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# The Jaina Science of Immobile Souls With Reference To Ācārāṅga Sūtra

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All the schools of Indian philosophy except *cārvāka* philosophy believe in the existence of pristine soul. An absolutely original notion of acceptance of equal consciousness in six classes of beings is the very heart of *Tīrthankara* Mahavira's preaching. No religion of the world has explained the concept of consciousness as deeply, profoundly and systematically as has been discussed with its applicability in life in Jainism. There is mention of the mobile beings and also plant life in non-Jaina literature, but the exposition of other types of living beings such as immobile beings like the earth, water, air and fire bodied beings is the novel establishment of Jaina-s. The scientific classification of beings based on the number of senses is exclusively an unique contribution of the Jaina-s. The present research paper would highlight the most subtle Jain concept of soul in the context of scientific view.

The first scripture *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*<sup>[1]</sup>, propounds the science of soul and the discipline of conduct based on that science. Even in the *Sūyagado*<sup>[2]</sup> and other subsequent scriptures like *Daśvaikālika Sūtra*,<sup>[3]</sup> the doctrine of six classes of living beings has found universal acceptance. In *Ācārāṅga, Sūtra*, attention is spontaneously drawn for logical argumentation to prove the category of sentient beings.

Jains have classified life forms in two categories, *trasa* (mobile) and *sthāvara* (motionless)<sup>[4]</sup>. While the presence of life in mobile beings is obvious, it is present in those beings too which are apparently stationary. Such life forms are of five types as described in jain literature namely,

*pṛthvikāya* (earth bodied), *āpkāya* (water bodied), *tejaskāya* (fire bodied), *vāyukāya* (air bodied), *vanaspatikāya* (plant bodied)<sup>[5]</sup> being.

*Ācārāṅga Sūtra*'s first chapter, '*Weapon of Injury*' starts with the description of the earth bodied beings and the like, instead of speaking of the human. The central theme of the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* is the exposition of the equality of all souls, from the earth bodied beings which resemble the soul in human beings. There is no discrimination about the nature of soul, the distinction being only in respect of the degree of their knowledge, intuition etc. owing to the difference in *karmic* veils that cover or distort them.

## Consciousness in Earth Bodied Beings

The doubt might arise whether the earth-bodied beings are living organism? For the knowledge of subtle entities, extra sensory perception is the only way. But the ancient authors have advanced some arguments to prove their existence. There is a sign of consciousness such as replication, in the earth-bodied objects like the growth of a homogenous slab in the rock, just as in the sprouts of the flesh of hemorrhoid.<sup>[6]</sup> Modern geologists also agree that rocks, mountains etc. undergo growth and decay. They suffer fatigue, metabolism and death that are sure signs of life.<sup>[7]</sup>

As the consciousness in the aforesaid entities is unmanifest, they are not easily identifiable as living beings, like the creatures in which consciousness is manifest. Lord Mahavira did not propound mere consciousness in the earth, but he disclosed many other facts about them as listed below namely:

1. Earth bodied livings do inhale and exhale from all the six directions, if there is no abstractions in any one of them. But in case there is obstruction, they can do so from only, four or five sides according to circumstances.<sup>[8]</sup>
2. Earth bodied beings have two means of action (*karaṇa*) i.e. corporeal means of action and *karmic* means of action. Earth bodied beings do feel pleasure and pain through their sense of touch.<sup>[9]</sup>
3. Subtle and superfine is indeed the volume of the body of earth bodied beings.<sup>[10]</sup>
4. Earth bodied organisms have very subtle bodies, such beings are not visible but we are able to see only a big lump of innumerable such beings huddled together.<sup>[11]</sup>
5. Earth bodied beings have no sexual desire but they have tactile enjoyment of sex.<sup>[12]</sup>
6. Earth bodied beings are subject to massive and meager inflow, massive meager falling off of *karma*.<sup>[13]</sup>
7. Earth bodied beings have the feeling of physical pain and therefore they have ageing. They have no mental pain so they have no bewailing.<sup>[14]</sup>
8. There are ten instincts in earth bodied beings namely food, fear, sex possession, anger, pride, deceit, greed, mundane & collective.<sup>[15]</sup>

9. Sensual and articulate, two varieties of knowledge are tacitly present in them.<sup>[16]</sup>
10. Earth bodied beings hanker after food every moment without break. Consume food by the entire surface of their body, transforming all old properties viz, colour, taste etc., into new ones.<sup>[17]</sup>
11. They undergo infinite number of modes in respect of colour and the like and also knowledge and intuition.<sup>[18]</sup>
12. There is subtle viscosity in earth bodied beings which is not perceptible to our sense organs.<sup>[19]</sup>
13. The passions of anger, pride etc. are also there in the earth bodied beings.<sup>[20]</sup>
14. There are four psychic colourings namely black, blue, grey and fiery in the earth bodied beings.<sup>[21]</sup>

So it is undoubtable fact that earth bodied beings can neither hear, nor see, nor smell, more than how they feel pleasure or painful sensation. Mahavira explained the problem with an example that just as the dumb cannot articulate his pain however intense, likewise the one sensed being like the earth-bodied organism feel pain though it is incapable of articulating it on account of his being bereft of any other sense organ to express. Another example is of son of queen Mṛga, he was like a lump of earth experiencing extreme pain.<sup>[22]</sup> The earth-bodied beings are comparable to him in respect of their feeling of pain. Other water air, fire and plant bodied beings too have above mentioned symptoms of consciousness.

### **Consciousness in the Water Bodied Beings**

There are water bodied-beings that are too subtle to be perceptible to the naked eye. But *Ācārāṅga Sutra* advises us, one should neither deny the world of water-bodied-beings nor should one deny oneself. One who denies the world (of water bodied beings), denies himself, and one who denies himself denies the world.<sup>[23]</sup> This kind of interdependence is the very basis of Jain environmental ethics.

But it is very difficult to understand the nature of water bodied beings as they neither hear nor see, nor smell, nor taste nor are they found to feel pleasure and pain, there is no throb of life in them, then why should they be considered as possessed of souls? The reply to this query is provided by the *Ācārāṅga Nirvyukti*.<sup>[24]</sup> Just as the body of the elephant embryo at the time of conception and the watery egg are both sentient liquids, exactly so the water bodied beings are sentient. They too feel pleasure and pain when hurt by any beings.<sup>[25]</sup>

### **Consciousness in the Fire Bodied Beings**

*Tirthankar* Mahavira, through his omniscience, declared consciousness in fire and preached to refrain from its violence for mendicants. Although fire bodied beings are very subtle even then the *Nirvyukti* has adduced some arguments in order to prove its existence. Even as the corporeal mass of the glow-worm shines as light in the night exactly so the lighting power in the fire is inferred as originating from a particular transformation in the fire bodied-beings. Even as the heat of fever is not separate from the fevered, exactly so on account of its heat fire is also

inferred as a variety of living being.<sup>[26]</sup> Modern thinkers admit that fire cannot kindle without the intake of oxygen. In the *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣyam* also, the following argument is given in favor of fire as a sentient entity. Fire grows on the supply of fuel, and diminishes and extinguishes in the absence of it. This is the notion of modern scientists regarding the life in fire.

### **Consciousness in the Air Bodied Beings.**

The air bodied beings though invisible are not difficult to believe. In the present paper the main purpose is not to prove the existence of air, but the real intention is to prove that it is animate. Air has unrestricted horizontal motion which is not effected from outside.<sup>[27]</sup> So air is included among the mobile beings. But as the air bodied beings possess only one sense of touch, it is basically immobile living beings. Life in the air bodied beings is accepted by Mahavira as there are three features of consciousness found in it namely, metabolism, death, tiredness (*Klānti*).<sup>[28]</sup> There are several direct and indirect proofs to establish the soul in the air bodied beings.

### **Consciousness in the Plant Bodied Beings:**

Among the immobile beings, the plant bodied beings have manifest consciousness. In the earth-bodied beings and the like, the consciousness is not as manifest as in the plant. That is why the comparison of the human body with plant body is possible in all respects. The characteristics of birth, growth, nutrition, metabolism, death, disease, consciousness, non-eternality, state of childhood, adulthood i.e. subject to change all these are parallel points in plants and human beings.<sup>[29]</sup> They are as follows:

1. As the human body is subject to birth, so the plant body exhibits signs of birth.
2. As the human body grows up so does the plant body.
3. As the human body is endowed with consciousness and is possessed of the power of cognition, so is the plant body.
4. As the limbs of human body, when severed, gradually decay and die, so the branches, flowers etc. of the tree, when torn, wither up.
5. As the human body draws nutrition, so the plant body draws mineral, water etc. The digestion in both cases depends upon sunlight.
6. As the human body is impairment i.e. subject to growth & decay, so is the plant body.
7. As the human body is non-eternal i.e. subject to death, so is the plant body.
8. As there is formation and disintegration of billions of cells every moment in the human body, in the same way, there is formation and disintegration of billions of cells every moment in the plant body too.
9. As the human body is subject to change, so is the plant body.

All these similarities are well accepted and proved by science. Here, both the jain concept of *Sadjivanikaya* and science agree to a very large extent. They both postulate the consciousness in all living beings and plant except that their quanta of consciousness differ. Though Indian philosophies have always been of the view that the plants possess consciousness, for scientific fraternity, the challenge was accepted by none other than an Indian scientist Jagdish Chandra

Basu. He proved that the chloroplast present in the protoplasm of plants gets excited when exposed to melody. Professor Nogel went a step ahead and recorded these internal vibrations on a graph. We also arrived at the same conclusion that the plants too have sensitivity.<sup>[30]</sup>

Thus *Tīrthankar* Mahavira's concept of consciousness in five kinds of immobile beings has been well proved by scientific research. The insight of Mahavira, 2600 years back, is really a very astonishing truth in case of life in five immobile being. Today's science is proving an evidence for the existence of immobile souls by getting its photographs. But Mahapragya cautions them in advance regarding the futility of this exercise because soul is so subtle, non material and formless. It is beyond the perception of even the most refined human sensory organ. But still he suggests do not doubt the existence of soul as it is amorphous. It is now proved by various scientific researches that there is life in the earth, water, air, fire, and plant bodied beings. In no other school of Eastern or Western philosophy, we find such a subtle classification of *Jīvās* form one-sensed to five-sensed beings. Ācārya Siddhasena rightly commented that for proving the omniscience of *Tīrthankar* Mahavira, only *Ṣadjīvanikāya* Concept is more than sufficient.<sup>[31]</sup>

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### Footnotes:

- [1] *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, 1.7  
[2] *Sūyagado*, 1.9.8  
[3] *Daśvaikālika Sūtra* 6.7-22  
[4] *Tattvārtha Sūtra* of Umasvati, 2.12  
[5] *Ibid*, 2-13  
[6] *Daśvakālika*, Hāribhadriya, vrti 139, *Samānya Jātiyamkurotpatty upalambhāt devadarthamāmsamkuravat*.  
[7] *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣyam* p-38  
[8] *Aṅga Suttāni II, Bhagavaī* 2.2-5  
[9] *Bhagavaī op. cit.*, 6.7, 6.13  
[10] *Bhagavaī, op-cit.* 19.34  
[11] *Ācārāṅga Nirukti, gāthā*, 82,83  
[12] *Bhagavaī*, 7.138-142  
[13] *Bhagavaī*, 19.55-56  
[14] *Ibid*, 16.30-31  
[15] *Ibid*, 7.161  
[16] *Ibid*, 8.107  
[17] *Paṇṇavaṇā*, 28.28-30  
[18] *Paṇṇavaṇā*, 5.52-53  
[19] *Nishītha Bhā·ya, gatha*, 4264  
[20] *Nishītha Bhā·ya, gatha*, 4265  
[21] *Bhagavaī*, 19.6  
[22] *Aṅga Suttāni III, Vivāgasuyaṃ*, 1.1.26.41  
[23] *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣyaṃ, Sūtra*, 1.3.39  
[24] *Ācārāṅga Nirukti, gāthā* 110  
[25] *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣyaṃ, Sūtra*, 28  
[26] *Ācārāṅga Nirukti., gāthā*, 119  
[27] *Bhikshu Nyāya Karṇikā of Ācārya Tulsi, Adrash Sahitya Sangh, Churu, 1966, verse 7.9*  
[28] *Ācārāṅga Bhāṣyaṃ, 1.1.113*  
[29] *Ibid*, 1.5.113  
[30] Gelara, Mahaveer Raj, *Jain Studies and Science*, Jain Vishva Bharati, Ladnun, 2007, p.100  
[31] *Siddhasena Diwakar, Dvātriṃshad Dvātriṃsikā, Verse, 1.13*

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