

The Solutions of World Problems from Jaina Perspective

By - Prof. Sagarmal Jain

Honorable Chairman and well-wishers of humanity.

I am extremely happy and feel privileged to have the honour of presenting a paper on "The solutions of world problems from Jaina perspective", before this august assembly of different religions of the world.

We all are human beings first and as human beings the problems, humanity is facing today, are our own and thus remove the sense of fear and insecurity, which is the sole cause of armament, race and second for check the mad race for weapons. Let us think what means have been suggested by the Jainas to solve the problem of human survival and to check the mad race for weapons. For Jainas, it is the sense of insecurity which causes fear and vice a versa. Insecurity results in the accumulation of weapons. So it is our prime duty to develop the sense of security among fellow beings. In Suttrakritanga, it is clearly mentioned that there is nothing higher than the sense of security, which a human being can give to others⁵. The virtue of fearlessness is supreme. It is two-fold (1) one should not fear from others and (2) one should not cause fear to others. A real Jaina saint is one who is free from fear and enmity⁶. When the fear vanishes and enmity dissolves there is no need for armaments. Thus the sense of security and accumulation of arms and weapons are related to each other. Though arms and weapons are considered as means of security yet these, instead of giving security, generate fear and a sense of insecurity in the opposite party and thus a mad race for accumulation of superior weapon starts. Lord Mahavira had seen this truth centuries before that there is no end to this mad race for weapons. In Acaranga (4th cent B.C.) he proclaimed "Atthi sattham parenaparam, Natthi asattham parenaparam " i.e. There are weapons superior to each other, but nothing is superior to asastra i.e. disarmament or non-violence⁷. It is the selfish and aggressive outlook of an individual or a society that gives birth to war and violence. They are the expression and outcome of our sick mentality. It is through firm faith in mutual credibility and non-violence that humanity can get rid of this mad race for nuclear weapons and thus can solve the problem of its survival.

The Problem of War and Violence

At the root of all types of wars and violence there lies, the feeling of discontentment as well as the will for power and possession According to Suttrakritnga, the root of violence is attachment or will for possession^{7a}. A book namely 'Tension that causes war' tells us that economic inequalities, insecurities and frustrations create group conflicts⁸. It is true that in the old days the cause of war was only will for power and possession, whether it was the possession of women or land or money. But now-a-days economic inequality, over population, sense of insecurity and unequal treatment on the basis of caste, creed and colour may be added to the causes of wars. Jaina thinkers have all the time, condemned war and violence. In Uttradhyayana, it is said "If you want to fight, fight against your passions. It is much better to fight with one's own passionate self than to fight with others, If some one is to be conquered, it is no other than your own self. One who has got victory over one's own self is greater than the one who conquers thousand and thousand of warriors⁹.

Though Jainas aim at complete eradication of war and violence from the earth, it is not possible as long as we are attached to and have possession for any thing-living or non-living, small or great. There are persons and nations who believe in the dictum "might is right". Though aggressive and unjust war and violence is not acceptable to Jainas, they agree on the point that all those who are attached to physical world and have a

social obligation to protect others life and property are unable to dispense with defensive war and violence. Jainas accept that perfect non-violence is possible only on spiritual plane by a spiritual being who is completely free from attachment and aversion and has full faith in the immortality of soul and thus remains undisturbed by the fear of death and sense of insecurity. The problem of war and violence is mainly concerned with worldly beings. They cannot dispense with defensive and occupational violence. But what is expected of them is to minimize the violence at its lowest. Ignorant and innocent persons should not be killed in wars at any cost. Jaina thinkers have suggested various methods and means for non-violent wars and for violence even in just and defensive wars. They suggested two measures. First, minimizing the war should be fought without weapons and in the refereeship of some one. The war fought between Bharat and Bahubali is an example of such a non-violent war. In our times Gandhiji also planned a non-violent method of opposition and applied it successfully. But we must be aware of the fact that it is not possible for all to oppose non-violently with success. Only a man, who is detached even to his body and has heart free from malice can, protect his right non-violently. In addition to this such efforts can bear fruits only when raised against one who has human heart. Its success becomes dubitable when it has to deal with some one, who has no faith in human values and wants to serve his selfish motives. Jainism permits only a householder and not a monk to protect his rights through violent means in exceptional cases. But the fact remains that violence for Jainas is an evil and it cannot be justified as a virtue in any case¹⁰.

Problem of Disintegration of Human Society

The disintegration of human race also, is one of the basic problems, humanity is facing today. Really, the human race is one and it is us who have erected the barriers of caste, creed, colour nationalities etc. and thus disintegrated the human race. We must be aware of the fact that our unity is natural while these divisions are artificial and man made. Due to these artificial man made divisions, we all are standing in opposition to one another. Instead of establishing harmony and mutual love, we are spreading hatred and hostility in the name of these man-made artificial divisions of caste, creed and coloty.

Jainism, from its inception, accepts the oneness of human race and oppose these man made divisions of caste and creed. Lord Mahavira declared that 'human race is one'¹¹. He further says that there is nothing like inferiority and superiority among them. All men are equal in their potentiality. None is superior and inferior as such. It is not the class but the purification of self or a good conduct that makes one superior¹². It is only through the concept of equality andur. The pity is that we have become thirsty of the blood of our own fellow beings. It is a well known fact that countless wars have been fought on account of these man-made artificial divisions. Not only this, we are claiming the superiority of our own caste, creed and culture over others and thus throwing one class against the other. Now, not only in India but all over the world class- conflicts are becoming furious day by day and thus disturbing the peace and harmony of human socie unity of mankind, which Janinism preached ,from the very beginning, that we can eradicate the problem of disintegration and class -conflict. It is mutual faith and co-operation which can help us in this regard. Jaina acaryas hold that it is not the mutual conflict but mutual co-operation, which is the law of living. In his work Tattvartha sutra Umaswati maintains that mutual co-operation is the essential nature of human beings¹³. It is only through mutual faith, co-operation and unity that we can pave the way to prosperity and peace of mankind. Though Jainas believe in the unity of mankind, yet for them unity doesn't mean absolute unity. By unity they mean an organic-whole, in which every organ has its individual existence but works for a common goal, i.e. human good. For them unity means 'unity in diversity'. They maintain that every race, every religion and every culture has full right to exist, with all its peculiarities, but at the same time, it is its pious duty to work for the welfare of the whole humanity and be prepared to sacrifice its own interest in the larger interest of humanity. In the Jaina text namely Sthanangasutra there is the mention of Gramadharma, Nagardharma, Rastradharma etc.¹⁴ . referring to one's duty to- wards one's village, city and nation that has to be fulfilled.

Problem of Economic Inequality and Consumer Culture :

Economic inequality and vast differences in the mode of consumption are the two curses of our age. These disturb our social harmony and cause class-conflicts and wars. Among the causes of economic inequality, the will for possession, occupation or hoarding are the prime. Accumulation of wealth on the one side and the lust for worldly enjoyment on the other, are jointly responsible for the emergence of present-day materialistic consumer culture. A tremendous advancement of the means of worldly enjoyment and the amenities of life has made us crazy for them. Even at the cost of health and wealth, we are madly after these. The vast differences in material possession as well as in the modes of consumption have divided the human race into two categories of have and have not 'Haves' and 'Have Nots'. At the dawn of human history also, undoubtedly, these classes were existant but never before, the vices of jealousy and hatred were as alarming as these are today. In the past; generally these classes were co-operative to each other while at present they are in conflicting mood. Not only disproportionate distribution of wealth, but luxurious life, which rich people are leading these days, is the main cause for Jealousy and hatred in the hearts of the poor.

Though wealth has to play an important role in our life and it is considered as one of the four purusarthas i.e. the pursuits of life, yet it cannot be maintained as the sole end of life. Jainas, all the time, consider wealth as a means to lead a life and not a destination. In Uttaradhyayana sutra it has been rightly said "that no one who is unaware of treasurer of one's own protect one-self by wealth¹⁵. But it does not mean that Jaina acharyas do not realise the importance of wealth in life. Acharya Amrit Chandra maintains that the property or wealth is an external vitality of man. One who deprives a person of his wealth commits violence. Jainas accept the utility of wealth, the only thing which they want to say is that wealth is always a means and it should not be considered as an end. No doubt wealth is considered as a means by materialist and spiritualist as well, the only difference is that for materialist it is a means to lead a luxurious life but for spiritualist, as well as Jainas, it is a means to the welfare of human society and not for one's own enjoyment. The accumulation of wealth in itself is not an evil but it is the attachment towards its hording and lust for the enjoyment of it, which makes it an evil. If we want to save the humanity from class-conflicts we will have to accept self imposed limitation on our possessions and modes of consumption. That is why Lord Mahavira has propounded the vow of complete non-possession for monks and nuns and vow of limitation of possession for laities. Secondly, to have a check on our luxurious life and modes of consumption he prescribed the vow of limitation in consumption. The property and wealth should be used for the welfare of humanity and to serve the needy he prescribed the vow of charity. In Jainism the vow of charity is named as Atithi samvibhaga. It shows that charity is not an obligation towards the monks and weaker sections of society but through charity we give them what is their right. In Jainism it is the pious duty of a house-holder to fix a limit to his possessions as well as for his consumption and to use his extra money for the service of man-kind. It is through the observation of these vows that we can restore peace and harmony in human society and eradicate economic inequality and class conflicts.

Problem of Conflicts in Ideologies and Faiths

Jainism holds that reality is complex. It can be looked at and understood from various view-points or angles. For example, we can have hundreds of photographs of one tree from different angles. Though all of them give a true picture of it from a certain angle, yet they differ from each-other. Not only this but neither each of them, nor the whole of them can give us a complete picture of that tree. They, individually as well as jointly, will give only a partial picture of it. So is the case with human knowledge and understanding also we can have only a partial and relative picture of reality. We can know and describe the reality only from a certain angle or viewpoint. Though every angle or viewpoint can claim that it gives a true picture of reality, yet it gives only a partial and relative picture of reality. In fact, we cannot challenge its validity or truth-value, but at the same time we must be aware of the fact that it is only a partial truth or one-sided view. One who knows only partial truth or has a one-sided picture of reality, has no right to discard the views of his opponents as totally false. We must accept that the views of our opponents may also be true from some other angles. The Jaina-theory of Anekantavada emphasises that all the approaches to understand the reality give partial but

true picture of reality, and due to their truth-value from a certain angle we should have regard for other's ideologies and faiths. The Anekantvada forbids to be dogmatic and one-sided in our approach. It preaches us a broader outlook and greater open mindedness, which is more essential to solve the conflicts taking place due to the differences in ideologies and faiths. Prof. T.G. Kalghatgi rightly observes : 'The spirit of Anekanta is very much necessary in society, specially in the present days, when conflicting ideologies are trying to assert supremacy aggressively. Anekanta brings the spirit of intellectual and social tolerance'¹⁶.

For the present-day society what is awfully needed is the virtue of tolerance. This virtue of tolerance i.e. regard for others ideologies and faiths has been maintained in Jainism from the very beginning. Mahavira mentions in the Sutrakrtanga, those who praise their own faiths and ideologies and blame those of their opponents and thus distort the truth will remain confined to the cycle of birth and death¹⁷. Jain philosophers have all the time maintained that all the view points are true in respect of what they have themselves to say, but they are false in so far as they refute totally other's view-points. Here I would like to quote beautiful verses from Haribhadra (8th century A.D.) and Hemchandra (12th century A.D.), which are the best examples of religious tolerance in Jainism. Haribhadra says : "I bear no bias towards Lord Mahavira and no disregard to the Kapila and other saints and thinkers, whatsoever is rational and logical ought to be accepted¹⁹." Hemchandra says: "I bow to all those who have overcome attachment and hatred, which are the cause of worldly existence, be they Brahma, Visnu, Siva or Jina¹⁹". Thus Jain saints have tried all the times to maintain the harmony in different religious-faiths and tried to avoid religious conflicts.

The basic problems of present society are mental tensions, violence and the conflicts of ideologies and faiths. Jainism has tried to solve these problems of mankind through the three basic tenets of non-attachment (Aprigraha), non-violence (Ahimsa) and non-absolutism (Anekanta). If mankind observes these three principals, peace and harmony can certainly be established in the world.

Problem of the Presentation of Ecological Equilibrium

The world has been facing a number of problems such as mental tensions, war and violence, ideological conflicts, economic inequality, political subjugation and class conflicts not only today but from its remote past. Though some of these have assumed an alarming proportion today, yet no doubt the most crucial problem of our age is or for coming generation would be that of ecological disbalance. Only a half century back we could not even think of it. But today every one is aware that ecological disbalance is directly related to the very survival of human race. It indicates lack of equilibrium or disbalance of nature and pollution of air, water etc. It is concerned not only with human beings and their environment, but with animal life and plant-life as well.

Jainism, presents various solution of this ecological problem through its theory of non-violence. Jainas hold that not only human and animal beings, but earth, water, air, fire and vegetable kingdom are also sentient and living beings. For Jainas to pollute, to disturb, to hurt and to destroy them means commit the violence against them which is a sinful act. Thus their firm belief in the doctrine that earth, water, air, fire and vegetable kingdom possesses life and minute observance of non-violence paved a way for the protection of ecological balance. Their every religious activity starts with seeking forgiveness and repentance for disturbing or hurting earth, water, air and vegetation. Jainacaryas had made various restrictions on the use of water, air and green vegetables, not only for monks and nuns but for laities also. Jainas have laid more emphasis on the protection of wild-life and plants. According to them hunting is one of the seven serious offences or vices. It is prohibited for every Jain whether a monk or a laity. Prohibitions for hunting and eating are the fundamental conditions for being a Jain. The similarity between plant-life and human life is beautifully explained in Acarangasutra. To hurt the plant life is as sinful act as to hurt human life. In Jainism monks are not allowed to eat raw-vegetables and to drink un-boiled water. They can not enter the river or a tank for bathing. Not only this, there are restrictions, for monks, on crossing the river while on their way to tours. These rules are

prevalent and observed even to day. The Jaina monks and nuns are allowed to drink only boiled water or lifeless water. They can eat only ripe fruits, if their seeds taken out. Not only monks but in Jaina community some house-holders are also observing these rules. Monks and nuns of some of the Jaina sects, place a piece of cloth on their mouths. Jaina monks are not allowed to pluck even a leaf or a flower from the tree. Not only this while walking they always remain conscious that no insect or greenery is trampled under their feet. They use very-very soft brush to avoid the violence of smallest living beings. In short Jaina monks and nuns are over-conscious about the pollution of air, water etc.

So far as Jaina house-holders are concerned they take such vows as to use a limited and little quantity of water and vegetables for their daily use. For a Jaina water is more precious than ghee or butter. To cut the forest or to dry the tanks or ponds is considered, a very serious offence for an house-holder. As per rule Jaina house-holders are not permitted to run such type of large-scale industries which pollute air and water and lead to the violence of plant-life and animal-kingdom. The industries which produce smoke in large quantity are not permitted. Jainas permitted agriculture for house-holders, yet the use of pesticides in the agriculture is not agreeable to them, because it not only kills the insects but pollutes the atmosphere as well as our food items also. To use pesticides in agriculture is against their theory of non-violence. Thus we can conclude that Jainas were well aware of the problem of ecological disbalance and they made certain restrictions to avoid this and to maintain ecological equilibrium, for it is based on their supreme principle of non-violence.