

## Relevance of Jaina Ethics: In Present World

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**ABSTRACT:** Morality is a fundamental process of human life. This is the root of human value. Today when the mind-set of people has been polluted of illegal activities, the question what is morality is surprisingly found to be forgotten by the society. In order to be a good human being, Jaina ethics guided to a man in this present world. Jainism one of the ancient religious system of India which originated for the welfare of humanity. Jainism is based on three basic principle known as three gems (right belief, right knowledge, right conduct). Apart from this, there are five important principles of Jaina philosophy, they are– Non violence (Ahimsa), The Truth (Satya), Non stealing (Asteya), Celibacy (Brahmacharya) and Non-possession (Aprigraha). This principle provided a comprehensive framework for Ethical living that not only addresses individual well being but also emphasizes harmonious relationship between humans, nature and all living beings. This paper explores the fundamental principles of Jaina ethics and discusses their contribution for social improvement and harmony in the present world.

**KEYWORD:** Morality, Jainism, Ethics, Ahimsa, Three Jems, Harmony, Knowledge.

### Introduction:

Jainism is one of the important ancient India religious traditions which originated for the welfare of humanity. There were twenty four Tirthankaras in Jainism. Rishabhath was the founder of Jainism and was the first Tirthankara and the last Tirthankara was Vardhamana Mahavira who was also a contemporary to Gautama Buddha. The word Jainism is derived from the word 'Jina' which means conquer-the one who has successfully conquered his passion and desires. All the twenty four Tirthankaras are known as Jinas as they have conquered all passions and have attained liberation.

Jaina philosophy places a strong emphasis on self-control, nonviolence and ethical leaving. It is distinct for its approach to Karma, the soul and the universe, making it an important and unique philosophical tradition in Indian thought. Jainism does not believe in the existence of God. In fact it believes that, human being is the highest of all who can attain the ultimate goal that is Moksha or liberation of soul which depends upon its own Karma and purity of effort. In Jaina philosophy the ultimate goal is to attain Moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Liberation is achieved by eliminating Karma and realizing the true nature of the self. There are five important principles of Jaina Philosophy. They are:

- 1) One should follows nonviolence towards any living being (Ahimsa)
- 2) One should always speak the truth (Satya)

38	ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC" under Volume: 2 Issue: 8 in October-2021 <a href="https://grnjournals.us/index.php/AJSHR">https://grnjournals.us/index.php/AJSHR</a>
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- 3) One should not commit theft (Asteya)
- 4) One should not involve in adultery (Brahmacharya)
- 5) One should set himself free from worldly possessions (Aparigraha)

These five principles are called as Vows. According to Jaina Philosophy Vows are at the heart of Jaina morality and are undertaken with a full knowledge of their nature and determination to carry them through. Principally, Jaina ethics specifies Five Minor Vows (Anuvratas), Three Social Vows (Gunavratas), and Four Spiritual Vows (Sikshavratas) to be carried out by the householder. Being twelve in number, the text speaks of them Duvalasaviha Agaradharma. The Minor vows are Nonviolence, Truth, Non stealing, Celibacy and Non-possession. They are called minor (anuvrata) because the householder observes them in a modified way. In their full observance by monks, they are called Mahabharatas.

Lord Mahavira believed that in this world every small and minute object has got life and he followed the principle of Non violence practically by setting examples to his followers. Jaina morality based on equality of life. All souls are equal. Therefore no wonder that Jainism take into account not only the human beings or animals or insects but even plant life or one sensed elements life, like water etc. In support of the principles of non violence Jains are preferred only vegetarianism. It is attitude of life which refused to enjoy any pleasure at the cost of committing of injury to the physical and non physical being. It is more radical innovation than any of the modern sciences to raise the cultural levels of man. The rational conclusion of vegetarianism is that one should refuse anything for any purpose in which animals are slaughtered, even medicine and leather goods. Jainism is considered the world's most peace loving religion because of its strict practice of Non violence.

### **Triratna in Jaina Philosophy:**

Jaina religion encompasses three fold path of spiritual practice. They are doctrine of Right faith or perception (Samyak Darshana), Right knowledge (Samyak Gyana) and Right conduct (samyak Charitra) which were known as three jewels or Triratna. The three jewels are interrelated and interdependent to each other. They cannot function alone by avoiding each other. According to Jains all the three jewels must co-exist in a person if he is to work along the path of salvation. The three jewels of Jainism are discussed in detail below:

#### **A) Right Faith (Samyak darshan):**

The Jain's right faith or perception is closely related to eightfold path of Buddhism. It is the fundamental element on the part of kevala. This refers to having a correct understanding and perception of the nature of reality. It involves seeing the world as it truly is, free from delusions and misconceptions. Right faith is the belief in the teachings of the Tirthankaras, the enlightened beings in Jainism, and recognizing the truth of the soul's journey toward liberation. It also implies a deep faith in the core principles of Jainism, such as non-violence (Ahimsa), non-possessiveness (Aparigraha), and the concept of Karma.

#### **B) Right Knowledge (Samyak Gyana):**

Right knowledge refers to an accurate understanding of the universe, the self, and the nature of suffering and liberation. In order to differentiate between the right knowledge and wrong

knowledge, right perception is very important. Right knowledge can be acquired from Six eternal substances and Nine principles or Nine Tattvas. The knowledge of the six substances in Jaina cosmology are: 1) Soul (Jiva), 2) Matter (Pudgala), 3) Principle of Motion (Dharma), 4) Principle of Rest (Adharma), 5) Space (Akasa), and 6) Time (Kala).

**The nine Tattvas include:**

1) Jeva (Soul), 2) Ajeva (non living elements), 3) Punya (good deeds), 4) Papa (bad deeds), 5) Asrava (influx of karmas), 6) Sanvara (stoppage of karmas), 7) Bandha (Bondage of karmas), 8) Nirjara (eradication of Karmas), 9) Moksha (liberation).

Right knowledge also involves understanding the Jain scriptures, philosophies, and the workings of karma, which influences the soul's journey through cycles of birth and rebirth.

**C) Right Conduct (Samyak Charitra):**

Right conduct is the practice of living according to ethical guidelines and moral virtues. Right conduct aims to inculcate right ethics, values, principles and discipline by which a person can attain his ultimate freedom. This involves into taking twelve great vows to attain the right conduct. They are described as follows:

**Five main vows of limited nature (Anuvratas):**

1) Ahimsa, 2) Satya, 3) Asteya, 4) Brahmacharya, 5) Aparigraha.

**Three Merit vows (Guna-vratas):**

1) Dik Vrata (self limitation), 2) Bhogopabhogamana (self imposed limitation on consumable and non consumable items), 3) Anartha- danda (avoidance of unnecessary evils).

**Four disciplinary vows:**

1) Samyak vrata (engaging in meditation), 2) Desavakasika vrata (restriction on space), 3) Pausadha Vrata (ascetic), 4) Atithi Samvibhaga Vrata (charity).

The Tri Ratna forms the foundation of Jain spiritual practice, guiding followers on the path of self-purification and liberation. By following the principles of Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct, a person can progress toward the ultimate goal of attaining moksha, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

**Anekantavada:**

Anekantavada is a key philosophical concept in Jainism that refers to the idea of “many-sidedness” or “multiplicity of perspectives.” According to this principle, reality is complex and can be understood from different viewpoints. It emphasizes that no single perspective can fully capture the truth, as the nature of reality is multifaceted and subjective. Anekantavada teaches that different beings and objects may have different experiences or perceptions of the same thing, and all perspectives are valid within their own context. This leads to a more tolerant and respectful approach to differing opinions and beliefs. This doctrine is often illustrated with the famous parable of the blind men and the elephant, where each blind man touches a different part of the elephant and perceives it differently (one thinks it's like a tree trunk, another like a rope, and so on). The parable underscores the idea that each person's perspective is limited, but together they can form a more complete understanding.

In summary, Anekantavada teaches us that truth is relative and can vary depending on one's perspective, and it encourages respect for diversity in thought and experience. Such kind of virtues will definitely help the individuals to promote peace and harmony in the society. It needs to be cultivated and perceived so that we can develop the quality of sensibility and forgiveness among us.

**Non-violence:**

The doctrine of non violence is the greatest legacy lord Mahavira left for humanity. Ahimsa is based on love and kindness for all living beings. It is a way of living that proceeds from the recognition of

the spiritual value of man as man. Non violence is a principal of life that goes beyond human life to include birds, animals and all living beings. Jaina laymen are obligated to the daily practice of Jivadaaya hawing mercy to all creatures.

The Jaina Tirthankaras and monks have been in the forefront of creating a world devoid of violence. Numerous episodes in the life of Parsvanatha record his strong opposition to violence. Similarly several events in the life of lord Mahavira also serve to establish Ahimsa as the highest perfection of human life. Jaina literature has many examples of animal rescue. It is said that Neminatha, the twenty second Tirthankarawa staged a nonviolent demonstration by sacrificing his nuptial pleasure in order to save the helpless animals that were kept in cages for the occasion of his marriage.

Vegetarianism is another important part of Ahimsa. It is attitude of life which refuses to enjoy any pleasure at the cost of another pain. It is the policy of living at peace with all beings as far as possible. Jainism believes that killing of living beings is counted on bad Karma and does the liberation of soul will be delayed. We can practice non violence if we hold back ourselves from violence. Since the Jaina ethical code is based on nonviolence, the people are very particular about matters of food and drink. Every layman is required to possess Asta- Mulagunas that comprise of five Anuvratas plus abstience from the consumption of flesh, wine and honey. Numerous stories claimed that flesh eaters have no kindness, drunkards never speak the truth and people who take honey and the Udumbara fruit feel no pity.

In Jainism, violence is not only defined by physical actions but also by harmful thoughts and words. Language should be balanced and expressive. Therefore the Jainism emphasizes on Right Speech as propagating truthfulness, compassion, kindness and love which ultimately can become a powerful motivator for the Good. The Jainism, thus strive to maintain pure thoughts, speech, and actions.

### **Three Forms of Violence:**

Jain philosophy recognizes three forms of violence:

Physical violence (causing harm through action).

Verbal violence (causing harm through words, such as lies, insults, or harmful speech).

Mental violence (harbouring ill thoughts or negative emotions towards others).

### **Ahimsa and Karma:**

According to Jain beliefs, every act of violence, whether intentional or not, generates karma that binds the soul to the cycle of birth and death (samsara). The aim of practicing Ahimsa is to reduce karmic accumulation and move closer to liberation.

### **Conclusion:**

The study above on moral principles of Jainism illustrates that this philosophy represents the practical application of an ideal to life. Science and technology have created a new world of prosperity, but material gain has been purchased with a spiritual loss that has global consequences. Today we are living in the age of ultra modern world, at the same time it is the age of anxiety and mental stress. We are passing through value crisis. Man has known much about the technology, but not about the values, that's needed for the meaningful and peaceful life. Jaina ethics is relevant to the quest of modern man for the satisfy not only the value orientation of the individual, but of the society.

Jaina ethics, with its emphasis on non-violence, truth, celibacy, non-possession, and non-stealing provides a profound and holistic approach to living a moral and peaceful life. These ethical principles, deeply rooted in compassion and mindfulness, remain highly relevant in the present world,

where challenges such as conflict, environmental degradation and social inequality persist.

By emphasizing Non-violence, Jaina ethics calls for a reduction in harm across all levels of existence – human, animal and environmental. In a world increasingly aware of the ecological crisis and the importance of compassion in human relationships, these principles can guide individuals and communities towards more responsible. The relevance of Jaina ethics, therefore, is not merely philosophical but practical, offering concrete values and practices that can help address the complexities of the modern world. As we face global challenges, integrating Jaina principles into our daily lives can contribute to the cultivation of a more compassionate, ethical and sustainable future for all.

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