

From Religious Books:

## **Glimpses Of The Jain Concept Of Reality**

by Dr. J. C. Sikdar

The Jain concept of reality is basically scientific. It states that all entities (substances) of the universe are eternal. Further, they undergo various transformations according to their intrinsic attributes. Consequently, the various objects of the universe assume different modes or forms. That is how the universe evolves continually. There is no place for a supreme being who creates or regulates the universe and its course. The following couplets from Acharya Kundkund's PANCHAASTIKAAAYASAAR introduce concepts similar to those presented in the article: - D.C.J

Substance is defined as an entity that has existence;  
existence entails origination of new modifications,  
decay of old modifications, and permanence of essence;  
substance possesses intrinsic attributes and assumes various forms;  
such has been stated and elucidated by the omniscient. ||10||  
Substance in its reality can be neither created nor annihilated,  
gold or silver or carbon or oxygen can not be created or destroyed;  
thus its substantiality is inexhaustible, everlasting, perpetual;  
however, from the viewpoint of its modifications,  
a substance acquires the dialectical triad of appearance and  
disappearance of modes, and permanence of its intrinsic qualities;  
a gold nugget can be made into a bracelet or necklace,  
but the intrinsic nature of gold remains unchanged. ||11||

### **Introduction:**

A study of Jain scripture reveals that substance (DRAVYA) is the crux of Jain metaphysics. According to Jain philosophy, reality consists of substances endowed with attributes (GUNAs) and modes or modifications (PARYAAYAs). Existence (SAT) is the characteristic of substance, and, in turn, existence is characterized by origination (UTPAAD) of new forms, decay (VYAYA) of old forms and permanence (DHRAUVYA) of intrinsic nature. The Jain acharyas (scholarly thinkers) developed the distinction between substance and attributes, partly in order to mark the logical difference between the various subjects of knowledge or judgment, and partly to answer perplexities about changes and identity of permanence-in-change. As a subject of judgment, substance may significantly be said to possess different attributes (qualities) at different times, while itself persisting through time as an identifiable subject with a whole series of different qualities inhering in it.

Jain acharyas have divided attributes (qualities) into two categories: essential attributes that make it the kind of substance that it is, and accidental attributes that it may acquire and lose without changing its essential nature. A concomitance of a group of attributes inhering in a substance is observed and as a result of this observation a logically necessary connection between the attributes is seen. The essence of being a substance is to possess this characteristic.

The concept of substance is the central theme of Jain metaphysics. It is related historically to the notion of scientific knowledge, which involves unveiling the essential

nature or the real definitions of the various natural kinds of entity existing in the universe. The form of statement that says that a substance possesses certain attributes signifies that scientific knowledge at this early stage of its development was conceived as the cataloging of the essential qualitative differences to be found in nature.

A substance, all of whose attributes and modifications can be deduced from its very own essential nature and all of whose attributes are therefore necessary and not contingent, may be described as the unique all-inclusive totality.

The unique, self-determining and all-inclusive substance cannot, by definition, be created or produced by anything other than itself; therefore the notion of a creator or God distinct from his creation contains an evident contradiction, involving, as it must, the conception of two substances, one the cause of the other.

### **Attributes (GUNAs) and modes (PARYAAYAs):**

It is evident that each substance changes into different forms in accordance with its own inherent capacity to mutate. Thus the essential cause of various transformations rests in the intrinsic attributes of the substance. The capacity to cause transformation (PARINAAM) or change in a substance is called attribute or quality (GUNA) and the transformation due to attributes is known as mode, or state or condition (BHAAV).

Modes are of two kinds from the point of view of common states, namely, intrinsic modes (ARTH PARYAAYAs) and manifest modes (VYANJAN PARYAAYAs). An object may have a particular mode of existence (manifest mode) for a certain duration of time. For example, a pot has got a particular mode of existence for a certain period of time in addition to the molecular integration and disintegration (intrinsic mode) taking place in the physical object every moment. Similarly, the continuous change taking place in consciousness is an intrinsic mode of soul (JEEV), while its existence as a particular organism as a man or a heavenly being with a determinate age is the manifest mode. Further, manifest modes, which occur in souls and matter, are of two kinds: inherent (SVABHAAV) and tainted (VIBHAAV). Manifest states occur due to the vibrations (PARISPANDAN) of worldly souls and matter. [Differentiated from other schools of thought] after having defined existence as characterized by origination, decay and permanence, Mahaveer made the doctrine of transformations or evolution (PARINAAMAVAAD) omnipresent (all-pervading) by admitting the state of transformations in these two substances - self or soul (JEEV) and non-self or non-soul (AJEEV).

A substance and its inherent qualities are permanent because of non-origination and non-destruction, while all individual modes are non-permanent because of their origination and destruction at every moment. However, from the point of view of the series (PRAVAAH) of infinite transformations, the modes are also eternal. For example, soul is permanent, so its intrinsic qualities - such as consciousness and self-awareness - are also permanent. But modes of consciousness born of sentience, being subject to origination and destruction, are not permanent with respect to an individual soul. However, the series (PRAVAAH) of modes of consciousness of the past, present and future times is permanent or eternal.

### **Summary:**

The Jains call the manifestation of substance and attributes as modes or modifications. Some modes of a substance are tangible (INDRIYAGRAAHYA) like the material bodies of living beings, while other modes are intangible (ATEENDRIYA) such

as the luminous (TAIJAS) and karmic (KAARMAAN) bodies of living beings. Furthermore, according to Jain philosophy, attributes can never exist independently of the substance. The gist of the Jain conception of reality is that substance is endowed with attributes and modes.

Footnotes:

1. Adapted from Theory of Reality in Jaina Philosophy by J. C. Sikdar, published by P. V. Research Institute, Varanasi, 1991.

A serious effort has been made to present a simplified essence of the highly complex topic from various portions of the scholarly work.

2. DAVVAM SALLAKKHANAYAM

UPPAADADAVVAYADHUVATTASAMJUTTAM |

GUNAPAJJAYAASAYAM VA JAM TAM BHANNATTI SAVVANAHU ||10|

UPPATEEV VINAASO DAVVASA YA NATTHI ATTHI SABBHAAVO |

VIGAMUPPAAD-DHUVATTAM KARENTI TASSEV PAJJAAYA ||11|

3. An example of inherent and tainted states is water whose inherent state is coolness and whose tainted state is hotness, which it attains by coming into contact with fire. Similarly, in the inherent state, a soul is self-contained - disinterested in external objects and totally blissful, while in the tainted state (due to the defiling association of karmic matter), the soul becomes 'desirous' - engrossed in external objects and affairs.

- D. C. J.