

Foundations Of An Ideal State Of Mind

Foundations Of An Ideal State Of Mind¹ (Realization Of True Knowledge in The Context Of Twelve Contemplations²)

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In this article, Dr. Pradyumn Kumar Jain presents a highly sophisticated view of the Jain theory of karma, in the context of the twelve contemplations; impermanence (ANITYA), helplessness (ASHARAN), transmigration (SAMSAAR), solitariness (AEKATVA), distinctness (ANYATVA), impurity of body (ASHAUCH), influx of karma (AASHRAV), stoppage of karmic influx (SAMVAR), shedding of karma (NIRJARA), auspiciousness of virtuous conduct (DHARMASVAAKHYAATATVA), nature of the universe (LOK), difficulty in attaining enlightenment (BODHIDURLABH). This article also brings out the subtle but significant differences between ancient (Indian) and modern (western) ideology.

Introduction:

Why are we overpowered by compulsion, despair and grief? Not because the individual is isolated, his/her worldly existence is transient, and his/her physical being is unclean. It is because the individual has not understood these truths in the proper context. The individual has been a victim of irrationalism and so he/she did not attain rational knowledge. Pandit Bhoodhar Das writes:³

Things such as wealth, precious materials like gold
and kingly pleasures can be obtained effortlessly;
but, in this mundane world, it is extremely difficult
to acquire the indubitable knowledge of reality.

All material comforts are easily obtained in life but it is extremely difficult to attain true knowledge. True knowledge can only be obtained through an omniscient. Further, one has to have the ingrained capacity to comprehend the omniscient. When an individual acquires the knowledge of reality, grief vanishes. The individual realizes that pain and sorrow are mere parts of reality of life. Sorrowful meditation disappears.

¹ Abridged English adaptation of the article 'AADARSH SAMAJ-RACHANA KI MOOL BHITTI', published in the prestigious journal 'Tirthankar' of December-January 2003-204.

² A related article: "Twelve Contemplations (Based on Acharya Hem Chandra's YOGASHASTRA" by Manish Modi, Jain Study Circular, April 1998, pages 6 - 14.

³ DHAN KAN KANCHAN RAJSUKH, SABAH I SULABH KAR JAAN I

DURLABH HAI SAMSAAR MEN, EIK JADARATH JNAAN II

-BAARAH BHAAAVANA

Thus the realization of true knowledge, though difficult, is such an auspicious feat that helps us deal with grief.

Causes of worldly afflictions:

Accurate knowledge of reality makes us realize that compulsion and despair originate in the inner swirls of complex feelings. Such feelings arise due to subdued mental states, which, in turn, result from passions of attachment, aversion, anger, pride, intrigue and greed. Passions emanate from delusion and injure the mind, which, in turn, leads to a variety of activities of body and speech. Our personality is influenced by these vibrations (activities) of body, speech and mind.

In the language of Jainism, these swirls of feelings (abstract karmas) bring about ultra fine particles of matter known as material karmas. In this manner, the three kinds of yoga activities incessantly cause the influx of karmas and the worldly being continues to be imprisoned by its own actions. The walls of this prison are high or low and their duration is short or long depending upon the intensity of passions, attachment and aversion. The main source of compulsion and despair of a worldly soul is influx and bondage of karma. A worldly soul has been confined in this karmic prison since time immemorial. New bricks of the prison walls continue to form, old ones vanish with the passage of time, and the prison continues to exist. The karmic prison is enduring. In this manner, the cultural traits and trends of the individual are established.

These cultural traits and tendencies determine the behavior of an individual. Psychologists explain this as the sequence of cause and effect. According to modern psychology, this is limited to the present incarnation of the individual. However, the Jain philosophers, just like other Indian schools of thought, hold that the bondage of karma has no beginning and no end. The only recourse to rid the soul of karmic bondage and attain pristine state is to attain self-realization through self-endeavor.

Modern psychology holds that the basis of the internal and external behavior of man is the hidden instincts that are formed due to the corporal needs and the surrounding environment. These represent the individual's inner self that influence his/her external as well. However, some psychologists have completely discarded this concept of internal traits. They consider a man's behavior to be fashioned by social and financial factors. They hold that man is a social animal and therefore his social environment induces his needs. Consequently, his conduct originates from societal pressures. However, these psychologists have skimmed only the surface. Compulsion and gloom do originate from

external factors. But it is only partially true. Inner disposition does contribute to our behavior. People, who do not accept the role of inner disposition, disregard the significance of the propitious contemplations of solitariness (EIKATVA) and distinctness (ANNYATVA). Solitariness implies that the individual self is the substratum (UPAADAAN) for one's conduct. In plain words, one is responsible for one's own feelings and actions - for the course of one's life. Disregarding these facts, modern psychology merely provides outlets for the animal instincts of individuals. One does get relief in the process, but such a relief is transient. One focuses on satisfying one's sensual appetites without realizing that this is a vicious cycle. It does not lead to contentment and mental peace.

Spiritual awareness – path to genuine happiness:

The Jain visionaries hold that rational knowledge is the first step toward attaining lasting relief from the afflictions of compulsion and despair. The concept of solitariness is the foundation to attaining relief from worldly affliction. The contemplation of solitariness embodies the ultimate rational concept that in spite of the transient worldly existence, the soul is immortal as far as its perception and cogitation are concerned. This concept of solitariness is embellished by the contemplation of distinctness, which implies that soul is sentient and it is distinct from all other entities of the universe. A soul has unique intrinsic attributes and it cannot be transformed into any other entity. Such rational knowledge reveals that irrationalism is the root cause of worldly miseries. On account of irrationalism, the focus of an individual turns away from the self and goes toward external objects. Modern psychology focuses on the external surroundings to a certain extent. According to Jainism, attachment to the external leads to influx and bondage of karmas. It should be pointed out that influx and bondage of karmas results primarily due to the thoughts and feelings of the individual. However, the external objects do play a limited role in the process. In the ultimate analysis, the root causes of worldly grief are influx and bondage of karmas. This auspicious truth becomes evident through rationalism and contemplation on Influx and bondage.

A worldly soul indulges in attachment to the external objects. It becomes involved in the activities of body, speech and mind. Consequently, its pristine attributes such as perception, knowledge and bliss are eclipsed. The cycle of birth and death of a worldly soul continues on account of delusion and attachment to external objects.

Our life's goal should be to comprehend and deal with this root cause of worldly miseries.

We are the masters of our destiny:

Now the question arises, what is the target of endeavor? Is it soul or worldly existence or karmas? Soul is eternal and invariable. Its intrinsic attributes cannot be modified. World is external to soul and so any effort to change it is of no avail. Thus only karmas can be modified. It should be added that karmas are not invariable. Karmas associated with a soul are shed upon fruition and new karmas are continually acquired by the soul. When the karmas associated with the soul come to fruition, the worldly being indulges in yoga, the activities of body, speech and mind. This causes the influx of fresh karmas. The walls and the guards change but the confinement continues. The worldly soul remains confined in this karmic prison. The path to salvation consists in shedding of karma without indulging in passions and yoga – the activities of body, speech and mind. Thus contemplation on the shedding of karma is auspicious.

At this point, it is appropriate to elaborate the processes of influx, bondage and shedding of karmas. Each karmic cluster is like a chemical combination of material karmas with the iotas of soul. With the passage of time, it matures and comes to fruition, bringing about pleasure or pain, desirable or undesirable. On experiencing repose or discomfort, the iotas of the worldly soul undergo vibrations causing the influx of new karmas. However, a cognizant individual who realizes that soul is distinct from its material environment and that physical enjoyment and discomfort do not influence the soul, does not indulge in inauspicious passions and yoga. Such an individual obtains less painful karmas or no karmas at all. By maintaining a balanced state of mind, a worldly soul can modify the karmic processes; it can modify, suppress or shed the karmas in its possession. This is also the process to stop the influx and bring about shedding of karmas.

In sum, the contemplations described above constitute the path to deliverance from the misery of our mundane existence. They embody the path to genuine happiness.