

Religion & Society:

*Relevance Of Bhagwaan Mahaveer's Teachings
In These Turbulent Times¹*

by Shri Dulichand Jain, Chennai, India

Shri Dulichand Jain is a highly regarded Jain scholar. Jainism is an individualistic religion that teaches us to improve the self regardless of the atmosphere around us. In this article, the discerning scholar presents the basic teachings of Jain scriptures, which can lead to peace and happiness in our individual lives during these trying times. - DCJ

In modern times, science and technology have progressed beyond one's imagination. Man has controlled natural resources. Fast means of transportation have reduced distances between nations. Nevertheless, can it be said that today's man has more peace and happiness than his predecessors? The answer to this question is: definitely not. Though man has advanced mentally and intellectually, his heart has not blossomed accordingly. On the other hand, in the words of the great poet, Ramadhari Singh Dinkar, intellect has become a slave of greed.²

Today, the developed nations of the world are engaged in the production of deadly weapons of mass destruction. A variety of chemical and biological weapons are on the horizon. There is relentless competition in the business world. These factors coupled with freedom without responsibility has resulted in turmoil and anguish in life. Is there a solution?

The Jain scriptures present a detailed analysis and review of these problems individuals face. They present a serious discussion of violence and nonviolence. Nonviolence does not imply not hurting any living being. Its functional view is that one should foster feelings of affection, fellowship and empathy toward all men as well as animals.

¹ Abridged English adaptation of the article 'AAJ KE ASHAANT YUG MEIN MAHAVEER-VAANI KI UPAADEYATA', published in the prestigious journal 'Tirthankar' of July 2007.

² BUDDHI TRISHNA KI DAASI HUIE

Jainism holds that there is a very intimate relationship between man and nature. They depend on each other. All living beings, men, animals, birds, insects and plants have the same privilege to live. AACHAARAANG Sutra states:³

All living beings possess intense love of life;
all cherish bliss and despise misery;
all abominate the end of life and
all possess a profound desire for a long life.

UTTARAADHYAYAN Sutra states:⁴

Apprehending the above, one should not inflict pain
on any living being.

SUTRAKRITAANG Sutra subjoins:⁵

We should not have feelings of animosity
towards any one.

Further, UTTARAADHYAYAN Sutra states:⁶

We should foster feelings of friendship and
goodwill towards all living beings.

Identifying the concepts of affection and identicalness toward all worldly beings, AACHAARAANG Sutra states:⁷

O worldly soul, realize that the one who
you intend to kill or hurt is the same as you.
Give it some thought that he/she experiences
pleasure and pain just like you.
The one who you wish to subjugate is a person like you.
The one who you wish to subject to pain and duress
is a living being like you.
Think, the one whose life processes you wish
to obstruct has a life similar to yours.

³ SAVVE PAANA PIYAAUYA SUHASAAYA DUKKHAPADIKOOLA |
APPIYAVAHA PIYAJEEVANO JEEVIUKAAMA SAVVESIM JEEVIYAM PIYAM | 1/2/3/63|

⁴ NA YA VITTASAYE PAR | 2/20|

⁵ NA VIRUJJHEJJ KONAI | 1/15/13|

⁶ MITTIM BHOOAEHIM KAPPAE | 6/2|

⁷ TUMAMSI NAAM SACCHEV (TAM CHEV) JAM HANTAVVAM TI MANNASI |
TUMAMSI NAAM SACCHEV JAM AJJAAVEYATTAM TI MANNASI |
TUMAMSI NAAM SACCHEV JAM PARIYAAVEYAVAVAM TI MANNASI |
TUMAMSI NAAM SACCHEV JAM PAARIGHETAVVAM TI MANNASI |
TUMAMSI NAAM SACCHEV JAM UDDAYEVAVVAM TI MANNASI |
ANJOO CHEV PADIBUDDHIJEEVI | TAMHA NA HANTA VI GHAAYAE |
ANUSAMVEYANAMAPPANENAM JAM HANTAVYAM NAABHIPATTHAE | 1, 5/5, 170|

A conscientious person adopts such prudence in life. He/she does not hurt any living being nor does he prompt anyone else to commit any violence.

Bhagwaan Mahaveer ascribed a supreme position to nonviolence among all virtues. DASHAVAIIKAALIK Sutra states: Righteousness is the ultimate benefaction. Its attributes are nonviolence, self-control and penance. A righteous person is respected even by the heavenly beings.

All Jain monks (SHRAMANS) diligently practice the five great virtues of nonviolence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness. Nonviolence is foremost among these virtues. They also practice other virtues such as truth and non-possessiveness that bolster and secure the cardinal virtue of nonviolence.

The inclination toward violence is one of the causes of mental stress in the life of an individual. The second cause is that man has forgotten the individual self. Of the nine aspects of reality (TATTVAS), soul, the sentient entity, is the most important one. A worldly soul is considered to generate and acquire abstract and material karmas. One's thoughts and feelings constitute abstract karmas, which, in turn, lead to the influx and bondage of material karmas. Realizing the self and understanding that the soul is distinct from matter (and energy) is called the science of differentiation (BHED VIJNAAN) in Jainism.

UTTARAADHYAYAN Sutra states:⁸

My own self is the doer and undoer
of unpleasant and pleasant experiences;
my own self, on meritorious path, is my friend,
my own self, engaged in demerit, is my foe.

Soul, the self, is responsible for producing or avoiding happiness and sorrow. Soul, through righteousness becomes the benefactor of self and through misconduct, the enemy of self.

Further, UTTARAADHYAYAN Sutra states that victory over self is most significant, though extremely difficult:⁹

⁸ APPA KATTA VIKATTA YA DUHAAN YA SUHAAN YA I
APPA MITTAMAMITTAM CHA DUPATTHIYA-SUPATTHIO I 20/37I
Also please see Jain Study Circular, Quotations From Scriptures, April 2000 issue.

⁹ JO SAHASSAM SAHASSANAM SEGAME DUJJAYA JIYE I

Victory over thousands of external enemies
in the battlefield is insignificant, (it is of no avail)
compared to the victory over one's inner enemies;
vanquishing one's passions is an unparalleled conquest.

Victory over self is superior to victory over thousands of other enemies. The real winner is one who conquers the self. Such a victory can be achieved through suppressing the four passions, anger, pride, intrigue and greed.

Commenting about passions, DASHAVAIIKALIK Sutra states:¹⁰

Anger spoils good relations,
pride destroys humility,
intrigue is detrimental to friendship,
while greed destroys everything.

Further, to contain the passions,¹¹

One should suppress anger with tranquility.
Pride should be replaced by humility.
Intrigue should be avoided through simplicity.
One should overcome greed through contentment.

UTTARAADHYAYAN Sutra presents an excellent analysis of the process of mastering the self in the following words:¹²

On mastering one - the self (mind), the individual gains control
over the five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing.
On subjugating the five senses, the individual gains control of ten,
including the mind, five senses and four passions.
Ultimately, the victory over ten comprises
the defeat of all inner enemies.

Evidently, this is the way to achieve contentment, equanimity and internal peace in our lives. This is the path to genuine happiness.

AEGAM JINEJJA APPANAM AESA SE PARAMO JAO | 9/34|

¹⁰ KOHO PEEIM PANOSEIE MAANO VINAYANAASANO |
MAYA MITTANI NAASEIE LOHO SAVVA VINAASANO | 8/37|

¹¹ UVASAMEN HANE KOHAM MAANAM MADDAVAYA JINE |
MAAYAM AJJUVABHAAVEN LOBHAM SANTOSHAO JINE | 8/39|

¹² AEGE JIYE JIYA PANCH PANCH JIYA JIYA DASA |
DASHA U JINITTANAM SAVVA SATTU JINAAMAHAM | 23/36|