

Research Paper-2

Why Jainism is The Least Acknowledged Philosophy in The World

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Why Jainism is The Least Acknowledged Philosophy in The World

A beautiful philosophy that teaches to break the shackles of blind faith and gets one's individuality introduced to oneself. That tells one to stand for the self with fearless exaltation, for there is no one, one is answerable to; but oneself.

Having an acquaintance with someone from a Jain community means you definitely know three things about the Jainas (and hence Jainism); their strictness towards food, how dedicatedly they follow it, and that their (male) hermits are bare. You don't have any information about the antiquity of this philosophy, what is it all about, what does it offer, and beyond everything else its' rationality, because unfortunately no one talks about it. It is indeed a wonder how this particular metaphysics is unknown to the masses, almost every modern philosopher either think of it as an offshoot of other religion or due to its own followers' introversive behaviour, doesn't inquire further.

It was indeed a shock for me to find Jainism at number five,¹ that too with wrong information, during my search on Google about the least known religions of the world.

It hurts when no one talks about a philosophy that is not only the most ancient, but is highly rational, open for discussion and has attracted many efficient scholars from around the globe.

Jainism is a religion that is based on reason and discourages blind faith; being a religion, an important element of faith always remains, but it is a rational faith that can be discussed.²

Mostly religion is defined as, 'the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.'³ and Philosophy

¹ <http://listverse.com/2008/07/08/top-10-religions-you-never-knew-existed/> Retrieved 29/09/2016 @ 11 AM

² Jainism Today And Its Future, Author: Robert Zydenbos, pp. 56

³ https://www.google.co.in/?gws_rd=ssl#q=religion (Retrieved 23/09/2016 @ 2:45 PM)

as, ‘the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.’⁴

As per the above definitions of religion and philosophy, when one steps ahead and try to know more about Jainism, one finds out that it is not a religion but a philosophy or it can be put this way also that here religion and philosophy are so intertwined that one cannot exist without the other.

According to Indologist Heinrich Zimmer, (1890 – 1943)⁵ Jainism can be traced back as far as third or fourth millennium BC, due to the discovery of a series of great late Stone Age cities in the Indus Valley.⁶ He introduced the term ‘Transtheism -- where the concept of God has been termed as ‘trans-theistic’ a system of thought or religious philosophy, which is neither theistic, nor atheistic, but is beyond them,⁷ for the theological system in Jainism.

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions in the world. Perhaps it is the oldest living religion that has served as a major civilizing force, giving birth to roughly two thousand years of written literature, to wonders of art and architecture, and to a system of philosophy and ethics. Several religious ideas that today are popularly considered ‘typically Indian’ either originated in or were spread by Jaina teachers.⁸

It has been said about Indologist Walther Schubring (1881-1969)⁹ that he has tried that Jaina friends might come to obtain an idea of what has been accomplished by Western scholars during a period of about one hundred and fifty years, burning the midnight oil, with a view to make the world acquaint with one of the finest achievements of the Indian mind.¹⁰

⁴https://www.google.co.in/?gws_rd=ssl#q=philosophy (Retrieved 23/09/2016 @ 2:45 PM)

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinrich_Zimmer Retrieved 29/09/2016 @ 11:10 AM

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Jainism#CITEREFZimmer1953 Retrieved 29/09/2016 @ 9:50 AM)

⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transtheism> Retrieved 23/09/2016 @ 4:30 PM

⁸ Jainism Today And Its Future, Author: Dr. Robert Zydenbos, pp. 6

⁹ http://www.herenow4u.net/index.php?id=62442&tt_address_pi1%5Buid%5D=175&no_cache=1 Retrieved 30/09/2016 @ 3:45 PM

¹⁰ From the front blurb of the book ‘The Doctrine of The Jainas’ by Walther Schubring, ISBN: 81-208-0933-5

Whenever I used to think or talk about Jainism, orthodox faces thinking of themselves as the most superior; claiming that they know the most about the universal truth and the path to follow it, stricter in their dietary habits seeing others with a lower eye, used to come into my mind. Because this is what my encounter was, with this religion. With actually no one to answer your questions or to satisfy your queries. Dharma-Gurus, who seem to exist to make you feel guilty at each of your doing that one may start to think, Why do I exist? I am such a sinner. This guilt in turn results in aversion, not from the world, but from the religion. I humbly apologise, if I sound rude, but I observe people following non-violence in their eating habits, but they miss compassion towards humans. They talk about attaining Moksha, a state of being infinitely knowledgeable, having infinite perception and infinite conduct, but they seem to be blind followers themselves. They feel the responsibility of social reformation, but they never peep into themselves. They believe that each soul, whether an ant or human, is the same, with the same capabilities, but in each of their talk discrimination flickers. They talk a lot about equanimity but transparent, welcoming smiles, are what missing from their faces. Yes, they are the people who believe in possessing lesser worldly materials, but perhaps they collect something heavier than materialistic things.

Reasons I found out:

- Jainism appears to be a philosophy of renunciation, where a normal human gets criticised for not understanding the seriousness of the same.
- Lack of people's interest in true knowledge; as people want to hear or know about the deities, or God, who can fulfill their selfish desires and not about someone who motivates you to improvise the self. None is ready to understand the essence of gaining knowledge, personal quest or his particular purpose to be fulfilled in this particular life.
- When one comes into touch with any philosophy in the current times, one tries to find solutions to one's day-to-day petty tensions whether mental or emotional. Not all of us have a keen interest in philosophy and are capable of asking deep questions and understanding their answers, as one has to either keep aside one's daily botherations or has to be efficient enough to tackle both at the same time. In these terms Jainism seems very difficult to be understood as on an outer perspective this philosophy appears to be a critique, where you are not allowed to eat this or that, you have to

follow very strict rules and the leaders of this philosophy make you feel even more guilty because for them a person who is eating non vegetarian, eggs or even onion or garlic, is not eligible to understand the same. This attitude limits its students tremendously.

- This is my personal observation that present international scholars who have a keen interest in Jain philosophy, are shy. Neither they want limelight nor are they interested to be in touch with the people to explain them the teachings or scientific explorations of Jainism because they work for self satisfaction. Dr. Natalia Zheleznova, Dr. Robert Zydenbos and Dr. Peter Flugel to name a few.
- Attaining Moksha is like being on the hundredth stair, whereas right now we are probably at tenth, we cannot jump and go to even the twelfth step. Each step has to be lived and explored fully to move ahead and degradation is certain for any step taken hurriedly. Unfortunately, today's trend is quite contrary, where the moment one hears about the concept of Moksha, instantly he involves himself in a race to achieve so, without even giving it a thought at which step he is right now.
- Jainism is a very interesting autochthonous Indian tradition, which is unique in some sense. Unfortunately it has not been studied, yet profoundly, in each aspect. There is extremely rich philosophical and narrative literature in Jainism, which till nowadays has not been paid proper attention, neither by Indian nor European scholars. We are now at the beginning of this process. The contribution made by the Jain logicians to the development of Indian logic has not been comprehended in full sense too.

There are lots of misinterpretations of real Jain philosophy usually confused with the so called 'spirituality' which does not allow to appreciate the depth and originality of Jain thinkers like Siddhasena, Mahamati, Akalanka Bhatta, Haribhadra Suri, Hemachandra and so on. In that sense the real potentiality of Jainism has not been revealed.¹¹

- Most Digambara Jains are business minded people, with the attitude of seeing one hundred and ten rupees in their treasury, by the evening of each day, in case they have invested a hundred in the morning. They can spend lakhs of rupees in creation of new temples but when it comes to scholarly investment, they step back. For this funding would at least take four to five generations to

¹¹ Email interview with Dr. Natalia Zheleznova on 19/09/2016

show concrete result.¹²

- They spread all the teachings of Jaina philosophy, amongst themselves; this restricts the reach of such wonderful knowledge to the multitude.¹³

Solutions, according to me, can be:

- Whenever one is interested in gaining knowledge the main focus must be on the knowledge only and not on criticism.
- The purpose of any philosophy is to awake a man's sentience upto a level where he finds himself able to think rationally and can take whatever step, as he feels right, without any outer influence. Whether it's about choice of food, clothing or his living style.
- We may expect more writings on the 'scientificness' of Jainism to appear, in which science will be called upon to prove that the ancient Jaina view of the material universe as consisting of atomic particles is correct; that the Jaina doctrine of syadavada (which is a form of logical application of language) is good because it is an early form of relativism and therefore also of the theories of Einstein about the material universe; and of course that vegetarianism is the correct way for humans to feed themselves.¹⁴
- There are books about 'world religions', in which are listed those religions that have huge number of followers, such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism; Hinduism is also usually included. But Jainism is never included. This omission of Jainism does not do justice to the historical importance of the tradition, nor is it a proper reflection of its potential role in the future, or of the hidden role which it already has played in most recent times. Recognition is bound to come if the Jaina community openly admits its religious identity and when more researchers study the tradition and realize its significance. This change has in fact already begun.¹⁵
- Jainism shares some of its beliefs with other religious and philosophical traditions; but even if other traditions hold similar or identical views, Jainism is unique in bringing these together to a coherent, meaningful whole. If Jaina thinkers can use this unique combination as a basis for creative thinking about problems which

¹² As told by a renowned Jain scholar (I decided to not to disclose his name) on 27/10/2016 at Delhi

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Jainism Today And Its Future, Author: Dr. Robert Zydenbos (pp. 45)

¹⁵ Ibid; pp. 51

people are facing today, then Jainism will demonstrate its present day relevance and play a significant role in the world's religious landscape.¹⁶

- There are Mantras in Jaina philosophy, for attaining peace of mind, to experience compassion, to show gratitude and so on. Concrete steps should be taken to introduce simpler mantras, along with telling their meanings and benefits, amongst people.
- Online meditation courses can be developed to spread the message of Jainism, as non-violence and *parasparopgraho jivanam*.

Solutions can be many, but for their application all the scholars and the community has to come forward and together a sturdy step can be taken.

What is a religious philosophy if it hasn't touched the inner chords of my conscience and fills me up with extreme gratitude and compassion! That not only enhances my knowledge but also awakens my intellect to an ever curious longing to learn more.

I feel now is the time that we remove the garb of pretentious rituals and enter into the purest form of Dharma. Which is naked, rough, perhaps is going to crush us to our bones as we are so used to of our preconceived false notions, that it is going to hurt. In turn we would transform towards a better future and real humanity.

A fearless world, where every soul has an equal right to exist. Everyone has the right to be oneself. We are not afraid of God, but we know the ultimate truth and the path to attain it. A spiritual environment where each is respecting each individuality.

Though attaining salvation seems to be a blissful concept and one must gain knowledge for that but right now we own comparatively lower state of logical understanding; where most people allow their minds to get boggled that they either start to follow a particular path blindly or start thinking themselves superior to others because of the inadequate knowledge gained, which they think as perfect. In our present day scenario one is not searching for emancipation but at first - peace of mind and inner happiness, that may eventually lead to salvation.

¹⁶ Ibid; pp. 52-53

According to me religion is not something that teaches one to follow others, whosoever, blindly. Religion is that wakes one up, shakes one up, enhance one's logical reasoning and gets one introduced to the truth, no matter how bitter it is and in doing so, shows one the path towards freedom.

Hence we can see how not only Indian but also western scholars are thoughtful about a wonderful philosophy's extinction. Again it's not about the promotion of a particular philosophy but a concerned request to at least not ignore it.