

Understanding Mind Through Jainism

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Mind can either be your best friend or your biggest enemy. It depends on how you deal with it.

Whether it's about accomplishment of a certain goal or about controlling one's immense desires, one is advised to control the mind. Since ages, man has wondered to know what exactly mind is and how does it work? From time to time, various philosophers and scientists, from around the globe, have tried to explain it and its workings; however, the search still goes on. Many seekers have termed it as the sixth sense present in one's body in an abstract form and others have identified it with the soul itself.

'The mind is a set of cognitive faculties including consciousness, perception, thinking, judgment, and memory. It is usually defined as the faculty of an entity's reasoning and thoughts. It holds the power of imagination, recognition, and appreciation, and is responsible for processing feelings and emotions, resulting in attitudes and actions.'ⁱ

Today we hear the trio of the words 'mind, body and soul' in spa, meditation retreats and at many other places. We are searching for a solution that can heal all these so that a balance can be attained, not only in our personal lives, but also universally. Balance that transforms us towards happiness and peace so that we will be able to give something better to our future generations. As Dr. Brian L. Weiss has put it, 'an alignment of love from the mind to love from the heart. Then we are in harmony, in balance.'ⁱⁱ

Whether or not we believe in the existence of soul but all of us often realize that we have capabilities which extend much beyond the five senses. 'There are infinite aspects to the sun of consciousness. Of them five have been obtained by us, in the form of five senses. In our kendras or psychic centers there is light, but it is concealed by a curtain which prevents the light from being emitted out.'ⁱⁱⁱ In Jain philosophy these curtains are named as *Gyanavarniya karma* (knowledge obscuring) and *Darshanavarniya karma* (perception obscuring). 'As we remove the curtain and come out, the light in our psychic centers begins to radiate. Once the process of development begins, it cannot be stopped. It keeps moving ahead and beyond. In the beginning, we open only one window, with the passing of time we open a door that leads to many other doors waiting for us to unlock them. Whereas the senses are small windows, the

mind is a very big door.^{iv} For a knowledge seeker the mere thought of unlocking the treasure of hidden capabilities one holds within, fills one with immense peace. One gets mesmerised at the opportunities one may have.

Mind In Jain Philosophy

‘Jain Darshan or, philosophy describes “*jiva*” (soul) as the sentient substance, which is non-physical and not perceptible to senses; consciousness and “*upayoga*” (manifestation) are the differentia of “*jiva*”. Consciousness manifests itself in many ways: intelligence, intuition, conation, bliss, perception (cognitive elements), emotions, will, attitude and behavior, awareness of pleasure and pain.’ Whereas the western definition of mind describes it as the cognitive faculty of a living being, ‘Jains distinguish between soul and mind. The mind does not possess consciousness, which is the exclusive attribute of soul. Mind like soul is not a permanent entity, it exists only when consciousness manifests as thoughts, beliefs, desires, emotions and feelings. All these activities are influenced by karma, which is an interface between soul and mind.’^v Here the interesting thing to be noticed, which usually thinkers do not pay attention to, is that workings of mind are also intricately imbued with karma.

‘Our existence is seen to be at three levels: soul, mind and body. The soul perceives and knows the external world through mind, so the perceptions made by soul are influenced by mind. The brain is seen as the center for information storage and processing, its activity is regulated by mind, which in turn is conditioned by the soul. The conscious experience is made by the soul, not the mind.’^{vi} As in Jainism, soul (*jiva dravya*) is the only substance that can enact, in the universe.

Since ages man has also tried to win over the mind as it is considered to be the key to many blissful as well as woeful experiences. Surprisingly, mind controls humans like puppets, it may boggle one to take inappropriate decisions and also may help one to overcome a negative phase in one’s life. It all seems quite mysterious. ‘The existence of mind is connected with its activities, when the activities cease, the mind also ceases to exist. The activity of thinking is prominent in five-sensed beings (vertebrates) and is limited in lower organisms. The five-sense “*jiva*” are, therefore, endowed with mind, and “*jiva*”, in lower organisms, discharges only limited functions of instincts, desires and feelings.’^{vii}

Jainism is unique in differentiating between the types of mind as well. 'Jains recognize two types of minds: (1) physical mind ("*dravya manah*"); and (2) psychical mind ("*bhava manah*").

Physical mind: This is the physical counter part of mind and is composed of "*mano vargana*". This part of mind interacts with the brain and nervous system. The physical mind stores memory.

Psychical mind: This is the part of mind which thinks, imagines, plans, discriminates and takes decision. The mind derives these powers from the soul, which actually is the seat of psychical mind. The psychical mind is the acquired impurity of the soul or the impure mode of the soul. A pure soul does not have mind.^{viii} Or we may put it that way, 'a pure soul is the one who has won over the negativity as well as positivity of mind and has achieved a state of perfect equilibrium.'

Though the following example may seem irrelevant under the context of how Jain philosophy depicts mind but I believe the journey outward first begins inwardly. Few years back I read the book, 'Fountainhead' by Ayn Rand, where the author has aggressively raised the issue of individuality and how each one of us must respect each other in this context. She also mentioned how badly almost all the leaders of the world try to get hold of people's mind, by telling them to dissolve their individuality and to start to think in a particular way, which is not shown by their own souls. When one dives deeper into a religious philosophy one gets stunned at the kind of freedom it provides and how wrongly it is described in today's times, where every person with rational queries gets criticized by the society. According to Jainism 'the mind has two properties: singularity and individuality. It can have only one thought at a time. Both the soul and mind (psychical) are spiritual substances. The physical and psychical (spiritual) parts of mind are intimately connected. The mind derives its power from the spirit and acts on a physical plane. The mind is influenced by the physical and external world and it influences the soul. Thus, mind establishes a connection between the soul and the external world. As long as mind exists, this connection exists and the soul bonds karma. In the emancipated state of the soul, the veil of psychical karma disappears, the mind ceases to exist and bondage of karma does not take place.'¹ Hence understanding and respecting individuality may lead us to emancipation.

'The mind ceases to be a problem for those who are capable of entering into the self. Those given to spiritual sadhana, view the mind and its

¹ Ibid, pp.8

problems in a different light. For them the mind is only an instrument. There is no use quarrelling with the instrument. The root cause of all evils lie elsewhere. Lord Mahavira said, 'The battle with all elements alien to the soul, is to be fought within the soul. The occasions for such a battle are rare and you should not miss any opportunity. The battle for self-realization is a tug of war between the self and all the elements alien to it. The outcome of the battle will be uncertain if you simply go on pulling the rope. The best and easiest way to defeat the opponent is to leave the rope so that the enemy falls by its own force.'^{ix} Indeed all good books convey the same message that one has to learn to be a spectator of the doings of one's mind. As soon as one starts to see and analyse one's own thoughts as a third person, one's mind stops bothering him and one finds peace with the self.

'We come into contact with reality through the sense organs and the mind. They impose limitations on our consciousness. They are the mediums through which the consciousness has to function.'^x But still 'we all possess intuitive abilities far beyond what we realize.'^{xi}

'The mind is like a photographic camera. An ordinary camera can click your picture, only when you stand before it physically. The sensitive cameras can catch your image from the atoms you leave behind. They are being used in tracing the culprits. The sensitivity of the mind can also be increased to such an extent that it can grasp the subtlest things.'^{xii} Once I heard an incidence of a girl who left her home to experience the peace through living alone, doing meditation. She lived in a small hut and practiced meditation for several months, then one day she got annoyed, 'why am I not experiencing what I am searching for?' Fortunately she remembered the saying of a guru, 'have patience, you are almost there.' She bore patience and finally one fine day, she went into a deep trance, now she was able to feel even the tiny movements of the spider on the front wall. This is a stage that can be achieved by all those who seek for it.

Conclusion

It is said about the mind, 'one can win all the land of the world, one can even defeat the strongest of warriors, one may own all the pricy possessions of the universe. Still one may find it difficult to win over one's own mind.'

Irrespective of our faiths, we know that each religious philosophy teaches us the same thing, i.e. to control our minds. The purpose of doing the same is to attain everlasting peace and happiness. By understanding what is mind and how does it work, one may conquer it. Also one realizes that mind is the only thing one has, that can be, though the toughest to defeat, moulded, if handled efficiently.

When we face different circumstances in our day to day lives, we cannot shape every event according to our wish or selfish pursuit; rather we are advised to make our minds understand that everything happens for a reason. ‘The painter does not put down his brush, walk over to the tree and bend down its branches---like the bonsai horticulturist--- in order to better suit them to the composition he may have in mind. The Jain composition will emphasize the bending of the painter’s own mental branches, not the tree’s.’^{xiii}

Mind and its workings has been described so minutely in Jain philosophy that it leaves no stone unturned. The purpose of our present generation, or be it any generation, is to understand life at its best and to provide that rational knowledge to our descendants. By understanding and trying to win over the mind, we can surely move ahead in the “right” direction.

ⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind> retrieved on 14/03/2017 @ 6 pm

ⁱⁱ Dr. Weiss L. Brian. *Through Time Into Healing*. Piatkus. London. 2009 pp.149

ⁱⁱⁱ Acharya Mahaprajna, *The Quest For truth (TOFT)*. Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun, Rajasthan. 2003 pp. 105-106

^{iv} *Ibid.* pp.106

^v Kachchara N. L. *Philosophy of Mind: A Jain Perspective*, retrieved from <http://www.jainworld.com/science/Metaphysics/Philosophy%20of%20Mind%20A%20Jain%20Perspective.pdf> on 15/03.2017 @ 4 PM. pp.1

^{vi} *Ibid.* pp.1

^{vii} *Ibid.* pp. 7

^{viii} *Ibid.* pp. 7

^{ix} Acharya Mahaprajna. *Mind Beyond Mind (MBM)*. Adarsh Sahitya Sangh Prakashan, New Delhi. 2013. Introduction

^x *Ibid.* pp.8

^{xi} Dr. Weiss L. Brian. *Messages From The Masters*. Piatkus. London. 2010. pp.42

^{xii} *MBM*. pp.93

^{xiii} Tobias Michael. *Life Force*. Jain Publishing Company, Fremont, California. 1991. pp.54