

Abstract of the paper titled:

Role of Jain Philosophy in Strengthening the Professional Ethics in its Adherents

General knowledge about Jainism depicts that it is a religious philosophy, where the main attention is on renunciation, non-possessiveness and following of the ethics. But when one sees around and observe the Jain laymen, this notion appears to be wrong. For, despite being very fewer in population, they are one of the wealthiest communities of not only India but also in the world.

However, study about the ford makers who, from time to time, have reformed the already established regulations for the ascetics and the laymen, expresses that all of them were from the royal lineages. They have not only experienced the peaks of finances but also have well-analyzed the pros and cons of it, have taught the consequences of overtly attachment with it, to their disciples. Along with the ways through which finances should be earned, keeping the best of ethics in mind. And when they were succeeded in overcoming it, they left it and went into the search of peace and truth.

This way money does not sound bad and even possessions seem fine. This paper will throw light into few of these Jains' lives, how they think about money and act in their jobs/businesses; how they keep ethics in check, how they feel that *aparigraha* is necessary for spiritual upliftment or to proceed onto the journey of self-improvement.

Role of Jain Philosophy in Strengthening the Professional Ethics in its Adherents

Beyond the community one is born into, ethics are the innate moral call of an individual. Without a doubt one is not required to be a Jain to adopt ethics and not all non-Jain people are without ethics.

However, an individual's childhood matters the most in terms of the values that are being inculcated into one through one's familial atmosphere hence one may admit without hesitation that Jain people are more acquainted with ethics since their childhood; be it the food they eat, the way they live and the actions they perform.

The uniqueness of Jainism is that, contrary to the popular belief, it's more of a philosophy rather than religion. However mostly Jain people seem to follow the rituals, where going to the temple, performing worship and fasting is the main aim for self-purification. But the moment one gets introduced to its philosophy, which is full of rationale and knowledge; one starts an altogether new journey of self-introspection along with observing one's surroundings, people and the importance of one's role in the entire cosmos.

'Their philosophy is at one level nature-centered, holistic and intuitive and at another level, it is rational and scientific in its methodology, and hence open to continuous experiment and new ideas.'¹

This is another beauty that just like science, it also provides one ample space to experiment with one's own thoughts, ideas and continuously motivates one to reanalyze one's previous beliefs; for at one point of life a belief seems to be true but after few years of introspection that same belief may prove itself wrong. This way one keeps moving ahead onto the path of self-exploration and eventually keeps climbing the spiritual ladder. For example: in context of finances, Jain businessmen have an intelligent mind to do business through their brains, hard work and making the best use of opportunities they get. They earn loads of money through these qualities but at all times in their business lives they are aware of the fact that these finances are materialistic and will not help them, in any way, in improvising their spiritual journey hence they keep giving away a certain part of their earnings into charity through the medium of education, health services etc. Also, they keep their business transactions clean and keep transparency in their dealings. This helps them in maintaining a lighter conscience which eventually influence their family lives positively hence we can see many Jain businessmen working together with their brothers, brothers-in-law and other relationships.

'Business and commerce have always been central to their way of life. At the same time, they follow an ascetic ideal, at the center of which is renunciation of material possession and worldly preoccupations.'²

One may not be sure if the thought of renunciation follows a Jain businessman at all times, because if it would have been so, he would not have been after earning huge amounts of money, at first place. However, this can be true that the introduction the Jain laymen get to morals and ethics, in their household, keeps them in self-introspective mode always. Also, Jain philosophy is misunderstood in the context that everyone, including its followers, take it as the philosophy of renunciation, but the ones who dare to understand it differently, know that renunciation never emerges from pauperism but from opulence. All the ford makers were from the royal

lineages, they saw it all, experienced it all and when they realized that neither materialism nor relationships can satisfy the quest of the soul, they renounced the world and went into the search of truth.

Somewhere, may be in their subconscious, Jain businessmen are aware of this fact and they lead their lives and their businesses accordingly. 'The components of Jain dharma, is at once a cosmology, an ethical system aiming for spiritual liberation (Moksha) and a practical code for living in the world.'³

Every Jain householder has it clear in his/her mind about how they can be connected with the whole cosmos, undoubtedly, through each of their thoughts, words and actions because the karma theory, along with the concept of God, play a very influential role in their lives. Which prepares them to find their own authenticity that too critically.

'Rather than asserting or seeking to impose its own 'truth', Jainism asks us to look inside ourselves, find our own and continuously question it.'⁴

The word *Jina* indicates all those beings who have won over their senses and passions, have shed all their *karma*, have attained the omniscience and have embarked on the journey of eternal bliss. Every Jain layman/woman is expected to aim for that and nothing less, without a compromise, without looking up to a supreme being for a favor; all by oneself and one's sheer hard-work.

'Liberation, for Jains, involves becoming a *Jina*: one who has overcome inner passions and to whom material or temporal considerations no longer have any import.'⁵

Every living being, irrespective of how tiny it is, has its own conscience, its own separate consciousness. And it is meant to proceed on its journey without an outer interference hence none of us has an authority over any being's life. 'Individual conscience and individual consciousness are central to Jain philosophy.'⁶

However, absolute non-interference is not possible when a being proceeds onto its journey of life, and this causes violence, to other beings, in various degrees. Where the intent of the performer of a specific *karma* is the most important.

In today's world where most of the motivational speakers, coaches and strugglers talk about taking out the best in one. In Jainism, there is already much emphasis on 'the importance of the individual making fullest use of his or her abilities.'⁷

In terms of intelligence, ethics in family lives, business, jobs etc., and all the other fields of life. But one has to admit that too, that most of the Jains are unaware of this uniqueness of their own philosophy because they are commonly seen highly influenced by their ascetics, with a noticeable expression of surrender. Which does not seem right; for it obstructs their personal faith in themselves and appears contradictory to what their philosophy teaches them. Because 'personal enterprise, individual initiative and education are all highly prized in Jain culture.'⁸

The theory of *karma* in Jainism plays an important role in all the fields of Jains' lives because here *karma* is not something abstract, account of which is being looked after by some far away residing supreme being or a deity but here *karma* is a physical reality and each individual is responsible and answerable for his/her own destiny by performing right or wrong actions. Here the universe is the only account keeper scientifically; which enacts automatically and

inevitably, by storing the physical particles called ‘karmons’ into it. Karmons which then have the ability to travel back to the soul that caused them.

‘In Jainism, there is a distinctive interpretation of karma not merely as process but as substance.’⁹

The concept of God also plays a significant role in the lives of Jains because, ‘in Jainism, we are supposed to become God. That is the only thing.’¹⁰ Here God is seen as the supreme manifestation of human possibilities and not as someone who has created the universe, or punishes and rewards someone, as per the *karma* performed by him/her.

Imagine to be raised since childhood with this fearless belief that, ‘I am the only one responsible for my actions, good or bad. There is no one to be looked upon for favor or to fix what I have done wrong, but only myself.’ Would not this belief make one stronger, more ethical, more fearless and more answerable? This is the belief that keeps the Jains on track at all times, in terms of ethics, in all areas of their lives, including business.

‘While the conceptual distinction between gaining good *karma* and removing all *karma* is clear enough, there is no correspondingly clear distinction between the practices which might cause these internal processes.’¹¹ Clearly ethics fulfil the most important part in the removal of karma because an ethical person is lighter in his/her conscience, is fearless because he/she is not answerable to anyone for any of her wrongdoing. He has nothing to hide from the world for he never lies. Eventually this lightness in conscience leads to lighter layers of *karma* that surround the soul, which in turn prepares one to understand the relevance of no karma.

Few real-life examples of the modern Jains working in different fields

‘While the reformers* of Jainism were mostly *Kshatriyas*, the present-day Jains are *Vaiśyas* (the merchant caste).’¹² All the ford makers were not only *kśatriyas* but also from royal lineages. The reason, of majority of the Jains as businessmen, is perhaps the teachings of nonviolence by the ford makers, for a *kśatriya* is a soldier and he cannot afford to be nonviolent due to his duties of providing security to his state. (*changed from founders to reformers) However, few Jains can also be seen serving actively to The Indian Army.

- Retired Major General Mr. Bhupesh Jain was a part of the Nine Para, soldiers of which are commonly known as Para-Commandos. During his career he was also a Defense attaché for US and Canada. He lost one of his legs on 22nd March, 1989 in a war with LTTE in Sri Lanka as a part of IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force). He stated, ‘as a Jain I believe in nonviolence but as a soldier I believe that protecting my country is my first and foremost *dharma*. And every citizen must know that they are able to continue following their passions, dreams, businesses and jobs because of the soldiers carrying forward their duties at the border.’
- Retired Justice Mrs. Vimla Jain, rose from the lowest post of Civil Judge to the position of Judge in the High Court of Madhya Pradesh, which is the highest seat of Justice in a state. She explained, ‘during my whole life, I kept my needs from moderate to minimum. The salary paid by the State had fulfilled all my needs. I even managed to save sufficient amount in my bank for any of my old age needs.’

When asked, ‘as a Jain do your ethical learnings play a role in your profession?’ She mentions without hesitation, ‘sometimes the Jain ethical principles are even more refined and comprehensive than the principles of Legal Jurisprudence.’

As a judge Mrs. Vimla Jain had to face many tough challenges during her career which shook up her ethical learnings quite badly. She informed about few such incidents, some of them are inspirational and some disturbing:

- (i) During my tenure as District Judge, in an unfortunate event, I had to give life-imprisonment to fifty-two people. I was advised by my senior and local police administration to be more careful about my safety. Therefore, I took a leave for ten days and went into the shelter of a Jain saint to attend his discourses, which eventually calmed my then disturbed soul.
 - (ii) In another case, one accused, who was indicted for killing of four of his own brothers, was sentenced to death. He also tried to kill his own wife, which caused the death of their baby in her womb. The accused was sentenced to death on sole testimony of his wife. Surprisingly he did not have a sign of regret on his face for the heinous crime he committed.
 - (iii) In another case, a man killed his younger brother and unfortunately their father not only tried to save his elder son by hiding the crime of murder but also, he misguided the court by filing the wrong report. And to my surprise his own wife gave testimony against him, despite being knowing that doing so, will eventually vanish all men of her family. This incident made me believe that truth is existent and will continue to do so.
- First generation entrepreneur Mr. Parveen Jain, Chairman and Managing Director, Tulip Infratech Pvt. Ltd. And Vice Chairman of NAREDCO (National Real Estate Development Council), when asked, ‘specifically as a Jain what role ethics play in your life?’ He answered lucidly, ‘even as a struggler I never ever thought of doing a business that causes violence to living beings, like that of leather goods etc. The importance of nonviolence was clear in my mind since childhood. Without a doubt my upbringing by my (Jain) parents has to be credited for the same.’

In answer to the question of how he applies financial ethics in his work field? He stated, ‘In the past few years, businesses have collapsed due to some reasons; be it demonetization or some strict governmental rules but most importantly because of the wrong decision making and unfair practices by the owners. For example – as a builder I prefer to put the money, collected from the clients of a particular project (be it residential or commercial), into the same project. We never use it for any of our personal purposes or for completion of any other project. This not only keeps my conscience clear but also helps my company in having clear transactions. I feel proud in admitting that, even after delivering more than twelve projects, Tulip is, perhaps the only zero debt company today. And we started the journey as a builder almost a decade back. Also, we make it a point that our team works hard to deliver every project, we take in hand, in time. I am happy that we have been succeeded in that too. As the leader of the company I give the credit to my better understanding of ethics.’

- Vice President, at a multinational organization in the field of Decision Analytics, Dr. Swati Jain has around four hundred people, directly and indirectly reporting to her. She

pleasantly admits that she wants to earn money to be able to make significant contributions to four types of charities mentioned in Jainism.

When asked, ‘as a Jain do your ethical learnings play a role in your profession? She explained, ‘I practice *das dharma* even in my profession by trying to ensure that I abide by *uttama satya*, *uttama sanyama* and *uttama tapa*, considering my profession as the *tapa*. Also, I try my best to be away from the four *kasāya* (passions), namely – anger, pride, deceit and greed.’

She states further, ‘the challenges at work have always eventually reaffirmed my ethical learnings. I believe that the spirit of *aparigraha* leads you to have a peaceful life where you are motivated to peep within whenever the situations are out of control, by concentrating your energy in introspecting the self.’

Dr. Swati also admits that she might have followed other approaches towards handling things if her ethical understanding would not have been this clear. With her clarity of ethics Swati prompts to do what is good for every person working under her in the organization and humanity as a whole.

- A doctor with double specialization with the degrees of DTCD (Diploma in Chest Diseases and Tuberculosis) and DGO (Diploma in Obstetrics and Gynecology) Dr. Shalini Jain Nawal couldn’t continue to work for the commercial hospitals which only act on business modules. Eventually she opened her own private hospital, and a clinic, which now have a staff of almost hundred people. She informed, ‘during my studies only, I took a vow to never ever abort an unwanted child and never to indulge myself in unfair practices and I am happy to state that today I have my own IVF clinic with the success rate of 60-70% in comparison to the overall success rate of only 30%. I truly believe that positivity comes back to you.’ She also motivates her patients to adopt vegetarianism and surprisingly has succeeded with few of them.

Conclusion

High competition and lack of jobs are few of the reasons which have caused the degradation of moral values in personal and professional fields, where fulfilling one’s own, sometimes invalid, desires is the foremost aim. One can easily analyze that if the world keeps proceeding like this, we may soon witness immense chaos on our beloved planet, unfortunately induced by us only. In some cases, it is the hunger for power (be it at a national level or personal), in some the quest to earn more finances in a shorter period of time, enhanced by the jealousy caused by a rich relative, friend or competitor, and in some it is to fulfil the basic necessities. Hence the intent varies excessively and so does the consequences, in the long run.

We may observe that having faith in a super power has done more harm than good to us. For humans cunningly assume that if there is a superpower that has the ability to bless or curse us,

he can forgive us also. And very wisely we can burden him with all our sins, be it killing of innocent animals for food and business or by sacrificing them at the feet of him or for any of our wrongdoings.

Whereas the action of being responsible and answerable to the self for each action performed, by one, takes one to another level of courage and independence. The Jain theories of *karma* and god undoubtedly prepare one to be more self-reliant and compassionate. This is high time that the younger generation, throughout the world, get introduced to Jain concepts of ethics, *karma* and God specifically. So that they realize as Mahatma Gandhi once said, 'the earth provides for everyone's need but not greed.'

On the other hands by stepping out of the rituals, Jains have to be more aware of their philosophy so that they can discuss the same with others to enhance theirs as well as others' knowledge.

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¹ Shah K. Atul and Rankin Aidan. Jainism And Ethical Finance (A Timeless Business Model). (JAEF). Routledge, London and New York. 2017. pp. 19

² JAEF. pp. 20

³ JAEF. pp. 21

⁴ Mardia Kanti V. And Rankin Aidan D. Living Jainism (An ethical Science). (LJ). Mantra Books, UK. 2013. pp. 26

⁵ JAEF. pp. 22

⁶ JAEF. pp. 22

⁷ JAEF. pp. 23

⁸ JAEF. pp. 23

⁹ JAEF. pp. 25

¹⁰ Laidlaw James. Riches and Renunciation (RAR). Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1995. pp. 27

¹¹ RAR. pp. 28

¹² Nevaskar Balwant. Capitalists Without Capitalism (The Jain of India and The Quakers of the West). (CWC). Greenwood Publishing Corporation, Westport, Connecticut. 1971. pp. 196

People Interviewed for the paper:

1. Retired Major General Mr. Bhupesh Jain (through phone & personal meeting)
2. Retired High Court Judge Mrs. Vimla Jain (through email)
3. Mr. Parveen Jain (personally)
4. Dr. Swati Jain (through email & phone)
5. Dr. Shalini Jain Nawal (through email & phone)