
The Concept of Soul in ĀYĀRO

Professor M. R. Gelra, Ex. Vice Chancellor, J.V.B. Institute, Ladnun

Introduction

Using Prakrit language, Lord Mahavira, the twenty-fourth Tirthanker of Jain tradition, verbally disseminated his teachings nearly two thousand five hundred years ago. First spiritual successor of Mahavira, Gandhar Sudharma, compiled the doctrines and philosophy of Mahavira in the form of twelve Angas. The twelfth Anga, Drastivad, is considered to be lost. Therefore in Jain Svetamber tradition, there are eleven Angas. **Ayaro is the first and the oldest one amongst twelve Angas.** Angas are considered as most authentic Agamas in Jaina tradition. Ayaro is synonym of Acharanga sutra, and its language is Ardha Magadhi Prakrit.¹

AYARO²

If we are to trace the concept of the soul in Jainism, the best source scripture is Ayaro. Ayaro provides a classical knowledge on life and consciousness. The entire ethical code of Jainism which is based on non-violence is directed towards the attainment of complete liberation of soul from the karmas through introspection and penance so that the cycle of rebirth comes to an end. Ayaro not only describes about the empirical soul but shows the methods through which the empirical soul evolves to last stage to become Siddha i.e., pure soul. **It is important to note that Jainism decries the theory of 'God created the universe.'** This doctrine distinguishes Jainism from most other religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Hence, the concept of existence of soul has remained central to the Jain thought.

1. Concept of the soul

According to Jainism there are two basic realities i.e. ultimate principles which constitute the universe. They are: Jiva and Ajiva. Jiva means living beings with consciousness, soul, Aatma or sentient and Ajiva means non-living beings. The etymological meaning and synonyms 'Jivanamitijivah' means one that bears life or soul is called Jiva. There are several synonym of jiva. In the Bhagwatisutra, there are many names like 'prana, bhuta, satva, vigna, vetta, cheta, jeta, aatma etc. to indicate Jiva. Out of these synonyms, the terms Jiva and Aatma are indiscriminately used in Jain Agams. **We should note that Aatma is used for the self and Jiva is used in general for all souls.**

Acharanga 1/4 mentions that Jainism is based on four basic foundations:

1. Aatmavad - Concept of soul
2. Lokavad - Concept of universe
3. Karmavad - Concept of karma
4. Kriyavad - Concept of action

From the very first sentences of the Acharanga, we come to know that whosoever makes such a deep enquiry about self-i.e.'Who am I', 'from which direction have I come from?' Mahavira has said "Only he who knows the transmigration of the soul is the upholder of the doctrine of soul, universe, karma and action." The inference is that Jainism accepts the soul, the karma, and their mutual actions in this universe.³

Dalsukh D. Malvania, in his paper, 'Beginnings of Jaina philosophy in the Acharanga' clarifies that Jains are not Akriyavadi (non-action) and Nastikvadi.

Narration

Souls are classifiable under two heads:

1. Worldly - Mundane souls or embodied souls
2. Liberated souls

Worldly souls – We cannot understand the existence of soul without knowing the nature of Karma. The soul in bondage i.e. worldly soul is reborn and its course in the world is determined by the karmic particles adhering to it from the past. The soul has been in the world from the time which has no beginning. Each stage in the process of transmigration begins with death due to the end of Aushya karma. The Jain view asserts that the soul leaves the physical body behind and transmigrates to a new physical body. As the primary duty of the souls is to live in harmony with each other and not to harm any living being, they evolve the spiritual strength and removes the karma. This process of evolution continues till a worldly soul becomes a liberated soul.

Liberated souls - Liberated souls are disembodied souls who have shed all karmas and have no more births and deaths. Jivas totally free from all karmas are called Siddhas. Siddhas are GODLY souls.

Ayaro provides the knowledge about the attributes and qualities of soul and the methods of righteousness to follow. We find certain golden postulates of ultimate emancipation –^{4,5}

1. Thou are the greatest friend of thyself – nobody is thy foe.
2. Thy journey of life is a solitary affair – nobody can accompany.
3. Thy pain and ecstasy is thy own – others are not responsible.
4. It is thou, who is to be conquered – don't attack others.
5. It is thou, who is to be liberated – don't enslave others.

The Jain philosophy is the vision of perceiver, Commentators have therefore started the commentary by these words ' one of the chief disciples of Lord Mahavira, Sudharma, spoke thus to Jambo: O, long-lived! I have directly heard this from Lord Mahavira; whatever I am saying is not the imagination of my own mind, but has been told by Lord Mahavira himself. (Ayaro 1.37)

Characteristics of Soul

Soul exists.

It is non-material in form hence it is beyond sensory perception.

It is eternal.

It is the subject of action - it is the doer and enjoyer.

It reaps the fruits – karma. Karmas cause sufferings. All suffering sprouts out of passions..

There is Nirvana - emancipation.

There is path to attain emancipation.

Tattavarth Sutra mentions for the practice of three postulates - right perception, right knowledge and right conduct in pursuit of Moksa - which is the essence of all.

Souls are infinite in number. The spatial extension of the jiva varies from minimum to the entire cosmic space. The minimum extension would consist of innumerable space-points, and during Kevali- Samudhaghat the pradesas of soul spreads in the entire cosmos. However, each soul has its own independent individuality, meaning thereby that their innumerable pradesas remain united to each other and no vital energy can separate them. Neither is there any supreme entity like 'God' of which they are parts, nor are they the manifestations of 'Brahama'. 'Pleasure and pains are self-inflicted' -- this dictum clearly proclaims the independence of the soul.

Consciousness of happiness and sorrow

Consciousness or cognitive activity is the special attribute of the soul. Empirical souls are in bondage with Karmas. Karmas cause suffering. Mahavira says ' Comprehending the misery of the world avoid its cause -passion. All the sufferings sprout out of passions. Violence is also a cause of suffering, caused by passions. If the seed of passions is crushed, suffering gets eradicated altogether i.e. transcends the cyclic path of births and deaths.' Acharanga says, it is possible because bondage and emancipation, both are your own creations. Mahavira's supreme Truth is "the souls

are conscious entities, things or objects are not. The essence of soul is consciousness, not materiality." This philosophy of Acharanga gave a new turn to the science of Ethics and advanced thought process in the direction of peace. Thus philosophies of non-violent consciousness i.e. reverence for life and restraint attitude is the only way to be eco-friendly that assigns value to it. We find the extension of the concept of non-violence in Ayuro to immobile beings.

Plant body and Human body⁵

Among the immobile living beings, the plant-bodied beings have manifest consciousness. The comparison of the human body with plant body has been described in Acharanga as follows:

As the human body is subject to birth, so the plant-body exhibits signs of birth.

As the human body grows up, so does the plant-body.

As the human is endowed with consciousness and is possessed of the power of cognition, so is the plant-body.

In this way the characteristics of birth, growth, nutrition, metabolism, death, disease, the states of childhood, adulthood, and other items obviously shows the presence of consciousness in plants. The comparison of the plant body with human organism in this context attracts the attention of the modern scholars. If suffering is to be avoided and happiness is to be sought for, one should not desert the plant-family. This is the theme of the ethics of conduct.

In the Upanishads there are discussions about the existence of soul, but the doctrine of Shadjeev Nikayvad i.e. six classes of living beings is an absolutely original contribution of the Mahavira. They are prathavikaya, apkaya, tejaskaya, vayukaya, vanaspatikaya, traskaya. First five are immobile living beings. Acharay Siddhsen has said:

“My Lord, I do not need to provide much evidence to prove Your Omniscience. Shadjeev Nikayvad, expounded by You, is the strongest evidence of your Omniscience.

Shadjeev Nikayavad states that life exists in lump of stone, water, fire, air and the bodies of vegetation. They have only one sense of touch. The declaration of Lord Mahavira that life is present in the immobile bodies is remarkable a contribution because such knowledge was out of reach of a person having knowledge through senses. By postulating animated character of the plants and other souls, Jain ethics prohibits the killing or injuring of these non-human species.

It is the principle of self-restraint that enforces the duty of non-interference towards other forms of life. Hence Jain teachings were not only ahead of their times but were the predecessors of today's champions of environmental concern and ecological balance. It has given message of shunning violence and reverence for life, thus it provides universal appeal.

Sensitivity towards nature

Acharanga facilitates the understanding of different states of soul, induced by karma, which are very important from the standpoint of environment. According to Acharanga souls exist not only in human beings and animals but also in lumps of earth, in drops of water, in the flame of fire, in the wind and in the vegetation. They have invisible intelligent life forms which all fulfill their own functions in nature. They all experience pain and pleasure, as they encounter violence or compassion.

'To establish harmonious coexistence behavior with birds, animals, insects, earth, water, fire, air and vegetation is for human beings a devoted pursuit of Ahimsa. Ahimsa comprises in protecting the legacy of nature. The creation of the Universe is a mutually supportive web. If a single strand of the divine web is touched, it would sensitize the entire web. All the animate as well as inanimate elements in the universe

are inter-linked precisely as pearls in a chain' In Ayaro, environment reflects ethical sensitivity towards the nature and the imperative of living peacefully in a world of contradiction and pain, selfishness and exploitation, greed and cruelty. In the ancient traditions, religion is believed to help individuals attain peace and happiness.

The attribution of pleasure and pain to the immobile beings such as earth-bodied creatures is an absolutely novel contribution. Jain doctrine, therefore strongly advocates that one must refrain from destroying them. Jain philosophy has been invoking such a commitment as an integral part of society so that human beings do not tinker with the semblance of nature i.e. the embodied souls of earth, water, etc. The Jains have cultivated the practice to live non-violently with nature, and helped in protecting the environment and ecology. Jain seers attach great importance to the welfare of plant and other one-sensed jivas and produced sacred laws for the care of the natural world. In this way Jains uphold the moral, ethical, mental, and physical values of civilized society. Jain ethical values have paid the highest regards to all forms of life and helped to maintain the peace in the society.

2. Conduct of Ascetics

Acharanga deals with the life-style, precepts-mannerism, education-language, etc. of a saint in detail. The better part of an ascetic is to explore and enhance the basic qualities of soul by controlling the passions. There is an interesting description of the vicious circle of passions.

PASSIONS⁶

He who sees anger sees pride.

He who sees pride sees deceit.

He who sees deceit sees greed.

He who sees greed sees love.

He who sees love sees hatred.

He who sees hatred sees delusion.

He who sees delusion sees conception in the womb.

He who sees conception sees birth.

He who sees birth sees death.

He who sees death sees hell

He who sees hell sees animal life.

He who sees animal life sees sufferings.

The wise monk should, therefore, avoid anger, pride, deceit, greed, love, hatred, delusion, conception, birth, death, hell, animal, life and suffering. Conquering of passions is real liberation. One who is free from passions is a divine soul and experiences peace and happiness here and now. The control on passions causes the individual growth and their effect on society is tremendous and commendable. It brings the discipline of good conduct and helps in achieving peace. The first chapter of Ayaro gives the message of non-violence with the details of abandonment of the weapons of violence.

Ayaro describes the existence of life even in one sensed Jiva's i.e. the lumps of sand, live water, live fire, live air and vegetables and plants. Ascetics are therefore warned, not to involve in the activities where one-sensed Jivas prevail. It is the original contribution of Mahavira.

Narration

Anger is a common passion in human life. It has a lot of energy It should not be suppressed but managed. Let us see how the anger can be managed?According to modern science, humans have acquired and evolved several emotions which are hard written in their DNA's. Like other emotions– love, hate, fear , affection etc., anger is one such emotion.

How to manage anger?

It is believed that an angry person is full of venom and could be dangerous to others

like a snake. Though anger is natural and spontaneous, its degrees vary drastically from person to person. However, we can broadly classify the intensity of anger by drawing an analogy. Let us visualize four different surfaces on which an artist inscribes a curve –

1. On stone – such an inscription is everlasting in nature and tough to erase.
2. On wall – relatively less permanent and can be plastered off with some efforts.
3. On sand – such inscriptions are temporary and can be easily washed off by a breeze of wind.
4. On water – such inscriptions are momentary and vanishes quickly as they appear.

Jain religion describes that the persons falling in the first category exhibit very distinct symptoms – clinching of fists, bloodshot eyes and grinding of teeth. They lose their serenity and in their rage of fury they become ruthless and may commit brutal crimes. In a journal published by the American Heart Association, a study showed that people who are more prone to getting angry are three times more likely than others to have a fatal cardiac arrest. Second, third and fourth depict gradual descent in the intensity of anger.

In spite of very many efforts made in this direction to understand anger and to manage it, we must realise that we cannot get rid of or avoid anger altogether as we are humans, after all. However we can manage the anger.

Greek philosopher Aristotle said, “Anybody can become angry , that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time and for the right purpose, in the right way that is not within everybody's power – that is not easy”

Chinese philosopher Confucius said,” When anger rises, think of the consequences.”

Gurdief, a famous Sufi saint says,” If you are angry, do not answer immediately, answer only after a delay of 24 hours. He knew that anger is circumstantial and is rendered redundant once adequate time elapses.”

Lastly, we must form a habit to regret, whenever we lose our temper, or as soon as the angry words are out of the mouth. We can also put a sudden brake on the thought process and concentrate on breath and start counting inhalations and exhalations.

One who is free from passions is a divine soul and experiences peace and happiness here and now. The control on passions causes the individual growth and their effect on society is tremendous. It gives birth to the discipline of good conduct and helps in achieving peace.

3. Fundamental Principles

i. Concept of non-violence

The concept of nonviolence is so much highlighted in Ayaro that it is included in the fundamental philosophy and ethical practices of Jainism. We find in Acharanga the detailed study of the non-violent conduct of ascetics, it is the main theme of Acharanga. Mahavira-5 says, "**All creatures desire to live and none wants to die. Consider all living-beings are just like you, you should not kill them nor get them killed by others.**" This wisdom and understanding causes to observe abstinence from violence. The absence of violence in personal and social life leads to peace.

ii. Doctrine of Aparigrah

The majority of scholars identify with the subject matter of the first chapter of the Acharanga as far as the message of non-violence is concerned. However, a Jain saint AcharyaMahapragya believed, the non-violence must be understood in context of the doctrine of Non- possessiveness as dealt with in the subsequent chapters. In first chapter the principle of non-injury to life had been propounded. Second chapter deals

with the world of passions. It is mentioned that there are four fundamental passions anger, ego, deceit and greed. All these passions accelerate the sense of 'mine ness' i.e. possession in all activities. **According to Mahapragya, the principal cause of violence is the sense of possessiveness. Violence is an effect, possessiveness is its cause.** Modern Economics encourages violence by prescribing attachment to wealth. Mahavira on the contrary preached non-attachment to property. Attachment-dominated enterprises are opined as the foundation of social development. Acceptance of this partial opinion has resulted in the spread of violence and terrorism. Hence "Solve the problem of possessiveness; the problem of violence will considerably minimize".

iii. Concept of Equanimity⁷

Mahavira has proclaimed the righteousness of equanimity. By observance of equanimity in practical life one can lead happy social life. Acharanga dealt with the principle of equality amongst all types of souls. When passions decay, the attributes of equanimity take their place. The virtue of equanimity is the heart of Acharanga.

Equanimity means:

One should not develop attachment or hatred to one's relation.

One should not have laxity in self-discipline.

One should not be proud of his caste.

One should not indulge in sensual enjoyments

One should relinquish the sense of 'mine' ness

Above all, one should confess his own sins, asking pardon, and pardoning others, i.e., forgiveness is one of the unique features of Jainism and has relevance to all.

iv Righteousness

The path depicted in Ayaro is designed to improve the soul through righteousness i.e. to observe the principles of Ahimsa and Aparihraha so that the inflowing karmas are stopped, and existing karmas are annihilated. The ultimate aim of the soul's

pilgrimage is to achieve the pure conscious state where the inherent qualities of infinite knowledge and infinite freedom are availed.

Biography of Mahavira

In addition to the above, the last chapter of Acharanga has described the ascetic life of Mahavira to prove that Mahavira lived his own ascetic life for what he preached. There are four sections in this chapter; the topics are as follows:

- i. Itinerary.
- ii. Resting place
- iii. Hardship.

In this chapter, there is a very realistic description of Mahavira's practice of asceticism. Mahavira's power of suffering and infinite tolerance is mentioned in this chapter. There is also the mention of the troubles and hardships inflicted by humans and animals. **But there is no mention of the troubles inflicted by ill-divine powers.** In later literature there is a description in great detail of such troubles. There is also mention of tolerance towards severe cold, extreme hot caused by the change of weather and long fasting during meditation in lonely places. This chapter is considered to be an authentic source of the study of the biography of Mahavira.

Conclusion

Acharanga was composed nearly 2500 years ago, and it states that:

- A plant, like a human, also has consciousness and perception. This is remarkable, as science established this fact hardly a hundred years ago. The attribution of pleasure and pain to the immobile beings such as earth-bodied creatures is an absolutely novel contribution.
- Indeed, this canon contains the first formal and detailed proclamation on the environment, which is unparalleled, Science of Ethics and advanced thought in the direction of peace-process i.e. conservation of environment.
- The doctrine of the weapons of injury to the living beings opens up a new vista of

research in this field.

- The doctrine of six classes of living-beings is an original contribution of the Jains.
- The philosophy of *Acharanga* gave a new turn to the canon, is the practical and active compassion inherent in the fundamental philosophy and ethical practices of Jainism.

References:-

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