

JAINA DHARMA AS THE LAW OF BEINGS AND THINGS

*Jayandra Soni*¹ ■

Unlike the Buddhist view that the Buddha set in motion the law of beings and things with his first sermon in Banares as recorded in the famous *Dharma-cakra-pravartana-sutra*, the Jainas believe that the law of beings and things is eternal and has always been so. All the Jainas, including the last, the Mahavira, who was the Buddha's contemporary, reiterate this law which for the Jainas essentially remains unchanged. The word 'Jaina' itself is derived from 'Jina', which literally means 'one who is victorious', a victor or conqueror, signifying one who has obtained enlightenment by vanquishing, overcoming or subduing the passions which bind one to the cycle of existence (*samsra*) on account of the effects of karma. The word 'Jina' is a synonym for 'Trthamkara', a 'ford-maker', which refers to the teachings of the Jinas and Jaina dharma or Jain law functioning as a kind of bridge or ford facilitating the journey across the sea of life. This law applies universally to beings and things alike.

The word 'dharma' translated as 'law' here is a complex term, which in the Indian tradition is used in several senses: it is the dharma of a plant to grow in a particular way and to serve as food for animals; it is the dharma of certain animals to be preys or be preyed upon; it is the dharma of fire to burn, transform and, for the Hindus, to carry the oblations to the gods. When dharma is considered to be same as 'religion', and in a broader sense as 'philosophy', then it is certainly not

■ ¹. J. Soni is professor Indology at the University of Marburg, Germany.

in these senses, but rather as an extension of the universal rule or law implicit in them, or in the sense of the traditional views concerning the nature of beings and things. In Jainism dharma means at least two different things. On the one hand, dharma signifies the Jaina doctrine of beings and things as a whole, namely, from perspectives such as the ontological, epistemological and soteriological. In other words, what we call Jainism, the Jainas themselves call Jaina dharma, and the term encompasses not only philosophy and religion, but also, among other things, cosmology, social obligations and Jaina Universal History. The word 'dharma' in this sense is used in exactly the same way as when one speaks of Hindu or Buddha dharma. On the other hand, the word 'dharma' in Jainism is also used in a special way together with its negative form *adharmā*. Dharma and *adharmā* refer to two entities responsible for motion and rest. These terms are used technically by the Jainas and they apply in the context of Jaina ontology and metaphysics, as will be shown below.

It must be noted that Jainism and Buddhism share several terms which are similar. The word 'Jina' itself, for instance, is used by both to refer to enlightened persons and both have several similar rules for the ascetics, such as being required during the rainy season to abstain from their usual wandering about and to remain stationed in one place. Moreover, the history of Indian philosophy and religion as a whole evinces concurrent developments from the earliest times of all the three indigenous streams of Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Pan-Indian ideas were freely adopted by all thinkers. In other words, one can speak of a pool of ideas from which all Indians drew, such as the law of karma which seems to have already been accepted by all Indians in the sixth century BCE, i.e., during the time of the Mahavira and the Buddha. Even the later Brahmana tradition, the Upanisad tradition, seems to have taken over the ideal of karma as responsible of the resulting cycle of eternal existence (*samsra*) from the *ramanic* traditions of Jainism and Buddhism. The word 'ramana' literally means a 'mendicant ascetic', one who has adhered to an ascetic tradition that probably had pre-Vedic origins. The Jainas and Buddhists, as anti-Vedic thinkers, probably emerged out of this tradition, because Jainism and Buddhism are the

only so-called *ramana* movements which have survived out of a host of several others².

One of the chief features of the anti-Vedic *ramana* tradition is that it emphasizes asceticism in order to overcome the attachment to the world and worldly life. Whereas the Buddha preached the 'middle way' after coming to the conclusion that the extreme ascetic practices he underwent were useless for *nirvna*, the Mahavira and the Jainas say that one cannot be extreme enough on the journey to *moksa*, where *moksa* (for the Hindus and Buddhists as well) signifies a liberation from the effect and influences of karma. How exactly asceticism was practiced in the pre-Vedic times is not known, but there are evidences in the ancient Jaina and Bauddha sources of several groups of people, with differing metaphysical assumptions, who wandered about leading lives as monks³.

They were not followers of the Vedic world-view with its social and ritual rules nor did they worship any gods. However, they all seemed to have a common attitude, one that was foreign to the Vedic world-view, namely, the assumption of beginningless cycle of existences (*samsara*) which, for living beings, meant an endless transmigration from one birth to another. This eternal cycle was regarded as being determined, motivated and maintained by the inexorable law of karma. Liberation from this cycle of rebirths is said to be possible to achieve only through a renunciation of all demands and impulses of instinctive life. For some

². See Pande 1978.

³. Generally the *Smañña-phala-sutta* of *Dghanikaya* 1, pp.46 ff. is quoted in this context where six so-called heretical teachers and their teachings are briefly described as being different from the Buddha's views. These are: Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala (leader of the Ajivakas), Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccayana, Sanjaya Belattiputta and Nigantha Nataputta (the Buddhist reference to the Mahavira). A relatively ignored ancient Jaina source for other teachers is the *Isibhsiyaim* (*Skt.: Rsibhsitani*), "The Sayings of the Rsis". It was probably composed in the fourth century BCE and briefly records the views of Mahavira and his predecessor Parsva, together with over forty other teachers, many of whom are legendary figures. The Buddha is not mentioned, only two of his close disciples. See Schubring 1942/74; Basham 1951, pp. 10 ff.; and Dundas 1992, p.16.

ascetics this renunciation was connected with severe austerities in order to break the attachment to the world, others seemed to have emphasized the practice of mystical and meditative exercises in order to obtain the liberating knowledge of reality as such. Both Jainism and Buddhism seem to have emerged out of this tradition in which the law of karma was the crux of ascetic problem to be overcome.

The idea of a law of karma responsible for an endless series of existences is alien to the early Vedic literature. It can be found, however, in the later philosophical parts of the Veda, especially in the later Upanisads where, as far as the theory of karma is concerned, there seems to be a change in the Vedic world-view. In the Upanisads we see traces - perhaps under the influence of the ascetic tradition - of the possibility of liberation from the cycle of rebirths. In the Jaina and Buddha canonical writings the assumption of a karmic law and the theory of rebirth associated with it are already presupposed. As stated, they seem to have already been pan-Indian views by the time of the contemporaries of the Mahavira and the Buddha in the sixth century BCE.

Jaina dharma, as it has survived to this day, is traced by the Jainas to the teachings of the Mahavira. Unlike the Buddha, Mahavira is not the founder of a new movement, but only one who slightly reformed a tradition that had already existed at least two hundred and fifty years earlier and traceable to his predecessor as Jina, Parsva. The Mahavira and Parsva are the last of twenty-four Jinas or Tirthankaras who are practically worshipped by the Jainas as omniscient, universal teachers of mankind, because they had obtained liberation from the bondage to karma and consequent existences through the sheer power of their asceticism.

As far as the records of the Mahavira's teachings are concerned, Jainas, like Buddhists, organized several councils in order to redact the traditional material into what came to be known as the Jaina canon, the Jaina *Agamas* in Prakrit language, which were originally handed down

orally as what constituted the Jaina dharma⁴. These teachings are not in the original words of the Mahavira (*just as the Buddhist canon is not in the Buddha's original words*), but in those of his staunch devotees who learnt them from their teachers. There is an ongoing debate about the conception of the Jaina canon between the two main streams within Jainism, the Digambaras and the Svetambaras. Suffice it to say here that the Digambaras believe that the original teachings of the Mahavira were lost to posterity after the death of the only surviving follower of the Mahavira who had committed the entire doctrine to memory, but who died before he was able to pass it on to anyone else⁵. However, the Digambaras do have a limited number of texts they regard as canonical⁶. The Svetambaras have a full-fledged canon which in the traditional version contains forty-five texts, originally dating back to a council held in Vallabhi, Gujarat, around the fifth century CE.

The language of the Jaina canon which sets down all matters concerning Jaina dharma makes laborious reading and whatever is philosophically relevant has to be extracted out of a huge volume of material on a wide range of topics, such as the conduct of monks and nuns and general rules for the ascetics. The first attempt to present Jaina dharma in the form of the classical Sanskrit sutras of the other schools of Indian philosophy was done by Umasvati (also called Umasvamin), perhaps in the fourth century CE, in his procanonical work called *Tattvarthā-sutra* (or *Tattvarthadhigama-sutra*). Indeed, there have been successful attempts to deal with Jaina thought in the Prakrit language as

⁴. One of the *Mula-sutras* of Jaina canon, *Dasa-vaikalika-sutra*, begins with the declaration that "dharma, the law, consists of *ahimsa*, *samyama* (restraint) and *tapas* (austerity), and that even the gods bow down to one who abides by this law", Jaini (1979), p.64. See also p.164, where the following is a part of the daily chant of a Jaina initiate: "I take refuge in the dharma [Holy Law] preached by the omniscient Jina."

⁵. For details about Digambara and Svetambara schism, see Jaini (1979), pp.4ff., and for the chief disciple of the Mahavira and the Jaina canon, pp.47 ff. See also Dundas (1992), pp.40-73.

⁶. See Jaini (1979), p.51.

well, for example by Kundakunda (second or third century CE) and Siddhasena Divakara (fifth century CE). For the purpose of presenting Jaina dharma as the law of beings and things here, Umasvati's work will be taken as the chief source. Both Digambaras and Svetambaras regard the work as authoritative, despite the two different versions of the text. Philosophically, however, the differences of opinion are minor because the basic doctrine is accepted by both and both regard Umasvati as originally belonging to their own traditions⁷. In what follows, an attempt is made to present the Jaina dharma as the law of beings and things as delineated by Umasvati in his TS (*Tattvartha-sutra*). This law of beings and things is grounded on a traditional ontology and metaphysics which in their origin are probably traceable at least to the Mahavira's time.

The 357 *sutras* of Umasvati's TS are divided into ten chapters (the Svetambara version has 344 *sutras*) and the themes it deals with clearly show how Jaina dharma is presented in way which applies to all beings (*jiva*) and all things (*ajiva*), i.e., the work summarizes Jaina law about the natures and qualities of these two basic substances (*dravya*) of ultimate reality as such. Indeed, it deals with *tattvartha*, the meaning (*artha*) of categories (*tattva*) of reality which encompass both beings and things. Umasvati lists the seven basic categories of Jaina ontology and metaphysics in TS 1,4: *Jivajivasrava-bandha-samvara-nirjara-moksas tattvam*, "the basic categories are: the sentient principle, the non-sentient principle, inflow [i.e., influence or streaming in of karma], bondage, stoppage [of the inflow of karma], removal [or destruction of karma] and liberation." Beings and things (*jiva and ajiva*) constitute the basic substances and the Jaina dharma as the law concerning beings and things is a theory about their intrinsic natures, the way in which they interact,

⁷. There is also an ongoing debate about the authorship of the first commentary on the work. The Digambaras say that Pujyapada (perhaps fifth century) wrote the first commentary on Umasvati's work. Pujyapada called his commentary *Sarvartha-siddhi* (Attainment of the Meaning of Everything), published in the English translation by S.A.Jain (1992). The Svetambaras believe that Umasvati himself wrote a commentary to his own work. For the debate on this problem see Suzuko Ohira (1982).

the way in which they manifest themselves and the way in which their natures can be intuitively experienced.

The category *jiva*, usually translated as the 'soul', is in one sense the Jaina synonym for *atman* (as in Vedanta) or *purusa* (as in Samkhya and Yoga). It is the principle of consciousness, a category which enables one to speak of a being as a living entity, a thing inhabited by life. In other words, without the presence of *jiva* a human being would be a mere corpse, an insentient thing, an *ajiva*. As human beings we are unique in that we are not only constituted of a material body which made up a part of the non-sentient, material (*ajiva*) world, but that we also possess a sentient principle which radically and essentially distinguishes us from matter. This is to say that the principle of sentience underscores the defining feature of our existence. We are endowed with consciousness as our essence, without which the material body would be an inanimate, dead thing. Consciousness expresses itself through the material body whose nature it does not share. Further, the human being distinguishes himself or herself from other living creatures, like plants and animals, through the degree of the manifestation of consciousness by means of the various senses at his or her disposal.

We cannot speak of consciousness in the same way in which we speak about the things of the world. The manifestation of consciousness is entailed and presupposed in our description of the world and the question to ponder is whether consciousness can speak about itself. If this is at all possible, then it is obvious that it would have to use a means of communication different from the one used when speaking about the things of the world. This question has to be seen in close relation to the discussion of *moksa* or liberation, with Jainism offering its own unique interpretation. As principles of consciousness the *jivas* are endowed with the intrinsic features of infinite knowledge, bliss and energy⁸.

⁸. As far as *jiva* possessing energy (*virya*) is concerned, the view of Jainism is similar to the powers intrinsic to the *atman/pasu* in Saivism, which intrinsically possess different *saktis* or powers. This is as far as the similarity goes, because, among other things, Jaina dharma would not accord Siva the status which the Saivas do. For differences

However, the story of all *jivas* starts with their association with karma; their pristine qualities are manifested optimally only when the soul is rid of the binding and limiting influence of karma. In other words, all souls, including those of the Jinās, attain the ideal state only after obtaining the intuitive knowledge about the true and real nature of beings and things through the ascetic discipline.

The category of *jiva* is distinguished from *ajiva* which is a general term for five insentient categories which as substances (*dravya*), like *jiva*, also belong to the ontological structure of ultimate reality. Umasvati enumerates four of these in TS 5,1: *ajivakaya dharmadharmakasa-pudgalah*, "the insentient bodies are: dharma, *adharmā*, space or ether and matter. *Kala* (time), the fifth insentient substance, is mentioned separately in TS, 5,39⁹. *Dharma* and *adharmā* as categories, responsible for motion and rest respectively, are unique to Jainism. These terms are explained as mediums through which things can move or remain static. Just as water itself does not make a fish stop or move, but makes these activities possible, so too dharma and *adharmā*, without themselves changing in any way, offer beings and things the condition for the possibility of movement and rest.

Space or ether (*akasa*) is used in two senses by the Jainas. On the one hand, it is a category which provides the place where beings and things can exist, without itself occupying a separate place. Space is the place itself in which it is, and in which the other categories can be. On the other hand, space is divided into what is called the world (*loka*), whose end is the border to the empty non-world (*aloka*). The non-world serves no function at all, except as demarcating the world. The world itself is made up of three parts, the hells, the middle world and the heavens. There is also a world above the heavens inhabited by souls

between Jainism and Saiva Siddhanta views of ontology and epistemology, see Soni (1996b), pp.9-13.

⁹. There is an ongoing debate between the Digambaras and the Svetambaras about time being given the status of a separate substance (*dravya*). See Jaini (1979), p.100.

which no longer have any traces of karma. In the hells the souls reap the fruits of their terrible deeds (*papa-karma*), in the heavens the souls, as divine beings, enjoy the fruits of their meritorious deeds (*punya-karma*). The middle world is the world in which we live. The uniqueness of our world is that it is the only place in which complete liberation from the influences of karma can be achieved, namely, through ascetic exercises. It is the only place in which the ultimate knowledge of Jaina dharma as the law of beings and things can be obtained by human beings. Even divine beings have to return to our world in order to attain the ultimate knowledge which brings with it absolute freedom (*moksa*). In other words, the prerogatives of the human existence is that it provides the condition for the possibility of attaining liberation.

The role of the category of matter (*pudgala*) is defined by Umasvati in TS 5,19-20 in the following way: “[The function] of matter [is to form the basis] of the body and the organs of speech and mind and respiration (19). [The function of matter is] also to contribute to pleasure, suffering, life and death of living” (20)¹⁰. Matter is seen as identical with what constitutes its fundamental unit, namely, the atom (*anu* or *paramanu*), which can combine with other atoms to form conglomerates of various kinds of things, including various kinds of bodies. The crucial role of the atoms for beings is that they provide the place for the souls in which to live until their final liberation. In this way the Jainas can speak of *living* earth, water, fire and air atoms. In other words, in the practice of non-violence (*ahimsa*), great care has to be taken in one’s contact with them. The forms of matter are characterized by touch, taste, smell and colour (TS 5,23). Unique to Jaina dharma is that the following are also regarded as forms of matter which, may be inhabited by souls (TS 5,24): “Sound, union, fineness, grossness, shape, division, darkness, image, warm light (sunshine) and cool light (moonlight)”. Another unique view regarding the role of matter in Jainism is that it adheres to the soul and can become seeds of karma. The subtle particles of matter, which

¹⁰. The translation is by S.A.Jain (1992), pp.144 & 146. The Sanskrit of TS 5,19-20 is: sarira-van-manah-pranapanah pudgalanam /sukha-dukhka-jivita-maranopagrahas ca //

become transformed into karma particles, hinder and limit the functions of the soul. The question concerning how a soul originally became associated with karma is a fundamental one. This point will be considered below briefly.

The category time (*kala*) is also used in two broad senses. On the one hand, time encompasses a sequence of events in the past, present and future, without being able to say when time itself began, because of the cyclical nature of time. At the cosmological level time is best represented as a wheel with twelve spokes, divided into six periods for the descent of time (*avasarpini*) and six for the ascent of time (*utsarpini*). The descent of time also metaphorically represents a gradual descent of human values based on an almost imperceptible loss of the Jaina teaching. Needless to say that we are in the worst period in the descent of time. With automatic ascent of the wheel of time comes an improvement in the human condition on account of the adherence to Jaina principles, especially of non-violence which, as will be seen below, is finally based on Jaina metaphysics. The dimensions of time at this level involve hundreds of thousands of years. The intricately and exactly calculated figures involved here are humanly inconceivable, because they could even go into seventy-seven digits. The smallest unit of time is called a moment (*samaya*), which is defined as the time an atom takes to travel its own length slowly. Out of this, seconds, minutes, hours, etc. are calculated.

On the other hand, time remains unchanged for the liberated souls once they have rid themselves of karma. In other words, the passage of time is closely associated with the mechanics of karma. When all the karmas of a soul have been annihilated, then time no longer wields any influence on the soul. The liberated soul remains forever suspended between the world and the non-world, self-sufficient in its own pristine nature. Time here is thus an eternal, undifferentiated continuum as far as the liberated souls are concerned.

Karma is the key factor in understanding the sequence of the other categories of TS 1,4 mentioned above, namely, *asrava-bandha-*

samvara-nirjara-moksa. The Jainas refer to these categories also as the basic or fundamental truths. They are the building blocks of Jaina metaphysics. Through the interaction between *jiva* and *ajiva*, which is said to have taken place since beginningless time (*anadi*), an aspect of *ajiva*, namely, matter (*pudgala*) becomes converted into karma and clings to *jiva*. This fact, as the Jainas see it, is realistically depicted as dust particles settling down onto an oily surface. The effect of karma attaching itself or streaming into (*asrava*) the soul restricts its intrinsic powers of believing, knowing and acting properly. Thus, soul is under bondage (*bandha*). However, it is possible for the flow of karma to be stopped by ascetic practices, and this truth is expressed in the word *samvara*. Asceticism also helps the *jiva* to rid itself of or burn away the karma that is already active, and this truth is *nirjara*. The effect of cleansing itself of karma is liberation, and this truth, which is the goal to be attained according to Jaina dharma, is *moksa*.

Whilst what has been said above is the basic structure of the Jaina dharma of all matters related to beings and things, it does *not* deal with a fundamental question: in what way exactly does a being or soul (*jiva*) become associated with things (*ajiva* categories) when their intrinsic natures are diametrically opposed to each other? In other words, when the Jainas say that the intrinsic nature of the soul entails proper faith (*samyag-darsana*) in the Jaina dharma, proper knowledge (*jnana*) of everything and proper conduct (*carita*) in accordance with Jaina principles¹¹, and that these become limited only because of the influence of karma, then the question is: what was/is the original cause of the association between soul and matter in a way which leads to an accumulation of karma on the part of the soul? What is the cause of the soul getting into such a situation that it becomes bound by karma and is made to go through an endless cycle of existences as a result of it?

¹¹. Cf. TS 1.1: *samyag-darsana-jnana-caritani moksa-margah* // "Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct [together] constitute the path to liberation" (trsl. S.A. Jain 1992 repr., p.2).

This fundamental question applies to all adherents of karma theory, that is, not only to the Jaina dharma, but also to the Buddhists and Hindus. In the Indian tradition one is hard-pressed to find an adequate, philosophical justification for the assumption of the karma theory. It was already taken for granted in the sixth century BCE, because both the the Mahavira and the Buddha regard the existence of karma as an inextricable fact of existence as such. Generally, the adherents of the karma theory ignore the question concerning the original cause of karma, or give an unsatisfactory answer by saying that karma started at some beginningless time (*anadi*)¹². Be that as it may, neither was the issue regarded as a problem, nor is it possible for us to ignore the theory of karma, because the value of the theory of liberation (*moksa or nirvana*) is primarily based on it. In other words, the need to seek an original cause is not as important as the need to find the means through which bondage may be overcome. Each of three Indian indigenous streams of Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism offers its own means within its own ontological and metaphysical assumptions.

For Jaina dharma, as the law of beings and things, non-violence (*ahimsa*) is the indispensable prerequisite for the annihilation of karma. From the practical point of view the followers of Jaina dharma are guided by ethical principles which are based on the Mahavira's teaching and practice. Let us consider now the way in which this key term in Jaina ethics is grounded on Jaina metaphysics.

Jainism seems to have retained from ancient times not only the basics of karma theory as discussed above, but also the ascetic practices which are said to lead to a complete destruction of all karmas, a destruction which identically corresponds to the attainment of liberation. These practices are encapsulated in the code of conduct for ascetics and applies with necessary changes also for the lay followers. They are rules which constitute the basis of Jaina ethics.

¹². See also Soni (1996b), p.5.

The crux of our problem here regarding metaphysical basis of non-violence is the point concerning the streaming in or inflow (*asrava*) of particles of matter which then adhere to the soul and become transformed into seeds of karma. Liberation, as we saw, is identical with the destruction of all karmas. The Jainas believe that violence (*himsa*), encompassing all forms inflicted through thought, word and deed, is responsible for the accumulation of the maximum amount of karma. It thus follows that the path to liberation involves an earnest attempt to eschew all kinds of violence and, in this way, the extreme emphasis which Jainas place on non-violence, the most important ethical rule, is grounded on their metaphysics. The life of the ascetic, emulating the practice of the Jinas, serves as the model for an ethical life within the traditional Jaina outlook. The five great vows (*mahavratas*), ascribed to the Mahavira, of which non-violence is the first, have to be undertaken by every Jaina monk and nun. The corollary to a total abstinence of violence is not to make another person commit violence nor of approving acts of violence in any way. The remaining four vows are: eschewing lying and harmful or violent speech, non-stealing, celibacy and renunciation of private property.

The ideal ethical life of a lay person is based on the ascetic's model with certain necessary changes. Thus, for example, marriage is permitted with sexual life restricted to married partner, with restraint enjoined as a virtue bearing in mind the celibate's great vow. The ascetic vow of non-possession of property is converted to non-attachment to one's property, associated with the aim of leading a simple life. Donations of various kinds for furthering the cause of Jainism and supporting its various institutions are regarded as acts of virtue. A noteworthy point about the suggested rule for lay ethical conduct is that there is no compulsion to follow them nor would one be excommunicated for ignoring them. The choice to take the vow, to adhere to the codes of conduct, or a selected number of them, is an individual one and once taken is religiously followed for the merit it promises. Thus, for example, the ascetic vow to eat before sunset in order to avoid unconscious injury to insects of the night, is considered to be especially meritorious if practised by a lay person. To eschew

excessive and unnecessary travel, and to fast on auspicious days of Jaina calendar are also regarded as being particularly beneficial to lay devotees.

In view of the fact that the Jainas do not accept the concept of a creator God who, in the final analysis, can be made responsible for creation as such and for the human situation, Jaina ethical rules depict how it is nonetheless possible to lead a virtuous life. The ideal models of conduct are the Jinas whose biographies are included in the Jaina canon. An emulation of the virtues taught by them can lead to the same goal of liberation they achieved. The Jainas repeatedly emphasize the human nature of the Jinas and that, theoretically every human being can attain the liberating knowledge they had. Practically however, in view of the tremendous difficulty in the fulfilment of the task which is often described in superhuman terms, the Jinas are worshipped as model beings, almost as gods. They serve as superhuman models for the superhuman task within the range of human accomplishment. Jaina dharma according to the Jinas is summarized by Umasvati in their forms in TS 9,6 as follows: "Supreme forbearance, modesty, straightforwardness, purity, truthfulness, self-restraint, austerity, renunciation, non-attachment and celibacy constitute virtue and duty¹³".

In concluding this brief survey of Jaina dharma as the law of beings and things it can be shown how the Jaina theory of manifoldness (*anekanta-vada*) also comes within the gamut of this law. The Jaina theory of manifoldness is basically an epistemological tool for the way in which beings and things are to be seen. The basic attitude is that beings and things should not be looked at from a onesided (*ekanta*) perspective or standpoint. According to Jaina dharma beings and things (*jiva-dravya* and *ajiva-dravya*) can have manifold qualities (*guna*) and modes (*paryaya*)¹⁴ and one's judgements and predications should reflect this

¹³. *Uttama-ksama-mardavarjava-satya-sauca-samyama-tapas-tyagakincanya-brahmacaryani dharmah //*

¹⁴. See Soni (1991).

manifoldness. The Jaina theory of manifoldness has two parts to it: the theory of manifold standpoints (*naya-vada*) from which an object of investigation may be considered and the sevenfold predication (*sapta-bhangi-naya*) associated with it, each of which is an epistemological assertion made from a certain point of view (*syat*). Certainly, the theory of manifoldness is often used as a synonym for the theory of viewpoints (*syad-vada*). For our purpose only two points will be mentioned here, without going into details of the theory which has come to be the hallmark of Jaina dharma¹⁵.

Firstly, according to Jaina dharma the word 'syat' is used in a technical way, and not as an optative of the root *as*. Hence, *syat* cannot be translated as 'may be, perhaps or probably'. Such a translation of the word would give the impression that the Jainas are unsure about their description of beings and things. What is aimed at, rather, is to show that predications about beings and things can be made from different perspectives, i.e., an object of inquiry can be determined from a specific perspective. *Syad-vada*, therefore, cannot be interpreted as a theory of doubt (*samsaya-vada*) or indeterminacy¹⁶. Associated with this point is the attempt to include within any predication itself the possibility of other points of view. If *syat* is interpreted in the technical way in which the Jaina tradition intends it, then *syat* means things like 'from one point of view, or in one sense'. This means that the predication itself entails the possibility of 'another point of view, or in another sense'. The word 'syat' serves this remarkable function of passing a judgement about an object of inquiry and *at the same time* leaves open the possibility of another judgement concerning the same object of inquiry. The Jainas use it effectively to attack other theories as being absolutistic, because of their dogmatic, one-sided views, and also within their own system of thought to allow, for example, for the simultaneous description of both permanency and change in the case of the natures of beings and things.

¹⁵. It is not necessary to go into details here because every standard work on Jainism deals with this theory. See, e.g., Jaini (1979), pp.90-97.

¹⁶. This has been dealt with in detail in Soni (1996a), pp.20-45.

The other point concerning the Jaina theory of manifoldness is associated with the Jaina emphasis on non-violence which, as we saw above, is grounded on the Jaina metaphysics. Modern Jaina thinkers are prone to interpret the Jaina theory of *syad-vada* as a kind of laudable intellectual non-violence. *Anekanta-vada* or theory requiring an object to be viewed from manifold standpoints and /or perspectives seems to have evolved out of Mahavira's method of dealing with questions put to him. The early Jaina thinkers saw it as an epistemological method of inquiry not only for their own philosophical activity, but also as a tool to apply it to other views so as to assess their status in relation to Jainism. Hence, for example, that the Vedantins adhere absolutely to the general or collective standpoint (*samgraha-naya*), or the Carvakas to the practical standpoint (*vyavahara-naya*), etc¹⁷. Each thinker within a tradition saw his view as the established one (*sidhanta*), an attitude that applied not only to Jaina thinkers, but also to Hindus and Buddhists. The vehemence with which each defended his standpoint while attacking the opponent can hardly be described as acts of intellectual violence, no less than Mahavira can be described as having committed intellectual violence in his discussions and debates. In the philosophical literature the opponent in many cases is a hypothetical rival, whose views are presented for the sake of argument, for the sake of obtaining clarity about a topic, and for the sake of arriving at some kind of truth or final conclusion. Hence, the a priori standpoint taken over from the Mahavira's method is that, since an object can be viewed from different perspectives, the views of others about the nature of an object or reality as such would be partially true. For the Jaina thinkers *anekanta-vada* seemed to have been such a philosophical, methodological tool and they do not seem to have themselves interpreted the method as being grounded on intellectual non-violence. That it indeed optimally lends

¹⁷. See Dixit (1971) at various places, especially pp.111 and 137. The point is that another view is not rejected outright, but is still valid, despite the complexity of the problem, in terms of *dravyastika-naya* and *pariyastika-naya* standpoints, which view an entity based on its substance (*dravya*) and its present mode (*pariyaya*). See also Soni (1991).

itself to such an interpretation is its merit, with the obvious virtues that go with it for discourse and debate.

Jaina dharma as a law of beings and things encompasses several aspects which could not be dealt with in the limited space of such an article as this. Aspects of the theme which appear in the canonical works of Jainas, for example, need to be consulted in order to see how the ontology and metaphysics of Jaina dharma, briefly dealt with above, developed and evolved out of the basic material in the Jaina canon. Despite the acknowledged contribution of Jainism to major areas of Indian culture, such as art, literature, doxography, philosophy, Jaina studies have been largely neglected in comparison with the studies done in Hinduism and Buddhism. What has been attempted above is a general survey of some aspects of Jaina dharma in order to show that a much more detailed study and research is necessary in the field. The points dealt with in this paper need to be better documented in the light of available, original sources of matters concerning the Jaina dharma as the law of beings and things.

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