

Economic Vision of Lord Mahavira: Building Blocks of Relative Economics

Himanshu Chaplot

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Computer Applications

Pacific University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

In the world of science and technology, our lives have been greatly influenced by scientific knowledge, which has not only destroyed many superstitions, religious dogmas but also uprooted the moral, religious and cultural values of our society. With the growth of scientific knowledge and outlook, the traditional religious values and belief have been thrown away, which has led to a life full of emotional disorders, mental tensions, pessimism and violence. Lord Mahavira gave principles like Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha which cope with such situations and led us to live a peaceful and religious life. The vision of Jain ethics is directed towards the liberation of an individual. Non-violence is the foundation of Jain ethics. Jain egalitarianism rejects the Hindu division of society in higher and lower cast. Social service is a prominent aspect of Jain ethics.

Keywords: Passion, Non-Violence, Humanity, Social Equality and Anekantvada

Introduction : The Economic Vision

Science and technology are creating an adverse effect on society. With the growing impact of Science and technology, the means of communication, the way of our work, house, clothes and everything has changed. Science has generated many changes in our moral values and welfare. The major difficulty that affects the prosperity and happiness of people is the inconsistency in between the concept and practices of communism and capitalism. Though these two words are totally different from each other, they have following things in common which results in mass exploitation:-

1. Greedy appetite for consumption.
2. Dishonor of moral principles.

The only way to cope with this situation is the introduction of moral

values into global economics which can bring peace, prosperity, non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity, non-attachment etc. Lord Mahavira, who was the 24th and the last "tirthankara" of Jainism, who at the age of 30 left his home and practiced meditation for twelve and a half years taught his philosophy which is based on Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. These 5 qualities teach an individual to achieve social peace, security and to grate on enlightened society. Jains hold these principles at the center of their lives. These principles can only be implemented with the acceptance of philosophy of "Anekantvad" (Non-Absolutism) and the theory of "Syadavd" (Relativity).

Humanity

Humanity means having the quality of being human; the special characteristics of man, by which a man is differentiated from other beings. In an individual, humanity can be defined as doing well for people without expecting anything back in return to the favour they did for someone. Humanity means caring, helping others (people, animals etc.) whenever and wherever possible without any expectation or selfishness. The best example of extra ordinary Humanity in humans is Mother Teresa. An individual's life is successful not by the scientific knowledge he or she gains but by the degree of humanitarian activities he does on a day to day basis. Serving the poor and the disabled is one of the greatest humanitarian helps an individual can provide in his or her lifetime. According to Lord Mahavira, as soon as one understand the importance of humanity, the purpose for which one is on Earth is automatically fulfilled.

Supremacy of Human Life

Supremacy, also known as Anthropocentrism creates a problem as all humans are not considered to be same. When a group of people come to be viewed less human than another group of people, then the former is viewed as of lower level than the latter, which results in slavery, violence etc. Lord Mahavira gave the idea of Supremacy of Human Life, which means humans are considered to be the most superior to others (animals, birds etc.) and therefore they can achieve utmost. by having Humanity in their life and thus lead a successful and happy life. He further explained that every soul is independent of the other and all souls are same. No soul is inferior or superior to one another. According to him the soul moves from one body to another, no one accompanies it. The greatest mistake of human soul is non-recognition of his real self and that is why when a human being wins over his enemies, he considers himself the winner. But the real winner is that person who wins over himself.

Positive Attitude

Lord Mahavira stressed the importance of positive thinking in human life. By God's grace our mind enables us to distinguish between right and wrong things. For every situation, our mind lets us think two different kind of thinking- one is positive thinking and the other is negative thinking. A positive thinker always keeps a positive attitude. By positive thinking, we can make everything possible, but if we think negative then the easiest of things can become impossible. Positive thinking brings ambitions, happiness, and comfort in our life and also increases our energy level. A negative thinker thinks everything to be impossible but a positive thinker takes this word "impossible" as "I Am

Possible". Positive thinking is nothing but bringing the brighter side of things in our mind and thus resulting in joy, success and favourable results. In positive thinking, internal feelings are reflected in a person's outer appearance to be happy and smiling. In negative thinking, a person's outer appearance seems to be sad, weak and reflects his pessimistic view of nature and life. Positive thinking improves our mood, removes and cures diseases (as it is said that a smile keeps doctor away), reduces tension and thus increases life span. Positive thinkers are always successful in life for every easy as well as difficult things. Subodh Gupta, an author has even said that "A positive attitude may not solve all our problems but that is the only option we have if we want to get out of problems."

Passion and Compassion

Passion which causes cycle of births and deaths can be termed as natural physical need of living beings. Lord Mahavira has said that those who have compassion for passion can lead a peaceful life from birth and finally achieve Moksha-a state of never ending happiness. Passion displays characteristics of living beings such as their likes, dislikes, ego, anger, happiness, sadness, greed etc. Mainly passion is characterized into four- anger, ego, greed and fraud. All these may arise due to observation, preparation and commencement. It can be sensed through touch, taste, smell, see, hear etc. Passion relates to violence, falsehood, stealing etc. Causes of passion are attachment, friendship, hatred etc.

Lord Mahavira taught how to overcome passion, the term which subdues passion is compassion. Compassion is one of the teachings of Lord Mahavira and can be termed as tolerance, forgiveness, kindness, concern, non-

violence etc. Compassion means passions are not the aim in themselves and it is better to ignore and control passion and adopt the path of Moksha. Compassion provides an inspiring vision of life with truth, brotherhood, peace everywhere and no hatred. In the third International Conference held by International Centre for Economics of Non-violence & Sustainability [I C E N S], Acharya Shri Mahashraman Ji had said "Lot of economic problems can be solved if two main human values of Honesty & Compassion are inculcated in our unconscious mind."

There are number of ways to control passion temporarily, two of which are as follows:-

1. If a person has hurt another person, the former should not take law into his hands and take revenge. The later will be punished for his misdeeds in this life or the next life.
2. If one has hurt the feelings of other, than the former should forget about it thinking that the later could have done greater harm.

Relative Economics: Vision and Scope

Relative Economics is based on the concept of economically unbiased development along with the changing world, changing education and growing technology without changing the basic need and moral values. Lord Mahavira's two principles - "Aparigraha" and "Ahimsa" developed the principle of Relative Economics. In the 21st century and economic order of progress, peaceful society is needed. Relative economics would fulfill the basic needs of human beings which will avoid violence, tensions etc.

Modern Economics has developed the country and lives of human beings scientifically but on the other hand it has led to poverty, hunger and

social inequality further resulting in terrorism. Acharya Shri Mahapragya has attempted for a revolutionary concept in economics in the form of non-violence for empowerment and social transformation. He also put his efforts on developing "Relative Economics" to have a society which is free from exploitation and inequality.

Acharya Shri Mahapragya Ji has also said *"If economics merely continues to remain the economics of utility, it will not be possible to remove social disparities."*

Non-Violence and Sustainability

Lord Mahavira gave the message of Non-Violence in his teachings. Non-Violence was one of the five principles given by him. By non-violence, we mean that we should not cause harm to any living beings. Prof. Ved Prakash of IILM, Jaipur has said "If people could be trained in violence, there is no reason why they can't be trained in non-violence." To remove violence, each and every individual must be educated and must know the importance of human lives. Various ways to remove violence are:

- a) Forming attachment with people.
- b) Developing a conscience by making people aware of violence, providing secure life to children and not being violent towards children.
- c) Showing and developing empathy.
- d) Giving kids attention.
- e) Building self-esteem by praising people.
- f) Avoiding corporal punishment.
- g) Learning and teaching calming techniques.

Sustainability can be defined as the practice of maintaining processes of productivity. Sustainable Development means development

that does not affect the future generation's ability and meet the present generation's needs. It is a process that visualizes a desirable future state for human societies in which living conditions and resource-use continue to meet human needs without undermining the "integrity, stability and beauty" of natural biotic systems.

Jain Ethics and Morality

The Jain religion derives its name from the jinas ("conquerors"), a title given to twenty-four great teachers (tirthankaras or "ford-makers"), through whom their faith was revealed. Mahavira, the last of the tirthankaras, is considered the founder of Jainism. Jainism is one of the oldest living religions of India. Jain ethics are simple and considered to be the most glorious part of Jainism. In Jainism, there is no contrast between obligation to himself and to society. Here the benefit of society is the benefit of the person. As per Jainism the spirit must be developed to the best of its present limit, and one intends to this advancement is the obligation of helping others. The tenets of Jainism have been isolated into:

- (i) Sadhu or Sadhvi
- (ii) Shravak or Shravika

The adherents of Jain religion have been customarily isolated into four gatherings: Sadhus or munis i.e., male self-denial; Sadhvis or aryikas i.e., female monkish life; Sravakas, i.e., male people or male householders, and Sravikas, i.e., female common people or female householders. The fundamental five pledges of the Jains are as per the following:

- (i) Ahinsa, abstention from savagery or damage to living creatures,
- (ii) Satya, abstention from false discourse,

- (iii) Asteya, abstention from burglary,
- (iv) Brahmacharya, abstention from sexuality or unchastity, and
- (v) Aparigraha, abstention from avarice for common belonging.

Lord Mahavira said that, *"A living body is not merely an integration of limbs and flesh but it is the abode of the soul which potentially has infinite perception (Anantdarshana), infinite knowledge (Anantjnāna), infinite power (Anantvirya), and infinite bliss (Anantsukha). Mahavir's message reflects freedom and spiritual joy of the living being."* Lord Mahavira and Jain Ethics gave lessons for Social Equality and Anekantveda.

Social Equality

Lord Mahavira gave importance to all-living beings, irrespective of their size, shape, form, and how spiritually developed or undeveloped. He said that all are equal and we should love and respect them. In this way, he preached universal love. Lord Mahavira taught that reality is timeless that has no beginning or end. From realistic point of view, according to Lord Mahavira, Religion consists of four parts:

- 1) Equality to all living beings
- 2) Every soul is independent
- 3) No one should rule over the other
- 4) All situations should be faced without like or dislike.

According to Lord Mahavira, if one adopts any of the four philosophies, the other three will be automatically adopted by him.

Anekantaveda

Anekantveda means No-one-sidedness. Truth is knowledge of reality. According to Jain

philosophy, truth is a vast and wondrous complexity. Reality is extremely difficult to fully grasp because of its four aspects:

- 1) extension over time
- 2) extension across space
- 3) changing forms and fixed qualities that characterize the different substances, and
- 4) substances and forms are constantly undergoing new beginnings (origination) and endings (destruction) while still remaining permanent, all at the same time.

We would see the starting points and predeterminations of every soul and substance, including our own particular selves. People who have accomplished the roots and fates of each spirit and substance in Jainism are alluded to as Jinas or Kevalins. "Supreme truth" can't be gotten a handle on from any one perspective, without anyone else, on the grounds that any perspective is subject to the time, place, nature and condition of both the watcher and whatever is being seen. This mentality starts an art of intuition called Anekantavada, which is the rule of "non-one-sidedness". Anekantavada is scholarly lowliness that engages the brain. It is a basic piece of being peaceful in our psyches and our discourse. It demonstrates to us why we shouldn't marry ourselves to inflexible suppositions that distinction us from reality or smother the quest for more full understanding. It additionally shows why we ought not fall down to vague or agnostic positions with next to zero feeling of good and bad. Non-one-sidedness urges us to analyze and be incredulous of all convictions and conflicts from a wide range of edges, helping us perceive the estimation of others' sentiments and viewpoints and also the impediments of our own.

Conclusions

Jain religion is still existing as a great pillar in the modern world because many people today are very conscious of what they wear and how they look. Today, many individuals fear "breaking the picture" implying that they are extremely worried about how others will consider them. Jainism shows you to acknowledge who you truly are. On the planet today there are such huge numbers of chances for us to take after these Jain standards, however yet we don't. We should accept these open doors and not miss them and utilize them to help fabricate a solid character. These standards not just offer internal peace and can prompt Moksha. But it can also remove violence and terrorism. Jainism can bring truth and equality throughout the world. If Relative Economics is used in our day to day life, then we will get a Developed country as well as peace everywhere.

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