

CHAPTER-2

Self : The views of *Cārvāka*, *Bauddha* and *Jaina*

In the previous chapter a general discussion of the self has been stated. It might be mentioned here that except *Cārvāka*, all the schools of Indian philosophy accept the concept of self. In this chapter the present scholar tries to discuss the views regarding self (*ātman*) cherished by *Cārvāka*, *Bauddha* and *Jaina*.

The Self in *Cārvāka* Philosophy

Cārvāka, after whose name this school is so called, represents the materialistic tradition in Indian Philosophy. Scholars doubt that *Cārvāka* (the founder) actually existed, but they do not generally doubt the existence of *Cārvāka* philosophy. It is a system of Indian Philosophy that assumed various forms of philosophical skepticism and religious indifference. As a system it must have come into existence in the post-*Upaniṣadic* and pre-Buddhistic period (about 600 BC). The meaning of the word '*Cārvāka*' is shrouded in mystery. According to some scholars, it was the name of the founder of the materialist school and his followers were called *Cārvākas* or materialist. According to some others, it signifies a person who believes in 'eat, drink and be merry'.

The root '*carv*' means to eat and hence a person is called a *Cārvāka* who eats up all moral and ethical considerations (*Carvante puṇyapādikam vastujātam*).

According to still another, it is a combination of ‘*Cāru*’ (sweet) and ‘*vāk*’ (speech) and so it means the sweet-tongued, because the *Cārvākas* teach that pleasure is the ultimate aim of life. Another synonym of the word is *Lokāyata* which means a commoner and therefore, by implication, a man of low and unrefined taste.

In the allegorical play of *Prabodhachandrodaya* (second act) *Kṛṣṇapati Miśra* sums up the teachings of materialism thus: “*Lokāyata* is the only *Śāstra*; perception is the only authority; earth, water, fire and air are the only elements; enjoyment is the only end of human existence; mind is only a product of matter. There is no other world: death means liberation.”¹

The *Cārvāka* School maintains that perception is the only source of valid knowledge and therefore, it is called positivist. The *Cārvākas* argue that the self is nothing but the body as characterised by consciousness. The *Cārvāka*’s denial of a substantial self is based on the epistemological position that perception is the only valid source of knowledge. *Cārvāka* denies the validity of inference and other sources of knowledge (*darśanas*) usually accepted in classical Indian philosophy and this thought resembles that of British empiricist and skeptic David Hume, as well as of logical positivists. The validity of inferential knowledge was challenged on the ground that all inference requires a universal major premise (‘All that possesses smoke possesses fire’) whereas there is no means of arriving at a certainty about such a proposition. No amount of finite

observations could possibly yield the required universal premise. The supposed 'invariable connection' may be vitiated by some unknown 'condition', and there is no means of knowing that such a vitiating factor does not exist. Since, according to the *Cārvākas*, inference is not a means of valid knowledge, all such supersensible objects as 'afterlife', 'destiny' or 'soul' do not exist. In their view, it is because of our wrong ways of thinking that we presume the existence of other worlds like heaven, hell etc. and of supernatural beings or deities behind the natural phenomena. In reality, these are all non-existent, as they are not perceived by us.

The authority of the scriptures is also denied in *Cārvāka* philosophy. First, knowledge based on verbal testimony is inferential and therefore vitiated by all the defects of inference. The *Cārvākas* regard the scriptures as characterised by the three faults: falsity, self contradiction and tautology. On the basis of such a theory of knowledge, the *Cārvākas* defended a complete reductive materialism according to which the four elements, i.e. earth, water, fire and air are the only original components of being. All other Indian philosophers trace the origin of the universe to five elements (*pañcabhūta*) — earth, water, fire, air and ether (*ākāśa*). But the *Cārvākas* reject ether, as it is known not through perception but through inference. So, the *Cārvāka* regards the world as composed of four gross perceptible elements. The whole universe, animate as well as inanimate is composed, according to them, of the four elements. Not only non-living material

objects but also living organisms, like plants and animal bodies are composed of these four elements, by the combination of which they are produced and to which they are reduced in death.

The *Cārvākas* speak of mind (*manas*) which according to the *Mīmāṃsā* is different from the *ātman*. But the *Cārvāka* seems to think of mind as the consciousness in its knowing function which of course is not separate from the body. The body along with its consciousness is the *ātman* and consciousness in its experiencing function is the mind. Mind knows the external world through the senses.

In consonance with their general outlook to reality the *Cārvākas* say that there is no such thing as the *ātman*. We cannot perceive the *ātman*, and its existence cannot be proved with the help of inference, because inference is not a valid source of knowledge. Of course, the *Cārvākas* accept the existence of consciousness, as it is directly experienced by all. But, in their view, this consciousness is not due to some unperceived non-material entity called *ātman* or self, but a by-product of matter. It is not an inherent quality of particles of matter, but when the latter come to be arranged in a specific form, they are found to show signs of life. Thus consciousness is inseparable from life; it is always found associated with the body and is destroyed with the body's disintegration.

The *Cārvākas* quote the *Vedic* text for this:

“Springing forth from these elements itself
 solid knowledge is destroyed
 when they are destroyed—
 after death no intelligence remains.”²

Therefore, the soul is only the body distinguished by the attribute of intelligence, since there is no evidence for any self distinct from the body. Consciousness or intelligence is the result of an emergent and dialectical evolution. It is an epiphenomenon, a by-product of matter. The *Cārvāka* would say: “Matter secretes mind as liver secretes bile.”³ The soul is therefore nothing other than the conscious living body (*caitanya-viśiṣṭa deha eva ātmā*). The soul is the body characterised by the attributes signified in the expressions, ‘I am stout’, ‘I am youthful’, ‘I am grown up’, ‘I am old’ etc. If the ‘I’, ‘the self’ were different from the body, these would be meaningless.

The body is said to be the substratum of the self. The qualities of the self which is contained in the body cannot be identical with those of the body, which is the substratum. Cognitions, feelings and volitions are said to be the qualities of the self, but they are erroneously identified with those of the body. According to *Cārvāka*, this is wrong. Curds are contained in a bowl. But the coldness of curds is never regarded as the quality of the bowl. So, the body can never be the substratum of the self, rather, it is identical with the self. Cognition is regarded as the quality of the body, because it is perceived as identical with the body like

its complexion. 'I see'. It implies that the body has visual sensation. Pleasure and pain are attributes of the body, because they produce changes in it. If they were attributes of the soul, they could not have produced changes in the body. The body perceives the actions to attain an object of desire and avoid an object of aversion. These are expressions of desire and aversion that arise from cognitions of their objects. So, cognition has to belong to the body.

Consciousness is generated by the modification of the unconscious material elements of the body, just as the combination of betel, areca nut and lime produces the red colour. *Cārvākas* hold that consciousness is produced by the proportionate combination of material elements constituting the body though the ingredients separately do not possess it, just as the intoxicating quality of wine is produced by the fermentation of molasses though the ingredients separately do not possess the intoxicating quality. But some other schools argued that consciousness is always produced by the communication of the sense-organs with their objects in the form of sensations of colour, smell, taste and the like. Now the question is— how can it be said that consciousness is produced by the material elements? The *Cārvākas* reply that the sense-organs and objects are mere aggregates of earth, water, fire and air, which are objects of direct perception. An aggregate is a mere collection of the constituent elements. It has no existence apart from that of the elements. When there is invariable concomitance between two things, they are causally connected with each other;

one being the material cause of the other, which is its effect. Lamp and light are always found together. Therefore lamp is the material cause of light. There is invariable concomitance between a body and consciousness. So, the body is the material cause of consciousness.

There are two types of the *Cārvākas*, viz., the *Dhūrta* (cunning) *Cārvākas* and *Suśikṣita* (educated) *Cārvākas*. The former consider the conscious body to be the soul. There is no soul distinct from the body, whose consciousness may exist in it and which may go to heaven or attain liberation. Consciousness in its various forms exists when the body exists and it does not exist, when the body does not exist. For example— heat and light exist, when fire exists. They do not exist when the fire does not exist. So heat and light are the properties of fire. The soul's identity with the body is proved by such common experiences as 'I am fat', 'I am lean', 'I am fair', 'I am black', 'I am going' etc. Fatness, leanness, fairness, blackness, movement etc. are qualities of the body. Therefore the soul is identical with the body endued with consciousness. This is the view of the *Dhūrta Cārvāka*.

But according to the *Suśikṣita* (educated) *Cārvāka*, there is a soul apart from the body, which is the permanent knower, recollector and enjoyer of all experiences, but that it is destroyed along with the body. It does not survive the death of the body and transmigrate into some other body. It is foolish to think that past actions become a kind of unseen force (*adr̥ṣṭa*) and determine one's future

births. In fact, according to the *Cārvāka* way of life, there is no rebirth. Humans have only one birth and that is the present one. If there is rebirth, one ought to remember it. No one remembers his previous births as he remembers his experiences of childhood. So the soul persists till the destruction of the body. Thus, some of the *Cārvākas* are *Dehātmavādin*, i.e. those who identify body and soul. Others are *Indriyātmavādin*, because they consider the senses to be the soul. There are others who regard the soul as nothing but the vital principle (*prāṇa*) and are therefore termed as *Prāṇavādin*. There are still others among the *Cārvākas* who see no difference between mind and soul and are known as *Ātmāmanovādin*. *Sadānanda* has described these four categories of *Cārvākas* in his '*Vedāntasāra*'. But all of them unanimously hold that the soul does not survive the body.

According to the *Cārvākas*, good deed is not much necessary to perform in one's lifetime, as is instructed by the crafty priests. The basic thought of the *Cārvākas* is to obtain worldly pleasure by making merry, as there is no hell where one can be hurled. Pleasure and pain are the central facts of life. Virtue and vice are not absolute but mere social conventions. *Cārvākas* rejected the practice of worldly renunciation and penance (as observed by the followers of the *Vedas* and by the Buddhists). Rather, they advocated a tempered amount of bodily sense enjoyment.

The *Cārvākas* rejected ‘*dharma*’ (virtue) and ‘*mokṣa*’ (spiritual freedom) of the four ‘*puruṣārthas*’. They regard only *artha* (wealth) and *kāma* (pleasure) as the rational ends of man. Of these too, wealth is not the ultimate end; it is good only as a means to pleasure. Pleasure, then, is the ‘*summum bonum*’. The wise man should squeeze the maximum pleasure out of life. He should not let go a present pleasure in the hope of a future gain. “A pigeon today is better than a peacock tomorrow, better to have a sure copper coin today than a doubtful gold coin in the future.”⁴ These are the maxims which the *Cārvākas* give.

The *Cārvākas* believed there is nothing wrong with sensual indulgence, and that it is the only enjoyment to be pursued. That the pleasure arising to man from contact with sensible objects, is to be relinquished because as it is accompanied by pain— such is the reasoning of fools.

Their idea of good living was symbolised by the consumption of clarified butter (*ghee*), a food regarded by ancient Indians as life-strengthening and as a symbol of wealth. *Cārvāka* ethics urged each individual to seek his or her pleasure here and now. The *Cārvāka* advocates, “While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in debt; when once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?”⁵ These words, so full of love for humanity and life, are strikingly reminiscent of the life-enhancing philosophy of Epicurus. There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world. Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders, etc. produce any real effect. What is meant by

heaven is the pleasure one has in eating, drinking, making merry and singing. And hell is the pain one experiences in this world itself. There is no point in trying to obtain salvation and a life of eternal quietude; there is an end to life at death and all will be quieten then. The differences between castes and their distinctive duties are falsely laid down by interested persons. There are no objective ethical laws, so one can do what one likes, provided he is careful that his actions do not bring pain as a consequence.

The existence of God also is a myth. God cannot be perceived. The world is made by the automatic combination of the material elements and not by God. According to the *Cārvāka*, if there is a benevolent God supervising humanity, then why is it that a majority of the human population is in the throes of misery and suffering? If there is just a God above us, then why is there so much injustice on the earth against the poor and deprived sections of society? The minor gods also do not exist. They and the *Vedas* belong to the imagination of crafty priests, who invented them to make a living out of them by officiating at sacrifices, and to owe people into obedience by saying that God would punish them, if they did not follow the *Vedas*. There is no heaven, no hell, no God and there are no objective ethical laws. The only laws binding on man are the laws of the state, obedience to which brings rewards and disobedience of which brings punishment. And the science (*śāstra*) of the laws of state is the only science worth studying.

Most philosophers hold liberation (*mokṣa*) to be the highest goal or *summum bonum* of human life. Liberation is conceived as to complete freedom from all sorrows and sufferings. Some think that it can be attained only after death, when the soul is free from the body; and others believe that it can be attained even in this life. But the *Cārvāka* holds that none of these views stands to reason. According to *Cārvākas*, if liberation is freedom of the soul from its bondage to physical existence, it is absurd because there is no soul. The expression ‘freedom of the soul from the shackles of the body’ conveys no sense. Liberation can neither mean a condition here in this life, from which all sorrows and affliction have been negated, since this condition is impossible and unreal. Human life is a mixture of pleasure and pain. What we should do is to avoid pain as far as possible which inevitably accompanies pleasure. Complete freedom from all kinds of pain and sufferings can only mean death. Death is certainly not desired by anybody.

Due to his promotion of hedonistic living and his rejection of soul and social values, *Cārvāka* and his followers found themselves at odds with other Indian philosophies and eventually *Cārvāka* philosophy died a natural death.

Self in Buddhism

The teaching of *anāttā* or no-self is one of the most fundamental aspects of Buddhism and perhaps it is the most important feature which makes Buddhism

quite unique. In Buddhism, *anāttā* (*pāli*) refers to the notion of ‘no-self’. “*Chandrakīrti* declares *ātman* to be the cause of all sufferings and demerits and says that a *Yogī* should deny its ultimate reality. *Śāntideva* says that just as when one goes on taking off the layers of a plantain trunk or an onion nothing will remain, similarly if one goes on examining the self, ultimately it will be found to be nothing. *Dharmakīrti* regards the self as the root-cause of attachment and misery. As long as one is attached to the *ātman*, so long will one revolve in the cycle of birth-and-death.”⁶ It might be pointed out in this context that this Buddhist view regarding self has a close similarity with the traditional Hindu philosophy. The Hindu thinkers also say that the non-distinction between the body and the self is the root-cause of all the sufferings and misery. They emphasise that to get rid of worldly miseries one must realise the true nature of self which is called *ātmajñāna*. They however, do not deny the reality of self. According to them, if one comes to the realisation that self is something eternal and different from the corporeal body then he becomes liberated from the cycle of birth and death. And this is the point in which Buddhism differs from the Hinduism.

Quite in harmony with the law of impermanence or momentariness, the Buddhists hold that there is nothing in the individual which can be regarded as permanent or fixed entity. In the view of the Buddhists, all the elements of the world are impermanent or momentary and are guided by the law of causation.

The chain of causation in the life-process of an individual consists of twelve links or *dvādaśa nidānas* of which each preceding link determines the succeeding one. These twelve links are i. *avidyā* or ignorance ii. *saṃskāra* or the aggregate of the dispositions of the earlier life, iii. *viññāna* or consciousness, iv. *nāma-rūpa* or mental (*nāma*) and physical (*rūpa*) conditions, v. *ṣaḍ-āyatana* or six sense-organs, vi. *spārśa* or contact between the senses and the objects, vii. *vedanā* or sensation, viii. *trṣṇā* or desire, ix. *upādāna* or attachment, x. *bhāva* or existence or becoming, xi. *jāti* or birth and xii. *jarā-marāṇa* or old age and death. The law of change is universal. Neither man nor any other being animate or inanimate can exempt from it. According to the teachings of Buddha, life is comparable to a river. It is a progressive moment, a successive series of different moments, joining together to give the impression of one continuous flow. It moves from cause to cause, effect to effect, one point to another, one state of existence to another, giving an outward impression that it is one continuous and unified movement, whereas in reality it is not. The river of yesterday is not the same as the river of today. The river of this moment is not going to be the same as the river of the next moment. So does life. It changes continuously, becomes something or the other from moment to moment.

Religiously Buddhism is divided into two important sects— *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*. Like Jainism, *Hīnayāna* is a religion without God, *karma* taking the place of God. *Hīnayāna* denied the existence of self. *Nāgasena* tells *Milinda* that

the so-called self is nothing apart from the fleeting ideas. This reminds us the Western philosopher David Hume who mentions: "I never can catch 'myself'. Whenever I try, I stumble on this or that perception."⁷ *Hīnayāna* emphasises liberation for and by the individual himself. Its goal is *arhathood* or the state of the ideal saint who obtains personal salvation or *nibbāṇa*, which is regarded as the extinction of all misery. In *Mahāyāna*, its ideal saint is *bodhisattva* who defers his own salvation in order to work for the salvation of others. Buddha is here transformed into God and worshiped as such. The *Bodhisattva* is he who attains perfect wisdom, ever dwells in it, and inspired by the love of all beings, ceaselessly works for their salvation, which is to be obtained here in this world. He is guided by the spirit of Buddha who said: 'Let all the sins and miseries of the world fall upon my shoulders, so that all the beings may be liberated from them.' The denial of God is replaced with Buddha's divinity. Thus we find that *Mahāyānīst* believes the existence of the spirit or soul of Buddha. Again, the *Mahāyāna-sūtras*, the *Śūnyavādins*, the *Vijñānavādins*, and the *Svatantra-Vijñānavādins* all take the word '*ātman*' in the sense of the notion of the 'I' and the vain-glory of the 'mine' and condemn it to be ultimately unreal. *Mahāyāna* also says that *Hīnayāna* philosophy is either due to the adjustment in the teaching by Buddha to suit the needs of the less qualified disciples (*upāyakaūśalya*) or due to their lack of understanding the real significance of the teachings of the master.

It is commonly believed by the Hindu systems of philosophy that in man there is a permanent reality called the soul which persists through changes that overcome the body, exists before birth and after death, and migrates from one body to another. In consistency with his theory of dependent origination Buddha denies the existence of an abiding substance called soul or self. Buddha said, all that can be spoken of as self is nothing but the changing streams of mental phenomena like thoughts, feelings, desires etc., which arise at one moment and vanishes at the next and this process continues perpetually. No mental idea lasts for more than one instant. Our mental phenomena, like a stream, are a continuous flux. The self is nothing but the series of successive mental and bodily processes which are impermanent. There is no permanent self behind this stream. The self is a stream of cognitions (*vijñānasantāna*).

But a question may arise in our mind that if there is no permanent self in man, how it is possible to explain the continuity of a person through the different states of childhood, youth and old age? To this objection Buddha says that though there is no permanent self in man there is a continuity of the stream of successive states that compose one's life. Identity of objects is only another name for continuity of becoming. It is the succession that gives the appearance of an unbroken identity. The seed becomes the tree through different stages. Though the substance of our body as well as the constitution of our soul changes from moment to moment, still we say it is the same old thing or same old man.

Just as a glowing stick whirled round produces the appearance of a complete circle, similarly due to the rapid succession of mental states, we are deceived and believe that there is a permanent soul. "Rapidity of succession gives rise to the illusion of unity or identity or permanence."⁸ Just as a chariot wheel in rolling rolls only at one point of the tyre, and in resting rests only at one point; in exactly the same way the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As soon as that thought has ceased the living being is said to have ceased. The wheel of the cosmic order goes on without maker, without beginning.

According to Buddhism, the continuity of the life-series is based on a causal connection running through the different states. There is the cause and effect relation between antecedent and consequent states of life. Life is a continuous and systematic process through different states. In this process every stage depends on the stage preceding it, and subsequent stage is the result of the present stage. Hence life is homogeneous. This continuity is explained by Buddha with the example of a lamp burning throughout the night. Like the flame of a lamp, life is changing every moment. The flame of each moment depends on its own conditions and is different from the flame of other moment which is dependent on different set of conditions. During all these different moments different parts of the wick and oil have been burning. Yet the unbroken

succession of the different flames deludes us into believing that there exists the same flame. It is due to their continuity.

The conception of the soul-substance is thus replaced in Buddhism by that of an unbroken series of states of consciousness. As the present state of consciousness derives its characters from the previous one, the past in a way continues in the present through its effect. On these lines memory is explicable even without the assumption of a soul- substance. Such a theory of self is as it has been mentioned above, closely resembles Hume's theory of mental life as a series of sensations and perceptions which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity and are in a perpetual flux and movement.

Buddha declared that decay is inherent in all component things. The self is transitory; they grow and decay. Only *karma*, the effect, good or bad of our deeds is continued. Buddha believed in the law of *karma* (action) and rebirth. The chain of causation in the life of an individual is guided by the law of *karma* which, on its part, is a manifestation of the cosmic principle *dharma*. *Karma* refers to the law of cause and effect in a person's life; reaping what one has sown. Buddhists believe that every person must go through a process of birth and rebirth until he reaches the state of *nirvāṇa* in which he breaks this cycle. According to the law of *karma*, "you are what you are and do what you do, as a result of what you were and did in a previous incarnation, which in turn was the inevitable outcome of what you were and did in still earlier incarnations."⁹ For a

Buddhist, what one will be in the next life depends on one's actions in this present life.

Like Hinduism, Buddhism also believes that man after the death of his present body, has to assume another body in accordance with his deeds in the present life. But only the doers of attached actions have to reborn by assuming another body. Those who perform actions without attachment do not have to take rebirth. They attain *nirvāṇa*, a state of being which is purely spiritual and which is free from all sorts of sufferings of the physical life. According to Buddha, whatever actions one performs with a sense of attachment generate forces (*samskāras*) which cause rebirth. But actions performed without attachment are like fried seeds which do not generate any plant. Consequently there is no question of rebirth. Thus, we see that the Buddhist eschatology is very simple, straightforward and unambiguous. There is no mention of heaven and hell here. There is no deity here who will judge the good and bad actions of man so as to either reward him or punish him accordingly.

But Buddhism has to face queries by saying all these. Like, in the absence of some eternal and permanent soul, who would enjoy the rewards of *karmas*? When 'I' is not there, who will reborn or who gets *nirvāṇa*? Who is called the '*karmadāyāda*', the kith of *karmas*? In reply to all these questions, the Buddhists hold that it is the continuity of *karmas* what becomes manifest in succeeding lives. There is, of course, not a permanent soul-substance, and there is only a

series of the changing moments of consciousness. But the series is unbroken in which every subsequent moment is caused and conditioned by the antecedent one. The series has thus got an unbroken continuity. It is like a flame that burns throughout the night, or like a river current which has not the same water at any next moment, but still in the ever passing current of water, there is an unbroken continuity. Just as any river is neither strictly the same river at the next moment nor a totally different river, similarly a person who dies and is again reborn is neither strictly the same person nor totally a different person (*Na cha so na cha anno*). Change is there, but the continuity is there too. The last thought moment of the present life gives birth to the first thought moment of the next life and the continuity goes on. Just, as a burning flame may light up another flame before blowing out, similarly the last conscious moment of the present life brings birth to the next life and blows out. In this sense, the next life is nothing but a continuity of the same series and hence rebirth is possible even without a permanent soul. Thus Buddha does not believe in rebirth in the sense that a soul enters in a different body after leaving one body, but rebirth means that another birth follows every birth, or another birth is caused due to one birth. In the same way, the rationality of *nirvāṇa* also may be explained. The question of self-identity is automatically solved by realising that although the self is a stream of changing moments of consciousness, still in this stream the antecedent moment

of consciousness conditions and gives rise to the next moment of consciousness and the process goes on in the fashion of an unbroken continuity.

After death the predispositions of the *jīva* remain. These predispositions are according to his *karmas* and it is due to these that a link between one birth and another is maintained. The predisposition is expressed in the last thought of a dying person. Along with this power of *karma*, attachment or clinging (*upādāna*) is also required. This clinging is the power which is the cause of the new birth according to old *karmas*. Without it the *karmas* themselves have no power. After the attainment of liberation, the attachment or clinging is annihilated, resulting in the negation of rebirth. There is no similarity between the past and the present individual except that the new is according to the *karmas* of the old. Sometimes even consciousness has been admitted as remaining after death. Whatever we are or whatever we think is the result of it. Consciousness has been rightly conceived as the essence of our soul. In fact, this proves the close relation between consciousness, action, thought and will. After the attainment of *nirvāṇa*, one is liberated both from consciousness and from actions.

The term *nirvāṇa* means literally, 'blowing out', just as candlelight is blown out. *Theravādi* Buddhist tends towards such an interpretation and distinguishes between *nirvāṇa* and *parinirvāṇa*. The notion of *nirvāṇa* reminds us of the notion of *jīvanmukti*, whereas, the notion of *parinirvāṇa* reminds us that of *videhamukti*. Buddha entered the former at the time of his enlightenment and at death passed

into *parinirvāṇa*, which means utter extinction, i.e. no longer participating in any desirable form of existence or, indeed in non-existence. *Nirvāṇa* has been held by some Buddhists to mean extinction of desire, and non-extinction of existence. Mind remains tranquil and unperturbed when the desires disappear forever. *Nirvāṇa* is a calm state where all desires have died out. Total extinction of existence cannot be ideal. Buddha spent forty-five years of his life in active preaching and doing good. This proves that *nirvāṇa* is not complete annihilation of being or existence. But Buddha's refusal to admit the reality of any permanent and eternal soul seems to contradict the view that *nirvāṇa* is not a state of complete annihilation of being. The upholders of the view that *nirvāṇa* is not a state of extinction of being come to the conclusion that Buddha never denied the reality of a permanent being, though he rejected the idea of the empirical soul.

The cycle of re-embodiment should not be confused with reincarnation or transmigration of the soul, for Buddhism does not believe in such phenomenon; it rather refers to the transference of *kārmic* accumulations or residues from the disintegrative moment of death to a new womb of conception. The *kārmic* accumulations therefore fix the potential seeds (*bīja*) of fructification in a future life. These seeds, which are accumulated by acts of the present and preserved from acts of the past, furnish the basis for the causation of expectant individual existence as based on the law of retribution, which keeps us entrenched in the eternal cycle of birth, death and re-embodiment. Thus the series of existence in

the form of past, present and future life revolves round these 'potential seeds' or causal factors, otherwise called *karma*.

As a matter of fact, Buddha has always asked his disciples not to indulge in useless discussions regarding self. If the soul is taken as eternal, one gets attached to it and suffers in the efforts to make it happy. According to Buddha, love of the invisible and unproved soul is as much ludicrous as the love of some insensible and imaginary beautiful woman. Attachment to this soul is like preparing a ladder to mount on a place which has not been seen by anyone.

Nāgasena, a Buddhist teacher, brings out the nature of the soul by means of the parallel of the chariot. Just as a chariot is nothing but an aggregate of wheels, axle and the body, similarly, the self is nothing but the name of the aggregates of the material body (*kāya*), the immaterial mind (*manas* or *citta*) and the formless consciousness (*vijñāna*). The soul or ego denotes nothing more than this collection. So long as the collection remains the soul of a man also remains, death is the name of its destruction.

Buddha taught that an individual is a combination of five aggregates of existence, also called the five *skandhas* or the five heaps. These are – *rūpa* or matter, *vedanā* or feeling, *saṃjñā* or perception, *saṃskāra* or disposition and *vijñāna* or consciousness. These are changing elements. The *rūpa* is the first *skandha*. It includes form, shape and colour of the human body. The second

skandha, *vedanā*, is made up of our feelings, emotional and physical and our senses— seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling. The third *skandha*, *samjñā*, takes in most of what we call thinking— conceptualisation, cognition and reasoning. This also includes the recognition that occurs when an organ comes into contact with an object. *Samjñā* or perception can be thought of as ‘that which identifies’. The object perceived may be a physical object or a mental one, such as an idea. The fourth *skandha*, *saṃskāra*, includes habits, prejudices and predispositions. Our vision or willfulness is also a part of the fourth *skandha*, as are attention, faith, consciousness, pride, desire, vindictiveness, and many mental states both virtuous and non-virtuous. The causes and effects of *karma* are specially important to the fourth *skandha*. The fifth *skandha*, *viññāna* or consciousness, is awareness of or sensitivity to an object, but without conceptualisation. Once there is awareness, the third *skandha* might recognise the object and assign a concept-value to it, and the fourth *skandha* might react with desire or revulsion or some other mental formation. The fifth *skandha* is explained in some schools as base that ties the experience of life together.

But the five aggregates, even when they are in combination cannot be identified as one's own self. Because, whether they are taken severally or in combination, do not behave in the way one wants them to behave. For one does not have control or power over them. Therefore, the five aggregates are not the self.

David Hume's 'bundle theory of the self' is in some ways similar to the Buddha's *skandha* analysis, though the *skandhas* are not an ontological exercise, but rather an explanation of clinging.

But when Buddha says that the five aggregates are not self (*anāttā*), this does not amount to the denial of the self. It only amounts to the fact that none of the five aggregates can be identified as our true self, because they are subject to impermanence. As man dies, this collection is scattered. The true self is besides the five aggregates and could be discovered only by transcending them. For this purpose, the process of self-identification which manifests itself as: this is mine (*etanmama*), this I am (*eṣoḥam asmi*) and this is my self (*eso me ātmā*) should be replaced by the opposite process: this is not mine (*nedam mama*), this I am not (*neṣoḥam asmi*) and this is not my self (*neso me ātmā*). It is through this process of self-negation, so runs the argument, that one transcends the five aggregates and discovers his true self.

The *Upaniṣads* have repeatedly used the word *ātman* as a synonym of reality. Buddha admitted this reality and termed it *bodhi* or *prajñā*. But instead of frankly identifying his *bodhi* with the *ātman*, Buddha degraded *ātman* to the label of the *jīva* and easily condemned it as unreal. The real self is untouched by their criticism. They have, in one sense or the other, implicitly or explicitly, always accepted its reality. It is called not generally as *ātman*, but as *bodhi*, *prajñā*, *citta*, *bodhi-citta*, *vijñāna* etc., *Aśvaghoṣa* calls it *ātman* also. The pure

self which is pure consciousness is always admitted by Buddhism to be the ultimate reality. The *tathatā* of *Aśvaghoṣa* is *ālayavijñāna* or absolute consciousness. The *Mahāyāna-sūtras* identify reality with consciousness and call it *prapañca-śūnya*, *atarkya*, *sarvavāgviṣayātīta*, *advaya*, *acintya*, *anākṣara*, *anabhilāpya*, *atyantaviśuddha* and *pratyātmavedya*. It is significant to note that though reality is not generally called *ātman*, it is sometimes described as *Brahman*. “Thus we find in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* that all things are such that they neither come in nor go out, they are neither pure nor impure, they are free from attachment and detachment, and they are undefiled, unattached and uncontaminated because they are of the very nature of *Brahman*. The *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka* says that one who truly follows the teaching of the Buddha ever dwells in the *Brahman*, the Absolute, the Pure, the Calm, the Blissful and the Undefiled. . . . *Asaṅga* also says that by becoming one with Pure Spirit, one realises the last, the fourth meditation, and then one ever dwells in the blissful *Brahman*. . . . *Āryadeva* says that the jewel of self is absolutely pure and self-luminous and appears to be impure only on account of ignorance just as a white crystal appears coloured on account of a coloured thing placed near it.”¹⁰

Buddha never said that ‘there is no self’; he simply describes the elements of individuality as not-self. “It is noteworthy on examination to find that in the great sermon at Benares on the characteristics of that which is not the self, the

doctrine extends emphatically to deny the permanence as existent of all empirical things; it does not, in point of fact, deny in express terms that there may exist another realm of existence which is exempt from empirical determination, and which therefore, might be regarded as absolutely real.”¹¹ In the *Brahmajālasūtra*, where various views regarding the *ātman* are mentioned, no question is raised regarding the existence of self, but the issue is whether the self is eternal or not. So, the problem with Buddha is not ‘whether there is any self’, but ‘wherein the self lies’. And, he approaches the problem negatively by describing ‘what is not the self’. Thus, Buddha describes the elements of individuality as not-self, because, they originate and perish and also they generate pain in us. According to Buddha, that which is transitory, evil and subject to vicissitude cannot be the eternal self. Thus, throughout his sermons, Buddha tries to show as to what cannot be regarded as the self. This does not necessarily mean the negation of the self itself.

“When thirty Brahmin-youths inquired about the whereabouts of a run-away woman, Buddha told them, ‘what is of greater importance, O youths, to search for a woman, or to search for your ‘I’?’ This ‘I’ or ‘self’ cannot be the conglomeration of the physical and psychical elements, because these elements being already there, none should be advised to search for them. Moreover, Buddha always describes the elements of individuality as not-self. So, the ‘I’ or ‘self’ spoken hereof must be something lying beyond the elements of the

individual.”¹² When Buddha was asked point blank by *Vacchagotta* the wanderer whether or not there is a self, Buddha was silent. When Buddha was asked by his disciple *Ānanda*, why he did not answer *Vacchagotta*'s question, Buddha stated that “if I had answered ‘the self is’, he would have confirmed the doctrine of the *Śramaṇas* and the *Brāhmins* who believe in the permanence of the self. If I had answered ‘the self is not’, then he would have confirmed the doctrine of those who believe in the annihilation of the self.”¹³

Thus, Buddha rejected both the theories of eternalism (*śāśvatavāda*) and annihilation (*ucchedavāda*). The former, he stated, would be incompatible with his thesis that all laws (*dharmas*; *pāli*— *dhammas*) are selfless (*sabbe dhammā anāttā*); the latter would be significant only if one had a soul that is no more in existence. Thus, by taking sides with the metaphysicians, Buddha describes how the consciousness ‘I am’ comes to constitute itself in the stream of consciousness out of the five aggregates of form, feeling, conception, disposition and consciousness. Though Buddha denied the ultimate reality of the empirical self, he asserted its empirical reality.

The doctrine of ‘no-self’ actually has two aspects: as applied to *pudgala*, or the individual person, and as applied to *dhammas*, or the element of being. In its former aspect, it asserts the fact that an individual is constituted out of five aggregates; in its latter aspects it means the utter insubstantiality of all elements. Intuitive realisation of the truth of the former leads to the disappearance of

passions and desires whereas realisation of that of the latter removes all misconceptions about the nature of things in general. The former removes the covering of the passion (*Kleśāvaraṇa*); the latter removes the concealment of things (*jñeyāvaraṇa*).

The self of Buddhism can be compared with the *jīvātman* of the *Vedānta*. “Buddhism generally means by *ātman* what *Vedānta* means by *jīvātman* or *buddhi* or *citta* or *antaḥkaraṇa*. And on the other hand, Buddhism generally means by *citta* or *vijñāna* or *vijñapti* or *bodhi* or *prajñā* what *Vedānta* means by *ātman* or *Brahman* or *samvit* or *cit*. Thus the *Vedāntic* *ātman* generally becomes the Buddhistic *citta*, and the *Vedāntic* *citta* generally becomes the Buddhistic *ātman*.”¹⁴ These are the basic differences between the *Bauddha* and *Vedānta* philosophy regarding the concept of *ātman* or self. Had Buddha refrained from committing an error of commission in degrading the *Upaniṣadic* *ātman* to the level of the empirical ego and also an error of omission in not identifying his *bodhi* or *prajñā* with the *Upaniṣadic* *ātman* or *Brahman*, the age-old battle regarding the *Nairātmyavāda* fought without any reasonable ground by the Buddhists and the *Vedāntins* on the soil of Indian Philosophy would have been surely avoided.

The Concept of Self in Jainism

Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism is one of India's ancient, indigenous religion and one of the systems that is considered as an atheistic in its nature. The word '*Jain*' derives from the '*Jina*'. '*Jina*' literally means conqueror. He who has conquered love and hate, pleasure and pain, attachment and aversion, and has thereby freed his soul from the *karmas* which obscures knowledge, perception, truth and ability, is a *Jina*. The *Jainas* refer to the *Jina* as God. They teach us to reduce vices like *rāga* (attachment), *dveṣa* (aversion), *krodha* (anger), *māna* (pride), *māyā* (delusion) and *lobha* (greed).

Within the Hindu religion, Jainism started as a reformation movement but soon found itself as an independent religion based upon the teachings of its founder, *Mahāvīra*. *Mahāvīra* established Jainism in about 500 BC. *Mahāvīra*, an unorthodox teacher, firmly opposed the prevailing religion of the day, the sacrificial *Vedic* religion, and the already dominant authority of the *Brāhmaṇa* caste. In later period, Jainism had fallen apart in two sects called *Śvetāmbara* and *Digambara*. But the differences are only in some minor details of faith and practice, and do not affect the fundamental philosophical doctrines. Both the sects follow the teachings of the *Jina*.

Jainism divides the whole universe in terms of two eternal, independent, indestructible and co-existing components—*jīva* and *ajīva*. The *jīva* of Jainism

is similar to *puruṣa* of *Sāṃkhya* and the *ātman* of *Vaiṣṇava-vedānta*. Etymologically the word '*jīva*' means 'what lives or is animate'. *Jīva* is interpreted differently as being, embodied soul and conscious soul. *Ajīva* is the lifeless inert matter having qualities (*guṇas*) and atoms (*paramāṇus*). In a being, *jīva* is the soul and *ajīva* is the physical body. "Like the monads of Leibnitz, the *jīvas* of Jainism are qualitatively alike and only quantitatively different and the whole universe is literally filled with them."¹⁵

The *Jainas* opposed the materialistic conception of the soul as identical with the body. In their opinion, "the principle of life is distinct from the body and it is most erroneous to think that life is either the product or the property of the body."¹⁶ It is on account of this life-principle, i.e. soul, the body appears to be living.

The numbers of *jīvas* are infinite, all being alike and eternal. The *Jainas* believe that not only that the *jīva* exists but also that it acts and is acted upon. The soul is the knower (*jñātā*), agent (*kartā*) and enjoyer (*bhoktā*). The soul knows things, performs actions and enjoys pleasure and suffers pain. The soul is eternal, but it also undergoes change of states. As a spiritual substance, the soul is eternal and changeless. But in so far as its modes are changing, the soul also has changes. The soul and body are not identical. The soul can maintain its existence independent of the body. The existence of soul is directly proved by its consciousness of itself.

The essential characteristics of *jīva* are consciousness (*cetanā*), bliss (*sukha*) and energy (*vīrya*). In its pure state, *jīva* possesses these qualities in infinite measure. Every self is a conscious, doer, dynamic agent of actions and direct enjoyer. Each self is a separate entity. It is eternal, uncreated, immaterial, incorporeal and beyond the range of physical vision.

Consciousness is the very essence of *jīva* (*Cetanā-lakṣaṇa jīvaḥ*). Every soul from the lowest to the highest possesses consciousness. "It is found in the lowest stage of the psychical evolution as that of Nigoda as well as in the omniscient. It is present in sleep also; otherwise the pleasing experience of sound and comfortable sleep, in the subsequent waking state, cannot be felt."¹⁷ There can be no soul without consciousness though the nature and degrees of consciousness may vary in different souls. Souls may be theoretically arranged in a series according to the degrees of consciousness. At the highest end of the scale, there would be perfect souls that have overcome all *karmas* and attained omniscience. The most imperfect souls would lie at the lowest end inhabiting bodies of earth, water, fire, air or vegetable. In them life and consciousness appear to be absent. But in true sense, even in them consciousness of a tactual kind is present; only consciousness in them is in a dormant condition due to the overpowering influence of *karma* obstacles.

Ātman in this world is known as *jīva*. It has vital and physical, mental and sensuous powers. The self is essentially conscious. If it were non-conscious, as

is held by the *Naiyāyikas*, knowledge could not arise in it, just as it cannot arise in the non-conscious *ākāśa*. The *Jainas* further hold that every individual feels that he is conscious, nobody perceives thus— I am non-conscious and become conscious when consciousness is attached to me. This shows without any doubt that “*caitanya* or consciousness is an essential attribute of the self. Consciousness of the self has two manifestations, viz. *darśana* or intuition (indeterminate knowledge or knowledge of the constituents of knowledge) and *jñāna* or knowledge (determinate knowledge).”¹⁸

Thus knowledge or sentience is an essential attribute of the self. Consciousness manifests itself through knowledge and vision. Knowledge comprehends the reality of the nature which is both universal and particular. Vision or *darśana* comprehends the reality of the self. *Jñāna* or knowledge reveals the external reality whereas *darśana* or vision reveals the internal reality. From the ultimate standpoint both knowledge and vision are identical with self. When the self knows external reality we have *jñāna* and when the self has a vision of itself we have *darśana*. In this way *jñāna* and *darśana* both are attributes of the *ātman* just as heat and illumination both are attributes of the fire.

“No self without *jñāna* is conceivable, or *jñāna* without a self— a point in the doctrine which well illustrates its distinction from Buddhism. The culmination of enlightenment is reached when the obstacles are broken down in their entirety.”¹⁹

Then the individual becomes omniscient and knows all objects vividly and precisely as they are. That is called *Kevala-jñāna*.

Jainism believes in the variable size of the *jīva*. The self is sometimes compared to the sky. Like the sky, it is formless. Though it is formless it acquires the size and form of the body wherein it lives. It is in this sense that a soul (*jīva*) though formless, is said to occupy space or have extension (*astikāya*). But the soul (*jīva*) does not extend in space like material body. “A material body fills a part of space in such a way that while it is there, no other matter can occupy it. But a soul’s presence in a particular space does not prevent another soul’s presence there.”²⁰ The *Jainas* point out that, two souls may be present at the same place just as two lights can illuminate the same. The *Jainas* hold that, the souls expand and contract according to the dimension of the body which they occupy at any given time. For example, when the soul moves from the body of a mosquito to that of an elephant, the soul expands according to the dimension of the elephant’s body. When again it enters the body of a mosquito, it contracts itself according to the changed dimension of the body with which it is incorporated for the time being.

According to the *Jainas*, the self is subject to change or modification. Unlike the *Naiyāyikas* and others, the *Jainas* regard the self as mutable. They argue that if the self were immutable, cognition could not arise in it. For before the acquisition of knowledge, the self is devoid of knowledge, while after the rise of

knowledge, it becomes the knower i.e. endowed with knowledge. These two states could not be explained if the self were immutable. Thus, different states of the self clearly show that it is changeable. In the view of the *Jainas*, the self is of *madhyama-parimāṇa* or limited magnitude and is a bit smaller than the body in which it resides.

But philosophers of *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and *Vedānta* school hold that soul is all-pervasive. The soul pervades the whole body like the sandal paste (*chandanavat*). The soul being present in a particular part of the body makes its presence felt in all other parts like a sandal-wood which gives out its fragrance all over the surrounding areas. The soul, therefore, need not be considered as extending all over the body. But, the *Jaina* theory is opposite of this. According to them, the soul is not all-pervasive. The *Jainas* argue that if the self were all-pervasive, it would come in contact simultaneously with all the bodies, senses and minds, and as a result, could know and act through all bodies, senses and minds. In that case, differences of knowledge, action, birth, death etc., found in different individuals could not be explained. In other words, the difference in the experiences of the selves is a fact which cannot be adjusted to the all-pervasiveness of the self.

The *Jaina* view of self is substantial. It can assume different forms and names in different states of existence, but its substantial nature remains unchanged just as gold remains gold in different ornaments made of gold. It has been stated in the

Samayasāra: “what is also produced from a substance always has the same attributes as those of the substance. Know you: surely it cannot be different, just like bracelets, etc., made of gold cannot be other than gold.”²¹

Self is a dynamic entity in the sense that it is the doer of deeds and enjoyer of their fruits. Another feature of self is its luminosity. It illuminates the body in which it dwells.

The self is the maker of its own destiny. It has been declared in the *Uttarādhyayan-sūtra*: “my own self is the river *Vaitaraṇī*, my own self the *Śālamāli* tree; my own self is the miraculous cow *Kāmadhenu*, my own self the park *Nandana*. My own self is the doer and undoer of misery and happiness, my own self, friend and foe according as I act well or badly.”²²

Jainism is a pluralistic system. According to them, the *jīvas* are infinite in number and each *jīva* is different from other. One never becomes another or absorbs another. This view is radically different from the monistic *Vedānta* doctrine of the reality of one absolute self. Jainism rejects the notion of one absolute self and believes in the plurality of selves. Jainism believes that everything has life and this also includes stones, sand, trees and every other thing.

Jaina religion postulates three stages of *jīva* or soul: the external self (*bahirātman*), the internal self (*antarātman*) and the supreme self (*paramātman*).

The external self, out of ignorance and attachment, takes the body for the self. It says 'I am the body and the physical objects are mine'. This identification of the self with the gross physical body and external objects is a positive hindrance to spiritual enlightenment and liberation.

The internal self, that is, mind, is aware of the difference between the self and not-self. It knows that the self is the supreme reality, free from objectivity and untouched by sense-enjoyments. In this form the self as a spiritual entity is free from lust and attachment and is on the way to liberation.

This internal self becomes the Supreme Self when it knows its real nature, full of knowledge and devoid of all *karmas*. We read in the *Samayasāra* the following description of the one who has the knowledge of *paramātman*: "I am unique in as much as I am of the nature of *upayoga*; hence no delusion whatsoever is related to me. He who thinks like this, the knowers of the true self call him free from delusion."²³

The word *paramātman* denotes the real and ultimate form of the supreme self which is pure, perfect and luminous. Such a self is called *siddha* or perfected. He is the knower of all and conqueror of passions. In the *Tattvārthasāra*, he is described as perfect, pure, eternal, and free from *karmas* and of the nature of knowledge. This concept of self as *siddha* represents the climax of *Jaina* ideology. To attain the state of *paramātman* is the highest goal according to Jainism. This same state is known as liberation (*mokṣa*).

According to the Jainism, *jīva* is of two kinds, viz. *baddha* (bound) and *mukta* (free). The former is further subdivided into two categories, viz. mobile (*trasa*) and immobile (*sthāvara*). The *sthāvara* or immobile *jīvas* possess only one sense-organ, *tvak indriya*, i.e. touch. Earth, water, fire, air and the vegetable world fall in this category. *Jīvas*, like stones, who assume earth bodies, are known as *pr̥thvikāya*. Similarly, *apakāya jīvas* are those who assume watery bodies. So also there are *vāyukāya* and *tejahkāya jīvas*, meaning those having the bodies of air and light, respectively. The *jīvas* possessing more than one sense organ is termed as mobile or *trasa*. The mobile *jīvas* are further classified according to the number of sense-organs they possess. The *jīvas* who possess two sense-organs, i.e. touch and taste are kept in one category. For example, worms fall under this category. Likewise, the *jīvas* who possess three sense-organs, i.e. touch, taste and smell represent a separate category, e.g. ants. *Jīvas* with four sense-organs, i.e. sight in addition to the above three are kept in another category, e.g. bees, wasps. All the vertebrates, e.g. cow, goat etc., with five sense-organs, i.e. touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing, represent another category.

The higher animal among this, viz. man, denizens of hell and the God possess in addition to the five sense-organs, an inner sense-organ i.e. *manas* by virtue of which they are called rational (*samjñin*) while the lower animal have no reason

and are called *asamjñin*. After the attainment of liberation the *jīvas* become free (*mukta*).

According to *Jaina* belief, the universe was never created, nor will it ever cease to exist. Therefore, it is *śāśvata* (infinite). It has neither beginning nor end, but time is cyclical with progressive and regressive spirituality phases. The universe runs of its own accord by its own cosmic law. The universe is eternal and indestructible. There is no need for someone to create or manage the affairs of the universe.

Jainas acknowledge a three tier universe, consisting of an upper, middle and lower worlds. The upper world is known as *siddhaśīla*, inhabited by eternally free and pure souls, who remain permanently in a state of pure bliss and peace. The middle world is inhabited by embodied beings such as humans, plants, animals and beings with inert bodies (inanimate objects), subject to the law of *karma*. This world is known as *jambūdvīpa*, or 'the continent of the rose-apple tree'. The lower world in *Jaina* cosmos is known as hell, inhabited by beings, passing through various stages of punishments for the sin they incurred upon earth. They return to our world of embodied souls when their punishment is complete. *Jainas* view the world in which we live, to be full of misery and suffering and the souls that inhabit it are not free because they are attached to matter or substance and vulnerable to the influx of *kārmic* matter. As the *Ācārāṅga-sūtra* describes, the living world of ours is afflicted, miserable,

difficult to instruct, and without discrimination. In this world, full of pain, the individual beings suffer by their different acts.

Unlike the Hinduism, Jainism believes that there is no supreme divine Creator, owner, preserver or destroyer of the universe. Though the followers of Jainism do not acknowledge the presence of God, they acknowledge the existence of higher beings called *arhats* in heaven and also some gods who are embodied souls but with greater freedom and higher degree of knowledge and intelligence. When a person destroys all his *kārmic* prison, he comes into possession of perfect knowledge, vision, power and bliss. He becomes omniscient and omnipotent. He is liberated soul. He lives in perfect blissful state of *mokṣa* (heaven). This living being is God of the *Jaina* religion. Every living being has the potential to become a God. Hence, *Jainas* do not have one God, but gods are innumerable and their number is continuously increasing as more living being attain liberation.

Like Hinduism, Jainism also believes in the theory of transmigration of soul. Man has an immortal soul within him, which does not die with physical death. After the death of the physical body, the soul immediately transmigrates into a new body. The assumption of the new body with all its circumstances depends on the *karmas* of the previous life.

The term '*karma*' means 'action'. The law or doctrine of *karma* means that all deeds, good or bad, physical or mental produce their proper consequences in the life of the individual who acts. It is founded on the law of cause and effect. No effect is without a cause, and one has to bear the fruits of his deeds, sooner or later. There is no escape from this.

According to Jainism, *karma* is a kind of matter (*pudgalika*) which enters the body of a *jīva* according to the nature of its action. The *kārmic* matter is present in the whole universe and has the tendency to modify the future of a *jīva* by entering into it and creating effects of merits and demerits.

The *Jainas* hold that the self in its real state is pure, free, perfect and divine and is endowed with *ananta-catustaya*, i.e. four infinite qualities viz. infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite bliss and infinite power. But during the empirical state, its real nature is obstructed by *karmas*, just as the natural light of the sun is obstructed by clouds.

Karma is what binds the soul (*jīva*) to the matter (*ajīva*). Jainism recognises seven *tattvas* or principles viz. *jīva*, *ajīva*, *āsrava*, *bandha*, *samvara*, *nirjara* and *mokṣa*. A *jīva* (soul) becomes free from *ajīva* (material body) through various stages to reach the highest state of absolute liberation called *mokṣa*. Ignorance of the truth and four passions viz. anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), pride (*māna*) and delusion (*māyā*) which are called *kasāya* or sticky substances where *kārmic*

particles stick, attract the flow of *kārmic* matter towards the soul. The state when *kārmic* particles actually begin to flow towards the soul to bind it is called *āsrava* or flow. The state when these particles actually infiltrate into the soul and bind it is called *bandha* or bondage. The ideal bondage (*bhāva-bandha*) of the soul takes place as soon as it has bad disposition and the material bondage (*dravya-bandha*) takes place when there is an actual influx of *karma* into the soul. In bondage the *kārmic* matter unites with the soul by intimate interpenetration, just as water unites with milk or fire unites with the red-hot iron ball. It is for this reason that we find life and consciousness in every part of the body. By the possession and practice of right faith, knowledge and conduct, the influx of fresh *karma* is stopped. This state is called *samvara* or stoppage. When already existing *karma* is neutralised and eliminated from the soul it is called *nirjara* or wearing out state. And “when the self, through proper spiritual practices, stops the entrance of fresh *karma*-atoms, and washes out the *karma* particles already absorbed into its body, it regains its natural qualities i.e. the *ananta-catustaya*. This is the state of liberation.”²⁴

Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct have come to be known in *Jaina* ethics as the three gems (*triratna*) that shine in a good life. In the very first *sūtra* of *Tattvārthādhigama sūtra Umāsvāmī* states this cardinal teaching of Jainism. The path of liberation lies through right faith, right knowledge and right conduct.

Liberation is the joint effect of these three. *Mahāvīra* in his *Uttarādhyayan-sūtra* states that—

“There’s no knowledge without right faith,
 No conduct is possible without knowledge,
 Without conduct, there’s no liberation,
 And without liberation, no deliverance.”²⁵

Jainas believe that to attain enlightenment and ultimate liberation, one must practice in their thought, speech and action the following five ethical principles or *pañca-mahāvratas*: *ahimsā* (abstinence from all injury to life), *satyam* (abstinence from falsehood), *asteyam* (abstinence from stealing), *brahmacaryam* (abstinence from self-indulgence or *kāma* of every form) *aparigraha* (abstinence from all attachment). Jainism believes that by following these principles one can stop the inflow of bad *karma* and burn off accumulated *kārmic* particles.

Liberation is a spiritual state of perfection. In it the soul assumes its original spiritual and infinite character. When a soul achieves *mokṣa* (liberation) it is released from the cycle of births and deaths, and consequently being free from all suffering, it attains absolute bliss. It then becomes *siddha*, literally means one who has accomplished his ultimate objective. Attaining *mokṣa* requires annihilation of all *karmas*, good and bad; because if *karma* is left, it must bear fruit.

The celebrated *Jaina* scripture, *Uttarādhyayan-sūtra*, portrays the concept of self-reliance through an expressive metaphor depicting our worldly existence and the path to liberation in the following couplet —

“This body may be viewed as a boat,
the soul is its worthy sailor,
the ocean is the cycles of worldly existence,
which is traversed by illustrious beings.”²⁶

We, the worldly beings, have to face the ocean of innumerable cycles of birth and death. Our bodies can be compared to the boats floating in the ocean and our souls serve as skillful sailors, who can take the boats across the ocean of worldly miseries. *Jainas* do not believe that some superhuman entity helps us in achieving salvation. We have to liberate ourselves through self-endeavor. Thus the *Jainas* think that they are self-reliant (*śramaṇa*). This is a unique feature of the *Jaina* religion.

“When a wise man, in whatever way, comes to know that the apportioned space of his life draws towards its end, he should in the meantime quickly learn the method of dying a religious death.”²⁷ A ritual almost unique among the world’s religions is described in the *Jaina* Holy Scripture *Sūtra-kṛtāṅga*, a holy fast unto death, which through inaction rids the soul of negative *karma* and brings about death with dignity and dispassion (*sallekhanā*). In Jainism, this is not regarded as

an act of suicide which involves passion and violence. This 'death of the wise' (*paṇḍita-marāṇa*) is recommended only for a few spiritually fit persons with the approval of the family and spiritual superiors and under strict supervision and usually in a public forum. People who die by this ritual are considered to have removed a few births to achieve final liberation from the painful cycle of death and rebirth. Two other forms of withdrawal from life are also practiced in conjunction with abstention from food. These are death through renunciation (*sannyāsana marāṇa*) and death through meditation (*samādhi marāṇa*).

The world's scriptures describe heaven as a place of rest, or as an exalted spiritual state, full of divine splendour and communion with the Absolute. There are also descriptions using more graphic and materialistic imagery: gardens of delights, with riches and pleasures abounding and so on. Jainism describes heaven as the world to come, where is neither eating nor drinking nor procreation of children or business transactions, no envy or hatred or rivalry; but the righteous sit enthroned, their crowns on their heads, and enjoy the luster of the divine splendour.

In *Jaina* cosmology, *naraka* (hell) is the name given to realm of existence having great suffering. The hells are situated in the seven grounds at the lower part of the universe. The hellish beings are a type of souls which are residing in these various hells. They are born in hells by sudden manifestation. . The hellish beings possess *vaikriya* body (protean body which can transform itself and take

various forms). A soul is born into a *naraka* as a direct result of his or her previous *karma* (actions of body, mind and speech) and resides there for a finite length of time until his *karma* has achieved its full result. After his *karma* is used up, he may be reborn in one of the higher worlds as the result of an earlier *karma* that had not yet ripened.

According to Jainism, every *jīva* is a composite of both body and soul, of which the soul is active while the body is inactive and passive. *Jainas* offer the following arguments to prove the existence of the soul —

Through the different attributes or the qualities of the soul, we realise the existence of the soul. For example, we say that we see an orange when we perceive the smell or colour of an orange. Likewise, the soul is directly perceived when we perceive such qualities of the soul as pleasure, pain, thought, doubt etc.

Just as a car requires a driver for controlling it, so also the unconscious body requires a conscious agent, i.e. the soul who shall direct and control it. The sense-organs like eyes, ears etc. are only instruments of knowledge. But without a coordinator, knowledge cannot be gathered through these sense organs. The soul is the required coordinator.

Besides material cause, an efficient cause is also required for the production of inanimate objects, e.g. a jar or a piece of cloth. The body also cannot come into

existence without an efficient cause. The soul is the efficient cause of the existence of the body.

The *Jainas* are sometimes called '*nāstika*' or atheistic as it does not accept the authority of the *Vedas*. But, they strongly believe that the soul exists, and the main objective of our life is to attain the highest goal—*siddha*, the state of liberation.

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