

# Role of Jainism in Evolving Ethico-Spiritual Paradigm of Social Development

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The most distinguishing feature of Jainism is to maintain a note of overall universal identity in matters of religious and social order. From the social history of India it is evident that Lord *Abha*, the first *tirthankara*, has been responsible for the rise and development of Jainism in the history of Indian culture. *Abha* founded the social order and family system, and taught to mankind the art of the cultivation of land as also different arts like writing, etc. After him there were twenty two *tirthankaras* in Jain tradition. All of them contributed to develop more or less the same values in their times.

Lord Mahavira who was the twenty fourth *tirthankara*, after attaining supreme knowledge known as *kevalajnana*, visited for full thirty years the different parts of the country especially its Eastern and Northern parts and promulgated socio-spiritual values throughout. The significance of Mahavira's contribution lies in successfully ushering in the social situation of his time and making institutional and other arrangements for the perpetuation of his socio-religious order. Mahavira is one of those few personalities who raised his voice for individual liberty in social and religious matters. He did not confine himself to individual upliftment, but dedicated himself to the development of a new creative social order for the healthiest orientation of the individual's excellence. Though he was a man of highest spiritual values, yet social values got his fullest attention. Those who regard Mahavira only as a spiritual messenger do great injustice to him. In fact, like Lord *Abha* he also serves as a pioneering illustration of both ethico-spiritual realization and social reconstruction.

Lord Mahavira preaches the ethical discipline of five vows not only for the salvation of individuals but also for the survival and development of the entire society. In his message of *Ahimsa* and other corollaries in relation thereto, the social good in its ultimate analysis is shown to be dependent upon the moral and ethical development of the individual. There is no opposition between the good of the community and the good of the individual. The two are inextricably inter-linked with each other. In his view, individual development is not to be over emphasized at the cost of society. This is the reason he has introduced two types of ethical codes, one for ascetics and the other for householders, technically known as *ramachara* and *ravachara* respectively. As a result, the social bifurcation is found in the basic organization of the Jain community. When one speaks of a Jain community, there must be the description of two orders, the mendicant and the lay order. While one refers to the

group of people who fully exert themselves to realize the ethico-spiritual values in their entirety by overcoming attachment and entirely aversion, the later denotes is the group of people who perform social duties and practice in a limited manner the ethico-spiritual values keeping in view the importance of these values in individual and social life. Thus, to some extent, all members of the Jain community, whether the lay or the mendicant, may be said to practice the values non-violence etc. The outward expression of the practice is characterized by two explicit schemes of vows and restraints called minor and major vows, technically known as *Ahuvrata* and *Mahavrata* respectively.

In the context of a social order the Jainas have developed the whole set of social laws regulating the application of the ideal of *Ahimsa*. Ethico-spiritual values have been given paramount importance within the social order, allowing the diligent lay person to progress towards the status achieved by the mendicant in and through the *Ahuvratas*. It has outlined the progressive course leading to the renunciation of all violence. On the one hand, this course gradually widens the scope of the application of *Ahimsa* on the part of a layperson and on the other, it restricts the opportunities for violence in society.

In modern times, the word 'social development' has been used so indiscriminately that it has become almost impossible to define it. This is due to the fact that means of achieving it are sometimes confused with its objectives. The objective is obviously to develop a social system in which there is no exploitation of man by man and everyone has equal opportunities to fulfill his basic needs and to develop his capabilities. But it does not mean that everyone will thereby become equal in their lot, e.g., in matters of material prosperity and intellectual, moral or spiritual achievements.

The key to socially sustainable development is the creation of inclusive and accountable institutions and the strengthening of social capital across socio-cultural groups and trust between state and citizens to create socially cohesive societies. Social policy has both intrinsic and instrumental value : intrinsic in terms of creating equality of opportunity, and instrumental in terms of strengthening legitimacy of public institutions and social integration.

Hence, what is required is the creation of conditions in which they become encouraged and also have equal opportunities to develop their faculties. All this is possible only when the policies and strategies of social development are governed by some ethico-spiritual values. This must be amply clear to everybody that the necessity of the ethico-spiritual values of self-imposed control are not based on fear of laws, but on the firm

conviction that self-control is the surest way for one's social good and spiritual uplift.

"Social development is a process that seeks to recreate a system which opens up the fountain springs of life-force operating both in individuals and in the community. It leaves behind the conventional concept of 'adjustment' of the individual to a given situation, but tries to create a new, more congenial situation, which can make a progressive equilibrium between the individual and the community possible. The new situation may comprise of a new set of values, attitudes and practices and different, more sustainable and efficacious 'institutions' – that is, structures and organizations to translate those values into practice."

*Prof. P.D. Kulkarni*

If socialism is promoted only for the materialistic progress in the name of raising the living standard or the development of collective well-being of society governed only by materialistic considerations, then it would create contradictions. For unless there be simultaneously a change in the mental milieu of the members of the society, mere changes in the material condition in terms of socialistic criteria will be of no avail. The impression of the accustomed ways of living would stand opposed to the changed material conditions of society.

*Social development is a process, which results in the transformation of social structures in a manner, which improves the capacity of the society to fulfill its aspirations. Society develops by consciousness and social consciousness develops by organization. The process that is subconscious in the society emerges as conscious knowledge in pioneering individuals. Development is a process, not a programme. Its power issues more from its subtle aspects than from material objects.*

The practice of ethico-spiritualism can bring social development in a real sense. It will be recalled that among the five vows prescribed for right conduct one is *Aparigraha*, i.e. limiting one's possessions and giving the surplus in charity. This is the highest form of socialistic mentality and is pre-requisite for non-violent and spiritual uplift. It results in a real and sustainable development of man and society. For such socialistic bent of mind we need to follow simple living and high thinking. In Jainism, all souls are regarded as basically similar and they all suffer from the same disease of ignorance that is delusion. This is enough reason for achieving individual excellences and social good.

Similarly, non-violence is an integrated concept and foundation of all sorts of values. It has relation with the different aspects of social life. The cause of deterioration in society is that our social scientists have neglected the role of non-violence and other ethico-spiritual values in developing social sciences and framing social policies accordingly. This is why harmony and cohesion of our society is becoming subject to different kinds of threats in the form of corruption, disparity, violence, criminal and terroristic activities and different types of cultural conflicts. Due to the negligence of ethico-spiritual perspective in social development, the politics of today has become nothing more than mere diplomacy. Economics system is working for imbalanced growth of man and society and as such it has failed to achieve welfare of mankind. Education, by neglecting values, has become uninspiring. Instead of promoting cultural values it promotes materialistic attitude. Similarly, the study of

psychology is unable to transform the consciousness of human beings.

Looking at the present scenario of the world there is a great need to rethink, rearticulate and redefined the whole concept of social development, keeping philosophy of spirituality, non-violence, self-restraint and non-possession in centre. The question is – How is it possible to develop such a social structure when the present sociology is based on the Darwinian motto of "Survival of the Fittest" and the concept of "Violent class-struggle" given by Karl Marx? The extreme competitiveness of capitalism as evidenced in the present world inevitably increase violence in society. The real social progress based on socialistic ideals must eschew the principles of Darwin and that of Marx. This is possible only if the spirit of non-violence be made the pivotal mover of the ways of life both in the individual and the social sphere. This type of socialism of non-violence can be built on the basis of universal principle given by *Ucārya Umāsvatī*, viz., "*parasparopagrahojāvānām*" i.e. the very nature of the souls is to render service to others and "*tayassiyē*" i.e. one life is dependent on other, are followed. To materialize these principles, society needs to inculcate the spirit of interdependence, relativity, friendliness, communal harmony, tolerance and co-existence.

**The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD)**, held in Copenhagen from March 5-12, 1995 is a useful starting point for a discussion of social policy as it galvanized the attention of the world and succeeded in reaching consensus on a set of global commitments on social development. The report on the Social Summit by the UN Secretary General (February 2005) recognizes significant gaps in the areas of employment (or livelihoods); social integration; and the enabling environment—defined as improving the economic, legal, political and institutional environment for social development. The sectoral focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has led to a relative neglect of these crosscutting issues. Social policy is defined as a series of public policies designed to promote social development, undertaken by a variety of actors through a range of instruments. We envision social development as a natural complement to economic development with both intrinsic and instrumental value. While there is lack of consensus on the definition of social development it is generally understood to comprises of a set of objectives including equity and social justice, which subsume additional objectives including social inclusion, sustainable livelihoods, gender equity, increased voice and participation. They subscribe to the position taken by the 2001 Report on the World Social Situation that the principle of social justice most concisely captures the essence of the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) and, as such, has tended to be accepted as the goal of social development. For purposes of formulating social policies, however, they propose to go a step further by recognizing that social development involves multiple levels of engagement at the level of individuals, social groups, and society. As a working definition, social development can be described as the process of increasing :

- The assets and capabilities of individuals to improve their well-being,

- The capacity of social groups to exercise agency, transform their relationships with other groups, and participate in development processes,
- The ability of society to reconcile the interests of its constituent elements, govern itself peacefully, and manage change.

Social policies then are public policies aimed at three levels : promoting equality of opportunity to benefit individuals (micro-level), equality of agency and institutional reform to benefit groups (meso level), and horizontal and vertical social integration to benefit society (macro level).

*"It is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development."*

James Midgley (1995)

*"Basically the process of social development stands for a conscious and deliberate intervention with the instruments of policy and planning in order to bring about changes that lead towards desired goal."*

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The evaluation of the concept of social development the manpower required for its implementation, and the role and contribution of social sciences in social development are really linked together in one continuing theme, being just different points in one and the same continuum. It reveals an all-enhancing and inter-related broad spectrum against which man's potential for development is to be brought out to the fullest extent possible. For this, society must ensure a congenial atmosphere in which full growth of economic, social, spiritual advancement. The theory and practice of social development must be one, which seeks to have not just a higher standard of living, but also a better quality of life. This alone will bring the best in people, by the efforts of the people themselves, who will live happily ever afterwards."

The Ethico-spiritual paradigm of Jainism since its very inception has been engaged in the noble task of uplifting individual as also the social life by revitalizing the society with the awakening of moral and spiritual values in all walks of life. Jainism is eco-human centric in its approach and spiritualistic in its depth as against the mere anthropocentric model of social development takes exclusively the interest of man into consideration, all other things are treated as subservient to and mere means for fastening the interest of man. But the modal of social development based on the principle of non-violence takes the entire environment into account and thereby makes the real social development possible.

Thus, the Jainism lays stress on Ethico-spiritual paradigm keeping in view not only the development of the entire social and the environmental milieu as well to ensure the social development in the true sense of the term.

Paradigm shift is a characteristic feature almost of all knowledge society. However, in some cases such as physical sciences, paradigm constitutes a dynamic structure, which makes for visible progress, while in other cases, e.g. in social sciences such things do not happen. It is a matter of common observation that society advances in paradigmatic stages, but knowledge of

society does not do so. In the domain of human action the movement from Stone Age to Metal age, from Metal age to Industrial age, from Industrial age to Technological age and from Technological age to the age of Globalization and Post Modernism decidedly marks a paradigm shift. It does not necessarily indicate social progress in terms of the well being of all. Social development of today has become a target of adverse criticism of an increasingly large number of people. It's monopolistic, exclusivistic and imperialistic attitude do not predict for the well-being of society. Though developed society has virtues, yet it is not free from many engulfing problems such as robberies, murder, casteism, terrorism, corruption, environmental pollution, addiction to intoxicating substances, degradation of moral values, communalism, etc. Balanced social development would establish and ensure global harmony and mutual cohesion between the different segments of the society. It would thereby have no room for the emergence of social evils that beset the present state of social development.

Attempts are no doubt continuously undertaken by the authorities at the helm of affairs. Newer and newer problems are in the offing as time goes on. In this scenario, the ethico-spiritual paradigm of social development of Jainism can vigorously present itself as a case in point. It can act as an eye opener to what should be done to usher in a society free from all undesirable social phenomena eating into vitals of social life. For this reason that an in-depth study and research based analysis of the ethico-spiritual paradigm of social development as suggested in Jainism is all the more necessary.

Ethico-spiritual Paradigm will help us to understand the role of the transcendental states and powers of man in the field of social development. In this modern era the concept of ethics and spirituality has been kept aside, and man fails to understand the implications and depth of human existence and his potentialities. One should try to understand the ethico-spiritual values under a much wider and deeper perspective.

The Ethico-spiritual Paradigm seems to be the panacea of all social evils and it will act as a corrective step to check the current deviation, thus it is the crying need of the time to focus the utility of such paradigm to the society and this spirit will not only make clear its endemic discomfort but also endow it with a new intellectual force and liveliness which will help to inaugurate a new era of LOVE, peaceful and human harmony at the individual, institutional and society, level, for ethics and spirituality according to Jainism are cosmic, all-encompassing and all embracing. In the post-modern era, thus ethical and spiritual values alone can provide the healing touch and make the attempts of social development meaningful for the individual and the society at large.

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