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Mind, Soul, Consciousness and Jianism : Perspectives

Medical Science

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ABSTRACT

Jainism in its philosophy differs markedly from Buddhism and Vedanta when it comes to concepts of mind, soul and consciousness. The following articles looks at various aspects of Jainism with a focus on mind, soul and consciousness and related concepts from a Jainism perspective. Jain philosophy describes 'jiva' (soul) as the sentient substance, which is non-physical and not sense-perceptible; consciousness and 'upayoga' (manifestation) are the differentia of jiva. Consciousness manifests itself in many ways: intelligence, intuition, conation, bliss, perception (cognitive elements), emotions, will, attitude and behavior, awareness of pleasure and pain. Jain distinguishes between soul and mind. The paper also reviews the relation between the two and serves as a primer for researchers looking at basic literatures that defines these concepts from a Jain perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Jainism is part of the eternal tradition ('sanatana dharma') of Indian philosophy. However it isquite distinct from the Vedic or Hindu tradition, as it has evolved in modern times. This isbecause Jains reject social or spiritual hierarchy, and because it stresses the survival –and fullrealisation –of the individual sensibility rather than its union with a universal or cosmicconsciousness. Jainism scientific researchers suggest that each Jain is his or her own guru, and the spiritual quest is akin to theprocesses undertaken by the researcher in a laboratory [1]. Jainism's purpose, as a spiritual path, is to enable the human individualto realise his or herfull intelligence and strip away the illusions of materialistic attachments and 'vaultingambitions' of a destructive and superficial nature. Jainism means the 'religion (or way) of theconquerors' and the true Jain is one who has conquered him- or her- self. This conquest isidentical with realising the true self, which is free from attachment and so has true power,rather than delusional trappings [2].

BASIC JAINISM VOWS

The principle ofinterconnection informs the Five Vows ('Vratas') undertaken by Jains. These are adhered to byascetics in a literal way, as the 'Mahavratas',or Greater Vows, whereas lay men and womenobserve them as 'Anuvratas'(Lesser Vows) and use them as guidelines on which to base theirlives. There are references to the Vows in many Jain texts, but are explored in particular detailin the Acaranga Sutra, or 'Book of Good Conduct'[3]. The Acaranga is the oldest Jaindocument, probably composed in the 4th century BCE, and it sets out clearly the philosophy ofnon-violent living associated with the Jain dharma.

The Vows are as follows:

- 'Ahimsa': Non-violence; abstention or minimisation of anything that causes injury tolife, human or non-human;
- 'Asteya': Abstention from theft; avoidance of exploitative relationships of all kinds;
- 'Satya': Truth; the understanding of what is real, as opposed to illusory attachment;
- 'Brahmacharya': Chastity; avoidance of promiscuity, sexual exploitation and the'objectification' of fellow-humans (male or female);
- 'Aparigraha': non-possessiveness; reduction of consumption; reduction of 'carbonfootprint'.

THE SPIRITUAL QUEST OF JAINISM

From the Jain standpoint, the basic unit of life is the 'jiva'. This is not 'soul' in the way thisterm is conventionally understood, but a unit of pure,non corrupted consciousness that comesinto being spontaneously, that is, it is neither created nor destroyed. It also vibratesspontaneously and so comes into contact with 'karma'(which means action and arises throughactivity of all kinds). As a result, it is enmeshed in the wheel of 'samsara', the cycle of birth,death and rebirth that continues until enlightenment is achieved. The samsaric cycle is familiarto students of Hindu or Buddhist teachings, as is karma, but in Jainism there is a crucialdifference. For karma is not merely the cosmic law of cause and effect. It is a physical process,by which particles of subtle matter attach themselves to the jiva by a process known as'asrava', or karmic inflow. Karmic particles impose limits on the jiva's consciousness, obscuringits understanding of what is real. They also weigh it down, literally, and trap it in the'Lokakasa', or 'inhabited universe'. The jiva is alive, whereas the gross matter surrounding it –a physical representation of karma –is 'ajiva', or lacking in sentience [4].The spiritual quest is therefore the journey of the jiva back to its point of origin: pureconsciousness. This is a journey that can take aeons and can involve passing through manyembodiments, human and non-human, on earth, other worlds or even parallel universes. Theultimate aim is to achieve 'Moksha', or liberation from all physical constraints, within anotheruniverse, the 'Siddha Loka', or place of liberated souls [4].

THE SOUL IN JAINISM

"Jiva" (Soul) is the generic name of sentient substance. "Jiva" substance is non-physical and is not sense-perceptible, it does not have the properties of color, smell, taste and touch. Consciousness and "upayoga" (manifestation) are the differentia of the "jiva"."Upayoga" and consciousness are the two sides of the same entity "jiva". Consciousness may be interpreted both as a structure and a function of the "jiva", but "upayoga" refers to the functional side only. "Upayoga" gives us almost the same meaning as we get by being mentally active, just as a mental activity is a fact of mental functioning and a mental capacity, a fact of mental structure, in the same way, consciousness or "chetana" may be taken as a fact of the "jiva's" structure, and "upayoga" as a fact of the "jiva's" function [5].

Consciousness is the generality of the attributes (if not of all the attributes of the "jiva"), which distinguish the "jiva" from the inanimate. "Upayoga" is the generality of the manifestations of such attributes. Intelligence and intuition are agreed to be the two main manifestations (upayoga) of consciousness.When "jiva" interacts with the external world in mundane state the consciousness manifests itself in several ways: knowledge, perception (cognitive elements), emotions, will, attitude and behaviour, awareness of pleasure and pain. Life and consciousness are coextensive. Wherever there is life, there is consciousness and vice versa. But there are degrees of explicitness or manifestation of consciousness in different organisms. In the lowest class of organisms, it is quite latent; while in human beings, it is quite manifest. "Jiva" is entirely distinct from inanimate existence, which does not possess consciousness [5].

THE CONCEPT OF KARMA IN JAINISM

Soul, in common terms, refers to "jiva" in mundane existence. According to Jain philosophy, this is impure state of "jiva", bound with karma. Only impure "jiva" embodies, the pure "jiva", free of karma, is the liberated soul that never embodies again. According to Jain philosophy, a living being commonly has three bodies: physical ("audarik") body, "tejas" (or Fiery) body and karma body. The physical body can be sensed but the other two bodies, "tejas" and karma, are invisible. The physical body is the subject of science and has been studied in great detail. The "tejas" body

has two important functions to perform: (1) to manage the body systems; and (2) to support and provide control on the physical body. These functions are discharged with the help of "prana" energy and other systems. The karma body and the "tejas" body never depart and both of them are always in union with the soul. This union is maintained till the soul attains the state of emancipation. The karma body and "tejas" body together are referred to as subtle body ("SuksmaSarira"). The liberation of the soul is, in fact, getting freedom from the imprisonment by these two bodies [6].

The state of the soul is determined by the level of his consciousness, which in turn depends on the existing karma. The life a soul enjoys in different realms like animal, human being, infernal being or heavenly being is a function of consciousness and karma. The karma body comprising of the karma is a common feature of all organisms in the universe from a virus to highly developed organism like human beings. The karmas are divided into two groups on the basis of their influence on the soul [7].

- Psychical ("Ghati") Karma : These karmas affect the psyche, by which they inhibit and destroy the fundamental nature of soul. The intelligence obscuring, intuition obscuring, deluding and vitality-obstructing karmas belong to this group;
- Physiological ("Aghati") Karma : These karmas concern the physical body and do not cause any harm to the fundamental characteristics of soul. This group includes bliss obscuring karma, morphological karma, status determining karma and age determining karma.

The psychical karmas may destroy the nature of soul fully or partially. It may be mentioned that the fundamental quality of soul is never fully obscured. If that were the case, the soul would lose its basic character and became as good as an inanimate object. Even the densest and darkest of cloud cannot completely obscure the sun, in the same way, any amount of karma cannot obscure the total abilities of intelligence and intuition of the soul [7].

The effects of psychical karmas on soul can be briefly summarized as follows: [8]

- generate attachment and aversion qualities like anger, ego, illusion and greed;
- generate desires, instincts and needs like hunger, sleep, defense (fear) and mating (sex);
- determine the level of intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, perception, will power and determination;
- determine faith, philosophical and spiritual qualities;
- determine personal and social conduct and behavior.

Morphological karmas have a wide variety of functions ranging from the types of realm of birth to the minutest details of the body. These karmas can produce all possible types of bodies of all species, all possible variations in bodies of a given species, all different features like outer appearance, deficiencies, voice, etc., autonomic and physiological functions and structural quality of the body. The bliss obscuring karma may operate at mental or body level to produce mental- or body- oriented pleasure or pain. The age determining karmas has a temporal character and may be connected with "prana"[9].

KARMIC RADIATION THEORY AND JAINISM

Jain philosophy gives details of the mechanism which is responsible for bonding of karma to the soul. The actions of the soul, physical, mental and verbal, and accompanying passions cause vibrations in the soul and the vibrating soul induces similar vibrations in the karma field. The active karma field emits radiations known as "adhyavasaya" (vibrations of the soul in physical form), which possess the characteristic features of the active karma. The psychical "adhyavasaya" and physiological "adhyavasaya" must operate in different ways. The psychical "adhyavasaya" interact with the fiery body field and produce another kind of radiations called "lesya". The physiological "adhyavasaya" are supposed to interact directly with the body cells, most probably, genes, and regulate and control the working of the genes, the biochemical activities, autonomic functions and other body related functions. "Adhyasaya" are present in all living organism. The mind is developed in human beings and other five-sensed animals (vertebrates). The "adhyasaya" discharge the functions of mind in rest of the living organisms. "Adhyasaya" are the means of harvesting the intelligence of the soul. The body cells, according to some scientists, are the source of knowledge in living organism that do not have brain or mind. This only implies that "adhyavasaya" present in the body cells are the source of knowledge [10].

Our feelings and emotions are products of "adhyvasaya". Our thoughts are based on our feelings and emotions, and they do not have independent existence. Thoughts rise and subside with feelings. We can exercise control on our body, mind and speech, but the feeling are beyond our control. The "bhava" (feelings), in fact, need purification and refinement, once purified, there will be no need of control. "Lesya" provides connection between the subtle body and the physical body. They work in both directions. They pick up the signals from the soul through "adhyvasaya" and produce our feelings, and through it transmit the message to the mind and body. On the other hand, whatever is performed by mind, speech and body is communicated by "lesya" and "adhyvasaya" to the karma body. Thus, the entire communication between the subtle body and the physical body is through "lesya" and "adhyvasaya"[10].

THE MIND AND JAINISM

In Jainism, the mind ('manah') is a structure with no-sense (anindriya) or sometimes known as sixth sense. The terms 'no' or 'not' in this case, do not mean negation but comparatively lesser degree of the character of a sense. Though mind also is a source of knowledge, it is regarded as no-indriya; because, it is dependent on other senses for grasping the external objects. It is a common factor in all indirect cognitions. The object of other senses is fixed but the mind is not confined to any of the physical qualities. It iscapable of apprehending the past and future also. The function of the mind is thinking. It arranges the data given by the senses [11].

The mind is divided into two varieties the physical mind (dravyamanah) and the psychical mind (bhavamanah). The physical mind is material structure, constituted of manovargana. It occupies the whole body. This part of mind interacts with the brain and the nervous system. The Digambaras admit the heart as its abode; and of the shape of a lotus with eight petals. The psychical mind (bhavamanah) is the power or activity of the self resulting into various states of mentation, it is soul's capacity to perform mental functions. This part of mind thinks, imagines, plans, discriminates, and takes decisions. According to the Nyaya, the qualities of soul are cognized by the mind. The Jaina does not favour this dependence. He says that soul apprehend its own qualities independently. The Jaina says that they are the qualities of the self mixed with karmic matter [11].

CONCLUSIONS

A final remark on the meaning of the terms 'consciousness' and awareness is in order. The main property of the soul is called chetana. Chetanais not only just 'consciousness' as is generally known to philosophers but much more than that, it manifests itself in several ways: intelligence, knowledge, intuition, bliss, perception, emotions, will, attitude and behaviour, awareness of pleasure and pain as stated before. Philosophers hold that consciousness is "awareness" or "experience" in the conscious state, it is supposed to be absent in unconscious or in coma state. Chetanabeing property of the soul is always present, it manifests explicitly in the conscious state and implicitly in the unconscious or coma state. Without chetanano life is possible.

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