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Economical dimensions of Jain principle of ahimsa

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Abstract

The world is juxta posed with all kinds of people like happiness with misery, rich and poor, health and diseases, peaceful with miseries, comforts and discomforts and the like. The human sufferings are inevitable and pervasive. The human beings through the practice of virtues should identify the peace and potentialities. The growth of mankind and individuals i.e. human development leads to sustainable economic development. The latter is guided by the virtues prescribed in all religions especially Jainism. The great religion Jainism contributed significantly to the sustainable economic development through human development. The paper traces out how the path of Jainism and its ethical principles acting as guiding force and binding force for sustainable economic development. It mainly concentrates on interdependency of non-violence and economics and often leads to one another.

Keywords: Three jewels of Jainism, non-violence, gross national happiness, relative economics vs. absolute economics and sustainable economic development

1. Introduction

Religion and economics are converging. But science and technology have created a new world of materialistic prosperity. Material gain has been purchased with a spiritual loss. Its consequences are not only for human life, but also for the planet itself. Hence ethics is relevant to the quest of modern man in order to satisfy value orientation of the society.

2. Spiritual Progress and Economic Progress

According to J.M. Keynes the main objective of economics is the poor man should become rich and prosperous. Hence Ācharya Mahapragnya in their book "Economics of Mahaveera" said that Modern Economics is based on the materialistic economic prosperity. Economic development, industrial development, a development of technology, per-capita income, standard of living are the yard stick of modern economic development and all these are measured by the promotion of self-interest.

This individual self-interest has created several problems like inequality of income and wealth, exploitation, corruption and other pervasive due to individual greed. For example: in USA and other capitalistic countries greater inequalities of income and wealth because of consumerism and it is nothing but individual self-interest. Even in India these problems has been increased after new economic policy in the name of modernization.

The modernization invariably brings with it consumerism, aggressive capitalism, the exploitation of environment, the use of massive technology and many more. In the future from the Indian and global point of view this type of development is not good. Moreover India has its own enough resources for dealing with these problems. The most important one among these is preaching's of renunciants of different religions of India. Jainism is one of the most ancient religions which came into existence as a result of the most non-violent approach and humanitarian viewpoint towards all creatures.

They preached silently the virtues of non-violence, non-attachment and non-consumerism, where less importance is given to individual interest. There are many ways to adopt the ethical and spiritual values of Jainism to help to modern economic and environmental problems. In the words of Rajendra Suri, "Jainism is society oriented and it condemns individualism.

According to Bhagwan Mahaveera passions like pride, anger, deception and greed are responsible for committing violence. Thus in the words of Mahāvīra 'freedom from passions is the non-violence'. He emphasized that life is sacred irrespective of species, caste, colour,

creed or nationality. On this basis he advocated the principle of 'live and let live', Ahimsa paramo dharma'-Non-violence is the supreme virtue, and Parasparopagraho Jivanam"-which are the essence of Jainism. This distinctive contribution of Jainism makes it different from other religion and it holds an important position among Indian philosophical systems.

Jain philosophy is essentially the philosophy of co-existence. Coexistence of all living beings are treated as equal and exploitation of non-living being is also avoidable. Further earth, water, fire, vegetation are containing living beings and hence their exploitation is prohibited. In the words of Vinod Kothari in his article Jain philosophy and Modern Economics-Conflict or complimentary(2), the Jain view of life based on Ahimsa is extremely close to the theory of sustainable economic development which is needed at present consumer oriented economic system.

3. Non-Violence and Ethics

In Jainism non-violence itself is a religion and not merely a part of religion. That is why Jainism have popular slogan "Ahimsa Paramodharma". Jainism has been rightly ethical religion and lays great stress on the three jewels Right faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct based on the great ethic non-violence. In this ethics there is no conflict between man's duty to him and to the society.

3.1 Right faith (Samyak Darshana)

Jain scholar Umaswamy defines Samyaktarshana as "Tatvartha shraddhanam samyaktarshanam", which means determination to find out the meaning of the essence of reality, Awareness of reality with trust developed in the right view combines with willingness to practice self discipline which control over mind thought, speech, action and passions. This awareness produces an attitude of detachment and non-possession.

3.2 Right knowledge (Samyak Jnāna)

Right knowledge frees one from Ābsolutism (Anēkāntha vāda) and enables one to see things with a liberal and open mind. Anēkāntha vāda means listening views of others also. In this ethics the conflict does not arise and the discovery of the oneness of all living beings leads to non-violent conduct.

3.3 Right conduct (Samyak chāritra)

Right faith, Right knowledge seeker must proceed on the path of right conduct. Right conduct implies a life of self discipline through self restraint as against life of self-indulgence, it requires control over ones desires. Hence Right conduct is related to the state of mind, with discipline in one's mind, speech and body. This disciplined state of mind leads to free from all types of passions like attachment, infatuation, greed, aversion and hatred. Right faith gives confidence and knowledge clears the mind and conduct helping in attainment of equanimity, non-attachment and self-restraint which are required for sustainable economic development.

These three jewels are interdependent. In order to attain Right faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct one must observe the five great vows.

1. Non-violence : Ahimsa
2. Truth : Sathya
3. Non-stealing : Achaurya
4. Celibacy: Bramhacharya
5. Non-possession : Aparigraha

All these three jewels and principles are interrelated with each other and following these three jewels and five principles has not only to refrain from the violence and evils, but also positively engage in the virtuous activities that leads to sustainable economic development. The right conduct is related with practicing five vows non-violence, truth, non-stealing celibacy and non-possession. Jainism believes that troubles and problems in this world are solved by following five vows. Among these prominence is given to Ahimsa. Mahatma Gandhi, Father of our nation, a unique practical economist upholds his economic ideas on the basis of ethics of non-violence". He explained that economy did not mean that a people of a country having the right to develop with the unlimited use of all the living and non-living resources available in the country. But in his sense economy meant that the total living of a country who have got the right to survive with co-existence.

4. Sustainable Economic Development

In this context Ācharya Mahapraghnya in their book Economics of Mahāvīra expounds Mahāvīra's idea of sustainable development. While thinking about sustainable economic development, the following points to be considered.

- ✚ Ahimsa and purity of means
- ✚ Non-erosion of moral values
- ✚ Limits to self-interest
- ✚ Ahimsa and purity of means

Bhagwan Mahaveera said that nobody can object to economic development in society. But it should be achieved through ethical means of ahimsa and not by unethical means of violence. In modern society there is dichotomy of economic performance and ethical performance. Ethical performance implies that earning income by honest means is relatively low. On the other hand high economic performance will contain a tinge of unethical means. Ahimsa based on three jewels advocate ethical performance and discards high economic performance for the well being of society on a sustainable base in the long run.

4.1 Non-erosion of moral values

Lord Mahaveera proposition is that in the name of earning wealth human values should not be sacrificed. In achieving economic development value should not be allowed to be vanished. But now days in earning wealth human values and ethics are sacrificed in the name of economic development. This kind on development leads to impoverishment of crores of people. Thus development of compassion and sensitivity is more important than mere economic development. Hence in Jainism greater importance is given to sacrifice and charity. It is said that in India 62% of total charity fund is contributed by Jains.

4.2 Limits to self-interest

Lord Mahaveera spokes of three possible kinds of life styles.
 Limited desires – limited possession – limited violence
 Unlimited desires – unlimited possession – unlimited violence

Free from desires – non-possession – non-violence.

Thus desires, possession (parigraha) and violence cannot be segregated. Prof. Hiralal Jain pointed out the economic significance of Aparigraha. According to him, in Jainism Parigraha means extremely possessive about both living and

non-living things like animals, family, money, property and the like. The greed for possession has no bounds and causes great economic discord in the society and is responsible for various conflicts.

5. Relative Economics V/S Absolute Economics

The problem of choice between unlimited possession due to wants and limited resources instigate human beings indulge in unethical means and resort to violence. More accumulation due to unlimited desires leads to more violent activities in terms of human beings as well as in terms of natural resources. Less accumulation leads to non-violence is called relative economics. The present Absolute economics is based on unethical means of accumulation encourages violence. But Relative economics based on ethical means discourages violence. In the conference of non-violence of economics, 2005, Acharya Mahapragya is of the opinion that the present economic development is not Ahimsa sãpãksha (non-violence oriented), hence there is greed for wealth. This resulting increase in corruption, unemployment, hunger, industrial development at the expense of society and at the same time cruelty, individual selfishness and other problems raised in the economy.

Hence Acharya Mahapragya propounded Relative economics in terms of Aparigraha and the philosophy of non-violence that helps to attain sustainable economic development. Prof. Hiralal Jain states that controlling unlimited possession through laws has always been unsuccessful because this does not change the temperament of a person. Hence the role of ethical religion based on non-violence is important to control the tendency of extreme possessiveness through internal awareness. The essence of the economic virtue of Aparigraha is that one should set a limit to one's own desire and whatever surplus one may accumulate beyond this limit should be disposed through charities.

Jainism advocates four types of charities known as Aushadha dãna means donate for distribution of medicines and establishing hospitals, Shãstradãna means donate for education or establish schools or pãthashãlãs, Abhayadãna means save the people who are in trouble and Åhãra dãna means distribution of food for needy, hungry and needy people. This tendency will reduce the concentration of wealth among few hands and equal distribution of wealth is possible.

Aparigraha or put limits to accumulation is the only way that will reduce the gap between rich and poor and fair distribution of wealth is also possible. This is how Relative economics based on philosophy of non-violence and Aparigraha helps to attain sustainable economic development. Hence the lure of economic development is not the exclusive function of economic motivations alone, but it has much with religious beliefs of the people.

6. Gross National Happiness

The concept of GNH was introduced by Bhutan's king J.S. Wanshuck in 1972, which was based on the Buddhist philosophy that it is not monetary well being that brings happiness. Any work, any activity has to be undertaken on the basis of ethics, moral values, and non-violence and on spiritual frame-works that brings GNH which is different from GNP. Keynes advocated material happiness of GNP and Mahaveera advocates immaterial happiness GNH. GNH with Ahimsa promotes.

6.1 Social economic development: Means setup of society based on the egalitarianism is free from all sorts of discrimination. The complexities of inferiority and superiority created inequality that resort to violence. Violence brings disharmony, polluting individual as well as society. For example: Naxalites, Maoists, terrorists are indulged in violent activities in India because of social and economic inequality. A non-violence man is one who finds all are equal in spite of external differences. Thus Jain view of non-violence give all happiness. This noble idea of non-violence can be solid foundation of egalitarian society and lead to a better special social order.

6.2 Conservation of natural environment: Now a day's man in his attempts to get mastery over nature and destroying it for his self desire the solution to the problem will come from man himself and not from science and technology. The destruction of environment for all our selfish attitudes is as act of violence. Conserve ecology or perish is the message of Jainism to the modern world. In Jain context the principle "Paraspariopagraho Jeevanam" means that life exists not only in human and animal organism but also in stones, earth, water, fire and vegetation. The destruction of environment for all our selfish attitudes is as act of violence. The Jainism teaches not to exploit nature for our greed of wealth and power. If we practice "Parasparopagraho Jeevanam" based on non-violence does not disturb ecology. Thus non-violence implies restricted consumption of natural resources for universal welfare.

6.3 Establishment of World peace

The political harmony and global peace can be achieved through practice of non-violence

The above four pillars of GNH are achieved by Jaina ethic non-violence. Thus religion is the bed rock for an ethical and economic performance.

6.4 Preserve and promote cultural values: Because of globalization and westernization our cultural values are deteriorated. Our cultural values are preserved through indigenous Jaina philosophy of Non -violence.

7. Suggestions

Finally it can be concluded with valuable suggestion about ethical Jain religion and sustainable economic development.

1. Setup an unbiased international Centre for Relative economic system to look into the pros and cons of the present economic system.
2. The Government should adopt Relative economic policies to come out from present economic system.
3. For sustainable development importance to be given to GNH rather than GNP.
4. Resources possession should be in a judicious way, because excess of anything is dangerous to him, to the society and to the environment ultimately led to violent activities.

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