

Teachings on Non -Violence in Jainism

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Introduction

“If you kill someone, it is yourself you kill. If you overpower someone, it is yourself you overpower.
If you torment someone, it is yourself you torment. If you harm someone,
it is yourself you harm.”

Bhagwan Mahavir

The heart of Jainism is non-violence. Jainism is a religion of compassion, universal love and friendliness. It aims at the welfare of all living beings, and not of man alone. It maintains that living beings are infinite, all so called empty spaces in the universe are filled with minute living beings. According to it, there are countless single-sense organisms that take the subtlest possible units of material elements - earth, water, fire and air - as their bodies. Fresh earth is alive but when it is baked it becomes dead. Fresh water from a well, etc. is alive but when it is boiled or influenced by mixing some other substance it becomes dead. Vegetables, trees, plants, fruits, etc. do have life but when they are dried, cut or cooked they die. To avoid injury to them as far as possible, man is advised to use them discreetly. He should resist from polluting water, air, etc. and thereby perpetrating violence to them. Worms, insects, animals, etc. help in keeping ecological balance thus they help man. And domestic animals have for ages been a constant and faithful aid to man in civilizing himself. From the ultimate standpoint of their original pure pristine state, all living beings are uniform in their nature. Jainism teaches to look upon them as upon one's own self. Inflicting injury to them is inflicting injury to one's own self.

Violence and Non-Violence

The terms Violence and Non- violence are very popular in the present public debate because, people are struggling for non- violence all around the world because of the Violence. Non-violence is a term that most usually refers to an absence of aggression, violence or hostility. Though the world is struggling for non-violence based on various political theories it's more related to spiritual. Lots of religious teachings have discussed about non-violence but Jainism is significant among them. Before talking about the non- violence teachings in Jainism, we should have a clear idea about violence and non violence.

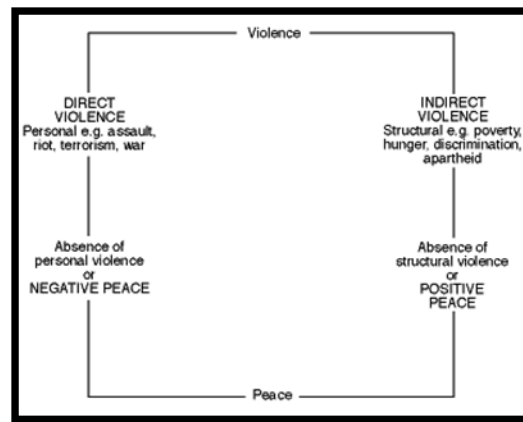
Violence and abuse may occur only once, can involve various tactics of slight manipulation or may occur frequently while increasing over a period of months or years. In any form, violence and

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abuse profoundly affect individual health and well-being. The root causes of all forms of violence are founded in the many types of disparity which continue to exist and grow in society. Violence and abuse are used to establish and maintain power and control over another person, and often reflect a disparity of power between the victim and the abuser. There are nine different forms of violence and abuse: Physical violence; Sexual violence; Emotional violence; Psychological violence; Spiritual violence; Cultural violence; Verbal Abuse; Financial Abuse; and, Neglect.

When conceptualizing violence, it is important to incorporate all aspects of violence while allocates room for understanding the relationship between the forms. A broader example is compulsory, one that includes not just war, torture and other physical abuse but also emotional abuse, oppression, and exploitation. Some of the peace research makes links among these different forms of violence, thus elucidating root causes. To differentiate between types of violence, Johan Galtung presents the concepts of direct and structural violence. Direct violence can take many forms. In its typical form, it involves the use of physical force, like killing or torture, rape, sexual assault, and beatings. Further, it understands that verbal violence, like humiliation or put downs, is also becoming more widely recognized as violence. Johan Galtung, further, describes direct violence as the “avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or life which makes it impossible or difficult for people to meet their needs or achieve their full potential. Threat to use force is also recognized as violence.” Structural violence exists when some groups, classes, genders, nationalities are assumed to have, and in fact do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, classes, genders, nationalities and this imbalanced advantage is built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, and the states. These tendencies may be obvious such as apartheid or slighter such as traditions or tendency to award some groups privileges over another.

Two basic types of Violence



Source: Johan Galtung, 1994

Johan Galtung argues that with a very slight different notion of violence, it can respectively develop a more slight understanding of peace. If it achieves the absence of direct violence in society but still have systems in place that prohibit people from reaching their full potential.

“The reason for the use of the terms ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ is clearly seen: The absence of personal violence does not lead to a positively defined condition, whereas the absence of structural

violence is what we have referred to as social justice, which is positively defined condition. Galtung (1969), p 183.

Non- Violence and Jainism

Jainism, traditionally known as Jain Dharma, is an ancient Indian religion belonging to the ShramaGa tradition. The central tenet is non-violence and respect towards all living beings. The three main principles of Jainism are Ahimsa (non-violence), Anekantavada (non-absolutism) and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness). The principle of Ahimsa (non-violence or non-injury) is the most fundamental and well-known aspect of Jainism. The everyday implementation of the principle of non-violence is more comprehensive than in other religions and is the hallmark for Jain identity. Jains believe in avoiding harm to others through thoughts (mana), speech (vachana), and actions (kaya). According to the Jain text, Purushartha Siddhyupaya, “killing any living being out of passions is hiCsa (injury) and abstaining from such act is ahimsa (non-injury)”.

The concept of Ahimsa, non-violence, has evolved from logical thinking and from experience. It has an almost empirical basis. It has emerged from the doctrine of the equality of all souls. Everyone wants to live, nobody likes to die. Violence enters first in thought, it then manifests itself in speech and then in deeds. That is why they say that war is born in the minds of men. The quest for ahimsa is centered in Anekantavada, the philosophy which accommodates a multiplicity of points-of-view and of perspectives.

In Jain philosophy Ahimsa is said to be the supreme religion and Himsa is considered to be source of all evil and of all miseries. Ahimsa is not limited to not harming the human beings, it extends to all living beings. This philosophy believes in the unity of life and regards all living beings as equal. He who can be cruel to animals can be cruel to human beings too. Further, cruelty is not only an aspect of external behavior, but it is also an inner evil tendency.

In the universe, there are different forms, different orders, of life, such as human beings, animals, insects, trees and plants, bacteria and even still smaller lives which perhaps be seen only through the most powerful of microscopes. Jainism has classified all the living beings according to their sense organs. So, it is impossible to exist without killing or injuring some of the smallest of the living beings. Even in the process of breathing, or drinking or eating, we almost unconsciously kill many sentient beings? Therefore, according to Jainism the minimum of killing should be our ideal. Moreover, it is more serious where killing is done intentionally or through indifference. Therefore, great care should be taken in all our daily activities to see that the minimum of violence is committed by our deeds, speech and mind.

Jainism firmly believes that life is sacred, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or nationality and therefore not only physical or mental injury to life should be avoided, but all possible kindness should be shown towards all the living things. This should be the true spirit of Ahimsa.

Jain Hand – Ahimsa / Abhaya Mudra

The emblem of the Jain religion, symbolizing its main tenet, the doctrine of nonviolence. The hand is in the position of the Abhaya or “no fear” mudra, a gesture-symbol shared with Hinduism and Buddhism. The wheel in the center of the palm is the wheel of Samsara or Dharmachakra; the word in

the center of the wheel reads *ahimsa*, “stop.” Together, they represent the halting of the cycle of reincarnation through the practice of Jain asceticism, the avoidance of harm to any living creature.



Conclusion

According to the findings of the research Ahimsa, non-violence, has been the sheet-anchor of Jainism. Ahimsa is one of the basic virtues. Nowhere else in the other religious traditions has this basic virtue been so scientifically, scrupulously and thoroughly integrated with the main doctrine. Jainism is the only tradition which has consistently allowed this tenet soak into the very essentials of its teachings and practices. This singular uncompromising emphasis on Ahimsa is the special and exclusive feature of Jainism. Jains extend the practice of nonviolence and kindness not only towards other humans but towards all living beings. After nonviolence towards humans, animals and insects, Jains make efforts not to injure plants any more than necessary.

Jains, whether monks, nuns, or householders, therefore, affirm prayerfully and sincerely, that their heart is filled with forgiveness for all living beings and that they have sought and received the forgiveness of all beings, that they crave the friendship of all beings, that all beings give them their friendship and that there is not the slightest feeling of alienation or enmity in their heart for anyone or anything. They also pray that forgiveness and friendliness may reign throughout the world and that all living beings may cherish each other.

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