

Chapter 3

Religious aspect of *ĀcĀrĀÉga-sŪtra*

3.1 Religion

Just as a man has developed social aspect in his life, so does man also possess religious consciousness to understand the objects of religion. The capacity to develop religious conscious is claimed to be universal, in the sense that every man has it. It is the very nature of man himself. It is very much true that from ancient times religious consciousness originated, developed and is expressed in the society by man. How it was done and how it is, will try to enquire in this chapter.

Religion is an attitude of man toward the supreme power or truth. It is a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature and purpose of the universe. It considers the creation of a superhuman agency which involves devotional rituals containing a moral code for governing the conduct of human affairs. It is a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects. It is also the life or state of a monk, nun etc.

It is a cultural system of behaviour and practices, world view, sacred texts, holy places, ethics and social organisation that relate humanity to an order of existence. Different religions may contain various elements like the belief in spiritual beings, divine power, sacred things, faith etc. Religious practices may include rituals, sermons, commemoration, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trances, initiations, funerary services meditations, prayer, music, art, dances, public and matrimonial services. Religions have sacred histories, narratives, scriptures, symbols and holy places that aim mostly to give a meaning to life.

Etymologically, 'religion' is from Latin – religionem (noun religio) which means "respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods".¹ It also means obligation, the bond between man and the gods.²

James define 'Religion' shall mean for us the feelings, acts and experiences of the individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.³ A similar meaning is attached to religion by J.B. Pratt, "Religion is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities towards the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies."⁴

As for the modern Indian point is concerned we take Vivekanand and Aurobindo as representatives. According to Vivekanand, "Religion consists in realisation, reawakening of the soul. It is an awareness of the individual of the infinite in him."⁵ Aurbindo emphatically asserts that the purpose of religion is to link the human with divine so that they may admit the rule of the soul and spirit.⁶

Some languages have words that can be translated as religion but they may use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all. The Sanskrit word *dharma* sometimes translated as religion. But, we do not find the exact rendering of the word *dharma* taken as religion. The word *dharma* comes from root '*dhr*' which mean to hold and bind together. We have discussed about *dharma* in first chapter in connection to man in bringing out his holistic picture. But, we will take up some definitions of *dharma* found in Indian tradition.

¹ See Har.per Douglas, "Religion", online Etymology Dictionary

² See Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

³ See James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p 34-35

⁴ See J. B. Pratt, Religious Consciousness, p.2

⁵ See Vivekananda, Complete works, Vol. IV, p.179-180

⁶ See Aurbindo, Life Divine, p. 102

Jamini defines *dharma* as 'a desirable goal or result that is indicated by injunctive (Vedic) passages.¹ The vaiḍeḥikasŪtra defines *dharma* as 'that from which results happiness and final beatitude.² The manusṠrti gives "know *dharma* to be that which is practised by the learned that lead a moral life, that are free from hatred and partiality, and that is accepted by their hearts.³ There are several other more or less one-side definitions like *ahiḥsā paramo dharmaḥ* (AnuḌĀsaraparva 115.1), *Ānḁḁaḥ syam paro dharmaḥ* (Vanaparva 373.76), *ĀcĀraḥ paramo dharmaḥ* (Manu I.108).

Hence, we see many definitions of both religion and *dharma* in western and Indian tradition. But, here question comes that how these religious consciousnesses developed and what things become the basic contents.

3.2 Development of Religion

The origin and development of religion can be traced from the psychology of a primitive man. "Religious ideas", says Freud, have spring from the same need as all the other achievement of culture, from the necessity for defending oneself against the crushing supremacy of nature.⁴

Psychologists explain it as a religious phenomenon which consists of religious consciousness in man which makes it possible for him to get religious experience. These experiences gave birth to faith and belief in the sacred and not sacred, the pure and the impure. By the process of selection these experiences developed into practise and became inseparable part of the primitive man life. Hence faith, belief, experience and practise lead to the development of religion.

¹ See Purva mimasa SŪtra, 1.1.2

² See P.V.Kane, DharmadĀtra (Vol-I), pp. 1-3

³ See Manusmḁti II. 1

⁴ See Freud, Future of an Illusion, pp. 76-85

The origin of religion is claimed by different writers in different things. For example Tylor's 'anima', Frazer's 'magic', Marett's 'mana', Max Muller's 'nature', and Durkheim's 'totem' gave rise to many different religious theories. We will not go into the detail analysis of these theories but, here it becomes important to conclude that the idea behind the origin and development of religion was man's innate consciousness to respond to nature or supreme power. Man tried to develop that nature in him through worship, prayer, rituals which made his religion. The different objects or ideas at different times gave rise to variety of religious sects.

3.3 Religious Sects in India at the time of Mahāvīra

The age of Lord *Mahāvīra* (6th century B.C.) was of far reaching religious reformist activities not only in India but also throughout the ancient world. It was an age of enlightenment for the human race. Simultaneously there started religious movements at separate centres of civilization of the world.

Even in India, this was an age of freedom of thought which gave rise to new religious movements and brought about radical changes for the better in the old ones. There were large numbers of heretical schools during this time. We should not assume that they were independent religious sects or schools because these are distinguished only by very subtle and minor differences in matters of doctrine and practice. It is not possible today to prove once for all that all these sects originated at the same time. Some of them may have their origin pre and post of *Mahāvīra*.

The origin of different religion revolves around the origin of the different ascetic or intellectual movements. When the individual theory of an ascetic gains appreciation from the masses, the ascetic conduct, becomes the religion of masses.

Max Muller¹, G. Buhler², H. Kern³ and H. Jacobi⁴ all contend that the Brahmanical ascetic was the model of the Buddhist, the Jaina and other heretical sects of this age. It has also been suggested that there arose out of the anti-ritualistic tendency gaining ground within the religion of the *Bráhmaṅas*. G.C.Pandey⁵ has tried to show that the anti-ritualistic tendency within the Vedic fold is itself due to the impact of an asceticism which antedates the Vedas. There are not one but several factors which gave rise to these religious movements. It was an age of frequent and bloody wars which made people long for peace. The great economic prosperity also filled some of them with the despair of material life. There was considerable social distress because of the rigid caste system, the clash of rival schools and sects also led the people to spiritual quest.

The different philosophical thoughts and the conduct gave rise to many religions or religious sects which differ from one another over one or other aspects. The two main streams were the *Vedic (Brahmanical)* and *Non-Vedic (Íramanical)* sects.

3.3.1 Vedic Sects

Vedic or Brahmanical sect is an ancient Indian religious tradition that emerged from the earlier vedic religion in 1st millennium B.C.E. It was the religion of the Indo-aryans of northern India. It is also known as vedism, ancient Hinduism, Brahmanism and vedic Brahmanism. It is historical predecessor of modern hindusim though significantly different from it. It emphasized the rites performed by *Brahmanas* or priestly class.

¹ See Hibbert lectures, p. 351

² See J. G. Buhler, *The Indian Sect of the Jainas*, pp. 191-192

³ See H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*

⁴ See *Sacred Book of east (Vol-XXII)*, p.24

⁵ See G. C. Pandey, *Studies in the origins of Buddhism*, p.317

The four Vedas composed in Sanskrit, *samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads* are the major sacred text. The Vedas are said to be "*apauruḍaya*" meaning uncreated by man who further reveals their eternal non-changing status. The mode of worship in this tradition was the worship of the elements like fire, water, rivers, worship of heroic gods like *Indra*, Chanting of hymns and performance of sacrifices. This mode of worship has been preserved even today which involves recitations from the Vedas for prosperity and general well being.

The attitude of the *Vedic* sects towards secular life was not so uncompromising for they emphasized renunciation only after the proper fulfilment of social duties. The *Brahmanical* religious life of an ascetic were probably the one retiring to the forest (*vĀnaprasthins*) and the one passing to the stage of *SannyĀsa*. The *JĀtakas* most probably depict the life of the *vĀnaprasthins* and the *sannyĀsins*, but there is no line of demarcation drawn between the two. It is only in the *DharmasŪtra* literature of a later period that a clear distinction is made between the two stages of life. According to the *BaudhĀyana DharmasŪtra*, one could renounce the world after the student life or after being a householder, or from the forest.¹

3.3.2 Non-Vedic Sects

Non-Vedic or *ĪramaĒa* sects did not believe in the authority of the Vedas, nor did they believe in the existence of God in the sense of a personal creator or determiner of destiny. For this reason it was also described as *NĀstika*. The *ĪramaĒas* or *munis* were apparently homeless wandering ascetics who did not follow the ritualistic religion of the vedic tradition. Vedic religion emphasized social and ritual obligations, emphasized happiness in the world as in the other and hoped to gain it from the gods. The idea of beginning less cycle of lives, governed by an

¹ See BaudhĀyana DharmasŪtra, II, 10.2-6

overarching law of *karman* from which freedom could come only by the total renunciation of all the claims and impulses of instinctive life, was idea of *Īramanic* religion.

ĪramaĒas believed in the equality of all beings and practiced non-violence etc. The similarity in nature to some extent regarded Jainism and Buddhism to be the offshoot of one another. But, both are different and independent originated religion.

Besides these two major sects, some minor sects were also prevalent during that time. The *sŪtrak^aitĀĒga*¹ describes the four heretical sects of the time of *MahavĪra*. These four great schools comprise three hundred and sixty three schools. These were *KriyĀvĀda* consisting of one hundred and eighty, *AkriyĀvĀda* of eighty four, *AjñĀnavĀda* of sixty seven and *VinayavĀda* of thirty two sects. The *DighanikĀya*² classifies the contemporary sects or religious thought into sixty-two schools which were in existence in the 6th century B.C. Some of them are following:

- a. *KriyĀvĀda* – *KriyĀ* denotes the existence of the soul (*Jiva*), and those who believe in existence of the soul are called *KriyĀvĀdins*³. It is stated that misery is produced by one's own works not by those of somebody else. He who knows the tortures of beings, below in hell, one who knows the influx of sin and its stoppage, one who know misery and its annihilation, is entitled to expound the *KriyĀvĀda*⁴.
- b. *AkriyĀvĀda* – The *AkriyĀvĀda* deny the existence of the soul, etc. for according to them everything is of a momentary existence, and a state comes to an end the moment it comes into existence, and therefore, it cannot have any *kriyĀ*. They do not understand the truth, bring forward

¹ See *SŪtrak^aitĀĒga*, 1.12-1

² See *DighanikĀya*,

³ See *SŪtrak^aitĀĒga*, 1.12

⁴ *Ibid*, 1.12

various opinions, many men believing in them will whirl round in the endless circle of birth.¹ They were identified with the Buddhist who hold the doctrine of *kòāÆikavÁda*.

- c. *AjñÁnavÁda* – The *AjñÁnavÁda* deny the necessity or importance of knowledge to attain salvation since there is assertion of contradictory statements in it.
- d. *VinayavÁda* – They are also known as *vainayikas* or *Aviruddhas*². They do not accept external rules of ceremony, but uphold the supremacy of reverence as the cardinal virtue leading to perfection. Believing truth to be untruth and calling a bad man good, the various upholders of *vinaya* asked about it, explains their tenet that *mokòā* is arrived at through *vinaya*³. They paid equal reverence to all.

Hence it can be concluded that the rise of different sects was a revolutionary and unique movement in the history of religion. Religion is as old as man, but asceticism can be discerned for the first time only in Indian *ÍramaÆism*. It would in fact be noticed that in this form *ÍramaÆism* cannot be distinguished from *BrÁhmaÆism* except negatively since it avoids ritual sacrifices or reference to the worship of gods or to the inequalities of the caste system. What brought together the different heretical sects was their common endorsement of asceticism in practice. In this form, it constitutes a system of universal rational and ethical religion which is wholly non-sectarian, as applicable and relevant today as it was 2500 years ago. This time period of ascetic order gave rise to many ascetics, saints reformers who wander here and there for preaching, discussing and proving their thoughts. During *MahavÍra* time, we come across many religious contemporaries which were enlightening, are found in ancient literatures.

¹ See SÚtrak^aitÁÉga, 12.4-8

² See AÉguttara NikÁya, III

³ See SÚtrak^aitÁÉga, 1.2

3.4 Religious Contemporaries

Some of *Mahavíra's* chief contemporary religious teachers belonging to the *ÍramaĒa* sect were *PÚraĒa kassapa*, *pakudha kachchĀyana*, *makkali GoḍĀla*, *Ajit Keḍakambalin*, *Sañjaya BelaŰŰhiputta*, and the Buddha. It becomes important here to know the other religious reformers thoughts to understand the accuracy and relevance of *Mahavíra's* religious thoughts, ideas, and ascetic code of conduct.

3.4.1 *PÚraĒa kassapa*

From the Buddhist¹ records it is clear that *PÚraĒa kassapa* (*PÚraĒa KĀḍyapa*) was an old, experienced, and respectable teacher. Though his date is not definite, it is presumed that he might have lived in the sixth century B.C. as is evident from references to him. He was the head of a religious order and the founder of a school (*tittha-karo*). He was followed by a large body of disciples and honoured throughout the country. It seems from his name that he was born in a *BrĀhmaĒa* family, the name *PÚraĒa* indicates that he was believed to have fully enlightened and perfect in wisdom.

PÚraĒa kassapa is known to be exponent of the non-action theory (*AkriyĀvĀda*). To him in giving alms, in offering sacrifices, in self mastery, in control of senses and in speaking truth, there is neither merit nor increase of merit.² This is called an exposition of the non-action theory (*akriyĀvĀda*). According to it, man is an irresponsible agent, because his action brings neither any merit nor any demerit. Most probably *kassapa* was an advocate of the theory that soul was passive (*nishkriya*) that no action could affect it and that it was beyond good and bad.³

¹ See DÍghanikĀya I.47

² See T.W.Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 69-70.

³ See *A History of Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy* by Benimadhab Baura, p.279

In other words it can be concluded that his views or doctrine was amoral because one might do whatever one wanted to do without becoming sinful or virtuous. No cause (*hetu*) or condition (*pachchaya*) are accepted by him in either defiling a person or purifying him. He accepted no cause for knowledge and insight or intuition which was not probable for the *Mahavíra* and Buddhist tradition.

3.4.2 *Pakudha kachchÁyana (Kakuda kÁtayÁyana)*

Pakudha kachchÁyana was an elder contemporary of the Buddha. He was the leader of some religious body and was held in great esteem by the people of the time. *Buddhaghosha* says that *pakudha* is his personal name and *kÁtayÁyana* his family name. The term '*pakudha*' has been traditionally interpreted as *prakrudha*, furious. As *Pakudha kachchÁyana* has left no records of his own, we have to depend for knowledge of his doctrine on the *praĀropanishad*, the *sÁmaññaphala sutta* and the *sÚtrak^aitÁnga*.

In the Buddhist *sÁmaññaphala sutta*¹ *kachchÁyana*'s philosophy is described as the doctrine of seven categories (*sattakÁyavÁda*). The *sÚtrak^aitÁnga*² presents the system of six categories omitting pleasure and pain, adding space in their place. He accepted nothing comes out of nothing.³ The term eternalism⁴ was applied to his doctrine.

It can be concluded *kachchÁyana*'s doctrine were said to be the doctrine of non-action (*akriyÁvÁda*). B.M. *Baura*⁵ compares *kachchÁyana* and Empedocles. Both of them maintained that the elements of being are so distinct qualitatively from one another that there is not

¹ See *DighanikÁya* (ed. by T.W.Rhysdaviids and J.E.Carpenter), (Vol-III), p. 57

² See *SÚtrak^aitÁnga*, I, 1.1

³ *Ibid*, I, 11.2

⁴ See *SthÁrÁĒga*, IV, *DighanikÁya*, 1.13-17

⁵ See B.M. Baura, *A History pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, pp.204-285

transition from one to the other. In the view of both becoming is impossible.

3.4.3 *Ajit Keḍakambalin*

Ajit Keḍakambalin is known to be the historical founder of Indian materialism. He was held in great esteem by the people of his time. He was called *Keḍakambalin* because he put on a blanket of human hair. His philosophy is known from *SÁmaññaphala sutta*¹. There are two aspects of his philosophy negative and positive.

According to him, there is no merit in sacrifices or offering, no resultant fruit from good and evil deeds. No one passes from this world to the next. There is no existence of individually after death. The four elements constitute a body, when a man dies it return back to it. Ajit in the negative aspect of his doctrine resemble Epicurus, while on positive side of his speculation he seems to be more a stoic than an epicurean, his fundamental point being that nothing but the corporeal is real.²

Ajit's doctrine was described by *MahavÍra* and Buddha as TaġġÍva-taġġ-sarÍra-vÁda in contradistinction to the doctrine of the soul being distinct from the body. According to *MahavÍra*, by denying future life, Ajita taught men to kill, burn, destroy and enjoy all the pleasures of life.³ Hence, he taught us to believe rather in life than in death and to show proper regards to persons when they are alive rather than honour them when they are dead.

3.4.4 *Sañjaya Belaġġhiputta*

Sañjaya Belaġġhiputta was one of the religious teachers of the 6th century B.C. As is obvious from the *SÁmaññaphala sutta*, he was a

¹ See *SÁmaññaphala sutta* (by DighanÍkÁya, I, No.2), 23

² See B.M. Baura, *A History pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, p.293

³ See *Sacred Book of east*, XLV, p. 340-341

wanderer and the founder of a religious order as well as of a school of thought in Rājagṛha.

The Jaina mention the theory of Ajñānavāda or Agnosticism of which *Sañjaya Belaṅghiputta* seems to be the chief advocate. Those in whom there is ignorance or who walk about in ignorance. According to the Buddhist, *Sañjaya's* doctrine was neither a doctrine of acceptance nor a doctrine of denial. He neither denied the existence of the next world nor accepted it. Whether the beings are produced by chance or whether there is any fruit of good or bad action or whether a man who won the truth continues after death, to all these questions he gave the same answer.¹

3.4.5 *Maṅkhali Goḍala*

Maṅkhali Goḍala was the *Mahavīra's* contemporary leader of the Ājivaka sect. He was born in the cow-shed, so he was called as *Goḍala*. When he grew up, he left home for some unknown reason and become a homeless wanderer, spending twenty-four years as an ascetic. From the account of the *Bhagavati sūtra*², it is known that *Goḍala* became a disciple of *Mahavīra*. Contrary to Jaina account, H. Jacobi³ and B.M. Barva⁴ are of opinions that *Mahavīra* remained a disciple of *Goḍala* for some time.

Goḍala was the profounder of a 'doctrine of change through re-animation' (*pauṅṅaparihāravāda*), or, better still of a theory of natural transformation (*pariṅṅamavāda*) which he came to formulate from the generalisation based on the periodical re-animations of plant life.⁵ He came to the conclusion that just as the sesame seeds after having completely perished come to life from their inherent force or will to be, so are all living beings capable of re-animations.

¹ See *Sāmaññaphala sutta*, p. 31

² See *Bhagavati Sūtra*, XV.1

³ See *Sacred book of the East*, XLV, p.30

⁴ See B.M. Baura, *A History pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, p.300

⁵ See *Bhagavati Sūtra*, XV.1

Both Buddhist and the Jainas regarded the Ājivikas as amoralist and proceeded to condemn them as immoral in practice on the evidence of Jaina scriptures. A.F.R. Hoernle¹ accuses *Goḍāla* of hypocrisy and in continence.

It can be concluded that his theory teaches that as man in predestined in certain ways. He stands highest in the graduations of existence and that the duty of man as the highest of beings to conduct himself according to law and make the fullest use of one's liberties.

3.4.6 The Buddha

Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism was also the contemporary of *Mahavīra*. Gautama alias *Siddhārtha* was born in 563 B.C. at *Lumbinivana*. His father *Īuddhodana* of the *SĀkya* clan was the ruler of *Kapilvastu*. His mother *MĀyĀ* died seven days after his birth, and he was brought up by his mother's sister *MahĀprajāpati Gotami*. When he grew up he married *YaḍodharĀ*, and has a son *RĀhula*.

Buddha established religious system by advocating four noble truths and the eight fold path. The first three practices lead to physical control (*Īila*), the second three to mental control (*Chitta*) and the last two to intellectual development (*Prajñā*). The exposition of the eight fold path is said to be the Buddha's first discourse. It is also widely known as *Madhyama pratipat*. Buddhism avoids the two extreme ways of life, one being that of ease and luxury and the other of rigorous asceticism.

Hence, it can be evaluated that *Mahavīra*'s time was the time of many religious contemporaries who originated and were spreading their religious and philosophical thoughts at that time. It was the age or time of religious practices and doctrines discussion. It cannot be absolutely said that these entire religious preacher were successful in establishing their

¹ See Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (ed. by J. Hastinga), pp. 263-265

particular system but, their ascetic ideas are found widely discussed in ancient literature. The two main religions developed in *Īramana* tradition were *Nigganthis* (Jaina) and Buddhism. The other contemporaries are discussed somehow similar to these both. *Ājivikas* were very near to *Nigganthis* with whom they were sometimes confused. Its doctrine were regarded same as of fatalism but rather with as special variety of it which included many other dogmas. It also combined an extreme form of asceticism which included nudity and austerities culminating in a voluntary suicide through not drinking.¹ In the same sequence, was *Pakudha kacĀyana* who is said to have questioned the possibility of interaction between the seven ultimate and immutable elements. The common thing of both was the denial of the spiritual efficacy of action (*akriyavĀda*). We also read of a materialist *Ajit Kesakambali* and of an agnostic *Sañjaya belaĀhaputta* among the leaders of the *parivrĀjakas*. The most prominent was the Jaina and Buddhist having many dissimilar arguments on similar subjects. The real difference between them was that *MahavĪra* accepted a dialectical point of view whereas Buddhist dialectic is negative. It seeks a middle way between *asti* and *nĀsti*. The Jaina dialectic is positive and synthetic.

However, we will not discuss the subject into more detail as the aim was only to know the different religious thoughts and preachers who were contemporary of *MahavĪra* and were advocating during his time. All were discussing individual and cosmic realities in their own way. But, their way of dealing was either absolutistic or nihilistic. It was also creating religious confusion.

Lord *MahavĪra* articulated a non-absolutistic perception to deal with and produce a unique way of thinking. *MahavĪra's* religious life and thoughts, his practices and conduct are well formulated in *ĀcĀrĀĒga-*

¹ See A.L.Bhasam, History and doctrine of the *Ājivikas*, pp.127-129

sÚtra. His asceticism, codes of conduct which he not only preached but, also practiced to achieve the highest goal of life. First he practised and then he preached as the religious propounder.

3.5 Critical Evaluation

The nature and origin of Indian religions has been the subject of much controversy, regarding two contradictory attitudes called as *pravrttidharma* and *Niv^atti-dharma*. Classical tradition attributes *prav^atti dharama* to the ritualistic side of vedic religion and the *Niv^atti-dharma* to the ascetic tradition of Buddhist and Jaina. They were believed to be as the reformist and anti ritualistic trend.

Vedic literature clearly marked the belief that divinity is, above all creativity. Nature is indwelt by divine power and man is surrounded by it in diverse forms. Brahma was in fact defined as the creator. The *DharmasÚtras* and *Sm^atis* included the renunciation of life within the vedic scheme of life as the fourth *Áðrama*. But against this outlook of vedic tradition, there was powerful current of *niv^atti dharma* by Buddhism and Jainism which led to a transformation of the vedic tradition through a new synthesis. This interactive synthesis was not confined to vedic, Buddhist and Jaina but also affected the other ascetic tradition like *kriyavada*, *akriyavada* etc.

The belief in the other world also rested on belief in *karma* philosophy, it follows that real issue on which *Ástikas*, *NÁstikas* and *aiòòikas* were divided was the issue of *karman*. The doctrine of *karman* constituted the essential doctrine of the *ÍramaÆas* and its impact created an unprecedented ferment in the thought world of the 6th century B.C. in India.

Man is wholly dependent on himself in *ÍramaÆism*. The doctrine of *karma* should logically mean self reliance and strenuous activity, i.e. the principle of *kriyÁvÁda*. It is a curious fact some of the

ĪramaĒa sects which we encounter in the 6th century B.C. had turned fatalistic or otherwise rejected the possibility of real action. They thus exemplified what is called *akriyāvĀda*. *ĪlĀnka* explains that action become sufficient for liberation only when it is combined with knowledge. The wise man avoids injury to living beings and restrains their actions. Only he “who knows the influx of sin and its stoppage; who knows misery and its annihilation he is entitled to expound the *kriyāvĀda*¹.”

The *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sūtra* defines the Niggantha as *kriyāvĀdi*². The *Sūtrak^{at}ĀĒga* criticizing the rival doctrine of *akriyāvĀda*, *vinayavĀda* and *ajñĀnavĀda* explains “misery is produced by one’s own works, not by those of somebody else, but right knowledge and conduct lead to liberation.³”

3.6 Religious Aspects of ĀcĀrĀĒga-sūtra.

The Jaina tradition has its own unique religious contribution to the life of a man. Right belief, knowledge and conduct become its basic constituent or contents in building its religious aspect. It also provides us with what type of nature religion has and who must be the preacher of religion. It gives us with important and unique practises followed in Jaina religious tradition. We will take these discussions and analysis under this section.

3.6.1 Contents of Religion

The building blocks of Jaina religious system are right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. The right faith in the Jina who were the profunder of religion, the right knowledge of the truth of the self and non-self and the right practises of the codes of conduct is the way to liberation. These are also called three jewels of Jaina religion.

¹ See *Acarangav^{at}ti* by Īlankasuri, I.1.1.3, V

² See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sūtra*, I.1.1.5 (517)

³ See H. Jacobi, SBE, *Sūtrak^{at}ĀĒga*, vol.45, p.317

The right faith or *Samyagdarðana* is the firm belief in the fundamental principles of Jainism. It is a right attitude or right conviction. The *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra* explain it as *praijñā*¹ meaning right perception and discrimination among realities and non-realities. The *uttarÁdhyayana* defines it as belief in the nine categories.² In *DarðanpÁhuda*, Kundakunda also define it as a firm belief in the six substances or nine categories.³ UmÁsvÁti⁴, define it as belief in seven predicament of Jainism. Faith marks the start journey towards the ultimate goal. It indicates the first glimpses of truth. Faith has been praised as a great moral virtue and necessary for all religious and spiritual progress. The ©gveda praises faith (ðraddhÁ).⁵ The GitÁ⁶ says that only the faithful attains knowledge. It has been held that right faith is the essential basis of the Jaina religious conduct, philosophy and culture.

After attaining the right faith, it is the right knowledge which helps in the realisation of truth. Knowledge occupies a very significant position in the history of Indian philosophy. Knowledge occupies such an important position in the Upaniðad that they are called *jñÁnakÁÉda* (dealing with knowledge) of the Veda. Ìðopaniðad says that through knowledge one gets immortality.⁷ The GitÁ says that there is nothing purer than knowledge.⁸ According to sÁkhyā, vaiðeðika and vedÁnta, knowledge is the only means of liberation. The *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra* says that the truth is that one who knows one knows all and who knows all knows one.⁹

¹ See *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*, 3.74

² See *UttarÁdhyayana*, 28.14,15

³ See *DarðanpÁhuda*, Delhi, 1943, 19

⁴ See *TattvÁrthsÚtra*, 1.2

⁵ See ©gveda, 10.151 1.5

⁶ See *GitÁ*, 4.39

⁷ See *Ìðopaniðad*, 11

⁸ See *GitÁ*, 4.38

⁹ See *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*, 3.74

Right faith and right knowledge precedes right conduct. Right conduct consists in self absorption. No conduct, knowledge without right faith can be said to be right. It is the union of the three that brings real bliss to the soul.

3.6.2 Nature of Religion

Every religion or religious traditions have some unique nature which differentiates it from other traditions and each behaves in accordance with their respective traditions. It is true that men's religion is universal and meant for mankind as a whole irrespective of their creed, sex, color and the like. Piety, truth, love, non-violence etc. are ideal religion to be emulated by all. Religion unites, but sects divide. Religion is good conduct and good conduct automatically becomes religion. The Nature of religion is also universal. It inherents the same qualities for all. In *ĀcĀrĀÉga-sŪtra* religion is explained as tranquillity, dispassion, peacefulness, liberation, purity, uprightness, gentleness, lightness and non-violence.¹

3.6.3 Preacher of Religion (Propounder of Religion).

Any one cannot become the expounder of religion. The *ĀcĀrĀÉga-sŪtra* explains that the unbiased monk of right faith should propound the religion.² The monk who is devoid of attachment, hatred, and who is impartial. The expounder of religion must be learned in the sacred lore, should know compassion or non-violence towards the living world and then expound the religion.³ The preacher must circumspectly expound the principles of religion to all living beings⁴ without offending himself and others. This is why he is also designated as non-offender⁵. The religion should not be propounded in a way that may be harmful to the acquisition

¹ See *ĀcĀrĀÉga-sŪtra*, 6.102

² *Ibid*, 6.100

³ *Ibid*, 6.101

⁴ *Ibid*, 6.103

⁵ *Ibid*, 6.105

of the *sÚtra* and its meaning or both with regard to himself and other monk. A religious preacher must possess certain qualification tested on the touchstone of truth and non-violence. The five qualifications have been attributed to the preacher, like freedom from bias, right perception, friendliness with all living beings, mastery of scriptural knowledge, and not causing hindrance to others. These qualities are important for the religious expounder.

3.6.4 Importance of *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*

The *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra* advises monks and nuns to never indulge in any sort of violence with earth, water, fire, plant, air bodied souls, two sensed beings and the like. Detachment, austerity and self control must be practised to release from the bondage of passion which is the cause of the world. The monk should not deviate from his path while facing favourable and unfavourable circumstances. The monk must be observer of Right knowledge and Right cognition. He should wash away all evil *karmas* by penance and self control. It advises all to be rid of infatuation and delusion. It exhorts them to preserve self control even at the cost of life. The *ÀcÁrÁÉga* contains various desires like those of food, movement, bed, speech, cloth, pot, shelter, space, excretion, word, form and the like. There are also twenty-five reflections on the five great vows and views about liberation with the help of many similes. The *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra* deeply focuses on the religious conduct of monk. We will take up some of religious aspects for critical analysis and evaluation.

3.6.4.1 Nudity / Begging of Clothes

In the Jaina tradition the practised of Nudity and relinquishment of clothes were prevalent during Lord *MahavÍra's* time or earlier and are prevalent even today till modern times. This characteristic of Jain ascetic of staying without clothes is the unique and highly religious.

The MÚIÁcara the basic text for the conduct of a Digambara monk mentions Nudity¹, as one of the quality among twenty-eight qualities (mÚlaguÆas) of a monk. In ĀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra three traditions about robes are mentioned. Some monk renounces the world with three robes, some with two and others with one only.² In all these three traditions, there is the prescription of robes only in the autumn and on the advent of summer, there is the prescription of one robe or nudity.³ It seems probable that in the dispensation of Lord PÁrĐva, all these three systems concerning robe were prevalent. Among those three the Lord *MahavÍra* adopted the system of one piece of cloth. *MahavÍra* initiated himself into ascetic life with a robe on, which he later on discarded.

After the Nirvana of *MahavÍra* the Jaina tradition was divided into two sects, the *Digambar* and the *Īvetambar*. The *Digambar* ascetic till now practice nudity and the *Īvetambar* uses white clothes to cover and protect their body. The four classes of ascetics have been mentioned in connection with the clothing with three or two or one or no clothing. The acceptance of clothing was twofold general and exceptional. An ascetic engaged in intensive penance uses three pieces of clothing. The monk of ancient Jaina discipline followed this. The monk with two pieces of clothing is necessarily the observance practiser of the Jaina discipline through purification or intensive penance. The monk with one piece of clothing is stronger possessed of strong physical structure in comparison with the monks with three or two pieces of clothing. The desire for fourth cloth is incidental seasonal. A true ascetic never desires for a fourth piece.

Now, it is very clear that the discipline of nude life is a transcendental discipline and not an ordinary doctrine. Living in nudity and

¹ See MÚIÁcara, GÁtha 2-3

² See ĀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra, 8.43,62,85

³ Ibid, 8.52, 53, 70, 71, 93.

the endurance of the hardships of cold etc. is the highest religious conduct for a monk. Even using very ordinary and merger clothing in respect of number, length and cost is mere necessity for protection and save from social shyness.

However, the question can be raised that even in Jaina tradition we find two different kinds of ascetics based on their clothes. It can be simply answered that the practise of religious conduct and hardship of nudity are not equally possible for all. From earlier time to modern times the life style, society and atmosphere have changed. People may not take the nude ascetic as much socially relevant and may even sometimes fear to go near him. People even put forth questions that what is need of it? Is nudity really needed to liberate or gain merit. Why such hard performance to the body.

It is argued that ascetic aim of life is to get liberation. He lives for soul and not for body. Soul cannot sustain without body in worldly life, so body has to be sustain. It is only sustained to do spiritual conduct and destroy the bondage of *karma*. When the hardships are beared by body through austerities and penances, the soul become light from the bondage of *karma* and moves fast towards the liberation. It is totally religious conduct or act and nothing else.

3.6.4.2 Fast Unto Death

According to Jainism every soul is, by its nature pure and perfect with infinite knowledge, power, perception and bliss. From eternity soul is associated with karmic matter and is subject to birth and re-birth. Religion prescribes many vows and rules of conduct to assist the path of realisation. Living a life is an art so the pursuing of death. How should a wise man face death when it is nearing. It is stated that there are two ways

of facing death: death with one's will and death against one's will.¹ Death against one's will is that of ignorant man and it happens many times and death with one's will is that of wise men and it happens once.

For an ascetic who has purified his body and mind with observance of so many vows, fast unto death is another highest vow at the end stage of his life. It is facing death voluntarily when one is nearing his end and when normal life according to religion is not possible due to old age, incurable disease, severe famine etc. after subjugation of all passions and abandonment of all worldly attachments, simultaneously doing meditation.

The Jaina literature like *UttarĀdhyayana*, *DaḅavaikĀlika*, *BhaktapratyĀkhyĀna* etc. explains about *SallekhanĀ*. The *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra* also gives three types of Fast unto death.

- 1) *BhaktapratyĀkhyĀna* – This means total abstinence from food and drink. The monk lies on a bed of straw and waits for death even without moving his limbs.²
- 2) *IPginĪmaraĒa* – The monk lies on a bare piece of ground and abstains from food and drinks although he can move according to the rules of *gupti* and *samiti*.³
- 3) *PrĀyopagamana* – In this monk stands motionless like a tree till death comes.⁴

In all the three stages the monk should be equanimous in favourable and unfavourable situations. He should be indifferent to pleasure and pain, concentrating only on dissociation of *karma*. By the such

¹ See Herman Jacobi, *Jaina SŪtra*, Vol-45

² See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*, I, 8.2-8.11

³ *Ibid*, I, 8.11-8.18

⁴ *Ibid*, I, 8.19-8.25

perception of dissociation of *karma* the ecstasy is well practised, his exertion for pure spirituality becomes successful.¹

The fast unto death vow of Jaina tradition is unique and a non-violent way of facing death. Though, other traditions have also talked of various modes of death. Like the Hindu *dharma sÁstras* sanction various modes of death. The Hindu scripture lay down various rules for the conduct of forest hermits. If the forest hermit suffers from some incurable disease and cannot properly perform his duties or feels death to be near, he should start the great journey (*mahÁprasthÁna*) subsisting on water and air only, till the body falls to rise no more. A forest hermit may resort to the distant journey or may enter water or fire or may throw himself from a precipice.² Even Buddhism condemns suicide but there are stories of individual monks having committed suicide in a heat of passion by hanging, falling down from the mountain top etc. we will not go into the detail of other traditions.

Hence, it is very clear that Jaina tradition of *sallekhana* is unique and harmonious to nature and self. It is completely different from suicide. Suicide is done in anger and with aim of getting rid of the situation, whereas *sallekhana* or fast unto death is done with the view that now body is not supportable for other spiritual practise and the aim is of liberation of the soul. The mind is at peaceful situation. Therefore society and religions in the past approved different forms of voluntary deaths in Jaina tradition as acts of piety, conducive to religious merit. Sometimes such acts have been condemned as repugnant to all morals and human conscience. At last, it can be said it is religious act of highly meritorious person.

¹ See *AcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*, I, 8.5

² See P. V. Kane, *History of DharmaDÁtra*, Vol-II, Part -II, p.22

3.6.4.3 The Great Vows (MahÁvratas)

Jainism is an ascetic religion from the very beginning and it has retained its ascetic character till modern times. The ascetic character is fulfilled by five great vows. Vows are a form of self-discipline. They mean a healthy restraint of body, mind and speech. The word *vrata* has been derived from the root 'vri' which means voluntary acceptance of certain limitations. It means a firm decision to do or not to do things. Vows and intentions are two different things, since intentions may be good or bad, but vows can never be evil in intent or execution vows are the buildings blocks of any religious system. The Jaina religious system talks of five kinds of vows or great vows of monk/nuns. The *mÚlÁcÁra*, *Bhagavati-sÚtra*, *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*, *TattvÁrtha-sÚtra* and many other texts explain about the five great vows. The five great vows are as following:

- 1) Great Vow of Non-Violence: The Jaina believes in the equality of all life. Therefore the vow of non-violence includes abstinence from taking the life of any superior or inferior being in any form. Not only the *trasa* or mobile forms of life, are not to be destroyed but any violence to *SthÁvara* or immobile such as vegetables, fire, air, water and earth is also to be avoided. An ascetic at the time of initiations takes the vow of restraining himself from injury to the six classes of beings.¹ Such observer of the vow deserves to be called an ascetic.² A monk should observe the discipline for the whole life. This is the pure perennial and eternal doctrine which was propounded by the self realized *arhats* who comprehended the world of living beings.³ The doctrine of *ahimsÁ* is the truth. The doctrine "no living being should be injured" is the ultimate truth.

¹ See *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*, 1.90

² *Ibid*, 1.92

³ *Ibid*, 4.2

- 2) Great Vow of Truthfulness: The monk leaves all worldly activities and, therefore for him truth carries a deeper meaning than mere statement of facts. Truth means a considerate mode of expression, a thoughtful speech which is beneficial for all. One should be steadfast in truth¹ till the end of his life. *BhĀsyakĀr* has given 12 meanings for truth. These are real, really existent ultimately real, fact, universal law, exposition of the real, restraint, uprightness in word, thought and deed, truthful speech, non-deprecatory speech, practical utterance and right observance of the vow undertaken. According to the *ĀcĀrĀĒga v^atti*, the meaning of the truth is restrain.² According to *ĀcĀrĀĒga cŪrni* truth is the right observance of the vow undertaken.³
- 3) The Vow of non-stealing: The vow of non-stealing of the monk refrain him from taking anything without being offered not only in a village or a town, but also in a forest. Whatever little possession a monk has is acquired by him by begging of the householders. No object, howsoever small should be acquired or used by the monk without an express permission of the owner. One should have an attitude of detachment towards one's possessions. Rules for begging food, clothes, bowl, shelter etc. should be observed by monks. We do not find detail description of vow of non-stealing in *ĀcĀrĀĒga*. But, according to it taking life of a living is stealing.⁴ The *BhĀĠyakĀr* has explained that in those days, the heretic teachers did not use water, not offered to them. They took the permission of the owner of the water reservoir. The Jaina monks however argued that such permission was inadequate for its killing before use. In the absence of such permission, was not the use of

¹ See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*, 3.40

² See *ĀcĀrĀĒga v^atti*, patra 147

³ See *ĀcĀrĀĒga cŪrni*, patra 114

⁴ See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*, 1.58

water that was deprived of its life, a case of accepting what was not offered. They take what has not been given.¹

- 4) The Vow of Celibacy: The monks, being a celibate, should be absolutely free from any type of sexual desire. He is to abstain not only from intercourse but also from bodily decoration. Sense indulgence, exciting food, excessive food, songs and dance, association with women, exciting surroundings, passionate thinking. Recalling past sexual enjoyment, and planning for future sexual enjoyment.² Such ascetic is designated as competent, heroic and praiseworthy. Practicing celibacy, he emaciates the conglomerate of his physical and karmic body.³ The *BhĀṭyakĀr* has given three meanings for the word celibacy: religious conduct, abstinence from sex and living with a teacher. The other name of *ĀcĀrĀĒga* is also *Brahmacarya*. The Lord *MahavĪra* has said a monk tormented by sexual desires should adopt the following measures: take light diet, reduce his diet, relax his body and do headstand posture, wander from village to village, undertake fasting, and withdraw his mind from women.⁴
- 5) The Vow of Non-possession: *Parigraha* has been defined as *mŪrcchĀ* or attachment.⁵ Attachment to anything is the cause of bondage and, therefore, should be avoided. The monk who gets rid of the mind of possessiveness abandons possessiveness.⁶ The disposition of "mine-ness is possessiveness". *MŪĪĀcĀra*, defines *aparigraha* as renunciation of sentient and insentient paraphernalia and non-attachment towards such objects as are allowed by the scriptures.⁷ The author of *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*

¹ See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*, 8.4

² See *MŪĪĀcĀra*, 10.105-106

³ See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*, 4.44

⁴ *Ibid*, 5.78-5.84

⁵ See *DaḍavaikĀlika*, 6.20

⁶ See *ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra*, 2.156

⁷ See *MŪĪĀcĀra*, 1.9

explains that the person endowed with the virtue of non-possessiveness are so on account of their non-clinging to the possessions.¹ All those who are free from acquisitiveness are so only on account of their being free from the sense of mine-ness with respect to worldly objects. In the same context, author also explains that the discrimination between the high who possesses fortune and the low who suffers from poverty become senseless.² The principle of non-possession is equally beneficial to the rich and the poor. Although there is fortune with one, and absence of fortune with the other, clinging is active in both. And, therefore, the instruction of the principle vow non-possession is to be imparted with the same seriousness to the poor as to the rich, in order to get released from clinging.

There are also small vows (*Añuvrata*) for laymen and laywomen according to their capacity to take up. It is not possible for all to bear the hardships of the life of a monk. In supporting these vows there are supplementary vows like *Guñavratas* and *SikòAvratas*. The difference of both great vows and small vows is based on the capacity to endure but, both are equally harmonious to nature.

3.6.4.4 Begging for Food, Shelter and Bowl etc.

The ascetic controls both attachment and aversion and lives a disciplined life. The begging of required things is done in well disciplined manner. Otherwise the love and hate for the agreeable and the disagreeable becomes the cause of accepting the unacceptable. Therefore, the abstinence from both attachment and aversion is described while begging. It is explained in *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra* that the monk should comprehend the proper time for the alms round, the condition of his health, the quantity of his food, the proper place of begging, proper behaviour while begging,

¹ See *ÀcÁrÁÉga-sÚtra*, 5.39

² *Ibid*, 2.174

discipline of begging, the doctrine and the attitude of the giver. He should not have any attachment to alms. He should practice the discipline in proper time and should be free of selfish motive and prejudice.¹ The ascetic should beg only for such articles that are necessary for sustenance of life. He should only beg for clothes, pots, blankets, dusters, shelters, straw mats.² The homeless wanderer perceives himself and also the ultimate truth. That is why he is called a 'seer'. Such a seer should use the articles in manner different from that of the common people.³ He should not receive them as a possession like that of the householder. Understanding that these things are religious materials belonging to the preceptor, he should receive them without any kind of attachment or sense of mine-ness to them. This is the way declared by Jinas.

Hence, it is clear that begging of necessary things is required from religious aspect as without these his spiritual progress may not be fulfilled. The society may feel that the person becomes monk, beg for everything and hence don't want to work and earn his livelihood. But, this idea is completely false. Monks don't want to engage himself in world attire for such necessities. His little requirement can be easily fulfilled by the householders who are engaged in worldly life and without much burden on them. At the same time they earn religious merit by paying reverence to the monks/nuns. The ways of monks must be respected. Sages help us to know the religious and spiritual values of life which helps us to solve our worldly problems.

Leap Ahead-

We considered and discussed above some of the crucially important religious conducts of monks and other points in analysis of

¹ See ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra, 2.110

² Ibid, 2.112

³ Ibid, 2.118

ĀcĀrĀĒga-sŪtra. Additionally, we have also discussed significant points about religion, its development, different sects and contemporaries in Indian tradition during MahĀvĪra's time. It is made clear that all religious rites, rituals, prayers, duties and conduct help us to remove our *karmic* bondage or *kleṣa* which purifies our soul. Without considering such religious analysis of man's life it was not possible to know about the soul (*Ātma*) and the way to become supreme soul. Therefore, with a view to move ourselves towards supreme power we, turn to the next chapter about the spiritual analysis of man's life.