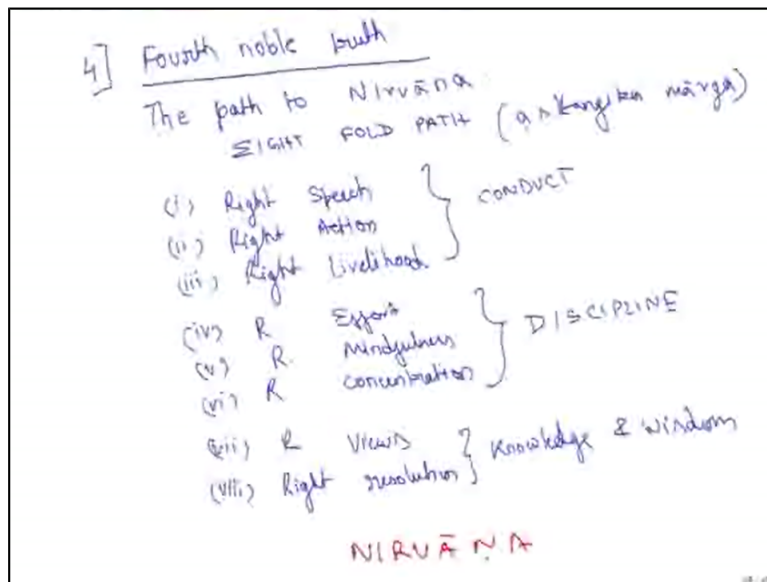


Ethics
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Module No. #01
Lecture No. #31
Buddhist Ethics – Part 2 – Jaina Ethics

Now, coming to the third Noble Truth, in the chain of understanding of, the moral life of a human being, the Buddhist have claim that, life is full of suffering. And then, we came across the first two Noble Truths. Now, the third Noble Truth states, almost an Ontological claim.

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That, if you look at the slide, when it says, the third Noble Truth claims that, since suffering is caused, it can be eliminated, by eliminating its causes. Now, this seems to be a fairly, obvious simple claim perhaps. That, when we talk about, well, since suffering is caused, it can be eliminate it causes, and eliminate suffering. What is the profundity of such a claim? Or, what is the need of one, regarding it as a Noble Truth. Well.

First, bringing suffering into the chain of causality, that well, suffering is no fatalistic accident. Suffering is no gift of chance. And that, there is a way out of suffering. And because, how do you understand that, with the ontological claim as well, suffering is in the causality chain. So, if you eliminate its causes, you eliminate suffering. Now, in contrast, a fatalistic worldview could say,

that well, that suffering is an inevitable part, or is a gift of chance.

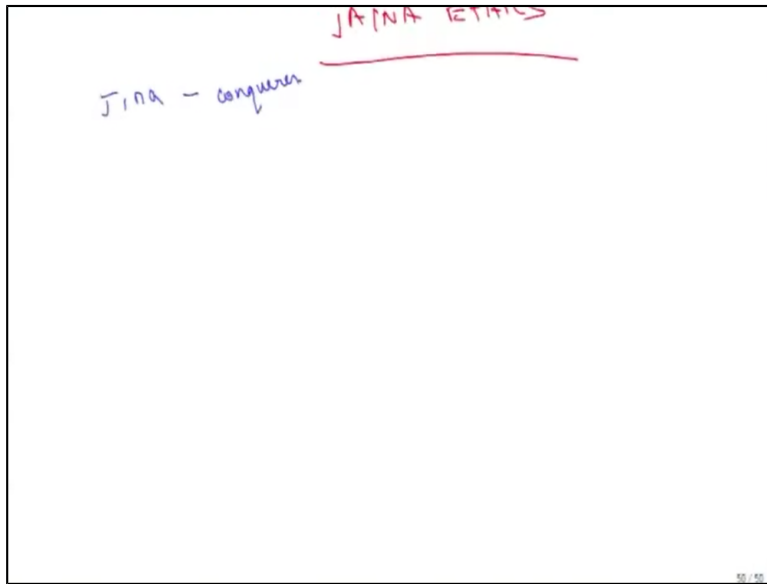
And, there is nothing, one can do about it. And, that brings about a sense of randomness, in human life. But here, the Buddhist claim is fundamentally very strong, that suffering is in the domain of causality. And, if you do eliminate the causes, you eliminate suffering itself. So, it is not that, suffering is a gift of chance, or that it comes about randomly, or it is inevitable. So, it can be evaded, or taken care of.

Now, the fourth Noble Truth describes the path, to the elimination of suffering. Or, what is in Buddhist terminology called, the path to Nirvana. And, it is called the eightfold path. Now, what about the eightfold path. What the eightfold path, or it is also known as the, Astangika-Marga. Now, this eightfold path, we will talk about. Well. First, let me list it down. Then, we will have a brief glimpse of it.

Right speech. Right action. Right livelihood. Right effort. Right mindfulness. Right concentration. Followed by, right views. And finally, the eighth method of right resolution. So, the first three, there to conduct. Then, to discipline. And, finally to, knowledge and wisdom. So, these are the eightfold paths, that the Buddhist suggest, one has to follow. It is about the right speech, right action, right livelihood. So, this is about, how one conducts oneself to lives.

Speech action, and livelihood about discipline, which is a mental phenomenon. So, it is about making the right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. It is about right views, and right resolution, or having the right resolve. Now, this is finally, what leads to, according to the Buddhists, what they have termed as the Nirvana. So, that is basically sums up, what the Buddhist Ethics briefly puts forth.

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Now, we are going to talk about, Jaina Ethics. Now, we have just talked about, in the earlier classes about, Buddhist Ethics. And, now we are going to talk about, Jaina Ethics. This is in no way, an exhaustive, or a detailed view of, Jaina Ethics. But, just a brief overview of Jaina Ethics, as a part of the Indian ethical tradition. If those who are interested, are welcome to go ahead, and read more about it.

But now, most people, who have studied in India, are familiar with, or in the Indian subcontinent, or those who have taken interest in, history of the world or religions, or the orient, have come across Jainism, both as a religion, and as a philosophy. Similarly, Buddhism has been both, a religion and philosophy. Now, we have come across the tenets, of these religions or philosophies, in elementary forms or in basic forms, in various books that we might have studied, or information that we have come across.

Now, I am sure, many of you must be wondering that, are these tenets practical. Why I have to talking about it. Do these, actually connect to the world out there. I mean, these are historical tenets. And, say something like, right action, truthfulness, that well, one should always utter the truth. Perhaps, these have become, not just out-fashion, but these have become difficult to hold, practices in the world out there.

Now, where are we connecting, and what are we talking about. Well. For one, let us open up our minds, let us have an empathetic reading, of these philosophies and religions. Let us imagine a time, when Buddhists and Jains, the Jaina religion and philosophy came up. Now, in that time, depending on the context, these religions evolved, or these philosophies evolved. Now, in these philosophies, Ethics was not an isolated conduct, that took place.

Now, in these times, philosophical understanding of religion, or the way of living, was centred around, one's philosophical, or metaphysical, or religious beliefs. Contrast it with, today. Today, the centre of our life is perhaps, for many of us, is occupied by the profession, they carry forward, or their means of livelihood. And, religion or other beliefs form to be a part, or supplement, to the life that they lead.

Now, this was perhaps not the case, in the times that these religions, and philosophies evolved. This was the time when, livelihood was perhaps a pursuit necessary, and there was affluence enough, not to worry about, or hoard and save for the future. But, the emphasis, was to live the right kind of life. And therefore, the entire thrust of the intellectuals then, was on discerning religion, philosophy, metaphysics, and the fundamental nature of the world.

And then, having a code of living, which will ultimately get, what one wants to get. And, which was perhaps liberation, in various terms as it is known. Today, we find this difficult. Today, we are talking about it, almost like an, object in the museum of, what is Jaina Ethics, and what is Buddhist Ethics.

Now, for somebody suppose, even let us imagine, has been transposed from that time, to this time, will be very curious and amused, if not hurt, or with this deep sense of wronging, or maybe a pity for people like me, and asks, who are trying to have a, textual understanding of Jain Ethics or Buddhist Ethics. Because, for them, Ethics was not something, which is to be listed down as a law code, and to be follow. But, it naturally stems from one's metaphysical beliefs, religious practices, and philosophy of living.

Now, in such a situation where, trust levels were perhaps so high that, uttering the truth was not a

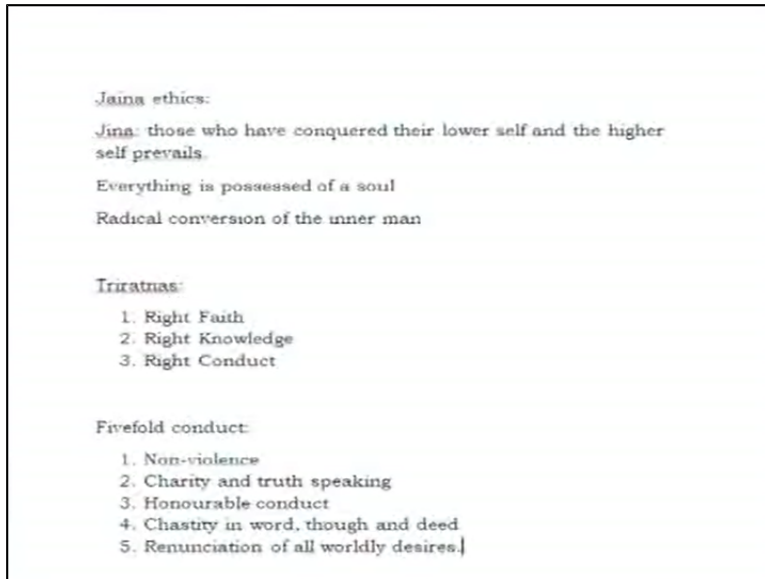
miraculous expectation. Whereas, perhaps today, if somebody says that well, I shall only speak the truth, well, one would perhaps line into a lot of trouble very soon, from the time one makes that resolution. Of course, this is not to disappoint the truth speakers, or not to say that all of us are liars, but even our etiquettes, our wishes also, have a certain level of implicit inaccuracy.

So, like when we, say thank you, or when we wish somebody a good morning, to be really wish, that the person has a good morning, or we are really grateful. Well. That is a question, I leave on you to dwell. So, coming back to, why we are talking about these things, is because, we need to understand that, these Ethics evolve in a time, and there are people today, and there are places today, where this is still trying to be practised, with the same spirit as in which it evolved.

So, it was a full package of living. It was not a one-hour escape for capsule course to find out, about the way of living. This is, another way of living. This is a way of living, which is governed by these metaphysical doctrines, and religious practices that came along. And, other things fade into the background.

So, having putting in that kind of a, notice in your minds, I hope to elicit an empathetic understanding, or more accurately, and more open understanding, or more contextual understanding of the Ethics, that we talk about. Now, a little bit history about Jaina Ethics, or which is known as Jina, or the conqueror. Jains are the follower of Jina, or the conqueror, the victor. Now, what did the conqueror conquer. Well. The conqueror did conquer, his lower self, and realise the higher self.

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So, when we talk about Jina, Jina is the one, those who have conquered their lower self, and the higher self prevails. So, this is what is basically, the etymological meaning of the word. Jina are the one, who has been victor, or victorious, or conquered yourself. Mahavira or Vardhamana, is perhaps known as the founder of Jainism, but which is not historically correct.

Because, Mahavira himself claims, that Vardhamana is the, last of the reformer, of the previously existing creed of Parshwanath. In fact, Rishabha, as he is known as the founder of Jainism. So, Jina was born in 599 BC, at Vaishali. And, he attains liberation in, 526 BC. So, that is a little bit sketchy history about the Jains. Now well, what are the tenets of Jainism. Well. First, it says that well, almost everything is possessed of a soul.

And, that is how, which many of you must have heard, we see the excessive stress, on non-violence in Jains, and the Jaina philosophy. So, the claim that Jaina want to make is that, we do have, so to say, a sticky material lower self. And, our objective is that, our higher self, conquers our sticky lower self. Now, let me put this, in a little bit of perspective, for you to perhaps make a little more sense out of this.

Because, yes, Indian philosophers do talk about self, and higher self, and a lower self. And, there is a lot of religion also, talks about it. But well, on the other hand, we have a dominant school of freedom saying that, let us be, what we want to be. And, let us not impose, morals and religion

and philosophy, and try to take control of people's lives. Because, after almost the scholasticism of the mediaeval times, we find this kind of rebellion, to any established religion or moral practices.

Now, let me put this question to you. That, if any of you have been fond of classical music, both in the Indian or the western tradition. Now, how have you been fond of this classical music. Probably, the answer for most of us, or most of the people, who would be fond of classical music, is that well, they have been trained in it. And perhaps, most of those, who have not trained in it, do not have a liking for it. Or, have not been able to cultivate, a liking for it. And, would prefer, more contemporary immediately appealing music.

But, does that mean that, a classical music does not make any sense. This is just being presented as an analogy, where you to perhaps make sense of it. Now, what we call as freedom, is giving oneself, no loading of information, or moral practices, or religion, or metaphysical beliefs. Then, what takes over. Well. One could say that, it is well, the fundamental biological rights, take over.

If one is not socialised, if one is not moralised, well one is free, well one is free, the fundamental rights takeover. So, either way, what is this thing called freedom. Is it just allowing, not loading any information, onto the human agent. And, then seeing, what the human being does, or allowing the human being to do, what he or she does. Or, what the notion of freedom, that these schools of philosophies and religions would say, just as classical music.

That, you need a certain amount of training, to cultivate or to understand, and thereof to be in a position, to like or dislike such a system. So, it is natural. A child going to school, would not like to study. Probably, most of us hated the school, on our first day. Or, it may be now, or even in our first year. And, alphabets did not make any sense to us. We were just mugging up alphabets, without understanding them.

Then, we come across words. And then, we come across sentences. And then, we come across meaning. And then, we are able to appreciate, that well, the alphabets had to be learnt, before one could make sense of its utility. So, like classical music, like anything in life, that requires a little

bit of, or substantial amount of training, to understand, or even have a chance to appreciate, or to dislike it, rather than judging it, as it comes across to us.

So, we do need to build our vocabulary to, appreciate or critique, meaning and language. Thus, the Jain philosophers or the Buddhist philosophers, or this entire Indian philosophical tradition, in fact even religious traditions world over would, only be fair in giving them a chance, in trying to understand it. And then, making a judgement on it than, fundamentally rejecting it.

And therefore, may be many countries in the world, do provide some religious exposure, to children in school. Whereas, some countries would prefer that, the children are not exposed to any religion or moral sciences, and they develop on their own. So, these are two ways of understanding, human nature. And, it differs in the practices, that come across. For Jainism, freedom is the radical conversion of the inner man.

I am extensively taking the words of Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, in understanding the Ethics of the Jains, in his classical introduction to Indian philosophy. Which, I think many must read, if you like to know more about, Indian philosophy and its various schools. So, this conversion of man, that well, from the lower self, we get onto the higher self, that we need to conquer our basic desires, or we need to move from, our basal fundamental self to a higher self.

It makes a very crucial assumption, why morality is required. It has because, it is again intertwined with its metaphysics and ontology. So, there is a Karma or action, which is accumulates. So, the kind of Karma, one accumulates. Karma or action simplistically understood, brings forth tendencies or fruits in one's own life or next life. And, one's aim is to nullify, the effect of these Karmas, and attain liberation.

So, we need to take care of the Karmas, that we are laden with, and try to restrain its effects, and then go ahead, and attain liberation. So, the apparatus of morality, is basically required to reform human nature, and prevent formation of new Karma. So, many of us must have heard in school, the Triratnas, or the Three Jewels, that Nirvana can be attained through. Now, what are these Three Jewels, or Triratnas.

These are, well, for one, it is Right Faith. Two is Right Knowledge. And, three is Right Conduct. So, what is basically means, Right Faith is that, faith in Jina, or the leader. And, the Right Knowledge is, knowledge of his doctrine. And, Right Conduct is following the conduct, prescribed in by the Jina. So, they also have mentioned of fivefold conduct, which is one, non-violence.

Well. The emphasis of non-violence for Jaina is very, very fundamental. And, many of you must have taken a look, those who are familiar with Jaina monks, would have seen, perhaps the Digambara and Svetambara. The Digambara are the ones, Jaina monks, who are aesthetics, or who are in the nude. And, Svetambara are the ones, that are clad in white cloth. They seem to have a cloth, wrapped around the mouth, when they are speaking or breathing also.

Because, this supposedly prevents the destruction of, or killing of, or violence of, the various microbes that are in the air. They have extreme practices, to prevent killing or violence, as much as possible. So, apart from non-vegetarian food, they even tried to go about their lives, causing minimum damage to life, or the world around them. Now, that perhaps, many people have found difficulty following, that well, life essentially breeds on life.

And, we do find, that well, no matter how much effort we make, the survival of an organism, feeds on another organism, or accidentally requires the destruction of another organism. Now, to this, I would like to say, maybe a more empathetic understanding of, this Jaina way of living is, that well, no matter, perfection cannot be achieved. But, does that mean, do we not even target perfection.

So, as much as we can, let us be. The Jaina would say, that let us be non-violent. That therefore, non-violence is refraining from all violence. And, also being, does not mean that, just refraining from violence, but also acts of positive kindness. Now, in the fivefold conduct, the second conduct that we talk about is, charity and truth speaking. Then, there is honourable conduct, chastity in word, thought and deed. And finally, renunciation of all worldly desires.

And now, these are fairly easy to understand, but they are perhaps very difficult to follow, and that perhaps, brings in a sense of difficulty. That, in the audience, and in people, who are trying to explore or engaged with Jainism, is that, this becomes very difficult. But well, this is the fundamental now, if the greater the reward, the stiffer the path. So, these are conducts, fairly simple, fairly obvious, and fairly postulated, by perhaps most of the religions, and codes of conduct.

But, to follow it, is this is the necessary path, which will get rid of our bad Karma, and bring about, the absence of any accumulation of future Karma. And, that means, the higher self, conquering the lower self. Okay. Many of you might be thinking, that well, why this notion of nudity, in Digambara. Now, as Radhakrishnan puts it, that well, nudity is getting rid of the final discrimination in the sense, that human beings have, of shame, that well.

Shame is, getting sense of discriminative possession, a sense of discrimination, between clothed, and the unclothed. And therefore, we find, that even giving up clothes, is giving that final sense of shame up. And, accepting oneself, as one is. The Jaina ethical systems are more rigorous, than the Buddhist ethical system. But, there is a lot of commonalities. But, there are essential differences about it also. In fact, there are views that, the Buddha and the Jain are, two interpretations of the same person.

We shall not be going to it. But historically, they have been documented as different figures, and with clear evidence of the same. Concerning more about Jaina Ethics, we would also like to say, that well, what essentially Jaina Ethics wants us, that well, to overcome our desire, for the things outside or external to us. And, this desire, for things external to us, bewilders us. And, the whole object of following ethical code of conduct, or Jaina Ethics, is to contain this bewilderment, by refraining oneself from, pursuing objects external to us.

And, meditation is a process, that helps us in this. So, Jaina Ethics that way, is very clear, that well, there is a clear cut systematic order of the world in which, the harder the Jina has worked, or the aesthetic has worked, he or she deserves the award, of the negation of Karma, and the attainment of Nirvana. And thereby, this denies the notion of blessings, or grace, or any phrenic

notion of god intervening to forgive, and bring about or give a special boon, or a shortcut, to the seeker on the spiritual path.

So, for the Jains, it is a very impersonal moral order, that the more dedicated and doggedly the aesthetic follows one's path, is what naturally begets the rewards of the path. And, there is no special intervention, or yes, in that case. So, we had a short talk on Jainism. And, I would invite others, who would like to read, or know more about Jainism, to go ahead with Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's Introduction to Indian Philosophy, from which the source of this talk, has been taken.

And, explore it, in its own detail, and try to get it, try to relate it to, what today is. The Jaina community, has been a rather small community, but a tightly knit community, and it does survive in its practices. So, we see, that well, Jaina Ethics is kind of a, perhaps one of the toughest, and most austere forms of, ethical practices subscribed. And, it does not count upon, grace blessing, or any kind of a shortcut, or intervention by gods, to bring about a special benefit to the seeker.

It is simply, the efforts one puts in, the livelihood one follows, the dog had sticking to the conduct prescribed, that one demolishes one's old Karma, or bad Karma, and creates none, and therefore leads to Nirvana.