

## **FOREWORD**

**Lala Raj Krishen Jain Memorial Lectures, University of Delhi, Delhi have become an institution in themselves. Instituted in 1975 by Lala Prem Chandra Jain in memory of his illustrious father, the Lecture Series have not only acquired a history of their own; but have created a tradition in the annals of the University. Beginning with A.N. Upadhye (who, in fact, could not deliver the first lectures of the series due to his intervening sad demise), the Lecture Series have passed through a long course of their own where eminent scholars presented their scholarly lectures of the highest order. Some of the top academicians who obliged us in this context were G.C. Pande, D.S. Kothari; B.R. Saksena, Jagdish Chandra Jain, K.D. Bajpai and so on. Vilas A. Sangave happens to be the latest and the fourteenth.**

**The verbal presentation of the scholars are committed to printing by Shri Raj Krishen Jain Charitable Trust, New Delhi for the benefit of those who fail to avail of the occasion and for the future generation of scholars and the lay people. Some of these lectures have already been published. The ones delivered by Dr. Sangave are being brought out presently**

**To write a foreword to the lectures entitled 'Jaina Society Through The Ages' by Dr. Sangave is a reward in itself. The theme chosen by him is relevant not only to every Jaina in the country and abroad, but also to every thinking Indian as well. He has brought out the salient features of the Jaina Community of India in the Most lucid language and has underlined the fundamental issues that haunt the community as a whole. Basing primarily on the Census Reports of India from 1891 to 1981 and on his own observations as one of the topmost sociologists Dr. Sangave has brought to high such important and startling facts which open the eyes of those who profess the religion in question and of those as well who watch it being followed, upheld and professed as per the tenets of their faith. Dr. Sangave has planned his theme in the following broad sections-Significant Features, Demographic Changes, Religious Splits, Social Fissions, Flourishment and Decline and Current Fundamental Issues. In this context, he has very ably highlighted the distinguishing features of Jainism (the precise and correct spelling of the term is Jinism), the demographic analysis of the Jaina Community as a whole and statewise, districtwise, regionwise and so on; the rise of sects and sub-sects, origin and interaction of classes (Varnas) and castes, the history of Jainism in terms of its Flourishment and decline and**

lastly the problems of the fundamental nature which are staring at the face of the Jaina Community in terms of its survival in the face of the cut-throat rivalry and competition that are going on in the country as a whole.

The present piece of research of Dr. Sangave like his earlier ones is a work which depicts his trait of clear-headedness and frankness. He has brought out and highlighted the truth without any fear or favour. This is one of the rarest feat on the part of a scholar particularly in the present day context, when intimidation and appeasement are galore all around. He has attempted at the exposure of the persecutions policy and nature of Hinduism in the past and present which has done utmost harm to the growth and development of Jainism and Buddhism. In this context, he has also suggested ways and means, which if followed and practised in letter and spirit, can restore the past glory of Jainism and can reinvigorate it for centuries to come.

One of the most significant observations of Dr. Sangave in his present thesis is with regard to the concept of Ahimsa as a doctrine. Among the five vratas (vows) of the Jainas; the first one which pertains to Ahimsa has been considered by Dr. Sangave and thousands of his predecessors as the

essence of Jaina faith and religion. It has also been considered as the chief or foremost vrata, whereas the other four ones, i.e. Satya-vrata (abstention from falsehood), Asteya-vrata (abstention from stealing), Brahmacharya-vrata (abstention from sexual indulgence) and Aparigraha-vrata (abstention from worldly possessions) are treated as the supplement of the first one i.e.-Ahimsa-vrata. In fact, the vow of Ahimsa over the centuries has become at the hands of authors and Acaryas the all-inclusive and the most comprehensive in character and scope.

Various studies of the doctrine of Ahimsa have been made and brought to light in the recent past by scholars both professing the religion and observing it from close quarters. They too have tried to define the term. Their interpretations differ considerably. The scholars depict it as a positive concept, on the one hand, though the derivative meaning of the term Ahimsa presents it to be a negative concept, i.e. negation from the act of causing injury to any living being while the other set of scholars, on the other hand, argue differently and ask why did after all the concept of Ahimsa originate; what was the necessity that impelled young men of the times of Mahavira and Buddha to leave their households, worldly pleasures, etc. and adopt a life of poverty and self-negation; what did they

want to achieve and so on and so forth. In finding answers to the questions cited above, some scholars have come to the conclusion that probably Ahimsa was a social necessity of that period and the period that followed. Modern researches; they argue; have revealed that iron was discovered in the Gangetic Valley in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. With the help of iron implements large tracts of land were brought under plough. That was the beginning of the shift in the society from the pastoral mode of production to an agricultural one. In carrying the shift to its culmination point, it was necessary to utilize the services of large number of domesticated animals and cattle and hence a social necessity was felt on a large scale. That was the reason, they hold, that led to the revolt against sacrificial killing of cattle.

It took the shape of a revolution under the leadership of Mahavira and Buddha. The emphasis on Ahimsa in the teachings of those great religious leaders has been explained in this very manner. Now the point that emerges is that if this explanation has got any bearing on the situation of the society of those days, it has equal of similar bearing on the society today. One may simply ask and argue: why this Ahimsa when the industrialization is the order of the day and machines are gradually taking over the place of the cattle; will it not lead to

large scale surplus of cattle; what will the society do With the surplus cattle, and so on and so forth. Large scale meat and fish consumption in the industrialised countries may have its explanation in the analysis as cited above. Under the circumstances, the role of the upholders of Ahimsa has increased to a very large extent. Among such upholders of Ahimsa, the Jainas occupy the foremost position and thus the major responsibility lies on their shoulders to defend and protect their cherished doctrine as a whole. The suggestion of Dr. Sangave that there is a tendency towards slackness in the observance of the principle of Ahimsa even among the Jainas themselves gets explained in this manner. One may go to the extent of suggesting that the necessity of the emergence of another Tirthankara has become quite obvious today.

Another very relevant question that needs an explanation in this context is the position of other vratas propounded by Ana (Mahavira, the Jaina Tirthankara) or Thirthankaras especially the last one, i.e. Aparigraha. Mahavira had taken it to its logical culmination when he established the order of monks who were required to discard parigraha (possession) of all sorts including the clothes to cover their bodies against the vagaries of nature and to hide their nudity. The spirit behind this lofty doctrine

of the Jaina faith as propounded by him was to think of the fate of the dispossessed in the society. Thus, in fact, he was the first and the foremost ‘socialist’ in recorded history of the human race. The question needs, I believe, a thorough investigation by the fellow scholars.

Another point that needs a thorough analysis by the scholars is the study of the ways and means that the religious minorities have adopted over the centuries for their survival in the face of the all-pervading influence of the ruling faith. It is a truth examined and tested all through history that the ideas, manners, customs, rituals, etc. of the ruling group overpowers those of the rest of the people, whether they like it or not. This process may be slow, but it is always steady. Under the circumstances of the same or similar nature, the leaders of each religious minority find out and practise the methods that they consider influence-proof. Whether the Jaina community has made its own arrangement to face this challenge is the uppermost concern in the mind of Dr. Sangave as a sociologist.

Dr. Sangave’s lectures provide a clear-cut message to the Jaina Community as a whole to rise to the occasion and unite itself for its survival. As noted above, he traces history

**of Jainism in the country and does not hesitate to call a spade a spade. The Hindu persecution of the Jainas has been clearly and unambiguously cited and illustrated by him and the sad and unfortunate fate of Jainism today has been ascribed to the aggressive and expansionist designs of Hinduism. This needs stoppage for all times to come. The awakening among the Jain masses is the only answer, one may submit.**

**To conclude, it may be noted that Shri Raj Krishen Jain Memorial Lecture Series have another dimension of their own. As cited above, the lectures have created history in the University of Delhi, I Delhi. Will this history stop with the said lectures alone? This is another question that agitates our minds quite often. Its culmination, I believe, lies in the establishment of a full-fledged Department of Prakrit and Jainology. Will the Jaina Samaja (community) rise to the occasion? Academicians like us are impatient people. They want history to be recreated and not that history be allowed to take its own course.**

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