

The Eleven Doubts

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Bhagvan Mahavira gained omniscience on the tenth day of dark fortnight of Vaisakha month on the bank of river Rajuvalka after a long period of penance and meditation of about twelve and half years. By a series of unprecedented spiritual efforts he eliminated all his psychical karma covering the infinite psychical powers of his soul. This resulted in the state of the soul with infinite intelligence, intuition, bliss and spiritual energy. A common human soul veiled with psychical Karma is possessed of knowledge as well as ignorance, the ignorance out weighing knowledge by a very large measure. The ignorance puts a bound on knowledge and the soul is not able to perceive the truth. When the ignorance is eliminated on annihilation of knowledge obscuring karma the knowledge becomes boundless, The knowledge of omniscient has to be necessarily boundless in order that there is no trace of ignorance, if there is a bound on knowledge, ignorance will necessarily exist.

The first public exposition of omniscience of Bhagvan Mahavira was made in the first Samavasaran when eleven Vedic scholars got fully satisfactory reply to their doubts. All these scholars were renowned exponents of Vedas but had some doubts regarding soul, cosmology etc. that perhaps no one could answer. They were of the view that if great scholars like them were not able to find answers to these questions, no one else could do so. When they came to know that Gods and people were rushing to the Samavasaran of Mahavira and not coming to their *yagya* their pride was hurt. They thought that there was no scholar greater than them and hence decided to test the wisdom of Mahavira by posing their doubts as questions. These doubts of Vedic scholars are also generally the doubts of many scholars today and their answers by Mahavira are really very educative.

The First Doubt

When the Vedic scholars went to Mahavira, there was no need for them to express their doubts; Mahavira knew the doubts by his power of omniscience. Indrabhuti Gautam, along with his 500 disciples, was the first to meet Mahavira. When he reached Samavasarana, Mahavira addressed him by his name. Gautama was surprised how Mahavira knew his name. He thought he is a famous scholar and like every one else Mahavira also knows him. But the next moment Gautama was stunned when Mahavira

said "**Gautam! You have a doubt on the existence of soul.** You think that if soul exists it should be visible like other objects; if the soul is invisible like *akasa* its existence cannot be accepted. If someone proves the existence of soul by inference, it is also not correct because only a visible object can be inferred, like fire on seeing smoke. There is also nothing else visible that is connected to soul that may help in its inference. The existence of soul can also not be proved by Agama, because an invisible object cannot be the subject of Agama. There is also no one who has really 'seen' or experienced the soul, whose words can be taken as a proof of its existence. Further, the existence of soul cannot be proved on the basis of Agama, as there are many conflicting Agamas. Then why people believe in soul?"

Clearing these doubt Mahavira said "Gautam! your doubting the soul is not right. Your belief that soul is not directly identified is not correct. You are directly experiencing the soul. The statements like 'I have done', 'I am doing', 'I will do' are direct indication of the existence of soul, because the soul and not body makes such statements. Further, who, except the soul, has the doubt? Your doubting itself is indicative of soul. If you doubt this inference, then everything in the universe will be doubtful."

"The soul is directly known because its attributes like memory are directly experienced. If the attributes are directly experienced so does its substratum soul. The soul is known by its attributes like knowledge, conation, etc. The attributes cannot be separated from the object."

Gautama agreed that the attributes are not separate from its substratum object but said that it is not right to assume that memory resides in the soul, it could, like weakness, strength etc., refer to the body, and there is no need to assume separate existence of soul for this. Mahavira said that knowledge, conation etc cannot be the attributes of body as the body is visible and physical like a pot whereas knowledge etc attributes are non-visible and non-physical. Hence there must exist a non-physical soul separate from the physical body."

Gautam said "OK, I accept the existence of soul in my body but what is the proof that soul also exists in other bodies? Mahavira said "The same logic also proves existence of soul in other bodies."

Mahavira presented other arguments for the existence of soul:

1. There must be an authority owning the sense organs. As the potter is the maker of a pot, the soul is the authority of sense organs.
2. As the body has a form, it must have an authority. The formless objects like clouds have no authority. The soul is the authority of body.
3. The sense organs and passions have the relationship of raw material and product, like clay and pot. As a potter is required to produce a pot from clay, the soul is required to produce passions through senses.
4. There must be a user of the body, as a man is the user of food. The soul is the user of the body.
5. There is an owner of a thing, like house, that is constructed. In that sense the soul is the owner of the body.

"The word 'soul' like the word 'pot' must have a meaning" said Mahavira.

"Yes, the meaning of 'soul' is body and nothing else" said Gautam.

Mahavira replied "No, the word 'soul' cannot mean body because the synonyms of 'soul' like *prani*, *sat*, *atman* etc. are not the synonyms of body. The attributes of soul and body are different; the soul is possessed of knowledge whereas the body is inanimate. Gautam! You should not doubt the words of the omniscient as he is free of passions which are the source of falsity."

Mahavira continued "The soul is identified by consciousness. Some people believe that the soul is universal like *akasa* and that the same soul pervades the bodies of all beings. This is not correct. *Akasa* is one because it is similar everywhere. The living beings are different and each being is a unique one. So the souls have individual identity. The pains and pleasures experienced by each soul are different and cannot be the part of one common soul. When one soul is emancipated the others are not."

Gautam - "If consciousness is the identifying attribute of soul than how the souls are individual as the same consciousness is present in all souls?"

Mahavira - "All souls possess consciousness but the level of consciousness in each soul is different. This, in fact, distinguishes the souls. Thus there are infinite souls."

Gautam - "Even if the souls are infinite, they could be omnipresent".

Mahavira - "The soul is not omnipresent, it extends the body it occupies as its attributes are found only in that body and not beyond. The soul is permanent as well as transient. It transfers from one body to another without changing its basic character. Thus the soul is eternal."

Mahavira continued - "Many people believe that only matter can produce a new article and therefore the soul is a product of matter. This is not correct. A dead body made of matter does not possess knowledge. Knowledge is the attribute of soul and not of matter. Hence a knowledgeable soul cannot emerge from matter."

All doubts of Indrabhuti Gautam regarding soul were removed and he along with his 500 disciples accepted the Order of Mahavira.

The Second Doubt

Agnibhuti, the younger brother of Indrabhuti Gautam, was the next scholar to go to Mahavira. Like Indrabhuti he also addressed Agnibhuti by name and said **"Agnibhuti! You have a doubt on the existence of karma as it is not directly proved by any means.** This doubt is not correct. I see the karma directly and you can also prove it by inference. You experience the result of fruition of karma as pleasure and pain and on that basis you can infer the existence of karma. Pain and pleasure are the actions that must necessarily have a cause. As the cause of sprouting is the seed, the karma is the cause of pain and pleasure."

Agnibhuti said "If a visible cause can be found for pain and pleasures, why one should assume an invisible cause for it. We know that sandal wood brings pleasure and snake poison is the cause of pain."

Mahavira replied "The visible cause suffers from forcible attempt, because when visible causes are the same the individual experiences differ. Therefore the proposition of karma is essential. The karma body exists even prior to the formation of the physical body. Further, we perform acts like charity etc., these actions must produce fruits later like the fruits of agriculture. These fruits of charity are karma."

Agnibhuti agreed but posed another question "As the fruits of agriculture is crop, the fruits of charity can be assumed as peace of mind. Not granting existence to such visible fruits why should one assume the existence of invisible karma?"

Mahavira replied "Agnibhuti! The peace of mind is also a kind of action and like other actions it must also produce fruit. This fruit is karma. The fruition of this karma again produces pain and pleasure in future and so on."

Agnibhuti "If existence of any action is due to a cause, the cause of physical body must also be physical"

Mahavira "Yes, I believe in physical karma as its fruits like body are physical. Further:

1. Karmas are physical as their association results in experiences of pain and pleasure like food which is physical. Any relation of body with non-physical thing like *akasa* does not produce pain and pleasure.
2. The karma is physical for its association results in fire like feeling.
3. Karma is physical because it attracts external physical matter, just like a pot smeared with oil becomes oily and attracts dust.
4. Karma is physical as its transformations are different from the transformation of the soul.

How the physical karma establishes a relation with non-physical soul? See, that a physical pot is related to non-physical *akasa*. In the same way the physical karmas are related to the non-physical soul. The visible body is physical but we find that it is related to the soul. The transmigrating soul from one body to another must have a relationship with the karman body in the absence of which the soul cannot form a new body.

You may ask how the physical karma can influence the non-physical soul? We see that the non physical intelligence is adversely influenced by physical matter like wine, poison, etc. and is favorably influenced by nourishing food like milk, ghee, etc. In the same way the non-physical soul is adversely and favourably influenced by physical karma.

In other words, we may say the mundane soul is really not non-physical. The relation between karma and soul is beginning less and so the state of the soul determined by karma is also physical. The soul and karma have cause and effect relationship, the body is cause and karma is its effect and similarly karma is cause and body is its effect.

Agnibhuti said "If we assume that God is the cause of this universe, there is no need of karma."

Mahavira - "Denying the existence of karma if we assume that pure soul or God is the cause of body then all such assumptions shall be inconsistent as the pure soul or God (being non-physical) do not have access to karma (the physical power). They cannot be cause of body as they lack the necessary means for it. As a potter cannot make a pot without a wheel and stick, the God also cannot make a body without karma. If the God is impartial and non-physical, he cannot be maker of the physical world."

All doubts of Agnibhuti were cleared and he, along with his 500 disciples, initiated in the Order of Mahavira.

The Third Doubt

Vayubhuti, the youngest brother of Indrabhuti, was the third scholar to reach Mahavira. Addressing him, as before, Mahavira said "**Vayubhuti! You have a doubt whether the soul and body are one or different.** You have this doubt because you have not understood Vedas properly. You believe that consciousness emerges from the combination of earth, water, fire and air. As the property of intoxication is absent in the components of wine but is present in the wine similarly, the consciousness is absent in earth, water, fire and air but it emerges when these components combine (to produce the body.) This new property remains in existence as long as the components stay together and disappears on their disintegration. So, consciousness is the property of bhutas (material existence) and consciousness and body are indifferent."

Clarifying the doubt Mahavira said "Vayubhuti! Your doubt is not right. Consciousness cannot emerge from combination of material components as none of them individually possess this property. How can a property that is absent in components can be present in the product? Your assumption that the intoxication property is absent in the components of wine is not correct, each component has this property in some measure and therefore wine is intoxicating."

Mahavira continued "Like the ingredients of wine why can't we assume the existence of consciousness in each component of the body? No, this is not right. We do not see any sign of consciousness in the components of the body. You may say that there is no need to assume intoxicating property in each of the ingredients of wine. But in that case anything like stone, clay etc. could become valid ingredient of wine, but in practice

we find that this is not true. Hence each ingredient of wine necessarily possesses the intoxicating property."

Consciousness is the property of the soul. Explaining this Mahavira Said." There is an element different from senses (the material body), that has the property of consciousness, because the element that perceives the objects contacted by each of the senses must be different from the senses. That element, different from senses, is soul, *jiva* or consciousness. You may again say why can't we assume the senses to be the perceiver? Mind that, we continue to remember the object perceived by a particular sense organ even after that organ is destroyed or incapacitated. Sometimes we perceive a thing through a particular sense organ and remember it and sometimes forget it even if that sense organ is in order. Therefore we must assume that the senses are not the perceiver, the perceiver is different from senses. This perceiver is soul.

Further, the same object can be perceived by more than one sense, so the perceiver must be different from senses. Sitting in a house you see the same object through two windows, so the observer is different from the windows. Similarly the soul perceives an object through different senses, and is different from senses. Secondly, the object is perceived through one sense organ and its property is sensed through another sense organ. For example, a lemon is seen by eye but is tasted by tongue. Therefore, the perceiver must be different from the senses. Thirdly, the perceiver remembers the objects perceived through all five senses, so he is different from the senses.

Vayubhuti- "Even if the soul is different from senses, it perishes with the body. What is the advantage in proving it different from body?"

Mahavira - "This is not a valid doubt. For some one who remembers his previous births, the body is destroyed but there is something (the soul) that is not destroyed. If the soul was also destroyed, then who remembers the previous birth? An old person remembers his childhood because the soul continues to live, so does the soul birth after birth and remembers his previous life. Soul remembering his past birth must not die."

"If some one says that memories are stored in the brain then it is obvious that when the body dies brain does not if the memories are to be carried forward. Since the brain is destroyed with the body there is something else, the soul that retains the memory. One that is temporary cannot remember the past, and therefore the entity that

remembers is permanent. The soul is eternal and has the attribute of knowledge and so it remembers the past. Memories can never part away from the soul.”

Vayubhuti - "If the soul is different from body why don't we see it entering or leaving the body?"

Mahavira "There are two kinds of instances of non-availability or non-observerability of a thing (1) A thing is like horn of a mule, non-existent. (2) It exists but is very far away, or very near or very subtle. The soul is non-physical and the karman body attached it is also very subtle, so we don't see the soul entering or leaving a body."

Vayubhuti was satisfied and he along with his 500 disciples accepted the Order of Mahavira.

The Fourth Doubt

Next Vyakta and his disciples went to Mahavira. Mahavira said "Vyakta! You have doubt on the existence of *bhutas*, the material existence, because you have not properly followed Vedas. I shall remove your doubt. **Vyakta! You believe that all visible worlds is like a dream and all invisible elements like soul, merit (*punya*) demerit (*papa*) etc. are also illusion,** Thus the whole universe is really *shunya*, non-existent. You also think that all phenomena in the world are relative, small or big, and therefore the existence of real is not proved with respect to the self, others or both. Hence the universe is non-existent. Similarly, no relation of existence, unity, diversity etc. can be proved for matter and so nothing exists. Hence, the universe must be assumed to be non-existent."

Your doubts are wrong because if the world does not exist, then you can not doubt about it like sky is flower. You raise a doubt only when a thing exists, like a place or a person. So your belief that everything is non-existent like sky - flower is not right. The existence of an object is proved by direct experience, inference or Agama and therefore we have doubt only about those things whose existence is established by these means. This is why we have doubt about place or person and not about sky-flower. Secondly, doubt is a mode of jnana (knowledge) and knowledge is not possible without the knower. Hence for doubt to exist existence of knower is essential.

Someone may say that if nothing exists still there can be doubt. For instance, a person may doubt in dream that he is an elephant or a mountain. Therefore doubt can exist even if nothing exists in reality. This thinking is not right. A doubt in the

dream is also based on memory of past experience. If nothing exists you cannot doubt even in the dream.

You see a dream for the following reasons:

1. Your past experience like bathing etc.
2. Your past observed objects like, dog, cow etc.
3. Your mental thoughts like your spouse, son, etc.
4. Things you have heard about like heaven, hell, etc.
5. Physical disorders like disease, trauma etc.
6. Favouable or adverse, pleasure and pain, conditions.
7. Wet regions.
8. Your merit (punya) and demerit (papa)

Dream is reflection of your attributes and is a product of your creation. One of the shortcomings of theory of non-existence is that it does not distinguish between dream and no-dream, true and false, main and auxiliary, goal and means, cause and action, speaker and speech, for and against argument, etc.

Saying that every action is relative, existence of no object is established, is not correct. Let us consider the question whether our knowledge of some thing as big or small, is concurrent or progressive. If concurrent than we must agree that when we know that middle finger is big at the same time we also know that ring finger is small. In this case we cannot say that big and small are relative. If the knowledge of big and small was progressive then we first know that ring finger is small and this perception is independent of the perception of bigness of the middle finger. So we have to believe that the perception of big and small is not a relative experience. For instance, when a baby opens his eyes for the first time, how he perceives the size? If we know two things simultaneously our perception is not relative. In view of all these cases we must believe that our knowledge of a given object is not relative to another object. When we remember another object of contrast, then we realize that this object is small or big. Therefore we must believe that the existence of objects is self-proven.

We can prove the existence of matter etc. If the existence of an object A is relative to the existence of another object B then on destruction of object B the object A

must be destroyed automatically, as A is dependent on B. But this does not happen. This proves that the attributes like size etc. of the object, are though relative, their existence is independent. Hence there should be no doubt about the existence of earth, water, fire etc. which are directly visible. Air and *akasa* are not visible and you may doubt their existence. But remember, the touch property is the attribute of some object. And since air has touch property its existence is established. Earth, water, fire and air are physical substances and they require a space for existence, just like storage of water needs a pot. The substance that holds earth, water, fire and air is *akasa*."

Clearing the doubts about the *bhutas* of Vyakta, Mahavira continued "These *bhutas* in natural state, until they are operated upon by some process, are *sachetan* i.e. they possess consciousness. They exhibit the properties of living being. *Akasa* is non-physical; it accommodates *jivas* but is not *jiva* itself. Earth is living as it possess the attributes of birth, aging, life, death, destruction, recovery, hunger, disease, treatment, etc. typical of living beings. The plant Lajwanti contracts on contact. Creepers grow towards trees to get support. The plant Shami has been found to have signs of sleep, awareness and contraction. Vakul tree enjoys speech, Ashoka tree enjoy beauty, Kurubuck tree enjoys smell, Virahak tree enjoys taste, and Champaka tree enjoys touch. Water is living as it oozes out of earth like a frog, and falls from sky like a fish. Air travels in lateral direction like a cow and is therefore living. Fire is also living as it grows on feeding fuel wood just like humans who grow on consuming food.

The question is that if earth, plants, waters, air and fire are living beings then their consumers are committing violence. How are the Sharmanas free from violence? This is because the processed earth, plants, water, air and fire are no more living, they become non-living. It is not right to think that a person is guilty of violence when he has killed some living beings and not guilty of violence because he has not killed other living beings. It is also not right to say that killing a few beings is not violence and violence occurs only on killing a large number of beings. The identifying sign of violence is ill feeling towards the beings even no killing has taken place. A person having pure feelings is free of violence charge even if killing has taken place (inadvertently).

A monk observing five carefulness (*samiti*) and three restraints (*gupti*) is considered free from charge of violence. But persons living unrestrained life are not free from the charge of violence. A monk observing restraints in his life is not guilty of violence irrespective of whether violence has taken place or not because the basis of

charge of violence is *adhyavasaya*, the emotions, of soul and not the act of violence. In effect, ill transformation of soul is violence. Such ill transformation of soul may or may not be associated with killing of another life. Any killing that causes ill transformation of soul is surely violence but that killing which does not induce ill transformation of soul is not regarded as violence."

Mahavira removed all doubts of *Vyakta* on the existence of *bhutas* and he along with his 500 disciples initiated in the Order of Mahavira.

The Fifth Doubt

Sudharma went to Mahavira next. Mahavira addressed him "**Sudharm! You have a doubt whether the next life of soul is similar to the present life.** You have this doubt because you have not properly followed Vedas."

"The Action following a cause also becomes a cause for future action. Agreeing that the cause decides the action, diversity in action is not ruled out. It cannot be said with certainty that a human being will be born as human being again in the next birth. The seed for the next life is karma and not the soul. As the karma of each soul is different there is diversity in the next birth for different souls. The karma is comprised of *pudgala karman vargana* and its nature is determined by behaviour of the soul. The attachment and aversion qualities of the soul are the main reasons for diversity of karma."

"You may say why karma should decide the next birth? But if karma is not the deciding factor then there could be no next birth and all efforts by way of penance and religious practices for Moksa are likely to go waste. Further in the absence of karma effect the diversity in life that we observe shall not exist. Thus ignoring of karma shall raise many problems."

"You may also say that the next birth is decided by the nature of the soul and not karma. First think, what is the nature of the soul? Is it an object or absence of cause or is it its attributes? It is obvious that the soul being inaccessible is not an object. Even if it is inaccessible it may still be assumed to inherit a nature? If so, then what is the objection in assuming existence of karma in the inaccessible soul? Further, we do not have a cause for diversity of nature of beings and diversity of life except Karma. The absence of cause option also presents many problems. Similarly, the third option of attributes of soul also does not offer any ground for diversity of life. When we try to

explain the diversity with the help of effect of matter, it converges to the concept of karma.

Satisfied by the arguments of Mahavira, Sudharma and his 500 disciples accepted the Order of Mahavira.

The Sixth Doubt

After Sudharma, Mandik went to Mahavira. Mahavira addressed - **"Mardik! You have a doubt about bondage and Moksa.** You think that association of karma with the soul is bondage then whether this bondage has a beginning or not. If it has a beginning then whether the soul first existed and then karma was bond or karma existed first and then soul was born or whether both came into being simultaneously? All the three options are objectionable as follows:

1. The soul can not exist before karma because if the soul is assumed to be born without any valid reason than it can also be destroyed without any valid reason.
2. The karma cannot exist before the soul as the soul is the doer of karma. Karma also cannot bond without reason, since in that case it will have to be assumed that it can also be destroyed without reason. So karma cannot exist before the soul.
3. If both soul and karma are assumed to come in existence simultaneously, then the soul cannot be the doer and karma is not the action of the soul.

The association of soul and karma is also not permanent because in that case the soul cannot gain Moksa. Anything that is beginning less and endless is also infinite like the association of soul and *akasa*? Clearing these doubts Mahavira said "The association of soul and karma is beginning less because they have a cause and action relationship like a seed and sprout. As a sprout from seed and seed from sprout is produced and as this process is going on from beginning less time the off spring of both is also beginning less. Therefore all the three options of karma are not true. The soul creates the body by karma so he is the creator of the body, and also creates karma by the body so he is the creator of karma. The association of body and karma is beginning less and so is the association of soul and karma. Therefore bondage of soul and karma is beginning less.

One that is beginning less is also infinite (in future) is not logical. The seed and sprout have beginning less association but this association can come to an end. Similarly the association between soul and karma can be brought to an end. This is

achieved by right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. Mahavira then told about Moksa and the state of *bhavya* (capable of Moksa) and *abhavya* (incapable of Moksa)".

"The association of soul and karma is terminated by appropriate means. Any product obtained by artificial means is temporary, just like a pot. So Moksa, attained by employing (proper) means, is also temporary?" Mahavira clarified "This rule, that is an artificial product is temporary, is forced. The pot, although produced artificially, has the property of transformation. If this 'transformation property is temporary then on loss of this (transformation) property a broken pot should again turn back to its original state. So the transformation although brought about by artificial mean is permanent. Similarly though attained by adopted means, the Moksa is permanent." Mahavira then explained the form of emancipated souls and cosmology.

All doubts of Mandik were cleared and he and his 350 disciples accepted the Order of Mahavira.

The Seventh Doubt

Following Mandik, Mauryaputra went to Mahavira. Mahavira addressed him" **Mauryaputra! You have doubt about existence of Gods (*Devas*)**. You think that the hell dwellers are tied up with chains and are not free, their sufferings are also extreme, and so they are not in a position to present before us. But the Gods are free and have unparallel powers but they are not seen here. So you doubt their existence."

Yours doubts can be cleared" said Mahavira. He said "You at least see the Sun, Moon and other celestial Gods like stars etc. directly. Besides this you also find instances of happiness and suffering inflicted by Gods in this world. So you must accept the existence of Gods.

Mauryaputra - "Sun and Moon are lonely lands, no body lives there. So how do you say that sight of Sun and Moon proves the existence Gods?"

Mahavira - "Sun and Moon being living places (*alaya*) somebody must be living there, otherwise they would not be living places. You may doubt whether they are living places in the first place. This must be ascertained first. Just possible they are not living places but are made of jewels." Mahavira continued "They are abodes (*vimana*) of Gods just like the *vimana* of Vidhyadhara, made of jewels and moving in the sky. The *vimanas* of Sun and Moon are not magical productions. Magic products are temporary but Sun and Moon are permanent."

“When you accept existence of hell, as the destination for souls committing intense demerit, you should also accept existence of heaven, a destination for souls committing intense merit. Your question is that if Gods exist and travel all over by their own will why they do not appear in this *loka*? The reason is that they generally keep enjoying, the divine resources of heaven and do not visit this world, which is foul smelling for them. But they do so occasionally. They visit this world at the time of birth, initiation, dawn of omniscience and emancipation of Tirthankara. They also come to this land due to friendship and enmity.”

On clearing the doubts Mauryaputra and his 350 disciples accepted the Order of Mahavira.

The Eighth Doubt

Next Akampit visited Mahavira. Addressing him Mahavira said "**You doubt the existence of hell dwellers.** Look, there are souls who commit intense demerit. The enjoyer of fruits of mild and medium demerits is humans and animals and there must be some souls that enjoy the fruits of intense demerit, they are hell dwellers."

Akampit "Why can't animals and humans enjoy the fruits of intense demerit?"

Mahavira "The humans and animals do not enjoy the degree of happiness the Gods enjoy, so they are not heaven dwellers. We do not find a single human or animal who is fully happy or unhappy. So there must be another category of souls, like hell dwellers, who enjoy the fruits of extreme demerit, without negligible happiness."

Mahavira removed all doubts of Akampit and so he and his 350 disciples joined the Order of Mahavira.

The Ninth Doubt

Now Achalbhrata went to Mahavira. Addressing him Mahavira said. "**You have a doubt whether merit (*punya*) and demerit (*papa*) exist and have a role in life?**" Clarifying this doubt Mahavira said that there are five options regarding merit and demerit.

1. There is only merit, and no demerit.
2. There is only demerit, and no merit.

3. Merit and demerit are same; there is no difference between them.
4. Merit and demerit both exist and are different.
5. There is nothing like merit and demerit, the nature of being is everything.

Let us discuss these options.

1. The first option says that only merit exists, demerit does not. As merit balance mounts, the happiness in life increases. When merit balance reduces, happiness also reduces. On complete elimination of merit the soul is emancipated.
2. In this case only demerit exists, merit does not. As demerit balance increases, suffering increases and vice versa. On complete annihilation of demerit the soul is emancipated.
3. Merit and demerit are not different; they are aspects of the same thing, say action of a being. When the good part of this action is more it is known as merit and when the bad part is more it is known as demerit. In other words when goodness of action declines it is demerit and it is merit if goodness of action is present.
4. Merit and demerit are distinct and independent. Merit is the cause of happiness and demerit is the cause of sufferings.
5. The existence of merit and demerit is denied, the soul transmigrates by his nature.

Out of these five options only the fourth is logical and is true. We experience happiness and unhappiness in relation to the intensity of merit and demerit. The sufferings and unhappiness is not due to absence of merit but is due to fruition of demerit. Clarifying further Mahavira said "No action can be both merit and demerit. Why? Because the reason of bondage of karma is activities of body, mind and speech. This activity can be either good or bad but not both. So its result is either good or bad, good result is merit or bad result is demerit. Both merit and demerit is pudgala (karma), physical."

Satisfied with the reply Achalbhrata and his 300 disciples accepted the Order of Mahavira.

The Tenth Doubt

Metarya went to Mahavira. Mahavira addressed him and said "**Metarya! You have a doubt about re birth.** You do not distinguish between the components of wine

and its intoxicating property and similarly disregard any difference between matter (*jada* body) and soul (*chaityanya*). So the concept of rebirth is meaningless and unnecessary for you. You think that when the components of the body fall apart (or destroyed) the *chaitanya* (soul) also loses existence and therefore there is no next birth. This concept remains unchanged even if existence of universal soul in place of individual soul is accepted."

Clarifying these doubts Mahavira said "The consciousness is the property of the soul and not matter (the body) as explained to your friends earlier. Therefore you must accept that soul is different from body. It was also made clear before that there is infinite number of souls in *loka* and Gods (*deva*), hell and heaven exist. Hence rebirth is proved. The soul is eternal, follows the law of creation and destruction of its modes, and continues to exist after bodily death. You must not doubt rebirth and reincarnation."

Matarya's doubt was removed and he and his 300 disciples joined the Order of Mahavira.

The Eleventh Doubt

The last and the youngest Pundit to go to Mahavira was Prabhas, he was only 16 years old. Mahavira said addressing him "**Prabhas! You have a doubt about salvation.** Some scholars say that like a lamp the end of life is salvation. Others say that salvation is the special state of the soul obtained on removal of sufferings in the form of attachment and aversion. What is correct? The association of soul and karma is beginningless like *akasa* and this association is never destroyed. Then where is the question of salvation?"

"Prabhas! The comparison of life with lamp is not correct. The light of the lamp is also not altogether destroyed, it only transforms from the light mode to darkness mode. As milk transforms to curds and a pot transforms to a bowl (on breakage), the same way, like a lamp, and the soul is not destroyed on death (bodily). You may ask if the lamp is not destroyed altogether why is it not clearly visible. This is because the light now assumes a finer form which is not visible to naked eye. Similarly, when the soul attains salvation its state is transformed permanently to the state of infinite bliss. In this sense salvation is the state of the soul completely free from suffering.

It is not right to assume that the free soul is devoid of knowledge (*Jnana*). *Jnana* is the inherent property of soul, the two are never separate. As a *paramanu* cannot

become non-physical, the soul cannot be separate from knowledge. You may ask, what is the proof that the soul and *jnana* are same? This is directly established by our own experience. We can also prove the *jnana*- form of other souls as well by inference. This is because the others souls also engage in worldly actions as well as in salvation activity, which is not possible without *jnana*. Just as from a lamp covered by a screen the filtered light comes out, the *jnana* from a covered soul comes out through senses, holes made by *ksyopasama* of knowledge covering karma. The cover is absent in the emancipated soul and the *jnana* is manifested in its full measure. In this state the soul knows each and every thing in the *loka*. So the liberated soul has perfect knowledge."

"The liberated soul experiences uninterrupted bliss, but this is sometimes not followed because we believe that happiness is caused by merit and sufferings are the result of demerit. Both merit and demerit are absent in the liberated state and therefore there should be neither happiness nor un-happiness. Secondly, happiness and sufferings go with the body and in the absence of body both of these should also be absent in the liberated state."

Mahavira clarified - "In fact, the fruit of merit is also un-happiness, and not happiness, as it has its origin in karma. The fruits of karma are always unhappiness; of course some one can say that the fruits of demerit are also happiness as it originates from karma, like fruits of merit that originates from karma. Secondly, the fruits of merit being favourable are cause of happiness, how can that be unhappiness?"

Mahavira continued "The so called happiness in reality is unhappiness. Generally by happiness we mean opposite of suffering and it is therefore unhappiness in real sense. So we should regard the fruits of merit also as unhappiness. For instance, the sensual pleasure is not happiness as it stands for absence of suffering. We treat the disease by drugs but this treatment and its outcome is also a form of suffering though we regard it as pleasant. In the absence of happiness of the soul, real happiness is not possible. So the real happiness is experienced only in the liberate state. This happiness results from the complete elimination of un-happiness (sufferings) and absence of contact with the external world. Thus, the happiness in the liberated state is pure and perfect."

Prabhas was now doubt-free and he and his 300 disciples initiated in the Order of Mahavira like his other ten friends. These eleven Vedic scholars became Ganadharas in the Order of Mahavira.

References

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