

Mahāvīra

by
Amar Chand

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VARANASI (INDIA)

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Publisher :

Parshvanath Vidyapeeth

Varanasi (India)

'Mahāvira'

by Amar .  **Library** IAS, Shimla



00094681

Reprinted

Parashvanath Vidyapeeth

I.T.I Road Karaundi,

B.H.U. - 221005

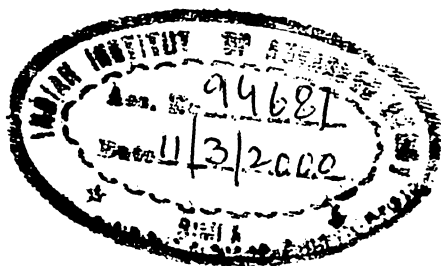
Phone - 316521

294.46

Apr 15 19

Second Edition, 1997

Price - Rs. 10/=



Type Setting at.

Rajesh Computers

D 59/378 k-2 Jai Prakash Nagar

(Behind Nagar Nigam)

Varanasi 221 103 Phone - 220599

Printed at :

Vardhaman Mudranalaya

Bhelupur, Varanasi-10

Publisher's Note

Dealing with brief life sketch of Lord Mahāvīra there have been brought out a number of monograph which, in there limited frame try to discuss the main events of Lord Mahāvīra's life. The present title '*Mahāvīra*' by Shri Amar Chand sucessfully depicts the prime events of Lord Mahāvīra's life along with his principal teachings. Previously it was published in 1953 by Pt. Dalsukh Malvania, Secretary Jaina Cultural Research Society which has been now merged into Parshvanath Vidyapeeth .

Parshvanath Vidyapeeth feels emense pleasure in bringing out this reprinted edition on the eve of Lord Mahāvīra's 2596th Birth anniversary (20th April, 1997) under 'ts scheme of publication of 'Old and valuable books and manuscripts'.

We are very thankful to Prof. Sagarmal Jain Director and Dr. Shriprakash Pandey, Lecturer in Jainology for seeing this book through the press.

Our thanks are also due to Rajesh Computers and Vardhaman Mudranalaya for beautiful type setting and excellent printing respectively.

B.N. Jain
Secretary
Parshvanath Vidyapeeth

MAHĀVĪRA

-Amar Chand

Conditions of the Country

The sixth century B.C. is one of the cardinal epochs in human history. It was the age of extraordinary mental stir and spiritual unrest practically all over the world. For instance, Socrates in Greece, Zoroaster in Persia, and Lao Tse and Confucious in China marked a revolution in the thoughts of those countries. The appearance in India of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, in the same way, meant the advent of philosophical rationalism.

In Indian society, this age was in various ways economically, socially, religiously and even politically, a period of transition and uncertainty. From the simple, and, on the whole, republican social organisation of the Vedic times, the country had been passing through a process of gradual stratification until by this time, caste distinction and priestly oligarchy had become a means of popular exploitation and a source of enormous social irritation. Rituals and ceremonies came to be worked out in endless details, and most fanciful and mystic significance was attached to them. Bloody sacrifices became the order of the age and lasted for weeks, months and even years. Śūdras, the fourth and the lower-most caste, which formed a bulk of the population, were not only socially boycotted, but their very existence was questioned and even bare necessities of human-life were refused to them.

Such a state of things was very disconcerting to the considerate and serious-minded section of the society. Lord Pārśvanātha, the 23rd *Tīrthaṅkara* had preached against the existing evils of the society some 250 years before the advent of Mahāvīra. But after his death, society was again condemned to yet worse state of affairs. It was in the above circumstances that Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and the last in the galaxy of *Tīrthaṅkaras*, was born.

Parentage

The birth place of Mahāvīra was Kuṇḍagrāma, which was a suburb of the flourishing town of Vaiśālī, about 27 miles north of modern Patna. It was an important seat of the Jnātṛka Kṣatriya clan, otherwise named Nāya or Nāta. It was oligarchic republic, its government being vested in a senate and presided over, with the title of king, by Mahāvīra's father Siddhārtha, also named Śreyāmsa or Yaśāmsa. He belonged to the Kāśyapa *gotra*. The name of Mahāvīra's mother was Triśalā, also known as Videhadattā or Priyakārīnī, of the Vāśiṣṭha *gotra*. She was a sister of Ceṭaka, the powerful ruler of Videha, at whose call the Licchavīs and the Mallas rallied together for the purposes of offence and defence.

Birth

In the year B.C. 599, on the 13th day of the bright half of the moon, in the month Caitra, when Triśalā herself was in perfect health, Mahāvīra was born.

The *Kalpa Sūtras* speaks about the great rejoicings that took place in the family and the town on the birth of the child, about the great illumination of the houses and the streets, about the liberation of prisoners, and about the performance of numerous charitable deeds.

Names and Appellations

Mahāvīra has been remembered by numerous names, such as *Vaiśālīya*—citizen of Vaiśālī ; *Videha* son of Videhadattā ; *Arhat*—being worthy of veneration ; *Arihanta*—destroyer of enemies ; *Aruhanta*—destroyer of the roots of *karmas* ; *Śāsanāyaka*—head of the order ; *Buddha*—having attained the highest knowledge. In the Jaina Āgamas, he is referred to as Vardhamāna, because of the increase that had taken place in the silver and gold, the intensity of liberality, and the popularity of his parents ever since the moment he had been begotten. The gods gave him the appellation of Mahāvīra for his fortitude and hardihood in bearing patiently all sorts of privations and hardships,

for his strictly adhering to the rules of penance, and no less for his indifference to pleasure and pain.

The Buddhists, on the other hand, know him by the name of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta. This was undoubtedly the name by which he was known to his other contemporaries. At the very face of it, this name is composed of two distinct epithets, the first of which is religious and the other secular. He was a *Nigaṇṭha* (*Nirgrantha*) in a literal as well as in a figurative sense-outwardly unclothed and inwardly free from worldly bonds and ties. His followers, accordingly, came to be known as *Nirgranthas*, and lay-followers as *Nigrantha-śrāvakas* or *Śramaṇopāsakas*. He was called Nāṭaputta because he was a scion of the Nāṭa clan.

He was also called *Jina* i.e. the conqueror of the *karmas*-the greatest enemies of the soul, and from this appellation Jainism derives its name. Mahāvīra's aversions to love and hatred earned for him the appellation of *Śramaṇa* or recluse. He is also called *Vīra*, *Ativīra*, *Sanmati*, *Siddha*, *Mukta*, and by a host of other names in the later Jaina literature.

All these are clearly qualitative names, that is to say, they are meant to draw our attention to certain qualities possessed by Mahāvīra.

Early Life

The facts of the early life of Mahāvīra are very few indeed as gleaned in early works. But the later accounts have connected him with certain anecdotes, myths and miracles. Here is one, illustrative of his supreme valour :

“One day, while playing with his friends in the garden of his father, Mahāvīra saw an elephant which was mad with fury with juice flowing from his temples, rushing towards them. His companions--all boys, shocked and frightened on the sight of the impending danger, deserted their comrade and ran away. Without losing a moment, Mahāvīra made up his mind to face the danger

squarely, went towards the elephant caught hold of his trunk with his strong hands, and mounted his back atonce.'

In person, Mahāvīra was very handsome and impressive. The several names by which he is called indicate that the chief quality of his character was courage and valour. He was intelligent and possessed of a very keen intellect. The *Sūtras* mention that from his very birth, he possessed supreme, unlimited, and unimpeded knowledge and intuition, and had the aspirations of a man of knowledge.

Mahāvīra's early life was spent in a royal atmosphere tempered with healthy influence of a republican character. His upbringing was quite balanced and his development was perfectly proportionate. His early years were spent in comfort, but not in luxury. His ambition was that to conquer, but not with a view to mastery over others. From his later thinking we find that he was deeply influenced by the democratic ethos of the society in which he was brought up. He was also impressed by the inadequate application of this ethos in the political, economic and social life of the community without its being based upon a really democratic religious system, so that later on he took it upon himself to work out and propagate a system of complete spiritual democracy in the form of Jainism.

Mahāvīra was an unusually reflective lad from his early childhood, and thought of renunciation in his early youth. He was, however, always prevailed upon by his affectionate parents to change his resolve. In order to create around him a luscious atmosphere of amusement and pleasure, and to engage his mind in worldly things, they married Mahāvīra to an exceedingly charming princess, Yaśodā, of the Kauṇḍinya *gotra*, and a daughter Anujā or Priyadarśanā was born to them. This daughter, eventually, was married to a nobleman Jamālī, who after becoming a follower of his great father-in-law, ended by opposing him. Their child, or Mahāvīra's grand-daughter was named Yaśomatī or

Śeṣavatī. The Digambara accounts, however, differ on marriage.

Mahāvīra had no desire to hurt his parents if he could help it, and so he promised his mother that he would not renounce the world as long as his parents were alive. This would suggest that Mahāvīra was a dutiful and considerate son, although very strong in his determination, for in his twenty-eight year, when his parents died, he repeated his desire of renunciation to his elder brother. But the brother dissuaded him saying, 'the deaths of our parents are still fresh in our memories, your leaving us at this time would render our bereavement the more unbearable and painful.' Mahāvīra, therefore, live for two more years in the house.

Renunciation

Disgusted with the non-finality of the things of the world, and persuaded by a desire to search for the ultimate Truth, Mahāvīra formally renounced all his secular bonds and set out for the life of a houseless monk. The great event has been somewhat poignantly described in the *Kalpa Sūtra* :

'In this age, in the first month of winter, in the dark fortnight of Mārgaśīrṣa, on its fifteenth day, when the shadow had turned towards the east and the first Pauruṣi was full and over, on the day called Suvrata, in the *muhūrta* Vijaya, in the palanquin Candraprabhā, Mahāvīra, followed on his way by a train of gods, men and asuras..... went right through Kuṇḍapura to a park called Śaṇḍavana of the Jñātrkas and preceded to the excellent tree Aśoka.

There under the excellent tree Aśoka, he caused his palanquin to stop, descended from his palanquin took off his ornaments, garlands, and finery with his own hands, and with his own hands plucked out his hair in five handfuls. When the moon was in conjunction with the asterism Uttarā-phālgunī, he, after fasting two and a half days without drinking water, put on a divine robe, and a

quite alone, nobody else being present, he tore out his hair and leaving the house entered the state of houselessness.'

The Jainas mark with great precision the five kinds of knowledge (*Jñāna*). Mahāvīra was born with the first three *Mati*, *Śruta* and *Avadhi*. On the eve of his renunciation, he gained the fourth *Manaḥparyāya*, by which he knew the thoughts of all sentient beings, and it remained for him to obtain the fifth and the final degree of knowledge which is called *Kevala*.

The Ascetic Life

Mahāvīra's ascetic life, before his attainment of the highest spiritual knowledge lasted for more than twelve years. His parents were lay-disciples of the Order of Pārśvanātha. Mahāvīra, therefore, began his novitiate as an ascetical member of the same Order.

His habits of life during this period of preparation for the perfect knowledge may be briefly mentioned. He went about naked, possessed not even a bowl for collecting food, and ate in the hollow of his hands. He neglected his body completely. Many insects crawled on his person, bit him and caused him pain, but he bore it with patience. People were shocked at the sight of him. They shouted at him, and even struck him. For days and months he would observe silence, and remained absorbed in his thoughts. He avoided men as well as women, often gave no answers to questions put to him, and omitted to return greetings.

Penances

Mahāvīra's idea of *tapas* was that of *Saṁvara* or practice of self-restraint, with regard to body, speech and mind. In his view, austerities had to be inward as well as outward, and fasting, absolute chastity, and unmitigated meditation were its several forms. He therefore, performed a very prolonged course of severe penances for twelve years for the destruction of his *karmas*. This course comprehended uninterrupted meditation, unbroken chastity, and the most scrupulous observance of the rules concerning eating

and drinking. The account of his *sāadhanā* given in the *Ācārāṅga* is literally soul-stirring.

He meditated day and night, undisturbed and unperturbed. Avoiding women, and giving up the company of householders, he realised singleness. He did not care for sleep for the sake of pleasure and slept only for short hours. In winter, he meditated in the shade, in summer he exposed himself to heat. He was free from sin and desire, and not attached to sounds or colours, and never acted carelessly. Thoroughly knowing the earth-bodies, fire-bodies, wind-bodies, the lichens, seeds and sproutes, and comprehending that they are, if narrowly inspected, imbued with life, he avoided all kinds of sins, and abstained from all sinful activities. He did not use what had expressly been prepared for him. Knowing measure in eating and drinking, he was not desirous of delicious food. For more then a couple of years, he led religious life without using cold water.

He remained circumspect in his walking, speaking, begging and obeying the calls of nature. He remained circumspect in his thoughts, words and acts. He guarded his thoughts, words, acts senses and chastity. He moved without wrath, pride, deceit, and greed. He remained calm, tranquil, composed, liberated, free from temptations, without egoism and without property. In short, he had cut off all earthly ties, and was not strained by any worldliness. His course was unobstructed like that of life. Like the firmament, he wanted no support. Like the wind he knew no obstacles. His heart was pure like the water in autumn. He remained unsoiled like a lotus-leaf. His senses were well protected like those of a tortoise. Like a rhinoceros, he lived single and alone. He was free like a bird, always walking like the fabulous bird Bhāruṇḍ, valorous like an elephant, strong like a bull, difficult to attack like a lion, steady and firm like the mountain Mandara, deep like ocean, mild like the moon, effulgent like the sun, pure like gold, patient like earth, and shining in splendour like a well-kindled

fire.

He lived, except in the rainy season, all the eight months of summer and winter, in villages only a single night, and in towns only five nights. He was indifferent alike to the smell of ordure and the sweet scent of sandal, to straw and jewel, dirt and gold, pleasure and pain, this world or the world beyond, to life and death, He exerted himself for the stoppage and the defilement of *karmas*.

Wandering and Meeting with Gośāla

The *Ācārāṅga* mentions that renunciation implied the quitting of the northern kṣatriya part of the place Kuṇḍagrāma, and arrival in the village Kummāra presumably a suburb of Kuṇḍagrāma. Then he moved to the settlement of Kollāga, near Vaiśālī, where he was hospitably received by the Brāhmaṇa Bahula. After roaming about in this area for six months, Mahāvīra came to Asthigrāma, to spend his first rainy season there. On way to Asthigrāma, Mahāvīra had the first taste of those bitter experiences which were going to be a common feature of his *sādhaka* life-(a) of hostility towards him of the other Parivrājaka sects roaming in those areas, and (b) of his persecution at the hands of various tempter gods.

Mahāvīra's second rainy season was spent at Nālandā, where he was met by Gośāla Maṅkhaliputta (Maskariputra), The Ājīvaka teacher. He was attracted by Mahāvīra owing to his extraordinary self-restraint and impressive habits of meditation. Possibly another factor, Mahāvīra's capacity to predict the things correctly, also helped to increase Gośāla's keenness in him. From this time onwards both travelled together for a period of over six years, and visited Campā, Bhaddilā the capital town of the Mallas, Magadha, and Lāḍha deśa. In the tenth year, on return from the Lāḍha deśa, while they were travelling from Kumāragrāma to Siddhārthagrāma, there sprang up acute differences of opinion between them. Gośāla separated himself from Mahāvīra and became known as the founder of the Ājīvaka sect.

Enlightenment

Thus as hero at the head of a battle, he bore all hardships and remaining undisturbed with right knowledge, faith and conduct, he meditated on himself for twelve years. During the thirteenth year, in the light fortnight of the month of Vaiśākha, on its tenth day, outside the town Jṛmbhikagrāma, on the bank of the river Rjupalī, not far from an old shrine, in the field of the householder Śyāmaka under a Śāla tree and the asterism Uttarā-phālgunī he attained the highest knowledge and intuition called *Kevala* which is infinite, supreme, unobstructed, unimpeded, complete and full. He was at that time absorbed in deep meditation in a squatting position with joint heels, exposing himself to the heat of the sun, after fasting two days and a half, even without drinking water.

Thus at the age of forty-two, he became a *Jina*, an *Arhat*, a *Kevalin*, omniscient, all-seeing, and all-knowing.

Propagation of the Doctrine

The last thirty years of his life, Mahāvīra spent in the propagation of his doctrine. He travelled through many parts of India, preaching and converting people to his faith, stopping as before for the four months of the rainy season at one place.

Knowing that a big *yajña* (sacrifice) had been organised by a Brāhmaṇa Somilācārya at a place at some distance from Jṛmbhikagrāma—the place where he attained Enlightenment, Mahāvīra moved to that place and held a public audience there. He explained his doctrine of the *Jīva*, *Ajīva*, *Āsrava*, *Bandha*, *Samvara*, *Nirjarā* and *Mokṣa*. The result was that among others, eleven of the learned Brāhmaṇa teachers, who had come there with a band of disciples to participate in the sacrifice, became converts to Mahāvīra's faith. They are known as the eleven *Gaṇadharas* of the chief disciples, of whom Gautama Indrabhūti was most prominent. Under these *Gaṇadharas* were placed all the monks of

the Order. These conversions gave to Mahāvīra a respectable community of 4411 *Śramaṇas* and a large number of lay-disciples or *Śramaṇopāsakas*. The genius for organisation, which Mahāvīra possessed, is shown in nothing more clearly than in the formation of the order of the lay-disciples-both of men and women. Now, Mahāvīra's fame as an omniscient seer began to spread fast and widely.

Mahāvīra had some powerful supporters among the ruling kings and princes also, to whom was due the spread of his doctrines. King Udayana of the country of the Sindhu-Sauvīras, king Dadhivāhana of Campā and his daughter Candanā, king Satānika of Kauśāmbī and king Caṇḍa Pradyota of Avantī are notables in the list of such rulers.

Further, the federal illumination in honour of Mahāvīra's death by eighteen Gaṇarājās of Kāśī and Kośala, nine Mallakīs, and nine Licchavīs points to the extent of his influence and to that of his religion over these republican people.

But Mahāvīra, like the Buddha, was also known for his devoted disciples, some of whom attained to *Kaivalya*. His first conserts were the eleven *Gaṇadharas*, already referred to. Gardabhāli, who made a monk of king Sañjaya of Kāmpilya, is another notable. In one of the well-known Jaina Āgamas, *Uvāsagadasāo*, the names of ten of the most important lay-followers of Mahāvīra are recorded.

Vāñjiyagrāma, Campā, Varanasi, Ālabhiā, Kāmpilyapura, Polāsapura, Rājagrha, and Śrāvastī are mentioned as the important ones among the places visited by the venerable Ascetic. In Vāñjiyagrāma, the great laydisciples were Ānanda and his wife Bhadrā; in Varanasi, Cūlanīpriya and his wife Śyāmā, Surādeva and his wife Dhanyā; in Ālabhiā, Cullaśataka and his wife Bahulā; in Kāmpilyapura, Kuṇḍakolita and his wife Puṣyā; in Polāsapura, Śakaḍālaputra and his wife Agnimitrā; in Rājagrha, Mahāśataka and his wife Revatī; and in Śrāvastī, Nandinīpriya and his wife

Aśvinī, Śāleyikāpitā and his wife Phālgunī. These lay-disciples are mentioned as persons of opulence and influence, and as those noted for their piety and devotion.

Personality of Mahāvīra

All these disciples and followers sincerely believed that their Master was a great *Śramaṇa*, a great *Brāhmaṇa*, a great *Tirthaṅkara*, a great *Guru*, a great Teacher, who was gifted with a supreme knowledge and visions of the *summum bonum*. To them he stood as a living example of highest human virtue and perfection. His life was to them a perennial source of light and inspiration. His suffering and forbearance kept them steady in all their trials and tribulations. And his teachings or instructions were to them not ordinary words but utterances of one who saw the light of Truth, and was able to lead others along the path of Truth. In all earnestness, they sought to obey those words both in letter and spirit. In other words, those teachings of Mahāvīra were readily accepted by them as a means of satisfying their supreme religious needs.

Wandering and Nirvāṇa

During the 30 years of his career as Teacher, Mahāvīra spent four rainy seasons in Vaiśālī and Vāṇijyagrāma, fourteen in Rājagṛha and Nālandā, and six in Mithilā, two in Bhadrīkā, one in Ālabhikā, one in Prānītabhūmi, one in Śrāvastī and one in the town of Pāvā, which was last rainy season. In the fourth month of that rainy season, in the dark fortnight of Kārtika, on its fifteenth day in the last watch of the night, in the town of Pāvā, in king Hastipāla's office of the writers, the venerable Ascetic breathed his last, went off, quitted the world, cutting asunder the ties of birth, decay and death.

Legends have gathered as thickly round Mahāvīra's death as round his birth. One tells how nearly all the ruling chiefs of the country gathered to hear his discourses, and how the Saint preached to them with wonderful eloquence for six days. Then on the seventh

day, he took his seat upon a diamond throne, in the centre of magnificent hall which had been especially built for him on the borders of a lake. It was a dark night, but the hall was brilliantly illuminated by the super-natural glow that issued forth from the gods who had come to listen to the illustrious Preacher. Mahāvīra preached all night. The saint knew that his end was drawing nigh, so he sat reverently with clasped hands and crossed knees (Samparyāṅka Āsana), and just as the morning dawned, he attained *Nirvāṇa*.

Mahāvīra attained *Nirvāṇa* in B.C. 527 at the age of 72. The Licchavis and the Mallas were the two whom the rise of Mahāvīra was an object of national pride, and accordingly, it is said in the *Kalpa Sūtra*, that when the great Soul departed, the 18 confederate kings of Kāśī and Kośala, the nine Mallakīs, and the nine Licchavis instituted an illumination saying, 'Since the light of intelligence is gone, let us make an illumination of material matter', and this is thought to be the beginning of Dīwālī among the Jainas.

Contemporaneity with the Buddha

The evidence of Buddhist literature is sufficient to establish the contemporaneity of Mahāvīra and the Buddha. Although they had not personally met each other, there were occasions when they felt interested in knowing and discussing each other's views and position through intermediaries. Dīrghatapasvī and Satyaka among the *Nirgrantha* recluses, and Abhay, - the prince, Upālī - the banker, and Simha - the Licchavi general, among the Jaina laity loom large among those intermediaries.

Teaching and its effects

Ahimsā or non-violent attitude is the very first principle of higher life that Mahāvīra inculcated to his disciples and followers. The visible effects of *Ahimsā* were sought to be proved by practical demonstration also. As a result, in his life-time,

practically all righteous kings made it a point of duty to vouchsafe the lawful protection to all forms of life. It also had solutary effect on diet. People gave up killing and took to vegetables, which provided no less energy. The same principle served to mitigate the rigour and ruthlessness of the criminal justice for times to come. The ancient laws were considerably modified and humanised. Compassion for the suffering fellow-beings is just the other side of *Ahiṃsā*. In this way more and more philanthropic activities, humanitarian deeds and institutions were encouraged.

The *Kriyāvāda* or doctrine of action, which Mahāvīra taught, contributed towards making people conscious of their responsibility for all their acts mental vocal and physical. The same also awakened the consciousness that salvation was not a gift of favour but an attainment within human reach through pious deeds. Thus the distant end or ultimate object of Jainism as taught by Mahāvīra is *Nirvāṇa*, which consists in 'Perfect Peace'. *Nirvāṇa* is just the other name of *Mokṣa* or liberation, *Mukti* or deliverance. 'There is a safer place', Mahāvīra declared, 'in view of all, but difficult to approach, where there is no old age, nor death, no pain nor disease. This is what is called *Nirvāṇa* or freedom from pain, rather perfection. It is the safer, happy, quiet and eternal place, which the great sages reach.'

But if *Nirvāṇa* or *Mokṣa* is a real state of *sukha* or bliss, how can it be reached ? The opinion that pleasant things *Mokṣa*, a pleasant state is arrived at through comfortable life, another pleasant thing is opposed to and proved to be futile. Even the Buddhist mode of life appeared to be too comfortable to be compatible with the right path to salvation. Mahāvīra, therefore, prescribed rigorous practice for the attainment of *Mokṣa* - the highest bliss. *Samvara* or practice of self-restraint with regard to body, speech and mind was just the other aspect of *tapas* taught by the great Teacher. The several practices of austerities were to be resorted to as means of wearing out and ultimately destroying

the effects of *karmas* or sinful deeds committed in former existences, and also of not giving effect to new *karmas*.

Mahāvīra declared : “There are O ! Nirgranathas, some sinful deeds and acts you have committed in the past, which you must wear out now by this acute form of austerity. Now that you will be living restrained here in regard to your acts, speech and thoughts, it will work as the non-doing of *karmas* for future. Thus by the exhaustion of the force of past deeds through penance and the non-accumulation of new acts, (you are assured) of the stoppage of the future course of rebirth, from such stoppage, of the destruction of the effect of *karmas*, from that, of the destruction of pain, from that of the destruction of mental feelings, and from that of the complete wearing out of all kinds of pain.” And there follows, as a result, the non-gliding of the self in the course of *Sarīsāra* in future.

This is what is reproduced from the Jaina *Sutras* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, and the historical importance of this Buddhist statement of Mahāvīra’s ideals is that it points to a very early formulation of the main ideas of Jainism. Its importance lies also in the fact that it sets forth the entire chain of reasoning by which the terms of the Jaina thought were interlinked the sequence ending in *Mokṣa*. It serves also to unveil the plan of thought in which the chain of reasoning was sought to be developed by arranging the terms broadly under two heads - positive and negative.

Salvation was assured to all without distinction of caste, creed or sex.

Mahāvīra lay great emphasis upon chastity - both sexual and moral. It was a virtue, he declared, alike for individuals and nations to develop.

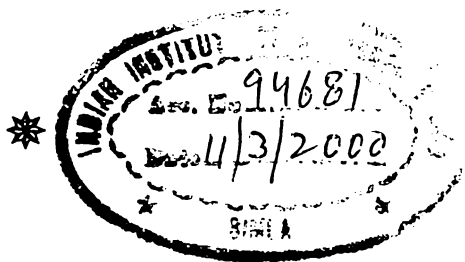
The *Syādvāda* is a doctrine forming for basis of Jaina metaphysics and dialectics. It was formulated as a scheme of thought in which there is room for consideration of all points of view, and of all ideals. This was brought forward at a most critical

period of Indian life, when many conflicting dogmas were adumbrated without leading certitude. The *Syādvāda* stands out as an intellectual idea of that harmony among men which is based upon mutual understanding. In literature it has served as a basis of encyclopaedic knowledge in which many of his votaries have excelled.

Such was the form of Mahāvīra's declarations which aroused confidence in so many hundreds and thousands of his followers who had gathered round his personality and impelled them to follow his example in their own life. And such was the special attraction of religious life which was held out to the householders, both men and women from all families and social grades who came to form a large body of lay-disciples of the venerable Ascetic Mahāvīra.

Resume

Mahāvīra was one of the great teachers of mankind. He was indeed one of those teachers through whom the problem of the perfection of man came to be recognised as the highest problem before progressive humanity. All the rules of religious life, which he had enjoined, were intended to be practical and to the attainment of perfection of self. The goal set before mankind was the blissfulness of the entire being which could not be brought by wealth, pomp and power in the world. This happy state is to be attained through patience, forbearance, self-denial, forgiveness, humanity, compassion and consideration—in short, suffering and sacrifice, love and kindness. Mahāvīra has died, but only to live as an eternal personality.





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