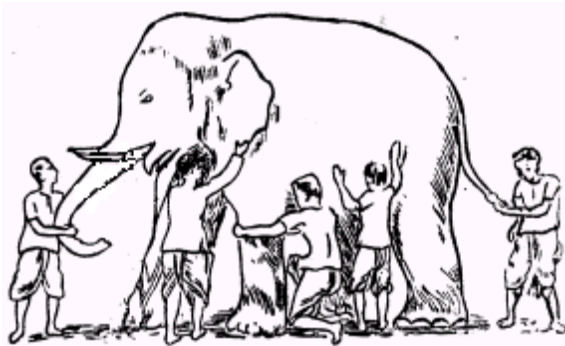


LESSON 24

MULTISIDED VIEW POINTS ANEKANTA (NON-ABSOLUTISM)

According to Jain philosophy the universe is formed of innumerable real substances which are living and non living. Each of them has innumerable qualities and modifications. Our ordinary knowledge cannot comprehend this complexity and if we try to judge and say that this is what reality is then we will be telling partial truth because we can not comprehend all aspects of substance, while those having omniscient (perfect knowledge) can describe all aspects of substance. Those people in Jainism are called Jina, Tirthankara, Arihant or Kevali and they are not limited to Jains only because omniscient is the state of soul and can be attained by anyone who totally wins over passions like attachment and hatred.



Jainism gives the example of elephant and blind men to describe this.

The story runs of the blind men each of whom formed his idea of an elephant by touching its legs, ears, tail and trunk, respectively and thus quarreling about the real nature of the elephant. They quarreled because each thought that his knowledge alone was complete and true and that it should be accepted indisputably by all. The

quarrel was over as soon as each of them realized that his knowledge was partial and referred to only one of the many parts of the animal. Different systems of philosophy represent different partial aspects of reality. Jain philosophy insists that every judgment should be qualified by some word like somehow, in some respects. For example, instead of a judgment like - "The elephant is like a pillar, to remove the chance of confusion it should be said in respect of its legs the elephant is like a pillar."

Some philosophers explain 'Syadvad' as a 'perhaps philosophy'. But it is their fallacious thinking. As a matter of fact, Syadvad banishes all confusion. It is wrong to consider this doctrine a form of skepticism, because it gives us the most precise, definite and distinct statement and leaves no room for doubt or suspicion.

The appreciation of this doctrine by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, first President of the Indian Republic, is remarkable, "This doctrine of Syadvad is a valuable contribution of Jainism to Indian and world philosophy. It consists of catholicity along with capacity to appreciate others." (Here catholicity means liberality of sentiments or views.)

Anekantvad is not dogmatism. It means open-mindedness, flexibility to accept view of others. The Anekantvad philosophy appeals to all irrespective of caste, creed, country and religion. Multiplicity of view-points is a right approach to solve the problems of life from a truly integrated point of view.

The Anekantvad philosophy develops the feeling of co-ordination, co-existence, mutual co-operation, mutual understanding and non-insistence. It directs our life by resolving all problems, whether individual or universal. The doctrine of Anekantvad (non-absolutism)

and Syadvad (relativism) is useful in our day to day life. Application of non-absolutism in thinking, Syadvad in speaking and non violence in activity serves the purpose of universal peace and happiness. We can establish communal harmony as well as balanced way of life with the help of these doctrines.

CONCLUSION

The universe has innumerable substances. Each substance has innumerable qualities and each quality has innumerable modes. A mundane soul has very limited knowledge, so it is difficult to grasp truth at a given point. Thus, every truth the mundane soul knows is conditional.