**The uniqueness of Jain philosophy**

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**Jain philosophy has some features, not found in any other religion.**

“Jainism is unique in the world, unlike any other faith or religion.But these exceptional features, vital for the survival of human civilization, are not known, much less appreciated, even in the Jain community. They deserve to be re-emphasised when the world is going through a critical phase.

One unique feature is that Jains do not pray to this “God” or that ‘messenger or a specific representative of God’ or a particular saint or monk. It prays to the enlightened souls, who may belong to any religion or sect or race. Their main prayer si Navkar mantra which begins with *Namo Siddhanam*. I bow to those who are enlightened, is the first prayer. That makes it objective and not subjective, like the other faiths.

After bowing to all the Gurus, preachers, and seers and sadhus in the universe (*namo ayaryaam, Namo Uvazzayanam, Namo Loye, savva sahunam*), what do Jains ask? Ask for good of every one, every living being, in universe. They ask not only for their own good but good of all, not only in their locality or city but in the whole universe. Two points need be mentioned here It is again non-subjective, impersonal, and unconfined to any specific people or place: includes every living being (including their enemies too) in the universe. Actually there is no equivalent word of mangal in English. Mangal does not mean only good but good in all apsects; not only material good, but good of the soul too. They express it as *Havai Mangalam.*

The next and equally important aspect of Jains is emphasis on their ‘self’. They can attain Godhood by improving themselves. The concentration is on their own self, not on others. They do not blame others for their suffering; they themselves are responsible for good or evil that happens to them.

The third unique aspect is *Anekantavad* (multiplicity). They do not claim that their’s is the only path for salvation, as claimed in monism, and other paths or religions are wrong. *Anekantavad* states that there are many paths to salvation, and others are as good.

The fourth aspect is they believe in a purpose in their life. It is not an objectiveless life we have got. And the purpose is well defined: it is salvation. One can attain it by certain practices and those too are well defined: purifying your body, mind and soul by, penances, self discipline and meditation, by following non-violence, non accumulation of possessions, search for truth and a disciplined life etc.

Like the Jain principles, Jain Laws are also impersonal. There is no personal God, although one can attain godhood by the practices mentioned above. The laws, equally applicable to every one operates the universe. No God the creator, The God who can create miracles, give favours or the one, in whose fear one should live and act. One is his own master, only one himself can do favor to himself by following the correct path and if one need to fear some one, it is himself or his wrong deeds. A Total freedom and independence from others in the whole universe. No luck, no miracles, no coincidences; only consequences. So Jainism guaranties equality to all,not only to humans but to the weakest insects or plants to the most developed species.

In Jainism, the laws have replaced the God. And what are these laws? These laws are the same as the laws of Nature, the few laws on which Nature operates and runs this complex, vast, universe. These laws include Law of coexistence (*parasporopagraho jivanam*), law of causality (*karmavad*), law of Conservation (eternal nature of basic constituents, that nothing can be created or destroyed).

Jainism has given equality to every one, because the universal laws affect every one equally, given them freedom and independence in true sense, by holding one and none others, responsible for his good or evil, an equal opportunity provider, not only to humans but to all living beings, without favour or fear of the God, and responsibility for oneself and one’s personal efforts (*purushartha*).

The Jain philosophy is well developed based on the doctrines stated above and has considered every aspect of life and matter, from macro to micro, living to non living, and is quite comprehensive, complex and yet based on simple laws. One does not find these features in any other faith in the world, which does not claim superiority although it is superior. For such reasons, conversion was never something one should carry out as is done in some other religions.

Jainism, thus has all the features of a civil society, equality, freedom, responsibility and independence and at the same time it operates in harmony with nature because it is based on Natural laws. All problems of the society today, violence, possessivity, consumerism, domination over others, environmental problems, over exploitation of the earth etc. can be resolved if people follow the principles enunciated by the enlightened souls mentioned above. Actually Jainism has nothing to do with Jain philosophy or religion but everything is based on Nature, is impersonal and gives a prescription for betterment of every body.

This is the only faith which can, therefore, be called universal, natural, rigorous, and eternal, and will continue as long as nature continues. It is the science of soul, and the science of whole. It better be called a path for self evolution and upliftment, rather than a faith. And if there is one faith which should be universally acceptable to all without bias of any kind, it is Jainism.