

The Purpose and Structure of the Book

Purpose

- The purpose of the book is to present to the Jain community and to the world, the many outstanding philosophical truths expounded by Jain *tīrthankars*. I have called them “gems”. At a few places these gems are then compared with the ideas in other religious Indian philosophies.
- The other purpose of the book is to bring out how, with time, some of the main principles and philosophical ideas have been diluted and/or completely changed. I have called them “aberrations”.

I earnestly hope that our great *sādhus*, *āchāryas* and thinkers can get together to stem, nay stop, the spread of aberrations and get the Jains to focus only on the great teachings of the liberated souls/*tīrthankars*.

There are many books and commentaries in our Jain spiritual literature, and voices of learned scholars who question many of the traditions and thoughts, which have crept into our religion. But they do so half-heartedly and almost apologetically. It is time to confront such issues, but surely with all humility and utmost caution, and with wisdom.

I wish to clearly state that the core teachings are sublime but it is the later dilution of the teachings, which needs to be arrested.

I am aware that the section on “aberrations” is going to cause great anger in some sections of the Jain community. But whatever I have mentioned is written in all sincerity and after a good amount of study and as a proud Jain.

- However, while discussing the gems and aberrations one needs to have a good knowledge about the Jain philosophy and also about the Jain code

of conduct. Hence in the beginning, two chapters, one on philosophy and one on *ācharaṇ* (code of conduct), are included.

I believe, I have done it in a manner, which will appeal to the discriminating minds of young Indians. Many a time, it is written in the first person and at times in an interactive way. Too much detailing has been consciously left out.

I also believe, that Jain scholars and *sādhus* will find interesting insights in the way I have approached a topic, say for example, the topic on *ratnatrayī*, or on *samyaktva*, or on *kāyotsarg*, or on *Syādvād*, or even on detailing of a simple term like *mumukshu*, amongst a few others.

- I have taken pains to point out, wherever possible, that some of the ideas and principles of Jainism are not exclusive to Jain religion. They prevail in the common Indian philosophical pool. At a few places, I have also pointed out the great philosophical ideas in other religions. This is done with a view that the Jain community, which is very proud of their religion, come to appreciate and respect other religions and philosophies.
- Further, care is taken to avoid exaggerated claims either to the superiority of the Jain statements or to its ancientness (antiquity). Jains believe that their religion is very ancient, and so believe that they have stated a particular principle before anyone else and claim exclusiveness to that philosophical thought or principle. This is a common flaw with writers of all religions, as they lose the balanced perspective in glorifying their religion.

Structure

- The book is written with a scientific temper and therefore is not too descriptive in nature. Concepts are explained in crisp and in an unambiguous manner. For the same reason, the paragraphs are smaller in length.
- As already mentioned, the book in the earlier two chapters, explains the Jain philosophy and the Jain *ācharaṅs* (code of conduct), before going on to the sections on gems and aberrations.
- Thereafter, there is a chapter titled “Points to Ponder”, which is another high point of the book. This section will stimulate a *sādhak* into thinking on the issues mentioned therein. This section also lists out a few concepts on which other philosophies have taken a different view and the spiritually inclined reader is asked to ponder on such points.
- Finally at the end, there is a chapter titled “Did You Know”. This section will also make interesting reading.
- Few topics appear in their normal order, either in the philosophy section or the *ācharan* section and then they are further discussed in the gems or the aberrations section. And in the case of *samyak darshan*, it is also discussed in the Points to Ponder section.
- Each major section begins on a new page. This is done so that the reader can pause before going on to the next concept. Further, for the new entrants to the field of Jain philosophy, I would advise them to read only a few pages/concepts at a time and assimilate them, before going on to the next concept.