ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AND JAIN PHILOSOPHY: A COMMON INTERLINKAGE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL CONSERVATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN THE WORLD

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ABSTRACT

India and Ethiopia has rich and recorded history of more than five thousand years old civilization. The Axumite kingdom was one of the great civilizations of the ancient world and has left behind the mystery of the great Axum stele. In same manner Indus Valley Civilization had well developed cultural system scattered across the Mohenjodaro, Harrappa and Lothal. It is also famous for its developed town planning and drainage system. Jainism was not unknown among the people of the Indus Valley and even among Jews and Egyptians and Ethiopians due to the activities of Jain Monks in the region. Ethiopian orthodox people have almost had almost similar ways of living and reasons of fasting, honouring and worshiping the God as it was in Jain. The major difference appeared today among these cultures are because of fusion and globalization. *But when it comes to faith in God then both Ethiopian's orthodox Christianity and Jainism shows almost the similar cultural behavior and pattern of sacrificing worldly life by adopting various types of occasions or ceremonies to come in closure with their God.* If you look at the inception of different prophets at different interval in the world during the last three thousand years it is found that most of them were the successor of "*truth and non-violence*". And they always focused on improving the eternal life rather than external. Jain religion has contributed a lot to the world in fighting against global warming and climate change through following its indigenous culture such as their food habits, way of living, and worshipping, all are close to nature and mostly based on conservation and sustainability. In similar way Ethiopian culture has its own value and is connected with nature and believes in protecting nature. Time has come when people should give respect to indigenous knowledge and cultural keeping aside the superstitious things from every culture.

The present paper has tried to unveil the indigenous cultural values and vows of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Jain Philosophy for eternal peace building in the world. The paper will try to showcase some common inter-linkages in between these two philosophies through extensive literature reviews and observations.

Key Words: Culture, Ethiopia, India, Jainism, Non-violence, Orthodox Christian, Vows

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1. INTRODUCTION

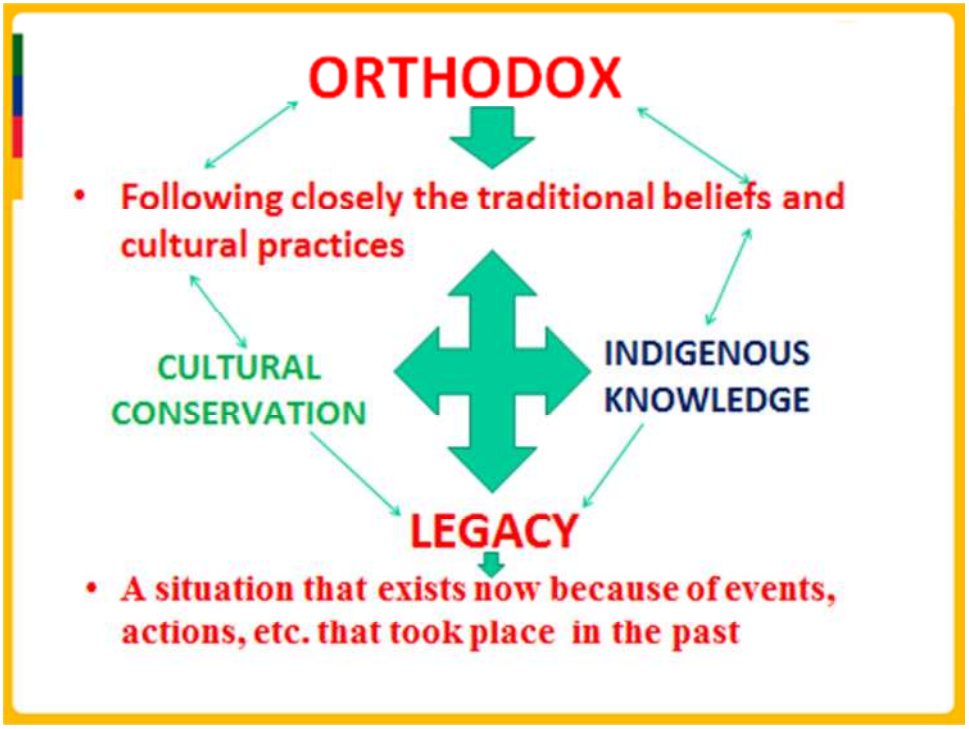
Indian subcontinent has been remained as a holy place of spiritual and dynamic learning by giving birth to great philosophers, saints, and prophets. The Indian philosophy of considering this world as one family (Vasudhaiv Kuttumbakam-a Sanskrit Notation) has attracted many research scholars and leaders towards it which further helped in peace building. Almost all culture in India is close to nature and its conservation but among all *Jan Philosophy* is still incomparable in the world because of its unique way of living followed by pure vegetarian (satvik food) and giving importance of wearing white clothing particularly in Swetambar Jain. White is symbol of "truth" whereas pure vegetarian is symbol of "non-violence". Jain philosophy totally believes in "truth and non-violence" which is a foundation of peace and harmony. In same manner Ethiopian orthodox Christian also put on white cloth before meeting their God in church and the keep fasting more than seven times in a year in which they eat vegetarian food only which signifies their affinity to truth and acceptability of non-violence in regard to gaining spirituality through purification. Therefore one thing is very clear that they also accepts that without following truth and non-violence they can't come closure to God Jesus. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity has been unique and untouched from the modernization and globalization except few cases where some changes can be seen in modern generation. Ethiopia has been able to conserve it legacy and cultural heritage because of the great role played by its orthodox Christians.

Both of these two philosophies that are Jain and Orthodox Christians have always focused on improving the eternal life rather than external only. Their main objective was to divert people from physical world to spiritual and holistic world and to provide guidance accordingly.

Invention and Innovation has given so many things to people by providing comfort but at the same time it has decreased the natural strength, immune system, and mental health of the people.

Indigenous culture has power to improve the human brains and drains. Most of these cultures have shown a traditional long lasting method of survival as well as celebrations. Live examples are there in the world, where in spite of advanced technology in agriculture and other area, people have been losing their lives due to unbeatable diseases that have been evolved like monsters. Average life span of living beings have come down across the globe due to climate change and global warming. And Ethiopia is also one of the best examples where average life span of human being is coming down from ancient time. More comfort lifestyle and thrust of worldly imitations perhaps the main reason behind all these sufferings. Today human are not only enemies of nature but also of humanity too. Time has come when people should give respect to indigenous knowledge and cultural keeping aside the superstitious things from it.

Fig.1. Defining Orthodox As Successor of Cultural Heritage(Legacy),



Jain philosophy has contributed a lot to the world in fighting against global warming and climate change through its indigenous culture such as their food habits, way of living, and worshipping. All are close to nature and mostly based on conservation and sustainability. Ethiopian orthodox Christians also fast almost seven times in a year and for monks it is more than common people. During fasting period they don't eat meat and milk products, totally vegetarian. So if you compare orthodox Christians in terms of fasting food and way of worshipping with Jain then it is found showing similar behavior in connection with nature and its conservation.

2. FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

The most important common linkage in between these two philosophies is fasting and abstinence. Ethiopian Orthodox still following the theme of Old Testament.

2.1. ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

The Church, in her earliest days, recognized the necessity for her children to "chastise the body and bring it under subjection", as St. Paul advises. The body is ever striving for mastery over the spirit; besides the external sources of temptation, "the world", we have always another source with us which is a part of our nature. This is the reason for mortification. Self denial is in lawful things enables us to turn with great earnestness to spiritual things. It is on these grounds that the

Ethiopian church has strictly adhered to the injunctions of the Didascalia and enjoyed on the faithful the longest and most austere fasts in the world.

Fasting implies abstention from food and drink. Special days are appointed for fasting. Every Wednesday and Friday are days of fasting because on Wednesday the Jews held a council in which they rejected and condemned our Lord and on Friday they crucified him. The total number of fasting days amounts to about 250 a year, of which about 180 are obligatory for all, and the rest are only for priests, monks, nuns and other special groups in the church. The longest periods of fasting are those of **Lent.**

To the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Lent means a period of fasting when the faithful undergo a rigorous schedule of prayers and penitence. *This fast is observed with greater rigor than any other fast and it is a test of one's Christianity. One who fails to keep it is not considered a good Christian. Properly observed in nullifies the sins committed during the rest of the year.* The faithful should abstain from all food except bread, water and salt. It consists of 56 days. All kinds of meat is forbidden, and *also dairy products*. On all the fasting days only one meal is allowed and this is to be taken in the afternoon, at 3 p.m. or in the evening. On Saturdays and Sundays people are allowed to eat in the morning.

2.2. JAIN FASTING AND BELIEF

Jain objections to the eating of meat and fish are based on the principle of nonviolence (ahinsa, literally "non-injuring"). Every act by which a person directly or indirectly supports killing or injury is seen as violence (hinsa), which creates harmful karma. The aim of ahimsa is to prevent the accumulation of such karma. Their scrupulous and thorough way of applying nonviolence to everyday activities, and especially to food, shapes their entire lives and is the most significant hallmark of Jain identity.

For Jains, lacto-vegetarianism (generally known simply as vegetarianism in India) is mandatory. Food which contains even small particles of the bodies of dead animals or eggs is absolutely unacceptable. Some Jain scholars and activists support *veganism, as the production of dairy products involves significant violence (himsa) against cows.*

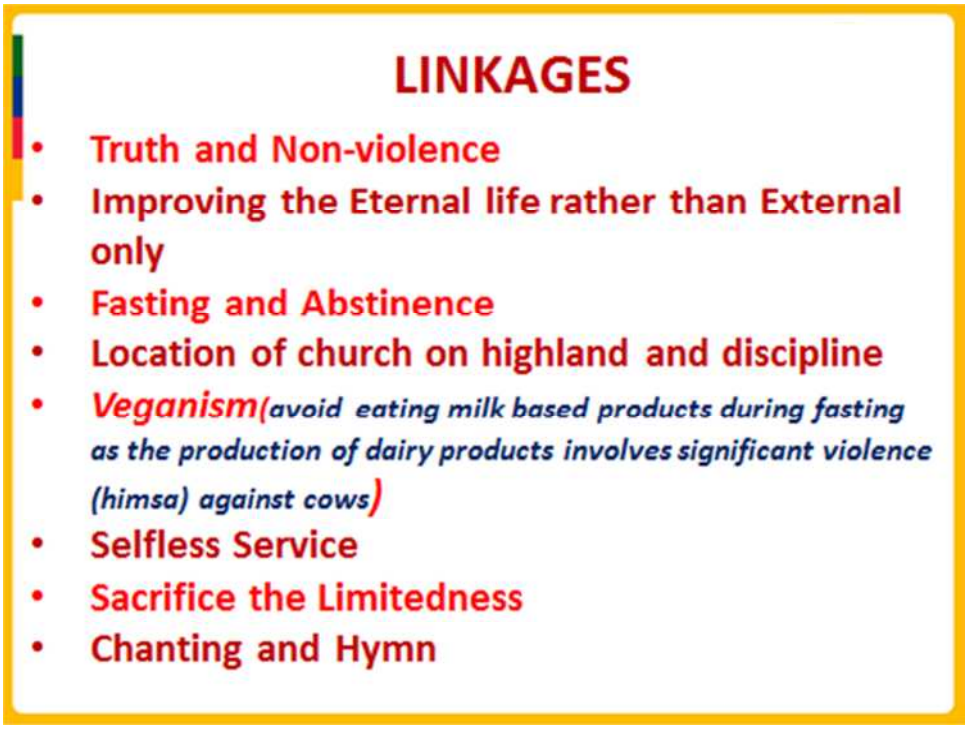
Fasting is very common among jains andas a part of festivals. Most Jains fast at special times during festivals and on holy days. *Paryushan* is the most prominent festival lasting eight days in Swetambara Jain tradition and ten days in Digambar Jain tradition during the monsoon. The monsoon is the time of fasting. However, a Jain may fastat any time, especially if he or she feels some error has been committed. According to Jain , abstaining from the pleasures of the five senses such as sounds and dwelling in the self in deep concentration is fasting(upavasa).

Varsitapa, is very rigorous since it entails a whole year of "tap" with eating no food on alternate days and eating food on the rest of the days, while following the prescribed rules like not eating in the evening after sunset, not eating root vegetables and various other rules. In swetambar Varsitap they do Ekasanu alternate days and Upavas(fast) on the rest days.

In the Samannaphala Sutta of the Dighanikaya, there is a reference to the four vows (Chaturyama Dharma) in contradiction to the *five vows* of Mahavira. The *four vows* of Parsva were :- *not to take life, not to tell a lie, not to steal and not to own property*. To these Mahavira was forced to add the *fifth vow* of *chastity* when the abuses had crept into the Jain church.

2.3. LINKAGES

Besides these other types of fasting are there in both the orthodox Christian and Jain. But it has been seen that the purpose behind fasting is almost similar. Most of these fasting runs as per sunrise or sunset and a particular type of food is prohibited to eat or no food at all that signifies the similar pattern. And putting on the white cloth on body signifies some nearest relation in between two great philosophies. Table-1 Common Linkages in Jain Philosophy and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians



3. MAIN REASON BEHIND CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL WARMING

Human wants are like wondrous creature that has changed the way of thinking and has been running behind unlimited satisfaction. Want has given birth to necessity and necessity has given birth to invention which further has given birth to comfort with easy lifestyle - *the main reason behind global warming, climate change and early death. In one line "want is root of all evils. Therefore it's time to piped inside the indigenous cultural knowledge and its benefits.*

Rarely people are found following the real "vows". Instead of that human beings are behind artificial satisfaction and illusions. And for that they are ready to go upto the extent of genocide and ethnocide.

People with more ethnic and indigenous values are being treated as inhuman, impotent and sometimes even antisocial. Therefore main problem lies in the eternal thinking rather than behavioural thinking. In nature everything is justified including of ecosystem. It's human who have been breaking the rules because of diverted mind and narrow thinking.

Jainism has always carried this perspective and Ethiopian orthodox Christianity almost has similar belief. Hence if again both decides to go ahead with above philosophy by taking hands in hand together then success is not too far to achieve.

4. JAINISM IN INDIA

The respectable and reliable sacred books of the Hindus themselves establish the most ancient nature of Jain thought. Rigveda, the oldest Hindu scripture refers to Lord Rishabha Deo, who was the founder of Jainism. It also talks about Vaman Avtar-incarnation, who is the 15th incarnation amongst the 24 incarnation. Rishabha's name comes as the 9th incarnation Vishnu. Rishabha's name occurs before Vaman or Ram, Krishna, and Buddha incarnations. Therefore it is quite clear that Rishabha must have flourished long before the composition of Rigveda. The great scholar Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, ex-president of Indian Union, in his India Philosophy had observed, "Jain tradition ascribes the origin of the system to Rishabhadeva, the first Tirthankara. There is no doubt that Jainism prevailed even before Vardhaman or Parsvanath. The Yajurveda mentions the name of three Tirthankaras-Rishabha, Ajitnath and Arshtanemi. The Bhagwat Puran endorses the view that Rishabhadeva was the founder of Jainism." (Vol. II, p. 286). The excavations made at Mohenjodaro and Harappa show that Jainism existed five thousands years ago, because the pose of the standing deities on the Indus seals resembles the pose of standing image of Rushabhadeo obtained from Mathura. The feeling of abandonment that characterizes the standing figure of the Indus seals, three to five (Plate II, I G.N.) with as bull in the foreground may be the prototype of Rishabha. (Modern review Agust 1932 - Sindha Five Thousand Years Ago). Rishabha has been spoken of as Yogishwara by the poet Jinasena in his

Mahapurana. Therefore, the Indus valley excavated material glaringly establishes the fact that the founder of Jainism belonged to the pre-Vedic period.

4.1. JAINISM IN AFRICA, GREECE AND ISRAEL

A glance over the glorious past of Jainism reveals the fact that the lives of Rushabhadeo and the succeeding twenty-three Tirthankaras had deeply impressed the entire world culture. When the Alexander invaded India he came across a host of nude Jain saints in Taxila whom the Greek writers call “Gymnosophists”. The Greek word connotes the nude philosopher. The mystic group of Israel, called the Essenes, was much influenced by these “Gymnosophists”, who were preaching their message of Ahimsa, the central truth in Jainism to the people of Alexandra in Egypt. Historical records tell us that the Greeks were much influenced by Jain thoughts. Alexander had taken one Jain saint, Calanes with him to his country.

It is to be noted that the Essenes of Israel were ascetics following the tenets of Ahimsa. They had great hold upon the people and they commanded deep influence in Palestine. John the Baptist was an ascetic teacher of this school of Essenism. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity was much influenced by John’s Non-violence cult and other teachers of Essenism. In six hundred B. C. this cult of Non-violence was progressing beyond Syria and Palestine. The Jain teachings has also influenced Pythagoras, the philosopher of pre-Socratic period, who flourished in 532 B. C. and led the non-violence way of life. During this period Lord Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, whom the ignorant people called the founder of Jainism, was living. Perhaps Lord Mahavira’s teaching had influenced the people of far off countries.

In his book, The Magic of Numbers, E. T. Bell (p. 87) tells that once Pythagoras saw a citizen beating his dog with a stick, whereupon the merciful philosopher shouted, "Stop beating that dog. In this howls of pain I recognize the voice of a friend, for such sin as you are committing he is now the dog of a harsh master. By the next turn the wheel of birth may make him the master and you the dog. May he be more merciful to you than you are to him. Only thus can he escape the wheel. In the name of Apollo, My father, stop or I shall be compelled to say on you the ten fold curse of the Teteractyas." This reveals the effect of Jainism.

5. TEACHINGS OF LORD MAHAVIRA

Lord Mahavira was the last and 24thTirthankara of Jainism and is responsible for reordering the religion and introducing the Jain Sangha. Lord Mahavira considered men and women to be spiritual equals and that they both may renounce the world in search of Moksha. Lord Mahavira encouraged participation of people from all social standings, rich and poor, men and women, touchable and untouchable.

The ultimate goal behind practicing the teachings of Lord Mahavira is to attain freedom from the cycle of rebirth as human life is representative of pain, misery and vices. According to him, every living being suffers under the bondage of Karma, which is the accumulation of that being's deeds. Souls seek pleasures in materialistic possessions that result into introductions of vices like self-centeredness, greed, anger and violence. These result into accumulation of bad karma which does not allow souls to be liberated from the cycle. He preached that the real path leading to attainment of liberation from the cycle of Karma is through Samyak Darshana (right faith), Samyak Jnana (right knowledge) and Samyak Charitra (right character). These three basic principles were further elaborated by the Gandhar Gautama Swami into the twelve parts sacred scriptures known as the 12 Agamas. Sermons of Lord Mahaveera were compiled in the Agam Sutras by his disciples and were passed on to the common people through oral recitations.

These scriptures prescribe 5 basic vows that should be observed by monks and common disciples alike. These five basic vows are

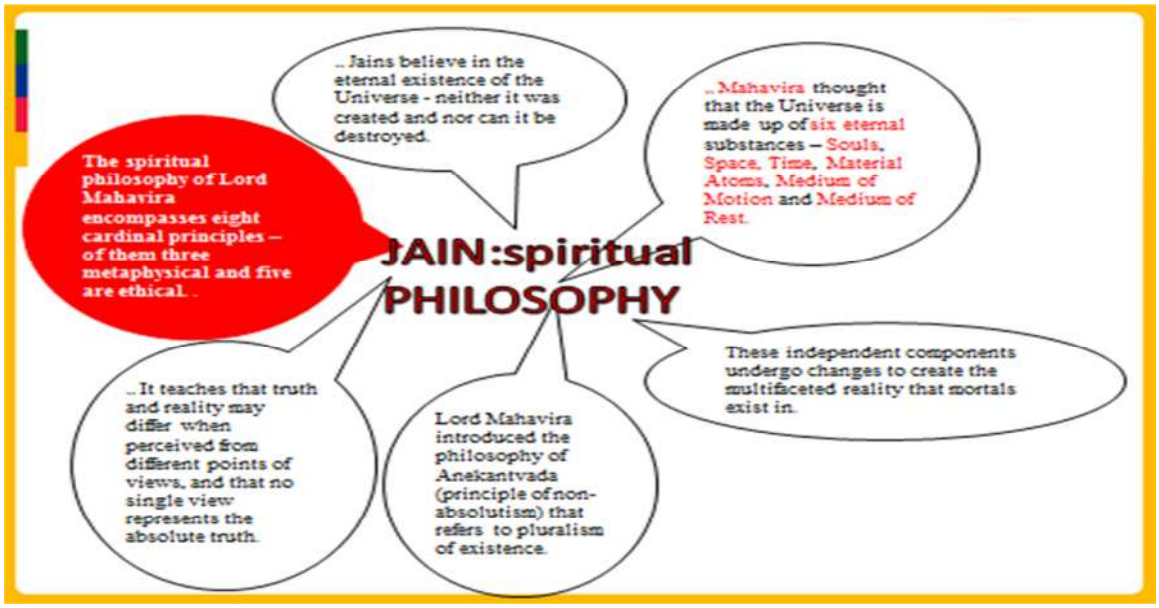
1. Nonviolence (Ahimsa) - not to cause harm to any living beings
2. Truthfulness (Satya) - to speak the harmless truth only
3. Non-stealing (Asteya) - not to take anything not properly given
4. Chastity (Brahmacharya) - not to indulge in sensual pleasure
5. Non-possession/Non-attachment (Aparigraha) - complete detachment from people, places, and material things.

Teachings and philosophy of Lord Mahavira laid down the foundation of a novel sect of Jainism known as the Digambaras, apart from the pre-existing Shwetambaras. The Digambaras believe that attaining moksha through a life of strict penance and by practicing nudity to symbolize freedom from worldly attachments.

The spiritual philosophy of Lord Mahavira encompasses eight cardinal principles – of them three metaphysical and five are ethical. Jains believe in the eternal existence of the Universe - neither it was created and nor can it be destroyed. Mahavira thought that the Universe is made up of six eternal substances – Souls, Space, Time, Material Atoms, Medium of Motion and Medium of Rest. These independent components undergo changes to create the multifaceted reality that mortals exist in. Lord Mahavira introduced the philosophy of Anekantvada (principle of non-absolutism) that refers to pluralism of existence. It teaches that truth and reality may differ when perceived from different points of views, and that no single view represents the absolute truth. This multifaceted reality is better explained with Syadvada or the Principle of Seven Fold Predictions. The principle of Partial Stand Points or Nayvada is also an offshoot of Anekantvada, reinforcing the Jain belief of existence of infinite points of view, each expressing a partial truth.

5.1. JAIN AND CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHIES : COMMON LINKAGES

The teaching of Jainism is that the essential part of man is his soul and that it is a immortal blissful, omniscient and omnipotent. That is why to say by nature it is divine. Fig.2 Jain Philosophy



The Christian teaching endorse this. The fact that Jesus recognised the existence of soul and knows its worth is seen in his question by St. Mathew.

St. John XIV 6

The way is the path leading to the goal, hence Right Faith. The truth is Right knowledge . The life is the proper way of living-doing the right things at the right time-hence Right conduct.

In conclusion Christianity even recognises that existence of 24 Tirthankaras and the Sidhas. They are to be found in the Revelation, Chapter IV,V,VI and VII of St.John, where they are referred to as “Four and twenty elders” and a great multitude which no man could number” no “Ten thousand times ten thounsand.” And thousands of thousands” respectively.

It will be seen that two religious run side by side all the way. The only difference is that, as said before, the Christian teachers were unable to give out their knowledge in plain straight forward way, so that the doctrine they were really expounding has to be searched for by the discerning eyes.

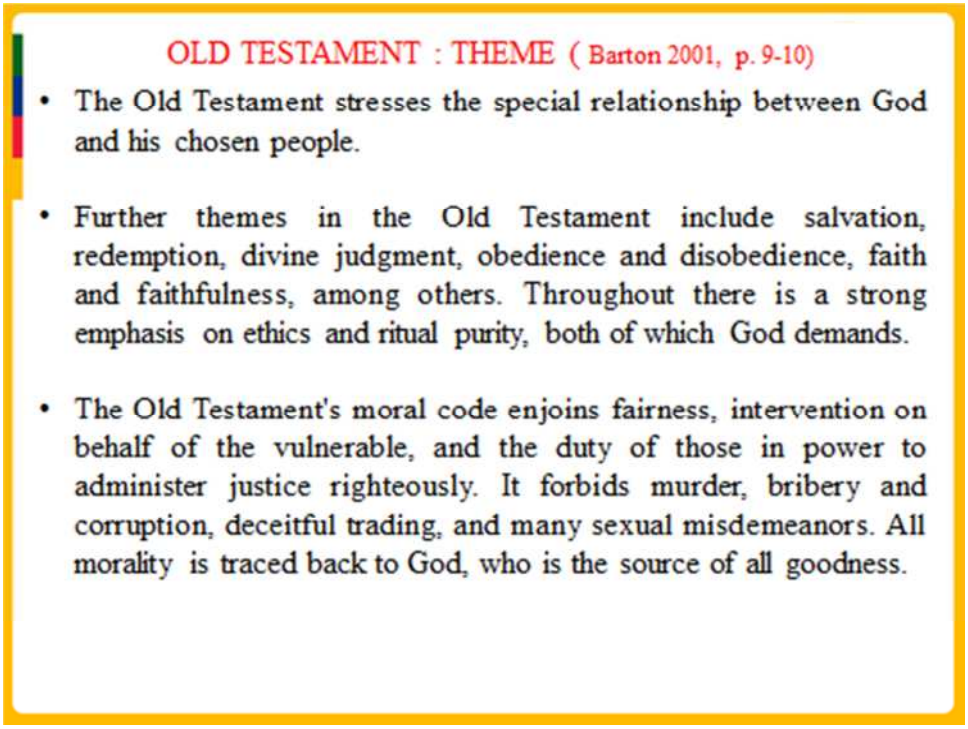
While Jainism taught his disciples plasting and factfully, Jesus, his disciples and the first fathers of Christians church were compelled to cloak their teachings in mystifying parables and allegories . They themselves give warning of this and explain why it was restored too. But the warning alos! Havemostly gone unheeded and over since men have instead on reading the Bible as straight history and fact.

Jesus tells his disciples according to St. Duke.

“Unto you is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables. That seeing they might not see and hearing they might not understand.”

In St.Methews Gospel he gives the reason:

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot.....”



5.2. AHIMSA (NON-VIOLENCE)

Truth quenches untruth, love quenches anger, self suffering quenches violence. The way of non-violence is not meant for saint alone. It is for all. Such people are few in number but they are the salt of the earth. The world is sustained through such people and not through those who sin against Light and Truth (M.K. Gandhi).

Misconception: uncharitable people have sometimes unjustly criticised Ahimsa or non-violence and attributed India's downfall and degration to this doctrine. According to such men Ahimsa produces only coward and weak-kneed people. But this is far from truth because the rule of ahimsa does not demand that a man should yield to the enemy on the battlefield or that he sit deaf and dumb if somebody attacks his home or hearth.

Dogmtaism:- Jesus preached this doctrine of Ahimsa more than nineteen hundred years ago. He warned, " All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

According to St. Methew, resist not evil but whosoever shall smile thee on thee right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away the coat, let him have thy clock also, And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him the twain. Give to him that asketh the and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

The Gospel of Ahimsa was deeply & Systematically expounded properly & specially preached by Jain Tirthankars more prominently by Lord Mahavira, then again by Lord Budha & at last it was acted in thoughts , word & deeds; symbolised by Mahatma Gandhi **(Einstein).**

6. CONCLUSION

Eternal peace building among human beings can only help to fight against global warming and climate change. People need to learn how to satisfy their unlimited wants with limited resources available to them in their surroundings. And in this process indigenous cultural methods and doctrines of great Jain philosophers and African philosophers can contribute maximum to human for getting eternal peace.

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are different and unique in the world. But their culture and some religious ceremonies shows similarity to Jainism particular the Old Testament related gospels and ways of fasting.

6.1. Make A Difference

All animals go through and spend time in the three functions of life, Ahara (eating), Nidra (sleep), Mythuna (mating). Humans also spend their life with these three functions. Then what is the difference between animals and us. Humans are uniquely endowed with the faculty of Buddhi (Intellect) that discriminates good and bad. This faculty of discrimination helps us seek the purpose and goal of life and living. This sets us apart from animal kingdom. Majority of us work typically for jeevanopadhi (livelihood) similar to animals. As humans we should also use our intellect and work simultaneously for Jeevana Parmavadhi (purpose of life).

How many of us are working towards this Jeevana Paramavadhi (purpose of life)*?*

Typically in a given society a small percent say 5% of people live a life of absolute laziness and do nothing to contribute either to themselves or to others. A large portion about 90% are satisfied with jeevanopadhi and their life is centered on themselves and their immediate family. The later 5% are the ones who work for jeevana paramavadhi along with jeevanopadhi. This 5% is the one that make a difference in the world. These people not only work for themselves, their families, but they also work for greater good of the society. They try to find salvation through nishkama karma (selfless action). World has witnessed many people come and go that represent this.

"Help if you can always - Even if you cannot help – Do no harm"

Purana(great epics/scriptures of India) also says(in Sanskrit Language),

"*Astadasa Puranesu Vyasena Vachanam Dwayam,*

Paropakaraya Punyaya – Papaya Para Peedanam"

It means essence of 18 puranas is "helping others is punya(good/blessings of God) and hurting others is papa(evil/sin)". "Make a difference with your presence". Our presence should bring in a positive change in the place or people. This should be the case in all places, in all times, in all circumstances. Attitude of gratitude help us connect and experience our blessings.

6.2. Experience Connectedness

We are not alone. We are connected to everything and everyone in the universe. Experience this connectivity. This is the true world wide web (www). Any thought word, action by any one of us has an impact to the totality of universe. As for the law of transformation of energy, the sum total of energy in the universe is constant. It can neither be created nor destroyed and it can only be transformed from one state to another. This applies to all our thoughts, all our words and actions. So we are connected to everybody and to everything in the universe. One should be careful on what they think, say or do. One should think positive, speak positive and do positive things. This experience of connectedness is Visvaroop Darshan or realization. This is also called Constant Integrated Awareness (CIA). Experience the Oneness, we are.

"Sacrifice the Limitedness". Ahankar (ego) is the mind's identification with the limited body. Thyaga is sacrifice. True sacrifice is, sacrifice of our limitedness, so that we expand into unlimitedness (infinite). This is what the Upanishads mean when they declared "Thyagenaike Amrutatva Manasu – Only through sacrifice one attains immortality". Selfless Service is a good vehicle to expand to our full potential through sacrifice of ego. This is the final frontier in the journey towards self-realization. Serve All. Sacrifice what you are not (ego) and be what you really (atma) are, your true self (Atma).

The following quotation in Sanskrit from ancient Indian Scripture that tell us to leave in eternal peace always..

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः (Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah)

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः । (Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah)

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु (Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu)

मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् । (Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet)

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ (Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih)

Meaning:

1: Om(Hey God !), May All become Happy,

2: May All be Free from Illness.

3: May All See what is Auspicious,

4: May no one Suffer.

5: Om(Hey God!) Grace all with Peace, Peace and Peace

The above quotation of ancient time is now more applicable to fight against global warming and climate change by spreading peace and harmony among people but it would only be possible if, everyone in this world give respect and honour to each other i.e. living and non-living both. And no doubt in this that age old indigenous culture, scriptures, epics and great philosophical thoughts of ancient philosophers are still applicable, implementable and alive and would be alive till the existence of the world through its successors.

7. LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING STUDY

Any generalized idea is not right due to variations in size, goal, changing perceptions and region and literatures followed.

8. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The further research must direct itself for conducting such investigations. This will make the study more meaningful to find linkage more effectively. Further the suggested linkages need to

be tested for its authenticity across the destinations and literatures available and benchmarks to be identified for others to follow. Further the views suggested are macroscopic; this can be further extended to microscopic level.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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