

self-development remains stunted. The first and fundamental need of every fresh student is to admire and attach himself to somebody. Every youth is a hero-worshipper. His first hero is naturally the teacher whom he instinctively admires. If the teacher takes an interest in him, his will to self-sculpture will come into active play.

The teacher, however, can only evoke hero-worship in the student if he enters his life not by sermons but by personal example; by encouraging friendly intercourse; by inviting confidence and suggesting ways of removing his difficulties, external or psychological.

The student in his formative period has, as a rule, generous impulses and high aspirations. But he can instinctively discover whether his teacher has the soul of a hired instructor or a *guru*. If the student feels that the teacher is devoted to his subject, to his institution, and to evoking the best in the students, he will surely take to the *guru*. There is no other way to evoke this feeling than for

the teacher to develop an apostolic fervour and a spirit of consecration to his life-work.

A teacher has in thought, word and deed to be the guide, philosopher and friend of his student before he can develop the *guru* attitude.

The teachers under Western influence are fast becoming mere wage-earners. Some have been known to be doing commercial side-jobs, to have been spending all their energy in intriguing themselves into position of power. The highly competitive—democratic is an inapt word—conditions under which our Universities and educational societies function at present, has placed a handicap on the teachers who devote himself solely to his work, his subject and his student.

But we have to cry halt and restore the teacher to the dignity of an apostle to which he is entitled. It will be an unfortunate generation which will be moulded by teachers who have not developed this *guru* attitude.

Lord Vardhamana Mahavira

R. Venkataraman

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Centres Worldwide will be celebrating Mahavira's 2600th birth anniversary. Shri R. Venkataraman, Former President of India and presently President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India are the Patrons in Chief of the celebrations. Dr. L. M. Singhvi is the Chairman of the International Celebration Committee and Dr. Navin Mehta Chairman of local organising committee in USA. The Prime Minister has kindly agreed to inaugurate the celebration in New York which will coincide with his visit to United Nations in October 2001.

—Editor

Lord Vardhamana Mahavira, the last of the Thirthankaras, was born on 599 B.C. at Kunda Gram, a large city in the Kingdom of Vaishali, near modern Patna. The World will be celebrating the 2600th Mahavira Jayanti this

year. I reverentially venture to highlight some of the highly relevant teachings of Lord Mahavira.

By virtue of constant practice and meditation for a long spell of twelve years. Mahavira attained



'Enlightenment' or realization at the age of 42. At this stage he became *Kevalin*, Omniscient, comprehending all objects. He saw and knew whence they had come, where they would go, and whether they would be reborn as men, animals, gods or hell beings. At

the age of 72, the venerable Ascetic Mahavira passed into *Nirvana*; he thus became a *Sidhdha*, one who is fully liberated, for ever free of embodiment.

During the time of Mahavira, the Indian society was ridden with castes and

birth considerations. The so-called upper caste people inflicted tyranny and torture upon the lower castes and the down-trodden and exploited them for their personal ends in all sorts of ignoble ways.

Mahavira was the first to lead the Indian society out of this vicious circle of casteism.

He gave the slogan, "The whole of mankind is a single caste, we are all human beings by caste. None is high or low; great or small by birth. Man becomes great or small by virtue of his deeds". It is not the accident of birth but his deeds which enable a man to become a Brahman, a Kshatriya, Vaisya or a Sudra. He who performs noble deeds becomes exalted and he who indulges in ignoble actions, degenerates. It is this mission of Mahavira which became the backbone of

Gandhiji's mission of Harijan welfare. Mahavira glorified man as a man.

During his times, fatalism was the fate of man. Man was accustomed to curse his fate for each and every adversity and

suffering which befell him. The desire to do something and a spirit of

He gave the slogan, "The whole of mankind is a single caste, we are all human beings by caste. None is high or low; great or small by birth. Man becomes great or small by virtue of his deeds".

adventure were lacking. Mahavira lifted man out of the dense darkness of inertia, ignorance and fatalism by telling him that his self effort alone can make his life. It is our own efforts which makes or mars our life. We are not helpless puppets in the hands of nature, fate and the like. We are the makers of our own destiny. Man can make himself great by the force of his efforts and character. His preaching is, "O Man, thy soul is God itself. Just realise it by self-efforts".

Swami Vivekananda gave the same clarion call when he uttered, "Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached". According to Mahavira, to remain attached to sensuous objects is to remain in the world. If mankind is to be freed from mental tensions, it is necessary to grow a detached outlook in life. Thus, Jainism preaches the vow of complete non-possession for ascetics and the vow to limit one's own possession for the house-holders, which are technically called as *aparigraha mahavrata*. The Gandhian concept of 'trusteeship' is the offshoot of Mahavira's *aparigraha* or his philosophy of non-possession.

While defining religion Mahavira says, "Living creatures should not be slain, should not be governed, should not be enslaved and should not be tortured. This is the pure, eternal and unchangeable law or the tenet of religion". The immortal preaching of Lord Mahavira, 'live and let live' and

his philosophy of universal friendship of mankind can alone be the basis of world peace. The concept of non-violence and regard for life is accepted by almost all the religions of the world. But none of the religions observed it so minutely as Jainism. Jainism prohibits even killing of vegetable life; to hurt the plants is also an act of violence or *ahimsa*. Its basic principle is that life in whatever form it may be, should be respected. We have no right to take another's life, because every one wants to live as we do. The directive principle of living according to Mahavira, is not 'living on others' but 'living with others' or 'living for others'.

The basic problems of present day society are mental tension, violence and the conflicts of ideologies and faiths. Jainism has tried to solve these problems of mankind through three basic tenets of non-attachment (*aparigraha*), non-violence

(*ahimsa*) and non-absolutism (*anekanta*). If mankind observes these three principles, peace and harmony can be established in the world. In comparison with limited and small population of Jains, the achievements of Jains in enriching the aspects of Indian culture are really great. Jains' contribution in every walk of national development has been unique and unprecedented. Valuable contributions have been made by the Jains to the Indian scientific and technical literature on various subjects like logic, philosophy, poetry, grammar, astronomy, metrology, geography, mathematics and medicine. Thus, there is hardly any branch of science that has not been ably treated by Jain writers. The Jains have enriched various regional languages especially Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu. The well-known theory of multiple view-points (*anekanta vada*) is the sole contribution of Jains. The Jains

especially in Southern and Western India, produced a large number of eminent and efficient monarchs, ministers and generals and thereby contributed to maintain and improve the political condition of the people.

Not only ordinary Jains but their saints or *acharyas* also aided materially to create proper political environment necessary for the regeneration of life in the country. The Jain sadhus by their renunciation of worldly pleasures have kept alive the spirit of charity, tolerance and compassion among the Indian masses. Braving terrible storms, Jain sadhus never allowed politics to capitalise on religion and they on their part never cherished political ambitions. In Jainism, religion is to realise mental equanimity which is the essential nature of a man. The main objective of Jainism is to emancipate man from worldly sufferings and mental tensions.

16 April, 2001
New Delhi