

BOOK REVIEWS

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Kamala Jain, *APARIGRAHA : THE HUMANE SOLUTION*,
Parsvanatha Vidyapitha, Varanasi, 1998. PP 102, Price Rs 120/-

This book is Kamala Jain's third work; the first *The Concept Of Pancasila In Indian Thought* was published in 1983; the second *Kanikayain (Jivan Ki Chut-Put Anubhutian)* came out in 1994. The present work connects to the first work where she discusses, for the first time, the concept of *aparigraha* (non-attachment to possessions) and *icchā-parimāṇa* (limiting one's desires) This book under review contains a preface and three chapters - (1) Consumerism - the anti human goal, (2) Environmental degradation - risk to human survival, (3) Aparigraha - the humane solution, and an Epilogue. There is an analytical Table of Contents and a detailed bibliography. The book is printed well and it has a good get up.

The title is half Sanskrit and half English. When *aparigraha* is translated into English, the title reads 'Non-attachment to possessions and limiting one's desires is the humane solution'. It is a solution to the problem of how to deal with the undesirable consequences of consumerism and environmental degradation. Kamala Jain makes a normative judgement here: Consumerism goes against the age-old maxim of simple living, hence it is undesirable. To avoid this consequence one should be unattached to possessions (*aparigraha*) and also one should limit one's desires (*icchā-parimāṇa*). Similarly, environmental degradation entails risk to the survival of the human race. This risk is to be eliminated. Again, the way out is *aparigraha* and *icchā-parimāṇa*. For, if one is unattached to possessions and also limits one's desires, one would no longer exploit and degrade environment. In this way both the problems of consumerism and environmental degradation can be solved in a humane way by practicing non-attachment and limiting one's desires.

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Although Kamala Jain does not argue, she regards the problem of consumerism and environmental degradation at root essentially one. She sees environmental degradation as "the logical outcome of consumerism" (p.94).

The author regards sympathetically the other alternatives, e.g., the Gandhian alternative of sustained development. She does not accept the hypocritical idea of combining environmental protection with consumerism.

Kamala Jain is fully aware of the practical difficulties in carrying out her proposed solution in terms of *aparigraha* and *icchā-parimāṇa*. She has no doubts about its feasibility. Nonetheless, she is bothered by skepticism about its practical implementation in the present day scenario which is characterised by obsession with consumerism. Her perception of difficulties focuses on (a) how to determine the limits of possessions and desires both as individuals and as a society? (b) how to justify such limits? and (c) who should be allowed to enforce the limits in a society in which the individual is too weak as a force and the society may function arbitrarily and/or in majority? She finds these questions difficult to answer. However, she expresses her strong conviction in the belief that an easy way out is "to develop a spirit of appreciation for those who practice *aparigraha* or *icchā-parimāṇa*" (p. 96). For, a widespread appreciation of their work would create an effective opinion in favour of *aparigraha* and *icchā-parimāṇa*.

Kamala Jain's argument is indeed essentially persuasive. Further, she feels uncomfortable about its applicability. For, even if this argument is accepted and also her proposed solution somehow works out successfully at the level of the individual, how is one to know that it will work out equally well at the level of the society at large? These difficulties are indeed enormous for the author's essentially idealistic framework to work out successfully.

All said, Kamala Jain's book is a serious study. It demands an equally serious attention and further work in the field explored by her.