Equanimity and Meditation (Sāmāyika and Dhyāna)

Sāmāyika is the principal concept of Jainism. It is the first and foremost among six essential duties of a monk as well as of a house-holder. Prākṛta term Sāmāya is translated into English in various ways such as observance of equanimity, viewing all the living beings as one's own self, conception of equality, harmonious state of one's behaviour, integration of personality as well as righteousness of the activities of mind, body and speech. Ācārya Kundakunda also used the term samāhī (samādhi), in the sense of sāmāyika where it means a tensionless state of consciousness or a state of self-absorption. In its general sense the word sāmāyika means a particular religious practice through which one can attain equanimity of mind. It is an end as well as means in itself. As a means it is a practice for attaining equanimity while as an end it is the state in which self is completely free from the flickerings of alternative desires and wishes, excitements and emotional disorders. It is the state of self-absorption or resting in one's own self. In Āvaśyakaniyukti, it is mentioned that the sāmāyika is nothing but one's own self in its pure form. Thus, from transcendental point of view, sāmāyika means realisation of our own self in its real nature. It is the state in which one is completely free from attachment and aversion. In the same work Ārya Bhadra also mentions various synonyms of sāmāyika. According to him equanimity, equality, righteousness, state of self-absorption, purity, peace, welfare and happiness are the different names of sāmāyika. In Ānyyogadvārasūtra, Āvaśyakaniyukti and Kudakunda's Nīyamasāra, sāmāyika is explained in various ways. It is said that one who by giving up the movement of uttering words, realised himself with non-attachment, is said to have supreme equanimity. He, who detached from all injurious or unpious actions, observes three-fold control of body, mind and speech and restrains his senses, is said to have attained equanimity. One who behaves equally as one's own self towards all living beings mobile and immobile, is said to have equanimity. Further, it is said that one who observes self-control, vows and austerities, one in whom attachment and aversion do not cause any disturbance or tension and one who always refrains from indulgence, sorrow and ennui, is said to have attained equanimity or sāmāyika.

This practice of equanimity is equated with religion itself. In Ācārānga, it is said that all the worthy people preach religion as equanimity. Thus, for Jainas, the observance of religious life is nothing but the practice for the attainment of equanimity. According to them, it is the essence of all types of religious activities and they all are prescribed only to attain it. Not only in Jainism but in Hinduism also, we find various references in support of equanimity. Gītā defines yoga as equanimity. Similarly, in Bhāgavatī it is said that the observance of equanimity is the worship of lord.

The whole frame-work of Jaina sādhanā has been built on the foundation of sāmāyika i.e. the practice for equanimity. All the religious tenets are made for it. Ācārya Haribhadra maintains that one who observes the equanimity or samabhāva will surely attain the emancipation, whether he belongs to Śvetāmbara sect or Digambara sect, whether he is Baudhā or the follower of any other religion. It is said in Jaina religious texts that one who observes hard penances and austerities such as eating once in a month or two as well as one who makes the donations of crores of golden coins every day, can not attain emancipation unless he attains equanimity. It is only through the attainment of equanimity of mind that one can get emancipation or liberation. Ācārya Kundakunda says "what is the use of residing in forest, mortification of body, observance of various fasts, study of scriptures and keeping silence etc. to a saint, who is devoid of equanimity" (Niyamasāra, 124).

Now we come to the next question how one can attain this equanimity of mind. Mere verbal saying that I shall observe the equanimity of mind and refrain from all types of injurious activities does not have any meaning unless we seriously practise it in our own life. For this, first of all, one should know what are the causes which disturb our equanimity of mind and then make an endeavour to eradicate them.

It is very easy to say that one should observe the equanimity of mind, but in practice it is very difficult to attain it. As our mental faculty is always in grip of attachment and aversion, what so ever we think or do, is always motivated by either attachment or aversion. Because the vectors of attachment and aversion are solely responsible for the disturbance of mental equanimity so the practice to attain equanimity depends on the eradication of attachment and aversion. So long as we do not eradicate the attachment and aversion, we are unable to attain equanimity.
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Now, our attention turns to the eradication or attachment and aversion. How we can get rid of these two enemies of equanimity. Attachment is another name of mineness and this mineness can only be uprooted through the contemplation of ekta bhāvanā and anyatva bhāvanā i.e. nothing is mine except my own self. In Āurāpacchākāna, it is clearly mentioned that if we want to conquer the mineness we must have to contemplate on the transitory nature of worldly things as well as of our own body. Only he who perceives that the death is coming nearer and nearer every moment, can see the things in their right perspective. samyagdarśana is nothing but to have a proper understanding of the worldly things. One, who perceives one's own death and transitory nature of things, can never be attached to them. When mineness disappears, otherness also disappears. For these two are the relative terms and without one, other also loses its meaning and when the idea of mineness as well as otherness dissolves, attachment and aversion disappears and equanimity dawns.

There is only one way to attain the equanimity of mind and that is through the contemplation of real nature of one's own self as well as of worldly things. One can eradicate the vectors of attachment and aversion and thus attain equanimity. And it is through self-awareness that one can be steady and firm in the state of equanimity or self-absorption. Equanimity needs proper understanding of real nature of one's own self as well as of others. In Niyamasāra, it is said that one, who meditates in one's own real nature with non-attached thought, activity and realises his self through righteous and pure concentration, can attain the supreme equanimity. One, who always practises the dharma dhyāna (righteous meditation) and śukla dhyāna (meditation of pure-form or real nature) can attain the equanimity. Thus, sāmāyika is closely related to meditation, without meditation and self-awareness no one can attain the equanimity of mind. Kundakunda further maintains that one who is absorbed in righteous and pure meditation is the antarātmā or sādhaka and one who is devoid of such contemplation or meditation is called bahirātmā. The realisation of self is only possible through equanimity and equanimity is possible only through the meditation of one's own real nature (Niyamasāra, 15, 147).

At last, I would like to conclude my paper by quoting a beautiful verse of Sāmāyika-pātha of Ācārya Amitagati-Satvēṣu maitriṁ gūṇisu pramodaiṁ kliṣṭesu jīveṣu kṛpāparatvāṁ. Mādhyasthīyabhāvant Viparita vr̥ttau Sadā mamātmā vidaddhateva.

Oh Lord! I should be friendly to all the creatures of world and feel delight in meeting the virtuous people. I should always be helpful to those who are in miserable conditions and tolerant to my opponents.*

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