JAINA MYSTICISM

Dr. Kamal Chand Sogani
Reader in Philosophy,
University of Udaipur, Udaipur

 hardship, there have been persons who regard spiritual quest as constituting the essential meaning of life. In spite of the marked environmental differences, their investigations have exhibited remarkable similarity of experience and expression. Such persons are styled mystics and the phenomenon is known as mysticism. Like the mystics of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam etc., Jaina mystics have made abundant contribution to the mystical literature as such. They have dealt with mysticism quite systematically and in great detail.

The equivalent expressions in Jainism for the word ‘mysticism’ are: śuddhavarga, Arhat and Siddha state, Pudita-panditamarana, Paramātman-hood, Svasamaya, Ārādṛṣṭī, Ahimsā, Samatva, etc. All these expressions convey identical meaning of realising the transcendent self. The traditional definition of Jaina mysticism may be stated thus: ‘Mysticism consists in the attainment of Arhat-hood or Siddha-hood through the medium of Samyagdarsana (right attitude or faith), Samyagjñāna (right knowledge) and Samyakcāritra (right conduct) after dispelling Mithyādārsana (wrong attitude), Mithyājñāna (wrong knowledge) and Mithyācāritra (wrong conduct).’ Kundakunda (1st cent. A. D.) records departure from this terminology when he says: ‘Mysticism consists in realising the Paramātman (transcendental self) through the Antarātman (internal self) after renouncing the Bahirātman (external self).’ Haribhadra (7th cent. A. D.) also employs a different terminology when he announces: ‘Mysticism consists in arriving at the state of Vṛtti-sāṅkṣaya (cessation of mental states) through the stages of Samyagdṛṣṭī and Āritrī after abandoning the stage of Apunarbandhaka (Mithyādṛṣṭī in transition).’ At another place he says: Mysticism consists in attaining to Parādṛṣṭī (transcendental insight) through Sthirā (steady spiritual insight), Kāntā and Prabhā Dṛṣṭis (elementary and deep meditational insights) after passing through Mitrā, Tārā, Balā, and Dīpār Dṛṣṭis.

All these definitions of mysticism are fundamentally the same. Paramātman refers to Arhat-hood and Siddha-hood, Parādṛṣṭī and the state of Vṛtti-sāṅkṣaya; Antarātman points to Samyagdarsana, Sthirādṛṣṭī and Samyagdṛṣṭī; and consequently to Samyagjñāna, Samyakcāritra, the state of Āritrī and the Kāntā and Prabhā Dṛṣṭis. Bahirātman refers to Mithyādārsana the state of Apunarbandhaka along with Mitrā, Tārā, Balā and Dīpār Dṛṣṭis and consequently to Mithyājñāna, and Mithyācāritra.

Thus we may say that the Paramātman is the true goal of the mystic quest. The journey

* The type of enlightenment accruing from eight Dṛṣṭis may respectively be compared to the type of light given by the sparks of straw-fire, cowdung-fire, wood-fire, the light of a lamp, the lustre of a gem, the light of the star, the light of the sun, and the light of the moon. Thus it varies from the indistinct enlightenment to the most distinct one. The first four Dṛṣṭis (Mitrā, Tārā, Balā, Dīpār) occur in the stage of apunarbandhaka (Mithyādṛṣṭī in transition) hence they are unsteady; while the last four, in the stage of Samyagdṛṣṭī and Āritrī, hence they are steady.
from the *Antarâtman* to the *Paramâtman* is traversed through the medium of moral and intellectual preparations, which purge everything obstructing the emergence of potential divinity. Before this final accomplishment, a stage of vision and fall may intervene. Thus the whole mystic way be put as follows: (1) Awakening of the transcendental self, (2) Purgation, (3) Illumination, (4) Darknight of the soul and (5) Transcendental life. According to Underhill, “Taken all together they constitute the phases in a single process of growth, involving the movement of consciousness from lower to higher levels of reality, the steady remaking of character in accordance with the ‘Independent spiritual world’.” But the Jain tradition deals with the mystic way under the fourteen stages of spiritual evolution, technically known as *Gunaśthānas*. However, these stages may be sub-summed under the above heads in the following way:

1. Dark period of the self prior to its awakening.
   *Mithyātva Gunaśthāna* (first)
2. Awakening of the self—*Aviratasyamagraṇī Gunaśthāna* (fourth)
   Fall from awakening :
   (a) *Sāśādana Gunaśthāna* (second)
   (b) *Misra Gunaśthāna* (third)
3. Purgation :
   (a) *Viratāvīrata Gunaśthāna* (fifth)
   (b) *Pramattaivīrata Gunaśthāna* (sixth)
4. Illumination :
   (a) *Apramaṇāvīrata Gunaśthāna* (seventh)
   (b) *Apūrvakaraṇa Gunaśthāna* (eighth)
   (c) *Avirūṭikaraṇa Gunaśthāna* (ninth)
   (d) *Sūkṣmasāmparāya Gunaśthāna* (tenth)
   (e) *Upāsāntakaśāya Gunaśthāna* (eleventh)
   (f) *Kṣīnakāśāya Gunaśthāna* (twelfth)
5. Dark period post illumination—fall to the first or the fourth *Gunaśthāna*.
6. Transcendental life :
   (a) *Sayogakeval Gunaśthāna* (thirteenth)
   (b) *Ayogakeval Gunaśthāna* (Fourteenth)

1. Dark period of the self prior to its awakening or *Mithyātva Gunaśthāna*:

In this *Gunaśthāna* the empirical souls remain in a perpetual state of spiritual ignorance owing to the beginningless functions of *Mohamtya* (deluding) *Karma*. This *Karma* on the psychical side engenders a complex state of *Mohi* having perverted belief (*Mithyādarśana*) and perverted conduct (*Mithyācārītra*) as its ingredients. Here the effect of *Mithyādarśana* is so dominant that the self does not evince its inclination to the spiritual path. Just as the man invaded by bile-infected fever does not have liking for sweet juice. This *Mithyādarśana* vitiates knowledge and conduct alike. In its presence, both knowledge and conduct, however extensive and suffused with morality they may be, are impotent to disintegrate the hostile elements of the soul and to lead us to those superb heights which are called mystical. Consequently, the darkest period in the history of the self is the one when the self is overwhelmed by *Mithyādarśana*. It obstructs all our mystical endeavours. Thus the plight of the self in *Mithyātva Gunaśthāna* resembles that of a totally eclipsed moon or a completely clouded sky. It is a state of spiritual slumber with the peculiarity that the self itself is not cognisant of its drowsy state. Led astray by the perverted attitude, the soul staying in this *Gunaśthāna* identifies itself with bodily colour, physical frame, sex, caste, creed, family, friends and wealth. The consequence is that it is constantly obsessed with the fear of self-annihilation on the annihilation of the body and the like and is tormented even by the thought of death. Besides, it is the victim of the seven kinds of fear and the eight kinds of pride. Again under the influence of *Mithyādarśana* one accepts the *Adharma* (wrong religion) as the
Dharma right religion, the Amārga (wrong path) as the Mārga (right path), the Ajīva (non-soul) as the Jīva (soul), the Advaita (non-saint) as the Viśva (saint), the Amukta (unemancipated) as the Mukta (emancipated) and vice versa\(^{18}\). Kundakunda\(^{18}\) and following him Yogindu, Pujyapāda, Subhacandra, Kārttikeya etc., recognise this Mithyā-tva Guṇasthāna as the state of Bahirātman. In this Guṇasthāna there are such souls as will never triumph over this darkest period and hence will never win salvation. They are technically called Abhavaya\(^{14}\). Haribhadra aptly calls them Bhavabhīnandis (welcomers of transmigratory existence)\(^{18}\). In contrast to these souls, there are, according to Haribhadra, Apunarbandhakas who are also occupying this Guṇasthāna\(^{16}\). The difference is that the latter are moving in the direction of becoming Samyagdrṣī and consequently do not commit sinful acts with much strong inclination, do not attach undue value to the worldly life and maintain properties in whatever they do\(^{17}\), whereas the former are Mithyādrṣī proper, and consequently they are mistaken as to the nature of things, evince no disgust for worldly existence and are like the man to whom unworthy acts appear worthy of performance\(^{18}\). The Apunarbandhakas may be further said to have developed first four Yogadṛṣī, namely, Mitrā, Tārā, Balā and Diprā. It may be noted here that the spiritual darkness of the Apunarbandhakas is not so intense as that of the Bhavabhīnandis.

2. Awakening of the self or Aviratamsamyagdrṣī Guṇasthāna:

Spiritual awakening or conversion is the result of Granthibheda (cutting the knot of ignorance)\(^{19}\). By virtue of cutting the knot, the Bhinnagranthi sees supreme verity and acquires unswerving conviction in the true self.\(^{20}\) This occurrence of Samyagdaršana (Spiritual conversion) is consequent upon the instruction of those who have realised the divine within themselves or are on the path of divine realisation.\(^{21}\) Yogindu points out that insight is attained by the Ātman, when at an opportune time, delusion is destroyed.\(^{22}\) It may be noted here that when there is Ardhapudgalaparāvartana kāla for the deliverance of the self, it prepares itself for three types of Karāṇas (Bhāvas) namely, Adhaoḥpravṛttakarāṇa, Apūrvakarāṇa, and Anivṛttikarāṇa, which guarantees for its spiritual conversion. Each of these Karāṇas last for an Antarmuhūrtā (less than forty-eight minutes).\(^{24}\) Just after the process of Anivṛttikarāṇa the soul experiences the first dawn of enlightenment of spiritual conversion. It is by these Karāṇas that Granthibheda is effected. “Even as a person born blind can see the world as it is on the sudden acquisition of eyesight, so can a soul having experienced the vision, see the truth as it is. Even as a person suffering from long-drawn disease experience extreme delight on the sudden disappearance of the disease, so does a soul eternally bound to the wheel of worldly existence feels spiritual joy and bliss on the sudden dawn of enlightenment.”\(^{25}\)

This is to be borne in mind that the spiritual conversion is to be sharply distinguished from the moral and the intellectual conversion. Even if the man in the first Guṇasthāna gets endowed with the capacity of intellectual and moral achievements, it cannot be said to have dispelled the spiritual darkness. The characters portrayed by Jaina Acāryas of Dravya-lingī Muni and some of the Abhavaya who have attained to the fair height of intellectual knowledge and moral upliftment illustrate this sort of life without spiritual conversion.\(^{26}\) Thus the flower of mysticism does not blossom by the water of mere morality and intellectuality, but requires spiritual manure alongwith it.

It will not be idle to point out here that the soul in this Guṇasthāna is called samyagdrṣī, Antarātman\(^{27}\), Bhinnagranthi\(^{28}\) and the occupant of Sthirādṛṣī.\(^{19}\) Being spiritually converted, the Samyagdrṣī considers his own self as his genuine abode, regarding the outward physical dwelling places as artificial.\(^{28}\) He renounces all identification with the animate and inanimate objects of the world and properly weighs them in the balance of his discriminative knowledge.\(^{31}\) His is the only self that has acquired the right of Mokṣa.\(^{32}\) Besides, he practises universal compassion (Anukampā),\(^{33}\) does not hanker after worldly opulence and empyreal pleasures,\(^{34}\) shows no feeling of disgust at the various bodily conditions caused by disease, hunger etc.,\(^{35}\) and is free from all fears.\(^{36}\) Again being overwhelmed by fear, inferiority and
agreed for profit, he does not recognise *Himṣā* as *Dharma*. Apart from this, he has deep affection for spiritual matters and strengthens the conviction of those who are faltering in their loyalty to the path of righteousness and disseminates spiritual religion through various means best suited to time and place.  

**Fall from awakening or** [a] *Sāsādana Guṇaṇṭhāna* and [b] *Miśra Guṇaṇṭhāna*:

If the spiritual conversion is due to the total annihilation of *Darśana Mohaniya* (faith-deluding) *Karma*, the self has thrown over all the chances of its fall to the lower stages. This is called *Kṣayika Samyaktva*. It is *Sthirāṭṣṭi* proper. But if the spiritual conversion is consequent upon the suppression of *Darśana Mohaniya Karma*, the self after one *Antarṃuhāṛta* either falls to the lower stages or remains in the same stage with the emergence of certain defects ordinarily incognisable. This is known as *Upaśama Samyaktva*. Here four *Antarāntubandhi* passions and the faith-deluding karma which is divided into three qualitatively different fragments of *Mithyāta* (impure), *Samyaka-Prakṛti* (pure), and *Samyaka-Mithyāta* (semi pure) are suppressed. When the impure piece comes up, the self again descends to the first *Guṇaṇṭhāna* where again darkness overwhims him, if the semi-pure piece, the self falls to the third *Guṇaṇṭhāna*, namely, *Miśra Guṇaṇṭhāna* wherein total scepticism as regards matters spiritual prevails. If there is the rise of the *Antarāntubandhi* passion, the soul sinks to the second stage known as ‘*Sāsādana Guṇaṇṭhāna*’. This is the intermediary stage of the self which has fallen from the peak of the mountain of *Samyagdarśana*, but has not arrived at the stage of the *Mithyāta Guṇaṇṭhāna*. In this stage the peculiar taste of the fall from *Samyagdarśana* like the peculiar taste of sweet food after its vomiting is experienced. Lastly, when the pure piece rises up, it continues to be in the fourth stage, but has lost the purity of *Upaśama Samyaktva*. This is called *Kṣayopaṇamika Samyaktva*.

**3. Purgation or** [a] *Viratāvirata Guṇaṇṭhāna* and [b] *Pramattavirata Guṇaṇṭhāna*:

After dispelling the dense and intense darkness caused by the faith-deluding (*Darśana Mohaniya*) *Karma*, the passionate and ardent longing of the awakened self is to purge the conduct-deluding (*Cārītra Mohaniya*) *Karma* which now stands between it and the transcendental self. Only those who are in possession of sturdy will are capable of doing so, says Amṛtacandra. In the fifth *Guṇaṇṭhāna*, the aspirant who is a house-holder is incapable of making himself free from all *Himṣā* root and branch. In consequence, he adopts the five partial vows (*Aṇuvratas*) along with the seven *Śīlavratas* in order to sustain the central virtues of *Ahimṣā* as far as possible. This state of the self’s journey has been called *Viratāvirata* or *Deśavirata Guṇaṇṭhāna*, since here the aspirant avoids intentional *Himṣā* of two to five-sensed *Jīvas*, but he has to commit the intentional *Himṣā* of one-sensed *Jīvas* namely the vegetable-bodied, fire-bodied etc. Besides the *Himṣā* which is committed in being engaged in a certain profession, in performing domestic activities, and in adopting defensive measures cannot be avoided by him. This shows that the householder’s life is a mixture of virtue and vice, which obstruct the purgative way pursued by the mystic. Hence, the aspirant, being motivated by certain incentives to spiritual life (*Aṇupreksā*) gradually renounces the householder’s type of living, becomes a saint in order to negate *Himṣā* to the last degree. In consequence, the saint observes five *Mahāvratas*, five *Samittis*, three *Gupts* and practises internal and external austerities with special attention to meditation, devotion, and *Śvādhyāya*. Besides, he gets food by begging, eats only a little, gets over sleep, endures troubles, practises universal friendship, adheres to spiritual upliftment, and turns away from acquisitions, associations and life injuring activities. Thus from the life of *Muni*, vice totally vanishes and there remains virtue which will also be transcended as soon as the flight into the realm of spirit is made. Since in this stage there is complete self-restraint (*Samyama*), this stage is styled *Pramattavirata Guṇaṇṭhāna* i.e., here *Pramāṇa* exists with self-restraint. Nevertheless this stage may be regarded as the terminus of purgative way. It may be noted here that the self in the fifth *Guṇaṇṭhāna* and onwards is called *Cāritri*. 
4  


These Guṇasthānas from the seventh to the twelfth are the meditational stages or the stages of illumination and ecstasy. In other words, these are the stages of Kāṇṭha and Prabhā Drṣṭis. It is to be noted here that the self oscillates between the sixth and the seventh Guṇasthānas thousands of times and when it attains steadiness, it strenuously prepares itself either for suppressing or for annihilating the conduct-deluding Karmas. This oscillation is the result of the struggle between Pramāda and Apramāda. By the time the aspirant reaches the seventh Guṇasthāna, he has developed a power of spiritual attention, of self-merging and of gazing into the ground of the soul. It is through the aid of deep meditation that the mystic now pursues the higher path. In consequence, he arrives at the eighth and the ninth stages known as the Apūrvakaraṇa and the Anuvṛttikaraṇa Guṇasthāna, where exists the state of profound purity. In the tenth Guṇasthāna known as Sukṣma-Samparāya there is only subtle greed that can disturb the soul. The soul suppresses even this subtle greed in the eleventh Guṇasthāna known as Upāśanta Kaśaya and thus absolves itself from rise of all types of passions. If the self follows the process of annihilation instead of suppression it rises directly from the tenth to the twelfth Guṇasthāna known as Kṣīnakasaya Guṇasthāna. Here the conduct-deluding Karma is destroyed instead of being suppressed. Pujāpāda rightly observes that meditation produces supreme ecstasy in a mystic who is firmly established in the self, such an ecstatic consciousness is potent enough to burn the Karmic fuel; and then the person remains unaffected by external troubles and never experiences discomposure.

5. Darknight of the soul post-illumination:

Owing to the suppressed passions gaining strength, the illuminated consciousness of the eleventh Guṇasthāna falls to the lowest stage of Mithyāva or to the fourth stage of Aviratasaṃyagdrṣṭi Guṇasthāna. The consequence is that the ecstatic awareness of the transcendental self gets negated and an overwhelming sense of darkness envelops the mystic. It may be noted that not all mystics experience this dark night. Those of them who ascend the ladder of annihilation escape this tragic period, whereas those who ascend the ladder of suppression succumb to its dangers and pains. Mystics of the latter type no doubt will also reach the pinnacle of transcendental life, but only when they climb up the ladder of annihilation either in this life or in some other to come.

6. Transcendental life or [a] Sayogakevali and Ayogakevali Guṇasthānas:

The slumbering and the unawakened soul after passing through the stages of spiritual conversion, moral and intellectual preparation, now arrives at the sublime destination by dint of ascending the rungs of meditational ladder. In the thirteenth stage the soul possesses dispassionate activities (Yoga) and omniscience (Kevalajñāna), hence it is known as Sayogakevali Guṇasthāna. It is a state of Jivanmukta, a supermental state of existence and an example of divine life upon earth. The fourteenth stage is called Ayogakevali Guṇasthāna, as there the soul annuls all activities (Yogas), but preserves omniscience and other characteristics. In this stage the soul stays for the time required for pronouncing five syllables a, i, u, r, l. After this, disembodied liberation (Videha Mukti) results. To be more clear, the self in the Sayogakevali and Ayogakevali Guṇasthānas bears the title of ‘Arhat’ and after this, the title of ‘Śiddha’. This state of Siddha is beyond all Guṇasthānas.

It may be noted here that the self in these two Guṇasthānas is called Paramātman, the doer of Vṛttisainkṣaya and the possessor of Parādṛṣṭi. This perfected mystic is established in truth in all directions. He experiences bliss, which is supersensuous, unique, infinite and interminable. Whatever issues from him is potent enough to abrogate the miseries of tormented humanity. His presence in supremely enlightening. He is the spiritual leader of society. Just as a mother educates her child for its benefit and a kind physician cures diseased orphans, so also the perfected mystic instructs humanity for its upliftment and dispenses spiritual pills to suffering humanity. He is always awake. He has transcended the dualities of friends and foes, pleasure
and pain, praise and censure, life and death, sand and gold, attachment and aversion. Since he is the embodiment of spiritual virtues, he leads a life of supermorality but not of a-morality. Thus we may conclude by saying that the cognitive, conative and affective tendencies of the perfected mystic reveal their original manifestation in supreme mystical experience, which is ineffable and transcends all the similes of the world.

Notes and References

1 Tattvārthasūtra of Umāsvāti 1. 1.
2 Mokṣapāhuḍa, 4, 7.
3 Yogabindu of Haribhadra, 31, 252, 366.
4 Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya, 13, 19, 178
5 Mysticism by Underhill, p. 169
6 Gommaṭśāra Jīvakāṇḍa of Nemicandra, 17
7 Paramātmaprabāṣa, 80 to 83
8 Jhānārṇava, 11, 18
9 Samādhiṣataka of Pūjyapāda, 76
10 Mūlācāra of Vaṭṭakera, 53
11 Raṭnakarāṇḍa Śrāvakācāra of Samantabhadra, 25
12 Sthānāṅgasūtra, 1-1-734
13 Mokṣapāhuḍa 8
14 Samayasāra of Kundakunda, 273
15 Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya, 75
16 Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya, Introduction, pp. 5 to 11
17 Yoganisataka of Haribhadra, 13
18 Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya, 78, 79, 80
19 Yogabindu, 252
20 Yogabindu, 205
21 Tattvārthasūtra, 1. 3
22 Paramātmaprabāṣa, 1. 85
23 Labdhisāra of Nemicandra, 33.
24 Labdhisāra of Nemicandra, 34
25 Studies in Jaina Philosophy, p. 273
26 Samayasāra 273, 274
27 Kārttikeyānupreksā, 197
28 Yogabindu, 266
29 Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya, 155
30 Samādhiṣataka of Pūjyapāda 73
31 Mokṣapāhuḍa, 17
32 Yogabindu, 342
33 Rājāvarttika of Aklāṅka, 1
34 Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya of Amṛtacandra, 24
35 Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya of Amṛtacandra, 25
36 Samayasāra, 228
37 Kārttikeyānupreksā, 418
38 Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya 29; Kārttikeyānupreksā, 420
39 Kārttikeyānupreksā, 423
40 Gommaṭśāra Jīvakāṇḍa, 647
41 Gommaṭśāra Jīvakāṇḍa 646
42 Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya, 154
43 Bhāvanāviveka 93, 100
44 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 650
45 Bhāvanāviveka, 98
46 Labdhisāra, 108
47 Labdhisāra, 107
48 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 19
49 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 20
50 Darśana Aur Cintana, p. 276
51 Labdhisāra, 105
52 Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya, 17
53 Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya, 75
54 Ratnakaraṇḍa Śrāvakācāra, 51; Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya, 136
55 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 30, 31
56 Jaina Darśana, p. 63
57 Ethical Doctrines in Jainism, p. 87
58 Ethical Doctrines in Jainism, p. 120
59 Mulācāra 895, 896
60 Ethical Doctrines in Jainism, p. 129
61 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 33
62 Yoganībīn 352
63 Yoganīṭhisamuccaya, 162, 170
64 Labdhisāra commentary Candrīka, 205, 217
65 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 50, 57
66 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 60
67 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 61
68 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 62
69 Iṣṭopadeśa of Pūjyaṇīpāda, 47, 48
70 Śaṭkhaṇḍāgama, Vol. 1, p. 191
71 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa 65
72 Jñānārṇavīva LX, 11, 59
73 Bhāvanāviveka, 234
74 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 10
75 Gommaṭsāra Jivakāṇḍa, 63, 64
76 Yoganīṭhisamuccaya, 178, 179
77 Aćārāṅgasūtra, 1, 4, 29
78 Pravacanasāra, 1. 13
79 Svaśayambhūstotra of Samantabhadra, 35
80 Svaśayambhūstotra, 35
81 Aćārāṅgasūtra, 1. 3. 1
82 Pravacanasāra, 341
83 Jñānārṇavīva, 33
84 Aćārāṅga, 15, 73