# THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN JAINISM

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#### What is True Religion

The ultimate end in view of all religions is to ensure peace and happiness for the individual and to establish harmony within human society. However, as is known from history, countless wars have been faught in the name of religion. The religion thus remains accused for the inestimable amount of bloodshed of mankind. Of course, it is not the religion but the fundamentalist and hence extremist and rigid outlook of the so-called men of religion which is responsible for this horrible consequences. At present religion as such is largely shoved into the background or at best used in the service of political ideologies. If one believes that only his Faith, his mode of worship, and his political ideologies are the right means for securing peace and happiness for mankind, then he cannot be tolerant to the viewpoints of his opponents. The immediacy therefore is to develop tolerance to, and friendship for others. It is the only approach by which we can generate peace and harmony inside human society.

Can religion as a category, of which Jainism is a part, meet with this challenge of our times? Before this question can be answered we must make a distinction between a true and a false religion. Because a true religion never supports violence, intolerance and fanatical outlook and it cannot per se be made responsible for the ignominious acts committed in the name of religion by such religious leaders who want to serve their vested interest. The barbarity committed in the past and perpetrated in the present in the name of religion is due very largely to the intolerance and fanaticism of the so-called religious leaders and their ignorant followers.

The only way of freeing oneself from this sordid situation is to comprehend the true nature, indeed to grasp the "essence" of religion

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and to develop tolerance toward and respect for other's ideologies and faiths.

For the Jainas, a true religion consists in the practice of equanimity<sup>1</sup> and its foundation is the observance of non-violence.<sup>2</sup> In the  $\bar{A}c\bar{a}r\bar{a}nga-s\bar{u}tra$ , the earliest Jaina text (c. late 4th cent. B. C.), we come across these two definitions of religion: Equanimity is the essence of religion, while the observance of non-violence is its external exposition or a social aspect of religion. The  $\bar{A}c\bar{a}r\bar{a}nga$  mentions that practising of non-violence is the true and eternal religion.

Jainism, since its inception, believes in and preaches for peace, harmony, and tolerance. It has been tolerant and respectful toward other faiths and religious ideologies throughout its history of existence. In Jainism one hardly comes across instances of religious conflicts involving violence and bloodshed. At most one meets with instances of disputations and strongly worded debates concerning ideological disagreements. The Jaina men of learning, while opposing the different ideologies and religious standpoints, fully paid regard to them and accepted that the opponents' convictions may also be valid from a certain standpoint.

# Intense Attachment, the root of intolerance

Among the causes that generate fanaticism and intolerance the blind faith is the principal; it results from Passionate attachment and hence uncritical or "unexamining" outlook. Attachment (mūrchā) according to the Jainas, is the cause of bondage. It causes perverse attitude. In Jainism various types of attachment are enumerated; among them darśana-moha|drṣṭirāga (blind faith), due to its very disposition, has been rackoned "paramount". In point of fact it is considered central in religious intolerance. It leads one's attitude toward a strong bias for one's own, and against other's religion. Non-attachment is therefore considered as a pre-condition for the right attitude or perception. A perverse, and hence defiled attitude renders it impossible to view the things rightly, just as a person wearing coloured glasses or suffering from jaundice is unable to see the true colour of objects as they are. "Attachment and hatred are the two great enemies of philosophical thinking. Truth can reveal itself to an impartial thinker." Non-attachment, as

Jainas hold, is not only essential, it is imperative in the search of truth. One who is unbiased and impartial can perceive the truth of his opponents's ideologies and faiths and thus can possess deference to them. Intense attachment unfailingly generates blind faith in religious leaders, dogmas, doctrines and rituals and consequently religious intolerance and fanaticism come into existence.

Jainism holds that the slightest even pious attachment, towards the prophet, the path, and the scripture is also an hindrance to a seeker of truth and an aspirant of perfection. Attachment, be it pious or impious, cannot be without aversion or repulsion. Attachment results in blind faith and superstition and repulsion consequences into intolerant conduct. The real bondage, as Jainas confirm, is the bondage due to attachment. A person who is in the grip of attachment cannot rid of imperfection. Gautama, the chief disciple of Lord Mahāvīra, failed to attain omniscience in the lifetime of Mahāvīra on account of his pious attachment towards Mahāvīra. So is the case with Ananda, the chief disciple of Lord Buddha, who could not attain arhathood in the Life-time of his "Śāstā". Once Gautama asked Mahāvīra: "Why am I not able to attain the perfect knowledge while my pupils have reached that goal" Lord answered 'Oh: Gautama; it is your pious attachment towards me which obstructs your getting perfect knowledge and emancipation.4" The Jainas therefore laid stress on the elimination of attachment, the rootcause of bias and intolerance.

### Reason, The check-post of blind faith

Though in Jainism right faith plays an important role—it is one of its three "jewels"—it is the blind faith, which causes intolerance. Jainism therefore does not support blind faith. Jaina thinkers maintain that the right faith should be followed by right knowledge. The faith seconded by right knowledge or truthful reasoning cannot be blind one. According to Jaina thinkers, reason and faith are complementary and there actually is no contention between the two. Faith without reason, as the Jaina thinkers aver, is blind and reason without faith is unsteady or vacillating. They hold that the religious codes and rituals should be critically analysed. In the Uttarādhyayana-sūtra, Gautama, the chief disciple of Mahāvīra strongly supports this view before Keśī, the pontiff of the church of Jina

Pārşva. Said he: "the differences in the Law must be critically evaluated through the faculty of reasoning. It is the reason which can ascertain the truth of Law".5

If one maintains that religion has to be solely based on faith and there is no place for reason in it, then he will unfailingly develop an outlook that only his prophet, religion, and scripture are true and others' prophets, religions and scriptures are false. He will also firmly believe that his prophet is the only saviour of mankind; his mode of worship is the only way of experiencing the bliss and the Laws or Commands of his scripture are only the right one and thus he remains unable to make a critical estimate of his religious prescriptions. While one who maintains that the reason also plays an important role in the religious life, will critically evaluate the pros and cons of religious prescriptions, rituals and dogmas. An "attached" or biased person believes in the dictum 'Mine is true'. While the detached or unbiased person believes in the dictum 'Truth is mine'.

Guṇaratnasūri (early 15th cent. A. D.) in his commentary on the Ṣaḍdarśana-samuccaya of Haribhadrasūri (c. 3rd quarter of the 8th cent. A D.) has quoted a verse, which explains: "A biased person tries to justify whatever he has already accepted, while an unprejudiced person accepts what he feels logically justified." Jainism supports "rational thinking". For supporting the rational Jaina outlook in religious matters Ācārya Haribhadra says; "I possess no bias for Lord Mahāvīra and no prejudice against Kapila and other saints and thinkers! whosoever is rational and logical ought to be accepted'?. While describing the right-faith Amṛtacandra (c. early 10th cent. A. D.) condemns three types of Idols, namely superstitions relating to deities, path, and scriptures." Thus, When religion tends to be rational, there will hardly be any room for intolerance. One who is thoroughly rational in religious matters, certainly would not be rigid and intolerant.

#### Non-absolutism-The Philosophical Basis of Tolerance

Dogmaticism and fanaticism are the born children of absolutism. An extremist or absolutist holds that whatsoever he propounds is correct and what others say is false, while a relativist is of the view that he and his opponent both may be correct, if viewed from two different angles

and thus a relativist adopts a tolerant outlook towards other faiths and ideologies. It is the doctrine of anekāntavāda or non-absolutism of the Jainas on which the concept of religioust olerance is based. For the Jainas non-violence is the essence of religion from which the concept of non-absolutism emanates. Absolutism represents "violence of thought", for, it negates the truth-value of its opponent's view and thus hurts the feeling of others. A non-violent search for truth finds non-absolutism.

Jaina thinkers are of the view that reality is a complex one. It has many facets, various attributes and various modes. It can be viewed and understood from different angles and thus various judgements may be made about it. Even two contradictory statements about an object may hold true. Since we are finite beings, we can know or experience only a few facets of reality at one time. The reality in its completeness cannot be grasped by us. Only a universal-observer-Sarvajña can comprehend it completely. Yet even for an Omniscient it is impossible to know it and to explain it without a standopint or viewpoint"10. This premise can be understood from the following example. Take it granted that every one of us has a camera for photographing a tree and we all use it. We can have hundreds of the photographs but still we find most portion of the tree photographically remains uncovered, and what is more, the photographs differ from each other unless they are taken from the same angle. So is the case with diversified human understanding and knowledge. We only can have a partial and relative view of reality. It is impossible for us to know and describe the reality without an angle or viewpoint. While every angle or viewpoint can claim that it gives a true picture of reality, each one only gives a partial and relative picture of reality. On the basis of partial and relative knowledge of reality one can claim no right to discard the views of his opponents as totally false. According to Jaina thinkers the truthvalue of opponents must be accepted and respected,

Non-absolutism of the Jainas forbids the individual to be dogmatic and one sided in approach. It pleads for a broader outlook and an open mindedness, which alone can resolve the conflicts that emerge from differences in ideologies and faiths. Satkari Mookerjee rightly observes that Jainas do not believe in the extremist a priori logic of the absolutists,

Pragmatically considered, this logical attitude breeds dogmatism and if carried a step further, engenders fanaticism, the worst and the villest passion of human heart". For non-absolutism the views of the opponent are also true. Remarks Siddhasena Divakara (5th Cent. A.D.) "All schools of thought are valid when they are understood from their own standpoint and insofar as they do not discard the truth-value of others. The knower of non-absolutism does not divide them into the category of true and false. They become false only when they reject the truth-value of others." It was this broader outlook of non-absolutism which made Jainas tolerant.

While expounding this tolerant outlook of the Jainas, Upādhyāya Yaśovijaya (17th cent. A. D.) mentioned "A true non-absolutist does not disdain to any faith and he treats all the faiths equally like a father to his sons. For, a non-absolutist does not have any prejudiced and biased outlook in his mind. A true believer of syādvāda (non-absolutism) is that who pays equal regards to all the faiths. To remain impartial to the various faiths is the essence of being religious. A little knowledge which induces a person to be impartial is more worthwhile than the unilateral vast knowledge of scriptures. 18

# Non-Personalism, A Keystone for Tolerance

It is the person-worship which makes the mind biased and intolerant. Jainism opposes the person-cult. For the Jainas, the object of veneration and worship is not a person but perfectness i.e. the eradication of attachment and aversion. The Jainas worship quality or merit. not the person. In the sacred namaskāra-mantra of the Jainas, veneration is offered to the spiritual-posts such as arhat, siddha, ācārya and not the individuals like Mahāvīra, Rsabha or anybody else. In the fifth pada we find that the veneration is paid to all the saints of the world. The words' love' and 'Savva' demonstrate the generosity of the Jainas 14. It is not the person but his spiritual attitude which is to be worshipped. Difference in name, according to the Jainas, is immaterial since every name at its best connotes the same spiritual perfection. Haribhadra in the Yogadrsti-samuccaya remarks that the ultimate truth transcends all states of wordly existence, called nirvāņa and is essentially and necessarily "single" even if it be designated by different names lik Sadāśiva, Parabrahman, Siddhātmā, Tathāgata etc. 15 Not only in the general sense

but etymologically also they convey the same meaning. In the Lokatattva-nirvaya he says I venerate all those who are free from all vices and adorned with all virtures, be they Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Siva or Jina¹6. This view is further supported by various Jaina thinkers of medieval period such as Akalanka, Yogindu, Mānatunga, Hemacandra and many others. While worshipping Lord Siva the Jaina pontiff Hemacandra says: "I worship those who have destroyed attachment and aversion which are the seed of birth and death, be they Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Siva or Jina." It is important that though Hemacandra was a Jaina-saint, he composed a hymn in praise of Siva. This liberalism is also maintained by latter Jaina-saints, who composed their works in Hindi or Gujarati like Ānandaghana and many others, till these days. In a Hindi couplet J. K. Mukhtar (20th cent.) says:

Buddha vīra Jina Harihars Brahmā yā usako svādhīna kaho / Bhakti bhāva se prerita ho, yaha citta usi me līna raho //

### The Door of Liberation open to All

Jainism holds that the followers of other sects can also achieve emancipation or perfection, if they are able to destroy attachment and aversion. The gate of salvation is open to all. They do not believe in the narrow outlook that "only the follower of Jainism can achieve emancipation, others will not." In the Uttarādhyayana there is a reference to anyalinga-siddhas, i. e. the emancipated souls of other sects. The only condition for the attainment of perfection or emancipation, according to the Jainas, is to shun the vectors of attachment and aversion. Haribhadra, a staunch advocate of religious tolerance, remarks: "One, who can attain equanimity of mind will for certain get the emancipation whether he may be a Svetāmbara or a Digambara or a Buddhist or any one else. It is this broad outlook of the Jainas which makes them tolerant and stick to the non-violence of thought.

About the means of liberation, the Jainas are also broad minded. They do not believe that their mode of worship or their religious practices alone represent the way to reach the goal of emancipation. For them it is not the external modes of worship, but the right attitude and mental purity which makes religious practices fruitful. The  $\bar{A}c\bar{a}r\bar{a}nga-s\bar{u}tra$  clearly mentions that the practice which are considered to be the cause

of bondage may be the cause of liberation also. \*\*O\* It is the intrinsic purity not the external practices, which makes the person religious. Haribhadra propounds that neither one who remains without clothes nor one who is white clad, neither a logician, nor a metaphysician, nor a devotee of personal cult will get liberation unless he overcomes his passions. \*\*I\* If we accept the existence of the diversity of modes of worship according to the time, place and levels of aspirants and lay stress on the intrinsic purity in religious matters, then certainly we cannot condemn religious practices of others as false. This liberalism of the Jainas on the methods of worship can be supported by the legends of the previous lives of Mahāvīra. It is said that Mahāvīra, in his previous existences, was many times ordinated as a monk of other sects, where he practised austerities and attained heaven. \*\*2\*

As for scriptures, the Jainas' outlook is likewise liberal. They firmly believe that a false scripture (mithyā-śruta) may be a true scripture (samyak-śruta) for a person of right attitude; and a true scripture may turn false for a person of perverse attitude. It is not the scripture but the attitude af the follower which makes it true or false. It is the vision of the interpretor and practitioners that counts. In the Nandī-sūtra this standpoint is clearly explained.<sup>28</sup> Thus we can say that the Jainas are neither rigid nor narrow minded in this regard.

# References of Religious Tolerance in Jaina Works

References to religious tolerance are abundant in Jaina history. Jaina thinkers have consistently shown deference to other ideologies and faiths. In the sūtrakṛtānga, the second earliest Jaina work (c. 2nd cent. B. C.)", It is stated that those who praise their own faith and view and disparage those of their opponents, possess malice against them and hence will remain confined to the cycle of birth and death. "In another famous Jaina work of the same period, the Isibhāsiyāim, the teaching of the forty five renowned saints of Śramanical and Brāhmanical schools of thinking such as Nārada, Bhāradvāja, Gautama Buddha, Maṅkhali-Gośāla and many others have been presented with regard. They are remembered as arhatnsi and their teachings are regarded as an āgamā. In the history of world religious teachers of the opponent sects were included

in one's own scriptures with due esteem and honour. Evidently, it indicates the latitudinarian and unprejudiced outlook of the earliest Jaina thinkers. We also have a reference to religious tolerance in the Vyākhyā-prajūpti, one of the early works of the Jainas. When an old friend of Gautama, who was initiated in some other religious sect, came to visit him, Mahāvīra commanded Gautama to welcome him and Gautama did so.<sup>26</sup> In the Uttarādhyayana, it is stated that when Gautama, the chief disciple of Mahāvīra and Keśī, a prominent pontiff of Pārśvanātha's sect met at Kosāmbi, both paid due regard to each other and discussed the various problems dispassionately and in gentle and friendly manner about the differences of both the sects.<sup>27</sup>

Haribhadra has not only maintained this latitudinarian outlook of earlier Jainācāryas, but lent new dimension to it. He was born in the age when the intellectuals of the India were engaged in hair-splitting philosophical discussions and in relentless criticism of one other. Though he also critically evaluated the other philosophical and religious systems, his outlook was fully liberal and attempted to see the truth of his opponent's logic also. Here I would like to mention only a few examples of his religious tolerance and regard for others ideologies and faith.

In the Sastravarta-samuccaya, which is one of the foremost works illustrating Haribhadra's liberal outlook, it is mentioned that the great saint, venerable Lord Buddha preached the doctrines of momentariness (kṣaṇikavāda) non-existence of soul (anātmavāda) idealism (vijñānavāda) and nothingness (śūnyavāda) with a particular intention to vanish the 'mineness' and desire for worldly objects and keeping in view the different levels of mental development of his followers, like a good physician who prescribes the medicine according to the disease and nature of the patient. 28 He has the same liberal and regardful attitude toward Sāmkhya and Nyāya schools of Brāhmanical philosophy. He maintains that naturalism (Prakṛtivāda) of Sāmkhya and Iśvara kartṛtivavāda of the Nyāya school is also true and justified, if viewed from certain standpoint. 26 Further, the epithets such as the great saint (mahāmuni), the venerable (arhat), the good physician (suvaidya) used by him for Buddha and for Kapila shows his generosity and deference to other religious leaders. Haribhadra's crusade against sectarianism is unique and admirable in history of world-religions.

Alongwith these literary evidences there are some epigraphic evidences of religious tolerance of the Jainas. Some Jaina ācāryas such as Rāmkīrti and Jaymangalasūri wrote the hymns in the praise of Tokalji and goddess Cāmuṇḍā, Jaina kings such as Kumārpāla, Viṣṇuvardhan and others constructed the temples of Śiva and Viṣṇu alongwith the temples of Jina. \*\*

Finally, I would like to mention that Jainism has a sound philosopoical foundation for religious tolerance and throughout the ages, it practically had remained tolerant and regardful to other faiths and ideologies. Jainas never indulged in aggressive wars in the name of religion nor did they invoke divine sanction for the cruelities against the people of alien faiths. Though generally Jainas do classify religions in the heretic (mithyā-dṛṣṭi) and non-heretic (samyak-dṛṣṭi). Yet, mithyā-dṛṣṭi, according to them, is one who possesses one-sided view and considers others as totally false. While samyak-dṛṣṭi is the one who is unprejudiced and sees the truth in his opponents views also. It is interesting to note here that Jainism calls itself a union of heretic views (micchādamsana-samūth) Siddhasena (5th cent. A. D.) mentions "Be glorious the teachings of Jina which are the union of all the heretic views i.e. the organic synthesis of one-sided and partial views, essence of spiritual nectar and easily graspable to the aspirants of emancipation." 18

Anandaghana, a mystic Jaina saint of the 17th cent. A.D. remarks that just as ocean includes all the rivers so does Jainism all other faiths. Further he beautifully expounds that all the six heretic schools are the organs of Jina and one who worships Jina also worships them. Historically we also find that various deities of other sects are adopted in Jainism and worshipped by the Jainas. Ācārya Somadeva in his work Yaşastilak-campū remarks that where there is no distortion from right faith and accepted vows, one can follow the traditions prevailing in the country. \*\*

Jainas believe in the unity of world religions, but unity, according to them, does not imply omnivorous unity in which all lose their entity and identity. They believe in that unity in which all the alien faiths will conjoin each other to form a organic whole without loosing their own independent existence. In other words it believes in a harmonious

co-existence or a liberal synthesis in which all the organs have their individual existence, but work for a common goal i.e. the peace of mankind. To eradicate the religious conflicts and violence from the world, some may give a slogan of "one world religion" but it is neither possible nor practicable so far as the diversities in human thoughts are in existence. In the Niyamasāra it is said that there are different persons, their different activities or karmas and different levels or capacities, so one should not engage himself in hot discussions neither with other sects nor one's own sect.<sup>84</sup>

Haribhadra remarks that the diversity in the teachings of the sages is due to the diversity in the levels of their disciples or the diversity in standpoints adopted by the sages or the diversity in the period of time when they preached, or it is only an apparent diversity. Just as a physician prescribes medicine according to the nature of patient, its illness and the climate so is the case of diversity of religious teachings. So far as diversity in time, place, levels and understanding of disciples is inevitable, variety in religious ideologies and practices is essential. The only way to remove the religious conflicts is to develop a tolerant outlook and to established harmony among them.

At last I would like to conclude my paper by quoting a beautiful verse of religious tolerance of Ācārya Amitagati—

Sattveşu maitrim gunişu pramodam Klişteşu jiveşu kṛpāparatvam Mādhyasthyabhāvam viparīta vrattau Sadā mamātmā vidadhātudeva. 86

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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  Ten a syādvādamālambya sarvadaršanatulyatām / mokṣoddešāvi (dvi) šeṣeṇa yaḥ pašyati sa šāstravit // 70 //
  Mādhyasthyameva šāstrārtho yena taccāru siddhyati / sa eva dharmavādaḥ syādanyadbālišavalganam // 71 //

Mādhyasthyasahitam hyekapadajñānamapi pramā / Sāstrakoţiḥ vṛthaivānyā tatha coktam mahātmanā // 73 //

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- Nāsāmbaratve na sitāmbaratve, na tarkavāde na ca tattvavāde / na pakṣasevāaśrayena mukti, Kaṣāya mukti kila muktireva //
  - —Upadeśatarangini, 1/8, p. 98, Haribhadra, Bhūrābhāi Harṣacandra, Vārāṇasi, V. S. 2437.
- 22. (a) Chassu vi pārivvajjam.... / Višeṣāvašyakabhāṣya, 1792, L. D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedābād 9, (1968).
  - (b) See also —Uttarapurāņa—Guņabhadra, 74 / 69-85, pp. 448-49. Bhārtīya Jñānapīṭha, Kāśi, 1954.
- 23. Eyāim micchadiṭṭhissa micchattapariggahiyāim micchasuyam, eyāni ceva sammaddiṭṭhissa Sammattapariggahiyāim, sammasuyam, ahavā micchadiṭṭhissavi 'sammasuyam', Kamhā? Sammattaheuttanao, Jamhā te

micchadițihiyā, tehim ceva samaehim coiyā samānā kei, sapakkhadițihio vamenti, se ttam micchasuyam.

Vṛti—etāni bhāratādīni śāstrāni mithyādṛṣṭeḥ mithyātvaparigṛhītāni bhavanti, tato viparītābhiniveśavṛddhihetutvān mithyāśrutam, etānyeva ca bhāratādīni śāstrāni samyagdṛṣṭeḥ samyaktvaparigṛhītāni bhavanti. Nandīsūtra, 72, p. 30. Śrī Mahāvīra Jaina Vidyālaya, Bombay, 1st ed. 1968.

- 24. Sayam sayam pasamsamtā, Garahamtā param vayam /
  je u tattha viussamti, Samsāram te viussiyā //
  —Sūtrakrtānga, 1 / 1 / 2/ 23.
- Devanāradena Arahata isiņā buiyam / —Isibhāsiyāim, 1 / 1. See also the names of its various chapters, edited by Dr. Walther Schubring, L. D. Instt. of Indology, Ahmedābād-9, 1974.
- 26. He khamdayā! Sāgayam, Khamdayā! Susāgayam —Bhagavatī, 2 / 1.
- Kesikumāra samaņe goyamam dissamāgayam / padirūvam padivattim sammam sampadivajjai //
  - -Uttarādhyayan sūtra, 23 / 16, Sanmati Jñānpītha, Agrā, 1st Ed.
- 28. Śāstravārtāsamuccaya, 6 / 464, 65, 67, L. D. Instt., Ahmedābād, 1st ed., 1969.
- 29. Ibid. 3 | 207 and 3 | 237.
- Jaina Silālekha Samgraha, vol. III, Introduction by G. C. Chaudharī. See also epigraphs of above mentioned book, vol. I, II and III, No. 181, 249, 315, 332, 333, 356, 507, 649, 710.
- 31. Sanmati tarka prakarana, 3 / 69, Jñānodaya Trust, Ahmedābād, 1963.
- 32. Namijina stavan—Ānandaghana Granthāvalī, Śrī Jaina Śreyaskara Mannal, Mahesanā (1957).
- 33. Yaśastilaka—Somadevaśūri, p. 373, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay.
- 34. Niyamasāra—Kundakunda, 155, The Central Jaina Publishing House, Lucknow, 1931.
- 35. Yogadṛṣṭisamuccaya (Haribhadra), L. D. Instt., Ahmedābād, 1st ed., 1970.
- 36. Sāmāyika Pātha 1-Amitagati. Published in Sāmāyikasūtra, sanmati Jīnānapītha, Āgrā.