

Samatva Yoga : The Fundamental Teaching of Jainism and Gītā

Ours is the age of tremendous growth of knowledge and scientific discoveries. Paradoxically, at the same time, we can call it also the age of anxiety and mental tension. Our traditional values and beliefs have been eroded by this growth of scientific knowledge. We know more about the atom than the values needed for a meaningful and peaceful life. We are living in a state of chaos. Our life is full of anxiety, excitement, emotional disorder and value-conflicts. In this age of anxiety American people alone are lavishly draining out more than 10 billion dollars per annum on wine and other alcoholic drugs. Today, what is needed for man is the mental peace and the capacity for complete integration with his own personality and with his social environment. This can only be achieved through the practice of *samatva*, i.e. mental equanimity or calm disposition. The theory of *samatva yoga* has been preached in India more than two thousand years ago by Lord Mahāvira and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Concept of Samatva in General

The concept of *samatva* is the cardinal one of Jainism and *Gītā*. It pivots the ethics of Jainism and *Gītā*. In English, we can term it as excellent blend of equality, equilibrium, harmony, integration and rightness. But none of these terms depict the true meaning of the word *samatva* and the exact sense in which it is used in the context of Indian philosophy, hence better to use it without translating it into English. The word *samatva* has different meanings in different contexts. Sometimes it means a balanced state of mind, undisturbed by all kinds of sorrows and emotional excitements, pleasures and pains and achievements and disappointments. Sometimes it refers to the quality of a personality, completely free from the vectors of aversion and attachment, or that with mental equilibrium (वीतराग or स्थितप्रज्ञ). The word *samatva* also denotes the feeling of equality with the fellow-beings (आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु). Loosely speaking, it also conveys the meaning of social equality and social integration. Ethically, the term *sam* or *samkyak* suggests rightness (सम्यक्त्व). We must be aware of the fact that in all its different imports the term *samatva* is associated with some kind of mental psychological state, having some impact on our social and individual adjustment.

Concept of Samatva in Jainism

In a Jaina text *Vyākhyāprajñaptisūtra* there is a conversation between Lord Mahāvira and Gautama. Gautama asks Mahāvira : "What is the nature of soul ?" Mahāvira answers, "The nature of soul is *samatva* (आयाए सामाइए)" Gautama again asks, "What is the ultimate end of soul ?", Mahāvira replies; "The ultimate end of soul is also *samatva* (आयाए सामाइस्स अहे).

This view, the real nature of soul is *samatva*, is further supported by Ācārya Kundakunda. In his famous work *Samayasāra* he deals with the nature of soul. Probably, he is the only Jaina Ācārya who used the word *samaya* or *Samayasāra* instead of Ātman or Jīva. The Ācārya has purposely used this word for Ātman. So far as I know, no commentator of *Samayasāra* has raised the question as to why Kundakunda and used the word *samaya* for *Jīva* or soul. I think the word '*samaya*' may be a Prākṛt version of Saṁskṛt word समः यः which means one who has the quality of *samatva*. Further, the word *Samayasāra* may also be defined in the similar fashion. It can be concluded, therefore, that one who possesses *samatva* as his essential nature is called *samayasāra* (समत्वं यस्य सारं तत् समयसारं). Ācārya Kundakunda also equated the word '*samaya*' with *svabhāva* or essential nature. He used the words *sva-samaya* and *para-samaya*. *Sva-samaya* means inner characteristics and *para-samaya* means resultant characteristics. *Sva-samaya* has been explained as an ultimate end. In this way, according to Kundakunda too, the nature and ultimate end of soul is *samatva*. Further more, according to the Jaina Ethics the way through which this ultimate end can be achieved is also *samatva*, known in Prākṛit as *sāmāiya* (सामाइय) or *samāhi* (समाहि). In this way, the three basic presuppositions of Jaina Ethics, the moral agent (साधक), the ultimate end (साध्य) and the path through which this ultimate end can be achieved (साधना मार्ग), are equated with the term *samatva*. In Jaina ethics end and means are not external to the moral agent, but part and parcel of his own nature and potentially present in him. Someone may ask : "What is the difference between a *siddha* and a *sādhaka*?" My humble answer to this question is that the difference between those two is not qualitative but quantitative in nature. It is a difference between capability and actuality. By means of *sādhana*, we

can exhibit only what is potentially present in us. That is the whole process of *sādhana* is the transforming of capability into actuality. According to the Jaina tradition, if *samatva* is not our real intrinsic nature, we cannot achieve it by means of *sādhana*, because *sādhana* is nothing but a practice of *samatva*. The three-fold path, of right knowledge, right belief and right conduct, depends entirely on the concept of *samatva* for its rightness. The three-fold path is only an application of *samatva* to the three aspects of our conscious activities, i.e. knowing, feeling and willing. According to the Jain Ethics, *samatva* should be a directive principle of the activities of knowing, feeling and willing.

Concept of Samatva in Gītā

The Ethics of *Gītā* also is solely based on the concept of *samatva*. The words *sama* and *samatva* and their various forms occur in *Gītā* more than hundred times. The *Gītā* contains many references, suggesting that the real nature of God is *sama* and so on. The *Gītā* equates *sam* with *Brahman*, the ultimate reality. Ācārya Śankara explained this by showing an identity between *sam* and *Brahman*, while Rāmānuja and others interpret that the *sam* is the quality of *Brahman*. But for our present purpose it hardly makes any difference. The *Gītā* mentions that the God the *amśi* (अंशी) of which, we are *amśa* (अंश), exists in the heart of every individual as a quality of *samatva*. Not only this but the way through which we can realise that ultimate reality of God is also *samatva-yoga*. In this way, the three basic presuppositions of the Ethics of *Gītā*- the moral agent, the ultimate end and the path through which this ultimate end can be achieved, are also equated with the term *samatva*.

Gītā as a treatise of samatva yoga

A question may be asked why *samatva-yoga* is to be considered as the fundamental concept of *Gītā*. Among the commentators of *Gītā*, there is a serious controversy; whether it is a treatise of *jñāna-yoga* or *bhakti-yoga* or *karma-yoga*. Among these commentators, Śankara is the supporter of *jñāna-yoga*. To him the knowledge alone can lead us to the realization of ultimate reality, the *Brahman*. While Rāmānuja and others held the view that it is only Bhakti through which we can realise God. Tilaka and Gandhi supported a third view that fundamental teaching of *Gītā* is, neither *jñāna-yoga* nor *bhakti-yoga* but *karma-yoga*. Dr. Rādhakṛṣṇan and some others have tried to bring out harmony among these divergent views. But I think the basis on which we can reconcile these views is still missing.

How can we reconcile the views of *jñāna-yoga*, *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* without any common element? My humble suggestion is that only with the concept of *samatva* we can reconcile these different view-points, because *samatva* is a common reconciling factor. Though the question why *samatva-yoga* is to be considered as the main theme of *Gītā*? is still un-answered, I would like to submit some arguments in support of my view that the *Gītā* is a treatise of *samatva-yoga*.

(1) In the *Gītā* the term *yoga* has been used at many places and in different contexts, we have only two definitions of *yoga* in the whole of *Gītā*. The first one is 'Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate' (समत्वं योग उच्यते) and the second one is 'yogaḥ Karmasu Kauśalam' (योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्). But the second one cannot be considered as a categorical definition of *yoga* it is only a conditional or a relative definition, because the term Karmasu shows a condition. It only tells us that with reference to certain activity (कर्म), the skillful performance is to be called *yoga*. But this is not the case with the first one. It may be considered a categorical definition of *yoga*. It simply states that mental equilibrium is to be called *yoga*.

(2) Secondly, in the 6th chapter of *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna 'Thou must be a *yogī* because a *yogī* is superior to *jñānin*, *karmīn* and *tapasvin*'; The question is what type of *yoga* does Kṛṣṇa want to teach Arjuna? It can neither be a *jñāna-yoga* nor a *karma-yoga* for the simple reason that here *yogī* is considered superior to *jñānin* and *karmīn*. I think here Kṛṣṇa is asking Arjuna to practise *samatva yoga* which is the supreme *yoga*.

(3) Thirdly, the concepts of *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* inherit their value by *samatva* only. It is the 'samatva' which gives them value and validity. Without *samatva* they are like a cheque or a paper currency, having no intrinsic value of its own. In the absence of *samatva*, *jñāna* can be a mere knowledge of scriptures but not *jñāna-yoga*, and the same is true with *karma* and *bhakti* also.

(4) Fourthly, *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* are the mere means for realization of ultimate end, namely, God. But *samatva* is not only a means but an end itself. It is not for some thing else which stands outside of it. I think according to the *Gītā* the *sam*, the *brahman* and God are one. Thus, we can say that the concept of *samatva* is the sole basis of the ethics of the *Gītā*.

Organic Basis of Samatva Yoga

What is the justification in saying that our essential

nature and our aim of life is *samatva*, or that *samatva* should be the directive principle of our life? What is the ground for its justification? To answer these questions, first of all we must understand the human nature. By human nature I mean his organic and psychological make-up. What do we mean by a living organism? By living organism we mean an organism that has a power to maintain its physiological equilibrium. In Biology, this process has been known as Homeostasis, which is considered as an important quality of a living organism. The second essential quality of a living organism is its capacity of adjustment with the environment. Whenever a living organism fails to maintain its physiological equilibrium and adjust itself with its environment it tends towards death. Death is nothing but failure of this process. It follows where there is life, there are efforts to avoid unequilibrium to maintain equilibrium.

Psychological basis of Samatva

Nobody wants to live in a state of mental tension. We like no tension but relaxation, no anxiety but satisfaction. This shows that our psychological nature is working for a mental peace or a mental equilibrium. Freud accepts that there is a conflict between our Id and Super ego but at the same time he agrees that our ego or conscious level is always working to maintain an equilibrium or for the adjustment between these two poles of our personality. It is a fact that there are mental states such as emotional excitements, passions, and frustrations, but we cannot say that they are our intrinsic nature because they do not exist for their own sake; they exist for satisfaction or expression. Secondly, they owe their existence to some other external factors. An important process of our personality is the process of adjustment and adjustment is nothing but a process of restoring peace, harmony and integration. In this

way, we can say that the concept of *samatva* has a sound basis for its justification in our organic and psychological nature.

Samatva as a Directive Principle of Living

Some one may remark that the Darwinian theory of evolution goes against the concept of *samatva*. Darwin presented a theory of the evolution of life, in which he suggested that 'Struggle' for existence is the basic principle of living. Apparently, it is true that there is a struggle for existence in our world and nobody can deny this fact. But due to certain reasons, we cannot call this as directive principle of life. To the question; "Why is it so?" my humble answer is that first of all this theory is self-contradictory because its basic concept is subsisting on others, that is, 'living by killing'. Secondly, it is opposed to the basic human nature and even animal nature to some extent. Struggle is not our inner nature (स्वभाव लक्षण) but it is only a resultant one. It is imposed on us by external factors. Whenever we have to struggle we do it out of necessity and not out of nature, and what is done in compulsion cannot be a guiding principle of our life, for it does not emanate from our inner nature. Thirdly, it goes against the judgments of our faculty of reasoning and the concept of natural law. If nobody has right to take my life, then on the ground of the same reasoning I have no right to take another's life.

The theory of 'live on others', is against the simple rule that all living beings or human beings are potentially equal. According to Lord Kṛṣṇa the concept of equality and union of all living being (आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु) can give us a right directive principle of living with fellow-beings and according to Lord Mahāvīra the directive principle of living is not 'live on others', but 'live with others' or 'live for others' (परस्परपग्रहो जीवानाम्-तत्त्वार्थ सूत्र).

