

SAMYAK DARSHAN

THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS DHARMA

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Introduction

A thousand mile journey begins with the first step. Likewise, the journey to moksha begins with the attainment of right faith. Understanding this is very important because it is regarded as a first step to the path of Dharma and Moksha. Samyak Darshan or Right Belief is very commonly used by almost all Jains and a popular term to indicate one's belief in Jain Philosophy. However, this is also a concept which is most commonly misunderstood by many Jains except a few of them who have really applied their mind to understand it. Some think that to be a Jain or follow basic Jain conduct is having Samyak Darshan, while some others believe that to follow a particular Guru, sect, certain religious practices or read certain scriptures automatically mean Samyak Darshan. In brief, every follower of Jain Religion has one's own view about right belief. It is a cap which everyone wants to wear it without knowing what it really means. Moreover, some people have even total dislike for others if they do not follow his or her own concept of Samyak Darshan and there are acrimonious debates over the subject without knowing the reality. One group takes pleasure in declaring the other person as having false belief or Mithya Darshan.

An Overview

There are infinite souls in this universe and each of them is frightened by misery and unhappiness. In spite of striving for happiness, they are unaware about the right solution or remedy to become like the God, completely happy. Liberation is the only solution of their problems and nothing else.

The path of liberation lies in Samyaktarshana (Right perspective), Samyagyana (Right knowledge) and Samyakcharitra (right conduct).

These three together constitutes the path to liberation. These are known as the triple jewels of Jainism (Ratnatraya). These three are essential for the soul to move up spiritually. Those who have attained Godhood or liberation have done so by taking shelter of soul and experiencing own self or soul.

Samyaktarshan, root of Jainism, brings true world vision. One who possesses it will view the things with a matured vision. He would make a balanced judgment through his improved vision but the more significant effect of this is self-realization. On meditating upon nature of soul, the mind gets rest and relaxed. After ascertainment of the self and by frequent/continuous engrossment in the soul, spiritual bliss is experienced. Such an experience is called the state of self-realization. *TattvarthasraddhanamSamyak-darsanam* refers to the determination to find out the meaning of the essence of reality known as the right vision. The true believer has firm conviction and intensive faith in nature of the soul which is necessary condition and a first step for launching upon the path of liberation. The framework of right view in Jainism consists of seven fundamentals given below.

All living beings are called **Jivas**. Jivas have consciousness known as the soul, which is called by different names like Chetan, Atma, Trikali, Samaysar etc. The soul and body are two different entities. The soul can't be reproduced or destroyed because this was never born. It is described as a sort of substance which is indestructible, invisible, and shapeless. Jivas are divided into five categories ranging from one-sensed beings to five-sensed beings. The body is merely a home for the soul but at the time of death, the soul leaves the body to occupy a new one. This simply means that soul has no causal relationship with other substances. Anything that is not a soul is called **Ajiva**. Ajivas do not have consciousness, knowledge or vision. Ajivas are divided in five broad categories: Pudgal (matter), Dharma (medium of motion), Adharma (medium of rest), Akash (space) and kala (time). The

influx of karma particles to the soul is known as **Ashrav**. It is basically caused by wrong belief. **Bandh** refers to the actual binding of karma particles to the soul. It occurs, when we react to any situation with a sense of attachment or aversion. **Samvar** is the process by which the influx of karman particles is stopped. It happens through a firm concentration on eternal nature of soul. When the concentration on self is enhanced, the karmas get separated from the soul. The process by which we shed karmas is called **Nirjara**. When we get rid of all the karmas, we attain liberation or **moksha**.

Interest in the soul, distinctly different from interest in substances including other living beings is known as right perspective. As the bondage of water and milk, gold and stones containing gold or husk and seed is found, so is the bondage of the soul with karmic matter. But the soul and matter, even besides their being in an intermingled state, both the substances are separate because of different attributes. Mistakenly the people in this universe continue to believe the intermingled state of self and body as to be one's own. At the time of death it is palpably seen that the accompanying body of the soul is left here itself and the soul takes birth in new body somewhere but the soul does not lose its existence. So how can soul be body? Soul's existence remains even after the body has turned into ashes.

While all living beings are equal and have similar potential capabilities, it must be believed that each one is different from other living beings. This is to make sure that one's knowledge, strength and power can't be found in others, every soul has its own knowledge and move with its own characteristics. No one can interfere in them and they can't interfere in others. All these constitute right perspective. Belief in true God-scripture-Saint is also known as right perspective. We bow down hundreds of time to dev, shastra and guru in which the 'dev' is the one who is illuminated with the light of the sun of 'kevalgyaan' (Kevali), the shastra represent the words of the kevali bhagwan in which all the tattvas or the realities are described in the most beautiful way. The Guru is the one who follows continuously the path of right-perspective, right knowledge and the right-conduct.

Holistic View

Some prominent concepts about samyak darshan are described below and holistic view on different concepts that emerges is also given. There is a unanimous view that "*dansanmoolo dhammo*", i.e. samyakdarshan is the foundation of Dharma and thus it is very closely identified with Dharma itself. One becomes very sensitive about it without knowing the reality. At present, every group is trying their best to prove that their version is right. Followers who do not have insight into scriptures, get misguided and develop wrong belief in dharma on the name of right belief.

1. Ahimsa parmo dharma- to be kind or compassionate to all species is dharma and therefore anyone who believes in this core concept and practices it, is having right belief.
2. The nature of substance is dharma- every substance is independent and has its own properties/dharma and so the belief in the nature of every substance is dharma. Soul being one of the substances is also included here. There are six substances viz. soul. Pudgal(matter), space, time, and medium of motion and medium of rest.
3. Right belief in dev, guru and shastra constitutes the path to Dharma. Dev here means Arihant- the omniscient. Shastras represent teachings of Arihant and Gurus teach and follow the preaching of Arihant. Without the knowledge of preaching of Arihant, one is likely to yield to the pressures of karmas/fellow beings.
4. Ratnatray dharma - samyak darshan, samyak gyan and samyak charitra lead to liberation. These three jewels of Jain Philosophy are well known concepts but lack of proper understanding or misinterpretation leads to false belief. In terms of ratnatray dharma, right faith or samyakdarshan comes first, implying its unique importance in the concept of dharma and path to moksh
5. Penance, meditation, donations, visits to priligrimages, tap, vrat and such other auspicious activities represent dharma. One who believes in these has right belief, otherwise not. These are very important in the path to liberation but these represent more of conduct and not right belief. In fact, right belief leads to right conduct and not the vice versa.
6. Samyakdarshan is also stated to imply the experience of blissful and eternal nature of soul. This experience revolutionizes one's own thinking and leads to a different and realistic vision of the universe and the self.
7. In terms of fourteen stages of purification of soul, samyakdrashti is one who is in the fourth stage and above. After this, those householders who undertake vows move to the fifth stage and those who renounce the worldly life and take diksha to become sadhu, move to sixth and seventh stage.

8. Each of daslakshan dharma is preceded by the word 'uttam' (e.g. uttam kshama) which denotes samyakdarshan and that ten dharma are followed better by persons having right faith.
9. Right understanding and faith in nine tattvas is considered to be the hallmark of samyakdarshan.
10. Samyakdarshan provides a view to look at the world at large and understanding of things around us (six substances), structure of universe, operations of karma theory in one's own life and lives of others etc.

There may be many other different ways to state as to what constitutes dharma. Only ten major ways are stated here. The point to be noted is that there is no contradiction between these concepts and these essentially refer to one and the same thing although expressed differently in words. Without proper understanding of the universe, six substances, nine tattvas, karma theory, ratnatraya, stages in purification of soul, it is difficult to have true faith in dev, shastra and guru, follow the path of ahimsa, adopt vows/vrata and sadhu's life in a realistic manner. Without knowing the process of karmic bondage it may be difficult to stop and shed karmas. Without knowing the nature of our relationships with other substances and living beings, ahimsa /kindness cannot be followed in true sense of the term. The foundation of ahimsa lies in knowing the truth/reality. All are interrelated and a holistic view has to be taken and not to unduly emphasize a particular point and create a rift in the society or raise controversies.

Subject Matter of Right Faith

From the real point of view, dharma/experience of the soul/ right faith refers to pure thought activity which involves viewing the eternal nature of soul with major characterized as follows

1. Viewing the eternal nature of soul independent of substances and tattvas
2. Viewing the inherent nature or capacity of soul (paramparinamik) which is indivisible.
3. Viewing the eternal nature of soul beyond karmic substance, karmic dispositions, mundane thought activity of karma and body related karma.
4. Viewing the soul free from all the attributes and modifications which are caused by the impurity of Karmas.
5. Viewing the soul without stages of thought activities or degrees of regards and disregards or grades of pleasing and pleasure or displeasure.
6. Viewing soul's eternal nature beyond various duration of bondage, types of karmic nature, quality of molecular bondage and intensity of karmic bondage.
7. The pure soul does not have wandering in the four conditions of life (gait) or birth, old age, disease, sorrow, and death. Further it does not have ancestral class, nuclei (yoni) or soul classes or soul quests.
8. The pure soul is free from activities of mind, body and speech. It is fearless, bodiless, independent, faultless and without any attachment. It is free from possessions, desires, anger, pride and lust.
9. It does not have the characteristics of pudgal such as color, taste, smell and touch. Further it is beyond conditions of male, female and common sex inclination, types of bodies and types of skeletons.
10. It cannot be apprehended by any symbols and has no describable symbols. It is soundless. It possesses the attribute of consciousness. From the real point of view, the pure soul is like liberated souls although from practical point of view it has no mundane characteristics.

All the above conditions are foreign to the pure soul. Right belief implies conviction about the things as they are without any perverse motive. Right knowledge about pure soul is free from doubt, perversity and vacillation. Right belief also implies conviction about eternal nature of soul and free from every impurity and non- steadfastness. Conviction about the Jain scriptures and the person who know them constitute the external causes and destruction of right belief deluding karmas is the internal cause of right belief.

Persons who lack right belief bog down with considerations of purity and impurity while the person of right belief is convinced about the purity of both the cause and the effect. The contemplation of the eternal nature of the soul is the cause and realization of the pure soul (Samyak Darshan) is the effect.

Steps towards Samyak Darshan

Attainment of Samyak Darshan is a spontaneous and natural event that takes place in one's life. It is hard to prescribe steps for the same. However, it happens to those who exhibit certain characteristics/efforts which are described below.

1. Study of Jain scriptures for basic understanding of operations of six substances and seven tattvas. All scriptures directly/indirectly deal with subject of right faith only.
2. Questioning of one's own understanding of basic principles and examination of the same is necessary. Acceptance of principles without examination does not result in long lasting right faith.
3. Applying the basic principles of karma and others in our day to day activities and experience them happening in our own life and that of others and thus validate the preaching of Arihant.
4. A person with right belief has unshakable belief in the reality and any doubt about it just the opposite of this essential quality. Suspicion means to have doubt about the nature of reality- six substances and nine tattvas as preached by the omniscient Arihant.
5. While one may live worldly life, sole objective of life should not be enjoying the pleasures of senses in this and future worldly lives, as such desires are contrary to the understanding of the reality.
6. One should not develop feelings of dislike or aversion towards the ugly looking bodies of monks and others due to diseases etc ignoring virtues of noble persons engaged in the path of moksha.
7. Praise or admiration of knowledge of wrong believers is one of the transgressions. It means considering flaws as virtues and vice versa. Some people may observe austerities but have perverted views on the nature of reality do not deserve appreciation. One can appreciate a person for human and other qualities but not their wrong belief.
8. We have at the moment two types of knowledge Mati and shrut. However, these two types of knowledge may also be erroneous if wrong logic is applied. This erroneous knowledge goes away only when one follows preaching of Arihants.
9. There is no samyak darshan if a person suffers from (a) different types of pride based on heredity, caste, physique, knowledge, wealth, strength, austerity, authority (b) faith in wrong Dev- Shastra - Guru (c) admiring places preaching wrong faith.
10. A person with right faith constantly develops his own spiritual qualities and undermines weaknesses in fellow beings, helps stabilization of faith among the faltering fellow beings, develops fraternity among similar followers and promotes glorification of right faith.

The above description is not exhaustive but summarizes the main issues involved in making right decision. If someone follows the essence of what has been said above and does not show laxity or lack of firmness, one is bound to experience the pure soul by contemplating on its eternal nature, the subject matter of right faith mentioned earlier. When one falls sick he has needed faith in the Doctor and the medicines prescribed to get well. Likewise, the sickness of mundane existence can be cured only if one takes the medicine of right faith prescribed by Arihant. This is the first step towards Dharma and will certainly lead to last stage of Moksha sooner or later.

About Dr. Jayanti Lal Jain: Dr. Jain currently serves as Director, Center of Philosophical Sciences, Mangalayatan University at Aligarh, India. He is a very learned Jain scholar giving daily Pravachans, covering multiple aspects of Jain studies, delivering key note speeches for many Jain programs or special auspicious events for the last 25 years. Dr. Jain holds Ph. D in Economics from Oklahoma State University, USA and Ph. D in Jainology from University of Madras, Chennai. He was Professor Emeritus at Department of Jainology, University of Madras. He worked at Indian Bank, Chennai as Chief Economic Advisor/ General Manager. Dr Jain has published many articles on Jain Philosophy and on Economics, Banking and Finance. His books on 'Pure Soul and its Infinite Treasure', 'Acharya Kundakund and Jain Philosophy' have been published by University of Madras. He has delivered many special lectures in India and abroad and has considerable teaching experience.