

Spiritual Foundation of Jainism

Indian religious quest has two main stream- Vedic (Brahmanic) and Śramaṇic. Among the world's living religion, Jainism and Buddhism belong to the Śramaṇic trend of Indian culture. There were some other Śramaṇic religions also, but they either like Ājivakas disappeared in the course of time or like Sāṃkhya-yoga became part and parcel of great Hindu religion. These Śramaṇic traditions are spiritualistic and stereological in their very nature.

Religions are consist of two aspects-ritualistic and spiritualistic. The Vedic religion is ritualistic, while the Śramaṇic tradition in general is spiritualistic. Spiritualistic religions are those, which give more stress on self realisation than rituals. The word Adhyātma,¹ the Sanskrit equivalent of spirituality derived from adhitātmā, implies the superiority and sublimity of Ātmā, the soul force. The realisation of the self i.e. Ātmā is the sole aim of spiritualistic religions. In the oldest Jaina text Ācārāṅga we find the word such as 'Ajjhathavisohi', which cannotes the inner purity of self, spiritualism is nothing but the realisation of self in its complete purity. Purification of self is the sole aim of Jainism. According to Jainism the realisation of physical amenities or creature comforts is not the ultimate aim of our life. There are some higher ideals of life which are over and above the mere biological and economic needs of life; spirituality consists in releasing these higher values of life.

Jainism lays special emphasis on the renunciation of creature comforts and emancipation from worldly existence i.e. the cycle of birth and death. It may be accepted without any contradiction that these very ideals of renunciation and emancipations have been cultivated by the Śramaṇas. Asceticism is the fundamental concept of

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the Śramaṇic tradition, such as Jainism and Buddhism. It is on this ground, they differ from early Vedic-religion. The early Vedic seers are against asceticism and emphasized the material welfare of the individual and the society. They in their hymns were praising world existence and praying for their own health and wealth as well as of their fellow beings while the Śramaṇas were condemning this worldly existence and propounding the theory that this world of existence is full of suffering and ultimate goal of human life is to get rid of the cycle of birth and death. Austerity, renunciation, emancipation, atheism, supremacy of human beings over gods, equality of all living beings, opposition to the supremacy of Brahmins over other casts as well as the opposition to animal sacrifices and emphasis on moral virtues and higher values of life are some of the fundamental spiritual tendencies of Śramaṇic traditions in general and Jainism in particular. These concepts which were absent in earliest form of vedic religion were contributed by the Śramaṇas to Indian culture.

Does Jainism teach the Negation of Life?

In Jainism more stress is given on austerities and renunciation of worldly enjoyments with the result that there is a wide-spread misconception that it teaches the negation of life. It will, therefore, not be irrelevant here to point out that the applause of austerities and renouncement does not imply non-recognition of physical and material life. The recognition of spiritual values does not mean that physical and material values should be completely rejected. According to Jainism, physical values are not hindrances to spiritual development, but are rather subservient to it. It is mentioned in the Nīṣīthabhāṣya (4159) that, "Knowledge leads to salvation, the body leads to knowledge and food leads to (the nutrition of) body." The body is a vessel that ferries a person to the shore of eternal bliss. From this point of view, fulfillment of bodily needs has both value and importance, the body is means to liberation and therefore deserves care. But it must be noted that our attention should be fixed not on the vessel-the means, but on the shore-- the end to which it leads. As the vessel, body is a means and not an end. The recognition of physical and material values of life as means is at the core of jainism and its entire spirituality. Here we have a line of demarcation indicating the

difference between spiritualism and materialism.

In materialism, fulfillment of bodily needs and animal urges is an end in itself whereas in spiritualism it is only a means leading to the higher spiritual values. In Jainism both enjoyment and renunciation of worldly objects by an aspirant are needed for the cultivation of self restraint (samyama) and mental equanimity (samatva). The entire religious practices of Jainism aims at the development of an unruffled, unattached, dispassionate and peaceful life that is free from mental tensions and conflicts. The main issue is not the fulfillment or rejection of bodily needs but the establishment of peace in the life of individual as well as of society. Hence the fulfillment of bodily needs is welcomed to the extent to which it furthers this particular cause, but when it does not, ought to be rejected. This view is beautifully presented in the Ācārāṅga and Uttarādhyayana (32/100-107). They say, when the senses come into contact with their objects, then the concomitant sensations of pleasure or pain also arise. It is not possible in actual life to effectively alienate senses from the experiences of their objects and thus to exclude sensations of pleasures and pains. Hence what we must renounce is not the sense experiences but attraction or repulsion to them invoked in the mind. Attractions and repulsions (mental tensions) are the effects of the involvement of the self in pleasant or unpleasant sense-objects; they cannot arise in an unattached and indifferent person. Thus the essential teaching of Jainism is the eschewment of attachment, not the negation of life.

The Main Objective of Jain Spirituality

The main objective of Jainism is to emancipate man from sufferings. It tries to track down sufferings to their very root. The famous Jaina text Uttarādhyayana-sūtra says :

*Kāmāṇugiddhippabhvaṃ khu dukkhaṃ
sawassa loṇass sadevagassa.
Jaṃ kāyaṃ mānasiyaṃ ca kiñci
tassa antagaṃ gacchai viyarāgo. (32.19)*

That the root of all physical as well as mental sufferings of everybody including the gods is the desire for enjoyment. Only a dispassionate attitude can put an end to them. It is true that materialism

seeks to eliminate sufferings, through the fulfillment of human desires, but it cannot eradicate the primal cause from which the stream of suffering wells up. Materialism does not have at its disposal an effective means for quenching the thirst of man permanently. Not only this, its attempts at the temporary appeasement of a yearning have the opposite effect of flaring it up like the fire fed by an oblation of butter. It is clearly noted in the Uttarādhyayanasūtra :

*Suvaṇṇa-rūpassa upawayābhavē
siyā hu kelāsasama asaṅkhaṇā.
Narassa luddhassa na tehiṃ kīñci
iccha u āgāsasamā upantiyā. (9.49)*

That, even if an infinite number of gold and silver mountains, each as large as the Kailāsa, are conjured up, they would not lead to the final extinction of human desires, because desires are infinite like space. Not only Jainism but all spiritual traditions unanimously hold that the root cause of sorrow is attachment, lust or a sense of mineness, but the fulfillment of desires is not means of ending them. Though a materialistic perspective can provide for material prosperity, it cannot make us free from attachments and yearnings. Our materialistic outlook can be compared to our attempt of chopping the branches off while watering the roots of a tree. In the above mentioned Gatha it is clearly pointed out that desires are endless just as space (Ākāśa) and it is very difficult to fulfil all of them. If mankind is to be freed from selfishness, violence, exploitation, corruption and affliction stemming from them, it is necessary to outgrow materialistic outlook and to develop an attitude which may be described as spiritual.

Jaina spiritually teaches us that happiness or unhappiness is centered in the soul and not in worldly objects. Pleasure and pain are self-created. They are subjective in nature also. They do not depend totally on the objects, but depend also on the attitude of a person towards them. The Uttarādhyayanasūtra mentions :

*Appā kattā vikattā ya, duhāṇa ya suhāṇa ya
Appā mittamamittam ca, duppaṭṭhiya-suppaṭṭhiyo. (20.37)*

That the self (ātmā) is both the doer and the enjoyed of happiness and misery. It is its own friend when it acts righteously and foe when

it acts unrighteously. An unconquered self is its own enemy, unconquered passions and sense organs of the self are its own enemy. oh! having conquered them I move righteously.

In another Jaina text Āurapaccākkhāṇaṃ it is mentioned :

Ego me sasado appā nāṇadamisaṇasaṃjūo
Sesā me bahirā bhāvā, sawe samjogalakḥhanā.
Tamhā samjogasambandhanī, sawabhāveṇa vosire.

The soul endowed with knowledge and perception is alone permanently mine, all other objects are alien to it. All the serious miseries suffered by the self are born of the individual's sense of mine or attachment towards these alien objects.

First of all, Jainism maintains that the attachment (Rāga) and delusion (moha) obscure our spiritual nature and are responsible for our worldly existence and suffering. The most intense vāsanā is *hṛdaya granthī*, which is a deep attachment towards sense-objects and worldly desires. The oldest name of Jaina sect is Niggantha-dhamma. The word Niggantha means the one who has unknotted his *hṛdaya-granthī*, i.e., the "mine-complex;" it means, in other words, one has eradicated ones attachment and passions. The word, "jaina", also conveys the same meaning; a true jaina is one who has conquered ones passions. According to Lord Mahāvīra, "to remain attached to sensuous objects is to remain in the whirl (Ācārāṅga, 1.1.5) The attachment towards sensuous objects is the root of our worldly existence (Ācārāṅga, 1.2.1.). Further, it is also mentioned in the Ācārāṅga, "only he who knows the nature of the sensuous objects is possessed of self knowledge, scripture, Law (dhamma) and Truth (bambha)" (Ācārāṅga, 1.3.1). The five senses together with anger, pride, delusion and desire are difficult to be conquered, but when the self is conquered, all these are completely conquered (Uttarādhyayana, 9.36). Just as the female crane is produced from the egg and the egg from the crane, in the same way desire is produced by delusion and delusion by desire (Uttarādhyayana, 32.6). Attachment and hatred are the seeds of Karma, which have delusion as their source. Karma is the root of birth and death. This cycle of birth and death is the sole cause of misery. Misery is gone in the case of a man who has no

delusion, while delusion is gone in the case of a man who has no desire; desire is gone in the cases of a man who has no greed, while greed is gone in the case of a man who has no attachment" (Uttarādhyayana, 32.8). According to the Tattvārtha-sūtra, a famous Jain text, perverse attitude (mithyā-darśana), non-abstinence (aviratil), spiritual inertia (pramāda), passions (kaṣāya) and activity (Yoga) -- these five are the conditions of bondage (8.1). We can say that mithyā-darśana (perverse attitude), mithyā-jñāna (perverse knowledge) and mithyā-cāritra (immoral conduct) are also responsible for our worldly existence or bondage. But perversity of knowledge and conduct depends upon the perversity of attitude. Thus the perversity of attitude, which is due to darśana-moha is one of the important factors of bondage. Non-absence, spiritual inertia and passion are due to the presence of perverse attitude. Though activities of mind, body and speech are considered the cause of bondage yet they are incapable of bondage unless they are following by perverse attitude and passions. They are only the cause of Āsrava (influx of karmic matter), not the cause of bondage. Bondage is possible only through these three type of activities or yogas in the presence of perverse attitude and passions. The perverse attitude (mithyā-darśana) and the passions (kaṣāyas) are mutually cause and effect of each other just as the egg and the hen or the seed and the tree. We can not fix the priority of one over the other, passions are due to the perverse attitude and perverse attitude is due to the passions.

The Nature of Self

(a) Nature of Self as pure knower : Here naturally a question may arise, "what according to Jainism, is the nature of self? While defining the nature of self, the Acārāṅga mentions :

je āyā se vinnāyā je vinnāyā se āyā (1.5.5)

Self is the knower and the knower is the self, thus the real nature of self is regarded as pure knower. Modern psychology recognizes three aspects of consciousness-- cognitive, affective and conative. Among these three, the affective and conative aspects respectively correspond to enjoying (experiencing) and to doing (behaving). So long as the self manifests itself as the enjoyed or the doer, it is not

in its ideal state of pure knower, for, in this state, the mind constantly sways between "either-or i.e. alternative feelings of pleasure and pain or alternative desires. Hence the mental equanimity of self is disturbed. But when consciousness appears as the pure knower it can lead the self to a deep seated trance and free it from sufferings. A pure knower is not enamored of the objects of pleasure which come to him. He enjoys them indifferently, and is therefore not subject to attachment or bondage. It is mentioned in Samayasāra :

*Jaha phaliyamaṇi suddho ṇa sayam pariṇamadi
rāgāmadhiṇi.*

Rājījadi aṇṇehiṇi du so rattadihiṇi davvehiṇi.

Evaṇ ṇāṇi suddho ṇa sayam pariṇamadi rāgāmadhiṇi.

Rājījadi aṇṇehiṇi du so rāgādhiṇi dosehiṇi. (300-301)

Just as the quartz crystal gem is by nature pure and white and it itself does not really become coloured in the presence of coloured objects but it appears to be coloured for it reflects the coloured of the near object, similarly the pure knower does not modify itself into love etc. But by attachment and other defects it appears affected. Love, hatred and other thought activities are not the souls own modifications. They are due to kārmiic matter or external objects. Really the soul is pure knower.

(b) Samatā as a Nature of Self : Sāmāyika (samatā) is the principal concept of Jainism. It is the pivot on which the ethics of jainism revolves. In English, we can translate it as equality, equanimity, harmony, integration and rightness. But none of these terms convey the complete meaning of the word Samatā (Samāika or Samāhi) in which it is used in Indian philosophy. And so it will be better to use it without translating into English. The word Samatā has different meanings in different contexts. Sometimes it means a balanced state of mind which is undisturbed by any kind of sorrow, emotional excitement, pleasures, pains, achievements or disappointments. Sometimes it refers to the kind of a personality which is completely free from the vectors of aversion and attachment, that is a dispassionate personality with a mental equanimity. The word Samatā also means the feeling of equality with the fellow beings. Loosely speaking, it also conveys the meaning of social equality and social integration.

Ethically, the term 'Sama' or 'Samyak' means rightness. In spite of all its different shades of meanings the term *śamatā* is associated with some kind of a psychological state of mind and it has some impact on our external, social and individual adjustments.

In a Jaina text known as *Bhagavatisūtra*, there is a conversation between Lord Mahāvīra and Gautama. Gautama asked Mahāvīra- "what is the nature of soul"? and Mahāvīra answered, "The nature of soul is equanimity." Gautama again asked, "what is the ultimate end of soul"? and Mahāvīra replied, "The ultimate end of soul is also equanimity (*Viyāhapaṇṇatti*, 1.9).

The view of Lord Mahāvīra that the real nature of soul is equanimity (*śamatā*) is further supported by Ācārya Kunda-kund. Kundakkunda's famous works known as *Samayasāra*, in which Jaina spirituality reach its culmination, deals with the nature of soul. In the whole of Jain literature he is the only ācārya who used the word 'samaya' or 'Samayasāra' for soul (*Ātman*). I think the Ācārya has purposely used this word for *Ātman*. So far as I know, no commentator of *Samayasāra* has raised the question : "why has Kundakunda used the word 'Samaya' for jiva or soul?" I think the word *śamaya* may be a Prākṛta version of Saṁskṛta-word *śamah* + *yah* which means one who has the quality of equanimity, i.e. *śamatā*.

Further the word *Samayasāra* can also be defined in the similar fashion. We can say that he who possesses *śamatā* as his essential nature is called *Samayasāra*.

Ācārya Kundakunda also equated the word 'samaya' with *svabhāva* or essential nature. He used the words *śvasamaya* and *para-samaya*. *Sva-samaya* means real nature and *para-samaya* means resultant nature. Further, *śva-samaya*, i.e. real nature, has been explained as an ultimate end. In this way its ultimate end is equanimity or *śamatā*.

Furthermore, according to Jaina Ethics the way through which the ultimate end can be achieved is also *śamatā* which is known in Prākṛta as *śamāhi* or *śamāi*. In this way three basic presuppositions of Jaina Ethics, the moral agent, the ultimate end and the path through which this ultimate end can be achieved, are equated with the term

equanimity or samatā. In jaina Ethics ends and means do not exist as something external to the moral agent; they are part and parcel of his own real nature. By means of sādhanā we can actualize what is potentially present in us. According to the Jain view equanimity (samatā) is our real potential nature and sādhanā is nothing but practice of equanimity. The three-fold path of right knowledge, right attitude or belief and right conduct solely depends on the concept of equanimity (samatā) for their rightness. The three-fold path is only an application of equanimity in the three aspects of our consciousness. According to Jainism, equanimity should be a directive principle of the activities of knowing, feeling and willing.

What is the justification for saying that our essential nature or our aim of life is samatā or that samatā should be the directive principle of our life and what are the grounds for its justification : To answer these questions first of all we must understand human nature. By human nature we mean man's organic and psychological make-up. What do you mean by a living organism ? By living organism we mean an organism that has the power to maintain its physiological equilibrium. In Biology this process is known as homeostasis, which is considered as an important quality of living organism. The second essential quality of a living organism is its capacity for adjustment to its environment. Whenever a living organism fails to maintain its physiological equilibrium and to adjust itself to its environment, it tends towards death. Death is nothing but an utter failure of this process of maintaining equilibrium. Thus we can say that where there is life there are efforts to avoid unequilibrium and to maintain equilibrium.

Psychologically nobody wants to live in a state of mental tension. We like relaxation and not tension, satisfaction and not anxiety; this shows that our psychological nature working in us is for mental peace or mental equanimity or for the adjustment between these two poles of our personality, the ideal and the real. It is a fact that there are mental states such as emotional excitements, passions, anxieties and frustrations, but they do not form our essential nature because they do not exist for their own sake. Either they seek their satisfaction from some external objects or we want to get rid of these

mental states. They are thus, the resultant expressions (ibhāva) of our self. An important process of our life is the process of adjustment, and at the mental level adjustment is nothing but a process of restoring mental peace, harmony and integration. In this way we can say that the Jaina concept of equanimity or 'samatva' as the real nature of souls has a sound ground for its justification in our organic and psychological nature also.

Darwin suggested that the "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 owing to certain reasons we cannot call this a directive principle of living. First of all this theory is self-contradictory, because its basic slogan is 'live on others', in other words, it prescribes 'living by killing'. Secondly, it is opposed to the basic human nature and to even animal nature to a certain extent. The theory 'live on others' is against the simple rule that all living beings or human beings are potentially equal. The concept of equality of all living beings (Samatā) can only give us a right directive principle of living with fellow beings. The directive principle of living is not "live on others" but "live with others" or "live for others". The famous Jaina philosopher Umāsvāti in his Tattvārtsūtra maintains that the nature of Jiva is to serve one another (Parasparopagrho jīvānām, 5.21). Struggle is not our inner nature but it is only a resultant nature, it is imposed on us by some outer factors. Whenever we have to struggle we struggle under compulsion and whatsoever is done under compulsion cannot be a guiding principle of our living, because it does not blow out from inner nature. In the Ācārāṅga (1.8.3) also equanimity has been referred to as the essence of religion (Dharma). This equanimity or balanced state of mind is the great nature of self. According to Jainism, Dharma is nothing but the fundamental nature of a thing (vatthu sahāvo dhammo, Kārtikeyānuprekṣā; 478) Jainism maintains that an ideal, which differs from one's own nature, cannot be realised or actualised; one's essential nature (savalakṣaṇa) alone can be our ideal.

It is true that dialectic materialism takes conflict or struggle as the law of life and states that the history of man is a history of class-conflict, but this concept is erroneous. No conscious and living being

tends to continue in a state of conflict, it rather seeks to put an end to a conflict as it arises. Since struggle or conflict is something to be got rid of, it cannot be regarded as the real nature of soul. The main drive of life is towards putting an end to mental tensions (arising from external and internal stimuli) and returning to a state of mental equanimity. That is why Jainism maintains that equanimity is the real nature of self and calls it Dharma. It is also true that in Jainism the basic aim of religious aspirations is to put an end to such mental disequilibriums or tensions as attachment and the sense of mine beget attraction and repulsion and cause mental tension or disturb equanimity of mind. An attached man identifies not-self as self, whereas an unattached and dispassionate person regards self as self and not-self as not-self and thus maintains mental equanimity.

According to Jainism the attainment of mental equanimity is the ultimate objective of man. It is in this state that consciousness can be free from constant flickerings and attain peace which again is a pre-condition for spiritual happiness which Jainism marks out as the goal of life and is possible alone in the state of equanimity. This comes down to the statement that the dispassionate stage of mind (*vītarāgata*) or the equanimity of mind itself is alone the goal of life. This state of consciousness is also known as a state of pure knowership (*Sākṣībhāva* or *draṣṭābhāva*) which is the real nature of self and its attainment is the ultimate aim of life.

The Identity of Self with End and Means

In Jainism the aspirant, the end and the means are regarded as identical to self. Each member of the trinity is a manifestation of self. The *Adhyātma-tattvāloka* (41.7) mentions that self is both-- the binding network of the phenomenal universe (*saṃsāra*) and salvation from it. It remains in bondage so long as it is conditioned by the *Karmas* and under the domination of senses and passions, but when it has full control over them, it is emancipated. In his commentary on *Samayasāra* (305) *Ācārya Amṛtacandrasūri* says, "Emancipation (*Mukti*) consists in the exclusion of *para-dravya*, i.e. Karma and the realisation of one's own real nature. *Ācārya Hemcandrasūri* also maintains in his famous work *Yogaśāstra* 9415). "The self which is

conditioned and overwhelmed by the senses is in bondage and the self, which has control over them, is called the emancipated or the enlightened one. In fact, the self being yoked to desires constitutes bondage and when the desires are shed, the self appears in its pristine purity, it is emancipated. The Jaina view of the spiritual goal is that it is within the aspirant and not outside. What is realised by spiritual practices is not an external object, but the full manifestation of one's inner potentialities of self remain same at the beginning of the quest and at its end; the difference lies in the realisation or actualisation of these potentialities. Just as a seed is capable of being developed into a tree, and it actualises his capability when it is really grown in the form of a tree, similarly the soul (ātmā) which has the potentiality of being the Supreme-Soul (paramātmā), becomes perfect by realising its potentialities of infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite bliss and infinite power. According to Jainism salvation lies in the full development of our potentialities. The mission of Jainism is the realisation of the self through the self. The godhood which is already present in the self has to be manifested and the soul has to be brought to its purity. Thus the spiritual journey of soul starts from impure state of the soul and ends with the pure state of the soul (Śuddhātma).

From the Jaina view-point the path of liberation is also not different from the self. The three aspects of our consciousness-cognition, affection and conation, when rightly oriented constitute the path of emancipation. In the Jaina philosophy, the three-fold path of liberation consists of right knowledge (Samyak-jñāna), right belief (Samyak-darśana) and right conduct (Samyak-cāritra). This implies that the cognitive, affective and conative wings of the self, processed into right knowledge, right belief and right conduct, appear to be the real path. Thus considered, the path of emancipation is also soul-stuff. As Ācārya Kundakunda puts it :

Ādā khu majjhañāṇaṃ ādā me darsaṇaṃ carittaṃ ca

Ādā paccakkhāṇaṃ ādā me saṃvaro jogo.

Darsaṇaṇa carittāṇi sevidavvāṇi sāhuṇā ṇiccaṃ.

Tāṇi puṇa jāṇa tiṇṇvī appāṇaṃ ceva ṇicchayado.

(Samayasāra, 18.19)

Right knowledge (Jñāna), right faith (Darśana), renunciation (Pratyākhyāna), Discipline (Samvarao) and yoga are the means to realize the real nature of the self. The same self (soul) is in knowledge, perception, renunciation, discipline and Yoga. What appears as knowledge, faith and conduct is no other than the self. From practical view-point (Vyavahāranaya) they are said to be different from the self, but from real view-point (niścaya-naya) they are one and same with self. Right faith, knowledge and conduct should always be pursued by a saint, but he must know that all these three from real view-point are the self itself. Thus we can say that Jainism is based on the spiritual foundation of the self realisation i.e. Ātma-sākṣātkāra.

