

THE PATH TO INNER PEACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH JAIN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

Peace is the fundamental requirement of life. This paper is an attempt to explore what inner peace is and what is the true path to inner peace according to Jainism. For this purpose, the ancient Jain literature has been explored with the aim of analysing how the Jain practitioners understand inner peace through the three A's of *ahiṃsā*, *aparigraha*, and *anekānta*, and also understanding what the spiritual stages (*guṇasthānas*) are when one walks on the path to inner peace. The observation of the above Jain principles allows one to attain the higher spiritual stages causing inner peace, where outer peace is just an outcome of it.

Introduction

The myriad struggles faced by individuals often result in psychological disorders and a pervasive sense of restlessness. In an effort to alleviate stress-inducing challenges, individuals are in pursuit of various methods and strategies to attain peace. Indian philosophies address the stage of ultimate peace – *mokṣa* – as the only goal of life. This provides us with a spiritual solution to an individual problem which may be a reason for various social problems. It is the time to bring to light the Jain doctrine of peace from the scriptures for those in dire need of peace.

To explore the Jain path to inner peace, the paper deals with the Jain teachings of three A's i.e. *ahiṃsā*, *anekānta* and *aparigraha*, and the spiritual stages called *guṇasthāna* which are interrelated to each other. The paper also discusses some Indian philosophies and their methods of dealing with inner peace to understand the significance of the term and explains how each and every philosophy strives to provide a tension-free world.

The word 'peace' has a long list of synonyms like tranquillity, calmness, quietness, silence, order, accord, happiness, love, friendship, harmony, etc., all of which come from the material world. However, the philosophical and spiritual heritage cover all the dimensions of peace beyond the given synonyms. It is to be understood that only inner peace is real peace, and outer peace is not everlasting peace but just a mask of peace as inside a person, a lot of conflicts and fights may be going on.

To understand the difference between inner and outer peace, let us take the synonyms and add the terms inner and outer with them. For example, let us take the word 'silence'. A *yogī* can remain silent within leading to inner peace despite a lot of hustle and bustle around him. It is true that humanity cannot survive and grow without peace, but we cannot declare that the absence of violent

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acts (war, riot, or conflicts and attacks) is peace. It gives us a negative notion of a term that is highly positive and has no trace of negativity in it and leads to just environmental peace only, which is only outer peace.

It also raises a question of whether inner peace arises out of the human mind or out of the environment around. Various Indian philosophies answer the question in their unique style and provide us with the possible answer accordingly.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* describes karma theory and correlates inner peace with God and auspicious actions. If the actions performed by a person are good without any desire for the fruit, then he does not need to worry, God will take care of his peace, by blessing him with *mokṣa*.² Yoga philosophy brings inner peace to the man from the eightfold path aiming at *dhyāna* and *samādhi* as the outcome³. Generally, all the Indian philosophies offer the path of *dhyāna* and *yoga*, but Jainism has a unique way of defining peace and it always talks about inner peace giving us a unique path of obtaining outer peace with the help of inner peace. In the Jain philosophy, the term peace stands for inner peace only, while outer peace is just a byproduct of the process of obtaining inner peace. But the practical aspect of inner peace is also well attended to by the Jain scholars. They analyze the relationship between external and internal environmental forces and also show the path that focus purely on the internal environment of the human mind.

For the present article, the following two principles are the focus of our discussion:

1. The three A's principle:

- a. *Ahiṃsā* – projects a fight with the inner self
- b. *Anekānta* – offers conflict resolution
- c. *Aparigraha* – suggests less possessions, less worries

2. The Guṇasthāna principle: The journey from *mithyātva* to *samyaktva* to *mokṣa*

The three A's principle

Ahiṃsā, *anekānta*, and *aparigraha* are the famous three principles Jainism embraces. The Three A's system consists of both internal and external forces. We shall understand it with the help of the following discussion:

² “*karmanye vādhi kāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana | mā karma phalāheturbhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmanī ||*” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.47)

³ “*yamaniyamāsanaprāṇāyāmapratyāharadhāraṇādhyānasamādhayo'ṣṭāvaṅgāni*” (Sacred Thread- Patañjali's Yogasūtra 2.29)

- **Ahimsā (nonviolence)**

The terms *himsā* and *ahimsa* have been defined in the Jainism keeping two perspectives in mind: practical point of view and definite view. The definite view is equivalent to *sva-himsā* (violence towards oneself), while the practical point of view is *para-himsā* (violence towards others) (Varni 531). Definite *ahimsā* is essential to move forward on the path of liberation as it says that all four passions and *āsuddha upayoga*⁴ are the real *himsā*. But from a practical approach, the *vyavahāra himsā*⁵ is required to be avoided to keep the present world running. The following discussions must be seen in this case:

Umāsvātī says, “taking life away out of passion is violence. Staying away from this violence is *ahimsā*.”⁶ Ācārya Jayasena in his *Tātparyavṛtti* on *Samayasāra* says, “making any physical or mental effort towards violence is *himsā*. Therefore, avoiding efforts for *himsā* is *ahimsā*.”⁷ Ācārya Amṛtacandra in *Tattvadīpikā* commentary of *Pravacanasāra* divides *vyavahāra himsā* into two types – *antaraṅga* (internal) and *bāhya* (external). It explains that deliberating into impure thoughts is internal violence and hurting a life form is external violence.⁸

Had the concept of *vyavahāra ahimsā* been missing from this world, the world would have reached to an end. Because the restrictions – ethical or religious – are required to control the animal instinct in the man. Avoiding the five transgressions of the minor vow of *ahimsā* restricts the practitioner from tying (someone), murdering/slaughtering, cutting (the body parts), not overloading, and not feeding the pets properly or keeping someone away from his diet.⁹

Ahimsā in Jainism is different from the *ahimsā* explained in other religious philosophies because other philosophies consider protecting humans and animals from harm, but Jainism declares not only plants and animals as living beings, but air, water, fire, and soil are also treated as living beings who have equal right of living. Hence any harm to any of these is to be considered as violence.¹⁰ This fact widens the scope of *ahimsā* in Jainism by providing a

⁴ When the soul is away from truth, non-violence, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession.

⁵ conventional or practical violence with the help of the activities of mind body and speech.

⁶ “*pramattayogāt prāṇavyaparopāṇam himsā*” (Tattvārthasūtra 7.13)

⁷ “*athaiva niścayanayena himsādhyavasāya eva himsetyāyātām vicāryamāṇam*” (Tātparyavṛtti on Samayasāra 262)

⁸ “*himsā: āsuddhopayogo'ntaraṅgacchedaḥ, paraprāṇa vyaparopo bahirmgaḥ*” (Tattvadīpikā on Pravacanasāra 3.17).

⁹ “*bandhavadhacchavedātibhārōpaṇānnapāna nirodhāḥ*” (Tattvārthasūtra 7.20)

¹⁰ “*vayaṁ puṇa evamācikkhāmī, evaṁ bhāsāmo, evaṁ paṇṇavemo, evaṁ parīvemo, savve pāṇā savve bhūtā save jīvā save sattā ṇa haṁtavvā, ṇa ajjāvetavvavā, ṇa pariḥettavvā, ṇa pariyāvevavvā, ṇa uddavetavvā*” (Ācārāṅgasūtra 1.4.138)

sense of fearlessness to all living beings living up to the phrase *ahiṃsā paramo dharmah* which means ‘nonviolence is the supreme virtue’.

- **Aparigraha (non-possession)**

Jain philosophy believes that the desires are endless.¹¹ Naturally, as soon as one desire is fulfilled, another crops up. But peace is not in fulfilling the infinite desires continuously, but in controlling or fully stopping the desires, as we can experience it in real life. That is why the kind of peace attained by a *nirgrantha* (an ascetic) is unmatched and is reflected on their faces. But at the same time if these monks turn to be mere ‘*bhikṣus*’ rather than ‘*nirgrantha*’ then sprouting desires may take the inner peace (they have earned) away from them too. The word *nirgrantha* stands for that state of an ascetic where there are no knots of passion remaining inside the monk.

This concept can better be understood with the definitions of *parigraha* (possessions) as per Jainism. The *Tattvārthasūtra* (7.12) defines it as *mūrcchā parigrahaḥ* meaning attachment to objects itself is possession. Therefore, being free from any kind of attachment is to be understood as *aparigraha* (non-possession). Apparently, Jain concept of *aparigraha* does not only talk about getting rid of physical possessions but also focuses on eradicating internal possessions like passions and desires.¹² This concept is also reflected in the fifth *aṇuvrata* (minor vow) of a Jain practitioner where the physical possessions of property and land, vehicles, gold and precious metals, the wealth of human resources, and food or agricultural products are supposed to be limited¹³ for his external peace as less possessions allow less disturbances in life. This external peace leads to inner peace.

- **Anekānta (non-onesidedness)**

It is an independent concept that initiates external conflictless-ness leading to outer peace. *Anekānta* is supported by the other two A's – *ahiṃsā* and *aparigraha* to reach a state of inner peace. *Ahiṃsā* leads to a peaceful outer world and *aparigraha* leads to an outer as well as inner tranquil world. Samaṇi Shashi Prajna opines that *anekānta* is knowing the same reality through various propensities (Prajna 55). Acharya Mahaprajna says that *anekānta* provides a solution to the conflict-raising problems of the world which are based on absolutism or difference in opinion for the same object (Mahaprajna 11). The *anekānta* philosophy keeps all the conflicts away. It works with the idea of looking at all the aspects of an object or all the dimensions of an idea at one point of time to avoid one-sided views of a particular object. This is not an escape route to peace, but it is a well-planned path to peace practiced by many

¹¹ “*nassa luddhassa na tehiṃ kiṃci icchā u āgāsa samā aṇantiyā*” (Uttarādhyayanāsūtra 9.48)

¹² *mithyātvavedarāgāstathaiva hāsyādayaśca ṣaḍ doṣāḥ | catvāraśca kaṣāyāścaturdaśābhyantarā granthāḥ* || (Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya 116)

¹³ *dhanadhānyādigranthaṃ parimāya tato dhikeṣu niḥsprhā | parimitaparigrahaḥ syādicchāparimāṇanāmāpi* || (Ratnakaraṇḍa Śrāvakācāra 61)

great Jain philosophers that brings harmony to the external world and then makes the path to inner peace smooth and trouble-free.

The trio of *ahimsā*, *aparigraha*, and *anekānta* can lead to a stress-free society and a peaceful world as *ahimsā* brings fearlessness. *aparigraha* brings contentment, and *anekānta* brings external peace. These three together provide inner peace. Practicing *anekānta* keeps all kinds of conflicts away from the environment. Hence, the combination of the three A's leads to a smooth world of tranquillity and peace.

The principle of Guṇasthāna for inner peace

The principle of *guṇasthāna* (spiritual stages) visualizes the journey of the soul from the absolute state of hopelessness/helplessness to the state of extreme inner peace, that is the state of supreme liberation/supremacy. We can also call it the steps of the journey from a *mithyātvī* to a *kevalī*, from *bandha* (bondage) to *mokṣa* (liberation), from disturbances to peace. These stages of spiritual purification are expounded as fourteen.¹⁴ The fourteen stages have been designated on the basis of the prominent thought activity at each succeeding stage of evolution. We shall deal with each of them in the same order¹⁵ (Tukol 165-174):

1. **Mithyādr̥ṣṭi (delusion):** At this is the stage, a soul is affected by wrong belief due to the deluding or infatuating karmas. Such a person does not believe in the right path. He does not believe in reality and the values of truth and goodness. However, he adheres to wrong beliefs, and he dislikes the right beliefs. In this stage, consciousness of the soul is obsessed with ignorance.
2. **Sāsvādāna Samyagdr̥ṣṭi (clouded right belief):** This stage literally means retaining taste. This stage foresees a fall from the stage of right faith. A person can reach the stage of right faith through instruction and right understanding. However, if he is overcome by passions or wrong thought- activity, he may fall from the upper rung of the ladder to which he may have ascended. During this downfall, the soul has neither right belief nor wrong belief. This is a transitory stage, but the evolution must commence again by destruction of the deluding karma.
3. **Misra or Samyagmithyādr̥ṣṭi (mixed belief):** At this stage, a person's beliefs are a mix of right and wrong together. This indicates a spiritual oscillation between right faith and wrong faith and is caused by indecision or a wavering state of mind. Such a person neither abandons wrong belief nor sticks up to right belief. This is also a transitory stage. A person may advance

¹⁴ “*kammavisohimagganaṃ paḍucca coddasa jīvaṭṭhāṇā paṇṇattā, taṃjahā – micchadiṭṭhī, sāsāyaṇasammadiṭṭhī, sammāmicchadiṭṭhī, aviratasammadiṭṭhī, pamattasamjate, appamattasamjate, niyaṭṭi, aniyaṭṭibāyare, suhumasaṃparāe uvasāmae vā khamae vā, uvasamtamohē, khīṇamohē, sajoḡī kevalī, ajoḡī kevalī*” (Samavāyāṅgasūtra 95)

¹⁵ The description of 14 stages of spiritual purification (*guṇasthāna*) is taken from *Compendium of Jainism* by T. K. Tukol (1980).

to the next higher stage. if the right faith is revived by *punya* or fresh knowledge from a preceptor; or the soul may as well revert back to the stage of wrong belief.

4. **Avirata Samyagdr̥ṣṭi (spiritual awakening):** At this stage, the person has the right belief but not the conduct in strict conformity with it. He has not committed himself by vows to refrain from hurting the living beings and indulging in sensual pleasures. He is compassionate, peaceful, scared of the mundane existence (*saṁvega*) and truthful. He never harms someone without being provoked. *Anantānubandhī kaṣāya*¹⁶ has been subdued by him but has lacks the strength to subdue the other types of passions. He desires to live a life of restraints, but he is unable to do.
5. **Viratāvirata or Deśavirata (partial abstinence):** At this stage, a person has right belief and right knowledge, and also observes certain vows, although this is partially due to lack of complete control. As a person of right believe, he will control his passions and not commit unnecessary sins. He will not kill the mobile beings. He will also not kill immobile beings unnecessarily. As he is completely devoted to the Jina, he is both vow full and vow less (*virata-avirata*).
6. **Pramatta Saṁyata (non-vigilantly restrained):** At this stage, the person has right faith and makes an attempt to control himself in his observance of the vows, but his renunciation of attachment to worldly objects is not complete which causes him to be hindered by impulses and desires. This is virtually an ascetic's stage. A *muni*'s conduct at this stage is noteworthy for lack of carelessness.
7. **Apramatta Saṁyata (vigilantly restrained):** At this stage, a person's soul is immersed in spiritual contemplation and is free from the infirmities of the 6th stage. This is an extremely important stage of spiritual development. Here onwards there are two ways to proceed: either the karmas and minor passions are merely pacified or suppressed (*upaśamaka śreṇī*), or they are annihilated (*kṣapakaśreṇī*). The soul has undoubtedly acquired strength as a result of the cessation of all attachments and having complete control over the body. There is complete self-restraint and not the slightest negligence in the observance of the vows etc., without any kind of transgression.
8. **Apūrvakaraṇa (unprecedented volition):** At this stage, the soul's spiritual development leads to attainment of new thought- activities which had not been reached before. Since each soul may have reached this stage of development at a different time, they are not equal in their degree of purity of thought. The destruction or subsidence of the right- conduct-deluding

¹⁶ “*anantasamsāra kāraṇatvānmithyādarśanamanantam | tadanubandhino'nantānubandhinaḥ
krodhamānamāyālobhāḥ*” (Sarvārthasiddhi 8.9.751)

Meaning, this *kaṣāya* binds the soul to endless worldly lives (*samsāra*). It adds bondage and impels the cycle of life and death to go on forever. This *kaṣāya* dwells in person who lives in false belief or *mithyātva*. The *jīva*, under the influence of this *kaṣāya*, commits very violent sins and has very severe attachments and hatred towards others.

karmas would be the primary focus of the new thought-activities. The soul delights in checking or eliminating the consequences of occasional streaks of passions. This is the stage of pure contemplation. At this stage, conduct is perfect or flawless and the soul is able to engage himself in holy meditation.

9. **Anivṛttikaraṇa (similar volition):** A person who has attained this stage has overcome all his cravings to enjoy what he has seen, heard, or consumed. He practises meditation on the true nature of the soul.
10. **Sūkṣma Sāmparāya (subtle passion):** As the passions are being suppressed or eradicated (*upaśama* or *kṣaya*), the minutest greed is also being suppressed or eradicated. Even now, there is a subtle desire to acquire *mokṣa*. Despite the soul's significant spiritual growth, an unconscious attachment to the body still exists. There is a faint hint of greedy passion.
11. **Upaśānta Moha (subsided delusion):** The soul arrives at this stage when the passions are repressed but not completely eliminated. It's highly probable that when the passions rise once more, the soul will move to the lower stage.
12. **Kṣīṇa Moha (destroyed delusion):** The ultimate state of inner peace is attained at this point since all attachments and delusions are eliminated, all deluding passions are destroyed. The thoughts are as clear as water in a crystal jewel container. The distinction between this stage and the former is that in the latter stage the soul is at the stage of subsidence while in the former stage, it has reached the ladder of destruction.
13. **Sayoga Kevalī (dynamic omniscient):** The omniscience is attained in this stage as a result of inner peace. Since, ignorance has been destroyed, the soul appears bright like the sun freed from the clouds, and it achieves full knowledge of the universe; that is why it is a stage of an omniscient (*kevalī*) with activity (*sayoga*). *Sayoga Kevalī* is exemplified by the *arhanta parameṣṭhi* who is engaged in propounding the *dharma* to all living things.
14. **Ayoga Kevalī (static omniscient):** In the body of the *kevalī*, all the *yogas* (activities of the mind, body, and speech) cease to exist. Thus, the infinite ultimate bliss is experienced, generating the inner peace. This is the stage of transcendental perfection known as *siddha*. The Omniscient of this stage is one who has attained its ultimate and everlasting bliss and completely stopped the influx of karmas after destroying those that were already attaching. After being completely liberated, the soul resides at the summit of the universe. The completely liberated souls reside in a place called *siddhaśilā*; where they live in peace and purity.

In a nutshell, the first three stages are far from peace as these are the stages of extreme anxiety where satisfying the pleasures of the five senses is falsely understood as happiness and peace (*sukhābhāsa*). In the fourth stage, *samyaktva* is obtained and spiritual awakening is attained that provides some inner peace. Inner peace is increased when some vows accompany it in the fifth

guṇasthāna. The sixth and the seventh are the stages of saints who keep swinging between these two. The eighth, ninth, and tenth stages are the stages where the passions keep diluting and the level of peace increases. The eleventh stage is the stage of pure peace but temporary, hence not desirable for the peace seekers. At the twelfth stage, even the leftover attachment disappears. The thirteenth and fourteenth are the stages of absolute inner peace. The optimum level of calmness brings the highest level of inner peace to the soul.

The *Tattvārthasūtra* explains the last two stages as omniscience manifests by the destruction of delusive knowledge and perception-obscuring as well as the obstructing karma.¹⁷ The moment all the passions disappear, the inner peace emerges.

Guṇasthānas are in a direct positive proportion with the peace – the higher the *guṇasthāna*, the higher the inner peace, and the lower the *guṇasthāna*, the less is the peace. For a soul indulging in adverse belief, there is no peace whereas stress cannot even touch the *sayoga* and *ayoga kevalī*. This philosophical psychology motivates the soul to stay in the right belief (*samyak darśana*) which is the onset of inner peace and to make continuous efforts to bring ultimate inner peace.

Conclusion

Peace is a spiritual and secular phenomenon. Jainism proposes attaining external and inner peace through its various principles. While most of the Indian philosophies aim at relieving the human body from any kind of discomfort, the Jain path to inner peace says that knowing one's self is to acquire the knowledge of your real identity. Human beings should work on the upliftment of the soul to attain this inner peace.

Jain philosophy offers a profound pathway to inner and outer peace through the integrated practice of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *anekānta* (non-one-sidedness), and *aparigraha* (non-possession), collectively known as the principle of Three A's. Each principle fosters inner harmony urging the practitioner toward a peaceful co-existence and ethical living. The ideal practice of these three is reflected in the spiritual journey of a practitioner which is called *guṇasthāna*. The principle of *guṇasthāna* illustrates the soul's journey toward complete inner peace and liberation. Through fourteen spiritual stages, the aspirant ascends from a state of delusion and bondage to absolute omniscience, marked by the complete destruction of karmic attachments. In this way, we can say that if the *ahiṃsā*, *aparigraha* and *anekānta* are correctly observed, they can lead to the ascension of the spiritual stages causing outer and inner peace.

Further scope of the research lies in the fact that inner peace can be obtained through many more ways which can be taken up as per the capabilities of the practitioner, hence the future scholars should be encouraged to find out more paths or path theories which suit each and every level of the practitioners.

¹⁷ 'moha kṣayājjñānadarśanāvaranāntarāyākṣayacca kevalam' (Tattvārthasūtra 10.1)

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