AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SHRIMAD RAJCHANDRA'S APŪRVA AVASARA FROM DRAVYĀNUYOGA POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract

This paper investigates the *dravyānuyoga*, one of the four *ānuyogas* in Jainism, within the framework of the *Apūrva Avasara* composed by Shrimad Rajchandra, employing a multidisciplinary methodology that integrates textual analysis and doctrinal interpretation. The research draws upon primary Jain sources and commentary literature to show the subject matter and thematic depth of *dravyānuyoga* in *Apūrva Avasara*. The paper highlights how *Apūrva Avasara* serves the fundamental objective of *dravyānuyoga* as a foundational framework for understanding Jain metaphysics and supports ethical and spiritual inquiry through structured doctrinal exposition.

Introduction

Jainism, an ancient religion practiced and promulgated by the *tīrthaṁkaras*, extends beyond mere religious doctrine; it embodies a comprehensive way of life. From the legendary figures of Bhagavāna Ṛṣabhadeva to Mahāvīra, Jainism espouses nonviolence and a spiritual path leading to liberation, the same thing Shrimad Rajchandra elucidates the path to emancipation through the spiritual ladder called *guṇasthāna* in *Apūrva Avasara*, an iconic hymn composed by him. It refers to an unparalleled, golden opportunity, a state of experience yet to be encountered by the soul. In its absence, the soul traverses the cyclic journey of transmigration, enduring the cycles of birth, death, old age, and suffering.

The canonical texts of the Jains are called *āgama*, and they are exhaustive. They represent a unique compilation, an aggregation of all aspects of life and beyond, as revealed by the omniscient *tīrthaṁkaras*. The Jains believe in the principles and preaching of all the *tīrthaṁkaras*. The *āgamas* cover many topics, including philosophy, ethics, cosmology, rituals, and guidance for Jain monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. They are comprehensive in their scope, providing a detailed guide for leading a Jain way of life and achieving spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*). Following in the footsteps of these *tīrthaṁkaras*, numerous Jain practitioners dedicated themselves to the Jain principles in pursuit of emancipation. Among such luminaries was Shrimad Rajchandra (1867), who lived about 155 years ago and composed various poems cherished by his followers. This paper discusses a profound poem titled *Apūrva Avasara* penned by him in Gujarati from the point of view of *dravyānuyoga*, a specific style of narration.

Anuyoga

Anuyoga is a style of narration or a way of interpretation. The Jain *ācāryas* classified the Jain *āgamas* into four parts as below:

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S. No.	Digambara Tradition[2]	Śvetāmbara Tradition[3]
1	Prathamānuyoga	Dharmakathānuyoga
2	Karaṇānuyoga	Gaṇitānuyoga
3	Caraṇāuyoga	Caraṇāuyoga
4	Dravyānuyoga	Dravyānuyoga

Jainism underscores that the four *anuyogas—prathamānuyoga, karaṇānuyoga, caraṇānūyoga,* and *dravyānuyoga*—constitute the whole scripture. In the classification of Jain *āgama*, these *anuyogas* are organized into four distinct categories:

1. **Prathamānuyoga:** This *anuyoga* encompasses legendary works, offering narratives and biographies of spiritually evolved beings, including *tīrthaṁkaras*, *cakravartīs*, etc. sixty-three illustrious personalities.
2. **Karaṇānuyoga:** This *anuyoga* deals with cosmological works, providing insights into universal history, calculations, and mathematical expositions. It delves into the intricacies of the cosmos.
3. **Caraṇānuyoga:** This *anuyoga* comprises ethical works, focusing on texts that delineate proper behavior for both ascetics and laypeople. It guides ethical conduct in various aspects of life.
4. **Dravyānuyoga:** This *anuyoga* offers a detailed exposition of profound philosophical, spiritual, metaphysical, and ontological concepts. It explores the depth of Jain philosophy, providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying principles.

This categorization allows for a structured approach to the vast body of Jain *āgamas*, catering to diverse aspects of knowledge and wisdom. Each *anuyoga* plays a crucial role in imparting specific teachings, contributing to the holistic understanding of Jain philosophy and spirituality.

Apūrva Avasara

It is the title of the hymn composed by Shrimad Rajchandra. The term *apūrva* consists of the prefix 'a' which is a negative prefix negating the word followed by it; and the word *pūrva* means before. Thus, the word *apūrva* denotes a period unprecedented in a particular experience. The word *avasara* literally means opportunity; here it represents the opportunity wherein an individual attains transcendental knowledge of the inner self, experiencing eternal splendor previously unknown to the soul. Only through such ethereal enlightenment can the soul break free from the cycle of transmigration and achieve liberation. Let us look at the first verse of this hymn:

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[2] "*prathamāniyogacaraṇāniyogakaraṇāniyogadravyāniyogabhedena caturvidha āgamābhyāsaḥ śrutabhāvanā*"| (Tattvapradīpikā on Pañcāstikāyaḥ 173)

[3] *cattāriu aṇuoga, caraṇe dhamma gaṇiyāṇuoge ya |*
daviya'ṇuoge ya tahā, jahakammaṁ te mahaḍḍhīyā ||
(Abhidhāna Rājendra Kośa, Part-1, p.256 cited in D. Muni fn. 24)

When will that unique opportunity arise?
When will I be unshackled, inside and out,
Piercing the bondage of entanglements,
When the path of great souls shall I tread.[4]

This verse, like the other verses in the hymn, can be understood from the *dravyānuyoga* point of view, looking at its spiritual approach. Let us first learn the meaning of *dravyānuyoga* in detail.

Dravyānuyoga

That branch of scriptures, which is mainly based on spirituality and in which six kinds of substances (*dravya*)[5] and nine elements (*tattvas*) are explained in detail, is *dravyānuyoga*[6]. It is the science of self and non-self-discrimination. It can be understood in the following manner:

- **Purpose of Dravyānuyoga**

  Through *dravyānuyoga*, the readers or listeners are actuated to follow the religion by describing the substances (*dravyas*) and the elements (*tattvas*). Those who do not know the substances and elements, and do not identify the self and the non-self as different entities, this *anuyoga* helps them in identifying these through reasoning, examples, logic, and through the comprehensive viewpoint (*pramāṇa*) and partial viewpoints (*naya*). It helps them eliminate ignorance and develop the right belief. (Mokṣamārga Prakāśaka 271)

- **Practices Found in Dravyānuyoga**

  Dravyānuyoga deals with the *dravya* as per Jain scriptures, which analyzes the six substances (*dravyas*) and the nine elements (*tattvas*)[7] based on valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*), viewpoints (*naya*), and positing (*nikṣepa*). This *anuyoga* also explains the state of being bonded and the state of being liberated in clear terms. Intense spirituality and karma theory are also a part of this *anuyoga*. (Jain Tattvavidyā 223)

  In *dravyānuyoga*, the tradition of logic or the science of reasoning is prominent because the purpose of making decisions is to ascertain the *tattvas*. In a sense, the path of making a decision is shown.

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4 *apūrva avasara evo kyāre āvaśe?*
kyāre thaīśuṁ bāhyāntara nirgrantha jo?
sarva sambandhanuṁ bandhana tīkṣṇa chedīne,
vicaraśuṁ kaba mahat-puruṣane pantha jo? (Apūrva Avasara 1)

5 the six substances are: *jīva* (soul), *pudgala* (matter), *dharma* (medium of motion), *adharma* (medium of rest), *ākāśa* (space) and *kāla* (time). "*jīvā poggalakāyā dhammādhammā ya kāla āyāsaṁ*" (Niyamasāra 9)

6 *jīvājīvasutattve puṇyāpuṇye ca bandhamokṣau ca |*
dravyānuyogadīpaḥ śrutavidyālokamātanute || (Ratnakaraṇḍaka Śrāvakācāra 46)

7 the nine elements are: *jīva* (soul), *ajīva* (non-soul), *āsrava* (influx), *bandha* (bondage), *saṁvara* (stoppage), *nirjarā* (annihilation) and *mokṣa* (emancipation). "… *jīvājīvā ya puṇṇapāvaṁ ca| āsavasaṁvaraṇijjarabaṁdho mokkho*…" (Samayasāra 13)

- **Characteristics of Dravyānuyoga**

  According to the *Ratnakaraṇḍa Ṣrāvakācāra*, *dravyānuyoga* illuminates like a lamp to propound the living (*jīva*) and non-living (*ajīva*) elements, auspicious (*puṇya*) and inauspicious (*pāpa*) elements, and bondage (*baṁdha*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) by amplifying the psychic scripture (*bhāva śruta*).[8]

  The *Dhavalā* says that *dravyānuyoga* proves the existence of substances as drafted in reality. This nature of *dravyānuyoga* comes under *Anuyogadvāra*.[9] According to the commentary of the *Dravyasaṁgraha*, primarily the description of pure and impure souls and the six *dravyas* is explained in texts like the *prābhṛtas* and *tattvārthasiddhāntas* are called *dravyānuyoga*.[10]

Nature of Dravyānuyoga According to Shrimad Rajchandra

Spirituality forms the very backbone of religion. Without deep immersion in the soul, the true journey on the path of liberation (*mokṣamārga*) cannot begin. The lens of *dravyānuyoga* directs the focus inward toward the rightful orientation (Śrīmad Rājacandra 586).

Dravyānuyoga encompasses the study of the infinite substances that constitute the universe—their intrinsic qualities, *dharma*, causal relationships, and modifications. The detailed exposition of these elements is what defines this profound branch of Jain philosophy (ibid 755). Under the guidance of a realized Guru, an aspirant cultivates *bhakti* (devotion) and *vairāgya* (detachment), progressing steadily through the path illuminated by *dravyānuyoga* (ibid 508).

In moments of doubt, when the mind wavers in its understanding of Jain teachings or struggles with conceptual clarity, one is advised to contemplate on *dravyānuyoga*. It serves as a stabilizing force, restoring conviction and insight (ibid 165).

This path is both intense and subtle, a secret embedded in the sermons of the knotless ascetics. It is the unique cause of *śukla dhyāna*, the purest form of meditation, which ultimately leads to *kevala-jñāna*, the omniscient state. Attaining the essence of *dravyānuyoga* is a rare blessing—granted only through immense fortune. As delusion and wrong perception diminish, the aspirant naturally becomes indifferent to sensual pleasures. By worshipping the lotus feet of an enlightened Guru, one achieves the strength to realize the self which is the essence of *dravyānuyoga*. With growing self-restraint, the purity of right faith emerges, enabling deeper realization. Though it is difficult to become truly worthy of self-knowledge, those who remain detached and engrossed in the self, are capable of such attainment. The ultimate fruit of *dravyānuyoga* is self-control, a state free from all desires and aspirations. Shrimad Rajchandra urges us never to dilute the teachings of an enlightened Guru, for they hold the secret to lasting

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[8] *jīvājīvasutattve puṇyāpuṇye ca bandhamokṣau ca |*
dravyānuyogadīpaḥ śrutavidyālokamātanute || (Ratnakaraṇḍaka Śrāvakācāra 46)

[9] "*satāniyogamhi jamtthittaṁ uttaṁ tassa pamāṇaṁ parūvedi davvāṇiyoge*" (Dhavalā 1/1,1,7/159)

[10] *prābhṛtatattvārthasiddhāntādau yatra śuddhāśuddhajīvādiṣaḍdravyādīnāṁ mukhyavṛttyā vyākhyānaṁ kriyate sa dravyānuyogo bhaṇyate |* (Brahmadeva's Vṛtti on Bṛhad-Dravyasaṁgraha 42/208)

peace. Indeed, this path is the sole solution to transcend suffering and attain liberation. (Śrīmad Rājacandra 632)

Dravyānuyoga in Apūrva Avasara

Apūrva Avasara is one of the hymns composed by Shrimad Rajchandra. It has 21 stanzas that reflects his desire of renunciation into the Jain tradition and to reach to the ultimate state that is apparent in the following verses:

> *apūrva avasara evo kyāre āvaśe? kyāre thaīśuṁ bāhyāntara nirgrantha jo?*
> *sarva sambandhanuṁ bandhana tīkṣṇa chedīne, vicaraśuṁ kaba mahat-puruṣane pantha jo?*
> *sarva bhāvathī audāsīnyavṛtti karī, mātra deha te saṁyama hetu hoya jo*,
> *anya kāraṇe anya kaśuṁ kalpe nahīṁ, dehe paṇa kiṁcit mūrchā nava joya jo*
> *apūrva avasara evo kyāre āvaśe* ||
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> **Meaning**: When would that opportune moment come when I will be free from all knots internally and externally, severing the sharp bondage of all relationships, renouncing all emotions with complete detachment from all kinds of emotions, only the body remaining as a mere instrument of restraint… (Apūrva Avasara 1, 2)

Similarly, in the next verse, he says:

> *darśanamoha vyatīta thaī upajyo bodha je*, *deha bhinna kevala caitanyanuṁ jñāna jo*,
> *tethī prakṣīṇa cāritramoha vilokie*, *varte evuṁ śuddha svarūpanuṁ dhyāna jo,*
> *apūrva avasara evo kyāre āvaśe* ||
>
> **Meaning**: When would that unprecedented occasion come when delusion is transcended, true awareness arises, and the realization of pure consciousness beyond the body prevails. One who dwells in such pristine self-awareness remains in meditation on the essence of purity. (ibid 3)

Ignorance of the true self and indulgence in attachment or aversion are the main causes of transmigration. Ignorance leads to perception-related delusion[11], and indulgence leads to delusional conduct[12]. Therefore, the primary concern of a spiritual aspirant should be to look for a true guide to learn the true nature of the realities. It helps in overcoming ignorance. The right perception arises in its wake. One then realizes that he is a soul – different and distinct from the body. He would not remain much inclined towards physical concerns or worldly aspects. If one is serious in his endeavors, he can notice that the conduct-related delusion is continually losing ground under the right perceptions. For example, look at the story of Megha Kumāra from *Jñātādharmakathāṅga Sūtra* (1.183). He took initiation (*dīkṣā*) under Lord Mahāvīra, but on the very first night, he could not sleep well, as many ascetics, while passing by, unintentionally touched him with their feet. He found it insulting and went to Mahāvīra, intending to go back to worldly life. But Mahāvīra explained to him that he had got this human birth due to the auspicious karmas of his previous birth. In the last birth, he was an elephant, who had shown pity on a rabbit by not stamping on him even when he was in great pain by keeping his leg lifted in the air for two and a half days. When he could bear such pain, this pain

[11] "*so'jñānitvānmithyādṛṣṭiḥ*" (Ātmakhyāti on Samayasāra 247)

[12] "*cāritramohasyāsaṁyamaḥ*" (Sarvārthasiddhi 8.3)

was nothing in comparison. This pain will take him to liberation (*mokṣa*). Thus, the right Guru had saved him from taking a U-turn and established him in self-restraint (*saṁyama*).

As one reduces the activities of mind, body, and speech to the minimum, self-awareness increases, one stabilizes into the soul and does not lose this stability, even in times of great distress or infliction of terrible pain until the soul is disembodied. Shrimad wonders to himself when that special occasion will arise in his life when he can contemplate only on the self and the nature of the self, as explained in verse four:

> *ātma sthiratā traṇa saṁkṣipta yoganī*, *mukhyapaṇe to varte deha paryanta jo*,
> *ghora pariṣaha ke upasarga bhaye karī*, *āvī śake nahī te sthiratāno anta jo* |
> *apūrva avasara evo kyāre āvaśe* ||
>
> **Meaning**: When would that unprecedented occasion come when the soul will situate in the self through the three restraints which should remain until the body's end. Let there be severe hardships (*parīṣaha*) and afflictions (*upasarga*), but the stability in the soul does not end. (Apūrva Avasara 4)

This stanza discusses about remaining continuously aware of the self through the three restraints (*guptis*[13]) – *manogupti, vacanagupti,* and *kāyagupti* (mental, vocal, and physical restraints). The three restraints or *guptis* enable one to stay tuned to the soul. The spiritual aspirant is self-aware, even if he comes across hardships and distress.

As *Apūrva Avasara* (3) mentions that the true knowledge or understanding is obtained through eradication of the perceptional delusion, it is clear that the ignorance of the self is the primary cause of worldly life. Because of that ignorance, the cycle of birth and death has been running uninterrupted despite various religious activities, which the worldly soul might have undertaken so far. Therefore, if one observes mere rituals, the purpose to get on the right path of liberation is not achieved. The path of liberation consists of right perception, right knowledge, and right conduct[14]. As the right perception is the first step towards path of liberation, an aspirant should find the right Guru and surrender to him[15]. Thereby, the delusion of the self is removed, and one reaches the state of enlightenment.

The practitioner's longing is presented in the following verse:

> *saṁyamanā hetuthī yogapravartanā*, *svarūpalakṣe jina-ājñā ādhīna jo*;
> *te paṇa kṣaṇa-kṣaṇa ghaṭatī jātī sthitimāṁ*, *aṁte thāe nijasvarūpamāṁ līna jo* |
> *apūrva avasara evo kyāre āvaśe* ||
>
> **Meaning**: When would that unprecedented occasion come when my activities of yoga are in accordance with self-restraint, and I observe the self as per the *jina's* teachings, getting more steadfast every moment, and finally situated in the self. (ibid 5)

It explains that subjecting all the activities to restraint and continually reducing their scope in line with the precepts of omniscient lords, one stays soul-oriented and ultimately gets absorbed

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[13] "*sā tritayī kāyaguptirvāgguptirmanoguptiriti*" (Sarvārthasiddhi 9.4)

[14] "*samyagdarśanajñānacāritrāṇi mokṣamārgaḥ*" (Tattvarthasūtra 1.1)

[15] *śraddhānaṁ paramārthānāmāptāgama-tapobhṛtām* |
trimūḍhāpoḍhamaṣṭāṅgaṁ samyagdarśanamsmayam || (Ratnakaraṇḍaka Śrāvakācāra 4)

within the soul. By observing self-restraint, the practitioner would gradually learn to remain within himself. He understands that he cannot completely abstain from exercising his faculties, so he observes essential activities with carefulness (*gupti*) and vigilance (*samiti*[16]). Once he achieves this attitude, he will consider every living being on the same footing as himself. Affection would innately flow from the self. As such, he would remain vigilant to protect the interests of others and be willing to sacrifice his own.

Similarly, *Apūrva Avasara* (6, 7, 9) discusses the strengthening of the determination of a monk. The monastic life does not concern about any particular place, specific season, or age. One should stay above all these considerations, having an indifferent attitude towards a conducive or comfortable environment. Disinclination or indifference is a vital factor in spiritual pursuit. He needs to stay detached from the body and free from all kinds of entanglements – physical or psychic. The same idea can be seen in stanza 10 saying that one has to observe equanimity in all circumstances. Even the desire for *mokṣa* should not be such that it becomes like greed.[17]

Once the four obstructive (*ghātiyā*) karmas, namely, *darśanāvaraṇīya, jñānāvaraṇīya, mohanīya,* and *antarāya* are destroyed, the soul immediately becomes omniscient.[18] It can know the universe in its totality of past, present, and future simultaneously. It ensures there is no further transmigration. The root of all worldly relations has been destroyed to the core. Moreover, as explained in the 18th stanza, it is a state where there is no contact with a single particle whatsoever; not even the smallest of atoms touches them now at this stage. This stage is unadulterated, non-oscillating, pure, untainted, conscious, non-incarnate, unique, unalterable, intangible, and innate.[19] Whatever little activity of mind, body, and speech was there, that too is stopped. All the karmas are annihilated, and the soul is inherently pure. Its purity was tainted in the worldly state and remained unstable because of the interaction with karma particles. This state is vibration-less and stabilized on itself. It is unique in the sense that there is no other state that can be compared with it. The soul eternally stays liberated and experiences its infinite bliss.

Shrimad explains in the further stanzas that he wishes to attain that state for a long time and he will attain his self through the path shown by the *tīrthaṁkaras*. Like the soul's nature is to go upwards, his soul will also get situated at the top of the universe, where all attained beings are situated, called *siddhālaya*. In this state, the soul enjoys perfect perception (*ananta darśana*) and perfect knowledge (*ananta jñāna*). Such a state could not be described by the *tīrthaṁkaras*

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[16] "*īryābhāṣaiṣaṇādānanikṣepotsargāḥ samitayaḥ*" meaning 'to walk, to speak, to eat, to handle objects of daily use and to dispose excreta with vigilance are the five *samitis*.' (Tattvarthasūtra 9.5)

[17] *śatru mitra pratye vartte samadarśitā, māna amāne vartte te ja svabhāva jo |*
jīvita ke maraṇe nahīṁ nyūnādhikatā, bhava mokṣe paṇe śuddha vartte samabhāva jo ||
(Apūrva Avasara 10)

[18] "*mohakṣayājjñānadarśanāvaraṇāntarāyakṣayācca kevalam*" (Tattvarthasūtra 10.1)

[19] *eka paramānumātranī maṇe na sparśatā, pūrṇa kalaṅka rahita aḍola svarūpa jo |*
śuddha nirañjana caitanyamūrti ananyamaya, agurulaghu amūrtta sahajapadarūpa jo ||
(Apūrva Avasara 18)

either, and can only be experienced (Apūrva Avasara 19-21). The eternal bliss, which is experienced at this juncture, has a beginning, but no end, which means this bliss is eternal.

Conclusion

In *Apūrva Avasara*, Shrimad Rajchandra reflects deeply on the ideal state of the *siddha*—the fully liberated soul. This longing becomes a central theme, illustrating the spiritual journey from bondage to liberation. Through this lens, the study shows that *dravyānuyoga*, as presented in *Apūrva Avasara*, provides a clear and lasting framework for understanding Jain philosophy. It connects profound metaphysical ideas about the nature of reality and the soul with practical guidance for spiritual progress.

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