



## ISJS NEWSLETTER

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### Speak Up

#### **“I AM” : EXPLORING SELF-IDENTITY THROUGH JAIN VALUES**

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The appearance “**I AM**” reflects the essence of human existence. It represents awareness, identity, and consciousness. In Jain philosophy, self-realization begins with a deep question — *Who am I?* When a person truly understands the meaning of “**I AM**,” life shifts from confusion to clarity and from impulsive reactions to mindful living.

#### **The Jain Understanding of “I AM”**

Jainism teaches that the true “I AM” is ‘the soul’— eternal, conscious, and naturally pure with four infinities (*ananta chatushtaya*). Often, we identify ourselves with our body, profession, relationships, achievements, or emotions, but these are temporary. Jain philosophy reminds us that our real self is beyond these external identities.

Realizing “I am a soul” helps us understand that peace, knowledge, compassion, and happiness already exist within us. The purpose of life, therefore, is not to gain goodness from outside, but to discover the inner purity that is already present within.

#### **“I AM” and the Practice of Ahimsa**

When a person truly understands “I am a soul,” and that all living beings have a soul like me, they begin to realize that all other beings have life just like them. This understanding naturally creates respect and care for every form of life. In Jain philosophy, this awareness leads to the practice of Ahimsa. Ahimsa then becomes not just a rule to follow, but a natural way of living. A person starts avoiding harm to others not only through actions but also through thoughts



and words. As self-awareness grows, negative feelings such as anger and cruelty reduce, and positive qualities like kindness, empathy, patience, and forgiveness begin to develop naturally. In this way, awareness of the self helps a person live with compassion and respect for all living beings.

### **“I AM” and Anekantavada: Respecting Multiple Truths**

Awareness of “I AM” means understanding our true self beyond ego, position, or outer identity. When a person becomes aware of this inner self, it naturally develops humility because we realize that our knowledge and understanding are limited. In Jain philosophy, this idea is connected with the principle of Anekantavada, which teaches that truth has many sides and cannot be fully understood from only one point of view. Every person’s perspective represents only a part of the complete truth. When we understand that our own view is limited, we become more open and respectful toward the opinions and experiences of others. This awareness reduces ego and rigid thinking and encourages dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect. By accepting that different viewpoints can also be valid, people are more likely to discuss and cooperate rather than argue. In this way, awareness of the self and the principle of Anekantavada help develop humility, encourage cooperation, and support peaceful coexistence in society.

### **“I AM” and Aparigraha: Non-possessiveness attitude**

When identity is centred within, dependence on material possessions naturally decreases. The Jain principle of Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) teaches simplicity and moderation. A person connected with the inner self understands that true happiness comes not from accumulation, but from contentment and balance.

### **Responsibility of the Self**

Jain philosophy strongly emphasizes personal responsibility. Awareness of “I AM” reminds us that our thoughts, words, and actions shape our karma. Through self-discipline, reflection, and ethical living, individuals purify their inner self. Practices such as mindfulness, meditation, forgiveness (*kshama*), and self-restraint help bring daily life in harmony with higher values.

### Evaluating the Self:

Placing “I AM” at the centre encourages individuals to reflect on themselves and develop positive self-identities.



- ✓ **I am: A Lifelong Learner:** I continuously seek knowledge, new experiences, and deeper understanding. I remain open to learning from people, situations, successes, and challenges throughout my life, believing that learning never ends.
- ✓ **I am: Peaceful and Compassionate:** I attempt to maintain inner calm and treat others with empathy, respect, and understanding. I value harmony in relationships and respond to situations with patience, kindness, and care.
- ✓ **I am: Capable of Growth and Change:** I recognize that improvement is always possible. I welcome new ideas, learn from mistakes, and adapt positively to changing circumstances to become a better version of myself.



- ✓ **I am: Responsible for my Thoughts and Actions:** I understand that my choices shape my life and influence others. I practice self-awareness and take accountability for my behaviour, decisions, and responses.
- ✓ **I am: Confident and Resilient:** I trust my abilities and remain strong in the face of difficulties. Challenges do not discourage me; instead, they help me grow stronger, wiser, and more determined.
- ✓ **I am: A Contributor to Harmony and Peace:** Through my words, actions, and attitudes, I promote cooperation, understanding, and mutual respect, helping create a peaceful and supportive environment around me.
- ✓ **I am: A Source of Positivity and Kindness:** I spread encouragement, confidence, and goodwill. My presence aims to uplift others and inspire hope, warmth, and positive energy in everyday interactions.

Such awareness strengthens confidence while nurturing humility and empathy.

## Conclusion

In Jain thought, transformation of the world begins with transformation of the self. The realization of “**I AM**” is the foundation of ethical living and spiritual growth. When individuals live with awareness of their true nature — pure, non-violent, and conscious — they naturally create peace within themselves and in society.

Thus, “**I AM**” becomes not just a statement of existence, but a path toward self-realization, harmony, and liberation.

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