

NATURE OF SELF AS REFLECTED IN THE JAINA PHILOSOPHY –A CRITICAL EXPOSITION

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Abstract

The philosophical schools of India, may be grouped as Brāhmanic and non- Brāhmanic. Buddhist literature appears to speak of all the non-Brāhmanic systems as Śramaṇas. Of these Śramaṇa sects, Buddhism and Jainism occupy the foremost rank. Among those who believe that there are infinite numbers of independent souls which are all pure and perfect in their original nature, the Jaina tradition is first and foremost. Indian philosophy has discussed about the self or soul in an ordered form since the Upaniṣadic period. The three common terms *jīva*, *ātman* and *brahman* are used to denote the idea of the self. According to the Jainas, the soul, by itself, is imperceptible, but its presence can be found out by the presence of its characteristic qualities in a material body. Its chief characteristic is consciousness, which is accompanied by sense activity, respiration, and a certain period of existence in a particular body. Thus, this paper is a critical explanation on the nature of self from the viewpoint of Jainism.

The philosophical schools of India, may be grouped as Brāhmanic and non- Brāhmanic. Brāhmanic is referred to as *āstika* and non- Brāhmanic as *nāstika*. *Āstika* represents the systems which recognize the Vedas and their branches as supreme authority. Sāṃkhya, for example, is regarded as a Brāhmanic system, since it has accepted the authority of the Vedas. Buddhism and Jainism are considered to be non-Brāhmanic, because they do not recognize the

authority of the Vedas. Buddhist literature speaks of all the non-Brāhmaṇic systems as Śramaṇas in the common phrase '*samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā*'. Here the word *brāhmaṇa* refers to orthodox schools. According to the tradition preserved in Tamil literature, Śramaṇa represents three sects, viz., Aṇuvādins (Pakudha Kaccāyana's sect), Ājīvikas (Ājīvakas) and Jainas. Of these Śramaṇa sects, Buddhism and Jainism occupy the foremost rank.¹

The word Jainism is derived from 'Jina' which means 'conqueror'- one who has conquered his passions and desires.² 'Jina' is derived from the Sanskrit root *ji-* 'to conquer', means 'victor'.³ It is the common name applied to the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, because they have conquered all passions (*rāga* and *dveṣa*) and have attained liberation.⁴ The Jainas are the followers of *Jina*, the victor, a title applied to Vardhamāna, the last prophet of the Jainas. The name Jainism indicates the predominantly ethical character of the system.⁵ The long line of teachers through whom the Jaina faith was handed down consists of twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, the last of whom was Vardhamāna (also styled Mahāvīra), a contemporary of Gautam Buddha.⁶

Indian philosophy has discussed about the self in an ordered form since the Upaniṣadic period. The defining characteristic of a soul is 'jīvatva' which means 'cetanā'. When the word consciousness is used as the decisive factor of soul, we only mean 'cetanā' by it. It is the 'cetanā' alone which cannot exist in any substance other than the soul. Hence, the main line of differentiation between *jīva* and *ajīva* is *cetanā*.⁷ The *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* defines the soul as follows- "Not different from knowledge, and yet not identical with it, in some way both different and the same, knowledge is its first and last; such is the soul described to be"-

*jṣānādbhinno na cābhinno bhinnābhinnaḥ kathaścana /
jṣānam pūrvaḥparibhūtaṁ so'yamātmeti kīrtita iti //*⁸

The Vedas and the Upaniṣads use the term 'self' in various senses. It means physical body, life, intellect, the vital breath, individual self (*jīva*) and the Absolute self (*ātman*, Brahman). The *Ṛgveda* uses the term *ātman* to indicate 'Vital breath'.⁹ Later on the term *ātman* became prominent in Indian thought and translated for soul or self. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* uses the word self in the sense of *buddhi* i.e., intellect.¹⁰ The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* uses the word self in the sense of physical body.¹¹ The *Praśna Upaniṣad* uses the term self in the sense of vital principle which denotes *prāṇa*.¹² Thus, the Upaniṣads use various terms to indicate the concept of the self. The three common terms used for the self are the *jīva*, *ātman* and *brahman*. *Jīva* or *jīvātman* is the individual self. Brahman is the Universal Self. The *Śabdakalpadruma* defines the word *ātman* as follows- *atati santatabhāvena jāgradādi sarvāvasthāsu anuvarttate, at sātavagamane+maniṇ*.¹³ V.S. Apte in his *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* defines the word *ātman*(*at-maniṇ*) as the soul, the individual soul, the breath, the principle of life and sensation.¹⁴ He again defines the term *jīva* (*jīv-kartari ka*) as the principle of life, the vital breath, life and soul.¹⁵ The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* mentions the real nature of self declaring that the self is pure consciousness and pure bliss. It is eternal, unchangeable and imperishable. It is devoid of any body and is free from birth and death- *na jāyate mriyate vā.....ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo* //¹⁶ According to the *Chāndogya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it is free from sin, old age, death, grief, hunger and thirst.¹⁷ According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the self is eternal. It is free from the cycle of birth and death and from the pains and sufferings accruing from it.¹⁸ It is immutable and imperishable: weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it; water cannot make it wet; and air cannot make it dry-*nainam chindanti Śāstrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ/na cainam kledayantyāpo na Śoṣayati mārutaḥ* // ¹⁹

According to Radhakrishnan, a *jīva* is a particular kind of existent thing. The liberated *jīva* freed from matter is called the *ātman*.²⁰ M. Hiriyanna holds that the notion of *jīva* in general

corresponds to that of *ātman* or *puruṣa* of the other schools of Indian thought.²¹ The earth, water, air, fire and space have been considered to be the ultimate elements of the universe, and soul is a product of the combination of these elements.²² Among those who believe that there are infinite numbers of independent souls which are all pure and perfect in their original nature, the Jaina tradition is first and foremost.²³ According to the Jainas, the soul, by itself, is imperceptible, but its presence can be found out by the presence of its characteristic qualities in a material body. Its chief characteristic is consciousness, which is accompanied by sense activity, respiration, and a certain period of existence in a particular body.²⁴

The Jainas believe that the *jīva* exists, it acts and is acted upon. The *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* states that, it is both an enjoyer (*bhoktā*) and an agent (*kartā*).²⁵ Ācārya Nemicandra has also opined that the *jīva* is incorporeal (*amūrta*), a casual agent (*kartā*), coextensive with the body (*sadehaparimāṇaḥ*), the enjoyer of the fruits of karmas (*bhoktā*), having the world as its abode (*samsārattha*), emancipated (*siddha*) and of the nature of darting upwards- *jīvo uvaogamao amutti kattā sadehaparimāṇaḥ / bhottā samsārattho siddho so vissasoḍḍhagadi //*²⁶ Kundakundācārya also gives similar opinion saying that the *jīva* is the lord (*prabhu*), casual agent (*kartā*), enjoyer (*bhoktā*), conditioned by the body (*dehamātra*) and ordinarily attached to karmas.²⁷ The characteristic of the *jīva* that it darts upwards is mentioned in the next verse of *Paṣcāstikāyasāra* thus- the soul, free from the defect of karmas gets to the highest point of the universe, knows all and perceives all, and obtains the everlasting infinite bliss- *kammamalavippamukko udḍham logassa antamadhigantā/ so savvaṇṇa-darīsī lahadī suhamaṇḍiyamaṇantam//*²⁸ This everlasting heavenly bliss is secured by the self by its own efforts without any extraneous help.²⁹

The Jainas hold that the liberated self acquires pure, perfect and infinite knowledge revealing everything of the world. This knowledge is called *kevala-jñāna* which is nothing but omniscience.³⁰ According to the Jainas the self is changeable. The self is subject to

change or modification.³¹ The soul manifests in the following forms as Deva, as man, as a member of the Hell or as a plant or an animal- *suranāraṇārāyatiriyā jīvassa ya pajjayā bahugā*//³² The *Paṣcāstikāyasāra* points out that when the original form is lost, the soul does not lose its own nature with the passing form and when it puts on a new form it does not get a new nature with its coming form. In spite of origin and decay of forms the soul maintains its nature and identity- *maṇosattaṇeṇa ṇaṭṭho dehī devo haveḍi idaro vā/ubhayattha jīvabhāvo ṇa ṇassadi ṇa jāyade aṇṇo*//³³ The *jīva* is described from two different viewpoints. These are: the transcendental or *niścaya naya* and the empirical or *vyavahāra naya*. From the empirical point of view (*vyavahāra naya*), the soul, in states other than that of *samudghāta*, due to its capacity of expansion and contraction, is co-extensive with the physical body that it inhabits, but from the transcendental point of view (*niścaya naya*), the soul has innumerable space-points.³⁴ Umāsvāmī also points out that a *jīva*, though formless, is said to occupy space or possess extension. Like a light the soul pervades the entire body in which it lives. Though it has no form (*mūrti*), it acquires like a light, the size and form of the body wherein it lives- *pradeśasamhāraṇavisar-pābhyāṃ pradīpavat*//³⁵ The Jainas regard the self as essentially conscious. According to Siddhasena Divākara, the soul is different from the body and its existence is directly proved by its consciousness of itself.³⁶ Every individual feels that he is conscious. The *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* also defines that *Caitanya* or consciousness is an essential attribute of the self-*caitanyalakṣaṇo jīvaḥ*.³⁷ It is always present in the soul, though its nature and degree may vary.³⁸ According to the degree of consciousness souls may be theoretically arranged in a continuous series. At the highest end of the level would be the perfect souls that have conquer all karmas and attained omniscience. At the lowest end would stand the most imperfect souls, which dwell in bodies of earth, water, fire, air and vegetables.³⁹ In them life and consciousness appear to be absent.

Midway between would lie souls having two to five senses, like worms, ants, bees and men.⁴⁰

Consciousness of the self is manifested in two ways, namely *darśana* or intuition and *jñāna* or knowledge, which is jointly called *upayoga*.⁴¹ During the empirical state, the real nature of self is obscured and enveloped by some atomic particles called *karmaparamāṇus* or karmic atoms. These atomic particles are attracted from outside by the self through its own karmans and are absorbed into its body. That's why; the self identifies itself with these atomic-particles and cannot understand the difference between its own parts and these particles. If, one can know the nature of *jñāna* and *darśana*, then he could know the difference between the *karmaparamāṇus* and the parts of the self. Hence, it is through *upayoga* that one can realize the real nature of the self- *sa parasparapradeśānām pradeśabandhātkarmaṇaikibhūtasatyātmano'nyatva-pratipattikāraṇam bhavati /*⁴²

Umāsvāmī in the *Tattvārthadhigamasūtra* defines that *upayoga* is the differentia (distinctive characteristic) of the self.⁴³ The word *upa* means "close" and *yoga* means "relation" i.e., which is closely related to the self. Kundakundācārya and Ācārya Nemichandra state that the two aspects of *upayoga* are *jñāna* and *darśana*.⁴⁴ *Jñāna-upayoga* is known as *sākāra-upayoga*, while *darśana-upayoga* is known as *nirākāra-upayoga*. *Jñāna-upayoga* is of two kinds, viz., natural knowledge and non-natural knowledge. Again non-natural knowledge is divided into two, viz., (i) right knowledge and (ii) wrong knowledge. Right knowledge is further divided into four kinds: (i) *mati-jñāna* (sensory knowledge), (ii) *Śruta-jñāna* (scriptural knowledge), (iii) *avadhi-jñāna* (limited direct knowledge) and (iv) *manaḥparyāya-jñāna* (direct knowledge of mind). Wrong knowledge is of three kinds, viz., (i) *mati-ajñāna* (sensory wrong knowledge), (ii) *Śruta-ajñāna* (scriptural wrong knowledge), (iii) *avadhi-ajñāna* (limited direct wrong knowledge). Thus knowledge or *jñāna* is divided into eight categories, viz.,

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| (i) <i>kevala-jṣāna</i> , | (v) <i>manahpariyāya-jṣāna</i> , |
| (ii) <i>mati-jṣāna</i> , | (vi) <i>mati-ajṣāna</i> , |
| (iii) <i>Śruta-jṣāna</i> , | (vii) <i>Śruta-ajṣāna</i> , |
| (iv) <i>avadhi-jṣāna</i> , | (viii) <i>avadhi-ajṣāna</i> . |

Darśana-upayoga is also of two kinds, viz., (i) natural vision and (ii) non-natural vision. Non-natural vision is further divided into three kinds: (i) *caḡsur-darśana* (visual vision), (ii) *acaḡsur-darśana* (non-visual vision) and (iii) *avadhi-darśana* (limited direct vision). Thus, *darśana-upayoga* is divided into four categories, viz.,

- (i) *kevala-darśana*,
- (ii) *caḡsur-darśana*
- (iii) *acaḡsur-darśana* and
- (iv) *avadhi-darśana*.⁴⁵

The Jainas hold that the self in its real nature is pure, free, perfect and divine, and is endowed with *ananta-catuṣṭaya* i.e., four infinite qualities: *ananta-jṣāna* (infinite knowledge), *ananta-darśana* (infinite intuition), *ananta-sukha* (infinite bliss) and *ananta-vīrya* (infinite power).⁴⁶ According to the Jainas, the self is not one, but many, as it is different in different individuals.⁴⁷ Jainism maintains that the self is an active agent. The Jainas also hold that pleasure and pain can not belong to an unconscious being. Consciousness belongs to *puruṣa*, so *puruṣa* is subject to pleasure and pain. This *puruṣa* is an active entity, because an inactive entity cannot be subject to pleasure and pain. Moreover, consciousness itself is active, because the term consciousness implies knowledge or intelligence which is active in character.⁴⁸ According to their characteristics, the *jīvas* are described as- 1) without beginning or end, 2) with beginning and end and 3) with beginning and no end- *jīvā aṇāṇihaṇā santā ṇantā ya jīvabhāvādo/ saobhāvado aṇantā paścaggagunāppadhāṇā ya//*⁴⁹ Every *jīva* pervades infinite point of space. It has the capacity of pervasion.⁵⁰

Ācārya Nemichandra states that, from the empirical or phenomenal point of view that which is living at present, will

continue to live in the future, and was living in the past, through its four principles of organism [prāṇas-strength (*bala-prāṇa*), senses (*indriya-prāṇa*), duration of age (*āyuh-prāṇa*) and respiration (*ucchvāsa*)], is the *jīva*. From the transcendental point of view, that which has consciousness is the *jīva-tikkāle cadupāṇṇā indiyabalamāuṇṇapāṇo ya/ vyavahārā ca jīvo ṇicchayanayado du cedaṇā jassa*//⁵¹

The *jīvas* (souls) are divided into two, the 'mundane' (*samsārī*) and the 'released' (*mukta*). The mundane pass from birth to birth; and these are also divided into two, as those possessing an internal sense (*samanaska*), and those destitute of it (*amanaska*). The former possesses *samijṣā*, i.e., the power of apprehension, talking, acting, and receiving instruction; the latter are those without this power. These latter are also divided into two, as 'locomotive' (*trasa*), or 'immovable' (*sthāvāra*).⁵²

From these descriptions of the self or *jīva* it can be summed up that, *jīva*, from the Jaina point of view is beginning less and endless. It is indestructible and beyond measure. *Jīva* pervades the body that it occupies. One of the characteristic of *jīva* is contraction and expansion according to the size of the body. Therefore, it expresses itself in modes. According to Jainism there are infinite numbers of souls and each occupies a particular body. The nature of *jīva* is pure and perfect and the same in all three phases of time- past, present and future. Therefore, it is eternal (*nitya*). *Jīva* is formless. We can comprehend the nature of the soul by means of intellect (*vijsāna*). *Jīva* is the basis of knowledge and experiences. The soul that exists with a particular body experiences the life in this existence, and as it leaves this body, and enters another, this experience is no more. The *jīva* is the same although it wanders about in the wheel of *samsāra*, in the four forms of existence- the heavenly, the human, lower animal and the hellish stage. *Jīva* cannot be seen in its form by the eyes, yet we can know the existence of the self through the attribute of knowledge. We can understand the nature of the *jīva* by means of its characteristics and effects. We can only infer the presence of *jīva* by observing the psycho-physical activities like

laughter, pleasure and bodily activities like dances etc. According to Jaina view, when *jīva* gets liberated from the bonds of *karma* which are of different aspects of substance, duration, fertility, and extensity, he reaches the summit of the upper world.

Notes and References :

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- ¹ Vide, Chatterjee, S. K., et al (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. 1, p. 389
 - ² Sharma, Chandradhar, *Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey*, p. 36
 - ³ Hiriyanna, M., *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p.155
 - ⁴ Chatterjee, S.C., & Datta, D.M., *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p.83
 - ⁵ Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 286
 - ⁶ Chatterjee, S.C., & Datta, D.M., op.cit., p. 29
 - ⁷ Mehta, M.L., *Outlines of Jaina Philosophy*, p. 44
 - ⁸ SDS., *Ārhatadarśanam*, 44
 - ⁹ *Ṛgveda*, 10.16.3; 1.164.4
 - ¹⁰ KU., 2.6.7
 - ¹¹ *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.5.1
 - ¹² *Praśna Upaniṣad*, 3.6
 - ¹³ *Śabdakalpadruma*, Vol. 1, p.172
 - ¹⁴ Apte, V.S., *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.209
 - ¹⁵ Apte, V.S., op.cit., p. 454
 - ¹⁶ KU., 1.2.18
 - ¹⁷ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.1.5; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.5.1
 - ¹⁸ *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2.20
 - ¹⁹ Ibid., 2.23
 - ²⁰ Vide, Radhakrishnan, S., op.cit., p.335
 - ²¹ Hiriyanna, M., op.cit., p.157
 - ²² Shastri, Devendra Muni, *A Source-Book in Jaina Philosophy*, p. 73
 - ²³ Shastri, Devendra Muni, op.cit., p. 84
 - ²⁴ Vide, Chatterjee, S. K., et al (ed.), op.cit., p. 403
 - ²⁵ śubhāśubhakarmakarttā bhoktā karmaphalasya ca // ṢAD., 48
 - ²⁶ DS., 2
 - ²⁷ PKS., 27
 - ²⁸ Ibid., 28

- ²⁹ Ibid., 29
³⁰ Sinha, K.P., *The Self in Indian Philosophy*, p. 18
³¹ Sinha, K.P., op.cit., p. 17
³² PKS., 16
³³ Ibid., 17
³⁴ DS., 10
³⁵ TSŪ., 5.16
³⁶ *Nyāyāvātāra*, 31
³⁷ ṢAD., 49
³⁸ Chatterjee, S.C., & Datta, D.M., op.cit., p. 105
³⁹ vanaspatyantānāmekam // TSŪ., 2.22
⁴⁰ krimipilikābhramaramanuṣyādīnāmeikaikavṛddhāni // Ibid., 2.23
⁴¹ sahajacidrŪpaparīṇatīm svīkurvāṇa jṣānadarśane upayogaḥ // SDS., *Ārhatadarśanam*, 42
⁴² Ibid.
⁴³ Cf. upayogo lakṣaṇam // TSŪ., 2.8
⁴⁴ PKS., 40 ; DS., 4
⁴⁵ Cf. sa dvividho'ṣṭacaturbhedaḥ // TSŪ., 2.9
⁴⁶ Sinha, K.P., op.cit., p. 18
⁴⁷ Sinha, K.P., loc.cit.
⁴⁸ Cf. Mehta, M.L., *Jaina Philosophy*, p. 100
⁴⁹ PKS., 53
⁵⁰ Shastri, Devendra Muni, op.cit., p.103
⁵¹ DS., 3
⁵² SDS., *Ārhatadarśanam*, 46

ABBREVIATIONS

DS.	-	<i>Dravyasaṅgraha</i>
KU.	-	<i>Kāṭhōpaniṣad</i>
PKS.	-	<i>Paścāstikāyasāra</i>
ṢAD.	-	<i>Ṣaddarśanasamuccaya</i>
SDS.	-	<i>Sarvadarśanasāṅgraha</i>
TSŪ.	-	<i>Tattvārthādhigamasūtra</i>

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