

Attainment of Oneness with the Supreme Self

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समाधितन्त्रम्

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Document Information



Text title : Attainment of Oneness with the Supreme Self by Acharya pUjyapAda

File name : samAdhItantrapUjyapAda.itx

Category : major_works, jaina, upadesha

Location : doc_z_misc_major_works

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Latest update : August 15, 2020

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March 24, 2024

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Attainment of Oneness with the Supreme Self

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Composed by Acharya Pujyapada

English translation and commentary by Manish Modi

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ॐ ह्रीं श्रीपार्श्वनाथाय नमः

जय जीनेन्द्र

सिद्धं जिनेन्द्रममलप्रतिमाप्रबोधं निर्वाणमार्गममलं विबुधेन्द्रवन्द्यम् ।
संसारसागरसमुत्तरणप्रपोतं वक्ष्ये समाधिशतकं प्रणिपत्य वीरम् ॥

Jina MahAvIra is a perfected being, a fordmaker and

An illuminator of the flawless awakened self.

He himself is the path of salvation.

He is free from all blemishes.

He is worthy of worship by the king of gods.

He is the ferry to take us across the ocean of transmigration.

Having bowed to him with great devotion,

I commence reciting

This century of verses on immersion in the supreme self.

It is part of Indian tradition that a colophon is written before commencing a text. The colophon has an invocation to deities to ensure that text is completed without obstruction. Jain authors comply with this tradition and use the opening colophon to pay their respects to the Jinas, who are the fountain of all knowledge. They also indicate, through the maṅgalAcaraNa (opening colophon) the subject matter of the text. In this colophon, Acharya Pujyapada expresses his complete devotion to Lord MahAvIra.

MahAvIra was a Tirthankara, a fordmaker who reiterated the path of liberation as taught by the first Tirthankara of this time cycle, Lord RiShabhadeva. However, today, MahAvIra is a Siddha, a liberated being. Hence, in terms of general understanding and common recognition, MahAvIra is a Tirthankara, because that is how he is commonly known. But in terms of current status, he is a Siddha (liberated being, free from all karmic encumbrance).

Jainism believes that all souls are inherently capable of attaining enlightenment. Hence, each of our souls has the capacity of becoming the paramAtmA (the perfected, supremely evolved soul free from all delusion). It is difficult to conceive this, is it not? Who is a paramAtmA? What is he like? Here, the author points us towards MahAvIra. MahAvIra personifies the paramAtmA. For he is supremely detached, omniscient, and free from all delusion.

MahAvIra is the very path of liberation (nirvANa mArga). Walk on the path of MahAvIra and you will become MahAvIra yourself.

Delusion is the greatest flaw of the worldly soul. MahAvIra conquered and annihilated the foe of delusion. Hence, he is flawless (amala).

MahAvIra is worshiped by all - humans, other living beings on earth, heavenly beings and hellish beings. The most learned of scholars, the most profound of thinkers worship the Jina's feet with great devotion, in order to attain his supreme qualities. The Indras themselves, the kings of the gods worship the Jinas' feet with great devotion and humility (vibudhendravandya).

MahAvIra and his path are the unsinkable ship that can carry us across the vast ocean of transmigration (sansArasAgarasamuttaraNaprapota).

Therefore, the composer, the evolved yogI Acharya Pujiyapada, pays obeisance (praNipAta) to Jina MahAvIra and commences this work, a century of verses on samAdhi (immersion in the supreme self).

The English translator worships the auspicious lotus-like feet of the 24th Jina Lord MahAvIra and prays that he may accurately convey the message of Acharya Pujiyapada to his readers, despite not knowing the language, not understanding the doctrine and lacking the ability to communicate effectively.

येनात्माबुध्यतात्मैव परत्वेनैव चापरम् ।
अक्षयानन्तबोधाय तस्मै सिद्धात्मने नमः ॥ १ ॥

I pay obeisance to the Siddhas (perfected beings),
Who knew the self to be self, and the non-self to be non-self
And who personify indestructible and eternal knowledge.

Jains worship five supremely beneficial beings in order to imbibe their attributes:
Siddha (Perfected Being residing in mokSha)
Arihanta (Embodied Perfected Being residing in sansAra)
AchArya (Head of the ascetic order as well as the community)
UpAdhyAya (Teacher of the ascetic order)
SADhu (votary who follows the five major vows as explained by the Jinas)

Of them, the Siddhas and the Arihantas are of primary importance. Every Jain who desires liberation aspires towards acquiring discriminative knowledge (bheda jnAna), supreme detachment (vItarAga) and omniscience (kaivalya). Those who have truly internalised bheda jnAna become supremely detached. They supremely detached ones attain omniscience, which is indestructible and eternal. Once attained, it is never lost. This is why the omniscient attain liberation.

Both the Arihantas as well as the Siddhas are supremely detached and omniscient. The only difference between them, is that the Arihantas are present on earth, while the Siddhas have transcended sansAra and attained liberation. Technically, both are on equal footing since omniscience is the benchmark of godhood. But, since the Siddhas have already attained liberation, they are higher in the hierarchy. Despite this, Jains worship the Arihantas before

the Siddhas, because they were the ones who preached the path of liberation, the path of the Jinas. This is why, the fivefold mantra of the Jains, the Namaskara Mantra [Namokara Mantra] goes thus:

णमो अरिहन्ताणं (Obeisance to the Jinas - Embodied Perfected Beings residing in sansara)

णमो सिद्धाणं (Obeisance to the Siddhas - Perfected Beings residing in moksha)

णमो आचरियाणं (Obeisance to the Acharyas - Heads of the Ascetic Order and the community)

णमो उवज्जायाणं (Obeisance to the upadhyayas - Teachers of the Ascetic Order)

णमो लोके सव्व साहूणं (Obeisance to all the ascetics in the world who follow the five major vows as explained by the Jinas)

Of these, Acharya Pujyapada has paid obeisance to the Siddhas, the perfected beings. He salutes them for they have internalised discriminative knowledge. They know the self, the soul, to be the self and distinct from all else, whether sentient or insentient. Jains believe that all souls are distinct, sovereign entities which have existed since beginningless time. Souls are eternal and indestructible.

Just as gold occurs in nature not in the pure form of a 999 purity ingot, but has to be mined and purified with great difficulty, the soul has to be purified with ceaseless focused effort (puruShArtha) in the right (samyak) direction. The purification of the soul is the central teleology behind the Jinas' teachings.

जयन्ति यस्यावदतोऽपि भारतीविभूतयस्तीर्थकृतोऽप्यनीहितुः ।

शिवाय धात्रे सुगताय विष्णवे जिनाय तस्मै सकलात्मने नमः ॥ २ ॥

Despite being a fordmaker, you are free from all desire.

Even though you do not speak, the glory of your teachings is enduring.

You are Śiva, DhAtra, Sugata and ViShNu - you are a Jina.

I bow to you, and to all enlightened souls.

Tirthankaras are fordmakers. They establish the ford of dharma which helps people cross the ocean of transmigration. This is done without an iota of desire and expectation. It is believed that the Tirthankaras do not speak. Having a conversation requires desire. In the absence of desire, why would one wish to speak? Tirthankaras remain serenely focused on their soul, immersed in its limitless attributes and supremely detached from all external

factors. The divine sound of 'OM' automatically emanates from every pore of their being, and this sound is understood by all living beings present at the samavasharaNa (divinely created circular park-cum-assembly hall with a three-tier raised dais at its centre, where the Tirthankara is seated in the lotus position (padmAsana) and is frontally visible from all four sides). This sacred sound is interpreted by the gaNadhara (disciple-in-chief) and crystallised into words, which is called the Agama. These Agamas were redacted several centuries later, when Jains began writing down their orally transmitted teachings. Jains believe that the teachings of the Jinas are the true path of liberation and hence revere them. A Tirthankara is pure, free from the encumbrance of ghAtIya karma (karmas that impede eternal bliss) and hence called Śiva (the pure one).

Since the Tirthankara upholds the dharma, he is called DhAtra (vessel).

Since the Tirthankara is vItarAga (supremely detached), his liberation is certain. He is therefore addressed by the author as Sugata (one who has fared well).

Since the Jina is omniscient, his knowledge is all pervading. Hence, the author called him ViShNu (the all-pervading).

With these words, the author bows to the Jinas, and to all enlightened souls in the world.

श्रुतेन लिङ्गेन यथात्मशक्ति समाहितान्तःकरणेन सम्यक् ।
समीक्ष्य कैवल्यसुखस्पृहाणां विविक्तमात्मानमथाभिधास्ये ॥ ३ ॥

I shall now relate the pure self, distinct from all else,

On the basis of the scriptures

To the best of my ability and experience,

With complete concentration and after thoroughly reflecting upon it,

For those who seek the bliss of omniscience.

Since eternity, the soul has existed in the impure state. Only through samyak puruShArtha (reasoned, well thought out perseverance) can the soul attain vItarAga (supreme detachment) and kaivalya (omniscience) which ensure liberation and eternal bliss.

The Jinas attained omniscience and promulgated the path of liberation. Jain scriptures reflect the Jinas' teachings. On the basis of these scriptures, and using his own experience and understanding, Acharya Pujyapada has given insights on how to attain the lasting bliss

of omniscience. He has set out to explain the pure soul/self, which is distinct from all external matter and emotions. Those who imbibe this teaching and practise the path of conduct and prescribed by the Jinas, are bound to attain omniscience and liberation.

बहिरन्तः परश्चेति त्रिधात्मा सर्वदेहिषु ।
उपेयात् तत्र परमं मध्योपायाद्विस्त्यजेत् ॥ ४ ॥

There are three kinds of self in all living beings,

The bahirAtmA (external self - identifies completely with the body),

The antarAtmA (internal self - realises the distinctness of the soul and the body)

and the paramAtmA (transcendental self - identifies absolutely with the soul,
completely detached from the body and from all emotions).

One ought to give up the external self,

And approach the transcendental self

Through the internal self.

All living beings have souls. Depending on their levels of self-awareness, the living beings may be classified as bahirAtmA, antarAtmA and paramAtmA. The potential for being any one of the three exists in all living beings.

BahirAtmA beings display the least self-awareness. They identify completely with their bodies, their passions and their emotions. Their existence is centred around their bodies. Their notions of joy and sorrow are sense-driven. Hence, if their body is treated with comfort, they are happy. If the body experiences discomfort, they are unhappy. They have no concept of the soul, nor are they aware of its attributes.

AntarAtmA beings are aware of their souls and know that the body and soul are different entities. But they have not internalised this, not annihilated their ghAtIya karmas (karmas that impede self-realisation) and hence remain trapped in the bondage of transmigration.

ParamAtmA beings have realised their soul and have conquered all attachment to the body. They have annihilated all ghAtIya karmas. They have reached the zenith of ultimate consciousness and enjoy supreme detachment, omniscience and immeasurable, eternal bliss. They have transcended the cycle of rebirth.

ParamAtmA beings can be categorised further as:

Arihanta paramAtmA : Embodied omniscient beings enjoying eternal bliss

Siddha paramAtmA : Perfected omniscient beings enjoying eternal bliss, freed from the body and hence residing in mokSha (abode of the perfected beings, situated at the top of the universe, where souls live eternally in a state of supreme bliss).

Hence, we should give up identifying with the body, become aware of our soul and make systematic, focused and appropriately insightful efforts to realise our soul by walking on the path prescribed by the Jinas.

बहिरात्मा शरीरादौ जातात्मभ्रान्तिरान्तरः ।

चित्तदोषात्मविभ्रान्तिः परमात्मातिनिर्मलः ॥ ५॥

The bahirAtmA confusedly identifies with his body.

The antarAtmA does not confuse his body with his soul.

The paramAtmA is absolutely flawless.

Consider this: we read in the newspaper that there was an explosion in Mars. Are we concerned? No. Why? Because we have no attachment towards Mars. But what if the explosion took place in India? We would immediately switch on news channels and begin surfing the net to see what was what.

I remember that when I first heard of 9/11, I was working at our bookstore. Immediately, I trawled the internet to find out what was happening. I have immediate family in New York and my first concern was for their safety. I tried calling but could not get through. But thanks to the internet, I knew that the explosion had taken place at a location reasonably distant from where my family members lived.

The same act (an explosion) took place in two different locations. One left me unaffected. The other one caused me immediate alarm. Why? Because there was no identification with the first one. No one whom I know lives on Mars! And there was tremendous identification with the second one. I had immediate family living in New York.

Evidently, identification brings pain, grief and misery..and fleeting moments of joy. I identify with the Indian test cricket team, and in between embarrassing drubbing at the hands of strong rivals, India does well occasionally at test cricket and I have my few moments of joy.

But is this really what true happiness is all about? Why do we link our happiness with external factors? Why am I pleased when I sit in an airconditioned room and uncomfortable when I have to walk outside in the heat?

Because I identify with the body.

I consider the body's relatives to be mine. I consider the body's comfort and discomfort to be my own. Because I identify with it.

I do this because I am a bahirAtmA. My understanding and perception of the world around me is guided, nay, led by my senses. They determine my choices, likes, dislikes and disposition.

Hence, a bahirAtmA is one who lets his senses guide him. He identifies with his body and considers it to be one with his soul.

In contrast, the antarAtmA is one who can distinguish between his body and soul. He is aware of the fact that while the body and soul occupy one space, they are distinct entities. He knows that the soul is eternal, while the body is mutable. He realises that in the eternity of time, the soul has taken on many bodies and continues to ride the cycle of transmigration. He knows that his body is temporary and therefore refrains from developing affection towards it.

The paramAtmA, the transcendental self, is the realised soul, free from the grievous clutches of delusion and the blemish of the four passions of anger, arrogance, artifice and avarice.

निर्मलः केवलः शुद्धो विविक्तः प्रभुरव्ययः ।
परमेष्ठी परात्मेति परमात्मेश्वरो जिनः ॥ ६ ॥

Thus, the paramAtmA is absolutely flawless.

He is unique, immaculate, unmixed with insentient matter,

He is the almighty. He is imperishable.

He is the ultimate benefactor, the transcendental soul,

The Lord and supreme victor.

The paramAtmA (transcendental self) is the realised soul, unblemished by the presence of delusion and the four passions of anger, arrogance, artifice and avarice.

He is kevala - exists on his own, free from all extraneous substances.

He is shuddha, undefiled by the four passions and the twin causes of worldly bondage - attachment and aversion.

He is vivikta - distinct from insentient matter. He is the pure soul, free from the corruption of external substances and emotions.

He is prabhu - the almighty. One who has conquered his passions has nothing to fear. Fear is caused by delusion and misguided identification with the body. Once the soul is realised, there is no false perception and no false identification. Hence, there is no fear. This is why omniscient beings do not carry any weapons, nor are they accompanied by companions, servants, etc. They are unconcerned with recognition, pomp and pageantry. They are completely immersed in their own soul, enjoying the everlasting bliss that is theirs alone.

He is avyaya - The soul is indestructible. No one can create, preserve or destroy the soul. It is absolutely imperishable. It may be classified in two broad categories:

The worldly and the free (liberated)

Worldly souls suffer from the presence of karmas. They keep taking birth in sansAra. If their karmic load is positive, they spend life in good circumstances. If their karmic load is more negative than positive, they spend their lives in misery. In either case, worldly beings cannot experience the avyAbAdha sukha (uninterrupted joy) enjoyed by liberated beings.

Another way of categorising souls is:

Kevall and Chadmastha

Kevall (Omniscient) beings, whether embodied like the Arihantas, or perfected beings residing in mokSha like the Siddhas, enjoy the constant, uninterrupted bliss that is concomitant with omniscience.

Chadmastha (Non-omniscient) beings are those who have not attained omniscience and hence are not free from the cycle of transmigration. They lead lives of sorrow and disappointment.

He is parameShThI, because his conduct and his teachings are supremely beneficial. Those who follow his teachings with utmost perseverance are certain to attain liberation.

His is the parAtmA, the supreme soul.

He is the paramAtmA, the transcendental soul.

He is Ishvara, the lord.

He is the Jina because he has conquered the self. He has transcended the flaws of attachment and aversion and emerged victorious. Consequently, he has risen beyond the imponderably vast ocean of transmigration. He shall never be reborn. He resides in the beatific state of sublime tranquility and bliss. His life is his message. He is immersed in his soul and completely oblivious to all else.

I pray that all of us may reach this stage of existence.

बहिरात्मेन्द्रियद्वारैरात्मज्ञानपरङ्मुखः ।

स्फुरितः स्वात्मनो देहमात्मत्वेनाध्यवस्यति ॥ ७ ॥

The bahirAtmA keeps the doors of sensual desire open at all times

Constantly distracted by them

He is disinterested in spiritual knowledge

And considers his body to be his soul

A bahirAtmA is one who is constantly engrossed in the physical, external world. He therefore has no inclination towards to inner self. He identifies with his body and considers it to be one with himself. Pursuit of sensual pleasure is the focus of his life. This is why he is constantly unhappy and keeps binding more and more karmas.

Picture this: A drunk man is walking in the burning heat of tropical summer and complaining about getting sunburnt. Instead of seeking shelter under a building or a tree, he walks on the middle of the road, liable to be hit by fast moving cars. In his drunken stupour, he fails to realise that if he runs away from shelter, he will never be able to save himself from getting burnt in the sizzling heat of summer.

Here, the summer heat is the inevitable sorrow of worldly life and the shelter from heat denotes Dharma. The drunken stupour signifies man's pursuit of sensual pleasure.

Let us reflect upon this description of a bahirAtmA and see if we fit into it. If we are honest, we'll find that most of us fit into the description, most of the time. If we are to progress on the path of liberation, we will have to give up our infatuation with external substances and look inward to find peace and tranquility.

नरदेहस्थमात्मानमविद्वान् मन्यते नरम् ।

तिर्यञ्चं तिर्यगङ्गस्थं सुराङ्गस्थं सुरं तथा ॥ ८ ॥

The bahirAtmA believes that the soul changes according to the body it occupies.

Thus, he considers the soul residing in a human body to be human,

The soul living in a sub-human body to be subhuman,

And the soul endowed with a celestial being's body to be a celestial being.

Most of the time, we cannot think beyond our own perceptions. We have preconceived notions about most things and are seldom willing to revise them. Similarly, the bahirAtmA person, who identifies with his body, judges others and categorises them by the body they occupy. Hence, he thinks of a soul that occupies a human body to be a human, a soul that occupies that body of an animal to be an animal and a soul that occupies the body of a fish to be a fish. He forgets that the soul occupies a certain body on account of karmic bondage. And such bondage is by no means lasting. It is a tenuous link which would break up the moment the age-determining karmas (Ayu karma) of that soul cease to exist.

But the bahirAtmA does not realise this and continues to categorise souls into various life forms based on their physical bodies.

Which gives us food for thought: Do we categorise those we interact with, as souls, or on the basis of their bodies? And if we categorise them based on the mortal coil, are we not bahirAtmA? How then, will we be able to attain liberation from sansAra?

नारकं नरकाङ्गस्थं न स्वयं तत्त्वतस्तथा ।

अनन्तानन्तधीशक्तिः स्वसंवेद्योऽचलस्थितिः ॥ ९ ॥

The bahirAtmA believes that

The soul residing in the body of a hellish being is a hellish being.

But this is not in accordance with reality.

In truth, the soul possesses infinite knowledge and power,

Can only be experienced (not seen or known through the senses)
And is constant (eternal).

In keeping with its mindset, the bahirAtmA categorises souls into various life forms on the basis of their current physical body. Thus, for the bahirAtmA, the soul residing in the body of a hellish being is a hellish being. This, of course, is untrue.

The categorisation of the soul as per the body it occupies is correct from the practical viewpoint (vyavahAra naya). But from the absolute viewpoint (nishcaya naya), this categorisation is untrue. From the absolute viewpoint, the soul has eternal perception, knowledge, power and bliss. It is formless. It cannot be seen by the senses. It can only be experienced. It is constant (eternal). Nothing and no one can destroy it.

Whereas the bahirAtmA knows only the practical viewpoint, one who has attained samyaktva (rational perception/true insight) knows both, the practical and absolute viewpoints. This is why, he who has understood both viewpoints well, unceasingly practices austerity and penance (important from the practical viewpoint in order to shed karmas) and reflects upon his soul as being a unique and independent entity, distinct from the body it occupies, from the karmas it is bound with and from the emotions that they engender in him (important from the absolute viewpoint in order to attain oneness with the soul).

If we are to attain the goal of liberation, it is imperative that we walk in the footsteps of the Jinas. Even if we are unable to fully comply with the Jinas' teachings, we should have faith in them and resolve to follow them to the best of our capacity in the most sincere and humble manner possible. Thus, the doorway to eternal bliss shall remain open to us in perpetuity.

स्वदेहसदृशं दृष्ट्वा परदेहमचेतनम् ।

परात्माधिष्ठितं मूढः परत्वेनाध्यवस्यति ॥ १० ॥

Because the bahirAtmA believes that his body is his soul,
He looks at the body of another, which is similar to his own,
And thinks of the body of another person to be his (another's) soul.

We keep making the same mistakes, don't we? Ad infinitum, we keep stumbling against the same obstacles. In my case, I have a mental block against math. So no matter what, every time I come across a mathematical question, my brain says, "No you can't solve this, Manish. Better ask someone for help."

Similarly, the bahirAtmA, who considers his body to be his soul, thinks of others' bodies as their soul. He does not realise that the body is inanimate and incapable of thought or action without the soul. The body merely houses the soul.

Let us take the example of a car. A car can move very fast indeed. But when? Only when there is a driver who is driving the car. So, the car is the body, and the driver is the soul. Taking the exemplar forward, petrol is the Ayu karma (lifespan determining karma). As we know, when you run out of gas, your car stops running. Similarly, you die when you run out of Ayu karma. And just as you refill your car at a gas station, Ayu karma causes you to be reborn. And just as your car will cease to run when there is no gas left in the tank, nor any available at the gas station, you will cease to be reborn if you have shed all your Ayu karma.

Now, how does one shed all Ayu karma? We need to follow in the footsteps of the Jinās, that's how. They shed all four ghAtIya karma (omniscience obstructing karmas) first, and then the aghAtIya karma (liberation obstructing karmas) went away.

There are eight types of karmas:

Category A: Liberation Denying karmas

1. Knowledge obstructing karmas
2. Perception obstructing karmas
3. Delusive karmas
4. Impediment causing karmas

Category B: Liberation Delaying karmas

5. Body determining karmas
6. Lifespan determining karmas
7. Status determining karmas
8. Feeling producing karmas

Coming back to the shloka, a bahirAtmA extends his false understanding of the self to others as well. So if we think of others not as souls, but as tall or short, thin or fat, dark or fair, we are being bahirAtmA. So let us stop this body driven identification of others. Or we will remain bahirAtmA ourselves.

स्वपराध्यवसायेन देहेष्वविदितात्मनाम् ।
वर्तते विभ्रमः पुंसां पुत्रभार्यादिगोचरः ॥ ११ ॥

Owing to confusion regarding what belongs to the soul and what does not,
A bahirAtmA believes that his body belongs to his soul.

To such a person,

Other souls appear to be his son, wife, et cetera.

When you identify yourself with your body, you tend to identify others with their bodies. Hence, those bodies which live in closest proximity to you seem to belong to you and you become attached to them; little realising that even in day-to-day conduct, people are aware that the body and soul are DIFFERENT. Which is why, when a person dies (the soul leaves the body), people destroy it - either by burning it, burying it or disposing of it in any way that meets religious and social approval.

False identification with the body leads to sansAra (transmigration). Because we develop attachment for our bodies, we also develop attachment for those related to our body - like mother, father, wife and son. Thus, our circle of attachment keeps increasing. And since attachment and aversion, love and hate go hand in hand, we keep increasing our timespan in sansAra. Those who can divest themselves from all rAga (attachment) and dveSha (aversion) can attain mokSha (liberation).

Similarly, inanimate objects like wealth, house, et cetera also do not belong to anyone. But we develop such strong bonds of attachment and avarice for material wealth, that its pursuit has begun to rule our lives. Right from the time of birth, children are educated, trained and shaped to become good providers. The whole focus on materialism has led to an increasingly sorrowful existence, where there is so much pressure, so much stress to make a living that spiritual bliss is no longer a priority. Today, the success of life's journey is measured by the number of material objects one owns. Not by one's moral values and ethical conduct. This is why, unscrupulous behaviour is the norm. This heightens our sense of insecurity and fear.

Misguided identification with the body leads to sansAra. Correct identification of the soul as self and the body as not belonging to oneself. Immersing oneself in the ultimate self leads to liberation.

अविद्यासञ्ज्ञितस्तस्मात् संस्कारो जायते दृघः ।
येन लोकोऽङ्गमेव स्वं पुनरप्यभिमन्यते ॥ १२ ॥

This false identification of the body with the soul leads to avidyA (nescience).

Therefore, one develops the sanskAra (predilection)

Of identifying with the body,

In this life and hereafter.

It is abundantly clear that the root cause of all delusion, nescience and the misery of continued rebirth is the mistaken sense of identity with the body. I am the soul. The body is not mine, it is a co-traveller. It will leave me soon. And perhaps another one will join me. Different bodies each time. But I remain the same.

Yesterday, I was traveling by train from Borivali to Charni Road. It was a fast train and had few stops. Different people sat next to me. By the time I reached Charni Road, four or five different chaps had sat next to me and gotten off when their destination had arrived. Now - wouldn't it be silly of me to identify with my co-travellers? I would completely lose my true identity and every ten minutes, become a different person! That would not make much sense, would it?

Why then, do I do this with my body? Why do I consider it to be mine? When I travel, I do not identify with my co-passengers, even though they occupy the same space as I. Then why do I make this mistake and consider my bodies to belong to my soul? This false identification of the body with the soul leads to avidyA (nescience) and causes us to imbibe the deep set sanskAra (predilection) of considering my body to belong to me/my soul.

This predilection is very difficult to get rid of, and birth after birth, we continue to identify with our current body making our journey of transmigration longer and longer.

Our predilections govern our beliefs. And our beliefs determine the direction and purity of our spiritual journey. They dictate our attitudes and to an extent predetermine our prejudices. And it is common nature to impute one's own likes and dislikes, beliefs and

biases onto others. Hence, because I like something, I assume that others too will like it. And if I dislike something, I assume that others too will dislike it. This is why, those who consider their body to belong to or be a part of their soul, assume that the bodies of other souls belong to them. Hence, we misguidedly take our own body to be us, and the bodies of our loved ones to be them. This is how we perpetuates the cycle of rebirth.

Those who realise this truth do not fall into the trap of nescience, delusion, false predilections and misguided belief. They realise the truth, follow the path of non-violence, self-control and penance as taught by the Jinas and attain liberation.

देहे स्वबुद्धिरात्मानं युनक्त्येतेन निश्चयात् ।
स्वात्मन्येवात्मधीस्तस्माद्वियोजयति देहिनम् ॥ १३ ॥

One with false predilection associates the soul with the body.

Inevitably, he distances himself from the true understanding of the soul

Owing to his incorrect beliefs.

Contemporary historians blame an earlier US President for an unprovoked, unethical and totally unnecessary war on Iraq. The man had incorrect information, a biased worldview and took the misinformed decision to declare war on Iraq thus resulting in massive needless bloodshed and a rupturing of his national economy. Thousands of lives were lost. Trillions of dollars were spent. And what was gained? Nothing.

Animosity towards the West was strengthened in the Islamic world. Acts of terror were perpetuated and the seeds of mistrust, religious hatred were sowed. The 'Clash of Civilisations' has become progressively bitter and seems harder and harder to resolve.

On a spiritual level, false predilections lead to incorrect belief, which lead to an exponentially increasing attachment to the body and weakened ability to understand the true nature of the soul. Just as the Iraq war spelt disaster for the US economy, false identification with the body has led to the greatest source of misery - our continued presence in sansAra. There is no deeper sorrow than being incarcerated in the cycle of mind numbing rebirth, each more painful than the next. Each time the soul takes on another body, remains attached to it, suffers helplessly and binds more karmas. This cycle goes on ad infinitum, unless the soul realises its own true nature and stops identifying with the body.

Hence, the soul who wishes to end this cycle of rebirth shall have to stop identifying with the body and realise its own true nature. It will have to conquer its senses and dissociate with all activities that increase involvement in sansAra. Only will it be able to shed all karmas and attain liberation.

देहिष्वात्माधिया जाताः पुत्रभार्यादिकल्पनाः ।
सम्पत्तिमात्मनस्ताभिर्मन्यते हा हतं जगत् ॥ १४ ॥

Because we identify with our bodies,
We identify others with their bodies.
And imagine them to be our son, wife, et cetera
(And therefore belonging to us)
Based on their physical proximity.
It is indeed regrettable that we identify not only with our bodies,
But with others' as well.
This is the tragedy of sansAra.

Irrespective of our intelligence, maturity and education, we tend to think of the body as ours. This is because we seldom cease to identify with our bodies. So much so, that we create and build relationships based on physical proximity. So we assume another to be our wife, our son, our friend, our parent, et cetera. And shed great tears of sorrow when they leave us. Little realising that they were never ours to begin with. Only the accident of birth or the act of marriage had brought them closer to our physical selves.

Similarly, we consider material wealth to belong to us. So obsessed are we with materialism, that chasing the dollar has become the major thrust of our lives - and no one seems to be objecting!

Man rushes to grab all that he can and identifies with a plethora of things that are not his. And in this mad rush, forgets the one thing that is really and truly his - his soul. Again and again, like moths to a flame, we try to grab the temporary and ignore the permanent, heedless of the fact that our desires lead to our destruction. We crave worthless dust when diamonds lie glittering at our feet.

This heedless desire to own all one sees, and to crave what one does not possess, has led mankind to untold misery. Despite that, mankind continues to rush headlong in the quest for physical happiness, material wealth and sensual indulgence. Despite being aware of the fleeting nature of such sensuous pleasure, man wants to envelop himself in the numbing embrace of sensuous craving.

All this leads to rebirth. So we keep being reborn in sansAra, making the same mistakes, crying the same tears and drowning in the same misery each time.

And what is the primary cause for all this? Moha (delusion). Our delusion leads us to identify with our body and others' bodies. And this is the root cause of all misery and the germinating seed of continued rebirth in sansAra.

The greatest tragedy is that despite knowing the true nature of sansAra, we cannot bring ourselves to break away from it. So we continue to rejoice in the fleeting and deceptive joys of sansAra; cry our hearts out each time someone hurts us; compete for the most worthless of things and lead pathetic lives, wallowing in misery and self-pity.

The greatness of the Jinas is that they have shown us a path outside this maze of sansAra. But are we brave enough, strong enough and smart enough to walk in their footsteps?

मूलं संसारदुःखस्य देह एवात्माधीस्ततः ।
त्यक्तवैनां प्रविशेदन्तर्बहिरव्यापृतेन्द्रियः ॥ १५ ॥

The key to all worldly suffering is our identification with the body.

Hence, we should give up identifying with the body,

Stop our senses from straying towards external stimuli,

And look inward.

Our identification with the body is the root cause of all the suffering we have to endure in sansAra. So one should give up this identification with the body and look inwards. Since our senses keep distracting us and keep our attention focused on the external world, we ought to put a lid on the senses first.

One who finds joy in something, remains immersed in it. Hence, we will have to find joy in inward contemplation. That is the only way to break out from the stranglehold of the senses.

Have you ever tried conducting a conversation in a stadium during an IPL match? There is blaring cacophony on all sides. A veritable feast for all the senses is on public display. It is almost impossible to hold a rational thought in your head! But if you were to go to the same stadium eight hours later (early in the morning the following day), you will find that the stadium is deserted. You could then sit down comfortably and begin meditating.

I have done this, gone to deserted places early in the morning or late at night, and found peace in them. The quiet, the stillness, the absence of other distractions helps one attain a sense of tranquility which is conducive to inner reflection.

We have to still the senses first. Meditation will follow. And once we attain the joy of meditation, the senses will be easier to still, because the bliss of meditation outweighs by far the claustrophobic cacophony of sensual indulgence.

So now the learned Acharya Pujiyapada, after explaining the root cause of unhappiness and transmigration, is showing us the way out. If we understand and follow his teachings sincerely and begin introspecting, we too shall attain peace.

मत्तश्च्युत्वेन्द्रियद्वारैः पतितो विषयेष्वहम् ।
तान् प्रपद्याहमिति मां पुरा वेद न तत्त्वतः ॥ १६ ॥

Here is what the antarAtmA (internal self who realises the distinctness of the soul and the body) thinks when he looks back at his earlier, less evolved bahirAtmA (external self) stage:

I had lost sight of my true self,
And was wallowing in the filth of sensual desire.
I obtained the object of my sensual desires,
But never understood the true nature of my self.

The internal self realises that the body and soul are different and distinct, looks back at himself when he was focused on the external self. Back then, he had no idea who he was. This is what he thinks:

‘It is unfortunate indeed that I had no clue about my true identity. I identified with the body, which is mutable and easily destroyed. Instead of reflecting upon the true nature of my soul, I indulged in sensual pleasure which is fickle, fleeting and sorrowful. Sensual pleasure is ephemeral, ultimately dis-satisfactory and arouses envy and greed. Worse still,

it muddies my self-perception. I have always been led astray by the senses. This is why I never understood the true nature of my self.'

एवं त्यक्त्वा बहिर्वाचं त्यजेदन्तरशेषतः ।

एष योगः समासेन प्रदीपः परमात्मनः ॥ १७ ॥

Bring to a halt all conversations with others and within yourself.

This is, in brief, the method of illuminating the ultimate self.

Who says that real life does not resemble Facebook? Just as we press the like button, often unthinkingly, on Facebook, we constantly like and dislike things in real life.

If we are waiting for a bus and it comes late, we dislike. If the bus comes on time but is crowded, we dislike. If the bus comes on time and is not crowded but gets delayed in the traffic, we dislike. But if the bus comes late, is crowded and getting delayed in the traffic, but we run into a dear friend on the bus, we like.

The point I was trying to make is, irrespective of circumstances, we splatter the world with our likes and dislikes. The moment we begin engaging with the external world, we begin liking and disliking things. Whether it is the weather, or the political situation, or the performance of our favourite sports team, everything inspires our like/dislike. Thus, unbeknownst to us, we keep adding to our karmic load. This is why our learned sages have asked us to stay away from sansAra. Only in solitude may the virtues of contemplation and meditation be practised.

There is a constant dialogue going on in our heads. It is the mind going into overdrive. This mind too needs to be stilled. Only then can the truest core of our being, the ultimate self, the paramAtmA be realised.

How can the mind be stilled? By immersing ourselves in the supremely detached auto-immersion of the yogI. This can only be realised by those who have immersed themselves in the spiritual world; stay away from name, fame and glory and keep a distance from wealth and its trappings. Such yogIs conquer their bodies through penance, conquer their minds through self restraint and purify their souls through non-violence. They progressively attain the highest echelons of auspicious meditation (dharma dhyAna) and pristine, unclouded

meditation (shukla dhyAna), shed all karmas that impede enlightenment, and become the ultimate self (paramAtmA).

This is the path of the Jinas. All those who have unshakable faith in this path, understand this path thoroughly and follow it completely are certain to attain liberation.

यन्मया दृश्यते रूपं तन् न जानाति सर्वथा ।

जानन् न दृश्यते रूपं ततः केन ब्रवीम्यहम् ॥ १८ ॥

One has to remove oneself from the external world if one wishes to focus on the soul and remain immersed in it. One may do so by contemplating upon the following fact.

That which I can see, has no consciousness.

That which has consciousness, cannot be seen.

So whom do I converse with?

The body is inert. Only in the presence of the soul does it have life. Take away the soul, and the body is dead matter. It has no consciousness of its own. The soul is sentient but cannot be seen. So whom could the yogI possibly converse with?

As children, we talk to our toys, play with them and make believe that they are real people. Thus, children play with dolls and get them married off, look after them, etc., etc. I remember, my sister had a doll named 'Ratti' and I had a doll named 'Kammo'. (We'd named them!) We used to play with them, pretend that they were sick, take care of them, and basically use our imagination to pretend that the dolls were real people with real feelings and afflictions, and we would make believe that we were adults and taking care of them. I am sure all of us have played with toys as children and have pleasant memories of them.

But would would we do that as adults? No. Because we realise that toys are inanimate objects. Some of us would be embarrassed to recall how we played with dolls and toys and puppets. Certainly, none of us would think of those toys as humans now.

The yogI realises the mutable nature of the human body. He realises that the body is inert matter, sharing the same space with the soul on account of the soul's karmic bondage. He realises that only the soul is sentient, and it is not visible to the senses. And that the body, despite being visible, is insentient. He sees the futility in dealing with inanimate matter and therefore does not exert himself in dealing with the outside world.

Without external influences to distract him, the yogI focuses deeply on his soul and spends as much time as he can, immersed in meditation. He is on the path of enlightenment.

यत्परैः प्रतिपाद्योऽहं यत्परान् प्रतिपादये ।

उन्मत्तचेष्टितं तन्मे यदहं निर्विकल्पकः ॥ १९ ॥

Can the ultimate reality be explained to others in words?

What I explain to others,

Is like the ravings of a madman.

Because the nature of the soul is truly inexpressible.

Have you ever tried to explain the thrill of winning your first match? Or the sheer joy you feel after you have written the last paper of your final exams? Or the exuberance of having ridden a motorcycle for the first time? Some things are beyond words. I still remember the moment when the doctor emerged from the labour room, cradling my son in his arms and congratulated me with the words, "Congratulations Mr Modi, it is a boy." The sheer exuberance I felt on beholding my firstborn, is beyond words. It has to be felt to be understood.

Similarly, the experience of the soul is immensely joyful and defies description. No one can explain it. Only the yogI s can experience it, and that too if they diligently walk the path of non-violence, self-restraint and penance.

Once the yogI has experienced his soul, he must give up the idea of being bound in a preceptor-student relationship with his guru, or with his own disciples. He is free to experience the fascinating inner world of his self, and should not for a moment come back into the external world which is full of grief, passion and sorrow. He must not harbour notions of reforming the world, or proselytise to others or engage with the external world in any way. He must remain immersed in the highest echelons of auspicious disposition (dharma dhyAna) and immaculate disposition (shukla dhyAna). Thus, he shall shed all karmas that impede enlightenment and become the ultimate self (paramAtmA).

यद्ब्राह्मं न गृह्णाति गृहीतं नापि मुञ्चति ।

जानाति सर्वथा सर्वं तत् स्वसंवेद्यमस्म्यहम् ॥ २० ॥

I am the soul.

I can only be experienced by myself.

I do not accept that which is not mine.

I do not cease to be what I am.

I am omniscient.

The soul does not accept that which does not belong to it. This includes all external factors.

These factors may broadly be categorised as under:

1. Association through coincidence (saMyoga)

Friends, family, loved ones, enemies, possessions like home, car, clothes, etc.

2. Association through karma

Body, health, happiness, etc.

3. Association through emotions (vedana)

Like, dislike, attachment, aversion, etc.

The (realised) soul does not accept any of the above as belonging to itself.

Such a soul does not give up its own intrinsic attributes of knowledge and perception.

Such a soul experiences itself, and only itself. No one and nothing else can experience it.

Such a soul remains immersed in itself, experiencing the bliss of supreme yogic immersion (samAdhi). Its bliss is eternal and defies description.

Such a soul is like a mirror. It reflects whatever it sees, accurately and without an iota of attachment. Such a soul attains supreme knowledge (kevala jnAna) which is beyond the borders of space and time. Such a soul is omniscient. Such a soul is paramAtmA. To become like that, is our goal.

उत्पन्नपुरुषभ्रान्तेः स्थाणौ यद्वद्विचेष्टितम् ।

तद्वन्मे चेष्टितं पूर्वं देहादिष्वात्मविभ्रमात् ॥ २१ ॥

Just as one may mistake a pillar for a man,

One mistakes the body for the soul.

(This is why I keep taking rebirth)

Sometimes, one mistakes a pillar for a man. Especially if it is dark and the pillar looms up suddenly in one's line of vision. Similarly, one draws wrong conclusions about several phenomena one observes in one's day to day life.

This is why, one mistakes the body for the soul and identifies with it. Because of this, one keeps taking rebirth.

Of all the thought processes involved in dharma, the one process that I have found to be the most difficult of all, is to get rid of this attachment to the body. I have had the privilege of learning at the feet of several learned monks, and they have taught me many wonderful things. I am blessed to be able to read Jain texts on my own, often without the help of any modern translation, and feel fortunate to be able to establish a rapport with the greatest of Jain thinkers over the ages. But despite that, my attachment for the body persists.

Being a Jain, I am a vegetarian, do not drink and do not smoke. This is part of my upbringing. As a Jain, I have been encouraged to fast, especially during the first and last day of the paryUShaNas, or at least, as the bare minimum, on the last day of the paryUShaNas. As a Jain, I have been taught basic Jain hymns and the NamaskAra Mantra at some point in my childhood. I am uniquely fortunate to have interacted with Jain monks from all four modern Jain ascetic traditions and observed that in their own way, Jain monks and nuns practise detachment from their bodies. But I myself have never felt this kind of complete abandonment of the body. Despite all my reading and studies and religious education, I cannot give up my attachment for my body. Because of this deep-rooted attachment, I shall keep taking rebirth in sansAra. However, if I were to take dIkShA (renounce the temporal world) and get rid of this attachment for the body, then I shall be able to attain the highest spiritual goals.

Only those who give up this attachment for their bodies attain true immersion in their souls and thus attain liberation. Others remain attached to the gross, ignore the subtle and remain enmeshed in the cesspool of sansAra.

यथासौ चेष्टते स्थाणौ निवृत्ते पुरुषाग्रहे ।
तथा चेष्टोऽस्मि देहादौ विनिवृत्तात्मविभ्रमः ॥ २२ ॥

One who does not mistake a pillar for a man,
Stops mistaking the body for the soul.
He then conducts himself appropriately.

A couple of years ago, we were discussing the ills of the dairy industry at home. Pramodaben Chitrabhanu had given me a few CDs describing the cruel way in which cows are treated in

India and abroad. We saw the CDs at home, and immediately my wife decided to give up all milk and milk products for life and became a vegan. I have been supporting the cause of veganism, but have still not taken the final leap. For my wife, the penny dropped within moments. She had attained realisation, and her conduct reflects it.

Since the beginning of time, we have identified with our body. Hence, our conduct is frenzied and seldom in line with the sage teachings of the Jinās. We do everything in order to please this body. We live for this body. And this is why we keep taking rebirth and coming back to sansAra.

Once the penny drops, realisation is attained, conduct falls in line with the eternal teachings of the Jinās. True realisation, knowledge and conduct lead to liberation. (TattvArthasUtra, 1.01)

येनात्मनानुभूयेऽहमात्मनैवात्मनात्मनि ।

सोऽहं न तन् न सा नासौ नैको न द्वौ न वा बहुः ॥ २३ ॥

I am that pure consciousness which experiences my true self.

I am supreme awareness,

Beyond the pale of gender and numbers.

One who no longer identifies with his body, realises his own true nature. He knows that he is the supreme soul, which is pure consciousness.

Consciousness (cetana) is the primordial quality of the soul. It is the signature attribute of living beings. Irrespective of the senses they are endowed with, all living beings have cetana (consciousness). It is the defining characteristic that distinguishes the living from the non-living. When this consciousness is purified through true insight or rational perception (samyak darshana), understood correctly (samyak jnAna), and rendered blemishless through appropriate conduct (samyak chAritra), the eternal truths of the Jina's teachings become apparent and become part of one's consciousness. Once that stage is reached, no delusion remains. The soul remains calm, focused and immersed in itself. It ceases to have any meaningful interaction with the external world.

Such a soul becomes impervious to external circumstances, and ceases to have any attachment towards the body. Hence, bodily traits like gender, etc. become totally

redundant. Bodily desires disappear and a profound detachment is developed towards all external stimuli. The soul transcends the physical and corporeal and attains the bliss of samAdhi (self immersion).

यद्भावे सुषुप्तोऽहं यद्भावे व्युत्थितः पुनः ।
अतीन्द्रियमनिर्देश्यं तत् स्वसंवेद्यमस्म्यहम् ॥ २४ ॥

I am that innate self

Without experiencing which, I was asleep,
And on experiencing which, I am fully awake.

I am beyond sensual perception, beyond intellectual explanation.

I can only be experienced.

How many of us remember when we took our first steps? Or said our first words? None of us.

But most of us would remember when we first rode a bicycle; when we first managed to balance ourselves on skates; when we flew our first kite; or rode a motorcycle or scooter for the first time. All of these are joyous occasions, but we do not remember those which occurred when we were little.

In Hindi, this is described very aptly, in the phrase, “Jab se hosha sambhALA hai.” (Since the time I started remembering things).

To apply the same phrase in the spiritual context, we become truly awake only when we experience our true transcendental self. Before that, all our lives were spent in deep slumber. And after having experienced the supreme transcendental self, we are now fully awake. Fully alive. Fully awakened.

What is this transcendental self like?

It is beyond any karmic influence and is untouched by karmically induced trials and tribulations. It is unaffected by the body and remains indifferent to external stimuli. Also, since it is beyond any karmic influence, the transcendental self is incorporeal. It is not bound by a body. It cannot be perceived through the senses.

The transcendental self is so unlike other human experiences, it remains completely beyond the ambit of language to describe it. Experiencing the transcendental self is an

occurrence of such vast magnitude and such incredible magnificence, that mere words are incapable of describing it. No person on earth, however learned he may be, can describe the magnificence and the exhilaration of the transcendental self. Only the yogI s may experience it. And even they cannot describe it in words.

Certain phenomena need to be experienced and realised. They cannot be understood in any other manner.

क्षीयन्तेऽत्रैव रागाद्यास्तत्त्वतो मां प्रपश्यतः ।
बोधात्मानं ततः कश्चिन् न मे शत्रुर्न च प्रियः ॥ २५ ॥

(Upon experiencing the transcendental self)

My attachment and aversion are stilled, and

I perceive myself from the absolute point of view.

Hence, I have neither foes nor friends.

Friends and foes exist only in the imagination of the deluded. It is beyond the scope of their comprehension to realise that rebirth is the cause of all sorrow. Our own karmas cause us grief. It may seem to us, that others are harming us, but they are merely the catalysts. It is our own past karmas that set in motion events and occurrences that cause us pain and sorrow.

Our perceptions of the world are totally dominated by our passions and our inability to distinguish between the soul and the body. We are so attached to our body, indeed so enamoured of it, that we love anyone who pleases our body and hate anyone who harms our body. Anyone who gives pleasure to our body becomes our muse, and anyone who hurts our body becomes our enemy.

Because of this sort of muddled thinking, we spend almost all our waking moments in the throes of anger, passion, hatred, like and dislike. Very seldom do we manage to see things from a neutral point of view. This is why we suffer from stress, disappointment and unhappiness. And look towards external sources of pleasure: intangible ones like love, friendship, camaraderie and tangible ones like material possessions, wealth, gadgets, etc. But just as adding salt to food cannot make the food sweeter, external sources can never give us lasting happiness or inner peace.

As the saying goes, money can buy possessions, but not happiness. Similarly, external sources may give you fleeting moments of sensual pleasure, but can never give you true inner joy or lasting peace.

Only self-realisation, self-immersion and supreme detachment can give us lasting spiritual bliss. Which is why yogIs focus on attaining the supreme self, and remain disinterested in worldly pleasures.

मामपश्यन्नयं लोको न मे शत्रुर्न च प्रियः ।
मां प्रपश्यन्नयं लोको न मे शत्रुर्न च प्रियः ॥ २६ ॥

Those who cannot see the real me, are neither friends nor foes.

Those who can see the real me, are neither friends nor foes.

When the soul attains self-immersion, it internalises its true incorporeal nature and loses feelings of attachment towards its mortal coil. At this level, there is no question of feeling friendship or enmity with other souls, for one is so detached, that even one's own body does not arouse love or hatred.

A soul that has reached such an exalted stage of being would reason that, "If others do not see the real me, how can I feel any sort of friendship or dislike towards them? And if others can see me, so what? I shall remain immersed in own true nature, and let others lead their lives in peace." Thus, such a soul bears neither amity nor ill will towards others.

त्यक्तवैवं बहिरात्मानमन्तरात्मव्यवस्थितः ।
भावयेत् परमात्मानं सर्वसङ्कल्पवर्जितम् ॥ २७ ॥

Give up the bahirAtmA (external self),

Remain in the antarAtmA (internal self) (by meditating)

And concentrate fully on the paramAtmA (supreme self),

Without any extraneous goals or desires.

How to become the supreme self?

When you give up the false and misguided identification with your body, you break down the shackles of sensuous desire that keep binding you in strong chains with sansAra. Once sensual desires are quelled, the soul is able to look inward. Just as one would find it extremely difficult to think for oneself amidst the cacophony of blaring horns and a raucous crowd,

our sensual desires submerge us in wave after wave of desire, attachment and aversion. Our whole being is channelled outward, alternating between likes and dislikes. When these desires are quelled, peace and quiet return. The true self can be perceived. When such a stage is reached, one should shed all doubts and ambitions and remain in the inner contemplative self and focus all efforts on the transcendental supreme self.

How does one do that?

Meditate upon bheda jnAna (discriminative knowledge). Practise the tapas so that the senses remain quietened. And repeat to yourself that:

“The capacity of becoming a perfected being (Siddha) is within me. All the Siddhas’ attributes are present in me. They may be in the dormant state, but they are present and shall manifest themselves the longer I stay in my inward looking state. The only reason that I have not manifested those qualities so far, is because of my deep-rooted attachment to my body and my grovelling to sensuous desires. Sensual desire has led me astray time and again, and I shall now move away from it all and remain immersed in that which is mine. Hence, I shall seek the shelter of my supreme self, which is absolutely free, unbound, untouched, unfettered, unique, incomparable, incorporeal and sovereign. It is that magnificent sovereign self that I am about to uncover. And once I uncover that sovereign self, I shall remain immersed in it forever. I shall become one with it.

There is nothing to the external world. It is a wasteland of unfulfilled desires, failures, frustration and despair that no longer fascinates me. I shall remain steadfast in my auto-immersion and as my meditation deepens, I shall experience more and more spiritual bliss. I shall rise above the level of thought, word and feeling, I shall rise above all desire and I shall rise above all to the level of total awareness, total bliss and supreme harmony.”

सोहमित्यात्तसंस्कारस्तस्मिन् भावनया पुनः ।
तत्रैव दृढसंस्काराल्लभते ह्यात्मनि स्थितिम् ॥ २८ ॥

Because of concentrating fully on the paramAtmA (supreme self),

You acquire a transformative thought,

That you too are a paramAtmA (supreme self).

One who has deeply infused himself with this sanskAra (impression),

Achieves the state of supreme self.

Internalise that you are that, which can only be understood correctly through the absolute viewpoint, you are free from all karmas, beyond the reach of the passions and free from all desire, attachment and aversion. You are all-knowing, all-seeing and free from all extraneous substances. You are no different from the perfected beings (Siddhas) who reside in mokSha. From the absolute point of view, there is absolutely no difference between the Siddhas and you.

Realise that while you are all of the above from the absolute viewpoint, from the practical viewpoint you are surrounded by karmas, subjugated by passions and led astray by attachment and aversion. Delusion prevents you from attaining the supremely detached all-knowing, all-seeing self.

Know your soul from both, the absolute and the practical viewpoints.

Infuse your soul with the sanskAra (impression) that you too are paramAtmA (supreme self). Your soul and the soul of perfected beings is substantially the same. You have the same qualities. The same abilities. And are capable of attaining the same status - that of a perfected being (Siddha). Keep hammering this into your consciousness, do it constantly.

Remain free from passions and desires through practising the twelve types of penance. Guard against hubris. And keep in mind that when you climb a higher step, you have to remain above the lower step. Or, to put it differently, when you take a higher vow, you have to keep practising the lower vow as well. Taking the higher vows does not exempt one from having to practise the lower vows. Hence, when you remain immersed in your soul, meditating upon the supreme self, you must ensure that your entire lifestyle reflects your spiritual dispensation. One cannot indulge one's senses, lead a worldly life and expect to attain the supreme self! One has to follow the order of the ascetic practices as outlined by MahAvIra, and only then will you get the fruits of your efforts.

Trust the Jinās' teachings Only by giving up any external dialogue with the third person (others) and merging the second person (the mind) with the first person (the supreme self), thereby giving up all internal chat, can one attain the supreme self. The supreme self is beyond words and has to be experienced. It cannot be expressed in words or language. One who attains it, remains in a state of supreme bliss forever. He rises above all mental, physical and spiritual desire and remains permanently in the untrammelled beatific state of ananta

darshana (eternal perception), ananta jnAna (limitless knowledge), ananta vIrya (endless power) and ananta sukha (boundless joy).

I earnestly pray that we may all attain this state of perfection.

मूढात्मा यत्र विश्वस्तस्ततो नान्यद्भयास्पदम् ।
यतो भीतस्ततो नान्यद्भयस्थानमात्मनः ॥ २९ ॥

Nothing should be feared more than what the fool trusts the most.

And nothing is safer than what is most greatly feared by the fool.

It is extraordinary, that we are so apprehensive about trusting the teachings of our JinAs and have trouble accepting them fully, but have no qualms following implicitly the directions of a Tom-Tom/GPRS. We don't merely question, we actively doubt the teaching of our Jain monks and are constantly trying to measure Jainism on parameters that are more suited to the exact sciences.

Not surprising then, that we seek shelter where the wise would dare not venture, and fear the one true constant source of succour, solace and shelter - our own soul.

In reality, the wise man should fear whatever is blindly trusted by the fool. The fool is likely to trust the most unreliable things in the world. Also, the fool is likely to fear deeply the one thing that is the truest shelter in the world - the soul.

Throughout our lives, we live in the external world and seek to conform to, as far as possible, the mores of the external world. We do not hesitate to bend, stretch and flagrantly ignore the teachings of the JinAs and the values taught by our parents and elders when they happen to conflict with our desire for sensual pleasure. How many times have we lied to our parents and slunk into a cinema hall or a discotheque and told them that we were going over to a friend's place in order to study together with the friend?

We constantly crave sensual delectation and this adds greatly to our karmic bondage. We acquire the greatest quantum of karmic bondage when we are in the sensual pleasure seeking mode, and yet we never cease to endeavour in this direction. In fact, society measures one's success on the basis of one's net fiscal worth and on how much sensual satisfaction one achieves for oneself and one's loved ones. There must be something seriously wrong with our meme!

We seek pleasure in things and activities that are bound to lead us to grief. And yet, like fools, we venture forth, again and again, in pursuit of sensual pleasure. Our behaviour is not dissimilar to the ancient Indian king YayAti, who upon losing his youth because of a curse, begged his son to lend him his youth. Since this is a fable, he actually got his son to give him his youth, and king YayAti spent the next thousand years immersed in all kinds of sensual pleasure. At the end of this period, he wearied of it, realised the futility of sensual desire and took up the ascetic vows.

YayAti was fortunate enough to live for over a thousand years. He had plenty of time to commit mistakes and then make good his mistakes. But do we have that kind of time? Will we live for a thousand years? And will we be strong enough, smart enough and intelligent enough to call it a day and move on? More likely, we will remain enmeshed in our desire for sensual pleasure and die unhappy.

This is what the venerable Acharya Pujyapada has tried to warn against in the above shloka. He knew that it is human nature to pursue the gross and ignore the subtle. So he points out that one may recognise a fool by observing what he trusts and what he fears. For fools seek shelter in worldly pleasures. The wise ignore them. And fools fear and mistrust the path of self-immersion. The wise ones choose the path of self-immersion and attain liberation.

सर्वेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य स्तिमितेनान्तरात्मना ।

यत्क्षणं पश्यतो भाति तत् तत्त्वं परमात्मनः ॥ ३० ॥

The true nature of the transcendental self can be experienced

By one who has stilled his senses and stabilised himself.

Whatever becomes visible to him, even for an instant,

Is the essence of the supreme self.

What is the transcendental self? How can it be experienced?

Let us go back to verse 4 of this text and see how the soul is divided into three categories, depending on its spiritual progress.

“ All living beings have souls. Depending on their levels of self-awareness, the living beings may be classified as bahirAtmA, antarAtmA and paramAtmA. The potential for being any one of the three exists in all living beings.

The bahirAtmA beings display the least self-awareness. They identify completely with their bodies, their passions and their emotions. Their existence is centred in their bodies. Their notions of joy and sorrow are sense-driven. Hence, if their body is treated with comfort, they are happy. If their body experiences discomfort, they are unhappy. They have no concept of the soul, nor are they aware of its attributes.

The antarAtmA beings are aware of their souls and know that the body and soul are different entities. But they have not internalised this, not annihilated their ghAtIya karmas (karmas that impede self-realisation) and hence remain trapped in the bondage of transmigration.

The paramAtmA beings have realised their soul and have conquered all attachment to the body. They have annihilated all ghAtIya karmas. They have reached the zenith of ultimate consciousness and enjoy supreme detachment, omniscience and immeasurable, eternal bliss. They have transcended the cycle of rebirth.

The paramAtmA beings may be further categorised as:

Arihanta paramAtmA : Embodied omniscient beings enjoying eternal bliss

Siddha paramAtmA : Perfected omniscient beings enjoying eternal bliss, freed from the body and hence residing in mokSha (abode of the perfected beings, situated at the top of the universe, where all souls live in eternal bliss forever).

How can this transcendental self be experienced?

By ceasing to identify with the body, becoming aware of our soul and making systematic, focused and appropriately insightful efforts to realise our soul by walking on the path prescribed by the Jinās.

If one were to create a step by step procedure on how to experience the transcendental self, one would probably say the following:

1. Realise that the soul and body are distinct and different.
2. Realise that one's identity is the soul, which is eternal. Not the body, which is mutable.
3. Follow the five major vows as prescribed by the Jinās. Give up feelings of attachment towards the body, through ascetic practices and controlling the senses.
4. Once the senses are stilled, stabilise yourself. You will experience the transcendental soul, even though fleetingly. And that experience, of the supreme self, is only experience

that will survive when all others are suppressed. For that is the pAriNAmika bhAva (eternal disposition) of the soul.

Of course, this is easier said than done. To achieve all this, one needs faith. Faith in the teachings of the Jinās and the efficacy of liberation as the only assurance of lasting bliss. Once one has faith in the Jinās, one has to have faith in oneself, realise that one is as capable as a Jina of attaining liberation. One who is deeply convinced that the path of liberation as prescribed by the Jinās is the only way of attaining lasting peace and happiness, and is certain that his soul as capable of attaining liberation as the Jinās', one has to follow the teachings of the Jinās in letter and spirit. Only then can one move ahead on the path of liberation. It may take us a few lifetimes, but it is worth it, to endeavour in this direction. But we have to ensure that our faith remains strong in the face of greatest adversity and that we keep walking on the path of non-violence, truthfulness, ethical behaviour, purity of mind and body, and non-possessiveness. Only then will we be able to significant progress in our journey towards liberation.

यः परात्मा स एवाहं योऽहं स परमस्ततः ।
अहमेव मयोपास्यो नान्यः कश्चिदिति स्थितिः ॥ ३१ ॥

Whatever is the supreme soul, that is me.

Whatever I am, is the supreme soul.

Therefore, I can only contemplate upon my soul

And not on anything else.

This is the reality.

Alternatively, this verse may be translated as:

Whatever qualities the supreme souls (Arihantas and Siddhas) have,

I have them too.

Whatever I am, the supreme souls are.

I can only contemplate upon my own soul,

Not on that of another.

This is the reality.

The Buddha said,

appa dIvo bhava

appa dIvo bhAva

Be your own lamp.

AchArya Kundakunda said,

appA so paramappA

appA so paramappA

Each soul is supreme.

The Jain dharma is the dharma of the soul. All* souls have the capacity to attain omniscience. The Jinas emphasise that each soul has to make its own rational efforts to attain liberation. No outside agent can help/harm it. Each living being has to grapple with its own set of karmas, conquer its passions and get rid of its delusion. It is an internal, intensely personal journey and each soul will have to be its own guru. It is alright to admire other lamps and pay obeisance to them. But one has to light one's own lamp. No one else can light it for us.

From the nishcaya (absolute) viewpoint, each soul is supreme. From the vyavahAra (practical) viewpoint, each soul has the potential to attain liberation through its own rational efforts and focus. Souls remain in transmigration not because they lack the capability of realising their transcendental selves, but because they do not make the effort that is required to break down the shackles of karma. Liberation requires constant and vigilant efforts, for delusion is hard to overcome. Wrong beliefs, anger, arrogance, artifice and avarice, indolence, sensual indulgence and lack of conscientiousness strengthen delusion and make it harder to get rid of. However, each soul is potentially supreme. It can attain omniscience and liberation.

We worship the Jinas because they have attained this supreme status of the soul. They attained the transcendental self and ascended to mokSha. But we have to attain liberation on our own. The Jinas are defined as the paragata tattva (Other Real). And only the soul is the svagata tattva (Own Real). (Devasena's TattvasAra, verse 3)

We have to believe that our soul is capable of /has the potential of becoming a paramAtmA (transcendental self) and attaining liberation. One must believe this and stabilise oneself. Only then will one be able to transcend the bahirAtmA (external self who identifies with the body) and antarAtmA (internal self who knows that the body and soul are different but

has not quite rid himself of all attachment to the body) stages and become the paramAtmA (supreme transcendental self who has shed all semblance of attachment to the body).

Please bear in mind that this kind of meditation is feasible for those who have attained the spiritual stage of the 8th guNasthAna or higher. For lesser mortals, worshipping the Jinas will help them shed karmas and controlling the passions will elevate their souls.

(*) I am not talking about abhavya jIva (soul incapable of attaining liberation) at the moment, since they are not germane to this discussion.

प्रच्याव्य विषयेभ्योऽहं मां मयैव मयि स्थितम् ।
बोधात्मानं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि परमानन्दनिर्वृतम् ॥ ३२ ॥

I withdrawing myself from the objects of sensual desire,
Stabilise myself in my inner self.
And attain my transcendental self
Which flows with the supreme bliss of true knowledge.

The deluded person's mind is never at rest. It is constantly at work, trying to discover new avenues of earning material wealth and sensual pleasure. The great Hindu poet GosvAmI TulasIdAsa compared the mind to a monkey. Just as a monkey is constantly hopping about, our mind has a short attention span and is constantly flitting about from one thought to another. When the mind is driven by sensual desire, it becomes even more agitated - like a jabbering excited monkey drunk on 100 proof alcohol.

In order to progress on the spiritual path, one has to withdraw oneself from the objects of sensual desire. This is one of the reasons why Jains celebrate the festival of paryUShaNa, in order to rein in rampant desire and strengthen their control over their. Only the mind which is freed from the vice-like grip of sensual desire can stabilise itself in itself. Once this inner stability is achieved, the transcendental self may be attained.

The transcendental self stems from supreme detachment and enjoys supreme, indestructible bliss. It is this transcendental self which is the final goal of the yogIs. Those who attain it are never reborn. They live on as perfected beings, free from all fetters and encumbrances, in mokSha enjoying unimpeded, eternal bliss.

Let us pray that we may all get there.

यो न वेत्ति परं देहात् एवमात्मानमव्ययम् ।
लभते स न निर्वाणं तस्वापि परमं तपः ॥ ३३ ॥

He who does not understand the soul as being different from the body,
As explained above,
Cannot attain liberation despite carrying out
The most intense ascetic practices.

Through several examples and parallels, the learned author has explained to us how the soul and body are different. Despite occupying the same space (the body), they are distinct, unique and completely different from each other. The essence of spiritual teaching is:
Realise that the soul is unique and distinct from your body.
Control your senses, stabilise your consciousness, focus inward.

Anyone who does not realise this, cannot attain liberation. Liberation may only be attained by those who have realised that the soul and body are different and have developed supreme detachment from the body as from everything else in the universe. Those ascetics who have not internalised that the soul and body are different, remain attached to their bodies. How could they then attain liberation?

Picture this: There is a railway carriage, and a railway engine. Till the time the railway carriage is coupled to the railway engine, it will be driven here and there by the engine. But when the railway carriage is uncoupled from the engine, it will not run hither and thither at the beck and call of the engine. Thus, if we were to uncouple ourselves from the engine of our body and sensual desires, we would become free from traversing the tracks of transmigration.

To underscore the importance of this assertion, let me quote from AchArya Kundakunda's SAMAYASARA.

paramaTThammi du aThido jo kuNadi tavaM vadaM cha dhAryadi
taM savvaM bAla-tavaM bAla-vadaM viMti savvaNhu
- AchArya Kundakunda, SamayasAra, verse 152

The omniscient ones state that the ascetic practices and penance
Of one who is not fixed upon the supreme self,

Are like the asceticism and penance of a child/ignorant person.

Asceticism and penance are extremely important from the spiritual viewpoint. It is extremely difficult to shed karmas without appropriate atonement and penance. But only the soul which is fixed on the supreme self will be able to attain the high degree of perfection in his penance that leads to the shedding of all karmas and the attainment of liberation.

In other words, practise asceticism with all sincerity, but remain focused inwards. Realise that the soul and body are distinct entities. Without this realisation, your asceticism will earn you merits (puNya) but not take you to the ultimate destination - liberation (mokSha).

आत्मदेहान्तरज्ञानजनिताह्लादनिर्वृतः ।

तपसा दुष्कृतं घोरं भुञ्जानोऽपि न खिद्यते ॥ ३४ ॥

One who has realised that his soul is distinct from the body,

Transcends all body related pain,

For he has ceased to identify with it.

He can practise the most extreme penance in mitigation of past sins

And yet feel blissful,

For he is immersed in his self.

Offer a child a nicely wrapped chocolate, and he will be thrilled. Offer the same child an empty chocolate wrapper, and he will disdainfully reject it. Even the child knows that it is the chocolate that counts, not the wrapper. He knows that the chocolate and wrapper are distinct entities. The wrapper may serve to cover the chocolate, but has nothing to do with the chocolate itself.

We adults know that the soul and body are different. And that the soul is eternal, while the body is mutable. Despite this, we hanker after the body. And spend our lives looking after the body and trying to appease all its (sensual) desires.

So who is smarter? Adults or children?

Taking the simile further, we adults are so bothered with the wrapper that we ignore the chocolate inside it. To our own detriment.

The wise ones, who realise that the soul and body are different, shed all attachment for the body and therefore rid themselves of the millions of causes of unhappiness

- for the body and its desires are the prime causes of misery in this world.

Instead, the wise ones stabilise their senses and remain immersed in the supreme self. Thus, they enjoy the incomparable bliss of the self immersion. Such persons feel no pain even when they practise the most austere and difficult of penance in order to shed karmas. This is because they are detached from the body and connected with their higher selves.

रागद्वेषादिकल्लोलैरलोलं यन्मनोजलम् ।

स पश्यत्यात्मनस्तत्त्वं स तत्त्वं नेतरो जनः ॥ ३५ ॥

One sees the true nature of the soul

Only when the waters of the mind are not

Agitated by massive waves of attachment and aversion.

Only such a person (who is unruffled by attachment and aversion)

Understands himself as well as the whole world. No one else.

Ever tried looking through glasses which have misted over? You won't see clearly. Similarly, if your windshield wiper is not working well (typical of most Indian cars in Mumbai rains) you cannot see the road ahead of you with any clarity. In the same way, you cannot perceive things clearly if the purity of your consciousness is sullied by gusts of attachment and aversion.

Only those who are beyond attachment and aversion can perceive the ultimate truth. They understand themselves as well as the whole world/reality. And they become the truth themselves. For what is the truth? It is the pure consciousness which has transcended all attachment, all aversion, all anger, all hatred, all love, all affection, all bondage. It is the consciousness of the liberated being, immersed eternally in its transcendental self, leading an existence of permanent and unchanging bliss.

Only those souls which have attained this supreme bliss manifest reality. Other souls do not. How could a soul entrapped in the quicksand of desire achieve the bliss of supreme desirelessness?

It is my sincere prayer that we may all attain that stage of the soul, where we rise above all desire, and manifest the ultimate reality. Until then, may we remain under the protection of Lord PARshvanAtha.

अविक्षिप्तं मनस्तत्त्वं विक्षिप्तं भ्रान्तिरात्मनः ।

धारयेत् तदविक्षिप्तं विक्षिप्तं नाश्रयेत् ततः ॥ ३६ ॥

The tranquil mind is the true nature of the self.

The perturbed mind is caused by a false understanding of the self.

Take the shelter of the tranquil mind.

Never of the perturbed mind.

The tranquil mind is the ultimate reality. The perturbed mind stems from a false understanding of reality. Hence, we are exhorted by the learned AchArya to hold a tranquil mind and never let it be disturbed again. Only the tranquil mind can pierce the stranglehold of sansAra (transmigration) and take us to mokSha (liberation).

Jains believe that if a soul can remain in the supremely tranquil state (shuddha bhAva) for a period of 48 minutes, it can attain liberation. In order to attain that supremely tranquil state, the soul will have to get rid of its state of passionate dispositions (ashubha bhAva) through benevolent dispositions (shubha bhAva); and then rise above benevolent dispositions through constant self-immersion (samAdhi) to attain the state of supremely tranquil disposition (shuddha bhAva). This is the path laid down by the JinAs. They have shown us the way, but we shall have to walk on it ourselves.

The path of the JinAs requires courage, fortitude, forbearance towards all, an enquiring mind and a generosity of spirit. It also requires stern self-control and a mastery over sensual desire. It is the not the path for the faint-hearted. This is why, not many choose to walk this path. But those who follow in the footsteps of the JinAs are certain to attain liberation.

अविद्याभ्याससंस्कारैरवशं क्षिप्यते मनः ।

तदेव ज्ञानसंस्कारैः स्वतस्तत्त्वेऽवतिष्ठते ॥ ३७ ॥

The mind that has imbibed delusion and nescience is tossed about helplessly.

The mind which has imbibed true knowledge is steadfastly immersed in its true self.

Anyone who is off training, finds it easy to make excuses and skip training sessions. And for someone who has never trained before, distractions are a constant. You ask him to train for a marathon and give him six months' notice. He will spend the first four months traveling and the next two coming up with new excuses every day to avoid training. In contrast, just

look at one of the champion long distance runners from Kenya and elsewhere - they train everyday. They manage to train wherever they travel. And they remain in the groove, long after the race is over. For it has become a way of life with them.

Similarly, owing to lifetimes of delusion and nescience, the mind is constantly focused on the outside. It foolishly thinks of itself as the doer and the creator. It is constantly rooted in the external self and spends every waking moment chasing sensual delectation. Like a bird which is always looking for food, the deluded person is constantly looking for sensual solace. Such a person is an easy prey to waywardness. His thoughts keep hopping from one subject to another. They cannot remain fixed or focused on one thing. He will pursue one thing, grow tired of it and pursue another. His life will be an unending pursuit of sensual pleasure. A pursuit that is bound to end in sorrow and disappointment.

On the other hand, one who has controlled his mind through ascetic practice and internalised true knowledge remains firmly established in the self. He is impervious to the sorrows of mundane life.

अपमानादयस्तस्य विक्षेपो यस्य चेतसः ।
नापमानादयस्तस्य न क्षेपो यस्य चेतसः ॥ ३८ ॥

The disturbed mind is susceptible to insult and flattery.

The calm collected mind is inured to the behaviour of others.

It is evident that those who are shallow, disturbed and whose thought processes are scattered, are very sensitive to slights and insults. Almost anything can set them off. Similarly, even the most blatant sycophancy is enough to win them over. Whereas, those who are mature and collected in their thoughts seldom let the behaviour of others affect them.

Those who have internalised the truth of the Jina's teachings and remain immersed in the soul pay no heed to what others say. They are in a world of their own, enjoying the incomparable bliss of self-realisation.

यदा मोहात् प्रजायेते रागद्वेषौ तपस्विनः ।
तदैव भावयेत् स्वस्थमात्मानं शाम्यतः क्षणात् ॥ ३९ ॥

Whenever the feelings of attachment and aversion rise in the mind of the ascetic because of latent delusion,

He should immediately compose himself by immersing himself in his soul.

The attachment he had experienced shall subside promptly.

The true renunciant is one who does not just practise asceticism and penance. He also makes sure that his consciousness remains free from attachment and aversion.

Only such a person can attain the fruits of equanimity and lasting peace.

Even the greatest yogI is liable to feel some vestiges of attachment and aversion from time to time. He must then immerse himself in his own pure self and he will find that the aberrant attachment and aversion have rapidly dissolved.

Till the time supreme detachment and omniscience are attained, the votary shall have to endure fleeting relapses. He should not be perturbed by them. He should redirect his consciousness inward. The feelings will subside because they are impelled by delusion. The moment one's consciousness is turned inwards, toward the supreme self, delusion is vanquished.

The primary objective of a mendicant is to attain liberation. Only through calmness and tranquility may liberation be attained. And the only way to attain equanimity is to look inwards, towards the transcendental soul. When one's thoughts are stilled, one can experience the transcendental soul. This is the most blissful experience in the world.

यत्र काये मुनेः प्रेम ततः प्रच्याव्य देहिनम् ।

बुद्ध्या तदुत्तमे काये योजयेत् प्रेम नश्यति ॥ ४० ॥

If a monk feels love and attachment towards his body,

He should get shed his deluded sense of identity with the corporeal form

And use his wisdom to connect with the supreme body (transcendental self).

His attachment for the corporal body shall be destroyed.

Attachment is of two types. Received and Unreceived. Received attachment (upAtta parigraha) is the attachment one feels for one's body. Unreceived attachment (anupAtta parigraha) is what one feels for one's material possessions, one's family members, relatives

and friends. In order to attain liberation, one must get rid of all attachment. Even the most minute attachment can keep one away from liberation.

This is why, Jain mendicants practise non-violence, self-control and penance.

Non-violence to prevent more karmas from attaching themselves to their soul.

Penance to attain detachment from the body.

Self-control to take the focus inwards.

Jain mendicants practise long hours of meditation seated or standing in the kAyotsarga position. This position signifies detachment from the body. Jain monks practise equanimity and detachment. But being human, there are times when they slip up. This verse seeks to guide them in those rare occasions when they fall prey to the distinctly human tendency of feeling oneness with the body.

The verse advises monks who feel attached the body to use their intelligence and training to dwell upon the distinctness of the body and soul (which helps them realise that the body they feel attached to, is not theirs), and to re-focus their attention towards attaining the transcendental self. Once consciousness is calibrated towards the supreme self, the attachment for the corporeal self dies.

आत्मविभ्रमजं दुःखमात्मज्ञानात् प्रशाम्यति ।

नायतस्तत्र निर्वाणं कृत्वापि परमं तपः ॥ ४१ ॥

Knowledge of the self quells the suffering caused by not knowing the self. Those who do make focused efforts to know the self, shall not attain liberation no matter how much penance they carry out.

All of us know that this world causes untold suffering. And that no one can have everything he wants. We know that sensual desire is chimeral. Despite that, we pursue it with misplaced single-mindedness. We set our hearts on things that we could not possibly attain. And if, by chance, we attain them, we tire of them easily.

A friend once told me, we are in love with the 'chase'. Once we attain the prize that we had been chasing so single-mindedly, that prize loses its value. So, in worldly terms, either we do not get what we want or if we get it, we get tired of it. Thus worldly life is full of dissatisfaction, sorrows and frustrations.

All this because we do not know who we are. Even the most intellectual amongst us claim that, “This body is me. I possess a soul.” The reality is that we are the soul. Because we are not free from karmas, we are stuck with a body. So, the body is a subset of the soul. The soul is NOT a subset of the body. And the reason why worldly beings are upset, unhappy and miserable is because they do not realise this. They identify with their bodies rather than their souls and therefore remain engulfed in grief.

Those who identify with their souls and remain detached to their bodies find peace, joy and serenity. They are free from the rat race and unaffected by the trials and tribulations that we have to endure in day to day life.

One of the harsh realities of life is that hard work alone will not get you anywhere. Ask the unskilled labourer who works in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh - he works unearthly hours all his life and still gets a pathetic pay. Hard work must be aligned with vision and knowledge/education if one is to succeed in this world. One who does not make efforts to attain education or specialised knowledge of some sort shall forever be consigned to working in menial jobs.

Similarly, for an ascetic to attain the desired result (liberation), hard work enough is not enough. The hard work of penance is admirable but without the accompaniment of vision (samyak darshana) and knowledge (samyak jnAna), the tapa shall not bring the desired result of liberation. Hence, he must be focused completely on attaining self-realisation. All his energies must be channelled inwards. Without realising the transcendental self, his ascetic practices will not help him attain liberation.

शुभं शरीरं दिव्यांश्च विषयान् अभिवाञ्छति ।
उत्पन्नात्ममतिर्देहे तत्त्वज्ञानी ततश्च्युतिम् ॥ ४२ ॥

One who identifies with the body seeks

An attractive physique and the highest degree of sensual pleasures.

One who identifies with his soul seeks

Freedom from the body and its desires.

I remember when I was about 8 or 9, my idea of the ultimate birthday gift was a set of Tintin comics or a set of Asterix comics! As I grew older, my idea of the ultimate gift took on more adult forms. But always, the idea of the ultimate gift hinged on sensual pleasure.

Like any other teenager, I wanted to ride a Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle, drive a Ferrari and wear a Rolex. In short, all of the desires were all related to the body. Evidently, there was a very strong identification with the body.

The one who has accomplished self-realisation, i.e. identifies with his soul, not his body, views all sensual pleasures as a deterrent for liberation. He has no desire for any of them. He is not only detached to them, he feels no attachment for his body. He realises that the body is not his and does not wish to encumber himself with it. He knows that the body is the ultimate attachment because it leads to all other attachments. Attachment to the body is the surest guarantee of rebirth. The soul cannot attain liberation while it is attached to anything, emotional or material. Hence, he seeks detachment from the body.

परत्राहंमतिः स्वस्माच्च्युतो बध्नात्यसंशयम् ।
स्वस्मिन्न अहंमतिश्च्युत्वा परस्मान् मुच्यते बुधः ॥ ४३ ॥

One who identifies with others (things or people)
Undoubtedly falls from the self and binds karmas.
But the wise ones remain in the self, shed the other (karmas)
And attain liberation.

The ignorant ones identify with everyone and everything, except their own true selves. They will identify with a cricket team, with a football team, with a leader, with an actor, with a politician, with a region, with a religion, with a language, with a culture, with a way of life, with a certain geographic location, with a certain club, with a certain product, etc. Their minds are constantly absorbed in all this identification and binding and do not remain in the self. Instead, they flit about binding karmas, very often clashing with others who have done them no harm except not identifying with the same things. Such people are moving away from liberation and remain engulfed in misery, anger, anxiety, jealousy and other vexing emotions.

On the other hand, the wise ones remain impervious to all other influences, things and people. They know that only the soul is their own. Even their body is but a temporary accoutrement. Just as people select various accessories to go with their clothing, the soul binds various bodies as per its karmic bondage. It is foolish therefore to feel any attachment towards the body. All worldly relations and attachments are built on the basis of this body.

And if the body is not ours, what of those whom we are connected with on the basis of this body? When the body itself is ephemeral, everything connected with it is bound to be short-lived. And in any case, it does not belong to us. So why identify with it?

This sense of detachment helps the wise ones shed karmas, cuts short their cycle of manifestation and is key to their attainment of liberation. Hence, we should all make great efforts to foster this sense of detachment from the body and from all that we have around us. Apart from our soul, nothing else belongs to us. We must therefore immerse ourselves in our soul and become impervious to all else.

दृश्यमानमिदं मूढस्त्रिलिङ्गमवबुध्यते ।

इदमित्यवबुद्धस्तु निष्पन्नं शब्दवर्जितम् ॥ ४४ ॥

The ignorant one sees a person in terms of appearance and gender

The enlightened one sees the soul which is complete and beyond words.

For the ignorant one, everything is seen and classified on the basis of its physical appearance. He judges people on the basis of their looks, gender, age and other external characteristics. Verily, he is incapable of seeing a person apart from his physical characteristics, appearance, wealth, temporal status, material accomplishments, etc. Such a person is called 'shallow' in modern parlance. His goal remains to amass wealth and external objects and to indulge his senses as much as he can. He devotes his entire life to chasing pieces of metal and scraps of paper and is deluded enough to think that they will belong to him forever. Such a person dies unhappy, dissatisfied and farther than ever from the path of liberation.

On the other hand, the enlightened one is capable of perceiving the truth and is not distracted by mere appearances. When he sees another person, he sees the attributes of his soul, not the attributes of his body. He does not categorise people on the basis of their appearance, ethnicity, wealth, age, gender, occupation, food habits, faith, lifestyle choices, etc. The enlightened person does not judge others. He realises that each soul is unique and complete. And that the qualities of the soul are far beyond the limited capacity of words. The enlightened one does not attempt to express the inexpressible. He remains immersed in his own soul and is detached to the rest of the world and all its animate and inanimate residents.

The detachment of an enlightened person does not mean that he is cruel and uncaring. The enlightened one is compassionate and uncompromisingly ethical in all his dealings with others. But he realises the ephemeral nature of the human body and worldly life and prefers to remain immersed in his eternal self rather than allow his attention to wander outwards.

जानन्न अप्यात्मनस्तत्त्वं विविक्तं भावयन्न अपि ।
पूर्वविभ्रमसंस्काराद्भ्रान्तिं भूयोऽपि गच्छति ॥ ४५ ॥

Despite knowing the nature of the soul and its distinctness from the body
The yogI can be misled because of earlier conditioning.

So often, we say and do the wrong thing despite knowing the truth. Why? Because our mind's conditioning and the circumstances around our lives compel us to do so. We are so heavily manipulated by our sensual desires that we lose focus on the essential and get trapped in the constantly moving roller coaster ride of sensual desires.

Even yogIs, contemplative saints and practitioners of penance whose sole aim is to discover their true selves, struggle to find the right path and stay on it. Such is the nature of this quest. It requires great courage and patience. The yogI has to be tenacious and steadfast. Frequently, he will lose focus and struggle to motivate himself. He will remain susceptible to the pitfalls of worldly life. Because he too is human and struggling to find his path. But once he gets hold of the right path, his journey begins.

His sternest tests will be unlearn the conditioning of thousands and millions of past lives - that his body is his own. This attachment for the body is what he shall have to get rid of. Till the time he is attached to his body, his spiritual path is shut. The moment he realises that he is the soul and not the body, which is like a garment worn by him, his journey shall begin. There is no guarantee that he will not fall. There is no assurance that he cannot fail. But this is the ultimate journey that each soul must undergo if it has to reach the stage of non-manifest.

अचेतनमिदं दृश्यमदृश्यं चेतनं ततः ।
क्व रुष्यामि क्व तुष्यामि मध्यस्थोऽहं भवाम्यतः ॥ ४६ ॥

When I cannot see the sentient ones, and the ones I can see are insentient,
Whom should I be pleased with or annoyed with? Hence I remain equanimous.

As they say, it takes two hands to clap. When you are alone, who would you fight with? And whom would you befriend? The seeker knows that the body is insentient and the soul is invisible. So whom should he be upset or pleased with? He wisely chooses equanimity.

Reminds me of the irritation I sometimes feel with answering machines. You call someone because there is something important that needs to be said. While calling the person, you rehearse in your mind what you are going to say to him/her. You anticipate their responses. And suddenly, instead of a human voice, you hear the impersonal voice of the answering machine! What can you say? Very often you hang up because you do not feel like talking to a machine.

The the enlightened seeker feels the same way about talking to people. What he sees, the body, is insentient. And what is sentient - the soul - he cannot see. Hence, sees no point in wasting his time and indulging his emotions. Instead, he prefers to internalise the calm and tranquil disposition of the soul which is his innate nature and can only be realised when the soul remains inward looking.

त्यागादाने बहिर्मूढः करोत्यध्यात्ममात्मवित् ।
नान्तर्बहिरुपादानं न त्यागो निष्ठितात्मनः ॥ ४७ ॥

The bahirAtman accepts or abandons objects of the outer world.

The antarAtman accepts or abandons objects of the spiritual world.

The paramAtman neither accepts nor abandons any object.

(He remains immersed in himself, sovereign, independent and complete.)

The bahirAtmA wrongly regards himself as manifested in the body and its functions and belongings. Hence, the bahirAtmA gives or takes objects from the material world.

The antarAtmA is free from the confusion of associating the self with the defects of the mind (doShas such as attachment, hate and malevolence). Hence, the antarAtmA gives up non-concrete entities such as passions and takes up non-concrete entities such as the five vows.

The paramAtmA is spotless (not sullied by karma). He has destroyed moha (delusion). Hence, the paramAtmA neither takes up any objects, nor abandons any.

Caution: The stage of paramAtmA is reached only when the soul achieves the 12th guNasthAna. Not earlier. We normal folks should concentrate on becoming antarAtmA first, by giving up our passions and taking up the vows. For us to pretend that we are paramAtmA and give up the vows would be a great folly!

युञ्जीत मनसात्मानं वाक्कायाभ्यां वियोजयेत् ।
मनसा व्यवहारं तु त्यजेद्वाक्काययोजितम् ॥ ४८ ॥

Immerse your mind in the soul, renouncing all conduct of speech and body.
Detach your soul from verbal and physical activities.

Just like a mobile phone app or facebook keeps students distracted from their studies, our activities of speech and body take us away from the soul and into the external world. We are so conditioned to responding to external stimuli that we have to work extremely hard to immerse ourselves in our consciousness. Unless we switch off this external interference, we shall not be able to immerse our minds in our soul.

Hence, it is important to renounce all speech and bodily movement and reflect upon the inner self. To begin with, one may set aside 10 minutes to sit motionless, quiet and eyes closed. It helps to concentrate on the breathing but ideally, try to sit still and simply observe your thoughts without reacting to them. With regular practise, you will experience a stage where your mind is free from thoughts for a few moments. With time, this stage of freedom from any kind of thought becomes less fleeting. When one reaches this stage one experiences certain insights which help one distinguish the soul from the body. In order to attain this level of meditation, one needs to be diligent and patient and keep an open mind. One will have to detach oneself from all external encumbrances and the paraphernalia that comes with worldly life, at least for a specific period of time if not for keeps. Only then can one experience a fleeting glimpse into the transcendental self, which lies within us all.

This text is a guidebook for us to attain this transcendental self. I am translating it based on my own limited intellect and ability. If I have made any mistakes in translating and describing it, I seek forgiveness and emendation.

जगद्देहात्मादृष्टीनां विश्वास्यं रम्यमेव च ।
स्वात्मन्येवात्मदृष्टीनां क्व विश्वासः क्व वा रतिः ॥ ४९ ॥

Those who think that the body is their self

Trust and enjoy the external world.

But those who are immersed in their souls

Realise that the soul and body are different

And there is nothing trustworthy or enjoyable in the external world.

It is so clear, isn't it? Those who identify with the body are always keen to enjoy the material world and its myriad sensual pleasures. Whereas those who identify with their soul fear rebirth in the material world and are extremely wary of sensual pleasures. They know that sensual pleasures are the honey trap that lures the soul away from spiritual pursuits into the gutter of transmigration.

Identification with the soul (and not the body) is known as samyak darshana.

The realisation, that this mundane external world is full of sorrow and misery, which is known as samyak jnAna.

Taking concrete steps to increase and internalise the identification with the soul is known as samyak chAritra and this involves self-control, restraint of the senses and renunciation of worldly ties.

Those who attain perfection in their samyak darshana, samyak jnAna and samyak chAritra attain liberation. (TattvArthasUtra, verse 1.1)

आत्मज्ञानात् परं कार्यं न बुद्धौ धारयेच्चिरम् ।

कुर्यादर्थवशात् किञ्चिद्वाक्कायाभ्यामतत्परः ॥ ५० ॥

Do not pay attention to any task which distracts you from self-realisation.

Only under dire necessity should one indulge in dealings with the external world,

And that too, only through acts of speech and body.

The mendicant is directed to stay away from all worldly tasks. For the mind can only focus on one task at a time. For ascetics, the primary reason for them to take the vow of asceticism is to immerse themselves in their soul. Hence, they should remain steadfast on the path of self-realisation. If, out of necessity, they have to deal with the external world, they should do so in a disinclined manner, and only through speech and body. The mind should constantly be engaged in reflection upon the teachings of the Jinas.

यत् पश्यामीन्द्रियैस्तन् मे नास्ति यन्नियतेन्द्रियः ।
अन्तः पश्यामि सानन्दं तदस्तु ज्योतिरुत्तमम् ॥ ५१ ॥

I am not that which I perceive with the senses.
I am that supreme blissful light which is perceived
When I control my senses and I look inwards.

The greatest, most repeated question that is central to every spiritual quest in the world is:
'Who am I?' Different people answer it differently.

The creationist's answer to this question is: I am a creature of god. I have been put on Earth
to serve my maker.

The evolutionist's answer is: I am an evolved animal. I evolved from an ape in order to rule
the Earth and all the flora and fauna on it.

The rationalist's answer is: I am the sum total of my intellect. I am my thoughts. When my
thoughts cease to exist, I shall die.

The pragmatist's answer is: Who cares? I am here for a while. Might as well make myself
comfortable and make sure I have a good time. For this, I should plan intelligently, work
hard, invest wisely and take care of my health and loved ones.

The hedonist's answer is: I am here for a very short period of time. I am going to party all
the time!

The seeker's answer is: I do not know. But I aim to find out.

The seeker studies texts, turns towards spiritually evolved people and sincerely meditates
upon this. He does not allow himself to be distracted by external factors. He knows that
he is something well beyond the mortal coil. This is why he is a seeker. He wants to really
know who he is. He thus looks inwards. And when he starts looking inwards, he finds the
answers. For the truth lies within us. We need to contemplate upon our inner selves and the
answers shall arise unbidden.

But we are so wrapped up in the cacophony of external senses that we turn a deaf ear to
the gently flute of consciousness. So badly are we distracted by the external world that we

have forgotten the art of looking inwards! This is why we focus on beautifying, decorating and building the body rather than exploring the soul.

Once we start looking inwards, we shall make friends with our true inner self, which is incandescent with knowledge, consciousness and bliss.

सुखमारब्धयोगस्य बहिर्दुःखमथात्मनि ।
बहिरेवासुखं सौख्यमध्यात्मं भावितात्मनः ॥ ५२ ॥

Newcomers to the path of meditation are conditioned

To feel happiness in the objects of the senses

And find spiritual contemplation to be a chore.

But accomplished yogIs who realise that there is no pleasure in external objects

Find the external world to be bereft of happiness

And spiritual contemplation to be full of joy.

The path of meditation may seem difficult and daunting to the newcomer, but those who continue to walk on it and become accomplished, find true and lasting inner bliss.

External objects of the world give momentary delectation and lasting discontent. The wise ones realise this and therefore make efforts to connect with their transcendental selves.

Those who have just begun their journey on this inner path, find the going tough initially because of their previous conditioning. As they progress further, they rise above the physical discomforts and begin to partake of the beatitude of the supreme soul.

तद्भूयात् तत्परान् पृच्छेत् तदिच्छेत् तत्परो भवेत् ।
येनाविद्यामयं रूपं त्यक्त्वा विद्यामयं ब्रजेत् ॥ ५३ ॥

He who desires spiritual perfection (liberation) ought to

Discuss, seek information on, desire and immerse himself in that

Which shall remove his nescience

And bring him true wisdom.

What causes nescience (absence of true knowledge)? Discussing, seeking information on, desiring and immersing oneself in external objects and considering them to be one with the soul causes nescience/ignorance.

As a corollary, discussing, seeking information on, desiring and immersing oneself in the soul and realising that the soul is distinct from all external objects brings about the attainment of true knowledge.

शरीरे वाचि चात्मानं सन्धत्ते वाक्शरीरयोः ।

भ्रान्तोऽभ्रान्तः पुनस्तत्त्वं पृथग् एषां निबुध्यते ॥ ५४ ॥

The confused person confuses the soul with speech and body.

But the unperplexed person knows that all three are different.

It is both common and easy to confuse the soul with the body and its activities of the body. Hence, we think that the body is the soul. Or, at least, the activities of the body are the soul. But in reality, all three - the soul, the body and its activities like speech, etc. are distinct.

The soul is pure consciousness. When it is liberated, it resides in mokSha, enjoying its four primary attributes of eternal perception, eternal knowledge, eternal bliss and eternal strength. When the soul is not liberated, it is embodied. Its primary attributes are obfuscated and impeded by karmas. These karmas are responsible for the soul's false cognition of itself, its delusion about reality and its attachment to external objects.

Speech is the combination of the embodied soul's effort and material karmas that make up sound.

The body is made up of karmic matter existing along with the soul. It co-exists with the soul, but is not one with it.

Hence, the soul, speech and body are different, even though found together.

The senses cause no happiness or well being in the soul.

Despite that, like children,

People get drawn towards them,

Owing to ignorance.

Objects of sensual desire cause no benefit to the soul. Most people confuse temporary and deceptive sensual pleasures with true happiness. They either do not realise, or conveniently ignore, the fact that sensual pleasure never lasts. And it leaves behind great desire and a residue of anxiety. Like rainfall in the desert, sensual desire is seldom lasting and causes more thirst than it quenches.

True happiness is lasting and requires no external objects. But how many people seek true happiness? Most would be perfectly content chasing objects of sensual desire. Those who are part of this ceaseless rat race, are like children. They deserve compassion, not scorn. For their heedless conduct is sure to lead them to misery.

न तदस्तीन्द्रियार्थेषु यत्क्षेमङ्करमात्मनः ।
तथापि रमते बालस्तत्रैवाज्ञानभावनात् ॥ ५५ ॥

The feeling of bliss enjoyed by a yogI is not caused by the senses.

Despite that, because of ignorance, childish people chase sensuous pleasure.

The world bAla (child) here denotes adults behaving like children by chasing sensuous pleasures, knowing fully well that sensuous pleasures are both fickle and fleeting.

The yogI is one who is detached from the world and immersed in his soul. Such a person enjoys true bliss which is reliable and lasting. It remains with us as long as we remain detached to non-self objects, whether living or non-living. It is the bliss experienced by one who is immersed in his soul.

Most of us know that yogIs enjoy this bliss. Despite this, we seek bliss through an obsessive pursuit of sensual pleasures. To put it differently, we know that the Sanjay Gandhi National Park is in Borivali, but we buy a ticket for Churchgate, sit on a Churchgate-bound train and spend an entire lifetime looking for the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Churchgate!...What would you call this kind of behaviour? Childish? Or deluded? It certainly isn't rational.

Be that as it may, one will have to walk the path of the yogIs in order to enjoy the bliss that is theirs.

चिरं सुषुप्तास्तमसि मूढात्मानः कुयोनिषु ।
अनात्मीयात्मभूतेषु ममाहमिति जाग्रति ॥ ५६ ॥

Since beginningless time, owing to the darkness of ignorance,

Deluded people keep taking birth in various realms

Identifying with and considering external objects to be theirs.

This is the extent of their awareness.

They are asleep to the existence of their soul.

Owing to nescience and delusion, we remain blissfully unaware of the existence and true nature of our soul. We keep taking rebirth in sansAra and continue to make the same mistake of identifying with external objects and considering them to be ours. For instance, I think that I am Manish Modi, owner of a prestigious century-old publishing house. But in reality, I am neither Manish Modi, nor has the publishing house anything to do with me. I am a soul. I have no other identity. No external dispositions are mine.

SansAra is a byword for misery. Despite this, I hang on to sansAra with all I've got. My mind, my emotions, my very consciousness is unceasingly engaged in external dispositions. There is constant awareness of the world around me. But where is the awareness of the true self within me?

Because of this awareness of external objects, and because of my intense attachment to them, I keep coming back to sansAra. Each time I identify with a non-self object, I add to my quantum of delusion. And the more delusion I have, the more likely I am to remain awake to the external world and asleep to my own true self.

The greatest irony is the fact that we who are asleep to the soul and awake to the external world think that we are all very aware and informed. As Shrimad Rajacandra lucidly wrote,

" BIjU ketalU kahiye, kar vichAr so pAm. "

- Atmasiddhi, verse 117

What else need be said,
Reflect upon reality and you will find (the truth) for yourself.

पश्येन् निरन्तरं देहमात्मनोऽनात्मचेतसा ।
अपरात्मधियाऽन्येषामात्मतत्त्वे व्यवस्थितः ॥ ५७ ॥

(In order to strengthen identification with the soul),
One should remain soundly immersed in one's soul,
Perceive one's body as not belonging to one,
And ought to also perceive the bodies of others
As being different from their souls.

Delusion causes us to perceive our bodies as our own. In reality, only our soul is our own. Nothing else belongs to us. Not our bodies, not our possessions, not even our dispositions. For they are the result of attachment and aversion. Our innate delusion causes this attachment and aversion to burgeon and blossom.

What is the way out?

We can only get rid of our delusion if we stop identifying with our bodies. One who has realised that his soul and body are distinct, different entities, only occupying a common space for a limited period of time, does not feel an iota of attachment for his body, and shall rid himself of all delusion. This takes place in the 12th guNasthAna (stage of spiritual purity), i.e. kShINa moha (nullified delusion)

Once delusion is destroyed, all the attachment and aversion one feels for external entities, whether sentient (parents, children, spouse, siblings) or insentient (body, home, wealth, et cetera) falls away and the supremely detached state of vItarAga (enlightened detachment) is attained.

May all of us attain this exalted state of vItarAga very soon.

अज्ञापितं न जानन्ति यथा मां ज्ञापितं तथा ।
मूढात्मानस्ततस्तेषां वृथा मे ज्ञापनाश्रमः ॥ ५८ ॥

Deluded souls cannot comprehend

The unexplained true nature of the soul on their own.

Nor can they comprehend it when it is explained to them.

Hence, it is useless to make the effort of explaining it to them.

Those who are immersed in their souls and engrossed in perceiving their true nature in its entirety, seldom bother with explaining the bliss of self-realisation to others. For they realise its futility. While explaining to others, one is deprived of the bliss of introspection. And since it is not possible for him to grant self-realisation to others, the yogI is asked to focus on his own soul.

However, if at all possible, the yogI may explain the path of self-realisation to others, provided his explanations do not interfere with his own spiritual quest. But in all cases, realising his own soul should be the first priority of the yogI.

यद्वोधयितुमिच्छामि तन् नाहं यदहं पुनः ।
ग्राह्यं तदप्यनान्यस्य तत् किमन्यस्य बोधये ॥ ५९ ॥

I am not (the supreme self) that which I am trying to explain.
What I am (that supreme self), cannot be understood by others.
So what could I possibly explain to them?

The supreme, transcendental soul cannot be explained in words. It is beyond the ambit of words. No one can explain all the attributes of the supreme self. These can only be experienced by the soul that has reached that stage of spiritual purity. And this stage of spiritual purity is only experienced by yogIs who follow the five major vows to perfection, master their senses and are immersed in their soul. When such yogIs engage with the external world, they cease to be in that state of spiritual tranquillity.

Hence, when the author starts explaining, his goal is to explain that supreme state of being to others. But how could he truly explain that supreme, transcendental state, when he himself ceases to be in that state the moment he begins to communicate with others? Besides, that supreme state of being is beyond words. It is inexpressible. There is no way he would be able to convey it aptly, even if he were to attempt to do so. Hence, what can he tell others?

Thus, the spiritual path is open to those who lead non-violent lives, control their senses and practise the teachings of truthfulness, gentleness, purity of the mind and body; and begin meditating. It is not for those who would discuss, theorise and not practise.

One who does not control his senses and tries to attain the transcendental soul is like the man who is trying to engage in reverse gear and top gear at the same time! He would either go in reverse or break his gear box! The senses take one towards the external world which goes against the spiritual quest of wanting to immerse oneself in the inner self.

बहिस्तुष्यति मूधात्मा पिहितज्योतिरन्तरे ।
तुष्यत्यन्तः प्रबुद्धात्मा बहिव्यावृत्तकौतुकः ॥ ६० ॥

One whose light of knowledge is dimmed,
Is satisfied with external objects.
But one who is spiritually awakened,

Has no curiosity for the external world.

His inner state fills him with joy.

One whose inner being is not enlightened, sees the external world as a field of endeavour. He allows his passions, his likes and dislikes to govern all his actions of mind, speech and body. Thus, if he has a propensity towards meanness and nastiness, he would spend all his time and energy harming others. If his propensity is towards hoarding, he will focus all his energies on earning wealth and property. If his propensity is towards art and creativity, he will expend all his energies in creating works of art, in whichever form he feels he expresses himself best. If his propensity is towards goodness, he will spend the rest of his life doing good works, great deeds of charity, deliver great sermons for the well being of the whole world, and carry out many deeds of kindness and generosity.

On the other hand, one whose inner being is enlightened, channels all his energies into his inner world. The external world ceases to exist for him. He is no longer governed by attachment and aversion, likes and dislikes. He is constantly engaged in introspection. His focus is on self-improvement, self-immersion and self-realisation. He has no desire to prove himself to anyone and does not seek any external engagement. He has reached a stage of equanimity where remaining within himself fills him with joy.

न जानन्ति शरीराणि सुखदुःखान्यबुद्धयः ।
निग्रहानुग्रहधियं तथाप्यत्रैव कुर्वते ॥ ६१ ॥

Bodies know not pain or pleasure!

But the deluded ones base their perception of pleasure and pain,

On their bodily states.

Those who are deluded, do not know their true self. They identify with their bodies. They know the nature of pain and pleasure. They fail to understand that the body is made up of inert matter. It knows neither pain nor pleasure. It is our attachment to the body that makes us feel pain or pleasure. This attachment leads us to gaining more karmas, thus prolonging our stay in sansAra.

The vItarAga Jinas, walking on the fourfold path of samyak darshana (rational perception), samyak jnAna (rational knowledge), samyak chAritra (rational conduct) and samyak tapa (rational penance) purified their souls and attained liberation. They broke this identification

with the body and shed all karmic fetters. They reside now in mokSha (at the apex of the Universe, where only liberated souls reside), enjoying the four-fold joys of ananta sukha (eternal bliss), ananta vIrya (eternal strength), ananta darshana (eternal perception) and ananta jnAna (eternal knowledge). We too are capable of becoming Siddhas (perfected souls who have attained liberation from the cycle of rebirth). It is our identification with the body that is holding us back. But deluded people do not realise this and instead, hanker for things that please the body.

Why do deluded people identify so strongly with the body? Because in our embodied state, our karmas show their beneficial/harmful effects through our bodies. For instance, if I have good karmas in a stage of fruition, my body will be in great shape, I will feel good about myself. However, if my bad karmas are in a state of fruition, my body will be racked by disease, weakness and disability. Hence, one who has not realised that the body and soul are different, will constantly identify with his body as the cause or giver of all pleasure and pain; without even realising the fickleness of bodily pleasure and pain, which is governed by the senses.

The five senses and their pleasures are the most fickle of all. They give momentary happiness and lasting pain. Hence, sensual desires deceive us and keep us in a state of anxiety and misery. If that were not enough, they attract more karmas, which serve to ensure a longer stay in sansAra for us. We get caught up in the endless cycle of transmigration and keep alternating between fleeting pleasure and lasting pain.

We need to realise that the body cannot be the cause or recipient of eternal bliss. For it is governed by the senses, which are ephemeral. The body itself is transient. Only the soul/self/AtmA is lasting. Hence, only the soul can be the recipient of lasting bliss.

But since the body is perceptible to the senses and the soul is not, we tend to identify with the body and not the soul. Which is why, our perception of happiness and pain is based on the body.

On the other hand, those who desire liberation and lasting bliss destroy this identification with the body by conquering their senses through appropriate perception, knowledge, conduct and penance. They are sure to attain liberation. For they are walking in the footsteps of the Jinās.

स्वबुद्ध्या यावद्गृह्णीयात् कायवाक्चेतसां त्रयम् ।
संसारस्तावदेतेषां भेदाभ्यासे तु निर्वृतिः ॥ ६२ ॥

One remains in sansAra

Till the time one identifies with one's body, speech and mind.

One is liberated

Once one stops feeling oneness with the body.

What is sansAra (transmigration)?

It is the entire gamut of rebirths, that souls remain stuck in, unless they stop identifying with the body, speech and mind. Once this identification ceases, rebirth ceases and they attain mokSha (liberation).

What is liberation?

Liberation is freedom from the cycle of transmigration. Liberation is everlasting unperturbed existence in a state of eternal bliss. It can only be attained by souls who have developed bheda-jnAna (the ability, insight and wisdom to differentiate between the soul and the body).

What are the factors that contribute to sansAra?

Identifying with the body.

Identifying with our and others' speech

Identifying with the mind and its thought processes

What leads to liberation?

Through the perfect practise of ahinsA (non-violence), saMyama (self-control) and tapa (penance); and constantly inculcating the absolute viewpoint, the advanced mendicant crosses the twelfth guNasthAna (stage of spiritual purity) of kShINa moha (negligible delusion). He thus attains vItarAga (supreme detachment) and kaivalya (omniscience). VItarAga and kaivalya are concomitant. A soul attains vItarAga and kaivalya only after having destroyed all four soul-destroying karmas. Such a soul is bound to attain liberation in that birth.

It is said that all the souls in the world who have attained liberation, have done so with the help of bheda-vijnAna. And all those who remain in sansAra, do so because they lack this bheda-vijnAna and identify with their body and its manifestations.

ghane vastre yathAtmAnaM na ghanaM manyate tathA .

ghane svadehe.apy AtmAnaM na ghanaM manyate budhaH .. 63

जीर्णे वस्त्रे यथात्मानं न जीर्णम् मन्यते ।

जीर्णे स्वदेहेऽप्य् आत्मानं न जीर्णं मन्यते बुधः ॥ ६४

naShTe vastre yathAtmAnaM na naShTaM manyate tathA .

naShTe svadehe.apy AtmAnaM na naShTaM manyate budhaH .. 65

रक्ते वस्त्रे यथात्मानं न रक्तं मन्यते तथा ।

रक्ते स्वदेहेऽप्य् आत्मानं न रक्तं मन्यते बुधः ॥ ६६

Just as a man wearing thick clothes does not consider himself to have become thick,

Similarly, the wise ones do not consider themselves as being fat

Even when their body becomes fat.

(For they realise that the soul and the body are distinct entities.) 63

Just as a man wearing old clothes does not consider himself to have become old,

Similarly, the wise ones do not consider themselves as being old

Even when their body becomes old.

(For they realise that the soul and the body are distinct entities.) 64

Just as a man wearing torn clothes does not consider himself to have become torn,

Similarly, the wise ones do not consider themselves as being torn

Even when their body becomes torn/damaged.

(For they realise that the soul and the body are distinct entities.) 65

Just as a man wearing red clothes does not consider himself to have become red,

Similarly, the wise ones do not consider themselves as being red

Even when their body becomes red.

(For they realise that the soul and the body are distinct entities.) 66

As the 13th century Persian mystic Rumi put it,

“I am not this hair, I am not this skin.

I am the soul that lives within.”

Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi

Even deluded people like us know that we are different from our clothes! The wise ones who have imbibed bheda-jnAna (the ability, insight and wisdom to differentiate between the soul and the body, and to identify with the soul and not the body) know that the soul and the body are distinct. Which is why they annihilate all attachment for the body and its activities and break out of the cycle of endless rebirths (sansAra).

The method is clear. Stop identifying with the body. Imbibe detachment with all that is external - the senses, other people, material objects, etc. Attain oneness with the soul. Remain immersed in the soul. Liberation is yours.

यस्य सस्पन्दमाभाति निःस्पन्देन समं जगत् ।
अप्रज्ञमक्रियाभोगं स शमं याति नेतरः ॥ ६७॥

Only he attains inner peace,
To whom this vibrant and pulsating world
Seems as dull as an insentient object,
Without any activity or delectation.

SansAra is full of sentient beings and material objects. There is no dearth of sensual objects in sansAra. Ironically, sentient beings cannot be seen, as the soul is incorporeal. Only insentient objects can be seen. Hence, all that we see in sansAra is inanimate. And yet we chase material objects. Indeed, we base our assessment of people on the basis of their material success. Little realising that pursuing material success is like chasing a rainbow. It is an unending quest that is certain to end in dissatisfaction and frustration. And yet, we dedicate our lives to this endless chase.

Even we, the sentient beings living in sansAra, are like inanimate, insentient objects, for we lack rational perception. Hence, this sansAra is full of dull, dreary objects and people, who cannot think beyond their material wants. To the mendicant who has attained spiritual awakening, sansAra is nothing but a collection of inanimate people and objects, none of whom interest him. He therefore turns inwards and finds true peace. For peace and tranquility lie within.

Those who seek solace in sensual pleasure and the unashamed pursuit of worldly objects, only attain frustration and disillusionment. For material objects and sensual pleasures are

capricious by nature. They are deceptive, hard to attain and even harder to enjoy. It is futile to chase them in order to attain peace and contentment.

शरीरकञ्चुकेनात्मा संवृतज्ञानविग्रहः ।

नात्मानं बुध्यते तस्माद्भ्रमत्यतिचिरं भवे ॥ ६८ ॥

The soul lies inside the cloak of the body (and is imperceptible to the senses).

Ignorant beings fail to realise the existence of their soul which embodies knowledge
And hence keep wandering in the ocean of transmigration.

The soul is the embodiment of knowledge. Ignorant beings fail to realise that their soul is enveloped by the body. For the soul is incorporeal and cannot be seen by the five senses. While the body is corporeal, and can easily be perceived by the senses. Hence, they see the body and identify with it.

On the other hand, the soul can only be experienced. It can be realised by those who make appropriate efforts to practise non-violence, self-control and penance and to attain rational perception, rational knowledge, rational conduct and rational penance.

The vast majority of living beings seldom look beyond their senses. Hence, they do not realise their souls. Nor do they make any efforts to realise their souls. They live in ignorance.

How does one perceive the soul?

Just because the soul cannot be seen, does not mean it does not exist. Just as water added to milk cannot be seen once it is mixed, the soul exists in the body but cannot be seen.

We can perceive our souls through:

1. Experience
2. Inference
3. Faith in the teachings of the Jinās

1. Experience: We cannot see the air, but can we not feel the wind?

2. Inference: I exist. I am aware. I see. I smell, taste, touch and hear. Therefore, I am.
I experience. I realise. I think. Therefore, I am.

3. Faith in the teachings of the Jinās: The Jinās propounded that the soul exists, is eternal and remains in the cycle of transmigration (in sansAra) unless it sheds all its karmas. Once

it sheds all its karmas, it attains liberation, exists in a state of eternal bliss which is its true nature. I have faith in the Jinās' teachings and therefore I believe that the soul exists.

What makes us remain in sansAra?

Since the path of liberation is so clearly laid out in the Jinās' teachings, which have come to us via the writings of our AchAryas, why do we not follow them fully, and attain liberation?

What is holding us back?

1. mithyAtva (delusion)
2. nidAna (desire for worldly gain from spiritual endeavour)
3. kaShAya (passions)
4. avirati (non-detachment from sensual desire)
5. yoga (sum total of all activity)

1. MithyAtva : We live in delusion. We keep identifying with our body and consider it to be ours. We are constantly informed of the world through our senses. We let them govern our actions. We live in denial of our soul and of the spiritual path. Because we are so fascinated by the gross sansAra, we simply cannot work up the moral courage to walk towards the subtle mokSha.

2. NidAna : The few spiritual endeavours we make, are often made for worldly gains. For instance, if I fast, I hope that as a result of my fast I may gain some fame, some glory and perhaps build new contacts. If any spiritual endeavour is made for worldly gains, it is a wasted effort. It is like spending ten crore (hundred million) rupees for a speck of mud.

3. KaShAya : Our passions let us down. The four passions of krodha (anger), mAna (arrogance), mAya (artifice) and lobha (avarice) constantly rob us of our peace of mind and earn us great mountains of negative karmas.

4. Avirati : We are creatures of desire. We constantly crave material objects. We are unable to step back from any of our material or sensual cravings. This earns us great demerit and keeps us in sansAra.

5. Yoga : All activity leads to the inflow of karmas to the soul. Thus, we keep attracting and binding more and more karmas through our acts of mind, speech and body.

Until and unless we shed all karmas, we shall never attain liberation. But we are so busy adding more karmas, shedding karmas is not a priority. This is why we remain in sansAra.

Since the soul is the embodiment of knowledge, and we all have a soul, are we omniscient? We are not omniscient as of now. Omniscient exists in our souls, just as oil exists in an oil seed. Or as fire exists in fuel. Or as ghee (purified butter) exists in milk. Omniscience exists in potential form. To attain omniscience in kinetic form, we will have follow the footsteps of the Jinas and purify our souls.

I sincerely pray that we may all walk in the footsteps of the Jinas and attain liberation. And until we attain liberation, may be reborn in a samosharaNa (divine stage where the Jinas speak in the divya dhvani (divine wordless speech which is understood by all living beings present) and adumbrate the path of liberation), where we spend our existence at the feet of the Jinas, worshiping them with all our heart and soul. Worshiping them in order to become like them.

प्रविशद्गलतां व्यूहे देहेऽणूनां समाकृतौ ।
स्थितिभ्रान्त्या प्रपद्यन्ते तमात्मानमबुद्धयः ॥ ६९ ॥

The body is made up of atoms and molecules that are constantly in a state of flux.
It is impermanent.

But deluded persons consider the body to be constant and permanent
And hence, think of it as their soul.

The constant presence of the body is illusory. The body is impermanent because its components (at the cellular level) are constantly undergoing creation and cessation.

For example, I have a full head of hair. But is the hair on my head constant? Did I have the same hair on my head when I was a kid? Obviously not. The hair that I had when I was a kid is not what I have today. Old hair falls, new hair takes its place and I wrongly think I have the same hair.

Similarly, the body is made up of very minute particles of matter known as pudgala. They are constantly undergoing change. However, the body looks the same to us. We think our body is constant and belongs to us. This leads to a misguided identification with the body. A more nuanced understanding of reality would have shown us that the soul is distinct from the body, even though it may be sharing the same space with it.

To use the analogy of a car and driver, the soul is the driver, and the body is the car. While the soul is in sansAra, it has a body. Hence, it is driving the car. And just as the car obeys the commands of the driver, the body obeys our commands. Ayu karmas determine our life span. They are the gasoline that impels the car. Just as you cannot run a car when it is out of gas, you cannot move your body once you run out of Ayu karmas. So you take on another body and begin the same process once again. This is known as rebirth.

To take the analogy further, a driver who is fully alert and conscious can drive his car safely and the car will obey all his commands with alacrity. But if the driver were drunk, the car would not obey his commands because his own body would not obey his instructions. In which case, he would most likely crash.

Hence, the yogI who is immersed in his soul can make his body carry out the ascetic practices he desires, and his body will obey him. Whereas we, intoxicated by delusion, are poor drivers as our senses do not obey our commands. Which is why we keep crashing back into sansAra.

Only when we cease to identify with our bodies and shed all karmas, can we break out of the cycle of sansAra. This is why we worship the Jinas, who broke this cycle and attained liberation. We worship them to attain their qualities.

गौरः स्थूलः कुशो वाऽहमित्यङ्गेनाविशेषयन् ।
आत्मानं धारयेन् नित्यं केवलज्ञप्तिविग्रहम् ॥ ७० ॥

Think not that you are fair-skinned, obese or slim,

For these are qualities of the body.

You are the soul,

Which has the attribute of knowledge (and is non-corporeal).

We are souls. Currently, our soul resides inside a body. But the body is not its identity. We should know our souls to be independent of the body. The body is there, because karmas are attached to our soul. But the body is not our soul. For instance, if I am wearing a blue sweater, my upper body may seem blue. But it is only due to the sweater that I am wearing. My body retains its skin tone. It has not become blue. Similarly, the soul retains its characteristics of being eternal, non-corporeal and possessed of the central attribute of

knowledge and perception. In fact, one may say that the only 'body' the soul has, is its jnAna-sharIra (body of knowledge) which is non-corporeal.

Hence, we must differentiate between the soul and the body. And not impute characteristics of the body - like complexion, height, build, etc. to the soul. The scriptures give us the example of a lamp placed in an earthen pitcher. The lamp may be present in the earthen pitcher - but retains its own identity. If the pitcher that contains it is thick, we will not describe the lamp as being thick. If the pitcher is thin, we will not call the lamp thin. If the pitcher is painted white, we will not call the lamp white. If the pitcher is painted red, we will not call the lamp red. Similarly, we must distinguish between the soul (the lamp) and the body (the pitcher). The process of self-realisation truly begins once we develop this bheda-jnAna (ability to distinguish between soul and body).

मुक्तिरेकान्तिकी तस्य चित्ते यस्याचला धृतिः ।
तस्य नैकान्तिकी मुक्तिर्यस्य नास्त्यचला धृतिः ॥ ७१ ॥

For one possessed of unwavering mind and unflagging determination,
Liberation is certain.

For one whose mind is wavering and whose determination is weak,
Liberation is doubtful.

One who has understood the soul fully; is unwavering in his understanding and belief in the soul and its attributes as explained by the Jinas because he has internalised bheda vijnAna (the ability to distinguish between soul and body); and has unflagging determination to follow the yathAkhyAta chAritra (appropriate conduct) as laid down by the Jinas, is certain to attain liberation. On the other hand, one whose understanding of the soul is not perfect because his grasp of bheda vijnAna is shaky, has unsteady determination and flawed conduct. Such a person is not certain to attain liberation.

Only those mendicants who have truly internalised bheda vijnAna and follow the three jewels of rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct impeccably, are certain to attain liberation. Once bheda vijnAna has been internalised, it becomes part of their basic attribute (sva-bhAva). It cannot then be lost. For instance, I am a soul and knowing is seeing is my basic attribute. This can never be taken away from me, whether I live in sansAra (transmigration) or in mokSha (liberation).

Thus, those who understood bheda vijnAna correctly, make it their basic attribute and are deeply, deeply convinced that it is true, have internalised bheda vijnAna. Their conduct reflects their perfect understanding and attains the levels of yathAkhyAta chAritra (appropriate conduct as adumbrated by the Jinas). Such persons are bound to attain liberation. May we become such persons ourselves!

जनेभ्यो वाक् ततः स्पन्दो मनसश्चित्तविभ्रमाः ।
भवन्ति तस्मात् संसर्गं जनैर्योगी ततस्त्यजेत् ॥ ७२ ॥

When you meet people, you talk.

When you talk, your mind is distracted.

Therefore, the yogI should stay away from people

(In order to focus on his inner self).

Interacting with people is a constant source of distraction. There is always conversation. When there is conversation, one is distracted from one's central purpose. Especially for a yogI, to engage in meaningless conversations with people is a waste of time. The distracted mind finds itself in all kinds of vibhrama (restlessness and confusion) since it has lost its central focus and once again engaged with the external world.

The yogI has to focus on his own soul, through the means of his mind, speech and body. This focus on the inner self gives him bliss. Any distraction from this inward focus deprives him of yogic bliss and dumps him into the minefield of sansAra and its web of attachment and aversion, that holds him back in sansAra and prevents him from attaining liberation. Any conversation involves activity and this activity churns up emotions and causes the yogI's descent from the exalted state of meditation to the lower state of worldly activity. Hence, the yogI who seeks spiritual bliss is advised to cease contact with others and live in seclusion, focusing on his soul.

ग्रामोऽरण्यमिति द्वेषा निवासोऽनात्मदर्शिनाम् ।
दृष्टात्मनां निवासस्तु विविक्तात्मैव निश्चलः ॥ ७३ ॥

Those who have not realised their souls,

Live in either one of two places, village or forest.

Those who realised their souls,

Reside in their immovable pure soul.

What does living in seclusion really mean? Is it truly possible to live in seclusion?

Seclusion means being able to live undisturbed. Is such a life possible anywhere? No place on earth is free from other living beings. Nature causes its own set of distractions. Try spending one night in a cave. There will be several insects, mosquitoes, tiny furry animals, and sometimes bats. Nature itself causes several disturbances through heat, cold, monsoon showers, snow, sleet, fog, et cetera. Hence, one who relies on the external world to remain static in order to attain an untrammelled state of oneness with the soul, is bound to be disappointed. For, it is simply not possible to live in seclusion.

What the learned author meant by seclusion, is residing in one's soul, a state of existence where one is so immersed in introspection that one becomes indifferent to external distraction...Where one transcends external barriers and attains spiritual elation. Such a person, whether he lives in a village or in a forest, shall live in bliss. For his source of felicity is inside him. He does not rely on external factors to attain happiness.

It is futile to rely on external factors to find happiness. For external factors lead to unhappiness and misery. Only one who is immersed in his soul find peace and joy, irrespective of whether one lives in a village or in a jungle. One whose consciousness is focused outward shall suffer the slings and arrows of misfortune, for such is the way of sansAra.

देहान्तरगते बीजं देहेऽस्मिन् आत्मभावना ।

बीजं विदेहनिष्पत्तेरात्मन्येवात्मभावना ॥ ७४ ॥

The seeds of rebirth lie in identifying with the body.

The seeds of liberation lie in identifying only with the soul.

Who am I? The soul, or the body? Or both?

Let us answer this question with another question. Who am I, my clothes or my body?

When compared to clothes, which are external and keep changing, the answer is clear. The clothes are not me. For they keep changing, can be bought and sold. And they are not sentient. They cannot feel, see, smell, hear or taste. Nor can they think. I am sentient. I can think, feel, see, smell, hear and taste. Hence, the clothes are not me. I am me.

Who is this I? The body or the soul?

Just as we take on and wear new clothes each day, we take on a new body in each birth. Bodies keep changing, the soul remains the same. Hence, I am the soul, not the body. One who attains this identification with the soul, is sure to attain liberation. One who still identifies with the body, continues to be reborn. Identifying with the body and considering it to be one's own, is the primary cause of rebirth.

The body is ours from the vyavahAra (practical) point of view. But from the nishcaya (absolute) point of view, only the soul is ours. Those who internalise this understanding and give up all attachment for their bodies and all other external factors, are certain to break away from the fetters of rebirth.

नयत्यात्मानमात्मैव जन्म निर्वाणमेव च ।
गुरुरात्मात्मनस्तस्मान्नान्योऽस्ति परमार्थतः ॥ ७५ ॥

The soul takes itself to rebirth or liberation.

Hence, from the absolute viewpoint,

The soul is its own guru

And needs no other.

Jain scriptures teach us the efficacy of both, the absolute viewpoint (nishcaya naya) and the practical viewpoint (vyavahAra naya). Both are concomitant.

From the absolute viewpoint, the soul is its own guru and needs no other. But from the practical viewpoint, we need a guru. A guru cannot earn you liberation. A guru cannot get you a job. A guru cannot cure your sickness. What a guru can do is prepare you in a way that will enable you to attain these things on your own. The true guru makes his followers independent, capable thinkers who can arrive at decisions on their own and rely on the calm and rational approach to life.

People find it surprising that I am still in touch with my first grade teacher - Mrs Zarine B. Merchant. I cannot explain to you the immense gratitude, love and respect that I feel for her. She taught me how to read and write, and encouraged me to express myself. She gave me the confidence to write. Sure, what I write today, is based on my own experience and

understanding - but had she not taught me the three 'r's, and not instilled confidence in me, would I have been able to read, understand and share the teachings of the Jinas?

From the absolute point of view, the soul is its own guru. For, only the soul can take itself forward, either in the direction of mokSha or sansAra. But from the practical point of view, we need teachers to show us right from wrong, and to point us in the right direction. Let us take the classic Indian example of Arjuna, the legendary archer, and Drona, his guru. From the absolute viewpoint, Arjuna became an expert archer through his own efforts. But from the practical viewpoint, Arjuna was guided by Drona. Without Drona's expert coaching, Arjuna could not have become Arjuna.

Similarly, the soul that learns the teachings of the Jinas, has to make the effort of internalising them; of accomplishing rational perception, rational knowledge, rational conduct and rational penance as taught by the Jinas; and at the most intimate level, of ceasing to identify with his body and with all external (sensual) stimuli. Only then can the soul attain freedom from karmic bondage, and liberation. This is the Jain path of purification.

दृधात्मबुद्धिर्देहादावुत्पश्यन्न आशमात्मनः ।
मित्रादिभिर्वियोगं च बिभेति मरणाद्दुःखम् ॥ ७६ ॥

Physical decay and the loss of friends and loved ones through death,
Makes one who is strongly convinced that his body is his identity,
Greatly fear death.

The deluded person feels oneness with the body. He is forever trying to beautify and strengthen it, for it is the sum total of his deluded existence. Such a person is greatly affected when he is confronted by old age, illness and age-related ailments. Also, since he identifies with his own body, he does so with others' bodies. So if his friends or loved ones die, he grieves their loss and fears his own death.

Thus, he lives in fear of the inevitable, dying a thousand deaths every day. His internal disposition is either sorrowful (Arta dhyAna) or passionate and fiery (raudra dhyAna). His emotional disposition causes more karmas to attach themselves to his soul. This takes his soul farther away from the two dispositions that could help his soul attain liberation,

auspicious disposition (dharma dhyAna) and immaculate disposition (shukla dhyAna). He thus perpetuates his stay in this den of misery known as sansAra.

आत्मन्येवात्मधीरन्यां शरीरगतिमात्मनः ।

मन्यते निर्भयं त्यक्त्वा वस्त्रं वस्त्रान्तरग्रहम् ॥ ७७ ॥

One who firmly believes that his soul is his identity is fearless.

He knows that the body is a distinct external substance.

(He regards death and rebirth as) the changing of one set of clothes for another.

Death is the litmus test of your faith. If you are truly detached, you face death unflinchingly. This is why, when they fall sick, Jain mendicants choose sallekhanA (reasoned voluntary death) over medical treatment. For, to become a Jain mendicant, you need to be detached from the body and focused on your soul. You need to develop bheda jnAna (the ability to distinguish between soul and body). Only then can you be called a true Jain muni.

The true mendicant is deeply convinced that his soul is his true self and the body is just an external attachment. Whatever happens to the body does not bother him. He only accepts food and water, if they are offered to him in the prescribed manner. Else, he ignores his thirst and hunger. He does not beg. His conduct is that of a lion (siMha vRRitti) who is the master of his own destiny. He is truly fearless. For he knows that the soul is invincible and eternal. And that the body is simply a vessel that contains his soul.

Just as water, whether stored in a pot, or in a jug, or in a vase, does not stop being water. Similarly, the soul, whether present in the body of an ant or a lion, or an elephant, or a human, does not lose its identity. The mendicant knows this and knows that death of the body is merely the soul giving up one set of clothes for another set of clothes. Hence, he remains unperturbed by the external world and remains focused inwards in a state of nirvikalpa samAdhi (unruffled meditative state). Thus, he sheds all karmas attached to his soul and attains liberation.

May we all attain this state of inward focus!

व्यवहारे सुषुप्तो यः स जागर्त्यात्मगोचरे ।

जागर्ति व्यवहारेऽस्मिन् सुषुप्तश्चात्मगोचरे ॥ ७८ ॥

One who is asleep to the external world,

Is awake to his inner consciousness.

One who is awake to the world around him,

Is unaware of his own soul.

Life has two aspects. One which is visible to us- the material aspect. And one which we cannot see but can experience - the spiritual aspect. Both aspects are real. Their existence is undeniable.

The material aspect is an agglomeration of pudgala (inert matter). It causes us pleasure or sorrow, depending on our karmas. Either way, the material aspect leads to further inflow of karmas in our soul. Hence, it is detrimental to our spiritual progress.

Let us use the analogy of food - calorie-laden rich food. Whether the food is tasty or not, eating it will result in weight gain. Similarly, material objects would either give me pleasure (like tasty food) or pain (like tasteless food), but both would result in karmic inflow in my soul (like the weight gain caused by overeating.).

The spiritual aspect is the soul itself. The Jinas have taught us that the soul is eternal, indestructible and remains in sansAra only as long as it is bound by karmas. The soul that sheds its karmas through the four-pronged approach of samyak darshana (rational perception), samyak jnAna (rational knowledge), samyak chAritra (rational conduct) and samyak tapa (rational penance) attains lasting freedom from karmic bondage and attains liberation.

One who walks in the footsteps of the Jinas and has immersed his consciousness in his soul, chooses to distance himself from the frenzied madness of the external world. He remains inward looking and focuses on his true self - which is distinct from the body, the mind, the emotions and all other external entities. Such a person becomes unaware of the external world, for he recognises its futility.

On the other hand, one who is constantly fascinated by the external world is a slave to his senses. Such a person is incapable of seeing beyond his senses, needs and desires. He is unaware of the spiritual realm and is asleep as far as his inner consciousness is concerned.

The one who is aware of his true self and has distanced himself from the external world may be called 'awakened' and the one who fascinated by the external world may be called 'unawakened'.

आत्मानमन्तरे दृष्ट्वा दृष्ट्वा देहादिकं बहिः ।
तयोरन्तरविज्ञानादभ्यासादच्युतो भवेत् ॥ ७९ ॥

Perceive the soul to be you,
And the body to be distinct from you.
Internalise this bheda vijnAna and attain liberation.

Question: What is the launching pad for liberation?

Answer: Following the three guptis (controls) of mind, speech and body and imbibing bheda vijnAna (the ability, insight and wisdom to distinguish between soul and body).

Knowing that your soul is you and that your body is not you, is the key to imbibe this bheda vijnAna. Once the soul is deeply convinced of this distinctness, it shall become detached from all external objects and people and thus attain liberation.

Our belief that the body is ours keeps us away from liberation. The more attached we are to the body and other external substances, the more karmas we bind. The more detached we are, the less karmas we bind. Once we give up mineness for the body, it shall no longer accompany us in the next birth. In other words, we shall attain liberation..

How does this realisation come about? Through constant practise. Through practising the twelve types of tapa, through a non-violent lifestyle and through perfect self-control.

The soul that is no longer distracted by the clarion call of the senses, can listen to the inner music of spiritual experience.

May we all succeed in shutting out the cacophony of external distractions and enjoy the blissful harmony of the soul...

पूर्वं दृष्टात्मतत्त्वस्य विभात्युन्मत्तवज् जगत् ।
स्वभ्यस्तात्मधियः पश्चत् काष्टःअपाषानरूपवत् ॥ ८० ॥

To the freshly realised soul,
This external world first appears like the frenzied activity of a madman.
With more practise and deeper insight,
The world appears as inert as a block of wood, or a chunk of rock.

What would you think on seeing a person rushing around duty free shops, blowing up all his money and credit cards on overpriced trinkets, and then dumping all his acquisitions as well as his air ticket and boarding pass in the trash can and leaving? You would think he was nuts! And you would be right.

Not surprisingly, the bedlam of the external world, and its chaotic activities appear like the hysterical actions of a madman to the mendicant who has recently realised his soul. He is nonplussed by people running around in a state of acute tension, pursuing sensual pleasure and despairing when it eludes them. He cannot comprehend why people focus the sum total of their life force on accumulating things that are irrelevant, useless and add to their bondage.

As he delves deeper in his soul and becomes more adept, nothing surprises him anymore. He is no longer fascinated by the incomprehensible workings of the materialistic world. He sees the world as nothing more animate than a block of wood or a chunk of stone. For he knows that what is visible, is insentient. And what is sentient is not visible. He thus remains immersed in himself, remote from the world despite being a part of it.

शृण्वन्न अप्यन्यतः कामं वदन्न अपि कलेवरात् ।
नात्मानं भावयेद्भिन्नं यावत् तावन् न मोक्षभाक् ॥ ८१ ॥

Despite hearing of it constantly from others,
Despite speaking about it oneself,
Unless one experiences the soul to be different from the body,
One cannot be a candidate for liberation.

In the worldly as well spiritual fields of endeavour, you've got to walk the talk. Else, you'd never make the cut. Irrespective of how many discourses you listen to, irrespective of how incessantly you surround yourself with Jain teachings, and irrespective of how eloquently you may speak on the subject, unless you can experience your soul as a separate entity from the body, you will never be able to attain liberation.

तथैव भावयेद्देहाद्यावृत्त्यात्मानमात्मनि ।
यथा न पुनरात्मानं देहे स्वप्नेऽपि योजयेत् ॥ ८२ ॥

Take away your attention from the body,

And completely immerse your consciousness in your own soul
Until you imbibe such complete identification with your soul
That you shall not identify with your body
Even in your dreams.

What does one have to do, in order to qualify for the process of self-realisation? What is the minimum qualification?

Following the five vows of non-violence, truthfulness, ethical behaviour, purity of mind of body and indifference towards material wealth is the basic minimum qualification for any kind of spiritual endeavour.

Only one who follows these five vows can delve into his inner self. With sincere and constant practice, this delving becomes deeper and new insights are gained. In time, the external conduct attains higher levels of purity, and inward consciousness grows stronger. This leads to a sense of detachment from worldly desires and an increased focus on self-contemplation. The sense of distinctness from the body and oneness with the soul becomes stronger. This concatenation of spiritual events leads to further detachment from worldly desires and a constantly deepening self-awareness. When this self-awareness becomes strong, the soul begins immersing its consciousness in itself. This period of self-immersion is seminal to the soul's inward journey.

We ought to make all efforts to attain this self-immersion and remain in it for as long as possible. This will not only give us a sense of incomparable peace that is beyond the grasp of words; but also strengthen our realisation that the body is not ours, but is external to us. So much so, that we would never think of the body with a sense of mineness, even in our dreams.

अपुण्यमब्रतैः पुण्यं व्रतैर्मोक्षस्तयोर्व्ययः ।
अब्रतानीव मोक्षार्थी व्रतान्यपि ततस्त्यजेत् ॥ ८३ ॥

Not following the vows leads to sin.

Following the vows leads to merit.

(Since both lead to inflow of karma in the soul)

One seeking liberation must give up both, sin and merit

For liberation can only be attained by the destruction of both.

The five sins: violence, lies, stealing, adultery and avarice

The five vows: non-violence, truthfulness, ethical behaviour, purity of mind of body and indifference towards material wealth

pApa (sin): Inflow of negative karma in the soul

PuNya (merit): Inflow of positive karma in the soul

Our souls reside in sansAra because karmas are attached to them. Had they been free from karma, the souls would have attained liberation. Hence, it is essential to shed all karma from the soul.

How do we shed karma from the soul?

Through practising ahinsA (non-violence), saMyama (self-control) and tapa (penance); getting rid of all rAga (attachment) and dveSha (aversion), shedding mithyAtva (false perception) and attaining the state of vItarAga (supreme detachment).

What is the role of puNya (merit) and pApa (sin/demerit)? If both puNya and pApa are to be avoided in order attain liberation, why prefer puNya over pApa? Because puNya enables and pApa disables. PuNya takes you forward and pApa holds you back.

Let me give you the analogy of an airplane. When an airplane flies, it does not need wheels. In fact, in modern aircrafts, wheels are retracted after the plane is airborne. But before it takes off, it needs wheels.

The advanced votary needs neither puNya nor pApa, for he has to shed all karmas, auspicious as well as inauspicious. PuNya karmas are the wheels that enable an aircraft to move speedily on the runway and take off. Without wheels, the aircraft would be unable to take off. Continuing the same analogy, pApa karmas would lead to an absence of wheels or flat tyres. Can an aircraft take off without wheels? No. Hence, puNya karma is preferable to pApa karma.

There are three types of bhAva (dispositions): shuddha bhAva, shubha bhAva and ashubha bhAva.

shuddha bhAva: Pristine state of inner being or disposition, bereft of all attachment and aversion.

shubha bhAva: Auspicious state of disposition, free from inauspicious attachment and aversion, but conspicuous for its auspicious attachment and aversion.

ashubha bhAva: Inauspicious state of disposition, free from auspicious attachment and aversion, but conspicuous for its inauspicious attachment and aversion.

Only the advanced votary, who has risen from the level of ashubha bhAva and shubha bhAva, needs to get rid of both puNya and pApa in order to attain shuddha bhAva.

But for ordinary people like us, following the vows and earning merits is the way forward.

For instance, Sachin Tendulkar need not put in four hours of net practise before a match in order to do well in the match. He would just need to 'get his eye in' and then relax while he walks to his crease. But for my teenage son Samyak to become a professional cricketer of Sachin's stature, he will have to spend at least four hours a day working hard at the nets for the next ten years.

So let us bear in mind that this verse is addressed to the advanced votary, not the average layperson or mendicant. For people like us, the path of goodness is an important stepping stone to take us on the highway of purity. If nothing else the path of goodness and kindness shall save us from the pitfalls of evilness, sin and violence that line the streets.

अव्रतानि परित्यज्य व्रतेषु परिनिष्ठितः ।

त्यजेत्तान्यपि सम्प्राप्य परमं पदमात्मनः ॥ ८४ ॥

Give up vowlessness by following the vows with great sincerity.

Once you attain supreme purity of the soul,

Give up (attachment to) the vows.

The Jinas' teachings are expressed from two perspectives, the nishcaya naya (absolute viewpoint) and the vyavahAra naya (practical viewpoint). It is important for all students of the Jina dharma to understand both viewpoints and realise their internal concomitance.

One must bear in mind that this verse of the SamAdhitantra, as well as the one preceding it, applies to the really advanced (shuddhopayogI) mendicant who has pristine disposition, not to the average (shubhopayogI) ascetic who has auspicious disposition; and definitely not to the layman. In today's world, we must all strive to attain and practise the vows, as we are not even capable of following them flawlessly, leave alone of immanence.

Attachment causes bondage. The state of vItarAga (supreme detachment), is absolutely essential to attain kevala jnAna (omniscience) and mokSha (liberation). In order to attain vItarAga, all likes and dislikes must be conquered.

First, one gives up bad deeds and takes up good deeds. One conquers one's senses and follows the vows as laid down by the Jinas. Once one has truly internalised the vows and has been following them impeccably and with great concentration for a period of time, realisation dawns that for attaining the supreme state of emancipation, even attachment to vows must cease. For, just as vowlessness leads to the inflow of pApa karma (demeritorious karma) in the soul, vows lead to the inflow of puNya karma (meritorious karma) in the soul. Until such time that the soul sheds all karma, the soul shall remain in sansAra. Only after the soul sheds all karma will it attain liberation.

Here, one needs to understand what giving up the vows means. Does it mean that the mendicant gives up the vows of monkhood and becomes a layman? No. It means, having to give up attachment to the vows. Practising the life of a Jain mendicant, but do not remaining attached to it. Things considered compulsory for the shubhopayogI (who has auspicious disposition, not yet reached the stage of pristine disposition) mendicant, like pratikramaNa (atonement), caturviṃshati stavana (worshiping the twenty-four Jinas), et cetera are considered to be completely pointless for the shuddhopayogI ones. In fact, Kundakunda calls them viShakumbha* (jar of poison) for the shuddhopayogI mendicant (a mendicant who has attained a state of pristine disposition where his soul remains immersed in itself).

(*) AchArya Kundakunda's 'SamayasAra' verses 306, 307.

यदन्तर्जल्पसम्मृक्तं उत्प्रेक्षाजालमात्मनः ।

मूलं दुःखस्य तन्नाशे शिष्टमिष्टं परं पदम् ॥ ८५ ॥

The root cause of misery is the conversation inside your head

As it grapples with various desires.

You attain the desired supreme state of the soul

Only when this internal cacophony ceases.

What goes on in a mind driven by the horses of desire, attachment and aversion is the chattering of the distracted mind. Just as horses' hooves clatter upon tar roads, various wants, desires and passions hammer upon the potential of the soul to remain in a state of calm reflection. Omniscience can only be attained when outward focus and internal chaos are both stilled.

अव्रती व्रतमादाय व्रती ज्ञानपरायणः ।
परात्मज्ञानसम्पन्नः स्वयमेव परो भवेत् ॥ ८६ ॥

The vowless should seek the shelter of the ascetic vows.
Those who follow these vows should develop spiritual knowledge.
The votary who has attained the highest spiritual knowledge
Effortlessly becomes the supreme transcendental soul (paramAtmA).

On the path of liberation, one needs to follow the vows perfectly, and then rise above them. Immanence can only take place when the vows are adhered to. The vowless ones cannot achieve it.

How is immanence attained?

The mind is nothing but the lowest manifestation of consciousness. When cleansed of external activity, it sublimates itself in the meta-consciousness of the soul and ceases to exist as a separate entity.

One who follows the vows to perfection, but is not attached to them and sees them as the means to an end and not the end by itself, shall transcend them and attain a mental space where the highest realms of spiritual knowledge are accessible. At this level, the mind is unclogged by internal dialogue and uncluttered by aversion and affection. It is sublimated in the dawn of supreme consciousness. Thus, without any noticeable external effort, the bliss of supreme realisation arises in the soul.

लिङ्गं देहाश्रितं दृष्टं देह एवात्मनो भावः ।
न मुच्यन्ते भवात् तस्मात् ते ये लिङ्गकृताग्रहाः ॥ ८७ ॥

Physical insignia is dependent on the body.
The body keeps the soul in sansAra.
Hence, those who focus on the body,

Cannot attain liberation.

In continuation with the earlier verse, the seeker of liberation needs to be a renunciant, a votary and an ascetic. He must give up temporal life and take the vows of an ascetic. But he must not be attached to these vows. He must transcend them and focus only on realising the meta consciousness of his supreme self. If he were to remain attached to physical practices (like vows), he would remain attached to the body and hence remain in sansAra.

The body, and the feeling of oneness with it, are the root cause of sansAra. Only those who can transcend the body and all external dispositions shall attain liberation.

जातिर्देहाश्रिता दृष्टा देह एवात्मनो भवः ।
न मुच्यन्ते भवात् तस्मात् ते ये जातिकृताग्रहाः ॥ ८८ ॥

Caste pertains to the body.

The body keeps the soul in sansAra.

Those who continue to identify with the body

(And categorisations based on it) like caste and creed, race and gender;

Cannot attain liberation.

As a resident of planet Earth, I have taken birth somewhere on the planet. But If I am to be a world citizen, I must not be attached to my place of birth, and ought to work for the betterment of the entire planet.

Similarly, anyone who is born, is born in some caste/endogamous group/faith/race. However, this only pertains to the body. The soul is free from all such categories. Those who desire liberation must transcend all these irrelevant categorisations of caste, religion, ethnicity, race, nationality and gender, and focus instead on realising the meta-consciousness of the supreme, transcendental self. If they were to remain attached to external categorisations based on the accident of birth, they would remain attached to the body and hence remain rooted in sansAra.

जातिलिङ्गविकल्पेन येषां च समयाग्रहः ।
तेऽपि न प्राप्नुवन्त्येव परमं पदमात्मनः ॥ ८९ ॥

Those who cling to conventional understanding based on bodily characteristics

Such as caste and gender,

Cannot reach the supreme state of the soul.

If the soul has to break free from the fetters of the body, it needs to transcend all considerations based on the body. Conventional understanding based on the body needs to be ignored if one is aiming to attain the highest realms of consciousness.

Jain doctrine is explained from two viewpoints: the practical and the absolute. The practical viewpoint, also known as the vyavahAra naya, is extremely important for a proper understanding and practice of the doctrine at the layman's level and at the level of the novice or junior votary. But the advanced votary, who has mastered his senses, must align his thinking to the absolute viewpoint, nishcaya naya. Only then can he make a break from the physical form that is caused by karmas and binds us to sansAra.

Let me explain this with an example: If I need to climb up to the second floor, I need stairs. But once I reach the second floor, (and have no intention of climbing down) why would I need the stairs? Stairs denote the practical level and the second floor denotes the absolute level.

Coming back to the central theme of this verse, the soul that continues to identify other souls with their bodily characteristics, shall never cease to identify itself with its own body. Hence, it shall never attain liberation.

यत् त्यागाय निवर्तन्ते भोगेभ्यो यद्वाप्तये ।
प्रीतिं तत्रैव कुर्वन्ति द्वेषमन्यत्र मोहिनः ॥ ९० ॥

Despite having forsaken all external sensual delectation
In order to be free from the body and attain liberation,
Deluded people hanker after the objects of the senses
And feel contempt for the supreme state (of liberation).

It is well known that the body and karmas tie down the soul to sansAra. Hence, all ascetic activity is geared towards lessening attachment to the body, giving up all external delectation and inculcating oneness with the soul in order to attain liberation. This is why aspirants take up the vows of an ascetic.

Those among the ascetics who are deluded, begin to desire external delectation. Which is why, sometimes, they develop a sansAra within the ascetic firmament. A sansAra of likes

and dislikes, of nepotism, of sectarianism and bias. Thus, despite having given up external objects of desire when they took up the ascetic vows, they begin seeking them again. If not in reality, then in their minds. In their eyes, the grandeur of the supreme state of the soul begins to pall in front of the shimmering mirage of sensual desires. Thus, they begin to ignore and subvert the dispassionate disposition which would have taken them on the path of liberation. Instead, they develop affection for external objects and desires.

In this verse, the learned Acharya Pujyapada has pointed out the possible pitfalls that a spiritual aspirant will have to beware of in order to attain the supreme state of liberation.

अनन्तरङ्गः सन्धत्ते दृष्टिं पङ्गोर्यथाऽन्धके ।
संयोगात् दृष्टिमङ्गेषुपि सन्धत्ते तद्वदात्मनः ॥ ९१ ॥

On seeing a blind man and a handicapped man move together
(the blind man carrying the handicapped),
And not knowing that they were separate,
The deluded think that the blind man has vision.

In the same way, the deluded assume that the body has consciousness.

In the days before motorised transport, there were once two men, who were thrown together by circumstances. Both had a common destination and were headed there in the company of their friends. It so happened, that they were separated from their friends. Both were alone, and incapable of traveling on their own. For one was incapable of walking and needed to be carried on someone's shoulders. And the other was blind and could not see where he was going. Individually, they were not capable of getting anywhere. So they decided to leverage their capacities and move together towards the common destination.

The blind man was perfectly capable of walking. And the immobile person had perfect vision. So the blind man carried the immobile person on his shoulders. He did the walking while the immobile person did the navigation. On seeing them, a fool would think that the blind man could see because he would fail to notice that there were two people. Their occupying the same space did not make them one.

Similarly, a deluded person thinks that the body has consciousness, because the soul's actions are carried out through the instrument of the body. Such a person suffers from three kinds of false perception:

1. kArana viparyAsa (faulty perception and understanding of the cause)

Failing to know what causes things to take place in a certain manner

Example: Not knowing how a remote control works

2. bhedAbheda viparyAsa (faulty perception and understanding of oneness)

Failing to distinguish between separate entities.

Example: Not being able to distinguish a pen from its refill

3. svarUpa viparyAsa (faulty perception and understanding of the true nature of an object)

Not knowing the true nature of any substance.

Example: Not knowing that the nature of fire is heat

Faulty perception and understanding cause delusion. Deluded people do not attain liberation.

दृष्टभेदो यथा दृष्टिं पङ्गोरन्धे न योजयेत् ।

तथा न योजयेद्देहे दृष्टात्मा दृष्टिमात्मनः ॥ ९२ ॥

In the earlier example, the blind man did the walking while the immobile person did the navigation.

Just as one who has discriminative knowledge

Does not impute the immobile person's vision to the blind man;

Similarly, one who has discriminative knowledge

Does not ascribe the soul's sentience to the body.

One who has discriminative knowledge would never confuse the qualities of one entity with another. He would not attribute the immobile person's vision to the blind man. Nor would he ascribe the blind man's healthy limbs to the immobile man.

Thus, one who has discriminative knowledge shall never assign the soul's central attribute of consciousness to the body. Such a person is free from false perception and hence perceives things exactly as they are. He is the true samyagdRRiShTi (possesses enlightened perception). He is the antarAtmA, who knows that the soul and body are distinct despite being eka-kShetrAvagAhI (occupying the same space).

सुप्तोन्मत्ताद्यवस्थैव विभ्रमोऽनात्मदर्शिनाम् ।

विभ्रमोऽक्षीणदोषस्य सर्वावस्थात्मदर्शिनः ॥ ९३ ॥

One who has not perceived his soul

Considers only those who are sleeping or intoxicated to be befuddled.

However, one who has perceived his soul but not yet rid himself of the subtle flaws,

Finds all aspects of worldly life bewildering.

Violence, lies, stealing and sexual misconduct are gross flaws that can be seen by anyone and are condemned by law as well as society. But the seeker of liberation has to not only overcome the gross flaws but also the subtle flaws which are equally effective in tying him down in the quagmire of sansAra. Likes and dislikes, attachment and hatred, anger, arrogance, artifice and avarice are the subtle flaws.

Even one who has not perceived his soul knows that one who is blind or drunk cannot perceive reality correctly. One need not be omniscient to know that temporal life is full of disappointment and tragedy. It has deep troughs and shallow peaks. Happiness is fleeting and elusive. Grief and worry are constants.

A lifetime devoted to the pursuit of wealth and glory is a wasted effort. Human birth should be used to seek self-realisation. Which is why, one who has perceived his soul realises the chimerical nature of fame and fortune and stays away from the hunt for rewards and recognition. He prefers the fragrance of introspection to the stench of the material world. He knows that spiritual emancipation shall free him forever from the cesspool of transmigration.

विदिताशेषशास्त्रोऽपि न जाग्रदपि मुच्यते ।

देहात्मदृष्टिर्ज्ञातात्मा सुप्तोन्मत्तोऽपि मुच्यते ॥ ९४ ॥

One who thinks that the body is the soul,

Can never attain liberation,

Despite being attentive and knowing all the shAstras.

But one who knows the true nature of his soul,

Shall attain liberation,

Even though he may be inattentive or distracted.

Identifying with the body is the primary mistake that worldly creatures make. Which is why they remain stuck in sansAra. Even those among them who are intellect-driven and have mastered all the scriptures but have failed to internalise the fact that the body and soul are separate entities, cannot attain liberation. Because there is a fundamental flaw in their understanding of reality. Liberation is not possible without enlightened perception/rational perception/true insight/holistic understanding of the realities of the universe. Of course, samyak darshana (enlightened perception) has to be balanced by enlightened knowledge, enlightened conduct and enlightened austerity. Only then can the soul attain liberation. As the BhagavatI ArAdhanA points out:

सिद्धे जयप्सिद्धे चौव्विहाराहणा फलं पत्ते ।
वंदिता अरिहंते वोच्छामि आराहणा कमसो ॥

- AchArya Shivarya's 'BhagavatI ArAdhanA', Verse 1.01

Siddhas are renowned in the whole word. They have attained the state of Siddhahood by constant practising the four ArAdhanAs (accomplishments) of enlightened perception, knowledge, conduct and penance. Bowing in obeisance to the Arihantas, I relate the four ArAdhanAs in a sequence.

The path of liberation requires all boxes to be ticked - darshana (perception), jnAna (knowledge), chAritra (conduct) and tapa (penance). Samyak is the prefix to each, to ensure that the enlightened/rational/correct/appropriate/true darshana, jnAna, chAritra and tapa are being referred to.

One who has samyak darshana is extremely likely to attain liberation, provided that he attains samyak chAritra as well. Which is why Acharya Pujyapada has said, one who has realised that the soul and body are different (and hence is truly a samyagdRRiShTi) shall attain liberation. One who has not realised that the body and soul are distinct, shall never attain liberation, despite knowing all the texts and being aware all the time.

This verse is written in order to emphasise the importance of realising that the body and soul are distinct. Hence, the focus is on bheda jnAna (realising that soul and body are different). However, there are several other verses written by this author and others, underlining the importance of enlightened conduct and enlightened penance. Liberation requires perception, knowledge and conduct to be in line with the Jinas' teachings.

May we all attain liberation by walking on the path shown by the Jinas!

यत्रैवाहितधीः पुंसः श्रद्धा तत्रैव जायते ।

यत्रैव जायते श्रद्धा चित्तं तत्रैव लीयते ॥ ९५ ॥

Man develops faith in that which captivates his mind.

Once his faith deepens, he immerses himself in that which captivates him.

Think of the opposite of a vicious circle - a circle of positives fortifying each other. Once your mind is deeply convinced of something, you develop faith in it. The more your faith increases, the more your mental conviction deepens. One feeds off and strengthens the other.

One who has samyak darshana (rational perception) shall examine something impartially before developing faith in it. But once he is convinced, his faith will be unshakable. He will immerse himself in whatever he has faith in. Hence, when such a person clearly understands that the body and soul are distinct, he shall be deeply convinced and shall immerse himself in the soul, to the exclusion of all else. Thus, he will develop true samyak jnAna (rational knowledge).

When such a person enhances his perception and knowledge by following samyak chAritra (enlightened ethical, restrained, responsible and rational conduct), he is walking on the Jain Path of Purification.

यत्रानाहितधीः पुंसः श्रद्धा तस्मान्निवर्तते ।

यस्मान्निवर्तते श्रद्धा कुतश्चित्तस्य तल्लयः ॥ ९६ ॥

Man loses faith in that which fails to captivate his mind.

How can one remain engrossed in something one has no faith in?

One can only immerse oneself where one has firm conviction.

Homoeopaths are often asked this question. How do their medicines work? The answer they give is, "Have faith in it, it will work for you". Similarly, meditation upon any object, either the self (soul) or an external entity (god/icon/image/idol/talisman/yantra (mystical diagram)/mantra (sacred incantation)/scripture/preceptor/religion), requires deep and unshakeable faith in the object of meditation. Without firm conviction, the deep absorption required to immerse oneself in it shall not appear.

If one's mind is not absorbed by something, one loses faith in it. It is not always enough to have textual knowledge and perfect conduct. One needs to be deeply fascinated and intellectually absorbed by something in order to have faith in it.

Without faith in the soul and its true nature, it is impossible to attain the highest level of spiritual awareness. Hence, one must develop faith in the soul and its true nature through reflection, constant study and revision.

भिन्नात्मानमुपास्यात्मा परो भवति तादृशः ।
वर्तिर्दीपं यथोपास्य भिन्ना भवति तादृशी ॥ ९७ ॥

Just as the wick of a lamp becomes like the lamp by worshipping (remaining close to) it
The soul becomes like the worthy ones (Arihantas and Siddhas) by worshipping them.

Contemplating upon the virtues of the Jinas and the pañcaparameShTI (the five supremely beneficial entities - Arihantas, Siddhas, AchAryas, upAdhyAyas and sAdhus) is a great way of imbibing them. A wick is merely a rolled up piece of cotton wool unless it is placed in a lamp and lit, whereupon it becomes a portal of light. Similarly, a soul blemished by sorrowful and fiery disposition can become aglow with auspicious and immaculate disposition by meditating upon the qualities of the Jinas as long as one's conduct is in line with the teachings of the Jinas.

The Jain tradition considers the Arihantas (embodied omniscient beings) and the Siddhas (liberated omniscient beings) to be worthy of worship and emulation. Jainism believes that there is no central authority who has created the Earth. Nor does Jainism believe in an omnipotent being who runs the show. Jainism believes that each living being has a soul which is independent and distinct from other souls. Jains hold that all souls are capable of attaining liberation.

How does one attain liberation?

By following the eternal path of the Jinas (enlightened rational perception, knowledge and conduct), by attaining true insight into reality and by constantly worshipping the Jinas who have adumbrated the path of liberation which is open to all. When one worships the Jinas, one remembers their qualities and tries to imbibe them.

Jainism has explained four types of meditation, the first two increase karmic bondage, the last two decrease it.

- (i) Arta dhyAna (sorrowful disposition)
- (ii) raudra dhyAna (passionate and fiery disposition)
- (iii) dharma dhyAna (auspicious disposition)
- (iv) shukla dhyAna (immaculate disposition)

The first two types of dhyAna are emotion-driven responses to the vicissitudes of worldly life and cause more karmas to attach themselves to the soul. This takes the soul farther away from the two dispositions that help the soul attain liberation - auspicious disposition (dharma dhyAna) and immaculate disposition (shukla dhyAna) - and perpetuates his stay in this den of misery known as sansAra.

The last two types of dhyAna take him away from knee-jerk responses to life's problems. The auspicious disposition settles him down and makes him devout and worshipful. Immaculate disposition helps him focus on the soul and remain immersed in it.

The entire focus of the Jain mendicant's journey, is to get rid of sorrowful and passionate dispositions and attain the immaculate through the auspicious. Devotion to the Jinas and their teachings shall help the votary remain firmly on the straight and narrow path of self-purification and imbibe their qualities.

उपस्यात्मानमेवात्मा जायते परमोऽथवा ।
मथित्वाऽऽत्मानमात्मैव जायतेऽग्निर्यथा तरुः ॥ ९८ ॥

Just as rubbing branches together sets the wood alight,

The (advanced) votary can attain

The transcendental state by worshipping the self with self

(by immersing his consciousness in his own soul).

We city-bred folks may not know it, but before the age of gas lighters and matchsticks, ancient men produced a fire by rubbing wood on wood!

In the earlier verse, the votary is asked to reflect upon the qualities of the Jinas in order to imbibe them. In this one, Acharya Pujyapada says that focusing inward would be of great help to the advanced votary who has already imbibed the Jinas' teachings fully and has

internalised the fact that the soul and body are different; who is skilled in self control and penance; and whose faith in the Jain path is unshakeable. If such a votary meditates upon his soul and remains immersed in it, he shall attain the ultimate state of spiritual purity, known as the state of paramAtmA, where passion and delusion are conquered forever and omniscience is attained.

Acharya Pujyapada gives the analogy of rubbing sticks of wood with each other, which produces a fire. He says that just as rubbing branches with each other produces fire, remaining firmly in the self purifies the soul and produces enlightenment.

इतीदं भावयेन् नित्यमवाचां गोचरं पदम् ।
स्वत एव तदाप्नोति यतो नावर्तते पुनः ॥ ९९ ॥

Thus, one must constantly reflect upon the ultimate stage of soul (paramAtmA)
Which is beyond words,
Which is attained on one's own
And from where there is no sliding back into sansAra.

The ultimate stage of the soul (paramAtmA) is far beyond words. The bliss enjoyed by the paramAtmA transcends any measure of joy known to us. It has to be experienced to be understood.

Jain doctrine tells us that karmic bondage causes the soul to remain in sansAra. This bondage is broken by paramAtmA, since it is supremely detached (vItarAga). Freed from the inhibiting baggage of karmas, the soul ascends upwards, into mokSha. There it lives forever in eternal bliss (ananta sukha).

There is no external agent that can carry the soul to mokSha. The soul has to attain this by itself, through its own efforts (puruShArtha). The Tirthankaras have shown us the way, but we have to make the journey ourselves.

So what precisely does one have to do, to complete this journey?

1. One must realise, first and foremost, that the soul and body are distinct and separate entities which happen to be sharing the same space (eka-kShetra-avagAhI). One should identify with the soul (ekatva) and not with the body (anyatva).

2. One must know that the body is bound to the soul through karmas. Hence, all spiritual endeavour must focus on stopping the inflow of karmas to the soul (Asrava) and shedding karmas from the soul (nirjarA).
3. One ought to have firm unshakable conviction (pratIti) in the teachings of the Jinas (kevalI-praNIIta dharma). One must see the enlightened path (samyak darshana), know the enlightened path (samyak jnAna) and walk the enlightened path (samyak chAritra).
4. One must practise the five vows of non-violence (ahinsA), truthfulness (satya), ethical behaviour (achaurya), purity of mind and body (brahmacArya) and detachment (aparigraha). One must ensure that one's behaviour is always ethical, nonviolent and does not harm others.
5. One must understand that sensual desire (indriya-janita sukha) is the greatest enemy of the soul, for it not only causes massive amounts of karmic inflow (Asrava) and bondage (bandha), but also, at a deeper level, strengthens the soul's attraction to the body (moha).
6. One must realise the fruitlessness of worldly life (sansAra), and the futility of seeking joy and expecting stability in worldly life (asharaNa). Sensual pleasure is deceptive and fleeting (anitya).
7. The four passions (kaShAya) of anger (krodha), arrogance (mAna), artifice (mAyA) and avarice (lobha) have to be conquered through self control (saMyama) and penance (tapa).
8. Through benevolent and considerate actions (puNya karma), one must focus on attaining the shubha bhAva (auspicious disposition) and avoid ashubha bhAva (inauspicious disposition) and passionate, selfish acts (pApa karma). Upon having attained the shubha bhAva, one must control the senses (saMvara), concentrate the mind (dhAraNA) and meditate upon the attributes of the Jinas (dhyAna). This, along with impeccable ascetic conduct (yama and niyama), will help one attain the yathAkhyAta chAritra (right conduct as promulgated by the Jinas) and shuddha bhAva (immaculate disposition) which lead to lasting immersion in the supreme self (samAdhi) and the attainment of liberation (mokSha).

It is my most sincere hope that all of us may walk on the path of the Jinas and attain endless bliss.

अयन्नसाध्यं निर्वाणं चित्तत्वं भूतजं यदि ।

अन्यथा योगतस्तस्मान् न दुःखं योगिनां क्वचित् ॥ १०० ॥

If the soul were made up of the elements of nature (earth, water, fire, wind and sky)

Death would mean a return of all the elements to their original form

And there would be no effort required for liberation.

If you believe that the soul is always pure and unbound

And not sullied by karmic association,

Then too, no effort is required for liberation

Since the soul will attain liberation after death.

If liberation is attained through yogic practices,

Then too, there is no problem

Since yogIs on the path of liberation remain unperturbed in the face of hardships.

If you believe that consciousness is a product of the coming together of the elements of nature in the formation of the body, then there would be no need to make concentrated efforts of mind, speech and body for liberation. Since consciousness would automatically dissipate when the body ceased to exist.

If you believe that everything that exists (including the soul) is momentary, then too, there would be no need to make efforts for liberation. For if the soul is not eternal, eternal bliss would cease to be a goal.

If you believe that the soul has always been pure and unbound, and that external dispositions do not affect it in the least, then again, there is no need to make efforts for liberation since it is already pure.

If you believe that only faith shall set you free, or only knowledge shall set you free, or only rituals and practices shall set you free, you are deluded and shall never attain liberation.

Liberation can only be attained by the synthesis of enlightened perception, knowledge and conduct. Just as, if you are ill, merely having faith in the medicine, or having perfect knowledge of the medicine will not help, you will have to take the medicine in order to get better. Similarly, for the attainment of liberation, enlightened perception, knowledge and conduct are absolutely essential.

True yogIs are unperturbed if they have to face difficulties in the path of liberation.

They know that the path of the renouncer is not free from impediments and physical hardships. They are unaffected because they know that the path of the Jinās is the only path for those who seek liberation because it is the path of self-reliance based on a clear, rational and enlightened understanding of the reality of the universe. They know that on death, the soul can take two courses - punarjanma (rebirth) or mukti (liberation). They know that karmas cause the soul to take rebirth. Unless the soul is free from all karmas, there can be no liberation of the soul. And that karmas can only be shed through appropriate practise of enlightened perception, enlightened knowledge, enlightened conduct and enlightened penance. Thus, they walk on the highway of spiritual purification shown by the Jinās who themselves walked on this path and attained liberation.

स्वप्ने दृष्टे विनष्टेऽपि न नाशोऽस्ति यथात्मनः ।
तथा जागरदृष्टेऽपि विपर्यासाविशेषतः ॥ १०१ ॥

Dying in a dream does not mean death of the soul in real life.
Similarly, death of the body does not mean the death of the soul.

Dream and delusion are alike, for both lead to a misunderstanding of the truth. For instance, even if you die in a dream/nightmare, you will find that you are alive when you wake up. Similarly, those who deludedly identify with their body think that their soul shall die when the body dies. But in truth the soul never dies despite the death of the body, whether in a dream or in actuality.

अदुःखभावितं ज्ञानं क्सीयते दुःखसन्निधौ ।
तस्माद्यथाबलं दुःखैरात्मानं भावयेन् मुनिः ॥ १०२ ॥

Knowledge earned without having to face difficulties,
Is easily lost when the seeker faces dire circumstances.
Hence, the monk should practise penance and asceticism to the best of his ability.

Adversity is the greatest judge of a man's character. What is easily gained in helpful conditions is easily lost in times of difficulty. An ascetic's greatest strength is his self-control. It is the trait that shall, along with samyaktva (enlightened perception), ensure his spiritual uplift and salvation. Thus, it is in the monk's interest to fortify himself with penance.

Acharya Pujyapada advises the monk to not only accept adversity and suffering with forbearance; but also practise saMyama (self-control) and tapa (penance) to the best of his ability. So that he does not lose his equanimity even when faced with calamity and misfortune.

प्रयत्नादात्मनो वायुरिच्छाद्वेषप्रवर्तितात् ।

वायोः शरीरयन्त्राणि वर्तन्ते स्वेषु कर्मसु ॥ १०३ ॥

Motivated by desire and aversion,

The dispositions and emotions of the soul

Activate a flow of air in the body.

This airflow energises the various parts of the body.

The body carries out certain acts naturally. Like breathing. Other acts require conscious effort by the soul. For instance, to eat or not to eat, to drink or not to drink, to speak or to remain silent. External factors are catalysts in causing emotions in the soul. These changing emotions and dispositions of the soul have two effects. Firstly, they attract the inflow and bondage of more karmas to the soul. Secondly, they create an airflow in the body. This airflow causes various parts of the body to move in line with the desire of the soul.

I know this may seem hard to digest in the light of modern education. But look at it this way. Students of robotics and biology know that motor nerves cause movements in the body. And who decides what they do? The brain. The brain decides and sends impulses to the motor nerves to act in a certain manner. And how are these impulses sent? Through the nerves. But what impels them? That which powers these impulses, is described as vAyu (airflow) by the learned Acharya Pujyapada, who composed this text over 1500 years ago.

तान्यात्मनि समारोप्य साक्षाण्यास्तेऽसुखं जडः ।

त्यक्तवारोपं पुनर्विद्वान् प्राप्नोति परमं पदम् ॥ १०४ ॥

Because they consider bodily organs and sensual desires as part of their being,

Deluded people are always unhappy.

On the other hand, those who have true insight

Do not mistake their senses and body for their soul.

They attain the ultimate goal (of liberation)

(By identifying with and immersing themselves in their soul).

What is the greatest folly on earth? Not knowing who we are. We living beings remain eternally enmeshed in sansAra because we never realise our true selves. It is common to confuse the body and its attendant desires with the soul.

The soul is nothing but pure consciousness. It is distinct from all external substances. The worldly soul may not be free from external encumbrances, but is certainly distinct from them. Those who are wise, realise this distinctness and make constant, focused and diligent efforts to attain enlightened perception, knowledge and conduct in order to shed all attachment to the body and realise their souls. But the deluded ones are constantly unhappy as they look outwards for their happiness.

As we all know, sensual desire can never be sated. Even though our sensual desires are unlimited, our ability to partake of sensual delectation is limited. One cannot ever fulfill all one's sensual desires. At best, sensual satisfaction is ephemeral. However, the craving for sensual desire is a constant source of dissatisfaction and unhappiness for the sense-driven person. People driven by sensual desire are never happy because even when their bodies are rendered incapable of enjoying their sensual fantasies, they still persist in pursuing sensual delectation.

Sensual desires even when fulfilled are seldom sated because they lead to increased desire. Besides, the fickleness of sensual desires is such, that one does not always succeed in attaining the object of one's sensual desire. And even if one succeeds, one's desire is inflamed further. It is a Catch 22 situation. One will have to transcend sensual desire if one is to attain peace and happiness.

What causes the frenzied pursuit of sensual gratification? Identifying with the body and bodily desires. Physical comforts seem tempting but they enslave you.

So the smart ones, and the Jinas were the smartest of all, stay away from the vicious circle of sensual desire and walk the straight and narrow road of spiritual emancipation. They are able to distinguish between the soul and the body, become completely detached to the body and focus on the soul. They immerse their consciousness entirely in their own soul and thus attain liberation.

We salute the Jinas and worship them in order to attain their qualities of vItarAga (supreme detachment) and kaivalya (omniscience).

मुक्त्वा परत्र परबुद्धिमहन्धियं च संसारदुःखजननीं जननाद्विमुक्तः ।
ज्योतिर्मयं सुखमुपैति परात्मनिष्ठस्तन्मार्गमेतदधिगम्य समाधितन्त्रम् ॥ १०५ ॥

He who stops considering external substances to be his own
Becomes free from transmigration which is the cause of all sorrow.
Having established himself in the path explained in the SamAdhitantra,
He shall engross himself in the transcendental self
And achieve the effulgent bliss of liberation.

The teachings of Acharya Pujyapada can be instrumental in our true understanding of reality. But how do we go about it? How do we begin this journey?

The answer lies in shraddhA. Let us examine the Sanskrit word shraddhA. It is a compound of two words, shrat and dhA.

shrat = true nature/substratum of everything

dhA = possessing/holding/grasping

Hence, shraddhA denotes the ability of a person to understand the ultimate reality.

When one has shraddhA, it means one has truly understood the all-pervasive truth. Once this ultimate, salvific truth is realised, it is reflected in one's perception, knowledge and conduct. The soul gives up attachment to the non-self and immerses itself in its own transcendental consciousness and attains emancipation.

At its core, all spiritual endeavour aims at one thing - the emancipation of the soul. Different faiths indicate different ways of attaining the common goal of spiritual uplift. Jainism and Buddhism propound the self-reliant approach to this goal, whereas other faiths rely on an external supreme deity to help them attain salvation. In each case, there is a clear understanding that the senses will have to be conquered and consciousness shall have to be turned inwards, to reach out to the luminous presence of one's own soul.

The stark difference in the Jain and Hindu understanding of this stage is doctrinal. As is well known, Jains reject the concepts of creationism and intelligent design. Jains believe that each soul is eternal, indestructible, unique and sovereign. Hindus believe that all souls

have sprung forth from the creator god and when their worldly sojourn is over, they shall go back and merge themselves in the entity of the creator god.

The attainment of a stage where one's consciousness merges completely in the self, is known as samAdhi (immersion in the supreme self). In Hindu texts, this stage of ultimate spiritual unity is known as laya (absorption in the supreme self). In the Jain tradition, this stage of supreme purity of the soul is known as shukla dhyAna (immaculate disposition). The soul that remains in this stage attains omniscience and becomes free itself from the sorrow-causing tentacles of sansAra.

The soul that gives up mithyAtva (false belief), moha (delusion), ahankAra (identification with external objects) and mamakAra (desire to possess external substances) attains samAdhi (immersion in the supreme transcendental self) and mukti (liberation). May we all attain mukti.

I bow in obeisance to the exalted Jinas, who have taught us the profound path of liberation. And to the learned Acharya Pujyapada, who has explained this path to us in such simple and elegant language.

इति आचार्य पूज्यपादविरचितं समाधीतन्त्रं अथवा समाधीशतकं सम्पूर्णम् ।

गमो जिणागं



Attainment of Oneness with the Supreme Self

pdf was typeset on March 24, 2024



Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com

