

4.5 The Origin of Knowledge and its end

Wherever there is humanity, there a natural respect for knowledge. The Brahmin and

Shewtambar traditions continue in India for centuries together on the expanse of vast knowledge. What did Lord Mahavir do for a number of years of his life? The authority of Lord Mahavir is nothing but his deep search for Knowledge. For this worthy search, he tortured his body; he strived for days and nights, months and years. The whole religion of Jainism is based on search for knowledge.

Jain path to liberation is of fourteen stages spiritual travel (14 *Gunsthans*). In this process, it is believed that Awakening (spirit of knowledge) occurs at the forth stage. The first stage is a state of delusion, misconception. We are in dark. We are even not ready to seek somebody's advice and we fail to seize the opportunity, in second stage. In third stage, there is an absence of desire to know and understand, but occasionally one becomes, curious about nature of truth and reality. The real awakening occurs at the 4th stage – *Avirti Gunstan*. The hallmark of this stage is 'Awareness'.

Through years of meditation, experimentation and practices, Tirthankaras achieve real knowledge – a spiritual path to liberation. Faithfully following their suggested path, we can certainly experience some degree of peace and tranquility.

We accept this path, because Tirthankaras have shown this path, but that is not a blind faith. Faith which results on spiritual progress is not blind faith, it is positive faith. Tirthankaras have worked against blind faith and preached that we must know ourselves, try to understand reality, the path leading to it, examine it, test it, verify it, and then , if satisfied , it convinced of it effects, build are faith on its foundation. That is *Samyak Drishti* (rational understanding)

In ancient Jain scriptures, the Jain philosophers have given supreme importance to knowledge, because the entire claims of rationality is based on knowledge. The Tirthankaras have shown the path to liberation is rational conduct, rational belief and rational knowledge. Thus it is stressed that the conduct and belief must be backed by knowledge. The Jain philosophers have defined knowledge as the essence of soul. "There can be no knowledge without soul, and no soul without knowledge."

Jainism believes that soul has infinite perception and knowledge, but our perception is obscured by the *Karma* particles. Further, the knowledge has also been clarified as limited are and complete are the limited knowledge is just 'Darshan' the complete knowledge is comprehensive, a true '*Gyan*' '*Darshan*' is knowledge without understanding of details where as in '*Gyan*' the details are perceived. Both *Samyak Gyan* and *Samyak Darshan* are equally important,

Samyak Darshan are equally important, *Samyak Darshan* is the starting point of the process of *Samyak Gyan* (Comprehensive knowledge).

Comprehensive knowledge (*Gyan*) is definite and determinate, but it may or may not be total, absolute and perfect, the total, absolute and perfect knowledge is '*Kevalgyana*', our comprehension of reality cannot perceive all facts of the reality, because our soul is associated with the *Karmas*, which are knowledge obstructing type (*Gyanvarniya Karma*)

The knowledge, the knower and the known are the three elements of knowledge

The Knower - The person who learnt

The Known - The matter about which the information is obtained and

The knowledge – an element which should be known.

There are several kinds of Karmic bandage and becoming conscious of something (that is, gaining knowledge of something) is merely a removal of or shedding of the Karmic particles that were obscuring the particular – knowledge. This shedding of may happen either naturally (because of pre-determined duration of bonding) or through one's initiative and action (self – discipline, penance etc)

The more one mages to shed of ones knowledge obscurity karma, the more enlightens one becomes

Avenues of Knowledge

The Jain theory states that there are five main avenues of gaining knowledge. They are :

1. Empirical knowledge – *Mati Gyan*
2. Articulate knowledge – *Shrut Gyan*
3. Clairvoyant knowledge – *Avadhi Gyan*
4. Mind Reading knowledge – *Manpariyay Gyan*
5. Omniscient - *Kevalgyan*

1. **Mati Gyan** :- This is a kind of knowledge which is acquired through the medium of senses, and therefore it is indirect or acquired knowledge, This knowledge can easily be corrupted or distorted.

2. **Shrut Gyan** :- This knowledge is acquired through reading, listening or interpretation. This knowledge is also subject to distortion.

The Jain scriptures are not the 'revelation from above' Of course, the Agamas stem from Tirthankaras – the liberated soul – the omniscient ones. Therefore the knowledge in the Agamas could be almost absolute, if not 'the absolute' This small degree of uncertainty is the essence of Jainism, where

anything is not rigidly true. In fact the Jain religious sacred literature is also grouped into two –

1. **Anga-Agamas** :- (Primary or main text based on the knowledge received by the '*Kavali Bhagavant*' – omniscient.
2. **Anga-bahya Agamas** – (Subsidiary texts written by the learned scholastic persons, but who were not direct disciples)
3. **Avadhi Gyan** :- This knowledge belongs to that category of knowledge which is independent of ourselves, and are the direct knowledge from the soul itself. This knowledge is not subject to destruction nor it is subject to limitation.

With this knowledge a person can know an object without being indirect contact with it. This knowledge could be either inborn or could be acquired. This knowledge could be acquired. This knowledge could be acquired by destruction of obscuring Karmas – through meditation, penance and self control. With this knowledge, one can know of things, persons or events of the past or future and of those happening or far off places.

4. **Manahparyah Gyan** :- This is mind reading knowledge. This knowledge is possible only if we can shed out the karmas is possible only if we can shed out the Karmas which obscure mind reading ability. This is possible by self-discipline, and austerities. Then we can read the mind, the ideas, the thoughts of other person without the help of any outside agency. Mind reading knowledge could be simple or complex. It is non-specific, fallible, shallow and rather limited in scope. Depending upon the quality of mind-reading knowledge, one can read thoughts and objects as also the motivation, beliefs and aims behind such thought-process along with its relations with some past events.

This ability can be achieved only when almost all Karmas obscuring knowledge are shed away. One who follows a very strict discipline, and who is able to burn almost all Karmas obscuring knowledge can hope to reach this stage. Therefore, such persons are almost rare, if any.

5. **Keval Gyan** :- The Ultimate Knowledge Omniscience
This stage can be achieved when the soul manages to destroy the four Ghatiya (destructive) *Karmas*. At this stage, a person is free from all passions, all the cause of bondage of any new karmas. Liberation (Moksha) is a final result, but a person who has achieved *Kevalgyana* may live his life till the bondage with life-span continues. But his life thereafter is pure. He is free from all destructive Karmas, and he does not cause any new Karma anymore.

This knowledge is unlimited, it cannot be distorted. It is pure, absolute, complete and total knowledge.