

Jīva-Dayā in the Sthānakavasī Tradition

Dharmchand Jain

Jain religion, at present, is represented by Śvetāmbara and Digambara traditions. A third tradition by the name of Yāpanīya existed from the early medieval period but is extinct now. The Digambara tradition has three divisions- Bisapanthī, Terahapanthī and Tāraṇapanthī. The first two among these support image-worship with some differences. The last one does not support image-worship and has faith in the scriptures of Tāraṇa Svāmī (c. 1448-1515). The new Digambara school of Kāñjī Svāmī emerged in the twentieth century which focuses on *niścaya-naya* (absolute perspective) and the pure soul. The Śvetāmbara tradition also represents three divisions as Mūrtipūjaka, Sthānakavāsī and Terāpantha. The followers of the Mūrtipūjaka tradition worship the images of tīrthaṅkaras in temples. They also have many sub-sects including the Tapāgaccha, Kharataragaccha, Añcalagaccha etc. Sthānakavāsī and Terāpantha traditions do not believe in image-worship and rely on a canon of only thirty-two scriptures. All the Jain traditions pursue the goal of emancipation of the soul and victory over negative passions (*kaṣāyas*). All accept the 'three jewels' of right view (*samyag-darśana*), right knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*) and right conduct (*samyak-cāritra*) as the path of purification and final emancipation. Despite similarity in doctrines, they bear differences in practice.

The Sthānakavāsī tradition emphasizes the self-study (*svādhyāya*) of scriptures, the practice of equanimity (*sāmāyika*), austerity (*tapas*), and jīva-dayā. This school came into existence after a revolution by the Jain layman Loṅkā (c. 1415-1489) in Gujarat against the prevailing laxity in the conduct of Śvetāmbara monks (*yatis*). According to verse 12.58 of the *Loṅkāśāha-carita-mahākāvya* Loṅkā was from the Arahattavādā district Sirohī (now in Rajasthan) and worked in Ahmedabad as a jeweller. He studied the Jain *āgamas* and with reference to the Jain canonical texts criticized image-worship in his text 58 *Bola* (8-12).¹ He attracted many Jains towards his ideology and, as a result, the Loṅkāgaccha and its branches came into existence, with a new lineage of monks. After an interval of a hundred years a new reformation in the conduct of monks and nuns took place in the 17th century by five great *sādhus* namely Jīvarāja, Lavajī Rṣi, Dharmasiṅgha, Harajī and Dharmadāsa.² After a long gap a new term, Sthānakavāsī, was used in the first half of 19th century.³ This was a collective development of *sādhus* of similar ideology influenced by the teaching of Loṅkā. According to the *Cāturmāsa sūci* of the year 2022, 748 monks (*sādhus*) and 3,442 nuns (*sādhvīs*) were leading this tradition, and the followers were more than a million. The term *sthānakavāsī* is

a compound of two words, *sthānaka* and *vāsī*. *Sthānaka* means a place where spiritual activities are performed and *vāsī* refers to the laity and mendicants using that place for spiritual activities (*sāadhanā*). *Sādhus* or *sādhvīs* can also stay there for a few days or for four months as their rules permit them. The followers do not keep any idol or image of a tīrthaṅkara or a god for worship. They do *svādhyāya* (study of sacred scriptures and books, and study of the self), *sāmāyika* (*sāadhanā* to practice equanimity for a period of minimum 48 minutes wearing plain white clothes and a white mouth mask which is known as *muḥapattī*), *pratikramaṇa* (*sāadhanā* for removing the faults in observation of twelve vows), *pausaḍha* (full day and night *sāadhanā* abstaining from all sinful activities and observing fast), etc., at that place. They focus on the preaching of the tīrthaṅkaras and *ācāryas* and avoid all activities that include violence in religious performance, even towards plants and flowers, and are known for their focus on compassion (*dayā*). At the end of a mendicant's daily speech (*pravacana*), the followers chant a verse that expresses the importance of *dayā*: *dayā sukhāṃ rī beladī, dayā sukhāṃ rī khāna. anante jīva mugate gayā dayā taṇo phala jāṇa*, 'dayā is like a creeping plant of bliss, dayā is like a mine of bliss. Infinite living beings have obtained emancipation observing dayā.'

Jīveṣu dayā or jīva-dayā denotes non-violence and compassion to all living beings. In Sanskrit and Prakrit, the word jīva, denotes all living beings, and the word dayā denotes ahimsā (non-violence) and anukampā (compassion). Nowadays, the word jīva-dayā is predominantly used to refer to practices concerned with the protection of animals and birds. Special donations are made for this purpose.

Dayā is one of the sixty synonyms of *ahimsā* as mentioned in the Śvetāmbara *āgama* text *Praśnavyākaraṇa* 2.1. Some other synonyms are *rakṣā* (protection), *abhaya* (fearlessness), *kṣānti* (forgiveness), *kalyāṇa* (welfare), etc. The expression *abhaya-dāna*, (gift of fearlessness) is also used for protection and non-killing of the beings. The Jain *śramaṇas* (mendicants) observe *abhaya-dāna* to all living beings including one-sensed to five-sensed beings. They do not kill, do not motivate others to kill, and do not support killing, even of insects, plants, earth-bodied, water-bodied, fire-bodied, and air-bodied living beings. They have compassion and empathy with all living beings. They understand their consciousness to be like their own. Such practice is supported by *Ācārāṅga* 1.2.3. Hence, everyone has the right to live and should be protected through dayā.

The practice of *ahimsā* is regarded as the essential means for self-purification, co-existence, and, nowadays, environmental protection. The practice trains a person to live a better life in harmony and peace, in contrast to violence, which is harmful for the agent and the environment. *Jīva-dayā* is a practical form of *ahimsā* which keeps a human being empathetic, compassionate, and happy. It enjoins others with love and friendliness. It is also essential for spiritual development. A person indulging in violence cannot be loved by anyone. S/he lives a disturbed life. *Ahimsā* has two aspects: (1) not to hurt or kill any living being, and (2) to protect or save others' life by practicing compassion and cooperation. The concept *jīva-dayā* includes both aspects.

Anukampā (compassion) is accepted as a behavioural characteristic of *samyag-darśana*.⁴ *Anukampā* can be of two types: (1) towards living beings, with expectation of something in return, and (2) towards living beings, without any selfish considerations. The second form is a characteristic of *samyag-darśana*. It expresses the sensitive nature of a person which destroys the cruelty and inertia of a human being. An individual that cultivates this type of compassion forgets his/her own sorrows and pains and feels delighted to help others in trouble.

In the *Sthānakavāsī* tradition male and female mendicants convey messages of *jīva-dayā* to followers by uttering *dayā pālo*, 'observe compassion in your heart'. This kind of message induces a person full of love, friendliness, and forgiveness to all living beings. *Dayā*, in their view, becomes the basis of spiritual purification also. Compassionless people cannot sense consciousness in other beings. To feel others' pain and sorrow as equal to one's own is the beginning of real *dayā*. Pride and a feeling of superiority should not enter into this valuable attribute.

Not only *Sthānakavāsī* literature considers *dayā* as the essential part of religion. The *Bodhapāhuḍa* 25, which is ascribed to the Digambara Ācārya Kundakunda, states: *dharmo dayā-visuddho*, 'religion is purified by compassion'. Ācārya Jināsena states in the *Ādipurāṇa* 5.21: *dayāmūlo bhaved dharmo*, 'the root of dharma should be compassion'. The *Dasaveyāliya* 4.10 propounds: *padhamam nānam tau dayā*, that 'first knowledge is necessary for compassion'. Here the word *dayā* denotes non-violent conduct.

Practices of Jīva-Dayā

In accordance with their focus on compassion, the followers of the *Sthānakavāsī* tradition have established many cow shelters, known as *gośālās*, or cow-shelters, and *pāñjarāpōlas* or road-asylums for injured animals, in various states of India including Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. They give donations for *jīva-dayā* and run or support these *gośālās*. They are very kind to animals and compassionate in their support for the shelter of cows and birds. They have no intention to earn personal money from these animal shelters. The purpose is protection and treatment of helpless and sick cattle and some other animals. They make proper arrangements of fodder, grass, and water for them. Staff are appointed for their care, cleaning, and medical treatment. Goats are also protected from slaughtering. *Bakarāśālās*, or goat shelters, are also run by the followers of this tradition. When they notice that some cows and goats are transported in an illegal way, they try to protect them. Sometimes they make payments to butchers to protect these animals from their hands, and make arrangements for feeding birds like pigeons, peacocks, parrots, etc. Some bird clinics are also managed by *śrāvakas* (laymen). In Jaipur and Ahmedabad many birds are wounded through sharp threads during the kite flying season in the month of January. These compassionate people take care of them and carry them

to a bird hospital.

Motivated by the value of *anukampā*, cooperation to human beings and animals at the time of natural calamities is freely offered. After the earthquake at Kutch and other parts of Gujarat many Jains were dedicatedly involved with all kinds of support for rehabilitation of the injured and affected people. During the drought in western Rajasthan about 15 years ago, Jains arranged for fodders and water through transport for the affected animals.

To help the poor, widows, students, and other needy people is also regarded as a compassionate activity. Only the *Terāpantha* tradition is of the view that help to people, except for *sādhus* and *sādhvīs* observing the five great vows, is not a part of *dharma* and a demeritorious act. *Śvetāmbara* *Mūrtipūjakas* defined seven sectors for donations namely temples, images, knowledge, *sādhus*, *sādhvīs*, *śrāvakas* and *śrāvikās*. Apart from these, they consider the support to the poor, animals, birds etc. as *anukampā dāna*. They have different funds for different types of charities.

This compassion has become a part of life for many *Sthānakavāsī* followers. They do not have the category of temples and images, but they have a specific category of *jīva-dayā*. These works of *jīva-dayā* are done through organizations and individually. Help to *sādharmīs* or followers of the same religious tradition, is also done.

Jīva-Dayā: textual explanation and evidence

Dayā is a form of *ahimsā* and *ahimsā* is a form of *dharma*, as is mentioned in the *Dasaveyāliya* 1.1: *dharmo mamgala-mukṣiṭṭham-ahimsā samjamo tavo*. 'non-violence, restraint, and austerity are forms of dharma which is the most auspicious thing'. *Dharma* is an instrumental cause for shedding *karma* (*karma-nirjarā*), stopping the inflow of *karma* (*saṃvara*), and for comparative piousness of the self as well as inflow of meritorious *karma* (*puṇya*). In this way *puṇya* has two meanings. *Pūjyapāda* Devanandī, in the *Sarvārthasiddhi* 6.3 explains this: *punātyātmānam pūyate-āneneti vā puṇyam*, 'that which makes a soul pious or through which it is made pious is *puṇya*'. *Puṇya* is meritorious and non-harmful *karma*. *Dayā* is a form of *dharma*, hence it is a cause of *nirjarā*, *saṃvara* and *puṇya*. It differs in terms of the degree of purity of the state of mind (*bhāva*) and action with wisdom and alertness or *yatanā*. Action with ignorance and carelessness may cause a new inflow of *karma* particles and bondage of them with a soul. Every action of *dharma* with pure intention (*śūbha bhāva*) and alertness may be a part of *nirjarā*. *Nirjarā* does not take place without *saṃvara* and *puṇya*. Pure intention (*viśuddhi*) is itself *puṇya* and its result is also *puṇya*. When pure intentions arise, vicious intentions are stopped. This is called *saṃvara*. Pure intentions cause the shedding of *karmas* (*nirjarā*). Ācārya Tulsī of the *Terāpantha* has accepted pure intention (*śūbha bhāva*) as the cause of *nirjarā* in his work *Jaina Siddhānta Dīpikā* (JSD 4.7); as he says: 'where pious activity of mind, speech and body is, there is the shedding of *karmas*' (*nirjarā*), *yatra subhayogastatra niyamena nirjarā*.

Dharma is of two types- (1) *anagāra-dharma* (religious activity of a *sādhu* and a *sādhvī*), and (2) *agāra-dharma* (religious activity of a householder). *Anagāra dharma* is far better than *agāra-dharma* for spiritual purification. It has five great vows and many other rules and regulations for *sādhana*. Mendicants also cultivate compassion; hence they perform *abhaya-dāna* towards all living beings of the universe. However, due to their limitations according to the code of conduct they can only inspire others for activities of *jīva-dayā*. They cannot open and manage *gośālās* and *pāñjarāpōlas*. The *tīrthānkara* Mahavīra was also compassionate. Hence, he shared his knowledge to make the people free from

sorrow. Jaina mendicants can also do so. Householders have variations in their *dharma-sādhanā*. Some of them observe five *anuvratas* (*ahimsā*, truth speaking, non-stealing, abstaining from sexual intercourse and limiting the possessiveness), three *gunavratas* (limiting travel, limiting the consumption, abstaining from un-useful, daily restraint in travel and consumption, ascetic of equanimity, bestow food, inanimate water etc). Some householders may have no interest in observing such vows, but if they are compassionate, then they can spend their time, energy, and money in any activity of *jīva-dayā*. The objective of this *jīva-dayā* should not be earning money and honour, because then the *dayā* (merit) converts into *papa* (demerit). Activity of *jīva-dayā* gives inner happiness. *Gośālas* and *pāñjarāpoḷas* are managed by such generous householders. Vow-observing *śrāvakas* and *śrāvīkās* can also support and maintain the activities of *jīva-dayā*. The chosen field of activity of *jīva-dayā* depends on individual interest. But donations for these activities are given by almost all *Sthānakavāsī* laity. On the occasions of the festivals of *pariyuṣaṇa* and *samvatsarī*, donations for *jīva-dayā* are made in almost every *sthānaka* (place of *dharma-sādhanā*). Some collections are made specifically for *gośālas* and *pāñjarāpoḷas*.

1. *Uttarādhyayana* (ch. 22) mentions the marriage of the 22nd *tīrthaṅkara* Neminātha who renounced the idea of marriage and instructed to free all the animals who were gathered for his wedding feast. He communicated the message to renounce non-vegetarian food thousands of years ago to protect these animals from cruelty and propounded that animals have also the right to live.
2. The *Jñātādharma-kathā* (ch. 1), describes how the elephant Meruprabha arranged a refuge for all the animals in the forest to escape a fire and kept its one leg up for two-and-a-half days not to crush a rabbit beneath him. Due to this compassion the elephant limited its birth- and death-cycle. He took birth as prince Meghakumāra in the next birth and after accepting initiation as a monk in the *saṅgha* of *tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra*, he was able to destroy the *karmas* and achieve purity.
3. In the *Rājaprasāṅgiya* (103–106) King Pradeśi after observing the twelve vows of a *śrāvaka* sponsored a *dānaśālā*, a place where many *śramaṇas*, *māhaṇas* and other poor and travellers got their food for livelihood.
4. The *Upāsaka-dāśa* (ch. 1–10) mentions that every lay follower of Mahāvīra was sheltering a huge number of cows. The householder Ānanda owned and nurtured 40,000 cows, Kāmadeva 60,000, and Culañipitā 80,000 cows. In this way, also other lay followers of Mahāvīra kept cow shelters. Hence, the modern laity establishes and keeps *gośālās*.
5. There are ten types of giving (*dāna*) in the *Sthānāṅga* (10.97). The first of them is *anukampā dāna*, which means giving with compassion. This form of *dāna* may be for *jīva-dayā* or for help to needy people.
6. *Punya* is an important element through which a living being gets chances for his spiritual and material development. The *Sthānāṅga* (9.25) mentions nine types of *puṇya*: (1) Giving food to *sādhus* and needy persons; (2) Giving water to mendicants and needy creatures; (3) Giving place for stay to *sādhus* and needy beings; (4) Giving bed for a sleep; (5) Giving clothes as per need; (6) An auspicious activity of mind; (7) An auspicious

7. *Jīva-dayā* can be considered as an *āṇyakarma* (noble deed). The *Uttarādhyaṇa* 18.10–19 relates how King Saṃjaya renounced hunting after hearing a sermon from Gaṇḍabhāli monk and initiated as a monk.
8. The *Uttarādhyaṇa* (13.32) tells that when emperor Brahmadatta was not ready to renounce his empire and get initiation, Cittaṃuni addressed him to do noble deeds which include *jīva-dayā*.
9. The *Kaṭṭhakeyyānupreṣṭhā* (v.478) mentions that 'the protection of living beings is dharma' (*jīvāṇaṃ rakhaṇaṃ dhamma*); hence *jīva-dayā* is *dharma*.
10. According to the *Tattvārthasūtra* (6.13) *anukampa* on all living beings and vow-observing persons is a cause of pleasure and happiness (*sātāvedanīya*).

Jīva-Dayā: some arguments

In the Terāpantha tradition it has been propounded that giving to non-restraint beings but to a *sādhu* or *sādhvī* is not *dharma*. Ācārya Hastīmāla replied that 'this statement is biased and result of a sectarian obstinacy. By this statement *dayā*, *karuṇā* and *anukampā* will come under the category of sin (because to give to other people than the *sādhus* observing the great five vows means to give non-restraint people and that will not be considered as a *punya* and *dharma*), and that will be against the Jaina principle of *dayā* and *dāna*.¹⁸ The statement of Ācārya Hastīmāla emphasizes

that the fruit of *dayā* and *dāna* depend on the intention of the giver, whereas according to the Terāpantha view *dāna* to persons who are not observing vows (*avīrata*) is not recommendable and is a form of sin. The *Sāmrantī* 1.11.20, however, prescribes a code of conduct stating that a mendicant should not prohibit any householder to give to needy persons, animals etc. because receivers will otherwise be deprived of their livelihood: *je ya naṃ padisehanti, vitāṣeḥyaṃ karanti te*.

Ācārya Umeśamuni propounds in his *Mokkha-purīṣattho* 7.6a: 'They are fortunate and virtuous, whose hearts are filled with compassion. Through the impact of compassion, a living being can be a recipient of many virtues.'

There may be an argument that in the activities of *jīva-dayā* violence of several subtle creatures and one-sensed living beings occurs, hence *jīva-dayā* is an activity of violence. This argument cannot diminish the importance of *jīva-dayā*. In nature, every living being has a right to use air and water. To live on earth and to eat the food received from plants is also a right of all living beings. But there is no right of any living being to misuse and harm these natural sources. Here, one point is to be added, that the living beings who bear more *prāṇas* (vital energy) experience through sense organs, mind, speech, body, life span and breathing) and whose consciousness is experienced by us are to be saved first. In this way animals and birds bear ten *prāṇas* including five *indriyas* (sense organs) and five other *prāṇas* (force of mind, speech, body, life span and breathing). These beings should be prioritized for protection. Then four-sensed beings with eight *prāṇas*, three-sensed beings with seven *prāṇas* and two-sensed beings with six

prāṇas are to be saved respectively. Protecting one-sensed living beings is the lowest priority for Jaina laity. We cannot live without water, air, fire, and plants. Hence a human being is compelled to use them to live. It may be reduced to some extent. It is a natural phenomenon of plants that ripen fruits and leaves fall on the earth, hence that may be used as food after saving their seeds for further crop.

Dayā is a virtue, hence it makes a person helpful to others and can promote spiritual development. *Dayā* is of two types: *dravyadayā* and *bhāvadayā*. When protecting and nurturing humans, animals and birds is done without feeling of inner compassion, then it is *dravyadayā* and when that is performed with inner feelings, then it is *bhāvadayā*. *Dravyadayā* or *jīvadayā* is helpful in protection and nurturing of the animals, birds etc., and *bhāvadayā* may lead to spiritual purification. There is a feeling of gladness in *bhāvadayā* which can eradicate selfishness and can experience friendliness.

There can be several benefits of *jīva-dayā* with *bhāvadayā*: (1) purification in thoughts and behaviour; (2) increase of virtuous karmas and happiness; (3) protection of living beings so that their auspicious emotions sanctify the atmosphere; (4) preservation of the environment and ecology; and (5) securing the right to use of animals and birds. This is why the *Sthānakavāsī* tradition is very supportive of activities of *jīva-dayā*. The spirit of *jīva-dayā*, in their view, keeps a human being alive with energy, generosity, tolerance, sensitivity, sympathy, friendliness, harmony, etc., and least to receiving auspicious wishes from all creatures.



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Notes

1. Hastimāla 2006: 526–535.
2. See Hastimāla 1998.
3. *Jaina Siddhānta Ratnākara* 2011: 118.
4. Cf. *Tattvārthabhāṣya* 1.2.
5. Cf. *Āṇukampā copai*, 11.38 and 4.18.
6. JSD 9.1 and 9.3.
7. JSD 9.4–5.
8. *Namo Purisavara-gandahathinam* 2003: 391–9.



(top) Pigeon house of Ahimsā tīrtha, Jalgaon.

(above) New developing Goshālā in Kustalā distt. Sawai madhopur (Rajasthan).

(left) Founder of Goshālā Ratan Lal Bafna and his wife are giving grass food to cows.