

Spiritual thoughts of Jain Saint Taran Swami and his contribution in the field of Indian philosophy

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Abstract

Taran Swami has been a prominent Jain saint of the 15th-16th century. The 14 books composed by Taran Swami are the main spiritual heritage of Jainism. In these scriptures, Taran Swami has paved the way for the only pure soul and its realization. He always emphasized that- **"He who thinks himself to be only his current manifestation cannot attain truth. The Soul is eternal. It exists in the past, exist now and shall exist forever. Believing that is exist only for the duration of the current manifestation is incorrect and believing so strengthens one's delusion only, Because soul is immortal."** Taran Swami condemned the external rituals without self-realization and highlighted the pure self-religion. He said- **"True spirituals practice brings us closer to our true selves. All other spiritual practices are merely namesakes."**

The spiritual revolution of Taran Swami was not only effective in the circumstances of that time, but to a greater or lesser degree it influenced the entire philosophical tradition even today. In this research paper, I am presenting this spiritual contribution of *Taran Swami*, who showed the true religion that leads to pure soul. Self-realization is the only way to get rid of attachment and hatred and to get rid of illhabits. No living being in the world can be happy without getting rid of his all source of desires, so the path of liberation propounded by Taran Swami is not effective only for Jains or Indians, but it is the way to be happy for all the living beings of the world.

Taran Swami did not say anything different from the *Tirthankar* or *Acharya* tradition of Jainism, rather he told the talk of Tirthankaras in easy public language and attacked the external ostentatiousness. Taran Swami's philosophy of life is the way to make every living being happy. To summaries, **"we should understand *Satya Dharma*/True Religion and follow it with utmost sincerity, not for the sake of influencing others. Only then will we attain salvation."**

Keywords

Taran Swami, Pure Soul, path of salvation, Jain Philosophy, Self-realization.

Introduction

After the Nirvana of Lord Mahavira and the three Anubaddha Kevalis (omniscient), the flag of Jinshasan (Jainism) remains intact today even after the passing of about 2600 years of *Panchamakal (DukhmahKal/Kaliyug)* due to the knowledgeable Acharyas, munirajas and great spiritual thinkers and *jnani* (scholar) of *Anga-Purva*. The spiritual consciousness of Jainism has remained alive today due to the philosophy given by many capable saints like Acharya Dharsen, Acharya Pushpadant, Acharya Bhootbali, AcharyaKundkund, Swami Samantbhadra, Acharya Umaswami, Amritchandra, Acharya Ankalankdev, Yogindu Dev and sages like MunirajPadmaprabhMaldharidev.

The great spiritual saint Acharya Taran Swami was born in the 16th century in the legacy of these *Nirgranth digambar* (nude sky clad passionless) *Acharyas* and this great personality not only influenced the entire 16th century but even today after passing nearly 500 years, the influence of Acharya Taran Swami is more or less felt in Jainism. Indelibly existing on the tradition of religious followers and Jinshasan/Jainism.

Acharya Taran Swami, was a Jain religious teacher and founder of the *TaranPanth*, a sect of *digambara* Jainism. The traditional biographies consider him a ritual reformer for rejecting the authority of *bhattarakas* and his emphasis on aniconism and inner realization. He is credited for writing fourteen texts. Taran Swami was born in Bilehari, Katni district in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. He took *muni-diksha* (became saint) in Sukha village of Damoh district and he did spiritual practice/*sadhna* in Semarkhedi of Vidisha district. He took *samadhi* (the state of abjorbing equanimity by giving up food & water till the end of life) in Malhargarh Nisai ji located in Ashoknagar district of Madhya Pradesh, India that is the reason why TaranPanth is prevalent in these districts and surrounding areas, has more followers.

Importance Of Taran Swami

As we see Taran Swami lived in the 15th-16th century central India. The 16th century has been the most tumultuous century in Indian history in terms of religious and cultural ups and downs. At the same time, the entire Hindu and Jain believers were being greatly attacked and terrorized by the religious frenzied atrocities of the rulers (Mughals) and its centers of worship were being ruthlessly destroyed. In such a situation, the security of religious places had become a matter of grave concern.¹ In this period, along with religious beliefs, the safety of *Jinvani* (Jain Literature/*Granthas*) and the extinction of philosophy among the frightened people was also a matter of great concern.

The appearance of Acharya Taran Swami at such a critical time to overcome both these challenges was a great event for the entire Jain tradition. Acharya Taran Swami re-enforced the path of salvation by preaching pure philosophy to the Jain religious followers drowned in fear, with his great spiritual personality and creativity while preserving the ancient Jain Agama-spiritual tradition. The influence of Acharya Taran Swami's personality was that in his company not only Jains but also followers of non-Jain sect, joined this *VitaragDharm* (Religion of Ahimsa/abstinence). Even today, this great favor of Taran Swami is remembered by the followers of TaranPanth (Special Sect of Jain Community) almost daily in their temple rituals like this-

“जो कदापि गुरु तार को, नहीं होतो अवतार।

मिथ्या भव सागर विषैं, और कैसे लहते पार।।”

“*jokadaapi guru taar ko, naheehotoavataar.*
Mithyaabhavsagarvisain, aur kaiselahatepaar..”

It means If Acharya Taran Swami was not born in this period, then how would we be free from the miseries of this world?

Acharya Taran Swami laid special emphasis on the practice of philosophy by worshipping *Jinvani*/Jain shastra for self-upliftment and upliftment of religion in the circumstances in those times and by keeping the worship of *Jinvani* as the main one, the rest of the activities were secondary. This was a revolutionary step. Due to this, on the one hand, inner ignorance was removed, on the other hand, the

ostentatiousness of the rituals also decreased and to win the hearts of the emotional devotees who were shedding tears over the ruined remains, he wiped their tears and said that the true *Dharmayatan* (Pilgrim) is your soul itself i.e. You are God yourself, whom no one can destroy. You go in the refuge of your self soul in your sentience form, he is the true refuge with determination, he is the real cause of attaining state of omniscient or supreme Godhood, by his reliance all the *Arahants* (ambodies state of omniscient) and perfect *swaroops* have become divine. This is the true path of libration.²

“चिदानन्द चितवनं, चेयन आनन्द सहाव आनन्दं।

कम्ममलं पयडि षिपनं, ममल सहावेन अन्मोय संजुत्तं।”

Chidaanand chitavann, cheyan aanand sahaav aanandn.

Kammamaln payadai şipann, mamal sahaaven anmoy snjuttn.

Taran Swami says here that knowledge and blissful soul should be meditated upon, because through this one attains the bliss of knowledge or natural self-happiness and by the experience of pure nature along with this bliss, the karmik metter bound with soul gets destroyed.³

Spiritual Contribution Of Taran Swami

In his life, Taran Swami explained the meaning of religion to the general public by preaching and writing literature and composed 14 books in the language of the general public also called *Lokbhasha*. These texts are divided into five parts and they are named as five Mat/Sect-⁴

**These texts are classified in five systems mentioned in one manuscript of *Thikanesara*-

- *Vicharamat* (Reflections)
 - *Malarohana* ("Garland offering")
 - *Pandit Puja* ("Wise worship")
 - *Kamala Battisi* ("Lotus thirty-two [verses]")

- *Acharamat* (Conduct)
 - *Shravakachara* ("Lay conduct")
- *Saramat* (Essential teachings)
 - *Jnyana Samuchchaya Sara* ("Substantial Collective Knowledge")
 - *Tribhangi Sara* ("Essence in triads")
 - *Upadesha Shuddha Sara* ("Substantial Pure sermons")
- *Mamalamat* (Spiritual purity)
 - *Mamala Pahuda* ("Handbook on purity")
 - *Chaubisa Thana* ("Twenty-four topics")
- *Kevalamat* (Absolute intent)
 - *Chhadmastha Vani* ("Discourses of Non-Omniscient")
 - *Nama Mala* ("Garland of Synonym names of object")
 - *KhatikaVishesa* ("Special uprooter")
 - *Siddha Subhava* ("Eternal Non Corporiel Omniscient Nature of Soul ")
 - *Sunna Subhava* ("Emptied Nature of Soul ")

Despite the great spiritual contribution of Taran Swami, it was a matter of concern that the great philosophy contained in his books remained limited to a special class. In his time, Taran Swami, rising above the boundaries of caste, sect, class, propounded the path of liberation for all living beings, but at present only a few thousand people, who later came to be known as the followers of *Taranpanth*, have access to these great spiritual texts. Due to the limitations of the sect, other sect people either did not try to understand them due to their prejudices or they could not get their introduction well. Taran Swami was a saintly man with a liberal heart away from discrimination of caste, creed and high and low class and he continued to hurt orthodox tradition and hypocrisy throughout his life. He also said-

“जाइकुलं नहु पिच्छदि, शुद्ध सम्मत दर्शनं पिच्छई।”

“jaa_ikulnnahupichchhadi, shuddhsammattdarshannpichchha_ii.”

Taran Swami says that Purity and greatness comes not from caste, creed or sect, but from pure right belief and to know yourself (Who am I).⁵

The irony has also been that most of the people who have been recognized under the shadow of the TaranPanth, either remained unfamiliar with these granthas/Literature or came to know this literature only superficially. Due to which the depth of the great philosophy contained in these texts remained untouched. However, from time to time, people with genuine interest in philosophy, who may belong to any sect, not only observed these texts but studied them deeply and praised them out loud.

The result of lack of familiarity with the scriptures of Taran Swami in the Jain society has become very worrying many times, due to which many people commented on Taran Swami without being introduced to the *Shastra Bhandar*/Literature. Due to this comment, there was a sense of mutual enmity among the followers of TaranPanth and we have made two differences in the great *Nirgranth Digambar Acharya* tradition. For some other Acharya tradition became primary by removing Taran Swami, while some turned away from the great spiritual heritage of Acharyas other than Taran Swami. It is a matter of great surprise that in the name of *Vitaragata's* nurturing Acharya tradition and *Maa Jinvani* (Jain Literature), mutual attachment and hatred flourished and we almost took a generation away from this great philosophy.

In fact, the only way to avoid all these bad associations is that we practice the *Aagam*-spiritual texts propounded by all the great *Nirgranth Vitaragi* saints with the spirit of self-welfare, without prejudice or enmity. Due to which the path of our liberation will not only be paved, but also, we will be able to get freedom from the instinct of attachment-hatred due to partisanship.

Even in rendering or narrating the philosophy quoted by Taran Swami, we should take his philosophy to the general public by understanding the new interpretations very well. Keep in mind that in our interpretations there should not be any conflict with *Jain Agama*, *Adhyatma* and all the four *Anuyog* applications, because the main basis of the authenticity of *Jain Agama* is to be free from conflict. If we will present the philosophy propounded by Taran Swami without knowing the *Nayvada/Syadwad* (relative statement), then the true meaning of Taran Swami's book could not be understood and the general public will remain untouched by this pure philosophy of the great spiritual saint.

Spirituality preached by Acharyas only confirms the path of Lord Arihant (absolutely passionless omniscient) which has been going on since time immemorial. It is a great responsibility in front of the learned class to make it accessible to the general public in the folk language. Do not submit to your solicitations or personal favors, if we can influence the path of *Sadguru Taran Swami* on this criterion, then it will be possible to reach this pure philosophy to the wider class by breaking the boundaries of the cult-sect and this path of salvation will be accessible to all. In fact, as *Pandit Todermal ji* (famous jain scholar) says, the condition of this synonym is for a short period of time, in such a situation, always be afraid of making anti-Jainism (anti-*agam*) statements, always avoid the implementation of wrong tradition by being eloquent, because this will harm millions of common sense. Innocent creatures possessing it cause great harm for a long time.

Acharya Taran Swami made it clear by linking his teachings with the great tradition of *Jinendra Bhagwan* (state of conquering passions) along with self-experience that this path of liberation has not been inaugurated today or tomorrow, but it is going on from time immemorial and will continue till eternity. Remembering Lord Jinendra (omniscient) in his sagas at many places, he described this philosophy as *Jinendra* or *Sarvajna*.

“जिनउवएसं सारं, किंचित् उवएस कहिय सदभावं।

तं जिनतारण रहयं, कम्मक्षय मुक्ति कारणं सुद्धं॥”

“*jina_uva_esnsaarn, kinchituva_eskahiysadbhaavn.*

Tn jinataaraṇarahayn, kammakṣaymuktikaaraṇansuddhn..”

Taran Swami Says As per the order of Lord Jinendra, I, famous by the name JinTaran is composing in short, this book for liberation from Karma and salvation.

The Central Theme Of Taran Swami's Books

From the study of Pujya Taran Swami's scriptures, it is clearly stated that he was influenced by Acharya Kundkund's book *Samaysara*, *Pravachanasara*, *Ashtapahud* and *Yogindu Dev's Paramatma Prakash* and *Yogasara* etc. and he

definitely studied these texts deeply. The meaning of many gathas quoted by Taran Swami is found in the texts of other Acharyas also partially or fully and Taran Swami also laid more emphasis on self-realization than mere knowledge or fasting activities. He also writes-

अनेय श्रुत जानाति, व्रत तप क्रिया अनेकधा।

अनेय कष्ट कर्तव्यं, न्यान हीनों वृथा भवेत्॥

Aneyshrutjaanaati, vrat tap kriyaaneekadhaa.

Aneykaṣṭkartavyn, nyaanheenonvrithaabhavet.

He Says that one knows many scriptures, does many types of fasting, penance etc. activities, but doing all this is just suffering because doing all this without self-knowledge is not effective.⁷

Similar sentiments have been expressed by Acharya Kundkund in his book *Pravachansaar-*

जं अण्णाणी कम्मं, खवेदि भवसयसहस्सकोडीहिं।

तं णाणी तिहिं गुत्तो, खवेदि उस्सासमेत्तेण।

Jn aṇṇaṇaṇaekammn, khavedibhavasayasahassakoḍaeihin.

Tn ṇaṇaṇaetihingutto, khavediussaasametteṇa.

Kundkund Acharya Says thatThe work which the ignorant spends in millions of lives, the work of the wise being hidden in three ways (mind-speech-body) spends it only in exhalation.⁸

Pandit Daulatram (famous jain scholar) has expressed the same thing in his book ‘*Chhadhala*’ like this-

कोटि जन्म तप तपै, ज्ञानबिन कर्म झरै जे।

ज्ञानी के छिनमांहि, त्रिगुप्ति तें सहज टरै ते॥

मुनिव्रत धार अनन्तबार, ग्रैवक उपजायौ।

पैं निज आत्मज्ञान बिना, सुख लेश न पायौ॥⁹

*Koṭijanm tap tapain, gyaanabinkarmjharain je.
Gyaaneekechhinamaanhi, trigupti ten sahaṭaraite..
Munivratdhaaranantabaar, graivakupajaayau.
Pain nijaatmagyaanbinaa, sukhlesh n paayau..*

Jain Scholar Daulatram ji writes that Even after doing penance for crores of births, as much karma is not destroyed by the ignorant, that much is done in a moment by the wise one. This soul has attained the high heavens/gravaiyak infinitely many times by the *Munivrat (great vows)*, but could not attain even a trace of happiness without self-realization.

In this way, we see that Acharya Taran Swami has given priority to self-worship, self-realization and self-knowledge at many places, which has been the main goal of our spiritual tradition. Along with this, Taran Swami has sung the glory of rightness everywhere and has described falsehood as the biggest fault and cause of sorrow. He writes-

मिथ्यात्वं परमं दुःखं, सम्यक्तं परमं सुखं।

तत्र मिथ्यामतं त्यक्तं, शुद्ध सम्यक्त सार्धयं॥

Mithyaatvnpamnduakhn, samyaktparamnsukhn.

Tatrmithyaamatntyaktn, shuddhsamyaktsaardhayn.

Taran Swami says that false belief is the cause of ultimate sorrow and the right believe is the cause of ultimate happiness. That's why leaving aside false beliefs and false opinions, The pure right believe should be practiced.¹⁰

Not only this, while describing the glory of *Samyak Darshan* (true faith), he further writes-

अनेक पाठ पठनं च, अनेक क्रिया संजुतं।

दर्शनं शुद्ध न जानंते, वृथा दान अनेकधा॥

Anekpaathpathannch, anekkriyaasnjutt.

Darshannshuddh n jaannte, vrithaadaananekadhaa..

Taran Swami explains to the devotees that he may be reading many scriptures, may be observing various types of conventional conduct and may be giving many

types of charity but all this is vain, if he does not know pure right beliefs and does not experience it.¹¹

Many types of question marks have been raised on Taran Swami's language, style, his syntax etc. but they are all baseless because Taran Swami composed his ballads and flowers on the basis of the words of Sanskrit and Prakrit language that were true to the then folk language. In which, along with self-worship, at some places the predominance of *Bhakti Rasa* is also visible, in which he mainly sang the songs of *Shuddhatma* (Pure Soul).

Dr. Hiralal Jain has made very accurate comments on the composition, style and language and subject matter of Sant Taranswami. he writes-

“The expressions of these texts are very strange. The basic principles of Jainism and the main elements of spiritualism are clearly reflected in it. But the author's writing style is not limited to one mold and one stream. The way in which the impulse of thoughts went, then they captured it and the language they used in this work is very personal. It is neither Sanskrit, nor *prakrit*, *apbhransh*, nor is it a vernacular language. In my understanding, it would be better to call it Taaran Taran language. It is difficult to take full advantage of the deep and beautiful sentiments that are filled in them due to the above awkward style.”¹²

On the other hand, Pandit Parmeshthidas also has the same opinion in this regard- “Who expounded the highest spiritual principles in his unique language style. It is difficult to understand the exact meaning of those Sutras and Gathas composed by Taran Swami, because his language style is different. In the present age, the name of Kanji Swami is prominent among the spiritual great men, who have sung the glory of the spiritual knowledge of Taran Swami and have also given discourses on his spiritual speech, which have also been published in two parts in the name of *Asht Pravachan* (Eight-Lectures).¹³

Here it is necessary to mention one very important name, without which it was not possible to understand the meaning of Taran Swami's texts. That name is Brihmachari Sheetalprasad ji, who not only wrote commentaries on Samaysaar, Niyamasar etc. but also did a great job by writing commentaries on 9 books of Taran Swami. in 20th century he has translated Taran Swami's Grinths into Hindi and

because of him the unbiased scholars and followers could understand the sum and substance of those Grinthis. None can deny this fact.

Conclusion

In this way, we see that Acharya Taran Swami gave his sermon by focusing only on the achievement of pure soul, keeping all other things secondary. Paving the way for self-realization should be the main goal of a moksharthi by repeatedly studying the scriptures of JinTaran Swami. There is a need for continuous study of these scriptures so that by understanding the heart of Taran Swami's teachings, we can become true followers of Lord Arihant's path and make our life successful without birth and death. In fact, this is the path of salvation, this is the religion of salvation and this is the way of life, this is the real Jainism.

Taaran Taran Swamy's literary contribution is most relevant even in the current circumstances because even today, forgetting the real form of religion, people are wasting their lives in extraneous rituals and dogmas. It is not right to weigh Taran Swami on literary scales, but the message or which he gave his whole life with honesty, needs to be imbibed in one's life. Taran Swami propagated religion by following the original path of *Jain Tirthankaras*, *Shrutkevalis* and *Acharyas* and experienced the only pure soul throughout his life and inspired the people to experience this pure soul. By excluding Taran Swami from the Jain scholarly tradition, we would surely be missing a very important literary contribution.

In short, the attainment of the pure soul and the realization of oneself in the form of a pure soul different from the world, body and pleasures, is the Jainism and this is the *TaranPanth/sect*. The attainment of the pure soul is the essence of the teachings of Taran Swami.

And in the end I would just like to say that what is the basic objective of all the scriptures of Jainism is also the objective of Taran Swami's scriptures, and that objective is- (i) to show the right path of salvation to the miserable capable souls (ii) to make them realize that they are potentially God (Paramatma) and they can attain Godhood through self realization and they need not to remain just like a slave of the so called imaginary creator God (iii) to make them understand the true nature of

omniscient Arihanta God and that of the self soul through the true posture of Jina's idol silently preaching the devotee to remain self-absorbed like him and (iv) for attaining happiness they need not to grope in the darkness of uncertainty and doubt and (v) to free the mundane souls from all sorts of pains & miseries of embodied state of existence and to install them in supreme bliss for ever and (vi) to get rid of birth & death cycle for ever.

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