

## Beyond The Hindu Frontier Jaina-Vaiṣṇava Syncretism in The Gujarātī Diaspora

Article 51A(f) of the Indian Constitution recognises what many politicians and anthropologists still fail to do: India does not represent a civilisational whole<sup>1</sup> but has a “composite culture.”<sup>2</sup> That this statement does not merely reflect the wishful thinking of the constituent assembly but historical fact is no more evident than in the continued presence of the ancient traditions of Buddhism and Jainism in India,<sup>3</sup> which contemporary religious nationalists have for decades unsuccessfully tried to incorporate into the indefinable ‘Hindu’ mould; not to speak of the presence of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, and diverse tribal communities. This



article tries to demonstrate through the analysis of the unique conversion ritual of the Akram Vijñān Mārg, a new religious movement in the Gujarātī-speaking world, that the supposition of a civilisational unity of India or of South Asia is a theoretical abstraction which obstructs rather than illuminates the understanding of the cultural and religious history of the Indian subcontinent. Heterogeneity and processes of bricolage, mixture, syncretism or hybridisation are not merely the consequence of external cultural interaction, migration and travel, that is the advance or retreat of a well-defined cultural frontier,<sup>4</sup> but situated at the very heart of religious and cultural life beyond the homogenising cultural politics of the state<sup>5</sup> and organised religion.<sup>6</sup> The article is based on intermittent fieldwork between 1997-2004 in Amadāvād/Ahmedabad, London, Mumbai/Bombay, Surat, and Vaḍodarā/Baroda.

### *The Akram Vijñān Movement*

The Akram Vijñān Mārg, or the Stepless Path to Soteriological Knowledge, has currently approximately 300,000 followers amongst the Gujarātī-speaking diaspora in India, East Africa, Great Britain, Fiji and the U.S.A. The movement was started in 1962 in Baroda by the religious visionary Ambalāl Mūljībhāī Paṭel (7.11.1908 - 2.1.1988), a businessman with only basic formal education who belonged to a Vaiṣṇava Pāṭidār family from Tarsālī, a suburb of Baroda. He spent most of his life as a married householder without children in Bombay where he worked as a contractor for the company Paṭel & Co. which specialised in the construction and maintenance of the dry docks in the harbour. In 1958, while waiting for a train at the railway station of Surat, he had reportedly a forty-eight minutes long ‘enlightenment’ experience. It is said that he was able to contact Sīmandhara Svāmī, the Jain *tīrthāṅkara* who presently lives on the mythical continent of Mahāvīdeha,<sup>7</sup> and due to Sīmandhar’s grace (*kṛpā*) was able to achieve the state of permanent self-realisation, or *ātmañāna*.<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, he understood the solution to all spiritual conundrums: “God is your real self”;<sup>9</sup> “All you need to know is to understand your real nature.”<sup>10</sup> He understood at once that through this insight he had gained *jīvanamukti*, or liberation in this life, since he was from now on able to directly experience the difference between the inner ‘real self,’ which he later called Dādā Bhagavān, Grandfather Lord, and the outer ‘relative self,’ that is A.M. Paṭel, and his actions which appeared to be nothing but *karman* accumulated in previous lives that come to fruition (*karmaphala*), without any involvement of the real self.

From 1962 onwards, A.M. Paṭel, the *jñānī*, or knower, taught his insights, first to family members and friends and later, on popular demand, in public meetings (*satsaṅga*) to anyone who was interested. He used the ontological categories of the Sāṃkhya tradition to describe the disjunction between pure consciousness (*puruṣa*) and the activities of the body-mind complex (*prakṛti*) which a self-realised being merely observes from the outside without identifying with them. However, most of the recognisable cosmological, soteriological and ritual concepts of his idiosyncratic teachings (which were only orally transmitted and via tape recordings)<sup>11</sup> stem from the Jain tradition. Like Sāṃkhya ontology, Jaina ontology is dualistic. It distinguishes between soul (*jīva*), or pure consciousness, and non-soul (*ajīva*), or matter, but

characterises pure consciousness not as a passive but as an active force. In addition to right knowledge Jainism stresses the soteriological importance of non-violent action, because the karmic bondage of the soul is perceived to be real, not just an illusion based on ignorance.

The principal text of classical Jainism, Ācārya Umāsvāti/Umāsvāmī's 5<sup>th</sup> century *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, propagates a threefold path to liberation: through right vision, right knowledge, and right conduct.<sup>12</sup> According to this view, salvation can only be achieved if non-violent conduct is informed by the knowledge and the belief in seven fundamental truths (*tattva*), which describe the mechanism of karmic bondage and the traditional path of liberation through the stepwise purification of the soul.<sup>13</sup> The combination of the three aspects of the path of liberation is still regarded as the essential feature of what later came to be known as *jaina dharma*, the doctrine of the Jinās, or victors, i.e. the twenty-four fordmakers (*īrthāṅkara*) which showed the way out of the eternal cycle of death and rebirth.<sup>14</sup> However, in practice, many Jain traditions have stressed one aspect more than others. As a consequence, contemporary Jainism presents at least three different Jain paths to salvation:<sup>15</sup> asceticism (canonical and classical monastic Jainism), devotion (classical lay Jainism)<sup>16</sup>, and knowledge (Digambara mysticism). I have suggested elsewhere<sup>17</sup> that the Akram Vijñān Mārg is the only religious movement which has developed the anti-ascetic implications of Kundakunda's Digambara mysticism, with its emphasis on self-realisation and salvific knowledge, into a Mahāyāna-style alternative to the classical path of purification. The emphasis on knowledge and devotion certainly proved to be of interest for many lay Gujarātīs, because it offers the option of a stepless (*akrama*) or instant 'enlightenment' (*vijñāna*) for everyone 'through the grace of Dādā Bhagavān,' that is the self-realised soul of A.M. Paṭel.

The movement,<sup>18</sup> which crystallised around A.M. Paṭel from 1962 onwards, cannot be easily located within any pre-existing religious tradition, although it clearly draws upon ritual and doctrinal elements of Vaiṣṇavism and Jainism whose classical conception of *siddhaloka*, the realm of the liberated souls, serves as the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey. It is argued here that the process of formation of this new religious movement is typical for many similar movements, probably since time eternal, by not being a product of cultural diffusion through travel or conquest, but a creative synthesis of elements that are cumulatively selected from the universe of known ideas and

practices under conditions of positive feedback.<sup>19</sup> The resulting syncretism is difficult to classify, because the Akram Vijñān movement explicitly rejects the conventional attributes ‘religion,’ ‘sect,’ ‘cult,’ ‘movement,’ ‘scripture,’ ‘doctrine,’ ‘ritual,’ ‘guru’ and ‘disciple,’ which it regards as worldly and particularistic. It favours a universal ‘non-sectarian’ path (*mārga*) to salvation through introspection and the mystical experience of individual self-realisation which is beyond words and not accessible through the intellect. This direct experience of the transcendental truth – which provides a shortcut to salvation<sup>20</sup> and marks the end of conventional religion – is offered to the followers of all religions, including Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, etc. This article analyses the method which A.M. Paṭel, the Dādā Bhagavān, invented to transmit his self-knowledge directly and unconditionally to all interested aspirants.

### *Worldwide Mission*

Although A.M. Paṭel rejected organised forms of religion, he invented a ritual technique for the ‘transmission’ of his experience of self-realisation to others. This unique procedure was called *jñān vidhi*, or the rite of knowledge, and became the focus of a new organised ‘guru-cult’ which spread quickly throughout the Gujarātī-speaking world, especially amongst urban working class and lower middle class professionals with limited formal education from Vaiṣṇava and Jain families.<sup>21</sup> In 1973, A.M. Paṭel gave his blessings to the creation of a community organisation, the *Jay Sacchidānand Saṅgh* in Mumbaī, for the financial and organisational support of his missionary tours in India and abroad, and for publishing and construction projects. The first leader of this nation-wide organisation was the head of the *Dādā Bhagavān Vitarāga Trust* in Bombay, Khetsī Narsī Śāh, who after his death was succeeded by G.A. Śāh from Ahmedabad. Important local *Sacchidānand Saṅghas* in India are located in Vaḍodarā, Surat, Amadāvād and Mumbaī. Amongst the Gujarātīs in East Africa, including several relatives of A.M. Paṭel, the community of Kampala (Uganda) has the greatest number of followers. In 1982, A.M. Paṭel was invited for the first time to the U.S.A. by the family of Vasant Paṭel in Oak Ridge Tennessee, the U.S. community leader, and returned to the U.S.A. every year until his death in Baroda on the 2.1.1988, which was mourned, amongst others, by more than 10,000 U.S. Gujarātīs.<sup>22</sup> The number of followers has continuously increased ever since.

## *Schism And Continuity*

In the last decade of his life A.M. Paṭel became almost a full-time preacher, due to popular demand. Until 1978, when he had an accident which left him with a fractured leg, A.M. Paṭel and his wife lived together with the family of Kanubhāi Paṭel (born 1930), a structural engineer who worked for his company and who became his most dedicated follower. However, from 1978 onwards he severed his business connections with Kanubhāi and concentrated entirely on his religious work. He was accompanied on all his missionary tours by the medical doctor Nīrubahen Amīn (born 1944–2006) from Auranṅābād, the widowed daughter of one of his earliest devotees, from the Carotar Paṭel *jñātī* of the village Vaso in Gujarāt, and herself a devoted follower who committed herself entirely to his service (*sevā*).

After the death of A.M. Paṭel in 1988 a succession dispute flared up between Kanubhāi Paṭel and Nīrubahen Amīn, which in 1993 – the year in which the first of three Tri-Mandira shrines of the Akram Vijñān movement dedicated to Simandhara Svāmī, Kṛṣṇa and Śiva was completed in Surat<sup>23</sup> – led to the split of the movement into two factions. At present, the oldest community organisation, the *Jay Saccidānand Saṅgh*, still supports Kanubhāi Paṭel, but the majority



of the believers follow Nīrubahen Amīn. The ongoing dispute between the factions focuses on the charismatic qualification of Nīrubahen Amīn, the person which was closest to A.M. Paṭel during the last decade of his life, to act as a religious leader. Nīrubahen Amīn claims that, in 1987, A.M. Paṭel (who publicly did not determine any successor since he rejected organised religion) had given her a secret *mantra* which allows her to temporarily invoke the spiritual power (*siddhi*) of the Dādā within herself and to act as a medium

for the performance of the rite of knowledge, the principal focus of the Akram Vijñān movement, after his death.<sup>24</sup> Kanubhāi Paṭel, on the other hand, points out that he was the person closest to A.M. Paṭel before 1978 and received from him the powers to perform the *jñān vidhi* already in 1960. His followers preserved a clandestine tape recording of a private conversation between A.M. Paṭel and Nīrubahen Amīn on the 19.9.1987 which seems to prove that he wanted Nīrubahen to work together with Kanubhāi and to assist him in the performance of the *jñān vidhi*. In contrast to Nīrubahen Amīn who does not claim to be enlightened herself but acts merely as a spirit medium (*nimitta*) of A.M. Paṭel, who in her view was the only *jñānī* of this age, Kanubhāi Paṭel asserts that he is a *jñānī* in his own right, and the only presently existing enlightened being/man (*pravartamān pragat jñānī puruṣ*).<sup>25</sup> One of the main objections of the *Jay Saccidānand Saṅgh* to Nīrubahen's succession is that she is a woman.<sup>26</sup>

### *Religious Hierarchy*

Both wings of the Akram Vijñān Mārg distinguish today three religious statuses: (1) The spiritual leader, Kanubhāi Paṭel or Nīrubahen Amīn, who carries the title *pūjya ātmājñānī*, venerable knower of the soul, and who alone can perform initiations and the rite of knowledge, (2) the category of presently ca. fifty male and seven-to-ten female celibate disciples (*brahmacārī* or *brahmacārinī*), called *āptaṭṭras* or *āptaṭṭrīs*, or true spiritual sons or daughters of the Dādā, "the one with the speech of truth (*āptaṭṭrī*),"<sup>27</sup> and (3) the common believers, which, after their initiation, are either called *mumukṣus*, seekers for salvation (like the followers of Rājacandra), or *mahātmās*, great souls or great beings. The social leaders of the local or the all-embracing lay associations are distinguished by the title *saṅghapati* or *sakal saṅghapati*.

### *Ātmājñānī*

The spiritual leader, who alone can perform the *jñān vidhi*, is evidently the most important individual of the Akram Vijñān movement. As a matter of principle, there is only one spiritual leader in each of the two present groups, qualified either by personal charisma or through the possession of a special *mantra*, i.e. objectified charisma, and the ritual competence learned in the presence of

A.M. Paṭel.<sup>28</sup> Since the Akram Vijñān Mārg is an egalitarian and rather informal lay movement, without rules and regulations or institutionalised hierarchies of command, the most important structuring device is the relationship between the *ātmājñānī*, the knower, and the *mahātmās*, the great souls which have received ‘the knowledge’ from him or her. This relationship was originally purely emotive.<sup>29</sup> The first ‘*jñān vidhi*,’ i.e. the transmission of the experience of *samyak darśana* to another individual, was performed by A.M. Paṭel in 1962 in his rented house in Baroda for his nephew Candrakānt Paṭel from Uganda through an informal discourse (*āptavāṇī*) followed by a personal blessing (*āśīrvāda*). Since 1983, the relationship was cemented by a formal initiation ritual which precedes the *jñān vidhi* and which requires the devotee’s symbolic surrender (*samarpaṇa*) of ‘mind, speech, and body’ to Sīmandhar Svāmī in the presence of the *ātmājñānī* (thus effectively to both). Since, in principle, the hierarchical relationship depends on nothing but the bond of a shared religious experience of ‘the pure soul’ and the mutual recognition of ‘knowers,’ the initiation does not involve any definition of mutual rights and duties or expectations of material or immaterial services. The designations *guru* and *śiṣya* are therefore deliberately avoided.

### *Āptaputra/Āptaputrī*

The *āptaputras* and *āptaputrīs* are *mahātmās* who practise celibacy in order to enhance their spiritual purity. They do not expressly claim the formal status of religious virtuosi, but many of them act as charismatically qualified preachers under the instruction of the respective *ātmājñānī*.

*Brahmacarya*, or celibacy, is the only commitment which was taken over by the Akram Vijñān movement from the lists of the five principal Jain vows (*mahāvratā*): non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), not stealing (*asteya*), non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*), and celibacy (*brahmacarya*) (AS 2.15.29f.). A.M. Paṭel himself rejected world renunciation and monasticism, because in his view leaving the family behind to rely on other people’s work creates violence itself. In accordance with his overall philosophy, he also did not share the Jain concern with the subtle physical violence accompanying every sexual act as a major argument for celibacy.<sup>30</sup> However, he recommended *brahmacarya*, because he regarded

sexual desire as the greatest distraction from the concentration on the pure soul, the source of real happiness, particularly in this “sexy age,” to use Nīrubahen’s words, but also because it generates the willpower (*ātmaśakti*) that is necessary for the incessant application of *bhed jñān* in everyday life.

The Jain lay vow of *brahmacarya* demands the observation of a great number of ritualistic rules and regulations, such as observing fast-days (*poṣadha*) four times a month and not eating at night (*rātri bhोजना त्यागा*), although permitting work and other aspects of householder life.<sup>31</sup> From the point of view of A.M. Paṭel, observing such vows and fasts may be helpful, but is not necessary. In his opinion, asceticism (*tapasyā*) cannot destroy *karman*, which can only come to fruition naturally.<sup>32</sup> Only the stoppage (*saṃvara*) of the influx of new *karman* through non-attachment and the constant awareness of the pure self combined with the process of automatic fruition of the already accumulated *karman* can liberate. He rejected therefore all the physical exertions and ritualistic formulae associated with the Jain practice of *brahmacarya* and emphasised that, like Kṛṣṇa, ideally, a true *jñānī* practices *brahmacarya* spontaneously in his everyday life.<sup>33</sup>

A.M. Paṭel initiated nevertheless twenty-seven celibate male disciples (*brahmacārī*) which he called *āptaṭputras*, true spiritual sons of the one with the speech of truth (*āptavāṇī*). Later, an *āśram*, called *Samyamdhām*, abode of restraint, was constructed for the *āptaṭputras* in Siṅgod, some 40 km away from Surat. At present, ten *āptaṭputras* who have vowed to practice celibacy for the rest of their lives live there to practise constant awareness of the soul. They are provided with all material necessities by the local *Āptaṭputra Trust* and undertake long journeys to the U.S.A., Canada, Great Britain, East Africa and Oceania (Fiji, New Zealand, Australia) to preach the teachings of the Dādā to their Gujarātī-speaking followers at *cāturmās*, the four month period of the traditional Jain monsoon retreat, during which most of the important religious festivals are celebrated.<sup>34</sup> However, during most of the year they continue to work in their chosen professions.<sup>35</sup> All of the presently twenty-two surviving *āptaṭputras* were initiated by the Dādā in their early twenties. Another twelve *āptaṭputras* which were initiated by A.M. Paṭel himself live with their families which have not yet given them permission to leave for the *āśram*. Some of the *āptaṭputras* told me that in future no more *brahmacārīs* will be initiated, because only the Dādā was



able to do that. These conceptions are obviously designed to enhance the status of the remaining *āptaṭputras* of A.M. Paṭel. But they also prevent Kanubhāi Paṭel from initiating his own celibate disciples.<sup>36</sup>

Nīrubahen Amīn, by contrast, initiated some thirty-five male and female *āptaṭputras* up to the year 2001. She permits them to take the vow of *brahmacarya* either lifelong or only for a limited period. Before the proper initiation of a lifelong *brahmacārī* or *brahmacārini* a five-year probation period is customarily observed. If someone comes to Nīrubahen and asks her to accept him or her as a lifelong *brahmacārī* or *brahmacārini*, she will ask the individual first to attempt to live for five years “as if” being a *brahmacārī*. Only after the successful completion of the probation is the initiation conducted with a small informal ritual. The candidate first touches the feet of a statue of Sīmandhar Svāmī, then states the intention to become a *brahmacārī* or *brahmacārini*, whereupon Nīrubahen utters several times “*śuddhātmā*,” pure soul/self, and then transmits to the candidate her inner strength by silently reciting the secret *mantra* that was given to her by the Dādā and by blessing the freshly initiated candidate, who bows down to touch her feet. Formally initiated *brahmacārīs* of A.M. Paṭel and Nīrubahen give up tailored clothing and permanently wear a simple white cotton garment which is nowadays the only outward characteristic of a Akram Vijñān *brahmacārī*, white being the colour of purity. The *brahmacārini*s, however, continue to wear normal clothes, as did the Dādā himself.

The first *brahmacārī* of Nīrubahen was Dipakbhāi Ghardas Desāi (born 1954), a softly-spoken textile engineer from Vavāniyā, the home town of Śrīmat Rājendra, who was attracted to A.M. Paṭel’s teachings in 1971 by Nīrubahen and “given the *jñān*” by “the Dādā” in 1977. Dipakbhāi became the first *āptaṭputra* initiated by Nīrubahen and is recognised as her dedicated successor “by the Dādā’s word.” It is said that in future he may become self-realised himself. He masters great influence amongst the predominantly male *brahmacārī* community which once resided in his apartment in Ahmedabad.

Most temporary *brahmacārīs* live a normal life with their families. However, the majority of the ca. thirty lifelong *āptaṭputras* and *āptaṭputrīs* have never married and lived “like a family” together with Dīpakbhāi Desāi and Nīrubahen Amīn in their apartments in Ahmedabad and Mumbaī. Recently, Nīrubahen’s core following of celibate males and females has moved together into a new apartment

block in Ahmedabad, which also houses a newly consecrated temple. All of them either work during the day, or live on the interest of their personal wealth to devote all their time to the propagation of the Dādā's message. There is no practice of begging alms or giving donations in order to accumulate merit in the Akram Vijñān Mārg. The *āptaṭputras* and *āptaṭputrīs* work for their own spiritual progress, by individually performing a number of religious practices based on idiosyncratic reinterpretations of Jain rituals such as the forty-eight minutes meditative introspection (*sāmāyika*) and the rite of repentance (*pratīkramaṇa*), or they simply read the edited discourses of the Dādā alone or collectively after dinner for one to two hours (ca. 20.30-21.30). Their main religious exercise is, however, the attempt to maintain a constant awareness (*jāgrati*) of the soul for twenty-four hours a day, a practice which is also conceived as a form of internal asceticism (*bhāva tapas*).

In addition, they do “the Dādā's work” for the religious community as a whole by organising *śībirs*, which are informal meetings of ca. 1000 devotees that are held in the evenings from ca. 18.00-24.00 four or five times per month, where videos of A.M. Paṭel's discourses are shown and discussed, *satsaṅgas* or question-and-answer sessions, and *yātrās*, or pilgrimages, which are effectively sightseeing tours with Nīrubahen or Dīpakbhāi which allow their followers to bond with them. They also edit, transcribe and translate the Dādā's taped discourses for publication, publish the community journal *Dādāvāṇī*, organise communications, maintain websites and generally organise the infrastructure of the still rather informally organised community.

Apart from Nīrubahen, only seven *āptaṭputras* currently hold *satsaṅgs* on their own, and four to five work full time for the *Dādā Bhagvān Foundation Trust*. Because the parents of interested girls often do not allow their daughters to live a communal life “without protection,” there are only seven *āptaṭputrīs* at the moment. Some of the *āptaṭputrīs* also left the group after one year to marry. The *āptaṭputrīs* supervise the cooking of the communal vegetarian meals by ca. thirty-five Brāhmiṇ girls, who do the menial work, and generally look after the communal household, which is also called religious service (*sevā*). The living arrangements are rather informal, although men and women live of course in different rooms, since the Akram Vijñān Mārg doesn't believe in rules and regulations, which “only create transgressions.”

In 1999, the new *Mahāvideha Tīrthadhāma* in Ahmedabad became the main centre for communal living and worship. Similar ‘*āśrams*’ exist today in five places: Vaḍodarā (4), Rājkoṭ, Surat, Valsad and New Delhi. Other members of the cult also live temporarily together with the celibate disciples of Nīrubahen. The desire to be close to her and the ideal of a communal living currently inspires large building projects such as the enclosed Akram Vijñān Mārg compound of a Tri-Mandir temple (consecrated on the 29.12.2002), apartments and service facilities for communal living in Adalaj 18 miles north of Ahmedabad, called *Sīmandhar City*, which is under construction. It will be used not only by the *brahmacārīs* and pilgrims but also as retirement accommodation by expatriate Gujarātī *mahātmās* from America, Great Britain and East Africa. For financing this project a special *Sīmandhar Svāmī Ārāadhanā Trust* has been established.

### *Mahātmā*

Individuals who have been graced by the Dādā with the experience of the pure self (*śuddhātmā*) are called *mahātmās*. This experience is ‘received’ through the participation in the collective *jñān vidhi*, the ritual of knowledge, which is nowadays preceded by an initiation ritual, called *samarpaṇ*, or surrender. Anyone who is eighteen years of age, vegetarian, abstinent from alcohol, and who practises sexual continence (exclusive commitment to wife or husband) qualifies for the ritual transformation into a *mahātmā*, irrespective of sex, caste, race, nationality, or religion.<sup>37</sup> Since the Akram Vijñān movement emphasises its spiritual and non-institutional character, it rejects the term initiation (*dīkṣā*), which implies the existence of an organisation. Rather than establishing membership in an institution, the *jñān vidhi* aims at the spiritual transformation of the candidates from the state of ignorance to the state of intuitive knowledge of the true self. However, a closer look at the two crucial elements of the ritual as performed by Nīrubahen Amīn, the vow of surrender in the presence of a *jñānī* or his medium and the active participation in the subsequent *jñān vidhi*, show all the hallmarks of a classical initiation or conversion ritual. Nīrubahen Amīn says that without the formal vow of surrender, which is preceded by the enlistment of the name and address of the candidate, no spiritual energy and moral instruction can be transmitted and received, be-

cause it is predicated on the correct devotional attitude. Moreover, whoever has been initiated by Nīrubahen will lose the knowledge if he or she participates in the rite of Kanubhāi Paṭel and *vice versa*. The *samarpaṇ* ceremony is clearly regarded as the formal condition for the success of the rite and effectively functions as an initiation into a more or less exclusive cult community. Until the year 2001, Nīrubahen Amīn has initiated ca 50,000 *mahātmās* world-wide, 5000 in Britain alone. However, she concedes that “of course not all are practising, in Britain maybe 100-500.”<sup>38</sup> The precise number of initiations performed by A.M. Paṭel and Kanubhāi Paṭel is not known.

### *The Ritual of Knowledge*

The *jñān vidhi* can only be performed by *ātmājñānīs* or by a specially qualified medium such as Nīrubahen Amīn who has also been honoured with the title *ātmājñānī*. The rite in the present form is an expanded and formalised version of the first public performances of the ritual by A.M. Paṭel in 1968. Between 1970-1983 the initially unstructured ritual *séance* was rationalised and augmented through the incorporation of preparatory songs and prayers, composed by the poet Navnīt Paṭel from Bombay and by Nīrubahen Amīn, and by explanatory lectures. Today, the schematic structure of the entire ritual, in which I participated myself three times between 1997-1999,<sup>39</sup> involves four stages, including the registration of newcomers, the opening lecture, and a concluding communal meal, called *prasād*. The ritual of knowledge as such, the third stage, comprises again four parts, with the original *jñān vidhi*, here called *bhed jñān vidhi*, sandwiched between an extensive prelude followed by the initiation rituals (*samarpaṇa*), and the concluding explanation of the five basic precepts (*pañca ājñā*) for the attainment of salvation to the new *mahātmās*. The structure of the ritual as a whole corresponds well to the famed tripartite analytical scheme of Hubert and Mauss (1898/1981) which inspired van Gennep and Turner: entry-consecration-exit, which is replicated within the middle section again. The key ritual, the *bhed jñān vidhi*, lasts about forty-eight minutes, or one *muhūrta*, while the entire ritual takes about four hours:<sup>40</sup>

- A. registration of new candidates
- B. lecture on the meaning and effect of the *jñān vidhi*

- C. *jñān vidhi*: rite of knowledge
1. prelude (ca. 10 minutes)
    - a. everything of mine is surrendered (song)
    - b. invitation to the Gods to come (song)
    - c. invitation to the Dādā and Sīmandhar Svāmī to speak through Nīrubahen
    - d. request to the Dādā for strength
  2. *samarpaṇ*: initiation of new candidates (ca. 20 minutes)
  3. *bhed jñān vidhi*: ritual separation of soul and body (48 minutes)
  4. *pāñc ājñā*: explanation of the five precepts (ca. 45 minutes)
- D. *prasād*: communal meal

### (A) *Registration*

The *jñān vidhi* is a collective public ritual for the transformation of newcomers into *mahātmās*, which can only be performed in the presence of an *ātmājñānī*. However, the entire congregation of local *mahātmās* following Nīrubahen Amīn (or Kanubhāi Paṭel: the two groups never mix) actively takes part in the ceremony. The underlying idea is that the more often a *mahātmā* participates in the ritual the stronger and longer-lasting will be its effects. For any local congregation, the visit of the *ātmājñānī* is rare, and the *jñān vidhi* is always a special event of his/her schedule (during each visit only one or two *jñān vidhis* are performed). The participation in the ritual is therefore seen as a unique chance to directly experience an intuitive insight into the inner pure soul.

The event usually takes place between 2-6 p.m. on a Saturday or Sunday and is advertised through e-mail lists, leaflets and small announcements in local Gujarātī newspapers. The venue is either a rented public hall or – if the congregation is small – a living room in the house of dedicated *mahātmās*. The hall is usually not decorated at all, except for an improvised shrine for the Dādā with a flower-rimmed photograph of A.M. Paṭel at the centre beneath a depiction of Sīmandhar Svāmī, flanked by images of Śiva and Kṛṣṇa. In front of this shrine, a small marble statue of Sīmandhar Svāmī is placed, usually on a table with a chair next to it; and on the left side, somewhat removed from the shrine, is a divan or a sofa chair covered with white cloth next to a microphone. In front of this ritual ‘stage’ separate seating areas are demarcated with sheets of

white cloth for men on the right side and for women on the left side of the central passage to the shrine. Placed at the back of the room and along the walls are chairs for the elderly, and for officials and guests of honour.

The ritual infrastructure and the material arrangements of the ritual are prepared by the principal local male *mahātmās* who usually wear a plain white cotton dress on the day to indicate their special role. At the point of entering the hall or the house in which the ceremony is held, they request new candidates for initiation to write their name and address on a list which is later used to individually call them for the *samarpaṇ* ritual. This list represents the only documentary evidence of discipleship or membership and also functions as a mailing list. The majority of the participants of the *jñān vidhi* are *mahātmās* who have already undergone the initiation ceremony and do not need to repeat it. Many families with children attend and the atmosphere is informal, warm and welcoming and permeated by an egalitarian spirit. The only requirement for joining the congregation is the removal of the shoes. The ceremony is open to non-participating observers as well.

### (B) *Lecture*

Nirubahen Amīn conducts all her engagements with the support of her personal attendant Brahmācārī Dimple Mahetā, an ex-stock broker from Mumbai in his late 20s who serves her in the same way as she once served the Dādā A.M. Paṭel. Dimple orchestrates the ritual performance with a second microphone. Once the majority of the congregation has assembled he is the first to enter the stage to give a short lecture to the newcomers on the structure and the aim of the ritual.

At the outset, he explains that the rite as such consists of three parts: (1) the initiation of new candidates through the surrender (*samarpaṇ*) of all worldly possessions to “the Dādā,” that is the pure soul; (2) the forty-eight minute long *bhed jñān vidhi*, a collective meditation on the qualities of the soul, wherein “the Dādā” says a sentence and everyone else repeats *unisono* what he said in order to generate the conscious or unconscious experience of the separateness of the pure soul from the body (*bhed jñān*) or right insight (*samyak darśan*); and (3) the explanation of the five precepts (*pāñc ājñā*) which, if applied correctly in everyday life, can lead to

salvation at the feet of Sīmandhar Svāmī after only one more rebirth.

Dimple emphasises that, despite the enlisting of names and the ensuing vow of allegiance to Sīmadhar Svāmī, the rite is not an initiation – not even a ritual – because the Dādā did not crave for disciples nor for the creation of a cult, but simply offered his assistance for the evocation of the immediate experience of the soul in everyone through the direct transmission of his unique spiritual energy.<sup>41</sup> It is a necessary precondition that those who desire to be graced with *samyak darśan* by him have to assume an attitude of devotion to him and Sīmandhar Svāmī and surrender all worldly attachments.

After the short overview of the structure of the rite, Dimple indicates the page numbers of the texts which will be recited during the first part of the ritual from a small booklet with the title *Caran Vidhi*, foot worship, which had been distributed among the congregation. This booklet is the main ritual manual of the Akram Vijñān movement and owned by every dedicated follower. It contains a collection of ritual texts, such as the '*Jñān Sākṣātkār*' *Pāmelāo Māṭeni Niścay-Vyavahār Caran Vidhi*, the Real-Relative Worship of the Feet (of the Dādā) for obtaining a 'Clear Vision of the Knowledge,' which gave the compilation its name.<sup>42</sup> The exact words of this text in particular should be recited daily by all *mahātmās* as a means of concentration on the pure self.

Parts of the text, called *Ātmā Sāmāyik*, are also recited by the medium Nīrubahen Amīn in the crucial *bhed jñān* section of the *jñān vidhi* during which she utters isolated sentences or whole sections of the text which the assembly then repeats *unisono*. The selection, sequence and number of sentences vary from performance to performance. However, almost all sentences can be found in the *Jñān Sākṣātkār* text, and certain sections at the beginning and the end are usually recited entirely as printed in the book. The text is never recited exactly in its printed form, because the words of Nīrubahen Amīn are supposed to come directly from "the Dādā" and not from a book. Dimple Mahetā sometimes points out in his introductory lecture that, in order to safeguard the immediacy of the experience, the *jñān vidhi* itself should not be taped nor photographed, in contrast to the *satsaṅgs*, the congregational question-and-answer sessions for the discursive clarification of doubts, which are nowadays always filmed on video. Regular

participants of the *jñān vidhi* are familiar with most of the sentences they encounter during the *bhed jñān* ritual. But beginners find it difficult to remember everything they hear. The increasing familiarisation with the procedures and texts of the rituals is regarded as part of the long-term process of induction.

### (C) *Jñān Vidhi*

The ritual proper is conducted by Nīrubahen Amīn herself, with support from Dimple. At some stage during Dimple's speech she suddenly appears without any formalities and climbs on her divan.<sup>43</sup> Often she is greeted by dedicated female devotees who bow to her feet and adorn her with flower garlands in order to receive her blessings.

#### **Prelude**

(1) The rite begins with the invocation of the Dādā and the Gods. The opening sequence has a fixed form. It consists of four elements: First, the congregation requests, through the collective chanting of devotional songs and *mantras*, the Gods to be present, and then invites the Dādā and Sīmandhar, who are invariably perceived as an inseparable unit, to reside in Nīrubahen and to speak through her and to transfer to everyone present the direct knowledge of the pure soul.

(a) First, the members of the congregation bow to A.M. Paṭel, the manifest supreme God, and announce their heartfelt desire to surrender all their worldly attachments and possession to the 'omniscient'<sup>44</sup> Dādā Bhagavān with the song *Sarvasva Amārūm Arpaṇ Che* - Everything of Mine is Surrendered:<sup>45</sup>

Everything of mine is surrendered,  
surrendered to you almighty, to your holy feet;  
for spiritual bliss supreme bliss,  
as a devotee of this realised soul, to his holy feet.  
The shadowy illusions of mind, speech, and body,  
of internal actions, habitual actions, and material actions;  
accept these childlike delusions,  
allow me to surrender this battlefield of life  
to none other but you.  
Everything of mine is surrendered.



The pearls of the nectar of knowledge,  
are picked by the swan in the lake of pride;  
in the light of this 'divine eye,'  
of truth, bliss, and beauty.  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

What an offering of the sun this is!  
In the cool rays of the moon;  
with a 'balanced mind' dispose of,  
the conflicts arising within.  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

Day and night, dawn and dusk,  
how wonderful is their regularity!  
The ebb and tide of the ocean of the mind,  
is determined by 'natural law' and 'order.'  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

Let life be one 'vision,'  
but the 'soul' is the eternal mirror;  
'transactions' may be with millions,  
but 'absolute determination' be only in the almighty.  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

For the liberation of the 'unenlightened soul,' the 'pure  
soul' is awakened;  
extraordinary, 'beyond the reach of the senses'  
and full of joy,  
bright light in body and mind.  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

Who opens the gate of liberation,  
'the path of immediate understanding' never seen before;  
O realised supreme soul in visible form,  
'you' are my 'pure soul.'  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

The song recalls the basic principles of the Akram Vijñān doctrine and expresses the longing of the worshippers to identify with the manifest self-realised soul of A.M. Paṭel.

(b) Now the Gods, that is the twenty-four Jain tīrthaṅkaras, are invited to come and to listen to the Omniscient one with the song *Devone Āvāhan* - Invitation to the Gods to come:

There is darkness of a million years, but it will disperse in a moment of sixty seconds, this insoluble unbreakable knowledge, will reveal itself in the form of light. Thirty-three million Goddesses and Gods,<sup>46</sup> will come for peace, for the equanimity of the pure soul, which the extraordinary “knower” will bring.

To the voice of ‘Dādā Bhagavān,’ the Tīrthaṅkaras are listening, at the holy feet of the Omniscient, the soul will find peace. I am surrounded by the flames of the forest fire, the whole universe is ablaze, an underground spring full of compassion, sprinkles cool water. The nectar-like speech of Bhagavān, will extinguish (the fire) by becoming cool water, the perfect twenty-four all together, ‘truth, consciousness and bliss’ is ‘that’ knower. Om hṛṃ I go to the omniscient Dādā Bhagavān to take refuge.

These words are not really sung but recited in a peculiar sing-song which stretches each word and puts great emphasis on certain words by rising pitch, volume and melody. The words *devī-devatā*, or gods and goddesses, are chanted particularly loud and at a high pitch, and the singing is performed deliberately off-key. It is at this moment that Nīrubahen, who participates in the incantations of the first song with her hands folded, begins to turn inward and to recite a special *mantra*, only known to her, while looking around in a slightly agitated way. When the words *devī-devatā* are mentioned, she holds her folded hands up and, for a short moment only, moves them in a dance-like circular motion over her head, a very slow controlled expression of ecstasy, while occasionally rolling her eyes until a single hiccup invariably indicates that a connection has been established. The following Sanskrit *mantra* is then collectively recited several times:

“Om hṛṃ Dādā bhagavān sarvajña śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi.”

“Om hṛṃ, I go to the omniscient Dādā Bhagavān to take refuge.”

(c) After the two opening songs, both the Dādā and Sīmandhar Svāmī are requested by Nīrubahen and the congregation together to come and to reside in Nīrubahen, by reciting the following sentence once:

*he dādā bhagavān, he śrī sīmandhar svāmī prabhu, āp ahīm padhāro,  
nīrū bolnā kaṇṭhe virājo. āp bolāvo ane hamo badhā bolīsuṃ.*

O Dādā Bhagavān, O Śrī Sīmandhar Svāmī Lord, come here and place your voice in Nīru's throat. You cause us to speak and we will all speak.

The Dādā is now assumed to be present within Nīrubahen. However, outwardly Nīrubahen acts normal, and no-one could tell that she is, or acts, at this very moment, as a medium of the Dādā, the incarnate pure self-realised soul.

In many ways, the invocation of the Dādā is the most crucial element of the entire ritual because without his presence it is bound to be ineffective. The use of the word Nīru instead of the respectful Nīrubahen indicates that, in the first place, Nīrubahen herself invites Sīmandhar Svāmī and the Dādā to manifest themselves within her. The capacity of the medium Nīrubahen to become temporarily 'possessed' by the Dādā, or rather of becoming his incarnation (*avatāra*), and thus endowed with his energy,<sup>47</sup> is said to be predicated on her knowledge of a secret *mantra* which A.M. Paṭel gave her before he died. 'Dādā' Kanubhāi Paṭel, on the other hand, claims to be a *jñānī* in his own right.

(d) The opening phase of the rite of knowledge terminates with the collective request to the Dādā to evoke the direct experience of the soul in everyone present and to give the strength to all *mahātmās* to perpetually maintain the experiential state of being a pure soul. This request is expressed in form of a self-suggestive formula which is uttered several times, first by Nīrubahen herself, and then repeated with great vigour by the whole congregation:

*hum niścay nirṇaythī kevaḷ śuddhātmā chum.*

With absolute resolve and determination I am only a pure soul.

The end of the prelude to the rite is marked by the twofold recitation of a long drawn out *om* and consecutive shouts of "jay *saccidānand*" - "victory to truth, consciousness and bliss."

### *Surrender*

(2) At this point, Dimple takes the candidate list and calls the neophytes up to dedicate themselves to the Dādā and Sīmandhar Svāmī formally in the presence of Nīrubahen, who now descends from her divan to place herself on the chair next to the small Sīmandhar Svāmī statue on the table in the centre of the room,

holding a copy of the list with the names of the new candidates for initiation. The candidates then form a queue and wait to be invited by Dimple to step up to the statue, either one after the other or in pairs. Nīrubahen sits now with folded hands next to the statue, sometimes rolling her eyes in a strange way to indicate that she is, at this moment, in direct spiritual contact with the Dādā and with Sīmandhar Svāmī. While the rest of the congregation chants devotional songs with hands folded, the first one or two candidates step to the statue, take off their glasses if they wear any (the contact with the *jñānī* should be non-mediated), and decorate the statue with flowers, or necklaces, which are at hand. Then they bow to Sīmandhar with folded hands and put their heads on the table. Ideally, the closed eyes of the initiate should touch the toe of Sīmandhar to enable the direct transmission of his knowledge-revealing power. However, to facilitate the procedures, this practice is omitted. Nīrubahen and her attendant only make sure that the heads of the candidates firmly touch the tabletop. Often they press the candidates' heads down with their hands. Then the text of the *samarpaṇ*, or self-offering, dedicated to the Dādā and Sīmandhar, is read out by the *āpta*putra in a business-like tone and repeated, sentence by sentence, by the candidates. Nīrubahen looks on, smilingly, with folded hands, making sure, that the direct link to Sīmandhar is maintained:

O Dādā Bhagvān, O Śrī Sīmandhar Svāmī Lord!<sup>48</sup> Whatever I \_\_\_\_\_ [insert your name] call mine, my thought, speech, and body, is all illusion (māyā) [I am a pure soul].

I surrender all my inner actions, outward actions, and reflex actions<sup>49</sup> at your holy feet, you are the revealed God in the form of the supreme soul.

After repeating these words, which are sometimes recited in English if the candidate does not speak Gujarātī, each neophyte receives a rose with a very strong scent. With the rose in the hands he or she returns to the floor and sits with eyes closed, silently repeating “*śuddhātmā, śuddhātmā ...*,” “pure self, pure self ...”

The initiations are witnessed by the whole congregation which participates in the ceremony by singing devotional songs. Already initiated *mahātmās* are instructed to silently repeat the dedication themselves to reconfirm their commitment. The ritualised public surrender represents obviously not just a form of inner devotion,

but also a formal initiation into the cult of the Dādā, despite all exclamations to the contrary by Nīrubahen and Kanubhāī. The most obvious proof of this evident fact is the list of addresses, which effectively functions as a membership list, and enables the leaders of the community to circulate leaflets and e-mails with updates on the travels of Nīrubahen Amīn and her dedicated successor Dīpakbhāī Desāī.

### *Knowledge of Separation*

(3) The main part of the *jñān vidhi*, the induction of the experience of the distinctness of soul and body (*bheda jñāna*), now begins. While Nīrubahen climbs back on her divan, Dimple explains that the following main part of the ritual, the forty-eight-minutes-long *bhed jñān* ritual is a 'scientific experiment' that is conceived as an attempt to separate body and soul in the experience of the participants, and to empower them to directly realise their own self with the help of the spiritual energy of the Dādā which is transmitted through his words, which have to be repeated exactly in the same way as they are uttered. Dimple stresses the crucial importance of non-mediated experience for the success of the experiment. Any interference by the intellect will preclude the mind from the requisite emotional experience 'of the heart' which is the real key to religious understanding. In this respect, the *bhed jñān vidhi* consciously departs from all other, officially less important, parts of the *jñān vidhi*, especially from the framing lectures, which emphasise the significance of cognitive understanding of the meaning of the ritual and of the complex Jain, Vaiṣṇava and to a lesser extent Śaivaite philosophical terminology employed therein, which not everyone will immediately understand.

Paradoxically, it is emphasised by the Akram Vijñān movement that the Dādā's 'pure speech,' i.e. words charged with spiritual energy which should be repeated but not reflected upon, should always be in his native Gujarātī; which automatically limits the circle of potential followers. This is somewhat awkward, because many young expatriate Gujarātīs in East Africa, Great Britain and the U.S.A. understand English better than Gujarātī. This is another reason why emotional understanding is privileged over cognitive understanding. However, the official explanations of the meaning of the ritual before and after the *bhed jñān vidhi* are given - according to the audience - either in Gujarātī, Hindī, or English.

Social Anthropologists such as Victor Turner (1986) emphasised that the experiences of others can only be understood through their expressions.<sup>50</sup> A.M. Paṭel similarly stressed that transcendental experience is only transmittable from one person to another through language. However, he argued that only the ‘pure language’ of the Unattached One (*vītarāgī*) can function as a medium for the transmission of the subtle emotions and energies that are required for the realisation of direct insight (*saṃjñā*) without the interference of the intellect, not the conventional ‘relative language’ of everyday life. Not the communication of symbolic meanings, but the transmission of living energy produces the intended transformation.<sup>51</sup> However, to create the effect of insight, the structure of the *jñān vidhi* systematically combines songs and repetitions of suggestive phrases with reflective discourse, and alternates between ‘relative language’ and ‘transcendental language’ and the corresponding ‘absolute point of view’ (*niścaya naya*) and ‘relative point of view’ (*vyavahāra naya*).<sup>52</sup> It can be analysed as a ritual which transforms the amorphous lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of the participants of the *bhed jñān vidhi* into a reflected experience (*Erfahrung*), that is in an object of conscious reflection and self-interpretation in the light of the presented teachings of A.M. Paṭel.<sup>53</sup> The *bhed jñān* ritual can, if at all, only be effective if it is embedded in a context of framed antecedent preconceptions and subsequent reflections. It is merely the central or liminal phase of the *bhed jñān vidhi*, where the Dādā by speaking directly through Nīrubahen ‘transmits his knowledge’ and graces all those in the congregation who resolved to surrender their worldly existence to the inner God, with the awakening of the experiential knowledge of the self. The psychological precondition for the perceived efficacy of this rite is the attitude of surrender and the assumption of an undisturbed steady state of equanimity (*sāmāyika*), open for a direct inner experience, not mediated by the intellect or by written words. Some effects of relaxation are already produced through the twenty minutes of chanting during the *samarpaṇ* rite. Others are produced through the participation in the performance itself.

At the beginning of the forty-eight minutes long *bhed jñān* ritual Nīrubahen asks the participants to close their eyes and to repeat, as good as they can, what will be said without attempting to understand its meaning: “the meaning is not important, no intellect should become between the words of the Dādā and the receptive souls of

the congregation.” Then she closes her eyes and suddenly begins to raise her voice, saying: “*hum śuddhātmā chum*” – “I am a pure soul.” The whole congregation repeats: “*hum śuddhātmā chum*” – “I am a pure soul.” After a few repetitions of the same sentence, which often marks the beginning of the *bhed jñān* ritual, she switches to another, similar sentence, such as: “*hum param jyoti svarūp siddha bhagavān chum*” – “I am the supreme light, the self-realised Lord,” and so on. Although most sentences can be found in the *Ātmā Sāmāyik* text of the ritual manual *Caran Vidhi*, the sequencing of these sentences is different at every occasion, and while some sentences of this text are not uttered at all, new sentences are included. Many of the sentences that are not printed in the ritual manual contain the suggestion of being liberated from one’s sins (*pāpa*), and particularly from the obstinate *mohanīya karmans*, the delusion-inducing *karmans*, which, according to Jain doctrine, prevent the true perception of reality and the soul. Most sentences are shouted out more than once by Nīrubahen, who uses a microphone, to be repeated in exactly the same way by the congregation. The entire forty-eight minutes long *séance* consists of a frenetic dialogic repetition of such auto-suggestive utterances.

The intensity of Nīrubahen’s delivery varies. The pitch, volume, speed, rhythm, and melody of her manner of speaking are imitated by the congregation. Most sentences are pronounced in an unusual way and often shouted in a fast, hypnotic rhythm which leaves little time for taking breath or thought. This exhaustive technique induces hyperventilation and heavy breathing, which on its own can lead to experiences of relaxation. Some elderly devotees invariably fall asleep. Dimple Mahetā, who does not participate in the rite himself, therefore regularly patrols between the rows of the devotees and scans the congregation with his eyes to make sure that everyone has the eyes closed and that no one is asleep. Sometimes he wakes someone up or orders others to close their eyes.

The rapid and often changing rhythms and noise levels create what Lévi-Strauss (1982 I: 31) would call a ‘pure physiological time of hearing.’ They destroy the awareness of both diachronic time and of discernible semantic meaning by forcing the participants, on one level, to concentrate only on their breathing and the proper mechanical repetition of the phrases in an extended present, while, at the same time, stimulating the self to observe itself observing the ritual mechanics from the outside.<sup>54</sup> After a while, the utterances

of the language of truth (*āptavānī*) which supposedly ‘communicate’ the experience of direct insight (*samyaktva*)<sup>55</sup> are not perceived as semantically meaningful elements anymore but as *mantra*-like vehicles of meditation.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the word *mantra* is used for certain phrases by Nīrubahen Amīn herself, although the sequential changes of her delivery do not conform to the formulaic format of *mantras*.<sup>57</sup> Maybe the best comparison is with the experience of music<sup>58</sup> which, in the words of Lévi-Strauss (1982 I: 31, 51), is coexistent with the emotive function and ‘transcends the dimension of the articulate language.’ This is here achieved not through the regression to the phonemic dimension of language but through the meta-linguistic perception of morphemes, units of signification, as phonemes,<sup>59</sup> that is as intrinsically non-significant (but not arbitrary) elements of transcendental ritual communication, which Frits Staal (1993: 267) called “language used in a pre-language fashion.”<sup>60</sup>

In the case of Nīrubahen, the pre-linguistic use of language is predicated on a deliberate state of possession. Dumont (1980: 270) highlighted the “importance of institutionalized possession of a man by a god (or several gods)” in popular Hinduism, and in *bhakti* religiosity in particular, where he observes the phenomenon of *entasis*:

It is true that ‘meditation’ also recalls the ritual identification of the priest with the god ..., and also that the *bhakta* does not prophesy as does the possessed. Yet it remains that both possession, a functional feature of folk religion, and *bhakti*, a characteristic of many sects, rest upon a common psychological condition, and that *bhakti* takes up in more or less sublimated form an aspect of common religion ignored by Brahmanic orthodoxy. We must remember that possession by a god is in popular religion one of the circumstances in which the divine resolves itself into an individuality. Even though it underwent a thorough intellectual elaboration, identification with a god was given in immediate experience (p. 283f.).

During the entire *bhed jñān vidhi* Nīrubahen speaks with the voice of the Dādā, which outwardly manifests itself in the strange oscillation of the pitch in her voice. It is said that she does not know where she is at the time, but she would not confirm this herself, but merely say that the Dādā is always with her. Nīrubahen admits that it is difficult to maintain the experience of being a pure soul continuously for forty-eight minutes, and that the Dādā does not



always directly speak through her during the entire rite. She says, sometimes he comes only for a few moments, but this is enough. Nīrubahen says she is only an instrument (*nimitta*). The words she utters are the actual words of the Dādā, who speaks through her.

These very words were apparently heard for the first time by A.M. Paṭel during his enlightenment experience. They are the words of the pure soul whose effect cannot be explained but only experienced. However, it is the power transmitted by these words, not the words themselves, through which the knowledge of separation (*bhed jñān*) is mysteriously transferred to the initiates.<sup>61</sup> It is said that many have tried to perform the *jñān vidhi* themselves, by memorising and repeating the phrases that were recurrently used by the Dādā and Nīrubahen, yet they remained unsuccessful, because the authoritative power (*śakti*) is missing, which only a person who has already experienced the *jñān* itself can have.<sup>62</sup> According to Jaina and Saṁkhyā-inspired interpretations, all speech is “totally material,” that is a manifestation of *karman*. However, the speech of the Dādā is special because it is the unattached speech (*vitaraṅga vāṇī*) of a self-realised pure soul: “our speech articulates after touching the conscious-manifested (chetan-pragat) paramatman and therefore it is spiritual (living),” “Our speech is real and living Saraswati. It burns to ashes others’ sins of infinite (cycles of) births. Our speech is absolutely free from attachment” (A.M. Paṭel, in Shah 1983: 71).

Though many *mahātmās* insist that it is Sīmandhar himself who speaks through the Dādā and now through Nīrubahen, the doctrinally-trained *brahmacārīs* insist that it is not Sīmandhar who speaks, but that he is only present through our belief, devotion, and surrender. However, they all assume that it was possible for the Dādā to communicate with Sīmandhar through a subtle body (*sukṣma śarīra*), technically called conveyance body (*āhāraka śarīra*),<sup>63</sup> which he detached from his body in his dreams to ask questions, sometimes returning with surprising answers.

The last part of the rite is fixed and the wording of the final section identical with the last section of the published *Ātmā Sāmāyik* text:

O universally adored and fully manifested śuddhātmā Bhagavān!  
Let your enlightened congregation constantly dwell in me (repeated  
3x). Let your enlightened right knowledge keep me aware of the

pure self at every moment (3x). Instil in my heart the knowledge that all gross circumstances, subtle circumstances, and circumstances of speech, are (separate from me and) dependent on external factors. Give me the strength not to interfere or quarrel (with the natural order of things) (3x). Give me the strength to perform only observation (3x). I only desire your grace (3x). Let your lotus feet dwell in my heart (3x). I am a pure soul (25x). With absolute resolve and determination I am only a pure soul! (2x). Victory to truth, consciousness and bliss (5x).

The repeated collective shouts of “*hum śuddhātmā chum*” - “I am a pure soul” - and “*jay saccidānand*” - “Victory to truth, consciousness and bliss” - which mark the end of the rite of separation are followed by the extremely slow, trance-like recitation of the words: “*hum Vijnān svarūp chum*” - “I am by nature pure experiential knowledge,” which formally state that the aim of the rite - the transmission of the knowledge - has now been achieved. After the subsequent recitation of the *Tri-mantra* - the Akram Vijnān version of the Jain *Namaskāra Mantra* with additional references to Kṛṣṇa and Śiva and the phrase *jay saccidānand* - the whole congregation ecstatically chants the words “*Dādā bhagavānanā asīm jay jaykār ho*” - “Infinite glory to Dādā Bhagavān” - which are also said to destroy sins - faster and faster, and the last time very slowly, for up to ten minutes. This is the devotional praise (*kīrtan bhakti*) of the now ‘directly accessible supreme self’ (*pratyakṣa paramātmā*) (A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Paṭel 1994: 77): “When one sings it for a minimum of eight minutes onwards and an optimum of forty-eight minutes, one starts feeling a taste of nectarlike happiness within. It heals old wounds of insults, assaults and sorrows of the worldly life. By doing it layers around the pure soul get destroyed” (Shah 1995: 45).

### ‘Actual experience’

Some people get quite agitated during the forty-eight minutes of meditative shouting. Some ecstatically shake their upper bodies. Others fall into a kind of trance with a strong tendency to fall asleep. I asked about fifty participants at various performances about their experiences during and after the rite. Everyone said that it is difficult to describe the feelings experienced during ‘the separation.’ Most respondents, even stern believers, told me that - apart from physical exhaustion caused by the intense shouting - they felt, like myself, ‘nothing’ or ‘absolutely nothing.’ An educated Jain sceptic

told me, he experienced the rite as a form of ‘brainwashing.’ Some people said, they experienced relaxation; some, that they perceived lights; others, that the Dādā actually appeared and spoke to them; or, generally, that they vaguely perceive things differently afterwards. One man in his thirties told me: “I felt as if I was floating, forgetting everything, thoughts, worries about money, relatives, etc.” He also felt empowered by the transfer of the Dādā’s energy through the rite: “When she says ‘*śakti*’,” he said, “then inspiring energy is released for whatever you do.” Another man of similar age said, he felt absolutely nothing during the process, but for two or three days afterwards he felt incredibly light, and was truly able to see the pure soul in everyone. Most respondents confessed their ignorance, and merely repeated what Nīrubahen has said: “Don’t listen to the words [that are uttered during the course of the ritual]. Their meaning is not intelligible at first, but understanding will develop later, with more practice. No miracle happens [during the rite].”

Several explanations are readily offered by the participants for discrepancies between the promised insight into the true nature of reality and actual experience. Most explanations cite the doctrine of *karman* and of the hierarchy of karmically-inherited sensibilities as the cause of different experiences. The three reasons that were quoted most often to me were: (1) Differential karmic constitution: people that are born with good *karman*, are more likely to consciously experience the effect of Dādā’s transmission of energy.<sup>64</sup> (2) Failed performance: the words have not been accurately repeated, or/and the required inner devotional attitude was not realised. (3) Latent efficacy: even those who are not consciously aware of any experience have unconsciously gained the benefit of the separation and will realise its effects later in their life.<sup>65</sup> Whatever their individual experience was, all participants were acutely aware of A.M. Paṭel’s promise that whoever performs the rite secures for him/herself the possibility of salvation within not more than two more lives. Even those who were sceptical about the doctrine of the Akram Vijñān movement wanted to make sure that they don’t miss out and took advantage of this opportunity as part of their spiritual insurance policy.

The discourse on the presumed effects of the *jñān vidhi* is an important part of the religious culture of the Akram Vijñān

movement. The individual self-exploration of the promised changes in the days and weeks after the ritual and the mutual communication and interactive validation of (usually affirmative) self-observations produces a self-confirming discourse amongst the believers which forms the bedrock of the religious movement. It is based on the preliminary acceptance of the premise that participation in the ritual indeed produces conscious or unconscious effects. An interesting, evidently well rehearsed, written account is available from Juan C. Garcia from Spain, now a committed devotee, who participated in a *jñān vidhi* in London in May 2002, following the suggestion of an internet contact. He reports that he experienced tremendous perceptual changes afterwards, although he could not understand a word of what was said in the 'Hindu' congregation. He was, however, offered a short version of the *vidhi* in English during a one-to-one encounter with Nīrubahen immediately after the public programme:

In the beginning I didn't feel anything special not to mention the normal feeling of relaxation after one hour meditation (with closed eyes). I took the underground back to my hotel and when coming out of the station I started to feel a sort of an unexpected euphoria and joy coming from within. It was no longer a feeling of relaxation due to meditation. I started to think that may be it could work for me. On the way to the hotel I noticed that my whole awareness of space and time was being changed, not being changed but more like being destroyed. It was the first time in my life that I was no longer sure that "that" called "Juan" which was walking in the hotel was me. This time it was not at all a play of intellectual concepts borrowed from somebody else, it was a real experience happening within me. ... Even sleeping I felt the touch of this Bliss which seemed to sprout from the heart area. It was as if my heart was full of light spreading this light all around me. I noticed that even my thoughts were no longer so important and that they took the form of visualisations which I could observe before [they were] effecting me at all. ... When I looked at my hands I could observe them as being separated from my real "I." The same happened with the thoughts, and with all this "doll" called Juan was doing. You could even observe your words as coming out of your mouth automatically (Garcia 2002).

Similar self-conscious, rationalised experiences are expressed more informally in the form of oral autobiographical narratives that are at various occasions shared and discussed by *mahātmās* in the

light of the doctrines of A.M. Paṭel. These are learned, step-by-step, through the repeated contact with Nīrubahen (or Kanu Paṭel) and their *brahmacārīs*, and by reading the published transcriptions of the oral discourses of A.M. Paṭel.<sup>66</sup> The collectively-shared esoteric experience of receiving the *jñān*, real or putative, and the accepting egalitarian atmosphere of the community clearly lift the spirits of the *mahātmās* and trigger their magico-religious imagination, as the following narrative of a dream experience by S. Paṭel, an approximately fifty-five year old man from Gujarāt who lives London, illustrates:

A couple of weeks ago I had a dream that I was travelling to Sīmandhar Svāmī in Mahāvideha Kṣetra together with the Dādā. There I was sitting at the giant feet of Sīmandhar. He was huge, dressed with a crown and sitting cross-legged, just like the statue in Ahmedabad. After a while, Sīmandhar slaps my front once with his fingers just like this [he hits me gently on my front to demonstrate what he felt] and I instantly gained *kevaljñān* (omniscience). The feeling was indescribable and I cannot put it into words, since I also cannot remember everything. But the dream experience is still very vivid with me. For three days afterwards I felt extremely good. Of course, this was just a dream. I have certainly not gained omniscience. But only few people have such dreams.<sup>67</sup>

In order to underline the last point he told me about a similar dream soon thereafter:

Later, I dreamt I was again at the feet of Sīmandhar Svāmī together with Nīrumā. I asked him when Nīrumā was to become omniscient. Sīmandhar answered that she will not yet receive omniscience since Sīmandhar wants her first to continue her religious work in Bhāratkṣetra.

He said, he discussed this dream with Nīrumā and she said that he must have had an experience of *jātismaraṇjñān* that is he was experiencing an event that happened in a previous life. In this way, she put his claim to be able to communicate with Sīmandhara directly (which would be the next step in doctrinal evolution) into perspective, by implicitly contrasting it with the well-known belief that only A.M. Paṭel had the unique capability of contacting Sīmandhar Svāmī in this life.<sup>68</sup> That the message from Sīmandhar was nevertheless correct was evidently the case because she had the Dādā's assurance that she would ascent to Mahāvideha after this life and gain omniscience.

The mutual reinforcement of belief within the hothouse of the closely monitored cultic atmosphere surrounding Nīrubahen Amīn and similarly Kanu Paṭel is achieved through narratives such as this which contribute to a discourse of mutual recognition of charismatically qualified individuals with extraordinary religious experiences. Through the catalyst of Nīrubahen and her entourage of *āptaṭaputras* the most unlikely claims can gain acceptability if they accord with the doctrines of the movement. Nīrubahen Amīn, whose opinion is, qua status, always more respected than others, effectively exercises a monopoly of interpretation. Her recognition of narrated experiential claims can officially validate the reported magico-religious messages that are received in dreams and visions. This two-step procedure corresponds well to the pattern of transmission of charisma through a *guru* which is superimposed upon the initial processes of interactive validation of religious charisma between institutionally unconstrained individuals who meet as equals.<sup>69</sup>

### *Five precepts*

(4) The main part of the rite has now been completed. The experience of the separation, which nominally transforms every devotee into a *mahātmā*, that is someone who has received the *jñān* directly from the Dādā, has been imparted to the congregation. What remains to be answered is the question how to live a religious life leading to salvation without renouncing the world. One of the main attractions of the stepless path is that the *mahātmās* continue to live a normal householder life without being asked to renounce anything. Although their self-perception should have changed, outwardly they remain indistinguishable from anyone else. Only during religious ceremonies some male *mahātmās*, usually the local community leaders, distinguish themselves from the rest of the congregation by wearing the same white clothes as the *brahmacārīs* to indicate their dedication. When *mahātmās* meet or talk on the phone they also recognise each other by saying “*jay saccidānand,*” just as Vaiṣṇavaites say “*jay śrī kṛṣṇa*” and traditional Jains “*jay jīnendra.*”

The mere participation in the rite itself does, of course, not secure final *mokṣa*. But it is believed that by creating the condition of a non-attached way of life it offers the real possibility of achieving so-called living *mokṣa*, or *jīvanmukti*, and the prospect of being reborn

at the feet of the currently living *tīrthaṅkara* Śimandhara Svāmī in Mahāvīdeha Kṣetra within no more than one or two lifetimes. According to Jain doctrine, everyone has the opportunity of being enlightened in the presence of a living *tīrthaṅkara*, a process called *buddha-bodhita* that is attributed to his/her<sup>70</sup> great compassion, and to achieve liberation thereafter. The question is how to get to Mahāvīdeha Kṣetra? Classical Jainism teaches that a better rebirth can only be secured by reducing the *karmic* burden of an individual. A.M. Paṭel and his successors agree with this, but have a different opinion about the way in which this is achieved. Not asceticism or devotion, but the application of spiritual knowledge and passionlessness in everyday life is the key. In this respect the soteriology of the Akram Vijñān differs from the Vaiṣṇava approach.

A.M. Paṭel has made the importance of the role of self-effort, sandwiched between the initial gift of *bhed jñān* by the grace of the *jñānī* and the final gift of *sarvajñān* by the grace of Śimandhar Svāmī, explicit in the following statement:

First I destroy all your blunders because by yourself it is impossible for you. How do I do it? By placing my hand on your head and letting Bhagawan (Dada Bhagawan the Lord of the 14 worlds) give his divine grace (kripa). There after, you need to remove your mistakes yourself. You will be able to see your own mistakes. Daily you will be able to see 5, 50 or 100 faults of your own and thus these mistakes will go on their own. Your realization of your self will increase as your mistakes (faults) decrease” (A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 1994: 34).

In order to provide an easy answer to the question of how to remove one’s own mistakes, A.M. Paṭel drafted a list of five precepts (*pāñca ājñā*) which, if observed correctly in everyday life, would inevitably lead to salvation, ideally within only two rebirths. The precepts are explained immediately after the *bhed jñān* ritual. They are formulated in colloquial language, but their meaning is cryptic and unintelligible without supplementary explanations, which is not uncommon for mystical cultic milieus:<sup>71</sup>

1. From the ‘relative’ point of view ‘I am Candulāl’ (substitute ‘Candulāl’ with your own name).
2. From the ‘real’ point of view ‘I am a pure soul.’
3. This world is ruled by scientific circumstantial evidence.
4. Clear your files with equanimity.
5. Enter credit into the account book of the pure soul.

Do not look at the outer wrappings (‘packing’)<sup>72</sup> but look with divine sight at the pure soul.

These five precepts summarise the method of liberation propagated by the Akram Vijñān Mārg. They are not formally accepted like the five great vows (*mahāvratā*) of the Jain ascetics or the twelve vows (*barah vrata*) of the Jain laity in traditional Jainism, but serve as regulative ideals for those who wish to progress towards salvation, like the seven truths (*tattva*) of classical Jainism. Their meaning is explained in detail by Nīrubahen for up to an hour immediately after each *bhed jñān* performance. Strictly speaking, the *pāñc ājñās* are only revealed to initiated *mahātmās*,<sup>73</sup> but any bystander can eavesdrop on the public discourse as well.

The phrasing of these five precepts, which, if properly observed, are believed to lead to certain salvation, betrays the ethos of the Gujarātī business culture within which the Akram Vijñān Mārg thrives. They are composed in a popular language which an average Gujarātī businessman can easily identify with. Nevertheless, most of my informants, apart from Nīrubahen and the *āptaputras*, found it very difficult to explain what precisely is meant in particular by the enigmatic precepts 3 and 4.

### Precepts 1-2

The first two precepts are self-explanatory: From a common sense perspective we appear to be differently named individual personalities, but from the ultimate point of view we are all pure souls. The name ‘Candulāl’ should be substituted by the name of anyone who tries to apply these precepts. ‘Relative’ and ‘real point of view’ is a translation of the philosophical distinction between *vyavahāra naya* and *niścaya naya*,<sup>74</sup> which may well have been introduced by Buddhist philosophers such as Nāgārjuna (ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE) and then incorporated into Jainism by the Digambara Jain *ācārya* Kundakunda, who lived in Southern India sometime between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century CE; though many Digambaras reverse the chronology, while the Śvetāmbaras point to the ‘implicit’ application of this distinction already in the canonical *Viyāhaṇnatti*. The soteriological use of the two-truth theory by A.M. Paṭel overlaps with the oppositions of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, soul and matter, essence and appearance, knower and devotee, observer and actor, etc. In practical terms, the aim is to perceive everyone as a pure soul, and not as a mortal individual with all its natural, or rather ‘karmic,’ deficiencies, which is one of the cardinal mistakes of the beginner. “If we see the *prakṛti* of others we have missed the five *ājñās*. So *ājñā*



1, 2 are very important. Irritation also means you have missed the *ājñās*” (Nīrubahen Amīn, lecture). Hence, one should only perceive one’s own mistakes.<sup>75</sup>

### Precept 3

The difficulty of rule three, “This world is ruled by scientific circumstantial evidence,” is to understand the philosophical implications of the English expression ‘scientific circumstantial evidence’ which A.M. Paṭel often preferred to the original expression *niyamtā-vyavasthīt śakti*, which can be translated as ‘the power of natural law.’ What is meant are the combined effects of nature and the law of *karman* that are signified by the term *prakṛti*.<sup>76</sup> The precept expresses the conviction that the experienced world is neither governed by human intentions, nor by the laws of physics, but by circumstantial combinations (*saṃyoga*) which emerge through the co-occurrence of *karmans* which come to fruition under certain conditions.<sup>77</sup> In other words, what happens to the individual during one life, its actions and thoughts, is happening as the unintended consequence of inherited dispositions which were acquired in previous lives. There is nothing one can do about this, since human intentions, let alone habits, feelings or the biological metabolism, are merely *karmic* effects: “Everything that happens to you is destiny! [*prārabdha*].”<sup>78</sup> From the perspective of the pure soul, human action and life in general appear as a series of events which unfold through the interaction of *karmic* dispositions, which can only be observed but not be influenced or controlled by the pure self, because it is entirely distinct from the material and mental world, as *puruṣa* is from *prakṛti*. In accordance with Sāṃkhya doctrine, A.M. Paṭel does not conceive the soul as active, as in classical Jainism,<sup>79</sup> but as inactive. Therefore, the only choice that is left is to switch from the perspective of the relative self to the perspective of the real self. Once the soul realises that it is not a doer, and does not identify with the actions of the body and mind, then the charge, or bondage, of new *karman* is stopped (*saṃvara*), and an improved rebirth in the next life ensured. According to A.M. Paṭel, *karman* never comes to fruition in the same life in which it was accumulated:<sup>80</sup> “Everything you do in this life won’t change your present life, but it will have a considerable effect in your next life. ... In the present life we are only the masters of charge [*pūraṇa*],<sup>81</sup> not discharge [*gālana*].”<sup>82</sup>

**Precept 4**

This leads to the next question: How shall we act?<sup>83</sup> This question is answered by precept four: “Clear your files with equanimity.” The term ‘file’ is here used as a synonym for the different types of *karman* which are generated through the interaction of the relative self (*jīvātma* or *pratiṣṭhit ātmā*)<sup>84</sup> with lifeless matter (*ajīva*).<sup>85</sup> The sum of an individual’s *karmans* is pictured as a filing cabinet: file 1 contains the acts of the egotistic mind, file 2 relates to the body, file 3 to marriage, file 4 to neighbours, etc. In order to clear the files, the *karmans* have to realise themselves naturally, without any attempt of active intervention by the soul. This can be achieved by avoiding worldly presumptions and intentions (*saṅkalpa*) altogether in favour of the, ideally, permanent orientation towards the pure soul. The pure soul is not a doer, it is an observer. From the absolute point of view, actions should therefore be perceived as *karmic* results (or ‘happenings around one-self’) not as conditions for the fulfilment of a goal, that is from a retrospective point of view, not from a prospective point of view. Active interventions such as world renunciation, vow-taking, ritual observances, or fasting, as practised for instance by Jain mendicants, do not make much sense from the perspective of the pure soul, because they involve the relative self, the ego, and only create new attachments. For clearing their ‘files’ the followers of the Akram Vijñān Mārg do not need to change their life at all. It is not necessary for them to impose painful restrictions upon themselves or to follow rigid rules. They only need to perform a change of perspective or attitude towards the actions by assuming the passive and unattached stance of a pure observer towards anything that happens in the world. Everything else follows naturally, without coercion and self-torture. The pure self is not responsible for the actions of the ego if it merely observes its deeds with detachment and equanimity. In this way, it prevents the bondage of new *karmans* and at the same time discharges the *karmans* of all the actions which it merely observes without identifying with them: “there is no need to give up anything except your wrong beliefs.”<sup>86</sup>

**Precept 5**

In the same way, past mistakes (*karman*) can be neutralised by the practice of *sāmāyik*, or meditation, and other methods of self-purification. Precept five says: “Enter credit in the account book of the

pure soul.” This means that spiritual ‘credits’ should be accumulated by stopping the influx of both *pāpa karman* and *puṇya karman* and by discharging the *karmans* that have already been accrued. Crucially, credits are not defined as *puṇya*, or good *karman*, but as the freedom from the effect of all types of *karman*. There are four basic methods of doing this: (a) applying the five precepts to all aspects of one’s life,<sup>87</sup> (b) studying A.M. Paṭel’s discourses, (c) visiting Nīrubahen Amīn’s *satsaṅgs*, and (d) trying to minimise violence by recognising other living beings also as pure souls. All useful practical advice is said to be condensed in the only written religious text that A.M. Paṭel himself ever composed – the short *Nav Kalamo*, or Nine Laws – which, as stated in its subtitle, comprises ‘the essence of all scriptures’ and ‘of all religion.’<sup>88</sup> The core message of this text – non-violence – has been adopted from Jainism and is summarised in the following ‘golden rule’:

Try your best not to give any living being unhappiness.  
If you do (as a result of your previous lives), then ask for forgiveness immediately.”<sup>89</sup>

If nevertheless *karman*-charging acts of violence occur, then rituals of purification should be performed immediately to destroy the fresh *karmans*. The Akram Vijñān teaches that, after receiving the *jñān*, the *mahātmās* can purify themselves from newly committed mistakes simply through confessing and repenting their misdeeds, and promising not to commit them again. Giving gifts (*dāna*), fasting (*tapasya*), worship (*pūjā*), and other traditional Jain rituals are explicitly rejected, since the Akram Vijñān movement believes that inherited *karman* can only be discarded by acting it out, while newly acquired *karman* can be dissolved immediately,<sup>90</sup> if recognised, through processes of meditative recollection *cum* repentance and apology ‘to the pure self.’

### *Rites of repentance*

Four ritual forms of ‘apology,’ of ‘asking for forgiveness,’ or ‘saying sorry’ (*kṣamā*) are recommended for the purification of the soul:

1. absolute-relative foot worship (*niścay-vyavahār caraṇ vidhi*)
2. prayer to the pure self (*śuddhātmā pratye prārthanā*)
3. repentance (*pratīkramaṇ*)
4. rite of restoring equanimity (*sāmāyik pūrvenī vidhi*)

The first two of the four rituals, which cannot be analysed in detail here, the ‘absolute-relative foot worship’ and the ‘prayer to the pure self,’ are part of the recommended daily routine of worship. They are not considered to be obligatory, and are practised variably according to individual preference. The multi-purpose *niścay-vyavahār caraṇ vidhi*, or absolute-relative foot worship, consists of the recitation of the published *Ātmā Sāmāyik* text (the same text that provides the foundation of the *bhed jñān vidhi*) which should be performed daily for the purpose of ‘remembering one’s true self’ and for ‘asking the Dādā for forgiveness’ for the fresh mistakes that were committed. The *śuddhātmā pratye prārthanā*, or prayer to the pure self, fulfils the same purpose.

The most common rite of purification is the third ritual, the *pratikramaṇa*, or repentance. It is not performed periodically in a ritualised form, as it is by traditional Jains, but immediately after recognising an error (*doṣa*) or as soon as possible thereafter in order to prevent the *karman* leaving a durable imprint on the soul. It consists of a simple formula, a ‘divine apology,’ that is modelled on the Jain *Sāmāyika Sūtra*, and of a subsequent ca. fifteen-minute-long meditation on the freshly committed mistakes. Interestingly, asking forgiveness (*kṣamā*) does not necessarily require the presence of an interlocutor, because *karman* can only be dissolved by the perpetrator itself.<sup>91</sup> It is enough to ask one’s own pure soul for forgiveness, since “the good vibrations of one’s own pure soul, once they are activated, automatically reach the other soul and clear the *karmas* from the mind of the injured person as well” (Nīrubahen Amīn, lecture). Wrongdoing can be confessed to one’s self (*śuddhātmā*), to the person concerned, to the Dādā, to the Gods, to the assembly of the believers (*satsaṅga*), or to Nīrubahen. Sometimes a list with the names of the injured parties and the mistakes committed is drawn up on a piece of paper which is read out aloud first. Then the *pratikramaṇ* rite is performed, i.e. the mistakes are formally confessed, repented, and resolved to be never committed again.

The fourth ritual, the *sāmāyik*, is the preferred method of purification of the Akram Vijnān Mārg. The Jain term *sāmāyika* (Prakrit *sāmāyika*) is here used as a designation for the retrospective *anamnesis* and confession of all past acts of violence that can be remembered. The *sāmāyik* thus incorporates features of the traditional Jain rituals of confession (*ālocanā*) and repentance (*pratikramaṇa*). In contrast to the *pratikramaṇa* rites which are performed to cancel out short-term karmas, the *sāmāyika* procedure

is used in the Akram Vijñān Mārg to cancel the effects of mistakes committed a long time back, as far as one can remember, and to restore former purity. It is therefore the functional equivalent of asceticism in traditional Jainism, since the Jain rites of atonement (*prāyaścitta*) are not performed as a matter of principle.<sup>92</sup> The *sāmāyik* is the most innovative purification ritual of the Akram Vijñān Mārg, because it demands from the *mahātmās* the concrete analysis and insight into their own behavioural patterns,<sup>93</sup> which should be remembered and observed from the point of view of the pure soul 'like a film,' rather than the formulaic recitation of schematic lists of mistakes (*aticāra*) in the traditional Jain *pratikramaṇ* ritual.<sup>94</sup> Traditional Jain laity practice *sāmāyik* either individually or collectively in the form of forty-eight-minute-long meditations during which they study religious texts (*svādhyāya*), perform repetitions (*japa*) of the *Namaskāra Mantra*, or other purifying practices. Usually, the followers of the Akram Vijñān Mārg perform the *sāmāyik* collectively, preferably in the presence of Nīrubahen or one of the *āptaṭputras*, though, in principle, the *sāmāyik* can be practised individually at any time.

The perceived effectiveness of the four purification 'rituals' (*vidhi*) is predicated on the prior acquisition of *samyak darśan* during the *bhed jñān vidhi*, and on the formal renunciation of the faults committed by the 'relative self' through self-confession (*ālocanā*), repentance (*pratikramaṇa*), the promise not to relapse (*pratyākhyāna*), and the request for forgiveness (*kṣamā*). It is stressed that not the ritual procedures purify, but the insight that the pure soul itself has not committed any mistake, only the *karmans* which came to fruition. Thus, the four methods of purification of the Akram Vijñān Mārg are all based on the identification of specific individual mistakes in terms of the Jain *karman* theory, and on the 'reviewing of the video' of these mistakes from the point of view of the pure self. The salient feature of this method is the insight into the illusory character of the common sense notion that 'I have done this.' That is, the key for the purification of the soul from sin is the understanding of the false notion of agency: "it is not the karmas that obstruct our liberation; it is our ignorance."<sup>95</sup> Only the direct intuitive realisation that it was not 'I' who has committed the mistakes, but the '*karmans*' that were accumulated in previous lives, can purify. 'I' was not the doer, but 'me.' As soon as the awareness of the pure soul emerges, the mind and the conscience are clear.

The dissolution of *karman* through repentance, in the wider sense, is thus predicated on a process of inner distanciation and objectification which Dumont (1980: 282) has called the internalisation of renunciation, and which A.M. Paṭel called self-knowledge. William Johnson (1995: 260) has characterised Kundakunda's<sup>96</sup> exposition of the philosophical bedrock of such techniques in the tradition of Digambara mysticism (as well as Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva philosophy) as follows: "it is not the physical objects which make up the *ajīva* world themselves which are to be renounced, but the attitude towards these objects."<sup>97</sup> The Self "does not have to do anything to renounce since, having no other states and being in contact with no other states, there is nothing to renounce" (ibid., p. 288f.), except the attitude of desire and identification with the ego.

### *Knowledge and Conduct*

The pending question to what extent God's grace is evoked in the act of purification is interesting, since the rejection of this possibility is widely regarded as a main difference between Jainism and Hinduism.<sup>98</sup> In asking the Dādā for forgiveness the devotee is not assuming that A.M. Paṭel cleanses the soul by an act of pure grace, but by evoking the manifestation of the Dādā in his/her mind, the *mahātmā* can experience again his/her own self and systematically reduce the karmic load through the method outlined in the five *ājñās*. It is only the awareness that it was not "I" who has committed the mistakes but the discharge of my outer *karmic* fetters, the body-mind-speech complex called *prakṛti*, that can purify. In contrast to the 'Hindu' devotional traditions, it is believed that neither the god-like figures of Sīmandhar Svāmī nor the Dādā can purify. The Dādā can only give his knowledge and inspirational power to face one's own mistakes. Only the instantaneous awareness of one's real self can purify.<sup>99</sup>

Whereas principle four of the *pañc ājñā* resembles more or less the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*,<sup>100</sup> to remain unattached towards the fruits of one's actions, violent or non-violent, principle five implicitly refers to the Jain ethics of non-violence as the measure of good and bad actions. These ethical presuppositions are not always clearly expressed since the mystical philosophy of the pure soul has been put in the centre, but without them the movement could

hardly be linked to Jainism, despite its orientation towards Sīmandhar Svāmī and the goal of *mokṣa*. The question is whether violent action can function as a form of discharge without the bondage of further *karman* if it is performed in a non-attached way, as recommended by the *Bhagavadgītā*, or not? If this is the case, then non-violence should not be a necessary condition of salvation.

A.M. Paṭel's answer is unanimous: non-violence is an absolute condition of salvation, because it is the only form of action which is not only an effect of *karman* but, inevitably, also the cause of new *karman*. Why this should be the case is not immediately transparent. It seems, A.M. Paṭel assumes that violent or injurious actions cannot merely be observed but involve necessarily a sense of agency which by definition causes the inflow of *karman*, whereas the mere observation of one's other forms of action from the outside causes the dissolution of *karman*: "To support the action with the belief 'I am the doer' is called binding the karma",<sup>101</sup> "If you relinquish the doership, you are free of karma."<sup>102</sup> In an attempt to clarify the issue, A.M. Paṭel distinguishes 'cause karma' and 'effect karma.' Interestingly, effect karma is usually discussed by him in terms of the suffering experienced due to the actions of others, and cause karma in terms of one's 'own' actions causing suffering in others.<sup>103</sup> Yet, in practice the line between effect karma and cause karma is difficult to draw, as the tape-recorded and transcribed discussions of the *satsaṅgs* of A.M. Paṭel show. After all, "Everything you encounter is your own design. Nobody else is responsible for it"; even the co-occurrence of one's own actions with the actions of others is karmically determined.<sup>104</sup> That is, the suffering experienced through the actions of others is interpreted as self-created. If someone is inflicting pain on you, then for you the other is merely acting as the instrument of your own *karman* (apart from his/her own). The golden rule is that "The fault lies within the one who suffers."<sup>105</sup> From the point of view of the pure soul, suffering is a form of discharge of *karman* and therefore to be welcomed. This is one of key insights of A.M. Paṭel. But new *karman* will be bound if one reacts violently to such external or internal experiences. Ultimately, A.M. Paṭel takes recourse to psychological factors such as intention, attitude and perspective of doer/observer to draw the line between action and reaction somewhere:<sup>106</sup> "It is this inner reaction that will bind karma. ... While experiencing the effects one creates new causes."<sup>107</sup> It is simply assumed that subjectively

violent action can only occur if the ego is involved, but not if the individual is oriented towards the pure self. If violence occurs, it should be repented immediately.

Discriminative knowledge alone is clearly not considered sufficient for realising the pure self, as William Johnson (1995: 282f., 285) expected from any movement based purely on Kundakunda's concept of self-realisation. A.M. Paṭel insists on the importance of practising non-violence and mental detachment while acting out one's *karman*, whose discharge cannot be accelerated by asceticism, only slowed down. That is, despite offering 'instant salvation' to everyone, he holds on to a stepwise path of purification qua karmic discharge. In other words, it is not – as Johnson predicted – the practice of meditation as an internalised activity (*ātmabhāvanā*), set apart from everyday life, which is important, but the unattached reflection on every form of action or conduct, as it unfolds. If the action/behaviour is violent, then it should be repented immediately, to prevent its bondage.<sup>108</sup>

#### (D) *Communal Meal*

Nīrubahen's explanation of the basic implications of the five precepts, which in contrast to a *satsaṅg* is predominantly monological, takes up the rest of the afternoon until the time has come for the congregational evening meal which is, fittingly, called *prasād* (lunch is called *mahāprasāda*) – a term which can designate both the food offered to gods and the sacramental leftovers.<sup>109</sup> The shared meal must therefore be regarded as the final part of the rite of knowledge itself. The smell of the Gujarātī vegetarian food that is being prepared by female *mahātmās* in a separate room pervades the congregation hall during last part of Nīrubahen's lecture. The meal itself is taken informally. There is no seating arrangement or order of precedence in the process of food distribution, but a simple queue. In fact, even Nīrubahen, who is usually quite exhausted at this stage, and Dimple often eat together with everyone else, which is typical for the highly emotive and egalitarian family atmosphere amongst the followers of the Akram Vijñān Mārg.<sup>110</sup> The informal get-together over a meal gives everyone, male and female and old and young, the chance to discuss the effects of the *jñān vidhi* and to socially integrate new *mahātmās* into the circle of regular participants in the congregation.



### *Relative And Absolute Religion*

The Akram Vijñān Mārg presents itself as the very opposite of organised religion. It is, in the words of A.M. Paṭel, not a cult but a method to directly experience the ultimate truth. Anyone, whether Hindu, Jain, Muslim or Christian, is therefore invited to follow the stepless path and to realise that all living beings are essentially pure souls:

All religions of the world are correct by their own view point. But the religion which investigates, 'Who am I?' and 'Who is the doer?' is the final path. The absolute religion is the one that gives us the one and final understanding of 'Who is the knower and the seer?'"<sup>111</sup>

The acceptance of the doctrines of all religions as partially but not absolutely true is informed, on the one hand, by the Jain distinction between the practical point of view (*vyavahāra naya*) and the transcendental point of view (*nīścaya naya*) and, on the other hand, by the Jain doctrine of qualified assertion (*syādvāda*) which is predicated on the belief in the omniscience of the Jaina *tīrthāṅkaras* and of permanently self-realised beings such as the Dādā, who alone are able to see the absolute truth, while unenlightened beings or members of organised religions such as Jainism have to remain satisfied with the manifest plurality of partial truths:<sup>112</sup>

All these religions are true but they are relative religions. They are religions based on different view points. But if you want totality, you'll have to be in the centre. True (Real) religion is at the centre which includes all aspects of reality, integrates all fragments of reality. That is the religion of the soul (Atmadharma) for it leads to self-realisation. He, who sits at the centre, comprehends the view points of all and hence he has no cause for quarrel with any religion. That is why 'we' say that 'we' are 'Mahaveer' of the Jains, 'Krishna' of the Vaishnavas, 'Sahajanand' of the Swaminarayans, 'Christ' of the Christians, 'Zarathustra' of the Parsis and 'Allah (Khuda)' of the Muslims. Ask anything you love and it shall be given (A.M. Paṭel, in Shah 1983: 9f.).<sup>113</sup>

Of course only few, if any, Muslims or Christians etc. accept this argument which may, on the contrary, be perceived as a hegemonic device. But many Jains and Vaiṣṇava and Śaivaite Hindus, particularly those who live outside India, are currently attracted by the individualist and universal trans-sectarian message.

Before A.M. Paṭel, a similar message was preached by his Gujarātī compatriot Śrīmat Rājacandra whose philosophy was somewhat closer to classical Jain ontology, and to the concept of the path purification through acts of asceticism and renunciation, but also influenced by Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* movements going back to the *Bhagavadgīta*.<sup>114</sup> It is evidently not the hierarchical idiom of purity and pollution but the individualistic, egalitarian spirit of *bhakti* which colours many forms of religious expression in Western India and the Indian diaspora today. These devotional movements can not be easily accommodated within conventional models of Indian religion and culture, neither within ‘orthodox Brāhmaṇism’ or so-called ‘popular Hinduism,’ nor within ‘heterodox Jainism,’ since both the path of grace (*bhaktimārga*) and the path of knowledge (*jñānamārga*), as advocated by the *Akram Vjñān* movement, is invariably characterised by its adherents as superior to the traditional paths of merit (*puṇyamārga*) and of asceticism (*taptamārga*), etc., which are explicitly rejected.<sup>115</sup>

Almost all Jain and Non-Jain devotional movements developed institutions, which betray their characteristic ideological rejection of organised religion – in particular lineages of charismatically qualified virtuosi and initiation rituals. These features are typical for routinised forms of charismatic religion, as outlined by Max Weber. The principal organisational features of the Akram Vjñān Mārg, the officially denied *guru-śiṣya* relationship and the egalitarian cultic milieu, are in this form not present in the typical dualistic organisation of the mainstream ‘fourfold’ Jain sect, the *caturvidha saṅgha*, as analyzed by Weber (1951: 196) and Dumont (1980: 186), whose definition of ‘the Indian sect’ as “a religious grouping constituted primarily by renouncers” proves insufficient in this respect.<sup>116</sup> Not only bows the individual follower of the Akram Vjñān Mārg to his own pure soul, and to the knower, but the knower also bows to the *mahātmās*. Although Dādā Bhagavān was recognised as a spiritually superior, A.M. Paṭel himself and his successors Nīrubahen and Kanubhāi are regarded as human beings of equal status. Yet, despite the outwardly egalitarianism, no detailed religious instruction on the *pañc ājñā* is imparted by Nīrubahen to anyone who has not performed the *jñān vidhi*, and she also creates a strong sense that it is only by her grace – as the medium of the Dādā and Sīmandhar – that the initiation is given, as it were, as a personal favour.

In this respect, many similarities exist to the practices of the Vaiṣṇava Puṣṭimārga and other Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva devotional movements. In his exemplary study of the religious practices of the Puṣṭimārg, Peter Bennett (1993: 35), for instance,<sup>117</sup> also highlighted that the *mantra* of initiation is the “lifeblood” of the segmentary lineage structure of the Puṣṭimārg, and that “the Maharaja [guru] is at liberty to refuse a request for initiation, though I heard of no specific instances of this kind.”<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the purification of the self through the formal dedication of all possessions to Kṛṣṇa<sup>119</sup> and the emphasis on his grace (as opposed to *karman* and *jñāna* in early Vaiṣṇavism), is one of the principal components of the *śuddhādvaita* Puṣṭimārgī initiation, the *brahma sambandha*, which shares many features with the initiation of the Akram Vijñān movement, amongst others.

The attitude of devotion and surrender expected by the devotee is the same in both traditions, although the Akram Vijñān Mārg does not propagate the worship of a transcendent God, but the veneration of one’s own pure self through the mediation of Dādā-Sīmandhar as a quasi-personal God. Like the Puṣṭimārg *mahārājās*,<sup>120</sup> both the *ātmajñānīs* and the *āptaṭputras* visit family homes, which are thereby turned into temporary temples (*ghārasevā*), where they sit on an improvised throne (*gaḍḍī*), are garlanded and venerated through toe worship, and the *āptaṭputras* even receive gifts of money in return for their religious instruction and, sometimes, for the consecration of small house shrines (which a *jñānī* never does). However, in contrast to the Puṣṭimārgīs, the leftover food of the *ātmajñānīs* and *āptaṭputras* are not regarded as *prasāda* or *āhāra amṛta*, since the religious virtuosi of the Akram Vijñān Mārg eat together with their hosts.<sup>121</sup> The communication between the godlike *jñānī* and the *mahātmās* are characterised by great intimacy – hugging, for instance, is quite common – and couched in a discourse of love and transcendental unity, which is usually not found in Jainism, but in the Vaiṣṇava and the Śaiva Siddhānta traditions.<sup>122</sup> In fact, the accessibility of the religious functionaries and the closeness between them and their followers is one of the most attractive features of the cult for its devotees, which, like the Puṣṭimārg, makes no caste distinctions, and rejects brāhmaṇic discourses of purity and pollution<sup>123</sup> in favour of a purely spiritual experience of the pure soul. These attributes are also manifest in the ritual offerings of both movements.<sup>124</sup> Yet, in contrast to the Puṣṭimārgī, the followers

of the Akram Vijñān path do not perform elaborate material *pūjās*, but only *āratī* to the images of Sīmandhar Svāmī, Kṛṣṇa and Śiva and to the photograph of Dādā Bhagavān in their temples. They also do not display the same concern about food at all,<sup>125</sup> nor about charity,<sup>126</sup> or asceticism, which are all perceived as mere preoccupations of relative religion.

### “Who Am I?”

The question how the Akram Vijñān Mārg as an organised religious movement succeeds in transcending reified Jain, Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva etc. identities seems to lie in a particular variant of the proverbial dance (*nāṭaka*) of the mind which serves as a metaphor for the relationship of the dancer *prakṛti* and the spectator *puruṣa* in the Sāṃkhya inspired religious movements.<sup>127</sup> Because the inner self of the devotee and of the *jñānī*, the self-realised God, are essentially identical in the Akram Vijñān doctrine, paradoxical shifting identities are created:

Basically, you should play two different roles. With your external eyes you see by relative view-point and with your internal eyes you are the soul (pure-self) . . . We should also remember that we too are playing two roles; the human being and the soul.”<sup>128</sup>

The question of how the alternating of perspectives is practiced by the *mahātmās* who, at best, can only temporarily realise their pure self, can be answered through a comparison of the phenomenology of religious experience of the Puṣṭimārgīs, for instance, and of the Akram Vijñān Mārg. Bennett observed that the initiation into the Puṣṭimārg resembles a consecration (*prāṇa pratiṣṭhā*) of a statue, because in both cases the *guru* makes the identity of the divine qualities of both the image (*mūrti*) and the real nature or *svarūpa* of the soul of the devotee manifest.<sup>129</sup> The word *svarūpa* is similarly used by the Akram Vijñān to describe the manifestation of Sīmandhar-Dādā’s real form, as opposed to his outward appearance or figurative representation, in the inner experience (*bhāva*) of the *mahātmā* who is contemplating the Dādā by means of songs, *darśan* or *pūjā* to an image of Sīmandhar or the Dādā, the pure soul (*śuddhātmā*) is ideally felt as being actually present. There are no rules for the performance of *darśan* by an initiated *mahātmā*, since the knowledge and the devotional attitude towards the pure self

alone is crucial for the realisation of the God within through the medium of an image, be it a statue, a photograph, or a living manifestation, such as the Dādā himself, and his words:<sup>130</sup>

These our *mahatmas* can perceive the god residing in you and have 'his' darshana, because 'we' have blessed them with divine eyes (divya chakshu). These eyes of yours are physical ones which can see only transient things. The indestructible Bhagavan can be perceived with divine eyes only. ... But (this) wonderful Gnana (knowledge) is naturally revealed. It is a natural adjustment and therefore divine eyes are so effortlessly available in an hour. This, our word, your soul must accept because I am seated within you; but you must not be intransigent. We do not find any difference either in you or in us."<sup>131</sup>

The presence of Kṛṣṇa is experienced by the Puṣṭimārgīs as a momentary revelation in form of a sudden and brief change of consciousness, called *sākṣāta darśana*, or face-to-face vision.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, through the vision and voice of Dādā-Sīmandhar, the *mahātmās* suddenly temporarily realise the presence of their own pure soul, which is also characterised by the word *saccidānanda*, or truth, consciousness and bliss, which is used by Vaiṣṇavas to designate Viṣṇu and by the Śaivaites to designate Śīva, who are identified with the ultimate self-existing spirit (*brahma*).<sup>133</sup> Sīmandhar Svāmī, like Kṛṣṇa amongst the Puṣṭimārgī, "is both mediated by and manifested in the figure of the guru."<sup>134</sup> Although the soul of the worshipper is conceived in Jain terms as an individual entity and not as a reflection of the one and only soul of God, during the veneration of the Dādā in the experience of the worshipper the soul of Dādā-Sīmandhar and his/ her own soul almost unnoticeable tend to merge into one. Momentarily, at least, all souls seem to be an integral part of Sīmandhar Svāmī and the Dādā as his medium, in the same way as Kṛṣṇa is worshipped by the Puṣṭimārgīs and Śīva by the Śaiva Siddhāntins as the only real self.<sup>135</sup>

It is an interesting question whether and how the doctrinally prescribed difference between the similarity and the identity of souls can actually be experienced in religious performances. The ritual texts of the Akram Vijnān are, it seems, at times deliberately ambiguous. They indistinctively use phrases such as "āp' ja cho mārā 'śuddhātmā'" - "you' only are my 'pure soul'"<sup>136</sup> or "āpnum svarūp te ja mārūm svarūp che" - "only your natural form is my real form,"<sup>137</sup> instead of "you are like my soul" as in the phrase "hum 'dādā

*bhagavān' jēvo śuddhātmā chum*" - "I am a pure soul like 'Dādā Bhagavān.'"<sup>138</sup> The semantic shift in expressions such as this from comparison to identification, from 'your soul is *like* my soul' to 'you *are* my soul' and back again, shows that the Jain and Vaiṣṇavite or Śaivaite perspectives are still discernible, and have not yet been melted completely into a new syncretic synthesis which the theology of the Akram Vijñān Mārg generally represents.<sup>139</sup> Rather they are transformed into one another through subtle shifts in perspective produced both by the ritual dynamic itself and by the deliberately ambiguous composition of the ritual texts.<sup>140</sup>

If pressed, the *ātmajñānīs* of the Akram Vijñān movement prove to be clearly aware of the difference between themselves and Sīmandhar Svāmī, since they do not consistently claim to have already achieved complete omniscience themselves. Although they never cite any texts, they are also conscious of the differences between the Jain and Sāṃkhya ontologies, which both in their non-theistic emphasis on *karman* and (internalised) renunciation share an individualistic orientation<sup>141</sup> which probably accounts for the 'trans-sectarian' outlook and the contextual adaptability of movements such as this. In future, the Akram Vijñān movement may gain even more influence well beyond the Indian or Gujarātī diaspora if only it could detach itself from the infrastructure of spiritual lineages and temples which it shares with other religious movements of Indian origin. Typically, most *gurus* of such modern devotional movements developed a 'Western' following,<sup>142</sup> and the Akram Vijñān Mārg is no exception, though there seems to be limited influence beyond the Indian diaspora in Africa or the Middle East.

### *Conclusion*

The ways in which we imagine our world is part of the world and influences our individual and collective behaviour. In the past, Anthropologists have privileged a culturalist group-focused mode of imagination based on the dominant modern western utopia of the nation state with a homogenous population and culture and clear cut boundaries between one culture and the next. In the more diverse cultural universes of Africa and Asia plural ways of existence do still find more acceptance. The analysis of ritual dynamic of the conversion ritual of the Akram Vijñān Mārg casts some light on the ultimately dogmatic or political question whether this syncretic

movement can be categorised as ‘Jain’ or not. In his book *Absent Lord: Ascetics and Kings in a Jain Ritual Culture*, L.A. Babb (1996: 44) identified the conundrum of the absence of the divine as the defining problematic of the Jain tradition:

The ultimate locus of the sacred for the Jains, the Tīrthaṅkar as a generic figure, is no longer present in the world. In the aftermath of their era, therefore, the task is to maintain some kind of contact with their presence as it once was.<sup>143</sup>

P.S. Jaini (1985: 104), on the other hand, emphasised the soteriological conundrum of self-liberation and criticised theistic interpretations of Jainism for ignoring the fact that orthodox Jainism locates the principle of sacrality not within a transcendent God but in man (*jīva*) itself: “It is the contention of the Jainas that a person becomes an Arhat not by the grace of any Higher Being, but by dint of his own insights (*darśan*) and exertions (*caritra*).” Jaini (1979: 88ff., 134-41, 312) argues that these ‘core beliefs’ clearly demarcate ‘the Jainas’ from their theistic (Hindu) and fatalistic (Ājīvika) rivals. I would argue that the Akram Vijñān Mārg can be regarded as a ‘Jaina’ tradition, although its leaders claim to transcend all organised ‘religions,’ because it shares at least three of its key features. What is special about any self-consciously ‘Jain’ movement is the principal emphasis on the soteriological importance of non-injury and the soteriological goal of liberation preached by the ‘Jinas.’ It is the orientation toward the Jinas as the sources of the soteriological knowledge which defines the movement as ‘Jain.’

However, the real significance of the sudden insight of A.M. Paṭel at the railway station in Surat did not concern questions of group identity or philosophical doctrine, but the experience of the individual. It was that suffering is the consequence of one’s own *karman*, and that every insult suffered from someone else without reaction causes the discharge of one’s own *karman* (and simultaneously a charge of the other’s *karman*). If one realises this, then the other is doing oneself a favour: “the ego is melting away with every insult suffered happily.”<sup>144</sup> This theodicy seems perfectly suited for the lower classes, transforming social suffering and anger into an experience of bliss. But the sociological question remains, whether the control of anger, celebrated as a personal triumph rather than as a humiliation, is functioning predominantly as a ‘weapon of the weak’ (Scott), a device for the ‘pacification of the powerless’ (Weber), or indeed a universal answer to the experience of suffering.

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## Appendix

### Sequence of Texts Used in the Jñān Vidhi

#### Original Gujarātī Texts<sup>145</sup>

##### (1a)

##### **sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che**

*sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che,  
bhagavān tamārā śaraṇomām, su-caraṇomām;  
ādhyātmik ānand paramānand,  
ā param-haṃsnām satsaṅgmām, su-caraṇomām.*

*man-vacan-kāyā chāyā, māyānā, bhāv-no-dravya karma;  
svīkāro bhrāṃti bāḷaknī, ananya śaraṇ dhyo bhavaraṇmām.  
- sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

*jñānāmṛtnām motī cūge, haṃsā mān sarovarmām;  
satyam śivam ne sundaramnī, ā ‘divya-cakṣu’ nī jyotimām.  
- sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

*sūrajnuṃ kevuṃ tarpaṇ che! candānām śītaḷ kiraṇomām;  
‘sambhāve’ nikāl karo, ghaṭmāl ūṭhe je antarmām.  
- sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

*rāt-divas, sandhyā-uṣā, kevaṃ adbhut che niyammām!  
bharatī-oḷ man sāgarṇī, ‘niścīt’ ne ‘vyavasthit’ mām.  
- sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

*jīvan bhale ek ‘darśan’ ho, paṇ ‘ātmā’ śāśvat darpaṇ che;  
‘vyavahār’ bhale ho koṭī saṅg, paṇ ‘niścay’ keval bhagvānmām -  
sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

*‘mūḍh-ātmā’ no uddhār karī, je ‘śuddhātmā’ ne jagāe che;  
apūrvā ‘agocar’ ne ullasit, jhalhal jyoti tan-manmām.  
- sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

*‘akram’ nī aṇadīṭh keḍīṭhī, je mokṣadvār ughāḍe che;  
paramātma-svarūp he pragat puruṣ, ‘āp’ ja cho mārū ‘śuddhātmā.’  
-sarvasva amārūṃ arpaṇ che.*

(1b)

**devone āvāhan**<sup>146</sup>

*andhārā koṭi varṣnā, paḷ sāthmām ulecaśe,  
taṅkotkīrṇ jñān abhed-nā jyoti svarūpe pragataśe.*

*tetrīs koṭi devī-devatā, śānti kāje āvajo,  
sāmāyik śuddha-ātmānī, “jñānī” apūruva lāvaśe.*

*vāṇī ‘dādā bhagavān’ nī, tīrthaṅkaro sāmabhale,  
sarvajñānām su-caraṇo mahīm, ātmā śātā pāmaśe.*

*dāvānaḷnī juālā mahīm, brahmāṅḍ paṇ bhaḍake bale,  
pātāḷī jharaṇ karūṇā bharyām, jaḷ-śītaḷ chaṅtakāraśe.*

*amṛt-vāṇī bhagavānnī, jaḷ-śītaḷ thaī thārśe,  
caram covīśī sāmaḷī, ‘jay saccidānand’ jñānī ‘te.’*

*oṃ hṛīṃ dādā bhagavān sarvajña śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*

(1c)

*he dādā bhagavān, he śrī sīmandhar svāmī prabhu,  
āḷ ahīm padhāro, nīrū bolnā  
kaṅthe virājo. āḷ bolāvo ane hamo badhā bolīsum.*

(1d)

*huṃ niścay nirṇaythī kevaḷ śuddhātmā chum.*

(2)

**samarpaṇ**

*he dādā bhagavān, he śrī sīmandhar svāmī prabhu! [huṃ] man,  
vacan, kāyā ..... nā nāmnī sarva māyā [huṃ śuddhātmā  
chum]. bhāv karma, dravya karma, no karma, āḷ pragat  
paramātmā svarūp prabhunā su-caraṇomām samarpaṇ karum  
chum.*

*he dādā bhagavān  
oṃ śuddhātmā che*

(3)

**ātmā sāmāyik**

*'jñān sākṣātkār' pāmelāo māṭenī niścay-vyavahār caran vidhi*

*dādā bhagavānne trikāl namaskār, namaskār, namaskār. he nirāgī, nirvikārī, saccidānand svarūp, sahañānandī, anantjñānī, anantdarśī, trailokya prakāśak, śuddha, buddha, caitanyaghan svarūp, param jyoti sukhdhām evā he vītarāgī paramātmā! hum niścay nirṇaythī keval śuddhātmā chum (3x). mane āpnī āpūruva śakti āpo, śakti āpo, śakti āpo. mane śuddhātmānum satat smaraṇ āpo.*

*āpnum akhaṇḍ nididhyāsan āpo. āpnum akhaṇḍ sānnidhya āpo. āpnā sarvoṭkrṣṭ sadguṇo mārāmām utkrṣṭapaṇe sphurāymān thāo, sphurāymān thāo, sphurāymān thāo.*

*he viśvavaṃdhya evā pragat śuddhātmā svarūp prabhu! āp ā kāḷne viśe bijā rām ke mahāvīr ja cho. āp ja mārā pragat śuddhātmā cho. āpnā mām jevo ātmā varte che, tevo ja ātmā mārā mām vartāvo. mārūm man ane buddhi sarvathā āpne vaś vartyā karo. samasta viśvanī viśmṛti ane keval ek āpnī ja smṛti mane prāpta thāo. bhāve karīne keval śuddhātmānubhav sīvāy ā jagatnī koī paṇ vināśī*

*cīj māre jōṭī nathī. hum kṣaṇe kṣaṇe sadāy sarvathā svasattā mām rahī svasattāno ja upabhog karūm, tem ja parasattā mām kadī ja praveś na karūm,*

*e māro dṛḍh nirṇay niścay pūro pāo.*

*he viśvavaṃdhya evā pragat śuddhātmā svarūp prabhu! mārā sarva prakārñā sarva doṣonī mane kṣamā āpo, kṣamā āpo, kṣamā āpo. dayā āpo, śānti āpo, samatā āpo, satya āpo, tyāg āpo, vairāgya āpo.*

*sansār bhajavavānā ārambh kāḷthī āj dinnī adhyakṣaṇ paryānt, ā jagatnā jīvonī*

*kamī paṇ śaṅkā-kuśaṅkā karī, karī, karāvī ke anumodī hoy, kamī paṇ āparādh karyā, karāvī ke anumodhyā hoy, kamī paṇ virāadhanāo karī, karāvī ke anumodī*

*hoy, kamī paṇ antarāyo karyā, karāvya ke kartā pratyē anumodhyā hoy, cha mahāvratonā bhaṅge karī adhār pāpsthānakoe karīne kamī paṇ avinay, avivek,*

*abhakti, apakārya ke doṣ, jāṇye-ajāṇye karyā, karāvya ke kartā pratyē anumodhyā hoy, to te sarva doṣonī huṃ kṣamā māguṃ chuṃ, ālocanā, pratikramaṇ, pratyākhyān karuṃ chuṃ. mane kṣamā karo, kṣamā karo, kṣamā karo.*

*he viśvavaṃdya evā pragat śuddhātmā svarūp prabhu! āp nirāgī, nirvikārī, saccidānand svarūp, sahaajānandī, ānantajānānī, ānantadarśī, trailokya prakāśak cho. huṃ bhāv karma, dravya karma, no karma, man, vacan, kāyā ..... nā nāmnī sarva māyā, āp pragat paramātmā svarūp prabhunā sucaraṇomāṃ samarpaṇ karuṃ chuṃ. (3x)*

*huṃ caitanyaghan svarūpī evo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x). huṃ arūpī chuṃ (3x). huṃ asaṅg chuṃ (3x). huṃ akṣay chuṃ (3x). huṃ amūrta chuṃ (3x). huṃ acyut*

*chuṃ (3x). huṃ ajanma chuṃ (3x). huṃ amar chuṃ (3x). huṃ janma-maraṇthī mukta evo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x). huṃ avyābādh svarūp chuṃ (3x). huṃ paramānand sukh svarūpavālo chuṃ (3x). huṃ ṭaṅkōtkīrṇavat evo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x). huṃ sva-par prakāśak evo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x).*

*huṃ ‘dādā bhagavān’ jevo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x). huṃ ‘ṛṣabhadev dādā bhagavān’ jevo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x). huṃ ‘mahāvīr bhagavān’ jevo śuddhātmā*

*chuṃ (3x). huṃ śrī ‘sīmandhar svāmī bhagavān’ jevo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x). huṃ śrī kṛṣṇa bhagavān’ jevo śuddhātmā chuṃ (3x).*

*huṃ jñātaputra chuṃ. ane āp mārā jñātapitā cho (3x). huṃ param jyoti svarūp siddha bhagavān chuṃ (3x).*

*huṃ anant jñānavālo chuṃ (3x). huṃ anant darśanavālo chuṃ (3x). huṃ anant*

*śaktivālo chuṃ (3x). huṃ anant sukhnūṃ dhām chuṃ (3x). huṃ aguru-laghu svabhāvavālo chuṃ (3x). krodh-mān-māyā-lobh, e laghu-guru svabhāvnā ja che (3x).*

*dravye karīne huṃ sampūrṇ śuddha chuṃ, sarvāṅg śuddha chuṃ (3x). jñān-darśanādi anantā guṇo thakī huṃ sampūrṇ śuddha chuṃ, sarvāṅg śuddha chuṃ (3x). anantā*



*jñeyone jāṇavāmām pariṇameli anantī avasthāomām hum  
sarpūrṇ śuddha chum,*

*sarvāṅg śuddha chum (3x).*

*hum avināśī chum (3x). hum avyay chum (3x). hum sūkṣma  
chum (3x). hum keval nirvikalpa vītarāg kṣān mātra chum  
(3x). hum nirmaḷ akhūṭ paramānand svarūpī chum (3x).  
hum sarva paradravyoṭhī sarvathā udāsīn ja chum (3x).*

*sūrya samān tejasvī ane candra samān śītaḷ evā he vītarāgī  
paramātmā! tamām*

*lepāyamān bhāvōṭhī hum sarvathā nirlep evo śuddhātmā  
chum (3x). man-vacan-kāyānī tamām saṅgī kriyāōṭhī hum  
tadna asaṅg ja chum (3x). man-vacan-*

*kāyānī ṭevo ane tenā svabhāvne hum jāṇum chum ane mārā  
sva-svabhāvne paṇ hum jāṇu chum (3x). man-vacan-kāyāthī  
tadna bhinn evo hum śuddhātmā chum (3x). sthūlatamthī  
sūkṣmatam sudhīnī tamām samsārī avasthāono hum jñātā  
dṛṣṭā mātra chum, ṭaṅkōtkīrṇ chum, ānand svarūp chum  
(3x). āhārī āhār kare che ane hum nirāhārī mātra tene  
jāṇum chum (3x). avasthā mātra kudartī racanā che, jeno  
koī bāpo ya racanār nathī ane te ‘vyavasthit’ che (3x).*

*man-vacan-kāyānī āpnā jevī sahajtā mane prāpta ṭhāo (3x).  
āpnī vṛtti e ja mārī*

*vṛtti raho (3x). āpnī dṛṣṭi e ja mārī dṛṣṭi raho (3x). āpno  
svabhāv te ja māro svabhāv raho (3x). āpnūm jñān, darśan,  
cāritra ane sukh te ja mārum jñān darśan, cāritra ane sukh  
raho (3x).*

*he viśvavaṁdya evā pragaṭ śuddhātmā svarūp prabhu! mane  
ane sarva kalyāṇamūrtī, samakitadhārī mahātmāone tīvra  
jñān daśā prāpta ṭhāo, sampūrṇ arpaṇtā prāpta ṭhāo,  
sampūrṇ abhedatā prāpta ṭhāo, sampūrṇ vītarāgatā prāpta  
ṭhāo, prabaḷ puruṣārtha prāpta ṭhāo.*

*sarva kalyāṇamūrtī samakitadhārī mahātmāonā śuddhātmāne  
atyant bhaktīthī  
abhedabhāve vāraṁvār trikāl namaskār, namaskār, namaskār  
karī eḷum māṅgu chum, ke samatābhāve meṁ je dṛḍh*

*nirṇay niścay karyo che, ke mane śuddhātmānubhav prāpta thāo, ane te prāpta thavāmām sarva kalyāṇamūrti samakitadhārī mahātmāonā sarvotkr̥ṣṭa sadguṇo mārāmām utkr̥ṣṭapane sphurāyamān thāi mane śaktivaṃt banāvo, śaktivaṃt banāvo, śaktivaṃt banāvo. samasta viśvanuṃ kalyāṇ karo, kalyāṇ karo, kalyāṇ karo ane kalyāṇ karavānī mane param śakti āpo. samasta viśvanā jīvo sukh ane śāntine pāmo. samasta viśvanā jīvo mokṣane pāmo.*

*he viśvavam̐dhya evā pragat śuddhātmā svarūp prabhu! huṃ kadī paṇ āp gurudev thakī, jñānavādthī, syādvādthī, paramajñānthī, paramadhyānthī, śuddhātmāthī, śuddhātmānī upāsana karanārāo sarve kalyāṇmūrti samakitadhārī mahātmāonā śuddhātmāthī, sarva siddhothī, santothī, mahantothī, jagatnā jīvamātrathī kadī ja paṇ śaṅkit, vañcit, ke bāḍo na banuṃ tevī śakti, bhakti, dr̥ṣṭi, jñān, vivek, vinay, cāritra ane prajñā āpo.*

*ekaniṣṭhāpūrvak keval ek āpnī ja ājñāmām ja vartavānī māri je dr̥ḍh abhilāṣā che*

*ane pratijñā che, te pūrī karavānī śaktio mane prāpta thāo, prāpta thāo, prāpta thāo. āj dinnī adhyakṣaṇ paryānt āpnī je koī ājñā mārāthī pāṭī śakāī nathī, te sarvanī huṃ kṣamā māṃgu chum; ālocanā - pratikramaṇ - pratyākhyān karuṃ chum. mane kṣamā karo, kṣamā karo, kṣamā karo.*

*he viśvavam̐dhya evā pragat śuddhātmā svarūp prabhu! āpno bodhelo satsaṅg mārāmām nirantar thāo, nirantar thāo, nirantar thāo. āpnuṃ bodheluṃ samyak jñān mane kṣane kṣane jāgr̥ti arpo, jāgr̥ti arpo, jāgr̥ti arpo. sthūl saṃyogo, sūkṣma saṃyogo, vāñinā saṃyogo par che ne parādhīn che, e jñān mārā hṛdayne viśe sansthāpit raho, sansthāpit raho, sansthāpit raho. ḍakhodakhal karuṃ nahi tevī śakti āpo. (3x) keval dekhbhāl karvānī mane śakti āpo. (3) keval ek āpnī ja kṛpāno abhilāṣī chum. (3x) āpnām caraṇārvid mārā hṛdaymām sthān pāmo. (3) huṃ śuddhātmā chum, śuddhātmā chum (25x) huṃ niścay nirṇaythī keval śuddhātmā ja chum! (2x) jay saccidānand (5x).*

*‘huṃ vijñān svarūp chum’*

(4)

*pāñc ājñā*

1. 'rileṭiv' v̄yu poinmthī 'hum candulāl chum.'
  2. 'riyal' v̄yu poinmthī 'hum śuddhātmā chum.'
  3. jagat niyamtā-vyavasthit śakti.
  4. phāiḷono sambhāve nikāl karvo.
  5. śuddhātmānā copadāmām rakam jame karvī.
- pekingne na jotām enā śuddhātmāne divyadr̥ṣṭithī jovo.*

*English Translation*

*The rite of knowledge*

*1. Prelude*

(1a)

Everything of mine is surrendered (song)

Everything of mine is surrendered,

surrendered to you almighty, to your holy feet;  
for spiritual bliss supreme bliss,  
as a devotee of this realised soul, to his holy feet. The  
shadowy illusions of mind, speech, and body, of internal  
actions,<sup>147</sup> habitual actions,<sup>148</sup> and material actions;<sup>149</sup> accept  
these childlike delusions,  
allow me to surrender this battle-field of life to none other  
but you.

- Everything of mine is surrendered.

The pearls of the nectar of knowledge, are picked by the  
swan in the lake of pride; in the light of this 'divine eye,'  
of truth, bliss, and beauty.

- Everything of mine is surrendered.

What an offering of the sun this is!  
In the cool rays of the moon;  
with a 'balanced mind'<sup>150</sup> dispose of,  
the conflicts arising within.  
- Everything of mine is surrendered.

Day and night, dawn and dusk,  
how wonderful is their regularity!  
The ebb and tide of the ocean of the mind,<sup>151</sup>  
is determined by 'natural law'<sup>152</sup> and 'order.'<sup>153</sup>  
- Everything of mine is surrendered.

Let life be one 'vision,'<sup>154</sup>  
but the 'soul'<sup>155</sup> is the eternal mirror;  
'transactions'<sup>156</sup> may be with millions,  
but 'absolute determination'<sup>157</sup> be only in the almighty.  
- Everything of mine is surrendered.

For the liberation of the 'unenlightened soul,' the 'pure  
soul' is awakened; extraordinary, 'beyond the reach of the  
senses'<sup>158</sup> and full of joy,  
bright light in body and mind.  
- Everything of mine is surrendered.

Who opens the gate of liberation, 'the path of immediate  
understanding'<sup>159</sup> never seen before; O realised supreme  
soul in visible form, 'you' are my 'pure soul.' - (To you)  
Everything of mine is surrendered.

(1b)

*Invitation for the Gods to come (song)*

There is darkness of a million years, but it will disperse in a  
moment of sixty seconds, this insoluble unbreakable  
knowledge, will reveal itself in the form of light.

Thirty-three million Goddesses and Gods,<sup>160</sup> come for peace,  
for the equanimity of the pure soul, which the extraordinary  
"knower" will bring.

To the voice of 'Dādā Bhagavān,' the Tīrthaṅkaras are  
listening, at the holy feet of the Omniscient, the soul will find  
peace.

I am surrounded by the flames of the forest fire, the whole universe is ablaze, an underground spring full of compassion, sprinkles cool water.

The nectar-like speech of Bhagavān, will extinguish (the fire) by becoming cool water, the perfect twenty-four all together, ‘truth, consciousness and bliss’<sup>161</sup> is ‘that’ knower.

Om ḥṛṃ I go to the omniscient Dādā Bhagavān to take refuge.

(1c)

*Invitation for Dādā Bhagavān and Sīmandhar Svāmī to come and to reside in Nirūbahen*

O Dādā Bhagavān, O Śrī Sīmandhar Svāmī Lord, come here and place your voice in Nirū’s throat. You cause us to speak and we will all speak.

(1d)

*Asking the Dādā for strength*

With absolute resolve and determination I am only a pure soul.

(2)

*Dedication*

O Dādā Bhagvān, O Śrī Sīmandhar Svāmī Lord! Whatever I \_\_\_\_\_ [insert your name] call mine, my thought, speech, and body, is all illusion<sup>162</sup> [I am a pure soul]. I surrender all my inner actions,<sup>163</sup> outward actions,<sup>164</sup> and reflex actions<sup>165</sup> at your holy feet, you are the revealed God in the form of the supreme soul.

(3)

*Self-meditation*<sup>166</sup>

(Absolute-relative foot worship for obtaining ‘the direct vision of the knowledge’)

Humble obeisance (3x) to Dādā Bhagavān at all three times (through past, present, and future). O unattached Lord within; you are free from passions;<sup>167</sup> of the natural form of truth, consciousness and bliss; innate joy;<sup>168</sup> infinite knowledge; infinite vision; illuminating the three worlds;<sup>169</sup> pure; wise; in the form of knowledge; the abode of infinite joy and the supreme light (of knowledge). O unattached One! With absolute resolve and determination I am only a pure soul (3x). Bestow upon me your unprecedented strength (3x). Bless me with the perpetual awareness of the pure soul.

Bless me with the perpetual visual contemplation of your formless attributes.<sup>170</sup> Comfort me with your perpetual proximity. May all your magnificent attributes become instilled within me, instilled within me, instilled within me.

O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! You are another Rām or Mahāvīr of this age. You are my own manifest pure soul. Let me experience the same soul that you experience. May my mind and my intellect be completely absorbed in you. Let me become oblivious to the entire universe and keep only you in my mind. From the bottom of my heart, I do not desire any perishable worldly things. I only want the perpetual experience of the pure soul. Let me remain every second and in all ways in the realm of the self and enjoy the realm of the self, and never transgress into the domain of the non-self. I supply this resolve with my firm determination.

O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! Please grant me forgiveness for all my mistakes, forgive me, forgive me. Give me compassion, give me peace, give me equanimity, give me truth, give me renunciation, give me detachment.

From the beginning of this world's drama until this very moment; for all the times that I – through my own actions, through the actions of others acting on my behalf, or through my approval of the actions of others – have doubted or been suspicious of any living being in this world; for any hostility towards another living being; for criticising any living being;

for obstructing another living being; for knowingly or unknowingly doing, causing to be done, or approving of others doing<sup>171</sup> the slightest discourtesy, indiscretion, non-devotion, or harm to any living being, and for all the times I have committed any of the eighteen states of sin<sup>172</sup> or broken any of the six great vows<sup>173</sup> – I criticise myself,<sup>174</sup> and repent all these wrongdoings, and resolve not to commit such mistakes again, and ask to be forgiven. Please grant me your forgiveness (3x).<sup>175</sup>

O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! You are detached; passionless; of the natural form of truth, consciousness and bliss; innate joy; infinite knowledge; infinite vision; illuminating the three worlds. Whatever I \_\_\_\_\_ [insert your name] call mine, my thought, speech, and body, is all illusion, I surrender all my inner actions, outward actions, and reflex actions at your holy feet, you are the revealed god in the form of the supreme soul. (3x)

I am a pure soul by nature knowledge incarnate (3x). I am formless (3x). I am detached (3x). I am imperishable (3x). I am intangible (3x). I am eternal (3x). I am without birth (3x). I am immortal (3x). I am a pure soul free from birth and death (3x). I am by nature imperishable (3x).<sup>176</sup> I am by nature supreme infinite bliss (3x). I am a (permanent) pure soul like (something) inscribed with a chisel (on a rock) (3x).<sup>177</sup> I am a pure soul that illuminates the difference between the self and non-self (3x).<sup>178</sup>

I am a pure soul like ‘Dādā Bhagavān’ (3x). I am a pure soul like ‘Ṣṣabhdev Dādā Bhagavān’ (3x). I am a pure soul like ‘Mahāvīr Bhagavān’ (3x). I am a pure soul like Śrī ‘Sīmāndhar Svāmī Bhagavān’ (3x). I am a pure soul like Śrī ‘Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān’ (3x). I am your knowledge child.<sup>179</sup> And you are my knowledge father<sup>180</sup> (3x). I am the liberated God (Siddha Bhagavān) in the form of divine light (3x).

I possess infinite knowledge (3x). I possess infinite vision (3x). I possess infinite energy (3x). I am the abode of infinite bliss (3x). I am, by my very nature constant, without highs and lows. Anger-pride-deceit-greed, these highs and lows are by their very nature unstable (3x).

My substance is such that I am completely and totally pure (3x). Because of my absolute knowledge, absolute vision, and infinite other qualities, I am completely and totally pure (3x). In knowing infinite objects that give rise to infinite situations, I am completely and totally pure (3x). I am indestructible (3x). I am immutable (3x). I am subtle (3x). I am only absolute, changeless, detached knowledge (3x). I am pure, inexhaustible supreme bliss (3x). I am entirely indifferent to all other substances (3x).

O dispassionate supreme soul, you are as radiant as the sun and as soothing as the cool moon! Amidst all the worldly desires and wishes, I am a completely detached pure soul (3x). I am absolutely separate from all attached actions of mind, speech and body (3x). I know of the bad habits of the mind, speech and body and of their nature, and I also know of my own (soul's) nature (3x). I am a pure soul, completely separate from the mind, speech and body (3x). I am knower and seer of but completely separate from the gross and subtle circumstances of the world, I am inscribed with a chisel.<sup>181</sup> I am full of bliss (3x). The eater eats, and I, the 'non-eater,' know (3x). All the phases of life are created by nature, of which there is no creator, and they are '*vyavasthit'* (systematically arranged)<sup>182</sup> (3x).

Please bless me with the same innate state of mind, speech, and body that you possess (3x). Let your dispositions also be my dispositions (3x). Let your vision also be my vision (3x). Let your nature also be my nature (3x). Let your knowledge, vision, conduct, and bliss also be my knowledge, vision, conduct, and bliss (3x).

O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! Bless me and all other virtuous,<sup>183</sup> self-realised<sup>184</sup> great beings<sup>185</sup> with the acute condition of knowledge (of the pure self), with total surrender (to you), in a state of complete oneness with all, with complete detachment, and strengthen our endeavour.

I bow down,<sup>186</sup> I bow down, I bow down to the pure souls of all great beings<sup>187</sup> who are the living embodiment of auspiciousness and self-realisation,<sup>188</sup> with extreme devotion, unreservedly,<sup>189</sup> repeatedly, three times (through past, present, and future)<sup>190</sup> and request, what I firmly resolved with the feeling of



equanimity,<sup>191</sup> that I may be granted the experience of the pure soul, and, in obtaining it, that the best qualities of all the auspicious and self-realised great beings may come into me<sup>192</sup> in the best possible manner and make me strong, make me strong, make me strong. May you bestow spiritual welfare<sup>193</sup> upon the entire universe, and give me supreme strength to be an instrument for its welfare. May all living beings of the universe attain peace and happiness. May all living beings of the universe attain liberation.<sup>194</sup>

O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! Give me strength, devotion, vision, knowledge, discrimination, humility, right conduct and wisdom, so that because of you O Gurudev I may never doubt, be left out, or become blind towards the path of knowledge, the many-pointedness of existence,<sup>195</sup> the supreme knowledge, the supreme contemplation, the pure soul, the worshippers of the pure soul,<sup>196</sup> of the pure souls of all the auspicious self-realised great beings, of all liberated souls, saints, religious superiors,<sup>197</sup> and all living beings of the world.

Please give me (3x) the full strength to fulfil my intense hope and determination to loyally remain in your commandments<sup>198</sup> alone. Until this very day, for whichever commandments I have failed to follow, I ask your forgiveness; I confess, and repent, and resolve not to commit such mistakes again. Forgive me (3x).

O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! Let your enlightened<sup>199</sup> congregation<sup>200</sup> constantly dwell in me (3x). Let your enlightened right knowledge<sup>201</sup> keep me aware of the pure self<sup>202</sup> at every moment (3x). Instil in my heart the knowledge that all gross circumstances, subtle circumstances, and circumstances of speech, are (separate from me and) dependent on external factors. Give me the strength not to interfere or quarrel (with the natural order of things) (3x). Give me the strength to only perform observation<sup>203</sup> (3x). I only desire your grace (3x). Let your lotus feet dwell in my heart (3x). I am a pure soul (25x). With absolute resolve and determination I am only a pure soul! (2x). Victory to truth, consciousness and bliss (5x).<sup>204</sup>

I am by nature experiential knowledge.<sup>205</sup>

(4)

*The five commandments*

1. From the 'relative' viewpoint 'I am Candulāl'  
(substitute 'Candulāl' with your own name).
2. From the 'real' viewpoint 'I am a pure soul.'
3. This world is ruled by scientific circumstantial evidence.<sup>206</sup>
4. Clear your files with equanimity.<sup>207</sup>
5. Enter credit in the account book of the pure soul.

Do not look at the outer wrappings ('packing') but look with divine sight at the pure soul.

*Endnotes*

- 1 See particularly Dumont's 1980 still influential variant of methodological holism.
- 2 *The Constitution of India*. 24th Edition. Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 2003, p. 30.
- 3 In a footnote, even Louis Dumont 1980: 427, n. 6 emphasises that Hinduism does not encompass these religions: "'Hinduism' is used here in the habitual sense to mean the present religion of those Indians which are not Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs, and with these exceptions, the religion of the caste society." At the same time, he favours a "unitary definition of Hinduism and even of Buddhist and Jain religions" because, despite their philosophical differences, within India all these groups "have castes" (p. 46, cf. p. 269). 'Hinduism' (the term is missing in the index of *Homo Hierarchicus*) is for him "the religion of caste and of renunciation" (p. 285, cf. p. 428, n. 10): "belief in gods does not transcend this fundamental opposition of caste [i.e. 'pure and impure']" (p. 270). Fuller 1992: 91 criticises this approach as "sociological reductionism," though reverting to it himself elsewhere (p. 157f., etc.).
- 4 See Heesterman's 1989 influential article "The 'Hindu Frontier'" which utilises Redfield's term 'great tradition,' Srinivas' concept of Sanskritisation, and Dumont's insights on the 'complementary opposition of power and authority' to delimit the 'sharp edge' of 'Indianisation.' In his view, Buddhism "can mark the 'Hindu frontier' as well" (p. 11). For similar generalisations see for instance Parry's 1986 article on 'the Indian gift,' which is exclusively based on brāhmanical conceptions.

- 5 The, ultimately divisive, politics of cultural homogenisation is primarily a project of the modern nation state. In India, the ancient hierarchical ideologies, the cultural pluralism on the ground, and the secular constitution have, thus far, put a break on the supremacist 'Hindu' religious nationalism which, however, turns out to be difficult to contain.
- 6 Reified definitions of 'religion' and of religions such as 'Hinduism' or 'Jainism' are a modern, highly-politicised preoccupation. On the term 'religion' see for instance Smith 1991 and for 'Hinduism' Sontheimer 1991.
- 7 Mahāvideha plays an important role in Jain cosmology and cosmography. See Schubring 2000 ī 102ff.
- 8 The Jain terms *samyak darśana* (right insight) or *kevalajñāna* (omniscience) are rarely used in this context, presumably to avoid unnecessary debate. See A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 1994: 77.
- 9 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 1994: 32.
- 10 Ibid., p. 72. With the exception of the Appendix, I follow throughout the text the official English renditions of the original Gujarātī that are offered in the Pamphlet literature of the Akram Vijnān Mārg.
- 11 Orally transmitted practical philosophy of a similar style was also practised by the Marāṭhī-speaking householder Guru Nisargadatta Mahārāj (1897-1981), a petty shopkeeper in Mumbāi whose birth name was Māruti before he was initiated into the Advaita Vedānta Navnāth Sampradāy in 1930. See Dikshit 1999. Within the Jain tradition, the teachings of the Gujarātī *brahmacārī* Kānjī Svāmī (1889-1980) are also transmitted in this form. The only direct influences cited by A.M. Paṭel himself was the Gujarātī Jain householder Śrīmat Rājacandra (1867-1901) and the Digambara Ācārya Kundakunda (ca. 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE).
- 12 *samyag-darśana-jñāna-cāritrāṇi mokṣamārgaḥ* (TS 1.1).
- 13 Soul (*jīva*), non-soul (*ajīva*), inflow of karmic particles (*āsrava*), bondage of karmic particles (*bandha*), stoppage of the inflow of karman (*saṃvara*), annihilation of karman (*nirjarā*), liberation from karman (*mokṣa*) (TS 1.4).
- 14 On the principal features of canonical (and classical) Jainism see Schubring 2000.
- 15 See Johnson 2000.
- 16 Devotion here means merit making through *pūja*, *dāna*, *vandanā*, etc., in combination with asceticism. A Jain version of *bhakti* religiosity without the necessity of asceticism and study can be found amongst the followers of Śrīmat Rājacandra (Salter 2001).
- 17 Flügel 2005: 195.

- 18 The term ‘movement’ is theoretically uninformative, as Luhmann 1984: 543 rightly stressed, and is here only used for convenience for non-institutionalised collective behaviour. Luhmann suggests to rather talk about ‘the production of effects through unintended self-amplifying effect-cumulation,’ i.e. self-referential processes which initially emerge through the accidental coincidence of events which generate a series of unintended consequences, until they are stabilised when the notion ‘movement’ is used as a self-description (p. 544). A functional theory such as this comes somewhat closer to the self-interpretation of the Akram Vijñān ‘movement’ in terms of the contingent discharge of various individual *karmans* which come to fruition through natural processes or ‘scientific circumstantial evidence’ (*vyavasthita śakti*), rather than the reference to a common ideology (Salter 2001: 49) or political interests (Fuchs 1999: 59).
- 19 The aggregative, syncretic nature of ‘Brāhmaṇism’ and ‘Hinduism’ (and its ‘tolerance’ of heterodox sects) was highlighted by Dumont 1980: 269, 284, etc. But he denied this very feature to the religious ‘sects’ which, he argued, are “inclusive as regards the subjects, the faithful, but strict and exclusive as regards the god or belief, the object of religion” (ibid.).
- 20 “This is a short cut a diversion path (marg) a different (akram lift - “stepless” elevator). You don’t have to do any effort” (A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 1994: 81f.).
- 21 For further details on the history, doctrine and following of the Akram Vijñān Mārg see Flügel 2005. Most followers are Gujarātī Pāṭīdars on which see Pocock 1973 and Tambs-Lyche 1980.
- 22 Daniels 1999: 34f.
- 23 The two other temple complexes are near Baroda and near Ahmedabad. The latter is the only Tri-Mandir temple of the followers of Nīrubahen to date..
- 24 Recent publications edited by her contain the following quotation of ‘Dada Bhagavan’ under the heading ‘Current link for attaining the knowledge of Self-Realization (Atma Gnan)’: “I am personally going to impart siddhis (special spiritual powers) to a few people. After I leave, will there not be a need for them? People of future generations will need this path, will they not?”
- 25 The word *puruṣa* means either human being or man. The following characterisation of the ‘Vatsalyamūrti Kanubhāi Dādā’ is given by the president of the Jay Saccidānand Saṅgh, G.A. Shah 2003: 23: “In Him is the divine love of God personified. ... Today, DADA BHAGAVAN manifests in full spiritual splendour in Revered KANU DADAJI with all the spiritual might of conducting ‘Gnan Vidhi,’ separating ‘I’ from ‘My’ – Eternal DADA BHAGAVAN – The Formless ‘Pure Soul’ (Paramatma) is experienced in physical form and frame of KANU DADAJI. As the Liberator and Saviour of all aspiring Souls he is moving all over the world.”

- 26 For further details on the reasons for the split and the processes of the ‘routinisation of charisma’ within the movement see Flügel 2005: 218-225.
- 27 The word *āpta* means also trustworthy, reliable, authoritative. For its use in the Jain tradition see Soni 1996.
- 28 For a similar structural divide see the Śrīmat Rājacandra movement which has been studied by Salter 2001.
- 29 See Flügel 2005: 202ff.
- 30 Cf. Williams 1963: 91.
- 31 *ibid.*, pp. 84ff., 172ff.
- 32 Bronkhorst 2003 argued that similar conceptions must have prevailed amongst the Ājīvikas.
- 33 A.M. Paṭel in Amin 2005. In the words of Kanubhāi Paṭel (in J.P. Amīn Vol. 11 1997-2003: 10): “Real ‘Penance’ - ‘Tap’ is spontaneous and borne with equanimity within, not from any activity.” *Brahmacarya* does not involve taking a public vow of celibacy, but merely the inner belief “that ‘I am a Brahmachari’” (p. 20): “‘Renouncement’ is not of things, house, wife or children. No, it is the ‘attaching force’ that is to be renounced and in present times that is only possible after Self Realisation first, through the grace of Atma-Gnani the Self-Realized One” (p. 18).
- 34 In the U.S., apart from Oak Ridge, they travel to dedicated followers in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and Montreal. In 1994, a conference of 700 followers was held in Oak Ridge (Daniels 1999: 34f.).
- 35 The names of 17 of the 27 *āpta*putras initiated by A.M. Paṭel himself are: Pareś Aṇākhīvālā (from Surat, working in Mumbāi as a computer engineer), Bihārī Bhagat, Kāntilāl Bhagat, Navin Bhagat, Bharat Mahetā, Kamleś Mahetā, Mineś Mahetā, Dr. Śaileṣ Mahetā, Yogeś Mistrī, Aśok Mocī (a chemist), Pradīp Parekh, Maheś Paṭel, Pulin Punātar, Jaymeś Śāh, Kamleś Śāh, Mahendra Śāh, Nimeś Sakhīdās.
- 36 I do not know more about the relationship between Kanubhāi Paṭel and the *āpta*putras, nor his personal views on this point. Kanubhāi Paṭel regularly travels to the U.S.A., Great Britain and East Africa. He toured West Africa in 1996 where he created a following amongst the small Indian diaspora in Lagos (Nigeria) (G.A. Shah 2003: 1).
- 37 Amīn 1983: 89.
- 38 Personal communication, 1999.
- 39 Dudden Hill Community Centre, London NW10, 11.5.1997, 14.30-19.00; Madhanta Youth and Community Centre, London HA9 7EE, 16.5.1999, 15.00-18.00, and 8.8.1999 15.30-19.30. I attended two other ceremonies in London for a limited period of time and was assured that exactly the same format is applied in India and elsewhere in the

world. I have only participated in the rites of knowledge *cum* initiations conducted by Nirubahen Amīn who officially initiated me. Kanubhāi Paṭel apparently performs the ritual in exactly the same way (personal communication, November 2003), and I saw a video which seemed to confirm this.

- 40 Cf. Amīn 1983: 82f. For the Digambara Jain concepts of *bheda jñāna*, *jñānī*, *śuddha-upayoga*, etc., see the writings of Ācārya Kundakunda, and Upadhye 1935.
- 41 The paradox of mediated immediacy is not explained.
- 42 Amīn 1998: 30-43.
- 43 This technique of turning up “unexpectedly and suddenly” apparently out of nothing is utilised by many modern saints such as Sai Baba. See Swallow, in Fuller 1992: 178.
- 44 The term omniscience (*sarvajñāna*) is here used in the narrower mystical understanding that: “When ‘knower’ is ‘known,’ everything is known in the universe,” i.e. everything that matters (Kanu Paṭel: Aphorism 101 in J.P. Amīn Vol. 11 1997-2003: 16).
- 45 For full texts and translations of the texts cited in this section see Appendix.
- 46 The *tīrthaṅkaras* are included here.
- 47 Cf. BG 10.49, cited in Jaiswal 1967: 119.
- 48 I have not seen the Gujarātī original of a more elaborate English version of the first part of this offering which is often cited in the pamphlet literature: “O universally adored and fully manifested Śuddhātmā Bhagavān! O Dādā Bhagvān, O Śrī Sīmandhar Svāmī! You are detached, free from passions, blissful, natural, full of infinite knowledge, infinite vision, illuminator of the three worlds (the entire universe).”
- 49 The characterisation of the relative self in terms of the expression *huṃ bhāv karma*, *dravya karma*, *no-karma*, here translated as ‘my inner actions, material actions and reflex actions,’ requires some explanation. A.M. Paṭel equated these three types of actions with ‘charging, discharging, and neutral action,’ i.e. the mechanism of the acquisition of *karman* through the inner feelings or passions, the discharge of *karman* through action, and reflex behaviour. According to canonical Jainism, *no karma* is produced by reflex actions caused by *no-kaṣāya*, or subsidiary passions of the four principal passions anger, pride, deceit and greed. The following nine *no-kaṣāyas* are habitual in everyday life, but decrease with spiritual advancement: laughter (*hāsyā*), enjoyment (*ratī*), apathy (*aratī*), grief (*śoka*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsā*), and sexual cravings for the male, female, and hermaphrodite (*strī-veda*, *pumveda*, and *napumsakaveda*) (UṭS 32.102, 33.10-11). On *no-karma* see Schubring 2000: 87, Jaini 1979: 120, Bruhn 1987: 69. See also Chakravartī’s 1989: 129, 75 commentary on SS 190-192, and SS 87, and Johnson 1995: 287.

- 50 See also Geertz 1986: 373.
- 51 See Cort 2001: 153 for similar ‘magico-religious’ assumptions underlying the rather mechanical *Kalpa Sūtra* recitations of Mūrtipūjaka Jains during *paryuṣana*. For examples from ‘Hindu’ contexts see the contributions in Dalmia et.al. 2003.
- 52 The distinction was introduced by the Digambara *Ācārya* Kundakunda (SS 7) into Jain discourse. On the shock of insight created by the reversal of perspectives in Jain conversion stories see Ryan 1998: 77 and Flügel 1993. In the present case, the shock of insight is explained as the product of non-cognitive ritual action.
- 53 Turner 1986: 35 translates Dilthey’s terms *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, which have no equivalent in English, as ‘mere experience’ and ‘an experience.’
- 54 This formally resembles the separation of ritual and meaning postulated by Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, following Frits Staal 1993, but can hardly be interpreted as a universal condition of ritual action, as proposed by the authors.
- 55 “If one listens to the ‘Direct Speech,’ one will have ‘Samakita” (A.M. Paṭel in Shah 1983: 72).
- 56 A more differentiated analytic terminology is needed to make further distinctions.
- 57 E.g., Amīn 1983: 33. See Staal 1993: Ch. 3 and p. 192 on the ‘power of inspiration’ associated with words, derived from the Sanskrit (S.) root *dh̄-* (e.g. *dh̄yāna*), and its manifestation in language, especially verses, chants, and formulae, called *mantra*, which were at an early state distinguished from ritual itself: “Mantras [sacred formulae] are always the elements that are recited or chanted; they are neither the ritual acts themselves, nor the glosses or meanings ...”
- 58 In contrast to the ‘absolute,’ that is instrumental, music (Dahlhaus 1978: 13), ‘pure speech’ is not intended as a ‘pure structure’ without object or function, but has a strong ‘conative function,’ i.e. it is intended to direct the gestures of the participants (Lévi-Strauss 1982 I: 49). See also Staal 1993: 221 for the similarity between *mantras* and music.
- 59 Cf. Staal 1993: 233f. on Buddhist ‘meaning(ful)-memorization’ (*artha-dhāraṇī*) and on the Jain *Namokār Mantra* etc. (p. 223): “Many mantras [whether meaningful or meaningless] are constructed from language, but in their ritual use, which is their proper use, they do not conform to any of the normal uses of language” (p. 265). Staal argues “that language derived from mantras in the course of the evolution” but also describes the opposite phenomenon of “the musicalisation of language” (ibid.) under the same term (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1982 I: 42f. remarks on the differences between structuralism and serialism). The ritual communication of the *bhed jñān vidhi* is an example of the latter, since it clearly presupposes language.

- 60 “The mystical state is a state of awareness that can be reached or produced with the aid of mantras, a state of consciousness that is ‘beyond language’ or ‘ineffable’” (Staal 1993: 274).
- 61 “‘Understanding’ is not the function of language” (Kanu Paṭel: Aphorism No. 46, in J.P. Amīn Vol. 11 1997-2003: 8).
- 62 The emphasis on *śakti* reveals Śaivaite influence. Compare Staal 1993: 242 on the eligibility of using mantras.
- 63 Classical Jainism distinguishes five types of bodies: gross body (*audārika śarīra*), transformation body (*vaikriya śarīra*), communication body (*āhāraka śarīra*), fiery body (*taijasa śarīra*), and karmic body (*karma śarīra*). The *āhāraka śarīra* is said to be an attribute of ascetics with the knowledge of the lost fourteen *Pūrva* texts only. See TS 2.37 for details.
- 64 Garcia 2002 writes for instance: “This combination: one guru and a heavy load of karma made it impossible for me to experience anything within. Even when I experienced something, now I know it was due to the power of my own mind concentration and not necessarily due to the power of the guru.”
- 65 Compare the somewhat similar Mimāṃsā concept of the invisible (*adr̥ṣṭa*) effects of ritual (*apūrva*).
- 66 See www.dadabagawan.org. To dispel doubts about the efficacy of the rite, Nirubahen Amīn n.d. published also an explanatory article: “What is your spiritual state after the ‘Gnan Ceremony’?” which is often consulted.
- 67 The dream was related to me in 2001. On the significance of dreams see A.M. Paṭel, in K.N. Shah 1983: 168: “A dream is the complete effect. There, ego being inactive, causes do not get implanted. ... You gain profusely more by seeing ‘Dada’ in a dream and seeking his assistance, than by seeing Him in person. This Dada is capable of doing everything in a dream! Yes, you must know what you want to ask for. Some of our Mahatmas see Dada in dream everyday. As the scriptures sing: Even in a dream who has ‘Darshan,’ Not shall his mind seek another vision. The ‘Darshan’ of the Gyani Purush even in the dream will put an end to all the other roving of the mind.”
- 68 Śrīmat Rājacandra claimed to have met a Jina in a previous life. See Flügel 2005: 210.
- 69 Salter 2001: 46-47 reported similar processes amongst the followers of Śrīmat Rājacandra: “It is believed that one self-realised person can accurately recognise another ... If they reach the belief that the *guru* is authentic they go on to become a disciple and hence enforce the *guru*’s status.” See also Dumont’s 1980: 282 statement that “in order to conceive of a personal Lord there must also be a believer who sees himself as an individual.”
- 70 The Śvetāmbaras believe the *tīrthāṅkara* Mallinātha was female.



- 71 See Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 61.
- 72 That is the body (A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Patel 1994: 4f.).
- 73 The precepts are only printed in a single small booklet (Amīn 1998) which contains all important ritual texts in Gujarātī. It is only given to *mahātmas*.
- 74 In the ritual literature of the Akram Vijñān Mārg the word *niścaya* is sometimes interpreted literally, as resolve or decision, i.e. the intention of completely surrendering the relative self to the real self (not philosophically, in terms of *niścaya naya*). Shifting interpretations such as this offer escape clauses against the arguments of sceptics. It is argued that the *jñān vidhi* merely conveys the energy or spiritual power for the resolve, not access towards transcendental perception itself.
- 75 See Schubring 1957: 569 for critical reflections on the possibility of the apocryphal interpretations of SS 141 which identify the *niścaya* point of view with the view of a spiritually advanced believer.
- 76 “Prakriti means Circumstantial Evidence. This, that goes on, is nothing but the puppet show of Prakriti. One dances or does anything as it makes him to, and yet he brags: ‘See, I dance! I renounce!’ Renunciation is possible, only if it is in one’s Prakriti” (A.M. Paṭel, in K.N. Shah 1983: 257). On the use of the metaphor of dance, well-known in Vaiṣṇavism, for the ambiguities generated by the two-truth theory in Digambara Jain literature see Bhatt 1994.
- 77 On complementary *karman* see for instance A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 20.
- 78 A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Patel 1994: 50.
- 79 Cf. SS 332-344.
- 80 In classical Jainism, the technical terms for bondage and stoppage are *bandha* and *saṃvara*. A.M. Paṭel occasionally employed these terms, but usually used Gujarātī equivalents.
- 81 Literally ‘filling.’
- 82 A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Patel 1994: 11. Bronkhorst 2003: 169 has shown that already the Ājīvikas must have believed that the real self does not act, and that karmic changes can only occur through rebirth. Yet, the Ājīvikas did not – like A.M. Paṭel’s ‘moderate fatalism’ (which rejects the concept of ‘untimely death,’ see N. Amīn, in R.M. Patel 1994: 54f.) – consider the possibility of changes and shortcuts in the karmically predetermined course of rebirths through ‘the path of introspection’ (*antaramukhī mārga*) (A.M. Paṭel, in N. Amin 2000a: 7).
- 83 Cf. Todarmal’s 1992: 174-76, 203f. critique of the Sāṃkhya view: “nothing is achieved by mere knowing. ... So long as one believes Prakruti to be the doer (of attachment, etc.) and the self as non-doer, why would then he try to reduce attachment, etc.?” (p. 176).

- 84 A.M. Paṭel, in K.N. Shah 1983: 230.
- 85 Classical Jainism categorises the different types of *karman* according to effect (*prakṛti*), duration (*stithi*), intensity (*rasa*) and quantity of space points occupied (*pradeśa*). Four principal types of bondage (*bandha*) of *karman* are distinguished: wrong belief (*mithyātva*), non-restraint (*avirati*), passion (*kaṣāya*), and activity (*yoga*). Starting with wrong belief, they should be eliminated one after the other to prevent further bondage. The effects of *karman* are of three types: (1) *bandha* - bondage, (2) *sattā* (*ābāhā*) - latency, (3) *udaya* (*prārabdha*) - realisation: (a) *udīranā* - premature fruition, (b) *saṃkrama* - transformation of one type of *karman* into another (Vij. 57b; TS 8.2): “Of one’s own accord one makes [karman] effective (*udīrei*) and one repents (*garahai*), checks (*saṃvarai*), suppresses (*uvasāmei*), experiences (*veei*) and annihilates (*nijjarei*) it by an effort of one’s own will (*vīriya*)” (Vij. 1.3.6 (56b), in Deleu 1970: 78). See also Glasenapp 1915: 20ff., 35-38, 42, 75.
- 86 N. Amīn, in R.M. Patel 1994: 56.
- 87 Practical rules that are given orally, for instance: “to look at everything only as a karmic result,” to “accept everything that happens,” “never misuse the power acquired through the *jñān vidhi* for worldly ends,” “never resolve to do anything intentionally (*saṅkalpa*),” “don’t be presumptuous of the form ‘if I \_\_\_\_\_,’” etc. For lists of practical advice see also A.M. Paṭel, in N. Amin 2000a: 17, 36.
- 88 A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Patel 1994: 73-6.
- 89 Ibid., p. 62.
- 90 At least ‘seventy-five percent’ of it (A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 74).
- 91 Cf. A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003b: 107f.
- 92 On the Jain rites of atonement see Caillat 1975.
- 93 The Akram Vijñān movement often uses popular metaphors such as ‘video-rewinding’ or ‘the cinema approach’ to *karman*, i.e. life as a film (A.M. Paṭel, in N. Amin 2000a: 33f.), for the reflective *anamnesis* as the following summary of Nīrubahen Amīn’s Telesatsang on the 23.7.2000 illustrates: “Every 15 to 30 minutes rewind and fast forward your inner video and if you miss this, then at the end of the day rewind the entire day’s video for 10 to 15 minutes. Our Godown is stuffed full. Let us resolve to clear it with the phenomenal Grace of Dada and all His Gnan material. Remove all vyavahaar aagrahs and the rest is all nikaal. ... Observance with awareness is the essence of Time and the state of the Self. Day’s events and agenda: Set in advance the 5 agnas and then proceed. Thereafter rewind and set review and reset. ... When you get engrossed ... get unentangled by video rewind and review. When you are reviewing you are the observer and therefore free. To rewind and reset is your Purusharth. To forget your Self is what you have brought with you. Observe this in samayik

am till eve ... watch whether your upayog was of the Self or not. Set 5 Agnas. Set your Self: I am Shuddhatma. Observe all events of File 1. Observe all events of food intake situations. Observe all events of speech, thoughts, acts of the whole day. Observe and separate acts of chit buddhi and discharge ego. Observe all work done for mahatmas and dada versus your selfish self. Observe your upayog during charan vidhi. . . . Is the reading merely an act or is there an upayoga? Observe the nature of this neighbour of yours. ...” (now defunct website).

- 94 Bruhn 1998: V.1 has argued that even in classical Jainism “– there is no distinct meditation technique (leading to concrete experiences or insights). ‘Meditation’ in Jainism means realization and internalization of important dogmatic subjects but even that is more implied than expressly stated.” Cf. Schubring 2000: 314.
- 95 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 77.
- 96 Some of the statements in Kundakunda’s *Samayasāra* are clearly the source of inspiration of A.M. Paṭel’s teachings: “That ignorant Self which makes non-self, self, and the Self non-Self, becomes *Kartā* or causal agent of those various *Karmas*. - That knowing Self which does not make non-self, self, and the Self, non-self, does not become the *Kartā* or causal agent of those various *Karmas*” (SS 92f., tr. Chakravarti 1989: 78f.; cf. Johnson 1995: 280). “The scripture is not knowledge, because scripture knows not anything. Therefore, the Jinās said that knowledge is entirely different from scripture” (SS 390, tr. Chakravarti 1989: 226; cf. Johnson 1995: 275). See also SS 152, 404, etc.
- 97 “As (self-) knowledge renounces all (mental) states (bhāva), knowing them to be other (than the self), so (self-) knowledge should be considered to be the real/definitive form of renunciation [*pratyākhyāna*]” (SS 34, tr. Johnson 1995: 288). Cf. the translation by Chakravarti 1989: 37f.
- 98 See Jaini 1979: 89, and Beck 1997: 91: “Overall, the developing Hindu devotional tradition strikes one with the forceful theme of utter dependence on grace alone for remission of sin, leaving aside completely all self-restorative rituals and penances.”
- 99 The *brāhmaṇical* practice of transacting *karman* or pollution to others, as recently discussed by authors such as Parry and others, is rejected as an impossibility by Jainism, Buddhism, and Hindu devotionalism. See Cort 2001: 111.
- 100 The *Gītā* is cited explicitly on the official website: [www.dadabhagwan.org/new/introduction/akaram-intro/eng/akaram-intro.html](http://www.dadabhagwan.org/new/introduction/akaram-intro/eng/akaram-intro.html)
- 101 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 2.
- 102 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

- 103 “If your wife who is normal and intelligent becomes insane all of a sudden, whom can we blame? She turns insane as the result of the timing for your own karma coming into fruition. So you should realize this and accept that it is your account. ... You have no choice but to experience them” (A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 39).
- 104 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 3. There are, therefore, no accidents in life, there is not even the possibility of an accidental death.
- 105 A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Patel 1994: 48.
- 106 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 31f. It is asserted for instance, on apparently purely casuistic grounds, that: “discord does not occur because of effect karma. It arises because of ignorance” (ibid., p. 47). See similar discussions in the same volume.
- 107 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 13.
- 108 “The process of killing is a karma effect and it has to be suffered [by the killer, P.F.]. One must accept the fruit of the karma, but if repentance is done whole-heartedly, then the new karma will become light” (A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 72f.).
- 109 Sometimes, after *ārati* rituals, one plate (*thāḷī*) is placed in front of the picture of ‘Dādā Bhagavān.’
- 110 This has also been noted by Garcia 2002.
- 111 A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Patel 1994: 63.
- 112 “An Enlightened Guru like Dada Bhagwan accepts all view-points, all of these are included in his vision. A Guru can be said to be sitting at the centre, while all the other religions are in the surroundings in search of the truth” (A.M. Paṭel, in N. Amin 2000a: 30).
- 113 “The Germans are in search for ‘Absolutism.’ They have carried away our sacred books and they have dedicated themselves to the search of ‘Absolutism.’ But it is not easy to find it. ... When ‘we’ go to Germany ‘we’ shall tell them we are the horn of plenty (*kalpa vriksha*), ask anything of us and you shall have it, because ‘we’ have personally come before you” (A.M. Paṭel, in Shah 1983: 10f.).
- 114 For an overview of modern variants, see Fuller 1992: 174-77.
- 115 See for instance Bennett’s 1993: 136f. critique. Dumont 1980: 282ff. and Fuller 1992: 157f. acknowledge the antinomian character of devotionalism. But both argue that though it may be antithetical to ‘Hinduism’ on the level of ideas (Dumont characterises devotion as an internalisation of renunciation though), it is not on the level of social practice, since it accommodates itself to ‘the caste system.’
- 116 Dumont 1980: 187, but see his earlier and more flexible formulation on p. 284 in the light of the theory of *bhakti* as a form of internalised renunciation.
- 117 For further evidence see the majority of the contributions in Dalmia et. al. 2003.

- 118 Bennett 1993: 66.
- 119 “Possessions” is the English translation used for *dravya karma* here.
- 120 Bennett 1993: 60.
- 121 Ibid., p. 43.
- 122 Love “that is constant is paramatma’s love (God’s love). It will subdue anyone. I for myself do not wish to subdue anyone, but they surrender to my love. It is revealed in the presence of *Gnani Purush*. This love is absolute and unconditional. The Gnani’s love is God’s love” (A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2000b: 25).
- 123 Bennett 1993: 89.
- 124 Ibid., p. 124.
- 125 Ibid., p. 196ff.
- 126 Ibid., p. 254.
- 127 For imports into Digambara Jain mysticism see Bhatt 1994: 447.
- 128 A.M. Paṭel, in R.M. Paṭel 1994: 49.
- 129 Bennett 1993: 90.
- 130 Bennett 1980: 97, cf. 87 analysed similar processes amongst the Puṣṭimārgīs in psychological terms: “Those who experience *bhava* are by definition divine souls (*daivijīva*) aware of their innate identity as fragments of Brahman. Their divinity is not a quality received from Krishna, rather this is through Krishna’s grace that inner divine qualities are made manifest.” “The *svarup* becomes an actual manifestation of Lord Krishna through the combined efforts of the guru and the devotee. Although the guru initiates the process of the transformation of a murti into a *svarup*, the full identity of the *svarup* is revealed only through the efforts of the *sevak*. .. the *sevak* projects emotions into the *svarup* with the result that the *svarup* develops a lively personality” (ibid., p. 89).
- 131 A.M. Paṭel, in K.N. Shah 1983: 21f. In the original Gujarātī, the phrasing of the last sentence is: *ā amārī vāt to tamāro ātmā ja kalūb kare. kāraṇ ke tamārī mahim̄ hum̄ ja bethlo chum̄, tame jo āḍāī nahīm̄ karo to! amne tamārā mām̄ ne amārā mām̄ bhed na hoy* (AV I: 16f.).
- 132 Bennett 1993: 85.
- 133 Monier Williams 1986: 1135. The meaning of *saccidānanda* is interpreted slightly different in various traditions. Vallabhācārya wrote: “From the joy-form of God came out the in-dwelling spirits which have in them all the three attributes of God, being (*sat*), consciousness (*citta*) and joy (*anand*). The *jīva* (individual souls) are without joy, and matter is without joy and consciousness” (in Pocock 1973: 110f.). The classical Jain tradition defines: *sat* = the six ‘eternal’ categories of being: *caitanya* (consciousness), *puḍgala* (matter), *kāla* (time), *ākāśa* (space), *dharmāstikaya* (medium of movement), *adharmāstikaya* (medium of rest); *citta* = *jñān* (knowledge) + *darśana* (perception); *ānanda* = happiness or bliss (cf. Jaini 1979: 97, 122).

- 134 Bennett 1993: 60, cf. 41. Another example of this dynamic of devotional worship is the following line from a poem of Devacandrasvāmī that was quoted by Rājacandra in letter 753: *jina pūjā re te nijapūjana*. “It means ‘worshipping the Jina (the conqueror) is worshipping yourself (your own pure soul).’ What he means is that by nature the soul of a Jina (or a siddha) and that of the aspirant are equal” (Pungaliya 1996: 290f.).
- 135 Cf. Bennett 1993: 67.
- 136 Amīn 1998: 7.
- 137 Ibid., p. 23.
- 138 Ibid., p. 35.
- 139 See also Dundas’ 1998: 43-46 comment on the putative ritual function of the Tantric Mūrtipūjaka *sūrimantra* which is meditated upon so that, according to one Mūrtipūjaka interpretation, “the meditating *sūri* [is] becoming Gautama” (ibid., p. 44), although others insist that the meditator merely becomes “‘like’ or ‘equal to’ (*tulya*) Gautama” (ibid.). For general observations of the conflation of *guru* and god in Jainism see Jaini 1979: 256 and Cort 2001: 114.
- 140 Ultimately, a pure soul may only be conceived as a separate entity if the term *ātmaśuddhi* figures prominently as well, as Richard Davis has argued in his study on the Śaiva Siddhānta (in Babb 1996: 182f.).
- 141 Dumont 1980: 282.
- 142 Nīrubahen Amīn is now targeting this audience. Two hundred and fifty Europeans participated in a *satsaṅg* in Spain in May 2004.
- 143 The issue of the absence of the divine in Jainism has been extensively (and controversially) discussed by Stevenson 1915/1984: 289-98.
- 144 A.M. Paṭel, in Amīn 2003a: 32.
- 145 Most of the ritual texts, with the exception of 1c, have been published in the pamphlet literature of the Akram Vijñān Mārg. The principal ritual manual and the main source for this appendix is N. Amīn 1998. The texts are here presented in the sequence of their ritual performance, not as printed. Section numbering and sub-headings have been inserted by the translator (P.F.). Section three, the ‘meditation on the self’ cum ‘foot worship,’ is a ritual text which should be read out every day. However, it is not exactly recited in its printed form during the *jñān vidhi*. The translation has been informed by English renditions published by the tradition itself.
- 146 The song was composed in 1970 by Candrakhand Navnī, a singer from Mumbai.
- 147 *bhāv karma*.
- 148 *no-karma*.
- 149 *dravya karma*.

- 150 *sambhāv*.
- 151 I.e., of the waves of desire.
- 152 *niścīt*.
- 153 *vyavasthīt*.
- 154 *darśan*.
- 155 *ātmā*.
- 156 *vyavahār*.
- 157 *niścay*.
- 158 *agocar*.
- 159 *akram*.
- 160 Jain Tīrthaṅkaras are included here in the category 'God.'
- 161 *saccidānand*.
- 162 *māyā*.
- 163 *bhāv karma*.
- 164 *dravya karma*.
- 165 *no-karma*.
- 166 The translation of is based on A. Patel's n.d.: 13-22 rendition of the *Nishchay Vyavahar Charan Vidhi* text.
- 167 Or: 'changeless' (*nirvikārī*).
- 168 *sahajānand*.
- 169 That is, the entire universe.
- 170 The Vedāntic term *nīdīdhyāsana*, profound and repeated meditation (Monier Williams 1986: 549), is explained by Kanu Paṭel's Aphorism No. 89, in J.P. Amīn Vol. 11 2003: 14: "To see the formless within the aspectral forms of a Live Liberated State is called *Nīdīdhyasan*, and when you see that, that seeing function is again formless because it is divine vision."
- 171 This famous formula of the Jain vow of renouncing violence (*sāmāyika*) is applied to all the listed misdeeds.
- 172 In classical Jainism, the eighteen states of sin (*pāpa sthāna*) are: 1. killing (*prāṇātīpāta*), 2. lying (*mṛṣāvāda*), 3. thieving (*adattādāna*), 4. unchastity (*maithuna*), 5. acquisitiveness (*parigraha*), 6. anger (*krodha*), 7. pride (*māna*), 8. deceit (*māyā*), 9. greed (*lobha*), 10. attachment (*rāga*), 11. hatred (*dveṣa*), 12. disputation (*kalaha*), 13. false accusation (*abhyākhyāna*), 14. backbiting (*paiśunya*), 15. denigration (*par-parivāda*), 16. elation and depression (*rati arati*), 17. deceitful speech (*māyā mṛṣā*), 18. false belief (*mithyā darśana śalya*). The first five sources of sin refer to the five Jain *aṇuvratas*, or small vows, and the next six to the principal passions, or *kaṣāyas*.

- 173 The classical Jain *mahāvratas* are: 1. non-injury (*ahiṃsā*), 2. truthfulness (*satya*), 3. not taking what is not given (*asteya*), 4. non-possession (*aparigraha*), 5. celibacy (*brahmacarya*). Only in the DVS 4.17 a sixth *mahāvrata* is mentioned: not eating after sunset (*rātri bhojana tyāga*). It is surprising that these Jain categories are mentioned in the text, because such vows are not regarded as important by the Akram Vijñān.
- 174 *ālocanā*, or confession.
- 175 The terminology and the phrasing of this section is derived from the formulae of the canonical *Āvaśyaka Sūtra* (*Āvaśyaka Nirjukti*) and the Jain *Pratikramaṇa Vidhi* texts.
- 176 The word *avyābādha* (from S. *a-vyava*) was explained by A. Paṭel n.d. as “I can never be hurt nor can I hurt others.”
- 177 *ṭaṅkotkīrṇ* (S. *ṭaṅka-ut-kīrṇa*), lit. ‘chisel-inscribed,’ here means ‘unerasable.’
- 178 Patel n.d. translates: “between the real and the relative.”
- 179 *jñānaputra*.
- 180 *jñānapitā*.
- 181 *ṭaṅkotkīrṇ*.
- 182 Patel n.d. translates “governed by an impartial precise energy called ‘vyavasthit.’”
- 183 *kalyāṇamūrti*.
- 184 *samakitadhārī*, *samakit* is a colloquial expression for S. *samyaktva*.
- 185 *mahātmā*.
- 186 *namaskār*.
- 187 *mahātmā*.
- 188 *samyak darśan*, right insight.
- 189 *abhedabhāv*.
- 190 The explanation in brackets has been given by A. Patel n.d., though ‘morning, midday, and evening’ could also have been intended.
- 191 *samatābhāv*.
- 192 *sphurāyāmān*, from S. *sphur*, to sping, burst, manifest, etc.
- 193 The word *kalyāṇ*, welfare, means is here understood as ‘spiritual welfare.’
- 194 *mokṣa*.
- 195 *syādvād*. Inserted by A. Paṭel n.d.: “(not to hurt another’s viewpoint).”
- 196 *upāsana*.
- 197 *mahant*. This term is uncommon in Jain literature but frequently used in Hindu contexts.



- 198 *ājñā*.
- 199 *bodhelo*.
- 200 *satsaṅg*.
- 201 *samyak jñān*.
- 202 *jāgrti*.
- 203 *dekhabhāl*. Translated by Patel n.d. as “stay the ‘Knower’ and ‘Seer.’”
- 204 *jay saccidānand*. The following instruction at the end of the printed text explains why the ritual is also called “foot worship” outside the context of the *jñān vidhi*: “(touch yourself with the big toes of your feet on your forehead connect the wire with the inner God in the form of infinite knowledge and say at least five times)” (Amīn 1998: 43).
- 205 The word *viññāna* is usually translated as “scientific” by the followers of the Akram Viññān Mārga.
- 206 A.M. Patel often used the English expression, though *niyamtā-vyavasthit śakti* can also be translated as “power of the systematic-regulator (god),” i.e. here “the power of natural law,” the law of *karman*.
- 207 The official translation is reproduced here because it is often cited in the congregation. An alternative translation would be: “Settle your accounts with impartiality.”