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Patron: Prof. R. G. Kothari

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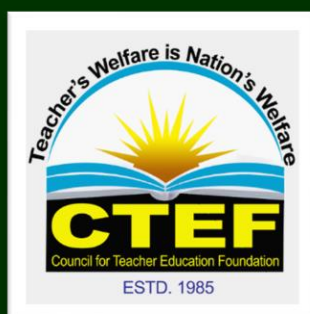
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Exploring The Fourteen Gunasthana: A Jain Approach to Value Education

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Abstract

Gunasthana “State of virtues” represents the progressive stages of spiritual development, illustrating the transformation of an individual from a state of ignorance to the state of enlightenment. The stages of Gunasthana are presented in the logical order which is decreasing Sinfulness to increasing purity. The gunasthana presents a holistic view of value education that emphasis on inner transformation and inculcation of virtues offering a unique perspective for educators and learners. The aim of this paper is to analyse the Jainism Spiritual path of fourteen Gunasthana, derive the essential virtues from the Jainism Spiritual path of fourteen Gunasthana and suggest value-based education as the Gunasthana stages. This paper reflects detailed description of each gunasthana’s Key characteristics and its teachings, it also brings to light how it can be applied in the modern value education and presents an exemplar of implementing the teachings of gunasthana in the daily life. In a Nutshell, the study examines each stage of spiritual path related to Jainism, elucidating how it maps the journey from a state of delusion to value inculcation like Honesty, respect, self-reliant, non-attachment, emotional control, empathy, reinforcing generosity, tolerance. Develops strong character traits on an individual like humility along with selflessness, wisdom and compassion. Hence by integrating these stages into value education, the students can be guided to develop holistic sense of responsibility, spiritual growth as well as prepares them to contribute positively to society.

Keywords: *Gunathastha, Virtues, Jainism, Value Education*

Introduction:

Value education, which aims to develop an individual's character and ethical integrity, is crucial for promoting social harmony and personal well-being. In this context, Jainism offers a rich, philosophical framework through the concept of the 14 Gunasthanas, a progressive model that outlines the stages of spiritual growth. The Gunasthanas represent a journey of inner transformation, designed to refine an individual's consciousness and bring about a greater understanding of ethical values such as Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) (Jain, 2014).

In Jain philosophy, the 14 Gunasthanas are not merely abstract ideas but are practical steps that guide the soul from a state of spiritual ignorance to the highest level of purity and liberation (Keating, 2004). Each stage represents a level of awareness, where an individual gradually discards ignorance and negative emotions such as anger, pride, deceit, and greed, while cultivating virtues. The progression from one stage to another is seen as a process of refining the soul, with each stage offering specific teachings on how to live a life in accordance with Jain values. These values are centered on compassion, truthfulness, and self-restraint, which are essential elements of Jain ethics (Tiwari, 2016).

The 14 Gunasthanas can be interpreted as a model for value education because they offer a detailed blueprint for moral and spiritual development. At its core, this approach encourages self-reflection and awareness of one's actions, thoughts, and intentions, guiding individuals toward a higher moral consciousness. Each stage serves as a checkpoint for an individual to evaluate their ethical growth, and through this process, one can embody values that transcend religious boundaries and contribute to a more compassionate society (Soni, 2008). For example, the first stages involve understanding the importance of non-violence in every thought, word, and deed, while the later stages emphasize the attainment of ultimate peace and liberation (Muni, 2011).

The practical application of the 14 Gunasthanas to value education can be transformative for individuals. By encouraging learners to adopt values such as humility, non-attachment, and truthfulness, Jain philosophy provides an ethical framework that encourages responsible living in a rapidly changing world (Mohan, 2015). As such, the Gunasthanas serve not only as a means of spiritual development but as a vital tool for cultivating moral integrity and social responsibility.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to revolutionize India's education system by emphasizing holistic development, critical thinking, and value-based learning. In the context of Jainism, the philosophical aspects of value education align well with the principles

outlined in NEP 2020, particularly with its focus on ethics, character development, and the nurturing of compassionate, responsible citizens. Moreover, Mainstream education often lacks holistic and ethically grounded models that emphasize inner transformation alongside social responsibility, resulting in value education that may be fragmented and disconnected from deep spiritual and ethical development. Additionally, many existing value education approaches fall short in being culturally inclusive, limiting their effectiveness in diverse, multicultural classroom.

The fourteen Gunasthanas from Jain philosophy offer a novel and comprehensive framework that integrates universal virtues such as non-violence (ahimsa), truthfulness (satya), and self-discipline (samyak charitra) in a progressive and practical manner adaptable to diverse educational contexts. This framework not only charts a spiritual path but also provides a detailed blueprint for character development, fostering moral integrity and social responsibility at every stage. Furthermore, the Gunasthanas align well with contemporary educational goals, such as those articulated in India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes holistic development, critical thinking, ethical consciousness, and compassionate citizenship. By integrating these principles into the curriculum through reflective practices, empathy-building activities, storytelling, and community engagement, education can nurture learners' ethical consciousness and promote social harmony across cultures. This integration addresses the gaps in current curricula by offering tools that foster inner growth and responsible societal participation, thereby establishing the unique contribution and relevance of Jain philosophical values in modern education.

Fourteen Gunathana a spiritual path of Jainism:

The fourteen Gunasthas includes Mithyadrsti Gunasthana where the Person are wrong believers, Sasvadana Samyagdrsti is the stage where the person has a slight taste of right belief, Misradrsti stage the person has a mixed belief, Anvirata Samyagdrasti a stage where a person has true belief but yet not self-disciplined, Desavirata a stage where the person has partial self- control, Pramatta samyatta is a stage where the person has completed self-discipline, sometimes however brought into wavering through negligence. Nivrtti Badra Samparaya is the stage where the person practices the process called Anivritti karma in whom Passion is still occurring, Anivritti Badra Samparaya stage where one practices the process of Anvritti Karna in whom passion is still occurring, Sukshma Sanparya is the stage where the person in whom the passion occurs in subtle form, Upasannta kaseya vitraga chadmasthna is the stage where a person is suppressed every passion but does not get into the process of

omnisciences, Ksina Kasaya Vitaraya Chadmasta is the stage where the person has annihilated every passion but yet not possess omniscience, Sayogi Kevalin is the stage where the person possesses omniscience and engages himself in activities and lastly ayogi kevalin where in the highest and the purest stage where the person obtains omnisciences and is free from all kinds of activities.

The stages are in logical order where the awakening stage includes 1st five stages of Gunasthana, the Developing right view and discipline stage includes 6th and 7th stage of Gunasthana, Developing self-discipline and knowledge includes the stages from 8th to 11th stages of Gunasthana and gaining absolute knowledge and bliss includes 12th to 14th stages of Gunasthana.

The virtues imbibed in Jain philosophical aspects:

The following are the values imbibed in Jain Philosophical aspects includes:

- a. **Samyag Darshana (Right Belief):** The first step involves developing a proper understanding of the universe and the soul, recognizing the reality of suffering, and acknowledging the path to liberation.
- b. **Samyag Jnana (Right Knowledge):** Acquiring knowledge of the scriptures and the teachings of Jain philosophy, as well as understanding the nature of karma, the soul, and the world.
- c. **Samyag Charitra (Right Conduct):** Practicing right actions according to Jain ethics, such as following the five great vows (Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha).
- d. **Virya (Energy or Effort):** Making a strong, conscious effort in one's spiritual practice and discipline.
- e. **Sattva (Purity):** Achieving mental, emotional, and physical purity by avoiding negative emotions and actions.
- f. **Daya (Compassion):** Cultivating compassion for all living beings and practicing non-violence in thought, speech, and action.
- g. **Kshama (Forgiveness):** Developing the ability to forgive others, thereby reducing anger and emotional turbulence.
- h. **Satya (Truthfulness):** Practicing honesty and integrity in all aspects of life.
- i. **Asteya (Non-stealing):** Avoiding theft or any form of taking what belongs to others.
- j. **Brahmacharya (Celibacy or Chastity):** Leading a life of self-control and refraining from indulgence in sensual pleasures.

- k. **Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness):** Renouncing attachment to material possessions and developing contentment with minimalism.
- l. **Tapa (Austerity or Self-discipline):** Engaging in physical and mental practices that promote discipline and purification, such as fasting or meditation.
- m. **Svadyaya (Self-study or Reflection):** Studying sacred texts, reflecting on one's actions, and meditating to deepen one's understanding and progress on the spiritual path.
- n. **Samadhi (Meditative Concentration or Enlightenment):** Reaching a state of perfect concentration, where the practitioner is free from distractions, achieving inner peace and enlightenment.

Karmic Bondages that obstruct the Gunasthanas from liberation:

In order to outreach liberation through the traveling various path of Gunasthana stages there are basically five significant karmic Bondages that obstruct the bhavyas to attain the highest level of Gunasthana which includes the following:

- a. **Mithyatva (Irrational Beliefs)-** it involves “False beliefs”. It cannot be easily defined as “indefinable”, “Non-existent” and something other than real which cannot be proved, produced by avidhya.
- b. **Avirati (Non-Restraint)-** Non-absentism is “not to protect the six kinds of living beings and not to exercise control on the five sense and mind. It includes the six classes of living beings like living with earth as their body, living with air as their body, living with water as their body, living with fire as the body and living with the vegetation kingdom.
- c. **Pramada (Carelessness)-**It refers to causes of bondages or negligence which has 15 types namely- Hearing four types of stories (of women/food, stealing), Four passions, Subject to sense organs, sleeping and affection. Indifference towards these activities causes flaws of negligence like carelessness (Samiti), three attitude of restraint (Gupti) and ten religious virtues (Dasalakshana).
- d. **Kashaya (Passions)-** There are four types of kashayas or passions that creates a karmic bondage which includes Krodha (Anger), Lobha(Greed), Mana(Ego) and Maya(Deceit).
- e. **Yoga (Activities of Mind, Speech and Body)-** It includes the actions or the activities that need to be pure in nature. Purity in relevance of thought, in speech, in body, while taking steps to move forward, in food accepted, in placing things in lying down and sitting.

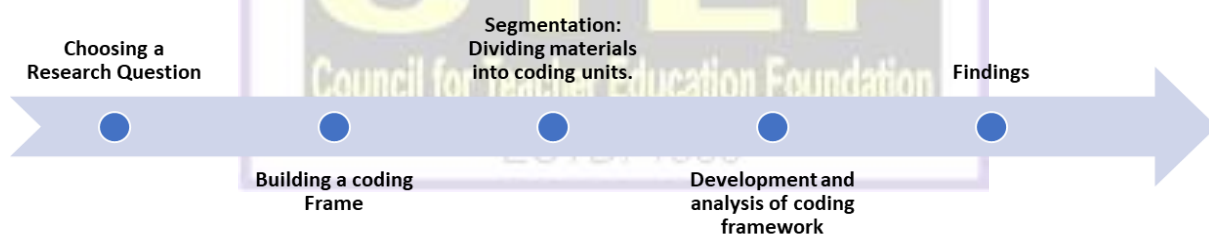
Objective of the study:

- a. To **analyse** the Jainism's spiritual path of fourteen Gunasthana and values imbibed

- b. To **derive the essential virtues** from Jainism's spiritual path of fourteen Gunasthana.
- c. To **suggest value-based education** model as per Jainism spiritual path of fourteen Gunasthana

Methodology:

This paper aims to investigate the extent to which the fourteen Gunasthanas in Jain philosophy can be interpreted and integrated as a structured framework for value-based education, with a particular focus on how each progressive spiritual stage embodies specific virtues such as right belief, right knowledge, right conduct, non-violence, truthfulness, non-possessiveness, self-discipline, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and equanimity that are relevant for contemporary educational aims. In examining the textual descriptions of the Gunasthanas and the value-education model proposed in this study, the analysis distinguishes between manifest content (the explicit statements about stages, karmic bondages, and named virtues) and latent content (the underlying assumptions about inner transformation, ethical maturation, and social responsibility conveyed through the progression from ignorance to liberation). The investigator adopts selected steps of qualitative content analysis as discussed by Krippendorff, Schreier, and Creswell & Poth, including the development of a theory-informed coding frame, segmentation of stage-wise descriptions into meaningful coding units, systematic coding of both manifest and latent value elements, and interpretive synthesis to derive an integrated Gunasthana-based framework for value education:



Choosing Research Questions:

In this study the investigator focuses on the following research question:

1. What key virtues are embedded in each Gunasthana stage?
2. How can these virtues be translated into the pedagogical aims, strategies and assessments in value education?

Building a coding frame:

A coding frame was developed that combined deductive (theory-driven) and inductive (data-driven) procedures. Deductively, initial top-level categories were derived from the conceptual foci of the study: (1) spiritual–philosophical elements (e.g. right belief, karmic bondage, spiritual stages), (2) virtues and values (e.g. ahimsa, satya, aparigraha, self-discipline, compassion, forgiveness), and (3) educational dimensions (e.g. cognitive development, emotional regulation, social skills, ethical reasoning, policy alignment). Inductively, as the Gunasthana descriptions and value-education texts were repeatedly read, new subcodes such as “inner transformation,” “self-reflection,” “detachment,” “equanimity,” “social harmony,” and “responsible citizenship” were added when they appeared consistently across the material.

Segmentation: Dividing materials into coding units:

According to Schreier (2012), segmenting material means dividing the content into units such that each unit fits into one category of the coding frame. For this study on the fourteen Gunasthanas and value-based education, the segmentation process is structured as follows:

- a. Units of Analysis: These refer to the complete descriptions of all fourteen Gunasthana stages as presented in the primary source texts. Each unit represents a comprehensive conceptual entity encompassing the key dimensions of a given stage—such as spiritual condition, karmic impediments, temporal span, defining characteristics, emerging virtues, and potential educational relevance.
- b. Units of Coding: These are the specific virtues description like practicing forgiveness and non-violence, Karmic obstructions like irrational beliefs, spiritual progression makers like true beliefs which is extracted from each Gunasthana description.
- c. Context Unit: It is the Gunasthaba description with philosophical integrity and textual boundaries containing all essential elements.

Development and Analysis of Coding frame:

The coding framework has been developed considering the coding units segmentation which includes the units of analysis, units of coding, and context units, systematically adapted to examine the fourteen Gunasthanas through the lens of value education components aligned with National education policy standards. Units of analysis comprise complete Gunasthana stage descriptions representing holistic spiritual progression, while units of coding capture specific virtue mentions (e.g., "forgiveness and Non-violence") mapped to ethical

competencies and context units provide surrounding philosophical narrative for accurate interpretation of latent ethical transformation from the stages of Gunasthana.

Gunasthāna Stage	Karmic Obstructions	Time Span	Spiritual Characteristics	Values Derived	Learner Stage	Developmental Features	Educational Strategies for Value Inculcation
1. Mithyādr̥ṣṭi	Mithyātvā, Avirati, Pramāda, Kaṣhāya, Yoga	Antar-muhūrta to Anādi-ananta	False belief; confusion between truth and illusion; beginners lacking spiritual discrimination	Right perception, awareness, basic moral clarity	Foundational Stage	Highly curious, self-centred, eager to question	Storytelling; dramatization; modelling right actions; helping children distinguish truth/falsehood
2. Sasvādāna Samyagdr̥ṣṭi	Pramāda, Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to 6 Avalis	Slight taste of right belief; occasional recollection of truth	Awareness, accountability, self-reflection	Foundational Stage	Confidence-building, learning from adults, early moral imitation	Repetition of simple moral instructions; positive reinforcement; relatable stories
3. Mīśradr̥ṣṭi	Pramāda, Kaṣhāya, Yoga	Antar-muhūrta	Mixed beliefs; curiosity emerges; partial acceptance of truth	Discretion, early detachment, moral judgment	Foundational Stage	Curiosity + growing reasoning capacity	Role-play, analysing simple right/wrong scenarios, interactive stories
4. Avirata Samyagdr̥ṣṭi	Pramāda, Kaṣhāya, Yoga	Antar-muhūrta to <33 Sāgaras	Right belief but lack of discipline; passions still dominant	Perseverance, forgiveness, non-violence	Foundational Stage	Child begins appreciating good in self & others	Stories of forgiveness; activities showcasing kindness and empathy
5. Deśavirata	Pramāda, Kaṣhāya, Yoga	Antar-muhūrta to 3 Antar-muhūrta	Partial self-control; some vows observed	Equanimity, mindfulness, self-control	Preparatory Stage	Concrete thinking; imitation; social awareness	Group discussions; peer-sharing activities; inspirational anecdotes
6. Pramatta Samyata	Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to Antar-muhūrta	Complete self-discipline; major vows undertaken	Ethical behaviour, understanding of self	Preparatory Stage	Social learning, developing reasoning	Life-lesson discussions; moral dilemmas; beginner-level self-regulation activities

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7. Aparamat ta Samyata	Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to Antar- muhūrt a	Self-control without negligence; high spiritual discipline	Critical and creative thinking; responsibi lity	Middle Stage	Peer acceptance, independen ce, higher awareness	Problem-solving tasks; leadership roles; collaborative activities
8. Nivṛtti Bādhra Samparāy a	Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to Antar- muhūrt a	Gross passions briefly appear; higher mental control	Selflessne ss, wisdom, inner illuminati on	Middle Stage	Critical thinking, sense of fairness	Reflective writing; meditation; service-learning
9. Anivṛtti Bādhra Samparāy a	Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to Antar- muhūrt a	Higher control over passions; deluding karma begins dissolving	Respect, harmony, dignity, gratitude, non- violence	Middle Stage	Emotional maturity, empathy emerging	Case studies; value-based discussions; nature appreciation activities
10. Sūkṣma Samparāy a	Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to Antar- muhūrt a	Passions suppressed except subtle attachment	Empathy, love, compassio n, appreciati on of diversity	Middle Stage	Heightened awareness of self and others	Community projects; teamwork activities; dialogues on diversity
11. Upaśānta Kaṣhāya Vītarāga	Kaṣhāya, Yoga	One instant to Antar- muhūrt a	Passions fully suppressed; no omniscience yet	Analytical ability, questionin g assumptio ns	Secondary Stage	Identity formation; deeper reasoning	Debate, reflective inquiry, group problem-solving
12. Kṣīṇa Kaṣhāya Vītarāga	Yoga	Antar- muhūrt a	All passions annihilated; omniscience manifests	Courtesy, humility, self- regulation, honesty	Secondary Stage	Search for meaning; emotional maturity	Role-modelling by teachers; ethical analysis of real-life scenarios
13. Sayoga Kevali	Yoga	Antar- muhūrt a to 8 yrs	Omniscience with activity; Arihant state	Non- violence, truth, non- possessive ness, equanimit y	Secondary Stage	Leadership mindset, social responsibili ty	Social issue debates; empathy exercises; value- based community action
14. Ayoga Kevali	Free from karmic bondage	Antar- muhūrt a	Siddha state; no body; pure liberated soul	Infinite knowledg e, eternal peace, pure equanimit y	Secondary Stage	High level of abstraction, philosophic al thinking	Meditation, philosophical inquiry, reflection on life purpose

Findings of the study:**The following are the findings of the study:**

1. **Karmic Reduction & Moral Growth Align:** As karmic obstructions reduce across Gunasthāna, learners show parallel growth in moral clarity, self-control, and reasoning.
2. **Values Evolve in Layers:** Virtues progress from basic ethics (kindness, honesty) → to regulation (equanimity, responsibility) → to higher virtues (compassion, humility, non-possessiveness).
3. **Spiritual Stages Match Educational Needs:** Each Gunasthāna naturally corresponds to age-appropriate teaching strategies, from storytelling for young children to inquiry-based learning for adolescents.
4. **Learner Traits Reflect Spiritual Characteristics:** Early stages show curiosity and confusion; middle stages show independence and fairness; advanced stages show deeper reflection—matching the soul's progression.
5. **Pedagogy Shifts from Teacher-Led to Learner-Led:** Teaching moves from modelling and reinforcement in early years to problem-solving, dialogue, and self-reflection in later years.
6. **Gunasthāna Provides a Holistic Framework:** The stages integrate moral, psychological, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions, offering a complete model for value education.
6. **Relevance of the Stages of Gunasthāna to Modern Theories of Education for Value Development:**

The developmental movement across the fourteen Gunasthānas closely aligns with modern theories of value education, showing that spiritual–ethical growth follows identifiable cognitive, emotional, and behavioural patterns. Early Gunasthāna stages, where learners grapple with confusion, imitation, and forming basic moral judgement, parallel Piaget's and Kohlberg's early moral reasoning levels, where children understand rules through authority and gradually begin to distinguish right from wrong using simple logic (Kohlberg, 1981). As the matrix shows, strategies like storytelling, repetition, and modelling match Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasises that children internalise values primarily through

observation of adults and reinforcement of positive actions (Bandura, 1977). Middle Gunasthāna stages highlight empathy, responsibility, and harmonious social relations, which connect strongly with Noddings' ethics of care, suggesting that value education works best when built on caring teacher–student relationships and emotional understanding (Noddings, 1984). Likewise, the emphasis on reflective thinking, problem-solving, and community engagement echoes Dewey's experiential learning, demonstrating that values are strengthened when learners actively participate in meaningful, real-life interactions rather than through passive instruction (Dewey, 1938). Finally, virtues such as self-regulation, compassion, mindfulness, and responsible action emerging in the higher stages align with contemporary Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks, which identify self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making as core competencies for holistic development (CASEL, 2020). Thus, the Gunasthāna framework not only mirrors but enriches modern educational theories by offering a culturally grounded, stage-wise pathway for nurturing values across the school years.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Fourteen Gunasthāna in Jainism serve as a profound guide for spiritual advancement and self-purification. These stages, encompassing several values like right belief, knowledge, conduct, and discipline, provide a comprehensive framework for practitioners to cultivate virtues such as compassion, humility, and self-control. By following this path, individuals can gradually transcend worldly attachments, overcome the cycle of birth and rebirth, and ultimately achieve liberation (moksha). The Gunasthāna are not merely theoretical ideals but practical steps that shape the lives of Jains, promoting peace, harmony, and spiritual growth in a world that often pulls us away from our true purpose. By integrating these principles into daily life, one can aspire to attain the highest spiritual goal, living a life of truth, non-violence, and deep introspection.

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