INTRODUCTION
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1. SALLEKHANĀ : RITUAL OF EMBRACING DEATH

Since time immemorial philosophers have been preoccupied with the problems concerning the nature and organization of this universe, the life of man on the earth, the relationship between man and the universe, the concept of God, the soul, life and the life after death, the nature of good and evil and a number of such riddles. The most feared problem that man has tried to probe is the inevitability of Death and the life after Death. Having realized that Death is inevitable, religions of this world have thought over the problem of facing death, what physical, psychological, intellectual and ethical preparations should be made to welcome Death and life after Death. Bhagavadgītā of Hindus has tried to interpret Death, as nothing but changing old clothes. The metaphor of body as an external clothing presupposes ātman that is immortal, and works as a solace for mankind. The vānaprasthāsrāma in Hindu religious system is in a way a preparation to welcome Death, psychologically and physically. However, no religious philosophy has dealt with the problem of embracing Death elaborately and with equipoise except Jainism. Sallekhanā in Jainism is a system evolved to welcome Death with mental equipoise, gradually purifying mind, shedding passions and ruining Karmic bondage and weakening of the body through regulated diet and fasting.

In this thesis, my effort is to study the system of sallekhanā from religious, philosophical and ethical points of view. My research in the
concept of *sallekhanā* is mainly carried out by the following works in Jaina canonical literature.

1. Śivārya (ācārya), Bhagyavati Ārādhana (1st cent. A.D.) : Ācāryaśrī Aparājit Śūri Racitā Vijayodayā Tīcā Tathā Tadanusaṁ Hīndī Tīcā Sahit (8th cent. A.D.)

2. Amitgati II (ācārya), Maranakaṇḍikā (993 – 1023 A.D.)

3. Samantabhodra (ācārya), Ratnakaranaṇḍa Śrāvakācāra (2nd cent. A.D.)

4. Vaṭṭaker (ācārya), Mulācāra (127 – 179 A.D)

5. Pt. Āśādhar (pt.), Sāgāra Dharmāmṛta (1173 – 1243 A.D.)

6. Umāsvāti (vācaka), Tattvārtha Sūtra (3rd cent. A.D.)

7. Vasunandi, Vasunandi Shravākaśa

   Besides, Śrāvakācāra Sangraha, Vols.I-V (1976-1978) edited by Hiralal Sastri contains canonical literature on *sallekhanā*. Some of them are as follows:


8. Rājamala (Pt.), "Lāṭi Samhitā" (1584 A.D.) Śrāvakācāra Sangraha III. (1977).


10. Abhradeva, "Vratodyotana Śrāvakācāra" Śrāvakācāra Sangraha III. (1977).


2. RECENT WORK DONE ON SALLEKHANĀ AND ITS EVALUATION:

It is also necessary to mention here the recent work done on sallekhana and evaluate it before undertaking further research. Here I would like to examine the following works briefly:

1. T.K.Tukol, Sallekhana Is Not Suicide (1976)


4. Revatī Doṣī, Ajitmaṭī Saḍhanā Smṛtiganadha (1992)

2.1 T.K. Tukol, in his work entitled *Sallekhana Is Not Suicide* (1976) has examined the concept of *sallekhana* comparing it with the forms of Voluntary Death in the religions other than Jainism. He defines *sallekhana* as follows:

"Sallekhana is facing death (by an ascetic or a householder) voluntarily when he is nearing his end and when normal life according to religion is not possible due to old age, incurable disease, severe famine etc., after subjugation of all passions and abandonment of all worldly attachments, by observance of austerities gradually abstaining from food and water, and by simultaneous meditation on the real nature of the Self until the soul parts from the body."

As the title suggests, Tukol's objective in this book is negative in nature, in that it goes to prove that *sallekhana* is not suicide. He does not deal with the nature and fear of Death. Besides, he does not elaborate on the philosophical aspects of *sallekhana* and its sub-rituals in *bhaktapratyākhyāna* and their interpretation.

2.2 *Mrtyu Mahotsva* edited by Nihālcanda Pāndyā (1995), is a compendium on *Sallekhana*, in Hindi, which contains commentaries on *sallekhana* in prose and poetic form, by great ācāryas and householders. These contributors are mentioned below:

1. Sadasukhdāsjī (Pt.), "Mrtyu Mahotsva"

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4. Deépcandaji (Pt.), "Samādhi Vārṇana"
5. Amṛtacandra (acarya), "Sallekhanādhrana Vyākhyaṇa"
6. Gumaniramaji (Pt.), "Samādhi – Maraṇa Svarūpa"
7. Deépcandaji (Pt.), "Samādhi Sāra"
9. Śrī Śivalalaji, "Samādhi Maraṇa"
10. Dhanatrayji, "Laghu Samādhi Maraṇa"
11. Śrī Śuracandaji, "Samādhi Maraṇa Bhāsā"
12. Śrī Budhajanaji, "Samādhi Sataka"
13. Śrī Deendyaluji, "Samādhi Deepaka"
14. Śrī Santa Caritra Sen, "Samādhi Darpaṇa", translated by Kamatā Prasad
15. Śrī Pyarelalji, "Param Samādhi"
16. Bhaiya Bhagavatidasji, "Vairāgya Caubisi"
17. "Samādhi Bhāvanā"
18. Śrīmatasakalkīrti, "Samādhimārpotsahā – Deepak"

Each of these articles in this compendium deals with several aspects of sallekhanā in a scattered manner. There are references to right occasions, rituals and discipline of sallekhanā. Some articles discuss the nature of kṣapaka, the austerity the kṣapaka must observe, the duties of niryāpaka. Articles like "Samādhivaraṇāna, Samādhi-Maraṇa Svarūpa", are descriptive in
nature, while a few others refer to the fear of death. These articles do not, however, look at sallekhana in a unified manner, giving it a foundation of religious philosophy.

2.3 S.Setter, in his work Pursuing Death (1990), refers to a number of works such as Bhagvatī Ārādhanā, Bhagvatī Sūtra, Ācārika Sūtra, Mulācāra, Ratanakaraṇḍa Śrāvakacāra, Sāgāra Dharamāṃta, Pravacanasāra, which form part of the canonical literature of Jainism. In this work Setter describes kinds of death and discusses rituals of bhaktaprātyākhyāna, ingini, prāyopagamana, samādhi, pañcapada, Ārādhanā and sanyasana maraṇa, all in the context of sallekhana. He also emphasises nisidhi, which is posture or place of mortification. Setter's account of sallekhana is, thus, more descriptive and historical rather than philosophical. He discusses satī and samādhi (sahagamaṇa death). ¹ (self immolation by a widow).

Along with this he cites the examples of ingini maraṇa² and prāyopagamana maraṇa, ³ which are embraced in Pañcamkāla* on the basis of nisidhi (which means a memorial). These types of death go against the

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1. S.Setter, Pursuing Death (Dharwad : Karnataka Uni. 1990), P.152.
2. S. Setter, op. cit. p.84
3. Ibid., pp. 103-04

* Pañcamkāla starts from 3 years, 8 months and 15 days after the death of Lord Mahavir (599 – 527 B.C.) quoted by Jnanamati Āryikā in her work entitled Jaina Bhāratī, 2nd ed.( Hastinapur (merath ) : Digambar Jain Triloka Sodha Samsthana, (1982) , p.40.
very essence of Jaina philosophy of sallekhanā because ingini and 
prayopagamana maraṇa are restricted to caturthakāla. Hence they are not 
practised in pāñcamkala. Besides, satī sahagamaṇa samādhi is not a part of 
Jaina canonical literature. It has no bearing on the concept of sallekhanā. The 
element of nisidhi discussed by Setter is strictly from historical point of 
view. He takes help of archaeological survey and epigraphical series in this 
aspect. Another work of Setter, Inviting Death (1986), also gives historical 
account of the holy deaths of Jaina monks, āryikās (nuns), śrāvakas 
(householders) and śrāvikās (housewives), practised on Candragiri (formerly 
called Kaṭavapra), a small hill at Śravana Belgola (Karnatak State) and other 
places in the same State. Here again Setter gives us historical account of 
deaths of renowned monks and householders who had embraced death. The 
information here is drawn from nisidhi records engraved on the rock-beds 
and from different archaeological and epigraphical series. Incidentally, he has 
reproduced here the philosophy of Kannada saint-poets like Ācaṇṇa, Āggalā, 
Bāhubalī, Guṇavarmanā, Mahābala. He makes a list of rituals viz. ārdhanā, 
pañcapada, sanyasana, sallekhanā, paṇḍita, and pauggamana ² appearing in 
the records of Śravana Belgola. All that we can say about Setter's 
contribution is that his two books are informative but they fall short of 
philosophy and ethical respect of sallekhanā.

2.4 Revati Doṣī, Ajitmati Sādhanā Smṛtigandha (1992)

This book describes in detail sallekhana vrata practised and completed by Ajitmati right from the stage of initiation to the final funeral ceremony. Revati Doṣī personally witnessed the whole procedure and maintained a diary, which forms part of the 354 page book, displaying photographs of the important rituals during the period of sallekhana. The work also includes interviews of āryikā Ajitmati recorded by the writer.

This book is an admirable account of the first hand experience of sallekhana procedure witnessed by the writer, and therefore a very valuable work illustrating an important Jaina tradition. However, like other works, it fails to explain the philosophy of death, the fear of death, and the philosophical and ethical aspects of sallekhana. It does not discuss how sallekhana is different from violent death such as self-immolation of a sati, or ātmahatyā committed by others by means of fire, water etc.

2.5 Ramescacandra Jain, ed. Sallekhana Darśana (1996)

This is another compendium on sallekhana, which includes 20 articles on different aspects of sallekhana contributed by renowned Jaina scholars.

The list of these articles is given below:

1. Muni Śrī Sudhāsāgarjī, "Sallekhana aura usakā Adhikārī"
2. Muni Śrī Sudhāsāgarjī, "Sallekhana ka Mahattva"
4. Śrī Jñānasāgarajī (ācārya), "Samādhimaraṇa"
5. Śrī Vidyānandajī (ācārya), "Sallekhana, Vītarāgta kī Kasautī"
6. Dr. Ramescandra Jain, "Mulāchāra mei Sallekhanā kā Svarūpa"

7. Dr. Šreyamskumar Jain, "Bhagvati Ārādhanā mei Pratipādita Samādhimaṇa"

8. Dr. Niśā, "Sallekhanā, Śivārya kī Drṣṭi meń"

9. Dr. Jaykumar Jain, "Tattvārtha Sūtra aurake Tikā Grantho mei Sallekhanā"

10. Dr. Ashok Kumar Jain, "Śrāvakācāro mei Sallekhanā kī Avadhāranā"

11. Dr. Kasturacanda 'Sumana', "Jaina Purāṇa Sāhitya mei Sallekhanā"

12. Dr. Sagarmal Jain, "Ardhamāgdhī Āgama Sāhitya mei Samādhimaṇana kī Avadhāranā"

13. Dr. Surendra Kumar Jain, "Sallekhanā Ātmagāta Nahiin Haiin"

14. Dr. Kasturcanda Kaslival, "Prācina Hindi Sāhitya mei Sallekhanā"

15. Dr. Srimati Urmilā Jain, "Anuprekṣā, Dhyāna evam Sallekhanā"

16. Dr. Suparśvākumar Jain, "Ratnatrayasvarūpā Mokṣamārga mei Sallekhanā kā Mahattva"

17. Seemā Jain, "Kṣapaka kā Ātmacintana"

18. Dr. Rameśacandra Jain, "Jaina Śilālekho mei Sallekhanā"


20. Jinedra Varṇī, "Sallekhanā : Sārdarśana, Pārdarśana, Ātmadarśana"

Even these articles are miscellaneous in nature and they do not relate Sallekhanā to its philosophical and moral implication. They discuss Sallekhanā mainly as it is depicted in Jaina canonical literature, commentary
works, Hindi sahitya and Purāṇa. Consequently, they do not look at sallekhanā in a unified manner. However, these articles discuss sallekhanā mainly as one of the last religious vrata of Jainism.

3. NATURE OF SALLEKHAṆĀ DEPICTED IN OTHER WORKS:


These books are translated by Hermann Jacobi. Gaina Sūtras, Part II (1989), mentions the longest duration of Sallekhanā (mortification) as twelve years, the middle duration one year and the shortest six months. He uses the term self-mortification for sallekhanā, which cannot do justice to this very complex religio-philosophical concept in Jainism. He also uses the term suicide to refer to sallekhanā in the translation of Jaina Sūtras Part I (1980), which again is very misleading. Jacobi describes two kinds of sallekhanā viz. bhaktapratyākhyāna maraṇa and ingini maraṇa, both for him are the instances of suicide.

5. Ibid., footnote, p.76.
It appears that *sallekhanā* is patently misunderstood or inadequately interpreted in the literature so far. M.G. Deshpande says:

"Curiously enough if one cannot resist passions and endure austerities, suicide is permitted by Jainism".1

Radhakrishnan notes:

"If asceticism is hard to practise, if we cannot resist our passions and endure austerities, suicide is permitted. It is sometimes argued that after twelve years of ascetic preparation one can kill himself, since *nirvāna* is assured." 2

The term 'suicide used by both Jacobi and M.G. Deshpande, and the verb 'kill' used by Radhakrishnan grossly misinterpret *sallekhanā*. *Sallekhanā*, which is all about endurance, conquest of passions and leading strictly ascetic life until the last phase is interpreted here as an escape from passions. In fact *śrāvaka* or *śrāvikā* has to purge himself or herself of all the passions and destroy the *karmic* bondage and stand the test of ascetic life. It involves to conquest of passions rather than embracing death because passions cannot be conquered.

4. FACTORS MOTIVATING THE RESEARCH:

The present research is motivated by the following considerations:

A. Jaina way of life prescribes several vrataś for the monks as well as householders. These vrataś are: five aṇuyvrataś, five mahāvrataś, three guptis, and five samitīś. Sallekhanā is the most important vrata among these because it finally leads to nirvāṇa. I feel that this concept in Jainism is unique and it must be studied and explained from different angles-social, philosophical, psychological, ethical and of course religious canonical.

B. Another factor which has necessitated this research is a lot of misunderstanding about sallekhanā that exists in the minds of the people of other religions and even some scholars as noted in 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 above.

C. Sallekhanā is also being confused with euthanasia, which is a very hotly discussed topic in India and other countries. It is necessary to establish that sallekhanā is totally different from suicide as well as euthanasia.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Limitations of the proposed research work are as follows:

1. I aim at studying only those forms of death related to sallekhanā viz. bhaktapratyākhyāna, ingiṇī and prāyopagamana maraṇa. Moreover, I propose to study other forms of voluntary death viz. 1. prāyopaveśana, 2. mahāprasthāna, 3. suicide and 4. euthanasia in comparison with sallekhanā.

2. Sallekhanā is being studied here from philosophical point of view. It proposes to take into account the religious philosophy of Jainism, as well as its social and psychological aspects.
3. Sallekhanā is about embracing death. Therefore, I aim at studying the concept of death depicted in medical science along with philosophy of death and fear of death considered in major religious philosophies.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The following methodology will be followed in carrying out this research:

1. A study of kṣapaka’s (the person undergoing sallekhanā) mind-set while accepting the sallekhanā vrata and its procedure, questionnaire and personal informal interviews of such persons.

2. A study of the role of niryāpaka (the person under whose guidance sallekhanā procedure is followed by a kṣapaka) through informal interview.

3. A case study of sallekhanā from its initiation to its completion.

4. Examination of sallekhanā procedure stated in the Jain canonical literature and the procedure being followed now-a-days.

5. A study of socio-cultural aspects of sallekhanā — through informal interviews with the members of the community, again through informal interviews or questionnaire.

A questionnaire, (a copy of which is given as an appendix), was prepared and sent to a number of people to ascertain their views about sallekhanā and some of its aspects. Out of 35 questionnaires sent to different people, 18 have responded to it. Four out of them are women and fourteen men.
I have drawn the following conclusions from the responses given by the subjects. It must be made clear here that the information gathered from the questionnaire has only limited significance for this research, because the intention behind it was only to get a layman's reaction to sallekhana and the general impressions about it among the common people.

1. Out of 18 subjects, who filled the questionnaire, 15 prefer death by sallekhana to natural death. Their reasons are religious or philosophical, motivated by the concept of mokṣa, peaceful death, death that occurs after relinquishing gradually all material possessions, passions and attachments.

2. Out of the 3, who accept natural death, one is a Hindu and has only academic interest in sallekhana. The other two think that sallekhana is not for ordinary or common man, who does not know how to abandon the body in a planned manner.

3. It can be seen from the questionnaires that only those who have read Jaina canonical literature of sallekhana, answer the technical questions such as inginī maraṇa or prāyopagamana maraṇa. Two of them say that this is 'Hunḍaka time', and as such these kinds of maraṇa though unusual now, are possible. While all others say that they are not possible in pañcamkala.

4. There appears to be unanimity about sati as ātmahatyā (suicide) and it is not at all acceptable to men as well as women. Besides, all of them agree that sati is not at all sallekhana.
5. Similarly about disposal of a dead body of a ksapaka, most seem to prefer burning it rather than allowing it to be thrown into the open space in a forest, to be picked by birds and beasts. One suggestion is to give it to the hospital for research and education. There is a readiness for change from the orthodox religious views.

6. Answering the question about the practice of sallekhanā, all of them agree that sallekhanā is not outdated or unscientific, except one respondent, (who is a Hindu), cannot say anything about it.

7. To the question why sallekhanā is not practised by people in general, though it is highest ritual of death to attain nirvāṇa, the commonest reasons given are:

   A. lack of knowledge of the canonical religious literature,

   B. fear of death, absence of proper religious guides

   C. the 'grhastha' (householder) does not take sallekhanā, only the munis.

One respondent has suggested that the knowledge of sallekhanā should be made available in all the modern languages (including European languages) so that people will come to know that there is a better alternative in voluntary deaths.

8. Those who have knowledge of sallekhanā have acquired it from the Jaina canonical literature. The books most referred to by them are:

   a. Ratnakarapāḍa śrāvakācāra

   b. Maranakapḍikā
9. Out of 18 people responded to the questionnaire, 11 have actually observed \textit{sallekhanā} taken by others, while 7 have functioned as \textit{niryāpakācārya} to guide the \textit{kṣapaka}s in their \textit{sallekhanā}.

10. The responses given by the subjects also show that they make a difference between \textit{sallekhanā} and other types of death such as euthanasia, etc. Secondly, they (except the one who is not a Jaina), believe that \textit{sallekhanā} has advantages in terms of the achievement of utmost religious blessings.

During informal interviews and discussions, the same questions as they appear in the questionnaire were asked. The opinions and views expressed there are the same as summarised above.

In this research, while examining the concept of \textit{sallekhanā}, I have followed inductive-deductive as well as speculative and dialectic method. I have studied the relevant Jaina canonical literature on \textit{sallekhanā}, and tried to corroborate it with the actual practice of it in the past as well as now. Jadunath Sinha, in his work entitled \textit{A History of Indian Philosophy}, Vol.I (1956) defines philosophical method as follows:

"The philosophical method is neither pure deduction from self-evident axioms or assumed truths, nor pure induction from particular facts observed. It is inductive-deductive, speculative and dialectic."\footnote{1. Jadunath Sinha, \textit{A History of Indian Philosophy}, Vol.I (Calcutta : Sinhna Publishing House, 1956), p.455.}
Bearing this in mind, I have interviewed people, referred to various critical materials on the concept of sallekhana by a variety of scholars, ascertained the views of the common people about it. My findings and conclusions are based on all these factors. Yet I am aware of the limitations of this research. Sallekhana is a delicate concept since it involves asceticism and gradual renunciation of everything, with the final abandonment of the body. Those who actually undergo sallekhana do not talk about it. They are not available for examination of their psychological aspect. The relatives of such people do not objectively answer the questions put to them. One has to speculate on the mental and material aspects of sallekhana, as it is being practised. I have interviewed niryāpakācāryas to surmount this difficulty. I was lucky in getting an interview of one ksapaka in Delhi (acārya Vidyānanda) whose sallekhana has begun and will go on for some years. It is said to have a duration of twelve years.

7. HYPOTHESIS:

After my preliminary examination of the problem, I start this study with the following assumptions about sallekhana:

1. Sallekhana is basically a religious-philosophical approach to death. It is a way of life in death.

2. Hermann Jacobi, M.G.Deshpande and Radhakrishnan believe sallekhana to be an instance of suicide, which is not true.

3. Sallekhana is also not euthanasia, which is a form of voluntary death but has totally different dimensions.
4. *Sallekhana* is neither *prāyopaveśana*, nor *mahāprasthāna*, which are forms of voluntary death in Vaidic religion.

5. *Sallekhana* is a practical approach to the fear of Death.

6. *Sallekhana* has its basis in the philosophy of life, which recognises inevitability of death and suggests how to embrace it peacefully and with mental equipoise.

8. **SCHEME OF THE PROPOSED CHAPTERS**:

The first chapter of the proposed work aims at studying the nature of *sallekhana*, which is divided into sections one and two. The first section, in turn, is divided into three parts. The first part studies the ways of well-being of the Self according to Jaina philosophy in which *samyagdārśana* (right belief), *samyagyātana* (right knowledge), *samyagcārita* (right conduct), five *aṃuvrata* (partial vows), five *mahāvrata* (complete vows), three *gupti*, five *samiti*, seven *sīlavrata*, the importance of developing asceticism and leaving body in peace are studied and discussed at length.

The second part of the first section assesses *sallekhana* as an ideal ritual of leaving body and introduces the types of *sallekhana* viz. *bhaktapratyākhyāna*, *inginī* and *prāyopagamana maraṇa*. Additionally, the same part puts forth the criteria of a person who desires to observe *sallekhana*. The third part of the first section introduces minimum and maximum durations of *sallekhana* along with their respective occasions.

Section two, of the first chapter, aims at discussing the role of *niryāpakācārya*, which helps the *kṣapaka* in establishing his equipoise,
practising meditation and if he goes astray from the religious path how to bring him back to the right path. Moreover, this section studies the relationship between kṣapaka and niṛyāpaka.

The second chapter aims at studying three main sub-types of pandita maraṇa viz. 1. Bhaktapratyākhyāna, 2. ingini and 3. prāyopagamana maraṇa, which are actually three ritual forms of sallekhanā. This chapter is also divided into two sections. Section one deals with savicāra bhaktapratyākhyāna, which consists of forty sub-rituals starting from arha adhikāra (ritual) to vijahanā (disposing of the dead body of the kṣapaka). These forty rituals are classified under four different heads viz. 1. preliminary preparation of bhaktapratyākhyāna, 2. intermediary preparation of bhaktapratyākhyāna, 3. final preparation of bhaktapratyākhyāna and, 4. ritual after breathing out. The section two aims at studying avicāra bhaktapratyākhyāna, ingini and prāyopagamana maraṇa with their sub-types.

The third chapter throws light on the kinds of sallekhanā from austerity point of view viz. kāya (external) and kaṣāya (internal) sallekhanā with their respective significance. Besides, this chapter throws light on the characteristics of sallekhanā in detail.

The fourth chapter throws light on the nature of suicide and euthanasia, which are the forms of non-religious voluntary death. Here the endeavour is made to compare the characteristics of a suicidal person, with that of the
characteristics of the ksapaka. Besides, it studies whether sallekhanā is suicide or not.

Moreover, this chapter aims at studying two legal aspects viz. 'Living Will', and 'Durable Power of Attorney' of euthanasia. Finally, sallekhanā is compared with euthanasia to look for similarities and differences.

The fifth chapter aims at studying the examples of 20th century saints, nuns and householders who have embraced death by sallekhanā. Finally, this chapter compares the reactions from the survivors of the deceased who committed suicide with those who practised sallekhanā.

The sixth chapter is divided into section one, two and three. Section one aims at studying the forms of voluntary death considered under the religions other than Jainism. Moreover, this section compares sallekhanā with mahāprasthāna and prāyopaveśana to show its real nature.


The seventh chapter forms a conclusion of the thesis and its findings.