

Sant Sri Sevalal's Principles for a Peaceful Life

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Abstract

Indigenous ethical traditions offer powerful ways to address modern challenges, including peace, justice, and sustainability. Sant Sri Sevalal, a respected spiritual leader among the Banjara people, established moral principles to promote peace, equality, self-control, environmental stewardship, and respect for everyone. This study examines the principles underpinning Sevalal's vision for peaceful coexistence and how they can advance gender equality, environmental protection, and moral leadership. It examines Sevalal's 21 precepts of moral principles with respect to honesty, nonviolence, acceptance of others, respect for women, care for nature, clear thinking, and social duty. The article employs a qualitative, interpretive approach, drawing on secondary sources and academic literature, to situate Sevalal's teachings within broader discussions of indigenous ethics, peace, and sustainability. The research suggests that Sevalal's ideas provide a comprehensive and practical moral framework for addressing today's conflicts, inequalities, environmental damage, and moral decline.

Keywords: Sant Sri Sevalal, tribal ethics, living in peace, nonviolence, social harmony, environmental ethics

1. Introduction

In a rapidly changing world of economic shifts, social inequality, environmental challenges, and moral uncertainty, the search for a path to peaceful living is more crucial than ever. Indigenous wisdom and tribal principles are underutilised, despite their significance in shaping sustainable peace. These systems influence individual behaviour, relationships with others, and interactions with nature. In this context, Sevalal's teachings assume particular significance.

Sant Sri Sevalal served as a spiritual and moral leader of the Banjara, a disadvantaged, nomadic tribe in India. His teachings emphasised personal development, environmental care, and spiritual and community upliftment. Unlike organised religion, his philosophy shaped daily actions, family relationships, community connections, and attitudes toward nature.

This paper carefully examines Sevalal's ideas on living in harmony as a single moral framework. It shows that his teachings include compassion, honesty, equality, respect for women, reason, environmental care, and nonviolence. The study connects Sevalal's ideas to current academic discussions on peace, indigenous ethics, and sustainability, demonstrating their continued relevance.

Violence, inequality, moral decline, and environmental crises hinder social harmony. Indigenous ethics offer alternative routes to peace and sustainability, building on collective wisdom (Bétéille, 2012; Gadgil & Guha, 1995). Sevalal's teachings are significant within this context. Sant Sri Sevalal guided the Banjara community in ethical living, equal treatment, and respect for nature. His teachings extend beyond rituals, serving as everyday principles for life. This dissertation presents his ideas as a systematic foundation for peace and development today.

2. Conceptual Framework: Ethics, Spirituality, and Social Order

The ethical principles cover morality, honesty, nonviolence, personal discipline, and respect for others. Spiritual philosophy emphasises the interdependence of humanity and nature. Social order encompasses social responsibility, respect for gender roles, equality, and community harmony. Sen (2009) notes that Sevalal's philosophy integrates these elements for peaceful living.

Sevalal's philosophy emphasises honesty, nonviolence, discipline, refraining from actions that harm others, and living with respect. These traits tell people how to act and help them become better people. According to Sharma (2006), moral character is what makes society work and people aware.

Being fair, treating everyone equally, being friends, respecting your elders, and being honest in your conversations are all part of social ethics. These values are intended to foster collaboration, prevent conflict, and ensure that everyone feels welcome. Most of what Sevalal teaches is about gender ethics. For moral progress and stability, it is important to respect women, have self-control in relationships, and respect family life.

Ecological ethics say we should use natural resources wisely, conserve water, protect living things, and keep forests healthy. These ideas derive from indigenous perspectives on human dependence on nature. These parts comprise a comprehensive moral framework aligned with both traditional indigenous values and modern ideas of sustainable living (Sharma, 2006).

3. Review of Literature

Research shows that indigenous moral traditions are crucial for maintaining balance in society and the environment. Gadgil and Guha (1995) say that tribal communities often live in ways that protect the environment because they believe it is the right thing to do, not because the law requires it. Bêteille (2012) says that tribal moral systems prioritise the well-being of the group, giving back, and social solidarity.

There has been extensive study of nonviolence as a means of changing society. Gandhi (1960) said that Ahimsa was both a moral principle and a means of changing society. Johansen (1979) demonstrated that nonviolent methods of conflict resolution and peacebuilding are effective. There has been much discussion in both moral philosophy and social theory about the importance of honesty and integrity. According to Rawls (1971), trust and fairness are the most important things for a just society. Sen (2009) also connected moral reasoning to the worth and capacity of individuals.

People believe that treating women with respect and adhering to gender ethics are essential for social harmony and progress. Nussbaum (2000) says that gender equality is necessary for moral and human growth. Environmental ethics stress the duty to protect forests and water so that future generations can have equal opportunities (UNESCO, 2019). There has been extensive research on these topics, but little direct academic research on the teachings of Sant Sri Sevalal. This study seeks to fill this gap by placing his ideas within well-known moral and social frameworks.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to examine the moral and intellectual foundations of Sant Sri Sevalal's ideas regarding a peaceful life. To find out how honesty, nonviolence, and moral discipline might help people get along with each other. To see how Sevalal's teachings stress the importance of treating everyone equally, not discriminating, and being a brother. To examine gender ethics, particularly the treatment of women and the moral standards governing interpersonal relationships. To look at the parts of Sevalal's worldview that have to do with the environment, like protecting forests and saving water, and Sevalal's ideas about building peace and sustainable development are still useful in present today scenario.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the main moral and intellectual ideas that Sant Sri Sevalal's rules for living in harmony are based on?
- 2) How do values like honesty, nonviolence, and moral discipline help people get along and settle their differences?
- 3) How does Sevalal's work talk about treating everyone equally, not being mean to others, and being a brother?
- 4) What does Sant Sri Sevalal's moral code say about how to treat women and deal with gender issues?
- 5) What environmental values are included in Sevalal's emphasis on saving water and protecting forests?
- 6) How useful are Sant Sri Sevalal's ideas in today's conversations about building peace, protecting the environment, and making society more fair?

Bhagwan Sant Sri Sevalal Maharaj was born on Monday, 15th February 1739. His parents, Bheema Naik and Dharmini Bai, belonged to the Rathod clan and Ramavath Gotra. During their nomadic life, while trading cargo

on bullocks, the family settled around the fort in Gutti in the Anantapur district of the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh. Sevalal was the eldest child of Bheema Nayak. Their tanda was located at the foot of Chowdewari Hill, situated between Guttikota and Ramachandrakonda. Sant Sevalal never married and ate only vegetarian food. He advocated against superstition and addressed it, and he preached 21 principles of the Banjara community life. The Banjara community prays to Sant Sri Sevalal Maharaj for the protection of their livestock and the cure of illness. On the 15th of February, all Banjara community members worldwide perform Maha Bhog Bandaro, offering jaggery and pancake rice with ghee (Lal, 2016).

Banjaras have a unique culture of their own and play an important role in Indian culture. Their lifestyle is unique and has nothing in common with either the population of plain areas or with local tribes, such as the Banjara, Lambadi, Sugali, or Lambani, in different parts of India. They speak a dialect known as Gor Boli, which has no script and is a mix of Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati (Lal, 2016).

5. Methodology and Data Sources

The study uses a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive framework to examine Sant Sri Sevalal's ideas for a peaceful life. This method is great for learning about ethical philosophies, indigenous knowledge systems, and value-based frameworks when understanding the ideas is more important than measuring them.

The study is based primarily on secondary data, such as Biographies, oral histories, and written narratives about Sant Sri Sevalal. Books and journal articles that other experts have read and are about tribal ethics, peace studies, and native beliefs. Reports by government agencies and other groups on tribal culture, intercultural relations, and environmental stewardship. Writings from the past and the present about social justice, nonviolence, and taking care of the environment.

We can use thematic analysis to put Sevalal's ideas into four groups: ethical, social, gender, and ecological. Interpretive analysis examines these ideas within major theoretical frameworks, including indigenous ethics, Gandhian nonviolence, human rights discourse, and sustainable development. We use comparative contextualisation to demonstrate that Sevalal's teachings remain relevant today.

6. Results of the Study

A qualitative study of Sant Sri Sevalal's ideas yields several noteworthy insights. They are Practice non-violence to solve social problems, Speak the truth, Uphold ethics and values, Refrain from stealing others' property, Avoid speaking ill of others, Avoid harming others, Respect your parents, Respect women, Treat everyone equally without discrimination, Protect forests and the environment, Pray to the Goddess, Love humanity, Befriend your fellow beings, Abstain from alcohol, Protect water and help those who are thirsty, Reject and avoid superstitions, Help poor people, Avoid illegal relationships with other women, Live with dignity, Respect elders, Maintain brotherhood.

These precepts are broadly categorised into: Ethical Foundations of Peaceful Living; Social Harmony and Interpersonal Ethics; Gender Ethics and Moral Discipline; Lifestyle Discipline and Social Responsibility; Ecological Ethics and Environmental Stewardship; Rationality, Spirituality, and Social Welfare.

6.1 Ethical Foundations of Peaceful Living

Nonviolence as a Social Solution: Nonviolence (Ahimsa) is a central component of Indian moral philosophy and the ideal of peace (Gandhi, 1960). Sevalal believed that violence was bad for people and wrong. His emphasis on patience, forgiveness, and talking is similar to conflict-resolution methods that stress peaceful change (Johansen, 1979).

Honesty and Moral Integrity: When people are honest, they trust each other and do the right thing in society. Ethical theorists argue that honesty helps maintain institutions and relationships (Rawls, 1971). This theory is supported by Sevalal's focus on truth, which shows that people need to be honest with one another to get along.

Respect for Property, Values, and Ethics: Respecting others' property demonstrates care for their work and dignity. In tribal moral economies, ownership is more about social duty than about acquiring more material goods (Polanyi, 1957). Sevalal's condemnation of robbery shows that fairness and happiness are important moral values.

6.2 Social Harmony and Interpersonal Ethics

Responsible Speech and Non-Harm: Language has a big effect on people. Hurtful speech keeps conflict and the breakdown of society going (Habermas, 1984). Sevalal's focus on careful speech underscores the importance of having moral conversations.

Equality and Non-Discrimination: Sevalal's stance against discrimination aligns with contemporary human rights principles that call for equality and respect for all (United Nations, 1948). His teachings are against caste-based systems and social inequality. They call for fairness and inclusion.

Brotherhood, Friendship, and Living Together: Communitarian ethics emphasise working together and interdependence more than individualism (Etzioni, 1993). Sevalal's call for brotherhood and friendliness exemplifies this communitarian ideal, fostering a sense of connection among people.

6.3 Gender Ethics and Moral Discipline

Respect for Women: In moral communities, it is very important to honour women. Feminist scholars argue that gender justice is important for social peace (Nussbaum, 2000). Sevalal is a moral thinker who is ahead of his time because he puts women's safety and dignity above all else.

Moral Limits in Relationships: People must be morally disciplined for families to remain together and for people to trust one another (Durkheim, 1897). Sevalal's advice on how to behave well in relationships indicates that he prioritises social peace over patriarchal control.

6.4 Lifestyle Discipline and Social Responsibility

Not drinking: People who abuse drugs and alcohol are often poor, violent at home, and have health problems (WHO, 2018). Sevalal's refusal to drink demonstrates that he understands the effects of alcohol on people and the economy.

Living with Dignity and Respecting Elders: According to Sen (2009), doing the right thing and working hard give you dignity. Respect for older people helps preserve cultural knowledge and pass it down from generation to generation. This is a key idea in anthropological studies of tribal cultures (Bose, 2001).

6.5 Ecological Ethics and Environmental Stewardship

Protecting Forests and Nature: Indigenous environmental ethics hold that we should live in harmony with nature rather than attempt to control it (Gadgil & Guha, 1995). Sevalal's call to protect the woods aligns with modern environmental values and actions that are beneficial in the long run.

Water Conservation and Humanitarian Responsibility: Water ethics are increasingly important for human rights and the environment (UNESCO, 2019). Sevalal's promise to protect water and help people who are thirsty demonstrates his concern for the environment and for others.

6.6 Rationality, Spirituality, and Social Welfare

Rejecting Superstitions: People who unquestioningly believe in superstitions are often afraid and hinder societal progress. Rational thought strengthens individuals and promotes their advancement (Ambedkar, 2014). Sevalal's focus on rational belief indicates a modern view of right and wrong.

Compassion for the Poor: Theories of social justice emphasise sharing, caring, and inclusivity (Rawls, 1971). Sevalal's desire to help those who are less fortunate strengthens moral duties to people outside of one's immediate circle.

Love and devotion for all people: Sevalal thought that devotion meant serving all people. This fits with ethical humanism and spirituality, which stress the importance of service (Schweitzer, 1952).

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6.8 Present Day Relevance

Sevalal's ideas align with modern global frameworks that promote peace, protect the environment, advance gender equality, and support sustainable development. His lessons demonstrate that traditional moral systems remain highly useful in contemporary discussions of ethics and policy.

7. Discussion

The results show that Sant Sri Sevalal's teachings constitute a moral philosophy, not just a bunch of disconnected moral rules. His focus on nonviolence aligns with Gandhi's ideas about peace (Gandhi, 1960), and his support for equality aligns with modern human rights values (United Nations, 1948).

His teachings on the environment align with contemporary ideas of sustainability, which prioritise environmental stewardship and responsibility to future generations (Gadgil & Guha, 1995). Sevalal's rejection of superstition

and focus on moral reasoning are important because they show a kind of rationalism that is not always present in depictions of tribal spirituality.

8. Suggestions and Conclusion

As part of peace studies and value-based education, teach about the ideas of Sant Sri Sevalal.

Apply ethical frameworks relevant to the field when working on community development and environmental projects. Encourage real-world research on how people use Sevalal's teachings in their daily lives. Encourage participants to record their findings on tribal moral ideas.

Sant Sri Sevalal's rules for living in peace provide a comprehensive, enduring moral framework that encompasses personal ethics, social justice, respect for gender, environmental stewardship, and intellectual spirituality. His teachings are timeless and apply to everyone. They can help us address problems such as violence, unfairness, environmental destruction, and moral decline in today's world. Recognising and using these indigenous ideas can improve academic debate and help build peaceful, long-lasting societies.

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