

Who is a
Saint?



*Answers and Spiritual Insights
through the Namaskāra Mantra*

Upādhyāya Rishi Praveen

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By saluting the virtuous, the seeker becomes drawn to their virtues, aspires for those virtues within himself, and as a result, slowly begins to develop those ideals in his life. Ultimately, the seeker transforms into whatever he seeks...the spiritual non-difference which only devotion can bring.

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Why this Book?

Publisher's Note

Every morning, when I recite the Namaskāra Mantra, I pay obeisance to all the saints. It is a mantra of reverence to all types of saintly beings. The fifth line of this mantra “namo loe savva sāhūṇaṃ” specifically means, **“I bow down to all the sādhus in this world.”**

I have grown up seeing sādhus during their wanderings. I have seen them come home for gocarī (seeking food as alms), heard their discourses, and also worked with them in publishing books and doing social work. But, can I really know a sādhu by his attire or his wooden bowls? Can external objects suffice as proof of inner saintliness? No. A sādhu is not worshipped for his external garb or appearance, but for his virtues. He follows a rigorous way of life to attain the qualities of contentment and non-possession, and to maintain equanimity amidst all kinds of situations, favourable or unfavourable.

But we also often hear about fake God-men. We read stories of their deception; we see them being held captive. Whenever such untowardly events take place, a large number of their followers become disappointed and disillusioned. Many become angry and agitated. Who they thought was a spiritual guru, a saint, turned out to be someone else!

Before people buy a product, they try to find out if it is genuine and of good quality. They do not blindly believe what the advertisements show. But when they accept someone as their

spiritual guru, they do so blindly without really knowing if he is a true saint.

Can such mistakes be avoided? What if there was a guidebook to help identify a venerable saint, a spiritual guru, irrespective of caste, creed and religion? This is what this book is all about.

The ancient Jaina texts describe the qualities of those who are on the spiritual path. These qualities become a way of life; it is these qualities that are worthy of reverence. This book explores the spiritual journey from the foundational stage of sādhu to the ultimate stage of siddha.

I am deeply indebted to Upādhyāya Shri Rishi Praveen for sharing his invaluable insights during the making of this book. His explanation of the Namaskāra Mantra as a model of the five-dimensional saint provided a strong base for this book.

I am thankful to Dr Pratibha Jain for penning my thoughts and exploring them further in creating this book. I appreciate her patience and dedication through the many discussions we had while writing this manuscript. I am thankful to my family: sons Prasan and Vinodh; daughters-in-law Nirmala and Kala; grandsons Pramod and Pratik; granddaughters-in-law Shraddha and Meghna; granddaughters Payal and Palak; grandson-in-law Rishabji Kanunga; and my great-grandson Sharav.

I hope this book serves as a simple guide to readers seeking gurus and spiritual role models who can lead them on the path of peace and universal harmony.

N. Sugalchand Jain

Trustee, Jainsindia Trust

Mentor, Sugal Group, Chennai



How this book evolved

Compiler's Note

Over the years, I have had the good fortune of enjoying many interesting conversations with Shri Sugalchandji. He is willing to share his own life experiences and remembers the good days and the not-so-good days with equanimity, always looking at what he learnt from those times. Above all, he is genuinely interested in inculcating the right set of values in the youth of today so that they do not lose themselves in indulgences.

During one such conversation, Sugalchandji said that if we could find a way to identify the right gurus, it would make all the difference to our lives. In this world where outward appearances are given much importance, we are losing sight of the things that can bring us real joy. A guru can help us choose the right things and walk the right path. Sugalchandji emphasized the qualities of a sādhu as described in Namaskāra Mantra. He stated that although we recite this mantra daily, we may not understand the qualities of saintly beings represented in the mantra.

That conversation laid the foundation for creating an outline of this book. At that juncture, I felt that we had not yet discovered the real depth of what the book could offer. We needed guidance to proceed. On an impulse, I travelled to Shimoga to speak with Gurudev Upādhyāya Rishi Praveen who was stationed there for a few days during his vihāra.

As always, Gurudev gave fresh insights and shifted the focus of the book. So far, the focus was on venerating the five kinds

of saintly beings mentioned in the Namaskāra Mantra. Gurudev pointed out that they were also five dimensions of saintliness. By reflecting upon them, we get an insight into the evolution of a saint. Most importantly, a spiritual practitioner can follow this process to touch his inner saintliness.

Under Gurudev's compassionate and insightful guidance, the Namaskāra Mantra, which was a mantra of reverence, became a mantra of inspiration. Worship turned into so much more: it became a tool, a mirror to look within. For all of this, and more, my deepest gratitude to Gurudev.

I am grateful to Shri Sugalchandji for the wonderful opportunity to write this book. I am also thankful to my team: Prasiddha Rama Rao for help with writing through the various stages of the manuscript; Ruchika Toshniwal for design and layout; Aruna Vayuvegula for brainstorming at all stages; Meera Srikant and Nisha Nahar for editorial assistance; and Pritee Bafna for help with typing and translation of Prakrit terms.

On the personal front, I am thankful to my father Shri Dulichand Jain for inculcating in me the joy of reading, writing and reflecting; and my husband Mahendar Chordia and daughter Manasvi for their love and support.

I apologize for any errors I may have inadvertently committed, despite my sincere efforts.

Pratibha Jain



SECTION ONE

SETTING THE STAGE



Bowing down before your role models and spiritual guides is an expression of reverence. This reverence emerges as a natural song of the soul, free of any bargains, exchanges, or compromises.

. 1 .

Introduction

Author's Note

I still remember how enchanted I was when I met my guru, Pūjya Ācārya Anand Rishiji, for the first time. I was all of ten; a naughty young boy engrossed in pranks and friends. My parents were religious and tried their best to instil religious values in me, but I was too young to comprehend the idea of divinity. Yet, I was drawn to this person clad in white, to his saintly look and compassionate gaze.

My guru had an aura which drew everyone in unconditionally. Soon after, I joined him and there was no looking back. In 1974, when I turned 16, he initiated me into becoming a sādhu. Every step of the way, I experienced his gentle guidance. Even now, he lives in every breath of mine. I am fortunate I found him – a genuine guru, a sincere sādhu, and a true saint.

When Pratibha Jain showed me the outline of this book, I was drawn to the title, “Who is a Saint?” The possibility of attaining sainthood is not limited by age, gender, class, caste or faith. Saintliness is a quality which can be embraced by anyone at any age, at any stage of life. Its traits are kindness, contentment and peacefulness. In a nutshell, a saint is one who uses his wisdom to choose spiritual gain over material gain.

A model of saintliness

We can study the concept of saintliness from many perspectives. One time-tested and successful way of understanding saintliness is seen in the Namaskāra Mantra. It is a five-dimensional model of spiritual growth. The roadmap begins with the dimension of sādhu and culminates in the dimension of siddha – the ultimate state of liberation for any soul. The Jaina scriptures are replete with stories of great souls who followed this path and attained liberation.

Immediately, a question arises: does one have to renounce the world and become a sādhu to attain liberation? No, not necessarily. A householder can also walk the spiritual path. But, while a householder has to take care of his family and worldly life, a sādhu is free of worldly bondages. He can dedicate his total energy to his spiritual goals. In many ways, the ascetic life facilitates the spiritual path. It is built on a strong foundation of powerful vows, namely non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession.

However, even a sādhu's life comes with its challenges. He still strives to be free of the four kaṣāyas of anger, pride, deceit and greed. He has to use his inner strength to attain victory over the senses, mind, passions and perversions, just like everybody else. His journey is to go inwards as much as possible, to work on passions with each passing day, and to find peace and divinity within.

Although a sādhu may spend hours studying scriptures and observing external austerities, these actions cannot offer any guarantee that he will be able to attain the inner quality of sādhutvā (saintliness). For this, he has to internalize the knowledge so that it becomes part of his conduct. He has to practice austerities externally and internally so that he attains

purity in body, mind and speech. Therefore, it is possible for one person to renounce the world but not become a true sādhu, and for another not to renounce, yet be a genuine sādhu at heart.

In the same way, every dimension of saintliness in the Namaskāra Mantra can be attained only by a genuine pursuit and complete dedication.

Namaskāra Mantra

A universal mantra from the Jaina tradition¹, the Namaskāra Mantra is anibaddha, meaning eternal and uncreated. It has nine padas (lines, steps) of which the first five are a veneration to five dimensions of saintly beings. Each dimension also represents a certain stage of spiritual progress. The last four padas describe the auspicious benefit of reciting this mantra.

The most unique feature of this mantra is its emphasis on **guṇa pūjā**, meaning veneration or worship of qualities. It guides us to draw inspiration from those qualities which lead to purity and perfection, and which make people worthy of reverence. There is no mention of any specific person, religion, god or goddess; not even Mahāvīra or any other tīrthānkara. Any individual who attains the qualities of saintliness is worthy of reverence. Thus, it truly lends itself to being a universal prayer.

¹ We find a reference to the Namaskāra Mantra in many ancient Jaina texts. It is the opening mantra in the Āvaśyaka Sūtra: the first sūtra contains the first five padas and the second sūtra contains the last four padas. This mantra also finds a mention in other texts such as Bhagavatī Sūtra and Kalpa Sūtra. The Namaskāra Mantra is also known by other names such as Navakāra Mantra (mantra of nine lines), Namokāra Mantra (meaning mantra of obeisance), or Pañca Parameṣṭhī Mantra (meaning mantra of the five venerables).

Each pada of the Namaskāra Mantra is significant because of the qualities that lead spiritual seekers to that stage, irrespective of tradition, caste, creed, colour, country, culture or sect. As a result, infinite arihantas, siddhas, ācāryas, upādhyāyas and sādhus are revered by uttering the Namaskāra Mantra. What a grand gesture and expansive feeling! What a beautiful picture this paints about the shift from the individual to the universal!

I hope that this book helps you on your spiritual journey. As you utter the Namaskāra Mantra, may you experience undying faith in all the great saints who have crossed the sea of attachment and aversion. By using that faith to boost your spiritual energy, you can bring all sorrows to an end, and find the key to bliss.

Titthayarā tava pasīyantu, siddhā siddhiṃ tava disantu.

May tīrthaṅkaras bestow blessings upon you, may siddhas bestow success upon you.

Rishi Praveen



.2.

Namaskāra Mantra

Sūtra

नमो अरिहंताणं	namo arihantāṇaṃ
नमो सिद्धाणं	namo siddhāṇaṃ
नमो आयरियाणं	namo āyariyāṇaṃ
नमो उवज्झायाणं	namo uvajjhāyāṇaṃ
नमो लोए सव्वसाहूणं	namo loe savva sāhūṇaṃ
एसो पंच णमोक्कारो	eso pañca namokkāro
सव्व-पावप्पणासणो	savva pāva ppaṇāsaṇo
मंगलाणं च सव्वेसिं	maṅgalāṇaṃ ca savvesiṃ
पढमं हवइ मंगलं	paḍhamaṃ havai maṅgalaṃ

Meaning

I bow down to the arihantas:
spiritual victors and perfect human beings.

I bow down to the siddhas:
liberated souls.

I bow down to the ācāryas:
administrators and heads of religious order.

I bow down to all the upādhyāyas:
preceptors of the religious order.

I bow down to all the sādhus
(and sādhvīs) in the world.

This fivefold obeisance annihilates all sins,
and among all that is auspicious,
is supreme as the most auspicious.

Word meaning

namo arihantāṇaṃ	I bow to arihantas
namo siddhāṇaṃ	I bow to siddhas
namo āyariyāṇaṃ	I bow to ācāryas
namo uvajjhāyāṇaṃ	I bow to upādhyāyas
namo	I bow to
loe	in this universe
savva	all
sāhūṇaṃ	sādhus
eso pañca	this fivefold
namokkāro	obeisance
savva pāva	all sins
ppaṇāsaṇo	annihilate
maṅgalāṇaṃ	auspicious
ca savvesiṃ	and among all
paḍhamaṃ	supreme
havaī maṅgalaṃ	is auspicious



SECTION TWO

SAINTS IN THE NAMASKĀRA MANTRA



The Namaskāra Mantra is a mantra of obeisance to qualities. When we recite “namo arihantāṇaṃ”, we are not bowing to any individual, but to that dimension which is devoid of any perversion or passion. So also, when we pay obeisance to siddhas, we are bowing down to the qualities which have led to their liberation. Similarly, the ācāryas, upādhyāyas and sādhus mentioned in Namaskāra Mantra are revered as embodiments of non-violence and truth. We revere them not for their individual name or form, but for their saintliness.

.3.

Five Dimensions of a Saint

Every living being negotiates the cycle of birth and death over innumerable lifetimes, experiencing pleasure and pain along the way. The vast majority of people equate a successful life with the accumulation of material possessions which bring pleasure, however fleeting. Even the value of relationships is measured by material gains. Most of them are trapped in an endless loop of fulfilling their cravings, thus only prolonging their suffering.

There are however, countless souls who break out of this loop and transcend the cycle of birth and death. By looking beyond worldly pleasures and searching for a deeper meaning of life, they embrace a spiritual path which leads them to true fulfillment and eternal freedom. Buddha and Mahāvīra are shining examples that this is possible. They were both princes who gave up luxuries of the world to pursue something far more precious – the liberation of their souls.

How can you move from the first group to the second? How can you stop meandering through this world and embark on the path of liberation? How can you acquire the qualities required for this journey? The first step is to develop an interest and belief in the existence of the soul. With this, the direction of your journey will start changing. Rather than continuing your outward search, you will begin to turn inwards, seeking the ultimate truth. As you get more and more engrossed in discovering your true nature, you will distance yourself from worldly dispositions, gradually

finding freedom from all forms of passions, indulgences and suffering.

The Jaina path to liberation

The Jaina philosophy offers a five-dimensional spiritual model to liberation, rooted in renunciation. It begins with a seeker renouncing the material world, thus taking on the role of a sādhu, and culminates in the dimension of the liberated siddha. In between the sādhu and siddha are the dimensions of upādhyāya, ācārya and arihanta.

Each of these five dimensions are revered as saints in the first five padas of Namaskāra Mantra, the daily prayer of Jainas. They can be divided into two categories: the **ascetics** who are progressing on their spiritual journey, and the **jinas**, meaning victors, who have achieved their spiritual goal.

Jainism does not believe in a supreme power or any almighty God. Any individual can attain enlightenment with his spiritual endeavour, touch the highest state of divinity, and become a jina, also known as kevalī (omniscient).

The first two padas of the mantra comprise the jinas:

1. Arihantas: Perfect human beings who have attained infinite knowledge and enlightenment.
2. Siddhas: Liberated souls who have conquered the cycle of birth and death, and no longer live in this world.

The last three padas comprise the ascetics:

3. Ācāryas: Administrators and heads of the saṅgha (religious order).
4. Upādhyāyas: Preceptors of the saṅgha.
5. Sādhus: Those who observe the ascetic way of life.

Collectively, these five dimensions are known as Pañca Parameṣṭhī, meaning five supreme venerables.

The inner state of saintliness

How can we recognize these five dimensions of a saint? When a sādḥaka (spiritual practitioner) renounces the world, we start identifying him as a sādhu. The ācāryas and upādhyāyas are chosen from among the sādhus. The upādhyāyas are the preceptors while the ācāryas are heads of the ascetic sects. We distinguish between them accordingly.

But, the real question is: when does the inner self attain the true state of sādhu? When does it attain the true state of upādhyāya or ācārya? So also, when does the inner self become an arihanta or a siddha? How does the soul attain these dimensions?

In order to attain each dimension, the soul needs to acquire a specific set of qualities and a certain state of spiritual progress. As the soul evolves from one dimension to the next, it acquires new qualities while strengthening previously acquired qualities. Thus, it is a journey of integration of qualities.

Assimilating the five dimensions

As a soul evolves, it adds higher spiritual dimensions to its existence. In this five-dimensional model, the sādḥaka (spiritual practitioner) first endeavours to acquire the qualities of **sādhu**. In the next dimension, he furthers his spiritual practices to assimilate the qualities of **upādhyāya**, and then of **ācārya**.

Whether the title of upādhyāya or ācārya is bestowed upon a sādhu or not, he must continue to pursue the qualities of those dimensions. For this journey is not about any external title; it is the inner journey of the soul.

As the journey progresses, the soul becomes free of its internal enemies and achieves a state devoid of passions – this is the

dimension of **arihanta**. An arihanta continues to live in this world but is no longer bound by it. At the end of his life, the arihanta becomes free of the cycle of birth and death, and attains the liberated state of **siddha**. Thus, the soul completes its evolution with the attainment of all five dimensions of saintliness.

The qualities needed for spiritual growth are not instantly attainable. Each sādḥaka has to fight a long and lone battle with the perversions of his mind. It is unrealistic to expect that as soon as one becomes a sādhu, he is able to observe the principles of truth, non-violence and chastity completely and unconditionally.

For any sādḥaka, it takes several lifetimes to acquire all these qualities. At any stage, whatever is learnt rests within the soul and is not lost when that particular lifetime comes to an end. Each person goes through this journey at his own pace. Therefore, all souls are at different stages of spiritual evolution. This difference is what makes each one unique, right from birth. No wonder then, some acquire knowledge more easily than others, some have a natural affinity for quietness and calm, some are more detached, and so on.

Each spiritual quality must be seen as a continuum. It is neither fully present nor fully absent in any person. A human being is not completely violent or completely non-violent, not completely attached or completely detached. With practice, a sādḥaka becomes more and more non-violent, more and more truthful, more and more detached, and so on.

Thus, this book serves a dual purpose. It sheds light on the five dimensions of saintliness as seen in the Namaskāra Mantra. It also shows how a sādḥaka can develop his inner saintliness by acquiring the qualities of the five dimensions. There are also overlapping qualities among these dimensions. Some of the qualities of ācārya are already listed under the qualities of a

sādhu while some qualities of siddha are already attained in the stage of arihanta. This is because these qualities get strengthened and build on each other from stage to stage.

To build a logical flow which is easy to follow, we will now explore each of the five padas² of Namaskāra Mantra according to the stages of spiritual progress. Starting with the foundational pada of the sādhu, we will then move on to upādhyāya and ācārya, then to arihanta, and finally siddha.



²There is a difference among the different Jaina sects regarding the qualities of saintly beings of the five padas. In this book, we have included the qualities propounded by the Śvētāmbara tradition from the Āvaśyaka Sūtra except for the 12 qualities of arihanta which are from the Aupapātika Sūtra.



***Is it necessary to renounce to
attain liberation?***

No, renunciation is not the only path to liberation. There are instances in the scriptures where householders have attained liberation. Whether a person is married, unmarried or an ascetic, the spiritual path is open to all. In a nutshell, this path means following the five vows of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness; and embracing the three jewels of true faith, true knowledge and true conduct. Anyone can undertake these practices at any stage of life and embark on the path of saintliness.

.4.

Sādhu

The Renunciate

Who is a sādhu? A sādhu (spiritual practitioner) who becomes engrossed in the sādhanā (spiritual practices) of the soul. The Jaina texts state, “sādhanoti mokṣamārgamiti sādhu³”, meaning one who undertakes sādhanā on the path of liberation is a sādhu.

The dimension of sādhu is of great importance for he is the first traveller on the spiritual path of complete restraint (sarva virati). In many religious systems, becoming a sādhu is considered a lofty goal. Men and women can undertake renunciation through a formal process of initiation.

A sādhu is one who is rich with the inner quality of sādhutvā (saintliness) which is devoid of anger, deceit and violence, and bestows peace and equanimity upon those who take refuge in it. A sādhu represents gentleness, nobility, purity, amicability, humility and equanimity. Any person with these qualities is worthy of reverence irrespective of the spiritual path or practices he or she follows. Sādhus are highly venerated and their blessings are sought by people for healing, absolution and purification.

When a person becomes a sādhu, he undertakes a lifelong

³ Hiralal's Saptasmarāṇi, pg 4

commitment to walk the spiritual path. He may sometimes stumble and go astray; hence, he has to be mindful every step of the way. It is on this path that he evolves through the respective positions of sādhu, upādhyāya, ācārya and arihanta, finally attaining the liberated position of siddha.

The Jaina scriptures mention twenty-seven qualities to describe a sādhu. One is not automatically endowed with these virtues the moment he renounces the world to walk the spiritual path. These virtues are what a sādhu gradually attains through disciplined practice of several vows and observations, and constant self-reflection.

The twenty-seven qualities of a sādhu are:

Observing major vows (mahāvratā) - pg 54

1. Non-violence (ahiṃsā)
2. Truth (satya)
3. Non-stealing (acaurya)
4. Celibacy (brahmacarya)

Restraining the senses (indriya viṣaya nigraha) - pg 62

6. Touch (sparśa)
7. Taste (rasana)
8. Smell (ghrāṇa)
9. Vision (cakśu)
10. Hearing (śrotra)

Restraining the passions (kaṣāya nigraha) - pg 65

11. Anger (krodha)
12. Pride (māna)
13. Deceit (māyā)
14. Greed (lobha)

Purity in all spheres (yoga satya) - pg 70

15. Emotion (bhāva satya)

16. Timeliness in activities (karaṇa satya)

17. Union of mind, body, speech (yoga satya)

Some practices for spirituality

18. Forgiveness (kṣamā) - pg 78

19. Desire for liberation (saṃvega) - pg 81

Exercising three restraints (gupti) - pg 68

20. Mind (mana)

21. Speech (vacana)

22. Body (kāya)

Three jewels of liberation (ratnatraya) - pg 72

23. True faith (samyak darśana)

24. True knowledge (samyak jñāna)

25. True conduct (samyak cāritra)

Victory over obstacles and death

26. Victory over obstacles (pariṣaha jaya) - pg 83

27. Art of dying (sallekhanā santhārā) - pg 90





***How can we acquire the qualities
of upādhyāya?***

An upādhyāya is a position bestowed upon a sādhu who has nurtured the knowledge assimilating quality of his soul. Because of his dedication to learning and teaching, he is revered by all. The same applies to every spiritual seeker. He must study the sacred texts, listen to discourses, and enhance his knowledge in every way. One who does that acquires the qualities of an upādhyāya, irrespective of his position.

.5.

Upādhyāya

The Knowledge Giver

In the Jaina saṅgha, the title of upādhyāya is bestowed upon a sādhu who has acquired complete knowledge of the Jaina scriptures and philosophical systems. “Upa” means near, and “adhyāya” means to study, which means one who goes closer to the knowledge of the soul. The ancient texts describe the upādhyāya as a lamp which lights other lamps with the flame of knowledge.

The upādhyāya focuses on the knowledge assimilating qualities of the soul. He spends his time in scriptural study and imparts this knowledge to other ascetics and laypeople. He does not simply study or memorize the Āgamas (sacred texts) but applies their teachings into practice.

For any seeker, it is the light of knowledge that illuminates his path. Knowledge endows him with the ability to discriminate right from wrong, and good from bad. It is important for an upādhyāya to have a broad spectrum of knowledge and understanding of various view-points so that he can guide people from different spheres of life. From the preachings of the upādhyāya, other sādhas understand their duties and regulate their lives by practising what is desirable and avoiding what is undesirable.

The upādhyāya is devoted to the religion of the Jinas, and is serene, compassionate, kind and friendly. He does not feel proud of his knowledge, does not criticize others, does not gossip, has control over the senses, and is mindful of whatever he does. In the absence of an ācārya, the upādhyāya takes on the responsibility of leading the saṅgha.

In addition to the qualities of a sādhu mentioned in the previous chapter, there are twenty-five qualities pertaining to knowledge of the Āgamas which define an upādhyāya. The Āgamas are an encyclopaedia of knowledge on various topics such as ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, cosmology, science, biology, environment and psychology. They also teach the conduct and lifestyle of an ideal householder as well as an ideal ascetic. The solution to any problem of life can be found in the Āgamas. Gautama Svāmī, the prime disciple of Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra, asked innumerable questions on various topics and Mahāvīra's responses to his queries are documented in the Āgamas.

The twenty-five qualities of an upādhyāya are:

Knowledge of 11 Aṅga Āgamas: these canonical texts contain the preaching of Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Ācāraṅga | 7. Upāsakadaśāṅga |
| 2. Sūtrakṛtāṅga | 8. Antakṛddaśāṅga |
| 3. Sthānāṅga | 9. Anuttaraupapātika |
| 4. Samavāyāṅga | 10. Praśna Vyākaraṇa |
| 5. Vyākhyāprajñapti | 11. Vipāka |
| 6. Jñātādharmakathā | |

Knowledge of 12 Upāṅgas: these texts provide insights into the Aṅga Āgamas.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 12. Aupapātika | 15. Prajñāpanā |
| 13. Rājapraśnīya | 16. Jambūdvīpaprajñapti |
| 14. Jīvajīvābhigama | 17. Candraprajñapti |

18. Sūryaprajñapti

19. Nirayavaḷī

20. Kalpāvataṃsikā

21. Puṣṭikā

22. Puṣṭacūlikā

23. Vṛṣṇidaśā

Knowledge of Caraṇa Sattarī

24. Pertain to general rules of conduct which are observed by sādhus for life.⁴

Knowledge of Karaṇa Sattarī

25. Pertain to specific rules of conduct which are observed by sādhus at specific times.⁵



⁴ Seventy general rules: 5 primary vows; 10 forms of dharma; 17 forms of self-control (saṃyama); 10 services to sādhus (vaiyāvṛtṭya); 9 fences of celibacy; 3 jewels of vision, knowledge and conduct; 12 austerities; and 4 passions.

⁵ Seventy specific rules: 4 kinds of bodily purification; 5 vigilances (samiti); 12 meditations; 12 steps of spiritual progress (pratimā); 5 kinds of sense control; 25 types of inspection (pratilekhana); 3 restraints (guṭti); and 4 kinds of resolutions (abhigraha).



Since an ācārya shoulders the leadership of the saṅgha, how does he nurture his own spiritual growth?

The life of an ācārya is one of great responsibility towards the saṅgha. As much as he is responsible for the wellbeing of the saṅgha, he is also responsible for his own spiritual growth. He does this by being the chief preceptor of his own soul through right conduct, austerity, self-discipline and equanimity.

·6·

Ācārya

The Guiding Force

The Jaina saṅgha is a fourfold religious congregation known as the caturvidha saṅgha, comprising of monks (sādhus), nuns (sādhvīs), laymen (śrāvakas) and laywomen (śrāvikās). In the saṅgha, the title of “ācārya” is bestowed upon a sādhu who has the qualities to lead the saṅgha. The complete responsibility and administration of the saṅgha fall on the shoulders of the ācārya.

The ācārya rules the saṅgha for the governance of religion. His position is not one of authority, but for developing the spiritual life of all sādhakas. He guides the evolution of each sādha, thereby enabling the entire saṅgha to progress. He does not stray from the path, nor does he allow anyone else to.

If a householder or sādhu strays from the path of restraint or appropriate conduct, it falls upon the ācārya to guide him back to the true path, and to purify his soul by giving him worthy atonement. The ācārya is the physician and healer of every sādha’s soul. He also oversees religious activities such as sāmāyika and pratikramaṇa to ensure they are performed diligently. Thus, the ācārya uses his mental, verbal and physical abilities properly to engage in spiritual activities without a moment of laziness.

In addition to the qualities of a sādhu and upādhyāya mentioned in the previous chapters, there are thirty-six qualities which

describe an ācārya. Though many of the qualities of an ācārya have already been listed under the qualities of a sādhu, a distinguishing feature of ācārya is observing the pañca ācāra, meaning fivefold code of conduct pertaining to knowledge, vision, conduct, austerity and energy. An ācārya strictly observes these five kinds of conduct and leads by example in guiding other ascetics do the same.

The thirty-six qualities of an ācārya are:

Observing major vows (mahāvratā) - pg 54

1. Non-violence (ahimsā)
2. Truth (satya)
3. Non-stealing (acaurya)
4. Celibacy (brahmacarya)
5. Non-possession (aparigraha)

Observing fivefold code of conduct (pañca ācāra) - pg 76

6. Knowledge (jñānācāra)
7. Vision (darśanācāra)
8. Conduct (cāritrācāra)
9. Austerity (tapācāra)
10. Energy (vīryācāra)

Restraining the senses (indriya viṣaya nigrāha) - pg 62

11. Touch (sparśa)
12. Taste (rasana)
13. Smell (ghrāṇa)
14. Vision (cakśu)
15. Hearing (śrotra)

Restraining the passions (kaṣāya nigrāha) - pg 65

16. Anger (krodha)
17. Pride (māna)
18. Deceit (māyā)
19. Greed (lobha)

Ninefold celibacy (navabāḍa brahmacarya) - pg 58

20. Residing
21. Discussing
22. Sitting
23. Looking
24. Occupying space
25. Recalling
26. Food intake
27. Food quantity
28. Dressing up

Observing five regulations (samiti) - pg 67

29. Walking (īryā samiti)
30. Speaking (bhāṣā samiti)
31. Receiving alms (eṣaṇā samiti)
32. Handling objects (ādāna nikṣepa samiti)
33. Disposing bodily wastes (utsarga samiti)

Exercising three restraints (guṇti) - pg 68

34. Mind (mana)
35. Speech (vacana)
36. Body (kāya)





In the Namaskāra Mantra, why are the arihantas venerated before the siddhas?

This question is often raised with regard to the order of padas in the Namaskāra Mantra. Since the siddhas are at the highest state, why are they not in the first pada? To this, the answer is that the siddhas have attained liberation and are no more in this world. They cannot communicate with us directly. It is the arihanta-tīrthāṅkaras who, as enlightened humans, reveal the greatness of siddhas to us. Hence, we bow down to them first.

It is the tīrthāṅkaras who establish the religious order for the masses. They are our supreme benefactors. With their infinite knowledge and compassion, they bestow the unwavering light of knowledge upon us. The ascetics (including ācāryas, upādhyāyas and sādhus) as well as the householders follow the path shown by the tīrthāṅkaras.

.7.

Arihanta

The Spiritual Victor

The word “arihanta” is made up of two words: “ari” meaning enemies, and “hanta” meaning destroy. Here, the enemies are not other people, but the enemies within oneself. Therefore, “arihanta” means a spiritual victor. By conquering passions and perversions, an arihanta is free of all worldly bondages, and remains peaceful in his inner and outer realms.

Once the soul attains the status of arihanta, it also reaches the end of the cycle of birth and death. Since an arihanta still has a body, he is bound by the karmas associated with the physical body (aghāti karmas, pg 52). These karmas, however, do not hamper him from experiencing infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite conduct (eternal faith), and infinite energy (infinite bliss). Including these, the Jaina scriptures mention twelve qualities to describe an arihanta which are listed at the end of this chapter.

When a sādḥaka reaches the state of arihanta, he attains sovereignty over the three regions of the universe. He is now the knower and seer of the entire universe. Bestowing blessings and auspiciousness on one and all, he shows the way to cross the worldly ocean. An endless flow of goodness surges through every pore of his being. He represents the highest form of equanimity and becomes worthy of worship by the greatest of human and heavenly beings.

The Tīrthaṅkaras

Among the arihantas, those who go on to propagate religion and establish the religious order are known as tīrthaṅkaras. Described as the spiritual victors, the enlightened humans and those who manifest divinity, the tīrthaṅkaras preach the essence of religion and way of life. In every epoch, twenty-four tīrthaṅkaras are born in intervals and live to spread the teachings of the true path.

The term “tīrthaṅkara” means ford maker or one who establishes the tīrtha (ford). A tīrtha is commonly understood as a fordable passage across the sea. In this context, a tīrtha refers to the religious order, also known as saṅgha. The saṅgha helps its members to cross the cycle of life and death, and attain liberation by following the principles laid down by a tīrthaṅkara.

Religion is not static. Even though its basic principles remain the same, its structure changes with the times. Therefore, each tīrthaṅkara revives the religious order to make it suitable and practical for the masses.

The present religious order

Ṛṣabhadeva was the first and Mahāvīra the last tīrthaṅkara of the present epoch. The present religious order was established by Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra. He lived from 599 BC to 527 BC. His teachings followed the well-established creed of his predecessor, Tīrthaṅkara Pārśvanātha, and those who came before him. However, Mahāvīra modified the teachings and reorganized the philosophical tenets to be relevant to his times.

Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra attracted spiritual seekers from all walks of life, including kings, nobles and commoners, rich and poor, ascetics and householders. He organized the religious saṅgha into a fourfold order known as the caturvidha saṅgha, consisting

of monks (sādhus), nuns (sādhvīs), laymen (śrāvakas) and laywomen (śrāvikās). Mahāvīra not only established the saṅgha to guide his followers on the true path, but also brought in many social reforms.

Arihantas and tīrthaṅkaras

A common question about Namaskāra Mantra is regarding tīrthaṅkaras. Since the tīrthaṅkaras are the ford makers, why are they not granted a separate pada in this mantra?

To this question, the answer is that there are two types of arihantas: sāmānya kevalī and tīrthaṅkara. The sāmānya kevalī are omniscient beings who are primarily concerned with their own liberation. The tīrthaṅkaras are omniscient beings who are the ford makers and guides for humanity. They attain the status of a tīrthaṅkara by virtue of a special type of karma known as the tīrthaṅkara nāma karma.

In terms of self-evolution, there is no difference between the sāmānya kevalīs and tīrthaṅkaras. All of them are endowed with the qualities of infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite conduct (eternal faith) and infinite energy (infinite bliss). They have attained these qualities by annihilating the four karmas which have defiled these qualities and obscured the true nature of the soul. Hence, all of them are at the same state of spiritual evolution; no one is lower or higher than another in any way.

This is the reason why Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra described 700 of his disciples, who had attained the state of arihanta, as equal to himself. He did not allow them to do vandanā (bow down) to him.

As a tīrthaṅkara, Mahāvīra was the ford maker and leader of the congregation to which all these arihantas belonged, yet, he stated that they were his spiritual equals.

The twelve qualities⁶ of an arihanta-tīrthaṅkara are:

- 1. Non-influx (anāśrāva)**
No further influx of karmic particles from passions.
- 2. Indifference (amamatva)**
Indifferent to gain or loss; a state of complete neutrality.
- 3. Non-possession (akiñcana)**
Completely free of possessiveness and attachment.
- 4. Disintegration of sorrow (chinna śoka)**
Free of pain, sorrow and afflictions which are erased and disintegrated forever.
- 5. Untainted (nirupalepa)**
Not tainted with any impurity or ignorance.
- 6. Devoid of delusion (rāga dveśa moha rahita)**
By overcoming delusion, becomes free from all forms of attachment and aversion.
- 7. Perfect exposition (nirgrantha pravacana upadeśaka)**
Endowed with purity and brilliance of speech, the discourses of an arihanta remove the knots of ignorance with regards to religious principles and fundamentals.
- 8. Embodiment of knowledge (śāstra nāyaka)**
Has complete authority over scriptural knowledge and presents it to the masses.
- 9. Infinite knowledge (ananta jñāna)**
Endowed with infinite, perfect understanding of the self

⁶Some texts mention another set of the first eight qualities which are external attributes arranged by the celestials for the last sermon of a tīrthaṅkara. They are: 1) Divine tree, 2) Shower of flowers, 3) Divine music, 4) Hand-fans, 5) Throne, 6) Halo, 7) Divine announcement, and 8) Three-tier umbrella.

and entire universe; about all substances, spaces, times, thoughts and lifetimes.

10. Infinite vision (ananta darśanā)

Attains perfect perception of past, present and future events, at the same time, thus resulting in infinite vision.

11. Infinite conduct (ananta cāritra) and eternal faith (kṣāyika samyaktva)

Attains perfect conduct which reflects the true nature of the soul – passionless and detached; never again trapped by any form of false belief or false conduct; and free of all forms of anger, pride, greed and fear.

12. Infinite energy (ananta vīrya) and infinite bliss (ananta ānanda)

Enables the soul to evolve to its highest state. The soul overcomes all kinds of obstacles to one's spiritual growth, and is now full of vigour and power; thus culminating in a state of infinite bliss.

The last four points mentioned above are ananta catuṣṭaya, meaning fourfold infinities. These qualities are attained by every enlightened being, whether a sāmānya kevalī or a tīrthaṅkara, by overcoming the ghāti karmas. (Read more on pg 51)





Can the enlightened arihantas and siddhas help us in any way? How can we benefit from doing namaskāra to them?

The arihantas or siddhas cannot bestow miracles or heavenly gifts upon us. But, by revering them, we become a recipient of their guidance and blessings. We also become receptive to the qualities and vibrations which have led to their evolved state. It purifies our own vibrations and strengthens our inner self. While doing namaskāra to them, we are saying: “I salute the divinity within you. I aspire to achieve the same level of divinity that is inherent within you.”

Receptivity to qualities is the first step to transformation and success. This is the key to Namaskāra Mantra, which considers a person as worthy of reverence only because of his spiritual qualities and not because of any worldly achievement.

·8·

Siddha

The Liberated Soul

Siddha means complete, accomplished and perfect. Leaving behind the body, the soul overcomes the cycle of birth and death, and becomes established in its pure and blissful state.

The state of siddha is a state of complete freedom where only the soul exists; neither matter nor change play any role. There is neither karma nor the conditions of karmic bondage. Hence, one does not have to return to the physical world. A siddha does not take birth ever again.

The ultimate goal of every soul is to become a siddha. This is the highest state of the soul's evolution; there is nothing beyond this. All siddhas reside in the Siddha Loka at the top of the universe, which is their eternal abode. They do not belong to this transient world any more.

The eight qualities of a siddha are:

1. Infinite knowledge (ananta jñāna)
2. Infinite vision (ananta darśanā)
3. Uninterrupted bliss (avyābādha ānanda)
4. Infinite conduct (ananta cāritra); eternal faith (kṣāyika samyaktva)
5. Immortality (akṣaya sthiti)
6. Formlessness (arūpīva)

7. Equality (aguru-laghutva)
8. Infinite energy of soul (ananta vīrya); infinite bliss (anantaānanda)

Among the qualities mentioned above, infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite conduct (eternal faith), and infinite energy (infinite bliss) have already been attained at the stage of arihanta, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

By attaining the other four qualities, the sādḥaka frees himself from this worldly existence and elevates his soul to the status of the immortal siddha. The soul is no more entangled in the body, but becomes pristine and formless. There is no inequality or hierarchy among the siddhas; they are all equal. Free from any kind of agony or suffering; they are forever blissful.

(Read about how these eight qualities are attained by annihilating the eight karmas in Chapter 10, pg 50)



.9.

Benefit of the Mantra

Cūlikā

The appendix of Namaskāra Mantra, known as cūlikā, consists of four padas. They shed light on the phala śruti (benefit) of the mantra. Through these padas, we learn that by doing the five-fold namaskāra, we can annihilate all our sins. There can be no greater power or blessing in our life. Hence, Namaskāra Mantra is a powerful, beneficial and supremely auspicious mantra.

Let us reflect on the last four padas.

Eso pañca namokkāro

In the sixth pada of Namaskāra Mantra, “eso” means this, “pañca” means five, and “namokkāro” means obeisance. Hence this pada means “this fivefold obeisance”. It refers to the obeisance paid to the five categories of supreme beings in the first five padas.

By reciting the first five padas, we pay obeisance to infinite arihantas, siddhas, ācāryas, upādhyāyas and sādhus of the past, present and future. We become receptive to their pure qualities of saintliness within.

Savva pāva-paṇāsaṇo

In the seventh pada, “savva” means all, “pāva” means wrongdoings, and “paṇāsaṇo” means to annihilate. Hence this pada means that Namaskāra Mantra annihilates all wrongdoings.

The ascetics as well as the householders should lead their lives by observing the five primary vows of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness. The ascetics observe them in a complete manner while the householders observe them partially. Transgression of any of these five vows by thought, word, or deed is wrongdoing which leads to karmic bondage. Therefore, violence, falsehood, stealing, unchastity and attachment in any form is sinful. These wrongdoings occur due to the four passions of anger, pride, deceit and greed which are considered as the four deadly enemies of human beings. Overcome by attachment and aversion, we fall prey to these passions. Under their influence, we commit wrong and stray from the prescribed path. These are the wrongdoings mentioned in the seventh pada.

This pada of Namaskāra Mantra states that when we pay obeisance to supreme beings, the blemishes of sins are washed away. Can this happen automatically? Lotuses bloom on their own when the sun rises. Darkness disappear on its own when daylight begins. So also, when we bow down in reverence before evolved souls, our thoughts are naturally purified. By pure thoughts, negative resolves are thwarted. Strength, courage and energy pervade the soul and the realization of its true and magnificent form dawns on us. At that moment, the karmic shackles are destroyed in the same manner as Hanumāna's fetters fell away when he realized his own strength in Lanka.

Maṅgalāṇam ca savvesiṁ

The eighth pada is about “maṅgala” meaning auspiciousness. The root word “maṅga” means hellish and that which protects us from hell is maṅgal or auspicious. Whatever, is auspicious always draws us towards purity, wellness, abundance and bestows good luck on us.

In this pada, “maṅgalāṇam” means that which is auspicious, and “savvesiṁ” means among all. Therefore, this pada tells us that

the Namaskāra Mantra is one among the auspicious things in this universe.

There are two forms of auspiciousness:

- » Dravya maṅgala, or auspicious objects
- » Bhāva maṅgala, or auspicious thoughts

All of us are aware that certain objects are auspicious which means they usher in good luck. For instance, people keep lucky symbols in certain places to enhance their good fortune. In many Indian cultures, jaggery is considered as auspicious, hence many rituals and traditions involve cooking a dish with jaggery. Certain precious stones bring in good luck for certain people. These are all examples of dravya maṅgala.

Just like objects, even thoughts can be auspicious. Among the two, an auspicious object has a limited effect but an auspicious thought has a more pervasive effect. For instance, a material object exists in a limited time and space, but a thought is not bound by such limitations. By focusing on auspicious thoughts, or bhāva maṅgala, we can bring in a powerful and lasting change in our life.

Namaskāra Mantra is considered as bhāva maṅgala as it brings positive vibrations in the mind, body and heart as a whole. Its power is not limited by anything; it always ushers auspiciousness.

Paḍhamam havai maṅgalaṁ

In the ninth pada, “paḍhamam” means supreme, “havai” means is, and “maṅgalaṁ” means auspicious. According to this pada, Namaskāra Mantra is supreme as it is auspicious and powerful, and reveals the infinite qualities of the soul.

Chanting this mantra makes us receptive to the qualities of all saintly beings. It helps to destroy karmic bondage and follow in the footsteps of those supreme beings on the noble path. It

also brings numerous worldly benefits such as curing sickness, erasing fear and negativity, protecting from dangers, as well as ushering in abundance and joy with positive vibrations. Before commencing any important task, we can create an aura of auspiciousness by reciting the Namaskāra Mantra.



SECTION THREE

WHAT DOES A SAINT SOW?



In this lifetime, each of us can aspire and endeavour to attain saintliness. This is possible for every single person who puts in the required spiritual practice. By bowing down to evolved souls, we acknowledge their spiritual merits and start to imbibe these qualities within ourselves, moving towards what every soul aspires to.

· 10 ·

As You Sow, So You Reap

Karma

It is a proven axiom of science that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. As living beings, we cannot help but perform various actions for our survival and progress. All our actions have consequences, whether positive or negative. This law of cause and effect is referred to as karma.

As we move from one day to the next, our activities of mind, body and speech lead to karmas, whether of merit or demerit. These karmas bind themselves to the soul and travel along with it over lifetimes.

All living beings are bound by a set of eight karmas which are the cause of this worldly sojourn. The goal of every sādḥaka is to stop accumulating new karmas and annihilate the existing ones, thereby achieving a state of no-karma, which is the state of liberation.

- » Among these karmas, the first four are known as **ghāti (destructive or defiling) karmas** because they obscure the natural qualities of the soul.
- » The last four are known as **aghāti (non-destructive or non-defiling) karmas** as they do not directly affect the qualities of the soul.

The four ghāti karmas are:

1. Jñānavaraṇīya (knowledge obscuring) karma

Obstructs the soul's ability to seek knowledge of all things in this universe, and to know each of them in their specific detail. By overcoming this karma, an individual is endowed with infinite knowledge (ananta jñāna).

2. Darśanāvāraṇīya (vision obscuring) karma

Obstructs the soul's ability to attain a general and holistic view of things. By overcoming this karma, an individual is endowed with infinite vision (ananta darśanā).

3. Mohanīya (deluding) karma

There are two kinds of mohanīya karmas: those which disturb conduct (cāritra mohanīya) and those which disturb faith (darśanā mohanīya). These lead to false faith, bring in delusion, and obstruct the clarity of the soul. By overcoming the two kinds of mohanīya karma, an individual attains a passionless state and is respectively endowed with infinite conduct (ananta cāritra) and eternal faith (kṣāyika samyaktva).

4. Antarāya (obstructing) karma

Creates obstacles in energy and obstructs the soul's ability to engage in true action. By overcoming this karma, an individual is endowed with infinite energy of soul (ananta vīrya) and infinite bliss (ananta ānanda).

Therefore, when a sādḥaka destroys the four ghāti karmas, he becomes endowed with infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite conduct (eternal faith), and infinite energy (infinite bliss). These are the natural qualities of the soul which were defiled because of karmic baggage. These qualities shine forth

as the defiling karmas are annihilated. With this, the sādḥaka attains the status of arihanta, meaning the enlightened one.

Since an arihanta continues to live in this world, he is still bound by the remaining four karmas. These are known as aghāti karmas which are associated with our materialistic existence. These karmas, however, do not hamper an arihanta from experiencing the qualities mentioned above.

The four aghāti karmas are:

1. Āyu (age determining) karma

Determines longevity of each lifetime. By overcoming āyu karma, the soul frees itself from the cycle of birth and death, and attains immortality (akṣaya sthiti).

2. Nāma (form determining) karma

Determines the properties of our materialistic existence. By overcoming nāma karma, the soul transcends the bodily state. The soul is no more entangled in the body, but attains a state of pristine formlessness (arūpīva).

3. Gotra (status determining) karma

Determines our existential status – high or low. By overcoming gotra karma, the individual erases all differences. Thus, there is no hierarchy among the siddhas; they live in a state of equality (aguru-laghutva).

4. Vedanīya (feeling producing) karma

Gives rise to bodily comfort or discomfort. By overcoming vedanīya karma, the individual is no more subject to any kind of agony or suffering. He attains a state of uninterrupted bliss (avyābādha ānanda).

Even though each and every soul is intrinsically pure, it becomes enveloped with layers of impurity as it accumulates the karmic baggage. As the soul begins its spiritual journey, the layers of impurity start shedding bit by bit. With each dimension of spiritual progress, the sādḥaka removes one more layer of impurity to reveal a bit more of the pure soul. The dust-covered mirror of the soul becomes cleaner and clearer as the individual reaches the next spiritual dimension. The karmic baggage becomes lighter. At the final dimension of the siddha, the true self shines forth in its pristine glory.

The forthcoming chapters will shed light on how to sow the right seeds to nurture one's spiritual growth. Among these, observing the five primary vows is the most prominent step with which a sādhu begins his journey.



Observing Major Vows

Mahāvratā

When we think of a saintly person, we imagine someone who is kind and compassionate, simple in his eating and dressing, truthful in speech and content with what little he has. Many religions such as Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism propound five primary vows of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession, which nurture our inner saintliness. An ascetic observes these vows completely; hence they are known as mahāvratas, meaning major vows.

The five major vows (mahāvratā)

- » Vow of complete non-violence and compassion
(ahiṃsā mahāvratā)
- » Vow of complete truthfulness
(satya mahāvratā)
- » Vow of complete non-stealing
(acaurya mahāvratā)
- » Vow of complete celibacy
(brahmacarya mahāvratā)
- » Vow of complete non-possession
(aparigraha mahāvratā)

In a nutshell, these vows encapsulate most of the activities in our life as explained here:

- » Non-violence: To have compassion for all living beings and never cause any harm to anyone
- » Truthfulness: To speak the truth at all times, in a manner that does not harm anyone
- » Non-stealing: To never steal or take anything that belongs to another
- » Celibacy: To stay rooted in the soul without being swayed by sensual pleasures
- » Non-possession: To stay detached from people, places and material things

These principles are eternal and universal irrespective of the times we live in. They were the guiding force many epochs before and continue to be the guiding force today as well as in the epochs to come. Let us understand them in greater detail.

Two levels of vows

The Jaina texts propound these five vows for householders as well as ascetics. Depending on one's way of life, the vows can be observed completely or partially.

- » When observed completely, they are **mahāvratas** – major vows of ascetics
- » When observed partially, they are **aṇuvratas** – minor vows of householders

By adhering to the vows completely, a sādḥaka stays away from all forms of violence, untruth, theft, lust and hoarding. To strengthen each of the vows, there are exercises known as bhāvanās, which means contemplations, thoughts or aspirations. As an ascetic practices them, he gradually moves into a state of complete saintliness.

Let us look at these vows one by one.

1. Vow of complete non-violence and compassion (ahiṃsā mahāvratā)

Of the five vows, ahiṃsā is considered the most saintly quality as it gives rise to universal love and infinite compassion. It is based on the tenet that every living being has the right to exist in peace and harmony. The vow of ahimsa involves not harming others as well as not being indifferent to the suffering of others.

Here, violence is not defined by actual harm, for this may be unintentional. It is the intention to harm, the absence of compassion, lack of awareness, and ignorance that make an action violent. Therefore, an ascetic does not commit violence with his body, mind or speech – whether physically harming someone, thinking ill of someone or speaking harshly to someone.

In this universe, there are different forms of life, from one-sensed bacteria and plants to the five-sensed animals, birds and human beings. A creature with more senses experiences more pain when it is harmed or killed. Hence, an ascetic follows a diet which involves minimal violence, sometimes even giving up fruits and vegetables. By following the norms prescribed by his guru and faith, he minimizes violence in every aspect of his life, including food, clothing, furnishings, medicines, entertainments and sports. To deepen the spirit of non-violence, an ascetic observes mindfulness in the following ways.

- » In movements; by being careful not to sit or step on even the tiniest creature
- » In thought; by practising equanimity towards noble as well as ignoble people
- » In speech; by refraining from impure and hurtful speech
- » In handling monastic objects; while picking or laying them down

- » In handling the objects in one's possession with care and attention

2. Vow of complete truthfulness (satya mahāvratā)

An ascetic is truthful and respectful at all times. He always speaks the absolute truth. He does not lie on account of anger, pride, fear, desire, greed, or any deceptive intention. For him, simplicity and honesty in speech are more important than being a witty and voracious speaker. He realizes that speaking without anger, pride, fear or frivolity is a mark of spiritual strength. Therefore, he neither utters lies, nor asks anyone else to lie, nor affirms those who lie. To deepen the spirit of truthfulness, ascetics observe mindfulness in the following ways.

- » To speak with mindfulness and without rambling
- » To speak with compassion and without any anger
- » To speak with selflessness and without any greed
- » To speak with courage and without any fear
- » To speak with respect and without any ridicule

3. Vow of complete non-stealing (acaurya mahāvratā)

The rules regarding non-stealing are clear and strict for an ascetic. Not only does he not steal, he also does not use things which are forgotten or lying unattended without permission. He also does not use something that has fallen or not been directly offered to him. Even if something is offered to him, he does not take more than the minimum required. As with the other vows, an ascetic does not steal, nor ask others to steal or support anyone who steals. To deepen the spirit of non-stealing, ascetics observe mindfulness in the following ways.

- » To seek permission of the owner or in-charge before accepting any object
- » To seek permission of the guru or elder monks before using food, clothes or other things

- » To seek permission of householders in accordance with place and time
- » To seek permission for accepting or using sacitta (with life) objects such as a blade of grass, or acitta (lifeless) objects such as one's tools
- » To seek permission of other sādhus in one's vicinity before using common things

4. Vow of complete celibacy (brahmacarya mahāvratā)

Celibacy, in its widest sense, means not indulging in sensual pleasures. It is not only the physical act of copulation which is forbidden to a sādhu or sādhvī, but also indulging in mindless conversation with the opposite gender, watching them, or lustfully thinking about them. An ascetic refrains from things which ignite passion, such as rich and aphrodisiacal foods, erotic literature and music, and even memories of these. He resides in solitary places where he can quieten his mind, study scriptures and observe religious practices without any distractions.

Ninefold celibacy (navabāḍa brahmacarya):

An ascetic does not touch members of the opposite sex, even a child. If he touches someone accidentally, as in a crowd, he undergoes prāyaścitta (repentance) under the guidance of his master. He leads a life of complete celibacy by observing the ninefold restraints. These are known as navabāḍa, meaning nine fences. Just as a fence protects whatever lies within its perimeter, these restraints protect the vow of celibacy.

An ascetic refrains from:

- » Residing in places which are noisy, disturbing, or filled with activities which stimulate the senses
- » Discussions about the opposite gender which dwell on caste, creed, physical appearance, or attire
- » Using a seat recently occupied by a person of the opposite

- gender
- » Looking at a person of the opposite gender with a lustful gaze
 - » Staying in proximity to a couple, transgender people, as well as animals
 - » Recalling past sexual activities
 - » Eating rich, oily or succulent foods which stimulate desire
 - » Intake of excess food which brings in lethargy or imbalance
 - » Dressing with decorative accessories

5. Vow of complete non-possession (aparigraha mahāvratā)

In Jainism and Hinduism, aparigraha is considered the most important vow after non-violence. Parigraha means collecting, amassing, possessing, or being attached to things. The opposite of this is aparigraha, which means non-possession as well as detachment.

The vow of aparigraha means not accumulating more than what is necessary or important, depending on one's life stage and context. It is rooted in self-restraint, and in overcoming greed and avarice. Those who are steadfast on the spiritual path must practice detachment from worldly objects and achievements.

An ascetic carries with him just the essential things for basic survival. He does not own or have any control on wealth, land or any other movable or immovable property. By remaining content, he does not look upon his life as one of compromise. Being rooted in the self, he does not experience the absence of material things. While he takes care of his minimal belongings, he does not get possessive about them. This extends even to his physical body – he does not grieve when it is diseased or decaying, just as he remains unperturbed by a tear or stain on his robe. Among the Jaina ascetics, those of the Śvētāmbara sect wear simple, unstitched white robes while the Digambara

ascetics remain naked (sky-clad).

An ascetic also gives up attachment to people – parents and siblings, and even gurus and disciples. By limiting his possessions and attachments, he reduces the chance of slipping on his spiritual path. While respect and care is extended to all objects, creatures and people, there is no attachment towards them. He nurtures the quality of equanimity every step of the way.

As with the other vows, an ascetic is expected to uphold these rules and discourage others from breaking them. He gives up attachments to all things, including the ones mentioned below.

- » Material things such as wealth, property, clothes and articles
- » Relationships with family, friends and other ascetics
- » Pleasure derived from the five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing
- » Feelings of pleasure or pain towards anything





Gocarī - Seeking Food as Alms

Since Jaina ascetics lead a nomadic life and do not possess anything apart from what is needed for basic sustenance, they do not cook their own food. They go from door to door seeking alms in a practice called gocarī. Here again, they observe many restrictions. They do not ask the householders to prepare anything just for them nor do they accept any food if it is specifically prepared for them.

Just as cows graze the top parts of grass, taking a little bit from each place as they move around, ascetics partake of a small portion of food from various houses so that they do not become a burden on any one family. They only accept food which adheres to the norms of their vows; otherwise, they bear hunger with equanimity.

·12·

Restraining the Senses

Indriya Viṣaya Nigraha

Ordinarily, a human being tends to seek worldly pleasures because the body is endowed with sense organs. The craving for pleasures related to touch, taste, smell, sight and sound lead him astray, away from the pristine purity of the soul. When denied these pleasurable experiences, he is often overcome by anger, frustration and disappointment. On the other hand, a sādḥaka treads the spiritual path by exercising control instead of giving in to sensual pleasures. Indriya viṣaya nigraha, meaning sense restraint, is the practice of staying unmoved by sense experiences

Restraining the senses (indriya viṣaya nigraha)

- » Restraint over sense of touch (sparśendriya nigraha)
- » Restraint over sense of taste (rasanendriya nigraha)
- » Restraint over sense of smell (ghrāṇendriya nigraha)
- » Restraint over sense of vision (cakṣuindriya nigraha)
- » Restraint over sense of hearing (śrotrendriya nigraha)

Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvira stated, “Knowing that pleasant sound, beauty, fragrance, taste and touch are transitory transformations of matter, the ascetic should not be drawn to them.”

– *Daśavaikālika Sūtra* 8.58

1. Restraint over sense of touch (sparśendriya nigraha)

The skin, endowed with the sense of touch, allows us to feel

different things such as temperature, pressure and texture. For someone entangled in the material world, these experiences of touch are directly connected with comfort and discomfort. By staying detached from these experiences, a sādḥaka conquers the craving arising from comfort and aversion arising from discomfort. With equanimity, he moves forward on his spiritual journey.

2. Restraint over sense of taste (rasanendriya nigrāha)

The tongue, endowed with the sense of taste, gives us the experience of sweet, sour, bitter, spicy etc. Someone entangled in this sense is forever thinking about what to eat and drink, even during prayers. By constant fasting, eating less and staying detached from pleasant and unpleasant taste encounters, a sādḥaka moves towards detachment and equanimity.

3. Restraint over sense of smell (ghrāṇendriya nigrāha)

Through the nose, the sense of smell gives us experiences of different aromas. They have the ability to excite and arouse, disgust and repulse. A sādḥaka is not swayed by worldly experiences and remains unmoved by them. By conquering the sense of smell, he walks the path of renunciation and destroys his accumulated karmas.

4. Restraint over sense of vision (cakṣuindriya nigrāha)

Through the eyes, our visual sense allows us to see the universe in its myriad colours and shapes. It is important for a sādḥaka not to be swayed by what he sees in the external world. By going beyond the notions of beautiful or ugly, he conquers his visual sense and encounters auspicious sights.

5. Restraint over sense of hearing (śrotrendriya nigrāha)

The ears allow us to experience different sounds in all their volumes and types. Some sounds evoke a pleasant feeling while

others make us anxious and fearful. Because of entanglement with the sense of sound, a person can ruin his own peace of mind. By staying detached from feelings evoked by the sense of hearing, he conquers his auditory sense and encounters auspicious sounds.

Thus, a sādḥaka uses the practice of indriya nigraha to elevate himself in his spiritual quest.



.13.

Restraining the Passions

Kaṣāya Nigraha

The greatest enemies on the spiritual path are kaṣāyas, roughly translated as passions or negative emotions. Broadly, there are four passions, namely anger (krodha), pride (māna), deceit (māyā) and greed (lobha). It is these passions that give rise to attachment and aversion. Unless a spiritual practitioner conquers these passions, he cannot become free of karmic bondage and the real power of his soul will not be manifested. A sādḥaka is one who wins over these passions with his practices.

Restraining the passions (kaṣāya nigraha)

- » Restraint over anger (krodha nigraha)
- » Restraint over pride (māna nigraha)
- » Restraint over deceit (māyā nigraha)
- » Restraint over greed (lobha nigraha)

1. Restraint over anger (krodha nigraha)

Anger is the most powerful of all the passions as it destroys love. In a state of extreme anger, a person does not hesitate to harm his near and dear ones, including parents and siblings. By practising forgiveness, a sādḥaka overcomes anger. He is always a messenger of forgiveness.

2. Restraint over pride (māna nigraha)

Pride destroys modesty and humility. Without humility, one cannot attain knowledge. In the absence of knowledge, a person cannot know the self from the not-self. Thus, he becomes entangled with the world and accumulates karmas. What can reverse this trap is the quality of humility. With humility, a sādḥaka conquers the kaṣāya of pride.

3. Restraint over deceit (māyā nigraha)

Deceit is considered a thorn which destroys trust in relationships. The quality of simplicity can remove this thorn. By being simple in thought, word and deed, a sādḥaka stays away from all forms of deceit.

4. Restraint over greed (lobha nigraha)

This is the most dangerous kaṣāya of all because greed can destroy all qualities. Time and again, we have seen that those who are overcome by greed will stoop down to any measure. But, it is the nature of greed never to be satisfied. The only way to curb greed is by realizing the power of contentment. Therefore, a sādḥaka's way of life is never about accumulation, but about finding peace and joy in non-possession.



. 14 .

Becoming Mindful

Samiti, Gupti

Whether as an ascetic or a householder, a sādḥaka must be mindful in every sphere of life. He must observe five forms of regulations and three forms of restraints. Regulation leads to positive actions while restraint helps in avoidance of negative actions.

Five regulations (samitis)

- » Regulation while walking (īryā samiti)
- » Regulation while speaking (bhāṣā samiti)
- » Regulation while receiving alms (eṣaṇā samiti)
- » Regulation in handling objects (ādāna nikṣepa samiti)
- » Regulation in disposing bodily wastes (utsarga samiti)

Three restraints (guptis)

- » Restraint of mind (manogupti)
- » Restraint of speech (vacana gupti)
- » Restraint of body (kāya gupti)

Let us look at these practices one by one.

Observing the five regulations (samitis)

To manage daily living even in the simplest manner, one has to perform certain essential activities such as walking, moving, sitting, standing, speaking, eating, lifting belongings,

and disposing excreta. It is not possible to exist without these activities. While it is true that they lead to a certain amount of violence, one can avoid careless wrongdoings. To perform these activities with care and diligence is samiti.

There are five areas in which a sādḥaka exercises vigilance and discipline in accordance with norms prescribed by his guru and faith.

1. Regulation while walking (īryā samiti)

A sādḥaka treads carefully while walking so that no living being is crushed under his feet.

2. Regulation while speaking (bhāṣā samiti)

He speaks with mindfulness by engaging in truthful, beneficial and restrained talk.

3. Regulation while receiving alms (eṣaṇā samiti)

He exercises mindfulness while receiving alms of any kind, including food. By accepting alms only in limited quantities, he ensures that the giver has enough left for himself. Thus, he does not become a burden on householders.

4. Regulation in handling objects (ādāna nikṣepa samiti)

He takes care while picking up and laying down any article such as food, clothing and monastic objects to avoid harming any small worms or creatures which may have crept in his belongings.

5. Regulation in disposing bodily wastes (utsarga samiti)

He exercises mindfulness while disposing bodily wastes in accordance with prescribed guidelines so that other people or creatures are not inconvenienced.

Exercising three restraints (guptis)

While samiti means regulation of one's actions, gupti means

restraint or control for a specified duration. With the practice of guptis, a sādḥaka protects the soul from worldly passions and pursues the path of restraint with body, mind and speech.

1. Restraint of mind (manogupti)

A sādḥaka does not get swayed by the fluctuations of the mind. He protects himself from the intention of causing harm to others. With the practice of manogupti, he attains concentration which protects the mind from sinful and harmful resolves.

2. Restraint of speech (vacana gupti)

He refrains from untruth, gossip, hurtful speech and slandering. By not speaking unnecessarily, he also observes silence and serenity.

3. Restraint of body (kāya gupti)

By maintaining physical composure, a sādḥaka avoids restless movements and maintains discipline in bodily movements such as walking, sitting and sleeping.

The Jaina scriptures consider these eight principles as eight articles of creed. They are also known as “pravacana mātā”, meaning mother of scriptural discourse. By employing these, existing karmas cease and new karmas are not allowed entry. Thus, samitis and guptis are the fundamental practices that determine the spiritual path.



.15.

Purity in All Spheres

Yoga Satya

A sādḥaka practices purity in all spheres of life, be it the mind, body or speech. When all the three are in harmony, a profound state of purity is seen in life.

Purity in all spheres (yoga satya)

1. Purity in emotions ((bhāva satya)
2. Purity in timeliness of activities (karaṇa satya)
3. Purity in union of mind, body and speech (yoga satya)

He purifies his emotions and thoughts by engaging in the right forms of meditation, namely dharma dhyāna and śukla dhyāna. By contemplating on his inner divine self, he experiences serenity.

Dharma dhyāna is contemplation on the scriptures and the teachings of the tīrthaṅkaras. It helps in understanding the nature of the universe and its principles, as well as following the path of true conduct. Faith in the trinity of deva (tīrthaṅkaras), guru (sādḥus) and dharma (religion) is dharma dhyāna.

Śukla dhyāna is the highest type of contemplation; it focuses upon the nature of the soul. When a sādḥaka has exerted control over all passions and vanquished desires, he becomes pure in thought, word and action. Such a transformation washes away the karmic dirt from the soul, allowing it to shine forth in its

pristine purity.

Next, the sādḥaka pays attention to discipline and timeliness of activities. Karaṇa satya pertains to rules of conduct at specific times according to the principles of Karaṇa Sattarī⁷. In accordance with this, he performs all his daily activities of studying, praying, religious rituals, seeking alms for food, and so on.

The third point in this section is yoga satya, which means harmony of mind, body and speech with utmost simplicity and honesty in all endeavours. By detaching the mind from senses and the senses from sense objects, and by staying rooted in spiritual practices, a sādḥaka lives in an integrated state of soulfulness.

At all times, a sādḥaka reflects upon the following principles of self-development:

- » The self is perfect and complete on its own. It is free and independent. The self is divine and its true form is Paramātmā.
- » I am not my body. There is a distinction between the conscious soul and the inert body.
- » Joy and bliss come from within me. I hold the key to the treasury of bliss. Any pleasure that comes from the outside is fake and creates delusion which prevents me from reaching my inner bliss.
- » My body and mind may be satisfied with worldly pleasures, but my soul seeks only spiritual joy.
- » The ultimate goal of my soul is liberation.



⁷Karaṇa Sattarī forms the basis for the 25th quality of upādhyāya, see pg 31.

. 16 .

Three Jewels of Liberation

Ratnatraya

Among all spiritual qualities, the three qualities of faith, knowledge and conduct constitute the path to liberation. Each of these qualities is preceded by the term “samyak” which means true, complete, divine and perfect. Thus, the true kind of faith, knowledge and conduct are the three jewels which illuminate the spiritual path.

Three jewels of liberation (ratnatraya)

- » True faith (samyak darśana)
- » True knowledge (samyak jñāna)
- » True conduct (samyak cāritra)

True faith (samyak darśana)

The term “darśana” is translated as faith, vision, view or perception depending on the context. Here, samyak darśana is defined as “tattvārthaśraddhānām samyak darśanam” (*Tattvārtha Sūtra 1.2*), which means faith in substances as they are.

True faith is the foundation of spiritual practices. When a person is endowed with true faith, his knowledge, practices, restraints and conduct lead to meaningful accomplishments. In the absence of true faith, they become worthless. Just as a long series of zeroes have no value unless preceded by a numeric value, so also without true faith, even knowledge and conduct

have no value.

True faith means belief in the nine tattvas (fundamental realities) which explain how a soul is bound by karmas and finds its way to liberation.

1. Jīva (soul): Existence of living beings with consciousness
2. Ajīva (matter): Existence of non-living things, including karmic matter
3. Āśrava (influx): Influx of karmic matter (ajīva) in the soul due to rise of passions
4. Puṇya (good karmas): Actions which generate merit
5. Pāpa (bad karmas): Actions which generate demerit
6. Bandha (bondage): Intermingling of soul and matter, leading to karmic bondage
7. Saṃvara (stoppage): Stopping the influx of karmic matter
8. Nirjarā (shedding): Dissociation of karmic matter from soul
9. Mokṣa (liberation): Annihilation of karmas, and freedom from the cycle of birth and death

With the quality of true faith, a sādḥaka is able to distinguish between consciousness and matter, between soul and not-soul, and between self and other. Until he learns this science of differentiation (bheda vijñāna), he cannot attain self-realization. When this realization dawns, he says, ‘I am not body, I am not mind, I am not a material object. I am different from matter, I am soul.’

Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvira stated, “One who believes in the soul, believes in the world, in the law of karma, and the power of action.”

– *Ācārāṅga Sūtra 1.1.1.6.*

If one does not believe in the soul, how can one speak of this world or the law of karma? For without the soul, who traverses this world, who performs actions, and who experiences the law of cause and effect? Faith in the soul and its infinite power is true faith.

True knowledge (samyak jñāna)

With true knowledge, one can know the nature of reality. Knowledge frees a person from doubt and delusion. A sādḥaka continually works on increasing his own knowledge and that of others. He studies the different branches of religion and philosophy. He also gains deep knowledge of the nine principles of reality mentioned above. With honest curiosity and an open mind, he carefully studies the sacred texts to understand the purpose of life.

True faith and true knowledge are interdependent. The two complement and support each other in understanding reality. There is a fair degree of interplay between the two. They are not only intertwined but also linked with the third jewel, namely true conduct, where the faith and knowledge are applied and experienced.

True conduct (samyak cāritra)

True conduct is the application of knowledge so that a sādḥaka can pursue what is beneficial and avoid what is harmful. When he learns to exercise restraint over internal activities of mind and external activities of body and speech, he becomes free of all those conditions which bind him to his worldly existence. He follows the vow of non-violence and other such pure and meritorious ideologies, and also helps others follow them. Through true conduct, he abandons wrong and detrimental actions, adopts right and beneficial actions, and through penance he is able to eliminate the karmic dust gathered within the soul.

Just like the light from millions of lamps is of no avail to a blind person, studying scriptures alone is of no use to a person who does not apply them. Therefore knowledge and conduct are interdependent. Without true conduct, there is no annihilation of karmas. And without the annihilation of karmas, there is no liberation.

Process of acquiring the three jewels

A sādḥaka inculcates the qualities of faith, knowledge and conduct in his life and improves them gradually until they become completely true and perfect. However, among these three qualities, it is true faith which brings perfection to knowledge and conduct. This means that only after the sādḥaka attains true faith, he can attain true knowledge. Before attaining true faith, his knowledge – whether it is of the philosophical tenets or the principles of reality – is apt to be vague, indefinite or fallacious, to whatever extent. These defects in knowledge arise because of the lack of true faith. On attaining true faith, his knowledge becomes perfect and true; free from errors or fallacy. So also, his conduct becomes free of blemishes and weaknesses. He becomes an epitome of right conduct.

When these three jewels of faith, knowledge and conduct are attained in perfection, the soul becomes an enlightened arihanta who continues to live in this world. When the soul sheds its body, it becomes a siddha and attains liberation. Thus, the pursuit of faith, knowledge and conduct is the path to liberation.



.17.

Fivefold Observances

Pañca Ācāra

When a sādḥaka observes the right code of conduct in all aspects of life and lives by the prescribed regulations and restraints, he becomes a beacon of light to those around him. His conduct in the five spheres of his life, namely, knowledge, faith, conduct, austerity and energy becomes exemplary. These five forms of conduct are among the thirty-six qualities of an ācārya.

Observe fivefold code of conduct (pañca ācāra)

- » Observance of knowledge (jñānācāra)
- » Observance of vision (darśanācāra)
- » Observance of conduct (cāritrācāra)
- » Observance of austerity (tapācāra)
- » Observance of energy (vīryācāra)

1. Observance of knowledge (jñānācāra)

To realize that the self is true knowledge and is distinct from delusion and ignorance and to strengthen this understanding is observance with regard to knowledge. It also includes the pursuit of scriptural knowledge and preaching it to others.

2. Observance of faith (darśanācāra)

To have complete faith in the trinity of devas (enlightened Jinas), gurus and dharma. To believe that the soul is supreme

consciousness and the only thing to be meditated upon. The practices which strengthen this belief is observance with regard to faith.

3. Observance of conduct (cāritrācāra)

To observe the ascetic way of life with all its rules and regulations, to refrain from sinful conduct, and to observe non-violence and other vows. The practices which keep a sādḥaka engrossed in the pure self is observance with regard to conduct.

4. Observance of austerity (tapācāra)

Tapācāra means following the path of austerity externally and internally. To encourage and extol those sādḥakas who remain steadfast in undertaking austerities. Fasting and penance are forms of external austerities while meditation, prayer and scriptural study are forms of internal austerities.

5. Observance of energy (vīryācāra)

Vīryācāra means giving full scope to one's inherent energy so that the above four observances are successful. A sādḥaka must undertake one's spiritual practices with absolute vigour, and not allow obstacles such as laziness and lethargy to block one's pursuits. Rather, to remove the baggage of wrong conduct of body, mind and speech and steer all energy towards the true path.



.18.

Forgiveness

Kṣamā

In Jainism, the quality of forgiveness is being true to the nature of the soul. Therefore, it is considered as the supreme virtue and the highest form of dharma. Without forgiveness, dharma cannot sustain.

Those who are forgiving by nature look upon the abusive actions of others with equanimity. They think, “This must be the consequence of some previous interaction between us, committed by me knowingly or unknowingly, in this birth or some previous birth. Hence, there is no need for me to take any offence or feel hurt.” Thinking thus, he protects himself from any need for revenge.

Forgiveness and compassion are the powers of the soul. Ascetics practice forgiveness with every breath, not harbouring negative feelings against anyone, irrespective of their behaviour. They extend compassion and love to one and all, and do not look upon anyone as enemy. They also seek daily forgiveness from all the creatures of the world whom they may have harmed knowingly or unknowingly. Their life is a mirror of forgiveness; therefore, they are also called *kṣamāśramaṇa* (ascetics of forgiving nature).

All Jainas - householders as well as ascetics - are expected to perform an elaborate prayer ritual known as *pratikramaṇa* in the morning and evening every day. *Pratikramaṇa* is the

combination of two words, “pra” meaning return and “atikrama” meaning violation. Literally, it means returning from violations or undoing any wrong actions. In pratikramaṇa, the seeker atones for wrongdoings committed knowingly or unknowingly and seeks forgiveness from all the creatures of this universe. It is a process of self-purification.

The festival of forgiveness

In keeping with the spirit of forgiveness, the most important festival of Jainas is Paryuṣaṇa Parva which is celebrated for eight days. The last day of the festival is known as Saṃvatsarī, popular as the Forgiveness Day. It is the holiest day of the year.

On this day, after the evening pratikramaṇa, the Jainas seek forgiveness from all their friends and relatives by uttering “khāmemei khamantu me”, a phrase which translates as “I grant forgiveness to you and I seek forgiveness from you.” This act of forgiveness is for all actions committed intentionally or unintentionally, knowingly or unknowingly, and by omission or commission, by thought, speech or action.

Greeting others with “khāmemei khamantu me” is a powerful form of repentance. By doing so, we can undo the hurt we have caused others or received from others, and also cleanse ourselves of guilt. It is the ideal way to end all quarrels and disputes. Out of all religious activities performed throughout the year, this is the most important.

The Digambara sect celebrate the festival of Paryuṣaṇa for ten days, calling it the Dasa Lakṣaṇa Parva (festival of ten virtues). The first day is a celebration of the virtue of forgiveness, known as uttama kṣamā, meaning supreme forgiveness.

The prayer of forgiveness

A very powerful way to find peace within is to recite the verse of

forgiveness. You can recite this prayer when someone hurts or harms you in some way. This Prakrit verse from the Pratikramaṇa Sūtra is an expression of goodwill and universal friendship, and aims to end conflicts and enmity.

Khāmemi savve jivā

(I grant forgiveness to all living beings)

Savve jivā khamantu me

(I seek forgiveness from all living beings)

Mitti me savva bhuvesu

(I have friendship with all)

Veram majjham ñe keṇai

(And enmity with none)

Here, forgiveness is given as well as sought from all beings in any form. It includes wrongdoings committed knowingly or unknowingly, whether in thought, speech or action. This prayer includes all forms of life we have come in contact with, in this lifetime or previous ones, whether we remember or have forgotten. Therefore, it leads to a complete cleansing of the soul.



.19.

Desire for Liberation

Samvega

Samvega means an intense longing; a desire so intense that it becomes a form of dedication. A spiritual seeker dedicates his entire life in the pursuit of his soul's supreme goal, namely liberation. He wants to break free of all shackles. He knows that the process of liberation can be achieved by detachment and renunciation. Hence he embraces vairāgya (renunciation), which is the foundation of ascetic life.

Having renounced his home, family and comforts, an ascetic leads an austere life and is indifferent to worldly pleasures. He strengthens his renunciation with true vision, faith, detachment and penance. With these qualities, he moves deeper into his spiritual quest and does not wander aimlessly any more.

As human beings, we have this choice before us: to nurture our longing for material comforts or spiritual joy? Renunciation is not a lack of desire; instead, it is a process of shifting one's longing from the material to the spiritual. A longing for the world transforms into longing for the liberation of self.

Who can aspire for liberation?

To understand the all-encompassing spirit of Jainism, let us look at the fifteen ways by which a soul can attain liberation.

1. Tīrthānkara Siddha: When a person attains liberation after

becoming a tīrthānkara

2. Atīrthānkara Siddha: When a person attains liberation after becoming a sāmānya kevalī (regular arihanta)
3. Tīrtha Siddha: When a person attains liberation after the formation of the tīrtha
4. Atīrtha Siddha: When a person attains liberation before the formation of the tīrtha or after the dissolution of the tīrtha
5. Svayambuddha Siddha: By his own efforts and by embracing renunciation without the guidance of a guru
6. Pratyekabuddha Siddha: By embracing renunciation on his own by the influence of an external trigger
7. Buddhābhī Siddha: By guidance of one's spiritual guru
8. Strīliṅga Siddha: When a woman attains liberation
9. Pulliṅga Siddha: When a man attains liberation
10. Napuṃsakaliṅga Siddha: When a neuter attains liberation
11. Svaliṅga Siddha: When an ascetic of Jaina faith attains liberation
12. Anyaliṅga Siddha: When an ascetic of another faith attains liberation
13. Gṛhaliṅga Siddha: When a householder attains liberation
14. Eka Siddha: When one individual attains liberation
15. Aneka Siddha: When many attain liberation at one time

These categories are not exclusive to each other. For example, if a male householder becomes an arihanta, he belongs to the ninth (pulliṅga siddha) as well as the thirteenth (gṛhaliṅga siddha) category. Thus, a person can become a siddha on his own or by the guidance of a guru, without any restrictions of gender or faith, and whether he is an ascetic or a householder. The path is open to one and all, unfettered by external rituals.



.20.

Overcoming Obstacles

Pariṣaha Jaya

Every path is strewn with its own set of obstacles, difficulties and challenges. Why do we expect the ascetic path to be any different? From the outside, it may appear that ascetics have a life which is free of responsibilities, spending all day chanting, wandering around, and seemingly carefree. But this is simply not true.

Look back on the lives of the great spiritual seekers and leaders. To attain their goal of spiritual enlightenment, they underwent tremendous hardship which they bore with immense patience, dedication and perseverance.

Following their example, an ascetic breaks out of his habitual comfort zone at every step of the spiritual path. This is no easy task. Each challenge on this path is a process of purification; every step of the way an opportunity to choose equanimity over suffering.

The path of an ascetic is filled with twenty-two pariṣaha, meaning obstacles and hardships. By facing them with serenity and equanimity, and under the guidance of his guru, he gains inner strength and moves ahead to destroy all accumulated karmas gradually. At all times, he adheres to the prescribed norms of his faith.

The twenty-two types of pariṣaha are:

1. Hunger (kṣudhā)

An ascetic exercises mindfulness in eating, accepting food which is acitta (without life) and abstaining from food which is sacitta (with life). He undertakes regular fasts and on other days, consumes simple meals which are cooked according to prescribed norms, and eats less than a full meal (ūnodarī). By gradually reducing the quantity of food intake, as well as by undertaking regular fasting, he triumphs over hunger.

2. Thirst (pipāsā)

Just like with hunger, an ascetic conquers the hardships of thirst with equanimity. Even when extremely thirsty, he does not drink water which is not boiled or filtered according to prescribed norms.

3. Cold (śīta)

He bears extremes in temperature, ranging from extreme heat to extreme cold. Even when the body hardens in extreme cold, he does not desire for warm clothing or fire.

4. Heat (uṣṇa)

Even when the body sweats or tires from extreme heat, an ascetic does not fan himself or hurry for a bath. He lives as naturally as possible and strictly avoids any use of electricity or electrical equipment. With equanimity, he wins over the hardships of temperature.

5. Insect bite (daṃśmaśaka)

He bears pain and discomfort of insect bites calmly, without causing violence to the creatures that bite. He never harms them in any way; neither by action nor by intention.

6. Clothing (acela)

Staying detached with what he wears, whether it is adequate or not, or even worn out. He is neither unhappy about old clothes nor excited about new ones since he does not dwell over these external possessions.

7. Discontent (arati)

An ascetic does not dwell in discomfort when things become unfavourable. For instance, while travelling through villages and cities, he stays calm in the face of varied and uncomfortable situations. He remains rooted in dharma and equanimity.

8. Women (strī)

He curbs his desire by observing total celibacy. He does not engage with women unnecessarily. His goal is to emerge victorious over sexual desire. The same applies to a sādhvī with regard to men.

9. Travel (caryā)

While travelling, he does not become attached to any person or place. He travels with minimum fuss and maximum equanimity, however long or rocky the distance may be, across villages, cities and states. By becoming accustomed to this austere way of life, an ascetic wins over hardships of travel.

10. Rest (niṣadyā)

During his travel, he accepts whatever resting spot he finds with serenity. He is not agitated if the spot is uncomfortable or occupied, and is unafraid even in isolated places. He undertakes various bodily postures for spiritual discipline without getting disturbed by hardships created by natural or supernatural entities.

11. Sleep (śayyā)

While sleeping, he bears the hardships of uneven, rough or coarse ground. He stays unperturbed even if the resting place is made over pebbles and stones or is filled with sand.

12. Abuse (ākrośa)

He stays peaceful even when abused with unpleasant and harsh words. As a messenger of peace, he forgives those who are not respectful or accommodating.

13. Killing (vadha)

If someone attempts to cause harm or take his life, an ascetic is neither upset nor vengeful. This is possible by bheda vijñāna, which means knowledge of the difference between body and soul. At all times, he remembers that the body is destructible, and the soul, indestructible.

14. Alms (yācānā)

Even if a person is born into a princely family, once he becomes an ascetic, he lives by seeking alms. Without feeling inferior or self-pity, he simply accepts whatever he gets within prescribed norms. This is what makes him simple and humble.

15. Unavailability (alābha)

Even if food or other necessities are unavailable for several days, an ascetic looks upon it as a golden opportunity to do penance and stay with composure. He does not display any sorrow when the desired thing is not obtained.

16. Disease (roga)

Knowing the body to be a house of diseases, he bears physical pain with equanimity. He follows those therapies as cures which are prescribed for ascetics, and never makes use of any special powers to heal.

17. Pricking sensation (tṛṇa sparśa)

If pricked by thorns while walking barefoot, an ascetic does not react to the pain. Even while sitting or sleeping on a bed of straw, he bears the pain inflicted by the sharp blades with calmness, without reaching for comfort.

18. Bodily dirt (jallamalla)

He is not repulsed by perspiration, mud or dirt that may accumulate on the body. Following an austere lifestyle, he does not bathe or change clothes frequently.

19. Honour (satkāra)

He neither experiences happiness on being honoured nor sorrow on being dishonoured. Instead, looking upon them as pariṣaha, he frees himself from them.

20. Knowledge (prajñā)

Even though knowledgeable about many subjects, he is careful about becoming proud or arrogant. With humility, he conquers the challenge posed by prajñā pariṣaha.

21. Ignorance (ajñāna)

Because of the rise of certain karmas, a sādhu may sometimes find it challenging to study and learn extensively. When he is unable to answer any questions posed to him, he does not feel inferior or miserable, but keeps alive his pursuit of knowledge. By staying calm, he conquers the challenge posed by ajñāna pariṣaha.

22. Faith (darśana)

Whatever difficulties and challenges emerge in the path, an ascetic never doubts his chosen path. In all situations, he displays unflinching faith in dharma.

Even though these twenty-two pariṣaha are mainly laid down for ascetics, they are a learning point for every sādḥaka, whether or not he has undertaken formal renunciation. Unless we challenge our comfort zones, we cannot make spiritual progress.





Vihāra – A Life of Wandering

Vihāra means wandering. Since ascetics of Jaina faith take a vow of non-possession, they do not possess land, homes, or earn a living. Instead, they lead a nomadic life which trains them to live their everyday lives in as much accordance to their vows as possible. They do not stay more than a few days in any one place. As they wander from place to place, they preach the teachings of the true path to the masses.

The only time Jaina ascetics stay in one place for an extended period is during the rainy season which is about four months in duration. They generally remain in religious places known as upāśraya or sthānaka. During their wanderings, they also stay with householders for short durations. Continuing their spiritual practices, they take care not to disturb the householder's life in any way.

.21.

Art of Dying

Sallekhanā Santhārā

A driver has to learn to use the accelerator as well as the brake to drive a car. Otherwise, he will be in danger. So also, a sādḥaka does not practice just the art of living; he also practices the art of dying. One of the principles of a sādḥaka's life is to undertake the vow of fasting unto death (sallekhanā santhārā) at the last stage of life. It requires great will power and spiritual strength and is considered as the ideal way to pass away.

Tīrthāṅkara Mahāvīra taught the art of living as well as the art of dying. Both these art forms have been incorporated in the conduct of householders and ascetics. Observing the vows is the art of living, whereas ending the journey of life with sallekhanā is the art of dying. Only those who have learnt the art of dying can choose sallekhanā samādhi maraṇa, which means dying in a meditative state. It is a highly evolved form of death.

One who has a religious approach towards the art of death abandons his body happily and peacefully. He will not be anxious even remotely at the time of death. He knows that as the palm fruit breaks from the tree and falls, similarly, man loses his life when it becomes feeble.

A sādḥaka is prepared for death just as a warrior is always ready for the battlefield. A brave warrior is not scared of impending war. Instead, he carries his weapons with him to fight and win, at the same time; he is also always prepared to die.

Those who are accomplished in the art of life, as well as death, become immortal artists. Indian tradition believes that the cycle of life and death has been going on since time immemorial and we are all just players. If the game of life is played like an artist, the game of death should also be played out as artistically. Such a spiritual artist neither hesitates to live nor worries about dying. He looks at both life and death with supreme detachment and equanimity.



EPILOGUE

Threefold Guidance

Once you firmly decide to walk the spiritual path, there are three sources you can look to for help. They are:

1. Deva: the perfect beings, namely arihantas and siddhas
2. Guru: the ascetics, namely ācāryas, upādhyāyas and sādhus
3. Dharma: the path of right conduct

This trinity of deva-guru-dharma is the foundation of spiritual life. It is this threefold guidance we can lean on to steer us in every situation of life. Let us look at these three sources.

Devas, also known as jinas (spiritual victors) refer to all beings who attain enlightenment with their spiritual endeavour. This clearly means that we mortals are capable of divinity. Bowing down before these enlightened beings inspires us towards our own supreme divinity.

Gurus are those who have progressed further than we have on the spiritual path. They share their invaluable experience with us and guide us every step of the way, enabling us to progress as well.

Dharma is the path propounded by the Jinas. Though the word dharma has many meanings, here it refers to the true way of life. The path itself can serve as a source of energy and inspiration to us as we traverse it.

Let us now see how the Namaskāra Mantra perfectly encapsulates all three dimensions of the trinity.

The first two padas of the mantra refer to the perfect beings, namely arihantas and siddhas, who are revered as **devas**. Among the arihantas, the tīrthaṅkaras set up the saṅgha or religious congregation. All Jains worship the twenty-four tīrthaṅkaras. Therefore, the first two padas of the Namaskāra Mantra offer us the support of the first arm of the trinity.

The last three padas of the mantra refer to the ascetics, namely ācāryas, upādhyāyas and sādhus, who are venerated as **gurus** since they guide laypeople and householders on the spiritual path. Thus, the last three padas offer us the support of the second arm of the trinity.

The third source is **dharmā** which refers to the holy and sacred path of the Jinas. In a nutshell, this path means observing the primary vows and embracing the three jewels of true faith, true knowledge and true conduct. These are considered as the qualities of saintly beings. This focus on qualities is the focal point of Namaskāra Mantra. Thus, it represents the highest form of dharmā, and covers the third arm of the trinity.

Due to the presence of all the three sources of spiritual support, namely deva-guru-dharmā, it is no surprise that the Namaskāra Mantra is the focal point of all forms of prayer and worship in Jainism. It is recited at the beginning of any auspicious event or task. It is recited as soon as one wakes up and also just before one goes to sleep. While reading the scriptures, preaching the teachings of the jinas, doing prayer rituals such as sāmāyika or pratikramaṇa, undertaking holy vows, and during vihāra (wandering by foot), the holy sound of Namaskāra Mantra keeps echoing.



ii

Reflections for the Five Padas

Here is a simple guide on how you can receive the energy and blessings of the five dimensions of saintly beings while reciting the Namaskāra Mantra. Each of the first five padas of the mantra is a treasure trove of saintly qualities which you can imbibe within yourself. While reciting the padas with the right reflections, you open yourself to infinite possibilities.

Reflection on *namo arihantāṇaṃ*

‘I bow down to the arihantas. O Arihanta! I receive your blessings to vanquish my inner enemies of anger, ego, deceit and greed; overcome the knots of attachment and aversion; and walk the path which leads to infinite knowledge, infinite vision, infinite conduct (eternal faith) and infinite energy (infinite bliss).’

Reflection on *namo siddhāṇaṃ*

‘I bow down to the siddhas. O Siddha! You have overcome the eight kinds of karmas, crossed the cycle of birth and death, and attained liberation. I receive your blessings to conquer my karmic blemishes and experience perfect bliss and equanimity; freedom from body, form and hierarchy; and attain the eternal state of liberation.’

Reflection on *namo āyariyāṇaṃ*

‘I bow down to the ācāryas. O Ācārya! You are the leader of the saṅgha, follow the path shown by the tīrthaṅkaras, and guide us to do the same. I receive your blessings to strengthen myself on this path; refrain from sinful deeds; and progress with true faith, true knowledge, and true conduct.’

Reflection on *namo uvajjhāyānaṃ*

‘I bow down to the upādhyāyas. O Upādhyāya! You are the teacher of the saṅgha. By teaching the scriptures, you keep alive the flame of knowledge in each one of us. I receive your blessings to endow my soul with knowledge and discrimination.’

Reflection on *namo loe savva sāhūṇaṃ*

‘I bow down to the sādhus (and sādhvīs). O Revered One! You spend time in taking care of our religious saṅgha. By being accessible to us, you kindle our spiritual interest. I receive your blessings to stay on the right path, observe the primary vows, and abide by dharma.’





"Namaskāra is the essential quality of human nature. It is the immortal voice of "guṇiṣu pramodah" which means the virtuous bring joy.

Even if you move away from the traditional understanding of Namaskāra Mantra and interpret it in new ways, what will remain constant is that it shows you the path to get from where you are at present to where you want to be in the future. The term "siddha" which is the pinnacle of this mantra, means accomplishment. Any journey you undertake at any stage is an exploration of yourself; a journey for self-actualization."

Rishi Praveen

AUTHOR

Upādhyāya Rishi Praveen, the disciple of Ācārya Anand Rishiji, is held in high regard among the charismatic and influential Jaina monks of today. His inspirational discourses, meditation techniques, and life programs inspire thousands of seekers from all walks of life. Gurudev is known to lift the veil off the orthodox mind-set of society with his keen, logical observations. He traverses over 2,500 km a year by foot across the country to propagate the words of Tīrthāṅkara Mahāvira.

Gurudev is the visionary of Arham Vijja – a package of programs for the several stages of life from conception to death. His work for social and educational development under the auspices of Anand Tirth Foundation has touched many lives. His teachings and meditation programs have been documented in several books in English and Hindi, some of which are Arham pregnancy, As the image brightens, Ignite divinity, and Arham couple.

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Dr. Pratibha Jain is an author and translator in the English-Hindi pair. Based in Chennai, she holds a Doctorate in Philosophy of Language from Madras University. She specializes in documenting heirloom recipes as well as spiritual discourses.

She is the co-author of three award-winning cookbooks, including the prestigious *Cooking at Home with Pedatha*, and has over a dozen publications on religious, spiritual, and meditation practices to her credit. Her work reflects her interest in the interplay of ‘food for the body’ and ‘food for the soul’. She has also compiled and translated several books for Upādhyāya Rishi Praveen and continues to be deeply fascinated by his pragmatic, spiritual approach.

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