

## PANCH MAHABRATA

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Jainism, a religion and philosophy of India, founded in about 6th century BC by Vardhamana who is known as Mahavira (Great Hero), the 24th of the Tirthankaras...Jainas means Conquerer. Jainism is centered in protest against the orthodox Vedic (early Hindu) ritualistic cult of the period. Its earliest proponents may have belonged to a sect that rebelled against the idea of practice of taking life prevalent in the Vedic animal sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

Mahavira is not the first prophet of his religion. In Jainism there is a belief in reincarnation which eventually leads to liberation. Jainism is different in its ascetic beliefs and it emphasizes on non-violence, which is its main core.

The essence of a jiva is not to be in bondage but to have Infinite capacity for intuition, knowledge, bliss and energy. These four infinities, which constitute the very essence of a jiva, are obscured due to various kinds of karmas (i.e. karmic matter). There are four of karmas which directly obstruct these infinite capacities and hence they are ghati-karmas. They are intuition-obscuring (darsanavaraniya), knowledge-obscuring (jnanavaraniya) deluding (mohoniya) and impeding (antaraya) karma in their respective order. A Jiva can experience intuition, knowledge, bliss, or energy when the respective karma is destroyed or subsided and it can be liberated by destroying all of them completely. The path of the destruction of these karmas is the Jaina path of self-purification.

Jainas hold the liberated state of a jiva to have three forms. The first one is called the state of sayoga-kevali (embodied liberated), the second is called the state of ayoga-kevali (disembodied liberated) and the third is called the state of siddha (accomplished one). In the first state, Jiva is free from all the obstructive karmas and hence it realizes all the four infinities. But the non-obstructive karma (aghati-karma) still remains due to which it continues to live in an embodied form. There are four non-obstructive karmas acknowledged by Jainas; namely, (i) The sensation-determining karma (vedaniya karma) which causes pleasant and painful sensations (ii) The life-determining karma (ayu-karma) which determines the span of life, (iii) the

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physique-making karma ( nama-karma ) which determines various physiological features, and (iv) the status-determining karma (gotra-karma) which determines the social, position or status. Due to these karmas sayogakevali lives the full span of his life, performing various actions and experiencing pleasant and unpleasant sensations. But he performs actions without any passions and hence no new karmic matter sticks to him. When the non-obstructive karmas are exhausted, such a person dies and attains the second state of liberation viz. the state of ayoga-kevali. In this state he becomes fully disembodied, goes upwards and up to the end of the universe-space (i.e. non-empty space) and stays there permanently. In this paramount state he is called the accomplished one (siddha).

Out of the three states of liberation described above, the last two are the outcomes of metaphysical consideration concerning a jiva and other substances. .... From the moral point of view, the state of embodied liberation (sayogakevali) is more important, because in this embodied state the jiva, which is still a person, performs various actions, experiences pleasant and unpleasant sensations and yet is free because it does not develop any passions towards these actions and sensations. How does it attain this freedom from passion? How does he lead the path of self-purification?

The purification of the soul is achieved through the path which consists of three jewels. These three jewels are samyak-darsana (right belief), samyak-jnana (right knowledge) and samyak-caritra (right conduct).....The Jaina concept of right conduct is not simply that of moral conduct in the ordinary sense of the term, but it is that of conduct which amounts to a stoppage of the in flow of karma-particles.....It is articulated through the conception of vrata (vow, restraint) .<sup>2</sup>

The ethical code prescribes two dharmas or rules of conduct. One for those who wish to become ascetic and another for Sravaka (householders). Five fundamental vows are prescribed for volaries. These vows are observed by ascetics strictly and therefore, observe complete abstinence.<sup>3</sup>

The panch mahavrata have importance in stopping the entry of karma particles into the self by following the five vows- ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (celibacy) and aparigraha (non-covetousness).<sup>4</sup>

## **THE FIVE BASIC VOWS ARE:-**

### **1. NON-VIOLENCE (AHIMSA):**

Among these five vows, non violence (Ahimsa) is the cardinal principle of Jainism and hence it is known as the cornerstone of Jainism. Non violence is the supreme religion

(Ahimsa parmo dharma). It is repeatedly said in Jain literature; “Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torture, or kill any creature or living being”.

According to Jainism all living beings, irrespective of their size, shape, or different spiritual developments are equal. No living being has a right to harm, injure, or kill any other living, including animals, insects, and plants. Every living being has a right to exist and it is necessary to live with every other living being in perfect harmony and peace.

Non-violence in Jainism is not a negative virtue. It is based upon the positive quality of universal love and compassion. One who is actuated by this ideal cannot be indifferent to the suffering of others.

Violence of every type should be completely forbidden. Mental tortures by way of harsh words, actions, and any type of bodily injuries should also be avoided. Even thinking evil of someone is considered violence in Jainism.

Practically, it is impossible to survive without killing or injuring some of the smallest living beings. Some lives are killed even when we breathe, drink water, or eat food. Therefore, Jainism says that minimum killing of the lowest form of life should be our ideal for survival.

It is more painful if a life of the higher forms (more than one sense) killed. Hence Jainism allows laypeople to use only vegetables as a food for survival. All non-vegetarian food is made by killing living beings with two or more senses. Therefore, Jainism preaches strict vegetarianism and prohibits non-vegetarian foods. Jainism explains that violence is not defined by actual harm, for this may be unintentional. It is the intention to harm, the absence of compassion, unawareness, and the ignorance that makes an action violent without violent thought there can be no violent actions. Non violence is to be observed in action, speech, and thought. One should not be violent, ask others to do so, or approve of such an activity.

## **2. TRUTH ( SATYA ) :**

Anger, Greed, fear and jokes are the breeding grounds of untruth. To speak the truth requires moral courage. Only those who have conquered greed, fear, anger, jealousy, ego and frivolity can speak the truth. Jainism insists that one should not only refrain from falsehood, but should always speak the truth, which should be wholesome and pleasant. One should remain silent if the truth causes pain, hurt, anger or death of any living being. Truth is to be observed in speech, mind and deed. One should not utter an untruth, ask others to do so or approve of such activities.

## **3. NON-STEALING (ACHAURYA OR ASTEYA):**

Stealing consists of taking another's property without his consent or by unjust or immoral methods. Further, one should not take anything which does not belong to him. It does not entitle one to take away a thing, which may be lying, unattended or unclaimed. One should observe this vow strictly and should not touch even a worthless thing, which does not belong to him. When accepting alms, help, or aid one should not take more than what is minimum need. To take more than one's need is also considered theft in Jainism. The vow of non-stealing insists that one should be totally honest in action, thought and speech. One should not steal, ask others to do so or approve of such activities.

#### **4. CELIBACY / CHASTITY ( BRAHMACHARYA ):**

Total abstinence from sensual pleasure and the pleasure of all five senses are called celibacy. Sensual pleasure is an infatuating force, which sets aside all virtues and reason at the time of indulgence. This vow of controlling sensuality is very difficult to observe in its subtle form. One may refrain from physical indulgence but may still think of the pleasures of sensualism, which is prohibited in Jainism.

Monks are required to observe this strictly and completely. They should not enjoy sensual pleasures and pleasure of all five senses, ask others to do the same, nor approve of it. There are several rules laid down for observing this vow for householders. They should not have any physical relationship other than own spouse. The relationship with your own spouse should be of limited nature.

#### **5. NON-ATTACHMENT / NON-POSSESSION (APARIGRAHA):**

Jainism believes that the more worldly wealth a person possesses, the more he is likely to commit sin to acquire and maintain the possession and in a long run he may be unhappy. The worldly wealth creates attachments which will continuously result in greed, jealousy, selfishness, ego, hatred, violence etc. Lord Mahavir has said that wants and desires have no end and only the sky is the limit for them.

An attachment to worldly objects results in the bondage to the cycle of birth and death. Therefore, one who desires of spiritual liberation should withdraw from all attachments to pleasing objects of all the senses.

Monks observe this vow by giving up attachments to all things such as:

***Material thing: wealth, property, grains, house, books, clothes etc.***

***Relationships: father, mother, spouse, children, friends, enemies etc.***

***Pleasure of five Senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing***

***Feelings: pleasure and painful feelings towards any objects***

They have the equanimity towards music noise, good and bad smells, soft and hard objects for touch beautiful and dirty sights etc. They do not eat food for taste but for survival with the intention to continue to progress spiritually and ultimately to attain liberation. Non possession and non-attachment are to be observed in speech, mind and deed. One should not possess, ask others to do so, or approve of such activities.

Jainism has lay down and described in much detail these five great vows for the path liberation. These are to be observed strictly and entirely by monks and nuns. <sup>5</sup>

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