

CHASTITY

From Lust to Love

(A translation of Brahmacharya Darśana)

Upādhyāya Amar Muni

Publishers: Jainsindia Trust

First Print, Jan 2021, 1000 copies

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Price: Rs. 249/-

ISBN : 978-81-948669-3-0

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Printed at:
Saroja Enterprises
“Saroja House”, New No. 18,
Arcot Road, (NSK Salai),
Kodambakkam, Chennai-600024.
Ph. : 91 44 24841129/4363/2246

COPIES AVAILABLE AT:

Veerayatan	Chennai	Gurgaon
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FOREWORD

Venerable Gurudev Upādhyāya Amar Muniji has left behind a legacy. A legacy of life values, of transformational thoughts and of simplified religiosity. His literary contribution is immense, spanning the study of Jain Agamas as well as other religions and philosophies.

Gurudev was blessed with the exceptional capacity to examine and assess all that he saw and read through a distinctive, astute lens. This enriched his discourses with practical tips as well as spiritual insights. His intuition and compassion made him a true seer and Guru.

With his holistic understanding of life, he offered suggestions and solutions for personal, social and national evolution. With each suggestion, he brought people closer to spirituality.

I am happy that the English translation of “Brahmacarya Darśana” has been added to the published literature of Gurudev Upādhyāya Amar Muniji’s work. This is yet another literary masterpiece which reflects Gurudev’s comprehensive understanding and deep intuition. It is a much-needed book in today’s world where the careless pursuit of pleasure is the norm of the day.

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity and non-possessiveness constitute the real path of dharma. These five are to be adopted as minor vows by householders and as major vows by ascetics. What this reveals is that householders don’t have to abstain from worldly pleasures completely, but exercise restraint and enjoy them according to dharma. Indulgence and carelessness have to be given up so that relationships can become virtuous and sacred, as well as joyous. Only when such possibilities open up, religion becomes a way of life.

Unless these ideals are incorporated from within one's inner being, religion remains at a superficial level.

This book is divided into three sections—discourses, principles, and tools. The discourses in the first section are so broad and pervasive that you can find fresh and contemporary thoughts of the modern world in them. Gurudev was considered a revolutionary thinker for his time. His thoughts were rooted in the issues surrounding life today. In the principles section, brahmacharya has been discussed from the point of view of physiology, psychology, philosophy, ethics, religion, and spirituality. Thus, the reader gets a holistic framework of chastity which answers questions that arise in the mind with regard to this principle. The tools section provides practical ways to incorporate the principle of chastity in our lives today. It sheds light on meditation, yoga, food, and other ways of enfolded chastity in life. Through the book, the original sutras from Jaina Āgamas and other religious literature offer a splendid authenticity to the words of the great seer.

Gradually, as the pages turn, the readers come to understand how one can strive to be chaste within the framework of marriage and family, and how to rise above karmic bondage. This is the purpose of this book. I am sure this book will guide us out of our uncertainties, doubts and dilemmas.

My blessings and gratitude to the members of Sugul Group for their dedication in bringing out this book. This is a welcome addition to the religious literature of the Jaina Philosophy. Thanks and congratulations to Dr. Pratibha Jain for yet another lucid translation of Gurudev's works.

Acharya Chandana
Veerayatan, Rajgriha

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

During my morning walks, I am always fascinated by the statue of Kannagi, standing tall by Marina beach in Chennai. She is holding up her anklet in a furious pose, seeking justice. She is the symbol of chastity. It is this virtue and her devotion to her husband which made her immortal in the pages of history.

Among the five primary vows of Jainism, namely, non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity (also known as celibacy), and non-possessiveness, chastity is perhaps the most elusive. It is also the one which can strengthen character more than any other vow. It gave Kannagi enough power to burn down a city, and she almost did! More than anything, her life proved the power of chastity.

Kannagi is the central character of the Tamil epic Silappadikāram. She is a legendary Tamil woman whose husband was sentenced to death due to a wrong judgment by the Pandyan King of Madurai. Written by Ilango Adigal, the epic shows us the power of chastity.

Given Kannagi's wrath, you may think that Kovalan was a devoted husband. But he cheats on his wife and spends his fortune on a dancer, Madhavi. He becomes penniless and then repents for his mistake. Kannagi forgives him and gives him her precious anklet, asking him to sell it to start his trade afresh. She takes shelter in a temple under Madiri Adigal, an old Jain nun, while her husband Kovalan goes to sell the anklet in the market.

When Kovalan tries to sell the anklet, it is mistaken for a stolen anklet of the queen. Accused of theft, he is immediately beheaded by the angry king. When the news reaches Kannagi,

she sets out in fury to prove her husband's innocence to the king.

At the king's court, she breaks open the anklet seized from Kovalan and reveals rubies, as opposed to the queen's anklets which contained pearls. The king and queen die of shame for the injustice towards Kovalan. But Kannagi's fury is unfettered. She utters a curse over the entire city of Madurai. She calms down later and attains salvation. Over the ages, she became eulogized as the epitome of chastity and is worshiped as a goddess in many regions.

In the world today, when human beings are losing themselves in sensual pleasures, and the sanctity of the marital relationship seems to be at stake, an understanding of chastity becomes the need of the hour. This book comes forth to offer us the way to embrace the power of chastity in our lives lending greater value and happiness to the institution of marriage. I am sure this English translation of Gurudev Upādhyāya Amar Muni's literary work will benefit laypersons and scholars alike.

I am grateful to Acharya Chandanaji for recognizing the need for an English version of "Brahmacarya Darśana", and for her encouragement and blessings for the same.

I am grateful to Shri T.R. Dagaji, Secretary, Veerayatan, for permitting and motivating us to get the Hindi book translated and published.

I extend my appreciation to Dr. Pratibha Jain and her team for undertaking the translation of the original text with such sincerity and dedication.

I am thankful to my family: sons Prasan and Vinodh; daughters-in-law Nirmala and Kala; grandsons Pramod and Pratik, grand-daughters-in-law Shraddha and Meghna; grand-daughters Payal and Palak; grand-son-in-law Rishabji

Kanunga; and last but not least my great-grandson Sharav. I dedicate this book to my wife Smt. Chandrabai for being with me even without her physical presence.

I hope that the lofty and pragmatic principles of Jainism as conveyed by Gurudev will reach far and wide with these publications. Let his words be instrumental in dispelling negativity from our lives, replacing it with inspiration and virtuous conduct.

N Sugalchand Jain

Trustee, Jainsindia Trust

Mentor, Sugal Group, Chennai

TRANSLATOR’S NOTE

I always find it insightful that the Jaina seers have given us two ways of observing a vow: as a *mahāvratā* or *aṇuvratā*, meaning completely or partially. Being a pragmatic religion, Jainism clearly offers this distinction because while ascetics can follow a vow in a rigorous manner, householders need a more lenient way.

This also applies to the framework of chastity. For householders, the vow of chastity does not mean abstinence, but restraint. While the ascetics observe complete chastity, married couples observe partial chastity by restraining their desire within the framework of marriage. In restraint lies the power to transform life. And this is what this book shows us. It explains the ways in which married couples can observe the vow of chastity without compromising on the joy of their relationship.

I am indeed grateful to Shri Sugalchand Jain for the opportunity to translate some of the literature of one of the greatest seers of Jaina religion, Gurudev Upādhyāya Amar Muni. Gurudev is a powerful thinker and teacher. His comprehensive understanding steers us through the maze of chastity, one of the primary vows in Jainism. In a simple style which captures the profound implication of this vow, he guides the reader to imbibe the various facets of chastity in life. Translating his literary work “Brahmacarya Darśana” from Hindi to English was an unparalleled experience for me.

My profound thanks to Prasiddha Ramarao for her meticulous editing; Manjree Khajanchi for helping with the first draft; Meera Srikant for help with translation and assistance at various stages; and Pritee Bafna for typing assistance. My

husband Mahendar Chordia and daughter Manasvi for their unconditional love and support.

I hope I have managed to capture the essence of Gurudev's words during translation. I apologize for any errors I may have inadvertently committed.

Pratibha Jain

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine a state where every thought that emerges in your mind is noble and pure. You may well ask, ‘Is this possible?’ The nature of the mind is such that it is full of wavering thoughts. Even when you have noble intentions and aspirations, you will find that mind is prone to corruption. Harmony between intentions and thoughts is possible only by living a chaste life. Hence, every spiritual seeker must practice the vow of *brahmacarya*, meaning chastity.

According to Jaina Philosophy, chastity is one of the five primary vows, along with non-violence, truth, non-stealing and non-possessiveness. These are the five cardinal principles which must be observed by all human beings.

Like the other vows, *śrāvakas* (householders) and *sādhus* (ascetics) can observe the vow of brahmacarya. You may wonder — how can a householder, who has a spouse, practice brahmacarya? This book will explain how everyone can lead a chaste life. There are levels of chastity, depending on the path you have chosen. For a *sādhu*, chastity means complete abstinence of lustful words, thoughts and deeds. But for a married person, chastity means limiting lustful activities to one’s spouse. Thus, everyone can observe the vow of chastity. It is anchored in practical reality.

Definition of brahmacarya

The word ‘brahmacarya’ is formed by joining the two words brahma and *carya*. ‘Brahma’ means the pure state of the soul and ‘carya’ means action, movement, or conduct. Hence, brahmacarya means observing the right conduct in search of the supreme truth. The goal of brahmacarya is to remove the soul from a state of perversion and establish it in a state of purity.

The popular Hindu treatise Bhagavad *Gītā* states that a person who wishes to attain supreme divine state must observe the vow of brahmacharya. The mind of a passion-driven person will always be restless, wandering towards sensory pleasures instead of looking inward. Only someone who has the desire and discipline to turn inward can practice brahmacharya.

The seeker finds harmony between intentions and thoughts by travelling the path of brahmacharya, restraining his or her mind, body and speech from excessive, and eventually, all lustful activities. Finally, not even a single thought is in discord with intentions. Such is the state of complete chastity.

The Greek philosopher Pythagoras said, “He is not free who cannot practice continence.” One who cannot control himself can never be truly free. The power to rule over oneself cannot happen without the practice of brahmacharya. Indian culture dictates that *śīla*, meaning virtue, is the supreme jewel; and self-restraint is the supreme quality of humans.

Brahmacharya is more than avoiding the physical union and consummation between a man and a woman. It means freeing oneself from all sensual perversions and attachments that make the soul impure. It is to stay in tune with the pure soul. Therefore, the elimination of perversion in every thought, word and deed is brahmacharya.

A man may not touch a woman or have any sexual contact with her, yet, if he is consumed by desire, he cannot be called a *brahmachārī* (celibate).

Curtailing physical contact between a man and a woman does not fully capture the meaning of brahmacharya. As Mahatma Gandhi explained, chastity does not mean that one may never touch a woman, even one’s sister, in any circumstance whatsoever. Instead, one’s state of mind should be as calm

and unruffled during such contact as though one is touching a piece of paper. He clearly stated, “To attain perfect purity, one has to become passion-free in thought, speech and action.” Such a state of mind devoid of any perversion or delusion is true brahmacarya.

According to Āgamas which are the sacred Jaina texts, *sādhus* and *sādhvīs* are permitted to touch each other during an emergency or a calamity. Therefore, while caring for the sick or saving someone from grave danger, touching someone of the opposite gender need not be a transgression of the vow of brahmacarya. If no other person is around to help, a *sādhu* can take care of a *sādhvī* and assist her. Likewise, a *sādhvī* can touch a *sādhu* while serving him. If necessary, they can even carry each other. But during such interactions, they must maintain purity of thoughts. If any perversions arise, they have violated the vow of brahmacarya. The practice of chastity is not possible in a state of perversion.

Lust, perversion and sensual desire tend to destroy the soul’s purity. When the vibrations of the soul are contaminated, the divine light of the soul becomes dull.

The source of energy

Brahmacarya is the ultimate source of energy, the vital power of life. It empowers the body, which in turn makes the mind strong and stable. For spiritual practices, the body and mind must be competent and healthy. Mental and physical resilience are the prerequisites of any spiritual practice. A person who is unable to build his concentration, stabilize his thoughts, endure the sufferings of the body, or have the courage to persevere with a smile, will not be able to see the pure light of the soul. Indian culture has always taught that the body that is devoid of strength, energy, or potency, cannot see the soul.

Only a person who practices equanimity and remains stable can realize the true nature of the soul.

Therefore, a strong and healthy body is needed to tread the right path of the soul. To strengthen the body, complying with chastity is necessary. Desire weakens energy. For example, the craving for different tastes makes a person greedy for food. When a person becomes obsessed with food, his ability to discriminate between what can be consumed and what cannot, is lost. He forgets what to eat, how to eat, when to eat and how much to eat. Overeating awakens one's desires, affects one's digestive power, and attracts diseases. Due to this, the body becomes weak and loses its energy. With the pursuit of meaningless pleasures, one's life becomes dull and sluggish. The person is no longer able to endure hardships, and his tolerance level decreases. With low tolerance, he is unable to continue his spiritual practices with due diligence.

One must strengthen the body for spiritual practice. To improve physical strength, one has to restrain the senses. When desires control a person, he becomes a slave to them. As Burke said, "The worst of slaves is one whom passion rules." He becomes powerless and loses control of himself. Therefore, eat with restraint, live with restraint, control your desires, and finally, relinquish your desires. Only by following this mantra, you can exert control over your mind and senses. Gandhiji said, "Renunciation of objects without renunciation of desire is short-lived, however hard you may try."

Restraining desires

The practice of brahmacharya is a rigorous exercise and great austerity. It requires complete control not only of the body, but also of one's mind, speech and senses. It involves introspection and contemplation. Without these qualities, the spiritual aspirant will not succeed in the practice of

brahmacarya. Instead of remaining self-absorbed, he must stake his life in serving family, society, nation and religion. He must deeply engage in religious practices and humane services. When the three activities of body, mind and speech are focused on noble and pure goals, he will neither encounter the opportunity for pleasures or perversions nor have the time to pursue them.

Desire is the violent enemy of the soul. Overcoming one's desires is infinitely more daunting than defeating an army of thousands of warriors. To turn selfish indulgences and sensual pleasure into selfless service is as difficult as changing the wind's direction from south to west. For this reason, Bhagavān Mahāvīra stated:

*jo sahasam-sahasānam, saṅgāme dujjae jiṇe.
egam jiṇejja appānam, esa se paramo jao.*

— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 9.34*

“Victory over one's self is greater than conquering thousands and thousands of enemies on the battle-field. A true conqueror is one who conquers his own self.”

Gandhiji echoed the same thought in his autobiography, “To conquer the subtle passions is harder than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms.”

Indian culture has always emphasized the enhancement of the inner self. It teaches us that external conquests are short-lived, but self-conquest is timeless. Thus, it is a culture of real victory. It does not teach people to fight against each other. Instead, it challenges them to conquer their desires. If you cannot control all your desires, try to subdue them. Remember, indulgence leads to destruction and restraint to victory. The person pursuing self-restraint will eventually overcome his desires.

Levels of brahmacarya

The energy that arises due to desires and needs is material in nature and not spiritual. The mind controls it. Hence it is not independent; it is a slave to the mind. When desires become unrestrained, sense organs get a free rein which results in a lack of self-control. On the other hand, when a person is not swayed by his mind, he does not allow any perversions or desires to rule his life. They cannot harm him in any way.

Every sense organ has its function and duty. Man's senses allow him to see, hear, smell, touch and taste. The only difference is that a brahmacārī can control his sensual desires, so he remains safe from harm.

Indeed, power is power. You can use it constructively or destructively. It is up to each person to use it with discretion and not allow it to get out of hand. The capacity to make this discrimination is a great life skill.

An engineer who wants to harness the flow of water constructs a dam by building a wall across the river surrounded by hills on three sides. He adds many outlets to remove excess water when required. There is no danger to the dam if it is filled to capacity. However, when it becomes overfilled, the outlets are opened to release the excess water; otherwise, the force can break the walls of the dam, leading to catastrophe.

Such is the situation of the dam of our mind. To control the flow of desires within oneself is the supreme duty of the seeker. He must be mindful of his capacity. If he controls his desires and can digest the ocean of lust, like Sage Agastya of the mythological tales, it becomes an excellent opportunity for self-evolution. If he cannot control his desires completely, yet repeatedly tries to exercise excessive restraint without any success, it can pose a significant danger to his own life.

What this implies is that one must not force or compel oneself but do as much as is in one's capacity. Therefore, there is one path for the householder and another for sādhus.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded two levels of *sādhanā* (spiritual practice) for the practitioners of brahmacharya:

- Observing complete chastity (for ascetics)
- Observing partial chastity (for householders)

Each of the five primary vows, namely non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity and non-possessiveness, can be practiced fully or partially. When observed fully, they are known as *mahāvratas* or major vows. When observed partially, they are known as *aṇuvratas* or minor vows. The *mahāvratas* are for ascetics while the *aṇuvratas* are for householders. This division is essential because householders are engaged in worldly pursuits; hence they cannot observe the vows as strictly as ascetics can.

When two people get married, they enter a conjugal relationship. They can satisfy each other's sexual desire, but ascetics cannot have a sexual relationship with anyone. They must remain celibate in thought, word and action.

- The vow of complete chastity is known as Brahmacharya Mahāvratā, also referred to as *sarva maithuna viramaṇa*, meaning abstaining from lustful activities entirely.
- The vow of partial chastity is known as Brahmacharya Aṇuvratā, also referred to as *sthūla maithuna viramaṇa*, meaning limiting lustful activities.

Ethically, we expect a married person to look at anyone other than their spouse with brotherly or sisterly affection. Therefore, this vow is also known as *svādara saṁtoṣa vrata* (satisfaction with one's wife) or *svapati saṁtoṣa vrata* (satisfaction with one's husband).

Hence, marriage holds a vital position in Jainism since it allows a space for desire. It is a widely prescribed method to limit unrestrained passion and lust. It curbs immoral and carnal thoughts and pushes you to embrace a moral lifestyle. It is also a stepping stone towards complete chastity. Therefore, it is considered a sacred relationship.

Marriage is a balm ointment that heals lustful thoughts. You apply the balm to treat a wound; once healed, there is no need for the application. In the same way, marital life pacifies the disease of perversions and restrains it. Even in marriage, the couple should refrain from activities that aggravate passion and lust. Each of them must watch out for any unregulated or unrestrained desires. As householders, they must be mindful in every sphere of their relationship.

Householders must exert control over all their other senses. They should avoid foods which are spicy and oily, and ignite passions and desires. Dietary intake must be controlled and disciplined, as this helps against perversions and health disorders.

One must also exercise restraint while listening, watching, or speaking. Householders should not sing or listen to provocative lyrics and music that invoke feelings of lust. They should avoid vulgar jokes and chatter. They should also refrain from watching films and plays with suggestive content and not waste their time reading erotic novels and stories. They must follow a fixed sleep-wake cycle and behave with utmost discretion at all times.

Obscene songs, uncultured jokes, lustful films and indecent books do not teach nobility and dignity as life values. They provoke desire and lust in the hearts of young men and women who will, someday, become the leaders of the

country, society and religion. Such an upbringing renders the overall social atmosphere toxic. Therefore, the ultimate duty of every householder is to protect his family from such negative influences.

A householder must not join in activities that act as stimulants. He should carefully curtail desires. Restraint will bring peace and enhance well-being.

The practice of brahmacarya

Observing the vow of brahmacarya is the art of life. It is the practice of changing your ethics, values and behaviour. Art enhances an object's charm, ethics make life supremely beautiful, and right conduct brings greater joy than sculpting or painting. As Emerson said, "A beautiful behaviour is better than a beautiful form. It gives a higher pleasure than statues and pictures." Brahmacarya brings joy to one's life and spreads it to near and dear ones.

Conduct reveals one's truth by relaying thoughts, words and deeds. It is the mirror that reflects every person's life. As Goethe said, "Behaviour is a mirror in which each person displays his image."

A decline in conduct is the downfall of life itself. One is not considered great by birth, but by behaviour alone. Being born in a lower caste does not make someone impure or inferior. A person with wrong conduct is like a thorn in the flesh, while one with right conduct is respected by all and is an ideal role model.

*yad yadācharati śhreṣṭhastattadevetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate*

— *Bhagavad Gītā* 3.21

“Whatever actions great persons perform, common people follow. Whatever standards they set, all the world pursues.”

Every individual must adopt the ideal of ‘simple living and high thinking’. Rabindranath Tagore stated, “Let our life be simple in its outer aspect and rich in its inner gain.” Here, we realize that simplicity is the illuminating jewel of life. Just as natural beauty does not require any artificial or external adornment to reveal itself, a person’s outer life should be simple. At the same time, he can enrich his inner experience with noble and virtuous thoughts. This will help to reach one’s supreme potential.

Beauty is the real quality of the soul. Try to enhance this beauty by improving your inner strength. Learn to exert control over yourself rather than letting desires control you. Known as ethics, character and moral strength, it is the process of evolution of the soul.



SECTION I - DISCOURSES

SELF-REFINEMENT

Look at the vast canvas of human nature. When studied deeply, you will find a complex matrix of good and evil reflected in it. On the one hand, the holy and pure stream of spirituality flows continuously. On the other, the rotting filth of passions also flows. On one side, the garden of noble qualities is in full bloom; on the other, a thorny forest of ignoble qualities looms large. We encounter both dense darkness and illuminating brilliance in life. This eternal conflict permeates every atom of human existence. Sometimes, goodness leads the way, and at other times, evil is on the rise.

Regarding this dichotomy of good and evil, the question arises — does the soul have an inherent tendency to one or the other? Some believe that the soul is inherently evil and can never become noble and pure. It has not turned good after several lifetimes and will never turn in the future lifetimes. There is no end to the passions which keep flowing through it. In turn, this leads to the continuing cycle of birth and death.

Materialists reject the idea of purity of the soul and its emancipation. According to them, the soul continues to remain in this world because it has no higher purpose. Such a belief system has dulled the illuminating ideals of human existence. It forces man to surrender his weapons and give up making any effort at all. It does not allow space for conquering one's passions or weaknesses. It also implies that if you cannot annihilate anger or greed, there is no point in subduing them.

Would a doctor encourage an incurable patient to take any treatment? What would be the use? So also, how can the soul ever benefit from a philosophy that advocates such pessimism?

In contrast to this philosophy, there are other schools of thought

that believe there is no inherent evil in the soul. The soul is divine and the abode of infinite goodness. The perversions and passions that seem to reside within are not a real component of the soul. Instead, they arise from the individual's mind and imagination. They are part of hallucinations, dreams, or myths.

Now, imagine a man is sick and screaming with pain. Can the doctor convince him that his pain is nothing but his imagination? Will that be sufficient to alleviate the suffering?

Such thinking provides neither the inspiration nor the intelligence to battle these passions and perversions. What we need is a way of thought which offers inspiration for spiritual practices.

In this context, Jaina philosophy presents an important point of view. It tells us that though the soul has the potential for both good and evil, its true nature is one of purity. What we have to do is fight the evil, eliminate it from the soul and thus cleanse it. For this, one has to walk the right path of *sādhanā*.

To begin with, we have to accept that the soul can become impure by being contaminated with perversions. However, this is not a permanent disruption since it is not the soul's true nature. You cannot erase the true nature of any object. No object can be isolated from its natural characteristics. In the same way, even though perversions can enter and reside in the soul, they are not the natural state of the soul. Hence, they cannot become the characteristics of the soul.

Furthermore, there cannot be conflicting characteristics in one object. Water is cool by nature; hence it cannot be warm unless heated up by an external source. Fire is hot by nature, so it cannot be cold. How can two opposing qualities reside in one object? They cannot. By this logic, the soul can either be perverted and disorderly, or pure and orderly.

Any characteristic that has arisen in an object but is not inherent to the object is known as *vibhāva* (non-nature). On the contrary, whatever is intrinsic to it and not arisen because of external disruptions is known as *svābhāva* (nature). Consider the analogy of a cloth that is dirty. Clothes become dirty due to external factors but are inherently clean. If cleanliness is its nature, then dirt is not natural. Similarly, if serenity is the nature of the soul, then perversions and passions are not. The soul is in an unclean state because of its non-nature, which must be eradicated and cleansed to reach its pure state.

The four *kaṣāyas* (passions), namely anger, pride, deceit and greed, are perversions of the soul and not its intrinsic nature. This knowledge is the stepping stone to liberation. By distinguishing between nature and non-nature, or conscious and inert, one can attain liberation.

The power of *viveka* (discrimination) illuminates a seeker's path. It guides him to the point where he sees the distinction between the conscious and the inert, between the soul and the non-soul, with utmost clarity. In this moment of self-realization, the soul comes into its pristine form. There are no more disturbances or differences in the soul; non-duality follows duality. A lamp's nature is to spread light. Can we expect that it should not spread light? When confusion is erased, what remains in the soul are those qualities which define the soul.

Today, people do not see things for what they are. Therefore, they consider nature to be non-nature. By subscribing to this point of view, they doubt their own innate, infinite power. Until they rectify this mistake, progress in any aspect of life is impossible.

The principle of Jainism is that non-nature will always remain as non-nature, regardless of the passage of infinite time. It

can never become nature. Similarly, nature can never become non-nature. Whatever is the nature of an object will never change.

Jainism divides the vast universe into two parts: matter and soul. Matter is inert while the soul is conscious. Due to association with matter, the soul becomes contaminated. Attachment and aversion arise in the soul, along with passions. Contaminated with passions, the soul interacts with matter and gives rise to karmic *pudgala* (matter). Thus, they interact and disturb each other.

Among the different schools of philosophy, the Cārvākas are materialists. They believe that the vast, visible universe is not conscious but inert. They consider consciousness a perversion of matter. According to them, there is no soul because nothing is conscious. In this way, the Cārvākas give the entire world a material structure.

On the other hand, we have the Vedantins who state that this universe is not inert. Instead, it is nothing but consciousness; even visible matter is consciousness. Hence, to consider it as matter is a delusion of the mind.

The rope-snake analogy is used by Vedantins to prove their point. The argument is this: a rope hangs in front of a window. But when you look at it in the darkness, you think it is a snake. Scared, you reach for a stick to kill it. The emotions and reactions the rope evoked in you were as if it was a real snake. When you look again, you realize it was just a rope, not a snake. Depending on what you see, your emotions change.

So, where was the snake?

The snake was never there — neither before, nor after. It was a delusion, an imaginary thought, an illusion that vanished just as quickly as it arose.

Vedanta scholars apply this analogy to the entire universe. They contend that all inanimate things in the world such as rivers, mountains, trees and houses, as well as all animate things such as humans, animals and birds, are part of the supreme consciousness. No land or mountain is disconnected from consciousness. No embodied creature is divided from consciousness. Whatever energy exists is consciousness. Whatever power exists is consciousness. Just as a rope was mistaken for a snake, people perceive consciousness in various forms. As daylight reveals the illusion of the snake, so also when the seeker receives the light of self-realization, he realizes that the entire expanse is nothing more than an illusion. The soul now expels darkness and becomes one with consciousness.

Jainism, on the other hand, accepts dualism. It explains that the entire universe is made up of not one, but two units. According to Jainism, the inert and conscious are two separate entities, each with their independent existence. As such, Jainism accepts both *jīva* (conscious soul) and *ajīva* (inert matter) as *tattvas* or fundamental principles. The purpose of life is to separate the soul from the non-soul. All *sādhanās* focus on this purpose.

Here, a question arises. If souls are infinite and of the same nature, why are there differences between creatures? Even among human beings, there are differences. Why do these differences exist? The answer is that in its basic pure form, all souls are the same, but because of association with matter, perversions arise and create a multitude.

The ancient Jaina text *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* states, “The soul is one.” This statement is not about quantity, but quality. It means that the infinite souls of this world are all of the same consciousness, have unlimited power, and are pure in

themselves. Because of the invasion of perversions, a soul becomes corrupt and impure.

A garment is spotless, another is entirely stained, and a third is partly clean and partly stained. The reason for the different states of cleanliness depends on the density of the stains. Where there is no staining, there is absolute purity.

The soul, which is on the path of forgiveness, humility and simplicity, eventually gains victory over desires and disorders. It then moves ahead with a natural flow. More and more, it moves into a state of harmony, and the disharmony reduces simultaneously.

This view of Jainism reveals that the soul is consciousness and not inert or inanimate. Therefore, the seeker should reflect, 'I am consciousness, I am not inert. I am not a perversion or passion, nor am I anger, pride, delusion, or greed. I am neither animal nor human, nor a hellish or celestial being. Just as water mixed with mud appears muddy, so also my soul's association with pudgalas (matter) makes it impure.'

When this right perception begins to awaken, the soul claims its pure form. The seeker now sees the animate and inanimate as separate. Even if the soul goes astray once again, it will correct itself. Sooner or later, it will break away from karmic shackles and rise in its pure form. When it embraces its pristine form and becomes independent of inert matter, that state is *mokṣa* or liberation.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra gave a message to all the living beings of this world. Those who believed in this message set out to awaken their inner divinity. Mahāvīra said, "My job is to illuminate the light of discrimination in you. Once you see this light, darkness will not stay for long. When the power of discrimination touches your soul, darkness will vanish."

Mahāvīra attracted thousands of seekers from all walks of life. They heard his words of wisdom with supreme devotion and joy. Many resolved to follow his teachings. But as soon as they went back home, most of them would revert to their usual way of life. They would become trapped in the worldly cycle like before.

The question then arises, if nothing changes, what is the use of listening to discourses?

In explaining the importance of listening to discourses, Mahāvīra said that many have not yet seen even a single ray of light. After infinite births and deaths, they have not yet realized that consciousness is different from inert matter. A discourse can spark the wish to unite with the divine, and once this wish arises, the person will not stay ignorant or forgetful for long! Eventually, he will come onto the right path and attain the supreme state.

Once, Bhagavān Mahāvīra was travelling with his disciples from Magadha to Sindh. In the scorching heat, they walked through the desert plains. The story goes that many disciples died due to starvation and thirst on the way. Yet, none were swayed by the hardships encountered. Whenever they met someone, they would stop to convey the message of *dharma*, then move on at a steady pace.

As the group moved ahead, some moved faster than the others. Gradually, the group got divided into smaller groups. Bhagavān Mahāvīra and Gaṇadhara Gautama were walking together. Gautama followed Mahāvīra like a shadow, not wanting to separate from him for even a moment. As all the saints walked, mindful of not causing any violence to other beings, they felt no anxiety, trouble, or distraction in their minds. They displayed no signs of irritation.

Mahāvīra and Gautama saw an elderly farmer taking his old and weak bulls to till the land. Assessing the farmer’s situation, Mahāvīra told Gautama, “This poor farmer leads a life under such duress and distress. Go and impart words of wisdom to him.”

Gautama said, “As you wish, Master!”

He approached the farmer and inquired, “What is your name? How do you fare?”

The farmer said, “Do your work and let me do mine.”

Gautama said, “O Brother! Kindly spare me a few minutes.”

The farmer replied, “What do you want?”

Gautama asked, “Tell me about your family.”

The farmer said, sadly, “I am alone, I have no one.”

Gautama continued, “What kind of a house do you live in?”

The farmer said, “It has a roof of hay. When it disintegrates, I gather more hay from the forest to repair it.”

Gautama asked, “If you have not been happy till now, how will you find happiness in your old age?”

The farmer replied, “There is no happiness in my destiny! I have lived without it for far too long. My remaining days will also pass in the same manner.”

So, Gautama wisely said, “Why waste your precious life for the sake of one square meal? If you do not prepare for the next life now, you will regret it later.”

The words of wisdom from an ascetic as great as Gautama bore fruit. Faith awakened in the farmer’s heart. With eagerness, he asked, “Is there any happiness in my destiny? Who will save me in this birth? What should I do?”

Gautama answered, “The ocean of eternal happiness flows in every soul. In every pore of the soul, the treasure of inexhaustible joy resides. The one who saves me will also save you. He will save everyone in the world. Everyone holds equal status in Bhagavān’s *Sarvodaya Saṅgha*. All seekers can take shelter with Bhagavān, regardless of caste and creed.”

The old farmer felt assured by Gautama’s words. He took initiation from Gautama right away. The newly initiated disciple then followed Gaṇadhara Gautama as he walked back towards Mahāvīra.

As soon as Gautama saw Mahāvīra, he bowed deeply. The farmer, now a sādhu, saw Bhagavān Mahāvīra with his council and the large crowd of men and women. He became agitated and said, “I expected to find detachment and simplicity, but all I see is pretence.” Saying this, he left the congregation and went back to his earlier way of life.

The turn of events surprised everybody, especially Gautama. He asked Mahāvīra, “Bhagavān! While the farmer was with me, he was not disturbed by such thoughts. He treated me with reverence. Why did such thoughts swamp him suddenly? Why did he run away after coming here?”

Mahāvīra explained, “O beloved of the gods! A long history of previous births led to this event. Listen! During my lifetime as Triṣṭha Vāsudeva, you were my charioteer and this farmer was a lion. I slaughtered him. Hence, in his dying moments, he had feelings of hatred towards me. At that time, you comforted him with your kind and wise words. As he lay dying, you explained to him, ‘O Lion! You are the king of the jungle while Triṣṭha Vāsudeva is the king among men. Do not feel regret or remorse. You have not died at the hands of an ordinary man. Today, a king has died at the hands of a king.’ Thus, the seedlings of love sprouted in his heart for you.”

“After a long series of births and deaths, I now stand before you as Mahāvīra. You are my disciple Gautama and that king is reborn as the farmer. That is why you could persuade him with your words of wisdom. But since he harbours feelings of hatred towards me from a past life, those deep-rooted emotions resurfaced as soon as he saw me.”

Mahāvīra explained further, “He is now trapped in the cycle of karmic shackles and has to bear the consequences of many previous karmas. O Gautama! Do not be upset! Our work is now complete. The seedling of right perception that you have sown in his mind will sprout one day and lead to his liberation.”

Such is the glorious power of right perception and discrimination. Bhagavān Mahāvīra planted the seed in the farmer through Gautama, giving him access to the path of liberation. Even though he may not have immediately joined the path, he would not remain ignorant forever.

The pristine and harmonious nature of the soul is the supreme self, while the opposite is non-self, which is disharmonious and chaotic. Disharmony leads to misery and defeat. One must endeavour to live as well as die in a state of harmony.

Perversions that cause disharmony are violence, untruth, theft and non-chastity. To destroy these perversions, we must capture the true essence of the soul. Brahmacharya, meaning chastity, is the nature of the soul; it is the spontaneous transformation of the soul. Brahmacharya is to live in brahma, which means to reside in the self. A brahmachārī moves inwards and controls the mind and the senses.

*jīvo bambhā jīvammi, ceva cariyā havijja jā jādīno.
taṃ jāṇa bambhaceram, vimukkaparadeha tittissa.*

— *Bhagavatī Ārādhana 878*

“Verily, the soul is brahma. Hence, any action of an ascetic which elevates the soul, such as abstinence of sexual enjoyment, is called brahmacarya.”

Such is the vow of brahmacarya! It is the vow that abides by the soul and is the nature of the soul. To reside in brahma, meaning soul, is true brahmacarya. Those who embrace brahmacarya will never stray from the right path for long. Worldly tendencies and worldly attractions will no longer hold any meaning or joy for them. Instead, they will receive eternal peace, unbridled satisfaction and eternal bliss.

The opposite of brahmacarya is *aham-carya*, which means to reside in the ego. An *ahamcārī* moves from inside outwards and lives in the body to cater to its needs. In aham-carya, one becomes a slave to the mind and the senses.

When karmas are on the rise, we move from self to non-self, and from harmony to disharmony. Our karmic shackles lead us astray. When we become free of our karmic shackles, we move from non-self to self, and from discord to harmony.

In this life, we have to fight enemies and conquer them. But we must first recognize that our real enemies are our feelings and thoughts. We must weaken them to increase the power of self. Self is liberation while non-self is bondage. Right perception is liberation while false perception is bondage.



INNER CONFLICT

The flow of human life is continuous. It is accompanied by both good and evil. No situation exists where evil is not present alongside good. In this way, man's life has become a Kurukshetra.

The Kurukshetra is nothing but the inner struggles of our hearts. The good and evil tendencies are the Paṇḍavas and Kauravas. The Paṇḍavas represent nobility while the Kauravas represent ignobility. The Mahābhārata of our lives has been going on since time immemorial. It is still going on today.

As long as we are unable to curb the mind, overcome conflict, and allow noble tendencies to triumph over ignoble ones, our lives will not head anywhere.

Many thinkers and philosophers have spoken about the outer and inner worlds, paying greater emphasis to the inner universe because external reflections come from within. If the feeling of friendship awakens in the heart, the whole world appears as a friend. If feelings of hostility and hatred rear their heads, the entire world appears as an enemy, and even benefactors look like opponents. Rāvaṇa regarded Rāma as his enemy and Gośālaka found even the nectar-like words of Mahāvīra poisonous. The basic tenet of ancient philosophies 'as is the vision, so is the world' explains that how a person perceives is how his world becomes.

The external struggle of man has its roots within. His inner tendencies are what cause him to live in conflict with the outer world. There is a beautiful metaphor to illustrate this point.

There was a palace constructed entirely of glass, from top to bottom. One day, a dog found its way inside. He was alone. Inside, he saw a piece of bread. As soon as he went to pick it

up, however, he noticed hundreds of dogs fighting for it. The dog started fighting with them in his struggle to get the piece of bread. In doing so, he was crushed by the shattering glass walls. The piece of bread remained untouched on the floor with no one to pick it up. The dog's mental framework gave rise to the perception of hundreds of dogs wanting the same thing, and in fighting them, he destroyed himself as well.

This is what is happening to human beings today. If you wish to solve the world's problems, first address the issues within yourself. If you understand the inner point of view, whatever you desire will appear before you.

Those who do service with a true spirit earn real fame. There is an old story of a small village whose headman served everyone. He undertook the welfare of everyone. When he became old, he left his house and took the seat of the village Panchayat. He thought that by doing so, he would be able to serve the villagers even in the last hours of his life. Whoever came to him seeking advice would go away having erased all the conflicts in their mind.

With the dedicated efforts of the old man, feelings of unity started to spread throughout the village. Even though people from different castes and social classes lived there, his efforts made them come together as one. The old headman became famous, and the villagers developed such reverence for him that they followed his advice in everything they did.

This is the real definition of a leader. A leader is someone who brings unity to differences and who can unite people walking on different paths.

The R̥gveda describes God thus, "He is the mighty one, the God who has a thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand legs. Even when he touches the entire globe, he is still yards outside that sphere."

If you reflect upon the description, you will find that it aptly describes a leader. A leader also has a thousand heads. Whatever he thinks, a thousand others start believing. It also means someone who can unite a thousand different ideas into one. That is the mark of a true leader.

A human being has two legs, but when a thousand feet tread the path shown by the leader, they cover the whole world. A leader serves the public and unites the masses while keeping away from the pleasures and enjoyment of the world's splendour.

A leader builds the country, the society, the city. If he gets embroiled in worldly matters, he cannot accomplish his goals or hold his head high.

Here is a follow up to the story of the old headman. It was evening time with a cool wind blowing. Some youngsters were chatting with the old headman who was teaching them words of wisdom. After a while, the old man said, "Just by sitting around, the body does not benefit. Let us go for a walk."

All started walking and reached a pleasant spot on the outskirts. After a while, a traveller passed by. Approaching them, he asked the old man abruptly, "Sir, what kind of a village is this? How are the people here?"

The traveller asked this question without any greeting or introduction. His manner of speaking was harsh, with no sweetness in it. The old man said, "First tell me about your village! How is it? How are the people there?"

The traveller replied, "Don't even ask about my village. It is a village of sinners and demons. There is not a single good man in my village. The people ruined me; they looked at me with hatred and spoke to me with animosity. I have just one

prayer to God that if I ever return there, may I find it deserted and in ruins.”

The old man now said, “Brother! Be careful; our village is worse than that. You have at least survived and escaped with your life from that village, but if you come into this village, I cannot even assure you of your life. What will you do in such a place? My own life is hellish here.”

On hearing the old man say this, the traveller went away. The young boys who were listening to these words started thinking, “This old man seems to have evil thoughts about our village. Perhaps he is planning its downfall. He is saying that it is a village of demons where no one is good. What is the strange mindset of our leader?”

Within a short while, another traveller passed by. He also asked the same question about the village and its people. In turn, the old man asked him the same question about his village.

The traveller said, “My village is nothing less than heaven. I have spent the happiest days of my life there. But my misfortune did not leave me; bad luck struck again and again. I have decided to try my luck in another place. My heart is still in my village; only my body is with me. When the tide turns in my life, I will return to my village.”

After listening to the traveller, the old man said, “Much as you speak about your village, our village is even better. Come and live here. We will not let you go elsewhere. Of what use is a village which cannot feed its guests? An ideal village is one where even those who come with tears, leave only with smiles. Such is the glory of our village. Here, every guest is respected and honoured.”

Seeing the goodness of the old man and feeling assured by his words, the traveller walked into the village.

Now, the young men were perplexed by the conflict between the earlier comment and this one. They could not contain their curiosity. One of them gathered the courage to ask the old man, “Baba, you first criticized our village and later praised it to the skies. What is the mystery behind this? Why do you have two different views about the same village?”

The old man said, “The first person was a spark of fire; he will burn wherever he lives. Think about it! The place in which many generations have lived, and where he has lived for many decades of his own life, he could not make a single friend and well-wisher! Instead, he called them all his enemies. As long as he lived in that village, he spread his evil values. He will do the same wherever he goes. It is better for our village that he does not come in.”

The old man further said, “The other man also lived among people who have done him some harm. But instead of seeing them as enemies, he thinks of them as friends. It is healthy to live with such a good man. The moral of the story is: If you are good, the world is good.”

If you are good, the whole world will be good for you. But, if you allow the burning flames of hatred and animosity to reside in your heart, then you can travel far and wide, from one corner of the world to the other, and yet, you will not find goodness anywhere.

We must first make an effort to cleanse the inside. This reflects well in Mahāvīra’s words:

appā nayī veyaraṇī, appā me kūḍasāmālī.
appā kāmāduhā dheṇū, appā me nandanam vaṇam.
— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 20.36*

“My own soul is the river Vaitaraṇī (a river in hell) and the thorny tree of Śālmali. It is also the miraculous cow Kāmadhenu and the divine garden Nandana.”

The question is — How can the river Vaitaraṇī and the thorny tree of Śālmali, which are symbols of hellish sorrow as well as the miraculous cow Kāmadhenu and the divine garden Nandana, which are symbols of joyous paradise, all be forms of the soul? If the soul is its friend, how can it be the enemy as well? And if it is the enemy, how can it be a friend too?

The truth is that there are noble and ignoble tendencies in the soul. Due to ignoble tendencies, countless lives have been wasted! If you cannot overcome them now, many more lives will be ruined in the future.

Human birth is very significant; its glory cannot be sung enough. Human birth is more glorious than the birth of the celestials. Bhagavān Mahāvīra has addressed all his seekers repeatedly as *devānuppīyā*, meaning ‘beloved of the gods’.

The celestials in the heavens also praise those born in the holy land of India, calling them blessed. How long will it be before we become such human beings again so that we can break our shackles and become free?

The ancient Purāṇas also echo the importance of human life. It is the rise of *puṇya* (meritorious actions) which leads to birth as a human being. The question before us is, how to make it worthwhile?

Both Rāma and Rāvaṇa were born as children. Rāma was not born as the greatest of human beings known as “maryādā puruṣottama”. Nor was Rāvaṇa a monster from the time of his birth. As they grew up, one became Rāma and the other, Rāvaṇa. Rāma was able to harness his noble tendencies to

defeat evil instincts within. Rāvaṇa also had noble tendencies; however, he allowed his evil endeavours to overthrow them.

Should we now say that man is the slave of his own tendencies? And the rise or fall of these tendencies decides his fortune or misfortune?

No, we should remember that all tendencies, whether they are good or evil, are created by man alone. As much as he is a product of these tendencies, he is also their creator. That is why the scriptures state:

*appā kattā vikattā ya, duhāṇa ya suhāṇa ya.
appā mittamamittam ca, duppaṭṭhiya supaṭṭhio.
— Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 20.37*

“The soul is the begetter of both happiness and sorrow; it is its own friend when it treads the path of righteousness and its own enemy when it treads the forbidden path.”

Creating tendencies and overcoming them is the independent power of the soul. If it were not so, then all the efforts and endeavours of man would have failed.

That is why Ānanda sought the path of spirituality in his life. He had resolved at the feet of Bhagavān Mahāvīra that from then on, he would not indulge bad thoughts or evil tendencies, and would walk on the right path of life which was non-violent and virtuous. Śrāvaka Ānanda embraced the vow of brahmacarya.

What Śrāvaka Ānanda achieved can be achieved by all of us. For this, you must appreciate the difference between desire and love. Desire is filled with lust and the absence of chastity. On the other hand, love walks on the path of sacrifice and ignites the light of duty. It has nothing to do with the darkness of lust; it is pure in itself.

Man is alone by himself, but he wants to connect with another so that he may not stay alone. He also wants affection in relationships. When he falls in love, he wants to unite his loved one with his life.

When two people are attracted to each other because of desire, it brings lust into their lives. This attraction gives rise to the poisonous waves of perversions and passions. But when they unite in true love, passions and perversions do not arise.

To understand the differences, consider the example of cow's milk and the milk of the poisonous plant 'āk'. Both are called milk, and both are white. But, one is filled with elixir and the other with poison. One gives strength with every drop while the other brings harm.

Both Rāvaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa were drawn to Sītā. But while Rāvaṇa looked at her with lust, Lakṣmaṇa looked upon her as a mother. His feelings were selfless. He gave up all his comforts to serve Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa attained fame with his nobility while Rāvaṇa came to be known as a demon.

When Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā and travelled across the skies, she dropped her ornaments along the way so that Rāma would come to know the path. When Rāma's eyes fell on them, he lifted them and asked, "Look at these Lakṣmaṇa, don't these belong to Sītā?"

Lakṣmaṇa replied, "Brother! I cannot say whether this bracelet belongs to Mother Sītā or not. I do not even know if these earrings are hers. I only recognize her anklets. When I used to bow to her, my gaze was at her feet alone."

This reply shows the lofty heights that human character can attain. But today's humans are living in a toxic environment of lust and pleasure! Where do they have the illuminating and serene eyes to see this greatness of Lakṣmaṇa?

You cannot measure Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Mahāvīra and Buddha with your yardstick because their lives were too great to be measured with your minuscule yardstick.

Look at the life of Śrāvaka Ānanda. He undertook the vow of brahmacarya at the feet of Mahāvīra. He resolved to establish a relationship of pure affection towards all women except his wife and to consider them as mothers and sisters.

When such high ideals fill one's life, negative tendencies begin to dissipate by themselves. The perversions and lustfulness of this world have found a prominent place from time immemorial. They bring about downfall in life. But when noble tendencies awaken, then that very life surrenders itself to duty. Even one single act of nobility and goodness can take life to lofty heights. You need to discover this power. The path of brahmacarya can be your powerhouse.

Our present life has two forms; it is neither pure consciousness nor completely inanimate. This form that we have — our physical body — is a combination of both inert matter and consciousness.

Brahmacarya has unlimited power; its power strengthens our outer body, inner body and the mind. It is the fire in which the soul purifies to become gold. In that fire, the karmic blemishes which are stuck to the soul from eternity turn to ashes.

Man has to cross the turf of the present impure life and reach the final point of purity. Only by strengthening both mind and body can we traverse our path. And the way to enhance both is brahmacarya. While physical exercise increases bodily strength and the four primary vows of non-violence, truth, non-stealing and non-possession increase mental strength, the vow of brahmacarya provides unlimited power to both the body and mind.

The great texts state, “*tavesu vā uttama bahmacheram.*” This means that among all the austerities, brahmacharya is the most supreme form of austerity. Those fortunate people who practice this vow make their life pure, sacred and happy.



FOCAL POINT OF POWER

Our present life is the result of the combination of body and soul. The body is material, inanimate and made of the five elements. Soul is consciousness and not made of any element. When this life ends, the body remains here while the soul wanders into its next sojourn. The body is not the soul, and the soul is not the body. Both are fundamentally different from each other.

An iron ball lying in fire starts to absorb heat into every particle until there is no part of it which does not have both iron and fire. Similarly, the soul infuses life into every part of the human body, until there is no part which is only the body or only the soul. In this way, even though both are intrinsically different, they share an intimate and vital relationship. Both have a profound influence on each other's actions. This is why when we think about life, both body and soul begin to swing before our eyes. We cannot consider either of them by ignoring the other.

Despite that, having the knowledge and experience that these are indeed different is known as *bheda vijñāna*. Attaining this knowledge is a practice of every spiritual seeker's life. Whether the seeker is a householder or a saint, he has the same goal — to understand the soul as distinct from the body, senses and mind. Even though emotions and passions arise in the soul, the pure soul is distinct from them all.

One who understands this will become rooted in his spiritual practice. No more is he distracted by happiness or sorrow. As long as this fundamental truth eludes him, he remains a puppet to both: happiness excites him while sorrow fills him with fear. By gaining knowledge of the difference between them, he is not disturbed by either. He realizes that when sorrow

comes, one must not stay in sorrow but in the soul. And when joy comes, one must not stay in joy but in the soul. One must clearly understand that the good and evil are not the pure form of the soul, but a consequence of the perversions and modes that arise in the soul by the power of karmic matter, known as pudgalas. By reflecting on this knowledge, the seeker starts realizing his true form.

There are eight karmas which bind the soul and create problems in our life:

1. *Mohanīya karma*: Gives rise to delusion
2. *Jñānavaraṇīya karma*: Obstructs knowledge
3. *Darśanāvaraṇīya karma*: Obstructs right faith
4. *Antarāya karma*: Creates obstacles in our actions
5. *Āyu karma*: Determines life-span in each birth
6. *Nāma karma*: Determines the type of bodily form in each birth
7. *Gotra karma*: Determines caste, family and social status
8. *Vedanīya karma*: Gives rise to bodily pain

As a person progresses on the spiritual path, his karmic burdens start to reduce. Through this process, he first becomes free of the karmas which produce delusion (*mohanīya*). Next, he frees himself of the karmas which obstruct knowledge (*jñānavaraṇīya*), faith (*darśanāvaraṇīya*), and create obstacles (*antarāya*). Having freed himself of these four karmas, he is now an enlightened human being. However, he continues to live in this world, not yet free of his physical body.

As long as the karma which determines life-span (*āyu karma*) remains, he has to live in the body. And as long as he is bound by the karma which determines the type of bodily form in each birth (*nāma karma*), he will continue to take birth in

one body after another. In the next stage, these two and the remaining two karmas will also be annihilated. After that, the soul will attain its pure form. This is the journey of the soul.

In this spiritual journey, how can we inculcate the eternal principles of non-violence, truth, non-stealing and chastity in our *sādhana*? By knowing ourselves as distinct from the body even while living in this body. Therefore, even though the annihilation of karmas may take place at a later time, we can right away employ the light of discrimination and start detaching ourselves from them.

All the *sādhana*s and rituals, such as fasting, vows, austerity and chanting are done to gain this experience. Similarly, meditation, *sāmāyika* (a prayer ritual) and *svādhyāya* (self-study) also serve this very purpose. Karmic shackles of many lives are annihilated. The seeker is redeemed and attains his purest self.

As inert matter reduces and the accompanying perversions that arise in the soul decrease, the soul becomes purer and purer. The purity that increases in the soul is nothing but dharma. As dharma increases, it breaks our shackles, and we attain liberation.

What role does brahmacharya play in this?

As we read earlier, ‘brahma’ means the pure self and ‘charya’ means to move towards the self. It means to walk towards the divine spirit, orienting towards it and doing the necessary *sādhana*.

Brahmacharya has the power to illuminate the divine light in life. The practice of brahmacharya is essential to conquer all other perversions as well. This entire exercise is a powerful inner battle. You may have noticed that it is easy for man

to observe rituals, but very difficult for him to practice brahmacarya. On this path, he will face many conflicts and perversions. That is why many seekers get distracted from this path. On this tough path, only a few rare persons can proceed and attain the final goal of liberation. Regarding this, Bhartṛhari has stated clearly:

*mattebha kumbha-dalane bhuvi santi śūrāḥ, kecita
 pracamḍa-mṛgarāja vadhepi dākṣaḥ
 kintu bṛdomī balinām purataḥ pratahya, kandarpa-darpa-
 dalane viralā manuṣyaāḥ*

— Śṛṅgāra Śatakam 2.73

“Some people on this earth are brave enough to crush the head of an elephant while some are skilled in killing a lion. Yet, even in the presence of such strong men, I firmly state that the men who can crush the power of Kāmadeva the god of passion, are rare.”

According to Jaina scriptures, the sādhu undertakes the vow of complete brahmacarya. In his sādhanā, there is no exemption even for a wife. That is why his brahmacarya is said to be complete. But here, we ask: Are external vows enough? In his inner world, can his brahmacarya be truly perfect? Has his being annihilated every iota of lust? Have all his inner conflicts ended? Have all the drops of passion dried up? No, all this cannot happen just by external vows. It is not that one utters holy words and instantly the sādhanā of brahmacarya reaches its zenith! The sādhu too has to fight a long battle with the perversions of his mind.

I will reiterate that it is unrealistic to expect that as soon as one embraces the life of a sādhu, the principles of truth, non-violence and brahmacarya reach a state of completion in his being. If this were possible, a sādhu would immediately reach

a state of complete perfection. Complete perfection leads to the pure divine state of the soul, which leads to liberation. But, a person who embraces the sādhu's way of life does not instantly attain the state of siddha.

When a person becomes a sādhu, he undertakes a lifelong commitment. He has to walk on the path continuously. However, he may stumble and go astray because of the accumulated *saṃskāras* from previous births. Therefore, the sādhu has to be extra mindful every step of the way.

*jakumbhe joiuvagūdhe, āsubhitatte nāsamuvayāi,
evittiyāhim aṇagārā, saṃvāseṇa nāsamuvayānti.*

— *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra 1.4.1.27*

“Just as a jar filled with lac is destroyed in a fire, so also, a sādhu who indulges in sexual contact loses his character.”

The mind is such a stubborn and restless horse that even though you steer it in one direction, it races in some other direction. The question is — who is stronger, the rider or the horse?

A true spiritual seeker has to control the horse of his mind. Gradually as the reins of knowledge fall into the hands of the rider, he can guide the horse towards his intended direction. A saint once said, “The mind holds the reins over one and all, but he who reins the mind is the winner!” Ask yourself, ‘Am I sitting on my horse or is my horse sitting on me? Am I wearing my clothes or are my clothes wearing me?’ We earn name and fame in society, but have they now clutched us in their grip? Indeed, the world has such a hold on us that we are wonderstruck!

A guru and his disciple would go to bathe in the river at dawn. One morning when they reached the banks of the river, the mist obstructed their vision. Both of them entered the river

and started bathing. Suddenly the master spotted a black thing, flowing away with the current. The Guru said to the disciple, “It looks like someone’s blanket is flowing away in the river. Go and bring it.”

The disciple said, “O Master! I will not be able to catch it.” The Guru reprimanded, “You are so strong, and yet you cannot catch a single blanket! Ok, let me go.”

The Guru went to catch the black blanket, realizing too late that it was a bear! As soon as he grabbed the bear’s fur coat, its claws got hold of him tightly. So now, it was the Guru trying to break free from the animal’s clutches.

The disciple could only make out that a struggle was taking place in the waters. He called out, “O Master! If you are unable to catch the blanket, let it go!”

To this, the Guru replied, “Your Guru wants to let go of the blanket, but the blanket is not letting him go.”

This is the state of the whole world today. We take a liking to something and want to possess it, but become trapped in its clutches instead. We become so entangled in things that we cannot get rid of them easily.

Although it is very difficult to conquer the human mind, man can harness his inner energies to free himself in one powerful stroke by practicing the art of non-violence, truth, non-stealing and chastity.

The truth is, the mind is simply an entity of the soul’s making. The soul has given birth to the mind. Therefore, the one who gives birth should also be the one to keep it under control. Instead of the soul being our guide, we go through our entire lives being slaves to our minds. A strong and powerful mind becomes a curse instead of a boon. Infinite time passes, but the mind cannot annihilate all its passions. Never satisfied; it is always hungry for more. When you stand on the banks of a river, you see that the water is continuously in motion. This is

how the mind works through every moment — whether one is asleep or awake. It is forever restless and full of turbulence. The tendencies of the mind vary from moment to moment. Therefore, blessed is the person who has conquered his mind. He is like the leader of an army, the army of thoughts and desires.

Just as the commander imposes a certain discipline on the army, the spiritual seeker exercises control over desires that arise in the mind. This is the path to liberation. On this path, we learn to align our senses, mind and body to the centre of the soul.

When all the powers of the soul are concentrated in one centre, the power of brahmacharya increases. The stronger this concentration, the greater is one's power of chastity.

When a seeker exercises control over his life, his body, mind and senses in a correct manner, the proportion of attachment and aversion decreases in the soul. As the modes of attachment and aversion lessen, the practice of chastity simultaneously increases and becomes more evolved.

In this way, the practice of brahmacharya is both external and internal. It does not operate at the level of the soul or the body alone. It not only strengthens the soul's progress, it also adds to bodily strength.

The scriptures tell us that a child born to righteous parents is blessed in all ways. He has a strong mind and a healthy body. On the contrary, when we see young children who are dull and depleted of energy, it is often due to the sinful conduct of the parents. Such children get progressively weaker after they are born. If the initial seed is weak, how can the dependent outgrowth be strong? How can a strong and powerful soul reside in a weak and inferior body?

In this context, we must reflect on the concepts of *saṃhanana*, meaning bodily strength, and *saṃthāna*, meaning bodily structure. Lay people assume that bodily attributes do not make a difference to spiritual evolution. They think that it does not matter if the body does not have a good structure or beauty. They believe that at the most, what matters is bodily strength so that one can participate in yoga, āsanas and other spiritual practices. Jaina texts list many attributes of the soul in this regard, but also mention bodily strength and structure as essential attributes. A stable, balanced, well proportioned and strong body is the only kind that can support high thinking, high resolve, strength to adhere to one's principles and the strength to stay rooted in the face of worldly struggles.

There is a phrase in Jaina texts known as *vajraṛṣabhanārāñca saṃhanana*, meaning a body as strong as the thunderbolt. This is a necessary attribute to attain liberation. Our spiritualism rests on the foundation of materialism where bodily strength is the basis. However, this does not imply that a person with a strong body will definitely attain liberation. A strong body is one spiritual pre-requisite, along with many others. In the end, one will transcend the body, but this is possible only if one has attained the physical strength required for one's spiritual practices.

If the foundation of any building is strong, you can safely build a magnificent house with many floors. If the foundation is weak or swampy, you will not succeed. Even if made, it may not be strong enough to last for long.

A devotee began a project of building a vast temple. When the labourers were digging to lay the foundation, someone asked, "You have already dug 60 feet of ground for the foundation, how much deeper do you want to go?"

The builder answered, “We may go as deep as 100, 200 or 300 feet until we find a concrete, strong rock! That is where we will lay the foundation. We have not yet decided on the depth of the foundation, but only about its strength. Our resolve is that when we find a strong rock, we will build the foundation. If we lay the foundation like this, the walls and rooms will withstand natural calamities and last forever.”

The same principle applies to the construction of life. Undoubtedly, spirituality is essential, but we must strengthen it with proper bodily care too. The material and the spiritual have to support each other. The spiritual seeker must not ignore his bodily strength when planning his goals.

The power of brahmacharya first makes our body strong. Physical ability does not come in the absence of chastity. Therefore, to attain spiritual strength through physical strength, brahmacharya is required. The more powerful the body becomes by practicing brahmacharya, the more it will be able to tolerate the storms of the world and the problems that will come in the way of sādhanā with ease.



THE ESSENCE OF LIFE

Many religious sects speak only about the soul. They contend that if the body remains unwell, it does not matter. One has to leave the body behind one day anyway. Therefore, they do not pay due attention to their bodies. Such people undertake long and rigorous spiritual practices, yet they are not able to strengthen the soul. They are not able to illuminate the soul.

In the periods of Bhagavān Pārśvanātha and Bhagavān Mahāvīra, many such seekers did not have precise knowledge of their goals. Not understanding the purpose of their *sādhanā*, they were bent upon punishing the body. Bhagavān Mahāvīra called such practices childish and stemming from ignorance. He stated that there was no mindfulness behind their austerities. And how can one practice religion without discrimination and mindfulness?

Those who subscribe to the view that this body is the root cause of all problems believe that if they destroyed the physical body, their soul will automatically become pure. Hence, they undertake rigorous austerities. In summers, they cover their body with ashes and face the bright sunlight. They believe that when the skin begins to burn, the perversions of the soul will also burn away. In winters, they stand in chilled water for hours to purify the soul. Many spend days and months standing rooted in one place. With such harsh *sādhanā*, they inflict tortures upon their bodies.

But, the truth is that despite sacrificing one's life in this way, one does not attain the desired divine light. Bhagavān Pārśvanātha said, "The suffering is fierce, yet one does not gain knowledge and truth!"

There is a mention of *sādhakas* (spiritual practitioners) in the time of Bhagavān Mahāvīra who would bring food as alms

and then wash it twenty-one times in water. What remained was utterly tasteless, which they would consume. There are also descriptions of ascetics who would make a vessel with many compartments and then resolve that what was added to a certain compartment would be fed to birds, another to someone else, and another to themselves. In this exercise, sometimes even three to four days would pass without any alms in their compartment. They would remain hungry. Such rigorous forms of *sādhana* lead to *akāma nirjarā*, meaning unintentional shedding of karmas, but the ultimate truth cannot be attained in this way. These austerities do not have much merit in the true spiritual sense.

We hear of even more terrible practices in this context. One instance is of a person who picked up something lying on the way, and then realized he had committed a crime. He felt that he had sinned because of his hands and feet, and went ahead and chopped off his limbs! Another is about a seeker in whose mind perversions arose on seeing a beautiful woman. He then blamed his eyes for leading him astray and damaged them with hot iron rods, blinding himself for life.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra called these types of austerities as *bāla tapa*, meaning childish or amateur austerities because they are not based on right knowledge. Do people realize that even if they torment the body in fire, they would not benefit unless they destroy the perversions and negative tendencies of the mind? The only result of mindlessly destroying and abandoning the old body is the appearance of a new one. What gives birth to the body are the results of perversions such as attachment and aversion, and passions such as anger, pride, delusion and greed. As long as they do not get destroyed, the soul wears one body after another. This soul has adopted eternal bodies and abandoned eternal bodies. If the soul would benefit just by leaving the body, then every creature in the world would have attained salvation by now.

If perversions arise from seeing or hearing, you need to discipline the mind. Destroying the eyes or ears will achieve nothing. If you want to stop stealing, do not chop off your hands, instead, learn to control the mind.

Your hands and feet are valuable instruments. If they can be used to hurt others, they can also be used to give joy to others. You can push someone into the river with your hands as well as save someone from drowning. Our limbs are our tools. If used wisely, they will bring welfare and happiness.

Once, a person who had kept his lips sealed for years with a coil met Gandhiji. He had sealed his lips so that he would not speak. With his lips sealed, he could not eat solids and would sip either milk or some other liquid through the gaps in the coil.

Gandhiji asked, “What have you done?” He replied by writing, “I am in silence. And for fear of breaking the vow of silence, I have sealed my lips.”

Gandhiji said to him, “If the instinct to speak is not broken from within, what can be gained by merely sealing the lips? To avoid a certain wrongdoing, do you have to stop yourself from doing other good deeds? By not sealing your lips, you could have offered words of solace and comfort to those who are hurt. You could have taught those who came to you to study. If you had disciplined the tendency to speak, there was no need to seal the lips. Now, the lips are sealed, yet the mind is not at peace.”

Hearing these words, the man opened the coil around his lips. Gandhi’s words of wisdom lit up the truth.

The body is the main centre of our religious activities. As long as you are in this body, you can be a sādhu or a householder, and observe the vows accordingly. It requires mindfulness

to utilize this human body. We should not let it stray in lustfulness, nor wander in dark pathways.

You have to exercise the body along with doing spiritual practices. Bhagavān Mahāvīra clearly stated, “O Seeker! Exercise your body and stop treating it with kid gloves, as if it is fragile. Alongside, win over your desires as well. Leave behind the attitude of animosity and let go of all attachments. You will find the supreme mystical road to joy.”

How clear and beautiful are the instructions! The body has to undergo austerity, but the desires of the mind also have to be destroyed alongside. The mind as well as the body have to be purified. This is twofold sādhanā.

The principle of Jaina religion is not destroying the body, but preparing it for sādhanā, which will lead to the welfare of the soul as well as of humanity.

Heat purifies ghee. But that doesn't mean one pours ghee directly into the fire! Instead, it is poured into a vessel which is heated over a low flame. Heating the vessel will purify the ghee without destroying either the vessel or the ghee. Similarly, this body must undergo penance and austerity, but the intent is to neither scorch the body nor oppress the soul. The goal is only to remove the passions and perversions for purifying the body and soul.

When you reflect on this principle, you will see that a mindful seeker uses his body to redeem himself while a thoughtless person uses it to walk the path to hell. But, what is the fault of the body? It is the fault of the person who uses it.

One who uses this body to wander in the circle of desires, wastes the power of the body. He treads the wrong path. As the Jaina seers tell us, the body is not for sense experiences or lust, nor is it for beauty. We have taken human birth for a

higher purpose. Our body can become a powerful medium for that purpose.

The body is not wrong in itself. Wrong is when it is misused. When the seeker is not mindful, the body does wrong things; the senses walk on the wrong path; and the mind goes astray. When the seeker is mindful, the body, senses and mind move towards self-evolution.

The instrument of Mahāvīra's magnificent sādhanā was the body itself. Pārśvanātha and Rāma also glowed in this world by adorning the human form. However, Rāvaṇa chose to walk the path to hell. The defect is not in the body; you can use it for either good or evil.

In this form, the central axis of sādhanā is both body and soul. Jainism does not teach us to destroy the body in the name of worship, or forget the soul while worshipping the body. In either case, one is misled from the true path.

Brahmacarya is a sādhanā through which both the body and soul become powerful. Outwardly, it keeps the body in good form, and inwardly, strengthens the mind and purifies the thoughts.

Humans have a bodily form that gradually grows from birth. As long as desires do not arise, the body develops well. The development of lust and perversions not only hamper its growth, but also causes its decline.

If the fire of passion that arises in one's youth is not controlled but ignited further, one gets entangled in temptations and destroys his own *tejas* (power) and *ojas* (strength). If these energies are not channelled properly, the body tends to smoulder and die an early death. Even if the person lives a long life, he is beset by old age before his time. Hundreds

of diseases find a home in his body. The body is no more capable of enjoying pleasures or practicing austerities. One who has destroyed the body through indulgences at a young age cannot engage the body in worldly or spiritual pursuits. The pleasures for which he has engaged his body now forsake him. This is the paradox of life.

Therefore, it is the sacred duty of man to be mindful at every step. Sometimes, just one wrong, mindless step can cause severe damage in life. Parents must take care that their children are not learning negative *saṃskāras* or indulging in perversions. They must teach their children the power of restraint and self-control. This will help the children take mature decisions as adults, and plan their family life and work life in a mindful manner.

Today, we are facing several problems in India, one of which is overpopulation. Some experts suggest that we must regulate childbirth through scientific means. No one can disagree with this. But when a solution comes from artificial scientific means, we need to think. Has the human being become such a slave of disorders and perversions that he cannot rise above them? Should he be compelled to resort to artificial means? We have the tool of *brahmacarya* which is more beautiful than other measures. Using scientific measures would mean that human beings need not control their lust; rather, they can play with the fire of passion unbridled. But if *brahmacarya* is added at the right time to the body and the resolve of chastity is taken at an early age, life will grow with abundance. If this does not happen, disease or decay takes over. It destroys the original power of human life.

*saṁvaṅgam peccaṁto, itthīṇaṁ tāsū bhuyadi dubbhāvaṁ.
so baṁhacerabhāvaṁ, sukkadi khalu duddharaṁ dharadi.*

– *Kundakunda Anuprekṣā 11.80*

“He observes the most difficult but pious virtue of chastity, who is neither infatuated nor attracted even after observing feminine charms.”

When I went to Shimla, I passed through a village called Dharmapura. There is a tuberculosis hospital in the village. One of my devotees who was sick and admitted there wanted to meet me. We went there and saw that hundreds of sick people were admitted there, all suffering from tuberculosis. Some had been there for as long as four to five years.

One patient said, “When I am here, I become fine, but fall sick as soon as I go back home.” The reason was that while staying in the hospital, his body responded to the discipline. But at home, it suffered from his indulgences. So any improvement in the hospital was ruined in the house. And time and again, he had to come to Dharmapura.

Jainism, as well as other religions, state an important point: Do not consider this body as something ordinary. Neither indulge it in the fire of pleasures nor extinguish it in the fire of mindless austerity. Those austerities which cross the boundaries of scriptures and physical strength, and which are performed only to torture the body are blind austerities. The path of excess or extreme is not the path of religion. Over-indulgence collapses the body just like mindless austerities. One must set limits keeping one’s strength in mind.

Walking on the right path will make your body so powerful that when needed, sufferings are tolerable. If the centre of the body is strong, the soul will remain firm in its spiritual practice. Hence, do not think of the welfare of the soul by slaying the body, nor make the body softer by killing the soul.

Buddha was engaged in rigorous austerities during his period of sādhanā. His body became weak, senses became impaired,

and even his memory started fading. It is said that at this time, some musicians who were playing the veena passed by. The chief musician explained the art of playing the musical instrument. He said that it was necessary to keep the strings of the instrument neither too taut nor too loose, but to maintain them in a balanced, middle position. When the instrument plays in this middle range, the perfect sound emerges. Upon hearing this, Buddha's contemplation took a new turn. For undertaking sādhanā, human life must be lived within certain boundaries. These boundaries are neither in indulgence nor in austerity. Just as a veena needs to be strung to the right tautness and tuned to the correct range to emit the perfect sound, the mind, body and senses must be tightened just to retain flexibility.

When flexibility is there, the strings of life will resonate with music. The sweet sounds of religion will emerge from them. But if life is left unattended and the senses and mind are let loose, life will not resonate with music. Rāvaṇa had left his strings open. Even after having 16,000 queens, he kidnapped Sītā and as a result, he could not redeem himself.

Chastity has a great purpose in human life. It is a healing medicine. If it is not used properly, then life will disintegrate in sensual pleasures. Nowadays, most people have diseased bodies and most homes have sick beds. One of the main reasons for this is lack of strength in the body. In turn, the reason for not having a strong body is due to indulgence. There are many brilliant and spectacular examples of brahmacharya in India's history. Today's youth must learn from them.

Let me ask you: Where is the brilliance on the face of Indian youth today? Where did the aura which shone from their heads vanish? Where is the illuminating spark on their forehead? Everything has turned to ashes in the fire of lust.

Today, instead of natural beauty, efforts are made to create beauty by artificial means such as lotions and creams.

The beauty of external applications is not the real beauty of life. By showcasing such artificial beauty, you can mislead others, but not for long.

Imagine a tree which is drying up. In this situation, if an artist wanted to infuse spring into it, he would not be able to do so by painting it. Spring will come when the life force of the tree has greenery in it. At that time, there will be no need to apply any external colours. The abundantly rich tree will automatically manifest the signs of living.

The real colour of life is chastity, but it is facing destruction. People are using facial applications to look youthful. If you want to make your face luminous, your mind strong, your life successful and charitable, then embrace the practice of brahmacharya. This will help you in your present life and life hereafter.



THE ILLUMINATED LIFE

What is the purpose of human life and this beautiful body? Why are songs sung about the importance and glory of human life? The precious life of man is not for falling prey to lust. If a person spends his life only in the pursuit of passions, he will be considered a fool. Imagine a person who has received the *wish-fulfilling Cintāmaṇi* gem. Instead of *fulfilling* all his desires, if he just uses it to purchase some rotten carrots and radish, will he not be called a fool?

Human life is also like this gem — it can help attain all the worldly and divine blessings. With this life we can achieve all forms of worldly pleasures, prosperity as well as the heights of spiritual life. We can make this life so magnificent that we receive joy not just in this life but even in the next. But if we use it just for worldly happiness, it is like wasting the precious gem.

This great life of man is sustained only on the foundation of brahmacarya. It is only brahmacarya that makes the body strong and life prosperous. A strong person will make his life beautiful, whether he is a householder or a sādhu. Wherever you place him, the stream of power will burst forth. Such a person will forsake life but never his duties.

The strength in thought comes from the practice of brahmacarya. But if someone’s mind is engaged in the filth of lust day and night, will that mind spread fragrance or a bad odour?

An Ācārya has said, “Manasaṃ viddhi mānuṣaṃ.” It means, “As is the mind, so is the man.” A good mind makes one a good human and bad mind, a bad human. Brahmacarya is the pure stream of mind and *abrahmacarya* (being devoid of brahmacarya) is the filthy stream of mind.

The biggest fault of the human mind is the lack of brahmacarya. Mistakes arising from lack of chastity can never be forgiven.

A Vedic sage rendered a beautiful prayer for pure resolves, “O Bhagavān, I do not want anything else. Money, family, prestige, respect and honour come and go. My only wish is that my mind and resolve remain pure and thoughts remain serene.”

You can gain wealth and prosperity, but if your thoughts are not pure, then that wealth will drag you to hell. If you acquire riches but not purity of mind, accumulation of riches is of no use.

The history of India mentions two cities of gold — Lanka and Dwarka. Everyone knows that Lanka finally became a heap of ashes and all its glory was in vain. Even after millions of years have elapsed, it is difficult to find another example of the feelings of humiliation and disgust that are associated with the name of Rāvaṇa and his clan of demons. The second golden city was the magnificent Dwarka. It was the abode of many wealthy and brave warriors, yet, in the end, that too became a pile of ash.

Even after attaining extraordinary glory in this world, why did the two clans of demons and Yādavas meet such an end? The masters of both these cities lost themselves in the shine of gold. In the pride of riches, they forgot the art of life. On one hand, the vast empire of Rāvaṇa became a victim of this mistake and was destroyed; on the other, the uncontrolled lifestyle of the Yādavas led to the tragedy. One was destroyed by attraction to illicit relationships while the other drowned in liquor.

The implication is that one may acquire worldly respect, high prestige and abundant wealth, but if one does not focus on

moral strength, then spiritual power cannot be attained. Even if the intellect is highly developed, if purity is not imbibed in the thoughts, then one cannot hope for happiness and peace in the world.

A king was riding an elephant. He was accompanied by thousands of subjects. A drunkard staggered by the procession. When his gaze fell on the king's elephant, he asked the king, "How much can you sell this buffalo for?" The king said to his minister, "He is calling my elephant a buffalo and insulting me by asking for a valuation."

The minister said, "O Lord! It is not he who utters these words but someone else. Why are you angry with him?"

The king glared at the minister, "Are you not listening? He is the one stating this."

The minister put the drunken man in jail.

The next day, when the person was brought before the king in the court, the effect of alcohol had worn away. The king pointed to his elephant and asked the man, "How much will you pay for this buffalo?"

The man responded, "O Lord! If you will spare my life, then I have something to say."

The king said, "Speak!"

He said, "O Lord! The buyer has gone away! I am sorry. Kindly forgive me."

The minister explained the drunkard's words, "Lord! If he was the buyer, he would have made the purchase yesterday itself. But today he is in his senses. It was not him but his drunken state that wanted to buy the buffalo and that state has gone away."

In ordinary human life, there are some minimal desires and passions, but the wise do not express disgust towards them. They realize that the soul is pure in itself, but the devil has gone into it and spread the bad odour of impure thoughts. As long as the devil is not expelled and that odour is not cleared, mere external control will not help. In the spiritual realm, external control does not have much value. Along with external control, there is also a need to control and mitigate the inner self.

The sādhanā of Jaina religion is the sādhanā of inner life. It places emphasis on cleaning life from the inside. If the vessel is filled with odour, will washing it on the outside serve any purpose? In the same way, the real purification of life lies in the removal of those perversions that are hidden inside. Therefore, the Jaina path inspires us to purify our inner self.

History is witness that the souls who understood the importance of chastity in life stood on the highest peak of progress and became immortal in the world. Those whose life is rich with the aura of chastity, whether they remain alone or are with thousands, they always remain mindful.

Let us now reflect on the story of Prince Rathanemi. He renounced the world and took initiation along with his younger brother Ariṣṭanemi. He meditated in the dark cave of the mountain Raivatachal-Girnar. The fear of death left his heart. Even the gruesome roar of lions could not make him fearful. But he was unable to forsake his desire for Rājimati. As soon as Rājimati entered the cave, he wavered. The seeker who walked the greatest path of spiritual practice was now lost. He told Rājimati, “In these intoxicating moments of youth, let us enjoy the worldly pleasures. We can walk the path of austerity when old age begins to set in.”

Rājimati replied to Rathanemi’s proposal, “O Sādhaka! What are you saying? What are you thinking of doing? Come to

your senses — think, reflect and contemplate. Otherwise, your life will meet the same end as the water plant that floats hither and thither on water when the tide is high.”

Just as an elephant is controlled by a goad, so also the words of Rājimati stopped Rathanemi. As a result, the seeker who was distracted became steadfast in his spiritual practices. Then both of them carried their sādhanā fully, finally attaining enlightenment.

In his final hours, Bhagavān Mahāvīra presented the holy character of Rājimati and Rathanemi to his disciples and seekers. He gave these words of wisdom to the world as his last gift.

Similarly, Sītā’s life has remained a pillar of light for us even after eleven million years and is guiding us on our path. Even today, millions of people worship Sītā. History itself has also gained importance by giving that holy name a place in its pages.

All kinds of worldly temptations were before Sītā while a powerful demon like Rāvaṇa stood with a sword on her head. But neither the temptations nor the sword could make her waver.

If there is something that can protect a person in this world, it is his or her strength of character. The serene mental attitude of a person is the most precious sādhanā of his life. Rāvaṇa was defeated before the same powerful character of Sītā.

*kiṃ puṇa guṇasahidāo, itthīo atthi vitthaḍajasāo.
naradogadevadāo, devehiṃ vi vaṃdaṇijjāo.*

— *Bhagavatī Ārādhana 995*

“There are many virtuous women who are famous for their purity and chastity. They are like the goddesses on this earth and even revered by gods.”

The great saint Nami once recounted an important point to his army, “When you enter another country and become a winner, you will encounter all the splendour and objects of luxury over there. As a soldier, you will have tremendous power in your hands. Do not allow this power to make you blind. Instead, remember that the wealth of that land is not for you. Do not covet any of the objects there. Consider the beautiful women of that land as your mothers and sisters. Develop such strength of character.”

The soldier fights in war, participates in the destruction, creates havoc and sheds rivers of blood. But the armies that persist in their moral force, neither plunder the wealth nor the respect of the women of any place which they fight against. Wherever they go, they win the hearts of people with their high character. Man’s character has immense power and he must utilize this power wisely.

The life of every householder should be like the life of a good soldier. If there is a moral force in a householder, he receives respect and earns a good reputation at home and outside. For one who has strength of character, a heap of millions is akin to a heap of ash. He looks upon all women as mothers and sisters. Even the heavenly dancers cannot evoke desire in him.

The great writer George Bernard Shaw is considered one of the world’s greatest literary figures of his era. In Europe, where there was an atmosphere of enjoyment and lust all around, he did not ever spoil his life with it. He never touched alcohol. He maintained a high standard of character and a sacred attitude towards women. Even at the ripe old age of ninety-four, his writing continued to flow with beautiful ideas. When he criticized dogmatic traditions, the opponents feared his pen more than they feared the sword. His power was due to the immense force of brahmacharya.

There are many human beings who are great thinkers in their youth, but become dull with age. Some become so dull that they cannot even manage their own business or grow in their religious pursuits. What happens to their intelligence? Why did their fountain of knowledge dry up? If you reflect deeply, you will realize that it is their impure and ignoble thoughts which brought in their downfall. There are others whose memory, intelligence and wisdom becomes sharper with age due to their inner restraint.

Behind man's own thinking and reflection, there is some form of *sādhana*. Where there is moral strength, there is mental strength. Such a person shines like the afternoon sun even at the fag end of his life. With the bright rays of his own life, he spreads light in the universe. He is a beacon of light which never dies before time.

See the life of Bhagavān Mahāvīra. With the strength of his character, he practiced rigorous austerities for twelve and a half years. He abandoned gold palaces, luxurious lifestyle, loving family and profuse material pleasures and turned to spiritual practices. Many objects of temptation came his way and so did mountains of difficulties, but he remained steadfast in his spiritual practices. He was able to develop such strength of character because of brahmacarya.

It is this strength of character and morality which creates inspiration in great minds to change this world. It ignites the inner light which makes life shine.

Check for yourself: What is the state of your mind today? You take great trouble to memorize one thing today and yet forget it the very next day. It is as though your feet are in the desert. You make a footprint with one step, and the next minute, a gust of wind erases it. It takes time to place the next foot, but it took no time to erase the print. People read pages

of scriptures but do not recall one thought of wisdom when in need. The main reason is that thoughts are moving at a restless speed, not allowing any contemplation to take place.

One who is careless and undisciplined invariably experiences a loss of intelligence and memory power. But one who leads a disciplined life with the right spiritual practices keeps his thoughts pure, and turns every thought into nectar. His memory always serves its purpose well.

The purer the mind of man, the more beautiful are the ideas that arise in it. Imagine there is water in a pond, but it is filthy. If you peer over that water, you will not be able to see your reflection. How can your reflection appear in muddy water? If the water is clean and clear, but keeps moving due to gusts of wind, then your reflection will appear, but it will be unsteady. The water should be clean and clear, as well as stable. Only then man can see his face clearly.

Similarly, in a mind full of perversions and lustful thoughts, you cannot see any reflection of the true principles or scriptures. The mind should remain clean and stable.

The practice of brahmacharya is a sādhanā that removes the filth of our lives and cleanses the way we think.

There was a very powerful Ācārya from the Mallavādī sect. He had been a serious and reflective thinker since childhood. Once, when he was absorbed in studying, the king of Ujjain passed by. His minister, who was a Jain, was also accompanying him. The king saw the young scholar and asked, “What is this boy doing? This place seems to be a monastery. Will he also become a sādhu?”

The minister replied, “O King! He does not have to become a sādhu. He is already a sādhu and our Guru.”

The king was amazed. He tested the young Master by asking him in Sanskrit, “What is sweet?”

The young sādhu heard this question, but did not even turn his head to look at the king. Remaining absorbed in his reading, he replied, “Milk.”

It is said that after six months, the king passed by again and still found the young sādhu deeply absorbed in his studies. The king remembered the question he had asked six months ago. Now, the king asked a new question related to the same old question, “With what?”

Hearing the question, the young sādhu instantly answered, “With jaggery.”

As soon as the king heard the reply that milk is sweet with jaggery, he descended from the elephant and fell down at the feet of the young sādhu. With reverence he said, “I had asked a question six months ago and you had replied instantly. Today I asked the second question and again you answered without any hesitation. The question of six months ago is as fresh in your memory as if I asked it just now. Your sādhanā is really amazing.”

The same young sādhu later shone like the sun in Jaina Saṅgha and came to be known as Mallavādī. He was a great logician of his time. He roamed around the remote regions of India spreading the message of Jainism. The texts written by him were so profound and logical that each line in them reflects a powerful form of contemplation.

The *saṃskāras* of previous birth definitely exert an influence, but the impressions of present birth also have a powerful impact.

An observer of brahmacarya, whom we call brahmacārī, has a very fertile brain with fabulous storage capacity and memory power. Unfortunately, majority of the youth today are losing themselves to passions and sensual pleasures. There is no enthusiasm in their life, no speed, no excitement to move forward, and no courage to take on troubles. They display weakness in their physical and mental stamina. The character force of human beings is rapidly getting impaired. This is the reason why we see so many people leading their life in mediocrity rather than with excellence. If brahmacarya is followed, the situation can change quickly. Only the path of brahmacarya can infuse life force in human beings.



MARRIAGE AND BRAHMACARYA

There are two ways to progress in life. One is a very rigorous and rigid path. The seeker who treads that path has to dedicate his entire life to it, sever all ties and forsake all desires. By removing passions from his thoughts, he becomes mindful and reduces the burden of life. This is how the sādhu lives. This is the reason why the sādhu is considered very sacred and pure.

The progress in this type of life happens from the inside. If the sādhu has not prepared enough for this type of life and has just imposed the weight of renunciation on the outside, wearing the garb of an ascetic, then his life will start rotting inside. One day he will become a curse to society and to himself.

The path of sādhu life is an evolved and sacred path. There is no other path like this. The sādhu is considered a form of god.

The rules embraced by Mahāvīra 2500 years ago are the rules adopted by the sādhus even today. If there is any difference, it is that Mahāvīra crossed the final lap of his life's goal while the sādhus are still working their way towards it. But there is no difference in the way one has to walk the spiritual path. The rules remain the same. These are eternal principles and neither time nor circumstances can change them.

A sādhu is worshipped not for his external garb or his appearance. A sādhu is worshipped for his virtues. To develop these virtues and conduct, a sādhu has to walk a rigorous path. On this path, he is not swayed by his bodily condition. He does not look upon it as especially favourable or unfavourable.

One man travels on foot, the second rides a horse cart, the third by train, and the fourth by an airplane. All are moving

ahead, but their movement differs in pace. When comparing the spiritual paths of a sādhu and a householder, the sādhu is moving at a much quicker pace. What increases the speed also increases the risk factor. In a speeding vehicle, even a small mistake can have a deep and dangerous consequence.

The other path is that of the householder. The life of the householder is also heading towards salvation, but he does not have to exert extreme control over his mind nor face the extreme dangers faced by a sādhu. Hence Mahāvīra propounded two forms of religion, one for the householders and the other for sādhus.

Walking the path of salvation is as much the duty of the householder as it is of the sādhu. Therefore, the word ‘dharma’ is also associated with the life of a householder.

A person who lives in this world and completes his responsibilities without undue attachment to worldly activities may be taking small, slow steps. Yet each step brings him closer to salvation. A poet from Rajasthan says, “O man! Have the vision of equanimity. Protect your family members and nurture them like the *dhāya mātā* who considers the child whom she nurses as her own.”

In many old stories, we read about the ‘dhāya mātā’, meaning the wet nurse. She loves the child like her own, feeds him, cuddles him, raises him and calls him ‘son’, yet she is aware that she is not the mother who birthed this child and that he is not her son. This is akin to the detachment of the spiritual seeker. One with the right vision of life takes care of the house knowing that it is not his permanent abode. He takes care of his family despite knowing that no one truly belongs to him. He lives with this mindfulness every minute and therefore, he never identifies with another person or object.

To take up responsibilities of the society, the nation and the family on one’s shoulders and to fulfil them without being attached is a true achievement. A true householder adheres

to the family, but does not have an attachment to it. This is the importance of household life. Here the family is referred to as ‘vasudhaiva kutumbakam’, meaning ‘the world is one family’. If the country and society are considered as different from the family, then the idea of discrimination creeps in. But where is the space for discrimination for the householder with the right vision? For him, the country and the society are as much his family as his own parents, wife and children.

One with the right vision fulfills the responsibilities of the nation, the society and the family. Anyone looking at him would think he is deeply involved, but deep inside, he is detached. This inner feeling of detachment moves him forward on the spiritual path every second.

If you look into history, you will see many women who played the role of the wet nurse. You will see the huge sacrifices made by them. Mother Panna’s name lives in the heart of every Indian even today. She nursed Uday Singh, the crown prince of Mewar. From childhood, he was under her care. One day while she was watching over her own son and Uday Singh, Banveer came in with a bare sword and asked her, “Which one is Uday Singh?”

As soon as she was asked this grim question, she understood its seriousness. If she pointed towards Uday Singh, then Mewar would lose its future ruler. On the other hand, lay her own son, a beautiful child she loved more than her own life. But she considered her duty greater than personal attachment and pointed towards her own child. As soon as she raised her finger, the bloody sword of Banveer rose like lightning and cut her child into two. Mother Panna was so strong in her duty that she did not cry out aloud. She did not let Banveer know that her own child had been murdered.

How noble were the mothers of that Rajput era that even a woman whose job was to nurse another’s child fulfilled her

responsibility by sacrificing her entire being. Mahāvīra gave a very important sermon stating that the person with the right vision is the custodian of the family while remaining detached. A flame of mindfulness and discrimination keeps burning within him. Just as the woman who takes care of and nurses another's baby remains detached, so also the true seeker realizes the truth. The light of discrimination illuminates his inner self every minute. He realizes that whatever he does is part of his external duty and, therefore, he does not identify with it. This is the ideal life of a householder: to live in the ocean without drowning; to live in the filth without getting dirty.

There is a third way apart from these two paths, but that does not lead to liberation. The travellers of that path are the ones who have created a world of lust within, but pretend to be on the spiritual path, either as sādhus or householders. Every single step taken by them only leads them closer towards worldly desires. The knowledge of discrimination has not awoken in their minds. The mindfulness needed to lead the right way of life is not known to them. They indulge in the mire of worldly pleasures while pretending to be spiritual seekers.

Old folktales tell us the story of a man who was walking at high speed, sometimes running, often gasping for breath, meandering here and there. A curious passerby asked him, "What are you doing? Where are you from?" The runner said, "I do not know where I am coming from."

"Ok. But where are you going?"

"I do not know that either."

"Then why are you racing?"

"I do not know even that."

“Who are you, dear brother?”

“I don’t even know that.”

Such a mad person can take a thousand births, yet will never reach his destination. This is wasting one’s time in wandering and not moving towards one’s goal.

Thus, those who wander like this, whether in the garb of a sādhu or a householder, are not taking the right steps towards the goal of life. Their actions can be considered as wandering but not travelling.

Śrāvaka Ānanda did not adopt the path of a sādhu. He examined himself, his own abilities and which path he would be able to accomplish. For this, he examined his weaknesses and his strengths. He decided that he was not capable of walking the path of the sādhu. He realized that even if he struggled at every step, he would not be able to complete the journey.

The rules of chastity adopted by Śrāvaka Ānanda are not rules of complete chastity. He thought, ‘As long as I am a householder, I am caught up in weaknesses. As long as I am in a marital relationship with my wife, I cannot take any extreme measures. I have to proceed ahead by taking only one step at a time.’ Hence, he adopted the vow of brahmacarya in a partial form. He decided that from that day onwards, he would consider every other woman in the world as a mother, sister, or daughter.

Imagine a sea filled with poison. Imagine that it is emptied of all its poison except for one drop. That is what taking the pledge of partial brahmacarya does. It tremendously reduces the poison of lust, allowing the sea to spread waves of purity everywhere it reaches. The person who takes this pledge can go to any corner of the world and will always have pure sight,

treating other women as mothers, daughters and sisters. Thus, you can understand how much poison he has eliminated.

If you think from this point of view, you will understand the place of marriage in Jainism. When a householder enters the institution of marriage, does he indulge in lust or is he guided by restraint? This is an important question. Many great thinkers and philosophers have spent their time solving this question.

Once, two philosophers were traveling together when they saw a rose plant. One said, “How beautiful and sweet the flowers in this plant are.”

The second said, “But see how many thorns are there in this little plant!”

The rose plant was before both of them. It contained scented flowers as well as thorns. But there was a difference in the attitude of the two people. That is why they reached opposing points of view in this regard.

When there is a controversial topic, then there is a difference of opinion amongst thinkers. Some see the positive while others only seem to notice the negatives.

The answer to this question is not lopsided. There are two possibilities in the institution of marriage — lust or restraint! Restraint is brahmacharya. Each individual needs to look inwards and understand if they have a higher proportion of lust or restraint. This point is a consideration for those who enter the field of marriage with thoughtfulness and intelligence.

Bhagavān Ṛṣabhadeva was the first to adopt the institution of marriage. Before that, it was the age of twins and a rather unusual way of life. The marriages of that era were not typical marriages. A man and a woman would live together

as partners or companions. Thus, according to Jaina history, R̥ṣabhadeva was the first person to get married in this time cycle (*avasarpinī*). He proclaimed, “If you want to choose someone as your partner, then you have to do so within the framework of marriage.”

The relationships that do not fall into the framework of marriage are immoral and adulterous. Those who become life partners through the pure and sacred strings of marriage and live together with the wisdom to take responsibility for each other’s life and not just fulfill their lust and desires, find the inspiration to drive the vehicle of householder’s life properly. If they unite with each other to take responsibility for one another, then the relationship is justified. Any relationship rooted in physicality outside of marriage is immoral.

Marriage is *vivāha* in Sanskrit, where ‘vi’ means ‘in particular’ and ‘vāha’ means ‘carrying’ or ‘protecting’. Marriage is an institution where you bear responsibility for one another and protect each other.

Here, it is not just being responsible but being responsible in a special manner and fulfilling that responsibility even if it means sacrificing one’s life.

Animals and birds also go through their life journey, but they are not bound by rules such as marriage. Their life is free without anything to hold them back, but human beings limit their passions within the fold of marriage.

When Bhagavān R̥ṣabhadeva spoke of marriage eons ago, he spoke about erasing immorality of an extreme order.

The spiritual practice that helps us absorb, digest and weaken our passions is brahmacharya. One who does not have enormous self-control and the superpower of restraint can

opt for the path of marriage. Marriage builds the great wall of chastity on all sides and only allows the space for desire through the door of the marital relationship, which prevents destruction. Social constraints do not come to a standstill and the sanctity of life is also safe.

Bhagavān Rṣabhadeva propounded marriage as a means to experience desire for those who do not have the strength to overcome their perversions completely. Basically, marriage is a means of protecting the sanctity of brahmacarya.

Having contemplated and reflected upon the scriptures allows me to say that if marriage is lived with integrity, then it is also a sādhanā of brahmacarya. Once you get married, the other doors of lust are closed.

*ee ya saṅge samaikkamittā, suduttarā, suduttarā ceva
bhavaṃti sesā.*

jahā mahāsāgaramuttarittā, nāi bhave avi gaṃgāsamāṇā.

— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 32.18*

“One who has overcome sensual attachments, can overcome all other temptations of his life just as a person who has crossed a great ocean will not face any difficulty in crossing a river.”

Marriage becomes meaningful only when it is considered with such depth. Only then does it take the form of sādhanā.

The scriptures mention a transgression called *paravivāha karaṇa*. It means that if you are practicing brahmacarya, you cannot be instrumental in another person’s marriage. At one time, fear of this transgression led people to refuse being involved in the marriage of their own children. This led to a new confusion in society. It was then that Ācārya Hemchandra reprimanded those householders who were denying their

responsibilities. ‘If you think that not taking care of your responsibilities will not have any karmic impact, think again. How can you assume that by avoiding this responsibility, you are not increasing immorality in society?’

Those who do not want the responsibility of children should not marry and instead adopt the path of complete brahmacarya. But those who have married and experienced the joy of parenthood cannot neglect these responsibilities. By doing so, they are encouraging immorality.

You need to understand what it means to not be instrumental in the marriage of another person. It means not to open marriage bureaus, or become brokers, or be instrumental in mismatched alliances. According to Jainism, marriage is a way to curtail unrestrained lust. It is a step towards restraint, a means to come out of a disorderly life, and embrace a life of mindfulness. There is a place for marriage in Jainism, but there is no place for irresponsibility. There is no place for prostitution or immoral relationships. Jainism presents a great ideal before the universal consciousness.



SPIRITUAL ABUNDANCE

Śrāvaka Ānanda opened the auspicious door of joy by surrendering at the lotus feet of Bhagavān Mahāvīra. This soulful joy is present in every being in an unmanifested form. No soul is devoid of it. Even though it is within us, it is elusive and distant. Even though it is closer than one's heartbeat, the worldly soul struggles to get near it and attain that inner bliss, even after the lapse of infinite time.

Truthfully, it is our own wrong thoughts that are obstructing the achievement of spiritual joy. Human beings attempt to find that spiritual joy and swim in the ocean of bliss hidden within, but are obstructed by their false beliefs. They then wander about and lose their path. Unless this obstruction of disturbing thoughts is removed, the mountain of false and perverted ideas cannot be shattered and we cannot reach the ocean of bliss.

To attain joy, Ānanda began to break the walls of wrong thoughts. The first among them was the wall of violence, separating the human being from the conscious universe. Where the conscious universe exists, some connection with it is bound to take place. However, human beings built this connection through violence thinking that by overpowering others and making slaves out of them, they could achieve happiness and peace. They crushed those who dared to rebel or stand up for themselves.

But this endeavour of man was built on the foundation of perverted thoughts. Due to this misconception, he could not establish an affectionate relationship with others around him. He could not receive joy from others and consequently, could not give joy to his own self. A wise seer has rightly stated, "By giving joy, you allow joy; by giving sorrow, you allow sorrow."

To accept this truth, you need to turn, not the pages of scripture, but rather, the pages of life. One who gives joy to others attains joy himself. And one who gives sorrow to others, brings ruin to his own life. If there is a fire in your neighbor's house, can you remain completely unscathed?

The wall of violence is a hindrance to the attainment of joy. Hence Ānanda first shattered this wall and initiated a relationship of love and peace with the conscious universe. He carried forward humanity in a positive and happy form. This is how he attained true joy.

When man connects with others in a deceitful way, he does not receive real happiness. The universe is like a well that echoes. Whatever sound you make, you will hear the same sound as an echo. Those who are standing before it with distrust and deception receive the same. Those who spread the pure waves of love and affection, get the same Ganges of love and affection.

A person's relationship with the universe can also be described in terms of a mirror. A person imposes a certain reflection on the world around him. Whatever he projects is reflected back to him. When you look into a mirror — it will reflect whatever face you are making.

If you begin to blame the mirror for reflecting your perverted form, will it help you in any way? You will not find any solution this way. Present a serene and beautiful face to the mirror in a quiet and beautiful form, and enjoy the reflection. This truth has been revealed by Jainism eons ago.

Whatever form of the world you want to see first needs to be created within yourself. If you have violence in your mind, then you will see violence in the world too. If you have untruth in your mind, you will receive the same. The same

is true of the other vows of non-stealing, non-possessiveness and brahmacarya.

Every seeker has to break this wall of violence first. After that, the other difficult walls of untruth, stealing, possessiveness and non-chastity must be shattered. If the seeker is a sādhu, he breaks these walls completely, and if the seeker is a householder, he breaks them partially. But without breaking them, either partially or fully, he cannot enjoy the unfettered state of the soul.

Let's now return to the context of brahmacarya. When a seeker breaks the walls of non-chastity and brings the joy of brahmacarya into his world, he stops seeing the world with the eyes of lust. Now, wherever he goes, in every house, in every family, he sets up the atmosphere of holy feelings around him.

In Indian philosophy, god is thought to be the form of ultimate, supreme purity. This form does not contain even a tiny fraction of impurity and this purity and sanctity can never ever become impure or profane. This indivisible and imperishable purity is known by many names such as *īśvara*, *siddha*, *buddha*. In Jainism, it is known as *siddha paramātma*. Once the perversions and lust are removed and purity appears, it is never attacked by them anymore. To remain steadfast in this pure, noble *brahma* is known as brahmacarya.

When the seeker presses forward with the vast, vivid and noble feeling of brahmacarya, he can succeed in its practice. As long as this powerful feeling is not present within him, he cannot practice brahmacarya because his vision of life is petty and poor.

That which is great is joyful. That which is petty is not joyful. From this point of view, when we see the human body and

pay attention to its necessities, the idea of food, water and clothes seems to be very basic. The needs of this body and their means of fulfillment are fleeting. They are available today but may not be available tomorrow. The tastiest food lasts only as long as you refrain from eating it. As soon as it goes down your throat, its beauty and taste vanish.

The pleasure of sweetness is not experienced before or after something is on your tongue. It is only experienced for the brief moments during which the food is in our mouth. Thus, whatever gives us momentary pleasure and dissolves equally momentarily, cannot lead to true happiness.

Humans are obsessed with their bodies and sense organs and find ways and means of giving them happiness and fulfilling their needs. But real happiness cannot be obtained from these ephemeral objects. Real happiness is imperishable, infinite and eternal. It cannot be contained in such petty forms. This glorious goal of indestructible spiritual bliss awaits the true seeker. The movement of the seeker towards it is what we call brahmacarya.

The seeker who chooses such high goals for his life and puts his complete power into achieving brahmacarya, develops total dedication towards it. As a consequence, he is not swayed by worldly desires any more.

Those who do not nurture such high ideals have a narrow minded and petty view of life. For such people, desires and wants loom like large giants who overpower their thoughts completely. The voices of their souls remain suppressed. Only when the inner voice is powerful and intense can desires quieten down.

If you look at the lives of the great men in this world, you will realize that once they renounced worldly life to enter the

path of sādhanā, they never looked back. Mahāvīra left home in his youth. All the glory of the world was accessible to him, yet he undertook renunciation. To test him, some celestial beings appeared before him in frightful forms and beautiful apsaras also tried to lure him. Yet, he was not swayed.

The reason for Mahāvīra's will power was that he had a lofty view of life. He wanted to elevate his own soul and redeem the masses around him. He knew that for this, he had to fight the evils of the world. He first fought with his own passions and weaknesses. He swept away the dust in the temple of his mind and did not let even one speck remain. Keeping the great ideals of such sanctity before his eyes, he cleansed whichever spaces he visited. He cleansed the aura of everything around him. His spiritual practices kept him so busy that he had no time to miss his home or family.

If he remained tied down to petty thoughts, he would have missed his home time and again. Remaining in his physical body, did he ever miss the physical world he had left behind? If he remembered it, he would have also remembered his bodily needs. But he was a spiritual practitioner of such high order that he had risen above his physical needs. He had evolved so much that his mind never meandered into the lanes of desires. Only the spiritual goal he had set for himself shone like a bright sun before him all the time. This was the reason that in moments of sorrow, pain, loss, or happiness, he remained in a state of perfect equanimity. He continued on the path of sādhanā without any break or halt. The mire of the world tried to stop him, but he ignored it and kept going ahead.

Look at a student who is studying. If a great, bright goal shines in front's eyes, if his dreams are vast, then one day he will definitely become great. The lustful of his mind desires of the world cannot keep him locked in his circle. How can

the darkness of desire enter the mind that is shining with the light of magnificent intentions and dreams? On the contrary, if his resolves are trivial, then he will stumble at every step. The darkness of lust enters petty minds.

There is a famous incident in the life of Vācaspati Miśra, one of India's renowned philosophers. The day after his marriage, he started writing the commentary on the *Śaṅkara Bhāṣya* of *Brahmasūtra*. He wrote diligently day and night, and stayed absorbed in deep thoughts. What was remarkable was that his young wife did not distract him ever. She stayed busy taking care of him. Every evening, she would automatically light the lamps so he could continue his writing.

Thus, twelve years passed and so did the passage of youth. Finally, one evening, as the commentary was nearing completion, the lamp got extinguished sooner than usual. As the wife came to light it again, Vācaspati noticed that she was thin as a reed, devoid of jewels and dressed simply. He asked, "Why are you living like this?"

She quietly replied, "I have been living like this so that you can accomplish your spiritual goal."

Vācaspati was overwhelmed and said, "Truly, it is your sādhanā which has led to the completion of this great text. If we had remained trapped in the web of marital life, that would not have been possible. I will name this commentary 'Bhāmati' in dedication to you."

If both Vācaspati and his wife did not nurture such lofty thoughts, this masterpiece would not have seen the light of the day. The said commentary is a source of deep contemplation for scholars even today. It is so powerful that while reading it, no worldly temptation, let alone lust, can lure the readers away.

In this way, one who wants to march on the glorious path of brahmacarya must place a great objective before himself. This ideal can be social, national, spiritual, or literary.

Here is a story about a scientist from Europe. From a young age, he was engaged in scientific experiments and developed many innovations over the years. In this scientific pursuit, his youth came and went by, without his being aware of it. Someone asked him, “How is your family?”

The scientist replied, “Family? I am my own family, and these machines are my family.”

The next question was, “Did you not marry?”

The scientist replied with astonishment, “I have never given the idea of marriage any thought until you mentioned it today. This is because man’s mind cannot attend to many things at the same time. The mind gives priority to only one task at a given time. I have been so absorbed and engrossed in my scientific pursuit that I have not paid attention to anything else. All the experiments I have presented before the world are a testimony to my complete determination and focused energy.”

This incident is an excellent example regarding the truth of life and sanctity of mind. Without such dedication, one cannot reach lofty heights in life. Be it a householder or a sādhu, the practice of brahmacarya is possible only when one immerses oneself in the great spiritual practice of knowledge. How will those who are not inspired by great Ācāryas such as Bhadrabāhu, Sāmantabhadra and Siddhasena Divākara practice brahmacarya? Just taking the vow of brahmacarya does not mean it can be practiced successfully. For that, every iota of life has to be surrendered with dedication.

A true merchant is one who elevates himself and helps others build mansions over their huts. Even in commerce, there is a great need for character and strength to overcome desires.

As long as the merchants of India strove for such ideals, this country kept evolving. But today's merchants walk the narrow framework of their petty goals which is weakening the matrix of the country by the minute.

Do those who engrave the marks of auspiciousness, known as *śubha-lābha*, in their shops, ever stop to think why 'śubha' is written before 'lābha'? While 'śubha' means auspicious, 'lābha' means profit. What it implies is that whatever profit is earned must be steeped in auspiciousness. If the profit is to be spent, it should be done in an auspicious way. But these are now mere words since life has become only about profit, leaving no scope for auspiciousness.

There was a trader who earned a lot during the period of war. His younger brother, who was skilled in the art of cunning, was instrumental in this profit. One day he said to his elder brother, "I would like to live separately."

This led to conflict at home. One day, I asked the younger brother, "You have been living with the family for such a long time, surely you can continue in the same way? What is the reason for this conflict?"

He replied, "We do not get along anymore."

Gradually he revealed what was bothering him and reality surfaced. He was feeling that he was the one who was earning while others were enjoying that wealth without any effort. If he parted ways with them, then he would be the sole beneficiary of the earnings.

I thought that where the wealth itself has emerged from unethical means, there will be no generosity, compassion and love. This is not the fault of any one person, it has become a fault which pervades the entire society.

I recall something a father once told me. He was tired of working all his life. He had been concerned with earning, without any thought to ethics. His sons began to waste away the accumulated wealth. The man came up to me and said, “Master! I have committed all the sins in this world to earn this wealth and now these boys are blowing it away.”

I said, “You paid attention to profit, but not to whether it came from auspicious means. This wealth has come from unethical means and is going back into unethical ways. Did you ever pay attention to how you were earning it? You did not even think about how to utilize the earned wealth in a righteous manner.”

In many nations across the world, cinema is used as a powerful medium of teaching societal reform and patriotism. On the contrary, in our country, movies are often given a free license to display unrestrained, unethical behaviour. Patriarchal, sexist, and violent portrayals of systems and relationships are offered to the audience as aspirational!

The country which was on the highest peak of spirituality thousands of years ago, which held the shining ideals of greats such as Bhagavān Ariṣṭanemi and Bhīṣma, where the inspiring discourses of Bhagavān Mahāvīra were heard, which embraced the path of virtue and wisdom in the very first breath of its evolution, which is still considered primarily as a spiritually motivated country, and which has received the glory of being the Guru of the world, today the very same country has reached a depraved state in which immorality and lust are taught openly. Neither has our government paid

enough attention to this nor have the citizens raised a strong voice in opposition.

In my opinion, the extent of damage caused to Indian culture by the cinema is greater than any other negative influence. Today's cinema is a challenge to the culture of restraint which was prevalent in India for thousands of years.

The great saints of this country spread the pure essence of brahmacarya in the world and announced that Indian seekers had conquered death by the great power of brahmacarya. Today, if we compare our lives with the scriptures, we will realize the kind of life we are living. If we do not put our lives in the framework of the lives of Ariṣṭanemi, Mahāvīra, Rāma, Hanumāna and Bhīṣma, then the welfare of country and society will only remain a dream.

The essence of life is in the practice of chastity. Even from the social and national points of view, we should have a great ideal and grand design for our life. Only then the life-giving spiritual practice of brahmacarya will awaken in our lives.



THE INFLUENCE OF BRAHMACARYA

Even though brahmacarya is the inner strength of the soul, it has the unique ability to make changes in external substances. It can annihilate the destructive play of nature's forces, improve its immunity and strength, and bring in joy and auspiciousness.

Even after a length of eleven lakh years, you still hear about Sītā's jumping into the huge pit of fire as a test of her pure conduct. When she jumped in, a loud scream was heard from the thousands of men and women present. Even the most hard-hearted of onlookers were shocked. However, a miracle took place in the very next instant. The pit of fire transformed into a cool and serene lake. Between the blossoms of lotus flowers, Sītā emerged with an illuminating halo.

This takes us to the question which looms large before us — which is stronger? The power of material objects or that of the spiritual soul?

If we consider material objects powerful, it implies that the soul cannot have any effect on them. It would mean that the soul is pure in itself, hence it cannot transform external objects. This is an absolute standpoint.

But there is also an empirical or pragmatic standpoint which holds the possibility of transformation. For example, just as an object is gold from an absolute standpoint, it can be transformed into a chain or a bangle, so also the soul is pure but also interacts with the changing world. Here, Jainism gives us a powerful tool for transformation. It empowers the human being to rise above material lust to awaken the powerful wave of spirituality within himself. By doing this,

the material powers of the universe will bow down before him. This means that spiritual power can transform material power so that fire can change into water. Physical science transforms in time, but spiritual power has the potential for instant transformation.

Have you heard the story of Somā who was considered an epitome of chastity? In a conspiracy hatched to kill her, a poisonous snake was put in a pot. She was then asked to bring the pot saying that it held a garland of flowers. As Somā put her hand in the pot, the snake changed into a garland. The viewers were stunned wondering where the garland came from!

When the viewers peeped into the pot, it was empty. They now asked Somā to put the garland back into the pot. As soon as she did, the snake began hissing again. Others could see the snake but Somā saw only a garland.

Those who saw this miracle with their own eyes must have been awed, but today when we read about this incident, we cannot find any logical answer to this mystery. We finally arrive at the conclusion that as is our thought, so is our vision. Those who thought of a snake saw one and those who thought of a garland saw a garland. Nature is subservient to the soul. Nature bows down before the lofty thoughts of a human being.

What happened when Bhagavān Mahāvīra meditated in the uninhabited forest? The deer would come near him and become enchanted on seeing his tranquility. Even the lions who roared would sit down at his feet upon seeing his serene countenance. The ācāryas have described that at times, in the presence of Mahāvīra, a baby deer would drink the lioness's milk while a lion cub would drink milk from the mother deer.

In fact, the animals were so mesmerized with his majestic powers that they would forget their own external forms. If

cruel animosity remained in the lion, would it allow the deer to sit beside it? Could a lion who was aware of its leonine nature stay silent near a mother deer? If the deer had not forgotten its own fearful nature, how could it sit beside a lion fearlessly?

Reflecting in this way brings forth a great spiritual light before us. In the presence of spiritual yogīs, nature leaves behind its terrible form. Cruel feelings leave the heart of the cruel creatures and a wave of love fills them all. It is then that such spectacular scenes are seen.

In this condition, it is not impossible for the great power of the soul to have an impact on the external world and the creatures living in it. Not just Jainism, all religions of the world subscribe to this view.

When the spirit of non-violence pervades the soul of a great seeker, the atmosphere around him becomes so sacred, pure and influential that even the most hostile enemies abandon their hostility and sit down together as kin.

Today's man hesitates to believe in such miraculous stories. Therefore, today the stories of the soul's splendour are diminishing. Today's human beings are so badly trapped in the clutches of lust and enslaved by negative tendencies that they have forgotten their inherent greatness. In fact, this disbelief is indicative of man's miserable condition today.

We cannot ever forget the great character of Draupadī, who shone like the sun in Duryodhana's court. When an attempt was made to humiliate Draupadī by removing her clothes, even though the evil Duḥśāsana's hands tired of pulling at her robes, the end of her sari did not appear at all.

And what about the life of Kannagi who showed such strength of character when her husband was accused by the king

falsely? We revere these women because of their chastity and purity. Reflecting on their stories fills us with inner courage and spiritual conviction.

Many philosophers ponder over whether it is consciousness that is affected by external substances or external substances that are affected by consciousness. Scientists say that the external world has an effect on consciousness itself. But accepting such a singular view is contrary to experience. From the empirical viewpoint (*vyavahāra naya*), just as the external matter affects consciousness, consciousness also impacts external objects.

If a person harbors animosity, he will be affected by animosity on the outside as well. In the *samavasaraṇa* (religious assembly) of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, Gośālaka turned two sādhus to ashes by using his *tejoleṣyā* (a power acquired through severe penance). But on Mahāvīra's moon-like face, the serenity that was seen before the arrival of Gośālaka continued to prevail. Those whose minds are not tainted by attachment and aversion, whose minds have become pure, stay unaffected. This means that a person is affected by the outside world only when the mind is preoccupied with its judgments. If one is not judgmental within, the outside cannot have any effect.

What is commonly seen in many people is the ghost of fear. This imaginary ghost is so powerful that people fall prey to it and even lose their lives. Here the inner consciousness exerts such a strong influence on the external body that life becomes full of misery.

There are stories of how brahmacarya humbles us. Who does not praise brahmacarya? Our scriptures have sung the glory of brahmacarya thus:

*deva-dāṇava-gaṃdhavvā, jakkha-rakkhasa-kinnarā.
baṃbhayāriṃ namamsānti, dukkaraṃ je karaṃti taṃ.*

— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 16.16*

“The devas, dānavas, gandharvas, yakṣas, rākṣasas and kinnaras pay homage to a celibate sādhu who stands rooted in the difficult vow of chastity.”

We want to know how brahmacarya is attained and how it can be protected. Before knowing the answer to these questions, you must understand that the thought of brahmacarya cannot be brought in from the outside. It is already established within, but suppressed by perversions.

Jaina Philosophy states that there is nothing in this conscious world which has fundamentally not existed before. We use the term ‘originates’ for *kevala jñāna* (right knowledge), *kevala darśanā* (right faith), and such other spiritual powers. In fact, these powers do not originate, they manifest or reveal themselves.

The powers of the soul are present within, but are suppressed because of desires. Our job is to remove those desires. This is called *sādhana*. It is like polishing a rusted and dulled metal dish to make it shine. Rather than creating a new glow in it, the polishing reveals the glow that always existed in the vessel and was buried due to the rust. So also, if gold falls into filth, its glow gets hidden. The cleaner does not need to put any new shine on the gold, he is not turning it into gold since it is already gold. It was gold before it fell into the filth and will remain gold even when it is covered with filth. By cleaning it, he reveals that it is nothing but gold.

This is the assertion of Jainism regarding the virtuous qualities of the soul. Those qualities do not come from outside, they are within. But perversions such as anger and lust suppress their glow. If the perversions are removed, the qualities of the soul will start to shine in their real aura.

When the perversion of violence is cleared, compassion and non-violence will begin to shine. When untruth is cleared, truth will shine. Similarly, on removing the perversion of theft, we will see the light of restraint. When anger is removed, forgiveness is manifested. When greed is removed, contentment becomes manifest. It is our job to remove pride, but humility is not a new thing. It is already present in the soul. Similarly, we have to do *sādhana* to remove delusion, but we do not need effort to create simplicity. Simplicity is the nature of the soul. As soon as delusion is removed, it will manifest itself in the same way as gold when dust is washed off.

In Jainism, a very beautiful and well-thought-out approach has been devised to establish spiritual qualities. Each step of the process becomes the foundation for higher qualities, known as *guṇasthāna*. As a certain weakness is overcome, the next stage is attained. When wrong belief is removed, one comes into the framework of right knowledge. When one overcomes a state of vowlessness, discipline is attained at the next position. As the perversions are gradually removed, the next evolved state of spiritual evolution is attained.

Right faith, knowledge and renunciation are the basic qualities of the soul. They are only revealed. A pot of treasure is present in the house, the task ahead of us is to dig it out, and remove the mud and filth covering it. Eliminate the perversions and find the original form of the soul.

How can these perversions be removed? Jainism gives extensive explanation in this regard. If the *bhāva* (thoughts) of non-violence is understood, other *bhāvas* will also be known. Whether violence and non-violence exist outside or not, even a single violent thought will lead to inner violence. One who lies destroys his own virtues. One who steals surely

steals from himself. For the abduction of virtues is a theft in itself. In this way, when a person falls prey to passions and perversions, violence takes place. Any perversion, whether it disturbs the external life or not, surely causes harm within. When a matchstick is lit, it burns itself first. If extinguished during the process, it may not be able to burn other things.

Every form of passion is violence; a flame which burns the soul. A person is destroyed by his own perversions, whether he harms others or not. Therefore, a true seeker must constantly fight with his perversions and defeat them. When he does that, brahmacarya stands before him.

If you accept the spiritual practice of brahmacarya but do not curtail your vision, what is the use? The path of Mahāvīra says that for the cultivation of brahmacarya, all senses should be controlled. Keep the ears so pure that they are not affected by any contrary influence. If the seeker has power, he must change the environment. If he does not have the power to do so, he must stay away from that influence. We should not allow any distorted word to enter our mind through the ears.

Once filth enters our mind, it will simply settle down in some corner of the mind. Unknowingly, these words begin to trouble our lives. Therefore, the practitioner of brahmacarya should be mindful of the words which go into the ears.

How many times have you found yourself humming a tune or singing along to a song without paying too much attention to the lyrics? How many times have you watched little children sing or dance to catchy film songs in competitions? If you really pay attention to the words, you will see that a lot of songs today contain adult content which either openly or indirectly allude to sex and violence. These songs are picked up for entertainment, at schools and colleges, at functions and weddings, and at home. We tend to shrug them off and

think they are just temporary and just for fun. But there is nothing innocent about them. Every time we listen to these songs, sing them ourselves, dance to them and enjoy them, they start making a groove in our mind. We then start craving more and more songs like them and soon, they permeate deep into us spreading thoughts and ideas that are incompatible to the spiritual path. It is astonishing that people who pray every day, listen to the discourses of the Āgamas, and worship in temples, sing such songs without giving it a second thought! Remember to be mindful of the entertainment you seek as that can heavily influence your and your family's thoughts and attitudes.

An ancient philosopher of India rendered a beautiful prayer, "*O Prabhu!* Even if I live a hundred years, may I never hear any obscenity! May the waves of purity flow in my ears."

What has been said about the ears is also said about the eyes. Nobody can walk with a curtain over his eyes. If one has vision, the world of good and bad will manifest before him. Whenever an undesirable scene comes before us, we must close our eyes or look away before our mind gets corrupted. Both nectar and poison can enter through the eyes, but our job is to ensure that we take in the nectar only.

There is a tree with flowers and thorns. The gardener takes flowers from it, not thorns. We must also take flowers like the gardener, not thorns. The corruption of the world is like thorns for us, to be shunned. Whether the world contains good or bad, we must endeavour to make our life good. Talking about improving the world without self-improvement is to fool yourself. How can one who cannot improve himself improve the world?

On every page of Jaina history, this truth is shining with its indelible impression. Look at the lives of Mahāvīra and

other *tīrthaṅkaras* (ford makers). Until they attained the omnipresence and asceticism that took them to the highest evolved state of the soul, they stayed away from all worldly matters or even from service to the world. When they attained the pure state themselves, they surrendered their lives to redeem humanity. They teach us the importance of self-control until the goal is achieved.

One who will listen to gentle words with his ears and see beautiful things with his eyes, will build a beautiful life. He will be blessed with longevity and spiritual powers. Inner chastity can be obtained only through the ears and the eyes. If you leave your ears and eyes open without controlling them, it is impossible to develop spiritual powers. That is why Jainism lays stress on the nine fences of brahmacharya, known as *nava-bāḍa*.

The practitioner of brahmacharya must be mindful of how he uses his other sense organs as well. Next, think about the tongue which is also an important organ in our body. If the body of a human being had been such that he did not need food to survive, most of his struggles in life would not have existed. But such is not the case.

When you eat something, who decides whether it is good or bad? The tongue tells you whether the food is tasty, healthy, edible, or otherwise. But nowadays, all the tongue tells you is about its craving. You eat to fulfill this craving, without any limit or restriction.

Eating is not the goal of life. One eats to compensate for body damage and impairment and to obtain the necessary physical strength. Where this vision is, there remains the purity of brahmacharya.

Any kind of food when consumed in excess, leads to heating of the blood, thereby causing excess heat in the body. It also

causes heat in the mind, thereby leading to forgetfulness. When a seeker loses his mindfulness, he also loses his sādhanā.

Today, we have easy access to a large variety of food preparations. Restaurants and take-aways offer us services at the click of a button. As a result, people don't seem to be concerned with whether they are consuming pure and healthy food. They are eating to satisfy the tongue, yet, the tongue is not satisfied. Human beings ruin their entire lives in trying to satisfy the cravings of the tongue.

Samartha Rāmadāsa was a Vaiṣṇava saint. He spent his cāturmāsa in a place where a young businessman and his wife became his devotees and attended his daily discourses. But at home, they quarrelled every single day over food. The young man wanted delicious varieties all the time and was not happy with the simple food his wife prepared. As days went by, his anger kept increasing. One day, he threatened her by saying, "It is better to renounce than go through this." Hearing this, the wife was petrified.

Another day, the young man kicked the plate so hard that the food splattered all over the place. "Enough of this domestic life! Better I renounce the world right away," he said and stormed out. He went directly to a nearby sweet shop and gorged hungrily. But his wife spent the rest of the day hungry and sad.

The incident repeated itself again and again. One day, as she was crying, Guru Rāmadāsa arrived on the spot. Seeing him, the woman was petrified and started crying loudly.

When the master asked her why she was crying, the woman said, "He does not like the food I prepare and says that he will renounce and become a sādhu."

Guru Rāmadāsa said, “Remove this fear from your mind. To become a sādhu, he has to come to me. It is not easy to follow that path. The next time he threatens you by saying he will become a sādhu, tell him to do it.”

The next time they quarrelled, the young man repeated, “It is better that I renounce the world.”

According to the plan, the woman said, “What is the use of scaring me every day? If that is what will give you happiness, please go ahead.”

The young man said angrily, “Well, if this is your response, I will renounce now.”

He went to Guru Rāmadāsa and expressed his intention at the Master’s feet. Rāmadāsa replied with joy, “Very good,” and carried on with his work.

During lunch time, the young man started feeling hungry. Helplessly, he asked Guru Rāmadāsa, “Will you not go to receive alms for lunch?”

Rāmadāsa said, “Today, I am observing a fast to celebrate the arrival of a disciple.”

For the young man, each passing minute was like one hour. He said, “Master! My stomach is clamping with hunger. If not for yourself, then arrange some food for me!”

Guru Rāmadāsa said, “Grind the leaves of neem coarsely and roll them into balls.”

The young man followed the command and made the balls. Rāmadāsa said, “Eat as much as you wish to.”

As soon as the young man put one ball in the mouth, the bitter taste made him vomit. Guru Rāmadāsa said, “Eat the other

one. And if you vomit again, then this stick is waiting. This is the food here every day.”

The young man said, “Sir, this is neem, it cannot be eaten by human beings.”

Now Rāmadāsa picked up a neem laddu and ate it like a dollop of honey. He then asked the young man, “Is this how you set out to become a sādhu? You have been unnecessarily troubling your young wife. Without control over your tongue, how can you ever lead the life of a sādhu?”

Wisdom dawned upon the young man and he returned home quietly. Then onwards, he ate whatever was cooked quietly and peacefully. Those who want to do sādhanā should give up the craving for food and not eat more than needed.

Food should be a means of developing life. It must not become a means of destroying life. In this way, along with the ears and the eyes, those who can also control the tongue, can observe the sādhanā of brahmacarya. One who will not exercise control over his tongue places his chastity in danger.

The practice of brahmacarya is so intense that it must be done with much caution. One has to exert control over the senses and the mind. To facilitate this vow, many external limitations are placed on a brahmacārī. For instance, he is not permitted to stay with a woman, talk about women in a desirous manner, have intimacy with them, become involved in their crying or singing, consume such drinks and food that kindle passions and eat more than required, and so on. All of these are poison-like for a brahmacārī. The same applies to celibate women regarding male contact.

*jaha sīlarakkhayāṇa, purisāṇaṃ ṇimdidāo mahilāo.
taha sīlarakkhayāṇaṃ, mahilāṇaṃ ṇimdidā purisā.*

— Bhagavatī Ārādhana 988

“For men observing chastity, the company of women is not permitted and for women observing chastity, the company of men is condemned.”

To conclude, one who can overcome the temptations of ears, the eyes, the tongue and the mind will move forward on the path of brahmacarya with greater ease and eventually fill his life with spiritual wonder.



SECTION II - PRINCIPLES

SELF-CONTROL AND BRAHMACARYA

Among all the paths of *sādhana*, the *sādhana* of brahmacarya is the highest and the most intense path. The force, power and dynamism contained in ‘brahmacarya’ is not present in any other.

Brahmacarya is popularly understood as protection of one’s potency (*vīrya rakṣā*), but this is a gross form of chastity. Brahmacarya is even more serious and comprehensive than semen protection. There are three differentiations of brahmacarya in Indian scriptures pertaining to mind, body and speech. Among these, the most prominent is brahmacarya of mind. If there is no brahmacarya in the mind, how will it appear in body and speech? The person who cannot restrain his mind can never succeed in the practice of brahmacarya. The *sādhana* of brahmacarya is such that it gets destroyed the moment there is perversion in the mind.

As explained earlier, brahmacarya means walking in one’s own greatness. When a seeker wanders in the lowly areas of his life, he cannot walk in his own greatness and dignity. In essence, brahmacarya means to destroy the lowly perimeter of life and immerse oneself in the vastness of holiness. One who protects his potency and power awakens in his heart the thought and intention of brahmacarya. The word brahmacarya means to make life great, to accumulate power and to gather the scattered dispositions of the mind. This is referred to as the versatile development of one’s *brahma śakti*. The seeker can conserve, modify and amplify his brahma, the self, the potency, the energy and can be successful in the practice of brahmacarya.

There is no doubt that brahmacarya leads to the development of bodily strength, which is not really connected with body weight. A person can be heavy but weak. In contrast, a person who is thin can be strong. The centre of power is brahmacarya, not the physical body. Brahmacarya and weakness cannot coexist.

In defining brahmacarya, the ancient yogis and sages have said that it means to carefully avoid eight kinds of sexual activity:

1. *Smarāṇa*: Memory
2. *Kīrtana*: Praising the qualities of the other
3. *Keli*: Amorous play
4. *Prekṣaṇa*: Looking at another person with lust
5. *Guhya-bhāṣaṇa*: Talking in private
6. *Saṅkalpa*: Determination
7. *Adhyavasāya*: Nearing the other person for gratification
8. *Sambhoga*: Sexual intercourse

Desire first rises in the mind, gets nurtured, flowers and finally bears fruit in the body. The above eight kinds of sexual activity include mental, verbal and physical brahmacarya. It is the sensory stimuli and mental activities which tempt man towards perversions and passions. In the teachings of brahmacarya, special emphasis is placed on subjugating each and every sense organ.

*sadde rūve ya gamdhe ya, rase phāse taheva ya.
paṁcavihe kāmaguṇe, niccaso parivajjāe.*

— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 16.10*

“A celibate should always give up the sensual pleasures of sound, sight, smell, taste and touch.”

The five sense organs, namely ears, eyes, tongue, nose and

skin, are not easy to control. But it is also certain that as long as the senses are not directed towards a higher purpose, one cannot achieve success in the sādhanā of brahmacharya. When the senses become entrenched in their respective subjects, they cannot be controlled.

Among the five senses, the sense of sight is the most powerful in awakening passion and perversion in the mind. Conquering this craving and rising above it is to have control of sight, meaning the brahmacharya of sight. The ancient scriptures state that one who practices brahmacharya should not even see his own face in the mirror because it produces an attraction for physical beauty.

Control of sight is the first step towards the pursuit of chastity. It means not to allow attachment and longing for beautiful objects to arise in the mind. Every spiritual aspirant must protect his sight from exposure to objects that kindle passion. From childhood, children should be taught not to be obsessed with their looks. It will hold them in good stead in life.

Humans have ears for listening to others. Sound is the subject of the ears. When one listens to enticing words, attachment arises in his mind. When one listens to unpleasant words, aversion arises in the mind.

Modern psychologists tell us that there is no doubt that music is an aphrodisiac. This is true even for different creatures, including insects, animals and birds. Dr. Albert Ellis states that it is obvious upon observation and reflection that there is latent lust not only in animals and birds but also in smaller creatures. With the development of consciousness, the organs and senses, there is an increasing manifestation of desire. When music can have an intoxicating effect on insects, animals and birds, how can it not affect human beings? Sound can have a powerfully favourable or unfavourable effect on the minds

of not just ordinary human beings, but also on the minds of great seekers. Therefore, for the practice of brahmacharya, it is absolutely essential to nurture the sense of hearing in the right direction.

Smell can be of two types: aromatic and repulsive. The seeker must be mindful of not reacting to either type of smell. An intimate relationship exists between the sense of smell and sexuality. According to physiologists, the reason for nosebleed in young men and women is related to nostrils as well as genitalia. In many experiments, nose bleed is stopped by placing ice on the genital region of the person. Men and women who are weak are known to bleed at the end of sexual intercourse. The reduction of sexual potency is related to obstruction of nasal discharge and sneezing.

Dr. Ellis reported about a woman who started suffering from nose bleed after marriage, and a man who started to suffer from constant cold after marriage. It was found that hypersexuality was responsible for this. This is the reason why the ancient scriptures of India consider smell to be a deterrent for brahmacharya along with sight and sound.

The subject of the tongue is taste. A person intoxicated with taste cannot follow brahmacharya at any time. Excessive eating leads to various disorders and perversions. This is the reason for several types of diseases in the body. Where there is taste, sight, smell, and touch also get stimulated. Therefore, Indian scriptures strictly prohibit the brahmachārī from consuming rich foods. Even sour, spicy and sweet tastes are deadly for a brahmachārī.

Alcohol, tea, coffee and tobacco also cause bodily disorders. Excess eating leads to disturbance in pursuing brahmacharya. Ayurveda teaches us that the person who eats healthy food in reasonable quantities never becomes ill. As is the food, so is the mind.

The subject of skin is touch. Touch can be gentle or rough, dry or unctuous, long or short, and hot or cold. Our ancient sages taught their disciples that they must forsake soft and delicate objects because stimulating the sense of touch causes friction in brahmacarya. Touch is a very powerful tool to awaken suppressed desires and feelings. Compared to other bodily parts, the skin is very effective in awakening mental perversions. The person who escapes the storm of touch also avoids the negative consequences of those things which lead him astray. So much so, the seeker practicing brahmacarya should not sleep on a soft bed nor touch any other person. It hinders the practice of brahmacarya.

Ācārya Hemacandra has written in *Yogaśāstra* about how the practitioner of brahmacarya should conquer his senses. Just as the heavy cold of winter cannot be overpowered without heat, in the same way the lustful feelings in man's mind cannot be conquered without control over the senses. Describing the plight of beings engrossed in the senses, he narrated how the longing for a female elephant's touch results in the male elephant being caught in a trap. So also, as soon as the fish that is swimming in the vast body of water begins to long for the meat attached to a fishing hook, she falls into the trap of the fisherman. The bee which is deluded by smell, sits on the cheek of the elephant and falls prey to death by the flap of the elephant's ear. Similarly, the moth loses its life because it is attracted to the flame. Upon hearing the sound of a melodious song, the deer gets mesmerized and does not see the hunter, becoming a victim of his arrows. Thus, if each sense by itself can become the cause of death, imagine their cumulative effect! Therefore, a brahmacārī should abstain from attachment to these five senses.

For the cultivation of brahmacarya, mind control is more significant than sense control. Distractions are the play of

mind. It does not sit idle even for a moment, not even in sleep. Acknowledging the power of mind, Saint Kabir said that one becomes a loser when he loses control of his mind, and a winner when he wins over his mind. The warrior fighting the fiercest enemy is not defeated by the enemy, but by the weakness of his mind. As long as man is defeated by his mind, any external victory will not bring in joy.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Arjuna asks, “O Kṛṣṇa! How can we control the mind? It is even more subtle and dynamic than the wind.” Kṛṣṇa said, “O Arjuna! Man’s soul has more power than the power of the mind. If you realize this, controlling the mind will not be difficult. There are two ways to conquer the mind: practice and detachment. Practice means continuous effort and detachment means effortless disinterest towards sense objects. Those who become successful in practice and detachment can easily overcome the perversions of the mind.”

Ācārya Hemchandra has said in *Yogaśāstra*, “Purification of mind is necessary for conquering the senses.” The duty of the seeker is to win over the senses by purifying the mind. Jainism does not believe in suppressing the mind, but in disciplining it. As the mind is the operator of the senses and motivates them towards objects, having authority over the mind helps exercise control over the senses. In fact, *sādhana* of the mind is true *sādhana*. If the mind is managed well, everything is managed well. The seeker who cannot resist the mind, cannot rein in the sense organs. He cannot observe brahmacharya. The framework of brahmacharya includes removing the senses and the mind from material objects. This is called Brahmacharya Yoga in religion.



PHYSIOLOGY AND BRAHMACARYA

In Indian religion and culture, the body is considered the foundation of *sādhana*. Although the body is physical and composed of five elements, it has an important place in spiritual practice. The centres of bodily power are *vīrya* (potency) and *śukra* (reproductive tissue). To evolve to higher levels, these important power centres should be directed inwards and be focused on creative pursuits. Before speaking of preserving this potency, we should understand what it is. Here is a brief introduction of what is said in Ayurveda and Science regarding *vīrya* — how it originates, nurtures and develops the whole body.

The science of Ayurveda

Whatever a human being eats, drinks, smells, or applies on the body, is absorbed into the body and is converted first into something Ayurveda refers to as *rasa* (plasma). It is one of the *sapta dhātus*, or seven tissues of the body. *Dhātu* means that which bears or holds. In English, the seven tissues are known as plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, nerve and reproductive tissue. In Sanskrit, they are *rasa*, *rakta*, *māmsa*, *medas*, *asthi*, *majja* and *vīrya*, respectively. The production of each of these tissues takes place in a specific order: plasma to blood, blood to muscle, muscle to fat, fat to bone, bone to nerve, and nerve to reproductive tissue. The seventh tissue, the reproductive tissue, is *vīrya* or potency, also known as *raja* in women. To make this, the body has to work harder than to produce the other tissues. It takes a large quantity of blood to form a small quantity of reproductive tissue. This *vīrya* spreads to the entire body as *tejas* and *ojas*. This is the life force of the body.

This principle of Ayurveda is reflected in the research of many western scholars. In his book, *The Science of a New Life*, Dr.

John Cowan says that an ounce of semen is equivalent to 40 ounces of blood. Macfadden supports this view in his book *Manhood and Marriage*.

Indian physiologists also state that it requires 40-60 times the amount of rakta to form one unit of vīrya. If the life and death of a body can be decided by the amount and nature of rakta, then, vīrya, which is created from rakta, must surely be many times more powerful. Vāgbhata, a famous Ayurvedic scholar, has said, “Life means to have vīrya in the body. The energy in all the seven tissues, from rasa to vīrya, is known as ojas. Ojas remains mainly in the heart, yet it pervades the entire body. As the ojas in the body increases, so does the amount of energy, strength and ability to maintain the body. Man’s death is caused by weakening of ojas. Ojas is what leads to talent, intelligence, elegance, beauty and enthusiasm.” Maharishi Suśruta states, “From rasa to vīrya, the quintessential energetic part of these seven tissues is known as ojas. This is the force and this is the power.”

Śāraṅgadhara further explains, “This ojas lives in the entire body. It is smooth, soft, stable, white and nectar like. It gives strength and stability to the body.” The origin of the ojas element is vīrya. Therefore, vīrya is the main basis of life.

How long does it take for food, water and other elements that are consumed to be converted into vīrya? Ayurveda explains that it takes five days for a dhātu to transform. Once food is consumed, the essence of the food remains in the body while the undigested non-essential portion is discharged in the form of stool, urine, sweat etc. As soon as vīrya is formed, digestion stops, and the essential portion remains in the body as ojas and tejas. From the production of rasa to vīrya, with each dhātu taking 5-6 days to form, it takes more than thirty days for digestion and maturing of the dhātus.

In the Ayurvedic texts, it is said that forty measures of food form one measure of rakta, and one measure of rakta forms a very small measure of vīrya. The *Suśruta Saṃhitā* says that during intercourse, some measure of vīrya is lost. This vīrya, which is prepared after so much work and diligence, is lost in a momentary impulse by lustful people. The man who destroys his priceless energy in such a way cannot do any important work in the world. This vīrya pervades the body just like ghee in milk and jaggery in sugarcane juice. Just as milk has to be churned before getting ghee and sugarcane has to be squeezed before getting juice, so also the entire body has to be churned and squeezed to produce vīrya. Just as milk loses its essence when ghee is removed; sugarcane loses its essence after juice is extracted, so also the body becomes dull, essence-less, and hollow when the vīrya is expelled.

Western physiology

Modern physiologists do not refute the unique power and importance of the reproductive tissue, or vīrya. Mostly, they are of the same opinion about the science of the reproductive tissue as Ayurvedic scholars. But the style of thinking and presenting the subject are unique to each. Western scientists do not accept semen as the essence of the seven tissues. According to them, semen is produced directly from the blood. Hence, they do not accept its prevalence in the entire body. They believe that when perversion arises in the mind, the testicles produce a fluid by its action, which is called semen. They say that just as looking at a stimulating object brings tears to the eyes and saliva to the mouth, in the same way, semen is discharged from the testicles on stimulation from anything erotic.

Western scholars consider secretions to be of two forms: internal and external. Internal secretions happen all the time

and are consumed by the body. This juice, pervading through the entire body, makes the eyes bright, gives the face its glow, and makes each body part strong. The sudden change in the body of a young teenager is due to this internal secretion. The western scientists believe that the external secretions of the reproductive areas are a mixture of different elements, and this combination is known as semen. Dr. Augustus Gardner says, "Semen is the absolute essence of blood. Nature has not just given it life force, but has also filled it with the magic of enriching personal life. There is no doubt that the retention of semen by the body gives rise to life force in the entire body." Hence, restraint is necessary for the physical, mental and spiritual growth of a person because it regulates the discharge of semen.

Whatever may be the difference between ancient and modern thought, all accept the importance of semen preservation.

There are two types of conditions in the body: accumulation and dispersion. From the beginning of life to the age of forty-five, the power of accumulation is in abundance while from forty-six to seventy, the power of dispersion rises. As a person ages, accumulation gradually gives way to dispersion.

Humans think that sense experiences lead to pleasure, but pleasure is not really happiness. Momentary pleasures only lead to terrible consequences. As potency declines, the cognitive fibres become so filled with tension that its negative effects cannot be fully ascertained.



PSYCHOLOGY AND BRAHMACARYA

Psychology, as a science, reflects deeply on every aspect of human life. It sheds important light on the form of mind, its thoughts and subsequent actions. Hence, it is of great importance in running public life smoothly.

Psychology lays emphasis on the connection of body and mind. Many physical ailments have their root in our mental framework. It is now proven that an unhealthy mind gives rise to many diseases. Just as physical health is dependent on mental health, so also noble and ignoble conduct are dependent on the activities of the mind. Conflict between two nations, between two societies and between two people are because of the knots in man's mind.

Psychology is one of the most important subjects of human study. From its study, man can know his own nature as well as the nature of society. As long as man does not understand himself, his neighbours and the society, he will not experience happiness, peace and contentment. As a subject, psychology seeks to reconcile science and philosophy. Through its study and research, the deep recesses of the human mind can be understood in a scientific manner.

Divisions of the mind

According to psychologist Sigmund Freud, there are three levels of the human mind — conscious, subconscious and unconscious. These three levels are similar to an iceberg. We can only see what little is visible above the surface of the water, but most of it remains invisible, hidden under the water. The part of the mind we can know is called the conscious mind, the part about which we do not know anything is called the unconscious mind, the part between the conscious and the unconscious is called the subconscious. The unconscious mind is like an ocean of our past experiences. The innate tendencies of humans remain in the unconscious mind. The

conscious and the unconscious mind can be compared with the stage and the wings. The actors who appear on the stage are few when compared to all the support staff who remain hidden. Likewise, the desires of the conscious mind are only a fraction of the total number of desires, most of which remain hidden in the unconscious.

Desires appear only when they move from the unconscious mind to the conscious mind. The main difference between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind is that the experience of the conscious mind can be recalled usually within a few attempts, while the experiences of the unconscious mind cannot be recalled even after trying multiple times. The unconscious mind contains all kinds of knowledge and experience, which the individual himself may have forgotten, but it is the source of experiences in the conscious mind. Therefore, the unconscious mind is more powerful than the conscious mind.

The sublimation of energy

Lust energy appears in many forms in human life. To control lust, many types of rules of etiquette are created. That is why humans are considered to be different from other creatures. If we look at the history of the world and study the literature of different communities, we will see the prevalence of different types of lust. In the history of Greece, there is evidence of lustful relationships between mother and son. In Indian mythology, Sister Yāmi goes to her brother Yama with lustful feelings. Yama tries to calm her lust by teaching her about good conduct.

The societal suppression of lust leads to its denial. People deny it despite being aware of its presence. Lust is not destroyed by suppression; it only moves from the conscious to the unconscious mind. As long as this continues, the mind will

not sit silent. According to psychology, the sublimation of lust leads to its transformation into higher forms of expression, while its suppression results in perversion.

Sublimation is a wonderful ability of the human mind to channel and transform energy towards development. When a person channels his negative or unwanted energy to develop literature, music, art and spirituality, he transforms or sublimates the energy into something positive. When the person removes all his distractions and concentrates all thought on a pure and lofty mission, then no perversion arises in his mind. In religion, this is called brahmacarya. Gathering the scattered powers of the mind and focusing on any one sacred goal is true brahmacarya.

Man is capable of doing the work of mental refinement quite thoroughly because without this refinement, man cannot fulfill any great goal. Self-respect, public welfare and social service are strong in the person who lives in chastity and he can easily achieve these goals with the proper use of his potency.

Most of the times, the term *śodhana* is used in the context of lust energy. If this lust power is not utilized properly, then it can lead man towards misdeeds. The early life of Kālidāsā was full of desire, but when he refined his lust energy, he created great works such as *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and *Meghadūta* which were his precious gifts to the world. The melody in Mīrābāī's music came from the refinement of her mental faculties. The mind of saint Sūradāsa was enamoured with a prostitute called Cintāmaṇi, but one day when he reflected upon this despairing state of his own mind, his dormant consciousness awakened. By refining his mental strength and immersing himself in love for Kṛṣṇa, he wrote verses that are considered unmatched in devotion and wisdom.

The story of Saint Tulasīdāsa is also insightful in this regard. Before he became a saint, he was so steeped in lust for his wife Ratnā that he was unable to stay away from her even for a night. One night, he climbed onto her balcony mistaking a snake for a rope in the dark. When he realized his own desperation to fulfil his lust, he transformed. He then presented his best works to the world, becoming immortal through them.

The best way to control that lust energy is to employ mindfulness in its development, adaptation, mitigation and refinement. This can be the most beautiful and useful explanation of chastity in terms of psychology.



RELIGION AND BRAHMACARYA

In Indian culture, dharma has been called *parama maṅgala*, meaning supreme auspiciousness. The reason why dharma is known as supremely auspicious is because it leads human life away from downfall towards evolution. Even the most ordinary citizen of India cannot imagine a society or culture devoid of dharma. Bhagavān Mahāvīra, the peacemaker of *śramaṇa* culture, the giver of divine light of non-violence and manifoldness, has said that even the celestials pay obeisance to the person in whose heart religion resides.

*dhammo maṅgala-mukkiṭṭhaṃ, ahimsā saṃjamo tavo.
devā vi tam namaṃsanti, jassa dhamme sayā maṇo.*

— *Daśavaikālika Sūtra 1.1*

“Dharma (righteousness) is supremely auspicious. Its constituents are non-violence, self-restraint and austerity. Even the celestial beings revere him who is rooted in dharma.”

No conscious creature across this universe has the power to refuse the existence of divine power in a righteous soul. What is that religion whose power cannot be denied? Bhagavān Mahāvīra said that to nurture love in every heart, to maintain equanimity in the most adverse circumstances of life, and to exercise restraint over the notorious tendencies of the mind, is the biggest religion. He described this ultimate pure religion in three words — non-violence, restraint and austerity. Wherever the ugly game of selfishness exists, restraint is required to stabilize the divine lamp of non-violence, and to purify this restraint, austerity is needed. When this trio exists, life becomes pure and holy.

A devout person is one who has a strong sense of duty and practices it. Can anyone be more righteous than a person who

does not relinquish his duty even in difficult moments of crisis? The relationship between religion and duty is beyond logic. With practice, every duty evolves into religion. Duty points to that special action which man must do. By doing duties, the purity of religion increases. Therefore, religion and duty are complementary to each other. Religion finds expression in duty and manifests itself in duty. Religion is excellence of character while irreligion is a blemish on character.

Aristotle stated, “Religion is a permanent mental state. Its origin lies in auspicious resolutions. Its basis brings excellence to life. Its ideal is stabilized and regulated by the intellect.” Western thinkers say that religion is a permanent tendency and character acquired by ethical rules. This is not a natural tendency; it is acquired. But Indian philosophers and thinkers do not agree with this because they have always believed that religion is the natural and effortless tendency of the soul.

Religion, happiness and knowledge

What is the relationship between religion and happiness? Human beings observe religion so that they may find happiness. There is a desire for happiness behind every effort of human intellect. According to Aristotle, happiness is achieved by fulfilling human actions in a proper way. The right practice of any activity leads to joy. The unique capacity of the human, which distinguishes him from other creatures, is his thinking power. From a righteous life, anything negative or inauspicious cannot arise. Religion is not pleasure in itself, but is the ultimate means of achieving happiness.

Socrates said, “The only good is knowledge and the only evil is ignorance.” If a person has complete knowledge about the nature of auspiciousness, then his practice cannot falter. On the other hand, if someone does not have this knowledge, then he can never be righteous. What this means is that the

nature of dharma cannot be known without knowledge, and without pure sādhanā of dharma, one cannot get Right Knowledge. According to Jaina philosophy, where there is Right Conduct, there will be Right Knowledge. Knowledge is not an external object, but it is the sacred feeling of the human mind. Indian culture accepts the harmony of restraint and knowledge. According to *anekantavāda* which is the Jaina theory of manifoldness, one-sided restraint or one-sided knowledge cannot be accepted. Thus, religion and knowledge nurture each other.

Indian religious tradition has always considered conduct and thought as equally useful for life. If an idea originates in the human brain but does not take on the form of conduct, then it is not a useful idea for life. Once truth and non-truth are known, truth has to be accepted and untruth has to be shunned. Wisdom and discrimination illuminate the path, but it is pure conduct that gives it movement. Thought is the eye while conduct is the foot. As long as the eyes and feet are uncoordinated, the wheels of life's chariot cannot move and develop.

Religion and brahmacarya

No one can deny the purity of brahmacarya. If a person commits adultery due to lust, his conscience condemns him for this sin. It is not easy to practice brahmacarya unless devotion for restraint, conduct and virtue arise in man's mind. One and all are impressed by the purity of brahmacarya.

Among the four stages (*āśrama*) of the Vedic tradition, brahmacarya is the first. Man must construct the lofty mansion of his life on the foundation of brahmacarya. Without it, the pursuit of science or theology is not possible. To achieve the highest goal of life, there is no means as powerful as brahmacarya.

In Jaina tradition, brahmacarya is considered an extraordinary force of unparalleled energy. The sādhanā of brahmacarya is deemed as necessary to bring beauty, simplicity and luminosity to human life. If the basis of life is not pure and holy, then how will the goal be pure? Bhagavān Mahāvīra has called it an eternal religion. Infinite seekers have achieved the supreme state by its pure sādhanā, and in the future too, countless seekers will attain liberation through the practice of this brahmacarya. Such beautiful, sublime and illuminating thoughts about brahmacarya cannot be found elsewhere in world literature.

In recent times, Mahatma Gandhi stands before us as a serious practitioner of brahmacarya. He stated that establishing brahmacarya in one's life was necessary for growth and evolution. He undertook this sādhanā by observing chastity.

In Buddhist texts, it is said that to attain enlightenment, it is necessary to practice restraint on one's desires. A person who cannot restrain his desires, can never become a buddha. For this view, Buddhism has received much honour and respect.

Brahmacarya also holds an important place in Christianity. In the Bible, there are many places where adultery, sexual desires and amorous behaviour have been condemned. To commit adultery or rape is considered to be a serious sin in Christianity.

Thus, we see that all the religions of the world state unequivocally that brahmacarya is a great vow and powerful way of life.



ETHICS AND BRAHMACARYA

Ethics have contributed a lot to the development of human life. Ethics transform the moral belief about truth and untruth into thoughtful insights. Ethical studies are rooted in analysis of morality.

Ethics is not a science, because science teaches us to know, whereas ethics teaches us duty and conduct. The field of ethics sheds light on human behaviour and conduct. Ethics is sometimes called the science of conduct where man's behaviour is studied in a scientific way. It is said that virtuous action leads to merit and sinful action leads to demerit. Ethics studies merit and demerit, as well as the characteristics of religion and irreligion. Ethics considers merit and demerit as a person's moral system, and presents the consequences of both in a logical way. For ethics, freedom of will is an accepted truth. Every person is free to do any action, be it good or bad. But every action has a consequence for him. Hence, it is said that ethics inspires man to move from the inauspicious to the auspicious path.

Buddha said that the significance of human life lies in man releasing himself from the bondage of desires. He taught four noble truths. They are:

1. There is sorrow in the world,
2. There is a cause for sorrow,
3. There is cessation of suffering, and
4. There is a path to the cessation of suffering.

Buddha also preached the eightfold path of right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. His ethics emphasize the inner sanctity of life. In Buddha's life, compassion and detachment are reflected.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded non-violence and equanimity as the basis of ethics. He stated that without *ahiṃsā*, human culture cannot reach great heights. Non-violence is a vast and pervasive intuition of the human soul, which has the amazing ability to assimilate the whole world. Mahāvīra's non-violence is found to exist in every atom of the conscious world and is the connection between one soul and another.

According to Bhagavān Mahāvīra, there are five cardinal principles, which are forms of ethical behaviour: non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truth (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacarya*), and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*).

Among these, non-violence means not giving any kind of pain to anyone. Truth means accurate speech. Non-stealing means not to take anyone's belongings without their permission. Chastity means restraint on one's lustful desires. Non-possessiveness means not to have attachment to any object, as well as not to take or covet the object of another without their permission.

These five principles are observed in two ways, depending upon whether the seeker is a householder or a *sādhu*:

- 1) *śrāvākācāra* (conduct of householder)
- 2) *śramaṇācāra* (conduct of ascetics)

A householder cannot observe the vows as strictly as a *sādhu* because a householder is bound by worldly duties. For instance, he needs to have belongings such as house, vehicles, utensils, and so on and so forth. A *sādhu*, on the other hand, lives with minimal possessions. So, a householder observes the vows in a partial manner while the *sādhu* observes them completely. Therefore, the conduct of the householder is known as *aṇuvrata* (minor vows) and the conduct of *sādhus* is known as *mahāvratā* (major vows). Minor vows are observed

in a partial manner while major vows are observed in a complete manner.

Apart from these five principles, Bhagavān Mahāvīra has propounded that any true seeker must reflect on four contemplations daily: *maitrī* (amity), *pramoda* (reverence), *karuṇā* (compassion) and *mādhyastha bhāvanā* (equanimity). Amity means friendship towards all creatures in the world. Reverence means to feel happy on seeing well-being and affluence in the lives of others. Compassion means kindness and empathy towards those who are suffering. Equanimity means not to feel inimical even towards those who oppose us.

While observing the primary vows, one must keep the following principles in mind:

- 1) Viveka – The quality of discrimination
- 2) Jāgaruktā – Mindfulness in all activities of body, mind and speech
- 3) Live and let live – The principle of non-violence where you learn to treat others as you would treat your own self
- 4) Saṅghattā – Avoiding any contact which leads to conflict
- 5) Pratilekhana – Practice of intense inspection of objects and places of use to ensure stringent cleanliness and orderliness.
- 6) Yatanā – Carefulness in one's actions to ensure unavoidable violence reduced to minimal levels

Buddha affirmed the same tenets that were propounded by Mahāvīra. He taught his followers the fivefold principles of *pañcaśīla* for the development of human life. He said that all creatures in the world should be happy and peaceful and not feel animosity towards anyone, not hurt anyone. Above all, one who cannot triumph over lust, cannot improve his life.

*tellokkāḍavidahaṇo, kāmaggī visayarukkhapajjalio.
jovvaṇataṇillacārī, jaṃ ṇa ḍahai so havai dhaṇṇo.*

— *Bhagavatī Ārādhana 1115*

“The fire of lust when kindled by the fuel of desires destroys the forest of the three worlds. Blessed is he whose youth remains unsullied by this fire.”



PERSPECTIVES ON BRAHMACARYA

Brahmacarya is the essence of restraint. It is the singular reason for salvation. Celestials, demons and humans worship one who observes brahmacarya. By the influence of chastity, man remains healthy, happy and prosperous. From its sādhanā, the life of man becomes bright and energetic.

Although the definition of the term Brahmacarya may vary slightly across the world, the basic premise remains the same, reflecting facets of the same principle. Let us reflect on some schools of thought.

The great Greek philosophers — Socrates, Plato and Aristotle — said that without restraint and virtue, man is dull and lifeless. If a man cannot be righteous, he cannot achieve anything. Whatever man thinks in his mind, he feels the same with his heart and that is how his actions also become. Conduct is influenced by thoughts and thoughts are influenced by conduct.

In India, religion, philosophy and culture are not physical, but spiritual. The basic premise of Indian culture is austerity, sacrifice and restraint. *Samyama*, meaning restraint, is considered as spiritual energy. Every thought that makes life beautiful is restraint and virtue. In Indian culture, it is said that just as all the pilgrimages are absorbed in the sea, in the same way, restraint, virtue and morality across the world become embedded in brahmacarya. Anyone who maintains renunciation, restraint and detachment in their lives can live anywhere without any fear of wrong action.

The sādhanā of brahmacarya has been given more importance than all other spiritual practices. In the Vedas and Upaniṣads, brahmacarya is glorified with powerful words. The Atharva Veda says that the Vedas are brahma. Therefore, the study

of the Vedas is also brahmacharya. The meaning of brahma is taken as ‘the supreme divine’. The rituals and meditation that are done for that supreme divine are brahmacharya. Ācārya Manu said, “If the mind is pure then life cannot deteriorate. Therefore, do whatever sādhanā you undertake with your entire heart.”

In yoga texts, brahmacharya is said to mean sense restraint. In yoga practice, the sādhanā of brahmacharya has been given special significance. Patanjali considered brahmacharya one of the five yamas (restraints) of his Yoga Philosophy.

Buddha also considered brahmacharya as one among his *pañcaśīla* (fivefold principle). In the first part of the Buddhist *Viśuddhi Magga*, brahmacharya is defined as the religion that leads to liberation. The Buddhist Tripiṭakas have highlighted the importance of brahmacharya in detail. Countless seekers of the vow of brahmacharya have progressed on their path by considering the light shed from the above texts. The question is, why did the spiritual practice of brahmacharya get so much importance? Why is the value of other sādhanās lower in comparison to the sādhanā of brahmacharya? The sages who are seers of the epoch have tried to solve this question. The conclusion is that the spiritual practice of brahmacharya is the sādhanā of victory. Triumph over the lust of the mind is not as easy as is conceived by many.

An incident from Buddha’s life gives us so much inspiration. When Buddha was doing sādhanā, Māra (Kāma) tried to disturb him by creating an intoxicating environment and sending beautiful nymphs. But Buddha was invincible, determined and steadfast in his sādhanā — like a warrior. In this battle of lust, Māra was defeated and Buddha became the winner. In Buddhist Philosophy, it is said that until one conquers the ‘māra’ of his own mind, he is not capable of becoming a Buddha.

Poet Kalidāsā, in his epic poem *Kumāra Saṃbhava*, described the fierce austerity of Śaṅkara, the greatest of yogis, in such brilliant words that they left readers and listeners mesmerised. At the end of the poem, the poet showed how the great austerity of that yogi became extinct just by seeing the beauty of Gaurī. This gives an impression that the practice of brahmacarya is impossible.

However, in counter, the great poet Bhāravi has given a detailed description of the austerity and yoga of Arjuna in his epic poem *Kirātārjunīya*. Before the war of Mahābhārata, when Arjuna became absorbed in yogic practices to get the blessings of Śiva, Indra sent many beautiful nymphs to test him, but they were not successful. This incident of Arjuna's life became a divine light for the seekers of brahmacarya. The spiritual practice of brahmacarya is one of the toughest challenges before us. Complete effort should be made to keep the mind pure. If ever any perversion enters the mind, this practice becomes not just difficult but also impossible.

The sādhanā of brahmacarya is considered a spiritual practice. Gandhiji has written that brahmacarya is not the restraint of any one sense, rather, it is the restraint of all the senses that is the all-consuming restraint of life. The seeker of brahmacarya should resolve in his mind that he will not look at the beauty of any woman with an unblinking gaze, not read erotic literature, not listen to erotic music and not pronounce obscene words. Then the spiritual practice of brahmacarya will not be impossible for him.

The author of the memoirs of Lokmanya Tilak writes that once an extraordinarily beautiful young woman came to Tilak to discuss a subject. As soon as he saw the woman entering his study room, he immediately fixed his eyes on a book. The woman sat with him for three hours, but Tilak did not even

look at her once. This is called restraint of sight in Indian culture. That western writer wrote, “The brightness that I saw in Tilak’s eyes, I have never seen in the eyes of any other man in the world.” Such brilliance is not possible without the *sādhanā* of brahmacarya.

The great scholar Rajbade took a vow that he would only sleep on a mat spread on the ground. When he was twenty-five years old, his wife died because of some illness. Everyone insisted that he marry again, but he refused saying, “There was only one obstacle in my spiritual practice, which has gone away by itself. When I am free of bondage, why should I be in bondage again?” Because of his restraint, his will power and intelligence were extraordinary. He stayed unfazed in his understanding and interpretation of the most complex scriptures. Such is the power of brahmacarya.

Swami Vivekananda’s concentration, dedication and surrender are unparalleled. Regarding his talent and intellectual capacity, it was said that when he used to study, he would sit in an *āsana* and read all the chapters one after another, after which he could repeat them by heart. His memory was amazing. He used to say that all these things were achieved by the force of brahmacarya.

The Jaina View

In Jaina philosophy, the terms *viramaṇa* (abstinence) and *śīla* (conduct) are specifically used for brahmacarya. In the Sanskrit commentary of *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra* by Acārya Śīlāṅka, the interpretation of brahmacarya is given, “When truth, austerity, kindness and sense restraint are consecrated in brahma, it is known as brahmacarya.” Bhagavān Mahāvīra accepted brahmacarya as one of the five cardinal principles for *sādhus* and householders. The spiritual practice of brahmacarya is prescribed for men and women. Observing

partial brahmacharya will help to build soulful love and respect between couples. One who does not understand the importance of chastity in marriage stays ignorant and falls into the web of desires.

*jahā ṇāī veyaraṇī, duttarā iha sammatā.
evaṁ logaṁsi ṇārīo, duttarā amaīmayā.*

— *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra 1.3.4.16*

Just as it is difficult to cross the river Vaitaraṇī, so also it is very difficult for an ignorant person to conquer over his passion for women.”

In *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, Ācārya Umāswāti defines brahmacharya as residing in a *gurukula*. As long as the seeker is entangled in sensory indulgence, he forgets the pure nature of his soul. Therefore, Indian thinkers and philosophers have warned time and again to refrain from the wrong wheels of attachment, temptation, desire and lust. There is a need to be constantly alert.

In the commentary, the origin of the word ‘maithuna’ is given as *mithuna*, the union of male and female. The feeling and action of *mithuna* is known as *maithuna*, which is *abrahma*. In the “Sarvārtha Siddhi” section of *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7.16, it is said, “When there is a desire for intercourse between a man and a woman due to the emergence of attachment, it is *mithuna*. The effort and action as a result of this attachment is *maithuna*.” Akalaṅka Deva explains masturbation in his “Rājavartikā” of *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7.16, “A person’s sexual touch by his own hand, foot and pudgala composition is also *maithuna*. This is because one person does the activity of two due to lust that arises out of delusion. Any sexual contact between two can be called *maithuna*. Apart from this, any inappropriate touch between two men, or two women, is also *abrahma*.”

In *Yogaśāstra*, Ācārya Hemchandra says that in the beginning, maithuna appears to be pleasant, but in the end, it is distressing. Sense indulgence is like the kimpaka fruit, which is tempting to look at, tasty to eat and fragrant to smell, but is fatal and destructive. During sexual acts, the violence of subtle microorganisms takes place. The sacred texts say that lustful indulgence is the door to hell. It destroys the intellect and damages the soul's power. It can also lead to health consequences such as the spread of venereal diseases.

In the illuminating history of *śramaṇa* culture, there are many touching stories which shed light on the spiritual practice of brahmacarya. The description of Rājimati and Rathanemi is one such story. Rathanemi, who was a great sādhanā of his era, became enchanted by the amazing beauty of Rājimati and forgot his sādhanā. He pleaded with her to give in to lust. But the magnificent woman condemned his lack of abstinence and said that no seeker could succeed in his sādhanā if he could not win the battle of his own mind. She explained that if one could look at the beauty of physical form without allowing attachment to arise in the mind, then one was a true sādhanā. Without winning over lust and desires, one cannot acquire the desired fruit of sādhanā. Truly, it is better to die than to live such a corrupt life. After listening to this sermon of Rājimati, Rathanemi again became rooted in restraint.

Ācārya Hemchandra has written a beautiful and glorious picture of the life of a great seeker in *Triṣaṣṭi Śalākā Puruṣa Caritra*. The great sādhanā was Sthūlībhadrā who made his life immortal with the sādhanā of brahmacarya.

Sthūlībhadrā came to Patna for the *cāturmāsa* (rainy season). There was a divine resolve in his heart — to impart wisdom to a prostitute named Kośā. Although the resolution was sacred, it was not easy to realize it. It was like playing with

fire without getting burnt, like waking a giant cobra without getting bitten, or trying to cross a vast ocean by rowing only with one's arms. But that yogi made the impossible possible with his power of determination. He remained serene in the whimsical environment of the prostitute, remained steadfast in meditation and the sādhanā of brahmacarya. He was undoubtedly a great yogi of his era.

*vāū va jālamaccei, piyā logaṃsi itthio.
itthio je ṇa sevaṃti, ādimokkhā hu te jaṇā.*

— *Sūtrakṛtāṅga Sūtra 1.15.8.9*

“Just as the wind passes through the flames of fire so also a spiritual aspirant overcomes the charms of beautiful women and supersedes their attractions. They are first to get liberated.”

Even two thousand years later, immortal seekers have not forgotten Sthūlībhadrā. Ācārya Hemacandra has written that he was the best amongst yogis, meditators and ascetics.

The glory and importance given to brahmacarya in Indian culture is not given to any other vow. This is the reason that seekers of brahmacarya exist in all three streams of Indian culture — Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist — and present great ideals on the strength of their sādhanā. Brahmacarya is a continuous effort to stay absorbed in the self, in Brahma. Not just to keep trying but ultimately become absorbed in brahmacarya and self.



SECTION III – TOOLS

ĀSANA

For accomplishing one's goals, tools are necessary. A practitioner of any vow cannot succeed in his endeavours without the right tools. When a practitioner accepts brahmacharya as the goal of his sādhanā, what tools can he use to help himself? While various tools are mentioned in Indian Yogic practices, there are three main ones: *āsana* (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breathing) and *dhyāna* (meditation).

The Yoga Philosophy sheds light on right living with *yama* (restraints) and its complement *niyama* (vows). We need both in life, the things we must avoid and the things we must do. These are what the yamas and niyamas give us. Along with them, an emphasis is placed on *āsana* (posture). The daily practice of some āsanās eases the path of brahmacharya. The aim of āsana practice is to keep the spinal cord straight in an effortless manner. It is necessary to keep the chest and neck straight so that the entire weight of the body falls on the ribs. The right āsanās will stabilize the body along with the mind. Out of the sixty-four types of āsanās, we will only mention those here which are helpful in the practice of brahmacharya. With their daily practice, the potency of an individual becomes stable and fertile.

The āsanās should be done in a place that is clean, well ventilated, quiet and secluded. The best time to do the postures is in the morning. Through this powerful form of physical exercise, the nerves are purified, the digestive power increases and the blood flow improves. If you are new to āsana practice, please consult your doctor and an āsana teacher to ensure the practice is suitable for you.

The duration of āsana

There are various views on how long an āsana should be held for. But normally, during the first week, practicing an āsana

for 15-20 seconds is sufficient. Increase the duration by two more minutes every week until you get to 12 minutes. In one year, you can increase the length of practice from half an hour to one hour. Further, depending on the posture and circumstances, the practitioner can decide how long he can remain stable in the practice of āsana.

Benefits of āsanas

Practicing āsanas helps in keeping the body healthy, light, bright and energetic. It helps maintain, cleanse and stabilize one's potency; improve eyesight, delay greying of hair, protect the body from diseases, prevent obesity and keep laziness and indulgence at bay.

Śīrṣāsana

When you stand upside down on the head, blood and semen move from the bottom to the top and get stored in the brain. This posture removes impurities of semen, blood disorders, epilepsy, leprosy, weakness of head and eyes etc.

Method:

Before doing śīrṣāsana, clean the floor, roll a blanket or a garment into a pad or a ball and make place to keep your head on it. Before doing this āsana, remove your clothes and loosen your loin cloth or waist belt to prevent any obstruction to the blood flow. When you are ready, kneel on the ground, lock the fingers of both hands and place them on the ground with arms resting on the ground. Place your head near the locked hands to prevent it from moving. Lay the head on the cloth pad and slowly bring your legs close to the head to shift the weight of the body to the head. Then fold the knees and raise the feet very slowly. First the waist should be straightened, then the raised feet should be straightened with the weight

on the head. The body should be stable when the posture is completed. Knees, toes and heels must be together. While in the āsana, centre your attention on the brow or on the front part of the nostrils. Keep your eyes open.

Siddhāsana

Siddhāsana, meaning accomplished posture, is known for its ability to destroy seminal disorders. This is considered to be the best posture for the cultivation of brahmacharya. Semen becomes stable with this posture. All the nerves of the anus, the penis and the stomach get stretched, which eliminates abdominal and semen disorders. This posture helps in stabilizing the mind and correcting the pace of the breath, which is very important in the practice of brahmacharya. Those who want success in the practice of brahmacharya should do this āsana as it destroys lust.

Method:

Sit on a soft mat and spread your legs. Fold the left leg and place the heel firmly between the anus and the testicles. Ensure that the heel is above the *śivani nāḍī* (perineum area). The left foot should rest below the right thigh. Now fold the right foot and place its heel on the root of the penis, making sure that the heels are in a straight line with the legs. Place the sole of the right foot on the left thigh and the toes between the thigh and the shin. Keep both hands under the belly, the right hand on top of the left. Rest your chin in the pit on the throat. Fix your gaze steadily on the brow. Keep the mind calm. This is called siddhāsana. This posture is difficult, hence begin by doing it for two minutes and then gradually increase the duration. Practice it in a place that is secluded, clean and peaceful.

Ardhasiddhāsana

Ardhasiddhāsana means semi-accomplished posture. Householders can practice this posture. In it, the left heel

stays between the anus and the testicles, but the heel of the right foot does not remain above the penis and instead remains on the thigh. In these two types of postures, the spinal cord should be kept straight. All the weight of the body is brought on the left heel.

Padmāsana

Sit down with your legs stretched, place the left leg on the right thigh and the right leg on the left thigh. Stretch the heel of both feet firmly on the thigh joints. Let the knees rest on the ground. Try and place the chin on the pit of the throat without undue strain. Increase the duration of this āsana gradually. Start by doing it for one minute and then increase it to one hour every day. If along with this āsana, shrinking and expanding of the stomach is also done, it helps to remove arthritis and disorders related to stomach, breath, semen and digestion. This āsana also helps to remove obesity.



PRĀṆĀYĀMA

Prāṇāyāma, is also an important tool for the practice of brahmacarya. Āsana is physical exercise and prāṇāyāma is the exercise of inhaling-exhaling. *Prāṇa* refers to the air with high oxygen level and is also the primal force that forms the basis on which the life instruments of our body run smoothly. A dimension of life breath is prāṇāyāma. It involves three actions: inhaling, holding the breath and exhaling. Inhaling is called *pūraka*; holding is called *kumbhaka*; and exhaling, *recaka*.

Benefits of prāṇāyāma

While prāṇāyāma is beneficial for health and especially in the practice of brahmacarya, it can also do much harm if not done properly. Improper practice of prāṇāyāma can result in many diseases, but if done properly, it can also free people from severe diseases. Therefore, prāṇāyāma should be practiced under the guidance of a qualified guru. Householders should practice prāṇāyāma from 3:00 am to 5:00 am in the open. If done methodically and as per one's capacity, prāṇāyāma can purify the elements in the body and cleanse the body, making it disease free. This stimulates the gastric juices and increases digestive power. The bowel function improves and one feels hungry. The practice of prāṇāyāma purifies blood and stabilizes the semen. The body becomes bright and the face glows. It improves the elements in the body, protects the semen and helps the practitioner to practice complete chastity. Here are a few prāṇāyāmas related specifically to the sādhanā of brahmacarya.

Elementary prāṇāyāma

Elementary prāṇāyāma is the most popular form of prāṇāyāma as it can be done by men and women; young and old; strong and weak.

Method:

Straighten the spinal cord and sit cross-legged. Tilt your head forward a little, without the chin touching your chest, and keep the neck straight. Slowly inhale without putting stress on the chest, using the navel and the stomach. Focus on the navel lotus. Take in as much air as you can, filling the abdomen and the lungs such that the stomach and the chest expand. Hold the breath for as long as you can and then exhale gradually. Once you have exhaled air fully, again hold your breath. This is one cycle of *prāṇāyāma*. Do this three times.

Sun piercing *prāṇāyāma*

When you have practiced and perfected elementary *prāṇāyāma*, then start practicing *sūrya bhedi*, meaning sun piercing *prāṇāyāma* or right nostril *prāṇāyāma*. In this too, inhaling, holding and exhaling should be practiced. In this *prāṇāyāma*, breath is inhaled through one nostril and exhaled through the other. In the next round, breath is inhaled through the nostril from which breath was exhaled. Thus there is a change in the nostril used for inhaling and exhaling.

According to yoga scriptures, the right nostril is known as *sūrya svara* or sun breath, and the left nostril as *candra svara* or moon breath. Only during deep meditation does one breathe through both nostrils evenly. At other times, breath is stronger in one nostril and lighter in the other. In this *prāṇāyāma*, the thumb and the middle finger of the right hand are used. Close the left nostril with the middle finger and inhale with the right; then close the right nostril with the thumb and exhale from left. Then inhale from left and exhale from right.

Semen empowering *prāṇāyāma*

There are many variations in semen empowering and semen stabilizing *prāṇāyāma*. Seekers do this in a variety of ways.

This prāṇāyāma removes all the flaws of the semen and makes the seeker a pure celibate. This prāṇāyāma cannot be practiced by ordinary people.

Method:

Sit in ardha siddhāsana and press the heel in the middle of the anus and the testicles so that the entire body's weight rests on it. Keep the spine straight, use force from the navel to inhale through one nostril and hold the breath by placing the chin in the pit of the throat. Then exhale gradually from the other nostril and make a firm resolve that the air is rising from the pelvis to the head, that it has climbed. Hold after exhaling. At that time, resolve that the sperm pulled up is filling the brain, that it has filled the brain. This is one kind of prāṇāyāma. Do three or five such rounds regularly in a clean and open space. With this prāṇāyāma, all the diseases related to the semen such as loss of semen, dream defects and urinary tract infection are destroyed. Body becomes stronger and bright.

Prāṇāyāma produces heat and dryness in the brain. Therefore, intake of unctuous substances such as milk, yogurt and ghee are recommended by yoga experts. The sādḥaka should abstain from any foods which ignite passion. Intake of *sāttvika* food is ideal while *rājasika* and *tāmasika* foods should be shunned. Only then one can benefit from the practice of prāṇāyāma.

The spiritual practice of brahmacharya should be done with the mind, speech and body, only then can one's life become pleasant, calm and sweet. During the practice of chastity, as the semen's power increases, so also does the will power as well as the power of resolve. In the practice of āsana and prāṇāyāma, will power plays a pivotal role. Without will power, there will be no enthusiasm or excitement in undertaking a task. Will power plays an important role in improving one's conduct, character and health. This can help reduce and increase

the speed of the heart and the muscles. By being steady in meditation, one can stop and activate the blood flow and heart rate at will. Even an old man can become young and youthful with will power and determination. A seeker can exert his will to overcome any desire through meditation.



THE POWER OF RESOLVE

According to the school of Yoga, meditation is nothing but concentration of the mind. It is his mental strength. To observe any vow, one must have firmness in one's resolve. To practice the vow of brahmacharya as well, a strong resolve, will power, mental strength and meditation are a must because the rise of lust begins in man's mind, and is then manifested in behaviour and speech.

Jainism, Buddhism and Vedic tradition are of the same view. All of them explain that with meditation, the seeker is able to concentrate the scattered dispositions of his mind on any one subject. He gradually becomes blessed with such ability that he is easily able to overcome the contrasting thoughts and perversions of the mind.

The power of resolve

The power upon which man's life is dependent for its creation and development, is referred to as will power and mental strength by psychologists. In Rabindranath Tagore's words, "When a person considers himself insignificant, small, oppressed and inferior because of his ignorance, then he falls." Weakness of resolve and pettiness of mind leads man to lose faith in his power and ability.

The person who thinks of himself as eternal, infinite and the bearer of consciousness, is the one who can accomplish anything in this world. But one who has inferior feelings and petty thoughts towards himself, loses the power to know himself, let alone others. As long as man does not believe in his own divine form and does not behave accordingly, no god or celestial being can preserve or promote him. The seed which has now lost its vitality, cannot be nurtured by the

thousand waves of great rains, or by the sun's warm light, or by the life-infusing force of the wind. There is nothing left in the fate of that seed, except to waste itself in the soil. It has no value at all for anyone's life.

It is the power of brahmacarya which ushers in a strong resolve and will power, leading to brightness and the glow of life. The person who practices the vow of brahmacarya with steadfastness and speed makes his intensity and resolve that much more pronounced and powerful. Be it the great meditators who want to achieve their goal through meditation, the intellectuals who want to reach their goal through the pursuit of knowledge, or the scientists who want to prove their hypotheses with their experiments, all of them are examples of nothing but the power of resolve, concentration, dedication and single-mindedness. The glory of chastity is immense and profound.

Man's life has been divided into two compartments — one is earthy and ephemeral while the other is divine and eternal. The person who believes in his mortal and earthy aspect forgets his eternal and divine aspect. This is the reason for his feeling of worthlessness. This eliminates his ability to accomplish anything. Therefore, one who wants to undertake sādhanā, must remind himself that he is not the material, but the spiritual; and not the body, but the soul. He is an infinite source of energy. When this resolve manifests in a person, he cannot be bound by anything.

To build his character, man should fix his goal and focus his entire energy towards that goal. There is no greater mantra of success. As instability in thought causes disturbance in life, the person who has no stability and integrity in his resolve cannot fulfil his mission however intelligent he may be. If you want to practice the vow of brahmacarya, then you must

focus the entire power of your mind on it. On the strength of this same concentration, scientists are conducting enormous experiments with the once unreachable planets and stars of the universe.

The practice of brahmacarya

It cannot be denied that external means are required for the practice of brahmacarya. But inner means like resolve, will power and mental strength are also essential. To avoid the cruel claws of lust, man must awaken his power of resolve. There is an urgent need for four resolutions to overcome lust.

The first resolution: Making positive resolve

The first rule for breaking a bad habit is to awaken the resolve to inculcate positive resolutions in one's life. Follow that rule carefully. Bring these thoughts in your mind, 'No power of the world can remove me from my path. A single wave of lust cannot stir my mind. I am infinite and my power is also infinite. There are enough things in this world which will disturb me every step of the way. Around me is an environment which can pollute my thoughts, yet I will not weaken my resolve to practice the vow of brahmacarya.'

The second resolution: Refrain from weakness

Until this sādhanā becomes a part of your life, do not allow an iota of weakness to overtake you. A small victory in the war zone is helpful in the next big victory, and a small defeat also invites the final defeat. It is laziness which can cut the tree of our will power. There should be a strong resolution in the mind of man that the evil left behind should never enter life again. In this world, there will always be temptations in various forms. One who is unable to resist them cannot escape the consequences of his mental weakness. But one who is

wise will not allow himself to become weak-willed when he comes face to face with the most attractive temptation.

The third resolution: Stay mindful

If you want to implement any resolution in your life, then hold on to it firmly. There are many opportunities in the life of a human being to accomplish great things just by strengthening his resolve, but it is tragic that as soon as there is a slackness in his resolve, he forgets his goal. To be trapped by any temptation means destruction of will power, which is the same as destruction of self. By giving attention to sense objects, you form attachment which makes lust stronger.

A seeker shared these words of wisdom, “In this world, reasons for one’s downfall are present at every step. If you do not walk mindfully, then at any place and in any situation, your downfall can happen.” Therefore, walk the tough path of brahmacharya with care. The vow of brahmacharya is life-changing. On its path, even a small careless step can throw man into a deep trough of collapse.

The fourth resolution: Practice daily

By daily practice, a new habit becomes a habit for life, and once something becomes a habit, it does not pose any fear or danger. Obstacles are indeed bound to arise while adhering to any vow, but we must overcome that obstacle. An empty mind is a devil’s workshop; do not leave your mind empty even for a moment. As Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa:

*cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa, pramāthi balavad dr̥ḍham
tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye, vāyor iva su-duṣkaram*
— *Bhagavad Gītā 6.34*

“O Kṛṣṇa! Since this mind is fickle and restless, always putting down others, and is very stubborn and strong, I find

that controlling this mind is as difficult as trying to control the wind.”

If you do not exert caution, a spate of negative thoughts can grow in the mind. In the same mind, flowers of good thoughts and sweet fruits can also arise. However restless the human mind is, it can be calmed and stabilized by self-study and meditation. As you are doing one task, keep the next one ready. Change of work is comfort for the mind. It will be catastrophic to stop working. If you do not have any work, keep filling your mind with good resolves. There is no means more effective than this for the sādhanā of brahmacarya.

These four resolutions can only be possible when you truly take the effort to integrate them into your everyday life. Everything can be accomplished with the right effort. Without dedication, even an ordinary task cannot be done. Even a weak person can achieve a lot by investing his energy in one single goal. In contrast, a powerful person cannot accomplish anything if he diverts his energy. The wavering of man’s mind leads him astray like a straw in the wind, while the determination of man’s mind keeps him firm on his decided goal like Mount Sumeru. Resolution is the power of life. In order to succeed in the spiritual practice of brahmacarya, the seekers must strengthen their power of resolve.



FOOD AND BRAHMACARYA

*rasā pagāmaṁ na niseviyavvā, pāyaṁ rasā dittikarā
narāṇaṁ.*

*dittam ca kāmā samabhiddavaṁti, dumam jahā sāuphalam
va pakkhī.*

— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 32.10*

“One should not relish rich foods for they stimulate the passions. Just as birds flock towards a tree laden with fruits, so also a person is impassioned by taking rich food.”

There is an intimate relationship between food and chastity. According to Ayurveda, food has a substantial effect on human thought. What a human being eats forms his thoughts, and in turn, influence his conduct. The old proverbs state, ‘As is the food, so are the thoughts’ and ‘As is the food, so is the mind.’ In these proverbs, there are hidden truths. From food that is eaten, the primary substance of blood is formed with the same qualities as the food. Food is the means for good thoughts in our mind and intellect. Indian culture has said that there is a need for sātत्वika food for the cultivation of sātत्वika qualities.

A man’s life progresses when he reinforces himself with locally and organically available food. Anger, gentleness, simplicity and other qualities of human nature often depend on food. Those who eat spicy and oily food, how can they live with restraint? Such foods adversely affect their well-being. Food and mind are interdependent. If food is pure, its consumption gives rise to pure thoughts. If food is impure, its consumption will result in lustful and impure thoughts.

The word ‘bhojana’, meaning food, has a connection with the word ‘bhoga’ meaning enjoyment. The root of both the words is ‘bhuj’. From this point of view, the broader meaning of

bhojana is enjoyment as well as the means of enjoyment. One must also refrain from *atibhoga* or excessive eating. Even if sāttvika food is consumed excessively, it can be harmful.

*jahā davaggī paurimdhane vaṇe, samāruo novasamaṁ uvei.
evimdayaggī vi pagāmbhoiṇo, na bambhayārissa hiyāya
kassā.*

— *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 32.11*

“Just as a forest conflagration is difficult to extinguish in the presence of the winds, so also the senses of a person who relishes rich food are not easily calmed. Hence, a celibate should not eat rich or excessive food.”

In the animal world, the main food of animals such as cows, buffaloes, elephants, horses and goats etc. are grass and vegetables. As a result, they are tolerant, calm and gentle. In contrast, lions, leopards, wolves, cats and other meat-eating animals are fierce, angry and easily provoked.

Sāttvika food is the foundation for meditation. According to Ayurveda, food is primarily of three types:

1. Sāttvika foods are those that are fresh, juicy, light, digestible, nourishing and delicious. They increase life energy, well-being, strength, health, happiness and affection. Sāttvika food leads to concentration and clarity of mind.
2. Rājasika foods are those that are bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and acidic. They give rise to sorrow, depression and diseases. Their direct effect is on the mind and the senses.
3. Tāmasika foods are those that are semi-cooked, indigestible, smelly and stale. These reduces thinking power, and increases laziness and lethargy.

These three types of food have been described in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Among these, as is obvious, sāttvika food is the best food.

Abstaining from non-vegetarianism

Over the past few decades, the consumption of eggs and meat has risen drastically. Many misconceptions are spreading that human beings need non-vegetarian food for survival. But this is not at all true. The truth is that sāttvika foods are sufficient to preserve and develop life. Recent scientific research has proved that many diseases take place due to meat consumption; therefore, humans should be vegetarian. According to the law of nature, vegetarian food is the best and most useful type of food for human beings.

For the cultivation of chastity, it is necessary to eat pure and sāttvika food. Tāmasika and rājasika foods create disturbance in the sādhanā. According to Jaina scriptures, junk, sweet, or oily foods should be shunned by those who practice brahmacharya. Foods that are sweet, sour, or create perversions should also be avoided.

The practice of self-restraint and abstinence can become effortless only by eating sāttvika foods. How can the flame of lust be calmed by consuming aphrodisiacal foods? Therefore, being mindful about one's diet is essential for meditation.



NINE FENCES OF BRAHMACARYA

Although it is true that great yogis, meditators and ascetics sometimes get distracted in the practice of brahmacarya, it is equally true that they can also correct themselves. The person who is trapped in various types of perversions and adverse temptations cannot succeed in the practice of brahmacarya, unless he undertakes corrective measures. Religious scholars have described some tools and measures whose practice can help even lay seekers pursue the vow of chastity. The plant of chastity is important for spiritual evolution.

To achieve success in brahmacarya, Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded the concept of *nava-bāda* or nine fences. These are ninefold restraints which a seeker can practice to accomplish his objective. He also introduced the practice of *samitis*, meaning self-regulation by which one can exercise vigilance and discipline in different spheres of life and *guptis*, meaning control or restraint by which one can protect the soul from worldly passions. Just as the farmer constructs a fence of thorns around his field to protect it from animals, there is also a need for fences in spiritual practices. As a boundary protects a field, these nine fences protect the vow of chastity.

Mahāvīra's teachings on regulations, restraints and fences can be found in the *Sthānāṅga Sūtra*.

The nine-fold fences are:

1. Solitary residence (*vivikta-vasati-sevā*): To reside in a solitary place. An aspirant must stay in a place which is not inhabited by those who stimulate the senses or engage in lustful deviations. He should reside in a quiet and peaceful place and nurture the vow of chastity.

2. Refraining from stimulating discussions (*strī kathā parihāra*): To stay away from discussions about the opposite gender. For men, this includes conversations that dwell on caste, creed, beauty and attire of women. Just as the description of a lemon activates the salivary glands, discussion about women stimulates intense sensations. Likewise, women must also avoid discussions about men.
3. Avoidance of seat previously occupied by a person of the opposite gender (*niṣadyānupaveśana*): This gupti advises the male aspirant to avoid sitting in a place that was previously occupied by a woman, and vice versa. It is stated in the scriptures that a brahmacārī must not sit in a place that has been the previous sitting place of a woman even if as long as two hours ago. The reason is that when someone sits in a place, his or her energy is transmitted to the seat. So, when a person of the opposite gender sits there next, his or her mind gets corrupted.
4. Refraining from looking at a person of the opposite gender (*indriyāprayoga*): The male spiritual aspirant must avoid looking at the bodily parts of a woman and vice versa. Even if one's eyes encounter this accidentally, one must look away. The sense of sight stimulates the mind, which affects the vow of chastity. It is said that just as gazing at the sun weakens the eyesight, looking at a woman's body weakens the spirit of chastity in a man.
5. Avoidance of a place inhabited by a couple (*kuḍyāntara dāmpatyavarjana*): One must not stay in a place inhabited by a couple, to the extent that one must not even share the same wall. Being close and hearing words of passion may weaken the aspirant's resolve just as fire melts the wax near it.

6. To avoid reminiscing about previous indulgences (*pūrvā krīḍita-smṛti*): After one undertakes the vow of chastity, one must not dwell or think about the carnal pleasures one has indulged in previously. Even a memory is enough to ignite desire and destroy one's sādhanā. It is a well-known fact that the lure of intoxication happens by memory.
7. Succulent foods (*praṇītābhjana*): Here the reference is to unctuous and sensually stimulating foods that should be avoided by the brahmacarī. Just as fever is aggravated by the intake of oily and spicy foods, such foods also aggravate the senses.
8. To avoid intake of excess food (*atimātrābhoga*): To exercise restraint in eating is the most important tool for the protection of chastity. Intake of excess food creates physical lethargy and mental turmoil, both of which affect chastity.
9. Avoidance of decorative accessories (*vibhūṣā parivarjana*): *Vibhūṣā* refers to jewellery and other accessories that glamourize physical appearance, and *parivarjan* means renunciation. Thus one must avoid dressing gaudily. Extravagant acts such as luxurious baths, spraying perfumes on oneself and wearing fashionable clothes give rise to desire in the mind of the doer as well as that of the observer. It is akin to placing a red gem on the terrace, thereby attracting the eagle that soars in the distant sky.

What is significant is that the scriptures stress upon voluntary restraint of desire:

*vatthagam̐dhamalam̐karam̐ itthīo sayañāni ya, accham̐dā je
na bhujjanti, na se cāi tti vuccai.*

*Je ya kam̐te pie bhoē, laddhe vi piṭṭhikuvvai, sāhīṇe cayaī
bhoē, se hu cāi tti vuccai.*

— *Daśavaikālika Sūtra 2.2.3*

“One who is unable to enjoy clothes, perfume, jewellery and comforts because of their non-availability is not a true ascetic. On the other hand, one who forsakes worldly pleasures which are easily available to him is a true renouncer.”

In addition to this ninefold way, scholars have mentioned other ways to facilitate the spiritual practice of chastity. One of these is to stabilize the practice of brahmacharya through ‘bhāvanā’, meaning reflections. We will look at them in the next section.



REFLECTION FOR BRAHMACARYA

There are twelve powerful reflections in spiritual practice. To cultivate a religious outlook in life, we must meditate upon these reflections. They increase spiritual awareness and bring equanimity.

The twelve reflections are:

1. *Anitya bhāvanā* (reflection on impermanence): Nothing in this universe is stationary or permanent; everything is subject to change.
2. *Aśaraṇa bhāvanā* (reflection on non-protection): No one can protect us from the consequences of our actions.
3. *Saṃsāra bhāvanā* (reflection on transmigration): Every soul will independently go through the cycle of birth and death until it is liberated.
4. *Ekatva bhāvanā* (reflection on solitariness): Each one of us is born alone and will depart alone from this world.
5. *Anyatva bhāvanā* (reflection on separateness): The physical world and the people around us are not part of our real self.
6. *Aśuci bhāvanā* (reflection on impurity): The physical body is impure when compared to the pristine soul within each of us.
7. *Āśrava bhāvanā* (reflection on karmic influx): There is a constant inflow of karma in our lives.
8. *Samvara bhāvanā* (reflection on stoppage): Karmic influx can be stopped by cultivating virtues.
9. *Nirjarā bhāvanā* (reflection on shedding): We can reduce our karmic baggage by self-control and austerities.

10. *Loka bhāvanā* (reflection on universe): We must reflect on the nature of the universe and its constituents.
11. *Dharma bhāvanā* (reflection on religion or righteousness): We must reflect on the path of righteousness as propounded by our masters and the scriptures.
12. *Bodhi-durlabha bhāvanā* (reflection on rarity of enlightenment): We must reflect on the fact that attaining right knowledge, right faith and right conduct is a rare blessing.

Strengthening chastity with *ásuci bhāvanā*

The sixth reflection, known as *ásuci bhāvanā*, sheds light on impurity of the body. This reflection is especially important in observing the vow of chastity. The noted scriptures on this topic are *Yogaśāstra* of Ācārya Hemchandra, *Jñānārṇava* of Ācārya Śubhacandra, and *Dvādaśānupreṣā* of Swami Kartikeya.

The term ‘bhāvanā’ generally means emotions or thoughts that arise in man’s mind. But here bhāvanā, also known as *anupreṣā*, means to reflect and contemplate repeatedly on a specific topic. As the body is the biggest centre of attachment, the Āgamas reflect on the body’s impurity. Men and women are enchanted by looking at each other’s physical beauty and appearance, which gives rise to lust in their mind. To remove this attachment from each other’s body, the ancient seers propounded reflecting on the impurity of the body.

While describing *ásuci bhāvanā* in *Dvādaśānupreṣā*, Swami Kartikeya has written, “O Seeker! Why do you have attachment to the body? Look at the inner form of this body. Is there any beauty in it? Reality will emerge as soon as the curtain is removed. Whatever a man eats, it enters the stomach and becomes the form of dirt. Whatever a man wears, also

becomes dirty by its association with the body. O Great One! Why do you form such attachment to this body? If its true form comes out, you will not be able to sit near it even for a moment. This body is impure, unholy, and full of stench.” By reflecting on the impurity of the body, the seeker’s mind is gradually filled with quietness, detachment and renunciation.

Ācārya Hemacandra has given a powerful description of the twelve reflections in the fourth edition of *Yogaśāstra*. Describing *aśuci bhāvanā*, he writes, “The form and beauty of this body towards which human beings are attached and feel pride, is full of fluids, blood, flesh, semen, nerves, stool-urine and other impurities. When the external skin is removed, this is all that will be seen. From the doors of this body, what comes out is always full of unpleasant smell. It is with this smell that the body is always entwined. To imagine beauty and purity in this impure body is ironical.” Continuous contemplation on impurity of the body sharpens detachment.

Ācārya Śubhacandra has stated in *Jñānārṇava*, “This body which is received by various organisms of this world, is prone to decay and degeneration. It is formed from many metals and minerals. Its origin is from blood and semen. In this physical body, there is not even one substance that is pure and beautiful and worthy of attraction. This body is so unholy that if it is washed with the holy water of the great ocean, it will make the ocean unclean. If the outer skin of this body is removed, then no one can protect it from flies, worms, insects, crows and vultures. In addition, this body is also home to thousands of severe diseases. That is why it is called the temple of ailments. The wise man knows that there is sadness at the beginning of receiving this unholy body, and this sadness continues through the middle and until the end. How can pleasure arise from that which is sorrowful?” The result of reflecting on *aśuci bhāvanā* is that it gives rise to waves of detachment in human beings and helps them overcome lust.

*jiviyam ceva rūvam ca, vijjusampāyacamaḥcalaṃ.
jattha taṃ mujjhasi rāyam, peccatthaṃ nāva bujjhasi.
— Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 18.13*

“Transient like a stroke of lightning are life and beauty which you love so much. O Seeker! Why don’t you comprehend what will benefit you in life hereafter?”

The ninth chapter of *Tattvārtha Sūtra* contains the twelve reflections. In describing *aśuci bhāvanā*, it is said that this body is impure and unholy because it is made of blood and semen, which are impure in themselves. The basis of the body is food. When the food reaches the body, it undergoes transformation. The process helps to form stool and urine, as well as blood, muscle, nerve and semen. These are the impure products of the body. To be enchanted with the momentary beauty of the body is a certain kind of ignorance in itself.

This body undergoes changes every moment. The ancient scholars have described its four stages as infancy, puberty, adulthood and old age. None of these conditions are permanent. The reproductive secretions of the father and mother become the basis for many conditions of the body. When we look at these conditions, we wonder why human beings are so attached to this impure body. Reflection on *aśuci bhāvanā* leads man from attachment to renunciation.

Reflection and renunciation

It is necessary for the practitioner of brahmacharya to keep his mind engaged in reflection and renunciation. The seventh chapter of *Tattvārtha Bhāṣya* states that a seeker should continue to think about the nature of the body and the world. This world is a combination of six *dravyas*, meaning substances. These substances go through origination and destruction. The nature of this world is creation and

deterioration. The form of the world that was yesterday is not there today, and what it is today, will not be there tomorrow. Not a single substance of the world is stable and eternal, so how can this body, which is made from material elements, be stable? The body which looks beautiful in childhood and attractive in puberty, loses its charm in old age. Lust is born from attachment to the body, which does not let brahmacharya remain stable.

In *Tattvārtha Bhāṣya*, Ācārya Umāswāmi has stated that reflecting upon the sorrowful consequences is essential for the stability of brahmacharya. Just as a man scratches an itch and finds momentary pleasure, it is possible to get pleasure from sense objects for a short while. But just as scratching can leave scars, indulging in sensory pleasure leads to sorrow eventually. Adultery leads to social disrepute. Imagine the sorrow one has to suffer as a result, not only in this world but also in the next. By reflecting upon the sorrow caused by sexual acts, adultery and sexual perversions, man becomes detached from lust. Therefore, the great Ācārya advised seekers to contemplate upon their flaws constantly. As lust calms down, the observance of brahmacharya will become easy.



TRANSGRESSIONS OF BRAHMACARYA

The vow of chastity, called brahmacarya vrata, is one of the important vratas in Jainism. While the ascetics observe complete chastity, laypersons get married and enter into family life, observing the vow of partial chastity. The purpose of marriage is to practice dharma and limit the pursuit of *artha* and *kāma*.

The importance of chastity is emphasized by the repeated use of the word ‘śīla’ in Jaina scriptures. The word ‘śīla’ has a broad meaning, yet it is mainly understood as brahmacarya even in Hindu and Buddhist literature. This word is so common and broad in Indian culture that all the virtues of character and ethics are included in it. Therefore, even though ‘śīla’ is used to mean chastity, it includes almost all of the qualities of spirituality. While observing the vow of chastity, there are some transgressions that a householder must avoid. These are known as *aticāra*. Knowledge of these transgressions makes a person mindful of temptations. By not giving in to temptations, he starts to live according to dharma. This helps him choose the right path.

*mokkhābhikaṃkhissa u māṇavassa, saṃsārabhīrussa
ṭhiyassa dhamme.*

ṇeyārisaṃ duttaramatthi loe, jahitthio bālamaṇoharāo.

— Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 32.17

“To a man who longs for liberation, who is afraid of the saṃsāra and lives according to dharma, even for him, nothing in this world is as difficult as forgoing the attraction of women who lure the minds of the ignorant.”

The five transgressions of the vow of brahmacarya are as follows:

1. *Ittariyapariggahiyāgamaṇe*

Ittariya means tender age. The first transgression of this vow prohibits sexual intercourse with one's own wife who is not mature for such purpose in age. Another meaning of 'ittariya' is 'temporary', and cautions against live-in relationships where a man and a woman stay together as a couple, even though not married to each other. This reflects inferior amorousness and abrahmacarya.

2. *Apariggahiyāgamaṇe*

Having sexual intercourse with a woman before marrying her is the second transgression of this vow. This also includes prostitutes or even women who are not under anyone's authority. To have sexual relationship with such women is prohibited.

3. *Anaṅgagrīḍā*

The third transgression of this vow refers to unnatural intercourse such as homosexual intercourse, or other perverted ways to satisfy sexual desires. It is considered lowly and inferior and reflects poorly on the character.

4. *Paravivāhakarāṇe*

Arranging marriages of other people comes under this transgression. A householder can arrange the marriage of his children or the children in the extended family who are dependent on him. But one must stay away from arranging marriages of other people.

5. *Kāmabhogātivvābhilāse*

As the human mind is weak, limited and controlled indulgence in sexual activity till the desire is satiated

is permitted. However, excessive sexual pleasure and involvement is not desirable as it increases the chances of breaking the vow and its boundaries.

Consuming intoxicating drugs that leads to excessive indulgence in sexual pleasure is not desirable for a spiritual seeker. Indulging in substance abuse is the fifth transgression and its abstinence is important for nobility of character.

The above transgressions are to be avoided by female householders as well.

A Buddhist perspective

In Buddhist literature, *Viśuddhi Magga* is a special text of yoga. The first section of this text offers a detailed analysis of the concept of chastity.

How can we purify the waves that are floating in the mind? The path shown by Buddha is known as *śīla nirdeśa*, which means guidance for chastity. Buddha said that as long as the mind is associated with lust, suffering cannot end. Such a person cannot escape birth, old age and death. The only way to free oneself from suffering is to be detached from lust. To avoid the flaws of copulation, Buddha described seven aberrations of brahmacarya:

1. If a śramaṇa does not indulge in sex with a woman, but derives pleasure if she scrubs, massages or bathes him, it is an aberration.
2. If a śramaṇa refrains from physical contact, but talks, laughs or jokes excessively with women, it is an aberration.
3. If a śramaṇa refrains from physical and verbal contact, yet gazes at a woman with enjoyment, it is an aberration.
4. If a śramaṇa refrains from physical, verbal and visual contact, but listens to a woman across the door as she laughs, speaks, sings, or cries, it is an aberration.

5. If a śramaṇa refrains from physical, verbal, visual and auditory contact, but enjoys remembering his previous romantic encounters, it is an aberration.
6. If a śramaṇa refrains from all forms of contact nor does he remember previous romantic encounters, but watches a householder indulging in sex, it is an aberration.
7. If a śramaṇa refrains from all forms of contact, but enjoys making a resolve that he will practice the vow of brahmacarya to become a *deva* (heavenly being), it is an aberration.

What Buddha has said in relation to protecting one's śīla or chastity is the same as what Mahāvīra has propounded as the nine fences. It will be extremely difficult to follow brahmacarya if these guidelines are not followed.



AUSTERITY AND BRAHMACARYA

In the Jaina śramaṇa culture, special significance is given to *tapa*, meaning austerity or penance, and its intimate connection with brahmacarya. Austerity and brahmacarya protect each other as well as develop each other. There is no form of austerity where brahmacarya is not considered necessary.

What is austerity? In defining austerity, it is said that whatever is required for the evolution of the self and others, is austerity. Any action which helps to curtail desire is austerity.

The Āgamas declare *tapa* or austerity as the butter of religion, the essence of religion. Just as butter is obtained by churning milk, so also austerity can be attained by churning one's self. The practice of austerity is necessary for spiritual evolution. It keeps the body and mind pure. Just as burning gold in fire removes impurities and increases its glow, the fire of austerity destroys perversions and lends a rare glow to life.

Nothing is unattainable with the power of austerity. By the power of austerity, what is difficult becomes easy, what is complex becomes simple, and what is inaccessible becomes accessible.

The boundary of austerities

The question is, what is the limit of austerity? How do we determine how much austerity each one of us must practice? After all, what is simple and easy for one seeker can be a harsh penance for another. For some people, even the most difficult of austerities may be easy to practice. Therefore, it is a complex process to determine the limits of austerities. Upādhyāya Yaśovijayī has made a powerful remark on the range of austerities in *Jñānasāra*. He said that it is important

to practice austerities for the redemption of the self. One must do as much as fills the mind with enthusiasm and energy, while preventing any contrary thoughts from emerging. The boundary of an austerity can be fixed by ensuring it does not bring any harm to the mind, body and speech of the practitioner, or any depletion of the senses. As long as purity of the body and serenity of the mind remains, a seeker can practice austerity. If that is shattered, then he has gone too far.

Twelve types of austerities

Jaina scriptures describe twelve types of austerities of which six are external (*bāhya*) and six are internal (*ābhyantara*). The objective of performing austerities is to reduce the buildup of karmic particles on the soul.

External austerities are of six kinds:

1. *Anaśana*: Fasting for a defined period
2. *Ūnodarī*: Eating less than required
3. *Vṛtti Saṁkṣepa*: Restrictions in seeking alms (esp. for ascetics) and eating
4. *Rasa parityāga*: Renunciation of taste
5. *Kāyagleśa*: Penance, enduring bodily affliction
6. *Pratisamlīnatā*: Staying in a place devoid of any comforts

Internal austerities are of six kinds:

1. *Prāyaścitta*: Atonement for our sins
2. *Vinaya*: Humility and reverence
3. *Vaiyāvṛtṭya*: Selfless service to sādhus and needy, including animals and birds
4. *Svādhyāya*: Self-study, meditation
5. *Kāyotsarga*: Detachment from bodily activities
6. *Dhyāna*: Meditation

Austerity and brahmacarya

The external austerities have a direct bearing on the vow of brahmacarya, because eating in excess, living with excess, indulging in different tastes, favouring the tendencies of the mind, and sexual contact with a male, female or transgender are a hindrance in observing the vow of brahmacarya. Therefore, external austerities help in practicing brahmacarya. They are the tools to stabilize the vow of brahmacarya. So also, among the internal austerities, self-study and meditation are special means in the compliance of brahmacarya. Self-study removes ignorance of the mind while meditation helps in gathering and integrating the scattered dispositions of the mind. Thus, both external and internal forms of austerities are necessary for the pursuit of brahmacarya.

Austerity and chastity have always been collaborators. If a seeker, on one hand, undertakes rigorous forms of austerities, both external and internal, and on the other, is attracted by the beauty of women and violates the vow of brahmacarya, his austerities will have no value. This is how spiritual laws operate.

The final culmination of the soul is the divine light, the supreme self, and the infinite truth. Brahmacarya is the *sādhanā* (spiritual practice) used to accomplish this task. Brahmacarya is penance in itself. Its practice is the worship of truth and supreme divinity. Its endeavour is to destroy the darkness of perversion from its very roots. Therefore, Mahāvīra proclaimed, “The greatest of austerities is brahmacarya.”

*viṇaya-sīla-tava-niyamaguṇasamūhaṃ, taṃ bambhaṃ
bhagavaṃtaṃ.*

gaha-gaṇa-nakkhata-tāragāṇaṃ vā jahā uḍupatī.

— *Praśna Vyākaraṇa Sūtra 2.4.27*

“Just as the moon is unsurpassed and outshines the planets and stars, so also, of all the qualities, viz. modesty, chastity, penance, vows and others, chastity is the greatest. Chastity is supreme.”



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