

6.11 The life style of Jain Monks : The *Achārs* and Ethics.

When a person renounces worldly life and all worldly attachments and is initiated into monkhood or nunhood, the man is called Sādhu, Shraman or Muni and the woman is called Sādhvi, Shramani, or Āryā. Their renunciation is total, which means they are completely detached from social and worldly activities and they do not take any part in those activities anymore. Instead, they spend their time in spiritually uplifting their souls and guiding householders such as us on how to uplift ourselves (our souls).

Five Great Vows (Mahā Vrata)

At the time of initiation, Sādhus and Sādhvis take five major vows and live strictly in accordance with those vows. The five great vows are:

1) Ahinsā Mahāvratā - Vow of absolute Non-violence.

Ahinsā (Prānātipāt Viraman Mahāvratā) means Sādhu and Sādhvis will never cause harm or violence to any living being including even the tiniest creatures.

2) Satya Mahāvratā - Vow of absolute Truthfulness

Satya (Mrushāvāda Viraman Mahāvratā) means they will not lie. They will speak only harmless truth otherwise they will be in silence.

3) Asteya or Achaurya Mahāvratā - Vow of absolute Non-stealing

Asteya (Adattādāna Viraman Mahāvratā) means without the permission of the owner they will not take anything from anywhere.

4) Brahmacharya Mahāvratā - Vow of absolute Celibacy

Brahmacharya (Maithuna Viraman Mahāvratā) means they have to observe celibacy with an absolute adherence to it. The Sādhu or Sādhvis should not even touch a member of the opposite sex regardless of their age.

5) Aparigraha Mahāvratā - Vow of absolute Non-attachment

Aparigraha (Parigraha Viraman Mahāvratā) means they do not possess anything and do not have any attachment for things they keep for their daily needs.

In summary, while taking these vows, they say, “O Lord Arihanta! I will not commit the sins of violence, express falsehood, steal, enjoy sensual pleasures, and be possessive. The above sins I will not commit by speech, thought or deed; nor will I assist or order anyone to commit these sins. I will not approve or endorse anyone committing such sins. Oh Lord! I hereby take a sacred and

solemn vow that throughout my life, I will follow these five major vows and strictly follow the code of conduct laid out for a Sādhu and a Sādhvi.”

Therefore, Jain Sādhus and Sādhvis never cause harm or violence to any living being. They live according to the pledge that they do not harm even the tiniest creatures. They always speak the absolute truth. They do not lie on account of fear, desire, anger or deceptive intentions. Without the permission of the owner, they do not take even the smallest thing such as a straw. They observe the vow of celibacy with an absolute adherence to it. They

do not touch the members of the opposite sex, even children. If members of the opposite sex touch them by mistake or ignorance, they must undergo a ritual of repentance (Prāyashchitta) for self purification. Jain Sādhus and Sādhvis do not keep money with them. They do not own or have control of any wealth, houses, or movable or immovable property or organization. They limit their necessities to the lowest limit and apart from these limits they do not have any attachments or possessions.

Special Rules of Conduct for Specific Activities:

In addition to the five great vows, the Jain Sādhus or Sādhvis follow special rules of conduct such as not consuming food or water after sunset or before sunrise, and wait 48 minutes after sunrise before even drinking boiled water.

Gochari (Alms):

Jain Sādhus and Sādhvis do not cook their food, do not get it prepared for them, and do not accept any food, which has been prepared for them. They go to different householders and receive a small amount of vegetarian food from each house. This practice is called Gochari. Just as cows graze the top part of grass by moving from place to place, taking a little at one place and a little at another, in the same way Jain monks and nuns do not take all their food from one house. They collect it from various houses. The reason Jain Sādhus/Sādhvis accept a small amount of food and not all the food from one house is because this way the householders will not have to cook again.

The cooking process involves much violence in the form of fire, vegetable chopping, water consumption, etc., and Sādhus or Sādhvis do not want to be a part of any violence due to their needs. They do not receive food standing outside the house; but they go inside the house where food is cooked or kept. This way they can understand the situation that their accepting food will not require the householders to cook again. They accept food, which is within the limit of their vows.

Digambar monks do not keep any utensils required for food to carry from one house to another. They eat the food given into their hands only. Hence on each day they have food (Āhār) at one house only. They eat and drink only once a day, standing in one position. They do not use any utensils for food and drink.

They fold both hands together so that householder can put a small amount of food in their hands till they have finished eating.

Vihār (Travel)

Jain monks and nuns always walk bare footed and continuously travel from one place to another. They do not use any vehicle like bullock cart, car, boat, ship or plane for traveling. Whether it is cold weather or scorching sun; whether the road is rough, unpaved, or full of thorns; whether it is burning hot desert sand or sun-baked asphalt, they do not wear any footwear at any time. They move about on bare feet all their life. The reason for not wearing shoes is that while walking, they can avoid crushing the bugs or insects on the ground. When they travel from place to place, they preach religion (Dharma) and provide proper spiritual guidance to people. They do not stay more than a few days in any one place except during the rainy season, which is about four months in duration. The reason they do not stay anywhere permanently or for a long period in one place is to avoid developing an attachment for material things and the people around them. The Sādhus and Sādhvis generally do not go out at night. The place where they stay is called Upāshray or Paushadha Shālā. They may stay in places other than the Upāshray if those places are suitable to the practice of their disciplined life and if they do not disturb or impede the code of conduct.

Loch (Plucking of hair)

The Jain Sādhus and Sādhvis after receiving the Dikshā (initiation), pluck their hair twice a year or at least once a year at the time of Paryushan. They pluck their hair or they get the hair plucked by others. This is called Kesh-lochan or Loch. It is also considered as one kind of austerity where one bears the pain of plucking hair calmly.

Clothing:

Digambar Jain monks do not wear any clothes. Shvetāmbar monks wear un-stitched or minimally stitched white cotton clothes. A loincloth, which reaches to the shins, is called a Chalapattak.

Another cloth covering the upper part of the body is called Pangarani (Uttariya Vastra). A cloth that passes over the left shoulder and covers the body up to a little above the ankle is called a Kāmli. They also carry a bed sheet and a mat to sit on. Shvetāmbar monks also have a Muhapatti- a square or rectangular piece of cloth of a prescribed measurement either in their hand or tied on their face covering the mouth. They also have Ogho or Rajoharan (a broom of woolen threads) to clear insects from where they sit or walk. Digambar monks have a Morpichhi (peacock feathers) instead of an Ogho and a Kamandal (small wooden pot) in their hands to keep water for purification of the body. These are the articles by which they can be distinguished. This practice may vary among

different sects of Jains but the essential principles remains the same to limit needs.

Conferring a Title:

The Jain Sādhus, after being initiated (receiving Dikshā), devote their lives to spiritual activities such as meditation, seeking knowledge, acquiring self-discipline, etc. Proceeding on the path of spiritual endeavor, they reach a higher level of attainment. Their spiritual elders, for the preservation of the four-fold Jain Sangha, confer upon them special titles.

The Title of Āchārya:

This title is considered to be very high and involves a great responsibility. The entire responsibility of the Jain Sangha rests on the shoulders of the Āchārya. Before attaining this title, one has to make an in-depth study and a thorough exploration of the Jain Āgams and attain mastery of them. One must also study the various languages of the surrounding territory and acquire a thorough knowledge of all the philosophies of the world related to different ideologies and religions.

The Title of Upādhyāy:

This title is given to a Sādhu who teaches the other Sādhus and Sādhvis and has acquired a complete knowledge of the Āgams (Scriptures) and other religious books.

The Title of Panyās and Ganipad:

To attain the status of Ganipad one should have in-depth knowledge of the Bhagawati Sutra along with other Āgams. To attain the Panyās-pad one should have attained a comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of the Jain Āgams.

The Title of Pravartini:

This title is given only to Sādhvis after attaining the knowledge of certain Āgam Sutras such as Uttarādhyayan Sutra, Āchārāṅg Sutra and ten Payannā Sutra.

Conclusion

The Jain Sādhus and Sādhvis are unique. Their entire life is dedicated to the spiritual uplift of their souls and others. They bestow their blessings on all, uttering the words Dharma Lābha (may you attain spiritual prosperity). They bless everyone alike irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, age, wealth, poverty, and social status. Some put Väskshēp (scented sandal wood powder) on the heads of people. Monks and nuns show the path of a righteous, and

disciplined life to every one through discussions, discourses, seminars and camps to attain spiritual prosperity. They perform the Pratikraman (introspection) daily and perform other austerities.