

Faith Personified

life sketch of Mahasati Salsa...

❁ Acharya Bhuvanbhanu Suri ❁



મુખ્ય પ્રાપ્તિસ્થાન

નવભારત સાહિત્ય મંદિર

જૈન દેરાસર પાસે, ૨૦૨, પેલિકન હાઉસ,
ગાંધી રોડ, અમદાવાદ-૧ આશ્રમ રોડ, અમદાવાદ-૯
ફોન : (૦૭૯) ૨૨૧૩૯૨૫૩ ફોન : (૦૭૯) ૨૬૫૮૩૭૮૭
૨૨૧૩૨૯૨૧ ૨૬૫૮૦૩૬૫

E-mail : info@navbharatonline.com
Web : www.navbharatonline.com
fb.com/navbharatsahityamandir



TOYCRA
play to grow

બીજા માળે,
ઈન્દ્રપ્રસ્થ કોર્પોરેટ હાઉસ,
શૈલ પેટ્રોલ પંપ સામે,
વિનસ એટલાન્ટિસ સામે,
૧૦૦ ફૂટ પ્રહલાદનગર ગાર્ડન રોડ,
અમદાવાદ
ફોન : (૦૭૯) ૬૬૧૭૦૨૬૫

Copy Right © 2017 Divya Darshan Trust

Translation Copy Right © 2017 Divya Darshan Trust

(info@Jainonline.org)

First published in 2017

Price : Rs. 250/-

ISBN : 978-93-85128-88-2

Cover Design : Jigna Shah Oza

(jigna.shah.oza@gmail.com)

Available at

Divya Darshan Trust

Shri Kuparpal V. Shah

39, Kalikund Society,

Dholaka,

Ahmedabad - 387 810

Tel. : 02714-225482

www.Jainonline.org

Shri Urmil Shah

D/2/3/,

Nutan Jeevan CHS

Kripa Nagar,

Irla, Vile Parle (W),

Mumbai - 400 056

M. : 98205 27710

Balvinod Prakashan

Nr. Jain Derasar,

Opp. Patasa Pole,

Gandhi Road,

Ahmedabad - 380001

Ph.: 079-22132921,

22139253

Typesetting by Samir Parekh,

at Creative Page Setters. M. 98690 08907

PRINTED IN INDIA

By Nilesh Parekh, Paras Prints, at Gala 32, Singh Indu. Estate-3,
Ram Mandir Road, Goregaon, Mumbai - 400104 M. 99691 76432

Dedicated to the great ascetic of this age :



Param Pujya Acharya

Premsurishwarji Maharaja

(Guru of Acharya Bhuvanbhanu Suri)

*A perfect combination of purity, simplicity and modesty,
A visionary whose foresight glorified Jinshasana immensely,
A missionary who was engaged in the research of Karma
philosophy relentlessly,*

A legendary whose life was a glimpse into divinity...

*A tough identity : Sensual desires and vices dare not
enter his territory...*

*A soft personality : Even the tiniest living creature was
within his affection boundary...*

Words seem state and feelings seem pale...



પાઠના પુસ્તક મુદ્દતેવે શ્રી
ભુવનભાગુરુશ્વરજી

સ્વગરિષ્ઠી

૧૯૯૩ - ૨૦૧૮



About the Author

**“Jain Acharya Param Pujya
Bhuvanbhanu Surishwarji
Maharaj”**

A clairvoyant, academic genius, profound thinker, skilful orator, versatile writer, incredible mentor of approximately 250 disciples, great sage, and above all, humble devotee of Lord Mahavira and his religious order.

Surishwarji was instrumental in bringing about a revolution in Jainism during the early 20th century. His effective skills and sight, impactful words and acts shook the youth and brought their fast-paced worldly life to a momentary halt. A halt to think, reflect and contemplate upon where their current lifestyle was leading them....

Surishwarji had acquired the prestigious GDA degree (Government Diploma in Accounting, equivalent to the current Chartered Accountants degree in India) from London. On his return to India, he renounced the material world and accepted Jain monkhood.

Along with following the strict code of conduct of Jainism, he sunk into the endless ocean of Jain literature.

He was a renowned scholar of Prakrit, Sanskrit and Gujarati, and had mastered every aspect of Indian philosophy.

After years of in-depth study of Jain scriptures, he could explain advanced concepts of philosophy in lucid language to the masses.

His motivating and heart-rending sermons created a magical effect on people from all walks of life. In a short span of 5 years, as many as 35 youngsters from affluent families of Mumbai renounced the material world and accepted monkhood.

He started a weekly magazine, *Divya-Darshan*, in 1952, which was published for 42 years.

Using his knowledge, logic, intelligence and convincing power, he was even successful in changing the thought process of a former Prime Minister of India on the subject of “*Child Diksha*”.

He invented the innovative concept of “*Shibir*” (youth camps). These camps played a pivotal role in increasing the faith of the younger generation in religion, thereby providing them with a progressively satisfied and happy life.

There are no appropriate words to describe the transformation brought about by this legend in the first decade of the 20th century. Looking at his life, we understand that he lived many lives in one. He was not a jack of all trades but a master of all.

His unmatched ascetic legacy is now under the able leadership of **Gacchādhīpati Āchārya Shri Jayghośh Sūriswarji**, who heads the world's largest and most reputed group of Jain monks.

Introduction

RELIGIOUS FAITH AND SULSA

What is Faith?

- Faith is the graceful dance of the peacock on seeing the black monsoon clouds.
- Faith is the sweet chirping of the birds at day-break.
- Faith is the laughter of the little child thrown up in the air.
- Faith is forgetting yourself and trusting someone more than yourself.
- Faith is the mountain that never moves but has the power to move mountains.
- Faith is the river that always flows but has the power to change its course.
- Faith in her culture, principles and motherhood enabled Sudha Murthy, Infosys Chairman Narayan Murthy's wife, a skilful entrepreneur to quit business and raise children at home.
- Faith in her wild imagination is what encouraged J.K. Rowling, a penniless divorced single mother to gift

the world – the popular Harry Potter Series and top the Forbes List of the richest woman in the world.

- Faith in his mission and research is what motivated Thomas Edison to make as many as 10,000 attempts before inventing the electric bulb.
- Faith in Jainism, its doctrine and its strict followers, inspires parents to allow their centre of affection - probably their only child, to renounce the world at the tender age of 10 or 12.

But tell me to define faith in one word and I would say...

“FAITH IS SULSA”

Why so? Who was Salsa?

- Salsa was a staunch, humble devotee of Lord Mahavira.
- Salsa’s love and faith, affection and attachment towards Lord Mahavira were eternal and inviolable, boundless and miraculous, incessantly increasing day by day.
- Salsa possessed the perfect perception, right knowledge and a pure conscience, free from mental agony.
- Salsa’s life was a shining example of dedication, determination and devotion, worthy of emulation.
- Salsa was a fantastic fusion of noble thought and proper conduct.
- Salsa was a virtuous, peace-loving woman, wife of Nagrathik, a resident of Rajgrahi.

- Salsa was a perfect combination of a model housewife and a loyal devotee of Lord Mahavira.
- Salsa was an extra-ordinary personality, a gleaming star in the sky of Jinshasana.
- Above all, Salsa – a common woman was held in high esteem by Lord Mahavira.

This book is basically Salsa's life, but it is titled, "FAITH PERSONIFIED".

What is so special about Salsa's faith?

Salsa's faith was branded, stamped, sealed and authenticated by Lord Mahavira. Out of his vast family of Sadhu, Sadvhi, Shrivaka and Shrivika. Salsa was the only fortunate one to have received Lord Mahavira's message - 'Dharmalabha' through Ambad, a Sanyasi-cum-Traveller. Though this is like comparing a pauper with a prince, still imagine how would we feel if the P.M. or any other renowned celebrity sent us a 'Hi' on "Whats App"? We would be on cloud nine and start boasting about this. Salsa received 'Dharmalabha' from the Supreme authority having command and compassion for the creatures of the three worlds. What more credentials are required to judge her?

Her faith in HIM was unflinching.

This book constitutes not only Salsa's life incidents but her mental state and thought process, her views and beliefs, too. It is said, "Life is only 10% of what happens to you and the remaining 90% is what you do with what happens to you". Similarly, this book is only 10% of what happened

to Salsa and the remaining 90% of what she did with what happened to her. By way of his splendid contemplation, Param Pujya Acharya Bhagwant Shree Bhuvanbhanu Surishwarjee Maharaja has compiled her actions, reactions and thoughts artistically in this book, originally written in Gujarati by him titled 'Dharma Shradha'. As the domination of English has tremendously increased in the last two decades, the need to translate such appealing literature in English was felt so that it could reach the masses.

Alongwith Salsa's story, the book also demonstrates an ideal thought process suitable for a faithful devotee of Lord Mahavira. It also effectively elaborates on various principles of Jainism.

Jainism – An ideology that can justify diverse view points.

Jainism – A religion that stands on the foundation of non-violence and self-restraint.

Jainism – A philosophy that is in sync with 'Simple Living, High Thinking'.

Jainism – The ultimate path to spiritual bliss.

The glory of Jainism has spread far and wide. This is the only religion in the world which believes that even the common man has the potential to become God.

Salsa's righteousness and purity touched Lord Mahavira. Salsa's faith in Lord Mahavira was so pure and strong that He gave her everything He possessed – His post and honour, dignity and reputation – You got it right! As a result of her

undeterred faith and devotion, Salsa will become the fifteenth Tirthankara in the next Chovisi....

Recently, there is a trend, that along with a hit movie, the edited behind the curtain scenes are also showcased. It is called the 'making of the movie' and people seem to be eager to watch it.

Many books have been published narrating Tirthankara's stories. But here is a book which analyses a Tirthankara's previous condition – the unique characteristics and mental temperaments which distinguish a Tirthankara's soul from the rest. We know God but in this book we get to know what we do not know about the One who knows all....

Trust me, this book is a must read because it's not just Salsa's story.

IT IS THE MAKING OF GOD !

INDEX

Sr. No.	Chapters	Page Nos.
1)	Religious Outlook : Impact of Positive and Negative Feelings	1
2)	Impact of Actions on Feelings	5
3)	The Futility of Worldly Pleasures	18
4)	Mithyatva : Ignorance	25
5)	Religious Faith and Sulsa	27
	a) A true Samyakdrishti Soul's prayer.	27
	b) How do saints face adversities?	31
	c) Sulsa's problem – Its effect on her husband Nagrathik.	32
6)	Adeya Namakarma – Cause and Effects	38
7)	Attraction towards Miracles or Religion and its Preacher ?	49
8)	Sulsa's Solution :	54
	a) What is Papanubandhi Punya?	
	b) Wealth : Pros & Cons.	
9)	Power of Religion	60
10)	The ultimate tool – Prabhu Bhakti	69
11)	Sulsa's Test	71
12)	The Delighted Devta's Boon	87

Sr. No.	Chapters	Page Nos.
13)	Time And Tide Wait For None	92
14)	Sulsa's Folly	97
15)	The Effective Solution – 5 Factors	105
	a) Ideal Parenthood	
	b) Karma and Destiny	
	c) Destiny and Efforts	
16)	Religion – The Ultimate Saviour	119
17)	Shrenik's wish to marry Sujyeshtha – The conditions and consequences	122
	a) Responsibility of Parents	
	b) Defining Vairagya (Non-attachment)	
18)	Sujyeshtha, Chellana and Sulsa's 32 Sons	138
19)	Independence and Interdependence among Punya Karma (Actions), Purushartha (Efforts) and Bhavitavyata (Destiny)	147
20)	Vairagya (Non-attachment)	155
21)	Nagrathik And Sulsa's Reactions	164
22)	Lord Mahavira's Message	173
23)	A Golden Morning in Sulsa's Life	192
24)	The Moral	199

Religious Outlook : Impact of Positive or Negative Feelings

“जं जं समयं जीवो, आविसइ जेण जेण भावेण ।
सो तंमि तंमि समये, सुहासुहं बंधए कम्मं ॥”

Jam Jam Samayam Jivo,

Aavisai Jen Jen Bhaven,

So Tammi Tammi Samaye,

Subasuham Bandhaye Kammm !!

24th Tirthankar, Lord Mahavira's highly knowledgeable disciple Shree Dharmadas Gani captures the true essence of life in the above Shloka. It says – “The soul binds itself by auspicious or inauspicious karmas due to positive or negative thought and feelings.” It implies that positive thoughts related to forgiveness, detachment, brotherhood, tolerance, generosity leads to origin of auspicious karmas whereas a mind occupied with anger, greed, vice, cruelty and sensual attachments originates inauspicious karmas and spoils the life.

Can positive or negative thoughts create such a huge impact?

Can they really spoil or improve your life?

Life is not considered spoiled or improved on the basis of present sorrow or happiness. Instead, it is judged on what kind of fruits it will bear in the long run – those of happiness or sorrow.

When a school-going boy is not studying properly and just whiling away his time by playing around and watching T.V., is he not happy? Then why is he continuously pestered. “O fool! Why are you spoiling your life by passing time like this? Playing around will not help in the future.” Don’t you say this? On what basis do you consider his life spoiled? You believe that if he does not study well, he will remain foolish and will not be able to earn a proper living for himself after growing up. He will thus be unable to remain happy and content.

Present activities that lead to a disastrous future are considered unwanted even if they provide momentary pleasures.

A rich father’s spoiled brat, indulging in gambling is enjoying his present life partying and eating with friends and family. In spite of this, doesn’t his father scold him for not doing anything worthwhile and thus wasting his life?

Similarly, wise men are constantly warning us – “If your mind is occupied with greed, hatred, revenge, jealousy and anger, then (mind well) you are wasting your life.” If you do not pay heed to this warning and continue living life according to your wish without even trying to eliminate such evils, you will be considered foolish like the spoiled brat.

Feelings leave a deep impact on your thoughts, actions and words. Remember – Our feelings are like a horse. It drags along the chariot of thoughts, words and actions along with it. If the horse goes wild, it loses its ability of rational thinking and drags the chariot off-track. Similarly if our feelings get poisoned and are deprived of practicality, it is natural that our thoughts, words and actions are dragged in the wrong direction. Observe your thoughts and behaviour towards a person for whom you harbour feelings of hatred and revenge. How do you converse with him? How is your tone while you talk about him in front of someone else? How is your body language and facial expressions while you are face-to-face with him? Isn't your hatred evident? Doesn't this hatred sometimes end up in physical abuse? The reason? The immense hatred towards him that has enveloped your heart. Thus you should take utmost care – “Do not spoil your feelings towards anyone.”

Strive to ensure that activities of mind, speech and body are royal and refined, not weak and low, because actions enrich your thoughts. You must have experienced that many times you go to the temple just as a routine activity but as you worship and bow down in Almighty Arihantas' feet, a sudden wave of positive and noble thoughts invigorate your existence. As you begin the Chaityavandana, recite Namutthunam (A Prahrut Verse which praises Arihantas) followed by a heart-rendering Stavan (devotional song), you can feel your devotion and dedication progressively rising. Even if we are not singing,

listening to someone's emotional reverence also nourishes our positive feelings.

On the contrary, even when your mind is pure and positive, listening to a romantic song gives rise to lust and attachment. Also, though you are initially not occupied by negative thoughts, actions like going to the theatre or pub, watching a movie, reading bad literature leads to the eruption of unwanted thoughts of attraction and destruction, lust and hatred just like the eruption of steaming lava from a volcano.

2

Impact of Actions on Feelings

Just as your feelings inspire your actions, similarly actions also have an impact on your feelings and thoughts. That's the reason we are told time and again to keep our thoughts, speech and actions pure and positive.

It is apparent that our mind is enveloped by auspicious thoughts not while listening to movie songs or partying with women but while listening to slow devotional songs and worshipping saints.

Actions affect your thoughts

A man filled with hatred for a saint decided to kill him. He hired a few killers and offered them a large sum saying, "Tonight the saint should be killed." The killers had nothing to do with the saint. All that mattered to them was their money. Greed of money had blinded their ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. Hence, wise men call – Greed → Destroyer of all virtues.

**Anger destroys Love,
Pride destroys Humility,**

**Illusion destroys Trust,
But greed wipes out all of these.**

Thus, it is advisable to keep a safe distance from greed and its causes.

The Prime difference between humans and animals is the human beings' strong mind and its power to control greed and resist temptations.

1) Control over greed

Some animal species like the Swan are naturally content and satisfied. Once they get their required quota of food, they do not crave for more, unlike humans. Being humans, we should wisely strive to control greed and eventually eliminate it. If complete elimination is not possible, keeping certain limitations is absolutely necessary.

2) Watch over greed

Keep a strict guard over greed. Does it stimulate sins, wrong actions and thoughts? Analyse yourself – If it does, then show a red signal to greed.

Disadvantages of greed

- i) If greed is not timely controlled or guarded, it leads to unlimited sins.
- ii) Unethical business activities prevail.
- iii) It leads to an increase in lies and fraud.

- iv) Court cases related to property and business, feuds among brothers and family members accumulate due to increasing greed and avarice.
- v) Obscene cinema, visits to pubs, etc. are all a result of the unquenching thirst for sensual pleasures.

In an age when even such activities are not considered wrong, is there any question of emphasis on activities considered sinful from the Jain religion's point of view? Does today's Jain Shrivak* consider avoiding green vegetables on Tithis**, observing celibacy, restraining himself from unnecessary violent activities as his duty? Does he feel ashamed if he forgets or ignores his duty? Does he regret his wrong-doings? Moreover, does he even consider them wrong? It seems that the current generation has forgotten the definition of sins. Sins are no longer considered harmful and worth abandoning.

In a life filled to the brim with sinful activities, how can we develop and preserve good and noble thoughts? Only if we keep a check on our greed can we realize that driven by greed, we have drowned in the vast sea of sins. Contemplate – what is the need of nourishing such greed and avarice?

Let us return to the story of the killers.

Killers' check on greed

The killers accepted the money to kill the saint. Late in the

* Shrivak – Jain house holder)

** Tithis – 05 holy days every month wherein special oaths are to be undertaken.... like not eating green vegetables, etc.

night, they reached the place where the saint was fast asleep. Ready with a knife, they glanced at the innocent saint, in the serene moonlight. Coincidentally at that particular moment, the saint happened to turn in his sleep. Non-violence and love for all living beings prevailed in each drop of blood flowing in his veins. Thus, even in sound sleep, the noble saint did pramarjana* of his body as well as the place where he would shift sides with his Rajoharana**. He then turned over and continued his sleep.

What made the killers change their mind?

The killers were absolutely speechless. Oh! This great saint was so compassionate towards the smallest creatures even in his sleep! How would his actions be while he was awake? Kindness and compassion would reflect in his every deed. How could he even think of harming or hurting anyone? Enveloped in such thoughts, they started talking among themselves, “Brother! How can we even think of killing such a gentle and selfless saint? Though our hirer harbours some animosity towards the saint, I wonder what harm can the saint have caused to him? What bitter fruits will we get upon killing such a noble ascetic? To hell with the money! We do not want the money.” Thinking along these lines, they abandoned the idea of killing the saint. Amidst all this

* Pramarjana – An activity carried out with the help of the Rajoharana to save small living organisms while changing body postures and keeping or lifting objects.)

** Rajoharana – A symbol of Jain Sainthood, that Jain monks and nuns keep with them 24x7. It is used to protect the smallest living creatures.

discussion, the saint woke up and glanced around. The saint's gentle look completely melted them. Their evil intentions started pricking them like a thorn. They felt sorry for their actions and falling at the saint's feet, asked for forgiveness. They cried, "O noble saint! Please forgive us. Driven by greed on someone's orders, we were about to execute you. But your compassion towards the tiniest creatures, even in deep sleep took us aback. Our hands froze. How can a selfless saint like you ever hurt or harm someone? How can we kill such a noble ascetic? We are now retreating without harming you. Please forgive us for our evil intentions. But, yes! Please stay alert about that cruel man who hired us. God forbid, he appoints someone else to kill you...."

Saint's words of wisdom....

"O great one! How will the caution from a mortal help when the mighty Karmasatta* is against you? In fact, even now if you would have murdered me, how would I have stopped you? I wouldn't have even realized. Remember, death is certain. People like you are merely instrumental in its occurrence. It is only karma that is the actual cause. Thus, instead of fearing death, fear your karmas that cause it. You have to be cautious when these karmas come into action, so that they do not deprive you of your merits. Before this happens, get rid of your sins and vices by devotion towards the Almighty."

The saint further said, "O fortunate ones! Even you should

* Karmasatta – The Supreme Power of Karma.

endeavour to become cautious against the tremendous strength and impactful results of these karmas. Convey the same message to the man who sent you here. Tell him, “I do not fear death nor do I harbour any ill feelings towards him. But it is in his well being to refrain from such low acts and implement the above message in his daily life. It is the only path to secure future happiness.”

The saint’s profound words created a deep impact on the killers’ mind so much so that they firmly decided to stop all the evil practices they carried out due to greed, hatred, etc. Hearts changed, they heartily thanked the saint and returned with a new, fresh perspective.

Now, let’s think over this

What made the killers overcome their greed? How did their plans undergo such a drastic change? Wasn’t the saint’s selfless act of kindness elemental in changing their perspective? Their evil thoughts transformed into auspicious ones.

This clearly indicates that actions inspire your thoughts as well as of others’. The saint’s gentle act of pramarjana not only strengthened compassion but also awakened noble thoughts and good feelings in the wicked killers’ hearts.

Kanjiswami followers are of the false opinion that external actions have no effect over your thought or sentiments. Then how will they be able to justify this incident?

Do not forget that just as good thoughts lead to good activities, good activities also help to stabilize and increase good thoughts. Without the support of such acts, auspicious thoughts will also fade away. Thus, wise men have emphasized on the need to keep your mind occupied with noble and positive thoughts, by way of sermons and scriptures. They have demonstrated an ample number of constructive thoughts and ideas.

Two kinds of people forget the right conduct

- 1) Those who fake spirituality
- 2) Those who are drowned in the material world and the pleasures it offers.

The initial ones call external, religious activities as mere physical exercises which have nothing to do with the soul while the latter ones are so engrossed in worldly pleasures that they completely ignore such religious activities. Now, how can these people ever possess noble thoughts? Their mind is filled with negativity and hatred towards people and ever increasing attachment towards worldly objects. How can their actions be justified?

You sit down to have your meal. In between you realise that little sugar or salt is less. The absence of sugar or salt is taken into consideration but what about the attachment of these taste buds which enable the mind to consider it? You take a sip of tea and realize that sugar is less. What do you do next?

Crib and complain? Have it as it is or add the required amount of sugar? If you just cannot have it as it and prefer to add sugar, you really need to think over and regret this action. Why can't you tell yourself," All I have to do is to fill my stomach. Why is my happiness dependent on non-living objects? Can a little salt or sugar make such a big difference? Can't I overlook such a minor fault? I am a human. I eat to live and do not live to eat."

But those who fake spirituality will say, "This body (minus the soul) is non-living and so are the sugar or salt. Both are material objects and matter eats matter. They support each other as well, what does the eternal soul have to do with it? The soul is immortal and imperishable.

Now, tell me. Can a person who thinks on these lines and is proud of his so-called deep spiritual realization ever accept his mistake and climb onto the right path? He does not believe in following the noble code of conduct and exercising religious activities like charity, celibacy, vigorous penance, etc. Thanks to the Kalyug, even innocent Jains get carried away by people who claim to preach the ultimate spiritual path ignoring the primary religious activities. In fact, they are in such awe of their "minute" narration and splendid foresight that everything else seems fake and false to them.

In this way, some forget their supreme duties towards God and religion due to such false and vague talks of spirituality while others have sunk so deep in the vast ocean of illusion and ignorance that they have no time to consider religious

activities, moral duties and obligations. They are indifferent to religion and rebirth.

How can such people have the right thoughts? Even the attempt to do so is as impossible as trying to extract oil from sand.

**Why have countless such noble activities
gone down the drain?**

If you wish to develop and stabilize auspicious thoughts, then engage yourself in noble activities. But why have innumerable such activities gone waste? Because, by way of these activities there was no aim to internalize such positive thoughts. Without an aim to purify your heart by these activities, the inauspicious thoughts are sure to multiply and eventually nullify the impact of religious activities. What does a small kid who hates books do after going to school? Does he learn something or is he up to some mischief there as well?

A man goes to listen to a religious discourse with the intention of passing time and mere entertainment – He has completely blocked his mind and strongly believes that all talks related to penance, salvation, etc. are humbug. Will he ever gain the right knowledge if he listens with such an attitude? An aimless presence at such a fruitful discourse cannot yield any positive results.

The soul has renounced the material world, accepted monkhood and performed religious penance innumerable

times in previous births but without any aim of non-attachment, resistance over temptations or salvation. Even while practicing monkhood, his sole aim was to attain more and more material luxuries and comforts. Then, how can his so-called noble conduct generate good thought?

The same applies for gaining knowledge. You are supposed to study with the intention of suppressing your anger, lust, greed and pride. But if you gain deep knowledge of religious scriptures only with the intention of achieving fame and appreciation, how will such knowledge generate noble thoughts and purify your heart? Such knowledge will not lead to your soul's progress; instead it will drown you further in the vast ocean of birth and death.

Even celibacy should be practiced with the intention of developing hatred and dislike towards sexual relations and not to ensure good health in the long run or to reserve your place amidst reputed people. Such a deceptive act of celibacy cannot give the desired result even after a couple of decades of practicing it. Instead those who are not capable of practicing complete celibacy but try to develop dislike for such relations by constantly distracting the brain by reading good books and listening to religious discourses will surely move ahead and overcome their sexual desires some day.

Coming back to the point, good activities inspire good thoughts only when negative counter-thoughts have not enveloped the mind and there is a desire to generate and

preserve good thoughts. Only then will good activities successfully produce such good thoughts. For example, a person is regularly listening to sermons inspiring the practice of celibacy and developing dislike towards lustful actions but there is absolutely no control in his conduct; instead, he is deeply engrossed in sexual activities. Then how can he develop and strengthen his hatred towards it? His activities completely contradict his goals. This should be understood for other religious acts as well. If there is no control or reluctance in carrying out sinful activities, it is difficult to create hatred towards them.

In spite of listening to the evils of anger and the benefits of forgiveness, if he gives his anger a free vein and is happy when it subjugates his opponent, how will he be able to truly despise anger? For that he will have to strive to control anger to some extent. If not completely, he should at least have remorse over his anger. Even a little control and remorse in the beginning will prove elemental in detesting and discarding anger completely.

The weirdness of our regret over anger

Analyse your weird thoughts and acts – are they in sync with my interpretation?

You say, “We cannot control anger but surely consider it as our weakness and hence regret it.” Now, when do you regret your anger? If the opponent immediately accepts his mistake and begs pardon, do you regret your anger then? Or do you

feel happy and think that anger was a necessity? Without anger, it was impossible to get him to the ground and make him realize his mistake. If the mind is enveloped by such thoughts, where is the space for regret and remorse? I will tell you the truth. You regret your anger only when you are subjugated by the opponent, your words misfire or he gets upset with you and becomes your enemy. Now, is this regret in the true sense?

If you really wish to regret your anger, do not feel pleased about the so-called benefits of anger. Even if you feel happy in the dominance you gained over your opponent, there is actually nothing to be pleased about because –

- 1) You have actually increased the burden on your soul because of anger and the resulting sinful activities.
- 2) The opponent was suppressed not because of your anger but due to your punya karmas which were in action. If your paap karmas would be in action, he would not be suppressed in spite of your anger. Instead, he would bounce back with equal rage. Thus, **do not remain under the wrong notion that you can attain authority over others by way of anger.** It is actually your punya which plays the primary role and suppresses others. If you do not rectify your mind's wrong notion of attaining dominance over others through anger, it will get habituated to anger. Hence, **STAY ALERT!**

If you believe that anger or greed reap sweet fruits, you are

mistaken. These are actually the fruits of past punya karmas which are in action.

Why do trees of vices and sins grow and fructify in spite of our awareness that they are wrong?

Its a minute but deep science, worth keeping in mind. Why do our soul's shortcomings and sinful activities continue? When we have remorse over our ill-doings, then why do they continue? If you give it proper thought, you will realize that it just seems that we regret our sins but in reality, we gain hidden pleasure from the temporary pleasure it provides.

For example you lied and earned money. Then how can that wealth be dear to you? Don't you think that, just as a butcher's wealth earned on the basis of violence is considered malign, similarly wealth earned through illicit ways is also offensive? If you do not consider it to be worth forsaking, then how can you claim to have regret over your sins?

If you truly wish to repent over your sins and flaws, you should despise the temporary pleasures you derive out of them. Or else, these great sins and vices will also seem meagre. For example you cheated and earned money. This wrong doing seemed small in front of your great love for money. Thus, you do not even regret it.

The Futility of Worldly Pleasures

Why don't wise men consider these worldly benefits worthy?

It is the rational knowledge that wise men possess owing to which worldly pleasures do not please them. They have the right understanding that there is nothing to be delighted about. These outward benefits rest on the slaughter of many living creatures as well as the loss of our merits. Then are these benefits worthy of admiration? It's a million dollar question.

Our epics talk of the legendary King Vikramaditya, whose valour and esteem were unmatched. Talking about an incident before he was crowned as the King.

He was on the verge of bankruptcy and reached Rohanachal Mountains with his friend. His friend said, "Vikram! This place is miraculous. If you say – Alas! God, save me and beg a little here, you will surely secure a precious gem."

Vikram flatly rejected the offer. He exclaimed, "I will not secure anything by begging. To me, wealth acquired through begging is as valueless as dry grass. The concerned friend was aware of Vikram's dire condition but also knew he wouldn't beg for life's sake. He devised a plan.

Some time passed. The friendly suddenly cried, “Hey Vikram! Forgive me, I forgot to inform you but I got news just some time back that your mother passed away.” Hearing this, Vikram was taken aback and exclaimed, “Alas! God help me...” No sooner did he complete his sentence, than the precious gem appeared in his palm. But Vikram was in grief. On achieving his target, his friend stopped him saying, “Vikram! Do not mourn. Your mother is alive and absolutely safe. I lied to you so that you would utter ‘Alas!’ and thus gain the precious gem.” On hearing the truth, can you imagine what Vikram did? “Then I do not want this....” Saying so, he flung the gem in the nearby valley.

Begging is vicious and so are the temporary benefits derived out of it.

This was legendary King Vikramaditya’s strong belief, which he stood by, even in critical conditions.

Kushalchand’s Example

Kushalchand was a successful businessman. When he reached the age of 50, he thought, “How long should I continue my business activities and thus engage in sins?” Jain religion teaches that even if you cannot completely renounce the world, once you have accumulated enough wealth to live the remainder of life smoothly, you should retire from business and engage in religious activities. Why so?

Business and sins

Why retirement? What kind of retirement? Business is a sinful

activity. Do we believe this ? Do we fear its ill after effects?
Even if your business is absolutely legal –

- 1) Doesn't it involve slaughter of small or large living creatures?
- 2) Isn't it enveloped with greed and attachment of wealth?
- 3) Aren't you delighted on acquiring wealth?
- 4) Doesn't this acquisition and accumulation of wealth increase your attachment towards it?

Why did Mamman Seth* end up in hell? Was he a butcher? Had he murdered or massacred people? Was he a cheat? Then, what was responsible for throwing him into the dungeons of seventh hell? It was his unquenchable thirst for more and more wealth.

Kushalchand was well-versed with all this. Hence, he decided to forsake his business. He informed his partner. “We discontinue this partnership from now on. Let's tally our accounts.” His partner tried a lot to prevent him from quitting, so much so that he told Kushalchand “ It's okay if you don't want to shoulder the responsibility of business and would rather concentrate on religious activities. Do not come to work. But, let our partnership remain intact. Let your account run in the books, you will get your share from time to time.” But Kushalchand was adamant. His decision and his faith in religion was immovable. He thus dissolved his partnership

* Mamman Seth – A wealthy miser extremely obsessed with his wealth

and retired from business. But his partner, an absolute gentleman did not forget Kushalchand's abundant favours to him – how he had freed him from the clutches of poverty and enabled him to reach where he was. As a mark of his loyalty, he kept Kushalchand's account running in his son's name and transferred equal profits from time to time. Kushalchand and his son were completely in the dark.

Time passed. The business flourished and profits accumulated. The partner came to Kushalchand's place and asked him to accept his share. Do you think Kushalchand accepted it? He was a man of indomitable religious spirit and determination. He firmly said, "No, I cannot accept it. Take it back."

His partner said, "But this isn't yours. It's your son's share." He replied, "My son and I haven't split our accounts. Therefore, his share and amount are actually considered mine. Since, I quit from business, I cannot accept its earnings." His partner replied, "But accept the amount and use it in religious deeds and acts of charity". Kushalchand resolutely said, "To use the money, I first have to accept it as mine. If I do so, my oath of retirement from business breaks. If unnecessary sins are considered worth leaving, then even the profits acquired from such a business are considered worth forsaking." In spite of his partner's tremendous efforts, he remained unwavering on his decision to reject the money. Now, let's see what the partner did.... He, too, was a man of principles. He was in a fix. What to do with the amount he had established in Kushalchand's son's name? He had flatly refused to accept

even a single penny and now keeping the amount with him was also not right.

Q. Where is the confusion? The money is to be used for good cause.

Ans. But it is unjust to do charity using someone else's money and earn a good reputation.

On pondering, he came up with an effective and satisfactory solution. A great saint (Acharya Bhagwanta) was going to come to town. The intelligent and virtuous partner ordered a grand welcome and decorated the entire city to welcome Acharya Bhagwanta. He ordered a music band and light decorations and also distributed food to the needy—but all in Kushalchand's name. He arranged everything absolutely systematically and ensured that his own name was not mentioned anywhere. The entire town was amazed at the preparations and started singing Kushalchand's praises. He, too, was speechless. He told each and every person that it wasn't his deed but his partner's. But, who would believe him? Everyone was aware of Kushalchand's generosity and selflessness. He had nothing to do with fame and name. Therefore, they thought that he was just giving credit to his partner.

Coming to the point, when Kushalchand stopped business considering it sinful, he considered its outcome also equally harmful and stayed away from it as wealth shares a direct connection with greed, lust, pride and never-ending desires.

This should be understood for other sins as well. If lies and fraud are considered wrong, then how can wealth earned by such means considered good? If anger is wrong, then can the benefits of attaining dominance over others by way of this anger considered worth?

The temporary benefits attained by anger or pride are considered worthy and hence these faults do not seem unfavourable. Then how can you eliminate them? If you do not wish to be prone to anger, stay away from anything which instigates it.

Wise men call this world worthless mainly because most of its benefits are an outcome of demerits and sinful activities. It's a vicious cycle. As you gain more and more benefits, your sins increase and with an increase in sins, you gain more and more material luxuries which seem beneficial. An ignorant man does not realise that these advantages are a result of past punya and not current vices and sins. How can you say so? Because there are many people who exercise sins but not everyone benefit out of them. Only those whose punya is working in the background attain such comforts. This ignorance – a kind of blindness - is worse than being born blind. Because born blindness prevents you from seeing what is present whereas this blindness not only prevents you from seeing what is present but makes you see the false as well. Till you do not get rid of this ignorance, right understanding cannot prevail.

When do religious sermons affect us? Only when you realize

the viciousness of sins and worthlessness of the material benefits derived from them.

Q. Then we should stop working to earn a living, because the need to earn also arises from greed. Then why nourish greed? Will we get money at our doorstep without working and just sitting idle at home?

Ans. That means you still believe that wealth can be successfully acquired only if you are a little greedy. But wake up and open your eyes. There are many people who are greedy but not everyone is wealthy. Only those whose efforts are combined with previous punya karmas reap desired results. Thus, while going to work, you should first think – Even I go to work, motivated by my greed but derive benefits only because of my punya. Then isn't this greed futile?

As greed increases, profits do not increase, but as punya increases, profits will surely increase. It's a widely accepted principle. If you are really intelligent and desire worldly benefits, divert your efforts in the direction of increasing religious activities and thus strengthening your punya. The religious understanding and true faith towards religion is worth attaining and not material comforts. If this is properly fixed in your mind, the thirst for material wealth will eventually decrease leading to an automatic decline in anger, greed, ego, lust, etc.

Mithyatva : Ignorance

Does religion lead to losses? Do vices reap profits?

What is Mithyatva? (Ignorance).

It is that phase when vices seem profitable and religion seems non-profitable. True religious faith cannot stay together with this ignorance.

Ask yourself

Do you consider offering incense sticks, ghee, milk, saffron, fragrant flowers profitable or a mere loss of money? If you consider it beneficial, only then you will overlook the money involved. How much do we spend for our family members and how much for the Almighty Arihantas? Don't we know that we owe all that we have to the Arihantas? All the comforts and luxuries we possess are actually the Arihantas' favours bestowed on us. Like wealth, consider time and money. How much time is allocated for business activities and how much for religious activities like Samayika, Pratikramana, etc.?

Does wealth spent in religion seem fruitful? If doing Pratikramana in the morning is considered a loss of sleep,

then how can you give full justice to it? How can you maintain enthusiasm throughout?

Remove this ignorance – that there are benefits in sleeping and loss in Pratikramana, benefits in eating and loss in penance, benefits in spending money for one's self and loss in utilizing wealth in religion, benefits in gossiping and loss in religious discourses.... Decrease in this ignorance will lead to spiritual upliftment.

Without elimination of this ignorance, how can your life blossom with true religious faith and consequent religious activities? It is all interdependent. As religious faith increases, religious activities increase and as religious activities increase, there is a rise in religious faith.

We start a particular religious activity due to some flow of auspicious thoughts and as these thoughts stabilise and increase, our religious activities also increase. All this is possible once ignorance is eliminated.

Money and mansions are not the only wealth. Hoard the wealth of the spirit. Character is wealth; good conduct is wealth and spiritual wisdom is wealth.

Religious Faith and Salsa

Religious faith enriches auspicious thoughts. How did Salsa Shravika develop an undeterred faith in religion? How did she stabilize and increase it? What did she gain as a result? Let's see.

Salsa's invincible faith in religion

Salsa was Lord Mahavira's loyal devotee and a lady of character – Nagrathik's wife. Her devotion towards religion was unconditional and natural. She did not have any child but was not sad because she possessed the Supreme faith in religion and its preachings. Material wealth seemed insignificant in front of her intense faith and inclination towards religion. Lack of material comforts did not disturb her. Grass is considered insignificant and thus its absence does not bother you. Similarly, if you consider worldly comforts equivalent to grass, then what's the point in getting dejected in their absence?

a) A True Samyakdrishti Soul

A Samyakdrishti soul (one which has right faith and understanding in religion) detests temporary luxuries because

his soul is enveloped with Samvega*. It is this great virtue 'Samvega' that we ought to attain, stabilise and enrich in this precious human birth. Such is the power of this Samvega, that mortal and divine pleasures seem worthless. Nothing except the external bliss of salvation occupies one's mind.

Q. Don't Samyaktvi souls strive to attain worldly pleasures?

Ans. Yes, they do, but not drown in worldly pleasures. They live a smooth and contented life till they become capable enough to walk on the path of renunciation.

They look upon these comforts not as a luxury but just a necessity. They consider this external happiness to be sorrow in disguise. Pleasures of this mortal world are actually sorrows, but mental instability and laziness in performing religious activities is the greater sorrow.

In our religious verse 'Jaya Viyaraya', 13 prayers are offered to the Arihantas. 'Ishta-fala Siddhi' is one of them. It means fulfilment of your desires. Which desires? Salvation ? No! It's still a premature stage for such desires. Here, we desire for the destruction of any obstructions coming in the way of mental peace. Mental peace and composure enable effective execution of religious activities like worshipping God, doing Pooja, Samayika, etc. When even meeting ends is difficult, is it possible to engage your mind in religious activities? How can you engage yourself in such deeds when you have to bear the brunt of frequent insults and disrespect? Thus, by way of

* Samvega – Fear from sins.

this prayer, a true devotee asks for mental peace and composure and the capability to smoothly walk on the path of religion and righteousness.

Intention behind this prayer.

He doesn't want to show off his wealth, enjoy worldly benefits, indulge in sensual pleasures, increase his social status or show attitude in front of others. Instead he wants his religious activity to be complete with mental peace, thus enabling his soul to progress. This is the real intention.

To attain all this, he doesn't want to knock on the doors of other Gods/Goddesses. He has undeterred faith in the magnanimous power of the Supreme Arihantas. He strongly believes that if the Arihantas have the power to enable your soul to reach Kevalgyan and finally salvation, then can't they do such a small thing? Can't they gift him with ever-increasing mental peace when the negative karmas are in action?

With this thought in mind, it is said "Hou Mama Tuha ppabhavao Bhayaram!.... Ishtafala Siddhi 'O Lord! By your grace, may my wishes get fulfilled...'

Thus, this prayer does not spoil the noble disposition of the soul and is appropriate. He actually considers sensual pleasures to be sorrow in reality. But he is still not capable enough to forsake the material world completely and hence tries his level best to make the most of the present situation by engaging in religious activities and keeping his mental state stable. Thus, here there is no question of sinking in material pleasures.

There is a difference in the ripe and unripe stage. For example before commencing 3-8-9 day long fasts, a person desires a nutritious meal to strengthen and support his body till the end. Now will you consider this meal as a medium to fulfil his desire of tickling his tastebuds? No. His intention is not just to savour delicacies for the moment.

If a sick man takes medicines from time to time, does it mean that he considers it to be a form of enjoyment? Of course not. He is very well aware that the medicine is to be abandoned at the earliest but considering his condition, he takes it as a necessity.

A wealthy merchant sends his son to his friend's firm to make him learn business tactics and gain experience. He does not consider this employment joyful but believes it to be essential for the unripe stage.

Similar is the state of the one who considers sensual pleasures deplorable. In this initial stage, he considers a substantial means of livelihood and his material wants as a medicine – a necessity and not a luxury. This is the ultimate intention of this prayer.

A samyaktvi person's religious understanding and faith makes worldly pleasures seem insignificant, unpleasant and harrowing. Thus, such pleasures do not enthrall him and absence of such pleasures does not depress him.

Sulsa Shravika also did not wail in the absence of a child. But her husband did not possess a similar religious understanding

and hence was dejected in the absence of an heir. This absence continuously bothered him and deprived him of mental peace.

How strange is this world! In spite of possessing everything, a single piece missing is enough to destroy your happiness.

Q. Why only worldly creatures? If a saint makes earnest efforts and despite it cannot remember what he studied, doesn't it bother him 24x7? If he is a subject of some painful, incurable disease, doesn't he lose his mental peace?

Ans. No. Unlike worldly people, the wise saint bears the distress caused by disease and ignorance without complaints.

b) How do saints face adversities?

Q. How does he make up his mind when he cannot study properly?

Ans. He thinks that in my previous birth, I surely must have mishandled knowledge and its instruments, disrespected learned men and thus burdened my soul with negative karmas which are showing its fruit now. There is no worry! It's a chance to bear the negative karmas and thus nullify its effect on the soul. Also, I should worship knowledge, serve knowledgeable people, follow Arihanta's conduct of gaining and retaining knowledge and harbour feelings of compassion towards all living beings. This will reduce the effect of the past karmas and open the doors of the greatest of all wealth-knowledge!

Q. How to retain your happiness when you are down with some major disease?

Ans. Just as undergoing penance and doing fasts is a form of worship, so is forbearing diseases without complaints. It stops the inflow of new karmas on the soul and also deletes the past karmas. You must be well aware that illness is an outcome of past inauspicious karmas. Once these karmas come into action, they will not wither away without showing their fruits. Thus, while you are being troubled by such diseases, why don't you think that it is actually an opportunity to get rid of the karma garbage dumped on the soul? By doing so, retaining composure and equanimity will become easier.

Thus, a wise and learned saint does not feel low and dejected during times of illness or in times when he cannot study efficiently, because he is aware that by studying properly or staying healthy, he will perform other religious acts efficiently. What is the ultimate outcome? Karma Nirjara – i.e. shedding of karmas from the soul. Similar is the achievement if he positively faces trying times of illness and ignorance.

c) Salsa's Problem

Because of her strong religious faith, the absence of a son did not matter to Salsa. In this material world, who possesses such faith towards the Almighty and his words? The majority of people overlook enormous gains and are continuously bothered by the minimal losses and missing pieces in their lives. It has become their way of life. Discontent prevails.

The material world and discontent are interconnected. This discontent continuously disturbs the mind. Now, tell me is this material world meaningful or meaningless?

Nagrathik – Salsa’s husband missed the lively sound of children playing in the courtyard. The silent house was getting on his nerves. The absence of a son was the reason behind his discontent. It troubled him day and night.

Day by day his sorrow and misery seemed to increase. Salsa inquired. “Why do you look tense since the past couple of days? Did the King insult you? Are people criticizing you? Have you incurred any losses? Then what is the reason behind your worry?”

Nagrathik answered, “I am absolutely okay. I haven’t lost anything but the absence of a son constantly bothers me.

- 1) Where you do not have support of family members,
- 2) Where the cheerful noise of children is not heard,
- 3) Where there is no concern for the elderly,

Is such a home actually considered a home?

It’s nothing more than a forest because you get none of these in a forest.... Do you? Thus, my unhappiness is natural. O dear one! Even one noble son is enough to brighten one’s entire life just as a single moon beautifies the night. A moonless night seems terrifying. That’s it! The sole reason of my anxiety – the absence of a son.”

Sulsa's divine words – What's the real worry?

She replied, “O Lord ! Why is this such a big problem? The sorrow of absence of a son is not so massive that its worry bothers you so much.

O respected one! The one who is a staunch believer of the teachings of the Supreme Arihantas is not moved by such minor issues. His worry revolves around the binding of inauspicious karmas, spoiling the next birth and hampering spiritual progress. Is there a rule that those parents who have a son do not go to hell? Why worry about the absence of a son? No one is able to stop you from going to hell—neither wealth nor wife, neither son nor daughter, neither family nor fame. No one except religion is the saviour.

O fortunate one! Having a son is not so important! King Dhritarashtra had many sons but his clan got uprooted. Mighty King Ravana was like a blot on his father's pure family progeny. Sagar Chakravarti lost his 60,000 sons in one stroke due to the rage of the celestial beings. During such times religion is the sole protector and sole shelter. Accepting this, Sagar Chakravarti also sought the refuge of religion.

O wise one! The presence of a son does not reserve your place in heaven, let alone salvation. Salvation cannot be attained without good conduct. Thus, worry about maintaining a good code of conduct, not children. In fact having children can take us away from religion and increase our birth cycle. Thus, this precious human birth will go waste.”

Contemplation on Salsa's Words :

Pondering over Salsa's words will effectively eliminate the worries of people – worries related to lack of children, wealth, power, position, etc.

Why worry about all these? Amidst these worries, why lose out on the actual worries of a progressive next birth or acquiring virtues? The mind is one. It cannot possess two different thoughts or anxieties at the same time.

What do you believe? Can worldly acts be accomplished only if you worry about it? Can acts of spiritual welfare be accomplished without any efforts or worries? You are under the wrong notion if you believe so. When will the concern for a better rebirth, noble acts and virtues occupy your mind? Salsa's words describe this. Her strong religious faith reflects in her words.

Nagrathik's Arguments

“O dear one! You are absolutely right, but my mind is just not ready to understand. Worldly beings have 3 places of refuge – (1) A loving wife, (2) A humble and cultured son, (3) Company of good friends. Even a single son brightens the entire family progeny.

A son denotes the family tree. The son reminds people of his forefathers. A noble son increases the reputation of his parents.

Sagar Chakravarti's glory spread far and wide and will be

sung for ages due to the sacrifice of his 60,000 sons for the noble cause of protecting Ashtapada Tirtha. Because of such sons, even today we salute Sagar Chakravarti's fatherhood. Now tell me, is this possible without a son?"

The intense desire for a son reflected in Nagrathik's arguments. He strongly believed that his desire and arguments were not at all wrong. Thus, he did not pay heed to Salsa's words and continued his arguments justifying the necessity of a son. Salsa could also place her counter arguments saying.

Arguments against having a son :

Why are you whining for a son? Who can guarantee that the son will be humble and considerate? A bad and ill-mannered son can destroy the reputation of the entire family in one stroke. Instead it is better to not have a son. Your argument that a clan is recognized by the presence of a son is also baseless because:-

- 1) A son is not elemental in causing progressive rebirths of his forefathers.
- 2) Forefathers' glory spreads owing to their own worthy deeds and not because of their son. People still remember Vastupal – Tejpal not because of their sons but by the magnificent Abu-Delwara temples built by them.
- 3) A good son spreads the fame of his father but on the other hand think-one son, his sons, his sons' sons' the

generation cycle continues and so does the series of sensual pleasures, violence of small and big living beings, 18 places of binding sins.

But Salsa did not argue any more. She had realised that now even her logical reasoning could not diminish Nagrathik's intense desire even a little.

6

Adeya Namakarma - The Effect of Adeya Namakarma*.

What do you think? Did Salsa not possess Adeya Namakarma necessary to make her words acceptable to her husband? No, it's not that. Actually Nagrathik's behaviour was the result of his strong Mohaniya Karma in action which prevented him from considering the opposite person's punya or Adeya Namakarma.

Don't Tirthankar Lords possess abundant Adeya Namakarma? Then why don't Abhavya being listen and implement his words? The effect of Mithyatva Mohniya is so strong that it weakens the power of the opposite person's punya.

Your words become Adeya (acceptable by others) only when your punya is in action. It creates an impact on the opposite person's thoughts, opinions and actions. He may change his mind or choices if your punya is in force. Or it may also happen that your logical and rational reasoning is not accepted by others. At such a time, you should understand that the

* Adeya Namakarma – The Karma due to which people around you listen to you and believe in you.

opposite person's Adevya Namakarma is in action and yours isn't. This will prevent the rise of jealousy.

Q. Why bring Adevya Namakarma into the picture?

Ans. So that we do not harbour jealousy and resentment towards those who possess strong Adevya Namakarma.

“Why don't people obey me? Why does everyone listen to him? Why is he wealthy and I am not?”

What is the reason behind such jealousy? The reason is that we look at the wealth but not the punya behind it. If we have that insight, then we will immediately tell our mind that attainment of wealth is dependent on the opposite person's punya. In that case, why should I be jealous and spoil my mind? What will I gain? Instead I should think about the opposite person's punya – why is his punya more than mine? What should I do to increase mine?

An employer's behaviour with two servants :

An employer favours one servant more than the other. He gives him many concessions in work. At that point of time, the other servant should not feel envious and spoil his mind thinking that the employer is unjust. Instead, he should consider the reasons behind the employer's favours on the other servant. Does he respect and serve the master better than I do? He gladly obeys each and every order without delay. Then, isn't it obvious that the master favours him? The favours are a result of punya and hence he should deliberate

upon the punya and the reasons behind it. Feeling jealous of the person bearing the punya is absolutely inappropriate.

Q. But it may so happen that both the servants equally respect and efficiently serve the master. Instead of it, the employer has a soft corner for one. Why so?

Ans. Such a situation is very much possible. But here you should understand that he is dear to the master because of the punya of his Saubhagya Namakarma* which is in action. Living creatures are vulnerable against the power of punya and paap. Therefore, they have no option but to naturally bear their good or bad consequences when they come into action. Therefore, instead of being jealous of the opposite person whose fortunes are dependent on his past punya karmas and harbouring hatred towards the person who is bearing the brunt of his past papa karmas, it is wise to ponder over the dominance of punya and papa. Also, think about your own punya and papa.

The second advantage of contemplation on punya and papa is that eventually your focus will shift on your own punya-papa and its reason; appropriate measures can be taken but it should not lead to envy and resentment.

I have good family and friends, wealth and wife, good health and a comfortable life. People like and respect me, my words also become acceptable to others. All these are the fruits of

* Saubhagya Namakarma – The karma which ensures your fortune and luck.

past good karmas and these karmas are the result of humility, modesty, appreciation of other's virtues, devotion and dedication towards God and Gurus, respect and sympathy towards one and all, charity, good character, acts of benevolence, compassion, non-violence, penance, etc. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken to follow and increase the above activities.

I respected and served the Arihantas and monks, hence people respect and serve me. I was compassionate towards others and hence I can live a comfortable and healthy life. Hence, I should consistently increase my acts of dedication and devotion and walk on the path of non-violence and compassion.

To summarize, if the opposite person seems to have acquired more than you, think about his punya and stay away from jealousy. If you have an upper hand, then focus on your punya and ways to accumulate it.

When you think about punya, do you remember the ways of accumulating punya along with it?

Think, of all the good things you possess. You have enough money to live a smooth life. You have a loving wife and son. You get tasty and hot food whenever you desire. People around you respect you. Amidst all these, do you think about punya and its reasons? After acquiring wealth, how do you feel like spending it – in acts of charity and religion or only in attaining new comforts and commodities? After getting nutritious food,

how do you use it? In worldly pleasures or religious activities? Do you feel like doing penance or only keep eating all day? On attaining respect from others do you start insulting and taunting people working under you, or do you sympathize with them? Owing to humility and modesty, you have got such a noble family; does it inflate your ego or does it lead to increase in humility and benevolence?

All of this needs deep thought. You claim to believe in punya and papa. But do you do anything productive after believing? In which direction is the precious human time, body and intelligence being drained? On the hard rock of 18 papasthanakas* or in the fertile soil of the appropriate acts of mind, body and speech?

If you divert all your energy in this direction, you will surely succeed in eliminating unwanted vices like pride, jealousy, hatred, deceit and cheating. Your life will shine like a true gem.

Q. But in today's fast-paced routine, who has the time to think about all this?

Ans. In the past as well as in the present, many respected people contemplate on this. Don't they have other things to worry about? Bharat Chakravarti had thousands of sons and grandsons and he ruled as many as 32000 countries; Is this a small responsibility? But you want to take everything in

* Papasthanakas : The activities of mind, body and speech that lead to the binding of sins.

your hands. You do not trust others nor do you trust your punya. You trust only your own efforts. No time to think about your punya – its causes and fruits. It is like trampling on this precious human birth on your own.

Inspite of the facilities provided by punya, if we do not turn our sight right upto its roots, then how will we be able to contemplate on the causes of papa and sorrow during adverse times?

Q. But isn't it very commonly said that "You remember God only in adverse times?"

Ans. "O God! Eliminate my sorrow and shower happiness!" Ha ha! As if you have some account with God that he will ceaselessly keep on blessing you. Take away your poverty and bestow you with wealth, improve your wife's nature so that she respects you, make your son obey and honour you - He continues doing all this for free. Is your understanding limited only to this much? Or do you look beyond all this right upto its causes and roots? No!

Q. But the Almighty is an ocean of compassion and generosity and hence He is bound to forgive our mistakes and crimes. It is very obvious that he eliminates our sorrows and showers happiness. How else would you call him compassionate and benevolent? It is his duty!

Ans. You apply the same formula everywhere, right? If the son does not follow his father's footsteps, if he gambles and loses money, will the father still continue giving him money?

How else can you call the father compassionate?

If the elder son keeps on hitting the younger one, will the 'kind' mother still pamper the elder one?

What is your calculation of kindness? All living organisms are the Almighty Lord's dear children. By way of our reckless activities, we keep on troubling and killing them, we do not bother to save and protect them. In spite of this the Lord showers us with His compassion and keeps us happy. How can we expect this? Is this justice?

When we remember God in adverse times, we really do not want to improve our life, do not wish to sacrifice or give up anything. We want to remain lazy and selfish and still desire that He eradicates all our miseries and bestows happiness. But if that is really possible, no one in this world would ever be sad and dejected.

We were talking about Adeya Namakarma and Saubhagya Namakarma. In spite of trying to be favourable to everyone, it may happen that people do not like your presence, your words and deeds. Here, no one except our Dourbhagya Namakarma is to blame. Because of it we do not get the love and respect of others. It is all a result of the sins that we have committed in the past.

- 1) We had disrespected Arihanta Lords,
- 2) We had not respected and honoured them.
- 3) We had humiliated Jain monks and nuns.

- 4) We hurt and criticized others, caused them pain and misery. All this resulted in the origin of Dourbhagya Namakarma which is troubling us today. You should think about all this.

Anadeya Namakarma is such that when it starts showing its true colours, our words do not become acceptable to others even if they are logical and in the opposite person's interest. Thus, during such times, instead of feeling low or thinking about others mistakes, think about the causes and effects of Anadeya Namakarma that we have perpetuated.

What are the possible causes of Anadeya Namakarma that we may have exercised?

- 1) We may have not obeyed Shri Arihanta's words,
- 2) We may have overruled the teachings of our mentors.
- 3) We may have not considered the words of our elders, "Let them speak, why listen?"
- 4) Due to our ego, we may have sidelined the appropriate advice of others; even of our elders and mentors.
- 5) We may have insulted and humiliated our mentors and others.
- 6) We may have misguided others on the path of sin and violence.
- 7) In short, we may have disrespected others' logical and right words and misused our power of speech.

- 8) We may have indulged in such behaviour as troubling others, scaring them, walking on the path of lies, deceit and blind lust, causing the disrespect or destruction of the Lord, our mentor of knowledge or a knowledgeable person, cheating others, etc.

As a result, 'Daurbhagya' and 'Anadeya' Namakarma have originated, due to which we experience dislike and hatred from the opposite person, due to which our words are not accepted by others.

The effects of previous paapkarmas is apparent.

What to do at such times?

My duty is

- 1) To stop exercising such sinful activities and walk on the opposite path.
- 2) Increase devotion and service of the Lord and Monks.
- 3) Respect the words of the Lord, Mentors and elders.
- 4) Consider the talks of others, sympathize with them.
- 5) Inculcate non-violence, truth and compassion.
- 6) Walk on the path of justice, trustworthiness and right conduct.
- 7) Guide people to follow religion, develop non-attachment and dedication towards the Almighty.
- 8) Undertake penance and new oaths.

- 9) Repeatedly listen to and contemplate on the words of Almighty.

The result of harbouring such thoughts and actions is that whenever someone insults or disrespects you, does not obey you or humiliates you in front of others, in times of some unexpected adversity or any other such misery, your mind will immediately tell you “This is all a result of disrespect of the Lord and misconduct in His reverence due to which today I have to undergo such times of trial.” It will help you to retain your composure.

The unfavourable present is like a THERMOMETER. It denotes the fever of short-comings in our devotion or the disrespect exercised in the past. Therefore, instead of complaining about the present unfavourable thermometer, it is wise to make efforts to eradicate the fever. That is, we should increase our reverence towards the Almighty and uproot our misconduct and disrespect.

Q. Why does the reverence and sight of Devas & Devis i.e. celestial beings inspire us and increase our devotion towards the Almighty? Why should miracles motivate us?

Ans. Isn't it very obvious? Such occurrences strengthen our faith and devotion.

We need to deeply contemplate on this. What do we really wish, the mere temporary sight of marvels and miracles of Lord Almighty or contemplation on the extraordinary permanent qualities of Arihanta Lord and the innumerable

favours bestowed by Him on us? Don't you think this is sufficient to increase our reverence towards Him?

The attraction towards miracles will keep our mind engaged only in temporary miracles and obstruct us from considering the infinite virtues and favours of the Almighty, the real nature of religion and the path of internal purification.

Attraction towards Miracles or Religion and its Preacher ?

But we can see these miracles only in this birth? No, we have seen them innumerable times in the past births. But what did we achieve? Even today we are attracted by them. Where is the liking for the real religion and its preacher, Lord Almighty? If that liking would have enveloped us, then the wonders and temporary marvels would seem inferior in front of the supreme and true nature of religion and Almighty – His virtues and blessings. We have experienced the marvellous pleasures of heaven innumerable times as a result of the religious and charitable acts performed by us. But eventually we got engrossed in those pleasures and completely forgot religion.

Thus purification of the soul is the greatest fruit of religion. Mere miracles cannot be the goal of religion in the true sense because they are temporary. Look at the mental state of those performing religious activities with the mere goal of miracles:

- 1) How long will their enthusiasm last?
- 2) What is the base of their present enthusiasm?

- 3) For example, if they are chanting Navakar, are they truly attracted towards the virtues of the five Parmeshthis?
- 4) How eager are they to attain those virtues? Or is their eagerness directed only towards seeing miracles? What is their mental state?

Our religious scriptures state that religion should be exercised without the intention of obtaining anything in return, without any expectation; only then it can be termed religion in the true sense.

The scripture, 'Yogadrishti Samuchhaya' defines true religious activities:

- 1) Those religious activities performed dutifully and faithfully.
- 2) Those which restrict completely or partly our temptation for food, greed, fear and attachment.
- 3) Those religious activities which are deprived of the expectation and desire of material fruits in return.

Only then will this religion become pure and true.

An incautious mind may cheat us whereas a cautious mind becomes our well-wisher.

A cautious mind means the one that –

- i) Sticks to its original goal of salvation,
- ii) Is indifferent towards the material world.

Such a mind does not give importance to temporary miracles and benefits and thus becomes your well-wisher. It inspires noble thoughts and conduct and contemplation on the real nature of the world, thus bringing the soul closer to salvation. Thus, a cautious mind is your well-wisher.

We sing the glory of religion not because of miracles like the appearance of celestial beings, etc. but due to its ability to gift the soul mental peace and solitude, which cannot be bought even for crores of rupees.

God! We believe in you, we have faith in you not because of your extravagant appearance and magical events which occur now and then but because of your 'Āptatva' and the light of knowledge that you have spread.

What is 'Āptatva'? A trustworthy personality. God is Omniscient and completely detached from all worldly aspects – no love or hatred for anyone and hence He has no reason to lie. He has eliminated ignorance entirely and can thus perceive objects otherwise invisible to the naked eye. Thus we can blindly trust his words and the minute details he delivers. Can you trust someone who is attached to worldly possessions and does not possess complete knowledge?

Thus, the glory of Arihantas is due to their Āptatva whereas the glory of religion is due to its ability to provide mental peace and solitude.

Exercise religion truthfully with a pure heart and worship Vitaraga Lord devotionally. You will hear an inner voice which says, "Lord! You are my wealth and health. External wealth

may cause miseries and tensions here and also consequent births of hell whereas, O Almighty! Seeing you and your detachment, this external wealth seems meaningless and who will worry on not obtaining such waste?

If worldly wealth seems like waste, then the mind will surely experience peace. If worldly wealth seems precious mental peace is beyond your reach.

You worship God every day, right? While doing so, do you realize that He possessed abundant wealth and then just discarded it as if it was absolutely unimportant and a waste? This is the actual importance of the ritual of worshipping God – realization that external wealth and luxuries are insignificant. This realization is sure to gift you mental peace.

Not only this ritual, but each and every religious activity has the power to give you peace and solitude, mental composure and calmness. The significance of religion is not measured on the basis of the magic and miracle that it exhibits. If you do so then when miracles are apparent, the significance will increase and when they are not, the significance of religion will decrease. But this is not the truth.

Religion is glorious and marvellous at all times. But its real significance is that only Religion has the power to gift you mental peace. No worldly wealth, family or fame has this power. A true religious outlook strengthens this belief.

What does a religious outlook enable you to do?

During adverse times, a person possessing a religious outlook

and having true faith in religion will look towards his own negative karmas. He will not blame others. Instead, he will blame himself saying “I am at fault. I possess Anadeya Namakarma and other such negative karmas as a result of which even my right advice and opinions are not accepted by others.” Not only this, he will also contemplate on the reasons behind this bondage of karma and try to eliminate those reasons by taking the necessary measures. He will think that he must not have worshipped God with complete devotion as a result of which such negative karmas are coming into action.

What is complete devotion?

Living a life completely in accordance with the principles laid down by the Arihantas.

(Bhakti) Devotion is of two types –

- i) (Object) Dravya Bhakti i.e. the one which is done using flower, fruits, ornaments and music.
- ii) (Feelings) Bhava Bhakti i.e. the one which is done from the heart by singing praises of Lord and by following his principles.

Also, complete faith in his principles = Samyak Darshan
= Incomplete Bhavabhakti.

Complete following of his principles = Samyak Charitra
= Complete Bhavabhakti.

Sulsa's Solution

Generally Nagrathik's thoughts were in sync with Sulsa's views. But this time he could not digest her words and pacify his desire for a son. At such a time, Sulsa said –

“It seems that I am not fortunate enough to become a mother. It would be better if you married another woman. I will take care of her like my younger sister. I ensure you there will be no tiffs between us and it is quite possible that your intense desire for a son will be fulfilled.”

Nagrathik turned a deaf ear towards Sulsa because he had pledged not to have a second wife. Thus, he replied,

“What are you saying? In this birth, even if some king offers me his kingdom along with his daughter, I will refuse the proposal because I cannot imagine another woman as my wife. If you cannot conceive a child, it is okay. Which wise man will forsake rubies for pebbles? If I am destined to have a child, it will be through you or else I do not want one.”

Now, Sulsa got the complete picture of Nagrathik's mind and did not insist any further. She was now concerned about

eliminating her husband's worry. But she herself was not worried. Here, her religious outlook comes into picture. She thinks.

“धर्मः कल्पद्रुमो धर्मश्चिन्तामणिर्मनोहरः ।
धर्मः कल्पलता धर्मः, कामधेनुर्निगद्यते ॥”

“Religion is the ultimate wish-fulfilling tree (Kalpavriksha). In fact, it will give you more than you desire. It has the power to give you heaven and ultimately salvation. Despite this, those ignorant beings engrossed in worldly pleasures overlook this power of religion and search for happiness elsewhere.”

It is wisely said, “What can you acquire from religion?”.

Religion ensures birth in a noble family, affection of others, a long life, healthy and beautiful body, favourable circumstances and progressive love for good virtues.

Q. Love for virtues is a virtue in itself. How can you acquire it from religion?

Ans. Religious activities exercised with a pure mind lead to emergence of fresh Punyanubandhi Punya owing to which you get a healthy mind, body and soul. It obstructs the inflow of sinful thoughts and activities. Noble thoughts and pure feelings are also a result of Punyanubandhi Punya. Thus Punyanubandhi Punya plays a pivotal role in the attainment of the pure Love for virtues and this Punya is accumulated due to faith and following of religion. Thus, it can be said that Love for virtues is acquired from religion.

Q. What is Papanubandhi Punya?

Ans. Papanubandhi Punya is the one wherein punya is accompanied with paap i.e. when punya comes into action, along with it the previous bad habits and negative impressions left on the mind also get activated. As a result, due to punya you obtain luxuries and comforts but on the other hand you are enveloped by anger and pride, greed and envy.

Q. Religion leads to punya which in turn gives you wealth and comforts. But this wealth is harmful to the soul. Then why does religion, the bestower of ultimate happiness, give you such things which cause your downfall?

Ans. The answer is clear. Religion gives you luxuries and wealth but not the harm caused by them. Religion is a saviour and so are the luxuries and wealth provided by it. But along with exercising religion, the attachment towards material possessions and the impressions left behind by it, is harmful. The anger, greed and ego caused as a result are the truly dangerous element. It is worldly attachments that lead to such sinful thoughts and activities; then why blame religion? Religion fulfilled its duty by giving us comfort; it is the extra attachment towards it which spoiled our mind.

Q. But had religion not given us such comforts, our mind wouldn't have been spoilt. Then why did it give us such comforts?

Ans. Arre! Every coin has two sides. Why not see the positive side? Religion gave wealth to fortunate people who performed

great acts of charity and spread the glory of religion far and wide. Also, there are numerous examples of people lacking in such wealth who are still victims of a negative and contaminated mind.

When you analyse the people around you, you will realise that they are deeply engrossed in love – hatred and attachment, power and fame, physical and material pleasures, not only because of external factors like wealth or fame but due to the activation of their own previous impressions left on the soul.

Q. Then why do religious scriptures devalue wealth?

Ans. The reason goes like this – Though the negative feelings of love, hatred and attachments are the root cause of a contaminated mind, wealth plays an elemental role in accelerating those negative feelings. Hence, it is devalued by religious scriptures. A person is already egoistic and the attainment of additional wealth nourishes his ego. Thus, wealth is dangerous.

Q. But if this wealth is in the hands of a noble person, it will accelerate his generosity and charity. Then, how can you call wealth completely dangerous?

Ans. When can a noble person be generous with his wealth? If he donates his wealth generously, how do you think he perceives his wealth? As a saviour or destroyer? If he perceives it as a saviour, will he give it away? But he strongly believes–

As long as this wealth is in our hands, it is sure to cause the violence of living creatures and increase the attachment of

material pleasures. Thus, it is better to utilize it in good deeds.

Such a deep understanding is bound to increase your generosity and benevolent acts. Thus, the increase in generosity is not because of increase in wealth but due to the real understanding that wealth is not a saviour but a destroyer.

Consider an example

A wealthy merchant gives money to a needy person to commence some business and stand on his own feet, but the needy person loses all the money in illegal activities and is sentenced by the Government for 4-5 years. Will you say that the money given by the merchant sent him to prison? Money was a mere instrument. Of course, without the money he wouldn't have been able to carry out the illegal activities, but that doesn't mean that he went to prison because of the merchant's money. He went to prison because of his inappropriate and unethical behaviour.

Similarly, wealth is a mere instrument in contaminating your mind. You cannot say that religion gives you wealth which contaminates your mind. Just as the merchant's role is just to financially support the needy, religion's role is just to provide you with luxuries and wealth. Just as the destructive nature and illegal activities exercised by wealth resulted in jail because of one's own inappropriate behaviour, here, too, the thought process that favours luxuries is an outcome of the long-lasting impressions of attachment which lead to a contaminated mind.

Since wealth has the capacity to spoil your mind and

contaminate your thought process, it is termed dangerous in our scriptures.

Considering all this, Salsa has absolute faith that along with family and fame, wealth and health, religion bestows upon you the love for virtues. Also the glorious religion preached by the Jinas stands on the base of the reflections of Maitri (amity), Pramoda (honouring those who are superior in virtues, knowledge and ability), Karuna (Compassion) and Madhyastha (being indifferent towards the wicked and arrogant).

Power of Religion

Thus, the one who takes the refuge of religion has heartfelt affection and esteem for other's virtues. Who is responsible for this?? The religion preached by Omniscient Vitraga.

Contemplating on the favours bestowed by religion, Salsa firmly believes that –

- i) Only religion has the power to bless you with a child because exercising religion increases your punya which in turn fulfils your desires.
- ii) Because of religion people listen to you and even obey you.
- iii) Religion results in increase in wealth, good speech, valour, charity, fortune, noble disposition, goodwill and fame.

“लक्ष्मीः स्वगेहे, वदने च वाणी, शौर्यं च बाहौ, स्वकरे च दानम् ।
सौभाग्यमङ्गो, हृदये सुधीश्च, कीर्तिश्च दिक्षूज्ज्वलधर्मतः स्यात् ॥”

“रे चित्त ! खेदं किमुपैषि नित्यं, दृष्ट्वाऽन्यवस्तूनि मनोहराणि ?
धर्मं कुरुष्व यदीच्छसीष्टं, धर्मं विना नैव समीहितं स्यात् ॥”

To eliminate her husband's worry and anxiety, Salsa intensely wishes to become a mother soon. Yet, she doesn't visit any mantriks, tantriks and sanyasis and does not take refuge of any superstitious beliefs or rituals only because she possesses a true religious outlook. She firmly believes that in this universe, no other power except religion has the strength to fulfil your desires and make you happy.

Ponder – if true religion is empowered to gift you the ultimate and permanent bliss of salvation, then won't it gift you temporary and materialistic pleasures? People who forsake such a priceless religion and step elsewhere to satisfy their wants are really foolish. And even after doing so how many are successful?? Very few!

This denotes that only a few have dutifully exercised religion previously as a result of which they acquired unexpected benefits. Noble clan, love and appreciation from others, long and healthy life, complete family and obedient children, authority, flourishing business are all an outcome of Religion.

When religion acquires top priority in your life, it can be stated that your faith in religion is genuine.

Salsa's faith, her religious outlook and thought process is worth analysing. On analysing you will realise the importance of religion in her life. And hence, Salsa does not think, "Let me do some good religious deeds so that my desire of a son gets fulfilled."

Instead she thinks, "Be it a son or daughter, health or wealth,

fame or family – if any of these material objects seem favourable, it is only and only because of this evergreen religion. These materialistic things seem to provide happiness but they independently cannot do so. The power of religion is essential to make you joyous and content. That is why it is observed that when the force of religion reduces, your flourishing business crashes, a loving family also seems tumultuous. Hence, decide for yourself – is business a provider or stealer of money? Does family pacify or aggravate you?”

Q. But doesn't a flourishing business provide wealth? A good family will support and comfort you, won't it?

Ans. Okay. Tell me one thing. How did you attain this business or family?

Was it through your own intelligence? If so, then in spite of your intellectual level being the same, why did the business incur losses? If your love and affection for the family is constant, then why aren't they presently favouring you? Here, by hook or crook you will have to believe that till the punya accumulated by religion was in stock, things worked smoothly and once this punya was exhausted, in spite of your IQ and love remaining constant, adverse times prevailed.

All factors other than the force of religion are mere excuses. At the end, it all revolves around the power of religion.

Q. Could it be that because of someone's misguidance the business drowned?

Ans. Previously you trusted and followed his advice frequently

and it even proved profitable to you. Why did it suddenly misfire this time? The reason is crystal clear – The strength of your Punya and the support of religion declined. The opponent did not intend to cheat or trouble you and in case even if he did, that too was due to the lack of punya.

Focus on the force and impact of religion is the way to mental peace and composure.

Focus on other secondary and trivial matters is sure to cause anxiety and disturb your mental peace.

True religious outlook is the one which soothes you in adverse times, draws your attention towards the strength of religion and inspires you to increase it.

“Religion is the ultimate donor and saviour. No one else can even compete with it.” Such deep faith in the force of religion increases your religious activities.

1) “I should practice religion because it can provide me with wealth.” Faith in religion should not increase by such thinking, because in such a thought process attachment towards wealth is prominent and it proves that you have faith in the significance of wealth and not religion. Once you attain your decided / desired wealth, you are bound to forgo religion.

Instead, your thought process should work in this direction:-

2) “Wealth can be attained only from religion.”

There is a very thin line between the above two thoughts.

One revolves around faith and the other around attachment.

The attachment depicted in the first thought obstructs the right understanding (samyaktva) and intensifies ignorance (mithyatva). The result? Never ending cycle of birth and death.

The second thought depicts faith in religion, trusts the power of religion and this considers it the foremost priority.

During dire circumstances, Salsa set her eyes on religion because she considered religion her sole strength and protector.

And just throw a glance on the thinking of today's youth

From where does wealth come? – Business.

What will make your speech captivating? – Higher studies and educational qualifications.

What will increase your physical strength? – Healthy food and exercise.

What beautifies your hands? A branded watch or a designer bracelet.

What increases the beauty of your body? Cosmetics and accessories combined with a set of branded clothes.

How will your goodwill and fame spread in all directions?

Through name plates put up at places where you have donated money.

Now answer my question; those who possess such a materialistic mindset, can they give prominence to religion in their daily life?

You consider business as your source of wealth and luxury and hence, there is no hesitation to walk on the path of lies and fraud while doing business.

The major portion of your day ends up in business activities and the rest in eating, drinking and sleeping. Where is the time for religion? How much to spend in religious activity and charity?

You believe healthy food and exercise to be your source of nourishment, then where is the place for Pratikraman? Is there any place for penance, control over senses, etc.? What if the body weakens?

You believe that fame is received from nameplates and advertisements and thus they have occupied a prominent place in holy places like temples and upashrays. A long list of donors' names is seen.

Now visualise this:

If the son is living a little away from his parents and gets some small repairs done in the parents' home, will he put up a name plate declaring that this maintenance work is done by him? If he purchases new furniture for them, will he inscribe his name on it? Today, what nuisance are the so-called sons of Lord Mahavir up to?

You haven't heartily accepted religion as your saviour and thus there is lack belief that "The founder of this religion is my father; This precious human birth, healthy body and other fortunes are all bestowed by Him on me. All is His grace. Thus, he is my father! If I worship and serve him only from what He has given me, what great I have done in it ? What's the need to put nameplates advertising my name for that?"

How many times in a day do you remember and realise that you are Lord Mahavir's heir? How much have we gained from Him? At what price? On what basis? And even after attaining so much, do we devote anything to Him?

We have acquired lot with the support of punya but do we really think that "It is He who has given me everything. His grace is eternal. He is my father. How can I sincerely serve Him? He has done a lot for me. Now it is my chance to do something for Him." Worth pondering—

Who served / favoured whom?

The Million dollar question

How many favours has the Almighty bestowed upon you?? And how much do you give him in return? By doing Prabhu Bhakti (God's devotional reverence) have you favoured him, or God has favoured you by giving you a chance to revere him? Ask yourself – after serving God, Guru and Sangha a little, what do we feel? That we are under their obligation or do we consider them to be under our obligation? If we consider ourselves to be under their obligation, then we will

never think of putting up name-plates and advertising our names for small acts of benevolence or charity done by us.

Arihanta Almighty is our father. Guru Bhagwant is our mother and the Jain Community, Scriptures and Religion are our strength and saviours. When we oblige them, it is actually we who are under their obligation. We forget this basic principle which leads to the rise of such petty issues.

Inspite of your financial and physical capacity, you miss the chance to devotedly worship and serve Him and utilise all your resources be it time, money or energy in sinful activities. How miserable is the plight of a person who has attained the precious human birth and Jain Religion! What a major loss!

Getting up in the morning, don't you feel awkward on having breakfast without offering anything to Him? Without offering at least one cloth of Angalucchna (cloth to wipe God's body after doing Prakshala) or decorating Him with silver or golden foil, how can you wear new apparel and walk with pride? How do you perceive Almighty? As a person in need? Thus, we will serve Him at our own free will.

Do not get off-track !

You are intelligent and the foremost use of this precious intelligence is to strengthen the belief that Vitaraga Bhagwan is our all-time well-wisher, protector and father.

We owe all our happiness to Him. All that seems good and glorious is only and only because of His eternal grace.

Now, how to perceive such an Almighty? Salute Him or insult Him? Even a dog is loyal to his owner. Then being an intelligent human, can we forget God's innumerable favours and turn our back? Shouldn't we optimally utilise all our resources – time, money and energy - to fulfil our duties towards Him?

Repeatedly contemplate on this –

“God is my father, fulfilling all my commands and showering happiness.”

Thinking of all this, instead of doing anything else, Salsa increased her religious activities. How ?

- 1) By increasing the time span of reverence.
- 2) By increasing the quantity and quality of objects offered in reverence.
- 3) By increasing her enthusiasm and devotion.

Do you really want to be religious?

The shortest and easiest way – Make Prabhu Bhakti (God's devotional reverence) your foremost priority.

Here, the excitement and enthusiasm should be way above the excitement during your own son/daughter's wedding. The various objects utilised should be precious and refined. The time allocated for Prabhu Bhakti should exceed the time used in fun and frolic, family and business.

The ultimate tool – Prabhu Bhakti

Prabhu Bhakti – day in, day out. As a result, Salsa attained her position as a Tirthankar. How did she do so?

Q. By clichéd and routine Bhakti devoid of any enthusiasm or devotion?

Ans. No, by bhakti complete with boundless faith and devotion. The desire for a child was a mere excuse because of which she increased her Bhakti physically, mentally and financially. Her Bhakti did not revolve around the desire for a son; instead it was overflowing with religious faith and unconditional love – for Vitaraga and His teachings. External factors are mere excuses. With an increase in Bhakti, her dedication and devotion also increased by leaps and bounds. Now is it surprising if Tirthankar Namakarma* emerges from such a vast ocean of unflinching faith and unconditional love?

Q. How did this become possible?

Ans. You cannot reach such a stage by merely sitting and

* Tirthankar Namakarma – The karma which enables a soul to achieve the supreme post – Tirthankara.

contemplating. You need to take action, optimally utilize your time, money and energy in Prabhu Bhakti and thereby expand your faith. You cannot say, “God! I love you, but my material comforts and conveniences are more dear to me. It’s my money and my time; How can I fritter it away in Your name?” With such an approach, your faith will not expand.

We all hope that He will keep us physically fit, make us wealthy and give us a long, smooth life. He is in our service but think, do you serve Him? If you believe God to be your saviour, well wisher and father, then as a good son, is it difficult to engage yourself in His service? Only then will the true love for God evolve and emerge.

Consider an ideal son, Rama – He enabled his father King Dashrath to keep his promise given to Kaikeyi and crown younger step-brother Bharata as the King and himself accepted exile.

This is true paternal love.

Along with a rise in Prabhuhakti, Salsa increased her service towards Sadhus-Sadhvis (Jain Monks and Nuns). She wouldn’t leave even a single chance to serve them. She became all the more compassionate towards one and all, commenced various kinds of fasts (Tapas) and other noble acts.

Sulsa's Test

When Sulsa's faith and devotion reached its Zenith, Indra in His Devasabha sung praises of Sulsa remarking, "O Devtas, Look!! In the mortal world, in the city of Rajgruhi, resides a Shravika named Sulsa. Her religious outlook and faith in Lord Mahavir is as still and strong as a mountain. No one can move or shake it, not even powerful Devas like us. But, Indra's* Chief Harinigamishi Deva was surprised and could not digest this, "What is so special about her? Let me test her steadiness in religion." He decided to examine her in the field of serving monks. By his celestial powers, he took the form of 2 Jain Monks and entered Sulsa's house.

The Deva very well knew that it was futile testing her by depriving her of material benefits or by creating some external adversities. Her faith in religion was undeterred because she was very well aware that everything was dependent on previous good or bad karmas. Then why lose faith in religion? Her faith was immovable. Thus the real test would be to create some adversity in her religious activity. With this thought in mind, the Deva came to test Sulsa taking the form of two Jain Saints.

* Indra – Head of all Devtas is celestial beings.

Hearing the saint's voice "Dharmalabha!" Salsa ran towards the door saying, "Welcome, Welcome!" She greeted the saints and requested them to oblige her by taking alms from her house and then started reciting the name of food items cooked, medicines and other useful items available at her home.

The saint said that a sick saint was in dire need of Lakshapaka Oil* to cure his pain. Her joy knew no bounds! She exclaimed, "How blessed I am, that you came to my house and considered me worthy of providing the required medicine." The Deva got awestruck seeing her devotion, overflow of emotions and joy. Salsa asked her maid to get the bottle of oil from the cupboard.

No sooner did the maid-servant get the bottle, than the devas with their power invisibly shook her hand and the bottle fell and shattered into pieces. All the precious was split. Instead of giving the oil in alms, all the oil fell on the floor, that too because of the maid.

How was Salsa's reaction ? Did she get angry?

No! Her religious outlook and faith was so strong that there was no space for anger. All her attention was centered on the saint's requirement for Lakshapaka oil. The worth of the oil was insignificant... Thus in comparison to the loss of not being able to fulfil the saint's need, the loss of the oil seemed insignificant.

* Lakshapaka Oil – A particular oil by that name used for medicinal purposes.

Immediately, Salsa politely with folded hand told the saint, “O noble one! Do not worry. Another bottle is also handy. How fortunate am I that you are providing me with this chance!” She instructed the maid-servant, “Do not worry about the bottle being broken. Carefully get another one from the cupboard. Handle it with the utmost care.”

But was it in the maids hand to handle it with care? The same story repeated and the bottle smashed into bits. In spite of this not a single line of wrath appeared on Salsa’s face.

“Take care,” she exclaimed. “We are losing the golden opportunity of giving alms to these great saints. Carefully get the third bottle from the storage. But do be careful!”

Q. Now in spite of the breakage of 2 bottles consecutively by the maid, why did she ask the maid to get the third one? Couldn’t she get it herself?

Ans. No, because she was worried that, disappointed by the breaking of the 2 bottles, the saints would go away without the oil. Hence, on one hand she instructed the maid to get the 3rd bottle and on the other, she heartedly pleaded the saints to wait.

Salsa guided the maid, “This is the last bottle we have. Get it with utmost care so that we do not lose this great opportunity.” The devta was continuously observing Salsa’s plight. Was there any anger for the maid and regret for the loss of the precious oil? Was there any chance that her religious faith would be replaced by vices like anger and frustration? Not even a tinge. But let’s go a little further.

Is there any comparison between a Devta's and Human's power? As the maid came closer to Salsa, the Devta made the bottle fall from the maid's hand. How can the maid withstand Devta's miraculous power? Humans have no physical power equivalent to that of the Devtas, but on the spiritual plane humans can leave them far behind. And that is exactly what spiritually powerful Salsa did!

On the breaking of the 3rd bottle, the maid burst into tears. She wept loudly, "How unfortunate and reckless I am that I broke 3 such bottles! How terrible is my state! I am truly worthless." Her sobbing increased, "O God! Take me, I am not worthy of living here."

Salsa's Condolence

Salsa lovingly comforted her, "Why do you cry and curse yourself in such trivial matters? Stop crying. I myself was not fortunate enough to give alms. Why else would the bottles break today!? My Antray Karmas* are showing their colours. You aren't at fault. I am not at all disappointed with you. Till today I have had no issues with you and your work! But today my karmas are unfavourable. My Antray Karmas are in action and here neither yours, nor mine or God's wish works. Relax! Just by the breakage of these bottles the world does not come to an end. So come out of the situation and get back to work."

* Antray Karmas – The karmas which obstructs you from doing or attaining the desired.

Sulsa politely told the saints, “O noble ones! Today I am unlucky. Despite having suitable gochari, I was unable to help and serve you. This oil is regularly utilized at my home. The new one will be ready in about 2 days. Do come again and bless me with the missed opportunity. You are an ocean of compassion and generosity. Have mercy on me sinking in the ocean of vices and sins, so that I can safely swim out with the support of such good deeds.

Sulsa’s words reflect deep wisdom and unflinching faith supported by a heart filled with generosity and compassion.

In spite of repeated warnings, a precious thing was destroyed by the maid. It is quite possible that this lost material may not aggravate her but here the situation was a little different. Here, because of this mistake, she lost the great opportunity to give alms to the saints. Not once, not twice and but three times! Further, the loss occurred at the hands of a servant, not her own son or daughter! In such a critical situation, when even her servant did not become the subject of her anger, is there any question of her thinking negatively about the saints, “How unlucky are these saints that on their arrival 3 precious bottles of oil broke!”

Q. Now do you understand why the Devta took such an exam to test Sulsa’s firmness and why he didn’t create some other external calamity or trouble?

Ans. Because, her deep, immovable faith in religion is clearly apparent in the way she handled the situation of her husband’s

anxiety due to the absence of a son. It reflected so much of faith that in her mind, the importance of a son was minimal because the birth of son is not capable to provide a better rebirth or salvation. In her mind, religion, right knowledge, right conduct, right understanding was of utmost prominence. And thus, in such a situation, wealth and health, family and friends did not hold any importance!

Thus, at the time of giving alms to the saints, the loss of the precious oil meant losing the chance to donate, losing the chance to exercise her religious duties. Thus for an absolutely religious person like her, it was quite possible that she would get furious and disturbed. The problem that He created was no small one. Religion was the thing dearest to Salsa and any obstruction in that was a great one. But Salsa successfully passed the test without any distress or vexation.

Can't you get angry or behave rudely for the sake of religion ?

Q. It is a virtue if you do not get disturbed inspite of losing worldly benefits. But if you are losing out on religion and still do not take strict measures, can you consider it a virtue? A true religious person is bound to get disturbed.

Ans. That's true. But what can she do? Will her fury and distress help her in any way? And while doing so, what about her religious outlook? What about her faith in the Arihantas, her compassion and generosity? Do we have to be compassionate only towards the poor and needy? Don't we

need to be compassionate towards those non-religious and sinful people who are affected by karma? There are two types of karma–

- 1) Dravya Karma (external karma)
- 2) Bhava Karma (internal Karma)

Do I need to specify that this Bhava Karma is much more important? Instead of showing compassion, if you get angry on these misguided and sinful people, then where will you shower your compassion? On those who are perfect? Absolutely religious?

Religious faith is directly proportional to compassion.

Religion cannot exist without compassion. Because in its absence the person becomes stone-hearted.

Q. Does that imply that all religious people are compassionate and forgiving by nature??

Ans. No, it isn't a rule. A religious person can also succumb to anger but it does not make him arrogant. He does not justify it. "If the opposite person behaves in such a way, aren't you bound to get angry? If he feels hurt, it is his problem, what can I do? The present situation demands anger." Such a mental state is sure to steal your compassion. Instead you should have a compassionate outlook which does not encourage anger, does not consider it a necessity even if the opposite person obstructs your religious activities. You should harbour ceaseless compassion for such ignorant people.

You ought to think that be it the opposite person or our own karmas, they can cause obstruction in our external religious activities but not in our internal religious outlook and faith.

A religious outlook – developing or destroying it is completely in your hands.

Obstacles in the path of religion

- 1) Religious activities are likely to be obstructed due to illness etc. Caused by our own previous inauspicious karmas which have come into action OR
- 2) Religious activities can be possibly obstructed by some other person,

But in such circumstances, a soul's greatest source of comfort is the safety of his religious outlook. If it is intact, he has nothing to worry about. No helplessness in the first instance and no anger or disgust in the second.

Kurgadu Muni And Salsa

- 1) Because of Kurgadu Muni's own inauspicious karmas, he could not stay hungry, fast and observe such external penance. In spite of this, his internal religious disposition was intact and hence he was not prey to dejection, jealousy and animosity. Instead, he would reflect and condemn his own previous birth's wrong doings which were showing their fruits today. This was his true religious outlook and dedication in Lord's preachings which took him to the highest plane of

existence – Omniscience (Keval gyan) in spite of eating everyday.

- 2) Salsa – Her activity of giving alms to monk, Supatradana got affected due to the breakage of glass bottles, but it didn't enrage her because her internal religious outlook was in place. Due to it, she successfully passed the Devta's test. Impressed by her faith, the Devta gave her a boon.

Let's ponder over the nature of religious outlook that both of them possessed.

Kurgadu Muni's religious outlook

He was remorseful about his inability to fast. However, this does not mean that, attributing his inability to his past karmas, he considered himself helpless and used it as an excuse to keep feasting all day. Instead, not succumbing to his taste and temptations he decided to have only a pot full of kura-rice once a day and thus he became famous as Kuragadu Muni.

Now reflect upon yourself –

On some tithi or holy day, due to some reason, you aren't able to fast. That doesn't mean that you can now eat all that you want, any number of times, at any time. Is this the religious outlook? Just because of a minor headache or stomach ache, you do not fast; that is still justified, but then no control over temptations, no compromise in your food. How will you justify

this? Can you measure the quantum of loss that you have incurred? The auspiciousness of the tithis – holy days - is underestimated. Do you regret it? Does your heart cry?

Remember, external fasts and penance are an excellent way to check the great sin of the non-restraint of sensual pleasures.

Non-restraint means allowance to perform sins. It is largely of 2 types–

- 1) Non-restraint of sins like violence.
- 2) Non-restraint of sensual pleasures and the uncontrollable mind.

From time-to-time, Sadhus as well as Shravakas restrain their actions and thoughts by accepting and following some small or big vows and oaths. As a result, the sinful non-restraint of sensual pleasures and mind are constrained and gradually decrease. The soul is trapped in the endless cycle of transmigration due to attachment and involvement in sensual pleasures. This involvement further increases due to the limitless availability of sensual pleasures. Thus, small or big vows and oaths are bound to check the non-restraint of the senses and mind. Eventually and automatically the mischief and cravings of the senses and mind will stop.

Vows and oaths ? Restrictions in the mischief of the senses and mind ? Decrease in our involvement in sensual pleasures? Reduction in our birth-cycle.

Thus, since it reduces our cycle of transmigration, these vows are truly a blessing.

The attachment towards sensual pleasures will not decrease by mere talk and misguided contemplation. Resistance over sensual temptations is of utmost importance and it is not possible without vows and oaths, fasts and external penance. Enjoying all the material benefits available and then engaging in big talk about spirituality – is there any connection?

“The temporary, material objects do not affect the eternal soul.” With such a belief in mind, you continually enjoy and consume all that you desire – sweets and fruits, appetizer and desserts! How much ever you try, the deadly attachment of sensual pleasures is not going to wither away so easily.

To break this attachment of sensual pleasures, the freedom of the senses and mind to wander in any direction has to be controlled.

The religious outlook reflecting in

Kurgadu Muni’s behaviour and actions

- 1) He regretted the fact that he could not fast.
- 2) Since he could not remain hungry, he attempted to restrict his sensual temptations and attachments by limiting his diet to only rice.
- 3) Continuous, heart-felt appreciation of those who could

fast (Tapasvis) was also an integral part of this religious outlook.

- 4) He believed harsh statements or insults from the Tapasvis to be their shower of grace and the best possible shortcut to wash away his previous inauspicious karmas. Such faith made even adverse situations seem smooth and joyous. This, too is the ideal religious outlook.

Imagine the situation – on the holy day of Samvatsari, he brought rice for himself and showed it to those saints who were fasting since 4 months. Despising his incapacity to control his hunger, they furiously spit in his vessel of rice. But Kurgadu Muni's faith made even this situation seem favourable. He assumed the great fasting saints' saliva to be nectar which had the power to dilute and eventually nullify the effect of the poison of his inauspicious karmas. Thus, he happily consumed the rice without any complaints or hatred. What a noble religious disposition! It gradually it took him on higher spiritual Planes, right upto Vitaragta – Complete non-attachment and omniscience.

Another glimpse of his ever-increasing religious disposition–

- 5) He ensured that since his one business i.e. his market of fasts and external penance crashed, the alternative market of Swadhyaya – Vinaya – Veyavacha flourished. His enthusiasm, excitement and increasing

concentration while exercising this – all are an integral part of the religious outlook.

- 6) The major cause of regret and sorrow should be the misdeeds of the past that resulted in the accumulation of inauspicious karmas and not the incapability to fast which is the result of those karmas. O Lord! I would have tickled my tastebuds, surely, would have obstructed other people from fasting, would have committed the sins of dislike and hatred towards penance, would have insulted and ignored those who fast, would have succumbed to the dreadful pleasures of the senses. As a result, I am facing such distractions in my path of penance. Arre! How evil is my soul which has become prey to such misconduct and thoughts.” Thus remorsefully condemning your misdeeds is a sign of glowing religious outlook.

Q. Is such a religious outlook enough to take you to the heights of non-attachment and omniscience?

Ans. While eating the rice in which the other fasting saints had spat, Kurgadu Muni might have thought,

“Arre! Such dreadful sins I must have committed in the past!

I despise this body which has made the soul a slave of food and drinks. It is this temporary body which engaged the soul in misconduct and misthought. If we feel hurt and insulted, it's the body that feels and not the soul. Just to please this

body, how many misdeeds will we indulge in? What is the connection between my sinful body and pure soul? Why should I keep pleasing this temporary and material body? My soul is permanent and eternal, a bearer of infinite knowledge and power whereas the body is a mass of temporary and decaying material constituents. The body and ‘I’ are two different identities.”

Thus, his attachment towards the body declined. His Kashayas i.e. anger, pride, greed and avarice cooled down, which led to an increase in equanimity and mental composure. This is the ultimate religious outlook.

How far is Vitaragta (Complete non-attachment) once you have attained equanimity and non-involvement in material pleasures?

Moving further and deeper on the path of non-attachment, Kurgadu Muni uprooted the remaining Gnana varniya Karmas and attained omniscience.

Inspite of the fact that Kurgadu Muni’s external penance broke but his internal religious disposition was in place. This was an example wherein our religious activities are obstructed because of our own previous karmas.

Now, we study Salsa’s case – Her religious activities were obstructed because of other people.

What did her religious outlook include ?

The bottle of the precious Lakshapada oil that was to be donated to the saints broke at the hands of her servant. Along with the bottle, her desire for Supatradana (giving alms to saints – the greatest donation) also crashed down. As a result what did she lose? What remained? As described by Indra, the Devtas who had come to test her experienced her glowing faith in religion and her calmness in adverse situations.

The highlights of her Religious outlook –

- 1) “The servant is not to blame for breaking the bottle of oil but it is my Danantraya Karmas* that are showing their fruits. How else would the always careful maid servant make such an error?” Thus, she focussed on the fruits of karmas and convinced her mind.
- 2) Her religious outlook reflects in her behaviour with her maid-servant- no hatred or anger, only forgiveness and tolerance.
- 3) She regretted the loss of the great opportunity of Supatradana that she had got and not the loss of the precious Lakshapaka Oil – Her pure religious disposition.
- 4) In spite of the loss of the first two bottles, her wish to

* Danantraya Karma – The karma which obstructs your desire to donate by creating adverse circumstances.

donate was intact till she had stock and thus asking her servant to bring in the third bottle is also a symbol of her undeterred faith.

- 5) When she lost the chance to donate, she regretted the status of her Antraya Karma which caused such a situation and hoped that she would get such a golden opportunity very soon. This again highlights her genuine religious outlook.
- 6) Out worldly affairs are all dependent on karma. The non-attachment and indifference towards it is the real religious disposition.

Now tell me, if this mindset is developed, then does the loss of Supatradana seem a great loss? Not in the least.

The Delighted Devta's Boon

The Devta was delighted and contented on seeing her genuine and unflinching faith in religion. What did he tell her?

He wound up all the drama created by him, resume his original form and said,

“Devi Salsa! Forgive me. Our Head-Indra praised your undeterred faith in religion. Being a little sceptical, I decided to test you and thus you had to undergo these tough times. But I must accept that you are truly worthy of his praises. I am impressed. Tell me, what is dear to you?

Do you think Salsa's religious outlook and activities expected material benefit in return? She did not want anything in return of her faith but she saw this as an amazing chance to eliminate her husband's worry and thus she said, “I do not want anything. **I have got Lord Mahavir and hence I have got everything. Having attained Him, what more can I ask?** But you know the cause of my sorrow – It's my husband's worry due to the absence of a son. Please eliminate my sorrow.”

The Devta examines her words:

“Here Salsa herself does not crave for a son but wishes to eliminate her husband’s worry.”

“Great is that religious outlook which believes the Lord to be the whole and sole, but along with it also considers the mental peace of family members.”

He gave Salsa 32 tablets and tells her to take one whenever she desires a son. “You will surely get a son,” he says and departs.

Now, here too, her internal religious outlook was glowing bright. Hence she thought, “Why do I need 5-7 children? Why should I lose my precious time of practicing religion in fostering and bringing them up? Instead let me take all those 32 tablets at one stroke so that I get 1 son – complete with all the 32 virtues required for a perfect son.”

You are bound to lose the precious time you can utilise for religion by increasing your unnecessary social relations and occasions. Thus, time, money and energy cannot be optimally used for religious purposes. Then why purposely create such situations ourselves? Thus, a person having the true religious outlook is fed up with worldly affairs.

Ask yourself – “Does religion have a place in your life? As a result, you do not welcome unnecessary talks and gossip, outings and meetings, right? Do you have no time for useless thoughts?” Thus, take care not to engross yourself in unnecessary thoughts, speech, actions, objects, people, because

it is sure to steal away your precious time of exercising the all-time beneficial and supreme religion preached by Lord Mahavira.

Sthoolabhadraji* initially thought that —

- 1) If I accept the position of ministership offered by the King, then its responsibilities are sure to demand time which will affect the leisure time spent with Kosha (A beautiful prostitute). His thought process did not stop here. He further thought.
- 2) Arre! Because of the unquenching thirst for sensual pleasures with Kosha, I am losing out on the precious time acquired in this human birth for spiritual progress. Then why not forsake such worthless sensual pleasures right now?

That's it! He quit his material world and accepted monkhood under the guidance of an able mentor. This, too, was not the end.

- 3) Why to while away the precious moments of monkhood by gossiping, glancing around and becoming lazy? Such unnecessary acts steal away the precious human time which can be utilized for increase in rightfaith, knowledge and conduct. Thus, he forsake these unnecessary acts and immersed himself in observing

* Sthoolabhadraji was the son of Shaktal, King Minister, who was attracted to a beautiful prostitute, Kosha, so much so that he gave up all social and family responsibilities and stayed at her place, enjoying sensual pleasures for almost 12 years. On his father's demise, the King of the State offered him the position of the State Minister.

the rituals of monkhood, serving God and Guru and acquiring knowledge, so much so that he was the sole person who tooth tirelessly took 7 lectures of our Aagam scriptures per day.

What does this depict?

Leave all that which steals your time for spiritual progress. How effective was Sthoolibhadra's formula! First, he forsakes the post of State Minister for the sake of the seemingly precious pleasures time with Kosha. Next, he forsakes these pleasures and accepts monkhood. Above all, even in the course of practicing monkhood, he avoided unnecessary chats and talks and optimally utilized the time available for spiritual progress.

This formula can become a source of great inspiration—

If you cannot completely renounce this world, you can take small or big vows and stand by them against all odds. Thus, you will not lose out on the time available for restraint over senses and resistance over temptations. For e.g. Immediately after your meal, you are not going to have anything for an hour. Here if you do not pledge 'to not eat or drink', then that time will not benefit you. Instead if you take an oath for a 1 hour, then the time is optimally utilized in restraining your senses and thus stops the interrex of new karmas.

You are definitely not going to acquire an income of lakhs or crores in the near future, but if you do not take an oath that, "I will not keep wealth more than a specific amount' then your time is bound to strengthen your attraction, greed and

non-restraint. You are surely going to observe celibacy during the day, but if you do not take an oath regarding the same right in the morning, then your time is surely going to be wasted in non-restraint of your senses.

Similarly, major sins like violent business activities, burning down forests, drying lakes, manufacturing and dealing in weapons are surely not going to be exercised by you. But if you do not take one oath to forsake them, then all the time till then is surely misused in non-restraint and continuous binding of sins.

Tell me, what is the use of such unnecessary sins and activities of non-restraint? Instead, if you have taken short-term or long-term oaths, then that much time is optimally utilized in restraint over senses.

Human time is valuable and should be used to practice restraint over senses; How can non-restraint steal away this precious time?

We have attained this precious human birth to exercise various religious activities like Navkarshi-Pachchakhana, worshipping God, not eating at night, not consuming underground vegetables like potatoes, onions, etc. Instead if you do not implement all these, then all this valuable time goes down the drain.

Time And Tide Wait For None

Loss of wealth is insignificant compared to the loss of the precious time that can be utilized in religion.

We get enraged over those who steal our wealth but do we have any remorse or do we feel sad if our precious time for religious activities is stolen? Only to tickle your tastebuds or because of ignorance, you do Pachchakhana of Navakarshi* and not Porisi**. Here, the valuable time wherein you could follow the Pachchakhana is going waste. Doesn't your heart cry? The attachment of sensual pleasures eats up all the time that can be utilized for observing celibacy.

“The precious time I have attained for exercising religion should not be stolen by anyone.” Use this formula frequently – It will minimise your sins and maximise your religious activities.

Even after renouncing this world and becoming a saint, you should be very careful that the time for attaining knowledge,

* Navakarshi – The vow wherein you can have food and water 48 minutes after sunrise.

** Porisi – The vow wherein you can have food and water approx. 3 hours after sunrise.

performing meditations and reflections, increasing virtues like forgiveness, non-attachments, etc. is not be stolen away by unnecessary talks and gossip, just looking around and wasting time.

24th Tirthankar, Lord Mahavir tells his first disciple Gautam Swami,

‘समयं गोयम ! मा पमायए’

“Samayam Goyam! Ma Pamayae”.

It means “Hey Gautam! Do not waste even a single minute or millisecond.”

What is its secret? What is Lord Mahavir trying to convey?

Lord Mahavira’s message

“O Gautam! Engage in unnecessary talks for even two minutes and you lose those precious moments of doing some noble activity. Even for a second or two you feel jealous of someone and you are bound to lose the time that could have been utilised for appreciating them. Just for a second, deliciously savour food and the time that could be used to contemplate upon non-attachment is sure to go down the drain.

O Gautam! Be careful! Look here and there a little and the time that can be used for acquiring knowledge, meditation and spiritual realisation is destroyed. Be cautious! Do not succumb to worldly comforts and do not become lazy. Even if five minutes are whiled away in observing other’s faults and

shortcomings, giving unnecessary advice to others and criticizing them, you are ruining the significant time that could have been utilised for self-reflection.

All of these are termed as 'Pramada' = Laziness.

Looking here and there, chitchatting, a wild imagination and an idle mind, luxuries and sleep, worrying about others, attraction of sensual pleasures, happiness and sorrow, anger and greed, laughter, fear, disgust and sensual attachments, all of this is laziness. Engaging in any of these means squandering away the extremely precious time available for religious activities.

If you pursue religious activities like Pratikramana, Chaityavandana, etc. and simultaneously talk amongst yourselves, look here and there, allow your mind to roam about or envelop your mind with jealousy and hatred for others, then these rituals will not be able to give you the desired results. To attain that, your rituals have to be complete with determination and mental concentration. You have been going to the temple and worshipping God for years together. Now check – while pursuing the various poojas and rituals, don't you look here and there? Do you talk amidst yourselves? Don't you let your imagination run wild?

We are worshipping God and someone comes and stands right in between, obstructing our sight of God. What will be our thought process? "Is he a fool? Doesn't he understand that he should stand a little away? When will he learn to act

sensibly?” What is this? Unnecessarily worrying about others.

Instead if you worry about your own soul, your thought process will be such, “Ultimately what do I have to gain from worshipping God? Reducing my love and hatred and attachment towards worldly objects, right? Then why don’t I think about what I ought to do instead of other’s duties?” Think about your own power to understand rather than another’s lack of understanding. If someone came in between and obstructed your sight of God, instead of criticizing the other person, close your eyes and mentally worship God. It will prove to be an examination of how well you remember the God you have worshipped with your eyes. Do you have the intelligence to consider the situation in this way? If you truly worry about your soul, then you don’t need to be told this. But you lose this precious time of self-introspection while worrying for others. The fact is this :

“Our mind does not remain constantly occupied in these great religious activities and thus we look around here and there.”

Does the person watching a movie look around? Does the person engrossed in gossip look here and there? Then why does this situation arise only while doing Pratikramana, Chaityavandana or listening to religious sermons? The reason is crystal clear. The previous activities interest us and hence our mind is completely occupied. But it is not so during the later ones and hence it runs to find better places to engage itself. If your mind remains engaged in God, God’s

Chaityavandana, His words and the glorious path of salvation preached by Him, then useless talks and thoughts and futile activities of looking around will automatically come to a stop.

Is the mind occupied in the Almighty's preachings? The barometer to measure this is the absence of futile talks and thoughts, actions and activities.

The key to stop all of this is to engage your mind constantly in Him, His reverence and memories and by relentlessly and faithfully following His words. Engage yourself in noble conduct and you will experience pure bliss and unparalleled joy. This is the highest level of religious disposition.

Sulsa's Folly

Sulsa's religious faith gives her the right wisdom to avoid unnecessary burdens and troubles. It makes her understand and follow Almighty Arihantas' words and preachings.

Thus, she wants just one son to ensure her husband's mental peace. She has absolutely no desire for more children. Thoughts of Jineshwaras and the path preached by them envelop and interest her so much that worldly affairs seem insignificant and barren. In fact, she is saturated with worldly affairs. She is still in this world due to karmic bondages or she would have definitely renounced the world at the earliest.

Only if you are saturated with the world, will wealth and family, luxury and comforts seem useless; this is the true religious outlook.

With the intention of avoiding the trouble involved in bringing up 32 sons and wishing to obtain just 1 son possessing all 32 virtues, she swallowed those 32 tablets given by the Devta at one stroke. But her plan misfired and the result was dismal. She had to bear 32 wombs together and eventually as they grew, the pain became unbearable.

This pain was a result of her ignorance and misunderstanding. She did not understand fully the intention of the 32 tablets given by the Devta.

Should her loss be connected somehow with religious faith ? Can you say “Despite having such a noble religious disposition, what did she gain ?” No. In fact her loss should be connected to her ignorance and her incapability to distinguish between true and false.

Thus, you should take utmost care that

- 1) You do not believe religious faith and activities to be the cause of sorrow and misery. Your belief that religious faith and outlook are the cause of all spiritual welfare should be strong. Previous inauspicious karmas are the cause of all sorrow.
- 2) Similarly, be careful that when you come across situations, wherein you have attained benefits due to anger and pride, greed, violence and cheating, do not consider the benefits to be a result of these vices. You attained desired benefits due to your auspicious karmas which have come into action. Otherwise, these vices can only increase your sins and karmic ties which will in turn lead to a channel of further sorrows and sins.

Shravika Salsa firmly believed in this and hence when she had to bear the pain of having 32 sons together, she did not blame her religious outlook and faith. Instead, she blamed her own ignorance for the unexpected turn of events.

The Devta appears

What to do? The pain was gradually increasing and becoming intolerable. Thus, she remembers the Devta and does Kayotsarga*. Her glorious faith and noble disposition attracted the Devta and he appears before her. Salsa narrates the situation and the intensity of her pain.

The Devta replied, “Then why did you become greedy? I had told you to take one tablet whenever you wished to have a son. Now, what did you do? Now you will conceive 32 sons together and if one dies, all the remaining will also die.

Salsa’s reply radiating glowing religious faith

Salsa said, “I had never craved for 32 sons. But I took this step with the intention of attaining one noble son, complete with all 32 virtues. But destiny had something different in store for me. Why else would I get such a thought?”

Inspite of having the right understanding, the misconceptions and wrong decisions that take place are all a result of destiny.

Thus, Salsa was compelled to take such a strange decision.

Destiny is powerful.

Why else would Rama have to wander in the forest for 14 long years? Why would he leave Sita alone? Destiny forced Rama to take such a decision and make the situation

* Kayotsarga – standing or sitting still and meditating.

favourable for Ravana. Also Ravana's destruction was written in his destiny and thus, in spite of deciding to free Sita, his ego stopped him and at the end, he was defeated by Rama-Lakshmana and had to plead for mercy.

You cannot deny the strength of destiny.

“Look! I accept that my destiny misguided me but it was my fault all the more. I did not take the appropriate decision considering all the angles. Now, if my punya is sufficient enough and if you have the calibre to reduce my pain, then please do so. If my punya is insufficient, do not worry. I will consider it to be a result of my previous misdeeds and bear it.”

The soul has to compulsorily bear the result of the good or bad karmas accumulated by him. Why else would extremely detached Lord Shantinath, Lord Kunthunath and Lord Aranath have to experience the pleasures of becoming a Chakravarti? Because those good Karmas could not be eliminated without experiencing its fruits. Similarly, Lord Mahavira also had to undergo many trials and tribulations – all because of his previously accumulated inauspicious karmas. He, too did not blame anyone except his karmas.

Sulsa's words of wisdom reflected a glowing religious disposition. Is Sulsa going to become a Tirthankar on the basis of the thoughts, words and actions suitable to a common man? No, she originated the supreme Punya of Tirthankar Namakarma on the basis of undeterred faith on the

preachings of the Tirthankaras.

This strong faith consoled her and made her realise that it was actually destiny that made her commit such a mistake and take such a decision and now the pain that she was facing was a result of her inauspicious karmas.

To summarize,

Vitaraga and Omniscient Arihanta Lord's religion teaches us,

“Destiny plays a major role in the errors that occur inspite of having the right understanding.

Our inauspicious karmas play a prominent role in the difficulties and pain that arise because of the error.”

Once, this belief is firm, no person or situation will seem adverse because at the end it is only karma and destiny that is to be blamed. Thus, if by chance the Devta could not remove or reduce her pain, she was prepared to accept the pain and thus uproot her karmas.

“O Lord! I like you! Then how can I dislike your path of tolerance?” This strong faith can surely stop the agitation caused due to the pain, thereby increasing the level of tolerance.

But this will not happen by just a one-time hearing or narration. It has to be repeatedly practised in day-to-day life. Then you will understand the enormous power of religious outlook and faith.

“O Lord! Do I really like you? Do I truly adore you? If I like you, can I like someone/something else? If I do, how can I say that I truly like you?”

Why do you like Him? Adore Him?

Because –

- 1) Arihanta Bhagwanta is Vitaraga i.e. completely devoid of love and hatred and thus proves to be a great source of inspiration for us.
- 2) He also gives us the right knowledge and understanding, thus guiding us towards the path of becoming Vitaraga.
- 3) He is the sole identity in this world who will never cheat or misguide us.

You like Him for the above reasons, right?

If you adore Him for the fact that His reverence is able to give you all worldly comforts, then be aware – “You actually like all those worldly comforts and not Him.

To genuinely like Him, you will have to develop a dislike for all worldly pleasures. Lord himself is Vitaraga and proves to be an idol and inspiration for people like us who desire to become Vitaraga. Thus, once you develop a liking for Vitaragta (feeling of absence of love and hatred) nothing else seems worthy of love.

Yes, Salsa was undergoing tremendous pain but her love for the Lord exceeded her attachment towards the body and thus she did not fall at the Devta's feet and beg him to reduce her pain at any cost. Her words did not depict helplessness or misery. Instead it reflected the depth of her faith and understanding, her strength and straightforwardness.

She had unbreakable faith in the Karma theory. She knew that the power of karma was far more than the power of the Devta. Thus, she displayed a readiness to bear the effects of those karmas. Why would she feel helpless and low? Why would she desire for more than the limitations of her karma? If at times, these inauspicious karmas are mighty, then ensure that you bear them without any dejection or agitation. All this is a result of a pure religious outlook.

The Devta's Reaction

He was highly impressed by Salsa's attitude and thus said, "Your pain will be eliminated but the after effect of taking 32 tablets at one stroke cannot be nullified. As a result, if any 1 of the 32 sons die, the remaining 31 will also immediately pass away."

Saying so, he pacified Salsa's abdominal pain and disappeared. Salsa felt relieved and narrated the entire incident to her husband, Nagrathik. He was glad that Salsa was relieved of the pain, but at the same time the other instance alarmed him –

“What? All of them will die together? A life-taking calamity on one will seize the lives of the rest, too?”

Sulsa replied, “Why worry needlessly? Who can change destiny? It is certain. Thus why worry about those events where our wishes or words do not work. Instead, cheer up! Be happy that your desire of a son is soon going to be fulfilled. All your worries will come to rest.”

The Effective Solution – 5 Factors

Trust your destiny and do not bother about things not under your control. Do not lose this precious time in worthless worries. Instead optimally utilise the time by increasing the devotion of the Jineshwaras. By doing so, you will experience the solution shown in the scriptures.

The effective solution shown in our scriptures –

5 factors

Scriptures say that each small or big act is influenced by 5 factors :-

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1) Kala | - Time |
| 2) Bhavitavyata | - Destiny |
| 3) Svabhava | - Nature |
| 4) Karma | - Actions |
| 5) Purushartha | - Efforts |

But all of these are servants at the feet of the Arihantas. Since that is the case, instead of working to individually acquire

each of them, why not strive to increase the devotion and reverence of the Almighty? Once you do so, the factors which are servants of this devotion will automatically appear before you and favour you.

Q. But can it improve your spoilt destiny? If it is subject to changes, how can it be termed destiny?

Ans. Wait a little. Think logically. What do you mean by spoilt destiny? “We did not attain our desired results. Destiny showed its colours and its work is now over. Now how will it improve?” But now you have to contemplate on the upcoming destiny so that it becomes favourable. In the scripture ‘Achara Pradip’, Pujya Ratnashekharisurishwarji Maharaja states that destiny is nor completely certain, nor completely uncertain but partly certain, partly uncertain.

Q. What do you mean?

Ans. The right or wrong efforts that we put in, the factors which affect it and the rise or downfall caused by it – The Omniscient Lord knows it all. From His point of view, destiny is fixed and certain. But, you say that efforts in the wrong direction lead to our downfall and those in the right direction lead to our rise i.e. wrong efforts cannot lead to our rise and the right ones cannot lead to our downfall. This means that our efforts are responsible for our rise or downfall. Not destiny but our efforts are independent. We are independent. If you look from this point of view, destiny is uncertain and liable to change.

Q. But our Purushartha i.e. efforts we take are also determined by our destiny. And thus, is destiny fixed?

Ans. ‘Purushartha’ – Here Purusha = Person; Artha = Efforts that he willingly undertakes.

Thus, Purushartha means the efforts independently taken by the person. It means that this Purushartha is not dependent on destiny but destiny is bound to give the results according to Purushartha.

We should have the depth to understand who is dependent on whom. Vitaraga, Omniscient Tirthankaras have the ultimate power of knowledge and can thus foresee the future. On the basis of this vast knowledge, He can determine whether the person is going to make efforts in the right or wrong direction. But that does not imply that He enables individuals to undertake efforts. Those efforts are solely dependent on the individual. He can undertake right or wrong efforts according to his own free will. “What kind of efforts will he according undertake according to his will?” This is foreseen by the Omniscient in His knowledge.

Thus, Vitaraga’s foresight is dependent on the good or bad efforts made by the person according to his own will. But the nature of efforts are not dependent on Vitaraga’s foresight.

Just as the crop produced is dependent on the kind of seeds you sow –

*Sow bajri and you will get bajra,
Sow rice and you will get rice.*

The 5 Factors – Servants in the feet of Jinas – How?

Call it Vitaraga's foresight or destiny – it is based on the individual's efforts. If the individual possesses devotion and dedication, honour and regard for the Jinas, then he is bound to put in efforts in the right direction, thus yielding positive results. Swabhava i.e. the nature of the soul ripens as reverence of the Jinas increases. Favourable time and auspicious karmas also originate due to the devotion of the Jinas. They became servants of Jinas and their reverence. All of these 5 factors become favourable by devotion and reverence of the Jinas. Thus, they can be called His servants.

Q. Accepted that they are servants of Jina's devotion and reverence but how can you call them servants of the Jinas?

Ans. If you heartily and devotedly accept, revere and serve the Jineshwara Devas, only then will the 5 factors become positive. Hence, it is the Jinas who hold the prime importance and thus they are called His servants.

Thus, Salsa is telling her husband

“Lord! Do not grieve over the Devta's words of all the 32 sons dying at one stroke. Instead of squandering away this time in unnecessary grief, utilise this time in the remembrance and devotion of the Jinas. The 5 factors may become favourable due to its effect. **Thus, have trust that whatever good happened, happens or is bound to happen is all because of the devotion of the Jinas.**

‘जिनभक्तिथी जे नवि थाय, ते बीजाथी नवि थाय’

“Jinabhakti thi je navi thaye, te bijathi navi thay...”

Thus, you should utilize this precious human birth in revering and serving the Jinas. These deeply meaningful words consoled Nagrathik.

As time passed, Salsa gave birth to 32 sons. Since Nagrathik was financially stable, he made all possible arrangements for the proper care and upbringing of those 32 sons. All those sons were also of noble descent, well behaved and virtuous. Thus, the house was now complete with the noise of little children. Nagrathik was now content. Nagrathik took complete care of them 24x7 because he was aware of the fact that the death of one would lead to the death of all. He took all possible measures to remove any kind of difficulty coming in their way.

This is all a result of the previously accumulated Punya of the sons that was in force. But the attachment of a father towards his sons deprives him of this understanding and he assumes himself to be the sole caretaker. Wouldn't it be wonderful if an individual takes so much care for his religious activities and spiritual progress too?

Destruction of the basic virtues of brotherhood and tolerance will lead to the destruction of all other virtues and religious activities. Similarly, you lose the feeling of non-violence, non-attachment and the right perception (Samyak Darshana) and you lose everything.

For e.g. :

- 1) Great sage Agnisharma retained his forgiving and friendly

nature for lakhs of years. In spite of the fact that King Gunasena forgot his Maskshamana Parna day 2 times, he did not succumb to anger. But the moment King Gunasena made the same mistake for the 3rd time, he lost his temper and alongwith it the feeling of brotherhood. Once this basic virtue was lost, all his severe penance and its sweet fruits were lost.

Give it a thought – due to the feeling of enmity and anger, such a great sage also had to face dire consequences. He had to stay in the dungeons of hell for as many as 8 births. His birth cycle increased enormously, including numerous births of algae as well. We do not have even the thousandth part of such penance or forgiveness. Now imagine where do we stand? What will be the fruits of our anger or hatred?

- 2) Marichi and Jamali uttered just a few words beyond the boundaries of the Jain Scriptures and lost the fundamental virtue of faith and perception resulting in the loss of all their strict penance and increase in their birth place. If they had to face such dreadful consequences in spite of living an ascetic life, imagine the state of those who speak recklessly against our religion only to display their so-called intelligence.
- 3) A saint by the name Kulavalaka stayed in a forest hermit all by himself. His penance and code of conduct was so strict that due to its miraculous effect, the river changed its direction of flow. The river flowing nearby was in floods

but its course diverted due to the saint's penance and their forest hermit was saved from being dragged away in floods. Thus, because of his penance, "Kula (=river walls) Valak (=diverted)" and he was named "Kula Valaka" by his fellow saints. Such was the power of his penance. Also, he ended his fasts by consuming all that he would obtain naturally without harming any living organisms. But when King Konila sent a cunning Jain Shrivika, a prostitute in disguise, saint Kulavalaka was tempted to accept her service and eventually lost control over his senses, That's it! It was the end of all of it. He lost his monkhood and devotion for the Almighty. He was instrumental in destruction of the miraculous ancient monument of Lord. Munisuvrat in the city of Vishala. Numerous births of hell piled up. All this inspite of penance of the strict code of conduct! Imagine the terrible repercussions that have to be faced by those who are anyways devoid of the right belief and conduct.

Thus, you need to remain alert. Loss of any fundamental virtue will lead to the loss of all virtues and penance. Thus, one should strive to preserve these basic virtues.

The Ideal Parenthood

Becoming a father – What should your thought procedure be?

Why do people wish to become parents? To show their sons and daughters the right path and prevent the emergence of

sins and wrong-doings in their life which may lead them to hell and births in other animal species. After becoming a father, do you live upto this responsibility? Or do you make your child smart in worldly affairs – Luxuries and comforts, wealth and women, food and fashion? Have you ever thought about the consequences he would have to bear as a result? Engrossed in eating all the time, what if he is born as some animal in the next birth? Roaming all around, what if he has to take birth as dog or a butterfly who roams about all day? What if his habit of cheating or cruel nature pushes him to take birth as a lion or a tiger?

Now say, how many fathers have this kind of thought process? Leave alone siblings, do they have such thoughts for themselves? What will be my plight if I continue my misdeeds and worries? How can the one who cannot think about his own spiritual welfare, think about his son's? But appreciate that, you as well as your siblings have attained the precious human birth. If not here, where else is there room for spiritual progress?

Under the pretext of ensuring the well-being of your children:

- 1) You introduce them to diverse cuisines, lifestyles and luxuries and eventually they sink in these worldly pleasures. Where are you leading them?
- 2) Secondly, you claim to ensure their well-being by providing them material comforts. Do you think that they will surely attain happiness as a result of your

intelligence? Or they will acquire happiness owing to their own punya?

While bringing up your child, ensure that your mind does not revolve around temporary thoughts like “My children are very good and beautiful! The house is worth living only because of them. I really adore them. I hope they enjoy all the pleasures of life.” This is the common mindset. But we are Jains and our mindset has to be different and a cut above the rest. We should worry about their spiritual progress – how they can attain noble qualities, stay away from vices and thus become religious by heart. This is the true worry and ultimately it revolves around our soul and the Arihanta Lord.

Can the worry about our children prove to be a source of spiritual progress? Yes.

Ensuring that the child does not get knowingly or unknowingly misguided by our actions or words, that we do not endow him with vices leading him on the path of destruction – all this means that we truly worry about their spiritual upliftment.

Making him a loyal devotee and follower of Arihanta Bhagwanta’s religion denotes our devotion towards the Arihanta Bhagwanta.

Can you do this after attaining parenthood? After becoming a parent, your life will take a turn – your anger and tantrums will decrease, likes and dislikes related to food and fashion will reduce. Petty quarrels with your spouse, neighbours and

in-laws will decline because of the fear that is constantly pestering your mind. The fear that God forbid, my innocent children may follow my footsteps and happen to develop these negative traits.

Now, if an individual understands this, won't he be alert and strive to ensure his child's well being? You worry for the health of your son, wife, etc. Do you have equal worry for the health and welfare of your own soul – that it does not lose its virtues and merits??

Do not forget – Childhood is the foundation. If the foundation ruined, then eventually the building will also get ruined.

Sulsa's religious outlook ensured the proper upbringing of her children. She imbibed in them noble virtues of humility, honesty, modesty, straightforwardness, generosity, loyalty, philanthropy, patience and determination. As a result, when they grew up, King Shrenik appointed them as his personal confidants required for any secret missions.

Isn't this a position of great honour and dignity? The king of the empire of Magadha, Shrenik confided in them as much as he confided in his son and minister Abhayakumar. He would involve them in significant political and social deeds and decisions. He would also reward them from time to time. Now tell me, isn't this a great, prestigious post? But it lead to the creation of a strange destiny!

Karma and Destiny :

Adversities occur because of inauspicious karmas but certain specific situations related to those adversities are caused by destiny.

For Example, Sita had to face trying times – Leaving all worldly pleasures, she was sent to exile when she was pregnant. The job of inauspicious karmas was limited to this. But the fact that she had to face this sorrow not at the hands of some enemy or thief but her own beloved husband, wise and just king Rama – this was destiny's job. Though her character was crystal clear, a question arose on her purity as a result of her Apyash Namakarma. This situation arose after coming back from Ravana's captivity – this was a result of destiny.

You can say so

Due to some strange destiny, the kidnapping and captivity of Sita proved to be a catalyst in activating her Apyasha Namakarma. Similarly, destiny ensured that Rama became instrumental in the fruition of her inauspicious karma of being sent to exile.

The thin line between karma and destiny is to be deeply understood. The Omniscient Vitaraga's foresight or destiny cause the specific circumstances but the emergence of adversities is due to the inauspicious karmas. Or else you would say that you acquired wealth and happiness owing to Vitaraga's foresight? That means it has the power to give you happiness or sorrow! Is Vitaraga's foresight so cruel that it envelops the infinite worldly creatures in pain and sorrow?

It is not destiny but the nature of karmas. Inauspicious karmas lead to sorrow and auspicious karmas lead to happiness.

Sins lead to sorrow,

Religion leads to joy.

It is the nature of karmas to provide you with happiness or sorrow but destiny creates circumstances that favours your karmas.

For Example, It was destiny that Samraditya met Agnisharma for almost 9 consecutive births; the trials he had to face were because of his own inauspicious karmas but the fact that the pain was inflicted by the hands of Agnisharma alone was once again destiny.

Q. But isn't it destiny which inspires you to make specific efforts that lead to the origin of karmas?

Ans. No, then the remaining factors – Karma, our efforts, etc. will become useless. Destiny would be the sole factor! This will abolish the Jain concept that any act/work is affected by 5 factors. This concept denotes that destiny, time, nature, karma and our efforts are all independent factors. It is very possible that for a specific act, some particular factor plays a role more prominent than the rest.

Destiny and Efforts

We just described how previous good or bad karmas are responsible for the external adversities that we face and not destiny. Similarly our positives and negative efforts

(Purushartha) are responsible for our internal good or bad thoughts and the good or bad words and actions caused as a result.

The only job of destiny is to create such specific circumstances.

For Example, It was destined that Marichi would meet Prince Kapila. But the misdeeds of making him his disciple and his deceptive words, “Religion is at both ends; here and there” was his faulty Purushartha (effort).

Thus, you have to carefully differentiate between karma and destiny as well as Purushartha and Destiny. All 5 factors are independent and have totally separate identities and thus you cannot merge them into one another.

In spite of having faith in the theory of karma, you take the effort of running to office each morning to earn money. Why so? Because you are fully aware that Purushartha is different from Karma and thus a necessity.

Q. Likewise why don't we put in efforts for exercising religion?

Ans. The reason is clear. In our mind, money is a necessity, religion is not. We feel hungry and hence we make efforts to eat. Is there any requirement or hunger for religion in our life?

Q. Why does this happen – why don't we experience the requirement and hunger for religion?

Ans. Because our mind is set, “life can continue smoothly in the absence of religion but not in the absence of money or food.”

Q. How can you expect your life to run smoothly in the absence of religion?

Ans. We are immensely attached to sensual pleasures and religion becomes a barrier for these worldly pleasures. Thus we believe life to be smooth in the absence of religion.

Instead, as a true Jain, your motto should be, “Life can run smoothly in the absence of sensual pleasures but not in the absence of religion.” Human life deprived of religion is equivalent to the life of animals. The optimum utilization of this precious human birth is religion.

Religion – The Ultimate Saviour

Benefits of religion :

- 1) Mental peace
- 2) A pure, soft heart
- 3) Spiritual well-being
- 4) A peaceful death
- 5) Progressive cycle of rebirths
- 6) Salvation

If you whole-heartedly accept and understand the above benefits, then the hunger for religion will arise. Its requirement will be felt and you will put in suitable efforts. Instead, if you want to keep yourself immersed in sensual pleasures, where is the need for religion?

To summarize, you cannot blame karma or destiny for the absence of religion. It is only us and our attachment towards sensual pleasures that is to be blamed. The mind set that - 'nothing will come to a halt without religion, Life is smooth' is worth abandoning.

Self-realisation

Perceive yourself as the one immersed in sensual pleasures. You will surely despise yourself. Why the immense addiction to sensual pleasures and temporary worldly benefits in this valuable human birth? I am a human and not an animal. I am an Arya and not an Anarya. Unlike the common man, I am a Jain. In spite of this, why I am continuously engaged in increasing the quantity and quality of my sensual pleasures?

“But be mindful that the increase in sensual pleasures is bound to increase its attachment and craving. How can its incessantly increasing hunger be satisfied?

Tell yourself that someday sooner or later you will have to forsake these sensual pleasures. Because of its immense attachment, imagine how miserable your condition will be. Refining your mind with such thoughts, your worldly attachments will decrease and your heart will say, “Life without religion is unimaginable”. The requirement for religion will be felt, thereby increasing our religious activities.

Sulsa is also living in the same world like you and me but she:-

- 1) Is not immersed in sensual pleasures
- 2) Considers religion a necessity
- 3) Puts constant efforts in religion
- 4) Possesses a glowing religious outlook
- 5) Has unflinching faith, devotion and reverence towards Lord Mahavira, the founder and propagator of Jain religion.

On the foundation of these, she originated the Punya to become a Tirthankara. Now just imagine – a common housewife and mother staying amidst worldly pleasures originates Tirthankara Namakarma. Due to the liking for sensual pleasures? Or due to the liking for Vitaraga? Or both? Do not be mistaken. You cannot like both together. If you like Vitaraga, it implies that you like the Almighty devoid of such sensual pleasures. And if you truly like Him for this reason, it means that sensual pleasures and its attachments seem like poison to you. And thus you like Omniscient Lord who has overcome this poison. It is a simple principle – Your liking for Vitaraga Lord implies your dislike towards sensual pleasures. They seem poisonous and worth abandoning.

In spite of living amidst worldly pleasures, to what heights can the devotion and reverence, love and faith for Vitaraga reach? To what extent can the attachments of sensual pleasures be reduced? Salsa was a fine example.

If you claim to like both Vitaraga and vicious sensual pleasures together then examine yourself. Deep inside, there will be the thought that devotion of Vitaraga will give me the desired pleasures and comforts. But this thought denotes your liking for those pleasures and not for Vitaraga.

We were talking about the minute difference between karma and destiny. Salsa's 32 sons were designated as King Shrenik's personal confidants due to their own auspicious karmas in action but it was destiny that this designation was instrumental in creating a great calamity.

Shrenik's Wish To Marry Sujyeshtha – The Condition And Consequences

Magadh's King Shrenik wished to marry beautiful Princess Sujyeshtha but at that point of time, Shrenik was not Jain and hence her father King Cheda refused the proposal. King Cheda was a true devotee of Lord Mahavira. Thus, why would he willingly deprive his daughter of religion? And if he did so, could he be called a devotee in the true sense? Do you have this pledge that when you are looking for a suitable bridegroom for your daughter, you will consider only those proposals which support religion?

If you marry your daughter in a religious family, not only the couple, but the family as well the next generation will progress on the path of religion. The legacy of Jinshasana will thus continue. King Cheda was truly fulfilling his responsibility as a father as well as a devotee of Lord Mahavira.

King Cheda was also determined to not spoil his daughter's birth by marrying her to a non-religious person. Shrenik had not accepted Jain religion and hence King Cheda refused to take this step. King Shrenik was also well aware of this but he

was so attracted by Sujyeshtha's beauty and virtues that he was constantly enveloped with the thoughts of attaining and marrying her.

***Abhaykumar's Plan**

Abhaykumar learned the reason of his father's worry. Secretly, he entered the capital of King Cheda's state – Vaishali and put up a shop of cosmetics close to the palace. Sujyeshtha's maid started coming there to make purchases. Abhaykumar arranged an attractive photo of King Shrenik in a prominent place so that it would catch the maid's eye. As expected, the maid was attracted by the picture, and asked, "Whose photo is this?"

"It's our glorious King's photo, because of whom my business is flourishing."

"But what is his name?"

Abhaykumar replied, "He is Magadha State's King Shrenik."

The maid said, "Wow! He is as handsome as the Indra-head of all celestial beings. Can you lend me this photo to show to my mistress?"

"Who is your mistress?"

"King Cheda's daughter Princess Sujyeshtha."

Abhaykumar was overwhelmed. Destiny was in his favour.

* Abhaykumar was King Shrenik's son and Minister – extremely witty and intelligent).

He thus gave the photo to the maid. She took it and showed it to Sujyeshtha and introduced King Shrenik to her. Fresh youth and captivating beauty! Sujyeshtha was so awestruck by the photo that she mentally decided to marry King Shrenik!

Look at the – 1) Significance of external factors, 2) Strength of Moha.

- 1) Till she had not seen the photo, she was at peace but as soon as she caught a glimpse of the photo, mental disturbances prevailed.
- 2) Such is the strength of Moha that inspite of knowing that King Shrenik was not a Jain and her father disliked Non-Jains and despite having 100% faith towards Jainism herself, she still got attracted towards King Shrenik. Such is the dominance of Moha over us.

Be cautious before encouraging and increasing Moha. Or else in the future, this dominance of Moha will obstruct the grandeur of virtues and religious outlook. Emotions inspired by Moha will progressively increase.

What does Moha comprise of ?

Moha comprises of attachments and hatred, infatuations and fascination, anger and greed, pride and ego, animosity and revenge, jealousy and envy, self-appraisal and others downfall, violence and cheating, our inclination towards luxuries and a comfortable life, joy-sorrow-disturbances, fear and irritation, etc. Exercising any of the above is sure to leave its impression on our mind and this will eventually increase.

‘Laughing a little won’t spoil anything’ – Your mind may tell you this but trust me, destruction is certain. The negative impressions of laughter are bound to increase thus decreasing your maturity level.

If you really want to obstruct the formation of such negative impressions, then tell yourself to become mature and wise when such situations arise. Do not laugh aloud on hearing silly talks.

The fact is–

You have not fixed a specific identity for yourself. The seriousness and sincerity required is missing. Hence, this life is spent in worthless momentary pleasures. Where is there any worry about the soul?

If you want to increase and intensify your spiritual worry —

- 1) Fix a specific identity for yourself,
- 2) Increase seriousness in your life,
- 3) Stop gossiping and laughing over silly, unimportant issues.

1) Specific Identity means the firm realisation that

For example ‘I am a reputed man’, ‘I am a server of the Jinas, a follower of his preachings’, ‘I Have undeterred faith in His words’, ‘I am a Samyaktvi’, ‘I am a Deshvirati Shravaka’, ‘I am a Jain Saint’, ‘I am literate’.... If such a genuine identity for yourself is fixed in your mind, then silly jokes and laughter

will seem irrelevant. Your inner self should tell you that all this is not suitable for your present level.

Similarly,

**2) You can increase seriousness in
your life by thinking about**

- i) The burden of infinite vices and sins on your head,
- ii) Valuable life and the fast flow of time,
- iii) Some great sin or misdeed that you have done in the past,
- iv) Life overflowing with outright demerits and wrongdoings,
- v) Dependence of our thoughts, speech and behaviour on our social circle and worldly affairs,
- vi) Being extremely inclined towards sensual pleasures, and thus the involvement in anger, greed, etc. Ignorance, being stagnant,
- vii) The extravagant waste of time inspite of numerous splendid scriptures lying unread,
- viii) Inspite of penance and fasts, compassion and donation, forgiveness, tolerance and selflessness, devotion towards the God and Guru being just a stone's-throw away, stuffing your mind with the garbage of anxieties related to food and sleep and these vicious senses, anger, greed, ego and cruelty.

Like the few stated above, there are many other serious issues worth considering. Even if one of them envelopes your mind, there will be no space for insignificant issues of laughing, gossiping and wasting time. Unnecessary thoughts and words will not bother you.

What thoughts can help us refrain from these trivial talks and humour ?

As said earlier, if the realisation of a specific self-identity or some serious issue like those mentioned above envelop your mind, then you will not get engrossed in petty talks and humour. Instead the worry about your soul will survive. But if you exercise the opposite, then the impressions of Moha on your soul will deepen. The result? A spoilt future? Dreadful rebirths? Ponder upon this seriously and earnestly strive to stop the unnecessary emotions of joy and sorrow, fear and disgust, etc.

Great Shravaka King Cheda's virtuous daughter Sujyeshtha also succumbed to the deep impressions left by Moha and thus got captivated seeing King Shrenik's picture. She asked the maid to request the merchant (Minister Abhaya Kumar in disguise) sitting at the shop if she could meet the King. Abhaya Kumar said that he would inquire and let them know. He continued, "But if the meeting is possible, what is the princess's thought? While inquiring if the King asks me, what should I say?" The maid posed this question to Sujyeshtha. On returning, she replied, "The princess is completely mesmerized on seeing the photo. If King Shrenik is willing to

take her along, then she is ready to accompany him and marry him.”

Abhaya Kumar said, “Very well, I will commence my inquiries immediately.” The maid spoke, “But ensure that this information does not leak. Only 4 people – The princess, I, you and the King know about it.” Abhaya Kumar replied, “Of course. Be assured that no one else will get even a hint of it.”

He immediately went and informed his father King Shrenik. The King was delighted and asked, “How shall we proceed?”.

Scheme devised to abduct Sujyeshtha

Abhaya Kumar said, “I will get a secret tunnel dug from our border right upto the border of Vaishali. You should reach there via that tunnel. I will give the particular date and time to Sujyeshtha. She will be waiting right at the mouth of the tunnel. Immediately take her along and leave without any delay. I will get the digging of the tunnel completed as soon as possible. Do not worry at all. Keep Nagrathik’s 32 loyal and brave sons along with you for safety.”

As per to the plan, the secret tunnel was ready within a few days. Sujyeshtha was informed about the particular day and time and was instructed to be punctual. Delay was dangerous because if her father got even the slightest idea, their plan would be ruined. Sujyeshtha was thrilled and thankful and was now waiting for the D-day.

Responsibility of Parents' in Today's terrible times

How would King Cheda get to know about this secret passage? In today's times, so many parents are in the dark. They have no clue about what is really going on in their children's life. Some are under the wrong notion that their children are obedient and well-behaved. They are confident that they won't take even a single step without their permission. And suddenly they get some unexpected, alarming news that – their children secretly got married, they have run away or they are involved in gambling and have thus lost a lot of money or your daughter has become pregnant, etc.

In reality, without having blind trust, you should secretly keep a watch on where are they going, with whom and what they are doing. What are they watching on T.V.? What kind of information is stored on the P.C. or mobile? You should keep a continuous watch. Today, the youth can obtain everything they wish at the click of a button. So many guys keep nude pictures of girls on their phone. Today's girls keep pregnancy – controlling medicines and instruments. Become a CID agent and check their phone, wallet, cupboard, diary and you will be surprised with what you find. Check their cell-logs and whatsapp chats. Do not have blind faith or you will remain in the dark. Your children may seem well-mannered and obedient but the effects of Moha are strange. God knows when suddenly it will arise! External factors play an important role. In today's times, there is no shortage of such negative factors. Thus, the youth are misguided and you have no clue about their mental state and secret actions.

There is another angle to this situation. Sometimes because of your blind faith and overconfidence on your children, you are under the misconception that they are obeying you and one day, suddenly when some unexpected mishap occurs, do you then start despising this selfish world? Does your attachment and affection decline? Do you still trust and love everyone and every temporary material object? Don't you realise the false, deceptive and impractical nature of this world?

Futility of religious advices given to those blinded by love and attachment.

In the Jain scripture 'Updesh Ratnakara', Munisunderji Maharaj clearly states that those blinded by love and attachment are unsuitable to follow religion and hence you should refrain from giving them religious sermons and not waste unnecessary time trying to make them follow religion. Bhadrabahu Swami also suggests the same in his scripture 'Avashyaha Niryukti'.

Check for yourself –

Haven't you been cheated and misguided in this selfish world? Haven't your plans misfired? Or haven't you faced insults? Hasn't something totally unpredictable and unimaginable even occurred with you? Didn't it incite and strengthen your non-attachment towards this selfish world? Didn't it inculcate hatred and despise towards this world? If not, then are you intelligent or illiterate? Wise or foolish?

Q. Renouncing the world at present seems impossible,

then what is the point of reducing attachment and despising it? Why need non-attachment for staying in this world?

Ans. That means if you are staying in this world, keep your attachment intact. Then, if you receive a setback, will you sit aside and start weeping? Does this situation appeal to you? Instead, if you had reduced your attachment earlier, understood that this material world is not at all worthy of your trust, there is a very small possibility that things are going to work in your favour, even your near and dear ones may betray you – then such setbacks wouldn't bother and deject you. Because these were not worth your trust in the first place.

If one day, my mother ill-treats and tortures the same daughter-in-law whom she had selected and brought into this house with great pomp and show, if suddenly my mother or brother creates unfavourable circumstances for me or my wife, I have to make myself understand that everything works according to *Punya*. No one in this world is worth trusting. There is absolutely nothing to be shocked about. “Do not get angry with your mother or brother and teach yourself and your wife to adjust to the situation”. Thus, being non-attached to worldly affairs is sure to bring peace in life.

How to treat your wife who troubles your mother?

If you are detached from worldly ties, then you will not be blinded by your love for your wife. You will not support her if she disrespects or mistreats your parents. Instead you should tell her –

“Do you like your parents?”

“Yes.”

“Then won’t you feel dejected if your sister-in-law all treats them?”

“Of course, I would”.

“Then, I too, like and respect my parents. Won’t I feel dejected if you trouble them? Won’t this dejection hamper my affection and love towards you?”

In this way, she will surely understand. In case, she doesn’t then you should strictly notify her that she has changed her home after marriage and his parents are now her’s as well. If you do not look after them, but trouble them, then I am not yours. External relations will stay but you will lose your place in my heart.

Inspite of this, if your wife does not understand, then you can warn her. This is possible only if you have not been blinded by her love and your heart is non-attached. Now let me know, isn’t non-attachment necessary to live a smooth and content life?

Q. What is Vairagya (Non-attachment)?

Ans. Vairagya is the absence of blind love, trust and sympathy.

If you do not blindly trust your relatives and friends, material objects and situations, then it will not lead to blind love and attachment. Thus,

- 1) Inappropriate activities occurring due to blind love will come to a halt,
- 2) A stop in inappropriate activities and sins will decrease your faults and vices leading to a consecutive decline in future instances of sorrow.

Death is certain. In spite of knowing this why can't man die with contentment?

Because he harbours blind and intense attachment towards the worldly pleasures and situations he has attained. Now, he can see everything slipping away. He feels he is losing out on all that he has. Then how can he remain at peace? Sorrow, dejection and misery are certain.

Life is in his own hands. Then why can't man live a contented life?

He perceives all that he has acquired to be good, reliable and beneficial and thus gets attached to it but due to his feeble Punya, those favourable objects and circumstances are also subject to change. It depresses him. In this world, change is constant. It is rightly said, "Everything changes but change." Owing to this, the one who is immensely attached to a particular object, person or situation is bound to be dejected.

Instead, if you had remained non-attached and would not have had blind faith on these ever-changing worldly affairs, if you had prepared yourself that favourable circumstances are short-lived and there is no point in trusting and liking

them - then for sure, any small or big change in them wouldn't affect or deject you. While dying, their upcoming absence wouldn't upset you.

Tell me,

You have borrowed someone's dress, jewellery, etc. for temporary use. Now will you feel depressed while returning it to its original owner?

Loss or change in the nature of the object is not the cause of sorrow but the blind trust and attachment towards it, definitely is. Vairagya (non-attachment) checks this attachment and trust. Thus, Vairagya is an effective remedy to eliminate sorrow.

Sulsa was on the highest plane of Samyak Darshan (right perception). If you want Samyak Darshan possessed by Sulsa, you have to create the kind of non-attachment she possessed.

Samyak Darshan cannot exist without Vairagya. Hence, if you desire Samyak Darshan, then develop a feeling of non-attachment, dislike and mistrust towards the material world and the so-called pleasures it offers, be it house or shop, comforts and luxuries, fame and respect, family and friends. You cannot be assured and carefree that all these will always remain yours, be favourable, will not betray and disappoint you. This will ensure mental peace. Look around yourself. Flip through the pages of history. Have these materialistic objects ever given permanent happiness to anyone? Have they proved beneficial all throughout? They have never resulted in anyone's upliftment. In spite of this, our mind keeps pinching us.

Q. Why? Can't money cause your upbringing? Your house, business, family – all works on the support of money. Isn't your temporary body useful? How else would you exercise your worldly duties?

Ans. That's true. But the money benefited your treasury and your family and the body proved useful to the outside world. Where is your spiritual well-being here?

Q. It gave us happiness, too.

Ans. Does that mean all your sorrows are now eliminated? Is there no pain or misery, worry or anxiety now?

Q. That is bound to be there. It is the nature of this ephemeral world. What is there to be scared of?

Ans. But do you have deep faith on this ephemeral world? You feed a dog a biscuit and give him 4 kicks in return. How will the dog react? He will still be affectionate towards you because you gave him the biscuit, right? Because that is the peculiarity of the dog species – in spite of being kicked, if they are given a biscuit, they will over-affectionately lick the person.

Examine yourselves

In spite of being kicked innumerable times by worry, sorrow, fear, dejection, adversity, disrespect in this ephemeral world, you achieve a little, temporary biscuit-like happiness and you shower all your attachment and affection towards it. How will you consider yourselves and your species? That of intelligent humans or ignorant dogs?

Soul – A Slave ?

The reality is such :

Business leads to wealth, wealth benefits your house, the house benefits your body and the body is utilised for worldly activities. But the slave who is doing the slavery in all these situations is your soul. He has to undergo all the worry, fear, disturbance and tension and you still claim to have attained happiness through all these. You consider them a blessing, worthy of your trust and affection. Is this an intelligent act? For how long will you remain a slave of all these?

A worker has to bear the insults and abuses of his employer and work to earn his livelihood. He has no other option but to continue working. Now, will he consider his employer a good man? Will he trust and favour him? No honourable man would do so.

Similarly, a non-attached (Vairagi) soul is an honourable soul living in this ephemeral world. Having no choice, he has to maintain contact with business, money, family, respect and goodwill, body and food. Acquiring happiness from all of these are his weaknesses. He consider the tensions and fears that come along with it to be the abuses from this world – his employer. Thus, he does not get carried away and does not shower them with love and affection. This is self-honour.

Vairagya (Non-attachment) = Self honour.

Self-honour enables him to stay awake. He will not get dominated or cheated. He will try his utmost to eliminate his

weaknesses. He is free from blind faith and hence behaves appropriately. He will not become tense or feel disappointed in situations of betrayal, insults, financial crisis or some dreadful disease.

A Vairagi soul very well understands

“How long the living and non-living objects of this world will favour me is unknown. They are absolutely untrustworthy.”

A truly non-attached soul considers his attachment to be his weakness. Thus, in adverse times, instead of blaming the object, person or situation, he blames his own attachment. It is his attachment towards all these, that is the real cause of his sorrow. His mental peace is undisturbed. His relations with those who seem to be the cause of his sorrow are also unaffected and intact.

Such is the might of Vairagya. It makes a man wise, content, honourable and peaceful by nature. It saves him from disappointments and dejections. The only thing that disappoints him is the loss of precious human moments in worldly attachments. It is his own dependence on this attachment that disturbs him. Hence, his sole aim is to reduce and eventually uproot it.

Sujyeshtha, Chellana And Salsa's 32 Sons

Coming back to where we were

Several times, even parents have no clue whatsoever about their children's acts and deeds.

Sujyeshtha ensured that not even a single person got to know about the plan she had devised with Abhay Kumar. But her younger sister Chellana seemed to have sharp instincts. She asked Sujyeshtha, "Sister! Why do you seem disturbed?"

She replied, "No, I am not disturbed at all. There is absolutely no reason for worry." But Chellana was not convinced. She further asked, "What are you hiding? Won't you tell me? Don't you love me? Can't you confide in me?"

Sujyeshtha had a soft corner for Chellana and hence could not keep herself from revealing the secret plan. Chellana's eyes went wide. She exclaimed, "O my! So many preparations? Good you told me." Not only this, but now Chellana was also shaken to such an extent that even she got ready to secretly run away along with Sujyeshtha. Why did this happen? Do

not forget that both the sisters were daughters of a great Shravaka and virtuous Shravikas themselves. They had faith in Lord Mahavira and his preachings. If one commits a mistake and decides to marry a non-Jain, shouldn't the other stop her? Should she instead decide to jump into the same well? They might have had such a conversation.

Sujyeshtha and Chellana's Conversation

Chellana asked, "But do you realise that King Shrenik is not a Jain?"

Sujyeshtha replied, "What is the use if he is a Jain but not brave? I agree that King Shrenik is not a Jain but he is brave and courageous. Having him as our husband will add to our beauty."

Chellana then asked, "But how will you fulfil your religious duties by marrying a non-Jain?"

Sujyeshtha confidently replied, "Why? What's the problem?"

"Arre, he is a man, that too a great king! That means that we have to stay under his dominance which may also lead to losing out on our religion."

Sujyeshtha answered, "Don't be crazy! The one who has taken such great pains to get the tunnel dug, the one who dared to make our valiant father his opponent - imagine his attraction towards us! Will he dominate over us or worship us? Haven't you seen the acts of men who are attracted by women? One sweet word or facial expression can captivate them and they agree to act as they are commanded."

“Attractive women have the power to make men dance on their fingertips just as a monkey dances according to the will of his keeper. Then can't we make our husband follow our religion? An attractive woman engrosses her husband in sensual pleasures, then can't a religious woman make her husband religious?”

Chellana replied, “What if he possesses deep Mithyatva Mohaniya Karma which obstructs him from understanding and accepting religion?”

Sujyeshtha says, “So what? What is our loss? We should be contented following our religion. If religion is secure within us, then why worry about others?”

“Also, as I mentioned earlier, he is already attracted to our beauty and after that when he sees our virtues and intelligence, our love and respect towards him, won't his attraction increase? Our worthiness, virtues and affection towards him have the capacity to captivate him, so much so that he will not only refrain from obstructing our religious activities but also create favourable circumstances to follow religion. Wait and watch!”

“Also, many times it is seen that the reason behind the husband creating obstacles in religion is the inappropriate conduct of those exercising religion. Hence, it is the responsibility of all religious people to first increase their worthiness, and stay away from improper speech and conduct. They should maintain a calm posture, calm nature and ensure complete respect and amity towards everyone.”

Chellana said, “In spite of this, pride or Mithyatva can make the opponent throw stones in the path of religion. Isn’t that possible?”

Sujyeshtha, still confident and unshaken replied, “It is very much possible. But I strongly believe that it is only the weak who do not exercise religion themselves nor let others do so. But King Shrenik is strong and valiant. Marrying such a person may possibly glorify our religion.”

Chellana is now ready

That’s it! Sujyeshtha was successful in convincing Chellana. Even she was attracted towards King Shrenik. Added to it, elder sister Sujyeshtha’s love and affection. Chellana said, “Sister! Even I will come along with you. Your husband will be my husband, too.”

Sujyeshtha said, “Are you sure? Think before you speak.”

Chellana replied, “Of course, I am. I know it is not a game.”

Sujyeshtha gladly answered, “Very well. The more, the merrier. Exercising religion will become easier. Adverse times will also seem easier.”

Thus, now even Chellana was ready. On the particular day and time, both of them went and stood on the decided spot. Now, see how destiny changes the game! What role does destiny play here for Sujyeshtha as well as Salsa’s 32 sons?

Both of them were standing on the outskirts of the city at the

decided spot. Shrenik had not yet arrived and suddenly Sujyeshtha remembered her jewellery box. She told Chellana, “Sister! You wait here, I will fetch my jewellery box in a jiffy and be right back. The box is ready lying outside. I won’t take long. Just in case King Shrenik arrives, stop him for a moment. Tell him to wait till I come.” Saying so, she left.

Greed – The destroyer

At such a crucial time, almost a matter of life and death, she felt like going and fetching her jewellery box. Innocent and ignorant, she didn’t realise that if she receive the great honour of becoming the main queen of the Emperor of Magadh, King Shrenik, he would cover her from head to toe with precious ornaments. Would her little jewellery box matter then?

Worldly creatures also commit the same mistake. They exercise some religious activity and then demand some meagre returns. Innocent and ignorant, they do not realize that if those religious activities are able to give you the pleasures of paradise and ultimately heaven, won’t they give you such trivial fruits and fame? Then why ask for it? But our ignorance and greed plays a role here.

Destiny in action

The same occurred with Sujyeshtha. Inspired by ignorance and greed, she went back to fetch the little jewellery box. The result? Loss of the prestigious position of the queen of Magadha. This loss also eventually proved beneficial but at

that point of time she incurred a great loss for a small so-called profit.

As soon as she left, King Shrenik arrived. He saw Chellana, equally beautiful and charming, mistook her for Sujyeshtha and took her along in his chariot. Without a moment's delay, he turned his chariot around and out of fear of King Cheda, immediately started his return journey. All this happened so quickly that Chellana did not even get a chance to speak and ask King Shrenik to wait. The horses pulled the chariot back at lightning speed.

The secret tunnel was wide enough for two chariots to run. Right behind King Shrenik's chariot was the chariot of Salsa's 32 sons who had come along for the king's security. The noise of the horses galloping at full speed was so loud and deafening that Chellana's little voice was impossible to hear. Imagine a musical band playing right in front of you. Now can you hear what the person standing next to you is saying even if he speaks in your ear? The same was the case here. Chellana's words went unspoken and unheard. Destiny did not give her the chance.

Imagine the magnitude of the loss incurred by Sujyeshtha resulting from the greed of the small jewellery box! Position of the Queen of Magadha, comforts and luxuries, maids and workers, fame and reputation – compare it with that little jewellery box! Now wouldn't you consider Sujyeshtha a fool?

In the same way, don't you think that the one who is

completely attached to and engrossed in wealth, women, business and family at the cost of religion is losing out on the great benefits of salvation i.e. external bliss? Just as the position of the Queen of Magadha was filled with abundant wealth and luxuries, food and frolic, fame and respect, similarly this path is also complete with different acts – that of charity, celibacy, penance, compassion and devotion towards God and Guru which can give you progressive rebirths and happiness.

But,

how will religion make its foray into the lives of those enveloped in the attachment of such insignificant objects? How will it enable better rebirths and avoid the sinful births of hell and animals?

Can you understand ?

In the greed of wealth you do business transactions at night giving up on the great religious act of prohibition of having food at night.

Due to your laziness and sleep you miss out on the precious time for the devotion of God and thus lose out on the Punyanubandhi Punya that you could have earned.

Not being able to resist your temptation, you savour all that you feel like without considering if it is edible or not and thus lose the chance to forsake the inedible.

Due to the attachment of wealth, you forget to spend it in the devotion of the Almighty and other religious fields thereby letting go of a golden opportunity.

Sinking deep in the sea of sensual pleasures, you forget the importance and marvels of the vow of celibacy.

Engrossed in self-interests, you keep merely witnessing the miseries of your brother missing out on the great religion of benevolence.

While satisfying the unnecessary demands of your wife, you skip the service of your parents.

Inspired by the attachment towards fickle wealth, you cheat and betray customers and thus miss out on the chance to exercise justice and fairness.

Can you relate to all this?

Compare the loss and profits- which side is heavier?

Sujyeshtha returned to learn that the chariot has already moved ahead. Now that King Shrenik took only Chellana along with him, what would she tell her father if he asked her whereabouts? Perhaps because of this fear or the feeling of betrayal by King Shrenik or anger on her sister Chellana – whatever the reason, she started screaming at the top of her voice. At that very moment, may be she thought that King Shrenik forcefully took her sister Chellana away with him, or may be the thought of separation from her sister was too painful. All of these feelings may have found expression in her terrified screams, “Run! Run! Look, someone has abducted Chellana!”

Hearing her ear-piercing screams, not only the soldiers but

King Cheda himself came running. He was just about to enter the tunnel when his skilful archer stopped him saying, “O noble King! Wait let me go.” He immediately started his chariot. When he sensed someone nearby, he released his arrow.

Death of Salsa’s 32 sons

His arrow found its mark. Salsa’s son, who was sitting in the last chariot got injured and died. Along with him the remaining 31 sons too fell on the ground like dead bodies. Before the archer could cross all the 31 chariots and reach Shrenik’s Chariot, King Shrenik had already reached the safety of his territory. King Cheda’s archer turned back.

Now Shrenik told Chellana,

“Sujoyshtha! Do not fear. We are now within our territory. No one can harm us.”

Finally getting a chance, Chellana said, “I am not Sujoyshtha but her younger sister Chellana”, and narrated the entire incident. “Poor Sujoyshtha is left there!”

Shrenik replied, “Whatever happened, happened. For me you yourself are Sujoyshtha!

Saying so, he married Chellana and made her the main queen.

Independence and Interdependence among Punya Karma (Actions), Purushartha (Efforts) and Bhavitavyata (Destiny)

	Punya	Puru- shartha	
Chellana	✓	✓	She got her desired husband as well as the position of Queen.
Sujyeshtha	x	✓	She did not attain the desired results.
Mayanasundari	✓	✓	She got Shripal as her husband though in the form of a leper.
Surasundari	x	✓	She did not get her desired husband.

Now let's take a glance at Bhavitavyata's role.

King Shrenik was attracted towards Sujyeshtha, Sujyeshtha shared the plan with Chellana and in this situation Chellana's efforts and Punya both became favourable. Now who is responsible for the rise of such a situation? 'Destiny'.

An individual's efforts are independent. It is possible for Chellana to do efforts according to her own will. Similarly, Punya is also independent. It is in store from earlier times. In its absence, you cannot attain its fruits. In spite of this, it is destiny which is responsible for the creation of those circumstances which enable Punya and Purushartha to work.

Sujyeshtha had almost achieved her target when she remembered her jewellery box and out of ignorance and innocence ran to fetch it. Meanwhile, Shrenik came and took Chellana away. This denotes that Sujyeshtha's Antraya Karma was in action. Right before it came into action, she made the mistake of going to fetch the box. This is destiny's play.

Similarly, Salsa's 32 sons had to face fatal calamities due to their own inauspicious Ashata karma in force. But the specific circumstances – that Sujyeshtha created havoc and as a result the rescue – archer's arrow hit them - who created such a situation? Destiny!

Thus, the efforts and punya of all 3 of them (Sujyeshtha, Chellana and Salsa's 32 sons) are independent, not created or affected by destiny. Destiny was only responsible for the creation of those particular situations; they then worked independently. Keep in mind.

Destiny does not create karma's fruits or efforts but is responsible for the origin of those specific circumstances wherein the soul bears the fruits of his past karmas, or puts in negative or positive efforts according to his will.

Destiny is ineffective

- 1) According to the great scripture Tatvartha – Mithyatva (ignorance), Avirati (uncontrolled sinful acts), Kashaya (passion or excitement), Yoga (activities of mind, body and speech) and Pramada (indolence) are the cause of karmic bondage.
- 2) According to Karmagrantha, including Pramada in the above four, Mithyatva, Avirati, Kashaya and Yoga are stated as the causes of karmic bondage. But nowhere have they said that karmic bondage is dependent on destiny or that destiny is one of the factors responsible for the bondage or fruition of karmas.
- 3) As per the scripture Karma Prakriti, the pure and impure mental propensities are responsible for the bondage and progressive change in the nature and intensity of karmas.
- 4) Shree Pannavana Sootra, one of the 45 Agamas, states that karma shows its effect i.e. fructifies in two ways:-
 - i) Due to some cause,
 - ii) Independently without any cause.
- i) Your specific task or activity causes the karma to show its effects. e.g. You consume too many sweets and thus cause the Ashata Vedaniya karma comes into force to trouble you and cause stomach pain. If you would not have over-eaten, then in the absence of the cause the

pain causing Ashata karma would also not have shown its fruits.

- ii) The second type of karmas do not require any cause to come into action and show their fruits. e.g. in spite of living a healthy life, sometimes you are prey to some dreadful disease or at times a reputed man has to face sudden dishonour. In his last birth, Lord Mahavira had to bear the consequences of the Neech Gotrakarma. This karma did not require any cause to come into action. Lord Mahavira had to stay in a Brahmin's Wife - Devananda's womb. Why? Not because of his destiny but because of the previous inauspicious karmas.

Thus, the factors like Mithatva, etc. stated earlier cause karmic bondage and the effect of previous karmas, is responsible for the various results we get. Here, destiny is not held responsible. Without understanding this, isn't it foolishness to consider destiny as the whole and sole reason?

**Isn't destiny responsible for the various emotions of
love and hatred that we undergo?**

Not destiny but the inappropriate scenes and songs, memories and movies, thoughts and words, food and fashion, are the cause of such varied feelings. Thus stop exercising and getting involved in the above activities and then mark the drastic reduction in your level of attachment, hatred, etc.

Instead, it is my destiny that I succumb to blind love, hatred, lust, anger, greed, etc.! Is this ignorance or something else?

“Whatever is destined, will take place.”

With this thought we continue exercising the above sinful activities leading to attachment, hatred and other negative emotions which result in the bondage of Mohaniya karma. This karma in turn will increase our negative emotions; thus it's a vicious cycle! Our cycle of birth and death is also bound to expand. Look for yourself – what did you gain in relying completely on destiny? Instead, had you realised the nature of karmas – both dependent on specific causes as well as those that are independent - and thus wisely given them up and decreased exercising the negative causes, then you would have been saved from these negative emotions of attachments, hatred, etc.

Just as destiny does not play a role in determining the bondage or results of our karmas, similarly it does not have any effect on our positive or negative efforts (i.e. Purushartha).

How can you say so?

Because our scriptures emphasize putting forth positive efforts and stopping negative efforts. If destiny was responsible for these specific efforts then Almighty's preachings would prove to be futile. The soul's independence of being able to forsake the wrong path and striving to walk on the right path would be at stake. If destiny is the ultimate doer, then what is the need of scriptures? Why did Almighty Arihanta establish the Shasana? Why think about the religious activities that we ought to do?

Q. Scriptures are a necessity because they show us the method to channelize our efforts in the right direction.

Ans. But the scriptures show innumerable methods ranging from the lowest to the highest level. Which method will you follow? Because you have no idea as to what level of efforts destiny will provide. Without that knowledge, how can you fix your method?

Q. But can't you estimate your capacity and thus determine the level of efforts you can take and accordingly select the appropriate measures to exercise those efforts from the scriptures?

Ans. At the end you have to keep aside destiny and shift your focus on your capacity, right? Hence, you have to agree that if you leave everything entirely on destiny, the scriptures i.e. His preachings would become futile. Because scriptures constantly tell you to put forth right efforts without concealing your capacities. To summarise.

- i) For our task we can estimate our capacity but not destiny.
- ii) We are independent in putting forth efforts according to our capacity, but not controlled by destiny.

Infinite Tirthankaras established the Shasana with this very purpose, so that we do not rely on destiny but stop our wrong efforts and accelerate the right ones. Destiny does not create our wrong or right efforts. They are created due to

one's knowledge, desires and interests. Thus, you can put in the right efforts if you are determined to do so. And this is the real success of this valuable human birth. Leave everything to destiny and you are bound to fail.

What is destiny's role?

Q. Then doesn't destiny do anything?

Ans. It does. It is responsible for the creation of certain specific circumstances. Owing to Punya, you get birth in a good family but who will determine the particular parents to whom you are born? Destiny. Similarly, King Shrenik possessed the Punya of attaining a noble queen; be it Sujyeshtha or Chellana, it's equal. But he had strived for Sujyeshtha and he attained Chellana; this is again destiny's role.

Similarly, Chellana also possessed the Punya of obtaining a virtuous husband which would have fructified on the attainment of some other noble man, too. But in spite of Sujyeshtha's efforts, Chellana was blessed with King Shrenik as her husband due to the effect of the mighty destiny.

Also, Sulsa's 32 sons had the Punya to earn a good living which could be acquired from anywhere but it was destiny which arranged for them to be employed at Shrenik's palace. They happened to go along to defend Shrenik while collecting Sujyeshtha, and their inauspicious Ashata Karmas caused their death. Such a situation was also an outcome of destiny.

Now, what did Sujyeshtha do?

Inspite of all her preparations Sujyeshtha was left at home and could not marry King Shrenik. What was her mental state now? Did she wish to marry someone else? No, she was saturated and her desire for marriage and sensual pleasures died away. Why so? Seeing Shrenik's picture, she was attracted towards him and had created this entire secret plan. Suddenly, where did the Mohaniya karma infatuation go? Vairagya (a strong feeling of non-attachment) suppressed it. Can you suppress karma or infatuation? Yes, by strengthening your non-attachment you surely can.

Vairagya (Non-attachment)

Strive towards increasing your non-attachment. Put forth your efforts in the right direction. Then what is the power of Mohaniya karma and infatuation? How can you blame it? The absence of your efforts in increasing non-attachment is solely to blame.

Infinite souls crushed their karmas and infatuation by channelizing all their efforts towards strengthening and internalizing non-attachment. Eventually they renounced the world, accepted celibacy and attained salvation. Why can't you do so?

Your soul also has infinite power. Find it and draw upon. Utilize it to intensify your non-attachment.

Futility of religious activities devoid of non-attachment.

You need to understand

Without attempting to increase Vairagya, all the activities of donation, celibacy, penance are sure to invite unwanted desires.

For example, you may think, “May I get wealth, fame and goodwill in return for my donations.”

“Let me follow celibacy today – It will ensure the availability of sensual pleasures till my last breath.” “Why not fast and stay a little hungry if it showers me with praises?”

What did you attain from such activities and thoughts? Mere increase in attractions and attachments leading to an increase in your cycle of birth and death.

Thus, strengthening your Vairagya is the foundation.

Q. That means in the absence of Vairagya, should you not undertake the above activities?

Ans. Oh no! That is actually what you ought to do but you should strive towards transforming it into an endeavour to increase your Vairagya. You should carry out charity with the intention of decreasing your attachment towards wealth. Observe celibacy with an aim of breaking the attraction of sensual pleasures. Follow fasts with the goal of resisting the temptation of taste and craving for food.

Isn't it possible? Repeatedly make attempts in this direction and you will surely overcome its attachments – be it wealth, fame or food.

Ways to increase your Vairagya

(non-attachment towards worldly objects)

- 1) Increase your acts of charity.

- 2) Increase your devotion towards the Jinas by their worship, reverence, meditation, and pilgrimages. Increase your dedication towards saints by serving and heartily appreciating them and by dutifully listening to their discourses. Why do all this? So that this world seems worthless and all its temporary pleasures seem futile.
- 3) The third solution – You come in contact with various people, objects and situations in the course of day-to-day affairs. Do not get immediately overwhelmed if they seem favourable and do not get depressed if they are not. Consider them from the spiritual point of view – are they beneficial to the soul or not?
 - i) Don't they cause intense attachment and hatred, anger, greed, lust, pride and ego?
 - ii) Aren't those pleasures built on a foundation of violence towards innumerable small and big living creatures? Won't they cause violence in future, too?
 - iii) Aren't they responsible for enmity amidst family and friends?
 - iv) Don't they lead to lies, cheating, fraud and other illegal activities?
 - v) So wretched is their nature that they make us forget all religious activities, acts of benevolence and charity, generosity, God, Guru and Sangha. They spoil our

rebirths and throw us in the dungeons of hell. Continuously contemplating on all these points is also an endeavour to intensify your non-attachment.

- 4) Another effort in this direction includes reading our scriptures and the motivational preachings of the Jinas.

Do you really feel the urge to increase your non-attachment? Does the material world seem worthless to you? Do you want to increase your contempt towards it? Then constantly exercise the above 4 remedies. This is the real effort to increase your Vairagya and thus to expand the unlimited power of the soul. Constantly strengthen your efforts, the real non-attachment will show its colours and the soul will thus become glorious.

Without Vairagya, the soul has no glory.

Without this glory, what is the point of renunciation, penance or charity? With the above four factors in mind, Sujyeshtha started reflecting on the current situation; what was in her soul's benefit and what was not. Her mind and thoughts were deeply influenced by the preaching of the Jinas. As if these preachings were telling her –

What do the preachings of the Jinas tell Sujyeshtha ?

O noble lady! Do not get misguided. You saw the nature of these relations, right? Shrenik's love? Chellana's affection? How much did your assumption work? Didn't your trust shatter and break like pieces of glass? All was set and a mere delay of a few seconds changed the game! How can you trust time?

O intelligent one! Now once again do you want to marry another man and invite the chance of your love and trust being broken? You want to be cheated by time? The one I marry will stay under my command – are you still under this impression? Do you have any idea of the hidden Antraya Karmas that you possess? Are you confident that they will not come into action? What will be your mental state if such a situation re-occurs?

O Virtuous soul! In spite of all this if you still feel that you must marry to satisfy your desires, then won't you be troubled by the thought that, as a member of a noble family and having mentally accepted one man as your soulmate, you will now be expected to replace him? Think about Rajimati's act when Lord Neminath returned without marrying her. Did she marry another man? Then, if you marry someone else, won't this be a blot on your nobility?

Q. Then what about lust and the unfulfilled desires? How do satisfy them?

Ans. O wise lady! Can't you control and eventually stop your desires? Yes, you can. Innumerable great women have done so in the past. Which worldly creatures are not enveloped by the karmas and impressions of lust? Everyone is under its control. Now if you feel that they cannot be suppressed and hence their effects have to be necessarily borne, then while doing so, you will lead to rise of new such karmas. Again they have to be borne and so on. It is a never ending cycle.

But this is not so. Engaging your mind in pure thoughts and reflections and sinking deep into the study of scriptures is a sure shot way to expel these karmas and impressions of lust.

Infinite souls have successfully done so, observed celibacy and strict penance and thus paved their way to salvation.

Supporting and nourishing lust is dangerous.

O bearer of Samyagdarshan! Inspired by lust, indulgence in sexual pleasures is dangerous because,

- 1) If by chance you lose focus and get deeply involved in those pleasures, the increase in passion is sure to bind karmas capable of sending you to hell. Imagine the torment and torture inflicted upon you in hell for innumerable years at a stretch! While indulging in such pleasures, is there any guarantee that we will not lose control over ourselves? Why dig our own grave?
- 2) In addition to the binding of karmas, indulging in these momentary pleasures leave long-lasting impressions on the soul, which become difficult to wipe out. In today's circumstances, when we have got the supreme shelter of God, Guru and Religion, can't we overcome these temptations? If not today, in which birth will we be able to do so? With time, these impressions will deepen. Then, will overcoming them become easier or more difficult?
- 3) The other major threat in strengthening lust is that

while surrendering yourself to your husband, you lose out on the golden chance to let God be the king of your heart in this human birth. Motivated by lust since time immemorial, you have adored the one who has satisfied your desires. Let alone God ruling your heart completely, have you even considered Him as being equal to your husband?

4) While succumbing to sexual pleasures, another major loss is the sidetracking of other important goals and worthwhile tasks to be accomplished in this precious birth, for example exercising religion, overcoming temptations, observing celibacy and following an appropriate code of conduct eventually resulting in spiritual progress.

5) O great one! Another risk on the road of lust is that-

Dependence on lust neither increases your physical power nor your spiritual power, instead it decreases both. The increase in temptations and unfulfillment of these desires are sure to disturb your mental peace.

O intelligent woman! Why undertake such risks? Instead of indulging in such momentary pleasures why not scale unexplored heights of Vitaragta and thus make this valuable birth fruitful?

Sujyeshtha decided to renounce the world

Why so?

- 1) The above preachings of the Arihantas was well understood by her.
- 2) The real nature of this selfish world was right before her eyes.
- 3) The attractions and infatuations of the world seemed hazardous to her spiritual health. Thus, her mind was saturated with this material world. She endeavoured to boost her non-attachment through her spiritual realizations. Courageously and confidently, she renounced this material world, accepted the 5 great vows and become a great Jain nun (Sadhvi).

Like Sujyeshtha if you develop a religious outlook

- 1) It proves to be a great blessings,
- 2) It ensures the soul's progress. It teaches you to take joy as well as sorrow in your stride and to convert each and every occasion to be a stepping stone to success.

This is clearly apparent from Sujyeshtha's life. She lost her beloved King Shrenik who had come right up to her door due to her small folly. An occasion of great sorrow and dejection had arisen. But contemplating on the real nature of this material world and the main objective of this valuable human birth, she converted this unfortunate event into an occasion for strengthening her non-attachment.

Q. But you cannot compare her with us. She lived in the 4th Ara – in the powerful presence of Lord Mahavira. It was

easy for her to develop such a positive religious outlook. How can we do so?

Ans. Your arguments are baseless because she belonged to this very Bharat Kshetra and lived in the end of the 4th Ara – close to the 5th Ara that we are living in. We may not be in the presence of Lord Mahavira, but we are living in His Shasan (reign). So if innumerable souls can attain spiritual welfare with the support of this glorious Shasana, why can't we?

Due to our inefficiency or incapability it is possible that we cannot completely forsake this world like Sujyeshtha but –

- i) Can't we give up on unnecessary attractions, blind attachment for wealth and its consumption and the fraud and illegal activities connected to it? Can't we forsake consumption of these things termed inedible such as movies and theatres, pubs and discos and other such sinful activities?
- ii) Can't we increase our devotion and dedication towards God and Guru and divert our maximum possible resources – time, money and energy-in obeying and dutifully following the Almighty's orders?

Nagrathik And Salsa's Reactions

Nagrathik's sorrow was boundless. All his beloved 32 sons died in one stroke. His intense desire to acquire a son and the extreme joy on the fulfilment of this desire were completely shattered. Once you lose someone to death you are surely not going to get him back.

Death of a beloved one is sure to bring down your pride, joy and excitement.

I am the father of such virtuous and noble sons.

I am the husband of such a beautiful and compliant wife.

I am the wife of a millionaire.

How long does this pride exist? Only till they are alive. What happens after their death? You are constantly pleased about the favourable situation you have acquired. You get so carried away by this joy that God, Guru and Religion are forgotten. Your spiritual progress is also hampered. But now what is your state on the death of these beloved ones?

The fire of sorrow burns in the same mind which was once filled with pride and overflowing with joy. Nagrathik's sorrow was uncontrollable. Have you understood the message to be learnt? You acquired material pleasures owing to your Punya but you have no right to be proud or over-joyous about it. Doing so is like committing an offence against karma. And if karma retaliates, do not be surprised.

Arre! You acquired something because of your Punya. Setting aside pride and joy, even considering its utility to be your right is also an offence.

Enjoying the benefits of your Punya – Right or Offence?

Q. Why is it an offence? You have derived it due to your Punya. It is your right to use it.

Ans. If you utilise it considering it to be your right, then your attachment and fondness for it is bound to be intense. It is sure to invite unwanted anger and greed, increase your sinful activities and expel you from the noble path preached by the Arihantas. It will negatively influence your mind. Now, tell me isn't it an offence to consider its usage to be your right?

Looking at the outcome –

Punya has given you the chance to earn wealth and enjoy the desired pleasures. You consider it to be your right and hence under its pretext carry out injustice and illegal activities, dominate over others and indulge in sensual pleasures without any hesitation.

Instead, inspite of attaining all this due to Punya, if you wouldn't have considered its usage your right, then you would think that –

- 1) Though, I can acquire wealth due to Punya, it does not imply that I go on incessantly acquiring more and more.
- 2) I will never earn money by wrong means and by suppressing my workers or cheating my customers.
- 3) I will not earn more than my requirement.

If you consider it an offence then such thoughts will save you from finding yourself in worse conditions.

It is truly said that every action has an equally opposite reaction. Here too Nagrathik's grief is tremendous, similar to the extent of his prior happiness. He mourns relentlessly, "O God! What did you do? You stole away all my gems at one stroke! Why did you keep me alive to see such a day? You should have called me before that. What should I do?" His mournful cries made others also weep. Even Salsa was moved by her sons' death and her husband's grief. She, too, couldn't control her tears.

Since attachment exists, the sorrow experienced as a result of its loss is obvious. Now who can eliminate this sorrow?

People will say only this, "Brother! You cannot overrule or change what is written in your destiny. Thus, calm down." But tell me, were these words consoling enough to pacify

him? If this was the case, why did destiny give him sons in the first place? The reaction to all those who gave such advice would be, “Let something like this happen to your family and then tell me if you blame your fate at that time. It is easy to talk. Put yourself in my shoes and then think. They died once but it seems that we are dying each minute.”

How will Salsa & Nagrathik eliminate their sorrow?

Abhay Kumar’s amazing consolation : Death is natural—

Seeing Nagrathik and Salsa’s sorrow, Abhay Kumar came to their house to console them. He said –

O honourable one! In spite of living in this material world, you have undeterred faith in the principles of Jainism. Sinking in this deep sea of sorrow does not suit you. The principles of Jainism teach you that this world is temporary like the rainbow, an elephant’s ears or the changing colours of the evening sky. Just as feathers get blown away by the wind, this life, too, is getting carried away by the winds of time. Life is momentary like the waves of the ocean and the lightning in the sky.

O fortunate one! Do not forget that death is natural and birth is unnatural. Life is an unnatural object which cages the external, formless soul in this body. Death is that natural saviour which frees the soul from the clutches of life. Why mourn over death? It is quite possible that they may have attained a better birth than this. Then tell me, is there any room for grief? No one in this mortal world – be it horses,

elephant and chariots or family and friends, wealth and business or workers and servants, can save you from the clutches of death.

Abhaykumar's consolation was different from that given by other people. He explained to them that since you have faith in the teachings of the Jinas, sorrow does not suit you. Because according to Jainism—

“All situations are temporary.” Nothing is going to last till eternity. Hence, as soon as an adverse situation arises, identify its temporary nature. Tell yourself right from the beginning that it is not going to last forever. Hence, its separation will not sadden you. Does the disappearance of the rainbow, the beautiful evening sky, dewdrops or the waves of the ocean disappoint you? Why? Because even while admiring their beauty you are aware of their momentary nature. Thus all situations are short-lived be it union or separation. Being well-versed with the principles of Jainism, why does this separation deject you? If you feel so, it is a blot on your faith in the preachings of the Jinas.

The second point that Abhaykumar emphasized was – for the external soul, birth is not an enhancement or an ornament. Instead it is a deterioration, a stain. This soul is originally bodiless and formless. Birth creates the bondage of this body and traps it. Death frees it from it and hence restores its original nature.

We can prove that death is the soul's nature in another way, too. It is not necessary that the one who dies has to take birth

again. But the one who takes birth has to necessarily die. It is natural and obvious. Being a staunch follower of Jainism, why do humans fear this bitter reality of life – “death”?

Listening to Abhaykumar’s wise words, Salsa – a humble devotee of Lord Mahavira and a loyal follower of His words immediately became alert. “I have faith in Lord Mahavira’s preachings. How can I mourn over this loss? Death is natural and certain. Instead of crying over spilt milk, why don’t I sit and appreciate my past good deeds? While grieving over what is lost, people generally lose out on the chance to appreciate their good deeds. There is absolutely nothing to achieve by mourning instead, there is the fear of losing our mental peace.

She addressed Abhaykumar,

“You are absolutely right. I will try my level best to abide by your words and advice. You have done me a great favour.” Abhaykumar was relieved up on hearing Salsa’s words and took their leave. Eventually Nagrathik’s sorrow also lessened after Salsa’s repeated attempts. He remembered Salsa’s arguments when his desire for a son was intense. “Who knows how the son will be? Do you have any assurances that he will stay with you lifelong?” Thus, even he consoled and pacified his mind.

One deduction you can make is that Abhaykumar possessed high I.Q. and hence he could have used logic and practical arguments to soothe Nagrathik. But he did not do so. In spite of his wit and intelligence, he took the refuge of

Arihanta's teachings to pacify Nagrathik, just like a little child seeks shelter in his mother's words.

Why such dependence inspite of possessing such immense knowledge himself? Because he was well aware that his intelligence was not even a mere droplet in comparison to the vast ocean of knowledge possessed by the Jinas.

“Jineshwar Lord's teachings are my ultimate refuge.” – This thought was a source of comfort for Salsa as well. Losing 32 beloved sons in a single instant, she sought the shelter of Jineshwara's teachings to ease her sorrow. The respect, faith and significance of “Jainism” in both Salsa and Abhaykumar's hearts denoted a glowing religious outlook.

Considering oneself to be nothing in front of Jineshwara Lords, considering one's knowledge to be insignificant in comparison to Lord's teachings is the true religious outlook.

You need firm determination to stop the arrogance of the vast knowledge possessed by you. Succumbing to the passions of anger, pride, avarice and greed is a trait of the weak and vulnerable. Strength and determination lies in stopping, suppressing and overcoming them. That is possible only by seeking refuge of the Jina's teachings. And doing so is a sign of faith and power combined with humility and modesty.

How does Lord's refuge pacify our passions?

Think about it -

- 1) Lord Mahavira had to tolerate such unbearable problems and he was still unmoved. My difficulties are

nothing in comparison. Then why must I get excited or angry?

- 2) He is a bearer of Eternal knowledge, superiority and respect. In front of Him does my knowledge and power hold any importance? What should I be proud of?
- 3) Lord's knowledge, power, splendour, prestige – all was incredible and incomparable. In spite of it, He was extremely humble and modest. How much do I have? In comparison, am I in any position to flaunt and show off?
- 4) Lord has innumerable powerful celestial beings in his service, 24x7 but he doesn't wish to obtain anything from them. Do I have even a single celestial being in my service? What luxuries am I hoping to gain? What is the point of being greedy?

With this understanding, it is possible to suppress your passions by seeking refuge of the Jinas and their preachings. Salsa possessed that kind of understanding as well as the determination to implement it. What is determination? That which ensures patience and composure during problems, eliminates fear and anxiety and prevents us from getting carried away in the opposite flow.

Not succumbing to attractions and attachments, passions and temptations is determination.

It is not an easy task to not let your mind become sad during

the loss of a lakh of rupees or not let it become over-joyous when you unexpectedly earn a lakh of rupees, be fearless when you encounter a thief or vogue. But for the one who has sought the shelter of the Arihantas, it is an easy task.

Sulsa considered the Arihantas to be her only shelter. Thus, she was fearless and determined. During the Devta's test, her religious disposition was unmoved even after the great blow of the death of her 32 sons. She regained her composure on hearing Abhaykumar's words.

Now, let's see how she successfully passed Ambad Parivrajak's examination because of her glorious religious outlook. Earlier, Ambad Parivrajak was a Sanyasi (a non-Jain sage) but influenced by Lord Mahavira's teachings, he had attained Samyaktva and had become a Shravaka.

Lord Mahavira's Message

Lord Mahavira was residing in the city of Champa. Visiting various pilgrim places like Shatrunjay, etc. with his magical powers, Ambad landed in the city of Champa, bowed down at the feet of Lord Mahavira and asked Him, "Lord! I am going to Rajgrihi. Do you have any message to deliver?"

Lord of the 3 worlds, 24th Tirthankar, Lord Mahavira said, "In Rajgrihi resides a Shravika by the name Salsa. Tell her 'Dharma labha' from my side. Ask her about her religious activities."

Ambad was taken aback. In this huge city of Rajgrihi did Lord find only Salsa's soul worthy of remembrance? Why did he send a message only to her? Where was a common household woman living in this violent and sinful world and where Lord Mahavira – worshipped by the Indras and head of the Ganadharas. However, as ridiculous as it may seem, can we question omniscient Lord Mahavira? Why only her? Why no one else? What was so special in her? Is Lord answerable to us? No, He is Omniscient and devoid of any

passions of love and hatred. Above all, He is our Lord. His order cannot be questioned.

With his faith undeterred, Ambad folded his hands and humbly accepted the order. He came to Rajgrihi at Salsa's doorstep. No sooner did he appear in Salsa's sight than she turned her face away. Why did she do so? Ambad was in the clothes of a hermit and hence she feared that the mere glimpse of a Kuguru (unsuitable mentor) would contaminate her Samyaktva – her faith and belief.

What is Samyaktva and why will it get contaminated?

Samyaktva means undeterred faith and respect for the right God, Guru and religion, **strong faith** that they are your only saviour and protector in this selfish world. **Boundless respect** – that no one except them are worth entertaining and respecting. **Overflowing affection** – so much so that even during the course of routine activities, their memory and beauty envelop your mind. They are the centre of our attention and affection at all times. Thus, a soul possessing pure Samyaktva is continuously involved in the thoughts and sight of his beloved God-Guru and Religion.

Q. Salsa thus avoided looking at the Sanyasi. But can the mere sight of the Sanyasi contaminate your Samyaktva?

Ans. Yes, there is a very strong possibility that because of your humble and modest nature, you feel like respecting the virtues of the Sanyasi and if this increases, it is bound to affect your faith in the God-Guru and religion and thus threatens your Samyaktva.

Q. But why is maintaining Samyaktva so important?

Ans. Because Samyaktva determines the true worth of a person. External wealth, huge kingdoms, celestial airplanes, beautiful celestial goddesses, fame and honour does not determine your soul's worth. Neither does a beautiful and intelligent body determine its worth, because it is incapable of providing mental peace and relief during diseases, accidents or even death. It is only Samyaktva combined with non-attachment that is the shelter and saviour. Without it, be it huge donations or strict penance, celibacy or a strict code of conduct – nothing is capable of providing peace and relief during illness or adversities. Thus, even the religious activities exercised in the absence of Samyaktva are worthless.

Being well aware of all this, Sulsa was 100% cautious to safeguard her soul's Samyaktva. Hence, let alone worshipping, she did not even indulge in the sight of non-Jain sages and their festivals. Thus, Sulsa turned her sight from the sage to another direction.

Ambad in a Jain Saint's attire

Now, to test Sulsa, Ambad put on the attire of a Jain saint and hence Sulsa readily greeted him. But as soon as he made inappropriate demands, Sulsa identified him as a fake or corrupt sage and immediately returned without giving alms. She accused him, "Are you a saint or a cheat? Can you make such a demand? You shouldn't even have such a desire, leave alone demand. Why are you defaming Lord Mahavira's pure

attire? Why are you cheating the innocent? Go away at once.” Thus saying, she resumed her work.

Ambad thought, “She seems quite firm and faithful. Was it on the basis of this much Samyaktva that Lord Mahavira sent the message? Is her faith only this much or even more? Let me put her to another test. Let me check her interest and eagerness in watching the miracles of other deities.

Ambad tests Salsa using his miraculous powers

Ambad possessed magical powers due to which he could assume varied forms. Using these powers, right outside the main gate of the city, he assumed a four-headed structure of Brahma (The creator of the world according to Hindu mythology). He descended from the sky. Seeing this, people were astonished and ran in his direction. “Who is this?”, they exclaimed. Brahma (Ambad) was seated on a Lotus outside the city. 1 body with 4 heads in 4 directions giving sermons to the curious crowd that had gathered. More and more people assembled. Ambad had seated himself in such a way that he could see who exited from the city-gates. He kept gazing and waiting but saw no sign of Salsa.

Salsa’s neighbours told her, “Go and have a look. What are you doing? Brahma himself has arrived. Don’t miss this golden chance to worship him. God knows how long he will be here! He might disappear any time. After all he is God! He can do anything he wishes to.”

But Salsa was completely unbothered and disinterested. She had no curiosity at all. She said, “I do not want to go.”

“Arre! But he is the creator of this entire universe. He created you in your mother’s womb.”

“All nonsense. Then why didn’t he make everyone beautiful?”

“That is because of everyone’s individual karmas.”

“Then why don’t you say that it is karmas which created us. Karma is mightier than Brahma, too. Then call karma the creator, why involve Brahma?”

“Arre! You get your body in accordance with your karmas but just as a potter is required to shape the clay into a pot, here Brahma is required as the creator!”

Sulsa firmly replied, “No, clay itself takes the form of a pot. Hence a potter is required to shape it. But the body does not comprise of Karma alone. It is made of food particles, flesh, blood, etc. There you need a creator and this creator is no one other than karma. Karma is independent. Hence, karma is the Brahma, the ultimate creator. Now, here if you assume some person ‘Brahma’ as the creator of all, then even he will need a body like that of a potter. Now which Brahma will come to create this body? If this Brahma’s body is minute, then how will he create our body? If his body is large, then how will he enter the mother’s stomach?

Thus, it is inappropriate to call Brahma as the Creator.”

The neighbour had no answer. She quietly returned. Unsuccessful in his attempt, Ambad made another attempt by assuming the form of Lord Shankar at another city gate.

He descended from the sky and once again innocent and curious people came running to catch a glimpse. Miracles attract and entertain people of all ages at all times. No invitation is required to witness them. Compare it with our attraction towards religion. Leave alone enthusiasm; many times, we do not exercise it inspite of being invited to do so.

This shows our interest since time immemorial. How much interest do we have in such amusements and miracles and how much interest do we have in following religion? Our inclination towards religion has been short-lived but it is not possible to achieve salvation without it.

A person can whole-heartedly exercise religion only if he is interested in it. Exercising religion without interest cannot boost your feelings. Religion not combined with pure feelings cannot help you to achieve salvation.

Q. Why didn't Salsa go?

Ans. People are interested in amusement and hence when Ambad dramatically glided down from the sky, people ran towards the door where 'Shankarji' landed. Did Salsa run? Didn't she know about the occurrence? That is not possible because Ambad must have ensured that Salsa came to know. If he had set up this entire drama to test her, wouldn't he have made sure Salsa would learn what was happening? So Salsa surely knew it. Then why didn't she run along with the others? Because she was least interested in such amusements. She possessed such a noble religious outlook that she was interested in nothing but religion.

A genuine interest in religion is bound to sideline all other interests.

Interest in religion makes a man wise and understanding. The one whose interest lies in shallow amusements and miracles is bound to be short-tempered and narrow-minded.

If you have really understood the importance of the 9 tatvas i.e. the nine entities and the path of salvation preached by the Arihantas, then neither will such amusements and miracles attract you nor will you be involved in such laughter and merriment.

Today, you feel like going to the cinema and multiplexes, malls and amusement parks. Why? Because the mind is not occupied with the preachings of the Arihantas – their deep truth and amazing facts. The aim of salvation is forgotten. A person who has attained Vitaraga Lord's Shasana (religious order) is mature and highly intellectual. Thus, such temporary wonders do not amuse him.

King Kumarpala witnesses the amusement:

Mithyadrishiti sage Devabodhi demonstrated a fake drama in front of King Kumarpala wherein his forefathers were worshipping Lord Shiva. He showed his father telling him, "O Kumarpala ! We are in heaven enjoying the sweet fruits of worshipping Lord Shiva. Hence, I request you to not forsake the worship of our forefather's religion and Lord Shiva.

King Kumarpala was a staunch follower of Jainism. Such amusement was incapable of attracting him and deterring his

faith. But later on he went to his mentor Shri Hemchandrasuriji Maharaj and narrating the incident asked him, “What was the secret behind this? Was this true or false?”

How his mentor was thinking, “Kumarpala is a faithful devotee but still a query rose in his mind. This means that the drama demonstrated by Devabodhi had left a certain impression in his mind. Now directly explaining the mere truth orally will not convince him nor will it erase the impact of the drama. Instead I should show him a greater drama and eventually convince him. “Thinking thus, he summoned King Kamarpala the next day and took him in the inner room. The sight left him awestruck. What did he see?

He sees the 24 Tirthankara Bhagwants seated on the Sinhasan and his entire progeny of forefathers worshipping them. The Lord himself addresses Kumarpala, “See Kumarpala ! How happy your forefathers are by rightfully following Jainism? Ask them to describe the glory of Jainism. Kumarpal was still in stock. He realized that there was no comparison between what he was presently seeing and the drama that was made up by Devabodhi. How foolish was I to get carried away by it!

What to think seeing the amusement?

His mentor then replies, “O King! Even the previous one was a fake drama and so is this. Only the words of Tirthankara Lords are real and trustworthy. I realized that you were a

little carried away by Derabodhi's trap and hence I made up this melodrama to convince you. But actually you had to think about Lord's universally applicable and acceptable fundas (Tatvas) at that point of time. How complete is the path demonstrated by Lord Vitaraga – no loopholes, no flaws. Do such miracles affect the universal fundas? You saw your father and Lord Shivji and your father was addressing you, does it devalue the path of conduct showed by omniscient Vitaraga Bhagwan? No. The elements of Ashrava, Samvara, Bandha, Nirjara, etc. are going to remain constant. Also, right perception, knowledge and conduct, 12 rows of a Jain householder, 10 types of rows of a saint, etc. cannot be proved wrong. What to get attracted by miracles? Why to give them any importance?"

If he would have thought on these lines and not given the drama any kind of importance, then he wouldn't have come to ask his mentor. Since he asked, his mentor judged his thought process and showed him a miracle greater than the one he had previously seen. Later, his mentor – knowledgeable Guru Hemchandracharya clarified saying that all these dramas are absolutely worthless. The principles and path preached by the Lord are precious and priceless and hence it is wise to stick to them and not get attracted by short-term miracles.

What was Guru Hemchandracharya's intention behind showing Kumarpada the drama? Not to show off his capability or satisfy his curiosity but only to pacify Kumarpal's confused mind. Hence, once Kumarpal realized his mistake, he clarified

that “As well as this is wrong and fake” Red and true is the path and principles preached by Lord.

From this, even we should learn –

If we understand the real significance of the 9 elements (Tatvas) and the path to salvation comprising of Right Perception, knowledge and conduct, then external dramas and miracles will not amuse us nor will we participate in such worthless events.

Today, the attraction for movies, dramas, magic shows, entertaining stunts is on the rise. At that point, doesn't this thought cross your mind that how can I get leisure time like this after acquiring such deep-rooted principles and path preached by Almighty. Desire to witness such occurrences denotes an immature and shallow nature. But Hemchandrasuriji Maharaj took the refuge of such amusements not because of his shallow nature but to bring back a specific person on the right path, to stabilize him these and to increase the glory of this priceless path.

But if you do not have such a pure and generous intention, and do you feel like creating such dramas for mere entertainment, then it surely depicts your immaturity and narrow-mindedness. A shravaka who was obtained Vitaraga Lord's religious order is sure to have a royal nature and possess high IQ and wisdom. Thus, he does not have to perform or watch such plays and dramas because if he wishes to do so, it will contaminate his intentions and thinking.

Sulsa was Lord Mahavira's true and loyal Shravika possessing a high level of maturity and deep faith. Miracles did not amuse her. Be it Brahma or Shankar, people ran to catch sight of them. But Sulsa was not tempted to go even for a moment. She possessed an outstanding religious outlook. Ambad waited and waited for Sulsa to appear but there was no sign of her.

Then Ambad thought, "Since she is a loyal Jain Shravika, such miracles wouldn't amuse her, but she is a householder after all and would definitely be in need of money. Let me assume the form of Goddess Lakshmi – the Goddess of wealth. Let's see if she comes."

Thus, at the 3rd city door, he assumed the form of Lord Vishnu along with Goddess Lakshmi. Now the citizens ran in that direction but Sulsa remained sitting at home, relaxed and content. Her neighbour called her while going, "Hey Sulsa! It is Lord Vishnu himself along with Goddess Lakshmi. This time, won't you come along?"

Sulsa replied, "No, I do not want to see anything."

The puzzled neighbour said, "O innocent lady! Worship Lakshmi and your treasury will overflow with wealth. Why lose such a bright, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity? Money is essential to survive in this material world."

Sulsa replied, "Why wander here and there? Due to our past births' misdeeds and sins, we do not acquire our desired wealth and comforts. Now, tell me merely worshipping Goddess Lakshmi

how will she erase and nullify the power of our past wrongdoings and shower us with wealth?”

The neighbours answered, “Sulsa! Why then do we see wealth in the hands of sinners? Would you call it as Goddess Lakshmi’s foolishness?”

Sulsa patiently and firmly replied,

“You need to understand and accept the fact that Goddess Lakshmi is not running some business that she randomly gives money to some and not to others. How else can you see wealth in the hands of thieves and rogues evil and wicked men while noble religious people are subjected to poverty? If Goddess Lakshmi is responsible for this, then isn’t it discrimination on her part? But in reality, she is not responsible for this. A soul’s previous good or bad karmas play an important role here. Accordingly, he obtains wealth here. Goddess Lakshmi is powerless. Thus, if the acquisition of wealth is dependent on our previous karmas, then in the presence of our inauspicious karmas, worshipping her will not help. Similarly if karmas are in our favour, wealth will be at your doorstep even if you do not worship her.

The neighbourhood women exclaimed, “Arre! But at least come to see them once.”

Sulsa replied, “Whom should you see? The one who is genuinely God or the one who is not? Tell me, can you call the one who has his wife with him as God? God is the supreme Vitaraga. He is completely detached from this world. Inspired

by our own selfish motives, what is the point of worshipping him once? I remember Him selflessly and devotedly throughout the day. In spite of this, if it was really God, I would surely go to worship Him.”

The neighbourhood women finally accepted defeat and went to see Lord Shankar accompanied by Goddess Lakshmi. Look at the power of Mithyatva – Salsa’s logical arguments did not stop them from going. Let alone stopping them, they weren’t even convinced that they were wrong.

Ambad was desperately hunting for Salsa but couldn’t find her. Thus, giving up hope, he resumed his original form. He was convinced that Vitaraga Lord was at the centre of her existence and such insignificant events were incapable of shaking her faith. “But though she is a loyal devotee of Vitaraga Lord, let me check if she possesses similar faith in His preachings.” With this thought in mind, Ambad transformed himself into the 25th Tirthankara. News spread like wildfire. The neighbourhood women once again came to Salsa’s doorstep.

“Come on! Now you will come with us, won’t you? You had said that you would come if Vitaraga – the true God came. Now, that your Lord is here, come along and accompany us.”

Salsa was bewildered, “What? Lord Mahavira?”

“We aren’t sure about that. But it’s the talk of the town that the 25th Tirthankar is here.”

Salsa immediately retaliated, “Then it is all an illusion. Because

a 25th Tirthankar cannot exist. In this Bharatkshetra, only 24 Tirthankar take birth in one era. I am not interested in the fake.”

Frustrated, the neighbour told her, “O noble woman! Do not bow down at his feet. But what is the harm in watching something new?”

Now listen to Salsa’s touching and motivational answer.

She said, “I have so much to observe, think and contemplate on my beloved Lord Mahavira that there is no spare time to look at all those amusements. If I become curious and eager to see such things, it means I am tired and too bored to watch and reflect upon what is truly worthwhile. But I am so deeply occupied in Lord Mahavira’s thoughts that boredom is out of the question. In fact, I am always unsatisfied. How much ever I watch, worship or think about Him, discontent prevails. My reflections and observations are never-ending. Highly knowledgeable Ganadharas and the superior Anuttara Devas possessing enormous life-spans are also unable to completely reflect on the Arihantas. Whatever little they do, is not more than a single drop in the ocean.

Arihanta Lord is a bearer of innumerable virtues, infinite power and boundless grace. A lifetime of thoughts are also insufficient to truly recognize Him. The interest in watching and thinking about Him is so deep that I will never be dissatisfied or bored. That is the real fruit of this precious human birth. Then why engage it in insignificant merriment and

amusements? Please forgive me. I am not interested in this, nor do I have spare time. Thus, I do not wish to come.”

Sulsa’s belief is worth considering. Arihanta’s virtues are unlimited and the time-span we have is limited. How then can we have spare time? Also, if we are truly interested in contemplating the Almighty, then how can such momentary wonders amuse and interest us?

What to contemplate about Arihanta Lords?

- 1) i) The 3 peculiar characteristics of a soul that has entered the final charnavarta period : (a) Compassion for the needy, (b) No ill feelings towards the noble ones, (c) Wisdom to understand the appropriate time and situations.
- ii) The 3 special features of the Apunarbandhaka condition – (a) Not respecting the material world, (b) Not exercising any sins with intensity, (c) Understanding the appropriate time and situations.
- iii) The 35 virtues of a Marganasari soul,
- iv) The virtues of the first four Yogadrishtis,
 - v) The virtues of the 5 seeds of Yoga,
 - vi) 67 features of Samyaktva,
 - vii) Characteristics eligible to become a Shravaka,
 - viii) 16 virtues necessary to make a Shravaka eligible to become a Sadhu. How did Arihanta Lord’s soul pass through all these stages and ultimately reach the zenith?

You can pick any of these virtues and reflect on Arihanta Lord.

- 2) Religion – be it donation, celibacy, penance and pure feelings or religion in the form of Right perception, knowledge and conduct or religion recognizing non-violence, restraining temptations and penance - how did Arihantas progress through all these? Thus, how is their present superior position? It is worthy of reflection.
- 3) Consider the Anitya, Asharana, etc. 12 reflections plus Maitri, etc. 4 reflections, 25 reflections related to the 5 Mahavratas (great lifetime vows accepted by a Jain monk), 10 contemplations to be done by a Shravaka at midnight, etc. You can keep in mind any of these and contemplate as to how Arihantas excelled at each of these.
- 4) Similarly, the 34 Atishayas of the Arihantas, 35 virtues of speech, 14 auspicious dreams, 8 Pratiharyas, the adjectives used to describe Him in Namutthunam, Shakrastava, etc. can be used as a medium to meditate on the Almighty.
- 5) Also you can reflect on the mighty Arihantas by deeply considering the stanzas and lyrics of devotional stnavas and stutis composed by great devotees. You can ponder on the connection between two stanzas. What is the reason of portraying this thought immediately after this one? Real food for thought!
- 6) Imagine the condition which arises due to the complete destruction of all the negativities, demerits and

weaknesses that are witnessed in the world. Devoid of all this, He is on such a high spiritual plane. You can reflect on this.

- 7) Also, you can think of the boundless favours He has bestowed on us by throwing light on the 9 Tatvas (entities that comprise this universe), the routine of a Samyaktva soul, a Shravaka and a Sadhu. How does this code of conduct benefit us and keep a check on our wrongdoings? Thus, the advantages of His guidance are worth contemplation.

You can also think that Lord showed such a wonderful vow of not eating at night that can become our own as well other living creature's saviour.

For example a Brahmin woman went to a Jain nun along with her Jain friend and accepted an oath to not eat anything at night (after sunset). Eventually she got married and this oath did not go well with her in-laws. When she flatly refused to break her vow, her father-in-law went to drop her back to her parent's house. During the journey, they stayed overnight at an acquaintance's place. All of them had Dudhapaka (Sweet rice milk) at night which was poisoned. Her father-in-law as well as the host family was almost on death bed but the Brahmin kanya who had not eaten at night was safe. She called the doctor and eventually cured them off the poison by way of vomit and motions. Eventually, every faith in Jainism increased immensely and they too stopped eating at night.

O Lord ! You have bestowed us with so many favours like this by showing us the right way.

These are some points in brief. Considering every single feature, you will get ample food for thought. Learned Upadhyay Yashovijayji Maharaj has mentioned in his Stavana –

**‘पार न आवे समरतां, तुम गुण-उपकार,
मेरे साहिब तुम ही हो, जीवन आधार...’**

“Paar na maane samarta, tum gun-upkaar,
Mere Sahib tum hi ho, jivan adhara...”

It means, “O Lord! Your virtues and favours are so many that I will never finish remembering them, pondering over them. Life is too short compared to your virtues. Contemplating on your virtues is one of life’s most important tasks which has the power to make you Parmatma. Who else but Lord can show these tasks? Thus, you are my only Lord, my saviour and protector, my life-support system.”

If you consider only the last Tirthankara Lord Mahavira, you will have so much to think about, for example the numerous dreadful and painful incidents that He had to go through and how they did not affect Him at all. Do we have to tolerate such adverse situations? How disturbed is our mental state at that time? How desperately we try to eliminate the difficulty! Instead what did Lord Mahavira do? Sit back and contemplate on this.

**His greatest favour bestowed upon us –
He became our idol and inspiration**

He Himself happily bore all adversities, thus becoming a perfect role model for us. Facing tough times becomes easier

if we keep Lord's terrible difficulties in front of our eyes. You can also ponder over the various vows and oaths accepted by Him, how well he followed the 10 Shramana Dharmas and how He eventually accelerated his spiritual progress. You can then compare His virtues with yours and eventually strive to reach His level. He became our idol in helping us to identify and implement the real path of salvation. Isn't this worth considering?

The favours He has bestowed on us are so many that thinking about them will take eons and still the thought process will stay incomplete.

Thus tell me, could it ever happen that Salsa did not have anything about Lord Mahavira to contemplate upon? Salsa told her neighbours, "If I get free from the deep thoughts of my Lord Mahavira, only then will I get time to observe the outside world. But I do not have such free time."

The neighbours left. Ambad also observed that the entire city of Rajgrihi had come to worship him but there was no sign of Salsa! Now what could he do? He resumed his original form and made up his mind. The spark that Lord Mahavira had seen in Salsa was valid. "Now, I should give up on testing Salsa and directly go and deliver Lord Mahavira's message to her. But how should I go? As Ambad (Sanyasi), she will not greet me, let alone listening to my message." Thus, Ambad transformed himself into a Jain Shrivaka and reached Salsa's doorstep.

A Golden Morning In Salsa's Life

On seeing Ambad with a tilak on his forehead, and a steady gait, Salsa assumed him to be a Shravaka traveller from another city and immediately welcomed him. She offered him a suitable place to sit and some snacks and then asked, "Where do you come from?"

Salsa and Ambad's conversation

Ambad observed that her understanding and faith towards religion was flawless. If Lord himself approves of her, than is there any question? He answers, "I was out on a pilgrimage – Shratunjaya, Champapuri, etc. These I happened to watch and worship Almighty, Omniscient Lord Mahavira. I feel so blessed! From there, I happened to come here for pilgrimage."

Salsa exclaimed, "O! You are truly blessed to have seen Lord Mahavira. Tell me, is he healthy and fine?"

"O Yes. He is absolutely fine. I have seen Him with my own eyes." Salsa was ecstatic on hearing this. She closed her eyes for a second, folded her hands and said, "O my Lord! If you

are fine, it implies that the entire universe is fine as well. If you are fine, it means that I am happy.” Sparkling tears of joy rolled down her cheeks. “How should I felicitate this lucky gentleman who gave me the news of Lord’s well being?”, she thought. She asked, Ambad, “Though you are here on a pilgrimage, give me a chance to serve you. You gave me the great news of my beloved Lord’s well-being. How much ever I greet and welcome you – it does not suffice. Give me a chance to serve you.”

Ambad replied, “You are at such a high level that I am not worthy to accept your service.”

Sulsa asked, “Why do you say so?”

Ambad answered, “Mother! I know what I am saying. Lord Mahavira has judged you as the best in the city of Rajgrihi.” He further explained, “While leaving for Rajgrihi I went to ask the Lord if he had some work ‘Lord! I am going to Rajgrihi. Any order for me?’ At that point of time, Lord asked me to deliver a short message to you. In the entire huge city of Rajgrihi, He found none other than you to be worthy of receiving his message. Now do you understand the high, dignified post that you enjoy?”

Sulsa was spellbound. She could not believe her ears. “What? Did Lord Mahavira send a message to an unworthy soul like me?” Impatient to hear the words, she excitedly asked, “Please tell me. What is the message sent by my saviour, my protector, my heartbeat Lord Mahavira?”

Ambad replied, “Lord has told you ‘Dharmalabha’ and asked about your spiritual well-being.”

Could Salsa remain calm hearing this? She was in seventh heaven. “O! The Lord of the 3 worlds sent me ‘Dharmalabha’ in spite of being so far? The head of innumerable Indras asks my well-being?” A chill ran down her spine and she had goosebumps all over. Joy reflected on her face. She immediately rose from her place and walked a little towards the direction of Champapuri. As a mark of the 3 circumambulations (giving Pradakshina around Lord 3 times) she circulated her folded hands around her face thrice. She then gave 3 khamasamanas and sitting on her knees, remembered the innumerable favours bestowed on her by Lord Mahavira. With sparkling tears of joy and gratitude, she recited a few words of devotion towards Lord Mahavira.

Salsa’s Wonderful Prayer

O Lord! You are the

- Destroyer of the powerful army of Moha,
- Pure water cleansing the sticky mud of sins,
- Windy weather eliminating the dust of Karmas,
- Saviour, Protector, Lord Mahavira! May you be victorious!

You are worshipped and served by the head of deities, demons and kings! You have the power to shaken the unshakable Mountain Meru. You are Omniscient. By the strength of

Kevalgyana you can visualize the entire universe. Your beauty and personality have won the hearts of the 3 worlds. No beauty in this world can even be compared with you. O Vardhamana Swami! My Lord! By purifying other's hearts, you are the Lord in the real sense. The head of the Indras prostrate themselves at your feet.

O Beauty of the 3 worlds! Those who beautify their forehead by the dirt of your holy feet (i.e. by bowing down at your feet) will soon be freed from this mortal world. O Lord! Your holy feet are the shore of the city of salvation. Those who serve you are served by the world.

O respected one! Those noble souls who worship you each morning, are worshipped here as well as in the future births.

O Mother Trishla's beloved son! Those who bow down at your holy feet become free of all faults and are guarded by the Devtas.

Imagine the extremely high position of the Lord in Salsa's hearts that such words naturally flowed in His appreciation. Her heart was constantly in awe, "Arre! I attained such a supreme Lord! How did I obtain such an incredibly affectionate and generous Lord? And He sent me a message?" Sitting on her knees with folded hands, she exclaimed.

"O, the support of my life! So much grace on this unworthy and foolish servant? Where do I stand, immersed deeply in the mire of pleasures and passions and enslaved by karmas?

Where do you stand, Vitaraga, Omniscient Head of the 3 worlds!

I do not completely follow your orders but yet you remembered me?

You compassion is truly amazing! You blessed me with the magical words ‘Dharmalabha’? Head of all Indras serve you, Ganadharas and knowledgeable saints are your disciples. I stand nowhere in front of them and yet you asked after my well-being? You took the trouble to send me a message! I heartily appreciate and thank your efforts again and again. I have achieved everything - all powers and strengths. I have nothing left to attain – no goal, no desire. I have nothing left to say. You ensured my place in salvation. My birth is today fruitful. I have no words to express my joy and gratitude.”

O Lord Mahavira!

My Mission, Motion and Motivation,

My Attraction, Aspiration and Addiction,

My Home, Heaven and only Habitation,

My Affection, Attention and Absolution,

My Vision, Vacation and Valuation,

My Inspiration, Innovation and Imagination,

My Resolution, Renovation and Revolution,

My Body and Soul ! Life and Love !”

Saying thus, she repeatedly touched her head on the floor.

Ambad was amazed on being a witness to such an event. “Arre! Her affection and desire for Lord must be so intense that such remarks naturally flowed from her heart. What gratitude! What sentiments! Lord is hundreds of miles away. But the way she addressed Lord, it seemed as if He was right here! What a devotional salutation!”

Sulsa told Ambad, “You have done a great favour to me by bringing me the Lord’s message.”

Ambad replied, “What favour have I done? It is Lord Mahavira and you who have done the real favour.”

Sulsa said, “Lord’s favour is obvious but what favour have I done?” Ambad replied, “You have done a great favour to me by showing me the true nature of Samyaktva and Lord did a great favour on me by giving me this chance by making me the messenger. He, great Lord Mahavira, must have seen that my Samyaktva was contaminated and thus He gave me an opportunity to identify the real one and purify my Samyaktva, on the pretext of delivering the message to you. Looking at your strong Samyaktva, I feel that that He gave you the real message but He gave me a secret message - do not be under the false impression that your Samyaktva is in place. If you want to see the real Samyaktva, go and see Sulsa’s Samyaktva. Thus, along with you, Lord showered his compassion on me, too. You also obliged me by showing me the real, intense love for Vitaraga Lord. You might not be aware but it was I who

had assumed the form of the fake saints, Brahma, Vishnu, etc. to test you. But you were not at all attracted. What unflinching faith! You taught me the level of faith to be maintained towards Arihanta Lords.”

Saying this, Ambad’s eyes were filled with tears of dedication and appreciation.

The Moral

What to learn from Salsa's Incident ?

Miracles and wonders did not affect or attract Salsa. Keeping this in view, sit back and think –

Look at what science and technology has done today. Scientific inventions have created material benefits and man has become a devil.

- Gas stoves, pressure cookers, microwaves reduced the time needed to cook food. What do women do with the spare time? Nothing. 'An idle mind is a devil's workshop.'
- Instead of manual work, as machines and mills increased, the need for labour and manpower reduced. The result? Increase in unemployment.
- Malls and multiplexes, laptops and iPods became cheaper. People spend time watching movies and listening to music. Does it boost their humanity and morality?
- Modes of communication and transportation increased,

comforts and luxuries increased. New sectors opened up in business. As a result, was it satisfaction that increased or greed?

Does all this boost your morality and humanity or the opposite? All this requires deep thought. Scientific inventions and technological advancements have washed away faith and spiritual realization. They have erased the affection towards Arihanta Lords and their religion. It is now replaced with materialism and worldly attachments. It expanded the various comforts like refrigerators, ovens, washing machines and made man dependent on it. There is now no sign of penance, control over temptations, contentment and celibacy. Vows and oaths are forgotten. Unnecessary sins of acquiring knowledge of events occurring around the world have increased. Religious discourses, study of scriptures, devotion of God and Guru, daily activities like Pratikramana, etc. and their importance are decreasing.

What did the advancements of science give the world? Lies, wrong doings, cheating, bribes and addictions or was it anything else?

Q. But it is wrong to blame science. All it did was create comforts and gadgets. How to utilize it is in our hands. You yourself have to differentiate between right and wrong.

Ans. That is true. But everyone is affected by external factors. Imagine the condition of few but all reputed people living in a society and a prostitute comes and starts living amidst them. How can men then maintain their character when women

around wear inappropriate clothes? Similarly just as mobiles, laptops, WhatsApp, etc. applications increase, won't related activities increase? Isn't the attraction towards them bound to increase? Thus, be alert that just as Salsa did not get attracted towards miracles, we should not get attracted towards the present technological wonders.

These gadgets are instrumental in increasing our sensual desires, passions like anger, greed, ego, illusion and other sinful activities. Without thinking about the future births, we constantly exercise such sins without fear. If we bear this burden of sins, then we will refrain from giving importance to such modern developments.

Remember – we aren't saying that the successes and achievements of science are worthless. That is foolishness. But we are trying to say, "Even though the achievement of science are worthwhile and useful. What are its fruits?"

Increase or decrease in the dependence of sensual pleasures and passions?

Today science has developed many methods like hypnotism, etc. that prove reincarnation and the existence of a soul even beyond this life. But did this development increase the fear of sins? Did it inspire people to think about the eternal journey of the soul, rebirths and the vast past and future? Did it make people fear the emergence of sins? Did it decrease the attachment towards non-living objects? Did it lesser the violence involved in mills and factories, slaughterhouses and

powerhouses? Then, what is the utility of this new advancement? According to Jainism, that which does not have any pure intentions is termed as Mithyagya (ignorance).

Not supported by pure intentions, even enormous knowledge and strict conduct has no value.

The purity of intentions and purpose is a primary necessity in life.

Sulsa was not at all attracted by Ambad's miracle which caught the attention of one and all, because she valued pure intentions and not mere bookish knowledge or miraculous events. Only because of this, she did not go to visualize Ambad's tricks. She did not have even the slightest desire to go. The result? Lord Mahavira measured her true worth!

Sulsa's life's main intention was unity with the Lord, Lord's principles and Lord's holy path.

'Knowledge is wealth', 'Wisdom is strength' – All this denotes the importance of knowledge. But, here too, it must be understood that the worth of knowledge is dependent on the purity of intentions, sacredness of the heart and generosity. Thus, all scriptures are not taught to each and every one. Depending on the capability of the saint or Shrivaka, Scriptures are taught to him. As his maturity, faith and period of monkhood increases, he is taught more difficult concepts and deep secrets are revealed.

But be mindful that though knowledge is useful in further

purifying your intentions and moulding your purpose, the right conduct (Samyak Charitra) is also essential. Thus, our scriptures instruct us to follow the following instructions before gaining knowledge – Do not study at inappropriate times, humbly serve your Guru, give ample respect to your Guru. This is all stated while describing the code to be followed in gaining knowledge. Do you understand the secret? If this soul is repeatedly taught humility, only then will the knowledge purify his intentions.

Tell me which is more valuable ?

The right code of conduct and pure intentions or baseless knowledge? Thus, basically keep purifying your intentions, make them sacred and generous and for that continue following the valuable codes of conduct laid down by our Arihantas. This is pure intention and Samyak Charitra (right conduct). You can attain this only in this precious human birth, in the presence of Vitaraga Lord. Thus, value it and preserve it.

This is exactly what Salsa did. The importance of attainment of Vitaraga Lord Mahavira was so high in her heart that she sought His refuge again and again and thus purified her intentions. Thus, her religious acts and rituals blossomed. Ambad left. Considering herself to be extremely fortunate, she continued and increased her daily activities of Pratikramana, devotion of the Lord, serving Monks, listening to religious discourses, samayika, fasting and penance, etc. To the best of her capacity, she also devotedly revered the

Arihanta, Pravachana, etc. 20 respectable identities (Vis sthanak) stated in our religion. Further pondering on the marvellous beauty of the Arihanta Lords and thanking HIM for all the favors HE has bestowed upon her, she recognized her true spiritual nature.

While doing so, her intentions and purposes became all the more vast and generous, pure and perfect. As a result, of this extreme purity, her compassion exceeded all boundaries – “How can I make all these living creatures attached to Lord’s Shasana? How can I bring their karma related sorrows and troubles to a permanent end and enable them to progress on the path of salvation?” Contemplating all this, **she originates the Supreme Punya necessary to become a Tirthankar. It is not surprising that such unconditional shelter of Tirthankar Almighty enabled her to become Tirthankar herself.**

Her internal religious outlook was so strong that Suls considered all these religious activities to be the essence of her life. Completely immersing herself in it, constantly remembering and meditating on the Pancha Parmeshthi and seeking the refuge of Lord Mahavira, she completed her life span and continued her soul’s journey by going to Devalok. From there, she will take birth in this Bharatkshetra and become the 15th Thirthankar named ‘Nirmam’ in the next Chovisi (cycle of 24 Tirthankar).

A common woman originated the Supreme Punya of becoming a Tirthankar – Lord of the 3 worlds! on the basis of the glorious purity of intentions and generosity that had

emerged as a result of her unflinching faith and strong religious disposition.

Salsa strongly believed

My real health, soul's eternal wealth is the true religious disposition. Nothing in this world is capable to hamper it, stagnate it and decrease it!!

Amidst all situations – *tight* or *light*,
she was invariably on His *side*,

With passing time,
her affection and dedication *multiplied*,
nothing in this world could take her for a *ride*,

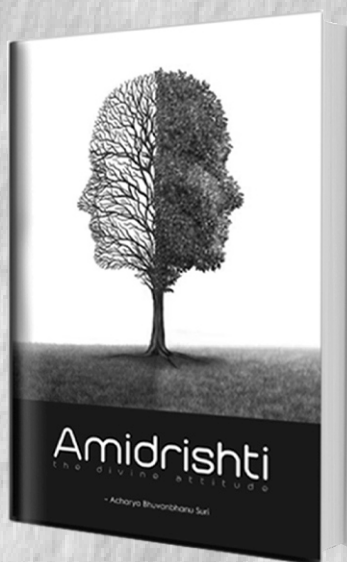
Her faith in Him was immovable,
such was its impact,
He willingly came to her *side* !

Do I need to describe her anymore ?
An amazing personality, undoubtedly,
FAITH PERSONIFIED !!!

Amidrishti

t h e d i v i n e a t t i t u d e

*A captivating story which captures
the wisdom of the enlightened*



Written by : **Acharya Bhuvanbhanu suri**

Published by : **CROSSWORD**

Available at :

Crossword.in, Amazon.in, Flipkart.com,

Selected Stores of Crossword

On Amazon portal of UK, France, Italy,

Germany, Japan etc. (more than 12 countries)

Contact us : **98205 27710**

Revolution

i n j a i n p a t h s h a l a

English - Hindi - Gujarati Multi-language Application



- *Memorise sutras* : App will teach you sutras.
- *Meaning of sutras*: Where you will be able to understand meaning of sutras.
- *Revision* : Will help memorise sutras.
- *Write sutras* : You can purify your sutras by writing it.
- *Exam* : Will check your sutras, its meanings and will also give you results.



Self Learning Pathshala



Free download from google play store



To get heart touching Quotations and
 life changing question - answer by
Acharya Bhuvanbhanu suri Maharaj
Acharya Jayghosh suri Maharaj



SAVE **88281 66999** & SEND "JAINONLINE"
 TO GET UPDATES ON WHATSAPP



jainonline



jainonline jainonline

visit us :
www.jainonline.org

