

Purity Purified

A Glimps into the life of Mahasati Sita



Acharya Bhuvanbhanusuri

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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) of London. Thereafter, 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.

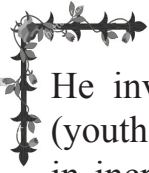
After years of in-depth study of Jain scriptures, he could explain advanced concepts of philosophy in lucid language to the masses.

His motivation and heart-rending sermons created a magical effect on people from all walks of life. In a short span on 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 **Gachchādhīpati Āchārya Shri Jayghośh Sūriswarji**, who heads the world's largest and most reputed group of Jain monks.



INTRODUCTION

We all know that fire tests the purity of certain substances and also purifies the impure. When an impure thing like gold undergoes the rising heat of fire, it is bound to leave its impurity and emerge purer and brighter than before. The fire (purifier) remains as it is but changes the nature of the other substance.

But have you ever seen that the substance to be purified remains as it is and the purifier undergoes a phenomenal change i.e. gold remains as it is and the fire undergoes a transformation ? Does this seem possible? Not unless a MIRACLE occurs !

One such MIRACLE is Mahasati Sita -

A mere spark of fire has the power to reduce an enormous jungle to ash. But here a 300-hand deep pit burning with fire proved weak in front of the intensity of Sita's glowing faith and purity. The fire could not harm Sita. Infact, the power of Sita's holiness was so high that the fire underwent a chemical change and transformed into its opponent. Yes, you got it right! The fire turned into water. Why?

“As if to surrender itself and accept defeat and make a public declaration that it is incapable of purifying Sita further. She is the ultimate purifier - stronger and more efficient than me (fire) also. She compelled me to forsake my negativity of burning and harming others. She can purify the young and old, the smart and dumb, one and all. She can purify me. Arre...

With the rise of intolerance and 'no compromise attitude', the levels of physical and mental stress are also on the rise. In such times, the demand for spiritual and life management books is pretty high. This book penned down beautifully by Pujya Gurudev is a perfect medium to learn the art of living a happy and peaceful life. Sita's life exhibits valuable virtues of respect and courtesy for elders, an all-time positive outlook, faith in Lord's teachings, depth and understanding, purity of actions, words and thoughts, gratitude and many more. These qualities if imbibed rightly can definitely bring heaven on earth.

Sita's personality complete with unperishable purity and faith, add to it Pujya Gurudev's deep contemplation and effective description – the outcome is nothing less than a masterpiece!

Come on,

Check yourself

Change yourself

and get ready to Change yourself.. !

A Journey from Impurity to 24 carat Purity !

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1. Impact of Religious Stories

“चिरसंचियपाव-पणासणीइ, भवसयसहस्स-महणीए ।
चउवीसजिण-विणिग्गयकहाइ, वोलंतु मे दियहा ॥”

Jainism preaches the holy ritual of Pratikraman twice a day for every Jain householder. The prime sootra in this Pratikraman is ‘Vandittu Sootra’ which is formed by the great Ganadhara Bhagwants. Lord Mahavira established the present Jain religious order on Vaishakh Suda 11. (11th day of bright half month of Vaishakh). Lord Mahavira gave the Ganadharas 3 golden words known as ‘Tripadi’. Based on it, the Ganadharas created the entire Dvadashangi* in a span of only an Antarmurhuta*. In this Dvadashangi, they created the 14 Poorvas ! What an endless ocean of knowledge !

How wonderful was that time when such an enormous treasure of knowledge evolved ! It was at that particular time that the essential routine sootras including the ‘Vanditta’ evolved ! Imagine the importance of each of these sootras and stanzas ! Vandittu is one of the most essential sootras and thus you can imagine the importance of each and every stanza of Vandittu sootra as well.

‘Gunāwanta giruā, vāni mithi re ganadhāra tāni’

Thus the above verse ‘Chirasanchiya’ picked up from ‘Vandittu’ is also one of these wonderful creations. Then doesn’t it prove

* **Dvadashangi** - The vast Jain scriptures comprising 12 parts.

* **Antarmurhuta** - A time span ranging from 9 samay (unit of time more minute than microseconds) to 48 minutes.

to be really important and impactful. Ganadharas are the creators of Dvadeshangi which includes the enormous '14 Poorvas'. They will never propound anything that is futile or unnecessary. Their propositions are definitely deeply meaningful. You can thus imagine the importance and depth of the above stanza.

The Verse means : "May my days pass by being occupied in the religious stories of the 24 Tirthankara Lords. These stories have the power to destroy the sins piled up by several past births and can also abolish lakhs of future births."

This should be the thought process of a true Jain householder. How impactful these religious stories are ! Listening to them for a short while can abolish the sins of several lifetimes.

Q. Can religious stories possess so much power ?

A. Ofcourse yes. Because,

- (1) The impact of these religious stories is propounded by the great Ganadharas. These religious stories have the power to eliminate the sins committed over a long period. Then where is the doubt about the power of these religious stories ?
- (2) The second reason is that these religious stories describe the valour and achievements of greatmen in interesting words which arouses the sentiments of the listeners, increases their positive thoughts thus purifying their mind and soul. Such sentiments and thoughts have the power to destroy the bad karmas accumulated over a long time.

The question here is,

How can short term positive thoughts destroy sins accumulated over a comparatively long period ?

Q. Bad karmas are accumulated due to wrong thoughts and actions exercised over a long period. Listening to

religious stories for a short span can inculcate positive thoughts strong enough to abolish all the bad karmas. How is this possible ?

- A. There is no doubt that positive feelings imbibed even for a short time possess such enormous power. "In order to completely abolish these wrong thoughts, the soul requires to inculcate positive thoughts for a period equivalent to its period of wrong thoughts." If you make such a rule then the soul will never attain salvation because the soul is contaminated with papakarmas accumulated because of ignorance, non-resistance of temptations since times eternal.

Now, is there time for the cultivation of positive feelings of resistance and composure ?

Is there any birth wherein positive feelings can be cultivated and retained for a comparatively long time span ?

- Right upto the births of mindless five-sensed beings, negative thoughts are almost inborn. How are positive and good thoughts possible at such a time ?
- In the births of hell and heaven, living beings possess mind, 5 senses and a long lifespan of infinite years. But they cannot take rebirth again and again in the same place. Also, during this birth inspite of increasing positive thoughts, a living being can maximum attain Samyaktva* but cannot attain the height of resistance and renunciation. Therefore, is there any birth in which you can eradicate the bad karmas accumulated over the giant previous births of hell and heaven ?
- Humans and animals in specific places have a life-span of infinite years. But there too, they cannot create and retain the feelings of resistance and renunciation. Hence you

* **Samyaktva** - Right faith that whatever is propounded by Arihanta Lords is true.

cannot eliminate the previously accumulated bad karmas in these births, too.

- Now, the only birth left is the human birth which has the shortest life span of finite years. Only here can a living being reach the zenith of resistance and renunciation. Now if you follow the rule that “In order to completely abolish these wrong thoughts, the soul requires to inculcate positive thoughts for a period equivalent to its period of negative thoughts.” Then how can you eliminate the bad karmas accumulated over the past infinite period in a span of just few years of human life? How can you attain salvation without completely eliminating these bad karmas?

To summarize,

“In order to completely abolish these wrong thoughts, the soul requires to inculcate positive thoughts for a period equivalent to its period of wrong thoughts.” – This rule is absolutely wrong. If this rule is right, then a living being will never attain salvation. But they do attain salvation. It is a proved fact. Salvation is not possible without eradication of past karmas. Infact, salvation literally means being free of all karmas, liberation from the bondage of karmas. Now, how can this be otherwise possible?

Understanding all the above reasoning, you have to agree that liberation from the bondage of karmas is possible only if short term positive thoughts and feelings have the power to destroy karmas accumulated over the past infinite period.

Now you may feel,

Q. Doesn't this seem weird and illogical that papakarmas binded by long-term negative feelings can be destroyed due to a short span of positive thoughts?

A. No. This is not at all illogical because such instances are visible in nature, too...

Lets see...

- (1) Continuous rainfall for just 4 days can cool down the atmosphere heated up by the scorching summer heat since the past 4 months.
- (2) Huge pile of grass accumulated over a long period can be burnt completely by a mere spark of fire.
- (3) Just 3 hours of saint's sermon can pacify the animosity prevailing since a long time and give rise to seeds of friendship and brotherhood.
- (4) Greed which is practiced since times eternal can be eradicated by the feelings of satisfaction and self-restraint developed by listening to a saint's discourse.
- (5) It takes years to construct a building and not even few minutes to destroy it.

The impact of positive feelings in the rapid progress of the soul is quite evident from the lives of great people like Mata Marudeva, Bharat, Bahubali, Sudarshan Sheth, Nagketu, etc.

Thus it is absolutely necessary to enrich this heart with positive thoughts all the while; especially thoughts of brotherhood for all, devotion for God and Guru and non-attachment towards material pleasures because the reason behind the **rise of negative thoughts is generally the lack of the positive feelings of brotherhood, devotion and non-attachment.**

The lives of great men depict exemplary virtues of non-attachment, brotherhood, compassion, etc. They must have imbibed these virtues so deeply that it made their thoughts and actions also noble !

Reading and listening to their motivating stories repeatedly

leads to rise of positive feelings and noble thoughts. Thus a Jain householder wishes,” May my days pass in listening to the religious stories propounded by the Jineshwara Lords.” Because of it the heart overflows with positive feelings and noble thoughts.

The major two advantages of positive feelings and noble thoughts are :

- (1) Elimination of papakarmas accumulated since a long time.
- (2) Reduction of the cycle of lakhs of births.

We already discussed about the first advantage. Now talking about the second advantage,

Panchasootra* claims that **“Positive feelings break down the negative series of feelings accumulated in the past.”**

[**Anubandha = Negative series of feelings.** It is the foundation stone of wrong thoughts of violence, love and hatred for the materialistic world, imbalance of mind, etc.]

We have carried forward such a dreadful serial of negative feelings since the previous births. This has led to wrong thoughts of violence, deceit, injustice, love and hatred for the material world, depression, etc. Thus a negative thought procedure gives rise to negative feelings which in turn increases the birth cycle.

However, if we repeatedly listen to inspirational religious stories and eventually cut down our serial of negative thoughts, then such feelings of violence, hatred, etc. will also stop thereby ensuring that our birth cycle does not increase. Moreover, noble thoughts of non-violence, truth, forgiveness, modesty, non-attachment towards the material world, composure and balance of mind will gradually arise and thus reduce the birth-cycle.

* **Panchasootra** - A religious scripture

Q. Why so ? How can our birth cycle reduce because of positive feelings ?

A. It's an accepted fact that,

- If one is thrown into the dungeons of hell or any other such dreadful births, then a sinful mind, violent activities, passionate feelings of lust, hatred etc. are bound to be prevalent.
- On the other hand, if one attains a good birth, then noble thoughts, religious intentions and activities, non-attachment towards the maerial world are easy to cultivate.

Now, if one repeatedly cultivates positive feelings, it leads to Punyanubandhi Punya* which eventually leads to a good birth enriched with noble thoughts and religious actions. This in turn results in a good birth and noble acts. Thus a successive series of good births is ensured. Dreadful births of hell and animal species will not form a major part of the birth cycle. And thus, it can be said that **'Positive feelings have the power to reduce one's birth cycle.'**

Every birth offers its natural gift to each of its candidate –

- Noble thoughts and actions in a noble birth and
- A sinful mind and actions in a low birth.

What does it mean ?

Once, you fall in the dungcons of some low-grade birth, you are entrapped by a sinful mind, violent activities and passionate feelings of love, hatred, greed, etc. Where will you reach next ? Ofcourse, a low-grade birth. What to do there ? Again strengthen the same sinful mind. Thus, a series of successive low-grade births continues.

* **Punyanubandhi Punya** – That Punya which inturn leads to cultivation of new Punya.

On the contrary, if you attain a noble birth, then maintain a good temperament, cultivate religious thoughts of non-violence, control your sensual pleasures and gradually increase feelings like forgiveness. For this devotional reverence of God and Guru, serving saints, listening to religious discourse, donation and penance is essential. By doing this if we again attain a noble birth, then a good mentality, religious thoughts, good actions are possible which again lead to a noble birth. Thus a channel of good births eventually reduces the long birth-cycle.

This is why knowledgeable men continuously warn us to **not spoil our thoughts and actions for the sake of temporary material objects**. They say, “Do not poison your mind or else once it opens the doors of a low-grade birth, eventual downfall cannot be denied. Because in such low-grade births, negative thoughts are bound to overcome your heart and mind which will again lead to a successive series of worse births in future.”

That is why you should not keep your thoughts and actions occupied constantly in this temporary materialistic world because it will keep your heart poisoned eventually leading to a spoiled birth cycle.

The above verse ‘Chirasanchiya’ depicts this great duty of a Jain householder to pass his days engrossed in the religious stories propounded by Tirthankara Lords. By contemplating on the inspiring life-stories of great men, we can successfully eliminate our previous karmas accumulated since a long time, give rise to fresh Punya and thus improve our birth cycle.



2. Sita's Gracious Gratitude

Now we look at some great inspiring incidents from Mahasati Sita's life. One of the most important incident which occurred in the latter half of her life :

Sitaji courageously performed the great Agni Pariksha* and the huge pit of burning fire transformed into a calm lake of water !

After this miracle, Ramchandraji, Lakshmanji, etc. requested her, "Welcome to Ayodhya. All your miseries will now come to an end. Enjoy a tension-free and happy life now."

At such a time Mahasati Sita did not think that, "Ohhh ! Finally, let's go. The dark night has passed. It is now time to live happily and enjoy all the palatial pleasures. The citizens of Ayodhya also respect and love me. It's now the chance to stay at peace." She did not think in this direction. Instead she felt the intense urge to renounce this material world. Therefore she replied, "I do not wish to come back to Ayodhya. I wish to become an ascetic and walk on the path preached by the Arihanta Lords."

Ramchandraji said, "What are you saying ? I agree that I have offended you and I am guilty. But can't you generously forgive me ?

Sita said, "Do not say this. You haven't offended me. Instead you have done a great favour on me.

* **Agni Pariksha** - A test to prove your purity in which you are supposed to step inside a huge pit burning with fire.

Ram replied, “Why are you taunting me ?”

Sita claimed, “Oh no ! I am not at all taunting you. This is the bare truth. I will tell you how. You have done a great favour on me by residing in my heart. Only because of this, the dreadful fire turned into water. If someone else would have been in my heart, then this fire wouldn’t have transformed into water. Instead, it would have reduced me to ashes. You stayed in my heart and hence this fire could not burn me. Isn’t this the greatest favour on me ?”

Imagine Sitaji’s deep feeling of gratitude ! What lesson can we learn from this ?

Leave alone those who have troubled us, we can atleast learn to remember the innumerable favours of the Arihantas on us from the above instance.

What are the great favours of Arihanta Lords on us ?

If we keep Arihanta Lords in our heart then,

- (1) We can perform great religious activities sincerely
- (2) We are motivated to cultivate virtues of forgiveness, humility, etc.
- (3) Positive thoughts and feelings increase.
- (4) We can earn Punyanubandhi Punya.

These are his innumerable favours on us. This should be our firm belief at all times.

If we heartily believe this, then we will never take any credit for our good actions. Instead, “It is God’s great favour that we could perform such a noble act.” - This thinking will motivate us to rever Him, serve Him or least bow down in front of Him.

That is the reason that ‘Vandittu’ sootra’s last verse says ‘Vandami Jine Chauvisam’ which means that ‘I bow down to the 24 Tirthankar Lords.’ Why are we bowing down ? The answer to this is that we can confess criticize and repent up on our sins only due to His great favour. As a sign of gratitude, we bow down in the feet of the great Arihantas.

Is there any place or time where Arihanta’s favours can be denied ? Because of Him, we got a place in this respectable Jinshasana, we acquired the path to salvation, the path of penance and religion. Forget all this. We have the great chance to worship Lord every single morning only because of Him ! While worshipping Lord each morning we should pray. “Oh ! Lord I got this golden chance of worshipping Arihant Lord only because you became Arihant. What grace you have done !”

While doing each and every ritual - be it Prakshal - Kesar-Dhoop-Dipaka Pooja, singing devotional songs and doing Chaityavandana, we should remember God’s innumerable favours on us right since we were in the births of plants, algae, etc. As a mark of his gratitude, we should also offer some money in the donation box.

His very first favour on us is the attainment of this great human birth. In our previous birth, we kept Lord in our heart, purified our thoughts, performed various noble acts, because of which our Punya increased manifold and we attained this great birth in return. Along with it, we acquired good health, five senses in order, necessities and luxuries, talent and intelligence; all these are God’s abundant favours on us. Thus, we remember him again and again.

Q. By offering our wealth and other such things, are we doing a favour on God ?

A. If we remember God’s eternal favours on us, then imagine how much wealth should we offer as a mark of gratitude ?

2. Sita’s Gracious Gratitude

Actually all that we devote to God is not our offering but a little effort to return his unlimited favours on us. Such a feeling will not give us pride that, "I created such a wonderful Angi." I helped in renovation of the temple." "I helped in the construction of doors and windows." All this is wrong mentality.

If a well- behaved and matured son does something for his father, it is not considered a favour on his father but only a duty carried out in return of his father's innumerable favours on him.

If a good son gets his father's room painted, he will not flaunt his act saying, "I got my father's room painted." He does not get his name engraved on the room wall depicting, "I got the painting done in this room." because he very well understands that by getting the painting done I am not doing any favour. In fact, father has done unlimited favours on me and as a mark of his gratitude, my work is negligible. Who am I to oblige my father ? What is the need of putting up a name plate ? What to flaunt ? My work is no favour but merely a duty."

Similarly, if we remember Lord's infinite favours on us then surely we will not feel like putting up our name plate when we make some donation.

Today it has become a trend to put up name plates after giving donations in religious places, as if they are making a favour on Lord Arihanta ! Do you think it is appropriate to engrave your name on Lord's idol or temple doors and entrances ?

Instead if your mind adopts the positive attitude that;

"Lord has done innumerable favours on me in front of which my service is negligible Being a Lord's devoted servant, my service is like a drop in front of his vast ocean. I am getting

this golden opportunity to demonstrate my feeling of gratitude. How can I let it go waste ? It is Lord's unforgettable favour on me that overcoming the low and torturous births of hell and animals, I am here at this honorable position. He is responsible for the religious knowledge and understanding that I possess. Only because of him, I am free from vicious vices and terrible sins. How can God's favours be underestimated ?

Sitaji is convincing Ram, "Such a huge pit of Fire turned into water only because you resided in my heart. Thus, you have done a tremendous favour on me."

Ramchandraji was spellbound. Sita's royal nature and noble thoughts touched him. His affection for her was scaling new heights. But look at the result. He did not know what destiny had in store for him.

Ramchandraji and Lakshmana addressed Sita,

"You consider this a favour because of your royal outlook. Considering your past circumstances, no one except you can think on these lines. Whatever it is, now forget the past and welcome to Ayodhya. Take a seat in this golden chariot and bask in the comforts of our luxurious palace."



3. Sita's Desire for Renunciation

Q. Why did Sitaji refuse to come in the palace ?

What a tempting opportunity !

She was left alone in the jungle and had to undergo numerous troubles. Previously also she had experienced the 12 year exile with Rama. Now finally the chance had come to comfortably stay and relax in the peaceful palace premises and enjoy all the respect and hospitality. Both her devoted and brave sons were also eager to serve her. In spite of this, she flatly refused to accept all this and expressed her desire to renounce the world.

At this moment, Ramchandraji did not agree with her. Instead, he was adamant on taking her to the palace and give her all worldly pleasures. The puzzling thing was that this was Ramchandraji's last birth (ie. He was going to attain salvation immediately after death) and in spite of this he was denying monkhood. Doesn't this seem weird ? Why such a mental state ? The reason is straight forward. Sitaji's royal nature and an increasing feeling of gratitude towards him in spite of difficult situations increased Rama's respect, love and affection towards her. This in turn did not let him leave Sita and he became a barrier for her desire of renunciation.

Why did Sitaji decide to walk on the path of renunciation ? Let's unfold the secret mystery behind her resolution.

Secret behind Sitaji's resolution to renounce the world :

When Sitaji was forsaken in the forest on Ram's order without any prior warnings, she must have thought –

“Only and only my past karmas are responsible for this unexpected occurrence. The main reason is my thirst for sensual desires which led me to this situation. Because I got married and sought the refuge of a worldly man, today this day has come that he himself left me. Thus the prime culprit is my thirst for sensual desires.

My Lord says that you should renounce the world at the tender age of eight, so that you do not get trapped in the worldly sorrows and troubles. I did not follow God’s orders and thus it is my offence in the first place. Once I get rid of these sorrows and troubles, I will definitely walk on Lord Mahavir’s path.

This was her resolution and now she got the chance, then why would she delay her decision ?

She was now happy and stable not because of the tempting chance to enjoy the palatial pleasures as a queen but because of her long time desire of renunciation which was soon going to be fulfilled. “Forsaking all such heavenly comfort, how to walk on the laborious path of renunciation ?” She had no such fear. Her decision was firm. She strongly believed **‘Adversity is the stepping stone to success.’**

Renunciation means a sinless life ultimately leading to eternal happiness. Therefore, why to fear short-term present adversities if eternal happiness is ensured in the long run ?

Thinking on these lines, worldly life is also full of difficulties. Because of our attachment we overlook those difficulties. Moreover the worldly life is temporary and full of sins.

Till sins are present, salvation is impossible. Only a sinless ascetic life can lead to salvation. Therefore consider all the troubles in this ascetic life as a stepping stone towards eternal peace. What is the value of temporary worldly pleasures as

compared to eternal infinite happiness ? Thus, a difficult but beneficial ascetic life is worth accepting.

Sita had already made a firm resolution to accept ascetism. Then do you think that such temporary difficulties would scare her ? Would momentary material pleasures tempt her ? While experiencing life's toughest problems, she had already deduced the world's true nature and decided her future plan of action. Despite of changing circumstances, her decision was firm !

Here, the question will definitely rise,

Q. How can you say that the decision to renounce this materialistic world was taken by Sita during her days of adversity in the forest ? Couldn't she have taken the decision spontaneously ?

A. No. The reason here is,

- Previously she was sent to exile with Rama for 12 long years. At that time the feeling of non-attachment did not rise. She did not feel that 'instead of roaming, in the forest without shelter renouncing the world is a better option.'
- After that, Ravana had abducted her. At that time also she did not feel the need for monkhood. This is evident because after that period also she stayed in the luxuries of the royal palace.

But here, right after the miraculous event of fire transforming into water she declared her desire to walk on the path of renunciation. This proves that she must have strengthened the feeling of non-attachment during her days in forest. She must have reflected that the thirst for sensual desires is in the centre of all her problems. Therefore, 'I will definitely accept ascetism once I am freed of this accusation. Because if I accept ascetism now when I am accused guilty it will cause harm to Jainism.'

Ignorant people will say, “Look, her husband threw her out of the house because she stayed at another man’s place and now she has become a saint. Such a wonderful religion ! First commit grave mistakes and then accept monkhood to attain respect and felicitation.”

“Thus such an act can degrade Jainism. Instead, it is advisable to wait till the accusation on me is cleared. People will understand that I was pure and will not get a chance to speak against Jainism.” Sitaji must have made up her mind in this way during her days of exile. At present, the situation was different and favourable.

- Rama now regretted his act.
- Rama’s affection and respect for Sita increased.
- Sita had two brave and devoted sons at her service.
- She now possessed all the luxuries and fame.
- People all around respected and worshipped her.

Inspite of all these conveniences, she was absolutely firm on her decision of renunciation.

Now the question that is bound to arise is –

Q. Isn’t it possible that her decision for renunciation was taken now after the miracle and not during her forest days ? Now witnessing extremely favourable circumstances, she must have concluded that the worldly occurrences are all a drama. “The very husband who threw me out is now feeling regretful. The same people criticized me are now praising and worshipping me. Everything here is fake and momentary. Whom to trust and whom to not ?” Thinking on these lines, she must have developed a strong feeling of non-attachment towards the world and a strong liking for a pure ascetic life. Isn’t this possible ?

A. Yes. This is quite possible in the lives of other great men but here the situation is different. Her husband is regretful because he was wrong previously. Such a feeling of regret is not a mere drama. Similarly, people who are not considering Sita pure and are worshipping her because the truth has unfolded before them. This is also a good sign and cannot be called a drama.

Conclusion : Seeing the current state of affairs, it seems that her decision for renunciation was taken during her forest days. This is also possible because the adversity faced by her when she was forsaken in the forest and criticized by one and all was way more than the difficulties faced by her during the 12 year exile or her arrest at Ravana's place. It is very difficult to bear such insults and hatred for any virtuous person. At such a time, luxuries and comforts seem immaterial.

Thus Sita must have thought that there is no point of enjoying luxuries and comforts which eventually result in destruction and insults. Therefore once I am proved innocent, I will not commit the foolishness of enjoying temporary material pleasures. Instead, I will leave this selfish world and walk on the path of renunciation.

Hence, it is proved that Sitaji must have decided to accept monkhood at the time of her forest days.

But such a decision is not at all easy. Even in today's times people have to undergo great difficulties. They are cheated and trapped again and again. In spite of this, they do not realize that attachment for sensual pleasures is the root of all the problem.

Hence, Sitaji's decision is worth appreciation and acceptance. Considering her a role model, one should try to become indifferent to worldly pleasures which is the root of all the problem.

We were talking about the instance wherein Sitaji refused to return to Ayodhya after the miraculous event. Rama and Lakshmana were forcing her repeatedly but she did not give in to their wishes. Look, what an amazing logical answer she gave them !

Sitaji says, "Do not unnecessarily force me."

"I have been attacked by the mighty Karmasatta plenty of times in the previous births. Moreover in this birth, too, I have faced the terrible burnt of Karmasatta thrice. Now I do not want to give it another chance."



4. Mighty Karmasatta

3 crucial attacks of Karmasatta on Sita :

Sitaji says; Look following are Karmasatta's attacks on me.

When I got married, I was enthusiastic that I have got an exceptionally brave and reputed husband – King Dashrath's son. I had thought that I will live a royal and happily married life. But Karmasatta attacked me saying, "You wanted a royal life. But instead I will show you the difficulties of exile. "Thus,

- (1) I was forced to leave the palatial pleasures and roam about in the forest.
- (2) In spite of the exile. I was not dejected. Instead, I consoled myself saying,

"Though I was forced to leave the palace but my husband is with me. I was not married to the palatial comforts but I was married to Rama, a true gentleman and he is with me. I was attached to my husband and not with servants, ornaments, royal feasts and chariots. So if I lose them, what's the big deal ? My husband is safe and thus everything is safe."

No sooner did I make up my mind in this manner, than Karmasatta took another shot at me. You were happy that your husband is safe with you, right ! Now look what I do ! Thus it made Ravana kidnap me. Now where was my husband's safe shelter ?

(3) Karmasatta's third terrible attack – Rama came fought and defeated Ravana, brought me back to Ayodhya and made me the Queen. At that time I heaved a sigh of relief but it was short-term. Karmasatta had another mighty attack planned. It exclaimed, “You think that you got rid of all worries and sorrows but wait ! Now you have to face the most dreadful sorrow wherein your husband himself suspects and insults you and throws you out in the forest alone.” Thus Karmasatta forced me out in the forest.

Thus, I bore the burnt of the mighty Karmasatta for 3 times. Now you invite me to come to Ayodhya and enjoy the joys and comforts of a kingly life. That means, you are inviting me to wait for Karmasatta's fourth attack !”

“Forgive me. I am not giving Karmasatta another chance.”

“Why give Karmasatta another chance to attack ? Instead, I will attack karmas using Jainism's weapon of non-violence, penance and control over senses. It will surely eliminate my karmas. Thus, a pure ascetic life is a sure path to succeed.”

Great was Sitaji's understanding !

We should take a moral from all the above three incidents.

Moral 1 :

(1) During the first instance, Sita was confident that for lifetime, her stay at the palace would be smooth and comfortable. But her confidence was smashed into pieces.

How can Karmasatta breach someone's trust so heartlessly ?

Karma is not only of one type. Punya karma* is also of different types. eg. The first and foremost good karma is the

* **Punya Karma** - Auspicious karma which leads to attainment of good things.

achievement of human birth which includes in it various other fortunous things like a precious life, strength, power, wealth, respect, good food, a high intelligence, family, servants, good neighbours, etc. How can each of this Punyakarma cheat us ? It is quite evident in the world around us.

Eg.

- Laying back on the punya of this precious life, suddenly this life is snatched away !
- Testing the long life of wealth, you are enjoying a luxurious life and in no time you become wealth less.
- You have complete faith in your physical strength and unexpectedly you are afflicted by some disease or an accident and you end up losing your strength.

Thus it implies that each of the above punya karmas come alongwith a trust breaking factor. Every living creature becomes a victim of this breach of trust and thus lives in a miserable state.

Then, now you have to decide that if such break of trust done by one Punya karmas really pinches us, then how can we happily live in this world whose happiness is completely dependent on favourable Punya karmas ?

Imagine that an employer has 25 employees working under him who are all untrustworthy. Now, will he be able to stay at peace ?

Then, how can we live happily ? From whom are we deriving happiness ? Wealth, wife, property, relatives or your own body ? Nothing is trustworthy. In trivial matters unexpectedly your wife or children get upset, wealth is lost or your property is spoilt. Someday your head starts aching, sometimes your back and suddenly one day your leg gets fractured. Suddenly

one morning the market crashed down or your relatives feel offended. What is all this ? Everything is working well and suddenly your trust is broken.

Now, the question here is that,

Living amidst all such untrustworthy factors, how is happiness and mental peace possible ? Your heart needs to be exceptionally tough for that.

But our answer is,

Though it is untrustworthy, it gives happiness. Isn't it enough ?

Wife is beautiful and devoted in service but has relations with another man, will the husband be satisfied thinking that the relations with another man are immaterial as far as my wife is giving me happiness. If a man thinks in this manner, then isn't he really tough ? What is the value and image of such a man ?

Similarly, such worldly relations and things are all untrustworthy and inspite of experiencing its true form, everyone is living in absolute peace and gay. Isn't this toughness ? What is the value of such people in the eyes of the learned ?

You might answer, "We understand everything but it isn't easy to leave all this ?"

"You are right. Everything cannot be forsaken completely but atleast you can utilise those untrustworthy things for the betterment of the soul, can't you ?

- Eyes can ditch you anytime. But atleast till the time they are good you can repeatedly go to the temple and visualize the Almighty. You can worship innumerable saints with these eyes. You can also read various scriptures and good literature. Now tell me, isn't the optimum utilisation of eyes possible every now and then ?

- Similarly this tongue also has so many good uses. How many do we adopt ? Do we think that this tongue can cheat me and thus we should utilize it smartly ? Speak good, sing Lord's devotional songs and chants, recite scriptural verses, and talk about the virtues of great men.

“All those whom we trust, can someday unexpectedly break our trust” If this is properly fit in our mind, then not only eyes and tongue but we will utilize all other parts of the body also optimally. We will also be always alert to use our wealth, family, property, business, profits, etc. also for good religious uses like devotion of God, serving saints, charity to the poor, reverence of scriptures, etc.

While getting up in the morning, sit back and think “The mighty Karmasatta deceived the great, fortunate Sita. Will it be loyal to me ? Will it work according to my expectations ? Will it timely serve me ?”

Not only me, but this Karmasatta and material objects can betray the entire world.

Hence we should do as many good deeds as we can till they are in our favour.

Thus during Karmasatta's first attack, the calculation to stay happy and enjoy palatial pleasures suddenly transformed into the troublesome forest life. Karmasatta's tight slap ! It also teaches that your Punya can break your trust untimely.



5. Religion and Character

(2) Karmasatta's second strike at Sita was when Ravana abducted her. Even though Sita was efficiently protected by brave Rama and Lakshmana and was not left alone in the jungle, Karmasatta created such a situation that Ravana kidnapped her.

Ravana laid a trap wherein Rama was made to feel that his near ones were attacked and his help was urgently required. For protection of the needy, Rama was drawn far away and then Ravana made a fake lion roar.

Hearing the lion roar Sita told Lakshmana, "Go fast. Your brother seems to be in deep waters. Go there and rescue him."

Lakshmana replied, "No one can harm my brother, such is his might. Do not worry. Moreover how can I leave you alone in this forest?"

Sita spoke, "In this selfish world, even the mighty can be trapped by sly means. Thus, swiftly go and rescue your brother from the trap. No one will harm me. And whatever it is, I should first ensure my Lord, Rama's security. Thus you should go without any further delay."

Look at Karma's game !

First Ravana laid the trap, then took Rama away and then eventually dragged away Lakshmana, too. Sitaji was living a tension-free life assuming that she was safe in the protection of two capable men. Then what had she to worry ? Being able to live in peace is the fruit of Punya. But punya is untrustworthy.

As a result, Rama and Lakshmana were forced to move away and Ravana appeared in front of Sita disguised as a hermit.

Ravana came near Sita's hut and called out, "Mother ! Will you give me alms ?" No sooner did Sita come out with food, than Ravana quickly snatched her and took her in his plane.

Who has the power to overcome such traps ? The entire world is full of such illusion and deceit. Even if you have to compulsorily stay in this cunning world, how can you be tension-free and live a relaxed life ? Infinite living beings have been cheated here.

"The entire world is filled with such untrustworthy things and that is why learned men call this world hopeless."

In this precious human birth, we have numerous opportunities for exercising religion and developing noble virtues and character. Who will miss these chances ? Only those who trust temporary material objects and occurrences. Instead if we understand that it is better to do charity, penance, serve saints, revere God before we are deprived of our punya, if we heartily feel the desire to cultivate virtues of forgiveness, humility, modesty, then this human birth will surely be utilised.

Great men of the past were hence religious and virtuous. They understood the destructive nature of worldly objects and situations and thus till they were favourable, used them for increasing their religious activities and virtues.

We were sinful and vicious since infinite births. This is the birth to forsake sins and become religious. This is the chance to leave vices and cultivate virtues.

Imagine the stake of Chandanbala :

She was sold in the market, and bought by Dhanasheth. Not only did she lose the royal comforts of her father's palace,

but she also lost her mother's lap. She had now landed in the Jain merchant's house as a trade girl. How immense was her sorrow ! But she did not cry, plead or accuse anyone. She knew that it was a sin.

She had the following things in mind :

- (1) Understanding the nature of her previous karmas, she stayed calm and composed.
- (2) Second, she accepted the refuge of the Arihanta Lords at all times. "I am in the shelter of the great Arihantas." Thus I have absolutely nothing to worry. He will take care of everything. I have to only take care of Him.

Thus, her heart and mind overflowed with the above two thoughts. Where was there place for hatred or anger ? Why commit the sins of allusion and deceit ?

I have attained the shelter of the great Arihantas and the glorious Jinshasana. Then it is essential to leave the sins and vices accumulated over past births.

Sit back and think about Chandanbala's difficult situation – A princess by birth now living as a slave ! Add to it Dhanasheth's jealous and cruel wife who shaved her hair off and locked her in a dungeon depriving her off food and water.

Inspite of all these adversities, she possessed -

- Remarkable tolerance
- Awesome composure
- Amazing humility
- Astounding devotion for God
- Faithful chanting of Lord Mahavir's name even though she was hungry, thirsty shut in the dungeons for 3 long days of summer.

It is easy to achieve all this if our life is complete with religion and character.

Life is fragrant only because of this. If we do not want to make our life fragrant by increasing religion and developing virtues, then what is the difference between our life and that of dogs and cows ? Such a life will not reap any good fruits in the next birth and thus will go waste.

Ravana laid a trap, cleverly kidnapped Sita and kept her in the Ashokvatika amidst tight security. What joy would he be gaining ? Kidnapping someone's wife and keeping her encaged gave him happiness. Ravana was mighty but the thirst for sensual pleasures disturbs the mighty as well.

Here, during Karmasatta's second attack, Sita was separated from her husband but she did not wail. She consoled her mind that, **“I am separated from my husband not because of any mistakes by him or me but because of Ravana's crime.”**

Though I am separated from my husband by Ravana's arrest, he does not have the power to spoil my character. Sitaji's resolution to maintain her character is strong. She very well knows why Ravana has abducted her. Now let's see if Sita can protect her character in front of the mighty Ravana.

Sita was kept imprisoned in Ashokvatika. When Ravana came to meet her for the first time, she challenged him, “Hey Ravana ! Stay 3.5 feet away and talk to me. If you try to cross this boundary, then understand that you will get Sita's dead body and not Sita. A dead body is then feast for vultures, not humans.”

Thus Sita was ready to die by crushing her tongue if Ravana attempted to touch her. Now how will the mighty Ravana be able to break Sita's character ?

Chandanbala's mother's example :

What happened in Chandanbala's mother's case ? The soldier was taking her by the forest path and while walking he said, "Do not worry. Though your husband is no more, you are not alone. I will make you my wife." Hearing this, the great Dharini crushed her tongue and committed suicide. The soldier was left astonished and scared.

Now, the question here is –

Just for the sake of protecting your character, why to give away your body which can be the cause of many religious deeds in future ?

Q. Is it appropriate to deliberately destroy this precious human life ? If you do not commit suicide and stay alive, there is a great chance for numerous religious deeds and development of virtues right upto renunciation.

A. This calculation is wrong. Because, if you destroy the foundation of religion-character for saving your life, then you actually destroy your religious outlook. 'Let character be affected, atleast my life is saved' – such a mental state gives importance to life which is after all material and ignores character which is spiritually impactful. It puts character at a second step.

Howmuchevery religion you exercise after ignoring character once; ultimately religion will always stay at second priority in life.

This is because though you saved your life for future religious activities, but as present you gave importance to life ignoring character. Hence, your mental state will be developed in such a way. "Life is more precious than religion. Religion and character occupy a secondary position." Such a mental state is harmful in the long run."

To avoid such a situation compassionate King Kumarpal was ready to burn himself alive for the sake of saving the life of a he-goat. Even Chandanbala's mother Dharini walked on the same path. Character was of primary importance in her life. Dharini's suicide scared the soldier. "What if her daughter also dies in a similar way ? Like mother, like daughter !"

Hence, he immediately assured Chandanbala saying, "Dear ! Do not do the same. Do not give up your life. I will neither harm you nor make you my wife."

Such courageous women protect their character more than their life. They do not fear to forsake their life for the sake of protection of their chastity.

Q. But how can you crush your tongue yourself and take your life ?

A. It is possible if :

- (1) You visualize a good character as the essence of life. If you lose the essence, then what is the worth of the remaining life ? **Courageous women have a firm resolution in this matter and hence to do not hesitate to commit suicide.** Because for them leaving their life is easier than breaking their purity and chastity.
- (2) The second reason which gives them the courage to give up their life is imagining the dreadful sorrows of hell which they would have to suffer if they broke their chastity. To avoid the long-term miseries they prefer to give up their life and guard their character.

The courageous Sita, was prepared for this. Hence, she could challenge Ravana to keep safe distance. Ravana also understood her pledge.

Ravana's great oath :

Ravana also had an oath that, 'I will not touch someone else's wife without her consent.' Thus Ravana did not come close to Sita. Here you can imagine Ravana's greatness as well. His thirst for sensual pleasures was not only insatiable but increasing each day. In spite of this he stood by his oath to get involved with another woman only if she wished to. Sita was nothing less than a beautiful goddess on earth. But if she did not consent to a relation with him, he would not compel her to do so.

This also requires great determination. Once you make a resolution, sticking to it in spite of adverse circumstances also demands courage and strength. Attractive and admirable Sita was right in front of him. There was absolute privacy and the fragrant atmosphere was also favourable to satisfy his passion. But he was firm on his pledge and did not break it.

Q. He was so determined that he did not want to force himself on Sita. Also Sita was never going to agree. It implied that eventually he had to return back Sita. Then what caused the destruction of Ravana ?

A. Pride was the cause of Ravana's destruction.



6. Soul – A Slave ?

The nature of Ravana's Pride :

Ravana's pride, ego, self-respect made him think on these lines – “Sita is never going to voluntarily agree for this relation and thus is useless for me. Then what is the need to keep her here ? I should hand her over back to Rama. But if I do so, people will think that, ‘Ravana got scared and did not want to fight Rama-Lakshmana in war. He feared that he will not only lose Sita but also his kingdom to Rama and hence preferred to return back Sita. This will make me infamous and will decrease my goodwill.

Am I a coward that I will return back Sita fearing my defeat ? Not at all. I can win in war. I have defeated numerous mighty kings, then where do Rama-Lakshmana stand ? I will defeat them on the war field, get them in my palace and out of sympathy hand over Sita safely. Then people will sing my glory, “Look ! Ravana is valorous and generous. He achieved victory over Rama-Lakshmana and gave back Sita, too.”

Just to keep his self-respect intact, inspite of suppressing his craving for Sita, he paved his way towards destruction. His desire for sensual pleasures reduced but his pride overcame him.

In this material world, this soul is slave to desire for sensual pleasures as well as passionate feelings of anger, pride, deceit and greed. What is the worth of such a soul ?

He is enslaved by one object or other. He is entrapped by anger or greed, pride or deceit. Soul, itself seems helpless.

It cannot suppress any of the above. Does this slavery pinch the soul ?

Temporary materialistic pleasures, temporary happiness from negative feelings like anger and pride which are followed by misery and a long birth-cycle in future is this soul's slavery.

Ravana prioritized his pride and what did he achieve in return ? He had overcome his craving for Sita but in spite of that, his pride took him right upto 4th hell. Imagine the harmful repercussions of pride !

Moral – Stay Alert !

The above incident teaches us to reduce our attachment towards worldly pleasures. We should leave some, reduce some and take vows to limit the remaining, because these pleasures prove to be a danger for the soul. Similarly anger, pride, deceit, hatred, jealousy, etc. are all dangerous. Hence, the mind has to be alert always –

‘I have attained the great Jinshasan which is like a doctor for the disease like negative feelings and cravings. This Jinshasan doctor provides the medicine of (1) 4 types of religion – charity, character, penance and good feelings, (2) Non-violence, renunciation, penance (3) 10 great virtues of forgiveness, celibacy, honesty, etc. Using these powerful medicines, why can't we uproot these diseases ? Infact we are continually adding fuel to these diseases by way of implementing the forbidden. Isn't this our foolishness and stupidity ?

We have fortunately attained this glorious Jinshasana and holy Jain religion. **In this precious Jinshasana and human birth, if we do not work towards the betterment of the soul and thereby eliminate our diseases in which other birth will we be able to do so ? If I do not utilize Jinshasana, then what is the point of gaining it. This should be our daily worry.**

Hence, King Kumarpal intensely wished, “Though I do not get a kingdom in the next birth, though I am born poor but I wish that I attain this precious Jainism without fail which will result in the removal of my desires and negative passions.

Each samyaktvi, each Jain householder should daily contemplate on this, “May Jainism be the cause of removal of my soul’s disease of birth and death. May my sensual desires subside. May my increasing temperaments of anger, pride, etc. die down !”



7. A True Jain's Prayer

Everyday while doing Chaityavandana, we recite the Jaya Viyaraya Sootra which says, “Dukkhkhaio, Kammakkhaio... sampajjau.” It means that we pray to Almighty to eliminate our sorrows. Which are these sorrows ? Are we asking for the removal of the sorrows of poverty, calamity, slavery, etc. ? No, we pray to God for the elimination of our soul's sorrows of sensual desires and passionate feelings of anger, greed, etc. We want these sorrows to be eliminated. Because these are the real sorrows which are troubling the soul since times eternal. Also, it is evident that many a times, we are not afflicted by poverty or slavery but the unquenchable thirst for sensual desires keeps us disturbed. Thus, these are the major sorrows which troubles the soul and hence need to removed.

A true Jain householder is constantly worried about this, “If I do not eliminate these soul's sorrows even after acquiring the great Jinshasan, then what will be my soul's state in the next births ?

Thus, a true Shravaka is constantly worried about his next births. His vision is focused on,

- **I do not want to surrender to sensual pleasures and vicious feelings and thus carry forward its negative effects in the next birth.**
- **The prime importance of this human birth is to eliminate these soul's sorrows by way of non-violence, forgiveness, penance, etc.**

He does not just sit back and think but also implements as much as he can. Even after exercising possible religious activities he analyses that –

- (1) Did these religious activities reduce my desire for sensual pleasures, my passionate feelings of anger, greed, etc. ?
 - (2) How many more vices are left to eliminate ?
- Q.** How did Shalibhadra forsake his tremendous wealth and comforts ? Thinking about the intensity of the dreadful birth cycle –

When you contemplate upon the life of previous great men, you will realize that they all left their happy and comfortable life because they understood the dreadful nature of this world and developed a feeling of non-attachment towards it. Feeling the dreadful repercussions of sensual desires and vices, great men left the materialistic comforts without a second thought and accepted the path of non-violence, penance, renunciation. Does this surprise you ? It shouldn't but it definitely does. You may be wondering that,

- (1) Hey ! Jambukumar, you left abundant wealth amounting to 99 crore gold coins just by listening Lord Mahavira's one sermon...
- (2) Hey ! Shalibhadra you suddenly left your 32 beautiful wives as well the 99 boxes of ornaments, clothes, etc. that came to you from heaven each day.
- (3) O Dhanyakumar ! You left the enormous wealth amounting to 32 crore gold coins by just listening to Lord Mahavira's one sermon. You accepted the path of renunciation on the next day itself.

Each of these incidents surprises you.

Instead you should be surprised by the fact that this dreadful birth cycle doesn't pinch you and being completely indifferent to it you are basking in the glory of materialistic comforts and luxuries.

Actually, we do not want to visualize the terrible consequences of materialistic pleasures as well as anger, greed, ego, etc. but we want to enjoy the momentary pleasures derived out of them. Thus, all efforts to obtain these instruments of joy, to retain and enjoy them seem easy and natural but to forsake all these seems surprising.



8. A Clear Vision

Change your vision :

The innumerable knowledgeable men were not fools that they renounced this world. Sanatkumar Chakravati, Meghkumar, Gajasukumal, Metaraj Muni... all great personalities also did not ignorantly give up these worldly pleasures and step into the ascetic world.

Thus, the path of renunciation preached by the omniscient Almighty and implemented by great Chakravartis and kings should definitely appeal to us.

We should heartily feel that renunciation is the true essence of life. Once we strengthen this feeling, life will seem fruitful if we reduce our worldly attachments and it will seem worthless if our worldly attachments increase.

Once our vision is developed in this manner, then someone's decision for renunciation will not surprise us. Instead, we will feel pity on ourselves for not being able to forsake this selfish and temporary world.

Thus thinking on these lines, Sitaji accepted monkhood inspite of attaining respect, fame and a grand, royal life. Her decision persuades us to think, "Why I am still seated amidst these temporary pleasures ? Why can't I follow Sita on her path of renunciation ? This incident of Sitaji's life increases her fame and glorifies her character.

After accepting monkhood, she lived such a holy life that she was reborn as an Indra* in the 12th heaven named Achyuta.

You may ask,

Q. Becoming an Indra in the Achyuta heaven – is it a great achievement ?

A. Yes, it is a great achievement. Because the Achyutendra acquires the first chance to perform the Janmabhisheka* of numerous Tirthankara Lords born in the 5 Bharat, Airavat, Mahavideha regions. 64 Indras and crores of celestial beings gather to perform Lord's birth ceremony on the eternal Mountain Meru. Among all of them, Achyutendra gets the first chance. There is no bidding or competition to decide who will do the first Abhisheka. But it is nature's law since times eternal that Achyutendra gets the first chance. Thus, not by any hassle or opposition but naturally and deservingly Sita's soul acquires the glorious right to perform Lord's Janmabhisheka...

No. of times Sita's soul (which became Indra) will get the chance to perform the Jammabhisheka of Tirthankara Lords –

Not 5-25, 100-200, 1-2 lakhs times but Sita gets the chance to perform the Janmabhisheka of innumerable Lords 'Asankhya' times. Can you imagine this figure of Asankhya (Innumerable) ? It isn't limited to lakhs, crores, millions, billions or even trillions. Because these figures are equivalent to a mere drop compared to the figure of 'Asankhya' which is like an enormous ocean. This figure of 'Asankhya' is measured in our scriptures by the example of 'Anavasthita – Shalaka – Pratishalaka – Mahashalaka'. Imagine Sita's fortune !

* **Indra** – Head of celestial beings

* **Janmabhisheka** – A ritual wherein Tirthankara Lords are showered with holy waters by heavenly beings right after their birth.

Achyutendra*'s life span is as much as 22 Sagaropama* which is equivalent to 220 crore \times 1 crore Palyopama. Every Palyopama measures innumerable years and in this time span innumerable (Asankhya) Tirthankaras are born in the 5 Mahavideha regions. This calculation is limited to the time span of 1 Palyopama. But Achyutendra's life span is as huge as 220 crore \times 1 crore Palyopama. Now imagine the innumerable no. of Tirthankara Lord's which are born in this time span.

Calculation of 220 crore \times 1 crore Palyopama :

This figure is equivalent to, not only 220 Palyopama, not 220 hundred Palyopama, but 220 crore Palyopama ! That means 2 million, 20 crore Palyopama ! This much timespan should pass not once, not 100 times, not 1000 times, not 1,00,000 times but 1 crore times. i.e. when 220 crore Palyopama passes 1 crore times, the total time period amounts to 220 crore \times crore Palyopama. This is the life span of the Indra of Achyuta heaven. At present, Sita's soul is the Achyutendra.

Now rethink and imagine this figure,

Out of the total period 220 crore, keep aside 20 crore. The remainder is 200 crore equal to 2 millions. Now these 2 million Palyopama pass not 100,1000,1,00,000 times but 1 crore times. Imagine this vast time span ! Add to it 20 crore Palyopama which also pass 1 crore times. The Achyutendra enjoys the right to perform the Janmabhisheka of all the Tirthankaras which are born during this enormous time period.

Sitaji is reborn as this Achyutendra. Now think, isn't it a great opportunity to perform the Janmabhisheka on Tirthankar Lord himself amidst 63 other Indras and crores of celestial beings

* **Achyutendra** – Head of the heavenly abode named 'Achyuta'

* **Sagaropama, Palyopama** – A scriptural term to measure time.

even once ! And if you get this chance innumerable times, what a great fortune ! What must be the feelings experienced by the Indra while performing such an auspicious deed ! Such auspicious feelings repeatedly leads to an enormous pile of noble deeds.

Now moving ahead, we have to contemplate on the reason behind this great jackpot. The ascetic life that she accepted must have been so pure, full of penance – non-violence and resistance over temptations that she got such a grand chance which again resulted in the rise of auspicious feelings and devotion towards Tirthankara Lords.



9. Exceptional Ascetic Life

Mahasati Sita's life was complete with the Following 3 Things :

- (1) Unflinching Faith and Right Perception
- (2) Non-Violence-Renunciation and Penance
- (3) Overflowing Devotion towards the Almighty

Sitaji's Faith and Perception was evident right from her household life. When she was left in the forest, do you know what she told the soldier who was ordered to leave her ?

Sitaji's words while being left alone in the forest :

She addressed the soldier," Why are you crying ? It is not your fault. You are a mere servant. It is your duty to obey the king's orders. Obeying your employer's command is a virtue and not a crime. Alongwith you, it is my duty also to follow your Lord's order because he is my Lord, my husband, too. Hence, I voluntarily get off this chariot. And,understand, it is not your Lord's fault also. Nor is it the fault of those who are criticizing me. Only and only my past karmas are responsible for this. No one else is to blame. My bad karmas instigated the people to criticize me and my husband, your Lord king Rama to believe them. You return back. Do not worry about me. Because at the end it is my karmas that will determine my state.

A well-known verse says –

“Savvam puvvakayānam, kammānam pāvae falavivāgam,
Avrāhesu gunesu ya, nimittamittam paro hoi.”

It means, whatever good or bad that we attain is all dependent on our previous good or bad karmas. Others are merely an instrument. Sitaji continues, “When such inauspicious karmas fructify neither you nor your Lord do anything to stop them. Thus leave this incident and my state to karmas and you go back to your Lord without my tension.”

Doesn't Sitaji's right perception reflect in her conversation with the soldier? Right perception is possible only if you possess exceptional faith in Almighty's words. Also this faith should be evident from your actions and thoughts and not be limited to mere words.

When you are passing through life's good phase, you shouldn't feel proud and stay on cloud 9. Instead, you should realize that this is all karma's game. Today it is favouring me, tomorrow it may not. Hence, I shouldn't be overwhelmed if something good happens to me. This is the ideal outlook if you possess the right perception and faith in Almighty's words.

When you are surrounded by adversity, you will not be dejected and start blaming one another. No one is to blame except my own karmas. Hence, I shouldn't be annoyed if something bad happens. It's all my own karma's game. Once these karmas show their fruits, they will get exhausted.

Madanrekha's heart-touching incident :

Madanrekha's husband was killed by his own brother. What did she tell her husband at this point of time? “Why get angry on your brother? Do not think otherwise. All that happened was only due to your own karmas. Your brother is merely an instrument. Do not get annoyed on him.”

“Your brother is similar to an axe's handle . It is not the axe's wooden handle which cuts the wood but the sharp axe blade. Similarly, only your karmas are responsible for your death, not

your brother. He is at the axe's handle position. Thus, if you have thought against him, then forgive him at once. Cultivate feelings of friendship and brotherhood. Pray God to bless him and seek the refuge of 4 eternal shelters- Arihantas, Siddhas, Sadhus (saints) and Dharma (religion). Condemn your bad deeds and appreciate your good acts. Engross yourself in the meditation of Navakar Mantra.

What miracle did Madanrekha's words perform ? Her husband developed a feeling of forgiveness and equanimity. He attained a peaceful death and eventually became a celestial being in the 5th heaven. If Madanrekha wouldn't have explained the karma philosophy to him, instead supported his negative thoughts saying, 'What a rascal your brother turned out to be !' 'How could he perform such a criminal act?', then what would have been the outcome ? Her husband's negative feelings and a desire for revenge would have increased and he would have landed up in hell.

**The real advantage of attaining Jinshasan and right perception, the core of what Jinshasan has to say is this-
"In this world, whatever good or bad that happens to you is only dependent on your good or bad karmas."**

Mahasati Madanrekha's glorious faith and perception was in sync with this principle. She had heartily accepted and applied this principle in her life. Only then, could she console her husband and remind him this golden karma theory at such a critical time when her husband was killed by his own elder brother and she was going to be a widow in no time. Such appealing were her words that she was successful in eliminating hatred and animosity from her husband's mind. Not only this, she ensured that her husband forgave his brother and attained a peaceful death, thus saving him from the clutches of hell.

Now think upon this

Madanrekha was a prince's young, beautiful wife and she had to face such an adverse situation. Her thought process during such a time was so deep and true. What an amazing advice she gave her husband ! How was all this possible ? Only because of her unflinching faith in the Lord, His teachings and the right perception she possessed.

Sitaji's situation was almost similar to Madanrekha's while being left alone in the forest. In spite of this, she taught the soldier the real fundamentals of life with the help of her right perception. She told him, "Neither you, nor your Lord, nor the ignorant people are responsible for my present state. Only my previous karmas and my attraction for sensual pleasures are to be blamed. Thus, you needn't cry. Tell your Lord that only my bad karmas forced him to do this. He is innocent." Imagine the intensity of Sitaji's sorrow – A great beautiful queen who was thrown out of the palace and left in the forest by her own husband !

The more dejecting part is that in spite of being absolutely pure and chaste, she was defamed by the people in this manner, "This Sita has stayed at Ravana's place and hence cannot be trusted and considered pure." This accusation had the greatest sorrow because she had taken tremendous efforts, overcome fears and temptations to keep her chastity and character untouched and this is what she got in return !

In spite of such adverse circumstances, Sita's unflinching faith and perception is worth admiration ! Then imagine her faith in Almighty's words after she became an ascetic ! Wouldn't her right perception have brightened with the aid of the noble path of renunciation ? We are concentrating on this because this is the real reason behind Sita becoming the Achyutendra and

getting the golden opportunity to perform the Janmabhisheka of innumerable Tirthankara Lords. Her exceptional perception and faith made her reach this position.

The noble path of renunciation motivates you to follow the 10 types of Yatidharma, bear difficulties, implement samitis and guptis in your life and thus strengthens your faith in the Karma philosophy. This is the way to stop bondage of karmas.

Stronger and purer the perception, stronger will be the faith and implementation of the various ways preached to stop the bondage of karmas. This in turn strengthens your perception. The cycle goes on.

Knowledgeable and great men say that even after accepting monkhood you should study scriptures like ‘Sanmati Tarka’ which strengthen your right perception.

Q. Right conduct (path of renunciation) is the outcome/of right perception. You have already accepted the path of renunciation. Hence you should take efforts to improve this right conduct more and more. Instead why work on strengthening the right perception ?

A. The answer is that as you keep strengthening your faith and purifying your perception, your conduct is also bound to become more strong and intense.

This is evident from day to day life as well.



10. Impact of Increase in Right Perception

- (1) As the affection towards husband increases, eagerness to act according to his desire also increases.
- (2) A love-blind husband is attached to his wife and thus enthusiastically works as per her wishes.
- (3) A patient who trusts his doctor will follow his advice and medications regularly. He will avoid that which is termed unhealthy by the doctor. He will consume only what he is advised to.
- (4) A student who is learning sculpture from a renowned sculptor and has faith in him will leave his own thinking and will implement his teacher's teachings.
- (5) There is a well-known folktale wherein a famous painter is teaching his son how to paint. He would pick out 4-4 mistakes each time his son approached him with a new picture. The son had immense faith in his sculpture knowledge and respect and love for his father which enabled him to follow his words and thus correct his mistakes. He became an efficient sculptor within a period of 6 months.

Similarly, in this ascetic life as the liking for Almighty's words increases, faith in his principles strengthens, implementation of his words i.e. the path of renunciation also becomes stronger. Thus, even after accepting ascetism and renouncing

this material world, it is absolutely essential to strive towards increasing and purifying the right perception. Mahasati Sita must have surely done all this and is thus reborn as an Indra in the 12th heaven ! There, too he got a chance to further purify his perception by way of performing the first Janmabhisheka of innumerable Tirthankara Lords.

Here, alongwith unflinching faith and love for Lord's teachings, the devotion for Lord also played a pivotal role in her rebirth as an Indra.

Sage Tamali's case :

Q. Sage Tamali was a Mithyadrishti. He did not possess any devotion for either Lord or his teachings. In spite of this he was reborn as the Indra in the 2nd heaven- Ishan. There suddenly how did he develop affection towards Lord ? He did not possess such devotion in the previous birth.

A. Two things have to be taken into consideration here –

(1) Though Sage Tamali was a Mithyadristhi, he had understood the real nature of Tirthankara Lords – free from illusion and deceit and thus had developed a strong feeling of affection towards him. Infact, because of this strong affection he renounced his home and accepted the life of a hermit.

The actuality was this – He realized that, “I have been a prey to ignorance and deceit since times eternal. Not only in the births of animals but also in the births of humans in other countries, I have practiced selfishness and cheated others. Now, in this holy human birth, if I continue doing the same, then when will I worship God ? For that I have to retire from this selfish world and go to the lonely forests where I can peacefully devote and worship God. Thinking on these lines, he had become a forest hermit.

Though, he did not have Tirthankara Lord in mind, but his main intention was to worship God – a God who was free of all vices. Thus, why can't such an intention of devotion multiply in the next birth ?

The question here is –

Q. But Sage Tamali had not attained Jain religion and had not identified Tirthankara Lord in the true sense. Then how can you say that he possessed devotion towards Lord which was carried forward in the next birth ?

A. He had not personally identified Arihanta Lord. But he had accepted the one who is free from worldly illusion and deceit as his idol. His God was the one who was like this. He was the follower of such a God.

Such a God is only Arihanta Lord and hence we can say that indirectly he worshipped the Arihantas.

You will always desire to be like your chosen idol.

Sage tamali had chosen the one who was free from illusion and deceit as his God. Therefore when the Bhuvanapati devis came to lure him and move him from his meditation saying, “You decide to become our head (Indra) in the next birth. We will serve you a lot.” At such a time, Sage Tamali thought :

“I have done great penance for 60,000 years. I fasted for two days and on the 3rd day I had mere tasteless rice and that too washed in water for 21 times. I overcame my taste buds not for the sake of these temporary heavenly comforts and attractions but for permanent salvation – a state free from illusion and deceit.”

Thinking on these lines, he did not have even a single glance at those heavenly devis. He continued his meditation peacefully and eventually the devis gave up, angrily spit at him and went away.

Now how was all this possible ? Only because he had established an image of God free from illusion and deceit in his heart. Also, he desired and tried his level best to become like him. This is God's real devotion and true love. Otherwise increasing your passions and desires and then chanting God's name, singing devotional hymns – how will it help ?

Sage Tamali truly believed,

This birth is exclusively for God's devotion. Why commit the blunder of wasting it in worldly illusion and deceit ?

Therefore, "O human being ! Wake up. Leave these worldly attractions and engross yourself in devotion of God !" This is how Sage Tamali became such a great sage. It clearly indicates,

Which is God's supreme devotion ?

Leaving all worldly illusions and attractions including the attachment of the body and then engrossing yourself in the devotion, meditation and appreciation of God's virtues.

Sage Tamali had recognized God as the one free from all worldly bondages and had thus devoted himself to God in the true sense. In this way, if he is reborn as the head of Ishan heaven (Ishanendra), if he becomes Lord's true follower and thus gets the opportunity to perform the Janmabhisheka of innumerable Tirthankara Lords – It is not surprising ! In spite of not attaining Jain religion and not knowing the Tirthankara Lords, Sage Tamali still became the Indra and devoted himself to God because of this above mentioned fact.

(2) Here, the second reason is –

During the later period of his life, Sage Tamali had encountered Jain saints in the forest. From them he had learnt the true principles of Jainism, the real path

of renunciation and had thus identified Tirthankara Lord – free from love and hatred. His devotion towards Tirthankara Lords naturally overflowed because of which he was reborn as the Ishanendra wherein he got an amazing opportunity to rever God. It is sung in thoya. (4 paragraph verses)

“Te Jinpujathi Aaradhaka Ishana Indra Kahayaji”

Sage Tamali became the Ishan Indra in his next birth because of extra ordinary feelings of devotion towards Lord. He used to regularly join himself in the reverence of the beautiful idols of Tirthankaras present in his heavenly abode. He carried out the transformation and beautification of the temples present on the eternal Shatrunjay Mountain. Thus, because of all this he was considered to be Lord’s true devotee. The root of all this lies in his previous birth.

Therefore coming back to Sita, attainment of the 12th heaven and the golden opportunity for God’s devotion was a result of the exceptional devotion towards the Arihantas that she had cultivated in the previous birth as a sadhvi (nun). Her position as an Indra as well as the chance to perform the Janmabhisheka innumerable times was an outcome of terrific devotion towards the Arihantas.

From this we can deduce that devotion towards God is life’s first and foremost “thing to do.”

We are living a precious human life. Thus, devotion and reverence for God becomes a must for each and every one. To constantly increase this devotion, we must forsake as many worldly attachments as we can. This will glorify our devotion and faith in the Arihantas. **Only and only during this human birth, can we adopt such devotion and renunciation. If we keep this in mind, then we can progress on the path of devotion and renunciation.**

While singing Mahasati Sita's glory, we saw how she consoled the soldier by explaining him the Karma philosophy. Who consoles whom? The depressed consoles the joyous or viceversa!

Who is worth consolation? Don't you think that Sita who is thrown out of the palace and left alone in the forest deserves to be consoled? Instead, Sitaji goes a step forward and consoles the soldier who is ordered to leave her alone. What greatness! What royalty!

Not only this, she exhibits exemplary royalty when she delivers an unexpected message to her husband.

Sitaji's Heart-touching Message to Rama :

Before leaving Sita alone in the forest, the soldier politely asks Sita, "I am returning back to Lord Rama. Do you have any message to convey?"

Sita replies, "Tell your Lord that he left me because of people's accusations – not to worry about me. But tomorrow if people start criticizing Jainism saying, "King Ramchandrajai is a fool to stick to Jain principles all the while inspite of ruling over people belonging to 18 different castes." If people say so, then tell him that I beg him not to leave Jainism amidst such circumstances depending on the opinion of ignorant people.

Sitaji patiently continues, "The reason behind this is that even after leaving me, he will get another good princess who might be better and more beautiful than me. This will not prove to be an obstacle on his path of salvation because even after marrying another woman he can leave her, accept the path of ascetism and attain salvation. **But if he happens to leave Jainism because of people's criticism, then he will not find any religion better or even equivalent to Jainism and this will definitely obstruct his path of salvation.**"

Thus forsaking Jainism will eliminate his chances of renunciation without which salvation is impossible. Thus this precious human birth will definitely be wasted !”

Imagine the situation when Sitaji delivered such a message ! She was left alone in the forest in an extremely miserable state – at such a time she conveyed such a message. She could have said something like this, “Message ? You have already killed me alive, now what message you want ?” “Such a breach of trust ?” “Such deceit ?” “Did you inform me while marriage that inspite of your innocence if people accuse and criticize you, I will throw you out of my house and heart ?” “You are afflicting me with pain and troubling me. Now wait and watch as to what will your state be.” Didn’t she feel like telling anything of the above to Rama ?

No. Because her heart was filled with unflinching faith for Arihanta’s teachings. She strongly believed, “My husband is not responsible for my condition. Only and only my karmas are responsible for my present state. It is a clear calculation that in my previous birth I had troubled someone and those karmas of mine are now troubling me. Knowledgeable men’s declaration that, **“Any activities and sensual pleasures done in this world are eventually going to end in sorrow and pain.”** proves to be true. Thus my act of getting married, my thirst for sensual pleasures has led me to this state.

Such a clear calculation was right in front of Sita’s eyes. Then how would she find her husband’s fault ? She will believe her attachment for sensual pleasures to be the real fault.

Our course of action during critical periods :

Learning about Sita’s message, we can understand the vision of a person who has truly and heartily accepted and implemented religion. **During such adverse conditions, she drew Rama’s attention towards the path of religion and salvation.**

- (1) You left me, but never leave religion.
- (2) Your path of salvation will not be hindered in my absence but will surely be hindered in the absence of religion.

The above two messages indicate that a true religious person always considers religion to be an integral part of life and never forgets his ultimate goal of salvation. Sitaji must have definitely done this; only then could she remember religion in adverse times.

You can remember religion and salvation in times of adversity only if you have given it considerable importance during times of prosperity.

You earned money and prosperous times prevailed. At such a time you will immediately consider it to be a result of religion exercised in the previous birth. I have attained this wealth because of charity, compassion, devotion of God and Guru exercised in the previous birth. Thus as this prosperity is an outcome of religion; today I will utilize these prosperous times to exercise religion and noble acts and not for sinful activities.

It is a logical deduction. If prosperous times prevail because of religion exercised in the past, then adversity is bound to attack us in future because of our present sins and violent activities. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to be constantly alert and keep a religious outlook all the time.



11. The True Vision

A religious soul's ultimate goal – Salvation :

If you focus on religion during times of prosperity, then you can focus on religion during times of adversity as well. Similarly, if you focus on salvation during times of prosperity, only then can you focus on salvation during times of adversity.

During prosperous times you should constantly warn yourself that this prosperity is not permanent. Only the happiness in salvation is permanent and eternal. Prosperity of material wealth and luxuries is insignificant.

Salvation is the soul's real prosperity.

Look, how impactful this thought is !

Sthoolibhadra's example :

While Sthoolibhadra was engrossed in the sensual pleasures with prostitute Kosha, he refused to accept the token sent by the King. Why ? Because accepting the token would reduce his time with Kosha. Similarly, you can conclude that by staying amidst these temporary worldly pleasures you are missing out on the unlimited, eternal pleasures of salvation. This precious human birth is to strive towards the attainment of such eternal pleasures and not for worldly attractions.

A true Jain householder's focus is constantly directed at salvation and hence his life is constantly revolving around the next birth. Even in times of prosperity, his words, thoughts

and actions are not such that will spoil his next birth. Because if the next birth is spoiled, then the negative atmosphere there is bound to lead to sins and accumulation of new karmas. This will inturn increase our birth cycle and take us away from salvation.

This human birth is mainly to reduce and eventually end the birth cycle. And we are continuously engaged in increasing it !

The result of having a vision focused on salvation even during times of prosperity :

- (1) He believes salvation to be the soul's real prosperity.
- (2) As a result, he will not get carried away by present materialistic and temporary prosperity. He will not flaunt his assets saying, "How wealthy am I !" "How intelligent am I !"
- (3) He will also not be satisfied and will not stay at ease believing that he has got everything and has nothing more to achieve.
- (4) He will not be jealous of other's prosperity because he very well understands that eternal prosperity is present only in salvation. Rest all the worldly wealth and comforts are temporary which are going to someday ditch him. Then what's the use of being jealous about this prosperity which is eventually going to cause pain.
- (5) This vision centered around salvation stops the feeling of hatred and anger towards others. Why does a person despise others ? Because he is proud about his prosperity. He considers others unimportant and thus despises them. If this pride and arrogance about one's assets is not present then why will the employer consider his servants unimportant ? Why will he despise and insult them ?

Why does a father scold his son ? Why does a teacher punish the student ? Why will an intelligent person hate the fools ? Because, in his mind, the pride of prosperity has sprouted. Instead, if a person understands the real salvation, then he won't want all this worldly prosperity and thus there will be no place for pride and arrogance. No space for hatred and envy.

In life, it is thus wise to consider the vision focused on salvation and actual salvation to be the real prosperity. Ultimately, salvation is my goal, then why not utilize this present worldly prosperity to go closer to salvation.

Using one's prosperity to go further away from salvation is an act of fools. The distance between me and salvation at present has increased considerably than the distance which was present during the time of birth. This is because I used all the worldly prosperity and comforts in sinful acts and thus accumulated new karmas. This is complete foolishness.

Wise men whose focus rests on salvation constantly consider their prosperity to be a result of Arihanta Lord's compassion and thus increase their devotion towards the Arihantas. Alongwith this he increases his contact with Sadhu-Sadhvis and devotes more time in their reverence and also uses his prosperity to join others in the right path. This is all an effect of a vision constantly focused on salvation.

King Samprati's optimum utilization of prosperity :

How efficiently King Samprati used his wealth and prosperity ! He built 25,000 Jain temples, numerous lodges for pilgrims and many charity houses. He spent his wealth and energy to enable ignorant people staying in far-away countries to know about Jainism and Jain Sadhu-sadhvis. He did widespread noble acts and strived to spread religion as far as Greece, Iran, etc.

Why so ? Because Jainism, its principles, its Sadhu-sadhvis attracted him so much that he wished that this religion reached out to one and all. By doing so, ultimately he brought his salvation closer to him.

Vision centered on salvation gives us balance of mind :

We saw how this right vision helps in times of emergency. Now, lets see how this vision helps in critical times. It helps us think -

“I am stuck in adversity. My worldly prosperity is lost, wealth is gone, family and friends have become distant- this is not a major loss. Great chakravartis and kings have lost their kingdom, royal treasury, huge families of lakhs of people – compared to this my loss is insignificant ! “All I have to check is whether my salvation is not going further away from me. I have to strive only in this direction.”

Such a thought is essential during crucial times to keep the mind free from tension and worry. Come what may, no one can change that which is destined to happen. What’s the point of worry and dejection ? The calamity cannot be calmed. Adversity – prosperity is karma’s play. It is pre-arranged and not subject to any change.

Sitaji understood this very well. That is why she did not get dejected and disturbed even when she was left alone in the forest. Instead,she applied the strength of religion against the power of karmas and accordingly conveyed a message to her husband Rama. **‘Do not forsake religion on people’s words. Because without religion, salvation is impossible and without salvation this human birth will go in vain.’**

To summarize, it is absolutely essential to keep one’s vision focused on religion and salvation at all times-adversity or prosperity.

- (1) Vision focused on religion – Prosperity is the result of religion exercised in previous births. Hence, following religion is important.
- (2) Vision focused on salvation – Salvation is the soul's real prosperity. Therefore worldly prosperity should be used for bringing the ultimate prosperity of salvation closer. Every thought, word and action is for going closer and closer to salvation. Think, every second – Am I moving away from salvation ?

In the presence of the above two visions, no adversity can disturb you and no prosperity can attract you. Only because of this, Sita was able to regain her composure and send the above heart-touching message to Rama.



12. Effect of Sita's Message on Rama

Look what happens next.

When the chief soldier returns and meets Ramchandrajji,
He asks : “Did you leave Sita in the forest ?”

The soldier replied, “Yes, My Lord. No sooner did I convey your orders to Sita, she immediately got off the chariot without any arguments. When I started weeping, she consoled me by saying : ‘Why are you crying ? It is not your fault at all. You are your Lord’s loyal servant and I too, am his faithful wife. Thus it is both- your and my duty to follow his orders. She continued, “Tell your Lord not to get disturbed. Because it is not his fault as well. Only my previous karmas are to be blamed. This is all karma’s work, then why are you feeling sad ?”

Rama was completely taken aback by these words. Sita’s royal nature and depth amazed him !

The chief soldier further said, “Lord ! While returning I asked if she wanted to convey anything to you ?”

At that time, she gave you this message. “Tell your Lord that thought he left me because of people’s criticism – this act will not hamper his salvation. But tomorrow, if people criticize Jain religion, then trusting such ignorant people’s opinions do not leave Jainism because absence of Jainism is surely going to hamper his progress towards salvation.”

Sitaji's heart touching message in such crucial times shocked Rama. "I abandoned such a marvellous wife like Sita?" This thought shook Ramchandraji and he fell unconscious. Why so? Because his heart couldn't bear such a terrible tremor.

He realized, "O, Sita possesses such respect and affection towards me. How worried she is about the welfare of my soul! What an amazing forgiving nature she has! She has developed such royal virtues and qualities. Contrary to this, listening to ignorant people I afflicted Sita with such trouble and misery. Visualizing all this, a chill ran down Rama's spine. Completely taken aback, he fell unconscious.

The shock was obvious because Sitaji exhibited an extremely royal attitude even in adverse and difficult times. Quite contrary to that, Rama sitting comfortably in his luxurious palace, behaved cruelly with innocent Sita only to save his image as a just ruler in the minds of ignorant and foolish people. Now wasn't Sitaji's greatness and Ramji's cruelty in return enough to shock Ramji?

Actually, Rama himself was a noble and great man. **Great men may also commit mistakes, but it is their great quality that once they realize their fault, they immediately move back.** If a man is not good by heart, then even after realizing his mistake, he will not leave his opinion and correct it.

But, Ramji was truly great. Thus, realizing his mistake, he was taken aback and fainted due to shock. After his servants brought him back to consciousness, Rama immediately addressed the chief soldier.

Rama's thought to bring back Sita :

Arree! What did I do? Just to satisfy and please ignorant people, I troubled and pained such an innocent, noble and virtuous lady like Sita? I really hate myself! Soldier!

Come on. Lets go. Join the horses in the chariot. We will go to the jungle and get back Sitaji. Let people speak whatever they want.

Initially, to remain in the good books of his subjects he threw Sitaji out of the palace. But now look at Rama's greatness, he wished to rectify his mistake by getting innocent Sita back inspite of ignorant people's criticism.

The question here is,

Q. Now, does Rama regret his mistake of giving importance to ignorant people's talks ?

A. Yes. The reason is that initially in his trial to save his reputation as a just king of the Ikshvaku dynasty, the people's ignorant and foolishness did not come in his eyes. But now he had understood the low level of the people that, "accusing such a pure-hearted and holy woman is mere foolishness and stupidity. Such fools may be not only 2-4 but in hundreds and thousands – but so what ? You cannot trust and follow them." After understanding this fact, it isn't surprising if Rama ignores people's lame talks and considers rectifying the injustice done on Sita. Infact, it is Rama's greatness to be able to do so. What ?

To rectify the punishment or injustice done to the innocent is also a great virtue.

This instance teaches us a lesson that it is inappropriate to support those ignorant people who speak against religion, Sadhu-sadhvis and the principle stated in the Jain scriptures. It should not be given importance thinking that, "If so many people speak in this manner, then it should be worth contemplation."

Giving unwanted importance to fools causes disgrace and injustice to religion and its elements. Hence, getting carried

away in the talks of such unwise people, it is inappropriate to forsake our religion, devotion towards God and Guru and the faith in Jain scriptures. What is value of the words of fools ?

As soon as Ramaji told his chief soldier, “Come on, let’s go and get back Sitaji.” He politely replied, “Lord ! I took considerable time in dropping Sitaji almost 1500 kms and returning back here. In this time span, she must have walked a lot. How will we find her ?”

The king replied, “Do not worry. She is walking by foot whereas we have a chariot adjoined to a horse whose speed is as fast as wind. With his help we will move through the forest swiftly and trace Sita.”

Rama intensely desired to bring back Sita. He wished to rectify his mistake of punishing the innocent and thus give justice to Sita. The chief soldier prepared the chariot and alongwith Ramachadraji swiftly headed towards the jungle. They searched every nook and corner of the area where the soldier had dropped Sitaji, but in vain. They searched and searched but no success. Sitaji was nowhere to be found. That was because Sitaji was actually not present there.

When a thing is not actually present there, you will not be able to find even if you search it for months, years or even the entire birth.

Is their nectar in snake’s mouth ? No, then even if you strive for your entire life, you will not be able to find it.

Similarly,

(1) The worldly objects are not capable to give you real happiness. In spite of this, if you try to find happiness in them in every birth, is there any possibility of attaining it ?

- (2) No friends or relatives love us selflessly. Hence, how much ever you sacrifice to attain their love, how will you get it ?
- (3) Here, actually Sitaji was not present in the forest hence even if they searched through the entire forest, how would they find Sita ?

Finally, exhausted and dejected, Rama thought, ' This forest is dense and scary. Wild animals stay here. Therefore, there's a chance that she may have become a meal for some wild animal. How foolish and cruel I am ! I left her alone in this terrible jungle ! His remorse was unlimited.



13. Rama's Regret and Power of Destiny

Rama's grief on not finding Sita :

Rama cried his heart out. He weeped out : "O Lord ! How did I commit such a huge blunder of abandoning such a great, noble, virtuous and pure-hearted woman like Sitaji in the forest ? Lakshmana tried to persuade me to ignore people's comments and trust Sitaji's purity. But I turned deaf ears towards him. O God ! What did I do ? How mean and cruel I am to send such a noble soul in the mouths of wild animals ! O my Sita ! Forgive me, I am your culprit. I am wicked and worst. You made me your husband in this birth. But, do not commit the mistake of accepting a man like me as your husband in future births."

"O virtuous Sita ! You enlightened this human birth by living a true, meritorious life as a faithful wife. On the other side, I darkened my birth by committing such a heinous crime of cheating my wife.

What really happened to Sita ?

Sobbing and regretting his misdeed, Rama returned home. Now, the question here is that what really happened to Sita. Was she hunted by wild animals or abducted by someone ?

The answer is that she was neither hunted or abducted but was in safe hands. It so happened that the ruler of a nearby state, King Vajrajanga was out on a ride. Coincidentally he happened to pass by and noticed Sita walking ahead.

Seeing her, he stopped and inquired, “From your clothes and facial expressions, you seem to belong to a good family. Then why are you alone here ?”

Now, will Sitaji criticize her husband Rama and the ignorant people ? No, Sitaji calmly said, “My misfortune has brought me here. It will be better if you don’t inquire any more.”

The king understood, “This woman is in deep trouble because of unknown reasons but is not able to disclose it because of her high progeny. Let it be. How does it matter to me ? But it is my duty to help the miserable.” Thinking thus, the King told her, “Do not worry at all. You are now my sister. Consider me as your brother. Come along with me. I am a king. Stay in my palace comfortably as my sister. My wives will be pleased to have you as their sister-in-law. They will welcome and greet you.”

Thus consoling Sitaji, King Vajrajangha seated her in his chariot and took her to his palace. Then how could Rama find Sita in the palace ? Also, who would convey this news to Rama ?

Food for thought :

In this birth itself, one cannot get the news of relatives lost in the jungle then in the next birth who will give us information about our lost relatives ? In what condition are they ? We are incapable of comforting them in sorrow, nor can they be useful to us in our bad times. Then it is worth thinking that what is the use of harbouring intense affection and love towards relatives who are here only for this birth.

Rama lost Sita in the jungle due to a specific reason but even otherwise in this selfish world, you have to surely lose your dear and near ones. Once they are lost in this dreadful forest of rebirths, no one is capable to find them or acquire news about them.

Then why to sacrifice the affection towards God-Guru-Sangha-Sadharmika by unnecessarily increasing the affection and attraction of relatives and family members ? Isn't it foolishness and ignorance ?

Strong attachments towards God-Guru-Sangha* and Sadharmika* surely ensures its acquisition in the next birth.

Now, think what does this acquisition reserve ? **It reserves our human birth. And even if we attain heaven, then we easily attain the devotion and affection of God-Guru-Sangha which will lead us to a human birth wherein this devotion is possible.** Thus understanding the fickle nature of our relations it is wise to develop and increase our attachment towards the great Almighty Lord, Jain monks and nuns, the Sangha and our Sadharmikas.

How to increase our attachment towards God-Guru & sangha ?

We should increase the utilization of time, energy and money in the field of religion. This will increase our attachment towards it. Without it, real attachment is not possible.

Therefore if you want to easily acquire this religion and its elements in the next birth, then create a real bonding and affection towards them. Real bonding means an attachment and fondness wherein you feels like sacrificing your time, money and energy for its sake.

For example –

(1) Mother is fond of her son. How is this fondness ? Such that she readily agrees to utilize her time, energy and all

* **Sangha** – The four-fold religious order established by the Tirthankara Lords. It consists of Sadhu, Sadhvi, Shravak & Shrivika.

* **Sadharmika** – A person exercising the same religion as ours.

belongings for the child's progress. A stepson doesn't get such love and facilities.

- (2) A faithful wife gives her husband first priority and is eager to use all her time, money and energy for his happiness.
- (3) Similarly a loyal servant is also fond of his genuine and good-hearted employer.

Such a strong desire and readiness for sacrifice is essential in the case of God-Guru-Sangha and Sadharmika as well. If this desire is not present, then real bonding and affection for it is also not present.

Great King Shrenika's instance :

Till King Shrenik had not attained Lord Mahavira, had not recognized him, he did not have any affection towards to him. But once he met and recognized him, he developed a strong affection towards him that :

“Wow ! I attained such an Almighty Lord capable of saving me from this endless ocean of rebirths. Only and only He is mine in this temporary and selfish world. This affection was so strong that he removed time and reverence of God 3 times a day. He also spent considerable wealth for the sake of God. How ? He would fatly reward the person who gave him news regarding Lord Mahavira. Someone may question that why spend money on merely receiving such news ? But it literally means that he gave Lord more priority than money. The mind may confuse you saying, “You cannot spend so much money for the sake of God. It is not essential.”

If you like wealth more than Lord, then you will use God for the sake of wealth, but not wealth for the sake of God.

For eg : If he happens to use money in the devotion of God, he will still wish to attain more money by God's grace.

He will pray, “O Lord Shankheshwar Parshwanatha ! I paid Rs. 150 and got your beautiful angli formed. O Lord ! Then please add two zeroes and give me the amount. That means you are asking Rs. 15000 in return ! What a smart way ! Your attachment for wealth far exceeds your attachment for Lord ! Only then can you spend Rs. 150 and ask not only Rs. 150 in return but $150 + 14850 =$ Rs. 15000 in return. Is this utilization of wealth for Lord’s sake ? Or using Lord for attaining wealth ?

What did Shrenik do out of affection towards Lord ?

King Shrenik’s affection and devotion towards Lord is evident from the fact that he immediately agrees to his sons - Meghkumar, Nandishen and Abhaykumar’s desire to accept monkhood and become Lord Mahavira’s disciple. Not only this, he readily gives permission to his wives – Kali, Mahakali, etc. to renounce the world.

Shrenik is going to become Tirthankara due to this equation clearly fit in his mind that, “My Lord is more precious than my sons, Hence if they wish to go in His service, I will not stop them.”

Instead if he believed that, “My sons should remain in my service; not in Lord’s service. Lord Mahavira has many other disciples and will get many more.” Then, how would his affection towards Lord be seen ?

Some may merely pretend, “I really love my father” but all the times keeps his son with him and does not let him serve his father, even in times of need. Would you call the love for his father true ? No, he only loves his self and his love for his father is fake.

Alongwith himself Shrenik engaged his family, too in the reverence of Lord Mahavira.

Thus, coming to the point, it is essential that the attachment towards Dev-Guru-Sangha and Sadharmika remains active and our desire to engage more and more time, money and energy for it remains intact.

King Kumarpal's example –

Kumarpal's attachment for his Guru :

Noble King Kumarpal's fondness for his Sadharmikas was truly heartfelt so much so that he used wealth amounting to Rs. 1 crore for the welfare of Sadharmikas. He loved his Guru Kalikal Sarvagna Shri Hemchandrasuriji Maharaja and hence engaged 700 writers permanently for writing scriptures created by him and spent wealth amounting to crores for this cause ! Once the leaves of Tad tree which were used as paper in those times for writing, were not available and King Kumarpala was so dejected that he gave up food and water till its acquisition was confirmed ! My Guru is extremely intelligent then why shouldn't I use my available wealth for getting his scriptures written ?

If I do not aid in this work, then how can I be called a real devotee of my Guru ? This was his affection towards his Guru. Do you possess such attachment ? Yes, we do have such attachment for our family members but not for our Guru.

Kumarpal's affection for Almighty Arihantas :

King Kumarpala led a Sangha* to Siddhachalji. After reaching Siddhagiri, he let go his right of wearing the Sangha-Mala. Instead he declared, "The one who bids the highest will wear the Sangha Mala." What was the reason behind this declaration ? The sole reason was the intense affection

* **Sangha** – A pilgrimage funded by a generous donor (Sanghapati) wherein all the pilgrims are supposed to walk towards the pilgrimplace, have food once a day, observe celibacy, sleep on the floor, etc.

towards Almighty Arihantas. He thought, “This is a great opportunity to fill the Lord’s treasury. Then why should I miss this chance and wear the Sangha-Mala* for free ? And imagine till how much did the bidding go ? 1 crore and 25 lakhs ! He was delighted with this event. He himself spent lakhs of rupees and led a historic Sangha towards Siddhagiri and generously let someone else wear the Sangha-Mala. Infact he was overwhelmed to do so. Why ? His affection towards Lord Mahavira enabled him to sacrifice his rights and inspired him to fill Lord’s treasury. On adding such a grand amount, why not rejoice ? **That love which is ready to sacrifice is the real love.**

Q. Won’t people start discussing that “What a fool king Kumarpala is ! He himself organized and funded the entire sangha and let someone else wear the Sangha-Mala ?”

A. No, because they must have realized that wearing the Mala himself is an indicator of ego and attachment towards oneself and one’s own status and dignity. On the other hand, letting someone else bid for it displays the attachment towards Almighty Arihantas. Thus his fondness for Lord exceeds his fondness for his own self interests.

King Kumarpal’s devotion towards God and Guru came along from his previous birth :

It is a natural curiosity that how did King Kumarpala develop so much affection towards God-Guru-Sangha and Sadharmika. But the answer is that he had created such a strong devotion right from his previous birth. During the past birth, his mentor had taught him, “God and Guru’s devotion should be done by

* Sangha Mala – As an indication honor, the donor who has funded the entire sangha is felicitated with a garland.

* Kodi – A measure unit probably close to the present paisa

optimally utilizing your wealth and time.” Faithfully accepting his words, he thought that though I have only 5 kodi, I will use all of it in the devotion of God. Thus, he bought flowers worth 5 kodi* and offered them to God and became extremely happy. He danced with joy and considered himself fortunate to be able to contribute even little in the devotion of God. He felt extreme gratitude towards God and Guru which enabled him to become Great King Kumarpala who was a true devotee of Jainism, who served God-Guru-Sangha and fellow Sadharmikas with all his wealth and energy. Thus, the gratitude and affection cultivated in the previous birth came along in the next birth as well.

It thus means, that the affection towards God, Guru, Sangha, Sadharmika and the money, energy and time used for them helps us reserve their acquisition in the next birth.

The thing to note here was that Sita happened to meet King Vajrajangha in the forest. He accepted Sita as his sister and brought her to the palace with great respect and affection. His wives greeted her and served her enthusiastically.

Now, you can imagine the fruits of Punya. When Rama forsake her in the forest, he must not have imagined or planned anything for Sitaji’s future security. Sita herself did not make any specific efforts for the search of the King. Then how did these favorable circumstances occur ? Only because of Sita’s Punya accumulated in the past.

The just Karmasatta :

Those who do not believe in the calculations of Karmasatta – how will they justify this situation ? How did Sita find a place of refuge in such a dense jungle ? And that to not an ordinary man, but a King as a refuge ? Is this merely a chance, a coincidence ? What do you mean by chance ?

**Nothing in this world happens without a cause, a reason.
Cause leads to effect.**

Hence here in Sita's incident in the forest, you have to consider Karma to be the main reason because no human efforts are involved here. In spite of being left alone in the forest, she enjoys a luxurious stay in the palace. Her delivery also took place there with utmost care. All this is result of Punya ! The effect of Punya and Papa plays an elemental role in the course of life. Thus favourable circumstances and facilities are all merely an indication of Punya in action and hence should not be used for satisfying temptations and strengthening our negative passions. Instead this Punya should be optimally utilized for acts of charity, devotion of God-Guru, Samayika, accepting various vows, for cultivating virtues of forgiveness, honesty, etc.

Thus, you should keep in mind :

That these favorable facilities and circumstances is not a fruit of past misdeeds but a result of good acts (Punya) done in the past. Thus is it appropriate to attain the fruits of Punya and use it in strengthening your Papa (doing acts that leads to Papa) ?



14. Sita's Devoted Sons – Lavana and Ankush

Sitaji gave birth to 2 sons – Lavana and Ankush who were famous as Lava and Kush. They were brought up with great love and care. Their maternal uncle King Vajrajangha provided them all facilities to train them in various arts and sciences. As a result of religion exercised in the previous birth, their intelligence, alertness and right understanding was beyond comparison. Teaching them was unnecessary. Though a teacher was required for mere supervision, their progress and gradual expertise in all fields was natural and required minimal efforts.

Hence, when once the king inquired about their studies to their tutor he replied, “O King ! They haven't studied only !”

The king was astonished on learning this. He asked, “What are you saying ? Didn't they concentrate in studying ? Did they waste their time in playing ?”

The tutor answered, “Oh no ! They have attained expertise in all arts and sciences.”

The king continued, “Without studying how did they attain this expertise ?”

The tutor said, “My intention is not this. What I mean to say is that they have not worked hard like other students. They have learnt by just little guidance and have started using that knowledge as if they are masters. Hence I can say that

various sciences like the science of archery, etc. have not been taught to them and they haven't practiced them. Instead, those sciences have willingly chosen them and come to them."

The king was extremely pleased on hearing this and heartily appreciated the two princes' expertise, sharpness and mastery on all skills.

Here an obvious question is about to rise that :

"On learning that Luv and Kush were smarter and skillful than his own children, wasn't king Vajrajanga jealous of them ? No. Sita's royalty and greatness was responsible for it.

Sitaji's exceptional qualities because of which the king was not jealous :

- (1) Her royal nature.
- (2) Her pure character and her post as the king's sister.
- (3) Respect and courtesy for the king in her mind.
- (4) Her affection and understanding with her loving sisters-in-law.
- (5) Her love for virtues.

Hence, the king immensely respected Sita and adored her noble virtues.

Now, think that how would Sitaji have respected the king ? How would she have displayed her gratitude for him ? What would she be doing ?

To understand this, you have to understand a common rule –

What should you do to display courtesy for others ?

- (1) First you should behave politely with them at all times. Hence, when they call you instead of saying what happened ?" you should say 'Yes'."

- (2) You should stand right next to them and request them ‘Go ahead. Kindly oblige me’.”
- (3) You should say, “Definitely, Of course. Without fail.”
- (4) Immediately after this you should implement their wishes to the best of your ability.

Does the current education system teach this courtesy? What is the value of such education? A minister also has to behave courteously with the king to stay in his good books. It is possible that even the elderly people may commit some mistake but if you heartily respect them, then you should say ‘Yes’ willingly and accept their order atleast at the first go and then courteously explain the real situation the them.

Example of a disciple’s courtesy towards his Guru :

In the beautiful sootra ‘Updeshmala’ created by Dharmadasa Gani, the Guru addresses his disciple, “Look, this white crow is creating such a havoc and the disciple immediately replied, “Oh, yes!” What is there to agree here? Agree that the crow is white? Can’t the disciple see that the crow is black? Or inspite of seeing, he is pretending only because of his respect for his Guru? Instead he accepts it heartily without any discussion. Later on, in privacy he will politely ask for a clarification.

For eg. In the present situation, he can later ask his Guru that I see the crow to be black in colour then how did you call it white? I did not understand.

Then the Guru will explain, “Listen, though the crow is black from outside, but he is white from inside. This can be seen from the fact that if he gets something to eat on the roadside, he will never eat it alone. Instead, sitting on a tree-branch he will continuously say ‘ka-ka-ka’ and create a havoc and thus

gather all his fellow crows. This act depicts his selflessness and concern for others which is a great virtue. Hence he is white and bright.

Those who are selfish and unconcerned about others are black; while those who have a selfless attitude and are concerned about others are considered white.

Having concern for others is real humanity :

The human race should learn a lesson from the crows that having a good appearance and wearing good clothes is not sufficient. You should be good from inside. Your heart should be pure. For this you should ignore all your self interests and willingly help others, ensure that your belongings prove useful to others and constantly think about others' welfare. Our words and actions should not create problems for others. If you do not possess such an attitude, then you will be worse than the crows. If the foolish crows also possess such understanding, then what to say about the so called intelligent humans ? Where is humanity gone ?

The Guru's clarification shocked the disciple. He thought,

“O, what a great religion Jainism is ! Great are its principles and consults ! According to it, I respected my Guru's words, I accepted the crow to be white and I was saved from the sin of disrespecting and contradicting my Guru. Instead if I would have contradicted my Guru's words and argued with him saying, “How can a crow be white ? Even a little child will say that a crow is black.” Then it would have resulted in the disrespect of my Guru in front of everyone. If he would have proved me wrong and disclosed his deep thought then it would have resulted in my disrespect in front of others. How great is Jinshasan ! How great are its principles !

(5) When an elderly person or our Guru, is sitting beside us, it is inappropriate to sit with legs stretched long, speak in a loud voice, scream and argue in their presence.

Also, if someone asks us something, it is our duty to not answer and say, “Ask the elderly person. It is the elderly person’s subject.” “Whatever they say is right.” If sometimes the elderly people, our Guru, etc. do something and then inform us or sometimes ask our opinion, it is our duty to reply that, ‘O respected one, you do not need to ask me in this matter. You have the right to do whatever you feel appropriate.’”



15. Importance of Respect and Courtesy

Dashrath had given a word to Kaikeyi and to keep his word he had to fulfill Kaikeyi's demand. She had demanded her son Bharat to be coronated as the King of Ayodhya and not Rama. Dashrath did accordingly.

After doing so, he called Rama and informed him about the unexpected occurring. At that crucial moment, Rama immediately replied, "Father ! You do not need to ask me or inform me because you are the owner of the state. The owner can give his belonging to whomsoever he wishes. Even if you give the kingdom to some soldier, it is absolutely acceptable to me. I am delighted to know that my brother Bharat is to be coronated as the King. I am happy that you cleared yourself off Kaikeyi's debt.

It is a good son's responsibility to ensure that father's debt is cleared even after his demise. But you cleared your debt while living. Being a loyal son, I am really happy even if I had to sacrifice my happiness for its sake."

Who speaks all this ? The courtesy and overflowing respect in Rama's heart for Dashrath.

Similarly, Sita also possesses and exhibits exceptional respect and courtesy towards her savior, King Vajrajangha. Then it is obvious that the King is affectionate towards her and does not harbour jealousy towards her sons' growth and progress.

Q. What should be done to glorify and exhibit increasing respect towards your elders ?

A. If you have increasing respect for elders in your heart, then your behavior with them should be courteous and polite.

Q. What should be done to display a respectful behavior ?

A. (1) You should strive that all the good things, fame, respect, credit and appreciation that you get eventually goes to the elderly ones.

Younger brothers Bharat and Lakshaman respected Rama and hence when Bharat was coronated as the king in presence of Rama, he was not ready to sit on the throne. Thus, Rama asked for forest exile from his father Dashrath and willingly left the palatial comfortable life. What a great sacrifice !

(2) Act according to their words and wishes.

To ensure that Dashrath's word to Kaikeyi was fulfilled and Bharat became the king, Rama accepted exile. His respect for Dashrath made him do this.

(3) Elder's words and wishes should be followed even if you have to make great sacrifices for it.

Lakshman respected Rama immensely. Hence, he too went in the forest with elder brother Rama. He believed, if my respected elder brother roams in the forest, how can I peacefully stay in the forest ?”

(4) You should help them in times of need.

Damyanti respected and loved king Nala so much so that she tried her level best to stop Nala from gambling with her brother Pushkar. But Nala did not listen and eventually ended up losing the entire kingdom. Now he had to roam in the forest.

Damyanti went along with him but did not taunt him even once that, “I had warned you several times. Now look at the outcome.”

(5) **You should overlook the faults of those whom you respect.** This is what Damyanti did. She did not accuse her husband. Instead she followed him without any arguments.

(6) **You should find the good qualities of those whom you respect and should appreciate them in front of others.**

You should admire them in front of others, sing their glory and try to increase their goodwill. On the other hand, you should not bear anything wrong spoken about them and immediately try to stop them.

Sita won the heart of King Vajrajangha by exhibiting exceptional respect in the above mentioned ways. She also shared cordial relations with her sisters-in-law because of her affectionate and royal nature. Thus no one harbored any negative feelings jealousy, hatred, etc. towards Sita and her sons.



16. Do not cry over spilt milk

The second reason as to why the king was not envious of Lavana-Ankusha's progress was their royal, virtuous nature.

The King himself possessed a royal nature where there was no place for jealousy. Also, Sita's sons Lavana and Ankusha were extremely obedient, humble and courteous which appealed to the King. In this situation, where was there any room for jealousy ?

This incident teaches us that if we do not want to be a victim of someone's jealousy then we should cultivate virtues like respect, humility, royal and generous nature, appreciation of other's qualities, compassion and a good character and also help others in their times of need. If this is not present in us then it is inappropriate to get disturbed by someone's jealous nature.

This implies that the reason behind the King not being jealous of Lavana and Ankusha was not only the King's royal nature but Lavana and Ankusha's royalty as well as Sita's royalty.

Now, we look upon Sita's one more distinctive quality.

Till date Lavana and Ankusha did not know the truth. But once by chance the reality reached their ears. They immediately come to Sita and asked for a clarification. They said, "Mother, till today you kept us in the dark. Today we came to know the bitter truth that our father and uncle left you alone in the forest. Why didn't you disclose this to us ?

Sita's deep revelation :

How mature must Sitaji be ! So many years had passed, her sons had grown up and she had not yet told them the intense suffering that she had gone through. Wouldn't she have felt like sharing her sorrow with her loved sons ? It is very obvious that in adverse times, we share our sorrow with our near and dear ones in the hope of consolation. But it is a misconception that 'trouble shared is trouble halved', because -

Remembering past troubles is a cause of sorrow again and again. It leads to disturbance and dejection. It decreases our courage and leads to anxiety and fear.

Thus, it is advisable to forget previous sorrows. If they suddenly disturb our mind then we should immediately change our track and think that, "Chakravartis lost their huge kingdom. Compared to that, my loss is negligible. Sagar Chakravati had to face the huge sorrow of losing 60,000 sons at stroke. Where do I have to face such a grievous situation?" Thus remembering the great adversities of previous great men, we should feel that our sorrow is negligible.

In this manner, we will not remember the sorrow repeatedly and the sorrow will not depress us. Because if we remember our sorrow again and again, we feel like sharing it with others. But Sita had minimized her sorrow to that extent that she had not even shared it with her sons even once in so many years.

To stop crying over your sorrow, first minimize the extent of sorrow in your mind.

How to minimize the extent of sorrow in your mind :

Q. How must have Sitaji minimized her sorrow ? How would she have convinced her mind ?

A. To minimize her sorrow, she must have thought that :

16. *Do not cry over spilt milk*

(1) For a noble queen like me, the sorrow of being left alone in the forest is huge but compared to the endless sorrows of roaming in the birth cycle, this sorrow is very less. Isn't it foolish to forget those great sorrows of many births and weep over this sorrow of just 1 birth? Great kings and also Indras who enjoy unlimited luxuries and comforts here are also afflicted with pain and troubles after death. After leaving their present birth, they are imprisoned in a mother's womb where there is only suffocation and darkness.

I am left alone in the jungle and it seems as if I am completely unhappy and have no ray of hope. But compared to those great Indras I am happier because I have a healthy environment to live in, enough place to sleep and sit, ripe fruits to eat and no pains of being hit or tortured. Thinking on these lines, she must have minimized her current unhappiness.

(2) Or else she must have contemplated that, 'Why to cry over the loss of material happiness and comforts? Compared to that, the loss of spiritual wealth of non-violence, penance, religious learning, resistance over temptations, non-attachment, etc. that my soul is facing is far more. The sorrow of being trapped in this vicious cycle of birth and death is terrible. This external sorrow has proved to be an eye-opener. Now, I will strive to eliminate the sorrows of the soul which are worse. It is quite possible that Sita must have thought on this basis.

(3) Or else, the sorrows of lower births like hell are so dreadful that these sorrows seem nothing in front of them. She may have consoled her mind thinking that at this very moment innumerable souls are bearing unbearable pain in hell. They are screaming and yelling for help. Compared to them, my sorrow is nothing. This, she must have nullified the intensity of her present sorrow.

- (4) Or else, Sitaji realized that the sorrows of this world are more beneficial to the soul than happiness. Because these sorrows make us remember God and his religion. Thus, these sorrows are not a curse but a boon. Hence, she must be considering present sorrows to be very minor. Then why to cry over minor issues in front of her sons ?
- (5) Or else, sorrows are a medium to destruct the previous bad karmas. ‘O soul, you will not get another chance to eliminate your karmas.’ Thus, thinking in this way she must have not have cried over her sorrows.

Thus, it is not surprising if Sitaji minimized sorrow of being left alone in the forest by reflecting upon the above thoughts.

External sorrows are not merely the rise of bad karmas but it is actually the removal of bad karmas.

Bad karmas are like a stain on the soul. It is an occasion to rejoice if these stains get removed. It isn't something to worry about. And thus, Sitaji was fresh and happy and overlooked her sorrows.

You may feel that all these methods to minimize your sorrows are impractical in routine life, it demands deep spiritual knowledge and understanding, it isn't possible to implement such ideologies in daily life but you have no other option other than implementing them. Adverse circumstances are a result of your own previous karmas which have come into action. They are not going to go away easily, then what is the point of just sitting and crying over them ? No. Instead this philosophical thinking and contemplation consoles the mind. It saves a negative thought process. Isn't it better to engage your mind in thoughts which strengthen and motivate us rather than in those which discourage you ?

Q. Can such philosophical thoughts help in minimizing your sorrow ?

A. Yes. Even if a warrior is seriously injured in war if he emerges victorious, then his pain becomes unimportant because the joy of victory is far more than the pain. Similarly,

If we experience the joy of removal of karma-stains during times of sorrow, then is there any room for grief ?

While fighting, he is ready to fight till his life's last moment because his mind is occupied with feelings of patriotism, love for the king, his own duty. These thoughts do not let him become unhappy. This shows that inspite of bearing pain which can result in death, he does not act and think like a coward.

This implies that inspite of being in pain, your mind can be joyful due to some other reason or be occupied with some responsibility, and then that sorrow automatically becomes negligible.

Do those housewives who cook food in summer days complain and cry ? Do those employees who get a fat salary complain of the troubles they have to face at work ? No, because they consider those sorrows to be meagre.

Thus, this is the real power of philosophical thinking and contemplation – it reduces the intensity of sorrow.

Sitaji was also successful in minimizing the severity of her problem by occupying her mind with such deep thoughts. Hence, she did not wish to weep in front of her children and gain sympathy from them. But, now when the reality had already reached their ears and they had come to ask Sita, she calmly replied...



17. Sita's Revelation of the Truth

Sita's amazing answer :

“O dear sons ! I was left alone in the jungle because of my own bad karmas. Why to blame your father for that ? He is a great and noble man. Everyone in his kingdom is happy and content. In spite of his greatness, why did my happiness get disturbed ? You will have to admit that there was fault in my luck, my Punya and not in his nobility.”

How strongly must have Sitaji cultivated her mind to speak such gracious words for the husband who troubled her so much !

Understand 1 thing,

**Your mouth will speak only that which your heart believes.
The reason behind bad words is bad thoughts and wrong intentions.**

But Sita's heart and mind were as clear as crystal. Thus bad words and accusations towards her husband were impossible. She was pure-hearted and noble and hence Lord Arihantas truly resided her heart. Only because of this she accepted Lord's path of renunciation even after successfully passing the Agnipariksha and being warmly welcomed by one and all.

A question that is bound to rise here is that :

Q. Lord resides in my heart. I chant his name and perform various rituals stated by him. Then why don't I feel like renouncing this world and walking on his path like Sita ?

Why aren't my words and thoughts positive even in adverse situations ?

- A. From this, you need to understand the importance of the teachings of great, knowledgeable men. Do you want Lord to stay in your heart ? Do you want your actions, words and thoughts to be revolving around him ? Then leave all the vices like anger, greed, pride, ego and animosity. Only then will Lord truly reside in your heart.

Only if Lord truly resides in your heart, you will feel the urge to walk on his path. Polite words and mental composure will become easy.

Sitaji was successful in eliminating all the vices from her heart and mind and hence Lord resided in her heart. Thus, she did not even glance towards the temporary worldly pleasures even once after giving the Agnipariksha and willingly adopted Lord's path of renunciation.

Even now, she is keen on displaying their father's greatness in front of her sons. But her sons were so devoted towards their mother that they said,

Lavana-Ankusha's answer – Fight with Rama :

“Mother ! Though you philosophically believe that you were left alone in the forest because of your own karmas but this belief cannot eradicate the truth that father was carried away by people's criticism and hence abandoned you alone in the forest. Does he think that Sita has no protectors, no refuge and hence he can trouble her ? Now we are ready – Sitaji's protectors and Sita's caretakers. We will show him this on the battlefield. Hence, O mother ! We are going to fight against our father and uncle. You please bless us and pray for our victory.”

Lavana-Ankusha's source of courage :

Lavana and Ankusha were still young. How did they gain the courage of fighting against the valourous Rama and Lakshmana? What was their source of trust and power? Firstly, they were themselves skilled in all arts and talents. With the aid of all these and also their uncle king Vajrajangha's huge army, they had previously defeated many kings and brought them in King Vajrajangha's feet.

Before Lavana and Ankusha went to war, their uncle, King Vajrajangha used to think that, "Inspite of my age and calibre, I cannot overpower these kings. How will little, inexperienced Lavana and Ankusha overpower them? What if these two little gemstones are hurt, injured in war? What if I lose them?" Hence he refused to send them to war. But those two little brave warriors answered, "O Mamaji! We are the sons of a valorous father. Though a lion's cubs are young in age but they are strong enough to overpower even the giant elephant. Do not worry. We will definitely win the war."

Thus, they defeated many kings and brought them in King Vajrajangha's feet. Hence, it isn't surprising if they gathered courage to fight against the great and brave Ramchandrajji and Lakshmana.

Now, they seek mother Sitaji's blessings to enable them to attain victory in their war against their father Rama and uncle Lakshmana.

Does Sita bless them? Let's see.



18. The Soul's Sorrows

Sitaji's greatness is evident from this incident. Her amazing answer is really worth appreciation.

On such an instance, an ordinary woman would reply, "You may go ahead if you wish. My blessings are with you. But make sure you do not hurt either your father or your uncle."

An ordinary woman may reply in this manner. But she was extraordinary. She did not recollect her past trials and tribulations. Even today, she did not blame her husband Rama for her troubles. She did not harbor any hard feelings for him. Then why would she support any talks which were against him? You may feel that –

- Q.** It is possible that she did not harbor ill feelings towards her husband but how is it possible that she forgot the immense troubles that she had to undergo?
- A.** She made it possible because she very well understood that there was no point in remembering the past troubles and thus taxing the mind. Instead, she remembered the living beings in hell who were continuously being tortured and punished without a single gleam of happiness and hope. Compared to that, she considered her trouble of being thrown in the forest to be meager.

The sorrows of hell :

- (1) Like iron is beaten, a creature in hell is also beaten with iron weapons.

- (2) Creatures in hell are smashed in machines like sugarcane.
- (3) They are roasted completely like corn in hot iron furnaces.
- (4) They are cut into pieces like cucumber.
- (5) They are peeled constantly like papaya and are made like a salad.
- (6) Like a deer in the forest who is constantly frightened of wild animals, a creature in hell is also constantly frightened from all directions.

These creatures in hell are bearing all this horrible troubles and pains even at this moment. If this is constantly in front of our eyes, then the various difficulties in this human birth seem unimportant.

Even Sitaji constantly visualized the pains in hell and felt that her present troubles were nothing compared to them. Hence, her mind was not always occupied in those sad thoughts. Instead, she was mentally calm and composed.

Secondly, our problem is that we immediately take our physical pains on our mind and constantly think about it and its solutions. But we do not give similar importance to our soul's endless pains. We do not think about it and its solutions and hence our mind always remains uncomposed and disturbed.

Compared to the soul's endless sorrows, these worldly sorrows are meager and unimportant.

The soul's endless sorrows :

- (1) Even after taking birth as the great Indra, death is certain. You have to compulsorily leave all the heavenly luxuries and comforts. Isn't this less painful ?
- (2) After that the soul has to roam in various high-low births. Isn't this painful ?

- (3) This soul gets carried away in the negative feelings of love, hatred, thirst for sensual pleasures, anger, greed, pride, deceit, etc. The soul's original nature is pure and constant – devoid of any such negative traits. In spite of this, it is contaminated by such temporary worldly impurities. Isn't this a great sorrow ?
- (4) The soul originally possesses infinite knowledge and perception. But trapped in this worldly bondages, it becomes ignorant. Just as the eye cannot perceive an object kept behind the wall, the soul cannot visualize its past or future birth. Isn't this the soul's severe setback ?
- (5) This thought is worth contemplation –

This glorious Jinshasana and its holy rituals were worshipped and exercised by the Arihant Lords, great kings and princes, many wealthy and famous men. Even after attaining this same Jinshasan, why don't we have faith in its each and every path, every ritual ? Can't we see infinite living creatures imprisoned in roots like potatoes, onions, in green algae with that faith ? Why can't that faith show us innumerable living creatures trapped in every little drop of water ? Our naked eyes cannot help us perceive all this, but can't our faith help us do so ? Isn't this a tragedy ?

- (6) The soul is an owner of infinite, incomparable happiness. In spite of this it has to become a slave of its senses and beg for happiness just as a mouth which has become bitter has to become a slave of sugar or jiggery. Isn't this less painful ?

A possessor of infinite happiness – the eternal soul has to become a slave of such temporary, sensual pleasures and strive to fulfil them. Doesn't it seem tragic ?

Imagine a man whose abundant wealth is buried somewhere and he is earning his livelihood by begging at some poor person's house for a piece of bread. Similar is the state of our soul. This real pain does not affect our mind and trivial physical pains are enough to bother and disturb it.

But Sita was different. She constantly visualized all the above spiritual pains and hence minimized her present sorrow of being left alone in the forest.

Thus, now when her loved sons Lavana and Ankusha came to seek her blessings before going to fight with Rama, she calmly replied the following.



19. Sita's Amazing Answer

“O sons ! How can you go to fight with your father ? And you desire my blessings for it ? You are completely mistaken here. If you wish, go and worship him and touch his feet. My blessings are with you.”

Imagine the level of respect Sitaji had for her husband who had left her alone in the forest. How beautifully she taught her sons the precious qualities of respect and courtesy ! When is this possible ? Only when the mind is completely calm and composed. Now think, that during times of adversity, do you teach such respect and courtesy to your sons and daughters. Infact do you yourself behave in such a respectful and courteous manner ?

Respect and courtesy at all times requires mental fitness.

King Shrenik's instance :

King Shrenik's 1 son Konik was unsuitable and bad while the other Abhaykumar was capable and good. Once, Abhaykumar put forth his desire for Diksha in front of Shrenik. He said : “O father, Lord Mahavir states that if I will not be able to take Diksha I will become the King. Kings are bound to go to hell. Then being a devotee of Lord Mahavir what do you wish ? Should I become a king and go to hell or should I accept diksha and eventually attain salvation ?

King Shrenik immediately replied, “I do not wish that you go to hell. Instead accept Diksha and progress on the path of salvation.” Abhaykumar requested his father to enable him

to take Diksha. Without delay, Shrenik immediately reached Lord Mahavir with a long procession and addressed Lord Mahavir, “O Lord ! I give you my son as your disciple. Kindly accept him and give him Charitra.”

How great was Shrenik’s selfless calculation ! It was quite possible that Shrenik would have to face difficulty under Konik’s tyrannical rule. In spite of that, he permitted his devoted and capable son Abhaykumar to leave the kingdom and accept Diksha. He left his fate to his own karmas. He did not ruin his son’s spiritual progress for his own selfish interests. Such a noble thinking is possible only if mental health is in place.

In today’s world also, many parents oppose their children’s desire for diksha for their own self interests. This is because their mind is unstable.

Many weird and wrong assumptions and notions are responsible for this mental instability.

“What will I do if my son accepts diksha ? Who will support me in my old age ?” But he doesn’t realize that if his Punya is lacking then his son may separate from him after marriage and not even bother about his old age and other difficulties. Here the imagination that his son and not his Punya will look after him is completely wrong.

The second imagination which is wrong here is that the parents feel that the little child will become unhappy by taking diksha*. On the other hand this worldly life will give him happiness. This imagination is also wrong because no one in this world has attained pure happiness. Instead this world is filled to the brim with sorrows, pains, troubles and worries. Those who have left this world and accepted Diksha are truly

* **Diksha** – Lord Mahavir’s path of renunciation

happy and content. You cannot attain this precious human birth without practicing Charitra*. Also, you cannot end this painful cycle of birth and death without practicing Charitra.

Selfishness, ignorance and deceit leads to an unstable mind which inturn obstructs the feeling of (Vairagya) non-attachment. It also obstructs children's feelings of non-attachment and their desire for renunciation.

Sita's highly matured behavior and depth and her advice of courtesy to her sons force us to think that : "How did she keep her life's most tragic event just to herself ? In spite of the fact that the whole world knew about it, how could she stop herself from telling this to her own sons ? How is it possible that she stopped her sons from fighting with Rama ? Instead taught them to have respect for him and thus motivated them to go and touch his feet. Doesn't all this seem fictional ? How can someone have such a noble outlook and an equally royal behavior ?

The answer to both the above confusion is –



20. Impact of Culture and Religion

Sitaji's extreme depth, maturity and the perfect understanding about the right and wrong was a result of the Indian culture and Jain religion that resided in her heart.

A person who is born and brought up in the Western culture cannot even imagine such virtues leave alone implementing them in their routine life. They may feel that this kind of an attitude is absolutely illogical. "Why not tell her sons about the reality? If even others know about it, what is the harm in disclosing the fact in front of those who are our own? Those whose mindset is influenced by the western culture may also feel the sons desire to fight their father to be absolutely appropriate. What is the point of having respect and bowing down in front of the father who is not bothered about them and who punished their mother without any mistake?"

Now the point here is that do we also term the above attitude and behavior to be illogical?

Is there any difference between the Arya and Anarya culture?

There is difference between a human and an animal's thoughts and behavior. Similarly a person brought up in the Arya* and Anarya* culture is also different. But what is the difference? "An Arya chants God's name and sings his hymns and devotional songs whereas an Anarya does not." Is this the only difference?

* **Arya** – A person brought up in the Eastern culture

* **Anarya** – A person brought up in the Western culture

Isn't there any difference in the violence, theft, injustice, corruption, dishonestly, animosity, jealousy, hatred, etc. exercised by the two? We have acquired this Arya land, religious family, good cultures and values because of our abundant Punya. Then isn't it wise to value this Punya? The Anaryas have only the happiness of this birth in their mind while living their routine life because they do not believe in the existence of the soul, rebirth, Punya, Papa, etc. On the other hand, because of being brought up in this Arya culture we believe in the existence of the soul, rebirth, Punya and Papa.

Hence, being an Arya we do not believe in lavishly enjoying this birth and thus destroying the soul's welfare in the next birth.

An Arya in the true sense means a person who believes in the existence of the soul and its transfer from one birth to another. If we truly believe this, then would we act in a manner by which our soul is thrown in the dungcons of hell or other such painful births? Such a behaviour suits an Anarya and not an Arya.

The real intention of an Arya is to cultivate the virtues of the soul and thus improve and glorify the next birth.

The one who does not believe in the soul's existence and only desires the body's wellbeing will always pay attention towards the body's comfort. Sitaji was a true Arya and very well understood the value of being an Arya. Hence it isn't surprising if she was well acquainted with the qualities of spiritual welfare, maturity and the difference between the right and wrong. But what is really surprising is that inspite of claiming to believe in the soul's existence, we still resort to vices like injustice, low mentality and live a life full of bad thoughts and bad actions.



21. Importance of Courage & Faith

Sita did not develop all such qualities lately but she was like this even before. She displayed such exceptional qualities even when her marriage proposal was kept. A Swayamvar* was organized. The condition kept was that ‘the person who picks up the immovable Devadhishtit* bow and launches the arrow on it and then hits the aim will become Sita’s husband. How did Sita accept such a condition? What if no one was able to pick up the bow? What if the person who succeeded in the task was some ordinary man, some Bhil*, etc. ?

Why did Sita agree ?

Because, firstly she considered the marriage arrangements to be the elder’s matter. Mature and considerate Sita did not interfere in this topic.

Secondly, Sitaji thought that it was absolutely useless to marry a man who did not possess even so much strength. It was possible that the one who picked up the bow and arrow was an ordinary man but at least he would be strong and courageous.

This was acceptable to Sita.

Keep in mind - Give your life in the hands of the one who is strong and brave, not the one who is weak and a coward.

* **Swayamvara** – An old Indian form of wedding

* **Devadhishtit** – Anything that is guarded by the Devas (the celestial beings)

* **Bhil** – A person belonging to the Adivasi tribe

King Shrenik was not a Jain and inspite of this Chellana agreed to marry him because of his courage and valour. What is the value of beauty without courage ?

Great women maintained purity of character even in adverse times only because of their courage.

Damayanti's example :

Damayanti had to leave the kingdom and roam in the forests with king Nal but she was fearless. Her husband told her, "I am facing tough days wherein I have to roam about shelterless in the forest. You are delicate and accompanying me like this is not your cup of tea. Hence, it is better to go and stay at your father's house till my bad days are over." Delicate but daring Damyanti flatly refused. She said, "The shadow always accompanies the tree. Likewise I will not leave your side. Whatever be the situation I am happy with you."

This is all an impact of courage. In the morning when Sita woke up she realized that her husband Nal had left her alone hoping that finding herself alone she would seek shelter at her father's house. Damayanti immediately decided to accept 4 vows to protect her chastity till she met her husband.

- (1) She left all 6 Vigais.*
- (2) She decided not to sleep on bed.
- (3) She decided not to wear colourful clothes.
- (4) She left Shringar.*

How did she manage to do this ? Only because of her courage. Eventually, she found a lonely cave near a nearby hermitage and she stayed there and worshipped Lord Shantinath

* **Vigai** – Milk, curd, ghee, sugar, oil and fried items are the 6 Vigais which are forbidden in Ayambil Tapa.

* **Shringar** – To look beautiful by dressing yourself and wearing ornaments

for as long as 7 years. She did not worry about her basic requirements of food and water. She maintained her purity of character and engrossed herself in reverence of God. How impactful was her devotion !

Impact of Damayanti's purity of character and faith in the Arihantas :

Once there were heavy rains in the forest and it seemed that the entire hermitage would be wiped away in the force of water. At such a time Mahasati Damayanti came out of her cave and made a resolution that, "May the hermits and the hermitage be saved because of the purity of my character and my faith in the Arihantas." Thinking thus, she drew a boundary line encircling the entire hermitage. That's it - the remaining was magic. So strong was the impact of Mahasati's character and faith that it seemed as if a roof was formed above the hermitage. Not a single drop of water fell on the hermitage. The water floods also changed track and did not harm the hermitage at all.

All the hermits were left spellbound. They thought, "We left our home and performed such strict penance. In spite of that, its impact is not as great as this mere lady's impact. What is her secret formula ? Let's ask her."

They approached Damayanti and asked her, "What magic did you do ? The rains and floods did not even touch our hermitage."

Damayanti replied, "This is all the impact of Jain religion. You are doing strict penance but if it is done along with faith in Jainism, it will give miraculous results." Hearing this, the hermits asked about the nature and principles of Jainism. Damayanti answered their questions satisfactorily. This created a deep impact in the hearts of the hermits.

The faith in the heart of Damayanti was spellbinding. She was confident that she would be able to stop the expected calamity and thus save the hermitage because of the influence of her purity of character and unflinching faith. Now ask yourself, how many various rites and rituals do you perform day in, day out ? You worship God, do Pooja, chant Navkar, observe different vows, do penance on Tithis, respect and obey Guru's words, etc. Do you have confidence in any of the above rituals enough to enable you to make a resolution like Damayanti and eliminate someone's trouble ? No, why ? Is it because of lack of courage or lack of faith ?

You worshipped Lord many times. But is there even a single day's Darshan* engraved in your memory which you will not agree to give away even if some Deva offers you 1 lakh rupees in its' exchange. Is there any specific Darshan wherein you became so engrossed in Lord that you forgot everything around ?

You became so sentimental that, "Oh Lord ! How fortunate I am to acquire you ! You are my might, sight and light. All the worldly luxuries seem pale in front of you." How many times has this occurred in your life ? If not, then how can you trust the impact of the numerable Darshans that you have done in your life ?

From this we can deduce that,

While observing any kind of penance, do it in such a way that the luxuries of the entire material world seem pale and unimportant compared to it. Get so engrossed in that activity that you forget all the worldly joys and sorrows.

Today, we have such glorious examples of great men and women like Damayanti only because they observed such

*Darshan – worshipping Lord

strict penance with complete concentration and immovable faith. Let's emulate their strong Samyaktva and marvellous character.

Coming back to the point, Sitaji was ready to accept the eventualities of marrying even an ordinary, brave man because she herself was courageous.

Mayana Sundari's example :

She, too was a live example of faith and courage. Only because of that she confidently and fearlessly presented the Karma philosophy in front of her father. She stated, "Parents are merely a medium in deciding the future destiny of a daughter. Actually, it is the daughter's own karmas which determine her joy and sorrow." Now was the chance to really implement this philosophy in routine life. Her father, King Prajapal presented an ordinary man affected by white spots in front of Mayana and sarcastically, told her, "Everything happens according to karma, right? Now, this leper has been decided as your husband by your karmas. Now go on, marry him." Mayana was brave and strong and hence implemented the Karma Philosophy in her own life without any dejection. She agreed to marry the selected man without any hesitation. In spite of the fact that the man himself told her to not marry him, she was adamant on her decision. She firmly declared, "My father's wish and choice is ultimate for me." Thus, she accepted him as her husband.

What a courageous action ! A beautiful and charming princess readily accepted a leper as her husband. Why ? Just to display her faith in the karma philosophy propounded by her. This act portrayed her unmatched courage and glorious Samyaktva.

This life will blossom with the fragrance of courage and faith.

This fragrance will keep spreading for thousands of years. That is why people still remember and sing the glory of Mayana and Shripal who lived thousands of years back. If some girl today takes a decision like Mayana, will you consider her intelligent or foolish? If your mind considers only sensual pleasures important, then you will definitely consider such a girl to be foolish.

The person who considers Samyaktva to be far more important than sensual pleasures, the person who counts faith in Arihanta's teachings to be life's main asset will be able to consider girls like Mayanasundari to be intelligent and wise.

To be able to appreciate the qualities of great men you need to have a heart which favours virtues and not sensual temptations.

Don't you recollect Lord Mahavir's life? Without any fault, the shepherd came to hit nails in his ears but he did not take any efforts to drive him away. Instead, he simply accepted the situation. In fact, he stood in such a manner that the coward could do his work easily. This was Lord's great course of action. "This is the right course of action. This course should be adopted at such times." When will this thought fit in our mind? Only when our heart favours the development of virtues like forgiveness, composure, tolerance, etc.

Check it out for yourself. Whom does your heart favour? Worldly pleasures or virtues of the soul? Though we run behind material pleasures whom do we heartily give importance? Happiness, virtues or religion?

“Worldly pleasures are nothing less than murderers. Virtues and religion are our real saviours.” Does our heart believe in this ?

Happiness is actually the soul’s prison whereas virtues and religion are like the soul’s beauty, soul’s progress. How much faith do we have in the above verdict ?

If your heart favours it, then you will agree with it, appreciate it and try to implement it in daily life. If at times, you cannot implement it, you will still be on it’s side.

A religious person favours and prioritizes religion and virtues and ignores worldly pleasures.

A sinful person favours worldly pleasures and hence sacrifices virtues and religion for its sake.

It means that a religious soul enjoys worldly pleasures as a result of his karmas. It doesn’t mean that this heart favours and desires these pleasures. Actions and intentions may differ. A sinful soul favours, desires and exercises only sinful activities. But a religious samyaktvi soul desires worldly pleasures along with a great feeling of repentance. Hence, he is said to favour religion not worldly happiness.

Someone’s penance of Maskhamana*, 16 upvas, etc. will touch us only if our heart favours penance and not only eating at all times. Similarly, if our heart favours tolerance and not overcoming and defeating others, then we will feel that great men were right in not opposing others but calmly accepting whatever came by.

In life, not temporary happiness but religion and virtues are the ultimate goal.

*Maskhamana - 30 days fasts (only boiled water permitted)

We live an aimless life where we consider only wealth and luxuries to be our ultimate goal because of which many religious activities are ignored and the importance of values like forgiveness, compassion, kindness are not properly understood. Is such a life appropriate for a human or an animal ?

Sensual pleasures are an animal's only goal. Does a religious man also have the same goal ?

A true religious man is the one who constantly considers religion and virtues to be his life's goal.

Sitaji was truly courageous and heartily favoured religion and virtues. Hence, she agreed for the tough Swayamvar. But she was fortunate as well and hence attained Rama as her husband in the swayamvar.



22. A Faithful Wife

Karma's test :

Fortunately, she attained Rama as her husband but Karma was right there to test her. Since Rama was going to become the King, she was going to get the honour of being the main queen of the huge kingdom of Ayodhya. But her karmas had something else in store for her. To keep Kaikeyi's words, Dashratha was forced to coronate Bharata as the King but Bharata refused accept this position in presence of Rama. Thus Rama willingly asked for forest exile. Now if her husband accepted forest exile, what would remain for Sitaji ?

Amidst many handsome kings and princes who had come for her Swayamvar, she had married Rama and what was the outcome ? She had to leave all the royal comforts and luxuries and roam in the forest. What would people tell her ? They would criticise her act saying, "What did you achieve in marrying Rama ? What had you thought and what did you get ?" But she was not all worried about that because she very well knew that,

Everything that happens is regulated by Karma and Destiny. Why unnecessarily cry over it ?

Respect for your husband increases tolerance :

Secondly, the moment she married Rama, she created a high level of respect and affection for him in her heart. Such was her respect that she considered everything that Rama did to be right and unquestionable. She made up her mind in such a way

that she was ready to accept Rama's words and act according to his wishes. She was indifferent to people's opinions. She thought that, "Instead of bothering about people's views, all I have to do is happily accompany my husband in his decisions." When Sitaji had so much respect and trust on Rama, where was the question of finding loopholes in Rama's decisions ? Additionally, Rama asked for forest exile without even asking Sita. Here the question is,

- Q.** Didn't Sita feel that at least Rama should have asked me before asking for forest stay ? He has married me and made me his life partner. Now, isn't it his responsibility to ask my opinion and think about my well-being ?
- A.** No. Such a thought did not cross Sitaji's mind even once because unlike today wherein wives consider their husband to be their life partner, Sita did not do so. She considered her husband to be her owner, her Lord and herself to be a mere, obedient servant in his feet. Then how would she expect Rama to ask her and then take a decision ?

The ideal relation between a husband and a wife :

Great is the Arya culture wherein the relation between husband-wife, father-son, employer-employee was similar to an owner and servant's relation. The husband-father-employer were given the position of an owner, not to blow up with pride but to keep in mind that the responsibility of the well-being of the son, wife, etc. was only and only his. He should have it in mind that, "I have to take care about their well-being and progress at all times. I can be the real owner only if I fulfill this duty without fail." Thus thinking, they used to behave in this way. The sons-employees-wives also accepted their position and could not act freely according to their own will. They respected their owners and obeyed them. Hence, they lived a disciplined life.

Being obedient is not a matter of sympathy or compulsion but it is display of respect and humbleness towards our elders which is worth appreciation.

This dependency on our elders proves instrumental in eliminating our bad points like ego, pride, freedom, independency, etc. Can you term such respect and obedience to be a subject of sympathy and compulsion? Can you consider it to be a fault?

Instead, living life recklessly without consideration for others and acting according to our free will is the greatest fault.

Because,

Since eternal times this soul is habituated to walk on the wrong path obstructing one's own welfare. Dependency on elders can act as the soul's saviour.

We come upon the wrong path because of our independence and acting according to our own will. On the contrary, if we stay dependent on our elders, then they save us from going on the wrong path.

You can examine a little child in day-to-day life. If he acts according to his own mind what will be the result? Will it be good or bad? Will he always speak the truth or sometimes resort to lies for his self interest? Will he always be just or sometimes walk on the path of theft-injustice? Will he have sweets, etc. in proportion or sometimes succumb to his taste buds and savour sweets beyond his capacity? Without any instructions, will a 5-6 year old child study sincerely or just play all day? Will he let go small matters or fight with his siblings and friends? All children are generally inclined towards the negative.

Here, if they do not stay dependent and obey their parents they are bound to go the wrong way. If the initial phase is

like this, then how can you expect that child to become a gentleman on growing up ? Only if he is continuously guided, directed, scolded, rectified by his parents will he turn up to be a good citizen. Today's parents have become indifferent towards their child's good upbringing and hence children have got the freedom to act according to their wish. Such children grow up to become liars, cheats, quarrelsome and unjust.

Freedom is a curse :

A little child's state shown above is similar to our spiritual state. Just as a child grows up to become a gentleman if he stays dependent on his mother, father and elders, similarly even if we respect our elders, our Gurus and obey them, then we will be surely nearer to our progress. On the other hand, just as a child who is not given proper guidance grows up to become vicious and mean, similarly without Guru's guidance we, too, will become vicious and our soul will pave its path towards destruction.

How can a human become religious ?

Only by listening and following the words of great saints and learned men. But, if he thinks that, "I will not obey and follow saints and learned men. Instead I will do what I wish." Such a man can never become religious in the true sense.

You require to obey a Guru till you do not become God.

Ganadhar Gautam Swami achieved widespread fame as Lord Mahavir's obedient disciple who was completely dependent on Lord at all times in spite of his position and knowledge. Actually, he achieved all his great position, power and knowledge because he stayed dependent on his Guru, Lord Mahavira. He considered this dependency to be life's asset and hence his progress was unstoppable. Only because of this joy in his mind, he could not bear Lord Mahavir's separation

after he attained salvation. He wailed, “O Lord you left me and went away forever. What will I do without you? Who will address me by saying Gautam! Gautam! ? Who will show me the path of spiritual progress?” If he had not liked dependency, then he would not have cried out like this. If he would have enjoyed freedom then he would have rejoiced on Lord’s salvation. But he did not rejoice because,

He considered freedom and independence to be a wild animal’s asset. This precious human life’s asset and glory was undoubtedly dependence and obedience of elders.

Hence, great Ganadhar Gautam Swami wept like a child on losing this asset. He himself created the entire wide Dvadashangi out of just 3 golden words given by Lord Mahavira. In spite of such major creation to his credit, he commenced the Dvadashangi stating “This is what I have heard from Lord.” Thus he exhibited his dependence on Lord.

The scripture Dharmabindu states : Live a life which is dependent on your elders. If in case your parents pass away, then seek refuge of some elders who are mature, wise and your well-wishers. From time to time take their advice and implement it which will stop your life from going on the wrong track. Thus living a life dependent on elders and obeying them is a great virtue, a valuable asset.

Sitaji understood this very well and hence stayed completely dependent on her husband. She obeyed, respected and served him faithfully. Hence, “If Rama asks for forest exile, then he should first ask me.” This thought never occurred to her. Instead she believed that it was her duty to ask Rama and not his duty to ask her. This was her remarkable quality of dependence and obedience.

A life of dependence is truly admirable.



23. Simply Sita ...

Look at Sita's further distinct qualities :

Rama did not come to Sita and inform her about his decision of forest exile. Instead he directly went to inform his mother. When his mother told to let Sita stay back, Rama also accepted her decision. Rama told Sita, "Mother is right. You stay here and serve her."

But Sita told her mother-in-law, "If my husband is living a painful life roaming in the forest, then how can I live peacefully in this palace ? My husband stays in the forest and I stay in the palace. This is not appropriate. Even I will accept forest stay along with him. Hence, please bless me also.

Why did she do this ? Because Sita very well understood that,

She would be a faithful and obedient wife only if she followed her husband. She could not tolerate that her husband bore pain while she enjoyed.

Thus, Sita willingly accompanied Rama only to fulfill her responsibility but not to taunt him. Leave alone taunting him, she did not even think that, "What days I have to see after marrying Rama !"

Why did she not taunt Rama even once regarding her forest exile ?

She did not feel like taunting Rama even once because she

never felt dejected about her state. She never thought that, “How pleasant was my palace stay and how painful is this forest stay !” If she had thought in this manner, then surely she would have taunted Rama at least once in a while if not every day. But no situation dejected her. Her mind always readily accepted every situation happily. Then where was there room for any dissatisfaction, sarcasm or taunts ? It’s a general rule that “The mouth speaks what the heart feels.” In her heart, the forest days were not so sorrowful that she had to express it by words.

Q. Isn’t it surprising that a delicate person like Sita who had always lived a royal life did not get depressed by such an adverse forest life ?

A. This was because Sita considered the forest exile to be her duty. If my husband has to accept forest exile, then it is my duty to follow him.

Sita considered these forest days to be her duty, and she believed that **“Following one’s duty is this human birth’s beauty.” Thus, the pains that came in the way while following this duty were of no importance.**

Following one’s duty is a great thing. It is of no importance to ignore one’s duty, run away from difficulties and always take care of our comfort zone. What is important is faithful observance of one’s duties. Thus keeping her heart and mind light, if Sita passed her forest days considering it to be her duty, where was there any space for complaints or depression ?

The one who considers happiness only in sensual pleasures and ignores duties and responsibilities is similar to an animal.

Examples wherein painful duties also seem joyful :

- Do those housewives who cook food for the entire family during the hot summer months consider this duty painful ? No. They enjoy performing their duty.
- Do those soldiers whose prime duty is to fight in war, consider this duty to be troublesome when the need arises ?
- Does a servant whose main duty is to serve his employer get frustrated with his work ? No. He does it to the best of his capacity.

Similarly, Sitaji considered her forest stay along with Rama to be her foremost duty and hence she was not at all sad about it. She roamed in the forest for 12 long years and not a single day did she feel frustrated, bored or tired, nor did she complain or taunt ever once.

Today's people, especially women need to learn a lot from her.

When your life is enveloped by difficulties, then see if there is any important achievement or penance in return.

Just as Sita had to face the troublesome forest exile but she kept the great achievement of being a loyal wife in front of her eyes and hence never felt dejected. Similarly, if you too have to face any difficulty in present or have to perform some challenging task or duty, keep the future achievement in front of your eyes which will definitely become a source of happiness.

Remembrance of religion in adverse times is the barometer of our love for religion.

For eg. Unfortunately if some day we lose our wealth, we should feel that in spite of losing wealth I still have the chance to follow Arihanta Lord's religion, I still have the chance to be a faithful and steady minded Shravaka who very well understands the outcome of karma. How meagre is the loss of wealth compared to these gains ! Just as Sita did not weep over her troubles but loyally performed all her duties as a faithful wife, even I should not cry over my sorrows. Instead I should also perform all my duties as a Shravaka with complete efficiency.



24. Sthitapragyata (Steadiness of Mind)

What is Sthitapragyata ?

Pragya = Good intelligence

Sthita = Steady

Thus a person whose good intelligence remains steady is called Sthitapragya and this virtue is called Sthitapragyata.

Where is this intelligence steady ?

This intelligence is not termed Pragya if it is steady in some tasty food items or some melodious music or some things which are soft to touch or in earning money because an intelligence which is steady in all such activities is called Sangya. But here while talking about Pragya, we have to take an intelligence which is steady in virtues like forgiveness, good acts of charity, penance, rituals like devotion of God and service of saints, etc.

For eg.

(1) A mind steady in forgiveness :

It means that when you have made a strong resolution that “However major be the mistake, I do not want to get angry on my relatives and people around me. I will peacefully explain to them the reality and their mistake. In spite of this if they will argue and defend themselves, I will understand that this is their fate. They are a victim of the great Karma disease due to which they cannot understand and accept their mistake.

People like them should be considered either a subject of compassion or indifference.” I will make up my mind in such a way but will surely not get angry.

You made this resolution and after that if someone committed a mistake because of which you had to face a problem, then you have to ensure that you do not get angry at all. You have to stick to your resolution of a forgiving nature at all times. This is developing Sthitapragyata for forgiveness.

(2) Salsa’s Sthitapragyata :

Salsa Shravika’s mind was steady in religion at all times. To test her steadiness, two Devas from heaven took the form of Jain saints and came to her house to seek Lakshapaka oil in alms. Salsa greeted them warmly, “How fortunate I am to have received the chance to do Supatradana* and serve sick saints !” After that she told her servant to fetch the oil bottle from the cupboard. With their magical powers, the Devas invisibly broke the bottle. Not only one but the second and third bottles were also broken by them ! But Salsa did not get angry on her servant even once. Salsa lost all her medicine bottles as well as the precious chance of Supatradana. In spite of this, she did not lose her temper. Because Salsa’s resolution of forgiveness was steady. She had the courage to stand by her resolution ?

That is why the Indra* praised her religious faith and courage in his court. He said, “On this earth, there lives a great Shravika Salsa whose religious faith cannot be moved even by the powerful Devas like you.” Hearing this, a Deva had come down to test Salsa and in spite of the entire situation he created, Salsa did not get angry or annoyed. Salsa’s virtue of forgiveness pleased the Deva and he told Salsa to ask for a boon.

* **Supatradana** – The act of giving alms to Jain Saints.

* **Indra** – Head of all celestial beings i.e., Devas and Devis.

This was Salsa's mind which was steady in forgiveness. Though her servant broke the expensive oil bottles and obstructed her religious intention and activity, she still kept her calm.

(3) Saint Damdanta's Sthitapragyata :

There was a saint named Damdanta. He was standing in Kaayotsarga outside the city of Hastinapur. The mean Kauravas did mischief and troubled the saint while moving out of the city. In spite of being capable, the saint did not react and show his ego. His mind was steady in humility. And hence in adversity also he decided to remain calm. To tease this saint further, the Kauravas fetched bricks and put them around the saint, totally covering him from all sides. He was still calm and composed. Eventually the Pandavas happened to pass by and became aware about the reality. They removed all the bricks and sought forgiveness of the saint. At this moment also the saint was steady minded. There was absolutely no change of emotions or expressions. How was this possible? Because when the saint had accepted Diksha, he had decided to stay humble, polite, healthy and composed at all times. He stuck to his decision firmly. His humility and egoless attitude stayed constant even in adverse times. His resolution to stay calm and composed and maintain a balanced state of mind was evident even in good times i.e. when his problem was solved. This is Sthitapragyata.

(4) Shalibhadra and Dhanna Muni's Sthitapragyata in penance :

Born with a silver spoon in the mouth and living royal life with beautiful wives and all possible comforts and luxuries, Shalibhadra and Dhanna experienced the instability and dreadfulness of material comforts and hence walked on Lord

Mahavira's path of renunciation. After accepting this difficult path, they were continuously fasting and doing penances because of which their body started becoming drier and drier. Their physical capacity declined. Their body was nothing more than a skeleton. Their complexion had also become darker because of the tremendous hardships that they were bearing. So much so that when Shalibhadra went to his own house to seek alms, no one recognized him. Thus no one called him or gave him alms.

Imagine how much they had ignored their body. How strong and steady was their mind in penance ! They had a strong resolution to not leave penance even if their strong body lost all charm and colour. How much penance to do ? Till the final stage of Anshana*.

On the occasion of their end of Maskhamana, they came to Lord Mahavira. Lord Mahavir said, "Your mother will give you alms today." But no one recognized saint Shalibhadra when he reached his home. While retuning, an old shepherd woman gave them alms. Taking them, both the saints ended their 30 days long fast and puzzled with the happening returned to Lord Mahavira. Lord immediately cleared their confusion saying that the old shepherd woman was Shalibhadra's previous birth's mother. Shalibhadra had attained such a precious birth because of his Supatradan whereas the shepherd woman was still in that old miserable state.

Hearing this, understading the importance of religion, both the great saints did their Parna* and approached Lord Mahavira. They sought permission to accept Anshana. Lord agreed and blessed them.

* **Anshana** – The ultimate penance wherein you take an oath to leave all food, water and stand still in a particular position till your last breath.

* **Parna** – Ending a fast

Both the great saints accepted Padapogman Anshana till their last breath wherein they had to lay down in sleeping position on one fixed stone on the mountain VaibharGiri.

What an amazing steadiness they possessed in penance !

Now let's take a glimpse into our lives.

Do we stick to even small resolutions like :

- (1) Doing Porisi Pachchakkhana
- (2) Doing some fix fast on Tithi days
- (3) Offering some amount in Lord's devotion.
- (4) Serving saints or helping some Sadharmikas on a regular basis.

It happens many a time in our day-to-day life that we decide something strongly on the previous day or that same day when we rise early in the morning. For e.g. We decide that from today we will stop speaking lies, teasing others, watching blue films and reading such novels, eating inedible outside food, getting angry on others, etc. But can we sincerely stick on our decision ? Do our activities support our resolution ? Or are we just enthusiastic in taking new resolutions and completely indifferent in implementing them ?

We really need to check our steadiness, our sthitapragyata even in such small things. This precious life is flowing away like a stream of water. The great rituals shown by Lord, the valuable chances of getting rid of our vices and striving for our spiritual welfare are in our hands but we are losing them because of lack of Sthitapragyata.

But we need to take care that –

“Time that has passed will never come back.”

Our scriptures state –

**“Ghora Muhutta, Abalam shariram,
No hu Vinimati Raio
No Punaravi Jiviyam.”**

Time is terrible. Body is weak. Nights which have passed do not come back. Our life span is also not going to come back.

(1) Time is terrible. Why ?

- (1) Firstly, this present time mesmerizes the soul and does not let it think about future disasters or problems. The present time engrosses the soul in negative thoughts and actions.
- (2) Secondly, even a second which has passed does not come back. Then is there any possibility that hours or days will come back ? Human birth is the only birth from where you can attain salvation. This birth once passed will not come back. Then isn't it foolish to while away such valuable time in bad thoughts and actions instead of walking on the path of renunciation and cultivating good qualities ?

Our scriptures talk about the life stories of two Chakravartis - First Chakravarti Bharat Maharaja and last Chakvarti Brahmadata. King Bharat passed his time faithfully, attained Kevalgyana* and reached the final destination Moksha*. He was relieved permanently from the bondages of birth and death. But Brahmadata passed his life in such a way that he was thrown in the dungeons of 7th hell.

Now, imagine if Chakravati Brahmadata - ruler of the entire Bharatkshetra thought at his life end time that “I was mistaken.

* **Kevalgyana** – Omniscience, knowledge of all 3 worlds

* **Moksha** – Salvation; A place which all the liberated souls reach after relieving the bondage of karmas.

I passed my life only in sins. Now, let me bring back my gone time and use it fruitfully in doing religious and noble activities.” Even at the cost of his entire kingdom and all his wealth and position, would he be able to get back the gone time? Not at all. He is not capable to get back even a single second that has passed. Hence utilize time efficiently before it passes away. If it passes away, it is definitely not going to come back.

Every second that comes along says “Use me. Utilize me. Or else I am going. Do not stay under the impression that I will come back.”

(2) Body is weak. How ?

This body is weak. If you trust its strength and think that “Let’s see. We will do this afterwards.”, then you need to understand that this body is completely unreliable. Amidst all the weird happenings, it is possible that suddenly one day this healthy body is afflicted by paralysis, cancer, etc. and it becomes totally unfit for religious activities and penance.

Hence, the current situation is like this,

“The time which has passed does not return and this weak body is completely unreliable.” Under such a situation it is wise to utilize the body’s strength in the present time.

Hence whatever strength we have at present :

- (1) Body’s strength to do penance.
- (2) Mind’s strength to think positive, noble thoughts.
- (3) Soul’s strength to follow different oaths and pledges.
- (4) Tongue’s strength to sing Lord’s hymns and devotional songs; give religious sermons and advice, recite and learn sootras.
- (5) Wealth’s strength to give donations.

It is wise to utilize the present time optimally by using all the above strengths that we possess.

We have two important things on our priority list :

- (1) Eliminate our vices
- (2) Develop virtues and exercise good deeds.

Remembering the above lines “Ghora Muhutta Abalam Sariram” do not delay the above two priorities. If vices are worth eliminating then why wait for tomorrow. Similarly if it is possible to perform good deeds and activate good qualities today, then why postpone them ?

There is a well-known saying in Hindi :

Which means “Do today what you wished to do tomorrow do now what you wished to do today.” Before sleeping at night you can sit back and reflect that “From tomorrow onwards, I will refrain from these specific sins or activities, I will utilize this specific time, money and energy in penance, Lord’s devotion, service of saints, charity etc. Also sometimes when you rise early you can sit and organize your priority list. You can resolve to become sthitapragya and calm at all times. You should also decide to stick to your resolutions.

Coming back to our point sthitapragyata is of utmost importance to live a steady and noble life.

Rama’s sthitapragyata :

Rama observed that according to Kaikeyi’s desire, his father gave the kingdom to Bharat. But Bharat was not ready to take the kingdom in presence of Rama. In such circumstances, Dashrath’s word to Kaikeyi would prove to be futile. Hence, ignoring his own comforts Rama decided to accept forest exile which would force Bharat to rule the state. Thus Rama asked for forest exile and left the luxurious palatial life. In

spite of this, Bharat was not ready to become the king. When Kaikeyi realized this, she regretted her decision. She thought “I forced Rama to leave, but Bharat is not ready to rule the kingdom. What will happen ?

Kaikeyi’s remorse :

“I did all this havoc for my son. I snatched the throne from eligible and capable Rama for my son, Bharat. But now my son is not ready to accept it and Rama has already accepted forest exile. What will happen of this state and its subjects ? My husband is also preparing for Diksha.

Now I should seek Rama’s forgiveness and beg him to come back and accept the throne.”

Thus she sat in the chariot and followed Rama. She met Rama in the forest. She got off the chariot and pleaded Rama with folded hands,

“Return back and accept the throne. Women like me are mean and narrow-minded. Thus, I ended up doing such a disgusting act. But men like you are generous and noble. Thus, forgive my mistake and come along with me.”

Here Rama’s sthitapragyata is note-worthy.

He had decided that his father’s words should not go futile. This was possible only if Bharat accepted the throne and he roamed in the forests. He was steady and determined in his sthitapragyata. The temptation of being coronated as the king also would not move him from his decision.

Thus to solve the problem being an elder brother, he ordered Bharat : “You have to accept the state kingship.” Before Bharat could counter argue, he called for a mug of water and showered it on Bharat himself as an indication of him being coronated as the king.

Here, Bharat respected his elder brother so much that once his elder brother ordered him, he couldn't disobey his order under any situation. With tears in his eyes and absolute silence he accepted the coronation.

Now here a very natural question that will arise is

Did Bharat lose his sthitapragyata in accepting the kingdom ?

Q. It was Bharat's resolution to not accept the kingship in presence of his elder brother who was more eligible for the post. Now when he did not live upto his decision, didn't he lose his sthitapragyata ?

A. No. The reason behind this was that, 'The resolution to not become the king in presence of his elder brother was an ordinary thought but more important was the resolution to never disobey elder brother's orders.' **Occasionally, you may have to let go an ordinary decision to keep a more important decision in place. This will not affect your sthitapragyata.**

For eg. A loyal son had resolved to not have meals without his father. But someday because of some important work, the father told his son to have his meal and not wait for him. At that point of time, the son should think that, " I have meals with father daily and hence dutifully follow my resolution. But today father has told me to have my meal and not wait for him. Instead of following my resolution, it is better to obey and follow father's wish." Here if the son obeys his father and has his meal without his father, he does not lose his sthitapragyata.

Similarly, on following Rama's orders and accepting the throne Bharat does not lose his sthitapragyata. Another question that arises here is,

Q. Kaikeyi tells Rama, “Please refuse and return back. Adorn the throne of Ayodhya.” But Rama does not agree. Why didn’t Rama obey his mother’s words ? Didn’t his resolve to act according to elder’s wishes break ?

A. Here also you need to prioritize both the things ‘Father was a great king in the Ikshvakau progeny. It is more important that the word given by my father does not go futile. If by chance I sit on the throne then my father, Dashrath’s word to Kaikeyi that ‘Ok. I give the throne to Bharat.’ will go futile.

Thus Rama thought that he should never become instrumental in defecting his family’s legacy, pride and goodwill. For that, the word that Dashrath had given to Kaikeyi should not go in vain. It is of utmost importance to stand by this resolve. Kaikeyi’s words and wishes are secondary compared to it.

Thus, even when he did not obey Kaikeyi’s wish to accept the throne of Ayodhya, his sthitapragyata did not decrease.

King Dasharnabhadr’s sthitapragyata :

King Dasharnabhadr thought, “Lord Mahavira - the Lord of the 3 worlds has come to my doorstep. Hence, I will go to bow him in the best possible way. No one will have ever displayed such devotion like me.” He strengthened his resolution and spent all his energy and wealth to decorate the city and the main roads. With great pomp and show, he led a procession wherein he adorned the main decorated elephant, his 500 queens adorned the following 500 elephants and his huge army followed.

The Indra saw King’s Dasharnabhadr’s pride and to break it, he led his procession of 64,000 elephants from heaven and landed on this earth to bow down in Lord’s feet. Seeing this,

the king was confused and depressed. Now, how would he be able to stand by his resolve of displaying incomparable devotion ? But his mind was steady.

I will stick to my decision. I will not get depressed thinking that where do I stand in front of the great Indra ? I do not have miraculous, celestial power using which I can display such grandeur. But I will use my human power optimally. I will still stick to my resolve and succeed however I can.”

He, thus realized that, **“Though this Indra has magical powers and can create all this material wealth, but he definitely does not possess the calibre to create the real spiritual wealth – Charitra*. I have that calibre.”**

Hence, if I bow down to Lord after attaining this topmost spiritual wealth i.e Charitra, it means that I bowed down to Lord with the best of my devotion. I am not worried if I have to forsake the entire kingdom, beautiful queens, the huge army to attain Charitra.”

He, thus took this decision and reached the samavasaran. Indra also reached there with his celestial procession The Indra may be thinking that,” Seeing my pomp and show, the king ’s prosperity will fade away, my devotion will exceed his devotion. But he will soon realize his blunder.” The Indra was left spellbound on seeing the further events. Before bowing down to Lord Mahavira, King Dasharnabhadra removed his royal attire, left the material world forever and accepted Charitra. He then came to Lord and bowed down to him in this holy attire.

* **Charitra** - Diksha i.e. renouncing the material world and becoming a monk.

* **Samavasarana** - The three-tier platform created by the Devas, wherein Lord Mahavira gives his sermon.

Now, how will the Indra flaunt his prosperity ? How will the king's prosperity fade away ? The Indra felt that he was pale and meagre in front of the king. He thought “, I do not have the calibre of accepting Charitra. King Dasharnabhadra worked wonders and fulfilled his resolution of bowing down to Lord with incomparable devotion.”

The Indra immediately folded his hands and addressed the king, “O saint ! I had come to defeat your devotion. For that I got this grand procession of 64000 elephants. In spite of this, I lost and you won. My prosperity is only material wealth. But your prosperity i.e. renunciation of material wealth is the real internal prosperity. Howmuchevery external prosperity I possess, it is nothing in front of the spiritual prosperity.”

You have won by making this great sacrifice and by your resolution. I heartily congratulate you This was king Dasharnabhadra's courage to keep his mind steady and achieve the desired result. He had the courage to maintain his sthita Pragyata.

May this virtue of sthitaPragyata glorify the lives of many people.

The main characters of our story Ramachandraji and Sita possessed high level of sthitaPragyata.

We have taken a glimpse into Sitaji's life and contemplated on the various incidents that she had to face. To ensure that they leave an impact on our lifestyle, we should keep a brief note of such incidents and its morals such so that we can refer them on and off. Going through them at frequent intervals ensures that they inspire our thoughts, actions and words.

Here once again we take a quick trip through Sitaji 's life and remember her life events in short.

Why to do so ?

Going through the numerous life incidents of great souls at a stretch gives us a chance to appreciate their deeds and qualities.

- (1) Sitaji was taught normal values and culture at her father King Janak's home. After marriage, even when her husband Rama accepted forest exile and told her to stay back at home, she willingly accepted forest stay with her husband and followed his footsteps. This was because she felt that it was inappropriate that her husband faced troubles while she stayed at ease. How loyally she carried out her duty as a wife !
- (2) She had learnt and understood the realities of life so well that she happily passed her days in forest. How else could she pass her days in forest ?
- (3) Sitaji's swayamvara was also quite unsafe. But she made her mind that it does not matter if the person who accomplished the task was not good looking or wealthy. He would atleast be courageous. She believed that it was wise and safe to seek refuge of someone who was courageous.
- (4) While leaving Ayodhya and accepting forest exile didn't Sitaji think that,
 - (a) Kaikeyi snatched Rama's right to the become the King.
 - (b) Rama accepted forest exile without even asking me. Didn't Sita fight with Kaikeyi or complain to Rama ?

No. She silently witnessed the happenings and eventually followed Rama in his forest stay.

How calm was Sita even during such crucial circumstances !

(5) Even during the tough forest days, Sita never felt that she had to leave such a luxurious lifestyle and roam about in these dense forests.

Sitaji's foundation of Samyaktva must be so strong that because of it her mind was set, that in worldly matters our efforts give negligible results. Actually, it is our karmas which determine the ultimate result. Hence, it is wise to heartily and happily accept karma's decision.

What an amazing sight ! By implementing this thought, she lived peacefully in the forest without taunting or complaining to Rama about anything.



25. Concern for Rama and Her Character

During their forest days, Sitaji stayed in a small hut. If and when Rama was not present, Lakshmana would sit outside and guard Sita from evil men or forest animals. But he would never sit inside with Sita. Neither of them would feel alone or sit chatting with each other. Such was Sitaji's alertness for safety of her character. She would sit back and contemplate on Lord Arihanta's teachings and hence save herself from being dragged into negative thoughts. Compare this to the present relations between young guys and girls and you will feel shameful.

Following the trap laid by Ravana, Rama went out to protect someone. From there Lakshmana heard the sound of a lion roar which indicated that Rama was in trouble and required Lakshmana's help. In spite of knowing this, Lakshmana did not move away from Sita's side. But Sita persuaded him to go and help his brother. She instigated him, "Your brother's safety is important. My protection is secondary."

She sacrificed her safety for husband's security. Ravana got his chance and abducted Sita in Rama and Lakshmana's absence. In spite of this occurring, Sita did not regret her decision of sending Lakshman to protect Rama.

Why so ?

Husband's security was a good deed, her duty. You should never cry over it. Even if you are trapped in some adversity

because of this good deed, you should still never regret your act.

Why ? Because she very well understood that her adversity was only because of her own karmas. It was foolish to hold the good deed responsible for it. This was Sitaji's pure mind which did not accuse the good act, instead considered husband's welfare to be her duty.

Today's old parents who are kept in an old age home should adopt this mentality. They should not think that it was futile to spend the entire life in comfortably raising children who eventually ended up removing them from the house. This is like regretting and burning the good act performed which will give nothing in return.

When Ravana imprisoned Sita in the beautiful AshokaVatika, she challenged Ravana. "Stay 3½ foot away and talk to me. Do not dare to step ahead or else you will not get Sita but Sita's dead body. It is the vulture's nature to feast on a dead body. Thus even at the cost of her life, Sitaji challenged Ravana. Staying 3½ foot away, Ravana tried to allure Sita in many different ways. His main queen Mandodari also came to convince her saying, "Please our Lord and all his thousand queens will stay at your service." But Sitaji did not succumb to any of these tempting temptations. Why ?

Because no wealth or happiness in the world was equivalent to purity of character. Her purity was her precious priority.

Being imprisoned in Ravana's premises, Sitaji decided, "I will not touch even a morsel of food till I get proper news of my husband's safety." Thus she spent days after days without food. What respect and concern she possessed for her husband !

Refusal to sit on Hanumanji's back :

During such a crucial period, suddenly Hanumanji turned up and insisted Sita to sit on his shoulders so that he could take her back. But Sitaji flatly refused. Hanumanji assumed that “Sita fears that I will not be able to take her safely from the clutches of Ravana’s soldiers and hence is not willing to sit on my back.” To remove her fear and to demonstrate his power, Hanuman uprooted a tree and started flying high carrying it in his hands. Also, he broke the upper floors of the palace, came and told Sita, “You saw my strength. Do not get scared of the soldiers in my presence.”

Sitaji replied, “O fool ! Your efforts were worthless. You should have first asked me the truth before doing all this. I would have told you that I am not scared of the soldiers. My reason of refusal is different. I declined your offer because I do not touch any man except my husband and hence I cannot sit on your back.”

Hanuman said, “But mother ! I have accepted Rama as my father and hence you become my mother. Then why do you hesitate to sit on your son’s shoulders ?”

Virtuous Sita answered, “You are right from the point of view of sentiments. But for the world you are a man other than my husband. It is inappropriate to break the norms of the society. Even a real mother does not keep her 3 year old son embraced to her while sleeping.”

What amazing courage she possessed to protect her chastity !

An obvious question that arises here is,

Q. Sita decided to refuse Hanuman’s help for the sake of protection of her character. But wasn’t her character at stake while staying at Ravana’s place ?

A. No, because she was ready to sacrifice her life for the protection of her chastity.

Leave alone breaking her chastity, she did not glance at Ravana even once. In spite of the fact that he stood 3½ foot away, she still did not look him in the eye. Whenever Ravana appeared in front of him, she would sit with her eyes rolled downwards so much so that Ravana's face or body did not come in her vision. This was Sita's insistence to protect her character. Neither did she accept Hanuman's proposal to sit on his shoulders nor did she make eye contact with Ravana.

Hence, great poet Udayratnaji sings Sita's glory in the Sajhaya :

**‘Udayratna kahe dhanya e abalā, Sitā jehanu nāma,
Satio mahi jeha shiromani, nitya hojo pranām.’**

Why repeat Sitaji's life events ?

We already went through Sitaji's life once. Now, once again we take a brief trip through her life. Do not get bored because everytime we recollect them, we get the golden opportunity to appreciate her good thoughts and acts.

Appreciating others good act is the best medium to accumulate positive thoughts, which eventually result in a wise and knowledgeable rebirth.

If we succumb to negative thoughts like anger, pride, greed more than implementing forgiveness, humility, satisfaction, etc. then we need to understand that we have got a negative series of thoughts from our previous births. Instead, if we desire positive thoughts and good feelings in future then we should appreciate the noble acts and virtues of great men. That is why we rewind Sitaji's life events.

While looking through the instance wherein Sitaji declined Hanuman's help to save her character, Hanuman repeatedly warned Sita saying, "Here, your safety in danger." But Sita replied, "If my character is safe, I am safe. I have warned Ravana to stay 3½ feet away. He does not dare to cross the territory because he very well knows that if he tries to come closer and touch me, I will end my life. So, be assured about my safety. My character is safe here. Then why should I sit on your shoulders and deliberately break it?"

Thus here we get a moral about sticking to protection of character and other virtues even in adverse times.



26. A Quick Glance

After Rama and Lakshmana defeated Ravana and finally brought back Sita to Ayodhya, people started criticizing this step. Fearing disrespect and insult, Rama decided to leave Sita alone in the forest and on a particular day ordered his chief soldier to do so.

During this event, too, Sitaji was mentally calm and composed and accepted the situation without any tantrums. Instead the soldier who was ordered to drop Sita in the forest, cried and cursed himself and his profession which demanded such a wicked act from him.

Here, Sitaji displayed exemplary maturity and composure. In a state wherein she required consolation, she sympathized and pacified the soldier saying that he or his Lord were not responsible for her state. It was only her previous karmas which had brought about this disastrous situation.

This teaches us that,

“If we could easily accumulate karmas in the previous birth, then we should learn to accept its fruits, too. This will result in the elimination of those karmas.”

On being asked about any message that she would like to deliver to her husband who had thrown her out of the palace without any prior notice, she calmly replied,

“Because of people’s criticism you accused and left me. This is not a great deal because you will find a more beautiful wife than me. Also, this decision will not hamper your path of

salvation. But someday if these ignorant people criticize Jain religion, then do not get carried away by their talks and leave this great religion because you will never find any alternative equivalent religion like Jainism. Also, your path of salvation will also be hampered in absence of Jainism.”

This is an answer which makes Sitaji who she was, an answer that we need to carve on our heart. These words of Sitaji reflect her real love for her husband as well as Jainism, her faith in the Karma theory and her courage to perceive every phase of life positively. There was no room for accusations, insults, sorrow or dejection in her life.

Her life teaches us to think, speak and act appropriately at all times keeping only spiritual progress in mind.

After that Sita met King Varjrajangha who accepted her as her sister. Staying at his palace, she delivered twins – Lavana and Ankusha. Sita was so wise and matured that she did not disclose the bitter truth to them till they were approx. 18-20 years old. She did not share her difficulties with them because she considered them to be an outcome of her karmas and hence there was no point in blaming and criticizing others for it. Compare this point of view to our thought process. The moment we face any problems we tell our problems or other’s faults to one another. Thus, we spoil our own well-being.

We can become like Sita if we constantly keep the karma theory and our soul’s safety in mind.

Sita herself never revealed the tough adversity. When her sons got to know about the reality from outside they came and confronted her saying, “Does our father think that Sitaji has no one to protect her? But her protectors are ready who will now fight for her justice and show the world that Sita has efficient protectors like us. Bless us so that we can attain victory in war.”

But as we read ahead, Sita did not bless them. Instead she scolded them for saying that it is inappropriate to even think about fighting with their father. They should go and seek his blessings and she would readily permit them for this task.

Thus, Sitaji's SthitaPragyata and right understanding is evident from all such instances. After she married Ramchandraji, she had fixed this in her mind that 'My life is dedicated in his feet.' Amidst all ups and downs, she firmly stood by her resolution and kept her respect for her husband intact. Isn't this amazing? Even after being thrown away into the forest by her husband, there was no difference in her attitude and understanding. She behaved as if she had never faced any problem from her husband. In our life, many a times we have little problems with our relatives because of which we completely avoid contact with them. We also harbour negative thoughts and irritation towards them. But it was Sita's nobility because of which she never harboured any animosity or hatred for him. Why? Because she not only respected her husband but worshipped him. Also, her husband's various qualities and virtues constantly enveloped her mind. There was no place for any negativity in her mind for Rama.

Q. How to think positively about everyone?

A. The path of positivity includes focusing on the good qualities and virtues of even our opponents.

This is the only birth to envelop our mind with such positivity. Great men and women have also cultivated such royalty and become great. If I wish to become great, this is the only solution.



27. Final Test

After that, Sitaji was ready to give the Agni Pariksha on Rama's insistence. Didn't she think that-wasn't the crime of keeping me alone in the terrible forest less that now I am supposed to give this Agni Pariksha? Isn't it scary to enter a 300-hand deep valley burning with fire? Can they be so mean to tell me to perform this frightful task? She did not succumb to any of the above thoughts.

How was this possible ?

This was very much possible because –

- (1) Firstly she did not consider her husband responsible for her being thrown in the forest. She held her karmas responsible for this state.
- (2) Secondly she was not at all scared of the Agni Pariksha because she had faith in the purity of her character.
- (3) Thirdly, she considered her husband's wish to be God's wish which was not subject to any arguments. Hence there was no place for any fear.

Sitaji must have maintained purity of character so much so that she had faith that the fire would not harm her at all.

Wouldn't Sitaji have seen handsome men before? Didn't she get attracted to them even once? Hence it is necessary to think that **'Except your husband, another man's beauty and attraction is a barrier for the protection of character.'**

How to stop this attraction ?

This soul is trapped in the sensual pleasures of this maternal world. Since times eternal, the soul is contaminated by the effects of sensual pleasures. These effects get activated immediately. How to save ourselves from them ?

It is a two-way process.

- (1) If the soul is not contaminated by the impact of these sensual thirsts, then the contact of these sensual attractions cannot disturb it.
- (2) Also, if the soul is contaminated but does not come in contact with such sensual pleasures, then again soul is safe.

But if both of these collide, a blast is inevitable. Everyone in this world have both of this and hence the sensual desires of seeing, hearing, eating and touching whatever is good is going on since eternal times. How can you save yourself from this ?

There are two things which can save you from these dangerous sensual pleasures –

(1) The inclination towards religion in your mind

(2) The fear for sins in your heart

The inclination for religion in your heart gives you the right understanding that, “Look, these sensual pleasures are worth forsaking. We succumbed to these sensual pleasures innumerable times in the births of animals and Anarya humans. But this soul is still not content. In the past, the soul did not resist such temptations because of ignorance and the absence of religion. But today is it appropriate to walk on the same path even in the presence of religion ?” If we constantly think on these lines, then we can stay alert. Worldly affairs will not disturb us.

Sitaji had to enter a burning fire but she was still not disturbed because in her mind burning of the body did not hold as much importance as the fulfillment of her husband's desire.

Courageous and loyal Sita thus entered the fire. As soon as she stepped inside, the 300 land deep pit of fire transformed into a lake. Imagine how pure must Sitaji's character be !

The pit of fire turned into a lake and Sitaji was seated on a golden lotus in the centre. The water from the lake started overflowing so much so that the people who were seated on all 4 sides to witness the event feared that the water would drown them. Hence they were confused but had no direction to go because there was water everywhere.

When they had nowhere to go, they realized that Sita possessed miraculous powers because of which the fire turned into water. Hence they called out to her for rescue. All the people started screaming, "O Goddess, Save us ! Save us !"

Here, imagine what would you do if you were in place of Sita. Sita did not think that, "These people are mean and cunning. They did not hesitate in criticizing me, they accused me of impurity and disloyalty towards my husband. Now they have no option but to die. I am not harming them. Their own sins are harming them. What can I do in this case?" No. Sitaji did not possess such a tough and cruel attitude. She was not stone-hearted. She was compassionate and sympathized with the people who were frightened with the thought of drowning in water.

She immediately spread her hands on the water overflowing on both sides with the resolution that, "May the water tide recede because of the impact of my purity and chastity." To everyone's surprise, the water immediately receded. The water which had taken a terrible form pacified.

This instance in Sitaji's life teaches us to be compassionate even towards your enemies. It teaches us to be soft hearted and to keep our heart free from evil thoughts and vices.

As we saw in the beginning, Sitaji does not blame or insult Rama for the happening. Instead she is grateful to him because she feels that it is only because of Rama that the fire turned into water. On being asked about the reason she clarified further that,

“Rama, this fire turned into water only because you resided in my heart. If anyone else would have been in my heart, then this fire would have reduced me to ashes. Hence, you have done a great favour on me for which I am immensely grateful to you.”

This incident displays Sita's amazing feeling of gratitude. She did not give credit to her purity for this transformation of fire into water. Instead she considered this to her husband's favour.

Those whose intention is only self-appraisal can never remember other's favours.

It is quite evident in this world that parents sacrifice time, money and energy and raise children. But when the child grows up, becomes successful and starts earning well, he does not give credit to his parents. Instead he thinks that he is successful because of his own intelligence and efficiency. This is only self-appraisal and pride about one's capability. Gratitude has no place here. The heart has become tough and stone hearted. This inturn results into a negative and indifferent attitude which troubles us in every successive birth.

Instead keep your eyes, heart and mind open to visualize and remember the innumerable favours of your parents, Guru and Arihanta Lords on you.



28. Thank You God !

Once there was a 35 year old foreign woman whose husband passed away. She had 6 children. She was now confused and helpless. She wondered, “How will I manage to raise all these children ? The one who earned is no more.”

She met a psychiatrist. She told him, “Lord’s kingdom is dark and unjust. Those who do not have children have no other problem. A person like me having 6 children has to face widowhood. Does Lord want us to die of hunger ?”

The psychiatrist calmly replied, “Here, there is no darkness but light, no injustice but absolute justice. You are given a chance to improve your efforts. **You were living a happy, prosperous life and had forgotten Lord. This was real darkness.** Now, you have acquired the real light which is to remember God, to pray to him, to remember his innumerable favours and to thus have faith in him. Pray to God that may your unmatched power help me and result in my wellbeing. Eventually as you start being happy, consider this to be his grace. Take this little amount. Start a small shop selling biscuits. Alongwith this do not stop praying to God and always remember his gratitude.”

This was it. The depressed lady suddenly saw a ray of hope and acquired strength. She started the small shop and her daily prayer to God. “Lord ! It is your unmatched power and grace which is at work. It is definitely going to result in my wellbeing.” As and when things worked in her favour

and the situation improved, she constantly considered it to be God's favour and thanked him. Her faith in Lord's existence and compassion increased. She started praying twice a day.

“O Lord ! How amazing is your grace because of which all my tasks are getting accomplished. When I lost my husband, I assumed that my fortune had left my side. In case of a rotten fortune, would I earn money ? But Lord ! It is only and only by your grace that I have all the conveniences like wealth, good business, and considerable profit and returns, etc. I am extremely grateful to you.”

Eventually the lady's business expanded and she transformed her small shop into a big store. Once she happened to meet that psychiatrist. He inquired about her condition. She gratefully replied, “You really opened my eyes. In this universe, God is the ultimate doer. I had forgotten this universal truth. You helped me recognize him. You made me realize that it is He who is responsible for all the good that is happening in the world. All is well because of the grace of God. By his grace even unexpected tasks are accomplished. I have had many such experiences. For ex.

- “Once I stepped out of my house and remembered someone who I hadn't met since 2 years. What a wonder that I walked just 50-80 steps further and came across that person.”
- “Once, I opened the shop and had no customers till half an hour. No sooner did I think that “Will I have customers today ?” than a customer appeared. By God's grace, the customers went on increasing.”
- “In routine life, sometimes when I just think that I want to buy this specific thing, I immediately get that thing in the market.”

In all these above incidents, my smartness or efficiency is of no use. Only and only Lord's grace is at work.

Hence whenever I acquire my desired result, I always remember God saying "Thank You, God!" You won't believe about the number of times I remember God in this way and thank God in every walk and talk of life. Even in little things like drinking water, I thank him for the acquisition of water.

'Do you thank God all the time?'

"Yes, if required I thank him 150 times in a day. "Thank You, God! I am extremely grateful." As a result, I acquire my desired things without any worries or efforts."

She again heartily thanked the psychiatrist for giving her this amazing sight and helping her to recognize God. Here, a noteworthy thing is that the lady's business flourished because of her hardwork but she did not give any credit to her efforts. Instead, she considered it to be God's grace. She considered God's compassion to be the elemental factor behind her success. She did not blow up with pride on attaining success. She just constantly said and heartily believed, "Thank You, God!"

The lady addressed the psychiatrist, "I am really thankful to you for helping me in identifying God's kingdom of infinite compassion and welfare. With my life's example I am now teaching others this golden rule to happiness.

**"Have faith on God's innumerable favours on you,
Have faith on his incomparable compassion,
Thank God in every walk of life."**

Worldly affairs are unimportant. But accepting Lord's shelter and understanding his endless compassion and grace is of utmost importance.

Also, remembering those who have done favours on us is the best way to reduce our pride and ego.

Sita, thus considered it to be Rama's greatest favour that the fire transformed into water. Similarly, in our life it may happen that we accomplished a tedious task wherein our intelligence and efforts were noteworthy. But we should still consider this achievement to be God's favour, God's grace.

While reciting 'Jaya Viyaraya' everyday in the chaitya-vandan, we pray God to bless us with 'Iththa Fala Siddhi.' (accomplishment of desired task) the intention behind this prayer is the strong faith that I will achieve my desired result only because of God's grace. If God's grace did not play any role in this achievement, then the great Ganadharas would not have written this line in this frequently recited sootra.

This is the extraordinary quality of the great men – they consider their success to be the grace of elders and do not take the credit on themselves. God and Guru are the eldest. Hence, we should always be grateful to them. This will reduce and eventually delete self-appraisal.

Now we come to the climax of Sitaji's inspirational life sketch.

Sitaji's extraordinary quality :

Sita passed the Agni Pariksha successfully. She pacified Rama's feeling of remorse. Rama and Lakshmana now requested Sita to sit in the chariot, accompany them to Ayodhya and enjoy a luxurious life. But Sitaji refused.

What was her reason for her refusal ?

- (1) Prior Resolution
- (2) Intense feeling of non-attachment.

(1) What was her prior Resolution ?

As soon as she achieved fame, glory and acceptance after successfully passing the Agni Pariksha, she declared her decision to forsake the maternal world and accept the path of charitra (renunciation) because she had resolved,

“I will forsake this material world as soon as I get rid of this accusation.”

She must have decided this when she was left alone in the forest and hence now when she was proved innocent, it was natural that she stuck to her resolution of forsaking the material world. In such a case why would she accept the offer of passing a peaceful life in the palaces of Ayodhya ?

This was one reason for her renunciation.

(2) The second reason for her decision was her intense feeling of non-attachment.

She strongly felt that there was no point of staying in this world wherein Karmasatta slapped you now and then.

As we saw earlier, Sita had to face Karmasatta’s severe brunt not once or twice but thrice –

First when she had to leave the palace and accept forest exile with Rama, second when she was abducted by Ravana and separated from Rama and third when she was accused guilty by her husband herself and was left alone and helpless in the forest during her pregnancy.

In this way, after facing the brunt of Karmasatta thrice, inspite of everyone’s noteworthy respect, affection and insistence she did not agree to accept a comfortable life. This was because there was no guarantee that she wouldn’t have to face Karmasatta’s brunt once again. Hence, she had decided firmly

to not only forsake the palace life but this entire worldly life and accept a pure spiritual life of Charitra.

Q. Even by doing so, wouldn't she have to accept the ultimate brunt of death ? Would she be able to avoid it by accepting Charitra ?

A. No, she wouldn't be able to avoid it but improve it. By implementing non-violence, resistance over sensual desires and penance one can slap Karmasatta and perform the great act of ending all the karmas once and for all which will result into salvation after death. After that, Karmasatta is completely incapable to cause you any harm.

Here, Karmasatta throws us into dreadful and painful births because of our lust and temptation for sensual pleasures wherein there is no chance for exercising religion and destroying sins. Now that I have attained this previous birth why let Karmasatta slap me ? Instead I will only destroy its existence by way of non-violence, resistance over temptations and penance.

Thus, because of her intense feeling of non-attachment, Sitaji retired from the material world and accepted Lord Arihanta's path of renunciation. She had experienced many troubles in life but she did not succumb to the fame, respect and the opportunity to enjoy a luxurious life. This is Sita's exceptional characteristic.



29. The Moral

This instance of Sitaji's life teaches us several important things.

- (1) **Firstly, never trust any material comforts and luxuries thinking that they will always give you happiness because before you realize it will take an unexpected U-turn.** Do not ignore your spiritual progress and religious outlook by relying on them.
- (2) **Secondly, we have been slapped and troubled by the Karmasatta innumerable times in previous births. Now we have attained the precious Jinshasan wherein there is the golden chance to abolish the Karmasatta's existence by way of charity-purity of character-penance-good thoughts, non-violence, resistance-penance, right faith-right knowledge- right conduct and other such religious activities. Hence, strive whole heartedly to stop sinful activities and increase religious acts.**
- (3) **Sensual pleasures are deceitful by nature. A flame of fire attracts the butterfly and then burns it. Similarly sensual pleasures attract us, create intimacy with it and eventually throw us in the danger of low births, thus hampering our spiritual progress.**

Sitaji recognized the true nature of these sensual pleasures and thus denied its dependency. Thus, keeping Sita as a role model, willingly forsake as many pleasures as you can.

Coming to Sitaji's final exceptional characteristic. She lived such a pure ascetic life that she was reborn as the 'Achyutendra' in the 12th heaven. Achyutendra is that fortunate Indra among

innumerable other devas who gets the great opportunity to perform the first Abhisheka of innumerable Tirthankara Lords on the MeruParrata.

To accumulate the enormous Punya required to become the supreme Achyutendra, Mahasati Sita must have exercised right faith-knowledge- conduct and penance faithfully throughout her ascetic life. She had the chance to enjoy royal comforts and prestige but she denied them and accepted such a tough life. How must have she done such difficult penance with such a delicate body ?

Only that penance and ascetism is supreme which does not care about the conveniences of the body and mind.

In every walk of life, if we continuously worry about the conveniences of our body and mind, then real penance is not possible. Real penance is possible only if we are ready to optimally utilize the power of the body and mind according to the words of the learned. In spite of her delicate body, Sitaji must have served her Guru and other Sadhvis, strictly followed non-violence and restraint, done various fasts and penances, engrossed her mind in the devotion and reverence of Arihanta Lords to accumulate such an enormous amount of Punya.

Sitaji's ascetic life constituted not only external deeds but a pure heart and mind, too which led to noble feelings, sentiments and increasing purity. This combination of noble thoughts and actions resulted in the accumulation of abundant Punya.

To conclude, note down the distinctive features of Sitaji's life, remember them. Try to recollect them frequently, implement them in your daily routine and thus spiritually progress in life. This will denote that you successfully sang the glory of great and pure-hearted Sita.