ISJS NEWSLETTER

Vol#07 | Issue#09 | No.01 | September 2024

Speak Up

DAŚALAKṢAṆA DHARMA

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History of Daśalakṣaṇa Dharma

Avasarpiṇī (the downtime) and *utsarpiṇī* (the upsurging time) are two time-cycles in Jainism. Towards the end of the *avasarpiṇī* and before the beginning of the *utsarpiṇī*, a transition period takes place. In the last forty-nine days of the *avasarpiṇī* which marks the end of the said *kalpa kāla*, there are seven types of inauspicious rain for seven days each. It covers nineteen days of the Indian month of *jyeṣṭha* and the complete month of *āṣāḍha*. The heavenly beings take some human beings with them to the banks of the Ganges and save their lives to continue the generations.

As soon as these inauspicious rains get over, the land goes down for one *yojana* due to which the Swastika made up of rock below the *Sammeda Śikhara* (the perpetual mountain) is seen for a short period of time, just for one intra-hour, which is worshipped by the heavenly beings. It is the first day of *śrāvaṇa* and from this moment begins the *utsarpiṇī kāla*. For the next forty-nine days, four kinds of auspicious rains revive the atmosphere to make it possible for inhabitation. It covers the complete month of *śrāvana* and nineteen days of *bhādrapakṣa*. The last day of this whole period is *bhādra śukla caturthī*. From the fifth day, the *bhādra śukla pañcamī*, the heavenly beings celebrate for 10 days where they worship and celebrate the continuation of the Jain tradition. This is why these 10 days are celebrated by the Jains as the Eternal Festival.

Daśalakṣaṇa Dharma, also known as the ten virtues or tenfold path, is a fundamental concept in Jainism that outlines the essential qualities and practices for spiritual development. Jains celebrate these ten days by fasting and observing other ways of self-restraint. All these ten characteristics are the inherent nature of the soul. Although these are names given to each of the days and the whole community adheres to the sequence and believes in observing all ten virtues throughout the entire festival:

1. **Uttama Kṣamā (Supreme Forgiveness)**

   Forgiveness is not merely an act but a state of being. It involves letting go of anger and resentment, which are seen as obstacles to spiritual progress. True forgiveness requires a deep understanding of the nature of the soul and the karmic bonds that bind it. Forgiving oneself for indulging in passions that cause harm to the soul is the purpose of this festival.

2. **Uttama Mārdava (Supreme Humility)**

   Humility is the recognition of the intrinsic worth of all beings. It involves shedding the ego and acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life forms. Humility fosters equanimity and is essential for spiritual growth.

3. **Uttama Ārjava (Supreme Straightforwardness)**

   Straightforwardness, or honesty, is another virtue of Jainism. It explains that being truthful and transparent in one's dealings is fundamental to building trust and integrity. This virtue helps in aligning one's actions with spiritual principles, thereby facilitating a harmonious and ethical life.

4. **Uttama Śauca (Supreme Purity)**

   In Jainism, purity refers to the virtue of maintaining cleanliness at physical, mental, and spiritual levels. Contradicting greed, this virtue encourages individuals to lead a life of moral integrity and spiritual clarity, which are essential for achieving inner peace and spiritual progress.

5. **Uttama Satya (Supreme Truth)**

   The interpretation of truth in Jainism goes beyond mere honesty. It views truth as a multifaceted concept that says that the truth should be both right and beneficial. It also emphasizes that truthfulness is a reflection of one's inner purity and is essential for spiritual awakening.

6. **Uttama Saṁyama (Supreme Self-restraint)**

   Self-restraint is the control of one's senses and desires. Jainism argues that self-restraint is crucial for maintaining discipline and focus on the spiritual path. By practicing self-restraint, individuals can prevent the accumulation of negative karma and cultivate positive qualities.

7. **Uttama Tapa (Supreme Austerity)**

   Austerity involves voluntary simplicity and self-discipline. It helps in purifying the soul by reducing attachment to material possessions and bodily comforts. This virtue is seen as a means to develop inner strength and resilience.

8. **Uttama Tyāga (Supreme Renunciation)**

   Renunciation, in Jainism, is the ultimate act of detachment from worldly desires and possessions. This virtue encourages individuals to give up worldly attachments and practice selflessness, leading to inner peace and spiritual growth. Renunciation is not donating but it is to give up the materialistic pleasures. Jains aim to cultivate a life of simplicity and non-attachment through this virtue.

9. **Uttama Ākiñcanya (Supreme Non-possession)**

   Non-possession is not just the practice of non-accumulating but also culminating the desire for accumulation. In fact, delusion is said to be the biggest possession. This virtue encourages individuals to focus on their inner self rather than external possessions and leads to equanimity and inner peace.

10. **Uttama Brahmacarya (Supreme Celibacy)**

    Celibacy is not just about abstaining from sexual activity but also about controlling all forms of sensual pleasure. *Brahma* means the soul and *carya* means to dwell, therefore it means that one should dwell in oneself and not indulge in any pleasures.

Kṣamāvāṇī (Seeking Forgiveness)

The festival of seeking forgiveness has its own significance. Although this festival is observed as a customary rite but is celebrated with great enthusiasm and joy. The true purpose of celebrating the 'speech of forgiveness' is to be overflown with the feeling of forbearance in our hearts. However, apologizing and forgiving is a serious matter that should be approached with a pure heart and followed by true self-introspection. Only then, forgiving and seeking forgiveness will make a difference and bring a positive change in our lives.

Unfortunately, nowadays the entire commercial side of it has developed with printed drafts and cards of apology letters where only the address is to be written. From a personal/private affair, seeking an apology became a market commodity. It must, rather, be a spiritual experience that transcends one from passion to passionlessness, like the tranquillity-possessed saints.

The festival emphasizes instilling positive qualities and observing being in oneself.