

## THE JAIN LIFESTYLE

*Ayurveda* aims not merely at treating a disease but also at preventing it. Medical science has also given a great deal of thought to prevention of diseases. But despite a variety of therapies and medicines diseases are growing. Both thinking and research prove that the cause of this growth lies in a bad lifestyle.

The main characteristics of the modern lifestyle are rivalry, haste, impatience, intolerance and lack of restraint. All of them disturb the balanced secretion of the endocrine glands, which amounts to an invitation to disease. Even heart specialists plead for a change of lifestyle.

There has been a phenomenal increase in mental imbalance, distractedness and negative attitudes. Consequently mental diseases have registered a big increase. Psychiatrists too regard a change of lifestyle imperative for ensuring mental health.

There is a constant increase in inhuman practices related to violence, foeticide, terrorism, domestic feuds, social strife, divorce and dowry. Again, religious philosophers ascribe it to irreligiosity and therefore prescribe a change of lifestyle.

Thus despite there being different areas of life, the remedy suggested is the same. Whether articulated or not, this felt need has been presented by Acharya Tulsi and Acharya Mahapragya to the public in the form of an organized Jain lifestyle. Then came the *Yogakshema* year and the voices of building a scientific cum spiritual personality began resounding. The principles expounded of the Jain lifestyle during that sacred year are capable of acting at once as a panacea for physical and mental health, an effective

instrument for bringing about emotional transformation and a potent means of awakening religious consciousness.

Life is a balanced amalgam of the body, breath, senses, life force, mind, emotion and consciousness. That lifestyle alone can be deemed good which provides adequate opportunities for the body to be healthy, for the breath to be rhythmic, for the senses to be instruments of well-being, for life to be dynamic, for the mind to be concentrated, for the emotions to be sublime and for the consciousness to manifest itself.

The following nine elements of the Jain lifestyle have been formulated on the same basis:

1. *Samyak Darshan* (right faith or true spiritual insight).
2. *Anekant* (the doctrine of non-absolutism)
3. *Ahimsa* (nonviolence)
4. *Saman Sanskriti* – *sam*, *sham*, *shram* (the mendicant or ascetic culture – equanimity, continence and laboriousness)
5. *Ichchha Pariman* (limiting desire)
6. *Samyak Ajivika* (right means of livelihood)
7. *Samyak Samskar* (right formative influence)
8. *Aharshuddhi aur Vyasan Mukti* (purity of food and freedom from addictions)
9. *Sadharmik Vatsalya* (affection for the followers of the same faith).

## 1. **Samyak Darshan**

The life of a householder is full of attachment and it cannot be deemed undesirable. But if there is no control over passions, life becomes unbalanced. Balance is a basic characteristic of the Jain lifestyle.

*Arhat* he who has attained absolute knowledge and is free from passions is my deity.

*Sadhus* (ascetics) are my teachers. They endeavour with dedication to rid themselves of passions.

The truth propounded by *arhat* is my religion. It is the path that leads to freedom from passions. Faith in *arhats* (the adorable ones), the *Guru* (preceptor) and *dharma* (path of righteousness) constitutes true spiritual insight. Its fruits are:

- (a). the development of right faith *samyak darshan*)
- (b) the development of a creative outlook
- (c) the subduing of rage, pride, illusion and greed

False perception of reality hinders the growth of peaceful coexistence, humility, fraternity, friendship, straight dealing and business integrity. All obstacles disappear and life becomes luminous once one starts following the style dictated by true spiritual insight.

## 2. **Anekant**

Community or group living requires relativism, harmony and peaceful coexistence.

Life is relative. Therefore without treating one's own view as unimportant, we should try to understand the viewpoints of others as

well. He alone can lead a healthy social life who follows relativism and openmindedness.

If I ascribe some element of trueness of my thoughts, how can I deny the same to someone else's thoughts? He alone can have sweet relationships who can harmonize his views with those of others.

The development of an outlook characterized by relativism and harmony can alone be the basis of peaceful co-existence.

Partiality and wrong insistence make life dry, bitter and sad. The outlook of a follower of the *anekant* lifestyle is characterized by humility. It automatically resolves disputes and strife. Domestic life becomes pleasant, happy and sweet.

In the absence of a universal feeling of relativism, it is idle to hope for any improvement in human relations.

The fruits of living according to the *Anekant* style are:

- (a) development of a relativistic outlook
- (b) development of an attitude of harmony
- (c) development of an attitude capable of harmonizing the opposites and controversial views

### 3. **Nonviolence**

Ordinary men cannot avoid violence altogether in the process of living. Even so those given to true spiritual insight undertake hard deliberation with a view to finding ways of minimizing violence. Such a deliberation becomes an important starting point on the road to the development of nonviolence. The first principle underlying the above minimization requires the abandonment of inessential violence.

Due to negligence, attachment and strong desires people indulge in a lot of violence. Therefore those who want to adopt a nonviolent lifestyle should always remember the precept: Minimize violence. Avoid inessential violence.

Cruelty causes inessential violence. Murders and foeticide are clear illustrations of violence. Suicide is an example of a flurry of excitement. The apparent motive behind cosmetic goods is the desire for make-up and beautiful looks, but at the back of it is cruelty.

One who avoids inessential violence does not overuse soil, water and vegetation. In using them he practises restraint and discrimination.

The fruits of a nonviolent lifestyle are:

- (a) the development of sensitivity
- (b) control of ecological pollution
- (c) continual growth of friendship with living beings.

#### 4. **The ascetic culture (*Shraman Sanskriti*)**

The very vital force of the Jain lifestyle is *Saman* culture. 'Saman' is a Prakrit word which is variably called in Sanskrit as *Saman*, *Shaman* and *Shramanv*.

A *Saman* is he whose heart is pure and who treats all sentient beings like himself.

A *Shaman* is he who knows how to subdue his passions and excitement.

A *Shramanv* is a *tapasvi* who undergoes religious austerities like fasting and mortification of the self and is given to doing hard work and self-reliance.

Will you like to be treated as inferior or subjected to wild anger and ill-treatment or to be exploited by others? If not, you will have to change your lifestyle. You will have to mete out equal treatment to all others and consider no one as inferior. You must learn to curb your excitement and impulses. You must not create obstructions in the way of someone's earning his living.

The fruits of the lifestyle of the ascetic culture are:

- (a) human unity
- (b) putting an end to racial and caste hatred as well as untouchability
- (c) peaceful coexistence
- (d) balanced behaviour
- (e) development of self-reliance

## 5. **Limiting or restraining desires**

Material objects and services are limited but consumers are too many. The desires too keep growing. As a solution to this problem Lord Mahavira propounded the principle of limiting or restraining one's desires. Absence of individual ownership militates against human nature; unlimited ownership runs counter to the creation of a proper social order. So there is a middle way - limit your desires; limit individual ownership and acquisition; limit individual consumption.

The experiment in limiting desires is a challenge to the present economic competitiveness and rat race of development. The experiment is difficult but in it alone lies the solution to the problem.

The fruits of the lifestyle of limited desires are:

- (a) sharing, parting with a part of what one acquires
- (b) building a healthy society

#### 6. **The right means of livelihood**

Man cannot live without bread. Begging is a crime. Earning livelihood is the only way out. Therefore every head of the family resorts to it. The consciousness of the purity of means awakens in a person faith in nonviolence and limitation of desires. He refrains from earning a living by hook or crook. He undertakes only such activities as do not tarnish either his character or that of society.

The fruits of right means of livelihood are:

- (a) clean business and integrity
- (b) refraining from trade and business related to intoxicants, meat, fish, eggs and similar items undesirable for eating
- (c) refraining from activities that involve smuggling
- (d) refraining from adulteration of food stuffs
- (e) refraining from trading in arms
- (f) refraining from felling trees and destroying forests.

#### 7. **Recasting education in true spiritual insight**

Life without direction leads nowhere. The right direction is one that leads to the destination. And our destination is the land where there is equity, balance and self-conquest. It is therefore essential that from the very beginning such education is imparted as well lead to that destination. Birth, christening, marriage, festivals and death are special occasions which lend an identity to the individual and this identity is made possible by sanctifying ceremonies. The Jain

sanctifying ceremonies should be such as are not contrary to the spirit of the age, are not fettered by wasteful rituals, are not tainted by blind imitation or unhealthy entertainment and do not sow the seeds of agitation and violence in society.

The fruits of the lifestyle resulting from sanctifying education grounded in true spiritual insight are:

- (a) use of **Jai Jinendra** in greeting and correspondence
- (b) primacy to pictures, quotations etc. indicative of Jain culture in home decoration

#### 8. **Purity of food and freedom from addiction**

Purity of food is a requirement not merely of religious texts but also of Health Science and Practical Psychology. There is an ancient saying which states that 'as you eat so you think'. Science has further enlarged this concept by stating that there is a casual chain of food, neuro transmitter and behaviour.

Eating eggs and meat results in the construction of the blood vessels which in turn enhances the chances of heart diseases.

Use of alcoholic drinks affects the liver and lungs. Likewise the nicotine contained in tobacco poisons the blood of smokers and chewers of areca nuts mixed with tobacco. It again leads to the constriction of blood vessels and enhances the chances of contracting cardiac ailments, cancer and other deadly diseases.

Gambling and similar addictions also cause mental afflictions and thus prove a curse for those seeking mental peace and happiness. It is vitally important to keep away from them.

The fruits of the purity of food and freedom from addiction are:



- (a) healthy and balanced life
- (b) improvement in physical, mental and emotional health
- (c) protection from criminal instincts

9. **Affection for the followers of the same faith (Jains)**

There are many factors responsible for social organization. Caste is one of them and sect another. Those who subscribe to the canons of the same sect develop a feeling of fraternity among themselves. The principle that one who has been initiated into the Namaskar Mantra is my dear brother reinforces the above formulation.

Followers of the same faith should remain steadfast in their faith.

This steadfastness is an important dimension of affectionate feelings for those who follow the spirit embodied in Namaskar Mantra.

Those who are not Jains by birth may become Jains by their conduct and lead their lives on the basis of their faith in purity of food, freedom from addictions and true spiritual insight. This is yet another dimension of expressing a feeling of affection.

The practice of four pure feelings of imparting education, arranging for health care, ensuring a living and creating an atmosphere free from fear were responsible for making Jainism widely popular in the south.

The fruits of the lifestyle based on a tender feeling of affection for fellow believers are:

- (a) popular attraction towards nonviolence
- (b) inter-caste goodwill
- (c) interfaith goodwill