

LESSON 07

REMOVAL OF KARMA PART 01 (NIRJARA)

The word Nirjara is made up of "Nir" and "Jara". Nir is prefix while Jara means to fall off. Hence, in the Jain philosophy Nirjara means falling off, destruction, or removal of karmas from the soul. In the discussion of asrav and samvar, we gave the illustration of boating. Let us again go over that example which also explains how nirjara works. Let us pretend, as if you went boating. You were having a good time and suddenly noticed the water rising on the floor of boat. You immediately felt that the boat had a hole and if leak was not sealed the boat would sink. So, the first thing you did was to find a hole and then seal it so that new water would stop coming in. Then, you started pouring out the collected water so that the boat would be dry again. This removal of water is called a nirjara. Karmas are accumulating to the soul through asrava. These karmas cover the attributes of our soul, and the removal or destruction of these karmas is called Nirjara.

The more effective the nirjara, the faster the attributes of the soul will shine. Once all the karmas are shed off, the soul will go to the salvation and then it will be able to exhibit all its attributes in a full capacity. In fact, as we are constantly accumulating and stopping karmas, we are also to some extent shedding off karmas too. In respect to quantitative shedding off, nirjara is grouped into two kinds:

Desh (limited) Nirjara, and
Sarva (total) Nirjara

In **Desh Nirjara** there is limited shedding off of the karmas. This is experienced by all while suffering from adversity or performing austerities, or prayers etc. This shedding off is done during all the stages of all gunasthanaks.

Sarva Nirjara is the total shedding off the karmas and occurs right before the soul is liberated. Whenever the soul becomes a Kevali, it has shed off all the ghati karmas forever, but still has to shed off the aghati karmas. The rest of the aghati karmas are shed off forever right before the soul is liberated and achieves the salvation. These liberated souls are called Siddhas.

When karmas mature they show their results and once these results are experienced completely the karmas are considered shed off. Nirjara can also be divided into two kinds by the process of shedding off of the karmas. They are:

Akam Nirjara,
Sakam Nirjara.

When karmas mature automatically at their due time they cause suffering accordingly. Thus, we have no control on the timing and intensity of such suffering and we have not put any special effort or shown special desire or intention to suffer on our side. Once the supposed suffering is over then those karmas which caused this suffering are considered shed off. This natural process of maturity and shedding off of the karmas is called Akam Nirjara. Example: When someone suffers from hunger not voluntarily or willingly but due to unavailability of the food then those karmas which caused these suffering will be shed off passively.

On the other side when karmas are brought to maturity ahead of their due time by special efforts, voluntarily or willingly to give their results, then those karmas will be shed off sooner than expected. Thus, we have a control on this process and this active process to shed off the karmas prematurely is called Sakam Nirjara. Example: When we perform fasting (not eating) voluntarily and willingly even though the food was available in abundance, then we brought out suffering actively ahead of the time which in turn will shed off the karmas prematurely.

Therefore in akam nirjara the karmas are ripe exhaust themselves after producing their results. When karmas lose their bondage in this way, it is called **swathaha**, self-destruction. In sakam nirjara, the destruction of karmas occurs ahead of their natural time by special efforts, by means of tapas (austerity), that is called Upayanirjara, initiated destruction.

Our life is a live drama consisting of accumulating the karmas and shedding off of the karmas. This drama never stops till we reach salvation. Depending upon what kind and with what intensity we commit sinful activities (pap), nirjara may be easier or harder. In order to simulate the process of nirjara, different examples are given to show how easy or hard it would be to remove dust or a stain from clothes.

The stain of dust from the dry cloth can be easily removed by just shaking it. It becomes harder to remove the stain of dust if the cloth was wet. It becomes much harder to remove the stain of dust if the cloth was oily. It would be almost impossible to remove a stain of dust from the cloth which had a coal-tar on it and would have to throw away the cloth.

Same way, from these examples, you can imagine how simple or how complicated a process of nirjara can be. In some instances, one would have no choice but to bear the results of one's karmas. These last kind of karmas are called nikachit karmas. At this time, it would be wise to remind us that nirjara is done most effectively by humans only, because other destinies have their own limitations. But for humans, the limitations are set by humans only.

The special efforts to destroy karma are done through Tapas or austerities. Austerity means restraint, which is done willingly by giving away some of the bodily comforts to discipline our mind from passions and pleasures. Austerities are performed at various occasions and in various different ways. All austerities have their own uniqueness. Austerities may be performed at two levels:

Physical manner or
Psychic manner

In the physical manner the person performs the austerity, but does not have the inner desires to change his or her life and therefore, it is just a physical act. While in the psychic austerity the person controls his or her inner desires along with performing a physical act. Unless the austerities are performed in psychic manner, they do not produce the much needed results. After all, the whole purpose of austerities is not just simply

make the body suffer, but to control our desires. Once that happens, the person will be on the path to spiritual uplift. Austerity is part of right conduct.

Austerities are categorized into two groups:

External, and

Internal

External (Bahyantar): External austerities are noticed by others because they have a greater component of physical than psychic manner.

Internal (Abhyantar): Internal austerities are not noticed by others because they have a greater component of psychic than physical manner.

Each of these two austerities is further divided in six types:

External (Bahyantar)

- 1) Fasting Completely (Anasan),
- 2) Partial Fasting (Unodari),
- 3) Limiting the number of items of food (Vruti Sankshep),
- 4) Limiting desired tasty food (Ras parityag),
- 5) Bodily Endurance (Kayakalesh),
- 6) Controlling of the Senses (Pratisanlinata).

Internal (Abhyantar)

- 1) Atonement (Prayaschit),
- 2) Politeness (Vinay),
- 3) Serving others (Vaiyavachch),
- 4) Giving away (Vyutsarg),
- 5) Spiritual study (Svadhyay),
- 6) Meditation (Dhyan)