

External (Bahyantar) austerities

Austerities play major role in the upliftment of the soul. If used appropriately then they help us shorten our time in this universe under the grip of karmas. While performing austerities we willingly give up our desire or wants. There are various ways of giving but here six ways are mentioned and we will look into them. They are:

- I. Fasting (Anasan),
- II. Partial Fasting (Unodari),
- III. Limiting the number of items of food (Vruti Sankshep),
- IV. Limiting desired tasty food (Ras parityag),
- V. Bodily Endurance (Kayakalesh),
- VI. Controlling of the Senses (Pratisanlinata).

I) Fasting (Anasan):

Anasan means fasting, renouncing food and water, etc., for a day, for a few days and sometime it is done to meet spiritual death it is called Sallekhana. One day of fasting is called upavas. Some people may drink boiled water during fasting and some may let go even water. Most people will start fasting from the evening day before and follow till the next day sunrise and sometime after that. Fasting until death is done when life is close to an end. Such fasting is considered very auspicious.

There is also called Bhav Anasan in which along with physical fasting of food and water one will try to control inner desires for a day or for a few days or for longer time. So to get most out of fasting we must not get stuck only to physical fasting of food and water but also control desires or wants and that will give the most desirable result in performing nirjara and lead us to spiritual uplift.

Partial Fasting (Unodari):

Unodari means eating a little bit less than what ones hunger is. This is called physical unodari. We all know that instead of eating less most of us end up eating a few more handfuls. It is experience of many of us that it is easier to do total fast then eating less because in total fast we are not subjected to temptations. It is hard to subdue when things are right in front of us. But once done its benefit goes long ways not only for physical benefits but spiritual too.

Just as physical unodari controls the physical nature of food, bhav Unodari limits our desires to some extent. It controls our desires or temptations not only to eat more but also eat less. It is easier to shut out our desires totally rather than cutting out some when all the temptations are there. This bhav unodari teaches us a lesson that if we can restrict our temptations for food then we can control other temptations in life and slowly but steadily control our passions. What a step down process and we must use it in our life.

Limiting the number of items of the food (Vruti Sankshep)

In Vruti Sankshep we will put a limit on the number of items we may eat or drink during a single sitting or throughout the day. That means we are saying we can live with eating less number of items from a regular food or liquids. This is called Physical Vruti Sankshep.

We can carry that concept to how we can limit our temptation. We can say today I am going to control some of my temptations. This will be Bhav Vruti Sankshep. This will help us selectively block some of our temptations in life and if done well it can go long ways.

Limiting desired tasty food (Ras Parityag)

Just as unodari is difficult than doing upwas in the same way ras parityag is much harder than vruti sankshep. Here you will give up what you like and that is harder because you can easily give up a few items which you like less and be satisfied but to give up what you like and feel happy is much harder. This is called physical ras parityag. This is the foundation to start giving up.

Physical ras parityag has set the platform and under Bhav Ras Parityag we will give up most desired temptations. It is harder to do but with slow and steady practice and if done genuinely it will lead us to change our behavior and will lead us to peace. This austerity will help us to control our passions even in the most tempting situations.

Bodily Endurance (Kayakalesh)

Now we move to something other than food and that is kayakalesh. In Kayakalesh we stand or sit still in a particular posture for some period of time and ignore pain during that time.

In Bhav Kayakalesh you will control your passions for the body. You will learn that I am separate from body and this pain is not happening to me. No one can hurt or harm me.

Controlling of Senses (Pratisanlinata)

Now we are coming to root causes of temptations or passions. Our senses are the main reasons, which make us wander in all kind of temptations and incite our passions. We run wild because of them. Through the vow of Pratisanlinata we learn to control our senses and not let them run like run-away train. The senses being the beginning point in the formation of the temptations or passions. So, if we control them at very physical nature than there will be no temptation or rise of passions. Therefore as we control physical attractions of the senses naturally we will control our temptations as well as passions and that is called Bhav Pratisanlinata. This way we will attempt to minimize our response to what we see or feel through our senses. Thus this austerity helps us to control our passions like anger, pride, deception, and greed.

In conclusion, we all know that it is not easier to control our temptations or passions just because we want to. We need the help and external tap provides that media. By observing external vows step by step or whichever way one feels comfortable one feels assured that

if he/she can control physical activities then he can also decrease or control temptations and in turn remove passions. So we must make a start in our life with these vows and before we know we will have our passions under our control.