

## LESSON 19

## VOW

Vow means a promise to do something.

A vow is an earnest promise or pledge that binds or connects us to that specific action or mode of behavior. To take a vow means we make a promise to ourselves to do certain things in certain ways. The vows help us in disciplining ourselves. In Jainism we take various vows voluntarily to perform austerity and in turn that helps us to reduce our bad karmas and we collect good karmas.

There are certain vows taken on specific days and then there are other vows, which could be taken on any day and in any part of the day. The vows help us to learn to restrain which in turn teaches us to be disciplined. It helps us to know that if we are determined then we can do something. It builds our confidence in doing things. We can extend that experience in various aspect of our life.

Different kinds of vows are:

### TIVIHAR:

It means not to take any kind of food for certain period of time but during that time regular or boiled water may be taken. It can be done in any part of daytime for certain hours or done from sunset till next day sunrise.

### CHAUVIAHAR:

It means not to take any kind of food for certain period of time including water. It can be done in any part of day for certain hours or from sunset till next day sunrise.

### TOTAL FASTING (UPAVAS):

In this we usually do not eat anything from sunset before till sunrise day after. Upavas could be Tivihar or Chauvihar type depending upon to drink boiled water or not. It can be for one day or for more than one day.

### PARTIAL FASTING:

It means to take some food during daytime from sunrise to sunset.

- 1) Ektana: We usually stop taking food from sunset before and take only one meal sitting in one position during the daytime. We usually drink boiled water in between time.
- 2) Beyasana: We take food for two times during daytime. We usually drink boiled water in between time.
- 3) Aymbil: We take food for one time in one sitting but food will have no salts or spices (bland). We usually drink boiled water in between time.
- 4) We may give up some kind of food for one day or for more than one day.
- 5) We may limit ourselves to eat only so many items of food for one day or for more than one day.
- 6) We may eat limited food from our hunger to 70 or 80 or whatever % we can.

These vows were related food. Now we may talk about vows we can take related to our behavior.

We may look at ourselves and we may say, “I easily get angry or upset.” In that case we can decide that I want to control my temper and take a vow that for a next few hours or a day or for a few days or for a longer time that I will restrain myself from getting angry. This is very good way to control our temper and train ourselves from getting angry. It will help us change our behavior and before we know, we could be most calm person.

We may also think, “I get tempted for so and so things and I want to learn to control it too.” In that case we can decide to take a vow that for a few hours, or a day or for a few days or for a longer time I will restrain from so and so kind of temptation, whichever we decide in our mind. This will slowly but steadily will change us and before we know we will be over the temptations.

This kind of vow could be extended to various other deficiencies we may have in our life, which we may or may not have thought of.

We must remember that we must take a vow seriously. We must not think that well I can break this vow today and I will do rightly next time. First thing that is not right thing to do and secondly we will never be disciplined. And, thirdly next day usually never comes. Plus, whenever we break a vow we become weaker in our determination and we also get bad karmas.

POEM:

I am a Jain

So I have taken vows

They help me be a better person

I have to make sure that I follow the vow

They will help me reduce my bad karmas

They will help me collect more good Karmas

The vows I take will make me happier.

The vows I take will make the creatures around me happier

The vows I take will make the world around me happier

So I will follow every vow that I have taken.

I will be a good Jain.