

## LESSON 21

## PARYUSHAN PARVA

The Jain community like any other communities in the world celebrates many social and religious functions throughout the year. The most outstanding Jain festival among all is '*Paryushana Parva*'. It is the most important festival among all of Jain festivals.

It is observed during every Chaturmas beginning on the twelfth day or thirteenth day of dark half fortnight of Shravan month and goes over to the fourth or fifth day of bright half fortnight of Bhadrapad (**Bhadaravo**) month. During these eight days, the entire Jain Community right from the young and to the old performs various kinds of austerities. Some do eight days (**Atthai**) total fasting (Upavas), three days total fasting (**Attham** or Tela) or anywhere from one to seven days total fasting. If people cannot do any of the total fasting, then they eat only once a day for one to all eight days. If that is not possible then they will eat only twice a day regular Jain food. Many might not be able to do that too then they might do not to eat or drink anything before sunset and after sunrise (Chauvihar). Or some may not eat anything before sunrise and after sunset but may take water during that time (Tivihar).

Many Jains will do one to eight days of Paushadh during this festival. If not then many may do as many samayiks as possible during this time. Many will do pratikraman in the morning and in the evening as per their situation for all eight days to some of these eight days.

The momentum is so high during this time not just because of merely his great festival but also many sādhus and sādhis are around to encourage performing some kind of austerities. Most of Jains end up doing some austerity during this time.

During eight days of Paryushana, sadhus and sadhis read and explain in detail the Kalpasutra, the most popular scripture of the Jains. During this, majority of Jains try to go to upashraya and listen to their sermons. Listening to Kalpasutra, we learn about the life of all Tirthankaras and how they achieved liberation with all adversities. The whole atmosphere gets fully charged with emotions and of devotion and desire to do something. These encourage us to follow some kind of Jain practices in our life, which we otherwise may or may not be doing as much.

The first seven days are the days of attainment and the eighth day is one of fulfillment or achievement. The eighth-day is celebrated as the Samvatsari Mahaparva, the annual festival. In the afternoon Jains perform Aloyana and in the evening all Jains perform the Samvatsari Pratikraman, (the day of the annual atonement) for seeking the forgiveness of those people to whom they might have hurt, harmed, a feeling of hatred or had an animosity, etc. Many people who have not spoken to each other because of hate or an animosity forgive each other and become friends again.

Digambara Jains celebrates Paryushana Parva starting from the fifth day to fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrapad (**Bhadaravo**). They also tell it "Das Laxan Parva".

During the festival they contemplate on ten universal supreme virtues in daily practical life.

All members of Jain community young and old, and males and females, regardless of their status in society participate with full vigor and zeal in the various religious rituals and cultural programs. Jains get engrossed listening to the holy sermons of the saints and learned Jain scholars arranged during the eight or ten-day or all eighteen days celebration.

Various meaningful and inspiring titles have been given to this festival of Paryushana Parva in different Jain scriptures. Some of them are:

#### PARVA RA:

The festival has a special and greater significance because of asking for forgiveness from others as well as offering forgiveness to others. This celebration is spread over a longer duration and there is soul-searching more than in any other festivals.

#### MAHA PARVA

The chief of all Jain festivals

#### DASH LAKSHAN PARVA

The festival is for the observance of ten universal virtues; which are forgiveness, contentment, and celibacy, etc. The practicing of these virtues aims at the uplift of the soul. They are clearly preached and practiced during the festival. Digambara Jains celebrate under this name.

#### PARYU-PRASA

The festival in which one meditates upon the in-built merits of the soul in thought, speech and action to attain the peace of the soul.

#### PARYUPSHAMN OR PAJJUSVANA

In this festival an attempt is made to find peace through removing all passions through various means. We observe harmony in the soul through the study of scriptures.

#### PAJJUSHANA

This word of *Prakrit* language carries the same meaning as explained in *Paryushana Parva*.

#### SAMVATSARI PARVA

The festival is celebrated every year to subdue all passions. This title is popular to the Svetambara sect.

In all during Paryushana Parva, all members of Jain community young and old, and males and females, regardless of what status they may have in the society perform austerities, listen to sermons, seek forgiveness and purify their souls.