

## LESSON 02      VOW OF LIMITED NON-VIOLENCE (STHOOL PRANATIPTA VIRAMANA VRATA)

### **Vow of Limited Non-Violence is the first Minor Vow (Anu Vrata)**

Pranatipata is made of two words; 1) Pran and 2) Atipata. Pran means vitality. Atipata means to hurt. So the pranatipata means to hurt any vitality of any living being regardless how smallest or how largest the creature may be. Depending upon the development, the Jiva have up to ten kinds of pranas or vitalities present in them. These vitalities are:

- 1) Touch (Sparsha-Indriya): The ability to feel the sensation of touch
- 2) Taste (Ras-Indriya): the ability to taste
- 3) Smell (Ghran-Indriya): the ability to smell
- 4) Vision (Chakshu-Indriya): the ability to see
- 5) Hearing (Shravan-Indriya): the ability to hear
- 6) Mind (Mano-bal): the ability to think
- 7) Speech (Vachan-bal): the ability to speak
- 8) Body (Kaya-bal): the ability to move the body
- 9) Respiration (Shwasochchhwas): the ability to inhale and exhale
- 10) Longevity (Ayushya): the ability to live

Let us learn how various jivas have various vitalities.

**The ekendriya jivas** possess only four prans: They are:

- 1) Touch,
- 2) Respiration,
- 3) Body, and
- 4) Longevity.

**The beindriya jivas** possess six prans. In addition to the above four prans, they also possess:

- 5) Taste and
- 6) Speech vitality.

**The treindriya jivas** possess seven prans. In addition to the above six prans, they also possess:

- 7) Smell vitality.

**The chaurindriya jivas** possess eight prans. In addition to the above seven prans, they also possess:

- 8) Vision (seeing) vitality.

**The panchendriya jivas** are divided into two groups:

The asangni (non-sentient) jivas, whose minds are not developed and,  
The sangni (sentient) jivas, whose minds are fully developed.

**The asangni panchendriya jivas** possess nine prans. In addition to the above seven prans, they also possess:

- 9) Hearing vitality.

**The sangni panchendriya jivas** possess ten prans. In addition to the above seven prans, they also possess:  
10) Mind vitality.

The reason we need to know these prans is because once we be aware of these prans we will not hurt or harm anyone of them or will try to avoid it or minimize it. Now we will not only protect highly developed beings but also a little creature that may look insignificant. We must also realize that whenever we cause harm to these prans our soul will accumulate the bad karmas or pap (sin). Therefore to prevent accumulation of karma we will observe ahimsa (non-violence) to the maximum possible ways. Nothing but practicing Ahimsa is called first vow of Pranatipata.

Now you will understand why we say “Ahimsa Parmo Dharma” (nonviolence is supreme religion), because by observing ahimsa we are protecting the vitality of all the soul no mater how microscopic they may be.

The first vow of non-violence is very important for the householders. When householders take this vow he/she takes a promise not to hurt any living being over two senses for sure and will be very careful to one-sensed beings. He/she will never intentionally destroy a jiva that has more than one sense. The vow also forbids the killing of weak creatures like mosquitoes and any other troublesome insects.

The vow is broken even if someone is planning to kill or hurt any one but did not carry out the action. It also forbids animal sacrifice under the pretend of attaining ultimate peace or liberation. Sometime you will hear an argument that if animals are in the pain, they should be relieved of pain. After learning what hinsa is it will be obvious that we should not be taking anyone’s life, we can not ask anyone to take anyone’s life and we can not encourage anyone else to take anyone’s life. Hinsa is hinsa no matter how you look at it and one will have to suffer the consequence of it. So in short we should not be taking anyone’s life under any circumstances and if we do we should realize that it will bring bad karmas to our souls. It is that simple. We might help to comfort those who are suffering but that is far we should go. Another point is that every creature suffers of its own doing and has to fulfill that part of it. So if we shorten their life what about its time left to suffer? This creature will have to take another life to continue this suffering to overcome the effects of its karmas. So how did we helped by shortening their life?

The result of carrying out hinsa could be either loss of our life, any body part of our body or vitalities in this or in subsequent lives. So why would we go for such results?

In socio-economical confrontation it may look hard to take this vow but we should always desire that when will that auspicious day will come in my life, where can reduce my responsibilities and I would be able to take the vow not to kill or hurt deliberately, intentionally or unintentionally, any of the mobile beings, namely those with two senses, three senses, four senses, and five senses, and even if possible to one sensed living beings. We should pledge ourselves that until we can take that vow, we shall try not to

hurt or kill the smallest lives, or ask anyone else to do so, or encourage those who are doing so mentally, verbally, or physically.

Even after taking vows we must be alert that we do not break the rules by not realizing and doing things like tying animals tightly; beating them up; cutting its limbs; overloading or overworking it; or neglecting to feed them properly.

We should let any animals and birds live their natural life rather than confining them in houses, circus or cages. This is also considered as hinsa. So having a pet should be avoided. Same way going to circus or zoo should be avoided because that will encourage their owners to bring more animals forget about the mal-treatment they may get during their confinement. We must also pierce nose, ear, or amputate limbs or any part of the body. We must not overload on those animals which are used for this purpose. We must not deprive them of food and free shelter, etc.

So in short we have to be very careful what we do as well as be careful not to ask or encourage others to do any hinsa. This way, not only we will not cause suffering to others, but, we will be protecting our souls from karmas too.

If we transgress to observe the vow by forgetfulness, by accident then it will be a partial transgression of the vow but, if we do it otherwise then it is breaking the vow.

For whatever reasons, lapses may happen to observe this vow. The following are common examples:

- 1) Confining any being inclusive of animals and birds where it could hurt them, or where there is no freedom,
- 2) Hitting them with sticks or by any other means,
- 3) Piercing nose, ear, or amputating limbs or any part of the body,
- 4) Making them carry heavy load, or
- 5) Depriving them of food, shelter, etc.