

LESSON 17

VOW OF MONKSHOOD EXPOSURE (POSADHA VRATA)

Mahavira taught householders two different ways to how the monkshood is. One was by observing Samayik and second by adopting this vow of Monkshood Exposure. This vow has four different kinds of controls one has to observe. They are:

- 1) Control of food
- 2) Control of clothes and makeup we use
- 3) Control of sexual activities
- 4) Control of daily activities

Control of food:

Usually it is suppose to be a fasting whole day. In Svetambara it can be total fasting and not even drinking water, or it can be fasting whole day means do not eat anything but may drink boiled water. Or, it could be partial fasting by observing Ayambil, Ekasana, etc. In Digambara tardyon they do total fasting without even water.

Control of clothes and makeup we use:

During this vow, person would use white clothes to wrap and will not take a bath, or even wash teeth. He will not spray any fragrance, or apply body lotion or powder. He will not use flowers either. They have to inspect clothes they use to be sure they do not have any bugs on it or otherwise very smoothly they have to remove to safer place where they will not be hurt or harmed.

Control of sexual activities:

During this vow person will observe total celibacy and would not read talk about sexuality.

Control of daily activities:

During this vow person will give up all worldly activities and will spend time religious study, rituals and doing meditation. While carrying out their activities or to walk around they have to be careful that they do not step on any bugs or wet ground. They can read religious books, do chanting of religious songs or mantras, do Pratikraman, do idol worship of Jina, listen to the sermons of sadhus or sadhvis if they are around, and do meditation, etc. (The person of Sthanakvasi, Terapanthi sect of Svetambara or Taranpanthi sect of Digambara do not do idol worship.)

In Svetambara tradition, this vow is usually taken for twenty-four hours but some may take it for twelve or even thirty six hours (starting from night before). While in Digambara tradition it is done for thirty six hours. So it is an extended Samayik for this much time.

To go to urinate they have to look for isolated vacant place or use urinals and before they urinate or dispose they have to the ground and it should not have any bugs. Same way they have to dispose their stool and cover it by dirt so no bugs will get on it and loose life.

For sleeping person may use white spread sheet or dry grass. Before they select the place to sleep they have to carefully examine it and it has to be free of bugs around.

Since this vow is longer than forty-eight minutes it gives more closure look to monkshood life. Practically he is like a monk for twenty four to thirty six hours. This experience awakens his soul and if it is awoken enough might think of renouncing household state and become monk or nun. If not until then he can frequently practice this vow which is usually practiced on eight day, fourteenth day, and fifteenth day in brighter cycle or darker cycle of fifteen days of month.

Svetambara usually perform this vow in upashraya, Paushadh Shala or in isolated room in house while Digambaras select isolated place.

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

- 1) Making bed carelessly without taking care of living beings,
 - 2) Not sweeping or sweeping carelessly the place for making the bed,
 - 3) Not watching carefully the places while walking,
 - 4) Disposing the excrete carelessly without looking for living beings, or
- Not following this vow in proper manner.