

LESSON 01

PRINCIPLES OF JAINISM

The principles of Jainism can be expressed in many different ways, but the following two slogans tell everything.

Parsparagrahojivanam **Live and Let Live**

PARSPAROGRAHOJIVANAM

This slogan means that all living beings are interdependent on one other and that sets the tones that we should respect all lives just like us. We are some of the most advanced creature in the universe and we have a responsibility to how we live. To maintain the harmony of the universe we should live in such a way that we should not disturb other lives. That brings the second slogan in the picture.

LIVE AND LET LIVE

There are two parts in this statement. "Live" represents how one (we) must live while "Let live" represents how we must let other living beings live.

The spirit of "Live" could be described in many ways but may be summarized in the following three principles.

- 1) Live in peace with others (Ahimsa)
- 2) Live the life of contentment (Aparigraha)
- 3) Live the life of tolerance (Anekantvad)

The spirit of "Let Live" could be described in many ways but may be summarized in the following three sentences:

- 1) Let live means do not disturb any other living beings
- 2) Let live means do not harm any other living beings
- 3) Let live means help other living beings

Awareness of Ahimsa creates awareness about other living beings. We will learn to respect other lives. We will also learn that our life is interactive not only with other human beings but also with animals, birds and plants, etc. We are interdependent in one or more ways to each other. Ecology is maintained because everybody plays their own role in their own ways. We, humans exploit our relationship with others when we forget this principle. In Jainism it is taught that even exploitation of others to whatever extent is hinsa (violence). Some of the human habits are taking advantage of weaker human societies, countries, hunting and fishing and using animals, birds or fish for games and food, etc. Many of us enjoy such activities while ignoring the pain and suffering by those involved. We should remember that these could easily be avoided or stopped without disturbing our daily life. We all should accept that all living beings like to live a happy life like ours, and no one likes to get hurt, harassed or killed for our fun. As a highly developed and intellectual being the burden is on us to look after weaker creatures that cannot talk or complain. Because of all these Jainism teaches us to observe the Ahimsa to the maximum possible level and start with being vegetarian. We cannot excuse our

actions under any pretend. Jainism has taken ahimsa (non-violence) to very minute level. Hinsa means violence. It is violence not only if we inflict pain to the most tiny and insignificant looking living creatures but also if we think of inflicting a pain. We will learn more about ahimsa in other chapters.

Awareness of Aparigraha: Aparigraha in simple words means over collection of anything more than our need. It is not that we should not have enough and usually we know how much enough for us is. This may change from person to person. But usually we ignore this and never feel satisfied with what we have. We always want more and in that we spend all our life in nothing but accumulating everything. We could help the society, which is hungry and starving, by helping them through our wealth or creating an environment where all are benefited and imbalance in the society is overcome. It is not that one should not be rewarded for his work but at what cost. It is not that we have to live a simple life even though it will be better but we know that after sometime the gap between what we need and what we have decreases. This way, we will be able to offer our helping hand to less fortunate person next to us in society, city and in nation as a whole. Talking about nation many nations have more than they could use and instead of offering their helping hands in nicer way they exploit the situation. Many nations instead of being satisfied with their boundaries they want to extend them or extend their influences in other countries. This shows how discontent we are. It never gives to either side. So we should experiment with this principle and we will see whole community, state, and country coming up in harmony.

Awareness of Anekantvad: Anekantvad means to accept that any thought or expression could be expressed in more than one-way. That means that views expressed in contrary to ours could have some truth as per their thinking. This does not mean that we are agreeing to their views but we are not insisting on ours as only truth. This makes us tolerant for others. This way we avoid conflicts and can live in harmony. People are forgetting this very important principle and if we put that in practice then our relationships with our family members, friends, society, state, country, and world would be much better. There will be lots of love and affection among each other.

Therefore, though they are sounding so simple and easy to implement but we make things very complex. We humans have tendency to exploit our position at the cost of other human beings as well as the lower creatures of the universe. We go to whatever extent possible to get what we want and use whatever means regardless how much hinsa it may inflict. We are seeing the example of this in families, friends, state, country, and the world, which have conflicts are going on daily basis. The solution to these is very simple that if we observe the principles of Ahimsa, Aparigraha, and Anekantvad we can make harmonious atmosphere around country, world and us. But it is not acceptable to opportunist human who is looking for self-interest in various positions. But as a student of Jainism we should make an attempt in our life that I will try to observe these principles in my life and I will contribute something to my family and society, country and world at large. So let us see how we can put Ahimsa, Aparigraha, and Anekantvad in our life.