

## LESSON 05

## JAIN ASCETICS (SADHU AND SADHVI) PART 01

When a person renounces the worldly life and all the attachments, and is initiated into monkhood or nuns hood, the man is called Sadhu or Muni and the woman is called Sadhvi or Arya. Their renunciation is total which means they are completely detached from the social and worldly activities and they do not take any part in those activities anymore. Instead, they spend their time spiritual uplifting their souls and guiding householders such as ourselves how to uplift our souls.

When they get initiated into the life of Sadhus and Sadhvis, they take five major vows and act strictly in accordance with those vows. The five great vows are:

- 1) **Vow of absolute Non-violence (Pranatipataviraman Mahavrat) -**  
First vow of Prinatipataviraman Mahavrat means sadhu and sadhvis will never cause harm or violence to any living being including even the tiniest creatures.
- 2) **Vow of absolute Truthfulness (Mrishavadaviraman Mahavrat) -**  
Second vow of Mrishavadaviraman Mahavrat means they will not lie.
- 3) **Vow of absolute Non-stealing (Adattadanaviraman Mahavrat) -**  
Third vow of Adattadanaviraman Mahavrat means without the permission of the owner they will not take anything from anywhere.
- 4) **Vow of absolute Celibacy (Maithunaviraman Mahavrat) -**  
Fourth vow of Maithunaviraman Mahavrat means they have to observe the celibacy with an absolute adherence to it. The sadhu or sadhvis should not even touch a member of the opposite sex regardless of their age.
- 5) **Vow of absolute Non-attachment (Parigrahaviraman Mahavrat) -**  
Fifth vow of Parigrahaviraman Mahavrat means they do not possess anything and do not have any attachment for things they keep for their daily needs.

In summary, while taking these vows, they say, O Lord Arihanta! I will not commit any sins of violence, express any falsehood, steal anything, enjoy any sensual pleasures, or possess anything, by speech, thought or deed; nor will I ask anyone to commit these sins. I will also not endorse anyone committing such sins. Oh Lord! I hereby take a sacred and solemn vow that throughout my life. I will follow these five major vows and strictly follow the code of conduct laid out for a sadhu and a sadhvi.

Therefore, Jain Sadhus and Sadhvis never cause harm or violence to any living being. They live according to the pledge that they do not even harm macro or micro organism, or the tiniest creatures. They always speak the absolute truth. They do not lie on any account of fear, desire, anger or deceit. They observe the vow of an absolute celibacy. They will not touch the members of the opposite sex, even a child. In case the members of the opposite sex either touch them by mistake or in ignorance, they have to undergo the ritual of repentance (Prayaschit) for self-purification. Jain Sadhus do not keep any

money in any form. They do not own or have any control on any wealth, houses, any such movable or immovable property or organization. They will limit their necessities to the lowest limit and even for them they do not have any attachments.

**Conferring a title:**

The Jain sadhus, after being initiated (receiving the diksha) become immersed in such activities as meditation, seeking knowledge, acquiring self-discipline, etc. Proceeding on the path of spiritual endeavor, when they reach to a higher level knowledge and conduct, their spiritual elders confer upon them some special titles.

The Title of Acharya: This title involves great responsibilities. The entire responsibility of the Jain Sangh rests upon the shoulders of the acharya. Before attaining this title, one has to make an in-depth study and a thorough exploration of the Jain Agamas and attain mastery of them. One must also study the various languages of the surrounding territory and acquire a thorough knowledge of all the philosophies of the world related to different ideologies and religions.

The Title of Upadhyay: This title is given to a sadhu who teaches all the sadhus and sadhvis, and has acquired a specialized knowledge of the Agamas (Scriptures).

The Title of Gani and Panyas: To attain the title of Gani one should have knowledge of the Bhagwati Sutra and to attain the title of Panyas one should have attained a comprehensive knowledge of all the aspects of Agamas.

In Digambara tradition one reaches to the level of Sadhu after going through stages of Kshulak (who wears two clothes and lives with sadhus and takes food ones a day in utensils sitting down) and Elak (who wears one cloth and lives with sadhus takes food ones a day in hands in standing position. He also plucks his facial and scalp hair called kesh-lonchan.)

The Jain sadhus, on account of the mode of their life, are unique among all the monks. The entire life of Sadhus and Sadhvis is dedicated to spiritual welfare of their souls. Their objectives and all their activities are directed towards elevating their souls to the purest state, Paramatma-dasha, the state of Arihanta.

Jain sadhus and sadhvis follow some other special rules of conduct in their life. They are:

1) About Food

The Jain sadhus or sadhvis take food or water only when sun is up and not after sunset. They even wait 48 minutes after the sun-rise before even drinking boiled water. Under any circumstance, they do not eat or drink anything between the hours of sunset and sunrise. Jain sadhus/sadhvis do not cook their food, do not get it prepared for them, or do not accept any food which was prepared for them.

Svetambara sadhus and sadhvis: They go to different householders that are Jains or vegetarians and receive a little food from each house. Just as cows graze the top part of grass moving from place to place, taking a little at one place and a little at another,

in the same way Jain Monks and Nuns do not take all the food from one house. They collect a little from various houses. **This practice is called Gochari.** The reason Jain Sadhus/sadhvis accept a little food and not all the food from one house is because this way the householders do not have to cook again. The cooking process involves much violence in the form of fire, vegetable chopping, water consumption, etc., and sadhus or sadhvis do not want to be the part of any violence due to their needs. They do not receive food standing outside the house; but they go inside the house. This way they can understand the situation that their accepting food would not make the householders to cook again. They accept food, which is within the limit of their vows.

Digambara sadhus and sadhvis (aryikas) take food once a day in standing position with folded hands at shrawakas house or chauka. Some sadhus before going for food make a special resolution or vow that if certain condition is met then only they will take food from that place. If such condition is not met then they will do fasting for that day. Shrawakas invite them by saying, food is pure, our thoughts are pure and our body is pure. This indicates that all normal requirements for accepting food are met. While accepting food if the fly or mosquito or even a small insect falls in the food they will stop accepting food right there. They drink boiled water also once a day a while taking food and not during the rest of day no matter how hot it may get. Sadhus take food standing up while sadhvis take food sitting down.

## 2) Day to day movement.

Sadhus and sadhvis move around from one place to another by walking regardless how far it may be. They do not wear shoes but walk bare feet. They do not use any vehicle like bullock cart, bike, car, boat, ship or plane to move around. Whether it is cold weather or scorching sun; whether the road is stony or thorny; whether it is the burning sand of a desert or a burning road, they do not wear any foot-wear at any time. They move about bare feet all their life. **This is called vihar.**

The reasons why they walk bare feet are:

- I. The shoes or slippers are usually made of leather.
- II. There is a lot of process involved to prepare shoes (even if they are not from leather) and during this process there could be injury or harm to living creature and they do not want to be part of that.
- III. Small insects could easily crushed by shoes.
- IV. This way they can avoid possessing one more thing and any distraction due to them.

## 3) Places to stay:

Since they do not own any place they have to be invited to stay. Usually community makes the community halls to practice religion and sadhus or sadhvis are invited to stay there. Sometime while walking from place to place if they have to stay in these places then they seek permission before they will stay there. They are called upashraya or Paushadh Shala. These are very simple places and usually without any electricity and mainly shells with many windows. These places could be near temple or in the community. They usually stay for a few days (2 to 3 days) in any one place

except during the rainy season during which they stay four months in one place. The sadhus and sadhvis generally do not go out during dark to avoid stepping on ants or bugs, etc. For some reasons if they have to stay in places other than the upashrayas then they make sure that those places would not become obstacles to practice their disciplined life and disturb or impede their code of conduct. The reason they do not stay for a longer period in one place is to avoid developing attachment for material things as well as the people around them. Digambara sadhus and sadhvis stay in campus around temple.

4) Plucking off hairs:

The Jain sadhus and sadhvis after receiving the initiation (Diksha) do not cut their hair or shave them. A barber does not cut them either. But they pluck off their hairs or they get the hairs plucked by other sadhu or sadhvi at least once every four months. **This is called Kesh-lonchan or Lunch.** This way they are not dependent on others to carry out their needs. It is also considered as one kind of austerities where one bears the pain of plucking of the hairs with equanimity.

5) Clothing:

Svetambara sadhus and sadhvis wear un-stitched or minimally stitched white clothes. A Lower cloth is called a Chalapattak. Another cloth to cover the upper part of the body is called Pangarani (Uttariya Vastra). Svetambara sadhus and sadhvis keep Ogho or Rajoharan (a broom of woolen or cotton threads) to keep insects away from them around their sitting place or while they are walking. Svetambara Deravasi sadhus and sadhvis wear also a cloth called a kamli, a woolen shawl that passes over the left shoulder and covers the body up to a little above the ankle. They also carry a woolen bed sheet and a woolen mat to sit on. Svetambara Deravasi sadhus and sadhvis hold a muhapati, a square or rectangular piece of cloth of a prescribed measurement in their hands. Svetambara Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi sadhus and sadhvis use cotton material only. Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi sadhus and sadhvis tie muhapati on their face covering the mouth.

Digambara sadhus do not wear any clothes. They keep kamandal (water pot and use water to clean) and morpichhi (a broom made of fallen off peacock feathers) instead of Ogho/Rajohan.

These way Jain sadhus are easily differentiated from other monks as well as people. This practice may vary among different sects of Jains but essential principle remains the same to limit needs.

6) Some sadhus bestow their blessings on lay people by saying “Dharma Labh” (May you attain spiritual prosperity). They bless everyone alike irrespective of their caste, creed, sex, age, wealth, poverty, high, or low social status or nationality. Some put Vakshep (scented sandal dust) on the heads of people. Sadhus and sadhvis show the path of wholesome life and of a righteous and disciplined life to attain spiritual prosperity through the discussions, discourses, seminars and camps.

During the day time they study scriptures or other books to enhance their spiritual knowledge and do meditation or answer questions to curious visitors like us. They do not get involved in social or business aspect of life. They do not own any place or hold any positions in the organization because they have left all that when they took diksha.

The entire life of sadhus/sadhvis is directed towards the welfare of their souls. All the activities of their life have only one aim, namely, self-purification for self-realization. For the attainment of this objective, besides following stipulated guidelines they perform the pratikraman daily, and perform other austerities.