

LESSON 15

GOOD/AUSPECIOUS DEEDS (PUNYA)

Why are some people in more favorable situations than the others? Why are some rich, while the others struggle? Why do some suffer more sickness than others? Why is science unable to explain all these questions? The answer to such a disparity lies in the understanding of the good and bad deeds. A good deed is earned when our activities are good and comforting to others. The good deeds results in punya. When the punya mature or give the result, it brings worldly happiness and comfort. The bad deeds just the opposite.

Now, it would be obvious that what we see in the world is nothing other than the result of our past actions. Knowing this would remind us that our activities should be wholesome if we want happiness and comfort in life, otherwise we should be ready to accept the unhappiness and discomfort. When talking about the activities, people mostly think of physical activities, but we should not forget that verbal expressions and mental thoughts are also considered the activities. For this reason, not only are our physical activities should be wholesome, but our speech and thoughts should also be pure. We should also remember that we accumulate punya (karmas) by asking someone else to do something for us or by encouraging someone else to do something. Thus our activities are done in nine ways: physical (to do, to ask someone to do, or to encourage someone to do something); verbal (to do, to ask someone to do, or to encourage someone to do something); & thinking (to do, to ask someone to do, or to encourage someone to do something).

Lord Mahavira's message is "Live and let live". Everybody desires to live and enjoy the comforts of life. Therefore, we should not come in the way of anyone seeking the same. If we can properly understand the implications of this message, it will go long way in molding our attitude towards other creatures.

So, our actions should not involve disturbing the comforts of other living beings, hurting or killing them in any way, directly or indirectly, but rather provide comfort and security to others then we gain good deeds. Good deeds bring happiness during this life or following lives.

Though it seems punya should bring everything good and person should have happiness or comfort after that but it is not true all the time. Depending upon mental attitude of a person when performing auspicious activities could accumulate one of these two types of punyas:

- 1) Punyanubandhi Punya, And
- 2) Papanubandhi Punya.

Punyanubandhi Punya: These kinds of punyas are built when our activities are totally auspicious all around and there is not a slight tint of inauspiciousness. So when this punya matures, it will provide a favorable environment and in turn will be able to perform more auspicious or spiritual activities. This will lead our soul to be more

purified. So it will be win win situation.

Now let us see example to explain these divisions.

Punyanubandhi Punya - Story of Shalibhadra

A long time ago a poor widow had a young son. She had to work hard to provide for herself and her son. Once, there was a great festival and neighboring families prepared the tasteful rice pudding called kheer to celebrate. The neighborhood kids were enjoying the kheer and seeing this; the poor boy went to his mother and asked her to make the kheer for him. He did not realize that his mother did not have enough money to buy the milk, rice, and sugar needed for making the kheer. The mother tried to explain the situation, but the boy started crying for the kheer. The mother could not tolerate his crying, so she said, "Don't cry, my son, I will make the kheer for you." She went to the neighbors and borrowed some milk, sugar and rice and made the kheer. She served the kheer in an earthen plate, and told him to wait until it had cooled. Then she left to get the water from the well.

While the kheer was cooling, a monk came to the boy's home asking for the alms (to get food). The boy felt very happy and invited the monk to come in. While he was serving the kheer, all the kheer slipped into the monk's bowl. The boy did not regret this, but instead felt very happy that he could offer the food to the monk. After the monk left, he ate whatever kheer was stuck to the plate and the pot. His thoughts did not change. (He built punyanubandhi punya.) As a result of this punya, in his next life he was born into a very wealthy family with all luxuries. His name was Shalibhadra. Shalibhadra during his life realized what life is all about. He renounced the luxuries of life, and uplifted his soul by becoming a monk with Lord Mahavira.

Papanubandhi Punya - Story of Mamansheth

Mamansheth in his last life was an ordinary person. One day his wife made four ladoos, round shaped sweet for a lunch. When he sat to eat a monk came to his house and said "Dharma Labh". He felt very happy to see monk at his house and he offered him two of those ladoos. After monk left when he ate those ladoos he liked them so much that he felt sorry for offering ladoos. He went after the monk to get them back (inauspicious thought of greed set in). So he built punya but of papanubandhi punya type. Now let us see what happened to him when this punya will mature.

As a result of punya in next life he became rich man named Maman Sheth. But, because he had inauspicious thoughts after offering he became very greedy. Because of that not only he could not enjoy his wealth but he would not let his family enjoy it either. He was so miser that he would not help needy people either. He took the risks to accumulate more wealth. Even with all his wealth he lived like a poor man. When he died he went to hell.

It shows that even though activity seemed to be of punya but because it was associated with inauspicious mental attitude when it matured instead of doing more auspicious activities and uplifting of the soul it ended up causing sinful activity and downfall of the

soul.

From these two stories, we learned that we would get happiness and comfort or spiritual uplift if we offered comfort to others with full willingness and without any expectation. As the saying goes you reap what you sow.

The following is a list of some activities that can bring comfort to others. They are:

- 1) Offering food to the needy (only vegetarian food)
- 2) Offering clothes to the needy
- 3) Helping the sick
- 4) Helping others to acquire knowledge
- 5) Giving to charities (be sure that the charity is used for a good cause)
- 6) Helping parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, and teachers, etc.
- 7) Helping in daily needs of monks and nuns
- 8) Helping animals or organizations that help animals
- 9) Studying religion and following its precepts in our daily life
- 10) Worshipping Jina or Tirthankaras like Lord Mahavira and even true monks and nuns

Someone has rightly said that:

- Sow a good thought and reap a good action
- Sow a good action and reap a good habit
- Sow a good habit and reap a good character
- Sow a good character and reap a good destiny

Our life is nothing but full of habits and we are free to cultivate our own habits.