

## LESSON 05

### SPIRITUAL TEACHERS (SADHUS AND SADHVIS/MONKS AND NUNS)

As we grow we go to school and we come across teachers who teach English, science, math, etc. Then there are teacher who teach dance, music and other subjects. And, in the same way those who teach us or show religious path are called the religious or spiritual teachers. They are called spiritual teachers because they teach about the uplift of our souls and not about the materialistic life. The Jain spiritual or religious teachers are called sadhus (monks) or sadhvis (nuns).

To be a Jain sadhu or sadhvi, people (male and female respectively) have to study as students and go through the training with Jain sadhus or sadhvis. During the time of training they study and learn about the Jain philosophy, scriptures, and the special code of conduct or behavior and day to day life of monks and nuns. By moving around with them they get used to live away from family and things at home. They also learn to live in various different places and without any money or other stuff at home. This way they get used to live simpler life without the comforts and luxury at home.

As students get familiar with this new life of staying away from the family and like the Jain philosophy, they decide whether they want to be sadhu or sadhvi or not. They are not under any pressure to make this decision. No one forces students as well as their parents, or family members for his or her decision. Desiring students (aspirant) has to listen to himself or herself. This gives them the inner strength to be initiated and to begin their lives as a true sadhu or sadhvi.

Once Acharya (the head of sadhus) decides to accept them to be a sadhu or sadhvi, the ceremonial initiation (Diksha) takes place. In some sects when there is no acharya, senior sadhu decides to give diksha. They take the permission from their immediate family members. During diksha they renounce, give up their family life and break their social and economic ties forever. They accept five great vows voluntarily on their own. They are:

- 1) I will not commit any violence. (Ahinsa)
- 2) I will not lie forever. (Satya)
- 3) I will not steal forever. (Asteya)
- 4) I will not indulge in any sexual activities. (Brahmacharya)
- 5) I will not have any possessions. (Aparigraha)

From here on monks and nuns no longer consider their parents as father or mother any more. They also give up other relationships like being brother, sister, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, husband, or wife, etc. They interact with them the same way they interact with any other householders. They have also given up all their belongings like money, houses, cars, jewelry, or anything else that they may own. They also give up the comfort of life and take on a very simple life.

Some monks who wear white clothes are called Svetambara sadhus while others who have given up their clothes are called Digambara sadhus. The nuns in both groups wear white clothes. Some of Svetambara (Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi) sadhus and sadhvis wear a white folded cloth

(muhapati) to cover their mouth, while others hold it in their hands. Svetambara Sadhus and sadhvis keep rajoharan (a small soft broom made of fine woolen or cloth threads) to clean the area around them to protect insects from getting hurt. While Digambara sadhus and sadhvis keep a small broom made of peacock feathers to do the same. Digambara sadhus and sadhvis also keep water pot (kamandal) to clean self. Svetambara sadhus and sadhvis keep patra (utensil) to get their food and boiled water. Digambara sadhus and sadhvis do not keep any patra because they take their food in their hands. Some sadhus and sadhvis might keep books to read along with other necessary things. All sadhus and sadhvis do not have any attachment to what they keep so they are not considered as possessions.

For food, Svetambara Sadhus and sadhvis go to various houses and take very little acceptable food from each house twice a day and eat in upashraya. While Digambara sadhus and sadhvis eat the food offered to them in householder's place and once a day only. They do not even drink water after that. Digambara sadhus take food standing up in their hands while **sadhvis sit down and take food.**

Sadhus and sadhvis walk barefoot that means they do not wear any shoes. They do not use car, train, plane or any other type of vehicle to travel. They do not walk on grass or on wet ground. They do not travel during night or while it is raining. They live in one place a few days only and other time they move around from one place to other or one city to other city. During the rainy season they stay four months (called Chaturmas) at one place. They give sermons for the benefit of householders so they can move to spiritual life.

During their life time they also carry out various kinds of austerities and study scriptures. They stand still at one place (kayotsarga) and perform meditation. As a part of austerity they also pluck the hairs from their head and face regularly. Because of the kind of life they live they do not accumulate new karmas and austerities and mediation help them to get rid of accumulated karmas. So in due time either in this life or in a few more lives they **get rid off all karmas** and are liberated from worldly life and attain salvation (Moksha).