

LESSON 07

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Worshipping is a common thing to do for all human beings of all walks of life. Just as others have their holy places so do Jains. They are called temples and upashrayas. They are scattered all over the country including even in smallest towns. Bigger cities have many more temples and upashrayas because of the larger crowd there.

TEMPLE

Temples are the holy places where Jains pray and worship Jina or Arihanta Bhagwans. Temples are very beautiful and peaceful places. Temples have idols of Tirthankaras (Jinas) either in sitting or standing postures. Jains perform various pujas* of Jin. Puja means worshipping Jina with various objects. While worshipping Jains pay their respect to the Jinas who are liberated souls and have reached the Salvation or would be liberated in this life. Jains worship and admire their virtuous and get inspiration to be like them. They remind us to change to be like them and therefore just praying or worshipping but not making any changes in our life style will not serve the purpose. So we should inspire to become nicer, kind and religious person in our life.

From the time we enter the temple and till we reach near the main idol we say "Nisihi" three times. By saying nisihi we are saying ourselves that we will discard worldly thoughts or leave them outside the temple and will concentrate on spiritual aspects of the life.

We do three circumambulations of idols from their right side.

(* There are some Jains who don't do pujas and do not go to temple.)

We worship idols of Jina Bhagwan.

We stand or sit quietly in one place and do prayer.

We meditate with rosary.

We stay silent or speak very softly so other people do not get disturbed.

Temples are very clean.

We see Jain flag there.

(* There are some Jains who don't worship Jina idols.)

UPASHRAY

An Upashraya is a place where sadhus or sadhvis stay while visiting city or town. Upashraya is also known as sthanak. An upashraya is a very simple place with a large hall with many windows. It has no air conditioning or any fans. An Upashraya does not have any furniture like home, but have a few plain wooden coats for the sadhus or the sadhvis to sit and sleep. Upashraya has a religious library from where people can check out the books and read there or may take books home. Many libraries also have manuscripts and Agamas book. Upashraya has no idols there.

An Upashraya is a place where sadhus or sadhvis stay for a few days while visiting city or town. People go there for their darshan. In the rainy season they stay 4 months in these upashrayas. They deliver their religious lectures in there. They carry out their religious and spiritual study here as well do mediation etc.

If the sadhus and the sadhvis are staying in the same town then they do not stay together in the same upashraya at the same time. However the same upashraya can be used by either sadhus or sadhvis at different times.

Householders also use an upashraya as a place for religious study; perform somatic, meditation and other religious activities. It is also used as pathshala to teach Jainism to the children.

Some of things we should be careful about while entering or in the temple or upashraya:

Before entering the temple or upashraya, we must take off our shoes.

We do not eat, drink or chew gum in the temple or upashraya.

We stand or sit quietly in one place and either meditate or recite rosary.

We should stay silent or speak very softly so other people will not be disturbed.

We put money in the donation box over there.