



Paryushan Celebrations - Wednesday, 12 September 2012

Day 1

The unattainable human life.

(please note even though it appears to be a "long" summary, this is still a condensed version of 90mins of pravachan).

Swamiji began his talk by expressing his happiness at the large turnout on the first day of Paryushan. He attributed this to the fact that most people are tired with materialistic life, and are looking for a way to introspect and elevate themselves. Paryushan gives everyone the perfect opportunity to do that. It enables a human being to get in touch with his inner self; to reconnect.

Swamiji starts his lecture with a story. Once a poor man goes to a Guru and expresses his sorrow over his state of affairs, his poverty, his life in general. The Guru, hearing this man's terrible fate, feels a surge of compassion in his heart, and hands him a piece of rock which was kept next to him. The rock happens to be a piece of diamond, and he tells the man to go into the market and ask four different people what the value of this rock is.

The poor man, unaware of the nature of the rock or its value, heads off into the market. The first person he comes across is a grocer selling fruit and veg. He shows the grocer this rock, and asks him what he would get in return for this rock. The grocer examines the rock, and offers 5kg of potatoes in exchange. The poor man thanks him, and informs him that he has further investigation to carry out and moves on.

The next person he comes across is a grain seller. The poor man shows him

the same piece of rock and asks the same question. The grain seller examines the rock, and offers 5kg of rice to him in exchange. Once again, the poor man thanks him and moves on. The third person he comes across is a goldsmith. Again, shows him the rock and asks the same question. The goldsmith examines the rock, and offers him Rs.500,000 in exchange. The poor man thanks him and moves on.

Finally, he comes across a diamond merchant, and asks him the same question. The merchant, knowing exactly what the value of the rock is, offers Rs. 5 crore in exchange. The poor man is very puzzled and goes back to the Guru. He explains his confusion over the variety of valuations he got for the same piece of rock. The Guru clears his confusion by explaining that similar to the four valuations he got from four different people, there are four types of people in this world.

The first type, who follow the philosophy of "eat, drink and be merry". They live for themselves and expend their life. These types of people value their diamond of human life as a 5kg bag of potatoes.

The second type expend their life living for their family. Everything they do, they do for their family, even if they need to harm others in the process. Their family comes first. These people value their diamond of life as a 5kg bag of rice.

The third type spend their life for society, and for the betterment of the community. They live for the people, and are willing to do anything for them. These people's value of their diamond of life is Rs.500,000, a big jump from a bag of rice.

The last group of people are above all three, who spend their life in trying to answer the question "Who am I?"; in introspection; in meditating on why he is born as a human being, what his purpose of life is, and trying to achieve a state of self-knowledge. These people's value of their diamond life is Rs. 5 crore, the full value.

It is a matter of great introspection to realise what level we are on and how much we value our human life. We must then make great effort to move on to the next level. And finally, achieve the highest level.

In Jainism, there are four stages to a life form - stages in which these form

exist: Naarki (Hell), Devgati (God), Tiryanch (animal, insects and other life form), Manushya (human). Out of all these, only the human form can be counted. All other stages of life form are countless, i.e. infinite.

To illustrate the point of how difficult it is to attain human birth, Swamiji recites a shloka from the sutra which was originally vocalised by Bhagwan Mahavir 2600 years ago. The shloka explains that there are four factors that are almost unattainable for human birth. First, being born as a human being. Second, if you attain human birth, then the ability to hear good things is unattainable. Third, if you are able to attain good hearing, then to imbibe faith in it is unattainable. And lastly, if you attain faith, then to implement it in your life is extremely unattainable. It illustrates how unattainable human life, that we take for granted, is.

To further illustrate the point, Swamiji elaborates on Bhagwan Mahavir's teachings from the Uttaradhyayana Sutra. Bhagwan states that there are 10 factors that need to come together to be able to have human life. And a human life that is capable to achieving the highest state of being and connection.

The ten factors or qualities are:

Being born as a human - Contemplate on the fact as to why you are born as a human being, and not a bacteria, animal, plant, insect or any other life form. There are 84,00,000 life forms, and human form is one of them. The first stage itself of being born as a human being is unattainable. Yet, we have been born human.

Born in an "Aarya desh" - To be born in a place where you get saatvik food, are able to listen to spiritual words, have a conducive environment to live a pure and clean life. Even living in a foreign land, today we have such a conducive environment where we are able to live a pure life, whereas people living in true "arya" lands are unable to do the same. It is a great privilege.

Good family - To be born into a good, spiritual family where you hear spiritual teachings, are looked after and brought up with good values. Imagine if you were born into a family that discarded human values, or that which did not imbibe spiritual teachings. We are fortunate enough to

have such a family support system, a seemingly unattainable virtue.

Longer life span - Compared to other life forms, human life form has a longer life span. At least we are certain that we will have a natural death and won't be crushed like other one or two sense life forms.

Five senses - Imagine how many human beings are born with fewer than five senses; some unable to see, some unable to hear; some unable to speak. The sad fact of human psychology, however, is that we value what we have only when it's gone. We are very fortunate to have all five senses that should be used to further elevate our human experience and take us to a deeper connection with the self.

Healthy body - How "lucky" are we that we have a healthy human body, without defects. Imagine if you had to perform dialysis every week, or suffered from severe diabetes. Because of your healthy body, you are able to enjoy the fruits of a good life today. And your healthy body is a result of all your good karmas in the past.

Intelligent mind - We are fortunate to have an intelligent mind; a mind that understands quickly and is able to comprehend complex situations and people. Without this mind, we should be lost in this world, aimlessly wandering. However, because of our mind, we have the capacity to contemplate and introspect, an ability that no other life form on this planet possesses.

Opportunity to hear spiritual teachings - How impossible is this to achieve in foreign lands. Imagine 30 years ago, in the UK, there would not have been any opportunity to listen to Jain lectures, spiritual talks and attend such religious events.

Imbibing faith - We have the privilege to listen to spiritual teachings, but also the ability to imbibe faith in what we hear. Since not everything can be proven and understood scientifically, the ability to have faith becomes even more important, and as such, even more unattainable.

Implementation of the faith - After listening to spiritual teachings and having faith in them, we have the capacity to implement the teachings in our daily life. This is the last, and the most unattainable of the ten qualities.

All the above ten qualities / factors are required to enable us to elevate ourselves to a new level. And all of us have this most unattainable human birth. Yet, we waste our human life on mundane existence with very little introspection and spiritual connection. Even animals eat, drink and wander around. We, as human beings, are the only life form to have the ability to think and use this faculty to better our existence.

In the 80 years of average life span that we have, we spend the first 40 years deteriorating our health to earn money, and the last 40 years spending that money to regain good health. This is the story of our human life. Unless we take steps to introspect and reevaluate our life, we would have wasted a diamond of life with no guarantee of attaining this form ever again.