

Navnat Vanik Association (UK)

Paryushan Celebrations 2013



Monday, 9 September 2013

Day 8 (Morning only) – The celebration of Samvatsar

Paryushan parva lasts for 8 days, and the last day is known as "Samvatsar", and from this word, we get "Samvatsari". And from all the parvas, Samvatsari parva is considered the most important of the year. It is a day of "maitri" (love and friendship), and of kshama (forgiveness). But the question arises - when did the day of Samvatsari start, and how did it get its name?

Jain history teaches us that this celebration started during the time of Rishabhdev Bhagwan. Before the time of Rishabhdev, the Kalpavruksh tree used to be the provider of everything for human beings. Under this tree, whatever you wished for, you would get. But as time progressed, the life bearing tree stopped giving these fruits. As time changes, so does Mother Nature. So when the wish fulfilling tree stopped bearing fruits for everyone, chaos ensued in society as people started fighting for its fruits. People started killing animals for meat and survival.

Mother India is a land of "rishis" (saints) and "krushis" (farmers). The saints have taken the responsibility of keeping the man's aatma (soul) in check, and the farmers have taken responsibility of keeping the man's health in check.

As this was happening, Rishabhdev Bhagwan was taking birth. And as this was about to happen, eight different types of rain splashed down on Mother Earth. The most important and prominent of these rains was called "Samvatsar", and because of this rain, the earth blossomed and became fertile. Rishabhdev Bhagwan witnessed how society was living at that time, killing each other and animals, all in the name of

survival. He decided that to stop this, he would teach people how to farm and grow crops on this fertile land. It was a success and people started growing more crops and feeding themselves. The killing stopped and people returned to living by the principle of ahimsa.

A year later, the people got together to celebrate the success of their new found agriculture and society. They decided on the day that they wouldn't cut any trees, plough any fields, nor commit any act that would harm any animals - these weren't Jains, but people of all communities and backgrounds who got together. And from then on, the day was celebrated and known as "Samvatsar". Henceforth, the tradition continued and the people who followed the teachings of Jineshwar were called Jains. Today, Jains are comprised of Brahmans, Patels, Sikhs and come from all backgrounds.

Being born a Jain does not make one a true Jain, but by human effort and sadhna, by following the teachings of Jineshwar and HIS guiding principles does one become a true Jain. The day of Samvatsari teaches us that regardless of what condition or situation we are in, we should keep our kshamta (calm / steady mind), and kshama bhaav (feeling of forgiveness). Pujya Tej Sahebji teaches us that whatever punishment we give ourselves when doing something wrong, we should give the same treatment to others. Only then is it considered justice.

Bhagwan has given us five options of when to do Pratikraman.

- 1 - Doing it during the day every day.
- 2 - Doing it at night every night.
- 3 - Doing it every 15 days (during paakhi).
- 4 - Doing it every 4 months (chaumashi).
- 5 - Samvatsari Pratikraman - the last day of Paryushan.

The more often we do Pratikraman, the more our karmas get cleared. The longer we leave it, the stronger our karmas become. Pujya Tej Sahebji implores us that on this day of Samvatsari, we should open our hearts and forgive those that have wronged us. And we should seek forgiveness from those that we have wronged. When done with a pure and honest heart, our karmas get cleared and our path to a more happy life becomes easier.