

## Pratikraman - Observance of Self-Reflection

### Six Āvashyak

Jainism believes that from times immemorial, every soul has assumed perverted impure nature. Attachment and aversion are the soul's impurities. All other impurities such as anger, ego, deceit, greed, and others are sub-categories of these two impurities. To help to remove such impurities, Jainism has emphasized certain practices to be performed regularly by its followers known as Āvashyaka (essential practices). These practices free the human mind from negative thoughts of attachment and aversions and enhance soul's spiritual progress which ultimately leads to liberation.

Ancient Jain literature defines six such activities of which Pratikramana is defined as 4<sup>th</sup> Āvashyak to be performed daily by its followers.

The six practices are:

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|----|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Sāmāyika                    | Equanimity                        |
| 2. | Chaturvimshati-Stava        | Devotional Prayer                 |
| 3. | Vandanā                     | Respecting Ascetics               |
| 4. | Pratikraman                 | Repentance and Confession of sins |
| 5. | Kāyotsarga                  | Non-attachment to the Body        |
| 6. | Pratyākhyāna / Pachchakhāna | Religious Vows                    |

### Pratikramana

"Prati" means "back" and "kraman" means "to go", i.e. to go back, to reflect and review, to confess and atone for transgressions of mind, body, and speech in one's daily activities. In other words, it means returning to and reaffirming the path of nonviolence, truthfulness, and non-attachment. Pratikraman means sincerely repenting and confessing our faults, forgiving faults of others, asking forgiveness from others for one's own transgressions, and extending friendship to all.

The Pratikraman ritual includes many original texts (Sutras) written in Ardha-Māgadhī and Sanskrit languages. These Sutras consist of many hymns in praise of Tirthankaras and many verses of repentance, confession, and requests for forgiveness.

Jain community is divided into two main sects - Shvetāmbar and Digambar. Again, Shvetāmbar sect has two branches - Murtipujak and Sthānakavāsi. In these two branches six essential acts are performed daily. Monks of these two branches have to necessarily perform these acts in accordance with the tradition. Devoted Jain laypeople staunchly observe them. All others voluntarily practice them.

During the last few centuries of Jain literature work indicate that the word "Pratikraman" is used as a common noun for all six essential acts (six Āvashyaka). This is also meaningful because during the course of time the Pratikraman ritual is enhanced to include all six Āvashyaka.

Hence entire Pratikraman ritual which covers all six Āvashyaka or six essential acts, occupies such an important place in the Jain tradition as does Sandhyā in the Vedic (Hindu) tradition, Namāz in the Islam, Kharavela Avesta in the Zoroastrian, Prārthanā (Prayer) in the Jew and the Christian.

It is recommended that Pratikraman be done twice a day, once in the morning (called Rāi Pratikraman) and once in the evening (called Devasi Pratikraman). The morning Pratikraman is for the atonement of transgressions incurred during the night and the evening Pratikraman is for the transgressions of the day. There is provision for fortnight (Pakkhi), once every four months (Chaumāsi), and yearly (Samvatsari) Pratikraman observances, if one is unable to comply with

the daily Pratikramans. The annual Pratikraman that all Jains should strive to observe is called Samvatsari Pratikraman. The Samvatsari Pratikraman is performed on the last day of Paryushan.

## **Pratikraman and Six Essentials:**

### **1. Sāmāyika - Equanimity**

To remain in the state of equanimity without yielding to attachment and aversion and treat all living beings equal to one's own self is called Sāmāyika. This procedure is performed to cultivate equal regard towards all living beings, equanimity towards pleasure and pain, and to be free from attachment and aversion. The Sāmāyika is performed at the commencement of the observance of Pratikraman ritual.

### **2. Chaturvimshati Stava - Prayer:**

This is the reverential worship of the twenty-four Tirthankars to reflect on their qualities, such as freedom from attachment and aversion (Vitarāga). This devotional prayer is also of two types; external (dravya) and internal (bhāva). To express one's devotion by worshipping them with good purifying substances like rice and flower is the external praise (dravya stuti). And to praise devotionally their internal natural qualities is the internal praise (bhāva stuti). The prayer inspires an individual to practice these ideals in one's own life. During Pratikraman ritual, this is accomplished through the recitation of Logassa and Namutthunam Sutras.

### **3. Vandanā – Respecting Ascetics**

Vandanā means offering of respectful salutations to all ascetics such as Āchāryas, Upādhyāyas, and other monks and nuns. The suguru vandanā sutra is recited during Pratikraman to pay respect and obeisance to the ascetics and teachers. .

### **4. Pratikraman – Repentance and Confession of Sins**

Pratikraman means to repent and confess past sinful deeds and thoughts, to protect oneself through the process of spiritual discipline from the present sinful acts, and to prevent the future sinful acts through renunciation. Hence Pratikraman means to go back, to reflect and review, to confess and atone for transgressions of mind, body, and speech in one's daily activities.

Alongside the six rites, the Jain ethics system outlines 12 vows of limited nature to be practiced by the lay people that are less intense than those followed by monks and nuns who have totally renounced worldly life. Jainism defines that every one should strive to adopt these vows according to one's individual capacity and circumstances. The ultimate goal is to accept them as full vows.

During the Pratikraman, a lay person reflects on these vows. One would repent and ask for forgiveness for one's past minor transgressions that may have occurred knowingly or unknowingly. One would contemplate on each of these vows so that one would be more aware of such circumstances and would avoid such transgressions in the future.

One should know that to effectively guard against sinful activities, one should abandon wrong belief (Mithyātva), non-restraint (Avirati), unawareness or lethargy (Pramāda), passions (Kashāya) and inauspicious activity (Aprashasta Yoga). To accept right belief after having given up the wrong one, to achieve self-restraint after having shunned non-restraint, to become spiritually vigilant after having abandoned lethargy, to cultivate good qualities like perseverance after having renounced passions and to attain the true nature of soul after having given up worldly activities is Pratikraman.

If one only performs the Pratikraman ritual through bodily and verbal acts, and just verbally confesses the past sinful acts and makes open declaration not to commit them in future, but in real life one continues to commit sinful activities without any hesitation, then this type of recitation of ritual is called Dravya or external Pratikraman. The Dravya Pratikraman is not useful, but on the contrary it is harmful. It deceives one own self and it meant simply to deceive others.

If after the performance of Pratikraman ritual, one minimizes or eliminates the sinful activities in real life then the Pratikraman is called Bhäva or internal Pratikraman, which is very useful for the purification of the soul.

During Pratikraman ritual, this is accomplished through the recitation of Ascetics Forgiveness Sutra (Abbhutthio Sutra), Atonement of Eighteen Sins (18 Pāpsthānak), and Vandittu Sutra reflecting on Transgression of twelve vows of the laypeople.

### **5. Käyotsarga – Non-attachment to the Body**

Käyā means body and Utsarga means moving away or rising above. Therefore, Käyotsarga means rising above the physical body activities to focus on the inner self and thus, develop non-attachment (Käyotsarga) towards our human body. To perform Käyotsarga in its true definite form one should also give up all the defilements from one's life.

One needs to renounce attachment to one's body to attain proper concentration, which is required for virtuous meditation (Dharma Dhyāna) and pure meditation (Shukla Dhyāna). During Pratikraman ritual, this is accomplished during meditation after repentance and confession of sins. Also the Pratikraman is performed while sitting or standing in the meditating position, practicing Käyotsarga throughout the ritual.

### **Pratyākhyāna / Pachchakhāna – Religious Vows**

Taking religious vows (Renunciation) and its declaration is called pratyākhyāna. It too is of two types - external (Dravya) and internal (Bhāva). Renunciation of external things like food, clothes etc. is external renunciation (Dravya pratyākhyāna). And renunciation of internal impure states of soul, viz, ignorance, anger, greed, ego, deceit, non-restraint, attachment and aversion generated in soul is internal renunciation (Bhāva Pratyākhyāna).

One can not attain true Bhāva Pratyākhyāna without performing complete Dravya Pratyākhyāna. Hence in the beginning one needs to renounce junk and tasty food, renounce all luxuries, and live a simple life. Now the true performance of Bhāva pratyākhyāna (true renunciation) leads to stoppage of karma (Samvara) gives rise to ultimate equanimity (Sambhava) which in turn leads to the attainment of liberation.

At the conclusion of the Pratikraman one chooses to observe certain vows (within one's own capacity). This practice fosters spiritual advancement through self-control.

### **Conclusion**

Jain literature clearly indicates that Pratikraman ritual is meant for repenting and requesting forgiveness for **“one's past minor transgressions of the vows that may have occurred knowingly or unknowingly”**. The vows for monks and nuns are 5 great vows and for laypeople are 12 vows of limited nature. Hence only monks, nuns and laypeople those who follow these vows are eligible for Pratikraman. The logic is that if one does not practice the vows then question of repenting and forgiveness of minor transgression of the vows does not arise.

Many Jain laypeople do not practice 12 vows. Hence after understanding the purpose and meaning of our great ritual, every Jain should strive to adopt the 12 vows of laypeople according to one's individual capacity and circumstances. They should review them before Samvatsari Pratikramana and improve the limit every year in such a way that ultimately they will be full vows.

Hence by performing Pratikraman one completes all six essential acts which are required by Jain tradition for our spiritual progress.

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