



DESIRE *to* DISASTER

Thrilling saga of rupsen and Sunanda

Acharya Bhuvanbhanusuri

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(info@jainonline.org)

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Cover Design by Hardik Kapadia (M. 99302 02335)
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About the Author



"Jain Acharya Param Pujya Bhuvanbhanu Surishwarji Maharaj"

A clairvoyant, academic genius, profound thinker, skilful orator, versatile writer, incredible mentor of approximately 250 disciples, great sage, and above all, humble devotee of Lord Mahavira and his religious order.

Surishwarji was instrumental in bringing about a revolution in Jainism during the early 20th century. His effective skills and sight, impactful words and acts shook the youth and brought their fast-paced worldly

life to a momentary halt. A halt to think, reflect and contemplate upon where their current lifestyle was leading them...

Surishwarji had acquired the prestigious GDA degree (Government Diploma in Accounting, equivalent to the current Chartered Accountants degree in India) of London. Thereafter, he renounced the material world and accepted Jain monkhood.

Along with following the strict code of conduct of Jainism, he sunk into the endless ocean of Jain literature.

He was a renowned scholar of Prakrit, Sanskrit and Gujarati, and had mastered every aspect of Indian philosophy.

After years of in-depth study of Jain scriptures, he could explain advanced concepts of philosophy in lucid language to the masses.

His motivating and heart-rending sermons created a magical effect on people from all walks of life. In a short span of 5 years, as many as 35 youngsters from affluent families of Mumbai renounced the material world and accepted monkhood.

He started a weekly magazine, *Divya-Darshan*, in 1952, which was published for 42 years.

Using his knowledge, logic, intelligence and convincing power, he was even successful in changing the thought process of a former Prime Minister of India on the subject of "*Child Diksha*".

He invented the innovative concept of "*Shibir*" (youth camps). These camps played a pivotal role in increasing the faith of the younger generation in religion, thereby providing them with a progressively satisfied and happy life.

There are no appropriate words to describe the transformation brought about by this legend in the first decade of the 20th century. Looking at his life, we understand that he lived many lives in one. He was not a jack of all trades but a master of all.

His unmatched ascetic legacy is now under the able leadership of Gachchhadhipati Acharya Shri Jayghosh Surishwarji, who heads the world's largest and most reputed group of Jain monks.



Glory of the Story



The youth phase is the cream of life. Like a sudden gust of wind, it breezes cool for a moment and eludes in a blink. Though it is fleeting, youth is a huge energy mass having vigorous potential. Everyone of us gets such a wonder creating capital. We have two options: either we can harness the youth energy to flourish our outer world or channelize the youth power to glorify our inner world.

Due to lack of right knowledge, the whole youth is blindly enchanted by the glitter and sparkle of the materialistic world. Everyone is running in a blind retrace with their eyes prowling on money, fame and sensual pleasures. Only right knowledge would help our steer our life in the right direction. Just as light dispels darkness, right knowledge eliminates one's ignorance.

This book is indeed a concentrated cluster of light radiated from a giant, luminous sphere, sun of knowledge Param Pujya Acharya Shri Bhuvanbhanu Surishwarjee Maharaja. Even though the sun as set, (Gurudev Shri is no more) his light of knowledge is still vibrant and glowing. Pujya Gurudevshri was infact a walking and talking scripture. He was the mastermind, the prime initiator behind thousands of spiritual workshops ("Shibirs") for youth held in last 50 years.

Six decades before, his forceful and influencing sermons backed by convincing logics and appealing eloquence had raised a spiritual uproar amongst Mumbaian youth. As

an effect, more than 35 vigorous youngsters from highly wealthy families kicked off their luxuries and embraced the pain, pocketless robes of a monk. His books are indeed bottles of life-saving drugs. Powerful to eject out the poison of delusion. In the words of current Gachchadhipati Param Pujya Acharya Shri Jayghosh Surishwarjee Maharaja “Pujya Gurudev Shri Bhuvanbhanu Surishwarjee Maharaja’s books are like Aagams (the chief sacred scriptures) of today’s era.” So if you read books of Pujya Gurudev, it’s like reading Aagams.

Although ___ is a love story, it is altogether different of its genre. The story starts with a sweet, unbearable longing of lovers and suddenly takes a tragic twist. By depicting the bitter painful consequences of a tiny sin, the betraying nature of worldly love and lust is very well exposed. The present story is indeed a “Danger” signboard yelling to the readers “O fools, however sweet it may be, but it is a poison, it is fatal.”

Pujya Gurudevshri has given a live and practical approach to the story. What lessons do we learn from each event of the story? How to deal with attachment and aversion in our daily life? He has also narrated effective measures to boost up our spiritual progress.

We all know only the apparent pleasing side of worldly love. Here, Pujya Gurudev shri has unfolded the agonized dark side of it, we are mostly unaware of. The reason of our ignorance is that our eyes are confined just between the cradle and coffin. We are wholly blank beyond it.

Rupsen, a rich merchant's son was just like any ordinary young man. He got fascinated by the looks of princess Sunanda and fell in love with her. Both love birds eventually planned for a secret meet. Read on further to see whether they would be able to enjoy their intimate love?

Further we would get a clear picture of how horribly unimaginable are the consequences of staring at a person of opposite gender. The description of pains and sufferings is so very heart-melting that it would definitely trickle your eyes.

This text is knit well intertwined with fabrics of captivating story and lucid philosophy. It renders a good eye-opening lessons of controlling our senses straying off the right path.

With the increased dominance of English in last two decades, the need to translate such appealing literature in English was felt so that it could reach the masses. Translator Mr. Manish Modi has very well comprehended the thought wave of Pujya Gurudevshri. He has been successful in decoding the heart behind the words. His rich vocabulary and appropriate choice of words has added the charm to this work.

Kudos to Influential speaker Pujya Acharya Kulbodhi Surishwarjee M.S. whose inspiration made possible the translation and publication of this valuable book for the benefit of the readers.

– Acharya Jaisunder Suri



Blessings



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Shri Varbodhi Surishwarjee M.S.**

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DESIRE TO DISASTER

Rupsen, the business tycoon's son, and Sunanda, the Princess

Do you know the story of Rupsen and Sunanda? It is a powerful depiction of attachment and its consequences. Upon reading it, you will realise that all worldly attachment is insubstantial. Despite that, the bondage of attachment is so strong that it influences a person to the extent that, in the absence of sayama {self-control}, it renders him incapable of seeing anything else. His obsession takes over and controls his actions. As a consequence of those actions, he undergoes pain and suffering.

Aversion destroys attachment

Once, standing near a window of her palace, Princess Sunanda saw a couple quarreling. Since then, she began hating men. Whenever her friends would raise the topic of marriage, she would emphatically refuse to get married. It was as if she had taken the vow of celibacy. She was beyond any feelings of attachment or affection towards men.

But this was only for a short while. Because her soul was affected by its disposition and the emotions of endless incarnations. Emotions of attachment and aversion! Sunanda's aversion was driven by her ego not by detachment. Her attitude was, "Why should I become a slave to a man? Never!"

Thus, her pride, self-obsession and hatred of servitude contributed to put her off men. But for how long? Only for as long as she did not find someone who could suppress her hatred of servitude.

The soul gets crushed between Likes and Dislikes

What happens in real life? For instance, you overeat and temporarily cannot stand the sight of food. But once you feel hungry again, and your favorite dish is placed in front of

you; your momentary hatred for food will vanish instantly. Your love for your favorite dish will immediately suppress your temporary distaste for food.

This kind of alternating attachment and aversion for external substances is caused by moha {delusion}. Attachment and aversion are servants of delusion. They endlessly keep fighting each other, and the jīva remains in thrall of them as long as he is deluded. They ensure that the poor soul remains unhappy at all times.

Understanding Samyaktva

How does the soul with samyaktva get tired of the push and pull of sañsāra? It is a strong reason. All of us have to bear the great burden of attachment and aversion. It is then that some people ask themselves: Why do I have to carry around this body? The ups and downs of life take their own course. I have no say in that. Events take place according to fate. So why should I get into the like/dislike mode? Why should I let the circumstances of life determine my happiness or unhappiness? I scorn such a life! Thus, the soul experiences nirveda {absence of worldly desire}. He gets bored with worldly life. Feels constricted by it. But he has not yet conquered desire. So when the occasion arises, or when a catalyst appears, those suppressed emotions rise and rise until they gain the terrifying form of attachment and aversion.

This is what happened in Sunanda's case. Standing once again at her balcony, she saw a couple making love. Her dislike for the male of the species fell away. She began to feel attracted to persons of the opposite gender. Now, her heart was filled with longing. Since she had not taken any restricting vows of sañyama {self control} her heart knew no bounds. Her desire had awakened. Now she told her friends, "If my mother raises the topic of marriage, please tell her that I am ready."

Attraction!

Look at the cascading effect of attachment. Once, Rupsen, the son of a prominent merchant, was sitting in front of a pān shop. He was young, handsome, and of the same age as Sunanda. Once Sunanda saw him and continued to gaze at him, from behind the window. Coincidentally, when Rupsen glanced up, he saw Sunanda and he too was attracted.

Both were drowning in each other's glances, and fell in love. They forgot the time-honoured Indian tradition of not staring at members of the opposite gender not related to us. Both of them reacted to each other's presence in a way that flared the attachment that was lying dormant within them. Sunanda was more assertive. She was impatient to know more about the handsome young man who had captured her heart. She sent her maid to find out who he was. And through her, she learnt that he was the fourth son of the leading merchant of the city. She sent a message to him, saying, "Please come here every day. I like you very much. So please come to this shop here and allow me to see you."

Identifying a Woman

Is there anything left to say? Who is more content, man or woman? The omniscient lord, and many other thinkers of this noble land have given some characteristics of women. Let us consider them.

It is not that men do not practise deceit. And it is not that women cannot practise penance. But we are going by what is commonly observed. We find many men who lose many opportunities of purifying the soul simply because they were influenced and manipulated by women. In colleges these days, a girl deceives many boys. If you look at city streets, you will find many ladies dressed like film stars or models, because they want to attract men. If you look at homes you will find

that women break up families. A newly married bride may succeed in harming the relations between father & son, and brother & brother. This is because she may be of an envious disposition. Else, she may wish to live away from the elders, where she would be free to indulge her desires, without fear of displeasing or upsetting the elders.

Today, women are recruited for sales jobs, because they are good at attracting potential buyers. During marriages, women are asked and expected to dress in stylish and fashionable clothes. Doesn't their bedecked appearance ignite passion and lust? The purpose behind stating all this, is to alert you of the attractiveness of women. Don't lose your manliness by succumbing to their charms. Don't waste your semen, which is one of the most important components of your body. Even a lustful glance at a woman is enough to harm your character and cause you to lose your semen.

How to weaken your attraction towards members of the opposite gender

Rupsen was beguiled by Sunanda's request. He started visiting that particular shop every day. From that point of view, both were committing a sin. Having failed to control their gazes, the primordial lust lying dormant within their hearts rose to its full height! Rupsen was unable to realise that the karmic consequences of his action would be disastrous. In future, when the consequences of his actions came into fruition, he would be miserable. He would be completely helpless and at their mercy. When it came to suffering the consequences of his actions, no friend or companion or wife or lover would be there to rescue him.

Despite knowing the painful consequences of attachment, we find it difficult to rise above attachment. Such is the strength of its karmic grip.

If a tyrant is using a staff to beat people, even animals will not go near him. But a man under the spell of love will go there repeatedly, get beaten up brutally by the tyrant, and yet beg for more. In fact, man will chase the tyrant for more of the same. This tyrant has two names: asaṅyama {lack of self-control} and rāga {attachment}. But the man is so captivated by this tyrant, that he shall constantly beg for more. He considers this tyrant to be his only shelter.

As a consequence, man loses the opportunity to weaken the hold of attachment over him, through his strength of self-control and intelligence. He wastes this life, knowing fully well that his next opportunity to be born as a human will come after who knows how many lifetimes steeped in loss and sorrow.

Being reborn as a human is difficult enough. But to be born on Aryan soil, where dharma is followed is even rarer. Then, to be born in a good family, and even more rare, to be born in a Jain family..

And even if he were fortunate enough to be reborn as a human, in this noble land, and be fortunate enough to be born in a Jain family, is it guaranteed that he would not get sidetracked by the same two flaws of lack of self-control and attachment?

It is commonly observed that we instantly recall what we are used to. This is why, start working on weakening your attachment and aversion from now. For this, move out of the rut of lack of self-control, and walk on the path of self-control and penance.

Deception during the Kaumudi Festival

Rupsen was caught up in his love and desire for the princess. He had lost his sense of propriety and morality. There came the Kaumudi festival. Sunanda thought to herself that since

the entire city, and her parents the king and queen would all go outside the city, to the park to celebrate the Kaumudi festival. Hence, it would be a great opportunity to sneak in Rupsen and spend some private time with him. Accordingly, she sent a message to Rupsen stating that, “Please do not go to the park to participate in the Kaumudi festival. I too am not going. Come here after the evening falls. We shall get an opportunity to get to know each other. Please come to the back of the palace. I shall arrange for a staircase to bring you to my window. You can climb up the stairs and enter my room.”

Look at what love compels people to do! Rupsen could not have entered through the main gate, as it would be guarded. And the guards would never permit Rupsen to enter the palace. Entering the palace and visiting the princess would be very risky. If he were caught, Rupsen would have to pay with his life. So caught up in their affair were both Rupsen and Sunanda, that they became fearless.

Humans can be so incredibly brave and fearless when it comes to love. But where does all his bravado disappear when it comes to serving the cause of dharma?

Impelled by his own love for the princess, Rupsen instantly accepted this proposal. He was thrilled! He thought to himself, “The princess really loves me! How brave she is being, by inviting me to her palace.”

Unknown to Rupsen, Karma was laughing at both of them. They did not know what they were letting themselves in for.

Attachment and aversion lie at the root of sorrow caused by karma

We do not know the future. Who knows which karma will come into fruition, and when? It is sufficient to note that our
Desire to Disaster

own tempestuous dispositions of attachment and aversion, pride and passion, likes and dislikes are the reason for each and every sorrow that karma causes us.

Question : What is sañsāra?

Answer : Sañsāra is a tree, with attachment and aversion, joy and sorrow as its roots, branches, leaves and fruits. One who indulges in likes and dislikes gives rise to the roots of the tree. From the roots springs forth the entire tree, complete with trunk, branches, stems, fruits and leaves. As long as the madness of likes and dislikes, attachment and aversion continues, the tree becomes stronger and stronger. Its fruits are the consequences of attachment - grief and sorrow. Which in turn bring about more attachment and aversion. The vicious circle of sorrowful circumstances - sorrowful reaction - sorrowful circumstances continues.

Is indulging in attachment and aversion, joy and sorrow folly or wisdom?

It is not smart to indulge in attachment and aversion, joy and sorrow because such indulgence results in violence, slavery to the senses, attachment to worldly objects, and further leads to lies and deceit, quarrel and dispute. All these things harm our own soul. So how can indulging in attachment and aversion, which is the catalyst for pushing the soul into this vicious circle, be called a smart thing to do? It is folly to indulge in such attachment and aversion. As it leads only to more and more sañsāra. Migration in sañsāra only leads to sorrow. This is why the wise ones have no love for or faith in sañsāra.

Rupsen was caught up in the throes of passion. He believed that his fantasy would come true. But fate was two steps ahead of him. When all his family members were going to the park to celebrate the festival of Kaumudi, Rupsen told

his father that he was not feeling well and did not go to the celebration.

Sunanda also deceived the queen by lying that she had a stomach ache. But her mother was concerned and stated that she would not leave her daughter alone when she was in pain. Sunanda was worried as she had planned to be alone in order to meet Rupsen. But she was a resourceful girl and came up with a plan.

Clever for worldly objectives but not for dharma

In this world, everyone is clever when it comes to fulfilling their wishes. But when it comes to dharma, all their smartness and resourcefulness disappears. Since they cannot perceive any direct benefits from dharma, they make excuses and turn away from it. They use inflation as an excuse to not make donations. There is no limit to how much they are willing to spend on their homes. But they are very particular about how much they spend for the cause of dharma.

For pūjā rituals, they will carry their own milk, sandalwood, saffron, soft cloth for wiping the idol, incense sticks, etc. On special days, they will carry silver foil, fruits and flowers.

- *But how much are they willing to do on regular days?*
- *How much are they willing to spend on helping fellow Jains?*
- *How much on promoting Jain studies and the publication of books on Jainism? Not much. Why not?*

If guests visit them, people pull out all stops to entertain them. Or if they or their loved ones fall sick, they spend any amount of money to regain their health. But they are unwilling to spend so lavishly when it comes to dharma.

They forget that they have the best god on earth. They should

therefore try to be the best devotees on earth, with complete commitment to god. Their commitment should be towards dharma first, then their family, home, business, etc. If their commitment is really towards dharma, why is not visible in their actions? Only one thought is sufficient to truly motivate bhakti. "I am so incredibly fortunate that I have the greatest god! He is the lord of the three worlds! Compared to god, money is worthless. Therefore, I should not hesitate to spend money on worshipping and serving god. In remembrance of god's endless grace on me in the past, in present and in future, I must not hesitate to spend on rituals and activities associated with dharma."

If the devotee feels this kind of deep devotion towards god and realises that his worldly as well as spiritual aspirations shall be fulfilled by god, he will not hesitate to spend money on dharma.

Spiritual Objectives and Worldly Objectives

People do anything in order to fulfil their worldly objectives. They find it burdensome to help their co-religionists, but find no burden in taking care of their own family. If guests of their liking come over, they are delighted to host them. They find it difficult to purchase flowers for pūjā, but have no difficulty in buying fruits and vegetables for their own consumption. They are perfectly happy to spend outrageous amounts on the worldly education of their children. But cringe when they are asked to donate a small amount to support the religious pāthasālā conducted by their local temple for their own children! There are many such instances that underline the fact that people cannot perceive direct worldly benefit from spiritual objectives and are thus unwilling to part with their money, or make any sort of physical or mental efforts in the direction of dharma.

If they are asked to fast, and practise penance and develop self-control for the sake of spiritual benefit, they flatly refuse to do so. But when the doctor or dietician asks them to do so, they are happy to go to any extent. They are willing to do anything for the body. But when asked to do something to help their eternal soul, they are unwilling to make any sacrifice whatsoever. They do not realise that they are suffering from the most painful disease of reincarnation (bhava roga), that their freedom is constricted by karmas (karma roga), and their perception is clouded by delusion (moharoga). Therefore, they are unwilling to follow any vows for spiritual progress, like Viggai Tyāga {giving up foods which increase one's passion}, Lilotri Tyāga {giving up green vegetables on certain days of the month}, Vardhamāna Tapa {increasing penance}, Āyañbila {eating one meal a day of bland, tasteless food} and other forms of self-control and penance.

When it comes to chit chatting with friends, or going out with them, one's sensual desires are appeased. Hence, one readily accepts such invitations. But when it comes to reciting the Namokāra Mantra, doing a Sāmāyika {remaining in equanimity for a specific period of time, by detaching the senses from sensuous objects} or Pratikramaña {confession and repentance for one's faults}, they are not ready to do so.

Similarly, qualities that beautify the soul, such as namratā {courteousness}, saralatā {simplicity}, udāratā {generosity}, pavitratā {purity} do not seem attractive from the worldly enjoyment point of view. Hence, there is no sincere attempt made to imbibe and develop these qualities within oneself. Even sterling qualities such as dayā {compassion}, paropakāra {helping others selflessly}, sevā {service to others}, tapa {penance}, tyāga {renunciation}, sahisñutā {tolerance} are seen as a liability, since they would result in loss of worldly enjoyment. Hence, people try to stay away from such qualities.

Had people really understood where their welfare lay, they would have inverted their priorities and led completely different lives. Dharma results in both spiritual and worldly benefits. Once the seeker understands where his true benefit lies, he will begin focusing on developing guṇa {positive qualities}, practising sukruta {good deeds, usually acts of generosity} and performing sādhanā {disciplined activity for the purpose of attaining moksha}. If any difficulties come his way, he shall find a way to overcome them without losing his way. Hence, understand and realise that your ultimate wellbeing lies in achieving spiritual objectives, not in fulfilling worldly goals.

Focus on Worldly Objectives, even though they lead to Difficulties and Sorrow

Who makes excuses for not following guṇapālana {practising appropriate conduct}, sukruta {earning merits through good deeds} and dharma sādhanā {disciplined religious activity for the purpose of attaining moksha}? The inability to realise that religious and spiritual activities are truly beneficial in all ways leads to people making excuses for not following the above acts. Irrespective of the difficulties people face in saṅsāra, they stick to their preconceived notions. But when it comes to obstructions that block their material progress, people use their initiative and find solutions to the most vexing problems.

For instance, it is extremely difficult these days to earn money. Despite that, no one is sitting at home twiddling his thumbs. People go about their jobs and businesses, not finding excuses to not work.

Similarly, parents find ways to deal with their children, even if they are disobedient and impudent.

Sādharma people, co-religionists, are not considered one's

own. Hence, people lack the skill of looking after their co-religionists

We consider so many non-self objects as being critical to our sense of well-being, although they are totally irrelevant to our spiritual progress. We can make any sacrifice, spend any amount on health, on physical fitness, on purchasing conveniences, on beautifying our homes and decorating our work spaces, on our staff, on doing things that boost our ego, for attaining worldly power, and many other things of a similar nature. Because we consider such things desirable, we find ways to fulfill these objectives.

Similar is the case with Sunanda, who finds a way to persuade her mother, the queen, to go to the park outside the city, in order to celebrate the festival.

Once a person realises that his ultimate benefit lies in self-realisation and decides that he should strive for the well-being of his soul, its purity, on lessening his sins and increasing his merits, on donation and other aspects of dharma, on compassion, helping others, truthfulness, honesty, generosity, purity, and he will surely find ways to achieve these goals. He shall practice bhakti, Sāmāyika and Pratikramaṇa, and shall contribute generously to the upkeep of temples, upāśrayas, etc. He is prepared to find ways to serve his dharma. Hence, it is extremely essential to realise that the most useful and lasting objective, worthy of one's time and efforts, is the attainment of self realisation and liberation. This is where one's well-being lies, not in collecting worldly wealth.

Question : *Despite knowing the above facts, why don't we feel motivated to follow the right path?*

Answer : *If you make the right efforts, the motivation for spiritual upliftment shall strengthen. Spiritual progress is not impossible. Look at the 63 Great*

Men, who took great strides in self-development. But their progress did not take place overnight. It took years. It was not achieved without hard work, sincere efforts and unshakable focus on one's own self. Right efforts lead to right results.

This is how you may inculcate the understanding that the key to spiritual progress is spiritual wealth, not material wealth:

- 1. Constantly try to achieve spiritual welfare and realise that it is the key to spiritual progress.*
- 2. Prayers*
- 3. Focus on the inner self, not on the body*
- 4. Compare the lives of a true spiritual seeker and a material pleasure seeker*
- 5. Seek inspiration from great men*
- 6. Satsang : Meet those who are on the right path*
- 7. Read good books*
- 8. Spiritual efforts focused on self-realisation*
- 9. Give up the unnecessary*

1. Constantly try to achieve spiritual welfare and realise that it is the key to spiritual progress.

One should first contemplate on the fact that the Arihanta, who being omniscient knew the past, present and future, found that people would be benefited by three things only:

- a) GunaSampadana - developing good qualities*
- b) SukrutaKamaai - practising good deeds*
- c) Dharma Sādhanā - living life as per the guiding principles of dharma*

The Arihantas were omniscient. If they showed us the path,

it has to be the right path. So why not follow that path, instead of indulging in attachment and aversion, acts of violence and greed, and activities that increase our worldly bondage. Why consider the path of attachment and bondage to be a worthy one? Am I not disrespecting the Arihantas, by disobeying their teachings? The Arihantas are all-knowing and all-seeing. They are supremely compassionate. Despite having them as our heroes and role models, if I do not practise their teachings, am I not being wicked, indifferent, shameless and impudent? Reflect upon this constantly. If you constantly ponder over this, it is possible that you will be able to change the direction of your thoughts and begin focusing on that which helps your soul, instead of that which helps your body.

2. Prayers

Each day, pray to the Arihanta, asking him to open your eyes, so that you may realise that developing good qualities, earning good deeds and leading life as per the teachings of dharma is the best way for you to fulfil all your objectives. The scriptures tell us about the power of prayer. Prayers are guaranteed result providers.

3. Focus on the Inner Self, not on the body

See for yourself that the inner self is seldom quiet. Thoughts occur constantly, and we continue to experience attachment and aversion, which have their own ebb and flow. We desire so many things. We allow ourselves to get tied down by so many preconceived notions.

All this occurs not because of the body which is incapable of conscious thought. It is the soul which undergoes these thought processes. With time, our thoughts and circumstances change and we can understand that the attachment, aversion, passions, undertakings and accumulation that we identify

with, only result in sorrow, worry and disease. So then, why identify with and engage in this complexity? Passions and attachments not only cause sorrow and anguish here, on earth, but result in endless pain and misery in the next world. Hence, do not indulge in attachment and aversion, material wealth and status. These things are pointless. In fact, they serve no purpose except harming the soul. If you really wish to understand what is beneficial for your soul, seek the advice of the wise ones.

4. Comparing the lives of a true spiritual seeker and a materialistic pleasure seeker

The fourth method of discovering the benefits of the spiritual quest over the material quest is that one should examine the lives of ascetics and true seekers and then compare them with the lives of those who seek material wealth and worldly pleasure.

You will find that the ascetics and seekers experience comfort, peace, gentleness, majesty, independence, etc. In marked contrast, the hedonists have to contend with reversals of fortune, troubles, anxiety, worries, anger, restlessness, weakness and dependence. Observe this, and realise for a fact that true happiness lies in spiritual well-being not in material well-being. Going forward understand this and make spiritual well-being your goal.

5. Seeking inspiration from great men

Even in today's world, where we are constantly surrounded by the glamour of the material world, and struggling to keep our own dispositions clean, there is a safe haven. Spiritually evolved seers and thinkers are a sanctuary for those who are troubled by the vicissitudes of worldly life. Think of the learned brahmin Indrabhuti Gautama, think of the chief priest of King of Chittaur, the brahmin Haribhadra, and the

great brahmin poet Dhanapala, who held sway in the court of King Bhoja. If such exalted scholars saw their spiritual upliftment in taking the shelter of the Jina's teachings, then who am I to disagree? I too should follow in their footsteps and take the shelter of the Jina's teachings. The illustrious persons who took up the path of the Jinas in their quest for liberation were not wrong. They achieved their goals and their legend continues to inspire us. So why should we not follow in their footsteps?

Similarly, the Chakravarti emperors Bharata, Sagara and Sanatkumar, who were conquerors of all the six sections of the world, gave up their vast empires. So did Jambukumara, the spiritual warrior who walked away from his eight gorgeous, newly married wives and his vast wealth of 99 crore gold coins. Also included in this elite list of seekers is Shalibhadra, who was divinely blessed and would receive 99 treasure chests full of gold ornaments, divine food and garments each day, and had 32 beautiful doe eyed wives. He gave them all up and became a wandering mendicant. Others like Meghakumara, who was known for his lustful ways, and Subahukumar, Nandishena, Gajasukumara and Avantikusumara gave up their rich and fulfilled worldly lives and became Jain ascetics. Hence, on the basis of the Sanskrit maxim, "Mahājanoyena gatahsapanthā" and upon observing the great sacrifices made by all these great men should inspire you to give up worldly goals and focus instead on the spiritual path.

Had we been smart enough, we would have let go of worldly desires and taken an interest in spiritual upliftment. But we are unable to think for ourselves. And cannot see the deep underlying benefits of walking on the spiritual path. Hence, we should seek inspiration from some of the highest minded, wisest, smartest, richest and most powerful people in our

history, who chose spiritual upliftment over worldly goals. They used their intelligence, saw the benefit of spiritual uplift over worldly wealth and indeed saw the miracle of the spiritual well-being. We too should follow in their footsteps.

If such rich, well brought up gentlemen did away with worldly goals and took up the path of enlightenment, then we too should walk in their path. It may not be possible for each of us to renounce the world, but the least we can do is get rid of our focus on the external world. We should, instead, focus on the inner world, the spiritual path. Although we may live as householders, our focus should be inwards.

6. Satsang : Meet those who are on the right path

In order to take away our focus on the external world and turn inwards, it is essential to interact with and learn from those who are on the right path. And not for the purpose of gossip or casual chit-chat or for boasting about oneself.

There are many who visit monks only to boost their social standing by bragging about how much time they spend with various monks. But instead of doing satsang with the learned monks, they waste their time either complaining about their worldly woes, or bragging about all the things they do for dharma and how great they are. This is not satsang!

Satsang means confessing one's flaws and seeking guidance from spiritual masters. It means absorbing and internalising the teachings of the monks. In short, one should visit monks in order to learn from them, not to dump our thoughts and views on them. When the seeker regular does satsang, his understanding of what is truly beneficial alters. His perception changes for the better.

7. Reading Good Books

Reading good books is another great measure to uplift the

soul. When satsang with realised souls is not possible, one should spend one's time reading good books. The focus should not be on the number of books you read. Instead, it should be on retaining what you have read. Contemplate upon what you have read and try to practise it in your day to day life. You should internalise the teachings to such an extent, that they become a spontaneous part of your behaviour. In essence, you must digest what you have read.

Just as merely eating good wholesome food will not help your health unless you digest it. Similarly, it is not enough to read good books. If you cannot understand it, reflect upon it, and internalise it to the extent that it becomes a part of your day to day behaviour, merely skimming through the pages will serve no purpose.

Even a small amount of reading is enough to change your thought process, your understanding and your behaviour. You will stop perceiving your well-being in material wealth. Instead, you will seek spiritual progress. Words are tremendously powerful. Even a few words, when heard with a calm mind create a great impact upon the psyche. They motivate you to focus on spiritual well-being. So please ensure that what you read brings about a change in your heart and mind.

8. Spiritual Efforts focused on Self-Realisation

One more thing that is worth doing, is to ensure that even if you are not committed to the spiritual path, you keep doing things that benefit your soul. And while doing things that benefit your soul, keep telling yourself that your true benefit lies in spiritual progress, not in worldly progress. Introspect on this principle. Your mind should be convinced that true well-being lies in obeying the teachings of the Arihanta, the teacher and the religion preached by Mahāvīra Svāmī. And that your soul will benefit in the auspicious surrounds

of temples, upāsrayas, places of pilgrimage, etc. And it will benefit by hearing religious sermons and spiritual discourses. And that your soul benefits from dharma kriyā {religious conduct}, sukruta {noble actions} and sat pravāṭti {auspicious activities}. One must focus on developing ātmaguṇa {qualities of the soul}.

I should not give up these fine goals and run after wealth, women and family ties. I should not chase material objects, should not run after worldly fame, should not hanker for power and should not seek adulation. Instead, I must focus on dharma, good qualities, devotion to the Arihantas, to Jain ascetics and to the Jain dharma. Only these activities will help my soul. As this mindset gets strengthened, you will find that your interest in religion and spirituality increases. Such is the nature of reality, that if you focus enough on one thing, you develop a deep and abiding interest in it.

9. Let go of the Unnecessary

Along with what you are doing, begin scaling down activities that are useless and only serve to kill time or activities you do only to get more personal luxuries. Else, these activities strengthen your desire for worldly pleasure.

A checklist for what you should do and should not do:

- 1. Is this activity necessary to remain alive?*
- 2. Can I survive without doing it?*
- 3. Would I endanger my life if I do not do this activity?*

If your answer is no for all three questions, then do not carry out that particular activity of mind/speech/body. Be determined in order to achieve this.

These 9 measures shall help you attain spiritual upliftment. They will keep you away from worldly desires.

Sunanda's Cunning Ploy

Princess Sunanda saw her betterment in meeting Rupsen. So when her mother was about to obstruct her date with Rupsen, she resorted to cunningness. Her mother told her that, "If you are down with stomach ache, I too shall not go."

Sunanda replied that, "No mother, please go! It is the most important festival of the year. The entire population shall be there. They shall expect their queen to be there. So please do not worry about it and leave. If I feel better, I too shall come to the park to enjoy the festivities. Please do not worry about me. I shall be accompanied by these two friends."

The queen said, "Alright then, I shall go attend the function. I pray you feel better quickly."

Sunanda was thrilled! Her manipulation had worked.

None of us need to be taught how to attain material well-being. Why? Because our attachment to worldly pleasures and possessions is very high. Unfortunately, all of us need to be told how to attain spiritual well-being. And we need to be told this repeatedly.

Finally, Sunanda's parents - the King and Queen left for the park along with their adoring subjects.

So now, will Sunanda and Rupsen be able to meet each other? Let us see what fate has in store for them.

In place of Rupsen, a Gambler enters the palace

In the same city lived a gambler had fallen on hard times. When he reached home, his wife threw him out. She said, "Get out, you miserable person! Do not come back unless you have some money with you. Without money, how can I buy food grains? And what can I cook if there is no food?"

The gambler knew that the entire population of the city

was going to attend the festivities in the park. He thought to himself that it was a good idea to steal something, since people were not going to be around. So he left to carry out a recce of the city, to find out which home would be easy to break into and steal from.

While he was conducting his recce, the gambler came across the ladder arranged to help Rupsen climb into Sunanda's window. Had Rupsen arrived at the same time, both of them would have blocked the other's chance to enter the palace. But destiny had something else in mind.

Rupsen had planned to enter the palace. But fate prevented him from doing so. Sunanda had not expected the gambler to turn up at the palace. But he did.

The gambler now reached the back of the palace. Let us see what happens.

The gambler saw the ladder which allowed anyone standing behind the palace to enter the princess's bedroom without getting discovered by anyone. Curiosity got the better of him and he shook the ladder. Sunanda was sitting near the other end of the ladder. Since it was dusk, it was impossible to see who was standing at the base of the ladder in the darkness. But it was evident that someone was standing close to the ladder. She assumed that it was Rupsen and was thrilled! She had no clue that it was not her paramour Rupsen. Instead it was an imposter! Thinking it was Rupsen, she called out, "Hi, you've come!"

The gambler replied in a muffled voice, "Hmm."

Rupsen said, "Please come up. Climb the ladder."

The Gambler's Test

The gambler thought to himself that it was a case of mistaken identity, since it was too dark to see anyone. He realised

that monkey business was afoot. Else, instead of using the normal staircase, why would anyone push up a ladder to their bedroom? He decided that he would climb up the ladder and see what was what. He was not afraid of being thrown out. He had already been thrown out of his own home and possible discovery and expulsion did not discourage him.

Those who desire material wealth are adept at recognising opportunities to earn wealth by hook or crook. They are willing to undergo any risk, take any trouble for earning wealth. Unfortunately, this spirit of adventure fails them when confronted with the idea of making efforts to earn spiritual well-being.

So the gambler climbed up the ladder. Sunanda helped him climb through the window. Now was the test, because there was light in the room. It had not been visible from the street because the window had been shut. Now the gambler could be discovered. Because the light would make it clear that he was an imposter, not Rupsen.

It is human nature to seek darkness to cover their sins.

Beware! Sinful acts go on uninterrupted

But fate played a role! Luck was on the gambler's side.

There is a saying, that there are a hundred impediments to good deeds. But if you seek to commit a sin, circumstances develop in such a manner that you do not face any obstructions in your desire to indulge in such acts. It has been observed that one who decides to commit sins almost always succeeds. There are few things that can hold people back from indulging in sin. In reality, we have very few genuine well wishers. And there are few obstructions on the path of sin. This is why people easily, unthinkingly fall into the trap of sinning. And life becomes besmirched by one's sinful deeds. Grief and sorrow slip in and people lead lives of sin and misery.

If you wish to lead a blissful life, stay away from sinfulness. If you desire a good name and prestige in society, do not indulge in deeds of infamy. If you seek peace, do not carry out activities that cause harm to others. Do not even think of committing bad sins. Those who are indolent, those who are lazy and those who lack character are easily tempted to commit sins.

People think that if they lie in court, they stand to gain. Those who steal deserve stern punishment. Lying, stealing, robbery.. So many crimes suggest themselves to the sinful mind. And once the opportunity arises, the person indulges in those sins. There are very few obstructions on the path of sin. Hence, it is better to prevent sinful thoughts from entering the mind. Do not allow sinful thoughts to raise their ugly head. Do not allow sinful thoughts to occupy your mind even for a moment.

Fate can push aside obstructions

As the princess stood at her window, some soldiers entered the palace from the front staircase. The princess's two friends, who had agreed to accompany her in her illicit tryst with Rupsen, were now scared of being discovered by the soldiers. So they quickly shut the lamp in the room and stepped out of the room. At the landing of the staircase, they told the soldiers to not make a noise as the princess was sleeping.

The chief soldier said that, "We have been asked by the Queen to check on the princess. How is her stomach ache?"

The friends said, "There was a lot of pain. But she began to feel better and has dozed off."

The soldier replied, "In this case, we shall leave now. We shall finish a small task and come back to check on the princess and see how she is doing."

Saying this, the soldiers left. But their promise to come back ensured that the princess and her friends dare not light the lamp again. Because no one knew when the soldiers would be back.

Sunanda was disappointed that her opportunity to meet secretly with Rupsen had been lost.

Such a situation ought to suffice in discouraging one from indulging in sinful behaviour. But does it?

All Sunanda desired, was to be able to gaze at Rupsen in the privacy of her room and to have a conversation with him. She had planned elaborately to create this opportunity. But now circumstances seemed to be preventing her from spending time with Rupsen.

Not all man's plans are successful. Else, evil would win over goodness each time. But the law of nature prevents them from doing so. For any act to be done, it requires several components to come together, only one of which is in the hands of man. The other four factors are beyond man's control. Hence, man should not be arrogant. It is not right to lose one's head over a little success. In order to save oneself from arrogance and pride, one should think on these lines:

What should I be proud of?

Why should I be overjoyed?

Who knows what tomorrow might bring?

I am a prince today, I could turn a pauper tomorrow.

As such, the law of nature is there to protect us from our unworthy instincts. But the very same nature becomes a willing accomplice if we wish to commit sins. Seeking shelter under the tree of sin is a sure way of falling into the trap of sinfulness. But Sunanda has forgotten this.

Just as Sunanda doused the lamp, the gambler entered her room. Sunanda was still unhappy over the fact that she would be unable to talk to her beloved, because the soldiers may return anytime. All she had on her mind was a conversation. She had not planned to commit any other sin.

By now, the gambler read the situation perfectly. He realised that he had stepped into a situation where the lady was expecting to meet her boyfriend. For some reason, her boyfriend had not turned up and she had mistakenly assumed him to be the boyfriend. The darkness had helped create this false impression. He decided to play the role of the boyfriend.

He knew that in the darkness, he would not be seen. And for fear of being overheard, there would be no conversation. Hence, there was no way he could be caught. Realising this, the gambler decided to commit both adultery and stealing. Unwittingly, Sunanda fell into this trap. She wondered why Rupsen was in such a rush. But she was in love. Such was her passion that she was unable to think of the consequences of her actions.

This is why, we should avoid blind love. Sometimes, blinded by love, the father permits his son to indulge in all sorts of sinful activities. He does not stop his son. Many college going girls suffer a fate similar to Sunanda's. Blind love is dangerous.

One crime leads to another

Under the guise of showing his love, the gambler snatched and broke the necklace worn by Princess Sunanda. Even in the darkness, he managed to pocket all the pearls of the broken necklace. Just then, the soldiers came back.

Sunanda was scared. She whispered in the gambler's ear, "Rupsen, today we barely had the opportunity to speak. But

I shall look for another opportunity and call you again.” Saying this, she led him to the window and allowed him to go away.

She was unmarried and had not sought to have sex with Rupsen. But since the act had happened, and she was under the false impression that she had been with Rupsen, her desire was inflamed. She did not think that she had indulged in a sin.

Royal families are not renowned for their deep understanding of true dharma. Most of them are immersed in the world of material wealth, unable to perceive or even imagine the agony that arises as a consequence of indulging in great sin.

Rupsen takes birth as Sunanda’s son

Natures takes its own course. The consequences of Sunanda’s rash act soon became evident. She became pregnant with the gambler’s child! What’s more, Rupsen was born in her womb.

Contrary to our Moral and Cultural Values

Rupsen had stayed back at home, on the pretext that he had a headache. In the evening, he left for the palace, as per his prearranged plan with Sunanda. He was on high alert, as the princess had called him, a commoner, to her palace. That too, after many months of simply gazing at her in rapt attention. He was delighted at the prospect of meeting her and having an intimate conversation with her.

All this is against our moral laws and ethical norms. It is against our society, our customs and our code of conduct for young men and women to mingle with strangers of the opposite sex. And that too, with the princess! It is against our accepted code of conduct to have relations with someone who is not your wife. To even think in a lustful manner about

a lady who is not your wife, is a sin. To indulge in sex with someone who is not your lawfully wedded wife is a great sin.

Where is co-education leading us? Although there are schools which are only for boys and only for girls. But today's upbringing is very different. Children do not follow moral codes. And their choices take them to the brink of sinful behaviour. And yet, parents knowingly encourage their children to go ahead. There is no thought of the consequences of such actions, and where they would take the new generation. No one understands that anguish and misery are the direct consequences of craving sensual delectation. The obsession with sensual desire shall lead to a great deal of agony and sorrow. Sensual desire lengthens the soul's journey in sañsāra. Birth after birth, he craves sensual fulfilment and keeps immersing himself deeper and deeper in the quicksand of sañsāra. A person caught in the throes of passion cannot appreciate what grief lies in store for him. He cannot even begin to imagine that sensual indulgence of this sort shall lead to unthinking, unhesitating indulgence into more acts of this type in further lives. It is ironic how present indulgence in such acts results in future booking of the soul in more heedless indulgences in further lives. Ironic and sad.

Rupsen's death

In the case of Rupsen, the echoes of his sins affected his current and further lives. He died in an accident.

While walking towards the princess's palace, he found himself walking beside a building that was being demolished. As fate would have it, a section of the building fell on top of him, and he was killed instantly. On dying, he was reborn in the womb of Sunanda.

How strange can circumstances get!

The events took place on their own steam. Neither Sunanda nor Rupsen had any inkling that their planned secret meeting would lead to such consequences.

- Sunanda was a virgin, living in a palace
- The gambler entered the palace
- Sunanda mistook him for Rupsen and brought him in
- Rupsen died in an accident
- A wall fell on him, the very moment he was passing by the dilapidated building.
- All these were sudden, unexpected events
- No one could have guessed at what transpired
- It was all strange and unthinkable
- Rupsen had no intention of dying
- Sunanda had no intention of having sex with Rupsen. She only wanted to have a conversation with him
- Despite that, things happened the way they did
- The wall collapsed exactly when Rupsen was walking beside it
- When Sunanda took the gambler in, there was no lamp in the room. It was in pitch darkness.
- Sunanda's friends were silly and immature
- This is why the gambler could so brazenly have his way with the princess

What is your Destiny?

The journey of life is unpredictable. The unexpected takes place. Sometimes, unpleasant events occur. And one has to pass through these trials and tribulations. Such is the helplessness of man in the face of karma. Hence, pride and arrogance are pointless. Realising the helplessness of man against the

law of karma, prevents man from indulging in acts of lies, immorality, unethical conduct, envy and slander. The fear of unwanted and unpleasant consequences holds one back.

One should bear in mind that the strangeness and apparent randomness of fate is such that one loses faith in sañsāra. Today, life may treat you kindly by lavishing its choicest blessings upon you. But do not get deluded! Do not let positive circumstances go to your head. Any worldly source of safety is illusory. Human life is constantly threatened by disease, sorrow, anguish, old age, infirmity and death!

Unforeseen circumstances, and the fruition of past karmas can lead to many different circumstances, none of them pleasant. Who knows what is going to take place in the future?

Rupsen was ecstatic about his meeting with Sunanda. What happened? Could anything save him from getting crushed to death under a collapsing wall? Or from being reborn in the womb of his beloved?

In reality, Rupsen was over the moon about his date with Sunanda. This led to his tragic end. And rebirth in unbearable circumstances. But he had no say in the matter. It was all up to karma.

Move away from attachment and aversion, happiness and sorrow, before your life comes to an end. Else, all the likes and dislikes that you indulged in shall lead to the inflow and bondage of intense karmas.

Can one control attachment and aversion?

Question : Since the consequences of past delusion causing karmas determine the course of this life, will I be able to control attachment and aversion?

Answer : The question is correct. But it is essential to learn to discriminate between circumstances. If, in a past

birth, you had deliberately indulged in attachment and aversion, likes and dislikes, joy and sorrow you can notice the horror of attachment and aversion. But now, on acquiring human birth, it may be understood that the impact of the mohanīya karma has lessened. But if you continue to constantly immerse yourself in attachment and aversion, joys and sorrows, without an iota of remorse, you shall bind very intense mohanīya karma, which will harm your soul for a very long time over several births.

Self-Control and the shelter of dharma are the only solution.

One needs to understand that in your following lives, you may take birth as a lower life form. The attachment and aversion you are indulging in right now shall bear unpleasant consequences and you will not be in a position to understand the root cause of this sorrow. In fact, you will be helpless in the face of tremendous adversity.

Today, you are in a far better position. You are able to comprehend the horrific consequences of attachment and aversion, through the example of the story of Rupsen & Sunanda. It is easy for you to step back, use dharma as the means to transcend the feelings of attachment and aversion through equanimity and contemplation on the self. But to walk on this path, self-control is essential.

Now let us see where his intense attachment and aversion take Rupsen. Not only did he die in an accident, he took birth in the womb of Princess Sunanda. Such was the strength of his longing for Sunanda that he was reborn in her womb! What was the unmarried Princess Sunanda to do? She was pregnant. Would she choose to keep her baby, or would she get an abortion?

Sunanda's Thoughts

Sunanda was now pregnant. Her pregnancy brought about many symptoms which were likely to reveal her secret. She was petrified! She realised that her unwanted pregnancy would become more and more evident as time passed and that sooner or later, the world would know her secret. She was mortified! How would she be able to show her face to anyone, if it became known that she was about to become an unwed mother. The thought of suicide crossed her mind. But she decided to terminate her pregnancy. But she did not know how to go about it. And who could take a decision on this? Only her beloved Rupsen could have done so. She was in a turmoil.

Suicide or Abortion?

The consequence of Sunanda's night of uninhibited passion was that she was pregnant. She now found herself in an unenviable situation. She was so fearful of the consequences of unwed motherhood, that she began to have suicidal thoughts.

The game of attachment and aversion has unbearable, unforeseen and unfortunate consequences! Sunanda was seriously considering suicide as a means of saving her reputation. She felt cornered and was aghast at the two options that were open to her :

Suicide - She would be guilty of killing herself

Abortion - She was ready to destroy the young life that was growing inside her.

In both cases, she was likely to come to grief.

The Evil of Selfishness

Rupsen had taken rebirth in the womb of Princess Sunanda.

Sunanda was unaware of this development. She was between a rock and a hard place. She felt all the love a mother naturally feels towards her child. But she was willing to sacrifice her unborn child on the altar of respectability and social acceptance. In other words, how true was her love for her child? Evidently, her love for the unborn child would only last as long as it did not come in the way of her dreams and ambitions.

The World Runs on Attachment

Worldly life is built on the edifice of love and attachment. This is why despite wandering all over the world, people come back to the place they consider home. They dwell in their homes, finding relief in them, they live in their homes, and store their wealth in them. Their families mean the world to them. They identify with their family members and consider their joys and sorrows as their own.

Attachment is uncontrolled, unrestricted and uncertain. Why seek it?

What is all this? So much emphasis on attachment and aversion! And love itself is doled out in percentages. Only so much love for one person and far more for another person! If needed, for the sake of those we love the most, we harm those we love the least. And our love is not consistent. At times, those we love the most fall in our eyes and we stop loving them. And at times, we shower all our love on those we used to dislike earlier. Essentially, there are no rules governing love. So why should we give it so much importance and ruin our lives for the sake of love?

If you must love someone, love the Jinas, the preceptors and dharma itself. Love your own soul. Loving one's body is pointless. It is not going to last. It is better to love the soul which is constant and shall be with you forever. Besides,

once you begin loving the soul, you begin to realise that it is different and distinct from the body. Once you truly begin loving your soul, you will start disliking sins because they harm your soul.

When you begin loving your soul, you will be able to rise above envy, jealousy, hatred, opposition, criticism, complaining behind one's back, arrogance and hypocrisy. Because all these are diseases of the soul. They perturb the soul, cause it great distress. They are the enemies of true peace and tranquility. But the basis for this state of being is love for the soul, instead of love for the body and worldly activities. Once you truly begin loving the soul, you will automatically stay away from the abovementioned flaws, because you know that they are causing the utmost harm to your soul. You will start working hard on removing the flaws.

Princess Sunanda had no interest in the soul. She was only concerned about her reputation. To safeguard her reputation, she was willing to take the extreme step of abortion. She began plotting with her friends.

“Look! How the folly of that day has led to such a huge problem! Now what to do?”

Her friends said, “What is the confusion? We shall get some medication from the courtesan's home. You take them to abort the child. Courtesans are resourceful in such matters.”

Where do Common Sense, Compassion, Dharma disappear?

The princess's friends were eager to aid and abet her cruel act of abortion. The fact that they were about to murder an infant did not register in their minds. They loved their friend, the princess so deeply that they were willing to be her accomplices in such a heinous and cruel act. Love befuddles the mind and renders it incapable of distinguishing between

the good and the bad. So the princess's friends pushed aside any shreds of humanity, compassion and dharma.

This helps us understand that unless we can put a constraint on attachment, we shall never be able to follow the path of dharma or practise compassion. Attachment is blind! Exile it from the country of your soul. Desire for worldly objects is poisonous. This desire poisons the perspective, and kills common sense, good qualities and dharma consciousness.

Unborn Child put under a great deal of pain and harassment

Now the princess's friends arranged for some medication that would abort the fetus in the princess's womb. They got Sunanda to drink that medicine. How did the abortion causing medication taste? Horrible! Now let us see what impact the medication had on the one month old fetus. Even a strong well built young body, in the peak of life, will suffer immensely if salt is rubbed into an open wound. How terribly the fetus must have suffered when Sunanda drank the cruel concoction that was going to murder her child! Unknown to Sunanda, her beloved, Rupsen had died and had been reborn in Sunanda's womb.

Effectively, Sunanda was causing the most brutal and horrifying pain and grief to the soul of the person she had once loved - Rupsen. Rupsen's fetus suffered a thousand agonies. But being an unborn child, it was unable to express its heartrending grief. Where could he have escaped? He was stuck in his mother's womb... And experiencing the most agonizing pain ever!

Readers, you should not get angry on Sunanda because Rupsen was suffering the consequences of his lack of self-control and his deep attachment.

Question : *Then why are women called the stepping stones to hell?*

Answer : *Because her body, her appearance, her image arouses men and incites them to commit acts of passion.*

He who does not wish to get burnt in the fire of attachment and aversion should get rid of women from his mind. Meaning, he should not gaze at women, not converse with them, should not think of women, not talk about them, etc. In case he happens to come across a woman despite not intending to, he must ensure that he controls his desire to stare at her and should curb any attraction towards her. If he manages to remain unaffected by her, he is saved. Else, he will be pushed back into the web of desire and enticement. Hence, man's true enemies are lack of self-control and attachment.

Rupsen had never met Sunanda but had only gazed at her from afar. His inability to stop himself from ogling her and the steps he took in order to meet her in person were part of his lack of self-control. His strong desire for Sunanda deepened his attachment and made his lapse all the more serious. After he died in an accident, he suffered the normal agonies of being in the womb. Over and above that, he had to undergo the hellish pains caused by his former beloved Sunanda, who was desperately trying to abort her child, not realising that Rupsen's soul had taken birth in her womb. Rupsen was in great pain.

One would not wish the agonies Rupsen was experiencing on one's worst enemy! And he had to suffer all this as a result of his lack of self-control and deep attachment. Hence, what should one beware of? One should constantly remain aware that attachment and the absence of self-control cause great sorrow. One should constantly ruminate on how to lessen

one's attachment. And one should realise the consequence of attachment: birth and rebirth.

What happened to Rupsen after he died?

Even when he was a full grown adult, poor Rupsen had no idea how to curb attachment and desire from taking over his thought processes. Naturally, when he was reborn in the womb of Sunanda as a tiny infant, he could experience pain and agony but was unable to take steps to alleviate the pain. The poison Sunanda kept consuming every day had an effect and one day the fetus of Rupsen died. He was reborn as the son of a serpent. What business transaction could he have conducted in the form of a snake? And what was he to eat in order to sustain himself? Tiny living beings, young frogs, etc. As the snake grew older, he began eating larger frogs and mice, rates, etc. As a carnivorous being, the snake killed thousands of small creatures.

No one can escape the consequences of the law of nature and the consequences of karmic bondage.

Sinner or Believer?

The great British writer George Bernard Shaw knew Jainism and was a vegetarian.

Question : *Mr. Shaw, why are you a vegetarian?*

Answer : *My stomach is not a cemetery for dead animals.*

The questioner was at a loss for words. Shaw was absolutely right. What is meat eating? It means, eating parts of a corpse.

How to lessen one's sins

Is it appropriate to feed yourself with food that was obtained through violence and murder? Think it over. You have the invaluable opportunity to decrease sinful behaviour as much

as possible and lead a blameless life. But despite attaining human birth, if you are only concerned with indulging your senses and seeking more and more comfort for your body, you will lose the motivation to stay away from sin and lead a blemishless life. A sinless life is only possible if you stop pandering to your senses and seeking material comforts.

Sunanda becomes the Queen

While Rupsen was reborn as a snake and was wandering in the forest, what was Sunanda up to? Princess Sunanda conveyed to her mother that she was willing to get married. Hence, her parents married her off to a wealthy king, befitting their own royal status. So she became the queen and travelled with her husband, the king, to live in his kingdom. Coincidentally, her new abode was right beside the forest in which Rupsen lived as a snake.

Look how Rupsen was suffering for his sins of lack of self-control and deep attachment!

The Snake saw Sunanda

One day, it so happened that Queen Sunanda stepped into the park behind her palace for a walk. By chance, Rupsen, who was reborn as a snake, happened to be in that park. He saw her. Upon seeing her, his previous attachment, stemming from his past birth, was awakened and he thought to himself, “Wow! What a gorgeous face!”

Who could have explained to the poor fellow that it was his admiration and desire for beauty that had caused him so much misery! And that he needed to curb this admiration since it simply inflamed his passions and deepened his attachment. His desire for Sunanda’s beauty had caused his untimely death not once but twice. And now he had been reborn as a snake. When would he understand the consequences of his actions? As Rupsen, he had the chance of meeting a saint or

scholar who could have explained the consequences of his foolish attachment. As a serpent living in the jungle, who could have explained all this to him?

Get rid of sin and commit meritorious acts

I hope you, the reader, can now understand the importance of stepping away from sins and committing acts of goodness, kindness, mercy and charity. Passion, desire and attachment lead to sin and misery. We are so quick to pounce on an opportunity to indulge our senses. But we should stop and think.

It is folly to seek sensual pleasure despite knowing that it leads to sin and the eventual bitter consequences of sin are fearful! It is equally foolish to ignore the opportunity to earn merit and lead a good life, despite being fortunate enough to be born as humans. What is the sense in igniting that which will kill you and forgetting that which will give you eternal bliss?

Why are we incapable of comprehending this? Because we are so deeply enamoured of sensual pleasures and so intoxicated by our passions that we are unable to perceive the right path. We cannot even think of the right path!

The Snake rushed towards Sunanda

Rupsen, besotted with the beauty of Sunanda's face, rushed towards her, seeking the touch of her soft hands. He was so overcome with the desire that he forgot that humans do not accept snakes lovingly. Passion and desire cause us to do stupid things. And so the snake rushed towards Sunanda, seeking her gentle touch.

The snake had absolutely no intention of harming Sunanda in any way whatsoever. He was utterly besotted by her charms. But how was Sunanda to know? She saw a snake slithering

rapidly towards her and assumed that it was about to bite her! She ran away to save her life. The snake rushed after her. As Sunanda glanced back, she saw that the snake was following her. Panicked, she shouted to her palace guards for help and ran away in fear.

The Soldier with the sword

Hearing Sunanda's anguished cry for help, a guard ran over with his sword held ready. But the snake was so deeply infatuated with Sunanda's beauty that he continued to slither towards her. He was impervious to all else. He ignored the soldier with his raised sword and rushed after Sunanda. Such is the blindness caused by intense attachment!

In our day to day lives, we strengthen our attachment through uncontrolled behaviour. And this had terrible consequences. Precisely this kind of attachment compelled the snake to chase after Sunanda. He did not stop to think what would happen to him if he continued to chase her. He was beyond caring whether the attachment would help him or harm him.

How can one break away from sin and sinfulness?

All we understand is that one should not commit sin as they cause sorrow. Hence, the reason to stay away from sinfulness is to avoid future sorrows. This is a primary level understanding. It cannot help the soul break away from sin and sinfulness.

In reality, we need to break away from sin. But not out of the fear of sorrow. Hence, fear is not the right deterrent to hold us back from sin. So strong is our predilection towards attachment that even the fear of hell cannot sometimes hold us back from committing the most heinous sins. How then, could one break away from sin?

One needs to understand and realise the truly alarming

consequences of sins. Once you reflect on it, you realise the true horror of sin - it leads to infinite pain.

One should not indulge in sin because attachment and aversion are the driving forces behind sin. Hence, the desire to commit sins is deep seated and not easy to get rid of. To make matters worse, the consequences of sin are terrible. Once they come into fruition, they cause one to commit more and more sins for many lives. Such is the impelling force of sin, that it causes a person to indulge in activities that may lead to grievous injury or even death. Despite knowing all this, we do not consider sin to be dangerous! We do not regret having committed sins. Instead, we justify them at every step. Because we do not consider sins to be dangerous, they follow us life after life. Enticed by our delusion, we continue to commit sins and remain stuck in mundane births, constantly enduring grief.

The problem with indulging in sin is twofold.

- 1. Our attachment and aversion are strengthened*
- 2. We can never come out of the vicious circle of sin and its consequences*

Hence, avoid sin! Think of the extremely painful and harmful consequences of sin, also known as the wages of sin. Once you realise the true horror of the wages of sin, you desire to commit sins will weaken. You shall then, of your own accord, try to remain away from sin and sinfulness. You will then lead a blissful life.

The Snake and the Princess

The utterly besotted snake continued to chase Sunanda, craving one glimpse of her beautiful countenance. He did not pay heed to the soldier who was chasing him with an unsheathed sword. As soon as the soldier came close enough,

he hacked at him with his sword, and the snake died. Even as he lay dying, his only regret was that he had been unable to gaze at the gorgeous face of Princess Sunanda. His own death and suffering were of no consequence to him.

Instead of realising that his own obsession, deep seated attraction and desire for the princess had brought about his downfall, he did not regret his passion, which had caused him so much pain and sorrow. Such is the hold of delusion over the human mind, that it fails to recognise the real causes of immense sorrow: attachment and aversion.

If one realises that attachment and aversion are the root causes of all worldly sorrow, and moves away from them, he is genuinely fortunate. Attachment towards other persons and objects is the greatest folly! Detachment should come from within. It cannot be forced from outside. Pretending to be detached when you are not, harms your soul.

The Snake reborn as a Crow

The snake died a wretched death. He was reborn as a crow. And what sort of values and teachings would he have got from a crow's upbringing? Instead of feasting on the bountiful fruits provided by Mother Nature, a crow eats the stinking putrid flesh of dead animals! Crows ignore tasty food and instead attempt to suck filth like nose snot, cough phlegms from the ground!

Humans too are full of arrogance and deceit. And like crows, they ignore the good and seek the bad. Instead of walking on the straight and narrow path of goodness, he prefers the dark winding pathways of evil. He competes with crows in being mean and nasty, and like crows, he seeks the most worthless objects.

Rupsen was born as a crow and grew up with the same values and priorities as other crows. Soon, he grew into an adult

crow and came flying to the very same park where Queen Sunanda went for her walks.

The Crow repeats the Snake's actions

As it happened, a great singer happened to visit the city where Queen Sunanda lived, at the same time as the crow reached the park behind Sunanda's palace. The king was keen to hear the singer and arranged for him to sing for him, at the park behind his palace. This was the park where Sunanda used to go for a walk, and where the snake had seen her.

The crow sat on the branch of a tree in the park. He saw the queen and was deeply moved by her beauty. His deep desire for Sunanda, initiated in his life as Rupsen, had deepened to an obsession with her beauty. The very same desire, which has led to his downfall as Rupsen, and then as a snake, had become stronger due to the extreme attachment that Rupsen felt for Sunanda's beauty. The attachment awakened the crow's memory and the crow thought to himself, "What a gorgeous face!"

So intense was the attraction the poor crow felt for Sunanda, that he was unable to recollect the catastrophic consequences of his attachment to that face. But what could he do? He was unable to think of the consequences even when he was a human being and capable of rational thought. Now, as a crow, he was incapable of logical thinking.

Don't be misled by delusion. Appreciate the unique opportunity that human birth offers

As a human, you are born with courage and wisdom that are beyond comparison. One cannot purchase the intelligence and strength of man, despite offering billions of rupees. Do not waste your intellect and energy on worthless ephemeral things like sensual pleasure. Sensual pleasure is fleeting. Do not throw away your incredible ability to think and act

on your own initiative. Do not let it go. It is sheer folly to sacrifice your human birth and rational faculties for the sake of fleeting and insignificant sensual pleasures. Else, you shall become the plaything of delusion.

Human life is the priceless opportunity to live life in accordance with the teachings of our revered Jinās. Make sure you do not lose this opportunity.

Do not lose this opportunity because of delusion

You are the master of your life. You have a right to decide what you wish to do with it. You are born with intelligence and wisdom. What course of action you take is entirely up to you. Do realise the value, importance, rarity and preciousness of human birth. Do not let go of this magnificent opportunity.

A smart investor never squanders his capital on losing propositions. In this case, you are the investor and your time is your capital. Make sure you do not fritter it away on unimportant things like material wealth and sensual pleasure. Instead, use it well. Stay away from the trap of delusion and desire. If you misuse your time your delusion and sensual desire will hold you back from the gateway of liberation.

The Crow gazes at Sunanda and falls for her...

Rupsen's obsession with Sunanda had cost him his life thrice. As Rupsen, as the aborted child in Sunanda's womb, and as the snake. But Rupsen was obsessed. Now reborn as the crow, his previous love and desire for Sunanda's beautiful welled up in his breast and he started crowing his pleasure. His raucous crowing upset the tempo of the music concert that was going on in the park. The king asked his servants to shoo the crow away. But the crow was in love! He refused to listen. He kept coming back and crowing his love for the queen in loud and harsh voice. He was delighted to have seen Sunanda and kept expressing his pleasure at having seen her.

He could not help that as a crow, his voice was loud, harsh, unmusical and irritating to the human ear.

The king was now well and truly angry. Despite shooping it away repeatedly, the crow kept coming back and crowing raucously, disrupting the mood and tempo of the music concert taking place in the park, at the behest of the king. The angry king picked up his bow and arrow and aimed an arrow at the poor crow. Instead of realising that he was in mortal danger, continued crowing loudly, thrilled that he could see Sunanda's beautiful face. He was unable to perceive anything around him.

It was a tragedy waiting to happen. The king was ready, his bow arched, ready to propel an arrow that would kill the poor crow. But the besotted crow was blind to this danger. He was gazing with rapt attention at Queen Sunanda's beautiful face. Unwittingly, he was part of a tableau, with the king with his arched bow and arrow, and the queen with her gorgeous face were the other components of the tableau.

What was about to happen? Would the arrow be released? Would the crow get killed?

An Arrow for the Crow

The angry king shot the crow with an arrow. Being an expert marksman, his arrow found its target. The arrow hit the crow and penetrated deep into his body. He fell to the ground. He was in excruciating pain. He had now forgotten his ecstatic crowing upon seeing Sunanda's gorgeous face. He was in intense agony. To add insult to injury, his beloved queen was present in front of him but did nothing to pull out the arrow or alleviate his pain in any way.

We do not know how karma works. It is very subtle. But we have to live through its consequences! At times, one is

drowned in grief. And one finds that one is deserted by all those whom he thought to be his well wishers. And he is all alone, helpless at the receiving end of all the misery that karma hands out to him. All worldly beings are constantly at the mercy of karma.

Knowing this, a soul with samyaktarśana stays away from worldly trappings. The most luxurious palaces and the most precious material possessions do not hold any charm for him. He has only one purpose. He wishes to go away from this attachment-filled, sorrow-filled world. He has no worldly desires left. He seeks liberation. He does not wish to come back to sañsāra.

Love's Sad Obsession

As the crow lay dying, the object of his affection, Queen Sunanda was completely oblivious to him. She remained in her seat, enjoying the music concert and did not even bother to see the suffering crow and try to alleviate its agony in any way. But the crow was so besotted with Sunanda's beauty that he kept calling out to her. He died for her sake. But she took no notice of him.

Lust is poisonous. One may die but the lust inside one's soul will not die. We are inspired by stories where people lay down their lives for the sake of their love.

The crow's love, obsession and passion for Sunanda had caused him so much grief! And yet the foolish creature continued to love her. He was unwilling to break out of his pointless and painful obsession with her.

We are imprisoned by our emotions and desires! We are completely helpless under the cruel yoke of our passion and desire.

But why are we so weak? The soul is infinitely powerful. But to leverage the soul's strength, one must break away from sensual desires, quieten the mind and look inwards.

It is sad that we are willing to use our capacities to the hilt in order to attain worldly objectives. This only serves to increase the strength of karmic bondage.

If one wishes to help the soul, here is the path :

Four Methods of Satya-Parākrama {True Effort}

- 1. Get rid of false understanding. Realise that the soul is different and distinct from sañsāra and bound to sañsāra only on account of karma. Never forget the sorrow caused to the soul by sañsāra and karma.*
- 2. Develop your character and will power. Realise that your soul possesses infinite strength. You are the most powerful entity in the universe. I shall not rest till I have got rid of the attachment and aversion that sully my soul and deprive it of its infinite powers. Tell yourself I shall follow the vows, live by the rules, practise asceticism, etc. in order to destroy attachment and aversion from my soul. Character is the steely determination to confront unflinchingly all the trials, tribulations and reversals of fortune in order to benefit the soul.*
- 3. Do not rely on sañsāra. Realise its fickle nature. Do not depend on others, whether living beings or material objects, for your own happiness. Expectation leads to disappointment and sorrow. Firm conviction in karma and purushārtha {one's own efforts made in the right direction} are required to gain freedom from dependence on others. Lasting faith in the beneficial Arihantas and the auspiciousness of their profound teachings need to be put in action by the seeker.*

4. *Bring out your inner strength and quell attachment and aversion through the following measures:*

- a) *Arihanta Bhakti - worshipping the Jinas with complete devotion*
- b) *Vitarāga Smaraṇa - keep reminding yourself of the omniscient Jinas and their teachings*
- c) *Guru SatsaṅgaSevā - find a true guru and learn from him with great humility and devotion*
- d) *Tapa - penance*
- e) *Tyāga - renunciation*
- f) *IndriyaDamana - control of the senses*
- g) *Vrata-Niyama - live by the rules and practise the penances espoused by the Jinas*
- h) *ŚāstraVāñcana-Manana - study the scriptures, reflect upon their teachings*

Rebirth as a Swan

The crow, upon being struck by an arrow shot by the King, died a painful death. After dying, he was reborn as a swan who lived in the adjoining lake. Soon, he grew into an adult swan and lived in the same lake.

One day, the king revisited the park along with his wife. After a while, he placed his head on her lap and fell asleep by the riverside.

The swan saw Sunanda from a distance and fell in love with her yet again. He stepped out of the lake, walked up to Sunanda and said in his own language, “What a marvelous face!” The swan danced a jig to show its happiness on having seen the queen yet again. The swan was so caught up by

Sunanda's beauty that he fell completely in love with her. The burden of attachment and aversion attracted karmas to his soul. The swan was unaware of the karmic burden that was being added to his soul through his emotional attachment.

We humans are a strange lot. We hang on to what we should have gotten rid of.

Inability to learn from Others

Look at moths which burn themselves on flames in order to express their love. Fish get caught on hooks when they seek to eat the worm. There are so many examples of people getting trapped due to their obsession with something, their desire for fame and recognition, or in their quest to make money. There are so many instances of self destructive behaviour that occur all around us. It is better to learn from others' mistakes, rather than make the mistakes ourselves.

A Stone for the Swan

The swan was still gazing at Sunanda's face. He was completely lost in her beauty. The King had been sleeping with his head in the lap of his wife. He was rudely awakened when bird droppings fell on him. A crow had done that! The crow, then flew to the ground and stood next to the swan, observing how the king would react after having bird droppings fall on him.

As soon as the king woke up, he saw the crow and guessed what had happened. He grabbed a stone and hurled it in angrily at the crow. Being alert, the crow flew away to safety. But the enraptured swan was still gazing at his beloved Sunanda, and did not see the stone being hurled his way. As a result, he got hit by the stone and died. He had been so blinded by the presence of Sunanda, that he had tuned out everything else. As a result, he had to pay with his life.

Is there a limit to the power of delusion?

How long will delusion exercise a hold over mankind? Delusion grows stronger with time. Unless an event occurs in the person's life, that inspires him to follow dharma. If such an eye opener takes place, and the sādḥaka {seeker} continues to carry out what he needs to do in order to weaken delusion, delusion can be conquered.

Rupsen's life was about to change. He would move away from the blind aggressive love that he had carried in his heart for so long. A catalyst would come in his life and alter it!

Death because of lack of self-control and delusion. Despite that, the inability to recognise delusion for what it is

The swan was completely trapped in the web of delusion which he had himself strengthened with his obsessiveness. So fascinated was he by Sunanda's beauty that he continued to gaze at her, without even realising that there was a stone being hurled in his direction. He was hit hard by the stone and fell down. He was bleeding, the flesh was oozing out of his wound. He was in great pain. He was very near death. And yet, his attention was riveted on Sunanda's face. There was no realisation that his lack of self-control, delusion, obsessive behaviour had led to such immense pain and sorrow. He was unable to realise that delusion was dragging him further downwards. And that he needed to get rid of it in order to escape the trap of grief and misery. There was no regret or repentance in his heart. He died of his injury, still gazing at the beautiful face of Sunanda. Even the intense agony of death could not reduce the edge of his desire and the extent of his delusion.

One should learn from this sad episode that passion, delusion, lack of self-control and avarice cause nothing but sorrow. We have seen the suffering of people who have the above flaws.

Should we not, therefore, back off from indulging in these things? Should we not dislike, detest and avoid them?

It is as if karma is telling us, “Your body will die but if your delusion, sensual desire and greed shall cause us to remain connected with your soul. Beware, your delusion, attachment & aversion, desire and greed shall cause you terrible sorrow.”

Reflect upon the fact that those who remain immersed in delusion, attachment & aversion, desire and greed suffer tremendously. Delusion, attachment & aversion, desire and greed suffer cause nothing but grief, misery and torment. Realise this and get rid of delusion, attachment & aversion, and passion.

Swan reborn as a Deer

The swan died a painful death, and was reborn as a deer in the nearby forest. The deer was living peacefully in the forest but once again, his bad karmas fructified and the king decided to visit the forest on a hunting trip.

Queen Sunanda asked her husband why he killed animals in the jungle.

The king explained that, “The entire forest and all the creatures who lived in it are our personal property. Just as the farmer harvests his crop when it is ripe, we hunt the animals living in our forest, as they belong to us.”

The queen followed her husband’s logic and asked to join him on his hunting trip in the forest. She did not stop to think that no one had the right to take a life. One who claimed the right to the lives of those creatures who lived in his forest would have to first exercise his right over his own children.

So the king and queen, along with their retinue, went to the jungle on a hunting trip. Once they reached, the singers and

musicians on their retinue set up a musical performance for their pleasure. Some deer who lived in the same forest came running up to listen to the music. They stood a little apart and enjoyed the musical performance.

Lack of Self-Control leads to Double Punishment

Man is so obsessed with fulfilling his sensuous cravings that he loses his sense of right and wrong. He cannot realise for himself that his pursuit of sensuous pleasures shall only serve to harm his soul. He is utterly incapable of comprehending the consequences of his actions.

So moved were the deer by the beauty of the music, and so poor was their willpower to resist sensual pleasure, that they rushed over to where the music was being performed. On the other side, the king's men tied together some bushes and created a temporary pen to trap unsuspecting animals. A deer from this flock was completely focused on the musical concert and did not pay any attention to the trap the king's men were setting. Now the king picked up his bow and arrow and notched a bow. The music concert finished and now the deers noticed that they were trapped and tried to escape. But not all of them!

For Rupsen's soul had now incarnated as a deer living in that forest. That particular deer had been enjoying the melodious music as much as the others in his group. But he then happened to glance at the queen's face. Lo! It was his beloved Sunanda! He was transfixed by her radiant beauty and stood there gazing at her with love in his eyes. He lost all track of time and ignored his animal's instinct for detecting danger. Yet again, he was mesmerised by Sunanda's beauty and as fate would have it, he would pay a heavy price for his infatuation once again.

So powerful is the power of infatuation that the all powerful

soul, when it falls in love, becomes incapable of doing anything else or thinking else.

Ignorance and Folly

Most of us are unable to realise the fickleness and capriciousness of sañsāra, and consider sensuous pleasures and material acquisitions to be lasting and permanent. Worldly beings remain trapped in sañsāra because they are unable to realise the above truths. They chase the ephemeral highs of sensuous pleasure and ignore the eternal bliss that accompanies self-realisation.

Rupsen wasted several lifetimes on his obsession with Sunanda's beautiful face. And he remained true to form. Instead of running away when he saw the king pick up his bow and arrow, he remained poised in one place, glancing at the queen's beauteous countenance with rapt attention. While the other deer bounded away in alarm, this fellow did not move a muscle. He was completely oblivious to the fatal danger that he was exposed to.

The king told his wife that she was indeed lucky that such a fine animal had come up to them, almost as if he were begging to be shot dead by an arrow. He told her that he was about to shoot the deer dead. He calmly shot the deer.

The Deer is shot

The hard steel arrow invaded the deer's soft body. Instantly, the gently swaying deer collapsed on the ground. He was in immense pain. The arrow was causing him excruciating pain. But who would pull out the arrow from his body?

The king and his family were gazing at the dying deer and congratulating themselves on their spectacular catch.

The deer was dying, and the person he loved the most was a silent witness to his murder. His anguish and intense pain

did not move his beloved. She stood there while his lifeblood ebbed away in a river of red.

We are strange creatures! We are obsessed with knowing more about things that have absolutely no connection with our lives! We do not trust our parents and elders but blindly trust our enemies. Our infatuation with the opposite sex, our desire for material wealth and our obsession with sensual pleasure binds us to sañsāra. Rupsen's story is the best example of this.

(For further enlightenment on this topic refer appendix 1 on page no. 92)

Rupsen's life was torn apart by his obsession with Sunanda's physical beauty. He died when a wall fell on him. In the very next birth, he was aborted by Sunanda. He was then reborn as a serpent and killed by Sunanda's guards. He was reborn as a crow and killed by the guards. And then reborn as a swan and killed yet again. Despite this, his attachment for Sunanda's beauty had not decreased one bit! He was not ready to give up his obsession with her. Reborn as a deer, he had once again been shot down cruelly by an arrow from the king's bow. As he lay there dying, his love for Sunanda dwindled not one bit.

Lack of Self-Control leads to Rise in Passion and Attachment

Just look at the tragedy of karmas! While Rupsen continues to be reborn and is killed cruelly each time, Sunanda is still in the same incarnation. The snake of attachment and aversion is strengthened by the lack of self-control and penance. The poison emitted by this snake is so lethal, that the jīva has to constantly bear its disastrous consequences. The lack of self-control exacerbates attachment and aversion. This is why those who desire spiritual emancipation, need to tackle the lack of self-control first.

When you practice self-control on a regular basis, your lower qualities of attachment and aversion have less opportunity to flourish. In the long run, their hold on you weakens and the higher qualities of spontaneous self-control, spontaneous detachment, and spontaneous peace emerge in the soul.

Rupsen was on the wrong path. As a human, he did not practise any self-control. Not was he bothered by it. Now, as a sub-human, he was not equipped to come out of the trap of attachment and obsession that he found himself immersed in. Attachment had become his way of life. As a result, he lost his life in quick succession for the sixth time. His birth as a deer ended as he died, suffering from the grievous wound caused by the king's arrow. He died in great agony.

Picnic with Deer Meat as the Feast

The king got his bearers to carry the deer's carcass back to his palace in the city and organised a feast for his friends, with the deer's meat as the main item on the menu. The king, his queen and his friends began feasting on the deer's meat. They were all enjoying themselves, when their party was interrupted...

The Monk Trembles

A couple of monks were passing by beside the king's park, where the feast was being held. When one of the monks saw the king's party feasting on the meat of the deer, he was disturbed. He told the other monk, "Look! One lover is feasting on the flesh of another one out here!"

The king heard him and was annoyed. He called the monks and threatened them. He yelled, "We can do what we want! You have no right to shake your head and stop us!"

The monk was fearless. Also, he had avadhijñāna {extraordinary knowledge enabling him to know about the past lives of others}.

He stated, “O great one, if people wish to become slaves to sensuous desires, which are the enemies of the soul, and lead to rebirth in naraka {hell} and in nigoda {the lowest level of existence, where many souls share one body and where the lifespan is shorter than 1/18th of second}, how can our prohibition stop anyone?”

The king was taken aback. He asked, “What is naraka and nigoda?”

Horrors of Hell

The monk replied, “Naraka is a place located below where we stand. It is a place where people bear the consequences of their sins. Sinners are born there, in a dark narrow cave, like a rat’s burrow. In naraka, they are dragged out from the cave through an even thinner path by the wardens of hell (known as paramadhama deva) and beaten up brutally by them. Firstly, by dragging them through a very narrow cave, the beings suffer like seeds in a mill. So they shriek in agony and cry piteously. But the wardens of hell have no mercy. They stretch them on a flat rock and whack them with a huge stick, just as washermen pound dirty clothes with a flat club. Then they grab them by the feet and dash them against the rock. This pounding goes on for a long time. After that they are shoved in a giant oil extracting machine. After that, they are shoved in a giant oven and baked over fire. Who can even count the terrified shrieks of pain of the denizens of hell?”

And then, the wardens of hell ask the person, “Didn’t you enjoy ogling beautiful women?” And a sharp spear is pushed into one eye.

“Didn’t you enjoy listening to the singing of prostitutes?” And then burning hot lead is poured in their ears.

“Didn’t enjoy the touch of soft sensuous objects?” And then they are scraped on a giant scraper, just like bananas are scraped to make wafers.

The wardens of hell shove terrible sharp weapons in the nose and mouth.

“Didn’t you enjoy eating meat?” And then they hack off parts of the body and force the denizens of hell to eat them.

They hack the denizens into tiny pieces but because they are slated to stay in hell for thousands of years, they do not die. They undergo the extreme agony of dying again and again, but do not attain the release of death. After being hacked into tiny pieces, their bodies become whole again, just like particles of mercury. The entire brutal process is repeated endlessly.

The agonies and tortures inflicted on hellish beings are beyond description. And there is no escaping them. Not a single moment is free from anguish and gut-wrenching pain. The hellish being is chopped into pieces, scraped, milled, squeezed, deep fried and roasted constantly. And the minimum duration in hell is no less than 10,000 years.

Once the wardens of hell leave, the denizens of hell begin fighting among themselves. The floor of hell has jagged edges which are as sharp as weapons. So the hellish beings pick each other up and dash them on the floor. And the heat there is terrible! It is infinitely hotter than the hottest iron smelting plant. Hellish beings feel such intense hunger and thirst, that their hunger would not be assuaged even if they ate every scrap of food available on earth and drank every drop of water in the oceans. And yet, there is not a morsel of food or a drop of water to be had in hell.

In brief, the denizens of hell suffer incalculable sorrows in hell. For innumerable years. They are the only living beings who want to die but are unable to, because they have such incredibly long life spans. Each moment of life in hell is full

of excruciating pain and heart-rending misery. There is no respite, even for a fraction of a moment.”

Agonies of Nigoda

The monk continued, “Those who live in nigoda are known as nigodiyas. They are one sensed beings. Many nigodiya souls live in one body. And suffer infinitely more than hellish beings. In nigoda, a living being is born and dies 18 times in one moment. It keeps taking birth and dying in the same place. And experiences the most horrific agonies each time it is born and dies. And this cruel process goes on for ananta kala {incredibly, unimaginably long period of time.}

The monk thus described the situation in naraka and nigoda.

When the king had asked the monk to explain naraka and nigoda he had done so in anger. But when he heard the terrifying realities of naraka and nigoda, his arrogance vanished. The king bowed at the feet of the monk, and with respect he seated the monks on a high seat. With folded hands, the king asked the monk, “What leads to rebirth in naraka or nigoda?”

Rebirth in Naraka or Nigoda

The monk said, “Great ruler, the five senses and the mind are enemies of the soul. Their longings lead to disaster. Those who become slaves of their sensuous cravings do the most violent and despicable deeds. They commit violence, they lie, they steal, they commit adultery and dedicate their lives to the pursuit of material wealth. They obsessively pursue all possibilities of sensual pleasure. Such people are reborn in naraka or nigoda. Lack of control over the five senses and the mind leads to rebirth in naraka or nigoda.”

The king was shocked to hear this. He was rudely awakened from his apathy. His arrogance shattered and he blurted,

“O prabhu, if this is the case, then what will happen to me? Chasing sensuous delectations has been my life’s pursuit! I have never curbed my sensual desires! What will happen to me? Is there a way to atone for my sins?”

The monk was wise enough to realise that the king was asking this question out of a genuine desire to break out of the trappings of hedonism that dominated his life. The desire to seek such answers is indicative of the desire to break out from the bonds of transmigration. The desire to learn new things is essential for progress to happen.

How does True Curiosity arise?

When one is truly keen to improve himself, curiosity arises. He becomes eager to look for answers and sincere enough to implement the answer. To live the values he has understood. As a consequence, he attains spiritual growth.

The problem arises when there is no genuine regret for all the flaws, wrong actions, violence and hedonistic actions that one has committed. A person may listen to various religious discourses, reads the scriptures, and realise that the Jain faith is the best path for liberation. But if he is not keen to know the self, if he is lazy about making spiritual progress, he will not be able to make spiritual progress. One should not merely want to know the right path out of academic interest. One should walk the path and achieve self-purification.

(For further enlightenment on this topic refer appendix 2 on page no. 99)

Seeing the king’s sincerity, the monk replied to him in detail, in order to help the king achieve spiritual purification.

The learned monk said, “O king! How could there not be a remedy? Certain reasons led to your attachment. When you get rid of them, in fact, pursue the opposite reasons, your attachment will lessen. When you change your direction

in life, you shall move on the path of righteousness and self-control. Your load of sin will decrease. And the effect of your previous sins shall diminish. There is absolutely no doubt about it.”

The king asked humbly, “O lord, what is the opposite path, that shall lead me away from my sinfulness?”

The monk explained that, “The opposite path is the path of sañyama {self-control}. One loses one’s way and commits sin due to mental desire, sensual indulgence and hedonistic conduct. This can be reversed through self-control and penance. In order to control the senses and the mind, you must first completely give up violence and all other sins.”

“Until today, you have led a life where you constantly harmed, hunted and killed other living beings. Your conduct has been unrestrained. You have constantly sought sensual gratification. Now rebuild your life in such a manner, that you do not harm the tiniest living being. You have to grant abhayadana {boon of living fearlessly} to all the living beings in the universe. You have to respect their right to life. You must not commit any violence yourself. Also, you must not ask others to commit violence on your behalf. Nor should you aid, abet, support, encourage or praise violence committed by others. Take the vow to never commit violence, never ask others to commit violence on your behalf; and never aid, abet, support, encourage or praise violence committed by others. And follow this vow faithfully.”

Similarly, take the vow to give up lies and falsehood, stealing, adultery and attachment to material possessions. You must stay away from all these sins. You must not only give them up, but also to never ask others to commit the above sins, nor should you ever aid, abet, support, encourage or praise these sins being committed by others. Take up these major vows and always be true to them.”

“Renounce all worldly relationships. Give up wealth, the companionship of beautiful women, your home, your profession, and the activities of preparing and cooking food. Instead, practise alms for food and travelling on foot all the time. Study and meditate upon the scriptures all day. Practise penance. Lead the life of a seeker. This is the best way to rid yourself of past karmas. This is our path too.”

The king was delighted to hear this! His perturbed mind was becalmed by the thought that he could ameliorate his past sins. He realised that he could fix his life. That there was now a way out. He realised that if he did not change his ways soon, he too would end up in naraka or nigoda and suffer endlessly.

O reader, get away from the trap of sañsāra and begin your journey on the path of self-control.

Although the king was convinced, he had a question that he wanted answered. With folded hands, he respectfully asked, “You had stated earlier that we were eating our own relative. Why did you say that?”

The monk said, “Leave this topic, o king”.

The king insisted, “Please maharaj, please answer this question. What is the problem?”

The monk said, “These is a problem. Disclosing someone’s darkest secret is not appropriate.”

The king appealed, “O lord, if it has to do with us, there is no problem in revealing it. Even if it is a personal secret, we shall not be offended. We assure you of this. So please do me a favour and tell us.”

Despite fervent declarations by the king, the monk hesitated to reveal Sunanda’s secret.

On the other hand, the king had by now completely forgotten that he was seated in his park with his friends in order to eat the meat of the deer he had killed. He was completely focused on the monk and his words of wisdom. He was full of gratitude and listened to the monk with great interest, deep faith and an open mind.

Now the monk felt sure of the king's receptivity and proceeded to reveal the story of Rupsen and Sunanda in simple but powerful words. He told the tale with such feeling and emotion that with each tragedy of Rupsen's life, the hearts and souls of his listeners were affected. Their hearts overflowed with compassion.

Sunanda was in tears! She felt disgusted at herself for just having eaten the flesh of the deer, which was a rebirth of Rupsen. She confessed to the monk, "What a tragedy! I am still living in the same body, leading the same life. But poor Rupsen! He had to take so many painful, short lives with calamitous circumstances. Shame on me that I trapped him with my beauty and put him through this series of tragic lives! Had it not been for my looks, disaster would not have struck the poor youngster's life!"

Sunanda's heart and soul has been awakened by the wise words and measured tones of the monk. She did not fear that her darkest secret had been revealed by the monk. Nor did she dump the blame on Rupsen, who had, after all, taken absurd risks in order to be with her. Instead, she realised that Rupsen's love and attachment had been invoked by her own beauty. Hence, her beauty had been the catalyst for Rupsen's downfall.

Her viveka {discriminative knowledge} had awakened. Her compassion for Rupsen, her ability to critically see her own role in the sad saga, led her to regret her own beauty,

which had caused so much trouble and led a young man to his ruin.

Those who have viveka and compassion deeply regret becoming the cause of others' ruin. They make sincere efforts to ensure that they do not knowingly or unknowingly become the reason for harm coming to others.

(For further enlightenment on this topic refer appendix 3 on page no. 102)

Sunanda's feelings of compassion and kindness were awakened. She felt great sorrow for Rupsen and thought that, "How I regret my appearance! What terrible anguish it has caused poor Rupsen, who had fallen in love with my beauty and had to pay such a high price for his infatuation! She asked the monk, "O lord, where has Rupsen's soul, which had been born as a deer, gone since the death of the deer? What form has it taken? Will it ever achieve spiritual emancipation?"

The monk replied, "O fortunate one, the deer died and was reborn in the womb of an elephant who is present in the jungles of the Vindhya mountain range. He is destined to learn about dharma and receive the right instruction from you."

Queen Sunanda felt relieved on hearing this. She thought to herself that, "Thank god! Although I am responsible for pushing him into the web of painful rebirths, but when I teach him about dharma and give him the right instruction, he shall attain liberation and I shall be able to atone for my sin of abetment that led to his death more than once."

Once the inner eyes open, the seeker does not look forward to anything except liberation. He is pleased when he learns of someone's liberation. And deeply saddened to hear of

someone's downfall. Sensuous pleasure becomes unimportant to the seeker.

These are the indicators of inner awakening:

1. His/her focus in life

2. If the focus is truly on the soul and not on external factors, then that person stops looking at his own family members and loved ones with special bonding. He feels the same compassion and amity towards them, that he feels for all living beings in the universe.

3. If he sees a hungry beggar, he will not merely feel pity for him. He will try to feed the beggar. But also, he will try to help the beggar on to the right path, by teaching him to not lie, not commit violence, not steal, etc. His compassion will ensure that he is not merely helping a person at the physical level but also at the spiritual level.

Sunanda felt great compassion, pity and regret for the tragic end of Rupsen's life. She was happy that Rupsen's soul would not languish in sañsāra. Instead, it would attain liberation. And she was thrilled that she would have the opportunity of giving him the right instruction on the nature of the soul and the path of liberation.

The king and queen now requested the monk, "We do not see any path before us, except taking the five great vows. So kindly stay here for a while. Let me organise my succession and the smooth running of my kingdom. After that, I shall be able to renounce the world without any worries. So kindly permit both of us to renounce the world and become your disciples."

The monk replied, "We are following the instructions of our guru. Hence, we have to depart for the neighbouring village, where our gurudeva is staying at the moment."

To which the king replied, “In that case, o lord, please ask your guru to stay back a few days on our behalf, and we shall reach the neighbouring village in two days, for the purpose of taking the major vows and becoming Jain ascetics.”

The King and Queen became Jain Ascetics

The king and queen got up, and prepared to take the major vows of asceticism. They bowed respectfully to both the monks and took their leave. They wound up all their worldly duties in the next two days. The king placed his son on the throne, and crowned him the king. They left their palace and commenced their new lives.

Since they were the king and queen, their renunciation was big news in their land and had a cascading effect. Many others developed faith in Jainism. Several of their courtiers and friends accompanied them when they left for the next village, in order to attain the ascetic vows. The erstwhile king and queen reached the next village, sought their guru’s permission and blessings and took the major vows of Jain asceticism with great delight and sincerity. They were no longer king and queen. Now they were wandering ascetics.

Sunanda’s Asceticism

Now, the Sādhvī Sunanda felt deep regret for her own sins as well as the sins she got Rupsen to commit. She had taken the ascetic path in order to wash away her sins. She remained alert 24 hours a day, to the possibility of a tiny living being harmed by her. Her renunciation and penance were extreme. She was absolutely obedient to her head nun. She served her head nun most sincerely and also spent a great deal of her time learning the scriptures. Her sincerity as a nun, her commitment to her vows and her focus on atonement ensured that she shed a great deal of the sinful karmas she had accumulated because of her past actions. She now attained

avadhijñāna {clairvoyance}. She could now see in to her own and others' past lives.

Rupsen reborn as an Elephant

Through her clairvoyance, Sunanda saw the Rupsen had been reborn as an elephant and was living in the jungles of the Vindhya Mountain region. She also learnt that the elephant was a wild one and known to go to the neighbouring village and cause destruction there. He would also beat up humans who were foolish enough to come within his range.

Sādhvī Sunanda felt great compassion for Rupsen's soul. She thought to herself, "Poor fellow! Look at what he has been reduced to...As Rupsen he bound a lot of sinful karmas. And now, reborn as an elephant, he is causing so much destruction of life and property! What will happen to him, if he continues to sin in this manner?"

Consequences of Sin

One feels compassion for Rupsen! As a rich merchant's son, he led a luxurious, self-indulgent life. He was unable to control his emotions and fell headlong in love with Princess Sunanda. His infatuation with Sunanda's beauty brought him disaster after disaster, and grief after grief. And now the same inability was causing him to behave in an extremely rowdy and violent manner.

A sinner does not know the consequences of his sins. One visible sin paves the way for a hundred sins. The worldly soul carries the seeds of sin with it during its incarnations. The seeds lay dormant till they find favourable circumstances. Once favourable circumstances are reached, the dormant seeds of sin become active and cause further trouble.

Sensual indulgence harms the soul. And results in the inflow of karmas. Overindulgence of the senses leads to:

1. Overindulgence of the Sense of Sight

Ogling women, admiring the wealth of others, trying to locate where others keep their treasure in order to steal it later, reading or seeing pornography, etc.

2. Overindulgence of the Sense of Sound

Hearing and indulging in criticism and backbiting, indulging in dirty talk, disclosing the secrets of others, etc.

3. Overindulgence of the Sense of Taste

Desire to eat various foods, obsession with tasty food and drinks, etc.

4. Overindulgence of the Mind

The mind can be one's worst enemy. By thinking sinful thoughts, it causes a great deal of harm to the soul. Thoughts of anger, arrogance, artifice and avarice, attachment and aversion harm the soul greatly. Thoughts are fickle and if one is not careful, tend towards exaggeration. At times, even minor inconveniences may seem like offenses against oneself. At other times, the emotions of love and liking and hatred are felt so strongly, that the soul suffers terribly as a consequence. Unbridled thoughts may cause delusion. In other words, there are no limits to the damage that an unrestrained mind can cause. Look at how the tiny 'rice fish' which lived off the pickings it found among the teeth of the crocodile, accrued more sin than the crocodile itself!

The long and short of it is that one must retain a hold over one's senses and the mind. Else, one must be prepared to go through a great deal of sorrow and anger.

Rupsen's soul was now roaming the world as a rutting elephant. Nature had given him a strong body and circumstances were

favourable for him to harass other, weaker creatures. The seeds of harassing others, which had been lying dormant in his soul for so many years, were now activated and were causing his soul to accrue a great deal of sin. This is why we are enjoined to stay calm in all situations. Indulging in excessive anger and violence can only harm the soul. And this is exactly what Rupsen's soul was doing.

Sādhvī Sunanda went to the Forests in the Vindhya Mountain Range

The clairvoyant Sādhvī Sunanda explained everything to her chief nun and asked her permission to travel to the forests on the Vindhya Mountain Range, in order to give the right guidance to the wild elephant, which was the incarnation of Rupsen. Sunanda's preceptor agreed and gave her blessings. So Sunanda, along with her fellow nuns, travelled to the village that was close to the forest in which the elephant was rampaging. Using her clairvoyance, Sunanda found out where exactly the elephant was, and walked in his direction, in order to preach the right path to him. As she walked in the elephant's direction, she saw many terrified people.

Some had climbed up trees for safety, and they shouted dire warnings about the imminent arrival of the elephant. Sunanda the nun ignored those warnings and walked calmly towards where she knew the elephant was. The people saw this lonely unarmed and defenceless Jain nun walking fearlessly towards the wild elephant and feared for her safety. They thought she was mad! Yet others thought that she was very arrogant and was going towards the elephant in order to fight him!

Fools and Wise People React Differently

Fools are unable to understand what motivates the wise. Hence, fools and wise people react differently to the same

stimulus. It is important to rise above the bonds of ignorance, folly, acquire knowledge and lead a life full of discernment, compassion, good qualities and good deeds.

Elephant rushed threateningly towards Sādhvī Sunanda

Not paying attention to what the others were saying, Sādhvī Sunanda continued to walk towards the jungle in her slow measured pace, looking downwards to ensure that she did not kill any tiny creatures while walking. The elephant spotted her from afar. At first it thought that the defenceless lady would be a good prey and rushed towards her. He made a terrifying sight, a full grown male elephant running towards her at full speed. Bystanders who were safely seated on tall trees, cried out in apprehension. They were fearful of what the elephant would do to this frail looking lady. They were quite sure that the elephant would either crush her beneath his giant feet, or toss her in the air with its huge tusks.

Can life change so completely?

Sādhvī Sunanda looked steadily at the madly rushing elephant, knowing it to be an incarnation of Rupsen. She was calm and unafraid. The only thought she had was that she wanted to help Rupsen's soul move out of the cycle of transmigration.

What a transformation Sunanda had undergone! All thanks to Jainism. Once a shallow, selfish girl with questionable morals, she had transformed into a brave and fearless Jain nun, keen to undo her sins of the past and help the soul of Rupsen, whom she realised she had wronged. Externally, she was the same person. But her internal thought process had changed completely. She was a different person altogether.

Changes caused by Dharma

*Dharma brings about fundamental changes in the heart, in
Desire to Disaster*



the belief system, in the aims and aspirations of the person, changes in the tendency of a person, in the very life of a person! Look at how drastically Sunanda had changed :

Earlier, Sunanda was like :

Heart - *She only sought sensuous pleasure*

Mentality - *Considered hedonism to be paramount and did not shy away from activities like hunting, etc. which she thought were perfectly acceptable pursuits*

Activities - *Pursuit of sensuous pleasure, violence, etc.*

Soul - *She considered her body to be the soul*

Life - *She only bothered about her current life, was animalistic in her approach*

Later, Sunanda became like this :

Heart - *She sought liberation from the cycle of birth and death*

Mentality - *Considered hedonism to be poisonous and sensuous pleasures to be frivolous*

Activities - *Practised immense self-control and great penance*

Soul - *She knew that although she was trapped in her body now, her soul had the qualities of eternal knowledge and perception, and that sentience was its defining attribute*

Life -Focused on liberation

The greatest credit for the tremendous changes in Sunanda's life may be attributed to the Jain dharma. She achieved it through the teachings of a true guru. And imbibed the teachings in her heart, mind, activities, soul and life. As a result, she made a U-Turn in her life.

We too have Jain dharma to guide us. What is holding us back from attaining similar spiritual progress? If you learnt how to make gems out of mud, would you be lazy about it? No, you would work around the clock! Similarly, you have the opportunity to break through the bondage of birth and death. Do not waste not your time in worldly pursuits. Use it wisely, to attain liberation by walking on the path of the Jinas.

Extent of the Elephant's Anger

The sādhvī was unperturbed. The elephant thundered across the forest towards her. It seemed that the elephant would smash her into the ground. But the Jain sādhvī had faith in the Jina's teachings and stood her ground unflinching.

The rutting elephant pounded the earth in his fury to get at her. But the moment he saw her face, he was transfixed. All his anger vanished. He was once again, the besotted Rupsen. Sādhvī Sunanda's beautiful face had captivated him once again. He halted his thundering approach and stood perfectly still, gazing at her beauteous countenance. So overjoyed was he on seeing her, that he started dancing with joy!

So deep was Rupsen's love for Sunanda, that after several rebirths, he still could not get over his infatuation. It would have been perfectly natural for him, as a male elephant, to be attracted towards a female elephant. Instead, he was deeply attracted towards Sunanda, a female human.

Two Types of Love: Praśasta {Auspicious} and Apraśasta {Inauspicious}

If the subject of that love is auspicious, the love is auspicious. If the subject is inauspicious, the love is inauspicious. Love for the Tīrthañkara, for one's preceptor, for one's dharma, for self-control and penance, is auspicious love. Worldly love is inauspicious.

Love of the Auspicious makes Love Auspicious

Love for dharma will make the person further inclined towards dharma and motivate him to attain dharma more fully, love for auspicious subjects like dharma is auspicious.

Also, one should ensure that one's motives are auspicious. If the motive is wrong, then even love for the auspicious can lead to painful consequences. For instance, one loves the Tīrthañkara, but only for the purpose of worldly gains. Such a person will think that, "My Tīrthañkara is very good. If I worship him, I shall get wealth." If he worships the Jina for getting wealth, his love is inauspicious. Because in reality, the driving force behind his bhakti is money, not an abiding devotion towards the Jina. Hence, such love, even though towards the Jina, is inauspicious love.

If you wish to save yourself from the poison of attachment and aversion, do two things :

1. Give up asaṅgyama {lack of self-control, hedonistic behaviour} and take up saṅgyama {the path of self-control}
2. Develop great respect for auspicious love (praśastarāga)

Sādhvī Sunanda's Discourse to the Elephant

Sādhvī Sunanda spoke to the elephant, "Wake up Rupsen, wake up! Wake up Rupsen! Why are you so crazy about my beauty? What is the big deal about my looks? Remember, how you were a high born youth called Rupsen, and how you fell from grace through your ill-conceived actions. Your lust for me drove you into several births, each more painful than the other. As Rupsen, you died a painful and unnatural death when you were crushed underneath a wall. You were then reborn as a fetus in my womb. You died when I aborted you. You were then reborn as a snake, a crow, a swan and a deer. Each life was brief and full of fear and pain. And you died

a horribly painful death each time. You are now reborn as an elephant. Why do you wish to perpetuate this painful cycle of birth and rebirth! Wake up, Rupsen. Turn back from this calamitous series of events. Turn back! Stop this madness at once! Stop your mad fixation with external appearances.

Elephant's Regrets

Sādhvī Sunanda's powerful words and her constant referring to him as Rupsen set the elephant thinking. Who was this gorgeous maiden? She seemed familiar. As he pondered over the identity of the mysterious stranger who addressed him with such confidence and fearlessness, he attained *jāti-smaraṇa-jñāna* {clairvoyance}! In a flash, he remembered everything that happened to him, from the birth of Rupsen to his current birth.

He was so overcome with remorse that he started trembling! His heart melted and tears swelled up in his eyes. He could see with his mind's eye all that had transpired in his life after he met and fell in love with Sunanda. He could recall all the calamitous events that he had to endure and a wave of remorse swept through him. He regretted the fact that he had wasted so many precious births chasing something as insubstantial as a beautiful face, and had to endure so much suffering as a result.

As Rupsen, he had squandered the opportunity to turn away from a life of sinfulness and begin his quest for salvation through dharma. Instead of choosing the higher path, he had gone in the opposite direction and suffered several painful rebirths.

As he reflected upon it, he now realised the rareness of human birth. On top of that, he realised how difficult it was to get to hear the golden discourses of the Arihantas, which only very, very few people are able to access. The elephant was delighted that he had been lucky enough to

get the opportunity to improve himself and truly know about his true self, his soul. He was filled with joy. This inner joy permeated his entire being.

With heartfelt gratitude and tears of joy, the elephant got down on his hind legs and put his forelegs together in a gesture of salutation to Sādhvī Sunanda. He bowed his great head expressing his profound respect for her. He stated, “Please, please save me! I was a fool. I am a sinner. I humbly seek your help. Please protect me.”

Vows and Penance for the Elephant

Sādhvī Sunanda was clairvoyant. She saw that the elephant’s regret and his desire to break away from the cycle of transmigration were genuine. She gave him the vows of a samyakdrishti layperson. As per his request, she blessed his decision to practise chatta {fast for two days} followed by one meal and then another chatta.

Humans and Animals : Animals and Humans

What is the difference between a human who has not realised his purpose in life, and an animal? If a man remains obsessed with sensual desires and attachment, how is he any different from animals? In fact, he is worse because despite being born as a human, he is unable to figure out the right path. Even animals are capable of walking on the right path.

Humans are born with so many advantages. They have a mind, the ability to think rationally, and access to the wisdom of monks and nuns. They can read, and talk. They can listen to religious discourses, read religious books, etc. Hence, it is far easier for them to understand dharma, than it is for animals. But this can only take place if there is an inner awakening. If there is no inner awakening, if the person is content to merely indulge his sensual desires and remain immersed in attachment and aversion, then that person is worse than an animal.

Inner Awakening

Inner awakening means that a person wakes up from the slumber of ignorance and realises that he is about to drown in the cesspool of endless sañsāra. He realises that there is no reason to be arrogant about anything. Because worldly achievements count for nothing in the spiritual world. He realises that his attachment for non-living things like wealth, property, etc. is nothing but folly. He knows that the human form is innately pure and meant for use as a vehicle to attain liberation. To use this human body to indulge in sensual delectations, and for increasing one's attachment and aversion through sinful conduct is not only stupid, it is also shameful. Desire is insatiable. It is the enemy of your soul. Should you then strengthen your desire by sensual indulgence? Would it not be counter productive, and harm your eternal self, the soul? It is well known that attachment and aversion lead to so many acts of madness and irrationality which lead to grief and sorrow. What complicates things further is that sensual indulgence does not fulfil any need. And worse, sensual indulgence leads to increase in your cycle of transmigration. Hence, it is known as 'rāga-mūḍha-daśā' (a state of stupidity brought on by unbridled attachment).

The Elephant's Thought Process

Once you start thinking about the whole pattern of sensual indulgence leading to more and more rebirths, you are bound to come to the realisation that dharma is the only way to break away from this chain of bondage. Awareness is essential. The elephant was an animal. But his inner self had awakened. He had now realised who he was and was determined to pay heed to Sādhvī Sunanda's teachings. Despite being an animal, he could sense the unselfish compassion of the nun.

He thought to himself that, "Wow! Look how lucky I am! Here I was, living in the jungle, behaving wildly. How

compassionate the nun is. What does she stand to gain from me? Nothing! We had both been young and foolish. She corrected her mistake and chose the ideal path to wash off her sins. And she is striding confidently on the path of liberation. Had she chosen to not help me, it would have made no difference to her own spiritual progress. But she has gone out of her way to help me get on to the right path. How kind she is! How deep and spontaneous is her love and compassion for my soul! How selfless and benevolent she is! Now that I have met a learned saint like her, and know how horribly I have suffered through my rebirths, why should I hold back my efforts to wash off my sins.”

The elephant understood what he had to do and wasted no time in taking up a life of self-control and penance. He began practising chatta {fasting for two days} followed by chatta in a continuous loop, with a break of one day where he would eat food only once. Once his inner being had awakened, his viveka {discernment} and svoddhāra {intense desire for self-betterment} kicked in and he did not find any difficulty in practising such a difficult penance.

Inner awakening (jāgruti), discernment (viveka) and the desire for self-development (svoddhāra) are absolutely essential for progress.

Difference between mana {the mind}, āśaya {intention} and laganī {focus}

Look, here is one thing that you need to pay attention to. Rupsen felt great joy when he beheld the beautiful face of Sunanda. Even when he was reborn and ran into Sunanda, glancing at her face gave him great joy. Birth after birth, he would gaze at Sunanda’s face and feel immense joy. Even when he was reborn as an elephant, he beheld Sunanda’s fair countenance and felt great joy. This did not change after he had experienced inner awakening. He still felt joy when

he saw Sādhvī Sunanda's face. But now, the joy he felt was different.

Although the object of observation was the same, the process of observation was the same, but since the elephant's mind, intention and focus had shifted, the result of observation was no longer the same.

Earlier, Rupsen's **intention** when he saw the beautiful Sunanda was the fulfilment of his desire, his **mind** was captured by her external beauty and his **focus** was on sensuous pleasure. Hence, whenever he saw her face, he felt physically attracted to her.

Now, Rupsen's **intention** was to turn away from sinfulness, his **mind** was turned inwards on the soul, and his **focus** was on spiritual development. Hence, when he saw Sunanda, he felt only the desire to seek shelter in dharma; a profound sense of gratitude towards her for her benevolence and kindness towards him; and deep rooted admiration and support for the self-control and penance practised by her. In fact, his heart danced with joy and gratitude each time he saw her.

This is a clear indication that when one's intention, mind and focus change, the same act shall produce different consequences. Upādhyāya Yashovijaya explained this beautifully : He gave the example of two people eating the same food. One is a glutton, and lives to eat. The other is a deeply detached person, who eats only to live. Outwardly, both are eating the same food. But inwardly, their response to it could not be more different!

The glutton's mouth is watering in anticipation of the taste of the food. And the detached person's eyes water because he is concerned about the extra karmic burden that desire for tasty food creates.

Question : *What causes this vastly different response to the same stimulus?*

Answer : *The difference in their intention, mind and focus causes them to respond uniquely to the same stimulus.*

His purity of intention, mind and focus ensures that the detached person does not bind too many karmas. In fact, keeping one's intention, mind and focus pure is the best way to ensure that one does not remain transfixed in the web of sañsāra.

Pure mind : *Concerned with self-purification*

Pure intention : *Gives importance to the soul rather than to sensual pleasures*

Pure focus : *On the freedom of the soul, rather than on worldly goals. A person with pure focus does not waste his time chasing sensual delectations. He has stopped walking on the path that could harm his soul.*

What you should think when you glance at a woman

Once your intention changes, everything else changes concurrently.

Suppose you are walking on the road. Suddenly, you see a beautiful lady. Keeping your intention pure, you glance away. But what if thoughts of her enter your mind? If your intentions are pure, you will not think of her as a body. Instead, you will think of her as a fellow living being who is capable of attaining liberation. You think of her as a soul possessing infinite qualities but jailed by karmas. You will hope for the liberation of her soul.

Your pure intention transforms your thought process completely. Instead of dwelling upon her looks, you feel

compassion and a bond of spiritual amity for her. As a consequence, your soul remains free from passion and lust. Instead, it feels a bond of amity and compassion. Hence, instead of incurring sin, you have earned merits.

A Pure Mind Can Focus on Spiritual Upliftment

One with a pure mind can take away his focus from his body and senses, and focus on spiritual well-being. A pure mind takes you on the path of enlightenment and away from the path of spiritual downfall.

Same activity, different results

Now, the elephant was looking at Sunanda, but not with lust-filled eyes. He looked at her with humility, respect and supplication. Although his act of looking at her was the same, his intentions had changed. Hence, the karmic consequences were completely different! Karmic consequences are directly proportionate to the extent of sañvega {desire to free oneself from worldly encumbrances} and vairāgya {detachment from the world} that you feel.

People and the King were transfixed

All those spectators who had fearfully climbed up trees watched in fascinated silence as the drama unfolded beneath them. They had feared that the rogue elephant would trample upon the Jain nun. But lo and behold! They saw Sunanda standing calmly, conversing with the elephant. They saw that she spoke to him at length, and from the elephant's bowed head and respectful demeanour it was evident that not only could he understand each word, he was deeply moved and was hanging on to each word Sunanda spoke. The spectators realised that the elephant's madness had passed. So they got down from the trees, and congregated near the spot where the elephant and Sunanda were conversing.

On the other hand, word spread to the nearby city that the wild elephant that had troubled people for miles around, was now in a docile mood. He had been tamed by a miraculous Jain nun. People's curiosity was aroused and soon, a large crowd had gathered. Even the king of the nearby town had been informed. He too turned up, with his large retinue. He was amazed to see the elephant's peaceful repose and the nun's gentleness. It was almost like the elephant and the nun were competing with each other, one who could seem more calm and tranquil.

In reality, the supremely Sunanda was clairvoyant and did not feel even remotely interested in competing with the elephant for anything. But because the previously violent and destructive elephant was so becalmed as he stood there, people assumed that the elephant and the nun were competing with each other to see who was more calm and serene.

The local King was absolutely floored. He bowed in obeisance to Sunanda and asked her how she had worked her magic on the elephant.

Sunanda's Discourse to the King

Sunanda replied that, "O king! In a previous birth, this elephant was a man named Rupsen. He fell in love with me and spent several births wandering in sañsāra. He suffered greatly and yet, so strong was his attachment that when he was born as an elephant and saw me here, in front of him, he began strengthening his attachment with me by gazing at me rapturously. The more you strengthen attachment, the more firmly it holds on to you. Hence, despite his general rowdyism, he turned quiet on seeing me and came towards me. I saw that look in his eyes and warned him. I explained to him what he had been doing in his past lives. And how much he had suffered as a consequence. I asked him to turn away from this obsessive attachment, which had murdered

him so many times. Fortunately for him, the elephant developed *jāti-smaraṇa-jñāna* and could clearly recall his previous lives. Once he could see for himself the painful and calamitous consequences of his attachment, he deeply and sincerely regretted his past actions of mind, speech and body. He renounced his *rāga* {attachment} and willingly took up the vows of an unrestrained layman with *samyaktva* (*deśa-virata samyagdrishti*). He also committed to a life of self-control and penance. He has vowed to practise *chatta* {fasting for two days} followed by *chatta* in a continuous loop. Now he is your *sādharmika*, and a *tapasvī*! Hence, please provide him with pure, cruelty-free food and water, allow him to live undisturbed on his own. Take good care of him, treat him with love and respect. He is now one of you! His spiritual purity is such, that he will help your soul on its spiritual path.”

The king and his citizens were amazed to hear all this. They were all deeply convinced of the efficacy and effectiveness of *dharma*. Some of the more motivated among them took up the five minor vows of being a Jain layman and vowed to take up certain practices of penance as per their capacity.

The moment people realise the absolute worthlessness and innate sorrowfulness of saṅsāra, they scorn it and deeply regret all the wrong things they did, driven by attachment and aversion, that have caused them such grief.

Following this, the king himself took upon the task of serving and taking care of the elephant. He took excellent care of the elephant. The elephant led a deeply spiritual life, practising the vows as faultlessly as he could. In a few years, he died a natural death while practising his religious activities, and was born in heaven as a prince.

While he was alive as an elephant, he experienced intense *paścāttāpa* {repentance, remorse} for all his acts of mind,

speech and body that had harmed others. He turned away from the cesspool of attachment and aversion. Driven by his desire to benefit his ātmā {soul}, he spent his days immersed in vairāgya {detachment from the world}, tapasyā {penance} and tattvavicāraṇā {contemplation}. So focused was he, that with time and discipline, he managed to break off the bonds of attachment that he had felt earlier. He managed to rise above attachment by destroying the seeds of attachment. He had not yet conquered attachment and aversion completely. But he had succeeded in destroying the mechanism that caused bondage.

Question : What is the difference between the attachment felt by a blind follower and a thinking follower?

Answer : They are as different from each other as a blind man, and a man with perfect vision. The blind man is unable to navigate fully and is therefore at a risk when he is walking past a well. He is liable to fall inside it. A man with perfect vision would not be at risk while walking past a well. He would see the well more clearly and walk safely past it. Rupsen was first like the blind follower. As a consequence, he had to suffer immensely. Later on, thanks to the teachings of Sunanda, he became a thinking follower and as a result, he ascended to heaven.

Question : What is the blind attachment?

Answer : Blind attachment is the inability to see how wrong and inappropriate attachment is, and how much it harms your soul.

Question : How to get rid of blind attachment?

Answer : 1. You must know that attachment is the greatest enemy of your soul. It is the worst addiction and

the greatest source of trouble and vexation. You must be clear that attachment/aversion to any person or any thing is a huge botheration. It is not worth the trouble. Attachment is a perverted state, one that we should all avoid as far as possible.

- 2. Whenever you feel inclined towards attachment, please realise that it is like inviting a thief and criminal to live in your house.*
- 3. If you must be attached, limit it. Keep many provisos. Restrict your involvement with attachment. And keep it in check with your attachment towards the Tirthankaras, monks and nuns who practise dharma, and the Jain dharma itself*
- 4. In order to ameliorate your past inappropriate attachments, try to donate to temples, and religious charities. Hold them in high regard and try to contribute to the welfare of these institutions and traditions.*

Please keep reflecting on these things. As explained earlier, you will have to use self-control and penance to keep your attachment in check.

The soul is eternal. In the course of its journey in sañsāra, it will come across many opportunities to indulge its senses. The world is full of objects of sensual fulfilment. Scriptures compare our senses to wild horses. Wild horses cannot be ridden. If not reined in properly, they will drag us to where we do not wish to go. Namely, hell. So do not relinquish control of your mind and your senses. Else, the consequences are too painful to contemplate. For ages, our soul has wandered in hell and has taken birth as a subhuman species. If you do not wish a repeat of that, self-control is essential. It weakens the hold of attachment and aversion, and allows the soul to experience its true nature.

Appendix - 1 (Refer Page No. 62)

The poet composes a prayer to God :

‘જિનકો અપના માનિયા, તિન દિના હો છિનમેં અતિ છેહ
પર જન કેરી પ્રીતડી, મેં જાની હો, અંતે નિસનેહ;
મેરા કોઉ ના જગતમેં, તુમ છોટી હો જિનવર જગદીશ,
પ્રીત કરું અબ કૌનશું, તું ત્રાતા હો મોહે વિસાવાવીસ;
અનંત જિણંદશું પ્રીતડી.’

*Those who I thought were mine, betrayed me in a moment
I have learnt that love for others ends in grief
In this world, there is no one I could call my own
Other than you o Jinavara, lord of the world
Whom should I love o lord, you are my saviour*

~ Ananta JinandashuPritadi

One's immediate family deceives one :

O lord! Those whom I considered to be my own, deceived me in a moment. In the end I realised that love for others is bereft of any real commitment. O Jinendra Deva, you are the lord of the world. I have no one but you. With whom can I develop a bond of love? You are my only saviour.

When we ponder upon it deeply, we realise that we carry with us the emotions of attachment, aversion, avarice, envy, etc. as if they were our closest relatives. But at the end of the day, they betray us. If attachment goes away, aversion takes its place. And if aversion leaves, attachment replaces it. We may envy someone today. But tomorrow, if he helps us fulfil our goals, we begin to like him, praise him and look forward to his company. What does this demonstrate?....The fickleness of our emotions. Thus, attachment and aversion force us into difficulties. They ensure that we bind huge amounts of paapa karmas and have to suffer tremendous grief. Is this not an illustration of the capriciousness of our emotions and

passions? In the birth of the deer, Rupsen was filled with this kind of stupefying attachment for Sunanda.

No wonder then, that despite getting crushed underneath a falling wall, dying in the womb, getting killed as a snake, a crow and a swan, Rupsen could not and would not come to his senses. His love for and infatuation with Sunanda's beautiful face had become the driving force of his worldly sojourn. Despite suffering so badly, his obsession with Sunanda's beauty was undiminished. Reborn as a deer, Rupsen continued to stalk Sunanda. As a consequence, he was shot down by an arrow. The tragedy of Rupsen's soul continued unabated. Such was the power of the attachment that Rupsen felt for Sunanda. It kept deceiving him and pushing him headlong into disaster after disaster.

Lack of Self-Control Awakens the Serpent of Attachment

Just look at the tragic story scripted by karma! Within Sunanda's lifespan, the soul of Rupsen has died and taken birth so many times! What caused this self-perpetuating tragedy to manifest itself repeatedly? The absence of self-control would repeatedly awaken the hitherto dormant serpent of attachment. The venom of this powerful serpent led to constant grief and cruelly tragic circumstances in the incarnations of Rupsen's soul.

Therefore, one who seeks self-realisation should root out the lack of self-control in order to keep a check on the rise of attachment and aversion in his soul.

Question : *Does the lack of self-control cause attachment?*

If you state that attachment is the result of lack of self-control, would the absence of self-control have arisen in the absence of attachment? If so, the supremely detached ones, the Vitaraga souls, would also suffer from the lack of self-control.

But that is not the case. So if you conclude that attachment causes asanyama (lack of self-control), should we not then focus our energies on suppressing attachment?

Answer :

1. Asanyama strengthens attachment.

Please understand that while it is true that asanyam does not occur in the absence of attachment, one must bear in mind that asanyama strengthens and entrenches attachment. In fact, asanyama nourishes attachment and gives rise to further attachment. However, if one follows sanyama {self-control} constantly and consistently, attachment weakens and falls away. Had it not been possible to defeat attachment through sanyama, liberation would be an impossible goal.

Attachment weakens if you remain steadfast in sanyama during situations that lead to enhanced attachment. But the problem is that sometimes the allure of attachment is such that our mind weakens and our senses get out of control and we lose control of the situation. Attachment further entrenches itself into our soul. Hence, asanyama is to blame as it invariably exacerbates both attachment and aversion.

2. Stopping asanyama is in our hands

Attachment arises a result of our past raaga-mohaniiya karmas {attachment-causing delusion-causing karmas}. That is when the asat {false} purushaartha {focused effort} of asanyama awakens. Although it is well nigh impossible to stop the consequences of karmas from manifesting, it is possible to suppress false purushaartha. Hence, it is relatively easy to suppress asanyama. In fact we may conclude that the first step to suppress attachment is to learn how to suppress asanyama. Although the attachment lying inside the self may aid and abet asanyama, taking the vows of self-

control ensures that the seeker does not go where the senses drive him to. Sanyama protects the seeker from pointless and harmful indulgence of the sense of sight, touch, etc. One has experienced this truth.

Have you not experienced the benefits that flow from control over speech? So often, one experiences only sweet relief after letting go.

- *Although we have no control over circumstances, we can control how we react to them. Since it is within our domain to make focussed efforts to stop asanyama, why not make the effort to do so?*

Hence, what it boils down to, is this: Should we endure attachment, which is harmful to our soul, and make excuses like — attachment is caused by karmas, what can be done? Such excuses only serve to strengthen attachment. We should not strengthen the asanyama of the senses, of speech by indulging in false purushaartha. We should not allow attachment and aversion to develop a better hold over us than the one they already have! It is in our hands to control our false purushaartha. Why should we hand over the reins of our own disposition to fickle hands of fate? This can be better understood with the help of an example:

Suppose anger rises in your soul, anger directed at a particular person. But should we indulge in angry facials, eyebrows askance and indulge in angry heated speech? Especially when it is within our personal domain? If we choose to, we can put an end to false purushaartha:

- *Learn to let go*
- *Ponder over the benefit or otherwise of indulging in bouts of anger*
- *Think compassionately*

- Realise that in the long sequence of births, the particular loss which has led to the current bout of anger, was fated to happen
- Fate has sent this situation your way in order to test your patience and help you assess your understanding of dharma.
- Hence, do not commit the false purushaartha {focussed effort} of asanyama {lack of self-control}. It is in your hands.

Difference between Saattvikataa and Sattvahiinataa

Question : *Many people think that if they do not respond to unfavourable situations with anger and violence, would it not be perceived as cowardice?*

Answer : *Not at all. By remaining calm in such a situation, you are actually developing your character. When you observe carefully, you realise that it takes a lot more effort and strength to remain in sanyama than it takes to indulge in asanyama. For instance, taking on an opponent who is bigger and stronger than you in physical combat requires a great deal of courage, endurance and strength. But it requires even more courage, endurance and strength to let go of an opportunity to berate, browbeat, dominate and intimidate someone who is weaker than one, especially when he is clearly at fault.*

Hence, it is not a sign of weakness to forgive and let go. In fact, it requires true saattvikataa to be able to do so. In fact, indulging in hatred and obsessing about revenge is a sign of weakness. Also, remaining calm and unruffled in combat with a bigger stronger opponent is also the work of the inner sattva {character}.

Although you need strength to grab something that you want from a strong person who possesses it, it requires far more strength and power to restrain yourself from grabbing that thing, and developing a disclination towards it within yourself. And it requires even more strength to give up the opportunity to enjoy something that is easily accessible and well within one's power. To indulge in one's desires, to enjoy whatever is offered, or to plan to indulge oneself, all these diminish one's character.

In conclusion, it requires tremendous strength of character to practise samyama, {self-control} rather than asamyama.

Different types of Samyama {self-control}

Samyama means stopping the natural inclination of the senses to be attracted to objects that they desire. It means to stop the feet from going in the direction of one's object of desire. To remain where one is, and to concentrate the mind on something else. Similarly, to not laugh when someone is saying something funny. To create pressure on oneself to do so. For example,

If one has committed some misdeed in one's life, to remember the shame, embarrassment and regret one felt upon realising the inappropriateness of that action.

Similarly, if there is a situation that would create anger and irritation, to practise self-control by ensuring that your facial expression, your tone, your language and your conduct remain calm and that you do not plan revenge on the person who has caused you the anger and irritation.

Other ways of practising self-control :

- *Rasa-tyaaga {practising control of the taste-buds through renouncing favourite foods}*
- *Tanka-tyaaga {giving up one's wealth}*

- *Limitation of possessions*
- *Silence*
- *Restriction of verbal activity*
- *Restriction of physical activity*
- *Trying to tolerate pain and inconvenience, etc.*

The Noble Consequence of Self-Control

One who practises self-control gives little opportunity to his inner passions, likes, dislikes and biases, etc. to manifest themselves. Practised in the long run, self-control ensures that the base passions weaken and the soul effortlessly develops innate self-control, innate detachment and innate calmness.

Rupsen was mistaken. If self-control is not practised in human life, then attachment bursts forth. And it is impossible to develop self-control as an animal! How can a sub-human like an animal, bird or reptile, with its limited intelligence, develop self-control? Attachment and aversion become a way of life for those who do not develop self-control.

Appendix – 2 (Refer Page No. 67)

Question : *How does true jigyaaasaa {desire for knowledge} arise?*

Answer : *Let us glance through the king's life to see how jigyaaasaa arises. It is evident that the king deeply regretted his transgressions. This led to his powerful thirst for knowledge, which led his asking the guru for answers. He was told that in order to awaken true jigyaaasaa, he would have to regret in his heart all his past transgressions and his hedonistic self-indulgent lifestyle. This regret would motivate him to seek a path that led him away from sinfulness; and motivate him imbibe good teachings, thus preparing him to receive something of substance from the information his true desire for knowledge would unearth.*

The great problem is that there is no regret for one's transgressions, sensual indulgence and acts of violence and sinfulness. So people listen to spiritual discourses, read good books and are aware that Jainism provides tremendous guidance to the true seeker. But because of indolence and apathy towards the self, there is no motivation to learn new things each day that would help one's soul. Hence, firstly, one should start feeling regret for one's actions of sinfulness.

This is the age of information. People wish to increase their knowledge. But for what reason? In order to sincerely regret one's transgressions?

Question : *What would you seek if there was no sincere regret?*

Answer : *If there is sincere regret, if the sins of the world pain your heart, then you will seek to worship the Arihantas, who have shown the way to move away from the pain and sorrows of the world. In the absence of such regret, you may still visit the temple and offer prayers to the Lord, but if you are complacent about your wealth, your social standing and familial circumstances, there is nothing to ask from god. You are unlikely to seek his blessings and grace. That would only happen if you had true regret in your heart about your past transgressions. Then you would be truly repentant about forgetting god in your lust for wealth and pleasure. And would realise the great sins you have committed in order to enjoy the fruits of your wealth.*

Question : *If the heart kept regretting its past transgressions, would it not lead to Rotadvedaa {proneness to tears}?*

Answer : *Yes, it would lead to Rotadvedaa — only for sinful deeds. It is indeed a good quality to have fear and disinterest in sinful deeds. As far as committing sinful deeds is concerned, fearlessness and enthusiasm are bad qualities. The soul that constantly regrets sins and sinfulness becomes an awakened soul. He shall truly seek dharma. He shall worship the Jinas and true preceptors with genuine devotion. He shall seek from the very core of his being. Such seeking is the cornerstone for spiritual accomplishment. But where does it stem from? It can only manifest when there is true regret for one's transgressions and sinful behaviour. When the heart bleeds tears of*

regret and sorrow for past misdeeds. Some beautiful and impactful pieces of literature were composed when the seeker expressed his sorrow and regret over his past demeritorious activities. Examples of Dridhaprahaarii, Arjunamaalii present before us evidence that the greatest and most heinous crimes can be washed away by the waters of sincere regret, atonement and self-censure. Even the most extreme crimes like murder can be expiated through sincere regret, sorrow and atonement. Those who were sincere in their repentance and sorrow took the high path of supreme conduct and managed to atone for their sins. They became the most devout seekers and became great monks and spiritual masters. Regret, repentance and atonement are so powerful that the seekers who imbibed these virtues attained tremendous spiritual growth within a very short span of time.

Appendix -3 (Refer Page No. 71)

Question : *Why are those who became the nimitta {catalyst} of paapa guilty? Will people stop sinning if there is an absence of nimitta? A sinner suffers the consequences of his own sins. Why should others be held responsible for his misdeeds?*

Answer : *It is true that from beginningless time, people have sinned because of their own innate tendencies. These tendencies can be modified. One who develops religious and spiritual tendencies may not sin. But it is observed that even such a 'reformed' character may start sinning once again, the moment such opportunities present themselves. It is the basic nature of a cat to chase and kill rats. Even if you prevent it from eating one particular rat, it will hunt and kill other rats. But should one therefore offer it rats to kill and eat? The one who offers rats to the cat is not innocent. He is the nimitta in the killing of the rat. Hence, he is guilty of being the nimitta. Similarly, although worldly people are strongly inclined towards sensual indulgence, one must not be the nimitta in their transgressions.*

For example, by wearing revealing clothes, indulging in erotic conversations and actions, etc. one plays the role of nimitta in stirring the passions of others. Hence, one is guilty of igniting their base passions.

It is exactly because of this nimitta that people indulge in grave sins and end up taking birth in the lowest life forms. They endure great misery and suffering due to their own delusion and acts of stupidity and folly. But whoever is the catalyst is guilty of being the nimitta in their downfall.

Worthlessness of Samsara

To the soul that has attained samyagdrishti {enlightened perception}, the entire world appears worthless. Worldly desires and temptations seem tiresome and pointless to the samyagdrishti. He feels compassion for his fellow beings and realises that remaining in samsara ensures that he becomes the nimitta in sinfulness. He becomes the nimitta in others manifesting the passions, irrespective of the worldly relationship he finds himself in. Nothing good comes out of samsara. Relationships like husband-wife, mother-son, father-daughter, etc. engender attachment and passions and result in an escalation of delusion, violence and attachment to material possessions. Hence, worldly life is best avoided. This is why one who has samyagdarshana remains focused on the self and seeks the opportunity to renounce the world.

Compassion felt by Great Souls towards Sinners

Great souls are careful to ensure that they do not even become nimittas in the downfall of others.

For example, in his fourth incarnation before attaining liberation, Samaraditya the Kevali regretted the tragedy that his looks and appearance in the form of Dhanya Muni was causing someone to have sinful thoughts. Dhanya Muni praised and adored the Siddhas, who have transcended the mortal coil and reside in Moksha, therefore shall never again be nimittas in someone else's sinful thoughts and conduct. Such profound sensitivity towards the spiritual welfare of others! Such thoughts only arise when one has understood that samsara is a source of sorrow and therefore worldly existence is permeated by sorrow. Such a person feels the deepest compassion for those who are immersed in worldly pleasures. He feels sad for such seekers of sensual pleasure. His heart melts when he thinks of their plight.

In the absence of this compassion, would Lord Mahavira have felt nothing but sympathy and compassion for the violent criminal Sangama Deva? Lord Mahavira was sad that without wanting to, he had been a nimitta in Sangama Deva binding violent sinful karmas and as a result would have to undergo tremendous suffering for several lifetimes.

Baladeva Muni, the brother of Krishna Vasudeva, was about to sit down to eat in a particular village when a woman from the village, who had come to fill water from the water well saw him and felt deeply attracted to his handsome appearance. So distracted was she by his good looks, that by mistake instead tying the rope to her water pot, she ended up tying the rope to her child's neck! Baladeva Muni immediately paid attention and ensured that the mother's rectified her mistake and thus a tragedy was averted. But he felt great regret that his handsome appearance was a nimitta in the increase of delusion and sinfulness in the beholder's heart. He therefore quit visiting villages in order to seek food.

MahasatiMadanarekha's husband was murdered by his elder brother who was lustfully attracted to her. The weeping Madanarekha deeply regretted her beauty, which had so captivated her husband's elder brother that he had killed his own brother to get him out of the way! She knew that her own husband was blameless and it was her own extraordinary beauty that had driven her brother-in-law to commit the heinous crime of murdering his own brother!

Upon examining these episodes, we realise that great souls never encouraged others to indulge in sinfulness. Nor did they aid, abet or encourage sinfulness in any manner whatsoever. The deluded and sinful wrongdoer had sinned out of his/her own volition. But such was the compassion these great souls had, that despite knowing that the wrongdoer was entirely at fault for the crime he had committed, they tried to look for

their own shortcomings and blamed themselves for the crime committed by the wrongdoers.

If you feel compassion for someone, would you look for his flaws and shortcomings?

If you were to accidentally crush an ant beneath your feet, you would naturally feel regret. But would you feel regret if you blamed the ant and believed that the ant was at fault for walking in the wrong place and getting under your feet? Or would you feel regret if you blamed yourself for not looking while walking? You will find that if you look at your own fault, you will feel a great deal of compassion for the ant.

A great man would think, "Oh! I became the catalyst for a misdeed! I wonder what will happen to the poor creature." And thus, all his compassion would be directed towards the poor suffering creature.

If you wish to inculcate universal passion within yourself, do not pay any attention to the flaws, shortcomings and defects of the world. Look for your own shortcomings.

Advantages of looking for your own shortcomings and feeling only compassion for the other:

- 1. You widen your horizons, become more generous and tolerant*
- 2. You free yourself from arrogance*
- 3. Your desire to reach the stage of perfection, siddhatva, increases greatly*
- 4. You feel pure compassion*
- 5. You save yourself from aversion by simply not noticing the shortcoming of the other*
- 6. Your heart remains calm and unperturbed*
- 7. Purifies your heart*

Compassion is the best fruit of the tree of human life. In order to attain it, look for flaws within yourself and feel compassion for others. This is not a tall order. If you truly realise the value of human birth, it is not at all difficult to do so. If you truly wish to obey the teachings of the VitaragiJinas, nothing is too difficult.

If you wish to attain an exalted spiritual place in your next life, no effort is too much. Nothing is difficult for the seeker who wishes to attain liberation. Do not attach too much importance to worldly incidents and material possessions, which are fleeting and momentary. If you manage this, focusing on one's own flaws and compassion for others becomes easy. When we look at the noble deeds carried out by our great men of the past, nothing is too difficult.

How to look for your own shortcomings and feel only compassion for others:

- 1. Value the uniqueness of human intelligence.*
- 2. Always keep the VitaragaJinas as your role models. Consider how they would have dealt with a situation before taking any action.*
- 3. Awaken within you the hunger for future upliftment.*
- 4. Observe for yourself the fleeting nature of worldly objects and circumstances.*
- 5. Seek inspiration from the mighty deeds of our great forebears.*
- 6. Give self-purification the highest priority.*
- 7. Ponder over the fact that even bad people practise aversion and hatred; even a buffalo thinks he is superior to others; there are many births in which one practices hatred for others and admiration for oneself. But it is only human*

birth where one can practise compassion for others and examine one's own shortcomings.

Hence, as human beings, we must always practise compassion for others and reflect on our own shortcomings.

Question : *How does one come to know when one's inner vision has awakened?*

Answer : *When one's inner vision awakens, one begins seeking the welfare of the soul. It becomes the central reason of one's existence. One becomes keen to listen to words of wisdom that centre on self-realisation. One feels great regret when one falls from the level of profound thoughts one wishes to remain in. Sensual pleasure seem trivial.*

It is easy to know when one's inner vision awakens, just answer the following questions:

What are you preoccupied with? What is the focus of your thoughts?

If the answer is that you are constantly preoccupied with your soul and its purification, then you begin to look at yourself and others from the spiritual viewpoint. If you saw a hungry beggar, you would think: "Poor fellow! He is suffering from hunger." But you would not stop there. You would also think, "Poor fellow! What misdeeds he must have committed in his past lives that he is suffering so much today! Let me try to feed him. Also, I shall explain to him the importance of not lying, not committing violence, etc." Such is the thought process of one who's inner vision has awakened.

Sunanda was extremely sorry to hear of Rupsen's plight. She was pleased to hear that Rupsen would recover from this reversal and his life would be uplifted. And she was delighted

to hear that she would be the nimitta {incidental cause} in his upliftment.

The Day Begins When You Awaken

It is never beneficial to delay actions or activities connected with dharma. They should be accomplished at once. And never be delayed because :

- 1. We do not know how much time we have in our hands.*
- 2. We have a lot of work to do. We have collected misdeeds and false beliefs over endless past lives. We need to free ourselves from all of them.*
- 3. When we were living in ignorance, deep in the slumber of nescience, we remained immersed in sinfulness and inauspicious karmas. But now, after knowing, can we remain immersed in the same quicksand of sinfulness and wanton behaviour? We have to get down to the brass tacks and commence sincere and focused efforts to attain enlightenment.*
- 4. One who does not procrastinate and immediately begins focusing on good thoughts, good words and good deeds will find that he progresses rapidly. One who delays and does things half-heartedly, may find that his progress is slow and painful. It is good that he chooses to walk on the path of dharma. But he will not make the rapid progress that the enthusiastic and hardworking seeker will be able to make.*
- 5. One should not delay walking on the path of dharma, because he is effectively delaying his own attainment of happiness. Hence, it is folly to delay walking on the path of dharma.*
- 6. The only appropriate usage of the precious opportunity of human birth and the powers of mind, speech and body*

that come with it, is to walk on the path of dharma. For so long, the powers of mind, speech and body had been used in sinfulness and inauspicious activities. Now, after realisation, why waste a single moment in walking on the path of dharma?

- 7. One of the reasons for delay in walking on the path of dharma is that since beginningless time, we have acted with great alacrity and eagerness when it comes to indulging in sinfulness. But have not shown that same sincerity when it comes to dharma. As a result, we continue the same pattern of behaviour again and again. But wait a moment. If we continue to behave as we had in the past, what will happen to us in our next life? Here, we have learnt that delay in dharma is not beneficial. In fact, it could have disastrous consequences. Dharma is supremely beneficial. It protects the soul from getting lost in the terrifying jungle of transmigration. One should never underestimate its importance in our lives. In fact, we should focus far more on dharma than we focus on worldly activities. Despite knowing all this, if we still delay in practising dharma, then we are paving the way for future sorrow and great difficulties in attaining dharma in later lives. As a result, our own transmigration would increase, thus causing us and more and more misery. We should not repeat our past bad habits. We should put an end to them by getting rid of the habit of procrastination when it comes to walking on the path of dharma. Instead, we should be ready to immediately take up the path of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.*

Samsara is unending. It shall never stop pulling you towards itself.

Morning is whenever you get up. Picture this :

31 March is approaching. You need to submit your accounts. You are doing your accounts, and there is a lot of work that needs to be done. If you feel sleepy, you shall keep yourself awake and do the accounts. You may doze off for a short while, but at the back of your mind remains the fact that you need to submit your accounts in time. So whenever you wake up, it is the morning for you.

Apply the same sense of urgency to your life. You need to close your accounts. And only dharma will allow you to close your account. Else, samsara is endless. You will keep wandering in it infinitely if you do not choose the path of dharma.

Eating (indulgence) will not help you end your migration in samsara. Penance (non-indulgence) will help you end your migration in samsara.

Attachment will not help you end your migration in samsara. Detachment will help you end your migration in samsara.

Indulging the five senses will not help you end your migration in samsara. Not indulging the five senses will help you end your migration in samsara.

Indulging in sexual desire, anger and arrogance whenever you get the opportunity will not help you end your migration in samsara. In fact, it will fan the flames of your desire. Chastity, forgiveness and humility will help you end your migration in samsara if you practise them seriously and sincerely for a long time. They will help you quell your sexual desire, anger and arrogance one day.

If you wish to close your book of accounts with samsara, that will not happen by continuously having new transactions by indulging in sexual desire, anger and arrogance. You will

have to give up your attachment for samsara and focus on dharma. Do not make the mistake of thinking that you could ever close all accounts completely. There is always something left to do. You will never be able to give up samsara if you try to close all your accounts completely because there is invariably something left from the past or current life. You have spent an infinity in samsara, and yet not managed to close each and every account of your past and present. It would be folly to even attempt that! Realise that you will never be able to do that, and focus on the self instead.

The nature of samsara is such that it never comes to an end by itself

There is always something happening in samsara :

- *Life is followed by death. Death by life. Birth and death do not end transmigration*
- *Indulging in sensual delectations shall not put an end to sensual desires.*
- *Indulging in parigraha {hoarding, desire for material possessions} shall not end the desire to indulge in parigraha.*
- *Indulging in violence and lies, etc. shall not put an end to samsara.*

Indulging in hatred, deceit, violence, causing your opponent to suffer losses, shall not result in the opponent throwing in the towel.

The above are examples of samsara and how we extend our own stay by indulging in one or more of the above activities. The more we try to close our accounts in samsara, the more new accounts we end up creating! In effect, we end up wandering in samsara.

Closure is only achieved when you rise above the mundane and the petty

You cannot end enmity by anger, hatred and resentment. It can only be ended by forgiveness.

Vows, penance and voluntary restrictions weaken the hold of the senses

The desire for material possessions can be weakened by inculcating the disposition of “I do not want what I am getting.” And by donating what you have.

Without bothering with profits, one should always behave in a truthful, ethical and honest manner.

You have gone through the cycle of birth and death infinite times. But without the aim of ending the cycle. So how could it end?

To end transmigration, you will have to make that your definite goal, remain in a state of constant awareness and lead your life as per the teachings of dharma. You will also have to take diksha and lead the anagaara life of a Jain ascetic.

Who would want to sleep after awakening?

Hence, one should not remain in samsara in order to achieve closure. Instead, one should walk on the path of dharma. What holds you back from taking firm strides on the path of dharma? Delusion and attachment. It makes you think, “Let me finish this little bit, and then I will be free.” Such folly! There will always be something else that you are required to do, and you will never be free. You will remain stuck in samsara. If you really wish to end your transmigration, then there is only one path — Dharma.

Tirthankaras, powerful kings and rulers, extremely busy business tycoons, all of them sought the shelter of dharma

and attained liberation.

Morning starts when you wake up. Even if you wake up in the middle of the night, count it as the morning and begin your work. Night is when you sleep. But sleep is for those who have no worries and responsibilities. But one who wishes to achieve a great deal cannot afford to sleep or be negligent. He has to work day and night. And there is no question of slowing down or taking it easy! Else, taking it easy will become a habit and this opportunity will be lost. You will end up suffering through many births and rebirths before you get an opportunity like this again. And there is no guarantee that you will get such an opportunity again. So practise dharma now!

Human birth is for you to remain awake. And focus on self-realisation, nothing else. There are many other births (life forms) where it is acceptable to remain unawakened and unmotivated to walk on the path of dharma. But human birth is a fantastic opportunity to attain dharma. So there should be no laziness, indifference or indolence.

Renunciation by the King and Queen

Both the King and the Queen agreed to renounce the world and take diksha under the ascetic. They sought the blessings of the guru and wound up all their worldly affairs in two days. After that, the King appointed his son as his successor and both husband and wife renounced the world and became Jain ascetics. Alongside them, many of their subjects took diksha and became ascetics.

Diligent Practices and Rigorous Asceticism of Sadhvi Sunanda

Sadhvi Sunanda felt great anguish and regret for her own past misdemeanours and what she caused Rupsen to do. She resolved to be the nun she could possibly be. Her enthusiasm,

Desire to Disaster

commitment and diligence knew no bounds. She was constantly aware, remained focused on her goal of liberation and practised gentleness and kindness in all her actions of mind, speech and body. She ensured that she did not cause the death of even the tiniest organisms. Her renunciation was solid and unshakeable. Her penance was incredible. She gave complete obedience to her guru and was absolutely devoted to her. She was always ready to obey her guru and followed her instructions to the letter. She had immersed herself completely in the study of scriptures and as a result of all this, many of her sinful past karmas were destroyed. Not only that, we manifested avadhi jnana {clairvoyance.}

Through her avadhi jnana, she saw Rupsen's plight. She learnt how badly he was doing and how brutally he had been treated, birth after birth.

Rupsen Reborn as the Elephant

She saw that Rupsen's soul had been reborn as an elephant. He lived in the jungles of the Vindhya mountain range. He would often visit the nearby villages and trample upon whoever came in his way, causing destruction and mayhem. Sadhvi Sunanda felt sorry for his soul. She thought to herself, "Oh! The poor creature! Since his birth as Rupsen, he has gone through such terrible grief! He has taken birth and died so many times! Each time, he has lived and died in sorrow. And now, born as an elephant, he is indulging in such wanton destruction! He is committing sins exponentially! Where will this take him?"

Varied are the Consequences of Sin

It is indeed pitiable! As Rupsen, his seeking visual pleasure by ogling Princess Sunanda has led to his rebirth as an elephant, where he indulged in harming and harassing people.

The sinner is not aware of the consequences of sin. One sin

carries within itself the seeds of multiple sins. In subsequent lives, the seeds of sin come to fruition and cause further sorrow. Rupsen's soul was now reborn as an elephant, where he had a massive, powerful body capable of crushing others to death beneath its feet. Now, its earlier sins had come to fruition and impelled his destructive behaviour. Since one sin gives rise to several sins, one must be careful as a human being to not indulge in sinning. Indulging in hedonism, indulging the senses of vision, sense of hearing, sense of taste, physical and mental activities of mischief and wickedness all lead to everlasting grief, regret and sorrow.

Mischief of the Eyes

- 1. Ogling and desiring someone else's wife, someone else's wealth.*
- 2. To constantly stare at a woman's body*
- 3. To constantly wonder how to grab someone else's wealth*
- 4. To constantly burn with envy looking at someone's success and good fortune*
- 5. Looking at or reading erotic or pornographic content*

Mischief of the Ears

- 1. Eagerness to listen to the criticism of others, gossip*
- 2. Eagerness to listen to talks of money*
- 3. Eagerness to listen to talks of sex*
- 4. Eagerness to listen to the secrets of others*

Mischief of the Tongue (Sense of Taste)

Slavery to food, indulgence of the taste buds

Mischief of the Tongue (Speech)

Criticising others, backbiting, blaming others falsely, etc.

Desire to Disaster

Mischief of the Mind

- 1. Wayward thoughts, hedonistic thoughts, irresponsible thoughts*
- 2. Obsession, desire, dark fantasies*
- 3. Attachment, aversion, envy, feeling of mineness, deceit, greed, etc.*
- 4. Anger, impatience and intolerance towards those who annoy us*
- 5. Love, passion and affection towards those who delight us*
- 6. There is no limit to mischief of the mind. The pilot fish that accompanies crocodiles and enjoys a symbiotic relationship with them is so tiny and powerless that it cannot commit any violence on its own. But it commits such terrible violence in its mind that it is invariably reborn in hell.*

In conclusion, control and silence the mischief of the mind and the five senses. Self-control keeps you away from a great deal of sinful behaviour.

Different Paths for the Wise and the Foolish

Different people have different thoughts and approaches. A fool would have no interest in the thought process and companionship of wise people. He is incapable of understanding or appreciating the discriminative knowledge of a wise person. This is why, since time immemorial, the wise and the foolish have trod on different paths.

Even the uneducated and illiterate shepherd is wise to the extent that an ill or weakened goat deserves his compassion and he carries it in his own arms. On the other hand, the ignorant hyena and leopard would, if they came across an ill or weakened goat, grab it and eat it alive!

Even the dog, which is uneducated, has the knowledge that he must be faithful to his master and he guards over his master's property. If he comes across a thief who is trying to steal his master's property, he barks at him. Even if the thief beats him with a stick, the dog continues to bark and chases the thief away.

On the other hand, human beings, who are far smarter than animals, behave like the ignorant and indulge in deceit, lies and stealing. Look at the difference! Foolish men and wise animals choose different paths.

The wise one is simple, humble, polite, tolerant and serves others. A haughty person suffering from ignorance makes a big noise, shows great anger and arrogance. This teaches us that if we wish to live like the wise ones, we should not be influenced by the ignorant world and its lack of discrimination, its mercilessness and its sinful and reckless life. Instead, we should lead compassionate, ethical lives full of kind words and good deeds, using our discriminative knowledge to guide us.

Treading a Different Path from the World

- 1. The royal swan only feeds on pearls, nothing else. This is the swan's USP. It will ensure its peace of mind.*
- 2. Similarly, we humans must only behave in a manner that is compassionate and kind. We must use our discriminative knowledge and practise good deeds. This is our USP. It will ensure our peace of mind.*
- 3. After spending an eternity in the infancy stage at the level of dharma, we have finally reached the youth stage at the level of dharma. Hence, it would be inappropriate to behave in a harsh, merciless and sinful manner that reflects a lack of discriminative knowledge. Behaving like an infant now*

will waste our youth. And it would be difficult to get back this youth.

4. *The most important thing is, what kind of behaviour do we expect from others towards ourselves? Do we want others to behave with us in a harsh, merciless and sinful manner that reflects a lack of discriminative knowledge on their part? Do we wish to be lied to, or bullied or deceived? If the answer is no, we need to bear in mind that other people also have the same expectations from us. If we want good behaviour from others but behave badly with them, do we deserve good behaviour from them?*

In conclusion, we must give up ignorance and folly, and become knowledgeable and kind, develop discriminative knowledge and behave in a compassionate manner. Our life must be full of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

Sadhvi Sunanda Confronts the Elephant

Sadhvi Sunanda showed exemplary courage. She did not flinch when faced by the fearsome rutting elephant. Her own motivation was to help the poor distraught creature. This is the greatness of Jainism! Just look at the massive change in Sunanda's life!!

At one time, she was the spoilt and selfish princess who would let nothing get in the way of her pursuit of sensuous pleasure. And today, she was a nun. She had given up all physical comforts and desires. She led a life of non-violence, self-control and penance. It is almost unbelievable, the 180° turn in her life! We must reflect on the fact that the great change in Sunanda's life came because of Jain teachings. And we are fortunate to have received Jain teachings since the time we were born! Sadhvi Sunanda's life is a fine example of how Jain dharma uplifts one's life.

Changes motivated by Dharma

Why not use your ability, intelligence and wisdom to change your heart, change your beliefs, change your intention, change your tendencies, change the core of your being, change your very life? Just look at Sunanda! There is a massive difference between the young princess Sunanda and the older, mature Sadhvi Sunanda!

Young Princess Sunanda

Heart — *Full of desire for sensual pleasure*

Belief — *It is OK to live for sensual pleasure, to kill animals for sport, etc.*

Tendency — *Pleasure seeking, violence-prone*

Soul — *Identified with the body*

Life — *Obsessed with the gross, with the material world*

Mature Sadhvi Sunanda

Heart — *Full of desire for liberation*

Belief — *Sensual pleasures are poisonous, living for pleasure-seeking is a sign of weak character*

Tendency — *Inclined towards tremendous self-control and penance*

Soul — *Bound by the body but possessing eternal knowledge, perception, etc. and distinguished by its constant awareness*

Life — *Concerned about the next world*

The greatest credit for this massive change goes to the Jain dharma. Sunanda learnt these values owing to the grace of her preceptor. She accepted his teachings with all her heart and soul and put them in practise with all sincerity. As a

result, there was extraordinary change in her heart, inner nature, soul and entire life.

We too are part of the same Jain dharma. So why hold back and not work as hard as we need to, in order to achieve similar change? Who would hesitate if someone gave him a magic wand that could turn dust into gold?

The great punya that enables one to attain human life is totally wasted in the pointless labour of chasing after insentient material objects.