



SELF-REFLECTION & PRATIKRAMAN

“Know thyself, recognize thyself, be immersed by thyself – you will attain Godhood.” ...Mahavir

As humans, we will make mistakes some or all the time. Self-reflection makes it possible to recognise, correct and improve upon our slips up in our behaviour, be it in our thoughts, words, or actions. However, if we don't spend time in self-reflection, we continue making these mistakes. Self-reflection is not unique to Jainism. Greek and Roman philosophers extolled the virtues of self-reflection. The first of three Delphic maxims inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi is “Know thyself”. Socrates famously said, **“The unexamined life is not worth living.”** and Plato **“...why should we not calmly and patiently review our own thoughts, and thoroughly examine and see what these appearances in us really are?”**

Self-reflection is not necessarily an easy thing to practice. It takes discipline and making time by pressing pause on the chaos of our busy life. Successful and wise people realise what a valuable practice self-reflection is for personal and leadership growth and always include it as part of their daily schedule. In an interview after his presidency, Nelson Mandela was quoted as

saying, "One of the most difficult things is not to change society - but to change yourself." All people who have changed the world first strived for something greater inside themselves through the process of self-reflection.

"The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none." -Thomas Carlyle

“The aim of a wise person is to see and know oneself as one really is and still continually strive toward growth”

Self-reflection is the key to self-awareness: it is about taking a step back and to look neutrally at our thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions. The regular practice of self-reflection creates an enormous ripple effect, benefitting oneself and others in one's encounters.

Benefits of self-reflection

- **Allows one to consider the consequences of our thoughts, words, and actions.**
- **Acknowledge lapses and gain courage to ask for forgiveness.**
- **Enables one to identify one's core personal values**
- **Opportunity to evaluate one's strengths and weaknesses**
- **Get a perspective on the world and one's place and role in it.**

- **Become aware of one's fears and how to overcome them.**
- **Better decision making – getting to know and trust one's inner voice.**
- **Promotes learning and understanding to live holistic, integrated, and healthy lives.**

In Jainism, the practice of self-reflection is known as Pratikraman – introspection, self-improvement, self-contemplation. Pratikraman is supposed to remind ourselves how we should be living our life. Pratikraman is like a mirror where we see ourselves internally. Pratikraman means to 'come back' to yourself which is pure soul.

Pratikraman is a practice where one contemplates daily on the activities that one has indulged in throughout the day and the emotions experienced during these activities. It is a period of introspection or looking within, where we study our own mistakes and shortcomings. The contemplation is then followed by repentance for the wrong actions performed and the negative/ unhealthy emotions bred inside the mind and soul.

During Pratikraman, Jains reflect, review, confess and atone for any transgressions of thoughts (mun), words (vachan) and actions (kaya) during daily life. It also entails looking at any mistakes/violations committed knowingly (janta) or unknowingly (ajanta) and taking a vow to not repeat the mistake, minimizing its occurrence and working towards self-correction in future. Pratikraman also entails forgiving faults of others, asking forgiveness from others for one's own transgressions, and extending friendship to all.

Jain scriptures state to guard against wrong actions of mind, speech, and body, one should abandon wrong belief (Mithyātva), an un-restrained lifestyle (Avirati),

unawareness, laziness, or lethargy (Pramāda), passions (Kashāya) and inauspicious activities of body, speech, and mind (Aprashasta Yoga). To accept right faith or conviction, achieve self-restraint, become spiritually vigilant, cultivate good qualities like compassion and nonviolence, and attain the true nature of soul after giving up worldly activities is the essence of Pratikraman. In other words, it means returning to and reaffirming the path of nonviolence, truthfulness, and non-attachment.

Pratikraman generates feelings of friendliness and love towards all. Pratikraman, if practiced in its true spirit can improve and make our lives happy and peaceful as well create a harmonious society. Practiced with true feelings, can even result in the liberation of the soul from the cycle of birth and death. There are examples in the Jain scriptures to this effect.

Busy lifestyles and recitation of many sutras prohibits many Jains to practice Pratikraman in a formal way daily. This does not mean; we cannot build 10/20 minutes in our schedule every day for self-reflection to reap the many benefits of self-reflection. To introspect and reflect on our mistakes for the day and seek forgiveness from all living-beings for any harm done to them, knowingly or unknowingly.

Recitation and contemplation of just few of the sutras like Kshamapna, Saat Lakh and Aadhara Paapsthanak can greatly benefit. Hopefully, over time, it will make us repent and ask for forgiveness the moment we realise we have done something wrong, like hurt someone's feelings, tell a lie, cheat, hurt a animal, spray chemicals to kill insects etc. If this becomes second nature, then this is true Pratikraman.

By Kishor Bhimji Shah



According to various scriptures it is said, that merely keeping away from sins, repenting and confessing is not true Pratikraman. True Pratikraman is:

- To criticise one's fault, confess before a guru and agree upon the expiation given.
- To confess, censure and accept sins before a guru and to make up one's mind not to repeat the sin again.
- To leave passions, attachment, aversion towards worldly objects and mediate upon the Atma.
- To refrain from immoral actions and perform devotional acts.
- To give up the wrong, vicious path and to follow the path shown by the Tirthankaras.
- To mediate upon the Soul and follow Right Conduct, Right Faith and Right Knowledge.
- To leave 'Arta' and 'Raudra' dhyana and mediate upon Dharma and Shukla dhyana.

In Jainism, daily practice of Samayik (Contemplation) and 'Pratikraman' (Repentance) is recommended. In daily activities, knowingly or unknowingly we may have to involve ourselves in an inappropriate or unethical thoughts or action. It causes the influx of 'paap' (bad karmas). That's why periodic repentance and contemplation are necessary. It is the way to attain balanced state of mind. Many get up early for yoga or gym as this is the current trend. Many may not be aware but (introspection) Pratikraman is also the same because Pratikraman has all the appropriate yoga positions (Yogasanas) for the body and doing it every day is as healthy as going to the gym, yoga, aerobics or whatever



SAMAYIKA



**No one has attained Moksha, no one is attaining Moksha,
and no one will attain Moksha, without the practice of Samayika**

Samayika is the first and arguably the leading duty of the six daily essential duties of Jain ascetics and laypeople. Samayika derived from the Prakrit word 'samaiya' has several interpretations in English such as observance of equanimity, viewing all the living beings as one's own self, conception of equality, harmonious state of one's behaviour, integration of personality as well as righteousness of the activities of mind, body and speech. Jain Acharyas and scholars have defined Samayika in various terms:

Acharya Bhadrabahu

“To remain tranquil, equanimous, and sinless without disturbing the state of mental equilibrium when faced either with gold or grass, friend or foe, and not swept away by feelings of craving and aversion, is called Samayika. For to be in equanimity is Samayika.”

Acharya Haribhadrasuri,

“Detachment from attachment & aversion, that means, the act of gaining the equanimity”

Padmanabh S.Jaini

“A fusion with the true self through increasing detachment from all external objects... a temporary renunciation of all possessions before sitting in meditation for up to one Indian hour.” (48 minutes)

There are two types of samayika – partial and complete. Partial samayika is for laypeople for a minimum duration of 48 minutes. Complete samayika applies to Jain ascetics. For Jain monks and nuns, this means to be always in a state of equanimity, when they are walking, eating,



sleeping, or engaged in their daily activities; also, to be free from cravings for worldly things, passions such as anger, greed, ego, deceit. In this constant state of equanimity, Jain ascetics are fostering feelings of love, friendship, happiness, kindness, and compassion towards all living beings in this world. Such ethereal feelings in one's mind is real samayika.

Acharaya Amitgati encapsulates this in the following sutras:

“O God, it is my wish that I always have feeling of friendship towards all beings of this world, feeling of happiness towards the meritorious, feeling of kindness towards those who are suffering and level-headedness towards those who are on the wrong path.”

“Whether it is a situation of loss or gain, of pain or pleasure, of long life or immediate death, of praise or criticism, of appreciation or affront, we remain poised and balanced, that is real ‘samayika’”



It is stated Samayika i.e the practice of equanimity is the foundation for almost all of Jain religious practices. The essence of Jain religion is included in Samayika. In reality, samayika is to meditate on true nature of soul. Acarya Haribhadrasuri states that “one who observes equanimity will surely attain emancipation, whether he belongs to Swetambara sect or Digambara sect, whether he is Buddha or the follower of any other religion.”

For Laypeople, practice of samayika provides an opportunity to spent time like Jain ascetics who live in samayika all of their life. For 48 minutes, the proper practice of samayika enables laypeople to remain calm and undisturbed, to get detached from daily activities and to engage in spiritual activities, to be free of all passions, and not to have feeling of liking, disliking, attachment, desire, or aversion. The period of 48 minutes is prescribed as it is believed that human concentration can last undisturbed for this time. Also, the sand clocks used in ancient times, was measured with the unit ‘ghadi’ which lasted for 24 minutes and when the sand clock was reversed, it carried on for a further 24 minute, thus making 48minutes in total.

In modern day context, this amounts to 2 minutes for every hour of the day – implying to be with your inner self at least for 2 minutes every hour. Samayika is the time to contemplate on the self and a time to seek the truth of human life.

The practice of samayika essentially involves letting go at the deepest level – opening to the experience of wanting nothing, needing nothing, expecting nothing. In doing this we are reversing the mind's inclination to want more, get more, consume more – experiences, thoughts, desires, things. How serene it is to let the tide go out! If one can spend time every day not trying to grasp, pull in, hold on, consume, in this place of deep awareness, perhaps – so the theory and I believe the practice goes – one will eventually act differently and start living like our monks and nuns. **If they can be always in samyaika – in a state of equanimity – surely, we can aspire to being in this state more and more in our lives. Paryushan Festival affords us this opportunity.**

By Kishor Bhimji Shah

Sources: Articles by Dr. Sagarmal Jain, P.S Jaini, Samani Sanmati Pragma, & Compendium of Jainism

