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# Social Relevance of Caturviṃśati Stava

Posted: 11.01.2016

Updated on: 16.12.2017

## Social Relevance of Caturviṃśati Stava

### Hymn in Praise of the 24 Tīrthaṅkaras

Eulogy is the very essence of all religions. *Stuti* or eulogy is nothing but the proper accommodation of the group of words in the praise of deity. In the prayer of *caturviṃśati stava*, there are seven verses in which the veneration to 24 *tīrthaṅkaras* is given which is considered tantamount to the *mantra* in Jainism.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Meaning of *Caturviṃśati Stava*

There are seven stanzas in *caturviṃśati stava*. In the first stanza there is a resolve to eulogize *tīrthaṅkaras*. The meaning of first stanza is: I praise and worship the 24 *jinas*, the omniscient, the *arihants*. You have enlightened the entire universe and established the four fold *Jain Sangha*. In next three stanzas, 24 *jinas* names of Rishabha etc. are quoted. The meaning of the fifth stanza is<sup>[2]</sup>: Oh *jina*! you have shed the impurities of *kārmic* particles, and thus you are free from old age and death: I praise all of your virtues and worship you. Please bestow upon me the sense to attain perfect knowledge, which shall lead to ultimate liberation. The meaning of the sixth stanza is: You have achieved this liberation and therefore, the entire universe praises you and offers obeisance to you. Please bestow upon me perfect spiritual health, right faith and the highest state

of tranquility. The meaning of last stanza is: Oh *jina*! you are purer than the moons, brighter than the suns and, more serene and deeper than the oceans. Oh *siddha*! Please bestow upon me the ultimate salvation.<sup>[3]</sup> The veneration of the twenty four *tīrthaṅkaras* is called *caturviṃśati stava*, a recital in veneration of the twenty four *tīrthaṅkaras* of each age, with the intention to develop their faith and virtues in ones own self.

*Stuti*, in Jainism, is the expression of sincere devotion of the aspirant for the spiritual values he esteems most. *Stuti* is nothing but a praise, admiration, veneration and adoration of omniscient being for the ideals he represents. The purpose is to get inspiration and guidance from the example of the worshipful, to get oneself purified mentally and spiritually by reciting and adoring the glorious attainments of the most glorious, and the will to achieve himself that ideal state one day. This is an unfailing and unflinching devotion to the divinity manifest in the ideal one.

### **Importance of *caturviṃśati stava***

The first step of spiritual development is right faith as per *tīrthaṅkar* Mahāvīra.<sup>[4]</sup> When Gautam asked Mahāvīra—what does one achieve by the veneration to *jinās*? Mahāvīra replied that "by paying obeisance to the twenty four *jinās*, the soul attains purity of faith i.e. *Samyak Darśana*.<sup>[5]</sup> Through the devotional recitation of *stava*, the deluded *karmās* can be eliminated and self-purification can be attained.<sup>[6]</sup> The greatest outcome of *stuti* is *guṇa saṅkramaṇa* i.e. the virtues of *Jina* are gradually acquired by the self.<sup>[7]</sup>

## **Social Relevance of Eulogy (*Stuti*)**

### **Auspicious Contemplation and *Stuti***

*Stuti* is a form of *dharma dhyāna*, the auspicious contemplation. It is a healthy practice in which all the faculties of the worshipper, mind, speech and body, function in unison. One engaged in worship is free from the *ārtta* and *raudra* types of *dhyāna*, the inauspicious and harmful brooding, worries, anxieties, and passionate feelings. *Stuti* is thus, an act of selfless devotion, done with joy, cheerfulness and due humility, and as a result the worshipper earns merit (*puṇya*) and destroys demerit (*pāpa*). So the sincere performer of *stuti* doesn't believe in prayers for asking boons, favours, the fulfillment of some worldly desire or warding off some danger, disease, trouble or loss, simply because no power is capable of answering them. On the other hand the prayers in return for happiness impair ones self-confidence, weaken ones will-power and tend to shift the responsibility of his actions to some other agency. He becomes supplicatory, complaining, clinging and whimpering, and begins to suffer from a sort of inferiority complex. So *stuti* in Jainism is selfless devotion. Through such devotion one doesn't merely loose the distance between himself and the goal, but gradually realizes oneness with the goal itself.

## ***Guṇa Saṁkramaṇa and Stuti***

The greatest outcome of *stuti* is *guṇa saṁkramaṇa*. It means eulogizer seeks the entire virtues and power of the deity, to whom he prays.<sup>[8]</sup> Complete faith and dedication towards the deity is essential for an accomplishment of such a high state. Mahātmā Gandhi said, "There is indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it."<sup>[9]</sup> A person of high aspiration having faith in scriptures, *sadguru* and God, surrenders himself to the spiritual preceptor and finally attains self-realization. It is well explained in Jain canonical literature that if one wants to be powerful, then he/she should pray and be one with the picture of Bāhubali. If one wants to attain mental equanimity in all the situations, he/she should pray with full devotion, keeping the picture of Mahāvīra in mind, one can attain the very same virtue within by *stuti*. *Guṇa saṁkramaṇa* can be well illustrated with a wasp that changes a worm into another wasp. Wasps generally take a worm to their place and sting. The worm constantly thinks of the wasp due to the pain of the sting. When the pain is about to subside, the wasp once again stings the worm. This process continues until the worm, on constant thoughts about the wasp, gets transformed into one. Whether the story is scientifically valid or not, it clearly restates that "'you' are what 'you' think". Even Māntungācārya in his work *Bhaktāmara Stotra* rightly sings that if one doesn't make the devotee worshipping him/her like him/her, then is there any significance in *Ṛṣhabh*) worship.<sup>[10]</sup> Eulogy of *tīrthaṅkara* awakens valor in the soul, that each person can attain the state of Godhood from the state of devotee. It is similarly like becoming a big river from a drop and the sun from a ray.

## ***Healing Mechanism and Stuti***

Sometimes, things happen to be a miracle. There are some cases, where the medical science fails in curing the disease, there works the significance of prayer. Science may never have all the answers about the power of prayer. James E. Sweaney writes, "There is power in prayer, your mind is linked with God, the source of all power. Your thoughts, your desires, your efforts can be unified in prayer with the will of God."<sup>[11]</sup> Individuals have to learn to grow more tolerant of ambiguity and life's mysteries. It is interesting that many scientific studies have been conducted to validate this observation. Dr. J. Jerome<sup>[12]</sup> Stowell, while making an experiment in a pathological laboratory to find the wave length of a brain, discovered that a woman in communication with God, had registered more than fifty five times the power used by a 50 Kilowatts broadcasting station in sending a message around the world. It was a positive proof to suggest that man in communion with God releases a power unequalled by instrumentation. Recently, Kenneth A. Carlson, who suffered from heart attack was healed through prayer and belief in God. His doctor said to him, "Your recovery is a miracle. You are not here because of any genius of medical science but because of the power than either one of us."<sup>[13]</sup>

Moreover Larry Dorsey, M.D. perhaps the world's most vocal expert on prayer and medicine says, "Prayer showed its effect on everything from seed germination to wound healing. It also operates as strongly on the other side of the earth as it does at bed side. *Stuti* helps in reducing the risks or effects of high blood pressure, heals heart attack and headaches. The immune system is strengthened and nourished by a sense of peace and calmness. A recent scientific study shows

that prayer can be used as an alternative therapy as successfully as meditation, yoga or herbalist. Gandhi said, prayer is the very core of man's life. So it is predicted that soon patients will be questioned about not only their medical history but also their belief system.<sup>[14]</sup> Not only physical ailments are cured through *stuti* but psychological and emotional problems also can be solved. *Stuti* or eulogy acts like a shock absorber and can easily free us from worries, tension and depression. Suppressed negative emotions in the subconscious mind are the root cause of all our mental and physical troubles. We can sublimate them through *stuti*. The *stuti* systematically replaces negative thoughts with positive and divine ones, leading to purity, strength, courage and ultimately changes the character of the person. It is our feeling that gives our prayers the power and helps in bringing about the desired consequences. A prayerful attitude arrests the aimless wandering of the mind and helps us concentrate our mind on things at hand. Love added to prayer increases its power. The intrinsic faith in prayer has the capacity to spark major personal enrichment in every area of life.

### **Elimination of Obstacles and *Stuti***

In all the Indian traditions the recitation of eulogy is practised. Although Jains don't believe in prayers where the mind is full of material expectations. A lot of texts were written on eulogy by Jain *ācāryās* in warding off some danger. Jain literature expounds various examples in this regard. *Māntungācārya* wrote and recited *Bhaktāmara stotra* with complete devotion in the eulogy of *tīrthaṅkara* Ādinātha or Ṛṣabha, at once shackles of chain were broken which were tied from head to toe of his body. Moreover there were 48 gates in the prison where he was kept. Due to effective dedication and recitation of 48 stanzas, one by one all the gates are opened successively and automatically.<sup>[15]</sup> Even *ācārya* Siddhasena wrote and recited *Kalyāṇa Maṅdira stotra* in the eulogy of *Tīrthaṅkara* Pārśva.<sup>[16]</sup> *Ācārya* Samantabhadra has written *Svayaṁbhū stotra* when the king *Shivakoti* was asked to bow before the idol of Lord *Śiva*. Even a poisonous snake's venom was washed away through the recitation of *Viśāpahāra stotra* by *Dhanañjaya's* son. *Ācārya* Bhadrabāhu wrote *Uvassaggahara stotra* during the obstacles. His eulogy or *stuti* is a living faith towards the omniscient being. The vibrations of *stuti* change the entire situation and devotee experiences himself above the obstacles.

### **Elimination of Harmful *Karma***

During the time of dedicated *stuti*, one praises the virtues of *Jina* i.e. you possess infinite knowledge, intuition, bliss and power, this recitation purifies his psyche and thereby destroys ones already bound harmful *karmās*.<sup>[17]</sup> Through *stuti*, one attains the unique spiritual state i.e. *samayak darśana*. This achievement occurs due to the destruction of seven *karma prakṛti* (seven types of sub-divisions of *karma*), which in turn is the signal of limited life and death in this mundane world. The devotee who keeps oneself in *stuti*, *Māntungācārya* says shed off the *karmās* and limits the worldly wanderings.<sup>[18]</sup> If there is no faith in *stuti* it will never be fruitful. The ultimate goal of all the Indian philosophies except the *cārvāka* philosophy is attainment of salvation.<sup>[19]</sup> The paths of achieving the ultimate end are many in number, but the goal is one and

the same. Both the Jain philosophy and the *vedānta* philosophy agree about the outcome of *stuti*, right faith as the material cause for the attainment of liberation. On the other hand, the person who disregards the *tīrthāṅkaras*, their scriptures, religious order, and doctrines binds the inflow of faith-deluding *karmās* and keeps on wandering in the empirical world of life and death.<sup>[20]</sup>

Thus *stuti* as prayer with devotion is accepted by all theistic religions as the powerful and efficacious means of God-realization. Prayer renders spiritual as well as mundane fruit. Attainment of Bhakti or love of the lord is the highest fruit of *stuti*. According to *skandha purāṇa stuti* opens the gate of final liberation. The secondary rewards of *stuti* are peace of mind, avoidance of obstacles, advancement and guidance in the spiritual path, awakening of knowledge, healing of disease, fulfillment of mundane wants, and relief from distress and sorrow.<sup>[21]</sup>

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### Footnotes:

[1] Mahāprajña. *Jain dharma ke sādhanā sūtra*, p. 141.

- [2] *Navasuttāṇi*. Ed. Yuvācārya Mahāprajña, p. 5.
- [3] *Pratikramaṇa: A Guide Book*, Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati.2007, p. 31-32.
- [4] *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, 1.1
- [5] *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, 29.9.
- [6] Mahāprajña. *Jain Dharma ke Sādhanā Sūtra*, p. 147.
- [7] Ibid, 139.
- [8] Ācārya Mahāprajña. *Anuvrata ke Āloka mein*: Churu: Adarsha Sahitya Sangh.1986, p. 86, *yogi dehe tathā dhyānāt jāyate guṇa saṁkramanaḥ*.
- [9] Chaganlal. *Philosophy of Bhakti*: Delhi: D.K. Publishers.1989, p. 118.
- [10] *Bhaktāmara Stotra* of Mānātungācārya.verse,9.
- [11] *Mīrā Journal*.June. 1966, p. 133.
- [12] Ibid. August. 1979, p. 107.
- [13] Ibid. May. 1968, p. 403.
- [14] *You Can Change the World*. Feb., 2004, p. 7.
- [15] *Bhaktāmara Stotra* of Māntuṅgācārya. Ratlam: Jñānodaya Pustak Prakāśan Samiti. 1937. verse 46.
- [16] *Kalyān Mandir Stotra* of Siddhasena Divākar. Bombay: Narendra Kumar Devendra Kumar. 1961. verse 48.
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- [17] Chandracārya. Shri Mahaviraji: Shri Shantivīra Digambara Jain Saṁsthān.v.s. 2495, verse 18.20.
- [18] *Bhaktāmara Stotra* of Māntuṅgācārya, op. cit., verse 9.
- [19] Dutta and Chatterjee. *Bhāratiya Darśana* (Indian Philosophy). Patna: Pustak Bhandār. 1994, p. 25.
- [20] *Sarvārthasiddhi* of Siddhasena, 6.13.
- [21] Chhaganlal Lala. *Philosophy of Bhakti*, p. 128.
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