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Pratyākhyāna (Renunciation)

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Introduction to *Pratyākhyāna*

The fifth *Āvaśyaka* according to the Digambaras, the sixth *Āvaśyaka* in Svetāmbara tradition is *pratyākhyāna*. Ācārya Amitgati defines *pratyākhyāna* as the avoidance of what is unfitting in order to prevent the commission of sin in the future.^[1] In a sense it is the equivalent to *pratikramaṇa* translated into future time. Here renunciation of any form of enjoyment is implicit in the concept but in practice it most often implies abstention from a particular kind of food, for a certain period of time. There are traditionally ten categories of *pratyākhyāna* namely *namaskāra sahita*, *paurasi*, *ekāśana*, *eka sthana*, *nirvigaya*, two *paurasi*, *āyambil*, *upavāsa*, and *divasa carima*.^[2] This food renouncement leads one towards the control over ones palate. Moreover a sense of detachment towards the world of experience occurs. The quantity of restrain in food items develops and at the same time check over physical, mental diseases is achieved.^[3]

Last *Āvaśyaka* refers to the abandonment of things harmful to the soul and acceptance of things beneficial to the soul. Taking *pratyākhyāna* means taking a vow appropriate to our capabilities, disengaging from worldly objects and engaging in the process of purification. When we take *pratyākhyāna*, we renounce certain activities for a pre-determined period of time to discipline ourselves. For *daivāsika* and *rātrika pratikramaṇa*, the vow lasts a day, for *pākshika*, 15 days, for *cāturmāsika*, 4 months and for *sāmvatsarika pratikramaṇa*, a year.

i. Social Relevance of *pratyākhyāna*

There is a definite notion of salvation in Indian culture. Votaries of this culture nurse an intense desire in their hearts for deliverance from this world. Prompted by it they make a supplication to God as follows:

- Lead me from untruth to truth.
- Lead me from darkness to light.
- Lead me from death to immortality.

This is a beautiful prayer. However I want to change the wording slightly. I want to bring human endeavour into it and rephrase it thus:

- I renounce the wrong and embrace the right path.
- I renounce ignorance and embrace knowledge.
- I renounce falsehood and embrace truth.

Such a person, while remaining faithful to God, will endeavour to achieve his goal. There is a need to install this idea in the minds of children so that their sub-conscious mind may always prompt them to endeavour. The concept of *pratyākhyāna* is nothing but to know the action as auspicious and to adopt it and renounce the actions which are inauspicious by nature. For the adoption of any action human endeavour is essential. Personality development is not possible by any means in the absence of ones endeavour. It is rightly cited in *Daśvaikālika Sūtra*, that once a person recognizes difference between vice and virtue, motor nerves activates automatically in the direction of the virtue acceptance.^[4]

ii. Classifications of *Pratyākhyāna*

Aparājith Sūri has defined *pratyākhyāna* in the context of three fold action-mind, speech and body. One should not repeat the sin in future, to think this mentally is *manau pratyākhyāna*. One should not repeat the sin, to say it verbally is *vacana pratyākhyāna*. One should not repeat this sin in future physically is *kāyā pratyākhyāna*. It is a spiritual injection, which leads towards the holistic development of personality. To think ill of others, to indulge in verbal abuse and to participate in violent acts, all these acts are causes of *kārmic* bondage at personal level and thereby social conflict at national level.

The other division of *pratyākhyāna* is of three kinds - *kaṣāya*, *śarīra* and *upādhi* i.e. renunciation from *kaṣāya*, from body and objects of material world. The twelve kinds of *nirjarā* i.e. shedding off *karmās* are also considered as the means of *pratyākhyāna*.^[5] Renunciation here doesn't mean mere giving up of food but renunciation of all the means of *kārmic* bondage. All the inauspicious actions are to be successively given up step by step gradually according to ones will. It is endeavour of the self which is detrimental in achieving the state of spiritual progress through *pratyākhyāna*.

iii. Spiritual Benefits of *Pratyākhyāna* At Personal-cum-Social Level

The fourteen ladders of spiritual progress (*guṇasthāna*) is nothing but the gradual purification of the self through the renunciation of deluded world view, vowlessness, laxity, passions and mind-body-vocal activities. *Pratyākhyāna* is also a kind of alternative therapy for curing many physical ailments.^[6] One can renounce anger for set period of time, one can refrain from use of bad words for others, one can renounce the intolerance, one can renounce cruel behaviour, one can renounce fear; such emotional renunciation are to be taken to solve the individual cum social problems.^[7]

In *Āvaśyaka Nirṣukti*, Ācārya Bhadrabāhu rightly said that a person who renounces anything develops the virtue of restraint. Restraint in turn leads to the stoppage of *karma* and thereby destruction of *ṭṣṇā*. Moreover *upaśama bhāva* originates and suppression of *karmās* occurs. Due to the suppression of deluded *karmās*, perfect conduct is acquired. Through the practice of perfect conduct, remaining *kārmic* particles are shed off and subsequently *kevala jñāna* and *kevala darśana* is achieved and at last, the self attains the state of eternal bliss of liberation.^[8] Through renunciation, what are the outcome achieved by the self are cited elaborately in *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*. By renouncing pleasures he obtains freedom from false longing whereby he becomes compassionate, humble, free from sorrow and destroys the *kārman* produced by delusion regarding conduct.^[9]

Jainism has laid the same stress on *sañyama* as on *ahiṃsā*. *Sañyama* means self-restraint. The philosophical basis of *sañyama* is the stoppage of influx of *karmās*. The whole code of conduct in Jain ethics is restraint based. The idea is that one has to restrict ones daily wants and consumption to a self-imposed limit. This is called as *pratyākhyāna*. It is a kind of self-retribution, by renouncing one, the other high virtues emerge from it.

The two aspects of life i.e. activity and abstinence from activity. *Pratyākhyāna* is nothing but abstinence from activity, passions, body, food, material possession, worldly pleasure and finally abstinence from taking help of others etc. Which yields the subsequent results as quoted in *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*.^[10]

- By renouncing articles of use, he obtains successful study, without articles of use he becomes exempt from desire and doesn't suffer misery.
- By renouncing food, he ceases to act for the sustenance of his life, he does not suffer misery when without food.
- By conquering his passions he becomes free from passions, thereby he becomes indifferent to happiness and pains.
- By renouncing activity he obtains inactivity, by ceasing to act, he acquires no new *karma* and destroys the *karma* he had acquired before.
- By renouncing his body he acquires the pre-eminent virtues of the *siddhās*, by the possession of which he goes to the highest region of the universe, and becomes absolutely happy.

- By renouncing company, he obtains singleness, being single and concentrating his mind, he avoids disputes, quarrels, passions, and censoriousness, and he acquires a high degree of control, of *saṁvara* and of carefulness.
- By renouncing all food he prevents his being born again many hundreds of times.
- By perfect renunciation, he enters the final fourth stage of pure meditation, whence there is, no return, a monk who is in that state, destroys the four remnants of *kārman* which even a *kevalin* possesses, viz., *vedanīya*, *āyushya*, *nāma* and *gotra*, and then he will put an end to all misery.

From the above renunciations we can derive the common conclusion that it stops the inflow of *karmās*, and destroys the *kārman* he had acquired earlier. Moreover by renouncing passions, one avoids disputes, quarrels and enters the highest stage of pure meditation and achieves the state of eternal bliss and puts an end to all sufferings.

It is the view of *Tīrthaṅkara* Mahāvīra that the restrains of a poor person is also self-restraint but that cannot serve as an ideal for others. He himself said,

*je ya kante piye bhoē laddhe vipitthi kuvvaā,
sāhīṇe cayai bhoē se hu cāi ti vucchaā.*^[11]

It means one who voluntarily and without any pressure discards the beautiful, lovable and delightful means of enjoyment available to him is the true follower of restrains and renunciation. In the wider sense, the real renunciation is that when one donates for charity although one is poor, observing celibacy when one is young, forgiving when one is authority to punish and observing code of conduct when one is rich are considered ideal.

iv. Renunciation and Social Good

The economic inequality, which is a big problem today can be solved through the practice of renunciation. In all walks of life, the practice of self-restrain is essential. Renunciation of all kind not only stops the inflow of *karmās* but at the same time leads the society to economical and ecological balance. There are two kinds of society, diseased society and healthy society.^[12] In healthy society there is self-restrain. Renunciation of cosmetic product usage is conducive in solving the valuable species being in the line of extinction. The non-renunciation of fast, junk, and packed food not only causes health hazards but also make the society sick too.

Renunciation from eating flesh helps in Animal Right preservation and observance of non-violence simultaneously. Renunciation from wanton killing, lying, stealing, hoarding of excess wealth and artificial sexual indulgence leads the nation towards the building up of healthy and harmonious society bereft of crime and punishment.

In nutshell, renunciation from attachment and aversion, which is the root cause of all sorts of problems, one can attain the state of equanimity balance of emotions and can develop the virtue of tolerance and amity, the attitude of indifference to all the incident of life.

From the point of view of spiritual perspective, the practitioner of renunciation limits the wanderings in the mundane world due to the detached attitude. The natural break over instinct of greed is achieved through the renunciation, which is the cause of all the sins committed in the world. The malpractices like adulteration, bribery, corruption, under weighing and measuring etc., problems, if renounced the society would be a better place to live in.

Thus *pratyākhyāna* at individual level, stops the inflow of *karmās*, helps in leading a tension free life and in solving health related problems. At social level it can establish the society free from crimes and punishment and maintain law and order. At global level, it can solve the problem of environmental pollution, global warming, problems arising through over-consumption so on and so forth.

Conclusion

The six essential duties prescribed by *tīrthaṅkara* Mahāvīra is more relevant in solving the present problem of emotional imbalance, non-belief in devotional worships, ego centric attitude, absence of self-confession, stressful life style and material attachment. As per my view, the doctrines of *Jains* are relevant in all walks of life. Man has forgotten the essential moral duties towards himself and the society and he is in the chase of earning money and in translating the dream of luxurious life in reality. It is my firm notion that the present day problems, which are mentioned above can be eradicated through faithful practice of six essential duties in life.

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Footnotes:

[1] *Pratikramaṇa Sūtra*, 49.

[2] *Yoga Śāstra*.iii.130.

[3] *Navasuttāṇi*. Ed. Yuvācārya Mahāprajña. Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1986, pp. 17-19.

[4] *Daśvaikālika Sūtra*.4.9.

[5] *Jain Siddhānt Dīpikā* of Ācārya Tulsī, p. 49.

[6] Mahāprajña. *Jain Dharma Ke Sādhanā Sūtra*, p. 179.

[7] *Ibid*, p. 180.

[8] *Āvaśyaka Niryukti* of Bhadrabāhu. verses 1594, 1595, 1596.

[9] *Uttarādhyayana*. verse 29.29.

[10] *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, 29. 34-42.

[11] *Daśvaikālika Sūtra*, 2.3.

[12] *New Man: New World*, p.56.

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