

Jain Traditions:

Worship Of The Worthy: Based On Jain Texts¹

by Smt. Alka Jain, Guna, M.P., India

Due to the passage of time and the influence of other religious systems, Jain religious practices have become similar to the rituals of other religious groups. These rituals disregard the real motive of prayers and worship, and have become engulfed in irrational and delusional conceits. This is in blatant violation of the spirit of Jainism. The following insightful and scholarly article is expected to open our eyes and impel us towards genuine Jain worship.

- D. C. J.

Introduction

Acharya Padmanandi II, in his celebrated work, PADMANANDI PANCHAVINSHATI, writes:²

Worship of the worthy (DEVAPOOJA), homage to guru (GURUPAASTI), study of scriptures (SWAADHYAAYA), self-control (SANYAM), penance (TAPAH) and charity (DAAN) constitute the six essentials, which the householders are expected to observe daily.

Thus worship of the worthy is the first and foremost essential observance for a Jain householder.

What is worship of the worthy?

A genuine worship of the worthy entails a firm conviction in the path to salvation exemplified by JIN - the victors of inner enemies. A spirited appreciation of the attributes of the PANCH PARAMESHTHI (five supreme benevolent personalities) constitutes worship of the worthy. The five supreme benevolent personalities are ARIHANT (supreme human beings), SIDDHA (supreme souls), ACHARYA (monks who preach), UPAADHYAAYA (monks who study) and SADHU (monks). Shedding the feelings of attachment and aversion is worship. Further, renouncing attachment and ego, while offering appropriate materials comprises the worship of the worthy.

Worship encompasses homage, prayer and obeisance to the five supreme benevolent personalities. Listening to discourses on scriptures, discussions of teachings of religion, building of temples and installation of images of VEETARAAG JIN - those who are beyond attachment and aversion, are included in worship as well.

Physical and abstract worship

Worship is of two kinds: physical worship (DRAVYA POOJA) and abstract worship (BHAAV POOJA). In the commentary of RATNAKARAND SHRAAVAKAACHAAR, Pandit Sadasukh Das writes: Physical worship consists of prayer, obeisance, offering of eight items such as water, sandalwood paste and rice, and bowing to the image of ARIHANT. On the other hand, abstract worship involves reciting the attributes of ARIHANT with concentration on the image of VEETARAAG, forsaking all other mundane thoughts.

In reality, the mere eightfold offering in front of the idol of JIN is not physical worship. Similarly, just reciting the worship contained in a text is not abstract worship. Indeed worship consists of moments of deep spirituality. Worship is devotion to the ideals represented by the image of VEETARAAG, whose aim is self-realization. Acharya Samant Bhadra has appraised worship as service to the virtuous and Acharya Ravishen viewed it as service to honored guests (ARIHANT). Because, worship is a means to spiritual uplift, it is regarded as an aspect of equanimity (SAAMAAYIK) in UPAASAKAADHYAYAN. Further, worship involves concentration on the attributes of a pure soul and therefore, in BHAAV SANGRAH, it has been classified as mantra-based meditation (PADASTHADHYAAN). In the final analysis, worship involves discerning the self and thus it is also considered to be an aspect of the study of scriptures (SWAADHYAAYA).

Purpose of worship

According to Jainism, realization of the attributes of soul is the supreme goal. Thus by making the eightfold offering, we Jains make a determination to break the cycle of birth and death, and attain the supreme eternal state. This is worship of the worthy in the true sense.

Jain worship is not intended to please JIN. It is meant to inspire good thoughts and feelings in the self. JIN is beyond attachment and aversion. Thus the question of pleasing or displeasing him is irrelevant. In SWAYAMBHU STOTRA, Acharya Samant Bhadra states:³

Being without likes and dislikes, JIN is unconcerned about worship. Having no aversion, he is nonchalant about criticism. Nevertheless, reflection and immersion in the attributes of JIN alleviates bad karmas and purifies the minds of the worshipers.

The above couplet indicates that the real purpose of prayer and worship in Jainism is to minimize thoughts and feelings of inauspicious and intense attachment, and foster pure thoughts. Along with diminishing impure thoughts of attachment and aversion, Jain worship advances rationalism and differentiation between mundane and spiritual tendencies. In 'A Prayer To JIN' that depicts the basic concepts of the Jain religion, Pandit Daulat Ram writes:⁴

Obeisance to you, the embodiment of serenity and peace,
who enables aspirants to enjoy self-realization and repose.
Aspirants suffering on account of karma, indulging in acts,
physical and mental, lose their delusion through your precepts.

Worship suggests attachment (RAAG) to the worthy. Nevertheless, worship of VEETARAAG - those who have no attachment or aversion, induces feelings of detachment from mundane affairs. In this context, in MOKSHA MAARG PRAKAASHAK, Pandit Todar Mal writes: Making an appropriate offering in front of the image of an omniscient is not culpable, because it may become the first step toward spiritual progress.

The sagacious individuals never perform the worship of the worthy with a desire or intention to accomplish any material goals. A proper worship does bring about spiritual awareness. However, there is a collateral benefit of worship. The devotee has pure thoughts and mild passions during the worship. He/she does not have desire of name and fame, money and material, or blessings and comforts. Consequently, he/she obtains beneficial karmas (PUNYA), which, on fruition, may bring some material means. Remember, the influx of beneficial karmas is caused by the pure thoughts and feelings. It is not the result of worship, which is only an instrumental cause (NIMITTA KAARAN).

Mode and types of worship

During the worship of the worthy (VEETARAAG JIN), the devotees have the ambition of shedding all feelings of attachment to the affairs of the world and aspire to become akin to the object of worship (VEETARAAG).⁵

Worship consists of three important aspects: the object of worship, devotee, and the procedure of worship. In the educational process, a competent instructor, a dedicated student and a well-organized lesson are necessary. Similarly, in addition to the worthy object of worship and a devoted worshiper, for a meaningful worship, a well-planned procedure should be adopted. Worship can be worthwhile only through pure feelings reflecting the attributes of VEETARAAG JIN. The worshiper must have feelings free from attachment to worldly affairs.

Jain acharyas have described two kinds of worship: realistic (NISHCHAYA) worship and experiential (VYAVAHAR) worship. From the realistic viewpoint (NISHCHAYA NAYA), there is no distinction between the worshiper and object of worship - both represent a pristine soul possessing absolute perception, absolute knowledge and bliss. In his celebrated work, ATTHAPAAHUD, Acharya Kundkund writes:⁶ Each one of the five benevolent personalities, supreme human beings (ARIHANTs), liberated souls (SIDDHAs), scholarly

monks (ACHARYAs), monks who study (UPAADHYAAYAs) and monks (SADHUs), essentially represents a pure soul and function as such. Thus I take shelter in my own self. This is realistic worship.

Experiential worship assumes various forms based on the object of worship, worshiper, substance (DRAVYA), place (KSHETRA), time (KAAL) and state of mind (BHAAV). Based on the object of worship, Acharya Amitagati, in AMITAGATI SHRAAVAKAACHAAR, and Acharya Vasunandi, in VASUNANDI SHRAAVAKAACHAAR, have classified worship into three categories:

- . Direct (SACHITTA) or proximate worship, which implies worship in person of supreme human beings (ARIHANTs) and monks (SADHUs). It should be pointed out that direct worship of ARIHANTs is not possible at present.
- . Indirect (ACHITTA) worship, which is worship of the images of TEERTHANKARs and scriptures.
- . Mixed (MISHRA) worship, which is a combination of proximate and indirect worships.

In MAHAAPURAAN, the following five kinds of worships have been described.

- . Daily (NITYA NIYAM or SADAARCHAN) worship, which includes worship of images of JINs with eight kinds of offerings, installation of images of TEERTHANKARs, building of temples, charity and offering of food to monks.
- . Royal (CHATURMUKH) worship - an elaborate worship performed by kings.
- . Majestic (KALPADRUM) worship - a grandiose worship performed by emperors.
- . Propitious (ASHTAANHIK) worship - a special worship organized during the solemn eight-day observance (ASHTAANHIKA).
- . Monumental (INDRADHWAJ) worship - a worship performed by a personage having transcendent character.

Pandit Sadasukh Das, in his commentary of RATNAKARAND SHRAAVAKAACHAAR, describes the following five parts of worship:

- . Invitation (AAVAAHANAN) - this implies concentrating on the attributes of the object of worship. For example, inviting VEETARAAG JIN, scriptures and guru during a worship, the devotee recites: OM HREEM,⁷ may Dev,

Shastra and Guru come into my thoughts.

- . Installation (STHAAPAN) - it entails a resolve to keep the pristine qualities of the worthy in mind during the worship. For example, the devotee recites: OM HREEM, may Dev, Shastra and Guru repose in my thoughts.
- . Immersion (SANNIDHIKARAN) - it implies absorption in the characteristics of the object of worship. For example, the devotee recites: OM HREEM, may Dev, Shastra and Guru be near me, be near me.
- . Invitation, installation and immersion constitute a preamble to the worship.
- . Main worship (POOJA) - it is essentially the principal component of the ceremony. In main worship, the devotee relates the pristine qualities of VEETARAAG JIN, scriptures and/or guru while making eight kinds of offerings. Sometimes, the worshiper states that the eight kinds of materials represent a variety of worldly afflictions or lead to involvement in mundane endeavors, and by offering them he/she sheds such involvement in an effort to achieve spiritual progress. The devotee expresses: O venerable! in the guise of these eight kinds of materials, with concentration, I sacrifice my earthly auspiciousness in the sacred flame of absolute knowledge (KEVAL JNAAN). Indeed, such physical and mental activities constitute worship.
- . Finale (VISARJAN) - it constitutes asking forgiveness for any unintentional physical and/or mental faults that might have transpired during the worship. Also, the devotee expresses a firm resolve to follow in the footsteps of the worthy (VEETARAAG JIN).

The most important means or instruments of worship are the eight kinds of offerings. Although they are material, still they symbolize shedding of one's ego and concentrating on self-realization. It is advisable to offer only inanimate materials in worship. Offering of flowers and fruit is not adequate as is explained by Pandit Sadasukh Das. He states that the possibility of hurting or killing any living being is avoided by making offerings of things such as almonds, dry rice, sandalwood paste and pure water. However, it is not the kind of material that matters. The main focus is on the thoughts and feelings of the devotee.

The following are recited while making the eight kinds of offerings:

- . 1. Pure Water (JALA): Pure water is offered with the intention of removing the impurities of delusion and irrationalism, and thereby attaining freedom from the cycles of birth and death.
- . 2. Sandalwood Paste (CHANDAN): Sandalwood paste represents coolness. It is offered with the intention of giving up anger and other passions that are

instrumental in perpetuating one's mundane existence.

- . 3. Rice (AKSHAT): Whole (AKHAND) rice represents the eternal state of liberation. It is offered with the determination of achieving the state of eternal bliss.
- . 4. Flower (PUSHP): Flowers symbolize sensual pleasures. By offering flowers, the devotee expresses the desire to refrain from mundane desires.
- . 5. Rich Food (NAIVEDYA): By offering rich food, the worshiper expresses a desire to shed the affliction of hunger. Again, this is symbolic of attaining the supreme state of bliss.
- . 6. Lamp (DEEP): By offering a lamp, the devotee expresses the intention of removing the darkness of delusion and attaining the state of enlightenment.
- . 7. Incense (DHOOP): Incense is offered with the intention of stopping the cycles of mundane existence.
- . 8. Fruit (FAL): Fruit is offered with the intention of eventually attaining salvation - the supreme fruit of human life.

At the end of the worship, the supreme offering is made. It is called ARGHYA that means extremely precious. Making the last offering, the worshiper recites: I make this offering of ARGHYA - the combination of water, sandalwood, rice, flowers, rich food, lamp, incense and fruit, with the determination of unveiling the pristine attributes of my soul and of attaining the supreme ARIHANT state.

In sum, the objective of Jain worship is not to achieve any material success in any endeavor such as business or employment. The sole purpose of a Jain worship is to purify one's thoughts and feelings and to achieve self-realization. The aspirant attempts to realize that the self is identical with the object of worship - the pure soul. It is the process leading from JIN DARSHAN (concentration on the qualities of JIN - the victors of inner enemies) to NIJ DARSHAN (the realization of self).

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Jainism: Practices and Principles

(A quotation from A. L. Basham's article published in 'Sources Of Indian Tradition')

In everyday life the Jains have been much influenced by the Hindus. They often perform all the domestic rites of Hinduism, employing Brahmins for the purpose. They worship many of the Hindu gods, who are believed to bestow

temporal blessings, and they have their own versions of the most famous Hindu legends. Nevertheless Hinduism has made little impression on the heart of Jainism, which remains much as it was over two thousand years ago – an ancient science purporting to give an explanation of the whole universe and to show man his way through it to its topmost point, where the conquerors and completed souls dwell forever in omniscient bliss.

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