



DHARMA KE DASHA LAKSHANA

(TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGION)

English version of the Hindi Book

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The Great Festival of Ten Virtues

Whenever discussion on festivals is held, their relation is often established with eating drinking and playing. For example, on the day of 'Raksha--Bandhan', special dishes of 'Kheer' and 'Laddus' are served, Tops are played, 'Rakhi' is tied; on the day of 'Holi', special dishes are prepared, colours are sprinkled, 'Holi' is burnt; on the day of 'Deepawali', crackers are burst, lamps are lighted, 'Laddus' are offered (to celebrate the salvation day of the omniscient Lord Mahaveera) and sweets are exchanged.

But the Jaina-festivals, like 'Ashtanhika' and 'Das Lakshana' etc., have their relation with giving up of eating and playing and not with taking food and playing games. These are the festivals of continence and not of enjoyment; hence, are called great festivals. Their greatness lies in abstinence and not in amusement.

If you ask a jaina as to how is the great festival of the ten virtues celebrated, he will reply by saying that during these days people observe abstinence, worship the almighty (omniscient Lord), Observe vows, fasts etc. and do not eat vegetables. They spend their maximum time only in reading the scriptures and holding discussions on it. Everywhere discourses on the scriptures by learned scholars are organized. In these gatherings, the differentias of ten virtues, supreme forbearance etc; are explained. All people accept some kind of renunciation according to their capacity, offer donations and keep engrossed in various types of religious activities. Thus, a religious atmosphere is obtainable everywhere.

The festivals are of two kinds :

(i) Eternal and (ii) Periodical

We may also call them as permanent and temporary. The temporary festivals are also of 2 kinds:—

- (i) Those related with some particular persons.**
- (ii) Those related with some specific events.**

The festivals of 'Deepawali', 'Mahaveera Jayanti', 'Rama Navami', 'Janmashtmi' etc., are the festivals that are related to personages, because 'Deepawali' and 'Mahaveera Jayanti' are, respectively, related to Mahaveera's salvation and birth and 'Rama Navami' and 'Janmashtmi' are related to Ramas and Krishna's birth respectively.

The festivals of 'Raksha Bandhan', 'Akshaya Tritiya', 'Holi' etc., are classified as the festivals which are related to specific events, because, these are concerned with famous mythological events. The Indian National festivals of modern times, the Independence day and the Republic day, may be called as the festivals that are related to historical events.

The permanent (eternal) festivals are neither related to any personage nor to any specific event; they are, in fact, related to spiritual thoughts. The great festival of ten-virtues, i.e. 'Dasha Lakshna Maha Parva', is such an eternal festival which is related to soul's natural traits (qualities) of supreme forbearance etc. which emerge in it as a consequence of the termination of impure (contrary) modes like anger etc.

As a matter of fact, the festivals which are related to some events or to some personages, can not be found existing from beginningless time, because, their existence is not possible before the emergence of the related events or personages. Those can also not exist (last) upto endless time, because, whenever in the future, more important personages take birth or any important event takes place, people will start remembering the latter and celebrate festivals related to them and will forget the former ones. In future, the birth-day and the salvation day of the future 'Tirthankaras' will be celebrated and not of the present

ones. As we have more or less forgotten the past 24 'Tirthankaras', similarly, the future generation will also not be able to remember the present ones.

Howsoever important the events and the personages may be, those can not be universal and eternal. All of these have limitations with respect to their own region and time; these can not be everlasting. Therefore, only those festivals can be universal and eternal which are equally related to all living beings, with their emotions, and not related to any particular personage or event. "Dasha Lakshana Mahaparva" is one such great festival which is equally related with the emotions and sentiments of all living beings. Due to this reason, it is eternal, belongs to all and will be existing for ever. Its usefulness is universal and eternal.

The great festival of ten virtues ('Dasha Lakshana') does not belong to a particular sect; it is meant for all. May be, it is celebrated by the people of a particular sect (faith), yet, it is certainly not a sectarian festival, because, it is not based on any sectarian thoughts. It has a universal base. Relinquishing the impure (evil) thoughts and accepting the generous thoughts, forms its basis, which is equally beneficial to all. Obviously, therefore, this festival is not of Jains only but is of all and every one. Believing it to be a sectarian festival is, in itself, a sectarian outlook.

Another reason why this festival is of all is that all living beings (mundane souls) want to be happy and are afraid of miseries. The emotions, like anger etc., are the seeds of all miseries and are themselves irksome. The virtues, like supreme forbearance etc., are the seeds of happiness and are themselves blissful. Hence, for all people who are afraid of miseries and wish to be happy, the ten virtues of supreme forbearance etc., which emerge as a consequence of abstinence from anger etc., are highly adorable.

In this way, this great festival of ten virtues, owing to its being auspicious and a guide to the right path of salvation, is the festival of all.

The basis of the universality of such a great festival of ten virtues, whose sole objective is the evolution of passionless ten

virtues of supreme forbearance etc., that are devoid of anger and other emotions, lies in the fact that everywhere emotions like anger are treated as bad, harmful, and forbearance etc. as good and beneficial; which is that region where anger etc. are not treated as bad and forbearance etc. as good ?

Due to this very reason, it is eternal too, because, there is no such time when anger etc. (emotions) were not treated, are not treated, and will not be treated as worth giving-up and supreme forbearance etc. as worth possessing (adoptable). Obviously, its adoptability in all times is undoubtful. Distress and disturbance from anger etc. and happiness and peace from forbearance etc. were found to be resulting in the past, are resulting in the present, and will be found resulting in the future as well.

Because of the universal, everlasting usefulness and delightfulness of the ten virtues of supreme forbearance etc., the "Dasha Lakshana Mahaparva" is included in the category of eternal festivals and that is why it is a great festival.

Here, a doubt may arise that since this great festival is eternal i.e. is beginningless and endless, why is it mentioned in the scriptures that it has a beginning ? In the scriptures it is said that:—

"Some natural ups and downs are observed during the cyclic changes of time, which, according to Jaina faith, are known as 'Avasarpani' and 'Utsarpani', In 'Avasarpani', gradual deterioration and in 'utsarpani' gradual development (in all respects) takes place. Each 'Avasarpani and 'utsarpani' has got six divisions of time.

At the end of each "Avasarpani" period, when the fifth era ends and the sixth era begins, people become destroyers (carnivorous) by following 'Anarya Vratti' i. e. Wildly-life. After that, when "Utsarpani" begins, and the period of religious development ripens, various types of rains occur continuously for seven weeks, (49 days) starting from the first day of the month of 'Shravana' (August) by means of which, a good pleasing period emerges and again non-injurious civilized instinct Crops up in the people. In this way, the dawn of religion takes place, i.e. the religion restarts and in that atmosphere, upto ten days, adoration of the ten virtues of supreme forbearance etc., is specially

performed, and based on this, in each 'utsarpani', this great festival gets started".

This story tells us only how in each 'utsarpani' period the restarting of this festival takes place. By this story, the eternity of the great festival of ten virtues does not get affected.

This story itself is also an eternal story which has been repeated many times and will be repeated. Because, at the end of the fifth era of 'Avasarpani', whenever people will get separated from these virtues of supreme forbearance etc., and in the beginning of "Utsarpani" period, whenever it will be repeated (reobserved), in that era, the great festival of "Dasha Lakshna Mahaparva" will get started in this way. In fact, this story is related to the beginning of the era and not to the beginning of this festival. In this way, from eternity, through various eras, this festival is being celebrated and will continue to be celebrated in future also.

Its eternity (beginninglessness and endlessness) has already been proved in the scriptures and is logical too. Because, ever since this 'Jiva' (embodied soul) is there, it is possessing a virtuous nature of forgiveness etc.. though, simultaneously, is also holding, ever since, the emotional foulness, anger etc. in its modification. On account of this, although possessing knowledge and blissful nature, it is ignorant and unhappy. Since it is unhappy from beginningless time, the necessity of happiness is also there ever-since. As all 'Jivas' (embodied mundane souls) are from the beginningless period, the necessity of virtues like supreme forbearance etc., the root cause of happiness, is also from the beginningless period.

Similarly, although, infinite souls got liberated from the state of anger etc. (alien dispositions) by taking shelter of the supreme forbearance and other virtues of the self, yet, infinite-times more souls than the liberated ones are still lying in the states of foulness, anger etc. and are unhappy. Therefore, even today, there is an immense need of the adoration of these virtues. Moreover, in the distant future, too, there will be many unhappy souls holding emotional foulness, anger etc; hence, in future also, the usefulness of these virtues is beyond doubt.

In the whole of the universe, everywhere, and at all times, anger etc. (foul emotions) are the causes of unhappiness and forbearance etc. (passionless activity of the soul) are the causes of happiness (spiritual bliss). It is due to this fact that this great festival of "Dasha Lakshana" is eternal, universal and is for all. May be, that all do not adore it, but, by its own nature, it is of all, it was of all and it will remain of all.

Although, this festival, like "Ashtanhika" Mahaparva, falls thrice in a year—viz., according to Hindi months, (i) From 'Bhadrapad Shukla' 5 to 14, (ii) From 'Magh Shukla' 5 to 14 and (iii) From 'Chaitra Shukla' 5 to 14, yet, it is celebrated splendidly in whole of the country only in the month of 'Bhadrapad Shukla' 5th day to 14th day. The remaining two are not known even to many of the Jainas. In the ancient times, during rainy season, business used to become dull, naturally, due to insufficiency of the means of communication. Moreover, the growth of 'Jivas' (small living beings), during rainy season, gets highly increased. It being a non-violent society, the monks (naked possessionless saints) of Jainas stop moving from one village to another village during the four months of rainy season and use to stay at one place only. 'Shravakas' (the householders), too, move (make tours) very rarely. Hence, the natural availability of the company of virtuous persons, and of the time, seem to be the main reasons for celebrating this festival on a greater scale in the month of 'Bhadrapad' only.

Normally, the purpose of each religious festival is to increase passionlessness in the soul, but, this festival, is chiefly related with the adoration of the self-attributes. Therefore, this—the festival of passionlessness—is really the festival of continence and observance of religious rites.

'Parva' means an auspicious time, i.e., the occasion for chastity. In fact, the manifestation of passionless state through realization of the nature of the self (soul) is the real festival, because, that alone is auspicious for the self and is the occasion for chastity.

'Dharma' (the serenity of passionlessness) crops up in the self (soul) not in the day or date, but on whichever date the serenity of passionlessness, in the form of supreme forbearance

etc., emerges in the self (soul), that very date is termed as a festival. The basis of religion (Dharma) is the soul and not the date.

The ten-fold adoration of the conduct attribute ('Charitra Dharma'), based on realization of the true nature of the self (soul), is, verily, the 'Dasha Lakshana Dharma'. Owing to its being concerned only with the evolution of ten virtues in the self (soul), it is called the great festival of ten commandments i.e. 'Dasha Lakshana Maha Parva'.

Since beginningless period, each soul has been continually unhappy and disturbed due to wicked emotions of the self (Soul), such as, anger, pride, deceit, greed, falsehood, incontinence etc., evolved in the self. The only means of ending inquietude and unhappiness (miseries) is self-adoration. After knowing and believing in the nature of the self, by keeping engrossed in it, by keeping absorbed in it, the supersensitive self-bliss and real serenity is achieved. The virtues of supreme forbearance etc. develop of their own in the heart of such an aspirant of the self (soul). It is, therefore, clear that the aforesaid festival is concerned with self-adoration (self-contenance), or, in otherwords, with the adoration of the ten virtues of supreme forbearance etc.

Forbearance etc., ten virtues, are also called the ten religions (or the ten-commandments). These ten religions are:—

1. Supreme Forbearance—'Uttama Kshama'.
2. Supreme Modesty—'Uttama Mardava'.
3. Supreme Straight-forwardness—'Uttama Arjava'.
4. Supreme Purity—'Uttama Shaucha'.
5. Supreme Truth—'Uttama Satya'.
6. Supreme Self-restraint—'Uttama Samyama'.
7. Supreme Austerity—'Uttama Tapa'.
8. Supreme Renunciation—'Uttama Tyaga'.
9. Supreme Non-attachment—'Uttama Akinchanya'.
10. Supreme Celibacy—'Uttama Brahmacharya'.

In fact, these are not the ten religions, but these are the ten characteristics (differentias) of religion. In brief, these are also proclaimed as ten religions. In which-soever soul the

state of religion (serenity), in the form of self belief, self-knowledge and self-absorbedness, is manifested, in that very soul, these ten distinct Characteristics of religion do get evolved of their own. These are the religions, characteristics, symptoms which are evolved as a consequence of self adoration.

Although, the abovementioned ten religions are the pure (passionless) modifications of Conduct attributes (Charitra Guna), yet, the word 'Supreme', prefixed to each religion, indicates the inevitable existence of right belief and right knowledge. The purport of this is that these pure (natural) modifications of conduct attribute are manifested in the enlightened self, possessed of right belief, and never in the ignorant self having perverse belief.

As a matter of fact, conduct (self-absorbedness) is the real direct religion. Right belief and right knowledge are the roots of the tree of conduct. As a tree, without its roots, can not remain standing, can not grow, or, in other words, as the existence of a tree without roots is not 'possible, similarly, the tree of 'samyak Charitra' (right conduct) without the roots of 'Samyag-darshan' (right belief) and 'Samyagjnan' (right knowledge) can not remain standing, can not grow, or, in other words, without these two limbs, even the existence of 'Samayak Charitra' can not, at all, be imagined.

Although, in the universe, many people who are devoid of self-belief and self-knowledge, may be seen engrossed in lessening the passions etc. due to fear of bondage and the greed of taking birth in heaven or attaining beatitude or worldly honour, prestige etc., yet, they can not be regarded as the possessors of the ten religions in the form of forbearance etc.

In this connection, the thoughts of the great learned person, Pundit Todarmaji, are worth viewing :—

“Moreover, due to fear of bondage etc., or, due to desire of birth in heaven or attaining liberation (beatitude), many persons do not indulge in passional acts (don't get angry), but, in them, the intention of indulging in passional acts does not vanish. For example, some one may not commit adultery due to fear of law, or due to greed of good reputation (renownedness) but,

he is not called an abdicator of adultery. Similarly this man is also not an abdicator of anger etc.”

“How does, then, one become an abdicator ? On account of the substances appearing to be good or bad, emotions like anger etc. are evolved; when, through the practice (study) of scripture- ‘Tattva Jyan’- ,nothing appears to be good or bad, anger etc. do not arise automatically; then only, the real religion gets evolved.”¹

Thus, the absence (non-emergence) of anger etc., alongwith right belief and right knowledge is, infact, the religion of supreme forbearance etc.

Although, the aforesaid tenreligions are described, at different places in the scriptures, from the religion of saint (Muni Dharma) point of view, yet, these (religions) are not simply to be observed only by the saints (Munis), but, the house-holders, ‘Shravaka.’, should also observe them necessarily according to their spiritual Status. ‘One ought to observe’ is only a way of telling; in fact, the point is that these are automatically found emerged in the life of an enlightened house-holder as per his spiritual status, and the observance of these (ten religions) becomes his natural way of life.

In ‘Tattvartha Sutra’, Supreme forbearance etc. (tenreligions) are described alongwith control (Gupti), carefulness (Samiti), contemplations (12 Bhavana) and conquest-by-endurance (‘Parishaha Jaya’). All these are related with the religion (duties) of monks. This is the reason why these are described only in superlative form at different places. Getting perplexed with this approach, their non-Observance (ignoring them) by lay men (house holders---‘Shravakas’) is not desirable.

If the ten religions, in the form of supreme forbearance etc., of the order of the absence of three intensest (Anantanubandhi etc.) types of passions, are manifested in the monks (naked possess'ionless saints), then, the ten religions in the form of supreme forbearance etc. of the order of the absence of two intensest

1. मोक्ष मार्ग प्रकाशक, पृष्ठ 228.

(Anantanubandhi etc.) types of passions shall be manifested in the right-knowledged 'Shravakas' (house holders) of 5th spiritual stage. Similarly, the ten religions in the form of supreme forbearance etc. of the order of the absence of only one intensest ('Anantanubandhi') type of passion, shall be manifested in the vowless right faithed Jivas (souls) of the 4th spiritual stage. Supreme forbearance etc. are not found in the ignorant-self (false believer). His passions might have got lessened to whatever low degree, but the aforesaid ten religions (virtues) can not be found in him because the aforesaid ten religions are the modifications which emerge in the absence of passions and not by the reduced intensity of passions. Whatever gradual differences are seen due to reduced intensity of passions, those are termed in the scriptures as 'Leshyas' (thought paints) and not as religion ('Dharma') Religion is the name of natural dispositions originated in the absence of perverse belief and passions; it is not a consequence of reduced intensity of passions.

Exposition of these ten religions (virtues) is possible from various points of view, e. g. from 'Munis' (naked possessionless saints) and 'Shravakas' (house-holders) point of view, from exact real ('Nishchaya') and conventional ('Vyavahara') point of view, from internal and external-states point of view etc.

Out of these, each religion (virtue) requires to be explained independently and in detail. A detailed study of each religion (virtue) is being given ahead.

Therefore, now, I conclude here with this holy contemplation that may all souls, on the auspicious occasion of this great festival of 'Dasha Lakshana' attain eternal happiness (self-bliss) by understanding and grasping clearly the aforesaid ten distinct characteristics of religion and by getting engrossed completely in the same.