

23. Agamoddharak Shri Ghasilalji Maharaj

Introduction:

Jain Acharya and a literary giant Shri Ghasilalji Maharaj was a great intellectual in Sthanakvasi Jain community. He was truly detached with worldly affairs and was famous for his deep study of Jainism. Major part of his life was engaged in writing commentaries on Jain scriptures and various literary activities. There is hardly a mendicant who has worked so much as Shri Ghasilalji Maharaj in the near past for literary creations and scriptural writings. He was a beloved disciple of the great Acharya Shri Jawaharlalji Maharaj. He has enlightened several key-issues in Jainism and Jain literature and has established his profound ability and very deep thinking. His literary creations reflect his holy, restrained and vowful life. His personality is evident from his thinking and his way of life.

Birth and Caste:

Shri Parasram and Shrimati Chaturabai were his grandparents; while Shri Kaniramji and Shrimati Vimlabai were his parents. The family had good agricultural land and property. The family was very happy and known well in the village. He was very simple at heart. They were eager to help others. He earned money by honest and truthful ways. The family was devoted to god. Shrimati Vimlabai was duly faithful to her husband; she was good-natured and was loved by everybody. Pandit Ghasilal was born in 1885 at Banol village near Jashwantgadh in Mewar region, which is well known for giving great warriors to the country. Shri Ghasilal's personal appearance was impressive. He was fair with shining face. Anybody who saw him predicted that the boy would be a great man in future. The astrologers said that the boy would have extra-ordinary fame in all matters of life. The parents fixed his name as Ghasilal, which was as per his birth-time stars.

Education and Culture:

Ghasilal did not go to any school for learning. He learnt everything from nature only. Every place was a spiritual school for him and all moments were his study-time. The world is an open book for great men and every event, every change and every thought brings new teaching for them. The child Ghasilal, thus, studied in the lap of nature. He learnt the virtues of tolerance, real, renunciation, satisfaction, and appreciation of other's virtues, fearlessness, simplicity, equal feelings for all and self-support from nature itself. The people of the village were also giving him their love naturally as if they knew the future of this boy.

Ghasilal used to think deeply on all events of his life as also of others. He was playing usual games with other boys but his attitude was exclusive. He went away in nearby forests to think about life and nature. He would sit under a tree for hours together. He lost his father at the age of ten and mother at the age of 12. As if the nature wanted him to be self-supporting from his early life.

Great men look at miseries with interest. They think that some way will emerge from these difficulties. Ghasilal also cultivated the virtues of patience and tolerance from his boyhood. He was staying with one of his relatives at Jashwantgadh. Acharya Shri Jawaharlalji Maharaj came in the nearby village Tarpal in those days after completing his monsoon at Udaipur. He had a small group of his disciples with him. The boy Ghasilal happened to meet him there. Ghasilal was deeply influenced by his preachings even though he heard religious sermons for the first time in his life. Seeing all these detached persons with Acharya Shri Jawaharlalji Ghasiram also turned to adopt the life of renunciation. Ghasiramji expressed his desire to adopt Dixa and then Acharya Shri told him how the life of a mendicant was full of pains and troubles. Acharya Shri told him, "It is very difficult and painful to follow vows but that is the only way to be free from the bondage of deeds". Ghasilalji atonce replied, "I shall suffer all pains with total determination to follow the restrained life because restraint

always brings happiness in this life as also in future lives." Seeing that Ghasilal was firm in his words, Acharya Shri allowed him to stay with the group of his disciple for some days. At last, Acharya Shri Jawaharlalji granted him Dixa in 1952 at Jashwantgadh. After a few days, some thieves took away his new clothes while he was moving around in the evening. The new mendicant Ghasilal proved his patience and tolerance even at this time. This was the first test of his restrained life and he proved his worth. This was the bright sign of his coming life of renunciation.

Study and Penance:

He started moving in several places in Marwar with his preceptor. He passed his first monsoon of 1903 at Jodhpur. The young mendicant Ghasilal began his efforts to take up rigorous penances and secure knowledge from whatever corner he can. In the beginning his learning-progress was quite slow. He took several days to memorize even one stanza or a lesson. But he could grasp his lessons speedily as the days passed. The cover over his knowledge began to weaken and as a result he could memorize DashVaikatik Sootra in the first monsoon itself and began with the study of Uttaradhyayan Sootra. He spent his second monsoon at Beawar, third at Bikaner, forth at Udaipur, fifth at Gangapat, sixth at Ratlam, seventh at Chandla, eighth at Jaora and ninth at Indore. He committed to memory several chapters and pleasures of many scriptures. During his monsoon at Indore, he studied Sanskrit Margopadeshika, Hitopadesh, Siddhanta Kaumudi, Urdu, Persian, Arabi and grammar in Prakrit. He went on studying scriptures day and night without rest, and studied well the principles of scriptures, Darshan, Astrology etc. He had unusual poetic skill and many of his poems were being recited in congregations.

After the monsoon of Indore, his preceptor Shri Jawaharlalji Maharaj wanted to make his beloved disciple Shri Ghasilal more and exceptionally learned person and hence decided to moved in south towards Maharashtra. Accordingly, he spent his tenth monsoon at Ahmednagar. While moving in this region, Ghasilalji learnt Marathi language and studied the literature about Saints Gnaneshwar, Tukaram, Namdeo and others. He committed several poems and other creations of these saints to memory. This is indicative of his outstanding power of learning. He was a broad-hearted man looking towards everyone with sympathy.

After this, he spent his 11th monsoon at Junner, 12th at Ghodnadi, 13th at Jamgam, 14th at Ahmednagar, 15th at Ghodnadi, 16th at Miri and 17th at Hivada. He spent many more monsoons in Maharashtra even after this. He came to Saurashtra after 1944 and spent some monsoons in this region. After finishing his 55th monsoon at Viramgam, he came to Ahmedabad from 1958 and stayed here continuously for next 16 monsoons. Here he did some writing on scriptures. He had acquired knowledge of 16 languages in addition to the study of Grammar, Logic (Nyaya), Darshan and Literature. He spent his monsoons in many regions of India and many non-Jains also took advantage of his vast knowledge. Accepting requests from several devotees from all over India, he started the work of translating 32 scriptures and stayed continuously at Ahmedabad to complete this work without interruptions. He at last completed this task by 16 years' hard labor. 27 scriptures are laid before the people duly printed in four languages and many people have read them with interest. His translation was multi-faced and this was the very first effort in the history of Jain literature. The original part of the scripture was put up first in the form of prose and poetry and then after detailed comments and hard meanings. After that there were translations in Hindi and Gujarati. Such exceptional arrangement was unique in the creation of Jain literature.

The Jain community will never be free from the obligation of Shri Ghasilalji because it only because of his pains that every Jain is able to read Jain scriptures in Gujarati and Hindi. The Sthanakvasi Jain community is particularly obliged in Shri Ghasilalji.

Awards and Honors:

The ruler of Kolhapur was extremely pleased with the vast knowledge of Shri Ghasilalji and he had awarded him with the titles of Kolhapur Raj Purush and Shasanacharya. The Karachi Jain Sangh gave him titles of Jain Diwakar and Jain Acharya because of his total renunciation penance and restraint.

Literary Work: A Big Lot:

Ghasilalji was a great saint of Sthanakvasi Jain community in particular. Following is a long list of his creations in Jain literature.

Eleven Ang Sootras: Spiritual phrases

- Acharang,
- Sootra Krutang,
- Sthanang,
- Samavayang,
- Vyakhya Pragnapti,
- Gnata Dharm Katha,
- Upasak Dashang,
- Ant Krudra Dashang,
- Anuttropapatik Dashang,
- Prashna Vyakaran,
- Vipak Sootra.

Commentaries on Agam Literature:

Achar chintamani	Anagar Dharma Mrut Varshini
Samayarth Bodhini	Sagar Dharma Sanjivni
Suvyakhya	Mooni Kumud Chandrika
Bhav Bodhini	Arth Bodhini Tika
Prameya Chandrika	Sudarshini Tika
Vipak Chandrika	

Literature of twelve sub-Agams:

1. Aupapatik	Piyush Varshini
2. Raj Prashniya	Subodhini
3. Jiva Bhigam	Prameya Dyotika
4. Pragnapana	Prameya Dyotika
5. Surya Pragnapti	Surya Gnypti Prakashika
6. Chandra Pragnapti	Chandra Pragnaptika
7. JambuDwip Pragnapti	Prakashika Vyakhya
8. Niraya vatika (Kalpika)	Sundar Bodhini
9. Kalpavatansika	Sundar Bodhini
10. Pushpika	Sundar Bodhini

11. Pushpa Choolika	Sundar Bodhini
12. Vrushina Dashang	Sundar Bodhini

Original Sootras:

1. Uttar Dhyayan	Priya Darshini
2. Dash Vaikalik	Achar Mani Manjusha Tika
3. Nandi Sootra	Gnan Chandrika
4. Anuyog Dwar	Anuyog Chandrika

Chhed Sootra

1. Neeshith	Choorni Bhagya Avachoori
2. Bruhad Kalpa	Choorni Bhagya Avachoori
3. Vyavahar	Bhashya
4. Dasha Shrut Skandh	Manu Harshini Tika

Avashyak Sootra: Mooni toshini

Shri Ghasilalji Maharaj has wrote exhaustive commentaries in Sanskrit on the 32 Sootras cited above and then he has translated his work in Hindi and Gujarati also. In addition to scriptural literature he has written many books on Nyaya (Logic), Grammar, Dictionary and poetry. His greatness and vast learning is evident from his works. He as made all efforts to put the Sthanakvasi Jain Literature to a very high position.

He was well invested with the virtues of simplicity, nobility, sweetness of speech, broad-heartedness, tolerance, self-supporting nature etc. It was for this reason that non-Jains respected him also. He has solved many quarrels between men and men in society. He was always for natural love, friendship and spiritual tolerance.

Last Days:

His life was nearing its end. He was not keeping well since December 1971. He stopped taking food during the last eight days of his life and accepted little water only. He adopted Sallekhana vow (fast unto death) on February 2, '73 at ten o'clock morning in the presence of Shri Chhotalalji, Shri Kanaiyalalji and Samastra Chaturvidh Sangh. He had completed 88 years of his life. He passed away on February,3 '73 -Thursday at 9-29 hours night at Sthanakvasi Upashraya of Saraspur Ahmedabad. Let us follow his preachings by mind, body and money because by that way only we will achieve good in ourselves.