

06. Guru Gopaldasji Baraiya

Introduction:

Just as Shri Shraddhanand and Rayjada Hansraj are in Arya Samaj and Sir Saiyad among Muslim Brotherhood, so is Pandit Gopaldasji Baraiya in Jain community. The Jain community was almost in darkness before the arrival of Panditji. The flag of Arya Samaj was not flying only in India but also in Arab-Iran. The Muslim and Christian religions were expanding with equal force. Shri Baraiyaji came to religions were expanding with equal force. Shri Baraiyaji came to resume the Jain community in such hard times. There will be no exaggeration to say that the souls of Shri Akalankdeva and Shri SamantBhadra were greatly pained with this painful condition of Jainism and they put in their extra-ordinary knowledge and power of scripture pleadings in Shri Baraiyaji and beat the drum of Jain Religion.

Birth, Childhood and Education:

Pandit Gopaldasji was born in Agra in 1867. His father, Laxmandas died when he was only two years of age and hence he could not study much but the mother gave him the best of impressions. He could study only up to seventh standard. It is worth to be noted that upto this age he did not have much interest in religion. He was in service of railway at Ajmer at the age of 19 and at that time he came into contacts with highly learned Jain gentleman Pandit Mohanlal. Gopaldasji was drawn towards Jainism with these contacts and he started studying Jain books. He left the railway-service after two years and started new service at the salary of Rs.20/- per month under Ray Bahadur Sheth Moolchandji where he had to supervise the construction work of various buildings. At Ajmer, he studied regularly for about six-seven years and with continuous hard working in study as also in service he mastered Laghu Kaumudi of Sanskrit grammar, some important sections of Jain grammar, Logic and principles of Justice (NyayDipika) etc. and then after started studying Gommatsar. Pandit Mathurdasji and Babu Vaijnathji helped and guided him very well in this task. He took up further study at the Pathshala (Religions school) of Bombay with Pandit Jivram Lallooram Shastri. He also studied Pariksha Mukh, Chandra Prati Kavya and Katantra-Vyakaran, Panch Dhyayi etc. with Pandit Baldevdasji.

Pilgrimage and Residence at Bombay:

In 1892, Sheth Moolchandji went for the pilgrimage of MoolBadri and Pandit Gopaldasji was with him. On his return journey, he came to Mumbai and felt that it was a good place for earning livelihood. He joined a European Company at the salary of Rs. 45 per month which was raised to Rs. 60 very shortly. During these years, his mother expired and he went to this native place without obtaining leave from his office. He was, therefore, removed from service but shortly reinstated because of his good record of previous service.

He worked as Commission Agent in jewellery after 1895 but it was difficult to maintain truth and honesty in this business and hence he stopped this work and then started to work as a broker in cotton, oil-seeds, silver etc. In V.S. 1902 he started working Adat (commission agent) at Morena with Gandhi Natha Rangji. He tried to work independently also for sometime in between but could not succeed. Now, he accepted service only for maintenance of his family

and dedicated himself for the service of the society. He did not care for rest, economic stability or prestige and worked hard for educational, social and religious activities in V.S. 1913, he was elected president of South Maharashtra Sabha. In V.S. 1918, he became ill due to excessive strains and died very peacefully.

Public Life and Works:

Pandit Gopaldasji Baraiya was the foremost torchbearer in Jain community. His public life begins from Mumbai. He established Digambar Jain Samaj in 14 with the help of Pandit Dhannalaji and then in 1897, Bharat Varshiya Digambar Jain Parikshalaya-i.e. Examination Board of India in unclothed Jain community-was also started and Pandit Gopaldasji himself took up its administration. In 1956, a periodical Jain Mitra was started and it was like a main pillar in the achievements of Pandit Gopaldasji. He started Jain school in Kundalpur with only two-three students and it is not well known as Jain Siddhanta Vidyalaya. This Vidyalaya has given many learned Pandits to Jain community who has taught many great Jain Shastras of Jainism to many students.

Considering his extra-ordinary contribution for the good of the society, the Government had appointed him as Honorary Magistrate of Morena. Then his outstanding services for Jain community and Jainism were also appreciated and the Provincial Council of Bombay, VadiGaj Kesri, awarded him the title of Syadvad Varidhi by the Jain Tattva Prakashini Sabha of Itava and Nyaya Vachaspati by the Sanskrit stalwarts of the Government Sanskrit College of Calcutta. His power of speech was astonishing and it was the main cause of his earning of so many awards. He could speak on any subject of principles continuously for two-three hours. Only highly learned Pandits could understand his lectures. He had been successful at the pleadings and discussions on many subjects but he had no systematic knowledge of Sanskrit and hence he did not enter into discussions with Sanskrit Pandits.

Contribution in Literature:

Panditji had no much of school or college learning. He did not know grammar completely, he had hardly studied under a teacher and yet by his own efforts, he studied extensively in almost all subjects and was honored as a great Pandit. He was a life-long student in search for knowledge. Since he was teaching the students in Jainism and other subjects, he had studied special and exceptional books so that he can answer the doubts expressed by his students. He was, thus, unparalleled and exceptionally learned man in Logic and Spirituality. His contribution in literature was mainly as under.

He wrote three great books:

1. Jain Siddhanta Darpan
2. Sushila Upanyas and
3. Jain Siddhanta Praveshika.

Jain Siddhanta Darpan is written in only one part and if it was written in all its parts, it would have been most important book in Jainism.

Sushila Upanyas is considered to be a very good Upanyas among such books of those days. Even if this is only an Upanyas-i.e. a guidebook, many serious subjects of Jainism is discussed in all details therein.

His exceptional contribution in Jain Literature is his Jain Siddhanta Praveshika. Even the most difficult and serious elements and principles are explained in simple language in this book so that a little learned man can also understand it properly. This book is as good as pocked dictionary for the students studying Jainism and those who are interested to know the essence of Jainism.

The life of Panditji and the main principles of Jainism which he followed can be seen briefly from his instructions and guidelines laid hereunder:

- If you want to be a true Anuvrati (Follower of Jainism), be free from fear.
- If you want to be free from fear, do not be in service of others but do your own business.
- If you want to be in discussions on religion even while being in business, you must maintain Anuvrat strictly. Then only your business will go well.
- If you want to follow Anuvrat, prescribe limitations for yourself.
- If you want to adopt limitations for yourself, let them come from your duties and responsibilities.
- Believe your duties as your right.
- Be rightful. Do not fight or cry for your rights.

Individual Character:

Panditji was of very high character. He was not addicted with anything. He was insistent on pure and holy food and drinks. He was, therefore, many times seen as orthodox. His clothings were also very simple. Hardly anyone could know from his dress that he was a great Pandit of Jainism. He never earned money through religious rites. He was accepting only travelling expenses. He did and said whatever he felt to be true without being influenced by rich or so-called great persons. He was, therefore, repelled by many of such persons.

He was totally selfless. He always came forward to help others. These were his greatest virtues. He did religious deeds for his own satisfaction. He worked hard for the development of Jain literature, Jain Principles and Jain religion. He used to work till late up to ten or eleven at night if circumstances called for without taking much care of his health. The work of administration of Jain Schools and other institutions brought him great burden of constant activities. He was peace loving, thoughtful, patriot and sincere to his responsibilities. He liked to stay in loneliness. He collected many books, he could remember many things at a time, he was simple and kind. He loved Hindi language very much.

Important Events of His Life:

He loved his students. He insisted for truth, hard work, simplicity, broad-heartedness, honesty and character. Two important events of his life are worth to be known by us and they are given hereunder:

- Baraiyaji was in service of Sheth Ray Bahadur at the salary of Rs. 20 per month before he came up in social field. Once, Sheth Saheb started for pilgrimage and he took Baraiyaji with him for lectures and discussions on religion and for maintaining account of money etc. Ray Bahadur sent him to buy railway tickets on one occasion. Baraiyaji not only brought the tickets but also paid luggage charges for the luggage with them. Ray Bahadur Saheb felt it seriously ill that such a great man, as he had to pay the luggage charges. Baraiyaji had to hear many good and bad words from Sheth Ray Bahadur. Baraiyaji was said to be senseless. How can Baraiyaji continue where cheating, fraud and falsehood are the pillars for prosperity? Even though, Baraiyaji was in financial hardship, he left the service of Ray Bahadur.
- Acharya Vrata (i.e. to keep away from theft and cheating) was one of the most essential vows out of the five major vows of Jainism. Once Panditji came from Mumbai to Agra with his family. After some days while seeing the account of expenses, he came to know that his servant had not taken the railway ticket for a child of three years of the family. He felt much pain in his mind and heart. He, atonce, went to the stationmaster and begged pardon for the mistake he put up the cost of the ticket on his table. The stationmaster persuaded him very much saying that it was true that he should have taken a half ticket for a child of more than two and a half years but in the present times, hardly any one follows this rule. He was very simple and plain-hearted. Please take back this money, otherwise he would be considered to be a fool among his friends and relatives. How can Panditji accept such an explanation? He returned leaving the money on the table of the stationmaster.

Baraiyaji was a great observer of five major vows. He was sincere and truthful in maintaining these vows.

Family Life:

Panditji was never happy in his family life. He was married at the age of 19 only when he was at Ajmer. He had one son, one daughter-Kaushalyabai and one more son Manikchand respectively. The first son died and lives much after his birth. His wife was not co-operative. She always created quarrels in the family. She did not contribute in any way for increasing the prestige of Panditji. She did not serve him well even in his sickness. We remember the wife of Socrates if we look at this woman.

Conclusion:

Totally an ordinary person in appearance, Panditji was really a very great man. He gave new life and look to Jainism. He had internal pride and satisfaction of his studies and learning. He worked hard for development and expansion of Jainism for about 25 years by moving at Kashi and other districts of United Province, Chhatarpur of Madhya Pradesh, Katni, Raipur, Indore and other districts, Jaipur of Rajasthan, Ajmer, Shetrunjaya, other places of pilgrimage, three major cities of India, viz. Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta etc. He took foremost part in Religious discussions, social institutions, establishment of Panch Kalyanak idols, up-lift of society and so on. People were deeply attached and attracted to him for his services in Jainism.

Late Pandit Manikchandji Kaundeya, late Pandit Bansidhar Nyayalankar, late Pandit Khoobchandji Shastri, late Pandit Devkinandanji Shastri, late Pandit Makakhanlalji Shastri and late Pandit Kailashchandrajji of the previous generation and Shri Pandit Jagan Mohanlalji, Pandit

Darbarilal Kothiyaji, Pandit Foolchandji Shastri and Pandit Pannalalji etc. of the present generation were the sources of inspiration for Pandit Gopaldasji Baraiya. Pandit Gopaldasji Baraiya was the religious teacher of Shri Ganesh Prasadji Varni and other religious leaders of his time. Even though Shri Ganesh Prasadji is not with us to day by his mortal body, he remains with us through the unending line of his followers and disciples.

Religion: High Thinking of Guru Gopaldasji:

The one, who insults and ridicules other religions through the pride of his own religion, really insults his own religion. The only purpose of worldly happiness (Public and personal) is religion.

When a person buys an earthen water-pot, he tests it by striking fingers on it repeatedly. In this way a man who turns to adopt a religion, he must test that religion upto his satisfaction and then only adopt it. A person taking up a work in hand must first examine its fruitfulness; otherwise his labor will go in Vain. Our soul becomes beautiful, simple, attractive, bright, impressive, peaceful and high by the effects of religion. The soul earns high credit and respects from others.

One cannot earn religion by partnership with any or by payment of money because it is the nature of substance. Religion can be achieved mainly by experience.

The great man having withdrawn from worldly subjects and pleasures is enormously happy. The Indras and Chakravarties do not even a croreth part of this happiness by the pleasures of subjects and objects. So if you want real happiness, you must follow religion because it is the only cause of happiness. The greatness of religion cannot be expressed by words. Jainism is not for specific persons of certain castes or creeds. It belongs to everybody, it saves everybody and none can capture it by him.

Wealth and Charity:

A fool gets golden ornaments and jewellery by earning money, a greedy man keeps his wealth under the ground, a man of ill habits wastes his wealth in evil deeds, a charitable person makes charity by his wealth while an intelligent person uses his money for the good of the people and advancement of religion.

Money earned by truth methods should be used in charity by sympathy and good will. Charity of knowledge is the best charity; you will your hunger only once while by earning knowledge the soul gets permanent happiness and salvation.

Education:

If students are taught only religion, they will not be able to maintain themselves and their families and therefore, practical knowledge must be imparted alongwith the knowledge of religion.

Where both these types of knowledges are given to students and where rich persons are in good number, that society is considered to be great, while the other societies and castes come to a lower status.

There are two main parts in the development of human life. (I) Personal development and (ii) Social or Public development. For both these types of developments, knowledge or learning,

money and unity are necessary. Jealousy, false pride and ill practices are the main obstacles in development. Human life becomes a success with good highest impressions (Sanskar) long-term development is not possible.

Subjective Pleasures:

The pleasures coming from senses and subjects lead to pains and miseries. To go for these pleasures is to go in the mouth of Kaal-death. Our soul suffers severe pains merely because of his longing for subjective pleasures. There is no happiness at all where the soul believes to be happy. The enemies in the form of subjects and worldly pleasures cause much more pains that are caused by the attacks of tigers and lions.

If you have sincere desire for real happiness, you must be away and detached from worldly way of living life and think for salvation. Shun subjects and run for knowledge. Leave away sexual pleasure and seek for eternal happiness of Moksha or salvation.