

08. VidyaVaridhi Shri Champatray Barrister

VidyaVaridhi Shri Champatray Barrister is one who has put in his entire mind, body and wealth for the expansion of Jainism in foreign countries. He believed in Jain scriptures very deeply and he was considered to be a determinant follower of Jainism of modern age who has engaged all his might for the development of Jain scriptures.

Childhood and Study:

There are many Jains living in Delhi. They have their independent business or they have are engaged as personal secretaries of kings, emperors and ministers. Some are dealing in jewellery also.

Shri Champatray was born in the year around 1872 AD in Chainsukhdasji Haveli of Delhi. Lala Chandramalji and Shrimati Parvatidevi were his parents. The family had deep Jain impressions since long traditions and hence the virtues like daily seeings of gods at Jain temples, worship, reading of scriptures, muttering of gods' names on rosary, avoiding eating at night and keeping of promises at any cost etc. were naturally inherited by the child. Champatray had three elder brothers but all of them had died in very young age. Champatray, therefore, got the love of his parents as their only child. But, unfortunately, his mother also died when he was only six years of age and Lala Sohanlal Bankelal, the elder brother of his father adopted Champatray as his son. Lala Sohanlalji was considered to be one of the richest men in Delhi in those days.

Champatrayji was put up to a private school named Kala Mahal for learning with his good deeds of previous lives; Champatray was healthy and charming. He was very intelligent also. He passed is matriculation examination in first class and therefore, he was admitted to the famous saint Stephen College of Delhi. Since he was very outstanding in his studies, he was sent to England in 1892 for the study of barristership and he returned to India in 1897 after achieving that degree.

Family Life and Business:

As per the prevailing practices of the time, Champatrayji was married at his age of 13 with the daughter of Lala Pyarelalji who was the Sarpanch of Delhi Jain Samaj and President of Delhi Bar Association. But destiny was quite otherwise. The girl with whom he was married was found to be mad and she never came to stay with Champatrayji. Champatrayji declined to remarry and thus, adopted life long celibacy.

During his stay in England, for the study of barristership, he was very much impressed by the English culture and even after coming back to India, he was considering himself to be highly learned, cultured and progressive man. He was very much famous as a great advocate of law within a few years and then he was appointed as chief-barrister in the criminal department of the High Court of Avadh. Even with so much success, he was never away from honesty, integrity and truthfulness. He accepted very few cases and refused to handle undeserving cases. He encouraged junior advocates and he was popularly known as uncle Jain.

Events Leading to Change in Life:

Shri Champatrayji was very much attached to his uncle-in-law Lala Rangilalji but with his accidental death in young age, Champatrayji was deeply moved. His mind was not convinced of this death by any arguments. He read some books of Swamy Ramtirth but when Babu Devendrakumarji residing at Aara gave him some Jain scriptures to read in 1913 AD and when he studied them very deeply he was at some peace. His confusion was resolved. His life took a turn. He left wearing suits, shoes, neckties etc. of barristeric attire and became a propagator of religion, a saint, and a godly-minded man. He adopted simplicity in life. He was smoking 25 cigarettes a day but now he did not smoke. He was now reading, thinking, meditating and reminiscing peacefully and in loneliness for eternal peace in life. Now, only this was his goal of loneliness for eternal peace in life. Now, only this was his goal of lie. This was 180° turn in his life-style. He was about 40-42 years of age in these days. He started working vigorously to expand the Jainism because with this knowledge only he was able to be at peace of mind and he wanted that all other disturbed and unhappy persons should also achieve peace like him.

Service to Society and Religion:

Shri Champatrayji First of all started experiments to purify his own life before turning to improve others. He adopted non-violence, truth and other Anuvratas-five major vows of Jainism. He was so honest that even if he had one or two kilograms of excessive weight of kits and luggage with him while travelling in railway, he atonce paid for it. When he declined for second marriage and later when he was pressed to adopt a son, he sternly said that man is great by his own deeds and not by the size of his family. He spent almost all his property for the advancement and expansion of religion and knowledge. At last, he had rupees 2,14,785 and he established a Trust for utilizing this amount in the activities of propagating good literature among the people. He never longed for fame or money and when he was honored by the title of VidyaVaridhi or Jain Darshan Diwakar, he advised the Jain community not to arrange such functions and waste money for unfruitful activities. In 1926 AD he stopped all activities for earning money.

Thus, Shri Champatrayji first purified his own life and then completely surrendered for the service of the society. When the Digambar Jain Mahasabha failed to adopt liberal policies and reforms to suit with the modern days in 1923, Akhil Bharatiya Digambar Jain Parishad was established and Champatrayji worked as its convenor and life-long member. He drew many young men also to work for the Parishad.

As regards the protection of the holy place of SametShikhar, Shri Champatrayji's contribution has been very much valuable. He also worked for the constitutional consent for the movement of Digambar mendicants (mendicants without clothes), permission of bringing out Jain chariots in circular processions, to draw the attention of the parliament at London against the cruelties and excesses at Kudchi, research in Jain archeology and many other problems of Jainism. Shri Champatrayji, thus, expressed his true and inherent love towards Jain community by actually working for it.

Great Lover of Jain Literature:

The life-message of Shri Champatrayji is expressed as under: Oh Jains! Your religion is connected with every living animate and non-living thing and therefore it is scientific. You must read your scriptures as if you prepare for examination in them, experience yourselves its

principles which are eternally true and present that religion in the most modern ways steadfastly, honestly and without prejudices. By doing this, even an ordinary man will be attracted to it and follow it.

You will have to prepare honest and young men to accomplish this work. They will explain the religious principles in English abroad and in different languages in India. One central university is necessary to prepare experts in various subjects like Languages, Grammar, Logic, Science, Sociology, History, Spiritual branches like Yoga, Meditation etc. For maintaining good administration of this university we will have to put aside trifling matters of family life and adopt non-violence, renunciation and even detachment. Only in this way, we will be able to show to the world that Jainism is capable of being a world religion. He did not accept that Jainism belonged to certain castes or communities. Jainism is for all and for all times. It is the only system by which truth can be propagated and established.

He stayed in America and Europe for many years. He created literature in modern style. He translated many Jain books into English and the important out of them are as under:

- Key to knowledge
- Confluence of Opposites
- Fundamentals of Jainism
- Householder's Dharm
- Jainism and World problems
- Cosmology: old and new

He presented the principles of Jainism in his characteristic modern style. He studied these principles in consideration with these of other religions so that people of other religions can also read them with interest. It was because of his deep knowledge of various religions that the Religion Conference of Kashi had honored him by awarding title of VidyaVaridhi. He started library of Jain books in London so that Jain literature may be available in foreign countries. He had sent many Jain books to foreign universities as a gift so that interest can be inculcated in Jainism.

Last Journey of Lonely Warrior:

Shri Champatrayji was engaged in many religious activities. He moved very much in India and many foreign countries. He was now about 60 of age and was keeping unwell since 1937. He, therefore, decided to return to India and die in India. His friends in England persuaded him very much that tuberculosis can be better treated in England but he did not submit and returned to India. He took treatment at Delhi for sometime and then at Mumbai. But no medicine worked on him.

During the last few months he went to Karachi for treatment. He was well here for sometime but the disease went on increasing and at last on 2nd June, 1942 he left this worthless world. The whole Jain community was unhappy with this sad news because with his passing away the work of expanding religion in foreign countries came to halt atonce.

Gems of His Thoughts:

- Selflessness and sacrifice are invariably necessary for the up-lift of Jain religion. We need not fear of cruelty or excesses but need to fight for justice and protection of religion. Even Lord Rama had to fight to save Sita. Shri Rama, Sugriva and Hanuman were the great men whose souls were on March towards Moksha-salvation. Non-violence is not cowardice but it is the best instrument to gain bravery.
- It is not necessary to go to Jain temples for a show or for prestige. Jain temples are not the places where beggars live. They are the sources of inspiration for those who desire to attain Moksha-salvation, for those who want to be eternally free and for those who want to be detached with this world.
- The Jain Religion is a Parasmani-a stone, which turns everything to gold on its touch. It makes an unholy, ignorant and uncivilized soul as pure as gold of total purity.