

LIFE OF A JAIN SAINT **(Digamber Tradition)**

A Jain Saint (Muni or Monk) dedicates his life towards spiritual purity and enlightenment through a disciplined mode of life founded upon the traditions of non-violence to all living creatures. The life of a Jain saint is a wonder in itself and a unique experiment in the art-of-living with no worldly possessions. The path followed by a Jain Saint is the path towards ultimate happiness (Moksha = liberation from sufferings due to the cycle of birth, death & rebirth). Given below is a list of their basic, daily and special practices that help understand their life with very busy schedule and the underlying principles that guide these practices.

Basic Practices

A Jain saint follows certain basic and secondary practices. There are 28 basic practices consisting of 5 complete vows, 5 carefulness, control over 5 senses, 6 daily essentials and other 7 primary virtues.

- **5 Vows:** Five complete vows in the activities of his mind, body & speech related to
 1. Non-violence
 2. Truth
 3. Non-stealing
 4. Celibacy
 5. Renunciation of possessions/ attachments.
- **5 Carefulness:** With a view of not harming other living beings a saint is very careful in
 1. Walking
 2. Speech
 3. Scrutiny of food
 4. Sitting and picking/ placing things
 5. Disposal of excretions
- **5 Senses:** Desires of senses lead one to thoughts of attachments & aversions, which leads to bondage of karmas. A saint constantly controls desires of his five senses: touch, taste, smell, seeing and hearing in order to restrain sensual interest.
- **6 Essentials:** These are performed to stay connected with their soul every moment of their day
 1. Practice of equanimity and bowings to five supreme souls three times a day,
 2. Recite eulogies in praise of 24 Great Omniscient/Preachers,
 3. Veneration to a Great Preacher,
 4. Confessing wrong activities of mind, speech and body and their rectification,
 5. Giving up undesirable passions and
 6. Contemplate on the nature of pure soul.
- **7 Virtues:** A monk considers his body similar to layer of clothes which changes with each birth. In order to remind himself the distinction between his soul & body they
 1. Pluck the hairs of his head, moustaches and beard by one's own hand
 2. Renounce all possessions including clothes (to avoid attachment to worldly materials)
 3. Renounce taking bath (practice non-violence even to the smallest organisms found in water)
 4. Short sleep on hard ground/wooden plank in one posture in the later part of the night (use maximum time towards their goal)
 5. Does not brush his teeth (keeping teeth clean is geared towards paying attention to their physical body)
 6. Taking food in palms in standing posture (using cutlery would become a possession)
 7. Single diet (food and water only once a day to keep his basic body functions to work while focusing on his goal)

The above 28 basic practices are observed in totality by each Jain Saint every second of their life.

The **secondary practices** include observance of 12 austerities and forbearance of 22 types of afflictions. Saints are categorized based on purity of conduct/austerities. They can have 18000 kinds of good conduct and follow 8.4 million secondary virtues.

Daily Practices

- **Early Morning Studies:** The Saint wakes up after 48 minutes of midnight and commences his later night self-study with a particular declaration of intend. He recites bowings to five supreme souls reciting relevant mantra nine times) and follows the small hymn of the scriptures. He then, declares his reverence to the head of saints, recites bowings and a small hymn of reverence to the head of saints.

With bowing to the sacred text, he starts studies and completes it before 48 minutes of the sunrise, followed by meditation/giving up attachment to body and with reverence to hymn of the scriptures.

Afterwards, the saint undertakes recital to rectify the transgressions during the night. There are four reverence hymn recitals- on liberated souls, confession of wrong passions, adoration of Lord Mahaveer and eulogy of Great Preachers. He absolves himself from the resolve made for the night, recites bowings and short devotional hymns. The vow of night stay in that place is thus concluded.

- **After Sunrise:** For 48 minutes beginning from sunrise, he involves in equanimity practice, recital of devotion to Jain idols, five supreme souls and meditation on the nature of soul. He performs veneration to the head of saints, recites short devotional hymn to liberated souls and to the head of saints. Thereafter, morning scriptural studies are undertaken until 48 minutes before noon.
- **Food:** A saint goes for seeking food with proper permission from his head of saints and takes food only if due process of invitation and devotion has been followed. He begins eating after fulfilling the vows of previous day. When completed, he renounces food until the next day by reciting bowings and devotional hymn. Later on, he goes to the head of saints, recites devotional hymn, accepts additional vows if any and does penance for faults during the process of seeking/ taking food.
- **Afternoon:** Afternoon studies are completed 48 minutes before the sunset. He recites hymn for penance, purifies himself from the defects observed during the day and resolves for the night stay at that place.
- **Pre-night:** Studies commence 48 minutes after sunset and concluded 48 minutes before the midnight. A Saint generally sleeps up to a maximum of 96 minutes for physical rest.

In brief, daily practices consist of 28 detachedly meditational postures – 12 for studies (devotion to scriptures and saint teachers in the beginning, eulogy of scriptures in the end, four times a day, 3 x 4), 6 for devotion to Jain Idols and five supreme souls in veneration of Lord thrice a day (2x3), 8 for devotional meditation postures (on liberated souls, confession of wrong passions, adoration of Lord Mahaveer and eulogy of Great Preachers) twice a day (4x2) and 2 for devotional hymn of the sages (resolving and terminating night stay).

Special Practices:

In addition to above basic and daily practices, a Saint observes certain special practices.

- His possessions only include
 - Pichhi (like a mini stick) with fallen peacock feathers to gently move tiny insects away from the places he walks, sits or from in between the pages of the scriptures, for saving their life, to practice non-violence
 - Kamandal is a vessel containing sterilized water for cleaning purpose.
 - Sometimes he asks for scriptures for knowledge enhancement, these scriptures belongs to the house holders or temples
- For the purpose of not getting attached to house holders around them:
 - Saints mostly live/move in a group. Do not stay at one place for long and move around in lonely places/jungles/caves etc., but stay at one place during four months of rainy season (generally June/July-October/November) so as to avoid injury to many tiny beings while walking.

- They do not address their family members or acquaintances by their relationships but address them as any other house holders.
- Walk barefoot and do not use any vehicle for movement from place-to-place.
- Saints do special recitations on Jain festivals and auspicious days on the life of Great Preachers.
- Write/preach when needed and do not speak at night.
- Do scrutiny of food by observation and give up if they find any one of 46 defects in food or 32 interruptions or 14 filth defects as purity of food is of utmost importance.
- Saints take food/water placed in the hollowed hand-palms by followers if given only in a prescribed manner.
- The objective of food is not for health/life but for self-study, practicing restraint and meditation.
- The food and water intake is usually restricted to 32 times. At times, do not take food for many days/months in view of preoccupation with meditation.
- The saints observe ten spiritual virtues such as supreme forgiveness, modesty, straight forwardness, purity, truth, restraint, austerity, renunciation, non-attachment (non-possession) and celibacy.
- Reflect on twelve contemplations to practice detachment to the world at large, sixteen causative factors that lead to being born as Great Preacher/lead to liberation and give up 37500 types of lethargy which prevent reflection on the nature of soul.
- In rare cases, some saints acquire automatically one or more out of classified 64 supernatural powers by practicing intense austerities.
- End of life: They plan to leave this body with no attachments relating to this body
 - Saints undertake prudent/holy death under certain conditions by gradually giving up food and drinks through an elaborately prescribed process. Some saints attain the state of Omniscient and Moksha, while others may attain the same in future birth, if the above practices are followed in its entirety.

At present, hundreds of saints live across various locations in India and follow the above practices with some minor variations.

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P.S: For details, refer to the texts like 'Mulachara', 'Bhagvati Aradhana', and 'Angara Dharmamruta', etc. Italic words are those as used in Indian Vernacular /Jain Scriptures.