
- MAHAVIRA -
GOLDEN PRINCIPALS OF
LIFE

- Dr. T.J. Salgia

At the age of thirty, Lord Mahavira renounced the world and became a Jain ascetic, and for a period of twelve full years was in deep meditation and penance. At the age of forty-two, he had become a 'Kevalin' (omniscient, all-seeing, and all-knowing soul). After attaining Kevalin, he continued his ministry for a period of thirty years during which thousands of people became his disciples. In daily activities he delivered countless sermons. Following are the best-known and most observed, which have left everlasting impressions on mankind:

1. Dharma is the highest of all blessings. It comprises Ahinsa, Samyama (self-restraint), and Tapa (penance). Even the gods bow down to him whose mind is always centered in dharma.
 2. A dog becomes a deva (celestial being), and a deva becomes a dog from virtue and vice, respectively. From dharma (righteousness), living beings obtain even such prosperity as is indescribable in words.
 3. Exert and control yourself.
 4. Fight with yourself; why fight with external foes? He who conquers himself through himself will obtain happiness.
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5. Man cease from sins. For the life of man will come to an end. Men who are drowned (in lust) and addicted to pleasure will, for want of control, be deluded.
 6. The observance of the five anuvratas (lesser vows, known as ahimsa, truth, non-stealing, chastity and limitation of possessions) and refraining from the use of wine, flesh and honey, are the eight fundamental virtues of a householder.
 7. Bathing in the so-called sacred rivers and oceans, setting up heaps of sand and stones as objects of worship, immolating oneself by falling from a precipice or by being burnt up in fire (as in sati) are the common follies.
 8. Deceit, greed, anger, and ego; combat these causes of sin; a wiseman should abstain from them.
 9. Better it is that I should subdue myself by self-control and penances than be subdued by others with fetters and corporal punishment.
 10. The man also, who still lives in the house, should in accordance with his creed, be merciful to living beings; we are bidden to be fair and equal with all.
 11. By one's actions one becomes a Brahmana or a Ksatriya or a Vaishya or a Shudra.
 12. In this world, living beings suffer indi-
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- vidually for their deeds; for the deeds, they have done themselves, they obtain retribution and will not get over it before they have felt it.
 13. Toward your fellow-creatures, be not hostile; that is the Law of Him who is rich in control.
 14. Though others sleep, be thou awake! Like a wise man, trust nobody; but be always on the alert, for dangerous is the time and weak the body.
 15. All beings hate pain; therefore one should not kill them. Let not anyone injure life; but be as assiduous in cherishing the life of another as his own, for ahimsa (non-violence) is the highest religion.
 16. Soul! If thy mind cannot bear painful words, then be immersed in the meditation of Pure Soul so that thou mightest attain happiness.
 17. If thou art afraid of pain, then give up every sort of care and anxiety; even as a little thorn is painful, so too, is slight 'chinta' (worldly anxiety) the source of pain.
 18. The embodied soul alone does actions; it alone wanders in the long chain of mundane existence; it alone 'takes birth'; it alone 'dies'; and it alone enjoys the fruits of its actions.
 19. One grieves for another, thinking, "He is my relative or my master"; but verity
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he does not feel sorry for himself who is sinking in the great ocean of mundane wandering!

20. To the beings in the world, union and separation, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, as well as honour and dishonour variedly happen.
21. In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, one should regard all creatures as one regards his own self, and let us therefore refrain from inflicting upon others such injury as would appear undesirable to us, if inflicted upon ourselves.
22. The fool is not warned by seeing distress overtake others; he acts like the man who, seated on the top of a tree in the midst of a burning forest, sees deer and other living beings perish, but does not think that the same fate is soon to overtake him also.
23. You cannot prolong your life, therefore *be not care-less*; you are past help when old age approaches. Consider this: "what protection will careless people get, who kill living beings and do not exert themselves?"
24. Do not spread your own fame!
25. The mind of those, who sin in thoughts, is not pure; they do not conduct themselves carefully.
26. One should always be meek and not be talkative in the presence of the wise;

one should acquire valuable knowledge and avoid what is worthless.

27. Happy are we, happy live we, who call nothing our own.
 28. Know that all the earth's riches with crops of rice and barley, with its gold and cattle, will not satisfy one single man; one should practise austerities.
 29. The more you get the more you want. Your desires increase with your means. Though two ounces would do to supply your want, still you would scarcely think ten million sufficient.
 30. Men who, adhering to wrong principles, acquire wealth by evil deeds, will lose it, falling into the snares of their passions and being held captive by their hatred.
 31. Wealth will not protect a careless man in this world and the next. Though he had seen the right way, he does not see it, even as one in the dark whose lamp has suddenly been put out.
 32. Forgetting that his life will have an end, a rash and foolish man is full of selfishness; he toils days and nights greedy for wealth, as if he never should grow old or die.
 33. The fool thinks that his wealth and relations will save him; but they are of no help, no protection.
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34. All material objects, the body, the house, wealth, the spouse, the son, the friend, the enemy, and the like, are quite different in their nature from the soul. The foolish man, however, looks upon them as his own!
 35. If there were numberless mountains of gold and silver, as big as the Himalayas, they would not satisfy a greedy man, for his avidity is boundless like space.
 36. Spouses and children, friends and relations, all are dependent on a man during his life; but they will not follow him in death.
 37. Time is the cause of the shortening of the duration of life as well as of wealth; the amassers of wealth love money more than their lives! "Sin is the enemy of the soul, and virtue its friend"; whoever knows the scripture, reflecting constantly in this manner is the most excellently wise.
 38. Devotion to ignorance bestows ignorance, and devotion to Jnan (self knowledge) bestows knowledge; for it is well-established that a thing can grant only that of which it is possessed!
 39. As the fallow leaf of the tree falls to the ground when its days are gone, even so the life of men will come to its close; Gautam, be careful all the while!
 40. A man who insults another will long whirl in the cycle of births; to blame others is not good.
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41. A cruel man does cruel acts and is thereby involved in other cruelties; but sinful undertakings will in the end bring about misery.
 42. Here in this life pleasure and amusements are not able to help or save one. Sometimes a man first forsakes pleasures and amusements, sometimes they first forsake him.
 43. Pleasures and amusements are one thing and I am another. Why then should we be infatuated with pleasures and amusements which are alien to our being?
 44. Subdue your Self, for the Self is difficult to subdue; if the Self is subdued, you will be happy in this world and in the next.
 45. Know that the present time is the best opportunity to mend and that an awakening is difficult to obtain. A wiseman should be aware of this.
 46. Birth is misery, old age is misery, and so are disease and death, and ah! nothing but misery is the samsara (the transmigratory condition) in which you suffer distress.
 47. The samsara is like a wheel at a well where, before one bucketful of distress is gotten over, a large number of afflictions overtake the soul.
 48. A man believes himself a hero as long
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as he does not behold the foe, as did Shripala before he beheld the great valorously fighting warrior.

49. Clever talking will not work salvation; how should philosophical instruction do it? Fools, though sinking lower and lower through their sins, believe themselves to be wisemen.
50. Try to realise that you are single and alone, thereby you will obtain liberation; mind this is no false assertion. Liberation is not anything unreal, but the best thing!
51. Though a man should conquer thousands and thousands of valiant foes, greater will be his victory if he conquers nobody but himself.
52. Banishing grief, fear, anguish, attachment, wickedness and hatred, and bringing into manifestation energy and enthusiasm, one should extinguish the fire of passions with the nectar of meditation and penance.
53. That which is free from birth, old age, disease, death, grief, pain, and fear, which is eternal, blissful (and of nature of) pure delight, is Nirvana.

We can sum up the teachings of Lord Mahavira in a few words: "Live and let live," and "He knows all, who knows Himself." If every one allows others to live, and treats them the same ways they want to be treated, there will be no war. Instead we all will live in peace.
