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Five Main Vows of Limited Nature (Anuvratas)

1. Non-violence Limited Vow (Ahimsa Anuvrat)

In this vow, a person must not intentionally hurt any living being (plants, animals, humans, etc.) or their feeling either by thought, word, or deed, himself, or through others, or by approving such an act committed by somebody else. Intention, in this case, applies selfish motive, sheer pleasure, and even avoidable negligence.

He may use force, if necessary, in the defense of his country, society, family, life, property, religious institute. His agricultural, industrial, occupational living activities do also involve injury to life, but it should be as minimum as possible, through carefulness and due precaution.

In Jain scripture, the nature of violence is classified into four categories:

- Premeditated Violence: To attack someone knowingly
- Defensive Violence: To commit intentional violence in defense of one's own life
- Vocational Violence: To incur violence in the execution of one's means of livelihood
- Common Violence: To commit violence in the performance of daily activities

Premeditated violence is prohibited for all. A householder is permitted to incur violence defensively and vocationally provided he maintains complete detachment. Common violence is accepted for survival, but even here, one should be careful in preparing food, cleaning the house, etc. This explains Jain's practices of filtering drinking water, vegetarianism, not eating meals at night, and abstinence from alcohol. Nonviolence is the foundation of Jain ethics.

Lord Mahavir says: `One should not injure, subjugate, enslave, torture or kill any living being including animals, insects, plants, and vegetables.'

This is the essence of religion. It embraces the welfare of all animals. It is the basis of all stages of knowledge and the source of all rules of conduct.

2. Truthfulness Limited Vow (Satya Anuvrat)

The second of the five limited vows is Truth. It is more than abstaining from falsehood. It is seeing the world in its real form and adapting to that reality. The vow of truth puts a person in touch with his inner strength and inner capacities.

In this vow, a person avoids lies, such as giving false evidence, denying the property of others entrusted to him, avoid cheating others, etc. The vow is to be followed in thought, action, and speech, and by doing it himself or by getting it done through others.

He should not speak the truth if it harms others or hurts their feelings. He should, under these circumstances, keep silent.

To be continued...