BHAVANAS (REFLECTIONS)
Pathway to Wisdom and Inner Peace
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Jayana Shah

On the Cover:
The 12 Bhavanas Bhagwan Mahavir gave us to explain the reality of our existence are shown in small circles around the picture. Whereas these are contemplative in nature, the 4 Bhavanas shown on the corners of the picture are action oriented and help us manage our relationships with others.

The picture shows King Shrenik and Anathi Muni depicting Asharan Bhavana.

We believe that the authors of the articles in this book have done their best to share their knowledge, skills and abilities. However, views expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of JAINA.
Foreword by
Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshbhai

Jain religion lays a significant emphasis on the thought process of a person because his speech and actions that follow reflect his inner thoughts. It also says that higher the quality of one's thoughts, lighter the karmic bondage and lower the quality of thoughts, longer the cycle of birth and death and suffering. Hence, one should be very careful about the way one thinks. To make room for pure thoughts and to drive out the evil ones, Jainism recommends reflecting or meditating on twelve insights known as the Twelve Bhāvanās (Anuprekshās), or Reflections. They make one aware of the fundamental facts of life and are a great tool for inner transformation.

These reflections were originally given to us by Lord Mahavir. They arose from the authenticity of his personal experience and shared them with people to help them clear up their inaccurate view of the worldly life and improve their vision. When one dives into the meaning of each of them, a moment comes when the flood of thoughts stops, mind calms down and one experiences peace. Initially, these Bhāvanās were taught to the monks and nuns as meditation subjects, to the initiates who had just left the worldly life. They were required to dive deep into those reflections to remove the past conditioning from their consciousness and come out from inertia and sleepy state. Those seeking spiritual growth should also contemplate on these Bhāvanās in order to overcome the delusion which prevents them from seeing the life as it is.

To live life peacefully and constructively, 4 more Bhāvanās were added later by Jain saints and sages. Ruminating on all these 16 Bhāvanās should widen our perspective and influence our thoughts and behavior in a positive way.

I am very pleased to note that JAINA is publishing this very useful book and hope that spiritual aspirants (Mumukshus) all over would assimilate the message deeply, apply daily and transform their lives for better. My blessings and best wishes to those authors who have put a lot of effort and research in composing excellent articles that capture the essence and deeper meaning of the Bhāvanās. The excellence they have shown does not come by chance, it is the product of their dedication and hard work and worthy of emulation.

Dharampur, India

June 13, 2019
Foreword
By
Pramoda Chitrabhanu

Our mind is a very powerful instrument, yet if we are like most people, we probably spend very little time reflecting on the way we think. Science shows that our thoughts about things that happen to us can have a big impact on how we feel and how we act. Not just the big events in life but even small everyday issues or hassles have impact on our consciousness. We are what our deep, driving desires are. As our desires are, so are our thoughts. As our thoughts are, so are our deeds (Karma). As our deeds (Karma) are, so is our destiny. So our thinking isn’t always obvious and accurate. When we become more in tune to our patterns of thinking we can have a big impact on our happiness, our behavior and relationships with others.

To begin transformation in our life and change our thought process, Jainism recommends reflecting or meditating on the twelve thoughts or everyday realities of life known as the Twelve Bhavanas (Anupreksha), or Reflections. They are designed to serve different facets of reality which reveal the inherent spirituality and radiant qualities of the enlightened human consciousness that aid in spiritual progress leading to the path of renunciation. They are reflections upon the basic facts of life. They stop entry of new karmas as well as eradicate old karmas while we are engaged in these reflections.

We need to look closely and reflect on our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and motivations. Periodically making the time to examine our experiences, the decisions we make, the relationships we have, and the things we engage in can help provide us with useful insights. These insights can cover a lot of ground - our life goals, the good traits we need to work on sustaining, and the less admirable traits we want to try to discard. Moreover, it gives us clues on how to act, react, and conduct ourselves in the midst of any situation.

In this system of contemplations one prepares the self to be calm, quiet and patient. The present lives of most people are filled with frequent periods of upheaval or stress. There is an important principle behind the success of these bhavanas - where attention goes, energy flows; and where energy flows, things grow.

I am glad that JAINA is publishing this unique book for the benefit of aspirants who can study each bhavana in detail and apply in day to day life situations. The Bhavanas which the writers are sharing with us will help us focus on the inner peace, tranquility and bliss. The scholarly writers’ insight and perspective will help readers enrich themselves and move forward towards their goal of moksha or liberation.

Jain Meditation International Center, New York  
June 24, 2019
INTRODUCTION TO BHAVANAS

Every activity whether good or bad, invariably gets associated with its respective karmas. Yatana, that is ‘carefulness with an intensely genuine intention to protect maximum living beings during one’s actions with unavoidable violence reduced to minimal levels’, would help restrict the inflow or even stop the influx of karmas (samvara) into the Soul; allowing it to remain light and become lighter. With so much of activity going around, it is very difficult to keep track of the morality/immorality of each action, let alone their consequences.

More than action, Jain religion has put a heavier emphasis on our thought process because it is closely linked to how we act. It says that higher the quality of thoughts, better the behavior; lower the quality, worse the behavior and greater the suffering.

Sages, philosophers and writers have also emphasized the importance of thoughts. William James, father of American philosophy said, “A man is what he thinks about all day long”. Eckhart Tolle, author of New York Times bestseller book “The Power of Now,” states that on a typical day, human mind encounters more than 60,000 thoughts, and 95% of these thoughts are compulsive in nature which are repeated again and again and this is how people end up saying “I have lost my mind!” The author further advises: “Learn to quiet your mind with wisdom of the sages and become an observer to find your true authentic self”. Dr. Wayne Dyer had created a life changing program titled “Change Your Thoughts – Change Your Life” based on practical teaching by Tao Te Ching.

Bhagwan Mahavir gave us 12 Bhavanas or Reflections to help us drive out the evil thoughts, and invite the pure ones. These bhavanas explain us the reality of our existence. These contemplative bhavanas are:

1) Anitya Bhavana 2) Asharan Bhavana 3) Samsar Bhavana 4) Ekatva Bhavana
5) Anyatva Bhavana 6) Ashuchhi Bhavana 7) Ashrav Bhavana 8) Samvar Bhavana

Importance of the 12 Contemplative Bhavanas:

To begin our inner transformation, we need to understand and contemplate on these Bhavanas. Introspection of the activities that took place throughout the day, with respect to the Bhavanas is said to be Anupreksha; to be done every day is a must, as each and every daily activity binds the Soul with karmas.

Anupreksha enriches the Soul with spiritual self-awareness. Worldly thoughts that lead to tension, stress, depression result in bondage of inauspicious karmas, while the spiritual thoughts that lead to self-awareness and inner peace of mind, empowers the Soul with its attributes. According to Acharya Siddhasena ‘repeated pondering develops in suitable mental states’. Pondering on negative aspects of life, hindrances faced, weaknesses of one self, develops that kind of energy uprising those kinds of karmas to surface and materialize into corresponding situations. But if one becomes aware of what to contemplate, the pool of problems can be sorted out easily. Right contemplation (Anupreksha) should be an integral part of every aspirant to attain
eternal bliss. It is conducive to shedding of karmas as it involves two kinds of penances – swadhyay (study of the Self, by the self, for the self) and Dhyana (meditation). Anupreksha is the pathway to meditation. One cannot obtain butter without churning or blending the curds. Similarly, one cannot obtain knowledge without Anupreksha i.e., contemplation.

Many of us live our lives with delusions, clinging to the past and fantasizing about the future. We create beautiful mirages and imagination in our mind and then we run after them only to find that they were just plain illusions, far removed from reality. This state of mind prevents us from seeing the life as it is. Just as a computer can be afflicted with a virus and crashes the system, the conditioned human mind afflicted by habit of dwelling on past memories may cause guilt or misery. Worries about future uncertainty may cause depression from fear of unknown resulting in loss of enjoyment in the current moment.

In addition, Jain religion provides us with 4 other Bhavanas that are action oriented. Whereas the 12 contemplative bhavanas explain the reality of our existence, these four bhavanas guide us about the virtues we need to develop. They are more action oriented and can be instrumental in improving our behavior and relationship with others. These 4 virtue related bhavanas are:

1) Maitri Bhavana 2) Pramod Bhavana 3) Karunya Bhavana 4) Madhyasthya Bhavana

These 4 bhavanas also require us to do introspection. Daily practice of reviewing our actions during the day to check if have made changes in our behavior to develop the virtues of friendship, appreciation, compassion and equanimity is necessary for spiritual growth.

Jain religion encourages us to evolve within and develop our virtues. Thoughts and feelings play an important role in this inner journey. The sixteen bhavanas guide us on how to be careful with our thoughts, focus them in the right direction and how to improve our relationships with others.
Anitya meaning transient, ever changing. The opposite word is Nitya is permanent and changeless. This Bhāvanā makes us realize that our physical body, youth, beauty, health, wealth, sensual pleasures, fame-everything is temporary and one day could go away in an instant like a lightning in the sky. To convince ourselves with this bitter truth, we need to look no further than at our own past, rewind it and observe how our body and its capabilities have slowly deteriorated; how we have lost some of our friends and loved ones already. Even if we live 100 hundred years, one day, we will have to leave everything, and our body will be nothing but a pile of ash. Jainism says very clearly that the attachment to these transient things is only going to cause more pain upon their loss if we don’t wake up. This recognition is very important for us to live a serene life.

For the mind it is frightening to know the ever-moving nature of everything we see. The mind wants to cling to whatever it has created – things, objects, ideas, relationships, and positions. That is why it is not willing to give up when the time comes. It says: It is going to remain with me forever. It is mine now. This is what causes attachment, thereby creating sadness upon separation. That is the reason when the things or people depart from us, our mind is not ready to accept it. The mind refuses to recognize that nothing lasts forever. Either it changes or ends. Quoting Eckart Tolle from his book - Practicing the Power of Now: “When a condition or situation that the mind has attached itself to and identified with changes or disappears, the mind cannot accept it. It wants to cling to the disappearing condition and resist the change.” This is the main cause of human unhappiness. Contemplation of this temporary nature of things is Anitya Bhavana. This bhavana is meant to lift us up when we are down in the dumps; when things go wrong. The purpose of such contemplation is for us to get a better understanding of reality and help us change our focus to what is eternal – the soul.

There are many incidents in daily life that exhibit the temporary nature of worldly objects. Let us look at some examples. One of the past presidents of Kodak was very humble and a small incidence from his life is worth noting: This happened when Kodak was booming and very rich. He was looking around for an expensive house one day when the realtor asked, “Sir, you are the President of one of the most successful companies of the world. You must be very proud of leading this wonderful company”. He smiled and said: “This too shall pass”. It is interesting to note that his words came true 25 years later when Kodak filed for bankruptcy. No one could believe that this could ever happen.

Bollywood star Mumtaz was interviewed by India Aboard a few years ago. She was one of the most beautiful actors of her time. When she was interviewed, she was 65, sick, lonely, and overweight. It was even difficult to recognize her. She narrated her life story and concluded it by saying” Nothing in life is permanent”. She realized the painful truth without any knowledge about Jainism.

My wife’s uncle was a great financial and social success in eighties. He was the founder of the JAIN Social group and was well respected throughout the Jain community. He had issues with blood pressure but was managing it quite well. But something went haywire and he got a stroke one day, got paralyzed and never fully recovered till he passed away 12 years later. His life changed overnight, and it was extremely painful for him to adjust to the handicapped life. He went down from glory to nothing overnight.

And this momentary nature of happiness applies to all; irrespective of who you are. On the day, Lord Ram was supposed to be coronated as a king, his life took a wild turn. He was asked by his father to go to a forest for 12 years! The excitement of coronation was replaced by gloom and doom in an instant.

Jainism tells very clearly that before we develop strong craving to favorable situations, to our creations and before
we go egoistic with our successes, we need to realize that everything has an expiry date over which we have no control. It is asking us to keep thinking about this Bhāvanā regularly to develop a sense of discretion and a realistic vision. Once we imbibe its real meaning, small things which used to trigger strong reactions at one time will no longer bother us. There will be no need to use so much energy on temporary things. When we absorb and ruminate on its essence deeply, we would come to penetrate the depths of our own reality.

Buddhism calls Anitya Bhāvanā as Impermanence and has dwelt upon it very deeply in its literature just like Jainism has. To educate its followers and to reinforce its meaning, it is common practice for Buddhist Monks to painstakingly create a beautiful sand Mandal (like a Rangoli) by spending long hours and then destroying it instantly. They would not save the intricate design for the future. Their aim was to create a symbol of transitory nature of all things and destroy it as soon as it was complete and to vividly demonstrate the principle of Impermanence. They wanted to show that eventually everything falls apart and becomes something else. They wanted to create a true awakening among the people. They wanted to inject insight into the essential meaning of life.

Many of us have heard about Anitya Bhavana from different sources but upon close examination, we will discover that the knowledge of this Bhavana has remained as a piece of information in our minds; it has not changed us much. So how do we develop it so that it becomes a part of our life? The best way to do it by introspecting our behavior through pratikraman, contemplation and meditation every day. This will keep us on the spiritual path and focused on lord Mahavir’s teachings.

Both in favorable and unfavorable conditions, it is important to think that “This too shall pass”. The result of such contemplation will result is a search - “where can I find the happiness that is eternal?” And the focus then will change to “Nitya”; which is our pure soul - a permanent and changeless entity. These steps have the power to increase our awareness of what is permanent and what is not, and effect a real change in our thoughts, speech, and action. This transformation could pave the way for emotional stability, peace, tranquility, and eventual liberation.

**ANITYA BHAVANA - CONTEMPLATION OF TRANSIENCE**

*Contemplation that one’s physical body and its associated pleasures, allurements, prosperity, riches, family relations, children, parents and others – all these are transitory and will perish. The basic nature of the soul is that it is eternal and to ponder over it is called Anitya Bhavana.*