

Paving a way to the Preksha Meditation-Maitri (Amity)

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ABSTRACT

Maitri; a central concept of the Preksha Meditation and authentic living has been recognized as one of the finest virtues., intends to expand the horizon of friendship with every living being and is experienced through benevolence with a sense of even-mindedness as well as serenity, stemming out of the doctrine of equanimity. The contemplation of Amity is a very useful Anupreksha technique.

Keywords: Virtues, Preksha Meditation, Happiness, Equanimity, Contemplation, Benevolence, Hatred, Forgiveness, Anupreksha

Introduction

Maitri is one of the finest virtues known to the mankind central to the Preksha Meditation, paving a way to the meditation and is also referenced in ancient Vedic and Buddhist scriptures. Seek truth within and have friendliness with all is the precious message of Preksha Meditation. Those, who nourish the seed of friendliness in their life prosper, remain always delighted, enjoy calmness and remain healthy.¹

Maitri (Amity): Depiction in Ancient Literature

Maitri according to the *Tattvarthasutra* (7/11), written in the 2nd century envisages that there should neither be any desire that others should suffer and no one should also cause to make others suffer and this has been called as benevolence towards all living beings. It enhances magnanimous disposition in the observer and eliminates the feelings of mine/ yours.²

In the 2nd *Anga Agama Suyagado* it is stated that:

वेराइं कुव्वती वेरी, ततो वेरेहिं रज्जती।
पावोवगा य आरंभा, दुख्खफासा य अंतसो।³

Suyagado, 1/8/7

It also indicates that equanimity is important for a monk and he should perceive all living beings as his own soul.

सव्वं जगं तू समयानुपेही, प्रियमप्यियं कस्सइ नो करेज्ज ।
उट्टाय दीनो य पुणो विसन्नो संपूयणं चेय सिलोयकामी ॥

A monk should be equanimous towards all living beings. He should not love someone and hate someone else. He should consider all living beings whether subtle or gross equal to his own soul.⁴

–Suyagado, 1/10/7

Further insisting that No enmity could take place even in the thought it is stated:

उड्ढ अहे यं तिरियं दिसासुत,

तसा य जे थावर जे य पाणा ।
सया जए तेसु परिव्वएज्ज,
मनप्पओसं अविक्कंपमाणे ॥

Whoever is *trasa* on *sthavara* living being in all the three directions of, lower and slanting, he should always lead his life carefully with them. Remaining steady in self-restraint, he should not develop enmity even by thought. ⁵

-Suyagado. 1/14/14

Same Agama mentioned that not only in thought but speech and body as well, no enmity should take place.

अनेनिसस्स खेयण्ण, न विरुज्जोज्ज केणइ ।
मनसा वयसा चेव, कायसा चेव चक्खुमं ॥

An ascetic quite skillful in self-restraint should not develop enmity with anyone by mind, speech and body.⁶

- Suyagado. 1/15/13

A famous Agama Uttaradhyayan also emphasized on equanimity as under:

As all pleasures are dear to you, the same is the position with other living beings, and life is dear to all living beings—each and every living being possesses a desire to live. Knowing this, one should not take away the life of innocent creatures, as they do not want fear and enmity

—Uttarajjhaynani, 6/6

To develop amity with all forgiveness is important. When it is asked to the Bhagwan Mahaveer that what is soul obtained by forgiveness? Bhagwan replied that amity, purity and fearlessness will be obtained by forgiveness.

खमावणयाए णं भंते! जीवे किं जणयइ ? ।
खमावणयाए णं पल्हायणभावं जणयइ ? ।

पल्हायणभावमुवगए य सव्वपाणभूयजीवसत्तेसु
मित्तीभावं उप्पाएइ मित्तीभावंभुवगए यावि जीवे
भावविसोहिं काऊण निब्भए भवइ ।

O Lord, what does the soul obtain by giving forgiveness?

By forgiveness he obtains happiness of mind; thereby he acquires amity towards all kinds of living beings by this amity he obtains purity of character and freedom from fear. ⁸

—Uttarajjhaynani 29/18

The other Jain granths as *Bhagwati Aradhana* written by Acharya Shivarya also states the same.

जीववहो अप्पवहो, जीवदया होइ अप्पणो हु दया ।
विसकंटओव्व हिंसा, परिहरियव्वा तदो होदि ॥ 793

To kill living beings, in reality, is killing self end to compassionate living beings, in real terms, is to compassion self. Therefore, violence is like a poisonous thorn and hence should be discarded. ⁹

- Bhagwati Aradhana 793

जइ काइ तत्त लोहं गहाय, रूटो परं हणमित्ति।
पुव्वदरं सो डज्जदि, डहिज्ज व ण वा परो पुरिसो।
तथ रोसेण सयं पुव्वमेव डज्जदि हु कलकलेणेव ।
अण्णस्स पुणो दुक्खं करिज्ज रूटो ण य करिज्ज ॥

As a man is annoyed with another, one thinks to kill him with a hot iron rod in his hand, then, first of all, he himself gets wounded; another person may or may not be injured. The same way an angry one, first of all, himself gets burnt in the fire of anger, thereafter, another one may or may not be grieved.¹⁰

—Bhagwati Aradhana, 1356-1357

Moolachar states that the ascetic's compassion towards other living beings can be equated with that of a mother's love towards

her sons and while moving barefooted, they do not cause any hardship to any living being.¹¹

- **Mulachar, 798**

A Sanskrit poetry work *ShantSudharas Bhavana* written by Acharya Vinay Vijay Suri give prominence to amity as under:

सर्वत्र मैत्री मुपकल्पयात्मन् चिन्त्यो जगत्यत्र न कोपि शत्रुः।
कियद्दिनस्यायिनि जीवितेस्मिन् किं खिद्यसे वैरिधिया
परस्मिन्॥

O Soul, You cultivate the friendship everywhere, contemplate on it. I have no enemy in this world. How long will this life last? In this ephemeral life, why are you being disheartened by having enmity towards others?¹²

-**Shant Sudharas Bhavana, 13/4**

The contemplation of benevolence (*metta bhavana*) is an important form of Buddhist meditation. It is a part of the four immeasurable in *Brahmavihara* (divine abiding) meditation. Metta as 'compassion meditation' is often practised in Asia by chanting, wherein monks chant for the laity. The compassion and universal loving-kindness concept of *Metta* is discussed in the *Metta Sutta*.

According to Bodhicharyavtar Sutra:

परात्मसमतामादौ भावयेदेवमादरात्।
समदुःखसुखाः सर्वे पालनीया भावयेदेवमादरात् ॥90॥

"First of all I should make an effort to meditate upon the equality between self and others: I should protect all beings as I do myself because we are all equal in (wanting) pleasure and (not wanting) pain."¹³

-**Bodhicharyavata Sutra 8/90**

It further suggests to keep compassion for all living beings.

तस्माद्यथन्तशोऽवर्णादात्मानं गोपयाम्यहम् ।
रक्षाचित्तं दयाचित्तं करोम्येवं परेष्वपि ॥110॥

According to Aristotle, "And it is those who desire the good of their friends for the friends' sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he is, and not for any incidental quality."¹⁴(Aristotle 1976) He further emphasized "To perceive a friend, therefore, is necessarily in a manner to perceive oneself, and to know a friend is in a manner to know oneself. The excellent person is related to his friend in the same way, as he is related to himself, since a friend is another himself."¹⁵

Violence V.S. Amity

Amity is beneficial to the world. Lack of amity brings unhappiness in the families, society and the Nations, paves a way to brutality which may also result in wars. Today, the world is in even greater need of amity, than ever before.

Psycho-physiological Impact of Amity on Human Beings

Hatred will emerge, where there is a lack of amity. Hatred has a detrimental effect on both body and mind. Feelings of anger and hatred building up in the mind, body, and soul, affecting the organs and natural processes generate further negative emotions. Its continuance for a long period leads to clashes in relationships and develops a disease in the body.¹⁶

Forgiveness and Positive Psychology

Forgiveness is the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven.¹⁷Forgiveness in positive psychology is most often viewed as character strength and a virtue worth pursuing for everyone, who desires a greater sense of wellbeing. Positive psychology explores human strengths that help to live more satisfying and fulfilling lives (Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and forgiveness is one such strength.¹⁸

The inability to forgive was linked to anger and hostility, and those, in turn, have proven to have negative health effects, especially with regard to cardiovascular conditions. Forgiveness has been linked to positive emotions of empathy and compassion. (Worthington & Scherer, 2004) ¹⁹

Forgiveness: The Jain Path

In Jainism, forgiveness is one of the main virtues that need to be cultivated. Kshamapana or supreme forgiveness forms part of one of the ten characteristics of the Dharma. In the *Pratikraman*, Jains repeatedly seek forgiveness from various living beings even from *ekindriyas* or single sensed beings like plants and microorganisms stating that they might have been harmed, while eating and doing routine activities. Forgiveness is sought by uttering the “*Kshamapana Sutra*” which is an agamic commitment composed in the Prakrit language.²⁰ During *Samvatsari*— the last day of Jain festival *Paryushana*, the devotees personally greet their friends and relatives by expressing *KhamatKhamna / Micchami Dukkadam*- seeking their forgiveness. No quarrel or dispute may be carried beyond *Samvatsari*, and letters and telephone calls are made to the outstation friends and relatives asking their forgiveness. The inspiration flows from the canonical literature, which is as under:

खामेमिसव्वजीवे, सव्वेजीवाखमंतुमे ।

मिक्खीमेसव्वभूएसू, वेरंमज्झनकेणइ ॥

(I ask pardon of all creatures, may all creatures pardon me. May I have friendship with all beings and enmity with none.) ²¹

If among monks or nuns there occurs a dispute or dissension, the young monk should seek forgiveness from the superior and the

superior of the young monk should exhibit his benevolence and forgive. They should forgive and ask forgiveness, appease and be appeased, and converse without restraint. For him who is appeased, there will be success (in control); for him, who is not appeased, there will be no success; therefore one should appease one’s self. The central point of this practice lies in achieving peace, which is the essence of monasticism’.²²

— Kalpa Sutra 8:59

Developing Amity: The Way Forward

Contemplation of Amity

Amity is as vital to life as the air is to breathe. The contemplation of Amity is a very useful *Anupreksha* technique. The process of contemplation of Amity is described here as guided by the pioneer of Preksha Meditation Acharya Mahapragya. It is as under:

Process of Maitriki Anupreksha (Contemplation of Amity)

- Select the posture and position of your hands.
- Recite the mantra ‘*Arham*’ – nine times.
Practice – *Kayotsarg*.
- Experience, you are surrounded by white colour particles like snow. Inhale bright white colour.
- Experience with each breath, bright white colour particles are entering inside your body (3 minutes)
- Concentrate your conscious mind at your forehead and perceive bright white colour there. (3 minutes)
- Concentrate your conscious mind at your forehead and give auto-suggestion – Everybody is my friend. I will practice friendship towards all.

- Pronounce these sentences nine times. Then recite them mentally nine times. (5 minutes)

Contemplate

- Sense of enmity aroused fear. Fear makes the body and mind weak. Therefore, I should develop a sense of friendship.
- As soon as the feeling of the enemy arrives, the happiness disappears. To preserve my happiness, I should practice friendship.(10 minutes)
- Take two-three long breaths.
- Recite the *Sharan Sutra* – three times. ²³

Daily Practice of Forgiveness

It is a good idea to make Amity a subject of daily practice. Every person should recite this couplet, and contemplate on the couplet before sleeping. The couplet is:

खामेमिसव्वजीवे,सव्वेजीवाखमंतुमे ।
मिस्तीमेसव्वभूएसू, वेरमज्जन्केणइ ॥

It means “I am forgiving all living beings and every living being should forgive me. I have amity with everyone, no enmity with anyone.”

Identifying the Hatred

Recognizing the element of hate is essential. It is essential to understand the reason behind the feeling of hate, analyse the reason of annoyance. Normally hate comes from fear, insecurity, or distrust. Replacing the hateful irrational thinking with calmer, rational thinking is a promising intervention.

Benefits of Amity

In addition to being beneficial to others, practicing compassion benefits the psychological and physical well being of a person. As scientists from North Carolina have discovered, true friendship has a positive effect on health and overall physical state. ²⁴ A study by Fredrickson et al. (2008) revealed that after practising

compassion for a week, participants succeeded in directing their loving compassion towards themselves, and in the next week towards their loved ones too.²⁵

Conclusion:

Practice of forgiveness has also been linked to a better immune function and a longer life span. Other studies have shown that forgiveness has more than just a metaphorical effect on the heart, it can actually lower the blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health as well. Amity should be perceived as a requisite for a meaningful existence and in a civilized society it is indeed a concept worthy of continued following to experience sublime happiness.

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