

19TH TO THE 26TH OF JANUARY, 2024

A Monumental Moment: Consecration of the Statue of Lord Bahubali in Gujarat

The 41-foot monolith of Bahubali Bhagwan is to be consecrated during a weeklong traditional Jain ceremony – Shree Aadinath Digambar Jinbimb Panch Kalyanak Pratishtha Mahotsav.

In the embrace of a gentle January breeze, Songadh, near Palitana, in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district, is ready to unveil its canvas of celestial hues, setting the stage for a sacred spectacle.

This small town reverberates with spiritual splendour as thousands of devotees, their hearts resonating with anticipation, congregate under the benevolent winter sun to witness the historic consecration ceremony of a massive monolith of Bahubali Muniraaj. Lord Bahubali was the second son of the first Tirthankar Aadinath, commonly known as Rishabhdev in Jain tradition.

As the gathered multitude eagerly awaits the unveiling of divine magnificence, it ecstatically looks forward to concurrent celebrations, including five auspicious events from Lord Rishabhdev's life. Along with Bahubali Muniraaj, a replica of Jambudvipa with a 91ft tall Sumeru Parvat holding 140 idols of Jain Gods will be consecrated. Hence, the magical aura of the ceremony transcends the earthly realm, becoming a celestial communion.

Notably, Sumeru Parvat is a tribute to the 91 years of saintly life of Pujya Gurudevshree, the prominent Digambar Jain saint Kanji Swamiji who preached the principles of Jainism for more than four decades.

For the unversed, Jain cosmology places Sumeru Parvat in the centre of the world, bounded by Jambudvipa with a diameter of 100,000 yojanas (about 900,000 miles); it is believed that Jambudvipa is the centre of the universe.

The trustees of Shree Digambar Jain Swadhyay Mandir Trust, Songadh, are of the view that the prestigious Panch Kalyanak Mahotsav initiative will help in spreading the basic principles of Jainism, benefiting many with its universal values of Ahimsa, Satya, Achaurya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha.

Elaborates the Trustee Nemish Shah, "Attending a Panchkalyanak Pratishtha Mahotsav live in person is a unique, paramount instrumental factor in attaining the goal of Right Belief - Samyak Darshan." He further describes that the objective of this grand occasion, through all its meticulously planned events, is to instil (this) very essence of genuine knowledge and detachment to achieve the goal. "As trustees of Songadh Trust, we earnestly aspire that this event will leave a profound and enduring impact on the lives of all attendees, marking the initiation of their spiritual journeys," adds Shah.

PREPARATIONS REFLECT THE BLISSFUL MOOD

In this finely tuned symphony of devotion, the arrangements made for devotees manifest as a meticulous choreography, harmonising the spiritual with the practical and

weaving an immersive experience that lingers in the hearts of all who partake in this sacred tapestry of faith.

Devotees have been booking dharamshalas and hotels in the nearby cities of Palitana and Bhavnagar for more than a year, indicating a palpable enthusiasm. Ample parking space for vehicles on a large parcel of land is provided for the worshippers flocking to the festival. As many as 25000 devotees are being catered for by professionals to add a culinary dimension to the spiritual journey, spreading the aroma of their sanctified food.

The streets and houses have come alive with a kaleidoscope of vibrant decorations, turning the ordinary into an extraordinary conglomeration of colours, lights and symbols. Each home is adorned with lights, and intricate rangolis are painted on floors, echoing the joyous spirit of the celebration.

Moreover, an enormous pillarless marquee stands as a beacon of reverence in the heart of the celebration site, sprawled over eight acres of land. It is here where the attendees will gather for events. The complete panch kalyanak will be performed in plays and dances on a vast stage against a backdrop of 3D representations of palaces.

THE CONSECRATION

Consecration is the act of making or declaring something sacred. The primary purpose is to pledge oneself irrevocably to God's worship through a solemn ritual. The worship of the consecrated idol's divinity that emanates and flows to the worshipper when he pays his respect helps elevate him to the higher realm of existence.

MAHAMASTAKABHISHEK

The 'Mahamastakabhishek,' or the Grand Anointment Ceremony of the newly consecrated Bahubali idol, will be conducted with grandeur in Songadh on Friday, January 26, as a fitting climax to this enormous celebration. Like the anointment cleanses the idol, devotees envision the pristine water purifying their souls of all misconceptions and sufferings, enriching their internal purity. The vital ritual is excitedly awaited by the devotees who will have the opportunity to witness the cultural and religious marvel. Notably, the Mahamastakabhishek is performed after every 12 years.

POMP AND DEVOTION AT PANCH KALYANAK PRATISHTHA MAHOTSAV

The mood at the Mahotsav is filled with spiritual fervour and excitement as the Jain community gathers to honour the enlightened persons' profound teachings and outstanding lives. In the Jain faith, the festival provides an opportunity to reflect on the path of righteousness and the goal of spiritual enlightenment. Each

devotee actively participates in this ceremony, hoping to halt his cycle of rebirths and achieve liberation.

The Mahotsav is a significant event held to consecrate idols of Gods known as Tirthankars in the Jain tradition. Tirthankars are the Omniscient Gods who preach and disclose the path to liberation through their holy teachings. The sermons are delivered at the heavenly assembly hall (Samavsharan). Decked with splendours and miracles, Tirthankars represent the ultimate road to emancipation. In Jainism, their lives are distinguished by the uplifting celebration of five auspicious events or occasions known as "Panch Kalyanak," believed to be observed by humans beings and celestial souls alike.

Generally, during the construction of any new temple, these five occasions are commemorated, with devotees portraying each significant occurrence to recreate the Tirthankar's life. Devotees perform intricate rituals and recite religious scriptures, culminating in placing idols representing Tirthankars' celestial trip. These occasions include:

Conception - garbha kalyanak



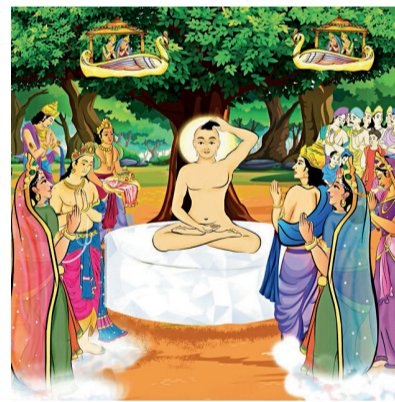
Marks the occurrence when a Tirthankar's soul leaves its former body and enters a mother's womb. During this time, the mother has 16 auspicious dreams, which signify the advent of a noble soul in her womb.

Birth - janma kalyanak



The birth of a Tirthankar baby is celebrated with grandeur by celestial beings and humans alike. The baby is taken to Pandukshila at the top of Sumeru Parvat, and his adamant body is bathed with 1008 kalash of pristine water from an ocean known as Kshirsagar.

Initiation - diksha or tapa kalyanak



An occasion when the Tirthankar King gives up all worldly goods and becomes an ascetic.

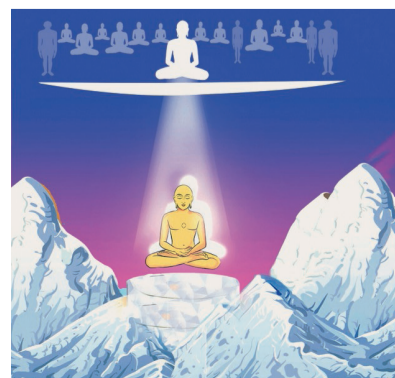
Omniscience - kevalgyaan kalyanak



During this occurrence, the Tirthankar ascetic attains internal purity, completely eradicating four Obscuring Karmas and attaining Omniscience known as kevalgyaan. Heavenly beings construct a divine hall (Samavasharan) for Tirthankars, from where they deliver the first sermon through the divine Om sound (divya dhvani). This sermon imparts knowledge to every soul about the order of the universe, the nature of substances, the nature of the Soul and the path to liberation.

Liberation - nirvan or moksh kalyanak

This signifies the moment when Tirthankar's soul leaves the body,



is freed from the corporeal existence of the worldly realm, and attains the siddha status. On this day, the remaining four Non-Obscuring karmas are entirely eradicated, and Tirthankar's soul achieves salvation, entering a realm of unbroken eternal pleasure.

BAHUBALI MUNIRAAJ - THE EPITOME OF UNWAVERING RESOLVE

Around 1042 years ago, in 981 CE, the visionary warrior Chamundraay, the visionary warrior Chamundraay dreamt about a hidden Munindra Bhagwan statue in the mountain of Vindhyagiri, Shrvanabelgola, now in Karnataka. He turned this dream into reality by commissioning the creation of the world's largest monolithic statue, reaching a majestic height of 57 ft. Crafted from fine-grained white granite, the idol of Bahubali stands on a lotus, earning acclaim as an epic statue in medieval Karnataka's sculptural art.

The statue has been revered as a symbol of tranquility, detachment, strength, valour and unwavering resolve, inspiring people of all faiths who have had the good fortune of visiting it.

Cut to the twenty-first century, in a parallel vision, devotees of Jain preacher Pujyashree Kanji Swami built a similar statue at Songadh, which is to be consecrated during the ongoing Mahotsav.

This gigantic statue of Lord Bahubali at Songadh, weighing almost 200 tonnes, was crafted in Bengaluru. An astonishing sculpture, the figure was meticulously carved from a single piece of 400-tonne granite mined at Koira in Karnataka. Equally impressive is that the sculptor is a national award-winning artist, Ashok Gudigar.

With dimensions of 41 ft in height, 14 ft in width and 6.5 ft in thickness, skilled artisans spent more than a year to complete this magnificent work of art, now mounted on the top of a 50-foot man-made hill; altogether, it stands at 91 feet high. It is no wonder that the beautiful artwork delicately attracts pilgrims' admiring gazes as they pass through Bhavnagar, Palitana and Songadh.

The enormous statue powerfully represents Bahubali's extended meditation, displaying his motionless contemplation in the standing pose - kayotsarga, which results in the growth of climbing vines around his legs, representing his steadfastness to remain focused on self-experience serves as an inspiration for seekers of all generations. While the saint's image symbolises the worthlessness of all material riches, perfectly chiselled facial features embody inner tranquillity and vitality, exuding a calm and forceful demeanour.

THE BAHUBALI DOME UNITES FAITH AND HERITAGE

The structure is a unique technical and architectural masterpiece within the artificial hill that accommodates the Bahubali idol. A massive pillar-less dome of pink stone has been erected, and plans are underway to exhibit Jain principles within this expansive space.

Devotees of Pujya Gurudevshree recognise that certain concepts within Jain philosophy can be complex for those unfamiliar with them. Therefore, for better understanding and a lasting impact, particularly among the younger generation, they have incorporated a unique and immersive educational multimedia experience. This initiative introduces people to Jainism and instils universal principles such as detachment and inner peace, sparking a desire to learn more about the Soul.

The 45-minute multimedia presentation will guide viewers through four separate zones, with each show delving into various philosophical concepts.

The first zone explores the time cycle, explaining the nature of the cosmos according to the Jain tradition and revealing the origin point of every Soul in the universe.

The second zone searches the Soul's never-ending cycle of existence in four states: hell, heaven, animal-plant and human, where it takes numerous forms and suffers eternally.

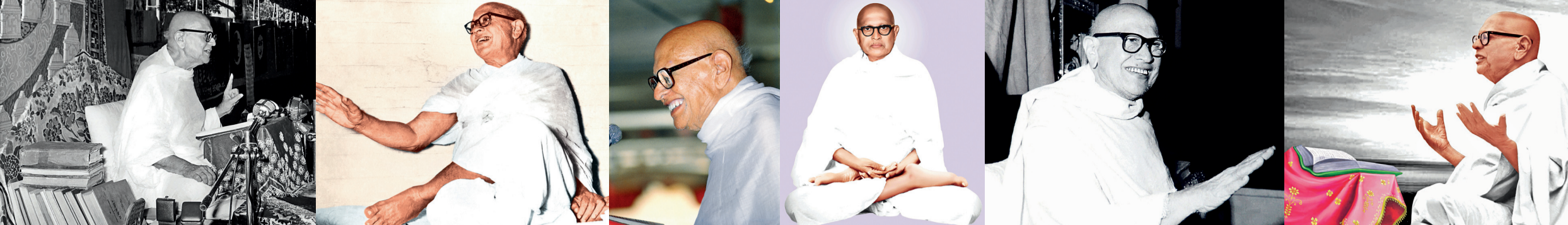
The third zone outlines the path to end miseries by attaining the Right Belief and embracing Digambar asceticism. It also narrates the inspiring saga of Bahubali Muniraaj and his year-long penance.

Finally, the fourth zone unveils the Divine Assembly Hall of Tirthankar Bhagwan, known as the Samavsharan, which features His divine "OM" sound.

Collectively, the presentation chronicles the journey of a Seeker to Siddha and Nar to Narayan, inspiring every devotee to tread the path to deity hood. Jainism believes that every Soul has the potential for divinity, and the purpose of religion is to guide individuals to a state of limitless serenity and happiness!



The New Jambudvipa and Bahubali Complex, Songadh.



Pujya Gurudevshree Kanji Swami was born in 1890 at Umrula village in Gujarat. A Seeker by birth, he was eager to understand the genuine route to Liberation. His inspiring journey illustrates the way he extracted profound meanings from ancient texts and attained Self-experience. Choosing the small village of Songadh as his place of study and reflection, he brought about a spiritual revolution that profoundly impacted the hearts of his followers.

His captivating oratory prowess and a simple yet inspiring persona drew people from across the country. His words acted as a ray of sunshine, illuminating the true wisdom of Jainism. His sermons were like an elixir, serving the spiritual nectar of knowledge to his devotees.

He emphasised that the soul wandered aimlessly through the four realms of existence, seeking happiness from external objects. However, he underlined that true happiness and peace were found within the "I," or Soul. This purposeless journey accumulates auspicious and inauspicious karma, leading to an infinite loop of births and rebirths in all states of existence.

How does one break free from this transmigratory cycle? In one of his sermons, the Gurudev says, "I am a Supreme Soul - Believe it, I am a Supreme Soul - Know it, I am a Supreme Soul - Experience it."

Pujya Gurudev outlined the first step, accentuating the need to recognise the nature of one's mistakes. Subsequently, he preached that one must discard false notions and discern what is right and wrong, what should be embraced and renounced. Deep concentration and genuine insights lead to a state of Self-experience, which is pure happiness. At this point, one achieves the Right Belief (Samyak Darshan) and is considered to have the Right Knowledge (Samyak Gyan).

The state of Self-experience leads to partial purity in the Soul, known as Samyak Charitra or Right Conduct. Right Belief, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct are the true path to salvation.

Gurudev asserted that without this self-realisation, all austerities, penance, worship, and other bodily practices were as ineffective as zero without the number one preceding it.

The revered Guru further elucidated that an enlightened Soul eventually embraced asceticism, practised penance and austerities, and attained Liberation. Being on the path to salvation (Moksha-Marg), Gurudev guided others along that line. He stated that Right Belief with Self-experience was the first step and demonstrated how it could be attained through the practice of the Science of Differentiation (Bhed Vigyan).

In his discourses, he methodically discussed the finer points of practising the science of distinguishing between the soul and the body, much like a father

explaining the minor elements of a business to his young son. Preaching authentic Jainism from ancient Digambar texts, especially Samaysaar by Kundkund Acharya, Gurudev conducted discourses at least twice daily for 45 years. His 10,000 hours of recordings are available online, offering seekers a profound understanding of Jain scriptures and guiding them down the path to breaking the cycle of miseries.

His speeches were continuously centred around the pure Soul, 'Bhagwan Aatma', attracting people from diverse sects and regions. He extensively preached that every soul, from the tiny to the colossal—whether in a microbial, animal, human, infernal or celestial form—can achieve emancipation and become God. "All souls are divine; may all attain divinity," these words of the Gurudev continue to ring true in the hearts of followers. This underpins the importance of Ahimsa, or non-violence, as the guiding principle of Jainism, where causing harm to any living being, regardless of its size, is strictly prohibited.

Pujya Gurudevshree explained the fundamental premise of Jainism: every substance in the universe is entirely independent while also manifesting itself through continual alterations. This principle rejects the notion of "doership" of one substance into another or its attributes or modifications. It states that "I," the Soul, is a knower of this entire system but not a doer. Understanding this concept eliminates the pride associated with creating or destroying another's life and the sense of inadequacy about

From a small following, Gurudev's popularity grew owing to his immense knowledge and ability to explain complex concepts in simple terms. His oratory prowess earned him the title "Kohinoor of Kathiawad," and (his) inspirational persona drew devotees globally, guiding them towards the true religion.

One of his most significant contributions was to promote the translation of scriptures into Hindi and Gujarati, subsequently printing them on a large scale. Scholars across India accomplished this monumental task under his direction, and scriptures such as Samaysaar, Pravachansaar, Niyamsaar, Ashtpahud, Panchastikaay, Moksha Marg Prakashak and others became household names. The masses began reading them due to their simple and understandable

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Jain philosophy is not a sect or a religion. It is the order of the universe as expounded by the Omniscients.”

Gurudevshree The Kohinoor of Kathiawad

not being able to fulfil one's tasks. The result is the emergence of the right effort in the form of true detachment, opening the path to Liberation.

"The eternal, unified and pure conscious nature of the self is attained by dedicating oneself to such a soul through self-introspection. It is the sole path to becoming a Supreme Soul," says Gurudevshree. He thoroughly explained basic Jain principles using examples and scripture references, providing sound, logical justifications for their authenticity. He humbly denied credit for developing or defining them first, underscoring that these universal rules were teachings passed down directly from the sermons of Tirthankars, ranging from Lord Rishabdev to Lord Mahavir.



Pujya Behenshree Champaben

One of Gurudev's foremost disciples and followers was Pujya Behenshree Champaben. She was born in 1914 in Wadhwan, Saurashtra, Gujarat.

At 18, Behenshree attained the Right Belief, Samyak Darshan, or Self-Enlightenment, through Gurudev's teachings. She recognised that he was explaining the genuine nature of the soul and how to experience it.

After Gurudev's passing, she continued to carry his torch, and her teachings are still popular among devotees because they explain the same path to moksha in a simple, common language. Behenshree passed away in 1990.

Songadh as a Pilgrimage Centre - Adhyatma Tirth



Songadh, also known as "Swarnapuri", is a prominent pilgrimage site for the Digambar Jain Community.

In 1938, Gurudevshree's fame prompted his followers to build a Swadhay Mandir (a temple of discourse) in the heart of Songadh, where people flocked to gain knowledge from his discourses. His followers further built the main temple of Simandhar Swami in 1941, followed by Manasthambh and Parmagam Mandir. This unique temple etched Acharya Kundkund's priceless scriptures on the marble stone walls. Additional structures like the divine assembly hall (Samavsharan)

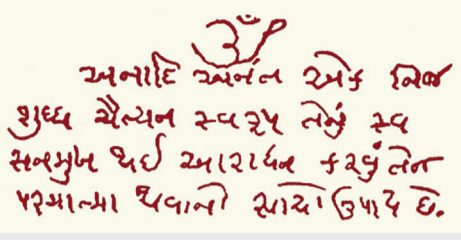
of Simandhar Swami, Panch Meru Nandishwar Mandir, etc., were also constructed, transforming Songadh into an Adhyatma Tirth—a spiritual pilgrimage. In later years, the avant-garde Guru Kahan Art Museum was built, exhibiting exquisite and international-level paintings and sculptures from artists around India.

For more details, browse through: www.kanjiswami.org OR www.vitragvani.com



language, sided by his initiative to organise educational camps for spiritual learning.

Gurudev went on several pilgrimages across the country, and many people joined him. He was instrumental in establishing 66 Digambar Jain Temples nationwide, including one in Nairobi, Kenya. Inspired by his influence, new temples were built in London, the United States, Dubai and Singapore, demonstrating his global appeal. Finally, Gurudev took samadhi in 1980 after leading a successful Jain movement.



Gurudev's Handwriting

JAIN VALUES OF HARMONY IN THE PRESENT TURBULENT WORLD

Equality: According to Jainism, all living species in the universe have the capacity for divinity, whether microscopic, invisible microbiological forms, plants, animals, people, heavenly beings, or infernal beings. All are considered Bhagwan atma, and each can incarnate into Supreme Souls - Parmatma.

Non-Violence (Ahimsa): All living Souls possess cognition and can feel pain or hurt. Jainism considers all Souls equal, prohibiting harming even the tiniest living beings. For that reason, Jains abstain from eating animals, root vegetables, food after sunset, unboiled and unfiltered water, and other products that harm vast numbers of living organisms. Notably, they avoid leather, silk, and other items associated with large-scale violence. Notwithstanding, for Jains, non-violence extends beyond these practices. They consciously avoid thoughts and words that hurt other living beings, integrating Ahimsa deeply into their lives. This philosophy inherently fosters the seeds of world peace, equality, and harmony among all sects and religions.

Minimalism (Aparigraha): Jain philosophy advocates that every soul has limitless happiness, and the desire for external possessions causes attachment, stifling spiritual development. Additionally, more possessions lead to more violence, which contradicts the fundamental principle of non-violence. Therefore, Jainism promotes the use of only the necessities of life and discourages the desire for more. The principle inspires sustainable living, reduces stress, and generates contentment, giving rise to inner peace and harmony.

Minimalism is evident in Jains' generous contribution to charitable causes such as hospitals, schools, and shelters for cows and other animals, aiming to protect them. They also serve as pioneers in expanding and preserving their spiritual heritage by constructing temple complexes and engaging in related activities across the country.

Karma Theory: It states that every soul suffers the repercussions of its own positive and negative thoughts, words, and actions. The circumstances they face today are the fruits of their past good or bad karma, and what they receive in the future will be the outcome of their current karma. This places the responsibility of creating destiny on the individual rather than blaming or crediting any other supreme entity. Jainism holds that Gods do not punish or reward us; instead, it is our karma. Therefore, if one wishes to avoid suffering, it is imperative to cultivate a benevolent character and refrain from malicious activities.

Forgiveness (Kshama): Jainism strongly advocates that forgiveness is an ornament of the brave, requiring tremendous strength to forgive those who have wronged us. From a holistic viewpoint, the wrongdoing is perceived as the result of one's previous karma, and the other person is regarded as innocent. Consequently, Jains believe in granting forgiveness rather than harbouring resentment and thoughts of revenge, which invites additional negative karma. Recognising that even a speck of anger within can disrupt the soul's peace, Jains prioritise forgiveness as their most important virtue.

Anekant and Syadvad: Anekant, derived from Anek + Ant, literally means multiple attributes. It emphasises the multidimensional aspect of all substances in the cosmos, which can be perceived differently through various points of view. Syadvad, on the other hand, is the doctrine of qualified assertion, which states that to understand something correctly, one must examine it from various angles to make an informed decision. Without this, succumbing to one-sided prejudice can result in incorrect knowledge, frequently leading to real-world disputes.

Equanimity (Santabhaav): This principle advises looking at everything through the lens of equanimity without categorising anything as desirable or unpleasant. All substances in the cosmos are autonomous, and none are fundamentally desirable or undesirable. However, incorrect beliefs about whether they are good or detrimental to us trigger a cascade of attachments and aversions to all external items. These are the core causes of anxiety and restlessness, which disrupt inner serenity. Toxic emotions such as rage, pride, dishonesty, and greed go away as one learns to perceive the external world with calm. Inner detachment occurs, leading to supreme bliss, the ultimate goal of every soul.