

Maitri Bhavanu Pavitra Zarnu

The 12 Bhavnas

Jainism puts a significant emphasis on the thought process of a human being. A person's behaviour and actions are the reflection of their internal thoughts, day in and day out. It is not the action but the intention behind the action that results in the accumulation of Karma. Hence, one should be very careful about his thoughts, how he thinks, and the subject matter of his thought.

To make room for pure thoughts, and to drive out the evil ones, Jainism recommends reflecting on the following twelve thoughts or Bhavnas.

The twelve Bhavnas are the subject matters of one's meditation, and how to occupy one's mind with useful, religious, beneficial, peaceful, harmless, spiritually advancing, karma preventing thoughts. They cover a wide field of teachings of Jainism. They are designed to serve as aids to spiritual progress and lead the aspirants from the realm of desire to the path of renunciation. They are reflections upon the fundamental facts of life, intended to develop purity of thought and sincerity in the practice of religion.

1. Anitya Bhavna – the concept that nothing in this world is permanent.
2. Asarana Bhavna – that no one in this world provides true refuge or protection, and the only way of conquering death, old age and disease is by destroying all karma.
3. Samsara Bhavna - the concept that there are no permanent relationships in the universe, like father, mother, friend or foe. This helps prevent worldly attachments to other living beings.
4. Ekatva Bhavna – that the soul is solitary in nature, and the soul will enjoy the fruits, and suffer the bad consequences of its own action alone.
5. Anyatva Bhavna – that the soul is separate from any other objects or living beings of the world, including his physical body. This will prevent being controlled by the desires, greed, and urges of the physical body.
6. Asuci Bhavna – the concept that the body is impure and that the soul is pure and unattached to the body.
7. Asrava Bhavna – being aware that every time we enjoy or suffer through the five senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing), we accumulate more karma. This thought will make us more careful, and will try to stop the influx of karmas.
8. Samvara Bhavna – Under this reflection, one thinks about stopping evil thoughts, and becomes absorbed in achieving spiritual knowledge and meditation. This prevents the influx of karma.
9. Nirjara Bhavna – reflecting on the evil consequences of karma, and striving to destroy the previously acquired karma, by austerity and meditation.
10. Loka Bhavna – the concept that the universe is eternal but transitory, and thus all objects of the world come into existence and perish. This thought helps us understand the true nature of reality.
11. Bodhi-durlabha Bhavna – that it is very difficult to attain right faith, knowledge, and conduct in this world, so the effort to do so must be strengthened.
12. Dharma Bhavna – the concept that the true teacher, religious scriptures, and religion are excellent shelters in this world full of agony. All other things lead to misery and suffering.

Four Bhavnas or Virtues

Besides the twelve Bhavnas described above Jainism has laid great importance on the following four Bhavnas or virtues.

- Amity, love, and friendship - Maitri
- Appreciation, respect and joy - Pramoda
- Compassion - Karuna
- Equanimity and tolerance- Madhyastha

I will now sing a song that describes these four bhavnas, and the translation is as follows:

May the sacred stream of amity
Flow forever in my heart.
May the universe prosper,
Such is my cherished desire.

May my heart sing with ecstasy
At the sight of the virtuous.
May my life be
An offering at their feet.

May my heart bleed at the sight of
The wretched, the cruel, the irreligious.
May tears of compassion
Flow from my eyes.

May I always be there to show the path
To the pathless wanderers of life.
Yet if they should not hearken to me,
May I bide in patience.

May the spirit of goodwill
Enter all our hearts.
May we all sing in chorus
The immortal song of human concord.

[To be sung]:

Maitri Bhavanu Pavitra Zaranu,
Muj Haiya Ma Vahya Kare,
Shubh Thao Aa Sakal Vishvanu,
Evi Bhavana Nitya Rahe.

Gunathi Bharela Gunijana Dekhi,
Haiyu Maru Nrutya Kare,
A Santo Na Charan Kamal Ma,
Muj Jivan No Ardhaya Rahe.

Din Krur Ne Dharma Vihona,
Dekhi Dilma Dard Rahe,
Karuna Bhini Ankho Mathi,
Ashruno Shubh Shrot Vahe.

Marg Bhulela Jivan Pathik Ne,
Marg Chindhava Ubho Rahu,
Kare Upexa A Marag Ni,
To Ye Samata Chitt Dharu.

Chitrabhanuni Dharma Bhavana,
Haiye Sau Manav Lave,
Ver Zer Na Paap Taji Ne,
Mangal Geeto Sau Gave.