

LESSON 20

INTRODUCTION TO UTTARADHYANA SUTRA

All religions in the world have some specific and basic scriptural texts. They are taken as the sacred books. They contain the instructions for the ascetics. They contain the self-experienced results and processes. They contain the processes to be followed and the objectives of the life to be attained.

Early religions had a set of scriptural texts. Four Vedas of Hindus and three pitakas of the Buddhists are famous. Jains too have the twelve Agamas of scriptural texts. Later religions have a single scripture. The Bible for the Christians, the Koran for the Muslims, the Avesta for the Persians, the Guru Granth Sahib for the Sikhs, etc., are the scriptural texts of different religions are written in different languages. Jain scriptures are written in Ardha-magadhi language-spoken by the common people of ancient Magadha (Bihar) and Koshala (Uttar Pradesh) countries. Later on the Jain scriptures were written in Sanskrit and the other languages.

There are two types of scriptural texts for Jain: 1) primary and 2) secondary or supplementary. Both contain the Jain principles and practices, though the primary texts are the most important ones. The secondary texts are also important.

We will discuss here about one of the most important secondary scriptural texts named Uttara-adhyayan-Sutra. Traditionally it is said to contain the last sermons of Lord Mahavira. Many scholars presume that the current text seems to be a composite work of various dates. However, it is one of the earliest texts equivalent to the primary texts.

This text has various ways of narrating the Jain principles. They have been illustrated through the parables, the anecdotes, the episodes and the historical stories. It contains 36 chapters. Nearly, a third has the historical stories and the episodes. Some early chapters contain the parables and the concepts of Jainism. The variety of methods applied in the text makes the book highly illustrative and interesting. The text is now available with the translations in many languages: German, English, Hindi, Gujarati, etc. Its first English translation was published as early as in 1895. It is now available under the sacred books of the east vol. 45. There are many short and long commentaries on this text beginning since ninth century A.D. With the help of these translations, any person can read, understand and estimate the value of the book.

Let us now turn to the summary of the content of this important text. The book tells us that human life is rare and difficult to attain. However, it is the human life which leads us to ultimate happiness. Hence it is necessary to make the best use of the human life. One must try to enrich it with highest human values and enlightenment. It allures the people towards the ascetic life, which may be a life of better internal happiness. The texts tell us that there are four things which are rare:

- 1) **Human life**
- 2) **sermons of the Jinas**
- 3) **Right or rational vision, and**
- 4) **Right conduct of restraints.**

One must realize that Mahavira was the highest among the ascetics of his days. He had many followers with proper faith and understanding. He inspired many people to his path as a means of the outer and the inner happiness of the permanent nature. He also laid stress as an ascetic, the path of detachment, where one would have to face 22 types of the difficulties. One will have to bear many hardships of physical and mental nature to transform oneself as true ascetic.

Uttaradhyayan Sutra teaches us many points of ascetic life through the stories of Kapila, Nemi, Mrugaputra, Sanjaya, Rathnemi, Jaya-Vijayghosha and many more. They suggest that good life or ascetic life accrues from the previous good karma. One must think and act well all the times. It also tells us that professions should not be taken as the birth right. They depend upon your training and activity. This idea has been one of the most progressive one during old days. A chapter tells us the story of an ascetic who is not given the due regards by the high caste people. Later on, his sermons yield him the credit. Mahavira says the asceticism can be cultivated without any restrictions of the caste and creed. This is the basis of universality of the religion.

The text mentions that carelessness and indolence is not good. Too much attachment or indulgence is also bad. The ambitions and desires of the men are limitless. They cause dissatisfaction and lead to an unhappy life. One should practice cultivation of the good qualities which may moderate the obstructive attitudes. To get away from the bad actions and thoughts is the best sacrifice one can have.

A good number of chapters describe the basic tenets of the Jain system. The practice of these tenets is the milestone of the inner and outer purification. The Karma theory is the essence of the Jain system. The practice of equanimity (Samayik) or meditation has been described. The theory of colors (Leshya) is one of the most important psychological principles to reflect one's mind through the colored halo around the body. The practice of meditation improves the mind and therefore the color. The whiteness of the colors indicates the good qualities. There are six types of such colors. The three are good while the three are bad and we must try to have the three good ones.

The Jainism is an action oriented religion. However, the action bears the result only when performed with meticulous care without lapses of omission and commission.

The last chapter is very important for us. It gives us the details about the living and non-living world. It deals with the physics, chemistry, botany and zoology. The non-violence has been described in chapters dealing with the different qualities and vows of the ascetics.