

LESSON 04

NINE FUNDAMENTALS (TATTVAS)

Jain philosophy can be described in various ways and one of them is by describing it through various Tattvas. As per Svetambara there are Nav Tattvas or nine fundamentals.*

They are:

- 1) Jiva
- 2) Ajiva
- 3) Punya
- 4) Papa
- 5) Asrav
- 6) Banda
- 7) Samara
- 8) Nirvana
- 9) Moksha

Whole universe is divided into jiva and ajiva tattvas. The rests of seven tattvas are part of interactions between these two and are either expressing combination or freedom from each other.

JIVA (SOUL):

All living beings are called jivas regardless how minute or larger it may be. Here jiva has two independent components the body and soul (Atma). In Jain literature for description purpose the soul which resides in the body is described as jiva though they mean or Atma. The soul is also known as consciousness (Chetan). The soul cannot be reproduced. The soul has the characteristic of knowledge and it is indestructible, invisible, and formless. The true nature of pure soul is without any attachment or hatred, while our current soul is full of attachment and hatred. We have to work towards being in true nature of the soul. Studying these nine tattvas and putting them in practice will help us doing so. The body part of Jiva is ajiva part and it stays behind when soul leaves the body either to occupy a new body or to be liberated. Jainism divides jivas into five categories ranging from one-sensed beings to five-sensed beings.

AJIVA (NON-LIVING MATTER):

Anything that is not a soul is called ajiva. Ajiva does not have consciousness. Some examples are house, cars, toys, refrigerator, ball, chairs, bench, all matters, karman particles, etc.

PUNYA (RESULTS OF GOOD DEEDS):

By undertaking any wholesome activities, we acquire punya or good karmas. Such activities are: providing food or other items to the needy people, doing charity work, propagating religion, etc. When punya matures it brings forth worldly comfort, happiness and conducive environment to practice spiritual activities, etc.

PAPA (RESULTS OF BAD DEEDS):

By undertaking bad activities, we acquire papas or bad karmas. Such activities are: being cruel or violent, showing disrespect to parents or teachers, being angry or greedy and

showing arrogance or indulging in deceit. When papa matures, it brings forth worldly suffering, misery, unhappiness and hinders to do spiritual activities, etc.

ASRAVA (INCOMING OF KARMAN PARTICLES):

Whenever we do something good or bad it attracts karman particles to our soul and in turn they become punya or papa. This process of the incoming of karmas to the soul is known as asrav. Incoming of karmas is influenced by or caused by our wrong or misconception of what we do (wrong beliefs, Mithyatva), by being unrestrained and not watching what we are supposed to do (not observing any vow, Avirti), being taken over by our passions or desires (Kashaya), being careless or negligent in what we do (Pramad), and by carrying out various activities (Yoga).

BANDHA (BONDAGE OF KARMAN PARTICLES):

Bandh refers to the binding of karman particles to the soul. (We commonly say binding to the soul but it is actual coexistence of karman particles and Atma Pradesh.) Bandha occurs when any of our activities are associated with desires or a sense of attachment or aversion.

SAMVARA (STOPPAGE OF INCOMING KARMAN PARTICLES):

Samvara is the process by which the process of incoming of karman particles is stopped. Here activities are done but done with being careful (observing samiti), controlling ourselves (observing gupti), following restrains (ten-fold yati-dharma, monkshood), contemplating on various aspect of life (by reflecting on twelve bhavanas), and tolerating the suffering (parishaha) in the life. If we observe these things fully then we stop new karmas coming in or otherwise asrava will continue.

NIRJARA (ERADICATION OF EXISTING KARMAN PARTICLES):

The process by which we shed off accumulated karman particles that are attached to (co-existing with) our soul is called nirjara. Nirjara can be achieved by passively facing the results of maturing karmas or by prematurely maturing karma by performing penance, repentance, asking for forgiveness and meditation, etc. By nirjara we make our soul free from karman particles and when soul becomes free of all karman particles it gets liberated.

MOKSHA (LIBERATION):

Moksha is a state where the soul is liberated from worldly existence. Moksha happens by knowing and observing above mentioned processes:

- i) By knowing the relationship of the soul and ajiva (karman particles),
- ii) Realizing what brings new karman particles,
- iii) Stopping those new karman particles coming to the soul,
- iv) Getting rid off those old karman particles. When we get rid of all the karman particles the soul attains liberation or Moksha. The soul reaches to Siddhashila in this stage.

NOW, LET US USE A SIMPLE ANALOGY TO ILLUSTRATE TATTVAS.

You along with other people were going in a boat to the near by island. The boat was going on smooth because the wind was calm and steady. You were enjoying the boat-

ride. You suddenly felt your feet were wet. You looked down and found water was already few inches in the boat. Water level was rising. The fun turned into worry. You told the engine man about it. He tried to find a hole from where the water was coming. It was difficult because water had already covered the bottom of the boat. At last he located the hole. He packed the hole and new water stopped coming in. Now he took the bucket and started pouring out the water. The boat was empty again. Slowly he got the boat to the coast. You got down and felt relieved.

We can interpret this simple illustration in terms of Nav-Tattvas as follows:

- 1) Jivas are represented by the people like you (living beings) who were in the boat.
- 2) Ajiva is represented by the boat (non-living being).
- 3) Punya is represented by enjoyment resulting from the nice smooth ride.
- 4) Pap is represented by discomfort resulting from water getting into the boat.
- 5) Asrava is represented by the incoming of water through the hole in the boat similar to the incoming of karman particles to the soul.
- 6) Bandh is represented by the accumulation of water in the boat, which is similar to the bondage of karman particles to the soul.
- 7) Samvar is represented by the closing of the hole to stop the water coming into the boat, which is similar to the stoppage of incoming of karman particles to the soul.
- 8) Nirjara is represented by the pouring out of the accumulated water from the boat, which is similar to shedding off accumulated karmic particles from the soul.
- 9) Moksha is represented by the reaching safely to the coast by emptying out the total water from the boat, which is similar to the shedding of all karmic particles from the soul and reaching to Siddha-shila.

Another analogy to illustrate these Tattvas: There lived a family in a farm house. They were enjoying the fresh cool breeze coming through the open doors and windows. The weather suddenly changed, and a terrible dust storm set in. Realizing it was a bad storm, they got up to close the doors and windows. By the time they could close all the doors and windows, some dust had entered the house. After closing all of the doors and windows, they started cleaning away the dust from the house.

We can interpret this simple illustration in terms of Nav-Tattvas as follows:

- 1) Jivas are represented by the people.
- 2) Ajiva is represented by the house.
- 3) Punya is represented by worldly enjoyment resulting from the nice cool breeze.
- 4) Pap is represented by worldly discomfort resulting from the sand storm which brought dust into the house.
- 5) Asrava is represented by the influx of dust through the doors and windows of the house which is similar to the influx of karman particles to the soul.
- 6) Bandh is represented by the accumulation of dust in the house, which is similar to bondage of karman particles to the soul.
- 7) Samvar is represented by the closing of the doors and windows to stop the dust from coming into the house, which is similar to the stoppage of influx of karman particles to the soul.

- 8) Nirjara is represented by the cleaning up of accumulated as well previous dust in the house, which is similar to shedding off new as well as older karmic particles from the soul.
- 9) Moksha is represented by the clean house, which is similar to the shedding of all karmic particles from the soul.

*Digambara literature describes Jainism in seven Tattvas or fundamentals. Punya and Pap are part of Asrav Tattva.