

## LESSON 06

## INTRODUCTION TO TATTVARTH-SUTRA

Most of the sacred literatures of the Jains are written in Ardha-magadhi language. This was the publicly spoken language in those days. However, the times changed. Sanskrit became the royal and elite language. The Jain scholars too started writing their religious and other texts in Sanskrit. Tattvarth Sutra is the first such Jain text in terse aphoristic form. It has two more names: Tattvarth-adhigama-sutra (manual for knowledge of true nature of things or realities) and Moksh-Shastra (tenets of salvation). However, it is popularly known as Tattvarth Sutra.

The name Tattvarth Sutra consists of three Sanskrit words: Tattva (true nature), Artha (things or realities) and sutra (aphorisms of few words). It may, therefore, be called "Aphoristic Text on the true nature of realities". This indicates the contents of the text.

There is no definite information about when this text was composed. However, it is agreed that it must have been composed during the age of elegant aphorisms. The early Christian centuries, every philosophical or religious system in the east have almost put their tenants in short and sweet forms. Brahmsutra, Yoga-sutra, Vaisheshika sutra Nyaysutra etc., represent aphoristic texts of different systems. Tattvarth Sutra represents aphoristic text of Jain system. It must have been composed during 200-400 A.D.

The author of this text is Umasvati or Umaswami. His biography is not properly available. However, he composed his text at Patna in Bihar, eastern India. Umaswami and his text are respected by all the sects of Jains. It is taken as a sacred act to recite the textual aphorisms in private and temple worships. It is read during festival days along with many other texts like Kalpa Sutra etc. It is so short that it could be easily memorized.

Tattvarth-Sutra is not a part of the primary sacred scriptures of the Jains. But it is regarded by them as the most authoritative book on Jainism. It could be compared with the Bible (Christians), Quran (Muslims) Gita (Hindus) or Avesta (Zoroastrians). It has been a highly popular text. That is why it has the largest number of commentaries in different Indian languages from fifth century onward up to current age.

This text has two versions containing 344-357 aphorisms. The text contents are related with the major theoretical and practical aspects of Jain system. It is a small text but it describes Jainism excellently. It represents an epitome of Jainism. This book has ten chapters of uneven length containing the above number of aphorisms. The subject content is not new. However, it has brought together all the earlier scattered material for the first time in a structured system. It consists of all the necessary fundamentals of Jainism. It describes about the realities in the world and their true nature. Its contents are as appropriate as its name.

The Jain principles have been described here both psychologically and scientifically. It mentions that the object of a successful life is to attain ultimate, permanent inner happiness or salvation. It can not be fulfilled until we have a three-fold coordinated path

of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. The path can not be followed until we have the right knowledge about the realities of the world. The right knowledge could be obtained either by self intuition or it could be obtained through listening, reading and analyzing the scriptures. It is necessary that the knowledge is very right. The criteria could be satisfied only when one critically evaluates our information through different organs of knowledge and viewpoints. This is the same process we apply even today to get useful knowledge.

The text not only describes the methods of obtaining knowledge about the outer world, but it also describes how to attain knowledge about the inner world. This requires purification of the body, the mind and the speech through austerities and meditation. During the elaboration, it points out the details of seven types of verbal and non-verbal viewpoints and the theory of manifold predictions. These are the basics for obtaining the right knowledge.

In the first chapter itself, the text points out that there are seven elements to move onto the path of spiritual and physical progress. The first two are the main elements namely the living (Soul) beings and the non-living (pudgal) elements. The third and the fourth elements relate to the influx of the karmas to the soul. This process is called asrav and the bondage of the karmas to the soul is called bandh. The Karmas are the part of vast varieties of pudgals in this universe. This bondage of karmas is the cause of our rebirths, cycle of weal and woes from where we want to move away permanently. The fifth element is the means to stop this bondage of karmas is called the stoppage of karmas, samvar and the sixth is to eradicate the existing bondage of the karmas through various processes is called shedding off karmas, nirjara. And, the seventh element is the freedom of the soul from the bondage of all the karmas is called liberation, Moksha. Thus, we have seven elements for our worries and weal, once again they are:

- 1) Living
- 2) Non-living
- 3) Influx of karmas
- 4) Bondage of karmas
- 5) Stoppage of karmas
- 6) Shedding of karmas
- 7) Liberation.

Umasvati must be given credit to arrange these elements in proper order with respect to the process involved and the principles of human psychology. The earlier literature shows the numerical and ordinal variations. Umaswami, thus, systematized the Jain system with a logical sequence.

The first verse of first chapter is "Samyag darshan jnana charitrani moksha margah". This is the nutshell of Jainism in some respect. It means that right knowledge, right faith and right conduct collectively only are the path to liberation or Moksha. The next three verses mention the seven elements. Rest of the first chapter deals with the process of cognition and details about different types of knowledge, while detail about right conduct is

differed to chapters eight and nine.

The Second, third and fourth chapters deal with the Soul.

The Fifth chapter deals with the Non-soul (Ajiva).

The Sixth, seventh and eighth chapters deal with the various types of karmas and their manifestations and the inflow and the bondage of the karmas.

Ninth chapter describes the stoppage and shading off the karmas.

Tenth chapter is about the complete liberation of the soul or the Moksha.