

Quotations From Scriptures (continued from January 2006 issue):

Selections From Acharya Umaswati's TATTVAARTH SUTRA¹

Introduction

Acharya Umaswati's TATTVAARTH SUTRA presents a systematic and comprehensive view of the seven aspects of reality, as it relates to the basic principles of Jainism. The seven aspects of reality (TATTVAs) are: souls (JEEV), inanimate entities (AJEEV), influx of karmic matter towards soul (AASHRAV), bondage of karmic matter to a soul (BANDH), stoppage of influx of karmic matter (SAMVAR), shedding of karmic matter (NIRJARA), liberation of soul from karmic bondage (MOKSHA).

In the present segment, the discussion of the third aspect of reality, influx of karmic matter, is continued. In particular, the causes of the influx of karmas that determine the states of existence (GATIs) of worldly souls are presented in this installment. Jain scriptures describe four states of existence of worldly souls: Hellish (NARAK), animal or subhuman (TIRYANCH), human (MANUSHYA) and heavenly (DEV). One may question about the hellish and heavenly states of existence. However, in the text, PRASHAMARATI PRAKARAN, the insightful Acharya Umaswati states:²

The happiness of heaven is indirect - it is beyond our experience. Thus we may be disinterested in it. The happiness of salvation (NIRVANA) is even more indirect. Hence we may have doubts about it. On the other hand, the peace and calm brought about by religion can be directly experienced right here. We are free to attain this happiness, which is the fruit of the freedom of spirit. We do not have to buy it with money. We achieve this happiness by taking a dip in the stream of satisfaction and balanced emotions.

Thus questions about heaven and hell are not relevant to our practice of the teachings of our religion. However, it is observed that individuals in their present lives sometimes experience heavenly state of existence and at other times, hellish or subhuman state of existence. Such experiences are part of our worldly existence.

Our readers are expected to appreciate the highly sophisticated psychological content reflected in the presentation of the causes of influx of life-span-determining karmas relating to the four states of worldly existence.

Chapter 6 (Continued)

Causes of influx of hellish life-span-determining karma:

BAHVAARAMBHAPARIGRAHATVAM NAARAKASYAAYUSHAH | 6-15 |

Excessive indulgence (BAHU AARAMBH) in activities related to subsistence or occupation and unconscionable possessiveness (BAHU PARIGRAH) constitute the causes of the influx of hellish life-span-determining karma.

All worldly beings indulge in activities related to their subsistence. Further, they have to protect themselves from predators and adversaries. Human beings, in general, have some business or job. All these activities involve passions of greed, anger, intrigue and ego. They also constitute subsistence-related (AARAMBHI), occupation-related (UDYOGI) and adversary-related (VIRODHI) violence (HIMSA). An individual who passionately follows these activities and has inordinate regard for materials (PARIGRAH) attracts painful hellish life-span-determining karma. Such individuals are observed to have a mad pursuit of money and materials. They do not desist from defrauding others and appropriating their assets. They have lust for sensual gratification and intensive greed. No wonder such tendencies bring life-span-determining karma related to a hellish state of existence.

In everyday life, it is observed that conniving men and women who are engaged in the mad pursuit of materialism without any regard to the impact of their actions on the rest of the society are extremely stressed, discontented and agitated. Their frame of mind comports inclement meditation (RAUDRADHYAAN). When these individuals do not obtain their desired results, they indulge in sorrowful meditation (AARTADHYAAN). Even their family, relatives and friends are restless. This is close to suffering the hellish state of existence.

Causes of influx of subhuman (animal) life-span-determining karma:

MAAYA TAIRYAGYONASYA | 6-16 |

Deceitfulness (MAYA) causes the influx of subhuman (animal and plant) life-span-determining karma.

Indulging in intricate complicities, fostering schemes of deception, treachery and forgery lead to the influx of life-span-determining karma related to subhuman state of existence. Such tendencies include preaching irrational and deluding dogmas, advancing unreasonable concepts of reality in the name of religion, and finding faults of others with total disregard to one's own conduct and character. It should be pointed out that these tendencies involve sorrowful meditation and inclement meditation. Such traits correspond to the state of existence as an animal or a plant.

Causes of influx of human life-span-determining karma:

ALPAARAMBHAPARIGRAHATVAM MAANUSHASYA | 6-17 |

Limited indulgence (ALPA AARAMBH) and considerate possessiveness (ALPA PARIGRAH) constitute the causes of the influx of human life-span-determining karma.

The causes of the influx of human life-span-determining karma are nearly opposite to those of hellish life-span-determining karma. Obviously, activities limited to bare necessities of life, and contentment, forthrightness, gentle disposition, mild passions and peaceful death bring about genuine happiness in life. These virtues encompass an ideal human life.

Another cause of influx of human life-span-determining karma:

SVABHAAVAMAARDAVANCHA | 6-18 |

Modesty in behavior (SVABHAAV MAARDAVA) also leads to the influx of human life-span-determining karma.

A modest outlook toward life and propitious behavior also lead to birth as a human being. In general, it is observed that individuals who have a proper attitude in life and who conduct themselves with sincerity are content and happy. They take the ups and downs in life as part of the nature of reality - of their worldly existence. Such is a virtuous and blissful human life.

Causes of influx of life-span-determining karmas in general:

NIHSHEELAVRATATVAM CHA SARVSHAAM | 6-19 |

Influx of the life-span-determining karmas mentioned above is caused by absence of restraint (NIHSHEEL) and of vows (NIRVRATYA).

In this aphorism, the perceptive acharya summarizes the causes of the hellish, subhuman and human life-span-determining karmas. The causes of the influx of the three kinds of life-span-determining karmas essentially amount to absence of restraint and lack of vows to a greater or lesser extent. If an individual indulges in extremely immoral conduct, he/she obtains karmas that lead to infernal state of existence. Somewhat milder immorality leads to birth in the subhuman state of existence, and moral conduct accompanied with very mild passions leads to rebirth as a human being. In certain instances, living beings having mild passions, but devoid of restraint and vows, do obtain heavenly life-span-determining karma.

Causes of influx of heavenly life-span-determining karma:

SARAAGASAMYAMASAMYAMAASAMYAMA
AKAAMANIRJARAABAALA
TAPAANSI DAIVASYA | 6-20 |

Self-restraint tainted with attachment (SARAAG SAMYAM), restraint-cum-non-restraint (SAMYAMAASAMYAM), inconsequent shedding of karmas (AKAAMA-NIRJARA) and mindless penance (BAAL TAPAH) cause the influx of heavenly life-span-determining karma.

In aphorism 6-12, self-restraint tainted with attachment, inconsequent shedding of karmas and mindless penance have been attributed as the causes of the influx of pleasant-feeling-producing karma. Heavenly state of existence implies good life conjoined with comforts and sensual gratification. Thus partial self-restraint, inconsequent shedding of karmas and mindless penance have been attributed as causes of heavenly life-span-determining karma as well.

A rational individual adopts self-restraint in pursuit of spiritual progress. Rationalism entails absence of all desires. However, on account of human weaknesses, a person has devotion to religion, scriptures and monks. Certain individuals follow religious practices to enhance and maintain their status in society. These are aspects of attachment. Such practices amount to restraint tainted with attachment.

Being human, an individual observes restraint sometimes and, at other times, he/she is delinquent. Such conduct is called restraint-cum-non-restraint.

Inconsequent shedding of karmas takes place when an individual suffers desirable as well as undesirable consequences of karmas without any resentment, considering them as part of his/her worldly existence.

Mindless penance consists of fasts, meditation and other observances undertaken without rationalism. In such practices, the individual does not pay any regard to reason and has no understanding of the significance of the activities.

The Jain scriptures have described three kinds of thoughts and feelings, inauspicious (ASHUBH), auspicious (SHUBH) and pristine (SHUDDHA). Self-restraint tainted with attachment, restraint-cum-non-restraint, inconsequent shedding of karmas and mindless penance involve auspicious thoughts and feelings for most part. Thus they lead to the influx of heavenly life-span-determining karma. In everyday life, it is seen that an individual having a rational outlook toward life who practices self-restraint enjoys happiness and commands estimable status in society.

Another cause of influx of heavenly life-span-determining karma:

SAMYAKTVAM CHA | 6-21 |

Rationalism (SAMYAKTVA) as well leads to the influx of heavenly life-span-determining karma.

The Jain religion attaches great importance on rationalism. It is rationalism that advances the concept of freedom of each individual soul and that self-endeavor is the means to achieve it - the fundamental principle of Jainism. No supreme being or scripture or teacher (guru) can liberate a soul from the bondage of karma. The individual has to form his/her own concept of reality through study, observation and logical thinking. Thus the individual develops rational perception and rational knowledge. Then the person adopts rational conduct. These three jewels (RATNATRAYA) secure the shedding of karma and eventually salvation (MOKSHA). Such a frame of mind causes the influx of heavenly life-span-determining karma.

The freedom enjoyed by a rational individual, in itself, is a heavenly state of existence. It frees the individual from blind adherence to any scripture or pronouncements and dictates of any individual or entity. The Jain religion is the religion of self-reliants (SHRAMAN) - one who depends on the self for peace and happiness in life. It does not entail performing any rites and rituals because it is not physical activities but one's moral conduct that leads to spiritual progress.³ Thus Jainism frees an individual from the servitude of meaningless practices. A rational individual enjoys heavenly bliss.

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