

JAIN VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE : NATURALISTIC OR NON-NATURALISTIC ? *

Dale Riepe, in his book entitled *The Naturalistic Tradition in Indian Thought*, maintains that the Jaina view of knowledge is 'highly non-naturalistic'.¹ He has, evidently, based this judgment on the Jaina view of knowledge as presented by one H. M. Bhattacharya through two of his papers published in the July 1938 and January 1939 issues of the *Philosophical Quarterly*.² Bhattacharya thinks that according to the Jainas all knowledge is innate.³ To know is to remember and recognise or knowledge is nothing other than recognition and reminiscence. "Knowledge" in the context of Jaina thought, he says, is, "the self-functioning of the self."⁴

But Bhattacharya's is not the isolated view-point. There are very many competent scholars who seem to share the same. Speaking about the highest kind of direct knowledge called 'Kevala-jnāna' in the system S. N. Dasgupta has observed that it is "transcendental knowledge arising from within the soul".⁵ Jadunath Sinha, another historian of Indian Philosophy, obviously echoes the same view when he says that "the jaina doctrine of knowledge as revelation from within the self is hardly tenable."⁶

To me the remark seems to be a typical case of "call a dog mad and kill it" insofar as I think that to interpret Jaina view of knowledge as 'revelation from within the self' is to misinterpret it. In all fairness to Sinha and to Dasgupta, I must, however, acknowledge that they do not seem to be as emphatic on the point as does Bhattacharya. There is, on the other hand, some ambiguity in the views of the two scholars.

Contrary to what has been referred to above, Dasgupta also observes that "both logically and psychologically the validity of knowledge", according to the Jainas, "depends upon outward correspondence with facts."⁷ Sinha argues, in another book of his, that in accordance with the Jaina view 'there can be no cognition without an object.'⁸

His quotation from *Syādavādamañjari-Nirviṣayāyājñaptera-ghaṭanāt*⁹—in this connection is quite interesting. He seems to hit the nail on the head when he approvingly quotes the following statement of A. B. Dhurva : “ There is the external world in which things have their definite places; *our anubhāva (perception) obeys external facts*, and our *Vāsanās* (subconscious impressions) are determined by the *anubhava (perception)*. *Thus the final determining agent in our prema (valid knowledge) is the external world*”.¹⁰ The last sentence needs to be especially marked.

Now, the question is : Can these conflicting opinions be reconciled ? One may say, in a lighter view perhaps, that there is no conflict that cannot be (said to co-exist) reconciled following the Jaina attitude of extreme intellectual tolerance—as represented by their famous doctrines of *Anekāntavāda* and *Syādavāda*. Even contradictions can co-exist. The ambiguity reflected in the thoughts of the scholars is really that of the Jaina thought itself. . . I, however, do not think that this is the right line of approach.

It is my considered opinion that the Jainas do not maintain ‘innateness of knowledge’ and as such there is no basis for holding that the Jaina epistemology is non-naturalistic. Though, I am not unaware that there is some support to the contrary view point in some Jaina texts. Take, for example, a statement as the ‘shining of the self in its own splendour’ on the destruction of *Jñānāvāriṇya*, *Darśanāvāriṇya* and *Antarāya Karmas*.¹¹ Further, in *Parikṣā-mukhasūtra*,¹² we have an interesting argument minimising the importance of object in knowledge and suggesting that the sense-organs are the causal factors in knowledge.¹³ If we combine this with the view expressed by Siddhasena, an accredited Jaina scholaist, that ‘after the removal of Karma the self itself is the sense-organ proper and not any other’ (*Jīva-pradeśa evam Karmaksopasamatvād indriyān-nānyat Ātmā ca indriyam*)¹⁴, the way to the conclusion that the Jainas accept knowledge to be ‘revelation from within the self’ is clear. Besides the very name ‘*Kevalajñāna*’ too sounds indicative of such a view.

I am inclined to think otherwise, because I am conscious of the Jaina insistence on the realistic character of knowledge. The definition of knowledge as offered by the Jaina thinker Hemachandra in referring to ‘*arthabodhakṣamatā*, surely points to the object’s

being an essential factor in knowledge generation.¹⁵ Further, the Jaina criticism of the Yogācāra-Bauddha thesis is entirely based on the importance of object in knowledge.¹⁶

It may be argued that the Jaina insistence on Realism is only initial and not final. They do maintain a distinction between empirical perception—covered by *Mati* which along with *Śruta* is actually called in the system as *parokṣajñāna*—and transcendental perception—which consists of *Avadhi*, *Manabparyāya* and *Kevalajñāna* and is characterised in the system as *pratyakṣajñāna*. The realistic and naturalistic view is correct about the former and not the latter. To this I am to say that there is no support for the contention in the Jaina philosophical thought.

A dualism in epistemology is through out maintained by the Jainas. The object of knowledge is not just a perspective of the self. It is independent of the subject and does make its contribution in knowledge. The self is not modified by the object through knowledge. The same is true of the object, i.e. it too is not modified or appropriated by the subject. Knowledge being an external relation between the self—the sense-organ (*Indriya*) and the object (*Viśaya*) does not affect its terms.¹⁷ *Kevalajñāna* or so-called transcendental knowledge is not without any objective basis. It, on the contrary, has all objects in its range and is thus *sakalajñāna*. To the sentence “knowledge is not mere knowing but the self as knowing”¹⁸ we must add, “some object or the other”. The word ‘some’ in accordance with the usual logical convention should mean ‘at least one, may be all’.

The levels of experience are not different from one another in terms of one having an objective basis and the other having none. The self at the level of *Mati* and *Śruta* comes into contact with the objects through the agency of sense-organs—which serve as-if as windows. At the level of *Avadhi* and *manabparyāya* it does come into proximity of more of the objects and their modes because of the opening caused by the partial removal of karma matter.¹⁹ With the total removal of the veil and resistance of karma the self at the level of *Kevalajñāna* becomes—as-if all—windows and

is the sense-organ proper (Ātmā ca indriyam, as referred to by Siddhasena)²⁰ and as such is capable of coming into contact with all that is.

The controversy, on whether or not the Kevalī (one who has attained Kevalajñāna) is capable of having two conscious activities at a time, that we find the Jaina thinkers indulging in,²¹ is clearly indicative of the fact that the majority of Jaina thinkers do take a realistic and naturalistic view of knowledge. Umāsvāmi²² and Jinabhadra²³ suggest that no one other than a Kevalī can ever intuit an amūrta (immaterial) object. Further, both Bhagavatī Sūtra²⁴ and Tattvārtha Sūtra²⁴ speak of Upayoga (attention or consciousness) as the very defining property of the self and both of them²⁶ draw a distinction between Sākāra (determinate) and anākāra (indeterminate) upayoga. Such a distinction can be only justified if the Jaina view of knowledge is taken to be realistic and naturalistic.

There is yet another source of misinterpretation of Kevalajñāna as 'absolute and transcendental knowledge obliterating all distinctions and the plurality of the world of objects'.²⁷ In Acārāṅga Sūtra (1.3.4) we find a statement to the effect that 'one who knows one knows all and one who knows all knows one'—*Je egam Janai, se Sarvam Janai; je Sarvam Janai se egam Janai*. This can be taken literally and misinterpreted to support Absolutistic point of view. But, if we do so we would be contradicting the over all Jaina position represented by their anekāntavāda. The Jainas are non-Absolutists. The simple way of understanding such a statement must be in line with the Jaina thought. It simply means that while one knows one thing he knows everything insofar as nothing can be said to be completely known if it is not known as distinct from everything else and vice-versa.

NOTES

* Presented at the Golden Jubilee session of the Akhil Bhāratiya Sanskrit Sammelan—Oct. 1967.

1. See pp. 91–113.
2. The papers are titled as “The Jaina view of Knowledge and Error”; and “The Jaina Theory of Pratyabhijna.” respectively.
3. See *Philosophical Quarterly* (Amalner) January 1939, p. 1.
4. See *Philosophical Quarterly* (Calcutta) July 1938, p. 122.
5. S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I., p. 184.
6. Jadunath Sinha, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 275.
7. *Op. cit.*, p. 188.
8. Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Realism*, pp. 65–72.
9. See *Syadavadamanjari* of Malisena edited by A. B. Dhruva, p. 111 Quoted *Ibid.*, p. 65 fn.
10. A. B. Dhruva’s notes, his edition of *Syadavadamanjari* p. 199–Quoted *Ibid.*, p. 70 (My/underlining).
11. Cf. *Tattvartha Sutra* x. 1; *Sthanaga Sutra* 226.
12. *Sutra* ii. 6, 8, 10.
13. Cf. Jadunath Sinha, *op. cit.* *Supra* note 6, pp. 186–7.
14. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 187, fn.
15. See *Anyayogavyavachhedā-dvatrinsika* of Hemacandra stanza XIII.
16. See their arguments as summed up by A. B. Dhruva in his Introduction to (his edition of) *Syadavadamanjari* pp. cxv–cxvi.
17. Cf. K. B. Jindal, *The prefaces*, p. 45.
18. H. M. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.* (*Supra* note 4).
19. ‘Kama’ in the context of Jaina thought does not mean ‘deed’ or some ‘mysterious unseen force (Adṛṣṭa) but subtle matter (in the energy form)—See my paper iii. “The Jaina view of Karma”—*Bulletin of the Institute of Post-Graduate (Evening) Studies, University of Delhi, 1965.*
20. See page 3 above.
21. Cf. *Bhagvatisutra* XVIII.8; *prajnapanasutra* pade 30; *Sarvarthasiddhi* on *Tattvarthasutra* ii.9; *Jnanabinduprakarna* of Yasovijaya p. 30; *Visesanavatigathas*—184–280 etc. See *Nathmal Tatia Studies in Jaina Philosophy* pp. 74–79.

22. Tattvarthadhigama Sutrabhasya 1.24*
23. Visavasyakabhasya 814 and Brhadvr̥tti on the same.
24. Sutra ii.10
25. Sutra ii.8.
26. Sutras xvi.7 and ii.9 respectively.
27. P. C. Nahar and K. C. Ghosh in their *Epitome of Jainism* make an attempt at such an interpretation. They compare the Jaina view with the Hegelian Absolutism. See especially pp. 106-109.