

Jaina Epistemology and its Relevance in Our Day-to-Day Life

Rakesh Biswas

Senior Research Fellow, Department Of Philosophy, Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University

Abstract:

According to Jaina Metaphysics, ‘Ananta Dharmātmaka Vastu’, it means every real objects possesses infinite qualities, which cannot be experienced by the ordinary people. Jaina epistemology is the view which emphasizes that, we the ordinary people have some limitations; our sense organs also have limitations that’s why we are unable to know those infinite qualities of an object. Thus, Jaina introduced the theory of **Syādvāda**, which rejects the dogmatic standpoint and welcomes the new thoughts and perspectives. This writing is just a try to show that if the Jaina’s epistemological standpoint can be practiced in our day-to-day life, then most of our conflicts can be solved and the dogmatic standpoint which generally rejects the new ideas without any reason can be respected either.

Keywords: Jaina epistemology, Syādvāda, Anekāntavāda, aparokṣa jñāna, parakṣa jñāna, Naya.

Introduction:

Generally, epistemology tries to show what a valid knowledge is, and how should a person can avail the proper knowledge? There are various viewpoints in philosophy regarding valid knowledge and the required way to get the knowledge. Not only western philosophy as well as Indian philosophy also gave much more efforts in this regard. Every philosophical school tries to give the solution in their own ways and for this regard their views lead to the state of extreme views which are being represents as contradictory with each other. Both of them according to Jaina Philosophy are representing only one aspect of truth, that means both of the views are true in a certain aspect, they just somehow ignoring the other views and thoughts, and claiming that, only what they are saying is true and nothing could-be. That is why both of the views are being represented as far Jainism contradictory with each other. According to Jaina Epistemology Every school of philosophy are just expressing their own experience that can be diversified on the basis of the perspective which is differ in different situation as well as on the basis of different individual perceptions. The period of time when Jaina epistemology introduced there are various schools in philosophy both in western and Indian already started dogmatically presenting their views with a claim that, it is the only truth. It is the Jaina philosophy where we found an effort to overcome that type of dogmatic views. Here this writing will discuss mainly the Jaina views of knowledge basically, what the knowledge is, and how Jaina views is relevance in our day-to-day life?

Knowledge System in Jaina Epistemology:

Before we start, let’s begin with the way of knowing introduced by the Jaina philosophy, after a short discussion of this then we will fully concentrate with the Jaina views regarding knowledge and its relevance in our day-to-day life. As like other philosophical schools Jaina also accepts the two-fold

classification of knowledge that's are- **immediate knowledge or aparokṣa jñāna and mediate knowledge or parakṣa jñāna**. Though Jaina thinkers stated it differently. Jaina opines that what generally ordinary people considered as immediate knowledge is not absolutely immediate rather it is relative. According to them whatever knowledge we acquire through our senses are relatively immediate, those type of knowledge are cannot be said as absolutely immediate because to avail that type of knowledge we have to depend on our senses as a medium. Accordingly, mediate knowledge includes **Mati and Śruta**, and immediate knowledge includes **Avadhi, Manahparyāya and Kevala Jñāna**.

Mati- All perceptual knowledge which are ordinarily called as immediate knowledge according to Jaina philosophy those are actually relatively immediate, because whatever we got through senses are not merely included as knowledge until it not ordered properly by thought or reason at all. That means it is reason or thought which gave the proper meaning to those elements which we got through senses, so to being a knowledge, perceptual things need the help of mind or thought process. That is why all of our perceptual knowledge even inference both are according to Jaina epistemology included as mediate knowledge. Accordingly, both perception and inference are come under the section of **Mati**.

Śruta- This type of mediate knowledge or **parakṣa jñāna** includes such kind of knowledge which are derived from authority. This type of knowledge we derive indirectly by listening others or through studying something etc. That is why this kind of knowledge also includes as mediate knowledge by Jaina thinkers, and this come under the section of **Śruta-Jñāna**.

Avadhi- This type of knowledge called extra-ordinary or extra-sensory perception because it does not need any medium, it is a direct knowledge of soul itself. When a person according to Jaina gets over from the attachment of **karma-pudgala** then the concerned person can avail the power of having this type of knowledge, and for that reason they can have a direct knowledge of the things even if it at a distance of space and time. The term "**Avadhi**" means '**limited**', it is limited because it has a certain limitation, that means it have to function in a certain area, it cannot go beyond the spatial and temporal limits.

Manahparyāya- This includes such type of knowledge where person can have the knowledge of other mind or others thoughts directly without any medium. This is called in psychology as **Mental Telepathy**. This also was said by Jaina as limited it does have to function in a certain condition and area.

Although **Avadhi** and **Manahparyāya** both are immediate knowledge of the soul, because it does not need anything to acquire knowledge, it has some limitation both have to maintain a certain condition beyond which both cannot function.

Kevala-Jñāna- Only the liberated soul according to the Jaina philosophy can acquired this type of direct unlimited knowledge. According to Jaina thinker this type of knowledge does not have any kind of limitation it is absolute knowledge of the soul. This is not limited by space, time, and objects. Among the three kinds of immediate knowledge stated by Jaina epistemology only the **Kevala-Jñāna** is unconditioned and unlimited, absolute knowledge of the soul.

Area and Scopes of Knowledge: Now let's see how Jaina philosophy explains the knowledge of a thing as it is; to better understand Jaina views, we must have to know at first Jaina metaphysics. Jaina metaphysics opines a realistic and relativistic views of pluralism. According to them both Matter (**Pudgala**) and spirit (**Jīva**) are independently real, and both possess innumerable characteristics in themselves. Jaina says that **utpad-vaya-dhrouvayuktāmsat**, which means a real substance is that which have three characteristics that's are origination, decay and permanence. **Guṇa** and **Paryāya** are the two types of qualities a substance possesses, among these **Guṇa** are the necessary or essential and permanent and **Paryāya** are the accidental or changeable qualities of substance. Accordingly on the basis of **Guṇa**

substance is **Nitya** and on the basis of **Paryāya** substance is **Anitya**. That is why Jaina mentions that there are innumerable aspects and characters presents in a substance and individual, so every aspect is relatively true in itself. That is what called in Jaina metaphysics as **Anekāntavāda**, if any ordinary people without knowing the all aspects of a thing claims that what he knows only true then there will be a fallacy of **Ekāntavāda** according to Jaina epistemology. Jaina view of **Anekāntavāda** is the basis of Jaina's epistemological standpoint of **Syādvāda**.

Syādvāda- Jaina **Anekāntavāda** said that every object does have innumerable characteristics and ordinary people cannot perceive the whole characteristics at a time of an object, they are perceiving just a certain aspect in a certain perspective, and the main problem starts when the concerned person thought that only what he knows is true. According to Jainism those types of knowledge is fallacious under the **Ekāntavāda**. And this is called in Jaina epistemology as 'Naya', it means the partial knowledge of anything of its innumerable aspects or characteristics. It is quite clear that 'Naya' is also true in a certain aspect but not absolutely true because, it is only one aspect of that of innumerable characteristics.

So now it can be said that what we ordinary people perceived, is the only one standpoint out of the innumerable aspects of the concerned thing, ordinary people cannot possess the absolute knowledge, what we know are just true in a certain perspective. That means the judgement or 'Naya' we are making are not absolutely true but in a certain way or perspective. Whenever 'Naya' taken as absolute knowledge then the 'Naya' becomes the fallacy of **Nayābhāsa**. That is why Jaina thinkers used the term **Syādvāda**, it represents the theory of relativity of knowledge. Jaina epistemology appeals that, only the liberated individual may have the ability to know the substance as a whole, with its all aspects.

Accordingly, all the debates in the philosophy are because of the misunderstanding among the philosophers that, what they know only is true and with this over-confidence they remain unaware about the other aspects of the concerned object and claims that, only what they are saying is true and can not be either. Jaina epistemology rejects all types of dogmatic views and tried to show that every perspective is true in a certain manner and conditions but not absolutely true. It means Jaina Philosophers are giving respects to the all thoughts and perspectives but not accepting any kind of dogmatic standpoint, thus they want to make an end of all debates in philosophical discussions.

Relevance in our every-day life:

Common peoples in their every-day-life stuck in various debates which some-times leads themselves to some unwanted troubles; some time it causes emotional damage and even leads an individual to a dangerous situation. Here we can take an example from the life story of a Greek Philosopher named Socrates, in-search of true knowledge he followed the path of dialogue. The dialogue process of Socrates is famous as 'Socratic Irony', he usually involves in a debate with such kind of persons who used to claim that they have certain knowledge, then Socrates by asking some questions regarding the concerned area about which the concerned individual claims to have knowledge, he concludes by showing contradictory answer given by the individual that, the concerned person actually do not have the concerned knowledge he claimed for. This is how Socrates makes enemy every-where, which causes him to death by shallowing the poison. This is just one incident, but in our every-day life there are so many incidents happening continuously many of which are totally unknown to us.

The Jaina Epistemology teaches us that, it is impossible to know something with its totality; for the common people. Because we do not have the ability to know an object, as it has infinite characteristics with in itself and we only can perceive a certain perspective or characteristics according to Jaina

epistemology. If the Jaina epistemology mainly the **Syādvāda** accepted by all the people, then we do not need to disrespect others points even we will try to combine the all-individual perspectives and make a complete knowledge as much as possible.

Hence through the above discussions about the Jaina **Syādvāda** it can be conclude that, if the Jaina standpoint can be applied properly in common people's life, the conflicts among the ordinary peoples can be solved and the scholarly thoughts will be admired every time. Main thing is the dogmatical standpoint which generally the main culprit for any kind of unwanted situations, as for the debates.

Now a days the main conflict among the Modern people is about the various religious standpoints among the religious persons, as there are lots of religious communities in this world; some time in the same religion there are so many communities, every community follows their own rituals and ceremonies. Here the conflict comes when the variety of rituals and ceremonies among the religious peoples get stuck with each-other in conflicts. The Politicians are continuously using those conflicts as opportunity for their vote campaign. Here one famous Indian Devoti Sri Sri Ram Krishna Param Hangsa Dev once said that, "যত মত, তত পথ।" it means although there are so many religions in this world but the ultimate goal of every religion is to develop the life of every individual of its follower which differ community-wise. Here the problem begins when all religious sects are started dogmatically accepting their own standpoints and rejects others without any reason. If the Jaina **Syādvāda** can be followed then their will be no religious conflict remains among the people, every religious sect will act respectfully to each-others.

Conclusion:

The Jaina **Syādvāda** is a kind of thought which can solve many practical issues of our society. Basically, the most ancient and power full conflict is regarding the religious standpoints. Which is the corner-stone of merely every conflict of this society. This is being used by the political leaders even by the group of people for their own personal interests. If the people of our society understand Jaina **Syādvāda** and able to apply in their day-to-day life; the problems basically made by the politicians and the group of people wanted to herm the society by making various religious agenda will not success at all.

Reference:

1. Mohanty, J. N. The Philosophy of the Jainas. University of Calcutta, 1985.
2. Chatterjee, Satischandra, and Dhirendramohan Datta. An Introduction to Indian Philosophy. University of Calcutta, 1984.
3. Kothari, D. S. Anekantavada: The Philosophy of Co-existence. Jain Vishva Bharati, 1989.
4. Seal, B. N. Jaina Epistemology. Cosmo Publications, 1985.