

TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE (JNANA) IN JAINISM

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Introduction

Just like the concept of reality, Jainism has its own theory regarding the existence and nature of soul. What is important to note is the fact that Jainism accepts the existence of soul. It is Atmavadi Darsana; and the soul, according to Jainism, has an inherent capacity to know all things, if the soul were in its perfection. Higher the degree of purity higher the capacity to know. The main cause of obscured capacity being Karmic obstructions, on the total destruction of all possible karmic veils, pure perception - 'ananta Jnana' (infinite knowledge) occurs. "In our empirical lives, the purity of the soul is defiled by the absorption of the unconscious substance, matter. When the opposing energies are completely overthrown, the soul vibrates at its natural rhythm and exercises its function of unlimited knowing. Souls are substances characterized by intelligence, and their differences are due to the degree of their connections with matter." (1) The varieties of perception is nothing but the variation in degree of the karmic obstructions, or purity of Self. Thus like Jain ethics and religion, Jain epistemology is based upon the Jain doctrine of Karma.

Knowledge (Jnana) according to Jainas, "is the soul's intrinsic, inherent, inseparable and inalienable attribute, without which no soul can exist. Knowledge plays an important part in the conception of soul and its emancipation. Jain epistemology or Jain theory of knowledge thus becomes vital in Jain philosophy. As such Jain epistemology would include the theory of knowledge along with various topics such as psychology; feelings emotions and passions, theory of causation, logic, philosophy of non absolutism and the conditional mode of predication. But I, here in this paper, propose to deal in brief with the types of knowledge in Jain epistemology only.

Theory of Knowledge:

According to Jainism, the soul, as it is, exists and is consciousness (knowledge) (2). The soul has power of understanding (3). Consciousness and power of understanding are the most prominent inherent qualities of the soul (4).

Consciousness (Cetana), according to Jainas, is the power of the knowledge, the soul has. It stands for the passive experience of the phenomena, the experience of psychical state leading to pure knowledge. "As conscious, the souls experience in the three following ways. Some experience merely the fruits of karma; some, their own activity; some again, knowledge" (6). The Jaina thinkers and scholars were able to discover that Cetana or consciousness culminates in pure and perfect knowledge and knowledge itself has grades and modes. Kunda-Kundacarya

observes that "Upyoga or understanding is of two modes, Cognition and Sensation," Nemicandra says, "understanding is divided into two species Viz :- Darsana or sensation and Jnana or Cognition". Uma Svati says "Understanding is the distinguishing characteristic of the soul. It is of two sets (viz; Jnana or Cognition and Darsana or Sensation). The first is of eight kinds and the second, of four."(7)

The further description and classification of Upyoga or Understanding, as it appears in Jaina scriptures, conclusively proves that the early Jain thinkers clearly grasped the basic is essentially consciousness, Cetana or consciousness operates through upyoga or understanding.

The two modes of upyoga are Darsana and Jnana. "That perception of the generalities (samanya) of things without particularities (visesa) in which there is no grasping of details is called darsana.(8)

Darsana or sensation is of four kinds -

Visual (Cakshusa)
Non-visual (acakshusa)
Clairvoyant (avadhi darsana)
Pure (Kevala) (9)

Darshana is said to consist in the sensation of the generality of objects in which the forms and particulars specification are not recognised.(10) The first two kinds of the four are senseous and both consists in the consciousness that the eyes and other sense organs are affected.

The last two kinds of sensation viz: Clairvoyant and Pure are of the super-normal type. Out of these two the Clairvoyant or Avadhi darsana is the sensation of the mysterious parts or aspects of material things, The Pure or Keval Darsana consists in sensing all things of the universe.

The process of understanding becomes more complicated and subtle when it is cognition or Jnana.

The Jaina scholars divide cognition or Knowledge into two divisions viz;-

Valid Knowledge
Fallacious knowledge

The valid knowledge is of five types viz:-

Senseous (mati or abhinibodhika),
Authoritative (Sruta),
Clairvoyant (Avadhi),
Telepathic (manah-paryaya), and
Pure (kevals).

The fallacious knowledge is of three types viz:-

Kumati,
Kusruta
Vibhang

The three fallacious knowledge are the fallacious forms of Mati, Sruta and Avadhi Jnana respectively.

Thus, according to Jaina theory of knowledge, cognition is of eight kinds, out of which five kinds are of the valid knowledge and three, of the fallacious knowledge. Since the destruction of karmic veils and the higher

degree of purity of the soul is possible through the valid knowledge, the importance lies not in the fallacious species of knowledge but in the valid knowledge. Let us see each of these five species or types of valid knowledge, in brief.

Types of Knowledge:

Cognition or knowledge is of five types:- Mati, Sruta, Avadhi, Manah paryaya and Keval,

Mati- Jhana or Sensuous knowledge; is ordinary cognition, obtained by normal functioning of sense perception. It is based on senseous perception. According to the ancient texts, mati jnana is described as synonymous with intelligence and it includes remembrance, recognition and inductive as well as deductive reasoning". "Mati jnana is sometimes further distinguished into three kinds viz. upalabdhi or perception, bhavana or memory, and upyoga or understanding".(11)

Smuta- Jnana or Authoritative knowledge is knowledge derived through symbols, signs or words. All verbal knowledge is Sruta jnana. It includes all canonical, scriptural or both knowledge. "Sruta jnana is of four kinds, namely, labdhi or association, bhavana or attention, upayoga or understanding, and naya or aspects of the meaning of things".(12) Sruta jnana is invariably preceded by mati jnana. As we saw, mati jnana cognises only what is present, the Sruta jnana comprehends, all the three time dimensions (past, present and future) relating to the object. "While mati jnana gives us knowledge by acquaintance, this (sruta) gives us knowledge by description".(13)

Avadhi Jnana or Clairvoyant is a sort of clairvoyant knowledge or direct visual intuition which enables a person to know things or objects even at a distance of time or space, without their coming into contact with sense organs. Manah paryaya or Telepathic knowledge is a direct knowledge of the thoughts of the minds of others. It is without the help of any medium or agency. Just like Avadhi jnana, Manah paryaya jnana is an extra sensory perception. Manah paryaya can not be attained by ordinary persons. Only a soul in its higher progression stage or at its higher 'guna-sthana' may acquire this type of knowledge.

Keval jnan or perfect knowledge "comprehends all substances and their modifications".(14) It is the pure, absolute, complete, whole and total knowledge unlimited by space, time or object. It is the very omniscience, Omniscience according to Jainism is possible, It is the highest type of perception which falls in the category of extra-sensory perception. It is the perception of the cognising faculty of self.

Keval jnana is possible only when all the jnana obscuring karmas have been totally annihilated. It is independent of senses, can be only felt and cannot be described. This supreme and unlimited knowledge is possessed only by purified souls free from bondage like Arihants and Siddhas.

Comments:

1. Of the five types of knowledge the first two i.e. Mati & Sruta are knowledge through senses, symbols and signs, and therefore, according to Jainas, are indirect or mediate or paraksha knowledge According to Nyaya darsana, perception or senseous knowledge is direct. But to Jains, this knowledge of the soul does not get directly but through senses or words, and therefore they are indirect or mediate or paroksha. The other three i.e. Avadhi, Manah-paryaya and keval are the direct or immediate or Pratyaksha knowledge.

2. "Again the first three types of knowledge i.e. Mati, Sruta and Avadhi are liable to error, while the last two can not be wrong".(15) In fact the last two can be acquired by purified souls and therefore, there is no scope of error. Erroneous knowledge is characterised by doubt (samasya), mistake (Viprayaya) or the opposite of truth which is caused by carelessness or indifference. We, thus have five right and the three wrong ones

totalling to eight kinds of knowledge.

3. In Jaina theory of knowledge we find that the Jainas have asserted the existence of an objective reality beyond and beside consciousness, apprehended by perception and understood by intelligence."(16) The analysis of types of knowledge reveals the fact that in Jain theory of knowledge the attributes and relations of things are directly given in experience and are not the product of thought or imagination.

4. According to Jain theory of knowledge, the relations between Prama (knowledge) and Prameya (object of knowledge), in case of a physical object is an external one. But it is different in case of self consciousness, The object of knowledge (jnaya) includes both self and not self. "As light reveals itself and others."(17) Thus we find that the Jainas reject the Nyaya Vaisesika theory that knowledge reveals only external relations but not itself.

5. Keval jnana or "omniscience is not only the culmination of our cognitive faculties, it is also the final consummation of our moral, religious and spiritual life."(19) In Jainism we find an intimate relation between the state of salvation and omniscience. The perfect being is also the possessor of perfect knowledge. The state of kevali is reached through the progressive development of the self which leads to the annihilation of various obstructions of knowledge. Like almost all the systems of Indian philosophy, "Jainism also tries to link the concept of omniscience with the highest of religious and spiritual life." The concept of omniscience, does involve difficulties. But then Jainism believes in and accepts the fact that omniscience is possible. The Jaina thinkers have discussed and proved the existence of omniscience through number of arguments. The chief one follows "from the necessity of the final consummation of the progressive development of cognition."(20)

"Omniscience in Jainism is not only the perfection of the cognitive faculty of the self but also its ultimate end. It is the spiritual state of eternal bliss and also the culmination of religious aspiration. This state can be compared with the Jivan- mukti of Sankhya and Vedanta, with the Turiyavastha of, Brahmananda."(21)

6. No soul of living being can be totally devoid of or bereft of mati jnana and sruta jnana. Knowledge according to Jain theory is always appropriated by the self. Often a question has been put before the Jaina scholars: How consciousness can reveal the nature of unconscious object. This question has been dismissed as an absurd one because according to Jaina theory of knowledge it is the very nature of knowledge to reveal objects.

7. In case of self consciousness the subject of knowledge (Jnanin), the object of knowledge (Jneya) and knowledge itself are different aspects of a single concrete unity. "In perfect condition, according to Jain theory of knowledge, the soul is pure Jnana and Darsana."(22)

Conclusion:

The Jain epistemology or theory of knowledge, we find it to be quite consistent with its metaphysics, ethics and philosophy of soul. The modes of understanding and the types of knowledge discussed in Jainism fosters a rational outlook and an appropriate attitude in understanding the scope and limitations of soul's capacity to know. The classification and descriptions of knowledge, given by the Jaina scholars, is convincing, minute and highly scientific. It is throughout consistent to the doctrine of karma. Of course, types of knowledge, as discussed in this paper, does not cover the entire realm of Jain epistemology but it certainly paves the preliminary essential background about Jnan, Jnanin and Jneya without which the

further complicated topics such as theory of causation, Jaina logic, the philosophy of non- absolutism and the conditional mode of predication cannot be understood.

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