

CONCEPT OF PRAMA IN JAIN PHILOSOPHY

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Theory of Knowledge in Jainism

According to Jainism, the soul, as it is, exists and is consciousness (knowledge). The soul has power of understanding. Consciousness and power of understanding are the most prominent inherent qualities of the soul. Consciousness (cetna) to Jains, is the power of knowledge, the soul has. It stands for the passive experience of the phenomena, the experience of psychological state leading to pure knowledge. "As conscious, the soul experiences in the three following ways – some experience merely the fruits of karma; some, their own activity; some again knowledge. The Jain thinkers and scholars were able to discover that cetna or consciousness culminates in pure and perfect knowledge and knowledge itself has grades and modes. Prominent Jainacarya Kundkunda observes that "Upyoga or understanding is of two modes, cognition and sensation." Prominent Jainacarya Nemicaandra says, "Understanding is divided into two species viz : Darsana or sensation and Jnana or cognition." Well known Jainacarya Umasvati says, "Understanding is the distinguished characteristic of the soul. It is of two sets viz – Jnana or cognition and Darsana or sensation. The first is of eight kinds and second is of four kinds."

The further description and classification of Upyoga or understanding, as it appears in Jain scripture, conclusively proves that the early Jain Tirthankars clearly grasped the basic is essentially consciousness, cetna or consciousness operates through Upyoga or understanding. The two modes of Upyoga are Darsana and Jnana. "That perception of generalities (Samanya) of things without particularities (Visesa) in which there is no grasping of details is called darsana." Darsana or sensation is of four kinds :

- 1) Visual (cakshusa)
- 2) Non-visual (acakshusa)
- 3) Clairvoyant (avadhi)
- 4) Pure (kevala)

Darsana is said to consist in the sensation of the generality of objects in which the forms and particular specifications are not recognized. The first two kind of four are sensuous and both consist in the consciousness that the eyes and other sense organs are affected. The last two kind of sensations 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 kevala 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 Jain scholar divide cognition or knowledge into two divisions viz :

(1)Valid knowledge (2) Fallacious knowledge.

The valid knowledge is of five types viz:

- 1) Senseous (Mati or abhinobodhika)
- 2) Authoritative (Sruta)
- 3) Clairvoyant (Avadhi)
- 4) Telepathic (Manahpariyaya)
- 5) Pure (Kevala)

The fallacious knowledge is of three types viz.

(1) Kumati (2) Kusruta (3)Vibhanga

The three fallacious knowledge are the fallacious forms of Mati, Sruta and Avadhi Jnana respectively. Thus, according to Jain theory of knowledge, cognition is of eight kinds, out of which five kinds are of the valid knowledge and three are 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 is not in the fallacious species of knowledge but in valid knowledge.

Types of knowledge in Jainism

According to Jainism there are five ways in which the souls obtain knowledge of the things and the world in which they live. Of them the first three are imperfect means of knowledge and prone to error, while the last two are perfect means of knowledge and convey the truth without error. These five means or instruments of knowledge are explained below :

(1) Mati knowledge

Mati is mind/Mati Jnana, is the knowledge of the mind, gained usually through our senses, our memory, our remembrance, our cognition and our deducting reasoning. It is something which we know with the help of our mind and its various faculties. From a soul's perspective, this is indirect knowledge because it is derived through the external agent of mind and its faculties.

(2) Sruta knowledge

when we learn something from other sources, other people or beings, through our observation of signs, symbols or words, we call it Sruta Jnana or the knowledge of sruta or hearing. This type of knowledge is gained through association, attention, understanding and naya or varied interpretations of the meaning of things. This is also indirect knowledge because of the external agents involved in obtaining knowledge.

(3) Avadhi knowledge

We gain this type of knowledge not through any physical means such as the senses or the mind, but through our psychic abilities, or through our intuitive awareness, by overcoming the limitations of time and space. It is beyond the boundaries of our ordinary awareness and faculties and is not generally available to every one. This is direct knowledge.

(4) Manahprayava knowledge

This knowledge is gained through the reading of others' minds and thoughts. It is the knowledge of others that we gain through some extraordinary process like telepathy or mind reading.

(5) Kevala knowledge

It is the highest knowledge that we gain when we transcend our ordinary self and become a Jina or Kevali. It is knowledge itself that does not require any outward means of its awareness. It is always there, unattached, unlimited and without any constraint in the consciousness of the enlightened Jina. It cannot be described to others satisfaction but can be experienced when the soul becomes liberated from earthly bondage.

As we can see, the first two are indirect means of knowledge since we have to depend upon some external source such as the senses or the mind to know things while the other three are direct where we do not have to depend upon some external source to know about things. The essential nature of the soul is consciousness or caitnya which has both perception (darsana) and intelligence (Jnana). The former is more general (samanya) and superficial and the later more specific and detailed (visesa) in providing the soul with knowledge. According to Jain beliefs a soul does not have to depend upon senses only for perception. Even in a liberated state a soul has the ability of perception, which it does intuitively without sense organs.

There are also several stages in perception. Knowledge is both perfect and imperfect. Liberated souls possess perfect knowledge, which is free from doubt (samsaya), delusion (vimoha) and wrong perception (vibhrama). Knowledge is also both Standard (pramana) and relative (naya). The former is based on a fact and the later upon a perspective or stand point.

Concept of Prama and Prameya in Jainism

According to Jain theory of knowledge, the relation between Prama (knowledge) and Prameya (object of knowledge), in case of 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. "A light reveals itself and others also." Thus

we find that Jains reject the Nyaya Vaisesika theory that knowledge reveals only external relation but not itself. Knowledge (Jnana) according to Jains, “is the soul’s intrinsic, inherent inseparable and inhalable 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.”

“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.**”

Modern science and concept of Knowledge

With the advent of science and the resulting technology, a misunderstanding and misconception has developed among the masses that the scientific knowledge is the only ultimate knowledge in the world. Not only this it is also presumed that the knowledge which is experimentally verifiable and repeatable at any place and at any time alone is the actual knowledge. This is far from the truth. The fact is that the so called science is just around 200 years old and the concept of knowledge existed much more before that for several centuries. Vedas, Upanisads, Puranas, Agamas, Mahabharat, Ramayan, Koran, Bible have lot of knowledge about life and controls to be followed. Similarly technology of gold manufacturing in the ancient India, design of old temples etc. also involve knowledge, which need not to be scientific.

Theory of knowledge through consciousness as described in various school of thought in Indian philosophy seem to be very promising. In particular the Jains have defined knowledge as an essence of the soul. According to concept of Jainism, a perfect soul has infinite knowledge, infinite intuition, infinite bliss and infinite power. Although perfect soul has other characteristic but the knowledge has been regarded as the chief characteristic of soul. Prominent Jainacharya. Kundkunda has stated that although from the empirical point of view there is a difference between soul and knowledge yet from the transcendental point of view it is sufficient to say that soul is knower and nothing else. He further said that there is no difference between the knower and his knowledge. From empirical point of view an omniscient (Kevali i.e. perfect soul) perceives and knows the whole of reality and from the transcendental point of view he perceives and knows.

The spiritual both suggested in Jainism and the properties of a worldly soul as it involved towards a state of perfection has many interesting features which appeal to scientist also. Many attributes of such an ordered soul are enunciated and are found in many monks. Thus for example shatabdhani like Shrimad Rajcandra are found who

demonstrate several powers of brain not commonly found elsewhere. It appears that practices like Varshi tap, Mas khaman, Updhyan, Siddhi tap and other several practices lead to very stable life, increased self confidence, reorganization of inner strength of soul.

If we look at some meaning of the term consciousness in the scientific perspective, than we find that it is a property of all biological systems. When our Acaryas, Seers and Monks talk of realization of a higher state of a consciousness which has certain characteristics, than it is worth examining the example of swami Vivekanand. **As per this swami Vivekanand had such a sharp memory that he almost remembered 11 volumes of Encyclopedia Britannica, which he had read once.** A question is to be raised by the scientific community. “What is the mechanism and how this state of orderliness is achieved and is related to his/her behaviour as Yogi?”

Conclusion

Upyoga (understanding) is the distinguishing characteristic of the soul. Understanding is divided into two species viz : Darsana or sensation and Jnana or cognition. The knowledge is of eight kinds and sensation is of four kinds. Consciousness and power of understanding are the most prominent inherent qualities of the soul, Darsana or sensation is of four kinds : (1) Visual (cakshus), (2) Non-visual (a cakshus), (3) Clairvoyant (avadhi) and (4) Pure (kevala).

According to Jainism there are five ways in which the soul obtain knowledge of the things and the world in which they live. Of them the first three are imperfect means of knowledge and prone to error, while the last two are perfect means of knowledge and convey the truth without error. These five means or instruments of knowledge are as follow.

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- (4) **Manahprayava knowledge** – This knowledge is gained through the reading of others’ minds and thoughts.

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With the advent of science and the resulting technology, a misunderstanding and misconception has developed among the masses that the scientific knowledge is the only ultimate knowledge in the world. This is far from truth, the fact is that the so called science is just around 200 years old and the concept of knowledge existed much more before that of several centuries. Vedas, Upanisads, Puranas, Agamas, Mahabharat, Ramayan, Koran, Bible have lot of knowledge about life and controls to be followed, which need not to be scientific.

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