Akalanka— as a Logician

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(I) Akalanka occupies a unique place in the development of Indian logic. He was one of the foremost Jaina logicians. If Kundakundācārya is to be considered as the father of Jaina logic, Akalanka cemented the foundations of Jaina logic and built a logical structure with depth and subtlety of thought. His writings are difficult to understand and even eminent logicians have expressed their profound admiration for the subtlety of thought and depth of vision in his writings. Prabhācandra, in the first part of his Nyājakumudacandra has expressed his admiration for Akalanka and said that he was fortunate to have been able to study the writings of Akalanka, although his writings are full of subtlety of thought. Vādirājāsūri was amazed at the profundity of thought expressed in the writings of Akalanka. It is difficult to express in our words the profundity of thought contained in the writings of Akalankadeva. The writings of Akalanka are so difficult for understanding that ‘ordinary persons like me would not be able to explain much less comment on the writings’. As Dharmakīrti is for Buddhist logic, Akalanka is for the Jaina logic. In the Śravapabeljagola inscription, it has been stated that Akalanka is the Brahaspati in the six darśanas. After Ācārya Pūjyapāda Akalankadeva has been eulogised as the sun dispelling the darkness of ignorance arising out of the perversity of thought, as the sun clears darkness and gives light.

(II) It is difficult to give a clear picture of the life-history of Akalanka. Similarly there is controversy regarding the period in which he lived. Some have suggested that Akalanka lived in the latter part of the 8th century on the basis of the interpretation on ‘Vikramānka as ‘samvat’, as mentioned in the verse in the Akalankacarita. He has been considered as the contemporary of Rājā Dantidurga alia Kriṣṇaparāja of the Rāṣṭrakūta dynasty. The other view suggested by Sri Jugal Kishore Mukhtar fixed his date as the seventh century A. D. on the basis of the interpretation of the word Vikramānka as ‘vikramasamvat’. Pandit Kailāscandra Śastri is of the opinion that Akalanka’s period must have been from 620 to 680 A.D. There is verse of Dhanañjaya in which the Pramānāsastra of Akalanka has been mentioned with respect. Ācārya Jinasena has mentioned the name of Akalanka in Ādīpūraṇa with reverence and gratitude. On the basis of the review of the various views about the date of Akalanka, Shri Nemichandra Śastri has suggested that Akalanka must have lived in the latter half of the seventh century.

It is as much difficult to give a coherent and authentic picture of his life-story as it is difficult to determine the age in which he lived, but one thing is certain that he must have been from the south. There is the mention in the Rājāvallake that Akalanka was the son of Purusottama the minister of the king Śubhataunga of Mānyakaṭa. In the Praśasti of the first adhyāya of Tattvārtha-vārtika it has been suggested that he was the son of the king Luhadhava, although it is difficult to identify the king. There is greater evidence to consider him as the son of the minister of the king Subhataunga. Some interesting incidents have been described in the Kathākosa of Prabhācandra. Akalanka and Niśkalanka were two brothers. When they came of age, the parents tried to persuade them for marriage. But they refused to get married and enter into the life of ‘gṛhastra’, because once when they had gone along with their parents to a muni, the parents had taken the vow of brahmacarya for the period of one week in their presence. The boys insisted that the vow once taken is always valid and it applies to them also, although they
were very young at the time when the parents took the vrata in the presence of the muni. The
two brothers remained unmarried and devoted themselves to the study of sāstras. They joined
the Buddhist Academy for the study of the Buddhist Nyāya, as Buddhism was in the ascendent
stage at that time. Akalanka was a brilliant boy and was well-versed in the Jain philosophy.
The two brothers had joined the Buddhist Academy in the guise of Buddhist scholars, as other-
wise they would not have been admitted. But once, when the teacher was explaining the
Saptabhangi nyāya of the Jainas, the lesson was not correctly taught. After the teacher left the
class Akalanka quietly corrected the lesson. Later, the teacher got suspicious that the pupil who
corrected the lesson must be a Jaina. The life of the two brothers was in danger due to the
unhealthy and phanatic rivalry of Buddhists towards Jainas. They ran for life. But unfortu-
nately Niśkalanka was caught and killed by the guards of the king. It was destined that Akalanka
was to escape for the sake of the promotion of learning and the advancement of logic and meta-
physics. Another interesting incident in his life has been narrated in which it was stated that
Akalanka defeated the Buddhist scholars in the court of Himāśīla of Kalinga in logical and
metaphysical discussions with the help of Yakṣini Kuśmāṇḍini. The Buddhist scholar was being
assisted by the deity (goddess) Tārā. Apart from the story contents in the incident, the
narration has to be looked at from an historical perspective. From the analysis of the narration
it is clear that there was academic and sectional rivalry between the Buddhist and the Jaina
sections of society for social and spiritual supremacy. It is also clear that the tāntrik and the
ritualistic aspects of religion had come to stay. The deities were invented and invoked for the
sake of gaining superiority over one another. ‘Para-spiritual’ ritualistic practices became important
in society—may be for the sake of retaining the supremacy of one’s religion or for establishing
faith in the ‘para-spiritual’ practices so that the common man would be satisfied.

(III) We now consider the work of Akalanka in the field of logic and metaphysics with
special reference to the Jaina system of thought. Akalanka’s contribution to the study of Jaina
logic and philosophy is immense. His works may be studied from two points of view:—(a) his
original works, and (b) his commentaries on the works of other great Ācāryas.

(a) His original works are:
1. Laggīvastraya with the notes.
2. Nyāyaviniścaya with notes.
3. Siddhiviniścaya with notes.
4. Pramāñasamgraha with notes.

(b) Some the commentaries that he wrote, we may mention:
1. Tattvārthvārtika—sabhāṣya.
2. Aṣṭaṣṭati—devāgamavṛtti.

Laggīvastraya is primarily a logical treatise with certain explanations of the epistemological
implications of the logical concepts like naya and nīkṣepa. The logical and epistemological
critique of the theory of pramāṇa in the light of the Jaina analysis of the pramaṇas is a special
contribution of Akalanka in this work.

Laggīvastraya is a critique of knowledge. It gives critical analysis of the problem of
knowledge in the light of logical and epistemological implications. It has three parts: (1) Prāṇa
praveśa, (2) Nyāya praveśa and (3) Nīkṣepa praveśa. Pramāṇa praveśa has four sections: (i)
pratyakṣa pariccheda, (ii) Viṣaya pariccheda, (iii) parokṣa pariccheda and (iv) Āgama pariccheda.

In the Nyāyakumudacandra, commentary on Laggīvastraya, Prabhacandra has mentioned
the seven sections in the Laggīvastraya on the basis of the two-fold distinction in the Pravacana
praveśa. Akalanka has also written a short treatise on the Laggīvastraya which is primarily in
the form of added noted to the work and not an independent work.
Jainism presents a many-folded approach to the understanding of the nature of reality. The Anekānta outlook is the very basis of the Jaina view of life. And Samyag-Jñāna (right knowledge) is the essential characteristic of the soul. It is also the prerogative of the soul. Knowledge and the source of knowledge could be considered from two aspects: (a) pratyakṣa (direct knowledge) and (b) parokṣa (indirect knowledge.) Pratyakṣa Jñāna is the knowledge that the soul gets directly without the help of sense organs, as the sense organs are impediments to the attainment of perfect knowledge. However, with a view to accommodating the traditional views of other systems of Indian thought, knowledge gained directly by the soul without the help of the sense organs was termed as Mukhya pratyakṣa, and sense experience was considered as Saṅgyavahāra pratyakṣa. Akalanka has given an exhaustive and critical analysis of the two types of pratyakṣas. He has also given critical exposition of the ontological problems of permanence and change, unity and diversity and the one and the many. Dravyārthikānaya leads to the unity and paryārthikānaya presents the distinctions. The Jaina view of reality is comprehensive. Reality cannot be considered as mere unity nor mere diversity. It is unity and diversity. It is equally diversified. Similarly it is both eternal and non-eternal—eternal if looked at from the synthetic point of view, and non-eternal from the practical point of view (vyavahāranaya). Akalanka gives a critical exposition of the various forms of knowledge, like mati, smṛti, saṃjñā and cintā. In the latter half of Laghityastraṇyā Akalanka has discussed the logical and epistemological implications of pramāṇa and nayā along with the fallacies involved therein. Nayābhāsa has been critically examined. In this part, he has considered the presentation of the nature of reality given by the other Indian systems of thought from the different nayas. And to assert the exclusive truth of the expression of reality from a particular point of view is to be dogmatic. For the Absolutist, assertion of reality as One. The Buddhist gives emphasis on the changing nature of reality as fundamental considered from the point of view of moments. Both give partial views of truth, not the whole truth. But to insist on the exclusive and the full truth for these presentations would be dogmatism and ekānta. The Logical positivists and the school of Analytic philosophy give the view of reality from point of view of linguistic analysis (śabdanaya). But it is not the whole truth. Akalanka, in his Laghityastraṇa, has given an exhaustive and critical account of the logical and epistemological problems concerning the nature of reality in the light of his discussions of the problems in other schools of Indian philosophy.

In the Nikṣepa Viṣaya Akalanka has discussed the problem regarding the nature and function of nīkṣēpa. One can strive for self-realisation through the understanding of the fundamental principles of Jainism by means of pramaṇa, naya and nīkṣēpa. One can also understand the nature of jīvadraya through the comprehension of the many facts of a thing. Akalanka has made subtle distinction between the assertion of the many facets of a thing and the assertion regarding the nature of a thing as for example the statement ‘Śyādījiva eva’ presents the predication of the Jīvadraya. It is called ‘sakalādeśa’ predication. Nayāvākyā presents the predication of a facet of the nature of Jīvadraya, for example from a particular point of view. ‘Śyādastījjīvāḥ’ is predication of this types which is called Vikalādeśa predication. Such distinction is the special feature of the analysis of logical and epistemological concepts made by Akalanka.

Again, Akalanka gives a critical study of the logical and epistemological problems with special reference to the concepts in other Indian systems. In the works Nyāyavinīścaya, Pramaṇa-saṅgraha and Siddhivinīścava the Nyāyavinīścaya has three sections and problem of pratyakṣa, anumāṇa and śabda have been thoroughly discussed. Akalanka has refuted the Buddhist, Saṅkhya and Yoga theories of the characteristics of pratyakṣa. While discussing the theory of inference he has given a comparative picture of the nature of anumāna and the consequent implications of the validity or the fallacies thereon in the light of the criticism of the theories of inference in other schools of thought. In the third part of the Nyāyavinīścaya he has elucidated the
Jaina theory of Āgama-pramāṇa and refuted the ‘apauruṣeyatva’ of Āgamas as propounded by the Mīmāṃsakas. He has also discussed the nature of mokṣa and other metaphysical problems as the fringe of the logical and epistemological discussions which are the primary problems of the book.

Pramāṇasaṅgraha is a study of the epistemological problems of mati, śrūta, srūṣṭi pratyabhijñā, tarka and the other fallacies involved in logical and psychological process of thinking. For instance, the fallacies like, asiddha, viruddha, vāda and jāti have been analysed. The theories of causation as arising out of the discussions of the logical problems have been presented. There is again a discussion of the naya and nīkṣepa as a corollary of the total discussion.

Siddhvinīścaya has twelve parts. It gives a critical study of the same problems of logical and epistemological concepts like naya, pramāṇa, pratyākṣa, pratyabhijñā, srūṣṭi, jālpa and other logical concepts.

In the logical discussion of the pramāṇas, the question of pratyabhijñā to be considered as pramāṇa by the Jainas has been discussed. Upamāṇa is to be included in the ‘Śādṛṣyā pratyabhijñā’ (recognition on the basis of similarities). Certain metaphysical problems concerning the nature of bondage of the soul to karmic particles which are material in nature and the possibility of presenting a coherent view of this problem has been critically studied. The Siddhvinīścaya is a comprehensive and critical treatise on logic and metaphysics, although the emphasis is primarily on the discussion of logical and epistemological problems. Akalanka by his three works on logic has established himself as the undisputed master of logic and the relentless critic of the inadequacies in the theories of other schools of Indian thought.

Now we come to his two important commentaries which have brought him fame as philosophical commentator. The Tattvārthavārttika-sabhāṣya and the Aṣṭaśati have thrown greater light on the subtleties of thought as expressed in the Tattvārthasūtra of Umaswāmi and the Āptāṃśaṃsā of Samantabhadra.

Tattvārthavārttika-sabhāṣya is a unique work which synthesises the explanatory notes in the form of vārttika and the commentaries on the sūtras of the Tattvārthasūtra of Umaswāmi. The work is based on the Sarvārthasiddhi of Pujyapāda. On the basis of the presentational statements of Sarvārthasiddhi Akalanka has formulated the explanatory notes and has commented elaborately on these explanatory notes. It is, in fact, a compendium of Sarvārthasiddhi. And it would be easier to understand the intricacies of the discussions in the Tattvārthavārttika-sabhāṣya only when we have a thorough understanding of the Sarvārthasiddhi.

Tattvārthavārttika has ten parts based on the ten chapters of the Tattvārthasūtra. The cardinal note of this work is the confidence of the author to present solutions of all the problems in the light of the Anekānta attitude, especially in discussing the metaphysical problems. In discussing the metaphysical problems raised in the Tattvārthasūtra and in the Sarvārthasiddhi, several contemporary philosophers of the age have been referred to, such as Ekāryāvādins, Ajñānavādins, Vinayāvādins and the Kriyāvādins. Cosmological problems like the structure of the Universe have been elaborately presented. Here we are reminded of the exhaustive presentation of the constitution of the Universe as presented in the Tiloyapannatti. Akalanka has shown his masterly ability as a logician and a critic in the Tattvārthavārttika.

Āptāṃśaṃsā of Ācārya Samantabhadra is a scholarly exposition of Anekantāntarṣana. And Aṣṭaśati presents a critique and an enthusiastic exposition of the assertions of Ācārya Samantabhadra in the Āptāṃśaṃsā. The Aṣṭaśati is so called because it contains 800 slokas. This work presents a critique of the several philosophical theories like Dvaita-advaita, Śāṅkara-āśāyata, Daiva-puṣṭrāthya and Pāpa-puṇya and many other views. Vigorous presentation of the anekānta view is the cardinal note of this work.
(IV) The style of Akalanka is thoughtful, cryptic and difficult to understand. He is more concerned with the analysis, critical study and with the presentation of the subtleties of thought than with the flourish of language. Yet his writings are not bereft flourish and we find subtle and meaningful satire against the writings of other schools of thought.

The writings of Akalanka have been an important landmark in the development of logic and metaphysics. His works have contributed to the effective presentation of the development of Jaina logic and metaphysics, in the perspective of the problem in other systems of Indian thought.

Anekānta is the foundational principle on Jainism. It permeates the very texture of Jaina thought and life. In the context of the present day development of logic and linguistic analysis as metaphysical theory, it would be necessary to study the contributions of Akalanka afresh in the light of the modern developments in logic.

Akalanka showed the catholicity of outlook in understanding the problems of other views of thought as expressed in the controversies in the Indian systems of philosophy. Without entering into the controversy regarding the original intention of the author in the verse given below, we might with confidence say that Akalanka did express the magnanimity of thought and catholicity of outlook—

Yo viśvam vedāvedyam janana jala nīdhervhāismat pariṇāmāyaḥ ||

Pourvāparyā viruddhāḥvacanamanupsmam niṣkālaṃkāryadyayam ||

Tām vande saṅghavandam salalagūṇanidhitam dvāvastadādaśaṃ ||

Buddham vā Vardhānamāṃ Satadalanilayam Keśavam vā Śivam vā ||

Notes and References

1. Nyāyakumudacandra IV Adhyāya.
   “Traiokyodaravartivastuvīṣayajñānaprabhāvedyayo,
duṣprāpyaakalanka devasarāṇiḥ prāptītra punyodayāt
Svabhāṣṭaścā vivecitāśca śatasah sonantarīryokēto
Bhuyānme nayanītīdattamanasatadbodhasiddhipadah ||”

2. Nyāyavinivatigayavaram of Vādirājasaṇi
   “Gūḍhamarthamakalanka vāṅmayāgadha bhūminihitam tadarhamām
Vyanayatamananvantīvrayāk dipavartiraniśam pade pade ||”

3. Ibid. ................
   “Bhūyobhedanayāvagāhana devasya yadvāṅmayam
Kastadvistarato vivica vaditum mandam prabhāṃdaśaḥa ||”


   as quoted by Nemicandra Shastri:
   “Tataḥ param Śāstravidām munināmagesarobudakalangkasuśriḥ
Mithyāndhakkāraṣṭhaṅkāllīrthāḥ prakāśītā yasya vacomayukhehe ||”

6. Akalanka Carita mentioned as A.D. 778.
   “Vikramārkaśakābdiyāṣatapasapramajūṣī
Kalē Akalankayatinō Baudhāirvadō mahābhūt ||”

7. Dhanaṇjaya Nāmanāla as quoted by Nemicandra Shastri in his Tīrthankara Mahāvīra aur Unakti Ācārya Paramparā p. 305.
   “Pramāṇamakalankasya Purjapaṅdasya lakṣaṇam
Dhanaṇjaya kavhehe kāvya Ratnatrayamapaścimam ||”

   “Bhaṭṭākakalankāśripatpātrakṣeṣariṇāṃ guṇāhā
Viduṣām hṛdayarūḍhā hārayantītimirnalāhā ||”
10. *Tattvārthavārttikaprasasti*.

"Jivaścramakalnaabraham Labhuhavanpratipratahanayah |
Anvaratanikhilaninanavaidhab pravastijanahnadhah ||
" Also see *Ārādhana Kāthakoṣa*.
11. *Rājajvalikathe*
12. *Nyāyaśuddhacandra*, part I, of Prabhācandra

"Yatsat tatasvamanekāntātmakam vastuttavam sarvathā tadarthakriyākāritvāt |
Na kincitekāntam vastuttavām sarvathā tadarthakriyāsambhavāt ||
Nasti sadekantahā sarvavāpyātāvirodhaprasangāt asadekantadvadītī |
Vidhīnā pratiṣedhena vā vastuttavām nyāmyate ||"

It is human effort which leads to liberation. Though no action takes place in seclusion and human beings are also affected by circumstances and environments, yet the main factor, however remains human effort. Here we accept the existence of freedom of will over circumstances.

The reality is that that no object can interfere with the working of another object, whether animate or inanimate. So the self, accordingly is the agent of its own actions and modifications.

Thus the acceptance of the freedom of will glorifies the human efforts.