

REFUTATION OF THE JAINA DARŚANA BY ŚAṆKARĀCĀRYA WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SYĀDVĀDA IN THE BRAHMASŪTRA
ŚAṆKARABHĀṢYA 2-2

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Śaṅkarācārya has refuted some of the tenets of the Jaina system of thought in his *bhāṣya* (c. early years of 9th A. D.) on the *Brahmasūtra* 2-2 - 33 to 36. The second quarter of the second *adhyāya* of the *Brahmasūtra* has been traditionally designated as the “Tarkapāda”, indicating that its content is based on logic.

The main thrust of Śaṅkarācārya’s arguments is against *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda* and *Saptabhaṅginaya* which, as terms though not synonyms, are interconnected as one philosopher of this system, Akalaṅkadeva (c. 8th cent. A. D.) puts it : अनेकान्तात्मकार्थकथनं स्याद्वादः¹ *Syādvāda* and *Anekāntavāda* can be said to have the relation of ‘*Vācyavācakabhāva*.’ *Anekāntavāda* is intended to be expressed with the help of *Syādvāda*, as one other work, the *Syādvādamāñjarī* of Malliṣeṇa (A. D. 1294) explains : स्यादित्ययमनेकान्तद्योतकं ततः स्याद्वादोऽनेकान्तवादः ।²

The most singular contribution of the Jaina system to Indian thought is *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda*; and the Jaina system of thought has been almost identified with *Syādvāda*, at times to the exclusion of other important ideas of the system; so, it is not surprising that Śaṅkarācārya has specially targeted *Syādvāda*, arising out of the *Saptabhaṅginaya*, for his attack on the Jaina system of thought. First of all, Śaṅkarācārya directs his attack on the *Saptabhaṅginaya*, and says that one object cannot contain in itself contradictory attributes simultaneously : नहि एकस्मिन् धर्मिणि युगपत् सत्-असत्-त्वादिविरुद्धधर्मसमावेशः संभवति । An object cannot be existent and non-existent at the same time. Moreover, according to Śaṅkarācārya, the corollary of this doctrine would be that, even the seven *padārthas*, namely *jīva*, *ajīva*, *āśrava*, *saṁvara*, *nirjarā*, *bandha*, and *mokṣa*, would not have any definiteness about them. A doubt will arise regarding, first of all, about the number of the entities, and then their nature and so forth. Hence everything would be of indefinite nature, and so the knowledge would be of doubtful nature, which cannot serve as a means of knowledge. Resultantly, the *tīrthaṅkara* would not be able to lend any certainty to his preachings regarding the valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), the objects of knowledge (*prameya*), agent of knowledge (*pramātā*), and the resulting knowledge itself, all of which have a non-determinate form. If there exists any certainty, then alone the people can follow a certain path without any hesitation. So the teacher’s preachings would not be acceptable to the people, and hence they are liable to be rejected like the prattling of a maniac³.

Śaṅkarācārya’s dialectics in his refutation of the *Anekāntavāda* is doubtless remarkable; however, it does not take the real position of *Anekāntavāda* into account. Śaṅkarācārya’s representation of the *Anekāntavāda* is rather a simplification

of its inherent intention and contentation. Śāṅkarācārya seems to identify Syādvāda with the agnosticism which in remoter past (C.B.C. 5th-4th cent.) was articulated by one Sañjaya Belatthiputta (अत्थि पि मे नो, नत्थि ति पि मे नो अत्थि च नत्थि च ति पि मे नो नेवेत्थि न नत्थि ति पि मे नो). Sañjaya had said : "I cannot say if it is, and I cannot say if it is not." Syādvāda would say 'I can say that the thing in a sense is, and I can say that the thing in a sense is not.' So, this is certainly not the Śāṅsayavāda or agnosticism as Śāṅkarācārya would make it out to be. Anekāntavāda purports to grasp the polarity of the truth. This leads us to Saptabhaṅginaya, namely, (i) स्यादस्ति घटः, (ii) स्यान्नास्ति घटः (iii) स्यादस्ति स्यान्नास्ति घटः (iv) स्यादवक्तव्यो घटः (v) स्यादस्ति वक्तव्यो घटः (vi) स्यान्नास्ति अवक्तव्यो घटः, (vii) स्यादस्ति नास्ति अवक्तव्यो घटः.

Now, when a statement is made that a jug exists, it does from its own nature स्वरूपेण अस्ति and पररूपेण नास्ति. i.e. it does not exist in the form of पट. घटः स्वरूपेण अस्ति and पररूपेण नास्ति. Both statements are possible at the same time about घट and similarly, other remaining भङ्गी also can be worked out. So, as it has been explained प्रश्नवशात् एकस्मिन् वस्तुनि अविरोधेन विधिप्रतिषेधकल्पना सप्तभङ्गी । तद् यथा स्याद् घटः स्वात्मना, स्याद् अघटः परात्मना । Everything exists from its own nature and does not exist from the nature different from its own, as has been elucidated in one verse :

सर्वमस्ति स्वरूपेण पररूपेण नास्ति च ।
अन्यथा सर्वसत्त्वं स्यात् स्वरूपस्याप्यसंभवः ॥

Syādvāda is not taken from this point of view, then, as pointed out in the above cited verse, everything would be everything and there would not be any difference between the two things. If the Syādvāda arising out of the Saptabhaṅginaya is taken literally, at its surface value, then there would be anarchy in the world. As Dharmakīrti (7th cent. A. D.) would poke fun at the Syādvāda in the following couplet :

सर्वस्यो भयरूपत्वे तद्विशेषनिराकृतेः ।
चोदितो दधि खादेति किमुष्ट्रं नाभिधावति ॥⁴

With the differentiation removed, all things would be having dual nature, then, if somebody is implored to eat curds, why does he not eat the camel ? This indeed is an extreme view taking the Syādvāda in a very superficial manner. If it is said that, an entity is of dual nature, i.e. existing and non-existing, it means applying to an illustration given by Dharmakīrti, curds exist from the nature of curds and does not exist from the nature of a camel. So, if a person is asked to eat curds, then why should he run to eat a camel ?

Or as Akalaṅka had issued a rejoinder :

पूर्वपक्षमविज्ञाय दूषकोऽपि विदूषकः ।
सुगतोऽपि मृगो जातः मृगोऽपि सुगतः स्मृतः ॥

तथापि सुगतो वन्द्यो मृगः खाद्यो यथेष्यते ।
 तथा वस्तुबलादेव भेदाभेदव्यवस्थितः ।
 चोदितो दधि खादेति किमुष्टमभिधावति ॥⁵

“Without properly understanding the *prima facie* view, if a person criticises that view, then he is only a *vidūṣaka* and not a critic. Buddha was born as a deer and deer was born as Buddha, and yet Buddha is adorable and the deer is only food. Similarly, due to the strength of an entity with its difference and non-difference specified, nobody would eat a camel if he is implored to eat curds.”

As Amṛtacandra (early 10th cent. A. D.) elucidates : यदेव तत् तदेव अतत् यदेवैकं तदेवानेकं, यदेव सत् तदेवासत्, यदेव नित्यं तदेवानित्यं, इत्येक वस्तुनिष्पादक-परस्परविपुलशक्तिद्वयप्रकाशमनेकान्तः⁶

Or as one *ācārya* clarified with an illustration of a cowherd woman churning the curds :

एकेनाकर्षयन्ती श्लथयन्ती वस्तुत्वमितरेण ।
 अन्तेन जयति जैनीनीतिर्मन्थानुनेत्रमिव गोपी ॥⁷

The Jaina system of thought, while de-emphasizing one strand of thought, emphasizes another thought, just like a cowherd woman, while churning the curds, straightens one end of a rope, loosening the other end. So Saptabhaṅginaya is employed either from the point of view of Sakalādeśa or Vikalādeśa, that is, from a holistic point of view or from a partial point of view. Syādvāda is a holistic point of view. Syādvāda is dependent upon the Saptabhaṅganaya as *ācārya* Samantabhadra (c.550-600 A. D.) says : सप्तभङ्गनयापेक्षः स्याद्वादः⁸ So, Syādvāda attempts to accommodate all differing points of view and hence this characteristic is, in fact, an ornament or a plus point, स्यात्कारः सत्यलाञ्छनः and not a flaw as Śaṅkarācārya tried to make it out to be.

Further, Śaṅkarācārya argues that pursuing the Syādvāda to its logical conclusion would lead one to doubt the doubting self, as there would be indeterminacy regarding the number of *astikāyas* and their nature and so forth⁹, and thereby Syādvāda would topsyturvy everything in the Jaina system of thought, by its own indeterminate nature. Śaṅkarācārya's incisive logical faculty seems to be flawless; but, he does not seem to notice that such a situation is inherent in the doctrine itself. In fact, this possibility of Syādvāda applying its own doctrine to itself has been perceived in the Jaina system of thought. Samantabhadra, perceiving this possibility, or rather contingency, writes :

अनेकान्तेऽप्यनेकान्तः प्रमाणनयसाधनः ।
 अनेकान्तः प्रमाणात्ते तदेकान्तेऽर्पितान्नयात् ॥¹⁰

From the point of view of *pramāṇa*, it is *anekānta*, and from the point of view

of *naya*, it is *ekānta*. So, *anekānta* is *anekānta* as well as *ekānta*. As noted earlier, *naya* is a partial point of view. *Naya* has been explained as प्रमाणगृहीतार्थैकदेशग्राही प्रमातुरभिप्रायविशेषः नयः । *Naya* grasps only a part of an object cognised by *pramāṇa*. Or *naya* leads an entity to its partial nature excluding various other characteristics as Devasena (c. early 10th cent. A. D.) held : नानास्वभावेभ्यः व्यावृत्य एकस्मिन् स्वभावे वस्तु नयतीति नयः ।¹¹ So, *naya* is neither *pramāṇa* nor *apramāṇa*. *Naya* is a part of a *pramāṇa*. *Naya* cognises a thing only partially and not wholly¹². Thus *Naya* is a *pramāṇa* as well as *apramāṇa*. Similarly, *Anekāntavāda* is also *anekānta* as well as *ekānta*. *Anekānta* reconciles all differing partial positions¹³. So, *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda* boldly faces and does not shy away from facing its own logical consequences.

En passant, it may be remarked that the Jaina system of thought is not anxious to prove their *padārthas* any more than the Vedāntin is inclined to prove the Brahman¹⁴. The existence of the *padārthas* depends upon the authority of the Āgama as a Vedāntin would depend upon the Śruti. Of course, there is a difference, too, between the two systems. As God, the Creator of the Universe, is disrecognized and hence unavailable to the Jaina system of thought, as they do not believe in the creation and hence the Creator of the Universe, God does not lend any authority to the Āgamas. But, Śaṅkarācārya, too, does not lay much stress upon this argument. As noted in the beginning of this essay, Śaṅkarācārya's main thrust is against the Syādvāda. What is more, Śaṅkarācārya finds fault with one of the Śaptabhaṅginaya i.e. स्यादवक्तव्यः About this, Śaṅkarācārya remarks that, if it is inexpressible, it cannot be expressed and if it is expressible, or expressed, it is not inexpressible : न चैषां पदार्थानामवक्तव्यत्वं संभवति । अवक्तव्याश्चेन्नोच्येरन् । उच्यन्ते चावक्तव्याश्चेति विप्रतिषिद्धम् ।¹⁵ But Śaṅkarācārya forgets at that moment that his conception of the Māyā is also open to the same charge.

Thus, it will be seen that Śaṅkarācārya has not been able to do justice to the multilinked splendour of Syādvāda. It is quite likely that the great ācārya as he was, he might have been led by contemporary considerations (and compulsions) of his days, which were the days of great upheaval, affecting as it did the destiny of an entire nation. But, the Jaina system of thought, and especially its main plank the Syādvāda, is a distinct contribution to the Indian thought. In its Syādvāda tenet, the Jaina system of philosophy appears most vital and resilient. It can be said to be relevant even today, and Śaṅkarācārya's refutation of it had a little impact on the subsequent course of Indian thought*.

* Paper originally presented at the National Seminar (Sponsored by Indian Council for Philosophical Research, New Delhi) on Jaina Logic and Epistemology at Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, Poona, from 27th to 29th March, 1995. With some revisions it is presented here for the JCJ commemorative issue of the Nirgrantha.

REFERENCES :

1. *Laghiyastraya-tīkā* 62.
2. *Syādavādamañjarī* 5.
3. See the *Śāṅkarabhāṣya* on 2 - 2 - 33 : निरङ्कुशं ह्यनेकान्तत्वं सर्ववस्तुषु प्रतिजानानस्य, निर्धारणस्यापि वस्तुत्वाविशेषात्, स्यादस्ति स्यान्नास्तीत्यादिविकल्पोपनिपातादनिर्धारणात्मकतैव स्यात् । एवं सति कथं प्रमाणभूतः संस्तीर्थकरः प्रमाणप्रमेय प्रमात् प्रमितिष्वनिर्धारितासूपदेष्टुं शक्नुयात् कथं वा तदभिप्रायानुसारिणस्तदुपदिष्टेऽर्थेऽ-निर्धारितरूपे प्रवर्तेरन् । ऐकान्तिकफलत्वनिर्धारणे हि सति तत्साधनानुष्ठानाय सर्वो लोकोऽनाकुलः प्रवर्तते, नान्यथा । अतश्चानिर्धारितार्थं शास्त्रं प्रणयन् मत्तोन्मत्तवदनुपादेयवचनः स्यात् ।
4. *Pramāṇavārtika* 3 -181.
5. Akalaṅka in his *Nyāyaviniścaya* 203, 204.
6. Amṛtacandra in his *Ātmakhyāti* commentary.
7. Amṛtacandra in the *Puruṣārthasiddhi* 225.
8. Samantabhadra in his *Āptamīmāṃsā* 14.
9. तथा पञ्चानामस्तिकायानां पञ्चत्वसंख्यास्ति वा नास्ति वेति विकल्प्यमाना, स्यात् तावदेकस्मिन् पक्षे पक्षान्तरे तु न स्यात्, ज्ञायतो न्यूनसंख्यात्वमधिकसंख्यात्वं वा प्राप्नुयात् । *Śāṅkarabhāṣya*.
10. Samantabhadra in the *Śvayambhūstotra*, 103.
11. Devasena, *Nayacakra*.
12. नायं वस्तु न चावस्तु वस्त्वंशः कथ्यते यतः ।
नासमुद्रः समुद्रो वा समुद्रांशो यथोच्यते ॥ *Tattvārthaśloka vārtika*
13. परमागमस्य बीजं निषिद्धजात्यन्तसिन्धुरविधानम् । सकलनयविलसितानां विरोधमथनं नमाम्यनेकान्तम् ॥
Amṛtacandra in the *Puruṣārthasiddhi* 2.
14. S. K. Belvalkar, *The Brahmasūtras of Bādarāyaṇa*, 2-1,2, Notes p. 181.
15. *Śāṅkarabhāṣya* 2-2-33.

We regret, for want of time, we could not prepare the bibliography of works referred to in this article.

-Editors