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

Vijay Pandya

Śaṅkarācārya has refuted some of the tenets of the Jaina system of thought in his bāṣya (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 Saptabhaṅgininaya which, as terms though not synonyms, are interconnected as one philosopher of this system, Akalaṅkadeva (c. 8th cent. A. D.) puts it: अनेकान्तवादकार्थकवर्तम श्वास्त्र:। 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 Syādavādamahājāti of Malliṣeṇa (A. D. 1294) explains: स्वदिल्यमन्वातःश्वास्त्रः तत्त्वादश्वादवैद्वेदींशक्तेन्द्रावः। 1

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 Saptabhaṅgininaya, for his attack on the Jaina system of thought. First of all, Śaṅkarācārya directs his attack on the Saptabhaṅgininaya, and says that one object cannot contain in itself contradictory attributes simultaneously: नहि एकमन्यमृ धर्मविद्यावृपयते, सत्त-असत्त-स्त्राधिकर्षत्वमसमावेशः 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, saṃvara, 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 tīrthāṅkara 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 maniac.

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 contention. Śaṅkarācārya seems to identify Syādvāda with the agnosticism which in remoter past (G.B.C. 5th-4th cent.) was articulated by one Sañjaya Belarthiputra (अन्यिष्ट वि मे नो, नरिष्ट वि मे मे नो अन्यिष्ट च नरिष्ट च वि मे मे नो नैतिक न नरिष्ट वि मे 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

Sañjayavāda or agnosticism as Saṅkarācārya would make it out to be. Anekāntavāda

purports to grasp the polarity of the truth. This leads us to Saptabhaṅginaya,

namely, (i) स्यादसिद्ध घटः, (ii) स्याधसिद्ध घटः (iii) स्यादसिद्ध स्याधसिद्ध घटः (iv) स्यादसिद्ध बहसिद्ध घटः

(v) स्यादसिद्ध वक्तव्यो घटः (vi) स्यादसिद्ध अवक्तव्यो घटः, (vii) स्यादसिद्ध अवक्तव्यो घटः.

Now, when a statement is made that a jug exists, it does from its own nature स्वस्वतः असिद्ध and एकस्वतः नासिद्ध. i.e. it does not exist in the form of घटः स्वस्वतः असिद्ध and एकस्वतः नासिद्ध. Both statements are possible at the same time about घटः and similarly, other remaining घटः also can be worked out. So, as it has been explained प्रसन्नवाच्चे एकस्वतः असिद्ध विशेषतः अविशेषतः विशेषतः स्वस्वतः स्वस्वतः एकस्वतः नासिद्ध तदः गतः स्यादः घटः

स्यादः अपवतः परषया। Everything exists from its own nature and does not exist from the nature different from its own, as has been elucidated in one verse:

स्यादसिद्ध स्यादसिद्ध नासिद्धः च।
अन्यथा सर्वस्यतः स्यादः स्यादसिद्ध स्यादसिद्धः।

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:

स्यादसिद्ध एकस्वतः नासिद्धः।
चोदितो विष स्याते किन्मुखः नामिनालितः।

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 surficial 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 Akalāṅka had issued a rejoinder:

पुरवप्रक्ष्वभवान् दुष्कोष्ठिः नभवकः।
सुगोगिर्मिव गृहो जातः: सुगोगिर्मिव सुगतः: स्मृतः।

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"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 Amrtacandra (early 10th cent. A. D.) elucidates: यदेव ततौ तदेव अततौ तदेवैनकं तदेवानेकं, यदेव सतौ तदेवासतौ, यदेव नित्यं तदेवानित्यं, इत्येक वस्तुनिपटादृशः-परस्परविपिनवेक्षितां प्रकाशानन्देनकालं।

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

एकेनांतर्यंति श्लोक्यवर्ती वस्तुनिपटते।
अन्तर्वेदा सौन्दर्यिन्यः विनाजन्यः।

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 Śakalādeśa or Viṅkalādeśa, 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 Saptabhāṅginaya as *acārya* Samantabhadra (C.550-600 A. D.) says: साक्ष्यभावानिपदेश: स्थानां:। So, Syādvāda attempts to accommodate all differing points of view and hence this characteristic is, in fact, an ornament or a plus point, śaṅkāra: सत्यात्: 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 forth, 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:

अनेकानेतरोपनेताः: प्रामाण्यसाधनः।
अनेकात: प्रामाण्यं तदेकानेतरोपनेताः।

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 प्रमाणपूर्वतः देशप्राप्त pramāṇapūrvaṃ deśagacchati. 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: नामस्वाभावविश्वप्रमाणवेष्ठ: श्वाल्ल्य एकस्यस्तु श्वाल्ल्य कस्य नामस्वाभावविश्वप्रमाणवेष्ठ नय:।¹¹ So, naya is neither pramāṇa nor apramāṇa. Naya is a part of a pramāṇa. Naya cognises a thing only partially and not wholly.¹² Thus Naya is a pramāṇa as well as apramāṇa. Similarly, Anekāntavāda is also anekānta as well as ekānta. Anekānta reconciles all differing partial positions.¹³ So, Anekāntavāda or Śyādvāda boldly faces and does not shy away from facing its own logical consequences.

En passant, it may be remarked that the Jain system of thought is not anxious to prove their padārthas any more than the Vedāntin is inclined to prove the Brahman.¹⁴ 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 Jain 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. स्यादः लक्ष्यविवादापूर्णवी: श्वाल्ल्य संभवति। नवस्वाभाववेष्ठः नवस्वाभाववेष्ठः। 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 acārya 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 Jain system of thought, and especially its main plank the Syādvāda, is a distinct contribution to the Indian thought. In its Syādvāda tenet, the Jain 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.

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REFERENCES:

1. Laghityastra-tikā 62.
2. Śyādvadānaṁjāri 5.
3. See the Śāṅkarabhāṣya on 2-2-33: निर्रेवता स्म नेत्रकामत्वस्वार्थम् सर्वस्वस्वार्थम् प्रतिज्ञानस्य, निर्धारितस्यापि वस्तुतःविशेषतः स्मादिन्ध स्मानातोधारिकलाप्रभावाति निर्धारितस्यापि र्वा । एवं सति कथं प्रमाणपूर्तं: संस्कृतिधर्मकर: प्रामाण्यपूर्व: प्रतिधारिताद्वीपे शक्तिन्यात् कथं वा । तद्भवानुसारेण सत्यस्वार्थदुसङ्किर्देः ते।
5. Akalanka in his Nyāyavīnīscaya 203, 204.
6. Amṛtacandra in his Ātmakhyāti commentary.
7. Amṛtacandra in the Puruṣārthasiddhi 225.
9. तथा शाक्तान्तरितकायां निर्भवसंहारिता नासित वैविध्यभागान्, स्थात, तद्वेदकर्मिन् पक्षे पश्चाते दु: स्थात, भावो न्यूनसंहारितसंहारल्याने वा प्राणमुद्। Śāṅkarabhāṣya.
10. Samantabhadra in the Śvayambhūstotra, 103.
11. Devasena, Nayacakra.
12. नाय बल्य न चावल्य वस्त्रस्य: कथंसि यत्।
13. सन्तु: सन्तु: वा सन्तु: योस्यवते॥ Tattvārthaśloka vārtika
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