

## The Relativity of Naya in Jaina Logic

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### I

If things are cognised to have their extramental existence and are not unknowable like the Kantian things-in-themselves, what we know of them is not appearance, but reality. And it is this reality which, according to Jaina thinkers, we are directly in contact with and of which the world as a whole is constituted. For how can any one disbelieve what the experience testifies? Thus it would be an utter disregard of one's own living experience as well as the real world if the physical objects are considered as mere 'passing collocations of qualities' and hence 'mere fiction of ignorance' as the Buddhists believe or as mere illusions and the objects of name (*nāmarūpa*) as the *Advaita Vedāntins* hold. Like some of the western contemporary realists and empiricists, the Jaina thinkers not only believe in the reality of substance (*dravya*) or objects of sense, but in the fact that objects of sense-perception are the congruities of the 'most contrary qualities of infinite variety'. In view of this, the Jainas consider the nature of 'being' (*sat*) as a system which "involves a permanent (*dhruva*) accession of some new qualities† (*utpāda*) and loss of some old qualities (*vyaya*)"<sup>1</sup>.

On this view, therefore, every object is conceived to be constituted of infinite attributes (*dharmas*), which are not conceptual in Platonian or Hegelian sense of the western thought, rather they really exist in things and objects of the world. Thus when we speak of a specific property being possessed by an object, it can always be with respect to a 'specific point of view'. For how can a particular characteristic quality be alone true of a thing in view of the manifold changes due to light and shade when it is seen from different angles by the same observer or by different observers from the same angle? And this necessitates the Jainas to adopt the principle of '*naya*'—"the different standpoints from which things (though possessed of infinite determinations) can be spoken of as possessing this or that quality or as appearing in relation to this or that."<sup>2</sup>

### II

*Naya* is a form of *Pramāṇa* for achieving the knowledge of reality. As *Pramāṇa* is valid knowledge of the many-faced (*anekānta*) things and objects of cognition, so '*naya*' is a mode of valid knowledge from some specific point of view directed to apprehend a part or aspect of an object<sup>3</sup>. Since it apprehends a part or an aspect of some real thing to the exclusion of all other aspects, it is a partial knowledge. This may mean that to the extent it is not a complete knowledge comprising the whole nature of reality, it gives a truncated view of things. This is why when *nayas* are considered as representing the absolute view of reality, they verge on *nayābhāsa* or the false view of reality.

Since Jaina metaphysics gives due weight to each of the qualities or attributes which form the life-force of substances (*dravyas*) and by which alone their existence is realised. No substance

† Here the word quality does not mean attribute (*guṇa*) but the modes (*pariyāya*).

[Editor]



or object can be thought to have only one quality which may die out in course of time or having no quality at all. It is, therefore, essential that objects must be constituted of such elements or attributes some of which may be permanent and some may be changing. Things and beings, therefore, are to be considered as a synthesis of opposites, such as existence and non-existence, permanent and change, oneness and manyness, or identity and change, so that from the standpoint of substance (*dravya*), an object may be thought to be permanent and from the viewpoint of modes (*pariāyas*) it may be taken as changing. This is why all assertions with respect to the nature of things can be true only relatively. i.e., from some specific point of view. And this is what 'naya' aims to fulfil annulling all absolute and *ekāntic* view of things which, according to Jainas may be interpreted as smacking of violence (*himsa*) and vitiated with falsehood. Considering the fact that we human beings, subjected to many shortcomings, can have only limited vision of things, we cannot grasp the entire nature of reality all at once. Consequently, the *naya* view of things is the only alternative left. It is a point of view with which the knowing mind works in achieving any knowledge and in this the mind is guided by certain intent or purpose (*saṅkalpa*). And because an entity has infinite attributes, 'the Methods' are infinite.' "A Method-character belongs to the speaker's intents, which are satisfied with one of the attributes. And to this effect.....as many as are the ways of statement, just so many are the Method-statements."<sup>5</sup> Here a brief account of the important Method-statements may be fruitful and which will acquaint us with the Jainas penetrating vision of the reality too.

### III

Considering the various ways of perceiving an object, the 'nayas', broadly speaking, are found to be of two types—one concerning substance and the other concerning modes. "That which cognises only substance primarily, is that of substance, and that which cognises only the mode primarily, is that of modes."<sup>6</sup> The first one is called *Dravyanaya*. In cognising an object, it lays emphasis on its substantial part irrespective of the qualitative or modal aspects. The other form of *naya*, called *Pariāyanaya*, lays stress upon the qualitative or modal aspects of things ignoring its substantial part.

In this respect, it may be mentioned here that it is the demand of Jainas' ethics of 'abstinence from falsehood' (*satyam*) not to conceal one's own shortcomings i.e., even when not being able to cognise the entire aspects of a thing all at once, one should boast of cognising its entire substantial and modal aspects. Hence, the truth demands to embrace the principle of 'naya', which comes to suggest that a thing from a particular point of view, may be considered as substance (*dravya*) and from that of another, it may be considered as a system of attributes and modes. Besides, this method of apprehending reality also reminds us of Jainas' critical acumen in the field of logic and epistemology.

But the Jaina logician would not rest content only with these two broad distinctions concerning the ways of cognising reality rather they further make a thorough critical analysis of the various viewpoints. And since the phenomenal reality is many-faced (*anantadharmā*), so the ways of cognising its nature cannot be one, but many. Hence in accordance with the various aspects of things and beings, various *nayas* have been conceived.

Thus, of the substantial (*dravya*) *naya*, we can mention three forms—the non-distinguishd (*naigmanaya*) the generic (*saṅgrahanaya*) and the empirical (*vyavahāranaya*). In general, all of them may be classed under *arthanaya*, as they refer to objects or meanings (*artha*). Similarly, the modal aspect (*pariāyanaya*) may be classified under four important types—the straight-expressed (*rjusūtra*), the verbal (*śabda*), the subtle (*samabhirūḍha*) and the such like (*evambhūta*). In general these three may be called *śabdanayas* considering their specific reference to words (*śabda*). Thus, broadly speaking, we have seven forms of *naya*—three coming under the class 'dravyanaya' and four under that of 'pariāyanaya'. A brief discussion of these may be useful to our purpose, for these also reveal the farsightedness of the Jainas' understanding in the field of epistemology and logic.



1. Naigamanaya proceeds on the assumption that since a thing possesses the most general as well as the most special attributes, we may lay stress on either of them at any time and ignore the other. Thus, when I have a 'pen' in my hand and when asked as to whether my hand is empty, I may reply in one of the ways that 'I have something in my hand' or 'I have a pen in my hand'. Here in the first case my answer considers the pen in the "widest and most general point of view as a 'thing' or substance" and the alternative answer takes the 'pen' in 'its special existence' as a pen. Thus, it is, according to the Jaina thinkers, the common-sense point of view which considers things as possessed of both generic (*sāmānya*) and specific (*viśeṣa*) qualities which are not distinguished from one another with the result that, while cognising the nature of things, one may lay stress on either of the qualities.

It may be noted that 'naigamanaya' goes against the view held by the *Advaita Vedantins* and the Buddhists, for the former deny the specific qualities (*viśeṣa*) found in a thing, while the latter disbelieve in the existence of any generic quality (*sāmānya*). But for the Jainas, true to their unifying attitude and the view of *ahimsa*, there cannot be any absolute separation between the generic and the specific or the universal and particular and for that matter even between high and low or rich and poor.

2. The generic (*saṁgrahanaya*) is the class point of view which looks at things from their 'most general and fundamental aspect'. For instance, we may state that things of the world are mere 'being' thus laying emphasis merely on their most general character as 'being' or 'existence' devoid of all specific properties (*viśeṣa*).

*Saṁgrahanaya* may again be of two types—ultimate (*parāsaṁgraha*) and non-ultimate (*aparāsaṁgraha*) accordingly as the emphasis, in making any statement, is put either on the highest class essence as on 'being' or 'existence' irrespective of the specific features, or the emphasis is laid merely on the inferior class character as when *dharam*, *adharma*, *Ākāśa* (*space*), *Kāla* (*time*) etc., considered substantially, are thought to be identical. If things are regarded as belonging merely to either of the classes and the individual characters are ignored, we are liable to commit *parasamgrahnayābhāsa* or *aparāsaṁgraha-nayābhāsa*.

3. The empirical standpoint (*vyavahāranaya*) comes to regard the real nature of things from "the point of view of actual practical experience of the thing, which unifies within it some general as well as some special traits." Thus this 'pen' I am writing with has some 'general traits' shared by all pens, but it has some special traits as well. And all these, from the practical point of view, go to make up the essence of this 'pen', and none of these properties can be set apart forming concept of the 'pen'. On this view, therefore, the *naya* becomes empirical, for it remains indifferent to the generic (*sāmānya*) and specific (*viśeṣa*) features of things.

4. Of the *parāyāyanaya* which considers a thing as a cogglomeration of qualities and modes, the straight-expressed (*rjusatranaya*) concentrates upon merely that mode of things which is of the present moment irrespective of the past or future characters, e.g., there is the mode of happiness at present. Here emphasis is laid only upon the temporary mode of happiness. The *rjusutra* is the Buddhist way of looking at things which does not believe in the existence of a thing in the past or future, but believes that at each moment there are new qualities in things which form their true essence.

5. The next modal standpoint is the verbal (*śabdanaya*) which takes account of words and their meanings. Each word may refer to a particular object or quality and different words may mean the same object. The relation between words and their meanings cannot be absolute, but relative, as the relation is bound to vary in accordance with their use. Thus in the statements 'the mason constructs a house' and 'a house is constructed by the mason', the word 'house' is used in the objective sense in the first instance and in the nominative sense in that of the second one. Thus, the *śabdanaya* is meant to take account of the varying relations between words and their meanings. Contrary to this, if a word is considered to have its fixed meaning irrespective of its varying use, we commit *śabdanayābhāsa*.

6. As against the above standpoint which accepts identity in objects even though there is difference in their modes, the *samabhirūḍhanaya* takes account of the difference in objects when the modes vary; that is, it emphasises the literal meaning of words ignoring their identical derivated meanings. For example, the words *Indra*, *Śakra* and *Purandara* have the same derivative meanings, i.e. king of gods in heaven. But *samabhirūḍhanaya* overlooks the identity of meaning of the synonyms and it accepts difference in objects when the modes are different, and in this way it distinguishes one synonym from the other applying each word for its specific object in accordance with the etimological meaning of the word.

7. Lastly, the such-like or *evambhūtanaya* is a special application of *samabhirūḍhanaya* and it restricts a word to one particular meaning, which emphasises one particular aspect of an object. For instance, the word 'gau' literally means a moving animal and so a moving cow should be designated by 'gau'. But if it is not moving, the animal should not be designated as 'gau', but by a different word. This standpoint takes a word in its strict etimological sense, which is applicable to an object "having practical efficiency at the present moment". If this principle is ignored, as the grammarian does, we fall into error called *evambhūtanayābhāsa*.

Having discussed the important features of some of the *nayas*, we find that in each case the preceding *naya* has a greater extent and applicability than the succeeding ones. Thus for instance, the *naigamanaya* has the greatest extent, as it is concerned with both real (*bhāva*) and unreal (*abhāva*) things. Contrary to this *saṃgrahanaya* refers only to things that are real (*bhāva*) and so it has lesser extent, although it has greater extent and applicability than *vyavahāranaya* which deals with only a part of the real, e.g., individual things existing in the past, the present and the future. Again, the latter has greater extent than *ṛjusūtranaya* which is concerned only with the present modes of individual things. In this way each preceding *naya* has greater extent than the succeeding ones.

The above classification and explanation of the *nayas* go to show that there are many ways of looking at things and consequently there are infinite number of *nayas* or points of view. They are, of course, the partial views regarding things and are relative to the different aspects of them. All affirmations whether affirmative or negative are conditioned to time, place and the various circumstances, "Infinite number of affirmations may be made of things from infinite points of view."<sup>8</sup> It is, therefore, suggested by the Jaina logicians that each affirmation should be preceded by the phrase 'syāt' by certain point, which will ensure their correctness and relativity of truth.

#### IV

Having gone through the chief ways of affirmations called *nayas*, which at one time emphasise the substantial character of things in which qualities and modes remain merged and at the next moment the modal aspect where qualities and modes alone remain predominant, we find that they have a great practical value. And this centres round the truth that since we human beings cannot transcend our limitations regarding the knowledge of things we, of necessity, must approach reality with a specific point of view or intent, which "works, of course, by way of thing or by way of word, because there is no other course."<sup>9</sup> And this intent, which indirectly also exposes our inability to cognise things in their entirety, may be termed as pragmatic. It is pragmatic firstly because it enables men to cognise the nature of things, at least from a particular point of view, which may be useful to their purpose. Again, it is pragmatic because this intent to cognise things from a specific point of view has a unique compromising or unifying effect upon the different opposite and contrary view-points, and this may be considered as most useful and commendable for the well-being of men in general.

In this connection, it may further be mentioned that the Jainas' principle of 'naya', even to-day in some form or the other, is being practised by some eminent contemporary western thinkers too. For the meaning or importance in our thoughts of objects and things, according to some of them, rests mainly upon the "effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what



sensations we are to expect from it and what reactions we must prepare.”<sup>10</sup> And it is further asserted that “all realities influence our practice and the influence is their meaning.”<sup>11</sup> We start from the objects ‘already empirically given or presented’, and the meaning is the effects these objects produce. This means that if our approach to things be proper and just, as the principle of *naya* aims at, it is bound to prove beneficial and fruitful for us. Truth is relative to human purpose or the intent with which man works.

Further, it would seem quite true that the Jaina logicians were alive to the fact that impressions or sense-data caused by objects experimentally given cannot remain the same for all percipient beings, rather they are bound to differ from individual to individual producing a variegated knowledge of things. As the western pragmatist Dewey remarks: “One does not expect two lumps of wax at different distances from a hot body to be affected exactly alike; the upsetting thing would be if they were. Neither does one expect cast-iron to react exactly as does steel.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not surprising that one who holds a view which is partial, as the method of *naya* envisages, and acts accordingly to the effect that he refuses to entertain any absolute view regarding things, may be accused of being a subjectivist or dogmatist. But when seen from a wider perspective and scientifically judged, the Jainas’ logic of approach to things and their points of view (*nayas*) adopted in comprehending the nature of reality can never be condemned as an inconsistent or incoherent method. For no truth and for that matter no view regarding the nature of things and beings can have any value in life unless it gives due importance to each and every aspect of being. And these are what *nayas* aim at. “If truth thus stands in the service of life, can we refuse to recognise the importance....For are not Science, Morality, Religion, Art, so many different ways of seeking an ‘harmonious’ and ‘satisfactory’ life.”<sup>13</sup>

#### Notes and References

1. Das Gupta, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, (Cambridge, 1963), p. 175.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
3. Cf. “the Jainas restricted the *pramāṇa* to ultimate proof or truth in accordance with their main doctrine of many-sided (*anekānta*) existents. From this they distinguish the *nayas*, ‘loads’, ‘lines of approach’,”  
Mallison, Syādvādamanjari, Trans., F.W. Thomas, (Varanasi, 1968,) p. 152 (foot-note).
4. Cf. ‘*nayas*, ‘leads’, ‘lines of approach’ (here rendered ‘methods’), *Ibid.*, (foot-note).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
6. Yaśovijaya Gaṇi. Jainatarkabhāṣa, Trans. Dr. Dayanand Bhargava, Motilal, Delhi (India), 1973, p. 71.
7. Das Gupta, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1963, p. 178.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Mallison : Syādvādamanjari, Trans., F. W. Thomas, Motilal, Delhi (India), 1968, p. 154.
10. William James, Pragmatism, A New Name for some old ways of Thinking (Popular Lectures on Philosophy), Longmans, New York, 1907, pp. 46-47.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
12. His essay, ‘Logic of Judgments of Practice’ in Essays in Experimental Logic, Dover, New York, 1916, p. 411.
13. R.F. Alfred Hoernle, ‘Pragmatism Vs. Absolutism’ in Mind, Vol. 14, 1905, pp. 299-300.