



METAPHILOSOPHY OF JAINISM

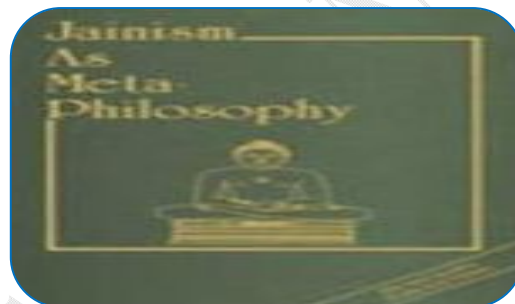
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ABSTRACT :

In the light of the three meanings of the term Darshana as used in the Indian tradition as the nearest equivalent of Philosophy and, in terms of the suggestion that these 'meanings' of philosophy find an articulation in the Jain tradition, we may enquire further as to how to arrive at the Jain concept of Philosophy.

KEYWORDS : Indian tradition , Philosophy , hard-core analysis.



INTRODUCTION:

It seems to me that the ideas of content and method provide useful starting points in our enquiry. It is obvious, even at the outset, that the two are related so closely that the consideration of the one cannot be attempted without an analysis of the other. The term 'content' may be 'method' is meant the techniques adopted by different systems (of philosophy) to deal with the subject-matter.

Concerned as we are with an enquiry into the concept of philosophy as discernible in the Jain tradition, suffice it to state here that the theme subjected to analysis is the nature of Reality. As man cannot be considered apart from Reality, reflection about the human condition is considered an equally legitimate subject-matter of Philosophy.

Arriving at the Jain concept of Philosophy may thus be attempted by delineating some details of its Weltanschauung. But here again what needs to be remembered is that these details qua details are not important for our specific task. These are to be considered with a view to identifying areas of enquiry which are crucial for philosophical analysis itself.

The Jain philosophers throughout point to the fact that reality is an extremely comprehensive term. For, it not merely incorporates a view of the nature of the universe but also a general philosophy of life. But for the presence of the latter element, the Jain theory would have remained a mere intellectual construction of a world-view, -describing natural phenomena and analyzing the laws which are at work.

While reference to matter constitutes the hard-core analysis of one aspect of Reality, the physical universe, reference to consciousness points to the other aspect, the non-physical. The implicit suggestion here is that leaving either of the aspects out of account is tantamount to taking a one-sided view of Reality, and hence arriving at an incomplete picture of Reality.

The uncompromising stand of realism that Jainism takes is evident from its identification of Reality with existence. The emphatic realistic stance of the tradition is further evident from its maintaining that existence is real. The assertion that the individual soul, matter, space, time and principles of motion and rest found in the universe are all real is indeed a clear indication that both the conscious and the non-conscious aspects of Reality (Jiva and Ajiva) do exist.¹ The six ultimate categories listed above and referred to as the two aspects of Reality are also denoted by the term Dravya (substance).

Since all the six categories are existent and are capable of assuming different modes and exhibiting varying qualities, Jainism defines Dravya as follows: "That which maintains its identity while manifesting its various qualities and modifications and which is not different from Satva (existence) is called Dravya".²

The three aspects of substance just mentioned need to be reflected about to get at the Jain theory of Reality. The term sat (existence) signifies the substantiality of the world outside the perceiver's mind. The of matter and non-matter is not a mere construction of the mind. It has its independent existence in *rerum natura*. This is perhaps what is meant by the statement. "Essentially, substance does not change."³

The 'qualities' and 'modifications' refer to the appearance-aspect of reality. They point to the eternality-aspect of reality. They point to the eternality-aspect of Substance in so far as Substance is regarded neither as created nor as destroyed. The essential nature of clay remaining unchanged despite its possible modes (shapes it assumes) and the varying qualities (color, etc) it exhibits, is cited as an illustration.

The Jain philosophers maintain that the persistent or enduring aspect of substance is quite evident from the very attempt at understanding the changes that take place in a thing since the attempt presupposes that the thing itself persists in spite of the changes. The changing modes are referred to variously as appearance and disappearance, origination and decay, modification, becoming, difference, discreteness, plurality, manyness and manifoldness. This seems to be the point made by Umaswami in his cryptic statement that sat possesses origination (*utpaada*), decay (*vyaya*) and permanence *Dhruvatva*.⁴

Furthermore, describing the divers qualities or ascribing attributes of different kinds implies that something exists; it is of this something that the various qualities are postulated. Speaking meaningfully of qualities, the Jaina philosopher asserts, is synonymous with asserting the existence of a substratum, an entity which is at its base. Similarly pointing to the changing modes too signifies, nay presupposes the assertion of a substance, for the changes in the modes must relate to something which persists though all the changes.⁵

It is significant here to note that the Jaina philosophers assertion that the conscious as well as non-conscious aspects of Reality exist as also their unambiguous position that Reality as Substance exists in three states, viz, permanence (*Druvatva*), appearance (*utpaada*) and disappearance (*vyaya*) imply that the three states relate to the *jiva*-aspect as well as the *ajiva*-aspect. The point is especially made here to indicate the direction that the analysis of *jiva* (along these lines) takes.

The changing modes of the *Jiva* point to the four states of being (*gati*) viz. those of infernal beings (*naaraki*), animal (*tiryanch*), human beings (*manushya*) and celestial beings (*devata*). The varying qualities of consciousness indicate the relation into which the *Jiva* enters when it comes into contact with the *ajiva*-aspect of Reality. In every one of these stages the *jiva* undergoes real changes, though its identity itself is not lost. The changes are seen in the facts of birth, growth and death.

Due to its association with Karma (an aspect of *ajiva*) the *Jiva* gets bound and is caught up in the cycle of birth death. Association with karma is considered a mark of impurity and hence the *jiva* in the state of bondage is referred to as impure (*aushadha*). With the attainment of liberation (*moksha*), the *jiva* becomes pure (*shuddha*). The original state of purity of consciousness which was lost (thanks to the impact of *ajiva*, particularly karmic matter, an aspect of *ajiva*) is now regained.

From our brief reference above to the Jaina Weltanschauung the general drift of Jain philosophy would have become apparent: the the analysis to Reality includes a concept of man as well as an exhortation that a right understanding of Reality paves the way for realizing a practical end for which philosophy strives.

Our analysis of the jain viewpoint has thus far been deliberately directed on the content-aspect. Why has this procedure been adopted even though our main concern is arriving at a concept of philosophy? Our answer is that it is with a view to making the point that descriptions of various systems of philosophy focus on content rather than on the method of analysis involved. It is also with a view to underlining the fact that not only are there systems of philosophy (*Darshanas*) but patterns of analysis as well which are at work in them all.

The patterns may not be discernible at all unless they are deliberately pondered over. This indeed makes it difficult to arrive at a concept of philosophy. Why are the patterns not transparently evident at first

sight and why cannot a concept of philosophy making itself apparent, even to start with? While describing the systems (delineating the specific contents of the system in question) is comparatively an easy task, "going beyond the contents", reflecting about what is involved in constructing these systems of philosophy, is admittedly a more difficult task. How is this situation to be accounted for? A slight digression here in defining the term metaphilosophy itself might help in finding the answer to our query.

While the expression 'philosophising' might be rightly used to describe what the various systems attempt to explain, the term 'philosophising about philosophy' may be employed to go beneath the superstructure that these systems of philosophy represent. This is the idea of metaphilosophy as employed in our present enquiry into the Jain concept of philosophy. The question posed in the previous paragraph might then be rephrased as follows: "Why is a philosophy of Philosophy (metaphilosophy) more difficult to arrive at than understanding philosophy as denoting systems of philosophy?"

A recent renowned Indian philosopher offers this answer to our queries. "Instances of philosophy occur first" he observes, and continues: and this enables us to raise a general question regarding its nature."⁶ He adds: "...the elucidation of the concept of philosophy is more difficult than the exposition of a philosophical system. For, the former is a question of the second order, of a deeper layer underlying the overt and avowed one philosophy of philosophy... stands on a deeper level of reflective consciousness."⁷

In our terms: investigating the question as to what is involved in arriving at philosophical positions or building systems of philosophy is more difficult than 'describing' a philosophical system. Since the latter is thus admittedly an easier task, it is natural to look into it first. And because it is closely related to the more difficult question of the methodology at work (in building the system of philosophy), the concrete doctrines and theories themselves are quite helpful in identifying the presuppositions of the philosophical system itself.

This has been the rationale behind our outlining the Jain View (philosophy of Jainism) for delineating the concept of philosophy implicit in it. Before proceeding further it may well be to spell it out. In this context there lines of analysis in regard to philosophy can be visualized:

1. What is the scope and subject-matter of philosophy?
2. If philosophy is understood as system, what are the methods employed in this process of system-building?
3. What is the purpose of philosophising?

In regard to the first question, the Jaina view, as has been indicated by considering its view of substance, is that Really is the subject-matter of philosophy. The scope of philosophical analysis, however is not to be restricted to considering any one aspect of Reality, however important it might be

For the sake of convenience, two aspects of the analysis may be more specifically commented upon, viz. the objective and the subjective. The former which has also been quite often referred to as the outer or external aspects, may be conceded as striking the attention of the philosopher at first. It is because of 'this that the nature of the world 'outside', the phenomena observable through perception and the characteristics they possess are at first looked int. while attempting to understand external Reality, however a deeper probe into the relationship between the observed phenomena and the features they possess, results. This technically is the problem of Substance and attributes. In addition, observance of a sequential relationship between phenomena leads to analysis of the precise relationship between them. This broadly indicates the philosophers' concern with the universal law of causation. The systematic characteristic of the universe and the existence of a meaningful structure seem to suggest themselves as a result.

Sooner or later, attention of the philosopher is inevitably turned on the inner world of human experience; and, questions hitherto posed in regard to the outer world are now addressed to the internal aspects of one's existence and transformed into a deeper analysis of the subjective aspects of existence in general. What is important to note here is that there is not only an attempt at finding, within the internal world of human experience, correlates of principles at work in the external world but also an effort at comprehending the differentiating characteristics of the inner world itself. While 'substantiality' and

'existence' may be considered "shared characteristics" possessed by the outer and the inner aspects of Reality respectively, the distinguishing feature of the latter is identified as the possession of consciousness.

The Jain theory of ajiva and jiva referred to briefly in an earlier section may thus be seen to imply a concerted attempt at comprehending the nature of Reality from the objective and the subjective angles respectively. It implies further that analysis of Reality cannot be confined to the outer aspects alone through the process (of analysis) may commence with the 'external'. Thirdly, since the analysis of Reality is attempted by man who is in quest of understanding it the identification of the subjective.⁸

This indeed makes for an understanding of Reality which is not directed merely at an examination of the status quo but a reflection of what ought to be the case. The dissatisfaction with the status quo may be considered to give impetus to this search for the understanding of the right relationship between man's innermost being and the peripheral aspects of his own personality on the one hand and, on the other, to the comprehension of the non-conscious aspects of Reality. This may be a starting point of philosophic enquiry itself which has to culminate in achieving a state of being which would bring with it a wholesome feeling of having found the true nature of oneself.

In this sense, reflecting about Reality does not connote a cold, analytical consideration of it but a more involved approach. As this involvement is of man's whole being and not merely his intellectual aspect, the comprehension of Reality resulting from it can be expected to bring with it a whole new outlook on life and things and also a transformed personality.

Considered in this light, the complexity of the Real-whether looked at from the outside or from the inside – is all too evident. Also, since both the outer (understood as the 'universe around') and the inner (interpreted as the 'human universe' proper) aspects of Reality are themselves subjected to further analyses and yield a varied and manifold picture, dogmatizing on the validity or correctness of any one view of Reality or any specific approach to Reality (as against all others) would seem to need a critical evaluation.

The subject-matter of philosophy being thus considered to be the *whole of Reality*, - neither the objective aspects alone nor the subjective aspects merely, but both together considered as aspects of a totality – the scope of philosophy is indeed very vast. Every attempt to understand Reality would be valuable and they may all be looked upon as offering creative possibilities of comprehension. Read along with the idea that understanding Reality is not merely a cognitive effort at mental comprehension but a whole new attempt at getting to 'know' it in all its aspects, the rich scope offered by the varied attempts at philosophizing is abundantly clear. Consequently, the methods adopted in the process of philosophizing can also be expected to be various and effective in revealing the variegated nature of Reality.

Thus it is that Jainism emerges as meta-philosophy; for here is a critical approach adapted to the very process of system-building. This idea of philosophy of philosophy arrived at through the critical method is explicated in two of the celebrated theories put forward by the Jain philosophers.

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