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The Beginning of Jaina Epistemology

Umasvami's Tattvadhigam-Sutra



Siddhartha Sadhu
Krishna Chandra College
PO. Hetampur Distt.
Birbhum,

Abstract

Tattvadhigam- Sutra, composed by Acharya UmaSvami (135-219 A.D), is regarded as the most authoritative book on Jainism. It is the only text which is accepted by both Digamber and the Svetamber Sects. Tattvartha Sutra deal with the Seven (or the Nine Essentials -- nav tattva) that forms the core of Jainism. Being a short composition containing only 357 Verse. The first verse is that, Right view, Right knowledge and Right conduct collectively are the path of liberation or moksha. So, the first chapter deals with the process of cognition and details about different types of knowledge. He took *jnana* (right knowledge) and *pramana* as identical. Knowledge (*jnana*) is classified as *Mati*, *Sruta*, *Avadhi*, *Manah-paryaya*, and *Kevala*. The first two, that is, *Mati* and *Sruta*, are called indirect (*paroksa*), and the rest direct (*pratyaksa*). Umasvami has confine 'pratyaksa' or 'aparoksa' only to the soul's immediate knowledge without any medium. Of the above five kinds of knowledge, *Mati*, *Sruta* and *Avadhi* can be erroneous. UmaSvami is aware of the existence of the school of philosophy which holds that the *pramanas* include inference (*anumana*), knowledge by similarity (*upamana*), scriptural testimony (*agama*), implication (*arthapatti*), probability (*sambhava*), and negation (*abhava*). It is maintained that all these are included in the *mati* and *sruta* knowledge, for they are based upon a contact between the sense-organs and the object.

Keyword: Sense-organs, Knowledge, Jainism

Introduction

The Tattvadhigama-sutra begins with the assertion that the path to emancipation consists of (acquiring) Right conviction (*Samyak-darsana*), Right knowledge (*Samyak-jnana*), and Right conduct (*Samyak-caritra*). (I-1)¹. Right conviction, Right knowledge, and Right conduct have, therefore, come to be known in jaina ethics as the three gems (*triratna*) that in a good life. In the very first sutra of *tattvadhigama-sutra*, Umasvami state this cardinal teaching of jainism. The path to liberation lies through right/conviction faith, knowledge and conduct. Liberation is the joint effect of these three.² When we look at the Tattvadhigam-sutra, we come to know that Umasvami made no difference between the categories of knowledge and the means of valid knowledge. In other words, he did not differentiate *jnana* and *pramana*.³ He observes: *Jnana* is of five varieties, viz., *Mati*, *Sruta*, *Avadhi*, *Manaparyaya*, and *Kevala*. All these varieties are *pramana*. He did not mention any particular characteristic except 'Rightness' regarding the conception of *pramana*. He took *jnana* (right knowledge) and *pramana* as identical.

Knowledge (*jnana*) is classified as *Mati*, *Sruta*, *Avadhi*, *Manah-paryaya*, and *Kevala* (I-9)⁴. These are called the means of knowledge (*pramanas*). The first two, that is, *Mati* and *Sruta*, are called indirect (*paroksa*), and the rest direct (*pratyaksa*)(I-11,12)⁵. Umasvati has confine 'pratyaksa' or 'aparoksa' only to the soul's immediate knowledge without any medium. But, later writers like Hemacandra extend it to ordinary sense-perception as well as most other Indian logicians do. To justify the narrower sense 'aksa' is interpreted as 'jiva' and not 'indriya' as ordinarily explained (vide Gunaratna's com. On sad-darsana, verse, 55)⁶

(1). *Mati* is either knowledge obtained through the five sense organs (*antndriya-nimitta*), which latter may be either reflective knowledge (*mano-vritti*), or general undifferentiated knowledge (*ogha-jnana*). Umasvami, who gives for the first time the definition of *mati jnana*. Of course, he does not state anything new, he only gathers up the scattered view of the scriptures in a logical way. He defines *Matijjnana* (sensuous cognition) as 'knowledge caused by the senses and the mind'.⁷ *Mati* includes both perceptual and inferential knowledge.—(I-14, and the Bhasya)⁸. The terms *mati*, *smrti*,

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samjna, cinta and abhinibodha are said to be synonyms (I-13)⁹. *mati* knowledge is further sub-divided into *avagraha, iha, apaya, and dharana*

Umisvami define *avagraha* as 'indeterminate intuitional cognition of their respective objects by the sense-organs. The *avagraha* cognizes only the general features of an object. It is indeterminate. The object presented in it is indeterminate and free from association with name. *Avagraha, graham, grahana, alocana (intuition) and avadharand (holding)* are said to be synonyms. *Avagraha* can be of two kinds *vig, vyanjanavagraha* (contact-awareness) and *arthavagraha* (object-perception). The *Nandi Sutra* does not clearly define *avagraha*, but only clarifies the implication by illustration¹⁰.

Iha (speculation) is a desire to know more particularly and definitely about an object, after it has been indistinctly perceived first (*avagritha*). The *Nandi Sutra* gives these five as the synonyms of *iha* : *abhoganta* (leaning towards), *marganata* (searching), *gavesanata* (fathom-ming), *cinta* (discursive thought) and *vimarsa* (enquiry). *Umasvami*, however, gives quite different synonyms which are: *Iha, uha* (reasoning), *tarka* (reasoning), *pariksa* (investigation), *vicarana* (think-ing), and *jijnasa* (inquiry)¹¹.

Apaya is the determination by means of reflection of the nature of the perceived object with regard to its perfection or imperfection (*samyag asamyag iti*) merits and defects (*guna dosa vicarana*). *Apaya apagama, apanoda, apavyadh, apeta, apagata, apavidha, and apanutta* are synonyms.

Apaya (perceptual judgement) is followed by *dharana* (retention) which means retention of the perceptual judgement for a number of instants, *samkhyeye* (countable) or *asamkhyeye* (countless). *Umasvami* defines *dharana* as 'final determination of the object, retention of the cognition and recognition (of the object on future occasions), and gives the following synonyms : *pratipatti* (continued-cognition), *avadharan* (memory), *avasthana* (retention), *niscaya* (continued cognition), *avagama* (retention) and *avabodha* (cognition)¹².

The above kinds of knowledge may be further differentiated according to the objects perceived are many, or of various kinds, perceived quickly or slowly, and so on (I,16). They pertain to the objects of sense (*arthasya*) (I-17)¹³. The knowledge of *vyanjana*, which, as will appear from its description, evidently signifies an invisible object, can be had only through *avagraha* with the limitation that it cannot be perceived by sight nor by mind. (I-18,19)¹⁴. It is said that thus *avagraha* is two kinds. (i) of *vyanjana*, and (ii) of *artha*. Of these the first does not take place through sight and mind, but it is possible through the rest of the four senses. Knowledge of the class *ihe* and the rest pertains only to *artha*.

The term *vyanjana* in (I-18)¹⁵ and the *Bhasya* is very obscure, and it has not been explained directly. It has been usually translated as (intermediation)¹⁶ sensation, or as indeterminate object; neither of which seems to represent the exact meaning of the author. Although the term has not been

defined, it appears from the author's own commentary on *Sutra* I-18, and 19, as explained above, that a distinction has been drawn between such objects of cognition as can be perceived by means of all the senses including mind and those which can be perceived only by means of the four senses of touch, taste, smell and hearing. The former have been called *artha* and the latter *vyanjana*. The underlying idea in regarding knowledge called.

Iha and the rest as applicable to *artha* only, and *avagraha* as applicable to both *artha* and *vyanjana* is that it is only the visible objects that admit of such determination and definiteness as is achieved by *iha* and the rest, and invisible objects admit only of such indeterminate knowledge as is signified by the term *avagraha*. According to the author, these invisible objects cannot also be the object of mind or reflection.

(2). *Sruta* knowledge is preceded by *mati* knowledge (I-20).¹⁷ It is the second kind of ordinary knowledge is mostly interpreted as knowledge obtained from what is heard from others. This includes all kinds of knowledge derived from spoken or written authority. As the understanding of any authority is dependent on the perception of sounds or written letters, *Sruta* is said to be preceded by *Mati*. It is of two kinds: (i) that which is external to the *Angas* (*anga-vahyam*), and (ii) that which is included in the *angas* (*anga-pravistam*). And these are further sub-divided into a number of classes. *sruta, aptavacana, agama, upadesa, aitiya, amnaya, pravacana jina vacana* are all synonyms.

The difference between *Mati* knowledge and *Sruta* knowledge is that while the former pertains to the objects existing at the present time, the latter pertains to the object existing in all the three times, and is also more pure (*visuddhataram*). Further while *Mati* knowledge is the result of the activity of the self as the knower, and is obtained either through the sense-organs or without them, the *Sruta* knowledge, which is based upon *Mati* knowledge is the result of communication from some reliable authority (*aptopadesad bhavati*).

(3). *Avadhi* knowledge is not defined at all either in the sutras or the commentary. It is said to be of two kinds: (i) that which belongs to gods and the denizens of the hell, in whose case it is innate, and (ii) that which belongs to man and other beings, in whose case it is acquired (I,21-23)¹⁸. The latter kind of *avadhi* knowledge is further sub-divided into six kinds according as it lasts for a short time or long time, etc. In the commentary on I-26, while comparing *avadhi* knowledge with *manah paryaya*, the author says that *avadhi* knowledge has for its objects only some aspect of material substances¹⁹, and this assertion is repeated (I-28). Further it has already been classed as direct knowledge. Thus it appears that *avadhi* is a kind of direct knowledge of material substances.

(4). *Manah-paryaya* is of two kinds (i) *rju-mati*; and (i) *vipula-mati*. The difference between the two is that the latter is purer (*visudda-tara*) than the former and while the former might cease (*pratipatati*), the latter cannot (*na pratipatati*), (I-24,25)²⁰. *Manah-*

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pariyaya is compared with *avadhi* knowledge as follows :

(i) *manah-pariyaya* is purer than *avadhi*, for the material objects which are known by the possessor of *avadhi* knowledge are known in a purer form and mentally (*manogatani*) by the possessor of *manah-pariyaya*.

(ii) while *manah-pariyaya* is confined to the universe inhabited by human being, *avadhi* can extend to the whole universe.

(iii) While *avadhi* knowledge can belong to all being, whether of disciplined lives or not, and in all condition *manah-pariyaya* can belong only to two men with disciplined lives.

(iv) While *manah-pariyaya* has for its objects material substances in all their aspects, *avadhi* has these only in a limited number of aspects.

(5). Kevala knowledge is perfect (paripurna), complete (samagra), unique (asadharana), absolute (nirapeksa), pure (visuddha), all-comprehensive (sarva-bhava-jnapaka), that which has for its object both the world and the non-world (*lokaloka-visaya*), and infinite (*ananta-pariyaya*) (I-30). Summing up the author says that the objects of *mati* and *sruta* knowledge are all the substances, but in all their aspects (*asarva-dravyesu asarva-pariyayesu*); of *avadhi* only material substances, but not in all their aspects (*rupisvev adravyesu asarva-pariyayesu*; *manah-pariyaya*) is a purer and infinitely subtle knowledge of the material substances known by *avadhi*; and *kevala* has for its objects all the substances, and in all their aspects (*sarva-dravyesu sarva-pariyayesu ca*) (1,27-30).²¹

Of the above four kinds of knowledge, *Mati*, *Sruta* and *Avadhi* can be erroneous. Error (*viparyaya*) is that which is the opposite of knowledge, and consists in a failure to distinguish between that which is and that which is not (*sad-asatara avisesad*); as for example, to perceive a horse as a cow, and vice versa. (I-32, 33).²²

Such is the classification of knowledge as found in the *tattvadhigama-sutra* and its commentary by the author of the *sutra* himself. The terms employed are peculiar to the *sutras*, and their exact significance is far from being clear. The first point to be noted is that what is perceived through the sense is regarded in this earlier jaina logic as indirect (*paroksa*), and that which is perceived without the medium of the senses as direct (*pratyaksa*). In this particular work, explanation of these; for, in the first place, their meaning is obvious and in the second place, they are of little importance from the epistemological point of view.

The author of the *Tattvadhigama-sutra* and the *Bhasya* is aware of the existence of the school of philosophy which holds that the *pramanas* include inference (*anumana*), knowledge by similarity (*upamana*), scriptural testimony (*agama*), implication (*arthapatti*), probability (*sambhava*), and negation (*abhava*). It is maintained that all these are included in the *mati* and *sruta* knowledge, for they are based upon a contact between the sense-organs and the object (I-12). This fact indicates that probably *Umasvati*, while referring to these *pramanas*, had the *Mimamsa* school in mind. He does not show any signs of knowing, or being influenced by the *Nyaya* school, and hence, as has

already been suggested, he seems to have lived before the compilation of the *Nyaya-sutras*. *Siddhasena Divakara*, the next important writer on jaina logic and epistemology, is much later than *Umasvati*, and as we shall see, he is distinctly influenced in his doctrines by the works of the Hindu and Buddhist writers. *Mati* knowledge pertains to the objects of the senses, and is either perceptual or reflective, - the latter also knowledge by inference. *Sutra* is knowledge by testimony. *Avadhi*, *manah-pariyaya* and *kevala* are forms of direct knowledge with such distinction as have been explained above. *Avagraha* and the rest three kinds of *mati* are the various degrees of sense-cognition according to its clearness and definiteness.

The *Nayas* have been described as the various ways of determining the nature of an object of perception and have been classified in the usual way. It is not necessary to go into a detailed.

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