

Remarking An Analisation The Nihnavaas : Its Historical Role in Jainism

Abstract

Any religion has to undergo a process of opposition and adjustment when it spreads in time and space and intelligent disciples cannot remain sheepish followers. This naturally gives rise to difference of opinions, aberrations and even schism with the religion. This is also true with Jainism. The seed of schism was already extant in the life-time of Mahavira. The differences among the members expedited its speed and widened the rift after His demise. Consequently new sects arose. To the orthodox monks, it was a transgression (Nihnava). Nihnava is explained in the Niryuktis and Bhasyas as concealing or evading the truth and creation delusion.¹ One who prevaricates the original doctrine is called Nihnava.² There had been seven Nihnavaas occurred in the church of Mahavira³ and two out of it happened even in his life-time Shivabhuti who founded the Botika sect or Digambara is counted as the eighth Nihnava.⁴ The Nihnavaas and their views are described in detail in the texts such as the Aavashyaka Niryukti, Vishesavashyaka Bhasya. Dashashrutaskandha Churni etc.

Keywords: Avasharpini, Nihnava, Kevlen, Jiva, Ajiva, Khalvata, Botika, Bahurataavadi, Jivapradeshikavadi, Avaaktavadi, Saduluka Samuchchedavadi, Yugpaddvikriyavadi, Rashitrayavadi, Abodhaikavadi

Introduction

The 24th tirthankar of the present Avasharpini era, was one of the most dynamic personalities of the historical period of 6th century B.C. He travelled extensively in different parts and preached the people the gist of religion. He reformed and reanimated the church organization with sound foundation and made it up-to-date to the need of the hour.

Mahavira's efforts yielded good result. Jaina religion spread rapidly and became popular even in his life-time not only in the large parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, it touched the boundaries of Bengal, Orissa and eastern parts of Andhra Pradesh. The religion grew incessantly in space and time only due to the firm foundation of church organization revived by Lord himself.⁵

Aim of the Study

The references to the Nihnavaas however occur even in Anga literature (Sthananga. 7/142/1). The Nihnavaas are as follows:

Jamali (Bahurataavadi)

The first rift in the church was created by Jamali, the son-in-law of lord himself. He was also the nephew of the latter (son of Mahavira's elder sister)⁶ It happened fourteen years after the attainment of Kaivalya by Mahavira.

Once Mahavira visited kshatriya Kundagrama (identified with modern Besarh in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar). Jamali also went to listen his preaching. After hearing religious discourses he received imitation as a monk on getting permission of his parents.

Once Jamali alongwith five hundred monks sought permission from his teacher for a separate tour. Lord Mahavira remained silent and did not respond to his request. In spite of it, he started on a tour. Wandering from place to place, Jamali at last came to the city of Shravasti in the garden of Tainduka, he stayed there in a Chaitya named Kausthaka.

There, on account of dry stale food that he was taking, Jamali was laid down with high fever. Being unable to sit he asked his followers to prepare bed for him immediately. The monks started preparing the bed. It took some time. Due to excessive heat of fever, Jamali repeatedly enquired the monks whether the bed was prepared. The monks who had already

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Remarking An Analisation

prepared half the bed and were busy preparing the rest of it replied that it was completed.

But Jamali, whose mind was not steady on account of excessive pain, was enraged at the sight of the half-spread bed that was being spread fully. On this, Jamali was reminded of Mahavira's view i.e. what is shortly going to be completed in the process of performance can be taken as performed from a particular view point. This explanation was of no use in the present situation, therefore, Jamali differed from him in this explanation and observed that when a thing is definitely done then and then alone it can be taken as done. Thus was started the theory of Bahuratas i.e. a thing which is still in the process of being done cannot be taken to be completed.

Some of the old sthviras tried to persuade him not to oppose Mahavira's explanation, but it was of no avail. Jamali went to Mahavira, without saluting him, he started as discussion and declared himself as Kevalin (a man who has attained omniscience). Mahavira asked him some questions related to Loka and Jiva "Is the Loka eternal or not? Is Jiva eternal or not?" Jamali got confused. Mahavira tried to bring him round but he persisted in his arguments. He brought into being a new sect which, however, could not survive for long.

Tishyagupta (Jivapradesikavadi)

It was the second schism held after 16 years of Mahavira's obtaining omniscience. He had propounded the doctrine of Jivapradesika. He was of the opinion that only the last of the innumerable particles of the soul is possessed. This schism originated with Tishyagupta who was the disciple of Acharya Vasusuri, a wellversed in all the fourteen Purvas.

At Rajgrih, once Acharya Vasusuri was delivering discourses on Jaina doctrine to his followers. A listener queried whether one part of a soul be called Jiva (animate being), the answer was in negative. Then it was asked whether two, four, ten or many parts of a living being may be called Jiva. But the answer was that even one portion less of living being cannot be said to be Jiva but the composition of all the portion of living being into one whole is Jiva.

Tishyagupta failing to apprehend the meaning of the statement he misinterpreted that the very last part which completes the composition is Jiva. In this way he came to the conclusion that Jiva existed only in the last part of the soul. The preceptor Vasusuri tried his best to remove Tishyagupta's suspicion. He was told that if he did not take the first part of a living being to be a Jiva, how could only the last part be called Jiva. It was not the last part alone but each and every part completes the perfect form of a living being. The last part is in no way different from the first one.

When Tishyagupta did not accept the explanation offered by the Acharya as mentioned above he was turned out of the Church. Propagating his view among his followers once he came to Amalakanka. A lay-devote of Mahavira Mitrashri lived there. Apprehending that Tishyagupta was a Nihnava he invited him to his place for dinner etc, in order to

make him conscious of his error. After Tishyagupta entered his house, he placed a pile of objects for food, drinks condiments and clothes in front of him. Then, from the midst of all those objects, the host took out the last portions of all the items and offered them to Tishyagupta. Being enraged at this act of the host, Tishyagupta enquired angrily why he was insulting him like this. The host explained that his sect held that there were numerous parts of the soul, but the Jiva remains only in the last part. He was, therefore, being served the only last parts of the food and so on. Realizing the truth, Tishyagupta with his follows went to Mahavira and rejoined his church organization as they had come to know the falsity of their views.⁷

Aasadha (Avyaktavadi)

Third Nihnava was Acharya Asadha. He propounded the doctrine of Avyakta (uncertainty of knowledge) i.e. nothing can be certainly known. It was established after him in Rajgrih after two hundred and fourteen years of the death of Lord Mahavira.⁸ The story about its origin is as follows.

Acharya Aasadha was the preceptor who used to teach Aagadha Yoga. On Account of excessive strain taken by him in reading the teaching. Acharya Aasadha suffered from acute pain in his heart and he died on the same night. Consequently he attained divine form and became a god in the Nalinigulma vimana (region).

This was not known to anyone in the temple. Then having known the past incident by Avadhi Jnana, Arya Aasadhacharya took compassion for his disciples and he re-entered his corps and started teaching and guiding them as usual. Thus the God in disguise of a preceptor taught the aims, explanations and commandment of the Holy writ. Practices of all the stages of Yogas were completely taught in that way. Finally, while going to heaven, after leaving the human body he told them the true story. He expressed sorrow for taking salute from them (in as much as he was no more a preceptor, not even an ordinary monk.)

This caused a great stir among his disciples. The disciple, thought that they were saluting a God in the form of their teacher. They felt that such Gods might be hidden in the bodies of others also. Their rules prohibited saluting the Gods deficient in right conduct. They, therefore, stopped saluting all monks and began suspecting bonafides of everybody. They established the doctrine that nothing can be certainly known. This doctrine can be called scepticism which even leads to agnosticism.

When they did not give up their mischievous belief inspite of being persuaded in many ways, they were expelled from the church. They rejoined the old order abandoning their wrong theories forever.⁹

Ashvamitra (Samuchchedavadi)

The fourth Nihnava was Ashvamitra. He established the doctrine of Samuchcheda after two hundred twenty years of the death of Lord Mahavira. This doctrine holds that everything is momentary i.e. everything perishes every moment, the story of this schism is as follows.

Remarking An Analisation

Ashvamisra was the grand disciple of preceptor Acharya Mahagiri suri and disciple of Kaundinya, once while studying the Naipunika portion of the Anupravada Purva, Ashvamisra derived the theory of transience. His conclusion was inferred form a statement which runs that all the inhabitants of hell (Narakas) of the present convention will perish, and so will all the deities. On reading this. Ashvamisra conjectured that all the Naraks of the present convention were to perish, all other living beings would also meet destruction, as soon as they were born. Consequently, they would not be able to attain the rewards of good and evil deeds. He misinterpreted the statement to mean that all the objects are transient and were destroyed after their origination.

His teacher Kaundinya tried to persuade him by means to various reasons. He said that the theory of destructibility of objects at every moment was laid down only from one point of view and not true from all points of view. The sutra mentioned did not in any way imply entire destruction of Narakas. The teacher again preached that if the theory of entire destruction of object was accepted everything would be destroyed immediately after its production. Consequently there would be no place for feeling like those of satiety, exertion or fatigue. There would be nothing like similarity, Dissimilarity, belief or remembrance and there would be no scope for study, meditation or imagination. But Ashvamisra was not convinced at all. He was then expelled from the church organization.¹⁰

Once, Ashvamisra with his followers came to Rajgriha. There lived a Jaina devotee named Khandaraksaka who wanted to mend the tendency of this ascetic group. He was posted there as a custom watchman. He began to beat Ashvamisra and his followers all of a sudden. Ashvamisra raised objection saying that he was an ascetic and why the watchman was behaving like that. On this, the devotee said that his theory of transience had turned turtle so Ashvamisra was not ascetic and he himself no devotee of Jainism. At this, some of them realized the fallacy of their principle, came to the right path and returned to the original school of their preceptor.¹¹

Ganga (Yugapaddvikriyavadi)

The leader of the fifth Nihnava was Ganga. He was the grand disciple of Arya Mahagiri and disciple of Arya Dhanagupta. This schism took at a place called Ullukatira after the lapse of two hundred and twenty eight years of Mahavira's death. He propounded the theory of Dvaikriya i.e. the simultaneity of two conscious activities as one experiences cold at the feet and heat on the head simultaneously.

Once upon a time Gangacharya was crossing the river Ulluka while going to pay his homage to his preceptor who was staying on opposite side of the river. Arya Ganga was bald-headed (Khalvata). It was autumn and the water of the river was cold. So, while crossing the river his bald head felt heat from sunshine and his feet felt cold due to river-water being cold.

At this time, under the influence of false belief, Gangacharya disbelieved the principle of

Agamas that two process of sensation could never take place simultaneously and thought that he felt the sensations of heat and cold at the same time. He reported the view-point to his preceptor and declared that the principle of the Agamas was false on the ground that it was contrary to the actual experience which he had undergone.

The preceptor tried to convince him of the validity of the religious principles of the Agamas. The preceptor proclaimed that felling of two sensations did not actually take place simultaneously as is represented by Ganga, but both the sensations were felt one after the other. One could not be able to mark such a process because the period of interval between the two different experiences was extremely short and the mind which feels the two sensations one after the other was fickle and subtle by its very nature.

The teacher again argued by giving an example of boring a hole into a hundred petals of lotus with a small needle after arranging the one over the other. One may think that all the petals are pierced though simultaneously, but really speaking that was not so. A petal beneath was not pierced unless and until the one above was actually pierced through. Thus, every petal was pierced through one after the other and hence, at different times. This difference in time was so minute that the person boring the hole was not able to mark it. Similarly the sensations of heat and cold were experienced only at different times and not simultaneously. So the theory of accepting the processes of undergoing both the sensations at the same time, proved to be absolutely unfounded. But Acharya Ganga did not change his belief. Consequently he was expelled from the church organization.

Rohagupta (Rashitrayavadi or Saduluka)

Rohagupta is considered to be the sixth Nihnava (schismatic) flourishing after five hundred and forty-four years of the emancipation of Lord Mahavira. He propounded the doctrine of three categories of reality i.e. – living being (Jiva) non-living being (Ajiva) and partly living being (No-jiva).¹² since he belonged to Uluka lineage and believed in six (sada) fundamental objects or formulated six sutras he is also known as saduluka.¹³ Rohagupta was the disciple of preceptor Shrigupta. He is also regarded as s disciple of preceptor Mahagiri as well as of preceptor Suhasti. It seems that formerly he was a disciple of preceptor Mahagiri, then he became that of Suhasti when Mahagiri embraced Jinakalpa and after the death of Suhasti he became the disciple of Shrigupta.

It is said that once upon a time when Rohagupta was coming to the city of Anatanjika in order to pay his usual homage to the preceptor, he saw a parivrajaka with an iron belt tied around his belly and with a branch of the Jambu tree in his hand signifying thereby that his stomach was filled to the brim with knowledge and that there was no body in the whole of Jambudvipa who could defeat him. This mendicant was known as pottasala in the city as his stomach was tied with an iron belt.¹⁴ On hearing this, Rohagupta took up the challenge even without

Remarking An Analisation

consulting his preceptor. When he narrated the whole incident to his preceptor afterwards, the preceptor said that he had incurred a risk by doing so because the mendicant was proficient in magical spells of scorpions, serpents, mice, boar, crows and parrots. The preceptor advised him that he should pickup all those spells properly so that he could nullify the spells of mendicant.

Thus advised by the preceptor, Rohagupta studied all the methods. Rohagupta then went to the royal assembly and asked that let the mendicant open any topic and that would be refuted him. The mendicant knew that Rohagupta was very clever and so he thought of opening the topic with the acceptance of Rohagupta's own principle so that Rohagupta would not be able to refute the same. He opened the topic with the remark that like the two categories of good and evil, there were only two categories living being (Jiva) and non-living being (Ajiva) in this world. This theory was acceptable to the Jainas but for the sake of defeating the mendicant, Rohagupta refuted it by say that all the objects in the universe could be divided into three categories Jiva, Ajiva and No-Jiva. He argued that like the three categories of best, medium and the lowest found in this world, there were three categories of living beings, non-living beings and partly living beings.

The mendicant was defeated by such an unexpected argument. So being naturally enraged at Rohagupta, the mendicant let loose his scorpions upon him, Rohagupta removed them with the help of his pea-cock. In this way the mendicant tried to defy Rohagupta by means of spells, while Rohagupta overpowered all of them by means of his spells. At last, the mendicant was vanquished in all ways. He was then driven away from the city with great humiliation.

Having defeated the mendicant pottasala in discussion in the royal assemble, Rohagupta came to his preceptor and requested him to hear the whole incident of his success. He said that the mendicant's theory of two categories was refuted by him by advancing a third category of No-Jiva supported by the example of a house-lizard with its tail dissected.

His preceptor answered that he had done a good deed by defeating the mendicant but the theory of the third category of No-Jiva was not acceptable. He advised Rohagupta to repent for his success and abandon the theory of No –Jiva but Rohagupta said that he did not see any harm in holding the theory of third category. He again tried to justify his theory by saying that such dissected portions being different from Jiva as well as from Ajiva should be taken as No-Jiva.

His preceptor warned and preached him by giving various examples but in vain. Rohagupta was not ready to give up the theory of third category. At last a discussion was again held in the royal assembly where Rohagupta was defeated by the preceptor. The king discarded him and he was driven away from there with great humiliation.

Although Rohagupta was defeated in discussion; the preceptor Shrigupta was so much enraged at him that he dashed an earthen pot against

Rohagupta's head. Rohagupta went away within his body besmeared with ashes etc. and out of sheer adherence to his own convictions; he set out to propound an absolutely different theory which spread by his followers after him.¹⁵

Since he preached the theory of six entities- Dravya, Guna, Karman, Samanya, Vishesa and Samavaya, he was also known as Saduluka. It is to be remembered here that the theory of six entities is also known as vaisheska system of philosophy.

Gosthamahila (Abaddhaikavadi)

It was the seventh Nihaava held in the city of Dasapur after the five hundred eighty-four years of the emancipation of Lord Mahavira. Gosthamahila is regarded as the seventh schismatic. His doctrine known as Abaddhika holds that Karma is not bound with the soul, it only touches it. According to him, it is wrong to believe that Karma binds the soul.

It is said that Arya Rakshitasuri was residing in constructing a monastery in city of Dasapur. He had three pupils named Ghrita Pushpamitra, Vastra Pushpamitra and Durbalika Pushpamitra. Vindhya, Phalgurakshita and Gosthamahila were another prominent ascetics in the Gachchha. Durbalika Pushpamitra, conversant with the nine Purvas. Was entrusted with the work of teaching Purvas to Vindhya. In course of his teaching the Ninth Purva, he found that he forgot his own study. Knowing this the preceptor thought that if such an able disciple forgets the part of sutra there is no wonder if all the Sutras could not be committed to memory by anyone. Consequently he divided all the Sutras into four Anuyogas.

In the meantime a great atheist rose up in Mathura denying even the existence of father and mother. When a combatant competent was not available, a deputation of ascetics was sent to Arya Rakshitasuri to inform him of this incident. Due to his old age he could not go there himself. So he appointed Gosthamahila for the task. The atheist was defeated by Gosthamahila who passed his rainy season at Mathura.

On the other side in Dasapur, Arya Rakshitasuri appointed Durbalika Pushpamitra as an Acharya after him and departed to heaven; on hearing that Arya Rakshitasuri had died, Gosthamahila returned to Dasapur immediately. When he came to know about the appointment of Durbalika Puspamitra as the Acharya of the Gachchha, he was vitally afflicted by the news. He therefore did not stay in the Gachchha and after some time he went to the Upasraya in order to see his fellow-ascetics. The ascetics received him with great warmth and requested him to stay with them in the Upasraya, but Gosthamahila did not accede to their request.

Durbalika Pushpamitra was giving sermons on the eighth Purvas, Gostamahila did not even care to listen to his sermons out of jealousy and impudence. He heard the same from Vindhya. In the discourse as regard Karman it was pointed out that relation between Jiva and Karman resembles that of milk and water or fire and iron. When Gosthamahila heard this from Vindhya, he contradicted this view by

Remarking An Analisation

saying that discourse was faulty. For, that if Jiva and Karman were inseparable as said above there would be nothing like Moksha. He said that just as the cost-off skin of a snake goes along with the snake even with a slight touch, so also Karman, though separate, goes with Jiva even with a slight touch. He also contradicted the practice of Pratyakhyana.

When Gosthamahila opposed the established theories, the matter was reported to the preceptor Durbalika Pushpamitra who sent a reply through Vindhya. But when Gosthamahila was not convinced even by that the preceptor himself had to come to the spot to defeat him.

The preceptor said that the relation between Karman and Jiva did not exist like that of a cast-off skin and snake, for, if Karman were to be connected like that it would not be able to follow the soul to the other life. He said that Jiva and Karman are united together like gold and stone and they could be separated from each other only by means of Jnana and Kriya. On the question of Pratyakhyana, the preceptor preached that Pratyakhyana is nothing but a dispassionate inclination of mind.

When Gosthamahila did not put faith in the words of the preceptor, the old monks of the Gachchha tried to convince him of the truth exposed by the preceptor. But Gosthamahila replied arrogantly that he was true to the words preached by the Tirthankaras.

At last, the old monks called an assembly of the monks who propitiated a goddess with the help of Kayotsarga. The goddess came to them and asked them as to what she could do for them. The monks requested her to go to the Mahavideha and ask the Tirthankaras there as to who was right. The goddess returned with a message within a short time and declared that the Gachchha led by the preceptor Durbalika Pushpamitra was right and Gostamahila was a liar.

When Gostamahila refused to believe even in this he was expelled from the Gachchha, afterwards he started propagating his precepts separately. Thus he had turned out as the seventh Nihnavas.¹⁶

Apart from these seven Nihnavas, Arya Shivabhuti is called the eighth Nihnavas. He is believed to have established the Botika sect¹⁷ which will be discussed in the following pages.

Conclusion

It is to be noted here that no independent texts of these schools are available to us. Their views are mentioned only in the Svetambars scriptures. The Digambaras do not make any reference to them. The schisms, however, seem to be historical, though presented in legendary garb. Due to scathing opposition, they could not continue for long, never the less, their contribution in the development of Jaina logic has to be appreciated. Besides, these were the creation of political storm. The first two transgressions took place even in the life-time of lord Mahavira, whereas five transgressions occurred 214, 220, 228, 544 and 584 years after his emancipation. These dissensions in the united church are enough to

indicate that there was not at all O.K. in the organization and the seed of discontentment were prevailing since the very beginning. It was not unlikely that third, fourth and fifth transgressions (Nihnavas) happened only in the duration of 15 years. Most probably it was the period of the formation of colossal Mauryan empire, At that time, India was facing her troublesome time as Alexander had attacked over it and subdued a large parts of it. Just after this, one more ghastly invasion by his commander in chief Selucas again gave a jolt. It was the period of illustrious Acharya Bhadrabahu and Acharya Sthulabhadra. The continuous foreign invasions had filled a sense of insecurity amongst the Indian. An insecure mind always lives in a state of fear. New thoughts were shaking the peaceful mind of intellectual Indians. Consequently, the dissension in the thoughts was natural. This state may be seen even in Buddhist Church organization. The second Buddhist congregation (Sangiti) was held around this period. The Buddhist church was split into major parts namely sthaviravada and Mahasanghika. How Jain religion could be untouched from this contemporary whirlwind. However, we have no records at present of that time as we could know the dissensions in the undivided jaina church. We are at a very later time informed about the split of Svetambara, Digambara and Yapaniya. The former sect, notwithstanding, preserved some discontentment occurred in the church organization in their canons, while the digambaras do not remember such type of any dissensions/Nihnavas in their literature. It was neither unnatural nor unwonted. The Digambara Acharyas either were not in a mood to describe these small dissensions/Nihnavas or the long span of time compelled them to forget all these antecedent happenings. Whatsoever may be the reason, we for the first time hear the dissensions as well as split in the middle of the tenth century A.D. in this tradition. Naturally, a long time of more than thirteenth centuries almost ended their memory. Most probably it was the reason that they did not recall or remember even the first Vachan held at Pataliputra during the time of Mauryan empire sixth and seventh Nihnavas were also the creation of political storm. It was the period of 1st or 2nd century A.D. The historical facts remind us that India, again become as a debilitated place for foreign invasions. There was no central power that could stem these attacks, consequently Yavaanas, Shakas, Kushanas, Pahlavas invaded over India one by one or contemporaneously and established their dominions in various parts of upper India. There was again a sense of fearfulness. With the foreign invasions, new thoughts were also shaking the intellectual mind of India. No one residing in the Indian soil could be untouched from these happenings. We are aware that sixth and seventh Nihnavas took place only during the period of forty years. And after 22-25 years of the Nihnavas, the Jaina church was divided into two major parts, for never to unite, namely as Svetambara and Digambara.

Remarking An Analisation

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