

Jaina Saptabhanginaya: The seven forms of judgement

The Jainas distinguish seven kinds of judgment including these two. Any object may be described affirmatively by a judgment which predicates of it any of the characters it possesses, or it may be described negatively by a judgment which denies of it characters belonging to other objects but absent in this.

18 These two

are the affirmative and negative judgments ordinarily recognised; but the Jainas qualify each with 'somehow' (syāt) to emphasise its conditional or relative character. Affirmative judgments about a jug, for example, would be like 'somehow the jug is in the room' (i.e., in the room at a particular place and particular time, and as a jug of a particular description); 'somehow the jug is red' (i.e., not always red but only during a particular time or under particular circumstances and the red is of a specific shade, etc.). The general form of all affirmative judgments can then be symbolically represented as 'somehow S is P' (syāt asti). Again, negative judgments about an object would be like 'somehow the jar is not outside the room' meaning that the jar of that particular kind, at that particular time, etc., is not outside); 'somehow the jar is not black (i.e., not black at that particular space and time and under those conditions, etc.). We find then that the general form of all negative judgments is 'somehow S is not P' (syāt nāsti).

When, however, we have to describe the complex fact that the jar is sometimes red and sometimes not, we must have a compound judgment like 'somehow the jar is and also is not red'. The general form of this judgment would, therefore, be 'somehow S is and also is not P' (syāt asti canāsti ca). This is the third form of judgment recognised by Jaina logic. This form is obtained by combining successively the points of view of the first two judgments into one composite point of view. The necessity of such compound judgment lies in the need of a comprehensive view of the positive and the negative characters of an object. A jar is black when raw, and red when it is baked. But if we are asked, what is the real colour of the jar always or under all conditions, the only honest reply would be that the jar cannot be described then, i.e., under the conditions of the question. Under such circumstances when we are forced to predicate simultaneously, of any object, characters which are incompatible, being contrary or contradictory, our judgment, according to the Jainas, would be of the general form 'somehow S is indescribable' (syāt avaktavyam). This is the fourth kind of judgment recognised by Jaina logic.

Recognition of this fourth form of judgment is of great philosophical value.

It points out, first, that thought of an object can be described from different standpoints, in different aspects separately or successively; it cannot be described at all, if no such distinction of standpoint and aspect is made. An object in general is an indescribable entity. Secondly, this also points out that philosophical wisdom does not always consist in the ability to answer a question by a straight affirmative or negative, but also in realising that some questions, by

their very nature, are unanswerable. Thirdly, the recognition of this form of judgment shows that the Jaina logic does not violate the principle of contradiction. On the contrary, it shows that obedience to this law makes the Jaina confess that incompatible characters cannot be simultaneously predicated of any subject in the same aspect.

The other three, of the seven forms of judgment, are obtained by combining successively each of the first three standpoints with the fourth. Thus by combining the first and the fourth successively, we get the fifth form of judgment, 'somehow S is P is also indescribable' (syāt asti ca, avaktavyaṃ ca). When we consider together, from a comprehensive point of view, the fact that a jug is sometimes red, but also that without reference to any particular time or state it cannot be described as having any predicable character, our judgment is of the form, 'The jug is somehow red but is also somehow indescribable.' Similarly, combining again the second and the fourth standpoint successively we have the sixth judgment of the general form, 'Somehow S is not P and is also indescribable' (syāt nāsti ca, avaktavyaṃ ca). Lastly, combining successively the third with the fourth point of view, we get the seventh form of judgment 'somehow S is P, also is not P, and is indescribable too' (syāt asti ca, nāsti ca, avaktavyaṃ ca).

If we combine simultaneously any of the first three points of view with the fourth, instead of doing so successively, we shall have in each case the simultaneous predication of incompatible characters (like 'is and is indescribable'; or 'is not and is indescribable'; or 'is, is not and is indescribable'. Hence in each case the judgment would be the same in form as in the fourth case, namely, 'Somehow S is indescribable' (syāt avaktavyaṃ). Therefore, though there are innumerable aspects of every thing, the forms of judgment would be only seven, neither more nor less.

To sum up, Jaina logic recognises the following seven kinds of conditional judgment (saptabhaṅgīnaya):

1. Somehow, S is P, (syāt asti).
2. Somehow, S is not P (syāt nāsti).
3. Somehow, S is P, and is also not P (syāt asti ca, nāsti ca).
4. Somehow, S is indescribable (syāt avaktavyaṃ).
5. Somehow, S is P, and is also indescribable (syāt asti ca, avaktavyaṃ ca).
6. Somehow, S is not P, and is also indescribable (syāt nāsti ca, avaktavyaṃ ca).
7. Somehow, S is P, and is also not P, and also indescribable (syāt asti ca, nāsti ca, avaktavyaṃ ca).

The Jaina doctrine of syādvāda is sometimes compared with the Pragmatism of some Western thinkers. It is true that a pragmatic logician, like Schiller, also recognises the truth that no judgment is true or false without particular reference to its context and purpose. Even a so-called self-evident judgment, like 'A square is not a circle', or 'Two and two are four', is true only in a specific sense, according to Schiller. This is a striking point of resemblance. But there is a very great difference also which should not be forgotten. The Jainas are realists, but

the pragmatists have a distinct idealistic bias.

19 According to the Jainas, the different judgments about an object are not simply different real aspects of the object. The Jainas would accept, therefore, a realistic view of truth which is rejected by all thorough-going pragmatists.

The Jaina syādvāda is sometimes compared with the Western theory of relativity. There are two kinds of relativity, idealistic (as of Protagoras, Berkely, Schiller), and realistic (as of Whitehead or Boodin). And if the Jaina is to be called a relativist, he must be understood to be of the realistic type. Our judgments about things are relative—but relative to or dependent upon not simply the mood of judging mind, but upon the relational characters of the many-sided reality itself.