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(4)

ISSN 0972-1002

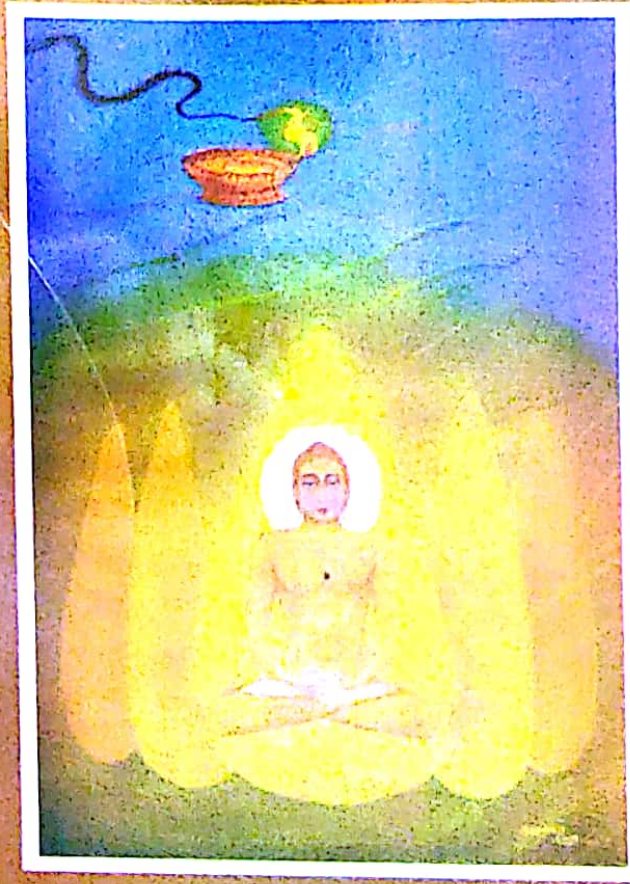
श्रमण ŚRAMAṆA

A Quarterly Refereed Research Journal of Jambhvi

Vol. LXII

No. II

April-June 2019



निर्धूमवर्तिपवर्जित-तैलपूरः कृत्स्नं जगत्त्रयमिदं प्रकटी-करोषि।
गाम्यो न जातु मरुतां चलिताचलानां दीपोऽपरस्त्वमसि नाथ जगत्प्रकाशः॥

भक्त्यामरस्तोत्र-16



Parshwanath Vidyapeeth, Varanasi

Established : 1937

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Contributions of Curious Gaṇadhara Gautama to Jaināgama

Dr. Samani Shashi Pragya

Introduction

Knowledge is born out of a sense of wonder and mystery. Out of all creations man alone has this capacity to enquire. Face to face with the unknown, he asks questions and shows the courage to contemplate on them. This universal urge to know is embedded in man. In Jaina tradition, Gautama Gaṇadhara- the foremost and nearest disciple of Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra, very well known for his mind b!ogging innovative and unconventional questions being asked by him to omniscient Mahāvīra. In this proposed research paper an endeavour will be made to highlight the importance of questions and enlightening answers rendered by Mahāvīra's insight. Along with this role of disciple Gautama in clarifying the Jaina metaphysical, ethical, epistemological, spiritual, philosophical, social concepts through this outstanding queries will be discussed in brief.

The history of mankind has been made by such people, who dared to ask unconventional questions and had the courage and stubbornness to pursue the answer. Asking questions reveals a mind that seeks to know, a mind which is the seed of civilizations of all philosophies and sciences. George Bernard Shaw said, "you see things that are and ask, why? I dream of things that never were and ask, why not?" Without the intellectual curiosity of Arjuna, there would have been no *Bhagavadgītā*. Even the wisdom of Kṛṣṇa got unfolded only when it was instigated by the curiosity of Arjuna. In the same way, it can be said that the wisdom of Mahāvīra enlightened people to mediator move towards the path of emancipation and self-realization and Gautama played as a role of mediator for all of us to get deep dip in to the ocean of enlightened knowledge.

Unconventional Questions Leading to New Discovery

Questions are born out of our interactions, generally, while watching things, incidents and people around us. Out of this confrontation we deduce principles of science and spirit. There is another story of another sixteen year old boy sitting by his first floor window watching the lethargic lane in front of his house. Although he was healthy, a sudden inexplicable fear of death overwhelmed him. This boy began to wonder, 'Death' 'What does it mean to die?' He was determined to find out who dies in death and who lives. He lay down on the floor on his back and began telling himself, 'I am dead, I am dead.' After a while, he felt his breath was stopping and body becoming stiff, but he was as 'alive' as ever. At that moment, he realized the supreme truth of life and that youth was Venkataraman of Tiruchuzhi. Tamilnadu, who later was metamorphosed into a Sri Ramana Maharshi. The falling of apple has been a well-known phenomenon like dying. Billions of people had seen billions of apple falling and billions of people dying, a couple of them questioned what they saw. The questions they asked metamorphosed them into a Sir Isaac Newton and a Ramana Maharshi.

Even the Western Greek philosopher Socrates too applied this question and answer method as a main source of knowledge. Socratic Method of teaching was basically based on conversational method. He used to raise question on every issue, what is virtue, courage, justice and tried to bring about the answers from his listeners. He also accepted the truth that the function of the teacher is to uncover the already hidden potential knowledge within the student. He called this method of learning as mid-wifely method. Actually a small kid usually questions every new thing when he/she happens to see unfamiliar things. The kids keep on asking the questions before their mummy and daddy. If they properly respond to their questions, the child develops confidence and maturity. What, why, how, who, when, where- all such curiosity-oriented series of questions keep rising one after another in the innocent mind of the child. That's why it is told by one of the learned professor that 'A student develops

by questioning and the teacher develops by answering.' The student who does not raise questions due to hesitation in spite of his/her not understanding any concept in class room, he remains dull/ignorant throughout his/her life regarding that concept. So it is better to become ignorant/ foolish once in the class room rather than remaining ignorant/illiterate/foolish throughout the life.

Historical Tradition of Curious Questioning in Jaina Canonical Literature

Never ever in the history of entire world religions, I have been able to trace out the most curious disciple who asked his (*guru*) teacher/preceptor more than 36,000 questions in one single life. Even Mahāvīra patiently answered each and every gross/subtle, silly/serious question from non-absolutistic perspective and satisfied the thirst for knowledge of him through his enlightened replies. It seems that Gautama had just played the role of mediation in unfolding the infinite wisdom and omniscient knowledge of Mahāvīra to all the disciples and followers. The entire Jaina community i.e. four-fold congregation (*caturvidha-dharmasamgha*) will be really grateful for centuries to Gautama Gaṇadhara, that it is because of his doubtful mind, reasoning mind, intellectual mind, dedicated mind, he was able to straight forwardly, humbly seek right answer and solution on every problematic issue from Mahāvīra. Gautama has not only enlightened all of us indirectly by asking the right question, at the right time, to the right (capable) person but also his endeavor to arrive at the right answer through repeated questions is also not any less important task undertaken by him to make others understand the naked truth as such. Let me proceed to exemplify few unique questions raised by Gautama one by one.

Significance of Series of Innovative Questions asked by Gaṇadhara Gautama

Without the intellectual curiosity, no innovation is possible. Curiosity creates questions. Questions lead to answers. And answers cause development. Without the curiosity of the scientists, there

would be no discoveries and inventions. Mankind will forever remain grateful to that young lad, Isaac Newton, for asking the questions. A strange idea came into the young boy's mind, when he was sitting under the apple tree. Why did the apple fall down? Someone inside him, the voice of convention, asked him, 'Did you think it should go up? He told himself, why not?' He then picked up a big pebble, and threw it up. That also came down. Then he saw a bird taking off from a tree and fly away. It did not fall down. 'There must be a way to explain why an apple or a pebble falls down on earth, and not a bird,' thought the boy. Rest of the story is history. Thus the questions we contemplate are a significant indication of our intention to adventure into the unknown.

Metaphysical Queries of Gautama and answers by Mahāvīra

The understanding of truth has been man's eternal quest. What is truth? What is reality? What is its nature, this question has been asked by Gautama to Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra.

Gautama: What is truth?1

Mahāvīra: To be created is the essence, creation (*utpāda*) is the truth.

He began to analyze this statement. If, to be created were the truth then creation would go on endlessly. The population would multiply to such an extent that there would not even be space for living beings and would get fixed with other beings due to lack of space, substances would merge into other substances and there would be no space for any new creation. Then there would be a problem. Having thus not understood, this answer pertaining to creation (*utpāda*), Gautama asked again, what is truth? Mahāvīra replied, to be destroyed (*vyaya*) is the truth. Again he began to critically analyze the statement to be created and to be destroyed is the truth. Once born and then dead, what else is left? The answer was still unclear to him. He asked yet again, what is truth? Lord answered, to be eternal (*dhrauvya*) is the truth. Gautama's mind now focus itself.

To be created, destroyed, and to remain in existence, this is the three-fold truth. Then he reflected upon this three-fold truth deeply and attained at the conclusion that truth is the conflict between the eternal and non-eternal.

Application of Mahāvīra's Unique Tool of *Nayas* to Answer all the Questions

Mahāvīra's unique tool to reply the answer is by implementing minimum two *nayas* for explaining the nature of reality i.e. transcendental *naya* and conventional *naya*. Here it is quite relevant to quote the metaphysical question is answered by him with his dispassionate consciousness. He said, *athirepallotai no thirepallota?*. It means from the transcendental point of view, reality is eternal and from the conventional point of view reality undergoes change.

Gautama understood the nature of two basic reality namely, *jīva* and *ajīva*, i.e. the right worldview towards the life and world of affairs aroused in him. He began to apply this formula of two fold perspectives and began to think whether the unstable changes or the stable changes. He wanted to solve this problem that origination and cessation occurs in the modes or in permanent nature of the substance. Where does the change occurs and what makes the reality to be permanent. In the quest of the truth, he had a series of conversations with the Mahāvīra regarding axiomatic nature of reality.

Anekāntic Answer of Reality as Permanent-cum- Impermanent

The first axiom of *anekānta* or non-absolutism is the concomitance of the permanent and the impermanent, the truth of one is verified by the truth of the other. The *anekāntic* dialogue goes as:

Gautama : Is the soul permanent or impermanent?

Mahāvīra : The soul is permanent as well as impermanent.

From the substantial point of view, soul or reality neither originates nor perishes, so it is permanent. From the conventional point of view, the mode of knowledge and intuition of consciousness level

originates and perishes. In case of matter also Mahāvīra said that from the above mentioned two *nayas*, matter is also permanent and impermanent both.³ Now Gautama understood the basic concept of reality.

Gautama understood the nature of two basic reality namely, *jīva* and *ajīva*, i.e. the right worldview towards the life and world of affairs aroused in him. He began to apply this formula of two fold perspectives and began to think whether the unstable changes or the stable changes. He wanted to solve this problem that origination and cessation occurs in the modes or in permanent nature of the substance. Where does the change occurs and what makes the reality to be permanent. The substance presents its prominence when our thinking is synthetic, losing all its modes and when our approach is analytical, the modes become prominent at the cost of the substance. In the quest of the truth, he had a series of conversations with the Mahāvīra regarding how to explain the multi-dimensional nature of reality. Now Gautama fell into trouble how to explain the multi-faceted truth through language is the first problem. This problem was being solved by the Mahāvīra, the preceptor.

Reality is both Speakable and Unspeakable in Anekānta

A substance is possessed of an infinite number of attributes. It is, however, not possible to express in language those infinite numbers of attributes taking place every moment. Besides, our span of life and also the range of language have their own limitations. A substance is unspeakable on account of this infinitude of the aspects of a thing.⁴ Only one attribute can be spoken of, in one moment and many in many moments, but never all during any stretch of time. A thing is thus speakable with reference to only a limited number of its attributes.

Similarly, here it is quiet relevant to discuss the questions of Somila and Jayantī and Anekāntic answers presented by the Preceptor Mahāvīra.

Anekāntic answer of one and many rendered to Somila

The following dialogue is an illustration, which throws light on the concomitance of one and many.

Somila : Are you one or many, O Lord!

Lord : "I am one in respect of substance, O Somila. However, in respect of knowledge and intuition I am two. In respect of parts (constituents of a substance), I am immutable, eternal and unchanging. I am many in respect of the ever-changing phases of my consciousness."⁵

The nature of the substance and modes entails the relationship of one and many, universal and particular, permanent and impermanent. The substance is one while the modes are many. The substance stands for the universal and modes for the particular. The substance is eternal, while the modes are changeable.

Anekāntic Ethical Solution of Slumber State and Awakening State

Lord Mahāvīra himself explained many a problem by means of this method of division. Once Jayantī asked the Lord, which was better between the states of slumber and awakening? O Jayantī!⁶ For some souls, the slumber state is commendable, but for other, awakening is wholesome.

Why is it so, O Lord!?

The exclusive assertion of the wholesomeness of slumber or awakening would be an absolutistic answer, which was not approved by Lord Mahāvīra who explained all the questions by means of divisions of issues avoiding exclusiveness. The empirical world is known as logically speaking through subject and predicates; metaphysically speaking, subjects having attributes.

Ethical Clarification of Auspicious and Inauspicious Renunciation

Gautama : If one says, I have renounced to commit violence of all *prāṇas* (two to four sensed being i.e. mobiles), *bhūta* (one sensed beings i.e. plants etc. or immobiles), *sattva* (all the living beings), *jīva* (five sensed beings). Then, is such renouncement auspicious or inauspicious? **Mahāvīra :** In some context it is auspicious and in other, inauspicious.

Gautama : Lord! What is the reason behind this statement?⁷

Mahāvīra : The person who is ignorant and can't differentiate between soul and non-soul, mobile and immobile beings, such persons restrain is inauspicious restrain. Such persons don't speak truth. But on the other hand who has discretion between soul and non-soul, mobile and immobile brings such persons restrain is auspicious restrain and such person always speaks true.

Similarly, we have numerous dialogues regarding the problem, whether it is good to be weak or to be strong is good?⁸ Whether the souls are mobile or immobile? Whether the souls are powerful or powerless? Whether the body is identical with soul or different? So on and so forth. All the replies of Mahāvīra were given in *anekāntic* style.

Conclusion

In sum and substance, Gautama Gaṇadhara had doubtless faith on the *anekāntic* replies rendered to him by his reverential *Guru* Mahāvīra. So his non-stop questioning mind almost touched all the dimensions and branches of knowledge namely philosophy, psychology, sociology, biology, zoology ontology, epistemology, theology, science, morality, spirituality so on and so forth. The *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, the Encyclopedia of Jainism, is the live and authentic witness of this multi-dimensional series of questions and the answers, dialogues and life-transforming conversations between both of them. The canonical knowledge of ocean seems to be filled with the endless

waves of metaphysical questions, ethical questions, epistemological questions, spiritual questions asked by an outstanding disciple Gautama which enlightened indirectly one and all and were amalgamated themselves within the ocean through the unconditional dedication.

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ऋद्धि-ॐ ह्रीं अहं णमो चउदसपुळ्वीणां।

मंत्र - ॐ नमः सुमंगला-सुसीमा-नाम-देवी सर्वसमीहितार्थं वज्रशृङ्खला कुरु कुरु स्वाहा।

प्रभाव - सब तरह की सफलताएँ तथा प्रतिपक्षी पर विजय प्राप्त होती है।

Winning over rivals and securing success.