

Jaina: The concept of substance

We have just seen that objects have many characters. As in common conversation so also in philosophy a distinction is made between the characters (dharma) and that which possesses the characters (dharmī). The latter is generally called a substance (dravya). The Jainas accept this common philosophical view of substance. But they point out that there are two kinds of characters found in every substance, essential and accidental. The essential characters of a substance remain in the substance as long as the substance remains. Without these, the substance will cease to be what it is. Consciousness, for example, is an essential character of the soul. Again, the accidental characters of a substance come and go; they succeed one another. Desires, volitions, pleasure and pain are such accidental characters possessed by the soul-substance. It is through such characters that a substance undergoes change or modification. They may also be called, therefore, modes. The Jainas call an essential unchanging character *guṇa*, and an accidental, changing character *pariyāya* or *pariyaya*. A substance is defined, therefore, as that which possesses qualities (*guṇas*), as well as modes (*pariyāyas*)

22

The world is composed of substances of different kinds. In so far as the essential characters of the ultimate substances are abiding, the world is permanent, and insofar as the accidental characters undergo modification, the world also changes. The Jainas, therefore, hold that those philosophers like the Baudhas, who say that there is nothing really permanent in the universe, and that everything changes from moment to moment (*kṣaṇikavāda*), are one-sided and dogmatic. Equally mistaken also are philosophers like the monistic Vedāntins, who declare that change is unreal and that Reality is absolutely unchanging (*nitya-vāda*).

23 Each of them looks at one side (*ekānta*) of reality only and thus commits the fallacy of exclusive predication. Change and permanence are both real. It should not be thought contradictory to say that a particular substance (or the universe as a whole) is both subject to change and free from it. Change is true of the substance in one respect (*syāt*), whereas permanence is true in another respect (*syāt*). The contradiction vanishes when we remember that each predication is relative and not absolute, as taught by *syādvāda*.

A substance is real (*sat*). Reality consists of three factors: permanence, origination, and decay.

24

In substance there is its unreality, viz. perma-changing essence and, therefore, it is permanent, there are again the origin and decay of its changing modes (*pariyāya*). Hence all the three elements that characterise reality are there in a substance.

By accepting this criterion of reality, the Jainas reject the Baudha view that reality consists in causal efficiency, i.e., that an object is real if it is capable of

causing any effect. The Baudha criterion is faulty, because according to it even an illusory snake must be called real as it can cause effects like fear, flight, etc. From this faulty criterion of reality, the Bauddhas deduce the theory of the momentariness of things, which, therefore, turns out to be fallacious. Against the one-sided theory of momentariness the Jainas also adduce the following arguments:

25

(a) If every thing be momentary, the soul also would be so, and then we could not explain memory, recognition, the immediate feeling of personal identity, etc. (b) Liberation would, then be meaningless, because there would be no permanent soul to be liberated. (c) No moral life would be possible then, because a momentary person could not attempt to attain any end. The work of the person who would begin an effort would bring about a fruit that would be enjoyed by the person succeeding him. (d) Consequently there would be no moral law; the consequences of one's own action would be lost to him (*kṛta praṇāśa*) and the consequences of another man's action would befall him (*akṛtābhyupagama*). (e) Mere momentary states would not even constitute any individual series, because without something permanent running through the changing modes, the different changing states cannot be held together to form a continuous individual. (f) Neither perception nor inference reveals the existence of anything in the world in which there is only change and no element of continuity.