

THEORY OF NYĀYA : SOME OBSERVATIONS

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Gautama's Nyāyadarśana written in the form of aphorism (sūtra) is a comprehensive philosophical system which like any other such system includes theories of being (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), inference (logic) and morals (ethics). One unique feature of classical Nyāyadarśana or Nyāya system of philosophy is that it includes in addition a theory of Nyāya.

This theory of Nyāya may be described as the science and art of disputation. In such disputation contending or rival parties aim at setting some controversial issue (i) through honest arguments (ii) through polemics and sophistry. In case of former type of disputation the dispute ends in arriving at or establishing or demonstrating certain truth which all concerned accept as proved. In sanskrit this type of controversy is known as *vāda* or *vāda kathā*. The second type of controversy ends in the defeat by fair means or foul of one of the contending parties. If the contending parties in such disputes not only aim at merely defeating the rival by any means but has some position of one's own to defend then it is known as *Jalpa*. When the contending parties have no position of their own to defend the controversy is known as *vitanda*. When an absolute and committed skeptic engages himself in disputing some theoretical point with others, he has recourse to *vitanda*. Vātsyāyana in his Nyāyasūtra bhāṣya has held the position of a *vaitāndika* as self-stultifying.

In the Nyāya system of philosophy the theory of Kathā or disputation is to be distinguished from the theory of knowledge. The latter theory discusses among other things such means as perception etc. which are

means of knowledge or *pramāṇa*. So the theory of knowledge is *pramāṇaśāstra* which includes theory of inference or *anumāna* also. For this *anumāna*, unlike deductive argument, yields novel information. The theory of disputation mainly discusses such means as *Nyāya*. *Nyāya* is not so much a means of knowing or *pramāṇa* it is rather a means of justifying certain position T (say the hill has fire) by showing that the ground that supports the thesis T (viz. smoke) is the right sort of ground capable of founding T. If it can be shown that the ground on which certain T is founded is sound then every one will accept T as proved in so far as it is based on that ground. It will also be demonstrated that the thesis contrary to the thesis T is not sound.

So, the means employed in settling issues or disputes in the context of theoretical debate or *Kathā* is *Nyāya*. We shall return to the discussion about the nature of *Nyāya* and how actually it hopes debates and controversies to be resolved. But a few other points may first be noted.

It has been already said that *Nyāya* system of philosophy in the classical period used to include with due prominence a theory of debate. In *Nyāya* text of this period detailed discussions would be found about the principles and techniques of such debates, conditions of success and failure in such debates and so on. But in later day *Nyāya* texts discussions of the art and science of debate are conspicuous by their absence. This suggests to many that the discussion on debate and disputation was necessitated during the classical period of *Nyāya* by the socio-cultural need. It has been said that during the classical period of *Nyāya* intellectuals and philosophers of the *Vaidika* society were found obliged to defend the beliefs and practices of the *vaidika* tradition against the socio-cultural (and not only intellectual) rivals who did not accept the authority of the *veda* and refused to believe and practice in the way the people of the *Vaidika* tradition did, on the simple ground that these were recommended or sanctified by the *Veda*. In short in India at that time there used to live in the same geographical region people who strongly differed on beliefs, practices and customs. So there had been genuine conflict and quarrel. To solve them at the theoretical and philosophical levels theoreticians and philosophers were often invited by the kings to engage themselves in public and open debate. There used to be honest understanding that the position, belief, custom or practice that

could be defended in the debate would have to be accepted and practised by the defeated contentant and the people on whose behest he engaged himself in dispute.

As could be expected when people of different traditions locked themselves in public debate to defend their respective position, unfair means were freely used to defeat the rival. Even so the disputants would have to observe certain norms and regulations so that even defeat could be forced on any one of the disputing parties. So the parties were obliged to agree on what could be allowed as permissible devices and what could not be allowed as such devices. Therefore even in Jalpa and vitanda form of debate or Kathā some rules norms and devices were used and some other such rules were avoided.

But since such form of debate is to be held between persons who respectively belonged to the vaidika and non-vaidika tradition, it could not have been obligatory for the disputants to use only such arguments as relate to things truth or position which was in conformity to what was said in the Vedas.

But in the *vāda kathā* none of the disputants was allowed to challenge or doubt the authority of the Veda. '*Śāstre vāde ca vimarśa varjya.*' To put it otherwise śabdapramāṇa could be employed and non-polemical debates could be held only when no doubt was really entertained in the truth or soundness of the vaidika position. So the Nyāya, used as means in the debate of the form vāda, had to be such that it did not aim at demonstrating any position which was contrary to the vaidika position in the matter. If the Nyāya to be employed did not satisfy this condition then it would be branded as spurious nyāya or nyāyābhāsa.

In course of time socio-cultural conditions changed. No longer there were frequent occasions to dispute or defend certain vaidika position as burning social issue. The art of debate came to be used less and less. The need for building theories of debate or improving upon the existing theories and art of debate was felt less and less. Therefore this part of Nyāyadarśana - the theory of debate - was dropped.

But, the principles that were discovered when social conditions demanded that theory of debate (on vaidika position) should be developed,

were found to remain valid when the debates relate to secular matters. So if originally vāda kathā used to be held between a preceptor and a disciple none of them challenged or doubted the authority of the veda. We can well imagine that even today some variety of vāda kathā is held whenever a teacher and a student endeavour to a critically examine some position to decide on the truth of the matter.

Anyway the best way to visualise an actual context of doubt is to visualise it as a situation of actual open debate where there are two disputing persons or parties are there. Either they want merely to defeat their respective rivals or they want to be convinced which the positions being represented is true.

Each of the disputing parties wants to convince his opponent or more particularly, such other neutral persons who are present either as arbitrar observer (the Madhyastha) or witnessing member of the assembly of men (Sabhāsad). Convincing others as to the truth and soundness of a position T (say the self is eternal or immortal) is to produce in the other a knowledge to the effect T (i.e. that the self is eternal). If any of the contending parties succeeded in producing in others the knowledge which he claims to have then he may be taken to have established or demonstrated his position and convinced all concerned that the position he represents is the correct one.

But what means does and should one employ to convince all concerned about the truth of the matter in the context of an open debate. The answer is that he must employ certain form of language. If the issue being debated is whether the self is eternal or not then the two debating persons are men who hold respectively the positions (P1) the self is eternal and (p2) the self is not eternal. None of these men would be able to convince others if he employed language in the sense of uttering a sentence to make the assertion that the self is eternal or that self is not eternal. Mere utterance of a sentence to assert or deny certain position is the form of employment of language as pramāṇa. But utterance of a sentence or employment of language as pramāṇa succeeds only when the audience takes the speaker as an āpta that is as a sincere speaker who is in a position to know the truth.

But in the context of debate all that is known to the people present is that both the disputing parties is not true. Both are not sincere speakers who know the truth. One at most may be holding the correct position. But no one present is supposed to know who of the two debating person is he. Therefore when a debate starts every one present takes each of the debating persons to be possibly wrong and anāpt. So mere assertion or utterance of the sentence expressing his position will not convince any one present that what he is saying is true. Each party will of course assert the sentence which expresses his position. But such assertion will produce in others the knowledge that the utterer believes such and such to be the case (the utterer believes the self to be eternal). But to know that a person believes that self is eternal is not to know or be convinced that the self is eternal.

To convince the audience that he holds the right position the speaker should be able to produce the knowledge of the form that say: Self is eternal. How can he do so? If he were an āpta or taken to be an āpta then the utterance or assertion of the sentence expressing his own position would produce śabdapramā of the form self is eternal. But that is not possible here. And this the debating people know, so they use another form of language which is known as Nyāya.

This nyāya is totality of a number of sentences which are called constituent parts of nyāya or nyāya avayava. There is wide difference among the philosophers of different schools as to the exact number of avayava of a nyāya. The standard view of the Nayāyikas is that a nyāya consists of five sentences each of which has a specific form, function, order of utterance and name. The names in order are pratijñā, hetu etc. These avayavas or constituent sentences are also called avāntaravākya and the nyāya or the totality of all such vākyas is called mahāvākya. A nyāya succeeds in showing the legitimacy of the ground because each constituent sentence of it has the backing of the pramāṇa or the other. The number of pramāṇas admitted in the nyāya system are four.

When one employs nyāya in the context of a debate over whether the self is eternal or not his purpose is not to produce in the audience śabdajñāna or śabdapramā to the effect that self is eternal. This he cannot do. So he cannot be taken to employ language as means of knowledge or

as means of producing knowledge in himself or in others.

Nyāya is a form of speech but its employment is not to be confused with the employment of linguistic utterance as śabdapramāṇa. The person who utters nyāya is not taken as an āpta by the persons who are debating, observing or witnessing the open debate. On hearing the nyāya (a form of speech) uttered by any one of the disputing parties the audience come to have some linguistic or sentential belief (śabda buddhi) about certain matter. But the audience does not come to have knowledge of the matter or truth in respect of which the speaker wants to convince others.

But when eventually one of the debating persons succeeds in convincing all present that the position he holds is true he succeeds in producing in everyone present a kind of knowledge that the so and so is such and such (say that the self is eternal). For to convince one is to produce knowledge in others. But what form of knowledge is produced in the observer and witnessing individuals in a debate. The agreed position is that an inferential form of knowledge is produced which is considered as parārthānumiti.

But the puzzle is how in the context of an open debate some debating individual can produce in others inferential knowledge while what he employs as means is nyāya which is a form of language?

II

The inferential knowledge which the hearer of a Nyāya vākya has is known as parārthānumiti. The special means that can produce Parārthānumiti is Parārthānumana. According to the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika whatever else a parārthānumana may be it cannot be śabdapramāṇa. Śabdapramāṇa can produce only śabdapramiti it cannot produce anumiti. Hence it cannot produce parārthānumiti either.

What does then produce parārthānumiti and what does employment of Nyāya contribute to producing such anumiti and convincing the audience in the context of open debate.

It is held that the factor which immediately causes both svārthānumiti and parārthānumiti is the same, namely parāmarśa. But the karaṇa in case of Svārthānumiti is Vyāptijñāna whereas in case of parārthānumiti it is manas or the mind.

If follows that general definition of anumiti cannot be given in terms of Karaṇa. This might have been the reason why Annambhaṭṭa defined anumāna (anumiti) in terms of parāmarśa. Viśvanātha's definition of anumiti (anumāna) as Vyāptijñānakaraṇakajñānaṃ is the definition of svārthānumiti. Gaṅgeśa defined anumiti in the Anumitiprakaraṇa of *Tattvacintāmaṇi* as *vyāptiviśiṣṭa pakṣadharmatājñāna jannya*. But he defined anumāna as the karaṇa of this anumiti. And that Karaṇa in the case of a person inferring on his own is Vyāptijñāna. But in the case of a person who does not infer on his own but is made to infer so to say by the form of language (nyāya) which in the context of open debate the disputing persons employ is manas.

The idea is this. In uttering a nyāya vākya a debator virtually asserts that the ground supporting his position has all the marks of a legitimate ground of inference. To be told this for an audience is to have śābdabuddhi to the effect that the subject of the inference (Pakṣa) has or possesses a property or ground which is inferentially related to (Vyāpya) the object to be inferred (sādhyā). Once the audience has such śābdaparāmarśa or memory disposition left by it as an auxiliary condition this cognition or disposition enables the means of the audience to yield a perceptual mānas parāmarśa. This in its turn produces in the hearer an inference that the pakṣa has sādhyā that the self has permanence.

This is how the form of speech called Nyāya helps in producing the knowledge in the audience which convinces him as to which is the truth or who among the debating individuals is right. This settles the issue and brings the debate into successful conclusion.

The concept of parārthānumāna appears to have essential reference to some context of open debate where specific form of speech is used to produce indirectly an inferential means (anumāna) and inferential knowledge (anumiti=anumāna) So parārthānumāna is also known as nyāya sādhyā anumāna.

It may be thought that if nyāya directly yielded any knowledge it would be śābda and not anumiti. There will always remain at the beginning doubt in the authority of the speaker of Nyāya. So no knowledge would be produced from the Nyāya he utters. And the belief that is produced will be śābda in nature and anumiti. If it is said that let not Nyāya it self produce

parārthānumiti but the śābdaparāmarśa which nyāya produces may yield parārthānumiti directly without any need for involving manas. In reply one may be tempted to say that śābdaparāmarśa is śābda by nature. It cannot be anumāna. But it would have to be anumāna if it were to (directly) cause parārthānumiti. How śābdaparāmarśa can be both śābda and anumāna. This reply is unacceptable. For in case of svārthānumāna i.e. svārthānumiti vyāptijñāna is regarded as anumāna. But vyāptijñāna is usually a case of memory. Thus a non-inferential knowledge can specially cause anumiti. In that case this noninferential knowledge is to be called anumāna.

The reason why śābdaparāmarśa cannot be regarded as anumiti karaṇa in case of parārthānumiti seems to be the following (i) anumiti is said to be caused by pratyakṣa. Remember Gautama's sūtra *atha tatpūrvakam trividhānumānam* etc. Here 'tat' refers to appropriate perceptual knowledge. (ii) A piece of cognition about the truth of which there is already doubt does not succeed to yield knowledge. In case of parārthānumiti the audience already has doubt about the truth of the śābdaparāmarśa generated by the nyāya employed by the contending parties to prove rival positions.

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