

Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

In Indian tradition philosophy is called '*darśana*', which literary means 'seeing' originated from the root *dṛś*. i.e. to see. Mere 'seeing with the gross eye' is not *darśana*. When an object is looked into under certain circumstances, it is not *darśana* in the true sense of the term. Something seen in the initial level cannot be confirmed due to the fact that there might be mistake leading to an illusory perception. Hence at this stage there is no confirmation of truth of the cognition of an object already seen. Hence, for the sake of confirmation there is a need for viewing something subsequently which is called critical observation. If a theory is proposed, one should critically ponder (*manana*) over the theory. This 'critical thinking' is the identifying mark of *darśana*. This 'seeing' may either be perceptual observation or intuitive experience. The phenomenon which is not realized through ordinary means of cognition may be intuitively realized or intuitively seen, which is also called *darśana*. Seeing by any means is *darśana*.

In our Indian tradition there are certain means of argumentation which is nothing but the exchange of views in favour of certain thesis. For this one should undertake such exchange of ideas in which an individual belonging to a particular school should argue against certain standpoint taken by the opponents. In order to arrive at a certain conclusion one adopts the method of argumentation called *vāda*.

In Indian logic three types of argumentation or debate have been taken into account. They are *vāda*, *jalpa* and *vitandā*. A *vāda* is a form of debate where the determination of truth gets priority than satisfaction of individual ego. The *Vāda* has been accepted by each and every system of thought in India for determining *tattva* (i.e., thatness). For having *tattvajñāna* i.e. the knowledge of real nature of an object *vāda* nature of debate is essential. If someone does not a least method of knowing the true essence of an object, he cannot be brought under *vāda* debater,¹ because, this type of debate is most honourable in Indian logic. Moreover, *vāda* is an open-ended concept and no philosophical conclusion is final but *ad hoc*. What is true today may be falsified by others in near or remote future. That is why; each and every theory is ended with the term *vāda* like *satkāryavada*, *śūnyavada*, *yadṛchhāvāda* etc.

The right cognition of the categories like '*pramāṇa*', ('means of knowing') '*vāda*' ('debate to arrive at truth without any desire to get victory over the opponent'), '*jalpa*' (argumentation for achieving victory, but not truth), '*vitandā*' (argument only to refute others views without substantiating one's own), '*chala*' ('adopting tricks in argumentation', '*hetvābhāsa*' (fallacy of arguments') etc leads to the former while the right cognition of the 'objects to be known' ('*prameya*') leads to the latter. In a debate between an opponent (*pūrvapakṣa*) and a proponent (*uttarapakṣa*) the determination of truth which is called technically *vāda* is the

main objective of the Naiyāyikas leaving the question of victory aside. In the *vāda* type of debate there should be the adoption of one of the two opposing sides (*pakṣa-pratipakṣa-parigraha*), which is defended by *pramāṇa* and *tarka* (*pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanopalambha*) and which is not opposed to the established tenets (*siddhāntābirudhha*). If the desire of victory prevails in debate, and determination of truth is bypassed, it is called *jalpa*, which is not taken as an ideal pattern of forwarding argument in a philosophical debate. If some one refutes the opponent's view only without forwarding his own, it is called *vitandā*, which is not honoured as a better philosophical method.²

After considering this method in view the *Pūrvapakṣa*'s account regarding the concepts of valid cognition (*pramā*), means of knowing (*pramāṇa*), different forms of *pramāṇas*, the theory of perception, inference, comparison, verbal testimony, presumption (*arthāpatti*) and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*) etc. are taken into account.

Among the *pramāṇas* perception (*pratyakṣa*) is called 'eldest among the *pramāṇas*' (*pramāṇa-jyeṣṭha*) on account of the fact that perception is the main pillar in other forms of *pramāṇas*. In the case of inference the perception of *hetu* and *vyāpti*, in comparison the perception of similarity, in testimonial cognition the perceptual cognition of word and the perception of known fact in case of presumption are essential. That is why; perception is mentioned at the very outset.

Negation or absence has been taken as a category in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy on account of the fact that each and every individual has an awareness of absence. Hence there is no doubt regarding the existence of negation as it is directly experienced by us. But philosophers vary in their opinion regarding the characteristic features of negation. The nature of *abhāva* or the interpretation of *abhāva* differs from one system to another due to their different ontological presuppositions. These presuppositions have also a distinct role in determining the means of knowing the negative fact. According to Nyāya, the absence is known through perception; the Buddhists believe that it is known through inference and the Advaita Vedānta thinks that it is known only through a distinct means of knowing called *Anupalabdhi*.

Let us try to understand the significance of describing *abhāva* as a ‘negative fact’. It may sound something problematic to us when the term ‘negative’ is conjoined with ‘fact’, because the latter always refers to positive entity. In other words, the reality or fact is to be understood in terms of positive judgment. But in the case of negative judgment there is no reality or fact reflected in it. The expression – ‘*bhūtale ghaṭo nāsti*’ (‘There is no jar on the ground’), we do not find any corresponding object on the ground as the absence of a jar. Hence, the term ‘negative fact’ may seem to be a problematic in understanding.

In reply, it may be argued that just as the positive object corresponds to some existent entity, the negative object also refers to the same. A negative entity provides an appropriate object for a negative judgment. When there is feeling of absence (viz., absence of jar, absence of near or dear ones, or lack of money etc.), it is an ‘actual feeling’ (i.e., it is really a ‘feeling’). As this is a ‘feeling’, it can be described as a psychological state of mind. Sometimes the feeling of absence is more touchy or sensitive than that of a positive object. In other words, the feeling of pleasure which is a positive fact is not as touchy and sensitive as found in the case of feeling of pain (i.e., absence of pleasure). That is why; the pathos or *karuṇa rasa* has been taken as best aesthetic pleasure in comparison to *śṅgāra* etc. It is told by our English poet-‘Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought’. Here, this negative object makes us ‘feel’ in a specific situation. Hence, it is also a fact. For this reason the Naiyayikas and Vaiśeṣikas have admitted absence (*abhāva*) as a category (*padārtha*), one of the real entities of the world. The concept of *apavarga* i.e., liberation is explained in the negative way as this state is nothing but the absolute cessation of suffering.³ Though they have accepted such a concept, they are not at all against good crops of negation. In fact, this doctrine of *apavarga* or *niḥśreyasa* points to the fact that absence, according to these systems, is an ultimately real entity (*padārtha*). This theory is employed in order to highlight *abhāva* as a status of a category.

The absence has to be admitted as an entity of the negative form of cognition (*nāsti buddhi*) which we experience occasionally. Just as the positive entities that become the contents of the cognitions in the positive or affirmative forms are accepted as objectively real, the negative entities that are the contents of negative cognitions must also be taken as objectively real or facts. Each and every cognition without exception must possess a corresponding object. The object which is known must exist in the external world even if it is not known by others. The cognition of an object presupposes the existence of the object in the external world. The cognition of an object having no existence at all is an impossible phenomenon. Had there been no object in the external world, there would not have been the cognition of the same. Cognition of an object presupposes its existence. In the similar manner, we can say that, since we acquire negative forms of cognition, they must have some entities in the forms of negation or absence. From all this it has to be admitted that there are, in fact, negative entities in the world. In other words, as there is a negative fact in the world, it can give rise to its cognition. In this connection Hiriyanna's view is to be reviewed:

“....negative facts are as much objects of knowledge as positive ones, knowledge of absence is not absence of knowledge. That is, the present view explains negative judgments by postulating negative facts as part of objective reality”⁴.

The Bhāttas have shown their departure from Nyāya regarding the method of apprehending negation. They believe that *anupalabdhi* or non-cognition is the means of knowing or *pramāṇa* for the cognition of a negative fact. Kumarila has shown his departure again on the issue of those who think that negation is a nonentity (*avastu*) and is without having any essence (*niḥsvabhāva*). To him *abhāva* or negation is a ‘thing’ just like any positive empirical entity. Kumarila also believes that all cognitions must have objects which may be of positive and negative nature. A negative cognition has got a relation with the positive cognition. To them each object has a relation of double character. A particular object exists in its own form (i.e., a jar exists itself as a jar) and it does not exist with regard to the form of another object (i.e., a jar does not exist in the form of cloth). In a piece of jar there is always the absence of cloth. The Buddhists admit this view which is called *apohavāda*. In a jar or *ghaṭa* there is always *aghata*. They explain a negative fact in the light of the positive factors existing in it. They are reluctant to give an ontological status to *abhāva*. To them the non-observation of a perceptible entity is the basis of a negative judgment.⁵

As the Prābhākaras and the Buddhists believe in such a notion of absence, they do not think it proper to accept a distinct means of knowing or *pramāṇa* called *anupalabdhi*. That is why; they admit that inference is enough to know absence. It

is a futile exercise to admit a separate *pramāṇa* for knowing it. The *hetu* of such inference is the non-perception of perceptible entity (*dr̥śyānupalabdhi*).⁶

The realism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika in connection with the concept of *abhāva* boldly identifies it as one of the categories. The Naiyayikas have admitted that absence can be perceived. In order to include it under perception they have invented a special type of contact called qualifier-qualificand-relationship (*viśeṣaṇa- viśeṣya-bhāva sannikarsa*).⁷

The Advaitins admit that the absence is known through the distinct means of knowing called *anupalabdhi*.⁸ The reason is that without admitting it the multiplicity (*nānātava*) of the phenomenal world cannot be accounted for. Brahman is associated with the absence of three different types of *bhedas* i.e., *sajātīya* (homogenous), *vijātīya* (heterogenous) and *svagata* (internal) is known through *anupalabdhi*. An individual can have the realization of Brahman directly which is called *Brahmasākṣātkāra* with the help of *śravaṇa* (hearing of the instruction of the Śāstras), *manana* (through reasoning) and *nididhyāsana* (meditation) are to be practiced. In the *manana* stage of *sādhana* we generally try to understand what our Śāstras or authoritative treatises of Advaita Vedānta have to say or tell us. At the same time we try to ponder whether these theories are logically tenable or not. The Advaita Vedanta thinkers have tried to establish the basic theories of Advaita Vedanta with the help of such arguments so that a logical

mind is convinced. The whole Tarkapāda portion of *Sankarabhāṣya* is devoted to the substantiation of the Advaita theory as to the origination of the world.⁹ The whole epistemology aims at in establishing the view that there is only one Reality which is Brahman. Consequently they establish that the entire world is nothing but the manifestation of Brahman. It is a common maxim with them – ‘*Mānādhīnā meyasiddhi*’ i.e., the substantiation of a metaphysical entity (*prameya*) is dependent on the means of knowing (*pramāna*). If an individual wants to establish some Reality, he has to put forward some proofs in favour of it so that a logical mind can be convinced.

To the Advaitins the multiplicity (*nānātva*) of the empirical world is illusory as it goes against the one Reality i.e., Brahman. In other words, Brahman is real and the world is illusory. An individual being is nothing but the manifestation of Brahman (“*Brahma satyam jaganmithyā, jīvo brahmaive nāparah*). The whole world is phenomenologically real but ultimate transcendently unreal. On the other hand Brahman is absolutely real and world is absolutely unreal. This is evident from their theory of perception etc. In order to show that Brahman is non-dual having three types of distinction the specific type of *pramāṇa* has been admitted by them which is *anupalabdhi*. It has been accepted in order to establish the main thesis i.e., non-duality of this world (which is *meva* or *prameya* here). To establish this *meva* i.e., non-duality of Brahman some distinct *pramāṇa* which is no other than

anupalabdhi is needed. The phenomenon of the absence of three types of *bheda* can only be ascertained through *anupalabdhi*. This is the metaphysical presupposition of the Advaitins which is accepted in admitting *anupalabdhi* as a distinct means of knowing i.e., *pramāṇa*.

Though the Advaita philosophers have argued in favour of *anupalabdhi* as a *pramāṇa* yet in philosophy other schools have preferred to include it under the purview of perception and inference for the sake of *lāghava* or precision, which is called law of parsimony. It is logically cumbersome to accept a separate *pramāṇa* for the explanation of the knowledge of absence. In spite of this, there is some logic behind the acceptance of *anupalabdhi* as a *pramāṇa*. Though logical precision or *lāghava* is always welcome and *gaurava* is taken as a defect yet it may happen sometimes there is no other way to admit logically cumbersome path called *gaurava*. Such cumbersome is called virtuous cumbersome or *phalamukhagaurava* or *gaurava* leading to the path of attainment of certain result. If *anupalabdhi* is not accepted as a separate means for knowing absence can never be explained. Hence, the Advaitins and Bhatta Mimamsakas are in favour of advocating *anupalabdhi* as a *pramāṇa*, for, to them it can never be known through perception or inference or any other standard *pramāṇa* due to having contact of the sense organ with absence and not having the cognition of a *hetu*.

References:

1. *Nyāyasūtra*, 1.1.1. and *Nyāyabhāṣya* on the same.
2. *Nyāyasūtra*, 1.1.1. and *Nyāyabhāṣya* on the same.
3. “*Tadatyantavimuktih apavargah*”- *Nyayasutra -1.1.22*.
4. M. Hiriyana: *The Indian Philosophical Studies*, p 140, Mysore, 1957.
5. Salikanath Mishra: *Prakaranapancika*, edited by Mukunda Sastri, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi, 1903.
6. *Ibid*
7. Annambhatta: *Tarkasamgraha* with *Dīpikā*, Bengali trs by Aurobindo Basu, Mitram, Kolkata, p.156
8. Dharmaraja Adhvarindra: *Vedānta-paribhāṣā* Edited by S. Suryanarayan Sastri, Adyar Library, Madras, 1942, p.101
9. *Brahmasūtra* with *Sankarabhāṣya*, Bengali trans by Swami Visvarupananda, Udbodhan, Kolkata, 1996, Vol.II, pp.213-413.