THE METAPHYSICS OF DHARMA IN PŪRVA MĪMĀMSĀ AND ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

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Almost all the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy accord with themselves suitable aspects of metaphysics within each and every proposition of their central doctrines. The duad of Mīmāmsā comprising of Pūrva Mīmāmsā and Advaita and Vedānta is also further than an exception to this. Though these two remain absolutely different in philosophical perspectives as well as conceptual realm of the perceived world, metaphysics lies with a sort of special relevance in both these. Beyond all differences of opinion the two Mīmāmsas have to go with hand in hand for reflecting over the meaning of human life and the all round welfare of man.

Dharma occupies a prominent place as recognized by almost all the orthodox philosophers while dealing with the life in this world. The ways of reformation of the entire phases of life represent different versions of dharma. The generally accounted definition of dharma is 'यतो अभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः।'

अभ्युदय concerns with the overall prosperity in life in this world, whereas निःश्रेयस enjoins perfect bliss even beyond this world. In order to attain these two fundamental aspects dealing with total meaningfulness of human life, the concept of dharma is to be considered with prime relevance.

The Mīmāmsā Sūtras of Jaimini are the fundamental records with regard to Pūrva Mīmāmsā. At the outset itself, Jaimini proposes that Pūrva Mīmāmsā is dedicated for the discussions and conclusions related to dharma. He defines dharma as a command that inspires action in people-'चोदनालक्षणाऽर्थो धर्मः'. The conception of dharma in the perspective of Jaimini always remains with actions. He holds that the entire Vedas stand for describing the nature and content of actions. The generally accepted version of dharma in Pūrva Mīmāmsa cannot disregard the place of Karma which serves as its true foundation. Karma always produces its fruit. Hence without Karma and its resultant fruit, a concept of dharma is impossible in this system.

The focal point in Pūrva Mīmāmsā relating to karma occupies its essence in the realm of the empirical world itself. Though other destinations like svarga, svārājya, etc. are mentioned there-with, they attain significance only in this world and only with the help of Karma. This fact proves that 'dharma' that is considered to be produced from karma is the sole direction which can be pointed out from the part of Pūrva Mīmāmsā. In this context, the actions, either vedic or material, when performed will produce their fruits at a later time.[1] Hence it is revealed that in between the performance of a peculiar karma and the producing of its result an unseen agency (apūrva) is generated. According to Pūrva Mīmāmsā this apūrva yields its respective fruit only when the impediments in its way are removed and time become mature for the producing of fruit. This fact is established with the authority of scriptures.

The above mentioned perspective of Pūrva Mīmāmsā regarding dharma discloses the possibility of a metaphysical standpoint within it. By analyzing it, the complex nature of apūrva as well as dharma advocated by them can be easily understood. The contents of these two words possess utter indefinability factor when one goes through their direct and implied meanings. This nature devoid of sensible cognition puts forth their metaphysical content and reveals the immeasurable implications hidden in the system of Pūrva Mīmāmsā.

The philosophy of Advaita Vedānta represents the most auspicious and eternal values of dharma in their esoteric and exoteric view points. Though freedom from all worlds is implied with its most significant factors in this system, life in this earth is considered with enough validity so as to reform human life in a much civilized manner. Śrī Śaṅkara clearly reveals that the birth as a human being is very rare and so also valuable. In this human birth, one has to experience happiness as well as sorrows. This paves the way to identify the good over evils. With the help of reflective power man can receive good aspects of life and can avoid evil influence created by ignorance and its related effects. Advaita Vedānta puts forth the concept of dharma in its worldly context for the upliftment of man leading to the highest knowledge and state of liberation.

Śrī Śaṅkara the greatest exponent of Advaita philosophy declares that dharma relating to this world is the direct source of अभ्युदय and निःश्रेयस. This is to be performed for the overall wellbeing of all interested in the welfare of the whole world. This fact is insisted within the Vedas themselves. The dharma relating to man for the smooth preservation of this world occupies two phases प्रवृत्तिलक्षण and निवृत्तिलक्षण. Between these two प्रवृत्तिलक्षणधर्म represents the reformed outlook on the performance of karma. Advaita Vedānta is the only philosophy that teaches the doctrine of Karma in a different and well studied manner. Every other system of Indian philosophy can not avoid the effects of karma in their performance. But Advaita Vedānta

puts forth a totally newer concept of performance of Karma in the sense that the birth as human being is to be made meaningful not by embracing worldly aspirations, but only by renouncing them all. Hence Karma is to be performed with renouncing their fruits .So that man can think differently on it with a more serious and introvert reflection. Advaita Vedānta teaches man to develop gradually with a sense of indifference to the worldly activities. With the help of this reformed outlook on Karma, man gets an opportunity for realizing the true meaning underlying the concept of dharma and this leads to a more civilized life enriched with all desirable qualities suitable for a prosporous life.

Advaita Vedānta considers the metaphysical element of dharma in the version of it known as निवृत्तिलक्षणधर्म. Though dharma includes the prominent aspect of karma, the निवृत्तिलक्षणधर्म involves with the refined state of attitudes towards the hidden meanings pointing to the gradual development of human mind. The life in this world can be made more meaningful with the help of renunciation in numerous aspects. As the word निवृत्ति indicates the refrainment from ordinary activities, निवृत्तिलक्षणधर्म is dedicated to enlighten man with the most sophisticated version of dharma leading to the purification of mind resulting from the deliberate dispensation of mental flunctuations. The purified mind points to the actual destination of dharma and thereby

discloses the real nature of man as Brahman itself. Advaita Vedānta leads man to the highest state of knowledge in its eternal nature and thereby points to the most civilized form of life involving the true meaning of human birth.

References:

1. Outlines of Indian Philosophy, J.N.Sinha, p.355.