Philosophy of Science in Vedic India

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Abstract

India is possessed of a great amount of resources related with every particular branch of knowledge for the smooth survival of humanity. Being inclusive of the gestures of difference within the socially formed structure, the culture of India is always keen to recognize the undercurrent of oneness that leads to a more comfortable and understandable status of human life. The treasure of knowledge preserved in India is the genuine contribution of our ancient sages who worked hard to find out new insights and knowledge-dimensions that facilitate common man to engage in a desirable environment in life eliminating all evil tendencies. Beginning from every minute aspect in life, they formulated the noblest ideals to their utmost depth for bringing out a transparent view of the world and the life within it. Borrowed ideals and systems fail to survive the test of time whereas the genuine attitudes and perspectives founded on a firm base will last forever. This fact is clearly evident in the case of India where every branch of knowledge remains eternal with its individual features based on the firm foundation of consensus in ultimate terms. The unique form of thinking in India represents the natural mindset of every Indian reflecting the harmless attitude towards every creature in the world. In the literature of every aspect of knowledge, this independent and non-violent approach can be found out. The present age demands the evaluation of the already available resources on knowledge for bringing out the factual materials hidden within the abundance of artificial literature with hidden agenda. The present attempt is to put forth some aspects of misleading arenas of knowledge that require urgent attention of the academia in the course of a discriminative approach.

Keywords— Logic, Samvada, Sampradaya, Indian Logic, Indian Scientific literature

1 Vedic period - A Review

According to latest studies, India has a continuous history which begins from the palaeolithic period. The famous archaeologist Dilip K. Chakrabarti has written a book named "India An Archaeological History Palaeolithic Beginnings to Early Historic Foundations, Oxford. In it, with the help of archaeological evidences he traces that continuous history. When Britishers came and ruled us, our history was written by Anglo-German scholars like James Mill etc. One of the reasons for writing our history by those scholars was to substantiate their invasion and hegemony. The second reason was to make us apologetic about ourselves. Hence those history books contain a distorted, non-realistic accounts of us. Sanjoy Chakravorty in his book 'The Truth About Us' (2019) writes thus: "James Mill's The History of British India (1818) was an openly racist, overgeneralized, and utterly dismissive book that became the most influential work on India and a manual for the East India Company's officers in the first half of the nineteenth century". They even cooked up the theory of Aryan Invasion which has been now proved to be a mere fictional account by modern scholars and hence rejected by the international community of scholars. Dilip K. Chakrabarti writes thus: "....The first is related to the traditional Indological framework of Ancient India in terms of race, language and culture. If one believes in the inevitability of this framework, one has to believe in the archaeological inevitability of the Aryans, Dravidians, etc. If one considers, for instance, the Aryans to be a real

group of people, one also believes in the geographical and chronological coherence of the Vedic texts. And if one accepts these Vedic texts as historical sources indicating a chronology-bound and geography- bound "Vedic Age"., one has also to think of such issues as Vedic archaeology and Aryan archaeology. Many scholars continue to do so, forgetting that archaeology by itself can lead to the reconstruction of grassroots history and that a racial approach (the term 'race' being somewhat unpopular in modern times, some scholars have taken recourse to terms like 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic groups') should not, methodologically, be a part of it. They tend to ignore, either deliberately or through ignorance, the vicious socio-politics of the racial approach to the past. Although strong voices have been raised in recent years against this approach, this has not gone out of scene in archaeological literature either in India or abroad. As long as this antiquated and overtly racist approach to the past persists, which it does in the framework of traditional Indology, archaeological emphasis on the grassroots history of the land is unlikely to be appreciated. It is the mind-set which provides the greatest stumbling block to the progress of archaeological research in India as a full fledged academic discipline"(Archaeology in Post-Independence India (Introduction/17-18), India An Archaeological History Palaeolithic Beginnings to Early Historic Foundations, Oxford, Second Edition).Famous sociologist M. N. Srinivasan in his Social Change in Modern India points out that there was no period in Indian history when there was a Vedic supremacy all over India. Hence we can conclude that there was no Vedic Period as such in the Indian History.

2 Philosophy, Religion and Science

The terms (and the ideas they contain) like 'Philosophy', 'Religion', 'Science' etc were imported to this land by the foreign scholars. And in the eyes of the Western scholars these are separate entities. Why in the West philosophy is regarded as different from religion? Arvind Sharma explains thus: "It is customary to end prefatory notes such as this with an anecdote. I would like to start with one. As a graduate student I once had the audacity, arising doubtless out of lack of acquaintance, to ask Wilfred Cantwell Smith, as he left the hall after delivering his lecture: 'What is the difference between religion and philosophy?' Professor Smith arrested his forward motion when he heard the question, looked me over, and asked: 'Are you from India?' 'Yes', I said, complying simultaneously with the requirements of honesty and courtesy. 'In that case', he said, resuming his stride, 'for you there is no difference. For us, our philosophy comes from Greece and our religion comes from Palestine." (ARVIND SHARMA, Associate Professor, Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal, A HINDU PERSPECTIVE ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, 1991). And why philosophy is considered different from Science? The story of the separation of Science from Philosophy is beautifully described by Philip Goff in his Galileo's Error: Foundations for a New Science of Consciousness.

3 Gaps in Western concepts

And what is philosophy, science and religion according to the Western concept? Philosophy is defined as "the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline" while Science means "the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation, experimentation, and the testing of theories against the evidence obtained" and Religion is seen as "The belief in and worship of a superhuman power or powers, especially a God or gods. A particular system of faith and worship".

What is philosophy of science according to the Western definition? "Philosophy of science is a branch of philosophy concerned with the foundations, methods, and implications of science. The central questions of this study concern what qualifies as science, the reliability of scientific theories, and the ultimate purpose of science. This discipline overlaps with metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology, for example, when it explores the relationship between science and truth. Philosophy of science focuses on metaphysical, epistemic and semantic aspects of science. Ethical issues such as bioethics and scientific misconduct are often considered ethics or science studies rather than the philosophy of science." And moreover, "There is no consensus

among philosophers about many of the central problems concerned with the philosophy of science, including whether science can reveal the truth about unobservable things and whether scientific reasoning can be justified at all. In addition to these general questions about science as a whole, philosophers of science consider problems that apply to particular sciences (such as biology or physics). Some philosophers of science also use contemporary results in science to reach conclusions about philosophy itself."(Philosophy of science, Wikipedia)

4 Dogmatic differences

Another point to be pondered in this connection is that the Indian and Western approaches evolved in different circumstances. Hence equating them will be like trying to put a square in the circle. We all are sure that Indian music is different from Western music. For denoting 'All' the European usage is from 'Pin to Piano' while in Malayalam it is from 'Salt to Camphor' Prof. Hajime Nakamura (Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan, 1964) has shown that there are about fourteen Indian attitudinal peculiarities which makes the Indian people different their Western counterparts. A. K. Ramanujan in his essay "Is there an Indian Way of Thinking?,1989" shows that the India way of thinking is different from the Western way.

Arindam Chakrabarti Philosophy Department, University of Hawai'i, in his essay on "The Subject Is Freedom" in "Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy" edited by Matthew R. Dasti and Edwin F. Bryant describes his own experience regarding this problem thus: "So, like every exercise in comparative philosophy, it must face a frustrating double bind. Let me start this review essay by illustrating this double bind with an anecdote. Many years back, in a large freshmen's Introduction to Logic class at Montana State University, as a zealous young visiting professor from India, I was asked to give a single lecture on Indian logic. On the first day, I gave a super-abbreviated accessible account of the original Nyāya/Buddhist argument-paradigm and the features of a good and bad argument introducing a handful of peculiarly Indian technical terms for the subject of the inference, the target property to be inferred, the reason property, and the ways of establishing or questioning the universal concomitance between the reason and the target property. The senior American professor who was co-teaching the Elementary Logic course with me commented that this was fascinating but it did not sound like "Logic" as we understand it in the West. He requested that I reformulate the basic insights in recognizably Western logical terms and give a second lecture. When I did that, on another occasion, his comment was "But this logic we already have in the West, between Aristotle and Frege-Russell: what is so Indian or different about it?" This double bind would always plague comparative philosophers as long as they use English (or any Western language) to make philosophy originally written in Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, or Chinese available to a Western or even Asian philosophical audience (and increasingly now, philosophy teachers and students in Asia speak and understand nothing but a Western idiom of philosophy). Should you emphasize the uncommon ("exotic") issues and techniques that are foreign to Western thinking, you would have a hard time convincing your audience that it is really "philosophy" (e.g., the discussion at the heart of Mīmāṃsā, concerning the exact meaning of a verb ending in an imperative sentence that enjoins an action-to-be-done to its comprehending hearer, which chapter 6 by Elisa Freschi so clearly lays out in the volume under review). Should you emphasize, instead, the common issues that are also known to and focused on in Western philosophy, you will either be suspected of superimposing a Western conceptual scheme on Classical Indian philosophy or, worse, you will be ignored as presenting a boring old hat".

So let us first understand briefly the aim and structure of the Indian system before attempting to find the common meeting points, if any. First of all we must understand that from its Palaeolithic beginnings up to the modern times the Indian system has a very long and continuous history as mentioned in the beginning. It is now established by Archaeology as well as Sociology. Secondly, the present Hindu system evolved through centuries of Samvada or Debate between Indian scholars. The Sindhu- Sarasvati civilisation was a mile-stone in the evolution of the Indian or Hindu system. In it, we can see the proto-type of the present Hindu system (Dilip K. Chakrabarti, ndia An Archaeological History Palaeolithic Beginnings to Early Historic Foundations, Oxford, Second Edition).

This system is a special arrangement of various Sampradayas like Vaidika, Vedanta, Tantra,

Yoga, Jaina, Bauddha, Vaishnava Paancaratra, Saiva sects, Carvaka, Ajivaka etc evolved out of a common pool of ideas and rituals on the basis of a common aim. This is amply clear when we go through the descriptions given in Upanishads like Svethasvatara (about 5th or 4th century BC), Jaina texts like Suyagada, Uttaradhyayana etc., and Baudha texts like Anguttara,Digha and Majjima Nikayas (c. 3rd century BCE) and in Mahaniddesa and Cullaniddesa (c. 1st century BCE).

The common aim of all these Sampradayas is Sukha or Happiness. This happiness has two dimensions, namely Kama (Paroksha) and Moksha (Aparoksha). The first one is momentary while the second one is permanent. Thus in this system the two types of happiness differs not in essence but in grade only. In Lalita Sahasranama it is said : "Svatmananda Lavibhuta Brahmadyananda Santatih". Also Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada says in his Manisha Pancaka: "Yad Saukhyambudhileslesato Ime Sakradayo Nirvrtah".

The several Sampradayas mentioned above are all equal as far their common aim is concerned. This equality of all the Sampradayas is maintained according to the famous "Na Hi Ninda Nyaya". But they differ in their Praamanya according to the individual seekers. They are designed for different Adhikaris. This Adhikara (Competency) is determined by Cithasuddhi and thereby Abhiruchi of the Sadhaka (Aspirant) which is again determined by their Purva Janma Karmaphala according to the Indian Karma Siddhanta. A detailed discussion of this is given by Bhaskara Raya in his commentary Sethubandha of Vamakesvara Tantra.

All these Sampradayas have a common structure in the form of Siddhanta Pada, Sadhana Pada and Charya Pada. These Sampradayas were taught in Gurukulas and ancient universities of Bharath. These were popularised by the Parivrajakas roaming all over ancient Hindusthan . In these groups there were men and women. These Parivrajaka groups are described in Harshacharitha of Banabhatta and also in Buddhist India by Rhys Davids.

Moreover, we here consider the knowledge systems which help us to achieve the material happiness (Kama) as well as those which help us to have the adhyatmic happiness (Moksha) as Satras. The first category is called Vijnana and the other is considered as Janna. It is said in Amarakosa of Amara Simha: "Mokshe dhirjnanam anyatra vijnanam silpasastrayoh". According to the Malayalam commentator of AmaraKosa, Vidya Vacaspathi Parameswaran Moosad, Mimamsa is considered as Vijnana.

5 Conclusion

The Indian System developed into a concrete whole unlike the Western one. According to Surendra Nath Dasgupta: "The old civilisation of India was a concrete unity of many-sided developments in art, architecture, literature, religion, morals, and science so far as it was understood in those days. But the most important achievement of Indian thought was philosophy. It was regarded as the goal of all the highest practical and theoretical activities, and it indicated the point of unity amidst all the apparent diversities which the complex growth of culture over a vast area inhabited by different peoples produced " (Introduction, A History of Indian Philosophy). When Westerners came to Bharath, they considered the above mentioned Siddhanta Padas of the Sampradayas as equal to their 'Philosophy' and the other two namely Sadhana Pada and Charya Pada as equal to their 'Religion' and hence the present confusion. As regards the 'Ethics', the concept of Dharma, as we can see here, is embedded in all Bharathiya disciplines be it the material sciences or the Adhyatmic sciences. Loyal Rue in his "Religion Is Not About God" (2005) points out the prominence of the idea of Dharma in the Hindu systems. No such in-built mechanism is there in the Western approaches. Moreover, the West considers that Man is an animal while Hindus see human beings as well as other beings as expressions of Sat-Chit- Ananda. Hence when we attempt to have a comparative study of Indian system and the Western system we must take care of the above facts properly.

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