

## The Concept of Dialogue in Indian Philosophy

By

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In different Indian philosophical systems some tools have been adopted for the sake of philosophizing. To them one should argue in a proper way to refute or to criticize or to refute the opponents' views. Among the tools *vāda*, *tarka* (*reduction-ad-absurdum*), doubt (*samśaya*), *pariprasna* or repeatedly questioning, dialogue (*samvāda*) etc are very much important. The present paper is an attempt to illuminate the concept of *samvāda* in Indian Philosophy which is taken as the foundation of philosophy in general.

Doubt can be taken as a philosophical method, because only reason can be applicable towards the object which is in doubt, not ascertained and not known (*nānupalabdhe nirṇāte'rthe nyāya pravarttate, kim tarhi samśayite'rthe*).<sup>1</sup> To determine the nature of reality the role of 'dialogue' (*samvāda*) and 'repeatedly questioning' (*pariprasna*) bears some educational value.

The Indian logicians are very cautious about the probable vitiation of their arguments by the fallacies of 'contradiction' (*bādhita*), 'unfoundedness' (*asiddha*), etc and logical defects like 'circularity' (*anyonyābhāva*), 'logical cumbrousness' (*gaurava*) etc. All these are essential to convince a serious scholar. It can be said that 'dialogue' (*samvāda*) between opponents and proponents is a method adopted in teaching-learning process. Without 'free and fair' discussion between two parties no philosophical decision is to be arrived at. Educational philosophy started when Naciketā asked his teacher, Yama, about the reality of this world and self in the *Kathopaniṣad*,

when a disciple opens a dialogue with his teacher about the movement of our mind and sense-organs as found in the *Kenopaniṣad*, when Arjuna wanted to know the efficacy of war with the relatives and superior from the Divine Teacher in the *Bhagavadgītā* and when Nāgasena, a disciple of Buddha, opens a dialogue with the King Milinda regarding the unreality of self in the *Milindaprasna*. Hence, dialogue or *samvāda* has been admitted one of the methods of education in Indian tradition. This dialogical tradition is very much prevalent in Indian tradition. That is why, the *Śāstras* and Indian philosophical treatises are to be read after opening a dialogue with the preceptor and hence such process of dialogical learning is otherwise called *gurumukhī vidyā* (learning through mouth of a preceptor).

Dialogue is of three types- *vāda*, *jalpa* and *vitandā*. In a debate between an opponent and a proponent the determination of truth which is called technically *vāda* is the main objective of the philosophers in general and Naiyāyikas in particular 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-sādhānopalambha*) and which is not opposed to the established tenets (*siddhāntābirudhha*).<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>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*,<sup>3</sup><sup>2</sup>which is not honoured as a better philosophical method. Hence each and every theory based on philosophical <sup>3</sup>doctrine is called *vāda*, e.g., *nirvikalpakavāda*, *apohavāda*, *īśvaravāda* etc.

While critically reviewing a certain standpoint one may partly or wholly reject or re-interpret the earlier view of the opponents (*pūrvapakṣa*). It is the custom that the whole system achieves philosophical growth through opponent-proponent-dialogue.

The opponent's standpoint is taken so seriously by the proponents that the explanation of opponents given by the proponents is more understandable to us than that of the opponents, which evidences the intellectual honesty of the philosophers. If the opponent's view is not tenable; it is expressed as *tanmandam* i.e. the thesis achieves less merit. If the position of the opponent is considered absurd, it is described as *tattuccham* i.e., the thesis is ignorable. These are possible if there is a successful dialogue. Dialogue or *samvāda* is essential to bring transparency in argument, because monologue as opposed to dialogue is always glorified in Indian tradition. The term *samvāda* in Sanskrit has got various connotations, viz, one to one correspondence. It means two-way traffic so that there remains a transparency between what is communicated to the opponents by the proponents. If there is any non-transparency between the proponent and opponent, it is not to be taken as honest philosophical means.

The same meaning can be extended to the field of epistemology and journalism. If there is a transparency between what is in our cognitive level and what is in the actual world, it is called *samvāda* and attempt to avail the object which is real is called *samvādi-pravṛtti* or successful inclination. If otherwise, it called non-transparent or *visamvādi-pravṛtti* (abortive attempt). If someone is having the cognition of water and if he gets water in the actual world, it is called *samvādi-pravṛtti* or successful inclination. If, on the other hand, he possesses the cognition of water and gets mirage in the real world, his attempt for getting water becomes an abortive one or *visamvādi pravṛtti*. In the world of argumentation a successful communication between proponent and opponent is called *samvāda*. In the same way, news or newspaper is called *samvāda* or *samvādapatra* by virtue of the fact that in news there is a transparency between what is in the news and what actually happens in the real world. In the newspaper also we find a transparency between what actually happens in the society, and what is printed. Due to having such

transparency a newspaper is called *samvādapatra*, which is otherwise described as mirror of the society for the same reason.

In the world of art there is certain methodology for delineating aesthetic enjoyment (*rasa*), which is nothing but a form of dialogue among the poet, dramatic character and connoisseur. Such dialogue or communication is so deep that it is called ‘*sahṛdaya*’, i.e., three types of people remaining in three domains must have a common heart or sensibility. This is the precondition of *rasa* which is first generated in the heart of the poet which is transmitted to the dramatic characters, which, again, is transmitted to the audience. When we turn to the theoretical aspect of the Hindu view of art, we come across the agreement that the one essential element in poetry is *rasa*. With this term, which is equivalent of beauty or aesthetic emotion, must be considered the derivative adjective *rasavanta*, having *rasa*, applied to a work of art, and the derivative substantive, *rasika*, one who enjoys *rasa*, a connoisseur, and finally *rasāsvādana*, the tasting of *rasa*, i.e., aesthetic contemplation.

A whole literature is devoted to the discussion of *rasa* and the conditions of its experience. The theory is worked out in relation to poetry and drama. Aesthetic emotion, *rasa*, is said to result in the spectator, *rasika*, though it is not effectively *caused*, through the operation of determinants (*vibhāva*), consequents (*anubhāva*), mood (*bhāva*) and involuntary emotions (*sattvabhāva*). There is no one single term for the English ‘beauty’. The words like *saundarya*, *cārutā*, *ramaṇīya*, *rūpa*, *camatkāra*, *hṛdayālḥādajanaka*, *mohana*, *suśamā* etc, should be taken as suggesting loveliness or charm. But these are of secondary importance in relation to the master idea of *rasa*. It is arguable that the Hindu theory of poetry is an improvement upon Croce’s definition, ‘expression is art’. A mere statement, however, completely expressive, is not art. Poetry is indeed a kind of sentence, but what kind of sentence? A sentence ensouled by *rasa*, is Viśvanātha’s answer (‘*vākyaṃ rasātmakam kāvyam*’)⁴ in which one of the nine *rasas* is implied or

suggested, and the savouring of this flavour, *rasāsvādāna*, through empathy, by those possessing the requisite sensibility is the condition of beauty.

Poetry or *kāvya* is called a perfect combination of a word and its meaning and hence it is said by Rājaśekhara as ‘*śabdārthau te śarīraram*’ (*Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter). Such a view is first propounded by Bhāmaha in his *Kāvya-lamkārasūtra* as ‘*Śabdārthau sabitau kāvyaṃ*’ (1/16) i.e., the assimilation of a word and its meaning is called *kāvya* or *sāhitya*. The appropriate combination between a word and its meaning is called *sāhitya*. Kuntaka in his *Vakroktijīvita* has expounded the exact significance of such appropriateness. To him *sāhitya* is a supernormal composition of a word and its meaning, which becomes charming and beautiful through their *balanced usage* neither too less nor too much (*‘anyūṇānatiriktivamanohāriṇyavasthitiḥ*’ 1/17). The point implies that a word cannot be less or more beautiful than the beauty of meaning and in the same way meaning cannot be less or more beautiful than the beauty of a word, which can be called balancing beauty. The beauty of a word is, as if, challenging the beauty of its meaning and the vice-versa, which is called metaphorically ‘*paraspara-spardhitva-ramaṇīya*’ (*Vṛtti on Ibid*) i.e., each other possessing the challenging beauty. Such is the methodology for the poetic creativity.

Even in other forms of art like music and paintings there is having the same type of dialogue with trio as mentioned above. Music becomes a successful one if there is a kind of dialogue between singer and the player of instruments. In fact an instrument follows what a vocalist expresses through different notes, which beautifully expressed by the grammarians by the verb-‘*anubharati*’ in the sense of imitation, the root cause of establishing dialogue. Rabindranath observes that any music is nothing but a dialogue between a singer and listener. The singer sings with his/her voice and the listener also sings the same thing silently without uttering anything. Rabindranath said in this connection-‘*Ekak gāyaker nabe to gān milite habe duijane/ Ekjan gābe kbhuliyā galā, ār jan gābe*

*mane//*”. Due to having such power of communication music is said to have a capability of making a heartless (*ahrdaya*) a *sahrdaya* (aesthetically sensitive) by purifying his heart. This cathartic value of music should not be lost sight of.<sup>5</sup>

Editorial Note: D&UE invites readers to submit written responses to the above essay for consideration of publication. The author, Raghunath Ghosh, also invites readers to directly share with him any comments relative to his suggestive for meeting the methodological challenges confronting his project of constructing a geopolitical model. Professor Ghosh may be reached at [ghoshraghunath3@gmail.com](mailto:ghoshraghunath3@gmail.com).

Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> *Nyayabhasya* on Sutra no.1.1.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Nyāyasūtra*-1.2.1-3 and also *Nyāyabhāṣya* on the same.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Sāhityadarpaṇa* on Sutra no. 3

<sup>5</sup> Premlata Sharma: *Indian Aesthetics and Musicology*, Amnaya Prakashan, Varanasi, 2000, p.208.