



INDIAN RATIONALISM : NYAYA-VAISESIKA SYSTEMS – RESTATED

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ABSTRACT

In philosophical thought, both Indian and Western, metaphysical and epistemological problems holds great significance. Philosophical studies that have taken place in both Indian & Western regions are characteristically different. The Western philosophy developed in the initial stage is on the line of thinkers taking into consideration their contribution to philosophy. Later on philosophers came to be known by the thought they have given to the world in the form of "isms" such as Rationalism, Empiricism, Positivism, Existentialism etc. On the contrary in Indian subcontinent the philosophical work came to known by systems, like Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya-Yoga, Mimansa, Vedant, Buddhism, Jainism etc which are the outcome of philosophical work of many scholars, thinkers and seers. Rationalism emerged as a philosophical theory as opposed to Empiricism which claims the experience is the necessary basis of all our knowledge, taking extreme position by propounding that even mathematical truth requires empirical knowledge. Rationalism, as a powerful theory claim that the nature of the world could be known through pure reason only and in principle all truth could be known by pure reason and experience is but inferior and substitute to it. In this paper I tried to explain and compare and throw light on historical treatment of Western Rationalist and the treatment of epistemological problems at the hands of Nyaya-Vaisesika system in Indian Philosophical system by the method of critical analysis.

Keywords : Rationalism, western, indian, epistemology, perception, inference, analogy

Introduction :

Metaphysical and epistemological problems holds significance in Indian & Western philosophical thought. Western philosophy is developed in at the initial stage on the line of thinkers taking into consideration their contribution to philosophy. Later on philosophers came to be known by the thought they have given to the world in the form of "isms" such as Rationalism, Empiricism, Existentialism, Positivism etc. The influence of the scientific development on the method and study of Philosophy can be seen in the hands of seventeenth to twentieth century philosophers. The philosophical work, on the contrary, in Indian subcontinent, came to known by systems like Nyaya-Vaisesika, Samkhya-Yoga, Mimansa-Vedant, Buddhism, Jainism etc. which are the outcome of philosophical work of so many scholars,

thinkers and seers who have contributed a vast literature in the form of original work, its elucidation, commentaries, criticism etc. to develop the philosophy of that system. Indian philosophical systems are famous by their way of study, points of central issue and it became their characteristic mark, ie. Nyaya system is known by its detailed treatment to inference as pramana and the mileage they have given to it. While Vaisesika came to be known for their special treatment to the category viz. Visesa.

In Indian Philosophy almost all systems emerged, existed and developed simultaneously and through discussions, arguments, counter arguments on the philosophical issues between adherents of particular philosophical systems and there seems spiral development in the area of Indian Philosophy. The

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famous dialectical method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis can be seen about the controversial issues between different systems. It shows that Indian Philosophical systems were aware of basic philosophical issues, methods and solutions.

Rationalism:

Before dealing with Indian rationalism, it would be better to summarize what rationalism is? The term "Rationalism" is coined from Latin language from the original root word reason meaning thereby "an independent faculty of understanding". The lexicographical meaning of Rationalism is a belief as a theory that considers reason is the foundation of certainty in knowledge. Rationalism treats reason as the ultimate authority in the field of knowledge. It has several meanings and variety of shades. Originally term rationalism is used to express the power of scientific inquiry to increase the happiness of mankind and to provide a foundation of free but harmonious social order.

Rationalism emerged as a philosophical theory as opposed to Empiricism which claims that experience is the necessary basis of all our knowledge taking extreme position by propounding that even mathematical truth require empirical knowledge. Rationalism as powerful theory claims that the nature of the world could be known through pure reason only and in principle all truth could be known by pure reason and experience in but inferior substitute to it.

1. There are synthetic a priori statements which claims that the knowledge of the world comes through such sentences based on pure reason. So synthetic a priori statements are knowledge carriers.
2. Rationalism advocates the realistic view about the nature of world and the relation of concepts with it.
3. Rationalism emphasizes upon a necessary relation between the concepts themselves.
4. Rationalism further maintains that the intellectual grasp of these concepts and the truth involved in them is seen as an insight into an existing structure of the world and thus it is determined by the concept which we employ to describe it.
5. Rationalism further states that according to it there

is a unique set of concepts and unique set of propositions employing the concepts, adequately express the nature of the world.

Galileo, the scientist personality, remarks on rationalism that the rationalist vision of mathematical structure of reality could be grasp through intellectual insight and the main characteristic of rationalism is its fundamental insight and ability; vital possibility of its conceptual jump beyond the observations.

Having been explained the historical treatment of western rationalism, now I turned epistemological problems at the hands of Nyaya-Vaisesika system.

Epistemological problem :

The basic question here is: what is the datum of epistemology? What is the subject matter of epistemology deal with?

Epistemology deals with the problems related to knowledge viz the object of knowledge and the validity of knowledge. Is it the case that the study starts with the assumption of knowledge or we have to question the very existence of the possibility of knowledge? Many philosophers including Nyaya-Vaisesika accept that the very examination of knowledge is preceded by the assumption that there is knowledge and is mainly infinitive one.

The first systematic treatment to the epistemological problem was given by Gautam in Nyayasutras dealing with nature of Pramans i.e. means of knowledge culminating into study of the object of knowledge is Prameya. Gautam extensively discuss the question whether is it possible to conceive the means of knowledge independently knowledge and object of knowledge? Nyaya treatment and analysis of Pramans share that the philosophical endeavor is based upon epistemological grounds and the metaphysical issues are dealt with the help of epistemology and thereby signify that the analysis of means of knowledge and means of proof are implicit in the study of Pramana.

Pramana i.e. the mean of knowledge through which man acquired knowledge of the object is the first category in NS compiled by Gautama. Nyaya accepts four means of knowledge viz. Perception (प्रमाण), Inference (अनुमान), Comparison (उपमान) and Testimony

(शब्द) with which our desire for certain knowledge is fulfilled says Vatsyayana. He further says that the pramanas as a mean of cognizing things in (प्रमाण) and cognition (ज्ञान). It is through these four factors cognition is accorded or discarded.

The definition of **first pramana i.e. perception or अव्यभिचारि** is "It is the cognition which arises from the contact of the sense organ with its object which is unnamable; unerroneous and definitive. (इन्द्रियार्थं संनिकर्षम् उत्पन्नं ज्ञानं अव्यपदेशम् अव्यभिचारि अव्यवसायात्मकम् प्रत्यक्षम्) Thus all these characteristics as अव्यपदेशम्, अव्यभिचारि, अव्यवसायात्मकम् collectively constitute the definition of perception leading to indicate non descriptive and non-inferential knowledge which corresponds in western terminology to acquaintance or simple apprehension. Thus the knowledge qua knowledge acquired through perception which is unnamable, unerroneous and definitive is mere sense datum and when question of describing or naming such sense datum arises one is required to add jati to it and jati is comprehended by reason when the process of transferring sense datum from mere impression to legitimate conceptualization begins, the reason plays an important role. Legitimate linkage between these impressions and objects of impressions, their forward or backward movement and back up are done by the reason and therefore one is compelled to say that in the process of cognition of perception reason plays the predominant role and helps to drive the knowledge of perceptible objects to the cognizer by co relating concepts, ideas and their inter relation.

Apart from the above mentioned criticism, Naiyayikas were aware that perceptible knowledge will have to be qualitatively finite having possibilities of ambiguity and contradictoriness cannot be dependable. In so far as perception is wielded as a tool or weapon to yield valid knowledge is concerned they know that it will not lead always to unambiguous indubitable certain knowledge of the objects. Consequently the role of perception, say Vatsyayana and others in the total process of acquisition of knowledge is comparatively very little.

The **second pramana is Inference or अनुमान** : Other mean of knowledge is very important in the epistemological sphere and has contributed much to

Indian Indian philosophy in general and Nyaya system in particular. Rather Nyaya system is known by its tremendous work on anumana in the world of philosophy. In Nyayasutras 1.5, Gautama simply elaborate अनुमान as पूर्ववत्, शेषवत् and सामान्यतोदृष्ट Explaining the definition of Gautama, Vatsyayana says that it consists of subsequent measurement of objects by measuring signs. Thus inference or anumana is the process which by means of recollection and perception of sign that the non-perceptible object is inferred. "अनुमीयते अनेन इति अनुमानम्". It is the process of coming to the knowledge of something that is not perceptible with the help of that which is perceptible. There arises the question that how can that which is not perceptible is cognized with the help of that which is perceptible and at the same time different from non- perceptible? When we come to analyze the process of inference, Naiyayikas argue that inference is preceded by two perceptions : when a man wishes to acquire inferential cognition he perceives the sign (लिंग), for the second time this perception arouses the impression left in his mind by the former perception which leads him to remember the relation between the sign and the significate i.e. vyapti (व्याप्ती). Vyapti व्याप्ती is not a category of perception but is of understanding. In the light of this recollection, when he again perceives the sign, the last perception which follows the former two perceptions and the subsequent recollection leads to inferential cognition. This entire operation is known as paramarsh. (परामर्श) All these factors involves in this operations are equally necessary for inferential cognition and there lies most importance to the sign in the whole inferential cognition process. Vatsyayana further says that the perception deals with things present while inference deals with things present as well as not present & this inference as a mean of knowledge is applicable to all times.

The **third pramana is analogy or उपमान**. Analogy means proving that which is to be proved by well-known similarity. Vatsyayana observes that analogy consists in the cognition of approximation (सामिप्य). Analogy is always stated by means of which the common property constituting resemblance is expressed. What produces analogical cognition is the peripheral cognition of

resemblance as aided by recollection of the connection between the things and its name as originally learnt from words. In the context of sabd pramana means authority meaning thereby knowledge derived from the authority of words.

Having been dealt with the four pramanas of Nyaya-Vaisesika system, I would like to put forward the Indian Philosophical Method adopted by various systems according to their standpoints. The Indian Philosophical Systems are mainly divided as heterodox and orthodox. Heterodox systems deny the authority of vedas.

The Carvacas; being emerged as opposed to the then existing Brahminism evolved (आध्यक्षिका) as its method of philosophy. (आध्यक्षिका) as method of philosophy made him empiricist in nature and accepting perception as the only means of knowledge. अक्ष means इंद्रिय, अधि means over & above, thus अध्यक्षिका means a method that rules out the knowledge gained over and above sense perception only. Thus अध्यक्षिका is a perspective developed to look at the world. It is a methodology to develop the outlook about the world which is based upon sense perception. This perspective led Carvaka to accept pratyaksh as the only pramana or means of knowledge. It further led him to determine the knowledge of that much world which can have through sense perception (materialism). It further led him to reject everything that does not come under the perview of perception, se3lf, rebirth, karma, other world etc. His rejection of God based upon "beyond perception" and "rejection of vedic authority" where Vedas propound the existence of God.

Purva Mimansa and Vedanta being orthodox schools accept validity of vedas and shrutis. The difference in the vedic statements is superfluous and can be removed through proper interpretations. They further maintain that the wrong comprehension of knowledge arises due to wrong application of pramanas. Shruti as is given by the God is considered as most trustworthy. Shruti described God therefore there is no question to doubt that there is God. They further maintain that he hruti which is subjected to test of reason is accepted. This method of Vedantins and Mimansakas is known as शाब्दिका.

Nyaya-Vaisesika & Samkhya-Yoga are treated as orthodox schools and they accept the authority of Vedas and Shruti. Especially Naiyayikas argue that perception is not adequate. There are two problems: 1) Knowing reality of external world, 2) Knowing reality of ultimate. The former is known partly by perception and partly by inference while later is known by intuition. This led the Naiyayikas to advance the philosophical method named तार्किका तार्किका is the method which is based upon तर्क inference, reason, intuition as the means of knowledge in the investigation of ultimate reality. Naiyayikas argue that reason alone is the primary source. (मूलतत्त्व अन्वेषण तर्कः एव मुख्य साधनम्) Further they argue that whatever is explained rationally is the Nyaya view (न्याय = Inference can't be used in vaccume. It is required to be given either empirically or revealed through reason. Let us now see how तार्किका as the method of philosophy is used in various spheres of knowledge in the realm of philosophy by Nyaya school.

1) Naiyayika's method of तार्किका i.e. rationalism has given rise to their further philosophical endeavor i.e. acceptance of atomism. The object of perception given in the external world are constructed out of त्रयाणुका, द्वायणुका and its further division into अणुs is not visible or perceptible in that sense of the term. So in this connection, the knowledge of the atoms is arrived at by reason and inference and therefore Naiyayikas legitimately say that the knowledge of the ultimate reality behind the existing perceptible world is not through perception but through inference or तर्क. The basic assumption that wherever the sense organs do not reach; the reason reaches there and we have knowledge of that thing. In modern scientific age we apply this method of तार्किका to scientific investigations which is known as indirect proof and thereby arrive at rational conclusion.

Therefore what Naiyayikas say that reason is always behind all types of knowledge whether observable or non-observable, present or non-present, it is the तर्क is hereby proved beyond doubt.

In so far Naiyayika's argument reading causation is concerned, it can be said that Naiyayikas propound असत्कार्यवाद as against सत्कार्यवाद as a theory of causation by Samkhyas. Naiyayikas when analyze the notion of cause as such they wanted to bring out that effect does not exist as such in the cause as tables and chairs exists in the room. The real tussle between Samkhya and Naiyayika was that of notion of actuality and possibility. When Samkhya advances the argument that effect is present, सत् in cause meaning thereby that cause has potentiality to produce that effect. This mere potentiality is much stressed by Samkhya and thereby wanted to prove that anything will not produce any effect unless it is potentially capable.

Naiyayika's view of असत्कार्यवाद was against the सत्कार्यवाद of Samkhyas to show that when the effect is not present physically as an effect; though it is present potentially in the cause; we can't perceive it by sense organ.

It is presented to us through व्यापार. We have to know it through by reason or तर्क or intuition that a particular type of cause has a capacity to produce a particular type of effect and this type of reasoning. Naiyayika says that they gain through past experience i.e. recognition and apply it to future incidences by तर्क. Thus तर्क helps Naiyayika to explain causal relation in three time span, past, present and future. In present if one experience that a particular cause produces particular effect, that too in process; there needs no reasoning. Reasoning is required only to link up present phenomenon to past and future. And thereby to establish rationalization and there we can't take recourse to प्रत्यक्ष as the source of knowledge but we have to take recourse to तर्क reason. Therefore Nyaya is legitimate in applying तार्किक method in the rational proof of causal relation.

3) Udayanacarya in Nyay Kusumanjali gives extensive arguments for the existence of God by devoting several aphorisms. He says, we can infer non-existence of pot on the ground because it is not perceived but such a way the non-existence of the God cannot be proved as the pot which is not perceptible at a particular time space but such is not

the case regarding the God as God is not fit object for perception, it is also not perceptible. Udayanacarya further argues that mere non-perceptibility can't be sufficient to establish non-existence. It only establishes that its existence is not proved. God's characterization as creator, sustainer, destroyer, omniscient etc is not legitimately provable. Neither अनुपलब्धी nor ordinary inference came to prove the existence or non-existence of the God. Similarly God's existence can't be categorically denied. Since in case of God is not fit for perception, its non-existence can't be proved. Therefore it leads to say that God's existence as a transcendental reality is to be accepted by speculative endeavor employed through intuitive faculty. Higher reason is the only source to accomplish for the proof of the existence of God. This function of speculative properly has anchorage on rationalistic method viz तार्किक. Thus तार्किक led Naiyayika in general and Udayanacarya in particular to prove the existence of God.

Conclusion :

From the above elaboration it will be clearly seen that the reason or the intellectual faculty plays an important and indispensable role in the cognition process of human being leading to valid and correct knowledge of the things. The sense perception having limited scope for its applicability in the process of acquisition of knowledge, though has importance in epistemological endeavour of human being but has its own limitations.

The indubitable categorical truth of the statements is known apriorily by reason only and the experience in this connection can't help to drive the knowledge beyond doubt.

The reason on which the total structure of rationalism is based is a special faculty and true knowledge of reality can be gained through reason only and nothing else. If the role of reason in the process of perception is ignored then the sense data received through perception will be merely nothing but juxtaposition of discrete items of sense data and it will fail to cognize anything meaningfully.

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