

The Style of Writing for Debate in Indian Philosophy

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The metaphysical truths, such as : “Brahman” or supreme soul, “Saṁsāra” or transmigration etc. are almost impossible to inquire. But, Indian scholars i.e. Ṛṣis and Munis explored many ways for such inquiries. One way was to organise “Debates”. The debates have been exhaustively dealt with in the “Nyāya-sūtra” of Nyāya philosophy. According to them the debate is called as ; Kathā. The “Kathā” or debate is of three kinds : Vāda, Jalpa and Vitaṇḍā.

Vāda : The main business of “Vāda” (discussion) was to ascertain the metaphysical truths, therefore, it rarely included the controversial subjects. Generally, “Vāda” took place between a preceptor and his pupils and occasionally took the shape of a conference, including some “Prāśnikas” or doubters. In this “Vāda” own thesis is established by the evidences, the thesis of the opponent is refuted by the logic, but consistent according to the dogma of the components and also consists all of the five-membered syllogism.¹ The discussion between Naciketas and Yama in “Kāthopaniṣat” is an example of “Vāda”.

Jalpa : A debate, organised between the representatives of rival schools, to discuss the controversies for effect and victory, is called “Jalpa” (wrangling). In this, contestants depend upon the false means, like : Chala (quibble), Jāti (futile objection) and Nigraha-sthāna (point of defeat), other than the evidences and logic.² The discussion between Yājñavalkya and other scholars, which took place in the court of Janakarāja, is described in Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣat as “Jalpa”.

Vitaṇḍā : When the above said “Jalpa” converted into discredit and repudiate the rival’s dogma and tenets as a main object of the contestants, without any direct effort to justify and fortify his own, is called “Vitaṇḍā” (cavil).³ The repudiation of “Advaitic Upādhi” of “Māyāvāda” and “Mithyāvāda” by Śrī Madhva are known as “Vitaṇḍā”.

In “Jalpa” and “Vitaṇḍā” the principle aim was to achieve effect and victory, therefore, the learned, impartial and unbiased interrogators were made compulsory to attend such debates with the rights to cross-question both of the parties and give the right judgement.

The “Caraka-saṁhitā”, a famous Āyurvedic work, also gives a detailed discussion about the debates.⁴ The word “Saṁbhāṣā” is used for “Debate”. It is divided into two parts : Sandhāya-saṁbhāṣā and Vighya-saṁbhāṣā. The former one, also called as : Anuloma-saṁbhāṣā, can be translated as—friendly discussion and the latter as : aggressive debate. According to Caraka, one should not enter into “Vighya-saṁbhāṣā” with one’s preceptor or men of similar position, “Sandhāya-saṁbhāṣā” with them is recommended for augmenting one’s knowledge.

1. “Pramāṇa-tarka-sādhanaopālabhaḥ siddhāntāviruddhaḥ pañcāvayavopapannaḥ pakṣa-pratipakṣa-parigraho vādaḥ”, Nyāya-sūtra, 1.2.1.
2. “Yathoktopannas-chala-jāti-nigrahassthāna-dohanosapālabho jalpaḥ”, Ibid., 1.2.2.
3. “Sa pratipakṣa-sthāpana-hino vitaṇḍā”, Ibid., 1.2.3.
4. See—Caraka-saṁhitā, Vimāna-sthāna, VIII.

Later, Jaina and Buddhist philosophers also came forward with their new concepts of debate. Buddhists refuted the Nyāya-theory of using “Chala”, “Jāti” and “Nigraha-sthāna” in the debates. Simultaneously, they themselves introduced two “Nigraha-sthānas” i.e. “Asādhanaṅga-vacana” and “adoṣodbhāvana”.¹ But, Jainas refuted the whole concept of Nyāya and Buddhist philosophies. According to them proving one’s dogma and tenets honestly is the right concept of “Vāda”, not through Chala, Jāti and Nigraha-sthānas.²

Jainas classified “Debate” into two types : Vitarāga-kathā and Vijigīṣu-kathā. Here one thing is notable that Caraka accepts the whole description of “Vāda” under “Sandhāya-sambhāṣā” and of “Jalpa” and “Vitaṇḍā” under “Vigraha-sambhāṣā”. According to Jainas ‘Vāda’ cannot be considered as “Vitarāga-kathā”, therefore, Akalaṅkadeva (8th cent. A.D.) has used the words “Vāda” and “Jalpa” in the same meaning.³ Prabhācandra (10th-11th cent. A.D.) in his refutation, says that the eight points of defeat (Nigraha-sthāna)—“Asiddhānta” by the word “Siddhāntāviruddha” and “Nyūna”, “Adhika” and five fallacies (Hetvābhāṣas) by the word “Pañcāvayavopapannaḥ”—can be taken into account by the Naiyāyika definition of “Vāda”.⁴ So, “Vāda” is considered same as : ‘Vijigīṣu-kathā’. Further, “Vitarāga-kathā” must be free from all false means i.e. Chala, Jāti and Nigraha-sthāna. “Vitaṇḍā” has been considered as “Vādābhāṣa” or fallacy of Vāda.⁵ According to them “Debate” must be having four components (caturaṅga). In other words, “Sabhāpati” i.e. chairman was made necessary for debate in addition to two contestants and interrogators.⁶

The peak of the ‘aggressive debate’ that how to achieve the effect and victory can also be seen in Jaina philosophy, when they introduced written debate. They decided the written style for it, called as “Patra” or letter. According to them the word “Patra” can be defined etymologically as : “Padāni trāyante gopyante rakṣyante parebhyaḥ svayaṁ vijigīṣuṇā yasmin vākye tat..... patram”.⁷ or such sentence is called “Patra”, in which the inflected words (Padas) are hid by a disputant (desirous of victory) from his opponent. The hiding of inflected word means the hiding of its radical (prakṛti) and suffix (pratyaya) etc.⁸ Such Patra-writing, so far, has not been seen in the available texts of other systems of Indian philosophy. But, Jainas refer to a “Patra” in the name of Yaugas i.e. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, as :

Sainyalaḍbhāḡ nānantarānarthārthaprasvāpakṛdāśaiṣyatonītkonenalaḍyukkulādbhavo vaiṣopya-naiṣyatāpastannanraḍḷadjuṭ parāparatattvavittadanyonādiravāyanīyatvata evaṁ yadīḍṛktatsakalavidvargava-detaccaivamevaṁ tat.⁹

The above “Patra” can be understood as follows :

Pratijñā : Sainyalaḍbhāḡ nānantarānarthārthaprasvāpakṛt āśaiṣyatonītkonenalaḍyukkulādbhavo vaiṣopya-naiṣyatāpastan anraḍḷadjuṭ parāparatattvavittadanyaḥ.....Dehaḥ prabodhakārindriyādikāraṇakalāpaḥ āsamudrāt acalogirīnikarah bhuvanasanniveśaḥ vā sūryācandramasau prithivyādikāryadravyasamūhaḥ vā, partīyamānaḥ samudrādīḥ andhakārādīḥ ausṇyaṁ meghaḥ na purusaḥ, nimittakāraṇaṁsya, apitu buddhimatkāraṇaṁ.

1. Dharmakīrti : Vādanyāya, Bauddha-bhāratī, Vārāṇasī, 1972, pp. 4-5.
2. See—Akalaṅkadeva : Siddhiviniścaya-ṭīkā, pp. 315-17 ; Vidyānanda : Aṣṭasahasrī, p. 87 ; Prabhācandra : Prameya-kamala-mārtanḍa, p. 649.
3. “Samartha-vacanaṁ vādaḥ”, Pramāṇa-saṁgraha (Akalaṅkadeva), 51 ; “Samarthavacanaṁ Jalpaḥ”, Siddhiviniścaya (Akalaṅkadeva), 5.2.
4. Prameya-kamala-mārtanḍa, Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, Bombay, 1941, pp. 646-47.
5. “Tadābhāṣo vitaṇḍādirabhupeto vyavasthiteḥ”, Nyāya-viniścaya (Akalaṅkadeva), 2.215.
6. Anantavīrya : Siddhiviniścaya-ṭīkā, 5.2.
7. Prameya-kamala-mārtanḍa, p. 685.
8. Ibid., p. 685.
9. Ibid., p. 686.

Hetu : Anādiravāyanīyatvataḥ.....kāryatvāt,

Udāharaṇa : Evaṃ yadidṛkṭatsakalavidvargavat.....Evaṃ yatkāryaprakāraṃ tat tasmāt buddhimat-kāraṇaṃ paṭavat.

Upanaya : Etat ca evaṃ.....Etat dehaḥ evaṃ kāryaprakāraṃ.

Nigamana : Evaṃ tat.....Tasmāt buddhimatkāraṇaṃ.

This “Patra” is having all the five members of the syllogism i.e. Pratijñā (Proposition), Hetu (Middle-term), Udāharaṇa (Example), Upanaya (Application) and Nigamana (Deduction). Sainyalaḍbhāg — — — tattvavittadanyaḥ is proposition, anādiravāyanīyatvataḥ is middle-term, evaṃ — — — vidvargavat is example, etaccaivaṃ is application and evaṃ tat is deduction.

“Sainyalaḍbhāg” stands for “Dehaḥ” or body. Here “Ina” means power or mightiness (prabhutva) what-so-ever exists with power or mightiness, is called “Sena”. In this whole universe the soul (Ātmā) is considered as the extreme powerful or mighty, therefore, “Sena” stands for the soul (Ātmā). The word “Sainya” has been derived by adding the suffix “Ghyaṇa” to the “Sena” in its own meaning. Further, “Laḍ” means pastime (vilāsa) and “Bhāg” means ‘to enjoy’. In this way, what-so-ever enjoys the pastime of the soul, is “Sainyalaḍbhāg” (body or dehaḥ).

In “Nānantarānarthāthaprasvāpakṛt”. “Prasvāpa” means sleep. For which the object is the motive, called “Arthārtha” and its negative is “Anarthārtha”. Similarly, “Anta” means destruction. “Puruṣāya antaṃ rāti dadātīti antara” means to destruct some human-being is antara and opposite to it, is “Anantara”. In the beginning, the particle (Nipāta) “Na” stands for negation. now, the whole phrase “Nānantarānarthāthaprasvāpa” means the sleep, which attributes the destruction to the human-being and also motive for some object. The last word “Kṛt” means ‘to destroy’. Hence, what-so-ever destroys the sleep, which attributes the destruction to the human-being and also motive for some object is “Nānantarānarthāthaprasvāpakṛt”. It stands for “Prabodhakārīndriyādikāraṇakalāpaḥ”, i.e. the group of the senses having causal consciousness.

“Āśaiṣyataḥ” stands for “Āsamudrāt”, i.e. upto the limit of the ocean. Here, for the word “Śaiṣ” Prabhācandra recommends the ‘bhvādigaṇī dhātu (root) “Śisu” —to water.¹ After using the suffix “ghañ” root śiṣu converts into abstract noun “Śeṣaḥ”. In its own meaning, suffix “añ” is used, to form the word “Śaiṣaḥ”. The suffix “nic” makes it “Śaiṣī”. This word falls under the category of “dhu-samjñā”,² by the effect of this “dhu-samjñā”, prefix “Ā” is added to it,³ which denotes the sense of ‘all around’ and by the suffix “kvip” the omission of its final ‘ī’ and change of ‘ś’ to ‘ṣ’ comes into effect to make the word “Āśaiṣ”. Further, “syataḥ” means flowing or moving. It means, which is watering the earth and also moving all around the world, is called “āśaiṣyataḥ”. In other words “āsamudrāt” or upto the limit of the ocean.

The root “iṣ” with the prefix “ni” means to go or to move.⁴ In the sense of its own meaning the suffix “kap” converts it into “niṣka”. So “niṣka” means movable and opposite to it, is “aniṣka”. Which stands for “Acalo girinikaraḥ” or unmovable mountains. Again, “a” is Lord Viṣṇu and “niṣ” to go, means what-so-ever goes towards Lord Viṣṇu, is “aniṣka”. Which stands for “Bhuvanasanniveśaḥ”, i.e. the whole universe.

“Anā” means, which does not have the material cause (Samavāyī-kāraṇa). That is “Inaḥ” or Sūrya (sun), “laṭ” or “laḍ” means “Kānti” or brightness and “yuk” means united. So, whatever is united with brightness, is “Candramas” (moon). In this way “Anenalaḍyuk” stands for “Sūryācandramasau” (The Sun and the Moon).

1. “Śiṣu ityayaṃ dhāturbhauvādikaḥ secanārthaḥ”, Ibid., p. 687.

2. “Tadantā dhavaḥ”, Jainendra-vyākaraṇa, 2.1.39.

3. “Prāgdhoste”, Ibid., 1.2.148.

4. See—“Iṣ gatihiṣanayośca”, Prameya-kamala-mārtanḍa, p. 687.

Further, “Kula” stands for “Sajātiya-ārambhaka-avayava-samūhaḥ” or the group of the similar originating constituents and “Kulāt udbhava” stands for “Ātmalābha” of the same or the origin of the same. Which is “Prithivyādikāryadravyā-samūhaḥ” or the group of the effects like earth etc. “Vā” stands for not spoken words, so the non-eternal quality (Guṇa) and action (kāraṇa) can be understood by it. “Eṣaḥ” stands for “Pratīyamānaḥ” or being believed or trusted. “Apyaḥ” or which consists the water, is “Samudrādiḥ”, i.e. ocean etc. The deed of night is “Naiśya”, stands for “andhakāra” or darkness. “Tāpa” stands for “Auṣṇyam” or heat. Which roars loudly is “Stan”, stands for “Meghaḥ” or cloud.

“Raḥ” means discourse, “Iaḥ” means pastime and “juḥ” means to serve,¹ hence, “RaḥIaḥjuḥ” means which serves the pastime of discourse, i.e. “Nimittakāraṇa” or instrumental cause. Consequently, “AnṛaḥIaḥjuḥ” means “Na puruṣaḥ nimittakāraṇamasya” or the (ordinary) man is not a instrumental cause of the above-said things.

“Para” stands for the matter, in the form of cause like : “Pārthivādi”, earthen etc. or “Parmāṇvādi”, i.e. atom etc., “Apara” stands for the matter in the form of effect, such as ; “Prithivyādi” or earth etc. and their “Tattva” means their form of shape. Having the knowledge of it, is “Parāparatattvavit” or the intellectual person, who has the knowledge of the matter in the form of cause and effect. “Tadanyaḥ” stands for “Abuddhimatkāraṇāt anyaḥ”, i.e. other than cause in the form of non-intellectual person. Instead of this the word “Apitu” or but can be used. It means that “Parāparatattvavittadanyaḥ” stands for “Apitu buddhimatkāraṇam”, i.e. but, the intellectual person is the cause.

In this way, the proposition (Pratijñā) can be transformed as follows :

‘Dehaḥ prabodhakārīndriyādikāraṇakalāpaḥ, āsamudrāt acalo-girinikaraḥ bhuvanasanniveśaḥ vā sūryācandramasau prithivyādikāryadravyasamūhaḥ vā, pratīyamānaḥ samudrādiḥ andhakārādiḥ auṣṇyam meghaḥ, na puruṣaḥ nimittakāraṇam aya apitu buddhimatkāraṇam.’

The cause is present before the effect, so it is “Ādi”. Other than “Ādi” is “Anādi”, stands for “Kāryasandohaḥ” i.e. assemblage of effect and its “Ravaḥ” or establishing stands for “Kārya”, i.e. effect. Further, “Ayanīya” stands for “Pratipādyā”, i.e. illustrating and its mode can be expressed by “tva”. Hence, the middle-term (Hetu) “Anādiravāyanīyatvataḥ” can be transformed as “Kāryatvāt”.

Similarly, “Yat” stands for “Anādiravāyanīyam or Kāryam”, i.e. effect and “Idṛk” for “Parāparatattvavittadanyaḥ or Buddhimatkāraṇam”, i.e. the cause in the form of intellectual person. “Kalā” stands for “Avayava” or component. Which exists with its components, called “Sakala”. The root “Vidṛ” means —to gain.² Hence, “Vit” stands for “Ātmalābha” or origin. Which originates with its components, called “Varga”. Consequently, “Sakalavidvargavat” stands for “Paṭa” or cloth. So, the example (Udāharaṇa) “Evaṁ yadidṛkatsakalavidvargavat” can be transformed as : “Evaṁ yat kāryaprakāraṁ tat tasmāt buddhimat kāraṇam paṭavat”.

“Etat” stands for “Dehaḥ” or body and “Evaṁ” for “Kāryaprakāraṁ” or like the effect. So, the application (upanaya) “Etaccaivaṁ” can be understood as : “Etat dehaḥ evaṁ kāryaprakāraṁ”.

Finally, the deduction (Nigamana) “Evaṁ tat” can be understood as “Tasmāt buddhimatkāraṇam”.

In the view of Prabhācandra, the above mentioned “Patra” (letter) is an example of the fallacy of inference, because of the corrupted components of the inference i.e. Pratijñā, Hetu and Udāharaṇa. The “Kālātyayāpadiṣṭa” like faults are there in it. Apart from this, the word “Prasvāpa”, which is used in “Pratijñā-vākya”, may create confusion with the concept of Buddhist “Prasvāpa” means “Mokṣa” or libera-

1. See—“Juṣṭi pritiśevanayoh”, Prameya kamala-mārtanḍa, p. 688.

2. See—“Vidṛ lābhe”, Ibid., p. 689.

tion of soul.¹ In this way such sentences which are not able to convey their intended meaning, having corrupted or clearly manifested words, can not be considered as a faultless “Patra”. Similarly, the poetical phrases, which are difficult to understand, because of having difficult verbal forms, can also not be considered as a “Patra”.²

According to the Jaina scholar Vidyānanda (9th cent. A.D.)—“A consistent Patra is that, which can convey its intended meaning, having faultless and concealed group of words and also having the syllogism with its well-known components”³ Prabhācandra also defines “Patra” in the similar way.⁴

Vidyānanda has given an example for “Patra” in the following way :

“Citrādyadantarāṇīyamārekāntātmakatvataḥ.
Yaditthaṁ na taditthaṁ na yathā-kinciditi trayatḥ.
Tathā cedamiti proktau catvārovayavā mataḥ.
Tasmāttatheti nirdeśe pañca patrasya kasyacit”.⁵

Here, “Citra” means “Anekrupa” or having many forms. “At” means to go constantly. Which goes constantly by having many forms is “Citrāt”, stands for “Anekāntātmakam” i.e. variable. Pronoun have been read in Sanskrit grammar as : sarva viśva yat etc. So, after which “Yat” exists, that is “Yadanta”. means the word “Viśva”. “Rāṇīyam” means “Sabdanīyam” or called. So, which is called by the word “Viśva” is known as “Viśvam” i.e. universe or world. In this way the Pratijñā “Citrāt yadantarāṇīyam” will be transformed as “Anekāntātmakam viśvam”.

“Ārekā” means “Saṁśaya” or doubt. In the “Nyāya-sūtra” of Nyāya philosophy there is a aphorism “Pramāṇa-prameya-saṁśaya”⁶ etc. So, concentrating on this aphorism, after which “Saṁśaya” is read, that is “Ārekānta”. Of which this read word is the soul, that is “Ārekāntātmakam”, stands for “Prameya” and to express its mode ‘tva’ is used. In this way the Hetu “Ārekāntātmakatvataḥ” can be transformed as “Prameyatvāt”.

“Yaditthaṁ na (bhavati)” stands for “Yat anekāntātmakam na (bhavati)”, “Na taditthaṁ” for “Prameyatmakam na (bhavati)” and “Yathākiñcit” for “Yathā na kiñcit”. So, Udāharaṇa “Yaditthaṁ na taditthaṁ yathākiñcit” can be transformed as “Yat anekāntātmakam na bhavati tat prameyatmakam na bhavati yathā na kiñcit”.

According to Vidyānanda the above mentioned three members i.e. Pratijñā, Hetu and Udāharaṇa are sufficient for the “Patra”. But, if somebody wants to use the other two also, he can use them with his own convenience in the following way :

The Upanaya “Tathā cedam” stands for “Prameyatmakam ca idam viśvam” and in the similar way the Nigamana “Tasmāttathā” for “Tasmāt anekāntātmakam”.

1. Prameya-kamala-mārtaṇḍa, pp. 686-689.

2. Ibid., p. 584.

3. “Prasiddhāvayavam vākyaṁ svetasyārthasya-sādhakam.

Sādhū gūdhapada-prāyaṁ patramāhuranākulam.,

—Patra-parīkṣā (Vidyānanda), p. 1.

4. “Svābhipretārtha-sādhanaṇavadya-gūdhapada-samūhātmakam prasiddhāvayava-lakṣaṇam vākyaṁ pramāṇam”, Prameya-kamala-mārtaṇḍa, p. 684.

5. Patra-parīkṣā, p. 10 (V. 1.2).

6. Nyāya-sūtra, 1.1.1.

Prabhācandra also gave an example of “Patra” as :

“Svāntabhāsitabhūtyādyatryantātmatadubhāntavāk.

Parāntadyotitoddīptamitītasvātamakatvataḥ.”¹

This “Patra” stands for only two members of syllogism i.e. Pratijñā-“Utpādayayadhrauvyātmakam viśvaṁ” and Hetu – “Prameyatvāt”. According to Prabhācandra these two components are sufficient for the “Patra” and the rest of the three components are optional to the use at the will of the contestants. This “Patra” can be explained as follows :

“Anta” and “Ānta” are same in the meaning because of the suffix “aṇ” which is added to “Anta”. According to the reading of the prefixes (Upasargas) in Sanskrit grammar—Praparāpasamanvādiḥ-“Svāntaḥ” stands for the prefix “ut”. The “Bhūti” lighted (bhāsita) by the prefix “ut” is “Udbhūti” (Utpāda or generation). At the beginning of which “Udbhūti” exists that is “Tryantāḥ”. In Jaina philosophy “Tryantāḥ” stands for “Utpāda, Vyaya and Dhraavya” the qualities of the matter. Of which these three are the soul, that is “Svāntabhāsitabhūtyādyatryantātma” stands for “Utpāda-vyaya-dhrauvyātmakam”. Which has “Vāk” on its both ends, that is “Ubhāntavāk”, stands for “Viśvaṁ” or universe. Further “Parānta” means “p”, being followed by “r” and lighted by these “p” and “r” is “Parāntadyotita”, stands for the suffix “Pra”. “Miti” lighted by this suffix “Pra” is “Pramiti” or true knowledge. “Itaḥ” means “to obtain”. So, what so ever is obtained by this “Pramiti” as its own soul (Svātmā) is “Prameya” or the object of true knowledge. Its mode has been expressed by “tva”. So, the whole phrase “Parāntadyotitoddīptamitītasvātamakatvataḥ” change to “Prameyatvāt”.

Conclusion

In modern days debates, especially the aggressive debates, are hardly seen. Although in India on rare occasions the aggressive debates are organised between two rival groups of same philosophical thought, the Patra-writing is no more in practice. In the ancient days too it used to take place only between 9th to 11th centuries A.D. . Nevertheless, the friendly discussions which used to occur between teacher and pupils can still be seen and the Patra-writing can also be seen in the form of modern examination system.

1. Prameya-kamala-mārtanḍa, p. 685.

