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Faith and Reason in Indian Philosophy

ABSTRACT

While understanding the relative roles of faith and reason in the systems of Indian philosophy, the paper deals with two main questions:

1. How does inference operate in establishing beliefs? Can we say that a belief is rational (and not an article of faith) if it is argued through inferences? In response to this question it is shown that some metaphysical systems use some forms of reasoning in dual way: to support common sense beliefs and also to transcend common sense in favour of some transcendent metaphysical beliefs. It was Cārvākas who tried to restrict the scope of reasoning to empirical world and this-worldly way of life.
2. Generally we talk of āgama or śabda (authority, or testimony) as pramāṇa when it is a question of supporting faith. But there are systems in which inference and verbal testimony operate together. So there is a question about the relation between the two sources of knowledge. What kind of relation between the two supports rationality and which relation supports faith? It is shown in the paper that the reason oriented systems even question the authority of scriptures through reasoning whereas the faith oriented systems try to restrict the scope of reasoning by adhering to scriptural authority.

Hence while considering the roles of faith and reason in the systems of Indian philosophy we get a spectrum of views. At one end we have the extreme criticality of the sceptics; next to that we have adherence to this-worldly common sense view of the learned Cārvākas. Then we have Buddhism which allows critical appraisal of faith. It is followed by Jainism which appreciates rival metaphysical views as partial truths. Then we have the systems like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which justify common sense, but also try to establish metaphysical views by applying non-empirical inference. On the other side of the spectrum, we have the systems like Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Vedānta. These systems not only emphasize verbal testimony against inference, but they claim themselves to be rooted in verbal testimony, that is Vedic scriptures. In this group of systems we have also to include Vyākaraṇadarśana as expounded by Bhartrhari in Vākyapadīya and also Dharmaśāstra as expounded in the works like Manusmṛti. These systems follow different ways of defending Vedas and subordinating reason. The paper finds a problem with both the extremes: Sceptical application of reason which question common sense and uncritical adherence to faith which disallows rational appraisal.

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Knowing Reality, Wisdom and Liberation: the Universal Statements in Buddhism

ABSTRACT

Those who are familiar with the early Buddhist discourses are familiar with such universal statements as 'all constructed phenomena are impermanent,' 'all constructed phenomena are sorrowful,' 'all phenomena are no-soul,' 'whatever has the nature of arising has the nature of ceasing,' 'the phenomena have mind as their fore-runner,' etc. Although these and other similar statements occur in the context of religious practice, one cannot reduce these statements to mere utterances motivated by religious faith or zeal because, within the Buddhist religious practice, which cannot be fit into the popular picture of religious practice, these statements are meant to be serious observations the comprehension of which is claimed to lead to liberation through the dawn of wisdom. Then the question is, how are we to understand the ontological status or the factuality of these statements. The statements are presented as serious and valuable insights into the nature of world, human beings and reality. And they are attributed to the Buddha whose 'enlightenment' or the awakening is traced as the source from where these and other insights arise.

Looking from a philosophy of science point of view, we may say that all these statements are subject to what is called the problem of induction which highlights the limits of human experience (e.g. how do we know that all constructed phenomena are impermanent all the time, everywhere?). Why one has to accept these statements to be true? It is true that the Buddha made these statements. In his very first statement to the world, he articulated the essence of his teaching, the four noble truths, as arising from his awakening or understanding which is known in the Theravada tradition as 'bodhi', a term that cover a range of meanings related to understanding, comprehension, realization etc. But why would anyone accept these statements, as the history of Buddhism shows, to the extent that a good number of people opted to change their entire way of life to achieve what was promised by these teachings? Obviously here there is a vast role for human rational and intellectual capacity and for the faculty of faith which has very crucial but essentially limited role to play in the process, a condition necessary but not sufficient.

The 'truths' Buddhism refers are to be seen and experienced in one's own life. In other words, the entire edifice of liberation rests on one's own experience, conviction and understanding. 'The Dhamma has to be known by each person within one's own self' – as the well-known statement goes, notwithstanding that teaching and instruction is not without its function within the system. The Dhamma is open to be verified or falsified and to do either, one has to overcome one's skepticism, which is permitted, and put the path into practice. Ultimately, the universal statements found at the heart of the teaching of the Buddha are not innate or 'clear and distinct' ideas of the type of the traditional rationalist persuasion, but insights to the nature of reality resulting from being fully awake to it. The quest for certainty may come to an end, not necessarily because one has found the ultimate

answers to all questions motivated by curiosity but because one has reached a state in which the hitherto existed questions are no longer questions.

Key words: universal statements, awakening, wisdom, liberation, questions, answers

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**Śrī Bhagavadgītā-Tattva-Vimarśa by Śrī
Bhagavadācharya as an Attempt to Reintroduce
Viśiṣṭādvaita in the XXth Century**

ABSTRACT

Śrī Bhagavadācharya was one of the most fruitful XXth century's Viśiṣṭādvaitins. Not only had he written Sanskrit commentaries for the whole text corpus of Vedānta but also made an attempt to popularize Viśiṣṭādvaita among common people in North India through dozens of books in Hindi and Gujarati. Though well-known during his life-time, nowadays Śrī Bhagavadācharya has almost been forgotten even by scholars and never translated into non-Indian languages. In my paper I will analyze a few theses he puts forward in his Śrī Bhagavadgītā-Tattva-Vimarśa that are peculiar to his thought and differentiate him from his predecessors. All the materials including the book in question were found by me in archives of several Ayodhya based temples during my fieldwork in 2021-2022.

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Pramanasamuccaya: Study of a Lost Text

ABSTRACT

The Pramāṇa-samuccaya is a seminal work that was authored by Dignaga, often hailed as the father of Indian Mediaeval Logic. It serves as a testament to the profundity of Indian philosophical thought. Unfortunately, Dignaga's original Sanskrit works are not extant, only leaving behind scant fragments that have been collected and published by H. N. Randle. However, our primary access to these texts is through Tibetan translations. The commendable and tireless efforts of H. R. Rangaswamy Iyengar marked a significant milestone as he presented the Tibetan text alongside the Sanskrit restoration of the Pramāṇa-samuccaya, complete with critical notes, to the public eye for the very first time.

Subsequently, scholars from the United States and Canada, such as Richard P. Hayes and Radhika Harzber, have undertaken the herculean task of rendering partial fragments of this work from Tibetan back into Sanskrit. Richard Hayes has based his translations on Kanakavarman's Tibetan rendition of the Pramāṇa-samuccaya titled Tshad ma kun las bdus pa. Another translation of the same was done by Vasudhararakṣita. However, the complexity of these Tibetan translations, coupled with their differing interpretations of Dignaga's teachings, has posed considerable challenges for scholars. To navigate this intricacy, Hayes heavily relied on the Tibetan translation of the sub-commentary (tika) by Jinendrabuddhi. This text that is composed in verses and unfolds across six chapters viz; (1) Pratyakṣa; (2) Svarthanumana; (3) Pararthanumana; (4) Drstanta Parikṣa; (5) Anyapoha- parikṣa and (6) Jai- Parikṣa. This work was extremely influential throughout India both within the Buddhist world and beyond. Its contents set the agenda for philosophical debate for many centuries after it was written. In recent developments, Professor Ernst Steinkellner has made significant strides in reconstructing two Paricchedas (sections) of the Pramanasamuccaya from Tibetan into Sanskrit. His ongoing research endeavours to complete the restoration for the remaining Paricchedas, promising to further illuminate the enduring legacy of Dignaga's profound contributions to Indian philosophy.

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Philosophy Beyond Borders

ABSTRACT

The theme of the forthcoming XXV World Congress of Philosophy in 2024 “Philosophy Beyond Borders” is not as unambiguous as it may sound. The title should “encourage us to think across national, political and cultural boundaries”, to switch from our own traditions to the complex interweaving of human civilizations, to encourage and defend the diversity of ideas and traditions of people from all continents and regions. It seems that the theme is formulated to support the intercultural trend in philosophy that emerged a few decades ago. However, the symbolism of holding the Congress in Rome is then noted, as it “embodies a particular cosmopolitan ideal”. It sounds paradoxical to mention cosmopolitanism alongside criticism of globalization and support for intercultural philosophy as a relevant and promising direction. Given the history of cosmopolitanism, which has been given different meanings as the ages have changed, we can expect that this will not go unnoticed and will be the object of debate at the forthcoming Congress.

In particular, it will show the opposition of “dialogical cosmopolitanism” (F. Dallmeyer, E. Demenchonok) to the classical cosmopolitanism, which transformed in the twentieth century into a globalist project. Representatives of the non-Western world, primarily Asians and Latin Americans, will insist that cosmopolitanism necessarily implies adherence to a world state. They will rebuke cosmopolitans for criticizing nationalism, for denying the rights to national self-determination. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that globalization has not only negative but also positive sides: the creation of a world market economy, transnational corporations, global organizations, new information and communication technologies (Internet, television, mobile telephony, etc.).

Can we influence the negative forms of globalization, which include the dehumanization of man and culture, which can only be avoided if traditional values are preserved and adapted to modern realities? The diversity of traditional cultures is a condition for the survival and further development of humanity. At the same time, traditional cultures can become a brake on development if they are unable to adapt themselves to global processes and, above all, to the challenges of the “knowledge society”. Those peoples who cannot find the resources for self-development may lose both their cultural identity and the identity of their state. That is why, “the protection of human beings today means the protection and development of traditional culture, and the latter presupposes the protection of national identity and, therefore, of national interests”.

Criticism and polemics should not be pursued in order to destroy one of the parties. Their existence and confrontation can be useful for the advancement of humanity along the median path, depending on the time and situational dependence.

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The Structure of Śāntarakṣita's Tattvasaṅgrāha in the Light of Kamalaśīla's Commentary

ABSTRACT

The paper provides an insight into the structural features of the famous VIII century Buddhist treatise *Tattvasaṅgrāha* by Śāntarakṣita with regard to the text's main purpose (*prayojana*) as it is treated in Kamalaśīla's commentary *Pañjikā*.

Any text along with its referential (representational) function of conveying message-meaning to the addressee, or its expressive function, reflecting the author's attitude to what is communicated, also performs the 'appellative' function, encouraging the recipient of the message to act. This function which could also be called praxiological was always significant in Indian text culture, since from the times of Veda-s it was embedded in its very core. This function is of paramount importance in the case of Indian religious and philosophical texts, whose main aim is to convince and transform the consciousness of their percipients. Along with linear models of message transfer, Sanskrit texts could demonstrate non-linear semantic structures, transmitting the main idea of the text indirectly.

It is exactly how one should perceive the message on Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgrāha* according to the suggested by Śāntarakṣita's prominent student Kamalaśīla in his *Pañjikā* commentary to the treatise. He proposes to consider *Tattvasaṅgrāha* not as a thematically heterogeneous encyclopaedic or doxographic work, whose main objective is to refute different non-Buddhist views (as it is often treated by scholars now), but as a text, which by its very design exposes one of the most important Buddhist principles – the law of the dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). The themes, discussed in a number of the chapters of *Tattvasaṅgrāha*, indeed, appear to have direct correlation with the characteristics of *pratītyasamutpāda* given to it in *Śālistamba-sūtra* – an early Mahāyāna text, which explains this universal law. Kamalaśīla suggests looking at *Tattvasaṅgrāha* as at one big unit-sentence - *mahāvākya*, with the exposition of *pratītyasamutpāda* as its unitary purpose-meaning (*abhidheya*). In this context the treatise functions as a praxiological tool for the 'installing' into the consciousness of the text's addressee the knowledge of 'true principles' (tattva-s) of *pratītyasamutpāda*. This interpretation of the main message of the text raises also a question of the adequate translation of the name of the treatise into other languages, because, according to Kamalaśīla, '*Tattvasaṅgrāha*' means the 'Assembly of Principles-(tattva'-s)' which specify precisely *pratītyasamutpāda* (*pratītyasamutpāda-viśeṣaṇāni tattvāni*).

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Hume and the Problems with Induction – an Anekanta Discourse Towards Epistemic Humility

ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into the profound philosophical discourse surrounding David Hume's critique of induction and its implications for the concept of epistemic humility. Hume's examination of the problems inherent in induction serves as a foundational basis for questioning the limits of human knowledge and understanding. Drawing inspiration from the Jain philosophy of Anekantavada, which underscores the multifaceted nature of reality and encourages the consideration of diverse perspectives, this paper explores the parallels between Hume's skepticism regarding induction and the notion of epistemic humility while noting that Anekantavada is not skepticism. Through a comparative analysis of Hume's empiricist perspective and the Jain doctrine of Anekantavada, this paper elucidates how both philosophies challenge the notion of absolute certainty in empirical human knowledge. Hume's contention that induction lacks a rational foundation aligns with the idea that human understanding is inherently limited. Similarly, Anekantavada promotes an open-minded approach to diverse viewpoints and recognizes the complexity of reality. This paper also explores the role of skepticism and cautious reasoning in both Humean philosophy and Anekantavada, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the fallibility of our beliefs. By examining the intersection of Hume's critique of induction and the principles of epistemic humility embedded in Anekantavada, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and uncertainties inherent in human cognition and knowledge acquisition. In conclusion, this philosophical discourse bridges the insights of David Hume's critique of induction with the principles of Anekantavada of Jain philosophy from the Indian tradition, shedding light on the shared emphasis on epistemic humility—the recognition of human limitations in the pursuit of knowledge. It invites contemplation on the intricate relationship between skepticism overcome by pluralism, and the quest for a more nuanced and humble approach to the complexities of human understanding.

Keywords: David Hume, Human Understanding, Anekantavada, Indian Philosophy, Jainism, Epistemic Humility