

PROYOJANA AS A NYAYA-CATEGORY: A CRITIQUE OF NĀGĀRJUNA

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I

The present paper deals with the arguments given by Nāgārjuna on denying the sixteen categories (*padārtha-s*) like *pramāṇa*, *prameya*, *saṁśaya* etc. admitted by Gautama in his *Nyāyasūtra* and commentary of Vātsyāyana. If the world chosen by the Naiyāyikas is taken into consideration then it will be found that it consists of sixteen categories, neither less nor more. They are called *padārtha-s* in the sense that they refer to objects having real existence in the external world. In this context the term ‘*artha*’ constituting the word *padārtha* is something which is capable of being referred to. The *Nyāyasūtra* of Gautama opens with an enumeration of sixteen items, the true knowledge of which is said to be instrumental of the attainment of liberation or *mokṣa* and under which the whole subject matter of the text is arranged. The true knowledge of the following categories – the instrument of right knowledge (*pramāṇa*), object of true knowledge or knowable (*prameya*), doubt (*saṁśaya*), purpose (*prayojana*), illustration (*dr̥ṣṭānta*), conclusion (*siddhānta*), syllogism (*avayava*), reasoning (*tarka*), ascertainment (*nirṇaya*), disunion (*vāda*), disputation (*jalpa*) wrangling (*vitandā*), fallacy (*hetvābhāsa*), quibbling (*chala*) pseudo-rejoinder (*jāti*) and clincher (*nigrahasthāna*).¹

The present paper deals with the arguments given by Nāgārjuna on denying the sixteen categories (*padārtha-s*) like *pramāṇa*, *prameya*, *saṁśaya* etc. admitted by Gautama in his *Nyāyasūtra* and commentary of Vātsyāyana in his famous *Vaidalyaprakaraṇa* which is available in the Tibetan version and its restoration in Sanskrit. In this small but philosophically significant text Nāgārjuna has got polemical character directed against the Naiyāyikas refuted all the sixteen categories accepted by the Naiyāyikas with special reference to Vātsyāyana. In this work an attempt has been made to highlight the arguments given by Nāgārjuna on refuting *prayojana* as a category which are very much significant in the philosophical analysis. Nāgārjuna has made an attempt to demonstrate the logical impossibility of the existence of the Nyāya categories or *padārtha-s*. The meaning of the term *vaidalya* is ‘tearing’. The title agrees with the content of the treatise whose aim is to

destroy the Nyāya- categories. In other words, the term *vidala* means tearing or rendering asunder or splitting of all the obstacles (*sarvāvaraṇavidalanataḥ*). So far, no reply has been put forth from the Nyāya point of view to refute the arguments of Nāgārjuna and substantiate the Nyāya position. Hence an effort has been made to develop a critique of Nāgārjuna in so far as the refutation of *prayojana* as a category is concerned. I have done work in this line and considered the arguments of Nāgārjuna forwarded on denying *prayojana* as a category.

II

An individual is always inclined to some activity (*pravṛtti*) or refraining from doing some work (*nivṛtti*) in order to fulfill some end-in-view or necessity (*prayojana*) in view. It has been admitted by the Naiyāyikas that an inclination towards an action presupposes the cognition of property of being conducive to that which is desired (*iṣṭasādhanatājñāna*) which is nothing but *prayojana* of an inclination.² That is why; *prayojana* is also admitted as a category included in the list of sixteen. It means that end-in-view induces an individual to an activity. It is told in the tradition that even a blunt individual does not incline to an activity without any purpose or end-in-view (*prayojamanuddiśyanamando'pipravarttate*). An individual is engaged (*pravṛtti*) in an action or refrained (*nivṛtti*) from action or become indifferent (*upekṣā*). All these actions are possible if the agent receives some sort of incentive or end-in-view. Such end-in-view pervades all beings, their activities and all types of knowledge ('*yamarthamadhikṛtyappravarttate tat prayojanam*')³. Arguments are also advanced after keeping such end-in-view in view. Now a question may be raised: what is called *Nyāya*? It is nothing but a logical examination of an object with the help of *pramāṇa*-s or means of valid cognitions ('*pramāṇairartha-parīkṣaṇamnyāyah*').⁴ The argumentation is otherwise known as *anvīkṣā* deriving from the words '*anu*' (afterwards or subsequent) and *īkṣā* (reflection). The known object which is reflected afterwards with the help of perception and verbal testimony is called *anvīkṣā*. The branch of cognition dealing with such *anvīkṣā* or subsequent viewing is called *anvīkṣikī* or *Nyāyaśāstra*. In fact, inference or *anumāna* which is unopposed to perception and verbal testimony is also called *anvīkṣā*. If inference is, on the other hand, opposed to perception and verbal testimony is called *pseudo-nyāya* (*Nyāyābhāsa*).⁵

III

It may be argued that in order to serve a purpose of action we should acquire the meaning of the object with certainty. But we bear always sense of doubt about it leading to the presupposition that end-in-view or *prayojana* does not exist.

In reply, it is replied by Nāgārjuna that if the object centering which end-in-view (*prayojana*) remains cannot be established, then end-in-view can never be proved as an existent object whether action exists or does not exist (*'nasidhyatiprayojanaṃsattvādasattvācca'*)⁶

The object centering which an individual does an action for serving some purpose is called end-in-view or *prayojana* (*'Yamarthamadhikrtyappravarttate tat prayojanam'*)⁷ according to Nyāya. A maker of pot inclines to make the same if the pot is taken as an object. If a pot already exists in a piece of clay (*sattvāt*) then the end-in-view or action for making a pot is without any objective. If the pot does not exist in the clay, there is no point to be inclined to make a pot due to its non-existence just the absence of oil in the sand (*asattvāt*). Hence in both the situations either in the case of existence of a pot or non-existence of a pot, *prayojana* is not said to be established. Moreover, if the doubt is taken as an existent category by the Naiyāyikas, it will lead to create problem in case of end-in-view or *prayojana*. For, it would be taken as an object of doubt, but not a separate category.

If the definition of the above-mentioned category or end-in-view is taken into consideration, it implies that a man's inclination (*pravarttanā*) towards an object is possible if it is existent in the material cause just as pot in the clay. Otherwise, the inclination would be taken as an abortive one. In other words, if the pot does not exist in other places just as oil in the sand, the inclination towards pot is not possible as per *sikatā-taila-nyāya* (i.e., principle involved in the availability of oil from sand). Just as oil cannot be extracted from the sands due to its impossibility of existence in them, a pot cannot exist in other places where there is no possibility of the same. Hence an inclination towards such absurd object is not possible at all. Human inclination (*pravarttanā*) is possible towards an object which

is helpful for serving the purpose. Anything which is not related to the object to be attained cannot make an individual inclined.⁸

The Nyāya definition of *prayojana* implies that an inclination towards an object is really existing. Nāgārjuna is of the opinion that there is not an object centering which inclination is possible. If the object centering which action is possible already exists prior to inclination then the inclination is abortive on account of the fact that it cannot produce it. If, on the other hand, the object which is the purpose of action does not exist prior to action, inclination towards non-existent object is impossible in nature. An object which is the purpose of action may be existent or non-existent in nature. If existent before one's inclination towards it, it is in vain as the object of action is already there. If otherwise, inclination towards it leads to foolishness due to its absurdity. No intelligent man tries to incline to do an action which is non-existent character. Apart from existent or non-existent one no other type of action is possible. Hence there is nothing which becomes the purpose of an action. The objects like pot, oil etc. can exist or cannot exist as objects, but can never be the end-in-view or *prayojana* of the action. End-in-view is always associated with the accomplishment of some action. If the object exists, the accomplishment of the same is not possible. If it does not exist, the accomplishment of it is beyond question. It can at best be included under doubt according to Nāgārjuna but not to be taken as a separate category.

IV

To Nāgārjuna *prayojana* or end-in-view cannot be admitted as a separate category, as it is capable of being included under doubt or *samśaya*. An inclination to achieve an object is not successful if the object, e.g., jar remains in the clay. For, if there is the existence of an object, there is no necessity to incline to this. If it does not exist there, there is no necessity to be inclined to this. If someone is in between existence and non-existence of the object, it can at best be included under doubt giving no room for inclination, which indirectly proves that end-in-view is not a separate category. In response to this, the Naiyāyikas could say that a pot does not exist in its material cause (*upādānakāraṇa*) due to their commitment to the theory of *asatkāryavāda*. To them an effect is always new and counter-positive of the prior-absence (*kāryamprāgabhāva-pratīyogi*)⁹ and hence it cannot stay in a clay. But such non-existence cannot make an individual free from inclination on account of the fact that pot remains in a clay in non-manifested manner. One's inclination to the non-existent object

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is essential for making it fully manifested. If it is said that a jar does not exist in clay, it does not exist in its material cause. In this case non-existence means its absence in the material cause, but not absence as an effect after its origination. If something exists after its origination, it is tantamount to its existence leading to the inclination of its acceptance for any use. Inclination of someone is justified because he must need the object for the purpose of fulfilling various necessities. Hence *prayojana* is not irrelevant as a category, but necessary in our life.

It is argued that the non-inclination towards sands of an individual seeking oil is established through the instance. It is established through instance that an individual being desirous of having cloth has got inclination towards thread but not to a kind of grass. An individual having desire to perform some action inclines towards that which has got capacity for accomplishing the same, but not towards others. This theory can be substantiated through the citation of an instance. If jar remains in the clay, it is not existence in the true sense of the term, but the possibility of arising jar from it if some effort is being made. Such an effort is being prompted by the end-in-view. In each and every existent object serves some purpose due to having its causal efficacy or *arthakriyākāritva* in Buddhist terminology. In order to fulfil the causal efficacy an individual inclines to take the pot for bringing water or reserving water or making the water cool, which are the *prayojana*-s of having an object. Water exists in the corporation tap, but it is not true that by virtue of being existent there will be no *pravṛtti* there. If I feel thirsty, I am bound to incline to have water in order to fulfill my thirst which is nothing but *prayojana*. Such is not the case with non-existent objects like sky-flower etc., as no *pravṛtti* is found there due to its incapability to fulfil my necessity or *prayojana*. Hence *prayojana* has to be identified as a separate category, which leads us to incline towards an existent object.

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1. *Nyāyasūtra*-1.1.1
2. *BhāṣāparichhedawithSiddhāntamuktāvalī* on verse no. 146.
3. *Ibid*-1.1.24
4. *Vātsyānabhāṣya*-1.1.1
5. *Ibid*
6. *Vaidalyasūtra*-23.

7. *Nyāyasūtra*-1.1.24
8. *Vaidalyaprakarana sutra no.24* with English Commentary by Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi,2004, p.118.
9. *Tarkasamgraha*, English Translation by Gopinath Bhattacharya, Progressive, Kolkata, 1983, p.80.

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