



***Vāda*: An Analysis into its Origin, Traditions and Essence**

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Abstract

Vāda, the classical name for the act of discussion/debate in the Indian tradition, forms the basis of every conversation undertaken to reach correct knowledge. The paper explores the Indian tradition of *Vāda* and its subcategories with the intention of highlighting the all-encompassing and holistic nature of this Indian tool of cultural studies in both theory and praxis. It checks into its evolution through contemporary times, wherein it has lost its essence to accommodate the corrupted interests of modern individuals as well as leaders and debaters. Through the analysis of various examples, the paper endeavours to establish *Vāda* as a comprehensive way to attain correct knowledge. Examples from day-to-day life as well as the historic-literary world help to explicitly comprehend these tools that have been used for establishing the nearest truth from ancient times in India. These tools are potent to all aspects of research across spatial-temporal limits as they are innate and immutable to all disciplines of knowledge and education.

Keywords: *Vāda*, *Nyāya*, Debate, *Jalpa*, *Vitandā*

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1. Introduction

The years 2019 and 2020 had two things in common with regard to the Indian democracy; one is *Samvāda* and the other, *Vivāda*. *Samvāda* amounts to dialogue, interlocution or conversation, while the absence of *Samvāda* often leads to *Vivāda*, a dispute or contestation of views. While the former attempts to find a solution to any predictable or unpredictable problem that might arise in the future, the latter transforms into a quarrel, further escalating the tension. *Samvāda* has nowadays become an integral part of international relations, especially those concerning border skirmishes, where a channel for ready dialogue is needed to de-escalate any cross-border tension. Furthermore, *Samvāda* holds an important place in the Indian foreign policy, especially in relation to its close neighbours: Bangladesh, China and Pakistan. Unfortunately, however, *Vivāda* too seeps in occasionally. It was due to *Samvāda* that agreement with regard to the historical Land Boundary agreement (2015) with Bangladesh could come into effect. It was due to *Samvāda* that the *Vivāda* which arose during the border skirmishes—in Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh—with China was amicably discussed and somewhat resolved. In the case of Pakistan, *Vivāda* often overtakes *Samvāda*, which has resulted in frequent aggression and transgressions on both sides.

Samvāda and *Vivāda* are, however, not limited to only the foreign policy of India. *Samvāda* forms the backbone of the Indian democracy, the biggest example of which is the Indian Parliament. The Constitution of India accords the Parliament of the right to enact laws on behalf of the citizens for the betterment of the whole populace. This is achieved with the help of debates and discussions between the government and the opposing parties regarding any prospective act introduced in the Parliament. Sometimes, the discussions take the form of *Samvāda*, resulting in the birth of well-planned and well-executed laws; on other occasions, it causes *Vivāda*, which results in a stalemate. Alternately, *Vivāda* can also be termed as an apolitical difference in thoughts and opinions from domestic to global level. A recent incident of *Vivāda* arose as a result of the coming into effect of two Acts of Parliament; Citizen (Amendment) Act, 2019 and the basket of the three Farm Acts of 2020—The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and

Facilitation) Act, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act—which saw the public at the helm, protesting against these Acts. The main aim of these protests was to right the government's wrong in not calling for a *Samvāda* with those affected by the Acts before their enactment. These highlight the importance of debates and discussions in the Indian democracy that is not limited to the Parliament but is inclusive of the people. These protests highlight the age-old tradition of debates and discussions in India from time immemorial. Beginning from the ancient texts to the contemporary times, everything from religious ideologies to societal rules and regulations has been decided upon after thorough debates and discussions, referred to as *Vāda* in the Indian tradition.

2. *Vāda*

A focused search for the Eternal or Absolute truth has always fascinated Indian scholars, and it is reflected in all the forms of learning – literature, art forms, philosophy and even science. The initial debates of *Ānvīkṣikī* or logical meaning made way for *Vāda*, leading to the path of Self-realisation or *tattvabodha*, which can be summed up as *Vade vade jayate tattvabodha* [after going through a series of *Vādas*, true knowledge is acquired]. *Vāda*, here, is a Sanskrit word which possesses multiple meanings in English, ranging from the act of talking or speaking to discussion, debate or even a simple conversation. It also represents one of the sixteen categories of *Nyāya*, which can be used to test any proposition in order to arrive at the truth with the assistance of logic. In simple terms, *Vāda* represents the exchange of ideas between two individuals in a 'matter of fact' kind of way without the emotions and feelings of the individuals involved taking over the interaction. It includes highly subjective views which are presented with evidence in a very straightforward manner without any fear or favour. The ensuing paper itself is a form of *Vāda*, where the potential reader constitutes the opponent who will independently debate and discuss the findings. The only major difference is the time lag involved in the presentation of arguments. Another example could be the *Vāda* or academic conversation which takes

place between a teacher and a student or somebody with a similar status without any competitive spirit in mind. The lack of feeling of competition, with the establishment of the truth or an accepted doctrine as the only aim, assists in differentiating *Vāda* from *Jalpa* and *Vitandā*—two other forms of debate undertaken with the sole aim of victory over the opponent. While *Vāda* represents a friendly, congenial debate, the other two, as they progress, tend to turn hostile. Consequently, they are unable to lead the way to correct knowledge, are highly personal and put the values and the welfare of the stakeholders at risk. Thus, these are negative forms of debate, where the debater resorts to trickery, cunningness, and deception.

Individually, in *Jalpa*, the tricky debater focuses more on establishing one's own position in order to clinch a favourable outcome, disregarding the means employed, whether fair or foul. It can be best described in the following words of Maharshi Gautama, taken from his *Nyayasutras*, *Adhyaya 1, Ahnika 2*:

यथोक्तोपपन्नश्छलजातिनिग्रहस्थानसाधनोपालम्भो "जल्पः" //१/२/२//

YathoktopapannaḥchalajātiniGRAHASTHĀNASĀDhanopālambhaḥjalpaḥ
//1.2.2// (Sinha, 1990, 20)

The above sutra defines *Jalpa* as mere wrangling, which aims at gaining victory by defending or attacking a proposition in the manner of quibbles, futilities, and other processes that deserve rebuke. Similarly, *Vitandā* or the destructive debate is described by him (*Nyayasutras*, *Adhyaya 1, Ahnika 2*) as:

स्वप्रतिपक्षस्थापनाहीनो "वितण्डा" //१/२/३//

Sahpratipakṣasthāpanāhīnaḥvitaṇḍā //1.2.3 // (Sinha, 1990, 20)

Vitandā (Cavil) is a kind of wrangling which consists of mere attacks on the opposition. There is no counter thesis, and the debater is blindly engaged in destroying the opponent using personal grounds. It focuses more on putting the opponent down than reaching the truth. The relationship among *Vāda*, *Jalpa* and *Vitandā* can be perceived through the following sutra:

प्रमाणतर्कसाधनोपालम्भस्सिद्धान्तविरुद्धःपञ्चावयवोपपन्नः पक्षप्रतिपक्षपरिग्रहो "वादः" /१/२/१//

*pramāṇatarkasādhanopālabhahṣiddhāntāviruddhaḥpañcāvayavop
apanaḥpakṣapratipakṣaparigrahaḥvādaḥ //1.2.1 //* (Sinha, 1990,
19)

Their relationship can therefore be summarized as follows: while *Vāda* (discussion) aims at ascertaining the truth, *Jalpa* (wrangling) aims at gaining victory, and *Vitandā* (cavil) aims at finding mere faults. The discussion (*Vāda*) between the two opposing sides is analysed in the form of five members of syllogism and defended by the aid of any of the means of right knowledge, while its opposite is assailed by confutation, without deviation from the established tenets. Each of the three forms of debate is, in turn, assisted by *Tarka* or a hypothetical statement which is used to counter a moot point with ease and finesse. Though sometimes not directly related to the question at hand, it helps in highlighting the reason behind the stance of the debater. *Tarka* can also be defined as the opposition offered to a proposition by the assumption of an alternative meaning, as highlighted in the following sutra:

वचनविघातोऽर्थविकल्पोपपत्त्या"छलम्" //१/२/१०//

Vachana-ighātaḥartha-vikalpa-upapattyāchhalam //1.2.10//
(Sinha, 1990, 23)

The difference between *Vāda*, *Jalpa*, *Vitandā* and *Tarka* can be better explained with the assistance of any universally accepted statement, for instance, ‘ice-cream is delicious’.

A good debater, trying to counter this statement, might highlight the inability of lactose-intolerant individuals to digest dairy products, thus, making them the ‘exceptions to the rule’—who cannot confirm the statement. Their claim, however, can be easily countered by listing ‘dairy-free’ versions of ice-cream [made from milk substitutes], which have a similar flavour profile as the regular sweetened frozen dessert. The dissenter opposing the statement might then put forth a claim in favour of individuals with nut allergies who cannot consume the standard nut variant of ice-cream such as Rocky Road. This claim can again be countered by presenting a ‘Rocky Road’ variant of gluten-free crispy and rice chex (an American breakfast snack). Both these claims against the frozen dessert constitute hypothetical arguments or *Tarka* which act

as legitimate reasons working against the universal character of the statement but, in turn, can be countered quite easily. However, in the event that the arguments made by the opposing parties take on the form of irrational reasoning, it then leads to *Jalpa* (wrangling). An example of this could involve an ice-cream enthusiast who favours mint chocolate over original chocolate flavour and puts forward the 'lack of exposure' of the opponent—mere wrangling—as a valid argument for not appreciating mint chocolate. In the event that the debate is further escalated and the arguments take the form of an ego clash between the opposing parties, it takes the form of *Vitandā* or destructive criticism. For instance, an ice-cream connoisseur—who prefers infusion of flavour from natural ingredients instead of artificial ones—cites the opponents' inferior palate as the reason for not recognising the difference between the two, giving the debate a prejudicial touch which is quite prominent in political debates. In the event that the debate is limited to only a discussion, in which the opposing parties stick only to the question at hand without straying, it then constitutes a *Vāda*. The arguments in it are confined to the facts of the subject matter without any personal attacks, without the use of irrational arguments, and proceed in an orderly manner.

Consequentially, the four methods or tools mentioned above constitute an immutable part of the Indian philosophical system of *Nyāya*. *Nyāya* is famous for its thesis that knowledge is not self-revealing. Individual effort is a prerequisite to gaining the correct knowledge. Thus, giving *Nyāya* the title of being the Indian system of Logic. *Nyāya* believes that a thinking person can gain a coherent perspective of life only by thoroughly examining the modes and sources of correct knowledge instead of blindly believing in the 'hand-me-down' knowledge of the older generation. *Nyāya* stresses critically examining the knowledge at hand before accepting it as true. For this, it lists sixteen categories of knowledge which assist the seeker in arriving at the truth without any scope for doubt:

प्रमाणप्रमेयसंशयप्रयोजनदृशान्तसिद्धान्तावयवतर्कनिर्णयवादजल्पवितण्डाहेत्वाभासच्छलजातिनिग्रहस्थानानां
तत्त्वज्ञानान्निश्चयेसाधिगमः //१/१/१//

Pramāṇaprameyasamśayaprayojanadr̥ṣṭāntasiddhāntaavayava tarka nirṇayavādajalpavitaṇḍāhetvābhāsachhalajātinigraha-sthāna tattva-jñānātniḥśreyasa-adhigamaḥ //1.1.1// (Sinha, 1990, 1)

Nyāya firmly believes that supreme felicity can be attained with the knowledge of the true nature of sixteen categories, which include means of right knowledge (*Pramana*), an object of right knowledge (*Prameya*), doubt (*Samsaya*), purpose (*Prayojana*), familiar instance (*Drstanta*), established tenet (*Siddhanta*), members of a syllogism (*Avayava*), confutation (*Tarka*), ascertainment (*Nirnaya*), discussion (*Vāda*), wrangling (*Jalpa*), and occasion for rebuke (*Nigrahasthāna*), among others. The first nine of these sixteen *Padarthas* of *Nyāya* are more strictly logical and assist in discovering the truth, while the latter seven *Padarthas* serve as weapons which help destroy erroneous knowledge. *Vāda*, *Vitandā* and *Jalpa* form a part of the latter category, while *Tarka* belongs to the first category. The representative category of the first nine *Padarthas* is *Pramāna* which simply means evidence supporting the claim at hand. The rest of the eight *Padarthas* in this sub-category assist in proving the underlying truth in the evidence gathered. Similarly, the latter sub-category has *Vāda* as its representative *Padartha*. Over time, the opponent deflects *Vāda* towards *Jalpa* and *Vitandā* and even employs *Hetvābhāsa* (fallacious reasoning) and *Chala* (quibbling) to support the negative claim. The debater counters the same through *Jāti* or sophisticated reasoning, leading to *Nigrahasthāna* or the dissenter's point of defeat. During *Vāda*, the debater and the dissenter have to follow its rules and code of conduct which requires them to support their arguments with evidence or some means of proof, better known as *Pramāna*. They also use *Tarka* or hypothetical reasoning to argue their point while taking into cognizance the fact that its outcome is not in contradiction with any of the previously accepted tenets. Indian logic is primarily a study of inference patterns where inference is also identified as a source of knowledge or *Pramāna*. Hence, *Vāda* refers to a discussion in *Nyāya* school of Indian philosophy, a type of discussion which is conducted with the help of *Pramāna* (inclusive of inference), *Avayava* (members of a syllogism) and *Tarka*. Radhavallabh Tripathi is in consonance with this assertion and writes:

B. K. Matilal recognizes two distinct traditions of Indian logic—one is the tradition of *vāda* (debates, dialogues and discussions) and the other is the *pramāṇa* tradition. The former is concerned with dialectical tricks, arguments and sophistry, whereas the latter with criteria for empirical knowledge. (2016, 1)

To ensure a healthy, creative and productive outcome, both the parties – one who is an exponent (*Vādi*) or debater and the one who has a different opinion or refutes what is proposed (*Prativādi*), a dissenter—carry on the discussion with the above tools. This seems very similar to Hegelian dialectics, which are limited in scope and bipolar in nature. Here, the arrival at the synthesis is a new beginning and hence becomes more comprehensive and closer to the dynamics of life.

Vāda or discussion has been an inherent part of the Indian debate. However, the Indian debate has a rich history that goes back almost three millennia. Furthermore, debate, discussion and dialogue constitute the basic style of most of the authoritative documentation of ancient Indian scriptures, generally termed *śāstra*. The narrative of most *śāstras* involves the author and an imaginary interlocutor who raises objections regarding a statement and then demands a clarification for the same, resulting in a constant debate within the author's mind. Each section of these *śāstras* constitutes a fivefold structure, consisting of *Visaya* (theme), *Samsaya* (doubt), *Purva-paksha* (the prima facie view), *Uttara-paksha* (the rejoinder) and *Nirnaya* (conclusion). Consequently, this fivefold structure finds application in most forms of debates and discussions in Indian philosophy, where the ultimate aim is the search for correct knowledge. Hence, the great reliance on *Vāda* in the Indian tradition.

3. The History of Vāda

Vāda theory has been practised to find out the ultimate reality or final decision or *Tattoo nirnaya* about the inner or outer world and is an old concept in Indian Philosophy. The tradition of debates has been taken seriously since ancient times in India. Though the treatment has varied in different ages, its importance was never

forsaken. There have been debates over the practice of debate or *Vāda* itself among different schools of philosophy and philosophers. Indian philosophy was able to develop freely because nothing was considered too sacred for criticism. Whether related to the Vedas or God himself, each subject was forever open to debate and discussion. This helped in the birth of the plethora of schools of philosophy which highlight the evolution of Indian philosophy. Each school of Indian philosophy developed after a bout of discussion and debate based in the tenets of a previous school of philosophy, a journey with Vedas at its origin. One example is the various arguments in the *Sad-darsanas* (six systems of Indian Philosophy) with respect to the manifestation of the universe. Being allied systems, *Vaiśeṣika* is in consonance with *Nyāya*, which puts the theory of atoms forward as the basis of the entire universe, the basis of which is constituted in the twelve major categories of *Prameya*. *Vaiśeṣika* follows suit and elaborates on the atomic theory, which finds essence in the nine categories of substance or *Dravya*. *Sāṃkhya* goes a step further and sums up all the different categories of reality put forward by *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika* into two categories – *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, resulting in a dualistic philosophy through the theory of cause and effect. Yoga being an allied system, highlights the theoretical aspects of *Sāṃkhya* in a very practical form. Thus, highlighting the fact that rigorous debates and discussions were undertaken before any of the abovementioned schools were formally recognised or accepted as independent thought systems. Consequently, over time a pattern of the debate was deduced which was based on sound reasoning and, at the same time, was acceptable to all. These were put down into manuals and guidebooks to teach the rules of conducting successful debates to future generations. The books highlighted the tricks to be adopted, the ways to assault the opponent by finding his lapses and weaknesses and even ways to escape personal pitfalls during debates. These manuals also enlisted the situations or cases where one party had to concede to the other – the point of checkmate. Thus, giving the Theory of Logic a universal five-step formulation with the following structure - statement or thesis → reason → citation → application → assertion of the proven thesis. This represents how the Logic which developed in ancient India (from the tradition of *Vāda-vidya* and its tools of evidence or *Pramāna* and

argument or *Tarka*) is unlike the modern connotation where the terms like logic, inference have acquired a very specific, limited meaning in its usage when compared to the classical Indian philosophy. Thus, the six schools that were established are based on three important *Vādas* – *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeṣika* on *Aarambh Vāda* or the theory of commencement which takes the *Parmanu* or atom to be the fundamental reality of the Universe; *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* on *Parinam Vāda* which means that they believe in actual change and then Vedanta philosophy based in *Vivarta Vāda* which gives the idea that the world is merely an unreal manifestation or *vivarta* of *Brahman*. Jainism contributes *Syādvāda* or *Anekāntavāda* (world-thought), which is more inclusive as it is the philosophy of many-sided aspects. If Buddhists and Sage Kanada of *Vaiśeṣika* believed in *Aarambh Vāda*, wherein one thing is destroyed, and out of it, another thing comes into existence; for instance, the seed is destroyed, and from that, the sprout comes into existence, the sprout is destroyed, and from that, the tree comes into existence, and so on. But the *Sāṃkhya* and the Vedanta philosophers do not accept this proposition, and they maintain that those elements which existed in the seed of the tree are not destroyed, but they have absorbed other elements – the new form or state of a sprout is taken up by the seed. According to *vivarta-Vāda*, there is believed to be only one fundamental, real substance, and it is said that numerous, unreal or constantly changing appearances are ascribed to it. Similarly, in the *Guna-Parinama-Vāda*, two Real substances are taken for granted from the very commencement, and it is said that the *gunas* (constituents) of one of these two become unfurled and that all other things in the universe which are possessed of various qualities come into existence as a consequence. The impression of the existence of a serpent, where, as a matter of fact, there is only a rope, is the *vivarta-Vāda*; and fibres being formed into a rope, or curd out of milk, is the *guna-parinama-Vāda*. The *Aarambha-Vāda* is the theory of the *Nyāya* School, the *guna-parinama-Vāda* is the theory of the *Sāṃkhya* School, and the *Vivarta-Vāda* is the theory of the Non-Dualist *Vedanta* School.

The debates in ancient India were lively and were formally conducted among learned, royal coteries on various issues for the people's welfare and the kingdom's progress. They were all inclusive as far as types of issues were concerned. Furthermore,

these debates' participants were not limited by class, caste or gender. For Gargi, a learned woman scholar of the 8th century BCE used to participate in the *Brahmayajna*, a philosophic debate in the court of King Janaka—a *Pramāna* (evidence) which is in direct contradiction to the common belief regarding the status of women in ancient India. Since times immemorial, debates have focused on finding the truth and searching for harmony and the inherent unity underlying many divergent theories. There have also been debates with sharp differences emphasising the distinctions. Starting from Svetaketu, who was the first person to have raised a voice of protest against the sexual exploitation of women, the dynamics of *Vāda* have provided occasions for meaningful protests and raising the voice of protests as an outlet for the release from violence. The reverberations of *Vāda* could also be heard in the literary tradition, accompanied by notes of dissent and protests. Thus, erasing boundaries and watertight compartments led to an atmosphere conducive to free dialogue. Going back to *Aksapāda Gautama* (150AD), who, in his *Nyāyasūtras*, has highlighted three types of debates as mentioned before: an honest debate or *Vāda* – where both proponent and opponent are seeking the truth; a tricky debate or *Jalpa* –where the goal is to win by fair or foul means and lastly; a destructive debate or *Vitandā* – where the goal is to defeat or demolish the opponent, no matter how. In recent times, the word *Vāda* has been retained sans its innate ethical conduct, which has forced it to recede into what is mostly known as *vi-vāda*, which goes against the decorum: against the intentions of the sayer and the hearer. The modern times '*Vādarājas*' or debaters sink into '*kalaha*' (quarrel) or *vi-Vādas* (verbal combats), which are the outcome of the forbidden debates which take place for the sake of debate and not as a journey of finding the truth. The forbidden practices are borne out of attachment or desire, an urge to create controversies and debating just for the sake of it, by resorting to *Vāk - pārūṣya* or harshness of speech, shouting, name-calling, filthy language condemnation, and *sandhi* – agreeing to disagree. According to Rajmani Tigunait, *Vāda* is:

A kind of debate between two parties—the exponent and the opponent—on a particular subject. Each party tries to establish its own proposition and to refute that of the other, arguing against any theory propounded by the other. Both,

however, are trying to arrive at the truth by applying the methods of reasoning and logic. This is an effective and efficient way to reach valid knowledge if both parties are honest and free from prejudices. (2005, 75)

Vāda is the common thread connecting *Nyāya* [the Indian system of Logic] to *Anviksiki*, which constitutes the earliest form of Indian logic or the science of reviewing. Even the Upanishads highlight systematic techniques for carrying out *Vāda* properly: *prasma* (question), *anuprasna* (counter-question), *anatiprasnanwarana* (avoiding too much questioning, which leads to side-tracking), *vyakha* (detailed explanation), *anuvyakhya* (further explanation), *drstanta* (illustration, story expositing, deciphering extant of learning). *Vāda* as a manner of debate and discussion has been there even before the six systems of the Indian philosophical approach (*Sad-darsana*) became systematized, leading to its formal academic acceptance as the right word for discourse and debate.

There have been several profound debates in the history of India across disciplines of philosophy, *dharma* and others that have led to the theoretical discussion on *Vāda* and have given rise to a conceptual universe of *Vādaśāstra*. Like the *Sad-darsanas* or six systems of Indian Philosophy, many systems and schools interacted, leading to revisions and corrections and the ultimate compilation of *Vādaśāstra*. *Dharamsastras*, too, offered wider and more potential fields for oppositions while providing alternate systems. A fine example of *Vāda* is to be found in the *Milindapanho*, a meta-text of debate in *Pāli*, compiled around the second century BCE. In it, the Greek ruler, Milinda, who was well versed in the practice of *Vitandā* (destructive debate), asks *Nāgasena* (a Buddhist monk) to enter into *saddi* (debate) with him. *Nāgasena* agrees but with the condition that the ensuing debate would be a *Panditavāda* and not *Rājāvāda*, for *Panditavāda* did not involve punishment for refutation but according to the tenets of *Rajāvāda*, the one who refuted the king, even in a debate, received punishment. Another example closer to the present can be found in the royal court of Akbar, the Mughal ruler of the sixteenth century. Akbar was very fond of discussions and debates and pursued the same path in the matters of religion for which he constituted the *Ibādat Khāna* (House of Worship), a meeting place for the discussion of the teachings of

the various religions with the different religious leaders. However, the best examples of *Vāda* are to be found in connection with Birbal, one of Akbar's most trusted ministers. Birbal, known for his legendary wit, was adept in the art of debates—a continuous source for Indian folktales, especially 'Akbar-Birbal' stories. However, the most memorable and important example of *Vāda* in the Indian tradition is the Bhagavad Gita itself which 'presents a tussle between two contrary moral positions—Krishna's emphasis on doing one's duty, on one side, and Arjuna's focus on avoiding bad consequences (and generating good ones), on the other' (Sen, 2012, 3-4). In the end, Lord Krishna's insistence on Arjuna's duty to fight with irrefutable arguments leads to *Nigrahasthāna* (point of defeat) for Arjuna and the commencement of the legendary war.

All this changed in the eighteenth century with the establishment of the colonial empire in India. The foreign rulers put an end to any scope of debate or discussion with the general populace. However, this allowed for the establishment of one of the most fertile periods in the history of Indian intellectual discourse. There was a rift between a Euro-centric and a revivalist discourse where the romantic fascination towards the East kept widening. Consequently, discussions and debates on India's social body were slowly re-introduced to counter the British colonisers' highly prejudiced portrayal of India. The process of dialogue in the literary traditions of Sanskrit classics accelerated during the beginning of the nineteenth century. In turn, allowing the new writings [1850-1947] to focus more on the presentation and the interpretation of history and contemporary society with a global perspective, resulting in the emergence of concepts like *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*. One of the influential thinkers of the time was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who wished to locate 'Indian History within the wider realm of international constitutional liberalism' and as a result, hosted celebrations in the Calcutta Town Hall for the Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Revolutions [1820-23] (Bayly, 2007, 31). He wanted to provoke reactions against British Imperialism in India and Britain, both by Indians as well as Britons. In this scenario, the idea of *Swaraj* emerged as a dynamic conceptual framework where '*swa*' indicated the self and '*raj*' got linked with the idea of freedom at political, social and psychological levels. This idea unfolded in Mahatma Gandhi's

liberation of the inner soul of man: *Atmano mokshartham jagad hitaya ca* (for one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world)—attributed to Swami Vivekananda.

Even though oriental scholars served their colonial masters, they never left the side of debate and discussion, continuing *Vāda* with Indian pundits and intellectuals simultaneously. This played an important role in encouraging Sanskrit studies, enabling Indians to better understand their culture and literature. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, *Vāda* in the Indian domain focused more on social issues like widow re-marriage and the caste system and even included treatises for and against sea voyages, in addition to the emerging political situation and the moral dilemmas in literature. Many great social reformers like Swami Dayananda Saraswati used *Vāda* to express their views and dissent from the colonial rulers. The ensuing *Vāda* with regard to the intentions of the colonial rulers in relation to social issues led to two extreme views. The first one belonged to Sri Aurobindo and Ananda Coomaraswamy, offering consolation by emphasising that nothing significant has changed. The second view belonged to Daya Krishna and bemoaned that all that is 'Indian' is gone due to the meddling of the British in Indian culture and tradition.

However, the biggest votary of *Vāda* in contemporary Indian history is none other than Swami Vivekananda, who single-handedly helped shape cultural studies on India by promoting modern thinking, especially through his famous 1893 speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Though a 'speech'—considered monologic in character—his address highlights the perfect way to present an argument in any situation, especially in terms of *Vāda*.

4. Swami Vivekananda and *Vāda*

Swami Vivekananda, a renowned figure, is best remembered for his 1893 address which firmly highlights the basics while undertaking *Vāda*. He began his address with the salutation 'sisters and brothers of America' (Vivekananda, 2010, 12), once again highlighting the importance accorded to the opponent in a debate/discussion, for *Vāda* can take place only between equals—meaning that the sex, class, status of the opponent becomes

irrelevant once they begin *Vāda*. Thus, reinvigorating the message of the Congress—to spread the message of toleration. He then directed his speech towards the positive aspects of Hinduism, highlighting the evidential/*Pramāna* aspect of *Vāda*:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: “As the different streams having their sources in different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.” (Vivekananda, 2010, 12-13)

As can be deduced, the mention of India in relation to Israelites and the Zoroastrians is used as a piece of evidence to highlight the openness which is to be associated with Hinduism, while the hymn highlights the universal end point of all religions: God. The last part of his speech includes a *Tarka* with which he builds an immutable bond between the ongoing Congress and Hinduism:

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: “Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.” Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization

and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal. (Vivekananda, 2010, 13)

He ends his argument by universalising the tenets of Religion in general while hoping for a better future. Swami Vivekananda preached monism of the *Advaita* philosophy as the only future religion of thinking humanity – highlighted by Jawaharlal Nehru in his, *Discovery of India*. He laid stress on reason and refused to take anything only on trust or belief, as inspiration or intuition can never contradict reason and must be good for one and all. Taking Swami Vivekananda as the topic or subject, the subsequent discussion will highlight the *Vāda* style of Indian debate.

5. *Vāda* on Swami Vivekananda: A Prototype

Based on the above speech of Swami Vivekananda and all that has been discussed so far with regards to the Indian tradition of *Vāda*, a deduction can be made of the steps required in the successful progression of any good form of *Vāda*/debate/discussion.

The first and foremost step being the introduction of the subject matter of debate for it becomes the basis of the dissenter's counter-arguments. As the subject matter in this example is Swami Vivekananda, himself, the best way to begin as a debater is by enlisting his achievements.

Swami Vivekananda is believed to have single-handedly revitalised the Vedanta philosophy, which is both spiritual and rational and is found to be in harmony with scientific investigations of external nature. He believed that 'out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come to the most scientific and practical psychology' (Advaita Ashrama, 1959). Consequently, his thoughts outgrew local and national levels and reached an international outlook. Simultaneously, he laid stress on the necessity for liberty and

equality [by rising of the masses] as the only hope for India, as the upper classes were physically and morally dead according to him. Swami Vivekananda considered liberty of thought and action as the only condition of life, growth and well-being, and its non-existence would mean the end of nation, race and even mankind. He intended to combine Western progress with India's spiritual background. He condemned mysticisms and occultism as creepy things that might have some grains of truth but are generally weakening as they dwell on fear which breeds evil.

Counter-argument of dissenter: The best way to counter this argument as an opponent in a Vāda is to begin by conceding to all that is agreeable first and then highlighting the points of dissent in a fair and orderly manner. In this case, the dissent arises in the negative services rendered by Swami Vivekananda through his teachings.

While Swami Vivekananda is credited for infusing 'self-confidence' into the Indian nation, he has also propagated negative traditionalism. The gateway of spirituality he opened before his countrymen led to political escapism and intellectual stagnation. In terms of his political influence, he personally objected to his Bengali followers' attempt to give a political slant to his writings while proclaiming his non-involvement in politics; still, what he preached had serious political implications about itself. His negation of the then current Indian politics was a deliberate attempt on his part. The regressive-ness of his nature can also be gathered from his belief that the future of India could be saved only by the revival of the Vedanta religion and not by politico-economic revolution or social reform. Furthermore, his advice to the lower classes to attack the higher classes while assimilating their culture, symbolic of the strength of Indian culture, shows that in spite of his spiritualisation, he could not escape traditional caste prejudices.

Now that the opening statements have been established on both sides, the dissenter can take the opportunity to include various examples to elucidate his standpoint by making use of Tarka and move the Vāda forward.

Swami Vivekananda advocated social reconstruction through the simple process of Sanskritisation without the agony of politico-economic revolution. He believed in the necessity for the nation's growth yet was against social reform [an import of western values],

for he considered them a conduit which would compromise the unique identity of Hindu culture. He opposed those who stood for social reform on the ground that such a change touched only the fringe of the Hindu society and left the masses unattended. This is in contradiction to his attempt to import “white” faces for influence. For Prabha Dixit, his concern for the masses was just lip service as he neither had plans to improve the condition of the masses, nor did they find a place in his vision of future India. The orthodoxy once ridiculed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his followers regained its lost prestige and glamour through Swami Vivekananda. Sadly, the universal brotherhood which he aspired for could not even unite his own countrymen. His philosophy of Hindu spiritual elevation and expansion culminated in an ideology of communal elevation and Hindu supremacy.

Now that the ball is back in the court of the first debater, care needs to be taken that personal prejudices, anger, contempt should not seep into their arguments for a successful Vāda aims at reaching correct knowledge. The debater can then move ahead and highlight their objections with the assistance of facts. In this case, the arguments presented by the opponent can be countered by highlighting the limitations which imbued the creed of Swami Vivekananda and his teachings.

Swami Vivekananda inadvertently addressed three major nineteenth-century concerns: Hindu identity, Hindu nationalism and an equal ‘dialogue’ between Hinduism and other faiths. Contrary to some apologists who think that he was an opponent of caste, Swami Vivekananda attributed the downfall of India to a thoughtless rejection of caste. He formulated an axiom: ‘unity is before creation, diversity is creation’. Caste was promised on the notion of diversity, where an individual was given the freedom to express his nature or prakriti. According to him, it was not to be based on custom, privilege or inheritance and such a crystallisation was a modern-day distortion.

Consequently, he preached about the Vedic ideal of the three castes without any subdivisions and envisioned to raise lowest to the higher with their learning of Sanskrit. The reason is that the so-called higher castes reinforced the caste system based on their knowledge of Sanskrit, which was the language of the sacred

Hindu śāstra. He aimed to exterminate the root cause, which was based in caste.

In this way, the Vāda can proceed till one of the contenders either admits defeat for lack of counter-argument or both of them reach the point of sandhi – agreeing to disagree. The lack of counter-argument would amount to defeat based on facts and figures assisted with the help of evidence or Pramāna. Likewise, sandhi would involve the admittance on both sides to mutual appreciation of the presented facts but without any clear result either due to paucity of time or other reasons. This is the beauty of Vāda, the lull brought about by sandhi can be picked up at any point by the contenders to reach a result, simultaneously amounting to a vast array of correct knowledge for the audience. If this Vāda were to digress from the topic of Swami Vivekananda, the man and the teacher for the sake of just winning the debate, then it would turn into Jalpa or Vitandā based on the intention and aim of the contenders in the debate.

6. Conclusion

The above-mentioned arguments for and against the thoughts and workings of Swami Vivekananda highlight the cordiality involved in the conduct of Vāda or the Indian form of debate. The intention in either counter-arguments is not to win at any cost or even malign the opponent's image to win the debate. The aim of both the arguments and counter-arguments is to highlight the points in favour and against the teachings and workings of Swami Vivekananda, the man and the teacher. There is no doubt that he always forwarded the philosophy of the Advaita Vedanta as a solution to any problem, whether individual or national. Furthermore, he was a stout believer in 'brotherhood' and forwarded a similar approach to religion whether at the national or international level. However, some drawbacks associated with his teachings, ideas and ideologies cannot be excused but need to be known to understand Swami Vivekananda, the man and the teacher, and were carefully undertaken in the above examples, in turn, highlighting the immutable aspects of Vāda.

According to R. Tripathi: 'Speech can liberate. Words are illuminators and are capable of enlightening. Creating a theory and purging out the unacceptable theories through vāda (proper debate, discussion and dialogue) settles disputes and purifies the self'

(2016, 1). This forms the basis of the Indian debate system, which in turn assisted in the setting up of the rich Indian philosophical tradition. *Vāda* is supposed to be conducted orderly and ethically without any fear or favour or any kind of ill-will towards the opponent. Though subjective in nature, it can lead to objective truths and is without any prejudice. The rich history of *Vāda*, as traced above, highlights its special position in the overall scheme of debates and discussions which are undertaken in the Indian tradition. It is an innate part of the ethos and is best highlighted in Swami Vivekananda as an individual and the debates which are undertaken with him as the subject.

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