

Intellectual disciplines: Miimaamsaa, Nyaaya

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Scheme of systems

Of the six orthodox systems, only three (Vedaanta, Saankhya, Vaishaeshika) are philosophical ones in the sense that they deal with philosophical issues. The remaining three (Miimaamsaa, Yoga, Nyaaya) are systems aligned broadly to the above respectively as far as their metaphysical views are concerned, and they develop in detail such disciplines as are aids to the metaphysical systems as a whole. Of these, Miimaamsaa deals with tenets of a systematic study of a text particularly with Vedic literature in view; Yoga deals with mind and its control as an aid to realise the findings of the systems; and Nyaaya deals with epistemology in general and the framework of scholarly discussion on the topics of philosophical relevance, i.e. dialectics and polemics. The earliest systematic works on these branches of learning are:

- 1 Miimaamsaa-sutra by Jaimini, commented upon (Bhaashya) by Shabara,
- 2 Yoga-sutra of Patanjali, commented upon (Bhaashya) by Vyaasa,
- 3 Nyaaya-sutra of Gautama, commented upon (Bhaashya) by Vaatsyaayana.

The Suutra and Bhaashya works are broadly placed a few centuries on either side of the beginning of the Christian era. Of these, Yoga-sutras will be considered in the next lecture. The rest, together with grammar of Paanini, were considered to be basic disciplines for all intellectual work, and a master of all the three was looked upon with high respect in ancient Sanskrit tradition.

The area of study of Miimaamsaa

The Miimaamsaa-sutra by Jaimini consists of 12 chapters discussing basic tenets of the study of a text and the criteria of arriving at its objects/purpose. The Miimaamsaks were the earliest to enunciate and elucidate two levels of meaning, viz. the primary and the secondary, conveyed through two distinct powers of the word termed *abhidhaa*, denotation, and *lakshanaa*, indication. The word 'lion' in its primary sense denotes a quadruped animal known for strength and bravery. When this word is used with reference to a man, its primary meaning becomes inapplicable, giving way, by the force of circumstances, to the secondary meaning which, pointing to a group of qualities a lion is associated with, removes the inconsistency in its use. The Miimaamsaa system has formulated rules governing the scope of *lakshanaa*; it is a course to be taken when there is no possibility of arriving at a consistent meaning by resorting to the primary sense.

This is an important contribution the Miimaamsaa system has made to semantic study of a language. Equally important is the study in this system of the process through which an idea is transformed into a physical operation. This system also discusses in detail the criteria to determine the intention/purpose of a work or a part thereof. It is true that the system has evolved its principles with special reference to the Vedic, particularly sacrificial, texts; and this has made the tradition to align it with Vedaanta, also founded on Vedic texts. But really speaking, Miimaamsaa is least concerned with philosophical problems. While the Vedaanta-suutra discusses the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world, Miimaamsaa believes that the world was never otherwise.

The area of study of Nyaaya

Gautama begins his work with the enumeration of 16 topics to be expounded in his work: means of knowledge, objects to be known, doubt, purpose, parallel, conclusion and so on, most of which relate to dialectics. The core of the work, however, is the exposition in detail of epistemology. The means of knowledge, according to Nyaaya, are four: perception, inference, analogy and authority. What the system is especially known for is the exposition in minute details of inference, broadly logic, which has influenced the intellectual society of India through centuries. This aspect has given rise to the popular remark that the Naiyaayikas are addicts of inference to the extent of proving even obvious things like their own existence by inference. No one could afford to neglect study of this system if he wished to participate in a learned discussion without exposing himself as a simpleton.

Nyaaya accepts Vaisheshika position in metaphysical matters except on the point of God. Vaisheshikas are atheistic; Naiyaayikas theistic. God, for Naiyaayikas, is not a matter of belief; they take pride in proving the existence of God on the strength of inference; and it is not easy to counter them on this point without damaging the logical framework they have evolved. This is said to be a historical achievement of the Naiyaayikas against the onslaught of the Buddhists on the Vedic tradition. There is an interesting anecdote about Udayana (984 AD), a giant of the system, narrating how he challenged even God in a famous temple in east India when he was denied entrance by the keepers.

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