

## Report of Special Lecture by Amit Bhattacharjee, on 18/10/2022

### Topic: Art of the Argumentation in Ancient India

Debates and arguments then came to be recognized both as art of logical reasoning (*Tarka-vidya*) and science of causes (*Hetu-shastra*) following the path of a well-disciplined method of inquiry (*ânviksiki*) testing scriptural knowledge by further scrutiny.

The monks and priests belonging to various Schools and sects were imparted training in *Tarka-vidya*: the art and skills of conducting impressive successful debates and disputations (*Sambasha* or *Vada vidhi*) in learned assemblies (*parishad*).

Apart from methods of presenting arguments as per a logically structured format, the training modules included ways to stoutly defend ones thesis by means of genuine criteria of knowledge (*Pramana*) and to attack the opponent's thesis by means of indirect arguments (*Tarka*); estimating the strengths and weaknesses of arguments of either side; establishing one's own points while setting aside those of the opponent.

They were also trained for handling different types of challenges, such as: how to vanquish a person of blazing fame; how to behave with a senior opponent; how to handle an aggressive and troublesome opponent; and, how to conduct oneself in prestigious *Parishads*, to influence the flow of debate and to impress the judges and the onlookers etc.

These types of debates and arguments broadly came under the purview of *Nyaya* or *Nyaya Shastra*.

The Charaka Samhita, a principal Ayurveda Text (dated around the second century), in its third part, called *Vimanasthana*, along with other topics like training of a physician, ethics of medical practice, pathology, diet and nourishment, taste of medicines, etc., also contains a discussion on the principles of debate

The related doctrines are treated in Caraka Samhita under three heads, namely:

- 1) *Karyabhinirvrtti*, the aggregate of resources for the accomplishment of an action
- (2) *Pariksa*, the standard of examination, and
- (3) *Sambasha-vidhi*, or *vada-vidhi*, the method of debate.

This is followed by detailed discussions on these three topics. For example, there is a discussion on the various resources that are to be examined to accomplish an action.

These resources include *Karana* (the actor, or agent who accomplishes an action), *Karya* (the action), *Karya-phala* (the effect), *Desha* (the place of the action), *Kala* (the time of the action), *Pravrtti* (the activity or exertion put forth for achieving the action), etc. The second head, *Pariksa*, deals with the standard of examination.