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Kantian Presumption and *Arthāpatti*: A Reflection

Tarak Nath Nandi

Asst. Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, Sambhu Nath College, Labpur, Birbhum, West Bengal

Abstract:

In Indian Philosophy, we know that there are different epistemological instruments to manifest the cognition of reality. There is maximum of six epistemological tools that are accepted in some classical Indian Philosophy Schools viz. *pratyakṣa* (perception), *anumāna* (inference), *upamāna* (comparison), *śabda* (testimony), *arthāpatti* (presumption) and *anupalabdhi* (non-apprehension). Apart from these instruments, *samvab* and *oitihya* are also accepted as epistemological instruments in Purāṇ. Different Indian philosophers have taken various epistemological tools for establishing their metaphysical pre-supposition. *Arthāpatti* (presumption) is accepted as an independent instrument of valid cognition by Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta school. Naiyāyikas and Sāṃkhyas have also accepted *arthāpatti* (presumption) as a valid piece of cognition but do not accept its instrumentality as a distinct instrument. Naiyāyikas reduce the instrumentality of *arthāpatti* (presumption) into *keval-vyātirekī* inference and Sāṃkhyas reduce the instrumentality of *arthāpatti* into *avīta* inference which is routed through *vyātirekī vyāpti*. While reading Kantian philosophy, it appears that Kant also used *arthāpatti* like arguments. A question may arise whether the concept of *arthāpatti* is synonymous with the concept of presumption found in Kantian philosophy? How does Kant establish noumena? Is it not by *arthāpatti*? In this paper, an effort has been made to analyze whether the concept of *arthāpatti* in Indian terminology is equivalent to the presumption that is available in Kant's philosophy.

Keywords: *māyā*, Brahman, transcendental significance, sensibility, a-priori, noumena, phenomena.

Arthāpatti (presumption) is one of the independent instruments of valid cognition like others instruments of valid cognition accepted by Mīmāṃsakas and Advaita Vedāntins. However, they are different because of their metaphysical pre-supposition. On the other hand, Naiyāyikas and Sāṃkhyas are denied the independent instrumentality of *arthāpatti* (presumption). At the very beginning of this paper, I have tried to attend to the nature of *arthāpatti* (presumption) after Mīmāṃsakas and Advaita Vedāntins. Immanuel Kant describes implication or presumption in his transcendental method. In this paper, I also discuss how Kantian presumption is associated with the concept of *arthāpatti* (presumption). Though Kant is not used the term 'presumption' directly in his philosophy, if we closely scrutinized his philosophy, there seems to be a concept of presumption in how

he explains, like the noumena, transcendental, etc. The main aim of this paper is to analyse the conceptual reflection of *arthāpatti* (presumption) in Kantian philosophy.

Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa in his *Mānameyodaya* says that “*anyathānupapattiyā yadupapādakakalpanam, / tadarthāpattirityebam lakṣaṇam bhāṣyabhāṣitam.*”¹, i.e., in the case when something is otherwise unintelligible, the assumption of something which will make it intelligible is called *arthāpatti* (presumption), and this is the only definition given in the *Bhāṣya*. When it is known that Devadatta is alive, but he is not in the house, then some sort of inconsistency arises. This inconsistency can be resolved if we assume that he is outside. This type of assumption is called *arthāpatti* (presumption). Actually, the conflict between the two instruments of valid cognition is called *arthāpatti* (presumption). Here, two instruments of valid cognition are: one is the general instrument of valid cognition, and another is the specific instrument of valid cognition. When something is assumed for removal of such type of conflict is called *arthāpatti* (presumption).

In the example mentioned earlier, Devadatta is alive is known by the general instrument of valid cognition, i.e., inference and the absence of Devadatta in the house is known by the specific instrument of valid cognition, i.e., non-apprehension. Devadatta’s aliveness is general in the sense that there is no particular place where Devadatta exists. Here, ‘exist’ means, either in the house or outside the house. But, his absence in the house is known through the non-apprehension. In that situation, the conflict between inference and non-apprehension leads to the *arthāpatti* (presumption) that Devadatta is outside the house. Reconciliation of the conflict is possible by this *arthāpatti* (presumption). So, the uncommon causal condition for the cognition of *arthāpatti* (presumption) is the conflict between two instruments of valid cognition. Though the two instruments of valid cognition are not specific, then the reconciliation will be impossible if they are distinct. If it is stated that ‘there is gold’ and ‘there is no gold’, then here, in both cases, the instrument of valid cognitions are specific and hence irreconcilable. Therefore, one instrument of valid cognition must be general, and the other is specific to the case of *arthāpatti* (presumption). Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa says, the cognition to remove the conflict between two instruments of valid cognition is called *arthāpatti* (presumption).

Advaita Vedānta accepts *arthāpatti* (presumption) as an instrument of valid cognition to explain the *Vedāntic* texts. For example, the *Upaniṣads* describe the creation of this world with the help of *Brahman*² and again say that *Brahman* is alone real³. This inconsistency is resolved by assuming that the creation of this world is not real but apparent (*vivarta*) as the shell appears as silver. Here, Advaita Vedāntin assumes the existence of *māyā* as the power

¹ Bhatta, Nārāyaṇa. *Mānameyodaya*, Sridinanath Tripathi Nabatirtha (Ed.), Vol I, Sanskrit College, Kolkata, 1989, p. 195.

² “*tasmādvaramā atasmādātmana ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ.*” *Taiterīya Upaniṣada*, 2/1.

³ “*ako debaḥ sarbabhūteṣu gūraḥ sarbavyāpī sarbabhūtāntarātmā, karmādhyakṣaḥ sarbabhūtādhībāḥ sāksī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca.*” *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣada*, 6/11.

of *Brahman* for resolving such conflict and such type of assumption is called *arthāpatti* (presumption) – “*idānīmarthāpattinirūpyate*”.⁴

Dharmarājā Adhvarīndra defines *arthāpatti* (presumption) as ‘the assumption of an explanatory fact (*upapādaka*) from a knowledge of the thing to be explained (*upapādyā*) – “*upapādyā-jñānenopapādaka-kalpanamarthāpatti*”.⁵ Here, the cognition of the seen facts is the instrument, and the cognition of the unseen or assumed fact is the result. *Upapādyā* cannot be explained without assuming another fact. The fact which is assumed to explain *upapādyā* is known as *upapādaka*. We may illustrate this with the help of an example. The stoutness of a man who does not eat at day (*‘pīno Devadatta divā na bhūñkte’*) is inexplicable without the assumption of his eating at night. One who does not eat both day and night cannot be stout. Here, the stoutness of such a man in the absence of eating at day is called *upapādyā* and the assumption of eating at night is called *upapādaka*. So, the assumption of an explanatory fact from an unexplained fact is called *arthāpatti* (presumption).

We have genuinely applied this in many instances. But here, I would like to mention one example where without *arthāpatti* (presumption), we cannot determine the object's truth. The Vedāntins are said about the scriptural statement ‘*tarati śokam ātmavit*’⁶ (the knower of self transcends grief), i.e., knowledge is the cause of making one free from bondage. In this case, the sentence suggests: if bondage is real, how can one be free from bondage through the help of knowledge? To avoid such conflict, the hearer assumes that bondage is not real, but illusory; and such type of assumption is impossible without the help of *arthāpatti* (presumption).

While reading Rasvihary Das’s book “*A Handbook to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*” page no. 128 to 131 (to quote) “The Ground of the Distinction of all Objects in General into Phenomena and Noumena” of Kant’s first Critique (1781), “The categories themselves, however, do not mean that they are forms of sensible things. They can be in a way understood apart from the conditions of sensibility...”⁷ We know the objects through the help of twelve categories, and Kant calls that knowledge as ‘phenomena’. Phenomena are distinguished from the noumena, which are being as such. But this being as such is unknown and unknowable. Again, the form of objects is a-priori, which is also the form of knowledge, and through this form, we know the object. For Kant, the categories themselves are not forms of sensible things. A question may arise: how can we know the categories apart from the forms of sensible things? I think that this knowledge can be possible through the *arthāpatti* (presumption). Therefore, the concept of *arthāpatti* (presumption) plays a vital role to know the noumena in Kantian philosophy.

⁴ Adhvarīndra, Dharmarājā. *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā*, Panchanan Bhattacharya (Tr.), Srinath Bhavan, Contai, Medinipur, 1377 (BN), p. 214.

⁵ Ibid., p. 214.

⁶ *Chāndogya Upaniṣada*, VII, i.3.

⁷ Das, Rasvihary, *A Handbook to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2013, p. 129.

Again, for Kant, "...They are, therefore, said to have a transcendental *significance*, but no transcendental use. What is meant is that the categories, which are really the ways of combining the manifold, have a meaning of their own, which has no necessary reference to the manifold of sense with which alone we are acquainted. This is their transcendental significance. But this meaning does not enable us to make use of the categories anywhere else except within the limits of possible sense-experience, for the simple reason that the manifold to be combined by them is available for us only within sense-experience. This is how they have no transcendental use."⁸ A question may arise: how can we know that categories have a transcendental significance as they have no transcendental use? We know through the help of *arthāpatti* (presumption) that categories have a transcendental significance.

Kant explains categories as the forms of thought which is distinguished from the forms of intuition. These categories are not dependent on our sensibility. Kant says, "...if what is given to us in sense-experience is called appearance or *phenomena*, then by contrast with it, what is not so given, but is merely thought, maybe called *noumena*. The very idea of appearance carries us to the idea of something that appears. What appears must be something in itself in order that it may appear in our sense-experience. The sensed appearance must be referred to some unsensed being which is thought..."⁹ Now, one may say that how can the thought of the unsensed take place? To me, the thought of the unsensed takes place in Kant's view as an alternative that is comparable with the concept of *arthāpatti* (presumption).

The background of acceptance of *arthāpatti* (presumption) in Advaita Vedāntins is that Advaita Vedāntin explains the creation of this world with the help of *Brahman* and again says that *Brahman* is alone real. This inconsistency is resolved by assuming that the creation of this world is not real, but apparent (*vivarta*) as a shell sometimes appears as silver. Here, Advaita Vedāntin assumes the existence of *māyā* as the power of *Brahman* for resolving such conflict and such type of assumption is called *arthāpatti* (presumption). Similarly, in Kant's case, he describes the reality of this world as phenomena known by the categories. But the categories are itself the forms of thought. How can we know the forms of thought? This knowledge of the forms of thought is possible through the *arthāpatti* (presumption). We may describe the *noumena* in the light of *Brahman* in terms of Vedāntins, but the difference is that the knowledge of the *Brahman* is possible (*Brahman-sākhyātkāra*), but for the case of *noumena* it is not. When Kant describes the object, we may be denoted it as '*jagat*' of Vedāntins. The power of the *Brahman* produces this '*jagat*', i.e., *māyā*. One can be free from *māyā* by the knowledge of ultimate reality. Still, *noumena* are unknown and unknowable. That is why Kant says, "... the unsensed noumena can be thought only as something unknown, and so the actual knowledge we can ever attain

⁸ Ibid., p. 129.

⁹ Das, Rasvihar, *A Handbook to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Progressive Publishers, Kolkata, 2013, pp. 129-130.

through understanding is always confined within the sphere of appearance or sense-experience".¹⁰

Being a rationalist, Kant always emphasizes synthetic a-priori judgment as of the right knowledge due to the presence of necessity and novelty of it. According to Kant, right knowledge should have two necessary characteristics, viz. necessity and novelty. Now, if we critically analyse the methods of Kant's philosophy that we have mentioned earlier, it will be seen that the conception of presumption is not related to inference adequately. Traditional inferential knowledge as conceived in Western logic is of two sorts, viz. deductive and inductive. Now, if inferential cognition is deductive, then it has necessity but does not have novelty. Again, if inferential knowledge is inductive, then it has novelty but does not have the necessity. So, inferential knowledge in traditional sense is not a proper one according to Kantian philosophy. However, the observation is that *arthāpatti* (presumption) should be related to the concept of presumption because *arthāpatti* (presumption) has both sorts of necessary characteristics of right knowledge, viz. necessity and novelty. Now, one can say that necessity is one of the vital characteristics of *pramā* (valid cognition) and that we unanimously accept. But how does the characteristic of novelty exist in the case of *pramā* (valid cognition) as well as *arthāpatti* (presumption)? We can explain this matter very simply in terms of Advaita philosophy. If we see the Advaitin definition of *pramā* (valid cognition), there is mentioned that 'anadhigata' (novelty) is one of the defining characteristics of *pramā* (valid cognition).¹¹ So, the characteristic of novelty also exists in Indian epistemology. Furthermore, *arthāpatti* (presumption) should have this characteristic of 'anadhigata' (novelty) as it is accepted as an instrument of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) in this school. In this way, it can be shown that there is a conceptual similarity of *arthāpatti* (presumption) with the presumption that is available in Kant's philosophy.

We assume the existence of the forms of thought and also noumena for Kant and *māyā* for Advaitins through *arthāpatti* (presumption). So, there is a conceptual similarity. But the difference is: Advaitins have accepted *arthāpatti* (presumption) as an instrument of valid cognition, whereas for Kant, it is bound to accept for the existence of the forms of thought and noumena. This difference is due to their own metaphysical standpoint. We have just presented the conceptual observation of the history of philosophy and try to realize philosophy as there is a conceptual similarity regarding *arthāpatti* (presumption) in Indian philosophy and Kant's philosophy.

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¹⁰ Ibid., p. 131.

¹¹ "tatra smṛṭivyaṛttam pramātvamanadhigatāvādhītārthaviśayaka-jñātam." - Adhvarīndra, Dharmarājā. *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā*, Panchanan Bhattacharya (Tr.), Srinath Bhavan, Contai, Medinipur, 1377 (BN), pp. 7-9.

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