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The Role of *Vakya Vidya* in The Digital Era Dialogue

Ni Made Sumaryani 1, Krisna S. Yogiswari 2,*, and Nurlina 3

- ¹ The Hindu Center of Indonesia; Denpasar-Bali; aryachandrani198@gmail.com
- Universitas Gadjah Mada; Yogyakarta; yogiswarikrisna@gmail.com
- ³ Universitas Tadulako; Palu-Sulawesi Tengah; <u>nurlinadisdikpar@gmail.com</u>
- * Correspondence: yogiswarikrisna@gmail.com

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Abstract

Mastery of philosophy and theology is very influential in internal and interreligious dialogue. Besides critical thinking and well-established argumentation, dialogue, debate, and discussion are central knowledge in darśana. Hindu thinkers mastered Tarka-Vāda and were able to dialogue with adherents of Sanatana Dharma and with followers of other faiths. The expertise of di Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and other Hindu thinkers in the field of Tarka-Vāda is essential today for Dharmapracārakas, teachers, Hindu Scholars, academics, and Hindu devotees. In addition, the mastery of Tarka-Vāda as an effort to support the science of communication (Vakya Vidya) in the Hindu tree of knowledge and glorify Vācaspati.

Keywords: Philosophy; darśana; Hindu Theology; Dialogue; Tarka-Vāda; Dharmapracāraka



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1. Introduction

Dialogue and debate today are unavoidable, especially on social media platforms. Regardless of background and knowledge, social media users are free to dialogue and even mock and vilify other people's religious teachings without guilt. In addition, it has become a daily routine for young people to search for various topics using web search engines. Hindus with religious learning patterns that tend to be natural and passive seem confused when other people question various topics of

Hindu teachings. They even seem unprepared and unable to have a dialogue, discuss, let alone argue. In fact, in Hindu Suśāstra, debate and discussion are vital knowledge to be learned, especially by Dharmapracāraka (Hindu Lecturer, teacher). Hindu civilization has experienced attacks several times, and there have been changes, such as the onslaught of the birth of Buddhism, Jaina, Islam, Christianity, and the onslaught of modernity.

To face the challenges of modernity in this contemporary era, Hindus should redesign strategies that follow the challenges of the times. The massive use of IT and Social Media and the emergence of preachers who continue to attack various Hindu teachings and even declare themselves as people who understand the contents of the Vedas have made many young people confused about their religion. Learning Hinduism should shift from traditional patterns to the jñāna path, learning the Sacred Library, philosophy, and theology.

A scholar must master various arts of communication, including discussion and debate. The Dharmapracārakas, Hindu devotees, organizational leaders should master the Tarkaśāstra (the science of logic, debate, and discussion) well. This is where the biggest weakness of Hinduism lies - where most of the people who should have mastered the Tarka have very little knowledge of it. Scholars, teachers, lecturers, preachers of discourse, Hindu religious instructors, PHDI administrators, Hindu organization administrators, Dharma Duta, and Ministry of Religion employees should master the science of public speaking, communicate well, and debate/discuss. The Vedas call-as the successors of truth orators who have a divine body and play a significant role in the transformation of society.

Since ancient times Hindu thinkers have realized that Śruti and Śāstra are closely related to raddhā or belief. Therefore, the purpose of learning Śāstra is to strengthen the beliefs of Hindus and be able to communicate them with the community. Today, human reason wants to be satisfied with knowledge. Therefore, Śruti and Śāstra became the answer, assisted by understanding reason and logic and good communication skills. Darśana, Hindu Philosophy, and Theology (Brahma Vidya) are studied through Śruti and Śāstra to strengthen Śraddhā. In addition, the power of reason and communication skills will be supported through intensive learning to open the way for internal and inter-religious dialogue.

2. Methods

This article is the result of qualitative research that focuses on the text. A text study is a data analysis that examines the text in depth regarding its content, meaning, structure, and discourse. Text studies have the breadth of interpretation and authenticity as their advantages. Text is considered a challenging area of study for researchers. He is always alive and dynamic. A text study is a data analysis that examines the text in-depth regarding its content, meaning, structure, and discourse. The purpose of the text also widens, not just something that is written. Text

reviewers focus on how the text is constructed, how meaning is produced, and the nature of the substance (Rahardjo, 2018).

In Hindu research, the first thing to do is the organizing principle to obtain complete knowledge by finding the truth in texts, objects, people, and oneself(J. Edelmann, 2011). This study describes the Digvijaya Mission of Śaṅkarācārya written in various classical texts, including Sankara Digvijaya The Traditional Life Of Śri Śaṅkarācārya (Vidyaranya, 2008), Complete Works of Śri Śaṅkarācārya in 20 Volumes 1910 Edition. In addition, secondary sources in various publications were studied. The theory used is the interpretation of Paul Ricoeur with data analysis using content analysis Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA).

3. Results and Discussion

Dialogue holds an important place in the Hindu Suśāstra. The Hindu-Śruti and Śāstra texts are full of dialogue to convey various teachings. The Upanișad library is full of dialogue. Even the most famous literature of the Bhagavad Gītā is the dialogue between ri Krsnā the Lord of Yoga and Arjuna, the mighty hero and great archer. Similarly, various suśāstras use dialogue as a medium for conveying multiple teachings. Dialogue in the Hindu tradition is ancient, developing in various forms. Dialogue also plays an essential role in the Vaisnava tradition and vision. First, the dialogue itself is an integral part of practice and worship in life that is absorbed in Kṛṣṇā bhakti. Dialogue is also the Śāstra matrix through which even the most significant revelations of Krsnā's divine acts are most often expressed. Moreover, dialogue is a pedagogical medium through which the teaching of devotional service is transmitted. And finally, dialogue becomes the primary and vital element in the most intimate exchange between divine figures in līlā contained in the sacred realm (Schweig, 2012:51). Dialogue is essential and even unavoidable today. In the world, the Vaiṣṇava community plays a significant role in building a bridge of dialogue between followers of the Sanatana Dharma and other religions. But in fact, this dialogue was spearheaded by Swami Vivekananda when he was present at the Parliament of the World Religions in Chicago, September 11, 1893.

Dialogue, debate, and discussion are nothing new in the Hindu tradition. Hindu literature is dialogue, especially the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā. Dialogue is the dominant mode of expression in these texts. As we often talk about Socratic dialogues, we might speak about Upanishadic dialogues because the Upanishads, especially the early ones, are filled with didactic dialogue between teacher and student. The famous Bhagavad Gītā is a dialogue, a conversation, between Kṛṣṇā and Arjuna, originating from within the layers of the outer narrative dialogue between Dhritarāshtra and Sanjaya. It is not uncommon to find multi-layered dialogues within the framed narratives of epic and historical Sanskrit texts. For example, Suka's dialogue with Parīkṣit, which takes place in the Bhagavata Purāṇa, is narrated

in a dialogue between the sages of the Naimiśa forest (Schweig, 2012:51. In addition, the Bhāgavata text is filled with various dialogues. Even the book Upadesa compiled in Bali uses dialogue as a learning medium.

Schweig (2012:61) states that in the Vaiṣṇava tradition, dialogue is considered a Divine Love Dance called Rāsa. The five chapters of the Bhāgavata known as Rāsa Līlā are rich in dialogue symbolism, a symbol of this final union in divine love-Rāsa Maṇḍala. The dance begins with the Vraja Gopikā, cowherd maidens of Vraja, linking weapons to form a large circle of dancers around the religious figure of Kṛṣṇā who remains at the center of the maṇḍala. So it was Kṛṣṇā who multiplied His divine form as many times as needed to enter between every two Vraja Gopikā. The significance of Kṛṣṇā enters between the two Gopikās is this: the two partners in the dialogue have the power to attract a new presence or divine revelation, which is the fourth phase of this axial dialogue to be regarded as the perfection of the discussion. The symbol of Rāsa Maṇḍala can be seen and interpreted as a symbol of great debate, the building block of authentic pluralism. At the very least, he can speak to Vaiṣṇavas as a symbol of the perfect form of dialogue or sharing between man and the divine and between man and other human beings.

Hinduism has never actually been against dialogue, but instead teaches conversation as an effort to enlighten each other, *mutual Enlightenment (Kathā, parasparam)*, as the following Bhagavad Gītā verse:

mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā bodhayantah parasparam kathayantaś ca māṁ nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca Bhagavad Gītā X.9

With their minds focussed on Me, with their prāṇas centered in Me, inspiring one another and constantly speaking of Me, they live in contentment and bliss at all times (Rāmānuja, 2009:333).

This translation of the Bhagavad Gītā from Rāmānuja is the oldest bhaṣya (commentary) after aṅkarācārya. Schweig (2012:57) states that there are four activities related to devotional service described in verse, (1) The first quarter of this verse directs one to enter deeper into a personal relationship with the divine by focusing all one's thought processes on the divine. divine, and offering one's breath of life to the divine (maccittā mad-gata-prāṇā). (2) The second part explains what others can do, with the phrase "enlighten one another" (bodhayantaḥ parasparam). (3) The third quarter of the verse talks about how the shared enlightenment between these souls becomes a fully absorbing kathā or continuous conversation about the divine (kathayantaś ca māṁ nityaṁ). (4) And the last line describes the satisfaction and affection one feels in sharing in this devotional service.

In Hindu literature, found around 246 books containing the Tarka āstra, such as the Garuda Purana, Sushruta Samhita, Bhagavata Purana, Abhinaya-darpana (the mirror of gesture), Vedanta Sutra, and hundreds of other books. Thus, the science of debate and discussion has been an essential knowledge since ancient times and is widely used in Darsana. The most famous tarka is the tarka between Śaṅkarācārya and Mandana Miśra at Mahismati (now Mahishi Bangaon, Saharsa in Bihar, India). Mandana Miśra is a very famous philosopher and teacher of the famous Mimamsa philosopher- Kumarīla Bhaṭṭa. When Kumarīla Bhaṭṭa met aṅkarācārya in Prayag, he suggested Śaṅkarācārya go to Mahismati to argue with Mandana Miśra (Surpi, Widiana, Wika, Avalokitesvari, & Untara, 2021).

Acting as a jury is the wife of Mandana Miśra herself, namely Ubhaya Bhāratī, who is also an expert. The debate lasted more than fifteen days, and Mandana Miśra was declared defeated. Ubhaya Bhāratī then challenged Śaṅkarācārya to argue with him for complete victory. Then Ubhaya Bhāratī admitted his defeat, and as a consequence, Mandana Miśra and his wife became followers of the Sankaracarya and were initiated under the name Sureśvarācārya.

Tarka Śāstra is a science of dialectics, logic and reasoning, and art of debate that analyzes the nature and source of knowledge and its validity. Śāstra in Sanskrit means that which gives teaching, instruction, or command. Tarka means debate or an argument. Tarka is a method of attaining knowledge of the truth about a strange thing by comparing and then gradually eliminating all the competing suppositions (Achari, 2013).

So Tarka āstra is the science of dialectics, logic and reasoning, and the art of debate which analyzes the nature and sources of knowledge and their validity. In Sanskrit, Tarka means debate or argument. Tarka is a method of attaining knowledge of the truth about the unknown by comparing, discussing, and gradually eliminating all other assumptions. So tarka means comparing one reality and another truth and analyzing it carefully, in detail, and progressively removing all doubts or contradictory things to clarify the truth or seek true knowledge.

Vāda means discussion, which is the art of exchanging thoughts, knowledge, and truths with others, intending to arrive at the truth. This can be achieved by discussing a topic with an earnest seeker of truth. Achari (2013) stated *that the purpose of the discussion is to arrive at the proposition's truth under consideration.* This may be achieved by talking about the topic with anyone sincere seeker of truth. The words Tarka and Vāda are often combined as Tarka-Vāda, indicating debate and discussion used to reach the truth.

The science of debate and discussion is essential in Hinduism and has been studied since ancient times. Hindu saints possess the ability to debate and discuss with contemporary Hindu figures. In the development of Hindu philosophy, several

figures were born who were tarka experts, including Adi Śankara (788-820 CE), Uddyotkar (Nyāyavartik, 6th-7th century), Vācaspati Miśra (Tatparyatika, 9th century), Udayanacharya (Tatparyaparishuddhi, 10th century).), Jayanta Bhatta (Nyāyamanjari, 9th century), Vishwanath (Nyāyasutravrtti, 17th century), Radhamohan Goswami (Nyāyasutravivaran, 18th century) and Swami Vivekananda (January 12 1863-July 4 1902). Śaṅkarācārya was a very well-known master of tarka. Śaṅkarācārya was able to bring back thousands of people who previously had turned to return to the bosom of Sanatana Dharma. Śaṅkara was famous as a genius from a young age.

Swami Vivekananda was a young monk famous for his speech at the parliament of world religions on September 11, 1893. During his work in the West, he was often opposed because he brought a spirit from the East that was different from Christianity or materialism. However, with his excellent debating skills, he conquered Western materialism. As the first Hindu swami to go West and break through the Western wall of self-satisfied Christianity, Swami Vivekananda is the national and international voice of the spiritual master Ramakrishna. He was an energetic and calm young man, athlete, and scholar. When he met Sri Ramakrishna, this university-educated rationalist almost ruled out God as unavoidable human creativity. In 1893 Vivekananda left for America on a steamboat to attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which he was not invited to this meeting.

Long ago, students went to Navadvipa in Bengal to study Tarka-Śāstra. In Bengal, many experts have mastered this science, one of which is Gaṅgeśa Miśra. Gaṅgeśa Miśra returned to Bengal in the 12th century to regenerate a very powerful Nyāya āstra known as "Navya Nyāya" meaning New Nyāya. Navadvipa is the place in Bengal where Gaṅgeśa Miśra and his followers resided, and Sri Krishna Caitanya also came from this place. He was also a very learned man, who mastered all the āstras, then chose to repeat the name of Krishna as Bhajan Sankirtan and established the belief that chanting the names of God is the way to attain liberation or moksha (Maswinara, 1999). Sri Caitanya is known for Acintya Bhedabheda and is a great thinker in Vaishnava philosophy (Aryadharma, 2019).

Thus, the Tarka-Vāda requires good mastery of the āstra, the study of the Scriptures, ability, clarity of vision, and good heart intelligence. At the intellectual level, Tarka should not develop into a lie, but rather a debate to obtain the truth, by comparing one truth with another, the truth that one person understands with the opponent debate, without rejection of the views of others. Still, dignified discussion and debate to obtain or confirm the truth (Surpi, 2020b). It takes high intelligence to reason and understand something so that tarka does not develop into a stormy debate. Arguing-discussion uses intelligence and reason that is sharp and gentle, not using ego, emotion, or just a desire to contradict each other.

A scholar must master various arts of communication, including discussion and debate. Dharmapracharakas, Hindu devotees, organizational leaders should be well versed in Tarkaśāstra. This is where the biggest weakness of Hinduism lies in that most people should have mastered the tarka but have very little knowledge of this. Scholars, teachers, lecturers, preachers of discourse, Hindu religious instructors, PHDI administrators, Hindu organization administrators, Dharma ambassadors, and Ministry of Religion employees should master the science of public speaking, communicate well, and debate/discuss. Because the Vedas call them the successors of truth, the orators have a divine body and play a significant role in the transformation of society. The Vedic scriptures state:

divakṣaso agnijihvā ṛtāvṛdhah ṛgveda X.65.7

"The teachers are the spreaders (successors) of the truth, the orators who are bright and holy as if they have divine bodies" (Titib, 2006: 431).

Religion does not kill the intellect or reason; in fact, a high intellectual ability will sharpen knowledge, as stated by Rigveda VIII.15.7 below:

Vajram śiśāti dhişaṇā vareṇyam

"Intellect sharpens knowledge that sparkles like lightning" (Titib, 2006: 433).

Thus, intellect, the ratio's ability, is essential because it will sharpen knowledge. Historically, tarka-Vāda was used to confirm the truth and even protected civilization. The number of spiritual teachers and scholars who master the tarka will inspire people and help them understand the truth to remain firm in their beliefs and Dharma. In the history of Hinduism in Nusantara and Bali, there are not a few cases of religious conversion that occurred because they lost in a debate about belief, where the ulama missionaries were equipped with the knowledge of disputation and influenced the minds of others well to accept the truth of their religion or beliefs.

The Vedas state that scholars should surpass other people's abilities. They must be intelligent, radiant (because of developing noble qualities), wise like the gods, spread knowledge, radiate holiness waves, develop knowledge, perform religious ceremonies, have foresight, develop noble deeds, and wise (Titib, 1996). Intellectuals should always have and develop intelligence, nobility, be able to get rid of bad qualities, and work for the prosperity of society. Intellectual faculties are

highly emphasized in the Vedas, which scholars must possess to understand the storehouse of knowledge and wisdom properly. So in Hinduism, do not accept the truth blindly as God's truth but develop the intellect to understand things better. Yajur Veda XXV.15 states, "devānām bhadrā sumatir jūyatām-May we acquire divine intellect from the noble Gods, for our welfare." (Surpi, Widiana, & Wika, 2021).

A scholar, a scholar is required to be good at communicating and understanding the meaning of speech as stated by *P. gyeda* IX.87.3:

sa cid viveda nihitaṁ yad āsām apīcyaṁ guhyaṁ nāma gonām Rgveda IX.87.3
"A scholar knows the secret (meaning) of speech."
In addition, not only understand knowledge and the secrets of speech, but a scholar must also have the third eye of knowledge to understand the most secret things of knowledge.

Tṛtīyena jyotiṣā saṁ viśasva Rgveda X.56.1
"O mankind, have the third eye of that knowledge."

Debates and dialogues are unavoidable these days, both formal and informal. Not infrequently, debate and dialogue can undermine one's faith. Donder (2006:2), Surpi Aryadharma (2011: 126) describe three important theological debate events that ended with the loss of belief in Hinduism. First, the King of Majapahit (Brawijaya V) could not have a theological dialogue with Sunan Kalijaga, which led to the conversion of religion to Islam. Second, several sources indicate that the King of Buleleng A.A. Pandji Tisna could not serve or win the theological debate with the zendeling, so he converted to Christianity and founded a church. The three defeats of the debate and the power struggle of a leak character with a missionary became the history of the emergence of Christianity in Buduk, Dalung, and Untal-Untal, in Badung Regency, Bali. The historical event of the collapse of Kutai Kertanegara (Hindu kingdom) into an Islamic sultanate was marked by the conversion of the King to Islam after losing an argument with the Muslim propagator. King Makota Mulia Alam, who ruled around the 14th century, visited two missionaries from the Bugis lands. Their name is Sheikh Yusuf or Tuan Tuangang Parangan and Abdul Kadir Chatib or Tuan Di Bandang. After losing a theological debate about the truth held by the King and his people compared to Islamic teachings by a power struggle and if lost, the King was willing to convert to Islam. The King finally lost, and the Hindu kingdom turned into an Islamic sultanate, which in the 16th century attacked the Kutai Martadipura Kingdom located in Muara Kaman (Kutai Mulawarman). The King of Kutai Martadipura, Dharma Setia, as his name implies, died as a Hindu (Surpi Aryadharma, 2011) (Aryadharma, 2011:34).

Therefore, (Surpi, 2019) *Tarka-Vāda* should be a lesson for every Hindu university, Hindu organization, Hindu religion lessons, materials for preparing Hindu cadres, preparing Hindu Dharma Duta, Dharmapracharaka, or future leaders of Hindu organizations because this knowledge is fundamental to explain and maintain the Dharma. The ability to explain is essential, and shrewdness to get out of the trap of the opponent's doctrine, which only aims to defeat, is equally important.

As Śaṅkarācārya travels on Dharma missions, Dig-Vijaya (missionary tour) after defeating Mandana Miśra, debating and propagating Advaita Vedanta, scholars should learn this skill. aṅkarācārya's merits are extraordinary in restoring pride in the Dharma religion. Śaṅkarācārya also defeated the Jain debate in a debate at a place called Bahlika. ankarācārya also established his victory in debates over several philosophers and ascetics in Cambodia (Northern region of Kasmir), Darada (Dabistan), and against many faiths encountered in the desert regions and across the mighty peaks into Kasmir. Śaṅkarācārya also met the Navagupta Tantric expert in Kamarupa. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya visits Sarvajñapītha (Sharada Peeth) in Kashmir (now in Pakistan-Kashmir). Madhaviya state Shankaravijayam this temple has four doors for scholars from the four cardinal directions. The south door (representing South India) was never opened, indicating that no expert from South India had entered the Sarvajna Pitha. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya opened the south gate by defeating in debate all the experts in all the various academic disciplines such as Mimamsa, Vedanta, and other branches of Hindu philosophy; he ascended the throne of the temple's Transcendent wisdom. Towards the end of his life, di ankarācārya continued his journey to the Himalayan region of Kedarnath-Badrinath and attained Videha Mukti (freedom from existence).

It is the duty of scholars, scholars, especially scholars/masters of Hindu Philosophy to master the skills of di Śaṅkarācārya and these other saints. With good knowledge and mastery of the Tarka-Vāda, it will be very beneficial not only for dialogue with other believers but also to convince the people themselves of the truth of their religious teachings. So far, this is the weak point. Namely, the lecturers have not been able to convince the truth. They have not discussed it well with the broader community to encourage transformation in society. The role of intellectuals is huge and builds a society in all fields. However, mastery of Śāstra, theology, and philosophy should be an absolute requirement for dialogue, even discussion, and debate (Surpi, 2020a).

Dialogue, debate, and discussion skills can be learned more quickly as a means of communication. However, what is the use of place/tool and no content? Its contents are the mastery of Hindu Philosophy and Theology. This knowledge must be studied diligently and structured to mature one's knowledge. Tarka-Vādin, a master of

tarka, not only has excellent debating and logical abilities but begins with the mastery of Śruti and Śāstra to be able to establish Śraddhā. Therefore, studying the Praṣṭana-trayā namely the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad-gitā, and Brahma-Sūtra is the initial gateway and is followed by special discussions on Hindu philosophy and Theology. Mature knowledge and good communication skills are needed to have dialogues internally among Hindus and between religious communities to explain various Hindu concepts and teachings often misunderstood.

4. Conclusions

The intellectual tradition of Sanatana Dharma was so advanced even at the beginning of the first millennium AD. Various types of knowledge such as Tarkaśāstra (science of reasoning, the science of debating), Tarka-Vidyā (the science of reasoning), Vāda Vidyā (the science of discussion), and Ānviksiki (the science of critical studies), as essential aids in studying philosophy. We should inherit this tradition as a significant advantage in the 21st century.

Debates and dialogues are unavoidable these days, both formal and informal. Not infrequently, debate and discussion can undermine one's faith, as in Hindu history in the archipelago. Therefore, Tarka-Vāda should be a lesson for every Hindu University, Hindu Organization, Hindu Religion lesson, material in preparing Hindu regeneration, Dharma Duta, Dharmapracharaka, or future leaders of Hindu organizations because this knowledge is fundamental to explain and maintain the Dharma. The ability to explain is essential, and shrewdness to get out of the trap of the opponent's doctrine, which only aims to defeat, is equally important.

As Śaṅkarācārya travels on Dharma missions, Dig-Vijaya (missionary tour) after defeating Mandana Miśra, debating and propagating Advaita Vedanta, scholars should learn this skill. aṅkarācārya's merits are extraordinary in restoring pride in the Dharma religion. Śaṅkarācārya also defeated the Jain debate in a debate at a place called Bahlika. aṅkarācārya also established his victory in discussions over several philosophers and ascetics in Cambodia (Northern region of Kasmir), Darada (Dabistan), and against many faiths encountered in the desert regions and across the mighty peaks into Kasmir. Śaṅkarācārya also met the Navagupta Tantric expert in Kamarupa. The younger generation of Hindus should be taught in a structured way Philosophy and Theology accompanied by good communication skills. So that the knowledge of Hindu communication, the science of speech (Vakya Vidya), is growing so that Vācaspati, the Lord of speech, the Vedic reciter, is glorified again.

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