



Is Prāmāṇya Svataḥ or Parataḥ?: A Controversy in Indian Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

In the very ancient time, there has been arising a controversy regarding the concept of truth in Indian Philosophy especially in the Mīmāṃsā and the Nyāya system and also to attempt a critical assessment of the *prāmāṇya* theories. If we could throw some light on this and clarify the concepts, we could also to some extent clarify the remarkably complicated tangle of discussion that have grown up throughout the ages around the apparently simple question, is *prāmāṇya svataḥ* or *parataḥ*? This is one of those questions to which every school especially *Sāṃkhya*, *Vedānta*, *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsaka* etc worth the name came forward with an official answer. Argument and counter arguments were produced in never ending stream. But among them the discussion of *Nyāya* and *Mīmāṃsā* School complete with has widely extended. In this article we have discuss the opinion of this two schools which is very relevant to our research work. I intend to analyse the positions of the contending schools and attempt a re-evaluation of their doctrines.

1. Introduction

The *Nyāya* school discriminates a number of technical terms all derived from the common root- *pra + mā*, meaning 'to measure out'. *Pramā* is a term designating a true judgment and *pramātva* is the universal property shared by all true judgments. Frequently this property is referred to by another word, *prāmāṇya*, which is, however ambiguous, as J.N. Mohanty demonstrates¹. The *Nyāya* expresses its discussion of truth and error in a vocabulary which is peculiar and important enough to warrant a rather careful exposition. This vocabulary makes an early appearance. Oberhammer thinks that it comes to Vātsyāyana from some previous commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra*, since he finds it in Kaṇḍīnyas commentary on the *Pāsupatasūtras*, a work in which Kaṇḍīnya appears to derive his *Nyāya* from an older source than Vātsyāyana.²

However, the truth of a judgment is grounded in what is called a *pramāṇa*, an instrument of true cognition; the *Nyāya* recognizes four such instruments. The property which all such instruments have come in is also called *prāmāṇya*. The *prāmāṇya* theory asks: how does knowledge become true, and how is its truth ascertained? The theories of *prāmāṇya*— the well known *svataḥ* and the *parataḥ* theories are concerned with *prāmāṇya* in the sense, i.e., with the truth of knowledge. But there are other questions regarding the knowledge such as how is the knowledge itself known? How do I know that? Such questions are relevant but belong to a different category. More accurately they belong to the category of theories of *prakāśa*. The latter is concerned with the apprehension, not of

¹ Mohanty, J.N., 'Gauṅeśa's theory of Truth' Visva-Bharati, 1966, p.4

² K.H.Potter, 'Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophy', Vol. II, p. 154

truth but of the knowledge itself whose truth or falsity may at any time be under consideration. According to J. N. Mohanty, the theory of *prakāśa* is, in fact, logically prior to the theory of *prāmāṇya*. The question about the apprehension of knowledge is logically prior to, and independent of, the question about the origin and the apprehension of the truth of that knowledge. For, unless an object is itself known, no question can even be raised about its truth. The theory of *prakāśa* is also wider in scope inasmuch as it pertains to all states of consciousness and not merely to knowledge.³

From Mohanty's interpretation of *prāmāṇya* and *prakāśa* of Mohanty, we have got four different combinations of *svataḥ* theory and *parataḥ* theory. These are—1) The theory of *svataḥ prakāśa* combined with the theory of *svataḥprāmāṇya* –the school of Advaita and Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā. 2) The theory of *parataḥ prakāśa* combined with the theory of *svataḥprāmāṇya* - the school of Miśra and the Bhaṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsā. 3) The theory of *svataḥ prakāśa* combined with the theory of *parataḥprāmāṇya* - the school of the Buddhas; and 4) The theory of *parataḥ prakāśa* combined with the theory of *parataḥprāmāṇya*—the Nyāya-school.

1.1 Definition-Based Approach

So, the above controversy over the truth (*prāmāṇya*) of knowledge in Indian Philosophy is well known. But the main participants in this controversy, whom I have considered here, are the Mīmāṃsā and the Nyāya schools of thought. The Mīmāṃsā theory is known as the theory that truth is *svataḥ* whereas falsity is *parataḥ*. As opposed to this we have the Nyāya theory that both truth and falsity are '*parataḥ*'. The key terms in this controversy are '*svataḥ*' and '*parataḥ*' literally meaning 'from within' and 'from without' respectively.

When the Mīmāṃsā theory holds that truth is intrinsic or *svataḥ* in knowledge, it means either or both of two things. It may mean, on the one hand, that the originating conditions of the truth of knowledge are precisely the same as the originating conditions of the knowledge itself. On the other hand, the theory also holds that the knowledge and its truth are apprehended together. The term 'intrinsic' refers to the 'intrinsic' property with regard to both origin and apprehension', both *utpattitaḥ* and *jñāptitaḥ*. Similarly, when the Nyāya holds that truth is extrinsic to knowledge, it means two things. On the one hand, it holds that the generating conditions of the truth of knowledge are more than the generating condition of the knowledge itself. It also holds that the apprehension of knowledge does not amount to the apprehension of its truth. The 'extrinsic' means the 'extrinsic' property with regard to both origin and apprehension, *utpattitaḥ* and *jñāptitaḥ*.

Our purpose is to examine, at the outset, the Mīmāṃsaka view that the validity of a cognition is apprehended by the same collocation of a causal condition (*sāmagrī*) which enables us to apprehend the cognition itself (*jñānagrāhakaśāmagrīgrāhya*) and finally explains the Naiyāyikas view that the validity of a cognition is not apprehended by the causal conditions which apprehends the cognition, but by something other than this.

³ '*Gaṅgeśa's theory of Truth*', *ibid.*, p.4

1.2 An Account of Background Information

It is, therefore, necessary for us to see how the Mīmāṃsaka describes the *sāmagrī* for the apprehension of cognition and, in this context; we may take note of three different schools of Mīmāṃsā. According to the school Prabhākara Mīmāṃsaka, cognition is self-luminous (*svaparakāśa*); the cognizing subject, the object of cognition and the cognition itself are apprehended at one and the same point of time. According to the Bhāṭṭa, cognition is not self-luminous, but it is inferred on the strength of a property, called cognizance (*jñātātā*) which is produced in the object through the cognition.

According to the school of Murāri Miśra Mīmāṃsaka, cognition is apprehended by a subsequent cognition known as *anuvyavasāya* or apperception. It is worthy of notice here that the Naiyāyika also thinks that cognition is apprehended by what he calls *anuvyavasāya*. But there is a very fundamental point of difference between Murāri Miśra and the Naiyāyikas as an advocate of *anuvyavasāya*. The difference between the two lies in the fact that Murāri Miśra believes that *anuvyavasāya* apprehends a cognition as well as its validity, while the Naiyāyika believes that *anuvyavasāya* apprehends the cognition only, but not its validity.

Now, let us return to the main point. Philosophers of the Nyāya and the Mīmāṃsaka schools have been at variance with one another with regard to the manner in which the validity (*prāmāṇya*) of cognition is apprehended. According to the most of the Nyāya philosophers, all cognitions are dubious in nature (*saṁśayita*) and as such it is not possible to determine the validity or otherwise of any cognition and thus advocate the *parataḥprāmāṇya* theory⁴. But there are other Mīmāṃsaka philosophers who opine that it is possible to apprehend the validity or otherwise of a cognition and thus advocate the *svataḥprāmāṇya* theory. According to all of these three schools of the Mīmāṃsakas (the Prabhākara, the Miśra and the Bhāṭṭa), the validity of a cognition is apprehended by the same *sāmagrī* (collection of all causal conditions) as enables us to apprehend the cognition itself (*jñānagrāhakaśāmagrīgrāhya*).

The Prabhākara holds that every cognition being self-luminous (*svaparakāśa*) by nature; the *sāmagrī* that produces cognition not only enables us to apprehend the cognition itself, but also to apprehend its validity. By validity of cognition we mean '*tadvati tatprakāratva*'. Cognition is valid (*pramā*) if and only if property 'x' appearing as a qualifier (*prakāra*) in that cognition occurs in, or is possessed by, the object 'y' which appears as the qualificand (*viśeṣya*) of that cognition. On a careful analysis, '*tadvati tatprakāratva*' will resolve itself into '*tadvadvīśeṣyakatvāvacchinnatatprakāratva*'. To be precise, for a cognition to be valid it is also necessary that the qualifier-ness in the property 'x' be delimited by the qualificand-ness of the object 'y' which possesses x.

So, in a valid cognition we have three elements as its constitutes—i) *tadvattva*—the property of the qualificand possessing the qualifier 'x';

ii) *viśeṣyakatva+prakāratva*— having qualificandness + qualificierness;

⁴ "*Pramātvam na svato grāhyam saṁśayānupapattitaḥ*", '*Bhaṣāpariccheda kārikā*', (Viśvanātha), Bengali trans. Gopal Mukhopaddhya, Burdwan University, 1980, p.136

iii) *avacchinnatva*—the relation of delimitation between the two relational abstracts, i.e., qualificand-ness and qualifier-ness.

Now, it is well known that when a cognition is apprehended such properties of the cognition as the cognition-universal (*jñātva*) etc, are apprehended along with it. So we may say that other properties of the cognition, viz. qualierness, are also apprehended by the same cognition. In the case of construction filled cognition, say ‘a white flower’, when the two properties, i.e., white colour and flower-ness, are apprehended, the relation of concurrence between them is also apprehended provided the situation does not contain any definite impediment to it. Similarly, the relation of delimitation between the qualificand-ness and the qualifier-ness is also apprehended in the apprehension of a cognition which apprehends the two relational abstracts, qualificand-ness and qualierness. Thus, the *Prābhākaras* argue that when all the elements constituting the validity of cognition are seen to be apprehended along with the apprehension of the cognition, it can be asserted that the validity of the cognition is apprehended in the apprehension of the cognition itself. The *svataḥ-prāmāṇya* theory is thus established.

Murāri Miśra holds that the *anuvyavasāya* or introspection of cognition apprehends not only the cognition itself but also its validity. To be sure, the *sāmagrī* for the apprehension of cognition in this view is identical with the *sāmagrī* for the *anuvyavasāya*. In the construction-filled cognition ‘this is a jar’, *jar-ness* appears as qualifying the object mentioned by ‘this’. In the *anuvyavasāya* coming after it, the object mentioned by ‘this’ is grasped as the qualificand of the previous *vyavasāya* or construction-filled cognition. Now, in order to distinguish between the cognition ‘this is a jar’ and the collective cognition (*samuhālabana*) ‘this is and a jar is’, it should be said that while the *anuvyavasāya* of the latter does not register the relation of delimitation between the qualifier-ness and the qualificand-ness of the cognition concerned, the *anuvyavasāya* of the former does so register that relation. This amounts to saying that such *anuvyavasāya* also apprehends the validity of the cognition in question.

The *Bhaṭṭa* maintains that cognition is not amenable to sense-perception (*atīndriya*) by nature but is apprehended through inference. When a jar is cognised cognition of the type ‘the jar is cognised’ follows. In this second cognition the property cognizance (*jñātatā*) appears as a qualifier of the jar. The *Bhaṭṭa* points out this unique property, viz, cognizance, and argues that it is different from what we call *jñānaviśayatā* or the property of being the content of cognition. The property ‘cognizance’ of the jar is also asserted to be perceivable by the sense-organ which perceives the jar. Now, the *Bhaṭṭa* says that just as cognition is apprehended (inferred) on the strength of this property, viz, cognizance, the validity of that cognition is also apprehended by the same token.⁵

The *svataḥprāmāṇya* theory as explained above has been severally criticized by Prācīna as well as Navya Naiyāyika Gaṅgeśa in his *magnum opus*, the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* and following him by Harirāma in his *Prāmāṇyavāda*. Before we study the objection raised by them it is essential to clearly elucidate a few fundamental questions.

⁵ “Svataḥ sarvapramāṇānām prāmāṇyam iti gamyatām / Na hi svatoḥsatī śaktiḥ kartumanena śakyate” ‘Mīmāṃsāslokaṅkārikā’, (Kumārila), ed. Durgadhar Jha, Darbhanga, 1979, p.47

True knowledge is defined by the Mīmāṃsā in the book *Mānameyodaya* as '*ajñāta tattvārthajñānam*', [*Mānameyodaya*, (Narayana Bhaṭṭa), ed. Dinanath Tripathy, Sanskrit College, Kolkata, 1990, p.2], i.e., that which has for its content something which is not already known (*ajñāta*) and which is real (*tattvārtha*). The same properties with different names are spoken by Dharmaraja Adhvarindra in the book *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* as '*anadhigata*', i.e., which is not already known, and '*abādhitā*', i.e., not sublated. Thus, truth of knowledge consists in 'newness' or 'novelty' and 'unsublatedness' of its content. Truth thus defined is, according to the Mīmāṃsā, intrinsic, i.e., it is generated by the conditions generating knowledge without requiring any additional condition, and it is also known along with the knowledge to which it belongs, without requiring further knowledge. I would consider first the latter part of the theory concerning the knowledge of truth. It is held that knowledge arises along with the knowledge of its own truth. Now, if 'newness' and 'unsublatedness' of content are the criteria of truth, how can its knowledge of *prāmāṇya* arise along with the knowledge? Obviously, the knowledge of truth would depend upon another knowledge with reference to which the 'newness' and 'unsublatedness' of the content of a knowledge would have to be determined. Hence, if the above characteristics are regarded as the criteria of truth, there arises an incompatibility between the Mīmāṃsā definition of true knowledge and the theory of intrinsic truth of knowledge advocated by them. The criteria would, in fact, support the rival theory of extrinsic truth of knowledge.

To save its theory the Mīmāṃsā maintains that knowledge is true by nature. To be knowledge is to be true knowledge and *vice versa*. This would mean that false knowledge is not knowledge at all; it is at best deceptions of knowledge. Thus, the knowledge of truth would be extrinsic, for if I have knowledge and I know it, I also know that it is true. These words are never used to refer to false beliefs. For example, one cannot assert without absurdity that 'I know that it is raining outside, but it is false'. If I am mistaken about something, I cannot be said to have knowledge about it, although I might have thought or said so. Thus, knowledge is intrinsically true, for truth is its essential nature. If I know that I have knowledge, I also know necessarily that it is true. Knowledge is never proved false; but the character of what is not knowledge, and yet poses as knowledge, becomes exposed.

If the *Mīmāṃsā* accepts the above view of knowledge, then it must reject the classification of knowledge into true (*pramā*) and false (*apramā*). But the *Mīmāṃsakas* (except the *Prābhākaras*) accept such a classification and consider both truth and falsity of knowledge under the theory of truth (*prāmāṇyavāda*). Besides, the *Mīmāṃsakas* use the term 'true' in two different senses. First, they say that all cognitions as cognitions are 'true' and secondly, they say that some cognitions are 'true' and some false. In the first sense even, error is 'true' while in the second sense it is not. These anomalies can be removed if error is excluded from the category of knowledge.

Thus, the theory of intrinsic truth of knowledge would have to maintain that all beliefs appear to be knowledge in the beginning, though some of them are false from their very inception and are, therefore, not knowledge at all, their falsity is known later on when they are put to practical test. So far as the knowledge of truth is concerned the theory would insist that knowledge is intrinsically true and is always known in its essential nature. There is no criterion of truth, though there is one of falsity. No criterion can prove truth but it can prove the falsity of what was taken to be knowledge and was not knowledge at all. Thus 'newness' and 'unsublatedness' of content are not the criteria of truth, but the nature of truth; they, however, function as the criteria of falsity when some belief is found lacking in one or the other of these two features. It is, however, important to ask whether knowledge is known to be true (or known as knowledge) without any reference to other knowledge which confirms or justifies it.

The traditional opponent of the theory discussed above is the *Nyāya* which advocates the theory of extrinsic truth of knowledge. Before we examine their view, certain basic points are elucidated here.

First, cognition in the philosophy of Mīmāṃsaka and the Naiyāyika is momentary by nature. That is to say, it perishes on the third moment of its birth. Thus cognition is born at one moment of time, it continues to exist for another moment and it dies out on the third. The position is therefore, different from that of the Buddhist according to whom momentariness (*kṣaṇikatva*) means destruction of each entity on the second moment of its origination. Secondly, the Mīmāṃsaka agrees that the apprehension of validity of cognition will be certitude or certain knowledge of such validity. For, cognition usually becomes certitude (*niścaya*) unless something is present in the situation to make it dubious (*saṁśaya*). Thus according to Prābhākara, the validity is apprehended, i.e., certainly known, by the *sāmagrī* which produces the cognition and at the same time does not contain any element that might apprehend its invalidity (*aprāmāṇyāgrāhakajñānotpādakasāmagrīgrāhyatva*).

Now, if it be held that the validity of a cognition is apprehended only by the *sāmagrī* of the same cognition, i.e., if the *svataḥprāmāṇya* theory is held to be true, it follows that in the third moment of its origin there cannot be any dubiety (*saṁśaya*) with regard to the validity of a construction-filled cognition (*vyavasāya*). For the cognition and certitude of its validity do not cease to exist in the second moment of their origin and as such they will set aside any apprehension of invalidity. To be sure, dubiety being a sort of vacillating cognition between two contradictory qualifiers like 'a' and 'not-a', the presence of a certain knowledge of validity in the second moment, will require both validity and its contradiction, viz., invalidity, as the qualifiers of the construction-filled cognition—but this is not possible in view of the fact that a certitude of validity being already there will serve as an impediment of the production of dubiety in the next moment.

But it is a fact as argued by the advocate of the *parataḥprāmāṇya* theory that we can sometimes doubt as to the validity of cognition in the third moment of its origin. This forces the Naiyāyika to conclude that the validity of cognition is apprehended through something else over and above the *sāmagrī* for the apprehension of that cognition.

The Naiyāyikas reject the first part of the Mīmāṃsaka view on the ground that knowledge is both made valid and known to be valid by its own intrinsic conditions. The validity of knowledge cannot be due to the conditions of knowledge as such. If that were so, there could not be any invalid knowledge, since even invalid knowledge arises from the conditions of knowledge. In fact, a valid cognition is more than cognition as such. Hence it must be due to some special character of the general conditions of knowledge just as an invalid cognition is due to some positive factors that vitiate the general conditions of knowledge. The mere absence of vitiating factors cannot account for the positive character of validity. Thus the validity of perception is due not merely to the absence of vitiating factors like the defective condition of the sense organ, but to such positive factors as the healthy condition of the sense organ, etc.

Similarly, in all other cases the validity of knowledge is due to some special auxiliary conditions in the specific causes of knowledge. Such special conditions may not be always perceived but they may be known from other sources like inference and testimony. Further, if the validity of knowledge be due simply to the absence of vitiating conditions, its invalidity may also be said to be due to the absence of efficacious conditions. As such, we need not say that invalidity is due to external conditions.

Again, on the Mīmāṃsā view, all knowledge being intrinsically valid, the distinction between truth and falsehood becomes insignificant. We should not speak of any knowledge which is an invalid one. It cannot be said that when any knowledge turns out to be false, it altogether ceases to be knowledge or cognition. A wrong knowledge is as good a cognition as a true one. So, if cognition is said to be true, there cannot be any wrong cognition. But there are wrong cognitions. That these are illusions and hallucinations is an undeniable fact. So it must be admitted that both validity and invalidity are externally conditioned.⁶

Similarly, no knowledge is by itself known to be valid i.e., self-evident. Thus the cognition of blue does not cognize its truth or validity at the same time that it cognizes blue colour. It does not even cognize itself immediately as cognition of blue, for less as a valid cognition of blue. On the Bhāṭṭa view, cognition is not immediately cognised, but is known mediately by inference. If so, the validity of knowledge cannot be immediately known by itself. Nor can we see that with every cognition there follows immediately another cognition which cognizes the validity of the first. With the perception of the blue, for example, we do not find cognition immediately following it and cognising its validity or invalidity. There is no introspective evidence for a secondary cognition of validity appearing immediately after the primary cognition of an object. Even if there were such, the validity of knowledge will not be self-evident but evident by another knowledge. Further, if the invalidity of knowledge be known from its contradiction, we are to say that its validity is known from the absence of contradiction.

On the other hand, if we accept the Prābhākara view that knowledge is self-manifest and guarantees its own truth without reference to anything else, we do not see how there can be doubt and suspicion, or how there can be any failure or practical activity. Since validity is inherent and self-evident in knowledge, each knowledge must carry in it an assurance of its truth and we should have no doubt. Similarly, every knowledge being true and known to be true by itself, there cannot be any disappointment in practical life. But doubts and disappointments are very common experiences of life. If it be said that doubt arises out of a contradiction between two cognitions and is resolved by a third cognition, we are forced to give up the idea of self-evident validity. The third cognition may not constitute the validity of the first by reason of its coherence with it, but it at least conditions our knowledge of its validity. So, the validity of one knowledge is known by another knowledge. In fact knowledge only reveals its object. To know that it is valid, i.e., it truly reveals the object. We must have some extraneous test like coherence with volitional experience or some ascertained past knowledge. Hence, the validity of knowledge must be known from external conditions.⁷

Generally speaking, the Naiyāyikas maintain that the truth and falsity of knowledge are known by certain external conditions other than the conditions of knowledge itself (*parataḥ prāmāṇyāprāmāṇyajñapti*). If truth be self-evident, there need not be any doubt and dispute about knowledge, and if falsehood be self-evident there should be no illusion and disappointment. As a general rule, the validity or invalidity of knowledge is known

⁶ Jayantabhaṭṭa, 'Nyāyamañjarī', ed. Pandit Surya Narayan Sukla, Kāśī Sanskrit Series, Haridas Sanskrit Granthamala, No.160, Vidya Vilas Press, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Benaras City, 1936, p. 170-71

⁷ Visvanātha, 'Bhāṣāpariccheda (with) Siddhāntamuktāvalīkā', ed. Pancānan Śāstrī. Kolkata, 1884, p.131-36

sometime after the knowledge itself has appeared.⁸ What, then, are the external conditions of the knowledge of validity or invalidity? The Naiyāyikas answer that both are known by inference. While knowledge may be internally perceived, its validity or invalidity is to be inferred from such extrinsic conditions. Its capacity or incapacity produces successful activity (*pravṛttisāmarthya*).⁹ By successful activity, they mean the volitional experiences (*arthakryājñāna*) of the expected object (*phalajñāna*). The perception of water in a certain place is known to be true when by acting on that perception we meet with the expected water. On the other hand, knowledge is known to be valid, when it is contradicted by subsequent volitional experiences (*pravṛttivisaṁvāda*). This is the invalidity of knowledge is inferred from the failure of the practical activities based on it. The perception of silver in a shell is known to be illusory because the act of picking it up does not give the expected silver. Hence *pravṛttisāmarthya* means that the object as cognised is found present when acted upon by us, i.e., it is given to volitional experience just as it was given to the corresponding cognitive experience.¹⁰

In the case of the knowledge of familiar objects (*abhyāsadaśājñāna*), we do not require the test of successful activity of cognitive satisfaction (*pravṛttisāmarthya*). In this case it may seem at first sight that the validity or invalidity of knowledge is self-evident (*svataḥ*). A habitual experience is known to be valid or invalid even before we proceed to act upon it and see if it leads to the expected object or not. It would therefore seem that the validity or invalidity of habitual experience need not be known by any inference and as such, is self-evident. But here the *Naiyāyikas* point out that it is a contradiction to say that the truth of the familiar is self-evident. The knowledge of the validity of familiar knowledge is conditioned by the conditions of its familiarity. The familiarity of knowledge means its similarity to previous knowledge. Hence if we have ascertained the validity of the previous knowledge, we may very well know the validity of the present familiar knowledge by an inference based on its similarity to the former (*tajjātiyatva*)¹¹. What happens here is that the previous verification of knowledge by conative satisfaction becomes a determinant of similar subsequent knowledge. This shows that the validity or invalidity of such knowledge as is not new is known by inference based on essential similarity or generic identity. This inference is in most cases, implicit and unconscious. But it is never absent. We may put it explicitly in the form of a syllogism like this: 'All knowledge of a known character is valid; this knowledge is of the character; therefore this is valid.' So is, (with the necessary changes having been carried out), for the inference by which we know the invalidity of the knowledge of familiar objects.¹² Hence the *Naiyāyikas* conclude that knowledge is both made true or false, and known to be true or false by certain external conditions other than those conditioning the knowledge itself.

2. Analysing the Problem

⁸ Gaṅgeśa, 'Tattvachintāmaṇi, MāthurīTīkā, Pratyakṣkhaṇḍa', 233, das Dhelli, 1974, p.184

⁹ "Prāmāṇyaṁ hi samarthapravṛttijanakattvād anumeyam" 'Nyāyavārttikatātparyatikāparisuddhi', (Udayana), ed. Vindhyasari Prasad Dvivedin, Asiatic Society, 1911, p. 3

¹⁰ Jayantabhaṭṭa, 'Nyāyamañjarī', loc.cit., p. 171-72

¹¹ "...abhyāsadaśāpannaya tajjātiyatvena prāmāṇyānumānād anabhyāsadaśāpannasya tu pravṛttisāmarthyāntara jñānena prāmāṇyānumānāt." , 'Nyāyavārttikatātparyatikā', (Vācaspati), ed. Anantalāl Thākur, ICPR., New Delhi, 1996, p.30

¹² Jayantabhaṭṭa, 'Nyāyamañjarī', .ibid., p.174

It will appear from the above discussion that the Naiyāyikas are not prepared to accept the theory of intrinsic validity. That truth is intrinsic and self-evident in all knowledge is not admitted by them. But that the truth of some cases of knowledge is self-evident is admitted by some Naiyāyikas. There is on this point a difference of opinion between the ancient and the modern exponents of the Nyāya. The older Naiyāyikas insist that a proof of the validity of any knowledge requires the exclusion of other suggested possibilities contrary to it. Hence, we find that they try to establish the validity of every knowledge by external grounds, even at the risk of *infinite regress*. To prove the validity of knowledge we need not go beyond perception, inference, comparison and testimony. But one perception or inference must be proved by another individual perception or inference. Hence the same knowledge may sometimes be proved by another and sometimes taken to prove another (*pradīpaprakāśavat*). This seems to be a more empirical and common-sense view of the validity of human knowledge.

Latter Naiyāyikas, however, do not insist that every knowledge must be tested and proved before we can accept its validity. According to them, the validity of knowledge need not be proved if there is not the slightest doubt about it (*samśayābhāva*). Its validity is practically self-evident as long as it is not contradicted. A motiveless doubt of a possible contradiction is of no account. To say that knowledge is evidently valid is not necessary to prove its infallibility or to exclude all other possibilities contrary to it. So, if there be such knowledge as cannot reasonably be doubted, we are to say that it has self-evident truth. Of course, when any doubt or dispute arises as to its truth, we must prove it by some extraneous test.

Among such cases of knowledge, the Naiyāyikas include logical inference and comparison, and cognition of the resemblance between two cognitions (*jñānagatasādṛśyajñāna*), cognition of cognition or self-consciousness (*anuvyavasāya*), and cognition of anything as something or as a mere subject are all cases of self-consciousness of knowledge. In these we not only know something but also know that we know it. That is, we know that something is known. Hence these cases of knowledge also are necessary knowledge having self-evident validity. We find such views in *Nyāyavārttikātparyāyikā* of Vācaspati Miśra and *Nyāyavārttikātparyāyikāparisuddhi* of Udayana in the Prācīna Nyāya as well as in *Tattvacintāmaṇi* of Gaṅgeśa in the Navya Nyāya.

In the case of sense-perception and testimony, however, there cannot be any self-evident validity. These are not based on any necessary relation between two terms. There is no necessary relation between sense-perception and its object or between words and their meanings. Hence, we cannot say that to know anything by external perception or testimony is also to know that we know it. These cannot be the contents of self-consciousness of knowledge and their validity is not self-evident.

The question about the knowledge of truth is more important from the point of view of epistemology. As regards the knowledge of truth the Nyāya maintains that it is extrinsic, otherwise there would be no place for doubt about any knowledge. Does it mean that truth of a knowledge, with regard to which there is no doubt, is known intrinsically? The Nyāya does admit some species of knowledge in the case of which there is no doubt, such as inferential, introspective, familiar knowledge, and knowledge of fruitfulness of activity. If the truth of these is admitted to be known intrinsically, there would be no logical ground for denying the same in the case of other knowledge which is free from doubt. And if their truth is also said to be known extrinsically, there would be an *infinite regress*. The Nyāya position in this regard is that the truth of inferential knowledge etc. is known intrinsically. However, if there is any doubt regarding their truth, then it has to be ascertained with reference to some other knowledge. But the question is: can the Nyāya consistently regard the truth of any knowledge be known intrinsically? It is true that knowledge of fruitfulness of activity, inferential knowledge etc. is accompanied by

certainty, but so are other forms of knowledge also, even error is not an exception to it. Then why is it not with regard to the truth of all certain knowledge as is known intrinsically? In fact, for the Nyāya truth of no knowledge can be intrinsically known. The question here is not about certainty or absence of doubt, but about the truth as defined by the Nyāya. Although inferential knowledge etc. is accompanied by certainty, their truth is known only extrinsically. 'Being certain' must be distinguished from 'knowing truth'. Only such a position would be consistent with the Nyāya.

3. Analyzing the solution

It should, however, be noted here that with the Naiyāyikas the self-evident validity of some cases of knowledge does not exclude their liability to error. Prof. S.C.Chatterjee remarks in his book '*The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge*' that the 'Nyāya conception of the self-evident validity of some knowledge is different from the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta view of the self-evident validity of knowledge'.¹³ For the Mīmāṃsaka and the Vedāntin, the self-evident character of a truth means its infallibility which excludes the possibility of any falsification, so that error pertains not to truth but to its applications (*vyāvahāra*). For the Naiyāyikas, however, even necessary truths are empirical and so require confirmation by fresh applications, i.e., *pravṛttisāmarthya*, whenever necessary. But they are different in status from ordinary observation and generalization. They possess the highest degree of certainty which is humanly attainable.

Parataḥ prāmānya theory has got one inherent defect. If successful activity generates the validity of knowledge over and above the conditions of knowledge, how will we account for this successful activity? How do we know the successful activity itself? Is it intrinsic? Vācaspati holds such a view. In that case we surrender the acceptability of *parataḥ prāmānya*. To avoid such unpleasant consequence, if we hold that successful activity will be certified by another knowledge, then that other knowledge remains to be certified by another, that another by another, thus leading to *regress ad infinitum*. How will we solve this problem? We will answer these questions at the end of this chapter. Before that, we will discuss briefly the opinion of other famous Naiyāyikas regarding *parataḥ prāmānyavāda*.

Bhāsarvajña's *Nyāyasāra* or *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* holds a very unique place in the history of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy. He was a great thinker of his time. He preceded Udayana by a short time. In his book '*Nyāyasāra*' he defined first *pramāṇa* or instrument of right knowledge. Bhāsarvajña holds that there are only three instruments of knowledge as opposed to the Nyāya view that there are four. The three means are perception, inference, and verbal testimony. He argues later (p.81) with great ingenuity that his system of three instruments of knowledge does not in fact go against Gautama's system of four. Gautama first spoke of five sense organs in *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.12, and then in another place accepted the internal organ as the sixth organ. This shows, according to Bhāsarvajña, that Gautama's enumeration of items was not always meant to be exact or exhaustive or even mutually exclusive of other lists. Thus, although he mentioned four instruments of knowledge, he would not have denied the fact that there are only three, the third in his list being capable of being included in the fourth, verbal testimony. In page 38-43, of the same book, the question whether the validity of knowledge is intrinsic or extrinsic is raised and Bhāsarvajña eventually supports the theory of extrinsic validity (*parataḥ-prāmānya*).

¹³ Chatterjee, Prof. S.C., '*The Nyāya theory of knowledge*', University of Calcutta, 2nd. ed, 1950, p.100

If we not discuss Udayana's view regarding *prāmāṇyavāda* from his famous book *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, then it seems to be an incomplete work. To reject the atheist view Udayana established the view of existence of God through *pramāṇa* and *tarka*. Udayana says that here his 'flowers' (*kusuma*) are his arguments (*Nyāya*). This is his motive to write the book *Nyāyakusumāñjali*.

There can be no question of His existence. Udayana established the existence of God by refuting the objection raised by his opponents and thus he entered into the discussion of *Prāmāṇyavāda*. To represent the opponent view Udayana admits in his book two (*Dvītiya stabaka*) of *Nyāyakusumāñjali Kārikā- 1*, '*nanu nityanirdoṣa.....*',¹⁴ i.e., we need not bring God to learn about transcendent things, for those things are known through the Vedas---which are eternal and without defect---or through an omniscient self who has perfected himself through *yoga* and meritorious actions. In reply Udayana remarks '*atrocayte—pramāyāḥ paratantratvāt.....*',¹⁵ i.e., valid knowledge depends for its validity on something other than merely the source of knowledge as such. Therefore, the validity of the Vedas must be due to another cause, specifically to the reliability of its author.

The opponent argues that the validity of knowledge is intrinsic. Wrong judgement arises from some fault in the causal factors which combine in producing the judgement. Thus, validity may be defined as absence of faults in the factors. These faults are typically things like inattentiveness and desire to mislead others, faults which may arise among human speakers. But since the Vedas are eternal and have no author at all, no faults can vitiate the knowledge they impart.

To answer the above objection Udayana admits that faults are additional factors according to the objector which make the resulting judgement invalid. Then they should be willing to admit that absence of a fault is an additional factor which makes the resulting judgement valid---and this is precisely a Nyāya stand point, viz., that validity is due to extrinsic causes.

But absence of fault is a negative entity. So, the opponent now revises their thesis to say that there are no extraneous positive factors productive of validity. Then the opponent can admit that absence of desire to mislead, e.g., is an extraneous factor consistently with their account. In reply, Udayana said that the opponent's thinking is of inattentiveness and desire to mislead as faults. But there are other sources of invalidity, other faults which are not positive, such as the fallacies of the *hetu*, for example, which are negative things, failures. And the absence of a negative thing is a positive entity. Thus, the opponent must admit positive extraneous factors and accept the Nyāya view.

Validity is a common attribute. It is never produced since it is eternal. The validity of a judgement is extrinsic, i.e., it is due to some extrinsic causes other than the causes of judgements in general. Varadarāja argues: a) whatever is a specific type of an effect is due to some extrinsic cause other than the cause of the common effect of that type, as, for example, barley sprout. Barley sprout is a specific type of effect and is produced from barley seed and not from any type of seed. Likewise, validity is a specific type of effect and hence

¹⁴ Udayana, '*Nyāyakusumāñjali*', ed. & trans. Sri Srimohan Bhattacharya TarkaVedantatirtha, Paschimanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, Kolkata, 1995, p.56

¹⁵ *ibid.*

must be due to some specific cause. b) Whichever is a judgement of a specific sort is due to some extrinsic cause to that which produces knowledge in general, as, for example, a false judgement.

Judgements, as said, are determined as to their validity by the nature of things, and thus whether a given judgement is true or false cannot be decided in general but must be decided case to case. Defense of this position requires, however, a discussion whether validity is intrinsic or extrinsic. It is not intrinsic. If it was intrinsic, then the question arises: is this fact made out by the judgement itself or by another judgement? It cannot be apprehended by the judgement itself as no judgement can apprehend its own validity. Judgements have the generic character of illuminating, but this cannot be the basis for declaring one to be valid in contrast to another. Perception cannot show us that a judgement is intrinsically valid, on the other hand, for there is nothing perceived in a true judgement which is lacking in a false one.

Someone (the Buddhists) argue that if a judgement is not allowed to be perceptible, then it will not illuminate its object for us. Again, if it takes a second judgement to cognize a first one, there will be an *infinite regress* and no judgement will ever be cognized.

As noted above, the validity of a judgement cannot be established merely on the basis that it illuminates, for all judgements do that by their very nature. More generally, the intrinsic validity of a judgement cannot be established by apperception (*anuvyavasāya*), as it is not possible to decide concerning a given judgement merely by inspection that it is valid rather than invalid. Nor can we hope to identify validity by inspecting the nature of the instrument used in arriving at a given judgement, for we can make mistake about this, and think that what is not a valid instrument of knowledge is one. Thus, even if validity pervades the judgement from its first instant, we cannot hope to know that fact except extrinsically, i.e., from a subsequent inferential judgement. But we must discover error, if wordly transactions are to proceed.

Prof. V. Varadachari explained the processes of extrinsic establishment of the validity of a judgement T is this: when T first arises, we do not distinguish the features which differentiate its object from other things much like it; it is only at a subsequent stage, called *abhyāsa*, that we doubt whether T is true or false, and study the relations between T and other judgements whose objects are similar to that of T. The study undertaken at this stage forms the basis of another judgement K; K is based on memories aroused by the impressions produced by knowledge of invariable concomitance, and thus it is K, which is about the identifying features of T's object, which validates T. (Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Vol. 2, ed. K.H. Potter, 1977, p.526)

4. Conclusion

The above account applies to perceptual judgements but not generally to inferential ones. For, in such case the *hetu* pervades the *pakṣa*. Though doubt does not arise there, yet pervasion is required to be occurred. As an exception, therefore, the determination of the validity of an inference, in as much as it depends on this relationship holding, is held to be intrinsic. (This matter is dealt with by Udayana in his *Parīśuddhi*, p.58). Udayana says that this is the traditional view of the Nyāya system, elucidated by Vācaspati Miśra. Similarly, another exception to the rule of extrinsic establishment of validity is allowed in the case of *anuvyavasāya* itself, in order to avoid *infinite regress*.

One important point should be noted here that Udayanācārya supported Vācaspati Miśra, but in his book '*Ātmatattvaviveka*' Udayanācārya has remarked that according to the Nyāya view in all cases the validity of

pramāṇa follows extrinsically, i.e., it is *parataḥ*. Though Udayana tried to improve upon Vātsyayana by showing that *pramāṭva* is *parataḥ*, not only in cases of inference and testimony (as advocated by *Bhāṣyakāra*), but also in all cases under consideration. The intention of Udayana seems to be this, that if *paratastva* is not proving all cases, the argument will be weak and less convincing. In other words, we cannot hold legitimately that in some cases *prāmāṇya* is *svataḥ* (intrinsic) and in some cases, *prāmāṇya* is *parataḥ* (extrinsic). These two views appear to be contradicting each other. That is why; Udayana in his works tried to establish that *prāmāṇya* is *parataḥ* in all cases. Gaṅgeśa in his '*Tattvacintāmaṇi*' also lends support to Udayana's view.

In fact, Ācārya Udayana argues in the book '*Ātmatattvaviveka*' in the context of *vāhyārthabhangavāda* that validity of knowledge is always ascertained by extrinsic character. This view is upheld by all the Naiyāyikas. But Vācaspati in his commentary, *Tātparyatikā*, is found to deviate from this view when he argues that inference which settles the claim of validity or invalidity need not be further certified by another knowledge. This means that Vācaspati tacitly admits the intrinsic nature of *anumāna* which stands self-validated (*svataḥ*). Ācārya Udayana argues in defence of Vācaspati stating that Vācaspati's intention is to show that the said inference itself is able to nullify any apprehension of further invalidity of knowledge. In short, the inference which certifies the validity of previous knowledge stands self-validated on the ground that there is no further query about the validity itself.

If we go on certifying the validity of first inference by a second one and the second by a third, this process will go on indefinitely landing us to *infinite regress*. If, on the contrary, the second inference substantially proves the validity of the previous one, we need not go through the long chain involving *infinite regress*. This does not mean *prāmāṇya* for Vācaspati is *svataḥ* or intrinsic. His intention is to show that if the said inference is capable to validate the first knowledge without doubt, then it requires no further validation. In this context, we may represent the opinion of Mahāmahopādhyāya Jogendranāth, who said in his Bengali book '*Prāchīna Nyāya o Mīmāṃsā Sammata Prāmāṇyavāda*' that "*aprāmāṇya śaṅkā viraha prajuktai anumānādir prāmāṇya svataḥ grhita hay*". (*Prāchīna Nyāya o Mīmāṃsā Sammata Prāmāṇyavāda*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1974, p.78). So, this is the answer of the question, which we have raised before regarding the *parataḥ prāmāṇyavāda*.

The conclusion reached by our investigation may now be summarized as follows:

1) The dispute between the Nyāya and the Mīmāṃsā over the conditions generating truth is without significance. However, the question about the conditions generating knowledge, or true knowledge, is intelligible and important.

2) Truth of a knowledge is always known extrinsically, i.e., by reference to some other knowledge which justifies it, though it is intrinsic to knowledge in the sense that it constitutes the very nature of knowledge.

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