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PRAMĀNAS IN THE PRĀBHĀKARA-MĪMĀMSĀ

The Mīmāṃsā system of Indian Philosophy has two chief branches viz., the Bhāṭṭa school of Kumārila and the Prābhākara school of Prabhākara Miśra.

Knowledge, according to the Prābhākaras, is intrinsic. Different schools of Indian thought are not unanimous regarding the nature and number of the sources of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*). According to the Prābhākara-Mīmāṃsā, valid knowledge is experience. Experience is different from remembrance and remembrance is, again the cognition that arises out of the impression caused by previous knowledge¹.

Of the sources of valid knowledge, Prabhākara recognizes five: perception (*Pratyakṣa*), Inference (*Anumāna*), Verbal Testimony (*Śāstra*), comparison (*Upamāna*) and Postulation (*Arthāpatti*)². The Prābhākaras do not recognize non-apprehension (*Anupalabdhi*) of the Bhāṭṭas and the vedāntins as an independent source of valid knowledge.

Prabhākara, a staunch follower of the Mīmāṃsā theory of the self-validity of knowledge (*svataḥ-prāmāṇyavāda*) asserts that all experience is valid. Śālikanātha also says as such³.

1. *anudhūtiḥ pramāṇam sā smṛter anyā smṛtiḥ punaḥ / pūrvavijñānasamkāramātrajaṁ jñānam ucyate // pp. 5.1.*

2. *tatra pañcavidhaṁ mānaṁ pratyakṣam anumānaṁ tathā / tathopamānārthāpatti itī guror matam // Ibid., pp. 5.3.*

3. *yathārthaṁ sarvaṁ eveha vijñānam iti siddhaye / prabhākaraguror bhāvah samīcinaḥ prakāśyate // p. 43.*

The theory of Error advocated by the Prābhākaras is known as Akhyātivāda. It is *Akhyāti* because it interprets error or illusion as the absence of '*khyāti*' which means knowledge. The Prābhākaras contend that the object of a cognition is that alone which is manifested by it. In the illusion, '*idaṁ rajatam*' (this is silver), what is manifested is '*rajata*' (silver) and as such its object is the silver and not the nacre⁴.

The theory of *Akhyāti* presents a good psychological analysis of illusion and it is right in stating that in illusion there is some objective fact which is incompletely viewed.

Perception (*pratyakṣa*) is the primary source of valid knowledge and is universally accepted. It gives a direct knowledge of reality. Prabhākara says that perception apprehends the form of object⁵. The very simple but clear definition of perception has been given by Śālikanātha as he says that perception is the direct apprehension which cognises the apprehended object (*Meya*), the self (*Mātā*) and the apprehension itself (*Miti*)⁶.

The Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas present a peculiar theory of perception called 'the Tripuṭīpratyakṣavāda (the theory of Triple perception). According to this theory, three factors (i.e., *Meya*, *Mātā* and *Miti*) are revealed. For instance, '*naramahaṁ jānāmi*' (I know the man). Here, in this example, there are three factors. The word '*aham*' (I) refers to the self or the apprehended person; the word '*nara*' (man) refers to the object of apprehension and the '*jānāmi*' (know) indicates the apprehension itself.

The self and the object always stand in need of a revealer, but the cognition is self-revealed (*svayaṁprakāśa*). The self is the subject of all the cognitions. Though all the three factors of the triple perception viz., the *Mātā*, *Meya* and *Miti* figure in every act of perception, still there is difference that so far as the *Mātā* and *Meya* are concerned, these are something different from the *Miti* itself, while the *Miti* is not different from itself. For, the *Miti* being self-

4. *idaṁ rajatam ity atra rajataṁ cāvabhāsate / tad eva tena vedyaṁ syān na hi śuktir avedanāt //* p. 49.

5. *yatra hi viśayasya svarūpaṁ paricchidyate tatsamvedyam ucyate* - BR, p. 84.

6. *sāksāt pratītiḥ pratyakṣaṁ meyamātrpramāsu sā / PP, p. 104.*

illuminous, it is in need of nothing to manifest it⁷.

According to the Bhāṭṭa school, perception is the valid knowledge produced by sense contact⁸. This definition is, to some extent, similar to the definition supplied by the Naiyāyikas. But the definition of perception given by the Prābhākaras, is not similar to any definition of any system.

Śālikanātha's definition of Inference (*Anumāna*) is contained in the statement '*jñātasmandha-niyamasyaikadeśasya darśanāt, Ekadeśāntare buddhiranumāna-mabādhitē*'⁹. (Inference is the uncontradicted knowledge of another factor because of seeing a factor the relation of which is well-known). This definition of *Anumāna* is almost similar to the definition given by Śābara wherein the word '*abādhitē*' is included and not '*asannikṛṣṭe*'. Śālikanātha interprets the word '*asannikṛṣṭe*' to mean that the object of inference should not be contradicted by a means of right knowledge.

According to the Prābhākaras, *Anumāna* or inference is apprehension rather than memory.

Anumāna is, according to the Bhāṭṭas, the cognition of what is not proximate resulting from the perception of what is pervaded¹⁰. The definition of *Anumāna* given by the Prābhākaras is found to be satisfactory and more logical. For, unless we know the relation between the fire and the smoke, we cannot infer fire by means of seeing the smoke. This natural and inseparable relation between the fire and the smoke is called pervasion (*vyāpti*)¹¹. The Prābhākaras say that the relation of smoke with fire is understood with a single observation and as such pervasion can certainly be understood from a single observation. Regarding pervasion the system of Prābhākara holds widely different views from those of all other thinkers. According to the Bhāṭṭas also, pervasion or *vyāpti* is a

7. *meva mātṛ-pramāṇānām pratītau viśeṣaḥ kaḥ. ucyate-Meye-mātari ca vyatirikṭā pratītiḥ Sākṣātkāravatī, mitau tv avyatirikṭā, Ibid., p. 170.*

8. *tatra Indriyasannikarṣo 'yam pramāṇam - MM, p. 4.*

9. *VIDE, Ibid., p. 196.*

10. *Vyāpyadarśanād asannikṛṣṭārthajñānam anumānam - MM, p. 25.*

11. *Yatra Yatra dhūmastara tatra bahnir iti sāhacaryaniyamo vyāptiḥ - TS, p. 34.*

natural relation¹². But it is known through repeated observation (*Bhūyo darśana*) and not from single observation (*Sakṛtdarśana*) as the Prābhākaras hold.

Verbal testimony (*Śāstra*) occupies the 3rd position in the serial order in the list of the sources of valid knowledge discussed in the *Prakarāṇa pañcikā*. Both the two schools of Mīmāṃsā have maintained this order, while the Naiyāyikas and the vedāntins explain verbal Testimony after *upamāna* or comparison¹³. The Prābhākaras name the verbal Testimony as *śāstra*, while the vedāntins *Āgama*. But other schools call it *śabda*.

Śālikanātha defines *śāstra* as — '*Śāstram tu śabdavijñānāt yad asannikṛṣṭārthe vijñānam*, (pp. 105). (Verbal Testimony is the knowledge of facts which lie beyond the range of perception and is due to the knowledge of words). This definition of *Śāstra* is almost similar to the definition given by Śābara¹⁴. According to the Prābhākaras, the word '*Śāstra*' in the above definition applies only to the vedic injunctions which only bear verbal Testimony. For, according to them, the non-vedic sentences cannot be taken into the status of verbal testimony. The word '*Asannikṛṣṭa*' in the definition, says Śālikanātha, means that which is not known by any other source¹⁵. Śālikanātha, in the *vākyaārthamātrkā-prakarāṇa* of his *prakarāṇa-pañcikā* explains the theory, on verbal Testimony, which is opposed to all other systems of Indian thought even to that of the Bhāṭṭa. The theory is called '*Anvitābhīdhānavāda*' while that of others is '*Abhihitānvayavāda*'. Śālikanātha rejects the view of the Bhāṭṭas¹⁶ and establishes the theory of *Anvitābhīdhāna*.

Upamāna or comparison is also recognised by the system of Prābhākara as an independent *pramāṇa*. According to Śālikanātha, *Upamāna* is the cognition of similarity brought about by the perception of similarity¹⁷. The Naiyāyikas say that the *upa-*

12. *Svābhāvikaḥ Sambandho vyāptiḥ* - MM, p. 26.

13. *anumānataḥ parastād upamānam varṇayanti tarkavidāḥ / vādīparigraha-bhūmnā vayam tu śabdam puraskurmah //* MM, p. 91.

14. *VIDE, Śābarabhāṣya*, p. 105.

15. *asannikṛṣṭa iti kim idam. Pramāṇāntareṇāpratīta itī*, p. 234.

16. *VIDE, Vākyaārthamātrkā* of the *Ibid.*, p. 381.

17. *Sādṛśyadarśanottham jñānam sādṛśyaviṣayam upamānam, Ibid.*, p. 267.

māna is the knowledge of what is to be known from a popular similarity (vide N.S.1.1.6). Regarding *upamāna*, there is not much more difference between the *prābhākaras* and Bhāṭṭas. The popular example of *upamāna* is — 'the *gavaya* is similar to a cow'.

In the *prakaraṇa pañcikā*, Śālikanātha explains *upamāna* at length. He says that *upamāna* cannot be included in perception, inference and memory¹⁸.

Arthāpatti or postulation as a separate *pramāṇa* is recognised by the *prābhākaras*, and the Bhāṭṭas and the vedāntins. In a case, where the well-ascertained perception of a thing cannot be explained without the assumption of another thing then it is the assumption that makes *Arthāpatti*¹⁹. For example, when we know that Devadatta is alive, and perceive that he is not in the house, these two things viz. 'alive' and 'non-existence' in the house' cannot be reconciled unless we assume his existence somewhere outside the house. Here, existence outside the house is called postulation. The followers of Kumārila Bhāṭṭa define postulation as — when something is otherwise unintelligible, the assumption of what will make it intelligible is postulation. This definition of postulation is in conformity with the *Bhāṣya* of Śābara. According to the Bhāṭṭas, there are two types of postulation — *Drṣṭārthāpatti* (seen) and *śrutārthāpatti* (heard). But this is not admitted by the *prābhākaras*. For there is no *śrutārthāpatti* since what is to be assumed is only the sense²⁰. The *Prābhākaras* recognize *Drṣṭārthāpatti* only. While the Bhāṭṭas are known as Śābdādhyāravādins, the *Prābhākaras* are known as Arthādhyāravādins. For example, in a sentence 'The door (*dvāram*) the door' in order to get a syntactical relation, the sense of the word 'close' *Pidhehi* is imported²¹. The importation of ideas in case of the incomplete sentences as stated by the *Prābhākaras* is found to be more acceptable than the importation of word as stated by the Bhāṭṭas. For, unless we know the sense of

18. *Tad idam upamānam na pratyakṣam, na ca smṛtiḥ. Ibid.*, p. 269.

19. *Vinā kalpanāyarthena drṣṭenānupann atām nayatādrṣṭam artham yā sārthāpattis tu kalpanā - Ibid.*, p. 272.

20. *anyāihānupapattiyā yad upapādakakalpanam / tadarthāpattir ity evam lakṣaṇam bhāṣyabhāṣitam— // MM*, p. 127.

21. *VIDE*, Foot note No. 4, *PP*, p. 280.

the word, we cannot import the word. Thus from the above discussion, it is found that the epistemology of the Prābhākara school of Pūrvamīmāṃsā is indispensable for the knowledge of the Mīmāṃsā epistemology as a whole and as such it needs a critical study.

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