

# PRĀMĀNYAVĀDA : FROM NYĀYA AND MIMĀMSĀ PERSPECTIVE



## Siddhartha Sadhu

Guest Lecturer,  
Dept. of Philosophy,  
(Research Scholar  
Viswa Bharti University,  
Santiniketan, West Bengal,  
India

### Abstract

Prāmānyavāda is the Indian theory of the validity of knowledge as to whether knowledge is itself valid or requires external sources to validate it. There are two kinds of validity namely-(I) **Svatah-prāmānyavāda** or *Internal Validity*, and (II) **Paratah-prāmānyavāda** or *External Validity*. **Svatah-prāmānyavāda** : The Mimāmsāka upholds this theory which may be translated as self-validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge. All apprehension is intrinsically valid. All knowledge is valid by itself. It is not validated by any other knowledge. Validity arises from the essential nature of the causes of knowledge. **Paratah-prāmānyavāda** : The Nyāya holds that knowledge is the bare manifestation of objects, and as such it is neither valid nor invalid in itself. The truth or falsity of knowledge depends upon its correspondence or non-correspondence with objects. Therefore, validity and invalidity are not intrinsic to knowledge. Validity depends upon some positive excellence (*guna*) in the generating conditions of knowledge. Similarly, invalidity is due neither to the general condition of knowledge, nor to the mere absence of positive excellence (*gunabhava*), but to some positive defect (*dosa*) in the condition of knowledge. Thus knowledge is not intrinsically valid or invalid. It acquires validity or invalidity from extraneous condition (*parata*).

**Keywords** : Prāmānyavāda, Nyāya and Mimāmsā.

### Introduction

The How is truth of a cognition known? It is a question whose answer given by different theorists varies widely. How can we know that a cognition is true? What is the test or criterion of truth? Anything which enables us to decide whether a cognition is true or false may be called the test or criterion of truth. Truth is defined as correspondence; but how can we discover this correspondence? We cannot directly know that a cognition corresponds with a fact, because we cannot know a fact otherwise than through cognition. We discover the correspondence between a face and its photograph because we know them independently of each other. But we cannot know a fact independently of cognition. Hence their correspondence can be known only indirectly. With the question of the knowledge (*jñapti*) of truth there is also the question of the genesis or origine (*utpatti*) of truth. Now we have to see that what is the Nyāya and Mimāmsā view about the genesis and ascertainment.<sup>1</sup>

Before the discussing of origin(*utpatti*) and ascertainment of prāmānya, we have try to know the meaning of 'prāmānya'.The word 'prāmānya' may mean either the property of being instrumental in bringing about true knowledge (*pramākaranatva*), or simply the truth of a knowledge (*pramātva*). In the former sense, prāmānya belongs to the various instrumental causes of true knowledge. In the latter sense, it characterises a knowledge itself, if that knowledge is true.<sup>2</sup> Of these two senses the second one is logically prior in as much as the very idea of being an instrumental cause of true knowledge cannot be understood without understanding what is meant by true knowledge and in effect without understanding what is meant by truth. The theories of prāmānya—the well known *svatah* and the *paratah* theories—are concerned with prāmānya in the second sense, i.e. with the true of a knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

Mādhavāchārya summarizes the various Indian views in the following verse:

*Prāmānatvapramānatve svatah sāmkyah samāsritah  
/ Naiyāyikaste paratah saugatascaramam  
svatah-----//  
Prathamam paratah prahuh, prāmānyam,  
vedavadinah /  
Prāmānatvam svatah prahuh paratascapramanatham  
//*

(sarvadarshanasamgraha).<sup>4</sup>

The sāmkyas hold that both truth and error are intrinsic, the Naiyāyikas that both these are extrinsic; the Bauddhas say that the latter is intrinsic while the former, truth is extrinsic; the followers of the veda (i.e.the Mimāmsakas) say that truth is intrinsic and error extrinsic. Here we discuss only two view about prāmānyavāda; Mimāmsaka theory of svatahprāmānyavāda and Nyāya theory of paratahprāmānyavāda. The key terms in this controversy are *svatah* and *paratah*, literally meaning 'from within' and 'from without' respectively. We would sometimes use the English words 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' more for reason of convenience than for their accuracy in rendering the two Sanskrit terms.

The main view of svatahprāmānyavāda is, the condition which give rise to knowledge also give rise to its validity (*prāmānyam svatah utpadyate*), and this validity is known as soon as the knowledge has arisen (*prāmānyam svatah jñāyate cha*).<sup>5</sup> It means, When the Mimāmsa theory holds that truth is intrinsic to 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. Thus 'intrinsic' means both 'intrinsic with regards to origin' and 'intrinsic' with regards to apprehension', both *utpattitah* and *jñaptitah*.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, when the Nyāya holds that truth is extrinsic to knowledge, it means both of two things. On the one hand it holds that the generating conditions of the truth of knowledge are more than the generating conditions of the knowledge itself. It also holds that the apprehension of a knowledge *does not always* amount to the apprehension of its truth. Thus 'extrinsic' means both 'extrinsic with regards to origin' and 'extrinsic with regards to apprehension', *utpattitah* and *jñaptitah*.<sup>7</sup>

At first, we have discussed the Mimāmsaka theory of Svatahprāmānyavāda. When-ever there are sufficient conditions for the generation of a particular kind of knowledge (and, therefore, no grounds for doubt or disbelief are known), there arises at once that kind of knowledge containing an element of belief in the objects known. For example, when our normal eyes light on an object conveniently situated in broad daylight, there is a visual perception; when we hear some one speak a meaningful sentence, we have

knowledge from his testimony. When there are sufficient premises, inference takes place. That we act on such knowledge in everyday life as soon as we have it, without any attempt to test its validity by argument, shows that we believe in it as soon as it arises; and the fact that such knowledge leads to successful activity and not to any contradiction shows further that such knowledge is valid.<sup>8</sup>

When, however, the conditions required for the generation of that kind of knowledge are known to be defective or wanting (if, for example, the eye are jaundiced, light is insufficient, premises are doubtful or words are meaningless, etc.) no such knowledge arises; neither, therefore, does any belief arise, so long as the ground for doubt and disbelief to not disappear. From these facts two conclusions are drawn by the Mimāmsa: (a) the validity of knowledge *arises* from the very conditions that give rise to that knowledge, and not from any extra conditions (*prāmānyam svatah utpadyate*). (b) The validity of knowledge is also *believed* in or known as soon as the knowledge arises; Belief does not await the verification of the knowledge by some other knowledge, say, an inference (*prāmānyam svatah jñāyate cha*).<sup>9</sup> This Mimāmsa view, in its double aspect, is known as the theory of intrinsic validity (*svatahprāmānyavāda*).

It is the very nature of knowledge to reveal its object. It, therefore, follows that knowledge requires no other condition than itself in order to reveal its object. It cannot be said that knowledge is neutral cognition and that validity and invalidity are its adventitious characters. There is no such thing as a neutral cognition, which is neither valid nor invalid. Further, if knowledge is not valid on its own account, it can never be made valid on account of any external condition, because the validating condition must itself be validated by other conditions, again by still other condition and so on *ad infinitum*. This means that the validity of knowledge cannot be finally established. We should thus either say that knowledge is valid by its very nature or deny that there is any valid knowledge at all.<sup>10</sup> So, we are to say that the validity of knowledge is due to the conditions of knowledge itself. Validity is intrinsic to knowledge.

Mimāmsaka says against Nyāya theory that validity is generated by some extra condition (such as soundness of organs), over and above the ordinary condition which generate a knowledge, the Mimāmsaka points out that those extra condition really from a part of the normal conditions of that knowledge; without them there would be no belief and, therefore, no knowledge at all. Against, the Nyāya view that the validity of every knowledge is ascertained by inference, the Mimāmsaka points out that would lead us to an infinite regress and activity would be impossible. If any knowledge, says, a

perception, before being acted upon were to be verified by an inference, then by the same Nyāya rule that inference also would have to be verified by another inference and so on; and there would have been no end to this process of verification and life would have been impossible. As soon as we perceive a tiger we run away, as soon as we infer the approach of a car from its horn we guard our steps; if we are to wait for verifying our knowledge with the never-ending series of inferences, we would have to wait for ever before we could act on any knowledge. It is true that when there is any positive cause for doubt regarding any knowledge, we take the help of verifying inference; but that only does the negative work of removing the obstacles that stand in the way of knowledge. After the obstacles are removed, knowledge arises out of its own usual conditions, if present there, and along with it arise its validity and belief in its validity. If that verifying inference is unable to remove doubt, then that knowledge does not arise at all.<sup>11</sup>

Although they all agree that truth of knowledge originates precisely from those causal conditions which also gives rise to the knowledge, the different advocates of the *Svatahprāmānya* theory nevertheless differ amongst themselves as to the nature of the apprehension of truth. Even with regards to this latter question they all no doubt agree that knowledge is as a rule apprehended together with its truth. They differ however, in the first place, with regards to the nature of knowledge and secondly, as to the nature of our apprehension of knowledge. Prabhākara is an advocate of *triputisamvit*, according to which the knower, the known and the knowledge are given simultaneously in every act of cognition. Knowledge reveals itself as well as the knower and the known. In the consciousness, 'I know this,' we have the three presentation of the object (*visayavitti*), and the conscious awareness (*svasamvitti*).<sup>12</sup> All consciousness is at the same time self-consciousness as well as object consciousness. In all knowledge the self is known directly through the agency and the contact of the mind. But there is not always a direct knowledge of the object. Knowledge is of the nature of light or illumination, and does not stand in need of any other thing to manifest it. Knowledge or cognition is, therefore, said to be self-apprehended. The knowing self and the known object are not of the nature of light. So they require the aid of something which is of the nature of light. Knowledge is self-illuminated and is neither perceived as object, nor known by knowledge. If knowledge is known as an object, then each individual knowledge may require knowledge of know it, and so on ad infinitum. Kumārila Bhatta denies the self-luminosity of knowledge. Knowledge is not self-revealing. He admits the independent existence of external objects. Every act of knowledge implies a

certain relationship between the knower and the known which involves some activity on the part of the knower. Knowledge reveals the object, but cannot reveal itself. According to Kumārila, knowledge is not directly known, but is inferred from the knownness (*jnatatā*) of the object produced by knowledge.

Naiyāyikas does not accept the *svatahprāmānyavāda* of Mimāṃsaka, so they give many arguments against Mimāṃsaka theory of *Svatahprāmānya*. (1) The Naiyāyikas criticise the Mimāṃsa view of self-validity of knowledge by saying that if all knowledge be intrinsically valid, the distinction between truth and falsehood becomes obliterated. If all cognition be true in itself, there cannot be any wrong cognition. But wrong cognitions like illusions, hallucinations etc., are undeniable fact.

In the preceding part, we have analysed the various notion of *prāmānya* up the theory of *paratahprāmānyavāda*, especially as upheld by its principal advocates, the Nyāya School of philosophy. Nyāya advocates the theory of extrinsic validity of knowledge called *paratah prāmānya-vāda*. According to it, knowledge is neither valid nor invalid in itself. It is neutral. The question of its validity or invalidity arises only after knowledge has arisen. The nature of knowledge is its correspondence with its object. And the test of truth is fruitful activity (*sadvādi-pravṛtti*). If knowledge leads to fruitful activity, it is valid; if it does not, it is invalid. Validity and invalidity are not intrinsically connected with knowledge. They are the result of a subsequent test. Validity is due to excellence (*guna*) in the causes of knowledge and invalidity is due to defect (*dosa*) in the causes of knowledge. Vishvanātha says in his great commentary, *Siddhantamuktavali*; defects are the cause of invalid knowledge, and merits or *guna* is the cause of valid knowledge. Defects are said to be of various kind, viz. (an excess of) bile, distance, and so forth (121).<sup>13</sup> Knowledge arises simply as knowledge and afterwards becomes valid or invalid due to extraneous condition.

Truth and falsehood are specific qualities of cognition. Cognition is the manifestation of some objects, which depends on certain causal condition, i.g. the operation of sense-organs. Now, while objects-manifestation is produced by certain general condition, truth and falsehood, which are specific features of object-manifestation, must be produced by some specific features of the general conditions. The specific features responsible for the production of truth and falsehood are the merits (*guna*) and demerits (*dosa*) of the conditions of knowledge respectively. Merits and demerits are additional features in the cause of cognition, which add the qualities of truth and falsehood respectively in cognition. But, merits and demerits are positive features. Merit is not merely an absence of demerit,

nor is demerit a mere absence of merit. Hence truth and falsehood are not intrinsic or natural but extrinsic or adventitious. So, it is clear that, the generating conditions of the truth of knowledge are more than the generating conditions of the knowledge itself.

On the other hand, the ascertainment of truth depends on some extraneous consideration just as its production depends on some extraneous factors. At the time of the origination of cognition there is no knowledge of its truth or falsehood. When the cognition of a blue objects arises, the objects is known to be blue; but the truth of the cognition is not known at that time, and subsequently when it is known it is not known independently because such knowledge depends on fruitful activity (*pravrttisamarthyā*). Fruitful activity is the test of truth and fruitless activity (*pravrttivismvada*) is the test of falsehood.

Now, question is, how can, it may be asked any activity ensure on the cognition of an object unless the cognition is already known as true? the upholder of the intrinsically of truth says that if the knowledge of truth is supposed to depend on the knowledge of successful action there will be mutual dependence (*anyonyāśrayā*), as successful action will then depends on the knowledge of truth and the knowledge of truth will depends on successful action, and again the knowledge of truth will become needless because the object of cognition has already been attained.

Nyāya reply is that there is no mutual dependence because practical activity with reference to a perceived object takes place in the absence of the knowledge of truth. When a man perceived water and approaches it to quench his thirst, it is not necessary that he must have ascertained the truth of his perception before proceeding towards it. What prompts him to act is his spontaneous or instinctive belief in the reality of the object of his perception. Whether his belief is justified or nor is a different question which is decided by ascertainment the truth of the perception. The case of our knowledge of objects which are not directly perceived is different. There practical activity follows from mere doubt, and if it is found successful the corresponding cognition is judged to be true. Our knowledge of such unseen objects as God, heaven etc., cannot be directly verified, yet we can ascertain its truth by the application of such tests as we might have derived from the verification of our knowledge of perceived objects. The ascertainment of the truth of our knowledge of perceived objects by successful activity, though useless in itself, has the value of giving us a knowledge of the means which distinguishes truth from falsehood and which we can avail ourselves of in judging the truth of our knowledge of unseen object.<sup>14</sup>

Though, Naiyāyikas holds that the generating conditions of the truth of a knowledge are more than the generating conditions of the knowledge itself and it also holds that the apprehension of a knowledge *does not always* amount to the apprehension of its truth, yet they accept that, there are some cases of knowledge whose truth appears to be self-evident. The knowledge of familiar objects, e.g., my house, my body, etc., is known as true immediately at the time when it arises and we do not feel the need of verifying it by successful activity. Is, then, such knowledge intrinsically true? The Naiyāyika replies that the knowledge of truth in such cases is conditioned by familiarity and that it is not self-evident though it arises quickly. The truth of the knowledge of a new object is ascertained on the ground of practical success to which it leads if it is true. When a new object is cognized repeatedly it becomes familiar and we need not test the truth of its cognition on subsequent occasions in the same way as when it was new. Truth in such cases is known through inference based on familiarity and not on successful activity.

Kumārila and his followers reject the Nyāya theory of extrinsic truth and falsehood. If truth or falsehood is not natural to knowledge but super-added to it by excellences or deficiencies of the causal conditions, then it would follow that knowledge is characterless (*nissvabhāva*) at the time of its birth. But a knowledge which is neither true nor false is a knowledge. Again if the ascertainment of truth and falsehood of knowledge is supposed to depend on inference which takes place at a later time, knowledge will lack certitude prior to the application of the test of after knowledge, which is obviously against common experience. No activity is seen to follow from a doubtful knowledge. And if the Naiyāyika maintains that successful activity from a neutral or doubtful knowledge is possible, then he contradicts the very first aphorism of the Nyāya Sutra which says that a study of *pramānas* is undertaken because it is only through valid knowledge that the useful is attained and the harmful is shunned.<sup>15</sup>

#### Endnotes

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7. *Ibid*, P-4.
8. Chatterjee S.C Dutta & D.M., *An introduction to Indian philosophy*, P-376, in 1984, *Calcutta university, Calcutta*.
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15. *Ibid*, p-118.