

MĀNĀDHĪNA MEYASIDDHI: A MYTH

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It is normally admitted by the Indian epistemologists that an object to be proved (*meya*) is dependent on the means of knowing (*māna*). Most of the treatises in Indian Philosophy deal with *pramāṇa* first only to prove *prameya*. Even in the Nyāyasūtra Gautama has mentioned *pramāṇa* first in the list of sixteen categories which is followed by the second category called *prameya* in order to give us an awareness that *pramāṇa* has to be put in the list at the outset on account of the fact that through *pramāṇa* alone *prameya* is substantiated. In this paper an effort is made to show that epistemology (*pramāṇaśāstra*) as available in Indian Philosophical systems is not unbiased, but is vitiated through various metaphysical or ontological presuppositions, though it is claimed by them that through a *pramāna* a *prameya* is substantiated. Gradually we will see that this principle - ‘*manadhīna meyasiddhi*’ is a myth on account of the fact that *pramāna* itself is not untouched by the presuppositions admitted by them. When a philosopher of a particular school is framing a definition of *pramāṇa*, it is to some extent ‘*subjective*’, but not objective in the sense that he bears some presuppositions behind such enterprise. The genuinity of *pramāṇa* is proved by the Naiyayikas with the help of its efficacy to successful inclination (‘*pravṛtti-sāmarthya*’) as their knot is tied with the theory of *paratah-prāmāṇya* (‘extrinsic validity of proof’) in view.¹ Whether something is a *pramāṇa* or a pseudo-*pramāṇa* (‘*pramāṇābhāsa*’) is dependent on its successful inclination, which leads to the supposition that the theory of *pramāṇa* on which a *meya* (‘provable object’) is substantiated is not free from the influence of *meya*-related presuppositions or beliefs. The point will be clearer if I put forth some definitions of perception (*pratyakṣa*) accepted by different systems as an instance.

The Naiyayikas think that the perceptual knowledge is a cognition arising out of the contact of the sense -organ with an object, which cannot be described through language (*avyapadeśya*), non-deviated (*avyabhicārin*) and non-erroneous (*vyavasāyātma*).² To them an object or *artha* is a kind of category accepted by them and capable of being perceived (*yogya*). There does not arise any question of perceiving an absurd entity, as the categorical scheme believed by them does not permit us to do so.

Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra, a follower of Advaita School, thinks that mere connection (*sannikarṣa*) between sense organ and an object may not be the cause of perceptual cognition. If the whole world is covered by Consciousness (*caitanya*) as believed by them, object (*artha*) is something covered with this Consciousness. These limiting adjuncts (*upadhi-s*) of one consciousness are called *viṣayacaitanya*, *pramāṇacaitanya* and *pramāṭṛ-caitanya* respectively just as time, though one, has limiting adjuncts (*upādhis*) in the form of hours, days, week, fortnight, month, year etc.³ After keeping these metaphysical presuppositions in mind Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra has accepted two criteria of perceptuality: *jñānagata* (perceptuality of knowledge) and *viṣayagata* (perceptuality of object). To him when there is a union between *pramāṇacaitanya* (consciousness limited by mental mode - *antaḥkaraṇavṛtī*) and *viṣayacaitanya* (consciousness limited by an object), then there is the perceptuality of knowledge (*jñānagatapratyakṣatva*). It is to be borne in mind that they have made a distinction between perception of the knowledge of a jar and perception of a jar. In the case of the perception of the knowledge of a jar there is the union between *viṣayacaitanya* and *pramāṇacaitanya* but *pramāṭṛcaitanya* will remain isolated. If it is said that there is the perceptuality of object, it should be treated as different from the earlier one. It is *not* knowledge, which is perceived, but the *object only*. Such a situation cannot give rise to knower-known relationship (*jñātr-jñeya-bhāva*).⁴ Hence Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra says that in such cases there is only the knower in the form of consciousness (*pramāṇacaitanya*); but other two i.e. consciousness limited by mental mode (*antaḥkaraṇavṛtī*) and consciousness limited by an object are united in the knower (*pramāṭā*). It is described by him as ‘*pramāṭṛsattātiriktasattākatvābhāva*’⁵ i.e. there will be an absence of the existence of other forms of consciousness excepting the existence of *pramāṭā* (knower). Herein lies some sort of metaphysical presupposition. In this case Dharmarāja is dealing with metaphysics in disguise of epistemology. When an individual thinks himself identified with the whole world, it is the stage of liberation due to the absence of reality of more than one (*advaita*). In this case an object is *not mere an object* but *subjectified object*.

If we turn to the Buddhists in general and Dharmakīrti in particular, they are also not free from some basic presuppositions like theories of momentariness,

dependent origination, causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritva*) etc as a characteristic feature of being *sat* etc. Keeping these in view Dharmakīrti has formulated the definition of perception as ‘*Tatra kalpanāpoḍham abhrāntam pratyakṣam*’ i.e. perceptual cognition is the non-erroneous cognition of an entity free from mental ascriptions.⁶ Is it not true that such a definition is given keeping some presuppositions in mind? In fact the Buddhists believe in two types of reality in their ontological framework: unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and generality (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). The former which is momentary and free from mental ascriptions (*kalpanā*) having causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritva*) and represents the domain of absolute reality (*paramārthasatya*) while the later is expressed through mental ascriptions like language etc belonging to the domain of covered reality or apparent reality (*samvṛtisatya*). In short, the whole Buddhist philosophy centres on two ontological presuppositions- ‘*yat sat tat kṣaṇikam*’ (i.e., that which exists is momentary in nature) and ‘*arthakriyākāritvalakṣaṇam sat*’ (i.e., the causal efficacy or purpose-oriented action is the mark of existence). Hence there is hardly anything in different systems of Indian Philosophy which may be described as ‘*pure epistemology*’ or ‘*unbiased epistemology*’.

The Naiyayikas believe that the realization of self ultimately leads to the realm of liberation. Though they have mentioned *pramāṇa* as the first category to prove the existence of *prameya* yet it cannot be ignored that the application of *pramāṇa* is to know the self truly (*tattva-jñāna*). When *pramāṇa* is applied, the total end-in-view of applying it is to conjoin an individual to liberation through self-realisation.⁷ Hence *pramāṇa* is not ‘objective’, because an agent cannot apply it ‘freely’, but ‘subjective’ or ‘teleological’. Being overburdened with metaphysics Annambhatta also took ‘*Tat tvam asi*’ (“That art thou”) as an example of *jahad-ajahad-lakṣaṇā* (quasi-inclusive implication). Moreover, this has been taken as an example of indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*) also by the Advaitins on the basis of sentence-holism (*akhandā-vākyaārtha*) which is purely metaphysical in nature. In the *Mahāvākya*- ‘*tattvamasi*’ the word *tat* stands for Brahman having all pervasive reality (*vibhu parimāṇa*) and *tvam* stands for an individual being (*jīva*) having atomic magnitude (*aṇu parimāṇa*). Though there is difference between two, i.e., Brahman and *Jīva* yet there is an essential similarity (*svarūpa tādātmya*) between two. If it is so, how is the holistic nature of the sentence (*akhandāvākyaārtha*) to be

understood? The answer is metaphysical. Due to some metaphysical presuppositions in the system the Advaita Vedantins believe the eternal relationship between a word and a meaning due to having its connection with *Sphoṭa* or *Śabdabrahman*. Moreover, it gives us perceptual cognition about liberation with the help of agamic statement-‘*Tat tvam asi*’. In order to highlight this metaphysical aspect they have introduced a specific type of *pratyakṣa* called *śābda-janya-pratyakṣa* (perceptual awareness generated through testimony).⁸

Metaphysical presupposition plays a greater role in Indian theories of error called *khyātivāda* as admitted by different systems. The Vijñānavādi and Śūnyavādī schools of Buddhism propagate *ātmakhyātivāda* and *asatkhyātivāda* respectively after keeping the theory of consciousness in the form of *Vijñāna* and *Śūnyatā* in view. Such is the case with the *anirvacanīyakhyātivāda*. In this case the represented object or the mistakenly known object is admitted as different from existent or non-existent (*sadasadvilakṣaṇa*), because it (i.e., snake in the case of rope) is neither existent due to its sublation by the latter cognition nor non-existent due to having its apparent awareness (*prātibhāsikasattā*). The Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas who do not believe in the existence of erroneous cognition formulates the theory of *akhyāti* presupposing it in view.⁹ To them no error is actually possible. The error seems to happen due to the knowledge of discrimination between the given content (*grhīta vastu*) and remembered content (*smṛta vastu*). This idea is embedded in their theory, which prompts them to formulate a theory of error called *akhyativāda*.

The Naiyayikas admit that more than one *pramāṇa* can be applied to know a single object, which is called the theory of *pramāṇasamplava*. The nature of an object is not a factor for applying *pramāṇa*. As for example, ‘fire’ can be known through perception, inference or verbal testimony. But so far as the Buddhist view is concerned, a particular nature of an object determines the particular means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) through which alone it is revealed. An object having a unique characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) is revealed by perception alone. A *svalakṣaṇa* - entity cannot be revealed by inference and in the same way the *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*-entity can be known by inference alone, but not capable of being known by perception. In Buddhism the nature of an object determines the way of knowing it. If an object is momentary having the nature of unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*), it is capable of being

revealed by perception alone. Inference cannot reveal an object having such character. In the like manner, an object having associated with certain concepts (*kalpanā*) is not capable of being revealed by inference. In the Nyaya system, such restriction is not there, because the object I.e., fire may be revealed through perception, inference, verbal testimony etc due to having different nature of the object. This metaphysical presupposition leads the Buddhists to admit the system of *pramāṇavyavasthā*.¹⁰ On the basis of the above-mentioned arguments we may come to the conclusion that Indian Epistemology is always vitiated by metaphysics.

From above it can be concluded that when a particular epistemic theory is propagated by a particular system, the philosophers belonging to the school keep the ontological or metaphysical commitment in view. Such metaphysical presupposition influences someone belonging to the particular school in formulation of an epistemic theory. The metaphysical commitment guides a philosopher to undertaken some decision in the form of *pratijñā* (proposition). Afterwards the same proposition is proved through *pramāṇa*, which is in the substantiated form as we find in conclusion called *nigamana*. When Sankara gives the definition of *adhyāsa* (superimposition), it is in the descriptive level having no relation with the actual realization of the same i.e., not being the result of experience. After the realization of the Self, an individual can realize the truth of the statement describing superimposition. The first introduction with the concept of *adhyāsa* is taken as proposition (*pratijñā*) and the realization of the same at the end is the conclusion (*nigamana*). The former is a mere description given by somebody else through his personal experience while the latter is the result of an individual's own realization. Such is the case with other philosophical enterprise. Thus we can say that metaphysical presupposition guides an individual to frame an epistemic theory.

Belief in the theories of *karmaphala*, the role of God in handling this and autonomy of an agent gives rise to different forms of theories as admitted in Nyāya, Advaita Vedānta, *Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā* and Pūrva Mīmāṃsa systems. Hence any formulation of theory presupposes some sort of belief. In our tradition we come across three theories regarding the law of *karma*. First theory is propagated by the Naiyāyikas. To them an individual being can enjoy the result of *karma* performed by him either in this birth or in the previous birth. The result is given as per the *karma* recorded against him, but not arbitrarily. This result of *karma* is attained by an

individual through the Divine interference. They have admitted the existence of God as the conveyer of the result of *karma*, because there is no man in this world having unlimited capacities to keep account of innumerable *karma*-s of innumerable human beings.

The Mīmāṃsakas are of the opinion that the Naiyāyikas view is not to be taken into account. To them, God of the Naiyāyikas is powerless as He is giving result to the human beings according to their recorded *karma*-s. God has no power of condone any wrong done inadvertently by a human being and hence He is to be taken as an impotent one. What is the utility of admitting the existence of such God? It is better to admit that *karma* alone can give rise to the result through instrumentality of *apūrva*. If the *karma*-s done by individual being is the ultimate decisive factor, then we should perform *karma* very sincerely and attentively. There is no point in investing our energy for the impotent God. To them *karma* automatically gives rise to result to an individual being without any Divine interference.

There is another theory regarding the law of *karma* followed by the *Bhaktivādī* schools. To them the results- good or bad, are given to us by God without any consideration of the activities done by him. To give some result or not is a kind of Divine sport (*līlā*) and it depends on His will. He is as if playing with the whole world as per His own will. The origination and destruction of this world depends on His desire, which is indeterminable by any means, as if a child is playing with the dolls as pointed out by Kazi Nazrul Islam in his song-‘*Khelichho e viśva laye virāṭa śiśu ānamane/ pralaya sṛṣṭi taba putulakhelā nirajane prabhu nirajane//*’. For getting His favour it is essential to surrender to Him and have some faith on Him. From the above it is established that each and every view regarding law of *karma* is correct if ontological beliefs of a particular school is taken into consideration.

Different causal theories have been accepted by different systems of philosophy being prompted by different presuppositions. The Advaita epistemic theory is backed by *vivarttavāda*, the Sāṃkhya believes in *pariṇāmavāda* and *satkāryavāda*, the Nyāya believes in *asatkāryavāda* etc. All these causal theories formulated by different systems are not arbitrary, but backed by their basic beliefs and presuppositions and these causal theories again serve as basic different epistemological theories.

From the above it is quite evident that *pramāṇa* is meant for proving *prameya*. It is to be taken as second order activity. For, *pramāṇa* which is meant for proving *prameya* is not free from metaphysical or ontological biasness. The definition of *pramāṇa* is formulated in such a way so their metaphysical presuppositions are preserved within a system leading to the falsity of the statement- ‘*mānādhīnā meyasiddhīh*’, rather it is a case of ‘*meyādhīnā mānasiddhīh*’.

References:

1. *Nyāyabhāṣya*-1.1.1.
2. *Nyāyasūtra*-1.1.4.
3. *Vedānta-paribhāṣā* (Pratyakṣa-parichheda), p.13.
4. *Ibid*, p.14
5. *Ibid*, p.25
6. *Nyāyabindu* 3
7. *Nyāyasūtra*-1.1.1. p.65
8. *Vedānta-paribhāṣā* (Pratyakṣa parichheda), p. 19
9. *Bhāmatī* on Adhyāsabhāṣya, pp.46-68
10. *Nyāyamañjarī*, p.33.

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