

Chapter - 1

DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

ACCORDING TO NYAYA SCHOOL:

Knowledge plays a vital role in the development of each and every aspect of human life. How far one will progress in one's economic and political aspect of life is mainly based upon how much knowledge and experience one will gather in these fields. The same can truly be said in the case of our social and spiritual life. Knowledge is the key-factor for social recognition and establishment. All the great men like Rabindranath Tagore, Shakespere, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and so on are still alive in the mind of the whole society because of their intellectual contribution to society. Spiritual upliftment is entirely depended upon knowledge. Perhaps keeping this in view, Socrates tells us that virtue is knowledge. All the men spiritually developed like Ramkrishna Paramhansa Deva, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Chaitanyadeva, Goutam Buddha, Jesus Christ, Hajrat Mohammed, etc advocate that ignorance is the sole cause of our bondage and sufferings, and it is knowledge through which liberation, the ultimate goal of our life be attained. Thus it is seen that our whole life, material as well as spiritual, is based upon knowledge. Keeping this importance of knowledge in view philosophy renders a lot of efforts to deal with it. Particularly the *Nyāya* School has given so much importance upon the concept of knowledge that it is regarded as *Tarkavidyā* or Indian logic.

In dealing with the concept of knowledge the question which arises in our mind at first is - What is knowledge? But unfortunately, a diversity of opinion is found among the philosophers regarding the definition of knowledge. Consequently, any singular universally accepted definition of knowledge can not be derived. Even the Indian scholars of different schools do not go hand in hand in defining the same. Here, in this paper, we are concerned only with the definition of knowledge as stated by *Nyāya* thinkers.

Annambhatta in his *Tarkasaṃgraha* says, "Cognition (*buddhi*) is consciousness (*Jñāna*) and is that quality (*guna*) which is the ground (*hetu*) of all usage (*vyāvahāra*). This is of two kinds memory and *anubhava*".¹

It is important to note that though the word '*buddhi*' as used by *Nyāya* school means the same as knowledge or *jñāna* it does not do so in other schools. Say for example, '*buddhi*' in *Sāṃkhya* school refers to the first evolute of primordial matter. The general meaning of the same also does not tally with that of the *Naiyāyikas*. By the term '*buddhi*' we, the common people generally mean the capacity of understanding we possess.

The *Naiyāyikas* take self or *ātmān* as a substance and cognition as a quality of it. It is worthy to note that as far as the observation of the *Naiyāyikas* is concerned knowledge is a quality of the soul, but not essence of it as maintained by the *Vedāntins*.

Cognition is an accidental quality and not an essential nature of the soul. In order to make us conscious about this truth the Naiyāyikas use 'cognition' and '*buddhi*' in one and the same sense. The implication of the use of the two terms in identical sense lies in the fact that '*buddhi*' is an accidental quality of the soul, likewise cognition is also accidental quality of the same.

All the words and phrases used in the definition of cognition noted above are highly essential. If the term 'quality' were dropped from the definition then the definition would have suffered from the fallacy of over coverage (*ativyāpti*) since it would include or cover time, space etc. within the purview of knowledge, which actually is not the case. Again, if the phrase 'ground of all usage' were not added to the definition then the definition would have been vitiated by the fallacy of over coverage. If the said phrase were dropped from the definition then any sort of quality like colour, taste, smell, etc. would have been cognition. But actually this is not the case. Colour, taste, smell, etc. are quality no doubt, but they are not the cause of all usage. So, the insertion of the phrase 'ground of all usage' to the definition is quite justified.

But it is important to note that the Nyāya thinkers are in confusion regarding the actual meaning of the phrase 'ground of all usage'. But it is important to note that the Nyāya thinkers are in confusion regarding the actual meaning of the phrase 'ground of all usages'. The meaning phrase, as noted in *Siddhānta Candrodāya* and *Padakṛtya*, is eating, walking, speaking, in a word all sorts of

activity. But if the meaning of the phrase in question is understood in this sense then even the non-voluntary actions be counted as an effect produced by cognition or consciousness. But the fact is otherwise, as we perform non-voluntary actions fully unconsciously. Thus the definition be the subject of the fallacy of over coverage. Keeping this problem in view, '*Nyāya-Bodhini*' and '*Nīlakānṭhī*' records the meaning of the phrase as the ground of all linguistic usage. If the meaning of the phrase is understood in this sense then, the so called non-voluntary actions with some voluntary actions like eating, walking, etc which are not the cause of linguistic usage, will be excluded from the definition of knowledge and thereby the definition will be free from the fallacy of over-coverage.

But the meaning of the phrase under consideration as noted down in '*Nyāya Bodhini*' and '*Nīlakānṭhī*' is also not purely free from all sorts of limitations and defects. If the meaning is understood in this sense then the definition of knowledge suffers from the fallacy of under coverage. Indeterminate knowledge is a knowledge proper, no doubt, but it is not the ground of linguistic usage. So, this knowledge can not be regarded as a case of knowledge as far as the meaning of the phrase 'ground of all usage' put down in '*Nyāya Bodhini*' and '*Nīlakānṭhī*' is concerned.

Keeping the problem mentioned above in mind Annambhatta in his *Tarkasaṁgraha Dīpikā* counts knowledgehood (*Jñānatva*) as a defining mark of knowledge. To clear this idea it should be elucidated. Some philosophers are of the opinion that knowledge is self-

luminous. But Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, on the other hand, observes that knowledge is not self-luminous. A cognitive state comes to be known in a subsequent state of cognition called '*anuvyāvasāya*' which is a kind of internal perception. When I have a state of cognition, say, perceiving a table, I do not at that precise instant know that I have such a cognition. I come to know only at a subsequent instant that I have a perception of the table. This latter perception is known as the subsequent perception or

'*anuvyāvasāya*' of the original perception which is known as '*Vyāvasāya*'. This internal perception reveals the state of the original cognition as a state of consciousness. The original states of consciousness have an indefinite number of multiplicity and the same can truly be said in the case of the corresponding states of internal perception of these original states. Now each and every original cognitive state is a state of consciousness. So, they possess something in common. This something is nothing but universal 'consciousness'. In Sanskrit terminology the original state of cognition is called a state of *Jñāna* and the common feature present in each and every state of cognition is said as '*Jñānatva*'. This *jñānatva* or knowledgehood is present in each and every case of knowledge either *nirvikalpaka* or *savikalpaka*. So, it is seen that the definition of knowledge given in '*Tarka samgraha Dīpikā*' is free from all sorts of defects.

Now let us deal with the classification of knowledge suggested by *Nyāya*. Knowledge, to them, is of two kinds: memory and *anubhava*.

Memory or recollection is defined in *TS* as the consciousness which results only from *Saṁskāra*.³ But it is worthy to note that the term *Saṁskāra* here has been used in a technical way. Generally *Saṁskāra* means a trace or impression. But here *Saṁskāra* has been used by the *Naiyāyikas* and *Vaiśeṣikas* as a term having wider significance including speed and elasticity as well as physical trace, which is specially called *bhāvanā*. This is why *TSD* explains it as *bhāvanā*.

The definition of memory given comprises three phrases, and the special significance of them has been explained by *TSD* in the following way: (a) consciousness (b) which results from *Saṁskāra* and (c) only or alone.⁴ (a) If the term 'consciousness' were dropped from the definition then it would have suffered from the fallacy of over-coverage, since it would cover or include the destruction of trace within the purview of memory which actually is not the case. The 'destruction of trace' also is the outcome of 'trace'. But yet it is not memory at all. So in order to avoid this difficulty the term 'consciousness' has been inserted to the definition. Though the effect, destruction of trace, necessarily presupposes trace as a cause, obviously this is not the state of consciousness. But memory, of course, is a state of consciousness.

- (b) The insertion of the phrase – ‘which results from trace’ to the definition saves the definition from being vitiated by the same fallacy mentioned above i.e. the fallacy of overcoverage. If the said clause were omitted from the definition it would have stood as ‘memory is consciousness’ and thus it would cover the perceptual knowledge, for those are also the state of consciousness. But the perceptual knowledge inspite of necessarily being a state of consciousness like memory. Clearly it is not the ‘result of any trace like the latter one’. So the insertion of the second clause to the definition prevents it from the fallacy of overcoverage.
- (c) The word ‘only’ or ‘alone’ has been inserted to the definition of knowledge because it also bears a great significance in it. If this term were dropped from the aforesaid definition, it would have read as “memory is the cognition which results from a trace and thereby it also invites the blemish of over coverage like the former owes in a different way. For a recognitive cognition (*pratyābhijñā*) is also a cognition resulting from a trace, though obviously it is not memory but perception. The insertion of the term ‘alone’ to the definition prevents it (definition) from being the subject of the difficulty already mentioned, because recognitive perception is due to some trace no doubt but it is not due to trace alone. It also requires some other conditions called sense-object contact which is not applicable to the case of memory-cognition.

In defining *anubhava* it is said that *anubhava* is that kind of knowledge which is different from memory or *smṛti*. It is important to note that here may translate *anubhava* as direct or immediate

cognition. But it will be mistaken for even the mediate knowledge like inference, testimony etc. belong to *anubhava*, as used by *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*.

Veridical and non-Verdical anubhava :

Anubhava, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* maintains, is of two kinds : Veridical (*Yathārtha*) and non-veridical (*ayathārtha*).⁵ A cognition which has, for its subject (determinans or *prakāra*), something 'p' (*taṭ*) when its predicate (determinandum, or *viśeṣya*) has that something (*tadvat*), for example the knowledge, "This is snake" in the case of snake is called veridical *anubhava* or *pramā*.

The definition of veridical cognition or *pramā* can hardly be understood and explained unless and until we understand and analyse what we mean by *prakara* and *viśeṣya*.

Knowledge, is of something which is known as the object or the cognitum (*viṣaya*) of the knowledge concerned. Usually this object is a complex entity composing of '*viśeṣya*', '*prakāra*', and '*saṁsarga*'. *Viśeṣya* in the object is one which is characterised by something, and *prakāra* on the other hand is that which characterises the *viśeṣya*. Let us explain the idea by citing a concrete example. Suppose I perceive a snake. In this perception, the object concerned is a complex entity which may be described as '*something*' which is characterised is called the *viśeṣya* and 'snakeness' which characterises the something i.e. snake is said to be the *prakāra* or *viśeṣaṇa* of the perception in

question. The same can truly be said about other kinds of cognitive states like knowledge by testimony, inference, and so on.

Now let us turn to the analysis of the terms, inserted in the definition of veridical cognition or *pramā* and thereby the justification of the definition as a whole. The definition given in *TS* and *TSD* stands – ‘*tadvati tatprakārākānubhavaḥ*’. The Sanskrit word ‘*tat*’ is usually a demonstrative pronoun which means ‘that’. But here this term has been used not in a traditional sense but in technical sense meaning anything which figures at the ‘characteriser’ (*prakāra*) or ‘determinans’ in the object of an *anubhava*. Here ‘*tat*’ is a variable for the determinans of a cognition varies from case to case and that is why it has been translated here as ‘something’ (P) without having any constant value. The term ‘*tad-vat*’ is also a variable like the former one with the meaning that which has the something the change of ‘*tat*’ to ‘*tad*’ is just an euphonic one in the Sanskrit language. The seventh case ending ‘*ni*’ has been added to ‘*tad-vat*’ and thereby the term ‘*tad-vati*’ is formed. It means ‘when there is that which has the something (P)’. This is what is about the meaning of the individual terms inserted to the definition. The meaning or sense of the definition as a whole stands – veridical cognition or *pramā* is an ‘*anubhava*’ which has for its determinans (*prakāra* – object) ‘something’ when the determinandum (*viśeṣya*-object) is that which has that something.’⁶ This version is somehow similar to that of the correspondence theory of truth.

But Annambhatta in his definition shows that the definition does not cover some cases of veridical cognition and it thereby

suffers from the fallacy of under-coverage (*avyāpti*). Say, for example, the cognition of 'potness in a pot' presented to be presented to a percipient subject, as a veridical one beyond doubt. But as long as the definition given in *TS* goes

this cognition does not come under the purview of veridical cognition. This knowledge has 'potness' for its determinandum (*viśeṣya*) and 'pot' for its determinans (*prakāra*). It would conform to the aforesaid definition of true cognition if the 'pot' (here the *prakāra*) would have been present in 'potness' (here the *Viśeṣya*). But actually the case is otherwise, for potness is present in pot, not the vice – versa. The definition requires that there just actually be the '*tad-vat*' which is obviously absent from the knowledge concerned. Since, if '*tat*' in the present case stands for the *prakāra* 'pot' the '*tadvat*' should be the *viśeṣya* 'potness' as having 'pot'. But 'potness' cannot surely have 'pot' for its determinans. Thus the required '*tad-vad*' is absent from the case in question and therefore the definition of veridical *anubhava* given in *TS* in terms of '*tad-vad*' fails.

In order to make the definition free from the defects already mentioned, the author proposes the phrase '*tad-vati*' in the place of '*tad-vat*' is his *TSD*. '*Tad-vati*' is a phrase which means 'when there is that which has a relation to the 'something' (P)'. In the case of the knowledge under discussion 'pot' obviously has a relation to 'potness' and thereby it conforms to the definition of valid cognition given in *TSD*.⁷

It is worthy to note that as between 'pot' and 'potness' though 'potness' can be said to be present in 'pot' it can not be said otherwise. 'Potness' is known as '*pratiyogin*' (the relatum) and 'pot' the '*anuyogin*' (the locus) of the relation that potness bears to pot. As 'potness' and 'pot' are related entities both can truly be said to bear some relation. But it should be pointed out that the relation that 'potness' bears to pot is not similar with but different from the relation that 'pot' bears to potness in status and that is why, though the former one can be expressed indifferently in terms of 'in' and 'has', latter one cannot .

The term 'has' used in *TS* definition bears some meaning which is different from the meaning it usually bears. In other words, the term '*tad-vat*' has been used here in its secondary sense but not in its primary sense. The scope of the former one is, no doubt, broader than that of the latter one and thus the author becomes successful in making the *TS* definition of true knowledge free from the charge of undercoverage.

Here, again, one thing should be highlighted . The term '*pramā*' has been used by different philosophers belonging to various schools. But the *Nyāya* usage of this term is different from others to some extent. For instance, the term '*pramā*' as used in *Vaiśeṣika*-texts means true cognition of all types. But as long as the *Nyāya* usage is concerned, '*pramā*' means only a veridical *anubhava*.

Non-veridical anubhava :

The definition of non-veridical *anubhava* (*apramā*) given in *TS* stands ; " Non-veridical *anubhava* is a cognition which has for its determinans (*prakāra*) something 'P' when its determinandum (*Viśeṣya*) is characterised by the absence of that something . To cite an example, 'the perception of snake' in respect of rope. Here this perceptual cognition has for its determinans (*prakāra*) 'snakeness' but its determinandum (*Viśeṣya*) is actually characterised by 'absence of snakeness'.⁸

But Annambhatta in his *TSD* maintains that the *TS* definition of *aprama* or non-veridical *anubhava* is not sound, since it remains to be the subject of the charge of overcoverage. Some explanation is needed to understand this difficulty. 'Conjunction' according to *Nyāya*, is a quality which exists in the substances conjoined with each other. For instance, when there is a book on the table, it implies that there is a relation between them known as conjunction . This relation of conjunction resides between the table and the book. But at the same time it is also true that this relation does not reside in them . For it is present in some of the parts of them and absent from some of the parts too.

If this is the case then the cognition - This table has contact with a book may as well be described as 'a cognition which has for its determinans (*prakāra*) something 'P' when its determinandum (*Viśeṣya*) 'the table' is not characterised by 'P' or is characterised by the absence of 'P'. Thus the definition of non-veridical *anubhava*

mentioned in *TS* would apply to the cases of knowledge like this which is surely accepted as valid one. So the *TS* definition of false cognition is too wide.

To overcome this difficulty the *TSD* defines false cognition in the following way : "A false cognition is that which has for its determinans (*prakāra*) something 'P' in a certain relation 'r' (*sambandha*) to a certain aspect (*avacchedaka*) of the determinandum (*Vīśeṣya*), when the latter has the absence of something 'P' in that relation 'r' (*Yatsambandhābhāvāna*) to that aspect a (*Yadavacchedaka*)." ⁹ *TSD* points out that a cognition conforms to the definition of false cognition , if it has for its determinans qualified conjunction, i.e. conjunction in a certain relation to a certain aspect of the object. But in the case under discussion, the cognition has for its determinans unqualified conjunction. So this definition of false cognition or non-veridical *anubhava* cannot be applied here in this case and thus it remains free from the charge of overcoverage.

After giving the definition of veridical *anubhava* or *pramā* and non-veridical *anubhava* or *apramā*. Annambhatta turns to the classification of them. Veridical *anubhava* or *pramā* , he says, is of four kinds – *pratyakṣa*, *anumiti*, *upamiti* , and *śābda*. And it is special condition (*kaṛaṇa*) which is also known as *pramāṇa* also can be classified into four kinds – *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* , *upamāna* and *śābda* . Here we shall deal not with the veridical *anubhava* or *pramā* but with the non – veridical *anubhava* or *apramā* . So, let us drop the

discussion of veridical *anubhava* and go on only with the non-veridical one.

Non – veridical cognition or *apramā* :

Non- veridical cognition is of three kinds of doubt, error and *Tarka*.¹⁰ But , it should be noted that in *TSD* an objection has been raised against this classification , given in *TS*. *TSD* maintains that dreaming too should be considered to be cognitive state of mind and therefore it should be enumerated as the fourth kind of non-veidical cognition . But this objection can be met by saying that actually dreaming is not different from but similar with error. But since it is not owing to any defect in the external sense-organs nor due to any defect in external nature, it must be because of some internal defect. So, it is called as a kind of subjective or internal error.

Here, we shall drop the discussion of the first two i.e. doubt and error just by hinting at and go through in details with the last one (*tarka*).

Doubt :

Doubt is the apprehension in respect of the same substantive . That is, it is characterised by many mutually opposed characters. For instance, “ May it be a post or a person ?”¹¹

But one may raise an objection by saying that this definition is too wide since this would also cover a selfcontradictory statement like “ This is both a stick and a man “. A contradictory statement can

hardly be considered to be the case of knowledge for it does not represent any cognitive state of mind.

But doubt, on the contrary, is definitely knowledge since it represents a cognitive state of mind. That is why, the aforesaid definition of doubt cannot be accepted.

Another more plausible objection may be raised that doubt in fact, should not be considered to be invalid cognition. Since the cases where there is the definite assertion of a certain character in regard to a subject to which it does not really belong is taken to be invalid cognition. But this is not applicable to the case of doubt, on the contrary, it involves some suspense of judgement – this suspense is due to many contrary suggestions.

But this objection does not hold good in the case of Indian philosophy. 'Invalid cognition' used in Indian philosophy is different from 'invalid cognition' used in western philosophy to some extent. In western philosophy, the phrase 'invalid cognition' is indeed associated with a judgement. But the phrase 'invalid cognition' used in Indian philosophy, particularly in *Nyāya*, stands for any cognition which fails to fulfil its function of delivering the truth about a thing. Doubt fails to fulfil its purpose just said, so, doubt is regarded as an invalid cognition.

With a view to making the *TS* definition of doubt free from the blemish of over-coverage, the author, Annambhatta gives the definition of the same in *TSD*. This reformed definition reads as

155237

23 SEP 2003

“Doubt is the apprehension, in respect of the same substantive.....”¹²

. The word ‘same’ in this definition prevents it from being too wide by concluding the application to what is called *samūhālabana-Jñāna* or a cognition which has many things for its object and has for its predicate, many characters which are severally ascribed to the many things which constitute its subject. This sort of knowledge is expressed in terms of compound judgements having mutually opposed characters as predicate. A compound judgement of this type is not in respect of one and the same substantive, but in respect of many substantive and that is why, it is not covered by *TSD* definition of doubt.

The phrase ‘mutually opposed’ has been inserted to the definition to prevent it from being vitiated by the fallacy of over-coverage again. Had this phrase not been inserted then it would have been applied to judgement as “A pot is a substance”. Because this judgement is one having more than one character – ‘potness’ and ‘substancehood’ and one subject “pot”. But the definition with that phrase excludes this judgement since the characters concerned i.e. ‘pothood’ and ‘substancehood’ are not mutually opposed, for, they can well reside in the same thing at the same time.

The term ‘many’ has been inserted to the definition to exclude the judgement like “This is possessed of pothood which is opposed to ‘clothhood’ from the purview of doubt. For although in this judgement two characters mentioned are opposed to each other yet only one of them, ‘pothood’, has been ascribed to the subject.

Error or Viparyaya :

TS defines *Viparyaya* simply as false cognition, meaning false *anubhava* . And the example given is 'this is silver' in respect of shell.

¹³ But this definition tends to include *samśaya* or doubt. That is why *TSD* explains that *viparyaya* is a *sure* perceptual cognition having for its predicate, a character which does not belong to the subject of the knowledge in question. But doubt is a knowledge which is not certain at all and thereby remains untouched by the *TSD* definition . ¹⁴

Tarka :

Tarka is the third non-veridical '*anubhava*' as enumerated by *TS* . Generally '*Tarka*' means argument . But it should be noted that here in *Nyāya* system the term '*Tarka*' has been used not in a general sense but in a highly technical sense.

Tarka has been defined as the false assumption of something through the false assumption of another thing which is invariably concomitant with that something, for example, 'If there were no fire, then, there would be no smoke'.¹⁵ It is the knowingly false cognition (*āropa*) of something 'B' on the basis of the knowingly false cognition (*āropa*) of some other thing 'A' which is invariably concomitant with 'B' . Here both 'B' and 'A' are known to be unreal and yet a relation between them is asserted. Here the Sanskrit term '*āropa*' means a false assumption or a false ascription entertained for a while, knowingly fully well that what is assumed is false. So '*āropa*' does not

mean the same as what the 'error' means. For in the case of an erroneous knowledge, the person concerned does not know that the knowledge in question is wrong but in the case of an 'āropa' the person concerned is quite aware that it is false. This sort of wilful assumption of what is known to be false is called *āhārya jñāna* (meaning literally a piece of knowledge which is artificial and brought about by an act of consciously wilful distortion).

So, it is obvious that *Tarka* is a false assumption. But it is worthy to note that every false assumption is not necessarily a *Tarka*. A false assumption should be considered to be *Tarka* only when it is entertained on the basis of another false assumption, through the knowledge of an invariable concomitance between two things. If we entertain the presupposition that there is in the kitchen no smoke in spite of knowing that it is actually there in it (Kitchen) , then no doubt it will be an instance of *āropa* or false assumption, but it would not be correct to say that it is an instance of *Tarka*. If a person perceives smoke in the hill and yet entertains the presupposition that there is no fire in it. Here he assumes absence of fire as a consequence of his assuming 'absence of smoke' which he knows to be invariably concomitant with 'absence of smoke'. A false assumption or *āpora* like this is called *Tarka*.

'*Tarka*' then is clearly a case of erroneous cognition and is admitted to be so by Annaṁbhatta in his *TSD*. So, naturally a question arises – why then has he enumerated it in *TS* as a separate variety of false *anubhava* or *apramā* ? The author replies this question by saying that it plays an important role in helping a

cognitive instrument (*Pramāṇa*) , such as inference , to perform its appropriate function which the other erroneous cognitions fail to do and is regarded as a subspecies of *apramā* like error and doubt and not as a sub-species of error.

But again our question is – How does *Tarka* help *pramāṇa* like inference ? The author , Annambhatta himself remains silent on this point and it is Nīlakantha who gives a little elucidation. Sometimes *pramāṇa* fails to produce its proper result because of some obstacles, such as doubt. Let us suppose that one infers the existence of fire in the hill on the perception of smoke in it. And he does this on the basis of the invariable concomitance (relation of *Vyāpti*) between smoke and fire i.e. *hetu* and *sādhya* . But one may doubt in the very invariable relationship between them and thereby doubt in the varacity of the inferential cognition itself. And as long as this doubt persists the process of inference would fail to generate its appropriate valid cognition, “There is fire in the hill”. This doubt can be ruled out through the proper application of *Tarka* in the following way. “If there were no fire, there would not have been smoke”. This *Tarka* in its turn is based on an established causal law holding between smoke and fire like ‘smoke is caused by fire’. So to doubt the validity of *Tarka* amounts to doubt the validity of the theory of causality itself. But no one questions the validity of the latter and thereby he has no proper right to doubt the validity of the former too. Thus by removing doubt *Tarka* helps a *pramāṇa* to perform its appropriate function.