

Indian Epistemology

Proceedings of National Seminar

Editor

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श्री शङ्कराचार्य संस्कृतसर्वकलाशाला

Dept. Of Sanskrit Nyaya
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit
Silver Jubilee Year
March 2018



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Publication

Dept. Of Sanskrit Nyaya, SSUS Kalady.

ISBN: 978-93-5311-034-5

March 2018

Price: Rs. 400/-

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NYAYA EPISTEMOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Dr. K. G. Kumari.

Indian philosophy mainly compares of the six scholars, Samkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaisesika, Purvamimamsa and Uttaramimamsa. The final goal of all these systems to attain salvation or Moksha. These assertions are based on the realization that the suffering in our lives is due to ignorance or avidya.

Nyāya is concerned with the correct thinking and valid reasoning as methodological tools for acquiring knowledge of reality. Nyāya is often referred to as tarkasastra, the science of reasoning or simply logic. It makes contribution of epistemology by providing some basic assumption about the content and methods of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge arises as a result of contact between the self and the non-self¹. Naiyāyikas fundamental definition of knowledge is phenomenological. In the nyāya philosophy cognition is taken to mean the same thing as apprehension or upalabdhi, knowledge or jnana². So knowledge means awareness or apprehension of knowledge. In Nyāya knowledge is different from both the knowing subject.

The epistemic and epistemological issues have been a central point of debate and discussion in all the philosophies of the world since time immemorial in Indian philosophy. The firsts systematic treatments of the means of knowledge (the Pramanas) is to be found in Goutamas Nyāyasutra. It also deal with the object of knowledge the orthodox schools of Indian thought accept at least two and at the most all six sources of knowledge named as perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, postulation, Non-cognition Apprehension vaiseskia accepts the first two, samkhya and yoga the first three, Nyāya the first four, Mimamsa the first five and advaita all six sources of knowledge. Pauranikas eight, Sambhava and ithihya each of the above are called Pramāṇas.

In Indian philosophy the first systematic treatment of the pramanas is to be found in Goutamas Nyāya sutra. The philosophical doctrine of nyāya

specializes in the exposition of the methodology of examination. These methods of validation are termed as pramāṇa and the nyāya is therefore called as the school of Logic, Discussion and Inference. The Vaiśeṣika School of philosophy and the Nyāya School are considered to be almost identical in approach. So they are called Nyāya-vaiesika system. The dates of nyāya way back to before the third century. It is promulgated by the sage Goutama Akshapāda. The authentic text Nyāyasūtra it contain five chapters.

The subject matter of the Nyāya School can be summarized in three headings-metaphysics, Epistemology and twelve object of investigation. Nyāyasastra give importance to pramana. So it is called pramanasastra-metaphysics deals with the enumeration of sixteen categories which are essential to be known in all the aspects. These include pramana, prameya, samśaya, proyajana, dṛṣṭānta, siddhanta etc. Epistemology in cynosure of the nyāya doctrine the first category pramāṇa is studied as the separate branch of philosophy as epistemology. This proposes a detailed methodology of logical reasoning along with the approval of analogy and perception as the competent instruments of scientific approach. The system of nyāya promulgate the twelve points of investigation or prameya that is soul, body, sense organs, objects of senses, intellect, mind, action, dosa, pretyabhāva, phala, dukha and Apavarga³. According to nyāya the whole course of debate has definite successive stages from the beginning to the end. They are pratinja, pramāṇa, prameya, samśaya, dṛṣṭānta, siddhanta, avayava and nigrahastāna. The nyāya school comprises four methodologies of examination. Pratyaksha or perception, Anumana or inference, Upamāna or Analogy and the Śabda or verbal testimony⁴. The knowledge obtained through these four methods. All examination and investigations are based on these tools.

Prathyāksha (Perception)

Goutamas definition of prathyaksha is the starting point of the Nyāya epistemology. It is the first of the four pramanas it is the basis of the operation of other pramanas. Pratyaksha is that cognition which arises from the contact of the sense-organ with its object and which is unnamable, non-erroneous and definitive⁵. From this definition it is clear that perception in terms of sense objet contact. Perception is a direct cognition through the five

senses. This includes visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile and olfactory perception. The sense object contact involved in six stages the step are termed as sannikarsa. This is again a scientific systematic exposition involving the observation from the superficial to the minute. These six points of contact are Samyoga or conjoined. The first step it includes the contacts of the substance with the senseorgan. The second step Samyuktasamavāya or inherently joined involving the contact of the quality of the substances this is the perception of the shape, size, colour etc. which are inherently present with the substance. Samyuktasamavedasamavāya the third step that perceives the degree of the quality like the intensity of redness in various water meters. Next is samavāya, the perceptions of the sound. Samavedasamavāya the perception of the quality of the sound. the intensity of sound with regards to pitch, frequency and wave is perceived on this stage. The last is viśeṣaṇaviesesyabhāva relation of the qualification and qualified the non-existence is perceived at this stage.

Perception as the major source of knowledge, inference has considered highly reliable and frequently used source of knowledge. There are number of limitations of the direct perception like the non-acuity of the senses, covering of the object to be perceived, group of similar objects at all⁶ Thus there arise a need to look for other means of attaining valid knowledge to overcome the restriction of the perception. The complete knowledge is therefore obtained with the other instruments of inference, Analogy and testimony.

The perception has its limitation from the fact it always involves, the knower or the subject and the known or the object. It is not always possible to have perception of all that we know. Greater part of knowledge is proportional and inferential in nature. It is a method of knowledge, it is plan alike for the western as well as the Indian logic and epistemology.

Anumāna (Inference)

Anumana has been defined in Nyāya system as the knowledge of an object, not by direct observation but by means of the knowledge of a linga or sign and that of its universal relation. It is proceeded by the perception and is classified in to three varieties and provides the inference of all the three stages of time, the past, the present and the future. In Nyāyasutra

tattrividham Purvavat, Śeṣavat, Sāmānyadodṛṣtamca⁶. This classification has reference to the nature of the vyāpti or the universal relation between the middle and major terms of inference. Purvavat and seshavat inference are based on causal uniformity, while Sāmānyadodṛṣṭa is based on non-causal uniformity. The third classification of inference is classified into kevalanvayi, kevalavyatireki, and Anvyayavyatireki⁷. This classification is more logical in as much as it depends on the nature of the induction by which we get the knowledge of vyapti or the universal proposition involved in inference.

The inference is explained as the judgement produced by the knowledge of the minor premise qualified by the knowledge of the universal proposition, the major premise. On the basis of continuous observation of the relation of the con comittance as that of the hetu and sādhyā, the observer infers the relation of cause and effect. Thus the inference is widely used as a tool of validation.

Upamāna (Analogy)

Goutama defines upamāna as the means of cognizing an unknown object through its similarity to another well-known object. The essential cause of the comparative knowledge is the comparison. The cause of this knowledge is the cognition based on the similitude. It is the cognition of the relation of a name with the names. The development of various sciences has taken place by the observation of the natural phenomenon and their application for the betterment of mankind. Ayurveda has utilized this methodology in the advancement of the knowledge of the health science.

Śabda (Verbal Testimony)

The valid assertion and authoritarian statements have been the greatest source of indigenous knowledge like that of the scriptures and Ayurveda classics. It is the fourth means of acquiring knowledge employed by Nyāya. Epistemologically verbal testimony refers to a source of knowledge. As apramāṇa it is defined in the nyāya as valid verbal testimony. It consists in the assertion of a trustworthy person. According to Goutama, Śabda is the upadeśa of a reliable person, Vatsyayana explain the term āpta as signifying a person who has immediate knowledge of dharma, who is capable of perceiving object in the real form and who communicate

real knowledge to the other out of comparison. The validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on the statements of a trust worthy person.

In the present day scenario, the reliable and factual statements of the experienced persons in their respective knowledge arenas are considered to be the authentic and therefore approved. The knowledge of the history, basic sciences at all are completely based on the reliable testimonials. The epistemology becomes clear that all the sciences need the tools of examination to pursue their research activity. Therefore the epistemology is the base for the advancement of scientific reasoning through pragmatic experimentation and analysis.

The role of epistemology (in the research methodology) is essential to have a discussion on the need of Research Methodology. In this modern era of science and technology, there is no space for blind faith in tradition and classical text. The faith has been replaced by skepticism and only the truth established by a systematic and unbiased method of experimentation and analysis is accepted. The truth seekers expect a hypothesis to be properly and methodologically evaluated in the scientific light. The most widely approved method of validation is the direct perception as it is directly perceived by the research scholar, through the senseorgans the observer directly fulfills his desire to know the fact modern scientific innovations in the form of aids and devices that argument the scope of direct perception. The direct perception in the source of the knowledge valid for only the present as it is directly perceived by the senses. The other means of valid knowledge is inference. It is an indirect method of validation valid for all the stages of time. The research plan is also expects the inference as the main factor. The establishment of the relation between the cause and effect is the aim of logical reasoning known as research. The inferential knowledge is based on the direct perception. The first step of inference followed by the observation of the regularity of positive or negative Co-relation between the probans (Cause) and probandum. The concomittance of the two entities is the basis of inference. If one entity exists, its other concomitant has to be there this tenant helps the scientist to draw a conclusion. The five fold statement for the inference is an excellent model of research in the

contemporary sciences. The five fold statements are Pratinja, hetu, udāharaṇa, upanaya and nigamana. The proposition of the Research Problem is Hetu. The Research plan describes the materials and methods that would suffice the research activity. According to the hypothesis, the appropriate materials and methods are selected. Udāharaṇa is very important is the demonstrations and experimental study are undertaken at this stage. It gives us the scientific data which is utilized at the later stage of the Research activity. Upamāna or Comparison is very important stage it includes the interpretation of the data collected through the experimentation and demonstrations. The relation between the cause and effect is drawn logically. The discussion of the possible relation between the cause and effect should be free from the fallacies of reasoning mentioned in the nyāyaschool as hetvabbāsa. The fallacies vitiate the proper reasoning and these pose a threat to the drawing of valid assertions and conclusions. Conclusion deals with the approval or rejection of the hypothesis and paves the way for planning the future action.

Analogy is the knowledge explained by the comparison of unknown one with the known on the basis of their similarity. A number of instances and concepts suggest the utility of Analogy in Research activity. It is a tool to validate and incorporate new knowledge verbal testimony guiding principles for the initiation of Research activity. The principles and concepts mentioned in the classics are questioned and revalidated in modern light.

Naiyayikas four independent sources of knowledge and to illumine the process of acquiring valid knowledge. It is true that the contemporary Sciences have advanced a lot and continue to scale new heights in this quest of knowledge among to the successful pursuance of the highly intellectual activity of Research. The seeds of the research method were shown in the Indian Philosophy mainly the school of Nyāya which promulgated the means of valid examination in the term of prāmaṇa. The western philosophy also accepts the epistemology as a tool of validation. These tools guiding principles for the research activity in all the knowledge.

End Notes

1. A critical survey of Indian philosophy. C. D. Sharma, Motilal Benarasidas, Delhi-1994-p-192
2. Nyayabhashyam— p.34-1-1-15
3. Nyayabhashyam— p.29-1-1-9
4. प्रत्यक्षानुमानोपमानशब्दाः प्रमाणानि Nyayasutra p.17-1-1-3
5. इन्द्रियार्थ सन्निकर्षोत्पन्नमपदेशमव्यभिचारीव्यवासायात्मकज्ञानं प्रत्यक्षं p.24-1-1-4
6. तत्पूर्वकं त्रिविधमनुमानं पूर्ववत्, शेषवत्, सामान्यतोदृष्टं च Nyayasutra p.24-1-1-5
7. Tharkasamgraha p-32

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