

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE : A BRIEF NOTE ON INDIAN EPISTEMOLOGY.

Man is a living being endowed with the gift of knowledge and this distinguishes him from all other living beings. In every step of his life, a true man displays the stamp of his distinguished intellect. Thus though primarily the man as an animal struggles for survival, he does not do it blindly. In their struggle for existence, the lower animals have no conscious plan and purpose. They work only by their blind instincts. Man, on the other hand, applies his superior gift of intellect in order to understand the meanings and conditions of the struggles and to materialise his plans in order to achieve his ends. Thus he wants to lead his life in the light of the knowledge of his own and of the world around. And man's desire for acquiring more and more knowledge again springs out of this rational nature of his.¹

1. IIP, p. 1.

Man not only knows, but is also aware of what he actually knows. He finds that his knowledge about himself and the world around is not always consistent. That is to say, the object or fact remaining the same, its knowledge varies from person to person and in the case of same person from time to time.² Thus he finally comes to discover the knowledge in his possession either as true or false. The awareness of this distinction naturally leads him to enquire into the nature, conditions and factors, the limits and validity of knowledge.³ The branch of study, which in the words of Late Dr. Ward 'aims at a systematic reflection concerning knowledge itself as the object of science' is epistemology.⁴

In Indian philosophy, a critical analysis of knowledge is first noticeable in the Nyāyasūtra of Gautama. Here we find a systematic treatment not only of the means of knowledge (Pramāṇas), but of its object also.⁵ Gautama deals with also the very question of validity of knowledge as well as that of its means (Pramāṇas). But at all events, an examination of the epistemological approach of Gautama and his immediate successors shows that in this early period of Indian philosophy, epistemology was treated as a part of metaphysics. In the subsequent

2. ISP, pp. 354-55

3. PRP, p.23

4. IL, p.5

5. ibid, p.5

period, however, this study of knowledge came to be gradually separated from that of the object of knowledge and consequently there came into being the works on pure logic and epistemology. We find such a departure first in the writings of the Bauddha and Jaina philosophers.⁶ But it was the modern school of Nyāya founded by Gaṅgēśa that carried out a very subtle and systematic study of the means of knowledge and gave epistemology the status of an independent and distinct branch of study. Thus epistemology came to be an important and indispensable part of Indian philosophy.⁷

It is needless to say that epistemological analysis in various schools of Indian philosophy grew with differences. But in all these schools, we find a common tendency of scholars to investigate into the problem of knowledge on the basis of the following four factors:⁸

- i) The pamātr - the knower : the cogniser of valid knowledge.
- ii) The Prameya - the knowable ; the object of valid knowledge.

6. ibid, p.5

7. ibid, p.5

8. pramāṇam pramātā prameyam pramīriti caturvargenaiva vyavahārah parisamāpyate. NVTI, I.1.1

- iii) The Pramāṇa - the chief instrument of knowing; the source of valid knowledge, and
 iv) The Pramā or Pramiti - the valid knowledge (of the object) itself.

Explaining the implication of these terms, Vātsāyana, the commentator on the Nyāyasūtra of Gautama, observes that a person who, being guided by the desire to seek or shun the objects, is led to activity, is called the Pramātr̥. This means that the cognition of valid knowledge invariably presupposes a psychological preparation on the part of the cogniser. Prameya is the object rightly known. The means or source by which the object is rightly known is termed Pramāṇa. Pramā or Pramiti is the specific valid knowledge of the object as it is.⁹

Of these factors, Pramāṇa is to be considered as the most important one, since without Pramāṇa, there cannot be Pramā, but for which, the question of Pramātr̥ and Prameya does not arise at all. Vātsāyana, the author of the Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya, therefore, categorically asserts that the other three factors, viz. Pramātr̥, Prameya and Pramā come to be useful only when Pramāṇa is meaningful.¹⁰

9. VB, vide ND, p.4

10. arthavati ca pramāṇe pramātā prameyaṁ pramitirityartha-
 vanti, kasmāt? anyatamāpāye'rthasyānupapatteḥ.

PRAMĀNAS AS RECOGNISED IN VARIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS

In their bid to prove the validity of knowledge, various schools of Indian philosophy were busy with the task of finding the Pramāṇas. But since the schools were ideologically different from one another, they were not unanimous in respect of the number of Pramāṇas recognised by them. Thus the number of Pramāṇas varied from school to school. Of the lists of the Pramāṇas, one found in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka might be the earliest, where they are recorded as (i) Smṛti (Code of Law), (ii) Pratyakṣa (Direct knowledge, i.e. sense-cognition), (iii) Aitihiya (Tradition) and (iv) Anumāna (Inference).¹¹ This list certainly belongs to an early date, since it includes Aitihiya as one of the means, which was later discarded as a Pramāṇa.

A stereotyped list of a later date enumerates the Pramāṇas as follows:

- i) Pratyakṣa (Direct knowledge)
- ii) Anumāna (Inference)
- iii) Upamāna (Comparison)
- iv) Śabda (Verbal Testimony)
- v) Arthāpatti (Postulation)

11. smṛtiḥ pratyakṣamaitihyam anumānaścatusṭayam.

- vi) Sambhava (Implication)
- vii) Abhāva (Non-existence) and
- viii) Aitihya (Tradition)

The Tārkikarakṣā conveniently enumerates the aforesaid Pramāṇas along with the concerned philosophical schools recognising them in a couple of verses.¹² Accordingly, the Cārvāka, the materialist recognises only Pratyakṣa (Perception) as the source of valid knowledge.¹³ The Vaiśeṣika and the Bauddha add Anumāna (Inference) to it. The Sāṅkhya recognises Śabda (Verbal Testimony) in addition to these two.¹⁴ Some Naiyāyikas¹⁵ accept Upamāna (Comparison) along with the earlier three. The Prābhākara Mīmāṃsaka adds Arthāpatti (Postulation) to these four,¹⁶ while the Bhāṭṭa¹⁷ and Vedāntin¹⁸

12. pratyakṣamekaṃ cārvākaḥ kaṇādeṣugatau punaḥ /
 anumānaṅca taccātha sāṅkhyāḥ śabdaṅca te api /
 nyāyāikadeśino'pyevamupamānaṅca kecana /
 arthāpattiyā sahaitāni catvāryāha prābhākaraḥ //
 abhāvaṣaṣṭhānyetāni bhāṭṭā vedāntinastathā /
 sambhavaitihyayuktāni tāni paurāṇikā jaguḥ //
 op.cit. quoted in MUS, vide BP, p.260

13. MM, p.8

14. SK, I.7

15. pratyakṣānumānopamānaśābdāḥ pramāṇam. NS, 1, 1.3

16. PP. p. 104

17. MM, p.7

18. VPB, p. 11.

recognise Abhāva (Non-existence) along with these five. The Paurāṇika, on the other hand, recognises Sambhava (Implication) and Aitihya (Tradition) also in addition to the six aforesaid Pramāṇas.

Though not mentioned in the list, it is to be noted that the system of Yoga recognises three Pramāṇas, viz. Pratyakṣa, Anumāṇa, and Āgama or Śāstra (Scriptural knowledge).¹⁹ These three Pramāṇas, however, are not supposed to give rise to any valid knowledge. Again it is to be added here that the Vaiśeṣikas appear to recognise Smṛti (Remembrance) and Ārṣajñāna (Intuitive knowledge) in addition to Pratyakṣa and Anumāṇa admitted by them.²⁰

In respect of denial of a particular Pramāṇa, we notice that while some schools have denied it altogether, others have tried to include it under the pervuew of some other Pramāṇa. As for instance, while the Cārvākas have denied Śabda as a Pramāṇa, the Bauddhas and the Vaiśiṣikas have included it under Anumāṇa. Similarly Arthāpatti is recognised by the Mīmāṃsakas as a Pramāṇa. But according to the Naiyāyikas,²¹ Arthāpatti,

19. pratyakṣānumānāgamāḥ pramāṇāni. YS, I, 7, p.14

20. Vide IP, p.181

21. na catuṣṭvam, aitihyārthāpattisambhavābhāvaprāmāṇyāt.
NS, II. 2.1.

Aitihya, Abhāva and Sambhava are not to be treated as separate Pramāṇas, as they can be included under the sphere of the four Pramāṇas recognised by them.

Excepting the Cārvākas, however, it is the common feeling of all philosophical schools that Pratyakṣa alone is not competent to provide us all knowledge of ourselves and the world around. There lies a vast range of knowledge beyond our direct sense-perception also. Hence the constant and vigorous search for the other means of knowledge also on the part of the scholars through ages.

Of the Pramāṇas, Śabda demands a special consideration from us in the context of the present treatment of Abhidhā which is otherwise known as Śakti.²²

A NOTE OF ŚABDA PRAMĀṆA

Śabda has been recognised as an important Pramāṇa by almost all the major branches of Indian philosophy. The Mīmāṃsakas²³ and the Vedāntins²⁴ have given the status of this Pramāṇa primarily to the Vedas. In these schools, therefore, Śabda is known as Śruti or Āgama also. In

22. See our discussion on these terms in chapter II of the present work.

23. pratyakṣamaṇumā tathā śāstram. PP, p. 44.

24. athāgamo nirūpyate. VPB, p.30

Sāṅkhya works, Śāstra is the common term for Śabda, but yet with some Sāṅkhya writers, we find the word Āptavacana²⁵ also being used as a synonym of Śabda. The Naiyāyikas, however, have used the term Śabda itself for Śabda-pramāṇa.²⁶

Notwithstanding such differences amongst the schools, however, they are one in maintaining that Śabda as a Pramāṇa means the source of knowledge that we obtain about objects from relevant sentences by way of understanding the relational meanings of the constituent words. The individual words can not be considered as means of proof by themselves. But the meaning of a sentence which involves a relation amongst the word-meanings, can not be said to be known by any recognised Pramāṇa other than Śabda. Hence Śabda is to be admitted as an independent Pramāṇa.²⁷

The Mīmāṃsakas²⁸ and the Naiyāyikas²⁹ who are known as great votaries of Śabdapramāṇa, have shown that the domain of Śabda is definitely distinct from that of

25. dr̥ṣṭāmanumānamāptavacanāṃ ca. SK, 4

26. śabdavijñānajanyam yathārthajñānam śābdapramā,
tatkarāṇībhūtaśabdaḥ pramāṇamityarthaḥ. TP, BHC, p.47

27. āptopadeśaḥ śabdaḥ. NS, I. 1.7

28. MS, VI. 11; SV, Śābdapariccheda, 54-111

29. NS, II. 1.50-57.

Pratyakṣa, Anumāna or any other known means of proof. The schools of Vaiśeṣika³⁰ Cārvāka, Bauddha and Jaina³¹ on the other hand, do not accept Śabda as a separate Pramāṇa. While the Cārvākas have denied Śabda altogether as a Pramāṇa, the Vaiśeṣikas, Bauddhas and Jainas have tried to include it under the process of Anumāna (Inference). Without going to details of these issues involved, we may take note of the fact that the propositional thought in the form of the total meaning of a sentence, which is better known as Śābdabodha in the schools of Indian philosophy and Grammar, is the result of this Śabda.

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION LEADING TO VARIOUS THEORIES OF MEANING

Man expresses his ideas and feelings through various means of communication.³² As for illustration, he expresses himself in words, by means of various gestures such as nodding his head, expanding or contracting his eyes in peculiar manners or by various facial

30. SP, p. 115

31. Vide ACS, p. 48

32. OHC, p. 3

changes.³³ But of all such various ways of communication, words or speech play the most important role in the civilised community of mankind. It is through speech that a man can express an idea accurately and easily. The formal speech is better known as language. The human civilisation, as we understand, would not have come into being without language. In his Kāvyaadarśa, Daṇḍin rightly observes that the whole world would be plunged into darkness if the light of speech did not illumine it from the beginning.³⁴

The problem of speech has been arresting the human intellect all over the world from remote past. In India, even from the Ṛgvedic period, we find the scholars being occupied very much with the issues like the origin and development of speech and its formation, the evolution of word and the problem of meaning. These issues came to form the very contents of the philosophy of language in ancient India. That speech was viewed with paramount importance in the Vedic age is gathered from the innumerable passages of the Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. The famous Devī-sūkta of the Ṛgveda, for instance, represents speech as the

33. POM, p. 54

34. idamandhaṁ tamaḥ kṛtsnaṁ jāyeta bhuvanatrāyaṁ
yadi śabdāhvayaṁ jyotirāsaṁsāraṁ na dīpyate //

goddess of Vāk who praises herself in various ways. In one verse³⁵ of this hymn, this goddess proclaims that she is the wise and the first of those that are worthy of being praised and worshipped, and that the gods have put her in many places making her dwell in many abodes and enter into many forms. Avoiding much details, we simply refer in this context to RV.VII.100.1 and TB,II. 2.84 for further illustration of the point. It is also interesting to note here how parallel tendencies towards the personification and deification of speech in its unitary or divided form grew with the thinkers of various corners of the globe in those remote days. Reference may be made in this context, to the ancient Egyptian and Greek literatures.³⁶

The Vedic seers also insisted on the correct use of language.³⁷

The various schools of thought belonging to the Vedic and post-Vedic periods continued their speculations

35. ahaṁ rāṣṭrī saṅgamanī vasūnām
 cikituṣī prathamā yajñīyānām /
 tāṁ mā devā vyadadhuh purutrā
 bhūriṣṭhātrām bhūryāveśāyantīm // op.cit., x.125.3

36. 'In the pyramid texts, we find mentioned as a God called Khern, i.e. Word; the word having a personality like that of human being'. MOM, p.27

37. RV, x. 71.2, RV, x.71.4.

on the problem of word and its meaning. We find the seed of such speculations in the Rgveda itself. In the Nirukta of Yāska, we find a fourfold division of words (Padas) into Nāman (Noun), Ākhyāta (Verb), Upasarga (Prefix) and Nipāta (Indeclinable) and a fourfold division of speech (Vāk) into Parā, Pasyantī, Madhyamā and Vaikharī.³⁸ But such divisions of words and speech already occur in a Rgvedic verse as quoted by Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya.³⁹ The Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads contain etymological analysis of various words occurring in the Vedic literature. The Prātiśākhyas and Nirukta were composed with the sole purpose of etymological and metaphysical speculation on language. Yāska informs us that prior to him also there were such authorities as Audumbarāyana, Śakaṭāyana and Vārṣāyana who speculated on the problem of language.⁴⁰

See

In contrast to Yāska, Pāṇini laid emphasis on the form of language than on its meaning. His magnum opus, the Aṣṭādhyāyī is indeed, the most scientific and systematic

38. tad yānyetāni catvāri padajātāni nāmākhyāte
copasarganipātāsca tānīmāni

op.cit., I.1.1.

39. RV, I.164.45, Vide MB., I. p.24

40. nigamanānighaṇṭava uccyanta ityaupamenyavo'pi
..... gārgyaḥ.

NIR, I.1.1.

work on language. He presents here elaborate analysis on the nature of the parts of speech and the etymological derivation thereof. Kātyāyana, a successor of Pāṇini, came to supplement a number of rules known as Vārtikas to the Aṣṭādhyāyī.

The school of Grammar, however, did not concentrate its speculation on the formal speech alone, but crossing the barrier of speech, it tried to see some ultimate principle lying behind. Such a quest which obviously resulted from the continuous trend of thought from the Vedic period, is best revealed in the works of Patañjali, Bhartr̥hari and Nāgeśa in particular. Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, the great commentary on the Aṣṭādhyāyī, not only deals with the syntactical problems in details, but it provides also the metaphysical explanations of the Paninian rules. Bhartr̥hari, the great exponent of the philosophy of Grammar, advocates in his Vākyapadīya the theory of word-principle (i.e. Śabda). The origin of this theory can be traced back to the Upaniṣads. Nāgeśa's Paramalaghumañjūṣā represents his intensive speculation on various problems of language. We find in his work also further elaboration of the views of Patañjali and Bhartr̥hari. Innumerable works on Tantra also represent metaphysical speculation on human language.

In dealing with the problem of meaning by the scholars, we find two principal approaches to the issues

involved, and they are namely the Khaṇḍapakṣa and the Akhaṇḍapakṣa.⁴¹ The former method of study is adopted by the Mīmāṃsakas and the Naiyāyikas, while the latter is accepted by Bhartrhari. The advocates of the Khaṇḍapakṣa consider a word as an autonomous unit of thought and meaning and accordingly, this approach of linguistic study is based on the individual words and their isolated meanings. Here the sentence is considered as an aggregate of words.⁴² The early works on Nyāya as also those on Grammar deal with the problems of the individual words and their meanings only. The Mīmāṃsakas also though started a detailed study of the sentences and as such are known as Vākyavādins, were basically concerned with individual words and their meanings. These schools, therefore, may be called the upholders of the Khaṇḍapakṣa. They are concerned with such various problems as the nature of the primary meaning of a word, the question as to how a word can convey a syntactically related unified meaning, the conditions responsible for the mutual relation of words constituting a sentence, the nature of verbal comprehension and so on. To explain the nature of verbal comprehension also there grew two rival theories, viz. the Abhihitānvayavāda as advocated by the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas and some Naiyāyikas and the Anvitābhidhānavāda as held by the Prābhākaras.⁴³

41. ITM, p.6

42. SITM, p.163, Vide ITM, p.6

43. Raja K.K., 'The Theory of Meaning according to Buddhist Logicians'. BRV, Vol.XVIII, Part 3-4

The advocates of the Akhaṇḍapakṣa maintain that the fundamental unit of a language is the sentence. They consider a sentence as an integral linguistic symbol,⁴⁴ whose parts are never relevant to it (i.e. the whole). Bhartṛhari contends that the meaning is conveyed not by the individual words, but by Vākyasphoṭa.⁴⁵ The sentence is an indivisible unit and the meaning conveyed by it also, is partless, which is called Pratibhā (i.e., an 'instantaneous flash of insight or intuition'). The words have no reality of their own, they are only abstractions made by linguistic analysis of the sentence. Words only serve as the hints that help the listeners understand the meaning.

Bhartṛhari's penetrating linguistic speculation that culminates in his theory of Sphoṭa influenced the Dhvani theorists to a great extent. Ānandavardhana taking the idea from Bhartṛhari modelled his theory of Dhvani or suggestion.⁴⁶ In contrast to his predecessors who meant by 'meaning' of a word only the

44. eko'navayavaḥ śabdah. VP, II.1, ITM, p. 9

45. The Sphoṭa theory of the Vaiyākaraṇas will be dealt with in due course of the present work.

46. prathame hi vidvāṃso vaiyākaraṇāḥ, vyākaraṇamūletvāt sarvavidyānām, te ca śrūyamāṇeṣu varṇeṣu dhvaniriti vyavaharanti..... tanmatānusāribhiḥ kāvyatattvārthadarśibhiḥ śabdātmā kāvyam iti..... dhvanirityukaḥ. DL, I, p.47.

literal or logical meaning, Ānandavardhana included in the domain of 'meaning' the emotive aspect of language also, which gets suggested by the help of certain contextual factors.⁴⁷ Ānandavardhana asserts that the suggested meaning which is much more charming than the expressed one, is the very essence of poetry.⁴⁸

Thus various schools of Indian thought including those of Grammar and Rhetoric evolved different theories to explain the manifold aspects of speech. All these schools, however, unanimously maintain that the basic unit of speech is a word (Śabda). But a word is useful only because of its being capable of conveying our thoughts and ideas ordinarily known as 'meaning' (Artha). In the matter of conveying its meaning, a word is supposed to have some kind of potency which is variously known as Śakti, Vṛtti or Vyāpāra. But all meanings that we understand from words are not of the same nature. While some meanings are apprehended from words directly, others are understood only indirectly. Thus, meanings are popularly classified under three heads, viz. Vācya (expressed), Lakṣya (indicated), and Vyañgya (suggested).⁴⁹ Thus words also come to

47. The contextual factors are samyoga (conjunction) etc.
cf. VP, II. 317 f.

48. kāvyasyātmā dhvanirīti DL, I.1

49. artho vācyaśca lakṣyaśca vyañgyaśceti tridhā mataḥ /
SD, II. 2, p.31.

be of three types, viz. Vācaka (expressive), Lakṣaka (indicative) and Vyañjaka (suggestive).⁵⁰ These three types of words convey their corresponding meanings by three different functions, viz. Abhidhā (also known as Śakti) (denotation), Lakṣaṇā (indication) and Vyañjanā (suggestion).⁵¹

SCOPE AND UTILITY OF THE PRESENT WORK

In the treatment of these Śabdasaktis, however, we come across interesting points of agreement and disagreement among the scholars of various schools. As for instance, while almost all the rhetoricians recognise the aforesaid three functions, Mahimabhaṭṭa⁵² recognises Abhidhā as the only function of words. The Mīmāṃsakas and the Naiyāyikas,⁵³ on the other hand, admit two verbal functions, viz. Śakti (i.e. Abhidhā) and Lakṣaṇā. In the matter of operation of a particular function also, opinions vary from school to school and in the same school from scholar to scholar. As for instance, according to the rhetoricians, Lakṣaṇā operates in the event of failure of the primary meaning

50. syād vācako lākṣaṇikāḥ śabdo'tra vyañjakastridhā /
KP, II.5, p.25

51. vācyo'rtho'bhidhayā bodhyo lakṣyo lakṣaṇayā mataḥ /
vyaṅgyo vyañjanayā tāḥ syustrisraḥ śabdasya śaktayah//
SD, II.3

52. śabdasyaikābhidhā śaktirarthasyaikaiva līngatā /
VV, I.27, p.105

53. saṅketo lakṣaṇā cārthe padavṛttih. SAKV, p.1.

resulting from a syntactical inconsistency (Anvayānupapatti)⁵⁴. But the grammarians⁵⁵ and the logicians⁵⁶ attribute Lakṣaṇā to the inconsistency of the primary meaning (Tātparyānupapatti). Similarly, while the advocates of the Dhvani theory recognise the Vyañjanā Vṛtti to account for the additional meaning of a word otherwise inexplicable, those opposed to Dhvani, try to explain that very meaning by the process of inference.⁵⁷

Of the verbal functions, however, Abhidhā is unequivocally recognised as the basic and the foremost one. But even here, we notice interesting points of differences amongst the theorists when they indulge in discourses with regard to the scope, nature and concept of this function. As for instance, while the Mīmāṃsakas conceive Abhidhā as a natural (Sahajā) power latent in words,⁵⁸ the Naiyāyikas assert that it is not natural, but an imposed power and hence artificial (Āropitā).⁵⁹

Thus, in the treatment of the verbal functions, we come across differences of opinion among the scholars

54. KP, II.9

55. vastutastu tātparyānupapattireva tadbījam. LM, p.114

56. SMU, p.285

57. anumāne'ntarbhāvaṃ sarvasyaiva dhvaneḥ prakāśayitum /
vyaktivivekaṃ kurute prāṇāmya mahimā parāṃ vācam//

58. See Mīmāṃsakas' treatment of Abhidhā in chapter III of the present work. VV, I, 1, p.1

59. See Naiyāyikas' treatment of Abhidhā in chapter III of the present work.

belonging to various disciplines. In view of this, an exhaustive examination of these functions is necessary for a critical appreciation of Indian epistemology and for a better appreciation of poetry and poetics. Indian scholars who have dealt with the problems involved in the cases of Lakṣaṇā and Vyañjana, have, no doubt, treated the function of Abhidhā also, but either partially or from specific viewpoints. No independent authoritative work on Abhidhā has come to our notice as yet. Recently, however, a work has been published by Dr. Y.D. Sharma. Although this work pretends to cover all the various problems relating to the Abhidhā function, in reality it is not so. The book has left a number of vital and delicate issues on the subject untouched. A critique on Śabda by my teacher Professor A.K. Goswami deals with Śabda and allied issues more particularly from the Nyāya point of view. Hence our endeavour in the present work is to make a critical and comparative study of this Abhidhā function as treated through ages by scholars pertaining to various schools of Indian philosophy and of poetics and Grammar as well. It is needless to say that we shall take into account the views of the modern writers also.
