UNIT 7: MĪMĀMSĀ: INTRINSIC VALIDITY OF KNOWLEDGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

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7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the nature of valid knowledge,
- discuss Mimāmsāka theory of svatahprāmānyavāda,
- describe the theory of paratahprāmānyavāda formulated by Nyāya,
- discuss paratahprāmānyavāda and svatahprāmānyavāda in a comparative outlook.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit basically deals with Mimāmsa's intrinsic validity of knowledge. As the exponents of Mimāmsā system, both Kumārila and Prabhākara define the nature of valid knowledge. According to Kumārila, valid knowledge is an apprehension of an object, which is free from defects and not contradicted by other knowledge. And Prabhākara holds that valid knowledge is a direct kind of apprehension of objects.

The issues to be discussed in this unit are:

- Nature of valid knowledge

- Mimāmsāka theory of svatahprāmānyavāda
- theory of paratahprāmānyavāda and svatahprāmānyavāda

7.3 NATURE OF VALID KNOWLEDGE

The Mimāmsā system has explained the nature of valid knowledge. Basically, the two exponents of this school, Prabhākara and Kumārila have significantly and analytically discussed the nature of valid knowledge. According to Prabhākara, valid knowledge is defined as apprehension of an object. He, through this definition, clears that all apprehension is direct and immediate; therefore, knowledge acquired through apprehension is considered valid. But, the knowledge or cognition of an object, which is acquired through apprehension, is defined as intrinsically valid (cannot be intrinsically invalid). However, the knowledge of memory, which is gained by the past impression, cannot be considered as valid. On the other hand, Kumārila maintains that valid knowledge is defined as apprehension of an object, which is not produced by defective causes, and which knowledge is free from contradiction.

From the above discussion of the nature of valid knowledge, it can be explored that there are four important conditions of valid knowledge. Firstly, valid knowledge must be free from defective causes. Secondly, it must be free from contradiction. Thirdly, it must apprehend an object, which is considered as direct or immediate or which has not already been apprehended. Fourthly, it must apprehend an object.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the four conditions of valid knowledge?

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Q 2: Who are the exponents of Mimamsa system?

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Q 3: What is valid knowledge, according to Prabhākara?

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Q 5: What is valid knowledge, according to Kumārila?

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Q 6: Is memory a kind of valid knowledge?

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7.4 MIMĀMSAKA THEORY OF SVATAHPRĀMĀNY-AVĀDA

The Mimāmsā theory of svatahprāmānyavāda is also known as self-validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge. According to Mimāmsā system, all apprehension is intrinsically valid and valid by itself. It is not considered valid by any other knowledge. It also comes from the causes from which knowledge itself arises. Validity of knowledge comes from the essential nature of the causes of knowledge, not from the external causes. Prabhākara and Kumārila, the two exponents of the Mimāmsā system, advocate the intrinsic validity of knowledge. Prabhākara mentions: "All cognitions as cognitions are valid; their invalidity is due to their disagreement with the real nature of their objects." Kumārila also says "The validity of knowledge consists in its apprehending an object; it is set aside by such discrepancies as its disagreement with the real nature of the object." The above sayings also mention that all knowledge itself is intrinsically and presumed to be valid. And invalidity of knowledge arises when real knowledge of the object is contradicted by false or illusory knowledge. For instance, a rope is mistaken as a snake in the dark. Here, the knowledge of snake is invalidated when we clear that it is a rope, not a snake. And false knowledge like 'snake' appears due to the absence of light in our mind and subsequently, we infer that it is a snake. But the true or validity of knowledge is not inferred; rather it is valid by itself or claims to be intrinsically valid when true nature of the

object comes to our mind or the false or illusory knowledge like rope-snake controversy disappears in our mind when our eyes in proper light determines the actuality or reality.

The Mimāmsākas support the validity of knowledge in case of its origin and ascertainment. The very conditions of self-validity of knowledge, which not only provide knowledge, but also give us the validity of knowledge in the context of belief in that validity. Validity of knowledge as well as belief in that validity does not require any external condition and verification in order to prove it. The theory of self-validity of knowledge advocates these two aspects. If the necessary conditions of knowledge, namely, absence of defects in the instrument of knowledge and absence of contradiction are present in case of acquisition of knowledge, knowledge as well as the belief in that validity arises together. Therefore, it is clear that the validity of knowledge comes after the knowledge has arisen.

Sāṅkhya views that validity and invalidity of knowledge are self-evident**.** In contrast to this view, some schools of Buddhism opine that knowledge is intrinsically invalid and becomes valid by extrinsic conditions. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system also in this respect points out that validity and invalidity of knowledge can be determined only through extrinsic conditions. On the other hand, the Mimāmsā system holds that knowledge is intrinsically valid and invalidated by extrinsic conditions.

The Mimāmsākas refute the Sāṅkhya view logically on the basis that the same knowledge cannot be both valid and invalid at the same time. If it is held that the same knowledge can be both invalid and valid afterwards, self-contradiction involves in case of knowledge, which we identify as valid and invalid at the same time. But, if it is said that the same knowledge cannot be valid and invalid at the same time, it would maintain that valid knowledge discloses its validity and invalid knowledge divulges its validity. However, in the context of distinction between valid and invalid knowledge, it can be viewed that invalidity of knowledge cannot be identified without external conditions. The Buddhist viewpoint also has been criticized by

pointing out that if knowledge is intrinsically invalid, it can never be valid afterwards. If intrinsically invalid knowledge is valid afterwards by help of other knowledge, which is considered to be valid to validate the first, it will be vitiated in a sense that the second knowledge will also be required to be valid by the help of other valid knowledge. And this continuous process of making knowledge valid leads to ad-infinitum.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: What is the other name of Svatahprāmānyavāda?

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Q 7: How does invalidity of knowledge arise?

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Q 8: Why Buddhism has been criticized by the Mimamsakas in the context of knowledge?

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7.5 NYĀYA THEORY OF PARATAH PRĀMĀNYAVĀDA

According to Nyāya, the extrinsic validity of knowledge is called Paratahprāmānyavāda. This theory holds that knowledge is neither valid nor invalid in itself. It is neutral. The validity or invalidity of knowledge comes only after the knowledge has arisen. The nature of knowledge deals with the correspondence to the object. The test of truth or the criteria of truth is nothing but the correspondence with its object. If knowledge leads to fruithful activity, it is valid and if knowledge does not lead to fruithful activity, it becomes invalid.

According to Nyāya, Validity and invalidity are not intrinsically connected with knowledge. Validity is the result of the excellence or guṇas in the causes of knowledge. On the other hand, invalidity arises due to the defect in the causes of knowledge. Knowledge is simply knowledge and it

becomes valid or invalid due to the extrinsic conditions. The Mimāmshakas agree with the Naiyayikas in the context of the invalidity of knowledge. Both hold that invalidity of knowledge arises on account of the extrinsic conditions. But, the Mimāmshakas disagree with the naiyayikas in respect of the validity of knowledge. They hold that all knowledge is intrinsically valid and do not require any extrinsic conditions to validate itself like the invalidity of knowledge. In contrast to this, Nyāyayikas hold that knowledge is simply knowledge. It is neutral. The validity or invalidity of knowledge does not come immediately and it comes afterwards. Therefore, it depends on the extrinsic conditions. In response, the Mimāmshakas point out that knowledge is not neutral, rather it becomes either valid or invalid. Therefore, the proposition or statement- *knowledge is neutral* upholded by Nyāya is not accepted by Mimāmshakas. According to the later, there is no possibility of neutral knowledge. The Mimāmshakas also point out that nothing can determine knowledge to be valid, if knowledge is not self-valid. Again, the presence of guṇas in the causes of knowledge can make knowledge either valid or the presence of defects in the causes of knowledge can make knowledge invalid, which is not accepted by the Mimāmshakas.

The Mimāmshakas also view that if knowledge requires external conditions to make knowledge valid; the second knowledge, which is considered to be valid knowledge itself as a condition to validate the first, would require other or a third type of knowledge to validate the second one before it can validate the first. Therefore, the process of validity of knowledge goes on ad infinitum, if knowledge is not considered as self valid or intrinsically valid. Hence, all knowledge must be self-valid. The so-called external or extrinsic conditions formulated by Nyāya like the excellence or correspondence or fruitful activity cannot be considered as external or mere conditions. Rather, the terms like excellence, correspondence, and fruitful activity are considered as essential characteristics of valid knowledge. These characteristics are essentially and intimately connected with the causes which produce knowledge. Therefore, they are neither external conditions nor mere conditions nor tests of validity of knowledge. They are, in a sense, the

essential and necessary causes of valid knowledge. Valid knowledge will emerge only in the presence of these essential features.

7.6 PARĀTAH PRĀMĀNYAVĀDA AND SVATAH PRĀMĀNYAVĀDA: A COMPARISON

The Nyāya theory of Parātahprāmānya and the Mimāmsā theory of Svatahprāmānya can be compared to the theory of correspondence and to the theory of coherence respectively in western logic. The western realism holds that the nature and the test of truth is correspondence with external reality. On the other hand, the western idealism holds that the nature and the test of truth is coherence or self-consistency with a system. According to the correspondence theory of truth, a proposition or statement is true when it correspond to the external object or reality. Therefore, correspondence theory holds that truth is a one to one external relation between the proposition or statement and the object or reality. Thus, this theory holds that our knowledge must correspond to the external object fully in order to be true knowledge. This theory has been criticized on the ground that our knowledge or truth cannot be purely external (one to one relation) or truth cannot be found out only through correspondence with the external object. As for instance, we perceive that the Earth revolves around the Sun, but is it true knowledge? In the ordinary sense it is true because we perceive it, but if we explore it critically, it is false. That is why, the test of correspondence or external relation cannot determine the truth or falsity of a proposition or statement in all cases of knowledge. Again, if the terms related in a proposition or a statement are conceived as ultimately simple and independent, there can be no relation between them. Thus, the coherence theory holds that relation inheres only in a consistent whole and a mere combination of simple or independent entities cannot constitute a real whole. The coherence theory is supported by the Idealists who hold that Reality is a concrete whole, which is also known as an identity in difference. It is also known as self-consistent and coherent whole. According to Coherence theory, truth or knowledge is a systematic coherence which

is considered a significant characteristic of a whole. Thus, according to the coherence theory of truth, coherence or self-consistency is nature of valid knowledge. This theory also has been criticized on the ground that no truth is completely true because the coherence as the test of truth fails to cohere the concrete whole or Reality. Thus, it admits the degrees of truth because coherence as the test of truth fails to represent or picture the absolute truth in complete sense. Again, the concept of truth or knowledge cannot be accepted in respect of degree which has been opined by the Coherence theory of truth.

The Nyāya system like western realism advocates the correspondence with external reality as the nature of valid knowledge. But the Nyāya system does not accept the correspondence with external reality as the test or criterion of truth. In contrast to this, the western realism admits the correspondence with external reality or one-to-one relation as the test of truth. The Nyāya system, in lieu of the term correspondence with the external reality, prefers the term fruithful activity or practical efficiency in respect of the test of truth. Therefore, Nyāya system in this context accepts pragmatism in order to refute direct test or naive realism. The Mimāmsā system also advocates the test of fruithful activity or practical efficiency in order to be free from contradiction.

Although the Mimāmsā system advocates the coherence theory of truth, yet there are differences between the Mimāmsā's concept of coherence theory and the idealists' theory of coherence theory. Like the Nyāya system, the Mimāmsā system also admits that knowledge must refer to the external and independent object. The later one also advocates that valid knowledge must represent the external object in real sense and correspondence with the external object is considered the nature of valid knowledge. The Mimāmsā system also agrees with the Nyāya standpoint that invalidity of knowledge is due to external conditions and clearly views that all knowledge is intrinsically valid. But, it does not advocate the test of truth, rather it holds that coherence or self-consistency is the nature of valid knowledge. Besides, not like coherence theory, it views that reality is

not considered a concrete whole and identity in difference. Reality is considered a juxtaposition of the distinct independent entities. By accepting freedom from external conditions, correspondence with the external object, and knowledge is intrinsically valid or self-valid, the Mimāmsā system refutes the charges against the coherence theory.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What is paratahprāmānya vāda?

Q 10: Write the common viewpoint on the invalidity of knowledge given by both Mimāmsākas and Naiyayikas.

Q 11: How does intrinsically invalid knowledge lead to mistake of ad-infinitum, according to Mimāmsā system? Briefly explain.



7.7 LET US SUM UP

- Prabhākara and Kumārila, the two exponents of the Mimāmsā system, have significantly and analytically discussed the nature of valid knowledge. According to Prabhākara, valid knowledge is defined as apprehension of an object. He, through this definition, clears that all apprehension is direct and immediate; therefore, knowledge acquired through apprehension is considered valid.
- The four important conditions of valid knowledge are: firstly, valid knowledge must be free from defective causes. Secondly, it must be free from contradiction. Thirdly, it must apprehend an object, which is considered as direct or immediate or which has not already been apprehended. Fourthly, it must apprehend an object.
- The Mimamsa theory of svatahprāmānyavāda is also known as self-validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge.

- The Mimāmsā system holds that all apprehension is intrinsically valid and valid by itself. It is not considered valid by any other knowledge. It also comes from the causes from which knowledge itself arises. Validity of knowledge comes from the essential nature of the causes of knowledge, not from the external causes. Prabhākara and Kumārila, the two exponents of the Mimamsa system, advocate the intrinsic validity of knowledge.
- According to Sāṅkhya system, validity and invalidity of knowledge are self-evident. In contrast to this view, some schools of Buddhism opine that knowledge is intrinsically invalid and becomes valid by extrinsic conditions. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system also in this respect points out that validity and invalidity of knowledge can be determined only through extrinsic conditions. On the other hand, the Mimamsa system holds that knowledge is intrinsically valid and invalidated by extrinsic conditions.
- The Mimāmsakas refute the Sāṅkhya view logically on the basis that the same knowledge cannot be both valid and invalid at the same time. If it is held that the same knowledge can be both invalid and valid afterwards, self-contradiction involves in case of knowledge.
- According to Nyāya system, the extrinsic validity of knowledge is called Parātahprāmānyavāda. This theory holds that knowledge is neither valid nor invalid in itself. It is neutral. The validity or invalidity of knowledge comes only after the knowledge has arisen. The nature of knowledge deals with the correspondence to the object, which we identify as valid and invalid at the same time.
- Nyāya system emphatically asserts that validity and invalidity are not intrinsically connected with knowledge. Validity is the result of the excellence or gunas in the causes of knowledge. And, invalidity arises due to the defect in the causes of knowledge. Knowledge is simply knowledge and it becomes valid or invalid due to the extrinsic conditions.



7.8 FURTHER READING

1) Sharma, Chandradhar. (1997). *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers

2) Hiriyana, M. (1993). *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers

3) Chatterjee, Satischandra & Datta, Dhirendra Mohan, 1964. *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy.* Calcutta: University Press



7.9 ANSWERSS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: There are four important conditions of valid knowledge. Firstly, valid knowledge must be free from defective causes. Secondly, it must be free from contradiction. Thirdly, it must apprehend an object, which is considered as direct or immediate or which has not already been apprehended. Fourthly, it must apprehend an object.

Ans to Q No 2: Prabhākara and Kumārila

Ans to Q No 3: Kumārila maintains that valid knowledge is defined as apprehension of an object, which is not produced by defective causes, and which knowledge is free from contradiction.

Ans to Q No 4: According to Prabhākara, valid knowledge is defined as apprehension of an object. By this definition, he clears that all apprehension is direct and immediate; therefore, knowledge acquired through apprehension is considered valid.

Ans to Q No 5: The knowledge of memory is gained by the past impression, therefore, it cannot be considered as valid knowledge.

Ans to Q No 6: The Mimāmsā theory of svatahprāmānyavāda is also known as self-validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge.

Ans to Q No 7: Invalidity of knowledge arises when real knowledge of the object is contradicted by false or illusory knowledge. For instance,

a rope is mistaken as a snake in the dark. Here, the knowledge of snake is invalidated when we clear that it is a rope, not a snake. And false knowledge like 'snake' appears in our mind due to the absence of light and subsequently, we infer that it is a snake.

Ans to Q No 8: The Buddhist viewpoint has been criticized by Mimāmsākas in this way that if knowledge is intrinsically invalid, it can never be valid afterwards. If intrinsically invalid knowledge is valid afterwards by help of other knowledge, which is considered to be valid to validate the first, it will be vitiated in a sense that the second knowledge will also be required to be valid by the help of other valid knowledge. And this continuous process of making knowledge valid leads to ad-infinitum.

Ans to Q No 9: Nyāya holds that the extrinsic validity of knowledge is called Paratahprāmānyavāda. This theory holds that knowledge is neither valid nor invalid in itself. It is neutral. The validity or invalidity of knowledge comes only after the knowledge has arisen.

Ans to Q No 10: The Mimāmshakas agrees with the Naiyayikas in the context of the invalidity of knowledge. Both hold that invalidity of knowledge arises on account of the extrinsic conditions.

Ans to Q No 11: The Mimāmshakas hold that if knowledge requires external conditions to make knowledge valid; the second knowledge, which is considered to be knowledge itself as a condition to validate the first, would require other or a third type of knowledge to validate the second one before it can validate the first. Therefore, the process of making knowledge valid becomes vitiated and goes on ad infinitum, if knowledge is not considered as self valid or intrinsically valid. Hence, all knowledge must be self-valid.



7.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short questions

Q 1: What is valid knowledge, according to Kumārila?

Q 2: What is valid knowledge, according to Prabhākara?

Q 3: Who are the exponents of Mimāmsa system?

Q 4: What are the important conditions of valid knowledge?

Q 5: Mention the alternative name of intrinsic validity of knowledge?

Q 6: Define intrinsic validity of knowledge.

Q 7: Write the opinion of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system in the context of valid knowledge.

Q 8: What are the two aspects of self-validity of knowledge?

Q 9: What is Parātah prāmānyavāda?

B. Short questions (Answer in about 150 words)

Q 1: Briefly explain the nature of valid knowledge by the Mimāmāa system.

Q 2: What is self-validity of knowledge? Briefly explain

Q 3: How do the Mimamsakas refute the Sāṅkhya view in the context of valid knowledge? Briefly explain.

Q 4: How do the Mimāmsākas refute the Buddhist viewpoint in the context of valid knowledge? Briefly explain.

Q 5: How do the Mimāmsākas refute the Sāṅkhya view in the context of valid knowledge? Briefly explain.

Q 6: Write a short note on Parātahprāmānyavāda.

C. Long questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Explain the Mimāmsā theory of self-validity or intrinsic validity of knowledge.

Q 2: What is extrinsic validity of knowledge or parātahprāmānyavāda? Explain it with the viewpoint of Nyāya.

Q 3: How do the Mimāmsākas refute Naiyayika's opinion on extrinsic validity of knowledge? Explain

Q 4: What are the differences between Mimāmsaka's concept of coherence and idealists' theory of coherence? Explain

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