UNIT 8: THE MIMĀMSĀ THEORY OF ERROR: AKHYĀTIVĀDA AND VIPARITYĀKHYTIVĀDA

UNIT STRUCTURE

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the sources of knowledge in Mimāmsā system,
- explain the nature of knowledge,
- discuss the non-perceptual sources of knowledge,
- explain the 'Theories of Error' in Mimāmsā system.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Jaimini (400 B.C.), the founder of the Mimāmsā system wrote the Mimāmsā sūtra. There are two schools in Mimāmsā system. They are the Bhatta and the Prabhā-kara Schools. The Bhatta School was propounded by Kumārila Bhatta. On the other, the Prabhā-kara School was propounded by Prabhākara Mishra. The Mimāmsā is called Pūrva Mimamsa, because it deals with the earlier portions of the Veda, i.e., the Mantra and the Brahman. These two portions of the Veda deal with actions, rituals and the sacrifices. Therefore, the Mimāmsā- system is also known as Karma Mimāmsā.

In this unit we are going to discuss the Mimāmsā theory of knowledge. Mimāmsā- theory of knowledge is concerned with the prama-

nas or the sources of knowledge. Although Jaimini admits only three sources of knowledge, viz., perception, inference and testimony, yet Prabhākara and Kumārila School have added another three more pramānas. They are-comparison, implication and non-apprehension. Besides, these sources of knowledge, anyathā-khyāti or Viparitakhyāti theory of error of Kumārila and Akhyāti or Vivekakhyāti theory of error of Pravākara, have been discussed in the unit.

8.3 NATURE OF VALID KNOWLEDGE

According to Mimāmsā- system, valid knowledge is that which provides new information about something and which is not contradicted by any other knowledge or defective conditions. The Mimāmsā- System admits two kinds of valid knowledge. They are immediate and mediate knowledge. When an existing object is related to our mind then immediate knowledge is involved. It can be said that immediate knowledge is a direct acquaintance of an object. It indicates that there is something, but we do not get the complete knowledge about the object. Therefore, this immediate or indeterminate knowledge is called nirvikalpa pratyakṣa.

On the other hand mediate knowledge is indirect knowledge. When we explain an object in the light of the previous knowledge of the object then mediate knowledge occurs. This knowledge can show specifically what the object is. It is not just a mere knowledge of something like existing an object only (immediate knowledge). It can show that 'this is photograph', 'This is Indira Gandhi' etc.

Kumā-rila and Prabhākara's view on Valid Knowledge: Kumārila and Prabhākara regard apprehension as a means of valid knowledge. Kumārila holds that valid knowledge is a result of a cognitive act. But Pravākara does not hold this view. He opines that valid knowledge is not inferable from cognizedness of its object (From knowledge of an object). He identifies pramāna or means of knowledge with valid knowledge. He holds that all cognitions are valid. And an invalid knowledge is due to the disagreement with the real nature of the object. So, it is clear that invalid knowledge or

wrongness does not belong to the knowledge themselves, but to the objects cognized. Like Pravākara, Kumārila also holds that wrongness of the object is due to the disagreement with the real nature of the object.

Kumārila advocates for intrinsic validity of knowledge and extrinsic invalidity of knowledge. According to Kumārila, knowledge is valid in itself. It depends on its essential nature, which is not contradicted by any other knowledge. On the other hand, invalidity of knowledge is due to the external conditions of knowledge, which is contradicted by other knowledge.

8.4 SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

Jāmini, the founder of the Mimāmsā system admits three pramānas. They are perception, inference and testimony. Prabhākara Mishra, the founder of the Prabhākara School adds comparison and implication to perception, inference and testimony. Kumārila Bhatta, the founder of Bhatta School adds non-apprehension to perception, inference, comparison, testimony, implication.



ACTIVITY 8.1

Do you find any similarity between Nyāya and Mimāmsā- kind of inference? Discuss

Ans: .....

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who is the founder of the Mimāmsā-system?

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Q 2: Write the names of propounder of Bhatta and Mishra school.

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Q 3: What are the two kinds of valid knowledge?

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Q 4: What is mediate knowledge? (Answer in about 20 words)

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Q 5: Fill in the blanks:

a) ..... deals with the earlier portions of the Veda.

b) The Prabhākara school was propounded by .....

c) Jaimini admits .....

d) ..... admits non-apprehension as the source of valid knowledge

8.5 THEORIES OF ERROR

The intrinsic validity of knowledge of the Mimāmsā system holds that all knowledge is self valid. It also holds that knowledge is intrinsically valid. Invalidity of knowledge is due to the contradiction or defect involved in the causes of knowledge. Now, the question arises as to, if all knowledge is valid in the Mimamsa system, how does error come into light? In reply, Pravākara and Kumārila answer it quite differently.

Let us now discuss the two different theories respectively.

Viveka Khyati theory of error (Prabhākara): The word 'khyāti' implies knowledge and the word 'akhyāti' means no knowledge. According to Prabhākara, the term 'error' is not a unit of knowledge; rather it is a combination of two jnanas or knowledge. As for instance, when 'shell is mistaken for silver', we say that this is silver. The 'this' is actually perceived

and the certain features of shell which are considered as common with silver. The knowledge of those features revives in our mind the impression of a former experience and consequently we recollect silver. Therefore, the concept of error, according to Prabhākara, consists of two jnāṅas or knowledge, one, is perception and the other is memory. And the concept of error involves when the perceptual knowledge of 'shell' is considered as 'silver' due to recollection of the past impression of 'silver'. As a result, the perceptual knowledge of 'shell' is contradicted and we perceive it as the other that is 'silver'. Perceptual knowledge is different from memory knowledge. The knowledge of 'shell', which is involved through perception, cannot be equated or identified with the knowledge of silver, which is involved through memory or recollection. That is why, error occurs when perceptual knowledge of shell, that is actual, is mispresented as silver due to the recollection of the past knowledge of silver. The former knowledge is claimed to be valid and the claim is justified. The later knowledge does not claim to be valid and the claim is not justified. Prabhākara holds that knowledge can never be false due to its logical nature. That is why, there is no error as far as knowledge is concerned. According to Prabhākara, error arises in case of knowledge when we fail to accept memory as a kind of knowledge in the context of when shell is mistaken for silver, here, there are two kinds of knowledge involved, one is perceptual knowledge and other is memory knowledge. Therefore, error is involved when we fail to accept the distinction between perceptual knowledge and memory knowledge and also ignore the former kind of knowledge as the other knowledge. (that is, the result of the later knowledge). This failure by itself cannot account for error, because, if it is, it would occur also in dreamless sleep. Thus, the state of dreamless sleep is characterized by absence of sleep. As we consider there is commonness between shell (this) and silver, so we consider it as silver on the basis of the similarity. Therefore, the knowledge which we gather is incomplete or partial knowledge. As for instance, a white crystal placed by the side of the red flower may be wrongly regarded as red crystal. Here also, we have two jnāṅas. One is the perception of the red crystal through the sensation of red flower and the other is perception of white crystal.

These two jnanas are also considered as valid, because both the knowledge is derived through the senses. Initially, they provide two jnanas which are incomplete or partial regarding the objects. As they provide incomplete or partial knowledge of the objects, crystal and flower, therefore error lies in the contiguity of the objects, not in the similarity or commonness of the two jnanas. The distinction between the two jñānas as well as the objects is not grasped before, therefore, error arises in the context of the knowledge. M. Hiriyanna in his book *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* points out that the akhyāti view lays down two conditions—— one positive and the other negative for error becoming possible at all——a partial knowledge of the things presented and a failure to note the distinction between them.

Pravākara explains through example that illusion occurs when 'nacre' is perceived as 'silver'. Here, nacre has the quality of brightness, which is perceived. Again 'silver' also has the same quality of brightness, which is remembered or recollected. Therefore, the distinction between the perception (nacre) and recollection (silver) is not apprehended. As a result, we perceive 'nacre' as the silver. In the illusion of 'this is silver', the two elements of perception and recollection are not distinguished, only the common quality that is brightness is found between nacre and silver, is considered as the main cause which leads to the illusion 'this is silver'. In the context of this illusion, we do not distinguish between perception and recollection and perceive the present given object, which is not indeed silver, as silver. Here, the knowledge of silver is recollected or remembered due to its quality of brightness. But there is a distinction between perception and recollection, which is non-apprehended in case of 'this is silver'. Therefore, Pravākara holds that error or illusion is due to non-apprehension or non-discrimination between the elements of perception and recollection.

Prabhākara holds that all apprehension is valid. It means, what is apprehended is valid and what is not apprehended is considered invalid. In case of "this is silver", nacre is perceived, and therefore, it is valid. But 'silver' is not perceived, so, it is invalid, to Prabhākara. He distinguishes between truth and error from practical viewpoint. The knowledge or object which leads to the successful action is true and which leads to the

unsuccessful action is false. It is clear that Prabhākara distinguishes truth and error from practical utility.

Now, let us proceed to another theory of error.

B. **Kumārila** holds the theory of viparityakhyāti or anyathākhyāti. This theory holds that error is due to misperception or false perception. In the illusion 'this is silver', this or 'nacre' is misperceived as silver due to the common quality of brightness, which was perceived in the past. Kumārila regards error as false perception or misperception of one object as another. He considers error as positive false knowledge. It is due to misidentification of the remembered element with the perceived element.

According to Kumārila, knowledge always points to an object which is directly perceived. For instance, this (shell) is perceived as silver. Here, shell is directly given, but silver is not perceived or given. Like Prabhākara, Kumarila also makes a distinction between perceived and non-perceived element of objects in case of knowledge. The difference between the two views or theories is that the akhyati theory is due to the misperception or non-apprehension of the distinction between perceived or presentative and non-perceived or representative elements in case of knowledge. While, the viparitya-khyāti theory holds that error is due to the wrong-synthesis of the given or perceived and not-given or non-perceived element of objects. The akhyāti theory holds that error is due to the omission because it fails to apprehend some relevant part of what is given or perceived. On the other hand, the Kumārila theory holds that error is due to the commission because it wrongly synthesizes the presentative (given) and representative (not-given) cognition of objects. Here, the subject and predicate elements seem to be related or included in the example like 'this is silver", but that is not seen in reality. Similarly, we can take another example of 'red crystal'. The two relata, namely, 'redness' and 'crystal' are actually given, but they are not unified in fact or wrongly synthesised. And as a result the concept of error appears. Thus, according to Kumārila, error is the partial misrepresentation or misapprehension of the object.

Kumārila differs from Prabhākara in the context that error is due to wrong synthesis between the perceived and remembered element. It is not

due to non-discrimination or non-apprehension between perception and recollection. In short, error is not akhyāti or non-apprehension but misrepresentation. Error is also regarded as valid knowledge as long as it is not obstructed by real knowledge. As for instance, nacre is considered as valid knowledge as long as nacre is not replaced by silver (real object). Therefore, true knowledge of silver can remove the misrepresentation or false perception. As a result, nacre is not misperceived as silver. That is why, error is positive false knowledge, which is removed by true knowledge. Very briefly speaking, Kumārila maintains the Viparita theory of error from logical point of view, while Prabhākara formulates the Viveka khyāti theory of error from practical standpoint. Prabhākara holds that error lies in the non-apprehension or non-discrimination of the two elements, perception and memory in the context of knowledge. And error ultimately disappears, to Prabhākara, when we apprehend the distinction between the elements of knowledge.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What are the two stages of perception?

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Q 7: Give an example of inference

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Q 8: What is svārthanumāna?

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Q 9: Give an example of comparison or upamāna?

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Q 10: Who advocates the theory of akhyāti or vivekakhyāti?

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Q 11: What is viparityakhyāti or anthyakhyāti? (Answer in about 50 words)

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Q 12: State whether the following statements are True or False

a) Prabhā-kara holds that negation or non-existence is an positive entity.

b) Kumā-rila holds that non-apprehension is an independent category.

c) Pauruseya relates to the trustworthy persons.



8.6 LET US SUM UP

- Jaimini is the founder of the Mimāmsā System, who wrote the Mimāmsā sutra.
- Kumārila Bhatta propounded the Bhatta School in Mimāmsā system.
- Prabhākara Mishra Propounded the Prabhākara school.
- Mimāmsā system is known as karma mimāmsā. It deals with actions, rituals and Sacrifices.
- Mimāmsā system is also called Purva Mimāmsā, because it deals with the early portions of the Veda.
- Jaimini admits Perception, Inference and Testimony as the sources of knowledge.
- Prabhākara and Kumārila add another three sources of knowledge. They are: Comparison, Implication and Non-apprehension. Kumārila admits five- pramanas, while Prabhakara admits six-pramanas.
- Mimāmsā- system admits two kinds of knowledge: Mediate and Immediate
- Mediate knowledge is indirect knowledge. On the other hand immediate knowledge is direct knowledge of something.
- Pravākara and Kumārila admit determinate and indeterminate perception.
- According to Prabhākara, there are two kinds of inference: Svārtha anumana and Parārtha anumāna.
- Upamāna is the knowledge of similarity of the perceived object in the present.

- Presumption is an assumption of an unperceived fact in order to reconcile two perceived facts.
- Verbal testimony is of two kinds: Personal or Pauruseya and Impersonal (aparuseya). The former relates to the trustworthy persons. On the other hand the Vedic knowledge is impersonal.
- Pravākara holds the theory of akhyati or vivekakhyāti. According to this theory, error is due to non-apprehension between perception and memory.
- Kumārila advocates the theory of viparityakhyāti or anthyakhyāti. It holds that error is involved due to misrepresentation of object.



8.7 FURTHER READINGS

1) Chatterjee, S.C. & Dutta, D.M. (1958). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. University of Calcutta
2) Sharma, C.D. (1973). *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.
3) Radhakrishnan, S. (1923). *Indian Philosophy (2 volumes)*. Oxford: University Press.
4) Hiriyanna, M. (1993) *Outlines of Indian philosophy.*Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass publishers pvt Ltd
5) Dasgupta, S.N. () *A History of Indian Philosophy.* Motilal Banarasi Publication
6) Sinha, Jadunath. () *Indian Philosophy.* Motilal Banarasi Publication
7) Kappor, Subodh. ( ) *The Systems of Indian Philosophy. Motilal Banarasi Das Publication*



8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Jaimini

Ans to Q No 2: Prabhākara Mishra and Kumārila Bhatta

Ans to Q No 3: Immediate and Mediate knowledge

Ans to Q No 4: When we explain an object in the light of the previous knowledge of the object then mediate knowledge occurs.

Ans to Q No 5: a) Pu-rva Mi-ma-m. sa- b) Prabhākara Mishra
c) Three d) Prabhākara Mishra

Ans to Q No 6: Determinate perception and indeterminate perception

Ans to Q No 7: From the perception of smoke in the hill, we infer that there is fire in the hill is the example of inference.

Ans to Q No 8: When inference is made for oneself then svā- rthanumā-na comes into existence.

Ans to Q No 9: As for instance, 'the knowledge of a wild cow' depends on the similarity of a cow perceived in the past leads to the knowledge of upama- na or comparison.

Ans to Q No 10: Prabhākara

Ans to Q No 11: According to this theory, error occurs due to misperception or false perception. In the illusion- 'this is silver', this or 'nacre' is misperceived as silver due to the common quality of brightness, which was perceived in the past. Kumarila, who advocates this theory, considers error as false perception or misperception of one object as another.

Ans to Q No 12: a) True b)True c)True



8.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q 1: Who is the founder of Mimāmsā- system?

Q 2: What are the sources of knowledge of Mimāmsā- system?

Q 3: Who advocates the theory of akhyāti or vivekakhyāti?

Q 4: Mention the name of the founder of Prabhākara School.

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about100-150 words)

Q 1: What is mediate knowledge?

Q 2: Briefly explain the sources of valid knowledge.

Q 3: What is non-apprehension? Briefly explain.

Q 4: Discuss briefly the theory of vivekakhyāti.

Q 5: Who advocates the theory of viparityakhyāti? Briefly explain.

C. Short notes on (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Presumption

Q 2: Comparison

Q 3: Non-apprehension

D. Distinguish between (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Determinate and indeterminate perception

Q 2: Akhyāti or vivekakhyāti and viparityakhyāti or anyathākhyāti

E. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: Discuss the nature of valid knowledge.

Q 2: Define perception? Is it an independent source of knowledge? Discuss

Q 3: What is an inference? Discuss it with an example.

Q 4: Define verbal testimony? Discuss it as a pramāna.

Q 5: Explain the theories of error of Mimāmsā system? Discuss

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