

## Jayanta's Refutation to Buddhist Definition of *Pramāṇa*

Tashi Dorjey

Eliezer Joldan Memorial College, Leh, India

✉ Address correspondence: Eliezer Joldan Memorial College, Leh (Ladakh), Jammu and Kashmir, India  
E-mail: ratntashi@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of epistemology has been one interesting topic in Indian philosophy that received heavy discussion from scholars in the past, whether they strongly agreed or disagreed on their formulations of the different schemes of metaphysics. Theory of knowledge (*pramana*) is a means to reach the ultimate truth through speculation and experience. Amongst the Nyayaikas, Jayānta's method of presenting his hypothesis is a peculiar one. He introduces the view and analyses the merit and demerit of opponent concept and ultimately puts forward his own theory of supports on the existing Nyāya view. Jayānta's introduction of the rival theory is remarkably impressive and his account of the Buddhist notion of *pramāṇa* is clear. His refutation of Buddhist view is also super, however, all perceptions do not necessarily come into being due to nescience but its predisposition. He was never found to be an orthodox and a blind follower of his predecessors.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the passage of time, Indian philosophy took in the various shapes of thought. Primarily, there are six Orthodox and three heterodox systems of thought. The six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, by and large, are known as the Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Purvamiṃsā and Vedānta. Due to the commonality in thoughts and doctrines, these orthodox traditions have been recognized as three pairs of allied systems even though each of these systems has their own independent, distinctive ideas or views regarding the issue of metaphysics, epistemology, logic etc. All these orthodox systems are originally intended to reveal the correct understanding and interpretation of the Vedas which is why they are known as orthodox systems in contrast to heterodox systems like the Cārvāka, Buddhism and Jainism which do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. It is a fact that except for Cārvāka, one thing common to all Indian philosophical systems is the concept of liberation recognized by its different names such as *nirvana* in

Buddhism, *kaivalya* in Sāṅkhya, and *mokṣa* in Vedānta. This paper is an effort towards understanding the Nyāya theory of knowledge in general and Jayānta's refutation to Buddhist realism.

Nyāya system is one of the most important and dominant ideas in Indian philosophy. It is generally accepted that the great sage Gautama was the founder of this system. The root text of the Nyāya school is known as *Nyāyasūtras*, the authorship of which is a subject of controversy as pointed out by certain scholars. Some scholars postulate Aksapāda and Gautama to be the same person and some scholars point out that both of them may have been two different persons. As stated in *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Vol.I), (Dasgupta, 2010, p. 10) "the late Dr S.C Vidyabhusana in *J.R.A.S* thinks that the earlier part of Nyāya was written by Gautama about 550 B.C; whereas the *Nyāyasūtras* of Aksapāda were written about 150 A.D and says somehow it is not easy to say that the use of the word 'nyāya' in the sense in the *Māhābhārata* they must be regarded as interpolation." Therefore, it is very difficult to justify the real authorship of *Nyāyasūtras*.

If we look at the history of Nyāya philosophy there has been series of commentaries and interpretation of *Nyāyasūtra* by Nyāya's philosophers like Vātsayāna, Vācaspati, Udayanacarya, Jayānta, etc. all these texts contend defiance position of *Nyāyasūtra* and criticisms of other systems. On the basis of *Nyāyasūtra*, Jayānta Bhaṭṭa composed *Nyāyamañjari* criticizing other systems, which is one of the most important texts for the Nyāya school. This paper will examine Jayānta's refutation of Buddhist valid cognition.

### **Nature of Nyāyaika Knowledge**

It is said that Nyāyaika system of philosophy is logically realistic and ontologically pluralistic. As far as the origin of knowledge is concerned, Nyāya says that it is produced by the soul when it comes into contact with an object. According to Nyāya, knowledge is an adventitious property of the soul which is generated in it by the object. As outlined by *Nyāya Theory of Knowledge*, (Chatterjee, 1950, p. 10), "according to the Nyāya, knowledge is an attribute of the self. It is not a substance, since it cannot be the stuff or the constitutive cause of anything, nor is it the permanent substratum of certain recognized and variant properties." Knowledge is a kind of effect and for the existence of this effect, certain conditions should be met with before it comes into being. The fulfilment of these preliminary conditions of knowledge gives rise to valid cognition. For instance, a man of sound vision looks at a conch and sees the colour white whereas for a man suffering from jaundice the same conch might seem yellow in colour. Being realistic, constant correspondence with the object to understand truth forms the basis of Nyāyaika philosophy. In a way, knowledge corresponds to its object leads to a successful activity and invalid knowledge does not correspond to its object and leads to false knowledge. Therefore, it is stated in the *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, (Jadunath, 2009, p. 485) "validity and invalidity of knowledge are not known by valid knowledge itself or by invalid knowledge itself. The validity of knowledge is inferred from its capacity to produce successful activity and invalidity of knowledge from its capacity to produce successful activity. Truth leads to successful action and error, to unsuccessful action."

As per Nyāya understanding, there must be three conditions to generate knowledge. These are a knower, an instrument and an object. The object of knowledge may be a thing, quality or emotion,

etc. It can be existent, non-existent or both. Whenever there is knowledge there must be something that stands out as the object of knowledge. Somehow according to Nyāya, knowledge is the manifestation of an object. When there is an object of knowledge, there must be a subject of knowledge. It goes by the idea that *Nyāya Theory of Knowledge*, (Chatterjee, 1950, p. 9), “All things are made manifest or revealed to us when they become objects of knowledge”.

The *Nyāyasūtra* however, does not provide any independent definition of valid knowledge. All prior understanding of this concept is based on the definition of valid knowledge of perception. Even Nyāyaika’s great philosopher Vātsyāyana defines only valid knowledge of perception as stated in *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, (Jadunath, 2009, p. 484) “valid perception as the knowledge that represents the real character of its object, or apprehends what exists in it. He defines an error as the knowledge that does not represent the real character of its object or apprehends what does not exist in it.” Therefore, he considers the knowledge which corresponds with the object as valid and which does not as invalid. But later philosophers of Nyāyaika have put forward explicit definitions of valid knowledge. Jayānta Bhaṭṭa defines the theory of valid knowledge in his work *Nyāyamañjari* translated by Janaki Vallabha Bhattacharyya, (Bhaṭṭa, 987, p. 22) “*pramāṇa* is the collocation of the two types of objects, viz., consciousness and unconsciousness ones which cooperate to produce such an apprehension as is other than an illusion and a doubt. The etymological meaning of a *pramāṇa* is what is an instrument of true knowledge.” Vacaspati Misra, another important figure of Nyāyaika philosophy adds to this definition as Jadunath observes in *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, (Jadunath, 2009, p. 488) “Vācaspati excludes recollection from valid knowledge, and defines it as the certain knowledge of an object, which is in agreement with its real character, independent of the previous perception and different from recollection.” There is developed in the definition of valid knowledge as these two philosophers incorporate memory and recollection as important factors of perceiving knowledge. The idea is then carried forward by yet another philosopher Udayana who maintains that the nature of valid knowledge is the true experience of an object. According to *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, edited with *Āmoda*, *Viveka Bodhini*, *Parimala* and *Sāra* by Mahaprabhula Goswami, Darbhanga, (Udayayana, 1972, p. 202) “The valid knowledge is a true experience which is independent and which is independent of any prior experience.” Lastly, I would like to deal with Gaṅgesa’s definition of valid knowledge. In terms of the nature of knowledge, his position is not different from early Nyāya scholars. He states that valid knowledge as the apprehension of what exists in its object, and invalid knowledge as the apprehension of what does not exist in it.

We have thus far seen that all Nyāyaikas philosophers somehow define knowledge as per definition of knowledge in *Nyāyasūtra* by Gautama with slight changes so as to defend their own position of the theory of knowledge and also to attack other systems. As per my understanding, there is an inevitable relationship between the concept of metaphysics and epistemology in every system of philosophy regardless of the philosophy hailing from the Eastern or Western traditions. Hence, there are so many different philosophical systems like realism, idealism, rationalism, etc. but they do not have a common basis to formulate episteme theory because the deprivation of metaphysical position automatically affects the epistemological position. It is my belief that it is difficult to articulate such and such view to be right and others to be wrong, due to disagreements of speculation about philosophical issues that go back to time immemorial. These kinds of debates and issue never will end and should never end because reality depends on an individual’s perspective.

### Jayānta's Criticism of Buddhist View of Nature of *Pramāṇa*

In this section, I have made an attempt of presenting Jayānta's critique of the Buddhist idea of valid knowledge. Focusing on his *Nyāyamanjari*, I intend to understand the basis on which Jayānta criticizes the Buddhist angle of valid knowledge. It is a known fact that the Nyāya philosophy is considered one of the most logically thorough schools of orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. It is a realist school and it believes that the world that we experience is ultimately real. In opposition to this idea stands the diverse schools and sub-schools of Buddhism like Viabhāṣika (realism), Sautrāntika (representative realism), Yogācāra (idealism), and Madhyāmika (Sunyāvāda). They have come up with the different notion of philosophical speculations like origination of the knowledge on the basis of the position of the metaphysical issue. Though the Buddhists differ among themselves regarding epistemological questions as much as they differ from the orthodox schools yet they form a fairly homogeneous group among themselves due to some common basic metaphysical issues which seem revolutionary in the context of orthodox systems. One such concept is the Buddhist notion of reality as a momentariness the criterion of reality for the Buddhists is causal efficiency. The real produces an effect and that which produces an effect is real. Reality is change and what does not change is unreal. Therefore, all that is real is momentary. Anyhow the main point of demarcation between orthodox philosophy and Buddhist philosophy is based on the theory of *ātman*. All Indian philosophies except Cārvāka and Buddhism believe in the existence of a permanent unchanging soul or *ātman*, whereas Buddhist philosophies totally challenge the existence of permanent *ātman* by rejecting the existence of anything permanent. It is a fact that the Nyāya school's refutation is considered to be one of the strongest refutations of one of the key foundations of Buddhist philosophical thought.

The *Nyāmāñjari* attacks the concept of *pramāṇa* as accepted by Sautrāntika (representative realism) and Yogācāra (subjective idealism) schools of Buddhism. I believe that the Sautrāntika's system of Buddhism should be known as representative realism. It is said that they hold that cognition is directly apprehended as having a form and belongs to an external object and also appears to be superimposed upon perception. They think that the form of an external object is reflected upon cognition. According to Buddhist realism valid knowledge in *Nyāyabindu-tīkā*, annotations and translated by Mrinalakanti Gangopadhyaya, published by Indian Studies Past and Present, (Vinītadeva, 1971, p. 81) "the attainment of human ends is preceded by right knowledge". Hence, the Sautrāntika defines *pramāṇa* as the knowledge that is conducive to the fruitful action and validity as its power to lead the knower to the attainment of its object if it is pleasant and to its avoidance if it is unpleasant. Jayānta's criticism of other system is so systematic and logical that he first presents others view as per his understanding after which he goes on to criticize and negate others concepts by ultimately displaying his own theory to be superior. Presenting Buddhist view of *pramāṇa* Jayānta attacks representative realism of Buddhism by pronouncing in *Nyāmanjarī*, translated by Janaki Vallabha Bhattacharyya, (Bhaṭṭa, 1987, p. 28) "these how hold that some forms of consciousness are *pramāṇas* lack deep insight into the science of logic."

Jayānta says that the capacity for leading the knower to the attainment of an object is common to both perception and inference because both of them are *pramāṇa* in accordance with Buddhism.

As far as the attainment of perception is concerned, it is not possible to apprehend the object at all because it is undertaking in changing constantly and it is a specific momentary which cannot be attained. But the same series of the specific individual can be attained. The power of perception to lead to the attainment of an object consists of its producing a determinate cognition. Jayānta says in *Nyāmanjarī*, translated by Janaki Vallabha Bhattacharyya, (Bhaṭṭa, 1987, p. 47), “Though it is impossible to attain it yet a phenomenon of its series is attained. Hence, the meaning of leading to successful attainment is the production of determinate perception which refers to a number of a series of an object similar to that of the basic pure sense perception.” Presenting the Buddhist view by Jayānta, in terms of inference Buddhist says it apprehends an unreal object which is attributed but non-existent at the time. It leads to the attainment of a real object to which an unreal form is attributed. For instance, a light of gem leads to the attainment of the gem. Therefore, *pramāṇa* is the power of knowledge to lead to the attainment of an object as it is known. Jayānta is asking to Buddhist realist that *pramāṇa* is a power to lead to the attainment of an object as it is shown or whether it is a power to lead to the attainment of an object as it is imagined. It is a fact that according to Buddhist realism in indeterminate perception a specific individual is certainly shown but it cannot be attained because it is momentary. The attainment of a specific individual is not the attainment of the same series, which is neither different nor indifferent, from its momentary members. But in determinate perception, an imaginary form is attributed to its object which is not attained. Further argument by Nyāya on the Buddhist view of inference, the inference past and the future object cannot be valid because it cannot produce fruitful action and determinate perception becomes valid because it is fruitful action. Somehow Buddhist realism regards indeterminate perception as valid. Jayānta says it is not valid as per Buddhist criteria of *pramāṇa* because it cannot produce fruitful action. Further saying a Buddhist *pramāṇa* is no capacity for leading to the attainment of an object shown by a cognition. Even for Buddhist realism, the knowledge of a neutral object, which is neither pleasant nor painful, is invalid because it does not lead to any attainment or avoidance of an object. Jayānta says, *Nyāmanjarī*, translated by Janaki Vallabha Bhattacharyya, (Bhaṭṭa, 1987, p. 50) “The Buddhist may urge that a negligible object is an avoidable object since it is not worth having. But there is no sanction of the reason behind it we can’t hold a thesis like that a sexually undeveloped person is a male because he is not a female or that he is a female because he is not a male. A neuter person is one who is neither a male nor a female since he is known to us to be such. Similarly, a negligible object is neither attainable nor avoidable since it is experienced by us to be such.” Therefore, Jayānta declaring that the Buddhist realist view is not tenable.

According to Jayānta some Buddhist realists regard cognition as *pramāṇa* and consider momentary objects and cognitions arising from the same causal conditions related to each other as apprehended objects and apprehending cognitions. Both depend upon the same causal condition, viz. object and cognition. An object is the material cause of an object and cognition is its auxiliary cause. Cognition is the material cause of cognition and an object is its auxiliary cause. A cognition corresponding to an object is valid both arising from the same causes. Jayānta urges that cognition cannot manifest an object and correspond with it because they are produced at the same moment out of the common mind stuff and matter stuff. It may be argued that cognition is conscious and therefore manifests an object which is unconscious. But cognition cannot have a distinctive character and a power of apprehending an object since it is produced by the same stuff with an object. So the Buddhist realist view is not tenable.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as far as Jayānta's treatment of the Buddhist realism and idealism concept of *pramāṇa* is concerned; it may be observed that *Nyāyamañjari* can be treated as a sourcebook for the study of Nyāya systems. Jayānta's method of presenting his hypothesis is a peculiar one. He introduces the view and analyses the merit and demerit of opponent concept and ultimately puts forward his own theory of supports on the existing Nyāya view. Generally, it is observed that Jayānta's introduction of the rival theory is remarkably impressive and his account of the Buddhist notion of *pramāṇa* is clear. His refutation of Buddhist view is also super but in my opinion, there is something wrong with Jayānta's presentation of Buddhist idealist view of *pramāṇa*. All perception does not necessarily come into being due to nescience but its predisposition. Somehow it is observed that Jayānta was never found to be orthodox and a blind follower of his predecessors. Therefore, he tries to present all possible interpretations and leaves the readers to themselves without imposing his own preference. This appears to be the beauty of Jayānta.

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