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Self-luminosity of knowledge: The viśiṣṭādvaitin's view

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Abstract:

Knowledge is the fundamental cause behind all practical activities. It is this that distinguishes the self (आत्मन्) from the not-self (अनात्मन्). It is knowledge that illumines all objects to the self, its substratum. From all these, the importance of knowledge in all conceptual, functional, and practical aspects is evident. Philosophy too has epistemology as a distinct branch to study exclusively knowledge and all other aspects directly related to it.

While dealing with the nature of knowledge, the question as to whether it is self-luminous (*svayamprakāśa*) or not was considered elaborately by different schools of Indian philosophy like *Sāṃkhya*, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Vedānta*, and others. The present article seeks to consolidate the view of *Viśiṣṭādvaita-Vedānta* on the basis of scriptural statements, logical arguments and refutation of the views of other schools of thought, as presented by Venkaṭanātha in his *Nyāya-Siddhāntajana*.

Keyword: Knowledge, self-luminosity, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, venkaṭanātha, nyāya-siddhāntajana

Introduction

Knowledge is the fundamental cause behind all practical activities. It is this that distinguishes the self (आत्मन्) from the not-self (अनात्मन्). Knowledge involves reference to a subject who knows and an object that is known.

In the Vedānta systems, it is accepted as the most fundamental and lasting characteristic of the self. It cannot be admitted to be an adventitious property of the self as by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. In that case, when it is lost, at the state of liberation, the difference between the self and not-self will cease to exist. Further, this would go against the spirit of the scriptures which declare the self as a conscious being. For this very reason, it cannot be admitted to be a property of the not-self too as is accepted as the attribute of the महत्-तत्त्वम् by Sāṃkhya-s and Advaitin-s. Hence knowledge is an essential and lasting feature of the self.

The Self-Luminosity of Knowledge

Knowledge is accepted to be self-luminous by the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedāntin-s. But it is self-luminous only to its substratum, namely, the self, at the time of comprehending objects. In the case of knowledge of other persons and of one's own knowledge referring to the past time, it is known only as an object of inference and memory, to the bound souls. The same is presented as the object of perception to the omniscient souls like the liberated and the ever-liberated souls, and God. Rāmānuja in his Śrībhāṣyam ^[1] clarifies the self-luminosity of knowledge thus: the statement that knowledge is self-luminous holds good only with respect to the self who knows at the time of comprehending objects. It is not a rule that it is so to all, at all times. Venkaṭanātha in his Nyāya-Siddhāntajana has shown the proof of the self-luminosity of knowledge. He states that the experience, "I know this" (अहमिदं वेत्ति) which is common to one and all, when they come to know of an object, reveals the self-luminosity of knowledge. He further states that the refutation of the views of the Naiyāyika-s ^[2] and Mīmāṃsaka-s ^[3], who do not admit the self-luminosity of knowledge, which shall be taken up in the sequel, also supports the said view.

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¹ SB vol. 1 (part 1) p. 134

² Supra pp. 313-314

³ Supra pp. 302-313

The following arguments also prove the self-luminosity of knowledge^[4].

1. Those who admit the existence of God agree in maintaining that He is omniscient. He has eternal knowledge that comprehends all entities. So, God has immediate knowledge of everything at all times. Now, there arises a question as to whether God has the immediate comprehension of His knowledge by His knowledge or not. If He has, then knowledge becomes self-luminous. This is because, God, by His eternal knowledge which is one only, comprehends His knowledge. This means that His knowledge manifests, of its own, to Him. If the second option is preferred, then God becomes non-omniscient as He does not know His knowledge. This, certainly, is not a welcome position to any of those who admit God.

Now, it can be argued that God does not become non-omniscient, though, His knowledge does not comprehend itself. It is because God comprehends everything excepting His knowledge, by knowledge, and has a second knowledge by which He comprehends His knowledge. So, His omniscience can be maintained by admitting two such cognitions.

But this does not hold good as there is no proof for it. Nevertheless, it can be contended as follows: it is a fact that God remains omniscient and His omniscience cannot be accounted for otherwise (सर्वज्ञत्व-अन्यथा-अनुपपत्तिः) than accepting two cognitions as stated above. But this cannot hold good because, the omniscience of God can very well be accounted for by a single cognition itself, which accounts for itself, as well as the other cognitions (स्व-पर-निर्वाहकम्). For instance, a lamp that illumines other objects illumines also itself. So also, the knowledge of the Lord, which cognizes the other objects, cognizes itself too. So, just by accepting a single knowledge, the omniscience of the Lord can be substantiated. Thus, as stated earlier, there is no proof for admitting two cognitions.

There can be another line of argument that the Lord is omniscient, comprehending everything, excepting His knowledge (एकोन-सर्वज्ञता). But this is not tenable because, it will result in His not knowing so many things, which will ultimately end up in losing His सर्वज्ञत्व itself. This is because, if He does not know His knowledge, then He cannot know Himself as the substratum of it and any given thing as the object of that knowledge and so on. So, it will ultimately result in the unwelcome position that God ceases to be a सर्वज्ञ । So the second alternative leads only to the unwelcome position that God is not omniscient. Thus, the first alternative alone holds good, which results in the self-luminosity of knowledge.

There is the knowledge of the form 'there is knowledge' (ज्ञानमस्ति). The question now is whether this knowledge comprehends itself or not. If it does comprehend, then knowledge becomes self-luminous. If it does not comprehend, then it would result in the unwelcome position that nothing could be established at all. This will lead again to it being non-existent since its existence could not be established through any other valid means or प्रमाणम् । If it is non-existent then its objects which are nothing but cognitions, also would become non-existent, with the result that the objects of these cognitions also would be rendered non-existent. The result is

that nothing can be established. Hence, in order to avoid this unwelcome position, the first alternative has to be accepted, which results in the self-luminosity of knowledge.

The Mīmāṃsaka View of Manifestedness (प्राकट्यम्) – Some Problems

It has so far been established that knowledge is self-luminous. But, the Bhatta-Mīmāṃsaka-s hold that knowledge is only inferred and not self-luminous. Their view is as follows: just as the numerical attribute, namely, two-ness (द्वित्व) is produced in two objects by the अपेक्षा-बुद्धिः of the form "This is one" "This is one" (इदमेकम्, इदमेकम्), a property (धर्मः) called cognized-ness (प्राकट्य) is produced in an object by the knowledge comprehending it. Knowledge, which is not perceptual according to this school, is thus inferred by the attribute, cognized-ness, the product of knowledge.

Against this view, Veṅkaṭanātha states that if the inferential theory of knowledge is maintained, it would then be preferable to infer the factors which gave rise to knowledge (i.e., ज्ञान-सामग्री), rather than knowledge itself, according to the law of parsimony (लाघव-न्याय)- तद्धेतोरेवास्तु तद्धेतुत्वं मध्ये किं तेना (if something results from the cause of a 'supposed cause', why accept the supposed cause in-between?)^[5].

In the present instance, as ज्ञान-सामग्री is the cause for ज्ञान, it is to be accepted that ज्ञान-सामग्री itself is the cause of प्राकट्य and to admit knowledge in-between the two, serves no purpose. On the contrary, it results in the defect of prolixity (गौरवदोषः). Hence if the inferential theory has to be maintained, then it would result in inferring the सामग्री rather than ज्ञान itself. And if ज्ञान could not be inferred, there would be no way to prove its existence, since it is not accepted to be self-luminous either.

It may now be contended that even the Siddhāntin is not free from the same difficulty. It is because all the effects of knowledge can be accounted for, by the cause of knowledge itself, as said in the above-stated law of parsimony, which would mean that there is no need to admit knowledge at all^[6]. Veṅkaṭanātha answers this by stating that the above contention cannot at all arise in the system of Viśiṣṭādvaita, as knowledge is accepted to be perceptual. The maxim of simplicity (लाघव-न्यायः) can be applied only when inference is involved and not when there is direct perception. This again is because, an object has to be accepted as such, when it is perceptually cognized. Neither prolixity nor simplicity can invalidate or validate it. Hence knowledge cannot be set aside just on the basis of simplicity, as it goes against perception^[7]. Now, it may still be objected that knowledge in a way is inferred, by the Viśiṣṭādvaita -s too. It is as follows: though cognized-ness (प्राकट्यम्) is not admitted, it is accepted that a property called manifested-ness (प्रकाशता) is produced in the object, by knowledge. Now, as this property results only from knowledge, the latter can very well be said to be inferred by this property^[8].

Veṅkaṭanātha sets aside this objection by clarifying the exact nature of प्रकाशता and thereby points out that there is no question of inferring knowledge. He states that manifested-ness or प्रकाशता is nothing but the relation of knowledge that

⁵ Cf. NST & RP p. 402. Also see TMK 4-3 p. 475 & NK p. 263

⁶ Cf NST p. 402

⁷ RP p. 402.

⁸ Ibid p. 403.

⁴ Cf. NS p. 401

resides in the objects. Knowledge is related to the soul by the relation of inseparability (अपृथक्-सिद्ध) and is related to the object by the relation of object-ness (विषयता). So, the knowledge that remains in the object, through the relation of object-ness is called manifested-ness. It cannot be anything other than this, as it would then involve the defect of prolixity. Hence if knowledge is not perceived, then manifested-ness which involves reference to this knowledge cannot be perceived. In that case, it would not be possible to infer knowledge.

Now, it may again be objected as follows: it has been stated that manifested-ness and knowledge are identical. In that case, as there is the usage of the form – ‘Devadatta knows the pot’ (देवदत्तः घटं जानाति I), so also, there must be the usage of the form – Devadatta manifests the pot (देवदत्तः घटं प्रकाशते I). Similarly, as there is the usage – ‘the pot is known by Devadatta’ (देवदत्तेन घटः ज्ञायते I), so there be the usage – ‘the pot is manifested by Devadatta’ (देवदत्तेन घटः प्रकाशयते I) [9].

Venkaṭanātha answers this as follows: the root ‘काशृ’ along with the preposition ‘प्र’ means ‘the object of knowledge’ (ज्ञान-विषयः). Since the pot is the object of knowledge, it becomes the subject of the root. So, the suffix – ‘सु’, indicating the subject is added to the nominal stem घट and so there arises the usage – घटः प्रकाशते. Then, the root ‘ज्ञा’ means ‘knowledge’ (ज्ञान) but not ‘the object of knowledge’ (ज्ञान-विषयः). So, as the pot becomes the object of knowledge, the suffix – ‘अम्’, indicating the object, is added. Consequently, there is the usage – घटं जानाति.

Thus, due to the difference in the natures of the roots, there is a difference in the suffixes added.

The author also cites the roots – ‘bhid’ and ‘pat’ as instances, wherein there is a difference in the suffixes employed, though there is not much difference in the senses conveyed by the roots. The roots ‘bhid’ and ‘pat’ mean ‘cutting’. But when the root ‘bhid’ is used, the word paraśu takes the instrumental suffix (परशुना) and when the root pat is used, it takes the suffix indicating the object (परशु) [10]. So, the usages are based solely on the natures of roots and it does not mean that there is any difference in meaning. So also, in the case of jñāna and prakāśa, there is no difference in meaning.

Now the Bhāṭṭa-Mīmāṃsaka-s raise the following objection: if cognized-ness is not admitted as produced in a pot, by the knowledge of pot, then how can there be the usage – “pot”? Similarly, how can it be decidedly known that pot alone is the object of the knowledge comprehending it? It cannot be said that that which is manifested by knowledge becomes its object. This is because manifestation also depends only upon cognized-ness. So, without admitting cognized-ness, the usage, object-ness, and manifestation of pot cannot be accounted for.

Venkaṭanātha answers this by pointing out that the said usage, object-ness, and manifestation of the pot, etc., are due to knowledge and not due to cognized-ness. It is the nature of knowledge to give rise to the usage, object-ness, and manifestation of entities, which are comprehended by it. So, there is no need to admit cognized-ness for this purpose. In that case, it may again be objected that, if knowledge, in general, is said to be responsible for usage, etc., then how can

the rule that the knowledge of the pot, etc., in particular, is responsible for the usage, etc., of the pot, etc., can be fixed.

In a reply to this, it is pointed out that the same question can be raised in the case of cognized-ness too. It is thus: how can there be a restriction that cognized-ness is produced in the pot, etc., alone by the knowledge of pot, etc. For this, the Mīmāṃsaka -s must answer that it is the nature of the knowledge of the pot, etc., to produce cognized-ness in the pot, etc., alone. The author here points out that, if so, then it is proper to admit that it is the nature of knowledge to give rise to usage, etc., of entities rather than to admit an unseen cognized-ness [11].

Further, it is pointed out that the alleged cognized-ness cannot be produced in the case of objects belonging to past and future, non-existence, and cognized-ness itself, even granting the Mīmāṃsaka view. Cognized-ness cannot be produced in the objects of the past and future, as the objects do not exist when their knowledge arises. Again, cognized-ness which is a positive feature cannot be produced in non-existence. Finally, cognized-ness cannot be produced in cognized-ness, by its knowledge, due to the defect of infinite regress. Hence there is no evidence to prove cognized-ness. It results from this that knowledge is self-luminous [12].

Venkaṭanātha quotes Yāmunācārya to support this view. Yāmunā in his Atma-siddhi, in order to establish the meaning of prakāśa, raises the question – ‘what then is the meaning of the term prakāśa?’ [13]. As a reply to this question, he quotes from Nāthamuni’s Nyāya-tattva which states that prakāśa is that which is not remote to experience and that which is the cause of memory (anubhava-adūram smṛti-nimittam) [14]. Yāmunā, who then reiterates this definition of prakāśa and as a reply to those who question the meaning of the term – adūratva – states as follows: let anubhava-adūratva means either ‘different from that which is remote from experience’ or ‘opposed to that which is remote from experience’. And to be manifest is to be different from that which is remote from experience or to be opposed to that which is remote from experience. But why indulge in all these unnecessary prattlings? [15]. What has been stated by this is that manifested-ness is that which is related to experience [16].

Then, Venkaṭanātha quotes Śrībhāṣya as further proof to establish the aforesaid view. Rāmānuja states – manifested-ness is the state of being conducive to practical purposes which is common to all the sentient and insentient entities [17]. Here vyavahāra-ānugūṇya means the relation to knowledge, which is conducive to practical purposes (vyavahāra-prayojaka- jñāna -sambandha). This relation is tādatmya in the case of the sentient entities and saṃyoga in the insentient entities [18]. Raṅgarāmanuja, however, feels that only a section of Viśiṣṭādvaitin maintains vyavahāra-ānugūṇya as samvid-adūratva [19]. But the former view appears to be closer to the text.

In sum, knowledge cannot be inferred by manifested-ness but is self-luminous.

Self-Luminosity of Knowledge in Tattva-Ratnakara

¹¹ See NS pp. 403-404.

¹² Loc Cit.

¹³ Atmasiddhi p. 209.

¹⁴ This definition is restricted to prakāśa belonging to objects given in perception. Cf. NS. P. 405.

¹⁵ Atmasiddhi p. 210. See also its translation by R. Ramanujachari & K. Srinvasachary p. 124.

¹⁶ Anubhava-sannikṛstatvam. NST p. 405.

¹⁷ SB vol. I. (part I) p. 143.

¹⁸ Cf. RP. P. 405.

¹⁹ Cf NST p. 405.

⁹ NST p. 402.

¹⁰ Cf. NST & RP pp. 402-403.

Then Veṅkaṭanātha gives the entire argument proving the self-luminosity of knowledge as given in the Tattva-ratnākara [20] of Parāśara Bhaṭṭa. Bhaṭṭa's first argument is that knowledge is self-luminous, as it is perceptual and is not comprehended by mental perception. Inference also proves the self-luminosity of knowledge, as follows:

(anubhūtiḥ svayamprakāśā anubhūtitvāt īśvarajñānavat|).

“Knowledge is self-luminous just because it is knowledge, as in the case of the knowledge of the God”.

Again, there is the usage ‘I know’ (aham saṁvedmi), as soon as one comes to know of a thing. This reveals the self-luminosity of knowledge, as no delay is felt due to any intervening cognition. Then, the fact that there is no doubt like – whether I know the object or not’, etc., as soon as an object is cognized, also proves the self-luminosity of knowledge. Further, there is a recognition (parāmarśa) of the stream cognition (dhārāvāhika-jñānam), as “till this time, I am perceiving it” (etāvantaṁ kālaṁ idamaḥaṁ paśyannevāsmi|). If knowledge is not self-luminous, then there can be no such recognition as it will get destroyed even before it is experienced.

Now it can be objected that, as there is an anuvyavasāya-jñānam in-between, the recognition of the stream cognition is possible. But this does not hold good, as such recognition cannot be accepted due to the fear of interruption in the flow of the stream cognition. Again, the inference belonging to the anvayavyatireka type, presumption (arthāpatti), reasoning (yukti), and scriptural declarations (vacana), also prove the self-luminosity of knowledge. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa thus summarises all the proofs for the self-luminosity of knowledge. Then, while commenting upon a particular phrase – *vyāptād-anvaya-vyatirekataḥ* (in the *karika* – *parasyādarśānat*, etc.), he puts forth an important argument as follows:

Vipratipannā samvit svagata-vyavaharam prati svādhina-kincitkāre sajjātya-sambandhānapekṣa, vyavahāra-hetutvat, arthendriyadipādivat

(The knowledge which is under discussion, does not stand in need of the aid of any entity which is similar to it for the aid it extends for the usage of it, as it is the cause of usage, just like the objects, sense organs, lamp, etc.)

The idea behind this is as follows; an object, say, a pot, becomes the cause of its usage by giving rise to the knowledge. Thus, pot here aids in giving rise to knowledge. For this purpose, it does not require the aid of any other pot, which is similar to it but requires only the lamp, which is dissimilar to it. Similarly, the lamp, which aids in giving rise to the cognition of pot does not require the aid of anything similar to it. Likewise, the sense-organs too which aid in giving rise to knowledge do not stand in need of anything similar to them.

Now, it may be objected that the sense of sight, which is the cause of the usage, requires the aid of the lamp, which is similar to it, being a Tejo-dravya. Hence there is a defect of anaikāntya. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa answers this by stating that this does not hold good as the sense of sight, being a sense organ, or being a product of ahānkāra, is dissimilar to light.

Now, in all these cases – pot or lamp or the sense-organ, it is seen that they do not require any other similar entity, just because they become the causes for usage. Similarly, jñāna too, which is a cause for usage, does not stand in need of another knowledge, for its manifestation, which means that it is self-luminous.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭa then proceeds to state that there are also other inferences to prove the self-luminosity of knowledge.

They are as follows:

i) Nānāsaṁskārāḥ svaikārthasamavāyijñāna
anubhāvānapekṣaḥ saṁskāratvāt anyasaṁskāravat|

[The latent impression of knowledge, does not require the experience of knowledge which inheres in its substratum (the self) for, it is a latent impression, like the other latent impressions].

The idea behind this inference is as follows: the latent impression of the pot is produced in the self by the experience of the pot. So, that latent impression requires only the experience of the object concerned, and not the experience of the knowledge concerned. Extending this line of argument, it can be stated that the latent impression of knowledge is produced by knowledge itself and not by the experience of knowledge. So, knowledge produces its latent impression by itself not depending upon any other experience. From this, it can be deduced that knowledge is svānubhava-svarūpa, as it is self-luminous.

ii) viśaya-saṁskārāḥ nanasaṁskāreṇa sahotpadyate
viśaya-saṁskāratvāt idamaḥaṁ jānāmīti jñānaprabhava
saṁskāratvāt|

(The latent impression of an object is produced along with the latent impression of knowledge, as it is a latent impression of an object, just like the impression produced from the knowledge “I know this”).

The idea behind this inference is as follows: the latent impression of an object produced by the knowledge ‘I know this’ is produced along with the latent impression of knowledge. On this basis, it must be accepted that all latent impressions of objects are produced along with the latent impressions of the cognitions concerned. This shows that the knowledge of an object manifests itself and produces its latent impression by itself, just as it manifests its object and produces the latent impression of it. Thus, knowledge becomes self-luminous.

Now, the following question may arise: it was stated that the latent impressions of the object and knowledge are produced together. But that is possible only when the knowledge, which gives rise to the impressions, has both the object and knowledge as its objects. That however is not possible for those who admit the self-luminosity of knowledge, as knowledge is not the object of knowledge. In that case, there would arise a question – how can the two impressions of object and knowledge be produced? The implication of this question is that ubhaya- viśaya-jñāna-pūrvakatva is the upādhiḥ. So, the hetu – viśaya-saṁskāratvāt is fallacious.

In reply, it may be stated that it has to be accepted, according to the law of parsimony (Laghava-Nyāya) that, knowledge, without becoming an object, creates two impressions – one about the object and another about itself. Otherwise, if it is contended that knowledge has to become an object so that its impression may be created, that would involve the defect of proluxity. This answer implies that when jñāna-pūrvakatva itself is sufficient, ubhaya- viśayakatva is added as its viśeṣaṇa, only to account for the pakṣa-vṛttitva of the upādhi. In that case, pakṣetaratva can be said as upādhi everywhere and inference as a whole has to be abandoned. Hence the said upādhi is defective. Consequently, the inference is free from any defect [21].

²⁰ NS pp. 405-410.

²¹ Vide, NST & RP Pp. 407-408.

Then Parasara Bhatta seeks to substantiate the self-luminosity of knowledge, with the inference given by Ramanuja in the Sribhasya as –
samvit anyādhīna-svadharmā-vyavahārā svasambandhāt arthāntare taddharma-vyavahāra-hetutvāt^[22].

He, further states that necessary refinements are to be made in this inference.

He also states that there are hetu-s with vyatireka-vyapti (negative concomitance) too, to prove the self-luminosity of knowledge. The intended inferences are –

anubhūtiḥ svayamprakāśā ajadatvāt|
(Knowledge is self-luminous, as it is non-inert)
Jñānam svayamprakāśam jñānatvāt.
(Knowledge is self-luminous, as it is knowledge).

Then he shows two presumptions (arthāpatti), to prove the self-luminosity of knowledge. They are:

- i. There is the immediate experience of knowledge for one and all. This is possible only if knowledge is accepted to be self-luminous. It may be objected that the self-luminosity need not be accepted, as knowledge is comprehended by mental perception (mānasa-pratyaksa). But this does not hold good as that view is proved to be unsound by valid criticisms. So, to account for the immediate experience of knowledge, self-luminosity is to be accepted^[23].
- ii. It is experienced by one and all that, there is the usage ‘the pot manifests’ (ghaṭaḥ prakāśate|), only when the pot is related to knowledge. So, knowledge gives rise to the said usage in the objects by its contact with them. This can be accounted for only when knowledge is self-luminous. That alone, which has luminosity by itself can impart it to others by its contact. So, to account for the said usages, knowledge must be accepted as self-luminous^[24].

Then, he gives several reasonings (Tarka-s) to prove the self-luminosity of knowledge. Veṅkaṭanātha records only one of them. It is as follows:

Jñānam na paraprakāśyam, ghaṭādivat, arthāprakāśa-prasaṅgāt

(Knowledge is not manifested by others, because it will result in the unwelcome position of knowledge not manifesting the objects, just like a pot.)

A pot is manifested not by itself, but by knowledge. So, it cannot manifest the other objects. But knowledge is not found to be so. It manifests all the other objects. So, it cannot be manifested by others but manifests by itself. It results in the self-luminosity of knowledge.

Then he cites the Upanisadic passages to prove the self-luminosity of knowledge. They are:

- i) *atrāyaṃ puruṣaḥ svayañjyotir bhavati*^[25]
[Here (during sleep) the individual soul remains self-manifest.]
- ii) *Atmaivasya jyotih*^[26]
(The self itself is its light)
- iii) *Svena jyotiṣā aste*^[27]
(The self remains with its luminosity)
- iv) *Ātma-samvedyam tajjnānam brahma- samjñitam*^[28]

(That knowledge which is manifested of its own is called Brahma)

All these statements declare the self-luminosity of the soul, which is referred to by the term – jñāna. They can be taken to convey the self-luminosity of knowledge, which is also referred to by the word *jñāna*, on the two grounds of possibility (*sambhava*) and simplicity (*laghava*). When the soul who is referred to by the word – jñāna, is self-luminous, then it is but natural that knowledge too, which is referred to as jñāna is self-luminous^[29]. Further, the law of simplicity also demands that knowledge be accepted as self-luminous. It is because a separate knowledge to comprehend knowledge need not be accepted^[30]. The Smṛti passages too support this view. They compare the individual soul to gems, the Sun and lamp, and their knowledge to the lustrous rays of gems, etc. The Gītā, for instance, declares,

yathā prakāśayatyekaḥ kṛtsnam lokamimam raviḥ|
kṣetram kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnam prakāśatai bhārata||^[31]

(Just as the Sun manifests the entire world by its rays, so also, Oh Bharata! The individual soul illumines the entire body, by its knowledge).

This passage indicates the self-luminosity of the self and of the knowledge, by comparing them to the Sun and its rays, which are self-luminous. Knowledge thus is self-luminous.

So far, arguments were cited in order to prove the self-luminosity of knowledge. If knowledge has to be proved as not self-luminous, it has to be shown that it becomes known invariably by becoming the object of another knowledge. Hence Parāśara Bhaṭṭa proceeds to criticize the inference which seeks to prove that knowledge becomes the object of another knowledge. The said inference is as follows.

jñānam jñānavedyaṃ vyavāryatvāt vastutvāt prameyatvāt kriyātvāt|.

(Knowledge is known by knowledge, as it is adapted to verbal usage, as it is an entity, as it is an object of cognition and as it is an activity).

The prima face view is – a pot which is an object of verbal usage, an entity, and an object of cognition becomes the object of knowledge. So also ‘going’ (gamana) which is an object of verbal usage, an object of cognition, an action, and an entity becomes the object of knowledge. Similarly, knowledge too, which is spoken of as an entity, an object of cognition, and action must be the object of knowledge.

Parāśara Bhaṭṭa observes that two alternatives are possible with regard to the sādhyā of the said inference. Based on the intended alternatives he criticizes the inference. They are:

- i. The inference proves the object-ness of knowledge in another knowledge, or
- ii. The inference proves the object-ness of knowledge in itself.

The difficulty in respect of the first alternative is that there would be the defect of non-perception of that which can be perceived (yogyānupalamba). That is, if knowledge becomes the object of another knowledge, then it must be experienced to be so. But there is no such experience. So, the does not hold good.

²² SB 1.1.1. Vol. 1. (Part I) p. 104.

²³ Vide NST & RP. P. 408.

²⁴ Loc. Cit.

²⁵ Brh. Up 6.3.9.

²⁶ Ibid 4.3.6.

²⁷ Ibid. 4-3-5.

²⁸ VP 6.7.53.

²⁹ Vide NST & RP pp. 408-409.

³⁰ Loc Cit.

³¹ BG 13.33.

In the case of the second alternative, there would be the defect proving what has been already proved. That is, those who admit the self-luminosity of knowledge hold that knowledge is manifested by itself. In this way, knowledge becomes the object of itself. If the second option is preferred, then this view alone is proved by the inference. So, there is the defect of Siddha-

sādhana. Further, there is the defect of anabhilaṣita-siddhi or proving the unintended view. That is, this inference proves the self-luminosity of knowledge when it is intended to prove the non-self-luminosity of knowledge.

Further, knowledge is not an action but an attribute of the self. So, the *hetu – kriyātva* is impossible (*asiddha*) in it. The inference is thus discredited^[32].

Now, there may arise a doubt. It is thus: those objects which have existence must become the objects of knowledge. In that case, how can the existence of knowledge be proved, as knowledge does not become the object of another knowledge in the view of those who maintain its self-luminosity?

This doubt is set aside by referring to the existence of pots, which do not become the object of knowledge. That is, there do exist pots that do not become the objects of our knowledge. But their existence is never doubted. Likewise, the existence of knowledge too need not be doubted, on the ground that it does not become the object of knowledge.

It may again be doubted as follows: through the pots, at times, do not become the objects of knowledge, yet there are times when they do become the objects of knowledge. Hence there is no problem as such, in admitting the existence of pot though it does not become the object of knowledge. But, in the case of knowledge, it never becomes the object of knowledge. So, this existence cannot be accepted as that of a pot.

This doubt is cleared by stating that in the view of the siddhāntin, it is accepted that knowledge also does become the object of another knowledge at times. The knowledge of entities belonging to the past times becomes the objects of memory (which is a form of knowledge), the knowledge of entities belonging to the future becomes the objects of inference and the knowledge of one person becomes the object of the knowledge of another person. So, when knowledge also becomes the object of knowledge, its existence very well stands proved, like that of a pot.

It may however again be doubted that, just as the tip of the finger cannot at once become the agent and object of the act of touching (which means that it cannot touch itself), so also knowledge cannot at once be both the agent and the object in the act of manifesting (that is it cannot manifest itself). So, it is not possible to accept the self-luminosity of knowledge.

It is answered as follows: when knowledge is accepted to be self-luminous, the intended sense is that knowledge is manifested by itself, without the need for any other knowledge, at the time of manifesting objects. The sense that knowledge becomes the agent and the object of the act of manifesting is not at all intended. So, the inconsistency as in the case of the tip of the finger does not arise at all here. Thus, there is no problem in admitting the self-luminosity of knowledge.

Now, it may again be doubted as follows: if knowledge is admitted to be self-luminous, then it is clear that knowledge is manifested along with the object. So, as there is sahopalambha-niyama, it proves the non-difference between the object and knowledge. It can be inferentially stated as *jñānaṃ viśaya bhinnam sahopalambhaniyamāt*].

It is answered that this cannot hold good. It is because perception proves the difference between the object and knowledge. This perception contradicts the inference which proves the non-difference. Further sahopalambha – cognizing two entities together, itself involves difference. So, the hetu-sahopalambha-niyama proves the contrary rather than the intended sense.

Then again if the aprayojakasāṅkā of the form – ‘let there be sahopalambha-niyama, but let the non-difference between the object and knowledge be not there’ is raised in the said inference, there is no supportive logic (*anukūla-tarka*) as a satisfactory answer to it. Thus, the said inference is refuted.

The Criticism of The Nyāya View in Tattva-Ratnākara

The Nyaya school holds that knowledge is known through mental perception and hence is not self-luminous. Parāśara Bhaṭṭa sets this view aside by pointing out some defects. He first states that mental perception cannot comprehend knowledge. It is because if there is such a mental perception then it must be experienced. But there is no such experience. This non-experience of that which could be experienced (*yogyānupalabdhi*) proves the absence of such a thing. So, mental perception cannot comprehend knowledge.

Further, there is no need to accept such a mental perception, as knowledge can manifest itself without the help of anything else. Despite this, if the mental perception is accepted as comprehending knowledge, then it results in the defect of infinite regress (*anavasthā*). It is thus: the knowledge of pot is known by mental perception. This mental perception being a knowledge must be accepted as being known through another mental perception and so on. This leads to an infinite regress. These are the reasons that are opposed to the view of the Nyāya school.

Further, Parāśara Bhaṭṭa points out that the two hetu-s of the Nyāya school, which are said to prove that knowledge is comprehended by mental perception, are fallacious. The two hetu-s of the Nyāya school are *kṣaṇikatve sati ātmaviśeṣa-guṇatvam* and *yogyatve sati ātmaviśeṣa-guṇatvam*. He points out the defect of *asiddhi* in the first *hetu* because knowledge is neither *kṣaṇika* (momentary) nor a *guṇa*. Then he adds that there is the defect of *vyabhicāra* too, in the *hetu*. The merit (*dharma*) accrued from the performance of atonement (*prāyaścitta*) is both – an attribute of the self and momentary. But it is not known through *mānasa- pratyakṣa*. Hence there is a defect of *vyabhicāra* in the *prāyaścitta-dharma*.

Then, he points out the defect of *vyabhicāra* in the second *hetu* also. The Nyāya school admits an effort called *jīvana-pūrvaka-prayatna* so that the inhalation and exhalation can be continued even during sleep. This effort is fit to be perceived (*pratyakṣa-yogyā*) and is an attribute of the self (*ātmaviśeṣa-guṇa*). But it is not comprehended by mental perception. So, there is a defect of *vyabhicāra* in its case.

Thus, it is not proper to hold that knowledge is comprehended by mental perception. But, even among the *Viśiṣṭādvaitin-s*, Varadaviṣṇuśrī in his *Mānayaṭhātmyanirṇaya* states that desire, hatred, and effort are known by mental perception^[33]. He states – ‘happiness and misery are of the forms of knowledge’ and then states – desire, hatred, and effort are comprehended by mental perception.

Veṅkaṭanātha, in order to account for this statement which does not agree with the view of most of the *Viśiṣṭādvaitin-s* states as follows: the statement is based on a self-entertained idea that desire, etc., are the attributes different from

³² Vide NST & RP p. 409.

³³ Q from Mana-yathamya-nirṇaya in NS P. 411.

knowledge, or is based on the view of others. Bypassing such a remark about the statement, Venkatanatha intends to point out that this idea is non-agreeable to the *Vīśiṣṭādvaitin-s*. Further, he states that when happiness and misery are accepted to be of the form of knowledge, there can be no difficulty in admitting desire, etc., too to be of the form of knowledge.

Incidentally, he also criticizes the view that happiness is the absence of misery and misery is the absence of happiness. He states, that if the said view is accepted, then there is the defect of mutual dependence (*anyonyāśrayaṇam*). It is because the knowledge of absence presupposes the knowledge of the counter-positive. So, if happiness is to be experienced, then it must be invariably preceded by the experience of misery and similarly, if misery is to be experienced, then it must be invariably preceded by the experience of happiness. Thus, due to the defect of mutual dependence, the said view is improper. Further, happiness and misery are experienced as positive states. That is, when the absence of happiness is experienced, misery is not experienced. This shows that happiness and misery are different from the absence of misery and absence of happiness respectively.

Then again, there is a state in which neither happiness nor misery is experienced. Such a state cannot be accounted for if happiness and misery are accepted to be of the form the mutual absence. It is because, when there is no happiness, there must be the invariable experience of misery and when there is no misery, there must be the invariable experience of happiness. But it is not vouched by experience. Hence the said view is improper.

Conclusion

Knowledge thus has been established as self-luminous by several authors in the tradition of Visistadvaita, through logical arguments and refutation of the views of by other systems of philosophies.

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