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The Nyaya Concept of Alaukika Pratyaksha: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract:

In the Nyaya Philosophy, perception (Pratyaksha) has been aptly regarded as the most fundamental of four kinds of source of knowledge (Pramana), viz., Pratyaksha or perception, Anumana or inference, Upamana or comparison, and Sabda or testimony. One of the justifications of such a view is that although perception is not the only source of knowledge, it is the basis of all the other sources of knowledge, in so far as Inference, Comparison and Testimony depend upon perception. 'Perception' has been defined in different ways by the different Naiyayikas.

The old school of the Naiyayikas did not generally distinguish between normal or Laukika and supernormal or Alaukika from of perception, although passing references to the supernormal form of perception found in some of the earlier texts on Nyaya (particularly in Jayanta Bhatta's 'Nyayamanjuri; and Vacaspati Misra's 'Nyayavartika-tatparyaatika'). It was Gangesa the founder of the New School of the Naiyayikas, who, for the first time in his 'Tattavacintamani', systematically distinguished between Laukika and Alaukika Pratyaksha.

In order to clarify the Alaukik Pratyaksha in Nyaya Philosophy it has been mentioned that here we have no direct contact sense with objects. There are three kinds of extra-ordinary perception (alaukika pratyaksa) produced by three kinds of extra-ordinary contact (alukika sannikarṣa) viz, sāmānya-lakṣaṇa, jñāna-lakṣaṇa and Yogaja. In order to clarify the first one, it has been said that when by the perception of particular object, we do the perception of universal. For example, one has the Alaukika Pratyaksha of all the cows of all places and times through the knowledge of the class- essence 'cowness in a particular cow, conjoined with eye. In Jnana Lakshna Pratyaksha the perception of an object by means of sense organ which is not ordinarily associated with it, becomes supernormally associated with it. Through memory-knowledge of the same, perceived previously by another sense. Such a perception takes the form of 'I see a piece of fragrance of sandalwood'. Here the visual perception of the fragrance of sandalwood is a case of Jnana Lakshna Pratyaksha, because ordinarily the perception of fragrance is not visual, but olfactory. Yogaja

Pratyaksha, the perception of all objects of all places and times. In Indian Philosophical tradition so many such Yogis have been accepted who have done this divine perception.

In this connection it may be mention that according to Nyaya, while Laukika Pratyaksha may be either determinate or indeterminate, Alaukik pratyaksha is always determinate, because it gives us explicit and definite knowledge.

I would like to discuss critically the details of this striking view in my paper.

Keywords: Pratyaksha, Pramana, Naiyayikas, Laukika Pratyaksha, Alaukik pratyaksha, Samanya Lakshna, Jnana Lakshna and Yogaja etc.

Perception (Pratyaksha) is one of the *pramana* or the *sources of valid knowledge* according to Indian epistemological tradition Perception (Pratyaksha) is defined as knowledge acquired through sense-object-contact, which is immediate, i.e., it doesn't depend upon any prior knowledge. In the Nyaya Philosophy, perception (Pratyaksha) has been aptly regarded as the most fundamental of four kinds of source of knowledge (Pramana), viz., Pratyaksha or sense perception, Anumana or inference, Upamana or comparison, and Sabda or testimony.¹ One of the justifications of such a view is that although perception is not the only source of knowledge, it is the basis of all the other sources of knowledge, in so far as Inference, Comparison and Testimony depend upon perception. 'Perception' has been defined in different ways by the different Naiyayikas.

'Pratyaksha' has been defined in different ways by the different Naiyayikas. Particularly there is a remarkable difference between the definition of perception given by the older Naiyayikas and that given by the later Naiyayikas. Gautama in his 'Nyayasutra' defines 'Pratyaksha' thus: 'Pratyaksha is the knowledge produced by the contact between the sense-organ and the object of sense that is not due to the instrumentality of the word, that is non-erroneous, and that is definite and free from doubt'.² Although in the case of Pratyaksha, there is not only sense-object contact, but also the contact of the self with the mind and that of the mind with the senses, only the contact of the senses with their object has been mentioned for the reason that this is the extraordinary cause of Pratyaksha, while the other kinds of contact are causes common to all other forms of knowledge. In order to clarify Pratyaksha, Maharshi Gautama said that, The knowledge originated by the contact of sense organs with the objects is perception if it is Avyapdeshya, Avyabhicari and Vyavasayatmak, where - Avyapdeshya means Nirvikalpak pratyaksha, where no knowledge of name and character does happen. Vyavasatmaka means Savikalpaka pratyaksha, where knowledge of name and character happens. Avyabhicari is which indicates doubtless knowledge.³

The prachina school of the Naiyayikas did not generally distinguish between normal or Laukika and supernormal or Alaukika form of perception, although passing references to the supernormal form of perception are found in some of the earlier texts on Nyaya (particularly in Jayanta Bhatta's 'Nyayamanjari' and Vacaspati Misra's 'Nyayavartikatatparyatika'. It was Gangesa the founder of the New School of the Naiyayikas, who, for the first time in his 'Tattavacintamani', systematically distinguished between Laukika and Alaukika Pratyaksha.⁴ Laukika Pratyaksha results from normal sense-object contact (Laukika-

sannikarsa); Alaukika Pratyaksha, on the other hand, result from supernormal sense-object contact (Alaukika-sannikarsa). Such sense-object contact may be of six types, viz. i) Conjunction (samjyoga)- The first step that includes the contact of the substance with the sense organ. such as knowledge of pitcher, ii) inherence in what is conjoined (samyukta-samavaya)- The second step involving the contact of the quality of the substance. This is the perception of shape, size, colour et al which are inherently present with the substance, knowledge of colour of pitcher, iii) inherence in what inheres in that which is conjoined (samyukta-samaveta-samavaya) - The third step that perceives the degree of the quality like the intensity of redness in various watermelons, knowledge of colourness of pitcher, iv) inherence (samavaya) -knowledge of word, The perception of the sound. v) inherence in the inherent (samaveta-samavaya)- knowledge of wordiness. The perception of the quality of Sound. The intensity of sound with regards to pitch, frequency and wavelength is perceived in this stage. and vi) the relation between the character and the characterized, i.e., the relation between the adjunct and the substantive (visesana- visesya-bhava)- knowledge of absence of pitcher. Supernormal sense-contact, the non – existence (absence) is perceived at this stage.⁵

Gangesa distinguishes ordinary (laukika) perception from transcendent (alaukika) perception. In order to clarify the Alaukik Pratyaksha in Nyaya Philosophy it has been mentioned that here we have no direct contact sense with objects. There are three kinds of extra-ordinary perception (alaukika pratyaksa) produced by three kinds of extra-ordinary contact (alaukika sannikarsa) viz, sāmānya-lakṣaṇa, jñāna-lakṣaṇa and Yogaja.⁶ ‘Sāmānya-lakṣaṇa-pratyaksha’ is the perception of all the individuals possessing a class- essence (or generic nature) through the knowledge of that class- essence in an individual conjoined with a particular sense-organ. For example, when I visually perceive an earthen pot (ghata) present before me here and now there is a normal sense-object contact between the pot and my eyes, and hence, the resultant perception of the pot is also normal. Now, when I perceive the particular pot, I also perceive the class-essence ‘potness’ (ghatatva) inherent in it. Again, through the knowledge of the class-essence ‘potness’ inherent in it, I know all the pots possessing that class essence. Here the contact of the sense-organ with all the pots is, however, supernormal. Thus, while perceiving a particular pot I also perceive all the other pots through the knowledge of the universal ‘potness’ inherent in it. This is a case of ‘sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -pratyaksha’. There is, however, a difference between the perception of the particular of the pot and that of all the other pots. The particular pot, ordinarily conjoined with the visual sense, is perceived as possessing both its class-essence and the particular characteristics peculiar to it; but all the other pots supernormally conjoined with the visual sense are perceived as possessing only that class-essence, and not their peculiar characteristics.

In Laukik pratyaksha there is direct contact of sense and object. There may be two types of Laukik pratyaksha- Bajya or External and Manas or Internal. In first one Knowledge, received by five sense organs have been included, such as the knowledge of word, touch, colour, taste and smell through ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose respectively; while in second

one the Perception by mind has been included. According to Nyaya, each of the five external sense-organs is material, and is composed of the same material elements, the quality of which is sensed by it. The basis of this view seems to be the principle: 'only the like can perceive like'. Perception is eternal when it results from the contact of the internal sense-organ, i.e., mind (manas), with such attributes of the soul as 'desire', 'aversion', 'pleasure', 'pain', etc. Unlike the external sense-organ, the mind is immaterial by nature, and its co-ordinates in all kinds of knowing.

The supernormal sense-object contact leading to 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -pratyaksha' is called 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa'. But what exactly is the nature of 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa'? In order to understand it, one has to know the meaning of the word 'lakṣaṇa'. By 'lakṣaṇa' we may mean either 'svarupa' (nature) or 'visaya' (object), and hence, we have to decide which of the two is the real meaning of the word in the case of 'Samanya-lakṣaṇa-sannikarsa'. First, by the word 'lakṣaṇa', we may mean 'svarupa' and that case, 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa' would mean that contact which has 'samanya' (class-essence or generic nature) as its nature, that is to say, 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa' is 'samanya' itself. The word 'samanya' means 'indriyasambaddhavisesyakajana-prakaribhutadharma', i.e., the attribute characteristic of the knowledge of the contact that is a contact with the sense-organ. For instance, in the case of the perception of a pot (ghata), as there is the relation of conjunction between the eye and the pot, there is knowledge of the which is in contact with the eye, and the generic attribute 'potness' (ghatatva) which is characteristic of such knowledge is to be regarded as 'samanya'. Now, the contact (sannikarsa) as potness (ghatatva) is in all the pots at other places and times. So, there is supernormal perception (alaukika- pratyaksha) of all the pots. When we perceive the generic nature of individuals, we have a case of sāmānyalakṣaṇa. The ancient school of Nyaya admits the perception of generality. In Gangesa we find a greater appreciation of the work of intellect in the apprehension of universals. Through the knowledge of the generic nature of an individual, we are able to know all other individuals at all times, and all places, possessed of the same generic nature. The nature of the relation between the universal and the particular is said to be inseparable and organic (samavaya).⁷

'Jñāna-lakṣaṇa -pratyaksha' is the supernormal perception of an object being in supernormal contact with a sense-organ, normally not associated with it, through a 'memory-knowledge of it' called 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa'. Thus, 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa -pratyaksha' is based upon 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa', which is also called 'upanaya'. The object that is perceived through 'upanaya' is called 'upanita', and such perception is called 'upanitabhana' (jñāna-lakṣaṇa -pratyaksha). Jñāna-lakṣaṇa-sannikarsa is a kind of 'memory-knowledge' (smṛti or smṛtyatmakajana). It is a contact which is of the nature of knowledge. For instance, when there is visual perception of a piece of fragrant sandalwood, there is a supernormal perception of the fragrance of the sandalwood, because here the sandalwood is, no doubt, visually perceived through normal sense-contact, but the fragrance which has become a character of the sandalwood cannot be so perceived, as there is no normal contact here between the fragrance and the eye, and again, there is no actual

contact between the sense-organ of smell and the fragrance. Here the memory of our previous knowledge of fragrance in the sandalwood through the sense-organ of smell works as the contact between the present fragrance and the sense-organ of sight. Thus, the memory knowledge of fragrance in the sandalwood acts as the 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa', which, as the 'vyapara', produces the supernormal visual perception of fragrance in the sandalwood. *yogaja* is *alaukika*, for the senses do not co-operate in it, but it is nevertheless perception, on account of the complete vividness of view which the *yogaja* yields.⁸

Now, if both 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa' and 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa' are of the nature of knowledge, what is the distinction between the two? In reply to this question, the Nyiyayika says that the function of 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa' is to produce the knowledge of the locus of the 'samanya', i.e. of all the individuals in which the 'samanya' inheres; whereas the function of the 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa', i.e., the memory-knowledge of an object, is to produce the present knowledge of the same object; that is to say, in 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa a-pratyaksha', the memory-knowledge of an object produces the present perception of that object. *Jñāna-lakṣaṇa* occurs when we only see the sandalwood but perceive its fragrance. When we only see it, the visual presentation recalls the fragrance with which *manas* comes into contact. It is indirect perception. It is called also *smṛti jñāna*, or memory knowledge.⁹ 'Yogaja-pratyaksha' is the third kind of supernormal perception recognized by the Naiyayikas. Intuitive knowledge gained by an enlightened being is termed as *Yogaja pratyaksha*. It is believed that a 'yogi', can attain, through the yogic practice of concentration known as 'samprajnatayoga', an indescribable supernormal state or quality, and with the incomprehensively powerful mind assisted by that supernormal state or quality, he can have a supernormal perception of his own self, the selves of others, the for kinds of atoms, the minds of others, air, space, time, ether, their attributes, karma (action), *samanya* (universal), *visesa* (particularity), *samavaya* (inherence), heaviness, elasticity, etc., volition, indeterminate perception, psychical traces, *dharma*, *adharmā* and all other things. All the ordinary general and special conditions of perception being fulfilled, if the soul attains such a supernormal state, it has, with the help of the infinitely powerful mind, a supernormal yogic perception of all things, the greatest and the smallest, the nearest and the remotest in space and time. Here the supernormal state or quality works as the supernormal sense-object contact (*alaukika sannikarsa*'). Such perception is called 'Yogaja-pratyaksha' and such sense-object is called 'Yogaja sannikarsa'.¹⁰

Acariya Visvanatha, in his "Nyayasiddhantamuktavali", has spoken of two classes of Yogis, viz., 'Yukta' and 'Yunjana'. A 'yuktayogi' is one who has attained spiritual perfection, and as a result thereof has a constant spontaneous intuitive knowledge of all objects. On the other hand, a *yunjana* yogi is one who is on the way to the attainment of perfection, and as such, has only occasional intuitive knowledge of things, through concentration. Thus, there are two kinds of *yogaja* p, *pratyaksha* viz., the *yukta* and the *yunjana*.¹¹

In this connection, it is interesting to note that in the allied system of Vaisesika Philosophy; two types of yogis are spoken of, viz., the 'yukta' and the 'viyukta'. According

to Prasastapada's interpretation, a yuktayogi is one who has non-erroneous knowledge of everything through the instrumentality of the mind aided by supernormal yogic power; whereas a viyuktayogi is one who, because of the contact of the soul, mind, sense-organ and objects, and by virtue of the supernormal yogic power, has direct knowledge of the subtle, hidden, and remote objects. Sridhara, the author of 'Nyayakandali', says that a yuktayogi is in the state of Samadhi; but a viyuktayogi due to abundance of supernormal power, consequent upon excessive yogic practice, has intuitive vision of everything, even of the insensible objects, despite his not being in the in the state of Samadhi. Udayana also explains the distinction between the yuktayogi and viyuktayogi in a similar way. In Sankara Misra's 'upaskara-tika' on the Vaisesika-sutra, the yuktayogi has been called 'Samahitantahkarana' and the Viyuktayogi has been called 'Asamahitantahkarana' or 'Upasamhrtasamadhi'.¹²

It seems clear that the Nyaya concept of 'yuktayogi' and 'yunjanayogi' are equivalent to the Vaisesika concept of 'viiyuktayogi' and 'yuktayogi'. It is interesting to note that the Nyaya theory of 'yogaja-pratyaksha' may be compared with the Buddhist and the Samkhya-yoga theories of supernormal yogic perception of things that are not normally perceived by us, it must be remembered that in the latter, nothing is recognized like the 'yogaja sannikarsa' of the Naiyayikas.

In conclusion, thus the theory of 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -sannikarsa' as it stands cannot be accepted, because, in the normal perception of a particular object of a class, the supernormal perception of all the objects of that class, is not testified by experience. Moreover, the Naiyayikas themselves are not unanimous on this issue. As we have seen, Pandit Raghunatha Siromani, one of the greatest Naiyayikas of the new school, has vehemently criticized the theory of 'sāmānya-lakṣaṇa -pratyaksha'. To the objection that such knowledge of all cases through the universal would appear to make us omniscient, the Naiyayika replies that we know only the general character of all individual instances and not their peculiar features. What is called 'jñāna-lakṣaṇa pratyaksha' can reasonably be explain in a case of inference or memory, as shown by the Advaitins and such cannot be justified as necessary. The Naiyayikas may, of course, argue that if we admit the existence of the two generic attributes, viz., 'pratyaksatva' and 'smrtitva' in the same instance of knowledge, there would occur the defect of 'sankara' (overlapping) which is an obstacle to 'Jati' (Universal). But there is no unanimity among the Naiyayikas themselves as to whether 'sankara' is really a 'jatibadhaka' or not. The Naiyayikas of the Navya School have refuted the theory that 'sankrya' is a 'jatibadhaka'. The perception of fragrance cannot be ascribed to ordinary intercourse of the olfactory organ with its object. Hence it is regarded as alaukik pratyaksa. Lastly, 'yogaja-pratyaksha' is beyond the comprehension of human reason. It is believed to be true on the basis of 'sabda-pranama'. It cannot be logically proved or disproved. Its truth can be verified only by means of the practice of Yoga.

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