

DHARMAKĪRTI ON CRITERIA OF KNOWLEDGE

In this paper* I intend to consider Dharmakīrti's two¹ important criteria of knowledge, viz. *Avisaṃvādana* or *Avisaṃvādakatva* and *A(vi)jñātārthaprakāśakatva*, explain their rationale and bring out the role they play in our epistemic enterprise. The paper has three sections. The first investigates into the need and necessity of the criteria under consideration. The second seeks to highlight their nature and role, while the last intends to study significant implications of them.

I

Need and Necessity of Criteria

Since antiquity human knowledge,² both in its cognitive and certificatory aspects, has continued to engage attention of the concerned. Initial inquiries of this sort might have been undertaken in the atmosphere of common-sensical thought and deliberation. However, in course of time they went on attaining greater and greater degree of precision and sophistication. At the hands of philosophers like Dharmakīrti various aspects of human epistemic enterprise came to be illuminatively investigated into. Such an enquiry of them brought to our notice certain assets and points of strength of human knowledge. But, on the other hand, it also exposed certain weaknesses and vulnerabilities, to which certain modes of analysing the phenomenon of human knowledge were perhaps inherently open and thus unfortunately gave rise to. From this point of view, Dharmakīrti's

Received : 04-2-89

enquiry into and analysis of human knowledge is important in two ways : (a) advocacy of his own views and (b) critical and yet refreshing evaluation of the views of his predecessors and contemporaries from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist camps. On account of such twin reasons a careful study of Dharmakīrti's enquiry into human knowledge and its analysis deserves a special attention. For, a study of this kind may bring to our notice the sort of questions and issues concerning knowledge which were then seriously considered and enable us also to grasp their appropriate rationale.

As argued elsewhere³ epistemic enterprise according to Dharmakīrti is basically purposive (*Sahetuka*) in character. Instead of considering knowledge to be valuable for its own sake, he considers it to be important in so far as it is instrumental to *Puruṣārthasiddhi*.⁴ Further, this sort of instrumentality of it is determined, according to him, by the fact that the knowledge under consideration enables us to acquire (*Upādāna*) that which is conducive to *Puruṣārthasiddhi* (realisation of legitimate aspirations of human life) and give up (*Hāna*) that which is not so conducive.⁵ Moreover, the legitimate aspirations of human life are expected to be realised in our life within the framework of Buddha's philosophy and along the path laid down by him. This kind of approach of Dharmakīrti and other Buddhist philosophers like him is clearly an alternative to the one adopted by adherents of various philosophical schools owing their allegiance to the *Vedas* in one form or the other. Both these considerations, viz. instrumentality of our epistemic enterprise to *Puruṣārthasiddhi* and the appropriate relation of *Puruṣārthasiddhi* to the philosophy of the Buddha and the path laid down by him, have number of implications;⁶ however, for fear of digression we cannot go into the details of them here.

Before we spell out the need and necessity of criteria of knowledge according to Dharmakīrti let us give a brief sketch of the kinds of cognitions that we have according to him.

It is a fact that we know or comprehend. The knowledge or comprehension we have, becomes available to us either directly (*Aparokṣa*) or indirectly (*Parokṣa*).⁷ Since over and above these two there is none, Dharmakīrti and other Buddhist philosophers hold that there are only two modes of comprehension, viz. *Pratyakṣa* (Perception) and *Anumāna* (Inference). The number and nature of *Pramāṇas* (modes of comprehending) are determined by *Prameyas* (knowables) they enable us to comprehend.⁸ Since there are only two kinds of knowables, viz. *Svalakṣaṇas* and *Sāmānyalakṣaṇas*, and since both of them cannot be known with the help of the same *Pramāṇa*, there are two *Pramāṇas*, viz. *Pratyakṣa* and *Anumāna* respectively to know them.⁹ If *Svalakṣaṇa* and *Sāmānyalakṣaṇa* are viewed as two distinct sorts of objects known respectively through *Pratyakṣa* and *Anumāna*, since, on this view, there is nothing common to objects of perceptual and inferential cognitions as also to the cognitions under considerations, then two unpalatable consequences follow : (a) the world would be compartmentalised and (b) our knowledge of the world would also be compartmentalised. Dharmakīrti, for obvious reasons, does not and cannot subscribe to this view.¹⁰ But, at the same time, he would neither give up duality of knowables nor that of *Pramāṇas*. Accordingly, knowables known through *Pratyakṣa* and *Anumāna* need perhaps to be understood as features of an (cluster-like) object rather than some static or changing objects themselves. In the light of *Anityatā* and *Anattā* to which Dharmakīrti subscribes, objects and persons need perhaps to be understood as changing clusters of features, rather than some or the other kind of static-entities.¹¹ Taken in this way, becoming turns out

to be basic rather than being in contradistinction with many philosophical strands. This has many implications; however, for fear of digression we cannot go into them here.

Understanding, then, that *Pratyakṣa* enables us to know such *Svalakṣaṇātmaka* features of an object, which are unique, particular, non-sharable in-communicable, instancial and yet experienceable, through *Anumāna* we comprehend general, sharable and communicable features. The former we know directly and empirically.¹² They are held to be what they are (*Paramārtha Sat*) not only on the ground of their being incommunicable (*Kalpanā-apodha*) but also because, other things remaining the same, they are non-deceptive (*abhrānta*). The latter we comprehend indirectly and inferentially in so far as they are communicable and coherently conceivable (*Loka Samvṛtti Sat*).¹³ The clusters of features which we may thus comprehend exhibit a fairly long range such that on the one extreme of it we have such a cluster every feature of which is *Svalakṣaṇa*, while on the other extreme we have such a cluster each feature of which is sharable. The cluster nearest to the extreme on the former extreme is the one at least one member of which is sharable, while the one nearest to the cluster of features on the latter extreme is the one at least one member of which is non-sharable i.e. *Svalakṣaṇa*. In between them, further, there could be whole range of clusters of features some of which are non-sharable while others are sharable. There could be preponderance of the former over the latter or *vice versa*. Accordingly, they would be locatable along the whole range of comprehensible clusters of features. Thus understood, various such clusters turn out to be complementary to one another rather than their being dichotomised and compartmentalised. In so far as such clusters are discrete and liable to change, there could be an overlap between simultaneously or successively presented clusters, although stability of

none. This kind of epistemic simultaneity or continuity through succession of clusters which we comprehend also demands their complementarity. This sort of complementarity of clusters that we comprehend also has certain implications; however, for fear of digression we cannot go into details of them here.

Further, whether we cognise perceptually or inferentially, directly or indirectly, cognitive aspect of our epistemic enterprise demands satisfaction of one minimum condition. It is this that there should be at least one person. It would, therefore, be extravagant to hold, according to Dharmakīrti, that social context or communicative situation is a necessary condition of cognition—no matter whether perceptual or inferential. Holding, therefore, what *Naiyāyikas* and some Buddhists also call *Nirvikalpa Pratyakṣa* to be primary and only genuine perceptual cognition and, likewise, *Svārthānumāna* to be primary in the case of inferential cognition are uniform and complementary features of Dharmakīrti's epistemology.¹¹

If we consider our epistemic enterprise then two complementary features of it come to surface. They are : (a) we cognise, and (b) we advance a claim that we have cognised such and such a feature. The latter of these necessarily presupposes the former, although the converse of this is not defensible. But right at this juncture there arises a complicated problem. The problem is : on what basis can we claim that such and such a feature, cognised by us, is acceptable or respectable. For the fact that we have cognised such and such a feature is not a matter of circulating subjective opinion. How are we, then, to establish that our cognition is non-subjectively viable? In the face of such a difficulty three *prima facie* viable alternatives may be proposed : (1) On the one hand, it may be held that the very mode of cognition itself brings forth the acceptability of the concerned cognition. However, in trying to make sense of

viability or acceptability of our cognition in this way two unsurmountable difficulties confront us. First, as noted above, our cognitions—perceptual or inferential—are subjective in their occurrence. Starting from this kind of subjectivity of occurrence of cognition it would not be possible to have objective and interpersonal basis relying on which viability of our cognition could be established, without allowing it to lapse into either arbitrariness or subjectivity. Secondly, if it is held that perceptual cognition is viable because it is perceptual, and inferential cognition is viable in so far as it is inferential, then this view turns out to be totally blind to the fact that both perceptual and inferential cognitions, sometimes at least, turn out to be deceptive, erroneous and hence unviable. But they too are subjective in their occurrence. Given this, it can no longer be held that perception makes perceptual cognition viable, while ratiocination makes inferential cognition viable. *Utpattau Prāmāṇya* view stands unfortunately exposed to this sort of difficulty. (2) On the other hand, it could be held that viability or unviability of the respective cognitions are structural or built-in features of them, and in so far as this is the case such a feature of the concerned cognition makes it viable or otherwise. This seems to be the view advocated by *Sāṃkhya*s. *Mīmāṃsaka*s, on the contrary, seem to hold that viability is a built-in feature of viable knowledge in so far as it has not been contradicted (*Abādhita*), while unviability of a cognition is brought out through its being contradicted. This view also remains vulnerable at least on two counts : First, on it viability becomes a permanent, indelible and incontestable feature of cognition. But this amounts to either ignoring possibility of error in our cognition or else immunising it against fallibility and revisibility of it. Whichever way it is considered it is counter-intuitive to say the least. Secondly, it closes the very possibility of growth and development of knowledge, contestability of claims advanced on

the basis of cognition and also of our coming to discover hitherto undiscovered or undisclosed features. It is an intuitive constraint on our analysis of epistemic enterprise that it should not close these possibilities. Having disregarded this kind of intuitive demand we cannot, at the same time, hope our analysis of our cognition to be satisfactory. (3) Thirdly, it may be held that what makes our cognition viable is the fact that it matches or corresponds with that of which it is a cognition. In so far as it matches it is viable, while in so far as it does not, it is not viable. This view, advocated by *Nyāya* philosophers, too, is unfortunately open to two weaknesses and vulnerabilities. First, it holds that cognition—no matter whether perceptual, inferential or of any other sort—is essentially public in its occurrence. This is counter-intuitive. But, secondly, it seems to unwittingly force us to subscribe to a kind of platonism which not only goes against the principle of simplicity or economy, which is a methodologically respectable demand, but it also forces us to accept that alternative approaches must be considered to be unacceptable just because and in so far as they are alternatives to the cherished view. This too is difficult to subscribe to since it is not only counter-intuitive but methodologically indefensible as well.

On this background, it becomes evident as to why Dharmakīrti explores into, discovers and explains the nature of the two important criteria of knowledge, viz. *Avisaṃvādana* or *Avisaṃvādakatva* and *A(vi)jñātārthaprakāśakatva*, which not only enable him to circumvent the sort of difficulties stated above in his analysis of human cognition but also bring forth such tenets of it which not only make perceptual and inferential cognitions essentially complementary to each other but also keep the doors of growth and development of knowledge, contestability and revisibility of interpretations of Buddha's philosophy etc. perma-

nently open and thereby also avoid dogmatism. To be able to see this we need to explain Dharmakīrti's criteria of knowledge. This is our task in the next section.

II

Criteria of Knowledge

It was observed above that according to Dharmakīrti the distinction between context of cognition and that of certification with reference to both perceptual and inferential knowledge, should never be ignored or circumvented. But, at the same time, perceptual or inferential cognitions cannot be held to be certifiable on the basis of their similar subjective mode of occurrence. For, as remarked above, that would rule out the possibility of objective and inter-personally sharable mode of certification of our knowledge-claims. And this would make non-sense of an important aspect of our epistemic enterprise, viz. certificatory epistemology. Hence, appropriate avenue of certification needs to be searched elsewhere. In this context certain kind of structural or built-in feature of knowledge and the known etc. offer themselves as *prima facie* plausible alternatives. Nonetheless, as indicated above, each of them is fraught with one or the other unsurmountable difficulty, as a result of which none of them is acceptable to Dharmakīrti. Accordingly, he provides a different kind of approach concerning certification or acceptability of our perceptual or inferential cognitions which could be called criterial or regulative.

While advocating and articulating such an approach, which perhaps was put forth by Dharmakīrti for the first time at least in the intellectual climate of the Indian sub-continent, he is careful not to ignore two points of seminal importance regarding perceptual and inferential cognitions in his philosophy. They are: (a) Knowables (*viśaya*) known with the help of these modes of

cognition are distinct and different. For, perception enables us to cognise only *Svalakṣaṇas*, while inferential cognition *Sāmānyalakṣaṇas* alone, and that none of them is reducible to or subsumable under the other. (b) Though these two modes of cognition are distinct according to Dharmakīrti, they are, nonetheless, on par with each other.^{1b} In consequence, neither perception could be held to be instrumental to inferential cognition nor inferential cognition to perceptual cognition. This sort of relationship between them needs to be understood both cognitively as well as certificatorily. For, if what is known perceptually is different from what is known inferentially, then how can our perceptual cognition be shown to be viable on the basis of what is cognised inferentially? Similar consideration holds in the converse direction also. Accepting this, however, does not amount to compartmentalization of our epistemic enterprise. Because even though what we cognise perceptually or inferentially is a different sort of feature—respectively *Svalakṣaṇātmika* and *Sāmānyalakṣaṇātmika*—yet from this it does not follow that, therefore, similar mode of showing acceptability of them should not be available. We remarked above that one way of making sense of this approach could be to hold that whatever we cognise is either a cluster of non-sharable features only or of sharable features only, or else a cluster of both sharable as well as non-sharable features. This could, however, be held to be a sort of ontological way of establishing contact between two modes of cognition, at least in so far as they amount to be cognitions of different features. On this consideration knowables could be either homogeneous or heterogeneous clusters, although perhaps contingently and non-purposively (*Nirhetuka*). Yet, the fact remains that this way of making sense of the possibility of contact between and complementarity of perceptual and inferential cognitions has some kind of ontological and yet

contingent consideration behind it. In so far as this is or could be the case, it cannot methodologically be said to be an altogether satisfactory way of circumventing the possibility of compartmentalization of the two characteristic modes of cognition available to us.

Moreover, cognition or certification of our knowledge-claims are basically epistemological concerns and they need perhaps to be made an appropriate sense of in the domain of epistemology, without, as far as possible, bringing in ontological or metaphysical overtones, although we can certainly requisition the services of appropriate methodological and intuitive demands on our epistemic enterprise and our mode of making sense of it. This does not mean that ontological considerations cannot even be brought in by way of re-inforcive and strengthening device. Nonetheless, basic concerns regarding cognitive or certificatory aspects of our knowledge should be made sense of, according to Dharmakīrti, without primarily dragging in any ontological consideration. This also enables him to avoid falling excessively prey to a realistic demand of using correspondence between cognition and the cognised as a mode of certification of our cognition.

Dharmakīrti's criterial approach regarding certification of our knowledge-claims enables him to consider and discuss a novel way of showing our cognitions to be viable. This he does within the domain of epistemology and only within the framework of certain methodological and intuitive demands, without bringing in ontological overtones. But even granting that Dharmakīrti adopts criterial approach regarding certification of our knowledge-claims, it could be asked : what sort of criteria of viability of knowledge does Dharmakīrti provide—definitionally guaranteeing or regulatively authorising ? For, depending upon the sort of criteria they are, the mode of certification of knowledge-

claims they would make available would differ in certain fundamental respects. And, if we are not aware of this distinction then we might expect Dharmakīrti to provide one sort of criteria, when he intends, as a matter of fact, to provide of a different sort, and our expectation may thus come to be belied. Likewise, we would also fail to understand the rationale of the criteria provided by him. In order not to give rise to this kind of confusion let us briefly look into the distinction between the two sorts of criteria under consideration.

Guaranteeing or defining criterion is exception-intolerent and applies never-faillingly. In other words, it advocates *Avinābhāva* between the criterion on the one hand and that to which the criterion applies on the other. For instance, definition of a triangle that it is a figure bound by three straight lines. If the given figure is bound by three straight lines then it must be a triangle, and conversely, if the given figure is a triangle then it cannot fail, in Euclidian geometry, to be bound by three straight lines. Thus, in the case of a definitional or guaranteeing criterion the definiendum and definiens cannot mutually fail to capture each other. Every criterion, however, need not necessarily be a defining or guaranteeing criterion for its being considered to be a criterion at all. It could be an authorising criterion instead. For instance, litmus-paper test used by chemist which authorises him to declare that the given chemical compound is an acid, or sulphuric-acid test used by a goldsmith which authorises him to hold that the given piece of yellow metal is gold. Such a criterion may not and often does not tell us what sort of chemical or atomic structure the given acid or yellow metal has. It, nevertheless, enables the concerned, in the given circumstance, to decide the issue at hand unambiguously on the fulfilment of certain minimum conditions. To insist that every criterion must be defining or guaranteeing one is too

stringent and hence methodologically suffocating. For, authorising criteria enable us to take a certain vital decision and make appropriate choices in spite of the fact that we do not have defining or guaranteeing criterion. To ignore such criteria just because they are not of the latter kind is to deprive ourselves of an important device. Such a move is not only methodologically too strong and pragmatically and intuitively uncalled for but unwarranted as well.

Dharmakīrti's two important criteria of knowledge,¹⁶ viz. *Avisaṃvādakatva* and *A(vi)jñātārthaparakāśakatva* are such regulatively authorising criteria of human cognition rather than defining or guaranteeing criteria of it. This is so because none of them tells us what sort of the given cognition is or what its principal kinds are. Likewise, they do not guarantee that our cognition, once considered to be viable on the fulfilment of certain conditions, must continue to be so come what may. Such is the case because not only no knowledge-claim is final and irrevocable but also that it is methodologically indefensible and intuitively unnecessary to bestow such a status on it for its being considered to be viable. What is sufficient is that our quest after knowledge is not made impossible. Likewise, our conception of knowledge should not make such a quest dispensable, and certification of our knowledge either impossible or redundant. The criteria laid down by Dharmakīrti, as will be argued below, enable us precisely to do this without forcing us to subscribe to the view that there is 'the cognition' or that it is permanent or exceptionlessly final.¹⁷ They, however, authorise us to consider as unambiguously as possible and on the fulfilment of such minimally necessary conditions that a given cognition or knowledge-claim is viable or respectable. This keeps the possibility and necessity of our embarking upon epistemic enterprise permanently open. Yet, at the same

time, it forewarns us, as it were, that none of our cognition or knowledge claim is final and irrevocable. We shall study later on some important implications of this. But before that it is necessary to present a sketch of the two criteria under consideration and explain their nature in such a way that we do not unwittingly miss any of their important tenets. It is to this that we now turn.

The criteria of *Avisaṃvādakatva* and/or *A(vi)jñātārthapraśaṅkatva* are laid down on the level of human cognition in general.¹⁸ According to Dharmakīrti we can have only two kinds of knowledge—viz. perceptual and inferential. Hence, these criteria are applicable to them both collectively and distributively. However, in the case of each kind of cognition, irrespective of fundamental differences between them, they must similarly authorise us to consider them to be viable. Secondly, intuitively it is necessary that in so far as perceptual and inferential cognitions are distinct and their respective knowables also are different, applicability of the same criteria under consideration to them should neither make caricature of these distinctions nor should annihilate them altogether. Thirdly, the two criteria should be such that one of them could be neither subsumed under nor reduced to the other, for in the absence of this their plurality would be deceptive. With these points in the background we give below an outline of Dharmakīrti's criteria of knowledge.

(i) *Avaiṣaṃvādanam* [*Avisaṃvāditvam* (*Avisaṃvādakatva*)] —

We would be authorised to consider any knowledge as viable or reliable (*Pramāṇam*) provided or in so far as it is free from inconsistency or incoherence (*Viśaṃvādanam*), since on account of its being infected by (*Tad yogāt*) inconsistency it becomes deceptive (*Vaṅcanam*) and therefore useless.¹⁹ But how is one to comprehend such viability (*Pramāṇayogyatā*) of knowledge on account of its freedom from inconsistency (*Avisaṃ-*

vādanam)?²⁰ It can neither be said to be a feature disclosed by knowledge itself (*Na pramāṇyasya svato gatiḥ*)²¹ or a built-in feature of it (*Svato 'bādhitvam*).²² For, on the former count reliability of knowledge becomes circular. On the latter, on the contrary, its contestability and later defeasibility is jeopardised. Both these alternatives are, therefore, unacceptable. How then are we to comprehend that our cognition—perceptual or inferential—is viable? In answer to this we are told that reliability of knowledge needs to be understood in terms of its serviceability (*Vyavahāra*) to our actions (*Kriyā*)²³ or dispositions (*Pravṛtti*).²⁴

Our actions and dispositions are incited by cognitions, and the former could only be coherently or non-deceptively related with the latter provided they (actions and dispositions) authorisingly enable us to acquire (*Upādāna*) or reject (*Hāna*) objects of perceptual or inferential cognitions, in so far as such acquisition or rejection of objects is instrumental to *Purusārthasiddhi* within the framework of Buddha's philosophy and appropriate interpretation of it.

This sort of efficacious or serviceably coherent correlation of our actions or dispositions, incited as it were by the sort of knowables which we cognise, remains similar no matter whether the knowable is external or internal.²⁵ And since perceptual mode of cognition is experiential or empirical in character, this amounts to establishing serviceable or pragmatically coherent correlation of our actions and dispositions incited by our experience with Buddha's philosophy, through appropriate interpretation of it. On the other hand, inferential cognition brings forth similar kind of correlation of our actions and dispositions with Buddha's philosophy in thought or in so far as the knowables which incite them (actions and dispositions) are coherently conceivable. Thus considered, *Avisaṃvādanam* furni-

shes a general background on the basis of which our actions and dispositions could be linked non-deceptively with our experience and/or thought on the one hand and Buddha's teaching and its appropriate interpretation on the other, in so far as they are not incoherent with each other. This sort of coherence of them could be authorisingly gauged along the following lines : Knowables known perceptually or inferentially incite actions or dispositions on our part resulting into acceptance or rejection of the knowables under consideration non-deceptively, provided such an acceptance or rejection of them is coherently instrumental to *Purusārthasiddhi* in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha.

Ultimately, therefore, the primary move we make in our certificatory epistemology, viz. to have authorisation that our perceptual or inferential cognitions from time to time are viable on the ground of their not being incoherent with Buddha's teaching, is, after all, a short term goal. For, in the long run it is more a question of various aspects of our life – experience, thought and modes of action and disposition – being coherent with Buddha's teaching. Here, realization of short-term goal is held to be instrumental to the realization of the long-term goal.

In this context also the notion of a cluster remains refreshingly illuminative. For, if our life itself is a cluster of experiences, thoughts and modes of actions and dispositions we adopt from time to time, then an assurance about any of them that it is coherent with Buddha's teaching would automatically result into an assurance, in the long run, that our life too is likewise coherent. This is especially because our life is nothing beyond such a cluster. And in the case of a cluster, if we have an assurance about each of its members then there is nothing on the count of assurance regarding the cluster over and above assurance about its members. This sort, of assurance could only be had epistemologically on the basis

that two principal modes of cognition open to us are not only complementary to each other but are also coherent with Buddha's teaching. This could be discovered via our actions and dispositions incited by them being non-deceptive, i.e. non-incoherent with Buddha's teaching.²⁶ This sort of assurance concerning different cognitions we have, and the different domains—of fact and that of coherently conceivable—with which they are connected/ correlated, are subject to the same kind of uniform regulative control which authorises us to hold that actions and dispositions incited by cognitions are non-deceitful of or non-incoherent with Buddha's teaching and its appropriate interpretation. It is this sort of authorisation that the criterion of *Avisamvādana* is supposed to issue which authorises us to hold that the way we are living is not at variance from the way the Buddha expects us to live. In the world of constant change and becoming we are continuously on trial, and we need to non-deceptively assure ourselves at different junctures of our life that we are not living in a way that is incongruent with Buddha's teaching. It is this sort of assurance that is expected to come forth from *Avisamvādana* to which our cognitions and modes of actions and dispositions incited by them are repeatedly subjected. In the absence of this sort of assurance we may deceptively hold that not only our cognitions but also actions and dispositions prompted by them are coherent with Buddha's teaching, though as a matter of fact they are not. Or else, we might hold their coherence even though we are unable to defend our claim in any respectable way. Both of them are deceptive and hence unacceptable. The non-deceptive assurance under consideration is not supposed to be anchored in subjectivity. It is rather anchored in sharable and objectively regulative uniform control that authorises us to hold our life to be coherent with Buddha's teaching, no matter whether it is related with the factual or the coherently conceivable world through appropriate actions and dispositions incited by their res-

pective cognitions. It is this sort of assurance that the criterion of *Avisaṃvādana* provides. It should not be held to be a matter of sheer accident, therefore, that Dharmakīrti links his discussion of the criteria of reliability of knowledge with a sketch of the philosophy and teaching of the Buddha along with the rationale of its acceptability discussed in the very next section of the same chapter of his *Pramānavārtika*.²⁷

(ii) *A(vi)jñātārthaprakāśakatva--* Any knowable, in so far as it is capable of being correlated with actions and dispositions incited by it, is essentially impermanent. The cognition too is impermanent.²⁸ Thus, when *Anityatā* as an inalienable feature not only of knowable, knowledge as well as its reliability is sought to be made an appropriate sense of, it brings forth another important aspect of our knowledge, and actions and dispositions incited by it. We said above that various aspects of our life-experience, thought and modes of actions and dispositions—are sought to be non-incoherently and non-deceptively correlated with Buddha's teaching and its appropriate interpretation. We do this through subjecting our actions and dispositions prompted by cognitions—perceptual or inferential—to repeated uniform test and trial. Nonetheless, through our cognitions at different times and circumstances, hitherto undisclosed (*Prakāśanam Prakāśajñātasya arthasya Prakāśajñānam*)²⁹ features of knowables may come to be discovered non-deceptively. This is especially because although each knowable—perceptual or inferential—is a changing cluster of features, yet in any cognition of it we may not cognise all features which have made it up.³⁰ Some of them may be disclosed in later cognitions. This sort of disclosure brings forth novelty of new features. But such a novelty could be extended to grasping hitherto undisclosed mode of coherence of our actions and dispositions with Buddha's teaching or an appropriate interpretation of it. Extending it still further, and

understanding the issue hermeneutically, it could be held that novel modes of interpreting Buddha's philosophy and discovering its relevance to the changing circumstances and contexts would continue to surface. The older ones may be challenged and contested and as a result of this in the changing world we constantly run a risk, in our epistemic enterprise, of being forced to alter, revise, modify our knowledge-claims. Thus, the criterion of *Ajñātārthaprakāśakatva* authorises us, in face of impermanence and becoming, to consider no knowledge-claim, mode of its certification, or interpretation or discovery of relevance of Buddha's philosophy with reference to certain context to be ever final, irrevocable and uncontestable. Hence, as quest after knowledge is interminable in principle, so also our search for appropriate interpretation and continued relevance of Buddha's teaching and philosophy is an on-going process. Though no truth is *the truth*, search after truth by nature is interminable, in the hope that we might discover a better truth. Impermanence and changeability explodes the myth of final, irrevocable truth; but it also pricks the bubble of the misplaced arrogance of ego to consider itself to be substantial and stable, or even of its being in possession of an unalterable truth. On the larger background of Buddha's philosophy and teaching our search after better and better modes of living life in way that is non-incoherent with and non-deceptive of Buddha's approach is on-going and interminable in character, although at no stage could it be final. For, the search for such coherence is not expected to be carried out merely in the world of coherently conceivable but also in the world we actually live in,³¹ although both are fraught with similar changeability.

A question may, however, be asked: If and in so far as the hitherto undisclosed features which we may come to discover cannot fall outside the domain of coherently conceivable, why

can the second criterion not be implied by the first and therefore held to be subsumable under it? Further, given this, the plurality of criteria falls to the ground, and thus there remains only one criterion viz. *Avisaṃvādana*. This is more in tune with the methodological principle of simplicity as well.³² The argument is, however, both misleading and deceptive. It is misleading because it ignores the distinction between coherently conceivable understood merely plausibilistically³³ and the factual, however non-purposive and contingent the latter may be. For, although the world of coherently conceivable could be immunised, through engineered rules or fiat, from its being subject to changeability, such can hardly be the case with reference to facts. It is deceptive also in so far as it misses the distinction between something cognised in thought and that in experience, and thus unwittingly seeks to subsume empirical experience under thought. The need for such a distinction could be seen provided we understand that while nature of coherently conceivable could be considered in thought fairly in the atmosphere of freedom from context, this kind of facility is hardly available with reference to that which is given in fact. It needs no elaborate argument to show that on both these counts the argument under consideration is unacceptable. Hence, although the discovery of hitherto undisclosed features does not transgress the limit and boundary of the coherently conceivable, yet the former is particularly alive to the fact of changeability, impermanence and revisibility which may be overshadowed by mere absence of inconsistency. Therefore, the two criteria under consideration should be held to be complementary to each other, rather than competitive and alternative. They cannot be subsumed under or reduced to each other. The complementarity of them, further, needs to be understood mutually and reciprocally.³⁴ The criterion of *Avisaṃvādana*, as stated earlier, furnishes the general context of Buddha's philosophy, with which

our epistemic enterprise and actions as well as dispositions incited by it are expected to be coherent. It is this which makes them appropriately instrumental to *Puruṣārthasiddhi* through *Hīna* and *Upādāna*. But it does not rule out plurality of interpretations of Buddha's philosophy in face of changing circumstances and situations, and epistemic and hermeneutical demands they make on the philosophy and teaching of the Buddha especially on the count of their continued relevance. Such plural interpretations no doubt bring forth hitherto undiscovered aspects of Buddha's philosophy. They are, however, required to be coherent not only among themselves but with Buddha's philosophy as well. Thus, starting with Buddha's philosophy and proceeding in the direction of studying its continued relevance to changing world, circumstances, situations and conditions of our life, newer and hitherto undisclosed aspects of the teaching and philosophy of the Buddha have to be unearthed and discovered; but they are required to be regulatively controlled by coherence. Conversely, starting with coherence and combining it with Buddha's philosophy it is required to be ensured that one and only one interpretation of it does not dogmatically come to be regimented mechanically even in face of changing world and circumstances. For, that would be tantamount to attaching finality and uncontestability to the interpretation under consideration, and closing the doors of growth and development of our understanding of Buddha's philosophy in face of impermanence and becoming, no matter with reference to resolution of problems faced in this world or otherwise, as also with reference to our being able to adopt such a mould of life that enables us to transcend limitations of constancy and stability of person, circumstance or both.³⁶ Thus, in whichever direction we seek to understand the relationship between the two criteria under consideration their plurality i.e., duality and mutuality are such tenets of them the

rejection of or compromise with any of which is disastrous both intuitively and methodologically. It is this sort of nature and explanation of them that makes them so essential and indispensable not only in Dharmakīrti's philosophy but in Buddhist or any other sort of philosophical consideration as well.

III

Implications of Dharmakīrti's Criteria of Knowledge

In the two preceding sections we outlined the rationale and nature of the two criteria of knowledge accepted by Dharmakīrti. On this background, in this section, we proceed to give a sketch of their philosophically and intellectually important implications. First, even when general engagement with and continued subscription to Buddha's philosophy and teaching is granted, this in itself should not close in advance the doors of the need and necessity of its variant interpretations – not only exegetically but along hermeneutical lines as well – and consideration of their continued relevance in face of changing world (*Anityatā*). But on the other hand, such an endeavour should also not rule out by a fiat contestability and revisibility of any of such interpretations. For, neither subscription to Buddha's philosophy is a matter of blind faith and dogmatism, nor is plurality of its interpretation given rise to just for the fun and fancy of it. The two criteria under consideration seek to blend both these needs and dispositions in such a way that irrational extension of the demands of one does not take a toll of the reasonable and just demands of the other.

Secondly, given variant interpretations of Buddha's philosophy and his teaching, each of them would bring forth a certain cluster of concepts. The problem of an appropriate interpretation of Buddha's philosophy and its continued relevance will continue to crop up in face of changing circumstances or situations and

the demands they make on our life – especially as to which sort of actions, modes of fellowship and dispositions should we adopt in face of them which would remain non-incoherent with Buddha's philosophy. The way out of such a difficulty is not mechanical collection of various concepts floated through various interpretations of Buddha's philosophy. Under such circumstance we may have to discriminate between various interpretations, the cluster of concepts they bring forth, and bring in newer concepts or interpretation if that is unavoidable, so that we neither ignore importance of relevance of Buddha's philosophy in face of changing circumstance nor do we stick dogmatically to one interpretation of it on account of security and immunity from risks it provides. For, security is important; but ignoring exposure to risks or turning back upon them is suicidal. The criteria under consideration provide such an appropriate rationale of requisite discrimination between satisfaction of the demands made from two sides – methodological demand of coherence and non-deceptivity, and intuitive demand of novelty, and enable us to take care of them neither naively nor irrationally, and hence indefensibly.

Thirdly, in the case of the study of the philosophy of an important philosopher like Dharmakīrti, comprehension of its appropriate conceptual framework is important. But it is misleading to hold that it is presented in a single treatise of his or made available through the mode of resolution of a single issue. It is likewise incorrect to hold that it is epitomised in a particular perspective that he adopts, or that it could be available only via etymological, philological or grammatical considerations regarding certain expressions he uses in his works. These considerations are important as far as they go, but none of them could be elevated to the status of the sole concern which is important at the exclusion of other philosophically important

ones. In such an appropriate conceptual framework of his philosophy such features and aspects of it need to be coherently grouped together and interconnected so that in their light such salient tenets of Buddha's philosophy as consideration of *Anityatā* (impermanence), *Anattā* or *Anātmata* (non-egoity), *Santāna* (flow or succession), *Duḥkḥa-nirodha* (possibility of cessation of pain and suffering in our life), repudiation of *Sahetukatā* (purposiveness) as isomorphic with *Sakāraṇatā* (causation) etc. would neither be caricatured nor ignored. But, on the other hand, the avenues of its possible extension in the direction of resolution of a problem thrown up by changed circumstances and contexts too should not be closed arbitrarily or through an engineered principle.

Fourthly, while addressing ourselves to the task of studying Buddha's – or anyone else's – philosophy and bringing out its continued relevance and significance with reference to or in face of changed circumstances and contexts we should not ignore seminal importance of two considerations : (a) those intuitive considerations like novelty and changeability which need to be respected should not be ignored and sidetracked, and counter-intuitive considerations should not be substituted for them just for fancy or in defence of a dogma. (b) Certain methodological considerations like coherence, simplicity etc. must not be compromised with just because such compromises are likely to pay greater dividend on the count of mass-acceptability or naive submission to the demand of popularity.

Lastly, a philosopher worth the name should make a discrimination between lure of popularity on the one hand and insulation and immunisation provided through a resolution of a problem through subscription to a dogma on the other. To the extent to which he remains equi-distant from these two traps he could be said to have followed what in Buddhist philosophy is significantly

called *Madhyamā Pratipad*, a count on which Dharmakīrti has shown exemplary courage and transparency. It is this aspect of his philosophy that makes it so much important.**

Department of Philosophy

MANGALA R. CHINCHORE

University of Poona

PUNE 411 007.

NOTES

* I am deeply indebted to Prof. M. P. Marathe who helped me at various stages in writing this paper.

1. One may *prima-facie* be tempted to count *Avisañvāḍakatva* (non-inconsistency, i. e., coherence), *Vyavahartavyatva* (serviceability) and *Avijñāṭīrthaprakāśakatva* (discloser of hitherto unknown feature/s) as three distinct criteria of knowledge put forth by Dharmakīrti. However, it will be argued below that he intends to bring out different kind of serviceability of perceptual and inferential cognitions especially because their objects are fundamentally different. Such differential serviceability of them under the jurisdiction of *Avisañvāḍakatva* is spelt out by *Vyavahartavyatva*.
2. The expression 'human cognition' or 'human knowledge' came to be coined in the Western intellectual tradition to differentiate man's knowledge from divine knowledge. To the best of our knowledge, till very recently and that too under the western impact, the issue of this sort of demarcation never cropped up in the intellectual atmosphere prevalent in the Indian sub-continent. Consequently, a neutral or secular expression '*jñāna*' was used and it was always understood in the sense of 'human knowledge'. We are using such expressions as 'human cognition', 'human knowledge' etc. more as a matter of current idiom and linguistic practice, and they have nothing to do with the above-mentioned distinction.
3. Chinchore, Mangala R.; *Dharmakīrti's Theory of Hetu-centricity of Anumāna*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989 (forthcoming), Ch. I.
4. Dharmakīrti; *N. B.*; *Samyajjñānapūrvikā sarvapuruṣārthasiddhiriti tad vyutpādyate*, Cha. 1., p. 1.
Durveka Miśra; *Dharmottarapradīpa*, pp. 5-6.

5. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Prañamāṇyāñi tatra...dhipramāṇatā...heyopādeya-
vastuni / Ch. I. K. 4-5.
Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti* on it, p. 5.
or Prajñākara Gupta; *P. V. A.*; ... Heyopādeyaviṣaye pravartakañi hi
pramāṇamucyate / p. 22.
or Dharmottara; *N. B. T.*; puruṣasyārthaḥ / pratipādyate Vyut-
pādyate iti / pp. 6-7.
6. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Heyopādeyatattvasya...paratra vā / Ch. III, K. 218.
Svopajñāvṛtti on *S. P.*; pp. 72-73 and
Kāṇakagomin; *Tṛkṣā* on it, pp. 394-395.
Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*; p. 324.
Prajñākara Gupta; *P. V. A.*; p. 52.
7. Dharmakīrti; *N. B.*; Dvidvidhañi samyagjñānam / Pratyakṣamanu-
mānaśca / Ch. I. K. 2.
Dharmottara; *N. B. T.*; pp. 7-8.
or Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Ch. II. K. 75-77.
8. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Mānam dvidvidhañi viśayadvaidhyāt / Ch. II. K. 1
Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*, p. 98.
9. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Ch. II, K. 51, 54.
10. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Artha rūpatvena samānatā samāśrayāt /
Ch. II, K. 10.
Manorathanand; *Vṛtti*; p. 104.
or Meyañi tvekañi svalakṣaṇam...matam / Ch. II, K. 53-54.
Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*; p. 117.
or Ch. II, K. 62-65, pp. 120-121.
11. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; Ch. I, K. 181-182, pp. 63-64.
Ch. II, K. 75, p. 124.
12. Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*; pp. 116-117.
13. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*, Ch. II, K. 1-3.
Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*, pp. 98-100.
Prajñākara Gupta; *P. V. A.*; pp. 169-176.
14. Chinchore, Mangala R., *op. cit.*; Ch. II.
15. Dharmottara; *N. B. T.*; Pratyakṣānumānayostulyabalatvañi samuc-
cinoti / p. 8.

16. Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*; Yathokta dvividhalakṣaṇaṁ uktaṁ yat pramāṇam / p. 9.
17. Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*; Kasmāt punaḥ nityaṁ pramāṇaṁ naivāsti? ... nāsti nityaṁ pramāṇyam / p. 9.
18. Manorathanandi; *Vṛtti*; Pramāṇasāmānyalakṣaṇam / p. 3.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
26. *Ibid.*, Yathokta dvividhalakṣaṇam uktaṁ ... ajñātasya prakāśanacca / p. 9.
27. Dharmakīrti; *P. V.*; and also Manorathanandi, *Vṛtti*; Ch. I, respectively pages 1-17 and 18-96.
28. Manorathanandi; *P. V.*; Vastunaḥ arthakriyākāriṇaḥ ... adhrauvyāt anityatvāt / pp. 9-10.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
30. *Ibid.*, Ajñātagrahaṇena sāmṁvṛtasyāvayavyādiviśayasya; ... vikalpanāt / p. 8.
31. *Ibid.*, Nanvavisaṁvādādevājñātārtha prakāśo jñātavyaḥ .. lakṣaṇaṁ syāt / p. 8.
32. *Ibid.*, Nanvavisaṁvādibhyo ... lakṣaṇaṁ boddhavyam / p. 8.
33. *Ibid.*, Syādetad yadi sambhavitvamātre lakṣaṇaṁ syāt / p. 8.
34. *Ibid.*, Tasmādubhayamapi ... boddhavyam / p. 8.
35. *Ibid.*, Yadi vyavahārataḥ ... paralokaniḥśreyasādervyavahārāprasid-dhasya siddhirbhavati / p. 7.

In this context it would be instructive to consider concepts of *Preyas*, *Sreyas* and *Niśreyas* and philosophical implications of their interrelationship.

** Paper contributed to the Second International Dharmakīrti Conference held in Vienna from 11th to 16th June, 1989.