

## ON COGNITION AS A RELATION

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After seeing a sandalwood from a distance one says that 'sandalwood is fragrant' (*surabhi candanam*). When the man says that I see a piece of fragrant sandalwood, he has an immediate perception of the object with its fragrance. In this case, the visual sense organ can operate on the piece of sandalwood only, and not its fragrance. Fragrance can be known only through the nose, but there is no contact of the nose with the fragrance. When such knowledge arises after seeing the distant sandalwood, it appears, that what one visually perceives is not only sandalwood, but also the fragrance inherent in it.

How to explain the case of such a perception? All types of perceptions take place due to some sense-object contact. The present paper tries to explain the above case of perception and would show the contact, by which such knowledge arises.

The *Naiyāyikas* explain this problem with the help of one supernormal contact, i.e., 'the contact of the form of knowledge' (*jñānalakṣaṇasannikarsa*).

Knowledge resides in the soul by the relation of inherence. We get perceptual knowledge, when our sense organ comes in contact with the object. Sense organs are six including the mind. Mind is the internal sense-organ and others are external sense-organs. This (*jñāna*) cognition serves as a contact when the external sense organs are connected with the mind, the mind is connected with the soul, where the knowledge inheres. If this knowledge, while inhering in the soul can be brought out by remembrance, to get the knowledge of its own object in connection with some object present outside, then the cognition in the form of remembrance serves as a contact between the object and the sense-organ, which is called *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*. In case of mental cognition the remembrance of the object of a knowledge can be done by mind itself.

When something is cognized that cognition produces an impression

(*samskāra*) in the soul. Remembrance is possible when that impression is evoked somehow. This cognition, in the form of remembrance serves as a contact to connect the object known previously with the object to be known at present, as an adjunct. When seeing a sandalwood from a distance, which is impossible to be inhaled, one says 'I see a fragrant sandalwood', there the knowledge of fragrance comes due to the remembrance which is *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*.

The author of *Kiraṇāvali* on *Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvali* explains it like, "on the first day by inhaling one gets the knowledge that sandalwood is fragrant; on some other day just after the glance of sandalwood from a distance, even without inhaling it, he says, 'the sandalwood is fragrant', to some other person who is anxious about it".<sup>1</sup>

In this later knowledge, there are three things, viz., sandalwood (*candana*), the property of sandalwood (*candanatva*) and fragrance (*saṃrabha*). Here the person gets the knowledge of sandalwood by the relation of contact with the eyes, its property by *saṃyukta-samavāya*. Both are normal contacts. So 'surabhi candanam', in this perceptual knowledge the fragrance (*saṃrabha*) is cognized as an adjunct to sandalwood. The fragrance of sandalwood cannot be grasped by the eyes, which is connected with the *candana*. *Candana* can be perceived with the eyes but fragrance always is perceived by the olfactory organs, not by the visual organs. Then how the fragrance comes as an adjunct in the knowledge of *candana*? The *Naiyāyikas* say, though the fragrance is not accessible to the visual organs, yet we should accept the total structure of knowledge as apprehended by the eyes. No doubt, that sandalwood is perceived by the eyes; but the fragrance which comes in the perceptual knowledge and remains as adjunct, is the knowledge of fragrance acquired previously. So the existence of fragrance in sandalwood is experienced previously in some other case. This past experience is remembered instantly on seeing the sandalwood, the object of that past experience i.e., fragrance is related to the present sandalwood as adjunct. This is how fragrance appears as a qualifier to the sandalwood even, in the case of the visual perception of sandalwood.

We get perception of that object, which is in contact with the same organ. In this case of visual perception we should accept that the fragrance experienced in the past is in connection with the eyes. We can say the whole knowledge as perception, if we accept the cognition of remembrance as a contact. In other

words, if we accept the past cognition of fragrance serving as a contact here, then only we can say 'sandalwood is fragrant' is a perceptual knowledge. For this reason, *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti* is to be accepted.

The *Vedāntins* are not in a position to accept the above explanation. *Dharmarāja*, the author of *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* opines that the above cognition involves two steps viz., perception and inference. Perception of that, which is present before the sense organ and inference of that, which was perceived in the past. Thus as per *Dharmarāja*, the case of 'sandalwood is fragrant' is a case of getting two knowledge. Perception operates in case of sandalwood and inference, in case of fragrance. But one traverses from the perception of sandalwood, to the inference of fragrance so quickly that it seems, as if he perceives the fragrant sandalwood.<sup>2</sup>

The *Vedāntins* also object that to say the above case as perception is to ignore the difference between perception and inference. So they reject the idea of *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*.

The *Vedāntin* view is that, apprehension of *candana* is immediate and the apprehension of fragrance is mediate. But the whole knowledge appears as one. People get the perception of fragrant sandalwood. If it appears as perception, the *Naiyāyikas* have given one epistemological explanation of the fact, people have the cognition of fragrant sandalwood as perception. This is done by *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*, where the past cognition is taken as a relation. With the same, *Naiyāyikas* have also tried to solve some other epistemological problems.

The explanation of this case as containing two distinct knowledge is not tenable. Because 'sandalwood is fragrant' (*surabhi candanam*) is a qualified cognition (*viśiṣṭajñāna*) as per *Nyāya* terminology. Here fragrance (*surabha*) appears as a qualifier to the sandalwood. It is a single cognition in which the fragrance is presented as a qualifier to the sandalwood through the remembrance of the fragrance. Moreover, if this is treated as two distinct cognitions, the causal relationship between the qualified cognition and the effort (*pravṛtti*) cannot be explained. Hence the *Vedāntins'* view cannot be accepted.

*Naiyāyikas* have propounded three supernormal contacts viz., *sāmānyalakṣaṇasannikarṣa*, *jñānalakṣaṇasannikarṣa* and *yogajasannikarṣa*. With the help of *sāmānyalakṣaṇasannikarṣa*, we get the knowledge of all the

individuals of a class, after the normal perception of one individual of that class. In this case, the knowledge (*jñāna*) of the universal serves as the contact. In case of *jñānalakṣaṇasannikarṣa*, the knowledge (*jñāna*) of remembrance of the qualifier serves as a contact. We should observe here that in both *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* and *jñānalakṣaṇa*, the contact is based on some kind of knowledge (*jñāna*). Here somebody objects, as to what is the difference between the two then?<sup>3</sup>

The reply to the above objection is, in *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*, the knowledge of the universal leads to the perception of the individuals, in which it inheres, whereas, in *jñānalakṣaṇa* a past knowledge leads to the present perception of its own object.<sup>4</sup>

*Naiyāyikas* have explained some other epistemological problems also with the help of *jñānalakṣaṇapratyāsatti*. Those are the cases of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*), awareness (*anuvyavasāya*), the perception of absence (*abhāvapratyakṣa*) and the illusory knowledge (*bhramajñāna*). *Śrī Harirāma Tarkavāgiśa* in his *Jvānalakṣaṇāvicārarahasyam* deals with these possibilities in detail.

While coming across a rope people sometimes commit an error as, 'this is a snake'. The *Naiyāyikas* explain this expression as a case of pure perceptual judgement. They do so with the help of *jñānalakṣaṇapratyāsatti*. In case of such an error, snake is not physically present before us. But, because of certain peculiarities like the crawling and coiling nature of the rope similar to that of a snake etc., added to the lack of sufficient light, our mind gets the idea of a snake, which has been already experienced on many occasions. Thus this past memory serves as a contact and the expression of perceptual error comes in the form of 'this is a snake'. Out of this expression, one part i.e., 'a snake', is brought with the help of *jñānalakṣaṇa*.

*Viśvanātha* adds, that when a mass of dust is erroneously cognized as smoke and afterwards one becomes aware of this illusion, then the next perception (*anuvyavasāya*), comes in the form of 'I cognized the mass of dust as smoke'. In this *anuvyavasāya*, the knowledge of mass of dust by mental perception is caused through the *jñānalakṣaṇasannikarṣa*.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, in case of a valid knowledge, when a pot is perceived by the eye, the awareness of the same perception will occur at the stage of *anuvyavasāya*

(*ghaṭam ahaṃ jānāmi*), by *jñānalakṣaṇa*, because the mind cannot have the visual perception of the pot through normal contact.

In Psychology, the expressions like, 'ice looks cold', 'the stone looks hard' are given the name of 'complication'. 'The sight of ice', says Ward, 'yields a fore-feel of its coldness'. Stout is of the view that what we have in such cases is rather a perception than a mere forethought. The ice is not merely thought of as cold, it has a cold look. The residual of past sensations of cold become entwined with our visual sensation so as to modify its character as an immediate experience. So here the revival and original sensations coalesce into a single complex sensation.<sup>6</sup>

The sight of a suit of polished armour, 'says Ward, 'instantly reinstates and steadily maintains all, that we retain of former sensations of its hardness and smoothness and coldness'. As per Stout, the armour looks hard, smooth and cold and appears as a single cognition. But this peculiar appearance to the eye does not necessarily involve any distinct representation or idea or separate sensation of hardness, smoothness or coldness. The corresponding tactile and other experiences are not produced as separate and distinct modes of consciousness. They are not discriminated from the visual experience itself. So in complication, it is impossible to separate by inspection what is actually sense-given from what is ideally supplied.<sup>7</sup> Some scholars have compared this with the *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*, by turning the example like, 'the sandalwood looks fragrant', and say, this may be regarded as another instance of what Stout, Ward and Wundt call 'Complication'.

So to conclude, we should see that in the above case of perception, there was a problem, as to, how the fragrance not amenable to the visual organ, comes in the perceptual knowledge. The explanation is given by the *Naiyāyikas*, with the help of *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*, that the past cognition of fragrance serves as a relation, to present fragrance in the content of the perceptual knowledge.

Both *sāmānyalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti* and *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti* are introduced in the *Nyāya* texts, to explain certain epistemological problems. The application of *jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti*, where, the cognition serves as a relation, is limited to a few epistemological problems. One cannot apply this relation in a general way everywhere.

## NOTES

1. *Prathamadivase candanam ghrātvā 'surabhi candanam' - iti niścītya divasāntare 'ghrātvaiiva dūrataścandanadarśanamatreṇa 'surabhicandanam' - ityanyasmai jijnāsamānāya vadati. Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī, Chowkhambha Prakashan, 1990. p. 214.*
2. *Surabhicandanamityādi jijnānamapi candanakhaṇḍāmśe aparokṣaṃ saurabhāmśe tu parokṣaṃ saurabhasya cakṣurindriyāyogyatayā yogyatvaghaṭitasya niruktalakṣaṇasyābhāvāt, Vedāntaparibhasā ed. Musalgaonkar, G. N., Chowkhamba Surabharati Prakashan, 1963, p. 49.*
3. *Nanu jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsatti yadi jñānarūpā sāmānyalakṣaṇāpi jñānarūpā tayorbheda na syāt, Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī, Chowkhambha Prakashan, 1990, p. 214.*
4. *Viśayī yasya tasaiva vyāpāro jñānalakṣaṇaḥ sāmānyalakṣaṇāpratyāsattirhi tadāśrayasya jñānaṃ janayati. Jñānalakṣaṇāpratyāsattistu yadvīṣayakaṃ jñānaṃtasyaiva pratyāsattiriti. Ibid. p. 214.*
5. *Evam yatra dhūmatvena dhūlipaṭalaṃ jñātaṃ tatra dhūlipaṭtalasyānuvyavasāye bhānaṃ jñānalakṣaṇayā. Ibid. p. 214.*
6. Stout G. F. *A Manual of Psychology* p. 205-6.
7. *Ibid. p. 207.*