

Nyaya, Buddhist School Controversy regarding the Laksana of Pratyakṣa: Causal versus Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract : Buddhist lakṣaṇa of pratyakṣa pramā is not the result of the causal analysis of the genesis of it. Naiyāyikas, on the other hand, has provided the lakṣaṇa of pratyakṣa in terms of the causal analysis of it. Thus, though in these two philosophical systems philosophers have discussed in detail the nature of pratyakṣa pramā (perception), yet their treatments and understanding of it vary according to their respective understanding of pramā and pramāṇa and their relationship. In Nyāya school, the definition (lakṣaṇa) of perception (pratyakṣa) has been given in terms of the process by virtue of which it has been generated. Thus, Naiyāyikas were found to provide a causal account of perception (pratyakṣa) by virtue of their lakṣaṇa of it. But in Buddhist epistemology perception has been defined by virtue of the nature of perceptual knowledge (pratyakṣa pramā) which is devoid of any vikalpa or cognition. These two schools differed due to their different metaphysical presuppositions which determine their epistemological pursuits. The Naiyāyikas admitted pramā and pramāṇa as separate events and they have taken pramāṇa to be the cause of pramā. These presuppositions enabled them to provide a lakṣaṇa of pratyakṣa pramā in terms of the causes by which it is generated. Why did the Buddhist epistemologists define perception by the unique nature of perceptual knowledge instead of the process by which it is generated? This question will be addressed and dealt with in the present paper. In doing so, the unique purpose of Buddhist philosophy will be identified which will enable us to find out an answer to the above question. This enterprise will also reveal the close relationship among some basic Buddhist presuppositions like pratīyasamutpāḍavāda and kṣaṇikavāda with Buddhist epistemological positions. In other words, their distinctive notion of pramā (knowledge) indicates their unique epistemological position which is found to comply with their basic philosophical presuppositions. The first section of the paper will present the Buddhist epistemologists' lakṣaṇa of pratyakṣa. The analysis of the lakṣaṇa will be given in clear terms to reveal the nature of pratyakṣa as an instance of pramā. In the second section, an effort will be made to identify the uniqueness of such a definition. Here an articulation will be made in which the relationship among basic Buddhist presuppositions and their unique epistemological positions are determined. In the third section of the paper, an effort will be made to compare Nyāya epistemologist's position regarding pratyakṣa with that of the Buddhist epistemologist.

Keywords : laksana, prama, pramana, pratyakṣa

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