

A Philosophical Study of Dignaga's Conception of the Object of Perception; Svalakshana as a Process

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Introduction

Dignaga, who was the most prominent Buddhist scholar and specially Buddhist logician in Indian tradition, is accepted as the person who has developed the system of Epistemologised Logic. That means he has connected the main fields of Philosophy namely, Epistemology and Logic through his masterpiece named, *Pramānasamuccaya*. In this text, Dignaga has discussed about means of cognition. According to him, there are only two sources of valid knowledge namely, Perception and Inference. In his discussion on Perception, 'Svalakshana' or the 'Unique Particular' can be taken as the object of Perception. This research aims to investigate the actual meaning which Dignaga has tried to emphasize and try to conclude Svalakshana as a Process.

Methodology

As a Philosophical study, this research is based on the Methodology of Logical Analysis.

Discussion and Results

When we consider about Dignaga's conception on the sources of Knowledge, it can be taken as Perception and Inference is mutually exclusive and together exhaustive. And there is no need to admit another separate means of cognition, because according to him, the object to be cognized has only two aspects. Unique Particular and the Universal are these two objects. Since Perception is free from conceptual construction according to Dignaga, Unique Particular or Svalakshana is ineffable. According to the current knowledge of this discussion, Perception can be taken as free from language. Therefore, it can be seen that Dignaga has not tried to describe or define on perception or Svalakshana. But he has asserted that Perception, Unique Particular or Svalakshana, and Reality are inseparable. Through this assertion, it can be concluded that Perception is the only one reality which can be perceived through human senses. In other words, Svalakshana, is the reality according to Dignaga's view on it. In most of Indian

tradition and western Philosophical tradition, reality is taken as absolute and static phenomena. Brahman in Upanishad, Things-in-themselves in Kantian Philosophy, can be taken as examples for the absolute and static reality in Indian and Western traditions. Traditional Physics also tries to find out an absolute reality based on the assumption that there is an absolute reality which is beyond human experience. For example, the theory of gravity can be taken as a kind of reality which has been mentioned as the reality of physical objects. It can be taken as a status which goes beyond human experience. When we consider about the accounts on Svalakshana, presented by scholars, it can be seen that they have emphasized Svalakshana, as absolute and static as well. According to Collet Cox, Svalakshana is the intrinsic nature of something and it represents a non-temporal characteristic. This assertion can be taken similarly Kantian view on things-in-themselves. And also it is the reality of the objects of external world. Thripathi has described on Svalakshana, as phenomena which is free from time, space and represents a small moment and it is ultimate as well. According to Richard P. Hayes, Svalakshana, are particles which disappeared suddenly in the reality. Christian Coseru has described on Svalakshana, as a phenomenological aspect. It is not the reality of the object of the external world, but a type of Perception. According to these assumptions presented by many of scholars it can be taken that the discussion of Svalakshana, is complex and incomprehensible. Therefore, it should be considered about the real idea which has been presented by Dignaga on Svalakshana. Since Perception is free from language, Dignaga has not described about Svalakshana, deeply. But according to his view on Perception, it can be seen that he has described on Perception according to the teaching in Abhidharma treatise. Perception can be taken as the aggregation of sense-object-consciousness. We can see something with the aggregation of eyes-picture-consciousness of eyes. In other words, our perception depends on the contribution of senses-objects-consciousness in the process of Perception. Since Dignaga has described Perception, Unique Particular or Svalakshana, and Reality are inseparable, or all the concepts are similar, it can be argued that Svalakshana, consistent with the process of Perception. In Pramāṇasamuccaya, Dignaga did not consider about the existence of external world. Therefore it cannot be admitted that Dignaga has described on Svalakshana, as the reality of external world. According to Early Buddhist view on reality, world is a process which can never be seen an ending or certain. Besides the reality is not a static concept like Brahman, but it characterized the nature of universal flux. It is called pañicchasamuppanna. It can be seen that according to the masterpiece which has been mentioned earlier written by Dignaga, he has totally agreed with the early Buddhist view on reality. Since he has described on perception, using the examples which has been taken from Abidharma treatise, it can be argued that this type of perception consistent with early Buddhist view on reality as a process or universal flux. The perception of human being characterized changing and non-repeatable. Therefore, this can be

taken as a philosophy of process. When we consider about Dignaga's conception of svalakshana, as the object of perception, cannot be separated from the flux which cannot be seen an end or beginning. Besides, our mind was taken as an insufficient tool to acquire the process in the world in ordinary sense by Early Buddhism. It can be argued that Dignaga has agreed with Early Buddhist view on our mind as well. In other words, ordinary people cannot grasp the process of the world because the capacity of their mind is not enough to understand on it. Since Dignaga has tried to distinct perception and inference based on conceptualization and non-conceptualization, Svalakshana plays a main role in this discussion.

Conclusion

Svalakshana, according Dignaga's view is the only one reality which can be perceived through human senses. And Dignaga has described on perception as inseparable from Svalakshana, and reality. Since he has represented the early Buddhist view on reality as a process, it can be concluded that Svalakshana represents the process as well. Therefore, the object of perception can be taken as a process according to Dignaga's view.

Reference

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