

The Buddhist Refutation of Testimony

Ruby Bharti

Research Scholar, School of Philosophy and Culture

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra, J&K

Abstract:

The nature and number of pramāṇa (means of knowledge) have been the center of debate among the Indian epistemologists. Different systems of Indian philosophy accept a varying number of pramāṇas from perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), verbal testimony (śabda pramāṇa), presumption (arthāpatti), non-cognition (anupalabdhi), etc. Every system seeks to justify the number of sources of knowledge accepted by it. The discourse on this issue also extends to refute any additional source of knowledge accepted by other systems. For instance, the materialist Cārvāka accepts the only perception as the reliable source of knowledge and argues for the rejection of inference, testimony, etc. Similarly, Buddhism accepts only two reliable means, namely, Perception and Inference. It rebuts testimony as a distinct source of knowledge for the reason that linguistic expressions can not touch the fleeting reality. Language somehow enables us to pick out the object in reality through the process of exclusion. The Buddhists thus move to reduce testimonial knowledge (śabda-jñāna) into inferential knowledge (anumiti). In this paper, an attempt is made to discuss the Buddhist arguments against the testimonial knowledge to see the rationality behind their rejection. It is moreover, argued that the pragmatic role of the Buddha's teachings does not elevate them to the level of testimony. The entire paper uses the analytical method of research. The first section of the paper discusses the śabda and its reliability in Indian orthodox philosophical systems. The second section argues on the reducibility of testimony into inference by the Buddhist epistemologists (particularly Dinnāga and Dharmakīrti). The third section focuses on the reliability of the Buddha-vaccana and his religious authority is testimonial or not?

Keywords: Apoha, Cognition Inference, Perception, Pramāṇa, Testimony.

INTRODUCTION

Testimony and its relevance

Testimony (*śabdapramāṇa*) is a valid and independent source of knowledge for some systems of Indian philosophy. These systems are Jaina, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and Advaita Vedānta. Different systems define testimony in different ways. For instance, Nyāya defines testimony as to the words of a reliable person who knows the truth and presents it in an accurate form. Similarly, Mimamsa holds that word independently signifies their separate meanings and subsequently, their isolated meanings combine again to produce the single meaning of a sentence. It is recognized as an important source of knowledge because it is believed to provide the knowledge which is not obtainable through any other source.¹ However, some systems of Indian philosophy do not accept testimony as an independent means of knowing (*pramāṇa*) such as Vaiśeṣika and Buddhism because they do not believe that testimony provides unique knowledge. Such systems argue against this source of knowledge. The objective of this paper is to focus on the arguments advanced by the Buddhist logicians Dinnāga (4th C.E.) and Dharmakīrti (6th cent.) why they are not accepting testimony as an independent *pramāṇa*. These two thinkers claim that there is a functional similarity between testimony and inference. The paper also intends to examine this claim. They argue that the process of *anumāna* (inference) and the process of *śabda* (verbal testimony) are the same. According to them, hearing the word is perception and knowing its meaning is inference. So, it is a combination of perception and inference. *Śabda pramāṇa* is reducible to inference. We will discuss on their not acceptable *śabdapramāṇa* in the next section, firstly we should discuss why we accept it as an independent *pramāṇa*.

Śabdapramāṇa

Word (*Śabda*) signifies sound (*dhvani*) but in the epistemological sense, it means a meaningful sound or word (*pāda*). The knowledge that came from person to person is only through words. It is a verbal testimony that has an independent status in the heterodox systems. For this, the knowledge that came from *śabda* is known as *Śābdabodha*. It originates from *śabda or pāda* which signifies the *karaṇa* of *Śābdabodha*. It is the Verbal cognition which composed and derived from the meaning of words and sentences. *Śabdapramāṇa* is the knowledge which is derived from authoritative words. It is a valid means of knowledge

¹ *Sabarbhāṣya Mimamsa sūtra*.....

The reliable source of knowledge

Gautama explains it as when *śabda* used as a source of knowledge then it means ‘*āptopadeśaḥ śabda*’ or the assertion of a reliable person.² It is the assertion of a person who is noble, trustworthy, and free from all evil habits and his words will never be called in question. The term ‘*āpta*’ as signifying the person who has immediate knowledge of *dharma* who is capable of perceiving objects as it is and communicates real knowledge based on the statement of the understanding of the meaning of the statements. It may be *rśis*, *ārya*, or *Mleccha* who is an expert in this manner and also have will to communicate their experience. They had an intuitive perception of the truth, love for humanity, and also desire to communicate their knowledge. Due to this knowledge, we can understand the meaning of the statements or the statements of a reliable person. In the nutshell, we can say it is the definition of *śabdapramāṇa* which includes not only the scripture regarded as the words of God but it is statements of the worldly persons who know the truth and speak it correctly. However, the validity of Verbal knowledge or *Śabdapramāṇa* depends on the utterance of a reliable person.

The means of verbal knowledge is the assertion of the productive knowledge which is free from memory, doubt, and error. It is different from the perception, inference, and comparison because it depends on the words or sentences of a trustworthy person. When it is in a spoken form we can use the auditory perception and on the other in the written form we have a visual perception of the words. But we can neither perceive nor infer the existence of the objects in this world. Testimony helps to take knowledge beyond reality. We know about the ‘*Suvarga*’ or Heaven only through testimony. We also believe in the infallibility of the Vedas and its statements that the performance of Agnihotra sacrificed leads him to the Heaven or Heavenly Bliss.

The power of words

Gangeśa describes that the utterance of any words or sentence which proceeded to the right knowledge is called Testimony (*Śabdapramāṇa*).³ It may be uttered by common Men or belong to the *Vedas*. It is constituted from various sounds (*varṇas*) which are the minimal unit of a meaningful sentence. It is necessary to understand the meaning of words and sentences for leading to put together a verbal testimony. Mimamsakas states that a word has a permanent relationship with the objects which is impersonal. It is neither created by God nor by a common man. It is learned from our elders for several years and carried after person to person through the meaning of words and their relation to objects. Furthermore, according to them, the relation between the words and meaning is *anadi* or eternal. Words contained its signifying power by themselves. Words have three aspects: sounds, letters, and the meaning conveyed. Firstly letters and meanings are not involved; the sound has

² It is the definition of *Nyāya sūtra* of Gautama translated by Major M.D Basu from Book 1 Chapter 1 - //1/1/7//, page no 4, it is the system which is taken as not only *pramāṇa* but as an independent *pramāṇa*.

³ Radhakrishnan. (1957). History of Indian Philosophy. p.236

physical involvement in sentences. Word is a combination of letters that signify the particular object by the way of denotation (*abhida*) and implication (*laksana*). Every word has its meaning, chiefly it is regarded as the relation between the word (sign) and the object (signifies).⁴ Nyāya holds on the other, words and its meaning is not due to its nature but due to the convention of God. The capacity of words to convey a particular object is called *sakti* or potency which is said due to the will of God. They assert that we get to know the meanings of words through its usage, grammar, and dictionaries. For instance, we know the word ‘cow’ because it is experienced that it has two horns, four feet, and a long tail and called by everyone an animal ‘COW’. But if by common consent it may be called ‘*bova*’, *gaya*, *go* etc. which means equally same. However, the relation between the word and meaning is only conventional not natural.

The Vedas are an authentic source (*apuruṣeya*)

The Vedas are a more authentic, authoritative, and reliable source of knowledge of the transcendental reality. Vedic sentences are injunctive and their injunctions are communicated through *śabda*. We get the knowledge from the Vedas which is beyond our senses. It is the direct intuitive knowledge of the ultimate reality. Nyāya asserts that God alone could be the author of the Vedas. Vacāspati holds that the Vedas are absolute. He also describes Verbal testimony restricted to the Vedas only. The reliability of the Smṛiti Manu depends on God because He is the original speaker here. Later on, Nyāyikas, Udayana, Annambhatta, and Vaiśeṣika regard as God as the Supreme *Iśvara* and the eternal author of the Vedas. Nyāya states that words are not eternal and language due to the will of God but the Mīmāṃsa refutes it and points that only sound and symbols are created and destroyed through the real words are eternal.

The intention of the Speaker (*Tātparyya jñāna*)

Nyāya holds the view that for the Speaker to generate knowledge through language and sentences. It should also have the capacity to generate the right knowledge for the hearer. Sentences have communicated the meaning depending on four conditions i.e. *ākāṅkṣā*, *yogyatā*, *sannidhi* and *tātparyya*.⁵ Firstly, a sentence consists of words that imply one another. So, there is a mutual implication which is called expectancy. Thus in the sentence “bring a horse- ‘a horse’ after ‘bring’ fills the required gap to complete the sense of the activity of bringing. Secondly, a sentence consists of words that have a fitness for one another. Mutual fitness is another condition for the intelligibility of a sentence. The sentence ‘quench your thirst with water’ conveys the meaning because its component words have mutual fitness. And the sentence ‘quench your thirst with fire’ is unintelligible, because its constituent words are incompatible. Thirdly, a sentence consists of words that are in reasonable

⁴ Bhatta, V.P. (1991). Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in the analysis of Sentence-meaning, Vol-1, p.30.

⁵ Chatterjee. S. (2017). The Nyāya theory of knowledge, p.338.

proximity with one another. A sentence should be uttered in close succession without a long interval of time between one word and another. If the words 'bring', 'a', and 'horse' is uttered at long intervals, they would not convey any meaning because the interval may be infused with some other words or activities making the knowledge conveyed through scattered expression incomprehensible. Fourthly, the meaning of the sentence also depends upon the knowledge of the intention of the speaker. The sentence '*saindhavam ānaya*' means 'bring a horse' only in a context when the speaker gets ready for a journey. It would however mean 'bring salt' when the speaker is on the dining table. The meaning may therefore entirely change depending on the contexts and according to the intention of the speaker.⁶ Compatibility implies formal consistency, while the knowledge of the speaker's intention implies material consistency. The knowledge of the *tātparyya* or intended meaning is the essential condition for verbal knowledge. It stands for the meaning intended to be conveyed by the sentence. Words may have a different meaning in different cases but in that case, depends on the intention of the speaker who uses the word. In the ordinary world, we may understand the intention if the speaker from the context in which they are used. On the other, in Vedic texts, we should follow logical rules of interpretation analysis of the sentence which is systematized by the *Mīmāṃsa*. This is the syntactical analysis of a sentence to generate a *śabdapramāṇa* (testimony). However, there are the reasons from which the heterodox schools accepting the *śabda* as a source of knowledge. There are orthodox schools like *Cārvāka*, *Buddhists*, and *Vaiśeṣika* who refuting the testimony and reduced it into inference. The main objective of the paper is to show only the Buddhist refutation of testimony, its reducibility to inference, and how their arguments are convincing for the *Nyāya* and *Mīmāṃsa* philosophy.

This paper draws attention to two Buddhist philosopher and their ideologies on the refutation of testimony. *Diṇnāga* (c. 480-540 Century)⁷, the Buddhist logician, in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, recognizes only two means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*)⁸, namely, perception and inference. *Dharmakīrti* (530-561 C.E.) writes a commentary on the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* with a title *Pramāṇavārtika*. Our purpose in this paper is to understand the arguments offered by the Buddhist logicians against the verbal testimony. It is observed that the Buddhists do not see any merit in accepting testimony as a distinct source of knowledge. For language is unable to present a true picture of reality. They reduced testimony (*śabda*) into inference because hearing the word as a sound is perception and knowing its meaning is inference. So, verbal knowledge is a combination of perception and inference. Later on, *Diṇnāga* introduced the theory of meaning is known as *apoha* theory (exclusion) to explain the

⁶ Ibid., p. 339

⁷ Matilal. (1986), p.40

⁸ The Buddhist tradition considers the word '*pramāṇa*' as both the process of knowing as well the knowledge produced through the process. *Diṇnāga* states as 'we call the cognition itself *pramāṇa* because it is generally conceived to include the act of cognizing although primarily it as a result.'⁸ In the *Pramāṇavārtika*, *Dharmakīrti* defines *pramāṇa* as '*Pramāṇam avisamvādi jñānam*'; it means knowledge as cognition must be in the consistency with its object.

linguistic meaning⁹. He considered the interpretation of conventional and symbolic signs such as words and sentences in the human language are nothing more than *anumāna* or inference.

Buddhists argument on the reducibility of *Śabdapramāṇa* (Verbal testimony)

Diñnāga argument on the reducibility of Testimony (*Śabdapramāṇa*)

Diñnāga portrays his epistemology in the text '*Pramāṇasamuccaya*', which deals with the theory of knowledge. Diñnāga argues that verbal communication is not different from Inference because it works in the same way as the names or meanings of the object are similar to the property of having been produced already by excluding incompatible names of the object.¹⁰ It is the linguistic sign which applies to the object by excluding other objects which is not that object. It is having the same process as inferential knowledge.

Diñnāga states that hearing the word of the object is perception and the meaning of the object is inference. So, verbal knowledge is the combination of both perception and Inference. Moreover, he also argues inferential knowledge is not different but verbal knowledge reduced to it.

In Buddhist philosophy, *Śabda* generates only an impression of the epistemic value of the deriving knowledge which is pledged by the authoritative of the statement. Diñnāga describes that *śabda* derived knowledge is the same as the inferential knowledge because it is based on the universal 'authoritativeness' as an inferential sign.¹¹

*api ca pratibhāmātre śabdah jāte 'pi /
kutrācit / āptavādatvalingena janayate /
niścītā matiḥ // ata eva hi manayate
śabdasyapi vipāścitaḥ //
āptavādavisam vādasāmānyad anumānatā //*¹²

⁹ The Buddhist According to this theory, the meaning of a word is conceptual image which represents an object not directly but by excluding all other objects. For instance, the meaning of word 'cow' given by excluding all other objects which is not 'cow'. It declares the technique of double negation (*apoha*) for the clarity and precision in thought of language. He reflects the idea of mutual exclusion (*svatovyāvartana*) in the grounds of reality, knowledge and language. Diñnāga advocates the distinction between the field of language and meaning. Every concept is expressing in language and its meaning. Meaning is conveyed by the word which represents a particular object. According to Diñnāga, every meaning of the word is the negative of its negative. Furthermore, we can say every word and its meaning cannot be the overlapping and the cross-division in the meanings of any two words. Diñnāga in his *apoha* theory portray the meaning of the word is a conceptual image of the object not directly, but by the way of excluding other objects.

¹⁰ Hayes, R.P. (1988). P.265

¹¹ It is found in the *Pramanavārtika*, *svārthanumāna* 216ab.

¹² Bhatta, J. (1978), p. 725-727

Translation: Moreover, in some cases even if by śabda itself only an impression is produced, certain knowledge can be generated employing an inferential sign of authoritativeness. Therefore, a learned people think that śabda has the character of inference because of the undisputedness of a trustworthy statement.¹³

It is a vague impression that *ārtha* which is generated by *śabda* and through it when knowledge is produced by an inference from the inferential sign ‘authoritativeness of the statement’. The word ‘*āptavādavisamvādasāmānyad*’ may be interpreted as ‘because of the undisputedness common to (*sāmānya*) authoritative statements (*āptavada*) (and inference).’¹⁴

One of the interpretations in the text of Chakradhara’s Nyāya - Mañjarī, there are two alternative interpretations of the arguments:

First argument: *āptavādāvisamvādasāmānyād iti yathā*

dhūmasāmānyād agnisāmānyaniścaya

evam āptavādasāmānyād

Second argument: *avisamvādāditvasāmānyaniścaya ity*

arthah. āptavādānām vāvisamvādah

sāmānyam rūpam, yo ya āptavādah sa so

’visamvādīt y arthah’¹⁵

Translation: Just like from the universal of smoke, the universal of fire is ascertained so from the universal of an authoritative statement the universal of undisputed-ness is ascertained. Alternatively, the undisputed-ness of authoritative statements is the same (as that of inference); whatever is authoritative, is undisputed.¹⁶

The first argument has the word ‘*sāmānyam*’ means universal and the second argument indicate us the similarity between the śabda and inference. If we take the *ārtha* as a locus then the argument form as:

1. If *ārtha* possesses authoritative- statement- ness then it possesses undisputed-ness
2. The *ārtha* possesses authoritative- statement- ness
3. Therefore, the *ārtha* possesses undisputed-ness.

On the other, if we take *śabda* is in the locus position then the argument form as:

1. If *śabda* possesses authoritative- ness then it possesses undisputed-ness
2. The *śabda* possesses authoritative-ness

¹³ Grahelli, A. (2017). p. 23

¹⁴ Ibid. (2017)

¹⁵ Nagun, J.S. (1972). p. 72

¹⁶ Graheli, A. (2017). p. 24

3. Therefore, the *śabda* possesses undisputed-ness.

Is the Speaker's intention as inference?

In the previous argument, *śabda* as a locus is senseless because it possesses an external object. Relatively in this statement, there is not any relation of possessor-ship between the *śabda* and the object. In the formation of reduction, it is declared that the probandum of *śabda* as inference is the speaker's intended signification rather than *artha*. (Varadacharya, 1983)

kiñ ca śabdo vivakṣāyām eva prāmāṇyaṃ aśnute/

na bāhye vyabhicāritvāt tasyām caitasya liṅgatā//¹⁷

Translation: Rather *śabda* can have epistemic validity only concerning an intention to speak, and not to an external object because such an inferential mark would be flawed by ambiguity. The status of the inferential sign of that *śabda* is only to prove the intention of the speaker.¹⁸

The ambiguity in this argument is that same *śabda* refer to one or more object in that case speaker must have determined the intention of the speaker. Here, *śabda* proves nothing but the speaker's intention. In the inference of language, locus must have necessarily been the speaker. In this regard, Jayanta Bhatta explicit the argument:

1. If a speaker possesses *śabda*, then it possesses an intention to speak
2. This speaker possesses *śabda*
3. Therefore, this speaker possesses an intention to speak

Diñnāga argues that verbal testimony is not a separate source of knowledge and also attacks the definition of Nyāya sutra, 'āptopadeśaḥ śābdaḥ' which means 'the speech of a trustworthy person is valid knowledge' or else it means the thing spoken is trustworthy and true. Diñnāga commenting on this sutra by saying that the credibility of the person is the belief that is derived through inference. Later meaning of definition criticizing by the argument if it is the truth of the statement then it is the matter of perception because when the person apprehends the perception of the thing then he realizes the truth of the statement. However, Diñnāga criticizing and dealing with 'credible testimony' means the assertion of a person is credible. He elaborates that belief on any particular statement is due to the inference. He portrays 'the belief is inferential, the ground of it being the common character of the corroborated-ness belonging to the statement of the trustworthy person'.¹⁹

¹⁷ Varadacharya, K.S. (1983). p. 1-2

¹⁸ Graheli. A. (2017). p.24

¹⁹ Randle, H.N. (1926). p. 34

Diñnāga enquires that, what is the significance of Credible Word? Does it mean that the person who spoke the word is credible or the fact which declared is credible?²⁰ He argues that if the credible person, it is just inference, and if it is the fact which is credible then it is merely a perception. Subsequently, Diñnāga concludes that credible word or verbal testimony is reducible to the inference or perception and it is not a separate source of knowledge.

Dharmakīrti analysis on the reducibility of testimony

In this section, we are explaining Dharmakīrti beliefs about the śabda pramāṇa to inference. The improved version of the explanation is found in Jinendrabuddhi's *Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā* commenting on *Pramāṇasamuccayavritti* words on *śābdaparisiddha*.²¹

‘Śābdaparisiddha is the instrumental tatpuruṣa compound’

In PSV, it is stated that an example of validation is based on the means of conventional recognition. Here, one statement in it ‘rabbit is not a moon’. The meaning of this statement is ‘rabbit’ is not which is designated by the word ‘moon’. So, the opposing and contradicting position is recognized through verbal knowledge. Moreover, verbal knowledge consists of the inference and is known as conventional recognition. It is recognized or ascertained employing inference in the sense of *śābdaparisiddha*.

‘Śābdaparisiddha as an ablative tatpuruṣa’

According to PSV, a convention that is caused by the śabda such as ‘the Moon is called Moon’ which constitutes verbal knowledge. It is commonly recognized from the *śābda* i.e. property of the character in which consists the intended designation of the word is *śābdaparisiddha*. It is established because it is for all the objects. So, it has the property of fitness in the arising of verbal usage which is ascertained by the means of inference known as conventional recognition. It has a nature to describe and applies to all the objects (ārtha).²²

Mokṣākaragupta (1050- 1202 A.D)²³ views on the reducibility of testimony

Mokṣākaragupta presents two arguments for accepting testimony- firstly, the word and its referent should have a relation or connection between them, and secondly, his argument from the trustworthiness of the speaker. He argues that we accepted testimony only if it is agreed on the word and external object is not possible without a relationship (*sambandha*). They argue that there is not any relationship between the word and the external object. If it is a relation between the word and its

²⁰ Vidyabhusana, S.C. (2005). p. 288

²¹ Tillemans, T.A.F. (2000). p.213

²² Tillemans, T. A.F. (2000), p.214

²³ Kajiyama, Y. (1966), p. 1 <http://hdl.handle.net/2433/72933>

referent then it should be either identity or causality. He argues against the idea that word and its referent are identical on the ground that if it is this case then there would not be a plurality of languages. For instance, ‘a man from Nicobar’ who does not know to speak in Sanskrit, but if the words and referents are identical then the man should know already the word ‘*agni*’ means fire. Mokṣākaragupta argues that if ‘The Man from Nicobar’ does not know that fire is the meaning of ‘*agni*’ is proof that no identity exists. (Kajiyama, 1998, 32)

Next, the other argument against the verbal testimony by the Mokṣākaragupta is the trustworthiness of the speaker. This may be striking to the consideration of the authority of the Buddha, so Kajiyama²⁴ (the author) quotes:

It is also not acceptable that the words spoken by a trustworthy person are a means of valid knowledge since trustworthiness is impossible to be ascertained. The state of being emancipated from all faults (*kṣiṇadoṣatva*) is called trustworthiness (*āptatva*). Emancipation from all faults refers to a certain state belonging to another person’s mind. And this is hardly visible (i.e. determinable) since we see (sometimes) that physical and lingual actions to be the logical mark (through which we infer the trustworthiness of the concerned person) occur in a person who is not. When it is usual that a man having passions pretends to be free from passions, how can you ascertain trustworthiness? (Kajiyama, 1998, 34-38)

Despite, this claim in the epistemological notion clearly shows only two means of valid knowledge and the skeptical attitude towards the reliability of the trustworthiness of the speaker as a means of knowledge created a logical problem within the Buddha tradition. It raises a question regarding the authority of the Sākyamuni Buddha as nature or the ground of human existence, the path of religious life. In other words, we can say it is the question against the ‘Buddha-vaccana’ the speech of the Buddha. Buddhism a historical institution in which all the things depend upon the authority of the Buddha, an awakened state of mind. He has the authority to transfers his knowledge to all the members of the Buddhist Sangha. The Buddha is the authoritative source of knowledge or not become a question of discussion itself. In the next section, we proceed with the discussion Buddha teaching is a testimonial knowledge or not.

Buddha’s śabda as a āpta-śabdaḥ (trustworthy or authoritative words) or not

In the non religion- human authorship like Hinduism and Christianity which as a foundational holy text – Vedas and Bible. Apart from this religion, Buddhist tradition is more ambiguous about the status of its scriptural sources. The teaching of the Buddha is par from the insights and wisdom. It is the awakening state of mind. In the early period, Buddhism has three developed ideas of bodies or it can say three ideas of Buddha’s existence. These three Buddha existence are; Sākyamuni

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 34-38

(*nirmanakāya*) a historical figure, a glorious body with the existence of Amitābha (*sambhogakāya*), and a body identical with the actual existence of all things i.e. emptiness (*dharmakaya*). It is also mentioned that the last two bodies of the Buddha are not an ordinary human being. Moreover, the authority of the Buddha or the speech of the Buddha is the same way as the Vedas and Bible are authoritative. Regarding this argument, Dharmakīrti elaborates on the two means of valid knowledge as the criteria for the authority of the scriptures are spoken by the *sambhogakāya* and *dharmakāya*.

Dharmakīrti's text of 'Pramāṇavārtika' is the most influential text which presented the discussion of the Dīnnāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya. In the opening lines of Dīnnāga's pramāṇasamuccaya is defining in the Pramāṇavārtika which is translated by the Roger Jackson as:

To the one who has become an authority, the one who desires to benefit beings, the teacher, the sugata (well-being), the savior, I bow down.

*In order to establish authority, I make here a single compendium of my various scattered writings.*²⁵

Jackson demonstrates that Dharmakīrti has the primary purpose in the chapter of 'Pramāṇasiddhi' is to give you an idea about the Buddha is an authority of spiritual freedom or liberation.²⁶ Dīnnāga listed the five descriptions of the Buddha which gave the Dharmakīrti the basic structure to his arguments regarding the authority. The lists of five epithets are:

1. *Pramāṇabhūta*: The Buddha has become an authority
2. *Jagadhitaiṣin*: The Buddha desires to benefit other living beings
3. *Śāstrī*: The Buddha is a teacher
4. *Sugata*: The Buddha is 'well-gone'
5. *Tāyin*: The Buddha is a protector (more than savior)

Before going to the argument 'the Buddha is an authoritative', Dharmakīrti should have to define the authority itself. He defines the authoritative knowledge into three types:

- Original and not derivative
- Cognitive and not a means of perception
- And not contradicted by the two means of knowledge- perception, and inference.

If one cognizes the meaning intended that is speech which is also non-deceptive. On this argument, Hayes elucidates about Dīnnāga understanding of this argument, 'a linguistic sign is mere an inferential sign to produce in the hearer of the symbol knowledge in the subject (speaker), the thing

²⁵ Jackson, R. (1993), p.127

²⁶ Ibid, (1993), p.127

which is the speaker of the symbol is applying the symbol, has a given property'.²⁷ It simply states that Testimony is not an autonomous means of valid knowledge. It may be the case where one can easily understand a statement and also the extent to the truth of the statement. Let us take an example which is familiar in Buddhist thought- the phrase 'horns of a rabbit'. Here, it is known to all of us that rabbits do not have horns, and also there is not an objective reality like this. However, they can argue through speech we have the meaning of the statement but if there is not any reference to any existing object, it is useless.

In the previous argument having the same reasoning in the Buddhist tradition, the difference between the words, meaning, and referent widen to the commentaries on the words of the Buddha.²⁸ They can have the authoritative cognition of the words of a śāstra and its meaning but do not have authoritative cognition of the referents of the śāstra. Hayes quotes, 'Not everything for which we have a name that exists'.²⁹

Authoritative cognition must be original because of its derivative nature. The memory cognition always depends on other cognition. This cognition is not direct apprehends its object, on the other hand, authoritative cognition is direct apprehends its object due to the perception, for instance 'a blue patch'.

Dharmakīrti explicates that the Buddha is an authority because it is defined as in fact the new possess 'new non-deceptive cognition'. The Buddha cognition is an achievement and is not an inherent quality. He has attained the 'method and wisdom' as a constant state of cognition.³⁰ The Buddha is a religious authority, a teacher who has all the supernatural powers resultant into meditative practice which are not confused his actual goals even in his state of awakening. In a limited sense, we can say it is the authority or testimony on the religious matters of liberation.

Conclusion

Buddhist tradition accepts only two pramāṇa - perception and inference with refuting the verbal testimony. They reduced other means of valid knowledge into perception and inference. They are defending their knowledge of the language by the process of exclusion. Diñnāga in his text '*Pramāṇasamuccaya*' describes that verbal testimony is not a distinct source of knowledge; it is reducible into inference because the process of the inferential sign is similar like the process of verbal testimony. He argues that language has the property of linguistic sign which refers to an object by excluding other objects. It is also the process of inferential knowledge. Later on, Dharmakīrti expounds these arguments of Diñnāga in his text '*Pramāṇa vārtika*' in the form of refining that śābda

²⁷ Hayes, R.P. (1988). p. 203

²⁸ According to the Buddhist tradition, in the teaching of the Buddha have the record that śāstra is distinct from sūtra.

²⁹ Ibid, p.178

³⁰ Jackson, R. (1993). p.188

pramāṇa (verbal testimony) is in relation with anumāna (inference). Śabda (words) is the judgmental knowledge that is inherent in the mind and then generates through language and refers to the object. The modern philosopher of the tradition, Moksakāragupta also elaborates his arguments against to accept śabdapramāṇa. He defines in the process of śabdapramāṇa should also have a relationship between word and its referent, if it has then it should be either identity or causality. *Buddha-vaccana* is the speech of religious knowledge. He is a teacher, an authoritative person defining the religious path of life to the entire tradition. If the Buddhist tradition refuting the verbal testimony then how can they justify his word of religious knowledge even their religion? A language is a tool through which we reflect our state of mind into objective reality. Dinnāga states language represents the object by excluding other objects. They argue words are unable to express the external realities by it. Words alone cannot make any sense in the sentence. If the single word denotes any meaning, its meaning should have imaginary or inferential meaning. Buddhist refuting testimony in the statement that absolute knowledge is beyond the reach of our senses. So, the question on the reliability of *Buddha-vaccana* is not including any pramāṇa rather it is the absolute knowledge.

References

1. Bhatt, S.R. & Mehrotra, A. (2000). *Buddhist Epistemology*. USA: Greenwood Press.
2. Gangaopadhyaya, M. (1971). *Vinītadeva's Nyāyabindu-tīkā*. Calcutta: R.D. Press
3. Garfield, J.L. (2002). *Empty Words*. New York: Oxford University Press
4. Graheli, A. (2017). Bhaṭṭa Jayanta: Comprehension, knowledge, and the reduction of testimony to inference. *International journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies*. vol no. 21. pp 175-225
5. Gupta, R. (1985). *Apoha and the nominalist/conceptualist controversy*. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol.13, No.4, pp. 383-398
6. Hayes, R.P. (1980). Dinnāga's views on reasoning. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. Vol. 8, no.3, pp. 219-277
7. Hayes, R.P. (1988). *Dignaga on the Interpretation of Signs*. Dordrecht: Kulwer Academic Publisher
8. Jaini, P.S. (1959). *The Vaibhāṣika theory of Words and Meaning*. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. Vol.22. No.1/3 pp. 95-107.
9. Jayatilleke, K.N. (1963). *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas
10. Kajiyama, Y. (1998). *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy. An Annotated Translation of Tarkabhāṣā of Mokṣākaragupta*. Wein: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische studien
11. Matilal, B. & Evans, R.D. (Ed.) (1986). *Buddhist Logic and Epistemology*. Netherland: D. Reidel Publishing

12. Mishra, R.K. (1965). *Buddhist Theory of Meaning and Literary Analysis*. New Delhi: D.K Printworld Ltd.
13. Mookherjee, S. (1935). *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*. Calcutta: Motilal Banarsidas
14. Nagin, J.S. ed. (1972). *Cakradhara's Nyāyamanjari granthibhaṅga*. LalBhai Dalpatbhai series, 35. Ahmedabad: L.D Institute of Indology
15. Prasad, R. (2002). *Dharmakīrti's Theory of Inference Revaluation and Reconstruction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press
16. Randle, H.N. (1926). *Fragments from Dinnāga*. London: Great Britain by Billing & Sons Ltd.
17. Tillemans, T.J.F. (2000). *Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇa vārttika*. Wein: Verl. Der Ostter
18. Vidyabhushna, S.C. (2005). *A History of Indian Logic*. Delhi: Roshan Offset Press