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## UNIT 5 MIMAMSA PHILOSOPHY

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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After having studied and worked through the unit, you should be able to:

- illustrate the validity of knowledge;
- discuss arthapati (postulation) as a source of valid knowledge;
- analyze khytivada (theory of error);
- explain the nature of self; and
- discuss the Mimansika's concept of liberation.

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, Yoga Philosophy, we gave you an account of different forms and modifications of citta. We had also discussed the 'eight fold path of yoga'. At the end, we had analyzed the concept of God and liberation.

In this unit, you will find the complete discussion on the Mimansa philosophy, their views on epistemology and the metaphysics. Theory of error and theory of causation are also discussed with reference to their view. Further, their arguments on the sources of valid knowledge (pramanas) are elucidated in an elaborate manner.

The Mimansa philosophy is one among the other schools of Indian philosophy. The Mimansa School was founded by Jaimini in 400 B.C. He was the author of 'Mimansa sutra'. The commentator works on Mimansa Sutra are primarily of Kumalia Bhatta and Prabhakara Mishra. Like Nayaya-Vaisesika and Samkhya-Yoga, Mimansa-Vedanta is considered as an allied system of Indian school of thought. The word 'mimansa' means 'revered thought', which is to be applied originally in the interpretation of the vedic rituals. Mimansa deals with the initial part of the Veda and is therefore called as Purva-Mimansa. The initial part of the

Veda concerns on human action, their rituals and the sacrifices. It is thus known as karmakanda.

Two scholars namely Kumarila Bhatta and Prabhakar Mishra wrote treatises on the Mimansa philosophy. They aimed at giving a theistic learning to the Mimansa philosophy.

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## 5.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

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The term epistemology deals with knowledge of an object. When we cognize an object we possess knowledge of that object. To verify whether our knowledge of that object is correct or not, we have to consider the below four conditions. These are;

- i) It must not arise from defective causes.
- ii) It must be free from contradiction. This implies it must be self-consistent and should not be contradicted by subsequent knowledge.
- iii) It provides the experience of an object which has not experienced earlier. In short, it provides experience of an unknown object.
- iv) It must represent the object.

Once these conditions are satisfied, our cognition of an object will be treated as valid. While considering these conditions, it is mentioned that memory can't be regarded as valid knowledge because it arises from the impression of a prior cognition which contradicts the third condition/ criterion of valid knowledge.

### Validity of knowledge

Kumarila regards cognition as a means of valid knowledge because of its apprehension (anubhuti), and he regards cognizedness produced by a cognitive act as its result. Prabhakara, on the other hand, vividly expresses that we cognize an object by means of valid knowledge as it is an apprehension, but it is not to the means of 'recollection' as it is found in case of memory. He identifies pramana with prama or valid knowledge and regards cognition as manifesting itself but not inferable from cognizedness of its object. Thus for him, pramana is same as prama. On his views, all cognitions are valid and their invalidity is due to the disagreement with the real nature of objects. So wrongness does not belong to the cognition but to the object cognized.

With these analyses, the Mimansa philosophy discusses two theories; svatah pramanyavada, and paratah pramanyavada. The former is translated as intrinsic validity and the latter is translated as extrinsic validity of knowledge. To explain svatah pramanyavada, knowledge of an object is valid by itself. Validity of knowledge arises from the essential nature of the causes of knowledge and it is not due to any extraneous conditions. To elucidate paratah pramanyavada, knowledge is not self-evident but it is validated by extraneous conditions.

By doing integration (reshuffling) of these two theories, we are resulted in four theories. These are;

- i) Svatah pramanyavada (intrinsic validity)
- ii) Svatah apramanyavada (intrinsic invalidity)

- iii) Paratah pramanyavada (extrinsic validity)
- iv) Paratah apramanyavada (extrinsic invalidity)

The Mimamsa (kumarila) upholds svatah pramanyavada and paratah apramanyavada. For him, the validity of knowledge arises from the essential nature of its causes untainted by defects, and is known by the knowledge itself. Intrinsic validity of knowledge consists in its being generated by the complement of causal conditions of the knowledge itself, and not by extraneous conditions besides them. The knowledge of validity is also generated by the aggregation of causal conditions, which make the knowledge known. But the invalidity of knowledge arises from defects in the causal conditions of the knowledge. It is known from the knowledge of the object itself.

Analyzing the four theories, the Samkhya philosophy upholds svatah pramanyavada and svatah apramanyavada. On their view, both valid and invalid knowledge are intrinsic whereas, Buddhists argue in favour of svatah apramanyavada and paratah pramanyavada. They regard that validity of knowledge is extrinsic and invalidity of knowledge is intrinsic. For them knowledge is invalid in itself but it is validated by extraneous conditions. As soon as knowledge of an object is generated, it can't apprehend the real nature of the object. It is uncertain at the time and liable to contradiction, and so should be regarded as invalid. Its validity is subsequently known by the knowledge of the excellence of its causes; or the knowledge of its harmony with the real nature of its object, or the knowledge of a fruitful action and sets aside its intrinsic invalidity.

The Nyaya-Vaisesika regards the validity of knowledge as due to the excellence (gunna) of its causes. These schools regard both validity and invalidity of knowledge as extrinsic.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain svatah pramanyavada.

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**5.3 SOURCES OF VALID KNOWLEDGE (Pramānas)**

Kumarila Bhatta recognizes six pramanas. These are;

- i) Perception
- ii) Inference
- iii) Comparison
- iv) Verbal testimony
- v) Postulation (Arthapati)
- vi) Non- apprehension (Anupalabdhi)

Prabhakara rejects non-apprehension (anupalabdhi) as a source of valid knowledge. He states that negation can't be an independent pramana. The reason he gives, it is a disagreement with positive facts or phenomena which are found in other pramanas. Thus, he accepts five pramanas. Let us illustrate all the above pramanas in a sequential manner.

**Perception**

Perception is a form of knowledge which results from the contact between the object and the sense-organs. Generally, we believe whatever is perceived by our senses must be true because in perception, the objects are directly known through our sense-organs. Thus perception is an immediate knowledge. Example; by seeing and touching a table one can acquire the knowledge of that table. Perceptual knowledge is valid only when an object is perceived as it is.

Like Nyayikas, the Mimamsa School has classified perception in various kinds from different perspectives. Firstly, perception is classified in two types; ordinary (laukika) and extra ordinary (alaukika). When sense organs come into the contact with the object in the usual way we have ordinary perception. savikalpaka (determinate) and nirvikalpaka (indeterminate) are two forms of ordinary perception. The detail analysis of these two perceptions are found in the unit-1:Nyaya Philosophy of this block. In the case of extraordinary perception, the objects are not presented to the senses in the usual way but they are conveyed to the sense through unusal medium. On perception, the basic difference between the Nyaya and the Mimamsa philosophy is, the Naiyayikas regard the auditory organ as proceeding from ether (akasa) while the Mimamsikas regard it is proceeding from space(dik).

**Inference (Anumana)**

The second kind of pramana is called anumana. Inference is a kind of knowledge, which is based on previous cognition. In perception we have direct knowledge of an object because there is a direct presentation of an object before our sense organs. Therefore, perceptual knowledge is immediate or prataksa.

In anumana, there is no such direct presentation of the object and therefore it is called paroksa jnana or mediate knowledge. In anumana, an object is inferred to be present in a particular case because it has been invariably perceived to be present in all such similar cases. Thus in anumana, the cognition of an object is based on our prior knowledge of it. For example, we see smoke in a distant hill. From the presence of smoke, we at-once infer that there must be fire in the distant hill.

### Comparison (Upamana)

Upamana is a pramana recognized by the Mimansikas as similar to Nyayikas' views. In upamana, knowledge of an object is determined by comparing it form other similar kinds of objects. Thus roughly it is treated as analogy. For example, assume a situation where a man has not seen a gavaya or a wild cow and doesn't know what it is. A forester told him that a wild cow is an animal like a country cow but she is more furious and has big horn in her forehead. In a later period he comes across a wild cow in a forest and recognizes it as the wild cow by compairing the descriptions made by the forester. This knowledge is possible due to the upamana or comparison. Thus, upamana is the knowledge of the relation between a name and the object it denotes by that name.

### Verbal Testimony (sabda)

According to the Mimansa philosophy, testimony is a reliable statement uttered by a trust worthy person similar to Nyaya Philosophy. It is stated that a sentence consists of a group of words, and a word is considered as an entity which has the power to express some meaning. Testimony is a valid knowledge, which is derived form word or sentence. But all words or sentences can't be treated as testimony because all verbal expressions are not necessarily regarded as valid knowledge. So, on the account of Mimansikas, sabda must be based on the verbal assertion of a trust worthy person who knows the truth and desires to speak the truth for the guidance of others.

Verbal testimony is used as meaningful words or sentences. The mere combination of letters or the words don't provide a valid knowledge. Therefore, words and sentences must be used in a specific sense whose meaning will be clear, as a result, it would be treated as a valid pramana.

### Postulation (Arthapati)

This is a unique source of valid knowledge upholds by the Mimansikas. In other words, the Mimansikas expressed arthapati as a valid method of cognition. The expression "arthapati" is a combination of two words namely 'artha' and 'apatti'. The term artha means fact and apatti means 'kalpana' which is understood as 'supposition' in English. Thus, etymologically speaking, arthapati is that knowledge which resolves the conflict between two facts. It entails a presupposition which solves the problem that occurred between two facts.

Arthapati is the assumption of an unperceived fact in order to reconcile two apparently inconsistent perceived facts. When a known fact can't be accounted without another fact, we have to postulate the existence of third fact. The valid and justified knowledge of the third fact is known as arthapati.

For example, Devadatta is a fat man by fasting in the day. In this proposition we find two facts. One, Devadatta is a human being alive and he is fat. Second, he is not eating in day time. In order to resolve this conflict, i.e. how a person will be fat and not eating anything in day time, we postulate the existence of third fact, i.e. he must be eating in the night. Another example, "John is living and who is not in home". The problem observed here is how John alive and is not found in his home. To resolve this conflict, we postulate the fact, i.e. he may be staying in a rented house outside his home. Thus, postulation or presumption is a valid source of knowledge.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss ‘arthapati’ as a valid pramana.

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**Non-Apprehension (Anupalabdhi)**

This is an independent source of valid knowledge subscribed by the Mimamsa Philosophy. Non-apprehension is the immediate knowledge of the non-existence of an object. An object doesn’t exist in a particular place and a particular time. But it exists elsewhere. To perceive the non-existent of that particular object in a given situation/place is known as anupalabdhi.

For example, ‘there is no book on the table”. Here, an individual does not perceive the book directly through his/her sense organs. But the knowledge of the absence or non existence of the book on the table arises because of the non-perception of the perceivable object. The absence of an object from the situation in which it should be available is said to be its non-existence. And, to possess the knowledge of non existence of objects in an existence form is called as anupalabdhi.

**5.4 THEORIES OF ERROR (Khyativāda)**

The theory of error is called as ‘khyativada’. It is opposed to the theory ‘pramanyavada’ (validity of knowledge). The term ‘khyativada’ is associated with invalid or erroneous knowledge. Before, entering into the discussion of theories of error which is expressed differently by different schools you should know ‘what is error?’.

**Error (viparyaya)**

Error or bharma is reverse of valid knowledge (prama). In the case of valid knowledge the presentation of object is found what it really is, but in case of error, it is found in inverse mode. In case of error, we cognize object what it is not. In error, an object is cognized as having certain characteristics that really fall outside of its being. Thus, it is a wrong apprehension in which the object is taken for what it is not. All error is subjective in their nature. For example; we cognize a snake instead of a rope. This happens because the characteristics of a snake are found in the rope. In the similar way we cognize shell erroneously as silver.

**Check Your Progress III**

- Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answers.  
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) What is error?

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With these backgrounds now let us discuss theories of error which are relevant in your present study out of many. Prabhakara school of Mimamsa and Advaita Vedantins propounded ‘akhyativada’ and ‘anirvacaniya khyativada’ respectively. Kumarila Bhatta advocates the theory of error known as ‘viparita khyativada’. Let us discuss how they establish their theory in their own ways.

**Akhyativada**

This theory of error is advocated by Prabhakara school of Mimamsa. It is also called as ‘viveka khyati’. According to Prabhaka School of Mimamsa, there is no invalid cognition. A particular cognition may be less than true but it can never be untrue. They recognize two fold classification of cognition. These are;

- i) Valid cognition
- ii) Memory

But they did not acknowledge delusive cognition as a third class. This is so because delusive cognition generates out of the above two cognitions.

For example, ‘This is silver’. The ‘this’ is perceptually cognized and the ‘silver’ is remembered. The cognition of the ‘this’ is perceptual because there is sense contact with what is present before us, i.e. shell. However, the cognition of silver is a memory being generated by our sense-impression. In this case, the cognizer fails to demarcate percept from smrti. As a result, our knowledge on the object is treated as erroneous. Hence, we cognize shell as silver.

**Anirvacaniya Khyativada**

This theory of error is proposed by Advaita Vedantins. It states that something is presented to our senses because of avidya or ignorance. Due to avidya the cognizer cognizes an object something different from what it is.

For example, we cognize shell as silver. In this case our knowledge of silver is imposed on the object ‘shell’. So it is erroneous. Further, they said that nothing is found real in this world because knowledge of an object is altered in the next

moment. Due to ‘I-ness’ we cognize objects in the world. But the fact is that, there is only one reality that is eternal and unchanging is known as Brahman. Hence, whatever we cognize is not real. Therefore, the nature of creation is indescribable. This implies cognition of shell as well as silver is not real. Hence, the theory of error is indescribable.

**Viparita Khyativada**

In regard to the theory of error, Bhatta School of Mimansa proposed a new theory known as ‘viparita khyativada’. On their view, error lies because of the wrong relation between the object and sense organs, but it is not due to the objects which are real. For example, people belong to different parts of the world seeing one and the same moon but wrongly claim that they are seeing different moon. This theory of error is reversal of right behavior towards an object.

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**5.5 METAPHYSICS**

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The Mimansa Philosophy believes in the existence of eternal world and the innumerable individual souls within it. They also admit the existence (presence) of other eternal and infinite substances in the earth. They viewed that the world is constituted of three types of elements. These are; body, sense organs and eternal things. The self in the body enjoys the fruit of its actions. Sense organs used as the means to experience pleasure and pain. External things are meant for enjoyment. Apart from all these realities they also believe in many other realities like, the existence of heaven, hell, etc. although these are not perceivable. Thus, Mimansikas are treated as pluralistic realist.

The Mimansikas agreed upon the view that the creation and destruction of the world is based on our karmas. Hence, they ruled out the existence of God behind the creation of the world. For them, God is an unseen power who guides/ instructs us to do certain karmas in certain time/period.

Regarding categories, Prabhakara School of Mimansa recognizes seven categories. These are; substance (Dravya), quality (guna), action (karma), generality (samanya), inherence (paratantrata), force (shakti), and similarity (sadrshya). Differing from prabhakara, kumarila admits only four positive categories out of seven. These are; substance, quality, generality and action. Further, Kumarila adds two more categories in his list- ‘sound’ and ‘darkness’. But these two categories are not accepted by Prabhakara.

**Theory of Causation**

According to the Mimansa philosophy, theory of causation is explained through ‘theory of energy’. They explained that there are potent energies found in the cause. As a result, a particular cause produces a particular effect and that has been observed or known by us (human beings). Thus each phenomenon can be explained only by the theory of potent energy in the cause. If the potent energy is absent, no effect would be observed. An example can clarify this notion. If we fry a seed and sown in the soil, it won’t sprout out. The reason is the potent energy of the seed is consumed in the process of burning it.



## 5.6 NATURE OF SELF

About the self, Mimansikas admit that there are innumerable selves exist in the world. For them, souls are of two sorts. One is liberated soul and other is living soul (individuals of the earth). This implies every living being possesses a distinct self or soul. For Mimansikas, the self is eternal and imperishable substance. When a living animal dies, it won't die with it. It continues to live to reap the fruits of its deeds. According to Mimansikas, 'consciousness' is not the essential attribute of the self. Rather, it is considered as an adventitious quality that emerges in particular situations. For example, while in deep sleep consciousness is not found in the self. This is so because in this stage there will be no contact between sense organs with objects.

Kumarila says that there is no knowledge of self as we have the knowledge of external objects like, tree, grass, bird, etc. Thus, for him, self is the object of self consciousness. Further, he states that when we concentrate on self we realize 'I exist'. Refuting this view Prabhakara Mimansa expresses that the self can't be the subject and object of the same knowledge. This is so because one thing can't be both the 'doer' and the 'deed' at the same time, and in addition to that the function of the doer and the deed are opposite/contrast to each other. Thus, on the account of prabhakara, an objective knowledge constitutes of three constituents; the knower, the known, and the knowledge. All these three constituents are known simultaneously for acquiring the knowledge of an object. For example, "I know this table". Here, the knower is "I", the known is 'table' and the knowledge that acquires is about the object 'table'.

**Check Your Progress IV**

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the Mimansika's views on 'self'.

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## 5.7 GOD AND LIBERATION

The Mimamsa Philosophy has given much importance to the Veda than the God. The Vedas prescribe eternal principles to do one's own duties and possess a good and healthy life in the cosmic world. God becomes only the name to offer flower while performing the rituals. They consider 'yajna' is the highest sacrifice

to achieve summum bonum in one’s life. Yajna is not for the worship to Gods or propitiation of Gods but purification of one’s own soul.

There are two sorts of actions performed by living soul in this earth. One; actions are performed to achieve certain worldly pleasures. Second; actions are to be performed because the Gita prescribes it. In short, the former action is known as duty for duty sake and later is known as duty for deity. Since, there are actions, there are attachment with worldly objects, hence arouses sufferings and pains. To detract from (get rid of) all sorts of sufferings, one needs to get liberation. In this regard, Mimansikas state that the self moves in the cycle of birth and death because of its action and attachment towards worldly pleasures. The state of liberation can be attained only when the self gets emancipation from the bondages of mind, body, sense organs and objects of the world. This helps the self to remain free from the cycle of birth and death. In the state of liberation, the self cannot enjoy the experience of pleasure and pain because it is devoid of consciousness.

Thus, for Mimansikas, liberation is not a state of bliss. It is a state where the self achieves its real nature and dissociated from worldly pleasure and pain.

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## 5.8 LET US SUM UP

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The founder of the Mimansa School is Jaimini. He is the author of Mimansa Sutra followed by two chief commentators, Kumarila Bhatta and Prabhakara Mishra out of many.

### Epistemology

A valid knowledge is one, that doesn’t arise from defective causes, it is devoid of contradictions and dealt with object. The Mimansa philosophy states about svatah pramanyavada (intrinsic validity) and paratah pramanyavada (extrinsic validity). It accepts six pramanas (sources of valid knowledge). These are:

- i) Perception
- ii) Inference
- iii) Comparison
- iv) Verbal Testimony
- v) Arthapati (Postulation)
- vi) Aupalabdhi (non apprehension)

The first four pramanas are similar to the Nyaya philosophy but the later additions are made by Mimansa philosophy.

### Theories of Error

Error is opposed to valid knowledge. All error is subjective. To explain error, not to cognize an object as it is. In other words, to cognize an object not as it is leads to erroneous cognition. For example, cognizing a rope as a snake instead of rope. There are different opinions given by different schools on theory of error. ‘Akhyativada’ is advocated by Prabhakara School of Mimansa whereas, Bhatta School of Mimansa is subscribed ‘viparita-khyativada’. Advaita vedantins uphold ‘anirvacaniya khyativada’.

**Metaphysics**

The Mimamsa philosophy is pluralistic realist because they suggest there are innumerable objects existing in the world. There are infinite and eternal souls also exist in the world. Souls are of two sorts. One is liberated soul and another is, living soul. This implies as many body those many souls. Further, they said that there are non-perceivable entities exist in the world, like, hell, heaven, etc.

**God and Liberation**

According to the Mimamsa philosophy, the Vedas prescribe eternal principles for living beings, accordingly, a self does his/her duties in the cosmic world. Since every one does his/her duties, the notion of action and attachment towards worldly objects can't be denied. To free from all sorts of attachment, pain, and pleasure, one needs to attain liberation. In the state of liberation, the self is emancipated from all sorts of worldly bondage and sufferings.

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**5.9 KEY WORDS**

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- Sutra** : Sutra (Sanskrit) literally means a thread or line that holds things together, and more metaphorically refers to an aphorism, or a collection of such aphorisms.
- Karmakanda** : Karmakanda refers to portions of the Samhitas and Brahmanas with ceremonial rituals used in a system of worship to establish communication with gods.

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**5.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

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**5.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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**Check Your Progress I**

Svatah pramanyvada means intrinsic validity of knowledge. In this case, knowledge arises from the essential nature of its causes untainted by defects, and is known by the knowledge itself. Intrinsic validity of knowledge consists in its being generated by the complement of causal conditions of the knowledge itself, and not by extraneous conditions besides them.

**Check Your Progress II**

Arthapati or postulation is the assumption of an unperceived fact in order to reconcile two apparently inconsistent perceived facts. When a known fact can't

be accounted without another fact, we have to postulate the existence of third fact. The valid and justified knowledge of the third fact is known as arthapati.

### **Check Your Progress III**

All error is subjective. In case of error, we cognize an object what it is not. An object is cognized as having certain characteristics that falls outside of its being. Thus, it is a wrong apprehension in which the object is taken for what it is not. For example, cognizing a shell as silver.

### **Check Your Progress IV**

According to Mimansikas, there are innumerable self existing in the world. Self or soul are of two types. One is liberated soul and another is living soul (individuals of the earth). This implies every living being possesses a distinct self. For them, a self is eternal and imperishable. When a living animal dies, it won't die with it. It continues to live to reap the fruits of its deeds.