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**MIMANSA
AND ITS
HISTORICAL EVOLUTION**

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2.1 Genesis of *Mimansa*

The germ of that branch of Indian philosophy which is now known as *Mimansa* is believed to have originated even before the *Vedic* period. The drawing of proper inferences and the ascertainment of the meaning of words, and through that process, the enrichment of the intellectual treasure, seem to be the outstanding characteristic of this branch. Sentences such as सैषानन्दस्य मिमांसा (“This is the true analytical interpretation of pure joy”) are testimony that this branch has very ancient origins. In the period of the “*RISHIS*”, this branch took its roots, thanks to the contribution made by great thinkers of that era - an era extending upto the period when Jaimini wrote his classical works on the subject. We can take the liberty of calling it a “science” because it did proceed on certain systematic lines.

2.2 Evolution: branches and sub-branches: ‘Jaimini’ and ‘Vedavyasa’

In the course of time, as a result of various sophisticated expositions of the doctrines of this science, there arose a number of branches and sub-branches. The principal divisions have come to be known as *Poorvamimansa* and *Uttaramimansa*. The founder of *Poorvamimansa* is, as per Indian tradition, Jaimini. The founder of *Uttaramimansa* is, as per Indian tradition, Vedavyasa.

In the 16 Chapters that are usually regarded as constituting *Poorvamimansa*, 12 are devoted to the principles of interpretation of *Vedic* texts, while 4 deal with miscellaneous topics, - mostly “*Devata*” element and are known as “*Devatakanda*”.

As regards *Uttaramimansa* (*Vedantasutras*), in its 4 Chapters Vedavyasa has dealt with *Samanvaya* (synthesis), *Avirodha* (non-contradiction or resolution of apparent discrepancy), *Sadhana* (methodology) and *Phala* (consequential aspects).

On the works of Jaimini and Vedavyasa, there came into existence numerous commentaries written by distinguished scholars. In a sense, the place of original contributions was taken by gloss thereon. But it is not very easy to say when the former ended and the latter begin.

2.3 Jaimini and his date

The exact date of Jaimini cannot be located with certainty. His name occurs in the *Mahabharata* as one of the *Rishis* who was present when *Bheeshma* was lying on his “bed of arrows”, awaiting death. The same epic has it, that in the “*Sarpasatra*” of King Parikshit, Jaimini had been installed as “*Brahma*”. These references take Jaimini to a point of time between 100 years B.C. and 300 years B.C. We can, however, make this statement without contradiction, that Jaimini’s date lies between the date of scholars whose names find mention in Jaimini’s *sutras*

and the date of the scholars who have written commentaries on Jaimini.

2.4 Jaimini and his predecessors

Jaimini wrote expositions of the *Sanhitas* and other sacred texts. The originality of *Mimansa's* contribution lay in the fact that it made an attempt at a logical exposition of the *Vedic* texts. There seem to have been written many learned works in the *Mimansa* tradition before Jaimini. Amongst these (as mentioned in some of the books) are Atreya, Ashmarathya, Aitishayan, Kamukayana, Karshnajini, Badarayana, Badari, Lubukayana, Alekhan and Audulomi.

2.5 Commentators

The commentators on *Mimansa sutras* have written commentaries in the form of "*Vritti*" or "*Bhashya*". The names of many of these occur in other works, though some of their own works are not now available. The following are some of the principal authors:-

- (a) Bodhayana - His name occurs in the works of Sabraswami and Sankara. He wrote a detailed commentary on all the 20 Chapters of *Mimansa*.
- (b) Upavarsha - He wrote "*Vritis*" on both *Purvamimansa* and *Uttaramimansa*. He finds mention in the works of Sabara and Sankara.
- (c) Devaswami - A commentary on the *Sankarshakanda* is linked with him. His name finds mention in the book *Prapanchahridaya*.
- (d) Bhavadasa - He seems to have written a "*Vritti*", which finds mention in the works of Kumarila Bhatta and Parthasarathi Mishra, as also in the *Shrautasutra* of Aapastamba.
- (e) Bhartrimitra - He seems to have written a "*Prakarana*" by the name of *Tatwashuddhi*. His work finds mention in the books of Parthasarathi, Mishra, Umbela Bhatta and Jayanta Bhatta.
- (f) Sabaraswami - He is one of the most well-known commentators on Jaimini's 12 Chapters and is believed to have belonged to the 2nd century A.D. His exposition has been praised by Kumarila Bhatta at several places. He has received laudatory mention in the works of Sankaracharya. It was his work that gave impetus to the trilogy of *Mimansa* books, constituted by the works of Kumarila Bhatta¹, Prabhakara Misra² and Murari Misra. (Murari Misra's contribution is, however, now almost extinct).
- (g) With Kumarila Bhatta, began a new sub-division known as "*Bhatta-prasthan*". With Prabhakara, began another sub-division known as "*Prabhakara-prasthan*".

2.6 Kumarila Bhatta (*Bhatta Prasthan*)

Kumarila Bhatta is one of the most famous commentators in *Mimansa*. He was from South India according to one view, while according to another view, he was from Bihar. He is generally taken to have belonged to the 7th century A.D.

1. Paragraph 2.6 *infra*.

2. Paragraph 2.12 *infra*.

2.7 Kumarila's works

Kumarila Bhatta has written a commentary on the 12 Chapters of *Sabarabhashya* which itself is a commentary on Jaimini. His commentary is divided into —

- (1) *Shlokavartika*,
- (2) *Tantravartika*, and
- (3) *Dusteeka*.

There are also references (in other authors) to Kumarila Bhatta's *Brihat-teeka* and *Madhya-teeka*, but these are not available today.

On Kumarila's own commentary, there are several commentaries, of which the following are well known:-

- (a) Parthasarathi Mishra's *Nyaya-Ratnakara*, and
- (b) Umbeḷa Bhatta's *Tatparya Teeka*.

2.8 Mandana Misra

Mandana Misra is the most distinguished of the disciples of Kumarila Bhatta. His best known works are —

- (a) *Vidhiviveka*,
- (b) *Bhavnaviveka*,
- (c) *Mimansanukramani*,
- (d) *Vibhrama-viveka*,
- (e) *Sphotosiddhi*, and
- (f) *Brahmasiddhi*.

Works at (a) to (d) above are on *Mimansa*. The work at (e) above is a book on grammar. The book at (f) above is on *Vedanta*.

2.9 Umbeka Bhatta and Parthasarathi Misra

Umbeka Bhatta, the second disciple of Kumarila Bhatta, wrote a commentary called *Tatparya Teeka* on Kumarila's *Shlokavartitika*. Parthasarathi Misra wrote commentaries on Kumarila Bhatta and also an independent book called *Nyaya-ratnamala*. His *Sastradeepika* is a highly erudite and lucid work on *Mimansa*.

2.10 Vidyaranyaswami Madhavacharya

The founder of Vijayanagara kingdom, who later took *Sanyasa* and was known as Vidyaranyaswami is well known for his works on *Vedanta* (most well known being *Panchadashi*). He also wrote, *inter alia*, following works on *Mimansa*:

- (a) *Jaiminiya Nyayamala*.
- (b) *Vistara*.

2.11 Khandadeva and Narayanbhatta

Khandadeva Bhatta gave a new dimension to *Mimansa* through his works -

- (a) *Bhatta-deepika*,
- (b) *Bhatta-Kaustubha*,
- (c) *Bhatta-Rahasya*.

Narayanbhatta (a combined name denoting two authors) wrote "*Manmeyodaya*" which is a treatise on the doctrine of Kumarila Bhatta in the form of verse.

2.12 The Prabhakara School

Another well known school of commentators on *Mimansa* came to be known as the Prabhakara School. The difference between the approach of Kumarila and that of Prabhakara is thus illustrated. The saying.... स्वाध्यायः अध्येतव्य ... stresses the need for devoted study. Now, study can be a literal one or it can be one accompanied by a meaningful understanding and an intelligent grasp of the subject by the pupil. What is the basis on which one can derive the last-mentioned proposition? Here, the Kumarila School and the Prabhakara School suggest two different avenues for reaching the same conclusion. According to the Kumarila School, no study by the **student** can be achieved unless the **student** has had an intelligent grasp of what is taught. According to the Prabhakara School, no **teaching** by the teacher can be complete if the **teaching** is not accompanied by an intelligent grasp of the subject by the student. Thus, in the former, the emphasis is on the student, while in the latter, the emphasis is on the teacher. The ultimate object of both the schools is to establish the utility of *Mimansa*. Both the schools seek to demonstrate this by telling us how, by taking the saying in question as an example, they show the process of inferential reasoning in operation, but the actual line of reasoning differs in each school!

Prabhakara who founded this school is believed to have lived in the period 610-690 AD and to have been a resident of Kerala, that being the region in which his doctrines were more widely prevalent than elsewhere.

Prabhakara wrote the following commentaries on *Sabarabhasya* (which itself was a commentary on Jaimini):-

- (a) *Brihati* (also known as *Nibandhan*), and
- (b) *Laghvi* (also known as *Vivarana*).

Of these, only the *Brihati* is extant at present.

2.13 Commentaries on Prabhakara

Several commentaries have been written on the works of Prabhakara. Some of the better known authors and their works are mentioned below:-

- (a) Shaleknatha Misra (8th to 9th century AD) who wrote the following works:
 - (i) *Rijuvimalapanchika* - a commentary on Prabhakara's *Brihati*.
 - (ii) *Deepshikhapanchika* - a commentary on Prabhakara's *Laghvi*.
 - (iii) *Prakaranapanchika* (an original work).
 - (iv) *Bhashya Parisishtha* (an original work).
- (b) Bhavanatha, who wrote *Jayaviveka*, explaining the doctrines of Shalikhatha. On *Jayaviveka* itself, four commentaries were written and are extant today. These are the following:
 - (i) Rantideva's *Vivekalatwa*.

- (ii) Varadaraja's *Nayavivekadeepika*.
- (iii) Shankar Misra's *Panchika*.
- (iv) Damodar's *Nayavivekalankara*.
- (c) Nandeeshwar, who wrote *Prabhakarvijaya*.
- (d) Ramanujacharya, who wrote *Tantra-rahasya*.

2.14 Murari School

The Murari School is generally regarded as third school of *Mimansa*, but it is not very certain that the works assigned to him were really written to him.

2.15 Vrittis

Several works in the category of "*Vrittis*" have been written wherein some of the established principles of *Mimansa* have been elaborated with a view to supporting or rebutting particular theories or views about some issues connected with the *Mimansa* system. One such *Vritti* is Venkanath's *Seshwar-Mimansa* where the author has challenged the assumption made by the Prabhakar School that Jaimini was an atheist.

Another *Vritti* is the *Kutuhel- Vritti* of Vasudev Dikshit, which is concerned with the difference of approach that one finds between the *Mimansakas* and the *Yagnikas* with reference to the sacrificial rites. The former support a rational concept of such rites, while the latter prefer to adhere to traditional approach on the subject. Rameshwar Suri wrote a lucid *Vritti* on the *sutras* of Jaimini under the title of "*Subodhini*". Several other *Vrittis* have also been written.

2.16 Adhikaranas

The *Adhikaranas* are books wherein the approach adopted is different from mere collection of *Sutras*. Here, the *Sutras* relevant to a particular topic are collected with a particular scheme in mind wherein a particular interpretation is sought to be elaborated. These books are useful as offering material in support or rebuttal of rival views. But this tends to make them cumbersome and verbose. Most well known work in this category is Parthasarathi's *Shastra-deepika* - itself the subject of numerous commentaries. The well known commentaries are: -

- (a) Ramakrishna's *Yuktisnehapoorani. Siddhanta Chandrika*.
- (b) Someshwar Bhatt's *Kapoorvartika*.
- (c) Somnath's *Mayoorkalika*.
- (d) Sudarshanacharya's *Prakash*.
- (e) Kamlakar's *Aloka*.

Madhavacharya's *Jaimineeya-Nyayamala* and Khandadeva's *Bhatta-deepika* are also works falling in the category of *Adhikaranas*. *Bhatta-deepika* has itself been the subject of several commentaries.

2.17 Prakaranas

Finally, several works in the nature of *Prakaranas* came to be written roundabout the 16th century. Chief amongst these are :-

- (a) Ganga Bhatta's *Bhatta Chintamani*.
- (b) Raghavananda's *Bhatta Sangraha*.
- (c) Appaya Dikshit's *Vidhi Rasayan*.
- (d) Apadeva's *Mimansa-nyaya-prakasha*.
- (e) Laughakshikabhaskara's *Arthasangraha*.
- (f) Shankar Bhatta's *Mimansa-bala-prakasha*.
- (g) Krishnayajva's *Mimansa Paribhasha*, and
- (h) Narayana Bhatta's *Bhatta-bhasha-prakashika*.

2.18 Translations and other works

With the works enumerated in the preceding paragraph, the traditional modes of exposition seem to have come to a halt. It was now the turn of translations and simplified expositions. The techniques of criticism also seem to have developed, but no noteworthy developments in the direction of original contributions can be noticed. Nevertheless, the science of *Mimansa* has gone on being enriched by the contributions of several learned scholars.