



Perception: A Critique of Nyaya Philosophy

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Abstract:

In this article, I have attempted to discuss a critical concept of “perception” from the standpoint of Nyaya philosophy. As inference, analogy and testimony are dependent on perception, so I attempt to establish the concept of supremacy of “perception”. First step of my analysis is to define ‘perception’ according to Maharsi Gautama’s Nyaya-sutra 1/1/4. I have discussed this definition given by Gautama is detailed and from different analytical perspectives. In order to establish this definition given by Gautama, I have analysed the Buddhist view of pratyaksa and also Vedantis. Also I have compared the concept of pratyaksa as was given by Nyaya with that given by Western Philosophers Kant, Whitehead, Russell and Heidegger. As the Nyaya-sutra 1/1/4 was questioned by other philosophical schools, I tried to justify the Nyaya-sutra 1/1/4 from two alternative standpoints. Does the so-called definition really state the nature of perception or does it express but the cause of perception? In this regard, I have discussed the sense-object contact theory of perception. Atma-manah-samyoga and indriya-manah-samyoga – these two types of concepts establish and justify the definition of perception that had been given by Maharsi Gautama.

Keywords: Prime Supremacy of Perception, Basic Concept of Pratyaksa Prama, Definition of Perception, Indriya, Artha, Sannikarsa, Different view of sense-object contact theory and Justification of Gautama’s Definition of Perception.

According to Nyaya philosophy, the four solid pillars of perception, inference, analogy and testimony stand the Nyaya edifice of knowledge. One of them, perception comes first and as superior to all sources of knowledge, because of its priority, acceptability and independence. Perception is jyestha in the sense that it is prior to all other paramana and thus the basis of all them. Further, perception is not dependent on any other pramana, whereas inference, analogy and testimony are all dependent on perception. There is no doubt about the legitimacy of perception any dissatisfaction about that which is directly perceived. This is completely universally acknowledged. The supremacy of perception over others depends on two such ways to consideration. Firstly, it is the basis of all other sources of knowledge. An inference is possible we have to take recourse to three conditions; viz, the observation of hetu in the paksa; the observation of invariable concomitance between hetu and sadhya, as evidence in domestic kitchen, mahanasa, and lastly the observation of vyaptivisita linga in the said paksa. In the older Nyaya terminology, the first condition to be fulfilled in the case of inference is called prathama linga darsana, the second condition

dwitiya linga darsana and the third tritiya linga darsana. In Navya Nyaya parlance, these three conditions are named respectively as paksadharmatajnana, vyaptijkana and paramarsajnana. Each of these three conditions in isolation may be termed necessary condition while their totality or conglomeration may be called sufficient conditions of inference. This is why Maharsi Gautama starts the discussion on inference by prefacing the words ‘atha tatpurvakam’¹. The word ‘atha’ refers to the determination of anumana after the determination of pratyaksa. The word ‘tatpurvakam’ refers to definite perceptual kind of knowledge. That is why Vatsyayana explicates the meaning of ‘tatpurvakam’ in the following words: ‘tatpurvakam’ iti anena lingalinginoh sambandhadarsanam lingadarsananca abhisambadhyate. Lingi-linginoh sambaddhayoh darsanena lingasmrith abhisambadhyate. Smrtya lingadarsanena ca apratyakso artho anumiyate.² Similarly, upamana or analogy between go (cow) gavaya (cow-like animal) is dependent upon perception of the points of similarity or dissimilarity between them. So also sabda or testimony. In Nyaya-sutra sabda is defined as aptopadesa.³ but who is an apta? Vatasayana, the celebrated commentator on Nyayasutra, brings out clearly the meaning of apta by saying that apta in one who has directly perceived any of the padarthas-saksatkrtadharma.⁴ Vacaspati Misra in his ‘Tatparyatika’⁵ further elucidates the meaning of ‘apta’ by saying that anyone who knows directly any tattva by means of inference or testimony and then narrates the same through sentences is also an apta.

In other words, if any padartha is vindicated by means of any of the strong, forceful pramana, then the padartha is being considered as much as perceived, i.e., saksatkaratulya. Apta is then regarded as saksatkrtadharma. But after directly knowing the truth or reality, if a person desists from its upadesa owing to idleness etc., then he is not to be treated as an apta. He must have the capacity to deliver the truth of his realization to others through the utterance of words, sentences etc. Hence testimony is also dependent upon direct or intuitive knowledge of truths communicated by an apta or reliable person. In this sense, not only the rsis or sages who directly perceive the super sensible but also the aryas and the mleccas who directly know the sensible objects are covered by the term apta.⁶ whatever it be, it is clear that the perceptual knowledge is considered by the Naiyayikas as the ultimate ground of all other knowledge by inference, analogy and testimony.

Prime Supremacy of Perception: The second consideration which leads to the supremacy of perception over the rest is that it is the final test of all knowledge. If there be any doubt regarding the knowledge from inference or analogy or even testimony, perception comes to our rescue. We may question the truth of knowledge derived from inference, analogy and testimony; but we do not raise any question as a matter of fact about that which we perceive. Perception is thus in a way beyond question. To explain; suppose, one infers the presence of fire in the hill on the observation of smoke issuing forth from there. Now if any entertains serious doubt the presence of fire in the hill, then he can be silence in two ways, i.e., either by pratyaksa itself or by tarka dependent on previous perceptual experiences. He should be led to the spot itself where the smoke is issuing from and be convinced that fire is also actually present there. Or we may dispel his doubt by resorting to tarka, a kind of

indirect proof. If smoke is possible without fire, then it is not due to fire. But all our experiences support that fire is the known cause as evidenced everywhere. It is true that smoke is produced only on conditions of the fuel being wet. But wet-fuel alone is not the cause of smoke. To produce smoke fire is necessary along with wet-fuel. Thus it proves indirectly the dependence of smoke on fire. Similarly in the case of upamana or analogical knowledge between a cow and a cow-like animal, we are to depend on perceptions of the similarity of the two creatures. If anybody raises any doubt regarding the similarity of gavaya with go, he can be assured of this truth by making him perceive the go, gavaya and the points of resemblance between them. So also the knowledge from testimony may require confirmation and the confirmation is available from the perception of the written or spoken words. Even if it is held that testimony is at best confirmed by a process of inferential reasoning, then it can be humbly said that inferential reasoning in its turn is dependent upon perceptual verification. Perceptual verification needs no further verification since what is perceived is taken to be true. Even if we raise any doubt about the validity of perception itself, as for example, in the case of illusion perception of snake in a rope and the like, the remedy lies in the perception itself. That is to say, the error in perception can be corrected or rectified by subsequent perception. Moreover, it is to be pondered seriously whether the object of perception in the case of illusion appears to be a wrong one. In truth, however, error is not detected at the time of perception itself. It arises only afterwards, in reflective thoughts, i.e., to say, when we are perceiving the object as rope what was taken to be snake previously. Be that as it may, perception is thus the final test of all knowledge. This is perhaps one of the reasons why perception has been admitted by all the Indian thinkers although they differ regarding the possibility of other source of knowledge. A word is caution here. Though pratyaksa has been regarded by many as superior (jyestha) to all other sources of knowledge, the Advaita Vedantins strike a discordant note. For them, scriptural knowledge or testimony is superior to all other knowledge. And that if any knowledge, even pratyaksa, comes into conflict with scriptural knowledge, we are to accept testimony and not perception. Thus the world which appears as real in perception is condemned by the Advaitins on the strength of scriptural knowledge.

Basic Concept of Pratyaksa Pramana: Before proceeding to the definition of pratyaksa let us ponder for a moment on the etymological meaning of the word. Vatsyayana draws our attention to the etymology of the word by saying aksya aksya prativisayam vrttim pratyaksam⁷. Here the word 'aksya' stands for sense-organ. By the word 'vrtti' is meant contact which is an operative cause of perceptual knowledge. The word 'prati' refers to respective objects of knowledge associated with respective sense-organs. For example, the sense-organ of vision can have the impression of colour, but not taste, smell etc.. The reason is simple. The visual sense-organ is composed of light and so receives the impression of colour which is but a quality of light. This is true in other cases of sense-organs. The rule is that the sense-organ which is composed of a particular substance can grasp the quality belonging to that substance only, and any other. In truth, however, the meaning of pratyaksa is threefold.⁸ It refers not only to pratyaksa prama or perceptual cognition arising out of

sense-object contact but also to pratyaksa pramana or instrument of perceptual knowledge and visaya or object of perceptual knowledge. We have expressions like pratyaksa jnanam, pratyaksam pramanam and pratyaksah ghatah to stand for prama, pramakarana and visaya respectively. That this word is suggestive of different meaning is known from its etymology. It is well understandable why the English word “perception” is not a proper synonym of pratyaksa. It is indeed difficult to translate a word of one language by a word of a different language. By the way, it is worth noticing that the Vaisesikas coin the same word pratyaksa for both pratyaksa pramana and pratyaksa prama besides pratyaksa visaya. But they coin two different words to designate pramakarana and prama in other cases of knowledge except in the case of pratyaksa. To explain; while the term anumana represents the karana, anumiti represents the resultant knowledge or prama. Similarly in the case of analogical knowledge, we have upamana as a pramana and upamiti as a pramiti. So also in the case of testimony, sabda is pramana, sabdabodha is the prama. Why the Naiyayikas who are the champions of the analysis of language to clear all misunderstanding fail to use different words for pratyaksa pramana and pratyaksa prama remains a wonder.

Definition of Pratyaksa: Let us now state that Nyaya definition of perception. In his Nyaya-sutra 1/1/4 Gautama defines perception as ‘indriyārtha sannikarsotpannam jnanam avyapadesyam avyabhicari vyavasayatmakam pratyaksam’.⁹ Perceptual knowledge arises out of sense-object contact which is different from verbal knowledge, is uncontradicted i.e. real and is infallible. Let us explain this definition first.

Indriya: It is to be noted that perception is a kind of knowledge that is produced by a contact or relation between the sense-organ (indriya) and object (artha). By sense-organ the Naiyayikas mean five external sense-organs which are capable of grasping five external objects and an internal sense-organ which is capable of grasping internal object. These external sense-organs are caksu (eye), karna (ear), nasika (nose), jihva (tongue) and tvak (touch). So there are as many sense-organs as there are objects in the external world – rupa, sabda, gandha, rasa and sparsa. The internal sense-organ i.e. manas is admitted not only to produce knowledge on internal object like sukha, dukkha etc. but also to help generate knowledge of external object. To explain; if the manas are absent where the external sense-organ is in contact with the external object, we have no perception at all. That is why besides indriya-visaya-samyoga we have to admit indriya-manah-samyoga and atma-manah-samyoga as causes of perception. We shall notice later on that the last two are the common causes of any knowledge produced whatever. Only indriyārtha samyoga can be looked upon as the asadharana karana or uncommon causes of perceptual knowledge. Let us note in passing that the Naiyayikas do not admit any karmendriyas¹⁰ like vak, pani, pada, payu and upastha admitted by Samkhya and other schools. For them, an indriya is responsible for the production of knowledge only and not for activity. Had there been any indriya for the production of activity, we would have to admit innumerable karmendriyas besides the five mentioned earlier. In that case stomach, heart, lung etc., would have to be called karmendriyas. But those who admit karmendriyas restrict them only to five. The term

‘indriya’ is applied to different karmas only secondarily in the Sastras: Ekadasendriyani ahu yani purve manisinih.¹¹

An objection may be raised here. Maharsi Gautama has not refuted karmendriyas explicitly. Hence, according to Tantrayukti,¹² karmendriyas are to be admitted as approved by Gautama. In reply it may be said that Maharsi has established clearly by means of arguments the existence of five kinds of external sense-organs. He has not even called them jnanendriyas only to distinguish from other types of indriyas, viz., karmendriyas. He has simply coined the term indriya and that shows that he is not approving any other indriya besides the five stated above viz., caksa, karna, jihva, nasika and tvak.

A further objection, Maharsi states different arguments to prove the existence of manas. But he appears silent on the indriyatva of manas. How then can we understand that manas is also approved by Gautama as an indriya? If one here takes recourse to Tantrayukti, the same way may be cited in the case of karmendriyas as well. As an answer to the above objection it is held that Maharsi has stated clearly manas in the list of twelve prameyas. Of these twelve prameyas indriya appears in the third position. There he explicitly mentions manas as a separate indriya. Moreover, Vatsyayana in his commentary writes: tantrantara samacarat ca.¹³ There he argues that Maharsi has not refuted the indriyatva of manas as approved in other Sastras. If the view of others is not rejected after stating one’s own view then that view is accepted as one’s own, i.e., anumata. This is tantrayukti. So the claim of manas as an indriya is supportable on the ground of tantrayukti. But the claim of karmendriyas as indriya is rejected secondarily with the help of tantrantara samacarat ca. Here ‘ca’ does not signify samuccaya but anvacaya. This signifies why the claim of karmendriya is not predominant at all. The indriyatva of manas is shown by Vatsayayana in a different way. To the query of the opponent what should be the indriya in atma and sukhadi pratyaksa Vatsyana retorts indriyasa vai. Here the word ‘vai’ refers to indriyasyaiva, i.e., manas as indriya, according to Gautama. The reason why he mentions separately manas from the context of indriya is due to dharmabheda. The intention is that manas is very different from external sense-organs like caksa etc. While the external sense-organs are bhautika, manas is abhaitika. Each external sense-organ is constituted by earth, water, fire etc., and each is capable of grasping only a particular type of object. That is why we speak of visayavyavastha with regard to external sense and external objects. But no such visayavyavastha is acceptable in the case of manas. There is indeed no definite object for manas. In all cases of perception the participation of manas is necessary and essential. That is why manas can receive not only internal object like sukha, dukkha etc., but also rupa, rasa etc., even when it is not possessed of those gunas. Uddyotakara, however, does not accept above distinction between manas and other indriyas. According to him, abhautikatva characterises a non-eternal entity which clearly manas is not. He is of the opinion that the true distinction between them centres round the character of sarvavisayatva of manas and asarvavisayatva of other indriyas. But manas being very subtle in nature can but give rise to one perception even when the different sense-organs may be related to different objects at a time. That simultaneous perception of different objects at a time is not possible is due to

anuparimantva of manas. When manas comes in contact with one object, it desists from a contact with other objects even though different sense-organs are associated with them. This ayogapadyatva of manas explains why we do not have more than one perception at a time. So, manas being an indriya, though of a different sort, there does not arise any question of alternative definitions in the case of atma pratyaksa or sukhadi pratyaksa. It is perhaps not out of place to mention that the author of Vedanta Paribhasa¹⁴ does not accept manas as an indriya. He cites as evidence the separate mention of manas in the Upanisads from the context of indriya. But this view of Dharmaraj Adhvarindra did not find favour with other Indian thinkers. Even Sankaracarya in his Sarirakabhasya (2/4/17) accepts manas as an indriya. The author of Bhamati, a commentary on Sankara-bhasya, also supports Sankara and explains why manas is stated separately in the Upanisads from the context of indriya. The reason is simple. Manas is distinct from other indriyas and this is the reason why it is not clubbed together with other indriyas in the Upanisads. This is also the reason why Maharsi treats manas separately under the prameyas because it is distinct from other external indriyas. Even in Bhagavadgita it is explicitly stated 'manah sastani indriyani'¹⁵ or 'indriyanam manschasm'¹⁶ which go to prove that manas is an indriya. The Sankhyaites¹⁷ also accept manas as an indriya. They too admit the distinctive character of this indriya, not including it either within the jnanendriyas or within the karmendriyas solely, but mentioning it as obhoyendriya. Similarly Maharsi Jaimini includes manas in his use of the word indriya when he says 'sat samprayage purusaya indriyanam buddhijanma tat pratyaksam'.¹⁸ Kumarila Bhatta, too, clearly recognizes manas as an indriya when he writes 'manasastu indriyatvena sukhaduhkhadi buddhisu'.¹⁹ In Caravasamhita,²⁰ too, mention is made of manas as an indriya.

That indriya is all together six is thus beyond dispute. But we should remember here that the Naiyayikas admit of the existence of one manas to be associated with everybody. There is no divergence of opinion in this respect. But opinion differs as regards visual sense-organ. While some Naiyayikas argue in favour of twin visual sense-organs, others favour the view that visual sense-organ is in fact one. It appears as two being distanced by nasal bones. As a matter of fact, the visual sense-organ is one though its locus is two. Both the parties advance arguments in their favour. The former point out that there are two visual sense-organs as there are two eyes. To recognize one visual sense-organ amounts to regarding one-eyed man as a blind man. In other words, the difference between one-eyed man and a blind man would cease to exist had there been only one visual sense-organ. Besides, it is true that when one eye is lost, the other remains operative. In a skull of a dead man also we find two cavities which were indicative of two visual sense-organs. There are other arguments too to prove the double vision theory. But those who support the one eye theory state that to admit two visual sense-organs is to contradict the established conclusion of five external sense-organs. Moreover, if visual sense-organ is admitted to be two, there cannot be any conjunction of manas with both the visual sense-organs. For manas is very subtle and atomic in nature and cannot be conjoined with both the eyes at one and the same

time. For a detailed debate on this issue, the readers are requested to consult further the Nyaya-bhasya, Vartik and similar texts.

We will finish our discussion on indriya after defining its exact meaning or significance. In Western psychology the words “sense-organ” is frequently used. But there is scarcely any attempt at defining it. The Indian thinkers are meticulous in their use of words. Hence much energy is spent on determining the exact meaning of the word ‘indriya’. Throughout the history of Indian thought we have three different views about what is exactly meant by an indriya. According to Buddhists, the indriyas or senses stand for the golakas or sense-orifices as visible to us, for example, the eyes, the ears etc.. The Mimamsakas do not accept the visible physiological organ as indriya. For them, indriya stands for a peculiar capacity (sakti) of the organ. Most other philosophers do not, however, subscribe to the above views. They argue that if visible orifices or their capacities were to be regarded as indriyas then serpents which were devoid of ears could not have any auditory perception at all. Moreover, trees which have no visible marks could not have perceived at all. That is why; indriya is not to be identified either with a sense-organ or its capacity. It is a different substance (dravya) altogether. It is composed of a definite substance and therefore receives the impression of that quality which resides in that substance. That the nose receives smell is due to the fact that it is constituted by earth and smell is a quality of earth. The rule that operates here and other cases of indriyas can be aptly expressed by borrowing the words of Empedocles: “like is known by like”. From what has been said above it is evident that indriyas for Naiyayikas are not visible or perceptible as the Buddhists think. Their existence is proved by inference. The act of perceiving must have some karana as every action presupposes some instrumental cause. This instrumental cause is indriya.

There is still another issue which must be brought to our notice here. As regards the modes of action of indriyas, the Indian thinkers hold to distinctive views. According to one view, the indriyas are aprapyakari, i.e., capable of working without reaching the object. This view is upheld by the Buddhists. They are of opinion that senses are attached to their respective golakas and as such cannot reach out of the object from the sockets. The sense-organs being visible physiological organs and are tied to their respective seats, it is impossible for them to come into actual contact with object lying far away. The Vedantins hold the opposite views. For them, every indriya is prapyakari, i.e., capable of working on reaching the object. They hold the view that is antahkarana that goes out to respective objects through the mediation of the senses. As a result consciousness determined by antahkarana undergoes modification and assume the form of the object. Like a jalouka (earthworm), its one end is tied to antahkarana and the other to the object, resulting in the subsequent knowledge of the object. Consciousness has got no form of its own, but assumes the form of the object to which it is lengthened. In the commentary on the “Samkhyakarika, Vacaspati Misra Writes: visayinam anuvadhanti, svena rupena nirupaniyam kurvanti iti yavat”.²¹ The term ‘visaya’ takes its origin from the root sin which means to bind. ‘Visaya’ thus etymologically means vi+sin+ach in the nominative case. Hence, ‘visaya’ is one which binds visayi after the nature of visaya itself. In other words, ‘visaya’ shapes the

antahkaranavacchinna caitanya after its own nature and thereby makes the object perceivable. Be that as it may, for the Vedantins it is absolutely necessary for every one of the senses to reach the object in order that contact is possible. If all the senses could perceive objects without coming in actual contact with them, as the Buddhists opine, then we could have perceived colours and sounds even when they were vanished. Similarly, we could have touched and tasted objects which were lying at a distance. So it is reasonable to conclude that all indriyas are prapyakari. The Naiyayikas, however, believe that of all the indriyas only visual sense-organ, i.e., caksu is capable of going out to the object through the help of external light. Other indriyas are not capable of going out. The Naiyayikas do not admit any movement of the ears to the object like the Vedantins. For them, ear is the nature of akasa which is devoid of any activity. Hence the movement of ears is impossible. Rather it is the sound itself that travels in waves and ultimately reaches the ears. But the contact that takes place is actual. In this sense Gautama looks upon all indriyas as prapyakari, i.e., coming in contact with the object to make the perception of object possible.

Artha: Let us now consider the meaning of ‘artha’ as used in the definition of pratyaksa. Here by the word ‘artha’ is meant object worthy of perceiving. Objects like akasa, kala etc., do not come under the purview of artha for they are not objects worthy of perceiving. Though the Bhattas think that kala (time) is perceived by all the indriyas, the Naiyayikas do not admit the possibility of the perception of time. However, objects which are perceivable by sense are many, according to the Naiyayikas. Some objects are perceived by means of sense only, while there are objects which are perceived by more than one sense. The objects like ghata (jar), pata (cloth) etc., and their respective gunas- like sankhya, parimana etc., - and also karma and jati belonging to the respective dravya are perceived by caksu and tvagindriya. Again rupa, rasadi gunas are perceived by one sense only like caksu, jihva etc.. In short by ‘artha’ is meant the perceivable object which is grasped by one sense or other.

Sannikarsa: The term ‘sannikarsa’ in the definition of perception signifies two types of sannikarsa – laukika and alaukika. The laukika sannikarsa are of six different varieties, viz., samyoga, samjukta samavaya, samjukta samaveta samavaya samavaya, samaveta samavaya and visesanata or visesya-visesana-bhava. In the perception of a jar, for example, the sannikarsa is samyoga. The visual sense-organ simply comes in contact with the object itself, namely, the jar in the case under consideration. In the perception of the colour of the jar, the sannikarsa is samjukta samavaya. For the eyes come in contact with the jar where the colour is present in the relation of inherence. In the perception of colourhood, the sannikarsa is samjukta samaveta samavaya. The colourhood is inherent in colour which in its turn is inherent in the substance, jar, in the case and the eyes come into contact with the jar. In the perception of sound, the sannikarsa is samavaya. For sound is a quality of ether (akasa) and it is also inherent in the empty place of the ear-hole (karna-vivarvarti-akasa). In the perception of soundness, the sannikarsa is samaveta samavaya. The soundness is inherent in sound which in its turn is inherent in the empty space of the ear-hole. In the perception of abhava, the sannikarsa is visesana-visesya-bhava. When, for example, we perceive the absence of a jar on the floor, our eyes come in contact with the floor (which is

visesa here) and the floor is qualified or characterised by the absence of jar (which is visesana in this case). Be it noted here that the Vaisesikas, unlike the Naiyayikas, do not admit the possibility of perception in the case of samavaya. They, on the contrary, establish samavaya by means of inference like *gunah-kriyadi-visista-buddhi visesana-visesya-sambandha-visaya visistabuddhitvat, dandipurusatva iti*. It is perhaps not out of place to mention that the Mimamsakas and the Advaitins do not recognize samavaya at all. They speak of three types of sannikarsa, namely, samyoga, tadatmya and samjukta tadatmya. For want of time I desist the temptation of explaining them here. But be it remembered here that only caksurindriya and tvagindriya can generate the perception of substance (dravya pratyaksa). As manas participate in every case of sannikarsa and without its presence no knowledge is possible, the casual efficacy of manas in the perception of dravya is also to be admitted. The remaining three indriyas like karna, jihva and nasika can never produce the perception of dravya. They can only generate the perception of sound, taste and smell respectively and these are all gunas. Though the sense of eye and touch can produce the perception of dravya, there is still a difference between the two. The eye can produce only three types of dravya pratyaksa, viz., ksiti, ap and teja. Vayu cannot be perceived visually. But touch can produce the perception of all the four substances of earth, water, fire and air. Thus it is evident that sannikarsa is a kind of relation between sense-organs on the one hand and perceivable objects on the other. Akasadi dravya padarthas are beyond the scope of perception.

Besides these six types of ordinary contact (laukika sannikarsa), the Naiyayikas also admit three types of extra-ordinary or alaukika sannikarsa. They are samanyalaksana, jnanalaksana and yogaja. When we perceive a cow, we also perceive the cowness inherent in it and through the perception of cowness (samanya) we perceive in an extra-ordinary manner all the cows – past, present and future. This is called samanyalaksana sannikarsa. Through jnanalaksana sannikarsa we visually perceive fragrance of sandalwood which really belongs to olfactory sense-organ. Here the previous memory of fragrance acts as a sannikarsa. By means of Yogaja perception, we perceive subtle objects like paramanu and distant or remote objects as well which are not ordinarily perceivable.

Incidentally, it may be pointed out that some Naiyayikas classify laukika pratyaksa under three heads—savikalpaka, nirvikalpaka and pratyabhijna. Savikalpaka is defined as visesya-visesana-sambandha-avagahi jnanam. Knowledge which is characterised with a visesya, a visesana and a sambandha is called savikalpaka or determinate perception. In the perception like ‘This is a jar’ (ayam ghatah), jar stands for visesya, jariness for visesana and samavaya stands for the relation between jar and jariness. This savikalpaka jnana is otherwise called visista buddhi. Visista buddhi, however, requires the presupposition of the knowledge of visesana as its logical Prius. Hence every savikalpaka pratyaksa must be preceded by knowledge of nirvikalpaka pratyaksa where we have the knowledge of visesya and visesana, but in an unrelated manner (Visesya-visesana-sambandha-anavagahi). Such a kind of knowledge, though admitted, is very difficult to illustrate. For, to illustrate is to take the help of language which always assumes the form and nature of savikalpaka. That is why the

author of Tarkasamgraha fails to specify its nature and simply says: yat idam kincit. Viswanatha also refers to it saying ghata-ghatvatve where both visesya (ghata) and visesana (ghatva) appears without being related as ghatva-vista-ghata. The Mimamsakas admit this type of nirvikalpaka pratyaksa as well. But for them, it is a psychological Prius. Before the occurrence of savikalpaka pratyaksa nirvikalpaka takes its rise. In other words, we have first nirvikalpaka perception before any savikalpaka perception which occurs subsequently. They illustrate the possibility of this type of perception by reference to children's perception for the first time or that of deaf and dumb persons' perception. Be it noted here that the Buddhists do not recognize savikalpaka perception as a genuine type of perception at all. For them, the nirvikalpaka perception alone is fit to be claimed as genuine perception. The Grammarians go to the other extreme in recognizing savikalpaka perception only denying the possibility of nirvikalpaka perception which is inexpressible through words. The Vadantins believe in the possibility of both these varieties. But their account substantially differs from that of the Naiyayikas. The third variety of laukika perception is pratyabhijna or recognition. When for example we say 'So 'ayam Devadatta' we have a perception of this type. Devedatta seen in the past is recognized as the same Devadatta perceived now.

Now a close look at Gautama's definition of perception will make us convince that the earlier part, viz., indriyatha sannikarsotpannam jnanam, constitutes the definition of perception while the latter half relates only to certain characteristics and classification of perception. The term 'avyapadesyam' refers to nirvikalpaka jnana which is asabda, i.e., not expressible through words. Similarly, the term 'vyavasayatkam' is included in the definition to make room for savikalpaka perception. The term 'avyabhicari' is inserted in the definition only to exclude erroneous perception from the domain of veridical perception. Though there are differences of opinion with regard to the interpretation of the above words, we would not enter into it for paucity of time. I shall rather confine my attention to two other theories of perception frequently found in Indian Philosophy.

Different View of Sense-Object: The sense-object contact theory of perception finds favour with the large majority of Indian thinkers. Besides the Naiyayikas, the Vaisesikas also opine that perceptual knowledge is conditioned by senses. In Padarthadharmasamgraha we find the definition of perception as 'Aksam aksam pratityotpadyate pratyaksam'. In a similar vein, the author of Samkhyakarika defines pratyaksa which he names drsta as 'pratavisaya adhyavasayo drstam'. Although Iswarkrishna does not explicitly state the fact of sense-object contact in this definition, yet it follows clearly when we collate the sutra and the commentaries on this point. In Nyayabhasya on Yogasutra the same view is propagated by saying that perception is a 'mental modification produced by sense-impressions and mainly related to the specific characters entering into the nature of the individual object of perception'. In Mimamsa-sutra and also in the school of Bhatta Mimamsa, as we have hinted earlier, perception is looked upon as a cognition produced by the efficient contact of senses with their objects. Varsaganya, a follower of the Mimamsa School, also reduces perception to the functioning of the sense-organs.

This customary way of defining perception in terms of sense-object contact has not been approved by the Buddhists on the one hand and the Vedantins, the Prabhakaras, the Jains and also a section of Naiyayikas on the other. According to Dinnag, a noted Buddhist logician, *pratyaksam kalpanapodham*.²² That is to say, *pratyaksa* must be free from any ideational or conceptual element which we frequently attach to the given datum. For the Buddhists, there are two kinds of objects in the world – *svalaksana* and *samanyalaksana*. In perception the unique particular is presented as a given datum. The concepts of name, class, quality, action and relation do not at all enter into the perception of an object. These are all added latter on to perception and these are supplied by imagination (*kalpana*). In truth, however, perception is an unerring cognition of the given *sensum* in complete isolation from any description by name or class etc.. Dharmakirti restates Dinnag's definition with the addition of the word '*abhrantam*' after *kalpanapodham*²³ only to exclude explicitly *savikalpaka pratyaksa* which, according to him, is a case of erroneous perception. For *savikalpaka pratyaksa* is characterised by *nama*, *jati* etc., which are looked upon as *vikalpas*, i.e., ideational element and not sensuous element. Hence true perception must be *nirvikalpaka*, i.e., free from any association with *vikalpa* like *nama*, *jati* etc. (*namajatyadi jojana rahita*). This Buddhistic view has been severely criticised by Udyotakara, Vacaspati Misra, Udayanacarya, Jayanta Bhatta and others. Let us mention a few of them.

The main objection to this theory is that the un-interpreted sensation of a unique particular (*svalaksana*) does not amount to knowledge and as such cannot be regarded as *pratyaksa* even. Kant has clearly pointed out that the sense datum must be properly arranged, systemised or conceptualised in order that it is raised to the status of knowledge. As he aptly puts it: "intuitions without concepts are blind".²⁴ Further, it may be asked why the Buddhists offer any definition of perception at all. For the task it is self-contradictory. If what is perceived admits of no description by concepts and words, then it is akin to define and determine what is indefinable and indeterminable. It is also to be taken into consideration here that if *pratyaksa* is absolutely devoid of characterisation by words and concepts what exactly is the need for characterising it by words like *kalpanapodham* and *abhrantam*. Further, the unique individual object which appears to give rise to indeterminate perception must be regarded as the cause of such perception. Being the cause, the object must be antecedent to perception. But the object is momentary and must cease to exist before it gives rise to any perception. In other words, when perception is or appears, its momentary cause, namely, the object, must cease to exist. The object cannot therefore be the cause of perception. Moreover, without assuming the possibility of *savikalpaka pratyaksa*, we cannot meaningfully speak of the possibility of *nirvikalpaka pratyaksa* at all. The famous verse of Udayana '*Na vajatyam vina tat syat, na tasmin anuma bhabet, vina tena na tat siddhi, nadhyaksam niscayam vina*'²⁵ may be cited here as a case in point. Thus the Baudhdha definition suffers from *avyapti dosa* as well. Lastly, if all perceptions were objectively determined as Vasubandhu opines – *tato arthad vijnanam pratyaksam* – then inferential knowledge would also come under the purview of this definition. For what is inferred is an objective fact and has an objective basis. This is true about all other kinds of

valid knowledge. Even the illusory perception of snake in a rope is not altogether without some objective basis. That is why the definition is subject to ativyapti dosa too. It is not perhaps out of place to mention that the notion of an ineffable sensum, like the Buddhists' svalaksana has also been repudiated by some eminent Western thinkers like Whitehead, Heidegger, Bosanquet, Dewey and others.

Let us now discuss in a nutshell the views of Vedantins and others who do not subscribe to sense-object contact theory. The Advaitins hold that perception is immediate knowledge in which the mental modification (antahkaranavrtti) is non-different from the object and is lit up by self's light. The immediacy in question is not actually brought about by any sense-object contact. If there be any sense-object contact at all in the case of perception, that is more accidental than essential. Similarly, the Prabhakaras also hold: 'Saksat pratiti pratyaksam'. Perception is the direct cognition of the object. For the Jains too, pratyaksa is the direct and immediate knowledge of objects – visadajnanasvabhabam. The Navya Naiyayikas also prefer to define perception not in terms of sense-object contact but with the character of immediacy. Pratyaksasya saksatkaritvam laksanam. This at once reminds us of Hobhouse²⁶ who also holds that it is the 'immediate presence to consciousnesses, 'not... dependence on any sense-organ or on any special kind of physiological stimulus' that the true character of perception consists in. Stebbing²⁷ also seems to endorse this view of perception as immediate knowledge when she observes that in perceptual judgements we simply record what is taken to be directly given. Russell²⁸ also seems to agree with this view when he declares that any knowledge of acquaintance gives us a direct knowledge of things.

Justification of Gautama's Definition: Let us now try to justify Gautama's definition and see in that connection whether perception can at all be defined in terms of immediacy without reference to sense-object contact. Gautama's definition of perception as indriyārtha sannikarsotpannam jñanam etc., has been objected to by the opponents on the ground that it is an incomplete one. Does the so-called definition really state the nature of perception i.e., definition? Or does it express but the cause of perception? The opponents are quick to point out that both the alternatives are indefensible. The second alternative is not defensible because perception is not caused by sense-object contact only. There are other causes of perception as well, viz., atma-manah-samyoga etc.. But the sutra in which perception is defined fails to explicate the other causes of perception. The first alternative that it is a true definition of perception is also not acceptable. For the sutra simply state the cause of the origin of perception and the mere explication of the cause of perception cannot be equated with definition. As an answer to the above objections Udyotakara points out that none of the alternatives is faulty or defective. In defence of the second alternative it can be held that sense-object contact is the asadharana karana (uncommon cause) of perception. The so-called atma-manah-samyoga (contact between the self and manas) is a common cause because it is present in all types of cognition – perceptual, inferential, analogical and verbal cognitions. Hence by virtue of a sadharana karana (common cause) perception remains indistinguishable from other types of cognition. This is why in pratyaksa-sutra, an

asadharana karana has been mentioned and there is nothing wrong in it. Again, if we hold the first alternative, the definition appears quite satisfactory. For, perception can be defined truly with reference to its uncommon cause. A true definition must be present in all the *laksya vastus* (definable objects) and differentiates the definable objects from *alaksya vastus* (indefinable objects). Now, the sense-object contact by means of which perception is defined is present in all case of perception. But it does not cause any other kind of cognitions like inference etc.. So the above definition can be called a definition in the true sense of the term.

Gautama himself has offered two kinds of solutions to the above objections. One may be called the *apta utara* or the apparent answer and the other *prakrta utara* or the real answer. The *apta utara* includes that (1) *atma-manah-samyoga* which is also one of the causes of perception has also been somehow incorporated in the definition. (2) Nor is *indriya-manah-samyoga* which is another cause of perception dropped or omitted in the definition. The real answer of Gautama consists in explicitly stating that perception is due to, or arises out of, sense-object contact which is its *asadharana karana*. In sutra 26 of the second *ahnika* of *prathama adhyaya*, Maharsi states: *pratyaksanimittvat ca indriyarthayoh sannikarsasya svasabdena vacanam*.²⁹ The intention of Maharsi is this. If we do not state any of the causes of perception, then that cannot be considered as a definition at all. Now, if we mention *atma-manah-samyoga* only as the cause of perception, then the definition becomes too wide, for it includes inference etc., besides perception. Inference and other cognitions as well are also due to *atma-manah-samyoga* which is a common cause of perception. If, on the other hand, we mention *indriya-manah-samyoga* as the only cause of perception, the definition becomes too narrow, not being applicable to mental perceptions (*manasa pratyaksa*). Hence, *pratyaksa* can be truly defined with reference to sense-object contact (*indriya-visaya sannikarsa*) which is its uncommon cause. This is the reason why *indriyārtha sannikarsa* has been explicitly stated (*svasabda vacanam*). That sense-object contact is predominant in perception has been further vindicated by Gautama on the consideration of knowledge of *suptamana* and *vyasaktamana vyakti*.³⁰ The primary of sense-object contact has been further shown by the fact that perception is in fact designated by or named with, reference to either a sense-organ (*caksusa, rasana* etc.) or an object (*rupajnana, rasajnana* etc.). Again, as the sense-organs are five and their objects are also five, we admit five types of external perception. This is also a reminder that sense-object contact is predominant in perception.

Conclusion: Let us consider the definition from another perspective. It is said that the Nyaya definition of perception is defective. If we define perception as *indriyārtha sannikarsotpannam jnanam* then the definition becomes too wide. For it not only includes perception but also other types of cognition as well. Just as perception is *indriyajanya*, inference etc., also are *indriyajanya* in as much as without *manas* no knowledge is possible, be it perceptual or otherwise. So every knowledge is *manojanya* and *manah* is an *indriya*. As an answer to this objection it can be held that *manah* functions as an *indriya* in the case of perceptual knowledge and so it is *indriyatvavacchinna*. But *manah* functions as a *karana* or cause in the case of inferential knowledge etc., not as an *indriya*. So it is

manastvavacchinna in those cases. The avcchedaka being different, indriyajanyatva can be said belong to perceptual cognition alone. Another difficulty may crop up. The Nyaya definition of perception does not apply to divine perception. It is said that God perceives everything in this world like a kuvalaya phala on His palm (Sa ha Bhagavan karatala kalita kuvalaya phalavat akhilam idam anavaratam avalokayati). But it is also admitted in the Sruti that He has no body and no senses. Apanipadau jabana grhitva pasyati acaksu sasrnotro 'karna etc. His perception is nitya or eternal. But the Nyaya definition of perception being not applicable to God's perception is subject to avyapti dosa. As an answer to this objection it may be said that iswarapratyaksa is not the laksa of Gautama's definition. This is clear from his use of term 'utpanna' (i.e., produced). Only human perception is produced, not the divine one. So, human perception has been defined here. And hence the charge of avyapti (too narrow) does not bear scrutiny. The opponents may further argue that in that case divine perception is to be recognized as a fifth source of knowledge which is against tradition. As a result some Naiyayikas define perception is jnanakaranakam jnanam pratyaksam, i.e., to say, perception is a kind of knowledge which is not brought about by the instrumentality of any other knowledge. To explain; the inferential knowledge is produced by means of vyaptijnana, paramarsajnana etc.; the analogical knowledge by sadrsyajnana etc., and the verbal knowledge by padajnana etc. But perceptual knowledge is not brought by any other knowledge. Hence the perceptual knowledge is jnana akaranaka jnana whereas inferential knowledge etc., are jnana karanaka jnana. It is worth noticing here that this definition is not also satisfactory in accordance with Vatsayayana and other older Naiyayikas. For, according to them, any veridical perception is also caused by hanadi budhi.³¹ Moreover; every savikalpaka perception presupposes nirvikalpaka perception as logically prior to it, and thereby invalidating the claim of perception as jnanakaranaka jnana. Let us reconcile these two views after Kesava Misra. In his Tarkabhasa he argues that perception is the source of valid immediate knowledge (the Navya Nyaya view) and immediate knowledge is that which is brought about by sense-object contact (the Pracina Nyaya view). Saksatkaripramakaranam pratyaksam, saksatkarini ca prama saivicyate yendriyaja. Thus the distinction between what is immediate and what is sensed in the case of perceptual knowledge is dissolvable.

Notes and References:

1. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on Nyaya-Sutra, 1/1/5.
2. Ibid, 1/1/5.
3. Ibid, 1/1/7.
4. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on 'Tatparyatika': Sudrdha pramanena avadharita saksatkrta dharma padartha hitahitaprapti parihartha jena.
5. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on 'Tatparyatika': Aptalakanasasya vyapakatvam aha 'rsi iti'. Darsanadrshih saksatkrta-traikalaya-vrtti-prameyamatrah. Aradghatah patakebhyah ityarjyo madhyalokah. Mlecchah prasiddhah.
6. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on Nyaya-Sutra, 1/1/7.

7. Tarkabagis, Mahamahopadhyay Phanibhusan; Nyayadarsana, Vol. I, Paschimbanga Rajya Purtak Parisad, Kolkata, 1981, p.87; and also Tarkasamgraha with Adhyapana commentary by Narayan Chandra Goswami, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, p.247.
8. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on Nyaya-Sutra, 1/1/4.
9. Ibid, 1/1/4.
10. Manusamhita, Ch. II, Verse 89.
11. Tarkabagis, Mahamahopadhyay Phanibhusan; Nyayadarsana, Vol. I, Paschimbanga Rajya Purtak Parisad, Kolkata, 1981, p.141.
12. Manasaca indriyabhavat na vacyam laksanantaram iti. Tantrantara samacarat ca etat pratyetyam iti.
13. Tarkabagis, Mahamahopadhyay Phanibhusan; Nyayadarsana, Vol. I, Paschimbanga Rajya Purtak Parisad, Kolkata, 1981, p.140
14. Smrtau tvekadasesdriyaniti mano api indriyatvena srotrativat samgrhyate.
15. Gita, 15/7.
16. Ibid, 10/22.
17. Ibid, 10/24.
18. Mimamsa-Sutra, 1/1/4.
19. Mimamsa-Sutra-Vartik, Verse 126.
20. Manodasendriyani arthah (Verse-15); Buddhi-indriya-manah arthanam (Verse - 23); Sarirakasthana.
21. Goswami, Narayan Chandra: Sankhyatattvakaumudi, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1406 Bangabdo, p.46.
22. Tarkabagis, Mahamahopadhyay Phanibhusan; Nyayadarsana, Vol. I, Paschimbanga Rajya Purtak Parisad, Kolkata, 1981, p.146.
23. Pratyaksam kalpanapodham abhrantam, Nyaybindu, Ch.I.
24. Kant, I.; Critique of Pure Reason, (Critique, B75).
25. Udayanacarya; Nyayakusumanjali, Stabaka I, Verse-16.
26. Hobhouse, L.T.; The theory of Knowledge, American Mathematical Society, New Work, 1896, p.15.
27. Stebbing, L.S.; Logic in Practice, Methue and Co. Ltd., London, 1934, p.13.
28. Russell, B.; the Problems of Philosophy, Henry Holt and Comp., New Work, 1912, Ch.V.
29. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on Nyaya-Sutra, 2/1/26.
30. Vatsayayana-Bhasya on Nyaya-Sutra, 2/1/27.
31. Hana Buddhi is one by means of which we renounce something as not desirable; Upadana buddhi helps us to receive something as desirable; Upeksha buddhi is the cause of indifference to something. Knowledge is an effect of any of the buddhi's mentioned above. 'Yada jnanam tada hana-upadana-upeksha-buddhayah palm'.