

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

**GANĠEŚOPĀDHYĀYA ON THE DEFINITION OF PERCEPTION**

Dr. Iti Chattopadhyay

In Nyāya Philosophy, perception (*pratyakṣa*) is considered as valid cognition as well as one of the means of valid cognition. When it is considered as the means of valid cognition, it is known as Pramāṇa and when it is considered as valid cognition it is known as Pramā. Perception is mentioned first in the Nyāya-Sūtra because of its primacy and independency of all cognitions. All cognitions like inference etc needs perception as perception underlies all other cognitions but perception does not need any cognition for its existence. Thus, perception occupies an important position in the Nyāya-Sūtra. This article attempts to examine the definition of perception as cognition (*pratyakṣa Pramā*) following *Tattacintamaṇi* of Gaṅgeśopādhyāya.

Sage Gautama in his Magnum Opus defines perception as “*Indriyārthasannikarṣotpannam jñānam avyapadeśyam avyabhichāri vyavasāyātmakam pratyakṣam*”<sup>1</sup> i.e., Perception is that cognition which is produced by the sense –object contact and which is determinate, unnameable and non-erratic. But, *Navya-Naiyayika Gaṅgeśopādhyāya* thinks that all these terms in the definition of Perception given by *Maharṣi Gautama* do not indicate the definition of Perception because the terms ‘*avyapadeśyam*’ and ‘*vyavasāyātmakam*’ denote the classification of Perception. These two terms represent the *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* or indeterminate perception and *savikalpaka pratyakṣa* or determinate perception respectively. So, according to him, “*Indriyārthasannikarṣotpannam avyabhichāri jñānam*” – this can be the definition of perception.

But *Gaṅgeśopādhyāya* thinks that “*Indriyārthasannikarṣotpannam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*” – this definition of perception is also faulty as it involves the charges of both *avyāpti* or under-coverage and *ativyāpti* or over-coverage. This definition is too narrow as it cannot be applicable to the perception of *īśwar* (God), because the perception of *īśwar* is eternal and thus cannot be produced.

Again, this definition is too-wide as it includes *ātmānumiti*, *ātmasmṛti* as its *lakṣya*. According to Gautama, the word ‘*artha*’ in the term ‘*Indriyārthasannikarṣotpannam*’, means ‘object’. In the case of ‘*ātmānumiti*’ and *ātmasmṛti* the object is ‘*ātmana*’ and the contact

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

between *ātmana* and *manasa* is the general cause of any cognition. So, here, both cases i.e., ‘*ātmānumiti*’ and *ātmasmṛti*, are produced by the contact of *ātmana* that is object and *manasa* that is sense organ. Thus, both are produced by sense-object contact. Hence, the fallacy of too-wide occurs.

Again, the definition “*Indriyārthasannikarṣotpannam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*” involves the fallacy of too-narrow due to the word of ‘contact’ or. In Nyāya Philosophy, there are six *laukika sannikarṣa* (ordinary contacts), namely, *saṁyoga* (conjunction), *saṁyukta- samavāya*, (*conjoined-inherence*), *saṁyukta-samaveta-samavāya* (*conjoined-inherent- inherence*), *samavāya* (*inherence*), *samaveta-samavāya* (*inherent- inherence*) and *viśeṣaṇatā* (qualification or particularity) and all these *sannikarṣa*-s (contacts) not only different but they play separate role in the origination of perception also. Thus, when Maḥarṣi says that perception is produced by the sense-object contact, the question arises, which type of contact or *sannikarṣa* is meant here? If it is said any contact or *sannikarṣa*, then the definition will suffer from the blemish of too-narrow. If we understand here *saṁyoga sannikarṣa*, then the definition of perception will be: ‘*Indriyārthasaṁyogasannikarṣotpannam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’. But this definition will not be applicable to the perceptions that are occurred due to the *sannikarṣa* (contact) other than *saṁyoga*. Hence the fallacy of too-narrow will appear. Again, if we take the term *sannikarṣa* as *samavāya*, then the definition of perception will not include those perceptions, originated by the *sannikarṣa* (contact) other than *samavāya*. In this way the charge of too-narrow will persist.

Again, if we understand by the term *sannikarṣa* or contact as any *sannikarṣa* stated above, then the definition again will suffer from the fallacy of *Bhāgāsiddhi*. We know that a definition serves two purposes, namely, differentiation (*vyāvartana*) and linguistic usage (*vyavahāra*). ‘*Vyāvṛtti*’ means to differentiate ‘*lakṣya*’ or ‘that is to be defined’ from ‘*a-lakṣya*’ or ‘what is not wished- for to be defined’. In this way, we infer that ‘*lakṣya*’ is different from ‘*a-lakṣya*’ through definition or *lakṣaṇa*. In this inference *lakṣya* is *pakṣa*, that which is different from *lakṣya* is *sādhya* and the *lakṣaṇa* is *hetu*.

Now, in the definition of perception, if we take the term *sannikarṣa* as any type of *sannikarṣa* (*yatkincit Sannikarṣa*) amongst the six mentioned above, the definition will suffer

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

from the fault of *bhāgāsiddhi*. If the *hetu* does not exist in a portion of the *pakṣa*, the *hetu* is faulty and such type of *hetu* is known as *bhāgāsiddha*. We can take the following inference as an example: ‘*Ṙṥhivī katṛṛjanyā kārjyatvāt*’. Here in this inference, *ṛṥhivī* is *pakṣa*, *katṛṛjanyatva* is *sādhyā* and *kārjyatva* is *hetu*. But such *kārjyatva* *hetu* does not exist in all the portions of the *pakṣa* i.e., *ṛṥhivī*, as there are two types of *ṛṥhivī*- eternal and non-eternal. The *kārjyatva* *hetu* does exist only in the non-eternal *ṛṥhivī*, but not in the eternal *ṛṥhivī*. Hence, as the *kārjyatva* *hetu* doesnot exist in the all portions of the *pakṣa*, *ṛṥhivī*, it is *bhāgāsiddha* *hetu*.

Now, in the case of perception, the inference (*Itarbhedānumāna*) is: ‘*Pratyakṣam pratyakṣetarabhinnam indriyārthasannikarṣayanyatvāt*.’ Now if here in this inference we take *saṃyoga* as *sannikarṣa* (*yatkincit sannikarṣa*), then the inference will be: ‘*pratyakṣam pratyakṣetarabhinnam indriyārthasaṃyogasannikarṣayanyatvāt*.’ Here, *pratyakṣa* is *pakṣa*, *pratyakṣetarabhinnatva* is *sādhyā* and *indriyārthasaṃyogasannikarṣayanyatva* is *hetu*. Here this *hetu* is *bhāgāsiddha* as it does not present in all types of perceptions as there are perceptions which are produced by other than the *saṃyoga sannikarṣa*.

Again, if we take the *samavāya* as the *sannikarṣa*, then the inference (*Itarbhedānumāna*) will be: ‘*Pratyakṣam pratyakṣetarabhinnam indriyārthasamavāyasannikarṣayanyatvāt*.’ Here *pratyakṣa* is *pakṣa*, *pratyakṣetarabhinnatva* is *sādhyā* and *indriyārthasamavāyasannikarṣayanyatva* is *hetu*. Here too *hetu* is *bhāgāsiddha* as all types of perceptions are not produced by the contact of *samavāya*.

To avoid such problem of *bhāgāsiddhi*, the term *sannikarṣa* should be omitted in the definition of perception and then the definition of perception will stand as follows: ‘*Indriyārthayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’ and the said inference (*Itarbhedānumāna*) will be: ‘*Pratyakṣam pratyakṣetarabhinnam indriyārthayanyatvāt*’. Here *pratyakṣa* is *pakṣa*, *pratyakṣetarabhinnatva* is *sādhyā* and *indriyārthayanyatva* is *hetu*. Here *hetu* is present in all types of perceptions and hence the *hetu* is free from the above-mentioned blemish i.e., *bhāgāsiddhi*.

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

So, the definition of the perception is ‘*Indriyārthayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam*’. Now in the request of law of parsimony which is accepted by the Indian Philosophy, the above definition may be either ‘*Indriyayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’ or ‘*Arthayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’. But whatever may be, both definitions are fallacious.

The first definition i.e., ‘*Indriyayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’ involves the fallacies of *ativyāpti* as well as *anyonyāśraya*. We know that the contact between soul and mind is the general cause of any knowledge and at the same time as mind is inner sense organ. So, any knowledge like inferential etc. must be produced by sense organ. Then the definition of perception will cover inferential knowledge also and thereby involves the fallacy of *ativyāpti* or too wide.

Again, the definition is not true as it suffers from the fallacy of *anyonyāśraya*. Because here we find we must have the knowledge of sense organ (indriya) in order to have perceptual knowledge and again we need a third type of knowledge whose subject matter is perception itself. Hence the fallacy of *anyonyāśraya* occurs.

Again, ‘*Arthayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’ this too is not the true definition of perception as it involves both the fallacies of *ativyāpti* or over-coverage and *avyāpti* or under-coverage. This definition covers the knowledge like *ātmānumiti*’ and *ātmaśmṛti* as they are produced by *artha* because here *ātmana* is the ‘*artha*’ or object of these knowledge. Further this definition suffers from the fault of *avyāpti* or under-coverage, as it is not applicable to *yogaja* perception. In this case, Yogi perceives many things which are not present at the time of his perception. So, such type of perception is not caused by *artha* or object. That’s why fallacy of *avyāpti* or under-coverage arises.

So, it is found both these ‘*Indriyayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’ and ‘*Arthayanyam avyabhichāri jñānam pratyakṣam*’ cannot be the right definition of perception.

1. To avoid such difficulty, Gaṅgeśopādhyāya presents these two definitions in the following manner: “*Viṣayatvena svaviśeṣyajanyam jñānam janya pratyakṣam*”<sup>ii</sup>
2. *Indriyajanyam jñānam janya pratyakṣam*”<sup>iii</sup>

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

In the first definition, there is no scope of the fallacy of too-wide in respect of *ātmānumiti*' and *ātmasmṛti*, as here *ātmana* or soul acts as an inherent cause, because we know that soul is the inherent cause of knowledge in general. But in the second definition, there is the scope of the fallacy of over-coverage as it will be applicable to inferential knowledge etc. We know that the contact between soul and mind is the general cause of all knowledge and we also know that mind is an internal sense organ. Hence all knowledge including inferential etc. are produced by the sense organ (*Indriyajanya*).

To avoid this problem, it may be said that mind produces its effect in two ways. When mind acts as the general cause of all knowledge it acts as the cause that is characterized or qualified by mind-ness (*manastadharmaviśiṣṭa*) only, but when it acts as the cause of perception, it acts as the cause which is characterized or qualified by sense-organ-ness (*indriyatvadharmaviśiṣṭa*). Thus, if it is said that perception is produced by the sense organ that is characterized by sense organ-ness only, then there is no problem of the charge of over-coverage as this definition is applicable to the perception only, not the inferential knowledge etc.

The definition of perception given by Mahārṣi Gautama is the specific definition as it covers only non-eternal perception and thereby is free from the charge of the under-coverage as stated earlier, because such perception excludes God's perception. But there is a rule that general definition of an object should be followed by the specific definition of that object. Thus, Gaṅgeśopādhyāya in his book *Tattacintāmaṇi*, provides a general definition of perception that includes both eternal and non-eternal perceptions and that definition is: "*Jñānākaraṇakam jñānam pratyakṣam*"<sup>iv</sup> Perception is that type of knowledge whose instrumental cause (karaṇa) is not any knowledge. Except perception, all other knowledge arises from like inference, comparison, verbal testimony, memory etc., their instrumental cause is knowledge. For example, the instrumental causes of knowledge come from inference, comparison, verbal testimony and memory are *vyāptijñāna* (*knowledge of invariable concomitance*), *sādrśyajñāna* (*knowledge of resemblance*), *padajñāna* (*knowledge of words*) and *pūrvānubhava* (*prior consciousness*) respectively. This definition of perception is the general definition of perception as it covers both eternal and non-eternal

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

perceptions.

But this definition too is fallacious as it does not include the non-eternal perception (*yanya pratyakṣa*) because knowledge is the instrumental cause (*karāṇa*) of non-eternal perception. We know that as knowledge of God is the general cause of all knowledge, so it is also the general cause of perception as well as *sannikarṣa* which is the cause of perception. So, here *Sannikarṣa* is the *vyāpāra* or operational or intermediary cause and knowledge of God is the instrumental cause (*karāṇa*) of non-eternal perception. Thus, here in the case of non-eternal perception, we see that knowledge is the instrumental cause of non-eternal perception and that's why fallacy of too-narrow in the general definition of perception occurs. Apart from non-eternal perception, this general definition of perception cannot be applicable to the series of specific perceptions also because in this case too knowledge is the instrumental cause of such type of perceptions. For example, the knowledge of 'this is jar' in the first moment is the cause of the knowledge of the 'this is jar' in the second moment which itself is the cause of the knowledge of 'this is jar' in the third moment. So, here in this instance, the knowledge of the 'this is jar' in the first moment is the instrumental cause of the knowledge of 'this is jar' in the third moment. That's why fallacy of too-narrow arises in the general definition of perception given by *Gaṅgeśopādhyāya*.

Besides this fault of too-narrow, this general definition of perception suffers from the fallacy of too-wide also. There are some *Naiyāyikas* who consider mind as the instrumental cause of knowledge. In *Nyāya* view, as the contact between soul and mind is the cause of knowledge, so, we can say that mind itself is the cause of knowledge. Here, the connection between mind and soul is the *vyāpāra* or intermediary cause that exists in the soul and thus soul is the substratum of that connection produced by the mind. So, here mind exists in that soul by the relation of the substratum of *vyāpāra* or intermediary cause, produced by mind itself where knowledge is produced by the relation of inherence. Thus, mind 'by the relation of the substratum of *vyāpāra* (intermediary)' produced by mind itself, is the cause of knowledge. That's why mind is instrumental cause of knowledge.

**SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**PEER REVIEWED**

If mind is the instrumental cause of all knowledge, the general definition of perception given by *Gaṅgeśopādhyāya* covers the knowledge comes from inference etc. and consequently suffers from the charge of too-wide. Because, in that case mind is the instrumental cause of such knowledge comes from inference etc and thereby knowledge is not be the instrumental cause of these knowledge like perception. In this way the general definition of perception is charged with the fallacy of too-wide and thus not acceptable.

- 
- i. Nyāya-Sūtra: 1:1:4.
  - ii. Tattacintāmaṇi, Pratyakṣa Khanda, p., 547
  - iii. Ibid, P., 548.
  - iv. Ibid., p., 552.