CHAPTER II

RĀMAṆUJA'S VIEW OF VALID COGNITION (PRĀMAṆA)
AND ITS MEANS OR INSTRUMENTS (PRĀMAṆAS).
Epistemology is that branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of knowledge, the nature of what we know, the sources of our knowledge, the limits and validity of human knowledge, etc. It is well-known that philosophers differ in their opinion regarding the exact sphere of epistemology - where it ends and where such disciplines like psychology or metaphysics begin. But perhaps all philosophers would, in general, agree that the primary or the first problem of epistemology is to ascertain the origin or the source of knowledge. The investigation of this problem in the west has given rise to two principal rival schools namely, rationalism and empiricism. According to the former, reason or intellect is the main source of human knowledge, while according to the latter, sense-experience is the main or even the only source of knowledge.

The great philosopher Kant may be said to have explicitly introduced epistemology as a separate branch of philosophical study. He, even, mooted the idea that epistemology
should be considered as a necessary propaedeutic to any philosophical enquiry. He also tried to mediate between rationalism and empiricism by holding that while the matter of knowledge is supplied by sense-experience, its form comes from the understanding. The Kantian tradition is still being continued in the most recent brands of epistemology, the main emphasis being, however, laid on sense-experience.

Now, although Indian philosophers, from the earliest times, when the various schools of Indian philosophy originated and gradually developed, invariably treated epistemology as an essential part of their philosophy, still they did not conceive of epistemology quite in the fashion in which it has been conceived in the west. Indian epistemologists are interested mainly in what are the fundamentally different kinds of valid knowledge (prama) and the specifically different kinds of causes giving rise to these different kinds of valid knowledge (pramāha). As stated above, western thinkers are more interested in what they call the sources of knowledge. They try to trace the root cause of the very origination of knowledge, and they generally maintain that the intellect or reason or understanding and the senses are the two possible sources of human knowledge.¹

¹ Among the Indian philosophers, the Buddhists are perhaps the only ones who say that in the perception of an object two different faculties function, namely, the senses
Sometimes the word pramāṇa is translated into English by the phrase "Source of knowledge". But this is hardly appropriate. On account of the fact that a pramāṇa is a specific kind of cause of a specific kind of knowledge, such as perceptual, inferential, verbal, etc. (except the Buddhists to whom I have referred in the foot-note No. 1), Indian philosophers do not think that knowledge is due to the functioning of two different faculties namely, sense and understanding. As will presently be clear, it would be better to render pramāṇa as an instrument of knowledge².

Evidently, a faculty is not an instrument of knowledge, as understood by Indian thinkers. A faculty means a special power or capacity of the human mind to obtain knowledge,

(1 contd.)

(indriya) and thought (kalpanā), but they do not develop this idea in the elaborate manner in which the western thinkers have done.

2. The word pramāṇa literally means that with the help of which a cognition is produced: (i) pramīyate anena iti pramāṇam. or (ii) pramākarāpanām pramāṇam.

(i) Vedānta Paribhāṣā, p 5
(ii) Yatindramatadīpikā, p 2

(Chowkhamba Edition)
while an instrument means the special cause or means which gives rise to knowledge. If we grant the correctness of the western doctrine of the two cognitive faculties, we may say that for an Indian philosopher, in every case of knowledge, a single cognitive faculty consisting of both sense and reason works. The concept of pramāṇa or instrument of knowledge is different from this. Thus in perception, the instrument of valid knowledge is said to be a sense-organ such as the eye, the ear, the nose, etc. In inferential knowledge the pramāṇa or the instrument of knowledge is stated to be the knowledge of universal concomitance (vyāpi-jñāna); in the knowledge of the absence of a thing, the instrument of knowledge is said to be the right type of non-apprehension (vogyānupalabdhi), etc.\(^3\).

According to the Indian epistemologists, in general, knowledge or apprehension or consciousness of an object involves four factors: (a) the knower (pramātr), (b) the object known (prameya), (c) knowledge itself (pramā), (d) the instrument by which knowledge is produced (pramāṇa). Among these four factors knowledge (pramā) and its instrument (pramāṇa) are the main concern of epistemology. Almost all the Indian systems have investigated these two factors. They all uphold that the kind or the special

\[^3\text{The third of these pramāṇas is recognised by Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta but not by the Rāmānujites.}\]
quality of a piece of knowledge is determined by the kind of the instrument by which it is generated. 

The question arises, "What is it that guarantees the validity of a pramāṇa or how is an instrument of knowledge itself known to be valid?" Of course, prior to the conscious employment of a cognitive instrument, we must have faith in its validity. But although we usually employ a pramāṇa with such a psychological belief in its validity, still its validity can only be tested by the validity of the knowledge which it yields. But how are we to know that the knowledge which is yielded by a pramāṇa is itself valid? If we say that this validity of knowledge is ascertained by the validity of its instrument, this would give rise to a patent circularity - the validity of a pramāṇa being based on that of pramāṇa while the validity of a pramāṇa being found on that of its pramāṇa. One may contend that the validity of one piece of knowledge is to be ascertained by the validity of another piece of knowledge. But this would land

4. This is similar to the western notion that reason and sense give rise to different kinds of knowledge - while the former yields a priori knowledge, the latter gives a posteriori knowledge.
us into an infinite process. This circularity and/or infinite process can be avoided, if we hold that all knowledge, as such, is self-valid (svatah prama). We will now explain this view.

Indian philosophers, however, usually divide knowledge into two kinds, namely valid (prama) and invalid (aprama). But as stated in the foregoing paragraph, this leads to the difficulty of ascertaining what is valid knowledge. We may in this connection refer to a contemporary western view, according to which, the division of knowledge into valid and invalid is unnecessary and incorrect; for knowledge in the true sense of the term means a true belief which is accompanied by an assurance of its truth; so that it is a tautology to speak of 'true knowledge' and a contradiction to speak of false or invalid knowledge. This is somewhat similar to the view of those Indian thinkers who support the svatahpramāṇya theory of knowledge, i.e. the theory of the self-evidential character of knowledge, the view that knowledge is intrinsically true, i.e. the truth of a piece of knowledge is due to the same conditions which give rise to that knowledge. In other words, truth is a natural property of knowledge, while invalidity or falsity is only

5. "Outlines of Philosophy" By B. Russell.
an accidental feature which occurs to it on account of
certain external conditions (other than the conditions
which generate knowledge)—these external conditions, in
some way, vitiate the natural situation in which knowledge
comes into being. Those schools which have absolute faith
in the authority of the Vedas (Vedavadinah) hold this
theory of svatabhpramāṇya. Both the Bhāṭṭa and the Prābhākara
schools of Mīmāṃsā as well as the Advaita Vedānta, and the
Viśiṣṭādhvaita school of Rāmānuja support this theory. This
theory implies two things. On the one hand, it believes that
the originating conditions of knowledge are also the origi­
nating conditions of the truth of that knowledge; and on
the other hand, it holds that knowledge and its truth are
apprehended together. Thus to say that knowledge is intrin­
sically true means that the truth of knowledge, is produced
by the very causes of that knowledge, i.e., it originates
as true (svataśtvam utpattau), it also means that knowledge
and its truth are apprehended simultaneously. The advocates
of this theory are unanimous in holding that the same condi­
tions which give rise to knowledge also give rise to its
truth, but they differ in respect of how knowledge and its
truth are apprehended although they all agree in maintain­
ing that these are apprehended simultaneously. The Bhāṭṭa
school of Mīmāṃsā holds that whenever an object is known,
there arises, in the object, a peculiar property which is called manifestness (prākatya), this property is known immediately after the cognition. But the existence of knowledge is known by a mediate process called 'presumption' (arthāpatti) - the existence of knowledge is presumed as what causes the property of manifestness of the object. The validity of that knowledge is, according to the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā also known by this very presumptive cognition (arthāpatti).

Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā also holds that a piece of knowledge and its validity are apprehended simultaneously by that very piece of knowledge - knowledge is self-consciousness (svayamprakāśa) not only in respect of its own existence but also in respect of its own validity. This school further maintains that all knowledge is true. There is no false knowledge. Even what is called false knowledge is really true, such knowledge being analysable into two and more cognitions having different objects, the distinction between their objects not being apprehended. We will give a fuller account of this interesting Prabhākara view in our chapter on Illusion. What we are concerned just now to point out is that the Prabhākara view of svatabhāpamānya is the most straightforward view of it. For it maintains that any piece of knowledge, say K, apprehends itself and its truth as well as its object. Murāri Miśra, a renowned Mīmāṃsā philo-
Sopher holds a somewhat different view. He thinks that knowledge and its validity are apprehended by an act of inner perception which is produced immediately after the origination of knowledge. This inner perception is called after-cognition (anuvyavasāya). This, in fact, is the Nyāya view about the cognition of a cognition, but unlike Nyāya, Murāri Misra supports the direct apprehension of cognitive validity; so while Nyāya says that cognitive validity is not apprehended by its after-cognition, but by an act of inferential knowledge made later on, Murāri Misra says that the same after-cognition apprehends both knowledge and its validity simultaneously.

The supporter of Advaita Vedānta also maintains the view of the simultaneous apprehension of knowledge and its validity. According to him, there is one enduring and immutable consciousness (sāksī-caitanya or witnessing consciousness) which apprehends both a piece of knowledge and its validity. It is in this fashion that Advaita supports the view of direct apprehension of knowledge and its validity.

As stated already, Rāmānuja as a Vedāntist, believes in the svatahpramāṇya doctrine of knowledge. According to him,

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6. Tacca svataḥ pramāṇyaṁ nyāya-siddham.  
Śrībhāṣya, Catuḥsūtrī, p. 105.  
Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
all pieces of knowledge are directly apprehended by the 'I', the knower, as long as they continue to exist. Knowledge (anubhūti), as he says, is an awareness of an object, and also of the knowing self; the awareness of the object being an awareness of it just as it is presented at the time when the knowledge exists.

Rāmānuja believes that the object of no cognition, whether true or false, can ever be altogether unreal. He advocates a realistic theory of illusion called the satkhyātivāda which maintains that whatever we apprehend is real just there where it is apprehended and that even our illusory perception has some real ground, i.e., its content, too, refers to some real factor of the object which is misperceived. That Rāmānuja supports the svatah-prāmānya theory or self-evidential nature of knowledge would be evident from the following quotation from Śrutaprakāśika. As knowledge, in most cases, is true,

7. Anubhūtitvaṁ nāma vartamānadaśāyāṁ svasattayaiva svāśrayaṁ prati prakāśāmānataṁ, svasattayaiva svaviśayasadhanataṁ vā;

Śrībhāṣya, Catuhsūtrī, p 85

By Rāmānuja

Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
truth is natural to knowledge while untruth accrues to it only in some cases, so it is an accidental feature of knowledge. If a property frequently is found in a thing, it is considered as a natural property, while a property which only occasionally is found in it should be thought of as an accidental feature of it, which pertains to it on account of some factor other than what usually brings it about. Our cognitions of pots, pieces of cloth, etc. are all true; and even our erroneous apprehension of a shell as a piece of silver in the form "This is silver", is true, at least in this respect that it apprehends "This", which stands for some object which is near to and in front of the knower. Thus truth belongs to most cases of knowledge while untruth or falsity accrues to it only in some rare cases, on account of some external vitiating condition. So we see that Rāmānuja along with the svatahprāmāṇya doctrine of knowledge supports the doctrine of parataḥ aprāmāṇya, just like the Advaita Vedānta and the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā schools. This doctrine of extrinsic invalidity of cognition holds that the invalidity of a cognition is

caused by external factors (other than the factors which produce the cognition). Rāmānuja says that occasionally we have erroneous cognition; and this is brought home to us from the unsuccessful result of activities prompted by that cognition. Such erroneous cognition is due to some external factors such as a defect in the sense-organs or a certain latent tendency (karma, i.e. dharma or adharma) of the knowing person—a tendency with which a person is born and which ultimately is traced to his past religious merit and demerit, acquired by him during a beginningless series of lives previous to the present one. Though the knower apprehends some real aspect of the object, yet the presence of these external factors vitiates the natural situation for right apprehension, so that he fails to know the object accurately with its principal and characteristic features and such a cognition may mislead him to undertake some fruitless activity in regard to that object. Thus Rāmānuja maintains that cognitive invalidity is only accidental to knowledge while validity is natural to it.

(8.Contd...)  

tasya bhūyastvām. Atāh svataḥ prāmāṇyaṁ paratoaprāmāṇyamiti.  

Śrutaprakāśikā in Śrībhāṣya, Catuḥsūtrī, p. 195.  

Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
Following this basic view of Rāmānuja about knowledge, his followers have defined pramā as knowledge which is conducive to the appropriate (yathāvasthitā) employment of words in regard to its object\(^9\). The words 'yathāvasthitā vyavahārāṇugūṇa' have been used in the definition of pramā to exclude those cognitions which are not capable of giving rise to the employment of words which are appropriate for describing the known object. Even erroneous instances of knowledge lead to linguistic expressions describing the object known erroneously, although such expressions would not be appropriate. This is why the word 'yathāvasthitā' has been added to the definition of pramā. This word is an adjective qualifying the noun 'vyavahāra' which serves to exclude both the cases of doubt and error from the scope of pramā or true knowledge. The Rāmānujites employ the term 'vyavahāra' in the definition in the sense of the employment of words\(^{10}\), though this term also signifies actual 'behaviour' or activity connected with the object.

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9. (a) Yathāvasthitāvyavahārāṇugūṇaṁ jñānaṁ pramā.  
Nyāya pariśuddhi, p. 5.  
By Venkaṭanātha.  
Chowkhamba Edition.  
(b) Yathāvasthitā vyavahārāṇugūṇa jñānaṁ pramā lakṣyam.  
Yatindramatadīpikā, p. 2 Chap. I.  
By Śrīnīvasaśāstra.  
Chowkhamba Edition.  

10. Atra vyavahārāṇugūṇāṁ vyavahārajananasvarūpayogyatvāṁ tena vyavahārāphalopadhānārahite pramāviśeṣe nāvyāptitī
Prof. Hiriyanna seems to take the word 'vyavahārāhuguna' in the sense of that which is conducive to correct behaviour while he explains Rāmānuja's philosophy in his book - "Outlines of Indian Philosophy". His suggestion of the sense of the word vyavahāra brings Rāmānuja's view very close to pragmatism. But this would seem to be somewhat farfetched. As Prof. Hiriyanna himself says, by introducing the word 'vyavahāra', however, Rāmānuja "does not relinquish the logical (attitude)". Of course, right behaviour directed to an object and right employment of words in regard to it are closely connected with each other. But both of them depend upon right knowledge of the object; and the Rāmānu­jites use the word, vyavahāra, in order merely to differentiate a true cognition (prama) from a false one (aprama), and thus their purpose is quite precisely served by their definition. For the definition which they offer does not apply to a case of aprama. Certainly, an invalid cognition does not prompt the knower either to employ proper words

(10. Contd...) dhreyam.

Nyāyasāra in Nyāya parisuddhi p. 9
Chowkhamba Edition.

11. Outlines of Indian Philosophy. By M. Hiriyanna.
Chap. on Viśiṣṭādvaita Phil. p 396.
to describe the known object, or to undertake the right type of activity pertaining to the known object.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{12. Being a realist, Rāmānuja is expected to agree, in general, with the Nyāya view of illusion, and he does so agree, as far as the reality of the content of illusion is concerned; for he, too, maintains that the silver which appears to us when we misperceive a shell for silver is quite as real as any piece of silver which is rightly perceived. He, however, differs from Nyāya in maintaining that the content of an illusion is real just where it appears to be, namely, in the very shell which is misperceived, while Nyāya holds that though this content is real, still it is real elsewhere, not just where it appears to be. This must be the principal reason why Rāmānuja does not, like Nyāya, define invalid cognition (aprāmā) as atadvati tatprakāraḥ jñānam, i.e. as a judgment in which the thing denoted by the predicate-term is not in the thing which is denoted by the subject-term. For according to Rāmānuja, when about a shell we have the wrong perceptual judgment, "This is silver," the thing denoted by the term 'silver' is in the very shell which is denoted by the term 'This'. And once Rāmānuja rejects the Nyāya definition of aprāmā, he has perforce to reject the Nyāya definition of pramā, too. This point will be further elaborated in the Chapter on Apramā.}
Those cognitions which do not conform to this definition are regarded by Rāmānujites as invalid (apramā). But in regard to such invalid cognitions, too, it would not, according to Rāmānujites, be correct to say that they do not reveal any real feature of the object known. On the contrary, knowledge, whether valid or invalid, always reveals only real aspects of an object, though knowledge may occasionally fail to reveal its most characteristic features and lead to wrong behaviour, and then it would be proper to call it invalid.

The definition of prama given by the Rāmānujites differs from the Nyāya definition of prama. Of course, both the Nyāya and the Rāmānujites hold a realistic view of knowledge and even of error, i.e., both believe that knowledge reveals the real thing and the nature of the object determines knowledge. Still they differ in their basic concept of knowledge. Gaṅgeśa, the great Navya Nyāya logician rejecting some older definitions of prama given by other Naiyāyikas, defines prama, "Tadvatitatprakārakam jñānam prama"¹³, i.e., true knowledge is a judgment of

- 13. Gaṅgeśa's definition is given in his book "Tattacintāmani" and is generally accepted as the most appropriate definition of true knowledge.
which the predicate is such that it belongs to the subject of the judgment. This will be clear with the help of a symbolic illustration. Let us suppose that I know that $S$ is $P$. According to the Nyāya logician, no knowledge that is expressed in language can be without an adjectival word as predicate (prakāra) which is taken as characterising or qualifying the object which is thus known; i.e. every judgment refers to some substrate (āsraya) to which some character belongs. So here in our example, $P$ is the predicate or prakāra or character. Now according to Gangeśa's definition, if knowledge is to be true, then the qualifier $P$ must belong to $S$ which is the substrate or qualificandum. Let us see how this definition applies only to cases of true knowledge and does not apply to cases of false knowledge. Suppose, in a case, I know a piece of silver as silver which I express as "This is silver"\(^{14}\). Here 'silverness' is the character which is attributed to "this". Now we see this qualifier belongs to the 'This' which is the subject or the qualificandum. So this is a case of true knowledge. If, however, I perceive silver in a place where there is no silver but only a shell and I judge "This is silver", the "This" would

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\(^{14}\) The predicate 'silver' means 'possessed of silverhood'. What the predicate silver attributes to "This" is, therefore, silverhood.
stand for the piece of shell and 'silverness' would be the qualifier of the "This". Here we see that 'silverness' which functions as a qualifier does not really belong to the qualificandum, 'This'. So the definition does not apply to it and it is a case of false knowledge.

Now Rāmānuja believes in 'Satkhyātivāda' as the theory of error. According to this theory, in our so-called erroneous experience also, what we apprehend is really possessed by the known object. So the Nyāya definition of pramāṇa as 'Tadvatī tatprakāraḥkatvam' would apply to cases of error as conceived by Rāmānuja. For example, according to Rāmānuja, while we wrongly perceive a shell to be silver, we perceive certain silver-elements really existing in the shell. Rāmānuja justifies this view with the help of the theory of quintuplication (pancīkaraṇa) which is also accepted by other Vedāntins including the Śāṃkarites. Thus in the erroneous

15. (a) Yathārthatam sarvavijñānamiti vedavidām mataṁ
    Śrutismṛtibhyāḥ sarvasya sarvātmavapratītitaḥ.
    Śrībhāṣya, Catuḥsūtrī, p 183.
    Nirmaya Sagar Edition.

    (b) Paṇcīkaraṇaprakāriyayaḥ pṛthivyādiṣu sarvatra
        sarvabhūtānām vidyamāṇatvāt.
        Yatīndramatadīpikā, p. 5, Chap.I.
perception of silver in the place of a shell, the prakāra or the qualifier which is 'silveness' really belongs to the shell, as Rāmānuja holds. So the Nyāya definition of apramātva as 'tadabhāvabati tatprakārakatva' does not apply to error as conceived by Rāmānuja. Hence a Rāmānujite does not accept the Nyāya definition of prama and propounds his own definition of prama as 'yathāvasthitā vyavahārānugunā- jañāna' in consonance with his firm belief in the Vedāntic doctrine of quintuplication 16.

The Rāmānujite definition of prama also differs from the Advaita and the Mīmāṃsā definition of prama. The Advaita defines prama in two ways - according to one definition, the content of true knowledge is such that it is not cancelled (abādhita) by later knowledge and that it is novel in nature, i.e., it gives new information about its object (anadhigatavisayā).

And the second definition merely states that the content of a true knowledge is not cancelled by later experience. The characteristic of novelty (anadhigatavisayatva)

16 By the by, here we get an instance in support of the remark that a philosopher's theory of knowledge is ultimately based on his metaphysics.
was added to the definition of pramā by the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā in order to exclude memory from the scope of true knowledge; for memory is necessarily of an object which was already experienced by some non-mnemic knowledge. All Advaita philosophers do not think novelty to be an essential feature of a pramā. Some among them hold that a valid memory, too, should be considered as pramā. The only difficulty that may arise by this procedure is that if memory is considered to be a separate pramāpa, the number of pramāpas would be seven.\(^{17}\)

But the essential nature of true knowledge is, according to them, that it must not be contradicted by any later experience. What is cognised has some reality of some kind - this is the basic concept of the Advaita. It maintains that there are three kinds of reality, namely, the apparent reality (prātibhāṣika sattā), the empirical reality (vyavahārika sattā) and the Absolute or ultimate reality (pāramārtha sattā) - the apparently real, such as an illusory snake is cancelled by the later experience of our ordinary

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17. The Advaita, following the Bhāṭṭa view of knowledge and its instruments accepts six cognitive instruments (pramāṇa) as valid, namely, perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, postulation and non-apprehension.
mundane life, so it is then to be regarded as apramā in accordance with the definition of pramā given by the Advaita. Similarly an empirically real thing such as a table, a chair etc. is cancelled by the knowledge of ultimate Truth; so at that time all empirical experiences are realised to be false (apramā). The definition of the absolute knowledge of Brahman is that it remains uncontradicted during all the three times (traikālika abadhitatva) past, present and future, i.e. it is never cancelled by any other experience.

Rāmānuja and his followers do not recognise any such kinds in reality and they do not consider uncontradictedness (abadhitatva) or novelty (anadhigatatva) as an essential characteristic of pramā or true knowledge. Rather, they hold that the essential mark of true knowledge is that it reveals the characteristic feature or features of an object, leading to appropriate employment of words describing the object as well as to successful behaviour in regard to it. And even in an erroneous cognition, what appears to be real is not, truly speaking, cancelled by later experience. What happens in erroneous apprehension is that due to some defect in the cognitive instrument or some
external vitiating condition certain insignificant and meagre aspects of the object appear to be its principal features, while the principal or important and characteristic features remain unrevealed. The Rāmānujites show the validity of their theory by examining the stock examples of illusion. Thus when we perceive a snake in the place of a rope, our perception is indeed wrong; still what we perceive is a real feature of the rope – there really exist in the rope certain characteristics of a snake which can be said to constitute its similarity with a snake. Of course, on account of such wrong knowledge, the knowing subject tries to avoid it. Still what really happens is that the perceiver merely fails to observe the essential characters of the rope – not that he perceives some thing which is neither real nor unreal, as an Advaitist holds. His false cognition of a rope as snake is indeed cancelled by his later knowledge of the rope as a rope but it does not cancel the content of the earlier cognition, reducing it into a cipher.

The school of Rāmānuja, too, accepts memory (smṛiti) as true knowledge (pramāṇa) just like some Advaitists. Not only that, it is also regarded by them as a kind of perceptive knowledge; for, as this school maintains, a memory is
due to the impressions left in the mind by some past perceptual experience\textsuperscript{18} - the root of memory being thus traced to perception, i.e., the functioning of the senses, it should itself be regarded as perceptual, i.e. as due to the functioning of the senses. Memory, thus, according to them, cannot be counted as a separate and independent instrument of knowledge for it cannot spontaneously manifest its object independently of previous perceptual knowledge and in a way which is distinct from that of perception - and these are the essential characteristics of an independent pramāṇa.

A pramāṇa is defined by the Nyāya as the instrumental cause of true knowledge. In order to understand this definition, it is necessary to understand what is meant by an instrumental cause (karana) of an effect. The Nyāya says that several causes work jointly to produce an effect and among these causes that which is the extra-ordinary (asadharana) cause for that effect is regarded as its Karana.

\textsuperscript{18} Smṛteḥ pramāṇyaṅgikāreapi Saṃskārasāpekṣatvāt tasya pratyakṣamūlabhūtatavāṃmūlabhūte pratyakṣerāntarbhāva iti na ṣṛthak pramāṇatvakalpanāṃ.

\textit{Yatindramatadīpikā}, p 4, Chap. I
By Śrīnivāsadāsa.
Chowkhamba Edition.
However, in the school of Nyāya, there are two different views about the meaning of the term Karana. According to one view, a karapa is that cause which has a vyāpāra (i.e., an intermediate operation)\(^\text{19}\) and the word asādhārapa would then technically mean 'having an intermediate operation'.\(^\text{20}\)

By the phrase 'having a vyāpāra', the definition excludes all those causes which precede an effect but which have not any such operation in producing the effect, such causes, for instance, as space, time, religious merit and demerit of individual selves, etc. which too, are considered

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19. Asādhārapaṁ Kāraṇaṁ Karanaṁ
   Asādhārapatvam vyāpāravatvam.

   Bhāsaparicchedah, Kārikā, p 246.
   By Visvanatha.

20. i.e, a cause of the effect which occurs after the karaṇa but before the effect and hence it is intermediate between karana and the effect. For instance, a knife is karana of an effect such as the mending of a pencil; here the conjunction of the knife with the pencil is the intermediate operation as it occurs intermediately between the knife and the mending of the pencil.
to be the necessary preconditions of every effect whatsoever, but are not the instrumental cause of an effect. The eye, for example, is an instrument (i.e., an instrumental cause) for giving rise to the visual perception of a flower. Here the sensory contact of the eye with the flower is the intermediate operation; so the eye is regarded to have an operation for producing visual perception and so it is called its instrumental cause.

The second view identifies the karana or the instrumental cause with the latest of the many pre-conditions of an effect. i.e. the cause which comes into being immediately followed by the effect. So according to this view, the word 'asādhāranatva' means the character of coming into being immediately before the effect and of being immediately followed by the effect. For instance, the sensory contact of the eye with the flower is a cause which occurs immediately before the effect and is immediately followed by the effect, namely the visual perception of the flower. It would appear, therefore, what in the earlier view is called the vyāpāra of a karana is, in the present view, called the karana.

21. Of course, when the operation comes into being all the other causes including the karana must also be present.
The Rāmānujites define a pramāṇa or the instrumental cause of knowledge as that cause which is produced just before the knowledge in question and the presence of which is immediately followed by this knowledge in question, as its effect. Among the many causes of an effect such as the cognition of an object, that cause is called kārana which is, as the Rāmānujites put it, the most effective (sādhakatama) in producing the final result; but by the term 'most effective cause' is to be understood that cause which occurs just before the effect and is immediately followed by the effect. This is called the most effective, because as soon as it occurs, the effect follows immediately. Thus a pramāṇa is that cause of a cognition which itself is produced just before the cognition and which immediately after its occurrence produces the effect. So we see that Rāmānuja's concept of pramāṇa is similar to the second of the two views of Nyāya about pramāṇa. That which for Nyāya is 'asadharana kārana' is for Rāmānuja 'sādhakatama kārana', both implying the view that that cause is the instrumental cause of a pramā which occurs just before the pramā, in question, and the


Yatindramatadīpikā p. 3. Chap. I
By Srinivasadasa.
Chowkhamba Edition.
presence of which immediately afterwards is followed by the pramā which is the effect. For example, the inferential judgment, "The hill possesses fire" occurs immediately after we have the complex judgment: "The hill possesses smoke which is uniformly concomitant with fire". This complex judgment, technically called parāmāraśa, itself originates out of our memory knowledge of the said universal concomitance and is immediately afterwards followed by the inferential judgment, "The hill possesses fire", hence parāmāraśa is the karana of inferential knowledge.

Though Rāmānuja is a Vedāntin and Vedāntins generally accept the Bhāṭṭa view about right knowledge (pramā), its different kinds and their corresponding cognitive instruments and their number, etc., still Rāmānuja recognises only three kinds of cognitive instrument and this would seem to be in agreement with a very ancient tradition which has the support of even Manu besides the Sāmkhya and Pātañjala Yoga systems. In his Sribhāṣya, while proving by means of various arguments

23 (a) "Pratyakṣaṁnanumānaṁ ca śastraṁ vividhāgamaṁ trayam suviditaṁ kāryaṁ dharmasiddhimabhipsatā."
Manusāṁhita, Adhyaya, 12, St No. 105.

(b) "Drṣṭamanumānaṁaptavacanaṁ ca sarvapramāṇasiddhatvāt. Trividham pramāṇam iṣṭam prameya-siddhiḥ pramāṇaddhi?"
Īśvara Kṛṣṇa's Sāmkhya Karika Karika, 4.

(c) Pratyakṣaṁnanumānaṁ pramāṇāni
Pātañjala - Yoga Sūtra : 1.7
that none of our cognitive instruments establish non-differenced reality (nirviśeṣa-vastu), Rāmānuja refers to only these three cognitive instruments, namely, perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna) and verbal testimony (śabda) and says nothing about the other three instruments (which are accepted by the Advaita Vedānta and the Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsā), namely, comparison (upamāna) postulation (arthāpatti) and non-cognition (anupalabdhi). While discussing his theory of Satkhyātivāda to explain erroneous apprehension, Rāmānuja refers to, by name, only these three pramāṇas²⁴, viz., perception, inference and verbal testimony.

²⁴. (a) Pratyakṣānunumānāgamākhyām pramāṇajātām.

Śrībhāṣya, Catuhsūtri, p. 280.

By Rāmānuja.


(b) Svabhimanuktām pramāṇatrayām.

Śrutaprakāśikā, p. 76.

in Śrībhāṣya.

Nirmaya Sagar Edition.
His followers also have explicitly stated that Rāmānuja accepts only three pramāṇas as valid\(^{25}\), and his followers have said that Rāmānuja would, and can easily, include the other pramāṇas under the three heads - perception, inference and verbal testimony. For instance, Rāmānujites hold that there is no need of accepting valid non-observation (anupalabdhi) as a separate cognitive instrument, for non-existence of something (abhāva) can be cognised by the perception of its substrate, since the non-existence of a thing is nothing over and above its substrate\(^{26}\). Similarly, comparison and postulation can be brought under inference.

For the pramāṇa called comparison depends on the observation of similarity between two objects; and this fact of similarity

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25. (a) Trividham pramāṇam pratyakṣānumāna śabdabhedāt.

Nyāyaparīśuddhi, p. 68.
By Veṅkaṭanātha.
Chowkamba Edition.

(b) Tāni pramāṇāni pratyakṣānumāna śabdākhyānī trīnaiva.

Yatindramatadīpikā, p 3 Chap. I.
By Śrīnivāsadāsa.


Yatindramatadīpikā, p.4 Chap. I.
between two things can be regarded as the mark (hetu) for inferring the knowledge which this pramâna is to yield. Comparison can also be regarded as a case of perception, since it is caused by the memory-impression of some past experience. Again, since it is produced by hearing the words of a reliable person, so it can also be regarded as a case of verbal knowledge (sábda-jñāna) 27.

The case of postulation of a fact to explain another fact is, according to Râmanujites, really a case of inference 28. The fact of a person's taking food at night can be inferred from the fact of his stoutness in spite of his not taking any food during the daytime. Thus the Râmanujites accept only three pramânas namely, perception, inference and verbal testimony, as sufficient for attaining knowledge of every kind of thing which is real.


Yatindramatadûpika, p. 10, Chap II.

28. Arthâpathirñâma divâ abhuñjânasya puruṣasya pînativa¬
darśanât râtõbh bhoganaṁ kalpate. Etasya anumâne antarbhâ-
vaḥ.

Yatindramatadûpika p. 10, Chap. II.
In ordinary life, we generally use the two instruments, namely, perception and inference to know the things and facts with which we have to deal. Our empirical knowledge which we come to have in ordinary life are mainly perceptual (prātyakṣa-jñāna) and inferential (anumāna-jñāna). The Western thinkers also generally accept only these two instruments for all possible types of knowledge. According to them, sense-perception and rational thinking (or inference) are the two sole methods of knowledge. Among Indian epistemologists, it is the Buddhists and the Vaiśeṣika philosophers who recognize only these two cognitive instruments, rejecting the rest. The Buddhists believe that perception gives us direct intuitive and indeterminate knowledge of bare and unique particulars while by inference we get determinate (savikalpaka) knowledge which involves concepts or universals or general ideas, etc. Such cognitions are called by them kalpanā. The Buddhists do not have faith in the authority of the Vedas and consequently, they do not accept verbal testimony as a valid instrument of knowledge. But Rāmānuja is a Vedāntin in the true sense of the term and a theist (āstika) he has great, rather absolute, faith in the authority of the Vedas and so naturally in the validity of verbal testimony (of the Vedas) as a distinct and important instrument of knowledge.
According to Ramanuja, there are three kinds of reality - the conscious finite beings or cit, the unconscious material objects or acit and the Supreme Being or the Absolute Reality. The first two kinds of reality can be cognised by one or other of the cognitive instruments, namely, perception and inference, but the Supreme Being or the Brahman can only be known by the right apprehension of scriptural statements. Thus we see that this epistemological view of Ramanuja, also is grounded in his metaphysical doctrine.

It is generally recognised that the epistemology of a school is determined by its metaphysical standpoint. Epistemology, as I understand it, is to deal with such questions as - How Knowledge originates in a finite being; What are the pre-conditions for the origination of knowledge; What are the different kinds of means or instruments by which objects are known by a subject, etc. Thus, according to Advaita Vedanta, knowledge or consciousness is eternal and the Absolute reality is consciousness itself. The finite consciousness and the Absolute consciousness are really one and identical, and all other things are unreal and are falsely ascribed to this Absolute consciousness. Thus everything is directly connected with the Absolute consciousness. So everything should be revealed always and to all, because consciousness is self-

* Jīva Brahmaiva nāparah.
luminous like the sun or a lamp. But it is not the case that we are always conscious of all things. The Advaita explains this fact by holding that the reason why we are not always aware of the things of the universe is that they are veiled by a beginningless and darkening principle called nescience (avidya)\textsuperscript{29}, the principal function of nescience being to conceal what, left to itself, is in a state of revelation\textsuperscript{30}. The Advaita further holds that there are certain specifiable ways by which this veil of avidya can be removed, thereby enabling us to know thing. The advaita epistemology deals with these ways and determines their various kinds, calling them instruments of valid knowledge (pramāṇa). Knowledge is always there, it is not something new which is to be brought about, says the Advaita. So the function of epistemology is, according to this school, only to consider the processes by which the veil of avidya or ignorance can be removed and thereby the reality be known by the natural and ever present light of consciousness with which it is always connected. Pramāṇa or the right knowledge of a thing is this very eternal consciousness, when the curtain of avidya is removed temporarily or for ever.

\textsuperscript{29} In spite of its being a beginningless thing, avidya is conceived to be an appearance having no ultimate reality.

\textsuperscript{30} In this respect, avidya is compared to the shadow which envelops the luminous sun at the time of a solar eclipse.
According to Rāmānuja, too, knowledge or consciousness eternally belongs to the individual self as its essential nature, it is not something which requires to be, or can be, produced. So the epistemology of Rāmānuja, too, like that of Śaṅkara, does not deal with the preconditions or causes by which knowledge is produced. On the contrary, it deals with the preconditions and circumstances by which the relation of knowledge with objects is made possible. For instance, when an object is presented to the sense-organs, consciousness as an attribute (dharmabhūtajñāna) comes out through one or other of the senses to the object and reveals the object. Knowledge as the self's essence (dharmiswarūpa-jñāna) is always there, says Rāmānuja, as self-consciousness, i.e., as consciousness of the self as 'I'; and the contact of sense-organs with an object, brings about some change in the attributive consciousness alone, and that, too, merely in its relation with an object. Epistemology mostly deals with this aspect of attributive consciousness. Consciousness is connected with external objects only under certain circumstances - the function of epistemology, in the view of Rāmānuja, consists in ascertaining the circumstances and conditions under which this connection of consciousness with the object is brought about. Thus although Rāmānuja's theory of knowledge

31. Thus for Rāmānuja, though the individual self or knower is endowed with a perennial consciousness, still this consciousness is not always connected with anything, except with the self, to which it belongs and which it reveals as its 'I'.
may appear to be similar to that of the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika system, still it essentially differs from it in that while Nyāya holds that knowledge is produced in the self under certain conditions, Rāmānuja holds that knowledge is eternal - what is produced is merely the connection of knowledge with the object. Nyāya epistemology deals with the preconditions and causes by which knowledge is produced and the different kinds of instruments by which different kinds of knowledge are acquired. The different kinds of instruments, according to Rāmānuja, are applied for bringing about merely the relation of an already existing knowledge with a particular object. This is an important distinction between Rāmānuja's epistemology and that of Nyāya. In fact, the eternity of our consciousness is an Upaniṣadic doctrine which is accepted by both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.