CHAPTER - III

PERCEPTION ( PRATYAKSA )
The word pratyakṣa or perception stands for both perceptual knowledge and its instrument. Perception, is, according to Nyāya, "a kind of knowledge which is produced by sense-object-contact". The perception of a pot, for example, is caused by the contact of the visual sense-organ with the pot which exists in the external world. The school of Rāmānuja points out some defects in the Nyāya definition of perception. It draws attention to certain instances of perceptual knowledge which do not depend on the sense-organs. Although the positivists would reject the reality of such perception, still it is an ancient belief in India that Yogins have suprasensory perception of everything or of whatever they would desire to know. Similarly all theistic schools of philosophy believe that God is omniscient and the knowledge which he eternally has of everything in the universe must be immediate and hence perceptual in nature. But God, being a pure spirit ( albeit a person ) has no body nor any sense-organ and so his immediate knowledge of things is suprasensory.

1. Indriyajanyam jñānaṃ pratyakṣaṃ.

Muktāvalī on Kārikā 51.
But Nyāya's reply to this objection is that such extra-ordinary perceptions (alaukika pratyakṣa) of Yogins should also be regarded as due to a type of extra-ordinary sense-object-contact called "Yogaja-sannikarāga", i.e. a sensory contact which is brought about by the occult power which a Yogin acquires by practising Yoga. As for God's intuitive omniscience, Nyāya, too, which is a staunch supporter of theism recognises that the definition of immediate knowledge as what is produced by sensory contact with the object is not intended to cover God's ever-present perception of all things in the universe. If we are to cover God's intuitive omniscience by our definition, we should as the new school of Nyāya (nayya-nyāya) remarks, define perceptual knowledge as that knowledge which is not brought about by any cognition. Thus inferential knowledge is produced by the cognition of implying concomitance (vyāpti-jñāna), the knowledge by analogy is produced by the cognition of similarity (sādṛśya-jñāna) and verbal knowledge is produced by the cognition of words, but perceptual knowledge is not produced by the cognition of anything.

2. Muktavātī, Kārikā 63
3. Ibid, Iśvara-pratyakṣaṃtu na lakṣyaṃ., Kārikā 51
4. Ibid, Athavā jñānakaraṇakaṃ jñānaṃ pratyakṣaṃ, Kārikā 51.
A Rāmānujite defines perception as immediate knowledge and the instrument of perception as that which yields immediate knowledge. Here the meaning of the word 'immediate' (sākṣātkāra) has not been made clear by him. It would seem that the word 'immediate' as an adjective qualifying cognition indicates a universal (jāti), i.e., a common characteristic of certain cognitions, which can be appreciated by the knowing self whenever such a cognition occurs. Since Rāmānuja grants that any act of consciousness is self-conscious or self-luminous (svaprākāśa), he can maintain that 'immediacy' (sākṣāttva) as a characteristic feature of any immediate cognition is revealed to the self as soon as it comes into being and as long as it continues. This would be analogous to the Nyāya position that immediacy as a generic character (jāti) of all immediate cognitions is capable of being apprehended in what this school calls after-cognition (anuvyavasā). If once we grant that immediacy as a feature of certain cognitions can have direct inner evidence in favour of it, we shall have further to grant that no circularity is

5. Atra sākṣātkārapramākaraṇām pratyakṣaṃ.
Yatīndramatadīpikā, p 3. Chap. I
Chowkhamba Edition.

6. For Rāmānuja's interpretation of self-luminosity of consciousness see p 24 of Chapter I of this treatise.
involved in defining perceptual knowledge as 'knowledge which is immediate'. Of course, this definition would require that we should be able to have inner awareness of not only 'immediacy', but also of another generic character, namely, what may be called 'knowledge-hood' ( jñānatva ). This also Rāmānuja can provide for by his doctrine of svaprakāśatva or self-luminosity of consciousness, just as Nyāya provides for it by its theory of after-cognition or anuvyavasāya.

If 'immediate' (sākṣat) be supposed to qualify a cognitive instrument, we can understand by it an instrument which produces immediate knowledge or which produces knowledge without the help of any other instrument.7

Those perceptions of a physical substance, which are caused by the sense-object-contact involve three conjunctions - i) the self is conjoined with the internal sense-organ ii) the inner sense is conjoined with an external sense-organ and iii) this external sense-organ is conjoined with the physical object which is to be known.

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7. There are, according to the school of Rāmānuja, three kinds of cognitive instrument: i) Perceptual e.g., a sense-organ such as the eyes, ii) Inferential, e.g., an inferential mark such as smoke, iii) words; and the implication of the word 'immediacy' (sākṣātkāra) is that while the inferential or verbal instruments cannot yield knowledge without the help of the perceptual instrument, the perceptual can do so without the help of the other two.
Here the view of the Rāmānujite is the same as the view of Nyāya. Like a Nyāya realist, a Rāmānujite also holds that our senses can work only by reaching and contacting its object\(^8\).

But although an Advaitist agrees in this particular view that in perception the senses must reach the object to be known, still it holds an essentially different view of perception. According to him, in the perception of an object the psyche (antahkaraṇa) which is to be understood as a material something different from the self or spirit, comes out through one or other of the senses, reaches the object, envelops it and assumes a form corresponding to the object, this specific form being called a cognitive mode (vṛtti) of the psyche (antahkaraṇa). A Śaṅkarite holds that the self or spirit is just consciousness (cidrūpa) which is eternal and omnipresent (vibhū) and so is ever in contact with all existing things and reveals them, but owing to the presence of the beginningless principle of nescience (ajñāna), a darkening principle of non-spirit or matter, things remain concealed to the cogniser. It is only when this ignorance is removed, for the time being, by the cognitive psychosis (vṛtti) referred to above that a thing is revealed or known through such a mode of the antahkaraṇa.

8. Indriyānām vastuprapyakārītvaniyamāt, (i.e., senses can work only if they reach their proper objects).

Yatindramadīpikā, p 3, Chap. I.
Chowkhamba Edition.
So a Śaṅkarite says that the consciousness which is limited by an object (viṣaya-caitanya) is rendered identical with the consciousness limited by the mode of the psyche (antaḥ-karāṇavṛtyāvacchinnā caitanya), then we have the perception of the object. For example, the perception of a pot takes place, when the consciousness as limited by the pot becomes identical with the consciousness limited by the mode of the antaḥkarāṇa.

Rāmānuja and his followers do not agree with this view of perception held by the Advaita because they do not identify knowledge with the cognising self nor do they think that the individual self is all-pervasive (Viśhū). In the context of perception of an object, Rāmānuja introduces a peculiar conception of what is called "dharmabhūtajñāna" or attributive consciousness. According to him, "dharmabhūtajñāna" belongs to the self as an attribute; it is capable of expansion and contraction and it reveals an object by going near to it through one or other of the senses. Thus to this attributive


Vedāntaparībhāṣā, p. 19
By Dharmarājādhvarīndra
Pandit Edition.
consciousness, Rāmanuja ascribes a function which is somewhat similar to that which the Advaita ascribes to antahkaraṇa or its mode. Still, this attributive consciousness is essentially different in nature from the antahkaraṇa as conceived by the Advaita, for dharmaṁbhūtajñāna is itself consciousness, or a principle of revelation while antahkaraṇa is a mode of matter (jāda) and only removes the darkening veil or obstruction which prevents the object from being revealed by consciousness with which the object is already connected even before the mode of the antahkaraṇa gets connected with the object.

But the main point of controversy between the Śaṅkarite and the Rāmanuja school is regarding the nature of the object of perception. According to the former school, pure consciousness which is the same as pure existence (ādhyatmikātman) and which is destitute of all difference, is the only reality that knowledge can grasp. So what perception can ultimately be said to apprehend is pure existence, it cannot grasp anything else nor any distinction10. The Śaṅkarite argues that difference (bheda) is an unreal notion which cannot be proved to exist by any valid instrument of knowledge (pramāṇa). We cannot grasp difference by perception for each perception lasts only for one moment and within this short time, only one thing,

10. Saṁmātrasyaiva prakāśakaṁ pratyakṣaṁ.
Mahāpūrvapakṣa, in Śrībhāṣya, p 61.
Nīrṇaya Sagar Edition.
namely, either the being of the thing or its difference from other things could possibly be perceived, but not both; again the difference of an object from other things cannot be known before knowing the being of that object; and this means that at the moment when perception occurs, it can grasp only the being of an object. So according to this school, difference cannot be apprehended by an act of perception.

Besides, difference, argues the Śaṅkarite, is not an intelligible notion. If difference were really connected with the object of our perception, then this difference must be either the essential nature or a character of the object - a character which is distinct from the object. The first alternative cannot be true. If it were so, then by knowing the essential nature of a thing such as a vessel, we should be able to apprehend its distinction from all other things such as books, walls, etc. and say that it is different from a book, a wall, and so on ad infinitum. But this is not what actually takes place. Moreover, the theory that difference is just the essence (śvarūpa) of a thing would imply that the

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11. Bheda nāma kaścit padārtho
Nyāyavidbhinnirūpayitum na śakyate.

Śrībhāṣya, p. 59.
Mahāpurvapakṣa.
Nirmaya Sagar Edition.
statement - "the vessel is different from the wall" is identical with the tautologous statement "the vessel is a vessel".

Nor is the second alternative that difference is the character of a thing acceptable. If difference be a character, the essential nature of a thing must be distinct from this difference. If not, the second alternative would be the same as the first which has already been rejected. If the essence be distinct from the difference then this distinction again must be considered to be a character of the essential nature of the thing and this would lead us to a vicious infinite process. There would be the further difficulty of mutual dependence. For in order to know that a cow is different from a horse, one must know certain special features of a cow and in order to know that certain features of the cow are special features, one must know that they are different from the features of a horse, a cat, etc. This would constitute the logical defect of a vicious circle. By arguments of this sort, the Śaṅkarite tries to support his contention that difference is not real, so it cannot be an object of knowledge. And the ultimate object of perception is only pure existence (suddha sattā) without difference.

According to the Advaita, the indeterminate perception (nirvikalpaka pratyaksa) is the pure type of perception of
pure differenceless reality; and such indeterminate perception is to be met with even in our ordinary life. As for example, whenever a person has a perceptual judgment of recognition (pratyavijnā) in the form, "This is the same as that Devadatta" (soyām Devadattāḥ), he has the intermediate perception of the bare identity of Devadatta as he was then and there with the Devadatta as he is here and now. This judgment is called indeterminate because this identity cannot be apprehended by relating the two qualifications of Devadatta, namely, 'there and then' (indicated by the word 'this') but only by eschewing them. The advaitist contends that the identity of God (Īsvara) and the finite individual self (jīva) can, in the same fashion, be apprehended by an indeterminate perception of the truth expressed by the scriptural statement "Thou art That" (Tat tvam āsi) - an indeterminate perception of the identity of the Reality which is qualified by 'God-hood' and the Reality which is qualified by 'finite individuality'. What should be specially observed is, that since this type of perception is to apprehend the bare identity of a thing, i.e., the bare thing without its attributes, it must not apprehend any relation (sambhandhāvagāhin)².

² Some greater elaboration is needed for bringing out the significance of this Advaita view of indeterminate perception. But for our present purpose of stating Rāmānuja's theory of perception in contrast with the Advaita view, this short account of Advaita view would perhaps be sufficient.
But Rāmānuja does not accept this Advaita contention and categorically says that perception must necessarily grasp distinction and difference which must, therefore, be accepted as real. Though he admits that there are two different types of perception—namely, indeterminate and determinate, yet he differs from the view of Advaita as well as that of Nyāya regarding the nature of these two kinds of perception. Indeterminate perception (nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa) is defined by Rāmānuja as the first perception of the first individual of a class possessing some features or certain configurations without knowing that these features are common to many individuals coming under a class, while determinate perception is the subsequent perception of other individuals of the same class as possessing those very features, a perception which, therefore, also knows these features as common to many individuals. When we perceive a cow for the first time, we certainly perceive it as possessing a certain configuration (sāṁsthāna), such as a dewlap hanging from below its neck, a general triangular shape of the head, etc. So even in the first perception of an object we apprehend it with certain special features, with its differentiating marks.

13. Which we will treat and discuss later.

14. Ātāḥ nirvikalpakamekajātīya dravyeṣṭv, prathamapiṇḍagrahaṇāṁ, dvitiyādipīṇḍagrahaṇāṁ svavikalpakamityucyate.

Sṛibhāṣya, Catuhsūtri, p. 73

Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
In determinate perception, however, the object is perceived as belonging to a certain class, by appreciating the fact that the special features or marks which it possesses are similar to those which were perceived in the indeterminate perception of the first member of that class. Thus indeterminate perception, according to Rāmānuja, is not the apprehension of pure and differenceless reality as the Śaṅkarite maintains. In the former perception, as the other instances were not still seen, the special features were not known to be the common features of all the members coming under the class. Thus the real distinction between indeterminate and determinate perceptions, according to Rāmānuja, lies in the fact that the former is the first apprehension of an individual belonging to a certain class\(^{15}\), while the latter is the apprehension of the subsequent members of the same class\(^{16}\). The generic character, according to the school of Rāmānuja, is nothing but a group of special features or the configuration of the individuals which is commonly shared by all the members of the same class. So even in indeterminate perception, says Rāmānuja, the object is cognised with its essential marks which constitute the generic character, without, however,

\(^{15}\) Without knowing that it belongs to a certain class;

\(^{16}\) appreciating also the fact that they belong to one class, by possessing certain common features.
knowing that they do so. The example cited by the Advaita, of an indeterminate perception, "This is the same as that Devadatta", cannot, as Advaita contends, possibly grasp mere Devadatta, in its bare existence and as devoid of all attributes, and hence devoid of all relations. As Ramanuja remarks, here Devadatta is at least apprehended as qualified by 'that' and 'this' signifying that the Devadatta who is being perceived here and now is the same person who was perceived then and there. Thus what Advaita considers to be indeterminate perception, also apprehends something as related with some character. There is no perception of an entity except as what is possessed of, or related with, some character.

Vedánta Desíka, the great exponent of Ramanuja's philosophy, has defined 'determinate perception' (savikalpaka jñāna) as the apprehension which is produced by 'sense-object contact accompanied by the past impression of the object' (samskāra) while 'indeterminate perception' is that apprehension which is solely produced by sense-object-contact

without the help of any past experience. So the distinction between the two types of perception, according to Vedānta Deśika, lies in the fact that while the former involves both perception and memory or recognition, the latter involves only perception, but in no case perception can apprehend anything as an object which has no attribute or quality.

Vedānta Deśika's formulation of the distinction between indeterminate and determinate perception, besides being compatible, and essentially in agreement, with that of Rāmānuja, has, it would seem, the merit of excluding, at the very outset, a perceptual judgment of recognition (such as, "this Devadatta is the same as that Devadatta") from the sphere of indeterminate perception; for recognition (pratyavijñā) of identity necessarily involves some element of memory, just as the recognition that a certain feature is common to many individual things involves it.

Nyāya also recognises two kinds of perception, namely, indeterminate and determinate, but it interprets the distinction between these two kinds in a manner different from that


Satadūṣāṇi, Veda II

By Vedānta Deśika.

of both the Rāmānujites and the Śaṅkarites. Determinate perception, is according to it, the apprehension of a thing as characterised by some attribute or character. It is knowledge of the character-characterised, or of the subject-predicate relationship. And indeterminate perception is the apprehension of a thing in itself (svarūpataḥ), without relating it with some character. The Nyāya argues that to have a piece of determinate perceptual knowledge, such as "This is a cup", the cogniser must first have indeterminate perceptual knowledge of the simple units, 'This', 'cuphood', and the 'relation' called samavāya which afterwards gives rise to their knowledge in such a way that they get connected with one another in the form "This is a pot", in which "This" becomes subject, 'pothood' becomes the predicate and samavāya becomes the tie between the subject and the predicate. The determinate knowledge of a thing amounts to knowing it as having a certain character. It is the knowledge

20. Viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyasamābhādānakāhī jñānam.
21. "This is a pot" is interpreted as "This has the character pothood".
of 'a thing as qualified by a certain character'. But the knowledge that a thing has a certain character, i.e. a certain characteristic mark is not possible without the previous knowledge of that mark. For instance, if I am to know "This man is with a stick (in his hand)", I must already be acquainted with a stick. Else, I should not know that a stick is a characteristic mark of the man whom I am perceiving now. Similarly, when I have the perceptual judgment, "This is a cup", what I know is that the object in front of me has the characteristic mark 'cup-hood'. This implies that I have already the knowledge of cup-hood. To have explicit or judgmental or determinate knowledge about a thing is to know it by attributing a character to it. Thus when I know something explicitly in the form, "This is a stick", I know it by ascribing the character stick-hood to it. But the question is: "How do I know the character stick-hood?" Do I know stick-hood also by attributing to it a character which may be called "stick-hood-hood?" An affirmative answer to the last query would lead to an infinite process, making it impossible for us to know something explicitly as a stick. This implies that we must grant that the explicit awareness of things like stick-hood, cup-hood, etc. (which, by the by, are universals or jātis) must not be by way of ascribing
any character to them. In other words, the explicit knowledge of a thing like stick-hood is possible in itself or in its own nature (svarūpataḥ), i.e., not as qualified by a character distinct from the thing to be known. Now if the knowledge of a thing is qualified by a character is to be called determinate (savikalpaka), then the knowledge of a thing just in its own nature, i.e., not as qualified by a character may be called indeterminate (nirvikalpaka). Nyāya thus argues that the determinate perceptual knowledge of a thing, such as the judgment, "This is a stick" requires the prior indeterminate knowledge of the determining character such as 'stick-hood'. At what prior time, does this indeterminate knowledge occur? Evidently, this indeterminate knowledge of a stick-hood must also be perceptual, as is the determinate perceptual knowledge, "This is a stick". Nyāya, therefore, maintains that the indeterminate or nonjudgmental knowledge of stick-hood is due to sensory contact with stick-hood and hence also with the stick and takes place immediately before the judgmental perception, "This is a stick", which, too, since it is perceptual, must be due to sensory

22. This, indeed, is true of even mediate knowledge, which is necessarily determinate.

23. Sensory contact with stick-hood can take place only through sensory contact with a stick in which stick-hood inheres.
contact with a stick. The upshot of all this is that (1) first, there is sensory contact with the stick as well as stick-hood which inheres in the stick, (2) then there occurs the indeterminate perception of both stick-hood and the stick as well as of inherence (samavāya), the perception of stick-hood and the stick, not related with each other also as substantive and character (visēgya-visēṣaṇa), and (3) after this, there is the determinate perception "This is a stick". I must, therefore, have the indeterminate knowledge of the simple units such as pot, pothood, etc. before I can know something to be characterised by pot-hood. Thus indeterminate knowledge is, according to Nyāya, the necessary precondition of determinate knowledge.

In order to understand the Nyāya concept of indeterminate perception, it is necessary to point out that Nyāya does not think that there can be any immediate inner awareness (anuvyavasāya) of indeterminate knowledge as we have such inner awareness of determinate knowledge. The reason for this is, as Nyāya observes, that the inner perception of knowledge invariably assumes some such form as "I know that this is a cup", where the object of that knowledge which is cognised by inner perception appears as a thing which is qualified by some character24, e.g., by cup-hood in the present case. This shows that we can have inner

24. Vaiśiṣṭyaṇavagāhi jñāṇasya pratyakṣaṁ na bhavati,
perception of only a piece of "judgemental knowledge" or determinate knowledge. As indeterminate knowledge is not "judgemental knowledge" in the view of Nyāya, i.e., since it grasps no subject-predicate relationship, so we cannot have the inner perception (anuvyavasāya or after-cognition) of indeterminate knowledge. Then how do we know that there is such indeterminate knowledge at all? Nyāya replies that we can only infer its existence by considerations of the type which we have stated in the foregoing paragraph.

We can now make a comparative assessment of the different views which Rāmānuja, Nyāya and Advaita hold in regard to the two kinds of perceptual knowledge, namely, indeterminate and determinate. Unlike Nyāya, Rāmānuja believes that every knowledge grasps an object as what possesses a certain character and so is judgemental in nature, i.e. objects are cognised as specified by some character. Even indeterminate knowledge involves some kind of judgment - it grasps an object for the first time at least with some of its special features and so it is not non-relational, as the Nyāya holds. Rāmānuja would perhaps contend that a stage of knowledge, in which a thing is known without being related with something else, as conceived by the Nyāya, is a myth, and what Nyāya calls (24. Contd.)

ghaṭamahāṃ jānāmiti pratyayāt.

Muktāvāli, Kārikā, 57
Bhaṣaṅpariccheda p. 280
Edited by Pancanan Sastri.
determinate knowledge is itself primal. Knowledge always apprehends a thing as specified by some character, and so is judgmental. Since indeterminate knowledge, as conceived by Rāmānuja, is judgmental, so Nyāya would be prepared to grant that it can be directly revealed in what Nyāya calls anuvyavasāya, (literally an after-cognition) which is a sort of inner perception that occurs (if all its conditions are fulfilled) immediately after such knowledge. But as already stated by us, there can be no direct perception of indeterminate knowledge, as conceived by Nyāya, and we can only infer it as the necessary pre-condition of determinate knowledge. Rāmānuja, therefore, is in an advantageous position in this respect. For while what he calls indeterminate perception can be directly certified by actual experiences, this cannot be said about indeterminate perception as conceived by Nyāya.

An objection, however, naturally suggests itself against this view of Rāmānuja. He contends that the first perception of an individual thing of a kind which was formerly unknown to the cogniser is to be called indeterminate. He grants, at the same time, that even this first perception apprehends the shape, structure, etc. of the thing, although the fact
that the shape, structure, etc. constitute a common feature of the individuals of a class is not apprehended by this first perception. If so, Rāmānuja grants that these are apprehended as characterising features of the individual thing perceived, although not as common features of other such things. Why should then such a first perception be called indeterminate (nirvikalpaka), at all, seeing that there is here the perception of some characterising or determining feature? In fact, Rāmānuja's whole point against Advaita, in this context, is that even nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa cannot but apprehend a thing to be qualified by some character. If so, why should it be called nirvikalpaka? At any rate, Advaita Vedānta and Nyāya define nirvikalpaka as samsargānavaḥgahaḥ or vaiśiṣṭvānavaḥgahaḥ i.e., as what does not apprehend "relation" or "the relation of what is characterised (viśeṣya) and what characterises (viśeṣa). How then can Rāmānuja be justified in holding that the nirvikalpaka also is saviśeṣavisaya?

I do not know whether or how Rāmānuja meets such an objection. But perhaps the following may be said in his defence. When he says that the nirvikalpaka is also saviśeṣavisaya, he means that it is sātvapiṣeṣavisaya, i.e., it is what apprehends a thing with its minimum characteristic.

Sṛibhāṣya, Catuḥsūtri, p. 73. 
Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
features which may later serve as the basis on which the percipient is able to judge that the thing belongs to a certain class and different from other things of the same class or from things of other classes etc. This kind of first perception of a thing is not a merely inferred or postulated entity; on the contrary, one can have immediate awareness, as well as recollection of it. If this be the way in which Rāmānuja would meet the present objection, it would appear that his conception of nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa is somewhat analogous to, though different from, the Sāṅkhya conception of it. The Sāṅkhya literature usually refers to this by the name alocanā jñāna (or alocitajñāna)\textsuperscript{26}.

Vācaspati, in his commentary on Sāṅkhya Kārikā 27, says, "The vague apprehension 'This is something' is attained by a sense-organ, this is an undiscriminated object, and then the manas (the internal sense), grasps it clearly in the form 'It is such, and not so' i.e., discriminates it by making (within it) the distinction between 'character' and 'characterised'"\textsuperscript{27}. In this connection, he quotes one couplet from one source and two other couplets from a different source without stating what these sources are.

\textsuperscript{26} Sabdādiṣu pañcānāṁ alocanamātrāṁ iṣyate vr̥ttiḥ.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} Alocitam indriyena 'vastu idām' iti sammugdham. 'Idām evam, naivam' iti saṁkalpayati viśeṣa-pa-viśeṣa-bhāvam, vivecayati iti yāvat.
(A) "Beings which are endowed with manas (the internal sense) first apprehend a merely confused thing which is not discriminated, and this they (afterwards) discriminate, by attributing to it some generic and some specific character" 28.

(B) First there is a vague and indeterminate consciousness possessed by infants and dumb persons and this arises from an undiscriminated thing (mugdha-vastujām) 29.

Then, again, this object is judged (avāsiyate) by the manas (the internal organ) by ascribing generic and other such characters — such a judgment too is considered to be perceptual.

It would appear from these quotations that alocana or nirvikalpaka jñāna, as understood in the Śaṅkhya system is not what is altogether beyond the ken of our immediate awareness. We do occasionally have the blurred and vague consciousness of an object which we know not what, and this is no mere hypothesis propped by arguments, but a fact of immediate experience. Śaṅkhya alocana would seem very closely

28. Sammudgham vastumātraṁ tu prāg grhṇautyā vikalpitaṁ Tat sāmānyā viśeṣābhyaṁ kalpayanti maṇiśīnāṁ.

to approximate to such a stage of consciousness, if it be not quite identical with it, and since this is said to be the function of the five sense-organs in respect of sound, touch, etc. 30, before the manas has exercised its discriminating function, it should be regarded as a perceptual state of mind which is sub-judgmental and not altogether non-judgmental in nature 31. The Rāmānujite nirvikālpaka is almost the same as this alocana except to this extent that in the former discrimination of 'characterized' is actual in some degree but it is only potential in the latter.

This is all that we can say in support of Rāmānuja's notion of nirvikālpaka pratyakṣa. It would appear, however, that Rāmānuja would have been in a stronger position if he had denied the possibility of any cognition, whether immediate or mediate, which is indeterminate (nirvikālpaka). For he explicitly says that every cognition must necessarily apprehend something as having some attribute, and what Sāṅkhya, Advaita Vedānta and Nyāya understand by savikālpaka

30. Sāṅkhya Kārika, 28.
31. We are distinguishing, here, three concepts, namely, (1) non-judgmental, (ii) sub-judgmental and (iii) judgmental, roughly corresponding to the psychoanalytical (i) unconscious, (ii) sub-conscious and (iii) conscious. The first would apply to the Nyāya Nirvikālpaka, the second to the Sāṅkhya, while both can be said to be pre-judgmental which comprises both the non-judgmental and the sub-judgmental.
cognition is just this - the distinction between savi-
kalpaka and nirvikalpaka knowledge is considered by all
these schools - to depend on whether a cognition apprehends
or does not apprehend some relation ( sambhandhavagahin or
sambandhanavagahin ). Alternatively, Ramanuja might have
granted the reality of nirvikalpaka pratyaksa in the sense
of a perception that fails to apprehend the character
characterised relationship, but like Sankhya and Nyaya, he
could have urged that such perception was very unsatisfactory.
Had he done so, we could have interpreted his statement
'nirvikalpakan api savisesa-visayameva' to mean that even
the object of indeterminate perception is something which
is characterised by an attribute ( although the fact of its
being thus characterised remains hidden to such perception);
and this would have been sufficient for Ramanuja to refute
the view of Advaita Vedanta that the attributeless ultimate
Truth ( nirvisesa tattva ) is grasped in indeterminate
perception.

Perhaps, on behalf of Advaita Vedanta, it would be
contended that Advaitic nirvikalpaka is supra-judgmental,
while the Sankhya and Nyaya nirvikalpaka is infra-judgmental
and that although the latter may, on account of its being
unclear and indistinct cannot be said to give the truth
about Reality, still the former being above the judgmental level of consciousness possess both clarity and distinctness and can therefore, be considered to grasp Reality as it is in itself. The Advaitist illustrates his notion of nirvikalpaka by the perceptual cognition, "This Devadatta is the same as that" and this clearly shows that his nirvikalpaka is not infra-judgmental, although he maintains that this cognition apprehends Devadatta as he is apart from his relation with 'This' (time and place) and 'that' (time and place). What is meant by supra-judgmental, in this connection, is that a non-relational simple content has to be intuited through the complex relational content of a perceptual judgment by freeing it from its relational aspects—the past and the present spatio-temporal relations of Devadatta in the example under consideration.

We have already seen how Rāmānuja urges that the content of the perceptual cognition, "This is the same Devadatta as that" is necessarily relational, in that this cognition apprehends Devadatta as characterised by both "that time and place" and "this time and place". The Advaitist indeed contends that these two characters being incompatible with each other, the Devadatta having one of them cannot be identical with the Devadatta having the other. Hence if the
cognition of the same or identical Devadatta is valid, the cognised Devadatta must have been cognised as mere Devadatta, i.e., Devadatta as free from these characters. Against this, Rāmānuja can easily point out that two different spatio-temporal positions as characterising the same thing are not mutually incompatible, but a plain matter of fact supported by everybody's experience. Why should it be impossible for the same Devadatta to have been in Pataliputra three months ago and to be at present in Puri and for me to have seen him there then, to see him here now at Puri and to recognise him perceptually to be the same person? Identity, for Rāmānuja, does not reject differences. Granting for argument's sake, that by some effort one is able to attain the supra-judgmental intuition of reality, which does not apprehend it as characterised, but as characterless, Rāmānuja can raise the question why such intuition should be considered to give us the whole truth, if the attributes which characterise Reality be also real? Of course, the Advaitist would maintain that the attributes are false appearances, so that the intuition of it as attributeless would be the only true apprehension of it. If so, Rāmānuja can rightly say to the Advaitist, "Well, then, the said supra-judgmental intuition would not be an evidence for supporting the view that Reality is attributeless and non-relational. On the contrary, this view would be the basis for the contention that the said intuition is valid and reveals reality as it is". 
Perception as understood by the Viśiṣṭādvaitins has a somewhat wider scope. According to them, memory knowledge, too, falls within valid knowledge (pramā). For it fulfils the conditions of valid knowledge, as defined by them. Pramā is defined by them as that piece of knowledge which is conductive to the employment of words appropriate in regard to its object and which, on account of this, leads to successful activities with which this object is connected. The Viśiṣṭādvaitins do not believe in novelty (anadhigatavishyatva) as an essential mark or criterion of true knowledge. This is why memory can be considered to be pramā. The opponents of this view may argue that if the cognition yielded by memory be considered valid, then memory should be counted as a distinct instrument of knowledge (pramāṇa) on a par with perception. But the Rāmānujites avoid this undesirable consequence by including memory within the scope of perception, on the ground that memory depends upon past perceptual knowledge. Memory is, then, defined by them as that knowledge which is caused by the traces of past experience32. The object of memory is necessarily a perceived object i.e., an object of past perception. So memory knowledge is not possible where there is a long lapse of time between the original

experience and the corresponding memory, for the traces of the past experience fade away as time passes. Like memory, recognition (pratyavijñā) also is considered by the Rāmānujite to be valid knowledge coming under the scope of perception (pratyakṣa). As for example, in the cognition, "This is the same as that Devadatta", a person recognises Devadatta whom he knew in the past. Thus recognition like memory depends upon past experience. Thus the Rāmānujite holds that it is nothing other than perceptual knowledge\(^{33}\).

It may be mentioned here that pratyavijñā is considered to be perceptual in nature even by Nyāya. Mīmāṃsā and some Advaitists think that memory is not pramāṇa. Their ground for giving pratyabhijñā the status of pramāṇa is that unlike memory, pratyavijñā requires sensory contact, in spite of the fact that it involves, as its condition, also the memory trace of some former perception.

According to the school of Rāmānuja, the non-existence of a thing can be cognised by perception, for the non-
existence of a thing is not a separate entity. For example argues the Rāmānujite, the absence of the pot on the ground is nothing but the ground itself. The prior non-existence of the pot is nothing but the ground itself. And the posterior non-existence of the pot (dhwānsa) which is caused by the destruction of the pot, is nothing but the broken pieces of it. So the non-existence of a thing, says the Rāmānujite, can be grasped by perception of its substrate. This is also the view of the Prābhākara school of Mīmāṃsā, for they also hold that the non-existence of a thing is nothing but the substrate of the non-existence itself. Non-existence is not a separate entity. But according to the Advaita Vedānta and the Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsā, non-existence is a distinct entity which can be cognised by a distinct pramāṇa called non-observation (anupalabdhi). As the Rāmānuja school of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta does not regard non-existence as a separate real entity, so it does not recognise non-observation as a separate instrument of

34. Of course, the English idiom is 'from' and not 'on'.

35. Asmaṁte abhāvasya bhāvāntararūpatvāt tagjhānasasyāpi prayākṣāntarbhāvah.

knowledge to grasp the non-existence of anything. He, on the contrary, holds that the non-existence of a thing can be grasped by perception (pratyakṣa) the first and most important instrument of knowledge which is thus recognised by the school of Rāmānuja to have a wider scope than what it has according to the Bhāṣṭa Mīmāṃsā and the Advaita Vedānta.

In this connection I may refer to that kind of knowledge by which the supreme Being can be known. This according to Rāmānuja and his school, is a kind of perceptual knowledge (pratyaksajñāna), but being supra-sensual, it cannot be brought under the category of ordinary sense perception. The Gītā speaks of three possible paths through which the individual self can attain the final knowledge of the Absolute.

36. Although Nyāya does not identify non-existence with its substrate and considers it to be a fundamental category of things on a par with such categories as substance, quality, etc. still, it, too, like the school of Rāmānuja, maintains that non-existence is primarily apprehended in perception. Their ground for holding this view is that sensory contact is essential for its apprehension. It is by employing my eyes that I can know that there is no pen on my table.
Being or God and thereby attain final release (mokṣa).

These are the paths of action (karma), of knowledge (jñāna) and of devotion (bhakti). Rāmānuja, as a Vedāntist, lays the greatest emphasis on the path of knowledge — he says that the root of bondage is ignorance of reality (avidyā) and through the perfect knowledge of Reality alone, our ignorance can be destroyed and final emancipation attained. What is the exact nature of such knowledge? Does it consist in mere understanding of the meaning of the scriptural texts like "Thou art that", "Thou art the same as Brahman", etc.? Śāṅkara answers, "Yes", and he thinks that the knowledge and performance of religious rites prescribed in the Vedas is not indispensable for this — on the contrary, at a certain stage of spiritual development, these are obstacles in the path of knowledge.

But Rāmānuja holds that knowledge of Brahman need not, in fact, must not, eschew religious acts; for their performance purifies the psyche (antaḥkarana) of the individual self, while their non-performance would increase the burden of sin and make the self averse to spiritual endeavour, and an

37. Avidyānivṛttireva mokṣaḥ sa ca Brahma-vijñānādeva bhavati.

Śrībhāṣya, Catuḥsūtri, p. 28
By Rāmānuja.
Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
individual with a purified psyche will easily attain the knowledge of the Absolute. When the Vedas, according to Rāmānuja, prescribe knowledge for attaining mokṣa, they do not mean to say that this knowledge is merely the intellectual understanding of the meaning of the Vedic texts. The Upaniṣads have pointed out what we may describe as three connected steps in the spiritual ladder leading to the perfect realisation of the highest Truth. These are śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana. The first means the ascertainment of the precise teaching of the texts that describe Brahman. The second means the employment of reasoning for confirming what is thus ascertained. The third, namely, nididhyāsana is also called dhyāna, and signifies

38. The oft quoted passage (Br. Up, 4, 5, 6)
Ātmavā are drāstavyāh śrōtavyo maṁtavyo nididhyāsi-
tavyāh; which is also quoted in the Śrībhāgāya:
The begining of laghupūrvapakṣa.


40. Ibid. Śravaṇa-pratiṣṭhāthatvāt mananasya.

41. Ibid (a) Tasmāt dhyānameva vidhiyate
(b) avṛttīḥ.
(c) tadidam apavargapāyatayā vidhīṣitaṁ
vedanāṁ upāsanāṁ ityavagamyate.
constant and conscious repetition (of the truth about Brahman). This is not merely the understanding and reasoned confirmation of the meaning of scriptural texts\textsuperscript{42}. But it is a cognitive experience (Vedana) which is the same as upāsana. In his further remarks on dhyāna, here, Rāmānuja says that this has been specially prescribed by Vedānta as the means to liberation (apavargopāyatva-śravanāt) and then describes this dhyāna to be a continuity of remembrance which is uninterrupted like the flow of oil (tailadhāra-vadavicchinna-smṛti-santarārūpaṃ). He adds further that such remembrance is of the same character as 'seeing' (darsana samānakāra), on account of the strength of the mnemonic traces (bhāvanā) which it involves (bhavati ca smṛter bhāvanā-prakārṣaḥ darsana-rūpaḥ). Śrutaprakāśīka says that the statement "memory becomes seeing" is to be understood by reference to 'clarity of revelation' (visāda-tarāva-bhāsa). When this mediation or constant memory is stated to be a sort of 'seeing' what is implied is that such mediation possesses perceptuality or the character of immediate apprehension (darsanarūpaḥ ca pratyakṣatāpattih).

\textsuperscript{42} Na tu vākyārthajñānamityrthaḥ Śrutaprakāśīka on the passage dhyānāmeva vidhiyate, stated in foot-note (4a).
Rāmānuja's exposition of the term 'dhyāna' does not terminate here. He points out that scripture itself further specifies the exact kind of 'dhyāna' which is to serve as the sole means to liberation. He has already described it as a continuous process of recollection of the Truth—a recollection which is a sort of 'seeing', i.e., a kind of apprehension which has the characteristic of immediacy and is, therefore, perceptual in nature. On the authority of the scripture, he now goes on to say that neither the mere ascertainment of the exact teaching of scripture (sravana) from the preceptor, nor the reasoned confirmation of the correctness of this teaching, nor the mere repetition of this truth can be a means to self-realisation (Kevala-sravanamanana nididhyāsananaṁ ātmaprāptyanupāyatvam). Something more than this is required. And this is God's 'choice'. "Whom the supreme self (i.e. God) chooses, by him alone. He can be gained". (Yamevaisa vynute tenalabhyah) (Ka. Up.II, 23). But we must not think that God's choice is arbitrary. The chosen person must be the most dear or beloved to the chooser. But who is the most beloved to the chooser? Well,

43. We may, here, call to mind, that recollection or memory is, as we have already stated, a kind of perceptual knowledge, for a Rāmānujit.
it is that person by whom the chooser ( i.e., God ) is held most dear\(^44\). Rāmānuja, therefore, concludes that only that person to whom that said perceptual recollection is itself the most dear thing, on account of the fact that its object ( i.e. the recollected God ) is the dearest thing, is chosen by God and gains Him. Now this kind of steady remembrance of God as the dearest object in the universe is designated by the word 'devotion' (bhakti)\(^45\). Hence if we are to interpret the term 'dhyāna' (meditation) rightly, so as to make it signify the means which Vedānta prescribes for liberation, we should not understand by it as a mere concentration of mind. as this phrase is usually taken to mean - we would have to widen our idea of dhyāna and include within it an emotive element over and above the merely cognitive. The saving knowledge of God that will liberate a finite self from its painful worldly existence is not the dispassionate and disinterested apprehension of an onlooker, but the passionate and constant awareness of a lover for his beloved

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44. "Priyatama eva hi baraniyo bhavati, etc. .......
 ...... priyatama bhavati".

45. Evam rūpa dhruvānusmṛtireva bhaktisabdēbhidhiyate.
who is the soul of its finite soul, the abode of the highest
delight, the repository of all auspicious qualities, etc.
which makes the devotee stick only to one thing, namely, the
object of his devotion, with all his desires direct there 46.

Devotion is a kind of consciousness of God which is
shot through and through by spiritual love, in which the
devotee comes into very close relationship with his beloved,
who, indeed, as the Upanisads say, is his inner self and
ruler (antaryāmin). Dhyāna is this loving and intense
awareness of the true nature of the Absolute Being, on
account of which the devotee surrenders himself wholly to
his Lord, with the firmest faith and reliance in Him as his
only shelter. It is only in such a stage of loving surrender
that an individual self can attain the highest and the most
perfect knowledge of the Absolute Being and thereby enjoy
the bliss of liberation 47.

46. Evamṛūpa dhruvānusmr̥ti-reva bhakti śabdena-bhidhi-iyate,
upāsanaparyāyatvādbhakti śabdasya.
Śrībhāṣya, Catuhsūtrī, p. 35.

47. But at this stage also, Rāmānuja holds, the distinct
individuality of the devotee is retained in the consciousness
of himself as 'I', for without this self-conscious
individual self, there would be nobody to enjoy the bliss
of liberation. While Śaṅkara says that in liberation
the jīva realises his complete identity with the Brahman
In this final stage of the soul's spiritual endeavour, the devotee realises that he is the body or temple in which his Lord dwells as the soul of his body. It is only in this attitude of loving devotion that a spiritual aspirant knows his beloved most perfectly. It is this loving knowledge of God which Rāmānuja prays for in the famous introductory prayer verses of his Śrībhāṣya,

" ........ Brahmani Śrīnivāse bhavatu mama parasmin ēmuśī bhaktirūpā".

" May I have the knowledge, which is of the nature of devotion, of that Absolute Brahman who is the abode of all Well-being". This highest intuition of Brahman ( ēmuśī bhakti rūpā ) is certainly not merely theoretical cognition, devoid of emotion, but it must be a total state of the psyche, which is both cognitive and emotive and is oriented to God and God alone.

( 47. Contd.. )

and all separate individual existence lapses and merges in the Absolute consciousness of Brahman, Rāmānuja maintains that the distinct existence of the individual devotee from the Lord is retained even in liberation.