CHAPTER V

VERBAL TESTIMONY (ŠABDA)
Rāmānuja and his followers, we have seen, recognise Śabda or verbal testimony as the third source or instrument of valid knowledge. The word Śabda, however, stands occasionally also for the verbal knowledge which results from this cognitive instrument. According to these philosophers, verbal testimony is undoubtedly a distinct and independent source of knowledge. Vedāntins, whether of the Advaita or the Viśiṣṭādvaita school have great faith in the authority of the Vedas and other scriptural literature, as they believe that these are the only means for knowing Brahman or the Absolute, as well as empirical things such as heaven. Even in the sphere of empirical knowledge, according to these thinkers, verbal testimony functions as an important cognitive instrument.

Verbal testimony is, in final analysis, a sentence uttered by a person, whether this person be God or a human being. So its soundness depends upon the reliability of its
speaker. And the testimony is recognised to be valid because their authors are either God or the great sages who are believed to be omniscient and free from all imperfections. Udayana, the great Nyāya logician, argues that although the Vedas are a valid source of knowledge, still they have no intrinsic validity and that their validity is wholly due to their divine origin. In our ordinary day to day life, also it is generally accepted that the excellence and the absence of defects in the speaker are the pre-conditions of the validity of the knowledge which is derived from his words.

That much of our knowledge, belief and opinion is derived from the words or statements of other persons can hardly be disputed. Still, one may not recognise śabda or verbal testimony to be a distinct and independent source of knowledge. The Vaiśeṣika and the Buddhist philosophers, for example, reject 'words' as an independent source of knowledge, distinct from perception and inference.

The Cārvāka or the materialist accepts only one cognitive instrument, namely, perception (pratyakṣa) and rejects all other instruments including verbal testimony as either unnecessary or invalid.
The Buddhist logicians comprise it within perception. They hold that it is a kind of inner perception (mānasa pratyakṣa), since whenever a person hears a sentence, he mentally perceives its meaning. When a person who has already learnt the meanings of the separate words contained in a sentence such as 'There are five oranges in the kitchen', hears this sentence, he first remembers the respective meanings of its different words, and then mentally apprehends, that is mentally perceives, the total meaning of the sentence. The Buddhist, therefore, finds no ground for accepting verbal testimony as a third source of knowledge, distinct from and on a par with, perception and inference.

The Vaiśeṣika, on the other hand, maintains that verbal testimony is really a case of inference. In support of this thesis, he employs a syllogistic argument like the following: The sentence, 'The tiger is like a big cat', uttered by a person, expresses the fact which is constituted by the connection (sāmsarga) of the things which are meant by the several words 'tiger', 'like', etc. which occur in this sentence; because this sentence is a group of words which have 'expectancy' (ākāmśa), 'suitability' (yogyatā), etc. in

1. Vedānta-darsana Advaita-vāda, p. 234, Vol. II.

By Ashutosh Sastri.
respect of one another; for whatever is a group of words (pada-kadaṁba) which have, in respect of one another, expectancy, suitability, etc. expresses the fact which is constituted by the connection of the several things which are meant by these words; as for example, a sentence uttered by me².

Here the Vaiśeṣika philosopher maintains that there is invariable concomitance of the mark which is taken as 'a group of words which have, in respect of one another, expectancy, suitability, etc.' with the probandum which is 'the fact constituted by the connection of the things which are severally meant by the words that make the group'.

One may object that here there is no universal concomitance between the mark and the probandum, since a group of words may convey different connections of meanings in different contexts according to the purport (tātparya) of the speaker. Thus there is no universal relationship between a sentence and its full intended meaning. But this objection can be met by including the speaker's purport (tātparya) among expectancy, suitability, etc. which characterise the words of a meaningful sentence.

². Etam padanisvāmāritārtha saṁsargavanti ākāmśādīmat padakadaṁbakatvāt madvākyavat.

_Tarkasamgraha-Dīpikā_,
Śabdakhaṇḍa.
Nyāya rejects this Vaiśeṣika thesis on the ground that while apprehending the total meaning of a sentence after hearing it, we are not aware of performing any process of inference as is suggested by the Vaiśeṣika thinker; on the contrary, in the after-cognition (anuvyavasā), i.e., in inner perception of the knowledge which we have by hearing a sentence, we become aware that such knowledge is derived from words, that is, it is verbal and not inferential knowledge.

3. The Nyāya thinker holds that the primary knowledge of knowledge is an after-cognition, i.e., a cognition which occurs after the knowledge which is its object and this acquaints us with the nature and kind of the known knowledge. Of course, there are other Indian philosophers such as Prābhākara, Rāmānuja and the Buddhists who like most Western thinkers hold that cognition is self-conscious, i.e., is self-cognised, that in order to be aware of a cognition it is not necessary to have another cognition having the first as its object, as Nyāya maintains.

"Caitanyaksvabhāvatā hi svayāṃprakāśatā. Ya prakāśā- svabhāvah so ananyādhīnāprakāśo dīpavat".

Srībhāṣya Catubsūtri, p. 94.
By Rāmānuja.
Niranya Sagar Edition.
The Buddhistic view that verbal knowledge is a kind of inner perceptual knowledge (manasa-pratyakṣa) is also rejected on the same ground that in regard to a piece of knowledge derived from a sentence, one is never reflectively aware that it is an inner perception like that of pleasure, pain, aversion, etc. Moreover, it is pointed out that knowledge derived from a sentence must necessarily be mediate and hence not perceptual. For such knowledge depends upon the knowledge of the signification of the words of the sentence. But knowledge which is due to some other knowledge cannot be perceptual, whether external or internal.

Western philosophers have, in general, neglected verbal testimony as a source of knowledge perhaps, on the tacit understanding that as the truth of knowledge derived from words can always be questioned and can only be ascertained by either perception or inference, so it cannot be recognised as a distinct source of knowledge. Prof. Montague is one of the very few Western thinkers who have referred to verbal testimony as a source of knowledge. But he is of opinion that though verbal testimony is 'as legitimate a source of knowledge as any other', yet it is neither ultimate nor independent. It may be counted merely as a secondary source

of knowledge. For the validity of a piece of knowledge derived from verbal testimony can be justified not by verbal testimony but by some other method.

We will examine the soundness of such an objection against the independent status of verbal testimony and will see how far verbal testimony can stand as a distinct and independent source of knowledge. Prof. D. M. Datta\(^5\) points out that such a view is the result of the confusion of two distinct questions, namely,

i) How is a fact known?

ii) How is the knowledge of a fact ascertained to be true?

Really, these are two distinct questions - the first concerns the knowledge of a fact, while the second concerns the validity of such knowledge. The true criterion of a distinct source of knowledge must be constituted by an answer to the second. For the judge whether a source of knowledge has a distinct status of its own is to consider

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5. '*Mind* Vol. 36, 1927,
"Testimony as a method of knowledge".
whether it can give us some new factual information in a way which is qualitatively distinct from other ways of knowing it, and not the question whether the information it gives is valid. Sabda, judged by this criterion, is surely a distinct instrument of knowledge; for it gives us new factual information which I may not already have. There is no doubt that I can learn something which I do not already know, from a person's statement about that something. His statement may or may not be true, and this may be ascertained later on by determining, for instance, the question of his trustworthiness. But I certainly have some knowledge from his statement which is usually taken by me to be true and is also true. This is an undeniable fact, and perception or inference employed by me, later on, only helps me to ascertain the truth of this knowledge, if I have doubt about it for some reason. In regard to every source of knowledge, this remark would hold good. Thus we can have a piece of knowledge by a particular method, say by inference, and its truthfulness may afterwards be known by another method, say by perception or by testimony. But that would in no way affect the distinctive character of that instrument as a source of knowledge. Really speaking, none of our cognitive instruments can guarantee the absolute certainty of the knowledge derived by its use; experience shows that knowledge obtained through perception or inference also can vary often be questioned and
its validity has to be ascertained by some other method. But if this does not affect the fundamental validity of perception and inference, there is no reason why this should affect the fundamental validity of verbal testimony either.

Professor Montague says, 'The weakness of the authoritarian method, consists first in the fact that authorities conflict and there is consequently an internal discrepancy in the method, which makes it difficult of application'. In defence of verbal testimony, we can, however, say that although a cognition yielded by a certain method may sometimes come into conflict with other cognitions, including cognitions derived from words and although such knowledge may occasionally be shown to be false, still for this reason only, the particular method in question should not be rejected. For very often, we know, even one perception conflicts with another or it conflicts with inference or an inference may conflict with perception; but for these reasons, neither perception nor inference as an instrument of knowledge is rejected. Then why should not verbal testimony be accepted as a distinct source of knowledge merely because it may conflict with other modes of knowledge?

6. "Ways of Knowing" p. 34.

By W. P. Montague.
The Rāmānuja school of Vedānta clearly says that verbal testimony must be accepted as an independent source of knowledge, irrespective of one's position on the question whether the validity of a piece of knowledge is conditioned by internal factors (svataḥ), i.e., factors which yield that particular piece of knowledge, itself, or not (parataḥ). Certainly verbal testimony is not perception, for the knowledge it yields is not immediate but mediate in nature, like a piece of inferential knowledge. But it cannot also be regarded as inference; for here we do not find a proper mark (hetu) residing in a proper subject (pākṣa) and having universal concomitance with an intended meaning which can be considered to be the infereable thing (sādhyā). On the contrary, we can show here a special kind of knowledge derived from a sentence which is made up of some words which are connected with each other according to syntactical and other rules of language, which are studied by grammar⁷.

⁷ Svataḥ parataḥ vā prāmāṇye ca tato viśeṣābhāvāt. Tatca vedyāṅgē pratyakṣātiriktvām asākṣātkāritvām anumānāvāt. Anumānātiriktaṁ pakṣaliṅgaparāmarśādyadṛśteḥ padavākyat-atsambhaṅhdhādīnāṁ ca viśiṣṭavākyārthāṁ prayāsiddhavyā-ปฏिकत्वनलिङ्गत्वात ......... ataeva ca vaktṛjñānānumānā- bhyupagamepi śābdaprāmāṇyamāṁ siddham.

Nyāyaparipūddhi, p. 363, 364.
By Veṅkaṭanātha.
Chowkhamba Edition.
Verbal knowledge (śabda pramiti) originates, at least at the first instance, from hearing a sentence employed by another person. Such knowledge requires the previous knowledge of the meanings of the several words in the sentence. And the knowledge or understanding of the total meaning of the sentence results from hearing the sentence, if and only if sentence consists of words, which possess (in regard to one another) expectancy, suitability, proximity, etc. provided also the hearer understands that meaning of a word in the sentence which is intended by the speaker. A Rāmānujite argues that such knowledge cannot be derived either from perception or from inference. His arguments in support of verbal testimony as a valid instrument of knowledge are the same as the arguments given by Nyāya against the opposed views of the Vaiśeṣika and the Buddhist schools, and these are mainly what we have stated in the beginning of this chapter. So we need not restate and re-examine them here.

The Vedāntists, both Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita, accept verbal testimony as a valid instrument of knowledge (pramāṇa).

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8. This is technically termed 'tātparyajñāna'. This is necessary because sometimes a word may have more than one meaning, and also because occasionally a word is used in a figurative sense.
in the fullest sense of the term, especially on the consider-deration that verbal testimony can give us information about something which is not already known (anadhigatavisayatva) and it can certainly give us true knowledge, just like any other source of knowledge, if there is no defect in its cause, i.e., in the speaker (kārapadosavādhatadarsanāt).

Inference may be employed afterwards to re-assure oneself about the truth of what even a trustworthy statement asserts. But this should not imply that the validity of verbal testimony is established by inference. On the contrary, one may still hold that verbal testimony is valid in itself, although on account of extraneous factor, there may crop up in our mind doubt about the truth of a piece of knowledge which is derived from verbal testimony, and inference may then be employed to remove such externally caused doubts; and this is what is positively maintained by all Vedāntists including Rāmānuja who support the self-validity of all knowledge (svatahprāmaṇa). Moreover, our knowledge of the questions,

9. Vedāntaparibhāṣā By Dharmarājādhvarīndra.
10. Nyāyapariprāśa, By Veṅkaṭanātha.
wishes, requests, etc. of other persons is primarily due to verbal expressions used by those persons. They cannot certainly be known by perception, whether inner or outer. Although they may occasionally be inferred from gestures and other physiological expressions, still ordinarily we learn them from verbal expressions proceeding out of them.

The foregoing treatment of this source of knowledge mostly pertains to empirical or ordinary sentences. Vedāntists, however, have and insist upon having, absolute faith in the authority of Vedic statements. According to both the schools of Vedānta, of Śaṅkara and of Rāmānuja, the Vedas and other Scriptures are the only source of the knowledge of absolute Reality and also of the knowledge of the supersensuous things. This is very well explained in both Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras; we can specially refer in this connection to Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's commentaries on the Sūtra 'Ṣāstrayonitvāt' (3.1.1).

In the expositions of this sutra, both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja remark that the Absolute or Brahman cannot be learnt

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11. Atyantātīndriyatvena pratyaksādipramāṇa viṣayatayā Brahmanāḥ śāstraikapramāṇatvāt.

Sṛībhāṣya Catuḥsūtrī, p.238
By Rāmānuja.
Niranya Sagar Edition.
by any other pramāṇa, neither by perception nor by inference but only by scriptural testimony\textsuperscript{12}. They have rejected the contention of other schools such as Nyāya that the Absolute can be known by inference, too. They have tried to show the absurdity of such a view and come to the conclusion that scriptural statements are the only source from which we can know the nature of Brahman.

It is interesting to note that in spite of their agreement in respect of the validity of verbal testimony, especially of scriptural testimony, Rāmānuja differs very fundamentally from Śaṅkara regarding the nature of the object or the reality which is known through scripture. According to Śaṅkara scriptural testimony describes Reality as an undifferenced pure consciousness and all difference or distinction to be unreal. But Rāmānuja does not agree with this view and says that none of our cognitive instruments can establish such an undifferenced pure consciousness\textsuperscript{13}, for difference is an undeniable factor of all types of reality and the Absolute is not an exception and the task of a cognitive instrument is to reveal the real in its true nature.

\textsuperscript{12} Sāstrādeva pramāṇat jagato janmādikāraṇaṁ Brahmadhi-gamyate ityathhiprāyaḥ. Śaṅkarabhāṣya, p. 10 of the Sūtra (3.1.1)

\textsuperscript{13} Na kenāpi pramāṇena nirviśeṣa vastusiddhiḥ. Śrībhāṣya, Catuḥsūtrī (1.1.1) p. 76 Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
Śabda as a valid method of knowledge, grasps reality with all its relations, attributes and distinctions. Especially, verbal testimony, even if it be scriptural, must necessarily indicate that which has attributes and distinctions. For a sentence which is what constitutes verbal testimony consists of certain words. A word, as used in a sentence, is usually formed by the combination of some root and some suffix or prefix and as these elements are different, a word necessarily conveys a sense affected with distinctions. The suffix "<prefix>"/, for example, gives a particular shade of meaning of the verbal root "<root>", and as a result we have the word 'kartr' meaning a doer. This is true of all cases of the conjunction of suffixes with verbal roots. The suffix "<suffix>" in the word "<word1>" must, according to Rāmānuja, add some character to the root "<root1>" and the word "<word2>" must denote some reality with certain characters. Thus Rāmānuja tries to show that the object which is conveyed by verbal testimony must necessarily be something which, in its

(13. Contd.)

In this context Rāmānuja proves that neither perception, nor inference, nor verbal testimony can establish a differenceless reality.
nature, is characterised by attributes \(^{14}\). Moreover, the plurality of words in a sentence is grounded in the plurality of meanings. So it follows that verbal testimony whether Vedic or ordinary cannot establish a thing devoid of all difference \(^{15}\). In fact each word of a sentence, whether Vedic or ordinary, has a meaning which is distinct from the meaning of every other word of the sentence. The total meaning of the sentence must, therefore, be a relation or connection of the different things which are signified by the different words of the sentence.

The Advaita insists that Vedic texts primarily assert the Absolute Brahman to be devoid of all difference and character. In order to show this, it has recourse to various passages of the Vedânta texts which represent Brahman as

\[ \text{14. Arthabheda tatsâmsargaviśeṣabodhanakṛta padavākyaswarūpataśabhapramāṇabhāvasya sabdasya nirvāśesa vastubodhānāsāmarthyāt na nirviśeṣavastunī sóbda pramāṇām.} \]

\[ \text{Vedārthasāmgraha, p. 46} \]

\[ \text{By Rāmānuja.} \]

\[ \text{Pandit Edition.} \]

\[ \text{15. Padasaṃghātārūpasya vākyasyāneka padārthasāmsarga viśeṣābhidhāyitvena nirviśeṣavastupratipadānāsāmarthānna nirviśeṣavastunī sóbdaḥ pramāṇām.} \]

\[ \text{Śrībhāsya Catuḥsūtrī, p. 72, 73.} \]

\[ \text{By Rāmānuja} \]

\[ \text{Nirnaya Sagar Edition.} \]
nirguna i.e. as destitute of all characters. But against this contention of Advaitism, its opponents quite passages which assert the Absolute to be qualified (saguna) by various auspicious qualities (kalyāṇa guna) such as "Brahman is true, knowledge and infinite". Rāmānuja interprets this passage as stating that Brahman possesses the characters of truthfulness, knowledge and infinity. But Śaṅkara, in order to establish his concept of nirguna Brahman, interprets the same passage as stating that Brahman is of a single essence only, and that truth, knowledge, and infinitude mean the identical essence of Brahman (svarūpa) - these are not characters which can be said to belong to Brahman. The different words used in the text such as true, knowledge, infinite, etc. only refer to the one identical reality, i.e. Brahman and not to state that it possesses different characters.

Rāmānuja replies against this by urging that the different words used in this text express indeed a single reality, but they also state that this single reality is possessed of

16. "Satyam jñānam anāntam Brahman" (Taittiriya Upad, 2.1.1)

Rāmānuja quotes this passage more than once in his Sribhāṣya, p. 27, 45, 123.
different qualities expressed by the different words, because they have सामानाधिकरण्या, i.e. they are used as grammatically co-ordinate with one another. 

17. Prof. G. Thibaut has translated the word "सामानाधिकरण्या" as co-ordination in his translation of the Vedānta Sūtra Bhāṣya of Ramanuja. Prof. Suryanarayana Sastri renders this word by 'apposition' or 'appositional relation' (see his edition of the Vedānta Paribhāṣā, note 40, p. 198). But the word 'apposition' has a certain association in English grammar. In the sentence, 'Philip, the king of Macedon is the father of Alexander; the king of Macedon is said to be in apposition with Philip. It is also said to be in the same case with Philip. This shows that the term 'apposition' is similar to सामानाधिकरण्या, since the latter is said to be the relation of those words in a sentence, which have "the same case-ending", provided, of course, they refer to the same thing. But there is also some dissimilarity. For of the words which have सामानाधिकरण्या, one may be the subject and the rest its adjectival predicates. For example, in the sentence, "निलाम उत्पलम सुन्दराम"( The logus is blue and beautiful), the word उत्पलम is the subject, while the words 'निलाम' and 'सुन्दराम' are adjectival predicates to it. But this is not true of words in apposition. In our sentence, 'Philip, the king of Macedon is the father of Alexander', while 'Philip', 'king' and 'father' may be said to have the same case-ending (although English does not decline its nouns), still, only 'king' and not 'father' is in apposition with 'Philip'. That is why we have preferred Thibaut's term 'Co-ordination' to 'apposition' for rendering 'सामानाधिकरण्या'. 
The idea of co-ordination (sāmāṇādhikaranya) implies that several things or attributes denoted by several words, in a sentence, having the same case-endings, belong to a common substrate as its attributes. Though all these words refer to one and the same substrate, yet they are not synonymous, they refer to one and the same substrate by meaning different characteristics belonging to it. For example, the sentence 'niḷam utpalam' (The lotus is blue) consists of two words which have the same case-endings (nominative singular) and refer to one substrate. This substrate is referred to as possessing the character of lotushood and blue colour. So a sentence having several words used with the same case-endings (in co-ordination) gives us the knowledge of a unitary thing, no doubt, but as the one substrate which has different characters signified by the different words. According to the grammarians, there is what they call co-ordination of several words in a sentence if each of them has a different meaning, but at the same time each refers to one and the same thing. Rāmānuja also says that if every one of these words would express only one and the same thing, then the use of different words would be useless and the different words would be all merely synonymous. To this, the Advaita rejoins that such an argument is based on a misunderstanding of the exact sense which the text

18. Bhinnapravṛttinimitānāṁ śabdānāṁ ekasminnarthe vṛttih

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in question intends to express. Here the main purport of the text is to express the one identical reality which is different from everything else. Here Advaita attempts to show how the different words in the text can express the same thing without being synonymous. Thus Brahman is to be defined as what is contrary in nature to all other things. The word 'true' (satyam) has the purport of distinguishing Brahman from whatever things are false, i.e., have no truth, the word 'knowledge' (jaññam) distinguishes Brahman from all non-sentient things and the word infinite (anantam) distinguishes it from whatever is limited in time or space or nature (svarūpayataḥ). We must not also think that this distinction of Brahman from all other things is either a positive or a negative character of Brahman. The said distinction is just identical with the single essence of Brahman. Thus the words used in the text need not be synonymous, although they all may refer to the one identical reality.

(18. Contd...)

sāmanādhikaranyamiti śabdikāḥ.
Śrībhāṣya, Catuṣṣūtri, p. 123.
"....... for what 'co-ordination' aims at is just to convey the idea of one thing being qualified by several attributes".
Translation of BrahmaSūtra Bhāṣya of Rāmānuja by G. Thibaut. p. 79.
Rāmānuja is not satisfied with this answer. He raises another objection against this interpretation of the text. He says that here the Advaita understands the words 'true', 'knowledge', etc. in their secondary senses (laksanā) by abandoning their direct or primary senses (abhidhā or sakti). For 'true' is interpreted as what is opposed to 'false', 'knowledge' as what is opposed to 'inconscience' and 'infinite' as what is opposed to 'finite'. But such a procedure is not permitted where the primary sense (abhidhā) of a word can be accepted. It is further pointed out by Rāmānuja that it is not proper to understand every word of a sentence in a secondary sense.

The Advaita answers as follows - here the general purport of the text is to refer to the one identical Being, so here the direct denotative power of the several words of the sentence has to be abandoned, since the total meaning of the sentence is oneness. So the text has to be interpreted as describing Brahman as a pure and characterless reality. The Advaita says that the words of a sentence must be so interpreted as to enable us to understand the general purport (tātparya) of the sentence. If the interpretation of any word in its primary sense may hamper the understanding of the general purport of the sentence, then that must be abandoned and some secondary sense of the word is to be
accepted. Whether one or more or all the words of a sentence are to be interpreted in their secondary senses is not a matter of importance. What is important is the general purport in accordance with which the words have to be understood. The general purport of the scriptural text "satyam jñānam anantaṃ Brahma" (Brahman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinitude) is to assert the one differenceless reality which is Brahman, so here all the words are rightly interpreted in secondary senses.

Rāmānuja simply denies this and insists that like perception and inference, verbal testimony also must necessarily acquaint us with no object except as having some distinctive characters; otherwise, if we accept the Advaita view, the primary denotative power of the words of a sentence would be useless and the use of "co-ordination" (sāmanādhi-karanya) in a sentence would have no meaning.

According to Advaitism, Brahman or the Absolute can be known only through verbal testimony, i.e., by the correct interpretation of Vedāntic texts. But verbal testimony as an empirical phenomenon falling within the world, appears to be
real only so long as the knowledge of the Absolute is not achieved. With the attainment of this knowledge, all things including the pramāṇas (verbal testimony, also) are considered to be unreal appearances. Even so, if perception is in conflict with verbal testimony, perceptual knowledge will be sublated by verbal knowledge derived from scripture; for the latter grasps ultimate reality in its true nature; and the correct knowledge of Brahman is ananyāthasiddha, i.e., is not attainable by any instrument of knowledge, other than verbal testimony. Moreover, it is generally believed that while two pieces of knowledge conflict with each other, the earlier piece of knowledge is invalidated by the later. For example, the perceptual knowledge of snake in a rope is later on sublated by the later perception that it is not really a snake, but a rope. Similarly, scriptural testimony which comes after sense perception and which is a flawless source of knowledge cancels all other cognitions including all pramāṇas.

Rāmānuja thinks that such a line of thinking which the Advaita takes up is altogether absurd. He says that it is ridiculous to hold that a pramāṇa is valid so long as the knowledge of the Absolute is not achieved. Ultimately, all pramāṇas, according to Advaitism, even scriptural testimony,
are a false show (mithyā), having only empirical reality (vyavahārika sattā). Rāmānuja fails to understand how an instrument of knowledge which is a mere show can possibly yield true knowledge. A pramāṇa which is not real or untrue, cannot possibly give information about the true nature of reality. So an Advaitist involves himself in absurdity and contradiction, while he holds that scriptural testimony which is the only means for the knowledge of Brahman is also ultimately not real, but a false appearance, possessing only empirical reality.

Rāmānuja firmly upholds that our instruments of knowledge always reveal the real. So far as scriptural testimony is concerned, it is a much more reliable instrument than any other, being free from all defects; moreover, this is the only cognitive instrument by which we can know the nature of the Absolute Reality and other supersensuous entities. The scriptures tell us the truth, he says. So according to him, scriptural testimony is a true and infallible instrument of knowledge.

Another important point connected with verbal testimony concerns the significatory capacity of words. How do
words express a meaning as well as a connection of meanings?
It is generally accepted that a word may have two modes of
signifying a thing namely, śakti and laksanā, i.e., primary
or denotative signification and secondary signification or
implication. The primary sense of the word is derived from
example, the primary sense of the word pācaka is a cook, it
being derived from the verbal root 'pac' which means 'to
cook'. And occasionally the word may imply also a secondary
sense in which the original meaning is given up in order to
express some meaning other than, though connected with the
primary.

Logicians differ in their opinions regarding the ques-
tion "What is it that a word or term such as 'cow' primarily
signifies? It is some individual thing such as a cow or
the generic character cowhood or is it some individual cow
as characterised by cowhood?" Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and Advaita
Vedānta hold the first view that what a word primarily sig-
nifies is the generic character (jāti) and not the indivi-
dual thing; the word 'cow' primarily signifies 'cowhood'
( gotva ) but cowhood cannot exist apart from individual
cows. So when a person learns the significatory meaning
of the word 'cow', he also knows individual cows. Their argu-
ment is that one cannot recognise an animal to be a cow if
he has no previous knowledge of cowhood. Therefore, it is
natural that the primary meaning of the word 'cow' is 'cowhood' and as cowhood exists in all individual cows, so when cowhood is known to a person, he by secondary implication or by other means also knows individual cows. If the primary signification of a word would be an individual thing, then it would be impossible to recognise a new individual thing as a cow when somebody tells me, 'Here is a cow', and differentiate it from other animals, such as a horse or a buffalo. Moreover, if we grant that the word 'cow' can primarily stand for every individual cow, it would amount to admitting that the single word 'cow' has an infinite number of primary Significatory capacities, each pertaining to some single individual cow. This goes against the principle of Ocśam's razor (Lāghava), since a single primary significatory capacity of the word 'cow', if this pertains to 'cow-hood' is sufficient.

The Prābhākara school of Mīmāṁsā believes that a word not only signifies primarily a generic character but also an individual thing. The individual thing is not known indirectly or by secondary implication, but when a person says that the cow is grazing or the pot is broken, he primarily means the individual cow or the particular pot. Further,
experience shows that when an elder person tells me, "Bring the cow" I at once understand what he means to say. If the word 'cow' in the sentence would mean only 'cowhood', then the sentence would not be intelligible to me for 'cowhood' is a generic character which cannot be physically brought.

The Nyāya realises the difficulties of both these extreme views and comes to a view which may be considered to be the right theory. According to Nyāya, a word neither signifies primarily an individual thing only, nor a bare generic character but it signifies an individual thing as characterised by a generic character. The Nyāya contention is that the knowledge of a thing as characterised by some attribute requires the prior knowledge of the attribute. So when by hearing the word 'cow' I recognise an individual or particular cow, it must be granted that I recollect that the generic character 'cowhood' which characterises the cow is also present in this animal. So Nyāya rightly asserts that a word 'pot' primarily signifies the particular pot characterised by the generic character 'pot-hood'. As for the charge of going against Occam's razor, Nyāya points out that this can easily be avoided, if we maintain that
the word 'cow' has, pertaining to all individual cows, only a single primary significatory capacity, besides its capacity to signify cowhood.

The school of Rāmānuja believes that when a thing is known, it is known always as specified by some character and not as a bare thing; so it holds a view which is similar to that of Nyāya, namely that a word signifies primarily a particular thing as characterised by some generic character or some general configuration. When, for example, the word 'cow' is heard, the hearer not only understands a bare thing, but an animal with some general character like cow-hood which, in turn, according to this school, consists of the special feature or configuration of the cow.\footnote{Ataḥ gavādiśabdebhyaḥ viśiṣṭāviśayamitī śabdāsakti-prasūteti balādabhyupagamyatām. Nyāyapariśuddhi, p. 373. Vanaras Sanskrit Series Edition.}

The reason for taking a word in a secondary sense, according to most schools of Indian philosophy, including that of Rāmānuja, is our failure to understand the intended meaning i.e., the meaning which the speaker intends to
express by the word ( tātparyānupapatti ) if the word is understood in its primary sense. For instance, the word 'puruṣasīṁha' means, by secondary implication, a man of great vigour, bravery and courage, although the primary meaning of the word would be a 'man-lion' which cannot possibly be the meaning intended by the person who employs this word, so here the secondary sense of the word is to be accepted.

Some thinkers have held the view that the ground for taking a word in a secondary sense is our failure ( if we take the word in its primary sense ) to understand the connection or relation of the things which are expressed by the words of a sentence - the connection which the sentence is to convey ( anvayānupapatti ). This view would seem

20. Rhetoricians consider this to be an illustration of what they call gauni vrtti, a mode of significatory capacity of a word, other than its primary or śakti or secondary capacity or laksanā. But the Nyāya view is that this is also a type of laksanā and Rāmānujites agree with Nyāya*.

* Lakṣaṇāgaunibhedat....... dvitiyā yathā, siṅgha Devadatta ityatra Devadatta sauryādigunayogah.

Yatindramatadīpikā p. 14
to be justified by the stock example of secondary signification, namely, "Gaṅgāyāṁ ghoṣaḥ", i.e., "The cowherds hamlet is in the river Gaṅges" or even by the example we have considered in the previous paragraph. For a hamlet cannot be connected with a flowing river as its locus, nor can a person be identified with a lion. That is why the word 'Gaṅges' is to be taken in its secondary sense, 'the bank of the river' and the word 'lion' in the secondary sense of 'what possesses great spirit, bravery, etc.". But this view is rejected because it cannot explain certain other instances of secondary signification, while the first view can explain them as well as those that have already been considered. For instance, when a host of a dinner party asks his assistants 'to bring the sticks first into the dining hall', what he means to say is the guests with sticks in their hands, should be first brought in. Evidently, the word 'stick', here, has to be taken in its secondary sense of 'a person with a stick in hand'. But on what ground is the secondary sense resorted to? Certainly, not because the connection of 'bringing in' and 'sticks' is unintelligible, but because the intended meaning of the word 'sticks' as employed by the host in the context of a dinner cannot be understood, if the word is taken in its primary sense.
Of course, the principle of parsimony (lāghava), i.e., Occam's razor would favour the first view in that it can explain all instances of secondary signification. Otherwise, one could reconcile the two opposed views by maintaining that the reason for having resort to secondary signification in certain cases (such as "He is a lion among men", "The cowherd's hamlet is on the Ganges", etc.) is the non-intelligibility of the connection of the things signified by the words in their primary sense, while in certain other cases this reason is the fact that what the speaker intends to convey by a word cannot be understood if the word is taken in its primary sense. This way of regarding the matter would also do greater justice to our usual and natural procedure when we interpret a word in some secondary or figurative sense. The only objection to this view is that it goes against the principle of Occam's razor. If we would stick to this principle, we may reconcile the two opposed views in a slightly different manner thus: The reason for having resort to the secondary signification of a word is indeed our failure to understand the sense intended by the speaker, if it be taken in its primary or literal sense; still, in certain cases, we become aware of
such failure, by first observing that the connection of
the things meant by the words of the sentence is unintelli-
gible, if all the words be taken in their primary sense.

The word sakti is defined by the Nyāya logician as
the relationship of a word with what is meant or signified
by the word or the meaning of the word. Now it is an
important question which philosophers have often
raised as to how the primary meaning of a word is first
learnt and whether the relation between a word and its
primary meaning is natural or conventional. The Mīmāṃsā
and the Advaita Vedānta hold the view that the Vedas and
scriptures are eternal (nitya) and these are not the
creations of mankind. They also believe that the relation
of the Vedic and the scriptural words and what are signified
by these are also eternal. So it means that it is a natural
relationship, a word always conveys the same thing. The
Mīmāṃsā philosophers have maintained that this natural capa-
city of a word (called sakti) to convey some meaning is
a fundamental category of a thing (padārtha) like a
category of substance or quality or activity.


Siddhāṭhamuktāvalī, Śabdakhandā, p. 414.
Kārikā - 81.
The Vedāntists both of the Śaṅkara school and of the Rāmānuja school accept this Mīmāṃsā contention, for they also believe in the eternal or natural capacity of the Vedic texts. But Nyāya holds that the capacity of a word to convey some meaning may be analysed into the will or desire of God that such and such an object should be understood by such and such a word. God desired that such a thing as pot should be called by the word 'pot', so it is called. But the later Nyāya (Navya Nyāya) is of opinion that śakti or primary significatory capacity of a word is nothing but a kind of desire, whether of God or of man. Parents give the name of their children and modern men also give new names to many things. So the relation of a word with its meaning is conventional. We think that the view of the later Nyāya is more natural and acceptable; for we know that in the modern age many new things are invented and are named by men. Moreover, a word may convey different meanings in different languages and societies. So it is hardly justified to say that the relationship between a word and what is meant by the word is natural.

There are, according to the school of Nyāya, different means by which we can learn the capacity of a word to express
the signified meaning. In the Muktāvalī, six ways by which a man may possibly learn the primary meaning of a word have been mentioned. He may learn from the grammar of a language, how a word is constituted by the combination of some verbal root with a suffix or a prefix of a word or by the nature of case-endings of the words. He may also learn from the dictionary of a language or from the words of an authoritative person who is free from all defects and is vastly learned. Then he may learn it by a method of comparison. For instance, when I hear from a person that gavaya is an animal which is similar to a cow, then in a forest seeing an animal to be similar to a cow, I at once recognise the animal as gavaya. Thus here the meaning of a word is learnt by the method of comparison. A person may also learn the primary signification of a new word where it is employed in a sentence, in association of certain other words of which he knows the meanings. But a person primarily learns the significatory meaning of a word from actual behaviour prompted by some sentence uttered by an elderly person.

22. Saktigrahaṁ vyākaraṇopamānakosāptabhikhyād vyavahārataśca Vākyasya sesión vivṛtvaradanti sānnidhyataḥ siddhapadasya vṛdhyāḥ.

Muktāvalī, Kārikā 81
The Mīmāṃsā, the Vedānta and the Nyāya agree in maintaining that a child first learns the meaning of a word from the behaviour of its elder (vṛddha-vyavahāra). For instance, when a child hears the words of an elderly person, "Bring the cow", "Tie the cow" etc. addressed to a junior, he observes the activities of junior person to whom the sentences are addressed and he comes to learn the meaning of the word 'cow', that such and such an animal is called by the word cow. Then when he hears, for example, another sentence, "Bring the horse and tie the cow", by careful observation of the activities of the person addressed, he learns the distinction between the meanings of the two words 'cow' and 'horse' and also learns in this connection the different names of the different kinds of work like 'bringing', tying', etc.

Another controversial and very interesting point²³ concerns how the connection (saṃsarga or anvaya) of the

²³. This is a point which seems to have hardly drawn the attention, much less any serious consideration, of Western thinkers, ancient, modern and even contemporary. The two theories about it, that we have presented here in broad sketch and rather superficial outline may be rejected as they stand. Still it seems to us that any satisfactory theory about this subject must be based on them; and this it would appear, is a rare achievement of first rate original thinking.
things meant by the several words of a sentence, i.e., the
total sense of the sentence is expressed. How do we arrive
at the total connected and unitary meaning of a sentence
from its different words? There are, in Indian philosophy,
two different theories about this namely, "abhihitānvyayāvāda"
and "anvītabhidhānāvāda". The former theory has been support-
ed by the Nyāya and the Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsā, while the
latter has been advocated by the Prābhākara school of
Mīmāṃsā and the Viśiṣṭādvaita or Rāmānujite school of
Vedānta. We shall now briefly discuss these theories regard-
ing the total meaning of a sentence.

We know that several words constitute a sentence and
each word has a distinct meaning or sense either by its
primary or by its secondary denotative capacity (sāktyi or
laksāpā). But the śabda-ijnāna or verbal knowledge which is
derived from the sentence, as a whole, is the knowledge of
the connection of the several things which are signified by
the different words. This total meaning of a sentence is
technically called anvaya or saṃsarga, literally meaning
'connection'. How do we obtain from a sentence, this anvaya
or saṃsarga, i.e., the relation or connection of the
several things which are denoted by the different words of
the sentence?
According to the theory of "abhihitānvaya" (literally, "the connection of the signified"), the meanings of the words of a sentence are first understood successively in the order in which they occur in the sentence, till we understand the sense of the last word; the memory traces (saṅskāra) of the ideas yielded by the earlier words combine with our understanding of the last word and act as causes in giving rise to the verbal knowledge of the total meaning (the anvaya or saṁsarga) of the sentence. Besides this, the facts of expectancy, suitability and proximity which the words of the sentence possess among themselves also function as causes of this final knowledge of the related total meaning of the entire collection of all the words. This is the theory which holds that a word signifies only its own object (whatever it be) and not any relation of its object with any other thing (whether substance, quality, activity, or etc.) signified by the other words of the sentence. Thus a non-related bare thing is signified by each word, and then the related total meaning of the sentence is understood.

The Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṁsā also believes in the theory of "abhihitānvaya" or "the relation of what are severally expressed by the several words"; but the account it gives of this theory is slightly different from that of Nyāya. The Bhāṭṭa holds that a word has a distinct meaning
of its own, but the related sense of the sentence, as a whole, is not conveyed by the words with their primary significatory capacity. For this related sense, i.e., the relation of the various things conveyed by the several words is not expressed by the natural denotative powers of the words of the sentence. The function of the primary significatory capacity of each word of the sentence is exhausted by conveying its distinct meaning. No word of a sentence, in its primary sense can import the connection of the meanings of the various words of the sentence. Then, how is such a connection of meanings conveyed? The Bhatta school of Mimamsa points out that this connected total sense, i.e., the connection of the several things indicated by the several words must also be considered to be conveyed by the words themselves, as otherwise the knowledge derived from a sentence would not be verbal knowledge (sabda-jñana).

Since this related sense of the sentence cannot be conveyed by the words with their primary significatory capacity, we, must grant that this connected sense of the sentence is signified by the words of the sentence with their secondary significatory capacity (laksanā). Secondary significaton of a word is adopted here because of the non-intelligibility of the intended connected sense of the sentence, if we stick to the primary signification (anvayānupapatti).

For instance, in the sentence, "Bring the cow", the things

24. Vayam tu padārtha lakṣaṇaivā vākyārtham

Contd...
'cow', 'bringing' etc. which we cannot by hearing the words, if 'bring' and 'cow' are taken in their unrelated condition, then this would be contrary to what the words of a sentence are intended to convey namely, a unitary and related sense like 'the bringing of a cow'. That the words of a sentence are employed for conveying such a related and unitary thing has been learnt by us, when we first learnt the primary meaning of a word from sentences like "Bring the cow". Indeed verbal cognition depends on learning. A child first hears a sentence like "Bring the cow" or "A son is born to you" etc., he notices the behaviour prompted by the sounds or the physical expressions of the person to whom the sentence is addressed. Then he comes to learn that such and such an activity is undertaken or such an expression of joy or sorrow is produced only in consequence of such and such a sound or sentence. He recognises that

(24. Contd.)

bodhoyantiti brūmaḥ. Vācyārthānupapattyā hi laksanā bhavati.

Mānomeyodaya, p 94
Adyar Edition.


Mānameyadaya, p. 96
Adyar Edition.
the sounds "bring the cow" etc. convey senses like "bring­
ing the cow" etc.. Afterwards, in some other usages like
"Tie up the cow", "Bring the pot" or "Take away the horse" etc. he observes carefully the insertion and deletion
( āvāpa and udvyāpa ) in the form of acceptance of some
words and rejection of other words and then he ascertains
the differentiation of the senses of the words he comes to
learn in this process that the sound 'cow' signifies an
object having a dew-lap hanging below his neck, etc., the
sound 'bring' signifies the action of bringing, and so on.

According to the schools of both the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā
and the Nyāya, when the distinct senses of words are learnt
thus by a child, he then proceeds to attain the knowledge
of the sense of the sentence as a whole, or as a unitary
piece of knowledge. Words express their distinctive meanings
respectively in a sentence - the related total meaning is
then recognised by the knower either by recollection of the
past impressions of the senses of the words according to
the mutual syntactical relation or by recognising the secon­
dary implication of the sense of the words. Thereby a person
comes to learn that this cow is certainly to be brought, and
'bringing' is certainly related to the cow; on account of
What is common to the Nyāya and the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā views about the total connected sense of a sentence is this. Both maintain (i) that the words of a sentence directly convey merely the separate things which they respectively mean or stand for; (ii) that the words, therefore, do not give the knowledge of the connection (anvaya) of these separate things; (iii) that what directly yields this knowledge of the connection of the separate things is these separate things themselves when they are recollected by us by hearing the words of the sentence. The connection it is considered to support the theory of abhihitaṃvaya, (the theory of "the connection of what are expressed by the words") i.e., the theory that the knowledge of the connection of certain things (which is the meaning of a sentence) is caused by the recollection of the separate things which are meant by the words. In short, when we hear the words of a sentence one after another, they make us remember the separate things which the words mean; and then these separate things give rise to the idea of the connection of these things, i.e. of a complex unitary object which is the meaning of the sentence, technically called anvaya (i.e. connection). To this extent, both Nyāya and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā agree. Now to consider their disagreement.
Nyāya, however, further maintains that the significatory function of the words is exhausted in making us recollect the things which they stand for - this function has nothing to do with our coming to know the complex unitary object which the sentence is intended to express. The knowledge of the complex unitary object is produced by the things as thus recollected with the help of certain other factors such as proximity, suitability, etc. of the words of the sentence. But Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā says that though the knowledge of what is meant by the sentence is caused by the things recollected through the words as well as by their proximity, suitability, etc., still this knowledge is also due to the significatory function of the words, not of course, to their primary significatory function (śakti), but to their secondary significatory function (lakṣāṇa).

Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā rejects this theory of abhihitānvaya (i.e., the theory of the connection of what are separately expressed by the words) and propounds, as we have said, a different theory called anvitābhidhāna (i.e. the theory of "the expression of what is connected"). This theory maintains that the very words of the sentence produce the knowledge of the unitary complex object which is the meaning of
the sentence, and they do this directly by their signification function and not through the separate and unrelated things which alone are, according to Nyāya and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, conveyed directly by the words. Verbal knowledge of a fact or a command, strictly so called, must be considered to be wholly due to words and not to things as distinct from words. If things which are conveyed by the words of a sentence exercised any causal function in giving rise to verbal knowledge, then things cognised by perception and inference also could be the cause of verbal knowledge and this is a position which must not be accepted, since verbal knowledge must be wholly due to words.

Verbal knowledge is the knowledge of what a sentence signifies. A sentence signifies either a fact or a command; and a fact or a command can be analysed into certain things (whether particulars or universals) and certain relations or connections which bind them into a unitary complex object. This unitary complex object is the meaning of the sentence. So if the words of a sentence be considered to have the capacity of signifying this unitary complex object, it would imply that a word signifies not only a thing, but also its relation or connection with other things; and this is what Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā maintains. We have already referred to the controversy on what a word primarily signi-
There it was stated that Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā holds that a word primarily means both a particular and the universal which it characterises, that the word 'cow' primarily means an individual cow as well as cowhood. But Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā further holds that a word such as 'cow' primarily means not simply an individual thing (namely, a particular animal) but a thing as related to something else (itarānvite sakti).

The theory of 'anvitābhidhāna' as propounded by the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā implies that each word expresses its own meaning as related to the meaning of some other word. That is to say, the primary denotative power (abhidhā-sakti or simply sakti) which a word has to express a thing should be considered also to signify a relation of this thing with a thing or things expressed by other words. So this theory is called the theory of "the expression of what are related" (anvita). The Prābhākara's basic concept is

26. This account of the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view is mainly based on the "Mānameyodaya" which is a handbook of the Bhāṭṭa system.

27. From the translation of Mānameyodaya made by Survanaravān Sastri and Kunhan Raja.
that a word signifies a thing as related to an activity (kriyānvite sakti) or to something else (ītāṇvite sakti).

For instance, in the statement, "Bring the cow", the word "cow" is cognised to signify an animal as related to an act expressed by the word "Bring". Or in the sentence, "The pot is brown", the word 'pot' means the thing pot as related with some other thing, namely, brown colour, which is expressed by the word, 'brown'. The connected meaning of a sentence is to be determined by the words of the sentence. But no word can be said to express merely a simple and non-related thing.

Against this view, Nyāya and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā have raised the objection that it unnecessarily ascribes to a word the capacity of signifying a relation with something or other, besides signifying a particular thing. The particular thing signified by the words of a sentence are presented to the hearer through recollection and the connection of these particular things is conveyed by certain relations such as those of expectancy, suitability and

28. Anyāṇvite gauḥ gopadavācyah.
proximity which obtain among the words of a meaningful sentence. There is, therefore, no necessity to burden a word with the function of expressing the relation which the thing it means has with the thing which is meant by another word. Moreover, if the capacity of expressing relation (\textit{anvaya}) would belong to a word, then every word would signify every kind of relation which the thing it signifies has with the thing which is meant by every other word. This would lead to the difficulty of determining whether the word 'cow' signifies the thing cow as related with the act of bringing or of tying or with the colour brown, etc.

As already indicated by us, the Prābhākara philosopher would meet the above objection thus. What we know by hearing a sentence is a related but unitary something - a fact or a command - which consists of certain things in relation with one another. If it be held that the significatory function of a word of the sentence is exhausted in signifying merely a thing and not also the relation which the thing has with something else, then the knowledge derived from a sentence could not strictly be considered to have the distinctive character of being verbal (\textit{sābda}), i.e.,
of being due to words. Of course, the relations of proximity, expectancy, etc. which the words of a meaningful sentence have with one another are necessary in order that the words be able to convey, i.e. express, or yield the knowledge of, that unitary complex object which is the meaning of the sentence. Though these intraverbal relations are not words, still they are also not things signified by the words of the sentence. They are, therefore, merely auxiliary causes of verbal knowledge, just like light in causing perceptual knowledge. They should not be considered to constitute the most effective cause (i.e., the karapa or sādhakatama kārana) of verbal knowledge as such, i.e. the cause which is responsible for the qualitatively distinct kind of cognition called verbal knowledge—they do so as merely intraverbal relations; that is, they could not do so, if the words among which they obtain did not themselves indicate, in a general way, not only certain things but also their mutual relations. If the eye had not the power of seeing a thing, no amount of light could render any assistance to it in yielding visual cognition.

The second point of the objection is that if a word be supposed to signify a thing as related to something else which is signified by some other word, then, it would
lead to the undesirable consequence that within the primary meaning of a word such as 'cat' would fall either the relation of a cat with (say) brindled colour, a mat, the act of jumping, a rat, etc. or the specific relation of a cat with (say) brindled colour. Neither alternative is true. For when the word 'cat' is heard, it is impossible to think of a cat as related with all such things; nor do we think of a cat as specifically related with (say) brindled colour; for if we did so, then the sentence "The cat is jumping" could not convey the fact that the cat is related with the act of jumping. The answer to this objection is quite easy. The Prābhākara philosopher explains his position thus. In the sentence, "Bring the cow", for example, the word 'bring' by itself, primarily signifies not the bare act of bringing, nor the act of bringing as related in some way, with something else. What this general and indefinite 'some' specifically and definitely is, is determined by the other words of the particular sentence in which the word 'bring' happens to occur.29

29. Instead of saying that a word primarily signifies "something as related with something else ( itarānvite śakti )", the Prābhākara philosopher usually states his view thus: A word signifies "something as related with an act which is to be done ( Kāryānvite śaktih )". This way of putting the Prābhākara position
The Rāmānuja school of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta accepts the main idea of the theory of anvitābhidhāna. Rāmānuja and some of his predecessors believed in some form of this theory; but they did not believe in the Prābhākara view of Kriyānvayavāda or Kārvānvita-sāktivāda i.e., the theory that a word necessarily signifies "something as related with an act which is to be done". For a sentence does not necessarily and always expresses a prescription or an injunction or a request, it may simply express a fact. So according to the view of Rāmānujites, words of a sentence which have, in respect of one another, expectancy, suitability, etc. signify something as connected with something else (anvitām).

(29. Contd..)

is intended to exclude, from the purview of verbal testimony, statements that describe some fact. The reason for this is that a fact is capable of being known by other means of knowledge such as perception, inference, etc. However, that a certain action should be done cannot be known by any instrument of knowledge other than a sentence. Thus words are the specific instrument of knowledge that they are, only when they express prescription, injunction, or request in respect of some act which is to be done or avoided.

But Vedāntists, in general, including Rāmānujites, believe that even descriptive statements are valid instruments for knowing a fact or the truth about a thing; and generally they uphold the Prābhākara theory of "the expression of the related (anvitābhidhāna)". They, therefore, maintain that a word primarily signifies "something as related to something else (itarān-vite saktīḥ)" so that this theory may hold good of both descriptive and prescriptive statements.
abhidadhati \textsuperscript{30}. A word signifies a thing as characterised by something else which is signified by other words. The object of verbal knowledge is not a bare non-related something, for the different words in a sentence are used in such a syntactical order that the thing expressed by each word is cognised as related to or characterised by the things expressed by the other words of the sentence. So Rāmānujites advocate the theory that a word primarily signifies "something as related with something else" (itarānvite sāktivāda).

Venkaṭanātha criticises the abhibitañayavāda of the Nyāya and the Bhāṭṭa school on the ground that this theory involves the unnecessary assumption of three different significatory functions: first, each word of a sentence signifies an unrelated thing which corresponds to it; secondly, the different unrelated things which are signified by the different words of the sentence signify that unitary complex object which is the meaning of the whole sentence; and

\textsuperscript{30} Akāmkṣasattiyogatāvanti hi padāni anvitamabhidhati, anvaye vā viśrāmyati.

\textit{Nyāyaparīśuddhi}, p. 368
By Venkaṭanātha
Uhowkhamba Edition.
Thirdly, the words of the sentence, too signify that unitary complex object\textsuperscript{31}.

The theory of "the expression of the related thing" on the contrary, assumes only one significatory function of a words, in order to account for knowledge derived from a sentence. Moreover, says Veda\kṣanātha, since the theory of Nyāya and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā attribute significatory capacity to things meant by words, as is pointed out above, their theory implies that the knowledge derived from a sentence is not verbal (vākyārthasya aśabdatva prasaṅgah). So his

31. (a) The word 'signify' has been employed, here, in the sense of exercising causal function in giving rise to verbal knowledge (śabda-jñāna). The third significatory function must be admitted by Nyāya, because, according to it, the knowledge of words is the karana of verbal knowledge, the vyāpāra being the recollection of the things meant by the words, which is represented, here, by the second item. This third item is granted by the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṁsā, because it holds that the words of a sentence themselves, by their secondary significication, express the meaning of the sentence.

(b) Abhihitānva ye hi padānām padārthe padārthānām vākyārthe padānām ca tatreti saktitrayagauravaṁ syāt vākyārthasyaśabdatvaprasaṅgo va.

\textit{Nyāyaparisuddhi}, p. 369.
great predecessors like Yamunācārya and Rāmānuja, he says, advocated *anvitabhidhānavāda*. In support of this statement, Veṅkaṭanātha quotes from the book "Tattvaratnākara" of Parāśara Bhattāraka and also from the scholiasts (Tīkā) on Śrībhāṣya of Rāmānuja by Rāma Miśra and remarks that these great scholars of the Viśistādvaīta school advocated the theory of *anvitabhidhāna*.

Now Veṅkaṭanātha also points out that if *anvitabhidhāna* be correct, then a sentence, however simple it may be, will always express a general relation with what is expressed by other true sentences; for words, by their natural denotative

32. *Avāsyaśrayanīyeyamavitārthābhidhāyita, ityāhuryāmunācāryāḥ padairevānāḥ vitabhidhām.*

   *Nyāyapariśuddhi*, p. 370.

33. *Vyākhyātām ca bhāṣyādikamanvitataparatayā Vivaranā Śrī Rāma Miśraīḥ; .......... .. atoanvitabhidhānām siddhānta iti.*

   *Nyāyapariśuddhi*, p. 372.
power, convey, according to this theory, a meaning associated with the meanings of other words. And just like a suffix or a case-ending of a word, the occurrence of each word in a sentence restricts the general connection of the meaning of each word with the meaning of any other word of the sentence. Now Rāmānuja's philosophy maintains that perfect knowledge i.e., the knowledge of truth reveals reality as a unitary and all embracing object, in which all things are intimately connected with one another as forming the body of God. Hence the theory of anvitābhidhāna is in full agreement with this basic concept of Rāmānuja's philosophy.
CHAPTER VI

RĀMĀNUJA'S THEORY OF ILLUSION (APRAMĀ)
Knowledge is consciousness of an object. The task of knowledge is to reveal the object as it is. But sometimes it is seen that knowledge fails to reveal the object in its true nature. Such knowledge is called false and is distinguished from right or true apprehension. If all knowledge were true, there would be no necessity of a criterion of truth or true knowledge. A criterion of truth is that feature of knowledge on account of which it is estimated as valid or true. It follows that such a criterion would also help us to differentiate truth from error. So it is said, "A criterion of truth is always double-edged; it is also a criterion of error".*

In Western philosophy, usually three theories about the criterion of truth are in vogue, namely, correspondence, coherence and the pragmatist theory. We shall present here

a brief account of each, trying to discern its merit in comparison with the principal Indian theories, especially the theory of Rāmānuja.

The correspondence theory states that a piece of knowledge is true if it corresponds to, i.e., is in agreement with, fact. This theory is usually supported by the realist who believes that objects exist independently of the knowing subject and knowledge is a special kind of relationship of the knowing subject with the object. The Nyāya concept of truth (prama) is considered by some modern thinkers, to be similar, to some extent, to this correspondence theory. True knowledge (prama) is defined by the old Nyāya as yathārtha-jñāna i.e., knowledge which confirms to or agrees with the object known. The definition of truth, however, as given by later Nyāya which would seem to be an elaboration of this very view can hardly be said to be similar to the correspondence theory. For it defines truth (prama) as that knowledge which consists of a judgment of which the predicate is such that it belongs to the subject.¹

1. (a) Tadvati tatprakāraṇakonubhavo yathārthaḥ yathā rajata idām rajatamiti jñānām.

Tarkasamgraha, Section II, p. 6
By Annām Bhaṭṭa
Edited by C. Bhattacharya.

Contd...
This means that a thing is known truly if it is known to have a character which really belongs to it. The only similarity between such a theory of truth with 'correspondence', which suggests itself to us, is that it, like correspondence, implies that knowledge is essentially distinct from its object that the reality which knowledge apprehends is not identical with, or constituted by knowledge or a set or a system of judgments. It may perhaps be contended that the correspondence and the Nyāya theory of truth are similar in at least one more point, namely, that both would maintain that in regard to a real thing such as a red rose, only a judgment like "The rose is red" is true, but not a judgment like "The rose is green", i.e., both these theories can uphold that while the former judgment corresponds, the latter does not

(1. Contd.)

(b) Tatprakārakaṁ yaj jñānaṁ tadvad viśeṣyakāṁ.

Bhasāpariccheda, Karikā 135 p. 519.
Bengali Edition by Pancanan Sastri.

2. We need hardly mention that the controversy in regard to correspondence and coherence in British philosophy, about fifty years ago, raged mainly round the question whether reality or truth is constituted by a system of coherent judgments.
correspond, with fact. But in this sense, correspondence
is just another word for truth. To say that a judgment
corresponds with a fact is only an alternative way of saying
that the judgment is true. This means that in this sense
correspondence is no real definition nor a criterion of
truth. But the Nyāya theory of truth is a real definition
of it - it states what precisely it is that constitutes the
truth of a judgment. Nyāya holds that ultimately it is a
judgment which is true, and a true judgment is one which
has, for its predicate, a character which belongs to the
subject of the judgment.

Now the question whether a character which is asserted
as a predicate in a judgment really belongs to the subject
can only be answered by references to knowledge, so that the
Nyāya definition of truth does not supply us with any cri-
teron of truth, other than knowledge itself. Nor does Nyāya
claim this, nor does it aim, by its definition, to provide
such a criterion as coherence does. Of course, Nyāya holds
that when we are in doubt about the truth of a judgment,
there is a mediate means of ascertaining this - a means
which is similar to a pragmatic test. We will presently con-
sider this. But before we do so, it may be worthwhile to say
a few words about the correspondence theory of truth.
It would be extremely difficult, if not quite impossible, to present the correspondence theory in a way which would be accepted by all philosophers who uphold this doctrine. Perhaps their minimum consensus would lie in the view that in our attempt to know fact or reality what we directly know is entitatively different from, and either corresponds or does not correspond, with that fact or reality. Thus Bertrand Russell speaks of correspondence between matter and sense-data (Problems of Philosophy p 54), it being presupposed that sense-data are different from physical objects (Ibid, p. 53). The main objection against such a doctrine is that it leaves the crux of the problem unsolved, the problem of ascertaining whether a belief or a piece of knowledge does or does not correspond to fact or reality. Even if we grant that reality as it is, i.e., bare fact is given directly in sensation, still this must be considered to be given non-judgmentally and the question of testing its truth does not arise. What can be tested is necessarily a judgment. When I know a table to be brown, what can be tested is whether brownness belongs to the known table. But how to know this? It would appear that this can only be known by reference to or comparison with some other judgment or judgments (whether of myself or others, whether subsequent or previous) and in no other way. So correspondence can hardly serve as a test of truth.
Knowledge cannot be tested by anything other than knowledge. This, indeed, is a bare truism. But it acquires significance in the context of 'correspondence', offered as criterion of truth. It is with some justification that the supporters of the coherence theory say, "Coherence of judgments within a system is our test, and our only test, of any truth or fact whatever".*

The coherence theory is generally accepted by the idealists of the west who conceive reality as identical with thought or knowledge. They hold that reality consists in a coherent system of judgments. A piece of knowledge is considered to be true if it completely coheres with the existing system of judgments and is regarded as false if it does not. The Absolute reality consists of a fully coherent system of judgments which is all-inclusive and perfectly self-consistent. The aim of knowledge is to attain this most perfect and consistent system of judgments - our process of knowledge gradually becomes more and more perfect and coherent, and in this process there are degrees of truth.

What is controversial in the above doctrine of coherence is its metaphysics, namely, that (i) Ultimate Reality is a **system** of coherent judgments, (ii) that a judgment can be more or less coherent with this system and thus be more or less true, (iii) that any true judgment is logically implied by, and hence can be logically deduced from, the other judgments included within the system, etc. If we eliminate this metaphysical element from the doctrine, what would be left behind would indeed be a very thin and slender remnant of it; and it would be this that true judgments must be consistent with one another. But this would perhaps be acceptable to all philosophers, whether idealists or realists. If this be entitled 'coherence', then Indian schools of philosophy, in general, can be said to support coherence as a negative criterion of truth. For they usually reject a judgment as false on the ground that it is contradicted ( **bādhita** ) by some other judgment or judgments (which evidently are cognised to be true in the same context). Contradiction or cancellation of a judgment by another (which is accepted as true) is thus a criterion of the falsity of the former. Similarly, the character of being unconstradicted or uncanceled by any true judgment
may be considered to be a criterion of truth. But this criterion of truth would be less justified than the former criterion of falsity. For although a judgment may not be contradicted by any other which is in our possession, still it may possibly be contradicted by one which is not in our possession. Even so, contradictedness and uncontradictedness (bādhītattva and abādhītattva) in this sense, would seem to be our usual means for recognising the falsity and the truth of judgments. It is perhaps not necessary to observe that these are not absolutely certain and fool-proof criteria of falsity and truth. At any rate, we should not make uncontradictedness a part of the definition of truth. But this is what Advaita Vedānta does.

Śaṅkara and his followers define truth as that knowledge which is not contradicted, cancelled or negated, by another knowledge. This definition can also serve as a criterion of truth. It would appear that the Advaita notion of uncontradictedness (abādhītattva) as the criterion of truth would, in practice, amount to nothing but the agreement of

3. Abādhītaviśayatvām pramālaksanām.  
Vedānta paribhāṣā, Pandit Edition.
a piece of knowledge with the existing stock of knowledge which is accepted as true. We have already said that this is what we actually employ (more or less consciously as the criterion of truth. But the question is: Are we fully justified in doing so? In the first place, the existing stock of knowledge, whether mine or of mankind, changes, in course of time, both by inclusion of fresh judgments and exclusion of old ones, so that a judgment which is compatible with it to-day may not be so to-morrow. In the second place, it is quite possible that each of a set of compatible judgments is false, although none of them can be said to be contradicted by any of the rest. Thirdly, of two naturally opposed judgments $p$ and $q$, which are we to regard as contradicting or cancelling the other? The usual answer of the Advaitist is that it is the later which is to cancel the earlier: The later judgment, 'This is not silver'. This account of the process of cancellation is, of course, psychologically correct. But is it justified, unless the later judgment is true? It is possible that the cancelled judgment may come back to life and cancel its cancellor. As for objectively right cancellation, this can be done only by the judgment which is true, and this means that truth is independent of cancelling or of being uncleanneled.
Of course, if it can be demonstrated that a certain judgment cannot, properly speaking, be cancelled by any other judgment, whether actual or possible, whether belonging to our existing stock of knowledge or outside it, then uncontradictedness or uncancellability could be the criterion of the truth of that judgment, if not quite its defining character. And Advaitists do think that they can demonstrate this in regard to the Upaniṣadic statement, "That thou art" (i.e., you, the individual self are identical with God, the absolute self). For according to Advaitists, this statement ultimately means that the true self of an individual person whether finite (jīva) or infinite (Īśvara) is the only reality that there is, that everything else is a false appearance of this true self; this Reality is an utterly simple entity having no distinction, either internal or external, hence its cognition is a supra-judgmental intuition; all other cognitions, being about appearances, must be incapable of contradicting or cancelling this intuitive cognition; on the contrary, this as giving the truth of the only reality that there is, would rightly cancel these cognitions pertaining to the false appearances of this reality. We can now also understand that although Advaitism would be
prepared to say, like Nyāya, that truth is the knowledge of reality as it is, still it would not define truth or valid knowledge as a judgment which has, for its character, a predicate which belongs to its subject. The obvious reason for this is that Reality for Advaitism, does not permit the distinction, within it, of a character and what is characterised by it, and so no judgmental cognition can possibly know this distinctionless reality as it truly is.

However, the above defence of the Advaitist's definition and criterion of truth can hardly stand its ground, if the metaphysic on which it depends is found to be wrong. We know that Rāmānuja has employed his great dialectical power in refuting this metaphysic. Moreover, according to Advaitism, the intuitive apprehension of Brahman which is to liquidate our ordinary cognitions is a sort of mystical experience in which Reality can neither be described in language nor understood by logical intelligence, in which the knower loses his own existence in the Absolute, and becomes one with it. Such a mystic notion of knowledge is certainly beyond the reach of epistemological investigation.

We may also briefly consider, here, pragmatism which certain Western philosophers offer as a criterion and defi-
nition of truth. For this is directly connected with the Rāmānujite conception of truth, as well as indirectly with that of some other Indian schools. As is well known, pragmatism maintains that truth is nothing but a judgment or theory which leads to purposeful behaviour or successful activity - practical utility is, here, the criterion of truth. This indeed is the Buddhistic view which says that pramā or right cognition is nothing but an idea which produces purposeful activity. The Nyāya philosophers also recognise, in a way, that successful behaviour prompted by a cognition, is a criterion of its truth. For they say that the act of producing successful activity ( saphala-pravrtti-janakatva ) is the mark by which the truth of a cognition has to be inferred. As we have already stated, truth is defined by Nyāya as that feature of a piece of knowledge which consists in its having for its predicate, a character which really belongs to its subject. Nyāya further maintains that such truth is tested by the observation of successful behaviour which is prompted by a piece of knowledge. We will presently see how Rāmānuja includes 'successful activity' in the definition of true knowledge ( pramā ). But before this, we should like to point out how the pragmatic test is not quite sufficient to demarcate truth from error. We
occasionally find that erroneous cognitions, too, prompt successful activity. Although a piece of true knowledge would give rise to successful activity directed to its object still the converse may not be true. For instance, the face which a person sees in a mirror, when he looks at the mirror, is certainly not there and so his perception of the face as being behind it is mistaken, yet it prompts in the perceiver successful activity like cleaning the face. The ancients thought that they knew that the earth was flat and their activities based on such false knowledge were also usually successful. So whatever produces successful activity is not necessarily true. Of course, wrong knowledge may occasionally initiate activity which is likely to end in failure. In any case, however, successful activity prompted by an idea, cannot be considered to be an unfailing criterion of its truth. Political and economic propaganda, we know, are often based on deliberate lies; but they are very often found to be very effective for the purpose for which they are resorted to. This, however, does not alter the character of a lie and transform it into truth. Moreover, pragmatism cannot be regarded as theoretically satisfactory; for in order to know that the activities prompted by a piece of knowledge are
successful, we have to depend upon some piece of knowledge, such as that of the fulfilment of some purpose. It thus leads to an infinite regress. However, it may be said in favour of the pragmatic theory that it is at least right to the extent that the cognition which is true, indeed, produces successful behaviour; but it is not correct to say that whatever cognition produces successful behaviour is, therefore, true. Truth is something more than what merely produces useful activity.

The school of Rāmānuja defines pramā or true knowledge as that which is conducive to the employment of proper words and to right behaviour in regard to its object as it truly is. True knowledge need not always give rise to its expression in words or to some suitable behaviour in regard to its object. Nevertheless, it must have the capacity of doing so. The Rāmānujites emphasise the point that true knowledge must have the capacity of producing proper behaviour including proper verbal expression.

4. Yathāvasthitavyavahārānugunāpānānam pramā.
   Nyāyaparīsuddhi, Chap. I p. 5

5. Atra vyavahārānugunyām vyavahārajananasvarūpayogyatvām tena vyavahārapadadhānaraḥahite pramāviṣeṣe nāvyāptiriti dhyeyām.
Ramanuja being a Vedantist believes in the self-evident nature of knowledge (svatahprāmānya). According to this school, 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. So while a piece of knowledge arises, a Ramanujite accepts it as valid; but if by examination it is proved that it is not conducive to right behaviour including the proper employment of words in regard to its object, then we are to know that this is due to some conditions other than those which give rise to knowledge as such. Though such cognitions are regarded by the Ramanujites as apramā as distinguished from pramā, yet these, too, are not considered by them to be altogether false in the sense that they do not correspond to any real character of the object at all. On the other hand, the Ramanujites hold that a cognition is true so far as it reveals the essential characters of an object and it is false or invalid if it fails to reveal these characteristic features of it. Thus apramā is, according to the view of Ramanuja, the cognition of the inessential features or insignificant (though real) aspects of an object, with, of course, the belief that these are its essential features. Apramā or false cognitions are

6. I have already explained the theory of svatahprāmānya-vāda in Chapter II.
are divided into three kinds by the school of Rāmānuja, namely, (a) sāṃśaya which is, here, translated into English as doubt⁷, (b) anyathājñāna or erroneous cognition of a thing as possessing some character which it does not really have and (c) viparītajñāna or the erroneous cognition of a thing as another thing. Doubt or sāṃśaya is defined by the Rāmānujites as that state of cognition in which mutually opposed characters are called to mind simultaneously as belonging to the same object. The conception of doubt, in most other schools of Indian philosophy including Nyāya, is the same. The state of doubt is illustrated by an experience like the following - by looking at a distant object in indistinct light I may not be definite what the thing is and I may have such an uncertain judgment as, "This is (perhaps) a man or (perhaps) a post"⁸.

7. Although the word sāṃśaya is usually translated by the word 'doubt', still this may be misleading. Doubt, at any rate, is highly ambiguous. But sāṃśaya has a more definite sense; and this is contrasted with niścaya or sure or certain knowledge. We may say that sāṃśaya is uncertain knowledge. But the element of uncertainty is constituted to the mind as belonging to the object which is thus cognised in a dubitable fashion.

In this cognitive experience, the perceiver wavers between two (or more) possibilities, viz., 'the possibility of its being a post' and 'the possibility of its being a man'. But the characteristic features of a post and a man being incompatible in nature, cannot be present in one and the same object. So such a cognition fails to ascertain the essential characteristics of the object. Here, only the common or general aspects of a man and a post are perceived, such as tallness, a general structure, etc. which may belong to both a man and a post. But the special structure and other distinctive features of a man which distinguish him from a post are not perceived. As a result of this, there is no assertion of any definite object. Veṅkaṭanātha in his Nyāyaparipṛṣṭuddhi has explained clearly the cognitive state which is called saṁsaya. He says that the rise of two contradictory ideas regarding one and the same thing in the mind of the perceiver is the basis of such a cognitive state. The perceiver wavers between two (or more) possibilities about a thing and this is due to the perception of the common characteristics of the object without grasping the uncommon or special characteristic of it. So according to Veṅkaṭanātha, two conditions are essential for the origination of doubt, namely, the occurrence of two (or more) contradictory ideas in the mind of the perceiver about an object and
the cognition of only certain characteristics of it, which are common to more than one object. 9

It may be objected that since in the state of doubt, there is no assertion of a definite object, so it is not a positive cognitive state of mind but a mere suspense of judgment. As such, it cannot be regarded as a kind of apramā or false cognition; for false cognition is one in which a thing is definitely known and asserted to be what it is not.

This objection can be met by the following considerations. If we avoid technicalities, we can say that the Indian idea of pramā is the idea of right judgment, i.e., a piece of sure knowledge (niścaya) which knows a thing definitely as it is. Hence it is logically possible that apramā, i.e., a cognition which is not pramā may be a cognition which either lacks certainty or lacks the character of knowing a thing as it is.

The objection which we are considering here, grants the second possibility to be the actually correct view, but not the first. That a piece of knowledge which claims to know a fact just as


Nyāyaparisūddhi, p. 60.
Chowkhamba Edition.
it is, but really fails to do so is an instance of apramā can hardly be doubted. This is definitely an instance of false or wrong knowledge, and hence different from pramā. But what about the first alternative? Is it merely a logical possibility but a psychological myth? Indian thinkers do not think so. They are of opinion that there do occur, in fact, such positive and single states or acts of mind which must be regarded as cognitive, but which are not instances of certain knowledge. The sentence, "This is perhaps a man or perhaps a lamp post", as an instance of samśaya (uncertain knowledge), is not to be understood as an expression for a disjunctive judgment which definitely affirms "This is either a man or a lamp post". A disjunctive judgment can form a part of a syllogism. But a samśaya cannot. Nor does the sentence under consideration express a question or desire for definite knowledge. The self-conscious awareness of a doubt is likely to be elaborated thus: "I am not sure whether the object in front is a man or a pillar. Both of these alternatives are present in one and the same act of cognition. The alternatives are incompatible with one another. Still they are parts of one and the same state of cognition. This has been possible, because the state of cognition is one of doubt and not of
sure knowledge, i.e., because there is no affirmation of either alternative”. Samsāya is thus a cognitive state of mind which lacks the sense of certainty. What is termed 'opinion' in Western philosophy would thus appear to be an instance of samsāya or doubt as understood by Indian philosophers. But an opinion is not an instance of doubt at the primary level which is concerned with the 'what' of an object. On the contrary, an opinion would seem to be an instance of doubt at a secondary cognitive level - it is doubt about the validity of a judgment (pramāṇya-samsāya) which was either held in the past or is being suggested now. The self-conscious awareness of an opinion would assume some such form as "I am not sure whether my judgment 'This is a man' is valid or not". This indeed would seem to be an elaboration of the statement, "I am not sure, but I think or am of opinion that this is a man".

Another reason why a samsāya should be considered to be a mode of apramā or invalid cognition is that although a samsāya cannot be regarded as false, still it is different from a valid judgment in that it fails to attain the purpose of a valid cognition, the purpose, namely, of knowing with certainty what a fact is.

The concept of doubt of the Rāmānujite school is, in fact, the same as the Nyāya concept of it. First, we define
pramā or valid cognition. Then, whatever cognition is not pramā is, therefore, apramā. Doubt, too, is not pramā; and in this sense, it is apramā.

Anyathājñāna and viparītajñāna are the two other kinds of invalid cognition recognised by the Rāmānujites. The anyathājñāna is defined as that cognition in which an object is taken to have a character which it does not really possess. As an example for such anyathājñāna, a Rāmānujite cites the Śaṅkarite view that knowership or the character of being a knower (jñātrata) does not belong to the self10. So this is a cognitive mistake about the character of an object. And viparītajñāna is defined by them as that cognition in which one thing is taken for another, for example, when a piece of shell is mistaken for silver11. So this is a cognitive mistake of one thing for another.

10. For a Rāmānujite, this is an instance of anyathājñāna, because he thinks that the falsity of this character jñātrata (knowership) is supported by the Śaṅkarite with wrong arguments. While according to Rāmānuja, what is revealed to the self about itself is that it is an agent (kartr) and a knower (jñātr).


Chowkhamba Edition.
Thus, according to the school of Rāmaṇuja, both anyathajñāna and viparitajñāna are kinds of erroneous cognition, since they involve either the wrong ascription of a character or the wrong identification of one thing with another.¹²

Nyāya enumerates three kinds of apramā or invalid cognition, namely, doubt, error (viparvaya) and a kind of suppositional thinking which is called tarka, which, in some respect is similar to a reductio ad absurdum sort of argument. Tarka is a method of removing one's doubt about the validity of a view by showing the absurdity of the counter-view, after taking the counter-view for granted for the time-being. For

¹² It would appear, however, that the distinction between anyathajñāna and viparitajñāna is rather superficial. For when we take a shell for silver, we certainly ascribe, to the shell, a character (namely, silverhood) which the shell does not possess. This implies that what is called viparitajñāna is really anyathajñāna. As will be presently shown, this is why Nyāya recognises only one kind of erroneous knowledge and calls it viparvaya i.e., sure knowledge which, however, attributes to the cognised object, some character which is opposed to the real characters of the object.
example, in order to remove an opponent's doubt about the legitimacy of the rule that smoke is universally concomitant with fire, I at first start with the supposition that smoke is not concomitant with fire and then show that as a result of this supposition the absurdity follows that smoke is not caused by fire. Thus we are made to see that doubt in regard to the rule of concomitance between smoke and fire is not legitimate.

The Rāmānujite does not mention this sort of suppositional thinking, called tarka in his enumeration of the types of invalid cognition. I think that the reason why a Rāmānujite does not include tarka in his list of invalid cognitions (aprama) is perhaps his reluctance to consider tarka to be in any way invalid at all. For the proposition, "If smoke were to be found without fire, then smoke would not be caused by fire" represents a piece of certain knowledge and it would seem that it also involves no mistake. What in modern logic is called a counterfactual statement is, of course, either true or false, and hence can be true and as such it should not be called aprama.

Needless to say, the account of the process of knowing which is given by Rāmānuja clearly indicates his fundamental
realistic position. According to him, knowledge corresponds to the real which exists independently of the knowing self. There is no knowledge which has no real objective ground, and even our illusory perceptions are not exceptions to this rule. Rāmanuja believes that no cognition is absolutely false, so he does not think that there is a clear cut and water-tight distinction between knowledge which is true and knowledge which is false, or between pramā and apramā. He says that knowledge is generally true by its very nature and it is only, by accident, that it deviates from its normal nature and that, too, only in certain respects, but never wholly. Such deviation takes place on account of some external factors such as, defects in the sense-organs or the perceiver's moral merit or demerit which is the result of his past actions, etc. These external factors may so influence the cogniser as to make him fail to apprehend an object in its essential nature and then to make him fail to react to the object by suitable behaviour. But this does not mean that the perceiver knows nothing real, on these occasions. On the contrary, Rāmanuja holds that even in erroneous perception what is apprehended, is real. Thus, according to Rāmanuja, the distinction between valid knowledge (pramā) and invalid knowledge (apramā) is not to be made in accordance with the reality
and the unreality of the object, but in accordance with the apprehension of the essential features or inessential features of the object. This, in fact, is what he stresses in his theory of error which is called satkhyātivāda, i.e., the theory that what appears in false knowledge is also real and not unreal\textsuperscript{13}.

In propounding his own view, Rāmānuja adopts a certain metaphysical theory about material objects which, according to him, is supported by the scriptures\textsuperscript{13}. It is an old Vedic concept that every composite thing of the world is created by the combination of three elements, namely, earth (\textit{keiti}), water (\textit{ap}) and fire (\textit{tejas}). This concept is called Trvṛtkaraṇa in the Vedas, and Paṇcikaraṇa is a later concept which is based on, and an elaboration of, the concept of Trvṛtkaraṇa\textsuperscript{14}. It implies that every material object is composed of five bhūtas or elements, namely earth, water, fire, air and ether, but all the elements are present in every object in varying proportions. The name and nature of an object

\textsuperscript{13} Yathārtham sarvāvijñānām iti Vedavidām matam, Śrutismṛtibhyah sarvasya sarvātmatvapratītiṣṭaḥ; Śrībhāṣya, p. 251. Nīnaya Sagar Edition.

\textsuperscript{14} Upaniśadābhāṣyagataṁ Trvṛtkaraṇaṁ tatpradarśitaṁ Paṇcikaraṇaṁ. Śrutaprakāsikā, p. 185. in Śrībhāṣya.
is determined by that element which is present in it in a preponderatingly large proportion. On the basis of this concept, Rāmānuja tries to maintain his realistic attitude that even our illusory perceptions have real grounds, i.e., what are apprehended in illusory perceptions are real aspects of the wrongly perceived object, and not unreal or false. Thus while a person perceives silver in the place of a piece of shell, Rāmānuja says that he perceives the real silver elements which are present in the piece of shell, though they are present there in a very meagre quantity. The preponderating element, here, is the shell element which determines the name and the nature of the object and this is over-looked by the perceiving person, but silver which is the object of his perception is not false. So also in the case of the perception of the mirage in a heated sandy waste, the water which is perceived is quite real; for among other elements, water element is also present there, according to the theory of quintuplication stated in the scripture. But the proportion of the water element is so slight here, that it cannot quench one’s thirst, and that is why it is regarded as an illusory perception. Still it is not totally false. According to Rāmānuja, the cognition of a thing is considered to be a canceller ( bādhaka ) if the thing is known to be that which
forms the major factor of the thing - the factor by which the thing is named and by which its essential character is determined; and the cognition of a thing is considered to be cancelled (badhya) if it apprehends the thing to be that which forms merely a very small element of the thing\textsuperscript{15}. As the quantity of the shell element in a piece of shell is much larger than that of the silver element, so the knowledge of silver here, should be considered to be cancelled, while the knowledge of the shell is to be regarded as the canceller.

Rāmānuja has recourse to another Vedic notion which may be regarded as a theory of vision, in order to explain certain cases of illusory perception in accordance with his realistic theory of illusion. According to this theory of vision, in the visual perception of an object, the rays of the organ of sight (nayanarasmi) go out to the object present before the eyes, and they come back to the retina of the visual organ with the picture it gets from the object and in this process the object is seen. Now following this idea, Rāmānuja explains

\textsuperscript{15. (a ) Bādhyabādhakabhavopī bhūyastenopapadyate.}
\textsuperscript{Śrībhāṣya, p. 184.}

\textsuperscript{(b) Śuktibhūyastvena tajjñānasya bādhakatvām, tata eva rajatālpatvām siddham tena rajatajñānasya bādhyatvamityarthāḥ.}
\textsuperscript{Śrutaprakāśikā, p. 184.}
\textsuperscript{In Śrībhāṣya.}
\textsuperscript{Nirnaya Sagar Edition.}
the illusion of a yellow conch on the part of a jaundiced person. Rāmānuja says that the yellowness is really present in the eye-ball of the diseased person and while he perceives a white thing, say a conch, the yellowness is actually transmitted from the eye-ball along with the rays of the organ of sight to the conch, covering the white colour of the conch by the yellow colour of the jaundiced eye. thus the diseased person sees the real yellow colour which is transmitted from the diseased eye-ball to the conch. Then in the case of the perception of a face in a mirror, Rāmānuja contends that the perception is quite veridical. Here also, the rays of the organ of sight come out through the eye-ball and while moving towards the mirror they are obstructed by the surface of the mirror and come back to the visual organ. This is how a person can perceive his own face from the opposite side. Thus, here, it is the real face which is perceived.

Rāmānuja says further that the perception of two moons by a person under certain circumstances is also veridical. This is explained by him by suggesting that the person exerts pressure on his eye-ball in such a way that the rays of the two eyes fall distinctly in two places. As the ordinary natural process of vision in which the rays of the two eyes go out jointly to the object is vitiated by the pressure on the eye-ball, Rāmānuja contends, the rays of the one eye fall on the other.

16. पितासांक्षादौ तु नयानावर्तिः पित्तद्रवयासांभिन्ना 
नायाना-रासमयाः सांक्षादिब्धी ह संयुज्याते। तत्रापि 
पिटागाति पितृव्यधिब्धूताः सांक्षागाता सुक्लिमा ना 
ग्र्ययते। 

actual position of the moon and the rays of the other eye fall in a place slightly away from the actual place of the moon, and due to some natural movement in the position of the moon, the moon is rightly seen as double. Here what Rāmānuja intends to show is that under such circumstances the perception of the double moon is not wrong. Though the moon is really one, yet under certain circumstances it is rightly perceived as double. Here what we should note is not the scientific correctness or otherwise of the arguments given by Rāmānuja but how far Rāmānuja is successful in maintaining his realistic position that nothing unreal can be perceived.

How does Rāmānuja fare, while he tries, with his realistic theory of illusion, to account for the facts of dream experience? How does he explain the reality of the dream objects? Here also Rāmānuja, in his support, quotes the authority of certain Upaniṣadic statements which, according to him, declare that dream objects are created by God Himself, according to the individual dreamer's moral merit and demerit accruing to him on account of his past deeds and that a new subtle body of the individual is also created by God for the time being so that he may suffer pain or enjoy pleasure by experiencing the dream objects. So the
dream objects are as real as the objects of the waking consciousness, except that they are comparatively of much shorter duration. In fact, even the objects of the world are created by God, as the scriptures declare, according to the good and the evil actions of the individual selves so that these actions may be requited by results appropriate to them in the form of pleasure or pain. Rāmānuja contends that certain objects are created for the sake of all individual selves and these are what constitute the public or common world which is attested by the observation by all knowers but certain objects are created by the supreme Being, which are peculiar to a particular individual only, and these constitute the subjective dream world which is private to him alone, which he alone experienced, enjoys or suffers from 17.

It is worth noting that Rāmānuja does not think that the reality of the objects which are private or peculiar to an individual experience is of lower grade than that of public objects. He does not admit different grades of reality like

17. Bhagavataḥ hi parena Brahmaṇa śketrajñāpuryapāpānugunam tadbhogatvayākhilaṁ jagatsrjataḥ sukhaduhkhoḥekṣāphala- nubhavyah padarthāḥ sarvasādhāraṇānubhavavishayāḥ kecana tattat puruṣamātrānubhavavishayarattatkālāvasānāstathānubbhāvyāḥ srjyaṇte.

Sribhāgya, p. 188.
Nirnaya Sagar Edition.
an Advaitist. On contrary, he maintains that the fact that an experience or an awareness of some object is peculiar or private to an individual does not necessarily imply the falsity of that experience or knowledge. Certainly, inner states, whether cognitive, conative or affective, which are private to an individual are as real as a thing which is not private.

Although in my account of Rāmānuja's view about illusion I have tried, as far as I can, to defend him, still one fact of universal experience has appeared to me to go against the total acceptance of his view. I am speaking of the fact that all of us recognise that the object of illusion, at least just in the place and time where it appears, is cancelled and dissolved by true knowledge of the thing, the misperception of which gives rise to the illusion. I am in agreement with Rāmānuja, when he denies that there is such a queer entity as an apparent object of knowledge, a sort of neither-real-nor unreal entity which a Śaṅkarite recognises. But I feel that by being faithful to ordinary experience, Rāmānuja cannot be justified when he says that the object of illusion, is real just at the place and time where and when the deluded percipient thinks it to be.
Moreover, consideration would show that Rāmānuja's interpretation of the principle of pañcikarana or quintuplication is somewhat misleading. Scripture indeed asserts that the subtle material elements constituting the universe are of five kinds and these are mixed up with one another in different proportions before they are changed into gross matter. But it never says that various gross things such as ropes, snakes, shells, pieces of silver, pieces of wood, etc. which are evolutes of the subtle elements are also always mixed up with one another or that a thing such as a pot consists of every other thing such as a piece of cloth, a table, etc. But Rāmānuja's explanation of the theory of satkhyāti seems to imply such a view. If this view of Rāmānuja were true, it would have been possible to mistake almost everything as any other thing.

So far as the idea of quintuplication is concerned, I think that in a sense, it may possibly be justified - modern science, too, may be considered to say the same thing by implication. For it holds that one kind of thing is and can be transformed into another kind; but this would be possible only if a composite thing contains all the ultimate constituents of matter with varying proportions. Else one thing could not be transformed into another.
Rāmānuja's theory of illusion which is known as satkhyātivāda can certainly be regarded as realistic, for it tries to explain the facts of illusory perception from a point of view of realism - it rejects the very idea that sometimes an unreal thing is taken to be real or some mental phenomenon or some state of consciousness is misperceived as a physical existence. Rāmānuja's position, in this respect, is similar to that of Nyāya. What, however, evinces his extreme realism, is his doctrine that the object of illusion is real just where, in illusion it is taken to be. The silver which is apprehended in the place of a shell, he maintains, is really present in the shell. For Nyāya, although the silver is real and real in the terra firma of the physical world, still it is not present in the shell - it is present elsewhere, in the smith's shop, for instance. Against the Nyāya view that the silver in question is not where it is perceived to be, Advaitism has pointed out that this is contrary to what inner experience would vouch for - the person under illusion would point at the place occupied by the shell as where he is seeing the silver. Rāmānuja would appear to agree with the Advaitists here, although he would reject their notion that this silver is neither real nor unreal. Of course, to this extent, Rāmānuja can be said by sound arguments to have done away with the possibility of any such thing as a false object, while remaining true to
the verdict of inner experience. He like a follower of Nyāya and Prābhākara Mīmāṁsā sticks to the point that knowledge is always of the real. He, however, differs from the Prābhākara philosopher, when the latter says that knowledge is always true. He, like the Nyāya and the Advaita philosophers, believes that occasionally knowledge is wrong. But then, what is apprehended in wrong knowledge is according to him, real — not only that, it is real just where it is apprehended to be — this is the basic concept of Rāmānuja's satkhyātivāda.

The Prābhākara theory of akhyātivāda explains the facts of illusory experience in a different way. According to this theory, the fact of an illusory cognition of one thing as another such as the misperception of silver in the place of a shell really involves two pieces of knowledge both of which are true, although this double knowledge is expressed by the single statement, "This is silver". Here the perception of something as "this" which is present before the cogniser is one piece of knowledge and this is certainly true. There is also the knowledge of silver, but this is an instance of re-collection; and this, too, is true. Now the Prābhākara maintains that the perceiver fails to know that these are two different pieces of knowledge and also that the 'this' is
different from silver. Thus though there is no cognitive error, still what is called error, it is held, consists merely of the fact of non-cognition (jñānabhāva) of the difference between the two cognitions as well as the difference between their objects. According to the Prābhākara, there is no positive error. Owing to certain defects in the perceiver, he has a partial view of the thing present before him and the memory impression is roused by the perception of certain common features present in both the object of perception and the remembered object. And he fails to determine between the two; as a result, the wrong employment of two words 'this' and 'silver' are connected as subject and predicate respectively. This wrong usage may lead to some wrongly directed activity and this is why the two true, but undiscriminated, cognitions of 'this' and 'silver' are wrongly expressed in a single sentence and wrongly called illusory cognition. Thus both the Prābhākara philosopher and Rāmānuja agree that what the man in the street calls false knowledge apprehends nothing but what is real. They do not think that the object of knowledge can be a mere phantom which is neither real nor unreal, as Śaṅkarites believe. But their agreement does not stretch further. For a Prābhākara, what is called an illusion is really a group of two or more cognitions which, however, remain cognitively undifferentiated
from one another. Nevertheless, the cognitions are true and pertains to fact - no cognition is ever invalid. But owing to non-discrimination (bhedāgraha) of the cognitive members of the group, the group gives rise to wrong behaviour including the use of a wrong syntactical form of a single sentence, which ends in failure and disappointment. What is important to bear in mind is that the group is a mere group and does not represent a single unitary piece of knowledge which can be properly called false knowledge. Rāmānuja, however, would maintain that the illusory judgment 'This is silver' is a single judgment and is also rightly termed false in that it attributes to the object an unimportant and meagre feature of it, thinking that it is its main feature. To the extent Rāmānuja thinks that an illusory cognition is a single judgment, he is at one with Indian philosophers in general (except the Prabhākaras) with, for example Advaita Vedānta and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system among others. We proceed now to give a brief statement of the view of the last named system, contrasting it with Rāmānuja's and Śaṅkara's views.

As already stated by us, the Nyāya system, too, like Rāmānuja and the Prabhākara, does not believe that the object of illusory cognition is a phantom. On the contrary, it holds
that what is ever perceived, whether this perception be right or wrong, is something real, a thing of the extra-subjective, independent and objective universe. However, it does not like Rāmānuja say that when we misperceive a shell for silver, silver is present in the shell. This silver is, indeed, real, but not in the shell, but elsewhere (for example, in the shop of the silversmith); of course, such silver was formerly perceived there; the mnemonic trace of this former perception makes the deluded person remember silver; and this memory of silver acts as a sort of unusual (alaukika) sensory contact with the formerly seen silver and gives rise to the wrong perceptual judgment, "This is silver". This is how Nyāya explains the illusion of silver in the place of a shell. For Nyāya, we can say, the remembered object is wrongly (though not deliberately) identified with the object in front, so that error is, for Nyāya, a positive, single and unitary act of knowledge which is perceptual in nature. The difference between this theory of error called anyathākhyāti and the Prabhākara theory called akhyāti lies in the fact that while according to the latter, so-called error is no error at all, but a mere failure to grasp the fact that a representative factor of the total cognitive situation is distinct from another factor which is representative in nature and that the two are unrelated (asamsargāgraha), but in the former view,
the representative factor which really is unrelated with the presentative factor is cognitively identified with it (saṃsa-rgagraha). In the latter view, illusion is explained as one of absence of the knowledge of the distinction of two cognitions, while in the former, illusion is taken as an unitary piece of knowledge instead of as a group of two cognitions. As we have already remarked, Rāmānuja, in this respect, agrees with the Nyāya school; all the three schools, however, agree in one point, namely that the content of illusion is real i.e., a part of the objective universe.

According to most followers of Śaṅkara, the objects of our cognitive experience belong to three ontological levels namely, prātibhāṣīka i.e., merely apparent, vyavahārika, i.e., empirical and pāramārthika i.e., absolutely real. Nothing that is altogether unreal can be cognised, this is the basic concept of the Advaita, too, a hare's horn or a sky-flower is not the object of anybody's cognition - such things have no ontological status at all - they are absolutely unreal. When we cognise a snake in the place of a rope, or experience a dream-elephant, the object of our cognition has some reality - it belongs to the class of things which have prātibhāṣīkasattā, i.e., they have apparent reality; they appear to be real so
long as they are not negated or cancelled by some other knowledge. The illusion of snake in the place of the rope is negated by the knowledge of the rope as rope. The apparently real thing persists so long as its knowledge persists. The objects of our ordinary experience, such as tables and chairs, have vyavahārikasattā or objective empirical reality. This reality is of a higher ontological level than apparent reality; for such objects persist so long as Brahman which has the highest reality or pāramārtikasattā is not known. So with the most perfect knowledge of Brahman, the world of experience is falsified. Thus, according to the Advaita school, the distinction between illusion and true knowledge can be said to be based on the ontological status of the object, i.e., on the level of reality the object belongs to. And a piece of knowledge is considered to be false, if it is contradicted by another piece of knowledge. The object of illusion is regarded by the Advaita as anirvācya or indeterminate in terms of 'real' and 'unreal' - it is not real because it is cancelled by another knowledge, as the dream-object is cancelled by waking experience; it is also not unreal, because it is cognised as an existent object before it is cancelled by subsequent knowledge. A wholly unreal thing such as a hare's horn does not become the object of even an illusion. An illusory object
cannot also be regarded as real-unreal, since this would be self-contradictory. The objects of empirical reality are also regarded by the Advaita as anirvācyā because this is experienced as existent and also cancelled by the knowledge of the Absolute. So Śaṅkara's theory of illusion is known as anirvacanīyakhyāti.

As stated earlier, this doctrine of Śaṅkara is not accepted by, as far as we know, any realistic school of India such as Sāmkhya, Nyāya, Mīmāṁsā, etc. and of course, by Rāmānuja. There is, however, agreement between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja in the following respect, besides the one which we have already mentioned. One principal consideration which prompts Śaṅkara to recognise the origination of the illusory object simultaneously with the illusion is that the object of perception (whether veridical or unveridical) must be present just where the object is perceived to be — if the shell is not the content of the illusion of silver, then, there must be a sort of silver just at the place of the shell. Now for Rāmānuja, too, the same consideration weighs — there must be silver at the place of the shell, since silver is perceived to be there. Of course, for Rāmānuja, this silver is quite real and is not produced just at the time of the illusion; it is really present
in a very small quantity within the shell itself; and this enables Rāmānuja to avoid recognising the production of that strange silver which is neither real nor unreal. But as we have already remarked, this doctrine of Rāmānuja that silver is present within the shell is hardly intelligible. Curiously enough, Rāmānuja recognises that dream objects are produced at the time of the self's dreaming state, although he thinks that such dream objects are real, being created by God and not produced unconsciously by the dreamer's imagination. It would appear that, in spite of protests by a Rāmānujite, the distinction between the position of Rāmānuja and that of Saṅkara, here, is extremely tenuous.