Chapter 3

VIPARYAYA AS APRAMĀ
3.1. LAKṢĀNA (DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS) OF VIPARYAYA (ERROR) EXPLAINED:

Jñāna (knowledge) in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy is considered as the revelation of the objective world. Knowledge is considered as something that looks beyond itself or object directed. It is a subjective phenomenon representing the world of reality. The success of any action presupposes a true and sure cognition or knowledge of its objects. In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the term 'jñāna' is used in a wider sense so as to include both true as well as false cognitions. True knowledge for the Nyāya is an apprehension of some object (arthopalabdhi), which is definite (asandidha) and non-erroneous (avyabhicāra). It does not include 'apprehension of the unapprehended' in the definition of validity. The Vaiśeṣika defines valid knowledge as a firm, uncontradicted and definite cognition. Prasastapāda, in his Bhāṣya on the Vaiśeṣika-sūtra, distinguishes between vidyā and avidyā. Vidyā stands for valid knowledge and avidyā for invalid knowledge. Prabhākara differs from the Nyāya and defines valid knowledge as apprehension (anubhuti) and it is something different from remembrance, which is not valid.¹ For him, a cognition which apprehends an object cannot be invalid. In other words, for Prabhākara, knowledge is something necessarily true or valid. Inspite of this, Indian epistemology contains different explanations of the fact of error from various philosophical standpoints.

The term 'error' is an epistemological concept. While the truth-claim of a judgement is not challenged, it is accepted as true judgement and where such truth-claim is challenged, it is regarded as erroneous. To speak the truth, it is only in the context of judgement, the concepts like truth and error are significantly applied and are properly distinguished. In the Nyāya, error is called viparyaya and is considered as different from samśaya (doubt). It is a positive case of invalidity whereas doubt represents a state of uncertainty about the character of the object cognised. In erroneous cognition, for the Nyāya, we have an assertion that contradicts the real nature of the object of cognition (viparītanirṇaya). It arises at a juncture where there is a 'contradiction between our cognitive and volitional experiences'. An erroneous judgement, according to the Nyāya, contains such characters as attributes of the real object of cognition which are in fact excluded by it (viparītadharmādhyāropeṇa). While dealing with the concept of error, different philosophers have analysed it from logical and metaphysical standpoints. The analysis of error from these different points of views give rise to different sorts of questions and problems. The logical analysis aims at determining the precise meaning of the concept of error, like, 'what is error?'. But a metaphysical analysis is not so much eager to find out a clear or precise definition of error for correlating as well as contrasting it with other

cognitive concepts. His interest is primarily to supply an ultimate explanation both for the origin as well as to indicate certain direction in which error can be avoided. The ultimate explanation of the metaphysician may either turn out to be the wholesale acceptance of error or may turn out to be a complete rejection of error. The psychological analysis does not search for universal explanation regarding the very possibility of error. As an empirical science, psychology is rather engaged in supplying particular answers to particular instances of error. The psychologist is not bothered for determining the precise definition of the concept of error. But be that as it may, the various approaches towards the explanation of the problem of error in Indian Philosophy, seem to mixed up in the consideration of logical, metaphysical and psychological issues. To put it otherwise, the Indian philosophers seem to be asking both about the nature, as well as, the cause of error in the same context. Hence, it appears difficult for bringing out the exact issue in which a philosopher is actually engaged.

In Indian Philosophy, error is discussed in the different theories known as 'khyātivādas'. Unlike the western tradition, knowledge in most of the schools of Indian Philosophy stands for both true as well as false cognitions. In Indian philosophical tradition, khyātivādas are discussed only in the context of false cognition or bhrama. There are actually many speculations about this cognitive content. If for satkhyāti this becomes real, for asatkhyāti it is unreal, for sadasatkhyāti it is both real and unreal, for anirvacanīyakhyāti,
it is indeterminable and so on. Hence, the dispute seems to be purely centering around the specific determination of an epistemic concept, viz., cognitive content.

Error (bhrama or viparyaya) is generally understood as something opposite to what is known as valid cognition (pramā). While valid knowledge is the presentation of an object as what it really is (tattvānubhava), erroneous knowledge is the cognition of an object as what it is really not (atattvajñāna). Error or viparyaya is an invalid cognition in which one thing is cognised as another, in which we perceive one thing, while the presented datum is some other thing. The cognition of a 'shell' as 'silver', or a 'rope' as a 'snake' are all cases of error or wrong cognition. In each, there is the cognition of an object as other than what it really is. S.K. Maitra holds that the controversy in Indian Philosophy about the khyātivādas centre round the nature of the false content i.e., the status of the content which appears false rather than of the subjective fact of the apprehension itself.\(^3\) Error is different from doubt. Unlike doubt, error is not only non-valid cognition (apramā), but is positively invalid or false cognition (bhrama). "An erroneous cognition goes beyond the state of uncertainty in doubt and carries with it a definite assertion (avadhāraṇa or niścaya) about some presented object. But, then, it is an assertion that contradicts the real nature of its object (viparītanirṛṣaya). It is

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a false judgement of the real through the attribution of such characters as are excluded by it (viparītadharmaśādyāropeṇa)." 

Different systems of Indian Philosophy explain error according to their own ways. They advocated their theories of error suited to their respective metaphysical positions. The Bhaṭṭa and the Naiyāyikas approach the problem in a purely empirical and psychological way and their positions can derive support from commonsense. The explanation of error of perception has been a perplexing question for all philosophy. The question is, how are we to explain the false perception of silver in a shell? Is it due to object itself? Or, is it due to our subjective attitude towards the object? According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, while valid knowledge (prama) is objective in the sense of being grounded in the object itself, all error is subjective in so far as it is due to the introduction of a certain foreign character into the object by the knowing subject. Before defending the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika account of error, we propose to examine different theories of error in Indian Philosophy.

3.2. ĀTMAKHYĀTI THEORY OF ERROR

The ātmakhyāti theory of error is traditionally propounded by the Yogācāra Buddhists who, though denying dualism, generally advocate monistic pluralism in which nothing but the stream of momentary consciousness-unit is real. The Yogācāra Buddhists, unlike the Vaibhāṣikas

and Sautrāntikas, deny the reality of the external world and hence they reduce all existence to a fleeting cognitions, the only reality acceptable to him. So, it is only to be expected that they should put forward the atmakhyāti theory of error. To the Yogācāra, consciousness is the only reality, and since, reality is momentary, abiding as it does only for a single moment, by its very nature and constitution, the ultimate reality is but the stream of momentary consciousness-series. "The Yogācāra idealist postulates two aspects of knowledge— samāropa or the phenomenal aspect from which the external world seems to exist, and apavāda i.e., the metaphysical aspect according to which vijñāna is the only reality, the cognitum and the cogniser being only false appearance. Consciousness is rigidly impartite and it has neither subject nor an object." As quoted by Phanibhūṣaṇa Tarkavāgīśa, according to Buddhists (excluding to Vaibhāśikas) who advocate momentariness and universal flux, — "bhūtiryēṣāṁ kriyā saiva kārakāṁ saiva cocyate".

For Yogācāra, error consists in the wrong objectification of what is essentially a state of consciousness. There is really no existence of external object, "The real in this system is the constructive activity of consciousness.

which alone invests things with significance. Independence of the subjective act of knowing is here the very essence of the unreal, the 'this' (idam) in the context of illusion, 'this is a snake', is false."⁶ The Yogācāras hold that in an invalid cognition like 'this is silver', the silver is but a cognitive construct and what is apprehended is nothing but cognition itself. They would urge thus: The silver in question cannot be non-existent; for, in that case, it could not be apprehended. Nor is it an external reality placed within the ken of our vision, for its erroneous character and subsequent recantation would then be unintelligible. Neither is it an elsewhere reality. In analysing an erroneous judgement like 'idam rajatam' — 'this is silver', all the disputationists are at one in taking the 'idam' as the substantive, 'rajatam' being only an adjunct to it. But, the Yogācāra, in perfect accord with his metaphysical position, reverses the situation and hits upon 'rajatam' as the substantive, 'idam' being merely an adventitious false adjunct attached to it. Still, this false adjunct simulates reality and it serves as the substratum of super-imposition of the silver-cognition. Hence, according to this theory, an illusion is not the super-imposition of one real cognition. It is interesting to see what professor M. Hiriyanna remarks in this connection. According to Hiriyanna, "the stimulus to erroneous experience comes wholly from within and not in the least from without".⁹

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But careful study of and reflections on the main tenets of this theory of error would at once make it clear that the theory contains some obvious shortcomings. The Yogācāra holds that a 'nacre-silver' is real, though internally. But this supposition of reality is defective and contradicted by the subsequent retrospective cognition 'asadeva rajatam pratyabhāt' (i.e., 'the silver, that appeared, was verily unreal'). This proves that the reality of the nacre-silver is nothing but a mere fiction. So, the cognition of externality is an illusion, an unreality, according to the Yogācāra. Now, since they themselves hold that what is unreal cannot be apprehended, it follows that externality also, being unreal, should not be amenable to intuition.

Vācaspati Miśra in his Bhāmatī-tīkā as well as in his Nyāya-vārttika-tātparya-tīkā attacks the Yogācāra position thus: - It may be asked whether the cognitive character of the nacre-silver be established either by perception or by inference. If it is established by perceptual cognition, is it the cognition of nacre-silver or the subsequent sublating cognition? The former only shows the silver as 'this', as something 'not I'. Had it not been so, the cognition would have been of the form 'I am silver', the percipient being non-different from the perception. So, the cognitive character of the nacre-silver cannot be proved. From all these considerations, we may conclude that the yogācāra theory has failed to defend the contention that the illusory object has no
objective basis and that it is purely a creation of mind. In other words, the perceptual character of illusion has been left unexplained.\textsuperscript{10}

3.3. \textsc{Asatkhyāti Theory of Error}

Let us now see how the school of Mahāyāna Buddhism has viewed the fact of erroneous cognition. Besides \textit{atmakhyāti}, there is another view named as \textit{asatkhyāti} or \textit{sūnyakhyāti} which is often ascribed to the Mādhyamikas. No original Mādhyamika treatises like \textit{Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā} or \textit{Vigrahavyāvartani}, clearly refer this term with explanation. Its reference is found in the writings of the rival schools of Indian philosophers including both the Hindu as well as the Jaina works. According to opponent philosophical systems, the Mādhyamika advocates the voidness (\textit{sūnyatā}) of all existence. He arrives at this conclusion by way of a dialectical examination of all categories of thought. Accordingly he explains error as the apprehension of non-being. In the illusory perception 'this is silver', 'this' is real and 'silver' too is real, but their relation is totally unreal. But according to the 'nihilist', 'this' and 'silver' are as unreal as their relation. Thus the object of illusion for the 'nihilist' is absolutely unreal.

The Mādhyamika argues that \textit{avidyā} located in cognition (or consciousness) reveals the unreal object. What is the exact function of this

\textsuperscript{10} Quoted by Nanilal Sen in his \textit{A Critique of the Theories of Viparyaya}, Rabindra Bharati, Calcutta, 1965, P. 72.
avidyā? Does it create the unreal object or merely reveal it? The first alternative is untenable, because the unreal, being pure nothing, cannot be created. Cognition being aided by its power, avidya is supposed to provide the unreal object and it does not reveal the object. Thus cognition is only the creator of the cognised and is not the cause of its revelation. The point is that it is improper to suggest that cognition whose sole function is to reveal objects, creates the objects cognised.  

It has also been urged by the Naiyāyika that the illusion of silver is not entirely baseless, it cannot arise out of nothing. What is absolutely non-existent cannot produce even the wrong cognition of silver. The illusion of silver is due to something in the nature of the shell. It occurs generally in connection with a shell and the like, but not indiscriminately with everything. Even if error is a cognition of the non-existent as existent, it is the cognition of it as what it is not.

Vimuktatman in his Iṣṭasiddhi argues that if the illusory cognition 'this is silver', the silver is taken to be unreal, it contradicts the intuition of silver as real. If the unreal may appear as real, it leads to universal lack of certitude in knowledge and, who knows, even what appears as real may be unreal. Besides, the unreal cannot be apprehended.  

3.4. SATKHYĀTI THEORY OF ERROR

This theory is accepted by Rāmānuja and his followers to explain the so-called illusory experience. Rāmānuja holds that objects exist before they are known and the existent alone is apprehended. Knowledge always corresponds to the existent object. Even the so-called illusory perceptions refer to what really exists: A piece of shell appears sometimes as silver, because it really contains the constituent elements of silver within it. It is indeed true that such appearances are due to the defective sense-organs, but knowledge can never reveal the non-existent. The theory is based on the principle of quintuplication (pāñcikaraṇa). The implication of this principle is that everything involves every other thing — 'sarvam sarvātmakam'. A 'conch' appears yellow to a jaundiced person. The explanation is that when the conch comes in contact with the colour rays, yellowness pertaining to the diseased eyes are transmitted to the conch. The yellow colour is thus imposed on the object and consequently its white colour, being super-seded, is not perceived. Yellowness attached to the object is too subtle to be perceived by other beings. The diseased man only sees it because he has followed its course from the initial stage of its transmission.

It seems to be followed from the doctrine of satkhyāti that the ordinary distinction between truth and error is entirely obliterated. Rāmānuja holds that knowledge to be true in its usually accepted sense, should not only correspond to the extramental reality, but also be useful in practical life. In
order to conform to the practical interest in life, knowledge must comprehend the preponderating elements of an object. When the preponderating elements in a piece of shell are cognised, the object becomes useful in practical life.

The 'Visiṣṭādvaitins' contention that 'All judgements are true' — is itself not a judgement but may be said to be meta-judgement about all judgements. This meta-judgement does not describe about the nature of all judgements but rather prescribes a ruling about the nature of all judgements. In this connection, truth is not actually shown to be so intimately related with judgement by means of any analysis of empirical fact. Nor even by analysing the linguistic nature of judgement, it is concluded that truth is an intrinsic property of any judgement.

The satkhyāti theory seems to rest on a misunderstanding of the principle of quintuplication. Though the subtle elements were mixed up with one another, it cannot be said that the gross elements or their evolutes were also mixed up with one another. Moreover, Rāmānuja's explanation of the

13. According to Rāmānuja, both illusory snake and actual snake are equally real and objective. The discussion of error is started from the standpoint of reality and not from language. Rāmānuja admits that descriptions do not falsify reality but actually represent it.

14. Although the elements are compounds of each and all elements and in theory of constitution of an element includes every other element, in the gross world of matter there are sharp differences and distinctions between things. Why do we not perceived silver in a post though theoretically silver may be an element in it? This ontological theory of the homogeneity of matter is irrelevant to the issue at hand. The shell is perceived as silver. This silver is not an attenuated metaphysical fact, because we are not interested in it. Our concern is with the pragmatic silver. We take it to be the pragmatic silver which it is not even on Rāmānuja showing. It appears thus to be a case of misperception of a shell or pragmatic silver.
experience 'the conch is yellow' is also unsatisfactory. If the conch were really painted yellow by the rays emanating from the jaundiced eyes, it ought to have been yellow by other people also. But this is not the case. Dream-objects also cannot be treated on at par with objects of normal experience. They possess a different kind of existence, otherwise dream-objects can not be 'private' to the dreamer only.

3.5. ANIRVACANĪYAKHYĀTI THEORY OF ERROR

The next theory we propose to examine is the explanation of error by the Advaitins. It is known as 'anirvacanīyakhyātivāda'. Any discussion of error in the context of Indian Philosophy can not be said as comprehensive unless one takes the Advaita account of error. In fact, it is Advaita alone which is found to have given maximum importance to the discussion of error for the construction of its own philosophical position. Māyā, the popular expression for error has been so elaborately analysed and discussed in the entire Advaita literature that the whole system is called by many as māyāvāda.

Māyā, in the usual sense of the term, stands for cosmic illusion. It is very often taken for granted that the Advaita, by the very discussion of error, comes to the conclusion that the whole cosmic existence is māyā or illusory in essence. The different orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy criticise the Advaita view vehemently for propogating the theory of error which ultimately reduces the whole world to illusion. Some of them have been charged the
Advaita to be unorthodox on this account and have presented it as Buddhism in disguise. Particularly the Theistic Vedantins hardly find any difference between Advaitism and Buddhism. Both the philosophers consider the world as illusory.

Śaṅkara in his 'Adhyāsa-bhāṣya', raises the problem of knowledge and error. He says that ordinarily men fail to distinguish between two opposite concepts — the subject (viśayin) and the object (viśaya). The superimposition (adhyāsa) of one concept upon the other or the qualities of one concept upon the other is due to ignorance (avidya). To take something as something else is adhyāsa. The silver-characteristics when are super-imposed upon the shell, the shell is no more known as it is but as something other than itself.

In this connection, it may be pointed out that the world-phenomena is not reduced to unreality like that of illusion or dream. The phenomenal reality of the world is never actually rejected by Śaṅkara. His declaring the world-phenomena to be māyā is only significant from the ultimate (paramārthika) standpoint. But the world is accepted to be as real as possible so long the ultimate reality is not realised. The phenomenal reality (vyavahārika sattā) of the world is never denied. There is a definite distinction between the phenomenal level and illusory level (prātibhāsika sattā). The objects of dream, illusion, and hallucination are all accepted to be unreal from the phenomenal
point of view. While the illusory silver is real for the moment of illusion only, the actual silver is real phenomemonally.

Hence, according to the Advaita, in the rope-snake illusion, the snake must actually be present where it is seen, though it enjoys merely a temporary existence so long as the illusion lasts, and because it can be neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal, nor both together, it must be indefinable. That which is absolutely real can never be sublated and that which is absolutely unreal can never be perceived. The illusory snake is perceived for sometimes and then sublated by a correcting experience. Therefore, it can not be absolutely unreal or absolutely real. It can not be both simultaneously, because two contradictory predicates can not qualify the same entity which is self-contradictory. Hence, the illusory snake is indefinable.

But it is clearly maintained by Śamkara that the falsity of the knowledge of the world-phenomena is only realised when the ultimate knowledge of Brahman is attained. The world-phenomena is ever false, only its falsity is realised when the nature of Brahman is realised. From the final philosophic point of view, there is no difference admitted between vyavahārika and prātibhāsika sattā. If the Advaita philosophy aims at establishing reality as only non-dual then it does not mean much to talk about the three levels of reality. It is interesting to note that Mīmāmsakas too while criticising the saṁvrti sattā of the Yogācāras offer a very similar point, "There can be no reality about illusory reality and hence, it can not be a form of reality, if it is real it can not be illusory; and if it is illusory, it can not be real".

15. It is interesting to note that Mīmāmsakas too while criticising the saṁvrti sattā of the Yogācāras offer a very similar point, "There can be no reality about illusory reality and hence, it can not be a form of reality, if it is real it can not be illusory; and if it is illusory, it can not be real".
manifold world can not but be unreal as the illusions and dreams are. According to him, the reality of a thing is that which persists through all its states. And as such anything which is changeable and perishable becomes virtually unreal. If the self is ultimately real, the necessary conclusion is that all else is mere illusion or māyā.\textsuperscript{16}

Jayatīrtha asserts that as the Advaitin concludes that the world has neither reality nor unreality, because they are unascertainable, so it might be maintained that the world is neither ‘anirvacaniya’ since that too is unascertainable. Venkaṭanātha argues that the Advaitin takes the world as different from sat and asat and, then denies even that difference and thus make it ‘sadasat’. In this context, he points out that the Advaitins can not maintain the general Vedantic hypothesis of universal knowledge through the knowledge of One, i.e., Brahman in as much as the cognition of ‘sat’ will certainly exclude that of ‘other than sat and asat’. He asserts that if the illusoriness of the world be false, the illusoriness will be not and likewise the reality of an entity will be established only when the reality is real.\textsuperscript{17}

3.6. SADASATKHYĀTI THEORY OF ERROR

The Sāmkhya school also tries to refute the different theories of illusion.

"In refuting the Advaita theory of ‘the apprehension of the indefinable


\textsuperscript{17} For details one may see : Nanil Sen, \textit{A Critique of the Theories of Viparyaya}, Rabindra Bharati, Calcutta, 1965, P. 224.
(anirvacanīyakhyātī), it contends that the super-imposition of something indeterminable as either real or unreal is not possible, because such a thing does not exist. What is not known cannot be superimposed, because superimposition must be consistent with experience. It propounds the theory of 'the apprehension of a real and unreal object (sadasatkhyātī). One and the same thing can be regarded as real and also as unreal under different conditions, so the theory is not self-contradictory. In the illusory perception, 'this is silver', silver is real as existent in the silversmith's shop, but it is unreal as superimposed on nacre. So, it is the cognition of a real and unreal object.'

This is Vijñānabhikṣu's explanation of the Sāṁkhya theory of error.

According to Aniruddha, in the illusory perception, 'this is silver', the cognition of 'this' is real, because its 'object' nacre is present to the organ of vision, but the cognition of 'silver' is unreal, because its object is not present to the organ of vision and is sublated by the cognition of the nacre. Thus, in Aniruddha's view, an illusion is the united cognition of a real and an unreal object. While the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school explains illusion as the mixed perception of two real objects, the Sāṁkhya school explains it as the conjoint perception of a real and an unreal object.

According to the dualistic Sāṁkhya, the silver is real as it is, but as ascribed to the nacre where it is not, it is unreal. Similarly, the objective

universe is real by itself, but as ascribed to the self to which it does not belong, it is unreal. Its falsity is in its association with the self. According to the Advaita Vedanta, the self alone is real, the phenomenal world is but an appearance dependent on the self. On the realisation of the non-dual Brahma (Self), it disappears, until then it endures.

But critical reflections show that Sāmkhya theory of illusion is unacceptable. It is based on the assumption that something non-existent can be perceived. In the 'nacre-silver' illusion, silver is an object of perception, although it does not exist where it appears. The perception of something where it does not exist is absurd. If a non-existent object could be perceived then the son of a barren woman would have been perceivable. The object of perception must be present to the organ of vision.

3.7. AKHYĀTI THEORY OF ERROR

Akhyātivāda is generally known as the theory of error maintained by the Prabhakara School of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā. Not only the philosophers of the Prabhakara School, including Śālīkanātha, Bhavanātha and even Prabhakara himself, call their own theory of errors 'akhyāti', but philosophers of different schools invariably use the term 'akhyāti' to refer to the Prabhakara theory. His view is found in his commentary called Brhati on Sabara-bhāṣya. Prakarana Pañcikā is another important work of the Prabhakara School which elaborately discusses the doctrine of error. Before dealing with the
perhaps it would not be completely out of place to refer to some of the important views of Prabhākara regarding the nature of knowledge, its validity, etc. for all those issues are well-connected with any discussion of erroneous judgement. Prabhākara defines valid knowledge as apprehension (*anubhuti*). All apprehension is direct and immediate and valid in itself. A cognition which apprehends an object can not be intrinsically invalid. Memory arises from the impression of a prior cognition and therefore can not be treated as valid knowledge. It does not determine an object independently, but depends on former experience. From this, it is clear that the Prabhākara’s epistemological scheme, knowledge is defined in terms of the external given and in no case the knowledge can be wrong. It is something logically impossible that the object appears otherwise than as it is. From the standpoint of modern terminology, it means that all cognitive expressions are cases of only right judgement. And hence, there is no cognitive error. Validity is the very inherent feature of all perceptual cognitions from Prabhākara’s point of view.

In strict accordance with his view of intrinsic validity of knowledge, Prabhākara does not admit error in the logical sense. All knowledge is valid in itself. The question of invalidity of knowledge does not arise in the Prabhākara School of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā. To experience is always to experience validly. According to Prabhākara, all knowledge, as knowledge, is quite valid, 

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though all knowledge is not necessarily perfect. Imperfect cognition is
commonly called ‘error’. But error is true so far as it goes, only it does not go
far enough. All knowledge being true, there can not be any logical distinction
between truth and error. Even in error, something is presented, otherwise
how could there be an apprehension. By this it should be noted that
Prabhākara is true to his realistic position in maintaining that knowledge can
never misrepresent its object. All judgements must have objective reference
and hence must be true.²⁰ Error is an act of ‘omission only, not of commission’.
It is only ‘non-apprehension, not misapprehension’. It is not a unitary
knowledge, not a single psychosis, but it consists of two psychoses, it is a
composite of two cognitions. Error is due to non-discrimination between
these two cognitions and their separate objects. It is a mere non-apprehension
of the distinction between the two cognitions and their objects. Hence, this
view of error is called akhyāti or non-apprehension.

When a person mistakes a shell for a piece of silver and says, ‘this is
silver’, two imperfect cognitions arise. The ‘this’ of the shell is actually perceived
together with certain qualities like whiteness and brightness which the shell
shares in common with silver, but minus its shellness. The common qualities
revive in memory the impression of silver which the person has perceived
previously elsewhere. Silver is imported in memory merely as silver, ‘robbed

²⁰ sarvam eva viññānam sāmicīnām — Prabhākara.
of its thatness*. The discrimination between the perceived 'this' of the shell and the remembered 'silver' without its thatness is not apprehended. Here, there is a non-discrimination between perception and memory, between a presented thing and a represented image. There is only non-apprehension of the distinction between these two imperfect cognitions and their partially presented objects. But there is no misapprehension because the 'shell' is not 'mis-perceived' as silver.

Kumarila and his followers like Sucarita Miśra are the direct critics of akhyātivāda. They first denounce the theory on the ground that the theory is not a faithful rendering of Sabara's view to whom Prabhākara at least claims to have generally followed. Unlike Prabhākara's view that error is due to non-discrimination, Sabara has clearly stated that error consists in a positively false cognition and is due to some defects in the source. Vimuktatman points out that if, to Prabhākara, all knowledge is self-revealed, then the two judgements, i.e., one derived from memory and the other from perception are to be assumed as self-revealed and by that very reason these judgements need not be non-discriminated and be confused among themselves.

According to Prabhākara, error is due to non-cognition of the distinction between two experiences and also between their respective objects. But this non-cognition of distinction is not possible. For distinction, according to him, is nothing but the nature of the distinct objects. So along with the
manifestation of cognitions and their objects, their distinction also is known, because the distinction is nothing else that the correlates themselves. Therefore, it can not be said that though the distincts are cognised, the distinction itself is not cognised. With regard to the knowledge of shell-silver, Prabhākara says that perception and recollection of 'this' and silver respectively are not known to be different. But this is not possible.

Vācaspati also argues that Prabhākara's analysis of illusion leads to the undesirable position of some ludicous extremity (ativityākhyāna) or to coin a word from B.K. Matilal, we may say that it is 'guilty of overskill'. It is too extreme to analyse illusion into two distinct cognitions like memory and perception instead of a unitary perceptual mode of awareness. The Nyāya critique would point out that the Prabhākara unnecessarily made the explanation of illusion more complex, the Prabhākara fails to see the fact that in illusory cognition our action is prompted by our lack of awareness of the distinction of the different cognitions. Again, this view also fails to account for the origin of human activity in order to achieve the object grasped in illusory cognition. Here, an Advaita Vedāntists may join hand with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and argue that the Prabhākara's explanation contradicts our positive normal actions. Vācaspati thus argues that "a conscious being does not act out of lack of awareness, but out of awareness." In the Bhāmati, Vācaspati

argues in favour of the Advaita view. He argues that if the non-apprehension of difference of contents and of cognitions is admitted as the cause of illusory cognition as held by the Prabhākara, then it would be equally possible to argue that it is on account of the non-apprehension of the ultimate 'non-difference' to the said two items. On this ground, Vācaspati prefers the Advaita theory according to which error is due to the failure of realisation that everything is, in the last analysis, Brahmān. Parthasarathi Misra refutes Prabhākara's contention that non-cognition of difference between two kinds of awareness, that is perceptual and memory, as the cause of illusory cognition. He points out that we can be in error, though we may discriminate two objects of cognitions. For instance, we may know the difference of north, south, east and west, still we may mistake about which direction we are facing now. Vivaraṇa also argues that in memory only the object is remembered, its previous knownness is never remembered along with the object. In such a case, the non-apprehension of difference of cognitions, memory elements can not be lapsed as held by the Prabhākaras. The Advaita Vedānta thus suggests that instead of admitting the non-cognition of two different kinds of cognition's nature, it is better to admit that the failure to grasp the ultimate non-difference of apparent diversified contents of cognitions as the cause of error.

23. Prabhākara's view have been severely criticised by Pārthasārathi Miśra in his Śāstra-dīpikā, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. 89, Oriental Institute, Boroda, 1940.

3.8. ANYATHĀKHYĀTI THEORY OF ERROR

So far we have seen that none of the theories regarding the explanation of erroneous cognition is satisfactory. Let us now turn to the Naiyāyikas. Their theory of error is widely known as anyathākhyāti, yet it is often said to be acceptable to some Jainas, and some Mīmāṃsakas. The Nyāya account of error has been expounded by a galaxy of thinkers beginning from Gautama (about 3rd century B.C.). However, Gautama has not explicitly mentioned the term ‘anyathākhyāti’ anywhere in his Nyāya-sūtra. But there are references about wrong judgement.\(^{25}\) His sūtras are commented by Vātsyayāna (300 AD). Uddyotakara (635 AD) defends Vātsyāyana-bhāṣya in his Vārttiṇa. Both of them, however, discuss and differentiate wrong judgements from the right ones in detail. The term ‘anyathākhyāti’ perhaps first occurs in Vācaspati’s Nyāya-vārttiṇa-tātparya-ṭīkā, a gloss on Uddyotakara’s Vārttiṇa. Tātparya-ṭīkā of Vācaspati is again commented by Udayanācārya (about 10th century AD) in his Tātparyapariśuddhi. " Tradition ascribes to Udayanācārya, the first conception of the idea of uniting the two sister systems of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika into one harmonious whole". However, the first known work which elaborately combines the two systems is Saptapadārthī of Sivāditya Miṣra which is again followed by similar works — Kesab Miṣra’s Tarka-bhāṣā, Annambhaṭṭa’s Tarka-saṁgraha, etc. All these

works, more or less, adhere to the classical account of anyathākhyāti. A departure to the classical account of error of knowledge comes from Gaṅgeśā (about 1200 AD), the author of Tattva-cintāmaṇi and popularly accepted as the founder of Navya-Nyāya Philosophy.

Before analysing the Nyāya theory of error, it is better to explain first the basic concepts of Nyāya epistemology. In Nyāya, the word 'knowledge' would be taken in two senses. In the first sense it may be taken as an awareness of truth and this is termed by some modern interpreters as 'knowledge simpliciter'. Secondly, according to Nyāya, 'knowledge' involves not only 'awareness of truth' but also the factors comprising its production by a necessarily connected causal factor called a pramāṇa. In the first sense of knowledge, it is not necessary on the part of the subject to 'know that he knows'. But in the second sense, an agent only knows 'P' but also knows that he knows 'P'. In this sense, the question of validity and invalidity is related. Thus knowledge is defined by the Navya-Nyāya in terms of knowledgehood having the form that 'I know that I know that P'.

Gautama does not find any difference between buddhi, upalabdhi and jñāna.26 Thus, in the Nyāya Philosophy, 'knowledge' is understood in a very wide sense, which includes both pramā (valid knowledge) and apramā (non-valid knowledge).

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27. buddhiḥ upalabdhiḥ jñānam iti anarthāntaram, — Nyāya-sūtra, 1.1.15.
According to Nyāya, knowledge is always conceptualistic and is classified into two types — *smṛti* (representational) and *anubhava* (presentational). The representational form of knowledge is known as memory. It refers to the knowledge of the past and hence, it does not become new but only repetitive. *Smṛti* is caused due to the impressions of the past.²⁸ *Anubhava* is said to be just opposite to *smṛti*. It is meant for referring to the directly presented object. It is taken to be presentational in character and it refers to the object, directly presented. It is actually here where the question of *pramāṇa* (truth) and *aprāmāṇya* (falsity) is raised. When the judgement describes the referent as it is, it is true. Erroneous judgement is said as judging something what it is not (*atasmīms tad iti jñānam*). It is invalid cognition, a constituent of non-valid cognition.

So far as 'shell-silver' illusion is concerned, the Nyāya account comes to this. "There is first the contact of sense with something present before it. Owing to some defects, the sense apprehends such general features of the thing as its brightness etc., but fails to discern its peculiar and distinctive feature. But the general features being associated with some other thing (here silver) recall the memory-image of the peculiar properties of that other thing. Through such recollection there is a sort of contact (*Jñāna-lakṣaṇa sannikarṣaṇa*) between sense and that other thing (i.e. silver). Hence this is an

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actual perception of silver in the illusion. The perceived silver is then referred to the locus (idam) or the something which present before and perceived by sense. Hence, in the illusion there is perception of both the 'this' and the 'silver', although in different ways."29 "Hence the error lies not in the presentations concerned in the perception but in the determination of one presentation by another given through association and memory (jātyasamāskārāt). And since, this determination results in a judgement of the object as something other than what it is, the Nyāya theory of error is called anyathākhyāti or viparītakhyāti. According to it, an erroneous cognition is presentational in character and has some basis in facts. But the facts being misplaced and misrelated, error becomes a false apprehension of the real".30 This means that error is a case of misjudging or mispredication. The presented object is perceived elsewise and the represented object exists elsewhere. The shell and the silver are both separately real, only their synthesis as 'shell-silver' is unreal. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika recognises the subjective elements in error. Error is due to a wrong synthesis of the presented objects.

The theory of anyathākhyāti of the Nyāya Philosophy is to be found in the writings of Udayana, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, Śridhara and such other scholars, including Vācaspati Miśra. Vācaspati in his Nyāya-vārttiaka-tātparya-ṭīkā, asserts that similarity is at the root of all kinds of erroneous cognitions. In

30. Ibid, P. 36.
erroneous cognition like 'shell-silver', certainly some sort of similarity is there which play its role in bringing about superimposition which brings in its wake an invalid judgement. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa points out that an invalid cognition is a single unitary cognition. His position may best be explained by a reference to his and Śrīdhara’s analysis of the phenomenon of acquired perception. Śrīdhara holds that the visual perception of ‘the fragrant sandal’ is generated by the visual organ, which apprehends the substantive sandal only, in collaboration with the previous olfactory perception of fragrance.\(^1\) On this point, Jayanta maintains that the fragrant sandal is not perceived by the visual organ, but by the mind.\(^2\) According to him, this is a new type of a synthetic unity of apperception. Hence, it seems that, according to Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, an error is the result of a synthetic unity of apperception of the presentative and representative elements.

This account of error as advocated by Nyāya seems to be hardly disputable. The logical point that one is to admit that error is judging something as what it is not. But some philosophers while admitting this logical point at the initial level of their discussion, seem to have extended the discussion of error from the formal plane to the metaphysical plane. However, the logical

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problem of error is misleadingly tackled in terms of metaphysics. The formalists like Naiyāyikas appear to have discussed the issue from a strict metalinguistic level without any ontological commitment. Modern exponents mistakenly present the logical argument of Nyāya regarding error in ontological terms, creating the suggestion as if for Nyāya the problem of error is a metaphysical one. But this problem of error for these philosophers (at least the early Naiyāyikas) is purely formal one. They are busy in formulating a logical condition for 'error' as such. The theory of anyathākhyāti is only the logical account of error. It does not solve the problem of error by offering a revisionary metaphysical explanation saying that really there is no error. Rather its singular interest is to formulate a formal definition of error as distinguished from truth. If something is known as 'it is' then the judgement is bound to be acceptable as true. And error, from all considerations, must imply some sort of deviation from this standard.

It is doubtlessly a merit on the part of the Naiyāyikas, who are the great advocates of nyāya or valid reasoning, to emphasize the important point that 'anyatha' in some where else can be regarded as the defining mark of all types of error. It is not merely a case of something as being misjudged as silver but anything being misjudged as another can be cited as the instance of error. The Nyāya theory of error is completely misconceived when it is understood only in terms of perceptual illustrations like shell-silver or rope-snake etc. But here it can be said that it is only the analysis of the
concept of error and not the source, from which the cognition of error actually originates, is the point of interest for the Naiyāyikas. \textit{Anyathākhyāti} is not at all required to explain the psychological problem about erroneous perception but it is exclusively engaged to meet the problem from a logical point of view. Here, the Nyāya comes very near to the contemporary analytical philosophers when it argues that error occurs due to mis-predication. A judgement is said to be false when it does not correspond to its objective reference. The modern exponents of the Nyāya theory of error very often conclude that the 'this' is taken to be real in this theory because of its inclination towards a realistic ontology. But this is just to completely misrepresent the purely formal issue with which the theory is actually engaged. 'This' is taken as real not in the sense of an ontological entity. It is merely a formal assumption for all significant judgement.

Now we may say that all these theories has got something relevant to say regarding some aspect or other of the very complex problem which is created for us by the phenomenon of error. When one is engaged in the discussion of the problem, he discovers very soon that there are so many questions connected with it, to which he would like to find some satisfactory answers. There is the question of determining the logical meaning of error as well as that of finding out the psychological conditions under which error is made possible. We may consider the general metaphysical implications of those judgements of perception which turn out to be false and try to
determine in this connection the ontological status of an illusory object. We may like to know how far this problem affects the possibility of attaining certitude in knowledge. "Akhyātivāda" comes nearest the truth as a psychological explanation of the fact of error, we know that our judgements of perception are not absolutely determined by what actually comes to us from without. Our past experience, present interest and accompanying circumstances are responsible for much that we seem to see or hear. In the case of error certain impressions are surely revived in our mind by the similarity in appearance of the presented object and we are prompted to make the erroneous judgement. So it seems that akhyātivāda gives the psychology of error more or less correctly. It is also true that in error we are not able to preserve the distinction between what is given to us from without and what is only revived in our mind. So we may say that there is in a sense non-apprehension of distinction in error. But the erroneous knowledge does not consist merely in the non-apprehension of distinction but in the positive apprehension of one thing as another. On this point, 'anyathākhyātivāda' seems to be correct. Every error implies corresponding knowledge in which the object of knowledge has been reached by knowledge. We get error when the object does not reveal itself but appearing as another. This theory seems to be correct also on the point that a thing must have been real at some time in order that we may be able to mistake for it what is presented to us in perception. We must have some knowledge of it so that we may be able
to ascribe it to another. It may be said that knowledge may be illusory, but if knowledge be an illusion, there must be some false ascription in it and it would necessitate previous knowledge of the ascribed thing. Unless we have the faith of the Naiyāyikas that our instruments of knowledge are competent to give us truth and they play us false only when they are vitiated by some defects which with caution and care we can very well remedy we shall always find reasons to suspect uncertainty and deception in every act of knowledge.\(^{33}\)

Moreover, all theories of error are *anyathākhyāti* in nature. According to Yogācāra, there is no extra-mental reality, and things are only thoughts or ideas. Hence, there is no difference between knowledge and the subject and object of knowledge, everything being an idea only. If everything be an idea we do not know how to account for the difference between an idea and its corresponding percepts. The Nyāya view that error is the cognition of an object as what it is not, really includes the Yogācāra theory of *atmakhyāti* that in error the subjective is taken for the objective and is so cognised as what it is not. The *asatkhyāti* theory of the Mādhyamika holds that error consists in the manifestation of the non-existent as existent. Against this the Naiyāyika urged that the illusion of silver is not entirely baseless, it must have some objective basis. What is absolutely non-existent cannot produce even wrong cognition of silver. If error is a cognition of the non-existent as

existent, it is the cognition of it as what it is not. Here we have in it a case of anyathākhyāti which includes the asatkhyāti of the Mādhyamika. According to the anirvacanīyakhyāti of the Advaita, through the operation of cosmic nescience, as aided by the past impressions of silver, revived by this object's similarity, there is the production of some inexplicable silver which lasts so long as the illusion lasts. It is neither real nor unreal, nor both real and unreal, but indefinable and indeterminable. Hence, in the illusion of silver there is an actual cognition of silver. According to Naiyāyikas, if the silver is actually produced, there could be no illusion but a valid perception. If it be said that the silver is supernatural and is erroneously cognised as natural, we have in it just a case of anyathākhyāti. Akhyāti theory of error of the Prabhākara School of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā fails to account for the presentative character of illusion. It must be admitted that in error there is a cognition of the object as what it is not. This will mean that akhyāti is but a form of anyathākhyāti. Hence, anyathākhyāti is the most satisfactory theory of error. It gives us all that the theories require. It seems to be more acceptable than any other.34

34. For details one may see, S.C. Chatterjee, Ibid., Pp. 37-40.
The following table can show the different dominant views on 'viparyaya' generally discussed in Indian Philosophy at a glance.

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<td>[The content of illusory cognition is non-existent (asat).]</td>
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