CHAPTER IV
DEFINITION OF PRATYAKŠA

It is obvious that there is a similarity between these two Buddhist thinkers and the Pāli Tipiṭaka tradition in holding the view of the doctrine of the truth or the ultimate right knowledge. The ultimate right knowledge as propounded by the Buddha is the knowledge of things as they are, i.e., knowledge of things in accordance with their real nature (yathābhūta or yathābhūtaṁaññadassana); it is an absolute knowledge. And that knowledge must be a knowledge which has usefulness (atthasādhita) to human existence. Having maintained the theory of truth or the ultimate right knowledge, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti hold that knowledge of things as they are is the knowledge of things in agreement (avisaṃvādaka) with the real nature of things (svalakṣaṇa, vastusatya). That right knowledge must be arthakriyākāritva (causally efficacious), i.e., it must be useful to human existence. Hence, it is clear that from the standpoint of these two thinkers, the ultimate right knowledge must depend upon these following three criteria (as state formerly): a) Right knowledge is avisaṃvādaka (not contradicted by experience), b) it is arthakriyākāritva (causally efficacious), and c) it is anāḍhīgatārtha-adhigantī (a new cognition which is the cognition of the object not yet cognised). This ultimate right knowledge is pratyakṣa (perceptual knowledge).

The Notion of Pratyakṣa in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism

Before discussing the theory of pratyakṣa of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, we would like to briefly refer to the theory of pratyakṣa in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the first chapter, we already traced the sources of the theory of pratyakṣa to the Pāli Tipiṭaka tradition (which is maintained by Theravāda Buddhists) where it is in the form of sense-cognition (indriya-
vinnāṇā/indriyavijñāna). There cognition (vinnāṇā/vijñāṇa) arises from the coming together of the three elements which is technically called phassa (contact or sensation).

The Theravāda Buddhists deny the theory of soul. Their theory of cognition is based on mana which is the internal organ. All cognition has been thrust upon it. Mana assists the outer senses, i.e., visible sense organ, auditory sense organ, etc., in apprehending external objects and to directly cognise the internal operations of the mana (itself). The mana is treated as the sixth organ, it is associated with the five sense organs, and has its own specific function in cognition. Senses cognise their respective objects; and the mana cognises all objects which are respectively cognised by the senses.

On the basis of the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Pratīyāsamatpāda), cognition (vinnāṇā/vijñāṇa) is interpreted in early Buddhism as the co-presence or coming together (samarigi or sannipātah) of at least three elements, namely, consciousness (citta), an object and sense organ. An image, conception, and judgement are produced by the addition of the element of conception which is a conceptual function of mana. It is the system of elements as a sixth organ (mana-āyatana) which is maintained by early Buddhists.

However, Vasubandhu, remarks that manas is not an organ at all in the sense in which the other organs are understood to be organs; nevertheless for the sake of symmetry, the manas is reckoned as a sixth sense organ, because there is analogy between, e.g. the organ of sight apprehending a coloured surface, and pure cognition (vijñāṇa) employed in observing the operations of

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1 E. Frauwallner, on a critical analysis of various sources, has confirmed the theory of two Vasubandhus, and has come to the conclusion that Vasubandhu, the elder, the brother of Asanga, lived in the 4th century AD., while Vasubandhu, the younger, the author of the Abhidharmakośa, lived in the 5th century AD. Frauwallner, E., On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu, p. 46. As quoted in ASA., p. 21.
our mana perceived by ourselves. These operations are the special objects of the “sixth sense,” while in the perception of the external sensible objects, it only assists the work of the other senses.\(^2\)

It is clear (as stated in the first chapter) that in the Pāli Tipiṭaka tradition, there is a sharp distinction between pure sensation (indriyaviññāṇa) and conception (the intellectual activity of the mana) as made by Dignāga and Dharmakirti. It is the elements as the “group of pure consciousness” (vijñāna-skhandha) as the pure sensation and the elements as the “group of concept or idea” (sanjñā-skhandha), and the other groups which concern with the conceptual activity of the manas.\(^3\) This distinction between vijñāna-skhandha (group of pure consciousness) and sanjñā-skhandha (group of conception) is very significant for Dignāga and Dharmakirti to make a sharp distinction between conception-free knowledge (pratyakṣa) and conceptual knowledge (anumāṇa). The remaining groups (skhandhas), namely, vedaṇāskhandha and samkāraskhandha are also subsumed under the category of conceptual knowledge (anumāṇa) by them because of their relation to the conceptual activity of the manas.

Mahāyāna Buddhists deny the reality of everything including object and cognition. For them, everything is śūnya (emptiness), because it is conditioned. It has no independent existence. They reject all the means of knowledge of reality (paramārthasatya). Asaṅga denies the reality of the external world, he holds that all cognition is merely cognition of cognition itself. He converts the whole of cognition of an object as accepted by early Buddhists into a process of observing the operations of our own minds (mere cognition of cognition). Having denied the existence of an external world, he

\(^2\) Vide BL. (Vol. 1), p. 173.
\(^3\) Vide the second diagram in the first chapter.
establishes a “store-consciousness” (ālayavijñāna) instead. The concept of ālayavijñāna is the central concept of the Vijnānavāda school.

We must ask ourselves the question that if Dignāga and Dharmakirti were Vijnānavādins, then why did they not believe in ālayavijñāna. Not only do they reject the concept of ālayavijñāna, they also hold it as a reaffirmation of the idea of soul in disguise. In their theory of knowledge, we find that they establish the theory of only two sources of knowledge or two kinds of knowledge and the theory of the only two kinds of objects of knowledge which are the fundamental features of the Buddhist epistemology and ontology respectively. We find only the doctrine of conception-free consciousness in the “pure sensation” in philosophy of Dignāga and Dharmakirti; this “pure sensation” is similar to the “group of consciousness” (vijñānaskhandha) and the “sixth sense” of Theravādins. We cannot find the concept of ālayavijñāna in their discussion of the theory of knowledge. It is valid to hold that sense perception (indriyapratyakṣa) as maintained by these two thinkers is identical with sense-cognition (indriyavijñāna) as maintained in the Pāli Tipitaka tradition.

The Vijnānavādins accept only the existence of consciousness (cittamatra), while Dignāga and Dharmakirti hold that the external world exists independently of our consciousness, and can be cognised through direct perception (pratyakṣa). If they were Vijnānavādins, why do they accept perceptual knowledge (pratyakṣa) of the external world, and why do they regard the real nature of the external things (svaḥakṣa) as ultimately real (paramārtha-satyā). For the Buddhists, paramārtha-satyā is used to refer to the ultimate reality; it can never be classified into lower or higher sense.

1 Vide., Ibid.
In considering the theory of *pratyakṣa* of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, it appears that their theory is closely akin to that of Theravadins. Because these two thinkers believe in the notion of *svalaksana* of the external object. Theravāda Buddhists accept the existence of the external object; there is a similarity among them on this basic position. And, in the theory of pure sense consciousness, Theravādins, believe in the concept of *phassa* or *sparsa*. This is the knowledge of an object inasmuch as it is the cognition of an object in accordance with its real nature. This also is very similar to sense perception (*indriyapratyakṣa*) as maintained by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

**Vasubandhu on Pratyakṣa**

In order to understand the theory of *pratyakṣa* as presented by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and to recognise the rudimentary ground on which the structure of these two logicians’ thought is built, it is important to highlight the theory of their Buddhist predecessor, Vasubandhu.

In *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu, the denial of soul or self is the main principle. Five sense-organs are internal bases (*ajjattāyatana* or *adhyātmāyatana*) and the objects of the senses stand for the external objects (*bahiuddhayatana* or *bahiyaḥyatana*). All elements have been divided into a plurality of separate and non-interacting elements. Contact between two elements is a misnomer. Contact is a name for the close proximity of two momentary flashes; there is no direct contact between two elements. What is called “contact (*sparsa*) between two elements” is, in the ultimate sense, the dependently co-arising of elements. 5

While the Vaibhāsikas hold that in a situation of contact, there is simultaneous emergence of two things in proximity; the proximity is absolute, Vasubandhu denies the Vaibhāsikas’ view that absolute proximity is impossible, if contact (*sparsa*) of two atoms was their close proximity, it

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5 Vide., *BTP.*, p. 22.
would imply they are in a state of duration, because the close proximity of two atoms requires their existence during the next moment. And this idea would break with the doctrine of momentariness.6

Following the tradition, Vasubandhu accepts six kinds of sparsa according to six kinds of sense organs. These six sparsas are, cakṣusamsparśa (eye-sensation), śrotasamsparśa (ear-sensation), ghrānasamsparśa (nose-sensation), jivhāsamsparśa (tongue-sensation) kāyasamsparśa (body-sensation) and manahsamsparśa (mind-sensation). The first five sparsa are called pratighasamsparśa as they have got the contactable organs as their support. The manahsamsparśa is called adhivacanasamsparśa as it properly designates the object (ālambana) of sparsa associated with manovijnāna.7

According to Vasubandhu’s Vādavidhi, the work on logic and epistemology, there are only two means of valid knowledge, i.e., pratyakṣa and anumāna. They are the sole means by which we acquire knowledge for ourselves.8 In this work, pratyakṣa is defined as “knowledge that arises from the thing alone is pratyakṣa.”9

To explain the definition, Vasubandhu writes:

When knowledge comes from (i.e., is caused by) only that real object, in accordance, with which this knowledge can be designated, and not from another object, then this knowledge which is not also caused by something different from this first real object is direct perception, as the knowledge of outer objects such as forms (rūpas), etc., and the knowledge of internal objects such as happiness, etc.10

According to Vasubandhu, pratyakṣa is not only knowledge arising from the senses, but it includes the introspective awareness of feelings and

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6 Vide B.T.P., pp. 21-22.
7 Vide A.S.A., p. 135.
8 Frauwallner, E., Vasubandhu’s Vādavidhi, WZKSO 1, 1957, p. 120. As quoted in E.S.A., p. 45.
emotions. In considering his statement “when knowledge comes from (i.e., is caused by) only that real object, in accordance, with which this knowledge can be designated,” we may conclude that the process of giving names to the object can be performed after that object has been directly cognised. This means that pratyakṣa is a cognition that is not constituted by language.

Vasubandhu, in his definition of pratyakṣa, intends to exclude erroneous knowledge and inferential knowledge from the genuine pratyakṣa. He says:

With this definition of pratyakṣa as knowledge solely caused by an object, erroneous knowledge is rejected as belonging to pratyakṣa, as the erroneous knowledge of silver with regard to mother of pearl. While in accordance with silver, this erroneous knowledge is designated by the perceiver as: “knowledge of silver,” it does not also come from (i.e., is not caused by real) silver, but it is caused solely by mother of pearl.11

He also rejects conceptual knowledge as genuine pratyakṣa. For him, with this definition (of pratyakṣa), knowledge of what is conventional (conceptual) is rejected too; this knowledge of conventional objects (such as pots) is not genuine pratyakṣa, because they only exist conventionally; it is a concept projected on to a certain form or collection of parts.12 Lastly, Vasubandhu differentiates pratyakṣa from anumāna. As he writes:

With the same (pratyakṣa definition) inferential knowledge (anumāna) is rejected, because, for instance, this inferential knowledge of fire comes from the knowledge of smoke (through pratyakṣa) as well as the recollections of the inseparable connexion of smoke with fire.13

It is obvious that Vasubandhu’s theory of pratyakṣa has had an influence on Dignāga and Dharmakirti for the following reasons: 1) He defines pratyakṣa as knowledge arising from a particular object; the object being

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12 Vide. ESA., p. 47
objectively real does not contain any concept and name. (2) He accepts not only sense perception, but also mental perception and self-cognition. (3) He denies the conventional knowledge as pratyakṣa (“this is a pot” is conventional knowledge, not authentic pratyakṣa). (4) He denies the possibility of erroneous knowledge in pratyakṣa. (5) This definition of pratyakṣa precisely separates perceptual knowledge from inferential knowledge.

Dignāga’s Definition of Pratyakṣa

Dignāga defines pratyakṣa as “a cognition free from kalpanā (conceptual construction).” Dignāga focuses his theory of pratyakṣa on “kalpanāpōdha” (free from mental construction). For him, genuine pratyakṣa must absolutely be conception-free.

Dignāga, like the Pali Suttantapitaka tradition and Vasubandhu, traditionally accepts the view that pratyakṣa is the coming together of the three elements, namely, sense (indriya), consciousness (citta) and an object (viśaya). However, this may not cover all types of pratyakṣa, because the coming together of sense, object and consciousness is only sense perception (indriyapratyakṣa). That is why, in his definition of pratyakṣa, Dignāga uses the qualification “kalpanāpōdha” (free from mental construction) in order to cover all types of pratyakṣa. Whenever the intellectual mind comes to function in the process of knowledge, there is kalpanā, and it immediately signifies that the process of perceptual knowledge (pratyakṣa) is distorted.

The qualification “kalpanāpōdha” has its source in the Suttantapitaka tradition where it is stated that knowledge (viśiṣṭa) is knowledge of an object that arises due to the coming together of three elements, viz., consciousness (citta) sense (indriya) and an object (viśaya). This knowledge is simple and pure, because it is not associated with the conceptual activity of manas.

14 “Prat’akṣanā kalpanāpōdhanā.” PS. I., verse k. 3c. As presented in DP., p. 25; Vide also BTP., p. 62.
Whenever *kalpanā* which means the coming into operation of the intellectual mind (*manas*), appears in the mode of knowledge, that knowledge is regarded as *anumāna*. The term “*kalpanāpodha*” signifies a difference of the view of *pratyakṣa* between the Buddhists and the other schools. And it also signifies the distinction between *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*. Where there is *kalpanā* there arises *anumāna*. Where there is *pratyakṣa*, there is no *kalpanā*.

Dignāga holds that Vasubandhu’s definition of *pratyakṣa* as “cognition arising from that very object” is too wide. It cannot precisely separate *pratyakṣa* from *anumāna*. If Dignāga retained Vasubandhu’s definition of *pratyakṣa* and had not added “*kalpanāpodha*” in his definition of *pratyakṣa*, then his definition would not have captured the exact meaning of *pratyakṣa* as he intended.

“*Nilam vijānāti*” (cognises blue) differs from
“*Nilam iti vijānāti*” (cognises that “this is blue”)

In the Abhidharma treatise, there is an argument to support that *pratyakṣa* is free from mental construction, it is a cognition of objects as they are. The following is stated:

One, who has the ability to perceive, perceives something blue (*nilani vijānāti*), but does not conceive that “this is blue” (*nilani iti vijānāti*).  

Here, the expression “*nilani vijānāti*” implies that one has an immediate awareness of the object itself. He sees blue, but does not recognise (understand blue through the intellectual mind) “this is blue or non-red” etc. On the other hand, “*nilani iti vijānāti*” is the understanding blue through the intellectual mind. It is the conceptual activity of the manas that constructs perceptual judgement by associating a name with the object perceived. Thus,

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the above Abhidharma passage is an evidence to prove Dignāga has his original concept “conception-free knowledge is pratyakṣa” from the Abhidharma tradition. It is obvious that the passage “nilam vijñānāti” expresses the concept that pratyakṣa is free from conceptual construction (kalpanāpodha). “Nilam vijñānāti,” stands for direct perception of an object itself (artha-samjñīn), whereas “nilani iti vijñānāti” stands for conceptual knowledge because it possesses the notion of the name imposed on the object and its other qualities that the manas which is involved in conceptual activity imposes on the real object (dharma-samjñīn).

Kamalaśīla\textsuperscript{16} claims that the expressions “nilani vijñānāti” and “na tu nilani iti vijñānāti” imply respectively that pratyakṣa is non-erroneous (abhranta) and that it is free from conceptual construction (kalpanāpodha).\textsuperscript{17}

The statement “nilani vijñānāti” also implies that pratyakṣa is a cognition of an object as its nature. Whatever an object is, perceptual knowledge (pratyakṣa) must have the form (sākāra) as the object (this is the doctrine of sarūpya) which it depends upon, but that form of the object is not judged or conceptualised by the intellectual mind. Since the object of the senses are inexpressible and unutterable, to name them and to give them other qualities are the activity of the intellectual mind which is included in anumāna. Pratyakṣa caused by the five kinds of sense organs is independent from conceptual construction.

**Pratyakṣa Named after Sense Organs**

*Pratyakṣa* is the knowledge derived from the external objects, but however, it has been named after the senses on which it is based. This is generally accepted by the Buddhists that vijñāna is dependent upon the sense-

\textsuperscript{16} About 750 A.D.
\textsuperscript{17} Vide *DP.*, p. 88.
organ (indriya) and the object (visaya). Vasubandhu asks why vijñāna is called caksuhvijñāna, etc., in accordance with the name of the sense, and not with that of the object, and he himself gives the following answers: (1) Accordingly, as the sense is strong or weak, vijñāna becomes clear or dim, therefore, the sense should be regarded as the basis (āśraya) of vijñāna. (2) The sense is the specific cause (asādhāraṇahetu) of Vijnāna. For example, when a man experiences a visual perception (caksuh-vijñāna), its specific cause must be his own visual sense (caksuh-indriya), since the object, i.e., rūpa, etc., is the cause of both visual perception (caksuh-vijñāna) and mental perceptions (mano-vijñāna) in other persons as well as in himself. For these two reasons, vijñāna (consciousness) is named after the sense and not after the object.

Here also, while calling pratyakṣa, we name it after the sense-organs viz., sense perception (indriyapratyakṣa): Visual sense-perception (caksuhpratyakṣa), not cow-perception, auditory sense-perception (srotapratyakṣa), not song-perception. Pratyakṣa arises dependently upon sense-consciousness and object. As it is said that an object presents its real nature to the sense-consciousness, then pratyakṣa arises. This means that object is the main cause of pratyakṣa. So why is “pratyakṣa” called after the names of sense organs (ākṣa), not to its object? Dignāga responds: “It is named after the sense organs, because they are its specific cause (asādhāraṇahetu).” To illustrate his above argument, he explains: “(It is) not (named) after the object such as color, etc., The reason is that the object is common (sādhāraṇa) (to many cases), for it is a cause of mental cognition.

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18 “Cakkhu ca paticca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvināṇaṁ.” Majjhimanikāya (Vol. 14, Bangkok), 248; Majjhimanikāya I. (PTS), 111.
20 “Asādhāraṇa-hetutvam ākṣais kal vyapadīśyate.” PS. I., verse k. 4ab. As presented in DP., p. 26. Vide also footnote 1.32., p. 87.
(manovijñāna) and perceptions in other persons (anya-samātānika-vijñāna) (as well as of one’s own perception.) We find that a designation is generally by means of a specific (cause); for example, (we use expression like) ‘the sound of a drum’ or ‘a sprout of barley’ (to indicate a certain sound or a certain sprout, instead of calling it ‘the sound of a stick’ or ‘a sprout of the earth’ although the stick or the earth is also a cause.)

In accordance with the above argument, Dharmakīrti states: “The name of a thing should be taken from its indicator (gamaka). For example, if a sprout is named ‘a sprout of barley’ (yavarikura), no one would mistake it for a sprout of rice. If, on the other hand, it were named ‘a sprout of earth’ (prthivy-ātikura), then this name could be just as easily understood to refer to a sprout of rice as to a sprout of barley. Thus, it is the asādhāraṇa-hetu, that is to be regarded as the ‘indicator.’” Following Dignāga, Dharmakīrti considers the sense (akṣa) as the “indicator” of pratyakṣa. Hence, we may say that from the standpoint of these two thinkers, pratyakṣa is named according to sense-organ because of these reasons: (1) The sense (akṣa) is the basis (āśraya) of pratyakṣa (2) the sense is the specific cause (asādhāraṇa-hetu) of pratyakṣa.

Authentic Pratyakṣa

According to Dignāga, cognising a rope as a snake, a conchshell as a silver, a mirage as water in a desert, are not perceptual illusions (pratyakṣādbhāsa) at all. They are mental constructions which are created by the conceptual activity of manas, they are illusions that are caused by mental construction. This is due to the non-apprehension of the difference between the two.

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21 Pramāṇasamuccaya-pravīrtti of Dignāga. Vide under verse, k. 3ab., PS. 1. As presented in DP., p. 26
22 "Sa-miksyā gamaka-tvāni hi vyapadātya vyagaya, iti ca kaśya-vaspadhāyati tuśādharmasya ca nyogyatāmi." Pramāṇavārttika, III, 192. As quoted in DP., p. 87.
Similarly, what is called perception (pratyakṣa) of an object associated with judgement, imagination, etc., is not the authentic pratyakṣa, from the standpoint of Dignāga, but we mistake pratyakṣa of an object with judgement, etc. (in fact it is anumāna) as authentic pratyakṣa because of non-apprehension of what is svalakṣaṇa and what is sāmānyalakṣaṇa. For example, when we see a cow, we immediately think that this is a cow or something else, it is anumāna, not pratyakṣa at all.

Here, what is authentic pratyakṣa is that in pratyakṣa we perceive a cow which is particular and has its own individuality, cannot be compared or contrasted with this or that cow or other things. It cannot be associated with a class character and also cannot be designated by a name. This also refers to every act of the intellectual mind. It is a self-conscious process (svasanvedanā) which determines and confirms the real nature of an object (svalakṣaṇa), which is free from conceptual construction.23

**Dharmakirti’s Definition of Pratyakṣa**

On the basis of the theory of accepting only two means of knowledge (pramāṇavyavasthā), namely, pratyakṣa and anumāna as maintained by Dignāga, Dharmakirti defends his master (Dignāga) against the opponents and maintains his master’s theory. Pratyakṣa, according to Dharmakirti, is a direct cognition of the real nature of an object (svalakṣaṇa).

Following Dignāga, Dharmakirti defines pratyakṣa as “a cognition free from mental construction (pratyakṣani kalpanāpohāni),” but he adds the qualification “abhrānta (non-erroneous).” And his complete definition of pratyakṣa is as “a cognition free from mental construction (kalpanā) and is non-erroneous (kalpanāpohāni abhrāntani pratyakṣaṇa).”24

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Being free from mental construction (kalpanā) and being non-erroneous (abhrānta) are the characteristics of pratyakṣa. Dharmakīrti also, like Dignāga, holds an essential meaning of pratyakṣa to be the direct knowledge in the sense that in this process an object is present to knowledge directly. It is the knowledge of the real nature of an object directly, not through concepts.

To say that to directly know an object according to its real nature is meant to directly know an object without conceptualisation. Because the real nature of an object is of conceptionlessness (kalpanāpōdha), it is the objective reality, the reality of an object. Whereas, kalpanā is subjective reality, it is the construction of the intellectual mind.

The qualification “kalpanāpōdha” (free from mental construction) is the first characteristic of pratyakṣa maintained by Dignāga; and this characteristic is accepted by Dharmakīrti. Pratyakṣa must be definitely free from this mental construction (kalpanā). Dharmakīrti’s definition of Kalpanā is “a mental construction or a judgemental cognition implies a distinct cognition (pratiti) of a mental reflex (pratibhāsa) which is capable of coalescing with a verbal designation.”

Every mental construction (kalpanā) is a determinate or judgemental cognition (pratibhāsapratitī), it is the identification of an object. For Dharmakīrti, judgement is a function of the intellectual mind; knowledge which is concerned with the intellectual mind, is not pratyakṣa, but anumāna. On the other hand, pratyakṣa as pure sensation (sparśa) is only the cognition which arises from the reflection of the real nature of an object (svaśaṇa). Only the real nature of the external things (svaśaṇa, vastusātya) is capable of arousing the sense-consciousness of sensation (sparśa).

25 “Abhilapasamsargayogyapratibhāsa-pratiti kalpanā.” Nyāyārthika (pratyakṣa) of Dharmakīrti, verse 5. As restored by by Alex Wayman, A Millennium of Buddhist Logic, p. 44; vide also BL (Vol.II), p. 19.
Kalpanā is responsible for the potentiality of coalescing an object with a verbal designation or word (abhilāpasāmsargayogātā). It is the cognitive dawning of an image (pratibhāsāpratīti) which is able to coalesce with verbalism.

From the standpoint of Dharmakīrti, words are symbols of concepts which are constructed by the manas which is involved in conceptual activity. When the intellectual mind constructs concepts, at the same time, its nature is to mentally separate or exclude a thing from other things which is called apoha. The conceptual function of the manas separates an object that it understands from other objects that it understood earlier, which are slightly different from them, as well as from those that are totally different from them. On the basis of this separation the intellectual mind arrives at certain general concepts.

It should be understood that to Dharmakīrti, it does not mean that whenever mental construction arises, it must be accompanied by verbal designation. Sometimes, there is only mental construction, but it is not accompanied by verbal designation. Where there is verbal designation, there is mental construction, but not vice versa. Verbal designation is based on mental construction. Mental construction is expressible, but it does not mean that it must be expressed always by verbal designation or word. That is why, the sphere of anumāna begins to operate when the intellectual subjective activity of manas begins.

To say that mental construction is capable (yogya) of coalescing with verbal designation, means that there is capability (possibility) of coalescing with verbal designation whenever mental construction (kalpanā) which is the nature of judgemental cognition (pratibhāsāpratīti), arises. The term “yogya” refers to potentiality, not to necessity. Where there is verbal designation, there is judgemental cognition. But it is not that where there is judgemental
cognition, there must be verbal designation. That is why, the term “yogya” has
been added in abhilāpasamsargayogya (ta) by Dharmakīrti. 26

Dharmottara takes the case of a newborn baby as an example to support
the above view. He says: “We may also have mental constructions which,
although not accompanied by corresponding words, are capable of being so
accompanied as e.g., the mental constructions of a baby not knowing the
import of words.” 27

Mental construction or judgemental cognition is not necessarily always
accompanied by word (verbalism). Word originates from mental construction
and judgemental cognition, it is always associated with a meaning which is
the construction of the subjective mind. Therefore, it is included in the field
of anumāna. It might be asked that if word is always associated with a
meaning, then how does pure auditory sense perception arise? According to
Dharmakīrti, what is called “word” which is heard, has its origin in sound.
Sound is of two characteristics, one is the unique particular sound
(svalakṣaṇa) which is the object of auditory sense perception, and the other is the sound
containing meaning, it is the generality of sound (sāmānyalakṣaṇa). In
auditory perception, the unique particular sound is apprehended (heard) by the
auditory sense consciousness (the present moment of the coming together of
auditory sense, consciousness and the unique particular sound generating the
auditory sense perception). Then, it corresponds to a conceptual activity of
manas which has the potentiality of coalescing the sound with a word
associated with a meaning.

Now, let us deal with the second characteristic of pratyakṣa. The
qualification “abhrānta” (non-erroneous) is used by Dharmakīrti in order to

27 Nyāyabindu of Dharmottara, 8.3. As presented in BL. (Vol. II), p. 20.
prevent perceptual knowledge from which illusion or erroneous knowledge arises out of defects of senses.

Some say that Dignāga accepts only mental illusion, illusion is only the production of the intellectual mind. Masaaki Hattori opinions: “This view may arises from which when Dignāga examines the Naiyāyikas’ definition of pratyakṣa ‘indriyārtha-sannikarṣotpannam jñānani... avyabhicāra...’ Dignāga himself states that the qualifier ‘avyabhicāra’ is necessary for the reason that the cognition produced by indriyārtha-sannikarṣa (the coming together of senses and their respective objects) is free of vyabhicāra which is caused by taking the illusion produced by conceptual activity of manas for the object.”28 He adds opinion: “This statement of Dignāga inclines us to believe that Dignāga attributed errors only to the intellectual mind and that he admitted indriyajñāna as absolutely free from error.”29 However, Dharmakirti argues that Dignāga was aware of the pratyaksābhāsa caused by the defect of sense organ. To support his view, he refers to a passage of Dignāga himself: “Indriya (sense organ) is the cause of cognition of nīla (blue), dvi-candra (double moons).”30

In accordance with the above argument, Dharmakirti further proceeds to disprove the notion that an error is caused only by the intellectual mind in the following manner: If the erroneous perception of dvi-candra were held to be caused by conceptual activity of the manas, this would involve the following absurd conclusions:

1. It would be removed even when the defect of the indriya is not cured, as the erroneous mental cognition of a snake for what is really

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28 Vide DP., p. 96.
29 Ibid.
30 Vide., Ibid.
a rope is removed simply because of the close examination of the object.

(2) It would not be removed even when the defect of the *indriya* is cured.

(3) A man whose *indriya* is sound would also perceive a *dvi-candra* if he were to hear about it from a man who had a defective *indriya*.

(4) It would not be immediate to *indriya* but would be mediated by remembrance.

(5) The image of *dvi-candra* would not be clear.31

According to Dharmakīrti, the erroneous knowledge caused by defects in the senses can arise in *pratyakṣa*, it is the sensory illusion such as seeing everything as yellow owing to eye-diseases, seeing moving trees while travelling by boat, etc. These are sensory illusions owing to senses, and do not involve the intellectual mind. They are said to be illusions because of the reason that they are contradicted by experience, because right knowledge is that which arises from the co-ordination (*sārūpya*) of sense, consciousness (*citta*) and an object. Here, sense is defective, that is why it generates an illusion. This sensory illusion leads to intellectual illusion in inferential knowledge, i.e., it is a cause of judging that we see moving trees, etc. As Dharmakīrti says in his *Nyāyabindu*:

Knowledge free from such mental construction, when it is not affected by an illusion produced by colour-blindness, rapid motion, travelling on board a ship, sickness or other causes, is perceptive right knowledge*.32

Hence, from the standpoint of Dharmakīrti, some illusions arise due to the operation of specific sense organs and vanish when the operation of the

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31 Vide *DP.*, p. 96.
32 "Perceive stive right knowledge" refers to *pratyakṣa*.
sense organ is over. If all illusions were only caused by mental activity, then these errors would disappear if the persons experiencing them were convinced of their former misunderstanding. If organic defect is not accorded the status of a cause, then, by merely a suitable manipulation in mental conditions, it should be possible for a jaundiced person to cease to perceive things yellow even if the jaundice is not cured.33

We must distinguish between a sense-illusion and an illusion generated by the conceptual function of the manas. For instance, when we mistake a rope for a snake, this illusion is produced by the wrong interpretation by the understanding of the matter presented to the senses. This illusion ceases, as soon as we are convinced that the object is a rope and not a snake. But if a man sees a double moon due to an eye-disease he sees everything double, this illusion will continue, even if he is convinced that the moon is single.34 Sense cannot judge anything, but senses being in an abnormal condition are the cause of understanding astray. Therefore, according to Dharmakīrti, there are two sources of illusion, viz., those generated by erroneous perception – for instance, mistaking a rope for a snake (mental illusion) and those arising from the condition of the senses, such as, vision of a moving tree while travelling by boat, seeing everything as yellow because of jaundice (sensory illusion). Hence, these two characteristics of pratyakṣa, namely, “free from intellectual illusion” and “free from sense illusion,” determine pratyakṣa to be free from all kinds of illusion.

It should be noted here that avisamvādaka (not contradicted by experience), which is one criterion of right knowledge as presented by Dharmakīrti, is sharpened by abhrānta (non-erroneous) as given by him in definition of pratyakṣa. Knowledge is avisamvādaka in the sense that there is

33 Vide BTP., p. 64.
34 BL. (Vol. I), p. 159.
no contradiction between knowledge and its object, whereas knowledge is *abhrānta* in the sense that it has no illusion which arises out of defects of the senses.

### The Debate over Pratyakṣa and Savikalpakapratyakṣa

There is a sharp line of demarcation between *indriya-pratyakṣa* (sense perception) along with all kinds of *pratyakṣa* as accepted by the Buddhists and *savikalpa-pratyakṣa* (determinate perception) as accepted by the Naiyāyikas, on the basis of their ontology. There is, for the Buddhists, a sharp line of a distinction between *svalakṣaṇa* (the unique particular) and *sāmānvyalakṣaṇa* (the universal); only *pratyakṣa* can cognise the *svalakṣaṇa*. Whereas *savikalpa-pratyakṣa* of the Naiyāyikas cognises only the *sāmānvyalakṣaṇa* which according to Dignāga and Dharmakīrti is nothing, but an ideal image hypothesised by the Naiyāyikas as if it was present in the external world. On the basis of this argument, *savikalpa-pratyakṣa* as maintained by the Naiyāyikas to be authentic perception, is not accepted by the Buddhists.

In chapter 3, we have stated about the criteria of the right knowledge; one criterion is that the right knowledge is the knowledge of the new object not already cognised. What has been already cognised through sense perception cannot be cognised again by the same cognition, but can be recognised through the intellectual mind which is regarded as inference (*anumāna*) by Dignāga. And when the real nature (*svalakṣaṇa*) of an object has already been cognised, what else is left to be cognised by *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* (determinate perception) of the Naiyāyikas. For the Buddhists, what can be recognised is only mental construction (*kalpana*) which is real in the sense of phenomenal world, not ultimately real as in the case of the unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*).

Here, let us deal with a traditional example of perceiving a cow. If determinate perception “this is a cow” is merely a mental image, not objective
reality (svalakṣaṇa), what is the difference between a memory of a cow which is also a mental image and a determinate perception “this is a cow”?

The Buddhists may answer with the help of the criterion of the ultimate reality – arthakriyākārītva (to serve the purposive successful action). The mental construction in the case of determinate perception “this is a cow” follows immediately after sense perception (includes mind perception too). This perception is caused by sense perception, it refers to a cow, in the sense that cow in this case can yield us milk. But, cow, in the case of memory, is only a mental image; it cannot yield milk.

For the Buddhists, “this is a cow” has been analysed as follows: The immediate moment of pointing out “this” refers to the real nature or the unique particular (svalakṣaṇa), the external reality. Whereas, the moment of pointing out “a cow” is the mental image constructed by the subjective intellectual mind in the wake of the sense perception “this.” They are different from each other. The one is an efficient unique particular, whereas the other is a mental image. The two different things are identified because of the non-apprehension of their difference. The mental image is conceptually constructed and erroneously regarded as the external thing (svalakṣaṇa). Thus, savikalpa-pratīyākṣa is regarded as anumāna by Dignāga and Dharmakirti.

**A Distinction between Nirvikalpakajñāna and Savikalpakajñāna**

Dignāga is the first thinker who makes a clear-cut distinction between nirvikalpakajñāna (mental conception-freed or indeterminate knowledge) and savikalpakajñāna (mental constructional or determinate knowledge). Nirvikalpakajñāna is the direct knowledge of svalakṣaṇa, it is free from kalpanā; it is the pratyakṣa (direct perceptual knowledge). On the other hand, savikalpakajñāna is the knowledge of sāmānyalakṣaṇa, it is the knowledge
associated with sāmānyalakṣaṇa in the form of kalpanā; it is anumāna (inferential knowledge).

On this basis, Dignāga refutes the doctrine of two stages of pratyakṣa, namely, nirvikalpa and savikalpa pratyakṣa as maintained by the Naiyāyikas. For him, there is no distinction between them, because there are no such two stages of pratyakṣa; only nirvikalpakajñāna is authentic pratyakṣa, but savikalpakajñāna is not pratyakṣa at all, it is included under anumāna (inference). All kinds of pratyakṣa have svalakṣaṇa as their object, and are free from kalpanā (mental construction). Dignāga holds that savikalpaprakṛtya is maintained by the Naiyāyikas is not authentic pratyakṣa; it is rather anumāna because of its association with kalpanā. Dignāga is very clear about the distinction between svalakṣaṇa and sāmānyalakṣaṇa. An object of pratyakṣa is beyond the conceptual activity of the manas. The manas in its function of conceptualising an object can never touch the object of pratyakṣa; the scope of conceptual activity of the manas is limited to sāmānyalakṣaṇa. On the contrary, the Naiyāyikas’ view of pratyakṣa is concerned with the conceptual activity of the manas, it is only savikalpaprakṛtya (determinate perception) that is complete pratyakṣa.

Perceptual Illusion (Pratyakṣabhāṣa)

According to Dignāga and Dharmakirti, the real nature of the external things is independent of knowledge. The conceptual mind cannot directly cognise them, just indirectly cognise (recognise) them through concepts constructed by the conceptual mind itself. There is no pre-established harmony between conceptual constructions of the manas which is involved in conceptual activity, and objects. They are so different from each other, but man never knows the distinction between them. Then, he mistakes the one for the other, mistakes conventional world which is the big projection constructed by his intellectual mind as real, and falls down into the net of conventional world. He never knows, by his intellectual mind, the external things as they
really are. In *Pramāṇavārttika*, Dharmakīrti reminds us about the illusory knowledge of *anumāṇa*, he writes:

The object of knowledge is in fact only one and that is the unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*). An inferential judgement (*anumāṇa*) enables us to attain the intended object in spite of the fact that its object is a concept and not a real thing. Inference (*anumāṇa*) is also a *pramāṇa*, but inasmuch as it bears the form of an object in general and not that of a real unique particular object, it is illusory also.38

Man's intellectual mind constructs concepts and images such as substance, quality, name, universal, etc. All these are illusory because of not having the real nature of thing (*svalakṣaṇa*). They are internal because they are constructed by the subjective mind. The intellectual mind identifies them (those conceptual thing) with the external real things (*svalakṣaṇa*) which is ultimately real (*paramārthasatya*). Due to ignorance (*avidyā* in *Pratītyasamutpāda*) man mistakes the unreality for the reality. This is similar to the case of the illusion of a rope as a snake. We mistake a rope for a snake owing to not apprehending the difference between them (*bheda agraha*). This is the way, these two Buddhist thinkers explain erroneous perception.

According to Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, the illusion of a rope as a snake occurs due to the non-cognition of difference, it is born of a confusion of one thing for the other. A rope perceived is real rope, or to say, this external thing (*svalakṣaṇa*) is real as *it is*, it is independent of knowledge. The rope, because of its thinness and length as a snake, has been mistaken to be a snake. The rope is objectively real, the snake is subjective and unreal because it is the projection or imagination of subjective mind and then it (snake) subsequently disappears, because it lacks correspondence with fact (*saṃśaya*), i.e., it is not real snake. Here, the “snake” is purely a subjective concept, unreal, only

38 *PV. II.*, verse 81-82.
imaginary, but appears as objectively real. The snake is subjective, because it is constructed by the subjective mind, but projected as objective. The snake that is simply projected disappears immediately when reality (the rope) is apprehended.

_Svalaṅkṣaṇa_, similarly, is ultimately real, independent of knowledge. Substance, universals, all mental constructions, are productions of the subjective mind, consequently they are unreal. They are absolutely different from each other. But the production of the subjective mind (_sāmānyalakṣaṇa_) appears as objective reality (_svalaṅkṣaṇa_), because the objective reality provides a basic ground for this conceptual construction of the _manas_. The _manas_ which is involved in function of conceptualising an object, borrows existence from the _svalaṅkṣaṇa_ and creates a body of its own, i.e., _sāmānyalakṣaṇa_. But when _svalaṅkṣaṇa_ is apprehended, then _sāmānyalakṣaṇa_ disappears.

Dignāga does not ignore illusions caused by defects in sense organs. Emphasising on the role of the senses in generating illusions, Dignāga writes: “The senses exist in the ultimate sense, in different forms (from those appearing in a cognition), and (yet they) become the cause of such cognition as the representations of something blue, etc., or of a double moon, etc.”

This is the evidence to indicate that Dignāga was aware that illusion could be caused by defective sense organs.

Dignāga classifies fallacies (or illusions) of _pratyakṣa_ into four kinds. As he says in _Praṇaṅkasamuccaya_:

Erroneous cognition, cognition of empirical reality, inference, its result, recollection and desire are not true perceptions.

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and are accompanied by obscurity (sataimira).  

It was explained by Dignāga as follows:

Erroneous cognition (bhrānti-jñāna) is not a true perception because it arises conceptually constructing, for example, water out of such things as vapor floating over sand. Cognition of empirical reality (samvṛti-saj-jñāna) is not a true perception (pratyakṣa) because it superimposes something extraneous upon things which are only empirically true (samvṛtisatya), and thus functions through the conceptualisation of forms of these (extraneous things). Inference (anumāna) and the cognition which is its result, etc., are not perceptions (pratyakṣa), because they arise through the conceptualisation of what formerly has been perceived.

In Pramāṇavārttika of Dharmakīrti too, it is declared: “There are four kinds of perceptual illusions — the first three are produced by kalpanā and the fourth (sataimira) is devoid of kalpanā.” This signifies the similarity between Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in the case of four kinds of illusion.

According to Dharmakīrti, the word “sataimira” has been mentioned by Dignāga in order to make an exception (apavāda) to his definition of pratyakṣa as kalpanāpodha and yet are not true pratyakṣa. Thus, “sataimira” is taken as meaning “indriyopaghatajani jñānam.” According to the above reason, Dharmakīrti adds the qualification “abhrānta” (non-sensory illusion) in his definition of pratyakṣa. Dignāga’s use of the term “sataimira” proves that he recognises sensory illusions. Jinendrabuddhi interprets: “sataimira” as cognition caused by the defect of sense organ, such as timira (eye-disease).  

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4. Vide., Ibid., p. 95.
Masaaki Hattori elaborates: “In Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti, on this verse, Dignāga does not mention ‘sataimira’ as a kind of pratyakṣābhāsa. He explains only (1), (2) and (3), all of which are produced by kalpanā. Dignāga defines pratyakṣa as kalpanapodha, and, in the preceding passages, he has mentioned various types of pratyakṣa. In enumerating three kinds of pratyakṣābhāsa, here, he seems to have followed the Vādavidhī, in which it is stated that the definition of pratyakṣa given therein effectively rules out bhrānti-jñāna, samvṛti-jñāna and anumāna-jñāna.”

C. L. Tripathi explains the illusions of pratyakṣa as stated by Dignāga as follows: (1) Illusion proper: Fata Morgana is an example of this kind of illusion. Here the conceptual mind mistakes the rays of light for the atoms of sand in a desert. (2) Transcendental illusion: According to it, all empirical knowledge is nothing but an illusion. We superimpose objective reality on things which are nothing but conceptual constructions of manas. (3) Inferential knowledge – All knowledge derived from inference is nothing but transcendental illusion. In the words of Dignāga himself “all the fabric of the empirical world, this inter-connected whole of substances and their attributes and the inferential knowledge founded upon it, is the conceptual activity of the manas, and does not adequately represent external reality. Hence, it is an transcendental illusion.” (4) Taimira jñāna – It is that knowledge which results from some defect in the sense-organ as the vision of everything as yellow.

It is obvious that in the theory of knowledge of these two thinkers, there are two different kinds of illusion, namely, intellectual illusion (bauddhikā bhrānti) and sensory illusion (indriya bhrānti). Understanding that is an

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12 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
13 “Sarva’yuṃ anumānaśūnyam-uyavakāra buddhyaruddhenaiva dharma dharmabhāvena na bhātya
14 C.L., Tripathi, The Problem of Knowledge in yogacara Buddhism, p. 63.
activity of the intellectual mind, causes the intellectual illusion. It is produced by misapprehension or misunderstanding of the intellectual mind, and disappears when an apprehension takes place. Sensory illusion, that is, perceptual illusion is caused by the defective sense organs, it disappears whenever the defect in sense organs has been removed.

Lastly, it should be noted here that Dignāga includes sataimira (defective sense organ) as pratyakṣābhāsā. Dharmakīrti and Jinendrabuddhi too recognise this and interpret it as such. Those who see the similarity between Dignāga and Vijnānavādins argue that the fact that Dignāga sees all illusions as mental constructions brings him close to the doctrine of Vijnānaptimatra (mere manifestation of consciousness).