

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CONCEPT OF PRAMANAS AS MEANS OF VALID KNOWLEDGE

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**ABSTRACT**

In the study of Indian philosophy and epistemology, *Pramana* refers to a valid means of knowledge. *Pramanas* are viewed as tools for attaining reliable and accurate cognition in both *Hindu* philosophy and the philosophy of *Buddhism*. The investigation into the means of knowledge arose out of a basic concern that human beings will achieve their goals in life only when they have a correct understanding of reality. Therefore, the systematic investigation of knowledge, its sources, how valid it is, and the scope of its validity, was regarded as necessity by ancient Indian thinkers. There are many philosophical traditions in ancient India that theorize about *Pramana* differently, with each attempting to justify their ethical and religious views. The various classical forms of *Pramanas* are *Pratyaksha*, *Anumana*, *Upamana* and *Shabda*, etc. These *Pramanas* can be used together to create a complete and thorough methodology for evaluating truth, and establishing reliable cognition, applying to understanding the nature of knowledge, regardless of philosophical perspective.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda*, *Pramana*, *Knowledge*, *Philosophy*, *Pratyaksha*, *Anumana*.**INTRODUCTION**

Ayurveda is an extremely old Indian way of healing and providing an understanding of health, disease and overall wellness. The principles of Ayurveda were developed from either an empirical standpoint or from philosophical investigation. The main schools of Indian philosophy include *Vaisheshika*, *Nyaya*, *Samkhya*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*. In order to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding the human body, health, disease, and treatment, Ayurveda developed many of its theories using the metaphysics and logic of these different systems of philosophical discourse.<sup>[1-4]</sup>

Ayurveda adopted concept of *Pramana* from *Nyaya*, which is the method for deriving valid and authentic knowledge. In terms of Ayurvedic healthcare, the term '*Pramana*' is understood as both a philosophical principle and a practical tool, or methods, for determining truth in relation to health, disease, diagnosis and treatment. The *Pramana* serves to guide the clinical reasoning process

within Ayurveda. The Ayurvedic *Samhita* presents four primary types of *Pramanas*; *Pratyaksha*, *Anumana*, *Aptopadesha* and *Yukti*.<sup>[4-6]</sup>

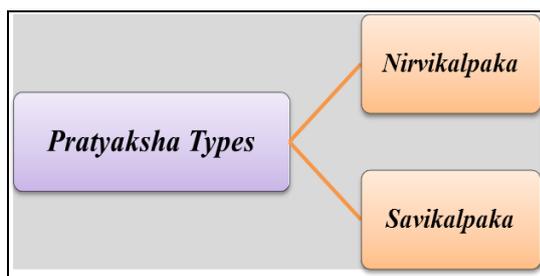
**Importance of *Pramana* in *Nyaya* Philosophy**

According to the philosophy of *Nyaya*, knowledge is not assumed or presumed to be true if it simply seems like it could possibly be correct; rather, it must have undergone more critical analysis in order for something to be identified as a valid output. This type of knowledge is called a "*Prama*," whereas a product of knowledge acquisition that does not meet this standard is referred to as "*Aprama*," which includes any type of mistaken perception or error of judgment that ultimately results in some sort of falsehood. *Nyaya's* definition of *Prama* therefore is related to its distinction between real knowledge and false impressions. *Nyaya* has developed a systematic method for testing the integrity of evidence to ensure that misinformation and other forms of non-rationally supported judgments will not hinder or prevent

people from acting in a manner that is fundamentally rational based upon their beliefs about reality. The various *Pramanas* in *Nyaya* philosophy are *Pratyaksha*, *Anumana*, *Upamana* and *Shabda* which are explained here in subsequent section.<sup>[5-7]</sup>

### Pratyaksha

According to the *Nyaya* school of philosophy, *Pratyaksha* or perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge and is therefore one of the major sources of knowledge. Perception is defined as the immediate awareness that results from the contact of the sense organs with an object which enables the perception of the object. The experience of Perception is the basis upon which all further reasoning and interpretation will take place. *Nyaya* divides perception into two primary categories as depicted in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1: Types of *Pratyaksha* (perception).**

*Nirvikalpaka* perception is the initial stage of awareness where a person becomes aware of an object but does not yet know what it is, therefore the object has not been categorized or named. As an example, someone could see a shape or colour but would not have any idea of what it is. *Savikalpaka* perception is the second stage of awareness, at which point the mind has organized the information from the senses to create a distinct concept about the object.<sup>[6-8]</sup>

Perception can also be described as *Bahya* and *Manasika*, *Bahya* perception is related to the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching through the sense organs; whereas, *Manasika* perception has to do with the mind being aware of its experience of various states, including pleasure, pain, desire, doubt, and memory.

*Pratyaksha* is a primary source of knowledge for the *Nyaya* which is acknowledged by the perception is not always accurate. *Nyaya* makes a valuable contribution to understanding the role of the mind as a critical intermediary for the process of perceiving. Systematic representation of perception exemplifies the depth and relevance of what we know today about the nature of knowledge in classical Indian epistemology.<sup>[7-9]</sup>

### Anumana

When observation not create knowledge the *Nyaya* school of thought moves towards *Anumana* or inference as a second valid way to know something. Inference

extends knowledge beyond immediate sensory experience, allowing individuals to recognize patterns between objects, see that they are related to one another, and draw logical conclusions based on these connections. Through rational reason, inference can take the individual from the known world that can be seen to the unknown world that cannot be directly seen. Inference is a type of reasoning that is not just used in philosophy, but also in scientific research, legal arguments, and day-to-day decision making. For this reason, inference is an extremely valuable cognitive tool for helping to further human understanding. This organizational model requires each syllogism to have all five parts defined so that the inference process is based on more than simply the individual's intuition; i.e., there are reasons for any conclusions reached through the inference process. The systematic and logical nature of *Nyaya's* treatment of inference represents an early form of reasoning. Its emphasis on structured logic not only produces argumentative reasoning that can persuade, but also facilitates establishing the actual occurrence of truth *via* a strict process of logical reasoning through investigation and analysis.<sup>[4-6]</sup>

### Upamana

*Upamana* represents a discrete category of logical thought and generates knowledge through the recognition of similarities between an object that is utilized as an exemplar and an object that is not utilized as an exemplar. Although *Upamana* is generally considered a subordinate source of knowledge compared to perception and inference, *Upamana* serves as a source of knowledge in expanding the individual's cognitive understanding of newly encountered objects or ideas. The person gained this knowledge through the process of comparison, which is called *Upamana*. Through *Upamana*, is able to pass from the known to unknown through the identification of similarities and differences by recognizing those that are functionally relevant. The similarity does not have to be superficial but, instead, functionally applicable. In modern cognitive theory, the process of making these types of analogies is referred to as analogical reasoning and prototype learning. *Upamana* is highly applicable in fields such as taxonomy, teaching/learning, linguistics and even the development of artificial intelligence.

### Shabda

In *Nyaya* epistemology, verbal testimony, or *Shabda*, is the fourth *Pramana*. *Shabda* is an accepted means of acquiring valid knowledge from a competent and reliable source. The source must be *Apta*; truthful, knowledgeable and unbiased in their statement in order for *Shabda* to be accepted as valid knowledge. *Apta* may come from an expert, teacher or a religious text/scripture. *Shabda* is fundamentally necessary for developing knowledge that cannot be known through direct perception or personal inference. It should be noted that *Nyaya* does not support blindly accepting testimony. Within the religious and ethical realms, where

many of the truths extend beyond the realm of sensory perception, *Shabda* has increasing relevance.<sup>[7-9]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The use of *Pramanas* in Ayurveda is not only theoretical but also basic to all aspects of clinical practice, research and teaching. Accurate diagnosis and assessment of a patient's condition cannot occur without properly performing physical examinations by using valid *Pramanas*. Rational and effective treatment cannot be provided until there is a proper understanding of both the disease and the patient's status. In this way, *Pramana Vigyana* is central to Ayurvedic practice. By using improper examination procedures or misinterpreting the findings of office examinations, it is possible to cause diagnostic errors and/or provide ineffective treatments. Because of this dependency on *Pramanas* for evaluating patients, Ayurvedic *Chikitsa* relies heavily on performing thorough evaluations according to the appropriate method of *Pramana*. Collectively, these tools for knowledge create a comprehensive, logical, and flexible medical framework for Ayurveda to support its traditions while adapting to meet current needs of society.

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