

## Study About Six Pramanas

**Dr. Surender Singh**, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy  
Govt., Ripudaman College Nabha Punjab

Any knowledge of even the existence of an object takes place in our minds. The mind becomes conscious of the various 'objects' by the various 'faculties' available to it. The very fact the mind has various faculties at its disposal shows that knowledge of different objects call for taking resort of different means. It is extremely important that we take resort to the right means, otherwise even the existence of that object will not be evident to us. These 'means of knowledge' are called Pramanas. Before we jump into the bandwagon of people who want to know 'all the different facets' of this beautiful blessing called life, it is extremely important that we first know which all faculties or rather means of knowledge are at our disposal.



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It is extremely important for us to understand each of these pramanas properly, so that we don't start using the wrong means to know a particular kind of object. This is specially so when we are inquisitive to know the Self, the Atman, which is the ultimate, transcendental, infinite, non-dual truth referred to as the Brahman in the Upanishads. Proper understanding of Pramanas not only facilitates channelising of our energy properly but also culminates in the attainment & fulfillment of the objective.

**1. Pratyaksha :** Pratyaksha or Perception implies direct, immediate cognition. There are two kinds of direct perception, external and internal. The 'external' perception implies cognition of sense objects, namely - sound, touch, form, taste and smell by our five sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose). When the sense organs contact their respective objects then the Pratyaksha knowledge takes place. The 'internal' perception means the direct & immediate cognition of pain, pleasure, love, hate, anger, knowledge or ignorance of various objects etc. in & by our minds. The Acharyas elaborately reveal that in any direct perception, the awareness existing at the level of mind of the person desirous to know an object, as though flows out through his respective sense organ and envelops the available & illumined object. This awareness is thereafter presented to the knower in the mind as a thought of the object, who then 'knows' the object. The entire process is extremely fast and implies the involvement of both the mind and the sense organs in all direct perception. Sitting in one place the knower knows even far off objects directly, provided they come in the range of our sense organs. The immediacy of direct cognition is the intrinsic characteristic of perceptual knowledge, and does not merely depend on the organs of perception.

**2. Anumana :** Literally translated the word anumana means ‘knowing after’. It means the method by which knowledge is derived from another knowledge. It is an indirect, mediate knowledge. We have knowledge of an invariable relationship between two things and on that basis while seeing one we deduce the presence the other. Thus anumana refers to the logical process of gaining knowledge. The knowledge thus gained is called inferential knowledge or the logical deduction. The nearest word to anumana is inference. We say it is nearest word simply because of a slight difference between the exact process of logical deduction in Eastern thought as compared to the Western system of logical deduction.

**3. Upamana :** The Mimamsakas & Advaitins define Upamana as the process by which the knowledge of A’s similarity to B is gained from the perception of B’s similarity to A, which has been seen elsewhere. This methodology is seen as distinct from mere inference, and is thus accepted as a valid mediate method of knowledge. For example, a person who has seen his cow at home goes to a forest and sees a gavaya (a wild cow but without dewlap). The person sees the similarity ‘This gavaya is like my cow’, and on this basis also concludes the opposite to be equally true, that ‘My cow is like this gavaya’. Thus by upamana he gains the knowledge of his cow’s similarity to the gavaya from the perception of the gavaya’s similarity to his cow.

**4. Arthapatti :** This means postulation, supposition or presumption of a fact. It is a distinct valid method of mediate knowledge. It is in fact a method of assumption of an unknown fact in order to account for a known fact that is otherwise inexplicable. The classic example of this method of knowledge is a fat person A says that he never eats in the day, then we can easily postulate that he eats in the night, for the simple reason that without this assumption his fatness & also his getting fatter cannot be explained. Arthapatti can either be from what is seen or from what is heard. The use of this method in Vedanta is in assuming rightly the implications of Upanishadic statements. Like in the statement ‘The knower of Self transcends grief’. Here we see that merely knowledge destroys grief, then it can be assumed without any doubt, that all grief has to be false then alone it can be destroyed merely by knowledge. So this is assumption.

**5. Anupalabdhi :** The Advaitins and the Mimasaka school of Kumarila Bhatt believe Anupalabdhi to be a separate independent pramana. It literally means non-apprehension. Non-existence of a thing is apprehended by its non-perception. By not seeing a jar in a place one knows that it is not there. We use this method of knowledge also very often, and this is evident from statements like : ‘There is no teacher in the class-room’, ‘There is no sound here’, ‘This flower has no fragrance’ etc. It may seem paradoxical that non-apprehension of a thing is a means to the apprehension of its non-existence (abhava). But in fact both non-perception as well as perception serve as a means to get various knowledge, for the simple reason that the knower is conscious of both.

**6. Sabda :** Sabda pramana is verbal testimony. It is also called ‘apta-vakyas’ (statement of a trust-worthy person’, and agama (authentic word). A verbal statement, uttered or written, is man’s most potent instrument for transmitting knowledge. We learn mostly by means of words. An oral or written message is a universal mode of communication. We constantly get various information, direction & knowledge through words. Right from school days to this moment we use words as a valid & effective means of bringing about awareness of things, ideas or emotions. Books, magazines, newspaper, letters, conversations, chats, radio, TV, movies, songs etc. etc. All use or depend on words. We cannot do without verbal testimony.

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