

Sūtra 7

प्रत्यक्षानुमानागमाः प्रमाणानि ॥७॥

Pratyakṣh-ānumān-āgamāḥ pramāṇāni

The three categories of valid proof are direct perception, inference, and scriptural testimony.

प्रत्यक्ष	<i>pratyakṣha</i>	direct perception
अनुमान	<i>anumāna</i>	inference
आगमा	<i>āgamā</i>	scriptural testimony, revealed authority
प्रमाणानि	<i>pramāṇāni</i>	valid proof

The yoga system accepts only three kinds of *pramāṇa* (valid proof):

1. *Pratyakṣha pramāṇa* (valid proof by direct perception)
2. *Anumāna pramāṇa* (valid proof by inference)
3. *Āgama pramāṇa* (valid proof by scriptural testimony or revealed authority).

Before understanding this concept of *pramāṇa* (valid proof), it is first necessary to understand how cognition occurs in the mind. The ability to perceive an object in the mind field is possible because the *puruṣha* (pure consciousness principle) pervades the *prakṛiti* (matter principle). It is *puruṣha*, through its influence on *prakṛiti*, that transmits to the mind the ability to cognize.

Sāṃkhya philosophy proposes that when the consciousness principle (*puruṣha*) comes within proximity of the matter principle (*prakṛiti*), the universal sense of being, the “I-sense” (*asmitā*), arises. *Puruṣha* is not a creator, even though this “I-sense,” which is the source of all creation, arises from the reflection of *puruṣha* on *prakṛiti*.

For an individual, the energy of consciousness (*chiti śhakti*) illumines the mind (*chitta*) and creates the individualized field of consciousness, which is the ability to cognize and experience.

Perception requires both a subject and object, or self and other. For this to happen, the universal “I-sense” becomes individualized, and the sense of separate identity (*ahaṁkāra*) is formed. *Ahaṁkāra* (“I amness”), operating in conjunction with *buddhi* (faculty of discrimination), is the subjective aspect of all experience, also known as *grahītri* (the experiencer).

The *grahaṇa* (instruments of experience) are the five sense organs: nose, tongue, eyes, skin, and ears. The *grāhya* (objects of experience) are the five *tanmātras* (subtle elements): odor, taste, form, touch, and sound. *Grahaṇa* and *grāhya* together provide the *grahītri* (experiencer) with the capacity to experience and grasp a material object.

Grahaṇa (instruments) and *grāhya* (objects) have the same root cause. They both issue from *ahaṁkāra* (“I-sense”), and hence they have the power to attract each other. A valid experience occurs when the senses are in the proximity of objects. The senses cause the mind to become absorbed by the *tamas*

guṇa (quality of inertia or solidity) inherent in those objects. Immediately, *sattva guṇa* (quality of purity or perception) arises in the mind to oppose that *tamas guṇa*, and knowledge of the object occurs.

This process of the mind becoming absorbed in the *tamas* of the object, followed by the opposition of *sattva*, which gives knowledge of the object, is called direct experience. *Sattva*, however, cannot arise by itself; it needs the reflection of *chiti śhakti* (light of consciousness) in the mind.

An example is the visual perception of a pitcher. When the light of the eye sense comes within the proximity of a pitcher, the light of the eye falls on the pitcher. The mind, through the eye sense, takes the form of the pitcher (*tamas*). *Chiti śhakti* (the light of consciousness) reflects in *buddhi* (the discriminative intellect) from within, and knowledge appears as, “I am seeing the pitcher.”

All knowledge is a transformation of *ahamkāra* (separate “I amness”), which relates in terms of “I” and “mine.” In the terms of the *sūtra*, this modification is a representation that accurately corresponds to the object received by either *pratyakṣha* (direct perception), *anumāna* (inference), or *āgama* (testimony); it is truth-bearing and it is considered *pramāṇa* (valid proof).

Pramāṇa (valid proof). The word *pramāṇa* comes from the root, *pramā*. *Pramā* means accurate perception of a state, condition, fact, or object. *Pramāṇa* is that modification of the mind field that creates *pramā* (accurate perception). *Pramā* is a mental perception and *pramāṇa* is the transformation of the mind that creates that perception. Therefore *pramāṇa* is an instrument for achieving the accurate perception (*pramā*) because the accuracy of the mental perception has been verified by direct sense evidence, correct inference, or reliable testimony.

In *pramāṇa* there is a true correspondence between the external object and the mental object. *Pramāṇa* and recollection are different. In recollection a feeling of an object that was felt before repeats. In *pramāṇa* an accurate perception of something not known before is realized.

Pratyakṣha pramāṇa (valid proof through direct perception). *Pratyakṣha pramāṇa* occurs when the senses contact an outer object and accurately present the information to the mind field, causing a *vr̥tti* (modification) to be produced in the mind field. This modification is called *pratyakṣha* (direct perception), which is a *pramāṇa* (valid proof) of the experience of objective reality.

In *pratyakṣha* (direct perception), the specific object is cognized. Take, for example, the experience, “I see a deer.” An object of experience has two aspects: *sāmānya* (universal, generic, general) and *viśeṣha* (particular, specific, individual, *artha*).

In direct perception with valid proof, the five sense organs and the mind attain sensation and knowledge of an object with its specific characteristics (*viśeṣha*). Vyāsa states, “It [*pratyakṣha*] determines primarily the specific in

a matter that consists of the general and the specific.” In the example above, the *pratyakṣha*, the deer, would give knowledge of its *sāmānya* (general classification of species), as well as knowledge of its *viśeṣha* (particular color, size, and state of being).

Anumāna pramāṇa (valid proof through inference). Inference is the *vṛitti* that primarily determines the *sāmānya* (general characteristics). In *pratyakṣha* (direct perception) the senses perceive a specific object; but in *anumāna* (inference) the senses infer rather than directly perceive.

For example, fire is inferred by seeing smoke. There is a correlation between fire and smoke. The modification that takes place in the mind field by this inferential proof is called *anumāna vṛitti* (inferential *vṛitti*). Correct knowledge is attained by establishing the relationship between the mark and the object; as the fire is inferred by its mark, the rising smoke.

Āgama pramāṇa (valid proof through testimony). *Āgama pramāṇa* (scriptural testimony) is the knowledge transferred by means of the words of an *āpta* (accomplished person). All of the scriptures were originally taught by such persons who had full insight into each of the *tattvas* (principles of nature). That is why the scriptures are called *āgama*. For *āgama* to be a valid proof, there must be a listener to whom the knowledge is transferred.

Āgama comes from the verb, *gama*, which means “to go,” or “to perceive.” *Āgama* literally means “to cause to come near.” So the hearer of *āgama pramāṇa* (scriptural testimony) is caused to come near to true knowledge through the words revealed by the *āpta*.

The knowledge received through *āgama pramāṇa* is general (*sāmānya*). It is accepted as true because of the hearer’s faith in the *āpta* (accomplished person) and in the source of the scripture. This transformation, which occurs in the mind upon hearing the scripture, is considered testimonial proof. Later, through practice, this truth is verified by direct perception.

Samprajñāta samādhi (super-conscious trance with higher knowledge).

Ordinary observation of outer objects is *loka pratyakṣha*. In normal consciousness the three kinds of *pramāṇa* (valid proof) operate together. For example, we perceive a pitcher (*pratyakṣha*), we infer its use (*anumāna*), and we attribute qualities to it based upon what we have heard in the past (*āgama*). Furthermore our individuality establishes a relationship to the object, “I am seeing the pitcher.”

In the process of normal direct perception (one type of *pratyakṣha*), three ideas function together: “I”, “the pitcher,” and “seeing.” However, in the absorption of meditation, when only the pitcher is seen, it is felt that only it exists, and the seer, the act of seeing, and the object seen are felt to be one. A direct knowledge (another type of *pratyakṣha*), outside of any personal, individual relationship to that object is achieved. This is a state of *samprajñāta samādhi* (super-conscious trance accompanied by higher knowledge).

As absorption in the object deepens, the general characteristics of the object (*sāmānya*), which were gained by *anumāna* (inference) and *āgama* (testimony), drop away and the *artha* (form of the object) alone is perceived.

When the mind goes deeper in *samprajñāta samādhi*, it is no longer dependent on an external object; it is purified and clear (*buddhi sattva*). When external objects drop completely out of the mind, the reflection of pure consciousness (*chiti śhakti*) is identified. This is true direct perception (*pratyakṣha*) and is the root of all other proofs. This kind of direct perception is *yogi pratyakṣha*.