

## Sūtra 8 विपर्ययो मिथ्याज्ञानमतद्रूपप्रतिष्ठम् ॥८॥

Viparyayo mithyā-jñānam-atad-rūpa-pratiṣṭham

**Wrong knowledge is a false conception of an object, the real form of which does not correspond to the form established in the mind.**

विपर्यय	<i>viparyaya</i>	false conception
मिथ्या ज्ञानम्	<i>mithyā jñānam</i>	wrong knowledge
अतद् रूप	<i>atad rūpa</i>	not its own form
प्रतिष्ठम्	<i>pratiṣṭham</i>	established, based

Sūtra 7 discussed the category of thought waves called *pramāṇa* (valid proof). In that *sūtra* it was explained that in valid proof there is a true correspondence between the external object and the mental object. Sūtra 8 discusses the category of thought waves called *viparyaya vṛitti* (false perception).

*Viparyaya* (false conception) gives *mithyā jñānam* (wrong knowledge) of an object. *Viparyaya* is conception based on an erroneous perception that does not correspond to the real form of an object established in the mind (*atadrūpa pratiṣṭham*). A good example of *viparyaya* is a mirage in a desert. In a mirage, water is perceived, but it is not real water; it is only convection currents rising from desert sand. This false conception that gives wrong knowledge of an object is called *viparyaya*.

According to Sāṃkhya philosophy, the original nature of the universe is an unmanifest state of *prakṛiti* (nature or matter principle) in which the *guṇas* (qualities) are in equilibrium. Once this equilibrium is disturbed, the universe becomes manifest. At this point, the universe is simply an eternally changing, unbalanced state of the *guṇas*. From this ultimate perspective, our cognition of the universe, which is an alteration of the true, unmanifest *prakṛiti*, is thus considered *viparyaya vṛitti* (false knowledge).

All forms of *mithyā jñānam* (wrong knowledge) are included in the category of *viparyaya vṛitti*. This wrong knowledge has five divisions:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Avidyā* (nescience, ignorance) also known as *tamas* (darkness)
2. *Asmitā* ("I-amness," egoism) also known as *moha* (stupor)
3. *Rāga* (attraction) also known as *mahāmoha* (great stupor)
4. *Dveṣha* (aversion) also known as *tāmisra* (nocturnal)
5. *Abhiniveśha* (fear of death) also known as *andhatāmisra* (blind nocturnal).

*Viparyaya* is a *vṛitti* that is a false perception of any object by the senses. *Mithyā jñānam* (wrong knowledge) is its symptom and *atadrūpa pratiṣṭham* (non-establishment in its own form) is its cause. In other words, when the

1 See Sāṃkhya Kārikā 48

object perceived is not established in its own form, wrong knowledge of the object results, and false conception is created.

*Viparyaya jñāna* (incorrect cognition) is based on a form falsely perceived by the senses. If the perception of an object is false, then it will bring wrong knowledge of the object. *Viparyaya vṛitti* also includes doubt, as doubtful knowledge is also based on the faulty perception of an object by the senses. When the mind cannot decide if what it is perceiving by direct cognition is a valid proof of the reality of an object, doubt arises, and the mind alternates between conclusions.

The classic example of this *viparyaya vṛitti* is when a rope is lying on the path and the perceiver cannot decide if it is a rope or a snake. If the object is not perceived the same way at all times then it is false conception (*viparyaya*). In direct cognition (*pratyakṣha*) all the senses involved in cognition confirm that the reality of the object is the same at all times. The mistaken conception that a rope is a snake, for example, is corrected by direct perception when one goes close to the “snake,” tests it, and discovers that it is a rope.

In Sūtra 6, Patañjali listed the five types of *vṛittis*: *pramāṇa* (valid proof), *viparyaya* (false perception), *vikalpa* (imaginary cognition), *nidrā* (sleep), and *smṛiti* (memory). The difference between *viparyaya* (false perception) and *vikalpa* (imaginary cognition) is in the object. Although there is *mithyā jñānam* (wrong knowledge due to an object not being established in its own form) in both types of *vṛitti*, in *viparyaya* (false perception) there is wrong knowledge of a perceived object, whereas in *vikalpa* (imaginary cognition) there is no corresponding object.

An example of *viparyaya* is when a rope is seen as a snake. In contrast, *vikalpa* (imaginary cognition) is based on a verbal concept that has no corresponding perceived object. The classic example of *vikalpa* is the mental construct of the “horn of a hare.” This is an example of *vikalpa* (imaginary cognition) rather than *viparyaya* (false perception) because such a creature, a rabbit with horns, is unknown in this creation.