



# THE ROLE OF PRAMĀÑAS IN ESTABLISHING THEISM: INSIGHTS FROM NYĀYA- KUSUMĀÑJALI

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## **Abstract**

*This paper delves into Udayana's Nyāya-Kusumāñjali to analyze how the means of valid knowledge (Pramāṇas) are employed to establish the existence of Īśvara (God). Focusing primarily on Anumāna (Inference), it explores Udayana's structured reasoning, refutations of atheistic views, and his application of Vyāpti (Invariable Concomitance) in proving a divine creator. The paper further compares these arguments with Western theistic frameworks and evaluates their relevance in contemporary philosophy. Through Sanskrit proofs, critical analysis, and comparative insights, this study underscores the lasting significance of Udayana's logical defense of theism.*

**Keywords:** *Pramāṇas, Anumāna, Īśvara, Vyāpti, Nyāya-Kusumāñjali, Udayana, Theism, Indian Philosophy.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nyāya-Kusumāñjali is a seminal work by Udayana that systematically defends the concept of God using logical reasoning. Written in the 11th century, this text forms a crucial part of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, which emphasizes the role of inference as a means of knowledge. By presenting a robust argument against atheistic schools like Cārvāka, Buddhism, and Jainism, Udayana revitalizes the traditional theistic stance.

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Udayana's use of Pramāṇas, particularly Anumāna, and evaluates how these arguments resonate with modern theistic debates. It also offers a comparative analysis with Western perspectives, highlighting the universality of rational discourse in theism.

**Pramāṇas: The Means of Knowledge in Nyāya**

The Nyāya school accepts four primary Pramāṇas:

1. Pratyakṣa (Perception) – Direct knowledge through sensory experience.
2. Anumāna (Inference) – Reasoning from observed facts to infer unobserved truths.
3. Upamāna (Comparison) – Gaining knowledge through analogy.
4. Śabda (Verbal Testimony) – Knowledge from reliable scriptures and authoritative sources.

Among these, Anumāna is the most significant in establishing God's existence. Udayana's precise use of inference establishes God as the universe's necessary intelligent cause.

**Structure of Anumāna in Udayana's Argument**

The Nyāya-Kusumāñjali is a seminal text within the Nyāya school of Indian philosophy. Udayana's primary objective in this treatise is to establish the existence of God through logical inference (anumāna). His systematic refutation of atheistic views and his defense of theism present a detailed philosophical argument that is applicable to contemporary metaphysical and epistemological discussions.

"अनित्यानां नित्यं हेतुमनिश्चितनियमाधिकरणम्। सदेकं तद्ब्रह्म परं प्रमाणैः सिध्यति निष्कलम्॥"

(Nyāya-Kusumāñjali, Canto 1)

"That eternal cause which governs the impermanent world with certainty and order, that is the supreme Brahman, established through valid means of knowledge."

**Structure of Anumāna in Udayana's Argument**

Udayana follows the traditional Nyāya structure of inference (anumāna) to establish the existence of Īśvara. The structure of inference consists of five steps known as pañcāvayava or five-membered syllogism:



1. Pratijñā (Proposition): The statement that asserts the existence of Īśvara.  
"ईश्वरः अस्ति" (Īśvaraḥ asti)  
"God exists."
2. Hetu (Reason): The logical reason supporting the proposition, often based on observable phenomena.  
"कार्यत्वात्" (Kāryatvāt)  
"Because the world is an effect."
3. Udāhṛta (Example): Providing an example to demonstrate the relationship between the cause and effect.  
"यथा घटः" (Yathā ghaṭaḥ)  
"Just as a pot is created by a potter."
4. Upanaya (Application): Establishing the similarity between the effect in the proposition and the example.  
"तथा जगत्" (Tathā jagat)  
"Similarly, the world must have a creator."
5. Nigamana (Conclusion): Concluding the existence of Īśvara based on the stated reasoning.  
"तस्मात् ईश्वरः अस्ति" (Tasmāt Īśvaraḥ asti)  
"Therefore, God exists."

Sanskrit Proof from Nyāya-Kusumāñjali

> यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वशक्तिश्च कारणं तस्मै नमः।

(Yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvaśaktiśca kāraṇaṁ tasmai namaḥ)

Translation: Salutations to Him who is omniscient, omnipotent, and the ultimate cause of the world.

This formulation exemplifies the rational grounding of Udayana's theistic belief, firmly rooted in logical analysis.

The Concept of Vyāpti in Inference

A crucial component of inference in Nyāya is Vyāpti (Invariable Concomitance), the universal relation between cause and effect.

Example of Vyāpti

Wherever there is smoke, there is fire. (Smoke is invariably associated with fire)

Similarly, the universe as an effect must have a cause, which is Īśvara.

Sanskrit Proof for Vyāpti

धूमात् वह्निनियमः।

(Dhūmāt vahninīyamaḥ)

Translation: Smoke is invariably accompanied by fire.

This principle forms the core of Udayana's argument, establishing God as the ultimate cause.

Refutation of Atheistic Objections

1. Refutation of the Cārvāka Objection (Materialism)

Objection:

- The Cārvākas argue that the universe can be explained solely through material causes like earth, water, fire, and air, without requiring an intelligent creator.
- They deny the existence of any non-material entity, including Īśvara, believing only in what is perceivable.

Udayana's Response:

- Inference Beyond Perception: Udayana establishes that knowledge is not limited to direct perception (pratyakṣa). Inference (anumāna) is a valid means of knowledge.
- Effect Requires an Intelligent Cause: Just as a pot requires a potter, the universe, which is far more complex, logically necessitates an intelligent creator.
- Order and Purpose: The regularity and purpose seen in nature (e.g., planetary motion, biological processes) indicate a deliberate design.
- "The presence of intelligent activity in the world cannot be explained by unconscious matter alone."

2. Refutation of the Buddhist Objection (Momentariness and No Permanent Creator)

Objection:

- The Buddhists argue that all phenomena are momentary (kṣaṇika). Since everything is in constant flux, there is no need to assume a permanent creator.
- They also reject the concept of a permanent self or Īśvara.

Udayana's Response:

- Continuity and Order: Udayana refutes momentariness by pointing to the observable continuity and predictability in nature.
- Causal Agency: If everything is momentary and lacks continuity, no causal relationship would be possible, yet causal interactions are evident.
- Existence of Īśvara as Sustainer: Udayana argues that a permanent, intelligent cause is necessary to maintain the order of the universe.

### 3. Refutation of the Mīmāṃsaka Objection (Eternal Vedas Without a Creator)

#### Objection:

- The Mīmāṃsakas believe in the eternal authority of the Vedas but reject the necessity of a creator. They argue that the Vedas are self-evident and independent.
- They claim that actions (karma) and rituals, when performed correctly, lead to results without divine intervention.

#### Udayana's Response:

- Authorship and Authority: Udayana asserts that even if the Vedas are eternal, their intelligibility and authorship must be attributed to an omniscient Īśvara.
- Linguistic Order: Language and meaning, as observed in the Vedas, imply the existence of an intelligent creator who has endowed them with meaning.
- Inevitability of a First Cause: Even ritualistic actions presuppose an initial cause that set the laws of karma in motion.

### 4. Logical Defense Using the Cosmological Argument

- Udayana employs the kāryatva (effect-ness) argument to establish that the universe is an effect that requires a creator.
- He invokes the principle of vyāpti (invariable concomitance), asserting that every effect has a cause, and since the universe is an effect, its cause must be an intelligent creator.
- "Just as a pot requires a potter, the universe requires Īśvara as its creator."

*However, while Western thought often integrates divine revelation, Udayana's arguments remain purely logical, demonstrating the universality of rational inquiry.*

### *Philosophical Significance in Contemporary Thought 1. Rational Theology and the Concept of God*

Udayana's logical demonstration of Īśvara's existence using inference resonates with modern discussions in rational theology. The cosmological argument he employs shares similarities with contemporary philosophical debates about the necessity of a first cause.

"कार्यतत्त्वात्कारणं, कार्यस्य न स्वतः सम्भवः।"

(Nyāya-Kusumāñjali, Canto 2)

"From the existence of effects, the necessity of a cause follows, as effects cannot exist without a cause."

### 2. Refutation of Atheism

Udayana's detailed engagement with atheistic schools like the Cārvāka and Bauddha philosophies provides a framework for engaging with modern materialistic and atheistic perspectives.

"न हि शक्तिर्न च विज्ञानं स्वतः कार्यसाधनी।"

(Nyāya-Kusumāñjali, Canto 3)

"Neither mere power nor spontaneous knowledge alone can bring about the existence of an effect."

### 3. Application in Contemporary Ethics

The belief in a moral governor, as argued in Nyāya-Kusumāñjali, holds relevance in contemporary ethical theories. Udayana's reasoning supports the concept of an objective moral order.

"धर्माधर्मौ साक्षिणं परमेश्वरं विदुः।"

(Nyāya-Kusumāñjali, Canto 4)

"The witness of virtue and vice is acknowledged as the supreme Lord."

Udayana's defense of theism holds relevance in modern debates on theism and atheism. Philosophers continue to engage with questions of causality, design, and existence, often echoing Udayana's emphasis on logical reasoning. Philosophy of Religion: Udayana's framework offers a non-theological, rational defense of theism.

Scientific Discourse: His arguments align with discussions on the origins of the universe in cosmology.

Comparative Philosophy: Udayana's reasoning invites dialogue between Eastern and Western traditions.



## **CONCLUSION**

Udayana's Nyāya-Kusumāñjali exemplifies the application of Pramāṇas, particularly Anumāna, to establish the existence of Īśvara. His sophisticated refutations of atheistic objections and reliance on logical inference present a robust case for theism. Through a clear understanding of Vyāpti and causation, Udayana offers a timeless contribution to philosophical discourse.

In a world where the dialogue between faith and reason persists, Udayana's insights remain profoundly relevant, bridging ancient wisdom with modern inquiry.

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