

## The Concept of *Pramātā* According to the *Nyāya* and the *Advaita Vedānta*: A Critical Study

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### Abstract

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All our successful action depend on valid cognition (*pramā*). The valid cognition is attained from valid instrument of cognition (*pramāṇa*). We can cognize an object (*prameya*) with a valid instrument. All these are done in which agent remains in the center. An agent can validly cognize an object by *pramāṇa*. But the question is - who is considered as an agent or *pramātā*? Etymologically, *pramātā* means the locus of *pramāṇāna* or the person who has the *pramāṇāna*. However, 'the locus of *pramāṇāna*' is not the only feature of *pramātā*. *Pramātā* should be conscious. The statement 'someone possesses cognition but he is unconscious' is a contradictory proposition. Most of the Indian philosophical schools accept that mind, sense-organ and object are not conscious. According to them, *ātmā* (self) is the only conscious being. For this reason, *ātmā* should be the *pramātā*. Naiyāyikas accept this notion. According to them, cognition remains in self. Cognition is the accidental quality of self. However, Advaita Vedāntins do not accept pure self as *pramātā*. According to them, cognition cannot remain in self by inherence relation. Moreover, if impermanent cognition becomes the quality of self, then self cannot be eternal. Advaita Vedāntins think that self which is limited by *antaḥkaraṇa* (internal organ) is taken as *pramātā*. But, how can it be possible? To find the actual nature of *pramātā*, we have presented the arguments of the Naiyāyikas and Advaita Vedāntins regarding *pramātā* in this paper, and try to understand the nature of the *pramātā*.

**Keywords:** *pramātā*, *pramā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya*, *svatantra*, *kartā*, *karaṇa*, *kāraka*, *ātmā*, *antaḥkaraṇa*, *pratibimbavāda*, *sense-organ*

‘*Mānādhīna meyasiddhi*’ is a generally accepted rule in Indian philosophy. According to this rule, reality depends on the method of cognition. If our cognition of an object arises from a proper way then we can be sure about the existence of that object. Otherwise, we cannot be sure about the existence of it. In general, sometimes the objects of our surroundings become the object of doubt. In this situation, our successful activities regarding these objects give us the certainty of its reality. Just as I feel thirsty and I have heard that water is in the refrigerator. Now if I find water at that place then my activity will become successful. From this successful activity, we realize that the water really exists there. This successful activity is possible if the cognition arises from a proper method of cognition. According to Indian philosophical terminology, this valid method of cognition is called ‘*pramāṇa*’. However, the term ‘*pramāṇa*’ does not only mean valid means of cognition but also it means valid cognition or *pramā*. Though, generally we use the term ‘*pramāṇa*’ to refer valid means of cognition and the term ‘*pramā*’ refers to the valid cognition. *Pramāṇa* produces *pramāṅjñāna* of an object. This object of *pramā* is termed as ‘*prameya*’. These concepts of *pramā*, *pramāṇa* and *prameya* are interrelated. Besides these three, one more concept is there. This is called ‘*pramātā*’. In Indian epistemology, *pramātā* is a very crucial concept. *Pramātā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and *pramā* – these are the main four pillars of epistemology. However, among these epistemological concepts *pramātā* has a special significance, because other three depend on *pramātā*. Though, depending on *pramāṇa* an agent will be the *pramātā*. Otherwise, an agent cannot cognize the real nature of objects and can never be the *pramātā*. However, in another sense, if *pramātā* does not exist then other three concepts will not be existed. Therefore, we can say that in epistemology *pramāṇa* is superior to *pramātā* but ontologically *pramātā* is superior to *pramāṇa*. Uddyotakara in his *Nyāyavārttika* stated the relation between *pramāṇa* and *pramātā* in order to establish the superiority of the *pramāṇa*. He said that, “*pramātā tatrāntarīyakatvāt. na hi pramātāramantareṅā pramāṅnam sambhavati*”<sup>1</sup>. It means, *pramāṇa* and *pramātā* are necessarily related because *pramāṇa* is not possible without *pramātā*.

Etymologically the word ‘*pramātā*’ means one who has the *pramāṅjñāna* (valid cognition). In this sense, *pramātā* is the locus of valid cognition. Just like, *jñātā* means the locus of cognition or we can say that *jñātā* is someone who has the cognition. However, the concept of *pramātā* is not only characterized as the ‘locus of *pramā*’ but also there have some other concepts related to it. As an agent, *pramātā* should have free will. Moreover, *pramātā* should be a conscious agent. As we differentiate conscious and unconscious being by cognition, so, generally, an unconscious object is not accepted as *pramātā*. If we observe an entity that has cognition then it is taken as conscious being. Otherwise, we take it as unconscious. Actually, having cognition or consciousness is the same thing. If

we say, someone has cognition but he is not conscious then our proposition will be contradictory. However, the question is, how will a conscious being be the *pramātā*? According to Indian Philosophy, most of the Schools accept that *ātmā* (self) alone is conscious. Following this, as a conscious object *ātmā* should be a *pramātā*. This *ātmā* according to some Indian philosophical schools is taken as eternal (*nitya*). Now, if *ātmā* is accepted as a *pramātā* then how can it be *nitya*? To overcome this objection it may be accepted that, mind is the *pramātā*. However, if mind is taken as *pramātā* then the question is, how can an unconscious object be the *pramātā*? Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Advaita Vedānta and other Indian Philosophical schools accept mind as unconscious. To find out the answers to these afore-mentioned questions regarding *pramātā* we shall go to discuss the notion of *pramātā* according to the Nyāya and the Advaita Vedānta in this paper, and try to evaluate their theories.

In the field of Indian epistemological discussion, Naiyāyikas play an important role. We find brief discussion about *pramā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and *pramātā* in Nyāya philosophy. ‘*Pramāṇa*’ is the first *padārtha* mentioned by Mahārṣi Gautama in his *Nyāya-Sūtra*. The validity of cognition depends on *pramāṇa*. Moreover, by *pramāṇa* we determine our duty. Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya, the founder of Navya-Nyāya, wrote the text *Tattvacintāmaṇi* regarding this *pramāṇa*. As we previously mentioned, *pramāṇa* is the key concept which is related to *pramā*, *prameya*, *pramātā*. Mahārṣi Gautama discussed about four types of *pramāṇa*, its results (*pramā*) and objects of our valid cognition (*prameya*). In the discussion of *prameya padārtha* he mentions *ātmā* as the locus of the qualities like desire, aversion, cognition etc.. However, he did not mention *ātmā* as *pramātā*. Moreover, he did not mention the definition of *pramātā* in his *Nyāya-Sūtra*. For the first time we find the definition of *pramātā* in the *Nyāya-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* of Vātsyāyana. He defines *pramātā* as –

“*tatra yasyepsājihāsāprayuktasya pravṛttiḥ, sa pramātā*”<sup>2</sup>

It means the person who is led to activity, being driven by the desire to seek or avoid the object, is called *pramātā*. By this definition, we know that desire and motivation are the qualities of *pramātā*. *Pramātā* is motivated by desire to perform an action. Therefore, *pramātā* is the *kartā* or doer. *Kartṛtva* is a character of *pramātā*. In Indian Philosophical system, we find that Sanskrit grammatical concepts make an impression on philosophical notions. Just as, ‘who is *pramātā*?’ – is a philosophical question. Now, if anyone tries to define *pramātā* with the help of its characteristic feature *kartṛtva* then it is necessary to explain who the *kartā* is. *Kartā* considered as *kartṛ-kāraka* according to Sanskrit grammar. In *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Pāṇini defines *kartā* as – “*svatantraḥ karttā*”<sup>3</sup>. It means a person who has independentness is *kartā*. *Kartā* has the free will to do some action. He is free to fulfill his needs by acquiring or avoiding an object. This is

the independentness of *kartā*. Now the philosopher, who wants to define *pramātā* with its feature *kartr̥tva*, definitely uses the feature ‘independentness’ to define *pramātā*. Just as, Uddyotakara in his *Nyāyavārttika* defines *pramātā* as –

“*pramātā svatantraḥ*”<sup>4</sup>

It means *pramātā* is *svatantra* or independent. This independentness belongs to *kartā* according to grammatical definition. A *pramātā* cognizes a specific object with a *pramāṇa* and then the *pramātā* has the independence to decide to grab or avoid that object. However, *pramātā* does not have independence to cognize an object. In a specific situation, where all conditions are there to perceive an object, perception automatically occurs without depending on *pramātā*. Otherwise, we shall be abstained from the cognition which will produce sadness. For example, we do not want to hear the news of death of our close relative. But we cannot abstain from it. Therefore, the question is, what exactly mean by the word ‘*svatantra*’ and from which *pramātā* will be ‘*svatantra*’?<sup>5</sup> To clarify the meaning of ‘*svatantratā*’, Uddyotakara mentioned three senses of the word ‘*svatantra*’. At first, Uddyotakara in his *Nyāyavārttika* says, ‘*svatantra*’ means –

“*kāarakaphalopavoktr̥tvaṁ, yasmāt kāarakāṇām phalenāyamabhisamvadhyate*”<sup>6</sup>

It means, only *kartā* is the consumer of the result that conjointly produced by different *kāarakas*. Those who are related to an action are called ‘*kāaraka*’. Six types of *kāaraka* have been mentioned in Sanskrit grammar. Besides *kartr̥*, *kāarakas* are *karma* (what the *kartā* most desired), *karāṇa* (the most efficient means), *sampradāna* (whom one aims to help by the action), *apādāna* (the meaning of root *bhī* or *trā*), *adhikāraṇa* (the locus of action). Grammatically, related to the action, these *kāarakas* conjointly produce result. Actually, when we express the procedure of an action in a sentence, the causes from which the action are produced, are categorized as different *kāarakas*. However, among them except *kartā* or *kartr̥*, other *kāarakas* are not the enjoyer of result. For example, Devadatta boiled rice with the help of a pot, fire etc. In this case, rice, fire, pot and even Devadatta (as *kartā*) are taken as *kāaraka* of this action ‘boiling rice’. Among these, by boiling rice only Devadatta as *kartā* can fulfill his appetite. Therefore, Devadatta is the enjoyer of the result. Result is produced to fulfill the need of *kartā*. This is the *svatantratā* of *kartā* or *pramātā*. Following this we can say that, independent consumer is *pramātā*.

In this regard, Vācaspati Miśra mentions another character of *pramātā* by analyzing this sense of ‘*svatantra*’. He states that *pramātā* is not determined by the features like desire etc. Moreover, independentness is not also the defining character of *pramātā*. Rather *pramātā* is determined only by the concept of *pramā*. Then what is the function of the character ‘*svatantratā*’ mentioned by Uddyotakara. Vācaspati Miśra has shown a different utility of the use of the term

‘svatantratā’ as the sense of independent consumer. He asked as an opponent, whether the feature ‘svatantratā’ resides in *pramātā* before *pramā* occurred or after occurring *pramājñāna*? According to Vācaspati Mīśra, by pointing out the feature ‘svatantratā’ Uddyotakara tries to solve this problem. As previously mentioned *pramātā* is ‘svatantra’ which means that *pramātā* is the consumer of result. A *pramātā* cannot enjoy the result of *pramāṇa* until the *pramājñāna* occurs. Following this Vācaspati Mīśra concludes that conceptually *pramātā* is *a-posteriori* to *pramā*.<sup>7</sup> For example, Devadatta cooks rice. In this case, Devadatta does not fill his appetite since rice is not cooked. He can eat after the rice is cooked (result occurred). Therefore, no one can be a consumer before the result is occurred. This is determined by the character ‘independentness’. However, ‘svatantratā’ does not only mean the independent consumer. Uddyotakara mentioned another sense of ‘svatantratā’ as –

“*tatsamavāyo vā, yadvāśeṣakāraṇaṣpadhyāyāḥ kriyāyāḥ puruṣa āśrayo bhavati*”<sup>8</sup>

It means, *kartā* is the locus of the *kriyā* that is produced by *kāraṇas*. This locusness or inherentness is the *svatantratā* of *kartā*. According to the Nyāya, quality and action belong to substance. There *kartā* is *ātmā*. For this reason, action inherently belongs to *ātmā*. For example, ‘Devadattaḥ pacati’. It means, Devadatta is cooking. We can express this sentence according to Navya-Nyāya language as – ‘*pākānukūla kṛtimān Devadattaḥ*’. In this formation, it is easily understood that ‘*pāka*’ or ‘cooking’ is an action and Devadatta is qualified by this action. This action is located in Devadatta by inherence relation. This locusness is one of the sense of *svatantratā* mentioned by Uddyotakara. In this regard Vācaspati Mīśra says that the agent whose function (*vyāpāra*) is presented as principal by either the verb (root) or the affix, is taken as *svatantra kartā*. Principal action is that which is affected by all *kāraṇas* and for which all the *kāraṇas* are functioned.<sup>9</sup> For example, ‘Devadatta cooks rice’ – in this sentence Devadatta is taken as an agent, because Devadatta’s action ‘cooking’ is the principal action here. He further said that, Uddyotakara mentions the word ‘*puruṣa*’ to explain the meaning of *svatantratā* because, *pramā* resides in *puruṣa*. In this case, *puruṣa* means *ātmā* (self). *Ātmā* becomes *pramātā* after being *svatantra*.

Thirdly, Uddyotakara states another sense of ‘svatantratā’ as –

“*tatprayokṛtvamitarāprajojyātā vā, yad vā paridrṣṭasāmarthyāni kāraṇakakrāṇi prayuṅkte, taiśca na prayujyate*”<sup>10</sup>

It means, *kartā* prompts all other *kāraṇas* to perform an action. *Kartā* is such a person who knows about the capability of other *kāraṇas*. And by this experience *kartā* can successfully prompts eligible *kāraṇas* to perform a specific action but

he is not influenced by other *kāra*kas. This is another sense of *svatantratā* of *kartā*. For example, when someone wants to cook rice, he uses fire, pot etc. for cooking. However, if he does not have the knowledge of cooking then he cannot use these elements. To know the process of cooking means that the agent knows what elements are required for cooking and what the importance of these elements are. By this knowledge, *kartā* chooses the elements and use these to cook. This knowledgeable use of the elements to do an action is the *svatantratā* of *kartā*. In this regard, Vācaspati Mīśra indicates ‘conscious being’ as a prompter of *kāra*kas and this ‘conscious being’ are not affected by *kāra*kas. An unconscious being also can be a *kartā*. For example, leaves are falling from the tree. In this sentence, the action ‘fall’ is regarded as the action of ‘leaf’. For this reason, grammatically this unconscious leaf can be *kartā*. However, Vācaspati Mīśra points out that, an unconscious being can be a *kartā* derivatively, not intrinsically.<sup>11</sup> To prove the validity of God’s cognition, Udayanācārya in his text *Nyāyakusumāñjalī* defines *pramātā* as –

“*mitiḥ samyakparicchittistadvattā ca pramāṭṛtā*”<sup>12</sup>

It means, according to Maharṣi Gautama, the locus of valid cognition is taken as *pramātā*. Here, he simply defines *pramātā* with its etymological sense. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, Kashmiri Naiyāyika, also introduced *pramātā* in his text *Nyāyamañjarī* following this etymological sense. He says, “*pramiṇotīti pramātā bhavati*”<sup>13</sup>. It means, ‘he who has the valid cognition becomes *pramātā*’. However, a problem arises that from this etymological sense. A person is taken as *pramātā* when he has valid cognition but according to Nyāya, cognition is destroyed in third or fourth moment by producing impression. Now, when we indicate a person as *pramātā* it is possible that his cognition is destroyed. So, our use becomes incorrect. To solve the problem Jayanta Bhaṭṭa points out that the term *pramātā* is used in two senses namely, primary and secondary. The term ‘*pramātā*’ is used in its primary sense when the person has valid cognition. On the other hand, the term ‘*pramātā*’ is used in its secondary sense when the person does not have valid cognition yet he is considered as *pramātā*.<sup>14</sup>

Now, even if *ātmā* is recognized as *pramātā* but there are many causes like sense-organs, mind etc. including self (*ātmā*) for cognizing an object. Then what is the reason for non-accepting mind etc. as *pramātā*? For the answer to this question we find the reasons behind the non-acceptance of mind etc. as *jñātā* at first. If someone is not regarded as *jñātā* then he cannot be *pramātā*. When *jñātā* cognizes an object with the help of *pramāṇa* then he recognizes as *pramātā*. Ontologically, *jñātā* and *pramātā* are identical. There are many texts of Nyāya philosophy where we find the reasons for non-acceptance of mind etc. as *jñātā*.

In the *Nyāya-Sūtra*, Gautama states that, *jñāna* is neither the quality of sense-organ nor the quality of an object. Since *jñāna* is attained even when sense-

organs or objects do not exist.<sup>15</sup> However, opponents can argue that, the perception of a pot is one kind of perception that cannot be possible in absence of that pot, eyes and their contact (*sannikarṣa*). Yet, 'I perceived' is another kind of perception, that is possible by the contact between mind (as internal sense-organ) and self, is produced even object and external sense-organs do not exist.<sup>16</sup> In response to this Vātsyāyana points out that, 'I perceived' is not a kind of perceptual cognition. It is memory cognition (*smṛti jñāna*). There is no need of the contact between external sense-organ and object for memory cognition. However, if there is no *jñātā* then memory is not possible. Since, cognition generates impression (*saṃskāra*) in self and from this impression we can recollect the object which was cognized in the past. If sense-organs or objects be the *jñātā* then memory is not possible when one of them is destroyed, because the impression in it will also be destroyed with the destruction of the *jñātā*. For this reason, sense-organ or object cannot be considered as *jñātā*. Now, self and mind are eternal. In absence of the contact between sense-organ and object memory is possible through the relation between self and mind. Therefore, we cannot decide with the above argument that who is the *jñātā* among these (mind and self).

To establish their position, Naiyāyika points out that mind is not a *jñātā* because it depends on *ātmā*. *Jñātā* is independent.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, if mind becomes the *jñātā* then it cannot be the *karāṇa* of *jñāna*. In the perceptual cognition of pleasure, pain etc., mind acts as a special cause or *karāṇa*. Without self-mind contact, this type of internal perception will not be possible. *Karāṇa* depends on independent *jñātā*. *Jñātā* cognizes objects with the help of *karāṇa*. In this case, *karāṇa* does not independently cognize an object. Viśvanātha in his text *Bhāṣāparicchedaḥ*, to explain the nature of self, points out that mind cannot be taken as a *jñātā* because, according to the Nyāya, eternal mind is *aṇuparimāṇa* (atomic). If this atomic mind is taken as a *jñātā* then perception of *jñāna*, *sukha* (pleasure), *duḥkha* (pain) etc. is not possible, because, *mahattva* is one of the causes of perception. For being atomic (*aṇuparimāṇa*), mind itself is not a perceptible object. Therefore, the *jñāna*, *sukha*, *duḥkha* etc. which remain in mind cannot be perceptible. For this reason, mind cannot be considered as *jñātā*.

From the aforementioned arguments, Naiyāyikas decide that self is a *jñātā*. However, opponents raise an objection that, if self is a *jñātā* then cognition (*jñāna*) of different objects occur at a time,<sup>18</sup> for, self is all-pervading object. As self is all-pervading, it connects with all sense-organs at a time. For this connection, the cognition of different objects can be attained at a time. In reply, the Naiyāyika asserts that mind is one of the important factors for producing *jñāna*. When mind connects with self and sense-organ, *jñāna* can be attained. However, mind is not all-pervading. Atomic mind cannot be connected with all sense-organs at a time and for the same reason *jñāna* of different objects cannot

be attained at a time.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, there is no objection to accept the self as a *jñātā*.

In like manner, Vaiśeṣikas accept self as a *jñātā*. In *Praśastapādabhāṣya* Praśastapāda advocates that body, sense-organs, or mind cannot be the locus of *jñāna* as they are not the *samavāyī kāraṇa* (inherent cause) of *jñāna*. The *samavāyī kāraṇa* of *jñāna* is the locus of the *jñāna*. Body is not the *samavāyī kāraṇa* of *jñāna* because body is the result of *bhūta-pañcaka* (five physical elements). Pot is not the *samavāyī kāraṇa* of *jñāna* because it is a *bhūta padārtha*. Moreover, *jñāna* cannot exist in death bodies. But, *jñāna* should remain in its locus until that locus is not destroyed. For these reasons, body cannot be taken as *jñātā*. On the other hand, external sense-organ also is not considered as the locus of *jñāna* because it is the *kāraṇa* (special cause) of *jñāna*. *Kāraṇa* of *jñāna* cannot be the *samavāyī kāraṇa* of *jñāna*. Now, opponents may argue that sense-organ is the locus of *jñāna* because sense-organ is the *samavāyī kāraṇa* of *jñāna*. In reply, it can be said that, memory generates when there is no contact between sense-organs and objects or memory cognition is possible even when sense-organs are destroyed. It cannot be stated that *jñāna* occurs when its locus is destroyed. Therefore, sense-organs cannot be the locus of *jñāna*. Mind also cannot be the locus of *jñāna* because mind is the *kāraṇa* of *jñāna*. *Kāraṇa* of *jñāna* cannot be the *kartā* of *jñāna*. *Kartā* is the locus of *jñāna*.<sup>20</sup> For these aforementioned reasons, it is established that only the self can be the locus of *jñāna*.

However, Advaita Vedāntins do not accept the Naiyāyika's point of view on *jñātā*. They think that *śuddha ātmā* (pure self) cannot be the *jñātā*. According to the Naiyāyika, *jñāna* remains in self by inherence relation but Advaitins do not accept inherence relation. The relation between *avayava* (component part) and *avayavī* (composite structure), *dravya* (substance) and *gūṇa* (quality), *jāti* (universal) and *vyakti* (individual), etc. is considered as 'inherence relation' according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. It is an eternal relation. According to them, this inherence is one kind of *padārtha* (category). However, Advaitins think that infinite regress is obvious if inherence relation is accepted.<sup>21</sup> For example, two *paramāṇus* (atoms) are very different from *dvyāṇuka* (dyad). The relation between dyad and atoms is considered as inherence. In this relation, atoms are the inherent cause of dyad. This 'inherence' is a different entity from these inherent causes. So, this 'inherence' is related to its inherent causes by another relation of inherence. Further, this new inherence relation is related to the previous inherence relation, which is now considered as inherent cause, by another inherence relation. In this way, infinite regress becomes inevitable.

In this case, the Naiyāyika may point out that, inherence eternally relates to its *samavāyins* (constitutives). Inherence does not depend on another relation to relate with its constitutive. For this reason, it is not necessary to accept any other



relation between inherence and its *samavāyins*. Therefore, there is no chance of infinite regress. However, Advaitins state that if it is accepted then *saṃyoga* (conjunction) also does not need to depend on another relation to relate with its *anuyogī* (correlate) and *pratiyogī* (counter-correlate) and it must also be accepted that, *saṃyoga* is an eternal relation. Further, if opponents say that those who are connected by *saṃyoga*, are different from *saṃyoga*. For this reason, to connect with its *saṃyogīns*, *saṃyoga* depends on *samavāya*. Then, Advaitins say that, for being a different entity *samavāya* also depends on another relation to relate with its *samavāyins* (constitutives). Now, if opponents say that, *saṃyoga* is a quality and for being a quality, *saṃyoga* needs to depend on *samavāya* to relate its *saṃyogīns* but not being a quality, *samavāya* does not depend on other relation to relate with its *samavāyins*. However, according to Advaitins, it cannot be said. Since, the relation that relates two entities is very different from those entities. In this point, *samavāya* and *saṃyoga* are not different.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, to relate with *samavāyins*, *samavāya* needs to depend on another *samavāya* relation and thus infinite regress is obvious. For this reason, according to Advaitins, cognition does not remain in self by inherence relation. Further, cognition cannot occur in its inherent cause, which is self. Since, the conjunction between self and mind is another cause of cognition. This conjunction is a quality. This conjunction can remain in self by inherence relation. However, it cannot be possible because, inherence is not acceptable.

Moreover, it can be stated that, cognition cannot be the quality of self. For, our cognition of object is not eternal but self is an eternal entity. If the cognition of an object is accepted as the quality of self then it also becomes impermanent. Further, according to the Nyāya, the entity in which cognition remains is taken as conscious. The cognition occurs when self is related to mind, and mind is related to sense-organs, and sense-organs are related to an object. However, this certain condition does not occur all the times. It means that cognition does not remain in self at all times. Just like, at *susupti* (deep sleep) stage cognition does not occur. For this reason, without having cognition self becomes unconscious.

Though, according to Advaitins there is a difference between eternal cognition and object cognition. Eternal cognition means the pure consciousness. This pure consciousness is Brahman. On the other hand, our object cognition is not eternal. It is a modification of mind. In the process of cognition, Advaitins think that, when an object comes in contact with an external sense-organ, *antaḥkaraṇa* goes to that object through sense-organ. After that, *antaḥkaraṇa* takes the shape of that object. This is called *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* (modification of mind). By this process the non-dual self, which is limited by *antaḥkaraṇa*, and the self, which is limited by object, become identical. For this, the ignorance of an object is eliminated and the object is discovered to the *pramātā*. However, ‘to whom, this object is appeared’?

is the main question. According to Advaita Vedānta, self can be the *jñātā*, *kartā* (agent) and *bhoktā* (consumer) but it is not the real nature of self. Conditioned by different *upādhi* (limiting adjunct) the non-dual self becomes *jñātā*, *kartā* and *bhoktā*. Advaitins say that the non-dual self or consciousness limited by object is called *viśayacaitanya*. On the other hand, this non-dual self or consciousness limited by *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* is called *pramāṇacaitanya* and that non-dual self is delimited by *antaḥkaraṇa* (mind) it becomes *pramātā* or *pramātracaitanya*.<sup>23</sup>

In this case, a question may be raised from Sāṃkhya philosophers that, *antaḥkaraṇa* alone can be called *pramātā* because *antaḥkaraṇa* is *pariṇāmī* (transformable) but self is *aparīṇāmī* (absolute). Then why the self which is delimited by *antaḥkaraṇa*, is taken as *pramātā*? In the *Upaniṣad* we find some sentence like, ‘the self (*puruṣa*) is necessarily indifferent’<sup>24</sup> in favour of this argument. To answer this, Advaita Vedāntins can say that *antaḥkaraṇa* is unconscious and an unconscious entity cannot be the *kartā*. For this reason, *antaḥkaraṇa* cannot be the *pramātā*. On the other hand, indifferent self also cannot be the *pramātā*. Only the self-limited by *antaḥkaraṇa* may be considered as the *pramātā*. In favor of this notion, they state another *Upaniṣadic* sentence like, ‘he is the seer, listener, thinker, cognizer’<sup>25</sup>. In this sentence, the words ‘seer’, ‘listener’, ‘thinker’, ‘cognizer’ do not indicate the pure self. These indicate the conditioned self (*upahita ātmā*).

Now, as we previously mentioned that, etymologically *pramātā* is the locus of *pramā*. According to Advaita Vedānta the un-contradicted (*avādhitā*) modification of mind (*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*) is called *pramā*. This modification remains in *antaḥkaraṇa*. Since, as we previously mentioned that *antaḥkaraṇa* can be transformed. Self cannot be the locus of this modification because self is absolute. Therefore, etymologically *antaḥkaraṇa* is the *pramātā*. However, though secondary sense *antaḥkaraṇavṛtti* is taken as cognition but cognition is primarily consciousnesses. Then how the unconscious *antaḥkaraṇa* becomes the locus of cognition? *Pratibimbavādī* says that *antaḥkaraṇa* is an unconscious entity. For this reason it cannot be the locus of cognition. However, *antaḥkaraṇa* is a very transparent entity. Pure consciousness can be reflected on the transparent *antaḥkaraṇa*. In this way, *antaḥkaraṇa* will be the locus of cognition.<sup>26</sup>

From these above arguments, stated by Advaita Vedāntins, it can be said that, the pure self cannot be the *pramātā*. However, the Naiyāyikas also do not accept pure self as *pramātā*. They say that self, which is delimited by body, is the *pramātā*. If it is not accepted then the existence of cognition will be perceived everywhere, because self is all-pervasive. Therefore, according to the both of these philosophical schools pure self cannot be the *pramātā*.

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3. Aṣṭādhyāyī, 1/4/54.  
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4. Tarkatirtha, Taranath, and Amarendramohan Tarkatirtha, eds. *Nyāyadarśanam*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985. p. 24.
5. “*kim puṇaḥ svātantraṁ yasyābhisamvadhāt svatantra iti*”  
Ibid. p. 24.
6. Ibid. p. 24.
7. “*na hi sarvaḥ kartā samastakāraḥ kanyasukhādi vaudanādi vā bhūṅkte, ṛvikvācakādiṣu ca vyabhicārāt. Kāraḥ tu sataḥ kartṛtvottarakālabhābinī phalabhokṛtā kartṛvanāntarīyakatayā tadupalakṣayati, yajamānasya rājñāśca paiśādīnā tattadvyāpāraḥ kartṛtvāt. yathāhuratrabhavantāḥ tadabhisandhipūrvakam preṣaṇamadhyeṣaṇam vā yuktaṁ tatsarvaṁ pacyartha iti.*”  
Ibid. p. 24.
8. Ibid. p. 24.
9. “*tatsamavāyo vā. Kāraḥ kābhidhānena sannidhāpitām kriyām taditi sarvanamnā parāmṛṣati. Yasya hi vyāpāraṁ prādhānyen dhāturākhyātapratyayo vābhidhatte sa svatantraḥ kartā*”  
Ibid. p. 24.
10. Ibid. p. 24.
11. “*tasya cetanasya sarvakāraḥ kartṛtvam, taiśca kāraḥ kairaprayojyatā vā. Acetanasya tu bhāktam kartṛtvam, na svābhāvīkamiti bhāvah*”  
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Ibid. p. 231.
17. “*vaśī jñātā, vaśyam karaṇam, jñānaguṇatve ca karaṇa-bhāvanivṛttiḥ*”, *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya of Vātsyāyana on the Nyāyasūtra 3/2/19*.  
Ibid. p. 233.
18. “*tadātmaguṇatve’pi tulyam*”, *Nyāyasūtra 3/2/20*.  
Ibid. p. 234.
19. “*indriyairmmanasaḥ sannikarṣābhāvāt tadanutpattiḥ*”, *Nyāyasūtra 3/2/21*  
Ibid. p. 234.
20. “*na śarīrendriyamanasāmajñatvāt. na śarīrasya caitanyam ghaṭādivadbhūtakāryatvāt mṛte cāsambhavāt. na idriyāñām karaṇatvāt. upahateṣu viśayāsānnidhye cānusmṛti darśanāt. nāpi manasaḥ karaṇāntarānapekṣitve yugapadālocanasmṛtiprasaṅgāt. svayamkaraṇabhāvācca.*”  
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23. “*tatra ghaṭādyavacchinna viśaya-caitanyam, antaḥkaraṇavṛtyavacchinnaṁ caitanyam pramāṇacaitanyam, antaḥkaraṇāvacchinnaṁ caitanyam pramāṭṛcaitanyam*”  
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24. “*asaṅgaḥ hi ayam puruṣa*”, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4/3/15*.
25. “*eṣa hi draṣṭā spraṣṭā śrotā ghrātā rasayitā mantā voddhā kartā vijñānātmā puruṣaḥ*”, *Praśna Upaniṣad, 4/9*.
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