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JAYANTA BHATTA ON PRAMĀṆA

Dinanath Ghatak

Introduction: Usually, *pramā* is taken to be derived from the root ‘*mā*’ preceded by the *upasarga* ‘*pra*’ which means ‘true’ and ‘*mā*’ means knowledge. So etymologically *pramā* means valid knowledge or *yathārtha jñāna*. We acquire such valid knowledge by means of the *pramāṇa*. So *pramāṇa* is the cause of cognition.

As the *pramāṇa* used as *pramā karaṇa*, in the same way the *pramā* is used also as *pramāṇa*. In *karaṇa vācya-pra pūrvaka mā dhātu karaṇa vācye lyuṭ*, *pramāṇa* stands for *pramā karaṇa* or means of valid knowledge. This amounts to saying that *pramā* or valid knowledge is the effect and *pramāṇa* is its cause. To put the same things in slightly different form, *pramāṇa* is different from *pramā*. There is another sense in which *pramāṇa* is used. It may also be derived from *pra pūrvaka mā dhātu karmavācya lyuṭ*. It means valid knowledge itself. It becomes evident from the *Nyāya* use of the term *pratyakṣa* both as a *pramāṇa* and as a *pramiti*. It depends on what sense the word is used—in the *karmavācya* or in the *bhāvavācya*. So, we can say that *pramā karaṇam pramāṇam*—is the *sāmānya lakṣana* of *pramāṇa*. The master of epistemology in Indian *Nyāya* philosophy Maharṣi Gautama uses the term *pramāṇa* in the above sense.

The view of Jayanta Bhatta & other Naiyāyikas regarding *pramāṇa*: One may ask a question like this— why did Maharṣi classify the *pramāṇas* in the *sūtra* (1.1.3) first, instead of giving its definition? According to Jayantabhata, through his first sutra Maharṣi has given the general definition and divisions of *pramāṇa*. So, he mentioned in his book *Nyāyamañjarī*, “*Ekenānena sūtreṇa dayam cāha mahāmuniḥ/Pramāṇeṣu catuḥsamkham tathā sāmānyalakṣanam*”. i.e., Maharṣi has fulfilled two purposes— (i) fourfoldness of *pramāṇa* and (ii) *sāmānya lakṣana* of *pramāṇa*¹. The answer of this question is also found in the *Bhāṣya* where it is said that it is not a rule that in every case a regular definition must precede the classification. In some cases, the definition may be given after the classification. Regarding this *sūtra*, it may be pointed out that the definition of *pramāṇa* has been implied by Maharṣi at the time of the classification of *pramāṇas*. In fact, the word ‘*pramāṇāni*’ in the *sūtra* serves the purpose of indicating the characteristic features of *pramāṇas*; and the definition is nothing more than the indication of such characteristic features.

¹ ‘*Ekenānena sūtreṇa dvayamcāha mahāmuniḥ/pramāṇeṣucatuḥ samkhyam tathā sāmānya lakṣanam*’. ‘*Nyāyamañjarī* (Jayantabhata), Kasi Sanskrit Series, Haridas Sanskrit Granthamala. No. 106, ed. Pt. S.N.Sukla, Vidya vilas Press, Venaras, 1936, p.25

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Now, we upheld here the view of some of the *Naiyāyikas* regarding the nature of *pramā*. Vātsyāyana defines it as whatever is knowledge of the object² but removes the ambiguity later on by speaking of it as ‘the knowledge of that as that’ (*tasminstaditi pratyaya*)³. Uddyotakara defines *pramāṇa* as ‘the cause of knowledge’ (*upalabdhihetu*)⁴. Vācaspati tries to make the definition more precise by adding that here what is meant by the word ‘*pramā*’ is the knowledge that does not deviate from its object and that is other than memory.⁵ Udayana in his *Parīśuddhi* also emphasises the character of *avyabharitava*⁶ though in his *Nyāyakusumāñjali* he gives a simpler definition of *pramā* as ‘right apprehension’ (*Nyāyakusumāñjali Kārikā*, 4/1, 4/5). Sivāditya brings out the logical implications when he defines *pramāṇa* as that which produces *pramā* or knowledge in accord with reality⁷. Jayanta makes *pramāṇa* the cause which produces non-erroneous, certain knowledge of objects⁸. That is to say, Jayanta takes it to be such knowledge of the object that does not deviate from the object and is free from doubt⁹ (*‘avyabharinīm asandigdham arthopalabdhim*).

From the discussion mentioned above, it is clear that there cannot be any means of getting valid knowledge of object except by means of *pramāṇa*. (So it has been said that there cannot be any right understanding of things except by means of *pramāṇa*.) A person arrives at the valid knowledge of objects by means of *pramāṇa*, for the existence and nature of objects are to be ascertained only by the cognition which is based on *pramāṇa*. Again, we are told, “*Pramāṇa* is the cause of valid cognition of objects, in as much as it gives us knowledge of objects as they really are and exist in themselves”¹⁰. “*Pramāṇa* has a real correspondence with objects, in the sense that the nature and attributes of objects, as revealed by *pramāṇa*, are uncontradictorily true of them, despite all

² “*yadarthavijñānam sa pramiti*”, *Gautamīyanyāyadarśana with Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana*, loc.cit. p.1

³ *ibid*, p.77

⁴ *‘Nyāyadarśanam’*, *With Bhāṣya, Vārttika, Tātparyaṭīkā*, loc.cit., p.16

⁵ *‘Pramāsādhanam hi pramāṇam na ca smṛtiḥ pramā’*, *‘Nyāyavārttika’* (Uddyotakara), loc.cit. p.17

⁶ Udayanācārya, *‘Tātparyaṭīkāparīśuddhi’* ed. Vindeswari Prasad Dvivedi, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata, 1924, p. 13

⁷ Shivāditya, *‘Saptapadārthī’* ed. Amarendramohan Tarkatirtha, Metropolyton Printing house Ltd., Calcutta, 1934, p.144

⁸ *‘Abyabharinīm asandigdham arthopalabdhim’* *‘Nyāyamañjarī’*, (Jayantabhaṭṭa), loc.cit., p.12

⁹ Jayantabhaṭṭa, *‘Nyāyamañjarī’*, ed. Pandit Surya Narayan Sukla, Kasi Sanskrit Series, No.106, Vidyā Vilas Press, Chowkhamba Sanakrit Series, Venaras city, 1936, p.12

¹⁰ Vātsyāyana, *‘Nyāyabhāṣya’*, ed. Anantalāl Thākur, ICPR, Delhi, 1996, p.1

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variations in time, place and other conditions.”¹¹ Following the introductory *Bhāṣya* of Vātsyāyana it can be added that the *pramāṇa* or the means of right cognition must be regarded as rightly effective, because it is only when an object is known by means of an instrument of right cognition that there is a possibility of its giving rise to fruitful and effective exertion. As a matter of fact, nothing can be known except through an instrument of cognition or *pramāṇa*, nor can fruitful exertion be aroused, except when things have become known¹².

Discussion regarding *karaṇa* & *sāmagrīkaraṇatāvāda*: *Pramāṇa-s* is the unique operative cause (*karaṇa*) of right knowledge (*pramā*). It does not, however, follow that *pramāṇa* is a simple concept denoting a single object. On the other hand, it denotes a complex of many conditions which are partly conscious object and partly unconscious object by nature or we may say that it is partly physical and partly mental in nature. This proves that no specific cause can be regarded as the *sādhakatama kāraṇa* or the excellent cause. On the contrary, we look upon the totality of causes (*kāraṇa sāmagrī*) as the *karaṇa*, we can do justice to the property of excellence which is generally accompanying the notion of *karaṇa*.¹³ Keeping this in mind, Jayanta refuses to admit any cause in isolation as the *karaṇa*. “*Karanam ca sādhatam tamabarthaśrātiśayaḥ*” But he is very much eager to attribute *karaṇatva* to the different causes in union with one another. It is the *sāmagrī* or the collection which properly deserves the characterization as *karaṇa*. Let us try to understand Jayanta’s definition of *karaṇa* as ‘*vodhāvodhasvabhāvā samagrī pramāṇam*’.

In fact, the term ‘*karaṇa*’ should be applied to the totality of uncommon causes without leaving aside any one. This view is known as *sāmagrī kāraṇatāvāda* and is propounded by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, the author of *Nyāyamañjarī*. He looks upon *karaṇa* as *sādhakatama* or the most excellent or efficient among the causes.¹⁴

Let us now try to explain Jayanta’s definition of *pramāṇa* as well as the *karaṇa* as *avyabhicārinim asandigdham arthopalabdhiṃ vidadhati vodhāvodhasvabhāvā samagrī pramāṇam*¹⁵ i.e., an aggregate of certain conscious and unconscious elements or objects which together make the

¹¹ Uddyotakara, ‘*Nyāyavārttika*’ loc.cit., p.4

¹² ‘*Arthabat pramāṇam*’ *Nyāya Bhāṣya*, (Vātsyāyana), loc.cit., p.1

¹³ Jayantabhaṭṭa, ‘*Nyāyamañjarī*’, ed. Pandit Surya Narayan Sukla, Kasi Sanskrit Series, No.106, Vidyā Vilas Press, Chowkhamba Sanakrit Series, Venaras city, 1936, p.12

¹⁴ Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, “*Nyāyamañjarī*”, loc. cit. p.95

¹⁵ Ibid.

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apprehension of non-erroneous and non-doubtful cognition possible. In this definition, the two adjectives of *abyabhichārinim* (non-erroneous) and *asandigdham* (non-doubtful) make the apprehension of the object possible. That is why they constitute the definition (*lakṣaṇa*) of *pramāṇa*. On the other hand, the aggregate or sum total of *vodha* (conscious) and *avodha* (unconscious) *padārthas* stand for the nature (*svarūpa*) of *pramāṇa*. The term *pramāṇa* is used here to represent the *karaṇa*, i.e., instrument of means of *pramā*. The etymological explanation is *pra-pūrvaka 'ma' dhātur uttara karaṇa vācye 'anaṭ'*. Hence the two terms *pramāṇa* and *karaṇa* are synonymous and have the same reference. Jayanta's definition of *pramāṇa* or *karaṇa* clearly indicates that any one individual cannot be the meaning of *karaṇa*; the totality (*sāmagrī*) alone can claim instrumentality or *karaṇatva*. For Jayanta, though the totality has the right to be considered as *karaṇa*, it is not the totality of conscious objects only. Nor is it the totality of unconsciousness objects alone. *Karaṇa* is the totality of both these different types of objects—conscious as well as unconscious.

Here occurs one objection that *karaṇa* as the totality of both objects (conscious & unconscious) can possibly have no application in respect of perception, because perceptual cognition can arise out of certain *avodhātmaka padārthas* only, e.g. *indriya*, *viṣaya*, *sannikarṣa* etc. on the other hand this definition may be applicable in the case of inferential cognition i.e., *anumānādi* etc. for example, analogical cognition rests on the conglomeration of certain *vodhātmaka* (*sādṛśyajñānādi*) and certain *avodhātmaka* (*indriyaviṣayādi*) elements. Hence Jayanta's definition being not applicable to perception, here arise *avyāpti doṣa* i.e., fallacy of too narrow definition.

To answers against this objection Prof. Tapan Chakraborty remarks¹⁶ that in the case of perception the totality of conscious and unconsciousness elements are very well present. For the Naiyāyikas, for every determinate perception, we have to maintain the causal efficacy of indeterminate perception. *Savikalpaka pratyakṣa* is a kind of *visistabuddhi* and the knowledge of *viśeṣana* is very much essential for making *visistabuddhi* possible. Hence, *nirvikalpaka jnana* can be cited as the *vodhatmaka dharma* in the case of perceptual cognition which is more often than not determinate in character and as such the charge of *avyāpti* is not justified.

So, Jayanta's view of *karaṇa* as *sāmagrī* does not go beyond challenged. Jayanta himself mentions and raises several objections against his view.¹⁷

¹⁶ . Chakraborty, Tapan, "Lights on Philosophy", Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 2012, pg. 78

¹⁷ Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, "Nyāyamanjarī", loc. cit. p.95

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But he himself refutes such objections on rational deliberation. Here we should briefly refer to these objections along with Jayanta's answers only to show the important of *sāmagrīkaraṇatā*. For Jayanta, no single cause can claim or demand the excellence which is associated with the meaning of *karaṇa* as *sādhakatama*. In truth, the totalities of cause (*sāmagrī*) are to be regarded as *sādhakatama* i.e. possessing excellence. So, the different individual causes by means of which the *sāmagrī* or the totality is constituted cannot have that excellence in isolation. Only the *sāmagrī* has that excellence in comparison with and contrast from the individual causes which together constitute the *sāmagrī*. But it is to be noted here that this difference between the *sāmagrī* and its underlying members is not the same sort of difference as we find in the case of *avayavī* and *avayavas* i.e., *sāmagrī* and that of *avayavī* is not identical.

Now, to regard *sāmagrī* as the *pramāṇa* is to face absurd consequences. In the first place what should be the proper object of such a *sāmagrī*? The *prameya* which is the object of *pramā* is to be considered as included within the *sāmagrī* which is one of its causes; for in the absence of *prameya*, *pramā* cannot take place at all. But *prameya* being already included in the *sāmagrī* as *karaṇa*, what should be the object for which *sāmagrī* is a *pramāṇa*? Again, if the *prameya* as the object of *pramā* be not felt independently, *pramā* becomes objectless, i.e., devoid of support. Further, who is he that will understand *prameya* by means of *sāmagrī*? In other words, who would be *pramātā* in that case? For, *pramātā* is also entered into the texture of *sāmagrī* and so loses its independent existence. Moreover, to fail to admit the uniqueness or individuality of *pramātā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya* and *pramiti* is to contradict the age-old teaching of the Naiyāyikas that these four constituents by their mutual combination make reality possible. '*Nanu mukhayaḥ pramātri prameyayarapi...karaṇam*'.

Jayanta's reply to such objections is that the words *pramātā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya* etc., are all intimately related to the production of *pramiti* as an effect. Without being related to *pramiti*, the words *pramātā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya* etc. loses their meaning and the property of *pramātā* (i.e. *pramātrtva*) and *prameya* (*prameyatva*) become indefensible. Besides, it is to be remembered also that the mere presence of the *kartā* (agent) or the *karma* (object) will not give rise to *pramāññāna* according to Jayanta. The presence of all the causes, viz, *kartā*, *karma*, *karaṇa* etc., is absolutely necessary for the generation of *pramāññāna*. For, *pramāññāna* will not result in the absence of any one of the above causes. So, the words *pramātā*, *pramāṇa*, *prameya* etc. can be primarily used only after the production of *pramā*. The individual causes never lose their individuality even in the collection. The distinctiveness of each remains intact at the collection itself. As their respective

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individuality remains unaffected even at the level of the collection, *pramiti* can no longer be viewed as *nirālabana*.

Conclusion: The Advaita Vedāntins define *pramāṇa* as the operative cause (*karaṇa*) of *pramā* or true knowledge. It defines *pramā* in two ways. Firstly, *Pramā* means knowledge that has both the characteristics of novelty and un-contradicted-ness (*anadhigatābādhivta*). This means that true knowledge is un-contradicted and original, i.e., it gives us new information. Secondly, *pramā* is taken to mean simply uncontradicted knowledge of objects. The result is that *pramā* is made to exclude or include memory according as we accept the one or the other way of defining *pramā* or true knowledge.¹⁸

Now, if we admit the concept *anadhigatatva* as *pramā* according to *Bhāṭṭa* and *Advaita Vedānta*, then the validity of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) as a form of knowledge becomes inexplicable. To recognize a thing is to know it as what was once known before. Recognition cannot, therefore, be a knowledge of what was not known. But consistency requires that we must either give up the idea of novelty (*andhigatatva*) as a characteristic of *pramā* or say that recognition is not true knowledge, i.e., is *apramā*. In fact, however, no knowledge is made true or false by reason simply of its originality or unoriginality. The truth of knowledge does not depend on the newness of its object.¹⁹

Of course, the *Bhāṭṭas* contend that the continuous cognition refers to new objects in all its parts. The series of cognitions occurs at different moments of time. The thing as thus connected with different times, though apparently the same becomes really different objects for our persistent knowledge of it. The successive cognitions are valid in so far as each apprehends the object as qualified by a different time and therefore as something new²⁰. The *Advaita Vedānta* suggests another way out of the difficulty. According to this way, persistent knowledge is valid either because its different parts perceive different moments of time or because it is one single cognition as long as it persists and no new mental modification is produced. A continuous cognition is thus one present knowledge manifesting one thing which was previously unmanifested. So the question does not arise as to whether the series of cognition apprehends new objects or not.²¹

¹⁸ “*smṛtyanubhavasadhārānaṁ pramākaraṇaṁ pramāṇam*”, *Tarkakaumudī*, (Bhāskara, Laugākṣi), loc.cit., p.6

¹⁹ Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, ‘Nyāyamanjarī’ loc.cit., p.21-22

²⁰ Pārthasārathi Miśra, ‘*Śāstradīpikā*’, ed. Laksan Sastri Dravir, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi, 1916, p.45

²¹ Viśvanātha, ‘*Vhāṣāpariccheda*’, loc.cit., ch. 1

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But the *Naiyāyika* -s object that the instants of time (*kṣaṇa*) cannot be perceived by us. The different instants, entering into the persistent cognition, being unperceived, cannot be said to constitute different objects for the series of cognitions²². Were these temporal differences apprehended and wedged into the body of the continuous cognition, its continuity would be broken up and our sense of continuity would have been lost. As that is not the case, we are to say that in persistent knowledge the series of cognitions refers to one and the same object. Nor can it be urged that persistent knowledge is a single state of cognition enduring for some time. Although from a subjective standpoint continuous cognition may be considered to be one present state of conscious illumination, yet objectively it is a series of cognitions. Hence a present continuous cognition is really a series of cognitions, of which those that succeed the first are admitted by all to be as valid as the first²³. It cannot be seriously maintained that they open up new aspects of the object. The palm of the hand seen a thousand times adds no new content to our previous knowledge of it²⁴.

This, however, does not include such universal conditions of all knowledge as subject and object, time and space etc. within the compass of *pramāṇa* or the method of knowledge. Hence the final definition of *pramāṇa*, according to Jayantabhaṭṭa is that it is the complex of specific conditions, other than the subject and the object, which does not normally fail to produce valid knowledge.²⁵

Jayanta Bhatta occupies a unique position in the history and development of Indian philosophy in general and Prācīna Nyaya in particular. The author himself informs that the text was written in a cave where he was put by the king of that time. Nyāyamañjarī is an encyclopaedic exposition of the Prācīna Nyaya. While writing this, Jayanta has taken into account all the relevant views of almost all the systems of Indian philosophy prevalent at his time. Prof. V.N. Jha, an eminent Scholar of Indian Philosophy, writes "He has presented views of his opponent so elaborately and clearly that sometimes it is easier to understand the opponents from Jayanta's Nyāyamañjarī than from the original texts of the opponents. Jayanta, the poet-logician, has unique capacity of presenting clearly the issues in a very beautiful Sanskrit."

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²² Vācaspati Miśra, 'Nyāyavārttikatātparyatīkā', loc.cit. p-22

²³ Gaṅgeśa, 'Tattvacintāmañih', with Māthurītkā, Perception chapter, Motilal Vanarasidas, Delhi, 1974, p. 379

²⁴ Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, 'Nyāyamañjarī', loc.cit., p. 21

²⁵ Ibid.

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