

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
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**DIFFERENT VIEWS REGARDING SENTENTIAL MEANING: AN
INTERPRETATION FROM MĪMĀṂSAKA THEORY**

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Introduction:

Most schools of Indian philosophy have an atomistic view of meaning and the meaning-bearing linguistic unit. This means that a sentence is put together by combining words and words are put together by combining morphemic elements like stems, roots, and affixes. The same applies to meaning. The word-meaning may be viewed as a fusion of the meanings of stems, roots, and affixes, and the meaning of a sentence may be viewed as a fusion of the meanings of its constituent words. Beyond this generality, different schools have specific proposals. The tradition of *Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā* proposes that the words of a sentence already convey contextualized inter-connected meanings (*anvitābhidhāna*) and that the sentence-meaning is not different from a simple addition of these inherently inter-connected word-meanings. On the other hand, *Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas* propose that words of a sentence taken by themselves convey only uncontextualized unconnected meanings, and that these uncontextualized word meanings are subsequently brought into a contextualized association with each other (*abhihitānvaya*). Therefore, the sentence-meaning is different from word-meanings, and is communicated through the concatenation (*samsarga*) of words, rather than by the words themselves. This is also the view of the early grammarians like *Kātyāyana* and *Patañjali*

I

Abhihitānvayavāda:

Kumārila's theory of *Abhihitānvayavāda* is based on Śabaraswamī's commentary on the *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* – '*tadbhūtānām kriyārthena samāmnāyaḥ arthasya tannimittavātt.* (Mīmāṃsā Sūtra. 1.1.25) Śabaraswamī comments that – *nānapekṣya padārthān pārthagairthyena vākyamarthāntarprasiddham ...na hi anapekṣitapadārthasya vākyāntyavarṇasya pūrvavarṇajanitasamskārahitasya śaktirasti padārthebhyaḥ arthāniare vartitumiti... padāni hi svaṃ svaṃ padārthamabhidhāya nivttavyāpārāṇi | atha idāniṃ padārthā avagatāḥ santo vākyārthaṃ gamayanti |*

Śabaraswamī's inclination to *Abhihitānvayavāda* is clear from this passage. Before apprehending the total meaning of a total sentence, we must have pre-acquaintance with the

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independent meaning of independent words taken in isolation. When such independent words bearing cognised independent meanings come together in a sentence, those independent meanings are caught in syntactical relation, and thereby we get the total meaning of the total sentence. A sentence is nothing but a get-together of independent words arranged in a syntactical structure, and the sentential meaning is nothing but a get-together of independent meanings organised in the syntactical meaning-structure. Thus, a sentence is not a linguistic reality over and above the different words captured in a particular relation. Similarly, the sentential meaning is not an ideational or physical fact over and above the separate word meanings related together by syntax. In short, a sentence is a structure of related words and a sentential meaning is a structure of related meanings. *Abhihitānvayavāda* may be called some sort of brick-and-mortar theory of sentential meaning. Brick, mortar, iron and cement are the constituents of a building structure. But mere conglomeration of these elements does not go to form a structure. The building is a structural organisation in which the constituents are to be arranged and organised in a certain way, that is, the constituents must enter into a certain type of mutual relation. Yet the relation itself is not a constituent of the structure. The relation is only the way or method in which the constituents have been organised. By an extension of this analogy, we may say that, though the sentential meaning is an organised structure of related meanings, yet the relation or relations (*ākāṅkṣā, yogyatā, āsatti*) do not figure as constituents of the sentential meaning itself. *Ākāṅkṣā, yogyatā, āsatti* (expectancy, efficiency and contiguity) are only the determining methods by which the constituents or the independent word-meanings are organised and related together in the syntactical structure. Just as the method of constructing a building is not a constituent part of the building, so the way of relating the different word-meanings into a total sentential meaning-structure is not a constituent part of the meaning-structure itself. In short, a sentence does not mean the syntactical relation of word-meanings, but means the totality of word-meanings related together in syntax.

II

Anvitābhidhānavāda

It should not be deduced from the above account that historically the theory of Abhihitānvaya is earlier than that of *Anvitābhidhāna*. It is difficult as yet to chronologically fix the position of these two theories. Our reason for discussing Abhihitānvaya at first springs from the consideration for the logical convenience of presentation according to ascending order of preference. The theory of *Anvitābhidhāna* is primarily derived from the linguistic behaviour of man. In normal linguistic behaviour man uses sentences for the purpose of communication, and not isolated and unconnected words (*vākyenaiva lokavyavahārah*). It is almost absurd to imagine that in the most primitive days

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there were some isolated words floating independently of their connection with one another. If that be the case then we should also further imagine that in a certain later period some men or group of men caught hold of these nomadic wandering words and collected them into different? sentences. But to perform such a highly abstract and intelligent work men should have had some prior knowledge of sentences. Without already knowing the nature of a sentence one cannot collect isolated words into a sentence. So, our imagined group of men who sat together to derive the method of forming sentences with words must have participated in the discussion with the help of sentences. Thus, the fallacy of circular argument becomes inevitable, if we imagine that, historically, at first there were isolated words and then at a later stage they were gathered into a sentential form. Even in the development of child's linguistic behaviour, learning of isolated words and isolated meanings is extremely limited. The members of the child's family communicate with one another in sentences and not in disconnected words. The child keenly observes the linguistic behaviour-pattern and the corresponding actions of the elders. So, it is natural that at first the child notices a connection between the total-sentence and the total occurrence without entertaining the distinctive relations between specific words and their specific meanings. This initial cognition of the total sentence and the total meaning without apprehending the internal distinction is called *sammugdhā vyutpatti* by the school of *Prabhākara*. [*prathamam tāvat vākyasya vākyārthe sammugdhā vyutpattir jāyate* (Tantrarahasya. p. 29)]

The differentiation between different meaning of different words comes to the child's mind at a later stage by contrasting sentences and the corresponding physical actions of the elders. Suppose a senior elder speaks to a junior one – *gāmānaya* (Bring the cow). The child hears the sentence and notices the corresponding action on the part of the junior elder. At this stage the child cannot relate the word 'gam' to the cow and the word 'ānaya' to the action of bringing. He only apprehends in non-differentiating total relation between the total sentence and total occurrence. Now the senior elder speaks again- '*gām badhāna*' (Bind the cow), '*aśvamānaya*' (Bring the horse). These sentences are soon followed by appropriate different actions on the part of the junior elder. Now the child standing nearby, hearing the sentences and noticing the appropriate actions, begins to learn the connection between specific words and their specific meanings. In the sentence '*gām badhāna*' a new articulation viz. '*badhāna*' is introduced followed by the introduction of a new action. This addition or introduction of a new element (*āvāpa*) of utterance and action is simultaneously accompanied by elimination or subtraction of something old (*udvāpa*), that is, the word '*ānaya*' in the first sentence '*gāmānaya*' and the action of bringing are eliminated in the second sentence and in the occurrence referred to by it. But the word '*gām*' and the corresponding object stand common between the two sentences and the two occurrences.

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Thus, by the joint method of elimination and addition respectively of the old and the new together with the apprehension of the common element, that is, by the joint method of Agreement and Difference the child learns to connect the words 'gām', 'ānaya' and 'badhāna' with their distinctive appropriate referents. This differentiation is further consolidated in understanding by the third sentence 'aśvamānaya' and the action following it. Here a new word 'aśvam' is introduced along with the elimination of the old word 'gām'. Again, here also the word 'ānaya' stands common between the first sentence (gāmānaya) and the third sentence (aśvamānaya) along with the commonness of the particular type of action between the two occurrences, viz., 'bringing the cow' and 'bringing the horse'. In this case also by the joint method of Agreement and Difference the child learns to connect the word aśvam with the particular animal and reinforce his understanding of the specific connection of the word 'gām' with the specific object and of the specific word 'Ānaya' with the specific action. It is needless to say that in this attempt at learning to associate particular words with particular objects the child does not consciously apply the method of logical inference. He learns to apply the method by force of habit without any reference to the conscious application of logical method. Logic is nothing but the consciously sophisticated analysis of arguments which the practical man learns to apply unconsciously from his childhood through accumulation of habit and experience. What appears spontaneous in the behaviour of a child is turned into a hierarchy of logical steps by the sophisticated intellect of the logician. If it is admitted that normal linguistic behaviour is expressed in the use of sentences and not of isolated words, it follows hence that the meaning of a word cannot be gathered or fixed in isolation from the meaning of other connected words. Thus, a word can mean its meaning only in so far as it and its meaning are respectively related to other words and their meanings -that is, a word that means is always a related word, and the meaning that is meant is always a related meaning.

This theory of meaning relation is called *Anvitābhīdhāna*. The term is significant. It means - *anvitānāmeva arthānādmabhidhānaṃ, na ananvitānam*, -it is only a related meaning that is invariably conveyed by a word and not an unrelated meaning.

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