

Lakṣaṇā as Inference

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This paper attempts to question a few assumptions of the Nyāya theory of ordinary verbal cognition (*laukika-śābdabodha*). For the Naiyāyika-s, meaning relation (*vr̥tti*) is of two kinds: *śakti* (which gives us the primary meaning of a word) and *lakṣaṇā* (which yields the secondary meaning). The ground (*bīja*) of *lakṣaṇā* is a sort of inexplicability (*anupapatti*) pertaining to the speaker's intention (*tātparya*). For example, if one says, "I live on the Ganges (*gaṅgāyāṃ vasāmi*)", one really does not want to imply that he literally *lives on the Ganges*. Here, if we take into account only the primary meanings of words, the speaker's intention will slip into absurdity. To avoid this, we choose the secondary meaning: we interpret the word 'Ganges' as referring to the bank of Ganges. Here the cause of the cognition of the secondary meaning is inexplicability (*anupapatti*). The same kind of cause, at times, underlies postulation (*arthāpatti*) too.

Here, I take the liberty of suggesting that the case of *lakṣaṇā* is quite similar to that of one variety of postulation, namely, *śrutārtāthāpatti*, where the subject hears only a word, "Close! (*pidhehi*)" and immediately grasps the unsaid object of that action, that is, the door. Unless he does that, the command expressed by the sentence "Close!" will remain inexplicable. In fact, in the 'Śaktivāda' section of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, Gaṅgeśa himself draws a parallel between the composite sentential cognition which results from the combination of the inserted object of action, that is, the door, with other word-meanings when the sentence "Close with the cloth! (*vastreṇa pidhehi*)" is heard *and* the sentential cognition which results from the combination of the secondary meaning with other word-meanings. However, the Naiyāyika-s treat the former instance of postulation as a piece of inferential cognition. In the section of the 'Anumānakhaṇḍa' where he deals with postulation, Gaṅgeśa represents and refutes the Bhāṭṭa account of *śrutārthāpatti*, which considers *yogyatā* (which, according to Mathurānātha, is construed by the Bhāṭṭas as the property of having all the features required for an *internally congruent* sentential meaning or *anvayaprayojakarūpavattva*) to be essential for *śrutārthāpatti*. For example, when one merely hears the command "Close!", one is compelled to imagine the word "door", in order to arrive at an *internally congruent* sentential meaning, which otherwise remains inexplicable. Soon, Gaṅgeśa refutes this view. He claims that *śrutārthāpatti* arises merely out of cognized inexplicability (*pratītānupapatti*): there is no inexplicability particularly regarding the cognition of an *internally congruent* sentential meaning. That is why there is no need for assigning any causal role to *yogyatā*, as the Bhāṭṭa-s conceive it. The cognitive process is entirely inferential. In

that case, we must admit, against the Nyāya view, that such cognition of sentential meaning cannot be accommodated within the framework of verbal cognition (*śābdabodha*). Neither can we regard the cognition of sentential meaning in cases of *lakṣaṇā*, admittedly similar to *śrutārthāpatti*, as verbal cognition. So, I conclude that some revision is needed in the Nyāya theory of verbal cognition with respect to *lakṣaṇā*.