

Gaṅgeśa's Definition of *Śabda*: What Kind of Words Can We Trust?

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When the Indian logicians (*Naiyāyika*) accept the word (*śabda*) as one of the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*), they do not mean that every word or utterance conveys correct information. The issue about what kind of words conveys the truth has been discussed among classical Indian philosophers since a long time ago. *Nyāyasūtra*, for example, defines the *śabda* as a *pramāṇa* as follows: *āptopadeśaḥ śabdaḥ* (the assertion of a trustworthy person is the word [as a *pramāṇa*]). The new tradition of Indian logic called *Navya-Nyāya*, established by Gaṅgeśa in the 14th century, also adopted this definition with a slight modification. Some manual books of this tradition have a similar definition: '*āptavākyaṃ śabdaḥ*.' Gaṅgeśa himself, on the other hand, presents a definition holding somewhat different form: *prayogahetubhūtarthatattvajñānajanyaḥ śabdaḥ pramāṇam*. In the present paper, I will investigate the import of this definition. By this examination I will try to make clear the view of Gaṅgeśa on what kind of words we can trust. I will start the inquiry with showing that Gaṅgeśa's definition can be reduced to that of *Nyāyasūtra*.

Several scholars have made surveys of this definition, and the most extensive study was done by Prof. Mukhopadhyay in 1992. He also pointed out that Gaṅgeśa stated essentially the same definition as that of *Nyāyasūtra*, as a later commentator, Viśvanātha (17c), interpreted *Nyāyasūtra* in the light of Gaṅgeśa's definition. Viśvanātha's interpretation, however, is subjective and not able to prove in itself the equation of the two definitions. I will try to justify the equation objectively by making reference to Gaṅgeśa's own descriptions. The evidence is found in his discussion with the opponent regarding the nature of the 'trustworthy person' (*āpta*). This inquiry, therefore, will lead us to search for what type of person Gaṅgeśa thinks of as a trustworthy person. We will refer to the treatises of the pre-Gaṅgeśa theoreticians also to see how he concluded his thesis, because the discussion of Gaṅgeśa shows close resemblance to a passage of Udayana (10-11c). In some places, however, Gaṅgeśa deviates from his own definition and denies the quality of *āpta* to be the determinative factor of the validity of *śabda*. Instead, he puts forth another theory, and we will have a look at it also.