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THE CONCEPT OF TĀTAPARYA
IN
INDIAN THEORY OF MEANING

'*Tātparya*' is a technical term in Indian philosophy of language. It does not have any English equivalent. Keeping in mind the distinctive character of the Indian theories of meaning, it is useful to look at its etymological meaning. The word *tātparya* is a noun and has its source in the adjective *tatpara*. *Tatpara* means dependent on that. The meaning of *tātparya* is dependent on the meaning of *tat* to mean a string of words (*Padasamūhah* or *vākya*). It would mean (a) a mode or power (*vytti* or *śakti*) which synthesises the isolated words of the string (b) the fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning. If we take *tat* in the sense of the utterer of the words concerned, *tātparya* would mean (c) an intention of the speaker. These three alternatives viz., (a) synthesising mode or power, (b) fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning and (c) an intention of the speaker suggest two notions of *tātparya*.

i) *Tātparya* is a *vytti* or *śakti* that synthesises the constituent words of a sentence (*anvayabodhikā śakti*).

ii) *Tātparya* is not self-dependent (i.e. *Svarūpa-sat*), but is knowledge arising out of either the fitness of words to express a particular meaning (*tat pratīti-jananayogyatva*) or a relevant intention of the speaker (*Vakturicchā*).

The first notion of them implies that *tātparya* is a *padavytti* like *abhidhā* and *lakṣaṇā*. It is different from them only in its

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function. The second notion tells us that *tātparya* is knowledge. It is *Vākyaārtha-jñānahetuḥ*. It is knowledge arising out of the fitness of words to express a particular meaning, or, it is knowledge of a relevant intention of the speaker.

Let us explain and examine these two notions. For our present purpose, we shall follow the *Nyāyamañjarī* of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa. In fact, while discussing, *abhihitānvayavāda* and *anvitābhidhānavāda*, the opposing views of the two schools of *Mīmāṃsaka*, *Jayanta*, the author of *Nyāyamañjarī* has introduced the concept of *tātparya*.

The *Bhāṭṭa* School of *Mīmāṃsā* holds that the words of a sentence first convey their primary meaning (*abhihita*) one by one. Then these meanings are combined (*anvaya*) through *ākāṅkṣā*, *yogyatā* and *āsatti* for the expression of the meaning of a sentence. This is *abhihitānvayavāda*. According to this view, the isolated word-meanings (*sūddha padārtha*) determine the meaning of a sentence (*Vākyaārtha*).

The *Prābhākara* school, on the other hand, opines that the words as constructed in a sentence (*anvita*) having necessarily a verb give rise to the meaning of them (*abhidhāna*). This is *anvitābhidhānavāda*. According to this theory, the total meaning of a sentence (*Vākyaārtha*) determines the meaning of its constituent words (*padārtha*).

On the first view, *Jayanta* observes, the words of a sentence have no function after conveying their isolated meanings, which are mere universals. As the words only represent their isolated meanings, there remains no possibility of construction (*anvaya*) of them. They stand independently like the iron-stakes¹ On the second view, the isolated objects (*padārthas*) cannot be the meanings of words; words as constructed in the sentence-form express their meanings.² On this view, construction (*anvaya*) of

the words appears first and as a result the constructed meaning of the words are represented. This construction is made possible through *abhidhāśākti* (primary meaning) of the words.

According to Jayanta, both the views, disregard any constructive mode (*anvayabodhinī śakti*). So both of them are weak. If we take into account the *abhihitānvayavāda* for the understanding of *Vākyārtha*, we are to accept such a mode for construction (*anvaya*) of the word-meanings. Again, if we accept *anvitābhidhānavāda*, we are to recognise such a mode for construction other than *abhidhāna*, because of the fact that construction is not cognisable through *abhidhāvṛtti*. Such a mode, Jayanta says, is *tātparyāvṛtti*, which has been ignored by the adherents of both the views. So according to him, both the views are unsatisfactory.³ Jayanta suggests that the *abhihitānvayavāda* may be accepted, if there remains any scope for the recognition of *tātparyāvṛtti* of the words for the synthesis of isolated word-meanings. The *anvitābhidhānavāda* may also be acceptable, if it permits the presence of such a *vṛtti* for the combination of words. *Abhidhā* can give us certainty only about the primary meaning; for the construed meaning, it has no utility. *Abhidhā* of a word only conveys the isolated meaning (*Śuddha padārtha viśayini*). It is *tātparyā* which expresses the related meaning (*Samśarga-viśayinī*)⁴

Abhinavagupta, Dhanarāja and Dhanika, the rhetoricians, have accepted *tātparyā* as a *Vṛtti*. Abhinavagupta is the famous author of *Locanatikā* of Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*. He upholds that for the understanding of *Vākyārtha*, construction of words is necessary; and for this purpose *tātparyāśakti* is to be granted.⁵ Dhanarāja in his *Daśarūpaka* and Dhanika in his *Kāvyanirṇaya* have accepted *tātparyāvṛtti* for the realisation of *rasa* or aesthetic enjoyment of the poetical sentences. Generally, the rhetoricians recognise a *vṛtti* called *vyañjanā* (suggested

meaning), besides *abhidhā* and *lakṣaṇā* for the realisation of *rasa*. According to them, *Vyañjanā* expresses *rasa* through *dhvani* or letter-sounds of the words. Dhanaraja and Dhanika do not accept *dhvani* and so they discard *Vyañjanāvṛtti*. To them, what others call *dhvani* is the *tātparya*. *Rasa* is realised through *tātparyāvṛtti*. A poetical sentence is composed (*anvita*) to express a particular implied meaning, which is not obtained through *abhidhā* or *lakṣaṇā*. This peculiar composition (*anvaya*) is made possible through *tātparyāśakti*. Dhanika says that *tātparya* has no limit; it can express any kind of meaning, as necessary for the expression of poetical thoughts.⁶

It is not clear, whether Viśwanātha the author of *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* has accepted the above point of view of Dhanarāja and Dhanika. Viśwanātha has explained *tātparya* with reference to the view of *abhihitānvayavādin*. He, however, explains that *abhidhā* and the other *vṛttis* cease from their function just after conveying the isolated meaning of the words in a sentence. Then the *tātparya-vṛtti* appears to construct the isolated meaning and express the total meaning of the sentence (*tātparyārtha*).⁷

In spite of the best efforts of Jayanta and the recognition of some celebrated rhetoricians, *tātparya* has generally been treated not as *vṛtti*, but as knowledge that produces the understanding of *Vākyārtha*. In this connection, we may briefly discuss the views of the *Nyāya* and the *Advaita Vedānta*.

Ancient *Natyāyikas* did not specifically mention *tātparyajñāna* as a condition for understanding *Vākyārtha*. They were only in favour of *ākāṅkṣā*, *yogyatā* and *āsatti*. Gaṅgeśa, the founder of New *Nyāya*, added *tātparya* as the fourth condition of *Vākyārthajñāna*. According to him, *tātparya* is not a *padāvṛtti*; rather *tātparya* determines the role of the recognised *padāvṛttis*, viz.,

abhidhā and *lakṣṇā* in a sentence (*tātparyānusāriṇī vṛtti*). *Tātparyā* is the *prayojaka*, the modes or *vṛttis* are *prayojya*. *Prayojya* and *prayojaka* cannot be regarded as the same thing.⁸ Thus, to Gaṅgeśa the knowledge of *tātparyā*, on the one hand, determines the meaning of words and causes the knowledge of *vākyārtha*, on the other.

Following the *Nyāyasiddhāntamañjarī*, Viśwanātha, the author of *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* upholds that *tātparyā* is the intention of the speaker (*vakturicchā*). It is the meaning intended to be conveyed by a sentence. A word in a sentence may mean different things in different contexts. The difference of meaning depends on the intention of the speaker. According to Viśwanātha, we must take into account the knowledge of *tātparyā* (*tātparyajñāna*) or intended meaning for understanding the meaning of a sentence. He cites the stock example of the sentence containing equivocal words, i.e., "*saindhavamānaya*". This may mean either "Bring the salt" or "Bring the horse". The word *saindhava* means both the salt and the horse. Knowledge of the intention of the speaker of "*saindhavamānaya*" is essential for correct understanding of the sentence. Of course, this knowledge of intention depends on the context (*prakaraṇa*). In the context of dining, '*saindhava*' would be understood as salt; in the context of going out, the same word would mean horse. Thus, the intended meaning of the word or words in a sentence uttered by a speaker should be taken into account for the understanding of *vākyārtha*. And this knowledge of the intention of the speaker is what is called *tātparyā*. Now, the knowledge of *tātparyā* or the intention of the speaker is caused by the context of the speech, motive of the speaker, conjunction, disjunction, concomitance, contradiction, proximity of other words, space, time etc. Bhāṭṭhari, the author of *Vākyapadīya* has advocated this view. From this consideration, it may be

said that it is not *tatparyajñāna*, but the context of the speech etc. are the conditions for *vākyaṛthajñāna*. *Viśwanātha* refutes this by saying that the context of the speech, motive of the speaker, conjunction, disjunction, concomitance, contradiction etc., have no self-same character (*anugata dharma*). There must remain some self-same character in that which has the character of being a cause (*kāraṇatā*) It may be argued that their character of being the cause of *tātparyajñāna* (*tātparyajñāna-janakatva*) is this self-same character. In reply to this *Viśwanātha* says that in order to maintain the comparative simplicity (*lāghava*), *tātparyajñāna* should be granted as the condition for *vākyaṛthajñāna*. Knowledge of the speaker's intention is a necessary condition, according to him. In the case of the vedic sentences, the intention of God is to be granted. Words of the irrational beings, like a parrot, when informative, are preceded by God, and when non-informative, are preceded by its tutor.

The *Advaita Vedāna* does not accept *tātparya* as the intention of the speaker, because of the fact that the speaker's intention pre-supposes the knowledge of the spoken sentence. There is accepted a principle that knowledge produces intention and intention produces action. But the words of an imitative parrot, though convey some meaning to the hearer, have no intended meaning. Or, when a person, ignorant of the Vedic Texts, reads out the sentences, he has no intention. Yet the read texts express some meaning. In these cases, the intention of God cannot be granted, because, then to the atheists like the philosophers of *Mīmāṃsā* and *Sāṃkhya*, these sentences should not be understandable.

So Dharmarāja, the author of the *Vedānta-paribhāṣā*, has defined *tātparya* as fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning, while there is no utterance intending to convey a different meaning (*tatpratītijanana-yogyatvaṃ*, with the *vīśeṣana*,

'*taditara-pratīti-cchaya-anuccāritatvam*'). *Tātparya* is *tat-pratīti-janana-yogyatvaṃ*; or *tadarthapratītijananayogyatvaṃ*; but to cover the sentences with equivocal words and so also the words having some intended meaning the adjective, '*tat-pratīti-cchayā-anuccāritatvam*' is to be added. If only *tat-pratīti-jananayogyatvam* were the the definition of *tātparya*, then in the case of utterance like '*saindhavamānaya*', both the meanings—'Bring the salt' and 'Bring the horse' may be understood, in as much as the sentence has fitness (*yogyatva*) to express both 'Bring the salt' and 'Bring the horse'. When one utters '*saindhavamānaya*' to mean 'Bring the salt', then he has no intention to convey the meaning 'Bring the horse' in his utterance. Thus, alongwith the sentences having equivocal words, all the informative sentences are to be understood with the help of the knowledge of *tātparya*, because in all such sentences, there is fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning. *Tātparyajñāna* is an essential condition for *vākyārthajñāna*. In fact, according to the *Advaita Vedānta*, if *tātparyajñāna* were not the essential condition for verbal knowledge, then contemplation over the *Upaniṣadic* sentences would be fruitless, as it is a fact that such contemplation results into the knowledge of *tātparya*, i.e. *Advaya Brahma*.

The above gives us a picture of the two notions of *tātparya*, i.e., *tātparya* as *ṛtti* (mode or power) and *tātparya* as *jñāna* (knowledge). Let us see which of the two notions is acceptable.

While explaining the view of Jayanta, we have seen that the acceptance of *tātparya* as a *ṛtti* is essential for both the theories of *abhihitānvaya* and *anvitābhīdhāna* in order to understand *vākyārtha*. But the scholar-theoreticians do not recognise it. In fact, in respect of the theory of *abhihitānvaya* it may be said that *ākṣmāksā* or mutual expectancy of words, *yogyatā* or fitness

of the words and *śānti* or the proximity of words can easily serve the function of *anvaya*, which is said to be the function of *tātparyā*. In respect of the theory of *anvitābhidhāna* it may be argued that *śabda* which produces *śābdabodha* is not isolated words, but speech or sentence. A sentence as a speech is itself a construction of words. Words, isolated from the sentence-form, are only abstract universals. Such words can never be treated as *śabda*, the source of verbal cognition. Frege, the father of contemporary western philosophy of language, has suggested a principle. The principle is 'never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition.'⁹ The same view has been established by the advocates of *anvitābhidhānavāda*. According to them, the words themselves are constructed (*anvita*) in a sentence to express some meaning. So the acceptance of *tātparyāvṛtti* for the knowledge of *anvaya* of the words is unnecessary. Jayanta has suggested two *vṛttis-ābhidhā* and *tātparyā* for the theory of *anvitābhidhāna*. But we cannot think how the two modes perform their function simultaneously. Knowledge of *anvaya* or *śābdabodha* will require of the simultaneous function of both the *vṛttis*. In the explanation of Jayanta, there is no scope for simultaneous function of them.

According to the rhetoricians, the expression of aesthetic enjoyment (*rasa*) from poetical sentences supersedes the meaning of words conveyed through *ābhidhā*. Some rhetoricians hold that such an expression is possible not through *dhvani* (letter-sounds) but through the *tātparyāśakti*. By this *śakti* (mode or power) only the synthetic relation of *vibhāva* (emotional state of long duration), *anubhāva* (production of *vibhāva*) etc. are apprehended from the reading or hearing of the poetical words. That is to say, the realisation of *vibhāva* etc. and the enjoyment of *rasa* arise simultaneously from *tātparyāśakti*. But how is it possible? Realisation of *rasa* etc. cause the feeling of *rasa*. There

is a before-after sense between the cause *vibhāva* etc. and the effect *rasa* (*kriyā paurvāparyam*). So the position of those rhetoricians, who reject the *tātparyāśakti*, is not to be underestimated.

Moreover, there is a rule which is followed by all the *vṛttis*. When one *vṛtti* ceases after trying to express the meaning only then another *vṛtti* appears. When by *abhidā* the meaning of some word is not satisfactorily conveyed, then *lakṣanā* appears to express the same. Each *vṛtti* can convey one meaning, or try to convey one meaning only. *Tātparyā* does not follow this rule. According to some rhetoricians, it has no limit; it can express any meaning whatsoever. But then to a hearer, a sentence, having the words of infinite and unrestricted meaning, would certainly be unintelligible. In fact, each and every sentence must have its *tātparyā*. In that case it does not matter whether any *vṛtti* ceases from its function or not. So it may rightly be said that *tātparyā* is not a *vṛtti*, it is a condition, a necessary condition so to speak for understanding *Vākyaārtha*. That is to say, it is better to accept *tātparyā*, not as *padavṛtti* but as a species of knowledge for the understanding of *Vākyaārtha*.

But in regard to *tātparyājñāna* as the *vākyaārthajñānaheṭu*, the question arises: in what sense, then, *tātparyā* is to be recognised? Is it intention of the speaker (*vakturicchā*), or fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning (*tatpratīstijanananyogyatva*)?

Consideration shows that *tātparyā* is not always *vakturicchā*; but it is necessarily *tatpratīstijanananyogyatva*, as the *Advaita Vedānta* contends.

When in dream, some one shouts '*taskarōḥ praveśaṁ karoti*' ('A thief has entered'), those, who are not yet slept or just

awakened have the knowledge by *śabda* (words). This knowledge is preceded by *tātparya*, not as the intention of the speaker but as the fitness of the words to convey some particular meaning.

Again, when some child imitates some slang-words and utters these in the presence of the parents, there is no *vakturicchā* (intention of the speaker). Still, there is *tatpratīttijananayogyatva* (fitness of the words to convey some particular meaning).

Further, the poetical words, generally have no intended meaning. That is why poetries are interpreted differently by different readers.

Moreover, even if we take *tātparya* as the intention of the speaker, we cannot say that sentence is possessed of *tātparya*. A sentence is a collection of letter-sounds. Sound, according to the *Naiyāyika* himself, is a physical phenomenon. So a sentence is also a physical phenomenon. How can a sentence possess intention of the speaker, which is not physical at all. But if we accept *tātparya* as fitness of the words to express some particular meaning, then it may essentially be possessed by a sentence.

So by *tātparya*, we should understand *tatpratīttijananayogyatva*, and not *vakturicchā*.

Some, however, accept this *tātparyajñāna* in the restricted sense. They opine that *tātparyajñāna* is the condition for understanding the meaning of only those sentences, which have equivocal words. But this is wrong. Even to understand the meaning of sentences without having equivocal words, this condition is necessary. As for example, there is no equivocal word in the sentence — '*ayam eti putraḥ rājñah puruṣa apasaryatām*'. This sentence can express either 'The son is coming, remove the king's men' or 'The prince is coming, remove the man'. With-

out the knowledge of *tātparyā* or *tadarīhapratīti janana-yogyatva*, these two types of constructive understanding (*anvaya-bodha*) is impossible.

In fact, in every informative sentence, there is fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning, because of the fact that every sentence is uttered under a particular context, in a particular time, space and form. *Tātparyā* differs according to the different forms of the same sentence. For example, the sentence, ' *sa āgacchati* ' — ' He is coming ' may be assertive (He is coming.), may be interrogative (Is he coming ?), or may be exclamatory (He is coming !). The *tātparyā* or, to say, the knowledge of *tātparyā* of each of the forms is not the same.

Besides *tātparyā*, there are other three conditions for *vākyārthajñāna*, viz., *ākāṁkṣā* (expectancy) *yogyatā* (compatibility) and *āsatti* (proximity). According to some, *tātparyā* is not a separate condition; it may be included in *ākāṁkṣā*. By *ākāṁkṣā* in a sentence, one word expects another mutually in order to convey the intended meaning of the speaker. So, *tātparyā*, which is, to some, merely the intended meaning of the speaker is a part of *ākāṁkṣā*. Again some think that *tātparyā* may be included in *yogyatā*, since *yogyatā* or mutual compatibility of a meaning is always determined with reference to the particular context or the probable intention of the speaker.

But we have seen that *tātparyā* should not mean the intention of the speaker, but should mean fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning. And in this sense, it may be justified to hold that *tātparyā* is the primary condition and the other three, secondary for the knowledge of *vākyārtha*, because of the fact that *ākāṁkṣā* or mutual expectancy of words, *yog-*

yatā or compatibility of words for non-contradiction in sense and *āsatti* or proximity of words are the conditions for the production of understanding some particular meaning (*tadartha-pratī-tijanana*) and *tātparya* is fitness of the words to convey a particular meaning (*tadartha-pratī-tijanana-yogyatva*).

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NOTES

1. *Nirapekṣaprayogeḥ ayaṁ salākākalpanā bhavet. — Nyāyamañjarī*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1936, p. 372.
2. *Tadanvī ābhīdhāne tu padāntaramarthakam. — ibid.*, p. 372.
3. *Matadvayamapīdaṁ tu nāsmābhyoḥ rocatetaram, kuto anvī ābhīdhānaṁ vā kutovābhīhitānvayam. — ibid.*, p. 370.
4. *Abhīdhātīmatā-śakti padānām svārthanīśthatā, teṣām tātparya śaktistu sāmsargamavadhī. — ibid.*, p. 372.
5. *Vākyārthe tātparyaśakti parasparānvite, tātparyaśaktaiva anvaya-pratīpatī. — Locanātikā*, pp. 16-17, quoted from J. N. Bagchi's *Vākyārtha-nirūpaṇer Dārśanik Paddhati*.
6. *Yāvatkāryaprasāritvāt tātparyam na tulādhr̥tam — Kāvyanirṇaya*, ref., *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, ch. v by Viśwanātha.
7. *Abhīdhāyā ekaikapadārtha-bodhana virāmād vākyārtharūpasya padārthānvayasya bodhinī tātparyam nāma. Tadarthasya tātparyārthah. Tadbodhakam ca vākyamityabhīhitānvayavādīnām matam. — Sāhityadarpaṇa* by Viśwanātha, ch. II.
8. Ref., by J. N. Bagchi, *Vākyārtha-nirūpaṇer Dārśanik Paddhati*.
9. quoted from the Foundation of Arithmetic, translated by J. L. Austin, in the article Bolzano and Frege by D. P. Chattopadhyaya in *Jadavpur Studies in Philosophy* — I.

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3. *Bhāṣapariccheda* with *Siddhāntamuktāvalī*, Viswanatha Nyayapanca-
nana, ed. by P. Sastri, Contai, Midnapore, 1374 (Beng.) (*śabdakhaṇḍa*).
4. *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*, Dharmarājādhvarīndra, ed. by P. Sastri, Contai,
Midnapore, 1377 (Beng.) (agamapariccheda).
5. *Vākyārtha-nirūpaṇer Dārśanik Paddhati*. J. N. Bagchi Sanskrit Book
Depo, 1981, pp. 7-44.
6. *Sabdārthatattva*, R. K. Bhattacharya Siddhanta Sastri, Pravartak
Publishers, 1364 (Beng.).
7. *Jadavpur Studies in Philosophy* — I, MacMillan, 1979.
8. *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge*, S. C. Chatterjee, C. U., 1965.

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