# MEANS OF KNOWING THE MEANING OF WORDS

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**Abstract**:  Śaktigraha (the apprehension of meaning) can be had in various ways. The number of ways prescribed for learning the meaning of a new word je for obtaining the knowledge of Śakti in particular context is not always the same with all scholars. Among the Naiyāyikas, Visvanatha, the author of N.S.M. explains eight means for knowing the denotative function[1] But Annambhatta recognises only. Vrddhavyavahāra as the Śaktigrāhaka. In his opinion, only usages of elders is the way in this regard[2]. Gangesa, a predecessor of Visvanātha[3] comes to admit that the knowledge of all words primarily results from the observations of the usage of elderly persons ie Vrddhavyavahāra. In the opinion of Jagadisa, the knowledge of samketa first takes place in all cases through vrddhavyavahara[4] and only thereafter, scope arises for the knowledge of śakti through other factors like Upamāna. From this we can see that according to the Naiyāyikas, Vrddhavyavahara gets more recognition.

**Index Terms:** Śaktigraha, Naiyāyikas, Ālamkārikas, Sāmkhya, Āptopadeśa,Mīmāmsa.

Among the Ālamkārikas. Vāmana[5] recognises only kośa (Lexicon) (dictionary) in this context. But after this period, Visvanātha kaviraja, a modern Ālamkārika have come to admit more than one way in this regard. According to him, Vrddhavyavahāra or usages of elders is the most important way and he adds two others like 'Prasiddha padasamabhivyāhāra' and Āptopadeśa[6]

Of the Grammarians, Nāgeśa[7] admitted all the eight fold means for obtaining the meaning of a word. But he considers Vrddhavyavahāra as Saktigrāhakasiromani ie the chief of the factors determining the denotative power of words..

Kātyāyana begins his Vārttikas with the statement that the relation between words and their meanings is got from worldly usage.

Sāmkhya admitted only three ways for learning the meaning of words[8].They are:- Āptopadeśa, Vṛddhavyavahära and prasiddhapadasannidhi.

From the above, we can see that though the number of ways suggested for acquiring the knowledge of new words varies in different treatises, it is interesting to find that Vrddhavyavahāra is invariably recognised by almost all the scholars of various schools including Mīmāmsa also. In the view of the Prabhakaras also, the most important method of learning the words is the Vṛddhavyavahāra or usage of elderly persons.

A brief explanation of eight well-known methods used for obtaining the knowledge of sakti is given below:

 **Vyākaraṇa or grammar** - It is with the help of grammar that one can understand the significance of a word. We learn the meanings of the roots, suffixes and derivatives from grammar. We all knew that the most important use of grammar is to help people to learn a language quickly and correctly. For eg:- 'Mitrah bhati'

and 'Mitram bhati'. Here the same word 'Mitra' when used in the masculine gender, we get the meaning as 'Sun' and when we used the same word 'Mitra' in neuter gender, we get the meaning as 'friend'.

**Upamana or analogy** - One can know the denotative function from comparison also. A man who does not know what a gavaya, a particular species of animal looking like a cow can identify it through perception aided by the description of the animal heard previously. He is told that a gavaya is like a cow, and then, if he actually meets a gavaya in the forest, he is able to identify it at once. This method of knowing is considered by the Mīmāmsaka-s and the Naiyāyika-s as a pramāṇa or means of knowledge different from perception and inference. By using this method, we can identify any herbs and plants..

**Kośa or lexicon (dictionary)** Third means of knowing denotative function is kośa or dictionary. Dictionary gives us the knowledge of the equivalent word - meanings with regard to a particular word. We know that Amarakośa etc. gives the knowledge of the synonyms like svargah, nakah etc.

**Āptavākya** or the direct statement of a trustworthy person is another way by which we may learn the meanings of words. When a trustworthy person says that the word 'pika' means "Kokila' ie Cuckoo'. The listener who does not know the meaning of the word pika, understands the denotative function of the word 'pika' as in Kokila, ie 'Kokilah pikapada vācyah'.

**Vrddhavyavahāra** or the usage of words by elders is the most important way among all the eight methods. In actual life, this is the natural way of observation. For example:- when the elder person directs another person 'Bring a cow' or 'Bring a jar. On hearing these words a jar is brought by the latter. Seeing this, a boy who is standing near by understands that the action of bringing the jar is brought about by the sentence 'bring a jar. Afterwards by means of sentences like take away the jar', 'bring the cow and so on by inclusion and exclusion of respective words, the boy grasps the denotative function of words like jar and so on.

**Vākyaśeṣa** or the rest of the passage in the context or the remainder of the sentence is the sixth means of determining the śakti of a word. We know that certain words have two or more primary meanings. Such words may have ascertained on the strength of Vākyaśeṣa ie the rest of the passage. As for example, in the Vedic passage 'yavamayascarurbhavati'. Here a doubt arises with regard to the meaning of the word 'yava'. The word 'yava' is used in the sense of 'barley' by the cultured people or Āryas; and in the sense of Kangu' (panic seed) by the uncultured men or Mlecchas. When we have to consult the rest of the passage like 'yatrānya etc. which describes the yavas flourishing with green leaves at a time when other plants are found withering away. Or we may have recourse to another passage read together with 'yavamayaścarurbhavati'. This passage, namely 'Vasante Sarvasasyānām etc. also describes the longawned yava's rejoining in the season of spring, when generally all herbs and plants come to be devoid of leaves. On the strength of either of these two passages, we come to be confirmed in the notion that 'yava in 'yavamayaścarurbhavati' means the Barley.

**Vivrti or explanation** - Visvanātha observes that even on the strength of Vivaraṇa, one can ascertain the śakti of a word with regard to a particular meaning. Vivaraṇa or Vivrti is the statement of the meaning of a particular word by means of another synonyms or a word having a similar meaning. For example: The sentence 'ghato'sti' is explained by putting the sentence 'Kalaśo'sti' and as a result, one can understand the meaning of the word 'ghata' as 'Kalasa'. Here we actually come to know the meaning of an unknown word through a commentary describing the meaning. Similarly 'pacati' means 'pākam karoti'.

**Siddhapadasānnidhya (prasiddha padasānnidhya)** or the syntactic connection with words already known is the eighth means of knowing denotative function. Visvanātha explains in N.S.M., that Sānnidhya (Proximity) to prasiddhapada (a well-known word) helps us to ascertain the śakti of a word so long unfamiliar or aprasiddha.

**Conclusion**

From the sentence 'iha sahakāratarau madhuram piko rauti' which means that 'A pika singing sweetly on the mango tree'. Here the word 'pika' is unfamiliar, while the words 'Sahakārataru', 'madhura" and 'rauti are already familiar. But the unfamiliar word 'pika' having physical proximity with the familiar words comes to convey the idea of Kokila as its Śakyārtha.

So we come to a conclusion that the śakti of the word 'pika' is ascertained on such a ground with regard to a cuckoo (Kokila).

Bibliography

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