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Central nucleus of a sentence

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Abstract

This is a common experience that firstly we hear a sentence and then we understand its meaning. This sentence is composed of words; and these words have got potentiality and through this they are capable of expressing definite meanings. In Indian Philosophy, such cognition of meaning is called Śābdabodha. In the process of Śābdabodha, it is very important to discuss the central nucleus of a sentence because the meaning revolves around the nucleus of a sentence.

Keyword: Epistemologists, grammarians, ritualists, logicians, nucleus

Introduction

Epistemologists ie. Grammarians, Ritualists (Mīmāṃsakas) and Logicians (Naiyāyikas) have proposed three main linguistic theories regarding the central nucleus or principal (chief) qualificand (mukhyaviśeṣya) in Śābdabodha. Of these, Grammarians accepted verb as the main substantive. But in the view of Mīmāṃsakas), meaning of the finite verb (ākhyātārtha) is the most important word while according to Naiyāyikas nominative case is the main substantive.

Grammarians' View Point

According to the Grammarians, it is the verb (kriyāpada) which possess an important place in a sentence. Hence they define a sentence as that which possess a finite verb In their opinion, verb is the central axis around which the other words perform their functions as auxiliary. Hence verb or kriya is the chief substantive (mukhya viśeṣya) and the kartā (agent or doer) serves as its qualified or adjective (viśeṣaṇa)". They pointed out that mukhya viśeṣya in verbal cognition is always the meaning referred to by the verbal root. This theory is based on the fact that verbs are held to refer to root-meanings as the principal element ie bhāva-pradhānam akhyātam. For eg: In the sentence 'Caitra grāmam gachati (Caitra goes the village). Here going (gachati) is the action, referred to by the verbal root 'gam (go) is the chief qualificand of all relations. Consequently, all other meanings, referred to by various words in the same sentence, relate directly or indirectly to the action 'going. Here the word 'village, referred to by the accusative word 'grāmam', is related to the object' or abode (āśraya) referred to by the accusative case ending '(am) through the relation of identity. The same object is related to the effect contact one of the two meanings referred to by root gam' (go) through the relation of occurrence. Again, the contact is related to the action 'going' the second of the two meanings referred to by the same root (gam) through producing-where as Caitra, the meaning referred to by the nominative word 'Caitrah', is related to the agent (kartr) one of the two meanings referred to by the conjugational ending (ti) through identity. Further, the abode is related to the action 'going through occurrence. Thus, the cognition is that the action 'going' which produces the contact, occurring in the object 'village' has Caitra, the agent, as its abode. (grāmahinnaśrayavṛttisamyogajanaka vyāpārah eka Caitrābhinna kartṛvṛttih).

Grammarians hold that such a theory is necessitated by the fact that in impersonal passive statements such as 'Caitrena supyate' (slept by Caitra). Here they have accepted the verbal cognition such as the action 'sleeping' has 'Caitra as its agent wherein the action 'sleeping' is the chief qualificand. Another example 'Rama brings a pot'. (Ramah ghatamānayati). This sentence as an act or process of activity leading to the bringing of a pot by Rama.

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Consider the statement 'pasya mrgo dhāvati' (behold the animal is running) consisting two verbs; namely 'behold' and 'runs' express the action beholding' and running' respectively. Here the action running' which has the animal as its agent, functions as the object; whereas the beholding functions as the chief qualificand.

Thus, the cognition produced is that the beholding has the running as its object which in turn, has the animal as its agent. So we can say that only grammarian's theory explains satisfactorily the verbal cognition produced from this statement.

View Point of Ritualists

The Mīmāṃsakas also emphasis the importance of the verb and they agree with the Vaiyākaraṇas in holding that it is the action which constitutes the central meaning of a sentence. They hold that in injunctive and other statements, optative and other verbal affixes (ākhyāta) must be accepted to refer to a productive activity (bhāvana). Also, they hold that finite verbs such as he ought to make oblations (yajeta) must be analysed as he ought to do the making of oblations (yagam karoti). Consequently, each finite verb refers to an action such as making oblations and activity (bhāvana or vyāpāra) such as 'doing' or 'making'.

Mīmāṃsakas considered such productive activity must be the central point i or chief qualificand in verbal cognition produced from sentences; and all other meanings referred to by the words in a sentence are directly or indirectly related to the productive activity. For eg:- Consider the sentence 'Caitra goes to the village' (caitra grāmam gachati). Here the nominal base (grama) refers to the village, the accusative case ending (am) refers to the power called objectness (karmatva akti) which is an undivisible property. Other nominal base 'Caitra' refers to the agent 'Caitra' and the nominative case-ending refers to the number (singularity etc) ie ekābhinna Caitravṛtti kartṛta nirūpikā grāmaṇiṣṭa karmata nirūpikā ca ya kriya tadanukūla bhāvanā. Similarly, the root 'pac' in the finite verb pacati (Caitrah tandulam pacati) refers to the action cooking and the conjugational ending 'ti' refers to the productive activity. From these examples, the syntactico-semantic relations involved in the referents can be described in the following manner:- The meaning of the accusative base, the village, is related directly to the objectness through the relation of occurrence and indirectly through the objectness to the activity; and the same objectness is related directly to the action 'going' through the relation of conditioning and indirectly through the action to the impellent force. Here the meaning of the nominative base, ie 'Caitra', is directly related to the activity through the conditioning of agentness occurring in him. Thus the verbal cognition produced from the statement is that the impellent force or productive activity is conducive to the action 'going' which is conditioning both the objectness occurring in the village and the agentness occurring in the single Caitra.

So we can say that Ritualists establish a different theory by interpreting the rule in this manner-ākhyāta ie verbal endings refer to the productive as the chief qualificand; and this interpretation confirms to the established convention that between the meaning of base and inflectional endings, only the latter is the qualificand ie productive activity is the chief qualificand in verbal cognition and hence in the opinion of Ritualists, predicate is the most important factor in the analysis of sentence meaning.

View Point of Logicians

In the opinion of Logicians, meaning of the finite verb (ākhyātārtha) is the most important part"and they laid emphasis on one point that the chief substantive (mukhya viśeṣya) is the 'karta' (doer) which is in nominative case(pratamanta) ie the subject of a sentence is the most important part of a sentence. According to them, all other words including the verb are only subsidiary to it and qualify it in some way or other (ie directly or indirectly).

For eg:- Caitra goes to the village (Caitro grāmam gachati). Here Caitra. the agent is the substratum of the activity conducive to the 'going' which in turn, is conditioning the objectness occurring in the object village. According to Logicians, conjugational endings refer to the productive activity only in the cases where the agent happens to be an animate such as Caitra. But where the agent is an inanimate, such as a chariot Chariot goes' (ratho gachati) the same refers through established indication to only an operation (Vyāpāra). Here, the cognition is that the chariot has an operation that is conducive to the action of 'going' Similarly in passive construction too, Logicians hold that the chief qualificand is the meaning referred to by the nominative word. For eg:- Village is gone to by Caitra (Caitrena grāmo gamyate). Here the instrumental case ena' after the word 'Caitra' refers to the activity ie the agentness. The root 'gam (to go) as usual, refers to the action going and the conjugational ending (te) refers to the objectness. which is, in this case, the effect contact: where as the nominative base grāma refers to the object 'village" and the nominative case coding (ah) simply refers to the number singularity. Thus the cognition produced is that the village, has the objectness that is produced by the action 'going', resulting from the productive activity ie agency occurring in Caitra.

Conclusion

From all these, We can conclude that while the verb is very important for the Vaiyākaraṇas and Mīmāṃsakas, it is not so important for the Naiyāyikas. In the opinion of Naiyāyikas, verb is not a necessary part of a sentence and they attach a greater importance to things and lay stress on the noun. These kinds of differences in attitude leads to the different ways to interpret the meaning of sentence.

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