Some Remarks on Gaṅgeśa’s Argument on Tātparyā

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Introduction

It was originally enunciated by Mimāṃsakas and later accepted by other schools, that the words as constituting a valid sentence have to be endowed with three factors—verbal expectancy (ākānśa), contiguity (sannidhi), and semantic fitness (yogyatā). Some later Navya-nyāya theoreticians add speaker’s intention (tātparya) to the list and formulate that the listener’s cognition of the four factors is required for the generation of verbal understanding.

Gaṅgeśa (ca. 1325), who established the Navya-nyāya school, is also sometimes said to be one of the upholders of this four-factor theory without showing efficient textual evidences. We should, however, be careful about drawing such a conclusion. There are at least two sections that show his systematic thought on tātparya in the fourth part (Śabdakhaṇḍa) of his Tattvacintāmaṇi (TC) — (1) the first chapter (Śabdarāmānyavāda) where he discusses the role of tātparya in the generation of the verbal understanding and (2) the fifth chapter (Tātparyavāda) where he argues on the nature of tātparya. This paper focuses on the problem of how to understand the latter argument properly. Although this chapter comes immediately after the examination of the three factors required for the verbal understanding in the second, third and fourth chapters respectively, it does not seem necessary to interpret it only in this context. A close look will exhibit its remarkable resemblance to the argument of his predecessor, Udayana (10–11c), who argues on tātparya in his NKus (Nyāyakusumāñjali) from a different viewpoint. A comparison of their discussions on that concept seems to provide us with another way of considering the fifth chapter. First, I summarize the content of their arguments to show their similarities.

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Udayana’s Argument

Udayana argues on tātparya in a section of the fifth chapter of his NKus. The overall motive of this treatise is to prove the existence of God (iśvara). In a controversy with those who deny it, particularly the Mīmāṁsā theoreticians (Mīmāṁsakas), he employs tātparya as one of the logical grounds for God’s existence. The following shows the outline of his argument, as I understand them from his concise descriptions.

The injunctive (vidhī) and prohibitive sentences (niśedha) of the Veda are acknowledged to be meaningful because they urge the listeners to make efforts to acquire or abandon the things prescribed or prohibited. The Veda, however, also contains explanatory sentences (arthaśāda) that neither command nor prohibit anything, but merely express the praise or censure of something. Tātparya has to be resorted to in order to explain that such sentences are also meaningful. In view of the commonly observed fact that people make efforts to acquire the things praised or to abandon the things censured, it stands to reason that the explanatory sentences should retain their meaningfulness by appealing to the intention (tātparya), with which people are expected to take positive or negative action in accordance with their messages.

What is the tātparya, then? First Udayana analyzes the word tātparya etymologically as a derivative of the bahuvrīhi compound ‘tat-para’ (having it as the ultimate), and then examines the nature of the concept by raising the question what the para (‘intended thing’) in the compound tatpara means. He offers four alternatives (see Table 1) as possible answers.

Let us leave out the first and second alternatives because they have little relevance to the matter in question. The third one is ‘purpose’ (prayojana). If the ‘intended thing’ means somebody’s ‘purpose’ behind the utterance, we have to consider whose ‘purpose’ it is. But it can neither be the purpose of the listener nor the speaker. The former option is rejected because the listener is not acknowledged to determine the reliability (prāmāṇya) or the intended meaning of an utterance. For the latter, Udayana simply states that the Veda has no speaker (namely, the author). This statement may sound somewhat strange, because the thesis that the Veda has no author is accepted only by the Mīmāṁsakas. As a Nyāya theoretician (Naiyāyika), Udayana could never support it. The only possible reason for this statement seems to be that he deliberately bases his argument on the opponents’ premise so
that he can establish the existence of God even from their standpoint.

The fourth alternative is ‘referent’ (*uddeśya*). Udayana proposes this alternative separately from *prayojana* probably because it may denote the impersonal intention of the words themselves so that it would be acceptable to the opponent who denies the existence of the speaker to the Veda. But Udayana, after analyzing this concept in the context of our common linguistic performance, ultimately concludes that the ‘reference’ is nothing but the purport or intention (*abhiprāya, bhāva, or āśaya*), which presupposes a speaker as the agent. Consequently, the fourth alternative is only offered for the sake of an argument with the opposing proponent of the *apauruṣeyatva* of the Veda. According to Udayana, it is substantially the same with the third one because both must finally be interpreted as the speaker’s intention.

He thus concludes that the nature of *tātparya* is nothing but the speaker’s intention, and proves the existence of God on the ground that He is required as the speaker (namely, the author) of the Veda.

**Gaṅgeśa’s Argument**

The fourth part of TC is devoted to the discussion on the nature and functions of words (*śabda*) as a type of the sources of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Gaṅgeśa establishes that verbal expressions are independent sources of knowledge in its first chapter, and then defines and describes each of the three factors—ākāṅkṣā, yogyātā, and āsatti. He subsequently commences his argument on *tātparya*.

In the section of *tātparya*, Gaṅgeśa takes up the question what the *tātparya* is and shows six alternatives. The sixth one (*tatprayojanakatva*) is interpreted in three ways and he adopts the third interpretation as what rightly explains the nature of *tātparya*. It should be remembered here that Udayana asks what the *para* is and gives four alternatives. Three out of the four are also mentioned by Gaṅgeśa and their correspondence can be illustrated by Table 1. Gaṅgeśa is quite likely to depend largely on Udayana’s argument in this section.

Nevertheless, there are some differences between them. For instance, Gaṅgeśa inserts the third and fourth alternatives and refines the argument. The most remarkable difference may be that Gaṅgeśa, without mentioning the ‘referent’ (*IV*), adopts the one rejected by Udayana (*IIIb*) as his conclusion, but this does not imply a fundamental discrepancy. We have seen that Udayana’s *IIIb* is not substantially different from IV. Since Udayana’s *IIIb*
corresponds to Gaṅgeśa’s 6c, there can be no fundamental difference between their conclusions.

It should be asked here why Gaṅgeśa did not reject 6c (speaker’s ‘purpose’). We can conjecture as follows. While Udayana seems to clearly set Mimāṃsakas as the opponents throughout his argument, the figure of the opponent is not explicit in the present section of TC. The context of TC does not force Gaṅgeśa to employ the dialectical technique Udayana resorts to. Perhaps on this account he does not follow the strategy of the predecessor and adopts 6c as his conclusive view.

After thus settling the nature of tātparya, Gaṅgeśa asserts that the Veda has the author on the same ground as that of Udayana and then begins the extensive discussions on scriptures.

**Conclusion**

We have seen above the close resemblance of Gaṅgeśa’s arguments on tātparya to that of Udayana. Both of them use the conclusion of the argument for the purpose of establishing the existence of the author of the Veda. The content of their arguments also shows great similarities. Based on this comparative investigation, we may safely say that Gaṅgeśa’s argument on tātparya is largely modeled on that of Udayana. We have thus obtained another piece of evidence that shows the influence of Udayana, particularly of his Nākus, on the formation of Gaṅgeśa’s linguistic theories. 9)

The close connection between Gaṅgeśa and Udayana would warrant reading Gaṅgeśa’s argument in the context of the discussions on scriptures rather than or in addition to the
context of the four-factor theory, since Udayana argues on tātparya in the former context. The consideration made in this paper, however, does not lead us to conclude that he dis-regards the importance of knowing tātparya in the generation of verbal understanding. To scrutinize how he incorporates tātparya into his theory of verbal understanding, it is necessary to see, as I mentioned in the introduction, the passages where Gaṅgeśa discusses the role of tātparya along with those of the other three factors. These passages should be studied carefully because they contain a different definition of tātparya from what we have seen above, and also show a contradiction to his conclusion made in the first part of the TC. 10) Further researches on them would help us resolve the present issue.

Notes:

Abbreviations:

(Key words) Udayana, Gaṅgeśa, śabda, tātparya, Navya-nyāya
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