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Early Indian Semantics – Grammatical and Philosophical Approach

Abstract

*In this article, I propose to analyse the earliest Indian systematic discussion on the problem of meaning and denotation of words. The discussion itself seems to have been conceived within the famous Indian grammatical tradition (*vyākaraṇa*), and its definitive form was given by the Grammarian Patañjali (second century BC) in his work* Mahābhāṣya*. This whole discussion is carried over and further developed within classical Indian philosophy, beginning with the Nyāya school, whose positions regarding semantics are also analysed here, based on classical works of this school.*

Keywords

denotation, form, configuration, generic property, class property, individual thing, meaning, Nyāya, Patañjali

Introduction

In this article, I propose to analyse the earliest Indian systematic discussion on the problem of meaning and denotation of words. The discussion itself seems to have been conceived within the famous Indian grammatical tradition (*vyākaraṇa*), and its definitive form was given by the Patañjali (second century BC) in his work *Mahābhāṣya*[1] which is an extensive commentary on the classic work of ancient Indian grammatical analysis, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*,[2] of the great Indian Grammarian Pāṇini (fourth century BC). In this commentary are also preserved the "Glosses" (*Vārttika*) on Pāṇini's work composed by Kātyāyana (third century BC) which Patañjali also comments on. This whole discussion is carried over and further developed within classical Indian philosophy, beginning with the Nyāya school, whose positions regarding semantics are also analysed here, based on three classical works of this school: *Nyāyasūtra*, attributed to a certain Akṣapāda (first to second century CE), *Nyāyabhāṣya*[3] of Vātsyāyana (fifth century CE), which is the earliest commentary on NS, and *Nyāyavārttika*[4] of Uddyotakara (sixth century CE) which is the commentary on NBh.

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[1]
MBh = *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali (Franz Kielhorn (ed.), *The Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali*, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona 1962).

[2]
A = *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (Otto von Böhtlingk (ed.), *Pāṇini's Grammatik*, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim ²1964).

[3]
NS = *Nyāyasūtra*; NBh = *Nyāyabhāṣya* (Anantalal Thakur (ed.), *Gautamīyanyāyadarśana With Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana. Nyāyacaturgrānthikā 1*, Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi 1997).

[4]
NV = *Nyāyavārttika* (Vindhyeśvarī Prasāda Dvivedī (ed.), *Nyāya-vārttikam: a gloss on*

1. Setting the Analysis:
   Grammarians on the Problem of Meaning and Denotation

The MBh begins with an exposition of the subject matter of the science of grammar (*vyākaraṇa*, lit. "discrimination", "analysis"). It is a word (*śabda*),[5] and so the grammar is "instruction regarding words" (*śabdānuśāsana*), specifically, words that constitute both everyday speech (as used by the educated élites, *śiṣṭa*) and Vedic sacred texts[6] (laukikānām vaidikānām ca, MBh I. 1. 2–3). But what exactly is a word, what is its nature as an (obvious) phenomenon, that is to say, "when the word 'cow' (is uttered), what is that word (as a word)?" (atha gauḥ iti atra kaḥ śabdaḥ, MBh I. 1. 6). Patañjali gives several possible answers to this question, which may have had its propounders in his time, all of which, however, he rejects:

"Is it not the case that an object made up of a dewlap, tail, hump, hooves and horns is [exactly] that word ['cow']? No, he [Patañjali] says. This is what is called a substance [or individual thing, *dravya*].

Then what we [recognize as] a gesture [or] a movement [or] a blink of the eye, that is the word ['cow']? No, he says [Patañjali]. This is what is called action [*kriyā*].

Then what we [recognize as] white, black, brown [or] gray, that is the word ['cow']? No, he [Patañjali] says. This is what is called a property [or quality, *guṇa*].

Then that which is undifferentiated [in the midst] of differentiated [things], the indestructible [in the midst] of destructible [things], which is of a general nature [*sāmānyabhūtam*], that is the word ['cow' i.e. 'cowness']? No, he [Patañjali] says. This is what is called generic [class] property [*ākṛti*][7]."[8]

It is obvious that, according to Patañjali, the word or language in general as a phenomenon cannot be reduced to any of the fundamental "categories" (*padārtha*) of the objective world into which all the phenomena of reality can be "decomposed".[9] Language has a separate, own nature (*svarūpa*), its own internal structure[10] which, although in contact with the world "out there", actually shapes a particular understanding ("in the mind") of the world.[11] In other words, language-forms correspond to our understanding (idea or concept) of objects and not to objects themselves:

"That by which when uttered, an idea [understanding, *sampratyaya*, of an object] possessing a dewlap, tail, hump, hooves and horns is generated ['becomes'], that is the word ['cow']."[12]

Patañjali also gives another, alternative interpretation of the nature of a word, namely, the word as "sound" (*dhvani*):

"Or, *dhvani* ['sound'], which has recognized [known] meaning in the world [of everyday speech], is said to be the word." (atha vā pratītapadārthakaḥ loke dhvaniḥ śabdaḥ iti ucyate, MBh I. 6. 7).

According to this interpretation, a word is nothing but a phonological (sound) sequence that conveys its own form and nothing more. Therefore, sounds (phonemes), taken separately or arranged in sequence, by themselves cannot generate any meaning which is the fundamental function of words (and language as a whole).

Kaiyaṭa (eleventh century CE) in his commentary to MBh thinks that Patañjali here introduces the so-called "sphoṭa theory", later developed by the famous Indian philosopher of language, Bhartṛhari (fifth century CE). According to this theory, language has two aspects, sound-aspect (*dhvani*) and meaning-aspect (*sphoṭa*). The first is just a sequence of phonemes and the second is a special "mental entity" that resides in mind (*buddhistha*), a real word,[13] that

is manifested through *dhvani* and which actually generates or conveys meaning. Hence there are three basic features of *sphoṭa*: 1. it is something over and above the phonemes; 2. it is manifested through (speech) sounds; and 3. it is expressive of meaning (*vācaka*).[14] Returning to Patañjali's "definition" of the nature of a word in terms of conveying an idea/concept or understanding

Vātsyāyaṇa's commentary of the Nyāya-aphorisms, Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi 1986.

5

The tehnical term *śabda*, which can also mean "sound", in the grammatical usage refers to the fundamental or the most basic bearer of meaning, a "linguistic form" that participates in the constitution of meaning. For early Indian Grammarians, as well as for the majority of Indian philosophical schools, it is a word. But for the later Indian Grammarians (Bhartṛhari, fifth century CE and his followers), just like for G. Frege, it is sentence (*vākya*) that cannot be analysed into simpler components as far as the problem of meaning is concerned. Hermeneutics of Vedic rituals (the Mīmāṃsā school), on the other hand, held that basic meaning-bearers are phonemes (*varṇa*).

6

Although words used in the Vedas do not differ (at least for the most part) from words in everyday speech, they are listed here separately because of their special (religious) status.

7

ākṛti, "shape" or "form". The Grammarians, as well as the Mīmāṃsā school, use this term in the sense of generic (class) property, while all other scools (including the Nyāya school as wee shall see) use the term *jāti* (or *sāmānya*, "general", "universal") for generic (class) property. In the latter case the term *ākṛti* is used for the physical shape (form) of an individual object (*dravya*).

8

kim yat tat sāsnālāṅgūlakakudakhuraviṣāṇyar tharūpam saḥ śabdaḥ na iti āha dravyam nāma tat yat tarhi tat iṅgitam ceṣṭitam nimiṣitam saḥśabdaḥ na iti āha kriyā nāma sā yat tarhi tat śuklaḥ nīlaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ kapilaḥ kapotaḥ iti saḥ śabdaḥ na iti āha guṇaḥ nāma saḥ yat tarhi tat bhinneṣu abhinnam chinneṣu acchinnam sāmānyabhūtam saḥ śabdaḥ na iti āha ākṛtiḥ nāma sā kaḥ tarhi śabdaḥ – MBh, ibid. Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

9

Patañjali probably has in mind here the categories of reality (*padārtha*) that will later fully analyse the Vaiśeṣika school which, in addition to the four mentioned (*dravya*, *karman* = *kriyā*, *guṇa* and *sāmānya* = *ākṛti*), lists two other categories, namely *viśeṣa* (distinction) and *samavāya* (relation

of inerence). There is also the possibility that classical categorial metaphysics of the Vaiśeṣika was later developed on the basis of Grammarians' investigation into the problem of word meaning (or of word reference) since the term *padārtha*, used in the Vaiśeṣika (and some other philosophical schools too) in a sense of the (metaphysical) category of reality, literally means "reference [meaning, *artha*] of the word [*pada*]" or, "a referent [that is revealed] through a word", and in that literally sense the term was used thoroughout the grammatical literature.

10

Cf. MBh I. 4. 5–8: "Just as a wife, wearing clean clothes, in longing for her husband, reveals her body [or: herself], in the same way speech [*vāk*] reveals its body [or: itself] to one who is skilled in speech [expert of speech, *vāgvid*]." – yathā jāyā patye kāmayamānā suvāsāḥ svam ātmānam vivṛṇute evam vāk vāgvide svātmānam vivṛṇute.

11

For the relevant discussion and analysis of this point in Patañjali, see e.g. Johannes Bronkhorst, *Three problems pertaining to the Mahābhāṣya*, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona 1987, p. 49.

12

yena uccāritena sāsnālāṅgūlakakudakhurav iṣāṇinām sampratyayaḥ bhavati saḥ śabdaḥ, MBh I. 1. 11. Cf. also MBh ad A 1.1.44 (I. 104.8–105.13): "The use of words is for the purpose of understanding [cognition] of objects [*arthagati*]. (With the intention) 'I will understand ['arrive at'] an object', the word is used." – arthagatyarthaḥ śabdaprayogaḥ. artham sampratyāyayiṣyāmi iti śabdaḥ prayujyate.

13

"Grammarians maintain that words or sentences, which are different from phonemes [*varṇa*], have the nature of expressing [meaning] […]." – vaiyākaraṇā varṇavyatiriktasya padasya vākyasya vā vācakatvam icchanti, MBhPr (*Mahābhāṣyapradīpa* – Bhargava Sastri Bhikaji Josi (ed.), *The Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣya of Patañjali with the Commentary Bhāṣyapradīpa of Kaiyaṭa Upādhyāya and the Supercommentary Bhāṣyapradīpoddyata of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa*, vol. 1, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishtan, Delhi 1987) p. 65.

(*sampratyaya*) of an object, we can recognize both aspects present there, namely "yena uccāritena […]" ("that by which when uttered […]") refers to *dhvani* or "outer" aspect and "sampratyayaḥ bhavati […]" ("an idea/concept is generated/'becomes' […]") refers to *sphoṭa* or "inner" aspect of language.

In MBh I. 6. 8–11 Patañjali introduces a topic that is of central importance for this study. Having previously determined that the meaning generated by a word is an idea/concept (*sampratyaya*) of an object, the question is now posed as to what exactly is the primary referent (*artha*)[15] of the word (*padārtha*) which is the basis for generating the meaning or concept of the object. That is to say, what a word primarily denotes on the basis of which meaning is generated as some apparently mental phenomenon.[16] Is the primary referent something individual (*dravya*, e.g. individual, concrete cow) or general (*ākṛti*, the class of "all cows"), perhaps in the sense of the generic property "cowness", *gotva*)? This dilemma will become the central subject matter of conceptual analyses of realist systems of Indian philosophy (Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, but also Mīmāṃsā) in the field of theory of meaning, as we shall see. But this dilemma is certainly older than the oldest surviving texts of the mentioned philosophical schools. Already Grammarian Kātyāyana mentions two Grammarians, Vājapyāyana and Vyāḍi, who advocated the second and the first position respectively (*Vārttika* 35, MBh I. 242. 10–11 and *Vārttika* 45, MBh I. 244.8 ad P 1.2.64). We will address this topic soon.

Patañjali preliminarily replies that the word primarily denotes both and does not justify this position by any ontological view about objects but, as a true Indian Grammarian, by referring to two of Pāṇini's grammatical rules (A 1.2.58 and 1.2.64) which can support both views. Specifically, according to Patañjali, Pāṇini formulated these two rules to cover both (opposing) views regarding the primary referent of the word. We will also address these rules and Patañjali's exegesis thereon.

But once words are accepted to have their referents with whom they establish a relationship that generates meaning or an "idea" of objects, the question arises as to whether this relationship is fixed and permanent (*nitya*) or "natural" (*svābhāvikī*) or is in some way artificially constructed (*kārya*), for example, through grammatical analysis, application of certain grammatical rules, etc. According to Kātyāyana, the connection (*sambandha*) between the word and its referent (*artha*) is "established" (*siddha*)[17] and not artificially or "post festum" construed, which Patañjali interprets in a sense that this connection is "permanent" (*nitya*). Furthermore, if it is accepted that this connection is permanent, then from which semantic perspective it proves to be permanent, from the perspective of the referent as a substance (individual object, *dravya*) or from the perspective of the referent as a class of all objects of the same kind (*genus, ākṛti*)?[18]

In the continuation of the discussion, Patañjali tries to argue that from both semantic perspectives this connection is shown to be permanent. Those who argue that in objects only the *genus* i.e. generic (class) property (*ākṛti*) is permanent, while individual objects ("substances", *dravya*) are perishable and impermanent (*anitya*), naturally conclude that the connection between the word and the referent is permanent precisely on the basis of the permanence of the primary referent, namely of the *genus* (*ākṛti*) of the object. But the permanence of that connection can also be defended if one argues that individual objects ("substances", *dravya*) are the primary referent of the word, holding that *dravya* is permanent while *ākṛti* is impermanent. For *dravya* can also

mean the material substance from which individual objects are formed, while *ākṛti* can also mean "form", "shape" or the configuration of a "manifested" (*vyakti*) object. E.g. the clay associated with certain shape, forms some accumulation of clay. When this form is destroyed, for example, a vessel is formed, i.e. a new form, etc. Thus, each time the form changes, it becomes different, while the material substance always remains identical to itself (permanent). But the proponent of the view that it is *ākṛti* that is permanent in objects can defend their position even if the *ākṛti* is understood as a form of a manifested object and not as a *genus*. Namely, although a certain form (*ākṛti*) of an object can be destroyed, it cannot be destroyed in all cases or instances of that object because it can always be verified that the form in question "resides" in other substances (*dravyāntarastha*), MBh, ibid.[19]

Patañjali at the end of the discussion, typically for him, concludes that whichever of the two fundamental aspects (*dravya* and *ākṛti*) of the object represents the primary referent of the word, the connection between the word and the object/referent is permanent.[20]

But how we know or on what basis do we claim that this connection is permanent? What or who establishes this fixed relationship? Is it established, so to speak, before the natural language was revealed[21], or is this permanence (*nityatva*) between the word and its referent constituted through actual linguistic practice or language usage. Patañjali (and Kātyāyana) adheres to the latter view: this connection or relationship is established as permanent "through (linguistic usage) of people/speakers" (*lokatas*, MBh, ibid.). It is naturally constituted in a linguistic community simply because:

14

Cf. Shivram Dattatray Joshi, *Patañjali's Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya, Paspaśāhnika*, University of Poona, Poona 1986, p. 22

15

artha can mean both "meaning" and "referent", depending on the context. It can also mean a "thing" in general.

16

There was a big discussion throughout the history of (classical) Indian philosophy as to whether meaning is a mental phenomenon (though generated by external word-reference, as thought by e.g. Grammarians, especially Bhartṛhari, and some Buddhists) or meaning can be simply reduced to reference in a sense of a mere correspondence or "matching" between a word and an object, as tought by Indian realists (e.g. Nyāya).

17

siddhe śabdarthasambandhe, *Vārttika* 1, MBh I. 6. 14. The statement can also be understood in the sense that both the word and its referent as well as the relationship (between them) are established.

18

atha kam punaḥ padārtham matvā eṣaḥ vigrahaḥ kriyate siddhe śabde arthe sambandhe ca iti, MBh I. 7. 8.

19

This is a somewhat problematic argument because in order for a property to be (absolutely) established, it must be valid in all cases. There must be no counter-examples (examples that prove otherwise).

20

Or: "… word, referent and [their] connection [relation] are permanent […]" – […] siddhe śabde arthe sambandhe ca […] – MBh, ibid.

21

This was the view of the the Mīmāṃsā school (MS 1.1.5) where it is said that the connection between the word and the meaning/referent is "unoriginated" (*autpattika*). Commentator Śabara (ŚB ad MS 1.1.5) interprets "autpattika" in a sense of *apauruṣeya* ("of non-human origin"). The connection is only revealed through the speaker's effort (*prayatnenābhivyajyate*, ŚB ad MS 1.1.22), but ist not created but the latter. MS = *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* of Jaimini; ŚB = *Śabarabhāṣya* (Kashinath Vasudev Abhyankar, Ganesh Shastri A. Joshi (eds.) *Mīmāṃsādarśanam*, seven volumes, Ānandāśrama, Poona 1976–1985).

"In the world, when people/speakers are grasping referents [of objects] they use [appropriate] words. And they do it effortlessly in a sense that they do not have to 'create' those words [for that purpose] […]."[22]

Obviously, Grammarians start here from the assumption that language and understanding of reality (ideas or concepts about reality) are co-extensive. When a particular language form is present, a particular object (referent) is recognized; the opposite holds too: When a certain object (referent) is known, a certain linguistic form that expresses it is necessarily present. The contraposition also holds true: When that linguistic form is absent, that object (referent) is not known. In other words, by observing the presence (*anvaya*) and absence (*vyatireka*) of certain linguistic forms in terms of cognition of certain objects,[23] Grammarians simply state that certain linguistic forms denote certain objects.[24] Thus, Patañjali concludes, linguistic usage (*loka*) is the ultimate authority (or "measure", *pramāṇa*) as for the language, meaning, and their connection. (MBh I. 8. 1)

1.1. Patañjali's Analysis of A 1.2.58

Starting from the assumption that the word primarily denotes either an individual object (substance, *dravya*) or a generic property (or a class of all objects of the same kind, *ākṛti, jāti*), Patañjali further investigates how these semantic choices are reflected in natural language (Sanskrit). The starting point for the discussion is A 1.2.58 where Pāṇini formulates the following rule (assuming the word primarily denotes generic or class property):

"The plural optionally [can be used] for one [object, 'singular'] when generic [class] property [*jāti*] is to be expressed."[25]

Pāṇini seems to have the following in mind: the singular or the plural are used depending on whether the denoted is one object or many objects. Since generic property (*jāti*) is obviously one object, the ending for the singular must correspond to it. On the other hand, there are many individual objects ("substances", *dravya*), so the plural is a natural semantic condition for the plural ending.[26] But the opponent[27] thinks that the rule regarding plural is superfluous because the plural naturally denotes many objects. It is necessary, however, to formulate a rule for the singular. What the singular stands for? According to the opponent, the singular does not stand for generic (class) property, but on the contrary, for many objects (*bahuṣu ekavacanam*, MBh. I. 229. 12, ad A 1. 2. 58). When we say "tree", that word in the singular does not mean the class of all trees or generic property ("tree-ness"), but rather, it denotes all individual (existing) trees.

The proponent considers it quite natural and in accordance with the speaker's intention (*vivakṣā*) that the singular is used to denote one thing. And that one thing can only be generic property or class, "rice-ness" (*vrīhau vrīhitvam*, MBh, ibid.). Therefore, only a special rule for the plural has to be formulated (i.e. A 1.2.58).[28] The opponent, however, seeks to argue that generic name (*jatiśabda*) can also denote an individual object, not just a generic property (jātiśabdena hi dravyam api abhidhīyate jātiḥ api, MBh, ibid.). He then gives one example to clarify his position:

"Someone asks a shepherd sitting next to a large herd of cattle, 'do you see a cow?' He (the shepherd) sees. He (the questioner) sees the cows and still asks, 'do you see a cow here?' Certainly, he (with his question) has in mind some (specific, individual) substance (thing)."[29]

If the word primarily (and only) denoted generic property, then the above question would not make any sense, i.e. it would be obvious that the questioner intends with his question to the generic property "cowness" or to the class of all cows. However, he asks for an individual cow using the singular.

1.2. Patañjali's Analysis of A 1.2. 64.

A more detailed discussion on whether a word denotes an individual object or generic (class) property is presented as a lengthy commentary on A 1.2.64 where Pāṇini formulates the grammatical rule *ekaśeṣa* ("one-remains") which, according to Patañjali, is formulated under the assumption that the word primarily denotes individual things (*dravya*):

"Of [words] whose form is the same, only one remains [*ekaśeṣa*], when [we have the case] of one case ending."[30]

Ekaśeṣa is a grammatical operation by which two or more words having the same nominal base are reduced to a single word standing in dual or plural. This operation refers to the fact that we normally say, for example, "trees" (*vṛkṣās*) and not "tree and tree and tree".[31] This rule is motivated by the idea that one word should be used for each object,[32] which is an implication of the view that a word or individual term refers (only) to one individual object

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22

yat loke artham upādāya śabdān prayuñjate na eṣām nirvṛttau yatnam kurvanti […] – MBh, ibid.

23

On *anvaya-vyatireka* method of analysis, see e.g. Jan Houben, "The Sanskrit Tradition", in: Wout Jac. van Bekkum *et al.* (eds.), *The Emergence of Semantics in four Linguistic Traditions. Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam – Philadelphia 1997, pp. 49–146, here pp. 93–94.

24

Peter M. Scharf, *The Denotation of Generic Terms in Ancient Indian Philosophy. Grammar, Nyāya, and Mīmāṃsā*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1996, p. 40.

25

jātyākhyāyām ekasmin bahuvacanam anyatarasyām.

26

Cf. Peter M. Scharf, "Early Indian Grammarians on Speaker's intention", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1995) 1, pp. 66–76, here p. 69.

27

The discussion is modeled in such a way that the proponent advocates the position that words denote generic (class) property while the opponent advocates the position that words denote only individual objects.

28

"If a word refers to generic [class] property [*jāti*], then it will have one object because it denotes general [universal, *sāmānya*]. 'Riceness' in rice, 'barley-ness' in barley, 'gargya-ness' in Gargya [personal name] is one [thing] and it is intended [(by the speaker). Because it is one [thing] the singular is achieved. But it is required to be plural and it is not realised [established] without effort. Therefore [Pāṇini argues]: 'Plural [occurs] for one [object] if [the word] refers to generic [class] property'. That [sutra] is stated for that very purpose." – jātyākhyāyām sāmānyābhidhānāt aikārthyam bhaviṣyati yat tat vrīhau vrīhitvam yave yavatvam gārgye gārgyatvam tat ekam tac ca vivakṣitam tasya ekatvāt ekavacanam eva prāpnoti iṣyate ca bahuvacanam syāt iti tat ca antareṇa yatnam na sidhyati iti jātyākhyāyam ekasmin bahuvacanam evamartham idam ucyate, MBh I. 229. 13–14, ad A 1.2.58.

29

evam hi kaḥ cit mahati gomaṇḍale gopālakam āsīnam pṛcchati asti atra kām cid gām paśyasi iti saḥ paśyati paśyati ca ayam gāḥ pṛcchati ca kām cid atra gām paśyasi iti nūnam asya dravyam vivakṣitam iti – MBh I. 230. 18, ibid.

30

sarūpāṇām ekaśeṣa ekavibhaktau.

31

Cf. Eivind Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis. The Nirvacana Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 42.

or "substance" (*dravya*). The word "tree" refers to a particular tree, another word "tree" refers to another particular tree, etc. In the absence of the *ekaśeṣa* operation, we would have to use two or more words "tree" in order to express the individual "substances" two or more trees.[33]

In an effort to refute the need for the grammatical operation *ekaśeṣa*, the opponent cites the view of the Grammarian Vājapyāyana that the word primarily denotes generic (class) property (*ākṛti*, MBh I. 242. 10–11,*Vārttika* 35 ad A 1.2.64). Because the word denotes generic (class) property, which is one (one object), there is no possibility of using more than one word at all, so the operation *ekaśeṣa* is completely unnecessary.

Kātyāyana gives several arguments of the opponent in support of the claim that there is one generic property (for each class of objects) and that it is precisely that which is denoted:

a) *prakhyāviśeṣāt*:[34] "… because there is no difference in cognition." (*Vārttika* 36, ibid.) E.g. when the word "cow" is uttered, no distinction is made in a sense of "white cow", "gray cow", etc. The individual cognition of "cow" arises with respect to each cow having different properties, size, etc., and therefore the basis of this cognition must be generic (class) property that is one, MBh, ibid.

b) *jñāyate caikopadiṣṭam*: "… once shown/taught, it is known." (*Vārttika* 38, ibid.). Once the object denoted by the corresponding word is recognised, that object in whatever state, time or place it appears, will always generate the same basic cognition, i.e. its generic or class property, MBh, ibid. Whenever the word "cow" is used it always denotes generic property ("cow-ness"). Otherwise, if a word denoted an individual object (substance, *dravya*), then each word "cow" would generate a completely new cognition of the cow, which obviously does not happen. On the contrary, once it is shown what an individual object of the corresponding class is, one also knows what other individual objects of that class are, once they appear in experience. This is because generic property is present in all members of the corresponding object class.

c) *dharmaśāstram ca tathā*: "… and [prohibitions imposed] in the 'Dharma Codes' [*Dharmaśāstras*] also [assume that the word denotes generic property]" (*Vārttika* 39, ibid.). E.g. the prohibition "Brahmin should not be killed." means "No Brahmin should be killed." If the word denoted an individual object, then the "Brahmin" in the above statement would refer to one particular Brahmin who must not be killed, and this could imply that other Brahmins may be killed.[35]

d) *asti caikam anekādhikaraṇastham yugapat*; "… and the fact is that one [object] is present in many places [*adhikaraṇa*][36] at the same time." (*Vārttika* 40). Patañjali gives a comparison: "Just as one [god] Indra, invoked in hundreds of [Vedic] rituals, is present everywhere at the same time, in the same way generic [class] property will be present everywhere at the same time."[37]

e) *dravyābhidhāne hy ākṛtyasampratyayaḥ*: "… for if [a word] denoted an individual object [*dravya*], there would be no cognition of generic [class] property." (*Vārttika* 42). And this in turn would imply "absence of cognition [of class] of all individual objects" (*asarvadravyagatiḥ*, *Vārttika* 43). Such an absence of cognition (of class) of all individual objects would lead, for example, to the impossibility of carrying out ritual injunctions (*codanā*) when Vedic rituals are performing. Patañjali gives an example

of one such injunction: "A cow, a goat, should be tied up to Agni and Soma." (gauḥ anubandhyaḥ ajaḥ agnīṣomīyaḥ, MBh, ibid.). If the words "cow" and "goat" denoted an individual object, then those words could not denote any other cow or goat, that is to say, their cognition could not be generated. After the above injunction is executed, no one could ever again execute injunction to tie up a cow and a goat because the execution of that injunction would be of a one-time nature. However, it is clear that this injunction is executed repeatedly in respect of any cow or goat, so it is obvious that the word denotes generic (class) property.

In the continuation of the discussion, Kātyāyana presents arguments of the proponent who is of the opinion that a word denotes individual objects (*dravya*), which is an implication of the grammatical operation *ekaśeṣa* formulated under A 1.2.64. That the word primarily denotes an individual object was the view of the Grammarian Vyāḍi (dravyābhidhānaṃ vyāḍiḥ, *Vārttika* 45, MBh I. 244. 8, ad A 1.2.64). The arguments and reasons for this position are as follows:

a) *tathā ca liṅgavacanasiddhiḥ*: "… and in this way (grammatical) gender and number are established." (*Vārttika* 46). Patañjali: "And thanks to this [literally: 'and just doing so', i.e. assuming the word denotes an individual object], grammatical genders and numbers are [well] established: "brāhmaṇī" [female Brahmin, feminine singular], "brāhmaṇaḥ" [Brahmin, masculine singular], "brāhmaṇau" [two Brahmins, masculine dual], "brāhmaṇāḥ" [Brahmins, masculine plural]."[38] Because if a word would denote generic (class) property, then the word would always appear in the singular case ending, because the singular occurs naturally when denoting one object and never in case endings for dual and plural. A word, however, occurs in both, dual and plural, and hence cannot denote generic or class property. Likewise, a generic term, e.g., "brāhmaṇa", occurs in both the masculine ("brāhmaṇaḥ") and feminine ("brāhmaṇī") gender. The word "Brahmin" (nominal base "brāhmaṇa") cannot be both masculine and feminine at the same time, so that word at least denotes two different objects, while generic property is presumably one object. Hence a word denotes individual objects.

32

In this sense, Kātyāyana formulates the principle "one word for one object" (pratyarthaṃ śabdaniveṣāt […]) which implies that one word does not denote multiple objects (*naikenānekasyābhidhānam*, *Vārttika* 1 ad A 1.2.62).

33

Cf. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality. An Introduction to Indian Philosophical Studies*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi 1990, p. 381.

34

prakhyā means "appearance", but the commentator Kaiyaṭa understands the term as synonymous with *buddhi*, "consciousness", "cognition". Cf. P. M. Scharf, *The Denotation of Generic Terms in Ancient Indian Philosophy*, p. 16, note 36.

35

yadi dravyam padārthaḥ syāt ekam brāhmaṇam ahatvā ekām ca surām apītvā anyatra kāmacāraḥ syāt – MBh, ibid.

36

adhikaraṇa, "place", but also locative case; also in the sense of an individual object (*locus*, *substratum*) which inhers (*samavāya*) in generic property.

37

tat yathā ekaḥ indraḥ anekasmin kratuśate āhūtaḥ yugapat sarvatra bhavati evam ākṛtiḥ api yugapat sarvatra bhaviṣyati – MBh, ibid.

38

evam ca kṛtvā liṅgavacanāni siddhāni bhavanti brāhmaṇī brāhmaṇaḥ brāhmaṇau brāhmaṇāḥ iti – MBh ad A 1.2.64., ibid.

b) *codanāsu ca tasyārambhāt*: "… and because according to the ritual injunction one undertakes [an action on the basis of] it [an individual object]." (*Vārttika* 47). It is quite clear that the ritual injunction "a cow, goat should be tied up to Agni and Soma" can be executed only if the words "cow" and "goat" denote individual objects (MBh, ibid.). Because "cow-ness" and "goat-ness" cannot be tied up, under the assumption that these words denote generic or class property, the ritual injunction could not be executed. Therefore, words denote individual objects (*dravya*).

c) *na ca ekam anekādhikaraṇastham yugapat*: "… and it is not so that one (object) is present in many places at the same time." (*Vārttika* 48). Patañjali gives the example of one person who cannot be present in two cities at the same time. (MBh, ibid.) In the same way one object (i.e. generic property) cannot be present in many individual objects at the same time.

d) *vināśe prādurbhāve ca sarvam tathā syāt*: "… when (some thing) disappears and when (some other thing of the same class) arises, all (members of the same class) would be equal (i.e. would arise and disappear)." (*Vārttika* 49). The idea of the argument seems to be as follows: If a word denotes generic (class) property, then with the disappearance of one member of the class, property of the class itself would also disappear because that property is entirely present in that member of the class. Therefore, with the disappearance of a member (an individual object), property of the class itself would also disappear. Patañjali: "'The dog died.' Nothing in the world by the name 'dog' would remain."[39] Likewise, under the assumption of generic (class) property as that which is denoted by a word, when an individual object is created, it would mean that the property of class of all objects in question is created at the same time. And in order for the property of a class to be manifested, all the members of that class (individual objects) would have to, so to speak, arise in one stroke. Patañjali: "'A cow was born'. There would not be enough room for everything that is (or has ever been or will ever be) a cow."[40] It is therefore obvious that words must denote individual objects.[41]

e) *asti ca vairūpyam*: "… and there is a difference." (*Vārttika* 50). Patañjali: "… [Difference between one] cow and [other] cow; an incomplete cow, a cow without horns."[42] Individual objects of the same class are in fact quite different from each other, and their evident similarity is still not a sufficient reason to postulate a generic or class property. We can call them by the same name, but not because we recognize in them a common generic property, but, for example, because they serve or can serve the same purpose. This diversity of individual objects, which supposedly have the same class property, is another argument in support of the claim that words denote individual objects.

f) *tathā ca vigrahaḥ*: "… and in this way the analysis [is possible]." (*Vārttika*, 51). Patañjali: "And thanks to this [literally: 'and having done just that', i.e. under the assumption that words denote individual objects], the analysis [*vigraha*] of 'cow and cow' [for dual 'two cows'] becomes possible."[43] The analysis of "cow and cow" [*gauḥ ca gauḥ ca*] aims to show the meaning of dual "two cows" [*gāvau*]. This analysis is possible only on the assumption that each word ["cow" and "cow"] denotes an individual object. Otherwise, if a word denoted generic or class property, which is one, the analysis would not be possible because both the first and second word "cow" would mean the same object, i.e. generic or class property.

1.3. Final Grammarians' Position Regarding Denotation of Words

After presenting arguments for and against the claim that the exclusive referent of generic words is an individual object (*dravya*) or a generic (class) property (*ākṛti*), Patañjali (following Kātyāyana's *Vārttikas*) now puts forward the thesis that in concrete linguistic usage both appear as a referent of words, while it depends on the speaker's linguistic intention which one of them will be the "primary" (*pradhāna*) referent and which one will be the "secondary" (*guṇa*):

"For it is not so that for one to whom the reference of a word [*padārtha*, that which is denoted] is generic [class] property, an individual object is not the referent of a word [i.e. not denoted], nor is it so that for one to whom the referent of a word is an individual object, generic [class] property is not the referent of a word. Both is denoted for both. But for each of them one is fundamental [primary, *pradhāna*] and the other is subordinate [secondary, *guṇa*]. For one to whom the referent of a word is generic [class] property, to him generic [class] property is fundamental [primary], and the individual object is subordinate [secondary]. For one to whom the referent of a word is an individual object, to him the individual object is fundamental (primary), and generic (class) property is subordinate (secondary)."[44]

But Patañjali, towards the end of the discussion, introduces some considerations regarding the nature of generic property that go beyond his (and grammatical in general) narrower interest which, as we have seen, is primarily an exploration of semantic "choices" with respect to Pāṇini's relevant rules of grammatical derivation that are always based on concrete language usage. Specifically, Patañjali seems to enter the domain of ontology when he claims that an individual object can be a referent of a word only insofar as it is "associated" (*sahacarita*) with generic property:

"Since [concrete actions such as] binding, etc. are not possible on generic [class] property, binding, etc. will take place on an individual object that is associated with generic [class] property."[45]

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[39]

śvā mṛtaḥ iti śvā nāma loke na pracaret – MBh, ibid.

[40]

gauḥ jātaḥ iti sarvam gobhūtam anavakāśam syāt – MBh, ibid.

[41]

It is obvious that the proponent understands the relationship between generic (class) property and an individual member of that class (an individual object) as the parts-whole relationship. Just as a whole can manifest itself only when all its constituent parts are present, so generic (class) property is present only when all the members of that class are present. Realistic philosophical systems (Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, but already Patañjali, see the end of this discussion below), however, as we shall see, understand the relationship between generic (class) property and class members in a way that generic (class) property is fully and simultaneously present in the latter, wherever and whenever they appear. The premise of this explanation is, of course, that generic (class) property is an object-independent entity in which objects inhere (*samavāya*), but the reverse is not true, generic (class)

property does not inhere in objects and hence by destroying one object of the same class or even all objects, generic (class) property itself is not destroyed.

[42]

gauḥ ca gauḥ ca khaṇḍaḥ muṇḍaḥ iti – MBh, ibid.

[43]

evam ca kṛtvā vigrahaḥ upapannaḥ bhavati gauḥ ca gauḥ ca iti – MBh, ibid.

[44]

na hi ākṛtipadārthikasya dravyam na padārthaḥ dvavyapadārthikasya vā ākṛtiḥ na padārthaḥ ubhayoḥ ubhayam padārthaḥ kasya cit tu kim cit pradhānabhūtam kim cit guṇabhūtam ākṛtipadārthikasya ākṛtiḥ pradhānabhūtā dravyam guṇabhūtam dravyapadārthikasya dravyam pradhānabhūtam ākṛtiḥ guṇabhūtā – MBh I. 247. 16, ad A 1.2.64.

[45]

ākṛtau ārambhaṇādīnām sambhavaḥ na asti iti kṛtvā ākṛtisahacarite dravye ārambhaṇādīni bhaviṣyanti, MBh, ibid.

And not just that. Commenting upon *Vārttika* 57 which states that generic property "is not destroyed because it is not dependent" (avināśo 'nāśritatvāt), Patañjali clearly takes a realist (philosophical) stance when he interprets this *Vārttika* in a sense of ontological primacy of generic property over individual objects:

"After the destruction of an individual object, generic (class) property is not destroyed […]. Generic (class) property does not depend on individual objects."[46]

Clearly, implication of this statement is that generic property is eternal and permeates all members of its class, while individual objects of the same class are of the opposite nature. All individual objects "inhere" in corresponding generic property, but the reverse is not true. This further means that generic property remains intact even in the case of disappearance of all individual members of the same class.

2. Denotation of Words: A Philosophical Analysis (Nyāya)

The discussion regarding the referent of generic terms ("nouns", *nāmapada*) is modeled by Nyāya in a similar way as Patañjali has done in MBh, and is perhaps modeled upon his analysis. In doing so, Nyāya lists three possible referents of generic terms: *vyakti* ("manifested", individual object), *ākṛti* (shape or configuration), and *jāti* (generic or class property).[47] The question is: does the generic term denote all of them together at the same time or just one or some of them (na jñāyate kim anyatamaḥ padārthaḥ utaitat sarvam iti, NBh ad NS 2.2.59)? Although the final result of the Nyāya analysis is more or less consistent with the results of Patañjali's analysis, as we shall see, the discussion is no longer motivated by questioning the plausibility of various positions with respect to the formulation of relevant (Pāṇini's) grammatical rules or operations as in Patañjali, but is, as to be expected for a philosophical school, conducted for purely semantic, ontological and epistemological purposes. But the basic starting point of the analysis is the same in both parties: What the word means (or refers to) can be determined only on the basis of the linguistic situation or "use" (*prayoga*) – śabdasya prayogasāmarthyāt padārthāvadhāraṇam, NBh ad NS 2.2.60, introduction.

2.1. Word Denotes Individual Objects (*vyakti*)

The proponent of this position can argue the following: there are certain linguistic uses or actions whose semantic condition is necessarily something individual. E.g. use of the relative pronoun (*yāśabda*), "the one who…" in sentences like "this standing cow", "this sitting cow", the word "cow" cannot denote generic (class) property because there is no difference (*bheda*) or differentiation in generic property. On the contrary, since differentiation is expressed in the above sentences ("this cow that ..."), the word "cow" denotes something individual.[48] Similarly, terms such as "groups of cows" denote something individual because they presuppose a difference (differentiation), not a generic property because generic property presupposes a non-difference (general or universal is one).[49] Furthermore, in the statement "he gives a cow to Vaidya (personal name)", the act of giving concerns an individual cow and not generic property because generic property is of non-material nature (*amūrta*) and because dissociation of the cow from a donor ("he") and joining

it with Vaidya, in case the cow here denotes generic property, would be utterly meaningless.[50]

The remaining arguments in support of the claim that generic terms denote the individual are mainly a variation of the assumption that properties and certain actions (modification, causality) are something that is associated with the individual and not with general. Thus, for example, statement "the cow has increased [grown]" suggests some "growth of parts" (*avayavopacaya*) which is possible only for the individual and which occurs through appropriate causes. Generic property, contrary to that, is not composed of parts (*niravayavā tu jātir*, NBh, ibid.). Also, the reproduction of the same form (*sarūpaprajananasantāna*, "a series of productions of the same form"), e.g., in the expression "a cow gives birth to a cow", must refer to the individual because only the individual can be causally (*tadutpatti*) produced. Generic property, since it is eternal, is the opposite of the idea of causal production.[51] And finally, terms like "white cow", "brown cow", etc., denote the presence of a specific property (colour) in an individual, not in general (*dravyasya guṇayogo to sāmānyasya*, NBh, ibid.).

In the continuation of the discussion the relevant counter-arguments are presented which could undermine the thesis that words denote the individual only:

"[This thesis] does not [hold]; for an infinite regress will appear [i.e., there will be no restrictions]."[52]

If that which is denoted is merely the individual, then it is not really possible to determine what exactly the object is, because it will be deprived of any qualification. NBh explains:

"What the relative pronoun [*yāśabda*] specifies [in expressions like] 'this cow standing', 'this cow sitting', etc., is an object denoted by the [word] 'cow'.[53] [The word 'cow'] does not denote a mere unqualified individual [*dravyamātram aviśiṣṭam*], which is completely devoid of generic

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[46]

dravyavināśe ākṛteḥ avināśaḥ […] anāśritā ākṛtiḥ dravya – MBh, ibid.

[47]

The term *vyakti* ("manifested") is synonymous with the term *dravya* used by Patañjali to mean concrete, individual thing; cf. NBh ad NS 2.2.60: dravyaṃ vyaktir iti hi nārthāntaram. But *dravya* also denotes elementary material substances, so Nyāya probably, for the sake of terminological clarity, prefers to use a more appropriate term for an individual object, *vyakti*, that which is "manifested" or constituted from elementary material substances (*dravya*). The term *ākṛti* is reserved exclusively for the shape or configuration of an individual object, whereas, as we have seen, in MBh (as for the Mīmāṃsā school) this term primarily denotes generic (class) property.

[48]

yā gaus tiṣṭhati yā gaur niṣaṇṇeiti, nedaṃ vākyaṃ jāter abhidhāyakam abhedāt, bhedāt tu dravyābhidhāyakam –NBh ad NS 2.2.60.

[49]

gavāṃ samūha iti bhedād dravyābhidhānaṃ na jāter abhedāt – NBh, ibid.

[50]

vaidyāya gāṃ dadatīti dravyasya tyāgo na jāter amūrtatvāt pratikramānukramānupapatteś ca – NBh, ibid. Action (*karman*, *kriyā*), as well as property (*guṇa*), according to Indian metaphysical realists (the Vaiśeṣika school), inhers in substance (*dravya*) as something individual, not in generic property. Generic property, on the other hand, is present in the individual through the relation of inerence (*samavāya*) and it is the only relation that generic property achieves.

[51]

sarūpaprajananasantāno gaur gāṃ janayatīti, tadutpattidharmatvād dravye yuktaṃ na jātau viparyayād iti – NBh, ibid.

[52]

na tadanavasthānāt – NS 2.2.61 (*anavasthāna*, "what is not established", logical fallacy of infinite regress – *regressus ad infinitum*).

property [*jāti*] […] [but what is really denoted is something individual] which is qualified by generic property [*jātiviśiṣṭa*]. Therefore, words do not denote [only] individual. The same is true for the remaining cases starting with 'group' [example of 'group of cows'], etc."[54]

Uddyotakara specifies that the meaning of NS 2.2.61 is as follows:

"If a word denoted only individual (*vyaktimātra*), then an understanding of any individual (without restriction) would be generated."[55]

Only generic (class) property allows the object to be restricted or qualified.

There are, however, linguistic situations which, according to the proponent of the *vyakti* theory, necessarily presuppose that words denote individual objects and that the possibility of referring to generic property at the same time is excluded. This is the case of a metaphorical statement when the word cannot be taken in its primary meaning (*abhidhā*), but the secondary meaning (*lakṣaṇa*) must be resorted to in order to generate the meaningful statement. This transfer of meaning is technically called *upacāra* and it assumes that the primary and secondary meaning are in some way related. Thus, for example, in the statement "the boy is a lion", the primary (literal) meaning is absurd (the boy is not a lion), so the secondary meaning is resorted to, e.g. "the boy is brave" which is previously made possible by the fact that the property of being brave belongs to the lion. In other words, the referent of the word "lion" is not a lion (primary meaning), but "being brave". The proponent of the *vyakti* theory wonders how is this transfer of meaning (*upacāra*) possible if words do not denote individual objects?[56] Or, in other words, if words denote generic property then no transfer of meaning is possible since it would require over-extending of different classes of objects (in our example "lion-ness" and "brave-ness"), which is not possible.

NBh gives several examples of the above semantic transfer: The word "stick" in the sentence "feed the stick" denotes a Brahmin who is associated with the stick. The word "stadium" in the sentence "stadium shouts" means people who are located there. The word "Ganges" in the sentence "cows roam on the Ganges" means a place near the river Ganges.[57]

Uddyotakara, however, taking the example of stick and Brahmin, argues that this transfer of meaning necessarily presupposes the existence of generic property as a referent of words (the same argument applies to other examples too):

"This word 'stick' (which is used) for a stick has generic property as its (semantic) condition (or foundation, *jātinimitta*). That generic property is 'stick-ness'. It is present in the stick. Brahmin is associated with the stick which is associated with generic property 'stick-ness'. Due to the association, by attributing generic property that is inherent in that (stick) with which (the word) 'Brahmin' is associated, it is said that Brahmin is stick."[58]

2.2. Word Denotes Form (Configuration, *ākṛti*)

One who claims that the form or configuration (*ākṛti*) is that what is denoted by the word argues that "depending on it one is able to determine [the nature] of the object" (tadapekṣatvāt sattvavyavasthānasiddheḥ – NS 2.2.63). NBh explains:

"The form [configuration] is the established [fixed, *niyata*] arrangement [order, *vyūha*] of parts of an object as well as their [of these parts] parts. And by grasping [*grahaṇāt*] this [form] one is able to determine [the nature of] things [*sattva*], 'this is a cow', 'this is a horse'; and does not [succeed in doing so] if [the form] is not captured. The word should be able to denote that on

the basis of grasping of which the [nature] of things [*sattva*] is determined. It is referent [*artha*] denoted by that (word)."[59]

The opponent of this thesis holds that whatever is denoted by the word "cow" must be associated or qualified with generic property, and it certainly cannot be "arrangement of parts" of an individual object but only the individual itself whose parts are orderly arranged:

"This [argumentation] does not hold. That which is associated with generic property, qualified with generic property [*jātiviśiṣṭa*], is denoted here by the word 'cow'. And the arrangement of parts is not related to [associated with] generic property. What is [then related to generic property?] A substance [the individual, *dravya*] whose parts are orderly [fixedly] arranged. Therefore, it is not [so] that it is the form [configuration] that is denoted by a word."[60]

The fundamental reason as to why the form or configuration cannot be that which is denoted by a word is given by the proponent of the theory that a word denotes generic (class) property.

2.3. Word Denotes Generic (Class) Property (jāti)

"Because it is absurd to wash a cow made of clay, even though it is something individual and has the form [configuration], generic property [is necessarily that which is denoted by a word]."[61]

NBh:

"(Statements like) 'wash the cow', 'bring the cow', 'give the cow', are not used for the cow made of clay. Why? Because generic property is absent. The individual [object] is present, the form [configuration] is also present. That due to the absence of which there is no grasping [of objects or referents] is the referent [or object, *padārtha*] denoted by the word."[62]

53
The relative pronoun *yā* ("which"), therefore, specifies (*viśeṣyate*) an object but does not denote it (*abhidhīyate*).

54
yāśabdaprabhṛtibhir yo viśeṣyate sa gośa-bdārtho yā gaus tiṣṭhati yā gaur niṣaṇṇeti, na dravyamātram aviśiṣṭaṃ jātyā vinābhidhīyate […] jātiviśiṣṭaṃ tasmān na vyaktiḥ padārthaḥ evaṃ samūhādiṣu draṣṭavyam – NBh ad NS 2.2.61.

55
yady ayaṃ vyaktimātrābhidhāyako 'bhaviṣyat, tena yasyāṃ kasyāṃcid vyaktau pratyayo 'bhaviṣyad iti sūtrārthaḥ – NV ad NS 2.2.61.

56
yadi na vyaktiḥ padārthaḥ kathaṃ tarhi vyaktāv upacāra iti – NBh, ibid.

57
yaṣṭikāṃ bhojayeti, yaṣṭikāsahacarito brāhmaṇo 'bhidhīyata iti […] mañcāḥ krośantīti mañcasthāḥ puruṣā abhidhīyante […] gaṅgāyāṃ gāvaś carantīti deśo 'bhidhīyate sannikṛṣṭaḥ, ibid.

58
yaṣṭikāyāṃ tāvad ayaṃ yaṣṭikāśabdo jātinimittaḥ. yaṣṭikātvaṃ jātiḥ. Sā yaṣṭikāyāṃ

varttate. tayā yaṣṭikātvayuktayā yaṣṭikayā brāhmaṇasya yogaḥ. Sāhacaryāt saṃyuktasamavetāṃ jātiṃ brāhmaṇe 'dhyāropya brāhmaṇaṃ yaṣṭikety āha – NV ad NS 2.2.61.

59
sattvāvayavānāṃ tadavayavānāṃ ca niyato vyūha ākṛtiḥ, tasyāṃ gṛhyamāṇāyāṃ sattva-vyavasthānaṃ sidhyaty ayam gaur ayam aśva iti, nāgṛhyamāṇāyāṃ yasya grahaṇāt sattvavyavasthānaṃ sidhyati taṃ śabdo 'bhidhātum arhati so 'syārtha iti – NBh ad NS 2.2.63.

60
naitad upapadyate yasya jātyā yogas tad atra jātiviśiṣṭam abhidhīyate gaur iti na cāvayavavyūhasya jātyā yogaḥ niyatā-vayavavyūhasya dravyasya tasmān nākṛtiḥ padārthaḥ – NBh, ibid.

61
vyaktyākṛtiyukte 'py aprasṅgāt prokṣādīnāṃ mṛdagavake jātiḥ – NS 2.2.64

62
That is, the reason why these activities (washing, etc.) are not applicable to the cow made of clay is precisely the absence of generic property "cow-ness" in the cow made of clay. The original: gāṃ prokṣaya gām ānaya

The objection regarding assertion that generic property is solely denoted by the word is obvious, namely generic property cannot be manifested in the absence of form (configuration, *ākṛti*) and the individual (*vyakti*).[63] No one can grasp "pure" generic property until he has first grasped the form and the individual in which it manifests itself (nāgṛhyamāṇāyām ākṛtau vyaktau ca jātimātraṃ śuddhaṃ gṛhyate – NBh, ibid.).

2.4. The Final Position of Nyāya

The final position of the Nyāya regarding the question of what exactly is the referent of (generic) words is almost identical to the position of Patañjali in MBh:

"But the individual, the form (configuration) and generic property (together represent the object) denoted by the word."[64]

NBh clarifies:

"[All three] are denoted by words but there is no [firm] rule [*niyama*] according to which some [of them] are superior ['fundamental', *pradhāna*] [while others are] subordinate ['auxiliary', *aṅga*]. When the intention of the speaker [*vivakṣā*] is on the difference [among the objects] and [on the part of the listener] is the understanding of the specific [object], then the individual is superior and the form and generic property are subordinate. When the intention of the speaker is not on the difference [among the objects] and [the listener] understands generic property, then generic property is superior and the form and the individual are subordinated. Many [examples of this subordination and superiority can be found] in [concrete linguistic] usage [practice, *prayoga*]. Also, [in a similar way] it should be understood [the case] when the form [configuration] is superior."[65]

The whole discussion regarding the referent of generic terms led by Nyāya, as well as by Patañjali, starts from the assumed fact that the denoted must be either an individual or generic property or a form (configuration). Finally, their view, as we have seen, is that all three (or two in Patañjali) potential referents of the word together participate in the process of generating meaning but with different "intensity", depending on the speaker's intention (*vivakṣā*), or depending on how the speaker wants to present or describe a given (non-linguistic) situation. Nyāya, however, unlike Patañjali, wonders on what basis do we know that these three possible referents have a different nature which then reveals a different type of reference and ultimately generates a different meaning? The answer is: „Because their 'definition' is different" (*lakṣaṇabhedāt*, NBh, introduction to NS 2.2.67).

Nyāya formulates, and this will be followed by all systems of classical Indian philosophy, three fundamental methodological procedures that in their reciprocity shape the discourse of a philosophical discussion (*śāstra*). These are: Mentioning or thematization of a relevant topic (*uddeśa*), its definition (*lakṣaṇa*) and critical examination (*parīkṣā*) of the latter, trividhā cāsya śāstrasya pravṛttiḥ, NBh, introduction ad NS 1.1.3. The definition is

"… characteristic ['property', *dharma*] which [serves to] distinguish that named [theme] [from everything else] that does not [possess] the essence [*tattva*] of that [named]."[66]

The implicit assumption of Nyāya, which is in line with the fundamental realistic orientation of the school, is that a valid definition of an entity of the highest ontological order is not only "for us" relevant but directly reflects the objective structure, nature or process of the defined. Such a possibility of direct

mirroring is ultimately based on the basic postulate of Indian realism: the mutual correspondence between language, thought (cognition) and reality.[67]

Having this correspondence in mind, Nyāya gives definitions of all three possible referents of words that can be understood partly in the ontological and partly in the semantic sense:

"Individual [*vyakti*] is a [physical] body [*mūrti*] which is *substratum* [*āśraya*] of specific properties [*guṇaviśeṣa*]."[68]

NBh clarifies:

"Individual, 'that which is manifested' [*vyajyata*], is perceptible through the senses; [therefore] not every substance [*dravya*] is the individual [*vyakti*].[69] The substance that is *substratum* of specific properties ending with touch [smell, taste, colour], as well as weight, density, fluidity, extensibility and size, is the [physical] body because it is made up of parts."[70]

Form or configuration is that which "reveals the [indicative] mark [*liṅga*] of generic property" (ākṛtir jātiliṅgākhyā, NS 2.2.68). NBh:

"It is important to know that the form [configuration] is that through which generic property and [indicative] mark of generic property are known. And this is nothing but an established [fixed] configuration [arrangement of parts] of objects and parts [of those parts]. Parts of an object that

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gāṃ dehīti naitāni mṛdgavake prayujyante kasmāt? jāter abhāvāt asti hi tatra vyaktiḥ asty ākṛtiḥ yadabhāvāt tatrāsampratyayaḥ sa padārtha iti – NBh ad NS 2.2.64.

63

nākṛtivyaktyapekṣatvāj jātyabhivyakteḥ – NS 2.2.65.

64

vyaktyākṛtijātayas tu padārthaḥ – NS 2.2.66.

65

pradhānāṅgabhāvasyāniyamena padārthatvam iti yadā hi bhedavivakṣā viśeṣagatiś ca tadā vyaktiḥ pradhānam aṅgaṃ tu jātyākṛtī yadā tu bhedo 'vivakṣitaḥ sāmānyagatiś ca, tadā jātiḥ pradhānam aṅgaṃ tu vyaktyākṛtī tad etad bahulaṃ prayogeṣu ākṛtes tu pradhānabhāva utprekṣitavyaḥ – NBh ad NS 2.2.66. Uddyotakara gives examples for all three cases. An example where the individual is superior: "The cow stands" (gaus tiṣṭhati). An example where generic property is superior: "A cow should not be hit" (gaur na padā spraṣṭavyeti). An example where the form is superior: "Make cows consisting of flour" (piṣṭakamayyo gāvaḥ kriyantām) –NV ad NS 2.2.66.

66

tatroddiṣṭasya atattvavyavacchedako dharmo lakṣaṇam – NBh, ibid. "[Critical] examination [*parīkṣā*] is the determination [*avadhāraṇa*] through the instruments of valid cognition [perception, inference, analogy and verbal testimony] as to whether the definition is applicable to the thing being defined [*lakṣita*] or is not." – lakṣitasya yathālakṣaṇam upapadyate na veti pramāṇair avadhāraṇaṃ parīkṣā – ibid.

67

This idea is pregnantly expressed in the work *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* of the Vaiśeṣika school: ṣaṇṇām api padārthānām astitvābhidheyatvajñeyatvāni (2.3.16): "All six [metaphysical] categories [*padārtha*, to which all reality may be reduced] [have the following properties in common]: existence ['is-ness', *astitva*], expressibility [*abhidheyatva*] and knowableness [*jñeyatva*]." On "the corresponding principle" in Indian philosophy, see insightful study: Johannes Bronkhorst, *Language and Reality. On an Episode in Indian Thought*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2011.

68

NS 2.2.67.

69

Elemental material and non-material substances (earth, water, fire, air, "ether", space, time, mind and self) in their "substantiality" cannot be grasped by the senses, but only coarser objects that are formed by them and which "have parts" (*avayava*).

70

vyajyata iti vyaktir indriyagrāhyeti na sarvaṃ dravyaṃ vyaktiḥ yo gu ṇaviśeṣāṇāṃ sparśāntānāṃ gurutvaghanatvadravatvasaṃsk ārāṇām avyāpinaḥ parimāṇasyāśrayo yathāsambhavaṃ tad dravyaṃ mūrtiḥ mūrcchitāvayavatvād iti – NBh ad NS 2.2.67. Thus, only that which "has parts" can be considered an individual object (*vyakti*) which thus qualifies itself as the bearer of properties.

[again] have an established arrangement of their parts are [indicative] marks of generic property. People conclude, based on the feet and head, that [a particular object is just] a cow. And 'cowness' is disclosed when a fixed arrangement of parts is present. If generic property is not disclosed [indicated] through the form [configuration] as [in the case of] clay, gold or silver, the form [configuration] withdraws and ceases to be an object denoted by the word."[71]

Finally, the definition of generic property is: "Generic property is that whose nature is the production of the same [cognition]" (samānaprasavātmikā jātiḥ, NS 2.2.69). NBh:

"That which produces the same knowledge [*buddhi*] in different objects ['substratum', *adhikaraṇa*], that by which many objects are not different from each other, that object [*artha*] which is the cause of the same ['repetitive'] idea [*pratyayānuvṛttinimitta*] with regard to many objects, that object is general ['universal', *sāmānya*]. And what makes some objects the same and differentiates them from other objects is specific general [*sāmānyaviśeṣa*], generic property [*jāti*]."[72]

NBh ad NS 2.2.69 introduces a distinction between "general" (universal, *sāmānya*) and the qualified or "specific" general (*sāmānyaviśeṣa*) which it identifies with generic property (*jāti*). This distinction is almost certainly taken over from the Vaiśeṣika school for at least two reasons. First, the Vaiśeṣika never uses the term *jāti* for generic property or ontological category of general (universal), as Nyāya does, but uses exclusively the term *sāmānya*.[73] Second and more importantly, NBh ad NS 2.2.69 can actually be understood as a paraphrase of PDS 2.2.11,[74] which may be founded on some earlier sources, where the difference between "higher" and "lower" general (*para-* and *aparasāmānya*) is introduced:

"General [universal, *sāmānya*], which is the cause of the same [repetitive] idea [*anuvṛttipratyayakāraṇa*], is of two kinds: higher [general] and lower [general]. Higher general is existence ['is-ness', *sattā*] because it [refers to] a large number of objects and because it is the cause of reappearing [ideas or cognitions]. Lower general, such as 'substantiality' [*dravyatva*], etc., obtains what is called an individual ['specific'] object because it refers to a small number of objects and because [specific objects imply] a difference [*vyāvṛtti*]."[75]

"A large number of objects" (*mahāviṣaya*) actually encompasses all objects or entities that can be said to "be" or insofar as they inhere in "existence" (*sattā*) as the highest, all-inclusive generic property (*parasāmānya*). "Small number of objects" (*alpaviṣaya*) obviously refers to a class of objects or a generic (class) property ("cow-ness", etc.) in which only members of the corresponding class or species are included, while members of the class of other objects as well as their generic properties are "excluded" (*vyāvṛtti*).[76] In this context and in this sense, one can speak of a "lower" general (*aparasāmānya*). So, going back to NBh, the term *sāmānya* would correspond to the term *parasāmānya*, and the term *sāmānyaviśeṣa* or *jāti* to the term *aparasāmānya*.

It seems, however, that according to the commentary, only the highest generic property (*sāmānya = sattā*) generates the same knowledge or idea in relation to many objects, while the "qualified" generic property (*jāti*) only determines the boundary between different classes of objects without generating over and over again repeating cognition or idea "with regard to many objects". Uddyotakara, however, believes that this is not the case:

"[Sūtra 2.2.69 sets] a restriction [*niyama*] regarding generic property [*jāti*], not [regarding] the appearance of the same cognition [idea], because it becomes obvious [that the same cognition appears] even in the absence of generic property [...] as in the case of 'the cook' [*pācaka*], etc."[77]

This interpretation assumes that "the cook" and similar terms are not generic terms like "cow", etc. There is no generic property "cook-ness", but still the same knowledge is generated for different cooks, namely that it (he) is a cook. What defines every cook as a cook is not, therefore, generic property but corresponding action (cooking) that is associated with every being whose fundamental characteristic is that it is an agent of an action called cooking. Scharf[78] provides the following interpretation, which is obviously based on Pāṇini's meta-concept of "thematic roles" (kāraka, literally "what generates action") by which he analyzes the constituents of a sentence and their syntactic relationship:[79]

"A cook is the agent or principal participant [i.e. kāraka, op.a.] in the act of cooking. The action of cooking and the relation of agency inhere together in every cook. The relation of agency involves being the primary participant in an adtion as opposed to the direct object [the food], the substratum [the pan], etc. This being primary in the action is part of what one knows in the cognition of a cook. Hence, in the case of cognition of a cook, two entities, the action of cooking and the property of being principal, present together, are responsible for the recurrent cognition

71
yayā jātir jātiliṅgāni ca prakhyāyante tām ākṛtiṃ vidyāt sā ca nānyā sattvāvayavānāṃ tadavayavānāṃ ca niyatād vyūhād iti niyatāvayavavyūhāḥ khalu sattvāvayavā jātiliṅgam, śirasā pādena gām anuminvanti niyate ca sattvāvayavānāṃ vyūhe sati gotvaṃ prakhyāyata iti anākṛtivyaṅgyāyāṃ jātau mṛtsuvarṇaṃ rajatam ity evamādiṣv ākṛtir nivartate jahāti padārthatvam iti – NBh ad NS 2.2.8. Given the latter claim, Nyāya underlines that although each form is an indicative mark of generic property, it does not follow that every generic property is necessarily indicated by it. – sarvākṛtir jātiliṅgam iti na punaḥ sarvā jātir ākṛtyā liṅgyate – NBh, ibid.

72
yā samānaṃ buddhiṃ prasūte bhinneṣv adhikaraṇeṣu, yayā bahūnīteretarato na vyāvartante yo 'rtho 'nekatra pratyayānuvṛttinimittaṃ tat sāmānyam yac ca keṣāñcid abhedaṃ kutaścid bhedaṃ karoti tat sāmānyaviśeṣo jātir iti – NBh ad NS 2.2.69.

73
Cf. Wilhelm Halbfass, *On Being and What There Is*, SUNY Press, New York 1992, p. 120.

74
PDS = *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* of Praśastapāda (Vindhyeśvarī Prasāda Dvivedī (ed.), *The Praśastapādabhāṣya with the commentary Nyāyakandalī of Śrīdhara*, Banares 1895.

75
sāmānyam dvividham param aparam cānuvṛttipratyayakāraṇam tatra param sattā mahāviṣayatvāt sā cānuvṛtter eva hetutvāt sāmānyam eva dravyatvādyaparam alpaviṣayatvāt tacca vyāvṛtter api hetutvāt sāmānyam sadviśeṣākhyām api labhate.

76
Cf. also Ronkin, N. (2005) *Early Buddhist Metaphysics. The Making of a Philosophical Tradition*, Routledge, London – New York 2011, pp. 144–146.

77
jātau niyamo na samānapratyayotpattau, jātim antareṇāpi dṛṣṭavāt […] yathā pācakādiṣu – NV ad NS 2.2.69.

78
P. T. Scharf, *The Denotation of Generic Terms in Ancient Indian Philosophy*, p. 155.

79
In this analysis, the formation of a sentence is understood as composed of an action (kriyā) denoted by a verb root to which certain "thematic roles" (kāraka) are joined in order to complete the action. These thematic roles, as well as their definitions (starting with A 1.4.23), are part of Pāṇini's meta-rules and each of them in natural language corresponds to a morphological element (case ending). The principal (pradhāna) thematic role is the agent (doer, kartṛ, "nominative case") which is defined as one who is "independent" (svatantra, A 1.4.54) in the sense that it is the only kāraka which possesses the property of action (kartṛtva). In a given sentence, the agent is also the only kāraka that is not denoted by a case ending, but only by a verb ending. Cf. Goran Kardaš, "From Etymology to Ontology: Vasubandhu and Candrakīrti on Various Interpretations of Pratītyasamutpāda", *Asian Philosophy* 25 (2015) 3, pp. 293–317, here pp. 301–302, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/09552367.2015.1082685.

with respect to many individuals. Because there are two entities, not one, which generate the recurrent cognition, the cause of the general cognition is not a generic property."

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored, based on relevant (Sanskrit) sources, the earliest Indian systematic discussions on the problem of meaning, denotation and reference, in a word, the oldest Indian discussions on semantics. This discussion was almost certainly conceived within the famous Indian grammatical tradition (*vyākaraṇa*), probably before Kātyāyana and Patañjali, but the latter certainly formed a standard discursive framework for this discussion followed by classical Indian philosophical schools. This influence is particularly evident in the case of the Nyāya philosophical school whose philosophical analyses, including semantic ones, have in turn set the standard for most other philosophical schools.

It is clear that Nyāya has taken over from the Grammarians the conceptual framework for semantic analysis, as well as many concluding positions, but it is also clear that in some of its solutions Nyāya is distancing itself from the Grammarians wherever its strictly realistic orientation may come into question. Patañjali, on the other hand, although basically dealing with a realistic conceptual apparatus, probably because it is closest to "common sense" or linguistic "conventional usage" (*vyavahāra*), does not actually show distinct ontological commitments, but primarily cares about that certain semantic choices or solutions are consistent with the corresponding (Pāṇini's) grammatical rules of derivation. I would like to highlight here a few points of discussion raised by Patañjali, and taken over by Nyāya:

1. There are two possible referents of generic words or "nouns" – individual (*dravya*, *vyakti*) or generic (class) property (*ākṛti*, *jāti*). Nyāya also considers a third option, namely that the word referent can also be the form or configuration (*ākṛti*) of an object, where it then uses *jāti* as a term for generic (class) property. Patañjali also mentions the possibility that the word denotes form or configuration, but does not discuss this possibility.

2. Patañjali, like Nyāya, presents the arguments of those who claim that only one of the two is the exclusive referent of generic words (Nyāya also considers the arguments of those who claim that form or configuration is the only referent of words). This discussion probably dates back to the period before Patañjali (and Kātyāyana) and is related to the names of two ancient Grammarians, Vyāḍi and Vājapyāyana (fifth to fourth century BC).

3. Both parties ultimately agree that both the individual and generic property can be a referent of generic words, but they seem to give priority to the generic property. For Patañjali, the individual can be a referent of a word, but only if it is "associated" with a generic property. For Nyāya, similarly, a word can refer to the individual only if it is "qualified" by the general. Nyāya, in addition, considers the form or configuration (*ākṛti*) of an object to be an "indicatory mark" of generic property. At the end of the discussion, Patañjali (following Kātyāyana) gives several ontological features of the generic property (eternal, independent, permeates all objects of the same class, etc.), while Nyāya here completely takes over the conceptual framework of the Vaiśeṣika school where general and individual are fundamental (metaphysical) categories of reality.

4. Both Patañjali and the Nyāya agree that in specific linguistic situations or usages (*prayoga*), or with regard to the "speaker's intention" (*vivakṣā*), general and individual can appear as referents of words with different "intensities". Sometimes in statements the emphasis is on the individual (e.g. "this cow stands") and sometimes on the general (eg, "cow is a mammal"). But even when the emphasis is on the individual, it appears as a referent of the word only insofar as it is related to or "qualified by" the general, that is, the statement "this cow stands" should be analysed as "this cow, which inhers in the general (which is qualified by/associated with the general property 'cow-ness'), stands here".

But Patañjali, unlike Nyāya as well as other Indian realists (Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā), believes that the natural denotative function of words (or utterances) is not the same as the meaning they generate. This means that reference and meaning (of words) are not the same thing. For Patañjali, as well as for the whole Indian grammatical tradition (especially from Bhartṛhari onwards), what we call meaning is actually a mental state (or cognition, *buddhi*, *sampratyaya*) that is generated on the basis of the natural denotative function of a word (or a statement in the case of Bhartṛhari). For Bhartṛhari, who has fully developed this "mentalistic" understanding of meaning, a statement can generate meaning even if it is an "empty" statement that has no reference in the outside world, such as the statement "the son of a barren woman is 2 meters tall". In this he seems to have anticipated Frege's distinction between sense and reference (in the case of proper names): The sense (or meaning) of a proper name is not identical to the object (if any) to which it refers. For example, "Pegasus" refers to nothing (in the world out there), but it still has a sense (meaning) that is generated as a thought. Nyāya, like other Indian realists, on the other hand, was here of the view that meaning is the same as reference the word possesses in a natural way. In that, it seems to have anticipated the so-called direct reference theory regarding proper names developed by S. Kripke, according to which a proper name has no other semantic function than referring to an (individual) object.

Goran Kardaš

Rana indijska semantika – gramatički i filozofijski pristup

Sažetak

*U članku predlažem analizirati najraniju indijsku sustavnu raspravu o problemu značenja i denotacije riječi. Rasprava je, čini se, začeta u poznatoj indijskoj gramatičkoj tradiciji (*vyākaraṇa*), a svoj je konačni oblik dobila kod gramatičara Patañjalija (drugo stoljeće prije Krista) u djelu* Mahābhāṣya. *Čitava se rasprava prenijela i nadalje razvijala unutar klasične indijske filozofije, počevši sa školom Nyāya čija su stajališta vezana za semantiku ovdje također analizirana na osnovi klasičnih djela te škole.*

Ključne riječi

denotacija, oblik, konfiguracija, generičko svojstvo, svojstvo klase, pojedina stvar, značenje, Nyāya, Patañjali

Goran Kardaš

Frühindische Semantik –
grammatischer und philosophischer Ansatz

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel beabsichtige ich, die früheste indische systematische Diskussion über das Problem der Bedeutung und Denotation von Wörtern abzuhandeln. Die Diskussion selbst scheint innerhalb der illustren indischen grammatikalischen Tradition (vyākaraṇa) *initiiert worden zu sein und nahm ihre endgültige Form im Werk* Mahābhāṣya *des Grammatikers Patañjali (zweites Jahrhundert v. Chr.) an. Die gesamte Diskussion wird innerhalb der klassischen indischen Philosophie fortgeführt und weiterentwickelt, beginnend mit der Nyāya-Schule, deren Standpunkte in puncto Semantik hier ebenfalls basierend auf klassischen Werken dieser Schule analysiert werden.*

Schlüsselwörter

Denotation, Form, Konfiguration, generische Eigenschaft, Klasseneigenschaft, einzelnes Ding, Bedeutung, Nyāya, Patañjali

Goran Kardaš

Sémantique indienne première –
approche grammaticale et philosophique

Résumé

*Dans cet article, je propose d'analyser le plus ancien débat systématique sur les problèmes de signification et dénotation des mots. Ce débat semble être apparu au sein de la célèbre tradition grammaticale (*vyākaraṇa)*, alors que sa forme définitive a été donnée par le grammairien Patañjali (deuxième siècle av. J.-C.) dans son œuvre* Mahābhāṣya*. Cette discussion dans son ensemble a été transmise et a poursuivi son développement au sein de la philosophie classique indienne, à commencer par l'école Nyāya, dont les positions, au regard de la sémantique, sont également analysées dans le présent travail sur la base des œuvres classiques de cette école.*

Mots-clés

dénotation, forme, configuration, propriété générique, propriété de la classe, chose individuelle, Nyāya, Patañjali