

# Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa and Nāgeśa on negation

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## 1 Introduction

Previous work:

- Previous work on theories of negation in ancient India focus on the philosophical traditions of Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya, e.g.: Staal (1962), Matilal (1968), Chakrabarti (1978), Shaw (1980, 1988), Bilimoria (2008), Guha (2013).
- Also work on the functioning of negation in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, e.g. Cardona (1967), Vergiani (1993), Scharf (1995).
- Discussions of the Vaiyākaraṇa theory of negation rare; exceptions Ogawa (1984), Timalsina (2014).

Vyākaraṇa on negation:

- Earliest discussion in Patañjali, developed by Bhartṛhari and later Kaiyaṭa.
- We focus on the extensive treatments in the works of the last great figures of Vyākaraṇa, Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa and Nāgeśabhaṭṭa:
  - Bhaṭṭoji D., *Śabdakaustubha*;
  - Bhaṭṭoji D., *Prauḍhamanoramā* (autocomm. on prec.);
  - Bhaṭṭoji D., *Siddhāntakaumudī*;
  - Bhaṭṭoji D., *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā*;
  - Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* (comm. on prec.);
  - Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra* (abridgement of prec.);
  - Nāgeśa, *Bṛhacchabdenuśekhara* (comm. on *Siddhāntakaumudī*);
  - Nāgeśa, *Laghuśabdenuśekhara* (more concise comm. on *Siddhāntakaumudī*);
  - Nāgeśa, *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntamañjuṣā*;
  - Nāgeśa, *Laghumañjuṣā*;
  - Nāgeśa, *Paramalaghumañjuṣā*.
- Though in many respects covering similar ground, these treatments differ in various ways, and the conclusions drawn appear to vary even within the works of a single author.
- As in other philosophical schools, *abhāva* is always understood in relation to a *pratiyogin* ‘counterpositive’.

## 2 Nāgeśa's *Paramalaghumañjuṣā*

All our texts begin with the paryudāsa negation, e.g. *abrāhmaṇa* 'non-brahmin', *aghaṭa* 'non-pot'. Topic based on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.2.6 *nañ*, which introduces negative compounds. Basic assumption that negation means *abhāva* 'non-existence, absence', problematic with paryudāsa.

Easier to start with prasajyapraṭiṣedha, e.g. *ghaṭo nāsti* 'there is no pot'.

### 2.1 Prasajyapraṭiṣedha

For Nāgeśa in the PLM, the basic sense of *nañ* here is *abhāva*. *Abhāva* can only be viśeṣya, meaning it must be the predominant element in the sentence:

- *ghaṭo 'sti* means *ghaṭakarṭṛkā sattā*;
- *ghaṭo nāsti* means *ghaṭakarṭṛkasattāpratiyogiko 'bhāvaḥ*.

Various complications to this basic view.

Indian theorists admit four types of *abhāva*: *atyantābhāva* 'absolute non-existence', *anyonyābhāva* 'mutual non-existence' (sometimes called *bheda*), *prāgabhāva* 'prior non-existence', *dharmaśābhāva* 'posterior non-existence'.

Nāgeśa admits only the first two as meanings of *nañ*: uncompounded prasajyapraṭiṣedha negation can mean either *atyantābhāva* (as in *ghaṭo nāsti*) or *anyonyābhāva* (as e.g. in *ghaṭo na paṭaḥ* 'the pot is not a cloth'). Compounded prasajyapraṭiṣedha is admitted in some cases, and can only mean *atyantābhāva* (e.g. *asūryaṃpaśyā rājadārāḥ*).

### 2.2 Paryudāsa

If negation means *abhāva*, and if *abhāva* can only be viśeṣya, then we have a grammatical problem with paryudāsa negation: the first member of a compound like *abrāhmaṇa* would have to be the predominant element.

But we need the second member to be the head, in particular to deal with pronoun compounds: *asarva* 'not-all', *asaḥ* 'not-that' follow the morphological rules for pronouns (e.g. datives *asarvasmai*, *atasmāi*), which can only be the case if the second element is the head. (Contrast e.g. *atisarva* 'all-surpassing', dative *atisarvāya*.)

Solution is to assume that *nañ* does not mean *abhāva*, but (roughly) means *āropa* 'superimposition'.

So the 'literal' (*śābda*) meaning of *abrāhmaṇa* will be something like *āropitabrāhmaṇatva*.

## 3 'Superimposition'

All our texts introduce *āropa* 'superimposition' as a meaning expressed by *nañ*, but there is disagreement on: 1. exactly how it is conveyed, and 2. whether it should in fact be accepted as a valid meaning of *nañ*.

How is superimposition conveyed? Two views:

1) *nañ* manifests a 'condition of being superimposed' (*āropitvatva*) at the 'cause of application' for the subsequent word. For example, the 'cause of application' for the word *brāhmaṇa* is *brāhmaṇatva* 'the condition of being a brāhmaṇa'. In the negative compound *abrāhmaṇa* 'non-brāhmaṇa', the *nañ* informs us that here *brāhmaṇatva* is superimposed. Context or circumstance allows us to understand senses such as 'different from a brāhmaṇa' from this word.

2) *nañ* expresses just superimposition (*āropa*) itself, and the fact that the subsequent word constitutes the range of the superimposition is based on the syntax of the initial word *nañ* serving to qualify the subsequent word. Again, context or circumstance allows us to reach a final understanding.

These distinct views are presented variously by the three authors (see appendix):

Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita: view 1 in ŚK and VSK; both options in PM.

Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa: both options in VBh. (view 2 is ‘newer’); only view 2 in VBhS.

Nāgeśabhaṭṭa: view 1 in BSÍŚ, PLM and LM; both options in VSM.

Nāgeśa’s defence of the first view seems to be part of assuming that among the possible meanings of a word is also the negation of its meaning, e.g. *brāhmaṇa* has not only *brāhmaṇatva* but also *āropitabrāhmaṇatva* as one of its possible meanings, and it is the job of *nañ* to manifest that particular meaning. So here *nañ* is really only a manifestor, it has no distinct meaning of its own, but it requires assuming that all words have their negation as one of their possible meanings.

## 4 Context

There is agreement that the recognition of a superimposed (*āropita*) item is only the penultimate stage in the conveying of a meaning, and that the final understanding is not linguistic (*śābda*), but rather based on context or circumstance (*ārtha*).

Contextual (or circumstantial) meanings: all three authors quote their commonly accepted range,

*tatsādrśyam abhāvaś ca tadanyatvaṃ tadapatā/  
aprāśastyam virodhaś ca nañarthā ṣaṭ prakīrtitāḥ//*

‘(1) Similarity to that, and (2) absence, (3) the condition of being other than that, (4) the condition of being a small amount of that, (5) the condition of being non- praiseworthy, and (6) opposition are declared to be the six meanings of *ñan*.’

The term *abrāhmaṇa* is variously cited as an example for numbers 1, 3, and 5.

Nature of *āropa* knowledge: *āhārya* ‘adventitious’, ‘removable’

Nāgeśa reports that whereas the older tradition used the term *āhārya* for assertions made in counterfactual arguments, he accepts it as describing the knowledge produced from the *āropa* of a feature from one thing on to another.

In the *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntamañjūṣā* Nāgeśa remarks,

‘But the claim that *āhārya* linguistic knowledge does not exist is in fact not to be believed. And on the present view, by accepting a knowledge of absence from *ghaṭo nā ’sti* ‘a pot does not exist’ that is based on circumstance (*ārthika*), one speaks of ‘knowledge whose qualified object is the meaning of *nañ*’ (*nañarthaviśeṣyako bodhaḥ*). And the blocking of knowledge of the counterpositive (*pratiyogin*) etc. can be justified.’

In commenting on a similar passage in the *Laghumañjūṣā*, Nāgeśa’s pupil Vaidyanātha Pāyaguṇḍe explains that it is precisely by accepting the circumstantial or contextual meaning that the knowledge of the pot is blocked,

‘But then, to answer the question, ‘How can a perception of absence that is established by experience, be denied?’ he says, ‘(knowledge) based on circumstance (etc.)’. It is only by accepting this that blocking of knowledge of the counterpositive can be justified.’

So we move from a *śābda* meaning like *āropitabrāhmaṇatva* to e.g. *brāhmaṇasādrśya*.

## 5 Āropa vs. abhāva

1. Opposition to *āropa* in favour of *abhāva*.

This is based on our common experience (*anubhava*) of non-existence (*abhāva*), not superimposition, as the meaning of *nañ*, both in non-compound constructions like *ghaṭo nā 'sti* ‘there is no pot’ and in compounds like *abrāhmaṇa* ‘non-brāhmaṇa’. It is presented by Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita in the *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā*, supported by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa in the *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra* and the *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa*, and possibly admitted(?) by Nāgeśa in his VSM.

Bhaṭṭoji permits *abhāva* to be *viśeṣaṇa*, eliminating the need for ‘superimposition’, and licensing a more unified treatment of negation. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa defends this second view of Bhaṭṭoji, and takes this as the *siddhānta*.

KB glosses *atvaṃ bhavasi* ‘you are a non-you’ as *bhedapratiyogitvadabhinnāśrayikā bhavanakriyā*.

Thus to contrast with the meaning of *abrāhmaṇa* given under Nāgeśa, above, KB would give the meaning as *bhedapratiyogibrāhmaṇatva*.

2. *āropa* in preference to *abhāva*.

But in the *Laghumañjuṣā*, often considered the final and fullest account of Nāgeśa’s writings on semantics, Nāgeśa argues that even the treatment of *prasajyapraṭiṣedha* negation involves *āropa*: the final meaning involving *abhāva* is contextual (*ārtha*), deriving in parallel manner to the meaning of *abrāhmaṇa* (given above).

(Interestingly, Vaidyanātha Pāyagunde maintains the opposing view (all *abhāva*, no *āropa*) in a lengthy passage near the end of his *Kalā* commentary on the *Laghumañjuṣā*, possibly influenced by the *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntamañjuṣā*, which he often draws on.)

## 6 Conclusion

- Debate centering on the treatment of *nañ*-compounds and the notion of *āropa*;
- *Āropa* is complex, both in its precise formulation and application; it requires contextual meaning for a complete interpretation, but avoids grammatical problems with *abhāva*.
- At least for some authors/texts, *abhāva* is problematic in *pariyudāsa* negation due to its necessarily being *viśeṣya*;
- But for others, *abhāva* can be *viśeṣaṇa* and so is a simpler assumption for the meaning of *nañ* in all cases.

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## Appendix

### 1. Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita

*Śabdakaustubha:*

'*Nañ* (is compounded) together with a word ending in a case suffix, as before. (As in) *abrāhmaṇaḥ, avṛśalaḥ*. Here the meaning of the subsequent word is predominant. For it is like this. The condition of being superimposed is made manifest by *nañ*. And that resides in the (cause of) application of the subsequent word. And in that way, when the condition of being a *brāhmaṇa* is superimposed, the compound has denotative power in reference to something qualified by that. And the association (*saṃsarga*) of the qualifier and the qualified is just the superimposition. Thereby the knowledge of the condition of being different from a *brāhmaṇa* is based on context (circumstance).'

*Prauḍhamanoramā:*

'The condition of being superimposed is made manifest by *nañ*. Or just the superimposition, and the condition of being the range (of the superimposition) is the association (*saṃsarga*).'

*Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā:*

'The condition of being superimposed is manifested by *nañ*.'

### 2. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa

*Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa:*

'Therefore 'the condition of being superimposed is made manifest'. The statement of the condition of being made manifest is made with the intended meaning that *nipātas* are manifestors. 'The condition of being superimposed' is the condition of being the range of a superimposition. According to scholars of the newer view, the meaning is only superimposition, and the condition of being superimposed is the association (*saṃsarga*).'

*Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra:*

'And here, the condition of being superimposed is (understood to be) the condition of being the range of a superimposition; the meaning (conveyed by *nañ*) is only superimposition, and the condition of being the range is the association (*saṃsarga*); that is the essence.'

### 3. Nāgeśabhaṭṭa

*Bṛhacchabdenduśekhara:*

'Here (i.e., at *anaśva*) something that has the superimposed condition of being a horse (*aśvatva*) is understood. And *nañ* is a manifestor. This alone is correct, and not that superimposition is the meaning of *nañ* and the condition of being a superimposition is relation (*saṃsarga*).'

*Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntamañjūṣā:*

'The meaning of *nañ* is the condition of being the range of superimposition, or it is just superimposition, and the condition of being the range is the association (*saṃsarga*).'

*Paramalaghumañjūṣā:*

'Of these two, the *nañ paryudāsa* makes manifest the condition of being the range of a superimposition (*āropa*). And the condition of being something that manifests the condition of being the range of superimposition is the condition in *nañ* of being something that causes the comprehension of the intended meaning, (i.e.,) that words like *ghaṭa* (pot), which are spoken together with it, bring about the knowledge of the cause for application (*pravṛttinimitta*) that has been superimposed.'

*Laghumañjūṣā:*

'Or rather, *nañ* causes us to comprehend the intended meaning, i.e., that words like 'ghaṭa' (pot), that are spoken together with it, give us a perception of an imposed *pravṛttinimitta* (cause for application).'