

*asti kaścit ((vāg)(vi))-śeṣaḥ?*¹

(Is there anything (specific) remaining (to be said))?

by

Malhar Kulkarni

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences,

IIT Bombay, Powai, Mumbai-400076

malharku@hss.iitb.ac.in , malharku@gmail.com

This talk first poses the question mentioned in the title in the context of the relationship of the Ancient Indian grammatical tradition and Modern Linguistics and then tries to fathom what the question encompasses, before attempting to answer it in some detail with examples pertaining to the field of Theoretical Linguistics, Computational Linguistics and also Philosophy of Language.

The answer to the above question addresses the following questions:

1. How to theoretically explain Multi Word Expressions (MWEs)?
2. Does a word have an ‘Absolute meaning’?
3. How to account for the compositionality of accent?
4. How does the compositionality of accent correspond to the compositionality of the Meaning and the compositionality of the Word form?
5. How does rule conflict between (a) an accent rule and (b) a non-accent rule, get resolved?
6. How does Linguistics contribute towards *mokṣa*?
7. How is ‘cognition’ related to the ‘meaning’ and the ‘word’?

¹ A note on the title: Clearly this question is asked in the style of Panini who uses *śeṣa* as an effective device in his description of Sanskrit in his grammar recurringly, for example A 1.3. 78, A 1.4.7, A 1.4.108, A 2.2.23, A 4.2.92 etc. This question assumes the existence of a tremendous body of work carried out by a scholastic tradition in the West, building upon which the question searches if there is anything remaining and if there is indeed something remaining, how are we going to proceed to know about it. The focus is on *śeṣa*.

Secondly, the question sentence is clearly borrowed from the Sanskrit tradition, albeit with a modified interpretation. This question is supposedly asked, as the story goes, to the poet Kalidasa by his wife asking him if he had any distinctive, i.e. sophisticated speech and in response Kalidasa composed three poems, each beginning with a word from this question sentence, *Kumārasambhavam* (a *Mahākāvya*, i.e. a long poem) beginning with *asti* (*asti (asty) uttarasyām diśi devatātām...*), *Meghadūtam* (a *Khaṇḍakāvya*, i.e. a short poem) beginning with *kaścit* (*kaścit kāntāvirahaguruṇā...*) and *Raghuvamśam* (a *Mahākāvya*) beginning with *vāg* (*vāgarthāviva sampṛktau...*).