

Tat Tvam Asi – Part VI



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The Background

The earlier essay 'Tat Tvam Asi – Part V' and the present essay 'Tat Tvam Asi – Part VI' are basically meant to set the foundation for *lakṣya-lakṣaṇatā-sambandha-jñānam* which is the third knowledge-step required for understanding the *mahāvākya* *Tat tvam asi*. *Lakṣya-lakṣaṇatā-sambandha-jñānam* is the relationship between the implication (*lakṣaṇa*) and the implied (*lakṣya*). The implied meaning, termed '*lakṣyārtha*' can be understood only in contrast with '*mukhyārtha*', the primary meaning. Hence the need to first study *mukhya-vṛtti* or direct connotation. The earlier essay was devoted to the explanation of *mukhya-vṛtti* and *mukhyārtha*. In this present essay we shall see in detail the second type of *vṛtti* (connotation) which is *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*¹.

Lakṣaṇā-vṛtti

Lakṣaṇā-vṛtti is commonly translated as secondary connotation, secondary signification, indirect connotation, indirect signification, implied connotation or implied signification².

¹ It is strongly recommended that one should first study *Tat Tvam Asi – Part V*, published in the January 2005 issue of *Tapovan Prasad*, before embarking into the study of this essay. The term *vṛtti* means connotation or signification. *Vṛtti* is the relationship between a *pada* (word) and its *padārtha* (meaning or word-sense). It is divided into two types a) *mukhya-vṛtti* (primary connotation) and b) *lakṣaṇa-vṛtti* (secondary connotation). All these have been elaborately explained in the previous essay.

² Different authors prefer different terminologies while translating the word '*lakṣyārtha*'. Hence the need to mention all the technical words which are in vogue.

When the *mukhyārtha* (primary or literal meaning) of a *pada* (word) is incongruous or inappropriate in arriving at the *vāk्यārtha*, i.e., the cogent meaning of a sentence, then the *pada* (word) will connote a *padārtha* (word-sense) which is different from and yet related to its *mukhyārtha* (primary meaning). This is a very simple idea and can be illustrated with a common example: 'muñcāḥ krośanti — the galleries are shouting'. Since the inert galleries (*muñcāḥ*) cannot shout, we construe the meaning or word sense (*padārtha*) of 'galleries' as 'people in the galleries'. This secondary *padārtha*, 'the people in the galleries', which is not the *mukhyārtha* (primary meaning) but at the same time is connected with it, is termed *lakṣyārtha*. *Lakṣyārtha* can be translated as secondary meaning, implied meaning, indirect meaning or suggestive meaning. Sri Sankaracharya in his work *Vākya-vṛtti* explains the nature of *lakṣyārtha*:

मानान्तरविरोधे तु मुख्यार्थस्य परिग्रहे ।
मुख्यार्थेनाविनाभूते प्रतीतिर्लक्षणोच्यते ॥

mānāntaravirodhe tu mukhyārthasya parigrahe ।
mukhyārthenāvinābhūte pratītilakṣaṇocyate ॥

In case the direct meaning of the word is not acceptable because it is inconsistent with other evidences, the meaning which is clearly intelligible and connected with the direct meaning is considered to be the implied meaning.

Thus the *lakṣyārtha* of a *pada* fulfils the dual criterion of:

- not being the *mukhyārtha* (primary meaning) and at the same time
- being related to the *mukhyārtha*.

The *vṛtti* (signification or connotation) by which a *pada* drops its *mukhyārtha* (primary meaning) and connotes its *lakṣyārtha* (implied meaning) is termed *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*. This *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* is classified into three types:

- jahal-lakṣaṇā* or *jahatī lakṣaṇā*
- ajahal-lakṣaṇā* or *ajahatī lakṣaṇā*
- jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā* or *jahatī-ajahatī-lakṣaṇā* or *bhāgatyaṅga-lakṣaṇā*.

Jahallakṣaṇā

In this kind of *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* the *pada* (word) gives up its *vāc्यārtha* (literal meaning or primary meaning) totally and connotes or signifies a meaning that is related to its *vāc्यārtha*³. The following is the definition given by Swami Brahmalinga Muni in his *Vedānta Sudhā*.

शक्यार्थं यत्र सन्त्यज्य तत्सम्बन्धितयाऽपरः ।

अर्थः प्रतीयते तत्र जहतीलक्षणा मता ॥

śakyārthaṁ yatra santyajya tatsambandhitayā'parah |

arthaḥ pratīyate tatra jahatīlakṣaṇā matā ॥

When the word totally gives up its literal meaning and connotes an implied meaning which is related to its literal meaning then it is a case of *jahallakṣaṇā*.

We shall now understand the nature of *jahallakṣaṇā* with a traditional example: An individual who wants to reach a particular village enquires from a passerby:

Question : 'Kutra ghoṣaḥ — Where is the village?'

Reply : 'Gaṅgāyāṁ ghoṣaḥ — The village is on the Ganga'.

We shall now study the methodology by which we understand the above reply.

Ganga is a river — a mass of flowing water (*jala-pravāha*) and hence there is no possibility of a village with houses, people, trees, cows etc., or for that matter anything being positioned on it except, say, a boat or some such thing which can float on water. Hence we find that the *vāc्यārtha* (literal meaning) of the *gaṅgā-pada* (word 'gaṅgā') arrived at by *mukhya-vṛtti* (primary signification), which is the watery 'river', is incongruous and inappropriate in construing a logical meaning for the sentence.

When the *mukhya-vṛtti* or primary signification fails to give a cogent meaning for the sentence (*vāc्यārtha*), we take recourse to *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* or secondary signification. The *vāc्यārtha* (direct

³ *Vāc्यārthaṁ samagraṁ parityajya tatsambandhimātram yatra pratīyate tatra jahallakṣaṇā* — this is another precise definition from the Sanskrit translation of *Vicāra-Sāgara* by Vasudeva Brahmendra Saraswati.

meaning) of the 'gaṅgā-pada' (word 'gaṅgā') is the river — a mass of flowing water, and this is totally given up. The 'gaṅgā-pada' (word 'gaṅgā'), by lakṣaṇā-vṛtti or secondary signification drops its vācyārtha (direct meaning) of 'river' and then gives the connotation 'tīra - the river-bank'. The sentence 'gaṅgāyām ghoṣaḥ - there is a village on the Ganga'— is now understood as 'tīre ghoṣaḥ - there is a village on the river-bank'. This sentence-sense (vācyārtha) is quite appropriate and rationally sound, as a village can definitely exist on the bank which is stable land, unlike on the watery flowing river.

The vācyārtha (literal meaning) or mukhyārtha (primary meaning) of gaṅgā-pada (word 'Ganga') is the flowing mass of water. The lakṣyārtha or implied meaning is the 'tīra-padārtha', the river-bank. While arriving at this lakṣyārtha of tīra-padārtha, the whole of the flowing Ganga is totally dropped and therefore we see that the vācyārtha (direct meaning) is totally abandoned. The earthy bank which has an absolutely different nature from the watery Ganga,⁴ though connected to the river by proximity, is taken as the lakṣyārtha or implied meaning of the word Ganga.

- Sentence by mukhya-vṛtti: 'Gaṅgāyām ghoṣaḥ - The village is on the Ganga'.
- Sentence by lakṣaṇā-vṛtti: 'Tīre ghoṣaḥ - The village is on the river-bank'.

This kind of secondary signification or implied connotation wherein the pada gives up its vācyārtha or mukhyārtha (literal or primary meaning) fully, and connotes something else different from its vācyārtha is called jahallakṣaṇā. This jahallakṣaṇā or jahatī lakṣaṇā is translated as exclusive-secondary connotation or exclusive-implied signification i.e., the secondary meaning or implied meaning is arrived at by excluding the mukhyārtha or literal meaning. (The term 'jahat' or 'jahatī' means 'excluding' and is derived from the Sanskrit root 'hā' to 'give up').

⁴ Ganga is water but bank is land. Water flows and is unstable but banks don't flow and are steady.

It is important to note that though by *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* a *pada* connotes a *lakṣyārtha* which is different from its *vācyārtha*, the *lakṣyārtha* is not totally unrelated to the *vācyārtha* but only something related to it⁵. The *lakṣyārtha* of a *pada* (word), by rules of *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*, has to be always related to the *vācyārtha*⁶. Thus by *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* the '*gaṅgā-pada*' (word '*gaṅgā*') connotes only the 'banks of Ganga' and not the banks of the River Nile or the shores of the Indian Ocean.

It is equally important to note that the banks being related to Ganga does not mean that they retain even a trace of the nature of the river, the flowing watery Ganga. Nay, the entire mass of flowing water called Ganga is dropped out of the reckoning when its earthy 'bank' is indicated. In other words, the whole of the *vācyārtha* is renounced and a new related *padārtha* of *tīra* (bank) is brought in to give a cogent meaning to the sentence. This new *padārtha*, the *tīra* (bank) is the *lakṣyārtha* of '*gaṅgāpada*' (the word Ganga).

To summarise, the *lakṣyārtha* arrived at by *jahallakṣaṇā* fulfils a dual criterion:

- a. The *lakṣyārtha* is arrived at by completely dropping the *vācyārtha* (literal meaning) of the *pada* (word) and
- b. The *lakṣyārtha* is related to the *vācyārtha* of the *pada*.

Ajahallakṣaṇā

After placing the food on the dining table, the mother instructs her son, 'Don't allow the dog to come near the food'. Here the word 'dog' also refers to cat, crow or for that matter any animal that may happen to steal the food. The word 'dog', while implying other creatures like 'cat', does not exclude its primary meaning 'dog'. In other words, the *vācyārtha* or literal meaning of the word 'dog' is not abandoned while construing the *lakṣyārtha*. This kind of *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* is termed *ajahallakṣaṇā*.

⁵ The relationship between the Ganga and its banks is described technically as *samyoga-sambandha*.

⁶ Refer to the two-fold criterion of *lakṣyārtha* explained under the sub-heading '*lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*'.

In *jahallakṣaṇā*, we arrived at the *lakṣyārtha* (secondary or implied meaning) by renouncing the *vācyārtha* or *mukhyārtha* (literal or primary meaning). But in *ajahallakṣaṇā*, we arrive at the *lakṣyārtha* (implied meaning), by retaining the *vācyārtha* (literal meaning) and then adding one or more new specific components that are obviously related to the *vācyārtha*. Thus the resultant *lakṣyārtha* contains the original element of the *pada*'s *vācyārtha* (word's literal meaning) along with its added related element or elements⁷. Swami Brahmalina Muni in his *Vedānta Sudhā* defines *ajahallakṣaṇā*:

वाच्यार्थसहितं यत्र तत्सम्बन्धितया पुनः ।
विशेषार्थपरिज्ञानमजहल्लक्षणा तु सा ॥

vācyārthasahitaṁ yatra tatsambandhitayā punaḥ ।
viśeṣārthaparijñānamajhallakṣaṇā tu sā ॥

When a special meaning is arrived at by adding on to the primary sense a meaning related to the very same primary sense, it is called *ajahallakṣaṇā*.

The following is the traditional example given by the *Vedānta āchāryas* to illustrate *ajahallakṣaṇā*. While visiting a horse stable or a horse race, one hears the statement '*śoṇaḥ dhavati* — The red runs'. We shall now study the methodology by which one construes the meaning of this sentence.

The *vācyārtha* (literal meaning) or *mukhyārtha* (primary meaning) of the '*śoṇa-pada*' (word 'red') is the property of '*śoṇatva*' (redness). Properties like redness, whiteness, greenness and blueness do not exist independently, let alone being capable of running. Properties require a substratum to reside. Since there is a logical inconsistency of the mere property 'redness' running, in the sentence '*śoṇaḥ dhavati* — The red runs', while construing the sentence, we are forced to take recourse to *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* or secondary signification.

⁷ *Vācyārthena sahaiva vācyasambandhijñānaṁ tena padena jāyate tatpade tasminnarthe ajahallakṣaṇā grāhyā*— a precise definition from the Sanskrit translation of *Vicāra-Sāgara* by Vasudeva Brahmendra Saraswati.

'*Aśvaḥ*' (horse) is related to '*śoṇatva*' (redness) by contextually being its substratum (as this sentence was heard in a horse stable). This enables us to come to the *lakṣyārtha* (implied meaning or secondary meaning) of '*śoṇa-pada*' (word-red) as '*śoṇaḥ aśvaḥ*' (red horse). Thus an utterly new component of *aśvaḥ* (horse) is added to the *vācyārtha* '*śoṇatva*' (literal meaning 'redness') to derive the *lakṣyārtha* (implied meaning) of '*śoṇa-pada*' (word-red). Now the sentence '*Śoṇaḥ dhavati* — The red runs' is construed as '*Śoṇaḥ aśvaḥ dhavati* — The red horse runs'.

- Sentence by *mukhya-vṛtti*: '*Śoṇaḥ dhavati* — The red runs'.
- Sentence by *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*: '*Śoṇaḥ aśvaḥ dhavati* — The red horse runs'.

This kind of *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* is called *ajahal-lakṣaṇā* or *ajahatī-lakṣaṇā* because the *vācyārtha* (direct meaning) is not excluded while construing the *lakṣyārtha* (implied meaning). The term '*ajahat*' or '*ajahatī*' means 'non-excluding' or 'not abandoning'. The term *ajahal-lakṣaṇā* or *ajahatī lakṣaṇā* is translated as non-exclusive secondary signification or non-exclusive secondary connotation.

To summarise: The *lakṣyārtha* arrived at by *ajahallakṣaṇā* fulfils two criteria:

- a. The *lakṣyārtha* is arrived at by retaining the *vācyārtha* (literal meaning) of the *pada* (word) and adding on a new component to the *vācyārtha*.
- b. The new component added to the *vācyārtha* is related to the *vācyārtha*.

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Grace is only to be found by effort,
although it is here and now.

Swami Chinmayananda

Conclusion

One may mathematically differentiate the *lakṣyārthas* derived using *jahallakṣaṇā* and *ajahallakṣaṇā*:

- *Lakṣyārtha* by *jahallakṣaṇā* = new component related to *vācyārtha* - *vācyārtha*
- *Lakṣyārtha* by *ajahallakṣaṇā* = new component related to *vācyārtha* + *vācyārtha*.

These two — *jahallakṣaṇā* and *ajahallakṣaṇā* — are verily the foundation for understanding the third, final and most important type of *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti*, the *jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā*. It is through this *jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā* that we will be able to derive the *lakṣyārthas* (implied meanings) of '*tatpada*' (word '*tat*') and '*tvampada*' (word '*tvam*'), which help us to understand the *akhaṇḍārtha* of '*Tat tvam asi*'. This topic of *jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇā* will be taken up in the next essay. As one studies these concepts, one is sure to examine and admire the great dexterity with which our ancient masters have dealt with and analysed subtle philosophical concepts. Truly speaking, no philosophy in the world can compare with the intellectual rigour and consistency of *Advaita Vedānta*. Our salutations to the vibrant intellectual tradition of *Vedānta*.

Auspicious days

February 2005

5 Ekadasi	14 Shashti Vratam	21 Pradosham
6 Pradosham	19 Ekadasi	24 Pournami
8 Amavasya		

March 2005

5 Shashti Vratam	10 Amavasya	25 Pournami
6 Ekadasi	16 Shashti Vratam	26 Holi
8 Pradosham	21 Ekadasi	31 Shashti Vratam
Maha Shivaratri	23 Pradosham	