

## A Critical Review of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā's Argument on the words *Upāsīta* and *Iti* in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* I.4.7

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### Summary

Śankarācārya reveals that the Upanadic statement “*Ātma ityeva upāsīta*” (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* I.4.7) marks the commencement of the non-dualistic teaching. Since the verb *upāsīta* is explicitly in the sense of optative mood and the word *upāsānā* primarily means meditation, there is wider scope for any School of thought to understand the said statement as revealing the sense of meditation upon the Self. In his commentary to this statement which is also known as the *vidyāsūtra*, Śankara conducts a philosophical debate with the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā to refute the claim that the said statement enjoins meditation. This section of the commentary is popularly referred to as the *Vidyāsūtrabhāṣya*. My Post-Doctoral research (unpublished) is on the *Vidyāsūtrabhāṣya* along with thirteen other Sanskrit commentaries of Advaitic preceptors. Based on my research analysis and findings so far, here, I propose to briefly attempt a critical review of the Mīmāṃsaka's application of the concept of *bhāvanā* (generative force) to the word *upāsīta* and the elucidation of the significance of the particle *iti* (in the statement *ātmā iti eva upāsīta*). This paper proposes to criticize the Mīmāṃsaka's methodology of deriving the notion of enjoainment, object of meditation and process of meditation from the standpoint of the metaphysical dimension that reflects in the reply of Śankarācārya.

### I

#### Introduction

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (henceforth *BU*), according to the Advaitic interpretation, is said to commence with the application of the methodology of superimposition and negation (*adhyāropa-apavāda*) in order to reveal the transcendental reality, the absolute nature of the very Self. The fourth section of the first chapter records the conclusion of the superimposition-negation method and introduces the transcendental Self through the statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*” (*BU* I.4.7). This statement is often referred to as the *vidyāsūtra* or the knowledge-aphorism since it reveals the non-dual nature of the Self. In his commentary to this *vidyāsūtra*, Śankarācārya conducts a philosophical debate with the School of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, primarily in refutation of the idea that the said statement is a statement of enjoainment (*vidhivākya*). Śankara first presents the view of Advaitin in this regard and then proceeds to enlist the arguments of the Mīmāṃsaka. Firstly, it is argued that the statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*” is not an original injunction (*apūrvavidhi*),<sup>1</sup> and the reason given is that since the Self is already known as a possible alternative<sup>2</sup> it cannot be enjoined through the statement of original injunction. Śankara then presents the metaphysical argument in relation to the transcendent<sup>1</sup> nature of the Self and justifies the impossibility of injunction with regard to the Self or the Self-knowledge.

Thereafter, the arguments of the Mīmāṃsaka is presented which commences with the note that the said statement is an original injunction alone. The method of the Mīmāṃsaka in arriving at this

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conclusion is then enunciated. To prove that the Upanisadic statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*” is a statement of enjoiment, the Mīmāṃsaka first shows that this statement enjoins meditation and this meaning is derived from the word *upāsīta*. Then, it is shown that this statement is an original injunction since one does not know that one should meditate on the Self and this meaning is derived by equating the sense of knowledge (*jñāna*) and meditation (*upāsana*). The Mīmāṃsaka here tries to then prove the sameness of the sense of knowledge and meditation by citing the Upanisadic statements occurring in *BU* I.4.7. The Mīmāṃsaka then reiterates that the assertive statements (*siddhabhodhakavākya*) does not induce one to act, which is the main criterion for validating the Vedic statements. Thus, the said Upanisadic statement is then likened to the injunctive statement of action and meditation. Further, the Mīmāṃsaka argues that the injunctive-ness of the statement gets validated by the logical emergence of three divisions of generative force or *bhāvanā*. Then, presently the Mīmāṃsaka's argument is concluded by demonstrating the *prakarana* or context for validation of the said Upanisadic statement to be a statement of injunction.

Later, while dealing with the significance of the particle *iti* in the statement “*ātmā iti eva upāsīta*”, the Mīmāṃsakatries to justify that because of the position of the particle *iti* after the word *ātmā* in the *mantra*, the object of meditation is known to be the non-self (*anātmā*). Now, this meaning is derived by the Mīmāṃsaka through the textual source and by grammatical application. By citing the text “*priyamityenadupāsīta*” (*BU* IV.1.3) the meaning of the particle *iti* is shown to be directed towards the 'other' entity that is to be meditated upon as this 'said' entity. That is, the Mīmāṃsaka tries to state here that the statement “*ātmā iti eva upāsīta*” is an enjoiment of meditation upon the non-self as endowed with the features of the Self as found in a similar fashion in the cited Upanisadic text. To emphasize the point that the non-self alone is the object of meditation intended here, the Mīmāṃsakaciting the statement “*ātmānameva lokamupāsīta*” (*BU* I.4.15) argues that, had the Upaniṣad intended the object of meditation to be the very Self, then the word *ātmā* in the statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*” must have been in the accusative case and since it is not so, the grammatically derivative sense is that the Self is not the object of meditation here. Thus, in this analysis of the significance of the particle *iti* (*itipadavicāra*), the argument of the Mīmāṃsaka is directed towards the object and process of meditation.

Now, the questions raised here are -

1. How does the Mīmāṃsaka apply the concept of *bhāvanā* in the Upanisadic statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*” to prove it as the statement of original injunction, enjoining meditation on the Self?
2. How does the Mīmāṃsaka analyse the significance of the particle *iti* in the said Upanisadic statement to arrive at the object of meditation and the process of meditation?

By analyzing the answer of the above two questions in the following sections, we shall then critically review the position of the Mīmāṃsaka by pointing out the fallacy of incoherence in the elucidation of the reasons through the concept of *bhāvanā* and *itipadavicāra*.

## II

### Mīmāṃsaka's Application of *Bhāvanā*

Let us begin the discussion now with an analysis of the concept of *bhāvanā* in the School of Mīmāṃsā. The *bhāvanā*<sup>3</sup> or the generative force is classified into two parts known as the verbal generative force (*śabdabhāvanā*) and the actual generative force (*arthabhāvanā*). The verbal generative force is said to be indicated by the verbal form in the sense of optative mood (*lin*)<sup>4</sup>. The

actual generative force is described to be indicated by the verbality element in general (*ākhyāta*)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the term *bhāvanā* by itself expresses the sense of 'inducing one to act'. The *bhāvanās* are said to address three basic expectations of the listener or seeker and the Vedic statements constituting the verbal form in optative mood are said to fulfill these three basic expectations. For instance, in the verbal form *yajeta* it is shown by the application of *bhāvanā* that the Veda induces one to act and the listener takes to action accordingly since the statement with the verb *yajeta* addresses the three basic expectations.

Now, the three basic expectations in relation to the concept of *bhāvanā* are said to be in the form of three questions and the Vedic statement is seen as a reply to these three forms of questions. The expectations at the three levels are expressed as *kim*, *kena* and *katham*. That is, (1) what is to be accomplished? (2) by what means should it be accomplished? (3) and how is it to be accomplished? – these three expectations are categorized as the components of *arthabhāvanā*.<sup>6</sup> Let us take the instance of the Vedic statement “*svargakāman (svargam) jyotinnomena yajeta*”. The first expectation or *ākāṅkṣā* as 'what' is to be accomplished? is addressed in the statement as 'The *svarga* or heaven is to be accomplished' which is in the accusative sense indicating the object to be attained. The second expectation as 'by what means is to be accomplished?' is indicated in the statement by the usage of the instrumental case. The means of attainment of the end-result is by the *jyotinnoma* sacrifice. The third expectation as 'how is it to be accomplished?' is revealed in this statement by the verbal usage *yajeta*. The usage of the potential mood indicates the enjoinder of action to be performed. So, the reply is that the heaven is to be accomplished by means of *performance* of the sacrifice *jyotinnoma*. A person hearing such a Vedic statement, having gained the reply to his expectations, sets to perform the sacrifice to gain the result. The Vedic statement is thus argued to be an original injunction which by way of addressing the three expectations reveals the totally unknown to the hearer.

The Mīmāṃsakas, thus show that the Vedic statements have the inherent power to induce one to act (and hence they are valid statements) and the hearer too on listening to such statements proceeds to perform the prescribed act (and hence there is accomplishment of the result through injunction). Now, the Mīmāṃsaka applies the model of *bhāvanā* in the present Upanisadic statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*”<sup>7</sup> and tries to show that the said statement is a statement of original injunction. It is shown that the first expectation of 'What?' is fulfilled by the revelation of the object (of meditation) as the Self. The second expectation as 'By what means?' is addressed by the particle *iti* and in this context the Mīmāṃsaka cites the other Upanisadic statements as revealing the sense of *iti* to mean 'a refined mind'. Thus, a refined mind is the instrument by which the said object is attained. The third expectation of 'How?' is said to be addressed by the verbal form *upāsīta*. The conjugational suffix '*ta*' indicates the sense of potential mood. The verbal root form *upās* in the sense of 'meditation' reveals the kind of action to be performed in this context to obtain the object. Thus, the Mīmāṃsakas interpret the said Upanisadic statement through the concept of *bhāvanā* as – 'The Self is to be meditated upon by the refined mind' and this is said to be an original injunction as the object of meditation is not known according to the Mīmāṃsakas.

### III

#### Significance of *Iti* – According to Mīmāṃsā

Prior to the analysis of the significance of the particle *iti* in the present Upanisadic statement, we shall set to briefly discuss the concept of *itikartavyatā* in the School of Mīmāṃsā. The third expectation as 'How?' described above while discussing the concept of *bhāvanā*, refers to the method of the act to be performed. It was shown that the reply to the third expectation is gained from the

verbal usage in a given statement. Here, while analyzing the particle *iti*, the Mīmāṃsakas apply the model of *itikartavyatā* or the *modus operandi* as done in the other Vedic statements. Hence, it becomes necessary here to distinguish between the *katham-bhāvanā* concept and the *itikartavyatā* concept in the present argument of the Mīmāṃsakas. The *itikartavyatā* is said to constitute the threefold components (expectations) of both the *śabdabhāvanā* and the *arthabhāvanā* and it is said to be connected in the sense of instrument to fulfill the expectation of 'How?'.<sup>8</sup> This idea of *itikartavyatā* is now extended directly by the Mīmāṃsaka in the particle *iti* occurring in the Upanisadic statement “*ātmā iti eva upāsīta*”. The Mīmāṃsaka also has to issue forth the argument based on the position of the particle *iti* in the present statement. That is to say that as the particle *iti* is positioned after the word *ātmā*, the expectation of 'How?' is said to be addressed. Which means – for the question 'How should one conduct the meditation?' – according to the Mīmāṃsaka this statement shows that – the meditation (of the non-self) is to be conducted as endowed with the features of the Self. The “*ātmā iti*” would then mean for the Mīmāṃsaka as – “(The non-self is to be meditated upon) as the Self.

Now, let us analyze the Mīmāṃsā's method of arriving at the significance of the particle *iti* in this Upanisadic statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*”.<sup>9</sup> Śankara in the earlier part of his commentarial discussion assumes a hypothetical position and argues that if at all an injunction has to be accepted in this said Upanisadic statement, it cannot be an original injunction, but it can be only as a restrictive injunction or *niyamavidhi*.<sup>10</sup> This position of compromise taken by Śankara in this context is to exclude the idea of the object of knowledge (or meditation as held by the Mīmāṃsakas) to be the non-self. Thus, the debate here wholly is based on the metaphysical position of Advaita Vedānta. When the compromised idea of application of *niyamavidhi* has been shown by Śankara to avoid the sense of non-self as the object under discussion, then the Mīmāṃsakas set to analyse the significance of the particle *iti* in the present Upanisadic statement as the indicator of the object and process of meditation in this context.

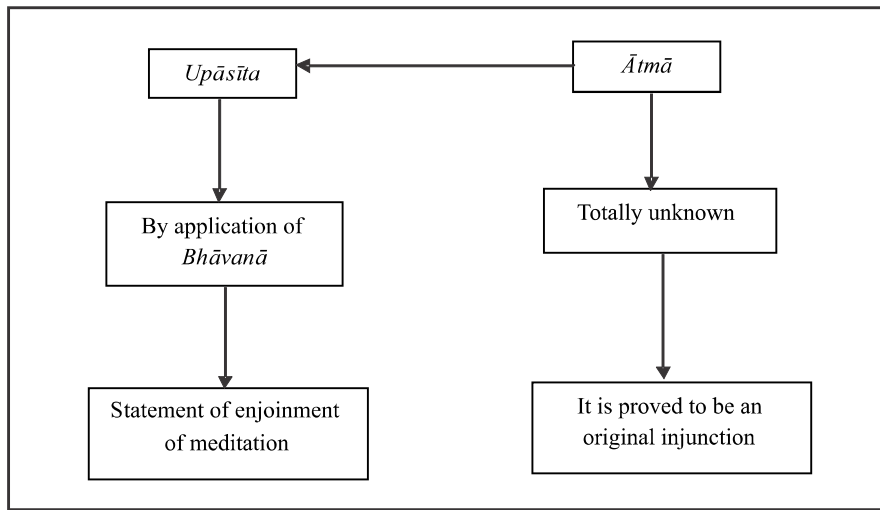
The Mīmāṃsaka has argued through the textual and grammatical sources (see above, Introduction) that the particle *iti* indicates the object of meditation to be the non-self and the process as by meditating on the non-self as endowed with the features of the Self. The object of meditation as the non-self is further reiterated by citing the textual reference from the very Upanisadic portion viz., *BU I.4.7* in which the *vidyāsūtra* occurs. By adopting this method of textual analysis, the Mīmāṃsaka tightens his force of argument to show in this context that the object of meditation is the non-self alone. The *BU I.4.7* states that – “(Then) That (supreme Self) enters here into this (individual self)” – and later states that – “That (supreme Self, the Witness Consciousness) is not seen (known)”. By relating these two statements, the Mīmāṃsaka here argues that since the vision of that very Self is impeded after its entry into the individual being, it evidently reveals that the object of perception (meditation) is not the Self. By exclusion, then the object of meditation has to be the non-self. Thus, the Mīmāṃsaka here concludes that the object of meditation is the non-self and the particle *iti* also signifies that the non-self is to be meditated upon as endowed with the features of the Self (see above, Introduction).

#### IV

#### Critical Review of Mīmāṃsā's Argument

In the Introduction above, we raised two main questions related to the Mīmāṃsakas analytical model by the application of the concept of *bhāvanā* and by the analysis of the particle *iti*.

We shall set to now answer these two questions based on the discussion conducted in the above two sections. To address the first question, it is obvious that the verbal form *upāsīta* gives explicit scope for the application of *bhāvanā*. Thus, it is derived that the said statement is an enjoinder of meditation. Now, to prove that it is an original injunction, the object of meditation, that is, the Self has to be shown as a totally unknown entity. The Mīmāṃsaka here tries to show that since the natural engagement of the individuals are in the field of non-self, there is unknown-ness pertaining to the Self and such an unknown Self is mentioned in this Upanisadic statement which is to be meditated upon. The argument of the Mīmāṃsaka in this context can be captured in a diagram (1.1) as given below –

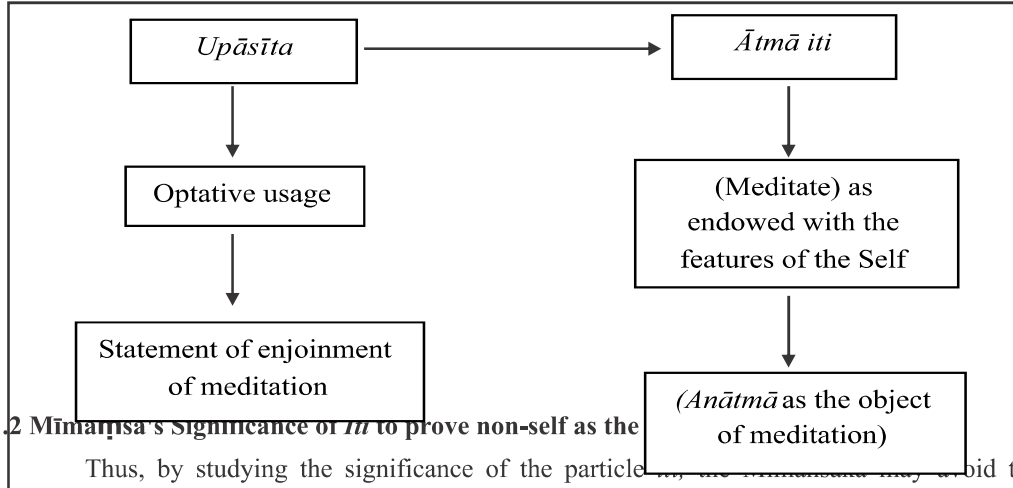


### 1.1 Mīmāṃsā's Application of *Bhāvanā* to prove the *Vidyāsūtra* as an original injunction

Thus, by the application of the concept of *bhāvanā* the Upanisadic statement reads for the Mīmāṃsaka as – “The unknown Self is to be meditated upon”. Or, it can be further argued by the Mīmāṃsaka that if the Self is said to be already known then also the present statement is an original injunction since it enjoins meditation upon the Self. That is, now the Upanisadic statement may be read as – “The known Self is to be meditated upon”. In either way, the argument of original injunction gets proved. So far, the reading of the statement revolved around the content as the very Self.

Now, seeking an answer to the second question raised in the Introduction (above), the Mīmāṃsaka's argument in relation to the particle *iti* described (above) is critically reviewed here. In this context, the Mīmāṃsaka, in order to dismiss the Advaitic hypothetical stand of application of the *niyamavidhi* which excludes the contemplation on the non-self, shows that the particle *iti* reveals the object of meditation as the non-self. This stand of the Mīmāṃsaka cannot be categorized as a hypothetical argument since this argument is advanced based on the textual and grammatical sources. But, the method of argument issued forth by the Mīmāṃsaka here is quite illogical. Firstly, the argument is advanced to prove that the said statement is an original injunction by pointing out the unknown-ness related to the Self. This means that the Mīmāṃsaka agrees that the present Upanisadic statement is dealing with the Self. Then, suddenly while trying to show the significance of the particle *iti* to counter the Advaitin's position of *niyamavidhi* application, the Mīmāṃsaka totally reverses the very content of the Upanisadic statement as the non-self. The argument of the Mīmāṃsaka in this

context can be represented in a diagram (1.2) as given below –



## 1.2 Mīmāṃsaka's Significance of *iti* to prove non-self as the

Thus, by studying the significance of the particle *iti*, the Mīmāṃsaka may avoid the application of *niyamavidhi* that insists the exclusion of non-self, but by doing so, the Mīmāṃsaka lands up in the contrary position of letting the context to revolve around the non-self. If this is the concluding remark of the Mīmāṃsaka then it goes contrary to the very attempt of the Upanisad here that intendsto introduce the Self. The contextual sense of the Upanisadic discussion would become meaningless in such an attempt of the Mīmāṃsaka. Moreover, by positioning both the arguments raised through the two questions in the Introduction (above) the Mīmāṃsaka may have to read the said Upanisadic statement as – “The unknown Self is to be meditated upon”, to prove it as the original injunction and then read as – “The non-self should be meditated upon as the Self”, to dismiss the idea of restrictive injunction.

By the metaphysical reply of Śankara in his *Vidyāsūtrabhāṣya*, that the Self is already known and there is no engagement in the non-self after the gain of Self-knowledge, it can be comfortably concluded here that the arguments based on the concept of *bhāvanā* and the *itipada*, the Mīmāṃsaka exhibit an incoherence in the application of the interpretative principles and it does not pose a major threat to the position of Advaita Vedānta according to whom the present Upaninadic statement takes the position of a *mahāvākya*.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Apūrvavidhi* or original injunction is that which enjoins something that is totally not known. For instance, in connection with the new and full moon sacrifices, the sentence, “One should sprinkle the rice grains” is said to be an original injunction because in the absence of this statement, such an action in this sacrifice will never be known. For details see, *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa* of Āpadeva.
- <sup>2</sup> The mention of possible alternative here indicates that it is restrictive injunction or *niyamavidhi*. A restrictive injunction is that which restricts something that is known only as a possible alternative. For example, in the context of new and full moon sacrifices, the sentence “One should thresh the rice grains” is a restrictive injunction because of various other ways of splitting the rice grains, this sentence restricts the action to the act of threshing alone. For details see, *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa* of Āpadeva.
- <sup>3</sup> For details see, *Arthasangraha* of Laugākni Bhāskara.

- <sup>4</sup> Of the ten *lakāra-s* of Pāninian grammatical verb structure, the *lin* represents the optative sense. It is the specific sense of the verb in the form of action.
  - <sup>5</sup> The verbality which has the general sense of the verb in the form of action.
  - <sup>6</sup> For application of *śabdabhāvanā* see *Arthasangraha*.
  - <sup>7</sup> See, the commentary of Śankara on the *Vidyāsūtra* (BU I.4.7).
  - <sup>8</sup> For details see *Mīmānsākośa* (Vol.II) edited by Kevalānanda Sarasvatī.
  - <sup>9</sup> See, the commentary of Śankara on the *Vidyāsūtra* (BU I.4.7).
  - <sup>10</sup> See Note-2, above. Also, later Advaitic preceptors like Saccidānandendra Sarasvatī shows the possible application of *parisankhyāvidhi* or exclusive injunction in the case of this Upanadic statement “*ātmā ityeva upāsīta*”. For details see, *Kleśāpahārinī* commentary to the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* of Sureśvara. See *Mīmānsāparibhāṣā* for details on exclusive injunction.
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