

# McDowell's communication intention theory Vs. Nyāya's structure of understanding (Śābdabodha)

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**ABSTRACT**--In this paper, I discuss that Śābdabodha and the Mc Dowell's Communication intentionist theories are related each other. Śābdabodha is a process of understanding in which first we process the speaker's verbalizing cognition and subsequently then encode it through a medium (i.e. Sentence). Secondly, a hearer must know that medium of instruction and get a same knowledge which the speaker had. It is viewed a two-way process of Speaker and the hearer and then we reach into certain understanding i.e. Śābdabodha. On the other hand, McDowell's communication-intention theory which contends that the mutual awareness of intentions is a characteristic of human communication in transmitting knowledge on the basis of the reductive analysis of the concept of meaning. Both these concepts and theories face the problem of understanding in the communication. As an addition, Nyāya process of understanding includes the five stages of sentential meaning to generate the Śābdabodha. However, this paper is an attempt the Nyāya philosophy of language and its relation with the western philosopher McDowell's Communication intentionist theory.

**Keywords**-- Śābdabodha, Śabdapramāna, Knowledge, Nyāya, Language faculty, Communication-intention.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the mediums in which we communicate with each other. It is like the frames to represent the reality. It can be in the form of a written or verbal. But there are more forms of language like gesture, regional languages, phrases language and many more. There is a fundamental distinction between the speaking and the writing skills. On the other side, written communication is survived only on the act of writing. It is all about how language functions in the communication. The nature of language is to decode and encode the words into a meaningful.

Wittgenstein states that there are two types of theories about the nature of language. In the 'Tractatus' he says, 'the totality of sentences is language' (4.001). In the PI (Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigation), Wittgenstein provides a theory the language depend its use; language in this sense is related to the speakers of the language. Language is the usage of the words by the speakers to communicate. There is a semantical theory of meaning which emphasizes those sentences or other linguistic expressions which have meaning. It is sentential meaning. Corresponding to this, there is a theory of user's meaning. If in the sentence has no meaning relation then there is

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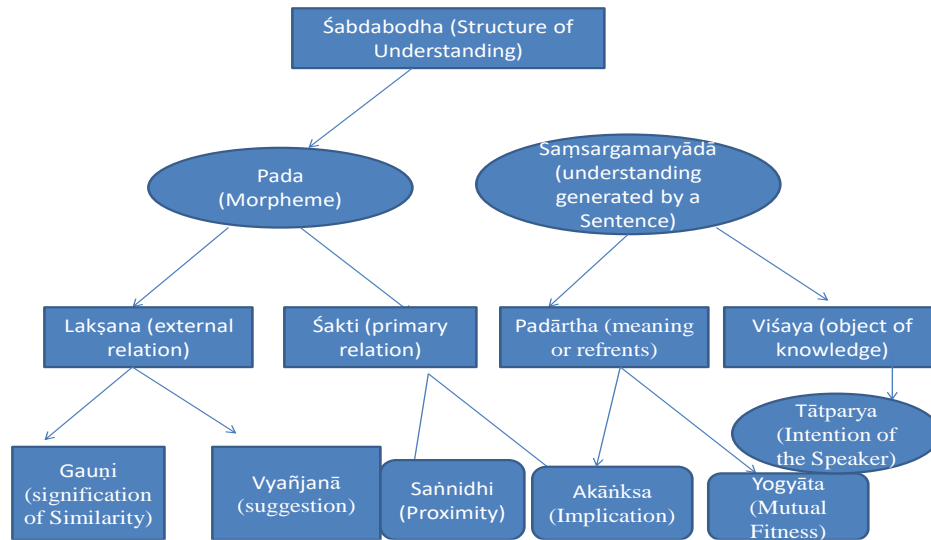
no sense. From the above discussion, we observe that any meaning which is generated from words is different and consistent for the speaker. If the word-meaning does not complete their nature of understanding in the sentence to the hearer then the whole responsibility switches to the speaker's utterance and his/her actions. For instance, a person saying in his/her native language, 'Please lend me a pencil' but his words not conveying its meaning to the hearer. In this situation, the person concerned has to do some action to convey his meaning through gestures. Here are some other language like Gestures language which work as the same as the speaking and writing skills. It is a sign language between the speaker and the hearer. Gestures are more basic than speech act. St. Augustine advocates that the gestures and other bodily behavior constitute the natural language of man. That is why a child learning his first language by observing the behavior and gestures of the elder. It is also true that we cannot express all our thoughts or communicate all information by means of these gestures. But this objection does not valid because like other languages we can also learn this gesture language. And language is not something which is inherent in new born babies but it should be learn from our elders.

In Indian philosophy, different schools have different perspective on language. Some system like Mimāṃsā asserts that the sentence and its meaning are the result from the combination of the smaller units called words and word-meaning. Nyāya philosophy points out that God is the source of relation of both the words and objects. They relate them semantically by His (God) will. It is divine will which has the semantical relation. Sāṅkhya also accept Verbal Testimony (Śabda) into their list of *pramāṇa*. Sāṅkhya advocates VT (Verbal Testimony) is understood as referring to the scriptures (Vedas) only. Navya-Nyāya emphasis language is based on the presupposition that written language is parasitic on spoken language. They assert that writing is possible to be long and complicated constructions only with the words. Vedānta school analysis verbal testimony is also included in the *pramāṇa*. They accepted that VT is known as 'āpta- vākya' and it is one of the instruments to transmitting the knowledge with Brahman. (Raju, 1985) However we can say Nyāya holds that linguistic communication involves two way processes. Firstly, it is in the communicator and secondly, is the person in which communicator communicates. Furthermore, we can say in the first process has the speaking/writing and in the second process explains only the process of understanding (Śābdabodha). (Jha, 2006, p. 1)

## II. NYĀYA STRUCTURE OF UNDERSTANDING (ŚĀBDABODHA)

Śābdabodha is the linguistically derived thought process. It is the understanding of the meaning. It is a theory of the relational structure when one knew something is the basis of hearing a sentence being uttered. It means the knowledge of the meaning of a sentence. Furthermore, we can say it is the total relational idea conveyed by the sentence. This concept distinguishes it from the expression of the Śābdabodha which means only signify the knowledge of a particular word. Moreover, we can define it as true knowledge (*pramā*) which is come from the Śabda as its source or *pramāṇa*. The first *karika* of the chapter on śabda in the BP (Viśvanātha's *Bhāṣāpariccheda*) Viśvanātha introduces Śābdabodha as the 'phala' (result) of the *padajñāna* (word-meaning). *Padajñāna* is the *kaṛaṇa* (cause) of the Pada. The term 'kaṛaṇa' here refers to *Pramākaṛaṇa*. *Pramākaṛaṇa* means *pramāṇa* (source of right knowledge) and the 'phala' of the *kaṛaṇa* is the *pramā* (right-knowledge). Matilal's remarked, 'To describe the content of Śābdabodha can be said to be equivalent to describing the meaning of the utterance.' (Ganeri, 2006)

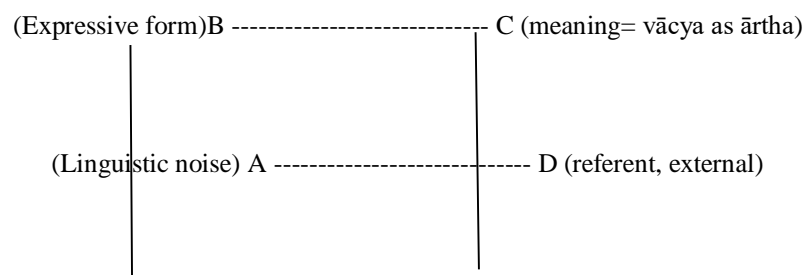
The structure of the Śābdabodha is as follows: 1) The hearer receives a sentence. 2) Then he splits the sentence into morphemes. 3) He remembers referents from each morpheme. 4) He infers the intention of the speaker and decided the intended meaning of a morpheme. 5) He relates meaning and then understands the sentence-meaning. This is called the Śābdabodha’.



**Figure 1:** The structure of the Śābdabodha

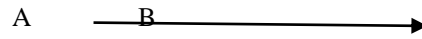
According to the Nyāya system, the meaning bearer unit is pāda (morpheme). Any hearer knows the meaning only if he/she finds the relationship (vṛtti) between a pāda (morpheme) and its meaning (padārtha). Hence, meaning defined as in which forms as an object of a remembrance caused by the knowledge. This is the relationship between a morpheme and its referent. Any object of remembrance is not any conceptual entity. Rather, it is a referent of the set of entities which constitute the world of our experience. Every morpheme refers to something which is the member of either the internal or external world. Logicians take the word ‘conceptual’ as created in the mind not having any external correspondence. They think that if they accept it they will be forced to accept the external world is merely a depression of mind i.e. unreal, it is like the Buddhist ideology.

In the western tradition by the Ogden and Richards’s triangle (Ogden & Richard, 1930, p.9-10), the relationship between a morpheme and its referent is in a straight–forward relationship but not through any concept or meaning. On the other in Indian tradition, Bhartrahri (Jha, 1992) holds that a word is not directly related to its referents and postulates the rectangular relation between a word and its referent.



**Figure 2:** Referents and postulates the rectangular relation

Initially, any speaker who utters is a 'noise' and after of the utterance an expressive form (sphoṭa) emerges. Indian tradition accepts the conceptual meaning. On the contrary to it only the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accepts a direct relationship between A and B.

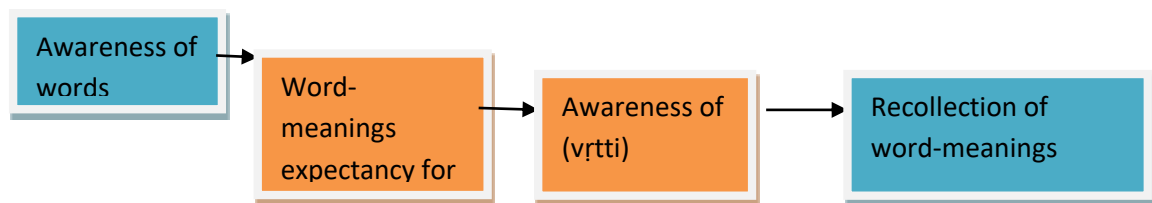


**Figure 3:** The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accepts

A= expressive form

B= meaning or referent

Above figure shows us that whodenies the existence of any conceptual entity over the actual referent. This extended relationship is called the *lakṣana*. There is only primary relationship and extended relationship. In the Nyāya system, we observe that there is no necessity to accept any third relation i.e. *vyāñjanā*(suggestion). In this relation, we found both the primary and secondary meaning and these meanings are nothing more than the referents. The facts in this relation are designated in the context of remembrance arising from a morpheme on the basis of the knowledge and the relationship between the morpheme and its referents. The relation of the word and meaning basically involves the awareness of 'word-meanings' through the *vṛtti* (functional relation) of the words. It is either in their expressive function (*śakti*) or in their implicative function (*lakṣana*). The *vṛtti* (functional relation) is identified through the *śakti* (expressive power) relation but fundamentally the *vṛtti* (functional relation) of the word is the disjunction of the *śakti* and the *lakṣana* (implicative function) relations. It can be easily understood through this diagram *pada-padārtha-sambandha* (relation of word and meaning).



**Figure 4:** pada-padārtha-sambandha

Moreover, in the *Vākyapadīya*, Bharṭṛhari asserts that the word and meaning are bound in a relationship. The two fold relationship is as follows: 1) it has the relation of inherent and natural fitness (*yogyāta*) and 2) it has the relationship of causality (*kārya-kāraṇabhāva*). It has a relationship between the word and the speaker's intention. Example of first relationship (*Yogyāta*), a sentence consists of words which have fitness for one another. Mutual fitness is a condition for intelligibility of a sentence. The sentence 'quench your thirst with water' conveys the meaning because its component words have mutual fitness. And the sentence 'quench your thirst with fire' is unintelligible, because its constituent words are incompatible. The second relationship is elaborate with instance: the meaning of the sentence also depends upon the knowledge of the intention of the speaker. The sentence

'*saindhavamānaya*' means 'bring a horse' only in a context when the speaker gets ready for a journey. It would however mean 'bring salt' when the speaker is on the dining table. The meaning may therefore entirely change depending on the contexts and according to the intention of the speaker. Compatibility implies formal consistency, while the knowledge of the speaker's intention implies material consistency. This is the syntactical analysis of a sentence. Sentences devoid of expectancy, compatibility and proximity are not a valid means of knowledge.

Nyāya derived the term 'śābdabodha' as "Śābdasyaayamśābdaḥ, śābdaḥbodhaḥśābdaḥbodhaḥ" (Goswami, 1991) it means that this is the knowledge which is pertaining to or coming from śabda. Nyāyaikas asserts that the word 'śabda' technically term as Pramāṇavākya. Viśvanātha introduces the term 'śabdabodha' as 'Vākya' and 'Śabda' stands for the Vākyaṛtha. It is also known as 'Vākyaṛthajñāna' which is the knowledge of the total meaning of a sentence. It is the valid verbal knowledge in which śabda in the form of Āptavākya.

In a later kārikā, proximity is the auxiliary cause of Śābdabodha. Sannidhi (Proximity) is to be valid only to a sentence not to be any single word. A sentence should be uttered in a close succession without a long interval of time between one word and another. For instance, if the words 'bring', 'a', and 'horse' are uttered at long intervals, they would not convey any meaning because the interval may be infused with some other words or activities making the knowledge conveyed through scattered expression in comprehensible. Āsatti (Expectancy) holds a word cannot convey meaning by itself. It must be related to some other words in order to convey the complete meaning. For example, 'bring', it does not make a full sense. It produces some expectancy in the mind that there is something to be brought and it should be represented by some words. Thus in the sentence "bring a horse- 'a horse' after 'bring' fills the required gap to complete the sense of the activity of bringing. Yogyatā (mutual fitness) is another condition for intelligibility of a sentence. The sentence 'quench your thirst with water' conveys the meaning because its component words have mutual fitness. And the sentence 'quench your thirst with fire' is unintelligible, because its constituent words are incompatible. Furthermore, Āsatti, Yogyatā and Sannidhi are the essential part of the logical relation between the meanings of different words in a sentence. It is the order to bring out the total meaning of the sentence i.e. 'Vākyaṛthajñāna'. It is also known as the Śābdabodha. (Goswami, 1991)

Arindam Chakraborty argues for the understanding of yogyatā wherethe compatibility or fitness is not suitable with the false sentences like 'Idleness is green' and 'He is sprinkling with fire' are ruled out to generate śābdabodha. Chakraborty interprets his suggestion from the *siddhantamuktavali* as implying a sentence 'a is F' is characterised by a fitness (yogyatā) only if 'a is F' which makes fitness collapse with 'truth'. Only true sentences are fit and can generate śābdabodha. False sentences (Idleness is green) is not represented the fact so they cannot generate śābdabodha.

The term 'Śābdabodha' means linguistically derived thought episode to a piece of knowledge formed by direct assent to some speaker's utterance. Our concern is only the role of sentence plays in Śābdabodha' i.e. linguistically derived understanding. We examine that the sentence plays in the structure of Śābdabodha' as its component parts in the next section.

### III. PROCESS OF ŚĀBDABODHA THROUGH SENTENTIAL MEANING

Sentence is the basic unit of analysis of Śābdabodha'. Its utterance generates the understanding of its meaning in the mind of hearer. In the sentence-meaning involves first of all the perception of the sentence and its composite parts which can be described the awareness of the basic structure of linguistic expression.

The sentence-meaning is greater and more 'holistic' than the meanings of the individual words. The main element in the sentence meaning is the relation content (samsarga) among the component parts of the expression, sequential order and syntactical connected in respect of their specific significations in the expression. The meaning of an isolated word as we have seen is a universal word. Any universal is necessarily indeterminate for knowledge, let us take an example the universal symbolized by the word 'cow' is based on the abstraction of common essential attribute of all the particular cow, white cow and non-white cow, big cow or small cow. Consequently, we can say that all universal potentially contains all the particulars.

When the two words 'black' and 'horse' are conjoined together then it makes an expression 'black horse'. In this expression we have two limits with each other yield into a synthetic meaning. Black horse means horse having the attribute of blackness, the universal 'black' is delimited and the particularized all the subjects which is not horses and on the other universal 'horse' same as the particularized through the elimination of all subjects that are not red. These two combinations of universal gives a synthetic meaning is a new grade of knowledge and it is quite different from the knowledge of the isolated universals. It is termed as the Śābdabodha' R.C Pandeya quotes, 'Meaning cannot hang in the air. Being a relation it has two terms on which it depends .One is the word, and the other is referent.'

Perhaps, it is the word comprises several letters while a sentence is nothing more than an aggregate of a few such words. Every system has different opinion on the formation of the sentence. According to the Abhihitānvayavāda theory, words are the units of meaning and sentence is the meaningful only when it is made up of meaningful words. These meaningful words are arranged in a proper syntactical relation then sentence is formed which a meaningful. This theory of Kumarila can be called as **brick and mortar** theory of sentential meaning. The Nyāya view is the same as the Kumarila. Both of them take the isolated words for the smallest unit of meaning out of which meaningful sentences are formed. On the other hand, Prabhākara views are different than the Kumarila view. According to his theory Anvitābhīdhānavāda, sentence is the real unit which carries a useful meaning. Any individual words are possessed of significance only in so far as they are the elements of a Sentence. He says that the sentence is a unit but it is an organic whole with parts which is correlated with meanings.

Language mediate after the cognition arises. For Instance, 'Bring a Cow', for this firstly a person has the impression of 'Cow' in the mind and then his/her cognition arises and he said, 'Bring a Cow'. It simply verbalizes that cognition. This verbalization is the performance of a speech act. Sentence is a collection of significant sounds and words. A word is cognized first and then their meaning. The cognition of the word leaves the impressions (samaskāra) which are remembered at the end of the sentence. After that different meanings are related together in one context. A Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika mention meaning of the sentence is goes through the following stages:

**Stage 1: Pada-Jñāna** (reception of the string of an utterance):-any knowledge of the language is the part of the listener and the reader. If any one of them does not know the language through which the communication is being made then the process of verbal understanding will not begin. It implies that the listener identifies the meaning bearing unit i.e., the morpheme in the string of that utterance or sentence.

**Stage 2: Padārthasmarāṇa** (remembering the referents):- In the second stage, it is important for the hearer to know the relationship between the morpheme and its referent. This is called Vṛtti and it is of two types: Śakti (primary relationship) and Lakṣana (external relationship). Any hearer and reader cannot remember the referents from respective morpheme if they do not know this vṛtti.

**Stage 3: Tātparya- Jñāna** (knowing speaker intention):- it is the case when polysemous words contains in the sentence and it may be remember more than one referent from a single morpheme. Actually, it is the any act of normal human being like the word ‘good’. For example: a) John was a good person he donated a lot of money in charity. b) Rocky was good painter. His drawings always were exciting to look at. In the both of the sentences the word ‘good’ play a different mean but it depends on the intentionality of the Speaker / writer. It is an outcome of speech act.

**Stage 4: Vivakṣitārtha-niścaya** (identifying or selecting the intended meaning):-After the stage 3, it is necessary to know the meaning out of the remembered referents and it is also essential to know the speaker intention. It comes from the speech act which becomes the contextual act, this context gives the clue or hetu to infer the speaker’s intention and thereafter, speaker or Listener will choose the intended meaning.

**Stage 5: Padārtha-dvaya-sāmsarga- Jñāna** (understanding the sentence meaning):- In the final stage, they attain the knowledge or understanding of the sentence meaning which is the relationship of the pairs of referents. It is the stage of Śābdabodha which comes after going through these stages.

According to the Nyāya theory of meaning, hearer’s language faculty determines a function from sentences to belief contents. This function is the meaning function. Matilal quoted, ‘To describe the content of a Śābdabodha may be said to be equivalent to describing the “meaning” of the utterance’.

Normally, the Śābdapramāṇa is accepted as final authority in relation to the matters beyond epistemic access. According to the Nyāya, śabda is the teaching of the reliable person and that is pramāṇa. They classify all the knowledge of śabda under two categories: drṣtārtha and adṛstārtha. Dṛṣtārtha related to sensuous object and the adṛṣtārtha is related to the super sensuous object. Dṛṣtārtha śabda is the trustworthy assertion of the ordinary person. Like knowledge of the plants by the farmer and the evidence person in the law court etc. Adṛṣtārthaśabda is scriptural text on God, Heaven, Hell and the prophet instruction about virtue and values.

#### IV. MCDOWELL’S COMMUNICATION INTENTIONIST VS NYĀYA POSITION ON ŚĀBDABODHA (TESTIMONIAL KNOWLEDGE)

Language is an instrument of knowing. Testimony is the essential part of the nature and function of the language. The central role of language is the understanding. Each and every hearer has a language faculty. It is the ability to hear some string of noises and then he/she believes that the speaker asked whether it is raining or the moon goes round the earth. Later on, the theory of understanding might call be theory of language-processing. NPL (Nyāya Philosophy of language) holds that basic category of utterances is the output of the language faculty in a pure belief in the expressed proposition. The proposition or statement should be asserted only by an honest and competent speaker. Any understanding of an utterance is the direct assent by the hearer to the speaker’s utterance. Furthermore, we can say understanding an utterance of ‘Rama is cooking rice’ it is uttered by a competent speaker consists hearer’s direct assent to the statement that Rama is cooking rice. *So, understanding is*

*a belief not about what speaker said but in what was said.* Beliefs are formed by the direct assent; it is a case of testimonial knowledge. Nyāya give it the technical term to this testimonial knowledge as Śābdabodha or 'linguistically derived thought episode'. It is a piece of knowledge formed by direct assent to some speaker's utterance. This kind of language faculty is reducible neither to perception nor inference.

Language and testimony thesis claims that the communication is the transmission of knowledge between the Speaker and Hearer. We have similar idea are found in the works Evans (1982: 310-20) and the most especially McDowell (1980). In this article, we criticized only the McDowell opinion for the establishment relation between the language and its meaning in the communication.

A communication intentionist theorist believes that concept of meaning lies the possession by speakers of audience with some directed intentions. Their intentions to get the audience who think that speaker has a certain belief. They would say that communication between the speaker and the hearer takes place when the hearer recognizes the speaker's intention to communicate that *p*, takes that intention as a reason for believing that *p*, and then comes to believe on that *p*. If 'communicates that *p*' has a success grammar, so that S communicates that *p* entails that *p*, then the hearer belief will often also be knowledge.

McDowell (Ganeri, 2006, p.75) contended that the mutual awareness of intention is a characteristic of human communication. Human communication is different from the animal communication due to its transparency of communicative intention. It is a primitive sort of information transmission which exhibits them from the animal communication like the bird squawk.

*"A bird might instinctively emit a characteristic sort of squawk on seeing a predator; other words might acquire, on hearing such a squawk a propensity towards behaviour appropriate to the proximity of a predator...[which] is no less appropriately thought of as possession of information than is the state which standardly results from perceiving a predator."* (1980:129) (Ganeri, 2006)

Mc Dowell proposes here that a bird squawk is able for transmit of information but it lacks due to the 'overtiness of communication' which characterizes and differentiate the human communication from them. According to communication intentionist theorist, it takes the notion of communication but it characterized in terms of the mutual awareness to transmit knowledge as per the basis of reductive analysis of the concept of meaning. With the counter argument of Nyāyikas to Mc Dowell, is to deny the acquisition of knowledge by verbal testimony in which involves the recognition of the Speaker's intentions. Dowell's himself distinguishes two levels in the concept of meaning: a) the information stated by the utterance is transmitted b) which concerns shared information about the speaker's intentions.

He claims that this information is transmitted whenever the speech act is understood. So, whenever a speech act is understood, it is considered to be transmitted information not only in the informative assertions but also in all those in which information is not transmitted. This kind of speech acts is not assertoric at all. It is also correct that in communication, the information about the speaker's intentions is always available to the hearer. These intentions have some sense which is made by the public or we can say from last experiences which are performed by the speech acts. It is literally not follow both sorts of information. It should always be transmitted knowledge.

Dowell's in the second level information is all about hearer. He does not describe information which is necessarily transmitted in communication. So, it is the case when the hearer capacity to acquire information about the speaker's intentions that distinguishes the human communication from the animal communication.



Contrary to the view of McDowell, the Nyāya position, understanding consist the relationship between the direct and non-inferential. On the other Mc Dowell position: assenting to another's utterance is never direct, but always depends on the hearer's awareness of the speaker's intentions. Nyāya asserts that an assent proposition expressed only by the trustworthy person. . If one believes that speaker has asserted it with certain intentions of the right sort. This claim makes a ground of the Nyāya anti-reductionist approach to testimony and distinguishes it from the approach of the communication-intentionist theorist. Some of the heterodox schools (Vaiśeṣika and Buddhist) claim that testimony is reducible to inferential knowledge. The Nyāya argues against these views as follows: even if it is reducible to inference then how we identify inferential mark in the case of the understanding of a sentence-meaning. For example, '*gaur asti*' (the cow exists). In the case of inference, 'the mountain has fire because of smoke'. The 'smoke' is the 'mark' through which we know the 'fire' exist on the mountain. The Vaiśeṣika claim that from the 'mark' we find the 'existence' which is also proved us 'the existence of cow'. According to them, the semantical competency (Yogyāta) is the required mark. It is defined as 'absence of lack of any contradiction' (*bādha-viraha*). So, Vaiśeṣika proves their argument 'reducibility of testimony into inference' given the statement of inference as: '*gaurastitāvānastitvābhāvavirahavattvāt*'(the cow is possessed of existence, because it lacks the absence of existence). (Bhattacharya, 1977, p.7)

Contrary to it, Nyāya argues to understand the meaning of the sentence '*gaur asti*' (the cow exists), it is not always necessary to know that 'Cow lacks the absence of existence'. It is simple when the sentence '*gaur asti*' uttered, we understand the meaning of the sentence not necessary to have knowledge of the existence of the cow. In the other sense, we can say the sentence '*gaur asti*' will generate 'śābdabodha' even if it is the semantical competency between the '*gaur*' and '*asti*' not present. Furthermore, Vaiśeṣika can say, the semantical competency is alone can be the 'mark' then from such sentence '*ghataḥkarmatvamānayanamḥṛti*' (a pitcher can be accusative, bringing, an effort) which has the lack of expectancy, but have semantical competency and the comprehension of the meaning get from the '*ghaṭamānaya*' ('bring a pitcher') is possible. Although, none admit as such expression of the comprehension of meaning is possible. However, we can say semantical competency cannot be the mark as such because Vaiśeṣika attempt to consider as the comprehension of the meaning as case of inference is dissatisfied their argument. (Ibid. 1977)

## V. CONCLUSION

Conclude the remarks by the Nyāya Philosophy of Language describe Śābdabodha as a 'linguistically derived thought episode'. It means knowledge which is formed by the direct assent to some speaker's utterance. It is the basic sort of utterance and understanding consists in the tokening of a belief which is apt to be an item of knowledge. It is the language faculty is a Sui generous epistemic faculty which is neither reducible to perception not inference, nor to the combination of these two. This kind of anti-reductionist of Nyāya argument accepted by all but neither by the Buddhist, Vaiśeṣika. In this, there is no mention about the speaker and hearer intentions in the communication. It is familiar and essential to know the communication by the transmission of the speaker and hearer. McDowell's and Nyāya argument is stand opposite with each other. But Nyāya rely on the direct assent or understanding of the speaker and hearer which we think is an improvement in understanding of Śābdabodha. On

the other McDowell's views that it never be direct but it is dependent on the awareness of the hearer or the recognition of the hearer.

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