Scripture, Men and Heaven:
Causal structure in Kumārila’s action-theory of bhāvanā

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Śabara’s conjunctive usage of bhāva, kriyā and bhāvanā Interpreting Jaiminisūtra 2.1.1, bhāvārthāḥ karmaśabdās teḥhyāḥ kriyāḥ pratiyeta ..., Śabara first clarifies his theory of bhāvanā. Though he has a developed idea of bhāvanā with its three elements, i.e. sādhyā, sādhana and itikartavyatā, he uses the terms bhāva and kriyā too as possible substitutes of bhāvanā, probably following the traditional terminology of action seen in the above sūtra, bhāvārthāḥ and kriyā. On the one hand he interprets yajeta as having a bhāva-structure: tathā yateta yathā yat kiñcid bhavati\(^1\) or yāgāt svargo bhavati (A 2099.12). He also glosses it as svargasyotpattim (A 375.9) and phalasya ... niṣpattih (A 375.8-9). On the other hand he interprets the same yajeta as yāgena svargam kuryāt (A 2106.17) and yāgena svargam bhāvayet (A 2114.7).\(^2\)

Kumārila’s unification of all three as bhāvanā alone Using Śabara’s concept of bhāvanā as a starting point, Kumārila develops the theory further with appropriate modifications. He singles out bhāvanā as representing the essential structure of all actions, i.e. the meaning of all finite verbs (ākhyātāni), because it is important for him to stress that all actions are essentially causal. Therefore he dismisses the other two, bhāva and kriyā, but by integrating rather than by excluding them. In his interpretation of the sūtra, he understands bhāva in a rather forced manner, through an unusual ‘etymology’ (vyutpatti), as an equivalent of bhāvanā (A 374.20-21). And he objects to Śabara’s straightforward interpretation of bhāva as “becoming” (A 386.16-17), for he needs to find in the sūtra some support for his concept of bhāvanā. But this does not mean that bhāva is completely discarded in his theory of action. It survives in bhāvana, because bhāvanā essentially comprises the two, kriyā and bhāva (bhāvanā = kriyā + bhāva). Kriyā, on the other hand, is “upgraded” to be the same as bhāvana through his skillful analysis.
**Analysis of intransitive and transitive verbs**  For this integration into bhāvanā, Kumārila first analyses through sāmānādhikaranya the general structure of actions denoted by finite verbs, especially transitive ones, e.g. pacati, gacchati and so on, which denote kriyā, the meaning of a representative transitive karoti (A 376.25-26). Kriyā, the action of making, necessarily requires a kriyamāṇa, an object to be made, which is nothing but the agent of bhāva, the thing that becomes (i.e. arises). Thus he shows the general structure of transitive verbs to be: “The agent of becoming becomes the object of making” (A 377.9-10; kartr. → kriyā → karmāṇa = kartr. → bhāva). For further clarification he defines in contrast the two, bhāva and kriyā: bhāva he defines as “an action of the agent merely acquiring its own body [i.e. coming into existence]” (A 376.27-28); kriyā he defines as “an action of an agent which has [already] acquired [its own] body (i.e. existence)” and as “an action which aims at another [thing] acquiring [its] body (i.e. which aims at another thing’s coming into existence)” (A 377.7; A 376.28-29).

“Discovering” the universal structure of causal-action: prayojaka-vyāpāra and prayojavyāpāra  He next identifies this kriyā-structure as being nothing but causal. We can see this as an upgrading of kriyā to bhāvanā. The prayojaka, the agent of a causal action (hetu in the grammarian tradition), causes the prayojya, the object of the causal action, to become, i.e. makes it an agent of becoming (A 377.24-25; prayojaka → vyāpāra → prayojya → vyāpāra). He defines bhāvanā as “an action of the causal agent, which has as its subsidiary element ‘the action of the caused object’, which is mentioned by a part of the same [causative] word [e.g. bhāvyayati and vikledayati]” (A 378.5-6; A 378.9). In this way Kumārila establishes causal actions as denoted by finite verbs, especially transitive ones. As he summarises himself, “Thus, through kriyā, bhāvanā is established in all finite verbs” (A 378.15).

**General structure of causal-action**  Kumārila further proceeds to demonstrate, through the application of this kriyā-structure, that even intransitives
and kṛdantas essentially have a causal sense (A 381.10; A 379.28). Thus, according to him, we can analyse any action as essentially causal.

**Application of arthātmikā bhāvanā to śabdātmikā bhāvanā: Analysis of vidhi-structure** Analysing the organic structure of Vedic rituals, Śabara developed his ideas about action and probably invented the concept of bhāvanā. Kumārila continues from Śabara’s idea and abstracts a universal causal-structure from all actions, not only Vedic but also worldly, with the device of prayojakavyāpāra and prayojyavyāpāra. The universal structure of causal-action, not restricted by Kumārila to Vedic ritual actions, becomes ready to be applied to all kinds of actions, not only physical but also verbal, injunction (vidhi) in particular, which we can easily see to be relevant to ritual actions. This is evident in the same sūtra, Jaiminisūtra 2.1.1, eṣa hy artho vidhiyate. Also the word codanā, which is a synonym of vidhi and upadeśa for Kumārila (Ślokavarttika autpatīka, v. 11cd), has a causative form, as shown e.g. by Śabara: acaryacoditaḥ karomi (Frauwallner ed., 16.9-10). Kumārila labelled the verbal action, i.e. the injunction, as śabdātmikā bhāvanā, in contrast with which he named the physical (and mental) action arthātmikā bhāvanā (A 114.14-15; A 378.20-21). Being a bhāvanā, an injunction is analyzed with a prayojaka-prayojya-formulation. Scriptural passages, liṅādis in particular, cause men to take actions (liṅādi → bhāvanā → puruṣa → bhāvanā).

**Connecting śabdātmikā and arthātmikā bhāvanā** As arthātmikā bhāvanā comprises three elements (aṇśas), śabdātmikā bhāvanā too requires three: the sādhya is *puruṣapravṛtti, i.e. arthātmikā bhāvanā (Ślokavarttika vākyā, v. 275: A 114.17-18; A 389.24); the sādhana is vidhiṣṭāna (A 114.22-23); the itikartavyatā is praśastyajñāna. (A 114.23-24). To explain, Vedic injunctions, liṅādis in particular, accomplish men’s taking action (arthātmikā bhāvanā) through vidhiṣṭāna. For no one follows an injunction without recognizing it to be an injunction. The vidhiṣakti, though sufficient by itself to prompt men, is further supported by the knowledge of a praiseworthiness (prāśastyajñāna), which is understood from the arthavāda-portion. In this manner, Kumārila succeeds
in connecting two causal actions: liṅādis make men take action, which in turn causes heaven to arise (liṅādi → bhāvanā → puruṣa → bhāvanā → svarga → bhāva).

Analysis and connection of adhyayanavidhi Arthātmikā bhāvanā is verbalized as yāgena svargaṃ bhāvayet, which is a gloss of a Vedic injunction svargaṃ kāmo yajeta. The agent of this command is the liṅādis, the bhāvanā of which can be also verbalized as vidhijnānena puruṣapravartanaṃ bhāvayet (= puruṣam pravartayet). But if the liṅādis are the agent of the commands to men to perform (ritual) actions, who is it that commands them in turn to perform the action of commanding men? Kumārila appoints the adhyayanavidhi, i.e. svādhīgyo ‘dhetyavyah, to take this role of “meta-injunction”, which orders other vidhis, including itself, to order men. Thus Kumārila succeeds in interpreting both types of bhāvanā as having the same structure and verbalization.

Three layers of causal-action: Kumārila’s framework of interpreting Vedic ritual Starting out from Śabara’s concept of bhāvanā, Kumārila succeeds in showing that bhāvanā encompasses the entire process of Vedic ritual, from the adhyayanavidhi to heaven’s arising (bhāva), including all the subordinate necessary elements of prāsaṣṭya and so on. Thus he establishes the Mīmāṃsā framework for interpreting the Vedas and Vedic rituals, namely a consistent three-layered structure of causal actions.

1) Śābarabhāṣya ad 2.1.1: tathā yajeta yathā kimcid bhavati. Ānandāśrama first ed. (=A), 375.3. Mañḍana Miśra (Bhāvanāviveka 23.1, 166.3-167.2 in Ramaswami’s ed.) clearly presupposes the reading yateta not yajeta. I also accept his yat, though there is a variant which omits it. Their witnesses too support the accepted readings, namely the Brhāṭi and the Ṛjvīmalā.
2) For further clarification of Śabara’s usage and intention, see K. Kataoka “Naraseru no Kaishaku gaku”, Indo Tetsugaku Bukkyō gaku Kenkyū, 3, 1995, 47–60.
4) Kumārila explains the content of eṣa ... arthāḥ as kuryād yajinā svargam (A 375.25).

6) A 114.17-20; Harikai (op. cit. 119) takes “pravartanam” as intransitive, as if a synonym of *pravṛtti*, but Kumārila seems to intend a causative, for he could have used *pravṛtti* instead of *pravartana* if he had intended an intransitive sense. But I agree that it is confusing, for logically we expect *pravṛtti* here, not *pravartana*, as a sādhya.

7) A 114.16-17: *svādhyāyadhyayanavidhinetare sarve vidhiyakāḥ svādhyāyapadopāttaś cātmā niyujyate bhāvayed iti*. Harikai (op. cit. 119) takes “ātmā” as equivalent to puruṣa (probably following G. Jhā’s translation), but this is clearly not intended. See e.g. Nyāyasudhā, p. 32; Ajītā, p. 29 in Allahabad ed., part 2, pp. 7-8 in Harikai’s ed.