TY-2026 · 20 — Tantrayukti Studies

व्याख्यानम्

Exposition: the Art of Elaboration

डॉ. मन्था-श्रीनिवासुः · Dr. Mantha Srinivasu · 13 Nov 2026 · AṠ 15.1.43–44; Su. Utt. 65.33

Abstract

Vyākhyāna, "exposition", is the device of elaboration beyond the ordinary. Kauṭilya defines it as "description in excess" (*atiśaya-varṇanā*), with a sentence from his discussion of vices that singles out one danger above the rest: for confederacies and royal houses of that character, gambling breeds dissension and dissension ruin. Suśruta defines it as "the description of what is distinctive in the treatise", and his example claims a distinction for his own work: "here the person of twenty-five principles is expounded; in other treatises of Āyurveda reflection begins from the elements." Cakrapāṇi defines it as "the explanation of what lies beyond the understanding of all", with Caraka's account of the embryo in the first month — coagulated, turbid with all the elements, like phlegm, its form unmanifest — "an explanation of matters unknown to people like us." This article shows that the three definitions describe three kinds of "beyond": beyond the ordinary in weight (emphasis), beyond other treatises (distinctive contribution), and beyond ordinary perception (explanation of the unobservable). It distinguishes vyākhyāna from *nirdeśa*, checks Suśruta's claim against Caraka's own account of the person, and answers three objections: that "excess" is mere rhetoric, that a claim of distinctiveness is self-praise, and that the imperceptible cannot be explained. It concludes that vyākhyāna is the device by which a text marks what matters most and what it adds, and that its modern forms are emphasis, the statement of contribution, and theoretical explanation.

Keywords: vyākhyāna; tantrayukti; exposition; elaboration; emphasis; atiśaya; contribution; novelty; explanation of the unobservable; embryology; Sāṃkhya; Arthaśāstra; Suśruta; Caraka

1. प्रवेशः · Place in the lists

Vyākhyāna is nineteenth in Kauṭilya's list, twenty-fifth in Suśruta's and twenty-third in Caraka's. In TY-08 it appeared as the boundary of *nirdeśa*: nirdeśa unfolds exactly what was stated in brief, vyākhyāna goes further. The word, *vi-ā-√khyā*, "to tell apart and fully", is also the ordinary word for a commentary, and every vyākhyāna in the commentarial sense contains vyākhyāna in the tantrayukti sense: the commentator says more than the text, and must justify the more.

2. लक्षणानि · The definitions

> अतिशयवर्णना व्याख्यानम्
>
> विशेषतश्च संघानां संघधर्मिणां च राजकुलानां द्यूतनिमित्तो भेदस्तन्निमित्तो विनाशेत्यसत्प्रग्रहः पापिष्ठतमो व्यसनानां तन्त्रदौर्बल्यादिति
>
> "Description in excess is vyākhyāna." — Example: "And especially for confederacies, and for royal families of the nature of confederacies, dissension arises from gambling, and destruction from that; so the patronage of the wicked is the most evil of vices, because of the weakening of the administration."
>
> Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra* 15.1.43–44

> तन्त्रे ऽतिशयोपवर्णनं व्याख्यानम्। यथा इह पञ्चविंशतिकः पुरुषो व्याख्यायते, अन्येष्वायुर्वेदतन्त्रेषु भूतादिप्रभृत्यारभ्य चिन्ता ॥
>
> "The description of what is distinctive in the treatise is vyākhyāna. For example: here the person of twenty-five principles is expounded; in other treatises of Āyurveda, reflection begins from the elements and so on."
>
> Suśruta, *Uttaratantra* 65.33

> व्याख्यानं नाम यत् सर्वबुद्ध्यविषयं व्याक्रियते, यथा- "प्रथमे मासि सम्मूर्छितः सर्वधातुकलुषीकृतः खेटभूतो भवत्यव्यक्तविग्रहः" (शा.अ.४) इत्यादिनास्मदाद्यविदितार्थव्याकरणम्।
>
> "Vyākhyāna is where what lies beyond the understanding of all is explained. For example: 'In the first month, coagulated, made turbid by all the elements, it becomes like phlegm, its form unmanifest' (Śārīrasthāna 4) and so on — the explanation of matters unknown to people like us."
>
> Cakrapāṇidatta, *Āyurvedadīpikā* on Caraka, *Siddhisthāna* 12.41–44

3. लक्षणपरीक्षा · Testing the definitions

3.1 Three kinds of "beyond"

Authority	Beyond what?	Example	Function
Kauṭilya	Beyond the ordinary **weight** of a statement	Gambling singled out as the ruin of confederacies	**Emphasis**: marking what matters most
Suśruta	Beyond **other treatises**	The person of twenty-five principles	**Contribution**: marking what this text adds

Authority	Beyond what?	Example	Function
Caraka (Cakrapāṇi)	Beyond ordinary **perception**	The embryo in the first month	**Explanation** of the unobservable

The prefix in Kauṭilya's and Suśruta's *atiśaya* ("excess, pre-eminence") and the phrase in Cakrapāṇi's *sarvabuddhy-aviṣaya* ("beyond the range of everyone's understanding") share one idea: vyākhyāna goes beyond. What it goes beyond differs.

3.2 Kauṭilya: emphasis as information

Kauṭilya's example comes from the eighth book, on calamities, where the vices of a king are compared. The sentence does not add a new vice; it raises one above the rest for a particular kind of polity — the *saṅgha* or confederacy, held together by the agreement of many — for which gambling, by breeding quarrels among its members, is ruinous. The word *viśeṣataḥ*, "especially", is the mark of the device. Emphasis here is not ornament: it tells the reader which danger to guard against first.

3.3 Suśruta's claim checked

Suśruta's example is a claim about his own work. In the first chapter of his Śārīrasthāna he does indeed expound the Sāṃkhya scheme of principles and places the person as the twenty-fifth:

> तत्र सर्व एवाचेतन एष वर्गः, पुरुषः पञ्चविंशतितमः कार्यकारणसंयुक्तश्चेतयिता भवति ।
> सत्यप्यचैतन्ये प्रधानस्य पुरुषकैवल्यार्थं प्रवृत्तिमुपदिशन्ति क्षीरादींश्चात्र हेतूनुदाहरन्ति ॥
>
> "Of these, the whole group is unconscious; the person, the twenty-fifth, joined with effects and causes, is the one who is conscious. Even though primordial nature is unconscious, they teach that it acts for the liberation of the person, and cite milk and the like as examples here."
>
> Suśruta, *Śārīrasthāna* 1.8

Caraka, by contrast, counts the person in two other ways. In one passage he gives a person of twenty-four principles:

> पुनश्च धातुभेदेन चतुर्विंशतिकः स्मृतः । मनो दशेन्द्रियाण्यर्थाः प्रकृतिश्चाष्टधातुकी ॥
>
> "Again, by division of the elements, (the person) is declared to be of twenty-four: mind, the ten senses, the (five) objects, and nature of eight elements."
>
> Caraka, *Śārīrasthāna* 1.17

And in another, a person of six elements:

> तमुवाच भगवानात्रेयः---अपरिसंख्येया लोकावयवविशेषाः, पुरुषावयवविशेषा अप्यपरिसंख्येयाः; तेषां यथास्थूलं कतिचिद्भावान् सामान्यमभिप्रेत्योदाहरिष्यामः, तानेकमना निबोध सम्यगुपवर्ण्यमानानग्निवेश! । षड्धातवः समुदिताः 'पुरुष'इति शब्दं लभन्ते; तद्यथा---पृथिव्यापस्तेजो वायुराकाशं ब्रह्म चाव्यक्तमिति, एत एव च षड्धातवः समुदिताः 'पुरुष' इति शब्दं लभन्ते ॥
>
> "The venerable Ātreya said to him: 'The particular parts of the world are innumerable, and the particular parts of the person are innumerable too. Of these we shall state some, broadly, with their common features in view; listen with attention, Agniveśa, as they are properly described. The six elements, combined, receive the name "person": earth, water, fire, air, space and the unmanifest Brahman. These very six elements, combined, receive the name "person".'"
>
> Caraka, *Śārīrasthāna* 5.4

Suśruta's claim is thus verifiable, and it holds: where Caraka builds the person from elements, Suśruta adds the twenty-fifth principle of Sāṃkhya. A vyākhyāna of this kind invites the reader to compare.

3.4 Caraka: the unobservable made intelligible

The passage Cakrapāṇi cites reads in full:

> स सर्वगुणवान् गर्भत्वमापन्नः प्रथमे मासि संमूर्च्छितः सर्वधातुकलुषीकृतः खेटभूतो भवत्यव्यक्तविग्रहः सदसद्भूताङ्गावयवः ॥
>
> "That (embryo), possessed of all qualities, having become a foetus, in the first month is coagulated, made turbid by all the elements, like phlegm, of unmanifest form, its limbs and parts both existent and non-existent."
>
> Caraka, *Śārīrasthāna* 4.9

No one could watch an embryo in its first month. Caraka makes it intelligible by images from experience — coagulation, turbidity, phlegm — and by a precise paradox: its limbs are "both existent and non-existent", present in potential, not yet manifest. This is vyākhyāna in Cakrapāṇi's sense: explanation of what lies beyond the reach of ordinary understanding.

4. पूर्वपक्षः खण्डनं मण्डनं च · Objections and replies

4.1 Is "description in excess" not mere rhetoric?

ननु अतिशयवर्णना अर्थवादमात्रम् — स्तुतिः निन्दा वा। शास्त्रे तु प्रमाणवचनम् अपेक्षितं, न अतिशयोक्तिः। अतः व्याख्यानं काव्यगुणः, न तन्त्रयुक्तिः इति चेत्, न। अतिशयोक्तिः असत्यं वर्धयति; अतिशयवर्णना तु सत्येषु एकं विशिनष्टि। "विशेषतश्च सङ्घानाम्" इति वाक्ये द्यूतस्य दोषः सत्यः, तस्य सङ्घेषु प्राधान्यं च सत्यं — सङ्घः बहूनां सम्मत्या तिष्ठति, द्यूतं भेदं जनयति, भेदः विनाशम्। अतः अतिशयः अत्र प्राथम्यस्य ज्ञापकः — कस्य व्यसनस्य निवारणं प्रथमं कर्तव्यम् इति। मीमांसकानाम् अर्थवादः अपि विधेः प्रशंसया तस्य प्राधान्यं बोधयति, न निरर्थकः। तथा व्याख्यानं क्रमस्य गौरवस्य च ज्ञानं ददाति।

Objection: description in excess is mere commendation or censure (*arthavāda*). A śāstra needs statements that are means of knowledge, not exaggeration. So vyākhyāna is a merit of poetry, not a tantrayukti. **Reply:** No. Exaggeration inflates what is untrue; description in excess singles out one among things that are true. In "and especially for confederacies", the harm of gambling is true, and its pre-eminence for confederacies is also true — a confederacy stands by the agreement of many; gambling breeds dissension, dissension ruin. Excess here makes known priority: which vice must be prevented first. Even the Mīmāṃsakas' arthavāda, by praising an injunction, conveys its importance and is not meaningless. So vyākhyāna gives knowledge of order and weight.

Śaṅkā–samādhāna composed for this article.

4.2 Is a claim of distinctiveness not self-praise?

ननु सुश्रुतः "इह पञ्चविंशतिकः पुरुषो व्याख्यायते, अन्येषु भूतादिप्रभृत्यारभ्य चिन्ता" इति स्वग्रन्थस्य उत्कर्षं परग्रन्थस्य अपकर्षं च वदति। आत्मश्लाघा च विदुषां न शोभते इति चेत्, न। श्लाघा प्रमाणरहिता, व्याख्यानं तु परीक्ष्यम् — अन्यानि तन्त्राणि उपलभ्यन्ते, तेषु चिन्ता भूतादितः आरभ्यते वा न वा इति पाठकः स्वयं पश्यति। चरके "षड्धातवः समुदिताः पुरुष इति शब्दं लभन्ते" इति, "चतुर्विंशतिकः" इति च दृश्यते — अतः सुश्रुतस्य वचनं सत्यम्। यत् विशेषवचनं परीक्षया सिध्यति, तत् ग्रन्थस्य स्वोपज्ञस्य निर्देशः, न श्लाघा। किञ्च पाठकस्य हितम् — कुत्र किं विशिष्टं लभ्यते इति ज्ञात्वा सः ग्रन्थं चिनोति।

Objection: Suśruta, saying "here the person of twenty-five principles is expounded; in others reflection begins from the elements", proclaims the superiority of his own work and the inferiority of others. Self-praise does not become the learned. **Reply:** No. Praise is without proof; vyākhyāna can be tested. The other treatises are available, and the reader can see for himself

whether their reflection begins from the elements. In Caraka we find "the six elements, combined, receive the name 'person'", and "of twenty-four" — so Suśruta's statement is true. A statement of distinction that is borne out by examination indicates the contribution of a work; it is not self-praise. Moreover, it serves the reader: knowing what is distinctive where, he chooses his text.

Śaṅkā–samādhāna composed for this article.

4.3 Can what is beyond all understanding be explained?

ननु "सर्वबुद्ध्यविषयं व्याक्रियते" इति विरुद्धम् — यत् बुद्धेः अविषयः तत् कथं व्याक्रियते, व्याकृतं चेत् बुद्धिविषयः एव। प्रथमे मासि गर्भस्य स्वरूपं न केनचित् दृष्टम्; अतः तद्वचनं कल्पनामात्रम् इति चेत्, न। "सर्वबुद्धि" इति अस्मदादीनां प्रत्यक्षबुद्धिः अभिप्रेता — चक्रपाणिः "अस्मदाद्यविदितार्थ" इति स्पष्टयति। यत् प्रत्यक्षस्य अविषयः तत् आप्तोपदेशेन अनुमानेन च ज्ञायते, व्याख्यानेन च प्रसिद्धैः उपमानैः — खेटः, कलुषीकरणम्, संमूर्च्छनम् — बुद्धिगम्यं क्रियते। "सदसद्भूताङ्गावयवः" इति वचनं च सूक्ष्मं — अवयवाः शक्त्या सन्ति, व्यक्त्या न। अतः व्याख्यानम् अप्रत्यक्षस्य बुद्धौ आरोपणम्, न कल्पना।

Objection: "what lies beyond the understanding of all is explained" is self-contradictory: what is beyond understanding cannot be explained, and if it is explained it is within understanding. The form of the embryo in the first month has been seen by no one; so the statement is mere fancy. **Reply:** No. "The understanding of all" means the perceptual understanding of people like us — Cakrapāṇi makes this explicit with "matters unknown to people like us". What is beyond perception is known by the testimony of the competent and by inference, and vyākhyāna makes it intelligible through familiar comparisons — phlegm, turbidity, coagulation. The phrase "its limbs and parts both existent and non-existent" is precise: the parts exist in potential, not yet in manifestation. Vyākhyāna brings the imperceptible within the reach of the mind; it is not fancy.

Śaṅkā–samādhāna composed for this article.

5. सिद्धान्तः · The settled view

सामान्यवचनात् अधिकं वर्णनं — गौरवेण अन्येभ्यः विशिष्टस्य अर्थस्य, अन्यतन्त्रेभ्यः विशिष्टस्य स्वोपज्ञस्य, प्रत्यक्षेभ्यः अतीतस्य वा अर्थस्य — यत् परीक्षया सिध्यति, तत् व्याख्यानम्।

"Vyākhyāna is description beyond the ordinary statement — of a matter pre-eminent in weight among others, of the work's own contribution distinct from other treatises, or of a matter beyond perception — that is borne out by examination."

Definition composed for this article.

The three kinds of "beyond" correspond to the three authorities. The final clause, "borne out by examination", is what separates vyākhyāna from exaggeration, self-praise and fancy — the three charges answered above.

6. आधुनिकसंवादः · The modern counterpart

Classical form	Modern counterpart
Kauṭilya: emphasis on the gravest risk	**Prioritisation** in risk assessment; the "key finding" or "main message" highlighted in a report
Suśruta: what this work adds	The **statement of contribution** or novelty in a paper: what is new relative to existing literature
Caraka: explaining the unobservable	**Theoretical explanation** and **scientific visualisation** of what cannot be seen directly; models of early development
The commentary	Review articles and textbooks that elaborate a field beyond its primary reports

Every journal now asks authors to state what their paper adds. Suśruta's sentence is a model: specific ("the person of twenty-five principles"), comparative ("in other treatises …"), and checkable.

7. प्रयोगाः · Uses

7.1 In research

State the contribution of your work as Suśruta does — what it adds, compared with which existing works — and make sure the claim can be checked. In the discussion, use Kauṭilya's *viśeṣataḥ*: single out the finding that matters most and say for whom. When explaining a process that cannot be observed directly, use Caraka's method: familiar images, chosen carefully, with their limits stated.

7.2 In teaching

Ask students, after a lesson, which point the teacher emphasised most and why. Then ask them to explain an unobservable process (the first month of the embryo, the movement of electrons) with an image from daily life, and to state where the image fails.

7.3 In daily life

Advice that gives equal weight to everything is hard to use. Kauṭilya's example teaches the value of saying "especially this". And when someone claims their product or plan is distinctive, ask Suśruta's question: distinctive compared with what — and can I check?

8. अभ्यासः · Exercise

1. Write the contribution statement of your current research in the form of Suśruta's sentence: "Here X is expounded; in other works, Y."

2. Compare Suśruta, Śārīrasthāna 1, with Caraka, Śārīrasthāna 1 and 5, on the constitution of the person. Is Suśruta's claim fair?

3. Explain a process in your field that cannot be observed directly, using one familiar image. State one way in which the image is accurate and one in which it misleads.

9. उपसंहारः · Conclusion

Vyākhyāna is elaboration beyond the ordinary. Kauṭilya uses it to mark the gravest danger for a particular polity, Suśruta to claim a distinctive doctrine for his treatise, and Caraka to explain the embryo in its first month. The three kinds of "beyond" — in weight, in contribution, in perception — are united by the condition that the elaboration be borne out by examination, which separates it from exaggeration, self-praise and fancy. Suśruta's claim, checked against Caraka, holds. Emphasis, the contribution statement and theoretical explanation are its modern forms, and each is subject to the same test.

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How to cite. Mantha Srinivasu. 2026. "व्याख्यानम् — Exposition: the Art of Elaboration." *तन्त्रयुक्तिविमर्शः · Tantrayukti Studies*, TY-2026/20. Sanskrit Manthan, 13 Nov 2026. https://sanskritmanthan.in/a/ty-20-vyakhyana
Author: ORCID 0000-0002-8834-3782 · Google Scholar
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.23947943
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