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अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणम्

Looking Back: Cumulative Knowledge

डॉ. मन्था-श्रीनिवासुः · Dr. Mantha Srinivasu · 18 Nov 2026 · AŚ 15.1.61–62; Su. Utt. 65.31

Abstract

Atikrāntāvekṣaṇa, "looking back to what has passed", is the backward reference. Kauṭilya defines it as "'it was laid down thus before'", with a sentence that invokes an earlier chapter: "the excellences of a minister have been stated before." Suśruta defines it as "what was stated before": as when, in the chapters on therapeutics, the author says "what was declared in the Sūtrasthāna" — and his own Cikitsitasthāna begins its chapter on diabetic boils with just such a reference. Cakrapāṇi, under the name *atītāvekṣā*, cites a verse from Caraka's chapter on fever — "that hut, that bed and that covering … quickly allay cold fever" — in which three demonstratives point back, without restating it, to the sudation chamber described in the Sūtrasthāna. This article traces Caraka's back-reference to its source, shows how the device makes a long śāstra cumulative, distinguishes it from *prasaṅga* and *atideśa*, and answers three objections: that sending the reader back is a burden, that the back-reference is the same as restatement or extension, and that a bare demonstrative is ambiguous. It concludes that atikrāntāvekṣaṇa is the device by which a śāstra builds on itself, presupposing what has been taught, and that its modern forms are the internal cross-reference, the statement of prerequisites and the citation of one's own earlier work.

Keywords: atikrāntāvekṣaṇa; atītāvekṣā; tantrayukti; backward reference; cross-reference; cumulative knowledge; prerequisite; anaphora; demonstrative; Arthaśāstra; Suśruta; prameha piḍakā; Caraka; jvara; sveda

1. प्रवेशः · Place in the lists

Atikrāntāvekṣaṇa is twenty-eighth in Kauṭilya's list, twenty-third in Suśruta's and twenty-fifth in Caraka's, where it is called *atītāvekṣā*. It is the counterpart of *anāgatāvekṣaṇa* (TY-28). Together the two devices bind a long text into a whole: one points forward to what will be taught, the other back to what has been taught. *Atikrānta*, "gone beyond, passed", with *avekṣaṇa*, "looking towards", names the text's glance at its own past.

2. लक्षणानि · The definitions

> पुरस्तादेवं विहित मित्यतिक्रान्तावेष्कणम्
>
> अमात्यसम्पदुक्ता पुरस्तादिति
>
> "'It was laid down thus before' — that is atikrāntāvekṣaṇa." — Example: "The excellences of a minister have been stated before."

Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra* 15.1.61–62

> यत्पूर्वमुक्तं तदतिक्रान्तावेक्षणम्। यथा चिकित्सितेषु ब्रूयात् श्लोकस्थाने यदीरितमिति ॥
>
> "What was stated before — that is atikrāntāvekṣaṇa. For example: in the chapters on therapeutics one may say, 'what was declared in the Sūtrasthāna'."

Suśruta, *Uttaratantra* 65.31

> अतीतावेक्षणं नाम यदतीतमेवोच्यते; यथा- "सा कुटी तच्च शयनं ज्वरं संशमयत्यपि" (चि.अ.३) इत्यत्र स्वेदाध्यायविहितकुट्यादिकमतीतमवेक्षते
>
> "Atītāvekṣā is where what is past is spoken of. For example: in 'that hut, that bed … also allay fever' (Cikitsāsthāna 3), it looks back to the hut and the rest, prescribed in the chapter on sudation, which are past."

Cakrapāṇidatta, *Āyurvedadīpikā* on Caraka, *Siddhisthāna* 12.41–44

3. लक्षणपरीक्षा · Testing the definitions

3.1 Suśruta's example in his own text

Suśruta's Cikitsitasthāna 12, on the boils that accompany prameha, opens by pointing back:

> शराविकाद्या नव पिडकाः प्रागुक्ताः; ताः प्राणवतो ऽल्पास्त्वङ्मांसप्राप्ता मृद्व्यो ऽल्परुजः क्षिप्रपाकभेदिन्यश्च साध्याः ॥
>
> "The nine boils beginning with śarāvikā were stated before; those of them that occur in a person of good vitality, are small, have reached only skin and flesh, are soft, of little pain, and quickly ripen and burst, are curable."

Suśruta, *Cikitsāsthāna* 12.3

The nine boils were described in the Nidānasthāna. The chapter on treatment does not describe them again; it refers back (*prāg-uktāḥ*, "stated before") and proceeds at once to what is new — the signs of curability. The reader is expected to know the description already.

3.2 Caraka's example traced

The verse Cakrapāṇi cites stands in Caraka's chapter on fever:

> सा कुटी तच्च शयनं तच्चावच्छादनं ज्वरम्। शीतं प्रशमयन्त्याशु धूपाश्चागुरुजा घनाः ॥
>
> "That hut, that bed and that covering, and dense fumigations of aguru, quickly allay cold fever."

Caraka, *Cikitsāsthāna* 3.269

"That hut, that bed, that covering" — three demonstratives, and nothing more. What they refer to is in the Sūtrasthāna, in the chapter on sudation, where the sudation hut (*kuṭī*) is described:

> अनत्युत्सेधविस्तारां वृत्ताकारामलोचनाम्। घनभित्तिं कुटीं कृत्वा कुष्ठाद्यैः संप्रलेपयेत् ॥
>
> "Having made a hut, not too high nor too wide, round in shape, without windows, with thick walls, one should plaster it with kuṣṭha and the like."
>
> Caraka, *Sūtrasthāna* 14.52

> कुटीमध्ये भिषक् शय्यां स्वास्तीर्णामुपकल्पयेत्। प्रावाराजिनकौशेयकुथकम्बलगोलकैः ॥
>
> "In the middle of the hut the physician should prepare a well-spread bed, with cloaks, deer-skins, silks, kutha blankets, woollen blankets and goloka coverings."
>
> Caraka, *Sūtrasthāna* 14.53

The correspondence is exact: the hut (14.52), the bed and the coverings (14.53). Caraka's verse on fever needs only the word *sā*, "that", to bring the whole construction into the patient's treatment. This is the device at its most economical — and it works only for a reader who has learnt the Sūtrasthāna.

3.3 Kauṭilya: building on a definition

Kauṭilya's example stands in his account of the excellences of the constituents of the state (AŚ 6.1). The excellences of the king are listed at length; then, for the minister, a single sentence; then the excellences of the country follow at length again:

> अमात्यसम्पदुक्ता पुरस्तात् ॥
>
> "The excellences of a minister have been stated before."
>
> Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra* 6.1.7

The reference is to the first book (AŚ 1.9), where the qualities of a minister are set out. Rather than repeat that list in the middle of a new one, Kauṭilya points back, and the reader supplies it. The backward reference turns an earlier definition into a standing resource of the whole work.

4. पूर्वपक्षः खण्डनं मण्डनं च · Objections and replies

4.1 Is sending the reader back not a burden?

> ननु "सा कुटी" इति उक्ते पाठकः सूत्रस्थानं पुनः अन्विष्येत्। चिकित्सकः रोगिणः समीपे ग्रन्थस्य पृष्ठानि परिवर्तयेत्? अतः यत्र आवश्यकं तत्र पुनः वक्तव्यम् इति चेत्, न। अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणं पूर्वशिक्षितं पाठकम् अपेक्षते। शास्त्रं क्रमेण अधीयते — सूत्रस्थानं प्रथमं, चिकित्सितं पश्चात्। यः चिकित्सितं पठति सः स्वेदाध्यायं जानाति एव; तस्य स्मृतौ "सा कुटी" इति शब्दः सर्वं विधानम् उपस्थापयति। अज्ञस्य कृते पुनरुक्तिः, ज्ञस्य कृते भारः। शास्त्रं अधीतपूर्वं शिष्यं प्रति प्रवर्तते — तत् एव तस्य क्रमस्य प्रयोजनम्। अतः अवेक्षणं भारः न, किन्तु पूर्वाध्ययनस्य फलम्।

Objection: when "that hut" is said, the reader must look up the Sūtrasthāna again. Should a physician turn the pages of a book at the bedside? What is needed should be stated again where it is needed. **Reply:** No. Atikrāntāvekṣaṇa presupposes a reader already taught. A śāstra is studied in order — the Sūtrasthāna first, the Cikitsitasthāna later. One who reads the Cikitsitasthāna already knows the chapter on sudation; in his memory the words "that hut" call up the whole procedure. For the ignorant it would be repetition; for the learned, a burden. A śāstra is addressed to a pupil who has studied what came before — that is the purpose of its order. So the reference back is not a burden but the fruit of prior study.

Śaṅkā–samādhāna composed for this article.

4.2 Is it not the same as prasaṅga or atideśa?

ननु प्रसङ्गः अपि पूर्वोक्तस्य पुनरभिधानम्, अतिदेशः अपि उक्तेन साधनम्। अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणम् अपि पूर्वोक्तम् अवेक्षते। अतः पौनरुक्त्यम् इति चेत्, न। प्रसङ्गे पूर्वोक्तः अर्थः पुनः उच्यते — शब्देन सह। अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणे न उच्यते, केवलं निर्दिश्यते — "प्रागुक्ताः", "सा कुटी"। अतिदेशे पूर्वोक्तः विधिः अन्यस्मिन् विषये प्रसार्यते — ऋणविधिः दत्ताप्रदाने। अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणे स एव विषयः, स एव विधिः — कुटी कुटी एव, पिडकाः पिडकाः एव — केवलं प्रकरणान्तरे उपयुज्यते। प्रसङ्गः पुनर्वचनं, अतिदेशः प्रसारणं, अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणं निर्देशमात्रम्।

Objection: prasaṅga too is the restatement of what was said before; atideśa too is establishing by what has been said. Atikrāntāvekṣaṇa also looks to what was said before. So they are redundant. **Reply:** No. In prasaṅga, what was said before is said again, words and all. In atikrāntāvekṣaṇa it is not said again but only pointed to — "stated before", "that hut". In atideśa, a rule stated before is extended to another subject — the rules of debt to undelivered gifts. In atikrāntāvekṣaṇa the subject is the same and the rule is the same — the hut is the hut, the boils are the boils — only used in another context. Prasaṅga is restatement, atideśa extension, atikrāntāvekṣaṇa mere reference.

Śaṅkā–samādhāna composed for this article.

4.3 Is a bare demonstrative not ambiguous?

ननु "सा कुटी" इति तच्छब्दः केवलः। ग्रन्थे अनेकाः कुट्यः उक्ताः स्युः — सूतिकागारं, रसायनकुटी, स्वेदकुटी। कस्याः परामर्शः इति न ज्ञायते। अतः अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणं संशयजनकम् इति चेत्, न। तच्छब्दः प्रसिद्धम् अनुभूतं प्रकृतं वा परामृशति। ज्वरचिकित्सायां शीतज्वरस्य शमनम् उष्णेन — तत्र स्वेदकुटी एव योग्या, न सूतिकागारम्। "शयनं", "आच्छादनं" इति सहपठितौ शब्दौ अपि स्वेदाध्यायस्य शय्याप्रावारौ एव निर्दिशतः। प्रकरणं, योग्यता, सहचारः च परामर्शं नियच्छन्ति। अतः तच्छब्दस्य अर्थः अनिश्चितः न, किन्तु त्रिभिः नियतः।

Objection: in "that hut" the demonstrative stands alone. Several huts may have been described in the text — the lying-in chamber, the hut for rejuvenation therapy, the sudation hut. Which is meant is not known. So atikrāntāvekṣaṇa breeds doubt. **Reply:** No. The demonstrative refers to what is well known, experienced, or in context. In the treatment of fever, cold fever is allayed by heat — so only the sudation hut is suitable, not the lying-in chamber. The words read together with it, "bed" and "covering", also point to the bed and coverings of the chapter on sudation. Context, suitability and co-occurrence fix the reference. So the sense of the demonstrative is not uncertain but fixed by these three.

Śaṅkā–samādhāna composed for this article.

5. सिद्धान्तः · The settled view

> पूर्वं स्वस्थाने पूर्णतया उक्तस्य अर्थस्य, अधीतपूर्वं पाठकं प्रति, पुनरभिधानं विना, "प्रागुक्तः", "सः" इत्यादिना प्रकरणयोग्यतासहचारैः नियतेन निर्देशः, येन सः अर्थः प्रकृते उपयुज्यते, तत् अतिक्रान्तावेक्षणम् ।
>
> "Atikrāntāvekṣaṇa is the reference — without restatement, addressed to a reader who has already studied, by words such as 'stated before' or 'that', fixed by context, suitability and co-occurrence — to a matter fully stated earlier in its own place, by which that matter is put to use in the present context."

Definition composed for this article.

The definition records the three conditions that make the device work: a matter fully stated in its own place, a reader who has studied it, and a reference whose object is fixed. Under these conditions a single word can carry a whole procedure.

6. आधुनिकसंवादः · The modern counterpart

Classical form	Modern counterpart
Kauṭilya: "stated before"	Internal cross-references ("as defined in Section 2")
Suśruta: the description presupposed, the new matter added	Textbook chapters that assume earlier chapters; **prerequisites** in a curriculum
Caraka: "that hut" for a whole procedure	Reference to a standard protocol by name; reuse of a defined module in software
A śāstra that builds on itself	**Cumulative knowledge**: citing one's own and others' earlier work rather than restating it

The difference between a field that accumulates and one that repeats itself lies largely in this device: whether new work refers back to what is established and builds on it, or restates it each time from the beginning.

7. प्रयोगाः · Uses

7.1 In research

Define each concept and describe each procedure once, fully, in its proper place; thereafter refer back to it. Make the reference unambiguous — by section number, by name, or by a context that admits only one reading. When building on earlier work, cite it and add only what is new, as Suśruta proceeds directly to the signs of curability.

7.2 In teaching

State prerequisites clearly, and when a lesson relies on an earlier one, name it. Use Caraka's verse as an exercise: ask students to find what "that hut, that bed, that covering" refer to, and to explain how they know.

7.3 In daily life

"As we agreed last time" is atikrāntāvekṣaṇa. It saves time when both parties remember the same thing, and causes trouble when they do not. Record what was agreed, so that the reference has something fixed to point to.

8. अभ्यासः · Exercise

1. Find three back-references in the Arthaśāstra (phrases such as *uktaṃ purastāt*) and locate the passages they refer to.
2. In Caraka's Cikitsāsthāna, find another place where a procedure from the Sūtrasthāna is referred to by a demonstrative or a name alone. Trace it.
3. In your own long work, list every term or procedure that is described more than once. Replace the repetitions with back-references where the context allows.

9. उपसंहारः · Conclusion

Atikrāntāvekṣaṇa is the backward reference. Kauṭilya builds on his earlier account of ministers, Suśruta on his earlier description of the boils, Caraka on his earlier construction of the sudation hut — the last with three demonstratives that point exactly to two verses of the Sūtrasthāna. The device presupposes a reader who has studied in order, differs from restatement and extension by merely pointing, and fixes its reference by context, suitability and co-occurrence. It is what makes a śāstra cumulative: each part stands on what has been taught.

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