

ARTHAPATTI: THE LOGIC OF PRESUMPTION IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Arthapatti, or presumption, is a distinct epistemological tool in Indian philosophy, recognized in traditions like *Vedanta* and *Mimamsa*. It serves as an independent means of acquiring knowledge when neither direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) nor inference (*anumana*) can fully explain a situation. *Arthapatti* operates by postulating an unseen fact to account for an observable reality, making it crucial in philosophical debates, logical analysis, and even Ayurvedic reasoning. It is categorized into *Drstarthapatti* (based on direct observation) and *Srutarthapatti* (derived from verbal testimony). Unlike inference, *Arthapatti* does not rely on a universal causal connection but rather on contextual necessity. This method is widely applied in diagnosing and reasoning within Ayurveda and scientific inquiry, offering a logical bridge between known and unknown phenomena. Its relevance highlights the adaptability of Indian epistemological frameworks in both abstract thought and practical application.

INTRODUCTION

Arthapatti, often translated as *postulation* or *presumption*, is a unique source of knowledge recognized in Indian philosophical traditions, particularly *Vedanta* and *Mimamsa*. It is considered an independent means of acquiring knowledge that helps explain situations that

cannot be understood through direct perception or inference.

This method of reasoning plays a crucial role in philosophical discourse, logical debates, and even medical explorations, particularly in Ayurveda. Although not universally accepted as a fundamental proof (*pramaṇa*), *Arthapatti* has been acknowledged for its practicality in deducing unknown facts based on observable phenomena.

Understanding *Arthapatti*

Arthapatti arises when an unexplained fact necessitates an assumption for coherence. It is neither direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) nor inference (*anumana*), but a separate cognitive process.

For example, consider the statement: "*A person claims that he has not eaten all day, yet he is not losing weight.*" Given that maintaining weight requires nourishment, the logical presumption would be that he must be secretly consuming food at night.

This knowledge is attained through reasoning—since weight maintenance cannot occur without food intake, and there is no perceptible evidence of eating during the day, the only reasonable explanation is nighttime consumption. This logical leap embodies the essence of *Arthapatti*.

Types of *Arthapatti*

Arthapatti is traditionally divided into two broad categories

1. *Drstarthapatti* – Postulation based on direct perception.
2. *Srutarthapatti* – Postulation based on verbal testimony or scriptural assertion.

Example of *Drstarthapatti*

If Devadatta is known to be alive but is not found at home, the reasonable presumption is that he must be outside. The fact that he exists but is missing from home leads to the conclusion that he is somewhere else.

Example of *Srutarthapatti*

If an Ayurveda text states, "*A disease cannot be cured with nourishing therapy (Santarpana),*" the implied understanding is that it must be treatable by the opposite therapy—emaciation (*Apatarpana*). Even though the second statement is not explicitly made, it follows as an unavoidable logical conclusion.

Arthapatti in Ayurveda

Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of medicine, does not formally classify *Arthapatti* as a direct means of acquiring truth. However, it is recognized as a tool in reasoning and debate. The *Charaka Samhita*, a foundational text of Ayurveda, describes *Arthapatti* under logical reasoning (*Vadamargha*). This principle is frequently applied in diagnostic and exploratory therapies (*Upashaya*), where symptoms and responses are examined to deduce causes and treatments.

For instance, if a person is advised against eating during the day, it logically implies they should be fed at night. The knowledge of one condition automatically leads to the understanding of the necessary counter-condition.

Arthapatti vs. Inference

Arthapatti is often confused with inference (*anumana*), but the two differ in their logical structure

- Inference: Requires an *invariable universal connection* (*vyapti*) between the cause and effect.
- *Arthapatti*: Establishes knowledge by assuming an unobserved fact to account for a known reality.

In inference, one connects *smoke* with *fire* due to the established rule that smoke accompanies fire. In contrast, in *Arthapatti*, the relationship is contextual rather than universally established.

Application in Logical Analysis

Scholars believe *Arthapatti* plays a role in analytical methods (*Tatparya*), particularly in empirical investigations.

For example, a student conducting a *salt analysis* in chemistry might repeatedly test different compounds to confirm which one matches the expected reaction. If one compound fails the test, the logical presumption is to investigate alternatives. This repetitive elimination process reflects the essence of *Arthapatti* in research and experimentation.

CONCLUSION

Arthapatti stands as an essential reasoning tool in Indian philosophy, logic, and medicine. While it may not fit into the rigid structure of fundamental proofs, it remains an indispensable

technique for contextual knowledge acquisition. It enables clarity where perception and inference alone fall short, making it a valuable component of philosophical inquiry and practical application.

From explaining hidden behaviors to diagnosing diseases, *Arthapatti* serves as an analytical bridge between the known and the unknown—helping humans make logical sense of the world beyond direct evidence.

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