

The evolution of the notion of negation in Indian philosophy of language in the period between the 5th and 18th centuries CE

Description for the general public

The notion of negation has been present in Indian culture in a variety of forms since the dawn of its civilization. Already in the earliest poetical texts we find descriptions of creation partially based on the notion of absence or non-existence of phenomena. It is not surprising, therefore, that negation as a concept was later analysed not only as part of linguistic structures but also as a philosophical idea. The aim of this project is to follow and analyse the evolution of this notion of negation developed in the school of Indian philosophers-grammarians. The period under examination covers the span of over a thousand years between the 5th and 18th centuries CE. The project is based on the excerpts from three Sanskrit texts crucial for the history of philosophy of language in India:

- 1) *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartṛhari dating to the 5th century CE
- 2) *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* of Koṇḍa Bhaṭṭā dating to 17th century CE
- 3) *Paramalaghumañjūṣā* of Nāgoji Bhaṭṭa dating to 17th/18th century CE

The project will analyse different types of negation described by individual philosophers as well as references to the system of traditional Sanskrit grammar in which the school of philosophy of language in India is deeply rooted. It aims to show how this idea was perceived in linguistic terms and how it developed over centuries incorporating more abstract philosophical notions as well as stretching further into the linguistic territory of particles other than purely negative ones.

The reason for undertaking this research topic has been, on the one hand, the importance of the notion of negation in Indian philosophy in general – which is evident from the analysis of other philosophical schools. On the other hand, the project will allow us to follow the development of the meaning of negation from its purely technical understanding in the system of traditional Sanskrit grammar to more abstract notions in its philosophical aspects. The research combines the linguistic methodology of the system of Sanskrit grammatical tradition with philosophical methodology developed in Oriental studies. The unique character of the school of Indian philosophy of language forms the contribution to the studies of this branch of philosophy in Oriental as well as western studies. It also opens the possibility of further comparative research into understanding negation in different cultures.