The aim of this paper is to discuss why a predicate-expression alone is to be considered as unsaturated, and why a subject-expression is considered as saturated. In this context I would like to examine Frege’s thesis that the subject of a thought is saturated while the predicate is unsaturated, and Strawson’s defence of the view that a subject-expression carries the burden of a fact, while a predicate-expression has no such presupposition. The Nyāya philosophers of the classical Indian philosophy have also discussed these questions, but their answers are different from those of Frege and Strawson.

1.

Frege’s doctrine that the subject-expression of a sentence is saturated while the predicate-expression is unsaturated cannot be explained without introducing his distinction between an object and a concept or function. In order to understand this distinction let us consider the following examples of Frege:

(1) Cato killed Cato.¹
(2) Caesar conquered Gaul.²
(3) 3 > 2.³
(4) The morning star is Venus.⁴
(5) The morning star is a planet.⁵
(6) Jesus falls under the concept man.⁶
(7) This rose is red.⁷
(8) There is at least one square root of 4.⁸
(9) The concept square root of 4 is realized.⁹

With respect to (1) Frege claims that “if we imagine ‘Cato’ as replaceable at its first occurrence, then ‘killing Cato’ is the function; if we imagine ‘Cato’ as replaceable at its second occurrence, then ‘being killed by Cato’ is the function; finally if we imagine ‘Cato’ as replaceable at both occurrences, then ‘killing oneself’ is the function”.¹⁰

According to Frege there is only one predicate-expression in (1),
Although there are three separate functions in it. The subject being the principal argument is to be equated with the first occurrence of 'Cato', but the predicate-expression designates the function killing Cato. Since a subject-expression designates an object and a predicate-expression designates a concept, in this example Cato would be the object and killing Cato would be the concept.

With respect to (2) Frege claims that it can be split up into two parts: "One complete in itself and the other in need of supplementation, or 'unsaturated'". In this example 'Caesar' is the subject-expression and 'conquered Gaul' is the predicate-expression. A predicate-expression, according to Frege, contains an empty place, and when this place is filled up with a proper name, there is a complete sense. This example of Frege emphasizes the point that the sense of a predicate-expression is also incomplete. From this it follows that not only a predicate-expression is incomplete but also its sense is incomplete.

In the case of (3) Frege claims that it can be split up into '3' and 'x > 2'. The first one is saturated while the second one is unsaturated. So the subject-expression is '3' which designates the object 3 and the predicate-expression is 'x > 2' which designates a concept. In this context it is to be noted that a variable occurs in a predicate-expression while in (1) or (2) no such variable has occurred. Even if it does not make any conceptual difference between a predicate-expression which contains a variable and the one which does not contain a variable, it does make some linguistic difference between them.

In (4) two proper names have occurred, but only the first one is to be treated as the subject-expression. Simply 'Venus' cannot be taken as a predicate-expression. The sign 'is', according to Frege, is a blend of both the predication-sign or copula and a part of the predicate-expression. According to Frege what (4) means is the same as 'The morning star is no other than Venus'. Hence the predicate-expression is 'no other than Venus', although the first three words of the predicate-expression do not occur in (4). Again (4) can be restated in the sentence 'The morning star is identical with Venus' or 'The morning star is not different from Venus'. Hence 'identical with Venus' or 'not different from Venus' can also be treated as the predicate-expression in (4). What follows from this thesis of Frege is that sometimes the apparent predicate-expression or the sentence in which it occurs requires some transformation to reveal the real nature of the