

**Zeitschrift:** Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

**Band:** 47 (1993)

**Heft:** 1: Proceedings of the first international conference on Bhartrhari : University of Poona, January 6 - 8, 1992

**Artikel:** Points of agreement and difference between the Vkyapadya and the Mahbhsya-Dpik in the matter of spota

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147011>

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POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE  
VĀKYAPADĪYA AND THE MAHĀBHĀṢYA-DĪPIKĀ IN THE  
MATTER OF SPHOTA

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Now that the publication of the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhāṣya-Dīpikā* (henceforth *Dīp.*) undertaken by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, has been complete (i.e. as far as the text is available in the unique Berlin Ms), it is possible to study this oldest commentary on the *Mbh.* in a variety of ways. One of the lines of study could be a sort of comparative study of the *Vākyapadīya* (henceforth *Vākyap.*) and the *Dīp.*, both assigned to Bhartrhari since Vardhamāna, the author of the *Ganaratnamahodadhi*, who says: *bhartrharir vākyapadīyaprakīrnakayoḥ kartā mahābhāṣyatripādyā vyākhyātā ca.*

I am interested in the Sphoṭa theory propounded by Bhartrhari since a long time. I have much tried to understand this theory, but I am not still sure that I have correctly understood it. Therefore, with the appearance of this new edition of the *Dīp.* I renewed my interest in this topic and tried to ascertain what Bhartrhari has to say about the Sphoṭa in the *Dīp.* In the present paper I have collected his occasional statements on Sphoṭa in the *Dīp.* (in all three, in the Āhnikas I and II), and have compared them with his statements on the same in the *Vākyap.* Frankly, this is not an exhaustive or thorough study: I have only jotted down points of agreement and difference regarding Sphoṭa in the two works and have offered a few passing observations.

I. The fundamental thesis:

- (1) The sounds, the revealers of the Sphoṭa, and
- (2) The Sphoṭa, the conveyor of meaning.

In the view of both, the *Vākyap.* and the *Dīp.*, the physical sounds uttered by the speaker do not convey any meaning directly. Their only purpose is to manifest the Sphoṭa which, the latter, conveys the meaning.<sup>1</sup>

1 Direct statements for the meaninglessness of phonemes are very rare in these two texts, such as *ke cin manyante yo vā 'yam uccāryate kramavān avarah / kaś cid anyah akramah śabdātmā buddhistho vigāhate / tasmād arthapratipattiḥ / kutah? yathāivārthāntara-nibandhano nārthāntaram pratyāyayati evam svarūpanibandhano nōtsahate pratyāyayitum* (*Dīp.* I.3.13-15) / Elsewhere there is no dearth of such express statements. Kaiy. for

- II. Some points of difference between the sounds and the Sphota:  
According to both the Vākyap. and the Dīp. -
- (1) The sounds are sequential (*kramajanman*), while the Sphota is without any sequence (*akrama*).<sup>2</sup>
  - (2) The sounds are transitory (*anitya*), while the Sphota is permanent (*nitya*).
  - (3) The sounds are transitory because they are produced (*karanebhyo vivrtena dhvaninā* - Vākyap. I. 47), while the Sphota is permanent (*nitya*) because it is only to be manifested, and not to be produced (*vyajyamāne tathā vākye... Vākyap. I.90*).<sup>3</sup>
  - (4) Therefore the sounds are called *vyañjaka* 'manifestor' while the Sphota is called *vyañgya* 'manifested' (*pratyekam vyañjakā bhinnā varnavākyapadesu ye I.88*).<sup>4</sup>

instance says: *varnānām pratyekam vācakatve dvitīyādivarnoccāranānarthakyaprasaṅgāt, ānarthakye tu pratyekam utpattipakṣe yaugapadyenotpattiyabhāvāt, abhivyaktipakṣe tu kramenaivābhivyaktyā samudāyābhāvāt, ekasmṛtyupārūdhānām vācakatve sarah rasah ityādāv arthapratipattyaviśesaprasaṅgāt tadvyatiriktaḥ sphoto nādābhivyāṅgyo vācako vistarena vākyapadīye vyavasthāpitah* [on the Mbh. 1.1.10.11: *yenoccāritena sāsnālāṅgūlavaiṣāninām sampratyayo bhavati*/].

Although Kaiy. expressly mentions here the *Vākyap.* in connection with the meaninglessness of phonemes, I have not come across such an explicit statement in that text. Still there is no doubt whatsoever that such a statement is implied there, since otherwise it will take the bottom clean out of the argument in favour of the Sphota theory. For the meaningfulness of the Sphota, see *aparorthe prayujyate Vākyap. I.44. jāter arthasya pratipattih / etac ca arthasvarūpam / sphoto 'yam eva śabdātmā nityah / Dīp. I.3.17,18 [ke cin manyante] yo vāyam uccāryate, [sa] kramavān avarah / kaś cid anyah akramah śabdātmā buddhistho vigāhate / tasmād arthapratipattih /* (quoted above). *Tatra yadāyam pakṣah vrksādayah śabdāh kramajanmānah ayugapaikālāh vrksāśabdātvaḥkrter akramāyā abhivyaktihetavo bhavanti - tadā vrksāśabdātvaḥkrter arthapratipattih / sā ca nityā / - tatra ca itad uktam "ubhayataḥ sphotamātram pratinirdiśyate, raśruter laśrutih" iti. Dīp. I.17.4ff.*

- 2 *nādasya kramajanmatvāt Vākyap. I.48; Dīp. I.17.4ff. na pūrvo na paraś ca saḥ / akramah - Vākyap. I.48.*
- 3 Also: *anekavyaktyabhivyāṅgyā jātih sphota iti smrtā Vākyap. I.93 yasyāpi śabdavyaktih tasyāpi nityah śabdah / sa tu nādābhivyāṅgyah Dīp. I.17.9 kramajanmānah - vrksāśabdātvaḥkrter akramāyā abhivyaktihetavah* (Dīp. I.17.4, 5)
- 4 Also: *vyañjakadhvanibhedānupātena Vṛtti on Vākyap. I.46; nādaḥ sphotam avadyotayati Vṛtti on Vākyap. I.48; dhvaniprakāśite śabde Vākyap. I.83.*

- III. Both the *Vākya*. and the *Dīp*. mention different views regarding where exactly the *samskāra* (perfection) is effected by the sounds which helps the grasping of the word (*indriyasya, śabdasya, ubhayoh*).<sup>5</sup>
- IV. Both the *Vākya*. and the *Dīp*. also state that the manifested word (Sphoṭa) only apparently seems to partake of the properties of the sounds which manifest it; the Sphoṭa, in reality, is above the distinctions made by the properties of the sounds.<sup>6</sup>

- 5 *indriyasyaiva samskārah śabdasyaivobhayasya vā /  
kriyate dhvanibhir vādās trayo bhivyaktivādinām // Vākya. I.78  
indriyasyaiva samskārah samādhānāñjanādibhih /  
viśayasya tu samskāras tadgandhapratipattaye // I.79  
cakṣusah prāpyakāritve tejasā tu dvayor api  
viśayendriyayor istaḥ samskārah sa kramo dhvaneḥ // I.80  
sa ca nādaḥ śrotasyānūgrahe vartate / tadanugrhitam śrotram śabdopalabdḥau samartham  
bhavati / yathākṣnor añjanam ity eke / apare śabdasyaiva / yathā prokṣanam pṛthivyā eva  
na ghrānasya / ubhayor ity apare / Dīp. I.17.15-17.*
- 6 *nādasya kramajanmatvān na pūrvo na paraś ca saḥ /  
akramah kramarūpena bhedavān iva jāyate // Vākya. I.48  
The Vrtti on this: asau [sphotah] ekatvam anatikrāman samsargino nādasya bhedarūpam  
upasaṃgrhnāti / (sequentialness)  
pratibimbam yathānyatra sthitam toyakriyāvaśāt /  
tatpravrttim ivānveti sa dharmah sphotanādayoh // 49 (number)  
sphotasyābhinnakālasya dhvanikālānupātinah /  
grahanopādhibhedena vrttibhedam pracakṣate // 75 (speed of utterance)  
svabhāvabhedān nityatve hrasvādīrghaplūtādisu /  
prākṛtasya dhvaneḥ kālah śabdasyety upacaryate // 76 (length of vowels)  
On this, Vrsabha: dhvanisphotayor vibhāgāparicchedād dhvanikṛtam bhedaṃ sphotē  
paśyanti.  
śabdasyordhvam abhivyakter vrttibhedam tu vaikṛtāḥ /  
dhvanayah samupohante sphotātmā tair na bhidyate // 77  
prakāśakānām bhedāṃś ca prakāśyo 'rtho 'nuvartate  
tailodakādibhede tat pratyakṣam pratibimbake // 99  
The Vrtti: dr̥ṣtam abhivyañgyānām abhivyañjabhedānuvidhānam / tad yathā / nimneśv  
ādarśatalādisu mukhapratibimbam unnatam dr̥śyate, unnatesu nimnam, khadge dīrgham,  
priyaṅgutaile śyāmam cīnaśastrayavanakācādisv ādarśapramānabhedānupātū parimāno  
bhedavikalpah / saṃkhyābhedo' pi ādarśabhede jalataraṅgabhede ca dr̥śyate sūryādi-  
pratibimbānām /  
Dīp.: yathādarśamandalādisu pratibimbāni dīrghāni parimandalāni mahānti anyāni ca  
dr̥śyante, evaṃ śabdā api nādabhedena bhidyante / yathā salile taraṅgabhedena ekaś  
candro 'neka upalabhyate / pradīpabhedāc ca chāyā bhidyate / ādarśabhedāc ca pratibim-  
babhedah / tasmān niyatanādābhivyañgyā nādavrddhīrāsānuvidhāyino vyaktiśabdā api  
nityāḥ (I.17.11-14)*

V. Both the *Vākyap.* and the *Dīp.* mention the different views held by different linguists as regards what exactly constitutes the Sphota. They are:

- (1) The inner or mental word, the inner Word-principle which constitutes the reality of every being (*buddhisthaḥ śabdah*,<sup>7</sup> *antahśabdatattvam*)<sup>8</sup>
- (2) The universal or the class notion (*jātiḥ*, *ākṛtiḥ*)<sup>9</sup>
- (3) A single word entity (*vyakti*)<sup>10</sup>
- (4) The sound (i.e. the first sound) produced by the activity of the speech organs (*yaḥ samyogavibhāgābhyāṃ karaṇair upajanyate / sa sphotah Vākyap. I. 102*)<sup>11</sup>

The first three make the sphota *nitya* while according to the last view it is *anitya*, since it is produced (and not just revealed) (*anityapakṣe sthānakaranaprāptivibhāgahetukah prathamābhinirvṛtto yaḥ śabdah sa sphotah ity ucyate*, the Vṛtti on *Vākyap. I.102*).<sup>12</sup>

- 7 *aranīstham yathā jyotiḥ prakāśāntarakāraṇam / tadvac chabdo 'pi buddhisthaḥ śrutinām kāraṇam pṛthak // Vākyap. I.46 kaś cid anyah akraṃah śabdātmā buddhistho vigāhate / tasmād arthapratipattiḥ / (Dīp. I.3.13-14)*
- 8 *Yad antahśabdatattvam tu nādair ekam prakāśitam / tad āhur apare śabdāṃ ... // Vākyap. II.30*  
See also 12 below.
- 9 *anekavyaktyabhivyaṅgyā jātiḥ sphota itī smṛtā / kaiś cid vyaktaya evāsyā dhvanitvena prakāśitāḥ // Vākyap. I.93*  
On this the Vṛtti: *ākṛtinityatvāc chabdanityatvam ācaksānāḥ ... sphoṭaśabdavācyāṃ ... śabdākṛtim ācaksate /*  
For the *Dīp.* (I.3.13-14 and 17-18) see Note 1 above.
- 10 *avikārasya śabdasya nimittair vikṛto dhvaniḥ / upalabdḥau nimittatvam upayāti prakāśavai // Vākyap. I.94*  
On this the Vṛtti: *anye tv ākṛtivyaktivyavahāraprakriyāvaidharmyād ekam eva śabdatattvam nityam ... abhivyaṅyata ity āhuh /*  
*Dīp.* (I.17.9ff.): *yasyāpi śabdavyaktiḥ tasyāpi nityaḥ śabdah / sa tu nādābhivyaṅgyaḥ / ... niyatanādābhivyaṅgyā nādvṛddhiḥrāsānuvidhāyino vyaktiśabdā api nityāḥ /*
- 11 *atha vā kāryavad buddhim kṛtvā idam ucyate [viz. "ubhayataḥ ... bhavati" Mbh.] / tatra kāryapakṣe sphoṭa eva samyogāt, vibhāgāt, samyogavibhāgābhyāṃ vā niṣpadyate / yat tv anuranānam tac chabdata eva / tena ya evāsau sphotasya niṣpādakah karaṇasya vyāpāras tāvata evāśrayanam / Dīp. II.25.19-21.*
- 11a *ya ete śabdāḥ kim te śabdākṛtayah āhosvid śabdavyaktayah itī ... niyatanādābhivyaṅgyāḥ vyaktiśabdā api nityāḥ / Dīp. I.17.3-14*
- 12 Cf. also *athāyam āntaro jñātā sūkṣmavāgātmanā sthitah / vyaktaye svasya rūpasya śabdatvena vivartate // [I.113]*  
Similarly,  
*api prayoktur ātmānam śabdāṃ antar vyavasthitam / prāhur mahāntam vṛśabham yena sāyujyam isyate // I.122*

## VI. Observations:

- (1) It must have been seen that there is agreement on most of the points concerning the Sphoṭa in both the texts.
- (2) Still there are some differences on a few minor points and in the matter of preferences. Thus, (i) the *Dīp.* speaks (foot note (11a)) of the *śabdavyaktayah* (in plural). The *Vākyap.* (I.94) is not very clear on this point. The *Vṛtti* on it speaks of *ekam eva śabdātattvam* (a single Word-principle) manifested by sounds while on *Vākyap.* I.23 it speaks of *nityām śabdavyaktim*. Vṛṣabha commenting on the stanza I. 94 introduces it thus: *apare tv ākāśagata ekaḥ sphoṭavarna ity āhuh - avikā-rasya iti*.<sup>13</sup> Though the author of the *Vṛtti* and Vṛṣabha speak differently about this *Vyaktisphoṭa* as being either the (inner) *śabdātattva* or external Sphoṭa-phoneme, both of them take it as a single entity which appears in the forms of myriads of individual utterances. The *Dīp.* however seems to hold that for every word there is a different *vyakti-sphoṭa* (*ya ete śabdāḥ kim te śabdākṛtaya āhosvit śabdavyaktaya iti* I. 17.3)
  - (ii) There is a difference of preferences as regards the *buddhistha śabda* vs. *ākṛti/vyakti*. The way the topic of Sphoṭa is introduced in the *Vākyap.* beginning with the *buddhistha śabda* (I.46) makes it almost certain that that is the author's own view. The *ākṛti* and the *vyakti* views, on the other hand, are mentioned (I.93,94) casually at the end and dismissed summarily. Exactly opposite is the treatment in the *Dīp.* where the *buddhistha śabda* is casually mentioned only once (I.3.14) and, there too, this view is indifferently ascribed to *kecit!* - while the *ākṛti* and the *vyakti* views are explained in detail (I.3.15 ff; I.17.2 ff; II. 25.21 ff).
- (3) How is this difference in the preference to be explained? One explanation could be that in the *Dīp.* Bhartrhari was commenting on the *Mbh.* Now, the *Mbh.* has in all probability used the word Sphoṭa only in a phonetic context. Further, only two views, *ākṛti* and *vyakti*, are mentioned in this context in the *Mbh.* (*Pratyāhārāhnikā, Mbh. on Vārttikas*

13 Nāgeśa - *sarvadhvanibhir ekasya sphoṭasyaiva tattadrūpena abhivyañjanāt* / (the Pradīpa: *ekaivākāravaktiḥ* on the Vār. *ekatvād akārasya siddham* / [pratyāhārāhnikā])

5 - 15. Vol. I. p. 16-18). That may be the reason why Bhartrhari gives prominence to these views in the *Dīp*. In the *Vākyap*. on the other hand he is free to give full scope to his own views. That is why he gives prominence to the *buddhistha śabda* there. It is also probable that, if he wrote *Dīp*. first and the *Vākyap*. afterwards, his own views may have been crystalised in course of time and so he stated the *buddhistha śabda* view prominently in the *Vākyap*. He may have mentioned the *ākṛti* and the *vyakti* views briefly, because he did not want to do any injustice to them by dropping them altogether.

Friends, as I said in the beginning, I do not claim to have made any substantial contribution to the subject under study. Still I may say this much:

- (1) The statements in the two works regarding different aspects of Sphoṭa are near-identical (and may indicate a common authorship, if, indeed, a proof of the identity of the authors of the two works was needed), and
- (2) the difference between the preferences as regards the exact nature of Sphoṭa (*ākṛti* / *vyakti* vs. *buddhistha śabda*) may indicate that initially Bhartrhari was under the influence of Patañjali but in the *Vākyap*., free from that influence, he has given his own view prominently.