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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 *Gaṇaratnamahodadhi*, who says: *bhartrharir vākyapadīyaprakīrṇakayoḥ kartā mahābhāṣyatripādīyā 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 Sphoṭa:  
According to both the Vākyap. and the Dīp. -
- (1) The sounds are sequential (*kramajanman*), while the Sphoṭa is without any sequence (*akrama*).<sup>2</sup>
  - (2) The sounds are transitory (*anitya*), while the Sphoṭa is permanent (*nitya*).
  - (3) The sounds are transitory because they are produced (*karanebhyo vivrttena dhvaninā* - Vākyap. I. 47), while the Sphoṭa 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 Sphoṭa is called *vyañgya* 'manifested' (*pratyekam vyañjakā bhinnā varṇavākyapadeṣu ye* I.88).<sup>4</sup>

instance says: *varṇānām pratyekam vācakatve dvitīyādivarnoccāranānarthakyaprasaṅgāt, ānarthakye tu pratyekam utpattipakṣe yaugapadyenotpattyabhāvāt, abhivyaktipakṣe tu kramenaivābhivyaktyā samudāyābhāvāt, ekasmṛtyupārūdhānām vācakatve sarah rasah ityā-dāv arthapratipattyaviśeṣaprasaṅgāt tadvyatiriktaḥ sphoṭo nādābhivyāṅgyo vācako vistarena vākyapadīye vyavasthāpitah* [on the Mbh. 1.1.10.11: *yenoccāritena sāśnālāṅgūlavaiṣāninām 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 Sphoṭa theory. For the meaningfulness of the Sphoṭa, see *aparo'rthe prayujyate* Vākyap. I.44. *jāter arthasya pratipattih / etac ca arthasvarūpam / sphoṭo '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 vrksaśabdatvākṛter akramāyā abhivyaktihetavo bhavanti - tadā vrksaśabdatvād arthapratipattih / sā ca nityā / - tatra caitad uktam "ubhayataḥ sphoṭamātram 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 jātiḥ sphoṭa iti smṛtā* Vākyap. I.93 *yasyāpi śabdavyaktih tasyāpi nityah śabdah / sa tu nādābhivyāṅgyah* Dīp. I.17.9 *kramajanmānah - vrksaśabdatvākṛter akramāyā abhivyaktihetavah* (Dīp. I.17.4, 5)

4 Also: *vyañjakadhvanibhedānupātena* Vṛtti on Vākyap. I.46; *nādaḥ sphoṭam avadyotayati* Vṛtti on Vākyap. I.48; *dhvaniprakāśite śabde* Vākyap. I.83.

- III. Both the *Vākyap.* 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 *Vākyap.* 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 śabdasyaivubhayasya vā /  
kriyate dhvanibhir vādās trayo 'bhivvyaktivādinām // Vākyap. I.78  
indriyasyaiva samskārah samādhānāñjanādibhih /  
viśayasya tu samskāras tadgandhapratipattaye // I.79  
cakṣusah prāpyakāritve tejasā tu dvayor api  
viśayendriyayor istah samskārah sa kramo dhvaneh // I.80  
sa ca nādah śrotasyānūgrahe vartate / tadanugrhitam śrotram śabdopalabdhau samartham  
bhavati / yathāksnor añjanam ity eke / apare śabdasyaiva / yathā prokṣaṇam prthivyā eva  
na ghrāṇasya / ubhayor ity apare / Dīp. I.17.15-17.*
- 6 *nādasya kramajanmatvān na pūrvo na paraś ca sah /  
akramah kramarūpena bhedaṁ iva jāyate // Vākyap. I.48  
The Vrtti on this: asau [sphoṭah] ekatvam anatikrāman samsargiṇo nādasya bhedarūpam  
upasaṁgrhnāti / (sequentialness)  
pratibimbam yathānyatra sthitam toyakriyāvaśāt /  
tatpravrttim ivānveti sa dharmah sphoṭanādayoh // 49 (number)  
sphoṭasyābhinnakālasya dhvanikālānupātinaḥ /  
grahanopādhibhedena vrttibhedam pracakṣate // 75 (speed of utterance)  
svabhāvabhedān nityatve hrasvaḍīrghapluṭiādiṣu /  
prākṛtasya dhvaneḥ kālah śabdasyety upacaryate // 76 (length of vowels)  
On this, Vrsabha: dhvanisphoṭayor vibhāgāparicchedād dhvanikṛtam bhedam sphoṭe  
paśyanti.  
śabdasyordhvam abhivyakter vrttibhedam tu vaikṛtāḥ /  
dhvanayah samupohante sphoṭātmā tair na bhidyate // 77  
prakāśakānām bhedāṁś ca prakāśyo 'rtho 'nuvartate  
tailodakādibhede tat pratyakṣam pratibimbake // 99  
The Vrtti: dr̥ṣṭam abhivyaṅgyānām abhivyañjabhedānuvidhānam / tad yathā / nimneṣv  
ādarśatalādiṣu mukhapratibimbam unnatam dr̥śyate, unnateṣu nimnam, khadge dīrgham,  
priyaṅgutaile śyāmam cīnaśastrayavanakācādiṣv ādarśapramāṇabhedānupātī parimāno  
bhedaṁvikalpah / saṁkhyābhedo' pi ādarśabhede jalataraṅgabhedo ca dr̥śyate sūryādi-  
pratibimbānām /  
Dīp.: yathādarśamandalādiṣu pratibimbāni dīrghāni parimandalāni mahānti anyāni ca  
dr̥śyante, evaṁ śabdā api nāḍabhedena bhidyante / yathā salile taraṅgabhedena ekaś  
candro 'neka upalabhyate / pradīpabhedāc ca chāyā bhidyate / ādarśabhedāc ca pratibim-  
babhedah / tasmān niyatanādābhivyaṅgyā nāḍavṛddhihrāsānuvidhāyino 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> *antaḥśabdatattvam*)<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 samyogavibhāgābhyām karaṇair upajanyate / sa sphotaḥ* *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 sphotaḥ ity ucyate*, the Vṛtti on *Vākyap.* I.102).<sup>12</sup>

- 7 *aranīstham yathā jyotiḥ prakāśāntarakāraṇam / tadvac chabdo 'pi buddhisthaḥ śrutinām kāraṇam prthak* // *Vākyap.* I.46  
*kaś cid anyah akramah śabdātmā buddhistho vigāhate / tasmād arthapratipattiḥ /* (*Dīp.* I.3.13-14)
- 8 *Yad antaḥśabdatattvam tu nādair ekam prakāśitam / tad āhur apare śabdān ...* // *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 ... sphotaśabdavācyām ... 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 ... abhivyaṅgyata ity āhuḥ /*  
*Dīp.* (I.17.9ff.): *yasyāpi śabdavyaktiḥ tasyāpi nityaḥ śabdah / sa tu nādābhivyaṅgyaḥ / ... niyatanādābhivyaṅgyā nādavṛddhihrāsānuvidhāyino vyaktiśabdā api nityāḥ /*
- 11 *atha vā kāryavad buddhim kṛtvā idam ucyate* [viz. "ubhayataḥ ... bhavati" Mbh.] / *tatra kāryapakṣe sphota eva samyogāt, vibhāgāt, samyogavibhāgābhyām 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 śabdān 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 *śabdavyaktayaḥ* (in plural). The *Vākyap.* (I.94) is not very clear on this point. The *Vṛtti* on it speaks of *ekam eva śabdatattvam* (a single Word-principle) manifested by sounds while on *Vākyap.* I.23 it speaks of *nityāṁ śabdavyaktim*. Vṛṣabha commenting on the stanza I. 94 introduces it thus: *apare tv ākāśagata ekaḥ sphoṭavarṇa ity āhuḥ - avikā-rasya iti*.<sup>13</sup> Though the author of the *Vṛtti* and Vṛṣabha speak differently about this *Vyaktisphoṭa* as being either the (inner) *śabdatattva* 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 śabdākr̥taya 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.* Bhartṛhari 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 tattadrūpeṇa abhivyañjanāt* / (the Pradīpa: *ekaivākāravyaktiḥ* on the Vār. *ekatvād akāśasya 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.