

# Two literary conventions of classical India

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# TWO LITERARY CONVENTIONS OF CLASSICAL INDIA<sup>1</sup>

Johannes Bronkhorst

## I

The centuries around the middle of the first millennium of the Common Era are extraordinarily important for the study of Indian culture. These centuries saw, among other things, the rule of the Guptas over large parts of India, and it is very likely that the peace and stability imposed by these rulers, along with their tolerance and encouragement, gave rise to a cultural renaissance. In the realm of literature, a large number of texts which we now consider classical attained their definite forms in this period. It is true that our knowledge of the chronology of Indian literature is very incomplete, yet it is not impossible that, for example, the great epic of India, the Mahābhārata, reached in these centuries the form which has been brought to light in the critical edition of this text.<sup>2</sup> It appears that this was a time of collecting and codifying. The Jaina canon of the Śvetāmbaras was collected in this period. The classical texts of several schools of philosophy date from this period, such as the Nyāya Bhāṣya of the Naiyāyikas, and the Padārthadharmasamgraha, or Praśastapādabhāṣya, of the Vaiśeṣikas. The Sāṃkhya system found its classic exposition in the Sāṃkhya Kārikā, the Yoga in the Yoga Bhāṣya. The Mīmāṃsakas codified their system in the Śābara Bhāṣya, and Sanskrit grammar produced its most important, and perhaps first, commentary on the Mahābhāṣya, by Bharṭṛhari. But also other kinds of works have been brought in connection with the Gupta period, such as the Kāma Sūtra, the Artha Śāstra, and the Manu Smṛti. Also the non-Brahmanical religions were productive. I may mention here only a few of their literary productions: the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya of the Śvetāmbara Jains, and the Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya of the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika Buddhists have remained classic expositions of these sects.

- 1 This is the slightly modified text of a lecture given on a few occasions both inside and outside Switzerland, most recently in Poona (India). It briefly discusses some of the issues which have engaged the attention of the author for some time, and are likely to occupy him in the future. Apart from presenting some results of earlier research, it raises a number of questions, not all of which may allow of a definite answer at present.
- 2 G. Bühler – in Bühler and Kirste, 1892 – has collected evidence in support of the view that the Mahābhārata had reached its present form in about the fifth century C.E.

This enumeration is of course not complete. Nor do I wish to give a complete survey of the literature of this period. What I wish to emphasize is that for the study of pre-Gupta India we are often to a large extent dependent upon texts which reached their definite form in the centuries now under consideration.

The relationship between these texts and their predecessors can be of various types. In the case of a text like the Mahābhārata it is clear that this definite form is really a collection of parts many of which may be considerably older than the collected form. The same is true of the Manu Smṛti, if indeed this text reached its classical form in the middle centuries of the first millennium. It seems likely that the Manu Smṛti had predecessors, at least one of which was a Dharma text of the Mānava school of the Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā. It is true that there have been different opinions regarding the question whether the predecessor of the Manu Smṛti was written in prose or in verse. But both the main exponents of these two views - viz., Bühler and P.V. Kane - agreed that there was a predecessor of this text, even though they could not adduce positive evidence to support this. In the meantime, however, it has become almost certain that Bharṛhari, who was himself a Mānava, was still acquainted with the, or a, Dharma text of that school, and that he identified a verse line as belonging to it.<sup>3</sup> A collection whose date is rather precisely known is the Jaina Svetāmbara canon. The Śvetāmbaras themselves believe that its final redaction took place 980 or 993 years after the death of Mahāvīra, i.e., in 453 or 466 C.E.<sup>4</sup>

Not all texts from the period under consideration are collections or reeditions of earlier works. Apart from the really original works, which will not be dealt with in this lecture, there are a great many commentaries amongst them. Most commonly these are commentaries on earlier sūtras or verses, in both cases on works which express themselves briefly and concisely. From among the works enumerated above we may mention the Nyāya Bhāṣya which comments on the Nyāya sūtras, the Yoga Bhāṣya which explains the Yoga sūtras, and the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya which is a commentary on the Tattvārtha sūtras. The Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya comments not on sūtras, but on verses. It however treats these verses as sūtras by cutting them into pieces; it even refers to these pieces as sūtras. The verses of the first two chapters of Bharṛhari's Vākyapadīya are

3 Bronkhorst, 1985.

4 Schubring, 1962: 78; Jaini, 1979: 51-52.

similarly commented upon in a commentary, the *Vṛtti*, which unfortunately has been preserved only partially.

In this lecture I wish to concentrate on the relationship between the various commentaries and the *sūtras* or verses contained in them. The importance of a correct understanding of this relationship is beyond question. The *sūtras* in particular are not infrequently the earliest expressions of certain systems of thought which we have, and the *Bhāṣyas* are so to say the glasses through which we have to look at them.

## II

*Bhāṣyas* enclose *sūtras*. Together they form a whole which reads like a single work in prose that contains short nominal phrases, the *sūtras*. This single whole might erroneously be considered the work of one single author. What is remarkable is that some authors of *Bhāṣyas* appear to have gone out of their way to create this impression that *sūtras* and *Bhāṣya* together are indeed one whole. The following cases illustrate this:

(i) The *Yoga Bhāṣya* is ascribed by the later tradition to a mythical person called *Vyāsa*, and the *sūtras* to *Patañjali*. The earlier tradition knows nothing of *Vyāsa*, and the colophon of the *Bhāṣya* calls the whole work – *sūtras* and *Bhāṣya* – not *Yoga Bhāṣya* but *Yogaśāstra*, and refers to but one single author, *Patañjali*.<sup>5</sup> The *Bhāṣya* never mentions any variant readings of *sūtras*, and what is more, where it refers to a *sūtra* it uses the first person, as if the *sūtras* were composed by the author of the *Bhāṣya*.<sup>6</sup> Yet there can be no doubt that they, or most of them, were not. Some *sūtras* have not been correctly interpreted by the *Bhāṣya*, which would be impossible if the *Bhāṣyakāra* had been their author. This is not the occasion to deal in detail with the *sūtras* which have been misinterpreted in the *Yoga Bhāṣya*, the more so since I have dedicated an article to this question.<sup>7</sup> I find it hard, however, to resist the temptation to briefly mention one example. *Yoga sūtra* 1.25 reads:

*tatra niratiśayaṃ sarvajñabījam*

5 Bronkhorst, 1985a: 203 f.

6 Bronkhorst, 1985b: 170.

7 Bronkhorst, 1985a.



The preceding sūtra deals with God (*īśvara*), which is a special kind of self. The present sūtra can therefore be translated:

In Him is the unsurpassed germ of the omniscient one.

This is not however the way the Yoga Bhāṣya interprets this sūtra. I shall not quote the Sanskrit text, but merely observe that according to this Bhāṣya the present sūtra contains an inference which supposedly shows that there must be an omniscient one. In reality this sūtra speaks about Kapila, who is an incarnation of the special self which is God, as can be proved in various ways.

(ii) As said already, it is not now possible to go deeper into this and other related questions. Instead we turn to another example of a text which, though commentary, treats itself and the sūtras enclosed in it as one indivisible whole. This text is the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya. As you may know, the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya is accepted as an authoritative work by the Śvetāmbara Jainas, who hold moreover that its author, Umāsvāti, was also the author of the Tattvārtha sūtras contained in it. This view is contested by the Digambara Jainas, who agree with the contents of the sūtras but not with those of the Bhāṣya.

Like the Yoga Bhāṣya, the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya never mentions variant readings of sūtras; and references to the sūtras often use the first person. Yet other indications leave no doubt that the sūtras had a different author. Sūtras and Bhāṣya differ on certain points of doctrine, and their choice of words differs; certain sūtras, moreover, are incorrectly interpreted in the Bhāṣya. Again it is not possible to go into details, which have been discussed elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

(iii) After discussing a Brahmanical and a Jaina work, our third example should be a Buddhist text. The Madhyāntavibhāga Śāstra of Vasubandhu is a combination of verses, the kārikās, and prose, the Bhāṣya. Unlike the Yoga Bhāṣya and the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya, the Madhyāntavibhāga Bhāṣya refers to the verses contained in it in the third person, so that one is not misled into thinking that both verses and Bhāṣya have one author. What is more, the initial verse of the Bhāṣya provides some information about the author of the verse text. It reads:

8 Bronkhorst, 1985b.

*śāstrasyāsyā pranētāram abhyarhya sugatātmajam/  
vaktāram cāsmadādibhyo yatisye 'rthavivecane//*

Having honoured the author/promulgator of this *śāstra* and him who taught it to/expressed it for me and others, I shall make an effort to explain its meaning.

The commentator Sthiramati is of the opinion that the author of the verse text is Bodhisattva Maitreya, its teacher Asaṅga; but this is not stated in the verse, nor indeed anywhere else in the Madhyāntavibhāga Śāstra. The verse can be interpreted differently and does not help to determine the author of the verse text. The only information regarding authorship occurs at the end of the Bhāṣya and says that Vasubandhu is the author.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the verse text came to be ascribed to Maitreya reminds us of the Yoga Sūtra, which came to be ascribed to an equally legendary person, Vyāsa, probably for the same reason that no indications regarding its true authorship are provided.

For our present purposes it is particularly interesting to see that verses and Bhāṣya occasionally join syntactically. Verse 1.14c, for example, is embedded in a Bhāṣya sentence, as follows (MAVŚ p. 36):

*yaś cāsau tadabhāvasvabhāvaḥ sa na bhāvo nāpi cābhāvaḥ*

Another instance is verse 1.17cd (p. 40):

*yadi samalā bhūtvā nirmalā bhavati katharṁ vikāradharminītvād anityā na bhavati/  
yasmād asyā abdhātukanakākāśaśuddhivac chuddhir isyate āgantukamalāpagamāt na  
tu tasyāḥ svabhāvānyatvarṁ bhavati/*

Before we leave this text an observation may be made regarding its name. The colophons call it Madhyāntavibhāga-kārikā-bhāṣya or Madhyāntavibhāga-śāstra. The commentator Sthiramati, however, speaks about the Madhyāntavibhāga-sūtra-bhāṣya (p. 3). It seems obvious that the kārikās and their parts are here referred to as sūtras, as we saw was the case in the Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya.

(iv) Our fourth and final example is the Artha Śāstra, supposedly written by Kauṭilya. This work too consists of verses and prose. Hartmut Scharfe (1968) has shown that at least two persons left their traces in the composition of this work, one of whom, the earlier one, wrote in verse, the other one in prose. Scharfe adduces several arguments in support of this,

9 MAVŚ p. 192: *ḥṛtir ācāryabhadantavasubandhoḥ*

among them the fact that the contents of the verses do not always agree with those of the prose. The verse text, moreover, calls its author Kauṭilya in the very beginning and states that he tore away the land of the Nandas at the very end, while the prose text calls itself a compilation in the first line and its author Viṣṇugupta in the last.<sup>10</sup>

The exact relationship between the portions of Kauṭilya and those of Viṣṇugupta is not clear. The concluding lines of the text state that Viṣṇugupta composed both Sūtra and Bhāṣya. What exactly is meant is not clear. It seems likely that here too the verses and parts of verses adopted in the prose are referred to as sūtras. This is what happened in the case of the Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya, while Sthiramati referred to the verses of the Madhyāntavibhāga Śāstra as sūtras.

The concluding lines of Viṣṇugupta are interesting in this context. They form a verse in *āryā* metre and read:

*dr̥stvā vipratipattim bahudhā śāstresu bhāṣyakārānām/  
svayam eva viṣṇuguptas cakāra sūtram ca bhāṣyam ca//*

The second line means, of course, that Viṣṇugupta himself made Sūtra and Bhāṣya, which does not exclude the possibility that he borrowed extensively from earlier authors, as we shall see. The first line can be interpreted in different ways. *Vipratipatti* means basically 'opposition' or 'contradiction'. The line may therefore speak of the opposition of the Bhāṣyakāras against the Sūtra, or against each other. In the first case it concerns an incorrect interpretation of the Sūtra, in the second a difference of opinion among themselves. Another and at least as important difficulty lies in the word *śāstresu*. Does this word refer to the books, or sciences, on which the Bhāṣyakāras wrote their Bhāṣyas? Another interpretation is possible. The whole line may be understood to speak about the opposition of the Bhāṣyakāras in the Śāstras.<sup>11</sup> This would mean that the Bhāṣyakāras were at the same time the writers of Śāstras. This is less peculiar than it seems. Viṣṇugupta describes himself in the same verse as the author of a Bhāṣya, but he is also the author of a Śāstra, the Artha Śāstra. A parallel case is constituted by the Yoga Bhāṣya, which calls itself - including the sūtras contained in it - Yoga Śāstra. And the names Madhyāntavibhāga-kārikā Bhāṣya, Madhyāntavibhāga-sūtra Bhāṣya and

10 Scharfe, 1968: 80-81.

11 Falk (1986: 59, 58 n. 12) has a third interpretation: "Viṣṇugupta sah häufig einen Widerspruch in den Lehren der Kommentar-Verfasser...".

Madhyāntavibhāga Śāstra are used side by side, as we have seen. A Śāstra is in these cases a work which combines sūtras (or kārīkās) and Bhāṣya, a work which brings a number of elements together and unites them into one. This is exactly what Viṣṇugupta's Artha Śāstra says in its first line:

*... yāvanty arthaśāstrāṇi pūrvācāryaiḥ prasthāpitāni prāyaśas tāni samhrtyaikam idam arthaśāstram kṛtam*

This single (*eka*) [work called] Artha Śāstra has mainly been made by compiling all the Artha Śāstras produced by earlier teachers.

This is not the place to study how many authors have contributed to the Artha Śāstra as we now know it. It is clear that the prose sections may contain parts which derive from various commentators preceding Viṣṇugupta. The statistical investigations of Th.R. Trautmann (1971) do indeed support multiple authorship.<sup>12</sup>

These four examples - the Yoga Śāstra, the Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya, the Madhyāntavibhāga Śāstra and the Artha Śāstra - must suffice to show that there was a tendency in the period which we consider to unite sūtras and Bhāṣya into one indivisible whole, which retained no traces of the original separateness, and authorship, of the enclosed sūtras.

### III

Besides this tendency - perhaps we should say literary convention - there is a second one to which I would like to draw your attention. It finds expression in what I will call the Vārttika style. In order to understand this style and its probable origin we must turn to the grammatical literature of ancient India.

I do not need to remind you that among the sciences of India grammar is one of the oldest and most important. Its influence on other fields of knowledge was consequently great. It has even been claimed that the grammar of Pāṇini played in India a role similar to that of Euclid's geometry in Europe. Both were, in their respective contexts, methodological guidelines for science and philosophy.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most important texts of Pāṇinian grammar is the Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya, or simply Mahābhāṣya, attributed to Patañjali

12 See also Falk, 1986, esp. p. 69.

13 Staal, 1965.

(who is not the same as the Patañjali who composed the Yoga Sūtra or Yoga Bhāṣya). The Mahābhāṣya is an ancient text, and may indeed date back to the second century preceding the Common Era. This Mahābhāṣya contains within itself nominal phrases which are called 'vārttikas'. The researches of Franz Kielhorn in the last century have shown that most of these vārttikas derive from an author different from Patañjali, who was called Kātyāyana.<sup>14</sup> Kielhorn was not the first to recognize this fact. To a great extent he followed the Sanskrit commentators on the Mahābhāṣya, primarily Kaiyaṭa, whose work he completed by trying to identify each and every vārttika.

The point to which I wish to draw your attention is that there is reason to think that these nominal phrases called vārttikas have not always been known to derive from a different author named Kātyāyana. In works belonging to the centuries which engage our attention the word vārttika is used to designate portions of the Mahābhāṣya which are far more than just the nominal phrases; sometimes the portions called vārttika do not even contain such nominal phrases. The word vārttika is used in this peculiar way in the Yuktidīpikā - the most extensive commentary on the Sāṃkhya Kārikā - and, more frequently and more importantly, in Bhartrhari's commentary on the Mahābhāṣya.

Once again it is not possible, within the time reserved for this lecture, to discuss these points in detail. Those of you who wish to pursue this question may refer to an article which has recently been published in the Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens (Bronkhorst, 1990). The relevant passages strongly suggest that around the middle of the first millennium the nominal phrases which we know by the name vārttikas were not recognized as the work of a different author.

This observation finds further and unsuspected support in the testimony of the Chinese monk I-ching, who visited India in the seventh century. I-ching's remarks about Sanskrit grammatical literature have always seemed rather problematic. A detailed study by John Brough has led him to conclude that I-ching could not distinguish between vārttikas and Bhāṣya.<sup>15</sup> What Brough did not know, and could not know, is that I-ching was apparently not the only one who was not aware of this distinction. It seems possible that no one at that time was aware of it.

14 Kielhorn, 1876.

15 Brough, 1973: 257.



Let me make it clear that the nominal phrases which we call *vārttikas* had not escaped the attention of the grammarians of the middle centuries of the first millennium. They even had a separate name for them: *vākyas*. My point is that they do not seem to have been considered as having an own author in many cases. The evidence is complicated and not completely satisfactory. The one fact which seems to stand out clearly, however, is that the word *vārttika* was used to cover more than just *vākyas*; they covered *vākyas* along with the accompanying *Bhāṣya*-portion, or even portions of the *Bhāṣya* that are without *vākyas* altogether.

Whether or not I have been able to convince you that the *vārttikas* in the *Mahābhāṣya* were not looked upon as deriving from a different author, a number of works from the period which we are now studying have the appearance of being imitations of the *Mahābhāṣya* considered in this way. Note that the *Mahābhāṣya*, once the *vārttikas* are no longer looked upon as the work of someone else, becomes a work characterized by a remarkable style, a style in which ordinary prose passages are frequently interrupted by short nominal phrases - *vākyas* - which are subsequently explained. This remarkable style - which we may call 'Vārttika style' - was noticed, and more than that, it was imitated as well. Several works of the middle of the first millennium of the Common Era imitate this style, and even call themselves *Vārttikas*. An example is the *Tattvārtha Vārttika* of *Akalaṅka*, which reads like the *Mahābhāṣya* including *Kātyāyana's vārttikas*. An other example is the *Rāja Vārttika* alias *Yuktidīpikā*, which I just mentioned. Other works again imitate the *Vārttika* style, but do not call themselves *Vārttika*. Perhaps the best known example is the *Nyāya Bhāṣya*, in which this style was already noticed by *Ernst Windisch* in 1888.

#### IV

These, then, are the two literary conventions which I wanted to bring to your notice. The first one is the tendency in commentaries, usually *Bhāṣyas*, to swallow up the *sūtras*, or verses, on which they comment, so that together they come to look like one single work: I shall use the expression 'Bhāṣya style' to refer to it; note however that this *Bhāṣya* style does not necessarily occur in all *Bhāṣyas*. The second is the tendency to write in what I have called the 'Vārttika style': a style in which ordinary prose and short nominal phrases alternate. Again I do not claim that this style is found in all works that call themselves *Vārttika*.



I have no doubt that many of you will have reservations about the existence of these two conventions, and I cannot blame you for it. It is not possible within the time allotted for this lecture to present all the supporting evidence. This evidence has been published in a few articles, and those of you who are interested may refer to those. During the remainder of this lecture I shall start from the assumption that these two literary conventions are a fact for the period under consideration, and I shall deal with some of the questions which arise in connection with these. Some of these questions may be answerable; others may remain unanswered.

(i) I begin with two texts the single or plural authorship of which has been debated for a while. These are the *Vākyapadīya* and the commentary on its first two books often referred to as the *Vṛtti*. All traditional authors have accepted that both these texts were written by Bhartr̥hari. Doubts about this have not been raised until modern times.

Let us look at the arguments which supposedly support the view that *Vākyapadīya* and *Vṛtti* have one single author. I quote Cardona (1976: 297):

The major arguments for concluding that the *Vṛtti* was composed by Bhartr̥hari himself are as follows. The *Vṛtti* does not record variant readings of verses, but later commentators do. Later authors consider the verses and *Vṛtti* to form a single work. Further, there are striking similarities in thought and expression between the *Tripādī* (this is the name Cardona uses for Bhartr̥hari's commentary on the *Mahābhāṣya*) and the *Vṛtti*.

The author who has most vigorously argued that verses and *Vṛtti* have one single author, is Ashok Aklujkar (1972). Aklujkar recognizes that the argument of similarity between the commentary on the *Mahābhāṣya* and the *Vṛtti* does not carry much weight. He however emphasizes the fact that *Vṛtti* and verses were intended to be read consecutively, and illustrates this with the help of a number of examples.

All this boils down to the following three points:

- (a) The *Vṛtti* does not record variant readings of verses.
- (b) *Vṛtti* and verses are meant to be read consecutively, they form one whole.
- (c) Later authors look upon verses plus *Vṛtti* as one whole.

It will be clear that these three points do no more than exemplify the *Bhāṣya* style which we discussed in the beginning of this lecture, and which occurs in a number of other works, as we have seen. These three points cannot therefore be used as evidence to show that verses and *Vṛtti* had

one single author. The fact that the later tradition is unanimous in ascribing the Vṛtti to the author of the verses carries as little weight as the tradition among the Śvetāmbara Jainas that Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya and Tattvārtha Sūtra have one single author.

There are, on the other hand, a number of indications which show that verses and Vṛtti have **different** authors. I mention the most important ones:<sup>16</sup>

(a) In a few cases the Vṛtti gives two alternative explanations of one verse.<sup>17</sup>

(b) On two occasions the Vṛtti quotes a *tatrabhavat*. Both the views ascribed to this *tatrabhavat* coincide with views expressed in the Vākyapadīya.<sup>18</sup>

(c) The concluding verses of the second kāṇḍa of the Vākyapadīya are not commented upon in the Vṛtti. This is reason to think that they are the concluding verses of the Vṛtti. And indeed, they contain the line

*praṇīto guruṇāsmākam ayam āgamasamgrahaḥ* (2.487 in Rau's critical edition).

This means, in Aklujkar's (1978) translation:

Our teacher composed this compendium of traditional knowledge.

The conclusion is inescapable that the author of the Vṛtti is different from the author of the verses.

(ii) It is known that the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra was once commented upon by a Vākyakāra and by a Bhāṣyakāra. This suggests that there was once a commentary in Vārttika style on the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra, containing both vākyas and Bhāṣya-portions. This possibility, in its turn, explains some otherwise obscure facts. I shall confine myself to one single example.

The Padārthadharmasaṅgraha contains some passages in Vārttika style which appear to be borrowings from another text. One of those passages fits so badly into its context that the commentators have great difficulty making sense of it all. This passage begins with the nominal phrase "No, because body, sense-organs and mind are not conscious" (*na, śarīrendriya-*

16 See Bronkhorst, 1988.

17 These have been discussed by K.A. Subramania Iyer in the Introduction of his English translation of the first chapter of the Vākyapadīya (1965: xxix-xxxi).

18 See Bronkhorst, 1988: 110 f.

*manasām ajñatvāt*).<sup>19</sup> However, the preceding lines contain nothing to which this nominal phrase could be a response. The following explanation of this nominal phrase, on the other hand, continues the preceding discussion in a satisfactory manner. It seems clear that Praśastapāda, the author of the Padārthadharmasaṅgraha, borrowed here a passage in Vārttika style from another work. About the nature of that other work there can be little doubt, for Praśastapāda is known to have written a commentary on the Vaiśeṣika Vākya-cum-Bhāṣya.<sup>20</sup>

(iii) The Nyāya Bhāṣya comments on the Nyāya sūtras. The first of these sūtras gives a brief survey of the topics to be dealt with, and most of the remaining sūtras fit well into this scheme. This is a reason to think that the Nyāya sūtras as a whole are no loose collection. Some few sūtras however, do not fit into the scheme. Sūtras 4.1.11-40, for example, look like an insertion, because they do not correspond to anything announced in the initial sūtras. But if these sūtras were inserted, the question is: who inserted them?

We have seen already that the Nyāya Bhāṣya is an example of a text which uses the Vārttika style. This means that the Nyāya Bhāṣya commented on nominal phrases – the sūtras –, and besides this contained nominal phrases – the vākyas which characterize the Vārttika style. It is clear that in such a situation confusion can easily arise. One possible answer to the question who inserted the additional Nyāya sūtras may therefore be: they were inadvertently taken over from the Bhāṣya.

I do not maintain that this is necessarily the right answer to this question. There are complications, which I have referred to in a published article (1985c). Yet it is clear that our awareness of the Vārttika style can influence the way we approach problems of this kind.

(iv) A similar situation presents itself in the commentary on Āryadeva's \*Śataka ascribed to Vasu. Karen Lang (1988) has studied this commentary and expressed the view that it exemplifies the Vārttika style. This, she argues, may have the following consequence. It has long been assumed that the \*Śataka cites four of the Nyāya sūtras. In reality, according to Lang, these sūtras may not be cited by the \*Śataka, but by Vasu's commentary. The confusion could arise owing to the Vārttika style of that

19 Pdhs p. 69 l. 10-11.

20 See Bronkhorst, forthcoming.

commentary. It is clear that Lang's thesis, if true, might have chronological consequences. In that case we cannot take it for granted anymore that Āryadeva knew these Nyāya sūtras.

(v) Several of the preceding examples dealt with the Vārttika style and its possible effects on the texts commented upon in this style. Our last example, like the first one, will deal with the Bhāṣya style. Tradition states that both the Abhidharmakośa - i.e. the verse text - and the Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya were composed by one and the same person, viz., Vasubandhu. I am not going to bore you with a detailed account of the controversy which has arisen regarding the reliability of the tradition of the life and works of Vasubandhu. This controversy mainly concerns the belief that Vasubandhu became a Mahāyānist later in life. No one seems to have seriously asked the question whether one and the same person wrote both Kośa and Bhāṣya. This is remarkable, for verses and commentary represent different points of view: the verses mainly the Vaibhāṣika, or Sarvāstivāda, position, the commentary the Sautrāntika position. The traditional account gives some kind of explanation for this, but one which on close inspection does not look very plausible. What is more, Kośa and Bhāṣya do not just represent Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika positions, as tradition would have it. If the Bhāṣya is to be believed, some of the verses express Sautrāntika views. And what is even more surprising, the Bhāṣya differs from the Kośa regarding the correct Vaibhāṣika position in a few cases.

An example is the Bhāṣya on Abhidh-k 3.2. This verse states that there are 17 'places' (*sthāna*) in the Rūpadhātu, viz., three 'stages' (*bhūmi*) in the first three Dhyānas, eight in the fourth.<sup>21</sup> The Bhāṣya specifies these stages, enumerating, among others, Brahmāpurohitas and Mahābrahmanas in the first Dhyāna. Then the Bhāṣya continues: "There are [only] 16 [places] according to the Kashmirians. As is well-known (*kila*), among the Brahmāpurohitas a higher place has been erected for the Mahābrahman, which is like a tower (? *parigana*), inhabited by [only] one ruler; this is not however another stage (*bhūmi*)."<sup>22</sup>

21 Abhidh-k 3.2: *ūrdhvaṃ saptaśasthāno rūpadhātuh prthak prthak/dhyānaṃ tribhūmikam tatra caturtham tv aṣṭabhūmikam//*

22 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 111 l. 26-27: *... sodaśeti kāśmīrāḥ/ brahmāpurohiteṣv eva kila sthānam utkrstataram mahābrahmanah parigana ivābhinirvrttam ekanāyakaṃ nā tu bhūmyantaram iti/*

There can be no doubt that the 'Kashmirians' here referred to are the Vaibhāṣikas of Kashmir, for their opinion is found in the Mahāvibhāṣā, after which the Vaibhāṣikas were named.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the 'Kashmirians' are a few times explicitly connected with the Prakaraṇa(-pāda), one of the canonical Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivādins.<sup>24</sup> And frequently the opinions ascribed to the 'Kashmirians' can be found in the Mahāvibhāṣā.<sup>25</sup>

A similar case is constituted by the Bhāṣya on Abhidh-k 1.10c. This quarter verse states that smell is of four kinds (*caturvidho gandhaḥ*). The Bhāṣya explains the four kinds of smell: good and bad smell which can be excessive or non-excessive.<sup>26</sup> Then the Bhāṣya continues: "But [smell is] threefold according to the Śāstra, [which says] 'Smell is good, bad, or indifferent'."<sup>27</sup> The quotation is from the Prakaraṇapāda,<sup>28</sup> a canonical text of the Sarvāstivādins. Here again, therefore, verses and Bhāṣya disagree as to what is the orthodox view of the Sarvāstivādins.

On one occasion the Bhāṣya points at an insufficiency in a verse and rectifies it. This happens under verse 2.50, which reads:

Coexisting [causes] (*sahabhū*) have one another as effects, such as the elements (*bhūta*), thought and the accompaniments of thought, the characteristics and what they characterize.<sup>29</sup>

This definition is not fully satisfactory, since the secondary characteristics (*anulakṣana*, i.e. *jātijāti* etc.; see 2.46a) have as coexisting cause the dharma which they accompany, but not vice versa. The Bhāṣya therefore completes the definition: "It must be added (*upasaṁkhyāavyam*) that even without mutuality a dharma is coexisting cause of its secondary characteristics, they not of it."<sup>30</sup>

The references in the Bhāṣya to the author of the verses do not allow us to draw any conclusions whatsoever. Sometimes these references use the first person. For example, the expression *paścād vaksyāmah* 'we'll

23 See Abhidh-k (VP) II p. 3 n. 1.

24 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 84 l. 10-15 (on 2.51), p. 89 l. 7-13 (on 2.54).

25 See Abhidh-k (VP) I p. 76 n. 1, p. 89, p. 205, II p. 13 n. 3.

26 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 7 l. 6: *sugandhadurgandhayoh samaviṣamagandhatvāt*. Yaśomitra explains: *anutkatotkatagandhatvād ity arthah*.

27 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 7 l. 6-7: *trividhas tu śāstre/ sugandho durgandhaḥ samagandha iti/*

28 See Abhidh-k (VP) I p. 18.

29 Abhidh-k 2.50: *sahabhūr ye mithahphalāh/ bhūtavac cittacittānuvaritlakṣanalakṣyavat//*

30 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 83 l. 23-24: *vināpi cānyonyaphalatvena dharmo 'nulakṣaṇānām sahabhūhetur na tāni tasyety upasaṁkhyāavyam*.



discuss [this] later' is used in the Bhāṣya on 1.10 (p. 7 l. 10) to refer to verse 1.12; *vyākhyāsyāmah* at p. 89 l. 4 (on 2.54) refers to verse 5.12; the same term at p. 274 l. 24 (on 4.125) refers to verse 6.17; *vaksyāmah* at p. 353 l. 12 introduces verses 6.29 f. After what we have learned from the Yoga Bhāṣya and Tattvārthādhigama Bhāṣya we will not be tempted to derive conclusions from this usage, the more not because the references may be to the Bhāṣya which explains those verses.

But nor can we draw conclusions from the references in the third person. On a number of occasions the Bhāṣya uses *vaksyati* 'he'll say' in order to refer to a verse. For example, the one but last sentence of the first chapter of the Bhāṣya (p. 37 l. 14-15) states: "He will explain later (*paścād vaksyati*) that the female and male [sexual] organs are part of the *dhātu* [called] 'body'." This refers to verse 2.2 which explains (at least in the interpretation of the Bhāṣya) that there are six organs (*indriya*), and that the female and male sexual organs are merely distinguished from the body, but not different from it, because of their supremacy regarding femininity and masculinity.<sup>31</sup> The Bhāṣya on the first part of Abhidh-k 2.33 indicates with the help of *vaksyati* that the last word of the verse (*cetasah*) is to be understood here too (p. 60 l. 25). The Bhāṣya on Abhidh-k 2.67 uses the same device to show that *anantaram* is here valid from verse 68 (p. 103 l. 20). The use of *vaksyati* on Abhidh-k 3.17 (p. 128 l. 28) serves a similar purpose. References to the Bhāṣya, on the other hand, use the first person: *vaksyāmah* (p. 107 l. 3 and 17, on 2.72) and *pravaksyāmah* (p. 400 l. 15, on 7.13) introduce immediately following portions of the Bhāṣya; *cintayisyāmah* (p. 93 l. 16-17, on 2.55) refers to the Bhāṣya on 5.27; *paścād vaksyāmah* (p. 343 l. 19) refers to the Bhāṣya on 7.13 (p. 400). All these cases do not allow us to draw any conclusions, because cases are known where an author uses the third person to refer to his own verses. An example is Maṇḍana Miśra, who - in the Brahmasiddhi, which consists of verses and commentary, both by the same author - uses on several occasions the third person in the commentary part to refer to his verses.<sup>32</sup>

31 Abhidh-k 2.2: *svārthopalabdhyādhipatyāt sarvasya ca ṣaḍindriyam/strītvapurṇstvādhipatyāt tu kāyāt strīpuruṣendriye//* The Bhāṣya explains (p. 39 l. 14-15): *kāyendriyād eva strīpuruṣendriye prīthak vyavasthāpyete/ nārthāntarabhūte/ kaścīd asau kāyendriyabhāga upasthāpradeśo yaḥ strīpuruṣendriyākhyām pratilabhate/*

32 E.g., p. 75 l. 4: *darśayati*; p. 23 l. 17: *āha*.



We finally consider one more point: the Bhāṣya refers to the author of the verses as Ācārya.<sup>33</sup> Verse 1.3, for example, is introduced in the following manner:

Why [should there be] teaching of Abhidharma, and by whom has it been taught for the first time, that the Ācārya piously applies himself to pronouncing the Abhidharmakośa?<sup>34</sup>

The author of the verses is again referred to as Ācārya in the Bhāṣya on Abhidh-k 1.11. This verse explains a concept of the Vaibhāṣikas. The Bhāṣya points this out, then adds that the word *ucyate* 'it is said/is called' in the verse shows that this is said by the Ācārya.<sup>35</sup>

## V

The purpose of the last part of this lecture was to raise questions, rather than to solve them. The case of the Abhidharmakośa and Bhāṣya is particularly complex, and much more research will have to be done before reliable conclusions can be drawn.

The same applies to the other examples which have been discussed. My main purpose has been to ask questions. In some cases an answer seems possible, in other cases this may not yet be the case. In spite of this, I hope that these questions constitute a modest contribution to the progress of our field of study. After all, the right question is often half the answer.

*Added in proofs:* Long after this article had been submitted for publication I discovered that the essentials of the 'Vārttika style' had already been correctly described by V.G. Paranjpe in his article "The text of the Nyāya-sūtras according to Vācaspatimiśra", PAIOC 10, 1941, 296-309.

33 Ruegg (1990: 64) considers this point not decisive and draws attention to Haribhadrasūri's Anekāntajayapatākā (ed. Kāpadīā, vol. i, p. 2.12) for a parallel.

34 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 2 l. 18-19: *kimarthaṃ punar abhidharmopadeśaḥ kena cāyaṃ prathamata upadiṣṭo yata ācāryo 'bhidharmakośaṃ vaktum ādriyat[e]*.

35 Abhidh-k-bh (P) p. 8 l. 9: *ucyata iti ācāryavacanāṃ darśayati*.

*References and abbreviations*

- Abhidh-k = Abhidharmakośa  
 Abhidh-k (VP) = L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu, traduit et annoté par Louis de La Vallée Poussin, 6 vols., Paris 1923-1931.  
 Abhidh-k-bh (P) = Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu, ed. P. Pradhan, rev. 2nd ed. Aruna Haldar, Patna 1975.  
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- MAVŚ = Madhyānta-Vibhāga-Śāstra, ed. Ramchandra Pandeya. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. 1971.
- Pdhs = Padārthadharmasaṅgraha: The Praśastapāda Bhāshya with Commentary Nyāyakandali of Sridhara, edited by Vinthyesvari Prasad Dvivedin. Second edition. Delhi: Sri Satguru. 1984. (Sri Garib Dass Oriental Series, 13.)
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