

Meanings out of rules : the editor's overview

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Meanings Out of Rules: The Editor's Overview

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In order to close the volume with a unifying survey, in this final section I shall present a short overview briefly restating the main points analyzed by each author. Furthermore, while summarizing the positions held in the single chapters I shall try to trace a sort of historical development of the various functions of *paribhāṣā* as well as the concepts lying behind that label.

While working on the concept of *paribhāṣā*, both individually as well as jointly (see *Preface*), we were confronted with several problems. First of all, in earlier times there was a lack of a formal definition of the word, which resulted in multiple interpretations of *paribhāṣās*, as meta-rules (rules concerned with other rules), general rules and interpretative rules. Besides this multi-layered function of *paribhāṣā*, we expected to find in Śrautasūtras the common source for the origin of – at least – the word *paribhāṣā*. But neither can this, too, be identified with certainty. What we have ascertained is that from a certain period on, perhaps identifiable with that of Vyāḍi or Kātyāyana, this seems to be a common śāstric trait.

Historically, however, we are in good company. In fact, in 1860 Theodor Goldstücker wrote:

Another question, however, is, whether those Paribhāṣās which existed before Kātyāyana existed also before Pāṇini [...].¹

We have seen, however, that as far as *paribhāṣās* are concerned, Grammar maintains its technical peculiarities unaltered and independent and because of its pivotal rule, is able to influence other *śāstras* which, according to their own doctrinal background and needs, reconfigure those *paribhāṣās*.

1 Goldstücker 1965: 121.

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In order to summarize the issue, let us simply look at the literal meaning of the word *paribhāṣā*. It is formed first of all by the preverb (*upasarga*) *pari*, which means “beyond”, “around” or “above” and conveys the idea of totality, circularity and direction (Pelissero and Chierichetti, this volume).² The preverb is prefixed to the root *bhāṣ* (*Dhātupāṭha* 1.696, *vyaktāyāṃ vāci*), which indicates an articulate sound or an explicit expression and leads to the final word-formation *bhāṣā* “language, statement, conversation, discourse”. From this basic analysis, *paribhāṣā* can indicate a broad assertion, a statement which goes beyond, a way of expressing many circumstances, an explanation embracing several situations, a statement capable of delimiting an issue, or a definition. Among these several meanings, and consequent ways of translating the term, we have “meta-rule”, “general rule”, as also “restrictive principle”, or “hermeneutic principle”, “interpretative-rule”, “general maxim”, etc., which also indicate some functions of the concept, such as restricting the applications of certain excessively broad rules, leading to a correct interpretation, applying rules and defining technical terms (see Chierichetti and Freschi). Today, both in colloquial Sanskrit as well as in Hindī and other modern Aryan languages, the word *paribhāṣā* is commonly used as a “technical definition” (see fn. 24) and the derivative adjective *pāribhāṣika* indicates a “technical” use.³ This semantic nuance also conveys a general

² Here, it seems useful to quote the *Nipātāvyayopsargavṛtti* of Tilaka (vv. 34–35, Someśvaraśarmā 1951: 49), which lists a series of 28 semantic nuances of the prefix *pari*: *udvāha* “leading to [marriage]”, *samantatva* “totality, circularity”, *vivarta* “transformation”, *varjana* “avoidance”, *śuci* “purity”, *nindā* “blame”, *vyavasthā* “settlement”, *nyakkāra* “disregard”, *narmā* “humor”, *āliṅga* “embracing”, *nirgama* “departure, going forth, exit”, *krama* “succession, course, order”, *bhūṣā* “ornament”, *nivasana* “putting on”, *kṣipā* “throwing”, *niścaya* “certainty, resolution”, *veṣṭana* “covering”, *sevā* “service”, *saṃnyāsa* “renunciation”, *apavarta* “removal”, *śakti* “potency”, *sāṃgatya* “meeting”, *lāghava* “lightness”, *parijñāna* “ascertainment”, *vinimaya* “exchange”, *vistāra* “extension”, *vyāpti* “pervasion” and *atikrama* “violation”. To these meanings, the gloss of the text adds five supplementary meanings of the prefix *pari* in its *karmapravacanīya* form. Further, an interesting account is given by the *Viṃśatyupasargavṛtti* (v. 19, Dimitrov 2007: 38), a short treatise belonging to the Cāndra school of grammar, founded by Candragomin (5th century). Twelve meanings of the *upasarga pari* are listed there, and seven of them clearly overlap with the list in Tilaka’s *Nipātāvyayopsargavṛtti*: *samantobhāva* (corresponding to *samantatva* in Tilaka) “totality, circularity”, *vyāpti* “pervasion”, *doṣākhyāna* “manifestation, declaration of defects”, *uparama* “repose, cessation”, *bhūṣaṇa* (= *bhūṣā* of Tilaka) “ornament”, *pūjā* “worship” (perhaps corresponding to *sevā* “service” of Tilaka), *varjana* “avoidance”, *āliṅgana* (= *āliṅga*) “embracing”, *nivasana* “putting on”, *vyādhi* “ailment, disease”, *śoka* “grief”, sorrow and *vipsā* “repetition” (listed among *karmapravacanīya* acceptations by Tilaka). I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this advice and even more so, to Dragomir Dimitrov’s kindness with the gift of his valuable edition.

³ Renou 1957: 204.

meaning of the word *paribhāṣā*, which should be seen as a technical instrument employed in solving problems and clarifying unclear situations. *paribhāṣās*, therefore, could also be technical terms and regulating formulations inserted into a natural language.⁴

Within this volume (see Candotti-Pontillo, this volume) it has been shown that Patañjali (*Mahābhāṣya* [hereafter M] *ad Aṣṭādhyāyī* [hereafter A] 1.1.49⁵ and M *ad A* 2.1.1⁶)⁷ counter-poses the word *paribhāṣā* to *adhikāra*, explaining that *adhikāra* is a heading which, without being repeated, remains in the background of every subsequent operation until the appearance of another *adhikāra*. On the contrary, a *paribhāṣā* is physically present in a precise point but its influence is registered throughout the entire *śāstra* or at the least, in several situations. A *paribhāṣā* is subtler than an *adhikāra* because it *observes* silently and whenever needed, *manifests* itself in order to clarify and disambiguate a specific context in the same way as a lantern placed somewhere in a room illuminates the entire room.⁸

Patañjali indicates the purport of a *paribhāṣā* without defining it. For a more formalized definition we must wait for the *Kāśikāvṛtti* (hereafter KV). According to Jayāditya (KV *ad A* 1.1.3),⁹ the *sūtra* 1.1.3 of Pāṇini is a *paribhāṣā* because it functions in order to limit the original element (*sthānin*) for which the substitution is prescribed. This restriction prescribes the settlement of too general a context. Louis Renou, quoting Durgasiṃha's gloss to the *Kātantra Vyākaraṇa*, writes *vidhau niyamakāriṇī* "restreignant une règle",¹⁰ i. e. that a *paribhāṣā* restrains the context of a prescription otherwise too wide (see Chierichetti, this volume)¹¹. This formulation together with the previous one leads Jhalakīkar's *Nyāyakośa*¹² to extend the perception of *paribhāṣā*, reaching a definition accepted even today which describes the broader function of a *paribhāṣā*: *aniyame niyamakāriṇī paribhāṣā* "a *paribhāṣā* creates a restriction where there is no restriction".

4 Bhattacharya 2001: 19; Bhattacharya 2006: 5–6.

5 M, Patañjali 1985–2002: 119.

6 M, Patañjali 1985–2002: 357.

7 See Freschi and Candotti-Pontillo. See also G. Mishra 2006: 2–4 and Devasthali 1985: 1–2.

8 According to Mishra (2006: 8–9) *paribhāṣās* satisfy three functions: 1. in helping with the interpretation of Pāṇini's rules; 2. in deciding the order and priority in the application of certain rules, if these contradict others; 3. in modelling the meaning of Pāṇini's rules so as to simplify the process leading to correct word-formation.

9 KV, Jayāditya-Vāmana 1985 vol. 1: 71.

10 Renou 1957: 199.

11 Devasthali 1985: 1.

12 Jhalakīkar 1978: 480.

Close to Patañjali's expression is the etymological reading presented by Jinendrabuddhi's *Nyāsa* on the KV (*ad* A 2.1.1),¹³ which underlines the all-around character of the interpretative formula: *parito vyāpṛtām bhāṣām paribhāṣām pracakṣate* "They [=the knowledgeable ones] say that a *paribhāṣā* is that utterance which is generally used in more than one place" (see Pellegrini). In the *Padamañjarī* (*ad Nyāsa ad* KV *ad* A 2.1.1¹⁴) Haradatta highlights the adverb *paritaḥ* specifying the general, hermeneutical and meta-linguistic content of a *paribhāṣā*: *paritaḥ sarvatra pūrvatra paratra vyavahite cānantare ca bhāṣate kāryam anayā sā paribhāṣā* "A *paribhāṣā* is that [tool] which states what should be done all-around, everywhere, before and later, concerning what is far and what is close".¹⁵

Nor should we forget that the term *paribhāṣā* is not present in Pāṇini's A, and only twice in Kātyāyana's *vārttikas* (*ad* A 1.1.69 and *ad* 1.3.11). For a massive use of the term *paribhāṣā* we must wait for Patañjali, even though it was perhaps¹⁶ already Pāṇini who refined the techniques for the construction of *paribhāṣās* apparently introduced by other *śāstras*, which were identified in the Śrautasūtras.

I say "apparently" because in this very volume, mainly in articles regarding ancient India, we came across some interesting points which in the future will require further research, especially in order to establish diachronic relationships among those disciplines. I mention these below (see also Candotti-Pontillo, this volume).

Just as in Pāṇini's A, neither do we find the word *paribhāṣā* in the original Śrautasūtras, neither generally nor attached to any specific aphorism whatsoever, finding it instead only in the commentaries. Although under the magnifying glass of later *śāstras* we can identify several *paribhāṣās* also in the radical

¹³ KV (Mīśra vol. 1 1985: 71): *paribhāṣeyaṃ sthāniniyamārthā | aniyamaprasaṅge niyamo vidhīyate |*.

¹⁴ KV, Jayāditya-Vāmana 1985 vol. 2: 3.

¹⁵ Jayadevaśarmā Mīśra – a Navya Vaiyākaraṇa – in his *Vijayāṭīkā* on the Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa's *Paribhāṣenduśekhara*, transforms this definition using Navya Nyāya style (Devasthali 1985: 2; Abhyankar 1967: 3): *lakṣyadharmikasādhutvaprakāraḥ prāmāṇyajñānānaskanditabodhopayogibodhajanakatvaṃ paribhāṣātvam* "to be a *paribhāṣā* is the property of generating an understanding useful for [another] understanding not obstructed by any judgements of non-validity, whose qualification is the correctness and whose qualified term is the *definiendum*". Hence, a *paribhāṣā* helps to understand how to understand something else, be it a rule or a textual passage, pushing us to ascertain what the correct *definiendum* (*lakṣya*) should be (see also Candotti-Pontillo, this volume). G. Mishra (2006: 3) quotes this passage partially and erroneously.

¹⁶ I say "perhaps" because even if it is more likely that Pāṇini himself developed the *paribhāṣā* techniques, nevertheless this might also be an *ex-post* recognition of the use of those techniques, which became identified later on with those of the *paribhāṣās*. Thanks to Elisa Freschi for this suggestion.

aphorisms (*mūlasūtra*), resting nevertheless on *mūlasūtras* alone, it cannot be said exactly what a *paribhāṣā* is.¹⁷ Only later do commentators attach the label *paribhāṣā* to a vast and heterogeneous variety of regulating principles, mainly general rules, meta-rules and sometimes, restrictive rules. Thus, we have these equally possible translations of the term, which are shaped afterwards to the function taken by a *paribhāṣā* within a specific context.

It is not easy to date Śrautasūtras' commentators. They do however appear to come later than the works of the grammatical *trimunis*, thus in a period already heavily influenced by Patañjali's *M* specifically and by the grammatical lexical choice in general; moreover, during that period Jaimini's *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (hereafter *MS*) had already appeared as well and become widespread.¹⁸ In fact, precisely in the commentaries on the Śrautasūtras, the *paribhāṣā* label seems to be applied to define sections or single aphorisms which usually deal with general rules¹⁹ or meta-rules (rarely with restrictive rules). Chakravarti²⁰ suggests distinguishing the various *paribhāṣās* on the basis of their functions and accordingly identifies seven different scopes or applications of the *paribhāṣā*-label. On this ground, it seems that in the Śrautasūtras the term *paribhāṣā* was applied to a vast and heterogeneous group of rules. This determines a less specific, and consequently broader, use of the term *paribhāṣā* than that developed in the Vyākaraṇa milieu.

The Śrautasūtras are prescriptive texts used as manuals, explaining all the necessary operations for preparing a specific sacrifice. Therefore, the expressions defined as *paribhāṣās* in the Śrautasūtras are general rules and/or meta-rules, depending on their nuances: they are “around” and “beyond” the text, determining its function on a meta-textual level. A meta-rule states something about the application of other rules, while a general rule is a statement that is generally valid throughout the text and is simply more far-reaching, while not affecting the application of other specific rules or of the regulatory mechanism (see Chierichetti).

17 For Renou (1963: 165–216) the origin of *paribhāṣā* methodology must be sought in the author of the more ancient Śrautasūtra, namely the *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra*.

18 Although in a prohibitive sense, at the beginning of his commentary on the (*MS*, Jaimini 1994: 2) uses a gerundive of the root *bhāṣ*, prefixed by *pari*: *nādhyāhārādibhir eṣāṃ parikalpanīyo 'rthaḥ paribhāṣitavyo vā* (see Freschi). The same Śabara frequently quotes the three *munis* of grammar (Garge 1952: 236–242). Moreover, Kātyāyana and Śabara share the technical lexicon and use very similar interpretative methods (Staal 1975: 335).

19 Some manuscripts of the *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra* (mainly of the 24th chapter) use the formula *sāmānyasūtra* (“general rule”), which could be a proto-description for *paribhāṣā* sections. See Chakravarti (1980: 26) and Chierichetti.

20 Chakravarti 1980: 28–30.

In any case, in the so-called “*Paribhāṣā*” sections of the Śrautasūtras not only do we find technical terms, but also other technical forms such as verbs (see Chierichetti), etc. with technical meanings, which are used only in that domain. Staal observes that this peculiar modality of the language is related to mathematical models.²¹ The rituals listed in the Śrautasūtras refer to linguistic units, but they do not tell us what these units mean.

Here I quote an example from the *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra* ([hereafter *ĀpŚrS*] 24.2.3, also in *Bharadvāja Śrutāsūtra* 1.1.21, see Freschi) which should help us to understand the issue at hand: *ādipradiṣṭāḥ mantrāḥ* “mantras are indicated by their beginning”. It is a fact that mantras are not extensively quoted except for the first two or three words (*pratīka*), after which the author confides in the educational background of the reader (see Rotaru). In addition, the following aphorism of the *ĀpŚrS* (24.2.4) dispels a doubt raised in identifying the end of the mantra-portion concerned: *uttarasyādinā pūrvasyāvasānaṃ vidyāt* “the end of the preceding should be recognized from the beginning of the next”. Even though in the *ĀpŚrS* these aphorisms are not called *paribhāṣās*, nevertheless they are true meta-rules since they present a device used for referring to Vedic mantras. This leads to a complex system of references, which is undoubtedly a meta-linguistic use,²² which permits us to clarify and systematize several issues.

To summarize, we may recall that some scholars have recognized that Indian scientific methodology is heavily influenced by grammar.²³ Thus the grammatical *paribhāṣās* indicate how to apply certain grammatical rules and correct results depend upon the application of these rules according to *paribhāṣās*.²⁴ It seems, in fact, that the technicality and methodology of the specific grammatical lexicon was borrowed and somehow de-semanticized in the grammatical sense and re-semanticized according to the tenets of other disciplines. Therefore, the grammatical *paribhāṣās* may have represented a

²¹ Staal 1975: 323.

²² Staal (1975: 330) also maintains that *sūtras* and *paribhāṣās* correspond respectively to axioms and rules. Since pāṇinian grammar is meta-linguistics, so *paribhāṣās* are meta-rules. He says also that *sūtras* themselves are to be seen as meta-rules, because their referent is language. Conversely, *paribhāṣās* refer to these aphoristic meta-rules and so might be referred to as meta-meta-rules (Staal 1975: 342). I would like to point out however the specific function of *paribhāṣā* as a restriction of an otherwise too broad a rule. This is well developed by Candotti and Pontillo (see specifically section 3.2.2 of their article).

²³ See Ingalls 1954 (4), Staal 1965 (99) and Bhattacharya 1992 (49).

²⁴ Staal 1975: 330. This problem is particularly evident in Vyākaraṇa, where we find several discussions on *saṃjñāsūtras* and *paribhāṣāsūtras*. *Samjñās* are rules defining technical terms of Grammar while *paribhāṣās* suggest the application of these technical terms (Mishra 2006: 4–5). See also Candotti-Pontillo and Freschi, this volume.

“scientific model” for all other *śāstras*. Nonetheless, this did not exclude the use of the term elsewhere in a less technical sense or slightly modified or, perhaps, in a broader manner (see Pellegrini, this volume).²⁵

One can learn from the *Kauśikasūtra* – the only Gṛhyasūtra of the Atharvavedins, a late Vedic text which from the point of view of the content stands between a Śrauta and a Gṛhyasūtra – how for the sake of the clarity and consistency of the complex work, *paribhāṣās* were added by later redactors, some at the beginning, in three sets (1.1–8 cum 1.9–23, and 7.1–9.7), others inserted into the text next to the *sūtras* to which they apply (e. g. KauśS 11.11, 12.4, 21.21, etc.). Even without these clear-cut *paribhāṣās*, the text of the *Kauśikasūtra* used certain implicit devices for clarification. Such is the case with the instance brought up by the chapter “Towards a methodology of applying the *paribhāṣās* in the *Kauśikasūtra*”, analyzing some particular rites called *manthāntāni karmāṇi* “the rites ending with the word *mantha*”, for the understanding of which a concatenation of implicit *paribhāṣās* is to be applied.²⁶

Moreover, Vyākaraṇa’s remarkable tendency to create and use meta-linguistic notions and tools reverberates on other *śāstras*, in *primis* Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā developed in close connection with the Śrautasūtras. According to Garge, more than a ritualistic exegesis, Jaimini’s aphorisms mark the emergence and the development of a rationalistic tendency, which leads to a canonization of the interpretation of the great quantity of ritual materials.²⁷ This stimulus becomes more concrete in Śrautasūtras’ previously-mentioned internal sections, called by commentators *Paribhāṣāsūtra*, which are related to the MS.

For its part Vedānta – or Uttara Mīmāṃsā – develops along the same lines as Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. Both Mīmāṃsās aspire to construct a hermeneutics based on those Vedic portions which they respectively consider prominent: normative portions (*vidhāyaka*) for Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and declarative portions (*abhidāyaka*) for Vedānta.²⁸

Worth remembering is an insightful consideration borrowed from Louis Renou: in the Indian tradition analogies, interpretative principles or maxims

²⁵ There are, however, many connections between Grammar and Śrautasūtras. For example, *vipratīṣedhe paraṃ kāryam* (A 1.4.2: “Wherever there is a contradiction [between two aphorisms] the following [rule] should be applied”), seems very similar to *vacanād vipratīṣedhād vānyaḥ kuryāt* (ĀpŚrS 24.1.20: “The other [=a person different from the contextually expected performer], should do [it] because there is an explicit indication or a contradiction”).

²⁶ Thanks go to Julieta Rotaru for this note.

²⁷ Garge 1952: 50.

²⁸ Renou 1960: 54 and Staal 1975: 334–335.

(*nyāya*)²⁹ and *paribhāṣās* are used interchangeably (see Chierichetti, Freschi and Pellegrini).³⁰

On the basis of these considerations we developed our *paribhāṣā*-survey of some of the principal disciplines of Indian intellectual history – namely Śrautasūtras, Ḡṛhyasūtras, Vyākaraṇa, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta – which in this final section I have summarized and concluded and, I hope, opened up to a wider discussion.

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²⁹ Pollock 2004: 783–784

³⁰ Renou 1963: 178. Worth mentioning are also both prefaces of the two editions (1900, 1910) of G.A. Jacob’s “*Laukikanyāyāñjali. A Handful of Popular Maxims Current in Sanskrit Literature*”. The book explains several *nyāyas* and *paribhāṣās* encountered in Vyākaraṇa, Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, etc. (Jacob 2004: i–iv, I–VI).

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