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Upaniṣads and grammar: On the meaning of *anuvyākhyāna*

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The word *anuvyākhyāna* occurs four times in Vedic literature, three times in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, once in the Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad, and nowhere else. It always occurs in the following enumeration of literary works:¹

*ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo 'tharvāṅgirasa itihāsaḥ purāṇaṃ vidyā upaniṣadaḥ
ślokāḥ sūtrāṇy anuvyākhyānāni vyākhyānāni*

Paul Horsch discussed some of the terms of this enumeration in his *Die vedische Gāthā- und Śloka-Literatur*. The terms *anuvyākhyāna* and *vyākhyāna*, he argues (1966: 32), cannot but refer to texts that explain (*vyākhyā*) They must be predecessors of the later commentatorial literature. With regard to *anuvyākhyāna* he expresses the opinion that this can only be an additional or extended *vyākhyāna* (p. 32).²

This opinion is not unproblematic. The position of *anuvyākhyāna* between *sūtra* and *vyākhyāna* suggests rather that, if anything, the *vyākhyāna* is secondary to the *anuvyākhyāna*, which in its turn might conceivably be some kind of commentary on the *sūtra*. The enumeration, moreover, seems to display a hierarchical structure, beginning as it does with the ‘five Vedas’ (*itihāsa* and *purāṇa* being occasionally referred to as ‘the fifth Veda’; see Bronkhorst, 1989: 129 f.) which supports the idea that *anuvyākhyāna* is ‘higher’ than *vyākhyāna* and ‘lower’ than *sūtra*.

A search for occurrences of the term *anuvyākhyāna* in post-Vedic literature does not help to solve the problem. Śaṅkara comments on the three words *sūtra*, *anuvyākhyāna* and *vyākhyāna* in the following manner under BAU 2.4.10: *sūtrāṇi vastusaṅgrahavākyāni vede yathā ātmety evopāsīta* (BAU 1.4.7) *ityādīni/ anuvyākhyānāni mantravivaraṇāni/ vyākhyānāny arthavādāḥ/ athavā*

¹ BAU 2.4.10, 4.1.2, 4.5.11 (= ŚB 14.5.4.10, 14.6.10.6, 14.7.3.11) and MaiU 6.32.

² The standard dictionaries offer the following translations: ‘eine besondere Klasse von Schriften’ (PW), ‘eine best. Klasse von exegetischen Texten’ (pw), ‘that portion of a Brāhmaṇa which explains or illustrates difficult Sūtras, texts or obscure statements occurring in another portion’ (MW), ‘That which comments on and explains Mantras, Sūtras &c. ...; especially, that portion of a Brāhmaṇa which explains difficult Sūtras, texts &c. occurring in another place’ (Apte), ‘n[om] de portions explicatives des Brāhmaṇa’ (SNR). Professor D. Seyfort Ruegg has made the suggestion — in a private communication — that *anuvyākhyāna* might be a graded *vyākhyāna*, just as *anusāsana* is a graded *sāsana*, adapted to the needs of the person taught. While this may be true, I am not sure that it would solve the difficulty to be discussed below.

vastusaṅgrahavākyavivaraṇāni anuvyākhyānāni/ yathā caturthādhyāye ātmety evopāsīta ity asya yathā vā anyo 'sāv anyo 'ham asmīti na sa veda yathā paśur evaṃ (BAU 1.4.10) *ity asyāyaṃ evādhyāyaśeṣaḥ/ mantravivaraṇāni vyākhyānāni/*. The fact that two different explanations are given for the words *anuvyākhyāna* and *vyākhyāna* shows that Śaṅkara was not at all certain about their meaning. According to him, *anuvyākhyāna* is either the explanation of a mantra (*mantravivaraṇa*) or the explanation of a concise statement of (ultimate) reality (*vastusaṅgrahavākyavivaraṇa*). In the latter case, *vyākhyāna* is the explanation of a mantra. In other words, the distinction between *anuvyākhyāna* and *vyākhyāna* is not clear to Śaṅkara.

The term *anuvyākhyāna* occurs in some other contexts, too, but always, as far I am aware, in a passage that is clearly indebted to the Upaniṣadic enumeration. Horsch (1966: 32) already refers to the scholiast on Yājñavalkyasmṛti 3.189, who explains *bhāṣyāṇi* with *anuvyākhyāni* and *vyākhyāni*. Since Yājñavalkyasmṛti 3.189 contains partly the same enumeration as the one we are studying, putting however *bhāṣyāṇi* where our passage has *anuvyākhyāni vyākhyānāni*, we can be sure that Horsch's scholiast copied our passage here. The term is also used by Nīlakaṇṭha in his comments on *savaiyākhyā* in Mahābhārata 1.1.50 (= Cr.Ed. 1.1.48). Nīlakaṇṭha states:

savaiyākhyāḥ vyākhyānam adhikṛtya kṛto grantho vaiyākhyas tadyuktāḥ/ yathā brahmavid āpnoti param iti sūtrasya vyākhyā satyaṃ jñānam iti mantrah/ anuvyākhyānaṃ tasmād vā etasmād ityādi brāhmaṇam/ evaṃ atrāpi [189] prathame 'dhyāye sūtritasyārthasya dviṭyatrṭyābhyāṃ vyākhyānam uttaragranthenānuvyākhyānaṃ ca/

This refers to TA 8.1.1 (8.2 in the edition accessible to me, see the note on p. 591; this passage is identical with TU 2.1), which reads, with extracts of Sāyaṇa's commentary:

... dviṭyasyānuvākasyādau kṛtsnopaniṣatsāram saṃgrahena sūtrayati om brahmavid āpnoti param iti/ ... idānīm tasya sūtrasya saṃkṣiptavyākhyānarūpāṃ kāmciḍ ṛcam udāharati ... satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahma ... iti/ ... tām etām ānantiyopapādanopayuktāṃ sṛṣṭiṃ darśayati tasmād va etasmād ātmana ākāśaḥ saṃbhūtaḥ ... iti/

Interestingly, Sāyaṇa cites in this context the above enumeration from *itihāsa* onwards, then explains the terms that interest us as follows (p. 563):

brahmavid ityādikaṃ sūtram/ satyaṃ jñānam ityādikaṃ anuvyākhyānam/ anukrameṇa sūtragatānāṃ padānāṃ tātparyakathanāt/ tasminn upasamkhyāne yo bubhutsito 'rthaviśeṣas tasya vispaṣṭam āsamantāt kathanam vyākhyānam/ tad idam atra tāvat tasmād vā etasmād ity ārabhyānnāt puruṣa ityantena granthenābhidhīyate/

Note that Sāyaṇa and Nīlakaṇṭha use the terms *vyākhyāna* and *anuvyākhyāna* differently. (Śaṅkara on TU 2.1 uses the word *sūtra* in connection with the line *brahmavid āpnoti param*, but does not refer to *anuvyākhyāna* (p. 360):

sarva eva vallyartha brahmavid āpnoti param iti brāhmaṇavākyena sūtritaḥ/ sa ca sūtrito 'rthaḥ samkṣepato mantrena vyākhyātaḥ/ punas tasyaiva vistarenārthanirṇayah kartavya ity uttaras tadvṛttisthānīyo grantha ārabhyate tasmād vā etasmād ityādih/.)³

How do we deal with the problem presented by *anuvyākhyāna* in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣads? Two observations are to be made here. The first one concerns the date of the enumeration in its present form, the second its correct shape.

First the date. The portion of the Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad that contains our enumeration is considered — by J.A.B. van Buitenen, who dedi-[190]cated a study to this Upaniṣad (1962: 34) — an accretion to an accretion to an insertion into the original Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad. This raises the question whether the enumeration containing *anuvyākhyāna* might not be late, perhaps added, or completed, by a late redactor.

With regard to the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which is part of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, it is worthwhile to quote the following observation made by Michael Witzel (1987: 399 n. 76):

The final compilation of [the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa], made up of several independent portions, is probably a comparatively late one; yet the compiler was able still to put cross-references into the Vedic text: ... : the compiler still knew Vedic well enough to produce ... sentences referring forwards and backwards in the text. On the other hand: the compiler was different from the (much later) redactor who seems to have lived many generations after Yājñavalkya, even according to the various Vaṃśas found in [the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa] and [the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad]. I suspect that he was a contemporary of the Kāṇva dynasty of the Sātavāhana dynasty. (This problem will have to be treated separately). It is only the redactor that was responsible for glorification of Yājñavalkya and for his authorship of the White [Yajurveda]; note that this information is added as the very last words of [the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa] ...; note that the redactor already describes Janaka as presenting *land* to Yājñavalkya Yet even the Satakarni inscription, 2nd cent. A.D., ... still mentions only presents of cows given as *dakṣiṇā* to Brahmins, and not a donation of land

Janaka is described as presenting land to Yājñavalkya at the end of BAU 4.2.4 (so Witzel, op. cit., p. 409 n. 99), not therefore at the very end of the Upaniṣad. This means that, according to Witzel, the redactor has made additions and modifications in other

³ The expression *anuvyākhyāsyāmah* occurs in the Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa (ed. B.R. Sharma, 5.6.1, p. 187) in a phrase which throws no light on our question; *anuvyākhyāsyāmi* at Ch-Up 8.9.3; 10.4; 11.3 clearly means "I will explain further", as Hume (1931: 270 f.) translates correctly.

places than only at the end of the ŚB and of the BAU. The enumeration of texts containing the term *anuvyākhyāna* might therefore conceivably be late, too.

Let us next look at the exact form of the term *anuvyākhyāna*. This term occurs only at the above indicated places of the Brhadāranyaka and Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣads, always in the same enumeration, and in passages that implicitly or explicitly refer to this enumeration, so far as I am aware. This may mean that one single editorial hand, or even one scribal error, may have been responsible for this word, and for its occurrence in this enumeration. And the possibility cannot be discarded that this single editorial hand ‘corrected’ some other word into *anuvyākhyāna* under the influence of the following *vyākhyāna*.

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If we accept this last hypothesis, the most likely candidate for the original form underlying *anuvyākhyāna* is, no doubt, *anvākhyāna*. This word occurs a few times in Vedic literature, once, at GB 1.2.10, in another enumeration of literary works. The fact that one ms. of the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa has *sānvākhyānāḥ* instead of *sānvākhyānāḥ* confirms our impression that *anvākhyāna* could easily be ‘corrected’ into *anuvyākhyāna*.

We arrive, then, at the hypothetical conclusion that our list originally contained the three terms *sūtrāṇy anvākhyānāni vyākhyānāni*, in this order. Does this help us to reach some form of understanding?

Consider first the pair *sūtra* - *anvākhyāna*. This reminds us of the manuscripts of the *Vādhūla Śrautasūtra*, which contain both *sūtra* and *anvākhyāna*. *Anvākhyāna* is here the term used for the brāhmaṇa-portion accompanying this Śrautasūtra. For, as Willem Caland (1926: 5 (307)) observed,

[d]ie Texte der Vādhūlas ... haben ... dieses Merkwürdige, dass zu dem Sūtra ein eigenes Brāhmaṇa gehört, eine Art Anubrāhmaṇa, ein sekundäres Brāhmaṇa, das neben dem alten Brāhmaṇa der Taittirīyas (oder vielleicht richtiger: neben einem alten Brāhmaṇa, das mit dem der Taittirīyas aufs engste verwandt ist) steht: eine noch nie in einem vedischen Sūtra angetroffene Eigentümlichkeit.

This secondary Brāhmaṇa of the *Vādhūla Śrautasūtra* calls itself ‘Anvākhyāna’.⁴

It is, in view of the above, at least conceivable that the author of our enumeration had the *Vādhūla Śrautasūtra* in mind while adding *anvākhyāna* after *sūtra* (supposing that he actually did so).

Interestingly, there is another set of texts that appears to be referred to by the terms *sūtra* and *anvākhyāna*. More precisely, this set consists of three texts, which are, it

⁴ See Caland, 1928: 210 (510), 218 (518); Witzel, 1975: 102 n. 47. Witzel argues (1975: 82) that, in spite of the joint occurrence of Anvākhyānas and Vādhūla Śrautasūtra in the same manuscripts, "[e]ine Zuordnung zum Śrautasūtra ist damit ... nicht notwendig gegeben".

has been argued, referred to by the terms *sūtra*, *anvākhyāna* and *vyākhyāna* respectively, i.e., by the very three terms that occur in this order in our enumeration. What is more, these texts were already referred to in this manner well before the beginning of our era. I am speaking about Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, a [192] Sūtra-work on grammar commented upon in Kātyāyana's *vārttikas*, which in their turn are discussed in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. The *Mahābhāṣya* is to be dated in the middle of the second century B.C.E.

In order to substantiate the above claim, I now cite from an article by R.G. Bhandarkar, written more than a century ago (1876: 347):

... it seems that the verb *anvācaṣṭe* is used by Patañjali as characteristic of the work of Kātyāyana His own work Patañjali calls *vyākhyāna*, and frequently uses the verb *vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*.

Since *khyā* replaces the root *caṣ* before *ārdhadhātuka* suffixes by P. 2.4.54 (*caṣṣiṅiṅ khyāñ*), the noun corresponding to the verb *anvācaṣṭe* is *anvākhyāna*. If then Bhandarkar is correct, Kātyāyana's *vārttikas* form an *anvākhyāna*, and Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* a *vyākhyāna*, also in Patañjali's own terminology. It is clear that Patañjali's choice of words deserves to be subjected to a closer examination.

(i) The word *anvācaṣṭe* in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* occurs most often in the expression *ācāryaḥ suhrd bhūtvā anvācaṣṭe*, which expression appears to refer in all cases but one — where it refers to Pāṇini⁵ — to Kātyāyana (see Bronkhorst, 1987: 6 f.).

In four of the five remaining cases⁶ it can reasonably be argued that *anvācaṣṭe* has Kātyāyana as (understood) subject, even though Kielhorn's edition of the *Mahābhāṣya* contains no indication to this effect. They all occur in the following general context:

‘*x*’ *iti vartate/ evaṃ tarhy anvācaṣṭe* ‘*x*’ *iti vartate iti/*

The first part ‘*x*’ *iti vartate* is commented upon in the immediate sequel and can therefore be considered a *vārttika*.⁷ This is confirmed by the fact that on one occasion Patañjali explicitly claims that the [193] next *vārttika* is meant to show the purpose of

⁵ At Mbh I p. 208 l. 16f. the expression refers to the author of P. 1.2.32. This sūtra (*tasyādita udāttam ardhahrasvam*) gives supplementary (*anu*) information concerning precisely how much of the *svarita* is *udātta*, how much *anudātta*.

⁶ Mbh II p. 83 l. 20 (on P. 3.1.106 vt. 1), p. 265 l. 12 (on P. 4.1.163 vt. 1); III p. 27 l. 15 (on P. 6.1.20 vt. 1), p. 349 l. 4 (on P. 7.4.24).

⁷ It is not printed as such in Kielhorn's edition on any of the four occasions.

this *anvākhyāna*,⁸ which makes no sense if the *anvākhyāna* does not derive from Kātyāyana. And on another occasion Patañjali ascribes the sentence under consideration to the *ācārya*, and repeats it in a slightly modified way, as he often does with *vārttikas*.⁹

In the one remaining case Patañjali uses the word *anvācaṣṭe* in order to describe the activity of the author of the preceding *vārttika* (P. 1.1.44 vt. 16), who, thinking that words are eternal, teaches (*anvācaṣṭe*) the correctness of words actually in use.¹⁰

The terms *anvākhyeya* and *anvākhyāna* are sometimes used in immediate connection with *anvācaṣṭe*. So in Mbh II p. 83 l. 20 - p. 84 l. 1 (*evaṃ tarhy anvācaṣṭe 'nupasarga iti vartate iti/ naitad anvākhyeyam ...*), III p. 27 l. 15 (the same with *yāni* instead of *anupasarga*), III p. 349 l. 4-5 (same with *upasargād*), II p. 265 l. 12-13 (*evaṃ tarhy anvācaṣṭe pautraprabhṛtī vartate iti/ kim etasyānvākhyāne prayojanam*).

At Mbh I p. 209 l. 1 and 4 *anvākhyāna* refers back to *anvācaṣṭe* on p. 208 l. 16, which here however refers to Pāṇini.

In one passage on P. 2.1.1 the sense 'additional communication' suffices for *anvākhyāna* (Mbh I p. 363 l. 12, 13 and 27). An **additional communication** regarding their meaning is given (in sūtras like P. 2.2.24 *anekam anyapadārthe*, P. 2.2.29 *cārthe dvandvaḥ*, etc.) to words which are naturally endowed with those meanings, by way of condition of application.¹¹ And later it is said that there is no use for an **additional communication** regarding the meaning of something whose meaning is known.¹²

The sense of *anvākhyāna* and *anvākhyāyaka* in the Bhāṣya on P. 1.1.62 vt. 1 (I p. 161 l. 17-18) is not relevant in the present investiga-[194]tion because the Bhāṣya follows here the use of *anvākhyāna* in the preceding *vārttika*.

We can conclude from the above that *anvākhyāna* and *anvācaṣṭe* carry the meaning 'additional communication' wherever Patañjali uses these terms in his own right. This 'additional communication' is in the vast majority of cases embodied in the *vārttikas* of Kātyāyana.

(ii) The word *vyākhyāsyāmaḥ* occurs always, i.e. no fewer than 11 times, in connection with the Paribhāṣā *vyākhyānato viśeṣapratipattir na hi saṃdehād alakṣaṇam* "The precise (meaning of an ambiguous term) is ascertained from interpretation, for (a rule), even though it contain an ambiguous term, must nevertheless teach (something definite)." (tr. Kielhorn, 1874: 2). In all these cases the *vyākhyāna*, i.e., 'interpretation'

⁸ See Mbh II p. 265 l. 12-15: *pautraprabhṛtī vartate/ evaṃ tarhy anvācaṣṭe pautraprabhṛtī vartate iti/ kim etasyānvākhyāne prayojanam/ tac ca daivadattyartham* (vt. 2).

⁹ Mbh III p. 349 l. 4-5: *upasargād iti vartate/ evaṃ tarhy ācāryo 'nvācaṣṭa upasargād ity anuvartata iti/*

¹⁰ Mbh I p. 104 l. 22-23: *yasya punar nityāḥ śabdāḥ prayuktānām asau sādhutvam anvācaṣṭe.*

¹¹ *svabhāvata cteṣāṃ śabdānām cteṣv artheṣv abhiniviṣṭānām nimittatvenānvākhyānaṃ kriyate.*

¹² *na khalv api nirjñātasārthasyānvākhyāne kiṃcid api prayojanam asti.*

or ‘explanation’, is given by Patañjali himself. It can here be said that the *Mahābhāṣya* embodies the *vyākhyāna*.

But in Mbh I p. 170 l. 17 *vyākhyāyate* is used to show how a sūtra is explained or interpreted in a vārttika, viz. in P. 1.1.65 vt. 5. And Mbh I p. 11 l. 21-23 contains a brief discussion in which *vyākhyāna* is explained to be not just the separation of the words of sūtras, but to include, ‘example, counterexample, and words to be supplied’.¹³ Mbh I p. 12 l. 23-27 again rejects this position and returns to the view that separation of words of sūtras is *vyākhyāna*.¹⁴ None of these characteristics apply to the *Mahābhāṣya*.

We must conclude that *vyākhyāna* for Patañjali means ‘interpretation’ or ‘explanation’ in general, and that he applies the word most often, but by no means always, to refer to his own *Mahābhāṣya*.

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We see that Bhandarkar's remark to the extent that Kātyāyana's vārttikas were known by the designation *anvākhyāna*, and Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* by the name *vyākhyāna*, is justified, but only to a certain extent. It is therefore at least conceivable that the terms *anvākhyāna* and *vyākhyāna* in our Upaniṣadic passage (supposing that the first of these two actually belongs there) refer to two-layered commentaries on Sūtra works like what we find in the case of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

Here it must be observed that it is out of the question that the word *sūtra* in our enumeration refers *only* to the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. There are many other Sūtra works connected with Vedic literature, and there may have been even more when our list was made. Nor can we believe that no other commentaries were known to the author of the list. However, one can reasonably raise the question whether other two-layered commentaries were known to him. Suppose there weren't. Suppose further that our author had such a two-layered commentary in mind when he enumerated the three items *sūtra*, *anvākhyāna*, *vyākhyāna*. In that case we cannot but conclude that he lived after Patañjali, i.e., after the middle of the second century B.C.E.

All this should not blind us to the fact that the present interpretation of the terms *anuvyākhyāna* (*anvākhyāna*) and *vyākhyāna* is no more than a conjecture. But even though a conjecture, it proposes an explanation for an otherwise obscure term.

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¹³ *nanu ca tad eva sūtram viṅghītam vyākhyānaṃ bhavati/ na kevalāni carcāpadāni vyākhyānaṃ vṛddhiḥ āt aij iti/ kiṃ tarhi/ udāharaṇaṃ pratyudāharaṇaṃ vākyādhyāhāra ity etat samuditaṃ vyākhyānaṃ bhavati/.*

¹⁴ *yad apy ucyate śabdāpratipattir iti na hi sūtrata eva śabdān pratipadyante kiṃ tarhi vyākhyānataś ceti parihr̥tam etat tad eva sūtram viṅghītam vyākhyānaṃ bhavatīti/ nanu coktaṃ na kevalāni carcāpadāni vyākhyānaṃ vṛddhiḥ āt aij iti kiṃ tarhi udāharaṇaṃ pratyudāharaṇaṃ vākyādyāhāra ity etat samuditaṃ vyākhyānaṃ bhavatīti/ avijānata etad evaṃ bhavati/ sūtrata eva hi śabdān pratipadyante/...*

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Abbreviations

Apte	V.S. Apte, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 3 vols., Poona 1957-1959.
BAU	Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad
Ch-Up	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
GB	Gopatha Brāhmaṇa
MaiU	Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad
Mbh	Patañjali's Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya
MW	Monier Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford 1899
P.	Pāṇinian sūtra

PW	Otto Böhtlingk, Rudolph Roth, Sanskrit-Wörterbuch, 7 Bde., St. Petersburg 1855-1875.
pw	Otto Böhtlingk, Sanskrit-Wörterbuch in kürzerer Fassung, 4 Bde., St. Petersburg 1879-1889.
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
SNR	N. Stchoupak, L. Nitti, L. Renou, Dictionnaire sanskrit-français, Paris 1932
TA	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
TU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad