

## Book Review

### Punarnavā of Prof. O. Vatsala

A Malayalam Commentary on the Mahābhāṣyaṃ of Patañjali

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The *pièce de résistance* of śāstraṃ or scientific treatises in Sanskrit is that they follow a specific sequence. The sequence is made up of abridging, supplementing and expanding. In scientific parlance, they are sūtraṃ, vārthikaṃ and bhāṣyaṃ. Sūtraṃ helps maintain the periphery of the śāstraṃ and also helps to remember it with ease. Vārthikaṃ takes care of additions and omissions. Bhāṣyaṃ provides for the gradual and systematic unfolding of the condensed grammar rule to unravel.

At the outset, complex linguistic theories are encapsulated based on certain regulative principles and parameters followed by supplementary material added in due course and then they are better explained strictly adhering to the boundaries of those regulative principles and parameters. Although the commonly seen textual sequence is of sūtraṃ-bhāṣyaṃ-vārthikaṃ, in grammar the order comprises of sūtraṃ-vārthikaṃ-bhāṣyaṃ, in which bhāṣyaṃ is seen enthroned as the accredited plenipotentiary, especially at times of indecision.

#### **The Philosophy behind the science**

Analogous to the abridging-expanding exercise practised in Sanskrit scientific treatises as mentioned in the beginning, there is a trend involving the philosophy-science sequence, eliciting doubt that there were other dialects for worldly interaction while Sanskrit was protected with pristine chastity. A galaxy of sages relentlessly working on to make the grammar flawless testifies this observation. Nowhere in the world do we see such acumen and significance shown for perfecting the language as seen in India for Sanskrit. How else shall we explain the huge gamut of literary works which covertly brood over the realization of the ultimate reality as being the end of human life! Let the plot be set in the mundane plane, but the undercurrent is brimming with spirituality; though poetic fancy is employed to embellish the narrative, the plot is drawn from such epic works which have written with spiritual purposes. It is better said, the attempt was to learn the language, a foolproof medium, to learn about the subject of communication, the ultimate! So the purpose is philosophical and the means scientific. Teaching of grammar will perfect the intellect to make the subject of communication intelligible. Perhaps Pāṇini ventures into this science with such an objective which is expanded and elaborated by others and Bhartruhari concludes the session paving the way for the departure. Perhaps this is the essence of the famous excerpt śabdabrahmaṇi niṣṇātaḥ paraṃ brahmādhigachhati.

The śabdabrahma is bereft of attributes and is the locus of wisdom. This is called parā vāk which is the proximate cause of the universe. This is what Bhartruhari describes in the beginning of Brahmakāṇḍaṃ thus, anādinidhanaṃ brahma etc. This is reflected in the Pāṇinīyaśikṣa thus, athāyamāntarō jñatā sūkṣmavāgātmanā sthitaḥ vyktayé swasya rūpasya śabdātvena vivartatē.

Transformation or vivartaḥ is seen here in its material level. The parā vāk transforms into paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikhari after being revealed by the same omnipresent air called by different names based on its location. The air transforms into sound. The air the cause and the transformed sound the effect as said by the Nyaya school of philosophy that kāryaniyatapūrvaruthi kāraṇaṃ.

The comparison among parā, paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikhari could be equated to sūkṣmatama-sūkṣmatara-sūkṣma and sthulā forms of a transformed indivisible unit; better said, the subtlest-subtler-subtle and gross forms of the vāk.

Like the modern-day physics or mathematics, this grammar brings the subject matters into a defined domain by categorising them on the basis of certain characteristics. It functions with the help of exquisitely carved out formulae that use commonly defined technical terminologies. Grammar actually becomes a science capable of construing the letters, words and sentences and their structural and semantic relations on the basis of certain core ideas.

Amidst several schools of grammar, Pāṇini's grammar has won the most coveted position with its brevity, clarity and all inclusiveness. Kātyāyana's vārthikaṃ would compensate for the shortcomings of the sūtraṃ of

Pāṇini and the Bhāṣyaṃ of Patañjali would reflect on both these sūtraṃ and vārtikaṃ to lay down the conclusion thus making Bhāṣyakāraḥ the supreme authority.

Though Punarnavā, the Malayalam commentary on the Bhāṣyaṃ is the topic of this discussion, a brief historic background of Pāṇini's school of grammar is given here for accentuating the seriousness of the work of Prof. O. Vatsala.

### The Chronicle

From various references we find that there are two streams of grammar. Among these two the one that describes the grammar using rules is known as mähéswarasampradāyaḥ and the other is aindrasampradāyaḥ that takes words per se for grammatical analysis. The lineage in the first category is formed through Brahma-Maheswara-Panini and the other Brahma-Bruhaspati-Indra etc. Grammars like the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini falls in the first category and those like Kātantraṃ falls in the second category.

Pāṇini has mentioned the names of 10 authoritarian grammarians viz., Āpiśaliḥ, Kāśyapaḥ, Gārgyaḥ, Gālavaḥ, Chākṛavarmā, Bhāradwājaḥ, Śakatāyanaḥ, Śākalyaḥ, Senakaḥ and Sphoṭāyanaḥ as those belonging to the mähéswarasampradāyaḥ. They may have lived before Pāṇini or may be his contemporaries! Nevertheless, it cannot be contended that there were only ten of them!

Though Bhāṣyaṃ mentions the names of several grammarians, they may not necessarily have lived before Pāṇini. Vāyuḥ, Bhāradwājaḥ, Bhāguriḥ, Pauṣkarasādiḥ, Cārāyanaḥ, Kāśakrtsnaḥ, Śantanuḥ, Vayyāghrapadyaḥ, Mādhyandiniḥ, Rauḍhiḥ, Śaunakiḥ, Gautamaḥ, Vyādiḥ etc. are attested by Bhāṣyaṃ as acclaimed authorities of grammar.

Pāṇiniḥ, Dākṣīputraḥ, Śālākiḥ Śālāturiyaḥ, Āhikaḥ etc. are considered different names of the same person by Puruṣottamadēvaḥ in his Trikāndaśeṣaḥ. Among these, the name Pāṇini is famous. Although there are references on his whereabouts, they are probable.

There are several vrthiḥ available for Pāṇini's sūtraṃ. The sentences that explain the meaning of a sūtraṃ is thus called. Pāṇini himself has written a vrthiḥ known as Akālakam. This is mentioned in the Mahābhāṣyaṃ. Besides this, Śwōbhūtiḥ, Vyādiḥ, Kuṇiḥ, Māthuraḥ, Vararuciḥ (*he is not the author of vārthikaṃ, but a contemporary of Vikramādityaḥ famously mentioned in jyōtirvidābharaṇam as 'dhanvantharikṣapaṇakā...vararucirnavavikramasya'*), Dévanandiḥ, Durviniṭaḥ, Cullibhattiḥ, Nirlūraḥ etc. About 30 grammarians have compiled vrthiḥ. Among these, the Bhāṣāvrtthiḥ of Puruṣōthamadēvaḥ and Siddhāntakaumudī of Bhattōjīdikṣitaḥ are prominent.

Such an extensive language in which inexhaustible literary works have been compiled, dispersed across a vast geographic region and spoken widely would certainly undergo drastic changes and its grammar would require amendments to accommodate acceptable changes. To bring such changes as also subjects which were not dealt with by Pāṇini under the purview of grammar, sage Kātyāyanaḥ composed vārthikaṃ.

Vākyaṃ, vyākhyānasūtraṃ, bhāṣyasūtraṃ, anutantraṃ, anusmr̥tiḥ etc. are different names of vārthikaṃ. Bharthariḥ, Kumārilabhataḥ, Jinēndrabudhiḥ, Kṣīraswāmiḥ, Hēlārājaḥ, Hēmarājaḥ, Haradattaḥ, Sāyanaḥ, Nāgēśaḥ etc. have referred to such names.

Among the compilers of vārthikaṃ, it was Kātyāyanaḥ, disciple of Pāṇiniḥ, who came to be reverently regarded one among the trinity of grammarian-sages. In his Trikāndakōśaḥ, Puruṣōthamadēvaḥ testifies that Kātyaḥ, Kātyayanaḥ, Punarvasuḥ, Médhājīta and Vararuciḥ are names of the same person.

### Bhāṣyaṃ and the Mahābhāṣyaṃ

Bhāṣyaṃ is a comprehensive examination of the sūtraṃ and related vārthikaṃ and takes care of commissions, omissions and augmentations. Among different texts of Bhāṣyaṃ such as the Vārthikōnmēśaḥ of Hēlārājaḥ, Arthaprakāśikā of Rāghavasūriḥ, Vyākhyānaṃ of Rājarudraḥ, the Bhāṣyaṃ of Patañjaliḥ has occupied prominence and became known as Mahābhāṣyaṃ. In the course of time, the authentic and final word on matters of grammar has become that of Patañjaliḥ.

As the name suggests Mahābhāṣyaṃ, the majestic commentary is considered so great owing to different reasons. It is great owing to the profundity of thoughts, for it goes into the extremely unfathomable recess of Pāṇini's grammar rules. Yet, the language is unpretentious and down-to-earth that gives the aura of the terrain after the dense bushes are cut and the entangled thorny creepers have been extricated, so it breaths

easy and looks sunny. Such is its capacity to clarify the grammar rules with ease and elan. The way of presentation is charming and exemplification of the core and intriguing grammatical principles are worldly – wise that will reach all alike. The most important of all is the attitude of the bhāṣyakāraḥ. He takes into account the views of all and approves of the essential and refutes the trivial views but with courtesy. He even counters Pāṇni, but with utmost reverence.

Important grammarians who have composed Bhāṣyam on Aṣṭādhyāyī are Kātyaḥ, Kātyāyanaḥ, Bhāradwajaḥ, Sunāgaḥ, Krōṣṭaḥ, Vādavaḥ, Vyāghrabhūtiḥ, Vayyaghrapadyaḥ etc. Puruṣōthamadévaḥ, the author of Bhāṣāvṛthiḥ and Patañjaliḥ, the author of Bhāṣyam mentions the name of Vyādi also known as Dākṣāyanaḥ as the author of a famous treatise called Saṅgrahaḥ. Vyādi is considered the uncle of Pāṇiniḥ. But the name of Vyādi is not found mentioned in the Aṣṭādhyāyī.

The texts of vārthikaṁ are not available today as independent treatises. All the vārthikaṁ available in the Mahābhāṣyam cannot be considered as belonging to Kātyāyanaḥ because the Bhāṣyam discusses vārthikaṁ written by a number of grammarians.

There are references to vārthikaṁ of Bhāradwājaḥ, Saunāgāḥ and Krōṣṭriyāḥ in the Mahābhāṣyam. It remembers Vādavaḥ, Vyāghrabhūtiḥ and Vaiyyāghrapadyaḥ. Besides them, Gōnarḍīyaḥ, Gōnikāputraḥ, Saurabhagavān, Kunaravādava etc. are composers of vārthikaṁ found mentioned in the Bhāṣyam.

### **Commentaries on the Mahābhāṣyam**

Bhartrhari has composed a commentary on the Mahābhāṣyam known as Mahābhāṣyadīpikā and is incomplete. Among other commentaries, the Mahābhāṣyapradīpaḥ of Kayyāṭaḥ is well-known. Jyēsthakalaśaḥ, Maitréyarakṣitaḥ, Puruṣōttamadévaḥ, Dhanéswaraḥ, Śeṣanārāyanaḥ, Viṣnumitraḥ, Nīlakanṭhavājapēyī, Śeṣaviṣṇuḥ, Tirumalayajvā, Śivarāmēndrasaraswathiḥ, Gōpālakriṣṇaśāstrī, Sadaśivaḥ etc. have written commentaries on the Mahābhāṣyam. Among these, the Mahābhāṣyapradīpaḥ of Kayyāṭaḥ itself has about 14 commentaries of which the most recognized is the Mahābhāṣyapradīpodyōṭaḥ (udyōṭaḥ in short) of Nāgēśabhaṭṭaḥ.

All these show that in this vast range of grammar textual tradition, the most venerated and authoritative text is that of the Mahābhāṣyam whereon Prof. O. Vatsala has compiled a commentary entitled Punarnavā that imbibes the essence of various other commentaries.

### **The Punarnavā**

Prof. Vasudevan Potty recollects the famous saying that the understanding of Bhāṣyam is as difficult as ruling an empire. According to him, the difficulty is attributed by the simplicity of the language. Small and sometimes frivolous sentences that go on entertaining the antagonist, cross-questioning now and then, eventually reaching the fringe are mind-blowing style distinctive of Bhāṣyam. This seemingly simple language itself is the most baffling factor because the content is thought provoking and can be assimilated only with the sharpest of intellect. Had the language too been tough, it would have been impenetrable.

Bhāṣyam explains grammar rules with the help of concise worldly maxims, taking recourse to what is in vogue, general practices and customs such as, ‘dvigatā api hétavō bhavanti’ ‘āmraśca siktāḥ pitarāśca p̄rīnitāḥ’. Another instance is the answer ‘śwētō dhāvati’ given to the presumed question kaḥ kīdrśō dhāvati where the euphony plays fun with śwā itō dhāvati and swētō dhāvati. The reiteration that śāstraṁ should not be forsaken in the face of shortcomings, instead, they should be sorted out is evident from the quote, ‘nahi bhikṣukāḥ santīti sthālyō nādhisrīyanté’ and ‘nahi mūṣakāḥ santīti krtvā śalayō nōpyanté’ etc. These are some of the reasons that made Bhāṣyam the most coveted among other similar treatises.

The text of Punarnavā which means ‘new again’ or rejuvenated! does pace with the lines of Bhāṣyam, alongside Malayalam translation. The gloss on anubandhacatuṣṭayam, while discussing the word *atha* is noteworthy. Similarly, the brief and clear explanation that clarifies the use of singular in ‘rakṣohāgamalaghvasandéhaḥ prayōjanam’ and the details on compound ‘asandéhaḥ’ are useful to students. Punarnavā extracts salient features of other texts such as the Vākyapadīyam while explaining ‘catvāri śrīngāḥ’ and Śabdakaustubhaḥ in ‘vrudhirādaic’. Although other commentaries like the Pradīpaḥ of Kayyāṭaḥ, Udyōṭaḥ of Nāgēśaḥ and the incomplete commentary of Bhartrhariḥ are available, the Punarnavā of Pro. Vatsala is a novel attempt in itself.

The Punarnavā provides sūtram, vārtikam and bhāṣyam in the Malayalam script. The position of the sūtram follow the same order in which it is placed in the Aṣṭādhyāyī. Its language is down-to-earth and it gives clear guidance to the acceptable decisions where ever there is apparent contradiction in Bhāṣyam.

Prof. V. Venkataraja Sharma comments that Mahābhāṣyam discusses every subject that has grammatical connection. Even the Sidhāntakaumudī, latest among the prakaraṇagranthāḥ that explains complex grammatical principles traces them to Mahābhāṣyam. Beauteous and supple diction and in-depth depiction of the subject matter are qualities epitomised in Bhāṣyam. Bhāṣyam has been composed using germs of words unlike other śāstrāḥ that use inapprehensible and obscure jargon. Even then, it requires a good commentary to understand its subtle nuances. A commentary that intelligibly interprets the hidden meaning of a śāstram can only be written by a person who has learned it from a guru and has grasp of what is set down in its other fêted commentaries. In most cases, uncertainty prevails over, especially while deciding whether a given sentence could be considered a bhāṣyavākyaṃ or a vārtikam of Kātyāyanaḥ or that of other vārtikakārah

For example, the commentator resolves with ease the dispute to settle on either ‘atha śabdānuśāsanam’ or ‘sidhē śabdārthasambandhē’ is the commencing vārtikam. She successfully negotiates that the first one is a bhāṣyavākyaṃ and the second is the first vārtikam by analysing the words *atha* and *sidha* found in these by her own reasoning and also by relying on other commentaries, for she quotes the Bhāṣyakārah that the word *sidha* is synonymous to *nitya* and is used for auspiciousness in the beginning which marks the commencement of the vārtikam and therefore all other previous truncated sentences resembling vārtikam are but the compositions of Bhāṣyakārah. This line of reasoning is substantiated by one of the characteristic signs of bhāṣyam thus, ‘swapadāni ca varnyantē’.

Similarly, the inconsistency between the plural word ‘prayōjanāni’ in the question ‘kāni punaḥ śabdānuśāsanasya prayōjanāni’ and the singular expression ‘prayōjanam’ in the answer thereof ‘rakṣōhāgamalaghvasandēhāḥ prayōjanam’ and the solution by defining the term ‘prayōjanam’ to mean *result* is another example that Prof. Sharma points out for the necessity of a commentary to understand the seemingly simple usages of Bhāṣyam which Prof. O. Vatsala brings about gracefully.

Like a temple car drawn by caparisoned elephants, the book is presented with the prefaces of Prof. Vasudevan Potty and Prof. V. Venkataraja Sharma, venerable grammarians of our times and a lengthy introduction by Prof. K. G. Paulose, the then chairman of the Chinmaya Shodha Sansthan.

Text	The Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣyam of Patañjali with the Malayalam commentary entitled Punarnavā
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