Some folk-etymologies in the Anuyogadvāra-sūtra*

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1. Among the ten types of nouns described in the Anuyogadvāra-sūtra*, two are called गोप्य and नौगोप्य. गोप्य is गुणनिष्ठ ‘appropriate to the meaning’ and नौगोप्य is ‘contrary to the meaning.’ The illustrations of the former type are: खमण (क्रमतित), तपण (तपतित), अलण (अलतित), पवण (पवतित). The illustrations of the latter type are: सकृत ‘bird’, which is अकृत ‘not having a lance’. समुप ‘box’ (Sk. समुप), which is without ‘the मुग (Sk. मुग) grain’. समुप ‘sea’ (Sk. समुप) which is without मुह ‘seal’ (Sk. मुह). पलाण ‘dry grass’ (divided as प-लाण, Sk. प-लाण ‘having abundant saliva’), which is अपलाण ‘not having saliva’. सकृत ‘kite’ (divided as स-कृत, Sk. सकृत ‘having a family’), which is असकृत ‘having no family’. पलाण ‘the पलाण tree’ (Sk. पलाण, understood as पल-अण ‘eating meat’), which is अपलाण ‘not eating meat’. इंगोच ‘a rainy insect’ (Sk. इंगोच), which is not a ‘protector of Indra’.

2. Another type is that which is designated by a word having a contrary meaning. The illustrations are: शिवा ‘vixen’ (meaning also ‘auspicious’), although it is अशिवा ‘inauspicious’. आर्त ‘fire’ is called शीतल ‘cold’. विष ‘poison’ is called मधु ‘sweet’. In the house of liquor-distiller liquor is called श्वान ‘sweet’ eventhough it is अम्ल ‘acidic’. अलौक (but understood as अलौक i. e. Sk. अलौक ‘not red’), eventhough it is रक्त ‘red’. अलाऊ ‘gourd’ (Sk. अलाऊ, understood as अ-लाऊ ‘not a container’) eventhough it is लाऊ ‘container’. For कुर्ण ‘Indian Maddar’ (divided as कु-र्ण ‘that which appears unbeauteous’) is used eventhough it is beautiful.

3. One type of names are given according to their etymology.

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The illustrations are: महिष ‘buffalow’ is so called because he sleeps on the ground (मझौ घोंटे). भमर ‘honey-bee’ is so called because it wanders and drones (भमति गैटि े). मुसल ‘pestle’ is so called because it rises up frequently (मुसलभरति). कपिल ‘the wood-apple fruit’ is so called because it hangs like a monkey (कपि+स्थि) चिक्खल ‘liquid mud’ is so called because it makes sound like बिंदू and it is low in the middle (खल). उलूक ‘owl’ is so called because its ears are high (उल्लबक्षण). मेखला ‘girdle’ is so called because it is a row of मेख (?).

4. Even if Ārya Rākṣita may not be author of the Anuyogadvāra, there is no doubt about the fact that its author was highly learned and well-versed in Sanskrit. Hence we are intrigued with the structural division or etymologies of the words like सकुंत, समुग, समुद्र, पलाल, सजलिया, पलास, इंदरोग that he has given just like a common man, who being ignorant of grammar or etymology gives a fanciful etymology to match the meaning—what is known as ‘folk etymology’. In every language such fanciful etymologies are current. For example in Modern Gujarati माशी ‘mother’s sister’ is explained by some as मार्शी ‘like the mother’. Actually it is derived as Sk. मातुःस्वरूपा, Pk. मातास्वरूपा, Old Guj. माशी > माशी. भन्त्रीजो ‘nephew’ is explained as भन जीजो ‘the third danger’, while actually it is derived as Sk. भारतीय:, Pk. भन्त्रीज्ञ, and then through भन्त्रीज्ञ, भन्त्रीजो. टपाली ‘postman’ is facetiously explained as टप दैने आलो जाय ते ‘He who delivers speedily’, when etymologically it is connected with टपौ ‘halts at intervals in the path’. In Hindi the following doggerel is well-known—

रंगी को नारंगी कहें, चालती को कहें गाढ़ी ।
गंदे को सफ़ी कहें, ऐसे लोक अनाड़ी।

(Variants खाने को मीठा कहें; वाढ़ी को कहें पाली; पाली को वाढ़ी कहें). In this नारंगी ‘orange’ is divided as न-रंगी ‘not coloured’ when in fact it is coloured. गाढ़ी is ‘cart, car’ taken as a homonym for ‘buried’. The piece of cloth used to cover
the end of चलन of a hookah is dirty, but it is called साफी meaning also ‘clean’. खाण ‘salty’ is called मीठा ‘sweet’. बाढ़ी ‘knife’ is also called पाली which also means ‘that which has increased’.

5. In the non-standard Sanskrit of Jain Prabandha works many fanciful etymologies are advanced. Pk. पाणहिमा ‘shoe’ derived form Sk. उपाणहिमा is re-Sanskritised as प्राणहिमा ‘beneficial for the life’ . Guj. दोषपर ‘old man’ is Sanskritised as दोषपर ‘he whose hands dangle’. दोहर ‘(दोहर) ‘a meter of that name’ is Sanskritised as दुर्घट रक ‘a pot of milk’ (probably based on the wrong alternative name दोधक, which is a different metre). अलंक, लाल, कुसम ‘as etymologized in the Anuyogadvāra are in line with the above given back-formations.

6. We however know that the tradition of giving fanciful, artificial or imaginary etymologies goes back to Yāska’s निरुक्त (about fifth century B.C.), and it continues later in the explanations given in the literature on the उपादिसूत्र and still later in the one-letter dictionaries (एकाक्षरी शब्दकोश). Among the illustrations cited above from the Anuyogadvāra the etymologies of the words Sk. अलावु (Pk.अलावउ), उलूक, कुसम्फ, पक चिक्काङ्ल, शक पलाश, पक. पलाष, शक. मुशल, मेखला, पक. सकुंत (related Sk. words शकुंतल, शकुन, शकुनी), Pk. साउलिया (Sk. शकुलिनिका, Guj. सामजी), Sk. समुद्र are unknown. भमर is connected with भर ‘to wander’ (with-अर-derivative). महिषी is based on Sk. महि ‘great’ and समुद्र derives from समु+उ (the same root as that of उच ‘water’). इंद्रगोप is in the same class as the popular names given to some insects etc. (e.g. fungus is called in Guj. बिलाखीन धें ‘the hat of a cat’). In the case of the use of शिवा (‘auspicious’ for that which is really considered अशिवा ‘inauspicious’) and स्वाद ‘sweet’ (which is actually अम्ल ‘acid’), the verbal taboo has prevailed, under the belief that if an inauspicious word is spoken the harmful thing may possibly materialize. The terrible Vedic god स्वाद
came to be called शिव, शंभु, शंकर ‘the benign one’, to appease him.

In Gujarati under the superstition that when somebody goes out to carry out a task, if anyone enquires क्या जाओ छो ? ‘Where are you going ?’. then the use of the word क्या would invite failure in the undertaking. So instead the word छो is used (शो जाओ छो ?), because that word is derived from Sk. सिद्ध, implying the undertaking will be successful.