AVĪTA AND ĀVĪTA*

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In his admirable study “Die’Erkenntnislehre des klassischen Sāṃkhya-Systems”¹ FRAUWALLNER has attempted to reconstruct the beginning of the Sāstitantra of Vārṣaganyā² by combining the evidence from Jīnendrabuddhi’s Pramāṇasamuccayatīkā and Simhasūri’s Nyāyagamānusārini. In this connection he referred to two modes of reasoning called vīta and āvīta, which technical terms he rendered as “direkte [Begründung]” and “indirekte [Begründung]” respectively.³ FRAUWALLNER must have known, of course, that the indirect proof usually appears in Sāṃkhya and Nyāya texts (notably in the Yuktidīpikā and Nyāyavārttika)⁴ with the designation

* As usual I wish to express my indebtedness to Prof. K. PREISENDANZ. The arguments presented here were developed in the course of several very long breakfasts.


2 FRAUWALLNER has tacitly reconstructed the name of the author of the Sāstitantra as Vṛṣagana; he took his clue probably from the fact that his followers are often called vārṣaganāḥ in the Yuktidīpikā. However, as Pulimbhara CHAKRAVARTI has pointed out, vārṣagana may also mean a follower of Vārṣaganyā (cf. also Astādhyāyī 4.2.111), and CHAKRAVARTI’s arguments in favour of Vārṣaganyā being the name of the Sāṃkhya teacher referred to in the Yuktidīpikā seem more convincing to me. Cf. P. CHAKRAVARTI, Origin and Development of the Sāṃkhya System of Thought, repr. Delhi 1975 (originally published Calcutta 1951), pp. 135-138.

3 Cf. FRAUWALLNER, op. cit., pp. 228, 229. These two terms are also used by FRAUWALLNER as qualifying “inference” (Schlussfolgerung) and “proof” (Nachweis); cf. ibid., p. 267.

4 Most of the passages that deal with these terms have been collected by K. KANO in a paper presented at the Third International Dharmakīrti Conference (Hiroshima, 6.11.1997): “On anyathānupapatti and āvīta/āvīta.” To these one may add Ślokavārttika, Apohaśāda 166 and the commentaries there on (cf. below); Nyāyavārttikatātparyaparītiśuddhi of Udayanacārya, ed. A. Thakur (Nyāyacatur- granthikā Vol. IV, Delhi 1996), p. 456.5 (... ṣlokaḥvārttikāḥ vātā; Abhayatilaka, Nyāyānīkāḥ, eds. A. Thakur and J.S. Jetly (Gaekwād’s Oriental Series 169, Baroda 1981), p. 265.7 (ete trayo hetavo darśanāntare ‘pi prasiddhā iti darśayati – vita iti); Vācaspatimiśra II, Nyāyāvatāvlokā in K. PREISENDANZ, Studien zu Nyāyasūtra III.1 mit dem Nyāyatāvlokā Vācaspatimiśras II. (Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien 46, Stuttgart 1994), Vol.1, p. 128.10 (... ity avītvahetoh ...: variants: iti vītauḥ itoh and iti na...
avīta, but his paper contains no discussion of this variant; in fact, he does not even mention that the variant exists. FRAUWALLNER’s silence may be explained by assuming that he has accepted Muni JAMBUVIJAYAJI’s opinion, expressed in his edition of the Nyāyāgamānasūrini, that “even though for the most part throughout the works of the philosophical systems of Śāṅkhya etc., the use of the word avīta alone is observed, whereas throughout the Nayacakra-vṛtti the use of the word āvīta alone is apprehended, nevertheless the usage of āvīta is indeed understood to be the correct one . . . .” However, the only reason provided by the revered Muni does not seem to be decisive. He merely points out that only āvīta appears in Kumārila’s Ślokāvārttika quoting Apohavāda 166.

paksikuryād yadā sarvāms tadāpy āvītahetubhīḥ /
anākānto virodhas ca sarvalokaprasiddhitaḥ //

For his quotation of this verse Muni JAMBUVIJAYAJI has used the edition by C.K. Raja, published in Madras in 1946. However, the same verse appears in Dvārikādāsa Śāstri’s edition of the Nyāyaratnākara with a variant tadāthāvītahetubhīḥ that leaves the reading ambiguous.

paksikuryād yadā sarvāms tadāthāvītahetubhīḥ /

According to HONDA’s word index to the Ślokāvārttika, this is the only occurrence of avīta in the Ślokāvārttika; the word āvīta has no entry in this index.

The two available commentaries on this verse also do not help us to decide between the two variants, for it is clear that if the printed editions are to be trusted – that Jayamśa has read āvīta, whereas Pārthaśarathīśvara has read avīta. It is interesting to note that there is a strong resemblance between the two commentaries on this verse, which to the best of my knowledge has not been noticed so far. If the dating of Jayamśa by C.K. RAJA as

5 Jambuvijayaji’s edition (cf. next note) bears the publication date A.D. 1966. Yet FRAUWALLNER already refers to it in the above mentioned paper that was published in 1958 (cf. FRAUWALLNER, op. cit., p. 231, n. 5). Further dates that appear on the title page of Jambuvijayaji’s edition are: Vīra saṃvat 2492, Viṃrama S. 2022 and Ārāma; S. 70. Vīra 2492 and Viṃrama 2022 correspond to 1964/65, unless the dates are given in expired years (cf. A.L. BASHAM, The Wonder that was India, Repr. Calcutta Allahabad/Bombay/Delhi 1991, p. 496) on which the case correspondence to 1966 is possible. Barring the possibility of time-travel, one can reasonably assume that Jambuvijayaji’s edition was set for print much earlier, at least to some extent before 1958. FRAUWALLNER’s preface to this edition (p. 6) is dated 15th September 1958; on the other hand, Jambuvijayaji’s notes (e.g., bhootaparīṣṭam p. 137, n. 1) refer to FRAUWALLNER’s “Erkenntnislehrs des klassischen Śāṅkhyasystems.”


7 Cf. the continuation of the quote in the previous note: . . . āṃśālaḥbhāttavāricīc māṃsāloka-vārttikāṃ cy avītāśābdayayaiva prayogātāḥ tad yathā . . .


10 Cf. Megumu Honda, Index to the Ślokāvārttika, (Dōhō-Daigaku-Kiyō Vol. 7, 1993), pp. 33-148 = (1)-116). This undoubtably very useful index, however, is reputed to be not entirely reliable.

11 Cf. Śarkarikā p. 75.4-6: tato ’py āvītahetubhir anākaṇānta iti . . .


13 Cf. Śarkarikā p. 75.9-12: ye hi vipakṣayātirekaniyārtham pratipādayanti te tātvikahetavo bhūdhāyante. yathā prāṇāyayām nirārikamābhvyābhya ghatādībhyaḥ nirvātājvaccharīre dhṛṣṭamāṇās tadāyavacchenedaiva sāmakatvaṃ avagamayanyoḥ arthah kim ca naḥyojinaḥ śabdāḥ naṁyavacchenedantah pratipādayantāti lokaviruddhaḥ ‘py ayaṃ paks(h). Nyāyaratnākara p. 433.20-22: avītā hetavo nāma vipakṣayāvṛttikumkhena ye sādhyaṃ gamayanti, yathā prāṇāyayā, te hi nirārikamābhvyābhyo vajvātājvaccharīrasya nirārikamatvāpohena sāmakatvaṃ gamayanti, lokaviruddhaḥ ca naḥyojinoṁ anapokarathvaḥ iti.

Of course the exact relationship between the two commentaries needs to be investigated in a systematic manner. It is not impossible that both commentaries draw here on a common source, for the above example for the a/avīta argument appears already in the Nyāyāvārttika.
belonging to the period before the 11th century is correct,\textsuperscript{14} then we may tentatively conclude that Pārthasārathimśa relies on Jayamiśra’s commentary. I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to Jayamiśra’s commentary which has been hitherto almost completely ignored in Mimāṁsā-studies.

To come back to our subject matter, it seems that the only unambiguous evidence for the reading āvīta is Simhasūri’s work (ca. 600?). To this one may add the later evidence of Mahāvīryupattī no. 4578 which renders āvītah with gsäl te ‘ōns pa\textsuperscript{15} and has no entry for avīta. In view of this scanty evidence WEZLER and MOTEGI decided to follow the majority of the manuscripts and to retain, albeit with some hesitation, the reading avīta in their recent critical edition of the Yuktidipikā.\textsuperscript{16}

Yet the reading āvīta receives unexpected support from a fragment of one of the earliest Turfan manuscripts. This manuscript is among the most precious finds of the Third German Turfan expedition.\textsuperscript{17} It was found in the so-called “Rotkuppelaum” in Qizil on the Northern Silk Road. The manuscript was transferred recently from the East German Academy of Sciences to the State Library, Berlin. Officially it is classified as SHT-810, but it is better known under the name that Dieter SCHLINGLOFF gave it, namely, “the Spitzer manuscript,” in homage of the German Jewish scholar Moritz SPITZER who was the first to work on this manuscript in 1927.

SPITZER was unable to complete his task. In the thirties, as I was told by his son Amitai Spitzer, he worked for the Schocken publishing house and made a narrow escape from Berlin to Jerusalem in 1939. Fortunately he took his transcripts with him, and they miraculously survived in a small plastic bag in his son’s attic in Abu Tor, Jerusalem. I had the chance and privilege to meet Amitai Spitzer in 1995, and he graciously gave me his father’s Nachlass, which, as I discovered later on, contained also materials that SCHLINGLOFF sent to SPITZER in the sixties in the hope that the latter would resume his work after some forty years of interruption. These additional materials consist of black and white photographs of the fragments that occasionally record a better state of preservation of the manuscript. A considerable number of the photographs are accompanied by SCHLINGLOFF’s own preliminary transcriptions. Upon my receipt of the materials Professor WEZLER showed interest in the manuscript and its history, and kindly applied for a research project with the German Research Council to enable me to publish the Spitzer manuscript. The project was finally approved last year, and if all goes well it will be completed by the end of the year 2000.

The original manuscript probably contained some 420 leaves of which only about one thousand, mostly small fragments remain. It is written in Kusāna-Brāhmī script and accordingly dated by LÜDERS to ca. 200 A.D.,\textsuperscript{18} and by Lore SANDER to the 2nd to 3rd century.\textsuperscript{19} I tend to assign the manuscript to a slightly later date, that is, as belonging to the late Kusāna period, but in any case the paleographical evidence does not allow us to

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. RAJA’s introduction to the Šarkarikā p. XIII: “Thus we know definitely that Jayamiśra must have lived before the eleventh century.” RAJA’s argument for this date, however, is not cogent, for it relies on a reference to Jayamiśra by Śrīdeva (i.e., Vādideva Sūri) who, according to RAJA himself, lived “in the end of the eleventh and the first half of the twelfth centuries.”

\textsuperscript{15} Sasaki’s edition p. 305 gsäl te has to be corrected to bsal te; cf., e.g., Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti quoted by FRAUWALLNER, ibid., p. 229.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. A. WEZLER and Sh. MOTEGI, Yuktidipikā. (Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien 44, Stuttgart 1998), e.g., p. 89.1 (underlined as an uncertain reading).

\textsuperscript{17} In the following I repeat and summarize parts of my paper “The Spitzer-Manuscript – Report on a Work in Progress,” forthcoming in J. Kato Felicitation Volume (ed. T. Wada et al.) Tokyo 1999(?)


It is interesting to note that WALDSCHMIDT, in his quotation of the Sitzungsberichte in Sanskrit Handschriften aus den Turfanfund, Vol. I, Wiesbaden 1965, p. XXI, has omitted the sentence that dates the manuscript “etwa um 200 nach Chr.” This, however, seems to be due to a simple oversight rather than to doubts concerning the dating of the manuscript. The omission has been pointed out by SCHLINGLOFF, ibid., p. 323, n. 2.

assume that it could be later than the 3rd century. Thus, we are dealing
here with the earliest philosophical Sanskrit manuscript that survived.

Although the Spitzer manuscript contained in all probability a
Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma work, or even more than one such work, one of
its most remarkable features is frequent references to non-Buddhist
literature and topics, e.g., the Mantras, Brähmanas and Upānisads,
arthaśāstra, kāmaśāstra, Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, the sixty-four arts
(kalā), etc. In his outstanding study of the Parvan-list of the
Mahābhārata Schlingloff has shown what a spectacular potential the
fragments of the Spitzer manuscript have and how far-reaching inferences
can be drawn even on the basis of a single, not very large fragment.

Among the non-Buddhist philosophical doctrines that are referred to in
the Spitzer manuscript one clearly recognizes references to Sāmkhya,
Vaiṣeṣika and Lokāyata. These seem to be the only non-Buddhist
philosophical systems known to the author, and perhaps indeed are the only
ones that existed in 3rd century in India. It was my hope to present here
today all the fragments that deal with Sāmkhya thought, but this task will
have to be postponed for another occasion. Instead, let me present just a
single fragment that bears on the topic of avīta and āvīta. The fragment,
frame 286 (1.9 x 3.6 cm), reads:

![Fragment Image]

// ity etad āvītam //

We can assume that the statement that preceded iti contained an example of
the āvīta mode of reasoning, but even if this assumption is correct, the
example itself seems to be irretrievably lost, and so far I was not able to
determine anything meaningful about the original context of the fragment.
The size of the aksaras seems to indicate that the fragment does not belong
to the middle portion of the manuscript, nor to its very end. The only thing
that we know for certain about the context are the few syllable written on
the other side of the fragment. We can merely gather that something
unknown is separated from something else, equally unknown, that is
referred to by a word ending in śa:

/// śaivuktam ity e///

SCHWARTZ and PFEIFFER's Rückläufiges Wörterbuch – that indispensable
tool for working with Sanskrit fragments – lists more than a thousand
words (including compounds) ending in śa, and this is more than enough
to dissuade us from any further speculation on the subject.

Nevertheless, important information can be gained from our fragment.
So far, our earliest primary references to āvīta date to ca. 600, namely, the
references in the Nyāyagamānussārini and possibly in the Ślokavārttika. Our
earliest secondary reference is from the Tibetan translation of Dignāga's
Pramānasamuccayavṛtti. Similarly, the earliest references to avīta, namely,
in the Nyāyavārttika and the Yuktidipikā, are not older than the 6th century.
Thus, the reference to āvīta in the Spitzer manuscript precedes the hitherto
earliest known references by some three centuries. From this reference we
can also conclude that the mode of reasoning called āvīta was well known
at least a century earlier than the Śaṣṭiśtantra, because FRAUWALLNER

20 It should be noted, however, that none of the early Turfan manuscripts is dated in
colophons, etc. The dating of these manuscripts is based on the similarity between
their script and dated inscriptions of the Kuśāṇa period.

21 For a masterful short survey of the Kuśāṇa manuscripts and the secondary literature
thereon cf. SÄNDER'S paper referred to in note 19.

22 SCHLINGLOFF suggested that the manuscript contained two works, the one divided
into āhnikas, the other into prakaranas; cf. SCHLINGLOFF, "Fragmente ....", p. 325.
Further, one can discern at least three, possibly more, different hands, and at least one
fragment is written in a Gupta script.

23 Cf. D. SCHLINGLOFF, "The oldest extant Parvan-List of the Mahābhārata," Journal of


25 Of course, the distance in time between Vārṣaganyā and the Spitzer manuscript need
not be a full 100 years. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that the author
ascribed Vārṣaganyā’s work to the beginning of the 4th century, and as far as I can see this dating cannot be challenged at the present. By the same token we also conclude that Vārṣaganyā was not the first to use this mode of reasoning, but only adopted it to his purpose. FRAUWALLNER himself, let me hasten to add, must have been of the same opinion: although he says in a rather sweeping manner that “Vṛṣagana’s epistemology is thus his own achievement and his own merit,” when he refers specifically to āvita-reasoning he says: “Valuable and innovative was finally the way in which Vṛṣagana made use of the indirect proof and incorporated it in his system of inference.”

Thus, the variant āvita has now acquired a pedigree that is significantly older than that of avita. Can we decide which of the two variants is the correct one? Before we attempt to answer this question it would be presumably not out of place to ask what the terms viita, avita and āvita actually mean.

While perusing the secondary literature on the topic I was surprised to find out that – with one notable exception – no one seems to have translated viita, avita or āvita literally. FRAUWALLNER’s rendering (cf. above) of viita and āvita as “direct” and “indirect” was, of course, not meant to be a literal rendering of the two terms, but rather a contextual translation or a descriptive conveyance of the way these two modes of reasoning function. The fact that this translation is purely contextual is clearly seen from the fact that even publications that do not follow FRAUWALLNER’s preference for āvita use “direct” and “indirect” for viita and avita respectively. The first scholar to have used “direkt” and “indirekt” for viita and avita is probably Albert BÜRKK in his study of inference in the Sāmkhya-

tattva-kauumudi. This translation was later adopted by GARBE himself. JACOBI, on the other hand, who first drew on the parallel materials from the Nyāyāvatārtika and the Tātparyatātika, is implicitly critical of these translations; he leaves the terms untranslated and seems to favour “positive” or “affirming” and “negative” or “negating” as their original (pre-Uddyotakara) meaning. PULINBHARHI CHAKRAVARTI renders viita and avita as “modus ponens” and “modus tollens.” Whether one considers these terms to be appropriate or not, it is clear that CHAKRAVARTI did not intend them to convey the literal meanings of viita and avita. KUMAR and BHARGAVA translate viita and avita in the Yuktidīpikā as “direct inference” and “inference by elimination.” JHA, in his translation of the Sāmkhya-tattva-kauumudī, sometimes leaves the terms untranslated (on kārikā 5) and sometimes translates avita as “negative inference” (on kārikā 9); similarly, he translates avitahetubhih in the Ślokavārttika “with a view to negative arguments.” In his translation of Nyāyavārttika on 1.1.35 viita and avita appear as “affirmative” and “negative,” and later on (on 3.1.54) as “positive” and “negative” proofs. LARSON and BHATTACHARYA use “positive inference” and “exclusionary inference.” Finally one may also

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33 Cf. Sh. KUMAR & D.N. BHARGAVA, Yuktidīpikā, (Delhi 1990) Vol. I, pp. 1, 169, etc.
34 Cf. The Tattva-Kauumudī, Vācaspati Miśa’s Commentary on the Sāmkhya-Kārikā Trans. by G. JHA with Introduction and Critical Notes by H. D. Sharma, Revised and Re-edited by M. M. Patkar, (Poona 1965), pp. 24-25, 48. In the critical notes, p. 8, avita is referred to as “negative reasoning.”
mention NAKADA’s rendering of vitahetu as “parallel to pakṣa-
dharmavatva”\textsuperscript{38}.

As mentioned above, so far I was able to find only a single attempt to
translate vīta and avīta literally. In Der Mondschein der Sāmkhya-Wahrheit,
published in 1891, GARBE translates vīta and avīta with “geradezu gehend”
and “nicht geradezu gehend.”\textsuperscript{39} It is interesting to note that BÜRK’s
translation of vīta and avīta, which has become the standard translation of
these terms, is based on this rather inappropriate translation which he
accepts uncritically. “Avīta means ‘not going straightforward’; and
‘indirect’ means indeed precisely the same thing.”\textsuperscript{40} Even though one has to
disagree with GARBE’s literal translation,\textsuperscript{41} it has an advantage over all
other translations inasmuch as it makes clear that the translator has
understood the term vīta to be the past participle of the root \textit{vī} with the
upasarga \textit{vi}, which is not at all obvious. GARBE’s interpretation of the term
is further endorsed by Vācaspatimiśra who analyses the term while
commenting on Uddyotakara’s \textit{Nyāyavārttika}.\textsuperscript{42}

If I understand correctly, Vācaspati interprets avīta as a \textit{kevalayatirekha-
netu}, i.e., a reason characterized merely by negative concomitance because
there is no \textit{pakṣa}; vīta could be either a regular reason that pervades the
\textit{pakṣa} wholly or partially, or a \textit{kevalānvyay-hetu}, i.e., a reason that also
pervades the \textit{pakṣa} wholly or partially, but is characterized merely by
positive concomitance because there is no \textit{vipakṣa}.\textsuperscript{43} Whatever the case may
be, Vācaspati’s interpretation reflects a more advanced stage of logical
development and could hardly be taken as representing the original meaning
of \textit{vīta} and \textit{avīta}.\textsuperscript{44} This in itself does not discredit the etymological
interpretation of \textit{vīta} as derived from the root \textit{vī} with the upasarga \textit{vi}. However,
a serious problem in this interpretation is that it renders the well-
attested old variant \textit{avīta} difficult to account for. In my opinion, any
reasonable solution of our problem, even if it eventually favours the variant
avīta, must account at least for the possibility of \textit{āvīta} as well. For if any
one of the two variants made no sense to begin with, how could one explain
that such a variant persisted for centuries? Furthermore, it seems \textit{prima facie}
feasible to attempt to derive both \textit{vīta} and \textit{a/āvīta} from the same verbal root.

Now, the term \textit{avīta} poses no serious problem. However, the
combination \textit{ā+vi+vi} does not seem to exist in the Sanskrit language; at
least none of the dictionaries at my disposal records it, and one may add
that the combination of the two \textit{upasargas} \textit{ā+vi} is extremely rare.\textsuperscript{45}

This leaves us with two ways to interpret \textit{avīta}, namely, as a past
passive participle either of the root \textit{vī} or of the root \textit{vīye}. Among the two,
the alternative of \textit{ā+Vīy}e is less than satisfactory. The basic meaning of the

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. N. NAKADA, “On the Three Aspected Logical Reason in Asanga’s
Madhyânta-nâgâma-sâstra,” in \textit{Science and Human Progress}. Professor D.D.
Kosambi Commemoration Volume, (Bombay 1974), pp. 164-166. Nakada follows on
this point a previous study by H. HADANO, “Saron gakub no nori ni tsute, vīta avīta ni
tsute”. Bunka 1944, XI/3 pp. 177-219, XI/4 pp. 306-326. In another paper, however,
Nakada translates vīta and avīta as “direct” and “indirect.” Cf. N. NAKADA, “Three
Kinds of Inference in the Commentaries on Sâmkhya-kârikâ (Part II).” \textit{Journal of
Indian and Buddhist Studies} XV/1, 1966, pp. (38)-(48) esp. pp. (47)-(48).

\textsuperscript{39} Cf. R. GARBE, Der Mondschein der Sâmkhya-Wahrheit, Vâcaspatimiśra’s Sâmkhya-
tattva-kaumudi, (München 1891), p. 32 = (548). In a different context (p. 47 =
[563]), on kārikā 9) he attempts a formulation that stands half way between a literal
translation and a paraphrase: “sādhanaṇy avītāni is rendered “die von negativer
Betrachtung aus beizubringenden Beweise.”

\textsuperscript{40} Cf. BÜRK, \textit{ibid.} [n. 29] p 255: “Avīta heist ’nicht geradezu gehend‘; und ’indirekt’
bedeutet ja genau dasselbe.”

\textsuperscript{41} GARBE, BÜRK (in following GARBE), F.M. MÜLLER, etc., ignore the simple fact that
\textit{vi} + \textit{vi} cannot mean “going straightforward,” but rather “going apart,” etc.

\textsuperscript{42} Cf. \textit{Nyāyavārttikatātparyātikā} p. 291.18 (on 1.1.53) in \textit{Nyāyadarśakam. With
Vāsīyāyana’s Bhāṣya, Uddyotakara’s Vārttika. Vācaspatimiśra’s Tātparyātikā &
Vīrāṇâthâ’s ‘Yrti.} Ed. Taranatha Nyaya-tarkatirtha and Amarendramohan Tarkatirtha.

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. Vâcaspatimiśra’s similar formulation with regard to Uddyotakara’s two \textit{anuvayin}
reasons in \textit{NVTT} p. 365,26-27: \textit{daśamaitkādaśau pakṣasya-vāpyavāpyātyādami
anvayinañu heti.}

\textsuperscript{44} Cf. also E. SOLOMON, \textit{Indian Dialectics.} (Ahmedabad 1976), Vol. I, p. 382.

\textsuperscript{45} The \textit{Monier Williams} records only three verbs with the combined \textit{upasargas} \textit{ā+vi}: \textit{ā-
vi-tan} (also in \textit{APTE}), \textit{ā-vi-bhā}, and \textit{ā-vi-han}. 
root is “to cover, to wrap, to conceal,” while the upasarga ꜐ functions in a reflexive sense (i.e., “to cover oneself,” especially with the sacred thread which was originally probably a larger piece of garment). Neither this meaning nor the other meaning recorded only by APTE, namely, “to sew,” seems to apply to an inference or a mode of reasoning. I for one fail to make any sense of an inference or a reasoning that is covered or concealed (by what?) or an inference that covers or conceals itself.

This leads us by elimination, that is by an āvīta mode of reasoning, to the last alternative, namely, āvīta as derived from the root ꜐vi and the upasarga ꜐. The basic meaning of this root is “to have in view, to approach, to strive for,” and this meaning can easily be construed as qualifying an inference or a mode of reasoning. Moreover, the Tibetan translation of āvīta, namely, bsal te ‘ons pa, seems to support this interpretation, for ‘ons pa could well translate vīta as derived from the root ꜐vi. Whether bsal te represents an attempt to translate the upasarga ꜐. however, is a more difficult question. So far I have come across no evidence to suggest that this is the case, and I assume that the Tibetan translation represents a mixture of literal and contextual elements. Literally it can be rendered as “[an inference/reasoning that] has come [to its object] after/inasmuch as it has excluded [all other alternatives].” The problem with this interpretation of āvīta, however, is that it does not seem to allow for a meaningful distinction, not to say opposition, between āvīta and vīta, if both are derived from this root. If vīta means “had in view, approached,” etc., then vīta and āvīta mean pretty much the same thing.

Therefore, our attempt to explain vīta and āvīta as derived from the same verbal root has failed, and we have to conclude, again by an āvīta mode of reasoning, that if vīta cannot be derived from the roots ꜐vi or ꜐vye, then it must be derived from the root ꜐i. This conclusion is also supported, at least to some extent, by the Tibetan translation of vīta as rnam par ldan pa. For rnam par is the usual translation of the upasarga ꜐i. Thus, the Tibetan translators and lexicographers seem to have understood vīta as derived from ꜐i+ ꜑i even though their translation does not contain a representation for the root ꜑i itself. With this we have now come full circle and returned to our starting point, Vācaspatimśa’s analysis of vīta. Of course, we should not accept his interpretation as to the varieties of vīta, but we can accept that vīta reasoning is a reasoning that has various modes, perhaps the five modes that are mentioned in the Sāśisțānta. This interpretation is certainly compatible with the literal meaning of the term in the sense of “going apart, going in different directions.”

Our interpretation of vīta and āvīta as being derived from different verbal roots can also explain the origin of the variant avīta. When one encounters the compound vitāvīta it is indeed most natural to assume that both words are derived from the same verbal root. And when one fails to make sense of the two words vīta and āvīta derived from either ꜐vi or ꜐i, it is also most natural to read the compound as comprising vīta and avīta derived from ꜑i.

Thus, I would like to conclude that the reading avīta, as preserved in the anonymous Central-Asian fragment, the Nyāyāgamānasārīṇī and probably in the Ślokaśārīti, and as reflected in the Tibetan translations, is the original reading of the term. In the final analysis we can therefore endorse the statement by OBERHAMMER et alii that avīta is probably only a “secondary simplification.” This, however, does not mean that we have to correct avīta to āvīta wherever the term appears. It is entirely clear that at

46 The Mahāvīsuddhānasattvācārya reads gsal te ‘ons pa, but, as mentioned above, this has to be emended: gsal (to be clear, distinct, bright, visible, etc.) does not make sense in the present context, whereas bsal, the perfect stem of sel ba (to remove, to reject, to refuse), fits perfectly with the definition of āvīta as arriving at its object by elimination (pariśīṣa) or by criticizing – and thereby excluding the possibility of – the position of the opponent (parapaksapratipadā), etc.


48 In this sense it can be said that we revert to DEUSSEN’s position in Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie, Vol. I, part 3, (Leipzig 1920), pp. 367, 418, which was severely criticized by SUALI; cf. L. SUALI, Introduzione allo Studio della Filosofia Indiana, (Pavia 1913), p. 415, n.1; cf. also GARBE, Sāmkhya-Philosophie [n. 30] p. 219, n. 2. However, what DEUSSEN considered as “getting lost in subtleties” (“da ... Vāc. sich in Subtilitäten verliert”) we consider as an attempt to harmonize the position of the Sāmkhya with that of the Nyāya and bring both traditions up-to-date.

49 The theoretical possibility of understanding vīta and āvīta to be both derived from ꜐i can be discarded because it would imply that an āvīta reasoning has not had in view/approached its object.

some point two traditions concerning this term began to exist side by side. Even if one or the other of these traditions has come into existence by mere misunderstanding, misreading or miscopying, once it has been established it continues to exist in its own right. It is obvious, for instance, that Vācaspatimisra has read and understood avita as containing an alpha privativum when he explains avita as that which is different from vita (cf. above tasmād [vitat] anyo 'vita iti). To emend avita to āvita in such a case would be nonsensical.

Vācaspatimisra’s reading and interpretation of avita may have exercised an influence on the manuscript tradition of the Yuktidipikā. The Sāmkhyaattvakaumudi has become by far the most popular commentary on the Sāmkhyakārikā, and because all the available manuscripts of the Yuktidipikā are younger than the Sāmkhyaattvakaumudi, one may well imagine that some manuscripts were “corrected” accordingly. Basically we have only two manuscripts for the relevant sections of the Yuktidipikā,51 one of which consistently reads āvita. Furthermore, most of the occurrences of a/āvita are ambiguous, i.e., the word appears either as the second member of the compound vitāvita or is preceded by ca, na or tatu.52 I was able to find only four occurrences in the entire work where the reading is unambiguous.53 Thus, if someone is convinced, due to Vācaspatimisra’s influence or some other reason, that avita is the correct reading, he may reasonably conclude that the few cases that read otherwise are simply scribal mistakes, and may therefore be tempted to correct them. This scenario is not a pure speculation, because we have some evidence that the manuscript was tampered with at some stage. Fortunately this tampering has left some meager but telling traces. One of the four cases, on p. 89.1, reads: vīta avita iti. This is not simply a case were the sandhi rules were not applied (as one could conclude from Pandeya’s edition that reads vītaḥ avita iti54), but clearly a case of wrong sandhi. Therefore, I tend to assume that the statement originally — and correctly as regards the sandhi — read vīta āvita iti, as in manuscript A, the ā was changed to a, but vīta was not changed to vīto, and the new a was not omitted or replaced by an avagraha. If this assumption is accepted, then the original reading in the YD must have been āvita.

One final observation in this connection. The terms vīta and a/āvita are usually associated with the Sāmkhya, and they are indeed typical for that system. However, it would go too far to claim that they are exclusively Sāmkhya terms or that the terms are recorded only for the Sāmkhya tradition.55 Uddyotakara has attempted to prove the existence of an ātman using an avita argument,56 in the Sālokavārtika (cf. above) it is a Buddhist opponent57 who attempts to justify his apoha-theory by having recourse to avita mode of reasoning; Bhāsarvāja interprets Nyāyasūtras 1.1.34-35 as referring to vīta and āvita respectively,58 and these are not pūravapakṣa-sūtras, but clearly represent the opinion of the Śrāvakāra.

Vīta and āvita, therefore, were not originally associated with a specific philosophical school. They seem to have been part of the vāda-tradition in general, the tradition of public philosophical debate in which the beginnings of Indian logic in the early centuries of our era can be located. It is probably because Sāmkhya logic did not change significantly after the fourth century that the expression vītāvita remained closely associated with it. In the other schools the developments in the theory of inference that occurred after Dignāga and Dharmakīrti rendered these terms archaic and somewhat obsolete; consequently they are only occasionally, indeed rarely, used or mentioned. Yet the Naiyāyikas have never quite forgotten that their sūtras were associated with these terms although they are not mentioned explicitly in them. This tradition has never quite disappeared. It is recorded at least as late as the 15th century, and in one form or another it probably continues up to the present day.

51 That is, manuscripts A and K. Manuscript B covers only pp. 224-270, and manuscripts D and P are derived from K.
52 Cf. Yuktidipikā pp. 1.3, 71.13, 71.15-16, 84.19-21, 89.10, 92.25, 96.22, 97.12, 106.7-19, 107.3-4.
53 Cf. Yuktidipikā 89.1, 89.12, 90.23, 97.6 (twice). Of course, it is possible that I have missed some occurrences. This statement will have to be re-examined when the promised Index to the Yuktidipikā will have been published by Wezler and Motegi.
57 The opponent may be an imaginary one, of course, but the fact that Kāmātā attributes the use of āvita-ketu to a Buddhist defending the apoha theory indicates that he did not consider this mode of reasoning to be exclusively Sāmkhyistic.