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Upaṇiṣads and grammar:
On the meaning of anuvyākhyāna

The word anuvyākhyāna occurs four times in Vedic literature, three times in the Bhadāranyaka Upaṇiṣad, once in the Maitrāyanīya Upaṇiṣad, and nowhere else. It always occurs in the following enumeration of literary works:

rgvedo yajurvedo sāmavedo ṭharvāṅgirasa itihāsaḥ purāṇaḥ vidyā upaṇiṣadaḥ ślokāḥ sūtrāny anuvyākhyāṇāni vyākhyāṇāni

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).

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 enumera-

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 MauI 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 anuvāsana is a graded śākana, 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.
tion, moreover, seems to display a hierarchical structure, beginning as it does with the ‘five Vedas’ (itiṣṭa and pūrṇa being occasionally referred to as ‘the fifth Veda’; see Bronkhorst, 1989: 129f.) which supports the idea that anuvyākyāna is ‘higher’ than vyākyāna and ‘lower’ than sūtra.

A search for occurrences of the term anuvyākyāna in post-Vedic literature does not help to solve the problem. Śaṅkara comments on the three words sūtra, anuvyākyāna and vyākyāna in the following manner under BAU 2.4.10:

śūtrāṇi vastusangrahavākyāṇi vede yathā ājīmya evopāśita (BAU 1.4.7) ityādīni//anuvyākyāṇāni mantravivarāṇāṇīl vyākyāṇāry arthavādāh/ ahaṁ vastusangrahavākyavivarāṇāni anuvyākyāṇāni// yathā caturthādhyāye ājīmya evopāśita ity āsya yathā vā anvo ’sāv anvo ’hām asmiti na sa veda yathā paśur evam (BAU 1.4.10) ity āsyaṁ evādhyāyaśeṣaḥ// mantravivarāṇāni vyākyāṇaṁ//.

The fact that two different explanations are given for the words anuvyākyāna and vyākyāna shows that Śaṅkara was not at all certain about their meaning. According to him, anuvyākyāna is either the explanation of a mantra (mantravivarāṇa) or the explanation of a concise statement of (ultimate) reality (vastusangrahavākyavivarāṇa). In the latter case, vyākyāna is the explanation of a mantra. In other words, the distinction between anuvyākyāna and vyākyāna is not clear to Śaṅkara.

The term anuvyākyāna occurs in some other contexts, too, but always, as far I am aware, in passages that are clearly indebted to the Upaniṣadic enumeration. Horsch (1966: 32) already refers to the scholiast on Yājñavalkyasūtra 3.189, which explains bhāṣyāni with anuvyākyāṇāni and vyākyāṇāni. Since Yājñavalkyasūtra 3.189 contains partly the same enumeration as the one we are studying, putting however bhāṣyāni where our passage has anuvyākyāṇāni vyākyāṇāni, we can be sure that Horsch’s scholiast copied our passage here. The term is also used by Nilakanṭha in his comments on savaiyākyāna in Mahābhārata 1.1.50 (= Cr.Ed. 1.1.48). Nilakanṭha states:

dsavaiyākyānaṁ vyākyāṇam adhiḥkṛtya kṣto grantho vaiyākyasah tadyuktiḥ// yathā brahmavid āpnoti param iti sūtrasa vyākyā yāt savayā jñānam iti mantrah// anuvyākyāṇam tasmād vā etasmād ityādi brahmānam// evam atraṁ prathame ‘dhūrye śūrītasyārthasya dvitiyādābhāḥ vyākyāṇam uttara-granthemūrvyākyāṇam 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 Śaṅkara’s commentary:

... dvitiyāsvaṁvukṣayādau kṣtrapaniṣatsūtram śūrītasya om brahmavid āpnoti param iti... idāṁ tasya sūtrasaṁ kṣtraparyāvyākyāṇānāṁ kānpīd caṁ udāharatī... savayā jñānam anamvam brahmaḥ... iti... ānām etām ānāntyopāṇāpyavāhānam śeṣam darśayantī tasmād vā etasmād ānāmaṁ akāśaṁ samabhūtaḥ... iti.

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

brahmavid ityādīkam śūtram/ satyam jñānam ityādikam anuvyākyānam/ anukramena śūrītasyānām padānām taṁ paryakathānāṁ/ tasmān upasāmyāṇaṁ ya bhūhatsuto ‘rthaviśeṣas tasya vīpaścātaṁ āsānāntāṁ kathanaṁ vyākyāṇāṁ/ tad idam atra tāvat tasmād vā etasmād ity ārthānīm puruṣa āntena granthena bhūdhyāntat.

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

sarva eva vallīyarto brahmavid āpnoti param iti brāhmaṇavākyena śūrītaiḥ/ sa ca śūrito ‘rthah saṁkṣepato mantravā vyākyāḥ// punah tasyāvaṁ vistarārthānirnayaḥ kartaṇya ity uttaras tadyātthāṁya granthā ārthāh tasmād vā etasmād ityādīḥ//.

How do we deal with the problem presented by anuvyākyāna in the Brhadāraṇyaka and Maitreyaṇiya 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 Maitreyaṇiya Upaniṣad that contains our enumeration is considered — by J.A.B. van Buitenen, who dedi-
cated a study to this *Upanisad* (1962: 34) — an accretion to an accre-
tion to an insertion into the original *Maitrāyaniya Upanisad*. This
raises the question whether the enumeration containing *anuvyākhyaṇa*
might not be late, perhaps added, or completed, by a late redactor.

With regard to the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad*, which is part of the
*Sātapatha Brāhmaṇa*, it is worthwhile to quote the following observa-

The final compilation of [the *Sātapatha 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 Vamsās found in [the *Sātapatha
Brāhmaṇa*] and [the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad*]. I suspect that he was a
contemporary of the Kaṇva dynasty or the Satavāhana dynasty. (This prob-
lem 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 *Sātapatha Brāhmaṇa*]; ...; note that the redactor already describes
Janaka as presenting *land* to Yājñavalkya ... Yet even the Satakarni inscrip-
tion, 2nd cent. A.D., ... still mentions only presents of cows given as *dakṣinā*

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 *Upanisad*. This means that, according to Witzel, the re-
dactor has made additions and modifications in other places than only
at the end of the SB and of the BAU. The enumeration of texts con-
taining the term *anuvyākhyaṇa* might therefore conceivably be late,
too.

Let us next look at the exact form of the term *anuvyākhyaṇa*. This term
occurs only at the above indicated places of the *Brhadāraṇyaka* and
*Maitrāyaniya Upanisads*, 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 discar-
ded that this single editorial hand ‘corrected’ some other word into
*anuvyākhyaṇa* under the influence of the following *vyākhyaṇa*.

If we accept this last hypothesis, the most likely candidate for the
original form underlying *anuvyākhyaṇa* is, no doubt, *anvākhyāṇa*.
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 *sānyākhyaṇāḥ* instead of *sānyākhyaṇāḥ*
confirms our impression that *anvākhyāṇa* could easily be ‘corrected’
into *anuvyākhyaṇa*.

We arrive, then, at the hypothetical conclusion that our list origi-
nally contained the three terms *śūtrāṇy anvākhyānāni vyākhyaṇāni*, in
this order. Does this help us to reach some form of understanding?

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

[die Texte der *Vādhulas ... haben ... dieses Merkwürdige, dass zu dem
*Sūtra* ein eigenes *Brāhmaṇa* gehört, eine Art *Anuvṝmaṇa*, 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* angetroffen
Eigentümlichkeit.

This secondary *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Vādhula Śrautasūtra* calls itself
*‘Anvākhyāṇa’*.

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

Interestingly, there is another set of texts that appears to be referred to
by the terms *śūtra* and *anvākhyāṇa*. More precisely, this set consists
of three texts, which are, it has been argued, referred to by the terms
*śūtra*, *anvākhyāṇa* and *vyākhyaṇa* 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 begin-
ing of our era. I am speaking about Pāṇini’s *Āṣṭādhyāyī*, a

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 *Anvākhyāṇas* and *Vādhula
Śrautasūtra* in the same manuscripts, “Eine Zuordnung zum *Śrautasūtra* ist damit ...
icht notwendig gegeben.”
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 anvācaṣte is used by Patañjali as characteristic of the work of Kātyāyana .... His own work Patañjali calls vyākhyāna, and frequently uses the verb vyākhyāyāmaḥ.

Since khyā replaces the root caks before ārdhāhātuka suffixes by P. 2.4.54 (caksinaḥ khyān), the noun corresponding to the verb anvācaṣte is anvākhyāṇa. If then Bhandarkar is correct, Kātyāyana’s vārttikas form an anvākhyāṇa, and Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya a vyākhyāṇa, 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 anvācaṣte in Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya occurs most often in the expression ācāryah suheṣṭh bhūtvā anvācaṣte, which expression appears to refer in all cases but one — where it refers to Pāṇini — to Kātyāyana (see Bronkhorst, 1987: 6f.).

In four of the five remaining cases it can reasonably be argued that anvācaṣte 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 varate/ evam tarhy anvācaṣte ‘x’ iti varate iti

The first part ‘x’ iti varate is commented upon in the immediate sequel and can therefore be considered a vārttika. This is confirmed by the fact that on one occasion Patañjali explicitly claims that the next vārttika is meant to show the purpose of this anvākhyāṇa, which makes no sense if the anvākhyāṇa 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.

In the one remaining case Patañjali uses the word anvācaṣte 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 (anvācaṣte) the correctness of words actually in use.

The terms anvākhya and anvākhyāṇa are sometimes used in immediate connection with anvācaṣte. So in Mbh II p. 83 l. 20 - p. 84 l. 1 (evam tarhy anvācaṣte 'nupasarga iti varate iti naitad anvākhyeyam ...), III p. 27 l. 15 (the same with yānī instead of anupasarga), III p. 349 l. 4 - 5 (same with upasgarād), II p. 265 l. 12-13 (evam tarhy anvācaṣte pautraprabhūṣṭi varate iti/ kim etasyānvākhyāṇe prayaṇam/).

At Mbh I p. 209 l. 1 and 4 anvākhyāṇa refers back to anvācaṣte 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 anvākhyāṇa (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 anyapaḍārthī, P. 2.2.29 cārtī dvandvah, etc.) to words which are naturally endowed with those meanings, by way of condition of application. And later it is said that there is no use for an additional communication regarding the meaning of words whose meaning is known.

The sense of anvākhyāṇa 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-

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5. At Mbh I p. 208 l. 16f. the expression refers to the author of P. 1.2.32. This sūtra (tasyādīta udātām ardhahārasam) gives supplementary (ānu) information concerning precisely how much of the svarita is udātta, how much anudātta.
7. It is not printed as such in Kielhorn’s edition on any of the four occasions.
8. See Mbh II p. 265 l. 12-15: pautraprabhūṣṭi varate/ evam tarhy anvācaṣte pautraprabhūṣṭi varate iti/ kim etasyānvākhyāṇe prayaṇam/ tae ca daivadaityārtham (vt. 2).
9. Mbh III p. 349 l. 4-5: upasgarād iti varate/ evam tarhy ācāryo 'nvācaṣta upasgarād ity anuvartata iti.
11. svabhāvata eteṣāṁ sabḍāṁ eteṣāṁ arhiveṣ abhiniveṣṭāṁ nimitatvaṃ anvākhyāṇaṃ kriyate.
12. na khall api nirjñātasyāryhasyānvākhyāṇe kidnca api prayaṇam asti.
tion because the Bhāṣya follows here the use of anvākhyāna in the preceding vārttika.

We can conclude from the above that anvākhyāna and anvācašte carry the meaning ‘additional communication’ wherever Patañjali uses these terms in his own right (i.e., where he does not borrow these words from the vārttika he is explaining). This ‘additional communication’ is in the vast majority of cases embodied in the vārtikas of Kātyāyana.

(ii) The word vyākhyāsyānāḥ occurs always, i.e. no fewer than 11 times, in connection with the Paribhāṣā vyākhyānato viṣeṣapratipaditādhi samāhītādhi alakṣānan “The precise (meaning of an ambiguous term) is ascertained from interpretation, for (a rule), even though it contains an ambiguous term, must nevertheless teach (something definite)” (tr. Kiellhorn, 1874: 2). In all these cases the vyākhyāna, i.e., ‘interpretation’ or ‘explanation’, is given by Patañjali himself. It can here be said that the Mahābhāṣya embodies the vyākhyānas.

But in Mbh I p. 170 l. 17 vyākhyāyatē 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’. Mbh I p. 12 l. 23-27 again rejects this position and returns to the view that separation of words of sūtras is vyākhyāna. 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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13. nanu ca tad eva sūtraṃ vighṛhitam vyākhyānam bhavatīt na kevalāni caryādānavi vyākhyānam vrddhiḥ at ait iti kim tathā vaddharanam pratyuddhāram vākhyāyaḥ ity etat samuditām vyākhyānam bhavatīt.

14. yadh api ucayate sād广apratipaditāt iti na hi sūrata eva sābān pratipadyante kim tathā vyākhyānataḥ ceti pariḥtam etad tad eva sūtraṃ vighṛhitam vyākhyānam bhavatītī nanu cakṣa na kevalāni caryādānavi vyākhyānam vrddhiḥ at ait iti kim tathā vaddharanam pratyuddhāram vākhyāyaḥ ity etat samuditām vyākhyānam bhavatītī avijñāta etad evam bhavatīt sūrata eva hi sābān pratipadyante...

We see that Bhandarkar’s remark to the extent that Kātyāyana’s vārtikas 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 Upanisadic passage (supposing that the first of these two actually belongs there) refers to two-layered commentaries on Śūtra 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 Śūtra 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 anvuvakhyana (anvākhyāna) and vyākhyāna is no more than a conjecture. But even though a conjecture, it proposes an explanation for an otherwise obscure term.

ABBREVIATIONS

BAU Bhādarānyaka Upaniṣad
Ch-Up Chāndogya Upaniṣad
GB Gopatha Brāhmaṇa
MaiU Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad
Mbh Patañjali’s Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya
P Pāṇinian sūtra
BIBLIOGRAPHY


RÉSUMÉ

Dans la littérature ancienne, le terme anuvyākhyaṇa ne se rencontre que dans une énumération d’ouvrages littéraires qui est répétée trois fois dans la Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad et une fois dans la Maitrāyaṇiṣṭha, Upaniṣad. Cette énumération a la forme suivante:

\begin{quote}
ṛgyvedo yajurvedo sāmavedo ṛthavṛṅgirasa itihāsah purāṇam vidyā upaniṣadāḥ ślokaḥ sūtrāy anuvyākhyaṇāḥ vyākhyaṇāni
\end{quote}

La forme anuvyākhyaṇa suggère qu’il s’agit d’un vyākhyaṇa additionnel ou étendu ; sa position entre sūtra et vyākhyaṇa suggère le contraire : que le vyākhyaṇa est secondaire à l’anuvyākhyaṇa, qui, à
son tour, pourrait vraisemblablement être une sorte de commentaire sur le sutra. De plus, en commençant par les 'cinq Vedas' (on se réfère occasionnellement à itihäsa et à puräna comme 'le cinquième Veda'), l'énumération semble montrer une structure hiérarchique qui sous-tend l'idée qu'anuvyākhyāna est 'plus haut' que vyākhyāna et 'plus bas' que sutra.

Une tentative de solution à ce problème est ici présentée à la lumière de l'ancienne littérature grammaticale.