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THE CHANGING NOTION OF ŚIṢṬA FROM PATAÑJALI TO BHARTRHĀRI

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The word *śiṣṭa* is used by the traditions of Dharmaśāstra as well as Sanskrit Grammar to refer to a community of social and linguistic élites whose socio-cultural and linguistic behavior was considered to set the norm to be described by the respective texts of Dharmaśāstra and Sanskrit Grammar, and to be emulated by others. This notion is by no means static, though the changing nature of this notion has not been sufficiently investigated in previous studies. In this paper, an attempt is made to trace the major changes in the notion of *śiṣṭa* from Patañjali to Bhartrhari. I have dealt with the notion of *śiṣṭa* in the earlier phase of Sanskrit Grammar, i.e. from Pāṇini to Patañjali, in my previous research (Deshpande 1985, 1979). Here, I will briefly refer to this earlier phase, and will discuss Bhartrhari's contribution in greater detail.

In the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, there is no explicit reference to *śiṣṭas*, though one can build a fairly clear picture of the community whose linguistic behavior Pāṇini was describing. In my forthcoming article "Socio-linguistic Parameters of Pāṇini's Sanskrit" (appearing in Professor A.M. Ghatage Felicitation Volume), I have discussed several issues relating to the earliest phase of Sanskrit Grammar and the nature of the language described by these early grammarians. To summarize the more extensive discussion in that paper, we can state the following things. Pāṇini's grammar dealt with a mass of language data which included within its scope language material from the bygone age of Vedic texts, as well as contemporary regional and scholastic dialects. To the extent his grammar dealt with contemporary usage, it seems to cover the dialects spreading from the Northwestern region of the subcontinent to the eastern region of the subcontinent. Essentially, its linguistic geography is restricted to North India. However, within that region, it does not describe the linguistic usage of everyone. Pāṇini is primarily describing the linguistic usage of the Brāhmaṇa males. The grammar is addressed to an audience of Brāhmaṇa males. Here too, the grammar does not describe all possible usage of this community, but describes how this community should speak correctly. This means that Pāṇini drew a dividing line between what he perceived to be the élite linguistic usage and the non-acceptable lower-class usage. This dividing line was not a totally hard and fast line. It

changed from region to region, time to time, and grammarian to grammarian. Thus, to make a cautious statement, Pāṇini's grammar tells us more about what he considered to be proper usage of Sanskrit, and less about what the people actually spoke. In this respect, Pāṇini's grammar is similar to texts like *Manusmṛti*, which tell us more about how the people should behave, and less about how they actually behaved. In general, this is what we can infer from Pāṇini's grammar, but there is no explicit theoretical discussion about this matter in the rules of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

As we move to Kātyāyana and Patañjali, we find more explicit discussion of the question of who sets the standard of usage for Sanskrit. Kātyāyana brings in some important notions. The first notion brought in explicitly by Kātyāyana is that the science of grammar does not create any new facts of language, but it only describes what is already found in the world of linguistic usage. The usage of language is given to the science of grammar. It does not invent this usage. If this is the case, what is the role of grammar? According to Kātyāyana, the role of grammar is to make a religious restriction (*dharmaniyama*), i.e. to specify explicitly which usages found in the world are proper, and therefore lead to the user gaining religious merit, and which usages found in the world are not proper, and therefore do not lead to the user gaining religious merit. Thus, while all linguistic usage described by a grammar is based on the actual linguistic performance observed in the world, grammar does not aim at describing this totality. It describes only a subsection of the total usage found in the world. It describes the proper, correct, and the meritorious linguistic usage, and by exclusion indicates that the rest of the linguistic usage is improper, incorrect, and does not lead to religious merit. However, Kātyāyana himself does not explicitly get into the discussion of how a grammarian decides which linguistic usage is proper.

For the first time, Patañjali goes into an explicit discussion of most of these issues. Yes, the grammar describes only what already exists in the linguistic performance of the world. Yes, the grammar does not describe the entire linguistic usage of the world. Yes, it describes only the merit-conducive usage, and leaves out the rest as being not conducive to religious merit. But, then how do we know which usage is conducive to religious merit? For the first time, Patañjali goes into details of this question. In his *Mahābhāṣya* on P.6.3.109, Patañjali says:¹

1 *ke punah śistāḥ / vaiyākaraṇāḥ / kuta etat / śāstrapūrvikā hi śistir vaiyākaraṇāś ca śāstrajñāḥ / yadi tarhi śāstrapūrvikā śistih śistipūrvakam ca śāstram tad itaretarāśrayam bhavati / itaretarāśrayāṇi ca na prakālpante / evaṃ tarhi nivāsataś cācārataś ca / sa*

Who are the *śīstas*?

They are the grammarians.

How is it?

The linguistic behavior of the élites presupposes the science of grammar, and the grammarians know the science of grammar. [Therefore, the grammarians must be the élites.]

But, if the behavior of the élites presupposes the science of grammar, and if grammar presupposes the behavior of the élites, then this argument becomes circular. Circular arguments are not acceptable.

Then we define *śīstas* by their place of residence and their way of life. That way of life is found only in the region of Āryāvarta.

What is this Āryāvarta?

It lies to the east of [where the river Sarasvatī] disappears [in modern Rajasthan], to the west of Kālaka forest [near modern Allahabad], to the south of the Himālayas, and to the north of the Vindhya. Those Brāhmanas who live in this Āryāvarta, the land of the Āryas, who store just a basketful of grain, who are not greedy, and who without any motive have attained the highest wisdom in some branch of learning, they are the *śīstas*.

If these *śīstas* are the decisive standard for correctness of language, then what is the function of Pānini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

Pānini's grammar aims at helping one recognize these linguistic élites.

How can the linguistic élites be recognized by means of Pānini's grammar?

A student of Pānini's grammar observes another person who has never studied that grammar but who uses constructions taught in that grammar. He [i.e. the student of Pānini's grammar] thinks that it must be either divine grace or some innate nature that this person who does not study Pānini's grammar still uses constructions taught in it. Perhaps he may know even other usages [which are deemed to be correct but are not taught by Pānini]. This way Pānini's grammar aims at helping one recognize the élite speakers of Sanskrit [= *śīstas*]. (MB 3:174)

In this major passage discussing the notion of *śīsta*, several clarifications emerge. Patañjali's *śīstas* are restricted to the region of Āryāvarta, which interestingly does not extend to cover even Pānini's birthplace of Śālātura, or even his Udīcyā region. Secondly, there is evidence in the *Mahābhāṣya* to show that Patañjali's linguistic élites did not use Sanskrit at all times, but only in the context of ritual, while they seem to prefer the use of

cācāra āryāvarta eva / kah punar āryāvartah / prāg ādarśāt pratyak kālakavanāt daksinena himavantam uttarena pāriyātram / etasminn āryanivāse ye brāhmanāḥ kumbhīdhānyā alolupā agrhyamānakāranāḥ kiñcid antarena kasyāścid vidyāyāḥ pāragās tatrābhavantah śīstāḥ / yadi tarhi śīstāḥ śabdesu pramānam kim aṣṭādhyāyā kriyate / śīstajñānārthāṣṭādhyāyī / katham punar aṣṭādhyāyā śīstāḥ śakyā vijñātum / aṣṭādhyāyīm adhīyāno 'nyam paśyaty anadhīyānam yetra vihītāḥ śabdās tān prayuñjānam / sa paśyati / nūnamasya daivānugrahaḥ svabhāvo vā yo 'yam na cāṣṭādhyāyīm adhīte ye cātra vihītāḥ śabdās tāms ca prayuñkte / ayam nūnam anyān api jānāti / evam eṣā śīstaparijñānārthāṣṭādhyāyī /, Mahābhāṣya III, p. 174.

Prakrits on other occasions. Here, I would like to emphasize two points in Patañjali's discussion.

a. The linguistic usage of Sanskrit is already established in the world, and the users of Sanskrit do not necessarily learn this language from studying grammar books. To put it in another way, there is grammar-independent usage of standard Sanskrit, and it is this grammar-independent usage of standard Sanskrit which the grammarians are expected to observe and follow in their description of standard Sanskrit.

b. The grammarian realizes that there is circularity in claiming the grammarians themselves to be the normative speakers of Sanskrit and then claiming that the science of grammar follows the usage of the normative speakers. Patañjali explicitly recognizes this dilemma and tries to find a way by pointing to a speaker of standard Sanskrit who is not a grammarian or a student of grammar.² This way he is able to break the inherent circularity discussed above. However, he is able to break out of this circularity only because there supposedly existed grammar-independent usage of Sanskrit. This seems to confirm the belief in the tradition of Sanskrit grammar that the grammarians from Pāṇini to Patañjali were *lakṣyaikacaksuṣka* "those whose eyes are solely fixed on the usage to be described." This is the period when grammar is believed to have followed the usage of language which existed independent of that grammar. The tradition says that the grammarians who came after Patañjali were *lakṣanaikacaksuṣka* "those whose eyes were solely fixed on the rules of grammar."³ This is the period when the language is believed to have followed the grammar, implying that the usage of language followed exclusively from the prior study of the grammatical description, and that there was no grammar-independent usage of Sanskrit to be observed any longer.

Around 400 A.D., about 500 years after Patañjali, came Bhartrhari. According to the later traditional division mentioned above, he indeed

2 This point seems to have escaped the attention of Abhyankar and Limaye (1965: 404) when they explain a Śiṣṭa as: "People of recognized learning and culture. People who have studied and understood the Vyākaraṇa and other śāstras and can speak with authority." To support this interpretation, they approvingly quote the passage *śiṣṭāḥ vaiyākaraṇāḥ / śāstrapūrvikā hi śiṣṭiḥ, vaiyākaraṇāś ca śāstrajñāḥ* (MB on P.6.3.109). However, they fail to point out that this is only a prima facie view finally rejected by Patañjali, who explicitly rejects it by pointing out its circularity.

3 The terms *lakṣyaikacaksuṣka* and *lakṣanaikacaksuṣka* are attested in the works of Nāgeśabhaṭṭa (Cf. *Paribhāṣendusekhara*, p. 78 and 145; *Uddyota* on *Pradīpa* on *Mahābhāṣya* on P.8.3.15). Renou's *Terminologie Grammaticale du Sanskrit*, p. 261 also refers to attestations from Nāgeśabhaṭṭa's works.

belongs to that period of Sanskrit grammar when grammarians had their eyes solely fixed on the rules of grammar, since there was no grammar-independent usage of Sanskrit to be found. The particular description of these two phases, using the terms *laksyaikacaksuska* and *laksanaikacaksuska*, is not found in any work of Bhartrhari, but belongs to much later works. Hence, we cannot attribute this division directly to Bhartrhari himself. Then, what do we find in Bhartrhari? Did he at least implicitly support such a division? While he claims to be an interpreter of Patañjali, is there any indication in his work that he is in fact offering us a new view of Sanskrit grammar and Sanskrit language, a view which is significantly different from the one found in Patañjali, and a view which is a more accurate reflection of the changed situation? I would like to attempt to provide some answers to these questions in this paper. Consider the following passages from Bhartrhari's works.

Passage 1: *nyāikor neti smṛtyanatare pratisedha ārabhyate, nyānikavam iti / ihāpy avyutpattipakṣe nyānikavam iti śiṣṭaparsadā uktatvād ayam vyākhyānam samsādhnoti /* [Bhartrhari's *Mahābhāsyadīpikā* in Palsule 1983: 12]. Translation: "In another Smṛti a prohibitory rule *nyāikor na* is framed (to account for the form) *nyānikava*. Here (in Pāṇini's grammar) also *nyānikava* has been accepted by the whole body of the Śiṣṭas, on the view that the *Unādi* words are unanalysable. So, he (the Bhāsyakāra) gives an explanation." [Palsule 1983: 35]

Comments: A grammatical description is termed *smṛti* "recollection, memory." This implies that, at least in this view of grammar, a grammar is a statement by some authority of his recollection of how the ideal usage is supposed to be. Taken literally, it is simply a descriptive statement. Bhartrhari then says that the word *nyānikava* was used by a body of Śiṣṭas (*śiṣṭa-parsad*), and this was why Patañjali came up with an explanation for this word. Here, Patañjali is depicted as being responsive to what the Śiṣṭas say, and this fits the description of the role of a grammarian as found in the *Mahābhāṣya* itself. A grammarian is expected to be responsive to the usage of the Śiṣṭas.

Passage 2: *śabdāḥ smaryante abhyudayāya / anye tu doṣāya /* [Mahābhāsyadīpikā in Palsule 1983: 13].

Translation: "(Correct) words are taught for worldly prosperity in the Smṛtis; the others lead to sin." [Palsule 1983: 35]

Comments: This explains the function of the Smṛtis, which include grammar. This function is very much in agreement with the discussion which goes back to Kātyāyana and Patañjali. I would suggest that we not

render the word *abhyudaya* by “worldly prosperity.” Such a rendering brings in the contrast between the notions of *abhyudaya* “worldly prosperity” versus *niḥśreyasa* “spiritual prosperity” as seen in the works of Śaṅkara, such as the introduction to his *Gītābhāṣya*. This is a very late contrast and is intended neither in Bhartrhari’s work, nor in the works of Kātyāyana and Patañjali.

Passage 3: [*mrjer*] *vrddhir acaḥ*’ ity etāvad evāstu / [*tataḥ*] ‘*aci kṛiti vā bhavati*’ti / *asya ca smartā bhāṣyakārah* / *ayam cādiśiṣṭa iti* / [*Mahābhāṣyadīpikā* in Palsule 1983: 13].

Translation: “To that end let (the sūtra) be as [*mrjer*] *vrddhir acaḥ*. Then *aci kṛiti* (and finally) *vā*. The author of this is the Bhāṣyakāra who is the foremost of the Śiṣṭas.” [Palsule 1983: 35]

Comments: This is a very significant passage. Here Patañjali offers a new grammatical formulation [or rather reformulation] which accounts for words not previously accounted for by Pāṇini’s grammar. Who is the author of this new grammatical rule? Bhartrhari says that Patañjali is the Smartā “recounter, rememberer” of this rule. This is the role Bhartrhari ascribes to grammarians. They do not produce new usage, but recollect the standard usage. So far this is fine. But then Bhartrhari says that Patañjali is the foremost of the Śiṣṭas. While in Passage 1 above, Bhartrhari says that Patañjali as a grammarian is responsive to the usage of the body of Śiṣṭas, here he calls him the foremost of the Śiṣṭas. Clearly, there is a conflation of the two functions here which Patañjali himself tried his best to keep separate. Patañjali’s logic was that if the grammarians are themselves to be called Śiṣṭas, and if grammar is to follow the usage of the Śiṣṭas, then this argument becomes circular. Therefore, Patañjali tried to find a non-circular definition of the Śiṣṭa. Bhartrhari has conflated the two roles by saying that the best Śiṣṭa is the best grammarian, and that Patañjali has the honor of being both. This peculiar conflation of the roles is not just casual or occasional in Bhartrhari, but, as we shall see, it is the hallmark of his thought. Bhartrhari’s recognition of Patañjali as the foremost of the Śiṣṭas has several possible implications. The first implication is that the roles of being a grammarian and a Śiṣṭa need not or cannot be kept separate, and that these roles can be, or perhaps must be, combined. Secondly, by calling Patañjali a Śiṣṭa Bhartrhari seems to affirm that a Śiṣṭa need not be a contemporary person, but that a person of one era could be considered to be a Śiṣṭa for another era. It seems that for Patañjali himself, the notion of Śiṣṭa seems to carry with it an associated notion of contemporariness. By considering Patañjali to be not

only a Śiṣṭa, but the foremost Śiṣṭa, Bhartrhari seems to be implicitly subscribing to the notion expressed later by Kaiyata in the maxim: *yathottaram munīnām prāmāṇyam* “the later the sage, the greater his authority.” Of course, this doctrine applies only to the first three sages of the Pāṇinian tradition, i.e. Pāṇini, Kātyāyana, and Patañjali. This makes Patañjali the most authoritative among these three ancient sages, and the doctrine does not apply to the period after Patañjali, which makes Patañjali the foremost authority for all periods of Sanskrit grammar. By considering Patañjali to be the foremost Śiṣṭa, Bhartrhari is also subordinating his contemporary Śiṣṭas to the authority of Patañjali. In effect, Bhartrhari seems to be subscribing to a new notion of Śiṣṭa, a notion not shared by Patañjali himself.

There is also another role-conflation manifest in Bhartrhari. He calls Patañjali a *Smartā*, as well as the foremost among the Śiṣṭas. This seems to combine the two views of grammar, one as a *smṛti* “recollection, description of [ideal, but actual] behavior,” and the other as a *śāsana* “teaching, ruling, decree, regulation.” Taken literally, the first notion seems to view grammar as a purely descriptive enterprise, while the second notion seems to add a prescriptive and a coercive dimension. The coercive nature of the meaning of the verb *śās* can be demonstrated from many examples.⁴

Passage 4: *upadeśam cāntareṇa samskāravati nirapabhramśe śabdabrahmaṇi labdhapratisthānām śiṣṭānām anumānam* / Bhartrhari's *Vṛtti* on *VP* 1.12 (Iyer 1966: 43).

Translation: “It is the means of inferring that those, who, without being taught, are well acquainted with the true word endowed with correctness and free from corruption, are the cultured people.” (Iyer 1965: 18).

Comments: This is merely a restatement of Patañjali's discussion in the *Mahābhāṣya* on P.6.3.109.

4 This dichotomy of views goes back to the old contrast between the notions of grammar expressed by the terms *vyākaraṇa* and *anuśāsana*. The coercive value of the verb *anu+śās* is manifest in many passages from the late Vedic literature, e.g. *vedam anūcyācāryo 'ntevāsinam anuśāsti - satyam vada / dharmam cara / svādhyāyān mā pramadah ...*, *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* 1.11. The content of the message of an *anuśāsana* is full of the usage of imperatives etc. Similarly, while the views of Āpiśali have been quoted in Passage 1 above under the name *Smṛtyantara*, elsewhere in Sanskrit grammatical literature, the same view has been referred to by using the verb *śās*. For instance, in his *Unādivṛtti* (p. 11), Ujjvaladatta cites Āpiśali's view as: *Āpiśalis tu nyaṅkor naicbhāvam śāsti*. This particular conflation of *smarati* and *śāsti* is not new for Bhartrhari. It is simply an instance of continuation of an old conflation.

Passage 5: *sādhuprayogānumitāṃś ca śiṣṭān na veda yo vyākaraṇam na veda /* Bhartṛhari's *Vṛtti* on *VP* 1.12 (Iyer 1966: 43).

Translation: "He who does not know (among other things) the cultured users (of Sanskrit) recognized from their use of correct language, does not know grammar."

Comment: This is also a continuation of the old notion of how to recognize a Śiṣṭa. Cf. *Mahābhāṣya* on P.6.3.109.

Passage 6: *tatrāmnātā maharṣibhiḥ / sūtrādīnām pranetr̥bhiḥ / vyākaraṇa eva ye sūtrādīnām pranetar̥as te vyapadiśyante / tatra sūtrānām ārambhād eva śabdānām nityatvam abhimatam / na hy anityatve śabdādīnām śāstrārambhe kiñcid api prayojanam asti / vyavahāramātram hy etad anarthakam na mahāntah śiṣṭāḥ samanugantum arhanṭīti /* Bhartṛhari's *Vṛtti* on *VP* 1.23 (Iyer 1966: 61-62).

Translation: "What is meant by 'taught there by the great sages', is: by the authors of the sūtras etc. Those who have composed the sūtras etc. of the science of Grammar are referred to. The very fact that the sūtras have been composed shows that they considered the words to be eternal. There would be no purpose in composing the science of Grammar if the words were not eternal. Because they would be a matter of mere usage and great cultured persons would not take the trouble of expounding them." (Iyer 1965: 27).

Comment: This passage identifies the Śiṣṭas as the authors of grammatical texts.

Passage 7: *athavā yaiḥ pratyakṣadharmabhis tatra pravacane sūtrānutantrabhāṣyāni praṇītanī tair eva śiṣṭair vyākaraṇe 'pi nityāḥ śabdārthasambandhāḥ ity āmnātam / tesām ca vyavasthītam loke prāmāṇyam iti /* Bhartṛhari's *Vṛtti* on *VP* 1.23 (Iyer 1966: 63).

Translation: "Or (it might be said) those very sages who have realised the truth and have, in the course of their different teachings, composed Sūtras, Anutantra (vārttikas) and Bhāṣya, have, in the science of Grammar also, declared that the word, the meaning and their mutual relation are eternal. And their authority in the world is established." (Iyer 1965: 28).

Comment: Iyer's translation does not do justice to the expression *tair eva śiṣṭair* in the text. It says: "by the same Śiṣṭas, [it has been declared in the science of grammar.]" This passage also clearly identifies the Śiṣṭas as the authors of grammatical texts. The commentator Vṛṣabhadeva glosses the words *tair eva śiṣṭair* with *pāṇinyādibhiḥ* (Iyer 1966: 63).

Passage 8: *śiṣṭebhya āgamāt siddhāḥ sādhave dharmasādhanam / arthapratyāyanābhede viparītās tv asādhavaḥ //* *VP* 1.27 (Iyer 1966: 81).

Translation: "The correct words, acquired from the cultured through tradition, are the means of obtaining merit. The incorrect words, while not differing from them as far as conveying of the meaning is concerned, are of an opposite character." (Iyer 1965: 40)

Comment: The words *śiṣṭebhya āgamāt siddhāḥ* are syntactically unclear. Do they refer to two separate sources for the knowledge of correct words, or are they dependent on each other in some way? The next passage from the *Vṛtti* deals with this issue in its own way.

Passage 9: *yathaiṅyāni dharmasādhanāni [vi]śiṣṭopadeśapāramparyāgamāvicchede-nāgatāni anabhiśaṅkanīyāni vyavasthitāni / ... tathā sādhasādhuvyavasthānam apy anavacchinnapāramparyam anabhiśaṅkanīyam yathāgamād eva siddham iti / Vṛtti on VP 1.27 (Iyer 1966: 82).*

Translation: "Just as other means of attaining merit, received through uninterrupted tradition consisting of successive teaching of the cultured are well established and are not to be doubted, in the same way, the distinction between what is correct and what is not is based on unbroken tradition and is not to be doubted, but is to be accepted according to tradition." (Iyer 1965: 40).

Comments: This passage makes it clear that for Bhartrhari the conception of Śiṣṭa is not a synchronic conception including only the contemporary Śiṣṭas. For him, this conception represents an *āgama* 'tradition, continuous transmission.' The Śiṣṭas of one generation transmit their knowledge to the next generation of Śiṣṭas in an unbroken way, and presumably the latter-day Śiṣṭas derive their authority from their being in line of transmission from the Śiṣṭas of the older generation.

Passage 10: *nānarthikām imām kaścid vyavasthām kartum arhati / tasmān nibadhyate śiṣṭaiḥ sādhutvaviśayā smṛtiḥ // VP 1.29. ko hi śiṣṭaḥ sambhinnabuddhir api lokam praty abhiniviṣṭo durjñānam duradhyeyam ca svarasamskāradīnīyamam laukika-vaidikānām śabdānām prayojanam vyavasthāpayitum utsaheta / na cānarthako niyamah / kṛto 'pi śiṣṭair aparair na pariḥyate / pramānam vā viduṣām loke na syād iti / tasmād anādir gurupūrvakramāgatā śiṣṭānumānāhetur avyabhicārā lakṣanaprapaṅcābhyām paryāyaiḥ śabdavati cāśabdā ca smṛtir nibadhyate / Vṛtti on VP 1.29 (Iyer 1966: 84-85).*

Translation: "Nobody would establish this system of rules without a purpose. Therefore, this tradition relating to correctness is being composed by the cultured. (Comm.:) Which cultured person, even if he has a confused mind and no sympathy towards the world, would undertake the regulation of the accent and other signs of correctness of the words of the Veda and of the world which are so difficult to know and to learn and which are the very purpose of Grammar? And such a regulation would not be useless. (If it were) such a regulation made by the cultured would be unacceptable to the others. And it would not be authority in the world for scholars. Therefore, this tradition (relating to words) beginningless, handed down from teacher to pupil, the means of inferring who the cultured persons are, infallible, consisting of general rules and their elaborations, is being composed in different ways, through direct statements and by implication." (Iyer 1965: 42).

Comments: Here, the verse from the *Vākyapadīya* and the *Vṛtti* seem to be espousing slightly different ideas. To focus on this difference, we can note that the verse says that the grammatical Smṛti is composed by the Śiṣṭas (*śiṣṭaiḥ nibadhyate smṛtiḥ*). On the other hand, the *Vṛtti* says that the grammatical Smṛti is a tool to detect who the Śiṣṭas are (*śiṣṭānumāna-hetuḥ*). Of these two conceptions, the first one is the new conception developed by Bhartrhari, while the second conception is the old conception found in the *Mahābhāṣya* on P.6.3.109.

Passage 11: *āvīrbhūtaprakāśānām anupaplutacetasām / aṭitānāgatajñānam pratyaksān na viśiṣyate // VP 1.37 // aṭindriyān asamvedyān paśyanty āṛṣena cakṣusā / ye bhāvān vacanam teṣām nānumānena bādhyate // VP 1.38. Vṛtti: atha ca tapasā nirdagdhadosā nirāvaranakhyaṭayāḥ śiṣṭāḥ pratibimbakalpena pratyakṣam iva svāsu khyātiṣu samkrāntākāraparigraham avyabharitam sarvam paśyanti / ... antaryāminam anugrāmam abhijātinimittanibandhanam anabhivyaktam śabdabrahma śaktyadhiṣṭhānam devatāḥ karmanām anubandhaparināmaśaktivaikalyāni sūksmam ātivāhikam śāriram pṛthag anyāms ca tīrthapravādesu prasiddhān arthān rūpādivad indriyair agrāhyān sukhādivat pratyātmasamvedyān ye śiṣṭā vyāvahārikād anyenaiva cakṣusā muktasamśayam upālabhante / teṣām anumānaviśayāṭitam vacanam vyabharibhir anumānair apākartum aśakyam / (Iyer 1966: 94-96).*

Translation: "The knowledge of the past and the future of those whose insight has manifested itself and whose mind is in no way tainted differs in no way from perception (VP 1.37). The words of those who, with their divine vision, see things which are beyond the senses and unknowable, cannot be set aside by reasoning (VP 1.38). (Vṛtti:) But cultured persons, whose impurities have been burnt away by austerities, whose cognitions are free from all limitations, see everything vividly reflected in their cognitions. The supreme inner Controller, the atoms which are the abode of the initial cause of creation, the unmanifested Word-Absolute which is the substratum of its powers, the gods, the residual forces generated by action, leading to particular results and not to others, in their maturity, the divine otherworldly body, and other such things known in all scholarly circles, imperceptible to the senses like colour and beyond the range of inner experience like happiness are undoubtedly perceived by the sages with their extraordinary eye. The words of these sages, dealing with matters beyond the range of inference, cannot be upset by reasoning which is so liable to err." (Iyer 1965: 47-48)

Comments: Here the verses of the *VP* do not mention the Śiṣṭas explicitly. However, the *Vṛtti* takes this to be a description of the Śiṣṭas. A comparison of this description of the Śiṣṭas with the description given by Patañjali on P.6.3.109 shows that while Patañjali is speaking about a real community of ideal speakers residing in the region of Āryāvarta, a community of learned Brāhmaṇas, Bhartrhari has almost mythologized the conception of Śiṣṭa. It has no specific regionality or temporality, but it has a very high degree of spirituality. This high degree of spirituality seems to

indicate that he is not speaking about any contemporary persons, but mythologized great sages of the golden age of Sanskrit grammar. His reference to *ārṣa cakṣus* “vision appropriate to a Rṣi”, which Iyer wrongly translates as “divine eye,” makes it clear that Bhartrhari’s Śiṣṭas are the ancient Rṣis, and not any contemporary persons. With this attitude, it makes eminent sense that Bhartrhari views Patañjali to be the foremost of the Śiṣṭas. By the time of Bhartrhari, Patañjali has been mythologized into a Rṣi, and his *Mahābhāṣya* is referred to as an *ārṣa* text (VP 2.481). As Abhyankar and Limaye (1965: 203) point out, these two verses of the *Vākyapadīya* have been quoted by Kaiyata in his *Pradīpa* on *Mahābhāṣya* on P.6.3.109, where he elucidates Patañjali’s conception of Śiṣṭa. However, Kaiyata sees no difference between Bhartrhari’s conception and Patañjali’s conception. Kaiyata cites these verses to explain the import of the expression *kiñcid antareṇa kasyāścid vidyāyāḥ pāram gatāḥ*. Kaiyata takes this to mean that the Śiṣṭas acquire mastery of knowledge without even being taught by a teacher (*vinaiva abhiyogādīnā, Uddyota: abhiyogo gurūpadeśaḥ, ādinā abhyāsādīḥ*). The implication is that they have direct access to all knowledge through their yogic and ascetic practices, and they need neither instruction nor practice. It is almost certain that Patañjali does not have any such thing in his mind. We need to be aware that Kaiyata’s understanding of the *Mahābhāṣya* has been significantly colored by his reliance on Bhartrhari, and that several crucial distinctions escaped his attention.

Passage 12: *astam yātesu vādesu karṣv anyesu asatsv api / śrutismṛtyuditam karma loko na vyatīvarṭate // VP 1.125. Vṛtti: iha pranetrivad āgamānām api pravādesu vicchedo bhūyupagamyate / teṣu pratyastamīteṣu yāvad anye pranetāro notpadyante, āgamāntarāṇi ca na pratīyante tatrāpy antarāle śrutivihītāni karmāni smṛtībandhanāmś ca bhakṣyābhakṣyādīn niyamān nātikrāmanti śiṣṭāḥ / (Iyer 1966: 204). Translation: “Even if the doctrines perish and there are no more authors to compose others, cultured people follow the right path mentioned in the *śrutis* (Scripture) and the *Smṛtis* (written tradition). [Iyer translates this verse under number VP 1.133.] [Commentary:] In all discussions, it is admitted that, like the authors, the written traditions themselves can disappear. When they come to an end and before other authors arise and other written traditions are elaborated, there may be an interval during which cultured people do not violate the rites taught in the Scripture nor the regulations relating to what to eat and what not to eat embodied in the written traditions.” (Iyer 1965: 120)*

Comments: Iyer’s translation needs some comment. The verse of the VP uses the expression *loko na vyatīvarṭate*, which literally means: “the world (or people) do not violate.” Under the influence of the *Vṛtti*, Iyer

translates the word *loka* as being equivalent to Śīṣṭa. In this particular case, there seems to be some contextual justification to support a restricted meaning for the word *loka*. Since the verse speaks about the “world” not violating the rules laid down in the Vedas and Smṛtis, we can assume that the verse does not refer to the world or people at large, but only to those people who follow the rules laid down in the Vedas and Smṛtis. Therefore, a more restrictive view of the notion of *loka* is justified.⁵ There is also no need to bring in any notion of “written” traditions. There is no reference to writing. The verse of the *VP* seems to refer to a decadent age where the ancient traditions have been lost, and yet some people seem to continue to follow the regulations from the ancient traditions, perhaps by instinct. These people could not be the same as the great ancient Rsis, referred to as Śīṣṭas elsewhere. Thus, the Śīṣṭas referred to in the *Vṛtti* of this verse must be good people in a decadent age. Thus, the word Śīṣṭa seems to have been used with some latitude, though mostly to refer to the ancient glorious Rsis.

Passage 13: *sādhutvajñānaviṣayā saisā vyākaraṇasmṛtiḥ / avicchedena śīṣṭānām idaṃ smṛtinibandhanam // VP 1.133. Vṛtti: yathaiva bhakṣyābhakṣyagamyāgamya-vācyāvācyādiviṣayā vyavasthitāḥ smṛtayah yāsu nibaddham samācāram śīṣṭā na vyatikrāṃanti tathayam api vācyāvācyaviśeṣaviṣayā vyākaraṇākhyā smṛtiḥ / smṛto hy arthah pāramparyād avicchedena punaḥ punar nibadhyate / prasiddhasamayācārāyām ca smṛtāv anibandhanaśabdāyām śīṣṭasamācārāvicchedenaiva smaryate / (Iyer 1966: 212-213).*

Translation: (Iyer 1965 translates this verse under *VP* 1.141): “Knowledge of the correctness of words is the subject of this tradition called Grammar. It is here that the uninterrupted tradition of cultured people is recorded. (Commentary:) Just as traditions relating to what can be eaten and what cannot be eaten, which woman one can marry and which woman one cannot marry, what can be said and what cannot be said are well established and cultured people do not go against the code of conduct based on them, in the same way, this tradition called Grammar relates

- 5 Here, we should distinguish the use of the word *loka* in this verse of the *VP* from the use in the first *Vārttika* of Kātyāyana on Pāṇini’s grammar: *siddhe śabdārthasambandhe lokato ’rthaprayukte śāstreṇa dharmaniyamaḥ* “With the words, their meanings, and the relationship between them being already established by (the usage of) the world and (with the words) being used to express meanings, the science of grammar makes a restriction as to (which words are conducive) to religious merit.” Here, the word *loka* refers to the world at large, i.e. to speakers of correct as well as incorrect words. All this usage of language, correct as well as incorrect, is given to grammarians, and all that the grammarians can do is to say which kind of usage is meritorious. They do not invent linguistic usage, either correct or incorrect. Of this totality of linguistic usage, Patañjali would say that the usage of the Śīṣṭas represents the correct and the meritorious usage. Thus, the Śīṣṭa usage represents a subset of the linguistic usage in the world.

to what particular words can be used and what not. What is remembered from generation to generation, in an uninterrupted manner is again and again embodied in words. A tradition which has no written basis but the observance of which is well-known is preserved by the continuity of the practice of the cultured.” (Iyer 1965: 124-125).

Comments: Again, Iyer is not justified in bringing in any notion of writing. In the syntax of the original verb, the genitive form *śiṣṭānām* is somewhat ambiguous. It could be possibly connected as an agentive genitive with the word *nibandhanam*, which makes the Śiṣṭas the authors of these grammatical compositions. Such a view of the role of the Śiṣṭas is justified on the basis of several other passages. The *Vṛtti*, and Iyer who follows it, seem to connect this genitive with *samācāra* “practice.” This word is found in the *Vṛtti*, but does not occur in the text of the verse. The verse as interpreted by Iyer does not make any reference to who the authors of the grammatical Smṛti are. However, as shown above, another interpretation is possible.

Passage 14: *tasyāś cāsamkīmam vāco rūpam kārtsnyena sāmānyaviśeṣavaty asmin lakṣane vyākaranākhye nibaddham / arvāgdarśanānām tu puruṣānām prāyena sātīṣāyāḥ pratighātīnyāḥ sāparādhaḥ śaktayāḥ / niraparādhas tu lakṣanaprapañcavān anekamārgo 'yam śabdānām pratipattiyupāyo darśitah / Vṛtti on VP 1.134. (Iyer 1966: 221)*
 Translation: (Iyer 1965 translates this passage as *Vṛtti* on VP 1.142) “The pure form of that word is embodied in this descriptive Science called Grammar, consisting of general and special rules. The powers of those of lower visions, generally admit of degree, are liable to meet obstruction and to commit mistakes. Hence this method of acquiring the words, free from error and consisting of definitions and elaborations and containing many paths, has been developed.” (Iyer 1965: 127).

Comments: The commentary *Paddhati* of Harivṛṣabha (Iyer 1966: 221) on the word *niraparādhaḥ* “free from error” says that the grammatical Smṛti texts are free from error because they are composed by the Śiṣṭas (*śiṣṭaiḥ pranītatvāt*). This comment from Harivṛṣabha shows that the idea of the Śiṣṭas being the authors of grammatical texts was positively endorsed by the commentators of Bhartrhari’s works.

Passage 15: *svabhāvajñaiś ca bhāvānām drśyante śabdaśaktayāḥ // VP 1.135cd // Vṛtti: santi tu sādhiprayogānumeyā eva śiṣṭāḥ sarvajñeyesv apratibaddhāntah-prakāśāḥ / te viśiṣṭakālāvadhīpravibhāgām yathākālam dharmādharmaśādhana-bhāvena samanvitām śabdaśaktim avyabhicārena paśyanti // (Iyer 1966: 221-223).*
 Translation: (Iyer 1965: 128-129 translates this verse as VP 1.143:) “[As] the powers of words are seen by those who know the true nature of things. (Commentary:) There are cultured people and that they are so can be inferred only from their use of correct words. They, whose inner vision is unobstructed in regard to all things to

be known, see, without error, the power of words, differing at different periods of time and consisting in their being the means of merit or demerit, according to the times.”

Comments: This passage also gives a view of the Śiṣṭas which is far more mythologized and utopian as compared to the conception of Patañjali. The commentary *Paddhati* of Harivṛṣabha offers an interesting explanation of the word *svabhāvajña* in the verse: *ye tu śiṣṭāḥ padārthaśaktim pratyakṣena [paśyanti?] te pṛṣodarādivat sarvān sādḥūn vidanṭīti tān praty anarthakam vyākaranam / tacchiṣṭaparijñānārthan tu vyākaranam iti /* (Iyer 1966: 222). This argues that the Śiṣṭas, with their mystical powers, directly perceive which words are correct and which are incorrect, and they use them appropriately. They do not need to use a grammar themselves to make this determination. Patañjali’s notion of Śiṣṭa assumes that there are people who speak correct Sanskrit without learning it from grammar books. However, Patañjali says that this could be either through divine grace or their own inherent nature. He does not enhance the mystical powers of these Śiṣṭas. He merely seems to refer to “natural” speakers of Sanskrit. By the time of Bhartrhari and his commentators, this “natural” speaker of Sanskrit has been endowed with supernatural mystical Ṛṣi-like powers. In this sense, the Śiṣṭas have been mythologized.

Passage 16: *anādim avyavacchinnām śrutim āhur akarṭṛkām / śiṣṭair nibadhyamānā tu na vyavacchidyate smṛtiḥ // VP 1.136 // Vṛtti: smṛtis tu nityam avicchidyamānārthā gadyaślokaṅkāyādibhedena pratikālam anyathā śiṣṭair eva nibadhyate //* (Iyer 1966: 223-224).

Translation: (Iyer 1965: 129-130 translates this verse as VP 1.144:) “Scripture (*Śruti*) has been declared to be beginningless, continuous and without an author. Written tradition (*Smṛti*) is composed by cultured Ancients and has continuity. (Commentary:) Written Tradition, on the other hand, has continuity of meaning, but is composed by the cultured differently at different times in prose, verses, sentences etc.”

Comments: As pointed out before, Iyer’s reference to writing is out of place. This passage most clearly connects the Śiṣṭas with the authorship of grammatical texts. Interestingly, the verse has just the word *śiṣṭa*, but Iyer renders it with “cultured Ancients.” Iyer’s translation obviously reads something into the text which is not there from a very literal point of view, and yet I feel he captures the contextually recoverable intention of the author of the verse. As I have argued before. Bhartrhari has mythologized the notion of Śiṣṭa and it does not refer to any contemporary speakers of standard Sanskrit. It refers to mythologized and partially deified ancient authors of Sanskrit grammatical texts. Bhartrhari’s conception of Śiṣṭa,

therefore, has a utopian quality to it, rather than being something which can be understood purely in sociolinguistic terms.

Passage 17: *atha kasmād ete gośabdasya gāvyaḍayaḥ paryāyā na vijñāyante /na hi śiṣṭasamācāraprasiddher anyad evamprakāreṣu smṛtinibandhanesv arthesu nimittam abhidhīyate / gāvyaḍayaś cet paryāyāḥ syur ete 'pi śiṣṭair lakṣanair anugamyeran prayujyeramś ca // Vṛtti on VP 1.141. (Iyer 1966: 231).*

Translation: (Iyer 1965: 134 translates this passage as *Vṛtti* on VP 1.149:) “Why is it that *gonī* etc. are not considered to be synonyms of *gauh*? In regard to such matters which are embodied in the written Tradition, no other cause other than being well-known in the practice of the cultured can be adduced. If *gāvī* etc. were synonyms, they would also have been included in their rules and actually used.”

Comments: This passage clearly attributes two functions to the Śiṣṭas. The usage of the Śiṣṭas is viewed to be standard usage. However, the Śiṣṭas are also authors of the rules of grammar codifying that standard usage.

Passage 18: *na śiṣṭair anugamyante paryāyā iva sādḥavaḥ / te yataḥ smṛtiśāstreṇa tasmāt sāksād avācakāḥ // VP 1.142 // (Iyer 1966: 231).*

Translation: (Iyer 1965: 134 translates this verse as VP 1.150:) “Since they (= incorrect words, *apabhramśas*) are not explained like correct synonyms by cultured people in the written Tradition (*smṛtiśāstra*), therefore, they are not directly expressive.”

Comments: This verse again clearly confirms the notion that the Śiṣṭas are authors of grammatical texts.

Passage 19: *jñānam tv asmadviśiṣṭānām tāsu sarvendriyam viduḥ / abhyāsān manirūpyādiviśeṣeṣv iva tadvidām // VP Kāṇḍa III, Jāṭisamuddēśa, verse 46 (Iyer 1963: 51).*

Translation: “The knowledge regarding the universal of those who are different from us proceeds from all the senses, just as that relating to the characteristics of precious stones and coins comes through practice in the case of those who know them.” (Iyer 1971: 33)

Comments: Iyer's rendering of the expression *asmadviśiṣṭānām* as “those who are different from us” does not do justice to the intention of the verse. As Helārāja appropriately points out, this expression seems to mean “those who are superior to us.” It refers to the Śiṣṭas with their supernormal cognitive abilities: *tad evam āgamaprāmāṇyād bhāvatattvadrśaḥ śiṣṭās santy afīndriyārthadarśina iti te yathāyatham gotvabrāhmaṇatvāḍijātīr āśrayavivekenādhyakṣayanti / tac ca tesām śiṣṭānām jñānam sarvendriyam pratiniyamānapekṣatvāt / sarvajñā hīndriyāntarenāpīndriyāntaravyāpāram kurvanti / ... brāhmaṇatvāḍiṣv asti kiñcit sāsnādisthānīyam upavyañjanam asmākam param afīndriyam / śiṣṭais tad avadhārya samjñāḥ*

pranītāh / ... tatrābhavatām upadeśād vāyam api sampradāyapārampariyād yathāyogam gotvāḍijāfir adhyavasyāmah // Prakīrṇakaprakāśa of Helārāja (Iyer 1963: 51-55). Translation: “Thus, on account of the authority of the tradition [we assert] that the Śiṣṭas do exist who see the truth of things and see things which are beyond the reach of senses. They appropriately determine the existence of different universals such as cowness and Brahminness depending upon the difference of the loci of these universals. That knowledge of those Śiṣṭas comes from all senses, since (for such accomplished persons) there is no restriction on which objects are cognized through which sense. Omniscient persons can accomplish the function of one sense with another sense. Just as [for recognizing cowness, there is] the dewlap [in the individual object], similarly there must be some indicator for the universals like Brahminness. However, those indications are beyond our senses. The Śiṣṭas, after comprehending such indications, make the appropriate designations. Because of the teaching of those honored [Śiṣṭas], we also determine the appropriate universals like cowness through continuity of our tradition.” Helārāja seems to be true to the spirit of Bhartrhari, though perhaps even more ebullient. According to him, we the current grammarians do not have the supernatural cognitive abilities which the ancient Śiṣṭas had, and therefore we can do no better than follow the teachings of those ancient Śiṣṭas. This virtually denies the existence of contemporary Śiṣṭas, and does seem to fall in the general line of the doctrine of declining abilities of humans in the course of time. Helārāja, in fact, discusses this notion of decline of abilities with time, and hence the resulting authority of the past sages, in great detail (Iyer 1963: 53). Again, to emphasize our historical perspective, Patañjali himself does not share in this notion of the non-existence of the contemporary Śiṣṭas.

Passage 20: *bhāvatattvadrśah śiṣṭāh śabdārthesu vyavasthitāh / yad yad dharme 'ngatām eti liṅgam tat tat pracakṣate // Vākyapadīya, Third Kāṇḍa, Liṅgasamuddeśa, Verse 21.* (Iyer 1973: 141).

Translation: “Cultured people who can see the truth and who know the words and meanings adopt whatever gender leads to merit.” (Iyer 1974: 114).

Comments: As Helārāja clarifies on this verse, Bhartrhari is redefining the notion of *loka* “world” in terms of Śiṣṭas. As the older dictum goes: *liṅgam aśisyam lokāśrayatvāl liṅgasya* (*Mahābhāṣya*, II, p. 198) “Gender need not be explicitly taught in grammar, since it depends upon the usage of words in the world.” While the original statement does not have any reference to Śiṣṭas with mystical supernatural cognitive powers, Bhartrhari’s

interpretation elevates the world of usage to the world of Śiṣṭas with supernatural cognitive abilities, who know the absolutely true nature of things and whose cognitive abilities are totally unobstructed: *iha lokaśabdena śiṣṭā vivakṣitāh / teṣāṃ ca vastuparamārtha-sākṣātkāritā laksanam / te hi nirāvaranakhyaṭayo 'bhidheyesu samavetaṃ strītvādi liṅgam abhyudaye yad yad yasya śabdasya sādhanatām eti tat tad eva tasyācaksate / Prakārnakaprakāśa of Helārāja, (Iyer 1973: 141).*

Conclusion:

A close study of all the passages cited above indicates that Bhartrhari has a distinctive conception of Śiṣṭa, a conception which is substantially different from the conception found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. Patañjali's Śiṣṭas are a real flesh-and-blood community of Brahmins living in the region of Āryāvarta. While they are selfless and learned, they are still contemporary human beings. Patañjali argues that these Śiṣṭas speak Sanskrit naturally, and their natural usage does not ensue from a study of Sanskrit grammar. Just as they do not study Sanskrit grammar in order to learn Sanskrit, Patañjali does not depict them as being authors of grammatical works either. In fact Patañjali points to the circularity of argument, if grammar were to follow the usage of the Śiṣṭas who were grammarians themselves. He insists on finding a source of grammar-independent usage of standard Sanskrit. Such usage is found in the community of Śiṣṭas. Patañjali's Śiṣṭas thus represent a sociolinguistic unit of élite speakers of Sanskrit. They most likely spoke Sanskrit as a second language, but they could, so it is claimed, acquire Sanskrit without learning it from grammar books. Patañjali exclaims that such persons must be divinely gifted or must have a special nature that they do not learn Sanskrit from grammar books and yet speak it correctly. However, Patañjali does not depict them as being highly mythologized mystical sages of some ancient times whose cognitive abilities were far superior to the contemporaries of Patañjali. Thus, there is no mystique about them. Besides these contemporary Śiṣṭas, Patañjali also refers to mythical sages and their behavior in particular contexts. This is, for instance, the case with the story of the sages called Yavānastarvāna narrated in the *Mahābhāṣya* (Vol. I, p. 11):

yad apy ucyate ācāre niyama iti yājñe karmani sa niyamah / evaṃ hi śrūyate / yavānastarvāno nāmarṣayo babhūvuh pratyaksadharmāṇaḥ parāparajñā veditaveditavyā adhigatayāthātathyāh / te tatrabhavanto yad vā nas tad vā na iti prayoktavye yavānastarvāna iti prayuñjate yājñe punah karmani nāpabhāṣante /

The statement that there is a restriction on the usage [of correct Sanskrit] applies to the context of sacrificial performance. Thus it is heard. There were in ancient times great sages called Yarvānastarvāna. They had direct insight into the nature of things, knew this and the yonder worlds, had realized what there is to be realized, and had attained the true knowledge of the world as it is. Those highly honored sages used the [incorrect = Prakrit] expressions *yarvāna* and *tarvāna* when they should have used [the proper Sanskrit] expressions *yad vā nah* and *tad vā nah*. However, they did not use these incorrect [= Prakrit] expressions during a sacrificial performance.

Thus, in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, there are two distinct kinds of references, one kind refers to contemporary élite speakers of Sanskrit, i.e. the selfless learned Brahmins of the region of Āryāvarta, and the second kind refers to mythical sages like Yarvānastarvāna. Only the mythical sages are glorified by a supernormal mystical description, though Patañjali does not invoke their supernormal cognitive powers as an argument. It is simply a rhetorical device. The contemporary Śiṣṭas are described more in terms of their social and scholastic élitism, rather than any supernatural cognitive abilities. There is no doubt that Patañjali argues for grammar being responsive to contemporary Śiṣṭa-usage of Sanskrit. The clear argument is that a grammarian who merely knows what the form would be in terms of the inherited rules of grammar (*prāpti*) is inferior to the one who responds to the desired current standard usage (*iṣṭi*).⁶ It says that an inherited system of grammatical rules is inherently an outdated system, and that it needs to be updated and revised by taking into account the contemporary Śiṣṭa usage. While Patañjali is not saying that the current age is as good as the older ages, he does not reach a point of denying the authority of the contemporary Śiṣṭas. While the ancient mythical Yarvānastarvāna are called Ṛṣis, the contemporary Śiṣṭas are not called Ṛṣis. They are exalted, and yet real human beings.

We should also refer to another distinction which we find in Patañjali's work. This is the distinction between the notions of *ācārya* versus *ṛṣi*. While the word *ācārya* is an expression of respect, it refers to real historical teachers, contemporary or otherwise. Thus, for Patañjali, Pāṇini is an *ācārya*, but the mythical Yarvānastarvānas are *ṛṣis*. This distinction between contemporary or ancestral teacher and mythical Ṛṣi is found in several Dharmasūtras. For instance, the *Āpastambīyadharmasūtra* (1.2.5.4:

6 *evam hi kaścid vaiyākaraṇa āha / ko 'sya rathasya praveteti / sūta āha / āyusmann aham prājītet / vaiyākaraṇa āha / apaśabda iti / sūta āha / prāptijñō devānāmpriyo na tv iṣṭijñā iṣyata etad rūpam iti / Mahābhāṣya on P.2.4.56, Vol. I, p. 488.*

tasmād ṛṣayo 'vareṣu na jāyante niyamātikramāt) claims that, because of the transgression of restraints, no Ṛṣis are born among the younger generations. However, it routinely refers to contemporary Ācāryas. Similarly, Pāṇini seems to consider other grammatical authorities to be Ācāryas, rather than Ṛṣis. The term *ṛṣi* in Pāṇini's rules seems to refer to Vedic seers (Cf. P.3.2.186: *kartari carsidevatayoḥ*) or to a Vedic mantra (Cf. P.4.4.96: *bandhane carsau*). The term *ācārya* refers to teachers whose opinions are cited (Cf. P.7.3.49: *ād ācāryānām*).

In Bhartrhari, an entirely new tone has set in. There is a strong undertone that the current times are decadent, and that there are no truly authoritative persons around. Grammarians in this decadent period must look back to the golden age of the great sages and seek authority in their statements. Thus, the ancient grammarians become the Śiṣṭas with super-normal cognitive and mystical abilities, something the contemporaries of Bhartrhari could not hope to achieve. Thus, the Śiṣṭas are no longer a contemporary community of standard speakers of Sanskrit, but the ancient sages of a golden age of Sanskrit grammar. This indicates that for Bhartrhari the ancient grammarians are already mythologized and deified to a great extent. While Patañjali has great respect for Pāṇini, he does not call him a Ṛṣi. On the other hand, Patañjali is already a Ṛṣi for Bhartrhari, who calls his *Mahābhāṣya* an *ārṣa* text (*VP* 2. 481c: *ārṣe ... granthe*). The later tradition clearly considers all the three sages, i.e. Pāṇini, Kātyāyana, and Patañjali to be Ṛṣis or Munis, and the beginning of this process must have already set in by the time of Bhartrhari.

This in general confirms the set of beliefs which become more explicit in later centuries when Patañjali is more conclusively regarded as an incarnation of the divinity Śeṣa. The iconographic representation of Patañjali as a serpent divinity appears for the first time in the southern Śiva temple at Chidambaram, and the literary references to Patañjali being an incarnation of Śeṣa also probably originate in the southern tradition.⁷

7 The oldest iconographic representations of Patañjali as a form of the serpent divinity Śeṣa are found in the 13th century A.D. Natarāja temple at Chidambaram in Tamilnadu. Some of this Chidambaram iconography of Patañjali is illustrated in J.F. Staal 1972. The poem *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* by the Kashmirian poet Rājānaka Jayaratha refers to Patañjali as an incarnation of Śeṣa (Chapter 27, verse 167, p. 236). This poem also belongs to the 13th century. Jayaratha's narrative is in part based on the long lost *Brhatkathā* of Guṇādhya. However, no other recension of this lost work refers to Patañjali being an incarnation of Śeṣa. Then there is the 17th century poem *Patañjalicaritam* by the southern poet Rāmabhadra Dīksita which elaborates upon this theme. K.V. Abhyankar (1954: 352) suggests that the southern grammarians knew the account of the transmission of the *Mahābhāṣya* and its recovery by Candrācārya from the south, and then they

As we are informed in the concluding verses of the second *Kāṇḍa* of the *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartr̥hari's grandteacher Candrācārya recovered the text of the *Mahābhāṣya* from a southern source. It is therefore likely that Bhartr̥hari may have been aware of and influenced by these southern traditions regarding Patañjali as a divinity. In a decadent age when one thought that there was no grammar-independent usage of Sanskrit to be found, an identification of ancient grammarians with Śiṣṭas seems to be a way of combining the two previously independent sources of authority. While Patañjali could point to a contemporary community of Śiṣṭas who spoke standard Sanskrit without learning it from grammar books, Bhartr̥hari was unable to do that. Thus, this whole argument lost its value. Under such changed conditions, Bhartr̥hari created a whole new edifice of authority for Sanskrit grammar by pointing to the golden age of Sanskrit grammar where the great grammarian Ṛṣis were also the great Śiṣṭas. Bhartr̥hari seems to argue that these great grammarians had a direct mystical insight into the true nature of Sanskrit and they did not need a grammar book themselves to learn Sanskrit. However, as great compassionate sages, these Munis prepared the grammatical Smṛtiśāstra for generations of lesser abilities to come. Bhartr̥hari, who claims to belong to such later generations, accepts this grammatical inheritance with gratitude and reverence. Here is the beginning of the *lakṣanaikacakṣuṣka* phase of the Sanskrit grammatical theory.

created the elaborate myths about Patañjali appearing in Chidambaram. However, this does not explain why Patañjali should have been regarded as an incarnation of Śeṣa, rather than of some other divinity.

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