

The Illuminating Mirror

Tibetan Studies in Honour of Per K. Sørensen
on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday

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Bhautopākhyāna or Dumb and Dumber: A Note on a Little-known Literary Genre of South Asia¹

Eli Franco

As is well known, Sanskrit philosophical texts are invariably written in the so-called nominal style, also known as “scientific” or scholarly style (wissenschaftliches Sanskrit). This style, which has a limited use of verbs (hence “nominal”), is abstract and impersonal. The first and second persons are hardly ever used, personal information about the authors or their opponents is extremely scarce, as are references to concrete reality or everyday practice. Although a sizable portion of the Indian philosophical output was written in verse, some of the essential characteristics of poetry are conspicuously underrepresented in it, and indeed the Indian tradition does not consider such verses to be “poetry” (*kāvya*). The most noticeable feature, which also distinguishes Indian philosophy from its Western and Chinese counterparts, is no doubt the relative poverty in examples, similes and analogies.² This stands in stark contrast not only to poetry in independent form (*kāvya*), or as embedded in theater plays, but also to poetical analysis as practiced in the *Alaṅkāraśāstra*. As Gerow points out in his *Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* (Gerow 1971: 140), among the hundred or so known poetical figures (*alaṅkāra*), about half are reducible to a basic simile. One author, Vāmana, even attempted, albeit not convincingly, to reduce all poetical figures involving meaning (*arthālaṅkāra*) to similes (*upamā*).

However, there are, of course, exceptions to the rule, and to one such exception I would like to draw attention in this short note. While discussing the proofs of rebirth against a materialist (Cārvāka) opponent, Prajñākaragupta (ca. 750–810), Dharmakīrti’s most brilliant commentator, argues that one has to assume life before birth because otherwise certain human properties would be inexplicable. Certain properties cannot come into existence spontaneously, but have to be developed by repeated practice (*abhyāsa*). The opponent retorts that properties that arise from repeated practice can also arise without it. For instance, he says:

“A colorful design (*citra*) arises from a painter, [but] is this the case with regard to [the colorful designs on the body of] birds as well? Similarly, the special property which arises from repeated practice can arise otherwise as well.”³

1 I am indebted to Ashok Aklujkar, Phyllis Granoff and Albrecht Wezler for very helpful comments. I also thank the Academy of Korean Studies KSPS) for a generous grant funded by the Korean Government (MOE) (AKS-2012-AAZ-104).

2 This may seem surprising when one recalls that in Indian philosophy every formal inference has to include an example, in some cases even two examples, the one positive the other negative. However, these formal examples are only instantiations of the property to be proved (or in case of the negative example, its absence). They do not require any imagination or innovation on the part of the author. It is also disconcerting to observe that Indian philosophers used the same single example to illustrate similarity (the cow and the geyal) for over two thousand years without any apparent need to introduce a variation or expansion on it.

3 *citraṃ citrakarāj jātam patariṣv api kiṃ tathā | abhyāsād (hi)* viśeso yaḥ so ’nyathāpi bhaviṣyati || 386 ||, Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra 55.10–11. *Added by the editor for metrical reasons. Tshad ma rnam ’grel gyi rgyan: ri mkhan las skyes ri mo ni | bya la’ang de bzhin ci ltar yin || de bzhin goms las khyad ’gyur gang | de ni gzhan du’ang ’gyur ba yin], ibid. 48a5. The translation above is repeated from Franco 1997: 170.*

Prajñākaragupta replies that just because the cause of the pattern of colors in birds and so on is not seen, this does not mean that it is without a cause. In this connection, he tells the following anecdote (*Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 55.20–24):

tad atra bhautopākhyānam⁴ āyātam.

*kaścīt bhautāḥ kilānyena pṛṣṭāḥ kathaya sambhavaṃ |
mātur dirghaviṣāṇasya vṛṣabhasya katham sthitih || 388 ||
sa prāha kukṣer jāyante na mātur mahiṣā amī |
haṭṭāgatānām eṣāṃ tu mūlyena krayamātrakam || 389 ||*

tathābhūtam evedaṃ lokāyatamatam:⁵

“Therefore, here the anecdote about the fools comes [to mind]:

A certain fool was reportedly asked by another: Tell [me],
how is it possible that a bull with long horns stays [in the belly] of [its] mother?
He said: Those buffalos do not come from the belly of [their] mother.
They come from the market and are only purchasable for a price.

This Lokāyata doctrine is just so.”

The same anecdote is repeated by Śānti Sūri in the *Nyāyāvatāravārttika-vṛtti* 46.16–20. Unfortunately, this passage cannot be considered to provide another version or another source for the above anecdote, for it is clear that Śānti Sūri quotes it directly from Prajñākaragupta. As has already been noticed by Dalsukh Malvania, the learned editor of the *Nyāyāvatāravārttika-vṛtti*, the entire section is an unacknowledged quotation of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*.⁶ Note that Śānti Sūri refers to the anecdote as *bhautākhyānam*. The reading *bhautāḥ*, rather than *tautāḥ* as in *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, also appears in the verse.⁷

Prajñākaragupta mentions very briefly two further anecdotes about fools in different contexts. In the beginning of the Pratyakṣa chapter (vv. 1–2),⁸ Dharmakīrti enumerates several criteria to distinguish between particulars and universals, one of which is similarity: the universal is similar and the particular is not, or more precisely, the cognition of the universal has a similar object and the cognition of the particular does not. While commenting on this criterion

4 Sāṅkṛityāyana, however, reads *tautopākhyānam* and in the next line *tautāḥ*. See the last paragraph of this paper.

5 *de'i phyir 'dir glen pa'i gtam 'ongs pa yin te |
glen pa 'ga' la gzhan dag gis		khyu mchog rva ring ma lto na
gnas pa ci ltar srid pa gang		smros shig ce ni dris pa na
de smras ma he 'di dag ni		ma yi lto las skyes min gyi
'di dag tshong dus nas 'ongs pa'i		rin gyis nyos pa tsam du zad
'jig rten rgyang 'phen pa'i gnod pa yang de lta bur 'gyur ro	, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan 48b1f.*	

6 See his *Ṭippanāni* p. 207, where he points out that the *Nyāyāvatāravārttika-vṛtti* (p. 46, lines 4–19) have been lifted from the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*.

7 Further variants from four manuscripts of the *Nyāyāvatāravārttika-vṛtti* are pointed out by Malvania in notes 5–8 thereon, but none of them would require a modification of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* text.

8 For a recent annotated translation, see Franco / Notake 2014.

Prajñākaragupta argues against an anonymous opponent who claims that only perception, due to experience that is repeated extremely often, prompts one to act,⁹ but not inference, whose form consists in an apprehension of similarity.¹⁰ Prajñākaragupta responds that this is not true because the first perception alone is not seen to prompt one to act. The opponent consents that the first perception of an object does not prompt to action, but claims that the subsequent ones do. This reminds Prajñākaragupta of a story of a fool who thinks about a disease-infested place: “In case entering this place for the first time may cause sickness. I will not enter first, but I may enter later.”¹¹

In the beginning of the Parārthānumāna chapter, Dharmakīrti discusses at some length a Sāṅkhya inference which attempts to prove that pleasure and so forth are material (i.e., are not conscious) because they arise and perish (*utpattimattvādi*).¹² The reason, however, is based on the Buddhist scripture and is not acceptable to the Sāṅkhya himself who maintains that they are permanent. Dharmakīrti retorts that the Sāṅkhya strategy is self-defeating, for if the Sāṅkhya is right, then the Buddhist scripture is wrong and cannot be relied on. In this connection, the Sāṅkhya opponent in the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* argues that such a criticism is not employed when arguing with learned people. However, when arguing with inexperienced or stupid opponents one is justified to use it because such opponents also make incoherent criticism. To each what he deserves.¹³ Prajñākaragupta answers that the following anecdote about the fools comes to mind: “[A stupid monk said:] He drank alcohol from my mendicant bowl, now I must drink urine from his bowl.”¹⁴

9 The epistemological issues involved in this statement are too complex to be explained here. Very briefly, prompting to action was used by Dharmottara as an ersatz to the actual obtainment of an object (*arthaprāpti*) indicated by a valid cognition; often repeated experience was used, for instance by Kamalaśīla, in the discussion of intrinsic versus extrinsic validity (*svataḥ* and *parataḥ prāmāṇyam*) to allow for the intrinsic validity of certain cognitions.

10 *atha kevalam adhyakṣaṃ tadabhāve** 'ryantābhyaśāt pravartakam dṛṣṭam nānumānam sādrśyagrabaṇākāram, *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 171.28. *Delete *tadabhāve*, which is syntactically awkward and has no equivalence in the Tibetan translation: *ci ste shin tu goms pa las mngon sum 'ba' zbig 'jug par byed pa mthong ba yin pas na / 'dra ba 'dzin pa'i rnam pa can gyi rjes su dpog pa ni ma yin no zhe na |*, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan* 158a2.

11 *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 171.29–31: *tad apy asat. nādhyakṣapratītiḥ kevalā prathamam pravartikā dṛṣṭā. mā bhūt pūrvam paścād bhaviṣyatīti cet. tad etat bhautākhyānam.**

*taddēśe hi praveśo yaḥ prathamam yadi rogakrt |
prathamam na pravekṣyāmi paścād astu praveśitā ||24||*

Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan 158a2f.: | *de yang mi bden te | mngon sum gyis (read gyi) rtogs pa 'ba' zbig dang po'i tshe 'jug par byed pa ma mthong ba'i phyir ro | | dang po ma yin kyang phyis 'gyur ro zbe na | 'di ni glen pa'i gtam yin te |*

| *gang de gang zbig yul der ni | | dang po zhugs pa na byed na |
| dang po 'jug par mi bya ste | | de yi 'og tu 'jug par 'gyur | | zbe'o |*

* As above, Sāṅkṛityāyana reads *tautā-*.

12 These verses were reedited, translated and commented in Tillemans 2000.

13 *athāpi syān na vidagdeṣv evambhūtasādhanopanyāśah. avidagdhaprativādinam praty upanyāsāt. yataḥ so 'pi dūśanam asambaddham eva dadyāt, Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 473.18–20.

'on te mkhas pa dag la ni de lta bu'i | sgrub byed nye bar dgod par bya ba ma yin te | mi mkhas pa la bstan pa'i don du dgod pa'i phyir ro | | gang gi phyir de yang skyon 'brel par med / pa nyid 'grel pa'i phyir ro |, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan* 129a3.

The literal meaning of *mūlye mūlye tathābhūta eva puṭikābandhaḥ* is not entirely clear to me. I assume: For each purchasable object, the corresponding wrapping/container. For the meaning of *puṭikā*, see also Kölver 1985.

14 *tathā hi, mūlye mūlye tathābhūta eva puṭikābandhaḥ. tad idaṃ bhautopākhyānam* āyātam. mamānena bhikṣāpātre madyapānam kṛtam mayā tv aśya mūtrapānam kartavyam, Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 473.19–21.

* Sāṅkṛityāyana, however, reads *tautopākhyānam*. *'di ltar rin dang rin la de lta bu nyid kyi phur ma 'ching ba nyid do zhe na | 'di ni glen pa'i gtam 'dis nga'i slong phor du chang 'thungs te | ngas 'di'i slong phor du gcin 'thung ngo zhes bya ba de byung ba yin no |*, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rgyan* 129a4.

Another anecdote about fools is told by the eleventh-century philosopher Jñānaśrīmitra in his extensive work on the thesis that consciousness / awareness / cognition has a form (*Sākāra-siddhiśāstra*):

“Even though the characterisations that are similar to what is assumed by fools are destroyed, the nature / character of the real thing, which is free from all [false, superimposed] qualifications, is not destroyed.

Having seen an elephant at the gate of the royal palace,

A certain [fool] said that because of the tusks it is darkness eating radishes, because of the flowing (i.e., the urine) it is a vessel that gives water (i.e., a cloud), [or that it is] a gate [which consists in] a high opening with four pillars, [or] because of the excrements resembling a lump it is an offering.¹⁵

Another fool [said that] this must be a kinsman, for there is a firm tradition which says ‘whoever stands at the royal gate or the cremation grounds is a kinsman’.¹⁶

A similar anecdote, or rather a variant of the same anecdote, occurs in the *Ātmatattvaviveka* of Udayana, which clearly shows that there is nothing specifically Buddhist about these anecdotes.¹⁷ Udayana argues here against the Buddhist Yogācāra theory that the world is unreal and is only an appearance in the consciousness of leaving beings. The Buddhist opponent attempts to prove his idealist doctrine by a formal inference, but Udayana retorts that such an inference is completely useless and is similar to the deliberations of a fool. And in this connection he narrates the following anecdote¹⁸:

15 Monier Williams’s dictionary, s.v. *bali*: “esp. an offering of portions of food, such as grain, rice &c, to certain gods, semi-divine beings, household divinities, spirits, men, birds, other animals and all creatures including even lifeless objects; it is made before the daily meal by arranging portions of food in a circle or by throwing them into the air outside the house or into the sacred fire; it is also called भूत-यज्ञ and was one of the ५ महा-यज्ञस्, or great devotional acts.”

16 *Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvali* 474–475:
bhautakalpitakalpānām lakṣaṇānām kṣatāv api /
sarvopādhibiviktasya vasturūpasya na kṣatih //
rājadvāri dviradam avalokya dantena mūlādakam andhakāraṃ prasrāvato nīradapotam āha /
kaścic catuḥ>stambhakam attam āyaṃ dvāraṃ baliṃ pīḍanibhāt puriṣāt //
rājadvāre śmaśāne vā yas tiṣṭhati sa bāndhavaḥ /*
iti gāḍhasmyter anyo bhauto bāndhavam eva tat //

*This popular saying is the equivalent of “a friend in need is a friend indeed”;

it appears twice in *Hitopadeśa* (1, 74.3 and 4, 68.12) as well as in the *Bṛhatakathāślokaśāstram*, 20, 346.2; see kjc-fs-cluster.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/dcs/index.php?contents=kwic&kwic_id_get=98643 (acc. 5.1.2015).

17 *Ātmatattvaviveka* 530, Dravid 1995: 240.

18 *tathā hi kenacid bhautena rājadvāri dviradam avalokya vikalpitam: kim ayam andhakāro mūlakam atti, āhosvit jalavāho balākān varṣati garjati ca, yadvā bāndhavo ’yaṃ rājadvāri śmaśāne ca yas tiṣṭhati sa bāndhava iti paramācāryavacanāt. athavā yo ’yaṃ bhūmau dṛśyate tasya chāyeti. dūṣitam ca, tatra nādyah, sūrpayugalaprasphoṭa nānupapatteḥ. na dvitīyah, tasya stambhacatuṣṭayābhāvāt. na tṛtīyah, tasya lagudabhrāmanābhāvāt. na caturthah, tasya naraśiraḥśatodgīraṇābhāvāt. tato na kiṃcid idam iti. kim etavatā dviradasvarūpaṃ nivartatām? yadvā varam etasmād yo ’yam so ’yam iti dvitīyo bhautah, Ātmatattvaviveka 530.*

“A certain fool saw an elephant at the royal gate and deliberated: Is this a darkness eating radishes? Or is it a cloud that rains and thunders?¹⁹ Or is it a relative? For the greatest teachers said: ‘whoever stands at the royal gate or the cremation grounds is a relative.’ Or is it a shadow of something seen on the ground?

[He] found fault [at all alternatives]: Not the first [namely, darkness eating radishes], for this is impossible because of the two winnowing baskets (i.e., the ears of the elephant). Not the second, for [a cloud] does not have four pillars. Not the third because [a relative] does not swing a stick (a reference to the trunk or the tail). Not the fourth, for [a shadow] does not eject (*udgirand*) hundreds of human heads (reference to the excrements of the elephant). Therefore, it is nothing at all.

Does the nature of the elephant cease to exist by such [deliberations]? Or is a second fool who professes ‘it is as it is’ better than the first?”

These are the only “Anecdotes about Fools” I was able to find so far. The basic structure of the above anecdotes seems mostly the same. A fool makes a stupid comment or asks a stupid question, and another fool, while professing to correct him, makes even a more stupid remark. In one case we have a fool intending to get a revenge for an offensive act by planning an even more offensive act. Further, we saw how Udayana has modified the anecdote on the elephant to fit the context of the discussion. Of course, the number of anecdotes collected so far is too small to make any secure generalisations. In at least one case (entering a disease-infested place) it does not fit with this scheme, but it is possible that Prajñākaragupta mentions only a part of it, for no more is needed in that particular context.

Finally, a word about the name of this genre of anecdotes. We saw that Sāṅkṛityāyana in his edition of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* refers to it twice as *tautopākhyānam*, and once as *tautākhyānam*. Further, in v. 388 on p. 55.21, the word *tautaḥ* appears. The word *tauta*, however, is not recorded in the Monier William’s dictionary. In the Petersburger Wörterbuch (*Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* of Böhtlingk and Roth. St. Petersburg 1852/3–1875), it appears only as a variant of *tottāyana*, the name of a certain Atharvaveda school. The Apte dictionary records *tautātika* and *tautātita* as belonging to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (who was known as *tutāta* and *tutātita*). None of these seem to make sense in this context. The word *bhauta*, on the other hand, is attested by all the dictionaries in the meaning of “idiot,” “fool” and related terms and fits perfectly in our context. It may be reminded that in Old Bengali (also known as Bengali cum Maithili), and in which the single manuscript of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* was written, the syllables *ta* and *bha* are indistinguishable. Further, the reading *bhauta* is corroborated not only by the parallel passages in the *Nyāyavātānavārttika-vṛtti*, *Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvali* and *Āmatattvaviveka*, but also by the Tibetan translation of the word (consistently in all three occasions) as *glen pa*. Quite obvious is also the choice for the second member of the compound. We saw that Prajñākaragupta uses *upākhyāna* twice and *ākhyāna* once; similarly Śānti Sūri uses *ākhyāna*. The *Jñānaśrīmitranibandhāvali* and the *Āmatattvaviveka* do not mention either. However, it is more likely that an *upasarga* would be omitted rather than added unnecessarily, and the term

19 The word *balākān* here is not clear to me. Śāṅkaramiśra’s *Ṭīkā* thereon, 531.14: *dante balākātvaṁ*. This, however, is also not clear to me (mistaking the tusks for cranes? Cranes, particularly female cranes are often associated with clouds in Indian poetry and are believed to be impregnated by clouds, but I do not quite see the picture in relation to the elephant; the two tusks are mistaken for two rows of cranes?); note also the change of the masculine to feminine (*balākā*). Dravid 1995 translates: “pouring down lightning,” *ibid.* 241. Unfortunately, I was not able to consult further commentaries to the *Āmatattvaviveka*.

upākhyāna, which usually refers to a short tale, an episode or a subordinate story, fits better the short anecdotes translated above.

My friend Phyllis Granoff, with whom I discussed these anecdotes, has found another one in Candrasūri's commentary on Haribhadra's *Upadeśapada* (ibid. vol. 2: 314). Although the protagonist himself is not called *bhauta*, the word does appear in it, and the story fits the pattern of the above anecdotes. The stupid Śabara who wants to avoid committing the sin of touching ascetics with his feet, commits a far greater sin when using weapons against them:

kila kasyacīc chabarasya kuto 'pi prastāvāt 'tapodhānām pādena sparśanaṃ mahate 'narthāya sampadyate' iti śrutadharmasāstrasya kadācin mayūrapicchaiḥ prayojanam ajāyata. yadāsau nipuṇam anyatrānveṣamāno 'pi taṃ na lebhe tadā śrutam anena, yathā bhautasādhusamīpe tāni yāni, yayācīre ca tāni tena tebhyah, paraṃ na kiṃcil lebhe. tato 'sau śastravyāpārapūrvam tāt nigrhya jagrāha tāni, pādena sparśanaṃ ca parihṛtavāms teṣām.

“A certain Śabara, who had learnt on some occasion that according to Dharmasāstra touching ascetics with one's feet leads to great misfortune, wanted sometime to obtain peacock feathers. After skillfully searching everywhere and not obtaining any, he heard that some stupid Sādhus had some. He asked them for the feathers, but did not get any. Then, after using weapons and subduing them, he took possession of the feathers, but avoided touching them (the Sādhus) with his feet.”

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