

ІНСТРУМЕНТАРІЙ TOOLS

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ON THE NOTION OF LINGUISTIC CONVENTION (SAMAYA, SAṂKETA) IN INDIAN THOUGHT

1. Introduction

1.1. Two central views on the origin of language and the main conception of samaya/saṅketa in Indian philosophy of language

In Indian thought, there are two central and opposing views on the origin of language. According to the first of them, all words were created and are conventional in their origin. The main defenders of this view include Naiyāyikas, Vaiśeṣikas, and Buddhists. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika hold that language has its beginnings in the primary linguistic convention (*samaya*, *saṅketa*). The convention is that some person or persons give names to things in accordance with their will, thus establishing the relationship (*sambandha*) between words (*śabda*) and their meanings (*artha*), and then communicate the relationship to other persons, who accept it. In earlier Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika texts, the authors of the primary linguistic convention are the first users of language – see the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* (*Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₁ II, 1, 18-19 and VII, 2, 15-24; *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₂ II, 1, 18-19 and VII, 2, 14-20),¹ as well as the *Nyāyasūtras* (II, 1, 53-56), together with the *Nyāyabhāṣya* (II, 1, 52-56),² Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana's commentary on them. In the later Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika texts, the creator of the primary linguistic convention is God (Īśvara, literally “Lord”) – see, for example, Candrānanda's *Vaiśeṣikasūtravṛtti*³ (II, 1, 18-19); Vācaspati Miśra's *Nyāyavārttikatātparyāṭikā*⁴ (II, 1, 52-56); Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī* [Śukla 1936: 220-225]; and Śaṅkara Miśra's *Upaskāra*⁵ (VII, 2, 20 and II, 1, 18-19).

Buddhists, like Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas, hold that all words are conventional in their origin. According to the Buddhists, the relationship between words and their meanings is established by the users of language. Buddhism encompasses many different philosophies, and it is hardly possible to sum them up in this research; therefore, I refer only to Dignāga and the

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¹ For the text of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₁ and *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₂, see Jambuvijayaḥ [1961] and Tarka Pañcānana [1861], respectively.

² For the text of the *Nyāyasūtras* and *Nyāyabhāṣya*, see Nyaya-Tarkatirtha et al. [1936-1944].

³ For the text of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtravṛtti*, see Jambuvijayaḥ [1961].

⁴ For the text of the *Nyāyavārttikatātparyāṭikā*, see Nyaya-Tarkatirtha et al. [1936-1944].

⁵ For the text of the *Upaskāra*, see Tarka Pañcānana [1861].

continutors of his thought⁶ – see Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti*⁷ (II, 5),⁸ Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika* (IV, 109-130; especially IV, 116, 126-127),⁹ and Śāntarakṣita’s *Tattvasamgraha* together with Kamalaśīla’s *Tattvasamgrahapañjikā*¹⁰ (2627, 2663, 2666-2669, 2767-2768).

The opposing view is that nobody created language – neither its users nor God. Words have always had a relationship with their primary meanings. This relationship, often called *autpattika* (“original”) or *svābhāvika* (“natural”, “inherent”), is rooted in the very nature of the word and its meaning; it does not come from outside. The adherents of this view include Mīmāṃsakas (see *Mīmāṃsāsūtras* and Śabara’s *Śābarabhāṣya*¹¹ I, 1, 5; Kumāriḥa Bhaṭṭa’s *Ślokavārttika*¹² V, sections 11 and 16), Advaitins [Murty 1959: 15-18; Potter 1981: 56], and the Grammarians focused on philosophical issues, namely, Bhartṛhari and the continuators of his thought [Subramania Iyer 1969: 204-218; Houben 1995: 154-157; Chakravarty 2004; Ogawa 2013: 244]. They have advanced many arguments for their view that language is prior to any conventions; one of the most important arguments is that words must already exist to set up a convention. Words must be used by the one who establishes it and understood by those who accept it.¹³

While presenting their views on the origin of words and contrasting the aforementioned two positions, Indian philosophers usually use the terms *samaya* and *saṃketa* to denote the linguistic convention establishing the relationship between a word and its meaning that had earlier been unrelated. When *samaya* and *saṃketa* are used in this way – that is, when they denote the event of semantic agreement establishing the relationship between a word and its meaning – they are often translated by scholars as “convention” or “linguistic convention” [Pandeya 1963: 171-187; Matilal 1990: 26-30; Taber 2005: 97 and 210, note 17; Arnold 2006 and 2010; Lysenko 2018; Saito 2020: 85, 98-99; etc.]. Basic dictionary meanings of both words include “agreement”, “consent”, “consensus”, and “convention”, and they are used interchangeably when they function as terms of philosophy of language.

1.2. The aim and contributions of this research

In Indian philosophy of language, the view that all words have their origin in linguistic convention (*samaya*, *saṃketa*) is usually contrasted with the view that words have a natural relationship with their primary meanings. Surprisingly, however, some philosophers who adhere to the second view – that is, who reject the conventional origin of language – at the same time accept linguistic convention pertaining to all words. How should we understand

⁶ This view on the origin of language had also other adherents among Buddhists – see Lysenko [2018]. However, I do not make any statements about Buddhism in general.

⁷ For the text of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti*, see Hayes [1988].

⁸ Dignāga says that the users of language gave names to different things on the basis of their perception of these things. The Sanskrit original did not survive; the work has reached us in Tibetan translations. I do not read Tibetan; I rely on the English translation by Hayes [Hayes 1988: 238].

⁹ Pp. 153-189 of Tillemans’ edition and translation. In the same book, see also Appendix B (“Dharmakīrti on *prasiddha* and *yogyatā*”), which contains Tillemans’ study on the Buddhist view of linguistic convention [Tillemans 2000: 219-228]. On the view of linguistic convention held by Dignāga and the followers of his thought, see also Arnold [2006 and 2010].

¹⁰ For the text of the *Tattvasamgraha* and *Tattvasamgrahapañjikā*, see Shastri [1968].

¹¹ For the text of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras* and *Śābarabhāṣya*, see Nyāyaratna [1873-1887].

¹² For the text of the *Ślokavārttika*, see Śāstrī [1978].

¹³ On both Indian and Western philosophers’ arguments against the conventional origin of language, see Arnold [2006: 445-476] and Chakravarty [2004].

these philosophers? Do they contradict themselves? Or are we dealing with terminological confusion in their texts – with a situation where the same term (*samaya/saṃketa*) has multiple completely different meanings?

My aim is to show that in Indian philosophy of language, *samaya/saṃketa* was not understood only as an agreement that establishes the relationship between a word and its meaning. In this paper, I present two other basic ways of understanding *samaya/saṃketa* in Indian philosophy of language. The first of these was discovered by Houben [1992] in Bhartṛhari and his commentator Helārāja, and the second was discovered by Łucyszyna [2017] in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*. I propose a classification of traditions of Indian thought based on which conception of linguistic convention was acknowledged or could have been acknowledged by them; such a classification has not been made before, and this is the first contribution of my study. I also attempt to explain why Indian philosophers had used the same term, *samaya/saṃketa*, for the three different ways of understanding *samaya/saṃketa* and give the pros and cons of translating the term *samaya/saṃketa* in each case with the same English term “(linguistic) convention”. This is the second contribution of my study.

2. Three basics ways of understanding *samaya/saṃketa* in Indian philosophy of language

The first and the most common way of understanding *samaya/saṃketa* in Indian philosophy of language has been described above.

It was Houben who for the first time drew attention to the second basic way of understanding *samaya/saṃketa* in Indian philosophy of language. In his groundbreaking study “Bhartṛhari’s *samaya* / Helārāja’s *saṃketa*” [1992], he observed that these Grammarians at the same time accepted and rejected *samaya/saṃketa*. He then explained why this was the case. Houben’s analysis of the meaning of the terms *samaya* and *saṃketa* in Bhartṛhari and Helārāja led him to the conclusion that the *samaya/saṃketa* of these philosophers is different from the *samaya/saṃketa* of Vaiśeṣikas and Naiyāyikas. Bhartṛhari and Helārāja rejected *samaya/saṃketa* as an agreement initiating the relationship between a word and its primary meaning (which had previously been unrelated), but they accepted *samaya/saṃketa* as the established usage of words. Houben shows that for these Grammarians, the terms *samaya* and *saṃketa* meant mainly the tradition, regular practice, or established custom of usage of words.

The third basic way of understanding *saṃketa* in Indian philosophy of language was for the first time analyzed by Łucyszyna, in her article “On the notion of linguistic convention (*saṃketa*) in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*” [2017].¹⁴ Łucyszyna’s study was inspired by Houben’s publication [1992] mentioned above. Łucyszyna discovered that linguistic convention was understood as the established usage of words also in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*,¹⁵ the first and most authoritative commentary on the *Yogasūtras*.¹⁶ Łucyszyna shows that in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*,

¹⁴ Łucyszyna’s article is open-access. For the link to download the article, see the References section of this paper.

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*’s view, see Łucyszyna [2017], who also notes striking similarities between the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*’s view of the word–meaning relationship and the theory of linguistic sign of Ferdinand de Saussure [ibid.: 15, note 25].

¹⁶ Classical Yoga (called also “Pātañjala Yoga”) was codified in the *Yogasūtras* and *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*. Before the series of publications by Maas, it had been generally acknowledged by scholars that one person, whose name according to the tradition was Patañjali, had compiled the *Yogasūtras*, while another person, traditionally called Vyāsa or Vedavyāsa, had composed the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*. The Indologist Maas questioned this widespread view. He holds that both these texts constitute “a single work with a single author” [Maas 2013: 58]. Maas presented many compelling arguments substantiating his opinion that “a single person called

like in Bhartṛhari and Helārāja as explored by Houben, the term *saṃketa*¹⁷ stands for both the agreement initiating the relationship between a word and its primary meaning and for the established usage of words. She also shows that the author of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, like Bhartṛhari and Helārāja, does not acknowledge *saṃketa* when understood in the first way and does accept *sāṃketa* understood in the second way.

The convention accepted by the Grammarians (analyzed by Houben) and by the author of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* is a consensus among the users of a language about the meanings of words. This consensus (established usage of words, tradition of usage of words) has neither a beginning nor an end. Unlike the consensus (*samaya/saṃketa*) about the meanings of words accepted by the Buddhists, Vaisesikas, and Naiyāyikas, it has not been initiated by anyone. In the Grammarians and in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, the consensus is not the origin of the relationship between words and their meanings. Rather, it reveals this relationship; that is, it makes it known. The consensus manifests the relationship: from the tradition of usage of words, we learn how words are used, which is necessary to understand language and communicate in it.

However, there are also differences between the convention of the Grammarians and the convention of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, and because of these differences, I treat the convention accepted by the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* as a separate – the third – basic way of understanding *saṃketa* in Indian philosophy of language. The first difference is that the convention of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, unlike the convention of the Grammarians, is not founded on the natural relationship between words and their meanings. According to the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, the relationship between a word and its meaning is neither natural nor inseparable. The second difference is that the convention accepted by the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* not only manifests the relationship between a word and its meaning but also keeps this relationship in existence. According to the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, the relationship between a word and its meaning, though having neither a beginning nor an end, continues to exist thanks to the consensus (agreement, convention) among the users of language.¹⁸

Patañjali collected some *sūtras*, probably from different, now lost sources, composed most of the *sūtras* himself and provided the whole set with his own explanations in a work with the title *Pātañjala Yogaśāstra*” [ibid.: 65-66]. Maas’s key arguments are summarized in Łucyszyna [2017: 3, note 2], who also lists his main publications about the authorship of the *Yogasūtras* and *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* [ibid.: 18]. – For the text of the *Yogasūtras* and *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, see Maas [2006] and Miśra [1971].

¹⁷ *Samaya* occurs in the *Yogasūtras* and *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, but it is not a term of philosophy of language there.

¹⁸ The three important views of *samaya/saṃketa* described above should be distinguished from the many other dictionary meanings of the terms *samaya* and *saṃketa*. Out of these other meanings, I shall mention only two, which can also appear in philosophical texts. The first one is *śakti* (“power”), that is, the power of word to express its meaning. The second is *śabda-artha-sambandha* (“the relationship between word and its meaning”) [Jhalakīkar 1928: 825-826, 878-879]. The interpretations of *samaya/saṃketa* as *śakti* or *śabda-artha-sambandha* that occur in some philosophical texts should not be considered a direct identification of *samaya/saṃketa* with *śakti* or *śabda-artha-sambandha*. The authors usually mean, in fact, that *śakti* and *śabda-artha-sambandha* are the results of convention, conceived of as the event that initiates the relationship between a word and its meaning and thus constituting a word as a meaningful unit, that is, a unit possessing the power (*śakti*) to express its meaning. In my opinion, the interpretations of *samaya/saṃketa* as *śakti* or *śabda-artha-sambandha* encountered in Sanskrit primary sources^a are confusing and do not serve terminological clarity. – ^a For example, in Śrīdhara’s *Nyāyakandaḷī* [Dvivedin 1895: 216], Śaṅkara Miśra’s *Upaskāra* (VII, 2, 20; see Tarka Pañcānana [1861]), and Annamhaṭṭa’s *Tarkasaṃgraha* together with its autocommentary *Tarkadīpikā* (59; see Athalye & Bodas [1930]).

3. Classification of the traditions of Indian thought based on which linguistic convention they acknowledged or could have acknowledged

Having presented the three main views on linguistic convention in Indian philosophy of language, I now propose a classification of the traditions of Indian thought based on which linguistic convention was or could have been accepted by them. This classification is new, incomplete, and preliminary; it should be verified and supplemented by further studies.

I. *Darśanas* that accept linguistic convention as an agreement establishing the relationship between a word and its primary meaning, previously unrelated to each other: these are Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhism, and later classical Yoga of Vācaspati Miśra's *Tattvavaiśārādī*. According to the *Tattvavaiśārādī*¹⁹ (I, 27), Īśvara is the author of the primary linguistic convention; Īśvara re-creates the convention at the beginning of each cycle of existence of the world. The position of this classical Yoga commentary²⁰ is similar to the position of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika.

II. Those who accept or can accept linguistic convention as the established usage of words based on the natural word–meaning relationship, which is necessary and not created by anybody: these are the Grammarians, specifically, Bhartṛhari and the continuators of his thought, Mīmāṃsakas, and Advaitins. The convention understood in this way makes known the relationship between a word and its meaning. In my opinion, it is very probable that Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta accept the linguistic convention acknowledged by the Grammarians, since the Mīmāṃsā's and Advaita's view on the relationship between a word and its meaning is similar to the view of the Grammarians. All these philosophers – the Grammarians, Mīmāṃsakas, and Advaitins – reject linguistic convention understood as the agreement initiating the relationship between words and their primary meanings.

III. Those who accept or can accept linguistic convention as the established usage of words that, though having neither a beginning nor an end, is not based on any natural and necessary relationship between words and their meanings: classical Yoga of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* and the Grammar thought of the *Mahābhāṣya*, ascribed to Patañjali the Grammarian. The linguistic convention acknowledged by the author of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* not only makes known the relationship between a word and its meaning but also keeps this relationship in existence. In my opinion, it is very probable that the author of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* (earlier classical Yoga) and the author of the *Mahābhāṣya* (earlier Grammar thought) had the same view of linguistic convention, for the view on the word–meaning relationship of Patañjali the Grammarian is similar to the view of Patañjali the author of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*. According to both the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* and the *Mahābhāṣya*, the relationship between words and their primary meanings has no beginning or end. Patañjali the Grammarian says directly that this relationship is eternal (*nitya*) and that neither grammarians nor anyone else had created words (*Mahābhāṣya*²¹ I, 1, 1, 58-81). In the *Mahābhāṣya*, nothing suggests that Patañjali the Grammarian could hold that the word–meaning relationship is natural.²²

¹⁹ For the text of the *Tattvavaiśārādī*, see Miśra [1971].

²⁰ Larson, one of the greatest scholars exploring Sāṃkhya and Yoga, wrote that the *Yogasūtras*, *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, and *Tattvavaiśārādī* “taken together provide the core textual evidence for Pātañjalayogaśāstra”. He considers these three texts the “core textual complex” of classical Yoga [Larson & Bhattacharya 2011: 65, 71].

²¹ For the text of the *Mahābhāṣya*, see Joshi & Roodbergen [1986].

²² *Sūtra* I, 1 of the *Yogasūtras* and the beginning of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*'s commentary on this *sūtra* imitate the opening of the *Mahābhāṣya*. This can indicate that the author (or authors) of the *Yogasūtras* and *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* was (or were) influenced by the *Mahābhāṣya*. However, Indologists are not certain that the text of the *Mahābhāṣya* in the existing editions is reliable; they hold that a new critical

4. Why was the same Sanskrit term *samaya/saṃketa* applied to the three different ways of understanding linguistic convention?

Now I shall attempt to explain why Indian philosophers used the same term *samaya/saṃketa* for the three differing ways of understanding linguistic convention, and give the pros and cons of translating this term of Indian philosophy of language in each case with the same English term “(linguistic) convention”.

Why is the same term *samaya/saṃketa* applied to the agreement initiating the relationship between a word and its meaning (the *samaya/saṃketa* of Naiyāyikas, Vaiśeṣikas, and Buddhists) and to the established usage of words (the *samaya/saṃketa* of Bhartṛhari and the continuators of his thought and of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*)? During the 17th World Sanskrit Conference, which took part in Vancouver in 2018, I posed this question to Sharda Narayanan, who delivered a paper about the issue of the word–meaning relationship in Bhartṛhari’s *Vākyapadīya* and Kumārila Bhaṭṭa’s *Ślokavārttika*.²³ She told me that the linguistic convention is one and the same. Why did she give me an answer that did not take into account the obvious differences between the interpretations of *samaya/saṃketa*?

Musing on Sharda Narayanan’s answer and trying to understand it, I came to conclusion that the usage of the same term *samaya/saṃketa* for the different kinds of *samaya/saṃketa* I described above is rooted in their common aspects. Below, I present them.

1) The first important commonality is the content of the linguistic convention. Regardless of how linguistic convention is understood, its content is the same: “such and such a word has such and such a meaning”. Obviously, when linguistic convention is understood as the established usage of words, the usage is conceived of as grounded in this content.

As to Naiyāyikas, Vaiśeṣikas, and Buddhists, who consider linguistic convention as an event during which some person or persons give names to things and communicate the relationship between words and their meanings to other persons, who accept it, these philosophers often emphasize the content of the agreement or describe the convention as this content. I attach evidence from their three representative texts.

We read the following in Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana’s *Nyāyabhāṣya*: “But what is this convention (*samaya*)? It is the rule that restricts what is denoted (*abhidheya*) by the word (*abhidhāna*): ‘This class of things (*artha-jāta*) is to be denoted (*abhidheya*) by this word (*śabda*)’” (*kaḥ punar ayaṃ samayaḥ? asya śabdasyedam arthajātam abhidheyam ity abhidhānābhidheyaniyamaniyogaḥ /*) (II, 1, 55).

In his *Upaskāra*, Śāṅkara Mīśra says, “Convention (*samaya*) is the convention (*saṅketa*) of Īśvara that has the form: ‘This meaning (*artha*) is to be understood from that word (*śabda*)’” (. . . *samaya īśvarasaṅketaḥ asmāc chabdād ayaṃ artho boddhavya ity ākāraḥ . . .* /). (This is part of Śāṅkara Mīśra’s commentary on *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* VII, 2, 20.)

In Śāntarakṣita’s *Tattvasaṃgraha* and Kamalaśīla’s *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, in the discussion of the nature of the word–meaning relationship (2611-2669), linguistic convention (*sa-*

edition of the *Mahābhāṣya* is needed. See, for example, Maas [2006: 89, note 1.2] and Harimoto [2014: 194, note 366]. Both the Yogin and the Grammarian are called Patañjali (on the Patañjali who compiled the *Yogasūtras* and composed the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, see footnote 6 of this paper). Indian tradition identifies these two Patañjalis as the same person, but this identification is doubtful.

²³ The 17th World Sanskrit Conference. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, July 9-13, 2018. Conference Programme. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/18NCFXiKKaEWqM-GmTZBcTTcpgrPBEOSI/view>

maya, *saṃketa*) is described both as the event of agreement establishing the relationship between a word and its meaning and as the content of this agreement. However, there are contexts in which we deal only with the second aspect, that is, with linguistic convention as the content of this agreement (2622, 2645, etc.). For example, in *Tattvasaṃgraha* and *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* 2645, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla argue that “learning the convention” (*saṃketa-grahaṇa*) and remembering it before hearing a word are necessary for understanding the meaning of this word, from which it follows that the power (*śakti*) of a word to express its meaning is not eternal.²⁴ The term “convention” (*saṃketa*) stands here only for the content of linguistic convention, and not for the convention as an event: in order to understand the meaning of a word, it is necessary to remember the content of the convention – that is, the word–meaning relationship²⁵ – and not the event during which this relationship was created.

2) The second important aspect common to the three abovementioned interpretations of *samaya/saṃketa* is its crucial role in language acquisition, communication, and transmission. In Indian philosophy of language, linguistic convention (semantic agreement) – regardless whether understood as having an author and initiating the relationship between word and meaning or as the authorless tradition of word usage – has always been considered as that which allows the relationship between words and their meanings to be learned. Without linguistic convention – that is, without language users’ agreement (consensus) as to the meanings of words – words cannot function as words, i.e., as units that express meaning. It should not be thought, however, that any agreement we participate in was created in accordance with our will. Sometimes we enter into agreements that precede us, and language is such an agreement for those who learn, use, and transmit it.

As to this aspect of linguistic convention in Bhartṛhari and the continuators of his thought and in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, it was described by Houben [1992] and Łucyszyna [2017], respectively. Convention is characterized as that which allows the meanings of words to be known from words also in the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* (*Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₁ VII, 2, 24; *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₂ VII, 2, 20), the *Nyāyasūtras* and *Nyāyabhāṣya* (II, 1, 55), the *Tattvasaṃgraha* together with the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (2627 – it is said here that convention, *samaya*, manifests/makes known the word–meaning relationship, *sambandha*; 2645; 2651; 2660-2661; etc.), and many other texts.

I cite the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* and the *Nyāyasūtras*. The *sūtra* of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtras* runs as follows: *sāmayikaḥ śabdād arthapratyayaḥ* // (“The understanding of the meaning from a word is based on convention”; *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₁ VII, 2, 24; *Vaiśeṣikasūtras*₂ VII, 2, 20.) In the *Nyāyasūtras* (II, 1, 55), we read: ... *sāmayikatvāc chabdārthasampratyayasya* // (“..., for the understanding of the meaning from a word [takes place] because [the relationship between word and its meaning] is based on convention.”)

²⁴ Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla polemicize with Mīmāṃsakas, who hold that word’s power (*śakti*) to express its meaning is natural (that is, constitutes word’s nature and is therefore inseparable from it) and eternal and that the established practice of using words is based on this power. According to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, if word’s power (*śakti*) to express its meaning were eternal (they use two terms: *nitya*, “eternal”, and *niyata*, “permanent”, “invariable” – see *Tattvasaṃgraha* and *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* 2641-2669), a word would always cause the understanding of its meaning, that is, even those who had not learned the meaning of a word before hearing it would understand its meaning. For Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, in contrast with Mīmāṃsakas, the established practice of usage of words (*vyavahāra*) is based on a convention that initiates the word–meaning relationship, not on the natural power of word.

²⁵ Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla emphasize, however, that linguistic convention and the word–meaning relationship are different from each other, and that the relationship (*sambandha*) can be called “convention” (*samaya*) only figuratively (2621-2622). According to them, the word–meaning relationship is the result of a linguistic convention.

Having attempted to explain why in Indian philosophy of language, the same term *samaya/samketa* was used for the different ways of understanding linguistic convention (described in the first, second, and third chapters of this article), I now present the pros and cons of translating the term *samaya/samketa* in all cases with the same English equivalent “(linguistic) convention”.

Houben [1992] proposes translating *samaya/samketa* differently depending on the context. In his opinion, these terms should be translated as “convention” when they mean the agreement initiating the word–meaning relationship, and as “established usage” when they mean the established practice of using words. He recommends translating *samaya/samketa* differently in order to make the translation more clear for the reader. However, he points out [1992: 222] that in both of these cases, *samaya/samketa* can still be rendered with the English word “convention”.

It is impossible to disagree with Houben that the English word “convention” expresses both of these meanings of *samaya/samketa*. The English “convention” means both an agreement initiated by some persons and an established usage, custom, or practice [Babcock Gove et al. 1993: 498]. In other languages that use a similar word from the same Latin origin, the word may also encompass both meanings; for example, I know this to be the case for the Ukrainian “конвенція”, Polish “konwencja”, and Russian “конвенция”. In my opinion, for all three understandings of *samaya/samketa* described above, the term *samaya/samketa* can be translated as “(linguistic) convention”.

I also agree with Houben that if we translated the term *samaya/samketa* differently depending on the context – that is, as “(linguistic) convention” when it is applied to the agreement initiating the word–meaning relationship, and as “established usage (of words)” when it is applied to the authorless established practice of using words – the reader would understand the translated text better than if we always translated it with the word/phrase “(linguistic) convention”. For example, a reader may be confused while trying to understand a translation of Helārāja’s text where Helārāja both rejects and accepts “convention”; this is a strong argument against translating *samaya/samketa* with the same English equivalent; this argument is given by Houben.

In my opinion, however, there are also pros of translating *samaya/samketa* with the same term “(linguistic) convention”; and I shall put forward two arguments for this. The first one is that any terminological ambiguity we deal with in Indian primary sources is an indispensable characteristic of these sources, and we need to be aware of it and try to explain it if we wish to understand the text properly.

The second argument is that Indian philosophers might have applied the term *samaya/samketa* to the established usage of words deliberately – when they wished to emphasize the conventional character of the established usage of words; namely, that the tradition of usage of words is a convention (agreement) regarding the meanings of words. Tradition is a kind of agreement; no tradition exists without those who accept it. Words cannot function as words – that is, as meaningful units – without the convention (general consensus, agreement, consent) of the users of language as to the relationship of words with their meanings. Regardless of whether this convention is based on the natural word–meaning relationship or not, it is still a convention – that is, an agreement among the language users participating in it.

In my opinion, regardless of whether we translate the term *samaya/samketa* understood differently in the same Sanskrit text with one or two English terms, it is necessary, first, to give the Sanskrit original of the term wherever it occurs in the text, and second, to explain how the term is used. This will make the text clear to the reader.

5. Conclusions and directions for future research

In Indian philosophy of language, we can distinguish between three basic ways of understanding *samaya/saṃketa*, linguistic convention. Besides its well-known conception as the agreement initiating the word–meaning relationship, we also encounter two other important interpretations of *samaya/saṃketa*, according to which *samaya/saṃketa* is the established usage of words.

In this paper, I classified traditions of Indian thought based on which kind of linguistic convention they accepted or could have accepted. This classification is new and preliminary. 1) Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhism, and later classical Yoga of the *Tattvavaiśārādī* accept linguistic convention as the agreement initiating the relationship between words and their meanings. 2) Bhartṛhari the Grammarian and his followers acknowledge linguistic convention as the established usage of words grounded in the natural relationship between words and their meanings; the convention manifests (makes known) the relationship. In my opinion, it is very probable that this view of linguistic convention was also shared by Mīmāṃsākas and Advaitins. 3) The *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* and probably also the *Mahābhāṣya* accept linguistic convention as the established usage of words, but this usage, though having no beginning or end, is not based on any natural and necessary relationship between words and their meanings. According to this view, linguistic convention not only manifests the word–meaning relationship but also keeps this relationship in existence.

In this article, I also proposed an explanation for why the same Sanskrit term *samaya/saṃketa* was applied to the different ways of understanding linguistic convention. In my opinion, this can be explained by the common aspects of all the aforementioned kinds of *samaya/saṃketa*. The first of these aspects is the content of all the three kinds of *samaya/saṃketa*. Irrespective of how linguistic convention is understood, its content is the same: “such and such a word has such and such a meaning”. The second shared aspect is the crucial role of linguistic convention in language acquisition, communication, and transmission.

This study is a starting point for a big research project or series of papers devoted to the notion of *samaya/saṃketa*, one of the most important notions of Indian philosophy of language. A thorough exploration of this concept requires analyzing a huge number of primary sources. On the basis of this analysis, it will be possible to verify and complete my classification of the traditions of Indian thought presented in this paper. A thorough inquiry into the notion of *samaya/saṃketa* also requires examining other central concepts of Indian philosophy of language, such as *śakti*, the power of word to express its meaning; *śabda-artha-sambandha*, the relationship between a word and its meaning; and (*vṛddha*-)*vyavahāra*, the established practice of word usage (by “elders”, that is, by experienced users of language). Examining these concepts and their interrelation with the notion of *samaya/saṃketa* is indispensable for a full understanding of the latter.

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On the Notion of Linguistic Convention (*samaya, saṃketa*) in Indian Thought

Linguistic convention (*samaya/saṃketa*) is one of the central notions of Indian philosophy of language. The well-known view of *samaya/saṃketa* is its conception as the agreement initiating the relationship between words and their previously unrelated meanings. However, in Indian philosophy of language, we also encounter two other important but little-researched interpretations of *samaya/saṃketa*, which consider it as the established usage of words.

I present a new classification of traditions of Indian thought based on their view of linguistic convention. This classification is to be verified and expanded in further studies. As far as I know, such a classification has never been undertaken before. 1) Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhism, and later classical Yoga of the *Tattvavaiśārādī* accept *samaya/saṃketa* as an agreement initiating the relationship between words and their previously unrelated meanings. 2) Bhartṛhari the Grammarian and the continuators of his thought acknowledge *samaya/saṃketa* as the established usage of words that is rooted in the natural relationship between words and their meanings; the convention manifests (makes known) the relationship. This view was probably also shared by Mīmāṃsakas and Advaitins. 3) Classical Yoga of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* and probably also earlier Grammar thought

of the *Mahābhāṣya* accept linguistic convention as the established usage of words, but this usage, though having neither a beginning nor an end, is not based on any natural and necessary word–meaning relationship. In this view, linguistic convention not only manifests the word–meaning relationship but also keeps it in existence.

Another new contribution of this research is my explanation for why the same Sanskrit term *samaya/saṃketa* was applied to the different ways of understanding linguistic convention. I explain this through the common aspects of all three kinds of *samaya/saṃketa*. The first aspect is the content of all these kinds of *samaya/saṃketa*. Irrespective of how linguistic convention is understood, its content is the same: “such and such a word has such and such a meaning”. The second aspect is the crucial role of linguistic convention in language acquisition, communication, and transmission.

Олена Луцишина

Поняття мовної конвенції (*samaya, saṃketa*) в індійській думці

Мовна конвенція (*samaya / saṃketa*) є одним із центральних понять індійської філософії мови. Зазвичай мовну конвенцію розуміють як угоду, що започатковує взаємовідношення між словами та їхніми значеннями. Однак в індійській філософії мови наявні ще два інші важливі (але малодосліджені) погляди на мовну конвенцію, згідно з якими вона є традицією слововживання.

У статті вперше запропоновано класифікацію напрямів індійської думки на підставі їхнього погляду на мовну конвенцію. Ця класифікація є попередньою; вона вимагає перевірки і доповнення, тобто подальших досліджень. 1) Ньяя, вайшешика, буддизм, а також засвідчена у «Таттвавайшараді» пізніша класична йога розуміють мовну конвенцію як угоду, котра започатковує взаємовідношення між словами та їхніми значеннями, що не творили раніше зв'язку. 2) Граматик Бгартрігарі та його послідовники визнають мовну конвенцію як традицію слововживання, що має свою підставу у природному взаємовідношенні між словами та їхніми значеннями. Вони вважають, що конвенція робить явним це взаємовідношення, уможливаючи його пізнання. Цей погляд, дуже ймовірно, поділяли також послідовники міманси та адвайти-веданти. 3) Викладена у «Йогасутрабгаш'ї» класична йога, а також, дуже правдоподібно, «Магабгаш'я», що репрезентує більш ранню граматичну думку, визнають мовну конвенцію як традицію слововживання, але ця традиція, хоча й не має початку і кінця, не ґрунтується на природному та нерозривному взаємовідношенні між словами та їхніми значеннями. Згідно з цим поглядом, мовна конвенція не тільки робить явним взаємовідношення між словами та значеннями, але й підтримує його існування.

Новизна цього дослідження полягає також у поясненні, чому той самий санскритський термін *samaya / saṃketa* вживається по відношенню до різних способів розуміння мовної конвенції. Я витлумачую це спільними аспектами всіх трьох вищезгаданих видів мовної конвенції. Перший спільний аспект – це їхній зміст: незалежно від того, як розуміють мовну конвенцію, її зміст є той самий: «це слово має ось таке значення». Другим спільним аспектом є те, що конвенція осмислюється як необхідна для оволодіння мовою та мовного спілкування.

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