Dignāga on Āvīta and Prasaṅga

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0. In the Śaṣṭītantra, the fundamental text of the Sānkhya school before the time of the Sānkhyakārikā, two modes of reasoning for proving invisible things such as the existence of primordial matter (pradhāna) etc. are explained, i.e., vīta and āvīta. Of these two, āvīta reasoning is formulated after vīta reasoning in order to support the same conclusion drawn by the vīta reasoning through a reductio ad absurdum-style argument (prasaṅga).¹

In the third chapter of his Pramāṇasamuccaya, Dignāga (ca. 480–540) mentions the Sānkhyas’ āvīta reasoning as being a prasaṅga argument, and criticizes its definition, its way of being formulated, and its independence from vīta reasoning. While other prasaṅga arguments are classified as refutation (dūṣana/parihāra) because they are formulated by provisionally relying on the opponent’s position, āvīta reasoning is presented on the basis of the proponent’s own view and hence its logical reason is regarded as fulfilling the three characteristics of a proper logical reason (trairūpya), at least for the proponent.

In this paper I will first attempt to clarify Dignāga’s explanation of the structure of āvīta reasoning and its reformulation into vīta reasoning, and then examine the influence of Dignāga’s analysis of āvīta reasoning on Dharmakirti’s theory of prasaṅgaviparyaya, as well as on Bhāviveka’s criticism of Buddhapālita.

1. In PS 3.16, Dignāga mentions two characteristics of āvīta reasoning, and argues that āvīta reasoning is not different from vīta reasoning.

hetvabhāvaprasaṅgas tu yatrāvīte kathaye | sa ṛṣṭāntadvayat saddhes tasmād vītān na bhidyate ||²

On the other hand, in a certain proof [a-1] the negation of the logical reason (hetvabhāva) [adduced in the vīta reasoning] is stated as an undesired consequence (prasaṅga) by means of āvīta reasoning. Such a proof is [a-2] based on the establishment [of the pervasion] by two modes of exemplification (i.e., positive and negative concomitance). Therefore, [āvīta reasoning] is not differentiated from vīta reasoning.

Because of these two characteristics, i.e., [a-1] and [a-2], āvīta reasoning can be reformu-
lated into *vīta* reasoning. Dignāga presupposes the following *vīta* formulation in the process of exemplifying this.

\[
\langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle \text{ bhedānām ekakāraṇatvam, anvayadarśanāt},^3
\]

Various individual things possess one and the same cause; Because homology (*anvaya*) [concerning three constituents, i.e., pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*duḥkha*), and confusion (*moha*)] is observed. Dignāga formulates this \(\langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle\) by revising the following original formulation found in the ŚT in order to make the logical reason “homology” (*anvaya*) possess the three characteristics of a proper logical reason \(^4\):

\[\langle \text{Vīta-1} \rangle \text{ asti pradhānam, bhedānām anvayadarśanāt}.^5\]

The *āvīta* reasoning derived by Dignāga from \(\langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle\) is as follows:

\[\langle \text{Āvīta-D 1} \rangle^* \text{ na vyaktaśyaikūpūravatvābhāvah, bhedaprāsaṅgaṭ},^6\]

It is not the case that evolutes do not arise from one and the same cause, because [if they would not arise from the same cause,] it would follow that [all evolutes would] differ [from each other completely].

This \(\langle \text{Āvīta-D 1} \rangle\) is also an improvement on the following *āvīta* reasoning set forth by the Sāṅkhya \(^7\):

\[\langle \text{Āvīta-1} \rangle \text{ na vyaktaśyāsata upattih, bhedaprāsaṅgāt}.^8\]

With \(\langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle\) and \(\langle \text{Āvīta-D 1} \rangle\) in mind, Dignāga explains his reformulation of *āvīta* reasoning into *vīta* reasoning as follows:


\[\text{[1] Since homology [among evolutes] is seen [only] when [they] come from one and the same cause and is not seen when [they] do not, [evolutes that possess homology as their property] come from one and the same cause. [2] And if it [i.e., their coming from one and the same cause] is not accepted, the negation of homology would follow. But there is no [negation of homology in reality]. [3] Therefore, [in the āvīta reasoning,] that very [undesired consequence of negation of homology (*anvayābhāvaprāsaṅga*)] becomes spoken of as “homology [in vīta reasoning].” . . .}

For, in this case what difference is there between “bhedaprāsaṅga” and “anvaya”?

In passage [1], it is shown that “homology,” which is the logical reason of \(\langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle\), is pervaded by “coming from one and the same cause.” Since “ekāpūravatvam” and “ekakāraṇatva” are regarded as conveying the same meaning, this pervasion (vyāpti) is the same one as presupposed by the \(\langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle\). If the pervasion of the logical reason (H) by the property to be proved (S) is represented as “H → S,” the positive concomitance (an-
vayavāpti) of this pervasion can be described as follows:

\( \langle \text{Vyāpti-A} \rangle \text{anvaya} \rightarrow \text{ekapūrvakatva} \)

And if the fact that pervasion “H \( \rightarrow \) S” held with regard to the subject “P” is represented as “P (H \( \rightarrow \) S),” then \( \langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle \) can be described as follows:

\( \langle \text{Vīta-D 1} \rangle \text{Individual things (anvaya} \rightarrow \text{ekapūrvakatva)} \)

In contrast, the contraposition of \( \langle \text{Vyāpti-A} \rangle \), i.e., negative concomitance (vyātirekavyāpti), can be described with the negative sign “\( \neg \)” as follows:

\( \langle \text{Vyāpti-B} \rangle \neg \text{ekapūrvakatva} \rightarrow \neg \text{anvaya} \)

Passage [2] expresses \( \langle \text{Vyāpti-B} \rangle \) in the form of a prasāṅga-style argument and denies the possibility of the negation of homology (\( \neg \text{anvaya} \)) in reality. This is the explanation of the characteristics of āvīta reasoning referred to in PS 3.16. Comparing these descriptions, we can get clearer view of Dignāga’s understanding of āvīta reasoning: it has the same pervasion as \( \langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle \) (see above PS 3.16 [a-2]) because \( \langle \text{Vyāpti-B} \rangle \) is logically equivalent to \( \langle \text{Vyāpti-A} \rangle \) and results in the undesired consequence of the negation of “homology,” i.e., the logical reason of \( \langle \text{Vīta-D} \rangle \) (see above PS 3.16 [a-1]). Moreover, it is known from passage [3] that the negation of “homology” means the complete difference (bheda) of every evolute. Therefore, the undesired consequence of complete difference (bhedaprasyāṅga) is derived from the negation of coming from one and the same cause (\( \neg \text{ekapūrvakatva} \)).

Now let us return to \( \langle \text{Āvīta-D 1} \rangle \). This formulation apparently consists of the thesis and its reason. However, the phrase “bhedaprasyāṅgāt” should not be regarded as the logical reason for proving the thesis “na vyaktasyaikapūrvakatvābhāvah” because it cannot prove the thesis by itself. In order to derive the thesis, “bhedaprasyāṅga” requires two things: First, the negation of coming from one and the same cause (\( \neg \text{ekapūrvakatva} \)) must be understood as the condition of “bhedaprasyāṅga,” because, as seen above, the latter can be held only if the former is established. In addition, since “bhedaprasyāṅga” is an undesired consequence, it must be negated. Consequently, in \( \langle \text{Āvīta-D 1} \rangle \) the following process of proof is seen with regard to evolutes (vyakta):

\( \langle \text{Āvīta-D 2} \rangle \text{Evolutes (ekapūrvakatva} \rightarrow \text{bheda)} \land \neg \text{bheda} \therefore \neg \text{ekapūrvakatva} \)

Since for the Sāṅkhya there is no difference between “individual things” (bheda) and “evolutes” (vyakta), and since the negation of homology (\( \neg \text{anvaya} \)) means complete difference (bheda), it is obvious that \( \langle \text{Āvīta-D 2} \rangle \) does not differ from \( \langle \text{Vīta-D 1} \rangle \) in its
content. Therefore, insofar as the phrase "bhedaprasaṅga" in \(\text{Avīta-D 1}\) indicates the logical reason "homology" in \(\text{Vīta-D}\) which is, for the Sāṅkhya, accepted as possessing the three characteristics of a proper logical reason \((\text{trairūpya})\), it can also be regarded as equivalent to a proper logical reason. Even though for the Buddhist the logical reason "homology" is not accepted as a proper logical reason,\(^{10}\) it is worth noting that Dignāga accepts the possibility that āvīta reasoning, i.e., a type of prasaṅga argument, becomes a proper proof \((sādhana)\).

2. \(\text{Avīta-D 1}\), even though it can be reformulated into the \(\text{Vīta-D}\), is not a proper proof \((sādhana)\) if it is put forth to the Buddhist disputant, because the logical reason "homology," which is adduced in \(\text{Vīta-D}\) and which guarantees the adequacy of the assumed logical reason "bhedaprasaṅga" in \(\text{Avīta-D 1}\), is accepted only by the Sāṅkhya proponent as possessing the three characteristics of a proper logical reason \((\text{trairūpya})\). However, Dignāga’s explanation of the reformulation of āvīta reasoning into vīta reasoning opens up the possibility that āvīta reasoning, a type of prasaṅga argument, can thus be regarded as a proper proof. This had a great influence on the later Indian logicians, including Buddhist philosophers Bhāviveka (ca. 6th cent.) and Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660), as well as within Tibetan Buddhism.

Let us first consider the process of formulating prasaṅgaviparyaya (the contraposition of prasaṅga) from prasaṅga. This process is often used in the treatises of Dharmakīrti’s successors. As earlier studies have shown, the structures of prasaṅga and prasaṅgaviparyaya can be described as follows:\(^{11}\)

Prasaṅga: \[A \ (B \rightarrow C) \land \neg C \rightarrow \neg B\]
Prasaṅgaviparyaya: \[\neg A \ (\neg C \rightarrow \neg B)\]

Both prasaṅga and prasaṅgaviparyaya are presented with regard to the same subject \((A)\). The pervasion presupposed in prasaṅgaviparyaya (i.e., \(\neg C \rightarrow \neg B\)) is the contraposition of that which is presupposed in the prasaṅga argument (i.e., \(B \rightarrow C\)). Even though Dharmakīrti does not clearly explain these two structures, because his successors commonly refer to the above-mentioned structure, it is likely that these structures represent Dharmakīrti’s own idea. And it is easily recognized that the structures of Dharmakīrti’s prasaṅga and prasaṅgaviparyaya correspond completely to those of Dignāga’s vīta and āvīta arguments, respectively.\(^{12}\) The identification of these structures is supported by the fact that Jinen-drabuddhi explains the reformulation of āvīta reasoning into vīta reasoning in the PS(V)
by using the term "prasaṅgaviparyaya." Accordingly, it can be said that the germ of Dharmakīrti's theory of prasaṅgaviparyaya can be found in Dignāga's interpretation of āvīta reasoning.

Another Buddhist philosopher who owes much of his theory of proof to Dignāga is Bhāviveka. As has been pointed out by Ueda [1995], it seems that Bhāviveka makes use of Dignāga's interpretation of āvīta reasoning in order to criticize Buddhapālita's prasaṅga argument. As an example, we will examine the discussion of the negation of arising from other.

On the other hand, the Master Buddhapālita says: It is not the case that things arise from other, because [if they arise from other,] it would follow that everything would arise from everything. [To this,] the Master Bhāviveka states the refutation [as follows]: Then, in this case, because [it is] a statement of [undesired] consequence, when the contraposition of the [property] to be proved and the logical reason is made, contradiction [of your prasaṅga argument] with [your] original position [become evident because the contraposition states that] things arise from self, or from both (i.e., self and other), or without any cause, because a particular thing arises from a particular thing. (Prasannapadā 36,11-37,2).

As the structure of 〈Āvīta-D 1〉 is described as 〈Āvīta-D 2〉, the structure of Buddhapālita's prasaṅga argument is described as follows:

〈Prasaṅga-BP〉 Things (parata utpadyante → sarvataḥ sarvasamabhava) ∧ ¬sarvataḥ sarvasamabhava :. ¬parata utpadyante

Bhāviveka reformulates this 〈Prasaṅga-BP〉 as the following argument, and points out that it contradicts the Mādhyamika's central thesis that things do not arise from self, from other, from both, or without any cause.

〈Viparyaya-BV〉 Things (kutācit kasyacid utpatti → svataḥ ubhayato 'hetuto votpadyante)

What is the "viparyaya" by way of which Bhāviveka derives 〈Viparyaya-BV〉 from 〈Prasaṅga-BP〉? Judging from the fact that he regards 〈Viparyaya-BV〉 as conveying the same meaning as 〈Prasaṅga-BP〉, it must express the contraposition of the pervasion. That is, "kutācit kasyacid utpatti" in 〈Viparyaya-BV〉 is the negation of "sarvataḥ sarvasamabhava" in 〈Prasaṅga-BP〉, and "svata ubhayato 'hetuto votpadyante" in 〈Viparyaya-BV〉 is the negation of "parata utpadyante" in 〈Prasaṅga-BP〉. Taking this point into consideration, 〈Viparyaya-BV〉 can be formulated as follows:

Things (¬sarvataḥ sarvasamabhava → ¬parata utpadyante)

Although in the case of Bhāviveka's reformulation of 〈Prasaṅga-BP〉 into 〈Viparyaya-
BV) the negation is interpreted as a implicative negation (paryudāsa), while in the case of Dignāga it is taken as being a simple negation (prasajyapraṇīṣedha), it can be said that the process of Bhāviveka’s reformulating (Prasāṅga-BP) into (Viparītya-BV) has a close similarity to that of Dignāga’s reformulation of āvīta reasoning into vīta reasoning.

3. When discussing āvīta reasoning, Dignāga accepts a possibility of reformulating prasāṅga argument as a proper proof (sādhana). This enables him to incorporate the prasāṅga argument into the framework of the trairūpya theory. It can be said that his view about prasāṅga marks a turning point in the development of the theory of prasāṅga, which until then had merely been regarded as a means for refuting the views of opponents. By making use of Dignāga’s explanation of āvīta reasoning, Bhāviveka and Dharmakīrti further developed their theory of prasāṅga.

Dignāga’s theory of trairūpya became widely accepted, causing the Sāṅkhya to relinquish their leading position in Indian logic to Dignāga and his followers. Since Dignāga developed his theory of prasāṅga by criticizing the Sāṅkhya theory of āvīta, it can be said that Dignāga is their most ingenious successor and, at the same time, their most severe critic.

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Notes: 1) For the characteristics of “vīta” and “āvīta,” see Watanabe [forthcoming]. 2) See Katsura [2009: 158]. Words of PS (V) in Roman typeface are attested in Jinendrabuddhi’s Sanskrit manuscript or in fragments, whereas those in italics have been reconstructed from Tibetan translations. 3) See NMu (Katsura [1978: 110]). 4) For Dignāga’s modification of vīta reasoning, see Watanabe [2008]. 5) See Frauwallner [1958: 125]. 6) Since Dignāga does not give this formulation, this is my conjecture based on his description. 7) For Dignāga’s criticism of the formulation of āvīta reasoning propounded by the Sāṅkhya, see Watanabe [forthcoming]. 8) PSV 3.16 (K [P128a8], V [D44a5–6, P47a5–6]). 9) PSV 3.16 (K [P129b1–3], V [D44a6–44b1, P47a6–8]). 10) See Watanabe [2008]. 11) See Tani [1983: 7–12] and Iwata [1997: 427–428]. 12) Since Ueda [1995: 113–117] takes the phrase “bheda-prasāṅga” in Āvīta-D 1 as the direct reason for proving its thesis, his interpretation of the structure of Āvīta-D 1 is different from mine. 13) See PST B122b4–6 (D159a5–7, P182b3–6): tadānabhyupagame ceti tasya vyāpakasyaikapūrṣvaktasyānabhyupagame. anvayābha-vaprasāṅga iti vyāpasyayavasyābhāvaprasāṅgaḥ syād ity arthah. . . sa cānvayābhāvaprasāṅga nāstāt prasāṅgapīrṣyayena sa evānvaya ukto bhavati—anvayād ekākāraṇāpūrṇaḥ bhedā iti, etc.

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