



Amitrakshar International Journal

of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research (AIJITR)

(A Social Science, Science and Indian Knowledge Systems Perspective)

Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Bi-Monthly, International E-Journal

Pre-Pāṇinian Sanskrit Grammarians Mentioned in the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini

Dr. Subhendu Manna¹

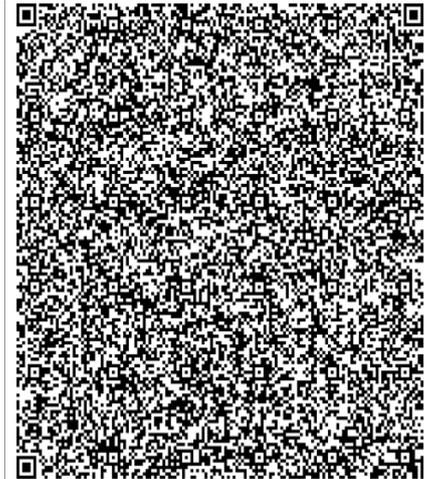
Abstract

The present paper attempts a critical study of the pre-Pāṇinian tradition of Sanskrit grammar with special reference to the grammarians mentioned in Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī. Among the fourteen vidyāsthānas of Indian knowledge, Vyākaraṇa—the “mouth” of the Veda—occupies a pivotal position as one of the six Vedāṅgas. Although Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī is the only extant text representing Vedāṅga-Vyākaraṇa, references within it and in later sources reveal a long and rich grammatical heritage preceding him.

This study identifies and analyses ten such grammarians—Āpiśali, Kāśyapa, Gārgya, Gālava, Cākravarmaṇa, Bhāradvāja, Śākaṭāyana, Śākalya, Senaka, and Sphoṭāyana—whose names and views are directly or indirectly preserved in the Aṣṭādhyāyī, Mahābhāṣya, Vārttikas, and related literature. By collating evidence from these sources, the paper reconstructs the linguistic theories and grammatical principles attributed to these predecessors, highlighting their influence on Pāṇini's linguistic architecture.

The discussion shows that Āpiśali, Gārgya, and Śākaṭāyana were system-builders who anticipated core ideas of morphology and semantics later formalized by Pāṇini. It further explores the philosophical significance of the Sphoṭa doctrine attributed to Sphoṭāyana and its uncertain chronological placement in relation to Pāṇini. Through comparative textual examination, the paper argues that Pāṇini's genius lay not in isolated invention but in the synthesis and systematization of a vast pre-existing grammatical tradition.

Keywords: Pāṇini, Aṣṭādhyāyī, pre-Pāṇinian grammarians, Āpiśali, Śākaṭāyana, Gārgya, Sphoṭa theory, Indian linguistic tradition



AIJITR - Volume - 2, Issue - V, Sept-Oct 2025



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Introduction:

*Aṅgāni vedāś catvāro mīmāṃsā nyāya-vistarah/
Purāṇam dharma-sāstraṅ ca vidyā hy etaś caturdaśa//*

Among fourteen sources of knowledge the Vedas have six Vedāṅgas, ‘auxiliaries.’ This is told that among six Vedāṅgas Vyākaraṇa, ‘grammar’ is the mouth of Veda-puruṣa— *mukhaṁ vyākaraṇam smṛtam* (Pāṇinīya-śikṣā). Now among all Vedāṅga-vyākaraṇa, only Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī is extant. We get many other names of grammatical texts some of which are in our hand, e.g. Mugdha-bodha, Sārasvata, Hari-nāmāmṛta, Jaumara, Kātantra etc. Though these later grammatical texts are not Vedāṅga-vyākaraṇa, yet they are still very much important for linguists. Some of them are also important for beginners.

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia

DOI Link (Crossref) Prefix: <https://doi.org/10.63431/AIJITR/2.V.2025.62-66>

AIJITR, Volume 2, Issue –V, Sept – Oct, 2025, PP.62-66

Received on 27th, Oct 2025 & Accepted on 29th, Oct, 2025 Published: 30th October, 2025



Amitrakshar International Journal

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Though from many references we get many names of Pāṇini's predecessors, yet now their treatises are not available. Only some citations are acknowledging us about their great works. Now we may think that before Pāṇini and in his time other Vedāṅga-vyākaraṇas were popular. Pāṇini also was helped by those Ācāryas. Pāṇini himself mentioned names of ten predecessors in his treatise, Aṣṭādhyāyī. Here a short description is given of those predecessors whose names and some of their views are mentioned by Pāṇini.

Āpiśali: Pāṇini in his work on the 1st chapter of 6th book, in 92nd rule mentioned the name of Āpiśali (Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī (P.) 6.I.92 *vā supyāpiśaleḥ*). In the time of Patañjali and of Kātyāyana studying of Āpiśali's grammar was popular— *pūrva-sūtra-nirdeśo vāpiśalam adhīta iti* (Vārttika under 4.I.14). Patañjali here says— *āpiśalam adhīte brāhmaṇī- āpiśalā brāhmaṇī*. Patañjali refers in his Mahā-bhāṣya to a rule (*vidhi*) of Āpiśali according to which the item *dhenu*, 'cow' is followed by the affix *ka* to form the derivative *dhainuka*, 'group of cows' unless it is preceded by the negative particle. Moreover, Patañjali refers to grammars promulgated by Pāṇini, Āpiśali and Kāśakṛtsna— *pāṇinīnā proktaṃ pāṇinīyam, āpiśalam, kāśakṛtsnam*. We get few rules of Āpiśali from many references. Like—

- i. *Ubhayasyobhayo' dvi-vacana-tāpo*
- ii. *Vibhakty-antaṃ padam*
- iii. *Manya-karmaṇy anādare upamāne vibhāṣāprāṇiṣu*
- iv. *Cira-sāyayor maś ca pragaprāhñāyor ec ca*
- v. *Dhenor aṅṅaḥ* etc.

For more details see Yudhiṣṭhira Mīmāṃsaka's *Saṃskṛta-vyākaraṇ(a)-śāstra kā itihāś(a), pratham(a) bhāg(a)*.

Kāśyapa: Pāṇini has mentioned the name of Kāśyapa in his work for thrice: *ṛṣi-mṛṣi-kṛṣeḥ kāśyapasya* (P. 1.II.25); *kāśyapa-kausikābhyām ṛṣibhyām ṇinīḥ* (P. 4.III.103) and *nodātta-svaritodayam agārgya-kāśyapa-gālavānām* (P. 8.IV.67). In VājasaneyīPrātiśākhya (VP). the author Kātyāyanarefers the view of Kāśyapa; i.e. *lopam kāśyapa-sākaṭāyanau* (VIII/22). From P. 4.III.103; i.e. *kāśyapa-kausikābhyām ṛṣibhyām ṇinīḥ*, we may guess that Kāśyapi was the name of the grammatical text as well as the name of Kalpa-sūtra composed by Kāśyapa. In another reference in VP. this is found that Kāśyapaspecially describes the topic of particles. There we see—

*Bhāradvājakam ākhyātām bhārgavam nāma bhāṣyate/
Vāsiṣṭha upasargas tu nipātaḥ kāśyapaḥ smṛtaḥ//* (VP. VIII/58).

Gārgya: The name Gārgya is mentioned by Pāṇini for thrice; i.e. *aṅ gārgya-gālavayoḥ* (P. 7.III.99), *oto gārgyasya* (P. 8.III.20), *nodātta-svaritodayam agārgya-kāśyapa-gālavānām* (P. 8.IV.67). In Ṛgveda Prātiśākhya (RvP.) this name is mentioned for five times; i.e. (i) *tasmād anyam avasāne ṛtīyam sparśam* (RvP. I.15), (ii) *yasmān nāsikyā svarabhaktir uttarā* (RvP. VI.36), (iii) *anantare tri-krama-kāraṇe yadi tribhiś ca gārgyaḥ punar eva ca tribhiḥ* (RvP. XI.17), (iv) *krte tu gārgyasya punas try-abhikrame* (RvP. XI.26), (v) *samāpādyām nāma vadanti śatvam tathā ṇatvam sāmavaśāms ca samdhīn/ upacāram lakṣaṇataś ca siddham ācāryā vyādi śākalya gārgyāḥ//* (RvP. XIII.31). In VP. (III.167) *khyāteḥ khayau kaśau gārgyaḥ sakkhyokkhyamukhyavarjam* this is a citation of Gārgya. From these evidences we may determine that Gārgyahad a complete grammar. The word Gārgya is derived from the word Garga adding the secondary suffix *yañ* (P. 4.I.105).

In Nirukta the author Yāska also referred this name. According to etymologists, all nouns (substantives) are derived from some verbal root or the other. Yāska in his Nirukta refers to this view (in fact defends it) and ascribes it to an earlier scholar Śākaṭāyana. This would require that all words are to be analyzable into atomic elements, 'roots' or 'bases' and 'affixes' or 'inflections' — better known in Sanskrit as dhātu and pratyaya. Yāska reported the view of Gārgya who opposed Śākaṭāyana and held that not all substantive words or nouns (*nāman*) were to be derived from roots, for certain nominal stems were 'atomic'; e.g. *tatra nāmāny ākhyātājānīti śākaṭāyanano nairukta samayaś ca na sarvāṅīti gārgyo vaiyākaraṇānām caike* (Yāska's Nirukta (Nir.) I.4.12).

Gālava: In four aphorisms Pāṇini mentioned the view of Gālava; i.e. (i) *iko hrasvo' ṇyo gālavasya* (P. 6.III.61), (ii) *ṛtīyādiṣu bhāṣitapuṃskam puṃvad gālavasya* (P. 7.I.74), (iii) *aṅ gārgya-gālavayoḥ* (P. 7.III.99), (iv) *nodātta-svaritodayam agārgya-kāśyapa-gālavānām* (P. 8.IV.67). Under P. 6.I.77 Puruṣottamadeva referred Gālava's grammatical view; that is *ikām yañbhir vyavadhānam vyādi-gālavayor iti vaktavyam/ dadhi-yatra, dadhy-atra;*



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madhu-vatra, madhv-atra. Pāṇini also applied this rule in his sūtra, i.e. *bhūvādayo dhātavaḥ* (P. 1.III.1). In Supadma-vyākaraṇathere is a rule *yañā vyavadhānam vyāḍi-gālavayor iti.* Śrīśa Chandra Vasu says under P. 1.III.1- “The ṅān the sūtra is for the sake of auspiciousness; for the regular sandhi of भू+ आदि and नभू+दि; while Dr. Ballantyne considers that ṅān is a separate root: he translates the sūtra thus.- “Let the verbal roots bhū ‘be,’ vā ‘below’ and the like be called dhātu.” Patañjali in his Mahā-bhāṣya says– *bhūvādīnām vakāro’ yaṁ maṅgalārthaḥ prayujyate/ māṅgalika ācārya mahataḥ śāstraughasya maṅgalārtham vakāram āgamam prayunkte.*

From citations of later grammarians this is very much clear that Gālavacomposed a complete grammatical treatise which was known to Pāṇini. Patañjali the Great Commentator of Pāṇini told *iko hrasvo’ nyo gālavasya* (P. 6.III.61) *prācām avrddhāt phin bahulam* (P. 4.I.160) *iti gālavā eva hrasvān prayuñjīran, prākṣu caiva hi phin syāt.* From this citation this may be determined that Gālava’s grammar was famous in the name Gālava and followers of this school of grammar were called Gālava. He was the disciple of Śākalya.

Cākravarmaṇa: *tī cākravarmaṇasya* (P. 6. I.130) in this Pāṇinian rule the name Cākravarmaṇa is used to ensure double function: firstly, this rule is made optional, and secondly, the technical term uapasthite does not follow from the previous aphorism by *anuvṛtti* here: *cākravarmaṇa-grahaṇam vikalpārtham, tad upasthite nivṛtṭy-artham* (Kāśikā). In Unādi-sūtra III.144 the name Cākravarmaṇa is mentioned. “If the authorship of Unādi-sūtras be assigned Śākaṭāyana (which issue was discussed previously) and if the Unādi rule under reference to be genuine product of Śākaṭāyana, then Cākravarmaṇa must have been a very very old grammarian, even older than Śākaṭāyana himself” (Kali Charan Shastri, p.100). Śrīpatidatta wrote the name Cākravarmaṇa in *vṛtti* under the rule of Kātantra-pariśiṣṭa; i.e. *ito vā (sandhi 43).* Ujjvaladatta commented on the rule *kapaś cākravarmaṇasya of trimuni-vyākaraṇa* of Śakaṭi, Śakaṭi and Śakaṭāyana, as *kapāter eva cākravarmaṇasyācāryasya matena kapa-pratyayaḥ samprasāraṇam ca/ kupāpaḥ sa eva/ svare tu viśeṣaḥ.* From these evidences we may think that Cākravarmaṇa was predecessor of Śakaṭāyanaand must he had a grammatical treatise.

Bhāradvāja: In two Pāṇinian rules the word Bhāradvāja is found. Among those aphorisms *ṛto bhāradvājasya* (P. 7.II.63) here Bhāradvāja is a name of grammarian. But the aphorism *kṛkaṇa-parṇād bhāradvāje* (P. 4.II.145) not explained by Patañjali, contains the word *bhāradvāje* which denotes, as the Kāśikā clearly states a country (during the days of Pāṇini) here and not a *gotra* name, i.e. *deśa ity eva/ bhāradvāja-śabdō’pi deśa-vacana eva na gotra-śbdaḥ.* Now the patronymic form Bhāradvāja, evolved out of a secondary suffix, i.e. *aṅ* is taken in the sense of *bharadvājasyāpatyam pumān* by the rule *tasyāpatyam* (P. 4.I.92). In RT Śakaṭāyana told about recitation of each and every word, i.e. *brahmā bṛhaspataye provāca, bṛhaspatir indrāya, indro bharadvājāya, bharadvāja ṛṣibhyaḥ* from this citation we may think that Aindra school of grammar was followed by Bhāradvāja. “We shall advert to this age-old traditional account in our consideration of the Aindra system of grammar later on.” (Kali Charan Shastri, p.98).

Śakaṭāyana: In RvP. we see *prathamam śakaṭāyanah* (I.16), *sāmdhyeṣv akāro’ rdham ikāra uttaram yujor ukāra iti śakaṭāyanah* (XIII.39). Pāṇini has mentioned the name Śakaṭāyana in his three aphorisms; those are- *laṇaḥ śakaṭāyanasyaiva* (P. 3.IV.111), *vyor laghu-prayatnataṛaḥ śakaṭāyanasya* (P. 8.III.18) and *tri-prabhṛtiṣu śakaṭāyanasya* (P. 8.IV.50). Now the available grammatical treatise which is ascribed to Śakaṭāyana, is not by the Śakaṭāyana mentioned in the Aṣṭādhyāyī (see Yudhiṣṭhira Mīmāṃsaka, vol. I, p.190). “although several years earlier Burnell (1875:97) had explicitly said that the available Śakaṭāyana grammar was post-Pāṇinan.” (George Cardona, p.149). However, Bühler described that Śakaṭāyana grammar was pre-Pāṇinian and claimed that Pāṇini’sAṣṭādhyāyī was a reworking of this treatise.

Yāska mentioned the name Śakaṭāyana in his Nirukta. There about meaning of prepositions he cited the view of his predecessors. Śakaṭāyana says that prepositions when not attached to nouns or to verbs, do not express meanings. But Gārgya says that they illustrate or modify the action which is expressed by a noun or verb, and that their senses are various even when detached. (*na nirvaddhā upasargā arthān nirahur iti śakaṭāyanah/ nāmākhyātayos tu karmopasaṁyoga-dyotakā bhavanti/ uccāvacāḥ padārthā bhavanti gārgyaḥ* (Nir. I.3.4).



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Śākalya: Pāṇini in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* takes the name of Śākalya in four aphorisms. Those are i) *sambuddhau śākalyasyetāvanārṣe* (P. 1.I.16), ii) *iko'savarṇe śākalyasya hrasvaś ca* (P. 6. I.127), iii) *lopaḥ śākalyasya* (P. 8.III.19) and iv) *sarvatra śākalyasya* (P. 8.IV.51). Except these aphorisms the word Śākalya repeats in *ṛtyakaḥ* (P. 6.I.28), from the previous sūtra- *iko'savarṇe śākalyasya hrasvaś ca*. In *ṚvP.* a few views of Śākalya are cited there. Such as— *ikārayoś ca praśleṣe kṣaiprābhinihiteṣu ca/udātta-pūrva-rūpeṣu śākalyasyaivam ācaret//* (*ṚvP.* III.13)

In *VP.* also, we get view of Śākalya along with his name; i.e. *avikāraṁ śākalyaḥ śa-ṣa-seṣu* (*VP.* 3.10). We see the name also in *Śatpatha brāhmaṇa*, *Yāska's Nirukta*, *Vṛhaddevatā* etc.

Senaka: This name is taken for once by Pāṇini in his great work (*gireś ca senakasya* P. 5.IV.112). Except this reference we do not get any other reference about this Ācārya.

Sphoṭāyana: Pāṇini mentioned this name for once in his work to show respect (*avañ sphoṭāyanasya* P. 6.I.123). Haradattain his commentary *Padamañjarī* has, under the rule P. 6.I.123, suggested the etymology of the word *sphoṭāyana* and the identification with this pre-Pāṇinian revered teacher of grammar, Sphoṭāyana, in the following words: *sphoṭo' yanam parāyanam yasya sa sphoṭāyanaḥ, sphoṭa-prati-pādanaparo vaiyākaraṇācāryaḥ/ ye tv aukāram paṭhanti te naḍādiṣu aśvādiṣu vā (sphoṭasabdasya) pāṭham manyante*. Kali Charan Shastri clearly explained this citation in his work; i.e. *Bengal's Contribution to Sanskrit Grammar in the Pāṇinian and Cāndra Systems*: "..., although it is a proper name which should not be grammatically analysed as such, and would not give rise to the designation, because of the grammatical dictum 'vākyena samjñānavagamāt'. Jñānendra-Sarasvatī follows suit in expounding the compound in the word 'sphoṭāyana' and also in identification.⁴ (sphoṭo' yanam parāyanam yasya saḥ, sphoṭa-pratipādanaparo vaiyākaraṇaḥ/ – *Tatv- bodhinī*, Siddhānta-Kaumudī, Venkateswar Press, p. 28) Nevertheless, from the above observation of Haradatta in categorical terms, it may be presumed with some reservation that this ancient grammarian Sphoṭāyana might have been the first originator or advocate of the theory of Sphoṭa in the science of grammar, and so became well-known by the sobriquet of Sphoṭāyana. But it is rather doubtful whether the Sphoṭa theory was advocated before the time of Pāṇini. Nothing can be definitely deducted either from Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* or from the contemporary *Prātiśākhya* treatises, now extant, where there is no reference to this important philosophical doctrine." (p.101).

Conclusion:

The pre-Pāṇinian linguistic tradition forms the vital foundation upon which Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* stands. Grammarians such as Āpiśali, Śākaṭāyana, and Gārgya introduced analytical insights into word-formation, meaning, and syntax that later crystallized in the Pāṇinian framework. Their contributions not only shaped the evolution of Sanskrit grammar but also established enduring principles of linguistic analysis that influenced subsequent thinkers like Patañjali and Bhartṛhari, thus marking the pre-Pāṇinian period as a formative epoch in the history of Indian linguistic thought.

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