

Inherited cognitions: *prasiddhi*, *āgama*,
pratibhā, *śabdana*

Bhartṛhari, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, Kumārila
and Dharmakīrti in dialogue

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Every now and then, even the Olympian Abhinavagupta loses his temper. We are at p. 36 of the first volume of his *magnum opus*, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī* (ĪPVV):

“riktasya jantor jātasya” iti riktā vācoyuktiḥ / prasiddhiśatapūrṇe jīvaloke kasyacit kācid eva prasiddhiḥ “līneva pratibimbiteva likhitevāntar-nikhāteva ca” iti nyāyena hṛdayabhittau utpāṭanaśatair api hṛdayam anumūlya nāpasarpati (pp. 36.24–37.6)

The phrase “in a new-born creature that [as such] is empty (*riktasya*)” is indeed empty (*riktā*)! The world of living beings is full of numberless inherited cognitions, so everyone does have some inherited cognitions embedded in his heart that cannot possibly be removed, even by hundreds of eradicating efforts, unless one eradicates the heart itself. As [the *Mālatīmādhava*] says: “They are, as it were, absorbed, mirrored, inscribed, dug into it.”

The addressee of Abhinavagupta’s outburst is his most prestigious adversary, or, as I said elsewhere, his most intimate enemy, the great Dharmakīrti. In fact, Dharmakīrti’s statement had already been questioned by Utpaladeva in his *Vivṛti*, and now Abhinavagupta is simply commenting on it. The passage comes from the Parārthānumāna chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* (PV), *kārikās* 53–54:

*riktasya jantor jātasya guṇadoṣam apaśyataḥ /
vilabhā bata kenāmī siddhāntaviṣamagrahāḥ // 54 //*

Vincent Eltschinger, Helmut Krasser (eds.), *Scriptural authority, reason and action*. Proceedings of a panel at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, Sept. 1–5, 2009. Wien 2013, pp. 455–480.

“In a new-born creature that [as such] is empty [i.e. devoid of philosophical tenets], and does not see [their] virtues and faults, then alas, who bestowed [upon him] these wicked demons of philosophical tenets!”¹

The import of the *kārikā* can only be grasped in the light of the preceding one:

*keneyaṃ sarvacintāsu śāstram grāhyam iti sthitiḥ /
kṛtedānīm asiddhāntair grāhyo dhūmena nānalaḥ // 53 //*

“Who made this rule that a treatise must be held in every deliberation? Now [if that were so], then people who had no philosophical tenets could not understand fire by means of smoke.”²

Dharmakīrti’s argument is about the possibility of inference based on the force of the real thing itself (*vastubalapravṛtta*) to act without recourse to scriptural authority – whose special domain is restricted to *atyantaparokṣa* matters³ – with regard to objects that also have

¹ Transl. Tillemans 2000: 84 (slightly modified; following Jayaratha, vol. 12 p. 358.6, on *Tantrāloka* (TĀ) XXXV.4c, I take *jāta* in the sense of *aharjāta*). The *kārikā* is also quoted, this time in full, by Jayaratha (on TĀ IV.18) with a significant variant: 54b *kāryākāryam apaśyataḥ*.

² Transl. Tillemans 2000: 83.

³ PV IV.48ab *uktaṃ ca nāgamāpekṣam anumānaṃ svagocare* “Now it has [already] been said that an inference [which functions by the force of real entities (*vastubalapravṛttanumāna*)] does not depend upon scripture with regard to its object [i.e. what is to be proved] (*sādhyā*)” (transl. Tillemans 2000: 78). See also IV.50 *tathā viśuddhe viśayadvaye śāstra-parigraham / cikīrṣoḥ sa hi kālaḥ syāt tadā śāstreṇa bādhanam //* “When two [types of] objects [viz., those which are perceptible (*pratyakṣa*) and those which are imperceptible (*parokṣa*) are [ascertained as] faultless in this manner [i.e., by means of direct perception and inference], then for one who wishes to adopt the treatise, this would indeed be the occasion [to accept it]. It is at this time that there [can] be invalidation (*bādhana*) on account of a treatise” (transl. Tillemans 2000: 80). It is to be noted, incidentally, that here the two terms *āgama* and *śāstra* (translated above as ‘scripture’ and ‘treatise’ respectively) are basically interchangeable, as is clearly shown by the commentators Prajñākaragupta and Manorathanandin (with the only possible difference that the former may be taken in a broader sense than the latter; cf. e.g. *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra* p. 504.16 *svāgamaviśayaśāstravirodhaparihāra eva*). Pra-

some aspects only knowable through scriptural authority. When Dharmakīrti vindicates the fact that rational demonstration of *parokṣa* objects is not dependent on *śāstra*, his opponent points out that any correct reasoning or debate does presuppose a pre-existing theoretical frame of reference (*siddhānta* or, more broadly, *śāstra*) without which the *vāda* ‘[correct] philosophical debate’ would be degraded to *vitaṇḍā* ‘cavilling.’⁴ Dharmakīrti, as explained by his commentators, replies that connection with the theoretical frame of reference assumed by his opponent should be either innate or dependent on contingent conditions, but neither of these qualifications is admissible: the mind of the new-born human being is empty, and subsequent acquisitions require his conscious intellectual effort, that is, critical evaluation of the various *siddhāntas* in the light of the *pramāṇas*.⁵

jñākaragupta and Manorathanandin’s interpretations of PV IV.50 are radically different. For Prajñākaragupta, the knower turns to *śāstra* (also) when he is not fully satisfied with the knowledge of *pratyakṣa* and *parokṣa* objects reached through perception and inference, respectively, although such knowledge is ‘correct’ (p. 505.3–4 *anumānena pratyakṣeṇa ca viśayadvayasya pratyakṣaparokṣasya viśuddhatāyām yadi tavatā na paritoṣas tadā śāstraparigrāhacikīrṣāyām sa hi kālaḥ syād abhyupagamyā*). For Manorathanandin, one has to turn to *śāstra* only when the third class of objects (*atīndriya, atyantaparokṣa*) is concerned. The *pratyakṣa* class includes objects that can be known through direct perception, such as form and so on; the *parokṣa* class includes objects that can be known only indirectly through inference, such as impermanence or absence of self; lastly, come the *atyantaparokṣa* objects, which are beyond the reach of human knowledge, such as the functioning of karma, etc.), accessible only through inference based on scriptural authority; cf. Tillemans 1986: 44.

⁴ The objection is made explicit by PV’s commentators (Prajñākaragupta p. 505.21 *nanu śāstram anabhyupagamyāpi vāde vaitaṇḍikaḥ syāt*; Manorathanandin: p. 381.21–22 *nanu śāstram anapekṣya na vādaḥ kartavyaḥ iti vastubalapravṛttānumāne ’pi śāstrāpekṣā*).

⁵ Cf. Prajñākaragupta p. 506.8–9: *sambandhāt saḥajāteś ca parityak[t]uḥ na śakyate / riktasya jantor jātasya tadyogaḥ saḥajāḥ katham // guṇadoṣaviveko ’pi pramāṇaṃ tyajataḥ kutaḥ*; very appropriate are Manorathanandin’s comments: p. 382.10–12 *riktasya tuchasya siddhāntarahitasya jantor jātasyānena saḥajasambandhābhāvanimittam uktam /*

We can provisionally leave the ĪPVV and continue the thread of Abhinavagupta's discourse shifting to the TĀ.

*abhiṭṣaṃvṛte jāta ekākī kṣudhitaḥ śíśuḥ //
kiṃ karotu kim ādattāṃ kena paśyatu kiṃ vrajet / (XXXV.4cd–5ab)*

In a place replete with all kinds of things, what could a new-born baby – being alone, hungry – do, what could he take, by what could he see, where could he go?

The response is given at the very outset of *āhnika* XXXV:

*iha tāvat samasto 'yaṃ vyavahāraḥ purātanaḥ [read: purātanīm] //
prasiddhim anusandhāya saiva cāgama ucyate / (1cd–2ab)*

In this world, all human activities hold in that they have as reference point an ancient complex of innate cognitions and beliefs (*prasiddhi*): this is what is called *āgama*.

If somebody argues that, more plainly, the criterion of agreement and difference would suffice to find one's bearings in the human world, we reply (Abhinavagupta goes on) that agreement and difference are also nourished by *prasiddhi*.⁶ If they were self-dependent, that is, if they had to act each time on the immense range of particular objects autonomously, how could we establish their necessity?⁷ But not only is inference based on previous *prasiddhis*: even perception, which arises from the specific complex of eyes, self, light, object, depends at its root on *prasiddhi*. But the opponent insists: The behaviour of the

guṇadoṣaṃ prāmāṇyāprāmāṇyanibandhanam apaśyataḥ / anenaupādhikasambandhanimittābhāva uktaḥ. The siddhāntas, concludes Manorathanandin (p. 382.14–15), are not like ears, which the living being is endowed with already at his birth.

⁶ In the PV passage quoted above, the opponent put forward essentially the same argument to claim that the knower must possess *siddhāntas* prior to embarking on any cognitive process. The distance between Dharmakīrti and Utpaladeva/Abhinavagupta can be measured by the fact that the former takes them as specific cognitions to be progressively acquired by the single knower, while for the latter this complex of cognitions/beliefs is already part and parcel of the individual subjects.

⁷ 2cd–4ab *anvayavyatirekau hi prasiddher upajīvakau // svāyattatve tayor vyaktipūge kiṃ syāt tayor gatīḥ / pratyaḥsam api netrātmadīpārthādiviśeṣajam // apekṣate tatra mūle prasiddhiṃ tāṃ tathātmikām /*

baby can be determined simply by his sense of satisfaction (ibid. 6bc *saṃprasīdati cetaḥ*): he has experience of the various things, selects those which give pleasure to his mind and discards the others.⁸ Not even *cetaḥprasāda* can be taken as a primary source of orientation and evaluation,⁹ says Abhinavagupta, since this satisfaction does not derive from external means of knowledge, like perception and inference, but is formed by an awareness made by previous mental impregnations; it is not a case of generic and unpredictable intuitive knowledge (*pratibhāmātram eva na; Jayaratha: na punar ākasmikaṃ pratibhāmātram*).¹⁰ In the same vein, but in a different context (aesthetical speculation on the basic emotions, *sthāyibhāva*), Abhinavagupta says that living beings are born already impregnated by such basic emotions which may affect them in various degrees but can never be altogether absent:

*sthāyitvaṃ caitāvatām eva / jāta eva hi jantur iyatībhiḥ saṃvidbhiḥ parī-
to bhavati / [...] na hy etaccittavṛttivāsanāsūnyaḥ prāṇī bhavati / keva-
laṃ kasyacit kācid adhikā cittavṛttiḥ kācid ūnā / kasyacid ucitaviṣayani-*

⁸ 5cd–6 *nanu vastuśatākīrṇe sthāne 'py asya yad eva hi // paśyato jighrato vāpi sprśataḥ saṃprasīdati / cetā tad evādāya drāk so 'nvayavyatireka-
bhāk //*

⁹ Abhinavagupta may have in mind the endless debate in Dharmaśāstra literature on *ātmatuṣṭi* as one of the sources of *dharma*, starting from *Mānavadharmasāstra* II.6: *vedo khilo dharmamūlaṃ smṛtiśīle ca tadvidām / ācāraś caiva sādḥnām ātmanas tuṣṭir eva ca //* "The root of *dharma* is the entire Veda, the tradition and practice of those who know it, the conduct of good people, and what pleases oneself (*ātmanas tuṣṭiḥ*);" cf. Davies 2007: 282. *Ātmatuṣṭi* is glossed by the commentators with *ātmaparitoṣa*, *manaḥprasāda*, *cetaḥprasāda*. This subjective and emotional feeling, however, must have something else at its basis in order to be allowed to aspire to any sort of normativeness. As Medhātithi says, *ātmatuṣṭi* as an admitted normative principle can only arise in a person whose entire being is imbued with the Veda and who cannot possibly deviate from its spirit (Davies 2007: 288). Abhinavagupta's position, *mutatis mutandis*, is not different.

¹⁰ Ibid. 7–8 *hanta cetaḥprasādo 'pi yo 'sāv arthaviśeṣagaḥ / so 'pi prāgvāsana-
nārūpavimarśaparikalpitaḥ // na pratyakṣānumānādibāhyamānaprasā-
dajaḥ / prāgvāsanopajīvy etat pratibhāmātram eva na //*

yantritā kasyacid anyathā (*Abhinavabhāratī* ad NŚ 6, prose portion after 31, *rasasūtra*, vol. 1, p. 281).

“These [nine] are indeed the only Stable States. Every creature, in fact, possesses such forms of consciousness since its birth. [...] There is no creature that is devoid of the latent impressions of these consciousness modes. Only [one might maintain] that some are predominant in someone, others in someone else, and for some people they are determined by appropriate objects, for others it is quite the opposite.”¹¹

We are progressively arriving at a definition of *prasiddhi*: so far, we can say that we are dealing with a reflective awareness depending on previous mental impregnations. These previous impregnations coming to us from the past constitute this ancient *prasiddhi*, which animates our present. It has come down to us (TĀ XXXV.10a: *āgatā*), it is to be identified with *āgama*. Unlike the Buddhists (and the Mīmāṃsakas), our Śaiva thinkers, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, are not willing to relegate *āgama* to the sphere of *atyantaparokṣa* or *dharma*; on the contrary, the entire *vyavahāra* is impregnated and made possible by it. If I say “Utpaladeva,” it is because in order to refine the portrait of *prasiddhi-āgama* we must refer to a couple of *ślokas*, first quoted (and commented on) in his lost *Vivṛti* and carefully glossed by Abhinavagupta in the ĪPVV¹² (we might even surmise Utpaladeva’s authorship of them¹³). The *ślokas* are quoted with significant differences (particularly in the last line) in ĪPVV, *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* (ĪPV), *Mālinīvijayavārttika* (MVV), Bhāskarakaṇṭha’s *Ṭīkā* on ĪPV. What follows is my own hypothetical (but highly probable, I believe) restoration.

prasiddhir āgamo loke yuktimān athavetaraḥ /
vidyāyām apy avidyāyām pramāṇam avigānataḥ //
prasiddhir avigītā hi satyā vāg aiśvarī matā /
tayā yatra yadā siddhaṃ yat tad grāhyam aśaṅkitaiḥ //

¹¹ Transl. Cuneo 2008–09: I, 295.

¹² ĪPVV I, p. 36.2–21; III, pp. 84.15–85.19; ĪPV II, pp. 83.12–84.1–2, MVV I.805–806.

¹³ While introducing a slightly modified quotation of this passage in MVV, Abhinavagupta simply says: *dhīdhanair uktam* I.805bc.

Prasiddhi is what we commonly call *āgama*, which may be either congruent with reason or not; it is a source of valid knowledge in the domain both of *vidyā* and *avidyā*, provided that it is not contradicted. For the non-contradicted *prasiddhi* is to be considered the true Voice of the Lord. What is established by virtue of this Voice, within a certain spatial/temporal condition, is to be accepted by those who are trustful.

Understood in the light of Abhinavagupta's glosses, the passage comes to mean more or less as follows: 'congruent with reason' means 'supported by logical reasoning,' like the tradition of non-dual Śaivism and others (ĪPVV I, p. 36.2–3 *nyāyadattahastāvalambo yathā īśvarādvayādyāgamah*). Apparently, the *āgama* 'supported by logical reasoning' includes matters that can also be accessed through ordinary inference (like the existence of Īśvara etc.), while the *āgama* unsupported by logical reasoning (*itara*) deals with *atyantaparokṣa* matters, like cosmology, the efficacy of mantras, about which there is no other source than the *āgama*.¹⁴ Another possible interpretation of *itara-niryuktika* could refer to its containing mutually contradictory or absurd teachings.¹⁵ Such *yuktimān āgama* can direct men engaged on the path of liberation (*vidyā*) and on the path of fruition (*avidyā*) as well (ĪPVV I, p. 36.6–8). A *prasiddhi* (and the *vimarśa* connected with it) is valid on condition that it is not subsequently contradicted by another *vimarśa* (ĪPVV I, p. 36.12–13 '*avigānataḥ*' *prāmāṇye hetuḥ, viruddhaṃ gānaṃ tadvimarśonmūlanena vimarśāntarasya abhāvāt prāmāṇyam*).¹⁶ In fact, *prasiddhi* is defined as 'deep rooting,

¹⁴ ĪPVV I, p. 36.3–6 '*itaraḥ*' *iti nyāyānanugrḥitaḥ / iyanti tattvabhuvanānīty ādita ārabhya teṣāṃ etair mantrair etāvatībhīr āhutibhiḥ śuddhir apunar-bandhakatvalakṣaṇā bhavati, tata evaṃ śivayojanetyādinā*; III, p. 85.17–19 '*nyāyaḥ*' *iti anumānam / īśvarasadbhāve hi sanniveśakāryādiliṅgajam anumānam asty eva, tattvabhuvanādīnāṃ tu iyattayāyāṃ nāsti anumānam iti āgama eva tatra śaraṇam*. The term *atyantaparokṣa* as such is not used by Abhinavagupta; I take it from the Buddhist *pramāṇavādins* (cf. above n. 3).

¹⁵ ĪPVV I, p. 36.8–12 *yuktimān dānād dharmo hiṃsātas tu adharma iti / upakārāpakārācittāt hi nirmalasamarūpāt tādrk phalam iti saṃbhāvanānumānam / niryuktikaḥ 'snānāt dharmo dikṣitasyādharma dānāt' iti*.

¹⁶ This is how Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta interpret *avigānataḥ* and

firmness of a cognition or belief' (ĪPVV III, p. 84.1 *pratīter nirūḍhir dṛḍhatā*); analogously, *āgama* consists of extremely firm reflective awareness (ĪPV II, p. 80.3–4 *āgamas tu nāmāntaraḥ¹⁷ śābdanarūpo draḍḥīyastamavimarśātmā*). The next feature of *prasiddhi/āgama*, listed in the two *ślokas* commented on by Abhinavagupta, is its verbal structure (*vāc*): a verbalization having a deeply rooted reflective awareness as its form (ĪPV II p. 82 *dṛḍhavimarśanarūpaṃ śābdanam*). The last two *pādas* add one more feature: *prasiddhi/āgama* is an open structure, which, though having an ideal unity and totality at the highest level of universal consciousness, can only act in an individualized environment. In fact, it is not a static content of the human being (or of any living creature), given once for ever, but is conditioned by the level of subjectivity reached by the individual, by his beginningless history (*vāsanā* and *saṃskāra*), by his living in a certain place, by his belonging to a certain caste and *āśrama*, and, finally, by his intellectual and emotional commitment. In other words, the 'static' content of the individually inherited *prasiddhi/āgama* is to be enacted by the personal adhesion of the subject, his confidence, faith.¹⁸ Only the subject who trusts in a certain tradition can have his

avigītā in the *śloka*. Interestingly, a few centuries later Bhāskarakaṇṭha comments on *avigītā* in a totally different way: *avigītā* means 'not conflicting with the Veda.' *Prasiddhi* is a body of teachings that have come down to us through an unbroken tradition and whose author is unknown, but being *prasiddha* in this sense does not suffice to constitute a *pramāṇa* if this is in contradiction with the Veda (vol. II, p. 89.7–8 *avigītā – vedāviruddhā, tathā ca prasiddham api vedaviruddham cet tyajyam eva / prasiddhir ity anenāviditakarṭṛkaṃ paraṃparāgātam upadeśajātaṃ grhītam*). The 'vedicization' process of Pratyabhijñā has indeed been completed. In positing the condition of 'not being invalidated by a subsequent cognition,' Abhinavagupta follows ĪPK II.3.1–2 (cf. Torella 2002: 161–162).

¹⁷ Bhāskarakaṇṭha reads *āntaraśābdana*^o (but cf. ĪPVV III, p. 84.1–2 *śābdanarūpatvaṃ vimarśanaṃ yad āntaram...*).

¹⁸ We might even say that the inner core of *prasiddhi* is not so much its content as its 'trust' component. An *āgama* can be authoritative only within a definite environment, just as direct perception can lose its inherent status of *pramāṇa* owing to the imperfections of its factors (ĪPVV III p. 85.2–5 *tatra yathāiva apramāṇabhūtaadvicandrasaṃve-*

behaviour guided by it, whilst, to another subject who does not have the same *dr̥ḍhapratipatti*, the precepts imparted by that tradition are not authoritative.¹⁹ As the TĀ says: “As long as the individual subject has not attained the Śiva state he does not distrust the limited *prasiddhi* that is in accordance with his own present nature. He distrusts any other *prasiddhi*, and strictly clings to his own.”²⁰ If the will of the Lord is ultimately responsible for the firm rooting of *śabdana* – or, in other words, of *āgama* – in the individual subject, then what is the ground for the arrogance of epistemologists? Wicked epistemologists! – thus Abhinavagupta replies to his own question – it is the Lord himself and none else who manifests himself in this way, is reflectively aware and is the agent of reflective awareness in individual subjects. But then for mankind is there no room for any investigation, teaching and learning of *śāstra*? Does only silence remain? Abhinavagupta’s conclusion is rich in insight, and also humour: yes, indeed, we might say that only silence remains for us, but are we sure that it is silence and immobility that are the Lord’s preferred modes of being?²¹

dana upayogam upagacchad ālokendriyādikam apramāṇam, na ca iyatā samyak pratyakṣasya pakṣapātītā prasajyate kācit, tathā [...]; p. 96.20–21 ‘yat yadā yathā yatra’ ity anena krameṇa sarvāgamānām prāmāṇyam; ĪPV II pp. 82.16–83.11 tatra yathā mithyājñāne sahāyatām bhajamānam ālokendriyādikam apramāṇatāsacivam apramāṇam [...] sarva eva hi āgamo niyatādhikārideśakālasahakāryādiniyantritam eva vimarśam vidhate; TĀ XXXV.35ab tad eka evāgamo ‘yaṃ citraś citre ‘dhikāriṇi).

¹⁹ ĪPV II, p. 82.1–3 [...] *tadāśvastasyaiva tatra anuṣṭhānayoogyatvāt, anyasya tu dr̥ḍhapratipattirūpatvābhāvāt apramāṇam eva tathāvimarśanātma-kaṃ śabdanam.*

²⁰ TĀ XXXV.21–22ab *yāvat tu śivatā nāsyā tāvat svātmānusārīṇim / tāvatīm eva tām eṣa prasiddhiṃ nābhiśaṅkate // anyasyām abhiśaṅkī syād bhūyas tām bahu manyate /.*

²¹ ĪPVV III p. 94.12–17 *nanu īśvarecchayaiva yat yasya nirūḍhaṃ śabdanam, sa eva tasya āgama iti ka idānīm prāmāṇikānām protkarṣaḥ / āḥ ke varākāḥ prāmāṇikāḥ / īśvara eva hi tathā bhāti vimṛśati vimarśayati ca / nanu evaṃ tūṣṇīm avasthīyatām, kiṃ śāstrapraṇayanopadeśaśravaṇānuṣṭhānaiḥ / satyam avasthīyate yadi sa tathā avatiṣṭhāsīta parameśvaraḥ /.*

There are two forms of *prasiddhi*: one is structured into normative texts (*nibaddhā*) and takes the form of an arrangement of definite words and sentences (ĪPVV III, p. 102.11 *viśiṣṭavākyaṛacanā*), while the other (*anibaddhā*) is based on traditional behaviours of people (p. 85.20 *lokapāraṃparyapraṭiṣṭhitāyām*; p. 101.16–17 *mahājanānuṣṭhānaśeṣatayaiva sthitā*). Beyond them lies the highest form of *prasiddhi*, coinciding with *pratibhā*; these are the three forms in which *āgama* manifests itself (p. 102.12–13 *evaṃ pratibhārūpeṇa nibaddhānibaddhāprasiddhidvayātmanā ca trividham āgamaṃ pradarśya*).²²

Among the main characters of the *prasiddhi/āgama* play, only one has not yet come to the foreground, albeit implicitly present from the very beginning: *pratibhā* ‘intuition.’ “Its name is *pratibhā*,” says a fragment of Utpaladeva’s *Vivṛti*, which Abhinavagupta glosses: “This [divine Voice] is characterized by ‘intuitive shining’ (*pratibhāna*), it is indeed the *āgama*, that is, the subliminal impulse toward language (*śabdabhāvanā*).”²³

²² In fact, a fourth variety (pp. 102.21–103.5) may be added: ‘the word of an authoritative person’ (*āptavāda*). Contrary to the above three forms of *prasiddhi*, which do not require any external proof, the reliability of *āptavāda* can be put to question, if a doubt arises as to the *pramāṇa* which is its source. Interestingly, if such doubt does not arise in the recipient of the teaching, the cognition which derives from *āptavāda* is placed at the same level as *prasiddhi*, is equated to direct perception itself and cannot be invalidated even by hundreds of reasonings. Such knowledge can be put into practice and even be imparted to others (pp. 102.23–103.5 *tam upadeśyaṃ tathābhūtāptavākyopadiṣṭavastusaṃvedanād anuṣṭhānaparopadeśaparyantāt nivartayituṃ na kenacit prakāreṇa anyo bhavati śaktaḥ / yato ’sāv upadeśyas tatra āptasambandhini jñāne pratyakṣapakṣāśrayeṇa sthitaḥ / yad āptena uktaṃ – mayā sākṣād etat jñātam iti, tatra asāv upadeśyo ’bhimanyate – mayaiva etat sākṣātkṛtam iti / na ca bālo ’pi sākṣātkṛtāt yuktiśatair api śakyanivartanaḥ*). This is additional evidence of the fact that the main character of *prasiddhi* is indeed ‘trust.’

²³ ĪPVV III p. 93.14–15 ‘*pratibhāsamjñā*’ *iti pratibhānalakṣaṇā iyaṃ śabda-bhāvanākhyā āgama eveti yāvat*.

What we can state so far is that the doctrine of *prasiddhi*, developed by Abhinavagupta in the TĀ, MVV, ĪPVV and ĪPV, was first formulated by Utpaladeva; though not found in ĪPK and *Vṛtti*, it is present in the *Vivṛti*, from which Abhinavagupta derives it.²⁴ But what, in turn, could Utpaladeva's source have been? Once again we trace back to the great mentor of Utpaladeva, Bhartṛhari. As is well known, the constellation *āgama-vāc-śabdabhāvanā-pratibhā* is at the centre of the Bhartṛharian sky. What Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta say of *prasiddhi* easily refers us to Bhartṛhari's *pratibhā*.

"It cannot be explained to others as such and such. It is experienced by everyone within himself and even the subject (of the experience) is not able to render an account of it to himself. It is something indefinable and it brings about a kind of amalgamation of the meanings of individual words, covering the whole sentence as it were, it becomes its object. None can avoid in one's activities that (flash of understanding) [*pratibhā*] produced either through words or through the working of one's predispositions [*bhāvanā*]. The whole world considers that to be the authority [*pramāṇa*]. Even the activities of animals develop because of that. Just as some substances acquire the power to intoxicate and the like by mere maturity, without the help of a special effort, in the same way are intuitions produced in those who possess them. Who transforms the voice of the male cuckoo in spring? Who teaches living beings to build nests, etc.? Who goads beasts and birds on to actions like eating, loving, hating, swimming etc. associated with particular species and pedigrees? This Intuition is the result of Tradition (*āgama*), accompanied by *bhāvanā*." (*Vākyapadīya* [VP] II.144–151, transl. Iyer 1977: 61–62).

This famous passage from the *Vākyakāṇḍa* evokes another equally famous passage from the *Brahmakāṇḍa*:

All procedures of practical activities in this world depend upon the word. Even the child, thanks to the impressions left from previous births (*Vṛtti*: *pūrvaśabdāveśabhāvanāsaṃkāradhānāt*), knows them. The first disposition of the vocal organs, the emitting of the air up-

²⁴ The doctrine of *prasiddhi*, as expounded in the 35th chapter of TĀ, is part of a special teaching on the 'meeting of the scriptures' by one of the main Abhinavagupta gurus, Śambunātha (44cd *itthaṃ śrīśambunāthena mamoktaṃ śāstramelanam*).

wards and the striking of the places of articulation would not take place without the subliminal predisposition to language. (VP I.129–130).

So *pratibhā*, just like *prasiddhi* in the TĀ passage quoted at the very outset of this paper, is a *pramāṇa*, or even the *pramāṇa* par excellence on which all the other *pramāṇas* ultimately rest. “Āgama is indeed formed by *prasiddhi*,” says Abhinavagupta, and goes on: “And precisely to strengthen the *pramāṇa* status of *āgama*, Bharṭṛhari has referred to the statement by the Muni (i.e. Vyāsa): ‘In order to decide what is good [and what is bad, all men, starting from the lowest, have very little use for normative treatises (*śāstra*)].’”²⁵ Incidentally, we may add a very welcome clarification, coming from the MVV, just after quoting the same sentence:

tathā ca munir āhedam puṇyam pāpam iti dvaye //
śāstraprayojanam svalpam nāgamasya prayojanam /
āgamo hi na nāmaṣa pustakagranthasaṃcayaḥ //
kevalam prathitābhikhyo ’nādir vedādikaḥ khila /
kiṃ tu prasiddhir evāsau sā ca śabdavarūpiṇī //

[...] There is very little use for *śāstra*, but not for *āgama*, since for sure *āgama* is not only the collection of written texts whose fame is widespread,²⁶ without beginning, like the Veda etc., but it is nothing else than *prasiddhi* – *prasiddhi*, which has language as its own form.²⁷

²⁵ ĪPVV III 102.3–10 *prasiddhirūpa eva āgamaḥ [...] idaṃ puṇyam ityādi-munivacanam bhartṛhariṇā āgamaprāmāṇyadārḍhyāya upanyastam*. Abhinavagupta refers to VP I.40: *idaṃ pāpam ity etasmin padadvaye / ācaṇḍalamānuṣyāṇām alpam śāstraprayojanam*.

²⁶ I connect *na* with the following *kevalam*. *Prathitābhikhyāḥ* could refer to the ‘manifested’ nature of the *āgama* as distinguished from its subtle dimension. This might also be the meaning of *prasiddhasya* in the passage from the *Vṛtti* on VP I.10 (p. 39.6–7: *vedākhyasya prasiddhasya brahmaṇaḥ*).

²⁷ The conclusion of the passage (I.805–806) refers once again to the couple of *ślokas* quoted above, this time partly paraphrased: *ittham āgama evāyam pramāṇam iti dhīdhanaiḥ / uktaṃ satyaiva vāg aiśī prasiddhir avigānataḥ // prasiddha* [read: *prasiddhir*] *āgamo loke yuktimān athavetarāḥ / vidyāyam apy avidyāyam pramāṇam iti tat sthitam //*.

(MVV I.799cd–801)

But, of course, not everyone would subscribe to this bold statement, certainly, for one, not Kumārila. In fact, when, at the beginning of the *autpattika* section of the *Ślokavārttika* (ŚV), he presents as a *pūrvapakṣa* the eligibility of *lokaprasiddhi* to establish by itself alone what is *dharma* and what is *adharma*, he quotes precisely the same statement of Vyāsa as a possible support (vṛttikāragrantha, v. 3). Needless to say, he quickly dismisses it with a few impatient words. Any *prasiddhi* is not a *pramāṇa* by itself, but is valid only if it is based on a *śāstra* of indisputable authority: only what is firmly established on a root can lay claim to authority, so *prasiddhi* itself needs to be investigated through valid means of knowledge (vṛttikāragrantha, v. 4ab *nirmūlāsambhavād atra pramāṇaiḥ saiva [prasiddhiḥ] mṛgyate*).²⁸ In fact, the first presentation of the *prasiddhi* doctrine in ĪPVV (I, p. 35) starts with a *pūrvapakṣa* of a Mīmāṃsā flavour (*nanu prasiddhir nāma na kiṃcana pramāṇam*; cf. also PV I-svavṛtti p. 171.7

The whole doctrine is ascribed to the followers of Śrīmatbhūtaja (?), who attribute the status of *pramāṇa* to *niyati* ‘necessity.’ In fact, the passage starts with the equation between beginningless behaviours and necessity ‘which sets everything into motion;’ this is nothing but *āgama*, consisting of the behaviours of the ancients, which is the only authority with regard to *dharma* (in this respect, perception and inference being mostly misleading): *anye tv āhur anādir yo vyavahārah kriyātmakaḥ // niyatīḥ saiva viśvasya pravartakatayā sthitā / sa eva cāgamo nāma vṛddhavyavahṛtikramaḥ // tataḥ samagra evāyaṃ dharmādipariniścayaḥ / na pratyakṣān nānumānād bhūyasā vipralambhakaḥ* (read: °kāt) // (I.794cd–796). In ĪPVV III p. 92, Abhinavagupta gives a detailed explanation of the primacy of *āgama* over *pratyakṣa*: *ekapramāṭṛrūpasāṅkucitaparakāśāveśinīlādyavabhāsavimarśanarūpāt pratyakṣāt samastāvīgītavimarśanarūpaparicchedaśūnyāsāṅkucitaparakāśaviśrāntabhāvattvāvabhāsavimarśanasvabhāva āgamo balavān*. On the insufficiency of *pratyakṣa*, cf. also VP II.141 *tasmāt pratyakṣam apy arthaṃ vidvān ikṣeta yuktitaḥ / na darśanasya prāmāṇyāt dṛśyam arthaṃ prakalpayet //*.

²⁸ Sucaritamīśra (vol. II, p. 3) comments: *na svatantrāyāḥ prasiddher eva prāmāṇyaṃ sidhyati*. Cf. the analogous remark by Bhāskarakaṇṭha (above, n. 16).

prasiddhim apramāṇayataḥ, to which Karṇakagomin p. 602.16 adds: *mīmāṃsakasya*).

The possible identification of Mīmāṃsā, and particularly of his most illustrious exponent, as the actual target of the two Śaiva masters may help us answer some crucial questions which we have so far left in the background. Why have Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta elaborated their *prasiddhi* theory, for whom and against whom? And, furthermore, why, though heavily borrowing from Bhartr̥hari, have they introduced this relatively new term, which is not found in the VP (at least, in this very specific sense)? In a sense, we could view *prasiddhi* doctrine as a posthumous defence of Bhartr̥hari from the unspoken attack on him by Kumārila. Kumārila must have seen the ‘universalistic’ approach to revealed scripture as upheld by Bhartr̥hari as being very dangerous. It is true that Bhartr̥hari focuses on the Veda, but, apart from the corpus of texts in which the Veda is embodied, he envisages a higher level, a kind of subtle Veda made of *pratibhā* and *śabdattva* which lies in the depths of all men, or even of all living creatures.²⁹ Apparently, *āgama*/Veda is not just a

²⁹ The Veda proper is only an image or reflection (*anukāra*) of the one Brahman, a means of reaching it; however, this Veda is not yet the Veda in the text-form we know, but so to speak its undivided prototype (VP I.5ab). According to the explanation given by the *Vṛtti* (cf. Aklujkar 2009: 24–26), the great ṛṣis ‘saw’ the subtle, eternal, sense-transcending Voice, and transmitted an image of it to others, those who are incapable of any direct experience of *dharma* (p. 24.2–3 *yāṃ sūkṣmāṃ nityāṃ atīndriyāṃ vācam ṛṣayaḥ sāḥśātkṛtadharmāṇo mantradṛṣaḥ paśyanti, tām asāḥśātkṛtadharmebhyo ‘parebhyaḥ pravedayiṣyamāṇā bilmaṃ samāmananti*); this image, still unitary and undifferentiated (*brahmarāśi*), is the root of Vedic corpus as it has been handed down to us (p. 26.5 *tathāyam apy aparimāṇamārgaśaktibhedo vedo brahmarāśir iti*). The Veda is the form in which the supreme Light comes to manifestation (*Vṛtti* on I.1, p. 12.5, *trayīrūpeṇa taj jyotiḥ paramaṃ parivartate*). This triple level of the Veda/*āgama* can also be seen in the Śaiva context: *Stavacintāmaṇi* v. 69 *stumas tvām ṛgyajuḥsāmnām śukrataḥ parataḥ param* / (Kṣemarāja’s gloss, p. 77.14–16: *ṛgādivedatrayasya yat paraṃ śukraṃ, tadabhedavimarśamayaṃ – bodhādityapratibhātma-kapraṇavatejorūpaṃ, tato ‘pi paraṃ – bodhādityarūpaṃ tvām stumaḥ*; see also Abhinavagupta’s slightly different interpretation in *ĪPVV* III, p.

content of the consciousness of living beings, but something more: on two occasions and in slightly different contexts, Bhartr̥hari likens it to *caitanya* itself (I.41 *caitanyam iva yaś cāyam avicchedena vartate / āgamas tam upāsīno hetuvādair na bādhyate*; *Vṛtti* on I.148, p. 203.7–8, *vedavākyāni tu caitanyavad apauruṣeyāni*).³⁰ Mīmāṃsā moves on the other hand along diametrically opposed lines: distancing the Veda from mankind as far as possible in order to vindicate its indispensable role as mediator. All kinds of *prasiddhi* (*bahujanaprasiddhi*, *mahājanaprasiddhi*) are equally dismissed. Even being *ārya* is not enough. The *prasiddhis* of the *āryas* are not to be preferred to the *mlecchas* unless they too are supported by the *śāstra*, represented by the Veda (and its interpreter, Mīmāṃsā).³¹ The very fact that the *prasiddhis* of the *āryas* and *mlecchas* are at variance with each other proves the unreliability of *prasiddhi* as a means of establishing *dharma*.³²

What lies at the basis of the Śaiva approach is the very denial that any gap exists between human and non-human knowledge. In so doing, Utpaladeva pushes Bhartr̥hari's position to the extreme. Not only do inexplicable cognitions or instinctual behaviours reveal the inner presence of *pratibhā*, but all cognitions without distinction are made possible by *prasiddhi*, the 'extremist' version of *pratibhā*. When Bhartr̥hari says:

"None can avoid in one's activities that (flash of understanding

99.5–10).

³⁰ Analogously, *vāc* is equated to *saṃjñā* and *caitanya*: I.126 *saiṣā saṃsāriṇāṃ saṃjñā bahir antaś ca vartate / tanmātrām apy atikrāntaṃ caitanyam sarvajātiṣu //*.

³¹ ŚV, *vṛttikāragrantha* v. 7ab *na cāryāṇāṃ viśeṣo 'sti yāvac chāstram anāśritam*. Bhaṭṭa Umbeka's *Ṭikā* p. 184.17–18: *śabdāmūlatvenāryaprasiddhir anāryaprasiddher viśiṣyate; sā kathamiva śabdaprāmāṇyānaṅgikareṇa dharmam prati pramāṇam syāt*.

³² 6b–d *viḡānataḥ / mlecchāryāṇāṃ prasiddhatvaṃ na dharmasyopapadyate*. The opponent had also put forward another generally accepted criterion for determining what is *dhārmika* or *adhārmika*: the former produces relief, the latter affliction (*vṛttikāragrantha*, v. 2). Needless to say, this too is immediately rejected by Kumārila.

[*pratibhā*]) produced either through words or through the working of one's predispositions. The whole world considers that to be the authority [*pramāṇa*]. Even the activities of animals develop because of that " (VP II.146–147, transl. Iyer 1977: 61),

Puṅyarāja (p. 66.20) quotes as an example the mysterious impulse that drives Duṣyanta towards Śakuntalā as an acceptable wife as far as caste is concerned.³³ Bhartṛhari sees the presence of *pratibhā* within pragmatic activities, which are epistemologically complex in that they presuppose various *pramāṇas* simultaneously at work. Abhinavagupta does not limit himself to saying that, on the one hand, there are fields in which *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* are unable to operate by themselves alone and where only *prasiddhi/āgama* can,³⁴ and, on the other, that only *prasiddhi* makes possible the use in practical reality of the object of direct perception,³⁵ but also straightforwardly says that *prasiddhi* is, so to speak, the very life of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*.³⁶ By saying so, he implicitly dismisses the naifs' (Naiyāyika etc.) belief in single *pramāṇas* working in isolation in the course of cognitive experience; in this, too, Abhinavagupta's³⁷ predecessor is Bhartṛhari.

³³ *Abhijñānaśākuntala* I.19 *asaṃśayaṃ kṣatraparigrahakṣamā yad āryam asyām abhilāṣi me manaḥ / satām hi saṃdehapadeṣu vastuṣu pramāṇam antaḥkaraṇapravṛttayaḥ* (only the latter hemistich is quoted by Puṅyarāja) "Without a doubt, if my noble heart pines for her, then she is fit to be wed to a Kṣatriya. For when doubtful matters arise good people trust their internal feelings as an authority" (Davies 2007: 288, where Kumārila and other authors' positions on the matter are presented).

³⁴ Cf. e.g. ĪPVV III p. 255.9–12 *tatra asmadādipratyakṣaṃ na aśeṣasākṣātkāri, anumānam api evaṃ sarvasya liṅgavyāptiyupalabdhisambhavābhāvāt / asaṅkucitaprakāśātmakaparameśvaravimarśātmakaḥ punar āgamo viśvaṃ pramātuṃ samarthaḥ*.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 83.15–16 *pratyakṣadr̥ṣṭam api arthakriyāsu śiṣṭair yojyamānām āgamalakṣaṇām prasiddhim apekṣate*.

³⁶ TĀ XXXV.18cd *tatprasiddhyaiva nādhyakṣān nānumānād asambhavāt* (Jayaratha thereon: *tayoś ca prasiddhir eva nibandanam ity uktam*); ĪPV vol. II p. 80.3–6, *āgamas tu [...] pratyakṣāder api jīvitakalpaḥ*.

³⁷ That practical activities clearly presuppose the simultaneous working of a multiplicity of *pramāṇas* had already been established in ĪPK

In order to express such a concept, Utpaladeva needed a broader term than *pratibhā* and less connoted than *pratibhā* by typically ‘mysterious’ overtones: *prasiddhi*, perhaps also because it furnished the occasion for critically addressing the Mīmāṃsā, was indeed the ideal candidate. A continuous line runs from the individually oriented *prasiddhis* which are at work in the everyday experience of living beings and the progressively higher *prasiddhis*, which give shape to the various world views, that is, the various *āgamas* – from the Veda to the Bauddha, the Pañcarātra, the Śaiva – culminating in the all-encompassing *eka āgama* (TĀ XXXV.24a, 30a, 35a, 37a). This, however, opens the door to two major objections: We have a multiplicity of *prasiddhis*, with various, even human!, provenances; then, these *prasiddhis* are not stable, but often fluctuate in a somewhat unpredictable way. It is true, Abhinavagupta replies to the second objection, that *prasiddhis* are in themselves eternal, but every now and then some of them emerge, some (provisionally) disappear.³⁸ The first question is even more arduous. As the scriptures tell us, “The *śāstra*, extremely hard to acquire, emerges in the form of ‘resonance’ (*nāda*) from Śiva, whose body is not seen, who is quiescent, the supreme cause,” or “Just as a great sound comes out of the im-

II.3.9 and *Vṛtti*: *sā tu deśādikādhyakṣāntarabhinne svalakṣaṇe / tātkālikī pravṛttiḥ syād arthino ’py anumānataḥ // Vṛtti thereon: kāyapravṛttiḥ punar deśakālādiratyakṣabhedasāhityena svalakṣaṇa eva tadarthitayā pramāṇasamūhād eva / anumānād api dharmipratyakṣaviśiṣṭād eva pravṛttiḥ*. “On the contrary, it happens differently in the case of the activity that starts at that moment in the subject who aims at producing certain effects, as regards a particular, individual object, differentiated by various specific sensations of place etc., and also [in the case of the activity promoted] by inference.” *Vṛtti*: On the contrary, the bodily activity of a person, that may concern only the particular object in association with a whole variety of perceptions (of place, time, etc.), in that it aims at producing certain effects, necessarily depends on the concurrence of several cognitive acts. This activity may also be promoted by inference, qualified, of course, by the direct perception of the property-possessor (transl. Torella 2002: 168–169). On Bhartṛhari’s position cf. Biardeau 1964: 351, Aklujkar 1988–89: 20.

³⁸ ĪPVV III p. 99.17–18 *anādikālabhāvinyo hi sarvāḥ prasiddhayaḥ / tatra tu kācid kadācid unmajjati, kācit nimajjati*.

material sky, so the *śāstra* called ‘word’ comes out of the quiescent [Śiva], made of consciousness.”³⁹ If this is how things stand, then how do we account for ‘historical’ traditions having a specific human being as their founder, such as, for example, Buddhism? Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta do not even for a moment take into account the possibility that these traditions do not deserve the status of *prasiddhis*. Rather, they contest that their founders are anything but definite historical persons (p. 97.21 *na hi buddho nāma niyataḥ kaścit*): the Buddha was one who reached firm conviction about instantaneity, etc. by force of his mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*), but he received the teaching of such mental cultivation from a previous Buddha, who in turn received it from another Buddha, and so on and so forth. By being just a link in a beginningless chain, the Buddha loses the status of ‘definite expounder’ (*niyatavaktr*)⁴⁰ and, because of this, even the Buddhist *prasiddhi* ultimately comes to be absorbed in and derive from the eternal Lord’s reflective awareness.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid. p. 97.14–18 *adṛṣṭavigrahāc chāntāc chivāt paramakāraṇāt / nādarūpaṃ viniṣkrāntaṃ śāstraṃ paramadurlabham // iti / amūrtād gaganād yadvan nirghāto jāyate mahān / śāntāt saṃvinmayāt tadvac chabdākhyam śāstram //*.

⁴⁰ Abhinavagupta has probably in mind one of the arguments used by Mīmāṃsā to prove the eternity of the Veda: the study of the Veda presupposes a teacher, which in turn must have learnt it from another teacher (ŚV vākya v. 366 *vedasyādhyayanam sarvaṃ gurvadhyayanapūrvakam / vedādhyayanavācyatvād adhunādhyayanam yathā //*; the same argument can already be found in *Śābarabhāṣya*, vol. I p. 122.2–3). The next step for Mīmāṃsā is to affirm that, as a consequence, the Veda is not the work of human beings. On this, however, Dharmakīrti (of course, unaware that this argument would have later been used precisely to ‘save’ Buddhist tradition at Brahmanical eyes) strongly disagrees, arguing that such a criterion would lead to accepting also the sinful behaviours of *mlecchas* or the statements of the *nāstikas* PV 1.244–245 *sarvathānāditā sidhyed evaṃ nāpuruṣāśrayaḥ / tasmād apauruṣeyatve syād anyo ’py anarāśrayaḥ / mlecchādīvyavahārāṇām nāstikyavacasām api / anāditvāt tathābhāvaḥ pūrvasaṃskārasaṃtateḥ //*.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 97.21–24 *na hi buddho nāma niyataḥ kaścit, api tu bhāvanābala-pratīlabdhakṣaṇikādīdṛḍhāvimarśaḥ / tasya kṣaṇikādībhāvanopadeśī guruḥ pūrvabuddhaḥ, tasyāpi anyāḥ, iti krameṇa aniyatavaktrkatvāt*

Human experience is the outcome of the interplay between what is already given in the individual subject and his personal cognitive and pragmatic efforts. To do justice to the complexity of the position of our authors, we should in parallel bear in mind that the epistemological primacy of *prasiddhi/pratibhā/āgama* does not result in the unilateral praise of a sapiential/instinctual behaviour at the expense of human empiricism and rationality: for Bhartr̥hari, e.g., there are spheres of human experience in which one cannot do without *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*; after all, reasoning, provided that it is not in contradiction with the Veda, is dignified as ‘the eye of those who cannot see’ (VP I.135ab *vedaśāstrāvirodhī ca tarkaś cakṣur apaśyatām*). However, one must be keenly aware of the central role that inherited cognitions play in the apparently autonomous working of perception and inference. The role and meaning of the instinctual component also needs to be carefully determined. A *kārikā* of the VP provides a clue for this. When Bhartr̥hari says: “If knowledge were spontaneous, there would be no purpose in the composition of the *śāstras*. If spiritual merit is the cause of knowledge, the Veda is the cause of the former” (VP I.150; transl. Iyer 1965: 120), we are indirectly warned that spontaneity itself is not a mere elemental property of our individual consciousness but the outcome of a timeless process.⁴² Even the intuitive knowledge of the *ṛṣis* is imbued with *āgama* (VP I.30cd *ṛṣīṇām api yaj jñānaṃ tad apy āgamapūrvakam*).

Abhinavagupta agrees with a hypothetical objector saying that, if the *vyavahāra* is conceived of as based on increasingly older *prasiddhis*, there would be the risk of a *regressus ad infinitum* and a cognitive chaos, unless, Abhinavagupta says, we recognize a single ultimate source for all *prasiddhis*. In the Śaiva conception of the Absolute, such

pārameśvaravimarśamayataiva vastutaḥ. On the status of the *āgamas* of *mlecchas*, see *ibid.* p. 96. *tad āha “ prasiddham tu” iti yat yadā yathā yatra ity anena krameṇa sarvāgamānām prāmāṇyam / mlecchādyāgamō hi tāvati pramāṇam bhavann api anāryasaṃparkasaṃbhāvyamānamlānir āgamābhāsaḥ*.

⁴² See also VP I.30 *Vṛtti* (p. 87.1–2) *svābhāvike hi tasmin prayatnaḥ phalād vyatiricyeta, svabhāvataś ca pratyavāyo ’pi tathābhūtaḥ sa prasajyeta*.

a standpoint is an all-knowing personal being⁴³ in which the totality of the *prasiddhis* are contained: this is Parameśvara, Bhairava,⁴⁴ who also constitutes the inmost essence of all creatures. Or, to revert to our starting point – the two *ślokas* quoted by Utpaladeva – *prasiddhi* coincides with the very voice of the Lord. In fact, *prasiddhi*, as such, is just one, and one is the *āgama*; however, it is undeniable that we are confronted with a multiplicity of *prasiddhis/āgamas*. To solve this, Abhinavagupta would have two possibilities at hand: either making their multiplicity merely illusory or establishing a sharp distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ *prasiddhis/āgamas*. His position is, instead, more subtle: the *āgama* is ‘variegated’ (*citra*).⁴⁵ All *prasiddhis* are equally authoritative (*sarvāgamaprāmāṇya*), which does not amount to saying that they are on the same plane. Out of the totality of *prasiddhis* that are contained in the creature, those that gradually appear or ‘emerge’ match the spiritual level reached by the individual subject, or, in other words, are in accordance with its specific ends. When the individual is close to reaching *śivatā*, he has to cling only to the Śaiva *āgama*, because only the Śaiva *āgama* is able to realise the highest end; if, on the contrary, he is still far from *śivatā*, he ‘has’ to

⁴³ Cf. Kṣemarāja’s remarks on *Stavacintāmaṇi* v. 69: “We bow to You whose command, consisting of the Veda [...] (*stumas tvām [...] yasya vedātmikājñeyam*): the verse means that by itself the command (*ājñā*) would be altogether ineffective were it not for the presence behind it of the ‘commander’ (*ājñātr*), whose agency alone is able to rescue the ‘words’ of the Veda from their intrinsic inertness (p.78.5–8 *yat niyogarūpājñātmā ayam vedārthaḥ sa niyoktari – ājñātari sati upapadyate, anyathā kathamiva jaḍasya śabdasya saṃghaṭanārvattvaṃ niyoktrtvaṃ vā syāt*).

⁴⁴ TĀ XXXV.11cd–14 *pūrvapūrvopajīvitvamārgaṇe sā kvacit svayam // sarvajñarūpe hy ekasmin niḥśaṅkaṃ bhāsate purā / vyavahāro hi naikatra samastaḥ ko 'pi mātari // tenāsarvajñapūrvatvamātrenaīṣā na siddhyati / bahusarvajñapūrvatve na mānaṃ cāsti kiñcana // bhogāpavargatadhetuprasiddhiśataśobhitaḥ / tadvimarśasvabhāvo 'sau bhairavaḥ parameśvaraḥ //*.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 35ab *tad eka evāgamo 'yaṃ citraś citre 'dhikāriṇi /*. Then, Jayaratha remarks that even among the individual *āgamas* there is none which, though being unitary, is not variegated itself owing to the different qualifications of the adepts (vol. 12 p. 375.11–13, on 35cd), *na hi evaṃ kaścit tv eva baudhādir āgamo ya ekatve 'pi adhikāribhedāt na citra iti*).

cling to other *āgamas*, more suitable to bestow the limited fruits he is seeking.⁴⁶ The subsequent passage of the TĀ gives voice to and then answers possible objections: But if all *āgamas* come forth from Śiva, why can the condition of Śiva not be achieved but through the Śaiva *āgama*? (Reply:) Just as one who is at a certain stage of life (*āśrama*) cannot achieve the results proper to another (superior) stage of life, so a follower of Pañcarātra cannot attain *śivatā*.⁴⁷ But if all *āgamas* come forth from Śiva, then why not call all of them 'Śaivas'? (Reply:) Because they are extracted/abstracted by their respective founders from the one *āgama* as single fragments; the result is that mankind is confused by their being mutually contradictory.⁴⁸ Among the *āgamas*, the Śaiva one stands in the highest place. If *prasiddhi* manifests in multiple forms, such as Śaiva, Buddhist, etc., why must the adept close to *śivatā* have to honour only the Śaiva? (Reply:) Because this prime *āgama* has been shown by the omniscient Lord himself; it covers both the path of action and renunciation; it is the only one able to act as a means to obtain all kind of fruits, whether higher or lower, belonging to all the four aims of existence (*dharma*, etc.).⁴⁹

This hierarchization of the various *āgamas* should not make us forget that *prasiddhi/āgama* is in itself one: "The *āgama* is in fact one: the single *śāstras*, from the mundane to the Viṣṇuite, the Buddhist, up to the Śaiva, all rest on it."⁵⁰ But is it not contradictory to

⁴⁶ Ibid. 16–17 *tayaivāśaiśavāt sarve vyavahāradharājuṣaḥ / santaḥ sam-upajīvanti śaivam evādyam āgamam // apūrṇās tu pare tena na mokṣa-phalabhāgināḥ / upajīvanti yāvat tu tāvat tatphalabhāgināḥ //*.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 29 *yathā ca tatra pūrvasminn āśrame nottarāśramāt / phalam eti tathā pañcarātrādaḥ na śivatmatām //*.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 37 *ekasmād āgamāc caite khaṇḍakhaṇḍā vyapoddhṛtāḥ / loke syur āgamās taiś ca jano bhrāmyati mohitaḥ //*.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 22cd–24 *evaṃ bhāviśivatvo 'mūṃ prasiddhiṃ manyate dhruvam // eka evāgamaścāyaṃ vibhunā sarvadarśinā / darśito yaḥ pravṛtte ca nivṛtte ca pathi sthitaḥ // dharmārthakāmamokṣeṣu pūrṇāpūrṇādibhedataḥ / vicitreṣu phaleṣv eka upāyaḥ śāmbhavāgamaḥ //*.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 30 *eka evāgamas tasmāt tatra laukikaśāstrataḥ / prabhṛtyā vaiṣṇavād bauddhāc chaivāt sarvaṃ hi niṣṭhitam //*.

posit an *āgama* covering such variegated domains? (Reply:) ⁵¹In the end, hierarchisation is a way of saving the authority of the single *āgamas*, within their own limited domains: putting them on same plane would amount to creating a babelian tower, where conflicting *prasiddhis* would neutralize each other, and, as we have seen, men cannot do without them. ⁵²

Conclusion

After presenting and discussing the relevant textual material, we can proceed to an overall assessment of this constellation of strictly related concepts: *prasiddhi-āgama-pratibhā-śabdana*. To begin with, *prasiddhi* is the paradox of something both coming from outside (*ā-gama*) and abiding in the depths of men's interiority. It is a content of our individuality for which we are not responsible, for it is already present in the new-born creature. It is not a fixed content, but a varying one, due to its interaction with the other factors of individuality. In a sense, then, *prasiddhi* is not even a content, being, rather, more like in its essence to a 'container.' At the same time, rather than belonging to the 'cognition' side it belongs to the 'action' side; it is the object of belief and the belief itself. Again, it is not bound to remain an inner belief, but enacts specific practical behaviours (TĀ XXXV.15cd *lokān vyavahārayet*). In the background lies the common Indian awareness that cognition alone is insufficient to set humans in motion. As Abhinavagupta insightfully says, even what has been directly perceived depends on *prasiddhi*, characterized by *āgama*, as applied by the *śiṣṭas* (learned and spiritually advanced men) to the various practical activities (cf. above n. 35). ⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid. 38–39ab *anekāgamapakṣe 'pi vācyā viṣayabheditā / avaśyam ūrdhvādharatāsthityā prāmāṇyasiddhaye // anyathā naiva kasyāpi prāmāṇyaṃ sidhyati dhruvam /*.

⁵² See the analogous remark by the Buddhist Dharmakīrti: "Man is incapable of existing without the authoritative support of revealed scripture" (PV I-svavṛtti p. 108.1–2 *nāyaṃ puruṣo 'nāśrityāgamaprāmāṇyam āsituṃ samarthah*).

⁵³ In this connection, I like to quote some passages from the *Zibaldone* by

Prasiddhi is belief in something, adhesion to something; its most recurrent qualifications are *dr̥ḍha* 'firm,' *nirūḍha* 'deeply rooted.' However, this 'firmness' does not derive from a conscious effort, but is innate, spontaneous, just as spontaneous as the insightful intuition (*pratibhā*) that plays such a great part in driving most of our actions. However, even this spontaneity does not belong to the creature individually, but to its shared background. Such a 'background' of the creature is its being ultimately rooted in universal consciousness, Śiva. This active divine presence is what may also be called *āgama*, and has the form of the innate language principle which imbues all cognitions and actions. It is the divine Voice (*vāc*) of the Lord that speaks in living beings.

From Utpaladeva/Abhinavagupta's conception of *āgama*, any parochial bias is banned as it comprises all the existing *āgamas*, from the Vaiṣṇava to the Buddhist (the Śaiva included). The immensely distant and undecipherable *āgama* of Mīmāṃsā, the Veda, leaves here the place to the internal and variegated *āgamas* of the Śaivas. Along with *advaitācāra* 'non-dual behaviour,' such a far-reaching universalistic approach to revelation constitutes the most insidious attack by Śaiva tantrism to Brahmanical hegemony.

the great XIX century Italian poet and philosopher, Giacomo Leopardi, which is just about finally to come out in an English translation. They sound in perfect consonance with the ideas just outlined: "[414] That is why reason could not lead to happiness without revelation. Truth was not necessary to man as truth, but as firm believability. Now only truth is firmly believable in the state of reason and knowing. And man with no firm belief has no firm ground on which to decide, therefore to act, therefore to live. [416] And the perfection of reason does not consist in knowing these truths, because it does not consist in knowing truth as truth, but as a firm basis for beliefs that are necessary or useful to life. [438] But I am talking about beliefs, not knowledge. The object of cognition is truth. The object of belief is a credible proposition, and I mean credible in relation wholly and utterly to the general or individual, essential or accidental qualities of the believing being, because something can be credible to one species or genus and not to another; to an individual in that species or genus and not to another; to this same individual today and not tomorrow" (Leopardi, forthcoming).

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