

Phrase in English - a Pada in Pāṇinian Grammar

Akshar Bharati, Sukhada, Dipti Sharma and Amba Kulkarni

Department of Sanskrit Studies, University of Hyderabad, India,
apksh@uohyd.ernet.in

1 abstract

Panini in his Aṣṭādhyāyī not only provides a grammar for Sanskrit but a grammar formalism that can be applied to other languages as well. There is a tradition of grammars for various Indian languages written in this formalism. The use of computers as an information processing device demands a sound theory for processing the information in a language string. Pāṇinian way of analysis of a language provides such a theory. In order to use Pāṇinian theory for analysis of other languages, it is necessary to model these languages in terms of Pāṇinian primitives such as *pada*, *sup*, *tiṅ*, *kṛt*, *vibhakti*, etc. This paper presents an attempt at modelling English in Pāṇinian framework. In an earlier effort (Bharati, forthcoming) it was shown that the notion of subject in English corresponds to the notion of an abhihita with a few systematic exceptions.

In this paper we analyse English defining the *sup* and *tiṅ* suffixes in English language and examine the notion of ‘phrase’ from the Western grammar formalism and compare it with the notions of ‘pada’ and ‘samāsa’ from the viewpoint of Pāṇinian Grammar.

Sanskrit expresses the agreement in case, gender and number between an adjective and a noun or between nouns in apposition. English does not use this device but marks the relation between an adjective and a noun or between two nouns through position. This results into the formation of a phrase. Following the definition of *pada* as ‘suptiṅantam padam’ (A 1.4.14), it would seem that an English phrase involves more than one *padas*. However, we will examine this similarity and see what is the relation between ‘pada’, ‘samasta-pada’ and ‘phrase’.

Further the prepositions in English are overloaded which denote the relation of a noun with a verb and also the relation of a noun with a noun. In Sanskrit, it is only the sixth case suffix which is overloaded in this way. Most of the noun-noun relations in English are instances of ellipsis of verbs (e.g. ‘the train from Mumbai’, ‘the train to Mumbai’) and these may be modelled as *madhyampadalopī* compounds. Taking into account various grammatical phenomenon related to the noun phrases, a detailed account of a noun phrase in English from Pāṇinian view point will also be presented.