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Contribution of the Kātantra system to the field of Sanskrit Grammar*

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Summary of the paper

Kātantra is one of the most popular systems of Sanskrit Grammar. The aphorisms were designed by Śarvavarma (1st A.D.) and it is the first Prakriyā treatise. It is believed to be more effective than Pāṇinian system for the learning of Sanskrit grammar. The simplification of the grammatical rules is the main aim of for designing the aphorisms of Kātantra. Being a first Prakriyā treatise, it has inspired the later grammarians to follow its methodology.

Introduction:

Kātantra is one of the systems of Sanskrit Grammar. As it is stated,

*Aindram candram kaśakṛtsnam kaumāram śākatāyaṇam |
Sārasvatam cāpīśalam śākalyam pāṇiniyakam |*²

Among these nine systems, Kaumāra stands for Kātantra system of Sanskrit grammar. Śarvavarma (1st century A.D.), a minister of the king Sātavāhana³, is said to be the profounder of this system. According to the story of the

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² Govindacharya, 'vaiyakaranasiddhantakaumudi' P. 7, Chaukhamba Surbharti Prakashan, Varanasi, 2013

³ Majumdar A.K., 'Concise History of Ancient India' P. 157, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1980

*Kāthasaritsāgara*⁴ of Somadeva and the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* of Kṣemendra, Śarvavarma had received the aphorisms directly from Kumar Kārtikeya; and hence it is known as Kaumāra = ‘*Kumārāṇām Idam Kaumāram*’. However this system could not get many followers. The successors of Śarvavarma who tried to develop this system are Durgācārya (7th century), the author of Kātantra sūtra-vṛtti and Acārya Merutuṅgasūri (14th century), the author of *Merutuṅgabālāvabodhavyākaraṇam*. K.V. Abhayankara informs that there are 28 commentaries on the sūtras of Kātantra.⁵ A few of them are published. They are Kātantra kaumudi of Govardhan (12th century), Kātantra candrikā of Hari Dikṣita (17th century) Kātantra pañjikā of Trilocanadāsa (11th century), etc.

Belvalkar in his systems of Sanskrit Grammar writes that ‘the name Kātantra, according to the commentators, means a short treatise or a handbook in other words in which the niceties of Pāṇini’s grammar have been dispensed with for the benefit of beginners’ but the learned author does not refer to the commentator who has said this and where. However he refers to the following verse

*Cāndasaḥ svalpamatayaḥśāstranantarataśca ye
 Īśvarā vyādhiniratasthālsyayutāśca ye |
 Vaṇiksasyādisamsaktā lokayātnādisusthitāḥ.
 Tesām kṣīrpam prabodhārtham-||*

This clearly states the following purposes: This grammar was meant for less intellectuals, ill or seek people, merchants, farmers etc, because they are unable to spent more time for their study. This system of grammar is also useful for those who want to study general rules of grammar which become helpful for the study of other treatises of different disciplines.

According to Weber this grammar was planned for those who wished to approach Sanskrit through Prākṛit, and that the Pāli grammar of Kācchāyana was based upon the Kātantra.

⁴ ‘Kathasaritsagar’ pp.11-19, Motilal Banarasidas Publication, Delhi, 1977

⁵ Shukla J.M. & Abhayankar K.V., ‘A Dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar’, pp.114-117, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1977

Kātantra

The word Kātantra is a combination of two words viz 'Kā' and 'tantra'. Tantra means a treatise and affix Kāis generally used in the sense of making something concise or small as it is clearly stated in the following verse;

Ajñātakutsite caiva sanjñāyāmanukampane.

Tdyuktanītāvalpatve hṛsve vācye kaḥ smṛtaḥ.

(Merutuṅgabālāvabodhavyākaraṇam 2-2-64 | 1)⁶

It is also known by Kālāpa or Kālāpaka, because the sūtras were written on the features of the peacock and those were read by Śarvavarma.⁷

Two types of Grammatical Texts: All the Grammatical texts after Pāṇini have been classified into two types viz (1) Prakaraṇa-krama and (2) Prakriyā-krama.⁸ The Prakaraṇa-krama is also known as Sūtra-krama. This classification is made on the formation as well as arrangement of the sūtras in the text. In the beginning, grammarians used to write texts in Prakaraṇa-krama, but later on they switched over to Prakriyā-krama.

Sūtrakrama or Prakaraṇakrama

In the sūtra-krama (order of the aphorisms), sequence plays a significant role. The Sūtras are positioned in such a way that the whole topic of discussion is covered in a single section, including the aphorisms of prohibition (Niṣedha-sūtras). To make the sequence more effective some technical terms are also introduced and used like Anuvṛtti, Atideśa-sūtra, etc. The *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini is the best example of the sūtra-krama type of text. In other words, these texts were written keeping in view the definition of Sūtra.

‘Svalpākṣarasandigdham saravad visvatomukham

Astobhamanavadyam ca sūtram sūtravidoviduḥ’⁹

⁶ Kansara N.M., ‘Merutuṅgabālāvabodhavyākaraṇam’ P. 19, Shri Arya-Jayakalyana Trust, Mumbai, 1998

⁷ For details see *Systems of Sanskrit Grammar* by Belvalkar S.K., P.69, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Varanasi, 2004

⁸ Tripathi J.L. & Malaviya S., ‘Kashika’, pp.27-29, Tara Printing Works, Varanasi, 1985

⁹ ‘Kavyamimasa’, P.102, Parshav Publication, Ahmedabad, 2008

Such is the style of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. As an example, the technical term 'It' (इत्) in the aphorisms 1/3/2-9¹⁰, is placed in such a way that it includes all rules at one place along with its Prohibited Rules (Niṣedha-sūtra). This term is placed in the first chapter while the area of its application is not confined to one chapter only but to the whole of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

Prakriyākrama

In due course of time, the grammarians like Śarvavarma, Dharmakīrti, Bhattojidikṣita and others felt the need of a proper arrangement which can help the beginners in understanding the grammatical rules easily. So they rearranged the aphorisms topic wise through which a student can get the knowledge of some Dhāturupa or Śabdarupa in a little time without going through the so called long procedure. Here all the aphorisms are presented at one place.

Not only this but at many places we find the readymade forms which can be applied directly. The aphorism जसि (का. 2/1/15), presents the rule for Nominative Plural. According to the gloss of this aphorism, we can directly apply the readymade case affix to the noun. Hence there is no need of the step wise application of sūtra. While for doing the same 08 aphorisms are required according to Pāṇini's grammar, it can be done only by one sūtra according to Kātantra.¹¹ This method is direct and does not consume much labour. The same is found in the other aphorisms of Kātantra like 2/1/14-24.¹² This technique has been maintained throughout the text and distinguishes the system of grammar from the other systems of grammar for the technique of brevity.

Another distinguished feature of the Kātantra system is that the aphorisms have been made simple, meaningful and clear. At some places two or more aphorisms are framed instead of one e.g. the sūtra 7/2/106 of *Aṣṭādhyāyī*

¹⁰ Mishra N., 'Aṣṭādhyāyī sutrapatha' P.4 Chaukamba Publishers, Varanasi, 1998

¹¹ स्वौजसमौट् । पा. 4-1-2 ।।, सुपः ।। पा. 1-4-103 ।।, चुट् ।। पा. 1-3-7 ।।, विभक्तिश्च ।। पा. 1-4-104 ।।, नविभक्तौतुस्माः ।। पा. 1-3-4 ।।, प्रथमयोः पूर्वसवर्णः ।। पा. 6-1-68 ।।, ससजुषोरुः ।। पा. 8-2-66 ।।, विरामोऽवसानम् ।। पा. 1-4-109 ।। & खरवसानयोर्विसर्जनीयः ।। पा. 8-2-15 ।।

¹² Kansara N.M., 'Merutuṅgabālāvabodhavyākaraṇam' P.9, Shri Arya-Jayakalyana Trust, Mumbai, 1998

(i.e.तदोःसःसावनन्त्योः) is explained by using two aphorisms viz सौसः&तस्यच ।। 2/3/32-33 ।।

Another notable feature of Kātantra is that the sūtras are very short. So they are very easy to remember. Moreover they don't create any confusion or doubt.

Secondary derivatives

While describing the rules for Secondary derivatives (तद्धित), Kātantra has omitted the laborious and tiring sequence of aphorisms. It directly provides the final form that can be attached to the word instantly. The aphorism of Pāṇini गोत्रेकुञ्जादिभ्यश्चक् । पा. 4-1-98 ।। explains that the affix चक् should be used after the word कुञ्ज, etc. In this, the affix च् is dropped according to the aphorism चुटू ।। पा. 1-3-7 ।।, the letter च् of the affix causes Vṛddhi due to तद्धितेष्वचामादेः ।। पा.7-2-117 ।। Then, the remaining फ् is substituted by आयन् by the sūtra आयनेयीनीयियः फढखच्छघांप्रत्ययादीनाम् ।। पा.7-1-2 ।। So, कुञ्ज+चक्+आयन्=कौञ्जायन्. Still this is not a complete word in order to make a word कौञ्जायन्ः; we need to add य by the sūtra व्रातचफयोरस्त्रियाम् ।। पा. 5-3-113 ।।

Such a lengthy functioning of secondary derivatives may become complicated to a beginner. So Kātantra accommodates all the rules in one and formulates the sūtra कुञ्जादेरेयण् ।। का. 2-6-3 ।। (The affix आयन् is applied to the names of कुञ्ज group and the affix ण्य (=य) is applied at the end except in plural as well as to a non-feminine word).

Another example is स्यत्र्यादेरेयण् ।। का. 2-6-4 ।। This aphorism suggests the direct application of the affix एयण् with the omission of ढ. Here, instead of five aphorisms of *Aṣṭādhyāyī* only one is made.¹³

Conclusion:

Though this Prakriyā-krama has some merit still it is not completely free from the drawbacks. The main aim of this methodology is to teach the student easily and in a short time. So the proper order of studying Grammar is not followed.

¹³ *Stribhyo dhak, dvayacah, itscaniyah, Subhradibhyascchah (Pāṇini 4/1/20-23) ayaneyiniyiyah phadhakchhaghgham pratyayadinam (Pāṇini 7/1/2)*

The sūtras were not comprehensible without the gloss. So the gloss was very necessary for clarification of the aphorisms. This has been felt even by Bhattoji and other grammarians. So their books accompany the gloss. However, the method was not completely successful and it betrayed the enthusiastic student for making them hard labour for remembering the sūtra as well as the vṛtti. The reason may be that the writers of the grammatical treatises have closely followed the intellectual tradition existing in their time. Even the texts of Sanskrit Poetics like Vakroktijīvita, Dvanyāloka, etc have followed the same method having both Kārikās and vṛttis.

It is helpful for them who are not much interested to study grammar systematically. They may study the required portion and then move to their other respective Śāstras.¹⁴

There is a common belief in the field of Sanskrit Grammar that Rupāvātāra of Dharmakīrti (11th century A.D.) is the first Prakriyā treatise, but this is not true. To my knowledge, Kātantra is the first Prakriyā treatise. Through the study of Kātantra of Śarvavarma (1st A.D.), we may conclude that it is the first Prakriyā treatise which has inspired the later grammarians to follow the methodology.

Thus we can conclude the paper with the view that the Kātantra system of grammar has made very significant contribution to the field of Sanskrit grammar.¹⁵

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<sup>14</sup> 'Systems of Sanskrit Grammar' P.68, Bharatiya Vidyaprakashan, Delhi, 2004