

SAMBANDHA AND ABHISAMBANDHA*

1.1. On the first page of his 1967 monograph *Word Order in Sanskrit and Universal Grammar*, J. F. Staal remarks: "The distinction which is relevant in the present context is that between *saṃbandha* 'the relation of one word to another within a sentence (as shown, e.g., by grammatical inflexion)' and *abhisambandha*, *ānupūrvya* or *ānupūrvī* 'the order or arrangement of words (as occurring in actual utterances)'.¹ This distinction could be specified within a general theory of language; in India it served to delimit the scope of the science of grammar or *vyākaraṇa* itself. For, though it is sometimes said that the Sanskrit grammarians were interested in grammar but not in syntax, it would be misleading to interpret this as asserting that they were interested in words (*pada*) and not in sentences (*vākya*) (cf. Renou 1960, 66; 1961, 129). It would however be correct to say that the Sanskrit grammarians were interested in *saṃbandha* and not in *abhisambandha*, and accordingly in grammatical relations but not necessarily in word order."

1.2. It is evident from this citation as well as his remarks in the following pages² that Staal attaches considerable importance to the distinction between *saṃbandha* and *abhisambandha*. In the present paper I wish to contend that no distinction of the kind Staal makes exists, that the distinction had no role in delimiting the scope of Grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) and that it is wrong to set up *abhisambandha* as a synonym of *ānupūrvī* and *ānupūrvya*.³

2.1. I do not know what the source of Staal's distinction is.⁴ The commonly used dictionaries of Sanskrit in general and of Sanskrit *śāstras* (the Vācaspatya, Śabda-kalpa-druma, Nyāya-kośa, Mīmāṃsā-kośa, etc.), particularly of Sanskrit grammar (Abhyankar, Renou), do not contain any observations that will support the distinction. True, the ordinary Sanskrit term *saṃbandha*, basically meaning 'binding

together, tying, connecting, relation,' can contextually mean 'grammatical relation, syntactic connection' and is naturally and frequently used in that sense, but no sense of *abhisaribandha* distinct from this sense of *saribandha* has been noticed by the compilers of dictionaries and *kośas*.

2.2. Nor has Staal pointed out any passages in which *saribandha* and *abhisaribandha* are juxtaposed and a distinction of their senses is indicated. If the two concepts were important, one would expect them to be set apart at least in a passage or two in the long and rich tradition of linguistic theorizing and observations for which India is justly famous among specialists. On the contrary, we find that while explaining his Trikāṇḍī K 1.67, *prāk sarjñinābhisaribandhāt sarjñā rūpa-padārthikā*, Bharṭṛ-hari (V 1.67) writes *yāvat sarjñinā sarjñā na sarībaddhā tāvan na sarjñīpadārthikā* and indicates that there is no significant difference between *abhisam + bandh* and *sam + bandh*. We also notice that Nāgeśa quite casually shortens Patañjali's phrase *yatheṣṭam abhisaribandhaḥ* to *yatheṣṭam saribandhaḥ* in Uddyota 1.1.58.

2.3. The contexts in which *abhisaribandha* or other derivatives of *abhisam + √bandh (badh)* occur do not support the distinction either. Whether one looks at the older uses such as *śiṣṭāñ śiṣṭābhisaribandhān mānino 'navamāninaḥ* (Mahā-bhārata 12.57.23) or *baijikād abhisaribandhāt* (Manu-smṛti 5.63) in non-technical contexts outside Grammar or at the occurrences in early commentarial literature of Grammar such as the Mahābhāṣya, B's Mahābhāṣya-ṭīkā or the Tripādī, and the Trikāṇḍī or Vākyapadīya, one finds *abhisaribandha* employed in the sense 'connection,' occasionally acquiring, on the strength of the context, a specific shade of meaning such as 'grammatical connection' or 'semantic connection.'⁵ In fact, in sentences such as *vyavāya-śabdasya pratyekam abhisaribandhaḥ* 'The word *vyavāya* is connected with each (word preceding it in the compound *aṭ-ku-pvāñ-num-vyavāye* of Pāṇini 8.3.6),' quoted in the St. Petersburg Wörterbuch, it is impossible to assign the sense 'word order' to *abhisaribandha*. Generation of an imagined clarificatory construction like *aṭ-vyavāye, ku-vyavāye, pu-vyavāye, āñ-vyavāye, num-vyavāye ca* is

not what we normally mean by “word order.” Such a generation amounts only to recognizing the intended relationships of words.

3.1. Perhaps Staal has inferred the distinction on the basis of two passages from Pa which are embedded in his presentation as follows:

P. 28: “We need not pay attention to the word order in the *sūtra*, says Patañjali, because: *neha prayoganiyama ārabhyate* ‘restrictions on usage are not here clung to.’ This he explains as follows: *saṃskṛtya saṃskṛtya padāny utsrjyante. teṣāṃ yatheṣṭam abhisambandho bhavati. tad yathā āhara pātram, pātram āhareti* ‘words are generated in accordance with grammatical rules, but their order [*abhisambandha*] is free, as in *āhara pātram* and *pātram āhara* “fetch the bowl”’ (ed. Kielhorn, I, 39, lines 18–9).”

P. 32: “. . . he [= Patañjali] quotes in support Kātyāyana’s vārtikā [→ °rttika] . . . *ānupūrvyeṇa saṃniviṣṭānāṃ yatheṣṭam abhisambandhaḥ śakyate kartum* ‘any desired order may be established between words arranged in a particular succession’ (ed. Kielhorn, I, 152, lines 24–5; quoted Renou 1957, 57⁶).

“The opponent raises a further objection: *na caitāny ānupūrvyeṇa saṃniviṣṭāni* ‘but these are not arranged in a particular succession’. To which the reply is: *anānupūrvyeṇāpi saṃniviṣṭānāṃ yatheṣṭam abhisambandho bhavati* ‘free word order may also be established between words not arranged in a particular succession’.”

3.2. Here, Staal does not tell us why an etymologically probable meaning like ‘connection’ (grammatical or semantic) of the word *abhisambandha* would not fit the context — why one has to accept ‘order’ as the meaning. Nor does he explain, in the case of the second passage, what *essential* difference there could be between grammatical or semantic connecting of words, on the one hand, and establishing “desired order . . . between words arranged in a particular succession,” on the other.

3.3. The context of the first passage is that of accounting for the order of words seen in Pāṇini’s rule *vrddhir ādaic* as Staal rightly explains; given Pāṇini’s usual practice, one expects the rule to read *ādaij vrddhiḥ*.

Pa’s words relevant to our discussion are: *prayoga-niyamārthaṃ tarhīdaṃ syāt vrddhi-śabdāt para ādaicaḥ prayoktavyā iti. neha prayoga-niyama ārabhyate. kiṃ tarhi. saṃskṛtya saṃskṛtya padāny utsrjyante. teṣāṃ yatheṣṭam abhisambandho bhavati. tad yathā āhara pātram, pātram āhareti*.

The only explanation of this passage that would make a contextually acceptable sense is: ‘Or, this (thought of Pāṇini) that *ādaic* are

to be employed after the word *vrddhi* may be for the purpose of restricting usage (i.e., for indicating to the reader that certain sequences are to be followed in the employment of derived expressions).⁷ [To this the response is:] Restriction on usage (or institution of a certain sequence) is not undertaken here. Sentence-usable words, which have undergone derivation, are released (made available) one after another. They come to be connected as desired as can be illustrated with *āhara pātram* and *pātram āhara*.

In other words, the point of the passage is not the general one that there is free word order in Sanskrit, but the rather specific one that free word order is presupposed in Pāṇini's grammar⁸ and hence the specific sequence in *vrddhir ādaic* cannot be used to infer that Pāṇini wanted to connote to his reader that the reader adhere to a specific sequence (or a set of specific sequences) in using the expressions the Aṣṭādhyāyī would derive. To attribute such an intention to Pāṇini would run counter to Pāṇini's presupposition.⁹ Hence, an explanation other than the one assuming a suggestive act of the described kind on the part of Pāṇini should be sought for the deviant order in *vrddhir ādaic*.¹⁰

3.4. If Pa's statement rested at asserting free word order in Sanskrit and did not make the further point that such freely ordered words come to be associated with each other as desired and that this is the way Pāṇini presupposes his grammar to function, Pa would have conceded the objector's point and accepted that the specific order seen in *vrddhir ādaic* has no purpose (is the result of a whim) and that Pāṇini has deviated from his usual practice for no reason.¹¹

3.5. The preceding discussion should serve to establish that 'order' is not contextually warranted as a translation of *abhisambandha* in the case of the first passage from Pa quoted by Staal. That *abhisambandha* cannot mean 'order' in the second passage has already been indicated (3.2).¹² If its juxtaposition in that passage is to be proper, it must be something different from *ānupūrvya* which has a well-established and etymologically justifiable sense of 'order, a certain sequence, a sequential arrangement,' etc. Staal (p. 32) too apparently recognizes this and attaches the sense 'word order in general' to *abhisambandha*

in the case of the second passage. Then, however, his initial statement declaring equivalence of *abhisambandha*, *ānupūrvī*, and *ānupūrvya* must be deemed to be ill-considered (see note 1). Also, the specific sense newly attached to *abhisambandha* does not fit the first MB passage. A statement of the form “Of the derived words, word order in general comes about as in *āhara pātram* and *pātram āhara*” either does not make sense or can only be taken to mean that a grammatical or semantic relationship comes about among the words delivered by the Aṣṭādhyāyī. Furthermore, if there is no evidence to support the understanding of *abhisambandha* as ‘order’ or ‘word order,’ there is even less evidence to support its understanding as ‘word order in general,’ unless “word order in general” is simply another way of conveying the notion ‘a grammatical or semantic connection.’

4.1. I suppose it is abundantly clear from the preceding paragraphs that no technical or grammatical distinction of any kind exists between *sambandha* and *abhisambandha* and that it is wrong to specify lack of interest in *abhisambandha* as something that had a delimiting influence on Grammar. It is more probable that the Sanskrit Grammarians, either beginning with Pāṇini or under the influence of Pāṇini, generally entertained a different notion of what Grammar was supposed to achieve, particularly about the kind of sentences Grammar was expected to derive (Aklujkar 1988: note 5), and that it is this notion which resulted in an absence of detailed and sustained studies of the phenomenon of word order.

4.2. The appearance of, and to some extent the preference for, *abhisambandha* when its equally non-technical colleague *sambandha* can convey its meaning seems to be due to the sensitivity which early Sanskrit authors had for the shades of meaning expressed by the *upasargas* or prefixes.

As the situation was probably perceived as one in which word ‘X’ turned to thing ‘x’ or word ‘Y’ for effecting a connection, it was perhaps felt that an addition of the prefix *abhi*, which indicates ‘facing’ or ‘looking in the direction of,’ was appropriate.

There is some evidence to this effect in Pa’s and B’s usage. A preference for *abhisam* + *bandh*, over the simpler *sam* + *bandh*, may

be detected in the following sentences which are concerned with situations of identification and in which a movement or turning of the signifier toward the signified seems to have been presumed:

nityo hy arthavatām arthair abhisambandhaḥ MB p. 1.7;

etad iti cānenāsyam evābhisambadhyate TP on MB p. 1.61, āhnika 4 p. 142;

yo go-śabdaḥ so 'yam piṇḍa ity abhisambandhe sati V 1.55,

prāk samjñinābhisambandhāt samjñā rūpa-padārthikā K 1.67,

so 'yam ity abhisambandho buddhyā prakramyate yadā K 2.40,

so 'yam ity abhisambandhād rūpam ekikṛtaṁ yadā K 2.128,

yenārthenābhisambaddham abhidhānaṁ prayujyate K 2.160,

śabdāntarābhisambandhenāgnir māṇavako, gaur vāhika iti V 2.251,

nāvaśyaṁ te 'bhisambaddhā śabdā jñeyena vastunā K 2.333,

yathaiva samudāya-sva-rūpasya samjñinābhisambandhaḥ V 2.356,

yadi samjñābhisambandhāt prāṇ natvaṁ tad alakṣaṇam / athordhvam abhisambandhād anityatvaṁ prasajyate // V 2.364,

vrddhyādīnāṁ ca śāstre 'smiñchaktyavaccheda-lakṣaṇaḥ / akrtrimo

'bhisambandho viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyavat // K 2.369,

samjñayā . . . samudāyo 'bhisambadhyate V 2.283, etc.

NOTES

* The main point of this article was briefly stated at the Sanskrit syntax session of the South Asia Language Analysis conference held at Ithaca and Syracuse in June 1987.

The few abbreviations employed in the body of the article are explained in the bibliography.

¹ Contradicting what he says here or extricating himself from a possible charge of contradiction, Staal makes the following remark on p. 32, while discussing Patañjali 1.1.58 (p. 1.152 lines 24—5): “The term *ānupūrvya* is here used to refer to a given particular succession of words; the term *abhisambandha* for word order in general . . .” As I point out below in section 3.5., the distinction which Staal makes here between *ānupūrvya* and *abhisambandha* is as arbitrary as their synonymy which he proclaims initially.

² “Taxonomy, in this sense, corresponds to the Sanskrit *abhisambandha*, and structural linguistics can in this sense be characterized by its insistence upon *abhisambandha*.” P. 2.

“ . . . the distinction Du Marsais made between *syntaxe* and *construction* corresponds to the distinction of the Sanskrit grammarians between *sambandha* and *abhisambandha*.” P. 13.

“ . . . the distinction between the *relation* of words in a sentence (*sambandha*), which certainly belongs to the deep structure, and the order of words of a sentence (*abhisambandha*), which may belong to the surface structure.” P. 30.

³ I have no difference of opinion regarding the other observations made by Staal in the passage quoted at the beginning.

⁴ One of Staal's references on p. 32 may be taken by some as suggesting that Renou 1957: 57 is his authority for the distinction. However, as I point out in note 6, the distinction is not found in Renou and Staal's reference should be taken literally the way he makes it — as simply stating that the passage quoted by him is also quoted by Renou or as indicating at the most that he became aware of the passage through Renou's quotation.

⁵ Important MB passages containing *abhisambandha* are discussed below. The word is found in TP āhnika 1 p. 12, āhnika 4 p. 142, āhnika 7 pp. 303, 305, 306; and in TK V 1.55, K 1.67, K 2.17, V 2.17, K 2.40, V 2.40, V 2.128, K 2.160, K 2.186, V 2.204, V 2.223, K 2.246, V 2.251, V 2.270, K 2.329, K 2.333, V 2.356, V 2.364, K 2.369, V 2.383, V 2.391, K 2.432, K 2.441, K 2.460, K 3.75, and K 3.163. Not to belabour the point, only a few of these will be quoted at the end of this article.

⁶ The source referred to here is Louis Renou's *Terminologie grammaticale du Sanskrit*, Paris: Librairie Ancienne, Honoré Champion, Éditeur. In it, Renou explains *abhisambandha* as "connexion (d'un mot avec telle notion ou avec tel autre mot dans la phrase, etc.)" and translates the MB passage reproduced by Staal as "pour des choses qui se présentent dans un ordre successif, la connexion entre elles peut être faite arbitrairement." From this, it is evident that Staal's understanding of *abhisambandha* is not derived from Renou. See note 4.

⁷ (a) That is, the rule *vrddhir ādaic* would achieve *prayoga-niyama* by setting an example of itself, by being a *jñāpaka*, that is, by being suggestive, through its formal peculiarity, of a general principle presupposed by Pāṇini in his grammar.

(b) Kaiyaṭa and his commentators (Nāgeśa and Annam-bhaṭṭa) do not reveal how exactly they interpreted the first sentence. They do not use any word like *jñāpaka* in their explanations which would support my explanation. The TP is unavailable for this portion. However, if Pa's remark is not interpreted in the way I suggest and is taken to mean 'Or, this (*vrddhir ādaic* or the specific order of words in *vrddhir ādaic*) would be for the purpose of restricting usage through a statement of the form '*ādaic* should be used after the word *vrddhi*,' then it would not be even a tentative answer to the specified problem. If understood as applicable to the *sūtra* itself, it would amount to simply pointing out what we already know, namely that *ādaic* is used after *vrddhi* in the *sūtra*; if understood as applicable to a sentence of the object language, what would be the justification for making a regulation like the following: 'If one wishes to use *vrddhi* and *ādaic* in a sentence, one should put *ādaic* after *vrddhi*.'? Is the *pūrva-pakṣin* so unsophisticated as to entertain the possibility that Pāṇini may write rules about individual sentences? How would what he says be even an answer to the problem pointed out in the case of a sentence of the metalanguage? Even if it were to be applicable to a rule, would it not amount to an assertion without any supporting argument, to a restatement of the problem itself?

(c) The discussion in (b) should suffice to establish that the following translation by Abhyankar and Shukla (1987), and other similar translations, are not likely to be correct: "Well, then, the present *sūtra* (*vrddhirādaic*) can be said to be for regulating the use of the words '*vrddhi* and *ādaic* in such a way that the words *āt* and *aic* i.e. the vowels *ā*, *ai* and *au* must be used after the word *vrddhi* and not in the other way, i.e. before the word *vrddhi*."

⁸ This does not mean either that the freedom is absolute or that there are no preferred word order patterns.

⁹ As deduced by his commentators from a study of the Aṣṭādhyāyī.

¹⁰ A corollary of what I state here is that *āhara pātraṁ pātram āhara* is primarily not an illustration of free word order in Sanskrit but of the peculiarity of generation of sentence constituents in Pāṇini's grammar — of the thesis that Pāṇini presupposes free order, that in Pāṇini's view variation in the placing of words has no bearing (of course, within limits) on words getting connected to each other.

¹¹ While stating that prescription of particular sequences of derived words is not undertaken in Pāṇini's grammar, Pa must presuppose that there *can* be such a prescription — that there *can* be *prayoga-niyama*. He must, therefore, be said to have noticed — and this is no great surprise or an advance over his predecessors — the phenomenon of specific ordering of words. His comment cannot, therefore, be interpreted to mean that, in his view, there is no preferred or common word order in Sanskrit.

¹² Cf. *pāṭha-kramād ārtha-kramo baliyān iti yatheṣṭam atrābhisarṁbandhaḥ*. Kaiyaṭa 1.1.58, that is, on our second passage here.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATIONS

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- Aklujkar, Ashok: 1988, "Some Theoretical Observations on Word Order in Sanskrit", forthcoming.
- B = Bhartr̥hari. Trikāṇḍī or Vākyapadīya. I have reproduced the text of the Vṛtti from my critical edition (under preparation) of the TK. Those wishing to verify my references to the V prior to the publication of my edition should consult the editions by K. A. Subramania Iyer: (a) Vākyapadīya of Bhartr̥hari with the Vṛtti and the Paddhati of Vṛṣabha-deva. Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute. 1966. Deccan College Monograph Series 32. (b) The Vākyapadīya of Bhartr̥hari, Kāṇḍa II with the Commentary of Puṇya-rāja and the Ancient Vṛtti. Delhi, etc: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983. I have followed the enumeration of *kārikās* in: Bhartr̥hari's Vākyapadīya, Die Mūla-kārikās nach den Handschriften herausgegeben und mit einem Pāda-Index versehen. Ed. Wilhelm Rau. Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner GMBH. 1977. Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XLII, 4. Hence the numbers in my edition and those in the editions by Subramania Iyer do not always match. However, they are not far removed from each other. See also "TP" below.
- K = kārikā. See B.
- MB = Mahā-bhāṣya. See Pa.
- Pa = *Patañjali. Vyākaraṇa-mahā-bhāṣya*, ed. F. Kielhorn. 1880—5. Revised third ed. K. V. Abhyankar. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Staal, J. F.: 1967, *Word Order in Sanskrit and Universal Grammar* Dordrecht-Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company. Foundations of Language Supplementary Series, vol. 5.
- TK = Trikāṇḍī. See B.

TP = Tripādī or Mahā-bhāṣya-ṭīkā, published under the title Mahābhāṣya-dīpikā of Bhartṛhari. Eds. K. V. Abhyankar and V. P. Limaye. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. Part I and II, 1967—70. Postgraduate and Research Department Series. No. 8.

V = Vṛtti, See B.

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