

The Definition of the Nominal Stem (*prātipadika*): the Sanskrit Grammarians' Theory of Word and Meaning.

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In ancient India, the desire to preserve the sacred language of Sanskrit brought about an extremely high level of analysis of the language, and with it linguistic philosophy. The basis of the Sanskrit grammarians' linguistics was the grammatical system of Pāṇini, which rigorously formulated the relation between word and meaning. In the *Mahābhāṣya*, the great commentary on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the author Patañjali (2BC.) directs his attention several times to the philosophical issues of language, and discusses them using the grammarians' analytic approach. For example, in the *Mahābhāṣya* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.2.45, we encounter a discussion about whether the nominal stem (*prātipadika*) is meaningful or not, and also an analysis of the function of phonemes. The nominal stem is defined by Pāṇini as the meaningful unit of language, which is neither the verbal stem nor the affix (*arthavad adhātur apratyayaḥ prātipadikam*); and both the commentators, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, show us how each word in the definition fills the domain of the nominal stem without deviation. Inevitably, we find here the various categories of speech, which function differently even though all of them are broadly speaking assumed as a combination of language components (*samudāya*, *vākya*, *samāsa* and *saṃghāta*). We also see the problem of whether particles (*nipāta*) that lack meaning can be excluded from the domain of the meaningful nominal stem when they are added to the stem. According to *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 4.1.1 if a unit is defined as a nominal stem, it must be followed by a case-ending. Careful attention is therefore paid to its range. The concept of the indivisible meaning-bearing unit of language is refined as a specific philosophy of language, which the later grammarians refer to as the *sphoṭa* theory. Therefore this rule provides us with an important clue in retracing the development of the philosophy of the grammarians.

In this presentation, I shall first introduce Patañjali's definition of the nominal stem, and then try to show how this became the basis of the philosophy of language developed by the later grammarians.