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WHAT IS *ASIDDHA*?(published in: *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 70 (1989), 309-311)

In a recent issue of this journal (vol. 68, 1987), Paul Kiparsky, whose valuable contributions to Pāṇinian studies are well known, did me the honour of publishing an article meant to clarify an issue about which I had been critical (1984), and to persuade me that his position is correct after all. The issue at stake is the correct interpretation of the word *asiddha* as it is used (three times) in Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. Much as I appreciate Kiparsky's clarifications, they have not made me change my mind; they have rather convinced me that some clarifications from my side seem necessary — or should I say that I may need even more clarifications?

I do not accept Kiparsky's interpretation, primarily for two reasons:

- (i) Kiparsky's interpretation is far removed from the literal sense of *asiddha*. This by itself does not prove that Pāṇini did not accept Kiparsky's interpretation, but it raises doubts.
- (ii) Kiparsky's interpretation is not able to account for a set of straightforward derivations, which pose no problem in my simpler interpretation.

Ad (i):

Kiparsky defines *asiddha* on p. 297:

- (1) A is *asiddha* w.r.t. B = where A is relevant to B, A does not take effect before B.

The literal translation of *asiddha* is 'not having taken effect', and this is the interpretation which I have proposed (1980) and still maintain. The second part of Kiparsky's definition — 'A does not take effect before B' — corresponds to this literal translation. But the additional phrase 'where A is relevant to B' is disturbing. We shall consider below how Kiparsky defines *relevant*. At present it suffices to note that this phrase changes the sense of *asiddha* (and correspondingly of *siddha*) to such an extent that Kiparsky can formulate his 'single generalized ordering principle' as follows (p. 296):

- (2) A rule is *siddha* w.r.t. all rules.

Here *siddha* does not have the sense 'having taken effect', as indeed it couldn't. In other words, Kiparsky does not use the words *siddha* and [310] *asiddha* in anything like their proper sense. This casts doubts on his interpretation, precisely because the literal sense of *asiddha* leads to completely satisfactory results, more satisfactory than Kiparsky's alternative, as I will explain presently.

Ad (ii):

Kiparsky defines *siddha* as follows:

- (3) A is *siddha* w.r.t. B = where A is relevant to B, A takes effect before B.

The term *relevant* is defined on p. 296:

- (4) Rule A is *relevant* to rule B w.r.t. a form F = the result of applying A and B to F in that order is different from the result of applying A and B to F simultaneously.

Consider now the derivation of *vakti*. At the stage

vac+ti

two rules apply: 8.2.30 (*coḥ kuḥ*) and 8.4.40 (*stoḥ ścunā ścuḥ*). We can distinguish three cases:

- a. Both rules take effect simultaneously: the result is *vak+ci*.
- b. 8.2.30 takes effect first, after which the conditions for applying 8.4.40 are no longer present; the result is *vak+ti*.
- c. 8.4.40 takes effect first, then 8.2.30; result: *vak+ci*.

According to definition (4) above, 8.2.30 is *relevant* to 8.4.40 w.r.t. the form *vac+ti*. The reverse is not true: 8.4.40 is not relevant to 8.2.30 w.r.t. the form *vac+ti*.

According to Kiparsky, the right order in this derivation would have been given by the *siddha*-principle, i.e., (2) above. It would have been, but it isn't, for 8.2.30 and 8.4.40 are part of the Tripādī, where the *siddha*-principle is not valid. In the Tripādī a subsequent rule is *asiddha* w.r.t. an earlier rule; therefore, 8.4.40 is *asiddha* w.r.t. 8.2.30. What does this yield?

We apply definition (1):

- (1') 8.4.40 is *asiddha* w.r.t. 8.2.30 = where 8.4.40 is relevant to 8.2.30, 8.4.40 does not take effect before 8.2.30.

But 8.4.40 is **not relevant** to 8.2.30 w.r.t. the form *vac+ti*. This means, in accordance with Kiparsky's definitions, that the *asiddhatva* of 8.4.40 w.r.t. 8.2.30 **implies no order of taking effect** in *vac+ti*. In other words, we are here abandoned both by the '*siddha*-principle' and by the '*asiddha*-principle'.

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It will be clear that the little phrase ‘where A is relevant to B’ in the definition of *asiddha* (1) spoils the derivation of *vakti*. If we drop it, we come closer to the dictionary sense of *asiddha* (and to the interpretation offered by me), and the derivation of *vakti* will be saved.

Kiparsky might argue that Pāṇini somehow overlooked the derivation of *vakti* and similar cases. Or he may try to refine his definitions even further so as to account for *vakti* too. As a philologist I cannot but be wary. Why bother with an artificial interpretation which doesn’t fit all the facts, where there is a natural and straightforward one which does?

Kiparsky’s reasons for pursuing the alternative course are clear enough: he wishes to wring out of the term *siddha* a sense which the dictionaries are unable to provide. There is nothing against this in principle. It is only unfortunate that in the case of *asiddha* — the term actually used by Pāṇini — this effort leads to no better explanation of the facts; indeed, it is not able to account for as simple and straightforward a derivation as that of *vakti*.

If Kiparsky wishes to continue his efforts to convince me, he should explain (i) how his theory accounts for the derivation of *vakti*, (ii) why I should accept an interpretation of *asiddha* that deviates from the literal sense of this term, when the literal sense yields a better result.

References:

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