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Remarks on Negation through the Ages or How Should We Look at Sanskrit Grammatical Tradition?

ABSTRACT: The tradition of Sanskrit grammatical school is viewed as having three founding fathers: Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, the latter of whom was given the position of the highest authority. Patañjali's interpretation of Pāṇini's grammar was supposed to be final, infallible and became a go-to in the following centuries. There are numerous instances, however, where Patañjali's interpretation of Pāṇini's rules is far from perfect and complicates, rather than simplifying, described procedures. These interpretations are further modified as the school of Vyākaraṇa develops under the influence of other philosophical trends. This article discusses selected examples of the phenomenon of negation to demonstrate the evolution in their explications over the centuries in the school of Vyākaraṇa. It attempts to answer the question whether we should, and can, look at Pāṇinian tradition as a whole; whether these different interpretations should be viewed as mistakes or innovations and a sign of independent thinking.

KEYWORDS: negation, negative compounds, Sanskrit grammar, *vyākaraṇa*, Navya-Vyākaraṇa, Pāṇini

1. Introduction

The Sanskrit grammatical tradition is sometimes looked at as a whole, with its foundations set by Pāṇini in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (4th century BCE) which were developed, or elaborated on, in the following centuries; the foundations always held as a benchmark and referred to when in need to support the line of argumentation. When we take a closer look, however, at different interpretations of various linguistic phenomena described by Pāṇini presented already by his commentators Kātyāyana (3rd century BCE) and Patañjali in the *Mahābhāṣya* (2nd century BCE), we will see that they do not always precisely explain the intentions behind the original text. They seem to deviate from the original application of Pāṇini's rules or concentrate on selected aspects in their understanding. The present article aims to take a look at a few selected passages related to the topic of negation, more specifically negative compounds (*nañsamāsa*) to sketch how the originally very straightforward formal take on a linguistic phenomenon transformed and was elaborated on in later centuries; how the initially morphological analysis gave way to the focus on the semantic and pragmatic aspect of such formations to finally delve into the issue of verbal cognition. Neither the analysis nor the selected passages aim to be exhaustive; what they intend to show is how, based on a widely discussed forms in literature, the interpretation of certain expressions and passages developed over the centuries and what layers were added onto them.

2. Simplicity at its finest—negation

Negation in the Sanskrit grammatical tradition was classified as either *prasajyapraṭiṣedha* ('negation (subsequent to tentatively) applying') and *paryudāsapraṭiṣedha* ('limitational negation', Cardona 1967: 34), which roughly corresponds to predicate versus term negation in western tradition. Although, it needs to be said that while *paryudāsapraṭiṣedha* can be found only in compounded forms (affixal negation), *prasajyapraṭiṣedha* can be expressed through both compounded (*samasta*)

and uncompounded (*asamasta*) forms.¹ It has often been assumed that in the former case the meaning of such a negative expression (or a negative particle) is that of *bheda* (difference), while in the latter (*prasajya*) the meaning is pure absence (*abhāva*) where provisional acceptance of an operation is required for it to be denied at a later stage. Negative compounds were given a lot of attention in grammatical literature in India, particularly because of their complex semantic structure. In Pāṇini's grammar, however, they are nothing if not simple and clear. Pāṇini introduces negative compounds in one rule:

P. 2.2.6 *nañ* | [The negative particle] *nañ* [combines with a syntactically connected nominal *pada* to form a *tatpuruṣa* compound].

This *sūtra* unequivocally classifies *nañsamāsas* as a determinative type of compound, in which the former member qualifies, in other words specifies, the latter. There is no room for interpretation here as to the type of compound or the relationship between its members; the nominative case of *nañ* indicates that the particle serves as a subordinate element (*upasarjana*). There is no semantic analysis though either; Pāṇini approaches affixal negation from the morphological perspective. What we could deduce from the ordering of the rules in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is that both items in a compound stand in apposition as in *karmadhāraya* sub-type of *tatpuruṣa* compounds.² What this rule also tells us then is that despite being an *avyaya* (indeclinable), negation does not form adverbial compounds (*avyayībhāva*). It consequently guides us to further instructions, according to which *nañ* can be subject to *n*-deletion (P. 6.3.73 *nalopo nañah* | “There is the

¹ The particle *nañ* “can be construed with the nominal following it in the compound, or it can be construed with a verb” (Cardona 1967: 34).

² I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for bringing this to my attention. As Joshi and Roodbegen point out, however, from the semantic point of view, treating *nañsamāsas* as *karmadhāraya* is difficult because two members of a compound do not, traditionally, refer to the same entity. While the second member points to a Brahmin, the negative particle is said to refer to a Kshatriya (Joshi and Roodbegen 1973: 70).

deletion of *n* [of the negative particle] *nañ* [before the second member of a compound]”) before consonants (e.g. *abrāhmaṇa*) and potential *nuṭ*-insertion (P. 6.3.74 *tasmān nuḍaci* | “[The augment] *nuṭ* is inserted after that [*nañ* which goes through deletion of its *n*] before a vowel”) before vowels (e.g. *aneka*). Pāṇini’s treatment of negative compounds in this rule is really straightforward and does not delve into potential semantic issues we might encounter while analysing such forms.³

In the centuries following Pāṇini we can see a number of turning points when negation got reinterpreted along new lines and the concept of absence was investigated from different angles, often under the influence of other philosophical schools.

3. Patañjali and his take on compounding—turning point 1

Discussion on the role of negation in the meaning of *nañsamāsa*s started with Patañjali and his interpretation of compounds in general. While Pāṇini’s classification of compounded forms was based on various criteria ranging from formal through morpho-syntactic to semantic, Patañjali concentrated on the meaning of individual members and their contribution to the final outcome of the compounding process. He introduced the concept of semantic headedness (*arthaprādhānya*) and described compounds based on semantic predominance of their members. He stated the following:

iha kaścīd samāsaḥ pūrvapadārthapradhānaḥ kaścīd uttarapadārthapradhānaḥ kaścīd anyapadārthapradhānaḥ kaścīd ubhayapadārthapradhānaḥ | pūrvapadārthapradhāno 'vyayībhāvaḥ | uttarapadārthapradhānas tatpuruṣaḥ | anyapadārthapradhāno bahuvrīhiḥ

³ I am omitting the case of *asamarthasamāsa*s, in which an outside word has a relation with the subordinate member of a compound thus making the picture more complicated. The examples of such compounds are *āsrāddhabhojin* (‘a person that does not eat during *śrāddha* ceremonies’) or *asūryampaśya* (‘a person never seeing the sun’). For more details on this topic refer to Gillon 1992, Joshi and Roodbergen 1996 and Vergiani 1994.

| *ubhayapadārthapradhāno dvandvaḥ* | (VMbh 1: I.376.24-377.3 on A. 2.1.6)⁴

Here some compound has the meaning of the former word as predominant, some has the meaning of the latter word as predominant, some has the meaning of the external/other word as predominant and some has the meaning of both words as predominant. [A compound that] has the meaning of the former word as predominant is an *avyayībhāva*. **[A compound that] has the meaning of the latter word as predominant is a *tatpuruṣa*.** [A compound that] has the meaning of the external/other word as predominant is a *bahuvrīhi*. [A compound that] has the meaning of both words as predominant is a *dvandva*.

When we consider therefore the case of *nañsamāsa*, we see that according to Patañjali, its second member is not only morphologically, but also, or most importantly, semantically predominant. This interpretation is significant because it became a benchmark for further analysis. It prompted questions that Pāṇini had never intended to answer or even ask; or to put it differently, they were auxiliary to the original formal classification he had proposed in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

Let us examine an example of a negative compound which is extensively discussed in literature to see what dilemmas this change in approach prompted.⁵ Patañjali analyses the example of *abrāhmaṇa* ('a non-Brahmin'), comparable to other typical *tatpuruṣa* compounds, such as *rājapuruṣa* ('a royal servant'), where the initial member specifies, qualifies, the latter. When the qualifier is a particle which

⁴ The emphasis in this and all the following quotes are mine. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Patañjali's semantic take on headedness could be viewed as the extension of the implications of Pāṇini's notion of *upasarjana*. I think the issue requires further research into various types of compounds; it has already been partially tackled by Mocci 2023 and Pontillo 2003.

⁵ It should be mentioned that there are various examples of negative compounds, some of which could and, probably should, be interpreted slightly differently. The basic principles and the changes in interpretation over the centuries still apply, however, so we can safely say that the discussed example is representative of a bigger picture.

signifies absence or non-existence, however, the qualifier–qualificand relation between the two words becomes problematic. While in *rājapuruṣa* the man (*puruṣa*) gets specified by the king (*rāja*), yet the compound still refers to a person, what happens in *abrāhmaṇa* is the negation of a Brahmin, a Brahmin becomes non-existent, but the compound does denote some person nonetheless. There is no problem on the morphological level; semantically, however, it is not entirely clear. This is how Patañjali explains the problem.

athavā punar astūttarapadārthapradhānaḥ | nanu cuktam abrāhmaṇam ānayet ukte brāhmaṇamātrasyānayanam prāpnoti | naiṣa doṣaḥ | idaṃ tāvad ayaṃ praṣṭavyaḥ – atheha rājapuruṣam ānayet ukte puruṣamātrasyānayanam kasmān na bhavati? asty atra viśeṣaḥ | raja viśeṣakah prayujyate tena viśiṣṭasyānayanam bhavati | iḥāpi tarhi nañ viśeṣakah prayujyate tena viśiṣṭasyānayanam bhaviṣyati | kah punar asau? nīrvṛt-tapadārthakah | (VMBh 2: 669.3–670.20)

Alternatively, let it be that [a compound] has the latter member as predominant. But has it not been said that when [a sentence] ‘**Fetch a non-Brahmin**’ is uttered, it would result in fetching just a Brahmin. This is not a fault. This is indeed what should be asked—in this case then, when [a sentence] ‘Fetch a king’s man’ is uttered, how come just a man is fetched? Here is the difference. [The word] *rājan* is used as a qualifier so there is fetching [of a man] specified by it. **Here as well then nañ is used as a qualifier and there will be fetching [of a Brahmin] specified by it. What is that? It is [a Brahmin] whose object-meant/meaning has been removed.**

Despite the fact that in Pāṇini’s classification negative compounds are most definitely included in the *tatpuruṣa* group, which Patañjali ultimately accepts as well, the possibility of other types of compounds is also discussed in the *Mahābhāṣya*. The semantic approach to compounds, summarised above in Patañjali’s division based on semantic predominance (*padārthapradhānya*), creates a possibility to interpret such expressions as *abrāhmaṇa* in various ways. Firstly,

we can accept *uttarapadārthaprādhānya* (predominance of the latter element) and read the compound as referring a Brahmin that is non-existent, which is the chosen interpretation in the tradition. Secondly, we can opt for *pūrvapadārthaprādhānya* (predominance of the former element), which places the emphasis on negation and can be interpreted as absence residing in a Brahmin,⁶ in other words treat absence as a qualificand in need for specification—what is it that we have absence of? Finally, we can interpret this compound along the lines of *anyapadārthaprādhānya* (predominance of the other/external element) and establish the meaning of a Kshatriya as dominant because this is what usage (*vyavahāra*) points to. The word *abrāhmaṇa* can also be used with reference to a Kshatriya as a result of a mistake/doubt (*saṁdeha*) or wrongful instruction (*durupadeśa*).

jātihīne saṁdehād durupadeśāc ca brāhmaṇaśabdo vartate | saṁdehāt tāvat—gauram śucyācāram piṅgalaṁ kapilakeśam drṣṭvādhyavasyati brāhmaṇo 'yam iti | tataḥ paścād upalabhate nāyam brāhmaṇo 'brāhmaṇo 'yam iti | tatra saṁdehāc ca brāhmaṇaśabdo vartate, jātikṛtā cārthasya nivṛttiḥ | VMBh 2: 674.6–675.2.

In the case of a person of low birth the word *brāhmaṇa* is used as a result of a doubt or wrong instruction. [Let us see the example of it being] a result of a mistake first—having seen a person that is light (skinned?), of pure conduct, having red and brownish hair, a person determines that ‘this is a Brahmin’. Then afterwards they realise that it is not a Brahmin, [they say,] ‘this is a non-Brahmin’. Therefore, as a result of a mistake the word *brāhmaṇa* is used and the cessation of this meaning is caused by a [person’s] descent.⁷

⁶ The expression can also be interpreted as referring to a person that does not exist as a Brahmin. See Joshi and Roodbergen 1973: 72.

⁷ Patañjali proceeds to explain the case of *durupadeśa*, which I omit here for the reasons of space, but the structure of the argument is identical. An assumption is made as to the identity of a person as a Brahmin which is subsequently corrected and we are observing the cessation (*nivṛtti*) of the original meaning.

As will be shown in subsequent paragraphs, this notion of mistake or wrongful cognition became the key feature in the analysis of negative compounds for Sanskrit grammarians.

4. Bhartṛhari (5th century CE) and his secondary existence—turning point 2

There is a gap in the sources pertaining to Vyākaraṇa after Patañjali; the next grammarian whose work was preserved is Bhartṛhari and his *Vākyapadīya* (5th century CE), in which he develops the notions hinted at in the *Mahābhāṣya*. In his very detailed analysis of the meaning and application of the negative particle he points to the meaning of *kṣatriya* that is understood when the compound *abrāhmaṇa* is used. The novelty that Bhartṛhari introduces is ‘secondary/metaphorical existence’ (*upacārasattā*), which comes to life when we talk about negation.

kṣatriyādaṁ padaṁ kṛtvā buddhiḥ sattāntarāśrayā |
jātyā bhinnāṁ tataḥ sattāṁ prasaktāṁ apakarṣati || (VP 3.14.262)

An idea based on **some other existence** is first applied (by mistake) to *kṣatriya* and the like and [when the negative particle is used], it removes the existence applied to something different from that based on a universal.

Bhartṛhari stresses that the entire process of negation of objects and the comprehension of uttered expressions happens in our brains. Treating negation as an attribute to the following noun, which ultimately means qualifying something existent with non-existence, can be problematic only in reality; on a linguistic level, however, it is perfectly understandable.

buddher viśayatam prāpte śabdād arthe pratīyate |
pravṛttir vā nivṛttir vā śrutyā hy artho 'nuśajyate || (VP 3.14.280)

In regard to what has been determined by the mind, one understands from a word its existence and non-existence (lit. activity and cessation). The meaning is attached to the word/what is heard.

This *kārikā* points to the fact that the ontological status of an object denoted by a word is irrelevant as we can express linguistically both its existence and the lack thereof.⁸ This potential for expressing contradictory aspects of being can be traced to Patañjali's explanation of *padārthanivṛtti* (the cessation of meaning) mentioned above, where he compares the use of the negative particle to a lamp illuminating the room and bringing different features of it to our attention, yet not creating the reality. In a similar fashion, *nañ* seems to reveal the non-existent aspect of a Brahmin in *abrāhmaṇa*.⁹ We can also see the remnants of Patañjali's wrongful cognition, mistake or faulty instructions given serving as the reason behind using negative expressions in the first place.

asamyagupadeśād vā nimittāt samśayasya vā
śabdaprayatīti na tv asti loṣṭādiṣu viparyayāt || (VP 3.14.281)

Either through faulty instruction or through some cause of doubt,
 a word is applied [to a wrong object]. It is not applied to a clod of earth and the like because of contradiction/opposition.

This last *karikā* is interpreted by later commentators in terms of superimposition (*āropa*) of concepts. Even though Bhartṛhari does not use the terms *āropa*, or its synonyms, with reference to negation, we can see how such a take on this passage can be justified. The similarity between the objects/notions in question is also emphasised

⁸ This emphasis on linguistic operations taking place in our minds with no actual reference to physical reality was discussed at length by Patañjali at various places in the *Mahābhāṣya*, for example in the context of substitution. See *vt.* 13–14 on A. 1.1.56; Joshi and Roodbergen 1990: 84–85. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing me in the direction of this particular passage.

⁹ See also Candotti and Pontillo 2015: 97–98.

as a prerequisite for superimposition to take place. Bhartṛhari prefers to use the term *upacāra* (secondary/metaphorical meaning) and *upacaryate* (it is used metaphorically) to describe the cases such as *abrāhmaṇa* (or *aneka* as in the following passage), but he seems to have focused on the error as the basis for using negative expressions in the first place.

brāhmaṇatvaṃ yathāpannā nañyuktāḥ kṣatriyadayah |
dvitvādiṣu tathaikatvaṃ nañyogād upacaryate || (VP 3.14.285)

Just like *kṣatriya* etc. have brahminhood associated with them when they are used with *nañ*, in the same way unity is metaphorically used in the meanings of two etc. from the connection with *nañ*.

Bhartṛhari's analysis of negation and especially negative compounds is strongly rooted in the earlier tradition and builds on Patañjali's notion of headedness. It does, however, introduce novel concepts, which form a foundation for further ideas developed by the school of Vyākaraṇa and finally solidified by Navya-Vyākaraṇa. Raising the discussion on negation to a more philosophical level creates a bridge between the earliest and latest grammatical tradition, and drifts further apart from the original formalism of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

5. Grammarians of the 10th–11th century and their superimposition—turning point 3

The turn of the second millennium CE sees further development in the semantics of negative compounds and negation in general. Different commentators composing at that time exhibit similar ideas as to how negative expressions should be understood. What we are also observing then is their increasing focus on the process of cognition behind negative terms rather than pure morphological or morphosyntactic analysis. They are not discussing the meaning per se, as that is contextually determined and does not require explanation, but attempt

to describe how the understanding of said meaning happens. Despite evident similarities in their approach, the three grammarians whose views will be discussed below also introduce their individual ideas to the problem of negation.

5.1 Kaiyaṭa in the *Pradīpa* on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*

In his commentary *Pradīpa* on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* when discussing the classification of negative compounds, Kaiyaṭa goes a little further. In his opinion, all three options presented by Patañjali, namely the predominance of the meaning of the first (*pūrvapadārthāprādhānya*), second (*uttarapadārthāprādhānya*) or other (*anyapadārthāprādhānya*) word, are equally valid; when it comes to semantics, we could choose at will, because there are complications with either solution. The reason why the second option is preferable is simplicity; it poses the fewest problems with interpretation.¹⁰ Kaiyaṭa does not refer to Pāṇini's technical classification to support his standpoint but instead he focuses on semantic headedness within a compound. He also recognises that in the case of *abrāhmaṇa* there are three elements at play: a Brahmin (core meaning); his absence (*a-*) and a warrior (*kṣatriya*) that the compound denotes. Kaiyaṭa resorts to the notion of superimposition (*āropa*), according to which one concept is imposed on another; it is subsequently removed in the case of *nañsamāsa* and this process of superimposition is revealed by the use of the particle.

nañviśiṣṭasyeti | āropitabrāhmaṇyaśya kṣatriyāder ity arthaḥ | kaḥ punar aśv ity | bhāvābhāvayor virodhān nañviśiṣṭo brāhmaṇārtho nopapadyate iti bhāvaḥ | nivṛttapadārthaka iti | nivṛttaḥ padārtho mukhyaṃ

¹⁰ *yadyapīhārtho na nirdiṣṭas tathāpy abhidhānaśaktisvābhāvīyāl labhyate | (...) evaṃ pakṣatrayasambhāve 'lpapratividheyapakṣam āśrayitum āha—uttarapadārthapradhāna iti |* ("Even though the meaning is not taught here, it is thus understood based on the natural power of denotation. (...) In such a way, when three views are possible, he has said to choose the view where there is little to object to, namely it (i.e. the compound) has the meaning of the latter word as predominant" (VMBh 2: 667. 5–7).

brāhmaṇyaṃ yasmin sa kṣatriyādir arthaḥ | sādṛśyādinādhyāropitabrāhmaṇyo nañdyotitatadavastha ity arthaḥ | (VMBh 2: 670.5–8)

[Let's explain:] 'of [the word] qualified by *nañ*'. The meaning is this: of a ***kṣatriya* etc. on whom Brahminhood has been superimposed**. What is it then? It is not possible to have the meaning *brāhmaṇa* qualified by *nañ* due to the contradiction between existence and non-existence—such is the sense. It is [a Brahmin] whose object-meant/meaning has been removed. That in whom the primary [meaning] of Brahminhood has been removed is the meaning *kṣatriya* etc. And that state of Brahminhood being superimposed due to similarity is revealed by *nañ*—this is the sense.

What is also interesting to point out here is the role *nañ* plays in determining the meaning of a compound. Kaiyaṭa emphasises that it serves as a *dyotaka*, a revealer or illuminator of the meaning. This notion of expressiveness (*vācakatva*) and suggestiveness (*dyotakatva*) of various parts of speech was present in the Sanskrit linguistic tradition from the time of Yāska (5th century BCE), the author of *Nirukta*, an etymological treatise. We can only assume that this distinction into words that are independently expressive and those that help to illuminate the meaning of words they accompany was known to Pāṇini, as he did not discuss it in his grammar. It was, however, heavily discussed within the school of Vyākaraṇa as well as in debates with other philosophical schools throughout the history of Indian thought.

5.2 Helārāja in the *Prakīrṇakaparakāśa* on Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*

Interpretations found in the *Pradīpa* were influenced by Helārāja's commentary on Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*, who elaborated on Bhartṛhari's 'ideas' (see par. 4) and expanded on his mistaken cognition, which ultimately led to adopting the notion of superimposition. While discussing the example of *abrāhmaṇa*, he points to error of mental effort (*mithyādhyavasāya*), which is corrected by *nañ* when realised.

brāhmaṇasattāviṣayā buddhir yadā kutaścīd bhrāntikāraṇāt kṣatriye pravartate tadā brāhmaṇaśabdas tatra prayujyate | so 'yaṃ mithyā-dhyavasāyo yadā tattvajñānān nivartate tadā nañāḥ prayoga ity ayaṃ viṣayo nañsamāsasya | (VP 1: 274.1–4)

When an idea whose scope is the existence of a Brahmin is employed to a *kṣatriya* on account of some mistake, then the word *brāhmaṇa* is used in that case. When after realising the truth that this is **the error of the mental effort** one corrects it, then [the particle] *nañ* is used; this is the scope of a negative compound.

What superimposition (*āropa*), which is an entirely mental process (*buddhistha*), requires is similarity between the two objects. Not only are negative compounds used to negate the superimposed object or notion, but they emphasise *āropa* and the correction of a mistake that was made.

nāyaṃ brāhmaṇo mithyā tv evaṃ avasitas tatsadrśo 'brāhmaṇo 'yam iti, sadṛśaḥ kṣatriyādir eva samāsārthaḥ sampadyate na loṣṭādi(h), samāropanibandhanasya sādṛśyāder abhāvāt | (VP 1: 274.5–7)

This is not a Brahmin, but he has been thus wrongly understood; *abrāhmaṇa* is someone similar [to a Brahmin]. And the meaning of a compound is that which is similar, that is a *kṣatriya* etc. only, not a lump and such, **due to the lack of similarity, which is the cause of superimposition.**

In his commentary on VP 3.14.285 quoted above, Helārāja yet again refers to the fact that superimposition of the wrongful notion is caused by a mistake, a faulty instruction (*adhyāropito durupadeśādinā nimittena* | VP 1: 283.12–13). Similarly to his predecessors, he accepts the headedness of the latter member of a compound (*uttarapadārtha*) in its semantic analysis and says that it indicates the object or notion that was metaphorically used and needs to be negated (*sarvatra prasiddhe nañsamāse samāropo 'nugantavyaḥ | upacāritapadārthapraṭiśedhena hy uttarapadārthapradhāno nañsamāsa ity |* VP 1: 281.5–6). By

stating that we should always refer to superimposition in the case of *nañsamāsa* Helārāja seems to imply that *āropa* could be one of the meanings of the negative particle; the notion that Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa will object to some centuries later.

5.3. Haradatta in the *Padamañjarī* on the *Kāśikāvṛtti*

We can see that at this point in time there is very little reference made to types of compounds introduced by Pāṇini. Patañjali's interpretation was adopted without question and significantly elaborated on, especially in the second millennium CE. The texts discussed above belong to the more philosophical branch of the school of Vyākaraṇa, but such arguments were not absent from more linguistically oriented works. If we look at the *Kāśikāvṛtti* (KV), the first full commentary on the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* composed by Jayāditya and Vāmana in the 7th century CE, we will not find much debate on negative compounds. The authors' take is limited to their morphological description, which is, as mentioned earlier, quite simple. One of the commentators on the KV, Haradatta, dated to the 11th century (Pathak 1931: 247), however, elaborates on the complexity of meaning behind the forms such as *abrāhmaṇa*. Haradatta seems to be following Kaiyaṭa in his analysis and points to the loss of the original meaning of the word while superimposition takes place. On the other hand, he also mentions the secondary meaning that emerges in the process giving rise to the final outcome that we are observing in the context.

naiṣa doṣaḥ, nivṛttapadārthako 'tra brāhmaṇaśabdaḥ, sā ca nivṛttih svābhāvikī nanā dyotyate, ko 'rthaḥ? kevalo brāhmaṇaśabdaḥ prayujyamāṇaḥ prasiddhivaśān mukhyam eva brāhmaṇam ācaṣṭe; nañprayogeṇa tu kṣatriyādaḥ sādrśyādinaḥ nimittenādhyāropitaḥ brāhmaṇyaḥ na tātvikam iti dyotyate | tad evam mukhyo brāhmaṇaśabdasyārtho nivṛtto jūtaś cāmukhyah kṣatriyādir iti na brāhmaṇamātrānayanam, nāpi na kasyacidānayanam iti siddham | (KV 2: 105.15–20)

This is not a fault. Here the word *brāhmaṇa* has its meaning removed; **and this removal being natural is revealed by *nañ***. What is the meaning [then]? The word *brāhmaṇa* used alone signifies only the primary [meaning] that is a Brahmin according to acknowledged usage. By the use of *nañ*, however, superimposed Brahminhood onto a *kṣatriya* etc. as a result of similarity is revealed, not the real one. In such a way, **the primary meaning of the word *brāhmaṇa* is removed and a non-primary one of a *kṣatriya* emerges**. [Thus the instruction *abrāhmaṇam ānaya*] will not result in fetching only a Brahmin or not fetching anyone— this is achieved.”

Haradatta seems to be combining the concept of superimposition and secondary meaning here. He says that the word *brāhmaṇa* has the potential, or contains, both a primary and secondary meaning (similarly to the existent and non-existent aspects proposed by Bhartṛhari). When used in isolation, only the main meaning is understood; the emergence of the secondary meaning is triggered by a mistaken judgement resulting in the superimposition of Brahminhood on a Kshatriya. This allows for the proper understanding of the injunction and fetching a person other than a Brahmin. Superimposition is, of course, a feature of the linguistic level; it has no bearing on external reality.

As we can see, the beginning of the second millennium CE marked another change in the approach to the analysis of negative formations by introducing the notion of superimposition into the equation. It seems that the term *āropa* itself was extended into this context only around the 11th century CE. Earlier, we can find references to the erroneous cognition and superimposition of one concept onto another resulting from it in the *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartṛhari (VP III.3.39–41, the chapter on relations— *sambandhasamuddeśa*, see Houben (1995: 257–262)), but it was not used to explain the process behind negative expressions.

6. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa (17th century CE) in the *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra*

When we move several centuries ahead, we enter the period of Navya-Vyākaraṇa (Neo-Grammarians), which witnessed the redefinition of various linguistic and philosophical concepts as well as the further development of the school of grammar. One of the prominent representatives of that period was Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa (KB), the author of the *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra*, in itself a commentary on his uncle Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita's *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā*. In his text KB takes a step back and redefines the notion of superimposition developed by the grammarians a few centuries before. He goes back to Patañjali's *nivṛttapadārthakatva* and opposes Kaiyaṭa on the interpretation of *āropitatva*:

yat tu nivṛttaḥ padārtho yasminn ity arthaḥ | sādṛśyādinādhyāropitabrāhmaṇyāḥ kṣatriyādayo 'rthā yasyety artha iti kaiyaṭaḥ | tan na, āropitabrāhmaṇyasya kṣatriyāder nañavācyatvāt | anyathā sādṛśyāder api vācyatāpatteḥ | (VSK 43.2–4 / VBhS 360.1–5)

According to Kaiyaṭa, the meaning [of the expression *nivṛttapadārthakatva*] is “that in which the meaning has been removed”; [consequently,] the meaning [of *abrāhmaṇa*] is the following: “whose meanings of *kṣatriya* etc. have Brahminhood imposed on due to similarity”. **This is not the case [in our opinion], because [the word] *nañ* does not express the meaning *kṣatriya* etc. on whom Brahminhood was superimposed. Otherwise, [*nañ*] would also express similarity etc.**

For Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa *āropitatva* should be read as the ‘object of superimposition’ because otherwise we would run the risk of superimposition itself being the meaning of a negative particle, which would make the semantic range *nañ* expresses even more complex.¹¹

¹¹ KB quotes a famous verse attributed, rather wrongly, to Bhartṛhari, in which six meanings of the negative particle are listed:

*tatsādṛśyam abhāvaś ca tadanyatvaṃ tadāpatā |
aprasastyam virodhaś ca nañarthāḥ śaṭ prakīrtitāḥ ||*

What KB seems to be looking for in his interpretation of negation is the unification of meaning of both types of negative expressions, sentential and nominal, for *prasajya* and *paryudāsa*; he looks for semantic simplicity, which is negation meaning *abhāva* ('absence'). Furthermore, he favours negation as *viśeṣya* ('a qualificand') rather than *viśeṣaṇa* ('a qualifier'); an interpretation morphologically difficult from Pāṇinian perspective. Although reluctantly, he finally accepts the latter in the case of negative compounds, which allows him to follow the traditional path. It should be pointed out here that while Sanskrit grammarians over the centuries reinterpreted the approach to negation, they never question its qualifying character in negative compounds. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa ultimately decides that the key to *nañsamāsa* is secondary meaning:

*atvaṃ bhavasītyādau yuṣmadasmados tadbhinne laksanā | nañ dyo-
takah | tathā ca bhinnena yuṣmadarthena tiṇaḥ sāmānādhikaraṇyāt
puruṣavyavasthā | tvadbhinnābhinnāśrayikā bhavanakriyeti śāb-
dabodhaḥ | evaṃ na tvaṃ pacasīty atra tvadbhinnāśrayakapākā-
nukūlabhāvanābhāvaḥ | ghaṭo nāstīty atra ghaṭābhinnāśrayakāstitvābhāva
iti rītyā bodhaḥ | asamastanaṇaḥ kriyāyām evānvayabodhāt | sa cābhāvo
'tyantābhāvatvānyonyābhāvatvādirūpeṇa śakyas tattadrūpeṇa bodhād ity
anyatra vistarāḥ | (VSK 43.27–44.2 / VBhS 366.1–367.3)*

In [the examples] such as *atvaṃ bhavasi* etc. there is **the secondary meaning of [the stems] *yuṣmad* and *asmad* in the sense of “different from that”**. [The particle] *nañ* [serves as] **an indicator** [of that secondary meaning]. And thus, the person is determined through the co-referentiality of the verbal ending with the meaning of *yuṣmad* that is different. The verbal cognition is the following: the action of becoming has a substratum not different from what is different from you. In the same way, in

“Six meanings of [the particle] *nañ* are mentioned: similarity to that, absence, being different from that, smallness of that, lack of excellence/inauspiciousness and opposition/contradiction.”

The detailed analysis and translation of the chapter on negation in the Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra see Sulich-Cowley 2023.

[the example] *na tvam pacasi* (“You do not cook”) there is the absence of action conducive to cooking which has a substratum not different from you. In [the example] *ghaṭo nāsti* (“There is no pot”) the customary cognition is this: the absence of existence in the substratum not different than the pot. [This understanding] is due to recognising the connection with the action only when *nañ* is uncompounded. And this absence is possible to [be understood] in the form of *atyantābhāva* (absolute absence) or *anyonyābhāva* (mutual absence), because this is how it is cognised. This is explained elsewhere.

The conclusion that we find in KB’s work is that in negative compounds the particle is indicative of the secondary meaning the negated stem possesses; this meaning might, in some case, be superimposed. This last passage also points to the role of *nañ* as a revealer (*dyotaka*) rather than an element that expresses a particular meaning; what it reveals is the aspect of non-existence inherent in the object next to its existence.

7. Conclusions

What can we take from the above selective analysis? What picture of negation emerges from the development of the school of grammatical thought over the span of two millennia? Firstly, what the example of negative compounds shows us is a shift from a formal, morphological, description to a semantic-based approach. The introduction of semantic headedness by Patañjali has become dominant in the later tradition and superseded Pāṇini’s original classification of compounds thus focusing on selective aspects in their analysis. Secondly, discussion on the headedness in negative compounds with time concentrated on the predominance of either former (*pūrvapadārtha*) or latter (*uttarapadārtha*) member of a compound. The notion of the head lying outside of a compound (*anyapadārtha*) was largely abandoned, or perhaps redefined, and gave way to the concept of superimposition.

Therefore, it can be said that the journey of the school of Vyākaraṇa progressed from formalism through contextual analysis to defining the process of cognition behind negative compounds.

Can we say that Sanskrit grammarians and philosophers following Pāṇini were mistaken in their interpretations? Did they misunderstand what Pāṇini said? There is no one clear answer to that. There was definitely some miscomprehension at play but there was also a different take on linguistic phenomena, such as negation and compounds in general discussed in this article. Sanskrit commentators concentrated on other aspects of compounding than Pāṇini had, selected and emphasised some of them while devaluing others. Ideas started by Patañjali began to live their own life; they evolved in their own way independent of Pāṇini. They became a tradition within tradition so to speak, like a frame narrative. Commentators' constant reference to Pāṇini's grammar was filtered through later interpretations and external influences; it was often not so much Pāṇini they were referencing as their image of him. Perhaps then, the Sanskrit grammatical tradition should not be seen merely as a means to explain the intricacies of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* but rather as an attempt to establish its own ideas and explore the aspects of language Pāṇini did not venture into.

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