SANSKRIT SYNTACTIC PARTICLES – KILA, KHALU, NŪNAM

by

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The syntactic particles of Sanskrit have not yet altogether received such careful attention as to their meanings as has been given to *The Greek Particles* by J. D. Denniston. For some of them indeed we can be reasonably well satisfied with what we know of their meanings – *ca*, for example, *tu*, and *vā*, *eva* and *iva*. For others our knowledge seems very shaky, and I would call attention in this paper especially to *kila*, *khalu*, and *nīnām*. The Indian lexica and commentators give some clues for arriving at meanings for these three, even though it will become obvious that these clues on the whole become meaningful most easily in the light of what we shall arrive at through examination of texts. Our

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The editions of the texts used are as follows, with abbreviations:

- Aśvaghoṣa’s two *kāvyas* – Johnston’s edition; *Buddh.* = *Buddhacarita*; *Saund.* = *Saundarananda*.
- Kālidāsa’s works – A. Scharp’s *variorum* editions in the various parts of his *Kālidāsa-Lexicon*, vol. 1. References to the prose parts of the plays are to Scharp’s numbered sentences; e.g. 3.0.29 is act 3, initial prose with no verse preceding, sentence 29. For the *Sakuntalā* play, references are also given to Pischel’s edition of the Bengali recension (P.) when they differ from the Scharp references. Translations of passages from this play are from my *Kālidāsa’s Sakuntalā, translated from the Bengali recension* (Berkeley, 1962). *Ragh.* = Rādhuvanśa; *Kum.* = Kūmārasaṃbhava (my collectanea are only from canto 3); *Megh.* = Meghadūta; *Śak.* = Abhijñānaśākuntala; *Māl.* = Mālavikāgnimitra.
- *Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* (*BAU.*) and *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* (*ChU.*) – Boehtlingk’s editions.
- *PW* – the major St. Petersburg lexicon.
- *MW* = Monier-Williams’ dictionary.
- Grassmann = Hermann Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*.
Western dictionaries and syntacticians, though they repeat much of the Indian doctrine, yet tend to fall back for these three, as do our translators with some notable and meritorious exceptions, on a selection from the lists 'indeed, assuredly, verily, certainly, truly' and 'gewiss, ja, freilich, sicherlich'. Such a lack of differentiation for the three particles assures us that we should look further, since, in spite of all revolutions in the linguistic world, the assumption that in a language different forms have different meanings still has some validity, even if only of the heuristic kind, and 'until proved otherwise'.

Our task is not made easier by the habit of later Indian commentators of neglecting some of the earlier doctrine. Mallinātha (circa 1400), for example, at times glosses kila with khalu (e.g. Ragh. 1.27, 2.53, Kum. 3.71); he seems uncertain at times about khalu, when he glosses it at all, sometimes glossing with eva (e.g. Ragh. 2.57, Kum. 3.13), sometimes with hi (e.g. Ragh. 9.28). Symptomatic of the same tendency is the occasional variation between two of these particles in different recensions or editions of the same passage. E.g. at Māl. 3.0.29, Pandit's edition has baliam khu, but Bollensen's bādham kila; the commentator Kāṭayavema gives no evidence, it is still uncertain what Kālidāsa wrote (and will certainly remain so until we have a critical edition, and may even remain so then), but kila makes better sense, as is seen below, in a report in an interlude (praveśaka) of events between the acts of the play. The later commentators, producers of recension differences, and editors seem infected by the late doctrine that particles are verse-fillers (pūrāṇe padavākyayoh, vākyapūrāṇe), or that they 'add grace to the sentence', without finding appreciable semantic values in the particles.

The method adopted in investigating the particles has been to examine early classical texts, especially Aśvaghoṣa’s kāvyas and five of Kālidāsa’s works (three kāvyas and two plays), and the Mahābhārata in its critical edition. The assumption is made that these texts represent, if not the living language of Pāṇini, at least a near approach to it, when the usage of the living language was closely approximated. This may be a large assumption, especially for the Mahābhārata, but I assume for this epic that the technique of formulaic oral composition, of which our critical text represents an enormous residual deposit, grew up and attained maturity while the language was still living (if not yet subject to Pāṇinean restrictions). Other texts should have been used, notably the Rāmdīvāna, but our lack of indexes makes the gathering of data a laborious matter.

² So Apte, p. 176, on khulu.