

A Study of Some Pāli Words in Sanskrit Origin from the Point of Polysemy

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Abstract: *As the increasing of words exists, the growing of senses of one word may occur in every human society. In human society, Sanskrit and Pāli were languages once used in India in about sixth C.A.D. Although they are silent at present, they were popular languages used by vast majority of people. Sanskrit, which was generally familiar to the educated class of people, had existed before the Buddha appeared in the 6th century B.C. The Buddha, therefore, was bound to use Sanskrit words in toto or partially in the Pāli language, which are mostly derived from Sanskrit. In derivation, however, the Buddha used the word either (a) in original sense or (b) in the new meaning. The similarity and difference of the meanings of the two languages are notable. In this paper, the Sanskrit words since they were used in the Vedic Age are collected. In addition, they are compared to their corresponding Pāli counterpart in meaning. Then the differences of meaning between these two languages are presented from the point of polysemy.*

Keywords: Sanskrit, Pāli, meaning, counterpart, Rig-Veda

1. Introduction

There are two kinds of words: content words and function words. Content words and function words differ in that the former increase in numbers as new words resulting from social phenomena, but the latter do not.

Content words thus increasing gradually may exist only in a living language. The international word-watchers proclaimed that English language with the largest number of words in the world has a million words on the 10th June, 2009. That number refers to *web 2.0*¹ involving 'the next generation of web product and services'.

Just as the increasing of words exists, the growing of senses of one word may occur in every human society. It is an undeniable fact that a word expands with new senses apart from its existing ones. Probably the number of words having more than one sense is in most languages. The same word may have two or more different meanings. Polysemy means this situation.²

As the present paper is based on polysemy, this needs to be explained in brief account so that the readers may have some knowledge about this science. Polysemy is a fundamental feature of human speech, which can arise in multiplicity of ways. Ullmann confined to the examination of six sources as follows:

(a) Shifts in application – On observing the reasons for such a large increase in senses of a word, shifts in application is one of them. The words have a number of different aspects according to the contexts in which they are used. Normally, only one of these will fit into a given context, but occasionally there may be some confusion in peoples' minds. Shifts in application are particularly noticeable in the use of adjectives since there are apt to change its meaning according to the nouns it qualifies.

(b) Specialization in a social milieu – The same word may acquire a number of specialized senses and only one of which will be applicable in a given milieu. Polysemy often arises through a kind of verbal shorthand. Breal said that in every situation, in every trade or profession, there is a certain idea, which is present to one's mind, so clearly implied, that it seems unnecessary to state it when speaking.³ The more specialized environments the word involves; the more senses it increases.

(c) A common noun virtually becomes a proper name denoting a single object in a particular environment when an extreme form of specialization takes place.

(d) Figurative language – Senses increase owing to figurative uses based on similarity or relation between the two entities. Metaphor and other figures are important factors in polysemy. Metaphor is not the only figure, which can give polysemy. Metonymy, based not on similarity but on some other relation between two terms, may work in the same way.

(e) Homonyms reinterpreted – When two words are identical in sound and the difference in meaning is not very great. Nevertheless, this situation is also one of the ways of Polysemy.

(f) Foreign influence – An increase in senses also occurs owing to the influence of heterogeneous or homogeneous languages.

Sign of increasing in the meaning of words is rare in dead languages like Pāli and Sanskrit, which can only be studied in records. In this paper, both Pāli words and its Sanskrit origin are dealt with. In comparing, it is found that large variety of senses of Sanskrit word is narrow in Pāli and vice versa. The following accounts will reveal this character:

Ārya

¹ www.language monitor.com.

² Breal. 139-145.

³ Ullmann. 161.

The word *ārya* is first noticed in the Rig-Veda where the aborigines are referred to a *dāsa* or *dāsyu* to distinguish them from the Aryans themselves. With the subsequent growth of the caste system, the three classes of *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* came to be designated as *ārya* to distinguish them from the *sūdras* who were of the lowest class.

Ārya is frequently used in Sanskrit as an honorific prefix without forming an actual part of the title of the text, or sect, etc. In such cases, the subject has been entered without the prefix. Thus, the *ārya sarvāstivāda* will be dealt with under *SARVĀSTIVĀDA*.¹

Being an *Aryan* was a great honor and in course of time, the word *ārya* came to denote 'one who is of noble birth'² and again further extension 'one who was faithful to the Aryan religion, customs and orders'. Later, these things themselves came to be qualified as being *ārya* or noble.³

Moreover, the word *Ārya* is the name of a race, which migrated from Central Asia into *Āryavarta*.⁴ *Āryavarta* is the abode of the noble or excellent (*Āryas*), particularly name of the extending from the eastern to western ocean, and bounded on the north and south by the Himālaya and Vindhya respectively.

Lexicographers used this word in the senses of 'a master, an owner, a friend, and a Vaisya'.⁵

The Sanskrit *ārya* is closest equivalent to the Pāli *ariya*. Buddhism recognized the equality of tribes and races and this idea gradually spread all over India. It was natural that this attitude of equality should have caused the term *ārya* to lose its original sense, in reference to a group of people. But the meaning of nobleness and truth in the term was retained and adopted into Buddhism and these meanings were further enriched by giving them Buddhist interpretations.

One of the most noteworthy uses of the term *ariya* appears in connection with the Buddhist doctrine known as the *Catu-Ariya-Sacca*. It deals with the Four Noble Truths regarding this world, its sorrow, causes of those sorrows, their cessation and the way leading to such cessations.⁶ The reason why these truths are called *ārya* is that they are considered the noblest and righteous of all truths.

The way leading to the cessation of suffering is *ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga* in Pāli. They are (1) right understanding, (2) right thinking, (3) right speech, (4) right deed, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration.⁷ Here *ariya* means 'right'.

In Jātaka commentary,⁸ there are four types of *Ariya*, namely,

- (i) a person or creature who practices the morality of a person who is worthy to be recognized as *Ariya* (*Ācāra ariya*);
- (ii) a person who is admirable by his physical appearance or posture (*Iriyāpatha ariya*);
- (iii) a person who looks like a monk due to his dress although he keeps no precepts (*Liṅga ariya*); and
- (iv) Buddha, *Pacceka* Buddha and disciple of Buddha who has obtained the *Magga-phala* (*Paṭivedha ariya*). In this case *ariya* may bear the sense of 'a person who is esteemed as good or ideal'.

In Pāli literature, the word *ariya* is often used in connection with *sāvaka*. Regarding with *ariya sāvaka* the Aṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā explains as follows: (i) a Buddhist Lay devotee who has not attained *Maggaphala* is only *Sāvaka*, but not *Ariya*; (ii) Non-Buddhist is neither *Ariya* nor *Sāvaka*.⁹

Like Sanskrit, Pāli word *ariya* has the sense of 'those belonging to Aryan race'.¹⁰

Out the sources of Polysemy, the fact that a common noun virtually becomes proper name owing to its extreme form of specialization is included. *Ariya* proves this fact because not only a *Pacceka*¹¹ but also an angler¹² bore this word as their name.

When comparing the meanings of Sanskrit and Pāli, some definitions are different. The reason may be that while *ārya* gives the meanings based on the local area and caste, *ariya* gives the definitions based on the way leading to *Nibbāna*.

Kṛṣṇa

The word *Kṛṣṇa*¹³ is not an adjective but a noun form in Sanskrit literature. At first, the word is noticed in the RigVeda. The work gives the senses of it as 'black', 'dark', and 'dark-blue'. In the Artharva Veda the word is used in the senses of 'wicked' and 'evil'. Here, it is found that the increase of senses is due to the basic on shifts in application.

When it is used as a noun in different milieus, specialized senses increase as follows:

- (i) '(with or without *paksha*) The dark half of the lunar month from full to new moon';
- (ii) 'the fourth or Kali-Yuga';
- (iii) 'black (the color) or dark-blue (which is confounded with black by the Hindū)';
- (iv) 'the antelope';

¹ SED(MW). 152.

² PSED (Apte). 229.

³ SED(MW). 152.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ps. 6; Dṛ III 222.

⁷ Vin III. 15.

⁸ JA II. 256.

⁹ AA III. 48.

¹⁰ Vin III. 323; PTS. 77-78.

¹¹ M III. 115; MA IV. 91.

¹² Dh A II. 250.

¹³ SED(MW).306; PSED(Apte).372.

- (v) 'a kind of animal feeding on carrion';
 (vi) 'the Indian cuckoo or Kokila' and
 (vii) 'a crow';

Although the word is a common noun, it, sometimes, becomes a proper name. The persons who bore the name Kṛṣṇa are as follows:

- (i) Kṛṣṇa, the name of one of the poets of the Rig Veda (descended from Aṅgiras);
 (ii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a celebrated Avatār of the god Viṣṇu, or sometimes identified with Viṣṇu himself as distinct from his ten Avatārs or incarnations;
 (iii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a celebrated Avatār of the god Viṣṇu, or sometimes identified with Viṣṇu himself as distinct from his ten Avatārs. In the earlier legends, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavadgītā, he appears as a great hero shepherd with flowing hair and a flute in his hand;
 (iv) Kṛṣṇa, the name of an attendant in Skanda's retinue;
 (v) Kṛṣṇa, the name of an Asura;
 (vi) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a king of the Nāgas;
 (vii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of Arjuna (the most renowned of the Pāṇḍu princes, so named apparently from his colour as a child)
 (viii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a son of Arjuna;
 (ix) Kṛṣṇa, the name of Hārīta;
 (x) Kṛṣṇa, the name of Śuka by Pīvarī (teacher of the Yoga);
 (xi) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a pupil of Bharad-vāja;
 (xii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of Havir-dhāna;
 (xiii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of an adopted son of Asanañjas;
 (xiv) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a chief of the Andhras;
 (xv) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the author of a Commentary on the Mahabharata;
 (xvi) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a poet;
 (xvii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the author of a Commentary on the Dayā-bhāga;
 (xviii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the son of Keśavarka and grandson of Jayaditya;
 (xix) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the father of Tāna-bhaṭṭa and uncle of Raṅga-nātha;
 (xx) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the father of Dāmodara and uncle of Malhaṇa;
 (xxi) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the father of Prabhūjīka and uncle of Vidyā-dhara;
 (xxii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the father of Madana;
 (xxiii) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the grammarian Rāma-candra;
 (xxiv) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the son of Viruṇendra and father of Lakshmaṇa;
 (xxv) Kṛṣṇa, the name of the father of Hira-bhaṭṭa (author of the Commentary called Carakabhāshya, and of the work Sāhitya-sudhā-samudra);
 (xxvi) Kṛṣṇa, the name of a hell; ;

The Pāli form of Kṛṣṇa is kaṇha, which is defined as follows: 'kaṃ sukhaṃ hanatīti kaṇhaṃ' (kaṇha is so-called because it destroys happiness).¹ Thus, the word kaṇha is used only in the bad sense in Pāli literature.

As kaṇha is an adjective form, a large increase in senses takes place in this word, such as, 'dark', 'black', 'opposed

to light', etc. The contrast with sukka (brightness) goes through all applications, with reference to light as well as quality. In kaṇha-sukka (dark and bright, i.e. black and white), kaṇha refers one system of color sensations.²

As it is an adjective, there are apt to change its meaning according to the noun it qualifies. In kaṇha sappa, (poisonous snake)³ kaṇha means 'having poison'. In kaṇha kaṇha sisā⁴ (with black heads; of an abundance of smooth, dark shiny hair) kaṇha gives the sense 'black'. But in kaṇha jaṭī (an ascetic with dark and glossy hair)⁵ kaṇha is 'dark and glossy'. Kaṇha means 'dark' in kaṇha pakkha (the dark (moonless) half of the month, during which the spirits of the departed suffer and the powers of darkness prevail).⁶ 'Black' and 'low' are senses of kaṇha in kaṇha abhijātika (of black birth; of low social grade)⁷. In kaṇha paṭipadā, and kaṇha magga (the evil way)⁸ kaṇha means 'evil'. But in kaṇha bhāvaka (causing a low rebirth)⁹ and and kaṇha kamma (black action)¹⁰ the word kaṇha means 'low' and 'black' respectively.

The word kaṇha may acquire specialized senses only one of which will be applicable in a given milieu. The senses are 'a dark-skinned person'¹¹, 'a person of low birth'¹², and 'Māra and his companions'¹³. The more specialized environments the word involves, the more senses increases.

The common noun kaṇha virtually becomes proper name in Pāli literature, e.g., a person having the name Kaṇha.¹⁴

Abhra

The Sanskrit word abhra¹⁵ is sometimes spelt abbhra. Abhra means 'cloud' and abbhra 'water bearer'. At first, the word is noticed in the Rg Veda. In the Rg Veda the word's meanings are 'cloud', 'thunder-cloud', 'rainy weather', 'sky', and 'atmosphere'.

In polysemy, a word may acquire a number of specialized senses only one of which will be applicable in a given milieu. The word abhra is entitled to an example of this process. In arithmetic abhra means 'a cipher'. In medicine the word means 'talc', 'mica'. Lexicographers give another meanings 'gold and camphor'.

Its Pāli equivalent is abbhra. It is defined 'Āpaṃ bharaṭīti abbhraṃ'¹⁶ (It is called abbhra because it bears water.) and

² D II. 262; M II. 176.

³ Vin I. 24; J I. 18; J II. 125.

⁴ A II. 210.

⁵ J II. 326.

⁶ Vin V. 354.

⁷ M II. 352; J I.392; JA V. 91.

⁸ JA I.120; Aṭ II. 85.

⁹ JA IV. 9.

¹⁰ VinV. 289.

¹¹ A II. 188; J I. 62.

¹² Dṭ I. 298.

¹³ S I. 187.

¹⁴ Pv.149.

¹⁵ SED(MW). 79.

¹⁶ Abhp, stz. 48; Abhp Ṭ, stz. 48.

¹ Abhp Ṭ, stz. 84.

'*Na bhamaṭīti abhām*'¹ (It is called *abhā* because it does not roam about.). These definitions indicate that the word *abhā* means not only 'cloud' but 'sky'. Rhys Davids translates the word as 'a dense and dark cloud' and 'a cloudy mass'.² Like Sanskrit *Abhra*, Pāli *abhā* has a number of senses of which each will be applicable in a given milieu. The specialized meanings only one of which will be applicable in a given are 'a dense and dark cloud', 'the sky', 'stone', and 'air'.

Kṣetra

At first the word *kṣetra*³ is used in the Vedic-age. In this age *Kṣetra* means 'landed property', 'land', and 'soil'. Later on, the word gradually increases in number of its meanings.

The increasing specialized senses only one of which will be applicable in a given milieu are 'soil of merit', 'a Buddha or any holy person', 'a field', 'place', 'region', 'country', 'department', 'sphere of action', 'place of origin', and 'place where anything is found'. So also 'Yogas', 'a sacred spot or district', 'place of pilgrimage as Benares etc', 'an enclosed plot of ground', 'portion of space', 'department', 'sphere of action', and 'superficies' are the increasing senses of this word.

For geometry the word will mean 'a plane figure (as a triangle, circle, etc.) enclosed by lines', 'any figure considered as having geometrical dimensions', 'a diagram', 'a planetary orbit', 'a zodiacal sign', and 'an astrological mansion'.

For chiromancy it will mean 'certain portions marked out on the palm'.

Lexicographers gives senses, 'a house' and 'a town', for it.

Moreover the word *kṣetra* has the meanings of 'fertile soil', 'the fertile womb' and 'wife'. It can be assumed that 'wife' and 'body' are descended from the word 'fertile soil'. As if fertile soil gives plants, wife's womb can do. Therefore, *khetta* seems to be regarded as the region that can produce well. In Hinduism, the body is occupied by the soul hence the meaning 'body'. Therefore, metaphor is the figure, which can give rise to polysemy.

Khetta is the Pāli counterpart of *kṣetra*. Its literal meanings are 'a field', 'a plot of land', 'arable land', and 'a site'.⁴

The Pāli phrase '*khetānaṃ adipaṭīti khattiyo*' (one who is an owner (or) lord of fields is called *khattiya*) made clear definition of *khetta* 'being wealthy'. The word's specialized senses only one of which is applicable in a given milieu are 'a mark of wealth (or) possession',⁵ and 'other earthy possessions'.⁶

¹ Abhp Ṭ, stz. 45.

² PTS. 59.

³ SED(MW). 332.

⁴ DA I. 76-77.

⁵ D III. 77.

⁶ Sn. 858.

Khetta is a word given figurative senses without losing its original meanings. Its figurative senses are 'the soil of merit' and 'the deposit of good deeds'. They like a fertile field, bear fruits to the advantage of the giver of gifts or the doer of good works. The Enlightened One, Lesser Buddha and Arahant are *khetta* because they bear fruits like a fertile field.

Sometimes *khetta* means 'original place'⁷. Therefore, cemetery is also called *khetta*, because *paṃsukūla cīvāra* (pieces of cloth discarded on a heap of dusts) for monks can originate from there.

2. Finding and Discussion

When the meaning of words mentioned above are criticized in accordance with Ullman's ways, the first four of them are found to be involved. It is not certain whether it is due to the fact of choosing Sanskrit words since they are used in Vedic age.

Out of the senses, it is not known exactly that which sense comes first and how later this meaning was transferred to another. However, this increase in meaning is considered as a sign of cultural progress by the linguists.

As the study is based on the comparison of two languages, it can be seen clearly that which language has more meaning, which is more widely used and in which field it is more widely seen.

Sanskrit *ārya* has more meaning than Pāli *ariya* in the social contexts. However, in the religious contexts Pāli *ariya* has more meanings and more abstruse. So also Pāli *khetta* are more widely used in religious field than Sanskrit.

Kṛṣṇa is more widely used in Sanskrit than in Pāli in the scope of proper noun derived from common noun.

In Sanskrit *abhra* and its Pāli counterpart *abhā*, it is found that *abhra* involves more specialized environment than *abhā*.

On a whole, the meanings of a Sanskrit word may become restricted (or) extended in Pāli.

Abbreviations

1. Pāli Text

A II *Āṅguttaranikāya* vol. II (*Pañcaka*, *chakka*, *sattaka*)

D II *Dīghanikāya* vol. II (*Mahāvagga*)

D III *Dīghanikāya* vol. III (*Pāthikavagga*)

J I *Jātaka* vol. I

J II *Jātaka* vol. II

M II *Majjhimanikāya Majjhimaṇṇāsa*

M III *Majjhimanikāya Upariṇṇāsa*

Pv *Petavatthu*

S I *Samyuttanikāya* vol. I (*Sagāthāvagga* & *Nidānavagga*)

⁷ Vin A III. 393.

Sn *Suttanipāta* (*Khuddakapātha*, *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*,
Itivuttaka,
Suttanipāta)
Vin I *Vinaya piṭaka* vol. I (*Pārājika*)
Vin III *Vinaya piṭaka* vol. III (*Mahāvagga*)
Vin V *Vinaya Pitaka* vol. V (*Parivāra*)

2. *Aṭṭhakathā* (Commentary)

AA I *Āṅguttara Aṭṭhakathā*, vol. I
DA I *Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā* vol. I
(*Sīlakkhandhavagga*)
Dh A II *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* vol. II
JA I *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā* vol. I
JA II *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā* vol. II
JA IV *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā* vol. IV
JA V *Jātaka Aṭṭhakathā* vol. V
MA IV *Uparipaññāsa Aṭṭhakathā*
Vin A III *Vinaya Pācityādi Aṭṭhakathā*

3. *Ṭīkā* (Sub-commentary)

AṬ II *AguttarṬīkā* vol. II.
DṬ I *Sīlakkhandha vagga Ṭīkā*
DṬ III *Pāthikavagga Ṭīkā*

4. *Ganthantara* (General Text)

Abhp *Abhidhānappadīpikā*
Abhp Ṭ *Abhidhānappadīpikā Ṭīkā*
Breal *Semantics*. Studies in the science of meaning
PSED (Apte) Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary
PTS The Pāli English-Dictionary
SED(MW) A Sanskrit-English Dictionary
Ullmann *Semantics*, An introduction to the Science of
Meaning

5. Internet

http://www.language_monitor.com

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