

XI Coffee Break Conference

# ARRANGED MARRIAGES BETWEEN DISCIPLINES

Rome, 10–11 December 2021

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*Book of abstracts*



**COFFEE BREAK PROJECT**

AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME

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*Edited by A. Keidan*

COFFEE BREAK PROJECT  
ROME, VIENNA  
2021

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ISBN 978-1-7947-4789-0

*XI Coffee Break Conference: Arranged Marriages between Disciplines. Rome, 10–11 December 2021; Vienna, 16–17 December 2021 / ed. by Artemij Keidan*

Cover image: Qutb Minar, Delhi; photograph by A. Keidan

Published by Coffee Break Project

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Hiding a verb: ritual vs. courtly interpretation  
of *Aṣṭhādhyāyī* 1.4.34

ABSTRACT

In the present paper, I am dealing with the meaning of the grammatical rule prescribed in Pāṇini's *sūtra* 1.4.34 that belongs to the subsection describing the *sampradāna*, i.e. the *kāraka* role corresponding to the 'recipient' of an action. This is a simplified translation of the *sūtra*:

- (1) *ślāgha-hnuṁ-sthā-śapāñ jñīpsyamānaḥ*  
"With the verbs *ślāgh* 'to praise', *hnu* 'to hide', *sthā* 'to make a statement', *śap* 'to swear', the person to whom the communication is delivered is to be classified as «recipient»".

Here, the *sampradāna* is described as *jñīpsyamānaḥ*. This tricky term is a passive present participle from a desiderative constructed upon a causative derived from the verb *jñā* 'to know'. Therefore, it literally means 'the person whom someone wants to be caused to know'. Or, more freely, 'the addressee of speaking'.

Indeed, three of the four verbs quoted in the rule describe activities falling into the scope of speaking. The roots *ślāgh* and *śap* are self-explaining in such respect. The root *sthā* is less obvious: it literally means 'to stand', but here is apparently used in the metaphoric sense of 'putting forward a proposition', or 'making a statement' (to use a western term that is likewise derived from the root of 'standing' but is used as a verb of speaking).

Only *hnu* stands out from this series: there is no simple way for connecting 'hiding' to 'speaking'. Thus, my main goal is to explain this apparent inconsistency, more specifically: the reason why the verb *hnu* appears in a collection of *verba dicendī*?

Pāṇinīya tradition is of little help in answering this question. Patañjali does not comment on this *sūtra*. Later commentators seem confused about its real meaning (cf. Palsule 1987: 657, fn. 8). Haradatta (commenting on the *Kāśīkāvṛtti*)

even admits that there may be two different readings here. From the *Kāśikāvṛtti* onwards, Pāṇini's commentators and illustrators are mainly concerned with the explanation of the meaning of *jñāpsyamāna* referred to the *sampradāna* in connection with the four verbs of this rule. Particularly with *hnu*, the commentators sought to accommodate the idea of 'hiding from someone' with the idea of 'making this same person know about such hiding', which is an obvious contradiction. As a result, almost all of the examples suggested by the commentators on this regard describe scenes of deliberate ambiguity, such as, for example, a situation in which a person tries to deceive the creditors, or, again, a love intrigue, in which someone *pretends* to hide from her/his partner only in order to attract his/her attention. Only the playfulness of flirting could justify such a contradiction (cf. Catullus' *odi et amo* 'I hate and I love').

Grammatically, the dative-marked complement (the *sampradāna*) is usually considered the person *from whom* something is being hidden, as in (2):

- (2) a. *Kṛṣṇāya hnuṭe iti. Sapatnyapanayanena svāśayaṃ kṛṣṇaṃ bodhayati.*  
 "An example for *hnuṭe* 'she hides from Kṛṣṇa' goes as follows. By removing herself from the fellow-wives, she reveals to Kṛṣṇa her desire" (*Bāla-manoramā* on *Siddhāntakaumudī* 572).
- b. *...nihnuvāno 'sau Sītāyai*  
 "...he [=Rāvaṇa], who disguises his true nature from Sītā" (*Bhaṭṭikāvya* 8.74; cf. Kawamura 2018: 68, 2nd interpretation).

The second reading of these examples, mentioned by Haradatta (in his *Padamañjari*, a commentary on the *Kāśikāvṛtti*), considers *hnu* a transitive verb with an odd dative-marked direct object. Moreover, this object of hiding is identified with the addressee of the action. See the examples in (3):

- (3) a. *Sapatnībhyah kṛṣṇaṃ hnuvānā tamevārthaṃ kṛṣṇaṃ bodhayati.*  
 "While hiding Kṛṣṇa from the fellow-wives, she reveals this fact to Kṛṣṇa" (*Tattvabodhinī* 508).
- b. *...nihnuvāno 'sau Sītāyai*  
 "...he [=Rāvaṇa], who conceals Sītā [from the demons]" (*Bhaṭṭikāvya* 8.74; cf. Kawamura 2018: 68, 1st interpretation).
- c. *Devadattāya hnuṭe iti. Sannihitam eva Devadattaṃ dhanikāder apalapatīty arthaḥ.*  
 "The meaning of *Devadattāya hnuṭe* 'He conceals to Devadatta' goes as follows. Someone hides Devadatta just in front of him from the creditor and the like" (*Padamañjari* on *Kāśikāvṛtti* on 1.4.34).

This “pseudo-transitive” interpretation of *hnu* is found in some modern editions of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (e.g. Katre 1987: 85), while others (e.g. Joshi & Roodbergen 1995: 108) do not even mention it. Importantly, there seem to be no examples of the “pseudo-transitive” construction in the Vedic corpus (De-Schai Olsen 2012: 28).

In my opinion, another solution is possible, one that will demystify the “mystery of *hnu*” in the rule 1.4.34. It consists in the following steps.

1. The term *jñīpsyamāna* should be “degrammaticalized”. If we read it as a simple noun (meaning ‘addressee’), rather than a highly complex deverbal formation, there would be no need to justify the ‘intentionality’ codified by the desiderative.
2. The verb *hnu* should be read as a verb of speaking. This is supported by a number of sources. In the *Vedas* the root *hnu*, always prefixed, is used to express the action of repentance. In the *Amarakośa* (1.6.17.1) this root is glossed as a synonym of *apalāpa* ‘denial’, which might be the source of Haradatta (see ex. 3c). Therefore, *hnu* primarily means ‘concealing something’ (e.g. the sins during the ritual of repentance) through the force of words, rather than by a physical removal.
3. The misunderstanding of the semantics of *hnu* might be explained by imagining a gradual secularization of Pāṇini’s grammar. The grammar was born in Antiquity as a ritual-related *Vedāṅga*. On the contrary, during the Middle Ages it evolved into a matter of lay culture, patronized by aristocrats and kings. Accordingly, the universe of the discourse of the grammar changed from a religious one to that of the courtly culture.

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