Information Structure of Vedic Narrative Prose

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Information conveyed in a discourse varies in status, such as whether it is new or given, depending on the assumptions the speaker and the hearer have in the situation. In Sanskrit, the status of information is marked by word order, particles and accent, and by interaction among them. For example, emphasis can be expressed by dislocating noun phrases, attaching particles, and accenting otherwise unaccented finite verb-forms. The function of particles has been described in detail, e.g. by Delbrück (1888) and Klein (1978, 1985), but difference in meaning of some particles, especially *vái* and *evá*, is still not totally clear.

Functional grammar provides simple terms to label information status, such as new/given information, theme and focus, and serves as a practical framework for describing information structure and discovering discourse rules. In this paper, we will first label the information status of words and phrases of Vedic prose using the terminology and scales of Halliday (2002), Kuno (1973), and Prince (1981), and analyze how each phrase is marked there with respect to information. As information structure is most obvious in stories, we use narrative sections of the Brahmanas and the Black Yajurveda Samhitas for our analysis. Then we will discuss how information status affects the choice of particles, especially *vái* and *evá*, in each text.

Through this research, we confirmed that *vái* and *evá*, especially the latter, gradually spread its use as a discourse marker, as Jamison (1991:108) pointed out. Then we would like to show that information status, which was primarily indicated by word order in older prose literature, came to be overtly marked by particles in later Vedic prose. We claim that *vái* had the function of highlighting new information as theme, and *evá* developed a usage to mark focus of given and new information, partly taking over the function of *vái*.

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