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# THE CONCEPT OF CASE/*KĀRAKA* A COMPARATIVE STATEMENT

The Case/*kāraka* is an important category of language structure. It is found or viewed in every language of the world, even in Chinese. In some form or the other it is a language universal. It is possible that the case-marker may be or may not be physically present in some of the forms or in some of the languages but conceptually it is always there. The verb/*kriyā* is of the central importance in the sentence. Sākaṭāyana states in his grammar that the existence of a sentence or of a language is only owing to the verb (*tiṇā vākyam*), if there is no verb, there will be no sentence and it will not be possible for a language to function properly. The cases are the relations of the verb with other constituents of the sentence. Communication is the chief aim of the language. There may be no communication if the case is dropped from the sentence, as in «Boy House Go». And if there is no communication, the very purpose of the language is defeated.

Pāṇini and Fillmore, both the grammarians have based their theories on the philosophy of this foresaid category of language. There are several points of similarities and differences on the concept of case as discussed in the theories of Pāṇini and Fillmore. The purpose of the present paper is to bring out such similarities and differences or the comparative situation which comes out of the comparison but not to show the concept of case/*kāraka* as these grammarians hold separately, so that the proper concept of case could be established.

As the view of Pāṇini and Fillmore, whatever is being discussed here, is that the Fillmorean view is based on his different papers while Pāṇinian is on the matter or material from his

commentators and followers, because Pāṇini himself has not explicitly defined the term *kāraka*, he has only referred to it in the *sūtra* or rule «*kārake*».

Following the tradition of Pāṇini, Patañjali and Bhartṛhari have considered case/*kāraka* as a means in the performance of the verb i.e. the ultimate action of the sentence. In the sentence, the activity expressed by the verb-phrase (or the verbs) is performed by the group of means. These means are called *sādhana/kāraka*, because all these are the equipments of the performance of the verb (IYER K.A., 1981, p. 325). These are also named as *kārakas*, because somehow all these play jointly vital role in the accomplishment of the main verb of the sentence. In this sense all these can be agents, but due to playing some special role in relation to the main verb all these are named specially as *karaṇa*, *karma* and *kartā* etc. (*niṣpattimātre kartṛtvaṃ sarvatraivāsti kārake, vyāpārabhedāpekṣāyāṃ karaṇatvādi sambhavaḥ*). Without the means no verb can be performed. Besides Bhartṛhari has also elaborated that a verb itself can be a means in performing the other verbs. Every preceding verb is a means in executing its following verbs (*sandarśanaṃ prārthanāyāṃ vyavasāye tvantarā, vyavasāyastathārambhe sādhanatvāya kalpate, pūrvasmin yā kriyā saiva parasmin sādhanaṃ matā, sandarśane tu caitanyaṃ viśiṣṭaṃ sādhanaṃ viduḥ — Vākyapadīyam* — 1.5.8). Agent completes every following verb by each previous verb. Someone sees something, then he desires to get it, thereafter he acts to get it and ultimately he gets it. Thus, in getting, which is the final verb, all previous verbs or stages of the verb viz. to see, to desire, and to act are the means. This way, the case is the vehicle to achieve the chief goal of a sentence, i.e. a complete sense or meaning which is the result on the accomplishment of final verb. Thus, the case enables the language to perform in real sense.

Case Grammar is a theory of sentence analysis. The conclusion of Fillmore's theory is that the case is not only the surface form of noun phrase but it also represents the sentence and grammatical entity at the syntactic deep level of grammar. In his opinion, case expresses two types of grammatical relations — 1. Pure or configurational, 2. Meditated or labelled. Thus, on the one hand it represents pure relations like subject and object and on the

other labelled ones like agent and instrumental. This twofold role of case is played at the two different levels of grammar. The pure relation is expressed on the surface structure of sentence and the labelled on the deep. Thus, the whole sentence structure is centralised in case. Fillmore himself states that the grammatical notion «Case» deserves a place in the base component of the grammar of every language (FILLMORE C.F., 1968 A, p. 2).

In the beginning of his article «The Case for Case» Fillmore accepts that the two assumptions are essential to the development of argument. The first is the centrality of syntax. In traditional grammars, syntax is used in the sense that it accounts the morphological structure of various classes of words and how to combine them in the sentences. Fillmore disagrees on this point and propounds that in grammars where syntax is central, the forms of words are specified with respect to syntactic concepts. The relation of NP and V is case relation. This way, he himself indicates that *the case is the central point of sentence and hence of syntax.* Another assumption is the importance of covert categories.

It is also relevant here to quote the theory of *sphoṭa* of Sanskṛt Grammarians because *sphoṭa* is known as the central element for the expression of meaning of the sentence or the language as a whole. *Sphoṭa* is that state of the sentence where meaning is actualised. Viewing the nature of the meaning, an assumption of diversion from the *sphoṭa* is natural. Sanskrit grammarians hold that from this *sphoṭa* which is an unexpressed form of language, all the sentences, *padas* and phrases are drawn. The analytical element like *dhvani, varṇa* and *pada* is only for the sake of analysis and discussion; ultimately they are related to the sentence in the assumed divisional sequence *varṇa* to *pada* and *pada* to sentence (JAIN V.P., 1984). From the central element *sphoṭa, padas* can not be drawn without the arrangement of the relations of *padas*. This arrangement of *padas* is dependent upon the *kāraka* and the *kāraka* is the relation of these *padas*. Thus, the case/*kāraka* controls the whole sentence structure and the language.

According to Fillmore «the sentence in its basic structure consists of a verb and one or more noun phrases, each associated with the verb in a particular case-relationship» (FILLMORE, 1968 A, p. 2). The case frame(s) of a verb indicate(s) the relationship(s) in the

form of cases that contract between the NP(s) and the V. Thus a verb like |open| has a case frame like –

open: + ----- O, (A), (I).

The base component of FCG comprises of a lexicon. As regards the selection of lexical items, Fillmore proposes that the selection of the verb should precede the selection of other lexical items. Thus, the verb is the central element of sentence in FCG.

Following Pāṇini, Patañjali defines *kāraka* as «*karotīti kārakam*», it means that there must be some sense of action. Nāgeśa states in his *Mañjūṣā* — «*kriyānişpādakatvaṃ kārakatvam*» the performer of the verb is *kāraka*. *Laghuśabdenduśekharakāra* assumes that «*sākṣātkriyānvayitvaṃ kārakatvam*» — the means by which the verb is directly related, is *kāraka*. In brief, the direct relation of verb with other costituents is *kāraka* relation. Only on account of this *śeṣa/sambandhā* is not considered as *kāraka* in Pāṇinian school. As is viewed in above definitions and in discussion Pāṇinian school presents the central position to the verb. Thus, Pāṇini and Fillmore both agree on the issue that the verb is the central element of sentence and thus of case/*kāraka*.

Now the other point of the similarity is that the notion «case/*kāraka*» is universal, although the expression of this notion *kāraka* or case on surface can be language specific. Fillmore treats the base component as language universal and not as language specific. In his view the grammatical notion «case» has a place in the base component of the grammar of every language (FILLMORE, 1971, p. 247; 1968 A, p. 9). The case-relations are viewed as forming a finite set which has universal validity (1968 A, p. 5). In the view of many of the scholars, this point with reference to Pāṇini can be controversial, but infact Pāṇini also accepts its universal nature, because not a single grammarian of his tradition has stated that the notion «*kāraka*» is language specific, although Pāṇini has taken it only with reference to Sanskrit, because his main aim was to produce the grammar of Sanskrit. The consideration of two levels — the *kāraka* level and *vibhakti* level itself certifies the universal nature of *kāraka* and the language specific nature of *vibhakti*, because when Pāṇini discusses *vibhakti* he signalises towards the surface structure of Sanskrit, on the other hand in the discussion of *kāraka* he never takes any language into account. It can

be seen in detail in the paper of A.C. Sinha (1971).

Fillmore makes a distinction between the conceptual presence of a role and its actual realisation in a sentence (BALACANDRAN, 1973, p. 4). In his grammar case-relations are posited as the deep structure relations or conceptual relations. In other words, he uses case to identify the underlying 'semantico-syntactic relationship' as deep structure/mental/conceptual phenomenon in a natural language, the notions 'subject and object' on the other hand are surface structure phenomenon.

*Sādhana* or *kāraka* is mental relation. *Apādāna* has been defined as that which remains firm and stable when separation between two things takes place. If two things in which we do not find any physical separation are compared, the situation is of *Apādāna kāraka*, because here the main thing is based on the idea that what is called *sādhana* is something essentially mental. Separation, however, needs not to be always physical. In comparison, for instance there is no physical separation but is mental. What is called separation, it is taking two things apart, preceded by their union. An example of comparison in a sentence is quoted here — *rāmaḥ kṛṣṇāt śobhanaḥ*: «Rāma is better than Kṛṣṇa», there is first of bringing together (*saṃśleṣa*) of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa on the basis of their resemblance in good looks and then their separation (*viśleṣa*) takes place on the account of superiority of one over the other due to some qualities. The whole situation is mental.

Another indication that *sādhana* can be purely mental is when a story-narrator narrates an old story, he sometimes uses the present tense – «he gets Kaṃsa killed». The historical present is well-known in many a languages. It is because the whole story is present in the mind of the narrator at the time of narrating and it is evoked in the mind of listeners also (*śabdopahitarūpāñca buddheraviṣayitāṃ gatān, pratyakṣam iva śabdādīn sādhanatvena manyate. Vāk.*1.2.3). The meaning of words figures in the mind and not outside reality (*buddhipratibhāsyeva hyākāro śabdārtho na vastvārthaḥ. Vāk.*1.1.8). Thus the story-narrator gets mental Kansa killed by mental Vāsudeva in a sentence. This way, it is clear that both the grammarians accept the mental/conceptual nature of *kāraka* relation.

Explaining the deep or the base component of language

Fillmore propounds that a base component is a 'semantically justified syntactic deep structure' (FILLMORE, 1968 A, p. 38). In his view, grammatical notion 'case' has a place in the base component of the grammar of every language (deep structure cases ... their existence could be discovered and justified by syntactic criteria, — FILLMORE, 1971, p. 245, semantically syntactic relationship — FILLMORE, 1968 A, p. 5). He defines the case relations as «certain semantically relevant syntactic relationships involving nouns and the structure that contains them' (FILLMORE, 1968 A, p. 5). Thus, we can say that Fillmore uses the case as semantico-syntactic relationship which represents the semantic deep structure of language.

In reference to the nature or the concept of *kāraka* in Pāṇinian theory the various scholars hold the various views. Some view that Pāṇini treated this category as grammatical category while the others as semantic and some others as syntactic. But, in fact it is neither purely semantic category nor purely grammatical. When we see the Pāṇinian grammar, we find that we can neither ignore semantic aspect and nor syntactic or grammatical one. Because semantics is the base standing on which Pāṇini viewed the syntactic structure and so categorised. Thus, we must call these *kāraka* relations as semantico-syntactic relations. Subrahamanyam also argues on this point but he argues that it has syntactico semantic value. In fact, Pāṇini's main aim is to analyse the sentence or language so this is syntactic category but the structure is of no use if it is not communicating any message so the meaning or semantics is in the base on which the whole structure or sentence or syntax depends. If it is accepted as syntactico-semantic category, the position of sentence or structure will be the first, the question is when the structure or sentence is already available what for the semantics stands. Only this was the reason that Pāṇini first defined the *kāraka* categories on the level of meaning and then talked about the *vibhaktis*. Thus, there are more evidences and reasons in accepting the *kāraka* or case as semantico-syntactic category. When we see the defintions of different *kāraka* categories, first we get or perceive the meaning and then on the ground of that meaning we reach to the sentence structure or establish the sentence structure. Here, it is also notable that with reference to *kāraka* in

general this semantico-syntactic relation is seen in general as found in role of each category but the same is specific in reference to specific category i.e. *kartṛ* or *karaṇa*.

Thus, no doubt that both the grammarians have viewed *kāraka* or case as of semantico-syntactic nature.

The other point of similarity is to accept two levels of the language. Fillmore accepts two types of relations — 1. Pure (Subject) and 2. Labelled (Agentive). This two-fold work of case is expressed on two different levels. The category denoting the labelled relation of noun phrases and predicator are the part of deep structure of sentence and subject denoting the direct relation with Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase is a part of surface structure. «Fillmore makes a distinction between the conceptual presence of a role and its actual realisation in a sentence» (BALCHANDRAN L.B., 1973, p. 4). In his grammar case-relations are posited as deep structure relations. In other words, he uses case to identify the underlying «semantico-syntactic-relationship» as a deep structure phenomenon in a natural language. The notions — subject and object on the other hand, are said to be surface structure phenomenon. The deep structure relations like Agentive, Experiencer and Objective are related to the surface structure notions by a system of rules for expressing subject and object. Thus it is clear that Fillmore has considered two different structures/levels of a sentence. In his grammar, deep structure of a sentence is such a semantic structure which represents deep case relations between verb and its related nouns and the surface structure to subject and object type of configurational relations, which are expressed by a set system of rules. In other words, deep structure denoting labelled relations, becomes changed in the surface structure of pure relations by a system of rules.

As the other references we also find different opinions in regard to the levels in Pāṇini-s theory of language. Some scholars hold that there is only one level in Pāṇini's theory of language, while the majority accepts and argues for two levels. In fact the followers of the former view have not properly evaluated and not gone in depth of Pāṇinian theory. Although there are different opinions on the nature of two different levels, yet the majority of scholars such as Cardona, Kiparsky and Staal, Sinha, Mishra,

Singh, Rocher and Anantanarayana accepts two different levels. In fact Pāṇini was also aware of two different levels of language or distinction between deep structure and surface structure of sentences. It is evident firstly by the use of difference in terminology i.e. *kāraka* (Case) the deep or underlying relation of a noun phrase to the verb and *vibhakti* (Caseform) for the representation of *kāraka* in surface structure; secondly there is no neat one to one correspondence between the *kāraka* and *vibhakti*, thirdly without being aware of the difference between these two structures or levels, it would not have been possible for him to recognise the paraphrase relation between sentences like *kaṭaṃ karoti*: «he makes the mat» and *kaṭaḥ kriyate*: «the mat is made».

Thus, we come to the conclusion that Pāṇini and Fillmore both the grammarians accept two different levels of language.

Pāṇini and Fillmore also agree on the point that a single *kāraka* or deep case could be expressed on surface in more than one way i.e. in Pāṇinian view in more than one *vibhakti* and that similarly *vibhakti* which is surface form may represent more than one *kāraka*, in Fillmore an theory one deep case can take more than one pre/post position in different surface structures. Now the question how this one many and many one representation is/may be treated in grammar? This is possible only when we assume semantic-equivalence among variously expressed sentences on surface. In deep structure or in base, there is only one finite set of semantic relations or of *kārakas* out of which each abstract structure makes its own selection. These relations may be expressed according to the genius of the language in many ways at the surface structure and the surface structure also defines/determines the various ordering of *vibhakti* or of case-forms. All this can be achieved by introducing a set of transformational rules which are introduced by both of the grammarians Fillmore and Pāṇini in their grammars.

Pāṇini assigns the primary representation to each of the above *kārakas* by one *vibhakti*: *kartā* by *tṛtīyā* in passive and by *prathamā* in active, *karma* by *prathamā* in passive and by *dvitīyā* in active, *karaṇa* by *tṛtīyā*, *sampradāna* by *caturthī*, *apādāna* by *pañcamī* and *adhikaraṇa* by *saptamī*. Following Pāṇini Fillmore too assigns the primary representation of each case category by one surface

form-as for Agentive on surface subject and for objective on surface object.

Pāṇini does not find it necessary to provide rules for word-order since there is no fixed order of words in Sanskrit. The word order though free but is signalled by the inflections rather than order of words as in English, what Pāṇini, therefore, was only to describe the relation of a noun phrase to the verb phrase in a given case frame for the verb. It is interesting that Fillmore also left the discussion of word order out of his Case Grammar and thus it has become a remarkable point of FCG against the Standard Theory of Chomsky that in FCG a base component is without any sequential ordering of items while Chomsky assumes a sequential ordering in the base structure (CHOMSKY N., 1965, p. 124-127).

When we see the definitions of the different case categories either of Pāṇinian grammar or of Fillmorean grammar, we find that both the grammarians have defined their case categories semantically or on the basis of semantics i.e. meaning while those categories are to explain the syntactic position, that is why in both the grammars these are accepted as semantico-syntactic categories.

Although there are many similarities still to be discussed yet the major ones could be shown here. Besides the similarities, there are several points of differences, which these grammarians hold, and now some of them are being put here.

The first is that both have recognised two distinct levels but their treatment is different. The main reason is the way, the deep case relations are defined in each. In Fillmore, they are action-centered and in Pāṇini the *kartā* is also taken into consideration to define some of the *kārakas* such as the *karma*.

Fillmore has considered the root part of the verb as the base of his grammar while Pāṇini to the complete verb, but in different forms of the verb he has considered the base only to the normal or simple form. All the case categories that can be taken by that particular root can be shown by this simple form of the verb. It is possible that all of them are not shown at all the time. Without focusing the complete verb, the complete meaning, which is to be denoted by that verb, can not be expressed. Cases are to express that meaning essentially. Another point in using the verb inspite of

root is that a root can express different meanings by using prefixes and suffixes. By using a particular suffix or prefix one root changes its meaning while another does not. So if we categorise cases at the level of root, we shall not be able to provide rules for the changing of the meaning in the context of different situations due to the contact of prefixes or suffixes. The other point in using the verb is that when we take the root, we are analysing the concept or verb but not the language in behaviour, because we are viewing as to how this root can take these case categories, we are not viewing which are taken or being taken.

According to Fillmore, the base component or deep structure of sentence consists of two constituents viz. Modality and Proposition. Proposition is a tenseless set of relationships involving verb and nouns and the case is the part of this proposition. But Pāṇini nowhere introduced this type of distinction. He never cuts the time aspect from the verb as is cut by Fillmore, because the main quality of being the proposition is to be tenseless. The verbs are to denote the action. No action can be performed without the time aspect. If there is action, there is time. Time is the base of the action. If the time is cut, the action is cut, now the question is what the verb stands for?... Thus the verb can never exist without time. If any part of the verb is cut, the verb can not remain verb in its complete sense. Time is the life of the verb. It is possible that time marker may be or may not be present at the deep level but the time is always there. But we do not know how Fillmore even after cutting the time from the verb tries to see the existence of the verb while it is nowhere, only on account of that he sees the relation in the proposition. Thus, Fillmore's assumption on which he has built his whole theory does not appear proper.

Fillmore has not given any place to Cognition and Intention in the determination of cases or *kārakas* while Pāṇini holds both of these elements as the main factors (*vivakṣātaḥ kārakāṇi bhavanti*).

Fillmore calls the case merely as the relation of the nouns to the verb but he is silent about what role they play in the action, while Pāṇini here pays his attention saying that these case relations play as the helping element or are the means in the accomplishment of the verb.

Fillmore also takes animateness and inanimateness in consideration while establishing his categories, but Pāṇini does not. In Pāṇinian view if something is inanimate but that is acting or appearing as animate that must be or is also shown as animate in the language, so animateness is not the base factor to categorise the cases.

In both the grammars, some of the case categories are similar in nature but it can not be stated that the deep case relations of Pāṇini and of Fillmore are all equivalents. If all case categories would be considered equal, that would be a broad statement. Agentive, Instrumental and Locative are equatable. Dative of Fillmore is Objective for Pāṇini. Pāṇini's Objective covers Fillmore's Objective, Factitive, Dative and some part of Locative and Goal. Pāṇini's Ablation includes some part of Instrumental and Source. The major expressions of Goal and Benefectitive are included in Dative of Pāṇini.

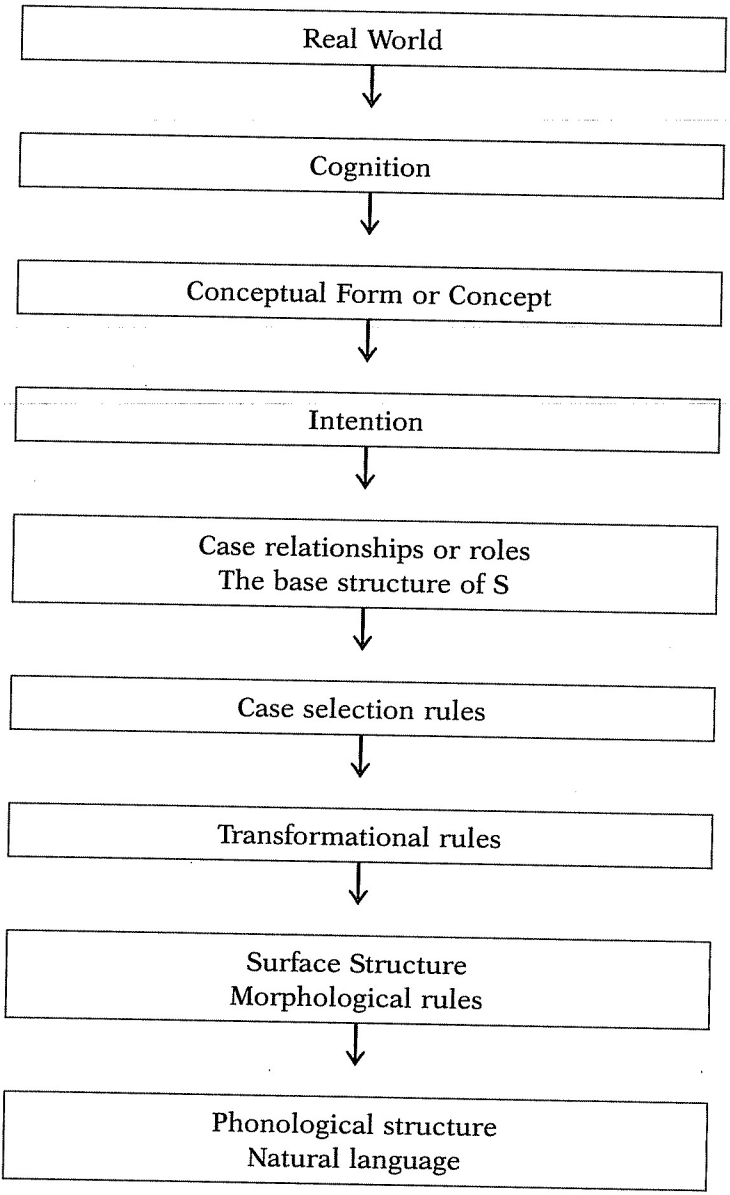
Fillmore changes the number of case categories from his paper to paper and upto last he could not present or fix a final number of case categories, while Pāṇini very clearly talks about the six *kāraka* categories.

Pāṇinian tradition shows some more roles and situations of *kārakas*/cases which are absent in Fillmore, viz.:

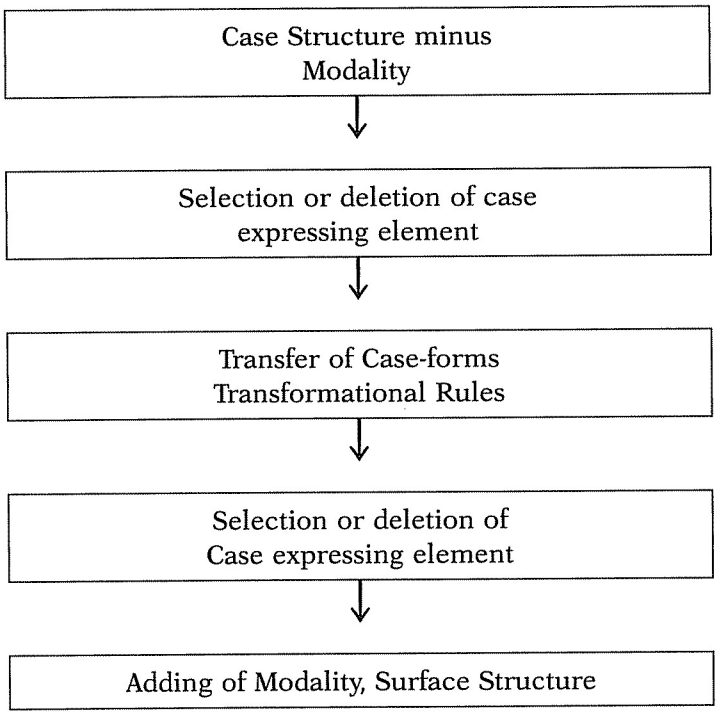
1. If something is *kāraka* for some action, it is no rule that thing may remain as *kāraka* for another verb or action also, that may or may not be.
2. Each previous act is the means or *kāraka* for its succeeding actions.
3. *kārakas* thus have a duality of roles. In their general role, any or all of them can be designated as *kāraka* but it is their specific role that they are given specific nomenclature of *kartā*, *karma* and *karaṇa* etc.

In short Fillmore's Case Grammar and Pāṇini's *kāraka* Theory could be viewed in the following way:

PĀṆINI:


Real World
Cognition
Conceptual Form or Concept
Intention
Case relationships or roles
The base structure of S
Case selection rules
Transformational rules
Surface Structure
Morphological rules
Phonological structure
Natural language

FILLMORE:


Case Structure minus
Modality
Selection or deletion of case
expressing element
Transfer of Case-forms
Transformational Rules
Selection or deletion of
Case expressing element
Adding of Modality, Surface Structure