

Prakrit Textual Criticism

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1. Introduction : Statement of the Problem :

The Prakrit language, or more properly, the Middle Indo-Aryan, belongs to the middle period of the Indo-Aryan language which is the Indic branch of the Indo-Iranian sub-branch of the Indo-European family of languages. So it is a connecting link between old Indo-Aryan (i.e. Vedic and Classical Sanskrit) on the one hand and the New Indo-Aryan languages (such as, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Oriya, Bihari, Assamese etc.) on the other.

Prakrit is a vast subject. It covers literatures for over 1500 years beginning from the time of Mahavira and Buddha (7th or 6th Century B. C.) down to the time of the emergence of New Indo-Aryan (i.e. 1000 A. D.) or even later than that. It includes literature written in Inscriptional Prakrits, nearly about 1500 in number and distributed geographically in almost all parts of India—South, North-West, West, North

and East ; it includes literature in Pali, both canonical and non-canonical, and also literature written by the Jains in Ardha-magadhi, Sauraseni, Maharastri and Apabhramsa. There are some non-Jain poets, such as, Satavahana, Pravarasena, Vakpatiraja, Rajasekhara, Abdul Rahaman and several others. Sanskrit dramas offer us a great variety of Prakrit dialects beginning from the time of 2nd or 1st Century B. C. down to the time of tenth Century A. D. or even later than that. Prakrit being a common speech and its dialects being representatives of different parts of India, the variety of Prakrit dialects makes it more difficult to handle any Prakrit texts easily. It also includes some other Prakrits, such as, Kharosthi, Niya and Gandhari or Prakrit Dhammapada, outside India.

Apart from the Inscriptional Prakrits, our knowledge on Prakrit language and its dialects and sub-dialects, commonly known as "Literary Prakrits", is mainly based on the works of Prakrit grammarians and the dramatic and rhetorical works of Sanskrit writers. The Sanskrit dramaturgists, such as, Bharata, Dhananjaya, Visvanatha, Singhabhupala, Sagaranandi and others, have given in their respective treatises only the names of Prakrit dialects which should be or is to be spoken by persons belonging to different strata of the society. The distribution of Prakrit dialects in Sanskrit dramas is, therefore, based on a sort of socio-linguistic pattern, no matter whether the author of a particular drama belongs to any particular region of India and speaking a particular

dialect of Prakrit. While distributing the Prakrit dialects in a Sanskrit drama, not a single author has shown any lack of knowledge by which the prescriptions of the dramaturgists are generally violated. But at the same time, it should be borne in mind that not a single dramaturgist has ever given any characteristic features of the dialect that they are prescribing for the dramatists. Bharata, of course, has given some general features of Prakrit, but nothing about dialects. So where do the Sanskrit authors get the characteristics from? Did the dramatists know the characteristic features of Prakrit dialects from their own personal experience, or from books current at their times?

Our knowledge about Prakrit and its dialects is mainly based on the grammarians beginning from Vararuci (4th or 5th Cent. A. D.) down to Markandeya (16th or 17th Cent. A. D.)—Vararuci and Hemacandra being the oldest and the best representatives of Prakrit grammarians. Although most of the Prakrit grammarians are later than the Prakrit literature, the features of Prakrit including dialects as prescribed by the grammarians are in major, if not in all cases, preserved in the works of the Prakrit writers and Sanskrit dramatists as we find them printed to-day.

But to a scholar, it seems, there are works where features of dialects as described by the grammarians are not fully preserved, not even in essential forms. Herein lies the main

difficulty in handling a Prakrit passage in a text. When a scholar opens up a Prakrit book and peruses a few passages, he can easily detect that such book is written mainly in X dialect, but it is also interspersed with other Y and Z forms. As a result what happens is this that we assume a different dialect for the justification of variety of forms. This assumption may be partly true at times, but sometimes it seems too much adherence to the manuscripts forgetting that some forms might be scribal errors or wrong representation of spelling, unless they can be justified historically. Therefore, in editing a Prakrit text, the problems which a linguist faces are mainly—

- i) dialectal,
- ii) orthographic, and
- iii) selection of readings.

2. Problems in editing a Prakrit text :

- i) Dialectal

As we have said above, it is a very difficult task to determine the dialect of a Prakrit passage. While editing some Prakrit texts, even scholars like Jacobi, Pischel were puzzled in determining the question of language of the text.

Hermann Jacobi has assumed a Jain Maharastri dialect of those texts which are non-canonical on the one hand but written by the Jains on the other. In a similar way Richard Pischel has postulated a Jain Sauraseni of those Jain texts which are written in Sauraseni. At the time of Pischel, of course, no Digambara canonical literature was pub-

lished, and so he had no comment on them. A few books by Kundakunda and Umasvami were available, and on the basis of those books he had established the Jain Sauraseni. But recently the earliest canonical literature of the Digambara Jains were published first in 1939 and then completed the whole lot in subsequent years by 1960, after which most of the earlier editions were being reprinted. The first of the series is Satkhandagama which is written in Sauraseni dialect, but again influenced by the older Ardha-magadhi and the Maharastri as well, giving it a name which is called by Pischel as Jain Sauraseni. The assumption of these two dialects—Jain Maharastri and Sauraseni is based on a notion that probably these two dialects are different from the normal features of the language as emblamed and treasured up by Prakrit grammarians. But how far they differ from Maharastri and Sauraseni is a moot question and how far these differences are systematic to forma separate dialect is another problem. These are the questions which normally puzzle the readers of Prakrit. With regard to the Inscriptional Prakrits and Pali, the question is not severe, but with the Prakrit and Apabhramsa and partly with the early literary specimens of some modern Indo-Aryan languages, the problem of readings is acute.

Although inscriptions are written documents and we have more reliability in inscriptions than in the manuscripts, the earlier writers do not offer the features of Prakrit that can go on at par with

the inscriptions. Take, for example, the drama of Asvaghosa. We are all grateful to Luders (Bruchstruck buddhistischen Dramen, 1911) who has presented the fragments of some Buddhist dramas discovered in Turkestan and dated by him in the first or second cent. A. D. In his opinion, there are three types of Prakrit dialect employed by Asvaghosa in his plays. To use his terminology, they are old Sauraseni, old Magadhi and old Ardha-magadhi. The Dusta's speech in three important points is similar to the Magadhi of the Prakrit grammarians, it substitutes l for r, reduces all three sibilants to s'; and has e in the nominative singular of masculine nouns in a. But it ignores the rules of the grammarians in certain respects; hard letters are not softend (e.g., bhoti), nor soft consonants elided (e.g., Kumuda-gandha), when inter-vocalic. There is no tendency to cerebralize n and in Kālanā the dental replaces the cerebral. Fuller forms of consonants remain in hangho (hamho) and baṃbhaṇa (bamhaṇa). Certain consonantal changes are irregular: ry > jj and not yy; e.g., ajja, śc > cch, kṣ > kkh, not sk or cch, ṣṭ > ṭṭh not ṣṭ, kiśśa > kīśa, ahakam than ahake, hake, haje, (Keith, Sanskrit Drama, p. 86).

But it is a point worth noting here that not a single grammarian has ever described any old features of Sauraseni, Magadhi or Ardha-magadhi. How should we justify these forms then? Should we reconsider the judgment of the manuscripts?

ii) Orthographic

The orthography of manuscripts is sometimes responsible for the selection of a reading particularly of a Jain manuscript. The peculiar way of writing na and ña, y and th, ś and ph, jh and bh and many other conjuncts makes us responsible for a wrong selection. Unless one is thoroughly conversant with the calligraphy of Mss, one cannot do any justice to the reading of a Prakrit passage. I need not dwell upon this point here in detail.

iii) Selection of readings

Leaving aside the orthographic representation of Prakrit, we shall now pass on to the next problem, i.e., selection of readings. It is a fact worth noting here that sometimes some editions are responsible for the peculiar, forceful and incongruous reading of a text. In this respect, we shall divide our examples into two groups. In group A, some of the grammatical texts are discussed, where the selection of a particular reading, instead of another, has caused us trouble in determining the linguistic features of a particular language. In group B, the readings of some Prakrit texts are analysed.

A. Grammatical texts

Let us first take Senart's edition of Kaccayana's Pali Grammar. Under the sutra—jāyāya tudam-jāni patimhi (II. 7. 24. No. 34)—jāyā iccetāya tudamjāni iccete ādesā honti patimhi pare. jāyāya pati tudam pati jāyāya pati jānipati. Senart has read the sentence as tu-dampati meaning 'husband and wife', and after that the word is included in all the Pali Dictionaries. But most of the scho-

lars including Senart himself were not happy with the reading. The tu prefixed to dampati is difficult to solve. T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede's Pali English Dictionary, The Pali Text Society, London, (1972) has explained the formation of the word thus :

“Tudampati (dual) husband and wife. [tu=dial. for du, Skt dve. dampati from dama=domus Skt. daypati = Gk. despotes ; cf. also Kern Toev-II. 93. who compares tuvantuva for duvanduva].”

In reality, the word is not tudampati, but simply, dampati as in Sanskrit, meaning husband and wife. tu is, in fact an emphatic particle meaning 'but', and the passage means, 'but (=tu) when jāyā is compounded with pati, we get the compound as dampati, jānipati and jāyāpati.

Coming to the field of Prakrit, the situation seems to be worse. For one word, we could have several forms in Prakrit and at times it is difficult to think which one is correct. Take, for example, the reading isi in Cowell's edition of Vararuci's Prakrita-prakasa. Cowell has accepted the reading isi with a short initial i under the vṛtti of a sutra id-īśat-pakva-svapna-vetasa-vyājana-mṛdangāṅgāreṣu, 1.3 i.e., (in a group of words beginning with īśat etc. i is substituted for the first a), whereas he has given the variant reading with long ī in the foot-note as īsi. In fact, the reading with long ī is the correct one, as in all the editions of all Prakrit grammarians so far known to us, the word īsi with long ī at the initial is given, which is also Cowell's reading in

the foot-note. Moreover, there is no reason why the Sanskrit long ī in īṣat should be short in Prakrit. The use of this word is also found with long ī (cf. īsīsi cumbiāim etc. in Sakuntala Act I, prologue). As Cowell has given the alternative reading in the foot-note, this should not be taken as printing mistake. The question of dialect will not also help us in solving this reading.

Hultzsch's edition of Simharaja's Prakitarupavataṛa offers us another difficulty. Simharaja has based his grammar on Hemacandra and Trivikrama, as far as examples are concerned. But with regard to ,l, Hultzsch has edited his text with cerebral ,l in cases where others will have simple or dental l. In fact, cerebral ,l is a rare occurrence in Prakrit. The reason that Hultzsch's edition contains cerebral ,l is due to the fact that he has edited his text from a South Indian manuscript preserved in the Royal Asiatic Society of London, where Sanskrit l is written as ,l, which Hultzsch thinks a variety of Prakrit. That is why in Bhasa's dramas this cerebral l is preserved. On the basis of this feature L. D. Barnett once thought that there was a southern school of Prakrit grammarians as well. (JRAS, 1921).

While giving the characteristic features of Sakari, Purusottama in his Prakritanusasana has given two sutras as

ṣṭah ṣṭah XIII. 3.

Viṣṭarasya XIV. 4.

Some have suggested "na viṣṭarasy" i.e.

but not in viṣṭara. Even then some scholars think that the sutras are not clear. Actually I feel that the reading should be ṣṭah ṣṭo viṣṭarasya as one sutra. From the method of framing the sutras, it is seen that the preceding sutra is duṣprekṣa-saḍṛkṣayoh kṣasya kkho vā (XIII. 2) where words are particularly mentioned for the Sakari dialect, it is quite possible also that the next sutra should contain a word as well, and the subsequent sutras are also framed with regard to some words. There is no reason to think ṣṭah ṣṭah as a general rule.

B. Prakrit texts

Let us now consider some of the textual readings of Prakrit.

Sten Konow's edition of Karpuramanjari (KM) is a great problem. Here the problem is not only of reading but also of language. According to general belief the KM is written in a Sauraseni dialect. But Konow has never mentioned it in so many words. In his opinion Rajasekhara's KM is written in a sort of mixed Prakrit—between Maharaṣṭri and Sauraseni. In his edition what we find is that the verses are in Maharaṣṭri and the proses are in Sauraseni following the dictum as laid down in the works of dramaturgy. After 35 years, M. Ghosh edited that text again. In his edition all the passages are in Sauraseni. Konow has consulted several Mss, and some of the best Mss do contain the readings in Sauraseni even in verses which he has either corrected for the sake of dramaturgy or neglected as improper

readings. Ghosh has done just the opposite. For example :

Sten Konow : hou (Ms. bhodu), Ghosh : bhodu
phurau (Ms. phuradu), phuradu
etc.

With regard to some of the readings of Desinamamala, Pischel remarks :

"Another great difficulty was raised by the examples which Hemacandra adds at the end of the commentary on each stanza of the ekārtha śabdās. These examples are either void of all sense, or of an incredible stupidity.It was a most disgusting task to make out the sense, or rather non-sense, of these examples, some of which have remained rather obscure to me." (Pischel's edition of Desinamamala, Poona, 1938, pp. 29-30)

This remark of Pischel depends upon the selection, of readings which, at times, seems to be ineffective poetically. Let us take one example to demonstrate this truth.

Pischel's reading :

aḍae suṇāhi ayaḍe aṇāḍa-aḍayaṇa-pie sarasi
kāle/aṇḍhaṇḍhuma-viṇaya-varāha-vvāṭṭhāṇaṁ
tamittha aṇaḍo kiṁ

(Hc. I. 18. verse 15)

The English translation on the basis of this reading will be as follows :

"O you the courtesan, hear(me), oh well, are you remembering the time favourable to a paramour and a courtesan ? Well is the (meeting) place of a paramour and an unchaste lady, is there any paramour ?"

The assumption of the reading suṇāhi meaning śṛiṇu ('hear me') and ayaḍe as independent words in Pischel's edition followed by other editions, gives us a sense that does not appear to be happy and consistent. But these two words when combined suṇāhi + ayaḍe = Skt sunābhi-kūpa acting as a bahuvrīhi compound representing vocative singular form of a feminine base ending in a and referring to aḍaye as an attributive adjunct, will present us a good sense, because the comparison nābhikūpa, nābhigarta etc. is rather usual in Indian literature, and even Hemacandra uses this comparison more than once in the same book.

The next difficulty is with the root sarasi. The use of the Prakrit root sara as an equivalent to Sanskrit root smṛ 'to remember' is far less common than the Sanskrit root sr 'to go'. And it may be added here that of the root smṛ, the form sumara very often puts in appearance in Prakrit literature, and the form sara is extremely rare. Hence I suggest sarasi meaning 'go'. It is also suggested that aṇāḍa—aḍayaṇa-pie should be taken in a locative form qualifying the word kāle, i. e., 'the time pleasing to the paramours and courtesans' which no doubt yields a good sense, happy and consistent. and sarasi in the sense of 'going', its object; being aṇḍhaṇḍhum, when aviṇaya-varāha-vvāṭṭhāṇaṁ will stand in opposition to it, i. e., the going of an unchaste lady to the well which is the meeting place of the paramours and courtesans.

The Prakrit word tam should stand for

tad, meaning 'therefore'; so tam ittha aṇaḍo kim should be translated as 'is there any paramour (waiting for you) ?' So the translation of the improved reading should be as follows :

"Oh, you the courtesan whose naval cavity is like a well, are you going at this time pleasing to the paramour and the courtesan to (that) well which is the meeting place of the paramour and the courtesan ? Why, is there any paramour (waiting for you) ?"

It is very difficult to get a very good edition of Prakrit texts. Take, for example, the editions of Kalidasa's Sakuntala by two eminent scholars—Monier-Williams and Richard Pischel. Both have claimed that they have paid much attention to the readings of the text and have carefully preserved the Mss. Pischel has an advantage over Monier-Williams with regard to Prakrit passages, which, Pischel believes, have been presented correctly. These two editions differ so much that they represent two different recensions. But with regard to the treatment of labial b and semivowel v, these two scholars vary too much. About the retention of v, Pischel is in favour of the grammarians, while Monier-Williams has a strong predilection for the historical development of the sound and prefers b. The common reader is at a loss to decide which course to adopt. This problem is summed up in my book—The Eastern School of Prakrit Grammarians, (p.99) which is quoted below :

"He (i.e. Pischel) says that the gramma-

rians are not to be corrected with the help of the manuscripts ; but the manuscripts are to be improved upon with the help of the grammarians. But it can be added here that the peculiar characteristics of an eastern Prakrit, supported by the eastern grammarians should not be rectified with the evidence of the western grammar. So the Prakrit readings, in regard to labial b, cannot be summarily rejected. It should also be noted that the readings given by Monier-Williams seem to be based on an outlook of the historical background answering to the reliability of one or two other readings of the different manuscripts, while it will appear as almost certain that the readings given by Pischel reveal a strong predilection for grammar."

In the Jain canonical texts the problem is different. We are all aware of mistakes that a scribe makes while copying the Mss from another one, or writing from the dictation of a person. The copyist may or may not be educated in the subject. As a result the Mss may contain some mistakes which obviously defy the genuineness of the language. These mistakes are at times regarded as "archaic" or earlier features of a language. Take, for an example, the one reading of the Uttaradhyayana sutra (I. 5)

kaṇakunḍagaṃ caittāṇaṃ viṭṭhaṃ bhuṃjai
sūyare

evaṃ sīlaṃ caittāṇaṃ dussīle ramaī mie

Here the reading with long ī in ramaī is difficult to accept, but for "archaic". Similar types of readings of long ī of verbs, such as vuccaī (I. 2), nikkanjjaī (1.4) are abundant.

The readings with short i are also available in the foot-notes.

Besides these are orthographic problems in Jain texts. The use of ya-śruti, dental and cerebral n, the sporadic cases of voiceless changing into voiced, and so on. These problems will remain as long as the principles of editing Prakrit texts are not followed.

3. Manuscripts vs Grammarians :

Having discussed some difficulties and anomalies of Prakrit texts, what remains now is a great task for the scholars to determine the principles we follow in editing a Prakrit text. The basic problem is whether the grammarians or the manuscripts are to be followed. It is not easy to answer the question, particularly when most of the scholars think that any kind of linguistic phenomenon is possible in Prakrit. Perhaps under the tacit influence of this so-called ideas, some of the Prakrit forms have been incorporated in some editions which sometimes baffle and betray some of the basic notions of Prakrit language including dialects as enunciated by Prakrit grammarians. It is true that Prakrit grammarians are not very old, and most of the authors belong at a time when the language was almost stereotyped like Sanskrit. As a result the Prakrit features as embalmed and treasured up by the grammarians vary from author to author, except a few general forms which are common to all. The texts of Prakrit manuscripts are not always uniformly common; the

variations are such that it is difficult to follow any particular reading from the Mss. The copyists are not always learned, moreso, they may not have any knowledge or a very limited knowledge of the language and hence every possibility of making mistakes. The phonetics of the language is not always regular. Sometimes the copyists add something to the Mss. to improve upon the text. It is, therefore, not an easy task to edit a Prakrit text, as is normally the case with Sanskrit or with Pali.

4. Emendation :

It is my personal feeling that some sorts of emendations are necessary to edit a Prakrit text—if the Mss. of a particular text do not help us much—recording, of course, the variants at the foot-note. (Cf. my edition of Kramadisvara's Prakrit Grammar, § 26, pp 19-22).

5. Conclusion :

The above are some of the specimens taken at random to show the linguistic problems of Prakrit and Prakrit textual criticism. It is indeed very difficult to form direct cut-and-dry principles for this purpose, unless we base our arguments on some principles by which grammarians are involved in the matter. In conclusion, I can just say that I have endeavoured to present a picture of editing Prakrit texts, and leave with the readers to judge its value or revalue of some Prakrit passages presented in this dissertation.

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