

Assimilation of conjunct consonants in Prakrit and Greek

Dr. (Mrs.) HARIPRIYA MISRA

In a recent book published in a couple of months back, a renowned scholar of Indo-European Linguistics rightly remarks that the Middle Indo-Aryan studies have been comparatively neglected for Indo-European comparative grammar. In the same context the same scholar further says that from the point of view of linguistic change Greek is comparable to Middle Indo-Aryan. But in that book no actual comparison is instituted perhaps because there was no scope for the same. In the following paper I propose to take up one important aspect of linguistic change i.e. assimilation of conjunct consonants which will substantiate the above view. With this end in view for the first time a comparative study of assimilation of conjunct consonants in Prakrit and Greek is presented here.

As a rule in Middle Indo-Aryan no heterogenous conjunct is allowed. They are either assimilated or divided by anaptyxis. In Greek several heterogenous conjunct are allowed but many are assimilated. The process of assimilation works according to certain principles in Prakrit and Greek which are discussed below.

The general rule for assimilation in Prakrit is that between equals the second prevails and between unequals the stronger prevails. In Greek also between two equal plosives the second prevails.

Moreover the consonants can be arranged according to their strength in decreasing order as follows as for as assimilation in Prakrit is concerned.

(i) Mutes (ii) nasals (iii) *d* (iv) *S* (v) *V* (vi) *ʃ* (vii) *r*.

But Greek shows the reverse order of strength as far as assimilation of unequal consonants is concerned.

Now a comparative study of Prakrit and Greek is taken up considering the rules of assimilation given above. According to the above rule between equals the second prevails i. e. $k+t > tt$, $g+dh > ddh$, $d+g > gg$ etc.

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e.g. Skt. *yukta* > Pkt. *jutta*

Skt. *dugdha* > Pkt. *duddha*

Skt. *udgama* > Pkt. *uggama*

Similar phenomenon is also noteworthy in Old Greek where in a combination of plosive + plosive the second prevails i. e. *d/t + p* > *pp*.

e.g. Gk *hoppos* < **hod·pos*

In a combination of mute + nasal, mute prevails in Prakrit and nasal is assimilated. i. e. *g + n* > *gg*, *gh + n* > *ggh* etc.

e.g. Skt. *agniḥ* > Pkt. *aggi*

Skt. *viḡhna* > Pkt. *viḡgha*

But Greek does not agree with Prakrit in this respect, because in case of mute + nasal, nasal prevails in Greek and the plosive becomes a class nasal.

i.e. *p/b/ph + m* > *mm*

e.g. *grāmma* (< *-ph-m-*) and *bn* > *mn*

e.g. *amnos* (< **abnos*) and *gn* < *gn* (written *gn*)

e.g. *gignomai* (< **gignomai*)

In case of a combination of mute + *l*, mute prevails and *l* is assimilated in Pkt.

e.g. Skt. *valkala* > Pkt. *vakkala*

Skt. *alpa* > Pkt. *appa*

But Greek shows the reverse example of this principle. In Greek in a combination of plosive + liquid, liquid prevails.

i. e. *dl* > *ll* in Greek.

e. g. *hellā'* < **sedlā*

In a combination of mute and sibilant when sibilant comes first it is assimilated and the mute is aspirated in Prakrit. i. e. *st* < *th*. e. g. *asti* > *atthi*. But when the sibilant follows the mute they become *cch*. i. e. *ts* < *cch*, *ps* > *cch* etc.

e.g. Skt *vatsa* < Pkt *vaccha*

Skt *matsara* > Pkt *macchara*

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Skt *apsarā* > Pkt *accharā*

But *S*+mute is not assimilated in Greek e. g. *gkt esti* (< *IE esti*),
gk *basko* < *IE g^wmsko* etc.

Mute+sibilant is sometimes assimilated in Greek.

i. e. dental (*t/th/d*)+*s* > *ss* in Gk

e. g. *pod+si* > *possi*

ornith+s > *ornīs* (< **orniss*) 'bird'.

V with a mute is assimilated and the mute prevails in Prakrit.

i. e. *kv* > *kk* and

jv > *jj* etc.

e.g. Skt *pakva* > Pkt *pakka*

Skt *ujjala* > Pkt *ujjala*

But in Greek unassimilated *v* is lost or becomes *u*. In most of the conjunct in *V*, *v* is lost. In a few cases it has a clear trace of assimilation. (It should be noted that in conjuncts *v* always follows another consonant, it does not precede. That is the case with *Y*)

i. e. *IE kw* > *pp* in Greek and *tw* > dialectally *ss* or *tt*. e. g. *IE ekwos* > Gk *hippos*

IE q^wewares > Gk *tessares, tettares*

Y with a mute is assimilated and the mute prevails in Prakrit.

i. e. *ky* > *kk* and

bhy > *bbh* etc.

e.g. Skt *cāṇakya* > Pkt *cāṇakka*

Skt *abhyantara* > Pkt *abbhantara*

Y with a mute is assimilated in Gk and it has various treatments depending on the preceding consonants.

i. e. *t/th+y* > *ss* in Gk and *k/kh+y* > dialectally *tt/ss*.

e.g. *IE medhyos* > **methyos* > Gk *messos/ mesos*.

**pikya* > *pittā* / *pissā* in Gk.

r with a mute is assimilated and the mute prevails in Prakrit.

i. e. *rg* > *gg*, *kr* > *kk* etc.

e.g. Skt *mārga* > Pkt *magga*

Skt *cakra* > Pkt *cakka* etc.

But *r* with a mute is not assimilated in Greek.

e.g. IE *pro* > *pra* in Gk

IE *rudhros* > *eruthros* in Gk.

There are also other cases of comparison of assimilation between Prakrit and Greek. Only the important ones are dealt with in this paper. Others are omitted for the time being.

Thus Middle Indo-Aryan and Greek both have assimilated consonants. The difference lies in the fact that the strength of consonants differ in MIA and Gk as shown above. Further it is also observable that Gk does not assimilate some conjuncts like first MIA where conjuncts with *r* and *s* are not assimilated in some dialects. (e. g. Asokan Inscription *asti bramāṇa* etc). So Greek is more like Prakrit than Sanskrit, since Skt does not assimilate any heterogeneous conjuncts in internal sandhi.

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Lecturer in Greek Sampurnanand Sanskrit
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