

॥ సంస్కృతస్య మాహాత్మ్యమ్ ॥

.. The Importance of Sanskrit ..

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భాషాసు ముఖ్యా మధురా ప్రాచీనా విశ్వతోముఖీ ।
 భాతి సంస్కృతభాషేయం సర్వదా సర్వదా సతీ ॥ ౧॥
 ఉన్నతేన స్థితిమతా హిమవద్భూభృతా యథా ।
 త్వజ్జత్తరజ్గయా పుణ్యసరితా గజ్గయా యథా ॥ ౨॥
 తథైవ భారతోర్వీయం దివ్యసంస్కృతభాషయా ।
 సరస్వత్యాపి విఖ్యాతా విభాతి వసుధాతలే ॥ ౩॥
 ఇయం భారతసంస్కారకోశాగారస్య కుఞ్చికా ।
 భాషాంతరాణాం మాతా వా ధాత్రి వా స్తస్యదా చిరమ్ ॥ ౪॥
 సంస్కారవత్సో జగతి సన్తు భాషాః పరఃశతమ్ ।
 తథాపి సంస్కృతాభిఖ్యా నాన్యస్యా దృశ్యతే క్వచిత్ ॥ ౫॥
 బృహస్పతిః పురా దైవిం ప్రోవాచేన్ద్రాయ భారతీమ్ ।
 ఇన్ద్రేణ వ్యాకృతా పశ్చాదియం దేవహితైషిణా ॥ ౬॥
 సంస్కృత్య సంస్కృత్య పదానీహ వాక్యం కరోతి హి ।
 తేన సంస్కృతభాషేతి భాష్యకారః పతజ్జలిః ॥ ౭॥
 ఆర్యాణాం మాతృభాషేయమార్యావర్తనివాసినామ్ ।
 ఆసీత్ పురా పాణినీయే భాషాశబ్దేన వర్ణితా ॥ ౮॥
 మృతభాషేతి జల్పన్తు మృతసంజీవినిమిమామ్ ।
 పామరాః పణ్డితమ్మన్యాః పరమార్థపరాజ్ఞుభాః ॥ ౯॥
 పూర్ణాపి స్వీచకారైషా భాషాంతరపదాన్యపి ।
 సరిదోభ్య నీరమాదత్తే సమూర్ణోఽప్యమృతాసాం నిధిః ॥ ౧౦॥
 దేశభాషావికాసార్థం తత్తద్ భాషాసు పణ్డితాః ।
 స్వీకృర్వన్తి యథాకామం సంస్కృతాత్ పదసంచయమ్ ॥ ౧౧॥
 “సమృద్ధిభ్యాం కరోతౌ సుత్” భూషణార్థే విధీయతే ।
 తేన భూషితభాషేతి విఖ్యాతా పాణినేర్మతే ॥ ౧౨॥
 న కేవలం భూషితా సా భూషయత్యపి భాషాన్
 కుమారసమ్భవే కావ్యే కాలిదాసవచో యథా ।

“సంస్కారవత్సేవ గిరా మనీషీ

తయా స పూతశ్చ విభూషితశ్చ” ఇతి ॥ ౧౩॥

ద్విజానాం వ్యవయహారో హి సంస్కృతేనైవ సర్వదా ।

ఆసీదితి జ్ఞాతమిహ వాల్మీకేర్వచనామృతాత్ ॥ ౧౪॥

ఆరణ్యకాణ్డే వాతాపికథాయాం దృశ్యతే కిల ।

“ధృత్వేల్వతో విప్రరూపం సంస్కృతే వ్యాజహార హ” ॥ ౧౫॥

“ధారయన్ బ్రాహ్మణం రూపమిల్వలః సంస్కృతం వదన్ ।

ఆమస్తయతి విప్రాన్ స్మ శ్రాద్ధముద్దిశ్య నిర్భుణః” ॥ ౧౬॥

హనుమత్కృతశజ్జాపి సుందరే కాణ్డ ఈరితా ।

ఏతదేవ జ్ఞాపయతి సంస్కృతస్య స్థితిం తదా ॥ ౧౭॥

“యది వాచం ప్రదాస్యమి ద్విజాతిరివ సంస్కృతమ్” ।

రావణం మన్యమానా సా సీతా భీతా మవిష్యతి ॥ ౧౮॥

“యతో వాచో నివర్తంతే ఆప్రాప్య మనసా సహ” ।

చిద్రూపిణీ సా వాగేవ శబ్దబ్రహ్మహ్వయా పరా ॥ ౧౯॥

దివోఽవతీర్ణా గజేవ లోకానుగ్రహతత్పరా ।

ప్రత్యాత్మవృత్తిదృష్టా సా పశ్యంతీ ప్రతిభా మతా ॥ ౨౦॥

భాషావైవిధ్యమాపన్నా మధ్యమారూపమాశ్రితా ।

వక్తృశ్రోతృమనఃసిద్ధా వర్తతే సంహృతక్రమా ॥ ౨౧॥

ధ్వనిరూపమథాపన్నా వైఖరీ వాక్ ప్రకాశతే ।

వ్యవహారే మనుష్యాణాం సాహాయ్యం కుర్వతీ సదా ॥ ౨౨॥

వాల్మీకివ్యాసముఖ్యైశ్చ లాలితా పోషితా చిరమ్ ।

జీయాత్ సమాః సహస్రం సా జ్యోతిరూపా సరస్వతీ ॥ ౨౩॥

అశక్నువద్భివ్యర్హర్తుం దేశభాషాన్తరే బుద్ధైః ।

స్వీకృతం సంస్కృతమితి శ్రీహర్షోఽప్యవదత్ సుధీః ॥ ౨౪॥

అన్యోన్యభాషాన్వబోధభీతేః

సంస్కృతిమాసు వ్యవహారవత్సు ।

దిగ్భ్యః సమేతేషు నరేషు తేషు

సౌవర్ణవర్ణో స్వజనైరచిహ్నా ॥ ౨౫॥

- నైషధ ౧౦.౩౪

కాశ్మీరే జన్మభాషావత్ సంస్కృతం ప్రాకృతం తథా ।
స్త్రీణామపి ముంఖేష్వాసీదిత్యేవం బిల్వణోఽబ్రవీత్ ॥ ౨౬॥
బ్రూమః సారస్వతజనిభువః కిం నిధేః కౌతుకానామ్
యస్యానేకాద్భుతగుణకథాకీర్ణకర్ణామృతస్య ।
యత్ర స్త్రీణామపి కిమపరం జన్మభాషావదేవ
ప్రత్యావాసం విలసతి వచః సంస్కృతం ప్రాకృతం చ ॥ ౨౭॥
- విక్రమాంజ్ఞదేవచరితమ్ ౧౮.౬

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The Importance of Sanskrit

by Shri K. Kunjunni Raja

Sanskrit is one of the most important languages of the Indo-European family and has a very rich and continuous history of nearly five thousand years. As a result of the patient and laborious comparative study of the various languages like Sanskrit, Old Persian, Greek, Latin, German, and English in the beginning of the 19th century, it has been shown by scholars that all these can be traced back to a common source which is termed Proto-Indo-European (PIE). It is generally believed that the original home of the Indo-Europeans was somewhere in Eastern Europe north of the Black Sea and Western Asia and that the ancestor language (PIE) common to the sub-families was spoken in a fairly unified form with minor dialectal variations. This ancestral language

must have resembled some of its more archaic descendants such as Greek and Sanskrit rather closely.

The ‘discovery of Sanskrit’ by the West is usually associated with the memorable utterance of Sir William Jones in his third annual address before the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, on February 2, 1786 (Asiatic Researches, vol. I. 1788, pp. 422 f) :

“The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed that no philosopher could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists ; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forceful, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a different idiom, have the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the Old Persian might be added to the same family.”

This statement of Sir William Jones is considered as the starting point of comparative Linguistics of the Indo-European languages. He came to India as the Judge of the Supreme Court of India in 1783; he founded the Asiatic Society on February 2, 1782. He translated Kalidasa’s Shakuntala into English in 1789 on reading which the great German poet philosopher Goethe went into raptures.

The year 1990 was declared ‘the Sanskrit year’ by the Government of India to celebrate the bicentenary of this translation and to focus attention on the value and significance of Sanskrit culture. A seminar on Sanskrit literature was conducted by the U.K. centre of the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan at London on October 20 and 21, 1990. Mathur Krishnamurthy, Executive Director of the Bhavan, was the moving force behind the seminar. The late Professor K. Krishnamurti gave the keynote address. Among Indian scholars who participated were Ramaranjan Mukherji (Calcutta), the late R.C. Dvivedi

(Jaipur), K. Kunjunni Raja and the late S.S. Janaki (Madras). Indian High Commissioner Mr. Kuldip Nayar said in his inaugural address: 'Sanskrit was once proposed as the 'lingua franca' of India, but for various reasons never became so. Nevertheless, the spirit of Sanskrit still today represents the hidden heritage which looks at the man rather than at his station in life.'

Sir William Jones also made a conjecture that Sandracottos of the ancient Greek writers was Chandragupta Maurya of the Puranas; this has been accepted by almost all scholars, and this has proved to be a pivotal one for ancient Indian history and chronology.

The 'discovery of Sanskrit' by Sir William Jones led to the comparative grammatical studies of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Old Persian and other languages. Bothlingk and Roth published the Sanskrit- German Dictionary in several volumes (St. Petersburg Dictionary, 1852-75). H.H. Wilson, the first Boden Professor at Oxford translated the Rigveda and Vishnu Purana with notes and wrote on the Indian Theatre.

Professor Max Miller's contribution to the popularization of Sanskrit has been the most important in the nineteenth century. He made a critical edition of the entire Rigveda with Sayana's Bhashya in about 25 years (1852-75). He also conceived a project of translating into English, with the collaboration of many scholars, the 'Sacred Books of the East' in a series of 49 volumes with a 50th volume of Index by Winternitz. He wanted to include the Old and New Testaments also in this series, but did not press for it because of objections from orthodox Christian scholars. Max Muller introduced three major academic disciplines in England -Comparative Philosophy, Comparative Mythology and Comparative Religion. As a Sanskritist he translated the Hitopadesa, Meghaduta, part of the Rigveda, the Dhammapada and some Upanishad-s'. Among his popular books are The six systems of Indian Philosophy, -Vedanta Philosophy, India -What can it Teach us? (Lectures for candidates of I.C.S.).

Although Max Muller was suitable for Boden Professorship after H.H. Wilson's retirement, he was not selected partly because he was a German and not pro-

Catholic. Monier Williams, the rival candidate was selected by a majority of votes. After the critical edition of the Rigveda and the series of the Sacred Books of the East of which 31 were devoted to the Indian texts alone, he retired in 1875 as Professor of Comparative Philosophy, for completing the preparation of the Sacred Books of the East. He died in 1900.

Max Muller did not visit India. He said he did not want to go to Benaras, for he was sure to be disillusioned if he saw the city as it was then. Vivekananda visited him in England. Max Muller appreciated the work done by Tilak. Relying on Vedic reference to Orion(మృగ Mriga) as the place where the Vernal Equinox was, Tilak suggested B.C. 4500 as the date of the Rigveda ; in the Brahmas, it had receded to Pleides(కృత్తిక Krttika) showing its date as c. B.C. 2500. On receiving Tilak's book Max Muller wrote to him that he was a bit skeptical, but it might be that he was not responsive to new ideas because of his old age. Tilak was released from prison because of the intervention of Max Muller who wrote a petition to Queen Victoria. His love for Sanskrit prompted him to have his name in Sanskrit as మోక్షమాల MokShamula.

Max Muller's Death centenary will be celebrated in December 2000 at Calcutta under the auspices of the Max Muller Bhavan of India and the Government of India.

Col. H.S. Olcott, Founder President of the theosophical Society, got the inspiration to specialize in the publication of the Upanishad-s by the Adyar Library from a letter written to him by Max Muller in 1888

(Later published in The Theosophist, December 1888) :

"It seems to me considering the higher object of the Theosophical Society, that you ought to publish a complete and correct edition of the Upanishad-s...The Upanishad-s are after all the most important portion of the Veda-s for philosophical purposes, and if the Theosophical Society means to do any real good, it must take its stand on the Upanishad-s and on nothing else. At present the issue of a beautiful and correct edition of the text seems to me almost a duty to be performed by the Theosophical Society."

From the affinity between the Avestan language and the Vedic Sanskrit, it is inferred that the forefathers of the Vedic Aryans and of the Iranians lived together and spoke a common language, Indo-Iranian. Hence the history of the evolution of Sanskrit has to be traced through the Old Indo-Iranian. Even though it is assumed that nomadic bands of Aryans migrated into India through the Northwest passes in successive waves, there is no reference to this migration in the Rigveda, the first recorded document of the Indo-Aryan. The Sanskrit language preserves many of the ancient features of PIE in its phonology and morphology, and Indian grammarians like పాణిని Panini (B.C. 500) have analyzed the language into its constituent elements and described the structure so thoroughly as to make the language almost transparent.

Sanskrit served as a link language not only within India but even outside in the South-east Asian countries. Its influence on foreign languages and even on modern Indian languages has been vast and immense. Sanskrit was a polished language of the elite Brahmins, the శిష్టా Shista-s of ఆర్యావర్త Aryavarta and was confined to the orthodox literary circles, but it was propagated throughout the mainland of Asia up to Japan and China by the Buddhists, and to South-east Asia through Saivism and Vaishnavism by Brahmins, though some Smṛti texts prohibit sea-voyage to the Brahmins as against their వర్ణశ్రమధర్మ Varnasramadharmas.

The first epigraphical documents available to us are Asoka's inscriptions in the third century B.C. which are in ప్రాకృత Prakrit with various peculiarities on the basis of geographical locations. Sanskrit is found replacing Prakrit gradually; and Rudradaman's inscription in the second century A.D. is the first Sanskrit inscription available. But in Indo-China the earliest inscription known is the Vocanh inscription, found in the Champa country, which is in Sanskrit. No Prakrit inscription is found outside India. Among Middle Indo-Aryan languages it is only పాలీ Pali that has spread outside India from Ceylon as the language of హినాయన Hinayana Buddhism. In India inscription in

mixed Sanskrit and Prakrit, and literature in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit began to appear.

Pali and అర్థమాగధీ Ardhamagadhi developed as the special languages of Hinayana Buddhism and Jainism respectively; but for the sake of prestige, Sanskrit began to be used especially in Mahayana Buddhism. In India along with the various Prakrits, Dravidian languages, especially Tamil, developed and became popular.

Facing such a diversity of language a common means of communication became necessary. During the period of Buddhist propaganda and later of Hinduism this link language was Sanskrit. In spite of its sophisticated nature, Sanskrit was regularly taught in schools not only in India, but even abroad, mostly by Brahmins. In India also Sanskrit was the link language used in the different regions. Post-Vedic religious texts as well as texts on medicine, astronomy, philosophy, art and architecture, and important literary works were written directly in Sanskrit itself in spite of the development of regional languages.

Itsing in the seventh century studied Sanskrit at Palambang in Sumatra on his way from China to India. Many foreign scholars could communicate in Sanskrit, though their command in the language was not perfect. Sanskrit MSS. were brought from India to Central Asia and Tibet. The propagation of Indian culture abroad has been through Sanskrit. Panini's grammar, దణ్డిన్ Dandins కావ్యదర్శన Kavyadarsa and the అష్టాంగహృదయ Astangahrdaya were taught and translated in Tibet and Mongolia. Sanskrit was also used for inscriptions, perhaps for prestige. They were in kavya style. Sanskrit inscriptions of Cambodia are rich and vast. Brahmins married princesses there and their children were considered as Brahmins. శైవగమ Saivagama-s and ఇష్టరాత్రగమ Pancaratragama-s were popular. The local languages were influenced by Sanskrit loan words.

The importance of the study of Sanskrit goes far beyond the aesthetic value of its literature. Sanskrit is the key to most of the branches of the study of

Indian civilization and the contribution of this civilization to the development of human thought and culture are considerable. The study of Indian classics is the foundation for the study of one of the major and ancient civilizations of the world.

One special feature of this Indian cultural inheritance is the unbroken continuity between the most modern and the most ancient phases of Indian thought extending for nearly 5000 years. Again, it is not an isolated existence. India had continuous and timely contacts with Babylonians, Iranians, Greeks, Egyptians, Chinese and Arabs, and has absorbed and assimilated the best from their civilizations without losing her own individuality. 'If her basic culture survived these contacts, there must have been something in the culture itself which gave it the dynamic strength to do so, some inner vitality and understanding of life.'

(A.A. Macdonall)

Unique Features of Sanskrit

Sanskrit is universally recognized as the language containing the earliest literature in the world; one or two other languages may contain some earlier inscription, but not a whole literature. It has been established as one of the ancient branches of the Indo-European family of languages, an elder sister of the ancient classical languages of Europe like Greek and Latin; modern North Indian languages are derived from it, and even the South Indian languages are saturated with Sanskrit loan words. For expanding the vocabulary to cope with the development of civilization, all languages of India and some of the neighboring languages like Singhalese, Burmese and Malaysian depend heavily on Sanskrit loan words. The discovery of Sanskrit as a sister language of the West made it an essential tool to understand the origin and early stages of the European languages, and European scholars began to study Sanskrit as their own language. It may be said that there is more awareness and a growing interest in the West for Sanskrit studies than in India. This is because Sanskrit

is recognized as the earliest member of the Indo-European family .

When studying languages with the help of computers there are two levels to be distinguished the word level and the sentence level ; the former deals with the total amount of information contained in separate words, irrespective of where and how they are used; the latter deals with sentences which give information on the basis of the syntactical aspects, like their position in the sentence. For languages like the English, the syntactic pattern is used for getting the maximum information possible ; but for languages like Latin, Greek and Sanskrit the word level approach is more suitable than the other, since they have a highly detailed morphological system, where the syntactic elements are included as part of the words themselves, through declensional and conjugational suffixes. Of these Sanskrit has the most detailed morphological system and is ideally suited for computer programmes of such classical languages. These programmes consist of pattern recognition - unambiguous recognition of significant patterns of words. The phenomenon of sandhi in Sanskrit, effecting alteration of word endings under the influence of the beginning of the next word, makes the task more complicated; the machine has to be taught these rules, so that the elements can be got in their neutral form.

Sanskrit has also been found the most suited as a universal language. The kAraka system in Sanskrit grammar lends itself for transformation into other languages. In ordinary sentences of the statement type indicating an action, the agent, the instrument, the object which undergoes change, the location etc. are all definite (named as kartar, karaNa, karma adhikaraNa etc.). A sentence in any language can be first transformed into the Sanskrit pattern, and then translated into any other language. The universal nature of the karaka system helps Sanskrit to play an important role in modem programmes using the computer.

Another interesting feature about Sanskrit is that its simplicity and flexibility do not depend on reducing the vocabulary (as in Basic English), but in a plethora of possible forms to convey an idea. The possibility of building up new words

from smaller units as in compound words, or even in కృత kṛita and తద్ధిత taddhita formations, and of the componential analysis of larger units into smaller semantic units makes Sanskrit a sort of transparent language. There are several words for water (salilam, jalam, vari etc.) ; if the suffix ja is added to any of them, it becomes a word for the lotus; if da is added, it becomes word for the cloud. Any word for ‘cool’ added to any word for ‘ray’, makes a word for the ‘moon’. These could be stored in a computer, and pressing a word for ‘hot’ and then for ‘ray’, will give several words for the sun (the sandhi problem has to be taken care of). A Sanskrit student is never at a loss for finding the appropriate word for any idea he has.

The apparent diversity and plethora of vocabulary may baffle the novice, but helps the scholar with a rich and abundant storehouse for proper choice and accurate usage.

The New Catalogus Catalogorum

The New Catalogus Catalogorum project of the Madras University in the Sanskrit Department was started in 1935 with Dr. C. Kunhan Raja as its editor and its first volume was published in 1949. After his retirement Dr. V. Raghavan became the editor. He published the second volume in 1966, and the revised version of vol. I in 1968. Dr. K. Kunjunni Raja was appointed its Associate editor in 1966 to help Dr. Raghavan and volumes III, N and V were published in 1967, 1968 and 1969 respectively. After Dr. Raghavan's retirement in 1969 Dr. Kunjunni Raja became the editor and volumes VI, VII, VIII, IX and X were published in 1971, 1973, 1974, 1977 and 1979 respectively.

The Catalogus attracted international and national cooperation. The Rochfeller Foundation was associated with it for some time; and then the University Grants Commission assisted it for ten years during the third and fourth plan. The International Council of Philosophy and Human Science of the UNESCO

held at Mexico in 1976 gave it strong moral support. In 1977 the financial commitment was stopped; and the project would not have continued but for the timely initiative of the Vice Chancellor Malcome Adiseshaiah. Volume XI edited by Kunjunni Raja and Veezhinathan came in 1983, Volume XII edited by Veezhinathan was published in 1988. Volume XIII edited by Veezhinathan, with C.S. Sundaram and N. Gangadharan as joint editors, was published in 1991. Volume XIV will be published in September 2000.

The present Vice Chancellor, Pon Kodandaraman, has constituted a five member Advisory committee with Dr. K. Kunjunni Raja as the convener to plan and execute expeditiously the remaining ten volumes of the New Catalogus Catalogorum.

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