

Sanskrit: Loss of the Language of Love



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Abstract

The appearance of modern Indian languages marks the transition from the ancient to the middle ages in Indian History. They became the media of literature and the instruments of medieval thought. It is true that Sanskrit continued to be cultivated but with the downfall of Hindu principalities and the drying up of the sources of patronage, its importance rapidly diminished. It now became the language of orthodox religious literature and of philosophy but the days of its glory seems to be over. The cultural waves which began to sweep the country from the 12th century onwards left the rivers of Sanskrit dry and flowed through new ways. In spite of all setbacks, Sanskrit still commands the homage of the people and exercised a deep influence over the growth of new languages and literature but for the expression of living experience and thought its usefulness had ceased. Its Apabrahmsha form took over the lead gradually.

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1. Introduction

The conquerors of India brought a number of languages like Arabic, Persian, and Turkish etc. with them. Arabic, as the language of religion and law, was cultivated by the trading class but its sphere was limited. Turkish was spoken within the domestic walls but it did not have much literature. Its influence was petite. Persian was the language of courts and judiciaries. It was used not only as an official language for all state purposes but also it was the medium of social intercourse and it was favorite of the ruling class. As a result, it got a promotion by officers and soldiers. Writers from Persia and India displayed their skills at the court of kings to win their favor. Thus, there developed a school of Persian writers in India who viewed with the natives of Persia in enriching the literature of that language. It may be difficult to ascertain the contribution of Indian writers to Arabic literature but inevitably the Persian literature of India has been dominated by the standards set by the Persians and although

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in language, style and content, the Persian literature of India bears the indubitable impress of its land of origin and there is little doubt regarding its high quality. It reflects the genius and spirit of the Indians.

2. Research Methods

For the understanding of the medieval Indian minds, it is necessary to study the languages which were the living media of expression at that time. Among them, the Sanskrit gradually broke down into numerous dialects of which the Braja and Awadhi were most prevalent one. All the three are closely related. The research on the evolution of these languages is a complex study not only from the point of view of past history but also for the understanding of some issues on which our future largely depends. All these are of Aryan descent i.e. offspring of the Aryan speech which was brought into India by migrants from Central Asia and Europe. After passing through different stages, it emerged in the form of Sanskrit which finally got its Apabhramsha incarnation in the sixth century A.D. This very century saw the decline of the type of polity represented by Harsha and the rise of Rajput kingdoms. Apparently, the older literary Sanskrit literature had now become stereotyped and lost space in the spoken dialects. Apabhramsha now denotes the literary phase of the spoken secondary Prakrits which came into light from the sixth century.

3. Results and Analysis

The last stage in the history of India's linguistic evolution begins in the period (11th century) which saw the invasion of Ghazni and Ghori. The modern languages of India, grouped together as the new Indo-Aryan languages or tertiary Prakrits developed from the Apabhramshas and possibly in some cases directly from the secondary Prakrits. Unfortunately, their history is largely enveloped in obscurity.

Among the Prakrits of Northern India, Saurseni and Ardha Magadhi were important but it is quite difficult to state what relation they actually had with the Apabhramshas. In all likelihood, the western Apabhramshas gave rise to the western modern languages such as Rajasthani, Punjabi and Western Hindi while the eastern Apabhramsha developed into Avadhi and the Purbi dialects. Western Hindi is a modern name which is used to cover the group of dialects spoken in the region of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. They include Khari Boli, Braja, and Bundeli. Punjabi is spoken to their north, Rajasthani to their west, Avadhi to their east, and Marathi to their south. Khari Boli is the dialect of the northern region from Sirhind to Delhi and Meerut to Bijnor. Braja belongs to the middle region whose center is Mathura and Bundeli lies to the southeastern Uttar Pradesh. All the dialects arising from Sanskrit came into prominence but Sanskrit decayed.

Rajasthani played an important part in the early middle ages in the greater part of northern India, for it had the patronage of Rajput princes. It was used as the medium of heroic ballads and bardic poems as well as of religious and devotional verse. The famous Prithviraja Raso of Chand Bardai, however, is written in such mixed dialects as to be of little value for determining the history of Rajasthani. Gauri Shanker Ojha, a well-known Rajputana scholar does not consider its date to be earlier than the 16th century. The use of Rajasthani continued from late 14th to late 18th century but after the 15th century, it was confined to Rajputana. Sanskrit lost but its offsprings grew.

Kabir composed his Bani in Avadhi dialect and Tulsidas made it a classical language by his Ramcharitamanas. The origin of Braj like that of a number of other dialects is still shrouded in mystery. As a spoken dialect, it must have come into vogue in the 13th century and it is likely that popular songs in Braj were famous from the very beginning but its popularity as a literary language seems to have begun when Vallabhacharya came to settle down in Brajmandal at the end of the 15th century. He founded a new sect in which devotion to Krishna was the central object. The greatest of them was Surdas whose padas or songs are recognized as presenting most clear expressions to the deepest emotions of a devotee towards his deity. It was Surdas by whose writings Braj leapt into fame as a fit medium for song and poetry. Even Bengal, which had its own literary language made use of Abrahmsa Braj called Brajbuli for Krishnite poetry. The domination of Braj lasted till well into the 19th century. Only during the last 50 years, it has been displaced gradually by modern Hindi. Again the eye brows should be raised that what happened to its Mother Sanskrit!

Khari Boli, the northern dialect of western Hindi named to distinguish it from Braj also called Hindwi by Amir Khusrau, Dakhini and Urdu by its southern and northern speakers is one of those obscure dialects which the ancient midland, the home of Sanskrit evolved. Saurseni Prakrit, Nagar or Saurseni Apabhramsha were its predecessors. Its phonetic and morphological systems were derived from the secondary Prakrits. But while it was a spoken dialect, it came under the influence of people who spoke Persian and Arabic. It received new sounds from them and evolved a unique phonetic system. Along with new sounds, many new words of Turkish, Persian,

and Arabic origin entered into its vocabulary. As far as its grammar was concerned, it underwent very little modification though the structure of phrases and the methods of derivation of words and compounds were changed to a small extent and minor grammatical forms and usages were adopted from Persian.

The dialect thus developed had an interesting history. In its own homeland, it remained a more or less effective means of communication between the foreign rulers and the people but there is hardly any authentic literary work which might testify to its use in literature till date.

The instances of the use of Hindi words in the poems of Persian poets are found in the works of Farrukhi, Manuchehri, Mukhtari, Hakim Sanai and others of the Ghaznavide period. Even more important than this is the fact that Masud Saad Salman is reported to have composed a whole Diwan in Hindi. He was born in Mahmud Ghaznavi's reign and acquired fame in Sultan Ibrahim's time. What form of Hindi language he used is nearly impossible to determine but the lines of his Diwan give instances of the Khari Boli forms.

Example- Ae parastare sang-o-sukh darpan
Wai giriftare ishq-e-sbam'a-o-lagan
Dil na mi arzad ki az mastiash kas
Warihanadya ba byohare dihad

It may, therefore, be inferred that those Persian poets who resided in the Punjab region frequently used Khari Boli. Amir Khusrau is described as the author of number of verses in Hindi. Hindi words are found scattered throughout his verses. His work (Diwan), Ghurratual Kamal, contains the lines-

Ari ari haman bayari aeyi
Maree maree birah ki maree aeyee

Fariduddin Ganj Shakar has used this phrase in his biographies- 'Poonam ka Chand bada hota hai', which is a Khari Boli sentence. His poems are included in the Adigranth too but their language is Punjabi. Phrases of Hamiduddin Nagori, Bu Ali Qalandar, Sharafuddin Yahya Muniri are reproduced. It has been found that Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti too employed Hindi in his talks. However, that may be the fact remains that these centuries up to the 15th provide little evidence of independent Khari Boli literature in the north. Undoubtedly, it must have flourished as a spoken tongue and might even have produced songs and poems and even folk lures whose record is lost.

Alauddin Khilji's conquests had opened the country and many Sufi saints visited south in order to spread their message. In south Persian was an almost unknown tongue, and they were compelled to use the dialect of Delhi which they knew in order to carry on their work. Among these saints, the one who created great impression was Khwaja Gesu-daraz Banda-nawaz. He left the north when Timur invaded Punjab in 1398 and settled down in the Deccan. He is probably the first writer of the Khari Boli who made it a literary language. His Risala, Mi'raj-ul Ashiqin, edited from a manuscript of 1500 AD gives a glimpse of his language. I would like to mention sentence from the Risala.

'Insan ke boojhe kon panch tan. Har ek tan ko panch darwaze hain hor panch darban hain. Pahla tan wajbul wajood. Muqam iska shaitani nafs iska ammara.'

Nizami was a poet at the court of Sultan Ahmad Shah-III in the 15th century. He is the author of the first known allegorical poem, Masnavi, in the language, entitled Masnavi, 'Kadorn Rao aur Padam'.

From the 14th century, this language which may be called Hindustani continues to progress rapidly. When Aurangzeb began the conquest of Bijapur and Golkonda in the 17th century, the poets of the Deccan began to visit the North and the consequence was that Hindustani poetry became known to the writers of Delhi and other places. The courtiers of the Emperors of Delhi were mainly speakers and writers of Persian but the Hindustani which came to them from the Deccan was the true representative of the mixture of Hindu-Muslim culture which prevailed among the people of the Indian subcontinent. Surprisingly, all these Apabramsha languages got prevalence but Sanskrit was nowhere mentioned or talked about. Many of the historians sense a conspiracy of the Persian writers to systematically overthrow Sanskrit and few gave logic of the classical language being lost because of the loss of classical literary laureates. The Sanskrit laureates lost their importance in the ruling class of medieval India thereby losing the faith of the upcoming generations in Sanskrit. They found it incompetent to

survive and in their misconception started to transform it in acceptable Islamic languages. Thus, non-Persian words were regarded by them as tough to learn and they began to abandon all the Sanskrit words.

The Mughal court with the use of Persian created an environment that developed an artificial language and literature. It was probably in the 18th century that Sanskrit was transformed into Urdu. As usual, the direct patronage of the mighty increased the number of its speakers and writers. It became the language of both the Hindu and the Muslim upper classes. With the decline of Mughal Empire, the British seized power and they replaced Urdu and Persian by English. Fort William College was established to teach British officials the Indian languages to assist in governing. Sanskrit and Hindi books were translated into English and other regional languages were also taught later on. The British translated the available manuscripts into English to compile a uniform civil code to govern the British India.

Among few of the languages worked out, Braj was the language of poetry and was not readily used for prose. Urdu which was used by both Hindus and Muslims was naturally accepted as the common language of India. Braj started a century later and continued its literary path till recent times but it continued the language of poetry only. As per unsaid traditions of language, a poetic language could not live long irrespective of its being fine or rich in vocabulary. The evolution of Sanskrit language shows a definite pattern of assimilation at work in medieval India just like the development of an Indian mystical philosophy. Indo Aryan dialect was used by the missionaries of the Sufi faith for the promotion of their message to all, be it Hindus or Muslims. By their continuous efforts, the dialect became a literary language. This shows how prose and poetry both are necessary to survive in the field of language.

As per my research, a number of misunderstandings do exist in context to Indian literature. For example, in the medieval period, although the faith of the invaders was much different from that of the Indians, the invaders soon settled down keeping aside their foreign origins and started to look upon India as their own. The adaptation of the foreign invaders in an alien land, people and its culture is indeed amazing.

The courts of the Mughal rulers were open to other poets too. Many Hindu poets received acknowledgment and patronage from them in the same way as the Persian poets had received. Now so far the Sanskrit poets are concerned, History mentions certain facts.

Much before the Mughal Empire, the presence of Brahman Sanskrit laureates was observed in the courts of most of the Sultans. It is stated about Firoz Tughlaq that he had numerous Sanskrit works officially translated into Persian. Jalalluddin of Bengal was the patronized Brihaspati and gave him the title of 'Rai Mukut'. Sher Shah gave much respect and patronized Bhuvananda and Todar Mal. Salim Shah patronized Chandrakirti, the author of Saraswati Prakriya. Akbar patronized many of them. Vitthal, Krishna Das, Gangadhar, Narsimha, Bhanu Chand, Siddha Chand, Narayan Bhatt and Nilkantha. During the Jahangir's reign, Govind Sharma and Kavi Karnapur got a prominent place in his court. Shahjahan kept many Sanskrit poets close to his peacock throne. Vedang Rai, Kavindracharya, Parashu, Ram Misra, Panditraj Jagannath were few of them. Even Aurangzeb, who was declared fanatic, had many Sanskrit poets in his court. The mansabdars equally supported the Sanskrit learning and literature. Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir was fond of hearing Yoga Vasistha and Ramayana. Pandit Srivara of Kashmir translated Jami's Yusuf Zulaikha from Persian into Sanskrit.

Poets who received encouragement and rewards at the Mughal Durbars are much longer. In fact, it can be said that the Mughal rulers were greater patrons of Sanskrit and Braj than of Urdu. From Babur to Aurangzeb neither of them had an Urdu poet at his court but several had Sanskrit and Braj poets. It was after Aurangzeb's death in Muhammad Shah's reign, the royal support to Urdu began but it did not affect the patronage of Sanskrit and Braj.

Another peculiarity of Indian literature is that there was much acceptance of each other's literature between the Hindu and Muslim writers. A clear illustration of this tradition is the borrowing of Hindi words by the Persian writers and of the Persian words by writers of Sanskrit, Braj, Avadhi, Bengali, and Marathi. Gulbadan Begam's 'Humayunama' uses a considerable number of Hindi and Sanskrit words. The use of some of them is surprising because it indicates clearly that the invaders to India adopted and accepted Indian customs readily. This tradition became so popular that a phrase was devoted to Indian works of poetry.

'Sher-i-Farasi be rawisha mardume Hindustan'

It is mentioned in one of the memoirs of Aurangzeb that once he was asked to name two new varieties of mango. He named them, Rasana Vilas and Sudha Ras. Similarly, he renamed the city of Barnala to 'Nawaltaara' and gave the named his canons as Agniban, Ramjangi, Gadhna, and Gajnal. In the same way, the Ramayana of

Tulsidas, many padas of Surdas, the Satsai of Bihari Lal and many Avadhi and Braj literary work of those times successfully used several words of Persian and Arabic origin.

The above pattern characterized the authorship. Among Sanskrit, Braj and Avadhi writers, many were Muslims and they shared same platform and rank with the best Hindu poets of their times. Raskhan has respectfully kept along with Surdas. Muslim, Raslin, and Pemi with Hindu, Mati Ram, and Chintamani. Rahim and Malik Mohammad Jayasi are themselves a class and are much adored than any of the Avadhi and Braj writers. Chandrabhan, Anand Mukhlis, Lachhmi Narain Shafiq, Brindaban Das and Tekchand Bahar are some of the Hindu writers of Persian. In this topography of literature it is to be noted that throughout the medieval period, translations from Persian and Arabic to Sanskrit and Hindi and vice versa was frequent. They together formed a powerful means of uniting the two communities. To consider the cases critically we can easily analyze that the first principle to be focused on is that history of literature is a social issue and but naturally embodies the ideals of the society of which it is a part. The history of the literature reveals that it truly represents the spirit of India and reflects Indian mindset.

In this research paper, a broad survey of Sanskrit, Persian, as well as Apabramsha languages, has been done by us. Hence, we have come up with the conclusions.

It's worth to me mentioned that all the three languages received respectful treatment from the communities of India. In the field of patronage, there is much that is common between them but the issue of importance is whether there is something in common in their origin and linguistics. This may be a difficult question but an effort has been made in this research paper to answer by a comparative study.

If we analyze the period during which these languages flourished, it seems to differentiate into two major divisions. The first part of it extends from the last decade of the 14th century to near about the last two decades of the 17th century. The second spreads along the next century and a half.

Among the recognized Indian poets of the first phase, we come across the popular names of Nizami, Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah, Ibn Nishati, Wajahi, Burhanuddin Janam, Muqimi, Nusrati, Shauqi and Aminuddin Ala. Their works consist of masnavis, qasidas or the longer poems. The main subject of the masnavis can be divided into mystical tales, biographical pieces, and romances. The qasidas deal with either the praises of articles of the Prophet or Ali or any great religious leader or are praises showered on princes and Sultans. The Marsias treat mainly of the tragic events of historical Karbala.

Religion, heroism, romance and adds to the basic emotional content of the poetry. It is the poetry of high level of craving for greatness in the present life or beyond life. It is normally idealist in the true terms. It appreciates struggle, suffering in the path leading to moral and spiritual progress. It is genuine because it avoids exaggeration which is actually a form of distortion and thereby falsehood. Its language is simple and natural. Among these poems, many are plane translations either from Persian or Hindi but the fact is that they are adaptations. Their style and presentation are their own.

When we analyze the second period, a very different picture comes out. The poetry of the last decades of the 17th and the 18th century is much different in tone and also in its substance. As far as its form is concerned the ghazal became dominant. The Masnavis, the Qasidas, and the Marsias were not abruptly abandoned but they lost the faith of people. They lost their truth, earnestness and the moral exaltation. The Masnavis of which 'Sihrul Bayan' by Mir Hasan may be taken as the best example show no power of construction or characterization.

The famous Qasidas of Sauda and Zauq are a literature in itself. In spite of the frightening collection of bombastic words culminated from the vocabularies of Arabic and Persian, they lost the capacity of presenting anything simply and straightforward. They became complex and full of twists and turns. Not even in Marsia which itself made a great leap upon its early form is the degenerated directness of statement of feeling observed. It must be kept in mind that the period during which it flourished was full of political intrigues, selfishness, treachery and these human vices were bound to be expressed in literature. So far, it reflects the lifestyle of its times it serves its purpose. It is not surprising that history of Avadhi and Braj moves parallel to that of Hindustani with same traits of emotion and thought.

The great writers between 1500 and 1650 like Malik Muhammad Jayasi, Surdas, Kabir, and Tulsidas have the predominant note of religious and moral parameters in their poetry. For example, Jayasi's Padmavat is not only a historicism written for the deviation of youth absorbed in the pursuit of romantic love but a mystic sense pointing to the everlasting struggle of the human soul. This poetry was naturally characterized by peculiar artistic style and in the sense that all creative literature is the literature of power; it has the supreme quality of acceptance and recognition. It seems to come straight from the heart and is clearly visible that it is not composed for the sake of effect. It makes the deepest impression upon the reader and has received the appreciation of generations.

On the contrary, the poetry of the second period is dominated by a set of ideas. In the terminology of Hindi critics, it is known as Riti poetry i.e poetry of Rasa and Alankara. Its main interest is Sringara and its chief aim, the exemplification of varieties of figures of speech. Its love is not the human passion which moves the heart of an individual but affects the soul. The great masters of the verse of the latter half of the 17th and the 18th century were engaged largely in the production of the poetry of this type. Among them were such magic workers as Chintamani Tripathi, Mati Ram, Bhushan, Bihari Lal, Dev, Pritam, Padmakar, Ghananand, and others. They have attained the limits of ingenuity and exhausted the possibilities of verbal skill over their descriptions of all parts of woman's body and the nuances of moods of woman's passion.

4. Conclusion

At its best, it excels the cut of the jeweler who effectively shapes his precious stones to fit the golden ring which will adorn the bewitching fingers of some great beauty. They shine and glitter and dazzle by their sheer artistry. The tendencies shown by Urdu and Hindi in the two periods of the Middle Ages are similar. But that is as it should be. The literature may be in two languages, but it is the literature of the people of India, and they had common experiences which united them in heart and intellect. They responded to the mysterious call which filled them with an eager enthusiasm to conquer the world both inward and outward.



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