



Buddhist Sanskrit Literature : A Discussion

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Indian culture is highly indebted to Buddhism and Buddhist literature for inducting certain rich thought in its texture and providing certain tissues, that are resplendent for all time to come in their own light in its magnificent fabric. Buddhism is noted for its lofty philosophy of Humanism, the emphasis placed by it on the qualities of non-violence and truth, maintenance of purity of character and newness of thought. It is because of this, that Buddhism could spread itself in different parts of the globe and many countries accepted it as its national faith. It is strange that though Buddhism originated from India it could not exist in the country of its origin for long time to come, but transcended the boundaries of the country of its origin and got itself spread in the neighbouring countries like Burma and Tibet, China and Japan. Just as Buddhism became one of the great religious and spiritual movements of the world, a great part of the Buddhist literature in Pāli and Sanskrit languages was also universalized. Even since then, Buddhist literature has inspired the minds of thinkers and the hearts of poets world over. The post - modern civilization has once again challenged the peaceful co-existence of nations and the whole of the culture biome. Through wide impact of Buddhist thought preserved in ancient Indian Buddhist literature the nations of the world can be led out of the impasse in which modern man is miserably enmeshed today. With the Buddhist literature only we set our foot in the bright day light of history and even the darkness of history of vedic and the epic literature is dispelled to certain extent by this light. Here different aspects of Buddhist literature require a fresh investing action with fresh points of view.

Key Words: Buddhism, Sarvāstivāda, Gāthā dialect, Mahābhāṣya, Mahāvastu

Buddhist literature is preserved mainly in four Indian languages :

1. The famous Buddhist poet Aśvaghōṣa wrote in standard Sanskrit language. His

Sanskrit is flawless, although it does not always follow strictly the rules of Pāṇini's grammar. Many Sanskrit works of Brahmanical tradition too ignored these rules. The philosophical texts of Sarvāstivāda, Vijñānavāda and Mādhyamika schools of Buddhism too were composed in the similar variety of Sanskrit.

2. The second is middle Indic dialect in which the Prākṛit Dhammapāda is written and which is published by Senart in JAS, IX - 12 in 1898 , pp.193 . This text was reprinted by B. Barua and S. Mitra in 1921 with a translation of Senart's new textual notes and exegetic notes. Some scholars are of the view that the language of this text was based on a north - western middle Indian dialect. There is no evidence to prove the existence of any such religious texts, which might have formed part of a canon and preserved in any middle Indian dialect.

3 . The third language preserving the Buddhist religious literature contains the largest Buddhist literature, even now preserved in original. It is called Pāli and is considered to be the sacred language of the Theravāda Buddhism. Opinions of scholars as to the origin of this middle Indic language are divided. The majority of them believe that it is a literary language based on Western or west -central middle Indic dialect of Buddha's time .

4. The fourth language is the main subject of the present survey. Different names have been suggested by different scholars. Previously it was called "Gāthā dialect " . Scholars like senart and M. Winternitz named it mixed Sanskrit. Similarly opinions regarding the origin and linguistic features of this language also differ. At the very outset it seems essential to point - out that the Buddhist religious literature composed in Pāli language is certainly rich and vast. However, it does not represent the literature of all the branches of Buddhism and is confined to the literature of one particular Buddhist, namely the Theravāda. In addition to it several other Buddhist sects produced their religious literature in several other languages mentioned above. The Theravāda tradition asserts that from the earliest times there were differences of opinions among the early disciples of the Buddha regarding the usage of a language for the propagation of Buddha's words. It is clearly mentioned in the texts of the Theravādins that the Buddha directed his disciples to learn and preach his Dhamma words in their respective dialects. Such a liberal attitude of the master paved the way for collecting his teachings in different dialects and languages. A Buddhist monk - scholar of 8th century A. D. named Vinitadeva also says that the Sarvāstivādins used Sanskrit, the Mahāsāṅghikas Prākṛita, the Sammitiyas Apabhraṃśa and the Sthaviravādins Paisācī. It shows that there existed a valuable literature of Buddhist, which was composed in languages other than Pāli. As most of the north Indian Buddhist texts of several Buddhist schools were composed in mixed and pure Sanskrit, therefore the analysis of this language and literature is essential to have a complete and clear picture of Indian Buddhist literature.

Some of the points to be discussed in this brief survey are :

A. Nomenclature of the language.,

B. Origin of the language or the identification of a dialect or dialects on which it is based.

C. A brief survey of the Buddhist literature composed in pure and mixed /hybrid Sanskrit.

A. As mentioned above scholars had suggested several names for this language. We propose to examine each and try to ascertain a most befitting nomenclature of this variety of Sanskrit. We intend to solve the problem of nomenclature with the hypothesis that unlike the standard Sanskrit, it was commonly understood even among the common men. Therefore it was used commonly by the compilers of the Hindu Purāṇas, Buddhists and the Jainas, Its designation as Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit, is inappropriate. In fact, it is a language exhibiting the tendency of common Sanskrit. Purāṇas , were also composed in this very simple Sanskrit. Taking note of various linguistical irregularities, the scholars like Kilhorn and Keith expressed the opinion that the Purāṇas are the Sanskrit renderings o Pāli originals or any other Prākṛit containing the traces of their originals here and there, Prof. T. Burrow says that the language of the Purāṇas is the Sanskrit of common usage. Prof. Jacobi also holds the same view. Therefore we may proceed with the hypothesis that there really existed a Sanskrit language, which was not regularized by the grammar of Pāṇini and was a medium of common conversation.

B. Edgerton has examined the issue of the origin of Buddhist Sanskrit in detail. However his findings on this matter seem to be obscure and self - contradictory. For instance, in the beginning he says that it is based primarily on an old middle Indic vernacular not otherwise identifiable. In the very next sentence that even its middle Indic aspects are dialectically somewhat mixed. According to him is was extensively influenced by Sanskrit. In spite of containing most of the linguistic (Phonological as well as morphological) peculiarities of standard Sanskrit language it clearly exhibits the linguistic features of several middle Indic vernaculars like Pāli. Therefore it is often suggested that it is neither completely an old Indo Aryan language nor middle Indo - Aryan.

Most likely a group of the disciples of the Buddha from Brahmana family interpreted the instructions of the Buddha for learning his teaching in different vernaculars in a specific way and started the use of that Sanskrit language which was spoken by the common men in north - western part of India during Buddha's life - time and even during post - Buddha period. The existence of such type of Sanskrit is confirmed by several passages of the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali and by the statements of some of the modern Indian Philologists. They tried to render into Sanskrit those original teaching

of Buddha, which existed mainly in Māgadhi or Pāli language. This hypothesis is based on the fact that this Buddhist Sanskrit has syntax, which is totally identical to that of Pāli. Besides it also shows close affinity to some of the phonological and morphological features of several middle Indic dialects. New dimensions may be added to the linguistic study of the Indo - Aryan languages if this problem is solved satisfactorily.

It is also suggested that Sanskrit was not a popular medium of composing religious literature in the Sramana tradition during the early period of its development. In the early inscription of emperor Aśoka and others we never see any evidence of the use of Sanskrit. However the Buddhists and the Jainas, both adopted Sanskrit as a powerful medium for their compositions. Probably they did so in order to meet the challenges from their counterparts in Brahmanical tradition. In the early stages the Sanskrit adopted by the Buddhist contained the elements of their original texts, which were in different middle Indic dialects. Thus this language may also be considered as an outcome of the attempts for the most artificial sanskritization of the original Buddhist texts composed in different middle Indian dialects.

C. The Buddhist Sanskrit literature is not exclusively Mahāyānic, Many important Hinayāna texts are also composed in pure and mixed Sanskrit.

We may divide this literature under following heads :

- (i) Sanskrit Āgamas or canon.
- (ii) The Mahāvastu
- (iii) The Lalita - vistara
- (iv) Literary compositions of poet Aśvaghōṣa, Kumāralatā, Matracetā, Āryasura and Buddhghoṣa.
- (v) Avadāna literature.
- (vi) Mahāyāna - Sūtra or vaipulya - sūtras.
- (vii) The Philosophical texts of :
 - (a) Vaibhsika school.
 - (b) Sautrantika school.
 - (c) Yogacara
 - (d) Mādhyamika
 - (e) Buddhist logic

(viii) Mahatmyas (texts glorifying different aspects of religion) ; Stotras (devotional hymns dedicated to the Buddha and other gods off Mahāyāna pantheon ; Dharanis (protecting magical formulas and tantras).

It is impossible to analyse each and every section of this vast literature. Here is a brief survey of some of the most important texts :

1. We know the existence of a Sanskrit canon of the Sarvāstivāda school of Buddhism from following sources :

a. Large and small fragments discovered from Eastern Turkestan (central Asia) by Sir A. Stein, A. Grunwedel, P. Pelliot and others.

b. Quotations in other Buddhist Sanskrit texts (like Mahāvastu, Divyavadāna and Lalita - Vistara).

C. Chinese and Tibetan translations.

From these sources we know the existence of 4 Āgamas composed in Sanskrit :

(i) Dirghāgama, corresponding to Pāli Digha - nikāya.

(ii) Madhyamagama, corresponding to Pāli majjhimāgama.

(iii) Samyuktagāma, corresponding to Pāli Samyutta - nikāya.

(iv) Ekottarāgama, corresponding to Pāli Anguttara - nikāya.

(v) Ksudrakāgama, corresponding to the khuddaka - nikāya of Pāli.

(vi) No Complete copy of Sanskrit canon has come down to us.

The existence of a Sanskrit Vinaya - pitaka is indicated by fragments from central Asia and Nepal, quotations in other Sanskrit texts and from Chinese and Tibetan translation.

It is not certain whether the collection of seven texts of the Abhidharma, translated from Sanskrit to Chinese, also belong to Abhidharma - pitaka. There seven texts are :

(i) Sangiti - paryāya

(ii) Dharma - skandha

(iii) Prajñapti

(iv) Vijñanakāya

(v) Dhatukāya

(vi) Prakarana

(vii) Jñana Prasthāna

The seven books are all extant in Chinese translations but in the Tibetan version there exists only the Prajñapti sastra while the Sanskrit originals have been lost. These seven books have nothing in common with Abhidhamma - pitaka of the Pāli canon except the number seven and a few titles.

2. Mahāvastu

It is a book of the Vinaya of the Lokottaravādins a subsection of the Mahārāṅghikas. It treats the life of the Buddha in three sections. The whole work, the prose as well as verse is written in "Mixed Sanskrit ". It is lacking in literary art. There is no uniformity in the language. Language and style of the earlier and later portions of this work can be clearly distinguished from each other. This book is like a treasure house of the Jātakas and the Avadānas. In spite of many interpolations this work represents transition from Hinayāna to Mahāyāna.

3. Lalita - vistara

It is considered as one of the holiest texts of the Mahāyāna and calls itself as one of the holiest texts of the Mahāyāna and a Vaipulya - sūtra - a common term for Mahāyāna Sūtras and exhibits all features of a Mahāyāna - Sūtra. The title "Lalita - Vistara " (The exhaustive story of the sport of the Buddha) represents the Mahāyāna idea. This book presents the narration of the life and acts of the Buddha in the form of play - full act (Lalita) of a superhuman being. The book contains 27 chapters in all. The biography of the Buddha forms the main content of the work. It covers the life of the Buddha from the time of his being in the Tusita heaven upto his attainment of enlightenment at Uruvela. This book appears the Buddha - biography of the Sarvāstivāda school, enlarged and embellished in the spirit of the Mahāyāna. This work was already translated into Chinese as early as in the 1st century A. D. This work was known to the artists, who about 850 - 900 A. D. decorated with their sculpture the famous temple of Boro - Budur in Java.

4. Literary compositions of Buddhist poets in pure Sanskrit -

The poetic compositions of following poets are worth - mentioning :

- a. Aśvaghōṣa
- b. Kumāralatā
- c. Mātracetā and Āryasura

A) Poet Aśvaghōṣa composed following compositions :

1) Buddhacaritam [in 27 cantos, in flawless Sanskrit, Created by a real poet, biography of the Buddha from his birth till his lost nower].

2) The Saundarnanda - Kāvya

3) The Vajra - suci or "Biomend Needle".

4) The Gandistotra - Gāthā.

5) The Sariputra - Prakaraṇa.

B) Kumaratā, a junior contemporary of Aśvaghōṣa, composed "Kalpana - manditika, which is a collection of holy legends after the manner of the Jātakas and the Avadānas. These stories are narrated in prose and verse in the style of ornate poetry".

C) Mātracetā, a contemporary to Aśvaghōṣa, composed :

1) Catuh - śataka stotra or "the hymn of four hundred verses" and

2) The Śatapañcaśatika - stotra or "The Hymn of one hundred and fifty verses" (Fragments of both of these have come down to us in simple and unadorned, but beautiful language).

D) Ārya - sura composed "Jātakamāla" or the "garland of Jātakas" containing 34 Jātaka tales. These stories are composed in ornate and elegant Sanskrit language and are intended to illustrate the perfections or pāramitās of a Bodhisattva. The boundless compassion of the Bodhisattva in also glorified in most of the tales.

5. The Avadāna Literature in Sanskrit :

The word "Avadāna" means "a heroic deed" or "a noteworthy deed" or "a feat and also" a story of a noteworthy moral feat. These stories are intended to show the good and evil results of good and evil deeds and are belived by the Buddhists to be the words of the Buddha. A regular Avadāna, consists of story of the present, a story of the past and moral.

Following Avadānas are most popular ones :

1) Avadāna - śataka or the hundred Avadānas. It consists of ten decades and presumed to be oldest among all Avadāns.

2) Karma - śataka or "A hundred stories about karman". It is available in Tibetan translation only.

3) Divyavadāna or a heavenly Avadāna is a later work, although it also includes some very texts. Aśokavadāna Kalpadrumavadānamālā Ratnavadānamālā,

Bhadrakalpavadāna and Avadānakalpalatā are some of the most significant writings under this head.

The Buddhist Sanskrit literature discussed briefly so far, belongs to the transitional period between Hinayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Now let us have a bird's-eye view of the Buddhist Sanskrit literature which belong exclusively to Mahāyāna.

We may decide this vast literature in 3 groups :

1) The Mahāyāna - Sūtra or the Vaipulya - Sūtra.

2) Philosophical texts.

3) Mahātmyos, stotras Dharanis and Tantras.

1. The names of the nine Vaipulya - sūtras are :

i. Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajña - Pāramitā

ii. Saddharma - Puṇḍarika - Sūtra.

iii. Lalita - Vistara.

iv. Lankāvatāra.

v. Suvarṇa - Prabhāsa.

vi. Gaṇḍa - Vyūha.

vii. Tathāgata - gūyaka.

viii. Samādhirāja

ix. Daśabhūmika - sūtra

These so-called "nine other mas" are not the canon of any Buddhist sect, but a series of independent works, compiled at different times and belonged to different sects. At present all are held in great honour in Nepal.

2. Most important philosophical texts composed in pure or standard Sanskrit are related to both, the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna. Some of the most important texts and names of their authors are :

i. The abhidharma - kośa - bhāṣyam by Vasubandhu (presents the view of vaibhasika school of Kāśmir), cooverses with auto - commentary.

- ii. Sphutartha by Yaśomitra, (a sautranitic interpretation of the Abhidharma Koṣa).
- iii. Mulamādhyaṃika - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- iv. Vighraha - Vyavartini - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- v. Śūnyatā - saptati - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- vi. Yakti - sastika - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- vii. Suhrillekhi - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- viii. Prajñā - pāramitā -sūtra - śāstra - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- ix. Daśabhūmic - vibhāsā - śāstra - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- x. Catusśataka by Āryadeva
- xi. Musti - prakāśa - kārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- xii. Abhisumayalankara - kārikā by Maitreyaṇātha or
- xiii. Mādhyanta - vibhāga - kārikā by Asaṅga.
- xiv. Mahāyāna - sūtralankara - kārikā by Asaṅga.
- xv. Bodhisattva - bhūmi - kārikā by Asaṅga.
- xvi. Vimsatika by Vasubandhu - kārikā by Asaṅga.
- xvii. Trimsika - kārikā by Asaṅga.
- xviii. Pañca - skandha - prakāśa - kārikā by Asaṅga.
- xix. Mahāyāna - śraddhapaḍā by Asaṅga.
- xx. Commentaries on Kāśyapa - parivarta and Trimsika by Sthiramati.
- xxi. Nyaya prakāśa by Dinneya.
- xxii. Nyaya - vindi by Dharmakīrti.
- xxiii. Prasannapāda, a commentary on the Mulamādhyaṃikakārikā of Nāgārjuna.
- xxiv. Tattva singraha by Santa - Raksita.
- xxv. Śikṣā - samuccaya by Santideva.
- xxvi. Sūtra - samuccaya by Santideva

xxvii. Bodhicaryavatire by sintideva

Besides these many Mahatmyas (glorifying hymns) stotras (devotional songs), Dharanis (magical formulas) and Tantras are also composed in pure and mixed Sanskrit.

It may be said that there is still vitality in the teachings of the Buddha and in the Buddhist literature noreated very briefly above. This literature has ever and again inspired the minds and hearts of thinkers and poets of all nations and still continues to do so.

Lord Buddha preached his doctrine in regional languages prevalent at that time namely Pāli and Prākṛit because he thought that lofty philosophical contents are to be presented through regional languages for the convenience of understanding of the common man. Buddhist philosophers however continued to present their philosophical theories through the medium of Sanskrit, which was intended for understanding of the enlightened people.

This liking for the regional languages as also for Sanskrit gave rise to a particular type of Sanskrit through combination of the regional languages and the Vedic language, and Buddhism adopted this new langugae as the vehicle of their thoughts. This led to the genesis of Buddhist Gāthā Sanskrit. The Gāthā Sanskrit is an admixture of pure Sanskrit (as prescribed by Pāṇini) and mixed Sanskrit, and it is interesting to note that some words belonging to dialects have found their entrance into the Gāthās.

Linguistically India is a polyglot country. It has four linguistic families, such as, Indo-European, Dravidian, Austic and Sino -Tibetan. To the Indo -European family belongs Sanskrit or Old Indo -Aryan, branched off from Indo -Iranian (2000-1750 B. C) as early as 1750 B. C. Of the Indo -Aryan again there are many stages of its development. The oldest phase of Indo -Aryan , linguistically called Old Indo- Aryan, is represented by the Ṛgveda (1500 B. C) and the other Vedic texts, by the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, by Classical Sanskrit as described by Pāṇini (400 B. C) and Patañjali (150 B. C) and as employed by Kālidāsa and others. The Old Indo - Aryan comprises both Vedic and Classical Sanskrit.

Nearly after thousand years, there developed a group of languages or dialects of Old Indo -Aryan which is considered as the second or middle phase of that language, technically called Middle Indo - Aryan. This group of languages dates from the 6th century B. C. and went down till the 10th or 11th century A. D. covering a period of nearly 16 hundred years.

The third or the new phase, also called New Indo - Aryan, begins from that time on till today.

The Middle Indo -Aryan languages are mainly represented by Pāli and Prākṛit literatures of various types and these are represented by different Prākṛits like religious, literary, dramatic, inscriptional, Prākṛit Dhammapada and popular Sanskrit.

The popular Sanskrit Dialects or language, may be divided into three classes according to the language as used by the Buddhists (chiefly Mahāyānists), by the Jains and / or even by the Hindus.

While describing the life of Buddha and his teachings and doctrines, a group of Buddhists used a type of Sanskrit which is not pure Sanskrit, but an admixture of Sanskrit, Pāli and some other dialects. Such works of the Buddhists are Mahāvastu, Divyāvadāna, Kāraṇḍavyūha, Lalita -Vistara, Sad-dharmaṇḍarika, Jātakamālā, Avadānā-Śataka, Suvarṇabhasottama - sūtra and many others. The names of the language as used by them are variously termed. Some say that the name of the language is to be called "Mixed Sanskrit " , or " Hybrid Sanskrit " or "Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit " or " Popular Sanskrit Dialect ". Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit language is Middle Indo - Aryan literary language, a Prākṛit dialect heavily infiltrated with Sanskrit, in which the texts of the northern Buddhist scriptures were written. It was developed before the Christian era. This type of mixed Sanskrit language was mostly used by the Mahāyānists, even though the Hīnayānists also used this mixed Sanskrit. For example, Mahāvastu is a Hīnayāna text, while Lalita -Vistara is a Mahāyāna text, though basically the linguistic features of both the texts are the same. The approximate date of the origin of this type of Buddhist Sanskrit is between 200 B. C. and 2nd cent. A. D. Hybrid Sanskrit, Pāli, and Sanskrit, thus become the major vehicles of the Buddhist thought. The prestige attached to Sanskrit and the ever - growing numbers of Brahmins entering monasteries would have contributed to acceptance and use of Sanskrit as an Important language of theological exposition among Buddhists, whose leaders originally wanted them all to use the dialects, the language of common people.

Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit writings emerged after the codification in the 4 th century BC of classical Sanskrit by the scholar Pāṇini. His standardized version of the language that had evolved from the ancient Vedic came to be known as Sanskrit (meaning ' refined ' , or ' completely formed '). Prior to this, Buddhist teachings are not known to have generally been recorded in the language of the Brahmanical elites.

The term Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit owes its usage and definition largely to the scholarship of Franklin Edgerton. Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is primarily studied in the modern world in order to study the Buddhist teachings that it records and to study the development of Indo - Aryan languages. Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit has been demoted by this name since the publication of a dictionary and grammar of the language by Franklin Edgerton, but has also been called " Buddhist Sanskrit, " "mixed Sanskrit, "

and " the gāthā dialect " (reflecting the fact that it is most commonly found in the verses, gāthā, of Mahāyāna discourse). Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is the appellation used by Professor Franklin Edgerton to design the peculiar religious language employed in the Buddhist texts of Northern India that have become known to us during the last 125 years in manuscripts found chiefly in Nepal, Japan and Chinese Turkestan. Indologists will know this very curious idiom by other names, such as Buddhist Sanskrit, Mixed Sanskrit, the Gāthā - dialect. The last term, which was the first to be used, when the linguistic individuality of the idiom was realized, suggests the fact that scholars investigating the texts first believed that the verse portions / or some of them) were composed in another dialect than the prose parts, which were thought to be simply Sanskrit, rather poor Sanskrit most of it, and badly treated by scribal tradition . However, as early as 1882 , when Senart published the first volume of his edition of the Mahāvastu, one of the oldest texts, it was made generally known that also the prose portions of at least this text belonged to the Gāthā - dialect, for which term Senart substituted the designation " Mixed Sanskrit ". In this widely read History of Indian Literature (vol.1,1905), Winternitz expressly states that an old Middle Indian dialect is employed in verse portions and also in large parts of the prose of this literature. Edgerton reports :

" Thousands of words were used which are unknown in Sanskrit, or not used there with the same meanings . To this curious language, which became widespread in North India, I have given the name Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit ... there is no reason to assume any single original language of Buddhism " .^[1] However, earlier works, mostly from the Mahāsaṃghika school, use a form of ' mixed Sanskrit ' in which the Prākṛit has been incompletely Sanskritised, with the phonetic forms being changed to the Sanskrit versions, but the grammar of Prākṛit being retained.^[2] Not all Buddhist usage of Sanskrit was of the hybrid form : some translated works (e. g. by the Sarvāstivādin school) were in classical Sanskrit. There were also later works composed directly in Sanskrit and written in a simpler style than the classical literature, as well as works of kāvya in the ornate classical style such as the Buddhacarita.^[3] Compared to Pāli and Classical Sanskrit, comparatively little study has been made of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, in part because of the view of some scholars that BHS is not distinct enough from Sanskrit to comprise a separate linguistic category. Edgerton writes that a reader of a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit text " will rarely encounter forms or expressions which are definitely ungrammatical, or at least more ungrammatical than, say, the Sanskrit of the epics, which also violates the strict rules of Pāṇini. Yet every paragraph will contain words and turns of expression which, while formally unobjectionable . . . would never be used by any non - Buddhist writer. " ^[4] Edgerton invited the attention of the Academicians by the use of a peculiar attribute " The Hybrid Sanskrit " while referring to the Buddhist gāthā language. Some scholars in India supported and praised this view. The origin and nature of BHS is disputed, Edgerton preferring to view it as the result of an

incomplete process of translation into Sanskrit of materials originally composed in a vernacular, prākṛit. This was not a formal attempt at translation but a gradual process of influence reflecting the prestige of Sanskrit proper in the broader Community (Edgerton, sect. 134). BHS texts vary in character, particularly in the degree to which they employ vernacular grammatical forms. Later BHS texts are identified as such largely through their vocabulary, their grammar being that of standard, if simple, Sanskrit. In the eyes of traditionally trained pandits and even some Western scholars, BHS appeared to be a highly incorrect, even barbaric, language requiring correction. The work of defining BHS continues, as texts are edited a new with greater sensitivity. Edgerton holds that nearly all Buddhist works in Sanskrit, at least until a late period, belong to a continuous and broadly unitary linguistic tradition. The language of these works is separate from the traditional of Brahmanical Sanskrit, and goes back ultimately to a semi - sanskritized form of the protocanonical Prākṛit. The peculiar Buddhist vocabulary of BHS is evidence that BHS is subordinate to a separate linguistic tradition quite separate from standard Sanskrit (Edgerton finds other indication as well).^[5] Sukumar Sen says " Before the publication of Franklin Edgerton ' s Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary (1953) the language of the scriptures of the Northern Buddhists - such as the Mahāvastu, the Lalitavistara, the Divyāvadāna etc - was known as Buddhistic Sanskrit. The amended nomenclature seems to have been accepted by scholars without a demur. But is the insertion of the word ' hybrid ' at all necessary or desirable ? " He further adds : " Buddhistic Sanskrit is not a hybrid language although its words are often not homogeneous. The overall pattern or structure of the language is an old Indo - Aryan language that was much akin to Sanskrit but unlike it was not rigidly controlled by the grammarians. It was a free kind of language that was used by ordinary men , not aspiring for Brahmanical scholarship or veneration. It was what may be called Spoken Sanskrit. By its nature it was an unstable literary or business language varying according to time and place. To call such a language ' hybrid ' is not correct. Buddhistic Sanskrit was not an artificially made up language fashioned by fusing Sanskrit and the Prākṛits. Any language whether spoken or literary, including the Pidgin and Creole etc has its distinct basis or seed language, however, inscrutable it may be. As regards the vocabulary there is no language which is not more or less heterodox. There is bound to be some borrowed element. In the case of Buddhistic Sanskrit its indebtedness in this respect is heavy. But that is natural. Both Sanskrit and the Prākṛits were influential contemporary speeches which controlled between them its career which ultimately vanished into Sanskrit. "^[6]

It is to be noted at the initial stage that when the Buddhist, well - versed in Pāli, started writing Buddhist scriptures in Sanskrit, there arose a type of Sanskrit literature which was known in course of time as Buddhist (Hybrid or Mixed) Sanskrit. To my mind it seems that this type of literature was grown out of " Popular Sanskrit " which was greatly influenced by Pāli, one of the Middle Indo - Aryan dialects. For example,

the genitive singular of all bases is generalised with *sya* like *a*-bases, e. g. *bhikṣu - sya*, *agni - sya* in place of *bhikṣoḥ*, *agneḥ*. This type of usage is also found in Sanskrit like - *udadhisyottare kūle mṛtaḥ Kim anuśocyate*, *atijarasaya bhikṣusya kantha - varṣāsatam gatā* as cited by Saraṇadeva in his *Drughatavṛtti* in 1172 A. D. In a similar way, we have *vucyate* (instead of *ucyate* in Sanskrit), a passive construction of Sanskrit *vac* to speak where the *samprasāraṇa* of *v(ac)* is accompanied by *vu-c* in popular Sanskrit.

Besides these, in Sandhi there are some very irregular forms like *naraśreṣṭho evaṃ*, *brāhmaṇo āha* (a Vedic type), *priyo ahaṃ*, and so on.

Some Pāli or Prākṛit forms are Sanskritised. *yāvat/yāva*, *khādayitvā/khādiya*, *dattā/dinna*, *idānīm / dāni*, *anyasmin / anyasmi* and so on.

All these uses are not without any reason, nor are they grown out of ignorance, but a large mass of Buddhist literature is grown out of this popular Sanskrit. All these Buddhist Sanskrit literature are very rich in Pāli and MIA construction, though basically written in Sanskrit.

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