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Acharya Hemachandra and Ardhamagadhi

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Introduction

Acarya Hemacandra is a remarkable figure in the history of Sanskrit literature. On account of his profound and wide reading and extraordinary talent he was credited with the title "Omniscient of the Kali Age" (कलिकालसर्वज्ञ). He was a very respectable Jaina monk of the Svetambara sect belonging to the Purnatallagaccha ^[1]. He was associated with Jayasimha Siddharaja and Kumarapala, the two well known Caulukya kings of Gujarat of the 12th century A.D. Being a prolific writer his literary activity covered almost all the branches of Sanskrit learning like grammar, poetics, prosody, lexicography, poetry, logic, dialectics, yogasastra and narrative literature etc. Tradition credits him with the authorship of innumerable works.

Here is an attempt to discuss the views of Hemacandra about the importance of the Ardhamagadhi and Sanskrit languages as expressed in the Siddha-Hemasabdanusasana and the Kavyanusasana, the two important works on grammar and poetics. The chronological order of these two works in this context is important. Sabdanusasana the first work of Hemacandra was written at the royal request of the king Siddharaja and the Kavyanusasana was written in the beginning of the reign of Kumarapala i.e. when Hemacandra was pretty old and mature. In the Kavyanusasana he has shown great reverence for the Ardhamagadhi which is evident from the benedictory verse-

अकृत्रिमस्वादुपदां परमार्थाभिधायिनीं सर्वभाषापरिणतां जैनीं वाचमुपास्महे ॥

(We meditate upon the language of Jina the conqueror of Raga etc. i.e. Lord Mahavira) Here, he obviously refers to Ardhamagadhi, the language of the Svetambara Jaina Agamas. The language is devoid of artificial charm. It has the original beauty and natural sweetness of the language. It expresses the nature of the ultimate reality by way of expounding fourfold Anuyogas and 'above all the other languages like Sanskrit, Magadhi, Paisaci etc. are its transformations just as the rain water released by the clouds takes the various forms according to the places where it falls, when it is mixed with river it becomes the river water, when it falls in the lake it is called the lake water ^[1]." The दैवीवाक्, मनुष्यवाक्, शबरवाक्, and तिर्यग्वाक् are all its transformations. (परिणाम). Here Hemacandra ^[2] refers to संस्कृत as दैवीवाक् The highest quality of the Ardhamagadhi is in its being परमार्थाभिधायिनी It is the only language which shows the way to the ultimate reality i.e. liberation.

परमार्थो निः श्रेयसं तदभिधानशीलां परमार्थाभिधायिनीं द्रव्याद्यनुयोगानामपि पारम्पर्येण
निःश्रेयसप्रयोजनत्वात् ।

इहानुयोगश्चतुर्धा चरणकरणर्ध कथागणित द्रव्येदात् । तत्राद्यस्य सम्यग्ज्ञान दर्शन नपवित्रिते
नवकर्मानुपादानातीतकर्मनिर्जरारूपे संयमतपसी प्रतिपाद्ये इति सर्वकर्मविमोक्षलक्षणमोक्षपरत्वात्
परमार्थाभिधायित्वं प्रतीतमेव शेषाणां तु पारम्पर्येण । -विवेक टीका ।

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Hemacandra wants to say that the Ardhamagadhi is the oldest language. This stand of Hema might be right from the view point of deep faith in Jaina religion but philologically it is unsound. No amount of arguments can ever convince the student of linguistic history that Ardhamagadhi was even earlier than the vedic language. The Kavyanusasana might be the

work of his (Hema) old age. He being a Jaina monk had naturally developed a deep love, ardour, passionate feeling and emotional attachment for the Ardhamagadhi, the language of the Lord Mahavira's sacred teachings. While commenting on his words 'सर्वभाषापरिणताम् अर्धमागधीम्' R.L. Parikh says [3].

"It will be seen that this statement of Hema is philologically quite unsound. It merely speaks of the highest estimation in which the author held the Ardhamagadhi which according to him has miraculous powers."

Buddhists⁴ also feel passionately about the Magadhi i.e. the Pali language and say that Magadhi is the oldest language.

सा मागधी मूलभासा नरा याय आदिकप्पिका । ब्रह्मणाक च इस्सूजानापा संबुद्ध चापि भासरे ।।

Magadhi is the original language in which men of the ages belonging to the beginning of creation and the angels of Brahma and those who never heard any speech and above all the Buddhas speak. Buddhaghosha goes a step further in his love for Magadhi, when he says that a child brought up without hearing the human voice would instinctively speak Magadhi. A language is what its literature makes it. Originally a mere dialect the Ardhamagadhi was raised to the status of a language by the genius of Lord Mahavira and his Ganadharas. It became the language of the vast and rich canonical literature of the Svetambara sect [1]. Now we come to discuss the views of Hemacandra as expressed in his Sabdanusasana about the mutual relation of Prakrit and Sanskrit in respect of the most controversial question as to which language is earlier to which. Whether Sanskrit is the प्रकृति of Prakrit or Prakrit is the प्रकृति of Sanskrit. He clearly admits that Sanskrit is the प्रकृति of Prakrit i.e. Sanskrit is the original language and Prakrit is the off shoot of it-

प्रकृतिः संस्कृतं तत्रभवं तत आगतं वा प्राकृतम् ।

The ardent lovers of Prakrit interpret it in other way. They say that Hemacandra means that Sanskrit is the प्रकृति i.e. base (आधार) for learning the Prakrit. He is explaining the nature of Prakrit vis-a-vis the structure of Sanskrit language. This does not mean that Sanskrit is earlier to Prakrit. This view is upheld by most of the Jaina scholars and monks like Namisadhu, the commentator of Rudrata's Kavyalamkara. Namisadhu says —

सकलजगज्जन्तूनां व्याकरणादिभिरनाहितसंस्कारः सहजोवचनव्यापारः प्रकृतिः । तत्र भवं सैव वा प्राकृतम् । 'आरिसवयणे सिद्धं देवाणं अद्धमागहा वाणी' इत्यादि वचनाद्वा प्राक्पूर्वं कृतं प्राकृतम् । 'आरिसवयणे सिद्धं देवाणं अद्धमागहा वाणी' इत्यादि वचनाद्वा प्राक्पूर्वं कृतं प्राकृतम् बालमहिलादिसुबोधं सकलभाषानिबन्धनभूतं बचनमुच्यते । मेघनिर्मुक्तजलमिवैकस्वरूपं तदेव च देशविशेषात् संस्कारकरणात् च समासादितविशेषं सत् संस्कृताद्युत्तरभेदानाप्नोति ।

Sabdanusasana is the earliest work of Hemacandra and it was written most probably when he was quite young. What he writes in the Sabdanusasana is the unbiased expression of a young scholar. He expressly admits the fact that Sanskrit is the original language and Prakrit is the offshoot of it i.e. Prakrit is the transformation of Sanskrit. We can not summarily dispose off the views of Hemacandra by saying that he used the word प्रकृति in the sense of आधार (base) and not in the sense of 'original' as the word invariably denotes. A

grammarian (शाब्दिक) like Hemacandra will never use a word which may create ambiguity. Actually he is indebted to Vararuci, the author of Prakṛta Prakāsa in writing the VIII Adhyaya of his Sabdanusasana. According to Vararuci Sanskrit is the प्रकृति of शौरसेनी and शौरसेनी is the प्रकृति of is the मागधी and is the पैशाची: Dr. C. Kunhan Raja in his preface to the Prakṛta Prakāsa writes- "To Ramapanivada (commentator of the Prakṛta Prakāsa) Prakrit is not a language. It is only a metamorphosis of Sanskrit. If Ramapanivada regarded Prakrit as an artificial make up from Sanskrit, Vararuci, the author of the Sutras did not regard the language as anything else. Vararuci as interpreted by Ramapanivada classifies the Prakrit words into three categories is the तत्सम, तद्भव and देश्य. The tadbhava words have come into being from the Sanskrit words only.² Here the word संस्कृतादेव संभूतम् is significant. It means that the tadbhava words have been made out of the Sanskrit words unlike the Desya words which have their independent origin. Now we come to the exact meaning of the word प्रकृति as admitted in the field of Sanskrit grammar. The following are the definitions of प्रकृति—

- (1) अर्थावबोधहेतुप्रस्ययविधानावधिभूतशब्दत्वम् ।
- (2) प्रत्ययनिष्ठाविधेयतानिरूपितोद्देश्यताश्रयत्वमिति ।

If we apply this definition, प्रकृतिः संस्कृतम् तत्रभवं प्राकृतमुच्यते will naturally mean that only for the purpose of derivation of Prakrit words, the Sanskrit words become the प्रकृति. It does not mean that Sanskrit as a language was prior to Prakrit, because in grammar the प्रकृति comes first and the प्रत्यय after words, but in the language the complete word forms the component of it. Grammar only does the postmortem of the words by bifurcating it into प्रकृति and प्रत्यय. The word प्रकृति will be तत्वान्तराभक्तत्वम् । अजन्यत्वे सति जनकत्वं प्रकृतित्वम् । If we, in the present context, interpret प्रकृतिः संस्कृतं तत्र भवं प्राकृतमुच्यते it will mean that संस्कृत being the originator of प्रकृति comes first and प्रकृति has other meanings also. In the सांख्यदर्शन the definitions of प्रकृति being originated from Sanskrit comes after words. In this way it naturally follows that प्रकृति is the offshoot or later development of the Sanskrit i.e., the Vedic language, because we have no hesitation to accept that Vedic language, the oldest language is the originator of both classical Sanskrit & Prakrit.

We may now conclude by admitting that both Sanskrit & Prakrit languages had their parallel development. Sanskrit being the language of the learned people was naturally the most refined form of speech rigorously following the rules of Paninian grammar and Prakrit being the language of the masses i.e. a dialect, was not so much bound by the grammatical rules and was full of diversified forms and yet abounding in forceful idioms and suggestivity. R.C. Childers, the author of Pali Dictionary has very aptly put the relation of Pali the earlier Prakrit & Sanskrit in the following lines.

"The parallel between Italian in its relation to Latin and Pali in its relation to Sanskrit is striking enough to deserve special notice. In the thirteenth century the literary language of Italy, the language of culture and science, was Latin, which however had long died out as the spoken tongue of cultivated society and was probably reserved for the Drama, and for occasions of state ceremony.

The spoken language of Italy was to be found in a number of provincial dialects, each with its own characteristics, the piedmontese harsh, the Neapolitan nasal, the Tuscan soft and flowing. These dialects had long been rising in importance as

Latin declined, the birth time of a new literary language was imminent. Then came Dante, and choosing for his immortal commedia the finest and most cultivated of the vernaculars, raised it at once to the position of dignity which it still retains. Read Sanskrit for Latin Magadhi (Pali) for Tuscan, Gautam for Dante, and the three baskets for the Divina Commedia and the parallel is complete. In the present context we may read Ardhamagadhi for Tuscan, Mahavira for Dante, the Jaina Agamas for Divina Commedia and the parallel will be complete. As the Ardhamagadhi has been raised to the position of high dignity by the Agamas of the Svetambara sect Hemacandra's placement of Ardhamagadhi at the top of all languages is not very out of place keeping in view the emotional attachment with the language of ones religion. If the Sanskritists hold Sanskrit in high esteem by calling it the language of gods (दैवी वाक्) and lovers of Pali can call Pali as मूलभासा (oldest language) Hemacandra's boasting of अधिमागधी as is justifiable. Supreme love for ones religion and the language of religion cares a fig for what the comparative philologists think.

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