



The Foundation of Sanskrit: Understanding the Role of Vyakarana

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Abstract

Sanskrit is a classical language of India. It considered the sacred language of Hinduism and the source of much of its philosophical and scientific literature. It was also a link language in ancient and medieval South Asia and influenced the language of South and Southeast Asia. While it is not widely spoken as a first language. Sanskrit is one of the official language of India and is still used for religious purpose. The grammar of the Sanskrit language has a complex verbal system, rich nominal, declension and extensive use of compound nouns. It was studied and codified by Sanskrit grammarians from the later Vedic period, culminating in the Pāṇinian grammar of the 4th century BCE

Keywords: language, Sankrit, Vedāngās, Vyākaraṇa, Munitrayam, shikṣa, niruktam, benefits of vyākaraṇa

Introduction

Language is a means for humans to communicate. It includes words, gestures, styles etc.. Language helps humans to share ideas, information and emotions. Language is a part of culture. It helps to introduce the elements of culture. Sanskrit is one of the oldest language in the world dating around as 15000BCE. Sanskrit is the mother of all languages. Sanskrit is the root of all Indo-European languages. A lot of the Ancient literature like Vedas, Upanishads, Epics... was written in this language. These scriptures written on subject as Medicine, Mathematics, Astrology, Yoga, Economics etc... Sanskrit gave birth to many languages and even gifted the script "Devanagari" to many popular languages spoken and real in India. Somehow the mother of all languages also considered to be the

'Gods own language' has not got the due credit and respect it deserves in the land of its birth in India.

Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Adharvaveda after these four Vedas the Vedangas came into being. The Vedangas are divided into six they are Chandha, Kalpa, Jyothisha, Niruktha, Shiksha, Vyakarana. These are the body parts of Vedapurusha.

छन्दः पादौ तु वेदस्य, हस्तो कल्पो अथ पठ्यते ।

ज्योतिषामयनं चक्षुः, निरुक्तं श्रोत्रमुच्यते ॥

शिक्षा धाणं तु वेदस्य, मुखं व्याकरणं स्मृतम् ।

तस्मात् साङ्गमधीत्यैव ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥

(पाणिनीयशिक्षा, अष्टमखण्ड ४०)

According to these verse, the feet of the Veda Purusha are Chandas (metre), the hands are Kalpa (ritual instructions), the eyes are Jyothisha



(astronomy/astrology), the ears are Nirukta (etymology), the nose is Shiksha (phonetics), and the mouth is Vyakarana (grammar). A person who knows all these limbs attain Brahmaloka.

The Foundation of Sanskrit: Understanding The Role Vyakarana

The origin of Vyakarana, one of the Vedangas, is connected with the preservation of aspects such as the correct pronunciation of Vedic mantras, the proper understanding of their meaning, and the study that safeguards the sanctity of the Vedas. The Science of grammar was refined by the works of three sages Pāṇini, Vararuci (Kātyāyana) and Patañjali. These three sages are commonly called Munithraya through the texts such as the Aṣṭādhyāyī, the Vārttikas and the Mahābhāṣya. Therefore, these are the considered the fundamental texts of Sanskrit grammar.

आसन्नं ब्रह्मणस्तस्य तपसामुतमं तपः ।

प्रथमं छन्दसामङ्गं प्राहुर्व्यकरणम् बुधाः ॥

Thus Bhartrhari, through his treatise Vākyapadīya, explains the importance of Vyakarana. In essence, the wise declare that grammar, being highly useful for the realization of the Veda as Brahman, and supreme among all forms of austerity, is regarded as the foremost limb of the Veda. Pāṇini sought to compile the grammar of the language that existed and was in popular use during his time. He did not refer to that language as 'Sanskrit' but simply as 'Bhāṣa'. After Pāṇini, Kātyāyana, through his Vārttikas, further developed the Pāṇiniyan system. He supplemented the sutras of Pāṇini with what had been omitted and pointed out those that he considered incorrect.

उक्तानुकृतुरुक्तानां चिन्ता यत्र प्रवर्तते ।

तं ग्रन्थं वार्तिकं प्राहु वार्तिकञ्जै मनीषिभिः ॥

This is the definition of Varttika

Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya is a commentary of Pāṇini's System. It was composed with independent thought, sound reasoning, and by critically examining earlier viewpoints. The topics related to the development of varttikas are also the theme of mahabhāṣya.

महाभाष्यस्यास्य महत्वम् हि वार्तिकोपरि चिन्तनात् ।

In the grammatical thought of ancient India, Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali stand as great grammarians. They were known as Munitrayam. Sanskrit grammar is well known as Trimunivyakaranam because the head of Munitrayam. The last word of grammar belongs to Munitrayam. Patanjali's importance is increased by the name of 'यथोत्तरं मुनीनां प्रामाण्यम्'।

Another reason for the primacy of grammar among the Vedas is the fact that knowledge of the meaning and application of words is essential for the study of the Vedas. Not only grammar, but the theme of the Vedas Shiksha and Niruktha are also related to the chanting and recitation of mantras. The earliest stage of development of grammar originates in the Vedas Shiksha. The word Shiksha means 'advice'. The subject of Vedas Shiksha which is related to the Phonetics, is the positional and phonetic aspects of pronunciation in Vedic chanting and the vowel variations such as Udātham, Anudhātham, Swaritham etc...the oldest examples of Shiksha are the Prātiśākhyas.

Another Vedanga related to grammar is Nirukta. It arose from the earliest attempts to interpret the mantras of the Vedas. The Nirukta of Yāska is the principal text available today. The first part of this work is a glossary of words, beginning with the word 'गौः' (cow) and extending up to the word 'देवपत्नी' (wife of god), it's also called Nigandu. निरुच्यते, निशेषण उपदिश्यते निर्वचनदीय तत्त्वर्थं बोधनाय पदजातं यत्र तन्निरुक्तं । This is the definition of Niruktha.

The beginning of grammar took place when inquiry into words led to analysis and classification. 'व्याक्रियते उत्पादते साधुशब्दा अनेन अस्मिन् इति व्याकरणम्' This is the derivation of word 'Vyakarana'. Terms such as dhātu (root), prātipadika (nominal base), agyata, liṅga (gender), vacana, vibhakti, pratyaya (suffix), upasarga (prefix), nipāta (indeclinable), mātra (measure), varṇa (sound/letter), aksara (syllable), pada (word), samyoga (conjunction),



sthāna(place of articulations), nāda(sound), anupradhāna, anukaraṇa, as well as various V्याकरण related terms, along with the very name Vyakarana are all mentioned in the Gopada vyakarana.

The term Vyākaraṇa as the name for the Science of language (Śabda-sāstra) can also be found in the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, and the Muṇḍaka upaniṣad.

न्यूनं व्याकरणं कृत्स्नमनेन बहुधा श्रुतम् ।

बहु व्याहरतानेन न किन्जिदपभाषितम् ॥

(रामायणम्, किञ्चिन्धाकाण्डम्- ३.२९)

सर्वार्थानां व्याकरणाद् वैयाकरण उच्यते ।

तन्मूलतो व्याकरणं व्याकरोतीति तत्था ॥

(महाभारतम्, उद्योगपर्व – ४२.६०)

तत्र अपरा ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः साम्वेदः अथर्ववेदः ।

शिक्षा कल्पो व्याकरणं निरुक्तं छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति ॥

(मुण्डकोपनिषद्)

Benefits of Vyakarana

‘रक्षोहागमलघ्वसन्देहाः प्रयोजनम्’ इति । Thus, in the Mahābhāṣya, Patañjali has spoken of the five important benefits of grammar. The benefits of grammar are: Rakṣa (preservation), ūha (inference), āgama (application), laghu(conciseness), and asandeha (freedom from doubt)

Rakṣa means the preservation of the Veda itself. Grammar is the basis of understanding speech. In the Vedas there are phenomena such as omission of sounds, addition of sounds and pauses that are not found in ordinary language. To one who has not studied grammar, such usages cause confusion and difficulty. But a grammarian, without any doubt, understands the meaning of the mantras and preserves the Vedas in its proper phonetic form.

Not all case ending and genders are explicitly taught in the Vedic mantras. The ritualist has to modify them according to the meaning intended one who does not know grammar cannot do this. This is

what is meant by the second benefit of grammar called ūha

‘ब्राह्मणेन निष्कारणो धर्मः षड्ग्रो अद्येयो ज्ञेयश्च’

The Brahmana, having renounced desire and devoted himself to ritual practice, must study the six limbed Veda and understand its meaning. For this, knowledge of grammar is essential. Patanjali says that effort in what is of primary importance thus becomes fruitful. This is what is meant by agama, the third benefit of grammar.

When teaching sounds, certain rules are necessary – general rules as well as special rules. Sometimes the special rules override the general rules. By studying these rules, the understanding of words becomes quicker. The easier way to achieve this is through the study of grammar. This is the fourth benefit, called Laghu.

Only when there is knowledge of compounds (samāsa) can one truly grasp the meaning of words; for this, grammar is indispensable. For example, if the prior member of a compound has the acute accent (udāta), it is a bahuvrīhi; if it has the grave accent (anudātta), it is a tatpuruṣa. Thus, in order to understand the accentual system of the Veda, one must know grammar. This is the fifth benefit called Asandeha

Thus has Bhartṛhari said through the Vākyapadīya ‘teaches that the study of grammar is a means to Mokṣa (liberation).

तद्वारामपवर्गस्य वाङ्गमलानां चिकित्सितम् ।

पवित्रं सर्वविद्यानामधिविद्यं प्रकाशते ॥

Which means “Grammar is a means to liberation, a remedy for the faults that arise through speech, the purest among the sciences, and that which shines forth in all branches of knowledge.”

Conclusion

For the study of Sanskrit in modern times to flourish, grammar must be learned with orderliness and careful attention. This helps, at least to some extent, in preventing impurities in pronunciation occurs, one must cultivate the attitude of openly admitting it and



correcting the mistake. One should read the texts carefully. Let the speaker avoid mispronunciation, and let the listener hear it in its correct form. Through pure pronunciation, may the aspiration of this world and the next be fulfilled.

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