

ON BUDDHISTIC (HYBRID) SANSKRIT

—SUKUMAR SEN

I

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?

The early Buddhist scriptural works that seem to have been produced in the northern half of the sub-continent of India, as known to us, are either in Middle Indo-Aryan (Prakrit) or in a style of Sanskrit more or less removed from the language to which Pāṇini had set the standard. The Prakrit texts (mainly represented by the Kharosthi Dhammapada) are written in the current language in the North-Western mountainous region where Sanskrit did not appear to have been much cultivated before the Christian era progressed a few centuries. The Buddhist scriptural works in "Sanskrit" belonged to the plains of the Madhyadesa and to the eastern region. No manuscript of the "Sanskrit" texts is written in Kharosthi, which lacked the long vowels and therefore was unsuitable for Sanskrit. The Gilgit Manuscripts of the *Vinaya Vastu* (edited by N. Dutt) are written in the Brahmi script.

The northern Buddhist texts do not present an identical language or dialect but they do represent a language style where beside the pure (i.e. Paninian) Sanskrit words are used along with Old Indo-Aryan words not formed according to Pāṇini, the words that are Prakritic (i.e. Middle Indo-Aryan) and the words that present an Old Indo-Aryan base and a middle Indo-Aryan suffix (ending or formative) and *vice-versa*. But the proportion of the three types of words are not the same in the texts. In some texts the first type of words preponderates, in some the second type and in some the third type,—but all in different degrees. The three types may be thus illustrated.

(i) Old Indo-Aryan (not found in classical Sanskrit): *kampe* 'it trembled' (perfect ending but no reduplication of the root); *pr̥cchita* '(she was) asked' (the suffix *-ita* added to the present stem instead of the root); *imā* (neuter plural; Vedic); *praṇipatitvā* 'having dropped down and forward for salutation' (*-tvā* attached to a root compounded to prepositions); etc.

(ii) *ṛatana* 'jewel' (as in *saptaratanamayam*); *dāni* (for *idānim*); *āsi* (for *āsīt*); *yenimā* (Sandhi form; for *yenemā*); etc.

(iii) (a) *Buddhāna* 'of the Buddhas' (*buddha*+MIA gen. pl. ending), *naravarasmīn* 'in the superior man' (*naravara*+MIA loc. sg. ending); *purāṇaśatehi* 'with a hundred purana coins' (*purāṇaśata*+MIA+*ehi* instr. pl. ending); *abhūsi* 'it occurred' (*a-bhū*+MIA ending, third per. sg.); etc.

(iii) (b) *bhesyati* 'it shall be' (OIA *bhū*+OIA-*iṣyati*); *dhārenti* 'they hold' (MIA *dhāre-*∠*dhāraya*+OIA-*anti*); *okasto* 'come down to' (MIA

okas- /ava-kas + OIA-ta); *okiritvā* 'having cast about' (MIA *okir- /avakr + (i)tva*); etc.

Buddhistic Sanskrit is not a hybrid language although its words are often not homogeneous. The over all 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 Prakrits. Any language whether spoken or literary, including the Pidgin and Creole etc has its distinct basic 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 only natural. Both Sanskrit and the Prakrits were influential contemporary speeches which controlled between them its career which ultimately vanished into Sanskrit.

Buddhistic Sanskrit was not a hieretic language; it was a general language, the spoken Sanskrit of the few centuries before and after Christ. It was used as an administrative language in Madhyadesa by Kanishka and his successors. The Sarnath Buddhist Image Inscription of Kanishka (*Epigraphia Indica* VIII p.173 ff), the Set-Mahet Image and Umbrella Staff Inscription of the same (*Ep. Ind.* VIII p. 180 f; p. 291), the Mathura Stone Inscription of Huvishka (*Ep. Ind.* XXI p. 60 f) etc are written in almost the same language as Buddhistic Sanskrit. It also appears in a few documents from Niya region. I quote below the Inscription of Huvishka which refers to the establishment of an alms or charity house. The date of the inscription is the year 28, probably the Saka year (=106 A.D.).

ayam puṇyaśālā pracinikana (=pracinikena) sarukamāna-putrena kharasālera-patinā vakana-patinā akṣayanīvi dinnā tuto (=tato) vṛddhito māsānumāsam śuddhasya catudīśi puṇyaśā(lā)ṭam brāhmaṇa-śatam pari- viṣitavyaṃ divase diva(se) ca puṇya-śālāye dvāramūle dhāriye sādyaṃ saktana (=sadyaḥsaktūnām) āḍhaka 3 lavṛṇa (=lavaṇa) prastho 1 sakta (=śukta) prastho 1 harita-kalāpaka-ghaṭakā 3 mallakā 5 etam anādhanaṃ kṛtena da (tavya) vabhakṣitana (=bubhukṣitānām) pivasitana (=pipāsītānām) ya catra puṇyam ṭam devaputrasya sāhisya huviṣkasya yeṣam ca devaputro priyah teṣam api puṇya bhavatu sarvāyi ca pṛthiviye puṇya bhavatu akṣaya- nīvi-dinnā.

'This hall of piety (i.e. charity house) is established as a perpetual endowment by Pracinaka the Lord of the Kharasālera the governor of charitable institutions, son of Sarukamāna. From out of that deposit (*vṛddhitah*) the interest (*śuddha*; Bengali *sud*) should be spent month by month for the maintenance of Brahmans (who come) from the four quarters to the hall of piety. Day by day at the gate of the hall of piety should be stocked freshly made (*sādyaḥ*; Bengali *sājo*) barley meal 3 Āḍhakas, 1 Prastha of salt, 1 Prastha of tamarind (literally, acid stuff), 3 jars of green peas, and 5 earthenware bowls. These are for charity to the destitutes and also for the hungry and the thirsty. Whatever merit there is goes to the Son of Divinity, Sāhi

Huvishka. May there be merit also for those who are dear to his majesty, May there be merit for the entire earth. The perpetual gift is made

II

Spoken Sanskrit, the basic language of the typical Buddhistic Sanskrit, as for instance in the *Mahavastu*, has the following characteristics in general.

1. The Phonological pattern is almost the same as that of classical Sanskrit. There are, however, exceptions.

a. There are Middle Indo-Aryan vocables which show the expected simplification.

b. There is no rigidity of Sandhi rules. It follows the Sandhi rules of MIA. The final *visarga* after a vowel other than *a* is more often dropped than retained. The final *-aḥ* becomes more often *-o* than not; e.g. *nando ca bhikṣuḥ*; *vanato ānetvā*; etc.

c. The final *-n* generally becomes *-ṃ*. e.g. *bhagavaṃ*, *balavaṃ*, *mahat-tarakāṃ* (acc. pl. msc.); etc.

d. The length of the stem vowel is as often retained as not; e.g. *sarvābhibhū* 'All overcome' (nom.sg.); *sarvābhibhūṃ* (acc.sg.); *sarvābhibhuṣya*/*-bhūṣya* (gen. sg.). There is always metrical shortening when necessary.

e. There is often *samprasāraṇa* of *ya* and *va* : e.g. *vīriyaṃ* (*vīryam*).

2. Morphological characteristics are as follows.

a. The dual number is replaced by the plural as in MIA e.g. *duve gandha-mahattarakāṃ* 'the two leading spice merchants' (acc.); *duve asthānsu* 'the two stayed'.

b. The noun stems ending in consonants are lost as in MIA, leaving a few fossils such as *rajñāḥ*, *bhagavān*, *bhagavatā*, *arhan*, *arhatām*, etc. The gender remains unchanged. Thus : *pariṣā* (for *pariṣat*).

c. The *a-* declension influences all other non-feminine declensions. Thus : *ṛṣiṣya* (gen. sg.), *bhikṣuṣya* (gen. sg.), *bhrātārān* (acc. pl.).

d. The ablative singular is formed with the adverbial suffix *-tas*; e.g. *vanato* (for *vanāt*).

e. The regular locative singular ending for the non-feminine is *-smin*. But the regular form for the *a-*stems is also current; e.g. *lokamin* as well as *loke*.

f. The ending for the instrumental, dative, ablative, genitive and locative singular fem. is *-(a)ye* (*-yāi*, the OIA dative singular).

g. The ending for the instrumental, dative, ablative and locative plural for all stems is *-hi* (*-bhis*).

h. The personal pronouns have developed some additional forms such as *mamam* (acc. sg.), *maye*, *tvaye* (inst. sg.) etc.

i. In the conjugation of the verb the *Atmanepada* forms are replaced by the *Parasmaipada*, even in the passive voice. A few *Atmanepada* forms survive in the verses mainly.

j. The *-a-* (and *-aya-*) conjugation predominates. The *-ya-* conjugation survives in the passive. The other conjugations survive sporadically.

k. The root *bhū-* (*bhavati*) generally becomes *bho-* (*ho-*) and *bhe-*; e.g. *bhoti*, *bhoṣyati*, *bheṣyati*; etc.

l. The gerundial suffix *-tvā* generally stands for *-ya* also, e.g. *pratiśrutvā*. Sporadically *-ya* stands for *-tvā*, e.g. *bandhiya* (*bandhya*, for *baddhvā*).

There is an additional suffix *-tvāna*, e.g. *karitvāna*, *kṛtvāna*, *dattvāna*, *vijahitvāna*, etc.

m. There is only one form of the finite past tense. It is a mixture of the perfect, the acrist and the imperfect. There are also relics from the old; e.g. *abhūṣi* (3, sg. pl.); *asī* (1.3 sg.); etc.

3. The more important syntactical characteristics are as follows.

a. There are many new idioms in the use of the cases. Thus : *bhagavatā* (instr. of the cause) *te amanusyakā palānā* 'on account of the Lord the non-humans fled'; *kālena kālam* 'from time to time'; *imasya śatasahasrasya* (gen. of exchange) *kesaram* 'the perfume bought by hundred thousand coins'; etc.

b. The compound verb also presents fresh idioms. Thus : *āhāraṃ kariṣyāmi* 'I shall eat (it)'; *prahāraṃ dattvā* 'having beaten up.'