LANGUAGE
AND
LITERATURE
Chapter Eight
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Language is the most important vehicle of self-expression and communication. It best reflects the culture of a people and preserves it in the literature. The literary production of the Yadava age is classical and the period is an epoch in the evolution of the Marathi language. Two languages received patronage under the Yadava rulers, Sanskrit and Marathi.

Kannada was an important language in the Yadava empire. Yet it flourished at the Hoyasala court. The Yadava rulers followed Kannada in Karnatak districts and the largest number of their epigraphs exist in that language. Still Kannada could not get court patronage as it had received earlier under Rashtrakutas and Later Calukyas. The Yadavas themselves spoke Marathi and their capital Devagiri was in the heart of Maharashtra. So no wonder if Marathi flourished under them. Of course, Kannada has considerably influenced Marathi during our period.

Our epigraphical evidence testified to the extent of Marathi language in the 13th century. As already pointed out in the third chapter the geographical distribution of the Yadava records shows that as a rule Kannada records are found in modern Kannada speaking areas and Marathi ones in Marathi speaking regions, except on the border lines. So we learn that the modern linguistic boundaries had already been established by 13th century and that the Yadavas followed the policy of using the local language for their records.
The introduction of Marathi in the official epigraphic records is an outstanding event of the Yadava period. Traces of Marathi have been noticed in the Badami Calukya and Rashtrakuta records suggesting that it was a spoken language much earlier. The association of Marathi with Sanskrit epigraphs goes back to the last quarter of the 10th century. From the latter half of the 12th century records written wholly in Marathi begin to appear. The epigraphs give an evidence of the gradual change-over from Sanskrit to Marathi and also of the rise of Marathi during our period. It was in fact a period of the rise of all modern Indian languages.

The rise of Marathi and its conscious use in preference to Sanskrit is not merely a linguistic but also a social and cultural phenomenon of wider implications. It marks a revolt against the monopoly of knowledge held by the few Sanskrit-knowing pundits and a war against ignorance. The shame-facedness attached to the language of the masses as against that of the classes was revoltingly thrown out by thinkers like Cakradhara and Jnanesvara, and knowledge was made free for all. This not only gave a new confidence and prestige to the Marathi language but it also meant a service to the cause of the common man and a faith in him.

Sanskrit Literature:

In spite of the rise of Marathi, Sanskrit did remain an important language and valuable contributions in it were made during our period.

We learn from the Patan inscription (App.Insc.no.48) a tradition of scholars of a single distinguished family. In 1207 A.D.
a college was founded at Patana by Cangadeva for the study of the works of the great astronomer Bhaskaracharya. This well-known Bhaskaracharya actually lived under Bhoja Paramara and wrote the Siddhanta-Siromani (c.1150 A.D) and the Karana-kutuhala (c.1183 A.D.) Two chapters from the Siddhanta-siromani, Lilavati and Bijaganita are permanent contribution to Mathematics and other two Grahaganita and Gola are most valuable writings on Astronomy.

Bhaskara's son, Laxmidhara flourished as the court-astrologer of Jaitrapala. Then Cangadeva and Anantadeva of the same line were two famous astronomers at the court of Simghana. Anantadeva wrote commentaries on Varahamihira and Brahmagupta. Another valued production under Simghana is the Sangita-ratnakara of Sarangdeva - a work on music. Then under Krishna, Jalhana write his Sukti-muktavali, an anthology of Sanskrit verse already noted.

But the mightiest Sanskrit author of the age is Hemadri. A number of works are attributed to him (Aufrecht, Catalogus Catalogorum, p.766). Out of them two may be considered here. His Caturvarga Cintamani completed by the end of Mahadeva's career is an encyclopaedia of religion based on the study of various Vedas, Sutras, Smritis, Puranas and other sources. It consists of 1) Vrata 2) Dana 3) Tirtha 4) Moksha and 5) Parisesha khandas. But not all of them are published. The work reflects the religious outlook, beliefs, rituals and practices of the age. It is the first work of its kind based on the study of Puranas along with other texts. It must have been done under the general editorship of Hemadri. It was completed by the end of Mahadeva's career. Hemadri is quoted by many later authors and is regarded even to-day as an authority on Dharmasastra.
Hemadri's another important work is on medicine. It is the famous commentary called Aurveda-rasayana on Vakbhatā. It was written during Ramachandra's reign and is regarded as an authoritative work even to-day. P.K. Gode has shown that Hemadri's authorship of this work need not be doubted. Hemadri is known to have composed a commentary on Bopadeva's Muktaphala a contemporary work.

Marathi Literature:

But the real blossoming of Marathi literature is to be seen in the newly rising Marathi language. Here religion has been the motive force of literary creation and literature cannot be understood without its religious contexts. From the latter half of the 12th century Marathi began a literary output which has remained an uninterrupted process till this day. There are two distinct literary movements of this age. One is the Saint literature produced originally under the inspiration of the Natha school and the other is the Mahamubhava. We shall take broad survey of both of them.

Vivekasindhu:

The earliest Marathi work is the Vivekasindhu composed by Mukundaraja in 1188 A.D. It is the first Marathi Upanishad and expounds the Vedantic philosophy. 'The work can be rightfully called the primus opus in Marathi' though because of its wild popularity among various sects the text has been considerably modernised and inflated.

Jnanesvari:

The next important contribution is the classical Jnanesvari already noted. It is a literary creation par excellence and marks the culmination of Marathi literature, apart from its philosophical
contribution. 'The treatment of any problem in the Jnanesvari is so lucid so penetrating and so full of fervour of spiritual experience that every reader is forced to admit its claim to be regarded as the greatest work in the Marathi language ever written.' Jnanesvara used the 'ovi' form which like a musical instrument has responded to any key, note or tune that the great poet wanted.

Jnanesvara's advanced concept of literary creation could be seen when he confidently says, 'Through words shall I reveal the form of the formless and shall provide a sensual experience of the non-sensual. Many have brought out the literary excellence of the Jnanesvari but its rendering into English must await a poet of Tagore's genius capable of translating 'the beauty and freshness of the Oriental thought into the accepted forms of Western Bells-letters'.

Apart from this celebrated work, Jnanesvara has to his credit one treatise on the advaita philosophy called - Amrutanubhava or Anubhavamrutsa and a number of abhangas.

The Devotional Lyrics:

The Marathi language of the 13th and first half of the 14th centuries is especially rich in its abhanga literature. The abhangas are devotional lyrics, an outpouring of the heart and of its spiritual experiences. The three brothers Nivrittinatha, Jnanesvara, Sopana and sister Muktabai constitute the first group of the abhanga writers.

But the master poet who brought perfection to this form of poetry was Namdeva (1270-1350 A.D.). He is the second great saint-poet after Jnanesvara and his junior contemporary. He stands
collosal among many other poets of his time. A number of his contemporary saint poets like Gora the potter, Visa the Khecara, Savata the gardener, Narahari the goldsmith, Cokha the untouchable, Janabai the maid, Sena the barber, and Kanhopatra the dancing girl have also made permanent contributions to the abhanga form of poetry. Their very names indicate that the great literary activity was an expression of a social enlightenment and not a pedantry of the pandits. These saints not only made permanent names in Marathi literature but also found eternal abodes in the hearts of the millions. The best exposition of all the saint literature is to be found in R.D.Ranade’s Mysticism in Maharashtra.

The Mahanubhava Literature:

Cakradhara was the source of inspiration of the second great literary activity of our period. Its followers produced great authors and poets. They first of all started a new form in Marathi, the biography. Three great biographies written in a peculiar style are already noted as sources. (The Lila Caritra, the Govinda-prabhu Caritra by Mahimbhatta and the Smriti-sthala by Parasuram Vyasa). Lucidity, realism and humanitarianism are three great qualities of these works.

Mahadamba who composed her marriage-songs (c.1285 A.D.) called Dhavalas was the first Marathi poetess. Bhaskarbhatta Borikar made a good deal of contribution by way of his romantic poem Sisupalavadha, Uddhava-gita - a commentary on the 11th canto of Bhagvat and the Pujavasara describing the daily routine of Cakradhara. These works belong to the first decade of the 14th century. Keshava Vyas composed Sutrapatha and Murtiprakasa, being works respectively on the teachings and personality of Cakradhara.
Narendra was another noted poet who wrote his Rukmini-Svayamvara (1298 A.D.). It is said that king Ramdeva offered to purchase the authorship of this work but the dignified fearless poet gave a bright reply that it would be a shame to the poets at large.

(नाही जेव्हा आमुळी देखत विकास मिळते राज.$\text{को}$ तरी) A number of other Mahanubhava authors of this period are also known. They are all dealt with by Y.K. Deshpande.

**Hemadpant and Marathi Literature:**

Hemadpant is usually known as an advocate of Marathi language though not a single authentic Marathi work of his is available. As a patron of learning he must have encouraged the authors of the new language. Hemadri as a giant scholar, advocate of orthodox Hinduism, authority on Dharmasastra, and a great minister made such a great impact upon posterity that his name became immortal in the legend. Tradition attributes to him, the invention of the Modi script and the construction of the temples called Hemadpanti.

Now the Modi cannot be his invention. It is a product of a gradual evolution and is closely associated with the large scale use of paper as writing material in the last quarter of the 14th century A.D. Paper enabled and necessitated speedy writing and the Modi script became popular. Hemadpant had hardly anything to do with it. But the explanation for attributing of so many achievements to Hemadri is not hard to find. The two centuries from 1350 to 1550 A.D. was a dark period in the history of Deccan. During this time much of the earlier knowledge was lost. Even Jnanesvari was required to be researched by Eknath. So during this period the legends must have developed around Hemadpant.
Hemadpanta's name stood for tradition and past achievements. This must have made him an advocate of Marathi in the eyes of the people. Moreover, who else other than this famous giant writer who was also a Karanadhipa could invent a fast script of Modi? This seems to be the only reasonable explanation of the legends that have gathered around his name.

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Thus our survey shows that the Yadava age has been a definitely creative one so far as literary production is concerned. It has left a profound impact on later periods and a proud heritage for the posterity.
References

1. Kannarese Influence on old Marathi, ABORI, Vol.XI, p.4, also S.B. Joshi, Marathi Samskruti. Marathi during our period was also influenced by Gujarati. See - Patil G.M., Gujarati Loan words from Jnanesvari, JASB, NS, 1962.


4. R.D. Ranade, Pathway to God in Marathi Literature, p.27.

5. Jn.VI
   तेषे काव्यांनी मरी वोटेलत! मोक्षाला अस्पर्शानें कल्प टाकिलेले।
   अनंतीयिन परी भोगवलेली! इंक्रियाकारी। ॥३६॥

6. Now published under the title 'Pathway to God in Marathi Literature'.

7. Smriti Sthala, Lila 113, p.37.