



Research Article

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Contribution of Pāli and Sanskrit to Buddhism

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Abstract: Pāli and Sanskrit are two ancient Indian languages that have played a significant role in the development and spread of Buddhism. Pāli, the language of the Theravada Buddhist canon, is believed to be the closest to the language spoken by the historical Buddha and was widely used in Southeast Asia. Sanskrit, a literary and liturgical language, was used in the Mahayana tradition and played a central role in the transmission of Buddhism to East Asia. Both languages have contributed to the preservation and dissemination of the Buddha's teachings, as well as the development of Buddhist philosophy and culture.

Keywords: Pāli, Sanskrit, Buddhism, Theravada, Mahayana, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Language, Canon, Teachings, Philosophy, Culture.

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ORIGIN OF PĀLI

By Pāli is understood the language in which the *Tipitaka* is composed. Speaking about the origin of Pāli, we must discuss how the word *Pali* came into existence.

Pali has derived from the causation base of "Pa" (to protect). Protects meaningful discourses "*Saddattham Paliti ti Pali*" (Text is so-called because it protects the sense of words or preserves their importance).

Kosambi mentions that the name is derived from the root "Pal" (to protect, preserve). And originally means the book or literature in which the preservation of the Buddhist canon has taken place. *Bodhdhagosa* described the *Tipitaka* or its language by the name *Pali*, which means the text of the Buddhist scriptures.

Max Walleser says that *Pali* is derived from the name of the city of *Pataliputra*; *Pali* is contracted from "*Patali*" or "*Padali*" the assumption is that it was a language of *Pataliputra*, *Pataliputra* was the capital of *Magadha*, and *Pali* was *Magadha's* language. (*Patali*>*Pali*)

But in Indian methods, the word "*Patali*" has not changed into *Pali*. It is known as "*Padali*" in later Prakrit. From this, we have "*Palali*" in old *Bengali*. It is "*Parula*" in modern *Bengali*.

According to some scholars, *Pali* takes its meaning from *Palli*. Thus *Palli bhasa* is the language of villagers, of common people, not a literary language. It is a famous speech and rustic character. It is known as

Pali. "*Palli*" to *Pali* gives too many irregularities, the loss of one "I," which accompanies the lengthening of "a" to "ā" and the shortening of the final "I." (*Palli*> *Pali*). There is another derivation from *Pakati* to *Pali*. It informs us that all means language of ordinary people. *Pakati* is the normal and natural language used 90% of the population. Sanskrit is the highly developed and ornamented language used by only 10% of the people, mostly by well-educated people. (*Pakati*>*Pali*).

Another opinion is to trace it from *Pariyaya*. Thus, *Buddhavacana*= *Dhamma*= *Sutta*- *Pariyaya*> *Paliyaya*>*Pali*. (*Pari yaya*>*Pali*).

In my opinion, the theory that suggests the origin of *Pali* from the root Pa, "*Pati rakkhati iti tasma Pali*" is the most reasonable.

Origin and Development of Pali Language and Literature

Pali is the term given to Theravada Buddhism's textual language. The language of canon is *Magadhi*, the language supposedly spoken by the Buddha. *Pali* was initially used to describe a canonical text or section rather than a language. Its current application is the result of a centuries-old misunderstanding. The language of Theravada canon is a version of a dialect of Middle Indo-Aryan, not *Magadhi*. Nevertheless, it became necessary as Buddhism.

Theravada canon was written down in the first century BC. The language of the canon continued to be influenced by commentators and grammarians. Even after the writings were first recorded on paper, oral transmission of the *Pali* canon persisted for several

centuries after the Buddha's death. No uniform script was ever devised for the linguistic doctrine; scribes transcribed the texts using the scripts of their local languages. The practice of monks reciting and validating books has endured into the twentieth century.

The primary division of the *Pali* canon is threefold. The three divisions are known as *Tipitaka*. First, the texts of canon are divided into *Vinaya* (monastic rules), *Sutta* (discourses), and *Abhidhamma* (analysis of the teaching).

Origin and Development of Tipitaka

The *Tipitaka* is the primary collection of texts maintained in the *Pali* language in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. It is the first known and most complete extant early Buddhist canon. It was composed in North India. It was orally preserved until it was committed to writing during the Fourth Buddhist council in Srilanka in 29 BC. The *Pali* canon falls into three general categories called *Tipitaka*. The three pitakas are as follows:

- The *Vinaya Pitaka* is a collection of regulations for monks and nuns.
- *Sutta Pitaka*, a collection of lectures attributed to the Buddha but also followers.
- *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, also known as philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, and other terms. The texts of various early Buddhist schools are strikingly similar to the *Vinaya* and *Sutta Pitaka*. However, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* is strict. Theravada collection has familiar with the *Abhidhamma* works recognized by other Buddhist schools.

ORIGIN AND CONCEPT OF JATAKA

Jataka is the stories of the previous lives of the Buddha. The future Buddha may appear in them as a king, an outcast, a god, or an elephant, but, in whatever form, he exhibits some virtues.

In *Theravada*, *Jataka* is included in the *Khuddhaka Nikaya* of *Sutta Pitaka*. *Jatakas* were initially amongst the earliest Buddhist literature. *Jataka* comprises 547 poems, arranged roughly by increasing number of verses. The *Cariyapitaka* has alternate versions of several of the stories.

Many stories and motifs in the *Jataka* are found in numerous other languages and media. Many *Jatakas* have parallels in non-Buddhist Indian literature, such as the *Mahabharata*, *Panchatantra*, *Puranas*, etc. Some of them reappear in places like Aesop's tales. In *Theravada* countries, several longer *Jataka* such as *Rathasena Jataka* and *Vessantara*, are still performed in dance, theatre, and formal recitation. The *Jataka* stories have also been illustrated frequently in sculpture and painting throughout the Buddhist world.

Origin and Development of Sanskrit Buddhist Literature

In general, as the *Pali* language, *Sanskrit* is one of the main languages used in writing the teaching of Buddha. The *Sanskrit* language was used as a vehicle of Buddhist scriptures in the fourth Buddhist council. Sarvastivada School predominated in this council. It made a landmark in the development of Buddhism. *Sanskrit* canon has significant similarities to the *Pali* canon, but on the other hand, there are many points of difference, too.

As a result of this council, the *Sarvastivada School* possessed the *Agama* and *Abhidhamma* written in *Sanskrit*. *Agama* correspond to the *Pali Nikayas*. Moreover, most of the Buddhist literature of Northern Buddhism is composed in *Sanskrit*, especially in *Mahayana* Buddhism.

Among the *Mahayanist Sutra*, the nine followings are regarded as the most important and earliest. They are the *Asta sahasrika-prajnaparamita*, the *Saddharpundarika*, the *Lalitavis tara*, the *Lankavatara*, the *Suvanprabhsa*, the *Gandha-byuha*, the *Tathagata-guhyaka*, the *Samadhiraja* and the *Dasabhumisvara*. These are called the *Vaipulya Sutra*. *Nagarjuna*, *Vasubhadu*, and *Asanga* are the famous authors of the philosophical works of this school.

North and northwest of India was the cradle of *Mahayana* Buddhism. The use of the *Sanskrit* language was significantly developed in those areas. There were the great centers of Buddhist studies there, such as *Nalanda* University, *Takshila* University, etc. Many Chinese pilgrims, Huen-sang, Fa-Hien, and I-sing, learned the Buddhist texts and returned them to their countries. Others came. At that time, many Indian Buddhist monks also went to Tibet and China and translated *Sanskrit* works into the language of these counties.

In brief, *Sanskrit* takes an essential role in Buddhist literature. It is used to convey the cannon. But, on the contrary, by Buddhist literature, the *Sanskrit* language remains and becomes brighter as far as *Sanskrit* Buddhist literature has contributed to the wealth of India.

Uposatha

Uposatha is a religious congregation of the Buddhist Order twice a month to expound the *Dhamma* and recite the ecclesiastical rules laid down in the *Patimokkha*.

A pre-Buddhistic tradition is prevalent in the other religious sect that used to assemble on the eve of every week. They utilized these days for their discourses and the exposition of their doctrines.

The *Buddha* also adopted this practice with certain modifications suiting to his *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*.

He reduced uposatha days from four to two in a month, held twice on the *Catuddasi* and the *Pannarasi* of the month. The *Buddha* stipulated that the *Sangha* should use the *Uposatha* days to explain *Dhamma* and recite the *Patimokkha*. The reckoning of the days is not done by the month but by the *Pakkha* (fortnight), so the four months of a season would have 8 *Pakkhas* for holding the *Uposatha*. Thus the 3rd and 7th *Pakkhas* of the season are *Catuddasi*, while the others, the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 8th *Pakkhas* have the *Pannarasi Uposatha*.

There is an *Uposatha* which can be held on any day by the *Sangha*. Hence, it is called the *Samaggi-Uposatha*. It is held to give a formal seal of reconciliation on a quarrel that existed earlier in the *Sangha* but has been made up. The whole *Sangha* grants a formal confession of reconciliation, and hence, it is called *Samaggi Uposatha*. It can be held on any day.

When the *Sangha* of 4 or more attends the *Uposatha*, *Bhikkhus* follow the *Uposatha*. The *Gana Uposatha* is accompanied by a *Gana* of the monks (i.e., by two or three *Bhikkhus*). And when the *Uposatha* is performed by one monk alone, it is called the *Puggala Uposatha*. A *Sangha Uposatha* is also known as *Sattuddesa Uposatha* because the *Sutta*, i.e., *Patimokkha*, is recited in this assembly. In the *Gana Uposatha*, the *Patimokkha* has not been recited. The monks only proclaim their purity among themselves, and so on. It is also called *Parisuddhi Uposatha*. The *Puggala Uposatha* is also known as *Adhitthana Uposatha* because a single person can have his resolve to perform the *Uposatha*.

The word *Uposatha* has been explained in three ways (i) attending endowed with the *Silas*. What is that? It is the recitation of the *Patimokkha*. (ii) attending by realizing its significance. Finally, (iii) it is *Uposatha* because the *Bhikkhus* undertake to live in harmony together.

The *Bhikkhus* living within one *Sima* (boundary) are required to hold their *Uposatha* at the hall for the *Uposatha*. However, if the hall is found too small, the place around the hall or another place fit for the purpose may be used after making such by declaration by the *Nattidutiyakamma*. This is known as *Uposathapamukha*.

A group of monks cannot observe uposatha. It can be held only by the whole *Sangha*, and that also in the proper manner. For example, a *Bhikkhu* cannot attend the *Uposatha* ceremony if he has committed some offense that he has not yet expiated.

In the texts, as many as twenty-one persons are mentioned whose presence the *Uposatha* should not be performed. They are known as *Vajjanipuggala* (prohibited persons).

Rules of Monks and Nuns

Theravada monastic discipline (*Vinaya*) consists of rules of monastic training laid down by the *Buddha* for regulating the conduct of Buddhist monks (*Bhikkhus*) and nuns (*Bhikkhunis*) and their monastic under-training disciples. These rules are meant to enable the renunciate to exercise restraint over bodily and verbal actions and thus help purify spiritual life.

Transgression of these training rules means committing an offense, which attracts penalties necessary to rehabilitate the guilty *bhikkhu* or *bhikkhuni*. The *Buddha* laid down these rules whenever the monastic disciples committed an unwholesome act and behaved unbecomingly. For, wrong conduct or behavior affects the transgressor's spiritual life. Therefore, it threatens to disrupt spiritual progress for everyone in the *Buddha's* dispensation, which consists of *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunis*, *upasakas*, and *upasikas*.

The *Buddha* laid down both offenses and penalties under seven categories depending on the severity of the transgressions: 1. *Parajika* 2. *Sanghadisesa* 3. *Thullacchaya* 4. *Pacittiya* 5. *Patidesaniys Dukkata* 7. *Dubbhasi*.

In terms of rules of training, the seven categories are: 1. *Parajika* 2. *Sanghadisesa* 3. *Aniyata* 4. *Nissaggiya* 5. *Pacittiya* 6. *Patidesaniya* 7. *Sekhiya* and 8. *Adhikarana Samatha*.

When first laid down by the *Buddha*, these rules are called *Mulapannatti*, the basic regulations. Later, the *Buddha* modified many of the regulations when necessities for such arose. And these are called *Anupannatti* supplementary regulations. Whether primary or additional, both are known as *Sikkhapada* training rules.

Regarding the offenses, *Parajika* is a grave offense for which there is no remedy. The penalty for such an irremediable offense is ex-communication from the order of *bhikkhus*. The offender automatically ceases to be a *bhikkhu* and cannot be restored to the status of a *bhikkhu*. The offender can become an under-training monk as the disciple of a *bhikkhu* known as *samanera*; otherwise, he reverts to lay life.

The second category offense, *Sanghadisesa*, is also a grave offense, but it has a remedy. Being remediable, the offender can be restored to the state of a *bhikkhu* after serving a prohibitory period of penance. However, during this period, he has to undertake certain disciplinary practices necessary for his rehabilitation by the *Sangha* assembly. The remaining five categories are known as lesser offenses, which are remediable and entail penalties necessary for self-cleaning to be free from the impact of the wrongdoing.

There are two *Aniyata* (indefinite) offenses entailing any of the three crimes, *Parajika*,

Sanghadisesa, and Pacittiya. The penalty is determined by the correlation of evidence, both by a trustworthy enlightened lay devotee and admission of the transgressor before the Buddha or Sangha.

There are thirty *Nissaggiya pacittiya* offenses and penalties based on the transgression of the relevant training rules. The process of freeing oneself of the guilt of these offenses includes the forfeiture and expiation, that is, firstly giving up the object for which the crime has been committed, and this is followed by making a clean breast of oneself through an act of confession.

There are ninety-two *Pacittiya* offenses and penalties based on the relevant training rules. Being a relatively lesser offense, the remedy is simple in the form of expiation, making a clean breast of the sense of guilt through admission.

There are four *Patidesaniya* offenses and penalties based upon four relevant transgressions of training rules. This category of crime, too, requires admission by the transgressor of his offense by using a special formula that clearly states the nature of his wrongdoing.

There are seventy-five *Sekhiyas* rules of monastic discipline, all about the behavior of a *bhikkhu* or *Samanera*. These rules are rules of good manners and proper conduct in various situations, dealing with the polite behavior while accepting and eating alms food, dealing with the teaching of the Dhamma appropriately, and dealing with ways of answering nature's call.

The *Vinaya* gives seven specific ways of settling disputes or legal cases. The last category is *Adikarana Samatha*, setting the conflict by mutual understanding.

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