MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATIONS.

A STUDY OF SOME ONOMATOPŒTIC DEŚĪ WORDS.

There can be no doubt that onomatopœia and interjectional cries played a great part in the formation of our languages. It is true that the 'Bow-wow' theory alone is insufficient to trace the origin of all words; and it is not true, what Professor Noirê would have us believe, that all roots can be traced to some interjectional cries of primitive men. But it is true that a carefully instituted philological analysis can disclose the influence of onomatopœia and interjectional cries in the formation of a very large number of Vedic and Laukika roots.

When by strict, rigid, and thoroughgoing rules of grammar, an artificial check was placed upon the growth of the Sanskrit language, new words could not be coined except by the fixed rules of grammar, from the definitely established list of roots. How jealously the purity of the literary language was being guarded in the second century B.C. can be known from the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali. It has been declared sinful in that book to use words other than what are strictly Vedic and Laukika.

In the Sanskrit works which have been, with considerable certainty, fixed to a time previous to the second century B.C., no words other than Vedic and Laukika (in the strictest Pāṇini sense) can be met with. Since the *Mahābhārata* abounds in words not strictly Laukik, may we not venture to say that this is evidence, so far as it goes, that the building up of the poem did not commence till at least a century

later than the time of the *Mahābhāṣya*. Such an orthodox work as the *Mahābhārata* came eventually to be, could not have departed from the much respected orthodox rules, if time had not then made the rules almost obsolete. What is true of the *Mahābhārata* is true also in respect of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as we now have it. To my humble thinking the latter shows signs of lateness to a greater extent.

Of words formed by imitating natural sounds, and undervivable from the fixed stock of Sanskrit roots, *kolāhala*, *kilikilā*, and the like are only found in the eighteen lengthy *Sarvaṇs* of the *Mahābhārata*. *Halahalā*, *Gadgada*, and *Humbhā* (lowing of the cow) are found used in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the 23rd chapter of the *Aranyakāṇḍa*, we find exact sounds of birds used as Sanskrit words. “*Chīchikū-chīti vaçyanto babhūbastatra sārīkā*,” would have defiled the purity of language in the second century B.C. This very “*Chīchikū*” we find also in the *Harivaṃśa*. These words, as well as the words *Khaṭ-Khaṭ*, *Ṭhan-Ṭhan*, *Jhan-Jhan*, and *Raṇaraṇaka* of still later literature, have been called *Deśī* words (words of provincial origin) by Hemchandra. It is known to all that Hemchandra’s *Deśī Nāmamālā* contains only such words as were never derived from Sanskrit roots. Some ingenious Pundits have tried a forced affiliation of many of them to some recognised roots; but I do not consider it worth while to make any criticism on this attempt.

When literature grew, the writers felt the want of words, and were forced to borrow many words from the *Prākṛits*. To commence with, it was only sparingly done; but when once it was tolerated and approved, the writers introduced the *Prakrit* words very largely. This inference receives full corroboration from the language of the old inscriptions which have now been chronologically arranged in many books.

The *Deśī* words of onomatopætic origin, such as *Jhankāra*, *maṛa-maṛa*, *paṭ-paṭ*, and the like, are nowhere found in the works of *Kālidāsa* and *Bhāravi*. It might be plausibly argued, that the use of such words in dignified *Kāvya*s was studiously avoided by the poets. But it is worthv of note

that Kālidāsa has not used these words even in the Prakrit dialogues in his Drama, while Mricchakatikā and Ratnāvalī abound with such expressions. It is also not true that the use of 'Gharghara' for Nirghoṣa and 'Jhankāra' for Aliruta lessened the dignity of the language. These words have been profitably used, to heighten the effect of grand descriptions, by Bhavabhūti in his Uttara-carita and Mālatīmādhava.

The poet Subandhu flourished towards the end of the sixth century, say some fifty years after the death of Kālidāsa. We find the use of a small number of onomatopætic words in his Vāsavadattā as nouns only. Three or four such words of this class as are found in Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa are also found used as nouns, as I have already shown. This is the sort of use made of them (though very sparsely) in the Pañcatantra. Kolāhala is the only word I have met with in the existing Pañcatantra, even though this is not exactly the book which was written in the fifth century.

In the writings of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, Bhavabhūti, and Śūdraka, these words have been very freely and largely used. Verbs also were made of them, and expressions like Khaṭ-khaṭāyate, Phurphurāyati, and Maramarāyisma are found frequently. The use of these words as verbs commenced only in the seventh century, so far as I have been able to ascertain. From the seventh century onward, there is scarcely any Sanskrit composition wherein these Deśī words of onomatopætic origin are not found.

I should like what I have asserted to be tested by reference to the books the dates of which have been fairly established. If the use of this particular class of Deśī words grew in the manner indicated in this paper, the words will have a special value in determining the chronology of some old books.

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