PROMOTION OF SANSKRIT STUDIES IN SIKKIM

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A hill tract in the lap of lanchasajangha happens to be topographically strategic. A small state is contiguously connected with TAA (Tibet Autonomous Region of China) which was traditionally called Bod yul (Bhotadesa). A sizeable number of bodpas from Bhotadesa who are usually named Bhutia or Bhutia entered by the 16th century in the Tsita and the Raski valleys in search of better livelihood. Prior to them, the Lepcha of different ethnic group had entered from the eastern part of the lower Himalayas by the 13th century A.D. The advent of the Tsong (Magar or Mon) who had been the dwellers of the foothills about the foothills of Sikkim. Thus the gتنظيم diversity of Sikkim is popularly described as Tung-Kong-Bod or restrictively Bod-Kong-Mon.

The Sanskrit culture which spread in the Gangs Brahmaputra valley had the least scope to be in Sikkim directly. Moreover, the traders who used to carry the culture traits from one country to other had had less communication in the olden days. The Bhutia traders of Sikkim preferred to cross the Nathula and Jalpaiguri with their merchandise for exchange with their Bod or Tibetan counterpart instead of coming down to the foothills up to the Tsita locality. The Lepcha or Kong group have been ego-dependent and usually move in the local markets. Similar is the case with the Magar and other local groups. Vedicsm transferred through the Puranic and the Smartha traditions could not move up to the hill tracts of Sikkim. The Nepalese however accepted Saiva, and Saktis cult together with Buddhism. The inhabitants of easternmost Himalayas traditionally are said to have associated with the Krishna and Parameswara legend and episodes.

However, Nimrat Ondoa Sinha has already pointed out in his article on the impact of Sanskrit with Tibetans. He rightly observed that Sanskrit and Tibetan are supplementary to one another in understanding the ancient Indian traditions.

Since the advent of the Bhutia from Bhotadesa (Tibet), they carried the legacy of the Buddhist culture, which had entered into Bod Yul through Sikkim used by the Buddhists of Bharatavarsha. Buddhism had sprouted up in Gankhar, khoten during the lifetime of Asoka (2nd cent. B.C.). As a result of that the Buddhist literature in Sanskrit did not always follow the language norms as prescribed by Panini (circa 400 B.C.). This leaves room to presume that Sanskrit had been a spoken language of the north-western Himalayas in spite of systematisation by grammatical formalism.
by Panini. The Buddhist texts like Lalitavistara, Manjusrimulakalpa, Gaudavya
etc. preserve the specimens of the Sanskrit speech which had been in vogue probably
up the beginning of the Christian era.

Again, the Buddhists in Tibet endeavoured vigorously to preserve
Buddhavacana or the Holy Buddhist literature kanjur (bka' 'gyur) in Tibetan
translation from the original sources which had been carried to Tibet by the Buddhist
monks since the 7th cent. A.D. The Indian pandits collaborated the Tibetan lostanas
in translating the Sanskrit Buddhist texts and thereby Sanskrit Studies developed
indirectly with an impact on chos skad in Tibet.

Actually speaking, chos skad or the Buddhist scriptural language which had
been formulated during the Early Spread of Buddhism (7th-10 A.D.) was Sanskrit in structure. Semblance of Sanskrit and Tibetan in the
morphology and the syntax are traced in many aspects of the two languages. The
Sanskritisation of Tibetan in chos skad opens a new approach of the Tibetan
Linguistics and that requires a separate treatment elsewhere.

However, a learner of chos skad endeavours to learn Sanskrit language and
literature, especially Buddhist for in-depth study of the Kanjur (bka' 'gyur, 
Buddhavacana) and the Tanjur (bstan 'gyur shastra). A few Sanskrit scholars among
the Tibetan erudite like Sakya Pandchen, Gyal wa nga ba have been honoured by
the Tibetans for their access to the inner significance of Chos. Especially, in the
mantras preserved of the Agyad snags and dungs the Tibetan experts experience
their inaccessibility in absence of their Sanskrit learning.

Keeping the above in view, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, which is
reverted to its original name Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology (SRIT) in
Gangtok resolved to acknowledge Sanskrit Studies essential for developing higher
researches in the field of Tibetology. Since 1960 SRIT avowedly follows the said
procedure to interrelate Tibetan researches with reference to Sanskrit and were
required. Sanskrit Studies add a new focus in Tibetological quests based on Katan
deno gsum (bka' 'gyur bstan 'gyur mdo snad gsum). Sikkim Research Institute of
Tibetology, Gangtok was pioneer to introduce regular Sanskrit classes— a five year
course for stipendary Monk Student since 1960. The classes were discontinued in
1973-74.

Buddhist works contributed by Nagurjuna Asvaghosa, Vasumitra, Asanga
Vasubandhu Dinnaga, Dharmakirti, Carakakirti, Rabjorkarasmi, Jnanakirti in
Pakistan Sanskrit had been carried to Tibet. A large number of eminent 7th-
scholars participated to elucidate the thoughts of the Indian Buddhists with new
approaches which took shape in separate traditional lineages like, Nyingma,
Kargyupa, Sakyapa, and Gelug in Tibet. The Buddhist monastic units in Sikkim inherit
these traditional lineages through centuries. Several Sikkimese scholars with yellow
robes flocked to Tibet for acquisition of the Indian teaching from the Tibetan erudite
as though had been lost in India since the 12th cent. A.D. After completion of their

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learning in Tibetan monastic academic centres like Sera, Gadar, Tashilhunpo, the Sikkimese teachers have been associated with the monasteries in various parts of Sikkim. But their aspiration to learn the original source materials of the Indian etuisle personalities remain unfulfilled in spite of their best endeavour to learn Sanskrit at the individual level.

On the other hand, several Nepali authors and eminent poets beginning from Acarya Bhunu Bhakta, Kavi Raghunath Upadhyaya, adopted their inspiration from the Sanskrit literature. Even the Nepali drama writers of the Raghavasanda Nataka, Haragauri Nataka, Paundavavijaya nataka, Harisandhra nityam of medieval period of Nepal were conversant in Sanskrit Nayasanstra and other texts. Acarya Bhunu Bhakta did not hesitate to follow the Sanskrit metres in his composition like indravaya, upajati, vasantitilaka, malini, tomka, sardilavirkrida etc. It may be added that earlier Carava (goedhayer) like Bharitavarma in Nepal had been acquainted with Sanskritic traditions. Similar instances may be referred to the contributions of Nepali poets like Indira, Patanjali, Vasantabharma, Vidyavarnya Kenari, who had followed the Sanskrit kavya style (riti) with aesthetic correctness (agnilanka).

The Sikkimese Nepali Speakers, though not always conversant in Sanskrit as an academic claim, have got the traditional aesthetic approach with its Sanskritic environment. Measures for promoting Sanskrit Studies do not always refer to Buddhistic feedback but also to cultural enlightenment in general.

A few Sanskrit Pathashala for teaching Sanskrit in a traditional manner have been established since the mid-sixties of our century in Sikkim centres are of two types. Namely:

1) registered under the Ministry of Education Sikkim National Government with financial aid annually;

2) non-registered with the local initiative. The distribution of these Pathashala is enumerated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Registered</th>
<th>Non-Registered</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Sikkim</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sikkim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sikkim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These Sanskrit Pathashala traditional Sanskrit learning are affiliated to Vananayya Sanskrit University Vasistha Vidyalaya. The courses and syllabi are also followed accordingly to conduct their examinations after completion of study. It takes five consecutive years from Pathashala to Acarya. A person awarded with the title of Acarya is recognized as an equivalent to the Master degree in Sanskrit of a recognized University. In that respect the standard of education is up to the mark as per with the other University. That is a plus point in respect of the
learners who qualify for entrance into in-depth study programmes to explore a new vista of Tibetan Studies. With reference to Sanskrit sources and Sanskrit Studies. With reference to their Tibetan materials, the Pathashala project has succeeded to a great extent to enliven awareness to a great extent.

Sikkim Government has taken steps to promote studies in Sanskrit vigorously. Sri Ujaya Chandra Vashista has been engaged in the capacity of Officer on Special Duty for the purpose. Two important programmes are in the course of implementation.

1. Establishment of Sanskrita Mahavidyalaya by the State Government at Gyalshing (gyal zhing).

2. Popular motivation for promoting Sanskrit awareness to explore the cultural heritage of Sikkim.

The above programmes have a satisfactory response from the Sikkimese.

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In this connection SRIT since its inception as Namgyal Institute of Tibetology has ventured to promote the cause for the last four decades. The following bilingual (Tibetan Sanskrit editions) of Tibetanological source materials have come out.

1) 'Phags pa kun tu bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam (Samanta-bhadra-carita (carya) pranidhana) ed. S.K. Pathak. 1961 'Phags pa Kunzubzang to spyod pa'i grol ba.

2) (Aya-samansahadra caryatika) of Lean Skyu Khtsukto Latetavajra's ceremony in Tibetan, 1961.

3) Vimucittatamasiddhi Vimucitika of Vasubandhu, with introduction, notes and index verbatim by N. Assyazawami Sastri, 1964.

3a) Bhayyari-siddhi (Establishment of Objective Reality) of Bhadantac Subhagacarya (slob-dpon dGe'-rung) an exponent of Buddhist Vajhabhikta school (empirical/objective Reality by N. Assyazawami Sastri, B.T. Vol. IV No. 2 1967).

4) Shes rab (Prajna), a Sanskrit Tibetan Bilingual lexicon compiled by Tenzin Gyalshen of Kham (18th cent. A.D.)

Besides these bilingual works several Tibetan works having reference to the Sanskrit source materials have been brought to light. Such as:


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Moreover, the following articles published in Bulletins of Tibetology focus a new approach towards Sanskritic studies into the context of the Indo-Tibetan Cultural relationship since the 7th cent A.D.

**On the Upanisads:**

**On the Sanskrit Grammar:**

**On the Nyaya and the naiyayikas:**

**On the Tantra and Agama:**

The few Nepali Priest families, whether they belong to Srimangari or to Budhhamangar cult are equipped with Sanskrit as family tradition and they may possess Sanskrit manuscripts. The Government authorities may take up a national project at the state level to procure those manuscripts and other antique belonging to Rong-Mos-Bod with no discrimination. Those core materials will strengthen Sikkimese Culture towards consolidation and integration.
In the cultural heritage of Sikkim, Sanskritic studies are equally important on the following grounds:

1. Linguistic semblance between Tibetan and Sanskrit paves a historical base of the Buddhist culture in Sikkim.

2. Among the other languages akin to Nepali the Sanskrit language and literature hold an impact through centuries. The Pahari Kuma which happens to be commonly spoken language in Sikkim, is a broken speech with its lien to Sanskrit and Magadhi Pārśkrt.

3. As regards the relation between the Rong (Lochen) Language and Sanskrit a close study is required.

With this context a few instances are referred here for illustration, from comparative structural linguistic with morphological references.

1. The Prajñā (SRIT ed.-p. 49) enumerates five words belonging to T. (Tibetan) skyas rengs kyi munsg group in the Amaṅkasa (‘Claimed extrod pa) manner.
   i) T. rengs for Ś. (śanskrit)staurus suggestsrejoicing to any literally. Here, T. rengs is an alternative from of T. rangs with reference to T. nyin rangs pa in the sense of T. thin rangs (dawn break of day).
   ii) T. bta med for Ś. asurah (having no thigh).
   iii) Ś. ‘od strung rgyud for S. kṣayaṇḍa; T. (sgrub) means (belonging to) the lineage of the protector of light. Where as S. Kṣayaṇḍa T. ’od strung s (Mahayulpati 345ś, Saṅkhā edn.)
   iv) T. Kyesg sngon kyes for S. garudagrabah is appropriate in literal rendering.
   v) T. nyi ma’s ka lo pa for Ś. sasvatuh disjoining the genitive compound denoting ‘belongs to’ or ‘possessed with’. S. surya or sara translated into Tibetan as nyi ma. In the group of T. nyi ma’t ming (Praţa, pp. 46ś) several words like T. ’od gzed for S. suryah, T. sngan byed for S. ahakarah T. Char ’bibs for S. mitrah T. grags lden for S. raviḥ or T. ’od ter grugs for S. raviḥ are to note for comparative rendering of the above words cited above. The semblance of Sanskrit and Tibetan are also explicit in morphological grammar which requires a separate study.

2. Dayanand Srivastava in his Nepali Language, its Origin and Development (p. xv), Calcutta University 1962) remarks as given below.
“The early Nepali inscriptions and Tummarapras confirm that Nepali, like the other NIA language, is in the direct line of development, from OIA through NIA. Rani Pokhri Inscription suggests the 1641 A.D. was the end of a phase in linguistic history of Nepal and not the beginning as suggested by Sir George Grierson. Grierson noticed a close similarity between Rajasthan and Nepali. This led him to think that Nepali has originated from Rajasthan. Nepali owes its origin from OIA, this fact cannot be disputed, but its exact place among the Indo-Aryan languages is open for discussion.”

He further establishes his arguments on the following grounds.

“The second person singular has ‘thou art’ and the third person singular has ‘he is’ (earlier hari, in the negative hari-na) are derived from OIA bhavati, bhavantī MIA hori, hori. The third person singular hori and third person plural hori go back to bhu, bhavanti respectively. The present participle jado, goes back to OIA -and, the past participle in -jyo goes back to OIA -ata. The masculine adjectival form in -o goes back to OIA masculine -akah, and the feminine -i goes back to OIA -ika. The post-negative, the pronominals and the verbal forms presented in these pages, all have developed from OIA.”

Prior to the Formative period 1776 to 1889 A.D. of the Nepali heavy literature a sizable number of songs had been in vogue among the Vajrayasa practitioners. Those were the earliest specimen of metrical composition in which Sanskrit and Nepali words had been inadvertently mixed in course of spontaneous outburst of inspiration of the deity. The tradition continued when the carana (court singers) used to praise the rulers in court. Gumani of Kumaun (1790-1846) used to compose three feet of a stanza in Sanskrit and one feet in Nepali or in Khariboli (Hindi).

Moreover, a few Sanskrit texts were translated in Nepali; such as:

1. Gopikasta (from the tenth chapter of Shrimadbhagvata) Indiras (born 1827)
   i) Draupadi Stuti (to Krishan in the instance of Vastrahara) Vidyaranya Keswari (b. 1806)
   ii) Benugeta (translated from Sanskrit). Sanskrit teacher of Kathmandu

Free translation of Mahabharata
Basanta Sharma
(Contemporary of Indiraas)
Courapancasika
Patanjali Gujrel (b. 1823)
Prasnoittari (mala)
Bhanu bhatta (1814-1869)

Thematically Yadunath Pahkarya (b. 1833), the first east Terain Nepali poet, and
Raghuwam Bhattacharya (b. 1811?) thematically used Sanskrit materials in their Satipadaya and Sundarakanda respectively.

In this connection the early drama works like Hatyakadasha ascribed to Shaktiballav Arya (trans. 1789); Muddarakshashaa translated by Bhuvandatta Pandey (trans. 1883) deserve mention.

Thus the Nepali speakers in Sikkim have been aware of the importance of Sanskrit in their culture context.

3. Phani Bhushan Chakravarty in his Parallelism between Indo-Iranian SomeHaoma rituals and the Chidya rituals of the Lepchas of Sikkim open a new vista in search of cultural affinity. In this regard the following observations are to noted.

"The customs and rituals of the Lepchas of Sikkim run parallel to the ancient Indo-Iranian customs. Among the southern Himalayan tribe, the Lepchas, according to M. Hermanns, are the only tribe having knowledge of plants and the art of preparing intoxicating drinks from them. The Tibetans call the Drink of Immortality "Dud-rtti". It is nectar or ambrosia although literally it means the devil's drink." (Bulletin of Tribology, SRIT, Gangtok, 1994 No. 2).

The Cultural affinity between the Bhutia the Lepcha and the Nepali speakers in Sikkim requires a separate socio-linguistic study.
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