PREFACE

The first information regarding the existence of Sanskrit and the literature of the Upaniṣads was carried to the West by the Latin translation, by Anquetil Duperron, of the 50 Upaniṣads from the Persian translation of Dara Shiko which at once elicited the highest approbation of Schopenhauer. There was a time when it was openly doubted in Europe whether there was any genuine Sanskrit language and the distinguished English philosopher Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) in one of his papers described Sanskrit as a forgery of the Brahmins. But the indefatigable work of Sir William Jones, Colebrooke and others made Sanskrit known to the Western world. It was then recognised that the Sanskrit language with its old and modern descendants represents the easternmost branch of the Indo-Germanic Aryan stock of speech. Numerous special coincidences of language and mythology between the Vedic Aryans and the people of Iran also prove incontestably that these two members of the Indo-Germanic family must have lived in close connection for some considerable period after the others had separated from them.

The origin of comparative philology dates from the time when European scholars became accurately acquainted with the ancient languages of India. Before this the classical scholars had been unable to determine the true relations between the then known languages of the Aryan stock. It is now almost universally recognised that Sanskrit is the eldest daughter of the old mother-tongue of the Aryan people and probably the only surviving daughter. But none of the other six principal members of the family has left any literary monuments and their original features have to be reproduced as best as possible from the materials supplied by their own daughter-languages.
Such is the case with regard to the Iranian, Hellenic, Italic, Celtic, Teutonic and Letto-Slavic languages. The oldest of the Indian speeches is to be found in the *Rgveda*. In the language of the *Rgveda*, one can trace a gradual and steady development of the language of the classical Sanskrit through the later Samhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. The development, however, is not as spontaneous as the modifications that are effected by popular speech. It has been controlled by tradition and grammatical studies. Changes in the speech of the upper classes are largely prevented by the sacred devotion to it and this was further supplemented by the work of the early grammarians, whose analytical skill far surpassed anything achieved in the West up till recent times. The Sanskrit grammarians tried as far as possible to remove irregularities and they hardly allowed any scope to new formations and this preserved to a very great extent the purity of the language and its well-ordered nature which would otherwise have been impossible. The conservative tendency of Indian literary culture, which we have tried to demonstrate in the field of the development of Sanskrit literature in the Introduction, is remarkably manifested also in the permanent form that has been given to the Sanskrit language. The word *sanskṛt* means *purified* and *well-ordered*. By 150 B.C., by the joint works of the 3 grammarians, Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, the language attained a stereotyped form which remained the same throughout the centuries, though it remained the literary language of the people. It can hardly be doubted that though Pāṇini recognised fully the Vedic accents and forms, yet in his time it was Sanskrit and not the older Vedic languages that were spoken. Yet Sanskrit cannot be regarded as an artificial creation of the grammarians, for its development from the Vedas through the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads can be clearly traced. The Sanskrit language, which Pāṇini calls *bhāṣā*, or speech, is closely akin to the language of the Upaniṣads and the Brāhmaṇas. Though this *bhāṣā* Sanskrit is not so luxurious in form as the Vedic Sanskrit, yet there is
no artificial symmetry and there is a profusion of nipātas or irregular forms which makes the study of Sanskrit so bewilderingly difficult to students.

Sanskrit was indeed the language not only of kāvya or literature but of all the Indian sciences, and excepting the Pāli of the Hinayāna Buddhists and the Prākrit of the Jains, it was the only language in which the whole of India expressed all her best thoughts for the last 2 or 3 thousand years, and it has united the culture of India and given it a synchronous form in spite of general differences of popular speech, racial and geographical, economical and other differences. It is the one ground that has made it possible to develop the idea of Hindu nationhood in which kinship of culture plays the most important part. Under the shadow of one Vedic religion there had indeed developed many subsidiary religions, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, etc., and within each of these, there had been many sects and sub-sects which have often emphasised the domestic quarrel, but in spite of it all there is a unity of religions among the Hindus, for the mother of all religious and secular culture had been Sanskrit.

Variations from Sanskrit as determined by Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali may occasionally be noticed in the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and some of the other Purāṇas and Patañjalī also noticed it when he said chandovat kavyah kurvanti and an early poet such as Kālidāsa also sometimes indulges in such poetical licenses. Lesser poets who wrote inscriptions also often showed their inability to conform to the grammatical rules of Pāṇini. But apart from this the Sanskrit language has not suffered any change in the course of ages. It must, however, be noted that the technical and non-Brahminical works sometimes reveal a laxity of Sanskrit speech and in the case of the early Buddhist writers there was an intentional disregard to the rules of Pāṇini, probably in their effort towards the simplification of the Sanskrit language. The most notable example of this is the gāthā language of the Lalitavistara and similar other works. Sometimes even later Brahminical works which tried to bring a
halo of antiquity, often made lapses in order to force upon the people the impression of their archaic nature as may be found in many of the Tantra works, or in the works of divination and incantation as found in the Bower manuscripts where there is ample evidence of Prākṛtism and careless Sanskrit. Instances, however, are not rare where actual Prākṛt forms were Sanskritised. The incorporation of Dravidian and other words into Sanskrit has also been widely recognised. The words formed by the unādi suffix will supply innumerable instances of how current words gained a footing into the Sanskrit language and fanciful derivations were attempted to justify such uses.

Not only in fairly early times was Prākṛt used for the edicts and the praṣasti but it was also used in writing poetical and prose kāvyas in later times. The word Prākṛta is seldom used in early Sanskrit in the sense of a language. Its real meaning is ‘original’, ‘natural’, ‘normal’, and it has been used in this sense in the Vedic literature in the Prātiśākhyas and the Śrautasūtras and also in Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya. The word prākṛtamānuṣa is used in the sense of ‘an ordinary man’ or ‘a man in the street.’ Hemacandra says that Prākṛta is so called because it has been derived from Sanskrit which is the prakṛti or source (prakṛtih saṃskṛtam tatra bhavam tata āgatañca prākṛtam). But there is another view as held by Pischel where the Prākṛt is derived as ‘coming from nature’ without any special instruction, i.e., the folk language. But it is impossible for us to decide in what way the Prākṛt language grew. In the writings of the Prākṛt grammarians and writers on Poetics, the term denotes a number of distinctly artificial dialects, which, as they stand now, could hardly have been spoken vernaculars. Sir George Grierson divides Prākṛt into 3 stages, first, the primary Prākṛt, from which the Vedic language and Sanskrit were derived; second, secondary Prākṛt, consisting of Pāli, the Prākṛts of the grammarians and literature and the Apabhramśas; the third, Prākṛt consists of the modern vernaculars. But the inscriptions of Aśoka show at least the existence
of three dialects, the Eastern dialect of the capital which
was the official lingua franca of the Empire, the North-western
and the Western dialects. We next find the post-Aśokan
Prākṛts in the inscriptions and the Prākṛt of Aśvaghoṣa of the
1st century A.D. Here we find the old Ardha-māgadhī, the old
Śauraseni and the old Māgadhi. According to the current
tradition the Jaina doctrines preached by Mahāvīra were
delivered in Ardha-māgadhī but the scriptures of Śvetāmbara
Jainas that are now available have been very much influenced
by the Mahārāṣṭrī and the later texts were written in Jaina
Mahārāṣṭrī, while the Digambara scriptures are in Śauraseni.
The Paisāci is also a form of Prākṛt though only few books
written in this dialect are now available. Paisāci was probably
the language current in the Vindhya region. The characteristics
of the old Prākṛts consist largely in the transformation of the
vowels ṛ and ļ, ai and au, and in the reduction of the sibilants and
nasals with also other changes in consonants. Literature of a
secular character might have been composed in old Prākṛts until
the 2nd century A.D. But about that date new changes were
effected leading to the transformation of the old Prākṛt to a new
stage of development. This resulted in the formation of the
Mahārāṣṭrī in the dominions of the Sātavāhanas in the South-
west and the rise of the Māgadhī and the Śauraseni, as may be
noticed in the dramas of Bhāsa and Aśvaghoṣa on the one hand
and Kālidāsa on the other. By the 2nd century A.D. we find
the Mahārāṣṭrī lyric in the poems of Hāla. The Mahārāṣṭrī
Prākṛt became important as the Prākṛt of the dramas and of the
epic poetry. The Śauraseni was but occasionally used in verse
and sometimes in the drama. The Śauraseni is more closely
allied to Sanskrit than the Mahārāṣṭrī and it was generally used
in dramas by men of good and noble position. The Māgadhī
on the other hand was reserved for people of low rank. The
Nātya-sāstra speaks, however, of different types of Prākṛt such as
Dākṣiṇātya, Prācyā, Āvanti and Dhakki, which are the different
types of the Śauraseni, though Cāṇḍāli and Śakāri are types of
the Māgadhī. The Prākṛt of the verses of the Nātya-śāstra need not be assumed to be the Prākṛt of a different type but it may well be regarded as a variant of the Śaurasenī. The poetry of Śaurasenī Prākṛt is closely akin to the Mahārāṣṭrī. A separate note has been added regarding the Apabhramśa, the importance of which for literary purposes may now be ignored.

A few Histories of Sanskrit Literature, such as History of Sanskrit Literature (1860) by Maxmuller, History of Indian Literature (1878) by Weber, Indiens Litteratur und Kultur (1887) by L. V. Schroeder, Literary History of India by Frazer, History of Sanskrit Literature (1900) by Macdonell, Die Litteratur des alten Indiens (1903) by Oldenberg, Les Litteratures de l'Inde (1904) by V. Henry, Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur by Winternitz, Sanskrit Drama (1924), History of Sanskrit Literature (1928), as well as Classical Sanskrit Literature by Keith, and Geschichte der Sanskrit-philologie und Indischen Altertumskunde (1917, Vol. I and 1920, Vol. II) by Windisch, have been written. Of these, Winternitz's work in three volumes seems to be the most comprehensive treatment. The Calcutta University had completed the English translation of the first two volumes under the supervision of Professor Winternitz himself. The English translation of Volume III had advanced a little when Professor Winternitz died. The Calcutta University had then entered into correspondence with some European scholars about the supervision of the translation of Volume III. This correspondence having failed, I was approached by the University to undertake the work and it was proposed by me that as the translation of Volume III had only advanced but little, it would be better to plan another work dealing with the subjects that form the content of Volume III of Professor Winternitz's work. It was also felt necessary that the title of the book, as it appeared in Professor Winternitz's work, History of Indian Literature, should be changed to History of Sanskrit Literature, as "Indian Literature" is too vast a subject to be taken up as a sort of appendage to the history of
Sanskrit literature, as Prof. Winternitz had done. As my hands at the time were too full with other works, it was arranged that under my chief editorship within an Editorial Board the work should be done by subscription by the scholars of Bengal. Volume I deals with Kāvyā and Alāṃkāra and Volume II is expected to deal with other Technical Sciences. In Volume I, I had the good fortune to get the co-operation of Prof. Dr. S. K. De in writing out the portion on Kāvyā. But for his valuable scholarly assistance and promptness of execution the publication of Volume I might have been long delayed. I have tried to supplement Prof. De’s treatment with an Introduction and additional Editorial Notes and it is expected that these may also prove helpful to students. Our indebtedness to Prof. Winternitz’s German Edition, Vol. III, and Prof. Keith’s works, as well as to other Western and Indian scholars, cannot be exaggerated. For want of space it was not possible to go into greater details regarding the Alāṃkāra-Śāstra, but I hope that what appears there may be deemed sufficient for a general history of Sanskrit literature. The Introduction is intended to give a proper perspective for reviewing the history of Sanskrit literature in its background of racial, social and historical environment, an appreciation of which I consider essential for grasping the significance of the Sanskrit literary culture.

It is to be regretted that some of the contributions, such as those on the Historical Kāvyas, or the elements of literature in the Inscriptions, or the Prākṛt literature, could not be incorporated in the present volume, though these should have been included here. This was due to the fact that those contributions were not received in time. It is expected, however, that these will appear in Volume II. In the meanwhile, both in the body of the book and in the Editorial Notes some general estimates have been taken of these, though very little has been said about the elements of literature in Inscriptions.

By way of confession of a hasty observation in the Alāṃkāra section that the Latin word aurum may be connected with the
word *alam* in Sanskrit I beg to point out that since that section has been printed, an eminent philologist has assured me that neither *aurum* is Latin nor can it be philologically connected with *alam* in Sanskrit.

In conclusion, I like to express my thanks to Mr. Krishnagopal Goswami, Sastri, M.A., P.R.S., Smriti-Mimansatirtha, Lecturer in the Post-Graduate Department of Sanskrit of the University of Calcutta, who has kindly prepared a list of contents and a detailed Index for this volume.

S. N. Das Gupta.

NOTE

Since on account of circumstances over which there was no control the publication has been unusually delayed for nearly six years, I owe an apology for my inability in bringing the work up to date.

*University of Dacca, 1946.*

S. K. De.