

Tatsama Vocabulary in Modern Bangla Language

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to show the influence of tatsama i.e. Sanskrit loanwords in modern *Bānglā* Language. Sanskrit language, however, is considered the mother of all Indian languages and it has rich vocabulary. The tatsama vocabulary belongs to a higher and more erudite register than common words. In this paper, we would discuss on the influence of Sanskrit loanwords in *Bānglā* language. The origin of tatsama in *Bānglā* is traced to tenth century poets, who felt that the colloquial language was not suitable for their expressive needs. Vedic and Sanskrit words that entered in Bengali Vocabulary by the way of Prākṛit are regarded as genuine *Bānglā* words.

1. Introduction

The paper concerns the study of *tatsama* vocabulary and its influence in *Bānglā* language. *Tat* means 'its', i.e. belonging to Sanskrit, and *sama* means 'akin'. The earliest use of *tatsama* word is to be found in Dandi's *Kāvyaadarsha*. To him, the words that remained the same in Sanskrit and Prakrit were *tatsama*. There are plenty of *tatsama* words in *Bānglā*.

1.1 Origin of *Bānglā* language

The three *Bihari* speeches of eastern India namely *Maithili, Magadhi* and *Bhojpuri* and on the other hand, *Oriya, Bānglā* and *Assamese* are all originated from Magadhi Prakrit. By 1000 A.D judging from the specimens of *Bānglā, Assamese* and *Oriya*, these languages had become fully established although the relationship between *Bānglā* and *Oriya* was a little closer than between *Assamese* and *Oriya*. About this time *Bānglā* was fully characterized while *Assamese* remained much closer to Old *Bānglā*.

Bānglā, like other Eastern Indo-Aryan languages, arose from the eastern Middle Indo-Aryan languages of the Indian subcontinent. Magadhi, Prakrit and Pali, the earliest recorded spoken languages in the region and the language of the Buddha, evolved into the Jain Prakrit or *Ardhamāgadhi* (Half Magadhi) in the early part of the first millennium CE.ⁱ *Ardhamāgadhi*, as with all of the Prakrits of North India, began to give way to what are called *Apabhramsa*, (Corrupted grammar) languages just before the turn of the first millennium.ⁱⁱ The local *Apabhramsa*, language of the eastern subcontinent, *Purvi*

Apabhramsa or *Abahatta* ("Meaningless Sounds"), eventually evolved into regional dialects, which in turn formed three groups: the *Bihari* languages, the *Oriya* languages, and the *Assamese-Bānglā* languages. Some argue that the points of divergence occurred much earlier—going back to even 500 CE.ⁱⁱⁱ but the language was not static: different varieties coexisted and authors often wrote in multiple dialects. For example, Magadhi Prakrit is believed to have evolved into *Abahatta* around the 6th century which competed with the ancestor of *Bānglā* for a period of time.^{iv}

1.2 Historical Development of *Bānglā* language

In the history of *Bānglā* literature three periods are usually identified.

➤ The Old *Bānglā* (1000 – 14001)

The oldest specimens of *Bānglā* are to be found in early inscriptions of *Bānglā* from the 5th century down to 1000 A.D. Collected specimens of *Bānglā* literature are found in the fifty *Caryāpadas* which were discovered in Nepal.

➤ Middle *Bānglā* (11400 -18001)

As we have seen above *Bānglā* language descended from the old Magadhi Prakrit, the oldest specimens of *Bānglā* literature dated roughly from 1050 to 1200 followed by a period of transition from 1200 to 1350. It is likely that the first drafts of the great *Bānglā* narrative poems were made during this period.

A great name in early medieval *Bānglā* literature is that of *Chandidāsa* who is considered by many to be the greatest lyrical poet of Bengal prior to Rabindranath Tagore. Over 125 poems relating to the love of *Rādhā* and *Krishna* were composed by *Chandidāsa*. He is supposed to have existed around 1450 as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486 – 1533) used to sing his poems.

➤ New *Bānglā* (1400 — 1800)

Bānglā literature during this period was profoundly influenced by the Neo-Vaishnava Movement of Chaitanya. Numerous poetical compositions including lyrics and songs, inspired by his life and teachings, constitute the richest treasure of *Bānglā* literature.

2. Characteristics of *Bānglā* language

Bānglā is the fourth most widely spoken language in the world. A very rich language indeed, *Bānglā* is spoken by approximately 10% of the world's population. In the written form of *Bānglā*, there are 11 vowels and 39 consonants. Moreover, there are 10 short forms of vowels called vowel modifiers, 7 short forms of consonants called consonant modifiers.^v

2.1 Literary Varieties

A report says that *Bānglā* exhibits 'diglossia' between the written and spoken forms of the language^{vi}. Two styles of writing involving somewhat different vocabularies and syntax, have emerged.^{vii} *Sādhubhāsā* and *Calitbhāsā* are the two styles of writing.

- *Sādhubhāsā* was the written language with longer verb inflections and more of a Sanskrit derived tatsama vocabulary. Songs such as India's national anthem *Jana Gana Mana* (by Rabindranath Tagore) and national song *Vande Mātaram* (by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay) were composed in *Sādhubhāsā*. However, use of *Sādhubhāsā* in modern writing is uncommon, restricted to some official signs and documents in *Bānglā* as well as for achieving particular literary effects.
- *Calitbhāsā* known by linguists as *Manno Cholit Bānglā* (Standard Colloquial *Bānglā*), is a written *Bānglā* style exhibiting a preponderance of colloquial idiom and shortened verb forms, and is the standard for written *Bānglā* now. This form came into vogue towards the turn of the 19th century, promoted by the writings of Peary Chand Mitra (Alaler Gharer Dulal, 1857).^{viii} Pramatha Chowdhury (Sabujpatra, 1914) and in the later writings of Rabindranath Tagore. It is modeled on the dialect spoken in the Shantipur region in Nadia district, West Bengal. This form of *Bānglā* is often referred to as the "Nadia standard" or "Shantipuri *Bānglā*".^{ix}

3 The influence of tatsama vocabulary in *Bānglā* Literature

The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh reports that *Bānglā* has as many as 100,000 separate words, of which 50,000 are considered tatsama (direct word taken from Sanskrit). 21,100 are tadbhava (native words with Sanskrit cognates), and the rest being bideshi (foreign borrowings) and deshi (Austroasiatic borrowings) words.^x

However, these figures do not take into account the fact that a large proportion of these words are archaic or highly technical, minimizing their actual usage. The productive vocabulary used in modern literary works, in fact, is made up mostly (67%) of tadbhava words, while tatsama only make up 25% of the total. Tatsama words in *Bānglā* use which retain their Sanskrit pronunciation are called *samocharita*, while those with a different pronunciation are called *asamocharita*.

3.1 *Caryāpada*

The *Caryāpada* is a collection of 8th-12th century Vajrayana Buddhist *Caryāgiti*, or mystical poems from the tantric tradition in eastern India. Being *Caryāgiti* (songs of realization), the *Caryāpada* were intended to be sung. These songs of realization were spontaneously composed verses that expressed a practitioner's experience of the enlightened state.

Miranda Shaw describes how *Caryāgiti* were an element of the ritual gathering of practitioners in a tantric feast:

The feast culminates in the performance of tantric dances and music that must never be disclosed to outsiders. The revelers may also improvise "songs of realization" (*Caryāgiti*) to express their heightened clarity and blissful raptures in spontaneous verse.^{xi} The *Caryāpada* poets or *siddhācharyas* were mystic poets, initiated in the Sahajiya doctrine. The poems express their tantric beliefs in figurative and symbolical language. Hence, the poems, though written in an early form of *Bānglā*, are difficult to understand. The following lines by Dombipa, for example, show how the *siddhacharya* used similes and metaphors to contain their deeper esoteric meanings. The literal meaning of these lines is that Dombi crossed the river. The deeper meaning is that Dombi reached the holy place through meditation.

Bahtu dombi bhaha lo dombi batata bhaila uchaara

Sadguru paaa pasaejaiba punu jinaura

The words used in this song are not similar to neo *Bānglā* language. Haraprasad Shastri in his introduction to the *Caryācaryavinishchaya* referred to the enigmatic language of its verses as 'Twilight Language' (Sandhya-bhasha). But later Vidhushekhara Shastri on the basis of evidences from a number of Buddhist texts referred to this language as 'Intentional Language' (Sandha-bhasha).^{xii}

The *Caryāpadas* were written by poets from different regions, and it is natural that they would display linguistic affinities from these regions. Different scholars claimed the affinities of the language of *Caryāpada* with Assamese, *Bānglā*, Maithili and Oriya.^{xiii} Gradually, change in language is observed in middle age *Bānglā* language.

3.2 *Mangalkāvya*

Next to Vaishnava literature, the Mangal-kāvya form the most important branch of *Bānglā* literature during (1400 -1800) period. It consists of poetical works describing the glories of many popular gods and goddesses such as Manasa (snake-goddess), Chandi (a form of Durga), Dharma-Thakur, Siva and others.

The central theme of Manasa-mangal is the conversion of the rich merchant Chand Sadagar who was at first unwilling to worship Manasa but was ultimately forced to do after his seven sons were killed by snakebite. Through her skills in dance and music the widow of the 7th son had his life restored.

Lila Ray in her essay elaborates, “Indigenous myths and legends inherited from Indo-Aryan cultures began to blend and crystallize around popular deities and semi-mythological figures in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A new cosmogony was evolved, which is different from Sanskrit tradition but has an unmistakable affinity with the cosmogonic hymns in Rig-Veda and the Polynesian myth of creation.”^{xiv}

3.4 Modern prose literature

Bharat Chandra marks the transition between precolonial theocentric poetry and modern poetry. Iswar Gupta, Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1834 -1873), Biharilal Chakravarti (1834 - 94), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Kazi Nazrul Islam (2011-2010), and Jatindramohan Bagchi (1878-1948) are noteworthy poets of this period.

With Rabindranath Tagore founding a firm basis for *Bānglā* poetry, the new poets of the early 1920s consciously moved from transcending the frontiers of traditional verses to establishing a realm of truly modern poetry. It was a successful movement that brought permanent change to the structure and theme of poetry. One notable sect of modernists included pro-socialism poets like Sukanta Bhattacharya and Samar Sen.

Now we will extract a stanza of Rabindranath’s *Gitanjali* where the use of tatsama vocabulary is seen.

Dekhi sahasa ratha theme gelo,

Aamar kache ese

Aamar mukhapane cheye

Naamle turni hese

Meaning: The chariot stopped where I stood.

Thy glance fell on me

Thou calmed down with a smile.^{xv}

Here we can see the use of tatsama vocabulary in this poem. For example tatsama words like

sahasa (suddenly), *ratha* (chariot), *mukha* (face), *hese* (smile) are used in this stanza.

4 Conclusion

In this way, it can be said that the influence of tatsama Sanskrit loanwords is seen in Bangla language. The paper focuses on the study of historical development of *Bānglā* literature and use of Sanskrit loanwords on it. It is mentioned earlier that many *Bānglā* words are borrowed from Sanskrit language. The paper also explores the study of old, middle and neo *Bānglā* literature and the use of tatsama words in it. In the conclusion, it can be said that not even the *Bānglā* language but all modern Indian languages borrow vocabulary from Sanskrit, the mother of all Indian languages.

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