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Antiquity and Development of Maithili Language and Literature: An Analysis

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Abstract-- Maithili is an independent language of eight crore people of Mithila region of Bihar, which has been recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution since 7 January 2004. This is a very sweet and the oldest language among the entire modern Indian Aryan languages. It is also a very rich language from a literary point of view. Every year hundreds of books are published in various genres of Maithili language - stories, novels, dramas, poems, epics, short stories, criticism, travelogues, memoirs, grammar, history, linguistics etc. Sahitya Akademi, the highest literary institution of the Government of India, annually awards books in Maithili language with Original Award, Translation Award, Children's Award and Youth Award. The first prose worked in the Maithili language, "Varnaratnakar", written by Jyotirishwar Thakur, is from the 14th century, which is almost the oldest book in all modern Indian Aryan languages. Mahakavi Vidyapati Thakur was the greatest poet of Maithili whose many unique works are available in Sanskrit, Avahatta and Maithili languages. Six hundred years ago, apart from Mithila, Vidyapati's influence had fallen on Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Nepal and since that day, Maithili has been waving its flag of victory in the literary field.

In conclusion, Maithili is a rich language which is fully capable of standing at par with any developed language of the world.

Key-Note-- Ancient Texts, Analysis, Current Status, Folk Literature, Germination, Historical Tradition, Indian Aryan, Literary Historical Aspect, Maithili Language, Naming, Spelling, Standard.

I. INTRODUCTION

Maithili is a major language of the state of Bihar, spoken by about eight crore people in the Mithila region of Bihar. It is the oldest language among all the modern Indian Aryan languages. The Mithila region has been considered to have an independent existence since ancient times. The existence of the Janpad language of this region also existed during the time of the writer of Ramayana 'Adi Kavi Maharshi Valmiki' which is known from the logical decision regarding language taken by Hanumanji to have the first conversation with Sitaji in Ashoka Vatika of Lanka.

*"Vacham chodaharishyami manushimih sanskritam.
Yadivachampradasyami dwijatiriv sanskritam.
Ravanm manyamana sa Sita bhita bhavishyati.
Vanarasya viseshen katham syadabhibhashanam,
Avashyamev vaktavyam manusham vakyamarthavat."*

The above verse proves the fact that the native language in which Hanumanji addressed Sitaji in Ashoka-vatika was 'Manushi' and this 'Manushi' dialect proves that 'Sanskrit' and 'Manushi' were two separate languages spoken at that time. Probably this 'Manushi' folk language would have had two forms - 'Sanskrit' and 'Asanskrit'(uncultured). This cultured Manushi dialect must have been the language of the civilized society of the province of Mithila. This folk language, crossing the levels of 'Pali', 'Prakrit', 'Apabhramsha' and 'Avahatta', took the form of Maithili and various literary genres of Maithili have been moving forward on the path of development day by day.

The oldest form of Mithila- District, the language can be traced in Mahavira's original verse 'Ardhamagadhi'. The original words of Lord Buddha were also not much different. Since the Apabhramsha period, the earlier literary works have now become unrecognizable. Since that time, literary tradition has existed in Mithila. Eastern Apabhramsha was the contemporary form of this region which came to be known as Mithila-Apabhramsha, and later came to be called Avahatta. It was composed and propagated among the common people apart from the Pandits. The first Maithili prose book 'Varnaratnakar' (1324 AD) was composed by Mithila's scholar Pandit Jyotirishwar Thakur. Apparently, before this, the literature of this language continued to be prevalent orally. 2. The basic reason for this was lack of state (Government) support for the folk language. With the rise of Nanyadev's Karnata dynasty (1097 AD), it got royal patronage and literary creation started in this language. In conclusion, it can be said that 'Maithili language' germinated in the form of literature from the reign of Karnatvansh (1097-1324), flourished during the period of Oinvarvansh (1325-1526) and Khandwala Kul.

In this way, the origin of Maithili language has been from the period of Ramayan of Tretayuga or rather it must have been there even before that, which, after going through various development processes, in different periods of time, being designated by various names, is today known as "Maithili" in its present form.

II. MAITHILI-NAMING

For the first time, the name 'Avahatta' or 'Mithila Apabhransh' for the language of the Mithila region is found in various texts. It was called 'Native Language' or 'Desil Vayana', originating from Sanskrit and Prakrit. See the following Aslokas:

*Prakritadalpabhedaiya hyapabhrashta ptakirtita
Deshabhasham tatha kechidapabhransha vidurbubudhaih.
Sanskrite prakrite vapirupasutranubhedystah.
Apabhranshs s vijneyeyp bhasha yatraiv lsukikah". 3*

Traditionally, in Mithila the word 'Apabhransha' was considered to be some other local dialect separate from 'worldly Sanskrit' and 'Prakrit'. The meaning of 'Desil Vayana' said by the great poet Vidyapati continued to be understood as 'national language'. Even in the early period of Maithili literature, the word 'Maithili' is not visible anywhere. The word Maithili is not found anywhere in the book 'Varnaratnakar' written by Kavishekhar Jyotireswar Thakur in the 14th century. If any 'Gaur-Bhasha' apart from Bengali is considered to be the language of Maithili, then it must have been composed by Amir Khusro in 1253 AD. Therefore, the word 'Maithili' is very new to the popular language of Mithila.

For the first time, the discussion of Maithili language is found in the Composition of Beligatti 'Alphavetum Brahmanicum' (1771 AD) of the Indian language survey form, in the preface of Amduj. It lists several languages and mentions the language of Mithila as 'Tourutiana' or 'Tiruhutia'. Later, many western scholars like H. T. Colebrooke and William Carey (1801 AD), Arskin Perry (1853 AD), Phelan and Campbell (1875 AD), Harnley (1880 AD), Kellogg (1893 AD) etc. named the language of Mithila; But none of these names is completely similar to present-day Maithili. Here, the scholars of Mithila also did not use the name 'Maithili' for the language here, but kept addressing it by the name 'Mithilabhasha'. The use of this word can also be seen in the period of Jyotirishwar and Vidyapati. Vidyapati in his Avahatta creation has used the word 'Desil Vayana' for the language of Mithila.

Later, even in the pre-modern period (1860-2000), the word 'Mithilabhasha' is used by some scholars for this; Like, Chanda Jha – Mithilabhasha Ramayana; The titles of works like Mukund Jha Vakshi- Mithilabhashamay Itihaas etc. can be seen.

The fame of establishing Maithili as an independent language ultimately goes to the western scholar George Abraham Grierson (7 January, 1951 - 9 March, 1941), who established it forever under the name 'Maithili' in 1880 AD. 5

III. INDIAN ARYAN LANGUAGE

Language-- 'Maithili' is the oldest language among all the modern Indian Aryan languages like other Indo- Aryan languages. Maithili language originated and developed from Sanskrit, that is, the 'progenitor' of all the Modern Indo-Aryan languages (Maithili, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Nepali, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Marathi, Sindhi Kashmiri etc.) is Sanskrit. The Indo-European family, 2500 BC, the development sequence of Maithili, a language which comes under the Indo-European Family, is presented as follows

"Indo-Iranian (2000 BC) > Indo-Aryan (1500 BC) > Classical Sanskrit > Oriental Prakrit > Magadhi Prakrit > Magadhi Apabhramsha (Avahatta) > Maithili, Assamese, Oriya, Bengali etc.

After Avahatta, the status of Maithili is -- Ancient Maithili > Medieval Maithili > Modern Maithili." 6

It is worth noting that when other Indian Aryan languages were circling in the circle of Apabhramsha after the Prakrit period, at the same time the language of Mithila region had directly reached Avahatta from Prakrit, which is the precursor of ancient Maithili.

Script- Maithili is an independent language, which has its own script, which is called 'Tirhuta' or 'Mithilakshar'. However, by the middle of the 19th century, Maithili adopted the Devanagari script, due to which the autonomy of Maithili got weakened a bit and some so-called opponents of Maithili definitely got the opportunity to make false statements like "Maithili is a dialect of Hindi". They would also have succeeded in this conspiracy; But the roots of Maithili language are so strong that they completely failed in this vile task and today Maithili is established as an independent language and stands at par with every Indian language.



As far as the antiquity and development of 'Tirhuta' script is concerned, it originated from 'Brahmi script'. Brahmi script is the mother of most of the modern Indian Aryan language scripts. The evolution of the Tirhuta script can be seen as follows:-

Brahmi script (script of ancient India) > Kushan script > Gupta script > Kutila script > Eastern Kutila script > Maithili, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Nepali etc." 7 Some scholars of Mithila also consider the origin of the Tirhuta script as 'Vaidehi script'.

IV. MAITHILI LITERATURE : HISTORICAL TRADITION

The history of Maithili literature is very ancient. If it is tested on the basis of time, then it can be divided into five time-periods 8 – Early Ancient Period (700-1300), post Ancient Period (1300-1600), Medieval Period (1600-1860), Early Modern Period (1860-2000) and Post Modern Period (2000-ADYAVADI).

The early ancient period has also been called the foundation period of Maithili literature. Historians have determined its time from the 7th century to the 13th century. Under this, the ancient material of all Maithili literature – Dakvachan, Siddha-Sahitya, Folklore, Idioms and Proverbs used in Maithili and the germination and flowering of Maithili literature has been kept on the basis of investigation of oral and written evidence. Dak and Siddhacharya are considered to be the original poets of Maithili literature. Dak was an astrologer, agronomist and geologist. He was born from the womb of a cow-girl and was the son of the famous scholar Varahamihir (537 AD). In Maithili literature, many public utility, policy-related, agriculture-related, weather-related terms are found in the verse of Dak, Ghagh, Bhaddri. 9

The available verse of Dak, Ghagh, Bhaddri, is famous by the name of 'Dakavachan' in Mithila. Looking at the language of 'Dakavachan', it seems that the later writers might have coined verses in their name, because after reading these words closely, it seems that this is the language of the 14th-15th century.

The names of Siddhacharya are among the most popular poets of Maithili literature of this period. The Siddha-Sahitya written by them was discovered by M. M. Harprasad Shastri during his visit to Nepal in 1907 AD, which he published in the name of "Bauddhagan O Doha" in 1916 AD. It was published by 'Bangiya Sahitya Parishad', Calcutta. The book 'Bauddhagan O Doha' contains the manuscripts of three books – Charyacharyavinishchaya, Dohakosha and Dakarnava.

The writings of Siddhacharya that had been compiled in this 'Bauddhagan O Doha' are known as 'Siddha-Sahitya' or 'Charyapada'.

The authors of 'Siddha-Sahitya' were 23 out of 84 Siddhas of India's medieval history who roamed around in Mithila and propagated their views in the local language. Among these Buddhist monks Sarahapad, Shabarpad, Luipad, Thirupada, Dombipad, Darikapad, Kukkuriapad, Kamaripad, Kanhapada, Gaurakshapad, Tilopada, Shantipad etc. were prominent. These people were associated with Nalanda and Vikramshila universities, which proceeded through the Guru-disciple tradition. Thus, there were nine Guru-disciple traditions in which the first tradition started from Sarahapada and the last ninth Guru was Shantipada. These Siddhaganas were originally patronized by the kings of Pal dynasty including Dharmapala (769-809), Devapal (809-974) and Mahipala (974-1024). The basic principle of the Siddhas was worldly material pleasures. These people were against Sanatan Dharma. He said that Yajnya, Homa, Puja (worship), recitation etc. are superstitions for attaining salvation. They considered "Panchamakar" as the basis of salvation:

"Madyam mansam cha minam cha mudra maithun mev cha,

Ete panchamakarastu moksha dayani yuge-yuge." 10

V. FOLK LITERATURE

In the period under review, folk literature is an important genre of Maithili Literature, in which we get a glimpse of the social, political, economic, religious, cultural traditions and conditions of contemporary Mithila. Under it Maithili folklore, folk songs, folk tales, folk dances, idioms, proverbs etc. has been kept. The creators of folklore are often unknown and on the basis of oral tradition. It is transmitted from one voice to another and from one generation to another. In Mithila folklore, human emotions are expressed lyrically in various rituals and on the occasion of "Shodash Sanskar" (Sixteen Samskaras). There are stories of great personalities and brave men of Mithila in folk tales and legends. It includes the great worrier of Alha-Udal, Naikabanijara, Kumar Bijubhan, Lorik, Dularadayal, Anang Kusama etc. and stories related to Chhaith, Anantapuja, Satyanarayan Puja, Madhushravani, and children's entertainment and moral education. Similarly, folk dances like Jata-Jatin, Kathputri Nach and Kathaghorba Nach, Vipata Nach, Chhakarbaazi, Leela Natya (dance) etc. have been kept under such folk dances.

VI. GERMINATION OF MAITHILI IN ANCIENT TEXTS

In ancient times, the prevalent Maithili words, idioms and phrases, folk-tales were found in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsh, Prakrit-Pangalam etc. in the ancient texts of Maithili. Such as - Vedanga Sutra of Vachaspati Mishra, Shankara's interpretation of commentary- 'Bhamati'; 'Poetry discipline' by Hemchandra; Sarvanand's 'Amarkosh-Tika'; Chandeshwar Thakur's 'Saptaratnakar' etc. Many Maithili words have been used in the works of Ruchipati Upadhyaya and Jagaddhar; Rodakavi's 'Rourvel' (Apabhramsh) and 'Prakrit-Pangalam' etc. The antiquity of Maithili literature can be estimated from these beautiful words of Maithili.

VII. LITERARY HISTORICAL ASPECT

The pre- ancient and medieval period of Maithili literature has been famous for 'Geeta-kavya' and 'Natyakavya' respectively. The available written evidence of Maithili literature comes only from the post ancient period (1300-1600), where the first prose text in the entire modern Indian Aryan language is available in the form of 'Varnaratnakar' (1324) of the scholar of Mithila Pandit Jyotirishwar Thakur (1280-1340). Apart from this, his first trilingual play 'Maithili Dhurtasamagam' is also available, which was written as a response to the Buddhist text 'Dhuttarayan', in which Sanatan Sadhu-Saint-Mahatma, Priest-Pandit etc. were criticized by calling them hypocrites, spreading superstitions etc. Later, the great poet Vidyapati (1350-1450) makes his debut in Maithili literature, who wrote more than a dozen books in Sanskrit; in Avahatta consists of three books – Kirtilata (1402-5), Kirtigatha (1402-5) and Kirtipataka (1414); and a trilingual (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Maithili) drama and about a thousand verses full of adornment and devotion composed in Maithili. The flow of tip and tradition of Vidyapati's poems was so intense that, breaking the dam of the medieval period, it spread even in the early ancient times; , can be seen in the early works of Chanda Jha, Jeevan Jha, Vindhyanath Jha, Gananath Jha, Satyanarayan Jha etc. also, Vidyapati's influence was so much that apart from Mithila, he came to be known as a Vaishnav saint in the provinces like Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Nepal etc. Among these provinces-Bengal, Assam and Orissa, a special type of literature was born by incorporating the words of the regional language in their works, which is known as 'Brajbuli literature'.

Poets (saints) influenced by these verses of Vidyapati include Chaitanyadev (1486-1534) Govindadas (different from Govindadas of Mithila), Balramdas, Narottamdas(1583), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Janmejy Mitra, Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-94), Rajkrishna Roy (1855-93) etc. of Bengal. Thus, the Brajbuli literature of Bengal includes Rabindranath Tagore's "Bhanusingh Thakurer Padavali" (1884), Radhamohan Tagore's "Padamrit Samudra" (1725), Gokulananda Sen's "Padakalpataru" (1750), Deenbandhu Das's "Sankirtanamrit" (1771) etc. and in Assam, Sankardev (1449-1568), Madhavdev (1489-1596), Gopaldev (1547-1611), Ramcharan Thakur and in Orissa, the king Baidyanath, Ramanand Rai, Champat Rai(1479-1532), Maharaj Prataparudradev. (1504-32), the works of Madhavidasi, Rai Damodardas, Chandkavi, Yadupati etc; the compositions are found mainly.

Vidyapati's contemporary and subsequent poets in Mithila carried forward Vidyapati's poetic tradition. Contemporary poets included Amritakar (1400-1482), Harpati (14th century), Chandrakala, Bhanukavi (1450-1500), Gajsingh, Dashavadhan Thakur, Vishnupuri (1425-1500), Yashodhar, Kansanarayan etc. Later poets include Mahesh Thakur(1557-90), Chatur-Chaturbhuj, Lochan(1625-1702), creator of Ragatarangini, Govinddas of 'Shringarbhajanavali', Umapati Upadhyay, creator of the play Parijataharan, Ram Das, Lalkavi, Ramapati, Nandipati, Ratnapani, Harshnath Jha (Ushaharan, Madhavananda) etc. the name can be taken prominently. The middle period (1600-1860) of Maithili literature starts with Umapati and ends with Harshanath Jha. This period was the golden age of theatrical literature. In this period, Umapati's 'Parijat-haran', Ramapati's 'Rukmini Swayamvar', Lalkavi's 'Gauri Swayamvar', Nandipati's 'Shrikrishnakelimala', Harshnath Jha's Usaharan etc. are the representative books of trilingual drama..

The flourishing of dramatic literature can be seen in the Maithili literature of the medieval period. Apart from Mithila, this type of Maithili trilingual dramas were also written in Assam, Nepal and, to a lesser extent, in Bengal. The Maithili drama of Mithila is known as 'Kirtaniya Natak', the drama of Assam is known as 'Ankiyanat', the drama of Bengal is known as 'Yatra' and the trilingual Maithili drama composed in Nepal is known as 'Sangeet Natak'. During this period, 'Ankiyanat' and Maithili dramas composed in Nepal remained very rich from a literary point of view.



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Maithili playwrights of Assam include Sankardev's (1449-1568) -- Kaliyadaman (1518), Patniprasad (1521), Keligopal (1540), Ramvijay (1568), Rukminiharan (1568) and Ushaharan (1568); Eight of Madhadev(1489-1596), two of Gopaldev and other playwrights composed many Maithili drama. Similarly, many Maithili dramas were written in the Malla courts (Darabar) of Nepal, in which the works of Jagajjyotirmall, Jagatprakashmall, Sumatjitamitramall, Ranjitmall, Srinivasmall etc. are prominent.

The Germination of Maithili prose started in the medieval period itself, but its form was different from the prose of Varnaratnakar. In addition to Maithili plays, Maithili words, phrases and inscribed prose sprouted in Sanskrit and Prakrit Avahatta compositions, prose of Prakritpangalam, Varnaratnakar and Journal (Patra-Patrika) etc. are used in daily life and government records; Like, Ekarnama, Gauriv-Chatika, Bahikhat, Ajatapatra, Nistarpatra, the use of Phaisala Patra (verdict paper) etc. is seen.¹²

The true form of Maithili prose literature is found in the pre-modern period (1860-2000). It started only after the development of Maithili magazine. The development of newspapers and magazines in Maithili language started from the first decade of the 19th century. The first Maithili magazine 'Maithil Hitasadhan' (1905) started from Jaipur, 'Mithila Mod' (1906) from Varanasi, 'Mithila Mihir' (1908) started from Darbhanga. After this, the publication of many Maithili magazines started. Today, many high quality magazines, research collections etc. are being published in Maithili language in annual, half-yearly, quarterly, weekly and daily forms. In the journey of literary development, the name of the composition of Manabodh 'Krishna Janam' can be taken in the last standard poetic composition of the medieval period. Later, Kavishwar Chanda Jha (1831-1007) made his debut in Maithili literature, which changed the nature of Maithili literature. He made thematic, emotional, linguistic, genre and social changes in his works. On one hand, you started the translation genre in Maithili literature by translating Vidyapati's 'Purush pariksha' (1888), while on the other hand, you started a new tradition by composing 'Mithilabhasha Ramayana' and 'Sphut' verses in the folk language. Breaking the trap of fidelity to Sanskrit of the medieval period, the beginning of the remote village language of Mithila is found in your writings. This is the reason that Uttar Adikal (1860) started with Chanda Jha and he is known as the first experimentalist poet.

The new tradition developed by Chanda Jha in Maithili poetry was followed by his subsequent poets, including Munsir Raghunandan Das, Mukund Jha Vaxi, Gananath Jha, Vindhanath Jha etc. Chanda Jha's poetic tradition continued to move forward. By the time Babu Bhuvaneshwar Singh 'Bhuvan' came near Maithili poetry like glorifications (Naman, Vandan, Abhinandan) etc. had reached its peak. Bhuvanji was fed up with this appeasement trend. The same situation started developing in other genres of Maithili literature of that time also. The society was divided into two classes – one was a great man and the other was a small man. There was immense inequality socially, culturally, educationally and economically between the two classes. People belonging to the small human category were completely isolated from society. Bhuvanji wanted to bring them into the mainstream of society. That's why, he blew the trumpet of progressivism. In the preface to the poetry collection 'Ashadha' (1936) written by him, he exclaims:

"Ham karab pralay, ham karb pralay.

Rahay deb nahi, kshan bhario visha kumbhak bhay."

In this way, the progressivism that germinated from Bhuvanji took the form of a huge banyan tree in the literature of Baidyanath Mishra 'Yatri' (Nagarjuna). Yatriji not only gave a wide dimension to progressivism in his works, but he also kept realism prominent. This is the reason why realistic poetry can be seen in every work of Yatri like 'Chitra', 'Patraheen Nagna Gachh' or 'Fekani', 'Goth Bichhani' etc. After Yatri, when the stream of Maithili poetry reaches Rajkamal Choudhary, a new voice and form is seen in it. Rajkamal Choudhary was a writer of independent and liberal thought. Firstly, he boldly put forward Fried's ideology in his prose works, at a time when sex related topics were considered completely unacceptable in Maithili literature. Secondly, he freed Maithili poetry from poetic rules and regulations. He believed that poetry required only words. If you have the power of words, you can create poetry. But the words should be emotional. He writes in his book "Swargandha":-

"Nahi chalat aab, nahi chalat aab, nahi chalat aab. "

Purana vidhan, purna yati, laya, tal, chhand A matra. "

In this way, the way Rajkamal Choudhary freed and liberated Maithili poetry, it was termed as 'Navakavita' and the same type of poetry is seen till-day.



Among the writers of this trend, the names of Ramkrishna Jha 'Kisun', Bhimnath Jha, Jeevkant, Udaychandra Jha', Vibhuti Anand, Narayanji, Saraswat, Ravind Narayan Mishra, Jagdish Prasad Mandal, Neeta Jha, Kamini, etc. can be taken prominently.

Apart from the above-mentioned tendency, two more tendencies can be seen in Maithili literature, the first of which is romanticism (Chhayavad). There were many romantic (Chhayavadi) writers in Maithili, among whom the name of Surendra Jha 'Suman' is prominent. Notice his following line :--

"Tat nitambini mori-mori, kati desh nritya ras nipun"
Kal-kal karait, nachait, gabait, kachhait satat dut charan."

13

Here the river is depicted as a boisterous love-filled young woman. In romanticism (Chhayavaad) the image is expressed by reflecting it. Apart from this, comedy and satire also continued to be composed in Maithili poetry, in which the names of poets like Sitaram Jha, Harimohan Jha, Chandranath Mishra 'Amar' etc. are especially noteworthy.

Be it Maithili prose or poetry, the above mentioned trend is found in almost all genres. In Maithili, epics, khandakavya, katha, novel, outspoken poetry, criticism, review, travelogue, memoir, reportage etc. and theoretical texts on grammar, linguistics, poetics, literary history etc. are being composed, and today Maithili literature is extremely rich, which is at par with any rich language fully capable.

VIII. MAITHILI LANGUAGE, SPELLING AND STANDARD

Maithili is a language of Mithila which has many dialects which are spoken in different special geographical areas of Mithila in the form of Standard Maithili, Southern Maithili, Western Maithili (Bajjika), Eastern Maithili, Chhika-Chhiki Maithili (Angika), Jolha Boli and Kendiya Boli etc.¹⁴ There is often phonetic similarity and mutual intelligibility among these different dialects. These dialects are used in mutual communication, but the written language, such as author's expression in literary works, educational institutions, research articles, literary symposiums, criticism and theoretical texts are composed only in standard Maithili. At present the Maithili language is very rich, in which hundreds of books are published every year, in different genres.

There are a total of 47 letters in the Maithili alphabet in which the number of vowels is fourteen, the number of consonants is twenty five, the number of semivowels is four and the number of sibilant consonants is four.

Apart from this, there are three conjuncts – 'ksha', 'Tra' and 'Jna'.¹⁵ The phonetic differences in the Maithili alphabet are analyzed in the beginning;

In Maithili script Tirhuta, there is a separate rule for the use of quantity, which is called 'Kakahara', like - Tarketa (Kae Kan) 'Ka', Kainchun 'Ka', Hariseen 'Ki', Durghen 'Ki', Taare 'Ku', Barjan Ku', Eklen 'Ke', Dolen 'Kai', Kalmat 'Ko', Dudhkanna 'Kau', Maste. 'Kan', Kavisarga 'Kah'; and the full stop is called 'Paasi' in the Tirhuta script.¹⁶

Maithili is also a very strong language from the point of view of linguistics. It has many phonetic features, which give it a distinct identity from other languages. In Maithili language the last sound is usually found as a short vowel ; but in Maithili, sometimes it is also found in the form of shorter vowels (Hrasva)- like Pani (water), Aagi (fire) etc. Letters like Ya, Va, Sh, Sha, etc. are not used in Maithili. These characters are used in Maithili due to Tatsam or Videsaj (foreign) words.

Ikarant (word ending in 'i') is used independently in the form of long 'E', like- E pothi (this book) etc but 'E' gets lost when it comes with other letters, like - Julai (July), Mai (May), Safai (Safai), Salai (Salai) etc. But there are some exceptions to this, like Ishwar (Eshwar) etc. Maithili alphabets are more similar in sound as compared to other languages. In Maithili, if the last letter of Pancham Akshar (Pentagram) is used as a ligature, Maithili originated from Sanskrit, hence it is a simple language like Sanskrit.

IX. CURRENT STATUS OF MAITHILI LANGUAGE

Maithili is a language spoken in Mithila, whose history is older than all the Modern Indian Languages. All its genres are completely strong, which establishes it in the category of a rich language. Considering the antiquity and literary richness of Maithili, it has been recognized by the Sahitya Akademi, the highest literary institution of the Government of India, since 1965 and has been honored by the Sahitya Akademi every year in its four genres. Sahitya Akademi has been rewarding Maithili language writers with the Original Award since 1966, Translation Award since 1979, Children's Award since 2010 and Yuva Award since 2011. It is recognized as an optional subject in Bihar Public Service Commission since 1972 and in Union Public Service Commission since 2006 and every year hundreds of candidates of Maithili subject get selected and are serving the nation as various administrative officers all over the country. Maithili language is a constitutional language of India, which has been recognized (place) in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution since January 7, 2004.



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Maithili language is being studied from secondary level to higher education in almost all the traditional universities of Bihar, Jharkhand and Purvanchal University of Nepal. Earlier, it was taught in Calcutta University since 1917 AD and in Banaras Hindu University since 1926, but due to some political reasons, its study has been stopped in both these universities. Maithili has been recognized as the second official language in Jharkhand since 2018 and as the constitutional language of Nepal by the Government of Nepal since 2007. Apart from this, Maithili has also been included in higher education as a subject in Dhaka University of Bangladesh under the name 'Kavikol Vidyapati'. But it is sad to say that the Maithili which is prestigious at the national level has not been able to get that prestige till date in its home state of Bihar. If the government of Bihar is not recognizing the mother tongue of more than half (8 crores) of the 14 crores people of Bihar, which is literary and culturally rich, then what else can it be if not a political conspiracy? Therefore, the Government of Bihar should, without prejudice, provide all the rights, respect and prestige to the Maithili language that it deserves.

X. CONCLUSION

In the presented article, an attempt has been made to connect the antiquity and development process of Maithili language with the dialogue of Hanumanji and Sitaji in the Ashok Vatika of Tretayuga which was done in “Manushi” language. Probably this “Manushi” language might have been the original form of Maithili language.

Maithili is an independent language of eight crore people of Mithila region of Bihar, which has been recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution since 7 January 2004. This is a very sweet language. It is the oldest language among the entire modern Indian Aryan languages. It is also a very rich language from a literary point of view. Every year hundreds of books are published in various genres of Maithili language - stories, novels, dramas, poems, epics, short stories, criticism, travelogues, memoirs, grammar, history, linguistics etc. Sahitya Akademi, the highest prestigious literary institution of the Government of India, annually awards books in Maithili language with Original Award, Translation Award, Children's Award and Youth Award.

The first prose worked in the Maithili language, "Varnaratnakar", written by Jyotirishwar Thakur, is from the 14th century, which is almost the oldest book in all modern Indian Aryan languages. Mahakavi Vidyapati Thakur was the greatest poet of Maithili whose many unique works are available in Sanskrit, Avahatta and Maithili languages. Six hundred years ago, apart from Mithila, Vidyapati's influence had fallen on Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Nepal and since that day Maithili has been waving its flag of victory in the literary field.

In conclusion, Maithili is a rich language which is fully capable of standing at par with any developed language of the world. I hope that this article will definitely prove useful for teachers, researchers, general students and curious people to understand Maithili language and literature.

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