



Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
(14th April 1891 - 6th December 1956)

Courtesy : B.D. Satpute, Pune.

DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES
Vol. 16

Grammar and Dictionary of The Pali Language
by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Edited
by
Vasant Moon

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : Writings and Speeches

Vol. 16

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Kumari Selja



**Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment
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MESSAGE

Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution was a scholar par excellence, a philosopher, a visionary, an emancipator and a true nationalist. He led a number of social movements to secure human rights to the oppressed and depressed sections of the society. He stands as a symbol of struggle for social justice.

The Government of Maharashtra has done a highly commendable work of publication of volumes of unpublished works of Dr. Ambedkar, which have brought out his ideology and philosophy before the Nation and the world.

In pursuance of the recommendations of the Centenary Celebrations Committee of Dr. Ambedkar, constituted under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister of India, the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation (DAF) was set up for implementation of different schemes, projects and activities for furthering the ideology and message of Dr. Ambedkar among the masses in India as well as abroad.

The DAF took up the work of translation and publication of the Collected Works of Babasaheb Dr. B.R. Ambedkar published by the Government of Maharashtra in English and Marathi into Hindi and other regional languages. I am extremely thankful to the Government of Maharashtra's consent for bringing out the works of Dr. Ambedkar in English also by the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation.

Dr. Ambedkar's writings are as relevant today as were at the time when these were penned. He firmly believed that our political democracy must stand on the base of social democracy which means a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. He emphasized on measuring the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved. According to him if we want to maintain democracy not merely in form, but also in fact, we must hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. He advocated that in our political, social and economic life, we must have the principle of one man, one vote, one value.

There is a great deal that we can learn from Dr. Ambedkar's ideology and philosophy which would be beneficial to our Nation building endeavor. I am glad that the DAF is taking steps to spread Dr. Ambedkar's ideology and philosophy to an even wider readership.

I would be grateful for any suggestions on publication of works of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar.

(Kumari Selja)

Collected Works of Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar (CWBA)

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MAHARASHTRA

PREFACE

The present volume of the Speeches and Writings of Bharat Ratna Dr. B.R. Ambedkar contains his Dictionary of the Pali language and Pali Grammar. The Dictionary and Grammar are certainly valuable aids to the speeches. Pali was indeed the *lingua franca* of the Buddhist India. It has close affinity to Marathi. As such, the study of Pali has much relevance to the contemporary Marathi. In compiling the Dictionary of Pali language and its Grammar, Dr. Ambedkar had in mind the project of promoting the study of the Buddhist India which is part of the ancient Hindu culture. As is well-known, Buddha is the 10th incarnation of God. This dictionary is a testimony and a tribute to the mind of Dr. Ambedkar that was deeply rooted in the Indian soil.

I hope the students of the Buddhist literature will find the present volume useful to quench the thirst of knowledge.

MANOHAR JOSHI

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FOREWORD

The present volume of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's writings contain the following important documents -

- 1) Grammar of the Pali Language was found printed by Dr. Ambedkar himself but was not released for sale.
- 2) (a) Dictionary of the Pali words in English and (b) in four languages.
- 3) Booklet printed and published by Dr. Ambedkar himself, for the followers of Buddhism.

It appears from the collection in part two (b) that Dr. Ambedkar could not complete the work of Pali Dictionary in 4 languages which he planned for the students of Buddhism.

The unpublished writings of Dr. Ambedkar as a whole, though incomplete are useful for the students of Philology. The curious student's may think of advancing this study further.

The Government is committed to finalise the remaining work of Dr. Ambedkar's writings and speeches and I hope this will be brought out at the earliest. The translation project is also in process.

The work of Dr. Ambedkar will prove to be a source of inspiration for younger generation and will help strengthening the roots of democracy in this country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Datta Rane'.

(DATTARANE)

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EDITORIAL

The present volume of the writings and speeches of Dr. Ambedkar contains his compilation of the Pali grammar and Pali dictionary. Dr. Ambedkar had profound fascination for Buddha and his teachings. The origin and the growth of Buddhist thought is a memorable chapter in Indian history. Buddhist texts are in Sanskrit and Pali. It was therefore the effort of Dr. Ambedkar to make this literature accessible to Indians in general and to admirers of Buddhism in particular.

Compilation of a dictionary of words and phrases of a language, no longer a spoken language, is an enterprise fraught with difficulties. Dr. Ambedkar was past 50 when he started the compilation of the Dictionary. It was an effort comparable to the effort of Dr. Samuel Johnson who attempted his dictionary of English language in 1755. Dr. Johnson had compiled the dictionary on the threshold of becoming the world language. Pali, though the *lingua franca* of the Buddhist world, is a dead language. In support of a living language, authority for correct sense and words, is always at our elbow, in the chat of our domestics or in the converse of the passengers at our street door, in colleges of learned and in stables of menials; in lanes of a city and in remote hamlets. Therefore phrases and idioms of people are easily available. That is not the case in respect of a dead language which has many pitfalls. Words and phrases of a dead language, are exercises in reconstruction of history, they are passages to times past and pathways to the sociology and culture of the ages gone by. The Dictionary of the Pali language taken up by Dr. Ambedkar for compilation when he was past 50, shows his indomitable spirit to look into the past, in order to know the present and to see the light for the future.

It is relevant to note that literature on Buddhism is a part of the heritage of Indian culture. It would be interesting to sum up the history of the Pali Language. According to Buddhist tradition, Pali was the dialect of Magadha and that it was the language in which Gautam Buddha preached. Originally, a mere provincial idiom, the Magadhi language was raised to the dignity of a classical language and is regarded by Buddhists of the whole world with the feeling of veneration, like the Roman language. R. C. Childers pointed out that the existing Pali literature is of great importance; it is valuable alike to the philologists, the historians, to the students of folklore and the students of comparative religion.

The Buddhist scriptures are called "*Tripitaka*" and are divided into Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma. The three baskets form a canon of the holy writ. According to Childers, this canon of holy writ are invested with all the sanctity of a canon by Buddhists. They are revered as containing the word of Buddha and are the ultimate appeal on all questions of belief and conduct. These baskets are estimated to be about **eleven times that of the Bible, and three times of the size of the Mahabharat** and are able to treat in great detail of all the relations of human life. According to Childers, the author of the first Pali - English Dictionary, the doctrine they contain is consistent throughout and set forth with logical accuracy.

When the great missionary Mahindra went to Ceylon in B.C. 307, he carried with him, not only the *Tripitaka* but the *Arthakatha* which had grown up around the *Tripitaka* during two and a half centuries that had passed since Buddha's death. Mahindra tried to translate these commentaries from Pali into

Sinhalese, the latter of which continued to exist in Ceylon for many centuries while the Pali version disappeared. In the fifth century, Mahindra's Sinhalese commentaries were retranslated by the famous Buddhaghosa, 'one of the most extraordinary men that Buddhism has produced,' as Childers rates him. The Sinhalese translation in the meantime disappeared. It is recorded by Childers that the Sinhalese commentaries disappeared in the twelfth century during the invasion of Ceylon by the Malabar princess. The princess who invaded Ceylon, one after another, temporarily obtained sovereignty over the island. They were the determined foes of Buddhism and are stated to have systematically effected the destruction of all the sacred books of Buddhism they could lay hands on. Among this Buddhist Literature, there were the *Tripitakas*, the Pali commentaries of Buddhaghosa and the Sinhalese commentaries of Mahendra. Tripitakas and Buddhaghosa's commentaries were first replaced from Burmah while Sinhalese commentaries existed only in Ceylon; and once destroyed could not be replaced. Buddhaghosa's commentaries contain much of the matter 'as old as *Tripitaka* itself' and are 'rich in history and folklore and abound in varied information which throws abundant light on the social and moral conditions of ancient India (Childers).

Besides the Pali literature mentioned above, few titles more noteworthy deserve mention. *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* are first in importance. Next in importance is *Milind Panha*, the *Questions of King Milind* who is identified with certainty with Bactrian King (Minander).

This work records familiarity with Greek names and places and records a religious discussion between venerable Nagasena and King Milind. Next in importance is *Visuddhi*

Magga which is fairly called as an Encyclopadia of Buddhist doctrine.

The Pali grammatical work is very extensive and centres around the famous Grammarian Kachayana, which is admittedly the oldest Pali Grammar. It is said, there are 60 or 70 grammatical works in Pali. In *Abhidhammappadipika*, a vocabulary of nouns on the model of Sanskrit Amarkosha by a Sinhalese Buddhist of 12th Century, is found.

The discovery of Sanskrit literature in Nepal is due to the great pioneering work of Brian H. Hodgson. His notices of the language, literature and religion of Nepal and Tibet, first appeared in 1828, and his essays began to appear in 1837. Besides, many western scholars including Bournouf, Fousball, Lassen, Spiegel, Clough, not to forget Weber, Senart, Kuhn and others have enormously contributed to the scholarship of Buddhist literature. It would not be out of place to mention the services of those great masters including Max Muller, Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids, Dr. Fleet and several others who dedicated their lives to the scholarship of Buddhist studies. It should not be forgotten that it is due to the lifelong endeavour of these geniuses that the present generation is indebted to the scholarship of the Pali Language.

It is in the light of the writings of those towering scholars that we have to search the gems of Pali scholarship; and Dr. Ambedkar's efforts for illuminating the light of Buddhist studies should be viewed accordingly. The justification for bringing out the dictionary of Pali language lies in the fact that Dr. Ambedkar had his roots in the Indian soil, and the Pali

language is an indispensable key to unlock the secrets of Buddhist India.

This volume includes Dr. Ambedkar's compilation of Pali grammar. In examining a dead language like Latin or Sanskrit, grammar of that language is to know syntax and style. Grammar throws light on words and phrases, it unfolds thought processes and shows the social mind in evolution.

To the lovers of Pali language and to those who are interested in the history of Buddhism, this volume will prove to be of interest and inspiration.

The work of editing of this volume has been made possible by the ready help, support and co-operation I have received :

-- from Professor Manohar Joshi, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra whose encouragement has made this work possible;

-- from Shri. Dattatraya Rane, the Hon'ble Minister for Education and Shri Anil Deshmukh, the Hon'ble State Minister for Education both of Maharashtra State, who showed keen urge in expediting the project for being completed speedily;

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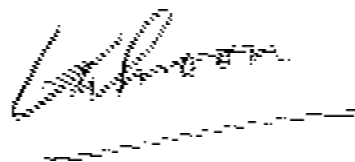
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The staff of this office comprising of Shri. Ravindra Sutar, Smt. Sumitra Nevarekar and Smt. Shalaka Tambe who assisted me in the whole process of collecting, editing and cheerfully scrutinising the material and verified proofs in the process of printing of this volume; and the members of the committee who stood by the Editor in every moment of this project and reposed their confidence in him and there are several well wishers and admirers of the Philosophy and spirit of Dr. Ambedkar who helped the Editor in various ways whose names are too many to be mentioned here.



(Vasant Moon)

Editor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar
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**Dr. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR
WRITINGS AND SPEECHES**

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BOOK I
PALI ENGLISH DICTIONARY

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THE PALI DICTIONARY

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