

5. SANSKRIT IMPERATIVES.

DEAR PROFESSOR RHYS DAVIDS,—Last year I pointed out in the J.R.A.S. that the “benedictive imperative” *avatāt* in the opening stanza of the Bimbamāna was a good instance of Pāṇini’s rule (vii, i, 35), which Whitney treats as a grammarian’s figment. Some scholars seem inclined to question the validity of the instance. I therefore have put together a few cases of this “benedictive imperative” that I have noticed in cursory reading of ancient authors. Were I to set out with the deliberate purpose of collecting examples, I believe I could soon find hundreds. But the following suffice: Hariśchandra, *Jivamdhara-champū*, verse 1, so *’vatāt*; *Bhaktiśataka*, verse 1, *jayatāt*; Vādībhasimha, *Gadyachintāmaṇi*, i, 4, *kurutāt*; Somadeva, *Yaśastilaka*, i, 10, *jayatāt*; *Kāvya prakāśa*, x, 118, *avatāt*.

The Sūryaśataka will supply examples in almost every verse; e.g., *stāt* 5, 16, 21, 27, *upanayatāt* 26, *avatāt* 30, *apaharatāt* 31. Compare too Speyer, S.S., § 350, and *Syntax* (in the *Grundriss*), § 192.

South-Indian writers of the nineteenth century are particularly fond of the form. In short, it may be said to be characteristic of the literature of the Dekhan, but is certainly not limited to them.

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6. METRICAL PROSE IN INDIAN LITERATURE.

Professor Hopkins in “The Great Epic of India” (pages 266 ff.) discusses this curious phenomenon as found in the Mahā Bhārata. There are some striking instances of this mode of composition in the earlier literature.

In Dīgha ii, 151, just before the verses inserted in the prose account of the Subhadda episode, the last few lines of the prose consist of words so arranged that they contain half verses, and a very slight alteration would make them read as consecutive verses. In the note to my translation of

the passage,¹ one such possible alteration has already been suggested.

So at *Dīgha* ii, 209, just after the two lines of verse in § 15 there follows a prose passage which is almost, but not quite, verse. And in *Vinaya* i, 42, the words *gambhīre upadhi-saṅkhaye* (at end of § 3) can be made, with a little pressure, into an awkward sloka, and there are two half slokas in the following words.

Professor Oldenberg, in his note on the last passage,² suggests that it may have been originally composed in verse in some dialect allied to Pali, and has become prose in the process of transliteration into, or restatement in, Pali.

I cannot but think this a very happy suggestion. Professor Hopkins sees, however, in this curious anomaly a very early form of popular verse, "an instrument of the perpetual story-teller, a naïve form, running in and out of verse like the rhymes in fairy tales." But the "running in and out of verse" is a frequent occurrence. What we have here are phrases which are by no means naïve and popular, but on the other hand ungainly and awkward either as prose or as verse, and leading to a grammatical construction that is the reverse both of the naïve and of the popular. It seems more probable that we have in the *Mahā Bhārata* metrical prose a result of the recasting into Sanskrit of a narrative once told in the living speech, that is in the dialects, in which the old popular ballads out of which the epics arose were most probably at first recited or sung.

In any case no explanation can be considered satisfactory unless it is sufficient to explain both the sets of facts,—in the *Pitakas* and in the *Epics*.

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¹ "Buddhist Suttas" (1881), p. 107.

² "Vinaya Texts" (1881), vol. i, p. 149.