

DEVELOPMENT OF SANSKRIT LEXICOGRAPHY

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Present paper surveys the development of Sanskrit lexicography. It will examine changing trends in this field. It is divided into three parts. I. **Survey of Sanskrit lexicons**, which depicts three phases of development. II. **Their comparison**. III. **Concluding remarks**.

I. 1 Nighantu

- a. **General Information** – Nighantu is probably the oldest lexicon. It seems probable that it is a compilation of different persons and so it might be a product of several centuries.
- b. **Structure** – It is a vocabulary of rare, unexplained, vague or difficult words collected from the R̥gveda. It is divided into 3 kandas, (sections).
- c. **Arrangement** – First section deals with synonyms and is divided into three chapters. It deals with physical things, objects of nature, man and abstract qualities. Synonyms in this section are arranged freely. The particular vocable for which synonyms are given, appears at the end of the list of synonyms. Second section, which has only one chapter, deals with homonyms. Third section gives the names of deities.
- d. **Grammatical Information** – Gender is not stated clearly but is known only through forms and accent. Different parts of speech can be identified only through their headword.
- e. **Remarks** – Nighantu is written in prose. The scope of Nighantu is limited to the R̥gveda. It covers all parts of speech. The arrangement is not scientific, nor, in many cases, even systematic, but it shows at least an attempt to group the words methodically. Nighantu along with its commentary Nirukta served as an implement for Vedic studies and is treated as a Vedanga in tradition. It has served as a starting point and as a model for later classical lexicons.

I. 2 Classical Lexicons

- a. **General Information** – Classical lexicons beginning with Amarakosa till 18th century can be divided into 3 major categories
 - a) Synonymic, b) Homonymic c) Synonymic and homonymic
- b. **Structure** – As per synonymic section / lexicon, subject wise arrangement is preferred. There is, however, no uniformity in the division of homonymic section / lexicon. The classifying principles adopted by different lexicographers are – 1. Declinable vs. indeclinable, 2. No. of syllables, 3. Alphabetical order, 4. Length of description. At places more than one principle

is also used.

- c. **Arrangement** – In synonymic section / lexicon, vocables under each subject are arranged according to their first / final letter, or length of description. For homonymic section / lexicon, grammatical status, length of description, no. of syllables, gender and alphabetical sequence are the main criteria. In alphabetical sequence, vocables are arranged according to either their first consonant, final consonant or according to the vowel coming after the first consonant.
- d. **Grammatical Information** – Not much grammatical information is provided except gender and mention of grammatical status. Gender is marked by labels, by apposite terminations, or by form and context and even through division. Grammatical categories are similarly known through division.
- e. **Remarks** – These lexicons are written in verses. They include only nouns and indeclinables. They have distinguished adjectives from nouns. These are more systematic than Nighantu. Various principles are used in the arrangement of vocables for the benefit of users, mainly creative writers.

I. 3 Modern Dictionaries

- a. **General Information** – The era of modern Sanskrit dictionaries started with H. H. Wilson's 'Sanskrit – English Dictionary'. Though these mainly include bilingual dictionaries, few monolingual ones are also compiled.

b. Features

1) Written in prose form and are bulky, 2) Aim at covering all available literature, 3) Include all parts of speech, 4) Vocables are arranged alphabetically in single volume, 5) Not only meanings but also senses are given, 6) Provide more grammatical information, 7) Most of them give either quotations or references, 8) Appendices are given by some of them, 9) Most of them give derivation and analysis, 10) Varietas orthographic devices are used to differentiate shades of meaning etc.

II. Comparison – Comparison of these three phases reveals following facts –

- a. Nighantu and modern dictionaries are written in prose whereas classical lexicons are written in verses, b. Nighantu is a vocabulary of rare, unexplained, vague or difficult words from Vedic literature. Classical lexicons do not show any literary influence. Vedisms are not very common. Again, modern dictionaries cover all available literature beginning with the Veda, c. Nighantu and modern dictionaries include all parts of speech whereas classical lexicons concentrate only on nouns and indeclinables, d. Nighantu and classical lexicons are divided into sections and chapters whereas modern dictionaries are written in single volume, e. There is no alphabetical order in Nighantu. In classical lexicons we see different combinations of alphabetization. It is not extended to the entire lexicon but is limited to individual sections of that lexicon. Modern lexicons have an elaborate alphabetical ordering, f. Nighantu does not give any explicit grammatical information.

Classical lexicons, too, do not give much grammatical information except gender and certain grammatical categories whereas modern dictionaries give either gender or nominative singular, grammatical status, irregular forms, and syntactical information. M. M. Williams and V. S. Apte also give derivation of most of the vocables. In addition, M. M. Williams also gives comparisons from Indo – European family, g. Nighantu and classical lexicons have mentioned only the meanings whereas modern dictionaries give even senses, h. Quotations and references are totally absent in Nighantu and classical lexicons. Most of the modern dictionaries give either quotations or references. These are arranged according to frequency, importance or historical order, i. Nighantu was a guide to Vedic studies. Classical lexicons did the job of supplying well-classified synonyms and homonyms to creative writers and were of great help to the commentators who tried to explain those works. The students of different sastras also essentially learned these. Modern dictionaries are helping all new generation scholars who want to understand the available literature.

III. Concluding Remarks – From the above discussion, certain trends in the development of Sanskrit lexicography can be sketched out. This development is basically of two types –

1. Quantitative development

- a. The number of vocables considered by lexicons has increased.
- b. The range of source literature for dictionaries has widened.

2. Qualitative development – Extent of information and its presentation has undergone drastic change.

- a. **Range of information** has widened from implicit information about gender and grammatical categories to the explicit mention of these and further up to the more systematic analysis along with morphological and syntactic information. Modern dictionaries even aim at furnishing the information, which can be useful to its users such as comparison between Indo – European family, derivation and various appendices.

b. Growing Systematization

- 1) The place of subject – wise and length – wise arrangement in different sections has been taken by elaborate alphabetical ordering in single volume.
- 2) The place of isolated meaning is taken by context bound meanings and senses arranged on the basis of frequency, importance and historical evolution.
- 3) Increasing use of orthographical devices

Changing needs of users, changing pattern of education and availability of source material has shaped the development of Sanskrit lexicography.

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