



## MAGAHİ AND MAGADH: LANGUAGE AND PEOPLE

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### Abstract

Magahi is an Indo-Aryan language, spoken in Eastern part of India. It is genealogically related to Magadhi Apbhransha, once having the status of *rajbhasha*, during the reign of Emperor Ashoka. The paper outlines the Magahi language in historical context along with its present status. The paper is also a small endeavor to capture the history of Magadh. The paper discusses that once a history of Magadh constituted the history of India. The paper also attempts to discuss the people and culture of present Magadh.

**Keywords:** *Magahi, Magadhi Apbhransha, Emperor Ashoka.*

### 1 Introduction

The history of ancient India is predominated by the history of Magadh. Magadh was once an empire which expanded almost till present day Indian peninsula excluding Southern India. Presently the name 'Magadh' is confined to Magadh pramandal of Bihar state of India. The prominent language spoken in Magadh pramandal and its neighboring areas is Magahi.

This paper talks about Magahi as a language, its history, geography, script and its classification. The paper is also a small endeavor towards the study of the history of ancient Magadh. The association of history of Magadh with the history and culture of ancient India is outlined. The paper also talks about people and culture of present day region of Magadh.

### 2 Magahi Language

This section is concerned with general features of Magahi language. These general features are genealogical history of Magahi language, from where did the language Magahi got its name, position of Magahi language among various Indian languages, geographic distribution of the language, dialects of the Magahi language, the scripts used in writing the Magahi language and finally classification of Magahi language.

#### 2.1 The Magahi Language

Magahi is an Indo-Aryan language. Grierson (1927) has named Magahi along with Maithili and Bhojpuri as Bihari language. These days Magahi is spoken in districts of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa. Magahi has developed from Magadhi Apbhransha or Eastern Apbhransha branch of Magadhi Prakrit.

Magahi is not the only language developing from Magadhi Apbhransha. Other languages developing from Magadhi Apbhransha are Maithili, Bhojpuri, Bangala, Assamese and Oriya. Pandey (1980) analysing the closeness of these modern Indo-Aryan languages to Magadhi Apbhransha writes that though *Prachin* Bangala, *Prachin* Oriya, *Prachin* Assamese, *Prachin* Maithili, *Prachin* Magahi and *Prachin* Bhojpuri had associated themselves with Magadhi Apbhransha but Magahi should be considered a model language developing from Magadhi Apbhransha. To support his argument he further writes that the literature of Siddhas, which are the earliest available document on Magadhi Apbhransha, there are found many instances which possess direct resemblance with modern Magahi. Aryani (1976) is also of the view that the language used by Siddhas is old form of Magahi.

##### 2.1.1 The Name Magahi

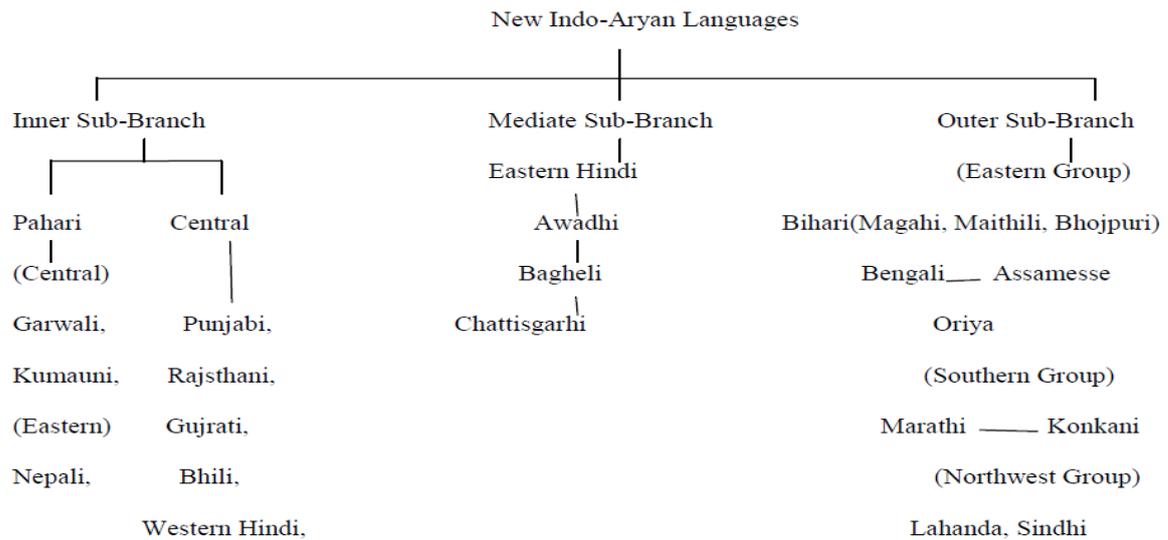
Magahi is also known by its Sanskrit name Magadhi. But the name 'Magadhi' is famous mainly among the educated speakers. Magahi is the common and popular name for the language. The name Magahi is derived from the word 'Magadhi' which was the popular name of eastern dialect of Apbhransha, fully known as Magadhi Apbhransha. As we have seen above Magahi is more directly related to Magadhi Apbhransha than the other languages developing from it, the name of the language Magahi is also the direct descendent from the name of the Apbhransha i.e. Magadhi. Aryani (1965) writes that the word 'Magadhi' underwent phonological changes with the development of Prakrits and Apbhranshas from Sanskrit, and became the word 'Magahi'.

Aryani (1965) further writes that Apbhransha was following Sanskrit but underwent various phonological changes. Because of those changes /maa/ became /ma/. Sound /g/ remained protected. /d<sup>h</sup>/ got changed into /h/. /ii/ coming with /d<sup>h</sup>/, remained as same. So, we have /maagad<sup>h</sup>ii/ changing to /magahi/.

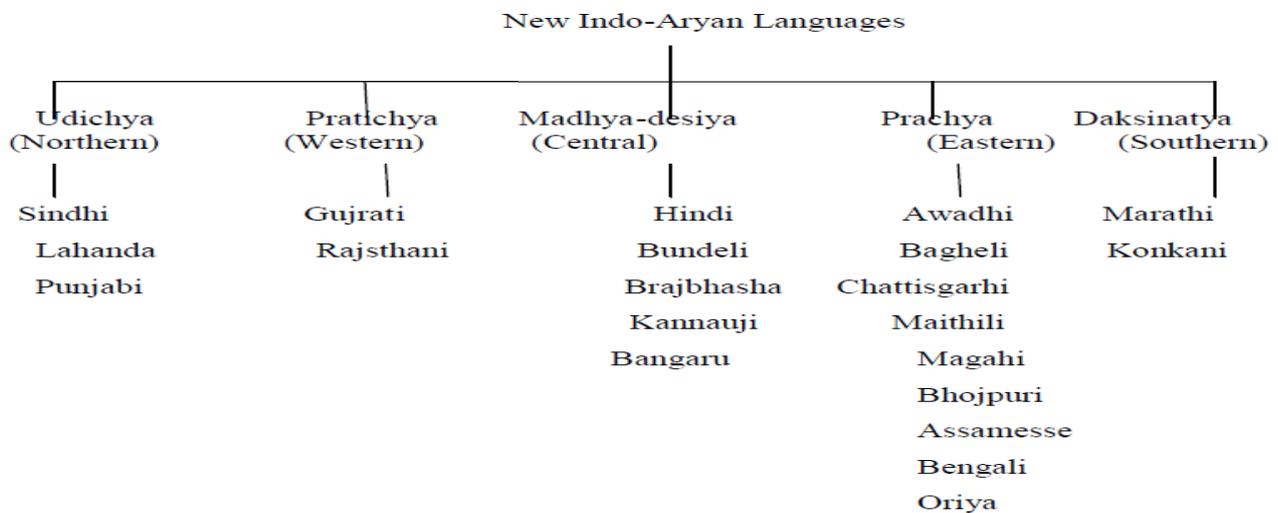
##### 2.1.2 Position of Magahi among Indian Languages

In India, languages belonging to four language families are spoken. These four language families are: Indo-European, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. Indo-Aryan is the name given to group of languages spoken in India and belonging to Indo-European family. Indo-Aryan languages based on their historical development are named as Old Indo-Aryan languages, Middle Indo-Aryan languages and New Indo-Aryan languages. Generally, two classifications

are followed for New Indo-Aryan languages (NIA). These are: Grierson (1905) and Chatterji (1926). Grierson has placed Magahi into Bihari group of Eastern group of languages belonging to Outer Sub-branch of New Indo-Aryan languages. Chatterji has placed Magahi into Prachaya (Eastern) group of languages. The details of Grierson's classification are illustrated in Fig (1) and that of Chatterji are illustrated in Fig (2).



(Fig 1: Classification of New Indo-Aryan languages as given by Grierson, 1905)



(Fig 2: Classification of New Indo-Aryan languages as given by Chatterji, 1926)

Grierson (1926) writes on the character of Magahi language “Magahi is condemned by speakers of other Indian languages as being rude and uncouth like the people who use it. In fact the principal difference between it and Maithili is that the latter has been under the influence of learned *Brahmanas* for centuries, while the former has been the language of people who have been dubbed boors since Vedic times.” Pandey (1980) talking about Aryans of Vedic times in Magadh regions writes that Aryans coming to Magadh did not follow the pure Vedic tradition. They easily got mingled with the local tribal people. They might have established a tradition and culture which was conducive to both Aryans and tribes residing in the area. This co-mingling of culture of Aryans in the area with that of the tribes of area might have triggered anger among the writers of Vedic literature. And so, people residing in Magadh were referred to as boors in Vedic literature. We can say that this prejudice was carried over in the heart of people and they also condemned Magahi as rude and uncouth.

### 2.1.3 Geographic Distribution

In Bihar, presently Magahi is spoken in districts of Patna, Nalanda, Gaya, Jehanabad, Aurangabad, Sheikhpura and Nawada. It expands its boundaries to Lakhisaray and Bhagalpur. The language is also spoken in districts of Hazaribag, Giridih, Palamau and Ranchi belonging to the newly formed state of Jharkhand, which was once a part of state of Bihar. The language is also spoken in Mayurbhanj and Bamra in Orissa. Magahi also has some speakers in Malda and Purulia districts of West Bengal.

Grierson (1927) gives population of Magahi speakers as 6,504,817. Aryani (1965) writes that in 1951 census, only 3,728 people registered Magahi as their mother tongue. She writes this does not mean the language is on the verge of death, rather people named Hindi as their mother tongue. This engulfed the real figure of Magahi speakers. Magahi is

still the vernacular language and Aryani estimates that in 1951 the population of Magahi speakers might have increased to 9,890,000. Number of people speaking Magahi language is about 12,132,383 as per the Census of India 2001<sup>1</sup>.

#### 2.1.4 Dialects of Magahi Language

Pandey (1980), keeping in mind geographical, cultural and administrative factor classifies four different forms of Magahi which are Standard Magahi, Eastern Magahi, Western Magahi, and Mixed Magahi. Grierson (1927) and Aryani (1965) both have mentioned about three types of Magahi i.e. Standard Magahi, Eastern Magahi and Mixed Magahi. The detail discussion on these classifications is done in section (2.1.6).

Grierson (1927) writes about the different dialects of Magahi like Kurmali, Khontai, Kurmali Thar, Khotta, Pargania and Tamaria. The commonality about all these dialects is that all these are different forms of Eastern Magahi. Eastern Magahi is a common name given to Magahi spoken in the state belonging to the border of Bihar like West Bengal and Orissa. However, a pocket of Eastern Magahi speakers are also found in South-East Hazaribag and South-East Ranchi which are very close to West Bengal. Eastern Magahi spoken in Mayurbhanj and Bamra is known as Kurmali. While in western Malda it is known as Khontai. In Manbhum the language is known as Kurmali Thar and Khotta. In the South-East of Ranchi it is known as Pargania or Tamaria.

#### 2.1.5 Scripts Used In Writing

Verma (2007) mentions that Magahi is written in four scripts: Devanagari, Kaithi, Bangla and Oriya. She writes “Bangla and Oriya scripts are employed in writing the forms of Eastern Magahi current in the Manbhum area, such as Purulia but also the south-eastern part of Hazaribag district that borders on the Manbhum region. The Oriya script is used, expectedly, in the areas where it coexists with Oriya, such as Mayurbhanj. Devnagari is the script for whatever is sought to be published today, or has been sought to be published since the early part of the twentieth century.” On use of Kaithi script for Magahi, Verma writes “The traditional script for Magahi has been Kaithi, which is still used in personal communication and sometimes in semi-legal transactions. The Kaithi script gets its name from the word ‘Kāyath’ < ‘Kāyastha’, the caste of writers in Northern India, and has been current until recently in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. It derives from early Nagari and is closely related to the current Gujrati script which replaced the Devanagari only in the nineteenth century.” On use of Kaithi script Pandey (2007) writes “Kaithi was the traditional script of the Bhojpuri and Magahi languages and the popular script of the Awadhi and Maithili languages...Kaithi was also used to write Urdu or the ‘Hindustani’ *lingua franca*, although now the Perso-Arabic script is associated with Urdu.” Though Kaithi is the traditional script for Magahi and other Bihari languages but it got replaced by Devanagari in Early twentieth century because of social and political importance given to the Devanagari script. However, the use of Devnagari script for Magahi is a bit problematic. Verma (2007) writes about this problem “The pronunciation convention associated with the Devnagari in the greater Hindi area (as also Nepali) drops the inherent vowel of the last consonant character of a word. Quite a number of verbal forms in Magahi end in that inherent vowel /a/. Therefore, the Devanagari for Magahi has been slightly modified with the addition of a word-final character, namely the ‘avagraha’ <S>, to provide for that vowel word finally.” Presently, Devanagari has become the popular script for Magahi.

#### 2.1.6 Classification of Magahi Language

There is a famous Hindi saying about Language:

*Tin kos par paani badale, saat kos par baani*

This could be translated as: The climate changes after every three *kosas* and language changes after every seven *kosas* (‘Kosa’ is an Indian unit of measurement for distance). It means that a language remains in constant flux and it undergoes changes after certain distance. This is true for Magahi language also. Based on different forms of Magahi, the language has been classified into various groups by various linguists at different times. Grierson (1927) has talked about Standard Magahi and Eastern Magahi. Standard Magahi is the name given to Pure Magahi. On Eastern Magahi, Grierson writes “On its eastern border Magahi meets Bengali. The two languages do not combine but meeting ground is a bilingual one, where they live side by side, each spoken by its own nationality. Each is, however, more or less affected by the other and the Magahi so affected possesses distinct peculiarities, entitling it to be classed apart as a sub-dialect, which I have named Eastern Magahi.” About the places where Eastern Magahi is spoken, Grierson (1927) writes “We find this dialect in South-East Hazaribag, in Manbhum, in the South-East of the District of Ranchi, in the native state of Kharsawan and even so far South as the native States of Mayurbhanj and Bamra which belong politically to Orissa and Chattisgarh, respectively. It is also spoken as an isolated island of speech in West of the District of Malda. Grierson (1927) names Patna and north of Gaya District as ancient Magadh. He writes about Standard Magahi “Magahi is, however, not confined to the old country of Magadh. It is also spoken all over the rest of Gaya and over the District of Hazaribag; also, on the West, in a portion of the District of Palamau, and, on the East, in portions of the Districts of Munger and Bhagalpur. Over the whole of this area, it is practically one and the same dialect, with hardly any local variations. Only near the city of Patna is it infected with idioms belonging to the North-Western Provinces by the strong Musalman element which inhabits that town, and which itself speaks more or less correct Urdu.” Grierson writes on the regional extension of Pure Magahi or Standard Magahi “Pure Magahi has also found its way down South of the District of Ranchi, and appears in the North of the District of Singhbhum, and in the native state of Saraikala and Kharsawan, where it is spoken side by side with Oriya. It will be noticed that both Standard Magahi and Eastern Magahi are spoken in Kharsawan.” In Grierson (1927), we also find a reference to a mixed dialect ‘Khotta’ which is spoken in Manbhum and Sihnbhum of Bengal. He, however, has not clearly classed it either as a Bengali dialect or as a Bihari dialect. He

<sup>1</sup> Data collected at JNU, New Delhi.

writes about the dialect 'Khotta' "On the western boundary of this dialect (Eastern Magahi) there are various mixed dialects which are generally known as khotta or impure Bengali. It is often difficult to say whether these should be classed as a dialect of Bengali, or of the neighbouring Bihari."

Aryani (1965) has classified Magahi into three dialects: Standard Magahi, Eastern Magahi and Mixed Magahi. By Standard Magahi and Eastern Magahi she means the same as Grierson. However she writes about Mixed Magahi that the mixed dialects of Magahi are the result of mixing of Standard Magahi with those of Maithili and Bhojpuri.

Pandey (1980) talks about four main dialects of Magahi: Standard Magahi, Eastern Magahi, Western Magahi, and Mixed Magahi. Standard Magahi is spoken in Gaya, Nalanda, Nawada, Patna and Lakhisaray. The Magahi spoken in Gaya, Nalanda and Nawada is unaffected by external languages so, it is considered as standard. There is a difference in Magahi spoken in Urban and Rural area of Patna. The Magahi spoken in urban Patna is influenced by different languages like Urdu, Bhojpuri, and Maithili and also by languages spoken by Nawabs of Mughal Period and by Kattiyas and Agarwals of Western India, who settled in Patna. Magahi spoken in Lakhisaray is though different from the one spoken in Patna and Gaya but taken to be standard as it is also uninfluenced by other languages. Eastern Magahi is spoken in Ranchi, Hazaribag, Giridih, Dhanbad, some parts of Sinhbhum, Purulia of West Bengal and Mayurbhanj and Bamra of Orissa. Places where Western Magahi is spoken are close to Bhojpuri speaking belt. This dialect is spoken in Aurangabad, Palamau, Vaishali, Arwal and Danapur. Western Magahi is influenced by Bhojpuri. In Vaishali, the language along with Bhojpuri also has the influence of Maithili. So, the language spoken in Vaishali is also referred to as 'Khichadia'. However, Magahi is much more prominent in the language of Vaishali. Mixed Magahi is spoken in Bhagalpur, Munger, Santhal-Pargana and Western part of Malda District of West Bengal. There is some influence of Maithili and Bengali on Mixed Magahi. In Bhagalpur, due to change in the form of Magahi language, it is also known as Angika. Mixed Magahi has maintained its different forms in Munger and Santhal-Pargana. Mixed Magahi has two different forms: Bangali-mixed Magahi and Maithili-mixed Magahi. The former is spoken in Santhal-Pargana and Malda, while the later is spoken in Munger and Bhagalpur. (Pandey, 1980)

### 3 Magadh

This section gives information about Ancient Magadh. It is divided into four sub-sections. Sub-section 3.1 tells about the Kingdom of Ancient Magadh. Sub-section 3.2 is concerned with languages of Ancient Magadh. Sub-section 3.3 tells about how far the two languages of Ancient Magadh, Magadhi and Pali, are related. Finally, the sub-section 3.4 tries to tell how Magadhi, the genealogical ancestor of Magahi, became popular in the hands of Buddha.

#### 3.1 Ancient Magadh

The history of Magadh is pivotal in the history of ancient India. The great ancient Indian rulers like Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Samudragupta and Vikramaditya were the great rulers of Magadh Empire. The glory of Magadh Empire is mentioned in the historical account of foreign travellers like Megasthenes and Fahiyen. Religions of Buddhism and Jainism are the gift of this land to the world.

We find one of the earliest mentions of 'Magadh' in the Mahabharata, a Hindu Epic. Magadh was one of the sixteen Mahajanpadas mentioned in the Epic. Haryanka dynasty founded Magadh Empire in 684BC and Bimbisara was the first king. Rajgriha, that time known as Girivraja, was the capital during the reign of Bimbisara. Later on the capital was shifted to Patliputra, near the present day Patna, by the King Udayi. The town of Bihar (today known as Biharsharif) also became the capital city of Magadh under the rule of Muslims. Grierson (1927) has mentioned this as follows: "Under the Muslims, the capital of the country was the town of Bihar, in the south of the Patna District, the name of which, a relic of ancient times, is a corruption of the Buddhist word *vihara* or monastery. From this town, the whole *suba* or Province of Bihar took its name." Many dynasties ruled Magadh Empire. Brihadrath, Pradyota, Haryanka and Sisunaga dynasties ruled Magadh during 7<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Later on Nanda, Maurya, Sunga, Kanva, and Gupta dynasties ruled Magadh and expanded its boundaries. Pandey (1976) writes that with Buddha and Bimbisara starts the historical era for Magadh Empire. Bimbisara was the first king who made Magadh, an Empire. Lord Buddha and Mahavira were contemporary of Bimbisara. They got their enlightenment while Bimbisara reigned Magadh. Bimbisara appreciated both the religions and helped them grow. Bimbisara was succeeded by Ajatshatru. Ajatshatru won other mahajanpadas like Anga, Kashi and Vaishali which resulted into Magadh emerging as powerful state in Northern India. Magadh saw its greatest glory during the reign of Mauryas. Mauryas not only expanded the boundary of Magadh but also established a people-friendly State. Emperor Ashoka was the greatest Maurayan king known for his world famous messages of love, truth, non-violence and tolerance. We find the inscriptions of Ashoka carved on various rock-edicts and pillars spread in different places which once belonged to his Empire. In these inscriptions Ashoka proclaims his understanding of *Dhamma*. *Dhamma* for Ashoka means to have control over their passion, to cultivate purity of life and character in innermost thoughts, to have respect for all religions and traditions, to practice non-violence, to be charitable to all, regard for parents, teachers, relatives, friends and ascetics, treating even slaves and servants kindly and telling truth (Lal ed. 2002). Ashoka was the first Emperor in the history of India to expand the boundaries of his Empire from present day Afghanistan and Baluchistan till Deccan Plateau in South. On comparing this Empire with present India, we find that just the North-East and few parts of South India was not the part of his Empire. Ashoka was a great admirer of Buddhism and he propagated Buddhist idealism to Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, West Asia and Mediterranean Europe. Pandey (1980) writes that through such spread of Buddhist Idealism, Magadh got a spiritual victory over different parts of Asia and Europe.

After Mauryas, Sungas and Kanvas ruled Magadh. But the disintegration of Magadh which started during later Mauryas couldn't be prevented by them and the Empire status of Magadh got diminished. Magadh again rose to its glory under Guptas. Gupta Empire was established by Srigupta. Chandragupta I was the first great king of the dynasty. He adopted the title maharajadhiraj and was the first one to issue gold coins. Samudragupta succeeded him. He was known not only for his military achievements but also for his versatile genius. Allahabad pillar inscription, composed by

Harisena, gives a detail of his achievements and personality (Lal ed. 2002). Samudragupta was succeeded by Chandragupta II, also known as Vikramaditya. Under Vikramaditya, the Gupta Empire reached its zenith both in political and cultural sphere. He conquered Saka dynasty and expanded his kingdom to Western coast. This gave impetus to trade and commerce. As a result, he made Ujjain, the second capital of his Empire. Vikramaditya is also remembered for his patronage to literature, arts and science. Scholars like Kalidas, Aryabhata, Varahmihir, and Dhanvantri were few among the nine jewels in the court of Vikramaditya. Hinduism got revived during Guptas. Two main sects of Hindu philosophy, Shaivism and Vaishnavism emerged. Guptas themselves followed Vaishnavism. But they also supported Buddhism and Jainism. Many Buddhist monasteries and stupas were created during this period. Economy was stable as both agriculture and trade flourished. Gupta period contributed to all spheres of knowledge, be it philosophy, literature, mathematics, astrology, astronomy or chemistry. Because of all these achievements, this period is known as Golden period in the history of India.

The Palas were the last ruler of ancient Magadh. After Muslim invasion and during Mugal rule, Magadh lost its political supremacy. It was for a small period, during the rule of Sher Shah Suri, that Magadh again became important in the politics of North India. During British rule, Magadh totally got crushed under 'Jamindari system'. In present Bihar, 'Magadh' is the name given to an administrative unit, called Magadh pramandal which comprises of five districts namely Gaya, Nawada, Aurangabad, Jehanabad and Arwal.

### 3.2 Languages of Ancient Magadh

In ancient Magadh, languages like Sanskrit, Magadhi Prakrit, Apbhransha and Pali were in use. Sanskrit is said to be the language of Aryans. Vedas and Upnishads are written in this language. There was a time when Sanskrit was both the written and spoken languages. About Fifth century B.C. Panini wrote Astdhayayi- a grammar of Sanskrit. Aryani (1965) is of view that the grammar resulted into unification of Sanskrit and the language got rule bound. Because of this it became difficult for common people to use Sanskrit as a spoken language as rules stole the flexibility of the structure of the language and made it rigid. So, Sanskrit got restricted to literary language. By that time, Magadhi Prakrit was gaining coin as a vernacular language in the Magadh region. In other parts of India, different forms of Prakrits were developing. Prakrit got importance as a spoken language after Sanskrit. Parallel to Prakrits developed another language, known as Pali. Pali cannot be said to be developed from Sanskrit. It developed independently and was mainly a written form of language. Prakrits further underwent changes and gave rise to new vernacular forms. Today, these vernaculars are known as Apbhranshas. Various Indo-Aryan languages spoken all over present India are genealogical successor of Apbhranshas. Apbhranshas are the connecting link between Prakrit and NIA (New Indo-Aryan). Eastern dialect of Apbhransha, known as Magadhi Apbhransha, was the vernacular language of Ancient Magadh later on. As mentioned earlier, Magahi got developed from Magadhi Apbhransha. Magadhi Apbhransha, popularly known as Magadhi, was recognized as *rajbhasha* by Emporor Ashoka. He used this language to inscribe messages on his rock-edicts. On the rock-edicts found in the North West places of his Empire, which are in local languages, the influence of Magadhi Prakrit is visible.

### 3.3 Relation between Magadhi and Pali

Sanskrityanan (1993) writes on recognition of Pali as language that today we use the word 'Pali' in the sense of a language and the whole Tripitak and Anupitak literature of Theraveda sect of Buddhism is available in this language. Initially the word was used to denote the original teachings of Buddha or Tripitak but later on it started symbolising a language in which Buddha's teachings are available. Thus the use of the word 'Pali' in the sense of a language is quite new and this sense got advertised in the nineteenth century. On the relation between Magadhi and Pali, Sanskrityanan writes that the language which we name presently as Pali has been traditionally called Magadhi. People have been calling it as Magadhi from the age when Atthkathas were written on Tripitak. Sanskrityanan, however, differentiates Pali from Magadhi and writes that the earliest available form of the Magadhi are the Ashokan rock-edicts found in Orissa, Bihar and Uttar-Pradesh. The Magadhi language of these rock-edicts and the Magadhi which is known for Pali language are different. He further writes that Pali underwent many changes like /s/ in place of /sh/ of Magadhi, /n/ in place of /N/ of Magadhi and /r/ in place of /l/ of Magadhi. This happened under the influence of Sthavirvadi Buddhist follower from Cylon. Sanskrityanan writes that Pali would have got the privilege of becoming oldest form of Magadhi if it has not done away with /sh/ and /r/. Despite of these changes, Sthavirvadi says that their original scripture (Tripitak) is in Magadhi language. But Sanskrityanan does not favour this view and concludes that Pali is the name of the language available in Sthavirvadi Tripitak. Various linguists are of the view that Pali is more related to Shaurseni Prakrit which was spoken in Madhya-desh. So, it can be said to be a literary language based on language spoken near Ujjain and Mathura. Pali got lost as a literary language from India in the early fourteenth century with the loss of Buddhism from the land. But it survived in other countries like Mayanmar, Thailand, Combodia, Laos and Vietnam until eighteenth century. So, it can be said that Pali was never a spoken language in India and it especially signifies the language of written Buddhist literature Tripitak and Anupitak.

### 3.4 Magadhi and Buddha

Magahi is genealogically related to Magadhi Prakrit. During the time of Buddha, Magadhi Prakrit was the vernacular language. Buddha gave importance to Magadhi for his preaching and sermon. He was opposed to the use of Sanskrit for his preaching as Sanskrit by his time had become prescriptive. Moreover, Buddha was against orthodox *karmkandas* which by that time had evaded Hindu religion. Sanskrit was limited to formal teachings and became a tool in the hands of orthodox Hindus. Buddha, for his teachings to easily percolate into the common mass, used the vernacular language, Magadhi Prakrit. Aryani (1965) writes that Buddha used to move around Kashi, Koshal, Videh and Magadh. In these areas, Magadhi was the popular language. That's why also Buddha chose Magadhi as the medium for his preaching and sermon. But Buddha also had followers from Kuru, Avanti and Gandhar. Sanskrityanan (1993) writes about these

followers that they started following their own language in the *suktas* used in Buddha's preaching. Few followers were against these changes and therefore requested Buddha if his preaching could be written and preserved in a form of literary language. But Buddha was against it. According to Sanskrityanan, about four centuries later, after Buddha's Nirvana, his preaching was preserved in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by Sthavirvadis in Pali, though they claim it to be Magadhi language. Chatterji (1963) writes that Lord Buddha's teachings and sermons were first compiled using the Magadhi language, which was later translated into Pali. The compiled form of Buddha's teaching is known as Tripitak.

#### 4 People and Culture of Magadh

Culture of Magadh has been rich since ancient times and the land has produced many important personalities who contributed in India's development. The land has been epicenter of various religious and political movements since ancient times. Lord Buddha and Mahavira got enlightenment on this land and moved around the neighboring places for their religious preaching. Buddhism and Jainism were the first religions to rise against the hypocrisies of caste-system, Brahmanism and Vedic *karmkandas*. Buddha advocated 'The Middle Path' for his disciples. He talked of *Ashtangika-marga* for attaining *nirvana*, which is liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Mahavira advocated rigorous asceticism for his disciples. Both Buddhism and Jainism stood for the reason of truth and non-violence. Sikhism also has roots in Magadh. Sikh's tenth Guru, Guru Govind Singh was born on this land. In nineteenth century, during struggle for independence against British, Patna became the centre for Wahabi movement. This movement was led by Sayyed Ahmed Shahid. It was both a political and religious movement. The movement was aimed towards reforming Islam. But for achieving this, reformers thought that independence from British was must. So they also acted against British.

Magadh has contributed a lot to the Indian culture. Mauryan art is the first imperial art in India. Ashokan pillars are unique and their incredible 'finish' is the pride of Indian Architecture. These pillars are carved out of a single rock. These rocks pillars are polished in such a fashion that they appear to be made of metal. Such polishing is striking example of Mauryan art and the technique vanished after Ashoka. Pillar at Sarnath is one of the Ashoka's pillars. The four lions carved on the top of the pillar are chosen as the national symbol of independent India. There is Iranian influence on Mauryan art. In Indian history, Ashoka was first to use inscriptions for spreading his messages. He followed the tradition of inscriptions from Iran. The tradition of rock-cut caves in India begun with the Mauryas. Rock-cut caves in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills in Gaya are examples from Mauryan period. These were excavated by Ashoka and his grandson Dasaratha for the abode of Ajivika monks. A glimpse of the folk art of the period can be seen in the Yaksha and Yakshani figures found from Mathura, Pawa, and Patna. The Yakshini statue from Didarganj, near Patna is the most famous one and shows Mauryan polish. *Arthashastra*, written by Kautilaya, is an important literature of the period for understanding politics and administration in general.

Gupta's contributions to the Indian culture are also remarkable. Hinduism reemerged in the form of Bhagavatism (Vaishnavism), Saivism and Saktism. Bhakti became central to the philosophy of Hinduism. Hinduism also got influenced by Buddhism. Under this influence Vaishnavism imbibed Buddha as one of the incarnations of Vishnu. Sculptures and temples of Gupta period are milestone in the field of art. Guptas were first to use dressed stone for temple construction. Before this, temples were made of wood or other perishable material. Gupta period is known as the "classical period" in the genre of sculpture as they were a combination of spirituality and idealism into art. This combination gets reflected in the images of Vishnu, in Dasavtara Temple at Deogarh. The seated Buddha from Sarnath and standing Buddha from Mathura represent fully developed form of Buddhist art. Their radiant spiritual expression carved with grace and refinement makes them masterpieces (Lal ed. 2002). Paintings at Ajanta and Ellora caves were made during Gupta period. Aryabhata, an outstanding scholar of the Gupta age, lived at Kusumpura, near Patna. He wrote *Aryabhattachiya*, which talks about geometry. He was first to use decimal and thus gave a new dimension to mathematics. He was first to give right reasons behind eclipses. Aryabhata was first to utilize sign functions in astronomy. This age contributed *Puranas* and *Smritis* to the Hindu literature. Kavyas such as *Meghduta*, *Raguvansa* and *Kumarsambhava*, dramas such as *Abhijnashakuntalam*, *Mudrarakshasa* and *Devichandragupta* are contribution of Gupta period to Indian literature (Lal ed. 2002).

Guptas established many Universities for promoting education. Nalanda University was one of them. It was famous for education in religion and philosophy. Students from all over India, China, Tibet, Indonesia and Sri Lanka used to come here for studies. The famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing studied at Nalanda University. Hiuen-Tsang mentioned the glory of Nalanda University in his book *Si-yu-ki*. I-tsing stayed at Nalanda for ten years. He translated many Sanskrit manuscripts into Chinese. This glory was mixed into ashes by Muslim invader, Muhmmmed Bin Bakhtiyar in about twelfth century. This was a great loss to Magahi language also as it was the time when Magahi was growing. In earlier paragraphs we saw how the ancient Magadh has contributed to the development of culture all over India. In the following paragraphs we look at various cultural aspects of present Magadh.

Folk songs and folk dance are an important aspect of Magadh culture. Folk songs like *Phaag* and *Chaita* are sung all over Bihar. While *Phaag* are sung in the month of *Phalgun*, *Chaita* are sung in the month of *Chait*. Rajashah of Patna is a famous name in the field of Indian classical music. He has not only reclassified the Indian Ragas but also discovered a new musical instrument called '*Thaat*'. Rajashah also authored a book '*Nagmat Ashfi*' on Indian music. Folk music of Bihar reflects the culture of its day to day life. *Sanskaar geet* like *sohar*, *khilona*, *kohbar*, *sumangali* are sung at various occasions like birth, munden, marriage etc... There are different kinds of songs for each kind of festival celebrated in the region like *holi*, *chhath*, *jitia*, *tij*, *bahura*, *pidia*, *godhan*, *diwali* and *ramnavami*. There are also seasonal songs like *chaita*, *kajari*, *chaturmasa*, *barahmasa*, *hindola* etc... Folk songs also include songs like *ropani*, *sohani*, *jata-pisai*, *chavai*, *thapai* etc... which are sung during various day to day activities. Various folk dances performed by local people in the area are: *dhobia nritya*, *karia jhumar*, *jhijhia*, *jharni nritya*, *jat-jatin*, *sama-chakava* and *domkach*. These dances are based on different religious, historical and social significance. Many movies also reflect the culture of Magadh. In the

movie 'Abhijan', which was directed by Satyajit Ray, the actress Vahida Rahman delivered her dialogues in Magahi. Other famous Magahi films are 'Maiyaa' directed by Fani Majumdar and 'More Man Mitwa' directed by Girish Ranjan. In the genre of painting, Magadh is known for its 'Patna Kalam Shaili'. The influence of both Mughals and British are found on the paintings of this school. Along with carrying these influences, this school has developed its own local features which make them unique. The famous painters of this school are Sevak Ram, Hulas Lal, Jayram Das and Shivdayal Lal.

Thus we can say that the culture of Magadh is rich and is full of different shades and colors.

## 5 Study of Magahi Language

The earliest form of written Magahi is found in the literature of Siddhas. After Siddhas, Magahi survived only as a spoken language. We find that after the Muslim invasion on India, Magadh lost its status as a political power, and the language couldn't get any patronage. Pandey (1980) divides the history of Magahi language from thirteenth century till today into four categories. These four categories are as follows:

Charan period – (1200-1500AD)

Devotional period – (1500-1800AD)

Development period – (1800-1900AD)

Modern period – (1900AD till today)

The following descriptions of the above mentioned four periods are based on Pandey (1980).

The Charan period starts with the Muslim invasion on India. In the beginning, Muslims started capturing all over North India and also destroyed its culture. During this period, Charans (Bhatt) started developing folklores in all over North India, including Magadh. They developed these folklores in many vernacular languages. Charans didn't have a written tradition for their folklores. The songs were transmitted orally from place to place and generation to generation. In Magahi the famous folklores of the period are: *Alha, Lorkayan, Sorthi-brijbhar, Naykva, Kunwar Vijayi, Gopichand, Bharthari-charitra, Chatri Chauhan, Nunchar* etc... All these stories have historical background and reflect the cotemporary political scenario. Most of these folklores developed outside Magadh. But they were translated into Magahi and brought into Magadh by Charans. During this period, Magahi language was under two influences. First, Magahi got developed into its present form and Second, Buddhism got vanished from Magadh and Hinduism once again became influential which in turn influenced the subject matter of these folklores.

Devotional period was the result of religious unrest that developed after a long period of Muslim rule in India. In the beginning of sixteenth century, Mughals took the reign of India from Turks. Hinduism once again started evolving into new forms. In Magahi many devotional songs and stories were authored in this period. In devotional category folk songs of *Sati Bihula, Nag Panchami, songs related to Chatth, Shitla Devi, Satnarayan baba, Tij, Anat-Chaudas, Jitia* and *Godhan* are famous. Folksongs related to love stories were also composed during this period. Among these the famous ones are *Reshma, Raja Dholan* and *Netua Dayal Singh*. The famous proverbs of *Ghagh, Bhaddari* and *Dak* are also available in Magahi language.

The period after Devotional period is Development period. The characteristic of Development period are work done by English historians, linguists and archaeologists. It was the period when genealogical history of languages was worked upon. The study of present form of Magahi language started in this period. The relation of Magahi language with other languages was established. Grammar for Magahi language was written for the first time. Following books included the grammar of Magahi language. (i) *Seven Grammars of the Dialects and Sub-Dialects of the Bihari Language*, by G.A. Grierson, 1883-1886. (ii) *A Grammar of the Hindi Language*, by Rev. S.H. Kellogg, 1893. (iii) *A Comparative Dictionary of Bihari Language*, by Hoernle and Grierson, 1889. In this period, for the first time, Magahi folklores and folksongs were also published which were surviving only in spoken form.

The Modern Period of Magahi language starts with 1900 AD. The significance of this period is that various works done in Magahi language and the importance of Magahi language was established. Various folklores, folksongs and other forms of vernacular literature were compiled and published during this period.

In another bid to study Magahi language, many grammars of Magahi language were written which includes (i) *Magahi Vyakaran*, ed. by Christian Missionary Press, Calcutta, around 1943. It is written in Kaithi script. (ii) *Magahi Vyakaran* authored by Rajendra Prasad Yodheya in 1957. (iii) *Magahi Vyakaran-Kosh* authored by Sampatti Aryani in 1965. (iv) *Magahi Vyakaran* authored by Rajeshwar Prasad Sinha 'Anshul' in 1970. (v) *Hindi aur Magahi ki Vyakarnik Sangrachna* authored by Saroj Kumar Tripathi.

Magahi language has also been studied from Linguistic point of view. Sheela Verma (1985) has talked about the structure of the Magahi verb. Phonetics of Magahi has been worked upon by Sheela Verma in 2007. Linguistic study of Magahi also includes the following: (i) *Phonology and Morphology of Magahi Dialect* authored by A C Sinha in 1966. (ii) *Magahi Phonology: A Descriptive Study* authored by Saryoo Prasad in 2008. (iii) *Magahi kaa Bhasha Vaigyanik Mimansa* authored by Kumar Rajiv Ranjan in 2010. (iv) *Magahi ki Sanyukt Kriyaon kaa Bhasha Vaigyanik Adhyan* authored by Kumar Indradev in 2007.

## 6 Conclusions

Magahi is an Indo-Aryan language. Presently, Magahi is considered as a dialect of Hindi language. This does not seem to be historically evident. Genealogically, it has developed prior to the Hindi language. Magahi got developed from Magadhi Apbhransha. Magadhi Apbhransha as a language is associated with ancient Magadh. The language in ancient Magadh was known as Magadhi. Even today, the name 'Magadhi' for the language Magahi is popular among educated people.

Historically, we find that ancient Magadh was once an Empire, which expanded all over the present day Indian peninsula. Maurya dynasty and Gupta dynasty were the most prominent rulers of ancient Magadh. Their history constitutes the history of India.

Today, Magahi language is confined to some region of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa. Looking into the literary tradition of Magahi language, we find that earliest form of written Magahi is found in the literature of Siddhas. After Siddhas, Magahi survived only as a spoken language. However, in Modern period, various folklores, folksongs and other forms of vernacular literature were compiled and published. Presently, an attempt to write grammar and to study the language linguistically is going on.

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