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Dhanapāla's Eleven-Verse Hymn to Mahāvīra in Sanskrit and Prakrit

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Abstract: This is a translation of an eleven-verse hymn (*stotra*) to Mahāvīra that was composed by the tenth- to eleventh-century poet and scholar Dhanapāla of Dhārā and mixes lines of Sanskrit and Prakrit. The article includes a brief introductory note about Dhanapāla and his minor works.

Keywords: Dhanapāla, hymn, multilingualism, Prakrit, *Stotra*

Introduction

This brief article begins a series of translations of the "minor works" of the poet and lexicographer Dhanapāla. Dhanapāla is known primarily as the author of *Tilakamañjarī*, a very fine work of Sanskrit poetic prose, and of the *Pāiyalacchī*, the earliest surviving Prakrit lexicon. Besides these, four of his own hymns (*stotra*s), a commentary on a hymn composed by his brother Śobhana, and a short manual for lay conduct (*Śrāvakavidhi*) survive, and he is likely to have composed another Prakrit lexicon that does not survive.[1] These "minor works" of Dhanapāla have so far attracted very little scholarly attention. Partly that is because they were not very popular. Dhaky and Shah (2017) do not include any of them in their collection, and Cort (2026) does not mention them in his recent overview of Jain *stotra* collections. Partly it may be because some critics have found little to recommend them (see below). The hymns were edited in the 1920s and 1930s and have hardly even been mentioned in scholarship since then.

[1] See Caturavijaya (1932, 12–16) and Kāpaḍiyā (1933, 16). Hemacandra cites Dhanapāla five times in his *Deśīnāmamālā*, but the quotations are not found in the *Pāiyalacchī*, so he may have written another Prakrit lexicon, this one evidently providing definitions in Sanskrit; see Bhayani (1997).

My interest in these works is primarily because of the distinction of their author. First, Dhanapāla lived at a fascinating time in history and was closely associated with the Paramāra court of Dhārā at its zenith (Yadava 1982). He mentioned Sīyaka's attack on Mānyakheṭa in 972 CE, received titles from Muñja, wrote his *Tilakamañjarī* for Bhoja, and lived through the campaigns of Maḥmūd of Ghazna in 1024 CE. Second, the details he gives us in his works, as well as the stories about him that were recorded in the *prabandha*s, mean that we know more about his life and work than about most other poets before him and many other poets after him (Granoff 1995). We know, for example, that he had a close personal relationship with Bhoja—indeed it is their relationship that forms the historical basis for the legends found in the *Bhojaprabandha*—and that he converted from Brahmanism to Jainism, partly due to the influence of his brother.[2] In fact he is one of very few figures whose pre- and post-conversion works are available to us. Third, Dhanapāla is one of very few poets to have composed separate works in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha, the three major literary languages of premodern South Asia. I suspect that the importance of Prakrit in Bhoja's court may have had something to do with Dhanapāla's poetry and scholarship; perhaps Dhanapāla even had some role in the production of one or more of the Prakrit poems that were inscribed in and around Dhārā.[3]

The work presented here has been published twice, as far as I know. In Kāpaḍiyā's (1933) edition it is called *Vīrastuti* (269–70), and in Caturavijaya's (1932) edition it is called *Śrīvīrastava* (91–92). The text is almost the same but for one apparent eye-skip in Caturavijaya's edition.[4] Dhanapāla wrote two other hymns in praise of Mahāvīra: one in thirty Prakrit *gāthā*s featuring "apparent contradiction" (*virodhābhāsa*), and one in fifteen Apabhramsha *vastuka*s, specifically devoted to the image of Mahāvīra at Satyapura.[5] The work translated here is composed in eleven *gāthā*s, which constitute a *kulaka*, i.e., they are all syntactically connected by means of relative pronouns to the correlative *taṁ* in the last verse. The work has the unique feature that the first line of every verse is in Sanskrit, and the second line is in Prakrit. Because both of the hymns to Mahāvīra are titled *Vīrastuti*, they are sometimes differentiated based on their language (either Prakrit or Sanskrit and Prakrit).

This *Vīrastuti* is therefore a multilingual hymn. A certain amount of scholarly attention has recently been directed toward multilingual compositions and

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2 On the *Bhojaprabandha*, see Gray (1950).

3 The most well-known of these are the two-hundred-verse poems on the tortoise that supports the earth, on which see Kulkarni (2003), but there are several others, all fragmentary and awaiting further research. Some of them appear to be from the time of Bhoja himself, while others are from the time of his successor Arjunavarmadeva, for which see Singh (2024).

4 In verse 7, after reading *saṅgamaka*, Caturavijaya's edition reads *surādhipa* and continues with the rest of verse 8. This seems to be an eye-skip triggered by the word *sura*, which is the second word in both verses 7 and 8. Neither edition tells us about any manuscripts of this work.

5 Satyapura is modern Sanchore in Rajasthan; see Ollett (2022).

multilingualism more generally in Jain literary traditions, but I do not believe that any of this scholarship mentions Dhanapāla's hymn (Balbir 2007; Vose 2016; Cort 2025). That may be because its relatively pedestrian combination of Sanskrit and Prakrit is perhaps not very interesting in comparison to other multilingual practices (see below). It may also be because—perhaps for the same reasons—there are few other examples of this kind of language mixture. Schubring (1959, 196) notes that Caturavijaya's collection includes two others, the *Jinastava* by Dharmaghoṣa (prior to 1357 CE) in nine verses and the *Ādidevastava* by Rāmacandra (thirteenth century CE) in eight verses.[6]

The standard format of multilingual hymns in the later (post-Hemacandra) period is the *ṣaḍbhāṣāmaya-stotra*, which includes verses in all six of the languages defined by Hemacandra (d. 1172 CE) in his *Śabdānuśāsana* (Schubring 1959; Balbir 2007, 40). The most well-known author of such hymns is Jinaprabhasūri (d. 1333 CE) (Balbir 2007; Vose 2016). Jinaprabha's contemporaries, Amir Khusrao and Hasan Sijzi, are also said to have combined Persian and Hindavi within the same poem (Bangha 2010, 30–31). But most of the earlier discussions of Sanskrit-Prakrit multilingual compositions refer to *bhāṣāśleṣa*, a device where the same text can be read in either Sanskrit or Prakrit (or Shauraseni, Magadhi, Paishachi, or Apabhramsha), either with the same meaning or with a different meaning (see Hahn 2012). Early examples include the thirteenth chapter of Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha* (sixth century CE). There we actually see the same combination of Sanskrit and Prakrit lines in the same verse (e.g., 13.8, 13.15) as in Dhanapāla's hymn, but only because Bhaṭṭi apparently tires, from time to time, of the task of writing every line such that it can be read in both Sanskrit and Prakrit.

What does the combination of Sanskrit and Prakrit in this *Vīrastuti* mean? Sanskrit and Prakrit were of course the two main literary languages of the Jain tradition. But Dhanapāla had a peculiar relationship with them. It appears that he composed his Prakrit lexicon, *Pāiyalacchī*, before converting to Jainism. This text demonstrates that he was fully conversant with "secular" literature in Prakrit. But he wrote works in Sanskrit and Apabhramsha as well. To me it seems that the *Vīrastuti* iconically presents Dhanapāla's commitments to a language order in which Sanskrit and Prakrit jointly occupy the foremost position. Apabhramsha is part of this order, but secondary. We see the same "ambocentric" language order in the citational practice of Dhanapāla's contemporary, Bhoja, who freely cites both Sanskrit and Prakrit examples in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* and *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa*.

The ten verses of the *Vīrastuti* allude to various events in the final birth of Mahāvīra. I have referred to Johnson's 1962 translation of Hemacandra's *Tri-ṣaṣṭi-śalākā-puruṣa-caritra* for these events. Hemacandra of course lived a century and a half after Dhanapāla, but Hemacandra's treatment of the story is the most well-known and accessible. A. M. Ghatage (2000, 291) said of the present hymn, and Dhanapāla's other

[6] He is referring to Caturavijaya (1932), pages 13–14 and 92–93 respectively.

Prakrit hymn to Mahāvīra, that it is "not of great importance [. . .] the hymn has no other merit nor any poetic quality that will charm our minds." I have to say that, were it not for the unique use of both Sanskrit and Prakrit and the fact that its author is a scholar and poet of great renown, I also would probably not have spared a second look at this hymn.

The hymn is in *gāthā*s with a relatively high proportion (45%) of *vipulā* lines.[7] The Prakrit lines pose no particular difficulties, and indeed many words appear in the *Pāiyalacchī* as well, including *runda* (6cd) in the meaning of "large" (*Pāiyalacchī* 73).[8] The use of a *cvi* formation (*vāmaṇīkaa-*, 3cd) is notable and strikes me as a Sanskritism. The orthography of the Prakrit is almost exactly as what Klatt has described in his article on Dhanapāla's *Ṛṣabhapañcāśikā* and is reasonably consistent across Dhanapāla's Prakrit works (Klatt 1879, 447). The features of this orthography are:

- the use of dental *n* at the beginning of a word and in a double consonant, and retroflex *ṇ* elsewhere
- the use of *i* for a short *e*, including before double consonants (e.g., at the end of the feminine oblique singular)
- the use of *u* for a short *o*, including before double consonants (e.g., at the end of the feminine accusative plural)
- the use of *ya-śruti* before *a* within a word.

One exception appears to be *abbhatthantīo* in verse 7, where the final vowel is short. We would therefore expect it to be written *abbhatthantīu*.[9] Another appears to be *gaṇiāo* (7cd), contrasted with, e.g., *jayassa* (4cd), but the use of *ya-śruti*, as Klatt notes, is less consistent than the other features (Klatt 1879, 447).

There is no good way of rendering the use of Sanskrit and Prakrit in English, so I have typeset the translation of the Prakrit line in italics and the translation of the Sanskrit line without italics.

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7 Namely 1ab, 1cd, 2ab, 2cd, 3cd, 5cd, 8ab, 8cd, 10cd, 11cd. A dedicated metrical study will be included in the last article of this series.

8 Others are *uppāḍiya* (*Pāiyalacchī* 82), *kaḍhiṇa* (74), *ṭhāṇa* (261), *theva* (164), and *viggaha* (59). For *pāyaḍa* (in verse 9) the *Pāiyalacchī* only has *payaḍa* (108). An index of Prakrit words across Dhanapāla's works will be published separately. See Bühler (1879) and Dośī (1960).

9 In fact, I would expect *abbhatthintīu* from *abhyarthayantīḥ*, with *i* < *e* < *aya*.

Vīrastuti Text and Translation

सरभसनृत्यत्सुरयुवतिकुचतटत्रुटितहारतारकितम् ।
जायं सिद्धत्थनरिंदमंदिरं जस्स जम्मम्मि ॥ १ ॥

At whose birth the house of King Siddhārtha became star-studded with the necklaces that snapped off the breasts of the divine women in their vigorous dance (1);

बुद्धावधिना निजजन्ममज्जने हृदयभावमशनिभृतः ।
लीलाइ चलणकोडीइ चालिओ जेण सुरसेलो ॥ २ ॥

who knew with his clairvoyance what Indra was thinking at the time of his postnatal bath and *easily moved Mount Meru with the tip of his foot* (2);[10]

येन च बाल्ये विबुधो विवर्धमानः सविभ्रमं नभसि ।
हणिऊण मुट्ठिणा वामणीकओ कुलिसकढिणेनं ॥ ३ ॥

who, in his childhood, when a god was rapidly growing into the sky, *struck him with his fist, hard as diamond, and made him into a dwarf* (3);[11]

सुरपतिपुरतो विवृतिं वितन्वता विततवाङ्मयं येन ।
जणियं जयस्स विज्जोवएससमए महच्छरियं ॥ ४ ॥

who, providing an exposition with great eloquence before the Lord of the Gods, *amazed the world at the time of imparting his knowledge* (4);[12]

[10] When Mahāvīra was an infant, he was taken to Mount Meru by Indra to be bathed, and when Indra was concerned that the water brought there was too much for him, Mahāvīra demonstrated his strength by pushing Mount Meru down with his foot (Johnson 1962, 27–28).

[11] Saṅgamaka, one of Indra's attendants, begins a long pattern of harassment of Mahāvīra by trying to intimidate him while he is still a child; Mahāvīra easily meets all of his attacks (Johnson 1962, 33).

[12] This refers to the young Mahāvīra instructing Indra in grammar (Johnson 1962, 33–34).

मातापित्रोः प्रेमानुबन्धमधिकं विबुध्य यः स्थितवान् ।
दिव्वालंकारफुरंतविग्गहो चत्तसंगो वि ॥ ५ ॥

who, cognizant of his parents' great bond of affection, remained *with his body dazzling with divine ornaments though he had given up attachment* (5);[13]

येन परित्यज्य जरत्तृणमिव राज्यं समं सुहृत्स्वजनैः ।
वूढो दढनियमभरो लीलाइ गिरिंदरुंदयरो ॥ ६ ॥

who left behind his kingdom like dry grass, along with his friends and family, *and bore with ease a heavy load of austerities, heavier even than the lord of mountains* (6);[14]

सङ्गमकसुरतरुण्यः स्वगात्रसौन्दर्यविजितरतिरूपाः ।
अब्भत्थंतीओ दढं थेवं पि न जेण गणिआओ ॥ ७ ॥

who did not consider in the slightest, despite their insistent requests, the divine women of Saṅgamaka, who outdid even the beauty of Rati with the loveliness of their bodies (7);[15]

कुपितसुराधिपविक्षिप्तदीप्तदम्भोलिभेदसम्भ्रान्तः ।
चमरो चलणुप्पलमूलमागओ रक्खिओ जेण ॥ ८ ॥[16]

who protected Camara, who had come to the base of his lotus-feet, terrified of the blazing thunderbolt the Lord of the Gods launched at him in anger (8);[17]

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[13] Mahāvīra's affection for his parents is given by Hemacandra as the main reason why he did not renounce prior to their deaths (Johnson 1962, 28, 25). The ornaments may serve as an indirect reference to his marriage to Yaśodā.

[14] This refers to Mahāvīra's renunciation after the death of his parents (Johnson 1962, 36–39).

[15] Saṅgamaka, already referred to in verse 3, was a god in Indra's service who attacked Mahāvīra during his meditation in several ways, including by sending beautiful women to distract him (in Hemacandra's telling they are the goddesses of the six seasons) (Johnson 1962, 95).

[16] I conjecture *kupita* instead of Kāpaḍiyā's *prakupita*, and *dīpta* for his *ādīpta*, both of which make the verse unmetrical.

[17] Camara is the name of an *asura* who challenged Indra and took refuge at the feet of Mahāvīra when Indra discharged his thunderbolt at him; see Johnson (1962, 105–11). Yadava (1982, 23) did not understand this reference.

येन घनकर्मपटलं प्रकटतपोवह्निना विनिर्दह्य ।
पलयरवितेयपायडमुप्पाडियमक्खयं नाणं ॥ ९ ॥

who burned up a dense mass of *karma*s with the blazing fire of his austerities *and generated perfect knowledge that blazed forth with the brightness of the doomsday sun* (9);

यश्च सुचिरं पृथिव्यां मिथ्यात्वान्धं विबोध्य भव्यजनम् ।
ठाणं जम्मणजरमरणरोगपरिवज्जियं पत्तो ॥ १० ॥

and who, having awakened on earth perfectible people who had long been blinded by wrong beliefs, *obtained the state completely free from birth, old age, death, and disease* (10);[18]

तं नमत नम्रशतमखमणिमुकुटविटङ्कघृष्टचरणयुगम् ।
भुवणस्स वि बंधणपालणक्खमं वद्धमाणजिणं ॥ ११ ॥

—bow to him, whose two feet are scraped by the top of the jeweled crown of Indra as he bows, *the one who is capable of protecting the whole world from bondage, the Jina Vardhamāna* (11).[19]

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[18] Wrong belief (*mithyātva*) is the first *guṇasthāna*, and the fourteenth and final one, referred to in the second half of the verse, is inactive solitude (*ayogakaivalya*).

[19] Note that the poet's name (*dhaṇapāla*), bolded in the Devanāgarī text, has been included as a "mark" (*aṅka*) in the last verse, made up of the end of one word (*bandhaṇa*) and the beginning of the next (*pālaṇa*). All of Dhanapāla's compositions have this feature.

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