



ŚRĪNĀRĀYANAVIJAYAḤ OF K. BĀLARĀMA PAṆIKAR

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INTRODUCTION

The creative genius in Sanskrit has always shown a predilection for the poetic form or *padyarūpa* of kāvya. Most of our Sanskrit poets prefer to compose poetry instead of prose though *Gadyam Nikaṣām Vadanti* is accepted as a dictum. I understand that the *padya* form of composition has special attractive force for, it contains marvelous beauty, the metrical unity and the rhythmic style, all of which combinedly create an inexpressible sense of sweetness loaded with sublime aesthetic rapture. That is why poetry has emerged as one of the best areas of Sanskrit creative literature. The *padya* form has attracted many great minds of past and is also attracting the outstanding poets of present time. In the past, the poetic form has fascinated the scientist, philosophers, religious writers and the general Sanskritists who have preferred to compose the scientific and philosophical treatises like *Carakasamhitā*, *Bṛhatsamhitā*, *Laghujātaka*, *Kārikāvali*, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, etc., to name a few, in the *padya* form. It is well-known that the tradition of poetry begins from the Vedas. The R̥gveda, the first documented literature of human civilization, is written in the poetic form. The Ādikavi Vālmiki has chosen to compose his *Rāmāyaṇa* in this form. Similarly, Vedavyāsa, the person of encyclopedic knowledge, gave us the Mahābhārata and the Pūrāṇas in the form of *padya*. It evinces that our creative writers have given importance to poet Bhartṛhari confidently declares - *sukavitā yadyasti rājyena kim* (what is there more in a kingdom if there is good poetry).

The experiments of Sanskrit poets gave rise to the various forms of poetry such as *Muktaka*, *Śataka*, *Khaṇḍakāvya* and *Mahākāvya*. It is beyond doubt that this poetic culture of past is exerting its profound influence on the minds of the modern poets. After the lapse of several centuries and many significant technological changes, the profound impact of that ingenious culture is paving the way for new for new horizons. This beautiful form of literature has injected energy and instilled inspiration not only to the poets of Vedic period but even to the great poets like Ratnākara of classical time, who succeeded in composing a magnanimous epic titled *Haravijaya* consisting of fifty cantos in Sanskrit in a very erudite style. Similarly, in the modern period of Sanskrit we have great stalwarts like S.B. Warnekar, the author of the *Mahākāvya-Śivarājyodayam* in 68 cantos based on the life of Chatrapati Śivāji and Ogeti Pariksit Sarma, the renowned author of the *Mahākāvya, Pratāparādhānam*¹ of 80 cantos based on the life of Rana Pratapa. Therefore, a critic has sufficient reason to be delighted with the fact that the area of Sanskrit poetry has grown to a great extent. Day by day it is also enriched by the marvelous contributions of the visionary writers of modern period rightly deserved to be called the *Mahākavis*.

The *Mahākāvyas* (long poems) written in Sanskrit are in fact invaluable gems of Sanskrit literature. They are the best creations of the master – poets who have struggled hard to maintain the glorious literary tradition of India. It is perhaps only in Sanskrit that at the tradition of composing *Mahākāvyas* is continuing till today. But, a cursory look at the huge amount of literature that has been produced so far, gives us the impression that all these *Mahākāvyas* like the old veterans are potent enough in creating the marvelous epics that are no way inferior to the ancient ones. Sanskrit, the language of Indian culture that has been nurtured by the great visionaries in the land of sages throughout, has maintained its identity even after the fullest development of the regional languages and literature. The Sanskrit poets have tried their best to

preserve their sublime thoughts for posterity by putting them in this language in the form of *Mahākāvyas*. The Sanskrit writers still continue to produce excellent literature even now.

Moreover, the substantial growth both qualitative and quantitative of *Mahākāvyas* (long poems or epic poems) has widened the scope of study and research in Sanskrit. The study of the Sanskrit *Mahākāvyas* of modern period is an interesting exercise to understand the human values preached by the poets through their *kāvyas*. The poets of modern period do not maintain the tradition for the sake of tradition. They do feel the literary value of this type of long composition which gives enough scope for displaying one's creative genius and bringing together many interesting things. They have been striving hard to preserve the language which is perishing day by day by making continuous efforts in composing literature in various forms.

They are trying to disseminate the historical truths and to spread the sublime aspects of Indian culture among the students and scholars. They are also endeavoring to set the models of great Indian heroes by way of presenting their heroic deeds in sweet, sympathetic and convincing manner. All these works reflect social consciousness and are not moving only in boundary of aesthetic pleasure which has been accepted to be the soul of poetry. Since the poets are mainly contributing to preservation, growth and development of language, culture, and treasure-house of knowledge, it becomes our duty to read their works, to understand their importance and to introduce them to noteworthy *Mahākāvyas* that are composed during 1976-2000 AD.

One has to admit the fact that the composition of a *Mahākāvya* in Sanskrit is a very arduous task. It requires great mastery over Sanskrit language, profound knowledge of different Śāstras, erudition in methodology of composition, impenetrable labor and above all poetic potency called Śakti in the language of Mammaṭa. Therefore, only a few of the aspirations succeed in composing *Mahākāvyas* which bring for them eternal reputation and universal recognition.

Before proceeding to introduce the selected *Mahākāvyas* of twentieth century, it is necessary to give a definition of the *Mahākāvya* for ready reference. Through several works on classical Sanskrit poetics have given some gross definitions focusing the general characteristics of a *Mahākāvya*, Viśvanātha's definition given in the *Sāhityadarpa* is accepted to be a standard one and that is given here for the convenience of the readers.

Definition of Mahākāvya

A great poem should have number of cantos (*Sargabandha*). The hero should be a deity, or a warrior of a noble family characterized by firmness and generosity of heart or a number of kings belonging to the noble family. Of the erotic, heroic, and the quietist (*Śṛṅgāra*, *Vīra* and *Śānta*) sentiments, any one should be the principal in it, all others being ancillary thereto. The *Mahākāvya* should contain all the dramatic junctures (*Sandhis*). The story, pertaining to some virtuous character or characters, must be derived from historical source like the *Mahābhārata* or the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It should have the final objects to be obtained by the hero like all the four *puruṣārthas*, namely, *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, or it should have only one of them. It should begin with a salutation to a deity or a benediction or simply

with the mention of a matter leading to the main story of the poem. Sometimes it should begin with a reproach of the malicious or the like, or a eulogy of the god. It should consist of cantos, more than eight in number, neither too short nor too long, each canto comprising of stanzas composed in some particular metre, but ending in those of a different one. A canto may be composed in a variety of metres. At the end of each canto there should be a hint of the subject of the succeeding canto. There should be descriptions of the sun, the moon, day, night, morning, evening, noon, twilight, darkness, ocean, mountain, wood, hunting, the seasons, the enjoyment and separation of lovers, saints, heaven, city, sacrifice, military march, council, marriage, birth of a son etc. these are to be described in a *Mahākāvya*, according to the occasion, together with their attendants, incidents and circumstances. The *Mahākāvya* is to be named after the poet, the story, the hero or the like, while the designation of a canto is to be made after the principal matter contained therein².

The above given us the idea that it is not the big bulk alone which makes a poetic composition *Mahākāvya*, but the important features prescribed by the rhetoricians, which should be employed in a poetic composition to make it worthy of the name. The rhetoricians hold the view that sentiment is the soul of poetry and the rhetorical figures are only the means to enhance the beauty of the poem. Therefore, the poet should try to present the full and natural development of the sentiment chosen for the epic poem. No epic, bereft of the proper and successful development of its sentiment can be regarded as a fine piece of literary art. In the classical period the poets were selecting the themes of *Mahākāvyas* keeping in view the scope of sentiment. For example, Kālidāsa selected the union of Śiva and Pārvatī for his *Kumārasambhava*, Māgha selected the theme of killing of Śisupāla for his *Śisupālavadha*, Bhāravi composed the *Kirātārjunīyam* and Kumāradāsa composed *Jānakīharanam*. But we come across a significant change in the modern period. For example, the work *Kṛitubhāgavata* of P.C. Devassia or the work *Nārāyaṇavijaya* of Bālārāma Paṇiker These works are not rich in sentiment. The main objective of these poets is not a declination of rasa. They are mainly popularizing the noble thoughts of the great persons like Christ of Śrī Nārāyaṇ guru. The themes being completely new become interesting whereas the *Mahākāvyas* based on the rotten themes like *Subhadraharana*, *Śumabhavadha*, *Draupadīsvayamvara*, *Karṇārjunīyam*, *Radhāparīṇayam*, *Vṛtravadham*, *Śrīkrśnacaritam*, *Lavaliṇīyam*, etc. are monotonous. The *Mahākāvyas* which are based on new themes like *Viśvamānavīyam* of Vidyādhara Śāstrī, *Svarājyavijayam* of Dwijendranātha Śāstrī, *Lenīnāmṛtam* of Padma Śāstrī, deserve special place among the *Mahākāvyas* of twentieth century. This shows that the objectives of the modern poets have changed. They have not composed the works in old line being very crazy for name and fame. With this background I now try to introduce some of the outstanding *Mahākāvyas* which are carefully selected for this purpose.

Śrīnārāyaṇavijayaḥ

Some of our modern Sanskrit poets have written on the topics which seem to be unusual but are really very interesting. This category appears to be the most important of all. What is worth mentioning and inspiring at the society affect the Sanskrit poets. The trend of selecting themes from contemporary political, social, and academic scenes and to help people by way of spreading the spiritual messages of the saints and sages is very much promised in this century. In this category falls the *Śrīnārāyaṇavijayam* of K. Bālārāma Paṇiker. This *Mahākāvya* came to light in 1971. The poem deserves a unique position for its subject-matter. The epic contains the biography, teachings and philosophical thoughts of Nārāyaṇa guru, a great philosopher and social reformer of modern time. The poet has very nicely described the contributions of this great religious teacher. The epic does not strictly confirm to the rules of the *Mahākāvya* as laid down by the rhetoricians like Viśvanātha. It mainly describes the biography of the saint. The hero of the poem is portrayed in all the solemnity and dignity usually unity of all religious end, the brotherhood of men, are clearly and emphatically

focused in different cantos. Śrī Nārāyaṇa's oft-quoted message - 'one community, one religion and one god for all' - has been ably and thoroughly interpreted in canto XIX. As a measure of relief from the tedious characteristic of didactic and philosophic discourses, the author employs natural descriptions abounding in figures of various kinds, thus enhancing the poetic beauty of the work. The cantos dealing with the consecration of the shrine of the goddess of learning, the visit of poet Rabindranātha Tāgore and Mahatma Gandhi and the cemetery of Gurudeva are interesting aspects. Though the epic is pervaded by the sentiment 'Śanta', the description of lamentations of the people on cemetery of the Gurudeva is full of pathos. Paṇiker's profound knowledge of Vedānta and logic entitles him to be a true interpreter of the teaching of the Gurudeva. Śrī Nārāyaṇa was also an excellent conversationalist whose sense of humor and wit are well-known to his to his followers. But the poet Paṇiker has deliberately refrained himself from bringing out this aspect of the master's character, probably out of his respect for the holy man or because of his feeling that such statements will be out of place in along poem. The simplicity of language, the lucidity of style and the felicity of expression make the work interesting. It will be easy and pleasant even to the students of low standard in Sanskrit.

It is easily understood that the poet does not strictly follow the classical definition. The hero of the poem does not belong to the category mentioned in the definition. Though *Śanta* may be accepted as the main sentiment of the poem, it is not delineated in the manner it is expected. Nevertheless, the *Mahākāvya* occupies an important place for its unique theme and its lucid presentation. Some of the verses are given to acquaint the readers with the style of the poet Paṇiker³.

Conclusion:

The present epic is a valuable contribution to the field of modern Sanskrit literature. To the best of my knowledge, nobody has composed any epic on this theme. Not even a minor poem is written on the philosophy and teachings of Nārāyaṇ guru who has done a lot for the humanity. The world of Sanskrit scholars will be highly benefited by this commendable contribution of this great writer of twentieth century. Not only the importance of this work is felt from the literary perspective but from the perspective of teachings of the great teacher who has shown us the way to lead a happy life. The important lessons that are propounded by this modern sage was now available in Sanskrit so that Indologists will be benefited.

The significant feature of this work is that it is written in simple language and lucid style. The learned author has also given the prose order of the verses and a good Sanskrit commentary which will facilitate the reading. The author has used simple metres for making his verses melodious and sweet. We do not find any difficult grammatical usage and difficult compound or obsolete words. Therefore, we cannot but appreciate the great poem and recommend for its study and research so that the students of modern Sanskrit will realize the value of modern writings.

¹ Panda, R. K., 'Contemporary Sanskrit Poetry', Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal, Hoshiarpur, Vol. XXXIII-XXXIV, Pts. I – IV, June- Dec., 1995-1996, pp. 242 – 243.

² सर्वबन्धो महाकव्यं तत्रैको नायकः सुरः ।
सद्वंशः क्षत्रियो वापि धीरोदात्तगुणान्वितः ।
एकवंशमवा भूषाः कुलजा बहवोऽपि वा ।
शृंगारवीरशान्तानामेकोऽस्मीत्युच्यते । ।
अत्रानि सर्वेऽपि रसाः सर्वे नाटकसन्ध्यः ।
इतिहासोद्भवं वृत्तमन्यद् वा सज्जनशायम् । ।
चत्वारस्तस्य वर्गाः स्युस्तेष्वेकञ्च फलं भवेत् ।
आदौ नमस्कृत्याशीर्वा वस्तुनिर्देश एव वा । । etc.

Kaviraja, Vishwanatha, *Sāhityadarpana*, with *Locana* and *Vijnanapriya*, Bharatiya Book Corporation, New Delhi, 1998, p. 365.

- 3 दुर्गितशतमवाच्यं जातिजन्यं कटोरं
बहुजनपरिहंसारूपमालोक्य लोके ।
अपर इह न दृष्टस्त्वां विना दूयमानो
गुरुमवशजनानां रक्षणे जागरूकः । ।XVII.11 । ।
Śrīnārāyaṇavijayam. Pub. by the poet., Trivandrum, 1973,
second part, p.64.