

## CHAPTER- I

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAHĀKĀVYAS

#### I. Origin of Sanskrit Poem:

The tradition of composing poem begins from the time of Veda and it is continuing without any break. In the Vedas we find the traces of good poetry. The Vedic seers were expert in composing poems and they were visionary poets.

Jawaharlal Nehru states:

“The Ṛgveda, the first of the Vedas, is probably the earliest book that humanity possesses. In it we can find the first outpouring of the human mind, the glow of poetry, the rapture at nature’s loveliness and mystery.”<sup>1</sup>

M. Krishnamachariar observes:

“The beginnings of poetry in India are to be found in the early Vedic Literature. The Ṛgveda contained hymns of a narrative character, and short legends in prose and in verse called *Gāthās*, *Narasamsis*, *Itihāsas* etc., occur in the Brāhmaṇa literature.”<sup>2</sup>

Sanskrit language is older than any other language in the world and hence, we could find some similar words as well as pronunciation of words in almost all the languages. Therefore, A.A Macdonell observes:

“Sanskrit is a language of very ancient origin among the Indo-Iranian languages. Sanskrit literature is like the ocean, which is both vast and deep. Its poets, writers and dramatists have

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<sup>1</sup> Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Discovery of India, p.79

<sup>2</sup> Krishnamachariar, M., *History of Classical Literature*, p. 2

drawn their inspiration from the cosmos on one hand and from the contemporary environs of their own times on the other. In turning from the Vedic to the Sanskrit period, we are confronted with a literature which is essentially different from that of the earlier age in matter, spirit and form.”<sup>3</sup>

Some other rhetoricians also noted that this tradition started from the time of fourth century i.e. from the Pāṇinī’s era and hence Krishna Chaitanya writes:

“Tradition ascribes a *Kāvya*, the *Jāmbavatījaya*, to Pāṇinī who lived in the fourth century B.C. But as the work is not available, it is difficult to say what value should be attached to this tradition, which, besides, seems to be very late origin. But Patañjalī in the second century B.C. gives very interesting material. He refers to a *Kāvya* by Vararuchi and three romances, *Vasava Dattā*, *Somanottara* and *Bhaimarathi*. But these have not come down to us.”<sup>4</sup>

He further writes:

The tradition, to compose *mahākāvya* is starting from the ancient time, “the narrative element in Vedic literature, many of them in dialogue form, like the story of Urvaśī or the account of them in battle between Sudās and the Bharatās, foreshadow the narrative matter of the *mahākāvya*.”<sup>5</sup>

The *R̥gveda* is the ancient *Kāvya* in Sanskrit language. Kunhan Raja rightly remarks:

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<sup>3</sup> Macdonell, A. A., *Origin and Development of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 188

<sup>4</sup> Chaitanya, Krishna, *A New History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 241

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.170

“As poetry, the Ṛgveda reveals certain features that are not seen in the recorded remnants of other ancient civilizations. Love nature is one such feather that is very prominent in the poetry of Ṛgveda. There is no ancient nation that has developed a poetic literature comparable to the poetry of the Ṛgveda.”<sup>6</sup>

Kunhan Raja further remarks:

“The earliest specimen of literature in Sanskrit reveals a very advanced stage in the development of literature as a polished art. A view was held in the earliest stages in the study of Sanskrit in modern times that the first specimens of literature in Sanskrit, known as the Vedas, are only pastoral poetry of a simple nomadic people attempting to appease the power of Nature in order to avoid their wrath and to get favors from them. Even now, there are scholars who are not able to detect any highly developed literary art in the Vedas. But opinion changed gradually and scholars in general began to recognize a highly polished art in Vedic poetry, and some specimens of poetry in the Vedas are accepted as what have not been surpassed later by Sanskrit itself or by any literature of other nations. At present Vedic poetry needs no pleading or advocacy, its poetic standing is what practically all scholars accept as an approved fact.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kunhan, Raja, C., *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 21

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

The tradition to composing a charming poetry begins from Vālmīki and *Vedavyāsa* who are the composers of gigantic *Mahākāvya*s viz. *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* respectively. Therefore, M. Williams rightly remarks:

“Indian literature like the whole face of nature is on a gigantic scale. Poetry, born amid the majestic scenery of the Himalayas and fostered in a climate, which inflamed the imaginative powers, developed itself with oriental luxuriance, if not always with true sublimity. Although the Hindus like the Greeks, have only two great *mahākāvya* poems (the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*) yet to compare these vast compositions with the Iliad and the Gaṅges, rising in the snows of the world’s most colossal ranges, swollen by numerous tributaries, spreading into vast shallows of branching into deep divergent channels, with the steams of Attica or the mountain torrents of Thessaly. It is, of course, a principal characteristic of *mahākāvya* poetry, as distinguished from lyrical, that it should concern itself more with external action than internal feelings. It is this which makes Epos the natural expression of trial has turned the mind of national life. When centuries of trial have turned the mind of early national inwards, and men begin to speculate, to reason, to elaborate language and cultivate science, there may be no lack of refined poetry, but the spontaneous production of *mahākāvya* song is, at that stage of national existence, as

impossible as for the octogenarian to delight in the giants and giant-killers of his childhood. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* then, as reflecting the Hindu character in ancient times, may be expected to abound in stirring incidents of exaggerated heroic action.”<sup>8</sup>

The growth and development of *mahākāvya* is very ancient and hence Tapodhir Bhattacharjee mentions:

“The Sanskrit *mahākāvyas* too have the quality of emerging from the stream of life. These are exceptional vehicles of communication, which indented to transmit aesthetic, cultural and historical concepts to every generation for reemphasizing the validity of their inherent creative aspect. The readers are always affected by mainly three constituents of such works, viz. materialized form, thematic idea and content. When we talk of realization of aesthetic experience, we actually expect the unity of these three elements.”<sup>9</sup>

## II. Definition of Kāvya:

Mainly poem is divided into two types viz. *Dṛśya* and *Sravya*. Daṇḍi has classified poetry into three fold *Gadya*, *Padya* and *Miśra*.

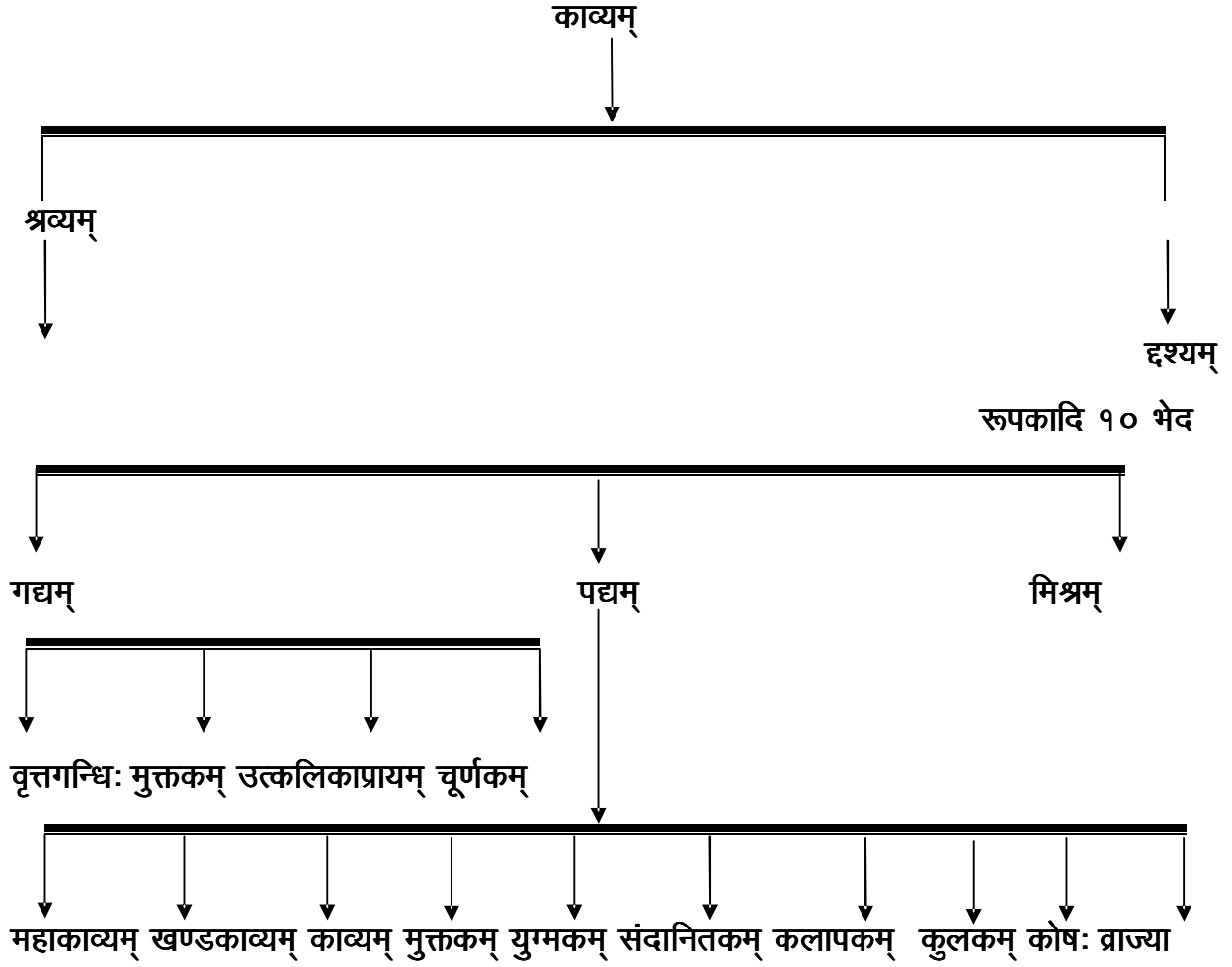
गद्यं पद्यं च मिश्रं च तत् त्रिधैव व्यवस्थितम् ।<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Williams, M., *Indian Wisdom*, p.6

<sup>9</sup> Bhattācharjee, Tapodhir, *Indian Mahākāvya tradition*, p. 50

<sup>10</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.11



In the words of Daṇḍin, poetry is a string of words that were determined by the desired sense or senses:

शरीरं तावदिष्टार्थव्यवच्छिन्ना पदावली ॥<sup>11</sup>

Kuntaka has defined poetry as follow:

“Poetry is that word and sense together enshrined in a style revealing the artistic creativity of the poet on the one hand and giving aesthetic delight to the man of taste on the other.

Poetry is nothing but word and sense in their unity”.

शब्दार्थौ सहितौ वक्रकविव्यापारशालिनि ।

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, I.10

बन्धे व्यवस्थितौ काव्यं तद्विदाह्लादकारिणि ॥<sup>12</sup>

According to Mammaṭa, Poetry consists of words and senses which are free from defects and are possessed of excellence and are sometimes without figures”.

तददोषौ शब्दार्थौ सगुणावनलंकृती पुनः क्वापि ।<sup>13</sup>

In other words of Mammaṭa, *Kāvya* means:

“*Kāvya* is that which touches the inmost cords of the human mind and diffuse itself into the crevices of the heart, working up a lasting sense of delight. It is an expression in the beautiful form and melodious language of the best thoughts and noblest emotions, which is the spectacle of life, awaking the finest souls.”

सकलप्रयोजनमौलिभूतं                      समनन्तरमेव                      रसास्वादनसमुद्भुतं  
विगलितवेद्यान्तरमानन्दम्                      प्रभुसंमितशब्दप्रधानवेदादिशास्त्रेभ्यः  
सुहृत्संमितार्थतात्पर्यवत्पुराणादीतिहासेभ्यश्च                      शब्दार्थयोगुणभावेन  
रसाङ्गभूतव्यापारप्रवणतया                      विलक्षणं                      यत्                      काव्यं  
लोकोत्तरवर्णनानिपुणकविकर्म ।<sup>14</sup>

The definition of poetry is given by Viśvanātha in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, poetry is a sentence the soul whereof is sentiment:

वाक्यं रसात्मकं काव्यम् ।<sup>15</sup>

### III. Purpose of *Kāvya*:

The main purpose of the *Mahākāvya* is to gain the four goals of life i.e. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*.

<sup>12</sup> Kuntaka, VJ, I.7

<sup>13</sup> Mammaṭa, KP, I.4

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>15</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, I.I

Daṇḍin says about the purpose of poem in his *Kāvyaḍarśa*:

चतुर्वर्गफलोपेतम् ।<sup>16</sup>

Bhāmaha in his work *Kāvyaḍaṅkāra* describes the acquisition of four purposes of poem but he emphasizes on the *Artha* as a major purpose of poem.

चतुर्वर्गाभिधानेऽपि भूयसार्थोपदेशकृत् ।<sup>17</sup>

According to Mammaṭa, purpose of poem is:

काव्यं यशसेऽर्थकृते व्यवहारविदे शिवेतरक्षतये ।

सद्यः परनिर्वृतये कान्तासंमिततयोपदेशयुजे ॥<sup>18</sup>

“Poetry brings fame and riches, knowledge of the ways of the world and relief from evils, instant and perfect happiness and counsel sweet as from the tips of a beloved consort”

Viśvanātha says that the four fruits are necessary in poem but at the end of the poem, one can get at least one fruit out of these four:

चत्वारस्तस्य वर्गाः स्युस्तेष्वेकं च फलं भवेत् ।<sup>19</sup>

Abhiraja Rajendra Mishra, a modern poet says that the fruits of *Mahākāvya* should be charming and one of the four purposes described by the earlier rhetoricians:

त्रयाणां पुरुषार्थानां कश्चिदेको भवेद् ध्रुवम् ।

महाकाव्यफलं रम्यं धर्मकामार्थसम्मतम् ॥<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. Definitions of Mahākāvya:

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<sup>16</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.15

<sup>17</sup> Bhāmaha, KL, I.21

<sup>18</sup> Mammaṭa, KP, I.2

<sup>19</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.318

<sup>20</sup> Mishra, Rājendra, *Kāvyaśāstrīya Mānadanda Evam Sanskrit- Navalekhan*, in Drk, pp. 24-25



The scholars have presented the different definitions of *mahākāvya* in their books. Vedavyāsa has also discussed about characteristics of *mahākāvya* in *Agnipurāṇa* as under:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यमारब्धं संस्कृतेन यत् ।  
तादात्म्यमजहत्तत्र तत्समं नातिदुष्यति ॥  
इतिहासकथोद्भूतम् इतरद्धा सदाश्रयम् ।  
मन्त्रदूतप्रयाणानि नियतं नाति विस्तरम् ॥  
शक्वर्याऽति जगत्याऽति शक्वर्या त्रिष्ठभा तथा ॥  
पुष्पिताग्रादिभिर्वकूत्राभिजनैश्चारुभिः समैः ।  
युक्ता तु भिन्नवृत्तान्तानातिसंक्षिप्तसर्गकम् ॥  
अतिशक्वरिकाष्टभ्यामेक संकीर्णकैः परः ।  
मात्रयाऽत्यपरः सर्गः प्राशस्त्येषु च पश्चिमः ॥  
कल्पोऽति निन्दितः तस्मिन्विशेषा नादरः सताम् ।  
नगरार्णवशैलर्तुचन्द्रार्काश्रमपादपैः ॥  
उद्यानसलिलक्रीडा मधुपानरतोत्सवैः ।  
दूतीवचन विन्यासैरसती चरिताद्भुतैः ॥  
तमसा मरुताऽप्यन्यैर्विभावैरतिनिर्भरः ।  
सर्वरीति रसैः स्पृष्टं पुष्टं गुणविभूषणैः ॥  
अतएव महाकाव्यं तत्कर्त्ता च महाकविः ।  
वाग्वैदग्धप्रधानेऽपि रस एवात्र जीवितम् ।  
पृथक् प्रयत्नं निर्वर्त्य वाग्विक्रमणिरसाद्वपुः ।  
चर्तुवर्गफलं विश्वव्याख्यातां नायकाख्यया ॥

*Agnipurāṇa*, Verses 24 to 34

A *mahākāvya* is usually divided into cantos (*sargas*). It is to be written in pure Sanskrit and in no other dialect. Some

historical incidents or some characters of celebrity should form the theme of a *mahākāvya* or some supernatural events might be as well immortalized in its pages. Such political incidents, as councils of state, sending of embassies, as well as the marching out of soldiers in battleground, should be taken not to encumber its majesty with a dull monotony of detailed descriptions. The metres, to be used, in its composition, are the *Śakvarī*, the *Ati-Jagatī*, the *Ati-Śakvarī*, the *Triṣṭup* and the *Puṣpītāgrā*. The cantos shall deal with different incidents of the same story and they should not be too short or succinct. Over and above these, it shall contain glowing and graphic descriptions of cities, oceans, mountains, seasons, the sun, the moon and the hermitage. The forest, the garden, the sporting with maidens in water, the drinking assembly, the festivities of love, the conduct of wanton girls, the emissaries of love, should be all described and discussed therein. All sentiments with their accessories should be touched upon, and all styles of composition and rhetoric should be used into the creation of *mahākāvya* poem. *mahākāvya* possesses the above mentioned characteristics and the composer of a *mahākāvya*, is called a *Mahākavi*. One predominant sentiment should run through the entire length of the poem, even in the midst of such a diversity of topics discussed therein. It is the sentiment that forms the soul of a *mahākāvya*; the different topics only serve to bring it out to a greater prominence. The poet, in the character of his hero,

unrolls the whole universe, as it were, with its four-fold knowledge to the vision of his readers.<sup>21</sup>

The erudite scholar of Sanskrit literature Daṇḍin has given the following definition of *mahākāvya* in his *Kāvyaḍarśa*:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यमुच्यते तस्य लक्षणम् ।  
आशीर्नमस्क्रिया वस्तुनिर्देशो वापि तन्मुखम् ॥  
इतिहासकथोद्भूतमितरद्वा सदाश्रयम् ।  
चतुर्वर्गफलोपेतं चतुरोदात्तनायकम् ॥  
नगरार्णवशैलर्तुचन्द्रार्कोदयवर्णनैः ।  
उद्यानसलिलक्रीडामधुपानरतोत्सवैः ॥  
विप्रलम्भैर्विवाहैश्च कुमारोदयवर्णनैः ।  
मन्त्रदूतप्रयाणाजिनायकाभ्युदयैरपि ॥  
अलंकृतमसंक्षिप्तं रसभावनिरन्तरम् ।  
सर्गेरनतिविस्तीर्णैः श्रव्यवृत्तैः सुसन्धिभिः ॥  
सर्वत्रभिन्नवृत्तान्तरूपेतं लोकरञ्जकम् ।  
काव्यं कल्पान्तरस्थायि जायेत सदलंकृति ॥  
न्यूनमप्यत्र यैः केशिचदंगैः काव्यं न दुष्यति ।  
यद्युपात्तेषु सम्पत्तिराराधयति तद्विदः ॥  
गुणतः प्रागुपन्यस्य नायकं तेन विद्विषाम् ।  
निराकरणमित्येष मार्गः प्रकृतिसुन्दरः ॥  
वंशवीर्यश्रुतादिनि वर्णयित्वा रिपोरपि ।  
तज्जयान्नायकोत्कर्षणवर्णनञ्च धिनोति नः ॥<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Joshi, K. L., Ed., *Agni Mahāpurāṇa*, Vol. 2, pp. no. 337-338

<sup>22</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.14 to 22

A ‘*Sarga-bandha*’ is a ‘*Mahākāvya*’. Its characteristics are discussed here. Its beginning is either a blessing or a dedication or an indication of the contents. It has its source either in a story told in the *Itihāsa* or other good material. It deals with the fruit (goal) of the four kinds (*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*). It has a great and generous person as the hero. It is embellished with descriptions of cities, oceans, hills, the seasons, the moonrise, the sunrise, of sport in the garden and of the sport in the waters, of drinking scenes, of festivals, of enjoyment (love), of separation (of lovers), of (their) marriage and (their) nuptials and birth of princes, likewise of consultation with the ministers of sending messengers or ambassadors of journeys (royal progress), of war and the hero’s victories; dealing with these at length and being full of *Rasa* (flavor) and *Bhāva* (suggestion): with *sargas* which are not very lengthy and which are well-formed with verse measures pleasing to the ear; everywhere dealing with a variety of topics (in each case ending each cantos in a different metre). Such a poem being well-embellished will be pleasing to the world at large and will survive several epochs (*kalpas*). A poem does not become unacceptable even when some of these parts are wanting if the poem is pleasing to those who know how to judge. At first describing the hero by his good qualities and by that very description despising his enemies is naturally a beautiful method. After describing the lineage, prowess and scholarship etc., even of the enemy, the

excellence of the hero by his victory over such an enemy is in our opinion also pleasing.<sup>23</sup>

Bhāmaha in his work *Kāvyaśālākāra* emphasized only two things i.e. form and matter. In his book, he gives the definition of *mahākāvya* as follows:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं महतां च महच्च यत् ।  
अग्राम्यशब्दमर्थ्यं च सालङ्कारं सदाश्रयम् ॥  
मन्त्रदूतप्रयाणाजिनायकाभ्युदयैश्च यत् ।  
पञ्चभिः सन्धिभिर्युक्तं नातिव्याख्येयमृद्धिमत् ॥  
चतुर्वर्गाभिधानेऽपि भूयसार्थोपदेशकृत् ।  
युक्तं लोकस्वभावेन रसैश्च सकलैः पृथक् ॥  
नायकं प्रागुपन्यस्य वंशवीर्यश्रुतादिभिः ।  
न तस्यैव वधं ब्रूयादन्योत्कर्षाभिधितस्या ॥  
यदि काव्यं शरीरस्य न स व्यापितयेष्यते ।  
न चाभ्युदयभाक्तस्य न मुघादौ ग्रहणस्तवौ ॥<sup>24</sup>

“*Sargabandha* means *Mahākāvya*, It is so called because it is composed in *Sargas*. It is large and describes significant events in the lives of great men and women. Vulgar expressions have no place in it. It is full of graceful thoughts and ideas, embellished with figures of speech and described good and dignified characters. Besides, it abounds in the description of conference for discussion between the kings and their ministers, sending of the messengers, wars, victory of the hero, etc. It contains five *Sandhis* - *Mukha*, *Pratimukha*, *Garbha*, *Vimarśa* and *Upasamhāra*, the stages

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> Bhāmaha, KL, I. 19 to 23.

sowing the development of the narrative. Its understanding and appreciation do not demand lengthy explanatory commentaries. In other words, it is written in a simple, lucid and intelligible style. Though it describes all the four *Purusarthas*- *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*, it lays more stress on the *artha*. It is in accord with the natural state of the movable and immovable world, besides being rich in all sentiments. The *mahākavi* should be careful in not describing the death of hero. For, the hero is expected to occupy and influence the *mahākāvya* from its beginning right up to its end.<sup>25</sup>

Viśvanātha has given the following definition of *mahākāvya* in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं तत्रैको नायकः सुरः।  
 सद्वंशः क्षत्रियो वापि धीरोदात्तगुणान्वितः॥  
 एकवंशभवा भूपाः कुलजा बहवोऽपि वा।  
 शृङ्गारवीरशान्तानामेकोऽङ्गी रस इष्यते॥  
 अङ्गानि सर्वेऽपि रसाः सर्वे नाटकसन्धयः।  
 इतिहासोद्भवं वृत्तमन्यद्वा सज्जनाश्रयम्॥  
 चत्वारस्तस्य वर्गाः स्युस्तेष्वेकं च फलं भवेत्।  
 आदौ नमस्कियाशीर्वा वस्तुनिर्देश एव वा॥  
 क्वचिन्निन्दा खलादीनां सतां च गुणकीर्तनम्।  
 एकवृत्तमयैः पद्यैरवसानेऽन्यवृत्तकैः॥  
 नातिस्वल्पा नातिदीर्घाः सर्गा अष्टाधिका इह।

<sup>25</sup> Lele, W. K, *Bhāmaha's Kāvyaśāhikāra : A Stylistic and Methodological Study*, pp.95-96

नानावृत्तमयः क्वापि सर्गः कश्चन दृश्यते ॥  
सर्गान्ते भाविसर्गस्य कथायाः सूचनं भवेत् ।  
संध्यासूर्येन्दुरजनीप्रदोषध्वान्तवासराः ॥  
प्रातर्मध्याह्नमृगयाशैलर्तुवनसागराः ।  
सम्भोगविप्रलम्भौ च मुनिस्वर्गपुराध्वराः ॥  
रणप्रयाणोपयममन्त्रपुत्रोदयादयः ।  
वर्णनीया यथायोगं साङ्गोपाङ्गा अमी इह ॥  
कवेर्वृत्तस्य वा नाम्ना नायकस्येतरस्य वा ।  
नामास्य सर्गोपादेयकथया सर्गनाम तु ॥ VI.315-325<sup>26</sup>

“The classical age of Sanskrit literature generally known as the Golden Era, which is identified with the Post-Gupta period of Indian history, brought out some of the best literary creations. The *Mahākāvya* (epic) form of literature with its themes based on *Paurāṇic* or historical episode and containing all the essential features of poetic embellishment was a product of this age. Benevolent monarchs, who themselves were endowed with literary talent, encouraged such poetic writings. About the same period, various works on poetics, defining and illustrating the various forms of literary embellishments, were also written. It is difficult to say whether the *mahākāvyas* set the pace for patricians or the poets followed the prescriptions of such literary manuals. It would be safer to presume that a constant interaction between

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<sup>26</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.315-325

literary critics and poets, each influencing the other, was responsible for the growth of a healthy tradition.”<sup>27</sup>

S.B. Raghunathcharya criticizes those who believe that Sanskrit is a dead language. Therefore he states:

“Many people believe firmly that Sanskrit is a tradition bound one and reforms or innovations are not acceptable to it. Based on this belief they conclude that Sanskrit literature has no relevance to the present day society, over the centuries, Sanskrit remained unchanged without bothering about the tremendous changes that are taking place in the society and that is why the number of writers in Sanskrit is fast dwindling.”<sup>28</sup>

He further remarks:

“Sanskrit is the oldest living language in the world. Some ill informed tend to dismiss it as a dead language. But Sanskrit is even today rich and dynamic. There are number of scholars who are enriching it with their master pieces.”<sup>29</sup>

However, with the passage of time the modern poet has changed the definition of *mahākāvya*. Hiralal Shukla writes:

“A great change came over Sanskrit literature after the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The style and the subject matter of poetry equally changed. The way of writing became more varied and natural, and bit by bit, the bondage of heroic couplet was

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<sup>27</sup> Swāmināthan, C.R., Kumāradāsa, p.9

<sup>28</sup> Raghunāthcārya, S.B., *Modern Sanskrit Literature Tradition and Innovations*, p. 1

<sup>29</sup> *Ibdi*, p. i



shaken off. Writers again began to reveal in country life and beautiful scenery and mountains.”<sup>30</sup>

Hence, we can see that modern poets have accepted new style to compose *mahākāvya*, following the definition of ancient rhetorician. Modern *mahākāvya* is invaluable gem in the field of Sanskrit. Therefore, there is more scope for research in this field. Rabindra Kumar Panda writes:

“The substantial growth both qualitative and quantitative of *mahākāvya* has widened the scope of study and research in Sanskrit. The study of Sanskrit *mahākāvya* 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.”<sup>31</sup>

Having studied the views of all the ancient rhetoricians, Rahas Vihari Dwivedi has given the following definition:

सर्गेवृत्तैश्च बद्धं सहृदयहृदयाह्लादिशब्दार्थरम्यं  
संवादैश्चोच्चशिल्पैः सततरसमयं ग्रन्थिमुक्तं समृद्धम् ।  
पात्रं स्याद् यस्य मुखं परमगुणयुतं लोकविख्यातवृत्तं

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<sup>30</sup> Shukla, H. L. *Modern Sanskrit Literature*, pp.6-7

<sup>31</sup> Panda, Rabindra, K., *Essays on Modern Sanskrit Poetry*, p. 22.

भव्यं लोकस्वभावं महदपि महतां तन्महाकाव्यमास्ते ॥<sup>32</sup>

Rajendra Mishra has also given the modern definition of *mahākāvya* as follows:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं लोकवन्द्यजनाश्रयम् ।  
ख्यापयद् विश्वबन्धुत्वं स्थापयद् विश्वमङ्गलम् ॥  
नायकस्तत्र देवस्स्यात्प्रजाबन्धुरथो नृपः ।  
चारुचर्योऽथवा कोऽपि सज्जनश्चरितोज्ज्वलः ॥  
प्रातस्सन्ध्यानिशीथेन्दु- भास्करोदयतारकाः ।  
वनोद्याननदीसिन्धु- प्रपाताद्रि- बलाहकाः ॥  
ग्रामाश्रम- पुरागम- दुर्ग- सैन्यरणोद्यमाः ।  
पुत्रजन्मादिवृत्तान्ताः पामरावाससंकथाः ॥  
इतिवृत्तानुरोधान्तु वर्णनीया न वाऽन्यथाः ।  
प्रसह्य वर्णने तेषां न च तृप्तिर्न वा यशः ॥  
यच्छिवं यच्च सत्यं स्यादथवा लोकमङ्गलम् ।  
वर्णनीयं प्रकल्प्यापि कथांशीकृत्य सादरम् ॥  
सर्गा अष्टाधिकाः सन्तु कथाविस्तृतिसम्मताः ।  
अष्टत्रिगुणतां यावत्सर्गसंख्या प्रतीयसी ॥  
नोद्वेगः कविना कार्यः पाठकानां रसात्मनाम् ।  
सर्गसंख्यादिविस्तारैर्वर्णनैर्वाऽनपेक्षितैः ॥  
लोकवृत्तं न हातव्यं मूलवृत्तोपकारकम् ।  
लोकचित्रणगर्भं हि महाकाव्यं महीयते ॥  
त्रयाणां पुरुषार्थानां कश्चिदेको भवेद् ध्रुवम् ।  
महाकाव्यफलं रम्यं धर्मकामार्थसम्मतम् ॥  
शृङ्गारवीरशान्तानां कश्चिदन्यतमो रसः ।  
सयत्नमङ्गीकर्तव्यः कविना प्रतिभावता ॥

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<sup>32</sup> Dwivedi, Rahas Vihari, *Sanskrit Mahākavya Kā Samālochanātmak Adhyayan*, p.9

छन्दोऽलङ्कारसन्दर्भा भूरिवैविध्य-मण्डिताः ।  
महाकाव्ये प्रयोक्तव्याः भावुकानां हि तुष्टये ॥  
लोकोत्तरगुणादर्शः पुरुषो नायको भवेत् ।  
महीयसी पुरन्ध्री वा नात्र कार्या विचारणा ॥  
कथावैशिष्ट्यमालक्ष्य समग्रं नायकस्य वा ।  
करणीयं महाकाव्यस्याभिधानं यशस्करम् ॥<sup>33</sup>

Having seen the observations given above we conclude that *mahākāvya* must follow some specific criteria which were given by the earlier rhetoricians. Therefore, M. Krishnamachariar very briefly states:

“A *mahākāvya* is a writing of considerable length, varying description and elaborate construction, embracing narrative, theological or historical and is divided into *Sargas* or Cantos for convenience of narration.”<sup>34</sup>

## V. Major characteristics of Mahākāvya

*Mahākāvya* is generally different from the other types of poem i.e. *Satakakāvya*, *Khaṇḍakāvya*, *Laghukāvya* and so on. Therefore ancient rhetoricians laid emphasis on the definition of *mahākāvya*. Let us discuss major factors, which constitute a *mahākāvya* in details.

### I. Plot or Source (*Vastu*)

(1) According to Daṇḍin, the subject matter of the *mahākāvya* should be taken from the history or other good sources. He says:

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<sup>33</sup> Mishra, Rajendra, *Kāvyasāshtriya Manadanda Evam Sanskrit- Navalekhan*, in Drk pp. 24-25

<sup>34</sup> Krishnamachariar, M., *op.cit.*, p. 81

इतिहासकथोद्भूतमितरद्वा सदाश्रयम् ।<sup>35</sup>

(2) Viśvanātha says that the theme of the *mahākāvya* should be related to the history or noble person;

इतिहासोद्भवं वृत्तमन्यद्वा सज्जनाश्रयम् ।<sup>36</sup>

## II. Cantos or (*Sarga*)

Almost all the rhetoricians are of the same opinion about the division of cantos. They say that *mahākāvya* should be divided at least into eight cantos or more than that. But it should not be less than eight cantos.

(1) According to Viśvanātha:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं ..... ।<sup>37</sup>

नातिस्वल्पा नातिदीर्घाः सर्गा अष्टाधिका इह ।

नानावृत्तमयः क्वापि सर्गः कश्चन दृश्यते ॥<sup>38</sup>

(2) Bhāmaha has not fixed the boundary line of *mahākāvya*. He only suggests *mahākāvya* should be big in size:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं महतां च महच्च यत् ।<sup>39</sup>

(3) According to Rajendra Mishra:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं ..... ।

सर्गा अष्टाधिकाः सन्तु कथाविस्तृतिसम्मताः ।

अष्टत्रिगुणतां यावत्सर्गसंख्या प्रतीयसी ॥<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.15

<sup>36</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.317

<sup>37</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.315

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, VI.320

<sup>39</sup> Bhāmaha, KL, I. 19

<sup>40</sup> Mishra, Rajendra, op.cit., p.24-25

### III. Hero (*Nāyaka*)

(1) According to Daṇḍin, the hero should be great and clever:

चतुरोदात्तनायकम् ।<sup>41</sup>

(2) Viśvanātha defined in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* that hero should be endowed with the many qualities like valorous and possessing the qualities of *Dhīrodātta*:

.....तत्रैको नायकः सुरः ।

सद्वंशः क्षत्रियो वापि धीरोदात्तगुणान्वितः ॥

एकवंशभवा भूपा कुलजा बहवोऽपि वा ।<sup>42</sup>

(3) Dhanañjaya writes about the qualities of a hero:

“The hero should be well-bred, charming, liberal, clever, affable, popular, upright, eloquent, of exalted lineage, resolute and young; endowed with intelligence, energy, wisdom, skill in the arts, pride, heroic and mighty, vigorous, familiar with the codes, and a just observer of laws.”

अधिकारः फलस्वाभ्यमधिकारी च तत्प्रभुः ।<sup>43</sup>

नेता विनीतो मधुरस्त्यागी दक्षः प्रियंवदः ।

रक्तलोकः शुचिर्वाग्मी रूढवंश स्थिरो युवा ॥

बुद्ध्युत्साहस्मृतिप्रज्ञाकलामानसमन्वितः ।

शूरो दृढश्च तेजस्वी शास्त्रचक्षुश्च धार्मिकः ॥<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I. 15

<sup>42</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.315-316

<sup>43</sup> Dhanañjaya, DR, I.12

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, DR, II.1-2

(4) Bhāmaha in his *Kāvyaalāṅkāra*, describes that hero belong to the great race:

नायकं प्रागुपन्यस्य वंशवीर्यश्रुतादिभिः॥<sup>45</sup>

(5) Rajendra Mishra says that hero should be a divine being, a king or a noble man good by character:

नायकस्तत्र देवस्स्यात्प्रजाबन्धुरथो नृपः ।

चारुचर्योऽथवा कोऽपि सज्जनश्चरितोज्ज्वलः ॥<sup>46</sup>

The hero as the principal character of the *Mahākāvya* can be classified into four types and they are *Dhīrodātta*, *Dhīroddhata*, *Dhīralalita* and *Dhīraprasānta*.

धीरोदात्तो धीरोद्धतस्तथा धीरललितश्च ।

धीरप्रशान्त इत्ययमुक्तः प्रथमश्चतुर्भेदः॥<sup>47</sup>

*Dhīrodātta*: The self-controlled and exalted hero (*Dhīrodātta*) is of great excellence, serious forbearing, not boastful, resolute, with self-assertion, reserved and firm of purpose.

महासत्त्वोऽतिगम्भीरः क्षमावानविकल्थनः ।

स्थिरो निगूढाहंकारो धीरोदात्तो दृढव्रतः ॥<sup>48</sup>

*Dhīroddhata*: The self-conceited and vehemently assertive hero is altogether dominated by pride and jealousy, wholly devoted to magic practices and deceit, self-assertive, fickle, irascible and boastful.

दर्पमात्सर्यभूयिष्ठो मायाच्छद्मपरायणः ।

धीरोद्धतस्त्वहङ्कारी चलश्चण्डो विकल्थनः ॥<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Bhāmaha, KL, I.19

<sup>46</sup> Mishra, Rajendra, op.cit., pp. 24-25

<sup>47</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, III.31

<sup>48</sup> Dhanañjaya, DR, II.4

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, II.5

*Dhīralalita*: The self-controlled and the light-hearted hero (*Dhīralalita*) are free from anxiety, fond of arts (songs, dance etc), happy and gentle.

निश्चिन्तो धीरललितः कलासक्तः सुखी मृदुः।<sup>50</sup>

*Dhīraprasānta*: The self-controlled and calm hero (*Dhīraprasānta*) is a Brāhmaṇa or the like, possessed of the generic merits of a hero.

सामान्यगुणयुक्तस्तु धीरशान्तो द्विजादिकः।<sup>51</sup>

#### IV. Sentiment (*Rasa*)

Sentiment is also one of the prominent elements of a *mahākāvya*. Without a sentiment, we cannot imagine the constitution of *mahākāvya*. On the other hand, Viśvanātha considered sentiment as the soul of poetry.

(1) Viśvanātha writes about sentiment in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*;

शृङ्गारवीरशान्तानामेकोऽङ्गी रस इष्यते ॥

अङ्गानि सर्वेऽपि रसाः.....।<sup>52</sup>

(2) Daṇḍin says that flow of sentiment in *Mahākāvya*, is to be continued from beginning up to end;

रसभावनिरन्तरम् ।<sup>53</sup>

(3) Rajendra Mishra says that one sentiment i.e. *Śṛṅgāra*, or *Vīra* or *Śānta* should be a major sentiment of the *mahākāvya*;

शृङ्गारवीरशान्तानां कश्चिदन्यतमो रसः।<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, II.3

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, II.4

<sup>52</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.316-317

<sup>53</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.18

<sup>54</sup> Mishra, Rajendra, op.cit, pp. 24-25

## V. *Sandhi*

*Sandhi* is also one of the major elements of *mahākāvya* and hence all the rhetoricians emphasize on *Sandhi* and discussed about its characteristic in their books:

According to Daṇḍin, the *Mahākāvya* should be well arranged by *Sandhi*:

सुसन्धिभिः।<sup>55</sup>

According to Bhāmaha, *mahākāvya* should consist of *Sandhi*:

पञ्चभिः सन्धिभिर्युक्तं।<sup>56</sup>

According to Viśvanātha, *mahākāvya* should consist of all the *Sandhis* those are found in Drama:

सर्वे नाटकसंघयः।<sup>57</sup>

Dhanañjaya described in his book *Daśarūpaka*. The five main *sandhis* are, ‘*Mukha*’, ‘*Pratimukha*’, ‘*Garbha*’, ‘*Avamarśa*’ and ‘*Nirvahana*’.

1. *Mukha*: - *Mukha* is the origination of the germ giving rise to various purpose and sentiments; it has twelve subdivisions, because of its connection with the *Bīja* and *Ārambha*.

मुखं बीजमुत्पत्तिर्नार्थरससम्भवा।

अङ्गानि द्वादशैतस्य बीजारम्भसमन्वयान्॥<sup>58</sup>

2. *Pratimukha*: - It is the development of the germ in accordance with its quality of being perceptible or not perceptible in turn.

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<sup>55</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.18

<sup>56</sup> Bhāmaha, KL, I.20

<sup>57</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.317

<sup>58</sup> Dhanañjaya, DR, I.24



लक्ष्यालक्ष्यतयोद्भेदस्तस्य प्रतिमुखं भवेत् ॥<sup>59</sup>

3. *Garbha*: - *Garbha* is the quest for the germ, which is pinpointed and lost by turns. In it, there should be the prospect of success.

गर्भस्तु दृष्टनष्टस्य बीजस्यान्वेषणं मुहुः।

पताका स्यान्न वा स्यात्प्राप्तिसंभवः ॥<sup>60</sup>

4. *Avamarśa*: - *Avamarśa* is that group of subdivisions of the junctures in which one stops to reflect because of anger or passion or temptation, and which has as its subject the germ (*Bīja*) that has been unfold in the development.

क्रोधेनावमृशेद्यत्र व्यासानाद्वा विलोभनात्।

गर्भनिर्भिन्नबीजार्थः सोऽवमर्श इति स्मृतः ॥<sup>61</sup>

5. *Nirvahaṇa*: - *Nirvahaṇa* is that juncture in which what occurs the opening (*mukha*) and in other junctures and that which contained the germ and were disturbed in due order, all are brought together to one end.

बीजवन्तो मुखाद्यर्था विप्रकीर्णा यथायथम्।

एकार्थ्यमुपनीयन्ते यत्र निर्वहणं हि तत् ॥<sup>62</sup>

## VI. Minor Characteristics of a Mahākāvya

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, I.51

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, I.36

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, I.43

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, I.48

Every rhetorician has discussed and laid emphasis on figures of speech, metres, various descriptions, and so on, as a minor character of the *mahākāvya*. They have also explained how these are necessary to compose *mahākāvya*.

## I. Metre (*Chanda*)

Metre is an important organ of the *mahākāvya*. Without metres constitution of poetry is impossible. No one can chant properly the verses without metres. Early rhetoricians have narrated proper application of the metres. According to Daṇḍin, metres should be melodious in singing as well as hearing.

श्रव्यवृत्तैः।<sup>63</sup>

Further, he says that the *mahākāvya* should end with different metres:

सर्वत्र भिन्नवृत्तान्तरूपेत्।<sup>64</sup>

According to Viśvanātha, *Sarga* or canto should be consisting of metre, but at the end of the poem, a poet should change the metre:

एकवृत्तमयैः पद्यैरवसानेऽन्यवृत्तकैः।<sup>65</sup>

According to Rahas Vihari Dwivedi, *mahākāvya* should comprise of metres.

वृत्तैश्च बद्धैः।<sup>66</sup>

According to Rajendra Mishra, a *mahākāvya* should be adorned with various kinds of metres as well as figures;

छन्दोऽलङ्कारसन्दर्भा भूरिवैविध्य-मण्डिताः।<sup>67</sup>

## II. Figures of Speech (*Alaṅkāra*)

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<sup>63</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.18

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, I.19

<sup>65</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.319

<sup>66</sup> Dwivedi, Rahas Vihari, p.9

<sup>67</sup> Mishra, Rajendra, op.cit., pp. 24-25

The early rhetoricians like Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin hold the same view that poetry should be adorned with figures of speech.

According to Bhāmaha, it should be adorned with ornaments:

सालङ्कारम् ।<sup>68</sup>

According to Daṇḍin the poetry should be adorned with ornaments:

अलंकृतमसंक्षिप्तम् ।<sup>69</sup>

### III. Description (*Varṇana*)

Various descriptions like cities, sun, moon, ocean, mountain, seasons, day, night, rise of sun, separation of lovers, enjoyment and so on, play an important role in *mahākāvya* to attract the readers. It captures the minds of readers beginning up to the end. It introduced about proper incident and situation, which were occurring in life of hero or heroine in the *mahākāvya*. Earlier rhetoricians like Daṇḍin, Viśvanātha, Bhāmaha et al. also speak about importance of description and hence, they also discuss about various types of narration in their definitions of *mahākāvya*.

Daṇḍin says that description of city, ocean, hills, the seasons, the moonrise, the sunrise etc. are necessary in *mahākāvya*;

नगरार्णवशैलर्तुचन्द्रार्कोदयवर्णनेः ।

उद्यानसलिलक्रीडामधुपानरतोत्सवैः ॥

विप्रलम्भैर्विवाहैश्च कुमारोदयवर्णनैः ।

मन्त्रदूतप्रयाणाजिनायकाभ्युदयैरपि ॥<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Bhāmaha, KL, I.19

<sup>69</sup> Daṇḍin, KD, I.18

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, I.16-17

Viśvanātha in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* says that the description or narration of evening, rising of sun, morning, noon, festivities of drinking etc. should find place in epic. The *mahākāvya* becomes interesting for the descriptions.

संध्यासूर्येन्दुरजनीप्रदोषध्वान्तवासराः॥

प्रातर्मध्याह्नमृगयाशैलर्तुवनसागराः।

संभोगविप्रलम्भौ च मुनिस्वर्गपुराध्वराः॥

रणप्रयाणोपयममन्त्रपुत्रोदयादयः।

वर्णनीया यथायोगं साङ्गोपाङ्गा अमी इह॥<sup>71</sup>

Rajendra Mishra also holds the same view. It is already given in the definition.<sup>72</sup>

## VI. Some well known classical Sanskrit Mahākāvyas

### I. RAGHUVAMŚAM

*Raghuvaṃśam* is an important *mahākāvya* of Sanskrit literature written by the great poet Kālidāsa. It is very well known, interesting and idealistic poem following the characteristics of *mahākāvya*, which were given by the ancient rhetoricians. This *mahākāvya* is divided into 19 cantos describing the lineage of Raghu. The poet gives appropriate titles. This *mahākāvya* begins with the prayer to the lord Śiva and Pārvatī. It is consisting of different metres, at the end of the canto; we can find the variety of metres. The poet in last verse of every canto indicates the subject matter of next canto. The poet has used both figures of speeches i.e. *Śabdālankāras* and *Arthālankāras*, so that readers enjoy this *mahākāvya* from beginning to end. It is an outstanding *mahākāvya* covering the life span of great kings of Raghu race viz. Dilipa, Raghu, Daśaratha, Rāma and so

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<sup>71</sup> Viśvanātha, SD, VI.322-324

<sup>72</sup> Mishra, Rajendra, pp. 24-25

on. The main sentiment is *Vīra* while *Śānta*, *Karuṇa* and *Adbhuta* are the minor sentiments. It is full of catholicity of love but its end is sad. Some of the well-known verses are cited here:

तस्याः खुरन्यासपवित्रपांसुमपांसुलानां धुरि कीर्तनीया ।  
मार्गं मनुष्येश्वरधर्मपत्नी श्रुतेरिवार्थं स्मृतिरन्वगच्छत् ॥ २.२  
पुरस्कृता वर्त्मनि पार्थिवेन, प्रत्युद्गता पार्थिवधर्मपत्न्या ।  
तदन्तरे सा विरराज धेनुर्दिनक्षपामध्यगतेव सन्ध्या ॥ २.२०  
कामं नृपाः सन्तु सहस्रशोऽन्ये, राजन्वतीमाहुरनेन भूमिम् ।  
नक्षत्रताराग्रहसंकुलापि ज्योतिष्मती चन्द्रमसैव रात्रिः ॥ ६.२२  
सञ्चारिणी दीपशिखेव रात्रौ, यं यं व्यतीताय पतिंवरा सा ।  
नरेन्द्रमार्गाद्विह्वलप्रपेदे, विवर्णभावं स स भूमिपालः ॥ ६.६७

## II. KUMĀRASAM̐BHAVAM

*Kumārasambhavam* is a *mahākāvya* written by Kālidāsa consisting of 18 cantos, but there is difference of opinion regarding the number of cantos. This *mahākāvya* begins with the description of Himālaya Mountain. The hero of this *mahākāvya* is lord Śiva who has the quality of Dhīrodātta while Pārvatī is described as a heroine, mother of this universe. In this *mahākāvya* the poet has depicted divine love, happiness and its hardship. Kumara is the son of Śiva and Pārvatī who is born with the purpose of slaying demon and protect the universe. It is a medium size of *mahākāvya*. Each canto are adorn with the suitable titles. The main sentiment of this *mahākāvya* is *Śṛṅgāra* while *Karuṇa*, *Raudra* and *Adbhuta* as subordinate. It is very complicated to decide, from which, the author has derived the theme of this *mahākāvya*, yet some rhetoricians believe that this

subject matter is derived from the different *Purāṇas*. This *mahākāvya* is included in the list of the five well-known *mahākāvyas* of Sanskrit literature.

Some examples are as under:

पर्याप्तपुष्पस्तबकस्तनाभ्यः स्फुरत्प्रवालोष्ठमनोहराभ्यः।

लतावधूभ्यस्तरवोऽप्यवापुर्विनम्रशाखाभुजबन्धनानि ॥ ३.३९

हरस्तु किञ्चित् परिलुप्तधैर्यश्चन्द्रोदयारम्भ इवाम्बुराशिः।

उमामुखे बिम्बफलाधरोष्ठे व्यापारयामास विलोचनानि ॥ ३.६७

त्वमेव तावत् परिचिन्तय स्वयं कदाचिदेते यदि योगमर्हतः।

वधूदुकूलं कलहंसलक्षणं गजाजिनं शोणितबिन्दुवर्षि च ॥ ५.६७

### III. KIRĀTĀRJUNĪYAM

*Kirātārjunīyam* is composed by Bhāravi. It is divided into 18 cantos and 1040 verses. Because of its charm, simplicity of language and lucid manner this *mahākāvya* is counted among the best five *mahākāvyas*. The theme of this *mahākāvya* is taken from the *Vanaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The poet did not give the title of the canto, but he has given some hints regarding next canto at last verses of each canto. The story of *mahākāvya* begins from the defeat of Pāṇḍavas in gambling and rendering in forest, where Yudhiṣṭhira appointed a spy to know the routine life of Duryodhana. Then, collecting the information regarding Duryodhana's activity a spy has come and informs to Yudhiṣṭhira. From here, the first canto begins. This *mahākāvya* ends with pleasure of Śiva seeing the courage of Arjuna. The main sentiment of this *mahākāvya* is *Vīra* and in some places we can find *Sambhoga Smṛgāra* as subordinate. The subject matter of this *mahākāvya*

is known yet, because of innovating style of the poet, the epic becomes very popular.

Some examples are given here:

अवन्ध्यकोपस्य विहन्तुरापदां भवन्ति वश्याः स्वयमेव देहिनः।

अमर्षशून्येन जनस्य जन्तुना न जातहार्देन न विद्विषादरः॥ १.३३

सहसा विदधीत न क्रियामविवेकः परमापदां पदम्।

वृणुते हि विमृश्यकारिणं गुणलुब्धाः स्वयमेव सम्पदः॥ २.३०

#### IV. ŚĪSUPĀLAVADHA

Māgha's *Śīsūpālavadha* is divided into 20 cantos and 1650 stanzas. The indication has been given of the theme of the next canto at the end of every canto. The structure of the *Śīsūpālavadha* fits perfectly to the structure of a *mahākāvya*, and hence it is listed in the best five renowned *mahākāvyas*. Each canto is consisting of average fifty to fifty-one stanzas not more than that. The poet has used only one metre in each canto but at the end of the canto, the poet has changed the metre. The theme of this *mahākāvya* is based on the *Sabhāparva* of the *Mahābhārata*. It begins from the anxiousness of Indra regarding *Śīsūpāla*. It is ending with the slaying of *Śīsūpāla* by Krishna. The hero of this epic is Krishna. He is a divine character possessing all the qualities of a hero i.e. *Dhīrodātta*. The main sentiment of this *mahākāvya* is *Vīra* while *Smṛgāra*, *Bibhatsa*, *Hāsyā* and *Raudra* are found as subsidiary. It is full of descriptions.

Some examples are given below:

उदासितारं निगृहीतमानसैर्गृहीतमध्यात्मदृशा कथंचन।

बहिर्विकारं प्रकृतेः पृथग् विदुः पुरातनं त्वां पुरुषं पुराविदः॥ १.३३

मधुरया मधुबोधित माधवी-मधुसमृद्धिसमेधितमेधया ।

मधुकराङ्गनया मुहुरुन्मद-ध्वनिभृता निभृताक्षरमुज्जगे ॥ ६.२०

## V. NAIṢADHĪYA-CARITAM

A great poet, Shriharsh has composed *Naiṣadhīya-Caritam*. He was the son of Shreehira and Mammaladevi. Therefore, he has mentioned the names of his parents at the end of each canto in *Puṣpikā*. It is consisting of 22 cantos. The theme of this *mahākāvya* is taken from the *Āraṇyakaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, but by the intellectual power the poet has made some innovations as per requirement relating to the theme. His father was very learned person in the assembly of king Vijayachandra of *Kānyakubja*. The main sentiment of this *mahākāvya* is *Śṛṅgāra* while *Vīra*, *Hāsya* and *Karuṇa* are there as subordinate. More than 19 metres are used in this *mahākāvya*. Seven cantos are consisting of only *Upajāti* meter and hence, we can conclude that *Upajāti* is a very favourite metre of the poet.

Some examples are given below:

अहो अहोभिर्महिमा हिमागमेऽ-

प्यभिप्रपेदे प्रति तां स्मरार्दिताम् ।

तपर्तुपूर्तावपि मेदसां भरा

विभावरीभिर्बिभराम्बभूविरे ॥ १.४१

नलिनं मलिनं विवृण्वती, पृषतीमस्पृशती तदीक्षणे ।

अपि खञ्जनमञ्जनाञ्चिते विदधाते रुचिगर्वदुर्विधम् ॥ २.२३

Thus there are many great poets and great *mahākāvyas* in the classical Sanskrit literature. It is not possible here to discuss about them. Just to maintain the sequel



we noted about few ones. In the following pages we will proceed to discuss about the *mahākāvyas* based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* the most influential and inspiring epic of the world.

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