

INTRODUCTION

Every language requires development to uplift the social and cultural conditions of the people. The development of a language is marked by the extent of good and valuable works of literature. The literary works preserve for posterity, information on the socio, economic, political, cultural and religious conditions of the people of a nation or the age. Besides, they are the repository of the lofty ideals and constructive thoughts of the renowned scholars, poets and writers.

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 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.¹ Sanskrit literature contrasts with that of both the earlier and the later Vedic period. While prose was employed in the *Yajurveda* and *Brāhmaṇas* which almost disappears in Sanskrit, nearly every branch of literature being treated in verse, often much to the detriment of the subject, as in the case of law.²

Outside the brāhmanical schools the knowledge of grammatical theory must have been elementary to say the least, and in the early period at least the knowledge of Sanskrit on the part of the epic reciters must have depended primarily on usage and not on formal instruction. From this arose the tendency to approximate the language to some extent to the prevailing type of Middle Indo-Aryan. Later when the gulf between the two became greater formal instruction in Sanskrit became a universal necessity, but by this period the epic style and the epic language had

¹ Macdonell, A. A., *Origin and Development of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 188

² *Ibid*, p. 189

already established itself in its own right, and linguistic features such as those mentioned above were accepted and retained.

In this regard M. Williams rightly observes in his book '*Indian Wisdom*': "In India, literature like the whole face of nature is on a gigantic scale. Poetry, born amid the majestic scenery of the Himalayas, and fostered in acclimate 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 epic poems (the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*) yet to compare these vast compositions with the Iliad and the Ganges, 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 epic poetry, as distinguished from lyrical, than it should concern itself more with external action than internal feelings. It is this which makes Epoch the natural expression of trial and 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 epic 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."³

The language of the Epics served also as a model for the language of the Purāṇas, of which the earliest core dates to the same period. It is continued in the numerous later compilations, and further in a variety of sectarian *āgamas*, etc. Linguistically these compilations are not of great interest, except occasionally in the matter of vocabulary, and many, particularly the later ones, testify to the deficient education of their authors in grammar.

³ Williams, M., *Indian Wisdom*, p. 27

From the classical age formalization in Sanskrit began. Meanwhile the science of poetry called *Kāvyaśāstra* (or *Alaṅkāraśāstra*) developed and the rhetoricians enumerated the principles and definition of poetry. The creative genius in Sanskrit has always shown a predilection for the poetic form or *padyarūpa* of *kāvya*. The experiments of Sanskrit poets gave rise to the various forms of poetry such as *muktaka*, *śatakakāvya*, *laghukāvya*, *caritakāvya*, *khaṇḍakāvya* and *mahākāvya*.

Caritakāvyas play an important role in the field of Sanskrit language as biography is a significant sector of literature. They mainly form a part of biographical literature. Biography is a narrative, which records consciously and artistically the important events happened in the life of a great person whom the author depicts. The biographical works are the combination of history and literary art. So the biographer shares with the historian a concern for truth and simultaneously with the novelties for the ambition to create a work of art.

In this regard Raghavan V. rightly observes: “The new movement was really a re-awakening and a fresh search of the spirit of India. With modern education and the cultivation of the critical spirit and the study of Indian history in a more intensive manner, a fresh realization of the value of the Indian heritage came. The Sanskritists particularly nurtured to the glory that way in ancient India with a fervour which urged him to a fresh effort for a renaissance. The higher spiritual values of Indian culture and the material nature of modern civilisation, the growth of new fashions and foibles, the slavish aping of west, all these produced reversion and led to a reassertion of the Indian spirit. Soon there was the birth of nationalism and the public movement, and the freedom movement, and a galaxy of outstanding leaders of public movement appeared whose patriotism, sacrifice, eloquence and campaigns stirred the intelligentsia and masses alike. The Sanskritists were also affected by the political activities and the Sanskrit writing of this age, also bear the impress of this new spirit, is the most striking part of

contemporary Sanskrit.”⁴

Biographical works are the significant treasure of Sanskrit literature. The life-sketches or the biographies of important persons attracted many poets to write upon. Therefore a huge number of *carita-kāvyas* have been composed. We have to accord due consideration to them as they possess high quality of literature.

Literary tradition in Sanskrit has been averse to the eulogy of man; an exception seems to have been made in the case of saints and teachers and, in latter times, royalty, as well. This should explain the paucity of biographical literature in Sanskrit, during early and medieval times, and why the available writings of this genre relate to religious leaders and the ruler of the land.

The word *carita* has the following meanings: performed, practised, attained, known, offered, going, moving-course, acting, doing, practice, behaviour, acts, deeds e.g. *Udāra-caritānām tu vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*, story e.g. *Uttararāma-caritam tat prañitam prayujyate*. *Caritam* means behaviour, habit, conduct, practice, acts, deeds, performances, observance, history, life, biography, account, adventure, nature, disposition and duty, established or instituted observance.⁵ The *caritakāvya* literature focused on the remarkable personalities of society. It can be divided in different groups according to the phrase of significant of personalities introduced therein.

Some of the *carita-kāvyas* are historical, some are biographical, some are focused on the life of persons, some are on their deeds and some are on their characters. It is interesting to note that there are *carita-kāvyas* of many types and many forms. The objectives behind the compositions are also different. We have to accord due consideration to them as they possess high merit of literature.⁶ Dr. Daxa Purohit

⁴ Raghavan, V., *Contemporary Indian Literature : A Symposium*, pp 244-245

⁵ Apte, V. S., *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 204

⁶ Panda, R. K., *Biographical Poems in Sanskrit- A Glance, Essays on Modern Sanskrit Poetry*, pp. 67-68

of our Department has prepared a Ph. D. thesis on the Carita-Kāvyas in Modern Sanskrit under the guidance of Dr. Rabindra Kumar Panda. The thesis is under publication.

The present thesis contains a critical, literary and linguistic evaluation of the epic *Bhīṣmacaritam*. An intensive study of this poem is made here where all the questions regarding the poem, its author and critical evaluation are discussed in detail. The present thesis is divided into nine chapters. The present thesis is based upon a modern biographical epic poem entitled *Bhīṣmacaritam* composed by Dr. Hari Narayan Dikshit. The Thesis is divided into nine chapters.

The first chapter is named as ‘Origin and Development of Sanskrit *Mahākāvya*’. It contains an outline of the tradition of Sanskrit *Mahākāvyas* from the classical period upto the modern period. It covers the points like the origin of *Mahākāvya*, Forms of *Mahākāvya*, Purpose of *Mahākāvya*, Development of *Mahākāvyas*, and Tradition of *Carita-kāvyas*, *Carita-kāvyas* in Sanskrit Literature, *Carita-kāvyas* in different forms etc.

The second chapter is ‘The Poet and His Works’. In it is given a detailed account about the life, date and works of the poet Dr. Hari Narayan Dikshit.

The third chapter is entitled as ‘Canto-wise Summary of the Epic’. In it the detailed summaries are given of all the cantos.

The fourth chapter is named as ‘Life of Bhīṣma as depicted in the *Mahābhārata*’. In this chapter the detailed account of the life history of Bhīṣma is depicted starting from ‘*Ādiparva*’.

The fifth chapter is named as ‘Life of Bhīṣma as depicted in the epic *Bhīṣmacaritam*’. In this chapter the character of Bhīṣma is well presented in the

entire epic.

The sixth chapter is named as 'A Critical & Literary Study of Epic'. It covers the topics like analytical study of the plot of the *Mahākāvya*, Sources of the plot of *Bhīṣmacaritam* and changes introduced in it, a critical study of the plot, *Rasa*, Language and Style, *Rītis*, *Alaṅkāras*, Metres, Descriptions etc. The other male and female characters of the epic are also presented in this chapter.

The Seventh chapter is titled as 'A Linguistic Study of Epic'. In this chapter a linguistic study is presented under the headings of a list of compounds, a list of adverbs, a list of difficult words, a list of tenses and moods etc.

The eighth chapter is 'English Translation of the Epic'. I have given the English translation of all the verses *i.e.* the entire text.

The ninth chapter is the 'Conclusion' of the thesis. It concludes the discussions and highlights the significant contribution of the poet to Modern Sanskrit Literature.