

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO SANSKRIT MAHĀKĀVYAS

1.1 Introduction:

Shri K.M. Munshi opines about Sanskrit Literature:

“Sanskrit literature is unequalled in richness, variety and continuity. From the second millennium before Christ, or possibly earlier, to the 18th century of the Christian Era, it has produced a wealth of literature, sacred and profane, poetic and scientific, philosophic and justice.”¹

The term *Kāvya* in Sanskrit denotes both *gadya* (prose) and *padya* (poetry). The *padya* form of Sanskrit *Kāvya* has always enjoyed the special preference of creative talents. Mostly the Sanskrit poets have liking to write a poetry instead of prose. However, there is a dictum *gadyam kavīnām nikaṣām vadanti* which says that in the *padya* form of composition the talent of the writer is examined as it provides scope to the writer to exhibit his talent at its highest level. But poetry, *kāvya* has the capacity to express the idea of the poet through various poetic elements like metres, figures of speech, style etc. The genre of poetry has become increasingly popular amongst writers in Sanskrit literature. Not only poets, but even Śāstrakāras and Dārśanikas have been drawn to the poetic form to express their ideas in their works. As we can see from the Vedic tradition, the Ṛgveda is a primary documented literature of global civilization composed in poetic metre. The great sage Vālmīki also has chosen this form to compose the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Similarly, the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas are also composed in *Kāvya* style. Bhartṛhari says – *sukavita yadyasti rājyena kim* (Apart from good poetry, what are some other aspects of a kingdom?).

We all know that poetry has emerged from the Vedas. Likewise, Vālmīki who has the wide knowledge has chosen the poetic form to write *Rāmāyaṇa*. The poets like Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Māgha, Aśvaghoṣa etc. also follow the footsteps of their genius ancestors viz. Vālmīki and Vedavyāsa and they gave us best classical epics of Sanskrit Literature. As a result of the

¹ Raja, Kunhana, *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, Foreword (K.M. Munshi), p.i

experiments in the field of poetry, the genres like *Muktaka*, *Śatakakāvya*, *Khaṇḍakāvya*, *Mahākāvya* are given us by the Sanskrit poets. In spite of such various forms of poetry the *Mahākāvya* is the foremost literary form liked by the poets of Sanskrit. The trends of writing *Mahākāvyas* began in early age during the period of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. The poem written in long narrative style as well as long in the size is called *Mahākāvya*.

Just like the earlier famous poets of India's past who created masterful epics, modern poets such as S.B. Varnekar have crafted works in modern Sanskrit, including *Śivarājyodayam*. Ogeti Pariksit Sharma composed the *Mahākāvya*, *Pratāparāṇāyanam* of 80 cantos which focuses on the life of Rāṇa Pratāpa. This is separate from another work written by him based on Chatrapati Śivājī, dividing into 68 cantos. The Sanskrit poetry genre has seen a great increase in popularity. It is now home to many talented poets known as *mahākavis*, further enriching the area and making it even more interesting.

Sanskrit *Mahākāvya* plays a pivotal role in bringing out the beauty of Sanskrit literature. This unique artistic form has its roots deeply entrenched in Vedas and has been continued from ancient to modern era. Everyone has to accept the reality that composing a Sanskrit *Mahākāvya* is a very difficult task. To compose a *Mahākāvya* one has to requires the expertise in Sanskrit language, good knowledge of methodology of composition, well-versed in vivid Śāstras etc. and these all are called *śakti* (poetic potency) in the view of Mammaṭa. That's why only some of the poets become successful to compose *Mahākāvyas*. And the composition brings to them reputation as well as recognition in the society.

Sanskrit literature includes invaluable masterpieces known as *Mahākāvyas*. These are long poems that were written with considerable effort by scholars to uphold the Indian literary heritage. Sanskrit still the carries on the writing traditions of *Mahākāvya*.

Indian literature has been enriched by the works of many great authors over the centuries. Their literature has withstood the test of time and continues to captivate readers today. The revered *mahākavis*, or "great poets" have produced a vast body of work that is as relevant today as it was centuries ago. A cursory look at this huge amount of literature gives us an impression that these

celebrated writers are still very capable of creating powerful epics that can move and inspire readers.

Sanskrit, the language of Indian culture has continuously been cherished and maintained by various sages over time. Even with the growth of regional languages and literature, it has still managed to retain its distinctive identity. The legacy of Sanskrit poets has been secured for generations to come through their *Mahākāvyas*. Even today, this language is being used by modern authors to create remarkable works of literature. Furthermore, the substantial qualitative and quantitative growth of *Mahākāvyas* (long poems or epic poems) has widened the scope of study and research in Sanskrit.

1.2 Definition of Kāvya:

The word *Kāvya* comes from the word कव् it means to speak. It is derived as कवेः कर्म, means any literary piece produced by a poet. The word *Kāvya* is also used for all the creative literature in Sanskrit which includes poems, prose, fables, tales, lyrics, dramas and others. Still, its use is restricted to the metrical compositions. Not only those who write poetry is known as poet but also the writers of prose and dramas are also known as poet. The prose writer Bāṇabhaṭṭa is also known as *Mahākavi*.

Kāvya has a much broader meaning and refers to the work of a poet in classical Sanskrit literature. Throughout history, numerous Sanskrit scholars have come up with various definitions of poetry. These were highly reflective of the personal opinions on what constitutes as a poetic view.

Previous definitions focus more on the exclusive bond between a word and its interpretation. Bhāmaha's definition of poetry is among the oldest known definitions and states that it is a harmonious union between sound and sense - which is referred to as 'poetry'.

शब्दार्थोसहितौ काव्य । (*Kāvyaṭīkā* of Bhāmaha)

In simpler terms, it is a type of writing where words and meaning work together. According to Daṇḍin, poetry is a series of words that suggests the intention or purpose (of the author).

तैः शरीरञ्च काव्यानामलंकाराश्च दर्शिताः ।
शरीरं तावदिष्टार्थव्यवच्छिन्ना पदावली ॥²

Ānandvardhana asserted that a poem encompasses both word and sound which build up its body and soul, which is interpreted as suggested sense.

काव्यस्यात्मा ध्वनिरिति बुधैर्यः समाम्नात ॥³

According to Ācārya Hemacandra

अदोषौ सगुणौ सालंकारौ च शब्दार्थौ काव्यम् ॥⁴

Kuntaka formulated poetry by applying the concept of *Vakrokti*. Poetry is a delightful combination of sound and sense that can be enjoyed by both readers and listeners alike. It is a unique form of expression in which the poet's subtle use of language creates an aesthetically pleasing experience.

शब्दार्थौ सहितौ वक्रकविव्यापारशालिनि ।
बन्धे व्यवस्थितौ काव्यं तद्विदाह्लादकारिणि ॥⁵

रमणीयार्थप्रतिपादकः शब्दः काव्यम् ॥⁶

Mammaṭa believes that a successful poem should have the perfect balance of words and meaning and should contain various figures of speech. It must also be without any mistakes or shortcomings.

तददोषौ शब्दार्थौ सगुणावनलंकृती पुनः क्वापि ॥⁷

² Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaadarśaḥ* (Translation in English by V.V. Sastrulu) Edited by, R. K. Panda, p.6

³ Parekh, Nagindasa, *Dhvanyāloka: Ānandvardhana no Dhvani Vicāra*, p.9

⁴ Acharya Hemachandra, *Kāvyaānuśāsana* (Ed. By Rasiklal C. Parekh), p.33

⁵ Parekh, Nagindasa, *Vakroktijīvita: Kuntakano Kāvya Vicāra*, p. 6

⁶ Parekh, Nagindasa, *Panditarāja Jagannātha Krit Rasagaṅgādhara*, p. 7

⁷ Parekh, Nagindasa, *Mammaṭa no Kāvya Vicāra*, p.11

Viśvanātha defines *Kāvya* as:

वाक्यं रसात्मकं काव्यम् ।⁸

1.3 Types of *Kāvya*

There are numerous definitions of *Kāvya* given by the numerous rhetoricians. In the Sanskrit Literature *Kāvya* is divided from various perspective by the rhetoricians. i.e. style, language, subject matter, meaning, form and origin.

There are two types of *Kāvya* 1) *Dṛśya* 2) *Śravya*. *Dṛśya* means that *Kāvya* which (we can see in front of our eyes) can be performed on the stage and beholder can see it. While *Śravya* means the *Kāvya* which can be hear or read by the people. *Dṛśya Kāvya* is called a *Rūpaka* in Sanskrit Literature, which are of eighteen varieties like *Nāṭaka*, *Prakaraṇa*, *Bhāṇa*, *Prahasana*, *Dīma*, *Vyāyoga*, *Samavakāra*, *Vīthī*, *Aṅka*, *Ihāmṛga*.

नाटकं सप्रकरणं भाणः प्रहसनं डिमः।

व्यायोगसमवकारौ वीथ्यङ्केहामृगा इति ॥⁹

Śravya Kāvya is divided into three types 1) गद्य 2) पद्य and 3) मिश्र.

पद्यं गद्यं च मिश्रं च तत् त्रिधैव व्यवस्थितम् ।¹⁰

Gadya is divided in two types: i) *Kathā* and ii) *Ākhyāyikā* while *Padya* is mainly divided into two parts: i) *Khaṇḍakāvya* ii) *Mahākāvya*.

Mahākāvya and *Khaṇḍakāvya* are written in verses while *Ākhyāyikā* and *Kathā* are written mainly in prose having some verses here and there. *Miśra Kāvya* is also known as *Campū Kāvya*. The *Campū Kāvya* is a mixture of *Gadya* and *Padya* and written without any uniformity. Therefore, it is called *Miśra*.

गद्यपद्यमयं काव्यं चम्पूरित्यभिधीयते ।

⁸ Viśvanātha, *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, p.20

⁹ Dhanañjaya, *Daśarūpaka*, (Ed. Shastri, Shrinivasa, with Hindi Translation & Commentary), p. 6

¹⁰ Sastrulu, V.V., *Kāvyaadarśah of Daṇḍin*, Ed. Panda, R.K., p.6

1.4 Definition and Characteristics of Mahākāvya

Though the writing of the poem has commenced from very early periods, the nature, scope and form of them appear to have been determined and definitions framed for them by the rhetoricians long after some of the prominent *kāvyas* were composed. Perhaps, these *kāvyas* themselves served as the models for framing the definitions.

Among all rhetoricians Bhāmaha is the first rhetorician who defines *Mahākāvya* for the first time in his *Kāvyālaṅkāra* 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 ब्रु यादन्योत्कर्षाभिधित्सया ।
यदि काव्यशरीरस्य न स व्यापितयेष्यते ।
न चाभ्युदयभाक्तस्य मुधादौ ग्रहणं स्तवे ॥¹¹

The form is called *Mahākāvya* which is divided in to parts and these parts are called as Cantos. It is far away from the vulgar expressions and it consists figures of speech and treats of good. It also contains the descriptions like city-life, garden, hills, rise of the sun, rise of the moon, the seasons like cold, rainy and summer, forest-sites, hermitages, armies and battles and many more. It also consists the five junctures (sandhis) of drama. It should have the ending which is prosperous. There is no requirement of the much commentary in it. While describing

¹¹. Bhāmaha, *Kāvyālaṅkāra of Bhāmaha*, pp.7-8.

the four-fold objects of human existence it relates chiefly to the acquisition of wealth, conforms to the ways of the world and contains separately the various *Rasas*. The hero of the *Mahākāvya* belongs to the noble family who has qualities like prowess, knowledge and valour etc. and destruction of the hero should not be shown there. The hero should have been described in the whole poem and at the end he has to get success also. Because if the poet does not do that then it is worthless to describe him in the beginning of the poem.

This definition of Bhāmaha is more elaborated by Daṇḍin. According to Daṇḍin, the definition of *Mahākāvya* is as follows:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यमुच्यते तस्य लक्षणम् ।
आशीर्नमस्क्रिया वस्तुनिर्देशो वापि तन्मुखम् ॥
इतिहासकथोद्भूतमितरद्वा सदाश्रयम् ।
चतुर्वर्गफलोपेतं चतुरोदात्तनायकम् ॥
नगरार्णवशैलर्तुचन्द्रार्कोदयवर्णनैः ।
उद्यानसलिलक्रीडामधुपानरतोत्सवैः ॥
विप्रलम्भैर्विवाहैश्च कुमारोदयवर्णनैः ।
मन्त्रदूतप्रयाणाजिनायकाभ्युदयैरपि ॥
अलंकृतमसंक्षिप्तं रसभावनिरन्तरम् ।
सर्गैरनतिविस्तीर्णैः श्रव्यवृत्तैः सुसन्धिभिः ॥
सर्वत्र भिन्नवृत्तान्तरूपेतं लोकरञ्जकम् ।
काव्यं कल्पान्तरस्थायि जायेत सदलंकृति ॥
न्यूनमप्यत्र यैः कैश्चिदङ्गैः काव्यं न दुष्यति ।
यद्युपात्तेषु सम्पत्तिराराधयति तद्विदः ॥
गुणतः प्रागुपन्यस्य नायकं तेन विद्विषाम् ।
निराकरणमित्येष मार्गः प्रकृतिसुन्दरः ॥
वंशवीर्यश्रुतादिनि वर्णयित्वा रिपोरपि ।

तज्जयान्नायकोत्कर्षवर्णनञ्च धिनोति नः ॥¹²

Mahākāvya is also called *Sarga-Bandha*. The attributes or characteristics of *Mahākāvya* is defined here. The *Mahākāvya* begins with either a salutation to the god or indication of subject matter. The story of the *Mahākāvya* is based on true story or any historical incident. The purpose is to get one from these four folds i.e., *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*. The person having noble qualities is the hero of the *Mahākāvya*. It is adorned with the descriptions like towns, mountains, seasons, marriage, birth of son, playing games in the garden, sports in the water, the scenes of drinking, celebrating festivals, the separation of couple, sunrise, moonrise, the advice taken from the ministers and conveying the messages, journey of good governance, war between the hero and others and as a result victory of the hero, the *Mahākāvya* is full with the sentiments and emotions, sargas in the not very big or short in length, and well-built with the vivid stories which gives pleasure when we read it, it also deals with the different metres, each canto is ending with the use of different metre. The *Mahākāvya* becomes acceptable by the scholars those who know the characteristics of it even there is lack of some of the attributes of *Mahākāvya*. The description of the good qualities of the hero is the natural way of the despising the enemy and this method is acceptable. The description of enemy's dynasty, bravery and education etc. even if all that the superiority proven by the victory of hero over his enemy is also given pleasure in our opinion.

Even though many authors have attempted to define the characteristics of a *Mahākāvya*, Viśvanātha's comprehensive definition as provided in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* is still considered to be the standard. Here is the definition:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं तत्रैको नायकः सुरः ॥
सद्वंशः क्षत्रियो वापि धीरोदात्तगुणान्वितः ।
एकवंशभवा भूपाः कुलजा बहवोऽपि वा ॥
शृङ्गारवीरशान्तानामेकोऽङ्गी रस इष्यते ।
अङ्गानि सर्वेऽपि रसाः सर्वे नाटकसंघयः ॥
इतिहासोद्धवं वृत्तमन्यद्वा सज्जनाश्रयम् ।

¹². Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaadarśaḥ*, pp.8-12.

चत्वारस्तस्य वर्गाः स्युस्तेष्वेकं च फलं भवेत् ॥
 आदौ नमस्क्रियाशीर्वा वस्तुनिर्देश एव वा ।
 क्वचिन्निन्दा खलादीनां सतां च गुणकीर्तनम् ॥
 एकवृत्तमयैः पद्यैरवसानेऽन्यवृत्तकैः ।
 नातिस्वल्पा नातिदीर्घाः सर्गा अष्टाधिका इह ॥
 नानावृत्तमयः क्वापि सर्गः कश्चन दृश्यते ।
 सर्गान्ते भाविसर्गस्य कथायाः सूचनं भवेत् ॥
 संध्यासूर्येन्दुरजनीप्रदोषध्वान्तवासराः ।
 प्रातर्मध्याह्नमृगयाशैलर्तुवनसागराः ॥
 रणप्रयाणोपयममन्त्रपुत्रोदयादयः ।
 वर्णनीया यथायोगं साङ्गोपाङ्गा अमी इह ॥
 कवेर्वृत्तस्य वा नाम्ना नायकस्येतरस्य वा ।
 नामास्य, सर्गोपादेयकथया सर्गनाम तु ॥¹³

Mahākāvya (epic) is a long poem which is written in a narrative style. *Mahākāvya* should be written in *Sargas*. The hero should be divine and noble. The many kings of one dynasty could be the hero of the *Mahākāvya*. The main sentiment of the epic is one of from these three, love (*Sṛṅgāra*), heroism (*Vīra*) or serenity (*Śānta*). Other sentiments are become subsidiary. All *sandhis* (dramatic juncture) should be there. They are as follows: 1) *Mukha* 2) *Pratimukha* 3) *Garbha* 4) *Avimarśa* 5) *Nirvahaṇa*. Historical incidents should be the theme of the *Mahākāvya*. *Mahākāvya* should begin with *Maṅgalācaraṇa* to the deity or discussing the matter of the chief story of the *Mahākāvya*. One should be the attainable from these four, *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. There should be the praise of good person and condemnation of evil person. There should be one metre in the whole canto and at the end of canto metre should be changed. Sometimes we find more than one metre in a single canto. There should be minimum eight or more than eight cantos and cantos are not very long or not very short. The canto ends with indication of the story of upcoming canto should be there. There must be the narration of evening, rise of sun and moon, day and night, star, marriage of son, city, journey, morning, afternoon, river, lake, hunting-mountain etc. Name of the *Mahākāvya* should be given from the name of hero of the

¹³. Vishwanatha, *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, pp.465-466.

Mahākāvya or on the subject matter. Name of the cantos should be given on the story of the canto.

Agnipurāṇakāra defines *Mahākāvya* as follows in *Agnipurāṇa*:

तादात्म्यमजहत्तत्र तत्समं नातिदुष्यति ।
इतिहासकथोद्भूतमितरद्वा सदाश्रयम् ॥
मन्त्रदूतप्रयाणाजिनियतं नातिविस्तरम् ।
शक्क्यादिजगत्यातिशक्क्या त्रिष्टुभा तथा ॥
पुष्पिताग्रादिभिर्वक्राभिजनैश्चारुभिः समैः ।
मुक्ता तु भिन्नवृत्तान्तानातिसंक्षिप्तं सर्गकम् ॥
अतिशक्क्यैरिकाष्टिभ्यामेकसङ्कीर्णकैः परः ।
मात्रयाप्यपरः सर्गः प्राशस्त्येषु च पश्चिमः ॥
कल्पोऽतिनिन्दितस्तस्मिन्विशेषानादरः सताम् ।
नगरार्णवशैलर्तुचन्द्रार्कश्रमपादपैः ॥
उद्यानसलिलक्रीडामधुपानरतोत्सवैः ।
दूतीवचनविन्यासैरसतीचरिताद्भुतैः ॥
तमसा मरुताप्यन्यैर्विभावैरतिनिर्भरैः ।
सर्ववृत्तिप्रवृत्तञ्च सर्वभावप्रभावितम् ॥
सर्वरीतिरसैः पुष्टं पुष्टं गुणविभूषणैः ।
अत एव महाकाव्यं तत्कर्त्ता च महाकविः ॥
वाग्वैदग्ध्यप्रधानेऽपि रस एवात्र जीवितम् ।
पृथक्प्रयत्ननिर्वर्त्य वाग्वक्रिम्णि रसाद्वपुः ॥
चतुर्वर्गफलं विश्वव्याख्यातां नायकाख्यया ।
समानवृत्तिनिर्व्यूढः कौशिकीवृत्तिकोमलः ॥¹⁴

¹⁴ Vedavyasa, *The Agni Mahāpurāṇam*, pp. 1216-1217.

A *Mahākāvya* is split up into the cantos. Cantos should be written in pure Sanskrit language and not any other language. The theme of the *Mahākāvya* should be framed by the use of the historical events or on famous person. The theme of the *Mahākāvya* might be the fascinated incidents also. *Ati Śakkarī*, *Ati Jagatī*, *Triṣṭhubha*, *Puṣpitāgrā* metres should be used according to the incidents described in the canto and canto should not be too lengthy or too short. It also contains the glow of love, the behaviour of girls who are wanton. The garden, forest, water sports with the maidens, drinking during the assembly, expression of love should be there in the *Mahākāvya*. All the styles of composition of poem given by the rhetoricians should be used while making of *Mahākāvyas*. All the sentiments should be used with their elements. The creator who created the *Mahākāvya* by using above attributes given by the rhetoricians is called a *Mahākavi*. One main sentiment should pervade in the whole epic poem while the other sentiments used in the *Mahākāvya* help to improve interest in the story according to its incidents. By the hero of the *Mahākāvya* the poet unrolls all the universe in him. As the result fourfold of the knowledge to be the vision of the readers.

Thus, it is observed that Bhāmaha first gave the definition and formative structure of *Mahākāvya*. Later on, other rhetoricians tried to give perfection to it by adding more detailed characteristics to it.

The characteristics of *Mahākāvya* are as under:

Bhāmaha gives the very first definition of the *Mahākāvya*. The long poem composed into the cantos called *Mahākāvya*. Daṇḍin adds that the cantos should not be very lengthy. Bhāmaha does not limit for the length of the cantos. Thereafter all the rhetoricians have agreed with his view. Viśvanātha expands the definition and adds that the cantos of the *Mahākāvya* should not be less than eight and it should not be very short or very long. Viśvanātha says that the name of the canto should be given according to the subject matter which is narrated in the canto. The authors have their own tendencies to increase or decreasing the verses in each canto. Because of this there is no certain rules regarding the length of the cantos. In the subject matter of the canto, we generally observe that there is narration of one main incident only.

The Hero is the central figure of the *Mahākāvya*. According to the Daśarupakakāra Dhanañjaya the hero should be courteous, charming and noble. According to the rhetoricians like

Bhāmaha and the story of the *Mahākāvya* should contain the account of a man who is great as well as noble. But in the opinion of Daṇḍīn the story should be based on the history. The *Mahākāvya* should have descriptions of Garden, cities, sunrise, moonrise, oceans, birth of son, marriage, separation, evening, war etc. with respect to the segregation of the story, Bhāmaha and Daṇḍīn both have held the same view that it should be divided into the various cantos. The story of the *Mahākāvya* consists the five stages of actions as well as five junctures.

The sentiment is also an important component of the *Mahākāvya*. *Mahākāvya* should have different sentiments. From all the sentiments one should be the prominent sentiment while other should be the subsidiary sentiments. The prominent sentiment should be either *Vīra* (valour), love (*Śṛṅgāra*) or Tranquility (*Śānta*).

The rhetoricians Bhāmaha and Daṇḍīn have given the same definition about the style and language. The language of the *Mahākāvya* should be simple, lucid and adorned by different figures of speeches.

The metre (Chhanda) is also an essential part of the *Mahākāvya*. Bhāmaha suggests that the metres which are used in *Mahākāvya* should be melodious. Daṇḍīn and Viśvanātha sets down the same view in the change of metre in the canto. Generally, we used a single metre is used in the whole canto but the metre has been changed at the end of the cantos. Viśvanātha says that sometimes we found the canto having different metres.

1.5 Definitions of the Kāvya by Modern Scholars:

Rahas Vihārī defines *Mahākāvya* as follows:

सर्गवृत्तैश्च बद्धं सहृदयहृदयाह्लादिशब्दार्थरम्यं
संवादैश्चोच्चशिल्पैः सततरसमयं ग्रन्थिमुक्तं समृद्धम् ।
पात्रं स्याद्यस्य मुख्यं परमगुणयुतं लोकविख्यातवृत्तं
भव्यं लोकस्वभावं महदपि महतां तन्महाकाव्यमास्ते ॥¹⁵

¹⁵ Dwivedi, Rahasvihari, *Sanskrit Mahākāvyaon Kā Samālocanātmak-Adhyayana*, p. 81

According to Rajendra Mishra the characteristics of *Mahākāvya* is as follows:

सर्गबन्धो महाकाव्यं लोकवन्द्यजनाश्रयम् ।
ख्यापयद्विश्वबन्धुत्वं स्थापयद्विश्वमङ्गलम् ॥
नायकस्तत्र देवः स्यात्प्रजाबन्धुरथो नृपः ।
चारुचर्योऽथवा कोऽपि सज्जनश्चरितोज्ज्वलः ॥
प्रातस्सन्ध्यानिशीथेन्दुभास्करोदयतारकाः ।
वनोद्याननदीसिन्धुप्रपाताद्विबलाहकाः ॥
ग्रामाश्रमपुराऽरामदुर्गसैन्यरणोद्यमाः ।
पुत्रजन्मादिवृत्तान्ताः पामरावाससङ्कथा ॥
इतिवृत्तानुरोधात्तु वर्णनीया न चाऽन्यथा ।
प्रसह्य वर्णने तेषां न च तृप्तिर्न वा यशः ॥
यच्छिवं यच्च सत्यं स्यादथवा लोकमङ्गलम् ।
वर्णनीयं प्रकल्प्यापि कथांशीकृत्य सादरम् ।
सर्गा अष्टाधिकाः सन्तु कथाविस्तृतिसम्मताः ।
अष्टत्रिगुणतां यावत्सर्गसंख्या प्रथीयसी ॥
नोद्वेगः कविना कार्यः पाठकानां रसात्मनाम् ।
सर्गसंख्यादिविस्तारैर्वर्णनैर्वाऽनपेक्षितैः ॥
लोकवृत्तं न हातव्यं मूलवृत्तोपकारकम् ।
लोकचित्रणगर्भं हि महाकाव्यं महीयते ॥
त्रयाणां पुरुषार्थानां कश्चिदेको भवेत्ध्रुवम् ।
महाकाव्यफलं रम्यं धर्मकामार्थसम्मतम् ॥
शृङ्गारवीरशान्तानां कश्चिदन्यतमो रसः ।
सयत्नमङ्गीकर्तव्यः कविना प्रतिभावता ॥
छन्दोऽलङ्कारसन्दर्भा भूरिवैविध्यमण्डिता ।
महाकाव्ये प्रयोक्तव्या भावुकानां प्रतुष्टये ॥
लोकोत्तरगुणादर्शः पुरुषो नायको भवेत् ।

The *Mahākāvya* should have written on those incidents which are true as well as benefactor for the people. Even if we have to imagine that kind of incidents that includes them as a part of the original story and described on respectfully.

1.6 Pre-Kālidāsa Mahākāvyas

Indian tradition treats the Vedas as eternally existent or at any rate revealed by God at the time of creation. The Vedic sages have composed then certain narratives to support Vedic interpretations. These came to be called *Ītihāsa*, *Ākhyāna* and *Upākhyāna*. There must have been a large number of them each called by one or the other name. Most of them got included in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*. After this stage, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* came to be styled as the *Ītihāsas*. These two epics refer to a number of *Ītihāsas*. Hence the epic period must be taken to have been in existence from very early times. The language of the epics betrays many of the features of the Vedic Sanskrit. The literature of the epics arose in a religious atmosphere. As evidenced by the *Brāhmaṇas*, these were recited at the time of the performance of the sacrifices.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is one of the two outstanding Indian epics, the other one being the *Mahābhārata*. It contains 24000 *ślokas* distributed among seven *kāṇḍas*. It was composed by Vālmīki. It deals with the life of Rāma and Sītā. The author calls it a poem, *Ākhyāna*, *Gītā*, and *Samhitā*.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* has become a popular book at the hands of the people of India. All are quite familiar with the characters and stories of this great epic. It is the popular literary work and more than that, it is held in great veneration by the Hindus. The pious- minded make a daily recitation of it. It is not placed on the floor but is always placed on a plank. Since the writing of the epic, it has gained a fame which no other work has to its credit. Brahmā predicted that the story of Rāma would last as long as the mountains stand and the rivers flow.

¹⁶ Mishra, Rajendra, *Drk*, Vol. 9, pp. 24-25

यावत्स्थास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च महीतले ।

तावद्रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति॥

Rāmāyaṇa I-2-36 37.

The unique popularity is due to the characters of the epic, style, characterisation, description and innumerable memorable sayings which it contains. Luckily for Vālmīki, there was no difficulty in choosing the hero and heroine for his poem. The hero was a man of spotless character, of inestimable qualities and of great prowess. It is difficult to enumerate his qualities which endeared him to his subjects. Suffice it to say that Sītā was a deserving wife to whom Rāma was a husband worthy of her.

The style of the poem is very simple, dignified, ornate and polished. The epic contains no word of rare occurrence. When recited, the language of the epic produces an enchanting impression on the hearers, the like of which is not available in the whole range of the Sanskrit literature. The epic is charming both when read and sung. All the sentiments have their due place in it. It is embellished by the figures of speech like *Upamā*, *Svabhāvokti* and *Rūpaka* which are employed to perfection only by Vālmīki. No Sanskrit poet had displayed his skill in *Śabdālamkāra* with effortless ease as Vālmīki had done.

Vālmīki has a Unique power in describing palaces, city-life," gardens, hills, rise of the moon, rivers, the seasons cold, rainy, autumn, forest-sites, hermitages, armies and battles and others. His description of nature has got a realistic touch not to be met with in the work of any other writer.

The *Mahābhārata* is the other well-known Itihāsa. It was composed by Vyāsa. It is the longest poem known to literary history. It contains one lakh stanzas. Its size is eight times that of Iliad and Odyssey put together. It is divided into eighteen sections each being called parvan. The eighteen parvans are: Ādi, Sabhā, Vana, Virāta, Udyoga, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa, Śalya, Saṃvata, Strī, Śānti, Anuśāsana, Āśvamedhika, Āśramavāsika, Mausala, Mahāprasthānika and Svargārohaṇa. Among these, the Śāntiparva is the longest containing about 14700 stanzas and

the last is the shortest with 200 stanzas. It has a supplement called Harivamśa containing about 12000 stanzas. Including the supplement, the epic contains one lakh of stanzas.

The epic deals with the story of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The story is too well-known and needs no narration here. Besides this story, the epic contains the accounts about the activities of gods, kings and sages who are not directly connected with the theme of the epic. The epic contains also information on cosmogony, the agony, expositions on philosophy, law, religion, duties of the castes and orders in life. In its final shape, it is a compendium teaching the four-fold aims of human existence. On account of this, this epic came to be called the fifth Veda.

Vyāsa, who wrote the epic together with the Harivamśa was originally called Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana as he was born on an island and was black in complexion. He was the son of the sage Pārāśara. He was responsible for the arrangement of the Vedas or classified them for the benefit of mankind. He was a contemporary of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. He was an eye-witness to the incidents connected with their lives. He describes the characters with a truthfulness and vivacity that can be ascribed only to the evidence of an eye-witness. Sanjaya and others are presented in the epic without any introduction as the author did not feel the need for it. The language of the epic is simple and grand showing that it was then a spoken language.

The epic, as it is available, contains a number of passages written in archaic prose. They are twenty in number, three in the Ādiparva, and seven in the Vanaparva, seven in the Śāntiparva and three in the Anuśāsanaparva. Most of these are in the form of Upākhyānas and are narrated by some great sages.

The metre used in both the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* is composed of four-lined verses, each carrying eight syllables. The books of *Mahābhārata* are divided into multiple cantos, each one ending with a new metre. It is characterized by its simplicity and clarity of language, as well as its poetic rhythm, style and ornamentation. Vālmīki is acclaimed as the first poet to compose a firstclass poetic art. His works are regarded as superior to Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda in terms of merit. He has set an example for poetry with his masterful writing and has not been matched since. The *Mahābhārata* is the one post-Vedic work that matches the grandeur of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Though the writing of the poems must have commenced from very early periods, the nature, scope and form of them appear to have been determined and definitions framed for them by the rhetoricians long after some of the prominent *kāvya*s were composed.

The period before Kālidāsa in regard to the poems is a dark one. The variety of metres skilfully handled by him, the figures of speech that adorn his poems and the acme of perfection reached by him as an artist show that before him, the *kāvya* had a long period of graded development at the hands of a number of writers. His works must have eclipsed most of the works of his predecessors. Among them, the name of Vālmīki proudly and justly styled as Ādikavi and his epic *Rāmāyaṇa* have been handed down to posterity. The name of the great grammarian Pāṇinī is associated in the anthologies with two works *Pātālavijaya* and *Jāmbavatīvijaya* which are known only in some stray quotations preserved in the anthologies.

Vararūci, also known as Kātyāyana and the author of the *Vārtika* on the *sūtras* of Pāṇinī, is said to have written a poem known as *Vararucam kāvyam* after his name. The *Chhandahsūtra* on prosody was written by Pingala also called Pingalanāga and referred to, by sadgurulisya in his *Sarvanukrāmanitika*, as the younger brother of Panini. It contains eight *adhyāyas*. The metres dealt with by him stand midway between those of the Vedic and classical periods. The names of metres treated by him are identical with the names of the women whom he describes in the stanzas serving as illustrations, eg. *Canalakṣika*, *Kuṭilagati* etc. The date of this work cannot be fixed with certainty. Nothing beyond this is known about the predecessors of Kālidāsa."

1.7 Mahākāvya of Kālidāsa

Kālidāsa is the author of two poems, the *Kumārasambhava* and the *Raghuvamśa*. These are the two among the five well-known *Mahākāvya*s.

1. Kumārasambhavam

The *Kumārasambhava* is a *Mahākāvya* in eight cantos describing the circumstances that led to the birth of Kumāra. The poem has an abrupt ending in the last canto which deals with the description of love of the divine pair. Perhaps, the censure of the critics of the day dissuaded the author from writing further. A later writer, finding the title inadequate for the poem, composed

nine more cantos in continuation leading the theme up to the destruction of Tāraka by Kumāra. The poem contains vivid descriptions of the Himālayas, spring season- Śiva in meditation, lament of Rati over the death of Cupid and the talk between Pārvaṭī and Śiva in disguise. The description of the marriage of Pārvaṭī and Śiva shows Kālidāsa as a close observer of the traditional practises.

There is no prayer, there is no apology in the beginning of the epic. The epic is started straightaway and the start is with the announcement of the great mountain of Himālayas and the Spirit that presides over the mountain. This is followed by a grand description of the mountain with divine damsels and various tribes that reside there, the animals like lions and elephants, the clouds that reach up only to the half the height on the sides, the herbs that emit a glow which reaches to the inside of the caves, the breeze, the snow deposited on its tops and so on.

The descriptions in the epic are superb. There is Nature coming in for its full share. There is a combination of contrasts in situations and in characters. We see the Himālayas, a great mountain with all grandeur and at the same time we see also a majestic picture of a great emperor with his vivid personality. Gods are brought into the midst of men and are made to live the normal life of men which should be their ideal life. The realistic presentation of Nature is illuminated with the romantic glow of the supernatural. All contrasts are brought within a harmonious unit of art. Here is combined beauty with a deep philosophy.

2. Raghuvamśam

The *Raghuvamśa* is an epic poem in eighteen cantos. As the name implies, it deals with the Raghu dynasty. It is perhaps one of Kālidāsa's earliest composition. The dynasty of the Raghus is introduced by an enumeration of the great qualities of the kings of that dynasty and the poet requests the readers to judge it with sympathy since he is persuaded to make that undertaking by the great qualities of those kings. The poet chose to deal with some prominent kings in the race like Dilīpa, Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha, Rāma, Kuśa, Lava and the further successors.

The *Raghuvamśa* is a *Mahākāvya* par excellence containing all aspects of the *kāvya* presented to perfection. Unlike the former poem, this begins with a benediction. Written in a

rigorous style, the poem describes the life of Dilīpa, his attendance on Nandinī, Raghu's encounter with Indra, his victorious march, Īndumatī's followed by her marriage with Aja and Aja's lament over the death of Īndumatī. Daśaratha's hunt in the spring and description of the return journey of Rāma from Laṅkā disclose the poet's study of the beauties of Nature. Canto XIV reveals the poet's deep insight into the workings of the human mind under trials. Appearance of Ayodhyā before Kuśa in the form of a dame and Kuśa's sport in are given a realistic colouring by the poet. XVIII is a list of the descendants in the family and the last canto portrays the life of the libertine whose excesses hastened his death.

The two poems, when taken together, present Kālidāsa as the greatest poet in the classical period. They are to be considered as the two parts of a composite whole depicting all the admirable features of the world and worldly life. In this epic we see a large number of characters drawn, each with a sharply cut individuality, seen in clear relief, full of life, moving in a variety of situations, and we see also the descriptions of Nature with all its wealth and variety like seasons and forests and trees and creepers and flowers and breeze and mountains and animals and birds and rivers, with Fairies and Forest Nymphs, gods and men and kings and the wise people and the common men-all brought together on the same scene. It is a whole world drawn on a small scale without missing any detail and without losing any clarity of vision and perspective.

The *Raghuvamśa* is the greatest of Sanskrit epics of that pattern. It is simple and even children start their study of the language with portions of this epic, and yet even scholars in their mature years find enough scope for further study in this epic, finding full satisfaction for their intellect and emotion in this epic. It is full of human touches and its realism is illuminated with occasional glow of supernatural events. An epic hero and an epic theme become insipid in dry realism, and an undiluted supernaturalism removes the human interest from it. Hence there is a happy combination of both in proper proportions.

I.8. Post-Kālidāsa Mahākāvyas

The writer about whom there is reliable evidence and who after Kālidāsa is Aśvaghoṣa. He is the author of two Mahākāvya, Saundarānanda and Buddhacarita. It is learnt from the colophon of the former that he was the son of Suvarṇakṣī and a resident of Sāketa. He had the titles Bhikṣu, Acarya, Bhadanta, Mahākavi and Mahavadin. He proved his worth by making the horses listen to his discourses leaving aside the fodder and hence his name.

1. Saundarānanda of Aśvaghoṣa

The *Saundarānanda* in 18 cantos describes how Gautama converted into the Buddhist order his half-brother Nanda who was reluctant to leave his wife. Ānanda, one of the pupils of the Buddha, persuaded Nanda by his teachings to become a recluse. At the end of the poem, the author says he wrote the poem in order to propagate the Buddhistic doctrines. The Buddhacarita was originally composed in 28 cantos and was rendered into Chinese and Tibetan. The poem has been reconstructed into Saṃskṛita for 13 cantos with a supplement of four more cantos by one Amṛtānanda of the last century. It describes the life of the Buddha and contains the doctrines of Buddhism presented in an attractive form.

Aśvaghoṣa betrays the influence of Vālmīki and Kālidāsa. Both the poems abound in alliteration and show the author's fondness for rare grammatical forms.

Mentha or Bhartṛmentha also called as Hastipaka, who was patronised by Matrgupta of Kashmir (C.430 A.D.), is known to have written a poem called Hayagrivavadha. It is available only in citations from the works on rhetorics.

Pravarasena is known as the author of a Prakṛita poem Setubandha, also called *Rāvaṇavadha* and *Daśamukhavada*. In fifteen chapters called divdsas, the author describes the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from Rāma's starting for Laṅkā up to his coronation in *Ayodhyā*. The author displays his skill in yamaka in this work. The poem has *anurāga* as its mark. It is held that this was written by Kālidāsa, at the instance of king Pravarasena of Kashmir, to commemorate the construction of a bridge of boats across the river *Vitatsā* now identified with Jhelum. This however is to be rejected since Bana, who knows both Kālidāsa and Pravarasena, attributes the authorship of the poem to Parvarasena. The date of the work may be placed about 400 A.D. The work has won the appreciation of Bāṇa and Daṇḍin.

The Buddhist writer Buddhaghosa is the author of a poem *Padyacudāmaṇi* in ten cantos describing the life of the Buddha. His work betrays the influence of Kālidāsa and Aśvaghoṣa. According to the Buddhist sources, he was sent in 357 A.D. to bring from Ceylon a Pālī version of the commentaries on the Tripitakas. One of his works was translated in 488 A.D. into Chinese. The date of the work can be taken to be about 400 A.D.

Bhīma also known as Bhaumaka wrote his *Rāvaṇārjunīya* or *Arjunardvaniya* in 27 cantos describing the battle between Rāvaṇa and Kārtavīryarjuna. It is mainly intended to illustrate the rules of grammar. Since this work is cited in the Kāsikāveti (C.550 A.D.), its date can be about 500 A.D. Kumāradāsa is the author of the poem *Jānakīharaṇa* twenty cantos. He is identified with a king of Ceylon of the same name (517-529 A.D.). He was born blind and was helped in getting his kingdom and in writing this poem by his two maternal uncles. He displays his skill in *Śabdālamkāras* e.g., *yamaka* in canto 17, *ślokas* in a single and double consonant, and other kinds of *bandha* like *muraja*, *jāla* etc. The poem is written in an easy flowing style and shows unmistakable evidences of Kālidāsa's influence.

2. Kirātārjunīyam of Bhāravi

Bhāravi is the author of a *Mahākāvya Kirātārjunīyam* in 18 cantos describing the getting of the *Pāśupatāstra* by Arjuna. The poem does not begin with a benediction. The discussions on political issues in which Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Draupadī participate take the first two cantos which are noted for the vigour and depth of expression. The Himālayas, love sports of the *apsarāsas* attempting to Arjuna and the fight between Arjuna and Śiva in disguise are described brilliantly with unrivalled skill. Both Śiva and Kumāra are shown here as opposing Arjuna.

Bhāravi's style is full of spirit and his language is pregnant with sense and would be the appropriate illustration for the definition of *sleṣa* as given by Daṇḍin. Bhāravi exhibits his skill in the careful use of the rules of grammar. In the 15th canto, he displays his skill in playing with words. There are stanzas with a single and double consonant, reading the same when taken from both ends of the line.

Bhaṭṭi wrote a poem *Rāvaṇavadha* known as *Bhaṭṭikāvya* after the name of the author, describes the story of Rāma in 22 cantos. It primarily illustrates the rules of grammar and the figures of speech. Canto XIII can be read as a Saṃskṛita or Prākṛta poem. The figures of speech illustrated by Bhaṭṭi help very much in tracing the history of their evolution.

3. Śiśupālavadha of Māgha

Māgha's poem *Śiśupālavadha* is a *Mahākāvya* in twenty cantos describing the slaying of Śiśupāla by Kṛṣṇa. The poem is modelled upon that of Bhāravi. Both do not begin with benediction but begin with the word: Political discussions, mountain scenery, drinking parties, and battle-scene occur in the same order. Like Bhāravi, Māgha exhibits his skill in *Śabdālaṃkāras*. There are stanzas with a single and double consonant, remaining the same when read from both ends of the line, illustrating *yamaka* and *bandha*. Of these, the *cakrabandha* contains the names of the author and poem.

Māgha's knowledge is very exhaustive and varied. He draws from all subjects possible for the effective presentation of the subject. The poem contains graphic descriptions and pithy statements. Māgha's comparison of the sun and moon on both the horizons to the bells suspended from the back of the elephant won for him the title *ara*. His vocabulary is so rich that it is said that after reading nine cantos of his work, one cannot come across a new word.

नवसर्गे गते माघे नव सर्गे न विद्यते ।

It is also said that Māgha combined in himself the excellences of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Daṇḍīn.

उपमा कालिदासस्य भारवेरर्थगौरवम् ।

Hariscandra is the author of the *Dharmaśarmābhūdaya* a *Mahākāvya* in twenty-one cantos dealing with the life of the Jain saint Dharmanātha. He was influenced by Māgha and Vākpati and therefore could be placed about 800 A.D. Nitivarman's *Kicakavadha* a poem in five cantos describes the death of Kicaka at the hands of Bhīmasena. It abounds in alliteration and pun. As Bhoja (1005-1054 A.D.) refers to it, Nitivarman can be assigned to the ninth century.

The *Haravijaya*, a poem in fifty cantos, is the work of Ratnākara. The author had the titles *Rājānaka*, *Vāgīśvara* and *Vidyādhīpati*. The poem which contains four thousand śloka deals with a very short theme of the slaying of the demon Aṇḍhaka by Śiva. The sole purpose in writing this poem, which is disproportionately long, seems to be an attempt to compose an ideal *Mahākāvya*. The poem, having the mark "ratna", exhibits the author's skill in *Śabdālamkāras*. In addition to the yamaka, and other features noticed in the works of Bhāravi and Māgha, the author has framed śloka in illustration of some bandhas not found in Māgha. He has a śloka in the language of the piśācas and another which can be read in six languages. The poem is valuable for the information it contains on dancing. Ratnākara's skill in handling the *Vasantatilakā* metre is attested by Kṣemendra.

Śivasvāmin, better known as Bhaṭṭa Śivasvāmin, was patronised by Avantivarman of Kashmir and therefore was a contemporary of Ratnākara (C.850 A.D.) His poem *Kapphinaabhyudaya* in twenty cantos describes how a king of the South Kapphina by name threatened to attack king Prasenajit of Sravasti but was converted into Buddhism by the latter. The poet avails himself of the opportunity to deal with the matters that require to be treated in a *Mahākāvya*.

Abhinanda, also called Gau Abhinanda, the son of the logician Jayanta bhaṭṭa (C.880 A.D.) is the author of a poem *Kādambarīkathāsāra* in eight cantos being a summary of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*. Another Abhinanda, son of Satananda of Kashmir wrote the poem *Rāmacarita* in 36 cantos beginning with the description of the rainy season in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* and ending with Rāma's coronation. The work was left incomplete. It was completed by two different writers who added four more cantos each, making the number of cantos forty in the poem. This work is cited by Mahimabhaṭṭa (C.1025 A.D.) and Bhoja (1005- 1054 A.D.) and therefore, the author may be placed about 900 A.D. The Jain writer Dhanañjaya of the same period was responsible for writing the *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya*, a *Dvisandhānakāvya* narrating the stories of Rāma and the Pāṇḍavas at the same time through the same composition. It appears that Daṇḍīn, probably the author of the *Kāvyaadarśah*, wrote a *Dvisandhānakāvya* on the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* themes. On the life of Yaśodhara, a Jain king, was written a poem *Yaśodharacarita* in four cantos by the Jain author Kanakasenaavadiraj (C.950 A.D.).

Padmagupta also called Parimala or Parimala Kālidāsa narrated the biography of his patron in a poem *Navasāhasāṅkacarita* in eighteen cantos. He was a poet under the Paramara kings Muñja, Siṇḍhu-rāja and Bhoja. The second mentioned king had the title Navasahasanka. The poem glorifies this patron of, the poet. It describes his hunting excursions and his marriage with Śaśiprabhā a Nāga princess.

Kṣemendra of Kashmir was a prolific writer of the first half of the 11th Century A.D. He was the son of Prakāśendra and studied literature under Abhinavagupta. He is the author of a number of abridgements of the epic-stories which he wrote at the request of a Brāhminā Rāmayasas. They are the *Rāmāyaṇamañjarī* which includes the story of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, *Bhāratamañjarī*, and *Br̥hatkathāmañjarī*, an epitome of Guṇa Ihyā's *Br̥hatkathā*. His *Daśavatāracarita*, the date of whose composition is 1066 A.D., is a poem on the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* was rendered into verse by him in the *Padyakādambarī*. His other kāvyas are lost. Some among them are the *Śaśivamśa Mahākāvya* and the *Amṛtataraṅgakāvya* which are cited by him in his *Aucityavicārasāra*.

Bilhaṇa of Kashmir was the son of Jyesthakalasa. Completing his study, he left Kashmir about 1050 A.D. After considerable wandering, he settled about 1070 A.D. in the court of Trailokyamalla, the Cālukya king who was ruling in Aṇahilvāḍa. After a few years, he left that court and became the poet under Vikrmāditya VI of Kalyāṇa. At about 1085 A.D. he wrote the poem *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* in eighteen cantos about the ancestry and life of his patron, his patron's hunting expedition and his marriage with Candralekhā a Silahara princess. In the last canto, he gives an account of his wanderings. Bilhaṇa is a master of graphic description and commands an elegant and smooth style. Maṅkha, also known as Maṅkhaka, is the author of the *Śrīkanṭhacarita*, a poem in twenty-five cantos describing the destruction of the three cities by Śiva. Much of what is contained there would declare the poem a *Mahākāvya*. The whole of canto I is filled with the stanzas of benediction. The next canto describes good and bad people, the subject matter is begun in the next canto and goes on in the traditional *Mahākāvya* style. In the last canto, the author gives an account of life in the court of his brother Laṅkā also called ALaṅkāra, who was a minister of king Jayasimha of Kashmir (1129-51 A.D.). This canto refers to Rājaśekhara, Murārī and others who were his predecessors and to Kalhaṇa, Bilhaṇa and Jalhaṇa who were his contemporaries.

In the year 1149 A.D. we got the *Rājataranṅiṇī*, the historical poem in eight chapters, by Kalhaṇa. Kalhaṇa began to write in this poem the history of Kashmir from the early period and stopped with the reign of Jayasimha (1129-1151 A.D.). At about the same period was written by Jalhaṇa the *Somapālavilāsa*, a historical poem about king Somapāla who ruled at Rājāpurī. The poem *Neminirvāṇa* in fifteen cantos was composed by Vāgbhaṭa (C. 1150 A.D.) in praise of the Jain saint Neminātha. To this period belongs the *Rāmapālacarita* of Sandhyakaranandin. This poem, which is of the *dvisandhāna* kind, gives the story of Rāma and at the same time glorifies the poet's patron Rāmapāla of Bengal (1104-1130 A.D.). Hemacandra (1088-1172 A.D.), who was styled as Kalikalasarvajña, was a prolific writer and Jain monk. He was a protege under Jayasimha and Kumārapāla of Aṇahilvada. The latter king became a Jain through the efforts of this monk and made Jainism the state religion. This writer is the author of poem *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpurasacarita*. The former is in ten parvans describing the life of sixty-three men of the Jain faith. The latter narrates the life of Kumārapāla, the poet's patron and therefore is called *Kumārapālacarita*. It has twenty cantos in Sanskrit and eight in Prakrit and so is called *Dvyāśrayakāvya*. At the same time, this poem illustrates the rules of Samskrta and Prākṛta grammars framed by the author himself century Vamanabhaṭṭabana, son of Komatiyajvan of Vatsagotra, described Rāma's life in the *Raghunathābhyudaya* a poem in thirty cantos and Nala's story in the *Nalābhyudaya* a poem in eight cantos. He was patronised by Peddakomaṭi Vemabhupala (1403-1420 A.D.) of Addanki.

In early 13th century many Jain *Mahākāvya*s were written. The social awareness and devotional feeling became the motivation for writing the *Mahākāvya*s by Jain poets. In the Upāśrayasa of cities like Patan, Bharuch, Khambhat, Kapadvanj, Karṇavati, Dabhoi, Palanpur, Vadnagar, Jaisalmer many Jain Yatis composed the *Mahākāvya*s. The life sketch of *Ruṣabhanatha*, *Pārśvanatha*, *Tīrthankaras* and great personalities like Pundarika were the base of the Jain *Mahākāvya*s for the propagation of Jain religion. There fore the *Mahākāvya*s like *Śāntināthacarita*, *Parśvanāthacarita*, *Padmānanda*, *Puṇḍarikacaritra* etc. are composed. We find many more *Mahākāvya*s like *Naranarayana* by Vastupal, *Shrenikcharitra* by Jin Prabha Suri. *Vasantavilāsa* by Balchandra Suri, *Hammīra Mahākāvya* by Shrinayachandra Suri, *Dharmaśarmābhyudaya* by Harichandra, *Sanatakumarcakṛīcaritra* by Jin Pal Upadhyaya, *Balabharata* by Umarchandra Suri, *Jayantavijay* by Abhaydeva Suri, *Muni Suvrata Kāvya* by

Arhad das. Nalāyanam by Manikyadeva Suri, Śāntināthacaritra by Munibhadra Suri etc. are some *Mahākāvya*s written in Jain tradition.

About 1600 A.D., a *Trisandhānakāvya* called *Rāghavapaṇḍayadavīya* was composed by Chidambara. In this *Mahākāvya*, the life of king Raghunatha, the Nayak king of Tanjore is narrated by Yajñanarayana, son of Govinda – Dikṣitā, in the *Raghunāthabhūpavijaya* also called *Sāhityaratnākara* in sixteen cantos. On the same theme and during the same period was written the *Raghunāthābhyudaya* in twelve cantos by Rāmabhadramba, the queen of Raghunatha Nayak. Under the patronage of the same king, Rajacuḍāmaṇīdikṣita, son of Ratnakheta Srinivasadikṣitā, a contemporary of Appayadikṣita (C.1600 A.D.), wrote the *Mahākāvya* Rukminikalyana in ten cantos.

Under the patronage of Tirumala Nayak of Madurai, Cakrakavi composed the *Jānakīpariṇaya* in eight cantos. He lived about 1650 A.D., when his contemporary Nilakanthadikṣita, grandson of the brother of Appayadikṣita (C.1600 A.D.) wrote the *Śivalilārṇava* and *Gaṅgāvataṛaṇa*. The former which is in twenty-two cantos describes Śiva's exploits. The latter is in eight cantos describing the descent of Gaṅgā. The author was born in 1613 A.D. and was the minister of Tirumala Nayak. He condemns the poets taking delight in the *Śabdālamkāras*.

Under the patronage of king Shahaji of Tanjore (1684-1711 A.D.), Rāmabhadradikṣita described the life of the grammarian Patañjali in the *Patañjalicarita* a poem in eight cantos. To the same period belong the *Rāmakathā* of Vasudeva and the *Rukmiṇīsvayaṃvara* of Ramavarma Parikshit.

In the eighteenth century, the Kerala poet Rāmapaṇivada wrote two Prakrit poems *Usaniruddho* and *Kamsavaho* on the epic, themes. Both the works contain four cantos each. The word pāṇivāda means one who plays with the hand, that is, one who plays on the mrdanga, the musical instrument. The author must have belonged to the family of drummers. During the same period, a *dvisandhānakāvya* was written with the name *Rāghavanaiṣadhīya* by Haradattasūri.

The period of the *kāvya* literature has a rich development. The period before Kālidāsa attached more importance to sense than to the form of the composition. This helped very much the creative faculty of the poets. Sense and form received equal and due attention in the period when Kālidāsa flourished. Poets distinguished themselves in establishing a sort of harmony between sound and sense. The period after Kālidāsa has many characteristic features. The *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana and the works on rhetorics exerted much influence on the poets during this period. The result has been the introduction of conventionalism in the mode of treatment of the subject matter. This of course took place gradually. The poets had to satisfy their patrons and a cultured audience. They had to satisfy the expert critics, sometimes fastidious also. There was thus no scope for the poets to display their creative faculty. More and more importance came to be attached to the form of the poem. Matter therefore the poet was given secondary importance. This was made possible at the sacrifice of sense. The poets began to compete with each other in displaying their originality in form.

As a result of the rules laid down for the writing of a *Mahākāvya*, the poets had to force certain matters in their poems to make them deserve the name *Mahākāvya*. Ratnākara's *Haravijaya*, Śivasvāmin's *Kapphīnābhyudaya* and Maṅkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* prove this tendency. Displaying one's skill in the use of the *śabdālamkāras* created a sort of rivalry among the poets. This is illustrated by the *Jānakīharaṇa*, *Kirātārjunīyam*, *Śiśupālavadha*, *Haravijaya*, *Kapphīnābhyudaya*, the works of the Yamakakavi Vasudeva and others. The growing influence of the grammarians is felt in the *Buddhacarita*, *Saundarānanda* and *Kirātārjunīyam*. Some poets composed their works for the sole purpose of illustrating the rules of grammar. Bhīma, Bhatti, Halayudha and others deserve mention in this connection. As the poems became more and more formative, some writers like Śrī Harṣa displayed their skill in fields other than poetry so as to heighten the artistic effect of the poem. A new tendency in the use of pun arose resulting in the writing of the *dvisandhāna* and *trisandhāna kāvyas*. It is aptly remarked that the puns "have a fatal effect on language; if a double sense is to be expressed, it is impossible for the best of poets to avoid straining meanings, constructions, and word order. The effort leads to constant ransacking of the poetical lexicons extant and turns the pursuit of poetry into an intellectual exercise of no high value to the utter ruin of emotion and thought." The *dvisandhāna* and other kinds of the *kāvyas* of Rāmacandra, Cidambara, Meghavijayagani and Haradattasuri could be cited here. The remark mentioned above does not apply to Kavīraja's work which is far simpler

to other compositions of this type. Some poems were written for the main purpose of preaching religion e.g., works of Asvaghosa, Hemacandra and others. Matters of historical importance came to be treated in the works of some poets like Padmagupta, Bilhana, Kalhana and of the poets of the Vijayanagar period. The Prakṛta language had rich development at the hands of certain poets like Vakpati, Pravarasena, Kṛṣṇaśūka, Rāmapaṇḍita and others. North India has been a strong hold for poets. South India gained importance through the poets during the periods of the Andhrabhṛtyas, kings of Valabhi and others. Countless Jain poets flourished in Gujarat for nearly three centuries from about the tenth century. These poets had an attraction for the stories of the *Mahābhārata*. In the regions to the south of Deccan, poets began to flourish in the courts of the Pallavas from about 600 A.D. From this period up to recent times, there have been innumerable poets in these regions. These poets flourished under the patronage of the Calukyas, Ceras, Colas, Pandyas, kings of Vijayanagar, Tanjore, Madurai and Malabar, many of these patrons were themselves poets of high merit and composed a number of poems. Till the advent of the British in India, the princes had patronised the men of letters. Literary pursuits were not encouraged on the waning away of the princely order. Talent is not wanting but patronage is conspicuous by its absence even after India has regained her independence.

Mūṣikavaṃśa is a historical *Mahākāvya* written by Atula. It is written in 15 cantos. The *Mahākāvya* deals with the Dynasty of Mūṣika which belongs to North Kerala. The title of the *Mahākāvya* derived from the Mūṣika Hill (Eli hill or rat hill). Rāmaghata Mūṣika is the king who is the founder of the Dynasty of Mūṣika. The king brought up in a cave which belongs to a rat (Mūṣika). That's why the name of the dynasty was known as Mūṣika.

Thus, it is observed that the great poets of classical period have enriched the *Mahākāvyas* to a great extent. It was the golden period when Sanskrit poets have shined out like stars in the world literature. The language also flourished in such a way that the ornamental poems of various poets became a piece of art. This heritage of India continues for centuries and in Modern period also this legacy has been maintained by the poets of Sanskrit.
