

CHAPTER XVII.

Language and Style.

It is futile to expect the easy, elegant and clear language of Kālidāsa from Māgha, the author of Śiśu. as he was the product and the eminent representative of the age of learning and was extremely proficient in the traditional Sanskrit learning.

Though at times his language is clear, sweet and lofty, it is difficult ~~to~~ in several places and is unintelligible without the help of a commentary or lexicon. His command over vocabulary makes his poem a great fruitful source of Sanskrit lexicography. One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the poet is his use of rare and unfamiliar words in his poem (Vide Appendix 3). He has rescued long-forgotten words from oblivion and discovered words lying hidden in the Śāstras and has fashioned an ornament for the goddess of speech with these gems of words. He was as if the architect of new words charming to the ear. It can be maintained that no single poet has experimented with so many new words in the field of poetry as Māgha has done in his poem. The sustained elevation of phraseology throughout the poem, the use of double entendre and figures of speech and the ingenuous turns of expression found almost in every alternate verse bear testimony to his excellent command and mastery over words. Even making allowance¹ for the exaggeration contained in the encomium which says that he has exhausted the vocabulary of the Sanskrit language in the

1. नवसर्गगते माघे नवशब्दो न विद्यते।

first nine cantos of his poem, it must be admitted that Māgha has displayed in his poem wealth of words which is unequalled in the Sanskrit poetical literature.

He is also exceptionally fond of sweetness of words. The musical harmony of sweet words in the poem is sure to give delight to readers. One even need not wait for even understanding their meaning, e.g., Śīsu. VI. 2, 14, 20 and XI. 19. These verses are artlessly beautiful. Even if we leave out of consideration the beauty of Yamaka and alliteration contained in them, the flow of sweet words provides us with incomparable joy.

Grammar is his strongest point. No Sanskrit poet has been able to equal him in this respect. That he was the complete master of grammar and adept in its use becomes evident at every step. He produced extraordinary charm in poetry by employing even dry grammatical words e.g., Śīsu. I. 37, 38, 47, 51 and II. 112. His attainment of high degree of success in his employment of double entendre, yamaka and alliteration may be due to his being a great grammarian. It is because of his mastery over vocabulary and grammar that he has been able to give us excellent descriptions e.g., the description of the city of Dvārakā (III), Raivataka (IV), forest-sports (VII), water-sports (VIII), drinking bouts (X), morning (XI) and Citrakāvyas (XIX). These descriptions contain excellent miniature paintings also. As Dr.Keith¹ has pointed out "Māgha is adept in² language and affords abundant exemplification of grammatical rules,

1. HSL. p. 130.

2. Cappeller, Bālamāgha, pp. 187 f.

very possibly under Bhatti's influence. His periphrastic perfects passive such as "bibharāmbabhuve" are frequent; rare uses are "madhyesamudram" and "pārejalam"; "vairāyitāras" is from the denominative "vairāyate"; "aghatate", "niṣedivān" and "nyadhāyisātam" are recondite forms; purely borrowed from Pāṇini are the unique uses in I. 51 of the imperative to express repeated action, and of the future in lieu of the imperfect after a ~~verb~~ verb of remembering."

His language is important from the lexicographic and linguistic points of view as it contains idioms current in modern Indian languages. The study of the influence of the then growing Indian languages on the language of Māgha may be fruitful. Thus Māgha's language enriches Sanskrit vocabulary and is useful from linguistic and lexicographic point of view. Hence his work is really a very valuable contribution.

Style: It is well-known that the poets have been nicknamed for their peculiar style of composition. Kālidāsa is nicknamed "Dīpa Śikhā-Kālidāsa" owing to the way in which he used 'Dīpa Śikhā' (flame of a lamp); Bhāravi as "Ātapatra-Bhāravi" (parosal Bhāravi) and Māgha as Ghantā-Māgha (Bell-Māgha). Māgha earned this sobriquet on account of his cleverness in comparing a mountain, on one side of which the sun set while on the other the moon rose, to an elephant from whose back two bells hung, one on either side.

The style of Māgha is highly elaborate, pretentious and ornate. It is characterised by the use of words and expressions that have double meaning, ingenious and clever conceits, elaborate figures of speech, play on words and frequent display of alliterations.

The outstanding features of his style are as follows. A detailed examination of the similes employed by Māgha in the poem shows that they are drawn from various fields studied and observed by him. He draws his similes from the nature, plant world, bird and animal life, mythology and worldly affairs.

(a) The following are the objects of nature on which he bases his similes. They are the sky, the sun, the moon and her rays, the stars, the constellations, the lightning, the clouds and their thunder, the ocean and the oceanic wealth (e.g. pearls, corals, shells), wind, fire, conflagration and rivers.

(b) Plant world:- The sprouts, flowers, creepers, fruits, trees and a forest constitute this branch of similes.

(c) The bird and animal life:-

(1) Birds: The peacock, his notes, the pair of swans, kraunca and its notes and birds in general.

(2) Animals: The lion, the elephant, the jackal, the dog and the horns of a male buffalo.

(3) Other creatures: They are the tortoise, the serpent and the bee.

(c) Mythology:-

(1) Some of the appropriate incidents and exploits of the gods Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahman, Indra, Paraśurāma and the goddess Mahākālī.

(2) The churning of the ocean, the heavenly horse Uccaiśravas, the heavenly tree Kalpadruma, the demon Rāhu and the moon, the mountains Malaya and Govardhana, the seven ancient sages, Garuda and the serpents, Kādraveyas, the confluence of the Ganges and the Yamunā and the noose of Yama.

(d) The worldly affairs:- The following constitute this branch. They are the Vedas, Smṛtis, poetics, politics, ethics, philosophy, grammar, dramaturgy, sacrificial material, commerce and trade, geography, castes, weapons of war, means of personal decoration, wrestling, prostitutes, debate, popular beliefs and the sciences of medicine, archery, music, agriculture, horses and erotics.¹

All these similes are mostly beautiful and at times artificial and studied. They are also varied in nature e.g. apt, queer, original, suggestive, recondite, Mālā and Abhūtopamā. III/65 of the poem contains Mālopanamā and I/12 and IV/49 contain Abhūtopamā.

Māgha is equally strong in the use of Utprekṣā (poetic fancy). They are only second to Bhamā from the point of preponderance in the poem. They reveal the different characteristics of

1. We have refrained from giving sources as they are too many to be given.

the poet's fancy. Most of them are original and beautiful e.g. V/69; VI/34; XI/44, 49, 51; XVII/58; XVIII/48, 73, 75, 77, 79 and XIX/117.

This is a fair share of the double entendre. There are several stanzas in the poem which contain this figure of speech. Out of twenty cantos of the poem, there are only two cantos, viz; IV and VI in which the double entendre is totally absent. The best example of this figure of speech is to be found particularly in canto XVI. 2-15. The 116th verse of canto XIX contains three different meanings. The pun is due to the poet's wonderful command over Sanskrit language, vocabulary and ~~ggx~~ grammar. The poem also abounds in alliterations and yamakas. These yamakas are already pointed out by us in the preceeding chapter. His profuse use of the alliterations and yamakas sometimes mars the beauty and naturalness of his poetry. This fondness for alliteration and rhyme from among word-figures and for paronomasia from among sense-figures is responsible for making his poetry stand in sharp contrast with that of Kālidāsa whose kāvya becomes at once intelligible by the presence of Prasāda (perspicuity) which is absent, though not totally, in our poet Māgha who calls obscure words from the lexicons for the alliteration and rhyme and who is fond of paronomasia which is by its very nature incompatible with Prasāda quality.

The metaphors also play an important part in the making up of his style. There are elaborate and complicated as well as simple

and attractive metaphors in the poem. There is a fair sprinkling of the grand metaphors also e.g. VII. 74; VIII. 46; XI. 40,47; XIV. 34; XV. 12; XVI. 67 and XIX. 39.

It was the age in which the people liked and appreciated the ideas expressed in round about manner and Māgha is not completely free from this feature. We have an example of Paryāyokta (circumlocation) in II. 63 of the poem. The influence of the Vakrokti school is also apparent in the poet as a result of which we have Vakrokti in XI. 33.

Māgha attained a high degree of skill in the difficult art of playing on words e.g. XIV. 83; XVI. 24, 76, 77.

He is simple in speeches but prefers to be bombastic and vigorous by use of figures and compounds in the descriptions. He displays great skill and cleverness in furnishing the brilliant and the highly finished word-pictures e.g. Rājasūya (XIV. 18-42).

His style becomes conversational especially in speeches. The argumentative element in the speeches lend them a dramatic touch. The following examples XIV. 2-11, 13-17, 54-70; XV. 14-38, 63-66 illustrate the point.

His style is enlivened by the occasional use of the popular maxims (Vide Appendix 10), the power to depict strange and terrible (XVIII. 73-77 and 79) and incorporation of mythological tales and the moral sentiments.

As pointed out by Dr.Keith,¹ there is simplicity (II. 86), suiting of sense to sound (XII. 59 and I. 47), martial tone (XVIII. 80), neat phrasing (XX. 5), strength and simplicity (XVIII. 54; XV. 14, 16) and the blending of the emotion of love with war (XVIII. 58, 61).

Among other features of his style, it can be asserted that Māgha is fond of using mannerisms e.g. the word "Śrī" as the stamp of authorship at the end² of the each canto of his poem like Śrīharsa who employs the word "Ānanda" and Bhāravi who uses the word "Lakṣmī" at the end of each canto of their poems. Similar is the use of the word "Uccakaiḥ" (I. 7, 12, 16, 70). This practice is found in Prākṛit poems also. Pravarasena's stamp mark is "Anurāga" while Hariharasūri uses 'Viraha' as his mark. His 'tour de force' is his composition of Citrakavyas in canto XIX.

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The oft-quoted verse proves that Māgha was a great poet. It says that Kālidāsa is famous for his similes, Bhāravi for the depth of meaning and Dandin for the use of the sweet and appropriate words. But Māgha's poetry combines in itself all the three qualities. A critical study of Śiśupālavadha convinces us of the

1. HSL; pp. 128-129.

2. Prof.R.C.Parikh thinks that the word 'Śrī' is used in this way to commemorate his city "Śrīmāla" in his poem", K.Anu.Vol.II, pt.I. p.94.

3. माघे सन्ति त्रयो गुणाः ।

truth of this remark but his free indulgence in artificiality has weakened the importance which it would otherwise command.

Thus his rhetorical skill, exuberance of fancy, copious and elegant diction, the variety of the lyrical metres, the free indulgence in poetic fancy and word-play make his style artificial. It is on the whole full of figures and compounds, in which case it comes near the "Gaudi" style. At times Magha is simple especially in the speeches and hence on these occasions, his style is "Vaidarbhi". However, there is difference between "Vaidarbhi" of Magha and that of Kalidasa. This is due to the fact that Magha was the product of the age of learning. It can be described as the vigorous "Vaidarbhi" to indicate his contrast from the graceful "Vaidarbhi" of Kalidasa.

There is serenity which is wedded with the depth of meaning not devoid of the loftiness of the ideas. It pervades the entire poem of Magha whose deep knowledge of the various systems of philosophy and other lore adds weight and dignity to the way in which he has handled poetry or dived deep into the niceties with success.

In short, as Muttapa Sastri¹ points out, Magha's muse is "Citrini" while those of Kalidasa and Sriharsa are "Sankhini" and "Hastini" respectively.

1. Brahmasri Muttapa Sastri, alias Venkatasubrahmanya Sastri whose words are reproduced by M.M. Prof. Kuppaswami Sastri: p.10, Foreword, Palghat Edn. of NC.