Chapter VI
Rāghava - Yādaviya
Aṣ A Mahākāvyam
(A Critical Appreciation)
The term Kāvya literally and in its widest sense connotes all that is the work of a poet. In that sense Kāvya is the subject of Classical Sanskrit Literature. The science of poetics, embracing in it dramaturgy, music and dancing, is a concomitant of Kāvya or poetry.¹ In the words of Mamata, Kāvya is thus described:

Kāvya is that which touches the in-most cords of the human mind and diffuses 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, awakening the finest souls.²

Poetry in verse follows generally the manner of Rām. Some call Kāyas, artificial Epics. They are either long or short, called respectively Mahākāvyas and Laghukāvyas or Khandakāvyas.

RVM of VP satisfies the characteristics of Mahākāvya in general and Dh-Kāvya in particular. The poet VP has termed

¹ M. Krishnamachariar, op.cit., p.79.
² ibid.

cf. KP, I.2.
his work as Mahākāvya as it is obvious from the title of the work, i.e., Rāghava-Yādavīya-Mahākāvyam.

In this Chapter it will be examined, how far this work is satisfying the requisite features of a Mahākāvya as specified in the Sanskrit poetics like Kavyadarśa (KD) of Dandin\(^3\) and Sāhityadarpana (SD) of Viśvanātha Kavirāja\(^4\) and others. At first the characteristics of Mahākāvya are found in the Agnipurāṇa (AP)\(^5\). Viśvanātha Mahāpātra was a famous rhetorician of 14th century A.D., whose definition of Mahākāvya has become more elaborate than others and it has also covered up all the aspects of a true Mahākāvya. The features of an Epic or Mahākāvya as mentioned in the Sanskrit poetics can be divided into four broad divisions.

1. The subject-matter
2. The hero
3. The technique
4. The aim

1 The first division consists of the following characteristics.

1.1 The 'topic' shall be either mythological or historical or about any popular famous event or person.

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3. KD, I.14-19.
4. SD, VI.315-325.
5. AP, 337.24-34.
1.2 It shall have descriptions of time, like the dawn, morn, day, mid-day, dusk, evening, night and the seasons, etc.

1.3 It shall have description of places, persons and objects like forests, mountains, sea, lakes, ponds, gardens, heaven, cities and the sages, the sun and moon, etc.

1.4 It shall have description of important events like sacrifices, marriages, birth of son, war-march, expedition and hunting, etc.

1.5 It shall have description of emotions such as union of a couple or their separation, etc.

1.1 The poet VP has chosen the topic strictly in accordance with these instructions. To write this RYM, VP has got the source from the Ram, BhāP and MBh the Great Epics of the world.

1.2 Coming to the next point it is seen that the picturesque description of the day and night in the Canto II at the birth of Rāma and Kṛsna. The poet has not tried to give the descriptions of seasons properly. In the first Canto the poet has given the reference of summer season in the description of the City Ayodhyā. In second Canto he has referred the spring season and Autumn season in which Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛsna were born.
There are descriptions of world famous cities like Ayodhya and Mathura in the first Canto and it is known from the last verse of the Canto. In the Canto VII the poet has shown the description of the City Laṅka and Dvārāvatī. In the Canto VI there is the description of the City of Kiskindhā and the Girivṛaja, City of Jarāsaṁdha. Moreover there is the description of the City of Nikumbha and Kubera in Canto VIII and the City of Baṇāsura in Canto IX. There are also depictions of the cities of Bhogavatī, Amarāvatī and Vaikunthapurī in the first Canto and the description of the City Mithilā in the Canto IV. There are the descriptions of mountains like Citrakūta, Govardhāna in Canto V, the mountains Rṣyamūka and Mālyavat in Canto VI, the mountains Maṁśaka, Mandara, Trikūṭa in Canto VII, the mountain Suvela in Canto VIII, the mountain Rajata in Canto IX. The descriptions of forests like Dandaka, Pañcāvatī, celestial garden Nandana and the forest Adī in Canto V, the forest Aśoka in Canto VII. The description of lake Mānasa in the first Canto and the river Sarayū and Yamunā in Canto III, river Ganges in the first Canto, the river Tamasa in Canto II, the description of the lake Paṁpā in Canto VI, the description of ocean in Canto VII fulfils the

7. ibid., V.7.
characteristics of a Mahākāvya. There is the description of Sun and moon in the first Canto and Canto II. In this Epic the poet has given vivid pictures of sages like Viṣvāmitra, Vaśistha, Garga, Atri, Agastya, Śarabhaṅga, Rṣyaśṛṅga, Vālmīki and their hermitage. Although the poet has not mentioned anything about the heaven strictly according to the specifications of Kāvya still he has taken Dvārakā and Ayodhyā as the heaven on the earth.

1.4 Daśaratha's sacrifice (Yajñā) with the help of the sage Rṣyaśṛṅga, Manasa-Yajñā of Vasudeva8 and the Rājasūya-sacrifice of Yudhīsthīra9 has been depicted for the purpose of poetic discipline. In the same way the hunting expedition of Daśaratha10 and the march past of the soldiers have been described. The marriages of Daśaratha and Vasudeva, Rāma and Kṛsna, Laksmana, Bharata and Satrughna, Pradyumna and Aniruddha have been described in a lucid manner.

1.5 The sentiment of union has been painted very wilfully by the poet at the time of Vanavīhāra and Jalavīhāra.

2 The next division is about the hero of the Epic. The hero may be a God or a man, either a king or a famous

8. RYM, II.8.
9. ibid., VI.30.
10. ibid., VI.2.
Ksatriya of a renowned family. He should have the qualities of a Nāyaka or hero as mentioned in the Sanskrit poetics. The hero should have the following qualities.

2.1 Ready for self sacrifice of any kind.
2.2 Able for performing the great deeds.
2.3 Famous in the family for his high and honourable works.
2.4 Intelligent, courageous, active, clever, warrior, good looking, young and energetic, of good conduct and character.

All these above qualities are seen present in Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa who are the heroes of the Epic RYM.

3 The third division of the Epic is the most important one as it deals with the art of writing an Epic or Mahākavya. The characteristics are discussed below.

3.1 The Epic or Mahākavya is to start with salutation to some deity, praises of the honest and abuses for the dishonest. One can also introduce his subject matter directly through a benedictory verse.

3.2 Not less than eight properly divided Cantos should be there in a Mahākavya. The name of each Canto is to be

cf. SD, II,30.
mentioned at the end of the Canto. The subject matter of the next Canto must be indicated at the end of the preceding Canto as a rule.

3.3 Not less than two kinds of metres are as a rule to be used in a Canto. The poet should start the writing in one metre and towards the end of the Canto he is to shift to another one. One can use even more than two metres in a single Canto.

3.4 The treatment of Rasa or sentiment is the main feature of an Epic. There should be one main sentiment in the whole of the Kavya and other sentiments can be used as subsidiary.

3.5 The name of the Epic may be either after the hero or the subject matter or the name of the poet.

Now it is to be seen, whether the poet VP has properly followed the instructions laid down for the art of writing an Epic.

3.1 The poet starts his Epic with salutation to Lord Śiva the Archanārīśvara for the safe completion of his work. He praises the noble-minded persons and abuses the dishonest.
3.2 The poet has divided his Epic into ten Cantos. The names and subject matter of the each Canto has been mentioned at the end of each Canto.

3.3 The poet has successfully treated the various metres in complete accordance with the rules provided in the poetics for an Epic. He has used six types of metres in first Canto and eight types of metres in Canto II and more than one metre in all the Cantos.

3.4 The next is sentiment which is vital in the rule of poetics for an Epic. The poet VP has treated Vīra (valour) as the main sentiment of the Epic. The poet has attempted successfully to treat other sentiments like Raudra, Śṛṅgāra (love), Bhayānaka (terror) and Karuna (pathos), etc.

3.5 The poet has named the Epic after the names of the heroes as it is ascertained from the title of the work and the last verse of the Epic.

4 The last division of the aim of writing a Mahākāvya or an Epic is about the attainment of the four ends of human life, i.e. Dharma (merit), Artha (wealth), Kāma (desire) and Moksa (liberation) or at least one of them.12

12. SD, I.21.
As this *RYM* of VP deals with the story of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, there is no doubt that one reader will attain these above four qualities as it is certainly a religious Kāvya.

Besides these main characteristics, there are some more things, which are the causative elements of a Kāvya or Mahākāvya. Such as:

\[ \text{śaktir nipunatā lokāśtrākāvvyādy-avekṣanat/} \\
\text{kāvyajñā-sīkṣyābhyaśa iti hetuṣa tadvdbhave/} \]

KP, I.3.

i.e., the ability, efficiency, vast study of Epics and scriptures relating the mass and poetics, good instructions from the persons well-versed in poetics and writing of Epics and continuous practice of writing are the causative elements of producing an Epic which the poet VP had.

From the above discussion it is clear that *RYM* of VP fully satisfies all the qualities of a Mahākāvya. So it can be appreciated as a full-fledged Mahākāvya in Classical Sanskrit Literature.