CHAPTER III

PRE-VASUDEV MAHĀKĀVYAS

IN ORISSA
Orissa has seven glories remarks Late Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in his "Artaballabha Memorial Lectures". They are: (i) Arts of Orissa (sculpture, architecture, painting and artistic crafts), (ii) Oriya literature, (iii) Sanskrit Learning, (iv) the temple and cult of Jagannātha, (v) the music, dance and drama of Orissa, (vi) the spirit of resistance to foreign aggression and lastly (vii) the character of Orissan people in its steadiness in work and gentleness of ways.

Among these glories, the Sanskrit learning occupies an important place. Orissa being the meeting place of the North and the South has played a prominent role in the growth, development and spread of Sanskrit literature and culture all over India. The Sanskrit scholars and poets of this land were versatile in the subjects like Veda, Vedāṅga, Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Smṛti, Nyāya, Yoga, Upaniṣad, Kāvyas, dramas and many other branches of Sanskrit literature are immense in comparison to the other states of India.
As this Chapter deals with the pre-Vasudeva-Kāvya literature the aim here is to indicate only the Sanskrit Mahākāvyas written in Orissa prior to the poet VP. These are:

Sahṛdyaṇānanda Mahākāvyam

This is the first available Mahākāvyya composed by Kṛṣṇānanda Sāndhivigrhaṇika Mahāpātra (1350 A.D.) of Kapiṇjalagotra and the brother of Mr. Chandi Dash, the grand father of Viśvanātha Kavirāja. The poet Kṛṣṇānanda was a Sāndhivigraha or the minister of war and piece of Narasingha IV (1385-1394 A.D.). The story of the King Nala has been narrated in 15 cantos of this work.

Kuvalayāśva Charitam

It is a prakrit Kāvya by the reputed poet and rhetorician Kavirāja Viśvanātha Mahāpātra (1407-1435 A.D.). But unfortunately it has not yet come to the light.

Rāghavavilāsa Mahākāvyam

It is a famous Mahākāvyya by the great poet Viśvanātha Kavirāja. It has been placed by Viśvanātha in the category of famous Mahākāvyas like Rāghuvamsham.

1. DCS Mss., op.cit., p.LXXVI.
2. ibid., p.LXXXII.
Śiśupālavādham and Nāisādhīya Caritam written respectively by great poets Kalidāsa, Magha and Śrīhāsa.

Usāparinaya Mahākāvyam

It is a renowned Mahākāvyya by Rāghavānanda Sāndhivegrahika Mahāpātra (1328 A.D.). It has been referred to in Sahityadarpana by Viśvanātha and in Vāmaya-viveka by Chintāmani Miśra (1530 A.D.) but the work has not yet been noticed.

Bhaktibhāṣavata Mahākāvyam

This is a famous work of Kaviśidindima Jīvadeva Āchārya who was the son of Trilochana and Ratnāvatī and the royal preceptor of Gajapati Pratāprudra Deva (1497-1533 A.D.). A work of Kṛṣṇa bhakti, narrates the story from the birth to the coronation of Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā in its 32 cantos. Jīvadeva Āchārya was 35 years old, when he completed this Mahākāvyya in a place on the bank of the Godāvari in 1510 A.D.

3. ibid., p. LXXXIII.
4. ibid., p. CXX.
5. ibid., p. 73
6. ibid., p. XCVID.
Pradyumnasambhava Mahakavyam

Kavicandra Govinda composed this Mahakavya in 19 cantos in imitation of Kumarasambhavam by Kalidasa. The story of love and marriage of Krsna and Rukmini and the birth of Pradyumna are narrated in this work in a novel way. The time of the poet has not yet been ascertained. Govinda Kavicandra or Kavindu was perhaps the preceptor of Vaidyeshvara, the father of Kavicandra Rāy Divakar Miśra or a contemporary of Yadunāth Sinha Mahāpātra (1750 A.D.) of Tigiri Rāj family. His other important work is Gaura Krsnodaya Mahakavya in which entire life history and activities of Sri Caitanya are described.

Kosalananda Mahakavyam

This is a historical work in 23 cantos by Gaṅgādhara Miśra, the son of Pandit Gopinātha. Gaṅgādhara who was the court poet of Rāja Baliarsingh of Sambalpur and completed this Mahakavyam in Kali year 4716 or in 1615 A.D. The poet was born in the family of Sambhukar and Vidyākar, two renowned smṛti writers of Orissa. This epic is a very

7. ibid., p,LXXX.
8. ibid., p,18.
important historical work which provides ample materials for study of history and culture of ancient Kośala or Western region of modern Orissa.

Bharatāmrta Mahākāvyam

This is an important work of Kavicandra Rāy Divākara Miśra who was born in a family having Bharadvāja Gotra and who was the son of Vaidyēśvara and Muktā. He was a contemporary and the court poet of Gajapati Purusottama Deva and his son Pratāprudra Deva of solar dynasty. For the first time V. Rāghavan threw light on this great Sanskrit poet of Orissa and his work on the basis of the information furnished by the concluding stanza of each canto of the Bharatāmrta Mahākāvyam. The entire story of the Mahābhārata is narrated in this Mahākāvyā in 48 cantos, out of which 40 cantos are available.

His other work is Laksanādarśa Mahākāvyya which is based on the Mahābhārata. This is very important work as it describes different prakaranas of Sanskrit grammar like Bhattikāvyya. But unfortunately the work is not available

9. ibid., p.CI.
in complete form. It is available up to the 14th canto which ends with the topic of Vrhannala Yuddha and samasa prakarana of the grammar.

Dasagriva-vadha Mahakavyam

It is a work in 20 cantos on the Ramayana by Kavindra Kavicakravati Markandeya Misra, a contemporary of Gajapati Mukunda Deva (1558-1568 A.D.). The entire story of Ramayana from the birth to coronation of Sri Ramacandra has been described in the work.

Vasantotsava Mahakavyam

This is a work on the fairs and festivals of Lord Jagannatha at Puri by Haladhara Misra who was born in the renowned family of Sambhukara Misra. The poet Haladhara Misra was the son of Divakara and Padmavati and court poet of Gajapati Narasimha Deva (1623-1647 A.D.). There are 22 cantos in this Epic which gives a clear-cut picture of the car-festival of Lord Jagannatha, observed during the spring season, which was newly introduced by

12. ibid., p.CIX.
13. ibid., p.CXXXIII.
Gajapati Narasimha Deva of Khurda, over and above the car-festival, which was traditionally being observed on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Ashadha.

Sulochana Madhava Mahakavyam

The work in 16 cantos composed by Brajasundar Pattanaik, a court poet of Gajapati Anangaabhimma Deva (1728-1799 A.D.), the king of Vijayanagar now known as Badakhemundi in the Ganjam district, describes the love and marriage episode of Sulocana and Madhava as has been narrated in Kriyasvasara of Padma Purana.

Then the work of VP which gives a new vision to the readers for its DS characteristics is worth mentioning. It fulfills the characteristics of Mahakavya in general and DS-Kavya in particular.

From all these above discussions it is known that Orissa was a citadel of learning and discussion of Sastras as the rulers of Orissa were highly patronising the scholars in their own interest as well as in the interest of the land.

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