CHAPTER VII

CARITA-KĀVYAS OF MODERN PERIOD: A CRITIQUE

In the foregoing pages an attempt was made to present a systematic survey of the *carita-kāvyas* composed by distinguished poets of Classical as well as Modern period in Sanskrit literature. The present researcher has tried her best to make the survey comprehensive and critical. Efforts have been made to collect pertinent information from both published and unpublished sources and to arrange the data in systematic manner. Therefore it was possible to have a clear and complete picture about the literary wealth available in the form of *Carita-kāvyas* and to develop critical point of view on the basis of the presentations made in the previous chapters. The present chapter contains an appraisal of the works and some general remarks about them.

The present survey attempted for the first time made us aware of the fact that a huge amount of literature is existing only in the form of *carita-kāvyas* which are in need of study, research and appraisal. The works constitute an important portion of Sanskrit literature. The authors of these poems have played a notable role in the cultivation and preservation of Sanskrit language and literature. An intensive study of the development of Sanskrit literature of a particular tradition
is a prerequisite to the preparation of a complete history of Sanskrit literature as developed all over country throughout the ages. It is known and confirmed that Sanskrit has never ceased to be a living language in India even after the development of regional literatures. There have been scholars and poets capable of wielding Sanskrit language with ease and facility. The main literary output is in field of poems.

We have made some discussion in introductory chapter about the renaissance period in Sanskrit literature. In the renaissance-period, for the first time we come across the undreamt of progress of the Sanskrit literature. Within the short period of 135 years, 1500 poets adorned the pantheon of Sanskrit literature. They produced countless immortal literary creations, and it can be safely declared without any fear of contradiction, that prior to this age, no literary age saw the emergence of such a vast shining galaxy of writers dedicated to the shrine of the goddess of Sanskrit learning. Moreover, this age saw a vigorous and lusty growth of the various branches of Sanskrit literature. Some all together new and revolutionary creations appeared in the domain of epics, dramas, novels, stories, criticism, autobiographies and letter-writing. The writers of the renaissance-period were no way inferior to Kalidasa, Banabhatta and Bharavi. They watered and fertilized the tree of Sanskrit renaissance by their very precious life-blood which dripped continuously for this lofty task. They identified themselves with this movement with all of their heart and their precious heartbeats for the cause of the Sanskrit language.
The nineteenth century is the golden age of Indian history. At the beginning of this century, the flood-gales of renaissance in Indian life and literature were opened. Sanskrit literature was powerfully convulsed by this Renaissance. The fair-face of Vedic religion had become tarnished in this age and it was honey combed with artificial rites and rituals. The agony is expressed in one of the carita-kāvyas.

From this survey it was known that Sanskrit poets have preferred to compose Mahākāvyas on the caritas of the great persons rather than khaṇḍakāvyas or Laghukāvyas. That is why we could gather information about 70 mahākāvyas whereas we could only trace about 30 Khaṇḍakāvyas. It is because the great poets have always preference for mahākāvyas. They get better scope to display their genius, by way of describing the nature of hero and characters. Another reason is that to write a small poem or some verses about a great person like Mahatma Gandhi or Nehru or Subhas Candra Bose does not seem to be logical and appreciable. Generally mahātmā caritum is accepted as suitable theme for a mahākāvyā. Valmiki, the ādikavi was in search of a hero who is endowed with a sublime caritra.

को न्वमिन् साम्प्रतं लोके गुणवान् करण्य वीर्यानां
धर्मज्ञान कृतज्ञान सत्यवाक्यो दृढ़तः ।
चारितेण च को मुक्तः सर्वभूतेषु को हितः
विद्वान् कः कः साम्यर्च परशेक्षितवर्धनः ॥

Valmiki Ramayana, I. 2-3.
Satyvrat Sastri in the beginning of his epic gives the reason of his composition and highlights the important facets of the personality of Indira Gandhi.

Similarly Icharam Dwivedi has made it clear that the Carita of Vamana is divine and it is beneficial and is giver of punya.

\[Vāman-caritam \text{ I.12, p. 4,}\]
In the beginning of the *Nehru-carita*, Brahmananda Shukla depicts the distinctive aspects of Nehru’s character.

*Svarūpamā suṣūktasamādhīteśārye—*

*Niyatī paropkarāṇaṅkāyaḥ: priyāṣe: 1*

Sārvarthata kṣastraśa uṣṇa sānita vināśitī
taṁ nēhāṁ nṛkvarṁ manrasa śyāram: 1

*Nāśanaśkrāntamahāsatiṣyamābhaṁtāni—*

Rāmādībhāṃ: suśrūptetraḥ vaca: pramūnaḥ: 1

Prōyābhāratamchārītreśvyaṁ prasthā

deva api pramūditasthitam śyāram: 11

Mābhāgagō pariṣṭanāḥ khatvya-pragān

Praśīti pariṣṭa pramūditaḥ paramādeśa

loke vādīyaḥ - chāritamātā - pān - tūm -

stān manvētŚmātēna manrasa śyāram: 1

*Nehru-caritam, XVIII-79, p. 237*

All these *mahākāvyas* can be categorized in three groups. There are some historical *Mahākāvyas*. It is pertinent to deal, before we take up discussion of the subject proper, with the question as to what is meant by the term historical. Various western scholars have defined history in various ways. From a study of their definitions we arrive at the
conclusion that history is a narrative of events connected with men. Its purpose is not to give statements of facts or chronological lists of events. It is a narrative devoted to the events treated. More clearly it is a systematic written account of events particularly those which affect a nation, an institution, science or art. Its purpose is to explain past events as steps in human progress, the study of characters and significance of events.

Now applying this definition or the general consensus with regard to the sense of history to Sanskrit literature, we find that we don't have history here at all. We have here the historical kavyas, not histories. And that is the line that divides the Indian and western concepts. Even the best work in Indian historical tradition, the Rājatarangini of Kalhana is a kāvya with all that it means. We may well quote here the view of Keith: “in view of the antiquity and developed character of Indian civilization, it would be ridiculous to expect to find India destitute of historical sense, but what is really essential is the fact despite abundance of its literature, history is so miserably represented and that in the whole of the great period of Sanskrit literature there is not even one writer who can be seriously regarded as a critical historian.”

History has often been woven with myths and legends in India. The facts were wrapped in panegyric fiction and poetical embellishments. Indians did not develop history as a science or an art as the Europeans did. They developed it in their own way, adding to it myths and legends and thus giving it a particularly Indian touch. To them history
need not have been just a factual statement of old occurrences, it has
to be something more and it is precisely here that the difference comes
in. They considered it a means through which the inculcation in
posterity of the fourfold object of life is to be attempted. This is what
the older and as yet the only available complete definition of history
says;

प्राचीनाःहार्मोकाश्चेतापूर्वेणमधुमयायमन्वितम् 1
पूर्वप्रवाचायुक्त मितिवांश प्रथमुपने ॥३॥

This was the sense of history to old Indians. And this sense of history
--- we are unable to agree here with Keith—were not miserably
represented in India.

The story and ethos of the Rājarājanish, how Kalhana presents an
authentic picture of his contemporary social, political life, as well as
of the past, were summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru, in the course of his
long foreword to R.S.Pandit’s translation of the chronicle. Here is an
excerpt:

It is history and it is a poem, though the two perhaps go ill together
and in a translation especially we have to suffer for this combination.
For we cannot appreciate the music of the poetry, the charm of
Kalhana’s noble and melodious language. It is a story of medieval
times and often enough it is not pleasant story. There is too much of
palace intrigue and murder and murder and treason and civil war and
tyranny. It is the story of autocracy and military oligarchy. It is the
story of the king and the royal families and nobility, not of the common folk. And yet Kalhana's book is something far more than a record of kings' doings. It is a rich storehouse of information, political, social and, to some extent, economic. We see the panoply of the middle ages, the feudal knights in glittering armour and intrigues and fighting, and militant and adulterous queens. Women seem to play quite an important part, not only behind the scenes but in the councils and the field as leaders and soldiers. Sometimes we get intimate glimpses of human relation and human feelings, of love and hatred, of faith and passion. We read of Suyya's great engineering feats and irrigation works; of Llitaditya's distant wars of conquest in far counties; of Meghavahana's curious attempt to spread non-violence also by conquest; of the building of temples and monasteries and their destruction by unbelievers and iconoclasts who confiscated the temple treasures. And then there were famines and floods and great fires which decimated the population and reduce the survivors to misery.

It was a time when the old economic system was decaying; the old order was changing in Kashmir as it was in the rest of India. Kashmir had been the meeting ground of the different cultures of Asia, the western Graeco-Roman and Iranian and the eastern Mongolian, but essentially it was a part of India and the inheritor of Indo-Aryan tradition. And as the economic structure collapsed, it shook up the old Indo-Aryan polity and weakened it and made it an easy prey to internal commotion and foreign conquest. Flashes of old Indo-Aryan ideals come out but they are already out of the date under the changing condition. Warlords march up and down and make havoc of
the people. Popular risings take place- Kalhana describes Kashmir as “a country which delighted in insurrection!” and they are exploited by the military leaders and adventures to their own advantage.”

There is a regular tradition in Sanskrit kāvyas and historiography biographies of eminent persons have been written in verse. It serves two purpose. Besides providing aesthetic enjoyment to connoisseurs they serve as a record of the activities of those persons. They thus unfold not only the history of those persons but also the condition of the times in which they lived. In those parts of India where the tradition of historical writings did not develop, unlike Kashmir where Kalhana’s Rajatarangini and its subsequent supplements came into being, this type of biographical writing provided a lot of historical facts and information to fill up the gaps in India history. Bana’s Harṣa-carita, Bilhana’s Vikramāṅkadeva-carita, Padmagupta’s Navāsāhasāṅka-carita, to name only a few, are such work of the older period.

These literary works though important in themselves are not historical in the true sense of the term. They do contain in themselves references to historical incidents and events and can therefore serve as valuable source books of the history of the contemporary period.

“In the poeticians jargon, the SGGSC, is a Khaṇḍakāvyā, though, in defiance of his injunctions, it details, albeit briefly, the Guru’s life in its entirety. The eventful career of the guru marked by an exuberance of vicissitudes, thrilling and elevating, forms a subject for a
Mahākāvyya. While in its present form, the poems seems to be weighed down with abundant details, the Mahākāvyya would have provided the author with a wilder canvas to deal with the varied events in the Guru’s career in greater details.

However, it would be idle to visualize for the SGGSC a format that it does not profess to have. It should be dispassionate to evaluate the poem as it stands. And the fact of the matter is that it describes, in brief, the variegated career of the guru in verses that are at once elegant and elevating. It is doubtless intended to be a versified biography of the grate Guru. This is what the name of the poem suggests and the author candidly admits with equal certitude that it may be called a historical poem. As a biography it exemplifies the modern concept of biography. And contrary to the ancient Caritakāvyas its narrative is not shrouded in the overgrowth of conventional trappings, which, whatever their poetic worth, form insurmountable hurdles in its smooth flow and tend to undermine the worth of the biography by the frequent digressions that they essentially constitute. Here the narrative flows uninterrupted by prolix descriptions. Whatever descriptions we have in the poem are invariably brief and seem to be skillfully interwoven in the texture of the narrative. The frame of the poem is undoubtedly fragile to sustain the massive narrative enlivened by the equally tremendous personality of the Guru. But it is the brevity of the expression that turns out to be its asset. Obviously the poet has no fascination for the conventional descriptions that overwhelm the narrative in the Caritakāvyya and thereby turn it into fiction rather than history. It is precisely because
of the balanced conception of the biography that the poem emerges as an excellent historical kāvyā and thereby seems to debunk the unkind charge that Sanskrit language cannot claim genuine history to its credit. The SGGSC is as good a historical poem, as interesting as a biography as it is a poem. The blend of the poetry and history makes it out as one of the best biographies/historical poems in Sanskrit verse. The SGGSC is as readable a biography as Louis Fisher’s biography of Mahatma Gandhi or Frank Morse’s biography of Nehru, with the added sweetness of Sanskrit poetry distinguishes by dynamism and piousness of the Guru that it seeks to delineate in inspiring tones.\(^5\)

The second category is Mythological. The epics like Radhā-caritam come under mythological category. But it is interesting to note that the poet like Harinarayana Dikshita has made appreciable innovation in the presentation of the character of Radha. In the poem, Radha is shown enthusiastic to work for development of society. She is trying to spread education and to remove illiteracy from the society. She is committed for cause unlike Radha of Kalika Prasada Shukla. Hari Narayana’s Radha is highly intellectual, courageous, committed, dedicated and conscientious human being. The old narrative does not find place in the epic of Harinarāyan. From this perspective, the is truly a representative of modern period.

We have devoted a complete chapter on the poems written on women. This shows the progressive attitude of modern Sanskrit writers. They do not follow the rhetoric definitions and not bound to tradition. So they have sung the glory of women and rejected the rule.
There are many Sanskrit poets who have glorified the *matrvabhāva*. We try to bring home this fact in the light on Rewa Prasad Dwivedi’s following verses.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ko va varnati prabhavatu jagamamutrasya yasanta} \\
\text{kena varna manunakampi kavihṛṣṇićchandakuranga} \\
\text{Asya: punyasya susūbhaya praveṇu pūritu dev} \\
\text{vaścetavanta śrāvī Śrīrūpaśriśriyām ākhyānām} \\
\text{Sita- caritam, X.80, p. 156}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yo māturavṛte mahimāsādīyā} : \\
\text{sa vai mahākāramikā prabhuvā} : \\
\text{sa bhāratī: sa śivatvālapā} - \\
\text{stvau sārṣabhim manu muṇḍaḥ} : \\
\text{sa viśvākṛtvāśvaraḥbhūtā} : \\
\text{sa viśvākṛtvā sītya pūru sāmaraśya} : \\
\text{jñānākṛtvāśrṇānī vī prāchāda} \\
\text{yo nāgtriṇaḥprātipāmī ca} : \\
\text{sa bhāratavṛte mātrīnītyāna tattvānvedanāmāsmānaḥ} : \\
\text{tatraśriḥ yādṛṣṭa nanāme ca prātipāmā pratibhāt} \\
\text{sa bhāratavṛte mātrīnītyāna tattvānvedanāmāsmānaḥ} : \\
\end{align*}
\]
Kumara Narendra Pratap Simha in his poem brings out nicely the past glory of India. His patriotic feeling presented sweet verses make us proud of our country.

सिताकरित्र, X.49, p. 147

tāmēva mātṛtuṁśāṁ tadāṁva viḍeṣṣṭuṇyaṁapulastya sarvāṁ 
lokaṁ svam kevalamekṣaṁ eva "mātā tu śīrṣāv charaṇārsya" II

Kumara Narendra Pratap Simha in his poem brings out nicely the past glory of India. His patriotic feeling presented sweet verses make us proud of our country.
Tryambaka Bhandarkar in his poem clearly justifies the importance of Dharma. The following verses are illustrative of the point.

इह हि मनुजयान्त्यं लक्ष्यं जगत्पतितिृष्यते
विषयवधवीमथ्यारूढोज्जृवत्नं न सम्भूते ।
अनुमृगतृणं धावन्ति काओजनुनुते हरिणी जलं
प्रभवति महानु धर्मो नेतुं नरं परमं परम् ॥ प : 133

वैज्ञानिकाविष्कृतिमात्रास्मिन्
कंथं जगत्पति सम्भवताह्याम् ।
मनुष्यजातो कियतिन्तरस्य
व्यक्तं: प्रमाणं किल सम्भवतयः: ॥

धर्मं विना विश्वसागराः
भेदरणं पशुभिर्बीरक्रीणम् ।
भोगविलासं न मनुष्यधर्मं
शां परं जीवनलक्षयं च: ॥

धर्मस्यालोकिकः: श्रोकः: पशुभैन नरायते ।
नारायध्यायते विना धर्मं नरं: पशुः: ॥

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Icharama Dwivedi gives vent to his devotional feelings in the following mellifluous verses.

अधिनर किले दिव्यरुचिवर्तलं

महिलामस्ति मित्रांमाधवयम्

दुःखिलिन्दरमयं तु दर्शनं

समधिगच्छति ५ रंगसमीरावस्थम्

नोच्चैवं दाता नापि विद्वानन्धारा

नायकमार्गे चाहिन्नामातानि

धर्म: किंतु स्वामुभूतेस्वास्थि: किद्वेत्तस्य: कायम्जाते प्रकाश: 

स्नेह: सम्पूर्णांसंसार - स्फि: प्राप्यपुषु निर्मल: 

उदारता तथा तेषु धर्मस्य निक्षय: समृत: 

यूवं सर्वेऽमुक्तेवा महान्नोज्वाजां चाहां अमृतोमिः यथायथम्

कोणलं बलुं प्रियसि पापिनो व: पूणांनि दिव्यानन्तिनुलु एवविनाशि

जनं मरणं दिव्यबिनिं नरुपीः कुम्भः जीयने

भवतो विरहे भवे भवे, भविष्यता भवनं चितायते

न जने न धने, कलकंते तभि कोडिः परं सुखं भवे

भजते न पदामुनुज्ज्वलं धर्मास्य यतिभिषेकवालयम्
Hari Narayan Diksit depicts the present day natural calamities like earthquake that takes place because of deforestation though he deals with a traditional theme.

Hari Narayana Dikshit hit in his other *mahākāvyya* describes the nature of *Mokṣaloka* in a modern manner.

From *Bhīṣma-caritām*. XIX. 21, p. 275.

Trigunamandha Shukla describes the social realities in the following words.

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Mithilesa Kumari Mishra composes her epic in a free style without using traditional metres. The following verses are the examples;

तत्र लभते न शास्तिनि लभते सुखं
कोशिपेतापि खलनेन तत्त्रिशिलम् ।
राशक्का यत्र सद्विनि खलु भवताका
यत्र दण्डेन वै शासनं चालितम् ॥
From the above analysis it is understood that some of the poems are in fact significant compositions. The *Bodhisattva-caritam* is one of them. Satyavrat Varma rightly remarks: “despite the constraints imposed by an in cohesive theme, fragmented into isolated episodes, coupled with the daring departures that he has made from the established norms, the author has given in the poem, powerful expression to some of the highest moral values and ideals that sustain society. By dint of his poetic talents, smooth and polished language, refined style, perceptive
imagination, profound grammatical equipment and the didactic and ethical values that he espouses in the *Bodhisattva-caritam* establishes him as a front-ranking poet.”

He further remarks; “the *Indirā-�ndhi-caritam* differs widely from the author’s *Bodhisattva-caritam*. While it adheres to the norms more faithfully, it, in a way, represents a pole apart from that lively *mahakavya* which flouts them with impunity. The *Bodhisattva-caritam* is an actuated by a keenness of the author to establish himself as an eminent poet. The objective of the *Indirā-�ndhi-caritam*, in the other hand, is to spin out a faithful biography of the lady who wielded unchallenged power for long as PM of the largest democracy, in elegant verse. The poet has eminently succeeded in the mission that he had set before him-self.”

The other important aspects of the above said poets they are composed in easy language and lucid style. The popular metres are used. Approach is not so much superfluous. So they are enjoyable and interesting.

Thus it is understood that the poems surveyed here are the precious wealth of Sanskrit literature. Most of them were completely unknown and their significance was not realized. Since the material is scattered and a systematic history of modern Sanskrit has not been so far prepared it was not possible to collect all the poems. It is believed that many more such works are still in darkness. Some are still unpublished, remaining in the manuscript form. More facts will come
to light when critical study of such works will be prepared from socio-cultural perspective.

Worthy of praise is that power of true poets, whatever it may be, which surpass even the stream of nectar, inasmuch as by it their own bodies of glory as well as those of others obtain immortality. Who else but poets, resembling Prajapatis and able to bring forth lovely production can place the past times before the eyes of men.
REFERENCE

1. दिनुस्य : कुसान्त्वकारिन्त्वितः मे न रूचिते स
खीवीकर्णातादुतुमहमित्वात् सत्वे ||

   Bhudeva-caritam, XIII.56

   See *Itihasa*.


4. Quated in *Kalhana* by Dhar, Somnath Sahitya Academy, 1978
   pp.2-3


6. *Ibid* p.83

7. *Ibid* p.147

8. Dhar, Somnath *op.cit.* p.26

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