CHAPTER - IV

LITERARY MERITS OF VISNUŚMRTI: Its Style, Metre, Figures of Speech etc.

The Visnuśmrti or Vaisnavadharmasāstra or Visnuśūtra is a peculiar work. It is peculiar in the sense that the dharmaśūtras like Āpastamba, Baudhāyana and others are composed in terse prose aphorisms while the dharmaśāstra or smṛti works like the Manusāṁhitā, Yājñavalkya smṛti and so on are composed in versified form in classical sanskrit. The Visnuśmrti is composed both in sūtra form and metrical verses. Unlike other sūtra works on dharmaśāstra, it may perhaps be a peculiar phenomenon of this work.

It is seen that some of the sūtras of the Visnuśmrti are connected together in the Yājñavalkyaśmṛti in versified form. On the otherhand it may perhaps be that some verses or ślokas of the Yājñavalkya smṛti are broken into sūtra form in the Visnuśmrti.

The chapters of the Visnuśmrti are not uniform in length. The longest chapter is the chapter 5 with 197 aphorisms, out of which 183 aphorisms are in prose and 14 aphorisms are in verse. The shortest chapters are 34, 39, 40, 42 and 76. These chapters have two aphorisms each one in prose and the other in verse.
The Visnusmrīti has quoted a good number of vedic mantras as well as we find innumerable verses composed in metrical forms of the classical type. Almost all the chapters of the Visnusmrīti have one or more verses at the end. The chapters 54 and 96 have a verse in the middle of the chapter. The chapters 1, 99 and 100 entirely consist of verses while the chapter 74 is entirely in prose. Some Vedic mantras in full are quoted in the chapters 48, 73 and 86. On the other hand some mantras are referred to in chapter 56 in their conventional technical names such as aghamaraśana, Devakṛta, Sudhavatyaḥ, taratsamandīya, kusmāndyaḥ, candrasāma, abhīmgaṃ, atharvaśīraḥ and so on. The Pratikas or initial part of some of the vedic mantras are quoted in chapters 65 and 67. Several mantras quoted in the Visnusmrīti are found to be quoted in the kāthakārghyṣūtra. The Visnusmrīti resembles the Vasisthadharmaśūtra in style and in treatment of the subjects. Some of the sūtras in chapter 56 of the visnusmrīti are found identical with those of the śaṁkhasmrīti. The worship of vāsudeva described in the Visnusmrīti is similar to that of the Visnudharmottara. It seems that the Visnusmrīti knows the Pañcarātra system, as the vāsudeva, Śaṁkaraśaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha incarnations. The seven days of the week with the deities presiding over them, the twenty seven nakṣatras with their presiding deities and the fifteen lunar days i.e. tithis are mentioned in connection with the performance of śrāddha ceremonies with specific objects.
The verses, in the Visnusmrti, are composed in different metres based on the vedic Anustubha and Tristubh particularly such as the classical śloka or Anustup, Indra-vajra, upendravajra, vasantatilaka etc.

It may perhaps be stated that the author of the Visnusmrti has used different figures of speech (alamkāra) such as the Rūpaka, upamā, arthāntaranyāsa etc.

It may not be that the verses enumerated in the Visnusmrti do not conform to the rules of sanskrit poetics (alamkāra śāstra) yet the verses of the Visnusmrti are good examples of fine poetry. An attempt will be made here to discuss the metres and the figures of speech of the verses in short occurring in the Visnusmrti.

METRES:

It has already been stated that the author of the Visnusmrti has employed different metres as enumerated in classical sanskrit.

The majority of the verses found in the Visnusmrti are composed in the classical śloka or Anuṣṭup metre based on the vedic Anuṣṭubh metre. The Anuṣṭubh metre is defined in the Rkprātiśākhya as consisting of the sātra two letters (aksara) divided into four quarters (pādas), each quarter
having eight letters. On the other hand, the sloka or anuṣṭup metre in classical Sanskrit is a samavṛtta metre. It consists of four quarters (pādas) and each quarter consists of eight letters. The fifth letter is short, the sixth long and the seventh is alternately long and short. The verses occurring in the chapters - I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XL, XLI, XLII, XLIII, XLIV, XLV, XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII, XLIX, L, LI, LII, LIII, LIV, LV, LVII, LXII, LXIII, LXIV, LXV, LXVI, LXVII, LXVIII, LXIX, LXXI, LXXII, LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXV, LXXVI, LXXVII, LXXVIII, LXXIX, LXXXI, LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV, LXXXV, LXXXVI are composed in classical sloka or Anuṣṭup metre based on the vedic Anuṣṭubh metre. The verses found in the chapters - XIX, LIX, LXXII, LXXXVI are composed in Anuṣṭubh, indravajra and Upendra vajra.

\[1. \text{dvātrimśadaśkāraṇuṣṭup catvāro'ṛṣṭakṣaraḥ samāḥ} / \text{RP, 16/37} \\
\text{sāṣṭākṣarair-anuṣṭup syāccatuspāccha} / \text{Agniya chandahsāraḥ, 3/6} \\
\text{ṛṛtiyamanuṣṭup catvāro'ṛṣṭakah} / \text{Kātyāyana.} \\
\]

\[2. \text{sloke sāṣṭhāṃ gururjiṃeyām} \\
\text{sarvatra laghu pañcamam} / \text{dvi catuḥ pādayoхhrasvam} \\
\text{saptamāṃ dīrghamanyayoḥ} / \text{Chandomānjarī} \]
metres. The Indravajrā and Upendravajrā metres of classical Sanskrit are based on the Vedic Tristubh metre. The Vedic Tristubh metre consists of 44 syllables divided into four quarters and each quarter has eleven syllables or letters. The Indravajrā and the Upendravajrā metres in classical sanskrit have 44 letters each in a verse divided into four quarters and each quarter has eleven letters. The Indravajrā and Upendravajrā are also samavṛtta metres.

3. catuscatvārīmāt triśṭubakṣaraṇī catuspadā / ekādaśaṅkṣaraḥ pādaḥ // RP. 16/64
   ekādaśaṅkṣara vai triśṭuba-gāyatrī
ekṣatram triśṭup // SB. 1.3.5.5
   anādeśe pādaścatvārah.

4. **Indravajrā**
syādindravajrā yadi tau jagau gahu//

Chandomāñjari

indravajrā tau jagau g //
yasya pāde takārau jakāra-gakārau gakāraśca.
tad vṛttamindravajrā nāma /

Example: yasyāṁ triśat saptamakṣaram syāt
hrasvaṁ sujamhe navamaṅca tadvat /
gatyā vilakṣikrtahamsakānte
tāmindravajrāṁ brūvate kavīndrāḥ //

Upendravajrā
taupendravajrā jatajāstato gau //

ibid.

Contd.
The verses in chapters XXIX, XXX and XLVIII are composed in Anuṣṭubh or sloka metre and Vedic Trīṣṭubh metre. The verses 9, and 10 of chapter XXIX, verse 47 of Chapter XXX, verse 6 of chapter XLVIII are in Vedic Trīṣṭubh metre. The verses in the chapter LVI are in Upendravajrā while the verses in the chapter XCIX are in Indravajrā, Upendravajrā and in Vasantatilaka metres. The Vasantatilaka is a variety of the Vedic śākvarī metre. The Vedic śākvarī metre consists of 56 syllables divided into four quarters and each quarter has fourteen syllables. The Vasantatilaka metre of classical Sanskrit also consists of four quarters in a verse and each quarter has fourteen syllables. 

Contd. 4.

upendravajrā jtau jgau g //
yasya pāde jakāra-takāra-jakāra-gakārau ca,
tadvṛttamupendravajrā nāma/

Example:

उ (ja) त (ta) प (ja) र (ga) य (ga)
bhavannakhāḥ kundadalaśriyo ye
namanti lakṣmīstanalakhane'pi /
upendra ! vajrādhi karkaśatvāṁ
kathāṃ gataśte ripudāraṇāyām //
atra pādānte yatih /

phāgala 6/21

5. śatpaṅcāsattu śakvarī //

RP. 16/81

anādeśe pādāścatvāraḥ.

Vasantatilaka
jñeyām vasantatilakām tabhajā jgau gah//

Chandomañjari
verses in chapter 100 are composed in classical Anuṣṭubh and Upendra-vajra metres. It is conspicuous that there is not a single verse in chapter LXXIV of the Visnu-smṛti.

It is well known that the Vedic metres are computed in accordance with the number of syllables (aṅkṣara) or letters. The most important metres in the Vedas are seven in number, viz. Gāyatrī, Uṣṇik, Anuṣṭubh, Brhatī, Pāṃkti, Tristūtbh and Jagatī.

The Gāyatrī metre generally consists of three quarters (pādas) and each quarter consists of eight syllables (aṅkṣara), totalling twenty-four syllables in a verse. The other metres Uṣṇik, Anuṣṭubh, Brhatī, Pāṃkti, Tristūtbh and Jagatī are increased by four syllables in the verses of each of the succeeding metres from the Gāyatrī. It may perhaps the Vedic metres are enumerated in an ascending order in respect of the number of syllables in order to compute the particular metre. On the other hand, the metres of the verses in classical Sanskrit have no fixed order in respect of the number of syllables or letters like those of the Vedic metres, though the samavṛttā metres are determined by computing the syllables.

6. gāyatryuṣṇiganuṣṭup ca brhatī ca prajāpateḥ /
   pāṃktistriṣṭubjagatī ca sapta chandāmsitāni ha //
   aṣṭākṣarā prabhṛtīni //
   caturbhūyaḥ param param //
   gāyatritī sā caturviṁśatākṣarā //
   aṣṭākṣaaraśtryaḥ pādāścatvāro vā saḍaṅkṣaraḥ //

RP, 16/1-2
RP, 16/16
It has already been stated that the classical Anuṣṭūpa or śloka metre is based on the Vedic Anuṣṭubh metre. The classical śloka metre has four quarters (pādas) consisting of eight letters or syllables in each quarter. The fifth syllable is short, the sixth long and the seventh is alternately long and short in each quarter. The following verses from the Viṣṇuśaṁśti composed in the śloka metre is quoted as an example.

\[
\text{nīla paṁkajapatrākṣīm} \\
\text{śāradendunibhānanām} / \\
\text{alisaṁghālakām śubhrām} \\
\text{bandhujīvādharām śubhām} //
\]

VS 1/22

\[
\text{nātatāyivadhe doṣo} \\
\text{hanturbhavati kaścana} / \\
\text{prakāśām vāprakāśām vā} \\
\text{manyustanmanyumṛcchati} //
\]

VS 5/191

The following verse occurring in the chapter 19 of the Viṣṇuśaṁśti is composed in the Indravajrā metre.

\[
\text{duḥkhaṁvitānāṁ mṛtabāndhavanā} \\
\text{māśvāsanaṁ kuryuradīnasttvāḥ} / \\
\text{vākyaṁstuvairbhūmi tavābhidhāsyē} \\
\text{vākyānyahām tāni manoḥbhirāme} //
\]

VS 19/24

The Indravajrā metre is based on the Vedic Triṣṭubh metre, so far as the number of syllables (aṅkṣara) are concerned.
The Indravajra also consists of four quarters and each quarter has eleven syllables or letters. The yati (pause) falls on the fifth and the sixth syllable.

The upendravajra metre also consists of four quarters in a verse and each quarter has eleven syllables. This metre, too, is developed from the Vedic Triśūbha metre. The following verses from the Visnusmṛti which are composed in the Upendravajra metre are quoted as examples:

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trivargasevāṁ satatānnadānam
surārcanaṁ brahmaṇapūjanaṁ ca /
svādhyaśasevāṁ pitṛtarpaṇaṁ ca
kṛtvā gṛhi śakrapadaṁ prayāti //

VS. 59/29
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vasāmyathārke ca niśākare ca
tārāgaṇāḍhye gagane vimeghe /
meghe tathā lamba payodhare ca
śakrāyudhāḍhye ca taḍitprakāśe //

VS. 99/9
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sāre ca samgrāma vinirgate ca
sthitāṁte svargasadaḥ prayāte/
vedadhvanau cāpyatha śāmkhasābde
svāhā svadhāyāmatha vādyasābde //

VS. 99/15
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The following verses of the Visnusmṛti chapter may be cited as example of the Vasantatilaka metre.
The vasantatilaka metre consists of four quarters in a verse and each quarter has fourteen syllables or letters. This metre is developed in classical Sanskrit from the Vedic śakvari metre. The śakvari metre has fifty six syllables divided into four quarters and each quarter has fourteen syllables.

It is seen from the above discussion that the verses of the Visnusmṛti, though composed in classical metres yet these have śrauta basis.

ALĀṆĀKĀRA:

It has already been stated that some of the verses of the Visnusmṛti are good examples of figures of speech (alāṁkāra) used in Sanskrit poetics. The author of the Visnusmṛti has used the figures of speech such as upamā, Rūpaka, Arthāntaranyāsa and so on.

Some of the verses from the Visnusmṛti are quoted in the following paragraphs as examples of different figures of speech used by the author.
The author has employed Rūpaka ałamkāra in the description of the Yajñavarāha in the first chapter of the Visnuśmrī. 7

vedapādoyūpadaṁśṭraḥ
kratudantaścitimukhaḥ /
agnijihvo darbharomā
brahmaśirṣo mahātapāḥ //

VS. 1/3

vediskandho havirgandho
havyakavyādivegavān /
prāgvāṁśakāyo dyutimān
nānādikṣabhiranvitaḥ //

VS. 1/7

nīlapamkajapatrākṣīṁ
śāradendunibhānanām /
alisamghālakāṁ subhrāṁ
bandhujivādharāṁ subhāṁ //

VS. 1/22

7. rūpakām rūpitāropāḥ (rūpitāropād)
viṣaye nirapahnave /

SD. Ch. X.

yathāsthite upameye upamānasyābhedaṁropo rūpakālaṁkāra
dhī saralārthah /

rūpayati upamānopameyayorabhedaṁpanam karotīti
rūpakamiti vyutpattih //

ibid, commentary.
The author has used upama alamkara also in the Visnusmrti. The following verses may be taken into account as examples of upama.

8.

8. sāmyam vācyamavaidharmyam vākyaiikya upamā dvayoḥ /
The Arthāntaranyāsa alāmkāra is also found to be used by the author of the *Visnusmṛti*. The following verses may be cited as examples of Arthāntaranyāsa.⁹

\[ \text{prajā sukhe sukhi rājā} \]
\[ \text{tadduṭkhe yaśca duḥkhitaḥ} / \]
\[ \text{sa kīrtiyukto loke 'śmin} \]
\[ \text{pretya svarge mahīyate} /// \]

*Vs. 3/97-98*

\[ \text{yathādhenusahasreṣu} \]
\[ \text{vatso vindati mātaram} / \]
\[ \text{tathāpūrva kṛtam karma} \]
\[ \text{kartāram vindate dhruvam} /// \]

*Vs. 20/47*

\[ \text{dehino'śmin yathā dehe} \]
\[ \text{kaumāram yauvānam jarā} / \]
\[ \text{tathā dehāntaraprajptir-} \]
\[ \text{dhīrastatāra na muhyati} /// \]
\[ \text{gr̥ṇātīha yathā vastraṁ} \]
\[ \text{tyaktvā pūrvadhṛtaṁ naraḥ} / \]
\[ \text{gr̥ṇātyevasm navaṁ dehī} \]
\[ \text{dehaṁ karmanibandhanam} /// \]

*Vs. 20/49-50*

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9. sāmānyam vā viśeṣeṇa viśeṣastena vā yadi/
   kāryaṇca kāraṇecetām kāreyaṇa ca samarthyate/
   sādharmyeṇetareṇārthāntaranyāso'ṣṭadha tataḥ///

*SD. x/80*
The chapter 99 of the Visnusmrta is also full of sentiment and different figures of speech. It may perhaps be said that the Visnusmrta differs to a great extent from other works on the dharmaśāstra literature and this work may perhaps be said to show the transition of vedic style to classical style as we find here the admixture of vedic and classical style.

The Visnusmrta, therefore, occupies an important place in the development and the study of the history of the dharmaśāstra literature as it is treated as one of the Mūlasmrtaś.