

CHAPTER-VIII

GARUDA IN CREATIVE SANSKRIT LITERATURE

While the Garuḍa myth is abundantly treated in the *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇa*, it is quite likely that the creative literature (called *kāvya* in Sanskrit) which generally borrows the theme from an *Itihāsa* or a noble source (like the *Purāṇas*) also contains adequate delineation of the myth of Garuḍa. The proposed study will include a critical survey of the extent of involvement of the classical Sanskrit literature with Garuḍa myth.

A critical survey of Garuḍa myth in creative Sanskrit literature includes Mahākāvyas and drama also.

While describing different speedy things very often poets compare them with Garuḍa. For example – In Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Kādambarī* – the horse Indrāyudha.

In Śrī Harṣa's *Naiṣadhacaritaṃ* it is depicted as –

yathohyamānaḥ khalu bhogabhojinā prasahya vairocānijasya pattanaṃ |
vidarbhajāyā madanastathā mano 'nalāvaruddhaṃ vayasaiva veśitaḥ ||¹

¹ *Naiṣadhacaritaṃ*, 1st Ch., Verse No.32

In the said verse it is stated that cupid could enter into the heart of Damayantī as she was young at that time (*vayasā*). This situation is compared to the paurāṇic story of Ūṣā-Aniruddha², with the help of pun. (*śleṣālaṅkāraḥ*).

In the said verse there is Pun in the word ‘*vayas*’. The word ‘*vayas*’ has two meanings – one is age and the other is a bird. In the story of Ūṣā-Aniruddha it is stated that Ūṣā, the daughter of Bāṇāsura, had fallen in love with Aniruddha, the grandson of Kṛṣṇa and son of Pradyumna. Pradyumna is otherwise known as Kāmadeva. Ūṣā’s friend Citralekhā managed to bring Aniruddha to the palace of Ūṣā and they got married.

While coming to the palace of Ūṣā, Aniruddha came riding upon the bird Garuḍa, the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu. He could do so because of the fact that Lord Kṛṣṇa is an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu.

In Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s *Kādambārī*, which is a kathā-type of prose romance, the mention of Garuḍa is found in the description of king Śūdraka. Śūdraka was a great and kind king. He gave shelter and pleased

² *tato garuḍamārūya smṛtamātrāgatam hariḥ |*

vala-pradyumuasahito bāṇasya prayayau puram ||

ViṣṇuPurāṇam, Ch-33, p.446, Sl.No.12

those people who came to him with humbleness. This quality of Śūdraka has been compared to vainateyas, that is Garuḍa's activities through which he could please his mother.

Cf: *pravartayitā goṣṭhavandhānām, āśraya rasikānām,*
pratyādeśo dhanuṣmatām, dhīreyaḥ sāhasikānām,
agraṇīvidagdhānām, vainateya iva vinatānandajanaḥ,
vaiśya iva cāpakotimasūt sārītasakalārātī
kulācalo rājā śūdrako nāma ||³

Here the term 'vinatā' has pun, one meaning of the term 'vinatā', is Garuḍa's mother, the other one is modest person.

Again we come across another reference of Garuḍa in Kādambārī while describing 'Indrāyudha', the horse of king candrāpīḍa. It is said that Lord Viṣṇu's mount, Garuḍa, the king of birds is faster and powerful than mind. Even then in the description of Indrāyudha it is mentioned that the horse Indrāyudha is swifter than Garuḍa and probably Lord Viṣṇu has not seen Indrāyudha yet as he still has the fascination of riding upon Garuḍa.

³ Kādambārī (pūrva bhāgaḥ) Śūdrakavarṇanam, Page-15

Cf: *manye bhagavato nārāyaṇasya cakṣurgocaramiyatāpi*

kālena nāyamupāgataḥ yenādyāpi

*tām garuḍārohana-vyasanitām na tyejati.*⁴

In *Harshacaritam* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa it is found that to compare the qualities of the two princes – Rājyavardhana and Harṣavardhana, the word Garuḍa is mentioned. They were charming and they overpowered the world by their valour and fame resembling flashing moonlight and therefore, they were like the sun and the moon. The moon is *abhirāma* while the sun is *durnirīkṣya*. The princes were like fire and wind acting in unison and manifesting their effulgence and force. If fire and wind be combined, the devastation wrought by them would be appalling. Their bodies are like Aruṇa and Garuḍa, who are assigned for carrying the Sun and Viṣṇu. Aruṇa is the charioteer of the Sun and Garuḍa is the vehicle of Viṣṇu.

Cf: *atha candrasūryāviva sphurajjyotsnāyaśaḥ*

pratapākrānta bhuvanāvabhirāmadurnirīkṣau,

agni marutāviva samabhivyektatejovalāvekībhūtau,

śilākathina kāyavandhau himavadvindhyācalau,

⁴ *Kādambarī* (Purva Bhāga) Indrāyudhavarnanā, Page-310

mahāvṛṣāviva kṛtayugayogyau aruṇagarudāviva

*harivāhanavibhakta śarīrau.*⁵

In the story of Jīmutavāhana in *Nāgānanda*, Garuḍa is found as the devourer of snakes. In the story – seeing the peaks of Malay mountain by flying white clouds Jīmutavāhana asked his friend Mitrāvasu, how beautiful is the mountain with white clouds. Then Mitrāvasu said that these are not clouds and these are the accumulations of snakes' bones. He also said that long years ago, Garuḍa, the son of Vinatā fed on reptiles by drinking water of the sea with his own wings. After destruction of the nāga dynasty, Garuḍa was prayed by the king of nāga.

The king of nāga said to Garuḍa “due to that fear thousand of nāga children would die and the death of our sons too would loose your interest for which you entered into the under-world. I will send a snake everyday to you and at this the king of birds, Garuḍa agreed. In this way the nāga dynasty was saved.”

⁵ *Harṣacaritam*, 4th Uchchāsaḥ, Page-10

Cf: *tataḥ sakalanāgalokavināśaśaṅkinā nāgarājena
garutmānabhihitāḥ.*

*mitrāvasuḥ – idamuktaṁ – tadabhisampātrāsāt sahasraśaḥ
śiśavaḥ pañcatvamupayānti. evaṁ ca
santatisamucchedādas mākaṁ tavaiva svārthahānirbhavet,
yadarthamabhipatati pātālaṁ tavaikaikaṁ
bhujāṅgamānāmanudivasāṁ samudrātatasthitasyāhameva
preṣayiṣyamīti. pratipannaṁ ca tat pakṣirājena.⁶*

Though the store house of Sanskrit literature is full of Mahākavya, Khaṇḍakāvya and Citrakāvya, yet it is thought to be most important for the scholars to complete the study of Pañca Mahākavyas i.e. *Raghuvamśam*, *Kumārasambhavam*, *Kirātārjunīyam*, *Śiśupālavadham* and *Naiṣadhacaritam*.

Due to the prowess and speed, Garuḍa the vehicle of Viṣṇu is described by the famous poets.

We find a reference of Garuḍa in *Raghuvamśam* canto XIII of Kalidasa also. It is stated that when Indra cut the feathers of the mountains, they scattered on all sides with the speed of Garuḍa.

⁶ *Nāgānandaṁ* (the story under the extract – “Śarīram Kṣaṇavidhvamsī Kalpāntasthāyino Guṇāḥ”:

In Kalidasa's *Raghuvamśam Mahākāvya*, in the XIIIth canto a description of mountains is given to depict the vastness of ocean, while Rāma returned from Laṅkā with his wife Sītā. Long ago Indra had cut the wings of mountains because they troubled the people in every regions. In this relation a reference is found in *Rāmāyaṇa* that mountains with wings were very speedy like Garuḍa.

Cf: *purvaṃ kṛtayuge tata parvatāḥ pakṣiṇo 'bhavan*

te'pi jagmurdiśaḥ sarvā garuḍa iva beginah

atastesu prayātesu devasaṃghāḥ maharṣibhiḥ

*bhūtani ca bhayaṃ jagmusteṣāṃ patanaśaikayā.*⁷

It has already been elaborately discussed in Chapter IIIrd of this dissertation, the heroic deeds of Garuḍa and his birth story found in the literature from Vedic age to the age of *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*. Now it has been tried to trace out the Garuḍa in classical Sanskrit literature. In the vast course of literature of modern India it is very difficult to collect all the materials regarding Garuḍa.

⁷ *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇam* (Sundarā-Uttarā Kaṇḍam), Sundarā Kaṇḍam-1/117-119.

In creative Sanskrit literature (of the modern state of Assam), the drama written by Śrīmanta Śaṅkardeva, it is found that where Lord Kṛṣṇa appears, invariably his vehicle, Garuḍa also appears. In the drama, *Pārijāta Harāṇa*, the verses composed by Śaṅkardeva are very sweet and charming. *Pārijāta Harāṇa*, literally means the stealing of flower Pārijāta which was brought by Nārada from the garden of Indra and Lord Kṛṣṇa presented it to his wife Rukmiṇī. It is found in a śloka—

Cf.: *khagendraṁ samāruhya nirjitya śakraṁ |*

mudā līlayā devakīgarbhajātaḥ ||

priyaṁ pārijātaṁ jahāra priyārthaṁ |

pareśāya kṛṣṇāya tasmai namaste ||⁸

In the said verse ‘Khagendra’ means Garuḍa, the vehicle of Lord Viṣṇu.

In the same drama, it is found that Lord Kṛṣṇa entered into the assembly with his wives Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā. Satyabhāmā, the another consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa, became enraged on him for the favour showing to Rukmiṇī by presenting the Pārijāta flower. On the other hand Satyabhāmā resolved to die if she could not get the flower. Lord Kṛṣṇa

⁸ *Aṅkiyā Nāt*, Page-132

remembered his vehicle Garuḍa, as Satyabhāmā was not able to walk for a long distance to reach the capital of Indra. Lord Kṛṣṇa at last went to Indra's court riding upon Garuḍa and uprooted the whole pārijāta tree and ultimately planted the same at Satyabhāmā's courtyard at Dwārakā.

Cf: *praveśamakaroddeva govindo garuḍāsanah |*

rukmiṇī-satyabhāmābhyām saha cārucaturbhūjah ||⁹

Here, in this śloka also Lord Kṛṣṇa ascending on Garuḍa came to the assembly with his wives.

Before bringing out the pārijāta flower, Lord Kṛṣṇa had to rescue the Gods by killing Narakāsura. So by ascending on Garuḍa he had to kill Narakāsura and it is found in the following śloka –

Cf: *āha āgatya garuḍa natvā kṛṣṇam kṛtāñjaliḥ |*

mama skandham samāruhya jahi pāpam durāśayam ||¹⁰

Again it is also stated that when Lord Kṛṣṇa went to Prāgjyotiṣpura ascending on Garuḍa, Narakāsura, encountered him by hearing the dhvani of pāñcajanya.

⁹ *Aṅkiyā Nāṭ*, Page-134

¹⁰ *Aṅkiyā Nāṭ*, Page-148

Cf : *prāgjyotiṣam so'tiyavena jāyayā |*

suparṇamāruhya yayau janārdanaḥ

kṣaṇena samprāpya puram pareśo

mahotsavai samkha-ravam cakāra ||¹¹

Here also, the mention of Garuḍa relating to Lord Kṛṣṇa is found.

¹¹ *Aṅkiyā Nāṭ*, Page-149