C H A P T E R XIX.

Literary Estimate of the Poem.

(A Critical Appreciation).

Theme:- The theme of Śiśupālavadha is neither eternal human triangle ending happily or otherwise nor the amorous sports of the hero and the heroine. There is again no treatment of physical or spiritual love. Māgha departs from the beaten path and treats of a theme which is something different from the usual one. The theme is the final victory of the forces of good over the forces of evil which prosper in the beginning; or to express it differently, it is the glory of the greatness of his favourite god Kṛsna that the devout poet Māgha sings.

Purpose:- This leads us to the purpose of the poem. Some[1] are of the opinion that the main purpose of Māgha in composing his poem is to imitate Bhāravi's Kirāta,and if possible to outshine it. It is with this purpose that Māgha borrows from the Bhāg. P. the two-third part of his story which is not based on the Mbh. and substitutes Śiśupāla in the place of Jarāsandha. Māgha presents his Śiśupāla in better and brighter colours with the help of the Viṣnu Purāṇa than that of Mbh. and Bhāg.P. and thus shows the great power and strength of the enemy Śiśupāla with a view to impressing the greatness of the exploit of Kṛsna. Moreover the poet Māgha wanted to imitate Bhāravi's Duryodhana in his creation of Śiśupāla. In order to make Śiśupāla great, it was obligatory

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1. Dr.K.N.Watve SKPP, pp.208-10.

for the poet to make Indra uneasy by the atrocities of Śiśupāla and to cause Indra to send a divine sage like Nārada to Kṛṣṇa with a request to kill him. Only then there is the glory of Kṛṣṇa and the greatness of Śiśupāla. Moreover, Māgha introduces the sage Nārada in the story because Bhāravi has introduced the sage Vyāsa. Māgha made his Kṛṣṇa to consult with Baladeva along with Uddhava in his political discussion because there are also three characters participating in the political discussion introduced by Bhāravi in his poem. The poet makes Bhīṣma suggest the name of Kṛṣṇa for the honour in place of Sahadeva in order to enhance the greatness of Kṛṣṇa. The envoy of Śiśupāla whom Māgha introduces in canto XVI is not to be found in the originalThis as well as Bhīṣmaīs long prayer of Kṛṣṇa (XIV. 59-70) and his description of the incarnations (XIV. 71-86) are introduced for competing with Kirāta. Thus the main purpose of Māgha was to imitate and surpass Bhāravi's Kirāta from every point of view.

It is true that Māgha endeavoured to force his claim to be acknowledged the greatness of his age by vying with his predecessors and his toughest task was to outshine Bhāravi, who as may be inferred, was at that time considered the greatest luminary in the firmament of poetry. This is not impossible but it is difficult to think that this was his main purpose. It becomes clear from the study of Śiśu. that Māgha is a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa whom he considers along with the author of Bhāg. P. the perfect incarnation of the Lord Viṣṇu. The poet states his purpose

in clear terms in the last[1] stanza giving the pedigree of the poet. In the second line of this stanza, he expressly says that his poem has become beautiful only because of singing the glory of Kṛṣṇa and adds with great modesty in the third line that it is something too much for him to expect to attain the fame of a great poet. When we take other poets at their words, why should we not accord the same treatment to Māgha ? Moreover the examination of the subject-matter leads us to the same conclusion, viz; his main purpose was to sing the glory of the greatness of Kṛṣṇa. In canto I, Nārada descends from heaven to earth to visit Kṛṣṇa in order to make him realise the urgency of killing Śiśupāla - powerful force of evil. In canto II, the political discussion is held only with a view to developing the action, viz; the slaying of Śiśupāla. The marching and the encamping of the army are meant for reaching Indraprastha for the same purpose. The performance of the great sacrifice (XIV) and its aftermath (XV) also lead to the same object which is finally realised in canto XX of the poem. Thus the good incarnate triumphs over the evil incarnate in the end. It is thus obvious that the main purpose of the poem is to sing the glory of the greatness of Kṛṣṇa who kills Śiśupāla. Nārada, Uddhava, Baladeva, Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma also contribute to the same mission.

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1. श्रीशङ्करस्थकृतसर्गसमाप्तिलक्ष्म
लक्ष्मीपतेश्चरितकीर्तनमात्रचारु ।
तस्यात्मजः सुकविकीर्तिदुराशयाद्यः
काव्यं व्यधत्त शिशुपालवधाभिधानम् ॥

Treatment:- The subject-matter is treated in the artistic manner befitting the style of an ornate poem. The poet introduces certain novel features in the poem in order to achieve this object of the artistic treatment.

Elaboration:- Māgha elaborates certain points e.g. the description of the Rājasūya sacrifice (XIV. 18-42), the giving of alms (XIV. 33-50), the anger of the kings allied to the king Sisupala (XV. 48-57), ill-omens (XV. 81-95), the effects of the major missiles (XX. 33-36, 38-40, 42-51, 53-58, 60-64, 66-74)[1].

Bandhas:- It was Bhāravi who started the tendency to illustrate in his poem the artificial Bandhas e.g. Gomūtrikā, Sarvatobhadra etc. and Māgha carried it further. Consequently we have in Śiśupālavadha Sarvatobhadra in XIX. 27, Muraja in XIX. 29, Gomūtrikā in XIX. 46, Ardhabhramaka in XIX. 72 and Cakra in XIX. 120. Such citra-kāvyas are the 'tour de force' of the later poets and Māgha is no exception to it. As Dr.Keith[2] points out, "No doubt we hear in the Alexandrian age, as in Roman poetry, of such things as Sotadean verses to be read backwards, of Simmias making poems, technopaignia, in the form of an axe or a nightingale's egg, of Dosiadas's similar feat with an altar, and so on. It may be that these tricks arose from the practice of writing inscriptions on swords and leaves."

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1. We have dealt with this point in Ch. II.

2. HSL. p. 127.

Though such tricks bespeaks of the high equipment of a poet, they have a fatal effect on poetry. We find Citrakāvyas in Kirāta (XV) and Haravijaya (XLiii and XLViii) also but they are conspicuous by their absence in NC. of Śrīharṣa.

Representative of the age:- As pointed out in the Ch.XVI of the present thesis, Māgha is the representative of the age of learning and hence he is the ardent follower of the contemporary school of artificial poetry for which hard and fast rules were laid down by rhetoricians. Both Māgha and Bhāravi introduced the descriptions of the mountains (Śiśu. IV; Kirāta. V), seasons (Śiśu. VI; Kirāta. IV and X), flower-plucking, water-sports, drinking-bouts, amorous sports (Śiśu. VII-X; Kirāta. IV-X) etc. irrespective of their propriety in their poems. Fortunately the case is different for NC. of Śrīharṣa who introduces only those elements which suit the context.

Main sentiment:- The main sentiment of Śiśupālavadha is heroic. Like Kālidāsa who in his play Śākuntala improves on the original in the treatment of the erotic sentiment, or Bhavabhūti who does the same in his play Uttara-rāma-carita or Śrīharṣa who does it in his NC. by basing his erotic sentiment on the foundation of Duty and Religion, Māgha improves on the original in his treatment of the heroic sentiment by basing it on the firm foundation of the sacred Duty. It becomes Kṛṣṇa's holy duty to punish Śiśupāla.

Humour:- It is interesting to compare Māgha with Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Śrīharṣa in this respect. We find occasional humour in the poems of Kālidāsa because he mainly emphasises erotic or heroic sentiment. Bhāravi is a serious poet and therefore humour cannot be expected from him. Śrīharṣa deals with the varieties of humour arising from action, situation, words etc. It can be safely asserted that Śrīharṣa's poem NC. contains greater and more varied humour than any one of the remaining four classical poems. Māgha stands second to Śrīharṣa in his treatment of humour. We learn about his gay and the light-hearted nature from the descriptions he has given of the luxurious life, water-sports etc. He has an eye for the odd and the ludicrous. His humour arises sometimes from action, sometimes from situation and sometimes from words. Some of the incidents that took place at the time of the camping (V) and the marching (XII) of Krsna's army illustrate Magha's humour arising from action (V. 7, 66; XII. 10, 71; XIII. 32) and situation (XII. 22, 24, 26, 42; XIII. 44). There is humour arising from words in XV. 23, 28, 29, 63, from a simile in XV. 33 and from pun in XVI. 8, 12. We come across light sarcasm in II. 71 and the biting one in XV. 24, 30; XVI. 7, 11. The humour and the erotic sentiment are happily blended in V. 34. Thus his humour is fairly spread in the poem and we find it in some of the incidents of the camping and the marching of the army and in the speeches of Śiśupāla (XV) and his envoy (XVI).

Māgha and his predecessors:-

(a) Māgha and Bhāravi draw upon the Purāṇas over and above the main sources. Māgha borrows certain set pieces of the description and the narration from his predecessors to embellish his poem(e.g. the description of the atrocities of Rāvaṇa, Śiśu. I. 51-66 inspired by those of Tāraka, Kumāra. II. 33-50; that of the women-folk of the city coming out to have a sight of Kṛṣṇa, Śiśu. XIII. 31-48 inspired by that of the marriage-procession of Śiva and Pārvatī, Kumāra. VII. 56-69 or by that of Aja and Indumatī, Raghu. VII. 5-16; that of the ill-omens confronted by the warriors of Śiśupāla setting/out for the battle, Śiśu. XV. 81-96 by that of the same confronted by the king Daśaratha, Raghu. XI. 58-61).

But there is difference also between the two poets in this respect. Kālidāsa is simple in his style and the manner of representation while Māgha is artificial. Inspite of the neatness of the versification, richness of imagery, beauty of diction and the parade of learning, he fails here to move the heart of the reader.

(b) Māgha and Bhāravi:-

As pointed out in the Ch. II of this thesis, Māgha imitates Bhāravi in many ways. Dr.Jacobi[1] has pointed out this similarity in the treatment of the subject-matter, general form, similar conceits etc.

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1. Vienna Orie. Jl. Vol. III.

But at the same time Māgha should not be lightly thought of and be condemned as a plagiarist. It is not impossible for a poet to borrow from his predecessors. A generality of the poets is prone to borrowing. A poet may, with impunity, borrow from other poets provided the borrowing is done in such a clever manner as not to incur the censure of readers. Rājaśekhara[1] also speaks to this effect when he says that "the poets are not non-plagiarists." Emerson rightly remarks that "the greatest genius is the most indebted man".[2]

The salient features of Bhāravi's style are the use of the double entendre and obsolete words, fondness for exhibiting grammatical and the metrical skill and extraordinary command over the Sanskrit language as seen in the different Bandhas. All these features are further developed by Māgha and his special features are the use of the rare and the obsolete words and the introduction of the Śāstric learning in the poem.

Knowledge of human nature and the psychological insight:-

Māgha is quite at home in human psychology. His pictures of the mental states are generally graphic e.g. V. 15; VIII. 16, 41; IX. 16, 23, 51, 58, 81; X. 28; XI. 33; XVI. 31 and XVIII. 52.

Power of observation:-

His power of observation covers a wide range - animals, birds, trees, plants, flowers and other things. There is a large number of

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1. Ka. Mim. 11.

2. Shakespeare; or, the Poet (1850).

examples in the poem illustrating this aspect of the poet.

Māgha and Nature:-

Māgha has his characteristic way of observing and painting Nature. There is a peculiar charm in his descriptions of Nature. Although he has mostly utilised the varied aspects of Nature to inflame passion still he has not failed to draw the vivid and minute pictures of the forest, the mountain, the trees, the creepers, the twilight, the morning, the sun-rise, the sun-set, the moon-rise, the setting of the moon and the darkness. His descriptions of the flowers blooming in different seasons speak of his great power of the observation of Nature and the poetic ability. To crown this all, he has enriched these descriptions with various figures of speech. This does not mean that he has overloaded his descriptions with figures at the cost of the beauty of the object under description, but, on the contrary, the employment of the figures makes the subject vivid and enhance its beauty to a great extent. The following examples illustrate the point. There is a beautiful employment of the figures Samāsokti, Utpreksā and Upamā with the excellent description of the setting sun (VII. 7-9). Again, we have Metaphor, Utpreksā, Śleṣa, Atiśayokti and Arthāntaranyāsa in the most charming description of the rising sun (XI. 44, 45, 47 and 64). His Utpreksāsin this description are not mere dry flights of imagination but are based on the permanent traits of Indian life.

The poet has adored the aspects of childhood on various occasions of the descriptions of Nature. Uṣā (dawn) is fancied

to be the beautiful daughter of the night(XI. 40). Similarly with the help of Samāsokti, the poet has beautifully painted the rising sun in the form of a king (XI. 48).

Thus his descriptions of Nature are wedded with the figures of speech. There is hardly any painting which is not endowed with some novel feature. There is the highest manifestation of the उद्दीपन विभाव in his description of the trees, the creepers and the mountain. He is the master-poet of the erotic sentiment and hence his descriptions of the forest-sports and the water-sports are supreme from that point of view.

Beauties in the poem:-

Māgha transforms a simple tale of the epic into a classical poem and in order to achieve this object, he has utilised all his armoury-words, figures, sentiments, skill in description, depth of thought and the uncommon style. There is no description, no incident, no sentiment which is presented in the ordinary way so much so that there is a beautiful employment of one or the other figure of speech wherever the story advances. This is the reason why his poem has become telling from the beginning to the end and extremely popular.

Some of his similes are really admirable e.g. II.112; III. 8; IV. 37; V. 66; XI. 6,20; XIX. 41. There is depth of meaning in IV. 47; IX. 6, 10, 13; XI. 24, 40, 47. The entire poem abounds in alliteration where Magha is supreme. We give a few samples only e.g. VI. 14, 20,; XI. 19. We have a good example of his mature

poetic flow in I. 19 where there is harmonious mingling of the simile, alliteration and the sweetness of words. Moreover I. 21, 22 and VI. 2 proclaim the abundance of the sentiments, emotions, words, depth of meaning and figures in his poetry.

The employment of 'Samādhiguṇa' is praised by Daṇḍin[1] as 'kāvyasarvasva' and it produces the Samāsokti figure. We have two very beautiful verses of this type in the poem, viz; XI. 22 and 48.

As pointed out by Dr.V.Raghavan,[2] Māgha has contributed the theory of 'Guṇa-aucitya' to the Sanskrit poetics. This theory is enunciated by the poet in Śiśu. II. 83 where we have an early "Śirodaya" of the doctrine of Guṇas as the Soul of Poetry which is one of the special contributions of Ānandavardhana. If the same theory is allowed to be expressed in the later terminology, it can be said that Māgha here (II. 83) speaks of the appropriateness of letters and collocation.

Again, it is Māgha who gives us a good example of how Anaucitya becomes Aucitya, how demerits become merits in Śiśu.II.44.

All the ten Guṇas of poetry are generally to be met with in XI. 19. Mallināthā[3] remarks as follows:

"श्लेषः प्रसादः समता माधुर्यं सुकुमारता ।
अर्थव्यक्तिरुदारत्वमोजः कान्तिसमाधयः ॥ इति आचार्योक्ता
दशगुणाः प्रायेणान्न संभवन्तीति निपुणैरुन्नेयाः ।"

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1. K.A., 1.

2. Studies on Some Concepts of the Alankāra Śāstra pp.199-200.

3. Comm. on XI. 19., Sisu., NSP.

Māgha is successful in cleverly showing in Śiśupāla's speech (XV. 22-38) his hatred for Kṛṣṇa by means of the supressed and the touchy humour. Similarly, the speech of the envoy of Śiśupāla (XVI. 2-15) which contains pleasant and unpleasant meanings is a good piece of art. Moreover, the sacred atmosphere of the sacrifice (XIV. 18-32), the donations made by the Pāṇaḍava King (XIV. 33-50) and the prayer of Kṛṣṇa made by Bhīṣma (XIV. 59-70) are appealing. Considering from the point of view of Māgha's devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the canto XIV is the best in the poem where particularly the verses 12-16 by way of Kṛṣṇa's reply to Yudhiṣṭhira move our hearts. We thus find the mastery over Sanskrit language, the sharpness of intellect and the devotional heart in the author of Śiśupālavadha.

Demerits:-

Śiśupālavadha is not entirely free from flaws. The defects are as follows:

(1) It appears from the poem that Māgha has a great reserve of power but he never lets himself go freely. He does not choose to lay out an independent and an original path for himself but is merely content with the imitation of his predecessors.

(2) There is very little characterisation in the poem. There is not a single female character. It appears that he has paid very little attention to this important and the indispensable art.

(3) Hemacandra[1] has pointed out certain faults in the Śiśupāla-vadha. There is a break in the uniformity (भग्नप्रक्रमत्व) in V.28 and X. 33; repetition (पुनरुक्तम्) in III. 12, 13 and V. 14 (where the plural number 'जनताः' is superfluous for the word 'जनता' itself means 'mass of people') and contradiction (गीतविरुद्धम्) in XI. 1.

(4) The descriptions given in the poem do not observe the rule of propriety. The subordinate themes and the accessory emotional interests should be developed only upto the limit which is proper for them, their main theme and its sentiment. Lollaṭa rightly condemns such descriptive digressions in the classical poems and lays stress on the observance of the principle of propriety. Hemacandra[2] is of the opinion that Māgha has committed the fault with regard to the sentiment (रसदोष) in the poem. The main sentiment of the poem is heroic and the development of the erotic sentiment with all its accessories such as forests, water-sports, amorous sports etc., is therefore, not proper. The poet, however, devotes a good deal of his poem to such descriptions. This militates against the development of the main sentiment and hence results in committing the fault of marring the sentiment (रसदोष).

It may be pointed out here that the poems of Kālidāsa and Bhāravi also are not free from this defect. It should be however noted that the poems of Kālidāsa do not show this flaw to the extent to which those of Māgha and Bhāravi have done.

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1. K.Anu., III. सूत्र 5 and 7. 2. Ibid; III. 3.

(5) Other defects:-

There are other defects like the excessive use of the double entendre, frequent use of Yamakas and Bandhas, attempts to make the verses abtruse at some places with the help of scholarship etc. But these are the flaws not of the poet but of the age to which he happened to belong.

Śiśu. - a Śāstrakāvya:-

Rājaśekhara[1] enumerates the twelve recognised sources of poetry which are (1) Śruti, (2) Smṛti, (3) Itihāsa, (4) Purāṇa, (5) Pramāṇavidyā, (6) Samayavidyā, (7) Arthaśāstra, (8) Nātyaśāstra, (9) Kāmaśāstra, (10) Loka, (11) Viracanā and (12) Prakīrnaka.

All these preponderate in our poem and we have shown this in the course of this thesis at their proper places. Hence our poem is a 'Śāstrakāvya' par excellence.

Śiśu. - a Purusakāvya:-

It has been rightly remarked that Raghu. and Kumāra are dedicated to Prakṛti, Kirāta and Śiśu. to Puruṣa and NC. to both.

It is well-known that Raghu. and Kumāra.adore the female characters, Kirāta. and Śiśu. the male ones and NC. glorifies both.

Śiśuecan therefore be called a Puruṣakāvya also.

Māgha and his successors:-

The high esteem in which Māgha was held by the poets

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1. K.M., Ch. 8.

succeeding him can be judged from the extent of his influence on them. It is Māgha more than any one else that sets the standard of the later school of poets.

The influence of his poem is quite clear in the following works:

(1) the Haravijaya of Ratnākara (850 A.D. or thereabout),

(2) the Rāvaṇārjunīyam of Bhaumaka (end of the 7th Cent.A.D.),

(3) the Kapphaṇābhyudayam of Śivasvāmin (second half of the 9th cent A.D.),

(4) the Dharmaśarmābhyudayam of the Jain Haricandra,

(5) the Yaśastilakacampū of Somadeva and

(6) the NC. of Śrīharṣa (in so far as his description of the incarnations is concerned) (NC. XXI. 53-118).

Moreover, the fact that the verses from Māgha's poem have found place in the standard works of the later eminent rhetoricians indicates the importance of the poem. Dr.S.N.Dasagupta[1] traces the quotations from the Śiśupālavadha in the works of Vāmana, Ānandavardhana and Mukulabhaṭṭa, Hemacandra also cites verses from the poem in his K. Anu. at several places.

Thus our poem is a big bunyan tree in the Indian Literature under whose cool shade all the branches of poetry will remain flourishing. It will be no doubt an eternal source of delight to the people of Bhāratavarṣa.

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1. HSL; Vol. I., p.188.