



International Journal of Sanskrit Research

अनन्ता

ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2019; 5(5): 01-05

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www.anantaajournal.com

Received: 01-07-2019

Accepted: 05-08-2019

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Jānakīrāmabhāṣya of Anundaram Barooah- An Analysis from the viewpoint of Sanskrit Textual Criticism.

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Abstract

Jānakīrāmabhāṣya, a Sanskrit Commentary on Mahāvīracaritam of Bhavabhūti, composed by Anundaram Barooah from Assam, occupies an important place in the field of Sanskrit textual criticism. Written in traditional style with new approach it exhibits certain uncommon features for which it stands out as an exceptional one from ancient commentaries written on Sanskrit works. The exposition of the text done in a method of text criticism applied in modern literature. Varied readings of the drama alongwith his views on them are also mentioned in the commentary. Barooah cites illustrations in the footnotes from other Sanskrit works having similarity in the use of words or expression with those of the Mahāvīracaritam. It is fortified by proper illustration and enriched with analytical exposition for which it may be called research work of high standard. It was the first of its kind till his time. The methodology of modern research was yet in its formative stage when Barooah wrote his commentary. The modern method of textual criticism applied by Barooah was still a new thing. He added a Sanskrit-English Glossary at the end of the commentary which is an innovation introduced in the traditional style of writing Sanskrit commentary. Thus, the uniqueness of the commentary offers a lot of scope for study.

Key words: Bhāṣya, ṭīkā, bhāṣyakāra, jānakīrāmabhāṣya, mahāvīracaritam, commentary

Introduction

Anundaram Barooah, one of the pioneer Indologists, was born at North Guwahati in Assam, in 1850. He passed away at an early age of 38 years in 1889 in Calcutta. Within short span of his life Barooah earned recognition as a brilliant student in India as well as in abroad. He was an erudite Sanskrit scholar and made his mark in the field of Sanskrit study with his valuable contributions. A man of exceptional personality Barooah imbibed best of modern civilisation from the West. He was a passionate lover of Sanskrit. To him, this language was 'dearer than any other language. Its music has charm which no words can express. Its capability of representing every form of human thought in most appropriate language is probably not rivalled, certainly not surpassed by any other language'^[1] Although Barooah does not have any original literary creative compositions like poem, drama or novel etc. to his credit yet we cannot say that he did not possess any original literary genius. He mainly concentrated in the study of the secondary type of literature based on ancient Sanskrit literature and deeply studied the dramas, Kāvya, lexicons, grammar, rhetorics and metrics of Sanskrit language and extracted the precious gems from them for the benefit of Sanskrit scholars and students. Jānakīrāmabhāṣya, the Critical Edition of *Mahāvīracaritam* of Bhavabhūti is one of his remarkable contributions in the field of Sanskrit textual criticism. This paper is an attempt to analyse the bhāṣya from the perspective of Sanskrit textual criticism.

Textual criticism in Sanskrit

This new methodology of textual criticism was introduced in India only towards the end of the 19th century mainly for restoration of the texts of rare books of Indian languages viz. Sanskrit,

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Prakrit and *Apabhramśas*. However, the scholars opine that it is not possible to arrive at a acceptable conclusion, providing solutions to all the problems which may arise in case of analysing Indian literature by exercising the methodology applied for textual criticism in European literature. Because there are many differences of the problems in the critical analysis of texts between European and Indian literature [2]. Dr. V.S. Sukhthankar was the first Indian who concentrated in the study in this field taking into consideration of the problems of Indian literature. Therefore, although scholars like R.G. Bhandarker [3], Anundaram Barooah, R. Pischel, Sten Konow, Todarmal etc. initiated the textual criticism in Sanskrit Literature, yet it is the critically edited edition of Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* which was the result of seventeen years of hard work of a group of scholars under the guidance of Dr Sukhthankar gives an idea about the study in this field. 'Prelogomana' the preface of *Ādīparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* edited by Sukhthankar is regarded as the authoritative book on Text Criticism in India. Although he follows basically European methodology in analysis of the text yet a particular method has been introduced for textual criticism of Indian particularly Sanskrit texts. Therefore the method introduced by Sukhthankar has been accepted as ideal for editing the other *parvans* of *Mahābhārata* and other texts in the later period. One of the pioneers after Sukhthamkar in this field was Edgerton. His edited version of *Pañcatantra* namely '*Pañcatantra Reconstructed*' published from Newhaven in America provided a clearer concept in text criticism of Sanskrit literature. After him the names of Ludwick, P.L.Vaidya, Johans Nowel Leijig, N.N.Upadhyay, Viswavandhu Shastri, Krisnakanta Hadiquii are mentionable. Ludwick edited '*Harivamśa*' (1936), Vaidya edited *Mahāpurāṇ* (1937), '*Suvarṇabhāṣottam sūtra*' of Leijig, '*Paramātmāprakāśa*' of Yogindra by Upadhyaya (1937), '*Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: Sundarakāṇḍa*' (1940) by Viśwavandhu Shastri, '*Naiṣadha Carit*' and '*Yaśastilaka*' of Krishnakanta Hadiquii, '*Karpūramañjarī*' (1939) by Manmohan Ghosh, '*Kṛṣṇakarṇāmrt*' by Sushil Kumar Dey, '*Saptakāṇḍa vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*' published from Baroda, 'Different Recensions of *Mahānāṭak*' by Dr Estellar, 'Love of Krishna' by Francis Wilson and '*vilvamangalavācitam kṛṣṇastotram*' (1962) edited by Dr Maheswar Neog are examples of textual Criticism in India.

The tradition of writing commentary for explaining the inherent meaning of a text in Sanskrit which is known as *Ṭikā* or *Bhāṣya* has been in practice from ancient Vedic age. It is not possible to understand the purport of the treatises or poetic works of almost all branches of learning composed in Sanskrit. The great scholars such as Yāska, Sāyaṇa, Patañjali, Vāmana, Jayāditya, Sankarācārya, Vācaspatimīśra, Abhinavagupta, Mallinātha, Haridāśasiddhāntavāgīśa, Sridhāracārya, so on and so forth made their mark of erudition in the field of study of Sanskrit by their exposition on Vedas, Vyākaraṇa, treatises on Darśana, Alamkāra, Kāvya etc. contributing a lot in explaining inherent meaning of ambiguous texts. Thus Sāyaṇabhāṣya on the Vedas, Samkarabhāṣya on Vedānta, Vārtikas by Kātyāyana and *Mahābhāṣya* by Patañjali on the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini and *Sāmkhyatattvakaumudī*, Bhāmaṭī and *Tattvaśāradī* by Vācaspatimīśra, Abhinavbhārati and *Locanāṭikā* by Abhinavagupta on *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Dhvanyāloka*, Medhātithibhāṣya on *Manusamhitā*, Rāmānujabhāṣya on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Nīlakaṇṭhāṭikā on *Mahābhārata*, Śrīdhārīṭikā on the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* are well-known commentaries which are held in high esteem by the scholars.

Time to time many scholars wrote numerous commentaries on poetics, prose and dramatic compositions.

Classification of Sanskrit commentaries

A commentary in Sanskrit is normally known as *Bhāṣya* and *Ṭikā*. Rājasekhara in his *Kāvyaṃmāmsā* defines *Bhāṣya* as '*ākṣipya bhāṣyam*' [2]. The Madhusūdanavivṛti of *Kāvyaṃmāmsā* illustrates this definition in this way- rejection of a conventional norm in *sūtra* and *vṛtti* is called *Ākṣepa* and explaining it by way of *Ākṣepa* is called *Bhāṣya*. V. S. Apte, in his Sanskrit English Dictionary defines *Bhāṣya* in a more elaborate way. Cf.

*Sūtrārtho varṇyate yatra padaiḥ sūtrānusāribhiḥ
Svapadāni ca varṇyante bhāṣyam bhāṣyavido viduḥ* [4].

A *bhāṣyakāra* explains sutras or aphorisms word by word with comments of his own. As for example, *Mahābhāṣya* of Patanjali in which the *bhāṣyakāra* explains the aphorisms of Panini and presents his own interpretation. Thus, it may be assumed that a *bhāṣya* was generally written on a treatise or grammar, poetics etc. On the other hand, a commentary written on a literary work is generally called *ṭikā*. It is defined by Rājasekhara as explaining the meaning in the most possible simple way [5].

Ṭikā has been classified by different scholars from different perspectives. According to some there are two types of it; one is *daṇḍānvayṭikā* and the other is *khaṇḍānvayṭikā*. Explaining the verses after arranging them in prose order is called *daṇḍānvaya* variety. This type of *ṭikā* also contains grammatical notes alongwith discussion on *Rasa* (sentiment), *Chanda* (metre) and poetic *Alamkāra* (embellishment). The other variety contains explanation of the verses on the basis of the meaning of them without arranging them in prose order.

Some classify *ṭikā* into eight types [6]. They are as follows-
Śṛṅkhalaṭikā- Sometimes a commentary composed on a *ṭikā* on the original work, is commented upon by another on which again another *ṭikā* is composed. This order of writing commentaries is known as *Śṛṅkhalaṭikā*. The *Bhāṣya* written by Vyāsa on the *Yogasūtra* of Patanjali, on which Śankaracharya composed *Tattvaviśāradīṭikā* can be cited for example.

Śāstrīyaṭikā- When there is analytical discussion followed by conclusion on the ambiguous and controversial topics on the basis of rules of treatises then it is called Śāstrīyaṭika which is also known as Prasthāpanāṭikā. The *Locanaṭikā* by Abhinavagupta on *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana is an example of this type.

Tulanātmikāṭikā- *Ṭikā* or *Bhāṣya* written on the basis of comparative and analytical study of different commentaries on the same book or treatise is called Tulanātmikā.

Vyavasthāpikā – When a commentator, having studied the views and difference of opinion of the seers on duties, rules and regulations, social customs etc. presents their views and the duties ordained by the treatises for their is known as Vyavasthāpikā *ṭikā*.

Anugāminī – An Anugāminī *Ṭikā* is that, which consists of enumeration, exposition explanation of the content of the original work without confronting the views of the author eventhough these may not be favourable to the commentator. For example, *Sāmkhyatattvakaumudī* by Vācaspatimīśra.

Svatantrā- Here the commentator gives his own views on the basis of the original work. As for example, the *bhāṣya*

written by Śamkarāchārya, Rāmānuja, Madhavāchārya etc on the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Vyāpakatīkā- Mixture of Anugāminī and Svatantrā commentaries is known by this name.

Rasagrahaṇātmikā- Where there is an effort by the commentator to give exposition of the original text in simple language, so that the reader can realise the feelings of the poet it is known as Rasagrahaṇātmikāṭīkā.

Type of the commentary jānakīrāmbhāṣya

Barooah's Jānakīrāmbhāṣya does not conform literally to the types of *bhāṣya* discussed above. On the other hand, it is also characterised with more elaborate explanation than commentaries written in traditional style. Barooah, besides giving word by word exposition of the text of *Mahāvīracaritam*, points out the flaws of the playwright. He also criticises the rhetoricians like Mammaṭa and Viśvanātha. He frequently refers to the aphorisms of grammar and poetics with his objections and conclusions regarding these and gives critical analysis of the text. For example, in many places he differs from the senior commentators and annotators such as Jagaddhara, Malanka, Wilson and others and suggested his own views. May be because of these factors Barooah likes to call his commentary a *bhāṣya* although he has not given any reason for it. It may be mentioned that Barooah was quite acquainted with the style of commentators of Indian classics like Mallinātha and others. While Mallinātha, who has written as many as commentaries on different texts is found to refer to the allusions as mere historical facts, Barooah quotes the original context as authority to justify his comments.

Barooah accepts better reading of the text pointing out the flaws of the readings adopted by Taranathatarkavācaspati and Trithen. For example, in the dialogue by Lakṣmaṇa in the 4th Act, Taranatha adopts the reading *daṇḍakam*, which the *bhāṣyakāra* considers erroneous because in the same dialogue by Lakṣmaṇa itself it is said that '*tasyām cīradharacaturdaśasamā*' where the word *tasyām* (which is the adjective of '*daṇḍaka*') is in feminine gender. Thus it is obviously a faulty reading in the opinion of Barooah.⁷

Thus, as per the two types of classification of *ṭīkā* discussed above, Jānakīrāmbhāṣya may be categorised under the *Daṇḍānvaya* and *Rasagrahaṇātmikā* variety of commentaries. However, this commentary written in traditional style with new approach. Barooah used both the printed editions of the *Mahāvīracaritam* in reconstructing the text as critical apparatus. Apart from that he also consulted a manuscript borrowed from Sanskrit College. He shows variant readings in Prakrit in the drama with justifications. He critically analyses Bhavabhūti's other two plays (viz. *Mālatīmādhavam* and *Uttarāmacaritam*) and give his opinion on the dramatist's style. Cf. "It is easy to form, from these plays some idea about the peculiarities of Bhavabhūti's style. They consist chiefly in the use of long compounds, high-sounding derivatives, and obscure terms. The first two were necessary to secure force, but the third is unquestionably a blemish. But this can be said in favour of Bhavabhūti that the use of obscure terms was occasionally forced on him for the sake of the big metres which he wrote."⁷ Such statements, as Professor Malinee Goswami observes, 'certainly prove Barooah's deep insight, clear observation and unequivocal decision expected from a very serious literary critic'^[8].

Title of the commentary

There is tradition of giving a title to the commentaries of the Sanskrit texts. As for example Sañjīvanī by Mallinātha,

Dīpikā by Annambhaṭṭa, Saralā by JīvānandaVidyāsāgara so on and so forth. Barooah has kept the title of his commentary on *Mahāvīracaritam* after his deceased elder brother Jānakīrām. Moreover, in the introductory verse of his commentary, Barooah gives the reason why he has named it as Jānakīrāmbhāṣya^[9]. He says, that he has composed the commentary on the *nāṭaka* entitled *Vīracaritra* Bhavabhūti, the story of which is connected with Jānakī (i.e. Sītā) and Rāma to explain the purport of the sentences difficult to comprehend. Thus assigning the title Jānakīrāmbhāṣya to the commentary on a play which is based on story of Rāma and Jānaki is quite befitting from this point also.

Salient features of the commentary

A manuscript gets corrupted in the process of transmission and to write a scholium on a work, the text first needs to be corrected. Therefore ancient commentators consulted various versions and recensions of the text as well as earlier commentaries and reconstructed the texts for themselves. Mallinātha and Rāghavabhaṭṭa also had maintained this tradition. Anundaram Barooah too, before writing his *bhāṣya*, at first concentrated in reconstructing the text of *Mahāvīracaritam* keeping conformity with the tradition.

Jānakīrāmbhāṣya is much closer to *Sañjīvanī Tīkā* by Mallinātha. On many occasions Barooah seeks support from Mallinātha to establish his own justification (cf. JB, Act II, 46). But he does not follow his predecessor blindly and points out the grammatical flaws in Bhavabhūti's composition citing from Pānini and Patañjali. For example, Mallinātha while pointing out the grammatical flaw in the word '*Kāmayamāna*' in the fifth verse of 19th Canto of *Raghuvamśam*, does not blame Kālidāsa on the plea that such unpaninian use is not unnatural in a writing composed three or four centuries after Pānini. But Barooah has not spared Bhavabhūti, although the latter was his most favourite poet for such unpaninian use and has criticised him with strong words. He says in the Preface of his *bhāṣya* '.....I have observed that the use of genitive for the dative as an indirect object is ungrammatical and faulty. What I mean is that it is against the rules of Panini and must be condemned as giving rise to great ambiguity'^[10].

The technical terms of dramaturgy like *Nāndī*, *Prastāvanā*, *Apavārita*, *Viṣkambhaka* etc. are usually explained by the commentators of Sanskrit play. Thus Jagaddhara in his commentary on *Mālatīmādhavam* has quoted Nāṭyaśāstra whenever an occasion arises. Rāghavabhaṭṭa's commentary on *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and *Svapnavāsavadattā* and that of Vīrarāghava on *Uttarāmacaritam* also quote abundantly from *Daśarūpaka* and *Sāhityadarpana*. This tradition is followed by later commentators of modern time such as Acharya Śeṣarāja Sarma Regmi (on *Prasannarāghavam*), Acharya Sri Ramcandra Misra (on *Mahāvīracaritam*). Unlike these, Barooah does not feel it necessary to quote the aphorisms of poetics. Instead he critically examined the rules of Dramaturgy. As for example, he points out flaws in the definition of *Nāndī* given by Viśvanātha^[11].

Barooah has made a comparative criticism of the *Mahāvīracaritam* and other Sanskrit works based on the story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. In his Preface to the *bhāṣya*, Barooah expresses his indebtedness to the Epic, particularly the Italian edition of Gaspar Garrison which he considers much closer to the original text of Vālmīki. He draws parallels of ideas, allusions, themes and expressions from Vālmīki. He also quotes parallels from *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇam* and *Bālarāmāyaṇam* to examine the parallels. He also refers to the

similarity of expressions in the works such as *Raghuvamśam*, *Meghadūtam*, *Uttarāramacaritam*, *Prasannarāghavam*, *Anargharāghavam* etc. where the story of Rama is depicted., He has adopted the same attitude also in cases of other allied episodes,. For example, while dealing with the Rāma-Paraśurāma episode in the 2nd and 3rd Acts, Barooah has referred to the Rāma-Paraśurāma story from as many as seven sources like epics and Purāṇas. He summarises them serially and finally draws conclusion that ‘we do not know where Śrīkaṇṭha has taken the story from [12].’ This modern research technique of collection of datas, analysis and examination on the basis of the same and arriving at a conclusion thereafter adopted by Barooah in his *bhāṣya*, was not found in the ancient commentaries composed in traditional style.

One of important features of the commentary is the Sanskrit rendering of the Prakrit dialogues alongwith notes on them. This exhibits Barooah’s good command over the language. However, unlike some other commentator of drama like Jagaddhara and Prithvīrāja (who wrote commentary on *Mṛcchakaṭikam*), Barooah has not mentioned the type of Prakrit used in the *Mahāvīracaritam*.

Influence of Jagaddhara and Malanka and also of western scholars like Coolbrook and Wilson can be seen in regard to special importance given by Barooah in explaining the names and places mentioned in the *Mahāvīracaritam* alongwith their modern existence. He has collected observations of these scholars before giving his view. This is an innovation introduced by Barooah since such effort is not seen in the ancient commentaries. Of course Mallinātha also gives note on name of places in his commentaries on *Raghuvamśam* and *Meghadūtam*.

I was able to find only two other commentaries on the *Mahāvīracaritam*. One is by Vīrarāghava and the other is by Acarya Ramacandra Misra. Both the commentators quote abundantly from rhetorics. Vīrarāghava quotes Amarakoṣa while explaining meaning of words. He also quotes *Ratnamālā*, *Kāmandakī*, and *Gītā* on few occasions. He also gives grammatical derivations of words. Rules of Prakrit grammar is explained but there is no Sanskrit rendering of the Prakrit language in his commentary.

Acarya Ramacandra Misra also writes his commentary in traditional style. Like his predecessors he also quotes from books on Poetics in the context of dramatics techniques applied in the drama. He also mentions the name of the metre and *alamkāras* employed in the verses in the drama. Barooah has not mentioned any one of them.

Thus we observe that these commentaries have been composed purely in traditional style without the views of the commentators. On the contrary, Jānakīrāmabhāṣya is much simpler in comparison with the two other commentaries on the drama. Moreover, he has added a Sanskrit-English Glossary of the most difficult terms which, according to him, ‘is the chief difficulty in the way of understanding the play’. He has also made critical and comparative assessment of the Ramaic plays referring to the parallels. Thus he has introduced both traditional and modern method of text criticism in his commentary.

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UGC CARE LIST NO.367

ISSN : 0022 - 3301

THE JOURNAL OF
ORIENTAL RESEARCH
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(Founded by Mm. Prof. S. Kuppuswami Sastri)



2020

Vol. XCIII

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

THE KUPPUSWAMI SASTRI RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MADRAS - 600 004

2023

Price : Rs.500
(India)

Foreign : \$30;£25

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CONTRIBUTORS

ŚĀRDŪLAŚAKAṬAM OF B.K. BHATTACHARYYA

MANASHI SHARMA

Dr. Birendra Bhattacharyya who made pioneering ventures in many aspects of Sanskrit composition occupies a unique place in the galaxy of modern Sanskrit writers. An erudite scholar in Sanskrit, he has carved a niche in the world of Sanskrit literature by his compositions in different genre. Birendra Bhattacharyya was born in 1917 in Sylhet district, then part of West Bengal and now in Bangladesh. He was educated in Calcutta with a bright academic career. Bhattacharyya was awarded prestigious Griffith Prize twice for his thesis by the Calcutta University, also awarded Mauat medal. Though he was faculty and in charge of the Philosophy dept. at St. Pauls College, Calcutta, he switched to Indian Administration Service in order to serve the Nation. On the basis of his excellent results in I.A., A.S. and ICS exams, he was inducted into the IAS in 1949 and held responsible positions in the departments of Finance, Labour, Provident Fund, Animal Husbandry, finally becoming the Chairman of all three Transport Undertakings of W.B. Government (1967-69).

He was not only a prolific writer in Sanskrit but has also introduced a few innovations in his writings, having based his plays on contemporary, political and industrial scenes. He has a number of creative literary works to his credit. Some special features of Bhattacharyya are :

He was capable of applying foreign as well as traditional metres in Sanskrit.

He is most popular and famous as the author of *Kalāpikā* - a collection of sonnets.

Translation of poems of Omar Khyam into Sanskrit using Sanskrit metres.

Unique mastery over writing several forms of Sanskrit dramas including Nāṭaka, Prakaraṇa, Vyāyoga, Prahasana, Nṛtyanāṭika.

कविकालिदासम् (1969), शार्दूलशकटम् (1969) सिद्धार्थचरितम् (1970),
वेष्टनव्यायोगः- एकाङ्कः प्रहसनम्, शरणार्थिसंवादः (1972) are the dramas written by him.

Amongst his dramatic compositions *Śārdūlaśakaṭam** (hereafter *ŚŚ*) occupies a unique place in modern Sanskrit literature. This play is based on the hardship of workers of West Bengal Transport Corporation in 20th century. The first Act deals with the woes of the workers in the form of exploitation done by the Industrialist, and the subsequent agitation in the form of *Hartal*, *Dharmaghat* etc. The first Act of the play depicts the revolutionary attitude of the workers and gives an impression that it is a drama with a message of communism.¹ However, as we progress in the play, it is seen that a message of socialism is intended to be conveyed through the congenial and compassionate attitude of the management resulting in solving the problems amicably. The compassionate nature of the concerned officer might have the reflection of Bhattacharyya's nature and his personal experience in dealing with such situations. The objective of the dramatist is to show that any organization runs in a smooth way if there is proper understanding and co-operation between the employees and employers. Socialistic approach of the playwright is very much evident in the depiction of the principal character of the play.

* *Śārdūlaśakaṭam* by Birendrakumārabhaṭṭācārya, Samskrita-Sahitya-Parishad, Calcutta, 1969.

1 *ŚŚ*, I.13 :

मार्गं दर्शयन्ति विद्युतो नः प्रोज्ज्वलाः
धरण्यां ध्वनन्ति मेघमन्द्रा मर्दलाः
न सूर्यो न चन्द्रो दत्ते ननु रश्मिलेशम् ।
पन्थानः करालकण्टकैः संवर्धिताः
झञ्झाः पीडयन्ति वशितान् वर्षान्विताः
न मन्दानिलो गीतं वा विनिहन्ति क्लेशम् ॥

Summary in a nutshell:

First Act: The drama begins in a traditional style. There is *Nāndī* where Lord Viṣṇu has been eulogized. Sūtradhāra gives the hint of the presentation of the Prakaraṇa *Śārdūlaśakaṭam*. In beginning, the slogan of the workers is heard in the background. The reason of the agitation is known from the discussion of Dibākara, the leader of the workers' association with his co-workers, that the industrialists get extra work out of the workers without paying them the due wages. Here the dramatist tries to portray the inequality between the rich and poor, the selfish attitude of the owners of the industries and the exploitation of the poor by the rich. While the workers are involved in the agitation to achieve their rights, some industrialists try to bribe them to take the management's side but the unity of the workers does not allow this to happen. The motto "United we stand, Divided we fall" - "संघे शक्तिः कलौ युगे" holds good. The workers make relentless effort for the success of their agitation and resolve not to be swayed away by false promises. They sing victory songs to get themselves motivated.

Second Act: The owners come to know that the workers are agitated because there has been a deduction in their wages. They then decide to send the workers to Ādiśūra, the Chairman of the department due to his skill in amicably dealing with labour matters. When the workers come to know that they are going to meet the Chairman who is known for his compassionate nature, they are happy and subsequently they get the assurance from the Chairperson that their problem will be given due consideration and solved. The Chairperson's commitment is for the development of the organisation. In the meantime, agitation begin in other branches of transport Corporation and the Chairman decides to go there personally and talk to their workforce to negotiate, where they are given assurance of increasing the transport fare in order to collect fund to pay

proper wages for the workers. The workers are happy and appreciative of the approach of the Chairperson and being satisfied with the negotiation they decide to go back to work.

Third Act in the office of the Chairman – because of the efficiency of work displayed by the Chairman, he is given additional charge of two more transport depots of the State. To increase revenue he decides to introduce Night Bus Services which would be inaugurated by the Governor and the foundation stone to be laid by the industrialists. To this, the workers decide not to co-operate as their agitation was against the industrialists. However, the Chairman sticks to his decision which result in the workers agitation once again. This time the Chairman goes to the workers and negotiate with them offering them increase in wages, introduction of Over-time and Provident Fund benefits but in return ask the workers to co-operate to make the department more efficient and, in the meantime, increases bus services to a number of interior places. The workers are happy with what the Chairman says and they call off their agitation and get back to work with renewed motivation.

Fourth Act : Depicts the sufferings of workers of other organizations and transport companies after their wages are cut, how people suffer and some of them had to lose their life. It generally depicts the adamant attitude of the industrialists. As President's rule was in force in that State during that time, the Police and other authorities have the upper hand in everything and travel in the buses without paying, agitating workers are beaten-up and abused.

As the play reaches the last Act, the Chairman comes into the scene to sort out matters at which the workers are very happy knowing about his popularity in dealing with such matters. The Chairman presents the problems of the workers to the Chief Secretary of the State and resolves all

the matters. The workers are happy at this and raise the victory slogans for the Chairman. The Chairman then informs the workers that it was their victory and due to their co-operation, all matters could be solved.

This piece of work by the eminent scholar is unique because :

1. Contemporary topic has been taken and written in the traditional style.
2. Being a contemporary topic, the audience can appreciate the play better as they are able to relate to some character or the other or an incident depicted in the play.
3. The dramatist justifies the selection of the plot as the life and work of the common people have been ignored in the past depicting mostly kings and queens or elite class while the author tries to break this tradition (ŚŚ. p.2):

प्राकृतजनानां जीवितं प्रायेण ग्रन्थकारैरवहेलितम् । कविरयं तेषु स्निह्यति
नितरामिति मन्ये ।

The playwright says in the prologue of the first Act that the new generation prefer plays depicting contemporary issues. They no longer appreciate plays with age old themes. As the world is moving fast so are the minds of the modern generation (ŚŚ. I.3):

महाकालो विश्वे चलति तरसा नाचला मर्त्यभूमिः
पुराणाः पन्थानो निखिलमनुजैश्चाधुना नाद्रियन्ते ।
नवीनैः काम्येते नवयुगकथा नूतनं दृश्यकाव्यं
गताह ग्रन्थाः प्रायो रसकृपणतां प्राक्तना नान्यहेतोः॥

Śārdūlaśakaṭam – a Prakaraṇa

In the Prologue of the drama, the author informs through Sūtradhāra (ŚŚ. I.p.1) – अद्य खलु उपस्थाप्यतेऽत्र वीरेन्द्रकुमारभट्टाचार्येण विरचितं शार्दूलशकटनामकम् अभिनवं प्रकरणम् ।

Now the question is-

- Is it befitting to be called a Prakaraṇa?
- How far does the play fulfill the required characteristics of Prakaraṇa laid down by the traditional Sanskrit rhetoricians?

According to Bharatamuni - The plot, and the characters should be creation of the poet himself. Hero should not be a Udātta or of divine origin. He may be a Vipra, Vaṇik (merchant), Saciva (councillor) Purohita (priest), Amātya (minister in the royal court) or a Sārthavāha (trader).²

The author of *Daśarūpaka* says that the plot of a Prakaraṇa should be the poet's own creation and must be *laukika*. A hero should be a Amātya, Brāhmaṇa, or Vaṇik and should be endowed with Dhīrapraśānta qualities (III.39-40):

अथ प्रकरणे वृत्तमुत्पाद्यं लोकसंश्रयम् ।
अमात्यविप्रवणिजामेकं कुर्याच्च नायकम् ॥
धीरप्रशान्तं सापायं धर्मकामार्थतत्परम् ।
शेषं नाटकवत्सन्धिप्रवेशकरसादिकम् ॥

The *Sāhityadarpaṇa* also gives the definition in a slightly different way (224b, 225, 227a):

भवेत्प्रकरणे वृत्तं लौकिकं कविकल्पितम् ॥
शृंगारोऽङ्गी नायकस्तु विप्रोऽमात्याथवा वणिक् ।
सापायधर्मकामार्थपरो धीरप्रशान्तकः ॥
कितवद्युतकारादिविटचेटकसंकुलः ॥³

2 NS, 18. 45-49.

3 SS, I. 2 :

पूर्या वङ्गानां जनबहुकलिकतायां राष्ट्रायत्ता या परिवहणविधिः संस्था ।
शार्दूलालेख्यैर्दुर्गतशकटास्तस्या राजन्ते लब्धां भ्रमणरतनृणां चार्हाम् ॥

On the basis of the characteristics defined by the rhetoricians, if we analyse this play we can see that he has followed some of the rules laid down in the treatises.

- ⇒ The selection of the plot is not taken from any epic. He has presented incidents related to the life of the common people in a very lucid and simple way.
- ⇒ The number of Acts being five are in conformity with the laid down rules.
- ⇒ Like other dramatic compositions, this play also ends with a Bharatavākya which is theme song of Transport Corporation.

But in many other aspects, the characteristics laid down are not followed. For eg., traditionally the hero should be Dhīraśānta but here the hero, Ādiśūra, the chairperson of the WB Transport Corporation is a Dhīrodātta type of person who has achieved *dharma* and *artha* through his duty (ŚŚ. p.15):

विजयताम् अस्माकं सर्वाध्यक्षो वीराग्रगण्यो धीरोदात्तश्च । तत्स्नेहच्छायायां दिष्ट्या वर्धते नः
परिवहणकल्पतरुः ।

- ⇒ There is no *Vidūṣaka* or a heroine in the play – this is also not in conformity in the traditional rules.
- ⇒ In the aspect of depiction of sentiment, the predominant sentiment is *karuṇa* and *vīra* sentiment is depicted as subordinate. As per defined norms, there should be depiction of *śṛṅgārarasa* in a Prakaraṇa. However, the theme does not give any scope for this.
- ⇒ Innovation is introduced in the play – adding a prelude at the beginning of each Act (except the 2nd). Thus even though all characteristics have not been strictly followed, yet it can undoubtedly be called a Prakaraṇa.

The Title :

A brief introduction of the composition is indicated by its title. The readers get an idea of the contents through the title. Therefore, we see that the Sanskrit dramatists name their compositions mainly on the principal character or a particular incident which play an important role in the development of the plot. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* says (VI.142b, 143a):

नाम कार्यं नाटकस्य गर्भितार्थप्रकाशकम् ॥
नायिकानायकाख्यानात् संज्ञा प्रकरणादिषु ।

As per this norm, the title in a Nāṭaka should be indicative of the theme of the plot and it may be on the name of the hero or the heroine in a Prakaraṇa.

As far as the title is concerned the dramatist deviates from the traditional norm. The title is not after the hero. Rather it is indicative of the theme- Dr. Bhattacharyya has composed this dramatic piece on the basis of the life of hardship of the workers associated with Transport Corporation. He himself was the Chairperson, the Controller of the Corporation. He always tried to work towards the welfare and satisfaction of the workers and the development. As he was closely associated with them, he could realise their woes. All the subjects presented bearing the symbol of *Śārdūla* (Tiger). The dramatist himself gives his justification in the forward of his composition (ŚŚ. forward) :

यत्संस्थाकर्मिसेवा उत्सर्गः प्रगुणकुशला काम्या हि नियतं
कृत्स्ना नित्योन्नतिश्च प्रथमप्रकरणं मन्यत इह नः।
यस्या दुनोति प्रथितिवचनं प्रीणाति च मनः
तस्यै सन्तर्प्यते मे प्रकरणमिदं शार्दूलशकटम् ॥

There is a deep interpretation in the title – just as a tiger can fight with an elephant and become victorious in spite of the elephant being more powerful, the workers attain victory agitating against the exploitation of their employers for their rights, being united.

Another interpretation can be given for the title – that a tiger reaches its destination quickly, running at a high speed, so does the buses of West Bengal Transport Corporation help the passengers to reach their destination quickly without any hassle.⁴

Thus we can say that the playwright is justified so far as the title is concerned.

It is interesting to note that in spite of incorporating many changes, it is maintaining a continuity with the past. This modern trend of writing no longer maintains an ideal isolation since it has started coming closer to the society in aspects to their day to day life, such as trials and tribulations, joys and sorrows, hopes and aspirations.

A dramatist must have adequate knowledge of the subjects depicted in the play in order to make it as authentic as possible. The author of a play must be pathetic to other's feelings. Then only a dramatic composition can leave a lasting impact on the audience. We can give full credit to Dr. Bhattacharyya so far as the presentation of the theme is concerned. The author was in charge of the Calcutta Transport Corporation and seems to be very much dedicated to his responsibility and the welfare of the workers as well and thus is well aware of the ins and outs of the bureaucratic system. Having deep grounding in Sanskrit language and with finest poetic talent and dramatic genius he has successfully executed the contemporary theme in this play. His mastery over composing verses and songs in a lucid language is evident from more than 100 verses in the play. His diction is simple and yet endowed with poetic beauty making them more acceptable to the audience. For example, can be cited the following verse where there is a description of the buses meant for women travellers (ŚŚ.2.41):

4 ŚŚ, I.5 :

न जातु कविना भवेद् विदितमत्र तथ्येप्सुना नृणामवरचारिणां निभृतजीवनं दुःखदम् ।
परन्तु हृदयानि यो विशितुमन्तरेण क्षमः स एव कुरुते क्वचिच्चरितचित्रणं सार्थकम् ॥

मञ्जुस्वना विहरते शनैः नृत्यैर्यथा कलापी
 मन्दाकिनी नगरवर्त्मगा मन्दारिका हसन्ती ।
 कामं न गुञ्जति मधुव्रता नारीमनस्तथापि
 सर्वे रथा रुचिरनामभिर्मन्ये सदा जयन्ति ॥

The names of the buses like *Mañjusvanā*, *Mandākinī*, *Mandārikā* *Madhuvratā* render softness of a woman's nature and thus comparing their movement with that of a dancing peahen is very befittingly presented. Thus *Śārdūlaśakaṭam* is a unique unparallel modern play.

To popularise Sanskrit amongst the new generation, we need to have more such writings and plays which deal with the contemporary issues. When the readers/ audience can correlate a plot/situation easily, their interest can be generated in the language. Along with the study and research in the traditional work, such creative writing should also be carried out.