

## BOOK REVIEWS

## Bhāgīrathī

by Govind Chandra Pande  
Allahabad: Raka Prakashan,  
2002, pp. xvi+223, Rs. 200

Acharya Govind Chandra Pande is an established Sanskrit scholar, poet, philosopher, linguist and above all a historian of international repute. *Bhāgīrathī* is his sixth book of poem and the fifth published book in Sanskrit language. He appeared in the arena of Sanskrit poetry with his 'Astāchalīyam' published in 1991 by the Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishva-vidyalaya, Varanasi. It contains metrical Sanskrit translation of 24 sonnets of Shakespeare and some poems of Milton, Donne, Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelly, Tennyson, Arnold, Poe, Yeats and Rupert Brooke. Though it is a general saying that 'no translation can ever do justice to the beauty of the original, but in the case of *Astāchalīyam*, to a Sanskrit *sabrdaya*, sometimes the translation appears to be more beautiful than the original. It is because of the fact that the poet (Pandeji) has the immense capacity and poetic insight to put a really suggestive word to convey the original poets desired meaning. Prof. Vidya Niwas Mishra, the then Vice Chancellor of the Sanskrit University, has written a short but pithy foreword to it. While commenting on the poetic

beauty of the *Astāchalīyam* Prof. Mishra says – "Sometime its poetic beauty reminds us of Bhavabhuti and sometime the arrangements of words (*Padanyāsa*) reminds us of the excellence of Poet Magha and Amaruka. The multiplicity of metres used in it has added to the beauty of the translation. His poetry is simple yet so charming." He also informs us that Pandeji has been composing Sanskrit verses since his student days.

*Bhāgīrathī* is a collection of about 250 Sanskrit verses under 163 titles. It is a work of a gifted poet possessing highly poetic insight. Actually, a masterpiece of Sanskrit poetic art. Acharya Rudrata in his *Kāvyaālankāra* says that after studying the various *Śāstras* the speech becomes refined but the cream of speech is only poetry—

फलमिदमेव हि विदुषां शुचिपदवाक्यप्रमाणशास्त्रेभ्यः।  
यत्संस्कारो वाचां वाचश्च सुचारुकाव्यफलाः॥

*Bhāgīrathī* is in this way, the fine fruit of scholar poet's speech.

The contents of the *Bhāgīrathī* are wide ranging and not hackneyed. The poet is averse to traversing the beaten

track. Not only the variety of the subjects but the manner of presentation, the poetic images, the lucidity and the wonderful suggestivity of the language, the similes, metaphors, description of nature, presentation of dream experiences, poetic presentation of philosophical problems are replete with wonderful poetic insight.

Prof. Pande emerges not only as a *Kāvya*kavi but a *Shāstrakavi* also. Rajashekhara in his *Kāvya*mīmāṃsā says that a *Shāstrakavi* does not explain the *Shāstra* but only loosens the knot of the *Shāstra* in his fine poetic manner

“यत्काव्यकविः शास्त्रे  
तर्ककर्कशमप्यर्थमुक्तिवैचित्र्येण श्लथयति”

Dr. Ram Vilasa Sharma, a renowned critic of Hindi, has said "Poetry is the language of heart and in order to appreciate it one needs a poetic taste and not philosophy and hence for relishing poetry one should cultivate this taste." This statement is quite reasonable. Too much of philosophy makes the poetry heavy with serious technical precepts and renders it a *Shāstrakāvya* and there

is no dearth of such poetic works in Sanskrit. In spite of all this the philosophy of life as perceived by the poet is bound to reflect in his poetry because the poetry is the true reflection of the self or ego of the creative artist. Moreover, the expression of the spiritual truth is never possible in ordinary language but in the poetic language only. The poet Pandeji has himself said in his book वैदिकसंस्कृति (p. 107) वैसे तो गम्भीर आध्यात्मिक सत्यों का प्रकाशन अमिथा के द्वारा न होकर अनुभूति की अभिव्यञ्जक काव्यात्मक भाषा से ही संभव है।

A true poet has to be a seer, a visionary, as has been said by Bhattatauta, Abhinavagupta's teacher in dramaturgy

नानृषिः कविरित्युक्तः ऋषिश्च किल दर्शनात्।  
विचित्रभावधर्माशतत्वप्रख्या च दर्शनम्॥  
स तत्त्वदर्शनादेव शास्त्रेषु पठितः कविः।  
दर्शनाद्दर्शनाच्चाथ रूढा लोके कविश्रुतिः॥

The poet Pandeji is a visionary in this sense and is endowed with the genius or *Pratibha* which enables him to bring about absolutely new poetic images which are so spontaneous that the connoisseurs get immersed in the magnificent poetic image and derive pure aesthetic pleasure. Thus the readers of his poetry attain the state of हृदयसंवाद and तन्मयीभाव the two prerequisites of aesthetic experience without any effort. This quality of his poetry reminds us of the following statement of Ānandavardhana, the greatest rhetorician of Sanskrit: कविना काव्यमुपनिबध्नता सर्वात्मना रसपरतन्त्रेण भवितव्यम्। By judging his poetry from the above point of view it appears that if Pandeji is an 'accomplishing poet' (साधककवि) in his *Hamsikā* (हंसिका) the Hindi poetry, he is a 'well accomplished poet' (सिद्धकवि) in *Bhāgīrathī*.

His genius is wide awake in going deep into the object of art and carve out a beautiful poetic image (काव्यबिम्ब) and present it in most suggestive words before the reader. For example, I take his poem entitled सागरः (p.108). The constantly rising and subsiding waves of the ocean are being described as if the ocean is trying hard to paint some unknown form and erases it every time because it is not satisfied until the desired form is rightly painted. For this painting the pastel is the sky reflected in it, the canvas is its own surface and the brush is the air

मसीकर्वन् व्योम प्रतिफलितबिम्बं निजहृदि  
समादत्तजे तूलीं सततगतिमम्भोनिधिरयम्।  
तथाप्यालेख्यं किं लिखति हरते तत्क्षणमहो  
यथान्विष्यन् रूपं किमपि न तु तत्त्वेन लभते॥

This poetic image will ever remain etched in the mind of the सहृदय and whenever he will see the ever rising and disappearing waves of the ocean he will certainly remember this idea of the poet. From the point of view of rhetoric evaluation the verse presents a beautiful combination (संकर) of एकदेशविचारतिरूपक, and शुद्धसन्देश culminating in प्रतीयमानोत्प्रेक्षा. Though the ocean has been described by the poets in many ways; specially there are innumerable verses of अन्योक्ति on ocean but the new idea described in the *Bhāgīrathī* never occurred to any poet.

In the poem प्रबोधनम् the poet described the trekking and climbing the hill and gives some advice as to how the trekking on hills be performed successfully

आरोहे पर्वतस्य प्रचरणसरणिर्दुर्गमोर्ध्वक्रमेण  
श्वासानायम्य मन्दं ब्रज समवहितः पूर्वकायानतश्च।  
नाधस्तान्निम्नगर्तं न च गिरिशिखरं तुङ्गमोलोकनीयं

प्रत्येकं पादपाते तव भवतु मतिः साध्यमेतावदेव॥

This verse is a fine example of the अर्थान्तरसंक्रमितवाच्यध्वनि. Here the expressed sense (वाच्यार्थ) is inapplicable (because the climber observes all these rules by himself) and hence the statement gives rise to the dominating suggestive sense (व्यङ्ग्यार्थ) in the form of sound advice that one has to be self controlled, humble, slow and steady if one wants to go higher and higher. The illustration of the अर्थान्तरसंक्रमितवाच्यध्वनि given by आचार्य मम्मट in the second chapter of the *Kāvya prakāśa* appears a little dull and prosaic as compared to the above *śloka*.

The beautiful spectacle of the snowfall has never been described by the Sanskrit poets. We fail to understand as to how it could escape the attention of even the poets of Kashmir. Pandeji has splendidly presented the scene of the snowfall and playing with snowballs in the following lines

विशकलितविलोलस्फारतूलाभराशिः  
प्रसरति हिमपातः श्वेतयन् दिक्कदम्बम्।  
तरुगृहशिखराणि प्रोर्णुवन् दिव्यकान्त्या  
सघनमृदुकुथं वा भूतले संवितन्वन्॥  
रम्यारस्ते दिवसाः बहुतरगुरुकार्यमुक्तहृदयानाम्।  
हिमकन्दुकलीलाभिर्येषु व्यवहराम निर्द्वन्द्वाः॥

The snowfall is whitening all the places including the tree tops and the roofs of the houses. It appears as if a white carpet on the earth is being stretched. In the second verse the poet remembers with regret his pleasant days of early childhood when he used to play with the snowballs. The regret is that those days will never come again (ते हि नोदिवसा गताः). In ordinary walk of life we only pick up the sense of the spoken word

but in the realm of poetry we also grasp the poetic image and without visualising the poetic image there cannot be any appreciation of poetry. The power of clear visualisation of the aesthetic image in all its fullness is technically called कविप्रतिभा and the poet Pande is undoubtedly endowed with this rare quality of कविप्रतिभा.

Describing the falling showers in the rainy season the poet says that they are not showers but they are the arrows sharpened in the whetstone of the lightning, and in the sky it is not the stream of the thundering clouds but the army of elephants in the battle fields running helter skelter

न बिन्दवो नैव पतन्ति धाराः  
पतन्ति विद्युन्निशिताः शरौघाः।  
न गर्जतीयं दिवि मेघमाला  
द्रवन्ति सान्नाह्यगजाः प्रभिन्नाः॥

This is a fine illustration of the *Apabnuti Alamkāra*. Similarly, in the following verse the poetic fancy under the garb of *Apabnuti* and *Utprekshā* attracts the attention of the reader

निदाघतापेन जडैस्तृषर्ते  
रपायि मेघैर्लवणाकराम्बु।  
मन्ये तदेवोद्गिरणे प्रवृत्ता  
मुहुर्मुहुर्वृष्टिभिषेण तेऽद्य॥

Here the falling of rain is imagined to be the vomiting of the saline water of the ocean drunk by the thirsting clouds during the summer season. Here the use of the word लवणाकराम्बु is very significant and its suggestivity reminds us of the statement of Ānandavardhana that

सोऽर्थस्तद्व्यक्तिसामर्थ्ययोगी शब्दश्च कश्चन

A rare combination of classicism and modernity is the hallmark of the

book. The poet has generally avoided mythological or traditional themes. Two or three mythological themes have been presented in an entirely new perspective of poetic imagery. Take, for example, the legend of ocean churning (समुद्रमन्थन) experienced in his dream where speech is Vasuki, the churning rope, mind is the Mandara mountain, the churning staff, Chitta is the ocean being churned. The poet, the churning agent, is in a terrible fix as to which jewel will come out whether the poison of the Lord Shankara's share or the nectar in the shape of aesthetic relish

वाणी वासुकितनामधत्त सहसा स्वप्नायमानस्य मे  
प्रज्ञा मन्थररूपिणी समभवच्चित्तोदधिं मथन्ती।  
इत्याकारविवर्तकौतुकरसप्रेक्षेरितोऽचिन्तयं  
किं रत्नेषु लभेय कालगरलं किं वामृतं संविदः॥

Here the poet wants to convey the wonderful and subtle idea that poetry is the joining point of the mundane and supramundane experiences which are like poison and nectar respectively.

In the very first verse of the book the poet has compared the world to a drama where all the men and women are like the heroes and heroines and the dominant *Rasa* is *Adbhuta* and all the people are the spectators as well as actors. The normal behaviour of the people will surprisingly appear dramatic if our viewpoint is changed and becomes a little detached. The clue to this idea of spectator and actor combined in one has been taken from the unavailable drama attributed to *Subandhu* but the poet's imagination has put it in an entirely new shape. Many poetic images, metaphors and similes are absolutely original and never thought of by the earlier poets. For straightness he coins absolutely

new standard of comparison (उपमान) in the following verse where he wishes that his intentions and designs be upright and straight like the line of the light, arrows shot out of the bow, the Devadaru trees of the Himalayas, row of swans flying straight to the Manasa lake

प्रकाशरेखा इषवो विमुक्ता  
हिमाद्रिदेवद्रुमराजयस्ताः।  
हंसावली मानसमुत्पतन्ती  
यथा, तथा मे प्रगुणा मतिः स्यात्॥

The poet's humility and hesitation about his capacity to compose poetry in the following verses reminds us of Kalidasas' humility

विश्वसृजः प्रत्यक्षं काव्यं पश्यामि यत्र यत्रापि।  
तेन चमत्कृतहृदयः कवयन्नुपहासयामि स्वम्॥  
काव्यं करोमि किमु मर्त्यशरीरधारी  
देवस्य कार्यमिति यत् प्रथितं सदैव।  
गीर्वाणवाक्चरणचारणताभिमानः  
सम्प्रेरयन्तु मम मूकमिवात्मभावम्॥

Rajasekhara the author of the *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā* writes –

सन्ति पुस्तकविन्यस्ताः काव्यबन्धा गृहे गृहे।  
द्वित्रास्तु भावकमनःशिलापट्टनिकुट्टिताः॥

The poetic compositions treasured in the book are present in every house but out of those only two or three are such which make a permanent mark in the hearts of the reader having aesthetic taste. I am sure the *Bhāgīratī* is one of those rare poetic compositions which will give true satisfaction to the सहृदय.

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