

## EXPANSE OF SANSKRIT EPICS IN INDIAN LITERATURE: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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### **Abstract:**

Sanskrit Epics are one of the major classifications of classical literature written in various languages worldwide. It is hard to specify the actual time of origin of epics but it is believed that seed of creation of epics started with the Mantras and theories of Rigveda. 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' are the two initial epics of old Sanskrit literature. After the creation of these two epics other epics are being created following the similar kind of ideology, which dignified Indian literature. With the starting of Ramayana and Mahabharata epic creation was continued through Pre-Kalidas, Kalidas and till the last poet of Post-Kalidas era Shree Harsha. Wide range of these epics added values to Indian literature. With this study we would like to highlight the journey of creation of epics from Ramayana to Shree Harsha's period that helped Indian literature to reach a high position. In this research paper we tried to discuss the trend of epics.

**Key words:** Indian literature, Sanskrit epics, Expanse of epics, Epics development.

### **0.00 Introduction:**

'Epic' is a significant classification of classical literature written in various languages. Epic means elongated rhythmic creation. Actual period of starting this trend cannot be specified but it is said that Mantras and theories of Rigveda claims origin of epics. 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' are the two initial epics of old Sanskrit literature. These two epics are called as history. In Indian literature the 'Ramayana' is called as the first epics and creator of Ramayana, Balmiki is called as the first versifier. The Ramayana is the first Decorative Indian Literature. Bedbyash Krishna Doipayyan is known as the creator of Chandra descendent Kings' history retained epic 'Mahabharata'.

Versifiers classified epics as extended or progressive and literalist or decorative. From Ramayana and Mahabharata progressive trend of epics and from the epics of Aswaghosh and Kalidas decorative trend of epic has started. Trend of epic creation was started from extended epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and expanded through decorative literature, Pre-Kalidas poet Aswaghosh, Kalidas from Kalidas era, Probarsen, Post-Kalidas poets Bharawi, Bhatti, Maagh etc and to the last poet Shree Harsha's 'Naishadha-Charita'. Broaden principles of these epics dignified Sanskrit as well Indian poetic literature.

### **0.01 Objective and Importance:**

In Indian national literature after Vedas Ramayana and Mahabharata were created. These two are called as 'Fifth Veda'. Following the Ramayana and Mahabharata with inventiveness different poet gratified Indian literature. Subject and objective of the paper is to highlight the history and wide spread epic trend which helped in the gratification of Indian literature starting from Adikabya (First Epic) Ramayana and continued to Shree Harsha's period with creation of history.

### **0.02 Methodology:**

Paper is prepared mainly following Descriptive methodology. For the collection of information help from both major and minor resources is being taken.

### **0.03 Range of study:**

The range of the study is from Ramayana to Pre-Kalidas, Kalidas and the last creator of Post-Kalidas era Shree Harsha. With epics of these versifiers and through an analytical discussion we tried to give a brief introduction of the epic trend.

### 1.00 Discussion of subject:

“Sargabandho mahakabyang tatraiko nayakah sura,  
Swadwansha khatriyo wapi dheerodatta gunannwita.  
Ekavanshavaba bhupah kulaja bahawohpi wa,  
Shringara veera shantanamekohongirasa ishyatey.”

Darpana 6.303)

(Sahitya-

Diversity in ideology, elaboration of events and progressiveness of characters are the qualities of this section of literature. Indian and western poets have discussed the characteristics of epics with logic. According to Kaviraja verse that, “Created with wide divisions are called epics. Here character of a hero is expressed. He should be steady, warrior and calm.” (Goswami, 01). In the epic religion-finance-dalliance-salvation these for four aspects should be present and one of these should be validate as a major aspect.

Two epics can be found in old Indian literature. Ramayana is called first epic and Balmiki is called first poet. This epic has a massive influence in literature, society and culture.

8,800 shlokas consisted Bedabyasha created origin ‘Joykabya’ was extended to attain the structure of Mahabharata with one lakh shlokas. Mahabharata reached its original huge volume through three stages. It cannot be said that epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata were created by single person, many people contributed in many ways to create these epics. Thus they are extended. These two epics have influence over Indian literature and culture from decades.

Two epics of Post-Kalidas eras poet Aswaghosh can be found. These two are ‘Soundarananda’ and ‘Buddhacharit’. Actual name of Aswaghosh is not known. He became famous as Aswaghosh after adapting Buddhism. He appeared in 1<sup>st</sup> century. ‘Soundarananda’ was his first epic. The epic was divided in 18 chapters. ‘Buddhacharit’ was divided in 28 chapters and it was based on life of Buddha.

Aswaghosh’s skill was different from Kalidas and his previous poets. Kalidas creations were completely satire where as Bharawi, Maagh; Shree Harsha’s creations were decorative. But artistic vision of Aswaghosh was extensive and simplicity, pleasantness and honesty were the characteristics of his creation.

Legendary poet Kalidas was recognized globally. Indian scholars have introduced him as the father of poet family. He was called as the third versifier after Balmiki and Bedabyash. There are many stories about his life. He wrote two epics named ‘Kumar Sambhavam’ and ‘Raghuvansham’. These two are considered among the five epics of old Sanskrit literature. In ‘Kumar Sambhavam’ birth story of Kartika is described. According to Indian tradition this epic was completed in 22 chapters. It is said that the last and the best creation of Kalidas was ‘Raghuvansham’. Divided in 19 chapters this epic contains the description of Kings from Surya family. Main story of this epic was taken from the Ramayana.

‘Setubandha’ of Probarsen and ‘Janakiharan’ of Kumar Das were two famous epics from Kalidas era.

Among the five epics of Bharawi in Post-Kalidas era 'Kirtarjuniyam' was the famous one. Other four epics are 'Kumar Sambhavam' and 'Ranguvansham' of Kalidas, 'Sishupal Badh' of Maagh and 'Naishadha Charita' of Shree Harsha. According to the time Bharawi comes in between Kalidas and Maagh. This epic was based on Banaparba of Mahabharata and Shiva Purana. This epic has 18 chapters.

Most of versifiers of Post-Kalidas era loved to show their skills. Bharawi was an artistic versifier. Next to Bharawi, Bhatti was a scholar of grammar and decorative literature. He wrote Bhattikabya to spread knowledge of grammar. Actual name of Bhattikabya is 'Ravanbadh'.

In the tradition of epics one of the famous names was 'Maagh'. 'Sishupal Badh' was one of his incomparable creations. But nothing was mentioned about his life. 'Sishupal Badh' was one in the five epics of Sanskrit. Sanskrit verse-

“Upama Kalidasashya Bharawartheya gourabam,

Dandina (or Naishdhey) padalalityang Maaghey santitrayo gunah.”

(Sarmah  
, 149)

Kalidas was known for paradigm, Bharawi was known for meaning and pride, Dandi or Shree Harsha was known for 'Naishadh' and all these three characteristics were present in Maagh's epics.

After this many people contributed in development of epics in many ways. Among these 'Goudhrawaho' of Bakapati, 'Kappwanabhrudaya' of Shibaswami, 'Harabijaya' of Rajanak Ratnakar, 'Kabirahashya' of Halayudha, 'Ramayana Manjuri', 'Bharat Manjuri', 'Brihat kothamanjuri', 'Dashawatar Charit', 'Boudhadan Kalpalata' of Khemendra and 'Naishadha Charit' of the last poet Shree Harsha attained a different standard of literature.

'Naishadha Charit' was known as Shree Harsha's fifth of five epics and last of 'Brihatrayi'. Maagh was a scholar and good poet. There were some stories about Shree Harsha that claimed that Bharawi was famous till the appearance of Maagh, after Maagh Bharawai lost his charm. Shree Harsha wrote 'Naishadha Charit' in 22 chapters which were based on the stories of Nal-Damayanti described in the 50-78 chapters of Banaparba of Mahabharata. Apart from its huge volume Shree Harsha created this epic giving complete amusement without diverting the story.

Thus in this way from the days of 'Ramayana' Aswaghosh, writer of Five epics and many others established a golden era of Sanskrit epics with their high standard creativity and skills.

## 2.00 Conclusion:

Sources of Ramayana and Mahabharata were Vedas and sources of decorative epics were Ramayana and Mahabharata. But charm of stories and beauty of epics added a depth to the expanse of epics. In Sanskrit epics 'Pachamahakabya' (Five epics) has a separate place. Panchamahakabya took the trend of epic creation to another level. Influence of initial epics on present day literature shows how Indian literature has a huge impact of old Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit epics will always be influential for Indian people with own dignity, skills and depth.

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