

The Contribution of Mallinatha as a Great Commentator in Sanskrit Literature

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One of the glorious and rich aspects of Sanskrit literature is the exegetical literature called commentaries that means a critical explanation or interpretation of a particular text. The briefness, the precision and the compactness of Sanskrit poetical style gave rise to the literature of exposition and elucidation. The verses and prose passages were interpreted and understood easily by such explanatory glosses. The words like 'Ṭikā', 'Vṛtti', or 'Bhāṣya' commonly denote such elucidatory passages. As an aid to the proper understanding of the texts, this type of explanatory literature attained a local habitation and a name in the literary field. The commentaries, in fact, become essential for a thorough understanding of the texts. Thus 'Ṭikā' or 'Bhāṣya' attained prominence side by side with the text. This type of commentary literature encircled all branches of Sanskrit literature --- philosophical, romantic, śāstrīya, dramatic and eulogistic. Thus a commentator or a Ṭikākāra is also recognized as an intellectual type of writer.

There are so many known and unknown commentators who have enriched the Sanskrit literature with the help of their scholarship and intellectual thoughts. But the moment, we think of authentic Sanskrit commentaries, the name of Mallinātha obviously comes first to the memory of any Sanskrit scholar. Mallinātha is remembered as a commentator and his creative works of commendable originality are generally forgotten. That is why I have selected the critical study on the significant characteristics of Mallinātha's commentaries as my area of interest. In this present paper we shall discuss about some significant features of Mallinātha's commentaries and also about the style and method, he had followed in his interpretations.

ABOUT MALLINĀTHA

When we thought about the commentator Mallinātha, the question of his identity has arisen and there is available different opinions about his personality. Mallinātha is a name given to many persons hailing in different centuries, adding to the confusion. About nine Mallināthas are known to Sanskrit scholars. The time range of all these persons called Mallinātha is from 13th to 18th century. Though nine such Mallināthas are known to the history, the commentator Mallinātha seems to be considerably remote from them. For a clear understanding of the identity, the introductions and colophons of his commentaries in the Mahākāvya, are useful. His colophons or introductions indicates that he was a great scholar of various Darśanas. A verse of Mallinātha counts the various Śāstras in which he was well-versed. He is also known as a great scholar of Vyāraṇa, Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya. He had received a title 'Mahāhopādhyāya'. Nothing, however, is known about his forefathers. Some information about his geneology can be culled from the commentary of Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita on 'Campūrāmāyaṇa'. It mentions that Mallinātha belonged to Kolachalma family. The surname of persons in Andhra families often bears the name of their village. Mallinātha's surname was Kolacala, Kolacela, Kolamchalma or Kolacherla. It somehow explains the fact that the members of his family had connection with the Kakatiyas of Warangal. The Kanakābhīṣeka from Pratāparudra, the Kakatiya king of Warangal underscores a fact that Mallinātha must have been well-known as a commentator by 1410 AD.

The date of Mallinātha can be correctly determined by internal and external evidences under the captions of which the date may be classified. Mallinātha has referred to the view of his predecessors which help us for setting the upper and lower limits for his period.

THE COMMENDABLE WORKS OF MALLINĀTHA

Mallinātha is well known as a commentator who has written glosses on Classical epics of Sanskrit, besides his commentaries on Śātrīc works. His Sanjivani commentary on Meghasandesa is the most popular one. He is also known as a poet, the fact which is rather unknown, though the names of his creative compositions are known to the scholars of Sanskrit literature.

Commentaries :

The following is the list of his commentaries on Classical Epics of Sanskrit -

1. Sanjīvanī - Commentary on Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa , Kumarasambhava and Meghaduta .
2. Ghaṇṭāpātha - Commentary on Bharavi's Kiratarjuniya .
3. Sarvaṅkaṣa - Commentary on Magha's Sisupalavadha .
4. Jivātu - Commentary on Sriharsa's Naisadhiyacarita .
5. Sarvapaṭhīnā – Commentary on Bhaṭṭikāvya .

The following is the list of his commentaries on Śātrīc works -

1. Tarala - commentary on Vidyadhara's Ekavali – alamkara Sastra .
2. Niskaṅṭakā - commentary on Varadaraja's Tarkikaraksa tika .

Creative works :

1. Raghuvīracaritā
2. Vaiśyavamśa Sudhākara
3. Udara Kavya

Mallinātha's style of interpretation.....

Every commentator undertakes the task of simplifying the text and also of justifying and appreciating the words and phrases of the poet. Mallinātha has selected five Mahākāvya of Sanskrit literature which are rather difficult for comprehension. He has revealed the direct and subtle meanings by adopting various methods. His vast knowledge is in the systematic commentaries.

Here we shall try to deal with some systematic peculiarities of his commentaries which prove the authenticity of a saying. There are various types of method those were found to be used in ancient commentaries. It is said in “Sarvatantra siddhāntapadārthalakṣaṇasaṅgrahaḥ”.

पदच्छेदः पदार्थश्च विग्रहो वाक्ययोजना ।

आक्षेपश्च समाधानं व्याख्यानं षड्विधं विदुः ॥

- When the words are single and not compounded, Mallinātha first mentions the synonym and then gives the supporting citation.
- In the case of a compound which is to be dissolved, the compound is mentioned earlier and then the paraphrase or a synonym is given.

Sometimes Mallinātha has introduced his gloss in between the constituent parts of the compounds. He is not particular about the dissolution of the smaller compounds. Sometimes, the word by word (the lenical) explanation is put before the formal vighraha of a compound. Sometimes, he avoids vighraha and just gives paraphrase. He is a master grammarian and does not miss any opportunity of explaining the grammatical formation of words. He has cited quotations from different lenicons to the meaning he has assigned. He often passed critical comments at the end of his commentary.

Mallinātha has a knack of judging the situations in a particular context and expressing his views in short, significant sentences. This skill is accorded in almost all the text, he has commended on. For example, in a verse in Kumārasambhava, the poet has mentioned that Śiva cast his eyes on Umā's face. Its lower lip was like 'Bimba' fruit. On this particular verse Mallinātha has commended –

“त्रिभिरपि लोचनैः साभिलाषमद्राक्षीदित्यर्थः ।

एतेन भगवतो रतिभावोदय उक्तः ॥”

means a symbolic description of the love feeling. Mallinātha's comment is self-explanatory. The excellence of Dilipa is represented by him as ----

“ अर्थकामसाधनयोर्दण्डविवाहयोर्लोकस्थापन प्रजोत्पादनरूप धर्मार्थत्वेनानुष्ठानादर्थकामावपि धर्मशेषतामापादयन् स राजा धर्मोत्तरोऽभूदित्यर्थः । ”

The parallelisms in Mallinātha's commentary have a modifying effect on the words in the text. When Mallinātha has presented these modifiers, he is always careful to see that his modifier is justified by authentic lexicons. His commentaries are mines of such expressions. For example he has quoted pāṇini to explain 'viśvajānīna' -

“ विश्वस्मै जनाय हितम् विश्वजनीनम् । आत्मन् विश्वजनभोगोत्तरयदात् रवः । ”

He has also explained the word 'Adhityakā' ----

“अधित्यकासु उर्ध्वभूमिषु । भूमिरुर्ध्वमधित्यका । इत्यमरः । ”

Among the Mahākāvya writers, Kālidāsa's style is marked by simplicity. Bhāravi and Māgha are well-known for their use of puzzling or uncommon words. Mallināth is not tired of ascertaining the meanings of such words, as he is well-armed with lexicons.

Sometimes the concluding portions of Mallinātha contain mythological explanations. Poets have suggested many occasions occurring in the great epics like the Rāmāyaṇa or the Mahābhārata and also those occurring in various purāṇas. The poets have utilized those incidents for comparing some descriptions or incidents in the text. A particular point is brought by showing its correspondence with certain events in the past. They are mythological co-relatives. Mallinātha has made these expressions easily understandable by giving details. He has also cited relevant passages from the earlier sources.

Mallinātha has sometimes picked up a key word and has commended on it. In Raghuvamśa, It is told that the 'Royal Glory' was deeply in love with Prince Raghu still waited for the master's consent, as a girl waits for the permission of her father. According to Mallinātha, the word 'anujāna' conveys her worthiness for marriage. He has commended -

“अनुज्ञाशब्दात् पितृपारतन्त्र्यमुपमासामथ्यात् पाणिग्रहणयोग्यता च ध्वन्यते ।

IMPORTANCE OF MALLINĀTHA'S INTERPRETATION FROM THE POINT OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The ancient Sanskrit texts were written by different scribes in different parts of the country. The text shows different readings at many places either due to the negligence of the scribe or due to the similarity in letters. Sometimes the scribes used to change the reading if they thought that, that particular word might have been wrongly written and that the substitute suggested by them is appropriate. Almost all the classical works are full of variant readings except the Vedas. Thus the corruptions come in transmitted texts. A commentator, while interpreting a text, has to deal with this type of corruptions, in order to substantiate his selection of text. Moreover, as reading substantially change, the implication of a word, sentence or verse also undergoes changes in meaning. The commentators have to criticize or set aside other readings in order to justify their readings. Mallināth has indirectly recognized the importance of textual criticism and has discussed many readings and has amended some of them. Thus his commentaries are also important to understand the textual criticism and to select a justified reading while confusion come. While discussing the readings (pāthas) he had adopted the three methods, according to his satisfaction.

1. Sometimes he has just mentioned the reading.
2. Sometimes he mentioned the reading with a discussion.
3. On accepting a particular reading, he has refuted the readings of other commentators.

At some places, he has given reasons, mostly grammatical, for rejecting a particular reading. As an example in Kumārsambhava. He has rejected the word 'द्वयी' and has accepted the pāṭha, 'द्वये'.

According to pāṇini 'द्वयी' will be the feminine form of 'द्वय' and the meaning will be (द्वौ अवयवौ यस्याः सा) which is not relevant to the context.

In kumārasambhava there was written – “ विमानना सुभ्रुकृतः पितुर्गृहे । ” Here some commentators have pointed out that the word ‘सुभ्रु’ is grammatically incorrect. They have suggested some other reading to make it grammatically correct. But Mallinātha has retained the reading ‘सुभ्रु’ and has condemned the other reading ‘subhrū’.

Mallinātha has sometimes rejected the reading of other critics by giving reasons. As example there is a line in Meghadūta –

‘कामार्ता हि प्रकृतिकृपणाश्चेतनाचेतनेषु’ The reading ‘प्रणयकृपणः’ is accepted by the earlier commentator vallabhadeva. The word ‘pranaya’ signifies request also. Kālidāsa has used this word in this sense in Vikramorvaśīya. Mallinātha has retained the reading ‘प्रकृतिकृपणः’. This reading supports the expression of not making difference regarding the sentient and insentient beings – on the part of the lovers. The sense of request is irrelevant here in the śloka according to Mallināth.

Sometimes Mallinātha has mentioned the names of the commentators with whom he differed.

Sometimes Mallinātha’s reading is different. In Bhaṭṭikāvyaṃ there is a verse –

दीपतुल्यः प्रबन्धोज्यं शब्दलक्षणचक्षुषाम् ।
हस्तामर्ष इवान्धानां भवेद् व्याकरणादृते ॥

Here instead of ‘हस्तामर्ष’, Mallinātha reads it as ‘हस्तादर्श’. For the blind people, even a mirror in the hand is useless. The epic is like a lamp for those who look at it from the point of view of grammar. In this way Mallinātha has kept his great contribution in the field of textual criticism through his commentaries and even today we follow those methods. He has shown us the scientific process how to select a justified reading. Mallinātha’s readings often are admitted as an Authentic pāṭha and also sometimes help to know about the views of the other unknown commentators. So it is important from the historical point of view also.

CONCLUSION.....

In this way through a thorough review we can see how Mallinātha deals with the words scholarly and gives them authentic justifications. Not only his commentaries make the meaning of the words clear but also support the formations. He has not only quoted the rules of grammar or pointed out the figures of speech, but also brought out the significance of the political expressions. The style of his interpretation proves that he has superseded other commentators. Thus for the study of the classical Sanskrit literature, specially on epic-literature, Mallināth’s study is inevitable. Like the poet, his methodology has grace, movement and clarity.

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