

Meters in the Rāmāyaṇa: A study

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Abstract

Sanskrit literature is classified into two categories that are the वैदिक literature and the लौकिक literature. In लौकिक literature ādikavi Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa is famous for its versatile dimensions of ancient Indian culture and civilization. The Rāmāyaṇa is one of the greatest ancient epics in world literature, consisting of nearly 24000 verses, divided into seven kāṇḍas and about 500 sargas or chapter. It considered to be the Ādi-kāvya (first poem), composed by Ādi-kavi Vālmīki. It depicts the duties of relationships and presents the teachings of ancient Hindu sage in narrative allegory. The subject matter of this epic represents a specific cultural and mythological land marks through its rigorous characterization and eventful situations. Thus its versatile themes make the Rāmāyaṇa an encyclopedic study. In Sanskrit, generally there are two types of compositions - prose and poetry. The verse-less composition is called 'prose' and the rhymed composition is 'poetry/verse.' The composition which consists of the laws of letters, quantity, speed, etc. is called 'Chanda.' The texts, in which the form and type of verses are discussed, are called 'Chandrasashtra'. In this paper I (researcher) want to discuss about the meters (chanda) in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Keyword: *Meters, Rāmāyaṇa, Vālmīki, Chanda, Anusthup, syllable.*

Introduction

Vālmīki is popularly known as ādikavi and Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is called ādikāvya. The Rāmāyaṇa is the greatest epic which has brought integrity amongst thousands of discriminations of Indians (and of course the Mahābhārata). Still now all pervasive impact of the Rāmāyaṇa is seen amongst the people of the India across Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Rāmāyaṇa vividly describes the role and relationships of numerous characters. Their idealism, dutifulness and also the sublimity in traits and characters have been sharply presented by Vālmīki along with some exceptions. Numerous books composed on the life of Rāma, but Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is the most prominent among all of them. This paper is an

attempt to meters on the Rāmāyaṇa, so it is important to study on the Rāmāyaṇa and establish the points of the Meters.

Characters or syllables: - From the point of view of the chandashastra, only consonants (क्, ख् etc.) are not called letters. A single vowel or consonant-containing vowel is called a 'letter'. 'आ', 'का', and 'काम्' have only one letter from the point of view of the chandashastra, because there is only one 'आ' in them. Consideration of consonants is not given while counting the letters in the chanda.

गुरु-:लघु-: -

The syllables or letters ह्रस्व (अ, इ, उ, ऋ, लृ) are called 'लघु' in the Chandrasashastra and दीर्घ (long) syllables (आ, ई, ऊ, ऋ, ए, ऐ, ओ, and औ) as 'गुरु'. Similarly क, कि etc. is a 'लघु' letter and का, कौ etc. is (गुरु) Guru. Guru's sign is "S" or '—' and लघु sign is '|' or 'u'. In Chandha Shastra, Pandit Gangadas tells the following has been considered as 'गुरु'.

“सानुस्वारश्च दीर्घश्च विसर्गी च गुरुर्भवेत् ।

वर्णः संयोगपूर्वश्च तथा पादान्तगोऽपि वा ॥”

Which means the letter गुरु (Guru) is preceded by a reminder (अनुस्वारयुक्त), long immersed (दीर्घ विसर्गयुक्त) and combined letters (संयुक्त अक्षरों). The final letter of the phase of the stanza is considered to be the लघु or गुरु as required.

According to Gangadas mentioned a shloka in his book 'chandomanjori' regarding the गण this shloka is:

“मस्त्रिगुरुस्त्रिलघुश्च नकारो, भादिगुरुःपुनरादिलघुर्यः।

जो गुरुमध्यगतो, रलमध्यः, सोऽन्तगुरुःकथितोऽन्तलघुस्तः ॥”¹

Meaning - The three (गुरु) gurus in the Magan, all the three (लघु) shorts in the Nagan, In Bhagan the initial letter is Guru, in Yagan the initial is Adi Laghu, in Jagan there is

¹ . Chandomanjari - (1. 8)

the middle Guru, in Ragana laghu is the middle, guru is the last in Sagan and laghu is the last of Tagan.

गणः-

The group of three-three syllables of Chhandashastra is called "Gan". Examples of eight गण from 'म' to 'न' and two गण 'ल' and 'ग' are e.g.

मगण- three syllables are गुरु (- - -) श्रीदुर्गा	जगण- first one is लघु second is गुरु and third one is लघु (u – u) शिबाय
नगण- three syllables are लघु (u u u) बिजय	रगण- first one is गुरु second is लघु and third one is गुरु (– u –) देबरः
भगण- first one is गुरु and another two is लघु (– u u) शंकर	सगण- first two is लघु and last one is गुरु (u u –) शरणम्
यगण- first one is लघु last two is गुरु (u - --) महेशः	तगण- first two is गुरु and last one is लघु (- - u) रत्नानि
लगण- is a लघु (u) नु	गगण- is a गुरु (–)सा

Prosody (chandaśāstra, chandovidhiti, chandah etc.) treats of the laws of verification. A verse (padya) is a short piece of composition regulated by harmonious arrangement of syllables adapted to please the ear and reach the heart of the reader or hearer. The form of harmonious succession of syllables is called meter (chanda). Meter is an important vehicle of sentimental expression. As per Dandin, view the knowledge of meters is like a boat to cross over the deep sea of 'Kāvya' only for those who desire to do so as;

“Sa vidyanaustitirsunamgabhiramkavyasagaram.”²

According to legend, Vālmīki was ordered to compose the Rāmāyaṇa in verses. The first verse came out his mouth is said to be 'māniṣāda' which is composed in Anustup meter. This is the modified form of the Vedic meter Anustup. This meter consists of 32 syllables. There was no very strict binding of letters (syllables) exact numbers in the Vedic Anustup

²Kāvyaadarsa, 1st chapter

meter. May be one or two letter plus or minus in a line. The definition of the Anustup meter as given in the छन्दोमञ्जरी ed. by Gangadas as follows;

पञ्चमंलघुसर्वत्रसप्तमं द्विचतुर्थयोः

गुरुषष्ठञ्चपादानांशेषष्वनियमोमतः

The similar definition of Anusthup meter is given in the श्रुतबोध ed. by Kalidās as follows

श्लोकेषुगुरुज्ञेयंसर्वत्रलघुपञ्चमम्

द्विचतुःपादयोर्ह्रस्वसप्तमं दीर्घमन्ययोः

The 5th and the 6th syllable of each quarter (pada) of a verse which is composed in Anustup meter should be vowels (swar) short and long respectively. The 7th syllable (vowel) in the 3rd and the 4th quarter should be long and it should long and it should be short in the case of the 2nd and 4th quarters of a stanza. There was no specific rule for the 4th and 8th syllable of a stanza the following verse is cited on the basis of the rule.

Now, we may cite two verses from the Rāmāyaṇa as an example of Anustup meter.

1. चारित्रेणचकोयुक्तः

सर्वभूतेषुकोहितः |

विद्वान्कःकःसमर्थश्च

कश्चैकप्रियदर्शनः |³

2. प्राप्तचारित्रसन्देहा

ममप्रतिमुखेस्थिता |

दीपोनेत्रातुरस्येव

प्रतिकूलासिमेदृढा |⁴

But, the exceptions of this rule are also found e.g.

तपःस्वाध्यायनिरतंतपस्वीवाग्विदांवरम् |

नारदंपरिपप्रच्छवाल्मीकीर्मुनिपुंगवम् |⁵

Here we find the exceptions of the rule in the 1st quarter the 6th syllable deviates the rule as it is not long. It took several times to be free from the influence of the Vedic Anustup metre. Deviations from this rule are also seen in the Rāmāyaṇa.

³. (V.Rāmāyaṇa 1.1.3)

⁴. (V.Rāmāyaṇa 6.115.17)

⁵. (V.Rāmāyaṇa 1.1.1)

The Upajati-meter (*Indrabojra+Upendrabojra*) that is used in the Rāmāyaṇa is the modification of the Vedic meter Tristup. This meter is immensely employed in the Rāmāyaṇa. e.g.

यज्जाग्रतोदुरमुदैतिदैवंतदुसुप्तस्यतथैवैति ।

दुरंगमंज्योतिषांज्योतिरेकं तन्मे मनःशिवसंकल्पमस्तु ।⁶

The influence of another meter at the end of the can to indicate as its letter addition the list of the chandas are वंशस्थविल (1.2.42) वैश्वदेवी (65.28) प्रहर्षिणी (2.107.17) रुचिरा (2.21.54) वसन्ततिलक (7.109.23) पुष्पिताग्रा (1.2.43) अपरवक्त्र (2.81.16) औपच्छन्दसिक (2.81.16) सुन्दरी (3.73.25).

According to some scholar on the basis of the evidences of these meters, it is not right to assign the date of the Rāmāyaṇa before Buddha. But, in the Samhita, Brahman, Aranyaka, Upanisads and Purana also we find that whenever narrative are in poetry they are mainly in Anustup, which also we find in the Rāmāyaṇa. In modern/classical Sanskrit literature e.g. in Kalidasa, Magha et.al we see the same.

We may assume, which is not probably wrong that poets, in a big narrative, inserted other meters for the purpose.

1. To bring variations in rhythm.
2. To show their mastery over other meters too.
3. In this context, we must not forget that the Mahābhārata and other Puraṇas are also goes mainly in Anustup and the story line of the Rāmāyaṇa is also found in nutshell in the Mahābhārata.

Hence, on the basis of mere presence of some different meters, we cannot conclude definitively that Rāmāyaṇa was composed after Buddha.

⁶. (शु.यजु.६.१.)

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