

## The Linguistic features of the Vatsagulma Māhātmya

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Vatsagulma Māhātmya is a Sanskrit Sthala Māhātmya text having nearly 5000 verses spread in 39 chapters. Being a text glorifying the ancient town of Vatsagulma, it narrates one hundred and eight sacred places in the vicinity of Vatsagulma. During description, it states various mythological stories already prevalent in popular Purana text. The language of the text is typically Purana literature language. It also shows some influence of the regional language mainly Marathi. The present paper tries to study these linguistic features of the text with the Puranic features in general and with sociolinguistic point of view.

**Keywords**-sthala māhātmya, Puranic language, regional language

### Introduction:

Sanskrit literature in its vast expanse covers different types of literature right from the Vedic *Samhitas*, *Brāhmaṇa* texts and other Vedic literature, the *ārṣa mahākāvya*s, the Purāṇa literature and then the classical literature afterwards. Each type of Sanskrit literature can be identified with some peculiar linguistic features in terms of formation of words and their accents. Dr. R.N. Aralikatti sir has taken an overview of some linguistic features of Hindu religious texts and states – I quote- “The discourse pattern employed in these Hindu texts covers the five main forms of speech- statements in simple classical Sanskrit, Vedic mantras in archaic style (for meditation), simple stanzas versifying the particular offering in puranic style and their specific injunctions (*Vidhis*) to follow the prescribed activity according to the procedure.” Unquote. Apart from the religious texts, the Shastra literature in Sanskrit also is characterized by some special linguistic features of precision. However, the present paper will focus on the linguistic features as seen from one of the *sthala māhātmya*s, i.e., the Vatsagulma māhātmya henceforth addressed in this paper as VGM.

There is a strong need to study the Puranic literature with its linguistic characteristics. Linguistic characteristics of any type of literature are the outcome of various factors like geographical, sociological, economical, and so on. The *sthala māhātmya* texts are many a times a part of some *mahā purāṇa* or at least they claim to be. These texts glorify some place of importance, mostly religious. It has many hints at the influence of geographical factors and sociological factors on the language of the text. The present paper will try to relate some linguistic components to geography and sociology of the area of Vatsagulma.

### Introduction to the text:

The text of the VGM – a *sthala māhātmya*- was critically edited by Y.K.Deshpande in Shaka 1873 i.e., 1951 of C.E. This book published by Koshatvar Mudranalay at Vashim has the Sanskrit text, Marathi gist of chapters and elaborate critical notes. The author has talked about the historical, religious importance of the text but not about the linguistic features of the text. The text of VGM states in its colophon that it belongs to the *Padma purāṇa*, but no recension of *Padma purāṇa* has it. The text is vast, with 39 chapters and around 5000 verses. The text starts with the dialogue between

sages and the Sūta. Śuka told the Māhātmya to Vyas. The king Vāsukī of Kanakādripura, because of deeds in his previous births had some skin disease. His wife dreamt of it. Incidentally, he comes across a pond in the forest, the water of which heals his skin disease. The story is narrated further stating the existence of one hundred and eight sacred places or *tīrthas* in and around Vatsagulma, the ancient Vashim.

**Linguistic features of the text:** The text of VGM is a *sthala māhātmya* which shows the features of the Puranic language at large. The subjects dealt with in the text of VGM are not the *pañcalakṣaṇa* or *daśalakṣaṇa* as seen in general Puranic literature. The main subject matter of the VGM is description of one hundred and eight sacred places in Vatsagulma. While narrating their importance, there are several stories stated describing various subjects like the *karmavipāka*, good behaviour of loyal wives, the destruction of the evil and so on.

The text shows the following linguistic features which are peculiar to the Puranic literature-

- 1) The forms of words which are incorrect according to Paninian rules of grammar.
  - i) यस्त्विदं पठते भक्त्या त्रिकालं नियतात्मना ॥८.९९॥ There should have been *parasmaipada* ending for the verb instead of *ātmanepada* ending used here.  
शिवस्य कृपया तेऽद्य कानिचित् कथ्यते मया ॥९.६॥ Here there should have been the plural form *kathyante* instead of the singular form *kathyate*.
  - ii) Improper use of *ktvāpratyaya*. There should have been *lyap*. It was proper in meter with *lyap*. अरण्यमिलितं वारि संस्मृत्वाथ शुभप्रदम् ॥३.८३॥
  - iii) The improper use of *lyap* ending is also seen. There should have been the *ktvā* ending instead of this *lyap* ending. अमलैरम्बुभिः पूर्णा लिङ्गं स्थाप्याथ तत्तटे ॥१०.२५॥

- 2) The use of some unusual words which seem to be perfectly derived with the rules of grammar. For example, while describing the spot of *sindūra* on the forehead of the queen of Vāsuki, the author says-

सिन्दूरतिलकं भाति प्राचीबिम्बमिवोष्णगोः ॥ १.३९ ॥

Here the word उष्णगु means the Sun. This word is not commonly used in Sanskrit. It is not mentioned in the *Amarakośa*, *medinīkośa* and *halāyudhakośa*.

Another example-

मित्रोदयाद्यथा फुल्लं कञ्जं निशि मुक्लितम् ॥८. ४०॥

The word *kañjais* is not mentioned in *Amarakośa*. But we can find it in *Medinīkośajāntavarga* 4<sup>th</sup> verse. The word is frequently found in *stotras* or the other Puranic literature.

- 3) The next feature of the language of the VGM is that it uses some words which are closer to Marathi in meaning than Sanskrit.

अस्तु वा स्त्रीचरित्रं तदन्यासां कामचेतसाम् ॥२.२१॥

The word *carita* should have been used here which means the character or behaviour. The word *caritra* in Sanskrit means the instrument of moving i.e., the feet. The use of word *caritra* here in the meaning of *carita* indicates that the language of the VGM is closer to Marathi, the regional language of the region where the VGM could have been composed. The ancient

Washim, may have Marathi and Varhadi as the prevalent languages. So, the use of such words in the text seems to be obvious.

- 4) The influence of Marathi can be again observed in the VGM in some phrases which seem to be the exact translation of the Marathi phrase.

**योऽसि सोऽसि नमस्तुभ्यं पाहि नो महतो भयात् ॥७.५२ ॥**

**योऽसि सोऽसि न मे चिन्ता नमस्तेऽस्तु सदाशिव ॥ ८.६८ ॥**

The phrase **योऽसि सोऽसि** seems to be very close to Marathi expression- **तू जो आहेस तो आहेस**. It was easily avoidable phrase in Sanskrit with **यः कोऽपि त्वमसि**. It was not probably used as it was misfit in the metrical system.

- 5) **तदृषीणां वचः श्रुत्वा परं भयमुपाययुः ॥सेन्द्राः समुनयः शीघ्रं कथयितुं विधिं ययुः ॥५. १२५ ॥**

The meter *anusṭup* seems to be broken here. We can find a few more examples like this the text of VGM.

- 6) Sometimes the words have been altered to fit into the meter. For example, the word *vidyādhara* should be used instead of *vidyādhra* in the following verse-

**सुपर्णाः किन्नरा नागा विद्याधाश्चाप्सरोगणाः ॥स्वानि स्वानि सुयानानि समारुरुद्धटाः ॥८.८ ॥**

- 7) The next feature is the use of words which are probably not there in the ancient Sanskrit. For example,

**एकदान्तःपुरे राजा मञ्चकस्थां निजाङ्गनाम् ॥महाविभवसम्पन्नां हावभावसमन्विताम् ॥१.४९ ॥**

The word *hāvabhāvain* in the scriptorium at the Deccan College has been listed with many meanings with a slight difference of shade. It is interesting to note that the earliest reference of this word has been listed from the Shiva Purana around 1000 C.E. The use of such words may throw a light on the date of the text.

## Observations and conclusion:

- 1) The text of the VGM has almost all the linguistic characteristics of the Puranic literature.
- 2) It has the influence of regional language mainly Marathi.
- 3) Many *sthala purāṇa* have no affiliation with the main text of Purana. Those should be studied from the linguistics point of view so that the dating of the text is supported.

## References

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Mahratta