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Influence of Sanskrit in the Film Bahubali I and II

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Abstract

This paper is a study of film Bahubali, made in Telegu and Tamil languages simultaneously and dubbed in Hindi and Malayali languages, which was released in July, 2015. It attempts to find out the extent of Sanskrit used in its making along with the Sanskrit literature as source of ideas and concepts. It makes an analysis by dividing various components of the film as worship, warfare, lyrics etc. The study shows that the film uses many Sanskrit mantras, terms and concepts which are popularly known to be the facts of Mahābhārata the greatest Epic and the treasure of ancient knowledge Arthaśāstra, written by Kauṭilya in Gupta age, besides many other sources of Sanskritic texts.

Key Words: Bahubali I and II, Sanskrit, mantra, dialogue.

Introduction

Though film is regarded as one of the most important media of entertainment, it also focuses on various aspects of our life and society. There are films which are based on social issues, political issues, economic issues, religious issues and so on. The first Indian full length feature film 'Raja Harishchandra' was featured on legendary events which was produced by Dadabhai Phalke in 1913.

Bahubali is a film produced in 2015 which had a major hit in the film production and the box office of Indian theatre. Originally made in Telegu and Tamil simultaneously and dubbed in Hindi, and also in Malayali, the film was opened worldwide on 10 July, 2015. The film makes a mix of religious, historical and political facts. The film is based on a story of Māhīśmatī kingdom and its king, seemed to have its scant appearance in historical record on central South India. The film was a major success with its digital effects, screenplay, techniques and archaic style of love making.

The film is found to have a major use of Sanskrit words and mantras in different places of the two parts of the film which makes someone to imagine its base in Sanskrit texts. This paper makes an attempt to make an analysis of the different parts of the film and the use of Sanskrit language in that. Besides, the paper also makes an attempt to find the resemblance of the theme and concepts in the film with the Sanskrit texts and writings.

Films based on Mythology and Legend

It is observed that there is a good number of films produced by the Bollywood producers among which mention of some important are done here-Mahabharata (1965), Jai Sontoshi Ma, Krishna and kans, Bal Ganesh (2007), Arjun: the warrior Prince (2012), Kalyug (1981), Dashavatar (2008), Ghatotkach: Master of Magic (2008), Bajrangbali (2008), Raavan (2010) and so on.

While some of the films are directly mythological, there are also films which focus on godly affairs or have considerable parts dealing with religious values, rituals, music and many more. Though the film Bahuvali is not directly based on mythology yet some resemblance of such type is imagined here.

Other films that focus on Sanskrit

There are a few numbers of films in Sanskrit language and it is also a fact that there is no any separate industry for making films in Sanskrit language. Mention can be done here of some Sanskrit Movies- Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, Bhāgavad Gītā, Sūryakānta, Priyamānasam, Ishti, Punyakoti, Anurakthi and so on. The Ādi Śaṅkarācārya is a film on Hindu Philosopher named Śaṅkarācārya of 8th century AD. It is the first Sanskrit feature film which won four numbers of National award. The second film was Bhāgavada Gīta and was made in 1993 while Priyamānasam was made in 2015 in Kerala, thus making Sanskrit film appear in film industry again in after 22 years of its absence. The film Iṣṭi was made in 2016 and is the first 3D film in India. Anurakti is the first art film made in 1917 which depicts a social issue of Kerala. 'Ahaṃ Bhrahmāsmi' is a 1 hour 45 minutes long movie released on September 2019 to promote, popularise and protect Sanskrit. Punyokoṭi is the first animation film in India made in 2020. The recent film Namō is made by Cheeranjiivi which is yet to make appearance in film industry.

While the above mentioned films were made in Sanskrit language, there are a number of films based on themes from Sanskritic texts. Utsav, made in 1985, is the famous Hindi film based on the drama Mṛicchakaṭikam. Besides, there are also films based on the story of Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, the two great epics, based on Hindu mythology. There are also a number of regional films based on the stories in Sanskrit texts. Even the film on third gender Chitrāṅgadā, directed by Rituparna Ghosh is based on the story of Princess Chitrāṅgadā, of North East India who used to wear attire of Prince to look like male, trained by her father as he wanted to have a son instead of daughter. (Bhattacharjee, 2014)

Sanskrit is the oldest language of India and to maintain its glory many efforts have been made time to time and hence several institutions are found to work for that in their own way. Ekalavya Sanskrit Academy is such an institution which is working on translation of Hindi dialogues to Sanskrit dialogues.

Now-a-days some dialogues from the Hindi movie 'Sholay' and 'Deewar' have come in social media ('Ab guli kha' to 'adhunā gulim khāda') mostly in Facebook. These are done to popularise Sanskrit among the youth of present generation.

Source of Film Bahuvāli (part I, II)

It is very difficult to establish the source of Bahuvāli. The story was randomly told by K V Vijayendra Prasad to his son S S Rajamouli, the Director of the film, being fascinated by the mythology and the tales of Amar Chitra Katha. It can be said that the theme of the part II of this film was greatly influenced by the story of the great Sanskrit epic the Mahābhārata. While watching the film one can easily remember the events of the Hastinapur Kingdom. All the events can be said as the resemblance of what happened with Pāṇdavas, Draupadī in the royal court of Hastinapur. It seems that the character of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryadhana are imposed on Bijjaladeva, the father of Bhallaldev and Bhallaldev himself respectively.

Theme of the Film Bahuvāli

The film Bahuvāli consists of two Parts. In the first part the hero is Mahendra Bahuvāli and the Heroine is Avantikā while in part II the hero is Amarendra Bahuvāli, Mahindra's father and Devasenā is the heroine. Śivagāmī Devī is the queen of Māhiṣmatī kingdom and the most important character in this film. Another character Katappa also plays a very important role there. This film reflects the monarchical rivalry as well as family level rivalry.

The film starts with a scene where Śivagāmī Devī the queen of Māhiṣmatī is seen to cross a river to save a baby holding him in her palm exits from a cave and after killing two soldiers she drowned in the river by saying that Mahindra Bahuvāli should be alive. The baby was then saved by a couple of Amburi tribe. This baby was then named Shiva. When Shiva reached his youth, he became attracted by Avantikā and fell in her love. Avantikā was a warrior in Jayavarma's troop, the brother of Devasenā who is the real mother of Mahindra. The story of part II of Bahuvāli is presented in Flash Back where the Valour and loyalty of Mahendra's father Amarendra and the pathetic condition of her mother Devasenā has been presented. Devasenā was captivated by Bhallāladeva after the killing of Amarendra, by royal person, the cousin of Amarendra. Ultimately with the help of Avantikā and others, Mahendra attacked Bhallāladeva and rescued Māhiṣmatī kingdom and his mother, by killing Bhallāladeva and his companions.

Sanskrit in Worship:

The starting of the film is in fact thrilling where the hero is presented to show his power of arms when he was lifting the Śivaliṅga. At that situation the famous Śiva-tāṇḍava- strotra¹ was played which was composed by great warrior Rāvaṇa. It was sung at the time of Abhiṣeka of Lord Śiva. The mother of the hero of the film Bahuvāli part I was shown in worshipping Lord Śiva by chanting the mantra 'om nama śivāya' and puts water on the top of Śivaliṅga, which is a typical way of worshipping Lord Śiva in India. Śiva, being one of the three principal gods (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśwar) in Hindu pantheon is worshipped

here by the mother of hero to appease him so that her son becomes obedient to her. This type of Sanskrit mantra is very often seen in many other films also.

Sanskrit used in Playback Music

Many events of the film are followed by Sanskrit play back song, which shows the passion and love of the director for this language. Most of the lyrics of this film have been composed in Sanskrit language as it is seen in case of famous song which glorifies the Māhīṣmatī kingdom-‘māhīṣmatisāmrajye patati yasya bikṣaṇam’², ‘māhīṣmatisāmrajyamasmākam ajeyam’. To praise the valour of the soldiers also, such type of wordings have been used ‘māhīṣmatisāmrajyasya mahāvīrah’. In the very beginning of the film, as is already mentioned in earlier section also, there is a background song which was a part of the Śivatāṇḍavastotra. The stotra actually was recited in a musical tune to magnify the strength of the arms of Mahendra Bahuvali and also to show a similarity between Lord Śiva and Mahendra Bahuvali. It was sung when the hero was lifting the huge Śivaliṅga (symbol of lord Śiva). The Śivatāṇḍavastotra is so nicely sung here which made the film much attractive and adorable with the picturisation of the Scenario. Again, in the very first song of this film also, some words are found to resemble Sanskrit words such as dhīrā, sauryyā, sthīrā, gambhīrā and so on.

Use of Sanskrit in Warfare:

Warfare in Bahuvali has some specific style of presentation. It shows the war technique of Mahābhārata or strategies mentioned in many other books such as Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya. The concept of Caturaṅgasenā (Padāti: Infantry, Aśva: Cavalry, Ratha: Charriot, Hasti: Elephant) mentioned in Arthaśāstra is directly reflected in the war of the film Bahuvali. The mention of Aśvadalam, Gajadalam, Khaḍgaśreṇī, Śulaśreṇī proves the awareness of the organisation of army of that period. Another extra ordinary technique is used in the war of this film which is termed as ‘Triśūlavyuham’. At the time of battle with Kalakeya, the arrangement of soldiers was made following this strategy. There was a discussion on how the soldiers in Triśūlavyuha would be arranged. The prevalence of Cakravyuha in the Mahābhārata showed the importance of Vyuhā in a great battle so also the case with Bahuvali. Kauṭilya also gave importance in forming Vyuhā at the time of war (vyuharacanam). This film not only shows the influence of techniques but has been vigorously influenced by the commanding words also. Various Sanskrit words have been used in this film such as ghāta, pratighāta, mahāsenā- pratighāta which brings into light the famous work of Kauṭilya’s Arthaśāstra written in ancient India which can be considered as magnum opus of the polity and economy of Indian Monarchical system. The use of Sanskrit is also found in the words of Amarendra Bahuvali while he was training Devasenā, the heroine, to throw three arrows at one time ‘*nādadve manivandham vahirmukham*’ when Kuntal kingdom was attacked by enemy. In this way a huge number of utterances in sanskrit language at the time of Rajyābhiṣeka of Bhallaladeva have been noticed. ‘*Māhīṣmati-aśvadalam abhimukham, mahārāja-vandanam, cakravarti-āgamanam, gajagaṇavinamra-kumbhanyāsam.....āyudhagaṇasamarpaṇam,Mahārāja-caraṇavandanam, Upaviśa*’ and so on.

Conclusion

Though Sanskrit is regarded as dead language, it still exists as living language which makes its entry in different ways. This is seen in case of writing of novels, theatres and even television serials and films. There are a number of regional films in India as well as Hindi films which use this treasure of house Indian knowledge. The film Bahubali shown in four languages viz., Telegu, Tamil, Malayali and Hindi, makes the film to reach a vast mass of Indian people. Besides, the film being a major heat in box office made it to have an appeal to larger society.

The Sanskrit language used in different occasions made the film quite unique. It also shows the richness of Indian knowledge in different field, as warfare, maintaining relations and values related to that are all rich knowledge stored in different texts written in Sanskrit. The film not only made it a unique piece, but also gives the industry a new dimension to explore this knowledge and make it to reach common people of Indian society. Though the film is written in Sanskrit language and apparently seem to be religiously loaded, but the film shows the non-secular aspect of Sanskrit texts and makes it to have more acceptability to larger society.

Notes

1. 'Jaṭāṭṭavīgalajjalappravāha-pāvitasthale/Galezvalamvyalambitām bhūjaṅgatuṅgamālikām// Dharādharendranandinī.....' Śivatāṇḍavastotram of Rāvaṇa.
2. "Māhīsmatisāmrājye patati yasya bīkṣaṇam.....raṇabhutale." Bāhuvalī Part-I

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