

ON SOME POEMS OF KUMĀRAN ĀŚĀN:

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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So much has been written and said about Kumāran Āśān and his poetry that it would be difficult to reconsider the fundamental features of his work without repeating concepts and ideas already previously expressed and widely known. I do not purpose therefore to examine and dissect thoroughly in this paper all the matters that his works offer, but only to deal with the remarks and the impressions that some of Āśān most important poems - namely *Oru vīṇapūvu*, *Naḷini*, *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta* and *Karuṇa* - suggested to me when I translated them from Malayāḷam into Italian.

Oru vīṇapūvu, literary manifesto of the Romantic Movement and the Renaissance in Malayāḷam poetry, is the basis of the whole further literary production of Āśān. Most of his favourite themes and figures can be identified and recognized in the poem, and ascribed to that first romantic formulation. The vicissitudes of the fallen flower, symbol of a woman, appear emblematical and suit many of the other stories Āśān describes. In fact, analogous characters recur in most of his works and are always bound to analogous courses of life. The protagonists in Āśān major poems are women, joined by several common elements: they are introduced to the reader in the most dramatic moment of their existence; their past was happy and

promising; their end is always sad, generally unfair and caused by the unyielding and cruel laws of fate. Āśān strays from such a plot only in poems of social concern, created to defend and support equalitarian ideas and hence subordinated in their treatment to the exigencies of the thesis he upholds.

The fine and loving narration of the infancy and earliest youth of the flower¹ finds its references and parallels in Naḷini's nostalgic recalling of her childhood spent together with Divākara². Through *Naḷini* verses, can also be connected with *Oru vīṇapūvu* Sītā's memories of the care-free time shared with Rāma on the banks of the Godāvarī - a period of absolute bliss and joy without any worry, like a child's life³. Common to the three characters, and to Vāsavadattā as well in *Karuṇa*, are a promising future and the first part of life spent in a climate of satisfaction and serenity which presupposes an equally happy following course of events. But in each of their stories a radical change of fortune occurs, a sudden upsetting of existence which is made all the more grievous and astonishing, to the writer's and reader's eyes, by its sharp contrast with the previous occurrences. Likewise love, always deep-rooted and sincere in Āśān heroines, is deceived or betrayed or severely tried. At best, it can continue to exist only if sublimated, or it is appeased and achieved in death or after death.

¹ *Oru vīṇapūvu*, 2-10.

² *Naḷini*, 81-87.

³ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sita*, 117-120.

In *Oru vīṇapūvu* the flower accomplishes the twofold poetic function of a symbol of the transient human condition and at the same time, of a sweet and charming figure of a woman. In the latter respect it is an almost fully passive and contemplative character, to whom universal attention gravitates and who receives love, attachment and final homage from others but also, and without reacting, suffers offences and deceptions. In the further poems, the women protagonists - whose psychology is clearly privileged, in Āśān attention, in comparison with their masculine counterparts - greatly differ from her. Āśān describes them as women of sudden decisions, impulsive and strong willed, the whole combined with complete femininity, devotion, faithfulness and goodness of heart. The only exception is Vāsavadattā, in whom these qualities, though present, are disowned by a wrong way of life. Almost all of them are paragons of womanhood, yet they are always joined with pale patterns of men. In fact the men's characters lack the passionate and emotional nature that makes the women's believable and convincing; there are not even errors and faults in them. These, the poet ascribes only to Rāma, making him much more human.

Rather unsuccessful is, in *Oru vīṇapūvu*, the character of the beetle, the lover of the flower. It causes a negative impression of intrusion and strikes a false note in the economy of the poem. The fluent continuity of the poet's speech with the fallen flower suffers a disagreeable break, because the attention shifts to the new character, whose description does not offer any significant feature. The

suppositions about the behaviour of the beetle and the consequent suffering of the flower⁴ seem to be redundant and digress from the main purpose of the poem. It seems more irrelevant still to follow the acts of despair of the insect insistently and till the end⁵. The figure of the beetle fails to find a harmonious part in the story. To discover the reason for it is not easy: but the combination of one character -the flower - which does rise to the function of a symbol, with another - the beetle - which does not and is rather banal and connected with related circumstances, appears to be inappropriate.

As to the structure of the composition, the elegy presents a single device skilfully employed, often recurring in *Āśān* with a sure effect. Concentrating and limiting the result in a single stanza, it introduces the reader directly to the final stage of the plot and its tragic conclusion. Immediately afterwards the story develops in the traditional way of narration, following a chronological order from the birth of the flower till its end and the lament over it.

In this first poem *Āśān* makes a noteworthy romantic innovation by the choice of an unusual subject, and yet he employs an intermediate element in narrating a non-traditional story. In fact, he does not directly choose human beings as protagonists, but keeps the classical figures of flowers and animals. On the other hand, his very skill in writing a new poem, original in its romantic and subjective form, by such usual and abused components is one of his main merits.

⁴ *Oru vīṇapūvu*, 17-19.

⁵ *Oru vīṇapūvu*, 13-16, 20.

Oru vīṇapūvu's flower becomes a person and assumes an individuality of its own in *Naḷini*, where the heroine's name just means "lotus" and the hero's one is Divākara, i.e. "sun", the traditional lover of the lotus. This evident connection finds further corroboration in an internal element of the poem: in stanza 34 Naḷini identifies herself with the lotus of the lake and her own condition with its condition, exhorting the flower not to fear and despair, because all around the sun's rays enclose and sustain it. The identification, hence, is complete.

Naḷini is among the most beautiful of Āśān's works, and undoubtedly that in which the romantic trend is more evident. Everything in it is romantic: the story of love and death, the tragedy reverberating also on guiltless and extraneous people, the despairing and impulsive heroine, the remote mountain scenery. In this respect the narration of Naḷini attempted suicide⁶ is very significant, as it presents a dreadful night-scene with the unfathomable deep waters of a lake, Naḷini's dramatic invocations to the stars and to Durgā, and the mysterious, silent apparition of the *yoginī* which rescues the girl. In that context of subtle and irrational elements, can also be included the frequent moods of intuition and precognition that the close bond of affection produces in the protagonists, and the peculiar sensitiveness of insight Āśān attributes to Naḷini and that can be recognized in part in Sītā's character too.

⁶ *Naḷini*, 95-107.

As previously mentioned, in *Naḷini* as well as in *Oru vīṇapāvu*, there is a striking contrast between the protagonists' natures. The passionate, sincere, impulsive girl is shown side by side with a cold and severe *yogin*, narrow in his doctrinal views, incapable of conceiving problems of life different from his, and a bit slow in realizing the depth and value of Naḷini's love. The contrast is happily pointed out by the sharp psychological remark of the poet on the difficulties that arise in mutual comprehension, when separated lovers meet again⁷. Similarly, Naḷini's dismayed astonishment, owing to the same troubles, expresses well the difficulties of reunion and understanding between two such different people⁸.

Āśān organizes the structure of the poem so as to rivet his reader's attention and lead him progressively to the climax of the tragedy. The reader is introduced *in medias res*, but for a while he can follow the action without yet understanding anything of the plot. Also after the meeting of the protagonists, during their dialogue, Āśān puts in a long monologue, in which Naḷini recalls her childhood and early youth, before explaining the events that led them to their present situation. Actually the story is disclosed to the reader in the same way and in the same time-progression as it is to Divākara. Then, the dénouement of the drama occurs in a very short time, through a rapid dialogue and inescapable events in quick succession, till Naḷini's sudden

⁷ *Naḷini*, 60.

⁸ *Naḷini*, 52 ff., 69 ff.

death. Finally, by means of a development common to some of others poems (*Līla*, *Karuṇa*) the tragic tension falls, since the drama has already taken place and has reached its conclusion. In the last stanzas, however, it gives way briefly to a rather mannered and conventional unfolding of the action. In fact, in many of Āśān's poems - most of which have a similar structure to that of a play - the end gathers on the imaginary stage together with the protagonists, minor or new characters - all of whom entertain good feelings of love, charity or compassion for the heroine. Hence, Naḷini is mourned also by the woman ascetic who rescued and taught her. So are Līlā and Vāsavadattā by their respective maids. And Sītā sees, as witnesses of her death, the sage Vālmīki, her repentant husband and Rāma's whole court as well.

Such an impression of mannerism and conventionality is strengthened by the poet's pursuit of a positive ending of the story at all costs. This is a recurrence in the poems, achieved by showing that the survivors of the tragedy have been called to a more meritorious life and committed for ever to good works and purposes.

When Āśān devotes himself to the treatment of social subjects, as in *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki* and *Duravastha*, his poetry assumes a different tone. Both poems clearly prove his engagement with and firm belief in the thesis he intends to support. They show trace, from the literary point of view, of having been created independently of a mere poetic inspiration and written on preordained subjects in order to transmit a

message. The result is that their style appears forced, in many passages poor and weary, and very uneven in its poetical level. Sometimes the poet seems to be obliged to resort to useless or rather uninteresting descriptions, with the sole object of attaining the episodes illustrating his social propositions. As to the treatment of the poems, it develops in a discontinuous way, with considerable changes. The descriptions of the characters and the unfolding of the plots are often fragmentary and incomplete. Nevertheless, those poems have some positive elements. For example, excellent results of a highly lyrical level are achieved in passages of strong pathos - in general eulogies of universal love and fraternity, or invectives against the evil of the caste-system. There, thanks to Āśān's intense emotional participation, form and contents blend in an admirable equilibrium. But they are prevalently monologues, isolated in the structure and the context of the story, where the forms of dialogue and drama prevail.

In *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, for instance, the very fine initial part follows a peculiar outline, which appears also in many other poems. The place is described through a successful technique of progressive approach and focusing, and the characters are created and identified in the same way⁹. The poet almost let the reader himself discover and recognize them. The description of the sunny land and the parched countryside petrified and motionless in the dazzling sunlight, is among Āśān's most beautiful¹⁰. The frequent motif of sunlight and of the

⁹ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, I.1-8, 27-33, 36-42.

¹⁰ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, I.1-20.

effects it creates when shining on the leaves of the tree - which crystallize into gems¹¹ - and on the shed water - which turns into a broken mirror¹² - is very evocative. So is the chromatic motif of red - well suited to the blaze of the sun and the burning land - which recurs in Mātaṅgī's dress and lips¹³. Time seems to be suspended, and so are the life and the activity of every creature. The meeting of the protagonists is scanned by a slow rhythm, very fitted to the immobility of the torrid scenery, whose focus is the tall and shady tree under which the monk takes refuge and sits still in meditation.

Āśān clearly intends to trace a parallel between the characters' personal events and the circumstances of place and time, particularly the different parts of the day. The *bhikṣu*'s and the girl's acts and words burning with charity, and the sudden falling in love of Mātaṅgī correspond to the scorching noon¹⁴. When the time of twilight follows, sorrow and confusion of mind rise in the Caṇḍāla girl¹⁵. The night is full of anxiety and torment; it is a "night of the soul", the captivity of the spirit in a condition which has become inadequate and unbearable - an initiatory death from the old existence¹⁶. The dawn, then, is a clearing of her mind, the light of a new consciousness, a

¹¹ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, I.9-10.

¹² *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, II.10-19.

¹³ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, I.39; II.13-17.

¹⁴ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, II.3-34, 42-48.

¹⁵ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, III.1-6.

¹⁶ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, III.7-17.

resolute decision to begin a new life, a rebirth in a different situation¹⁷. At the end of the poem¹⁸, a sunset coincides with the conclusion of the story, with the falling of an imaginary curtain on a stage from which - unusually - all the characters, even the divine messengers, have already left. The sunset reflects here the disappearance of the error, the solace of the souls and the millennial peace that the poet says to have descended on India.

But the harmonious continuity of these parts breaks off with the arrival of Mātāṅgī at Śrāvastī. Her dialogue with the Buddha already marks a moment of stasis. Afterwards, with her entry into the community, the girl's character really ceases to exist. In some stanzas¹⁹ she is still a minor figure acting almost mechanically, a subject for an unconvincing and banal description. Hence she disappears completely from the scene. Actually, her story has come to an end, as she has attained her aim and obtained what she wanted. She is no longer involved in the narration and in the polemics on her acceptance into the nunnery. Although all that can be justified by the happy conclusion of her vicissitudes, it creates a deep break in the poem. As a consequence, this presents a dichotomy, being formed by a beautiful love story - a genre among the most congenial to Āśān - and

¹⁷ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, III.18-22 ff.

¹⁸ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, IV.165-169.

¹⁹ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, IV.1-21.

by a flatter treatment of doctrinal and didactical subjects, yet not devoid of some passages of lyrical value²⁰.

Mātaṅgī's love story with Ānanda, moreover, remains without apparent conclusion, as it is incomprehensibly interrupted after her meeting with the Buddha. The ease by which the poet represents the girl forgetting her love, can be explained only by envisaging the peculiar kind of feeling she had for the monk. It is not a passionate or sentimental love. On the other hand, an explicit statement of it or the word itself never occurs in the poem with regard to the girl and the *bhikṣu*. Mātaṅgī's love is a logical consequence of her elating sensation of being regarded as equal to others and appreciated for herself- of being released from her feeling of inferiority. It arises from gratitude and should be identified with it. For this very reason, because it is actually the return for someone else's good feelings, it can be easily addressed not only to a single and definite person, but also to many people, and extended to the Buddha, the women in the nunnery and everybody who loves her.

Cintāviṣṭayāya Sītā is the most discussed of Āśān's poems and so is its protagonist. Here Āśān shows how a very old and usual epic subject can be employed so as to create a very original poem, destined to be perhaps his most modern and immediately appreciable by contemporary readers and men of letters. Certainly Sītā is the most interesting of his characters, owing to the very good psychological

²⁰ *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, III.69-73; IV.99 ff., 130ff., 150ff.

representation the poet gives of her. She is much more complex than the other female figures in the poems. She does not only suffer from love and from the new separation from her husband. She is troubled by past memories, by the regret for a happiness once fully possessed, whose loss is the more heart-rending the more it is unjust and unjustified. Besides, a deep-rooted sense of justice, honour and dignity provokes in her a special resentment against Rāma who greatly and repeatedly violated her feelings. Sītā stresses this without obstinacy but also without yielding. Hence, the theme of the grievous wrongs she suffered, of the unfair and repeated insults to her unviolated chastity, of the particularly painful circumstances of her being forsaken in the forest and of the disloyal and cruel way in which it was done, returns in the whole poem. Having been deceived in all her hopes and badly repayed for her virtue and sacrifices, Sītā despairs of a better future and rejects the very idea of undergoing a new trial. She feels very deeply that innocence does not suffer being questioned and tried out too often. Consequently, she has to achieve what could be considered the strongest and greatest rebellious act against her husband - the interior rebellion - that of the soul. It is also noteworthy that for this she begs the indulgency not of Rāma, but of Vālmīki²¹, the keeper of Tradition, the head of the heremitic community where the devout

²¹ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 188.

and faithful wives she praises in a previous passage of the poem²² live.

However, any accusation that she has infringed a tradition of dutifulness and unquestioning love to her husband is irrelevant. Sītā's devotion for Rāma is witnessed by the fact that she goes so far as to charge herself with many faults in order to justify and excuse him²³. This self-contradiction is fully proper to a moment of sad meditation; it is the wish, always present in the character, of changing the real terms of a painful problem and shirking a grievous reality, which is however lucidly recognized.

This attitude of refusal of reality recurs in the whole monologue, and can be found in the protagonist's tendency to escape from sorrow through states of unconsciousness, oblivion or sleep. The first example is the deadening of all sensations, the detachment from memories and passions that Sītā has achieved by long ascetic practice: but not, significantly, from the torment of the wrongs she suffered, that pricks like a thorn. It is a sort of ataraxy, a serenity obtained by removing the deepest grief. Nevertheless, being "negative" and caused by a "non-presence", it gives rise to a feeling of an empty space in the soul - the nest deserted by the doves²⁴. Again, Sītā remembers with regret, the pleasant and comforting oblivion which pervaded her when she fainted, after being forsaken in the forest and overcome by

²² *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 63-72.

²³ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 163-165.

²⁴ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 19-23.

sorrow²⁵. Then, when suffering most, she yearns for an escape even through madness and the loss of her mental faculties²⁶. Finally, she longs for an everlasting sleep in the bowels of the Earth, her mother, where all living and inanimate beings will cheer her²⁷. She asks to leave the world's stage like an actor who has finished his performance²⁸. At the end, her desired liberation is even more radical: Sītā departs from the Earth and all the dear things of creation, rids herself of every bodily and earthly burden and even of the beloved support of Rāma's arms, to immerse herself in a spaceless and timeless condition of peace²⁹.

Being herself a creature of Mother Earth, Sītā wished to mingle with other creatures or things and to be only a part of nature. Āśān stresses this identification already in the initial description of the woman engrossed in her thoughts in the garden near the hermitage³⁰. The transposition is drawn by subtle allusions and founded on some comparisons and the use of special terms. Sītā's figure does not stand out in the sylvan scenery surrounding her. Her only ornaments are the fire-flies around her head, and she herself is like a plant: her arms are twigs, her dress has the soft, tender qualities of a young shoot, and a verb meaning "to blossom" is used for her eyes. In stanza 100 as well,

²⁵ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 55-58.

²⁶ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 38-40.

²⁷ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 171-181.

²⁸ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 168.

²⁹ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 181-184.

³⁰ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 5-8.

Sītā, weeping and quivering, is compared to a shrub whose leaves sway, as they are shaken by the breeze, and shed dew-drops. In stanza 183, Āśān represents Sītā leaving "the boughs of Rāma's arms", which were her support. The image recalls that used for Sītā herself, and is very common in Indian poetry. But in this context it suggests also a symbiosis of two plants and consequently leads to the frequent literary representation of man and woman, husband and wife, as a tree and its creeper.

As to structure, the poem is in the form of a monologue except for some short passages and is of an admirable continuity and fluency. It lacks complete descriptions of situations or events and simply alludes to the facts, so that it avoids the banality of repeating well-known stories. In contrast with other poems, it does not disclose the protagonist and the initial scene by a progressive description, but shows them openly in the first stanza, with striking immediacy. Then, after a short account of Sītā's attitude, the monologue begins: the woman addresses herself and, successively, absent and far interlocutors, dear and beloved people, to whom she speaks with different but always mournful words. This fully corresponds with the disorderly and irrational flow of thoughts in a troubled mind, at a moment of evident crisis and re-examination of the whole existence. The monologue shows sudden changes from one subject to another, with only vague or remote connections between them. It reveals apparent contradictions, unsuspected awakenings of memories, sharp intuitions of the present and the future, and above all the alternation of

moods between doubt and certainty, that change immediately afterwards. In this irrational unrolling of thought and memories, which tend to wander and digress, perhaps can be included Sītā's recollection of the hermits' wives and her praise of them³¹, a little over insisted on.

In this poem, as in *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, the course of the day accompanies the several stages of Sītā's meditations. The twilight of the feelings, the reflection on the detachment of the soul from affections and sorrows, coincides with the dusk. The night is here too a "night of the soul", filled with torments and sufferings. With the dawn, clearness of mind and resolution come.

The end seems to be less successful than the rest of the poem. The final stanzas let into the scene a little crowd of minor characters, so that the reader's attention is in part diverted from Sītā, upon whom alone the whole poem has turned until that moment. Therefore, when the scene changes suddenly to Rāma's court, the merely outward epilogue of a tragedy is repeated, that has already been concluded for Sītā in her soul.

Karuṇa, the last poem Āśān wrote, represents the apex of his art and demonstrates his achievement of full maturity in poetry. It combines a perfect equilibrium between the refinement of form and the value of content.

Compassion, a feeling which often occurs in Āśān works, becomes the leit-motiv of an ancient story, which is set like

³¹ *Cintāviṣṭayāya Sīta*, 63-72.

Caṇḍālabhikṣuki in the Buddhistic age. Once again an impossible love for a monk is dealt with and, once more, it is a love destined to be sublimated and become faith, entirely transforming the heart that experiences it. But, unlike *Caṇḍālabhikṣuki*, this love story has a more complete development and Vāsavadattā's feeling has the feature of a passionate love and not of gratitude or tenderness.

Karuṇa presents Āśān's favourite plot: the heroine suddenly falls from a condition of the highest splendour to a most miserable state. This makes her an object of pity to others. However, in the previous poems, the protagonist is stricken by her destiny or deceived by beloved people through no fault of her own. The more unfairly she is treated the more guiltless and pure she remains. On the contrary Vāsavadattā is a courtesan without scruple and causes her own ruin by committing a cruel crime for abject reasons, so that she falls to the lowest condition of body and soul. As a consequence of this, the protagonist's character seems much less idealized.

As to Upagupta, he is one of the best figures of man Āśān has drawn. He is a monk of intense emotions: he feels affection, tenderness, sympathy and indulgence towards Vāsavadattā. He can weep with compassion, or make an instinctive movement of horror on seeing the dismembered body of the courtesan. He can even go so far as to appreciate her sincere love, without damaging in the least his own integrity - that of an ascetic man. The psychological immaturity that seems to be peculiar, for instance, to Divākara and Ānanda - with

the rather timorous rigour of the former and the almost total detachment of the latter towards the women who love them - does not exist in him. And the autobiographical component that can be found in Upagupta's character could denote the psychological equilibrium and maturity the author has reached now.

The dramatic structure is more stressed in *Karuṇa* than in the other poems. It is marked by close dialogues and an unexpected and striking change of time and place. The whole space of time between Vāsavadattā's highest moment of success and her utter misfortune is omitted, and the description of the woman sitting in a splendid garden is immediately followed by that of her body reduced to a shapeless bundle of blood-stained rags and left in a burial ground. But the poem is lacking in actual dramatic action, because Āśān makes no concessions at all to sensational scenes and stage-effects. Contrasting with the several detailed accounts of places and persons, nearly all the most determinant and tragic incidents of the plot - as the murder of the chief of the artisans and the mutilation of Vāsavadattā - are only briefly mentioned. Any narration of them is skilfully left out.

From the point of view of the form, Āśān revalues the positive aspects of the elegant and adorned style and adopts it without any excess or affectation. In the first part of the poem, the preciousness of form finds its counter-point in the elegance and wealth of the scenery and the characters. These are described in conformity with the usual techniques of a progressive approach that identifies the subject by going more and more into details, or of an increasing synthesis of

many fragmentary elements that re-create the whole. In other parts, the poet makes use of the truculent and violent aspects of the plot, but superimposes on them a special refinement of style and the perfection of form, so as to attenuate both the violence of the descriptions and the preciousness of his verses. The result is an effective and interesting contrast between beauty and horror, and a blend of both impressions. This is particularly evident in the crude description of Vāsavadattā's severed limbs, where their ancient charm is simultaneously recalled³², and in the evocative similes used in delineating her appearance in her last agony. Here her face is described as a butterfly wearily emerging from its cocoon and as a moon dimmed and covered with wisps of clouds³³.

In conclusion, a trend unusual in Āśān's poetry appears in *Karuṇa*. A marked realism is to be found in the poem, but it is treated with extreme refinement and mitigated by the pure and polished style of the verse, that confers a certain detachment on the accounts. Although traces of realism are present in previous poems too - especially in *Līla* and *Duravastha* - they are almost limited to the plot and the tragic events which occur in it. In *Karuṇa*, on the contrary, the realistic tendency is evident and well-present not only in the story but also in the descriptions, chiefly in those of the graveyard³⁴ and of

³² *Karuṇa*, II.59-71.

³³ *Karuṇa*, II.48-49.

³⁴ *Karuṇa*, II.4-32.

Vāsavadattā's limbs and death pangs³⁵. Besides, it is most significant that Āśān, as previously stated, introduces into the poem a heroine who is, at least at the beginning, negative and even wicked. That means a less idealized and much more realistic attitude in his poetic inspiration.

As Āśān died before his time and *Karuṇa* is his last work, it cannot be known for certain whether such realism is a definitely acquired component of his art, or a mere exception, limited to this poem and due to its peculiar subject. However, the copiousness and cleverness with which it is used and merged with the other trends of his poetry incline to the former supposition - that his usual means of expression have been enriched by a new and more modern tendency.

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³⁵ *Karuṇa*, II.57-71; III.1-12.