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Ugliness in women is an endless curse: A study from Tarapada Bhattacharya's 'Saivali'

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Abstract

Modern Sanskrit literature represents the thinking, values and problems of modern life and society. We find in the vast area of modern Sanskrit literature various problems of today's life, for example terrorism, politics, communalism, dowry system, women extortion, child labor, environmental pollution, breaking of relation, depreciation of humanity, child marriage etc. Pain of an ugly woman is a remarkable eternal problem, which is painted in the Bengali poet Tarapada Bhattacharya's Kathasahitya named "Saivali". Here we see the struggle of an ugly woman, tension of her parents, lack of confidence in life and the tragic end of Saivali. The poet presents very sensitively the ugliness as an endless curse for a woman. That curse does not permit her to lead a normal life. Death is the only freedom for her. In Saivali also we see how an ugly girl Saivali leads her life suffering from inferiority, shame and loneliness. The girl only for her ugliness welcomes death.

Key words: Modern, Sanskrit literature, society, ugly, curse, short Story, Kathasahitya, Saivali, Tarapada Bhattacharya, Rita Chattopadhyay, chandramallika, aparajita, Govinda, Parents, Karuna rasa, beauty

Introduction

The 'Modern Sanskrit story' is a new concept of modern era. 'Short Story' is an important writing matter of twentieth and post -twentieth century poets. Though there are many changes in 'modern short story' from traditional Sanskrit literature, it acquires new subject matters, new styles but it originated from ancient Vedic literature. Story of Sanskrit literature is called 'Katha'. This 'Katha' literature was originated and developed before Christian era. In the different branches of twentieth and post twentieth century Sanskrit literature (Short story, *Khanda kavya*, *Upanyasa* etc.) there is a collaboration of tradition and modernity. We see in Rgveda '*Manu-matsyakatha*', '*Bhekasukta*', the story of Pani and Sarama, the story of a dog in Chandagyopanisad, *Yajnavalkya –Maitreyi samvada* of Vrhadaranyokapanisad, the story of Yama and Naciketa in Kathopanisad, the story of a bird who gave golden eggs every day, the story of a clever jackal etc. We find in Mahabharata many fictions and narratives with main story. As example we can mention the story of King 'Yayati', the story of Nala and Damayanti, the story of Savitri and Satyavana, the story of Janamejaya, the story of Rudra and Vinata, story of sea churning of Gods and demons. These types of fables, parables or moral narratives are almost everywhere in Mahabharata. Ramayana and Purana are sources of tales and narratives. In this aspect, we can mention Jataka and Avadana literature of Buddhist, Kathanaka literature of Jain.

Vetala pancavimsati, Simhasanadvatimsika, Sukasaptati of Chintamani, Purusapariksa of Vidyapati, Pancatantra of Visnusarma, Hitopadesa of Narayanasarma, Prabandhakosa of Rajasekhara, Pravandhacintamani of Merutunga, Kathakautuka of Sridhara, Bhojpravandha of Vallava etc. are examples of tales and fables of traditional Sanskrit literature.

Today the stories have a separate new trend. It differs from traditional Sanskrit story or tales and fables or its subject matter or style. Modern short stories are highly influenced by provincial language and literature. As result 'short story' took many words and idioms from

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there and accepted new thoughts, elements for writing. There are many discussions of social crisis and realistic life in modern short stories. Sometimes we find high philosophical thinking in allegory of the story. Some modern elements are like - community problems, environment pollution, women extortion, breaking of relation, terrorism, depreciation of humanity, dowry system, child marriage, child labor, philosophical thinking etc.

Though we are not well familiar with modern short story, there have huge collection. According to Dr. Rita Chattopadhyaya, it's above one thousands of stories. Approximately there are 700 short stories have after the age of independence. Prof. Radhavallabh Tripathi said in "A bibliography of modern Sanskrit writings" that 'The present revised edition of Adhunikasamskrtasahityasandarbasuci is being published with 5040 entries, (3360 in the main list and 1680 in the appendix). Of these, 306 are Mahakavyas. 763 plays or collections of plays, 567 Khandakavyas, 1620 collections of lyric poems, 350 anthologies of poems, 113 novels, 337 collections of short stories, 227 translated works covering various genres and 23 titles belong to the category of literature for children. Remaining 417 titles belong to the category of scientific and philosophical literature.' We can mention some names of short story writers, such as Sri Laxmana Sastri Tailang of Uttar Pradesh, Ramachandra Mishra of Vihar, Surendranath Deb, Siddheswar Chattopadhyaya, Dipak Ghosa, Sitanath Acharya, Narayan Das, Rakesh Das of Bengal etc. Short stories have enriched by these great poets.

Prof Tarapada Bhattacharya is a great short story writer among twentieth and twenty first century poets of Bengal. His great creations are 'Gadadharavivahakatha', 'Saivali', 'Cauranaradasamvada', 'Maitreyi', 'Atha bhejalakatha', 'Radha', 'Iyam prthwi', 'Madanena krtam,' 'Pattakasthika', 'Jivanatrsna', 'Tasmai namascauraya', 'Visamapyamrtam' etc. These twelve stories published from 'Sanskrita sahitya parisad' in 2004, by Prof. Manabendu Banerjee. Prof. Banerjee published these stories as 'short stories'. He said in the preface of the Kathadvadasa - "I am glad to announce that the collection of twelve Sanskrit Short Stories with the title Katha dvadasa is going to be published under the banner of Sanskrit Sahitya Parishat." There has no doubt that modern Sanskrit short stories were much enriched by Prof. Tarapada Bhattacharya's writings.

In the vast area of modern 'Katha literature' poet Tarapada Bhattacharya is a competent short story writer. 'Saivali' is one of the best creations among the 'Kathadvadasa'. Today we find poetic imagination in short stories with a mixing of various problems of modern life and society. Sometimes the problems are provincial, sometimes zonal and sometimes universal. 'Pain of a black woman' is a universal problem and 'Saivali' has been created to take up this. Karuna is the main rasa (Angirasa) of the story and it resonated until the end of the story. Sage Bharata said in his 'Natyasastra,' the color of karunarasa' is grey. Except some middle parts of the story we feel this from starting to end.

A special feature of 'Saivali' is that it has tragic ending. Though we find karunarasa in dramas, kavyas (epics), prose romances of traditional Sanskrit literature, we did not find any tragic ending except Bhasa's 'Urubhanga'. This is an only tragedy in Sanskrit literature. Today we see modern Sanskrit literature is the mirror of the society and it cross all the limits. I think modern short story touches every field of writings.

The process of research

Research methodology is very important part of research. I have tried to complete my work appropriately with proper research method and research technique. This modern Sanskrit Katha was quite unknown to me; its variety attracts me to do work on it. It have new subject matters, styles etc. So I decided to work on it. In this stage of an article it's very important to choose a perfect topic. So, I also select a topic for my writing. My selective topic is 'Ugliness in Women is an endless curse: A study from Tarapada Bhattacharya's 'Saivali'. The name of the topic is the central point for my discussion. I think, it's a new topic and it will helpful for the interested future readers.

The next stage was Data collection and Data preservation. But in this stage, there I faced some difficulties. The main problem was the shortage of needed books. But I tried to collect data from here and there. First part of my work is accumulative research; I have to depend on books, Journals etc. Next part of the research work is analytical. So in this stage, I studied the main story thorough and I have to think properly and deeply every side. Sometimes I collected the necessary data from the internet also and analyzed it continuously with new data. After selecting the data I arranged them properly. I started to write my research work after being sure about data and its sequences. At first I wrote the name of the topic as directed. After that in the part of introduction I presented a discussion on modern Sanskrit literature, Kathasahitya, Poet Tarapada Bhattacharya and his writings. In the later part of the work I presented briefly the subject matter of Saivali. In the part of discussion I placed my analytical research. After that I have presented the results of the discussion in the part of conclusion. At last I arranged a list of references with page number as directed.

In the writing of the research paper I have chosen A4 paper size with the font time's new roman of 12points in MS word. But the name of the topic typed in 16points and the name of discussing objects was written in bold.

I arranged my writing following a define order. At first I gave - The Title, next Abstract and then 1) Key words 2) Introduction 3) Research Methodology 4) Discussions with the 5) Conclusion and 6) References.

I think my research work on this field will help the readers who are not much familiar with modern Sanskrit stories and it also will grow interest for work in future. Beside that I also think they will gate necessary data from this essay.

The story of 'Saivali'

A girl, named Saivali with black complexion has squint eyes and is short in height. Parents were worried about her marriage for her ugliness. But she does not care about this and thinks that as funny word. Thus when she attains her teenager, she realizes the reality of her beauty. So, now she does not laugh like before. She stands before mirror like a thief. Soon she became young and she got married to Govinda. Her mother seeing a happy and normal family life of her ugly daughter and tells her not to trust her husband.

She starts to do hard work for her family. One day her husband came home with white chandramallika, seeing it she agitated. Before that she was very intimate with black aparajita. When she feels that her husband has an attachment with white chandramallika, a deep pain seated in her mind. But, she placed white chandramallika beside aparajita with great care. Gradually she became ill and she gives her husband to an unknown imagined white and beautiful woman like chandramallika and welcomes death.

Discussion

Poet Tarapada Bhattacharya created every character in this story accurately. Not only the character of Saivali, he also painted suitably the characters of her mother, father and husband too. It's our culture that we have to obey our parents.

We find in Sanskrit literature – 'पिता स्वर्गःपिता धर्मःपिता हि परमं तपः, नास्ति माता सम वन्द्युः' etc. From the starting of the story we see cruel parent. When parent give birth of a child, they become everything of the child. They should accept everything of the new born (Their color and beauty no matter at all.) An ugly girl or an unfair boy becomes very beautiful with their love and the child get provision to live. We can refer another short story of Tarapada Bhattacharya, named 'Gadadharavivahakatha'. We find Gadadhara's mother always sees her black son as white. His teethees comes out crossing lips and taking air. Mother thinks God gave all beauties of world on the teeth – 'वालकःकृष्णवर्णः, माता तु शुक्लं पश्यति.....तस्य दन्ताः ओष्ठं भित्वा वहिरागत्य वायुं सेवन्ते, माता मन्यते - विधाता पृथिव्याः समस्तं रूपं मम पुत्रस्य दन्ते पुञ्जीचकार.' So, they are the parent. If a child becomes unable physically or mentally parents try to make confident him and show dream to win in the goal of life. But in the story of 'Saivali' we see from childhood mother rebuked her, father could not accept her normally for her ugliness – 'तां माता निन्दति, नाभिनन्दति पिता.' Mother said after marriage she will live in the house of her husband doing all the work as a maid - 'दासीवृत्तिं कृत्वा जीवेत्.' It means a women's life became very painful if she is ugly or black. We stunt to see that, how a mother can say this? Is there no pain of a mother seeing her daughter's agony? At the time of their conversation when Saivali answered with funny 'my prince will come at the time, then do not cry for me', mother answered - 'मरणम् गतायां जीवामि. That means her mother will be glad if she leave. 'Hearing this at first we can think it's a normal talking, we find its use in everyday life of villagers (we find the word here 'palli'). But it was not such as. Or, it is that her mother no differ from other who knows a women without marriage has nothing to do, who knows an ugly woman do not get obey in such society and this negligence is normal for them. But, we feel a deep pain that born of an ugly in this society, is a sinful act or endless curse and death is only solution for them. Not only in her childhood, when she was in teenage, when she realizes the difference between love and negligence, her parents' are talking same as early. Thus by reproach of talking day by day she forgot to laugh – 'अधुना तु न हसति किशोरी.' When Saivali is looking herself on mirror, her mother told her - 'नास्मासु विश्वासः' - that means do you not believe in my word, which I told about you? Oh God! Parents can say this? May parent can be cruel as this? Reading this part of the story I remember a movie of 1963. A Bollywood movie, named 'Meri surat teri ankhen' made in 1963, taking the great Bengali novel 'Ulka' of Niharranjan Gupta. A rich person, named Rajkumar when realized that his new born baby will be black, he refused him. Because he thinks a black man is ugly forever. He happily accepted his second baby who was white. We see again, when the boy a young guy and good singer, he refused him again to accept as his son and told him to stay away from his family.

We see again Saivali's mother said about her marriage – 'यथा तथा पात्रमेकं संगृहाण,' that means take any one as her bride. Literature is the reflection or mirror of society. We find in

'Abhijnanasakuntalam' of Kalidasa - 'अर्थो हि कन्या परकीय एव' - that means women are wealth of other. Women stay for some time in father's custody and protection of such things is trouble- 'दुःखं न्यासस्य रक्षणम्.' But is it also in twentieth century? Or, is she an expired useless thing? Parent wants to throw her anywhere without her opinion. But! Her mother is also a woman. Why a woman could not understand a woman's pain? We see again when Saivali came to her father's house in the ceremony of 'astamangala,' mother surprised to see her daughter's happiness because she thinks that this is not normal for an ugly one. So, she advised Saivali not to believe her husband - 'पुरुषास्ते, विश्वास मा कुरु.' Thus a normal conjugal relationship started to be complex and it goes to end of the story until her death.

The central character of the story is 'Saivali'. Poet creates her as so patient. She is a simple village woman. We do not see any cruelty in her. She wants to live simply like other women. From her childhood she got only negligence and rebuke for her ugliness. Seeing this reader can feel a deep pain and loneliness. But that reproach could not break her. So, she goes to crematorium path alone at the night purchasing a 'mala' of beli-flower. In normal family life of Govinda and Saivali, when mother said her not to believe her husband, Saivali for an unknown cause or from fear of lost her husband's love (because it is normal for her not to get). She starts to do hard work for her husband and house. Though her husband prohibits, she cleans her husband's shoes. Govinda told her - 'सदेव कृतज्ञा इव आचरसि', that means your behavior like kindness. She is so thankful to her husband for giving this life and love. With this behavior we find a self-underestimate -minded woman character. So, she said her husband - 'किमस्ति मम,-that means what is in me? Basically we find lack of confidence of a woman. So, we see in a romantic situation in a rainy day when her husband found similarity of Saivali with cloud, hearing this she was not pleased. She is black, so this similarity is unexpected and painful for her. After the season hemanta, in the starting of winter when husband Govinda came to home with white chandramallika, seeing it she was not pleased. Rather she stunt with fear because white color is her competitor forever. When Govinda told her that white chandramallika is dearer than black aparajita, she became completely distressed. A loneliness and deep pain situated in her mind. She thinks that she has nothing to give her husband. So, she said him - 'जानेहं हम्,' that means 'I know it'. She thinks that she is not suitable for her husband and decides to go far away from him. Thus she welcomes unseen death and passively gives her husband to an unknown imagined white and fair lady. At the time of her death she said – 'श्रुतं मया, यत् स्मरन् प्रियते तथा भवति जन्मान्तरोत्तव चन्द्रमल्लिकां मम पुरतो निधेहि.' - That means in my another birth I want to born in the world being white. From this uttering we can feel the deep pain and depression of a black woman.

There has a deep socio-economic crisis in the behavior of parent and Saivali's ending. In this third generation, so called civilized era we find everywhere disrespect for an ugly. We see color-envy in everywhere. We see in advertise for a job of companies 'need smart and beautiful women'. It's same for the purpose of marriage. This trend in twentieth century was more than now. In the society of 'Saivali' showed that marriage is only ambition for them. They need no education; they have no dream to do something. So, Saivali's parent thinks about her marriage. That society does not accept an

ugly woman, so her marriage is not easy with poor wealth. Her father said - 'तव कन्यायाः विवाहे भद्रासनविक्रयेणापि न पर्याप्तं धनं भविता. From this statement we can imagine the economic condition of her family that they are not wealthy and the society has dowry system. We can imagine another thing from this that if a woman is ugly there is a need for more money for her marriage and for rich person this problem may be overcome very easily. So we find this problem in literature basically in backward classes. So, there is no place for poor ugly women in the society. The society does not give chance to develop them and to enjoy the world. So, worry and rebuke of Saivali's parent is a general and normal matter.

That will be unfair to blame her parents. This negligence for black or ugly women is in our blood, in imagination and in sense. There is a familiar idiom in Bengali - 'prathame darsandhari, tarpar gunvichari.' It means at first looking then comes justification of quality. It is our duty to serve truth (सत्य), good (शिव) and beauty (सुन्दर). Which are beautiful in our imagination we accept them, though we have no clear conception about beauty. One black or ugly want a beautiful guy or woman as their life partner. As they are hated they also hate black and ugly. Basically this hate or negligence not made in one day, it's from some era. In every civilization, in every society we see negligence of mankind for their color and beauty. We see in London's best night club very black women are not accepted there. In America whites neglect blacks. We hope by passing of time the concept will change. No one will be another 'Saivali' and literature will not say such pathetic problem.

In the name of characters there is an allegory. The name of the story is 'Saivali,' who is the central character. Every sequence is rotated by her. The meaning of the word 'Saivali' is 'moss', which is born in water or slime. This is dark in color and not useful for any purpose. So it stays with unimportance here and there. We find Saivali in the story as an unimportant and ugly woman character for others.

Poet did use allegory in description of the story. Poet sketches the nature with some beautiful lines, such as - 'विराम वर्षणम्। जहास काशः। काशा विनाशं गताः। शुशुभे पक्वं शालिधान्यम्। सोऽपि अन्तं जगाम हेमन्तः। आयातः शीतः। भयेन चक्रम्मे आमलकीशाखा। पत्राणि व्यसृजत् भूमौ.' - That means rainfall ended, Kasa flower started to laugh. The day of Kasa has ended. Golden Sali-paddy started to shine. That hemanta session has ended. Winter has come. Bough of amlaki-tree starts to vibrate. The time has come to free leaves. We can think this description as - "The shower of keen talking stopped on child Saivali. By degrees she was a teen age. The time of her teenage has ended. Her young age starts to shine. Virginity has ended. She starts family life. In her family life we see the unfaith, inferiority, complexity and her heart starts to beat like amlaki tree. Saivali died to free her blackness and ugliness." Dr. Rita Chattopadhyaya said in her 'Adhunik samskrta sahitya' there has an allegory between welcome of candramallika and farewell of aparajita. Poet shows the ending of the story with this allegory.

We see in traditional Sanskrit literature, a main object of stories were to give suggestions. Though we did not find directly any suggestions, we can feel a message from the story. The message is - 'A man or woman should not be neglected for their color or beauty and also one should not underestimate own self.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can think from the above discussion the ugliness of Saivali became a curse for her. She had to carry

that curse from birth to death. Parent's negligence, her shame, lack of confidence does not permit her to spend a normal life. Society is also responsible for her tragic end, so called modern and civilized society is unable to accept normally an ugly. Till now there has been a difference between beauty and ugliness in the society. Though talent and wealth can make up the ugliness sometimes, largely the society always make difference between them.

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