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Few dramatic suktas of rigveda samhita

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Introduction

The Vedas are of two types- Mantra and Brahamana.Samhita is called the sum total of Mantras.There are four Samhitas- Rik, Saman, Jajus, Atharvan.The Pandits have admitted unanimously that Rik Smhita is the oldest among them. This Samhita is poetic and there are 1028 Suktas in it.Sukta means good quotation i.e. beautiful attractive quotations. Of course in terminological sense it is to be understood as a poem. The poems are of different tastes. Rigveda is so attractive for the varieties of its taste. We can get different historical data. Though the Suktas of Rigveda are to a get extent religious, some secular remarkable suktas are also available here. To be precise, in all those suktas god-related thoughts are not the main subjects. For example- Dialogue hymns, Danastuti etc.Yaskacharya said in 'Nirukta'- "एवमुच्चावच्चैरभिप्राये ऋषीणां मन्त्रद्रष्टव्यो भवन्ति" ¹ In other words, Mantra is always present. The Rishis are the seer of Mantras, they are not the lords. In some Mantras, there is only praise. There is no prayer or desire. For example- "इन्द्रस्य न वीर्याणि प्रवोचम्" ² Again in some Mantras there is only prayer or desire. There is no glorification. For example-"सुचक्षा अह्नक्षीभ्यां भूयासं सुर्वचा मुखेन सुश्रुत् कर्णाभ्यां भूयासम्" ³ There is oath in some Mantras, curse in some Mantras, abuse in some Mantras, praise in some Mantras.

There are about twenty Suktas in Rigveda which are written in conversational style. All these Suktas are called Dialogue hymns. Among them Yama-Yami (10/10), Pururavas-Urvasi (10/95), Pani-Sarama (10/108), Agni and Debabrinda (10/51-52), Agstya and Lopamudra (1/179), Indra-Indrani and conversation of Brisakapi (10/86).

Yama-Yami (10/10)

At first let us discuss the dialogue between Yama-Yami.This Sukta narrates the conversation between Yama,the son of bibaswan and his sister Yami. Lustful Yami has expressed in sexual language her wish to have sex with her brother.Yami is trying to incite her brother in illicit sex so that human being is not wiped out from the earth.

“ओ चित् सखायं सख्या ववृतां तिरः पुरु चिदर्णवं जगन्वान् ।
पितुर्नपातमादधीत वेधा अधि क्षमि प्रतरं दीध्यानः ॥” ⁴

Yama is here seen to be very restraint. Firmly but with restraint he has reminded her that it is illegal and illicit to have sex between blood-related brother and sister. He has advised her to set relationship with another male. The episode ends here.

There is no mention or hint about its consequence in the coming literature. The hint of Winternitz's opinion that perhaps the first origin of human being which was originated from the lover and the beloved. Though there is obscurity in some places in the story of this dramatic Suktas, the episode is excellent for its reflection of the humanitarian approach. Reading of this episode of Yama-Yami spontaneously arises in our mind the illicit marriage and birth of son of the sons of Adam and Eve narrated in the Bible. Some are of the opinion that this episode is allegorical. According to them Yama represents day where as Yami symbolizes night. Though night follows day, they never meet. This idea is possibly hidden here.

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Pani-Sarama (10/108)

There are eleven Mantrs in the Pani-Sarama Sukta of 10th Mondal of Rigveda. This Sukta is about arguments and counter-arguments among Sarama, the bitch of the Heaven and the depredators named Pani. When Pani stole the cows of Indra, the latter sent Sarama in search of them. Sarama found those thieves of cows after undertaking hazardous journey. The Panis told her to stay there through temptation. But Sarama overcame all those temptations and said-

“नाहं वेद भ्रातृत्वं नो स्वस्त्वमिन्द्रो विदुरंगिरश्च घोराः।
गोकामो मे अच्छदयन् यदायमपात इत पणयो वरीयः”¹⁵

At last Panis were defeated and the desired cow wealth of the gods was recovered.

European scholar Max Muller opened that recovery of light in the morning is stated here in terms of comparison. Here Sarama represents dawn. Men and gods were engaged to recover the cows. Max Muller guessed that ‘Trojan War’ episode is also the transformation of the Pani-Sarama episode. Sage Arabinda has interpreted this Sukta spiritually. According to him the recovery of the cows means to recover the enlighten that is covered by ignorance and delusion.

Pururavas-Urvasi (10/95)

The most famous Sukta of Rigveda is Pururavas-Urvasi. These dialogue hymns are conversation between Pururaba and Urvasi. Pururaba, the king of earth and Urvasi, the apsara of the Heaven passed long four years in the earth after they were attracted to one another. When the pregnant Urvasi disappeared Pururaba noticed her bathing with other apsaras in a pond during his search for her. Being unable to make her return, Pururaba expressed his desire to sacrifice his life. To console him Urvasi said-

“पुरुवरवा मा मृथा प्रपप्ता मा त्वा वृकासो अशवास उ क्षन् ।
न वै स्तैणानि सख्यानि सन्ति सालावृकानां हृदयान्येता”¹⁶

There is no description in Rigveda of the consequence of the love between Pururaba and Urvasi. This interesting episode is stated in prose in Satapath Brahman. This story is found in the Sanskrit literature, The Mahabharata, Vishnupurana and Katha-Saritsagar. Above all the poet of poets Kalidasa has written the drama Bikramorbasiym based on this story. The word Urvasi means ‘dawn’ and the word Pururaba means ‘Sun’. When the Sun rises the dawn disappears. This sense is assumed to be the main theme of the Sukta.

Agastya and Lopamudra (1/179)

We are greatly attracted to the conversation between Agastya and Lopamudra in other famous dialogue hymns too. There are altogether six Riks in this Sukta. There are conversation between husband-wife in the first four and comments of the disciple in the last two Riks.

Indra, Indrani and Brshakapi (10/86)

In the 10/86 Sukta there is conversation among Indra, Indrani and Brshakapi, Indra’s son. In fact, the purpose of this Sukta is to establish the greatness of Indra.

Agni and Debabrinda (10/51-52)

The Suktas tell the conversation among Agni and the gods. There at first Agni expressed his own grief by the possession of Yajna. At last, he had given his own permission to perform his duties.

The Scholars differed regarding the characteristics of the dialogue hymns. They have found, in one hand, a connection with the epics of the following age, on the other, they regarded them as the earlier source of dramas. Professor Oldenberg called them the examples of ballads following leveling them episode Sukta. In this view, the ancient epics were ballads and there was a mixture of prose and verse. Conversational parts were written in verse and they were linked with prose. Later on, only the verses were preserved in the families. As no caution was taken for the preservation of the prose, there were lost gradually.

Oldenberg has cited proofs from the literature of other countries to justify his opinion. For him there was the mixture of prose and verse not only in the ancient Indian literature in Ireland and Scandinavia. In this literature, both prose and verse parts were preserved. But, Rigveda Samhita being the collection of only versical Rik Mantras it was not possible to preserve the prose parts. In some cases, we can get those lost ballads partially from the following Brahman literature or epics. Pointing out this opinion of Oldenberg, Winternitz has observed ‘The oldest form of epic poetry in India, he said, was a mixture of prose and verses, the speeches of the persons only being in verses, while the events connected with the speeches narrated in prose’⁷.

Few Western scholars have criticized this opinion of Oldenberg. German scholar Max Muller and French scholar Sylvan Levi are of the opinion that these dialogue hymns have the signs of dramas. This view was supported by Hertel, Schroeder, Macdonell. Their view states that the dialogue hymns of Rigveda are the source or seeds of the next dramas. Prof. Winternitz has tried to assimilate these two contradictory schools of thoughts. So, he remarked ‘This ancient ballad poetry is the source both of the epic and of the drama, for these ballads consists of a narrative and of a dramatic element’⁸. In short, ancient ballad-related writings are sources of both epics and dramas. Among these both narrative and dramatic style are found.

Conclusion

In this essay it is discussed that the importance of the dialogue hymns of the various Suktas of Rigveda is very great. The excellent dramatic elements and the eloquence of the different characters have the enough power to attract and spellbound the mind of any modern reader. The misconception that there are only hymns of worship that only beneficial to the priests is likely to be wiped out if we uphold the existence and fragrance of these ancient Suktas in the different literary meet.

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