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Some 'stories' are novels in modern Sanskrit literature: An observation through Rakesh Das's Indoścandrikā

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Abstract:

The modern Sanskrit novel is a relatively new development in Sanskrit literature, with the first Sanskrit novel being published in the 19th century. The Sanskrit language, which is an ancient Indian language, has a rich literary history dating back thousands of years. However, the Sanskrit language has been largely replaced by other Indian languages as the primary language of communication. The modern Sanskrit novel is a unique literary form that blends the ancient Sanskrit language with modern themes and styles. These novels are typically written by authors who have a deep understanding of the Sanskrit language and literature, as well as a keen awareness of modern literary trends. Some of the most well-known modern Sanskrit novels include "Sarasvatikanṭhabharāṇa" by Bālabhadra, "Bhāsaṅtarasa" by Kṛṣṇabhāṭṭa, "Abhinavaguptacaritam" by Lakṣmīdhara, and "Rājaraṣi" by V. Raghavan. Despite the challenges of writing in a language that is no longer widely spoken, modern Sanskrit novelists have continued to produce a rich body of work, often with the support of literary organizations and cultural institutions. While the audience for these works may be relatively small, the modern Sanskrit novel remains an important part of India's literary landscape and a testament to the enduring power of this ancient language. Poet Narayan Dash says in the preface to his collection 'Lajja' - "prakāradṛṣṭyā paśyāmaścet ādhunikakathāsāhityasya - nimnabhēdāḥ syuḥ. 1. Ṭupkathā 2. Laghukathā/ khaṇḍakathā 3. Kathā/ kathānikā 4. Dīrghakathā/ sakalakarā 5 upanyāsikā/ laghupanyāsaḥ 6. Upanyāsaśca." Although 'Indoścandrikā' of Poet Rakesh Das is mentioned as a katha, it can be called a novel or short novel in terms of size and characteristics.

Keyword: Novels, modern Sanskrit literature, Abhinavaguptacaritam

Introduction

The 'Indoschandrika' was published in the October-March issue of 2010-11 of 'Kathasarit' magazine. The poet has presented the story in a different and distinct manner from the tradition of modern stories. The Angiras (main rasa) of the story is Karuna Rasa. Also in the story there are a dual flow of sringar - vipralambha and sambhoga. Poet Rakesh Das or Gupta Chandra's 'Indoścandrikā' though mentioned as 'Katha', we can call it a short novel by looking at the length or compositional features of this katha. In this seventeen-page long story, the style of narration is novelistic. Almost the entire life of the main characters of the story Sharadindu and Chandrika is told in separate narrations like a novel in a long narrative.

Discussion

The hero of the story is Sharadindu and the heroine is Chandrika. Sharadindu has a strong devotion to God since childhood. So he often goes to Harishava with his grandmother and has interest in going to temples. Although his father assigned him to study grammar, he had a strong interest in Vedanta and Bhakti Shastra. He has been subjected Grammar, Nyaya and Etymology in Kashi. Again, his ingenuity is in the art of speech. He received many awards and great achievements in his student days. Graduating with the Acharya title, he received a research scholarship. Again, he works in a college near home. His regular visits to many ashrams for reading scriptures and preaching scriptures. One day he was called to teach grammar in an ashram for a period of one month as studies. One evening after the term was over, while he was busy in writing, the telephone rang. A student named Chandrika from the grammar class called him and had a conversation with him. But later calling again at the same time she immediately offered her love to Sharadindu – "Aham bhavataḥ premavaśena baddhāsmi." Sharadindu was disturbed by the suddenness of the incident and forbade him to do anything else.

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But even after that Chandrika called him ten times but he did not pick up the phone. Lying in bed at night he thought - his pride was such that no woman in the world would dare to offer him love. But a little girl crushed his confidence. The next day he started his normal life, but he kept feeling the lack of something somewhere. In the evening he reluctantly accepts Chandrika's call and Chandrika then apologizes for her earlier actions.

But after that, every day she called Sharadindu to know his news. The daily conversation on the phone at certain times becomes a habit and waiting for Chandrika's phone becomes normal. Out of this Chandrika gave the Acharya exam and Shikshashastri entrance exam. He also started teaching in a school for a small salary. Sharadindu calls one day and knows that Chandrika has failed in Shikshashastri Praveshika, because she failed the Acharya exam. She says this failure for offer love to her Guru. After two days in one evening Chandrika called him and said – “Mahōdaya, satyaṁ kathayatu. Kiṁ bhavān, mayī na prīṇāti? Kiṁ mama prathamaprēmna ittham vaiarthamēva vidhinā iṣtam?” Sharadindu is shocked at this sudden statement, but what will he say true or false? After three days of eagerness, when Chandrika called on the evening of the fourth day, hearing her voice, he said – “Candrike, tvaṁ prīṇāmi aham. Uta matpāṇau svapāṇim dāsyati tvam ? Tuṣṇīm mā tiṣṭha candrikē, tvaṁ prīṇāmi aham. Uta mama bhāryā bhavitumicchasi tvam?” Chandrika says in trembling voice - 'Ām.'

After that, one day during their regular love affair, when the father knows about the matter, he wants to punish his daughter for her libertinism. But after a long talk with Saradindu, the parents were happy. One day in the solitude of the Ganges they met and kissed each other for the first time. When Saradindu arrived at Chandrika's house in an evening, her parents were impressed by her calm nature and personality. After that, when regular visits to the house started, one day Chandrika revealed some secret pains of her previous life. Chandrika unabashedly narrates all the painful history of her previous life without showing any weakness of heart and without hiding anything. She confesses her all previous love affairs with Manas, Satyasekhara, and Bhupathi, and how she was forced into physical relations under various circumstances. Saradindu is hurt by Chandrika's words and his pride is crushed for the second time. Because his dream was – “Mama bhāryā anāghrātā syāditi.” Chandrika tells him that Saradindu may reject her knowing her previous life. There was no mental attachment in her previous relations. There were only demands of physical relation. No one ever valued her feelings, her heart; no one ever tried to understand her. Sharadindu felt Chandrika's honesty, her pain. So accepting all the events of his life, their marriage was completed within four months and two sons were born.

The name of the eldest son is Pratyush and the youngest son is Pradyumna. The age difference between both of them is five years. Within a few years of normal married life, marital squabbles started over trivial matters. Gradually it increased without any reason and became a daily matter. On his youngest son's twelfth birthday, Saradindu was deeply hurt when his wife insulted him in front of all his relatives. When he presented that to Chandrika at night, he did not regret it - saying "Suṣṭhu ācaritaṁ mayā" broke his heart. On Shivaratri, while reciting the 'Shivanandalahari', 'aparadh Kshapan Stotra', he suddenly feels a strong aversion to the world. He left the house and boarded a train to Ujjain. Seeing Mahakal at Ujjain, he wandered for two years in various pilgrimages. Then began his pursuit of enlightenment at Amarkant, the

source of Reva. From that day he stayed there for ten years. Neither Chandrika nor his sons know about his presence? Chandrika now remembers his important presence in their life and feels pain. Chandrika searches him in all the shrines. One day her wish is fulfilled in Amarkanth. They exchange glances in an unknown temple and suddenly see each other. From a priest she knows (Sharadindu) Somtirtha is the disciple of the most venerable Kamalaksha Tirrapada. In the next morning at his abode When Chandrika arrives, a brahmachari gives Chandrika some letters given by Somatirtha and tells her not to wait for him. On returning to lodge, Chandrika notices that the words of Saradindu described in this story are written on it. Chandrika fills the empty spaces of the page to express the desire to bring it before all.

The central characters of the story 'Indoścandrikā' written by poet GuptaChandra are basically two Sharadindu and his wife Chandrika. We find Sharadindu in the story as a strong religious, wise, prudent and generous person. The beginning of the story tells about his strong religious devotion from childhood – “Bālyē mātāmahyā saha prāya eva harisabhāṁ gacchati sma. Mandirē gantum pravalō āgrahōpyāsīdēva”. When he became disillusioned with the world, he ran to the Mahakal temple of Ujjain. After two years there, traveling to various pilgrimages, he arrived at Amarkantak, the birthplace of Reva, and did sadhana stanga there.

One day before the marriage Sharadindu said to Candrika – “Candrike bhagavatprāptai mama sādhanē tvam antarāyasvarūpā bhaviṣyasi, uta saḥāyikā bhaviṣyasi.” In fact it was this deep devotion of the heart that helped her to renounce the world and live the life of a renunciate monk. Again, from a very young age, his eagerness for infinite knowledge gave prominence to his character. In the story we get the introduction of his great learning – “Sanskṛtamadhyetum pitrā prēṣitasya vyākaraṇaṁ paṭhatopi me vedāntē bhaktiśāstre ca āgrahāṭiśayyamāsīt. Kāśikṣetre vyākaraṇaṁ nyāyaṁ ca kiñcidadhītaṁ, butpattiśca kācana labdhā gurūṇāṁ kṛpāvaśāt. Ācāryopādhiṁ samāpya śodhavyṁ prāptavān.” His goal is to gain more knowledge. He used to recite various hymns from the morning of Shivaratri. During this study he felt a wonderful dispassion for the vanity of the world. Again in Amarkantaka also has the great fame of this scholar – “Amarakantakakṣetre śāstrajna tapasvinaḥ asya mahatī prasiddhiḥ bartata ca iti.” At the beginning of the story, suddenly one day when a student proposed to him, he was taken aback and did not pick up the phone. Because even if his pride is crushed, it may be indecent to offer the love of a disciple to such an individual. So later when Chandrika apologized to him for this, all his burdens were lightened. Again, when Chandrika was unable to qualify Acharya exam and failed to enter in the Siksasastri Sharadindu very judiciously said – “ Vahubidhāḥ ghaṭanāḥ jīvane sambhavanti. Dhairyamavalambasva”. Again, when he is disgusted with the world and departs to worship God forever, still thinking of his family, he leaves behind his accumulated wealth – “Mama etāvātā sañcītaṁ dhanam yābat vartate tena pañcavarṣāṇi yābat mama paribārasya ārthikāḥ kleśāḥ kōpi na syāditi mayā gaṇitamāsīt.”

In Candrika's word – “Tasya prerāṇayā sādhyāyēna ca mayā bibāhāt param uccataram śikṣaṇam prāptamāsīt.” Even at the end of the story, we see that Sharadindu has left behind this deep insight of his. In the midst of a long period of penance, a woman comes to the image of forsaken bonds, vain illusions, so that he may not be distracted from his life of renunciation, nor thwart his pursuits, so that he leaves for an indefinite period of time with several letters to his wife. Again, we see

him in the story as an ideal lover due to his great character generosity and tolerance. When he started his love affair with Chandrika, he first offered her to be as wife. For him, love is not a boy's game; it is a lifelong heart bond, a spiritual bond. So even after listening to the disgusting description of Chandrika's past life or hearing about Chandrika's intercourse by different men, his heart remained steadfast in his decision. Maybe, sometimes the heart has been tormented, but the burning of the beloved's heart; tears of grief have made her love purer, more pure. However, Chandrika was able to truly realize the identity of this noble heart of hers much later. Even after a long twelve-year rigorous penance, the most sainted monk is still feeling of the flow of the past-
 “Dvādaśavarṣāṇām me tapaḥ, samyag abhyāsēna ḍḍhikṛtaṁ me vairāgyam, mama caramā bhagavadāsaktiḥ adya dvādaśavarṣebhyaḥ param puraḥ sthitāyāḥ candrikāyāḥ, mama pūrvāsramabhāryāyāḥ sakṛddarśanena pravala jhañjhāyāḥ purataḥ parṇakuṭīramiva nimeṣe ēva bhagnam, niścīhnam ca jātam. Punaḥ punaḥ tām draṣṭum abhilāṣo bhavati.”

Another important character in the story is Chandrika. In Chandrika, we find an ideal lover, studious, painstaking helpless. In his description in the story we see – ‘Sā sāhityāśāstre ācāryaparīkṣā likhitavati. Śikṣāśāstrīparīkṣāmapī likhitavati.’ Again, when she has been brutally raped day after day believing them, her agony moves us strongly and her helpless character is revealed. In this way, the poet has drawn his character as an embodiment of mercy. Also, as an ideal lover, she has clear knowledge of his future. He did not conceal any ugly truth of his former life from his beloved. So that this truth of the former life does not afflict the latter in any way, she remains undisguised to him. If she wanted, she could live a normal life, hiding the sadness of the soul. But his character magnanimity, generosity did not allow him to do that. Perhaps it was felt in his consciousness that 'if the Beloved accepts after knowing all the truth, only then will real welfare be established.' Again, marital discord is very normal after marriage. People suffering from various problems engage in this conflict in various ways due to different opinions. Yet it can be said that in the narration of the story, a calm, restrained, wise person who engages in occasional quarrels for reasons - for no reason reveals his intolerance. He is unable to appreciate the proximity of such a great person. Lying during quarrels, belittling a self-righteous husband to relatives, and showing no remorse are the signs of indiscretion seen in him. Even if the husband turns away from the family, but shows hatred towards him instead of pain, it indicates the decay of his love. But he realized it too late. Her words - ""Tasya gr̥hatyāgasya māsābhyantare eva mayā jñātāmāsīt tasmin me jugupsā nāsti bartate tasmin prēmasammitam abhimānam. Tasya ādarśasya mahattā idānīm mayānubhūyate.” So she runs back after a long time to her lost life. Thus the poet paints her as a confused, exploited and sad female character.

The story ‘Indoścandrikā’ written by poet Rakesh Das has a flow of rasas, but the main rasa is Karuna rasa. The reader feels sorrow and becomes emotional after hearing the sad story of her past life from Chandrika's mouth. The rape incidents taking advantage of the trust of a helpless woman, the heart of the reader is touched. Again, when at the end of long agony the chaste long-sought marriage is suddenly struck with the harsh curse of separation, the heartbroken hero turns away from the family and the wife suffers her loss, there is a sense of pain. Even at the end of the story, we see the hero-heroine not reunited and the Karun rasa continues till the end.

Sometimes we feel vipralambha and sambhogashringara in the story.

Conclusion

In the Bengali novel, we notice contemporary reality, stories of people's lives told in prose, broad presentation rather than partial narratives or complete narratives with beginning-middle-end. Like a full Bengali novel, the story ‘Indoścandrikā’ narrated by the poet Rakesh Das has been described in detail in individual forms and names of human life. The narration of the entire story is also observed in simple pleasant prose. So it is not inappropriate to call the story a 'short novel'. The story is very realistically presented by the poet. At the end of the story, the reader wonders if this is a real event. So suspiciously the poet at the end of the story mentions separately that the story is imaginary.

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