

## ***DHUVAPRASĀDANAM-A DEVOTIONAL DRAMA WITH SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT: AN ANALITICAL STUDY***

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### ***Abstract:***

*The main object of this paper is to explore the incredible asset of Sanskrit Literature of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal. The drama Dhruvaprasādanam by Nityananda Mukhopadhyaya was a symbolic play by which the dramatist tried to show the values of dedication under the supervision of Ācharya (Teacher) can help a student to get success in life and reach the summit of knowledge. To increase the devotional power may bring the ultimate peace in human life. The popular story of Śrīmadbhāgavatmahāpurāṇam Dhruvaprasādanam was selected by the dramatist to show the patience of Dhruva until he reached his goal. Through the drama the dramatist tried to show such type of instances to inspire the modern generation and another motto of writing such type of drama was to spread Sanskrit language in lucid way so that the next generation can able to understand this. The paper will try to assimilate the thoughts of this legendary dramatist and bring it in light of knowledge of entire world to show the incredibility of this ancient language.*

***Keywords:*** Drama, Dhruva, Devotion, Knowledge, Attribute.

### Introduction:

During the wave of renaissance of 19<sup>th</sup> century besides English education, huge changes even in the study of Sanskrit can be noticed. In one hand Sanskrit poems and dramas were being translated into Bengali and on the other hand the culture of Bengal was being influenced by Western literature. As a result of this a group of Sanskrit Scholars (Pandits) came into sight who had broken down the difficult Sanskrit literature and wrote poems, dramas and short stories in lucid comprehensible language that could make Sanskrit language quite acceptable to all. In the writings of these Scholar Poets and Dramatists the contemporary problems of India are portrayed like Second World War, socio-economic problem of India as well as Bengal, exclusion of Sanskrit from text books and many others. There are some evergreen writings from these Poets and Dramatists that are invaluable asset in Sanskrit literature; for example PanchananTarkaratna's *Amaramaṅgalam*, *Kalaṅkamocanam*, Haridasa Siddhantavagisha's *Mivārapratāpam*, *Śivājīcaritam*, Hemchandra Ray's *Satyabhāmāparigraham*, *Paraśurāmacaritam*, Guruprasanna Bhattacharya's *Bhāminīvilāsam*, Jatindrabimal Chowdhury's *Bhāratalakṣmīnāṭakam*, *Deśabandhudeśapriyam*, *Subhāṣasubhāṣam*, Kalipada Tarkacharya's *Praśāntaratnākaram*, *Naladamayantīyam*, Srijiib Nyayatirtha's *Daridradurdaivam*, *Vivaha-Viramvanam*, *Caṅḍatāṅḍavam*, *Kumārasambhavam*, *Caura-cāturīyam*, Bishnupada Bhattacharya's *Anukūlagalahastakam*, *Kāñcanakuñcikam*, Bishweshwar Vidyabhushan's *Cāṅkyavijayam*, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Śārdūlaśatakam*, *Siddhārthacaritam*, *Veṣṭanavyāyagḥ*, Rama Chowdhury's *Jugajīvanam*, *Rasamayārāsamanī*, *Niveditānibeditam*, Siddheshwar Chattopadhyay's *Dharitrīpatinirvācanam*, *Svargīyahasanam*, *Nanāvītāranam*, *Atha-Kim*, Amiyanath Chakraborty's *Meghnādabadham*, *Dharmarājyam*, Jogendranath Chakraborty's *Samyuktā-Prithwīraja-Nāṭakam* etc are the dramas that have enriched Sanskrit literature.

### Purpose:

In 19th century holding hands of Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Bhāsa, Bhāravi etc Sanskrit literature crossed the boundary, came out of royal court and started to represent the common mass in world's yard. There is a common belief that the 19th and 20th centuries are the era of degradation of Sanskrit literature, no important literary piece was written in this period and the few Paṇḍits who practiced Sanskrit literature were dated and monotonous in their writings. But now it's clear

that like all other literatures, Sanskrit too, in 19th and 20th centuries was being practiced and the Paṇḍits made possible a reconciliation of tradition and modern. An extremely talented dramatist of Sanskrit literature in 19th century was Sri Nityananda Mukhopadhyay who was dedicated his life for the sake of Sanskrit literature and tried to spread the message among his students. Sri Mukhopadhyay wrote merely 115 dramas in Sanskrit showing various types of socio-economic, political, devotional aspects of those days. One of his devotional dramas *Dhruvaprāsādanam* also represented the different types of social aspects which is the main object of this research paper. The incredible asset of Sanskrit literature of 19<sup>th</sup> century was not adequately represented around the world; to explore those in front of the world is another purpose of this paper.

### **Methodology:**

The research paper is mostly based on the secondary resource. In primary research, the original texts and related books have been sourced from various libraries and the internet has also been utilized.

### **Objective of the Paper:**

### **Findings:**

Sri Nityananda Mukhopadhyay is one of the most eminent scholarly dramatists in Sanskrit literature that was born on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1923 as a fourth son of Sri Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay and Smt. Dinatarini Devi. After his thread ceremony (Upanayana), to fulfill his father's desire, beside studying in a English school, Sri Mukhopadhyay started studying Sanskrit under the supervision of his father Sri Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay and other teachers (Pandits) at his own school i.e. *Korārbāgān Chatuspāthī* (presently known as *Rāmgopala Chatuspāthī*). He wrote his first play (Dr̥śyakāvya) *Kālidāsa* at the age of 21. At the end of his life the numbers of his dramas became one hundred fifteen (115). Beside this he procreated 12 Epics (Mahākāvya), 113 Sanskrit poems, 54 essays in Bengali and many others. He wrote almost 40 devotional dramas and *Dhruvaprāsādanam* is one of the best among them. He collected the subject matter of this drama from the fourth chapter of *Srimadbhāgavadmahāpurāṇam*.

The story of this drama is like that:- the son of *Svāyambhuva* Manu, King Uttānapāda had two wives, Sunīti and Suruci. Being a victim to queen Suruci's conspiracy King Uttānapāda was

compelled to send Queen Sunīti for exile. A twist of fate resulted into a reconciliation of the King with Queen Sunīti. Then Queen Sunīti gave birth to a baby boy in the forest was named Dhruva. While playing with other sage-boys, Dhruva could not be able to answer his father's name so the other boys of his age made fun of him and Dhruva came to his mother Sunīti and cried for knowing his own identity. Mother Sunīti told him unwillingly that, which his father was. Then to get back his own identity and respect of his mother Dhruva went to the Palace and his father embraced first to listen this but later accept him with due love and respect. But his step mother Suruci appeared and insulted Dhruva by saying to want Royal throne and his father's love he must pray to Lord Nārāyaṇa so that he might reincarnate in the womb of Queen Suruci. Coming back to the forest Dhruva started penance of Lord Nārāyaṇa and passing through of many hindrances he ultimately achieved the blessings of Sri Nārāyaṇa. He was blessed by that Lord that in this life he would succeed his father to execute the royal duties in his kingdom and after life he would go to heaven to attain Devine pleasure.

### **Analysis:**

Now the question is why dramatist Sri Nityananda Mukhopadhyay, in 19<sup>th</sup> century selected a story from *Srimadbhāgavadmahāpurāṇam* and wrote a devotional drama named *Dhruvaprāsādanam*? We can say society comes with its regular good and bad, ups and downs. A writer is a societal being who cannot abandon reality and live in his imagination; if he does so then his writings would fail to touch the hearts of the readers. The relationship between society and literature is an intimate one. Literature feeds on the contents provided by society and literature often influences society. What writer has written might not be of contemporary time-line but what are important are how these writings compatible with the present society and how much the message conveyed by the writer is acceptable and logical.

A devotional drama like *Dhruvaprāsādanam* in 19<sup>th</sup> century makes us stand in front of a lot of questions. Back then the picture was quite poor. A newly independent Asian nation was trying to fit in the world hierarchy by clutching to the western culture. The heads of the nation waged a war to eliminate our heritage and traditions while blindly imitating European trends and the consequences of these actions are still faced by Indians. The change in political scenario of India didn't let West Bengal be an exception and Sanskrit was suddenly not a part of the curriculum. The difficulty and moral advises of the language were shown to be the reasons. "These moral and

ethical lessons makes us dumb", such wrong conception led to elimination of Sanskrit in that era. The character development faced multiple problems and the future generations remained oblivious to our rich culture.

With such circumstances, Sri Mukhopadhyay, to keep the practice of Sanskrit literature going and to revive the language, wrote national devotional dramas. The motto of the drama was to offer tough, complex, incomprehensible Sanskrit language as easy-going, lucid and understandable for all as well as to present the heritage of India along with his deep philosophy of life in front of all.

Ancient India was enriched with a master disciple culture. Unconditional devotion towards the master let the disciple to achieve their goals<sup>1</sup>.

The promise of walking together is an important aspect of this Indian culture. The modern trends made cracks on master disciple culture. The disciple lost respect for his master and consequently, in attempt to cross each other by both the master and disciple the pious mutual understanding is lost. For example, violence on teachers can be seen every day on pages of news papers. In this drama, Dhruva made Lord Nārāyaṇa come down to earth with his devotion and respect but when lord himself appeared before him he couldn't ask for any boon rather asked God to bless him by sheltering him underneath of his feet. The main objective as expressed by Indian philosophy is- *guruḥ kṛpā hi kevalam*. In the path of achievement, blessing of the master is foremost. Gaining knowledge in the under a compassionate master is the biggest achievement and this should stand on the pillar of the relationship of the master and disciple. In advance knowledge should be the motivation of a disciple. The dramatist also uttered the same thing – *gurumantram binā tāta! Nahīṣṭadarśanam khalu*<sup>2</sup>. The same thing has been said in the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*<sup>3</sup>.

Secondly through this devotional drama, the dramatist has tried to show another important aspect. Just the way devotion work is incomplete without a master, the same way stands for education. Sanskrit is the chief of all Indian languages. It is one of the main languages of the old Indo-European (OIA) language group. This language would only exist in the research of linguistics and will be eliminated from the practice of languages is not at all desirable. Not only literature but also *Veda*, *Upaniṣad*, *Āyurveda*, *Smṛti-Śāstra*, *Dharama-Śāstra* or Polity literature, Law as well as environmental issues other than all contemporary issues had been discussed in this language. Sanskrit is not only a language but a literature itself. Except English, no other language has such versatile and widespread use like Sanskrit. So, instead of giving the language

its due respect, throwing it away like waste is not only shameful for Indians but also a dark stigmatic chapter of Indian language practices. Through this simple tale of mythology the dramatist has expressed his resentment. In the end he has shown, no matter how powerful science is, nature is above it and Indian culture finds god in nature. In *Sāṃkhya* philosophy, nature is mentioned to be the god. Thus worshipping the earth and nature should be the motto of life. In other words, without neglecting science nature can be saved or using science towards the betterment of nature must be the aim of humans. For example, the solution to water crisis in India is embedded in nature itself and all we need is proper application of our knowledge. There is no peace in destruction; peace is hidden in our devotion. Manu said, desires are never satisfied by consumption. Just like ghee spreads the fire, the more we have the more we desire. Dramatist has also conveyed the same through the conversation between Director (*Sūtradhāra*) and co-actor (*Pāripārśvika*)<sup>4</sup>.

### Conclusion:

In the conclusion it can be said that, dramatist sent the message to mankind that greed and desires lead us to the wrong paths and degraded deeds. The only way out of these sins are directing our minds to the virtue of truth and choosing the path of *Dharma*. He taught us do not follow anything blindly; open wide eyes or seeing through the eyes of knowledge and wisdom by them human can establish a beautiful amiable society. That's why he made Director to be said<sup>5</sup>:- to revive the humanity and devotion towards god among humans so that the goal of ultimate peace can be achieved.

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3. *tadviddhipraṇipātenaparipraśenasevayā/*

- upadekṣyantitejñānaṃjñānīnastattvadarśinaḥ// Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, Chapter.4, Verse. 34.  
(With the Commentary of Pandit Sriyukta Bhutanatha Saptatirtha). Ed. Sriyukta Nalinikanta Brahma, Navabharata Publisher, Kolkata, 2006.
4. *mānavāsvīyakalyāṇaṃkāmayantenacedyādi/  
netrenimīlyagaccheyuścakṣuṣnantokṣitoyadi//  
pratīkārāyaduḥkhasyasukhādihigamanetathā/  
samarthaḥkomanuṣyeṣudharaṇyābhavitāvadā// Dhruvaprasādanam*, Chapter.1, Scene. 1, Verse.8,9.  
*Nāṭaka Saṃgraha* of Nityananda Mukhopadhyay, Howrah Sanskrit Sahitya Samaj, Howrah, ed. 1<sup>st</sup> 2007.
5. *bārṇāśramo bhāratvarsamadhye punaḥ pratīṣṭhā labhatācca dharmah/  
hiṃsābihīnaḥ samabhāvamagnaḥ samāja eṣo'stu śivena purṇaḥ// Dhruvaprasādanam*, Chapter.7,  
Scene. 2, Verse.121.  
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