

BUDDHODAYAKĀVYA OF ŚĀNTIBHIKṢUSĀSTRĪ – AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The *Buddhodaya* is a *Gītikāvya* written by Śāntibhikṣusāstrī. It is a unique literary composition in its own right. The work deals with the chosen anecdotes from the life of Buddha, starting from his birth (*avatāra*) to his attaining enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*). This literary piece comprises of ten sections named as *prasaṅga*-s. In each and every *prasaṅga*, we find ten brilliant verses composed in *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter and three mellifluous *geyapada*-s. This *kāvya* is very special as very rarely we find *Gītikāvya*-s dealing with biographical theme. Modelled on the famous *Gītagovinda*, this metrical master piece is full of *śāntarasa* entwined with *bhaktibhāva*. The subject matter of each *prasaṅga* is as follows –

1. *Janmamaṅgala*,
2. *Asitāgamana*,
3. *Gopāparigrahaḥ*,
4. *Nimittadarśana*,
5. *Vanavihāra*,
6. *Abhiniṣkramaṇa*,
7. *Tapaścaraṇa*,
8. *Mārāvijaya*,
9. *Sanḥapraṭiṣṭhāpana* and
10. *Buddhakāyalakṣaṇa*.

In this paper a serious attempt is made to study the salient features of this *kāvya*.

Introduction

The *Buddhodayakāvya* composed by Śāntibhikṣusāstrī, a unique literary work in its own sense, belongs to the variety of literature known as *Gītikāvya*. The work deals with the major incidents associated with the life of Buddha, starting from his *avatāra* to his attaining *nirvāṇa*. This literary piece comprises of ten sections

named as *prasaṅga*-s. In each and every *prasaṅga*, we find ten brilliant verses composed in *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter and three mellifluous *geyapadas*. This *kāvya* is very special as very rarely we find *Gītikāvyas* dealing with biographical theme. Modelled on the famous *Gītagovinda*, this metrical master piece is full of *śāntarasa* combined with *bhaktibhāva*.

About the author

The author of this work Śāntibhikṣuśāstrī, adorned with an apt title '*Sugatakaviratna*', was born on 27th December 1912 CE in a village called Bibipur near Lucknow. His father's name was Pandit Ayodhyaprasad Tripathi and mother was Rukmini Devi. After completing his studies in Jaipur Sanskrit College in 1938 he worked in many foreign institutions like Karl Marx University in German, Vidyalankarvishvavidyalaya in Srilanka as the head of the department of Sanskrit. He was also a visiting professor in the department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi. Apart from the *Buddhodayakāvya*, the author has also written a *mahākāvya* by name *Buddhavijayakāvya*, for which he was bestowed with Sahitya Academy award in 1977. He has written more than fourteen works to his credit and some of the works include the translation from Chinese Buddhist literature. After his illustrious contribution to Buddhist literature, the author attained '*nirvāṇa*' on 15th October 1991.

Salient features of *Buddhodayakāvya*

Here, unlike other *kāvyas*, the cantos are not termed as *sarga*-s. Instead they are called as *prasaṅga*-s. The subject matter of each *prasaṅga* is as follows –

1. *Janmamaṅgala*, 2. *Asitāgamana*, 3. *Gopāparigrahaḥ*,
4. *Nimittadarśana*, 5. *Vanavihāra*, 6. *Abhiniṣkramaṇa*, 7. *Tapascharaṇa*,
8. *Mārāvijaya*, 9. *Sanghapratīṣṭhāpana* and 10. *Buddhakāyalakṣaṇa*.

In *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghōṣa it is described that before her conception queen Māyā had a dream that of Indra's white elephant entering her womb.

प्राग्गर्भधानान्मनुजेन्द्रपत्नी सितं ददर्श द्विपराजमेकम् ।
स्वप्ने विशन्तं वपुरात्मनस्सा न तन्निमित्तं समवाप तापम् ॥¹

This is a well-known dream scene in the Buddhist literature, but it doesn't find a place in the present work. However, the poet offers a vivid description of the events that happened after the birth of Buddha.

शान्तं वैरमहो वृकी मृगसुतान् स्तन्येन पुष्पात्यहो
तिग्मैस्सन्तनुते करैरपि लिहंस्तापं न सूर्योऽप्यहो ।
भिन्नो लोकगणो विवादकलहैर्हन्तैक्यमद्याश्रुते
क्षुब्धं सर्वमिदं प्रशाम्यति जगद्धोः पश्य बुद्धोदयम् ॥²

The wolf forgetting its enmity nurtures a deer by feeding with its milk. Here, the poet suggests that *Ahimsā* will prevail throughout the world by the birth of Lord Buddha. In *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghōṣa, we have a similar description.

वाता ववुः स्पर्शसुखा मनोज्ञा दिव्यानि वासांस्यवपातयन्तः ।
सूर्यस्स एवाभ्यधिकं चकाशे जज्वालसौम्यार्चिरनीरितोजग्निः ॥³

As soon as Buddha was born, gentle breeze wafted spreading a divine fragrance. The sun blazed with more brilliance. Even the fire gleamed brightly unattended.

In the third *prasaṅga*, the king after deciding to arrange for the marriage of Siddhārtha, wants to know the expectations of his son. So, he enquires through the friends of Siddhārtha. In response, the prince sends his reply by means of a letter. This is beautifully composed by the poet in the form of *Gīta*.

या रूपेण भवेद्रमणीया गुणैर्नन्दयेच्चित्तम् ।
या रज्येन्मय्येव चिन्तयेन्न बहिर्वसुधावित्तम् ॥
वृणुयामहं कुमारीम् ।
तां धर्माचरणैकसहायां कमनीयां सुकुमारीम् ॥⁴

The prince says, “I want to marry a girl who will gladden my mind with her qualities. She will be attached to me more than the kingdom and other wealth. She will support me in fulfilling my duties”.

After the marriage of Siddhārtha with Gopā, her father Daṇḍapāni becomes very much happy. On seeing her daughter move around freely in the in-law’s house just like her own house he was very much relieved.

सा गोपा श्वसुरालयेऽपि विवृता तातस्य गेहे यथा
वृद्धानां पुरतोऽयवगुण्ठनमृते चर्या ततानात्मनः ।
सर्वेषां हृदयप्रसादमकरोन्मैत्र्या जनानां गणे
मन्यन्ते बहु रूढिमेव हृदये ये तान् कलं सा जगौ ॥⁵

Here, we can see the influence of Kālidāsa over the poet. In *Śākuntalam*, sage Kaṇva gives a beautiful piece of advice to Śakuntalā with respect to her conduct in her in-law’s house. He says, “serve your elders; be friendly with your co-wives; although maltreated by your husband, do not react in a harsh manner; thus, do young women attain the status of ‘Lady of the house’; those acting contrary are the bane of the family”.

शुश्रूषस्व गुरुन् कुरु प्रियसखीवृत्तिं सपत्नीजने
भर्तुर्विप्रकृतापि रोषणतया मा स्म प्रतीपं गमः ।
भूयिष्ठं भव दक्षिणा परिजने भग्येष्वनुत्सेकिनी
यान्त्येवं गृहिणीपदं युवतयो वामाः कुलस्याधयः ॥⁶

Both Siddhārtha and Gopā were endowed with all desirable qualities that they both appeared as made for each other. If Siddhārtha was shining like a sprout of the seed of enlightenment, so did Gopā as an embodiment of *karuṇā* and *praṇṣā*. Even the pair of Manmatha and Rati were inspired by their mutual understanding.

यादृक्सर्वगुणान्वितस्स भगवान् श्रीबुद्धबीजाङ्कुर-
स्तादृक्सर्वगुणान्विता भगवती सासीत् कृपाधीघना ।
अन्योन्योपमसाहचर्यमभवद्यूनस्तयोरुज्वलं
तद्दृष्ट्वा रतिकामयोरपि मनो जातं तयोरुत्सुकम् ॥⁷

In the *Nimittadarśanaprasaṅga*, the poet describes the disturbed mind of Siddhārtha. The prince observes his relatives who are selfish, never shying away from violence, always wielding weapons, having lots of difference of opinion. He feels pity for the people who are affected by the disputes and quarrels of others. So, he thinks for a permanent solution for this problem. ‘What could be the way to obtain peace of mind ? Is unity the only solution?’ Being disturbed by these thoughts he decides to go out of the city to divert his mind. Due to the order of the king, the paths were kept beautiful. The entire environment was pleasing and full of happiness. In the meantime, the prince looks at an old man. He enquires his charioteer about the old man.

मार्गे सिक्तजले रजोविरहिते लोकाकुले प्रान्तयो
राजादेशपरैः कृतेऽपि पुरुषैर्यत्नान्मनोहारिणि ।

संवेगावहवस्तुभिर्विरहितेऽप्यानन्दघोषान्तरे
जीर्णं कञ्चन वीक्ष्य सारथिमुवाचायं क इत्युत्सुकः ॥⁸

Then the driver answers. In these passages the impermanent nature of the world is very deftly delineated by the poet. These verses are permeated with philosophical insights.

अयमपि पुरा बद्धदृढवर्मा ।
समरे जयी बभूव सुकर्मा ।
परिभूतः परमेष इदानीम् ।
जरालीढतनुरेष इदानीम् ॥⁹

This old man, once, was a young warrior. He won many battles and achieved so many things. But presently he is defeated as the old age licked away his power.

अयमपि पुरा रूपबलशाली ।
सुविहिताङ्गरागो वनमाली ।
परिभूतः परमेष इदानीम् ।
जरालीढतनुरेष इदानीम् ॥¹⁰

Once he was handsome and powerful. He used to deck himself with garlands and beauty cosmetics. But presently he is defeated as the old age licked away his power.

इयं गतिस्सकलस्य भवित्री ।
 पूर्वं वसुबलमस्य धरित्री ।
 परिभूतः परमेष इदानीम् ।
 जरालीढतनुरेष इदानीम् ॥¹¹

And the charioteer concluded his speech by saying that this is the inevitable fact. One day, this plight will come to everyone.

Prince Siddhārtha had a shock of his life. He was disrupted by the bitter truth about the order of the world. He once again went out of the city and this time he saw a man suffering with disease.

संविग्रो जरया निवृत्य गमनात् प्रत्यागतस्स्वान् गृहान्
 रुद्धस्तत्र पुनः पुरान्नृपसुतो रन्तुं वियासुर्वनम् ।
 वीथ्यामेव पुरस्य वीक्ष्य मनुजं रोगार्तमार्तस्वयं
 कोऽसावित्यनुयुक्तवान् निजगदे यन्त्रा विवृत्याखिलम् ॥¹²

Siddhārtha enquired about the sick person. Then the charioteer gave an elaborate reply.

तपति तनुरस्य मनो व्याकुलत्वमेति ।
 यातं सुखमस्य चायं वेदनामुपैति ।
 वञ्चित इह खलु भोगात् ।
 एष विषीदति रोगात् ॥¹³

“O Prince! His body is burning. His mind is perplexed. He has lost his pleasure and is suffering from pain. He is deprived of enjoyment as he is dejected by disease.”

क्षुब्धे दोषगणे दशा सेयं सकलस्य ।
 दोषगणः क्षुब्धश्चास्य समतां निरस्य ।
 वञ्चित इह खलु भोगात् ।
 एष विषीदति रोगात् ॥¹⁴

“When the three *doṣa*-s i.e. *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* in our body get aggravated this is the condition we all have to suffer”. On seeing the pain of the sick person Siddhārtha’s mind became anxious. He felt pity for that unfortunate person. His mind was distraught at

the adversity of the world. So, he once again went out of the city. And this time he saw a person who was being carried by a group of people. But that person remained motionless. There were lots of people crying and weeping around him. Once again prince Siddhārtha asked his charioteer about this.

वीथ्यामेव परन्तु दृष्टिरपतन्निर्हार्यमाणे जने
निश्चेष्टे समलङ्कृते तदपरै रोरूयमाणैर्वृते ।
कोऽसावित्यनुयुक्तवान् नृपसुतो यन्तारमुक्तो भृशं
स प्राहैनमवेक्ष्य चित्तविकलं संवेगवृद्ध्यै वचः ॥¹⁵

The charioteer replied, “O Lord! The one who is born certainly dies. Nobody can see him at the end. The life span expires. And this is the end for all”.

जातो जातो जन इह नश्यति ।
अन्ते कोऽपि न चैनं पश्यति ।
पूर्यत्यायुर्मानम् ।
सकलस्यैतादृशं जायते लोकेऽस्मिन्नवसानम् ॥¹⁶

Here, a man eats, drinks, sleeps and wakes up. But at the end he has to go away. He laughs, sports and becomes a slave of his wife, but at the end he has to leave. He earns, saves and enjoys, fights and wins. He is born somewhere and goes somewhere else. Nobody can save him from this. This is end for all. In this earth, no one remains ageless or no one wanders deathless. One day he has to leave. The life span expires. And this is the end for all.

अजरः कोऽपि न भूमौ विचरति ।
अमरो नेह कोऽपि भुवि विहरति ।
पूर्यत्यायुर्मानम् ।
सकलस्यैतादृशं जायते लोकेऽस्मिन्नवसानम् ॥¹⁷

In these above lines the poet excels in delineating the *vairāgyabhāva*. The influence of *Mohamudgaracan* also be seen here.

Buddhist Philosophy

In the eighth *prasaṅga* the poet describes how Bhagavān Buddha conquers the Māra and attains *Bodhi*. Buddha realises that the entire world is full of misery.

दृष्ट्वा जन्मजराविपत्तिमरणान् सत्त्वान् दृशा दिव्यया
सर्वं दुःखमिति प्रमामधिजगे यामे निशामध्यमे ॥¹⁸

Further he realises that misery is the fruit of birth. *Bhava* is the cause of birth. *Bhava* arises out of *upādāna*. It results out of craving for enjoyment. This craving is the result of *vedanā*. *Vedanā* is produced because of *sparsā*. *Sparsā* comes out of *ṣaḍāyatana* and in turn that is born out of *nāmarūpa*. *Nāmarūpa* results through *viṣṣāna*. *Viṣṣāna* is produced by *saṃskāra*. And *saṃskāra* is the result of *avidyā*.

दुःखं जन्मफलं जनिर्भवकृतोपादानतोऽयं भव-
स्तुष्णा चेत् समुपाददाति विषयान् तृड्वेदनासम्भवा ।
वित्तिस्पर्शवशात् षडायतनतस्तन्नामरूपोद्भूतं
तद्विज्ञानभवं पुनः पुनरिदं संस्कारतोऽविद्यया ॥¹⁹

If *avidyā* is uprooted the series of sorrow i.e. *duḥkḥaparamparā* can be averted completely. In reality, there is no *ātmā* here. The things that are called as *ātmā* and *jagat* are just transformation of *skandhas*.

सर्वा दुःखपरम्परा जनिमतामेवं समावर्तते
साविद्याप्रतिरोधतः खलु भवेत् पूर्णं परावर्तिता ।
नात्मा वस्तुतयात्र वित्तिरखिला नैकाश्रयाथो कृतिः
स्कन्धानां परिवर्तनैव यदसावात्मा यदेतज्जगत् ॥²⁰

And the way to destroy the *duḥkḥaparamparā* is the *madhyamamārga*. Thus, Bhagavān Buddha obtains enlightenment at the time of dawn. He says, “now the night has come to end and the Sun rise has come. I realised everything. I am Buddha now”.

मार्गोदुःखपरम्परापहतयेऽभ्यस्तोऽसहायेन यो
भोगक्लेशविवर्जितस्स गुणवान् योगक्षमो मध्यमः ।

यात्मानन्मविवर्जिता च तथता लब्धा मया साधुना
याता रत्रिरियं प्रभाकृदुदितो बुद्धोऽस्म्यहं सांप्रतम् ॥²¹

Conclusion

In this *Buddhodayakāvya*, the poet Śāntibhikṣuśāstrī has made some deviation in the story of Buddha. He has omitted the dream of queen Māyā. The events of the birth of Lord Buddha is not described in the order. But it is portrayed with the sentiment of Bhakti. The author has cleverly chosen those important incidents and presented them in a dramatic manner that adds to the charm of the poetry. Another unique feature of the *kāvya* is the simple style adopted by the poet. It can be called as *kadalīpāka* or *drākṣāpāka* which makes the readers to understand easily even the complex topics like philosophy etc. In the Buddhist canons the name of Siddhārtha's wife is mentioned as Yaśodharā. Where as, in the present work the poet has mentioned her name as Gopā. Similarly, the poet has also chosen to describe the *nimittadarśana* following the footsteps of earlier poets like Aśvaghōṣa. Though the conquest of Cupid is dealt briefly by the poet it is impressive and full of poetic embellishments. The poet shows no difficulty in summarising the Buddhist philosophy in the form of verses. He makes it so simple, charming and lovely that the readers are transported to a new world of literary bliss.

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