



Moral and Ethical thoughts in Sanskrit Story Literature

Dr. Rajani Jairam¹, Ms. Padmaja D.S²

Received 12 June, 2016; Accepted 26 July, 2016 © The author(s) 2016. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

ABSTRACT: *The Indian expression of right activities is Dharma. The ethical concept of Dharma is embedded in all philosophical thoughts, be it written or oral traditions. Literature mirrors the thoughts of a human mind and identifies the right course of conduct. Dharma in its simplest form is a means to attain certain ends. Ends like Artha and Kama should be acquired through righteousness, honesty and good conduct. Story literature bears an impact on human society as it carries a message for right conduct. Through its narratives it ordains good conduct and infuses morality in human mind. The story literature in Sanskrit language has been responsible to create a remarkable impact on the human mind. The popular tales and didactic fables of Sanskrit literature have been responsible not only to regale the minds of the readers but also to instill in them moral values and ethics. The paper examines the moral and ethical thoughts in Sanskrit story literature focusing on Panchatantra of Vishnu Sharma and Hitopadesha of NarayanaPandita.*

Keywords: *Dharma, Story Literature, Society, Progress, Social Structure.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Before trying to understand the philosophical import of story literature it is important to understand an overview of 'Dharma'.

It is rather difficult to give an exact translation of the word dharma. It had been variously translated as religion, law, duty, religious ordinance, code of conduct and so on. It is universally accepted that the word dharma comes from the root 'dhr' meaning to uphold, to support or to sustain.

Dharma is the firm foundation upon which entire universe stands. Here dharma means righteous behavior based on truth and knowledge of the unity in spite of the diversity, and capable of bringing the highest good to the whole creation.

II. DHARMA ACCORDING TO VEDIC PRECEPTS

In Rigveda, dharma has been used in the sense of duty or action which contributes to the sustenance of the world. According to Brihadaranyakopanishad, Dharma is the subtle effect of action performed as per the directions of the scriptures, which will produce suitable results later. In Taittiriya Upanishad, the word dharma has been clearly used in the sense of obligatory works. In Bhagavadgita lord Shrikrishna says to Arjuna that dharma is righteousness, the basis of all purusharthas. In Ramayana sage Valmiki describes Srirama as dharma personified, who followed dharma in each and every path of his life setting wonderful example. The Mahabharatha is a veritable encyclopedia of dharma. The epic gives a detailed delineation of the varnashramadharmas. The dharmic virtues like Satya and Ahimsa are highly extolled.

III. CONCEPT OF THE DHARMIC AND ADHARMIC

For the understanding of a layman, if a person follows religion, law, duty, religious ordinance, code of conduct as per the concept of dharma laid down in the vedic precepts then he is said to be dharmic; if a person does not follow the norms according to Vedic precept then he is said to be adharmic. To simplify he is dharmic who conforms to the societal norms and vice-versa.

IV. DHARMA AS PORTRAYED IN STORY LITERATURE

Dharma helps in sustenance of society. It guides the social structure and promotes progression of the society. It may be observed that story literature has given the highest place for dharma. In the story of Tiger and the Brahmin, the tiger says that he has studied the codes of religious law and was advised by a holy man to practice charity and do such other holy deeds to attain moksha. So he was willing to give away the gold bracelet, and attain the highest level of salvation 'MOKSHA'.

Dharma is the one which uplifts the social structure, promotes the welfare of the society and helps an individual to become progressive. In the story of greedy pigeons, pigeon king chitragreeva seeks the help of his friend Hiranyaka-the mice king. Hiranyaka says that since he is very old he can only release his close friend from the net. But pigeon king says that Rajadharm lies in the welfare of the society and my followers bear a quality to me as regards kind, substance and qualities; say then, when and what will be the fruit of my being their lord? It is my duty to release my followers first inspite of my difficulty”. Here we can observe the duty of a sincere administrator.

Dharma is the foundation which leads the path towards political, economic, cultural and ethical progression. Dharma is capable of uplifting human beings. In the story of jackal and deer, since the deer was dharmic he escaped from the clutches of the wicked jackal and the jackal being adharmic it perished due to his own wicked desire to harm others.

Story literature is concerned with the foundation of Dharma. Story literature is a synthesis of various aspects of law in the widest sense of the term covered by the Indian conception of Dharma. Dharma is the performance of one’s duty, appropriate to the situation. In the story of Brahmin and the snake, the snake informs the priest that he bites not to hurt anyone, but only does so as it is his duty to protect himself from others.

The main function of dharma is conservation. If Dharma is followed, then there is orderly and enduring growth and prosperity. Failure to observe the code of dharma, will lead to disintegration and eventually destruction. In the story of the blue jackal, the jackal was killed since he followed the path of adharm to become the king of the jungle and deceived all the animals of that forest.

Story literature is an eternal treasure of morality and dharma. Dharma highlights about repercussion of the actions done by a person. In the story of greedy pigeons, the pigeons get caught in the net. The pigeon king seeks the help of his friend Hiranyaka-th mice king. Hiranyaka being puzzled asks about their condition for which the pigeon king relies-“Friend, this is the fruit of our deeds in a previous life”.

Story literature profusely tells us about Dharma shastra and a detailed account of honoring a guest is also given. In the story of cat and vulture, Dirghakarna-the cat comes near the parkati tree and requests Jaradgava-the vulture to teach him dharma shastra for which the vulture replies- “I cannot believe in a cat a he is fond of flesh. Go away or else I will kill you”. Cat says- “you are well versed in dharma. I am your guest. Fitting hospitality should be shown even to a foe coming to the house”.

In the same story there is a mention of Chandrayana Vratha which is a kind of purification process for the sins committed. Many types of purification processes are mentioned in the Dharma Shastra. Dirghakarna-the cat says-“I having learnt the code of religious ordinances and being free from passion have undertaken this arduous vow of the moon”.

Dharma occupies the premier and basic place in life. It is chief factor that shapes man’s life. When the crow mentions of its friend to Hiranyaka it says there dwells a pious tortoise in Karpuragaura lake of Dandaka forest. Befitting to its nature the tortoise-Manthara addresses a fitting welcome to Laghupatanaka-the crow and receives the mouse –Hiranyaka with hospitality due to a guest.

Story literature also highlights upon the merits and the duties which has to be performed by all the four castes. In the story of the demon brothers an old Brahmin advises the two demons-Sunda and Upasunda- “you two are the followers of the duties proper for the Kshatriyas; and so the rule for you is to fight”.

Dharma has always been dynamic and a very real force to reckon with in the life of our nation. Dharma was gradually metamorphosed into duties and responsibilities prescribed for various beings in different stages of evolution in lie, but it was always based on the principle that this evolution should ultimately bring about enlightenment. If all the members of the society act according to dharma, there is no reason why all should not live in happiness and peace. After all, the saying “dharmorakshatirakshitaha” of the great sage vyasa cannot go in vain!

1. A wise man should think of acquiring knowledge and money as though he were not subject to old age or death; but he should perform his religious duties as if death had seized him by the hair. (P.1 Introduction-Hitopadesha)

AjaramaravatPragnoVidyamratham Cha Chintayet I
Griheeta Iva kesheshuMrutyunaDharmamacharet II

II 3 II

2. The knowledge of arms and that of the shastras-these two lores conduce to glory: but the former exposes one to ridicule in old age, while the latter is ever respected (P.1 Introduction –Hitopadesha)

VidyaaShastrasyaShastrasadyadveVidhePratipattaye I
AadhyaHasyayaVridhatveDviteeyaDriyateSadaa II

II 7 II

3. Sacrificing, studying one's prescribed portion of the Vedas, charity, penance, truthfulness, patience, forgiveness and freedom from avarice – this is the eight fold way of doing religious duties as laid down in the smritis. (P.7, Part 1-Mitralabha, Hitopadesha)

IjyadhyanaadananiTapaha, Satyam, DhruhiKshama I
AlobhaitiMaargoyamDhamasyaastavidhahaSmitaha II
II 8 II

4. An afflicted man, in whatever Aashrama he may choose to be, should do the duties of religion, treating all creatures equally: external signs are not the cause of the performance of religious rites. (P.99, Part IV – Peace, Hitopadesha)

DhukitopiCharedharmaYatraKutraashrameRataha I
SamahaSarveshuBhooteshu Na Lingam Dharmakaaranam II
II 10 II

5. Our bodies are perishable and even more money does not last forever, we face death continually, so we must live according to the shastras. A man who passes his days irreligiously, is like an iron smith's bellows which breathes, yet has no life. (P.138, Part IV – LabdhaPranasha, Panchatantra)

6. He, who looks upon another's wife as a mother, another's wealth as a clod of earth, and upon all creatures as his own self, is a truly wise man. (P.7, Part 1 – Mitralabha, Hitopadesha)

Maatruvatparadaradareshu, paradravyeshuLostavat I
AatmavatSarwaBhooteshuYahaPashyatiSaPanditaha II
II 24 II

7. From whatever course, by whatever means, in whatever manner, at whatever time, of whatever kind, in whatever proportion and at whatever place, one may do a deed, good or bad, one reaps the fruit of it, in obedience to the will of providence, from that cause, by that means.

YasmachaYena Cha Yatha Cha Yada Cha Yaccha
YaavatchaYatra Cha Shubhashubhamaatma Karma I
TasmaatchaTena Cha Thathaa Cha Tada Cha Taccha
TaavatchaTatra Cha Vidhatruvashadupaiti II
II 08 II

8. Religious merit is the only friend who follows one even in death; everything else goes to destruction along with the body. (P.14, Part 1 – Mitralabha, Hitopadesha)

Eka Eva SahadharmoNidhanepiAnuyatiyaha I
ShareerenaSamamNaashamSarvananyathuGhacchati I
II 66 II

9. Fire is the object of worship of the twice-born (Brahmanas), and the Brahmana to the four castes; the husband is the only object of adoration to his wife, while a guest is the object of reverence everywhere. (P.13, Part1- Mitralabha, Hitopadesha)

GururagnidvijaatinamVarnanaamBrahmanoGuruhu I
PatirekoguruhuStreenamSarwatraabyagato Guru II
II 62 II

10. To be wise in giving advice to others is a thing very easy for all to do; but to be true to the discharge of one's proper duties (or, to discharge one's duties as required by religion) belongs to some magnanimous soul only. (P.18 Part 1-Mitralabha, Hitopadesha)

ParopadeshePandityamSarveshaamSukaramNrinaam I
DharmeSveeyamanushtaanamkasyachittuMahatmanahal II
II 204 II

11. The extent of merits, although great, shrinks into smallness when coming in contact with one, void of merits, by the relation of the receiver and the received, like a large elephant in a mirror. (P.64, Part III – War, Hitopadesha)

MahanapiAlpagatramYaatiNirguneGunavistaraha I
AadhavadheyabhaavenaGajendraivadarpane II

12. A Brahmana is esteemed when he is distinguished for his knowledge, a Kshatriya when powerful, a merchant when pre-eminently in possession of wealth and grain, and a shudra when serving the twice-born. (P.92, Part IV-Peace, Hitopadesha)

JnanashrestoDvajahaPoojyahaKshatriyoBalavanapi I
DhanadhanyaadhikoVaishyahaShudrastudwijasevakaha II

V. CONCLUSION

Story Literature Always In The Main Stream Of Human History

An analysis of the study of story literature from the socio-political perspective gives rise to the opinion that story literature is an agenda for the Socio-political study has an astonishing influence over the evolving fortunes of humanities and social sciences in the world. It also provides a continuing social order and allows people to benefit from the previous generations. A functional socio-political trait has a positive effect on the society. Society would be analyzed from the point of view of different literary analysts.

All the above aspects lead to the discussion as to why story literature remains in the main stream of human history. In order to understand this it would be very appropriate to analyse the meaning of history and human history in particular.

In story literature discussions dwell upon desha, kala and paatra i.e. right place, right time and the person concerned. The interactions mainly focus on the content in which a person lives and has his being. The three attributes of history, the past present and future continue to be the main focus of story literature. The enquiry moves on to different planes and throughout the didactic fables we find the enquiry establishing a relationship between eternal and transient and the substance of life and relationship.

Story literature is concerned itself with parameters like relationship, social, economic, political and philosophical life which are rooted in history. Desha and kala are the two coordinates of history which keep changing with the flow of time, own understanding and knowledge of others are linked with history. There is much reason to believe that story literature always remain in the main stream of human history.

Didactic fables emphasize that detailed observations and well thought-out plans are the basis of successful actions. Panchatantra focuses on the development of ability of careful observation and examination. These abilities help to ascertain the repercussions of one's actions. Being observant is a characteristic quality of successful person, absence of which not only brings failures but also makes him an object of ridicule. They indicate the futility of prevailing human character, which is marked by mindless copying, suspiciousness, unrealistic fears and greed, which eventually leads to dilemma, frustrations and sufferings which have become the hallmark of the present era.

All these stories cultivate in the reader, the ability to examine the situation, weighing its pros and cons, proper interpretation and application of knowledge and use of native wisdom. The central theme of the didactic fables is the harmonious development of the powers of man, a life in which security; prosperity, resolute action, friendship and good learning are so combined as to produce lasting joy.

REFERENCES

Books:

- [1]. Ryder Arthur: Translations of Panchatantra-Jaico(Publishing House, Bombay, 1975)
- [2]. Blunden Andy: For ethical politics(Routledge, Newyork, 2003)
- [3]. Chandiramani G.L: English translation of Panchatantra of Vishnu Sharman (Rupa& co, Publications, Calcutta, 1991)
- [4]. KosambiDamodarDharmanand: An introduction to Indian history (Popular publishers, Delhi, 1956)
- [5]. Kale M.R :English translation of the Hitopadesha of Narayana (MotilalBanarasidass publications, Delhi, 1961)
- [6]. Kale M.R: English translation of Panchatantra of Vishnu Sharman (MotilalBanarasidass publications, Delhi, 1969)
- [7]. MahodayaKamayani: Panchatantram- Chaukhamba(Sanskrit Pratishtan, Delhi, 2003)
- [8]. Gopallallanji: Cultural values in political and Economic thoughts of India (BharatiyaVidhyaBhavan, Mumbai, 1961)
- [9]. PandithaNarayana: Original Hitopadesha.
- [10]. Sharman Vishnu: OriginalPanchatantra

Websites accessed:

- [11]. Answers.com
- [12]. Culturemaking.typepad.com/main
- [13]. www.iemed.org/publicaxioms/quadems
- [14]. Books.google.co.in/books
- [15]. www.urbandictionary.com/define.php
- [16]. http://sp.oxfordjournals.org/misc/trms.shtml
- [17]. Wikipedia
- [18]. BharatiyaVidhya Bhavan.com