

# Vow-Keeping Ceremony in Mangalkavya

***Dr. Bibhuti Bhusan Biswas***

Assistant Professor, Department of Bengali  
Thakur Panchanan Mahila Mahavidyalaya  
Cooch Behar, West Bengal, Pin- 736101

***Ipsita Nandi***

Assistant Professor  
T.P.M. Mahavidyalaya  
Cooch Behar  
West Bengal  
Pin- 736101

The word 'vows' means religious deeds performed for the purpose of attaining virtue, gaining blessing or to destruct sin, rituals performed regularly, good deeds, abstinence, penance. Bengali sentimental nation from time immemorial, the Bengali nation has been organizing various vows, festivals and ceremonies for the purpose of establishing a relationship with God. From time immemorial, various types of rituals have been observed in Bengali vratakathas, such as the Mangalkavya of Bengal. There is certainly a lot of trace of this vow in the oral literature of that time. In order to reconstruct the history of Bengali culture, one has to look at the vows of Bengal. The vows contain innumerable elements of Bengali and Indian literature and culture. So the value of the vows of Bengal is immense. Abanindranath Tagore said-

“It is spread in pure feminine vows and in Alpana I get the impression of a nation's mind, their thoughts, and their efforts. Even in the suktas of the Vedas, I see a thought of the whole Aryan race, its zeal and enthusiasm. In between the two, people's hopes, fears, attempts and desires have been expressed to you and there is a lot of similarity between the two. The river Surya is one of the many Vedic deities, and I see in the feminine brats that rhymes are being recited for them.”

Abindranath did not discuss in detail how the picture of social life emerged in the vows. Yet through his words the reflection of social reality became manifest before our eyes.

“An act of desire and gratification of a person cannot be considered as a vow-ceremony. Although the root of the vow is the action for desire and satisfaction, but the vow is when the ten are doing the same thing one-purpose. The general norm of the vows is this - their desires have flown in ten and become a ritual. It is a matter of seeing why one is matching with the other ten, why one is imitating the other, but we will not go into all those complex questions now. The dance goes on with one but the drama does not go on, so the worship of the deity goes on with one but the vows do not go on. Vows and worship are both for the satisfaction of action-desire; but one is bound in one and worship is its ultimate, and one pervades in ten-. The success of desire is the end of it - that's the difference.”

Whatever he says, he does not hesitate to say that the story of the hope and aspiration of the Bengali lady and the Indian lady is told through the vows. We know that in the medieval Bengali society, everyone used to exchange ideas through oral rhymes like Mangal Gaan, Kirtan etc. Bangladesh is the country of thirteen festivals in twelve months. There is not a single month in Bangladesh when no vows are observed. Basically, a vow is to perform an act to fulfill the desires of a woman. In the words of Abanindranath - "I call a vow as the ritual that goes on in the society with some desire." The word 'vow' is derived from the root 'br'. The general meaning of the word 'vow' is rule or restraint. The aspects that flourish through vows are-

1. Vows give a thorough idea about the folk culture of Bengal.
2. It also gives an idea of how the vows under the women-centered folklore of Bengal society have had an impact.
3. The reality of Bengali society is depicted here.
4. Painting, drama, dance, lyric art, novels and anecdotes all come to light with the rituals of antiquity through vows.
5. Vows capture not only images of antiquity, but also diverse images of the social life of the time.
6. Through vows, one's desire or one's mind's swing has become a matter of shaking for decades, and in dance-song-feast, etc., a feminine mentality emerges.
7. Although vows are a formal act of desire, vows are seen to be the manifestations of poetry, images, anecdotes, prose and embellishments.
8. Vow is not a single ritual, one's desires flow in tens of vows.
9. A wish is always expressed in the vows. The vows are arranged for the real implementation of desires.
10. There are some stages in the feminine vows of Bengal. These are acquisition, behavior, wishing, listening to vows etc. In the sense of acquisition, to collect all the things are needed in the vows. Behavior is the rule observed in the vows. One of the main rituals of this episode is to give alpana. And this alpana is a reflection of desire. And the last episode is listening to the vows.

Alpana is the reflection of desire. And the last episode is listening to the vows.

All the vows are found in the collection of Mangalkavya that we find in the Bengali fifteenth century. Sahityakash can be used to record the rites of the time. Although we are Bengalis, I have a bit of a doubt about the people's list of the kind of vows they have. As I remember Ashoka Sasthi, Aranya Sasthi Vow, Akshay III Vow, Adar Singhasana, Ginger-Yellow, Itu, Kumari Puja, Kului Puja, Kal Kumari Puja, Champdani Vrata, Janmashtmi Vrata, Jamaishthi Vrata, Jitastami Vrata, Tush Tulsi Vrata, Puppet Vow, Durga Sixth Vow, Blue Sixth Vow, Patai Sixth Vow, Punyipukur Vow, Banabrat Festival, Magh Mandal Vow, Mecheni Vow, Megh Rani Vow, Jampukur Vow, Sixth Vow, Green Leaf Vow, Senjuti Vow, Savitri Vow, , Helena vows, etc.

If we look at the fifteenth century in Bengali literature, we see the triumph of Mangalkavya. The monopoly of Goddess Manasa has taken over most of the vows found in this Mangalkavya. Apart from this Manasa vow, all the vows found at that time are Dashahara vow, Suryabrata, Ekadashi vow. Like every vow, these vows carry the message of welfare of the family.

"Those who did not get a place in higher society, those who did not speak about the Vedas and mythology, and those who did not worship the scripture-directed mantras, most of the non-folk scriptural deities were worshiped in vows. Come on. "

Agriculture was invented mainly by girls. The girls have included the man in the dream of building a nest. The origin of agriculture is in the matriarchal era. All of these girls have preserved many ancient customs and faith reforms through their own vows. Goddess Manasa is an awakened goddess in the consciousness of the lower classes. Manasamangal's Pala songs centered on this Manasa are very popular not only in that era but also in rural Bengal. In the minds of the lower class people even today, Goddess Manasa is the serpent-queen of wealth and child-bearing. Manasa has spoken about her vows from one month of Baishakh to the next month of Baishakh in her series of sad words-

"The world becomes happy in the month of Ashar

Singer sings the song of Manasa Puja in every side.

Scattering strange pots singing is done in front of. "

In the vows, offerings are made to Goddess Manasa. The manner in which Jalu-Malu and his mother moved the pot and offered devotion to the goddess coincides with the rules of vows. In Vijay Gupta's poem, Sonaka Bhakti, the wife of the moon, humbly invokes the goddess. There is no doubt that Ghatpuja was common in the past. Apart from this, all the other vows that can be found are: Dashahara Vrata, Suryabrata, Ekadashi Vrata, Khand Vrata etc.

In the sixteenth century, women took vows from Goddess Chandi in the hope of attaining some of the desired happiness. This is the hope of getting back the missing husband, in the hope of having children, in the hope of getting back the lost property, in the hope of gaining the love of the wife. That is why Goddess Chandi has gifted Khulna in Kavikankan's Abhayamangal Kavya in the hope of getting her missing husband back home.

"As a result of my vows, husband will come.

Becomes Putravati by husband's intense love. "

At this time, all the other rituals that are found are - Shasthi Puja, Chandi Puja, Shiva Puja, Dharma Puja, Kula Devata Puja etc.

The source of true Bengali religion can be found only through vows. The priests are the girls in the brat. Vows are born in the hope of happiness and prosperity. The last quality of vows is harmony-righteousness. Manasa vows were foremost among the vows that were in vogue in the seventeenth century. During this time, in the month of Sravan, Manasa Devi vows were performed. This vow was mainly performed in the hope of relieving infertility and getting rid of incurable diseases. Ketkadas Kshemananda in his poem speaks of observing Manasabrata-

"People worship you in the month of Bhadra.

Arfabrata will be inside the world.

Worship you with panta odan.

There is no limit in the mind of eternal worship in Ashwin.

In the month of Kartik, worship cannot be said.

I will worship the tree with the sage. "

Apart from Manasabrata, all the other vratas that can be found are Arfabrata, Dashahara vrata, Ekadashibrata, Chandibrata, Ashtamibrata, Niranjanabrata, Lakshi vrata, Ambubachi etc. It can be said that Mangalkavya is the complete and extended form of Bratakatha. In every Mangalkavya one finds a no-no vow. Abanindranath Tagore said-

"Through the various seasons, all the different events have attracted the attention of the people and by imagining the main deities, demons, etc. of all these events, they have vowed to satisfy their various desires for grain and good fortune."

Women were obsessed with the welfare of the family. In the eighteenth century, various types of vows are found in major Mangalkavya. For example, virgin girls observe Shiva Chaturdashi vows in the hope of a manoput husband. E.g.-

"Maharaja, Listen to the words spoken by Karpur

Shivaratri Chaturdashi is the worship of Shankara.

By this Vow demon becomes immortal.

Listening to the Poet's Bhavishya Purana.

Parvati highlights the recovery of mankind.

Through this Brata the God Shiva always remains Merciful. "

There are various types of vows mentioned in the poem Annadamangal. E.g.-

"This Chaitra month is my Brata month.

Shuklapaksha, you are my side, you are a slave of my Brata.

This eight day is my Lunar Day.

Blessed is he who gets a guest in this day. "

The vows of Bengal are the property of the Bengali themselves. Vows are created from the urge of hope-desire, desire-desire. Vows are celebrated through special rituals. There is a story in every vow of Bengal. But aggressive urbanism is constantly consuming our rural Bengal and regionalism. This urban civilization has gradually swallowed the regional mindset. Today, family-centeredness and rural reform in rural life is on the verge of disappearing. But if we want to know the Bengali-ness of the Bengalis, if we forget the rural reforms, one day the Bengali nation will destroy its national identity. At the innermost point of family centric world, the Indus pattern is found in various rural reforms. The heart touches of Bengal are hidden inside this vow-ceremony. The vows of Bengal are our pride. But that is in the face of being lost today.

### **Auxiliary bibliography**

1. <http://www.ebanglalibrary.com/3679/>
2. <http://www.ebanglalibrary.com/3679/>
3. Mallick, Dipankar: Bengali Mangalkavya in the Light of Folk Culture (Comparative Lessons of Folk Culture and Mangalkavya), Dia Publication, Call-09, 1420, Page-62
4. Sen, Dr. Sukumar: Bipradas Manasabijaya (Sampa, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p. 496)
5. Bandyopadhyay, Sri Kumar: Kavikankan-Chandi, Mukunda Chakraborty, University of Calcutta, 1997, p.103
6. Bhattacharya, Jatindra Mohan: Manasamangal (ed.) By Ketkadas Kshemananda, University of Calcutta, 1949. P-134
7. Tagore, Abanindranath: Vows of Bengal, Calcutta, 198, p-16
8. Mohapatra, Piyushkanti: Sridharmamangal, Ghanram Chakraborty, University of Calcutta, 1982. P-216
9. Bandyopadhyay, Brajendranath and Das Sajanikanta: Annadamangal, Bharatchandra (ed.), Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, 1349 BS, p-127.

\*\*\* Translated by, **Koustav Neogi** M.phil Scholar, CBPBU Cooch Behar, West Bengal.

(The translation of the lines from Rabindra Upanyas, Chhotogalpo is done by me only for the sake of pure academic purpose)