

Disaster Management in Sanskrit Literature: A Study from ‘Abhijnānaśakuntalam’ and ‘Giri Govardhana Upākhyāna’ of Lord Sri Krishna

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Abstract

There are many noble creations in ancient age. In this era we find Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, dramas etc. There we see the descriptions of ‘akhyanas’, ‘upakhyanas’ and discussions on praise for Gods, Yajna (sacrifice), sprituallity, astronomy, astrology, chemistry, medical science, Vastusastra, mathematics, moral science, environmental studies etc. in this literature. Here also we see the contents of disaster management, which is relevant to ages. In the ‘ākhyānas’ and Upākhyānas, speeches of Arthasastra of Kautilya etc. we see the descriptions of disasters and about its management. Here I will mention two such incidents from the ‘ākhyānas’ and Upākhyānas where we see these disasters and its management. One is sage Durvasa’s curse and its management in the fourth act of ‘Abhijnānaśakuntalam’ and another is a childhood story of Lord Sri Krishna. We know this as ‘giri Govardhan Upākhyāna. Here we see how disaster was created by Lord Indra and Sri Krishna saves people from the danger.

Key words

Disaster, Management, Sanskrit literature, Abhijnānaśakuntalam, Durvasa, Sakuntala, Anasuya, Priyamvada, ākhyāna, Upākhyāna, Sri Krishna, Indra, Vrindavan, Govordhan

Introduction

‘A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community of society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins’ (Wikipedia). This disaster is divided in two types. One is Natural disaster and another is man-made disaster. Natural disaster happens from natural process of the world. Cloud bursting and heavy raining, earth quakes, floods, hurricanes, land sliding, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis etc. are the examples of natural disasters and by these sudden events we see huge losses of lives and properties. Man-made disasters are happened by man’s negligence, unconsciousness, negativity, unnatural behavior etc. If chemicals are released from factory, it damages the environment and health. This disaster is man-made. For examples - terrorism, nuclear disaster, transportation accidents, industrial accidents, explosions, mental disorder (mental disaster), illness (health disaster) are also the man-made disasters.

There are many noble creations in ancient age. In this era we find Vedas, Upanishadas, Vedangas, Brahman literature, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, dramas, lyrics, prose, epics, champukavyas etc. There we see the descriptions of ‘ākhyānas’, Upākhyānas and discussions of theories on deities, praise for Gods, Yajna (sacrifice), result of yajna, work, consequence, sprituallity, astronomy, astrology, chemistry, medical science, Vastusastra, mathematics, moral science, environmental studies etc. in these Vedic and classical literature. There also we see the contents of disaster management, which is relevant to ages. In the ‘ākhyānas’ and Upākhyānas, speeches of Arthasastra of Kautilya etc. we see the descriptions of disasters and about its management. Here I will mention two such incidents from the ‘akhyanas’ where we see these disasters and its management.

Discussion

Disaster and management in ‘Abhijnānaśakuntalam’

Mahakavi Kalidasa’s ‘Abhijnānaśakuntalam’ is the best creation among Sanskrit dramas. There have seven acts. The origin of this volume is Vyasadeva’s Mahabharata; there is a huge difference from the original. Here poet creates some new incidents by his own imagination. Every situations of this drama were situated by poet’s own thinking. Thus he makes this volume as one of the best noble creations. Poet created such an important incident is the ‘curse of Durvasa’, which we find in the part of ‘Viskambhaka’ of fourth act of the ‘Abhijnānaśakuntalam’.

Dusyanta, the king of Puru Empire came back to Hastinapur after marriage with Sakuntala and promises to take her in his palace as soon as possible. In this situation Sakuntala lost herself in thinking of her husband. One day when sage Durvasa comes to the hermitage of Kanva and waits for long time for hospitality and announces his presence in loud. Sakuntala forgets to welcome him, because she was completely lost her in thinking of her husband. Here we see, Durvasa cursed Sakuntala –

“Vicintayantī yamananyamānasā

tapodhanam vetsi na mamupasthitam I

Smariṣyati twām na sa vodhito’pi san

Kathām pramattaḥ prathamam kṛtāmiva II”

(Abhijnānaśakuntalam: 4/1)

That means, by thinking intently for whom failed to feel my presence, he will forget you as mad forgets his first word.

Sage Durvasa is a man who has attained divine grace through austere religious practice, becomes angry easily. We find in our scriptures that saints as speak as happened. Fortune does not cross their words – ‘na hi siddhavākyānutkrāmya gacchti vidhiḥ suparikṣitāni’(Swapnavāsavadattam – 1-11). Sakuntala’s intimate friends Anasuya and Priyamvada are bewildered by this sudden disaster. In this situation they become worried for Sakuntala, because Sakuntala cannot tolerate harshness naturally.

Sakuntala’s very intimate friends are Anasuya and Priyamvada. Priyamvada is surging, fickle and eloquence. One day Sakuntala asked her that Priyamvada is honey-tongued, so she was called Priyamvada. Anasuya is self-retrained. Priyamvada is emotional and she has presence of mind. Anasuya is calm and composed. She is realistic and has knowledge to see future. In that sudden disaster Priyamvada becomes confuse and does not think what should do at that moment and says – “hā dhik, hā dhik I apriyam eva samvṛttam I Kasmin api pūjārhā aparāddhā sūnyahṛdayā Śakuntalā I Na khalu yasmin kasminnapi I eṣaḥ durvāsā sulabhakopaḥ maharṣiḥ I tathā śaptvā vegabalotphullayā durvārāyā gatyā pratinivṛttaḥ I kaḥ anyaḥ hutavahāt dagdhum prabhavati”. We see here Anasuya tries to manage this sudden disaster by her presence intelligence. After uttering the curse when sage Durvasa was going from there Anasuya decides what should do at that moment to rescue her dearest one. She directs Priyamvada to relieve the anger of sage Durvasan and she goes to arrange for Durvasa’s hospitality – “gaccha, pādāyoḥ praṇāmya nivartaya enam yāvāt aham arghodakam upakalpayāmi”. This is noticeable here that Anasuya may go to Durvasa for relieving his anger and curse, she sends Priyamvada. Here we see her deep judiciousness and power to control situations. She knows well about Priyamvada’s presence intelligence and sweet speech. We also find the ability to control situations in Priyamvada. To relieve from the disaster Priyamvada requests Durvasa properly. She earnestly said him – “bhagavan prathama iti prekṣya avijnātatapaḥprabhāvasya duhitṛjanasya bhagavatā ek aparādhaḥ marṣayitavya iti”. That means, Bhagavan, she is innocent about your power of religious austerity. Beside this she is like your daughter, taking this as her first and one offence excuse her. Hearing these logical speeches sage Durvasa started to cool down and said her by seeing any memorable ornament the curse will be reduce. Sakuntala has a ring, which she gets before from his husband Dusyanta and they become satisfied to think about their friend’s future. At the end Anasuya warns Priyamvada about the secrecy of the curse, because if Sakuntala knows this incident she may breaks down.

Disaster and management in ‘Giri Govardhana Upākhyāna’

Here I mention ‘Giri Govordhana Upākhyāna’ from the childhood heroic activities of Lord Sri Krishna. We find this story in Bhagavat purana and in other puranas. We find here an incident of disaster and Sri Krishna’s management in this situation properly. We know Lord Sri Krishna was lived in Vrindavana before 5000 years. God Visnu takes births in ages to established religion, to protect good persons and destroy the evil.

Vrindavana was filled with greenery and cornfields. There men and women were lived happily. Every year they worship Lord Indra for sufficient rain and corns. In a rainy session Vrindavan was greened and filled by corn. Naturally the people were pleased. They decide to worship Lord Indra for the cause of prosperity and involve in festive. So, they clean Vrindavan and decorate by lights and flowers.

Sri Krishna does not aware about this festive. By hearing uproar he looked out from window. He looks the arrangements and asked his father to know the cause of this festive. Hearing the cause Sri Krishna was surprised and denies to accept Lord Indra as the cause of the rain. Hearing this people were surprised and started to hear silently his words.

Nanda, father of Sri Krishna tries to convince Krishna that there Lord Indra is the cause for sufficient rain and corns in Vrindavan. Srikrishna denies again this view and aware that the mountain Govardhan is the cause here, not Lord Indra and mountain Govardhan is our real friend. So we should worship Giri Govardhan. Hearing this they were surprised and one of them asked Sri Krishna that how he can say that the lifeless mountain is the cause here not Lord Indra. Sri Krishna answered him the

hill Govardhan sends signal through air and connects with clouds for rain indirectly. The hill Govardhan gives us needful drags and protects us from harmful diseases. Thus it refines water and air. It gives cows healthy grasses and we get healthy milk.

People were satisfied by the answer of Sri Krishna and came back to home. Hearing this news Lord Indra gets angry and orders the rainy clouds to shower heavily on Vrindavan. By his order clouds start to thunder and shower continuously through two days. Vrindavan was completely filled by water. Thus the situation creates a disaster. The Persons of Vrindavan were shelter less and become afraid. In this unexpected disaster Sri Krishna takes an important role and managed this situation well. He assures people and says them to go near Govordhan. He holds the hill on his little finger. All villagers and cattle take shelter under the mountain. Thus the disaster was overcome.

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