



Dharma in Sanskrit Story Literature

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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 the 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 the human mind. The story literature in the 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 introduce them to 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-Moral or ethical values, Story Literature, Society*

Introduction:

The Indian countenance of right activities is *Dharma*. The ethical perception of *Dharma* is rooted in all philosophical thoughts, be it written or oral traditions. 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 the entire universe stands. Here *dharma* means righteous behaviour based on truth and knowledge of the unity in spite of the diversity, and capable of bringing the highest good to the whole creation.

Literature is the mirror of thoughts of a human mind and identifies the right course of conduct. Story Literature is a most important part of Sanskrit *Gadya* literature. We love to listen to stories, especially children. In the very ancient time of India, our sages try to teach the children or humans through the story. These stories are full of moral and ethical values. The stories in Indian literature may be classed under three different heads, viz; the popular tales, the beast fables and the fairy tales. The popular tales again may be subdivided into Buddhistic and non-Buddhistic. The Buddhist popular tales are the Pali Jatakas which were current among the Buddhists from the earliest times. Apart from these Jataka stories, there are some Buddhist Sanskrit popular stories. Gunadhya's Brhatkathā is an outstanding work among non - Buddhistic

popular tales. It was written in Paisācī Prakrit, a dialect spoken in the north unfortunately western parts of India. The work is now lost to us, but the story has been preserved in three Sanskrit works, viz . , (1) Budhasvamin's Slokasamgraha (composed between the eighth and the ninth century A.D.), (2) Kṣemendra's Bṛhatkathāmañjarī (A.D. 1037) and (3) Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara (A.D. 1063-81) . According to Dr. Keith the *Slokasamgraha* (which is found only in a fragment of twenty - eight chapters and some 4539 verses) is a genuine translation of Guna dhya's work and he holds that neither Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara* (containing 21,388 verses) nor Kṣemendra's *Brhatkathāmañjarī* (containing about 7,500 verses) is from the original *Brhatkathā* . Nevertheless, the *Brhatkatha* is mentioned as early as the seventh century A.D. in Dandin's *Kavyadarsa* , and Dr Bühler has placed the work in the first or the second century A.D. Dr Keith suggests that it was written not later than the fourth century A.D. The importance of the *Brhatkathā* can never been the source of inspiration estimated. As a perpetual source of inspiration the *Brhatkathā* occupies in ancient Indian literature, a place next only to that of the two Great Epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The *Pañcatantra* attributed to Visnuśarmā is an important piece of beast-fable literature and it is said that the book has an earlier basis called the Tantra- khyāyikā now lost to us. The work is written in five books in clear lucid style with a mixture of prose and verse. It appears to allude to Cānakya and follow Kautilya's Arthaśāstra . It is suggested by Hertel that it was originally conceived as a work for teaching political wisdom but it must be admitted that its character as a political textbook is never glaring. It is essentially a storybook in which the storyteller and the political teacher are unified in one personality. The importance of this work may be judged from the fact that it was translated into Pahlavi and Syriac in the sixth century A.D., into Arabic in the eighth century A.D., into Hebrew in the eleventh century A.D., into Spanish in the thirteenth century A.D., and into Latin and English in the sixteenth century A.D. The *Hitopadeśa* is another beast-fable literature written by Nārāyaṇa Pandita. The author imitates the style of Visnuśarmā and the method of arrangement is entirely the same in both works. The author lived in the court of King Dhavalacandra, whom we know little. A manuscript of this work dates from the fourteenth century A.D. According to Dr Keith, its date cannot be later than the eleventh Century A.D., as a verse of Rudrabhaṭṭa is cited in the book. Moreover, a Jaina scholar made use of it in A.D. 1199 in order to produce a new version.

The Sanskrit 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 the human mind. The story literature in the 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 instil 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 Narayana Pandita.

Major Objective:

The major Objectives of the Study are:

- To analyse the historical status and philosophical importance.
- To understand the importance of the texts.
- The proper meaning of Dharma.

Review of Literature:

There are so many Sanskrit scholars who have edited Sanskrit stories like M R Kale, R Arthar etc. but very few among them have discussed the above-mentioned topic. Few scholars have discussed like Dr. Rajni Jairam and Padmaja D S the morality, ethical thought and environmental consciousness of the Sanskrit story literature. The above-mentioned topic is generally not seen.

Research Method:

This work is based on primary and secondary texts which are found in various institutional and non-institutional libraries. I have taken a few interviews with some Sanskrit scholars.

Discussion:

Dharma helps in the 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. Dharma is the one which uplifts the social structure, promotes the welfare of society and helps an individual to become progressive. 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 because he followed the path of adharma 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 repercussions 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-the mice king. Hiranyaka, 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 also highlights the merits and the duties which have 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 a 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.

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

*AjaramaravatPragnoVidyamratham Cha Chintayet
Griheeta Iva kesheshuMrutyunaDharmamacharet*

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. (Part 1-Mitralabha, Hitopadesha)

*IjyadhyanadaananiTapaha, Satyam, DhritihiKshama
AlobhaitiMaargoyamDhamasyaastavidhahaSmitaha*

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 smiths bellows which breathes, yet has no life. (P.138, Part IV – Labdha Pranasha, Panchatantra)

Analysis & Conclusion:

An analysis of the study of story literature from the socio-political perspective gives rise to the opinion that story literature is an outline for the Socio-political study and has an astonishing influence over the evolving fortunes of humanities and social sciences in the world. It also delivers an enduring social order and allows people to benefit from the previous generations. A purposeful socio-political trait has a positive effect on society. Society would be analysed from the point of view of different literary analysts. All the above aspects lead to the argument as to why story literature remains in the mainstream of human history. In order to escalate this, it would be very appropriate to analyse the meaning of history and human history in particular. In story literature discussions reside upon *desha*, *kala* and *paatra* i.e. right place, the right time and the person concerned. The connections 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 which embedded with the *dharma*. Story literature is concerned itself with parameters like relationships, and social, economic, political and philosophical life which are rooted in history. *Deśa* and *kāla* 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 remains in

the mainstream 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 the ability of careful observation and examination. These abilities help to ascertain the repercussions of one's actions. Being observant is a characteristic quality of a successful person, the absence of which not only brings failures but also makes him an object of derision. They indicate the ineffectuality of prevailing human character, which is marked by mindless copying, shiftiness, unrealistic fears and greed, which eventually leads to dilemmas, frustrations and sufferings which have become the symbol of the present era. All these stories cultivate in the reader, the ability to examine the situation, weighing its experts and ploys, proper interpretation and application of knowledge and use of native wisdom. The central theme of the didactic fables is the tuneful 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, this is happen only for the right conception about *dharma*. However, the Dharma in Sanskrit literature has been explained so many times but in Sanskrit story literature it is discussed in a different way. The first or beginners who just get enjoy their classes in the *Gurukulam*, the story is a very crucial thing for them. The ancient Indian story writers were very aware of the beginner learners. What is Dharma and Adharma, the learners know through this meaningful story. But nowadays it is missing from the school syllabus. There are so many Western stories that get privileged in the school syllabus. So we are pushing down our heritage culture. I think that we should be very careful about our Indian Culture, Literature and ancient Science.

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