

Parthasarathi Bhattacharya

Sarojini Naidu College for Women

**‘Empirical-purposive’ Value Approach through some Women Characters
in the Text *Sekaśubhodayā***

Abstract:

Values, Morality and Ethics – this try polar system i.e. (the sense of righteous) are the epitome of Human existence. Classical literature does not make any demarcation line between values and human values. Naturally Human does not exist without his/her own values. Although it is differ from man to man. In the present century search for a theory of values has become a separate branch and has been called axiology. According to our opinion the main approach to value system comprises two parts. One is ‘ideal-normative approach’ and another one is ‘empirical-purposive approach’. Again first one has two hands. They are theistic and humanistic. Ideal-normative approach opines that absolute values are related to absolute reality where the supreme power is the upholder of all values. Whereas, the empirical-purposive approach holds that the values are as a distinct component of the total human personality, which guide or affect attitude and behaviour of the individual and social groups.ⁱ So, it varies man to man. Our humble attempt may provide some concept of redefining values through some women characters which rejuvenates our modern values also.

Keywords: *Empirical-purposive value, Sekaśubhodayā, women characters, values, society.*

The text *Sekaśubhodayā* is hagiological literature which attributed to *Halāyudha Miśra*. But the pertinent question is whether he is the real author or not? Whatever it may be, out of 27

chapters 25 have been recovered. The style of this text is a historical narrative work. The blending of Sanskrit and Bengali makes the text unique. Political discrepancy, social and moral degeneration, adultery and mutual rivalry projected boldly without much pretention. Although the text is a pen picture of decadent Medieval Bengal, still a handful of Women excels in their own merit and retains the morality that is equally relevant even in 21st century. The position of women in Medieval Bengal, especially of the house-wives of well-to-do families, as reflected in this story is somewhat unparalleled in Sanskrit literature.

We have seen many adulterous women in different places of Sanskrit literature but the character like *Vidyutprabhā* is rarer. *Vidyutprabhā* was a play-actress and the daughter in law of the play-actor (*naṭa*) *Gaṅga*, but even being a house wife she gives erotic pleasure among her customers. The great saint *Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi* was a misogynist who accosted her roughly for being a woman. The man was rigidly of the opinion that “शृणु धात्रा सृष्टः सकलपुण्येन पुमानिति सकलपापानि स्त्रियामिति”ⁱⁱ i.e. Male is created by the almighty with all merit; naturally all evils belong to women. Hearing such gender bias full comment *Vidyutprabhā* replied in a verse which has also enough aesthetic value. “सिंहात् सिंहः समाजातो मृगान् मृगसमुद्भवः। पापात् पापं समाजातं [कस्य पुत्रो] भवानिति”ⁱⁱⁱ i.e. “A lion is born of a lion and a deer originates from a deer, evil comes out from evil. So, from what you have been born?” Her answer strongly argues for equality beyond gender discriminations. Having heard her answer sheikh also remained silent “विज्ञाय सेकोऽपि वाचाटेयं मौनमास्थाय स्थितः”^{iv}. *Vidyutprabhā* also replied that “त्रिभुवने विद्वान्तस्त्री जयति”^v i.e. in the three world a learned woman is triumphant. It denotes that even belonging an uneducated family she understood the significance of education. Not only this, her bravery compels us to bow down under her

foot with such admiration that she assaulted king's minister at the front of the court not for the reason that he enjoyed her but he gave less money as she expected “गते सति रात्रौ नाना सुरतं मन्त्रिणा सह भुक्तवान्, सुप्रभातसमये भूते द्वाभ्यां नर्तकीभ्यां मुद्राविंशतिः प्रदीयते मन्त्री”.^{vi}

When the minister wants her to come with suitable witness, the lady retorts with same smartness “ये परदारं करोति सोऽपि साक्षीं कृत्वा गच्छति परदारं, वक्तुं न लज्जयसे.”^{vii} i.e. “Who indulges adultery with eyewitness?”-was her answer. Hearing this everybody expects Sheikh remained silent “श्रुत्वा राजा अधोमुखोऽवतिष्ठते, ऋते सेकः सर्वे अधोमुखा अवतिष्ठन्ते”.^{viii} The king was also feeling guilty because several examples including his past life shows that he was not a self restrained man. According to the text “*Vallālacaritam*” the king *laxmaṇasena* was trying to molest her young mother and she also accused him by saying “धिकं तं धिक् तं किल्बिषाचारं कामान्धं व्युत्थितेन्द्रियं | मातरं यः कामयते दुरात्मामापतिव्रताम् ||”^{ix}. The text *Sekaśubhodayā* itself gives another example about king's erotic pleasure. Once the king saw a woman's breasts .When she was washing the clothes the king saw it again and again “प्रक्षालिते सति स्तनवस्त्रव्याधुट्यमाने राजा तस्या पयोधरयुगौ पुनः पुनः पस्यति”^x . The sheikh's comment “अस्मिन् राष्ट्रे मन्त्री पारदारिकः।राजाऽपि कथं न।”^{xi} i.e. in this country minister is an adulterer so, why should not the king be thought as such? It gives us that without knowing the true incidents about king's earlier life his assumption are going to be true. When the minister decided to die throwing himself into water “अहं जले वा प्रविश्य प्राणान् त्यक्षामि नान्येयेति”^{xii} at such crisis, the bold lady *Vidyutprabhā* changes her composure. “मया यथोचितं प्राप्तास्मि”^{xiii} i.e. the man is duly paid, the truth has come out. She just wants to expose the naked true fact

about our society nothing more. Another stirring remark she makes is that “यत्र राजा च मन्त्री च द्वावपि पारदारिकः। तस्य राष्ट्रविनाशः स्यात् संशयो नात्र विद्यते”^{xiv}. It is also the example that she was aware about righteousness. But she had the quality of forgiveness which is the greatest value among other values. Even the misogynist Sheikh could not but praise her “धन्ययं नर्तकी”^{xv}. His transformation of mind is also a very significant aspect near us. And the root fact is that the change of his observation was only possible by a concubine woman *Vidyutprabhā*. Not only this, the climax point of the text is the last chapter where *vidyudprabhā* falsely blamed a weaver for getting as compensation. And when the king ordered to give her slap on the ear then out of fear nobody would dare to give her slap “इयं पापीयसीं कर्ण चपेटं प्रदीयताम्। भयात् कोऽपि कर्णचपेटं तां न ददाति।”^{xvi} Since understanding her intention everybody ran away from the court. So, the naked portrait of the society was revival through the character of *vidyudprabhā*.

The house wife like *Mādhavī* is also rarely found in Sanskrit literature. The brother-in-law of the king *Lakṣmaṇasena*, named *kumāradatta*, molested her and she complained fearlessly in the court “राजश्यालकोऽयं कुमारदत्तो मम गृहं बलात् प्रविश्य वस्त्रं विधृत्य स्तनमर्ददनं कृतम्”^{xvii} i.e. that very brother in law of the king, *Kumāradatta*, entered into my house forcibly and catching me by the clothes squeezed my breasts. She had a strong belief on right justice about law and piety which has been permanent. No one could exert undue force “अस्मिन् राष्ट्रे शाश्वतो धर्म आसीत्। कोऽपि बलाबलं कर्तुं न शक्नोति”^{xviii}. Most fascinating fact is that when the king was tried to kill *Kumāradatta*, *Mādhavī* quickly bowed down to the king and made him desist. Because according to *Mādhavī*, the molestation neither claimed her life, nor corrupted

her caste. “राजन् अस्य करावलम्बलेन मम प्राणा न गताः।नापि जातिः।”^{xix} It treatises forgiveness is the best virtue that can change a beast into a man. It is the resonance of our ancient ethic “क्षमा हि परमो धर्मः”. Apart from this, in this text other women characters are shown with falsity. We often see them plotting for relationship to gain money. Sometimes they are held as liars, cheat and pervert. Likely so a Muslim lady named *Āyāsi* was blackmailing Sheikh and the false lady went to *Kāzi* but ultimately the truth comes out. These kinds of facts show that in the stage of social and moral decadence women exercised their capability for proper justice. Apparently so called greedy and selfish women gentry boldly assert their individuality, worth and sometimes moral education. “यथा शिशु मातुरङ्के चन्द्रं जिघांसते सदा।न तस्मै शपते चन्द्रो नापि क्रुद्धः कदाचन॥” i.e. just as a child in his mother’s arms often utters threats to the moon, but the moon curses him not, nor is ever displeased. Lots of several verses show that might be they had no textual or traditional education but they were aware of self respect and if necessary they were not ready to stay behind while seeking proper justice. It re estimates and re assesses that even in social and moral decadences somehow our own values glimpse independently. Because to estimate the truth there is no need to help others since Truth itself is a power “सत्यमेव जयते”.

Conclusion:

If we try to sum up above discussion, we arrive at the heart of some important points. A harlot like *Vidyutprabhā* stresses on to raise the voice against social and moral degeneration. The character like *Mādhavī* teaches us to hate the sin not the sinner. Apparently she was fallen but what she embodies is the crux of universal Humanism. Therefore in exterior, it is the disgrace of society but the inherent message voices sustainable development and spirited womanhood. To conclude, it can be summed up that the text is a trustworthy treatment of

society and having its feet planted on Medieval Bengal but its eyes are looking afar at the depth of newer Bengal. The morality and sustainable development demands a relevance that is universal, timeless and true in every spell of humanity. In areas the description is overt, the message is ready and the presentation of the women demands an uncommon boldness. The content is delivered with directness. That is why the straight, bold effect of the text is nicely carried through a mixed language. Therefore despite being an account of middle aged Bengal, the text, to a good extent, has the smack of modern time.

ⁱ Human values and the ethics in the workplace. www.globaldharma.org/hvew.htm.p 1-5.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*,p 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*,p 5.

^{iv} *Ibid*,p 5.

^v *Ibid*,p 5.

^{vi} *Ibid*,p 84-85.

^{vii} *Ibid*,p 85.

^{viii} *Ibid*,p 85.

^{ix} Dasgupta,prasanta Kumar. *Vācaḥ pallavayati*,Kolkata;Esha,1983,p 58.

^x Sen,sukumar. *Sekasubhodaya of Halāyudha Miśra*,Kolkata;The Asiatic Society,2002(1st edi 1963),p 69,

^{xi} *Ibid*,p 85.

^{xii} *Ibid*,p 86.

^{xiii} *Ibid*,p 86.

^{xiv} *Ibid*, p 86.

^{xv} *Ibid*,p 87.

^{xvi} *Ibid*,p 130.

^{xvii} *Ibid*,p 16.

^{xviii} *Ibid*,p 16.

^{xix} *Ibid*,p 17.

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