

Glorification of Kāmarūpa in the Satī Jayamatī : An appraisal

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Abstract :

Every part of India has its own contributions in the field of Sanskrit study. Assam known as Kāmarūpa in ancient and medieval period also contributed immensely towards the rich treasure of Sanskrit literature. There are various epigraphical and literary evidences which bear testimony of Assam's contributions towards Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit scholars of Assam exhibited their poetic skill in writing various forms of Kavyas. One of the notable contributions of Assam to Sanskrit literature is Satī Jayamatī of Bhavadev Bhagavati. His Satī Jayamatī is a Sanskrit Khaṇḍakāvya of one hundred elegant verses. Here the poet depicts the glorious history of Kāmarūpa through the story of Gadāpāṇi-Jayamatī. The poet presents the glorious tradition of Kāmarūpa in a poetic style. The paper makes an attempt to analyze the glory of the land in the light of the Satī Jayamatī.

Key Words :

Kāmarūpa, Sarasvatī, Brahmaputra

Introduction :

Bhavadev Bhagavati was one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of Sanskrit scholar of Assam . He was born in 1902 in the village Kaithalkuchi under Nalbari district of Assam. He was awarded the Certificate of Honour from the President of India in 1982 for his outstanding contribution to Sanskrit literature. He authored many a book both in Assamese and Sanskrit. His Satī Jayamatī (1932), a Sanskrit Khaṇḍakāvya, is based on a historical event of Kāmarūpa and the Ślokaṃālā (1957) is an anthology of Sanskrit verses on various themes. He left for heavenly abode in 1988.

It can be noted that the present day Assam was known as Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa in the ancient and medieval period. It is referred to in the Raghuvamśa¹, Mahābhārata² and Śamudragupta's Allahabad stone pillar inscription³. Kāmarūpa was mentioned as a frontier territory in the Allahabad stone pillar inscription of Samudragupta. Of course, both Prāgjyotiṣa and Kāmarūpa occur side by side in Raghuvamśa wherein king Raghu was described to come to Prāgjyotiṣa and then to Kāmarūpa after crossing the river Lauhitya.

The Satī Jayamatī (SJ) containing one hundred verses has been divided into three Pravāhas. The poet tries to depict the glorious history of Kāmarūpa through the well-known tale of Gadāpāṇi-Jayamatī. The poet pays obeisance to Sarasvatī, the goddess of wisdom and learning, in the benedictory verse. In the beginning of the SJ, the poet presents a vivid description of Kāmarūpa which is surrounded by forests, mountains, rivers etc.⁴ He narrates that the great sage Vaśiṣṭha was astonished at the sweet songs coming from the three streams of Sandhyā, Lalitā, Kāntā and resolved to be in deep penance in the holy Kāmarūpa⁵. The Kālikāpurāṇa (KP), an Upapurāṇa composed in Kāmarūpa, admits the existence of two rivers like Sandhyā and Kāntā. It also states that the body of Vaśiṣṭha became formless due to the curse of sage Nimi. So he made a holy bath in the Lalitā at Brahma's instruction and regained his past form. The Hindus consider the Vaśiṣṭhāśrama as one of the celebrated places of pilgrimage. In the fancy of the poet, Lord Śiva dropped the Yoṇīpīṭha of the Satī in the hill of Nīlācala only to remove the sins of her worshippers and to relieve other people from sorrow and suffering⁶. This story is narrated in the KP according to which Satī had a conflict with her husband on the issue of attending Yajña that her father was offering to satisfy the gods. Contrary to her husband advice she moved to the Yajña. She jumped into the fire of the Yajña after being insulted by his father. Out of anger Lord Śiva carried her body and Lord Viṣṇu cut the body into pieces to pacify the aggrieved deity. Her body parts are believed to be scattered in various locations of the country. The fall of the Yoṇī of the Satī in the land of Kāmarūpa is mentioned in the KP as follows –

kāmarūpe kāma girau nyapatat yoṇimaṇḍalam.

tatraiva nyapatyat bhūmau pūrvato nābhimaṇḍalam.⁷

The mighty river Brahmaputra flowing through the length and breadth of Assam finds mentioned in the SJ.⁸ The poet connects the episode of Paraśurāma with this river. The KP states that once Paraśurāma killed his mother Renukā with an axe for her deep attachment for the young king Citraratha at the instruction of his father Jamadagni. After the killing, the sage Jamadagni asked his son to bath in the Brahmaputra to get rid of the sin. Paraśu paved the flow of water by digging with his axe. The description is as follows -

na putra baradānena matṛhatyāpagacchati.

tasmāttvaṁ brahmakuṇḍāya gacca snātuñca tajjvale.

**tatra snātvā muktapāpo nacirāt punareṣyasi.
jagaddhitāya putra tvaṁ brahmakuṇḍam brajadrutam.⁹**

References to the great souls of the land namely, Cilārāya, Lachit Borphukan, Śaṅkaradeva, Harideva etc. are found in the SJ. The two sons of the Koch king Viśvasimha viz. Malladeva and Śukladhvaja became popular as Naranārāyaṇa and Cilārāya respectively in medieval Assam. Sāravatī, commentary on the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva by Śukladhvaja, the younger brother of the king Naranārāyaṇa, bears the evidence of ancient Assam's contribution to Sanskrit literature.¹⁰ Āhom general Lachit Borphukan's bravery and will power to challenge the Mughals in the Battle of Sarāighāṭa in 1671 is another significant event in the glorious history of Kāmarūpa. Vaiṣṇavism had its roots in the soil with the birth of the saints like Śaṅkaradeva and Harideva who preached the doctrine of Vaiṣṇavisim by composing various works. Śaṅkaradeva composed six plays whose subject-matters were taken from Sanskrit works. His Bhaktiratnākara guides the worshippers in their search for Hari. Bhaktirasatarāginī of Harideva describes the various kinds of Bhakti and merit of worshipping Viṣṇu. The poet refers to the traditional division of Kāmarūpa into so many Pīṭhas specially Saumārapīṭha and Kāmapīṭha. The Yoginītantra, a Tantra work of medieval Assam, refers to the four limits of Kāmarūpa as Saumārapīṭha, Ratnapīṭha, Kāmapīṭha and Svarṇapīṭha¹¹. The entire region was ruled over by the kings belonging to various dynasties with their great military power and enough treasure.

The first Pravāha of the SJ depicts the valour and military achievements of the mighty kings of Kāmarūpa. Many a illustrious ruler like Ghaṭaka, Naraka, Bhagadatta, Cukāfā ruled over this land with their indomitable prowess. In the imagination of the poet, Lord Indra was familiar with the glory of the land and asked his relatives to take mortal form and rule over this land¹². Narrating the splendid fame of the Āhom king Cukāfā the poet humbly declares that it is too difficult for a person like him to describe the king whose fame spread far and wide. This virtuous king made victory over a number of kings who occupied the throne of Kāmarūpa for a long time. His victory march was accompanied by brave warriors and elephants. He dared to destroy the hideout of the enemy and won over the kings of the Matakas. People from different walks of life came forward to appreciate him. The spies were like his eyes. He was like a wish-yielding tree for Brahmins. In spite of

being a Buddhist himself he held the Brahmins in high esteem¹³. He left no stone unturned to make his subjects happy.

The poet brings to light the well-known tale of Gadāpāṇi-Jayamatī in a poetic style. The self-negation of Jayamatī, the wife of Āhom youth Gadāpāṇi, is a famous event in the history of Kāmarūpa during medieval period. Gadāpāṇi is portrayed as courageous person who dared to challenge Culikaphā (Larārajā). He had to escape for Naga Hill only to comply with the request of Jayamatī. Though Jayā knew its dire consequences yet vowed not to utter even a single word regarding the whereabouts of her husband¹⁴. The royal captors did everything to inquire about her husband. Being afflicted with grief, Gadā approached Satī and asked to save her life by disclosing everything. All his efforts to protect Jayā went in vain as she paid no heed to it. Ultimately Jayamatī left for heavenly abode due to the severe atrocities made upon her.

Conclusion :

The poet states that this tale will remain alive among the people of Assam as long as the Sun and the Moon will exist. In the words of the poet –

**kāraṁ kāraṁ kṣauṇḍyā līlāṁ śuddhauṣā muktṛvā deham.
sādhyāsāmādvai saṁprāyādrāmye svargīye harmye.
yāvācandrāmbā sūryāmbā jīvā drakṣyanti vyomni.
smṛtyāścīhnāni śreṣṭhāyā bhāṣyanti svāne'smākam.¹⁵**

Thus the poet reveals his profound love for the land by presenting the glorious tradition of Kāmarūpa in a poetic style. The work bears testimony of the poet's acquaintance with the important works composed in medieval period. The fancy of the poet finds a perfect expression thereby making him a remarkable poet.

Footnotes and References :

1. cakampe tūrthalaḥyite tasmin prāgjyotiṣeśvaraḥ. - Raghuvamāśam., IV. 81
tamīśaḥ kāmarūpānamāt yākhaṇḍalavikramam. - Ibid., IV. 83.
2. Mahābhārata (Sabhāparvan), XXVII, 17, 18
3. samataṭa-davāk-kāmarūpa-nepāla-kartṛpurādīpratyanṛpatibhiḥ...
Samudragupta's Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription, Line 22.

4. kṛtamunijanavāso brahmanaḥ sṛṣṭivaryaḥ
sujalasuḥphalapūrṇaḥ pūtaratnaprakṛṣṭaḥ
vividhavibhavadhanyaḥ parvatairīkṣyamāṇaḥ
smarati paramabhāgyam kāmārūpapradesaḥ – SJ., I.2
5. śravaṇasubhagaśabdaiḥ sāndhyalālitakāntyair
girivaratanuruddhauvyāptamanjuṅikuṅjajaiḥ
ṛṣivara ihadrṣṭa puṇyavān satyarūpo
vimalatapasiyukto bhūtavān vai vaśiṣṭhaḥ, Ibid., I.3
6. Ibid., Sl. I.4
7. KP., 18.37
8. cilaraya harilācit śaṅkaradipramukhyāḥ
śubhatanayasamūhā āvirāsan jananyāḥ
vimalasaliladhanyo brahmaputraḥ suputraḥ
munitanayapradattaḥ śubhate'dyāpi bhūmau, Ibid., I.5
9. KP., 83/25-26
10. Kathāgurucarita, 215, P.100
11. YT., I.XI. 16-19
12. SJ., I.8
13. dvijamanasi sa rājā kalpavṛkṣasvarūpaḥ
parivabhaṇurbhīkṣṇam śreyase tasya viprāḥ
edaṃativiralam yadbaudhadharmāvalambī
gaṇayati satatam vai brāhmaṇānanyapūjyān, Ibid., I.20
14. sutaptatoyam dahanādvaśritam
dadau sugātre vat ko'hapi mānavaḥ
viśāsyadamśān bahukīṭasañcayān
pradattavanto mayanāñca kecana – Ibid., III.30
15. Ibid., III.42.

Bibliography :

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2. Sarma Daloi, Harinath : Bhārat-Koṣa, pub. by Padmapriya Library Nalbari, 2008.
3. Sharma, Kumar Dipak : Satī Jayamatī, pub. by Kitap Ghar, Nalbari, 2005.

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