

The Sanskrit novel *Kusumalakṣmī* as a Social Novel

Dr. Hiramoni Goswami

Guwahati, India.

ABSTRACT: A written work is a reflection of a society and its culture. Sometimes it may be the reflection of the society of the author or it may be the projection of the time period of the happenings delineated in the story. The background has much more to add to the essence of the story. In Sanskrit works the reflection of society and culture are always noticed. The Sanskrit novel *Kusumalakṣmī* is also a fine example of such work where reflection of today's society can be seen. The novel *Kusumalakṣmī* comes under social novel where some realistic characters are projected by the author. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the social issues through the characters of the novel *Kusumalakṣmī*.

KEYWORDS: *Kusumalakṣmī*, Sanskrit Novel, Vikāsa, Urmilā, Sulocanā, Social Novel.

In the tradition of Sanskrit many works are composed based on social issues. As for example the names of the *Mṛcchakaṭika* of Śudraka, the *Vāsavadatta* of Bhāsa etc. can be mentioned. Even in some Sanskrit novels viz. *Prītiḥ* of Jit Singh Khokhar, *Guhavasi* of Dr. Satya Prakash Singh etc. social matters are also seen. Although some novels are based on different aspect but some realistic episodes are noticed. For instance, the *Kāntāarakathā* of Abhiraja Rajendra Mishra, the *Avināśi* of Biswanarayan Shastri etc. can be mentioned. The novel *Kusumalakṣmī* is a full-fledged social novel. The work is written by Anandavardhana Ramachandra Rantnaparakhi in 1961. The plot of the novel *Kusumalakṣmī* rounds on the character of Vikāsa. Through this character the author has raised some day today's social issues. *Kusumalakṣmī* is the heroine of the novel. The characters of *Kusumalakṣmī*, Urmilā and Sulocanā are projected as lovers of Vikāsa. These all characters have together shown the urban life of today's society.

Vikāsa is a young man of a Marathi family. He has been introduced as a scholar of Sanskrit. Vikāsa is a resident of Raichura of Hyderabad. He has been raised with Indian values. He moves to Bangalore for the purpose of spreading the knowledge of Sanskrit. In the city of Bangalore Vikāsa meets three girls. Through these three girls author has projected the character of Vikāsa very skilfully. The girls are *Kusumalakṣmī*, Urmilā and Sulocanā. Vikāsa is projected as very romantic person who enjoys with girls. Vikāsa first meets *Kusumalakṣmī*. In Bangalore *Kusumalakṣmī* gives her best hospitality to Vikāsa. *Kusumalakṣmī* is portrayed as beautiful and innocent girl in the novel. Vikāsa considers her a girl of *devaloka*ⁱ and falls in love with her. *Kusumalakṣmī* is an ideal lover that a boy wishes for. Now both of them are in love. After some days Vikāsa comes across with Urmilā. Urmilā is glamorous and modern girl. She just seeks company of Vikāsa for a time being. One day Urmilā entraps Vikāsa by telling lie and brings him to her home. But Urmilā takes him an unknown home and has forced him to stay there for some time. She gets

success to seduce Vikāsa and after that both of them involve in romantic consumption.ⁱⁱ After satisfaction of Urmilā she comes to her home and sends one message to Vikāsa through a servant. In the letter it is written that Vikāsa should leave the Bangalore city very soon otherwise there can be danger for him. Vikāsa is in shock as Urmilā has befooled him in order to fulfil her desire. Vikāsa is not fit for such urban affairs as like young man of metropolitan city. But he cannot be regarded as idiot of the society. Vikāsa is already in guilt that he has betrayed his beloved *Kusumalakṣmī*. In such situation Vikāsa decides to leave the city.ⁱⁱⁱ The third girl Sulocanā comes across to Vikāsa in a bus. Although Sulocanā is projected as a reserved girl but in conversation with Vikāsa she has proposed him. Sulocanā is impressed by Vikāsa and requests him to accept her as either his beloved or his wife or a friend.^{iv} Sulocanā invites Vikāsa to meet her one friend. Unfortunately, Sulocanā's friend is *Kusumalakṣmī*. Eventually, Sulocanā comes to know that both Vikāsa and *Kusumalakṣmī* know each other. Here, cleaver Sulocanā takes back her step from Vikāsa. She says that this gentleman came across in the bus and she has nothing special with him.^v Vikāsa is very disgusted with the experiences of these two girls. He is deeply saddened and he has not the courage to face his beloved *Kusumalakṣmī* as he cheated her. Vikāsa decides to return his hometown although *Kusumalakṣmī* feels very pain at this.

The author Rantnaparakhi has presented a lively picture of today's metropolitan cities through this novel. The character of Vikāsa is not suitable for this type of urban societies where girls like Urmilā, Sulocanā are available. The scholar Promod Bharatiya remarks that the author has taken a very living plot, unlike traditional trend, and portrayed the mentality of the women of today's metropolitan cities wherein it is difficult to survive in such circumstances for those who are brought up under the shadow of Indian values.^{vi} So, Vikāsa finds difficulties to face his beloved *Kusumalakṣmī* after the episode of Urmilā. The girls like Urmilā are real spot of today's society. In Sanskrit dramas the values of Indian woman are projected in such a way that despite of all bad situation women maintain their loyalty towards their beloved ones. For instance, in the drama *Mṛcchakaṭika*, the character of Vasantasenā can be mentioned. Although Vasantasenā has been portrayed as a harlot in the drama but her true love for Cārudatta is not for the purpose of sex. Even she gives her all ornaments of gold to Cārudatta when he needs it for his child.^{vii} But in the novel *Kusumalakṣmī* the character of Urmilā has no value for love and she just knows to fulfil her desires. She can go to any extent to gratify her sexual appetite. Urmilā is very bold and clear with her needs in the novel.^{viii} The girl Sulocanā has also been projected in some category. She traps Vikāsa in a city bus and confesses her love towards him in few hours inside the bus. The girl like Sulocanā can suddenly change their filling according to the situation as she tells that she just

knows Vikāsa and there is nothing special. On the other hand there are some negative female characters in the Sanskrit works who can go to the extend level to get their love. For instance, the female character of Lalitā of the novel *Avināśi* can be cited. In this novel Lalitā kidnaps^{ix} Mādhavī with full planning as Mādhavī is her beloved Bhāskaravarmā's love. But in today's society the girl like Sulocanā are available who switches to another boy if the situation is unfavourable. So, it can be said that the author has projected a vivid and dynamic picture of today's society. The opportunists characters like Sulocanā and Urmilā are very common in the society whereas victim like Vikāsa is also normal.

REFERENCES :

1. kusumalakṣmīrbhūtvā mama samakṣaṁ devalokakanyeva samupātiṣṭhata/ Ratnaparakhi, A. R.; *Kusumalakṣmī*, A. R. Ratnaparakhi, 1961, New Delhi (1st edn.), p.128
2. sahababhāvena sā svakīyāvoṣṭau mama hyoṣṭayośrapari nyadadhāta/..... *Ibid.*, 216
3. kusumalakṣmī mayā gantavyamasti/ *Ibid.*, 251
4. abhyupagame nāhaṁ bhavataḥ preyaśī vā bhāryā vā bhavitumarhāmīti/
5. paramahaṁ paricitā tāvad bhavadīyā bhavitumarhāmyeva/ naiva kim? *Ibid.*, p.246
6. yaśavantapurād nagarayānamāruhyaikāsanāsīnayoratrāgacchatoḥ samajanyāvayoryādr̥cchikaḥ paricayaḥ / *Ibid.*, 251
7. Bharatiya Pramod, *Fourteen Novels of Sanskrit*, Parimal Publication, 1999, Delhi (1st edn), p. 38
8. *Mṛcchakaṭikam of Śrī Śudraka*, VI, Ed. by Dr. Jagdish Chandra Mishra, Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakasha, 2013, Varanasi.
9. vikāsa, ahaṁ tvāmicchāmi, kiṁ cāpicchāmi tvadīyamidaṁ susnigdhaṁ bhūjīveṣṭanam/ na kimapyanyat/ icchāmi svakīyānām cīrantanodyāmavāsanānām pūrtim/, *Kusumalakṣmī*, p. 216
10. Shastri, Biswanarayan, *Avināśi*, Manjushree Publication, Guwahati, 1994 (2nd end.), pp. 155-157