

A TUSSE BETWEEN MAN AND MACHINE IN *MUKTA DHĀRĀ*--A BRIEF STUDY

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Received: May 07, 2018

Accepted: June 08, 2018

ABSTRACT

Muktadhārā is originally written in Bengali by Rabindranath Tagore—a world famous Nobel Laureate. This drama was translated into Sanskrit by Dhyanes Narayan Chakrabarti in 1988. The story of this play projects two ideas of people. One side is the king Ranjit of the state Uttarkūt. The other side is the people who suffer from the king's decision to build a dam by the help of modern machines. Therefore the play projects a tussle between man and machine. The people who do not get water because of the dam are sympathized by the prince Abhijit. Finally Abhijit succeeds in breaking the dam and dies in the current of the river. He falls prey in the struggle between man and machine.

Key Words: Machine, Dam, Waterfall, Nature, King, Paddy Field

Introduction:

In our present endeavour, we wish to make an analytical study of the drama that epitomizes the dismal fate of man in his struggle with machine.

Muktadhārā is a Bengali play written by great Bengali Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in the year 1922. The play *Muktadhārā* was translated into Sanskrit by Dr. Dhyanes Narayan Chakrabarti in the year 1988. Humanity and morality had disappeared from man's heart because of the pursuit of civilization with this message Rabindranath showed us very beautifully the tussle between machine and human.

Discussion:

The oppression of the King Ranjit of Uttarkūt compelled the subjects to revolt against him. The subjects were deprived of drinking water because of the construction of a dam by Bibhūti ¹.

A pedestrian asked a villager that what the thing which stretches up to the sky. Then the villager answered that may be he didn't know that it was a machine. The passer-by again asked what type of machine was that. The villager said that the machine was made up for long twenty five years which tide the waterfall Muktadhārā. Bibhūti was a citizen of Uttarkūta. He builds the dam after trying twenty five years. He was very normal student at his early age. When his companion friends could not do anything in life there Bibhūti did a miracle as an engineer after building the dam up for the holding the water of the dam Muktadhārā.

At the beginning of the play a small introduction sketched by Rabindranath about the waterfall Muktadhārā that---' पार्वत्यप्रदेश उत्तरकूटः। तत्रैव उत्तरभैरव-मन्दिरं प्रति प्रसारितः पन्थाः। विदूरे गगनमार्गं कस्यचिदभभेदि-लौहयन्त्रस्य शीर्षदेशः सन्दृश्यते। ततश्चापरस्यां दिशि दृश्यते भैरवमन्दिरशिखरस्य त्रिशूलम्। मार्गस्य पार्श्वत आम्बकानने राज्ञो रणजितः शिविरसन्निवेशः। अमावस्यायामदय भैरवमन्दिरे भविष्यति आरात्रिकम्। राजा पदव्रजेण तत्र गमिष्यति; पथि शिविरे विश्रामं लभते। तस्य सभायाः यन्त्रराजो विभूतिः बहुवर्षव्यापिन्या प्रचेष्टया लौहयन्त्रेण बन्धनं निर्माय मुक्तधाराख्यां स्रोतस्विनीं रुद्वान्। अतुलनीयामिमां कीर्तिं पुरस्कर्तुम् उत्तरकूटाधिवासिनः सर्वे उत्सवार्थं भैरवमन्दिरप्राङ्गणं प्रति प्रचलन्ति। भैरवमन्त्रदीक्षिताः सन्न्यासिनः अखिलं दिवसं स्तवगीतिं गायन्तः परिभ्रमन्ति। तेषां कस्यापि करे धूपाधारे प्रज्वलति धूपः; कस्यापि हस्ते शङ्खः; कस्यापि हस्ते गानस्य अन्तरान्तरं ध्वनति च तालपूर्वकम् घण्टा।

पथिकः—आकाशतटमभि किमिदं निर्मितम्? दर्शनादस्य भीतिः समुत्पद्यते।

नागरिकः—नैतज्जानासि वैदेशिकस्त्वम्। एतत्तु यन्त्रम्।

पथिकः—यन्त्रमिदं किमर्थं विरचितम्?

नागरिकः—पञ्चविंशतिवर्षाणि व्याप्य अस्माकं यन्त्रराजेन बिभूतिना यन्निर्मितं तदेव समाप्तीकृतम्, तदर्थमेवाद्य उत्सवविशेषः।

पथिकः—यन्त्रेण किं प्रयोजनम्?

नागरिकः—मुक्तधाराख्या निर्झरिणी तेनैव निरुद्धा।²

Here unknown men's first acquaintance with machine is artistically presented.

The writer then wrote a song sung by the people of Uttarkuta doing praise of the machine. So we got the machine not like only a machine but a very important element of this play. Rabindranath wrote in Bengali—

यन्त्राय नमो नमः, यन्त्राय नमो नमः, नमामो यन्त्रम्।

चक्रमुखर-मन्द्रितस्त्वं हे वज्रवहिनवन्दित,

त्वं वस्तु-विश्व-वक्षोदंशः, ते ध्वंस-विकट-दन्तः ॥

त्वं दीप्त-वहिन-शत-शतघ्नी विघ्न-विजय-मार्गः।

लौहगलन-शैलदलनस्तवाचल-चलन मन्त्रः ॥

कदा काष्ठेष्टक लोष्ट्रकदृढ-घन-पिनद्ध काया।

भूतल जल-व्योममण्डल-लङ्घनलघु-माया ॥

तव खनि-खनित्र-नख-विदीर्णा क्षितिविकीर्णा न्त्रा ।

तव पञ्चभूत-बन्धनकर इन्द्रजालतन्त्राः ॥³

So we got the description of machine. That was like a demon stretching to the sky.

When we came to know that Amba—an only female character of the play lost her only child at the time when the dam was built.

नारी—अहन्तु जनाइ-ग्रामस्य अम्बा। स तु मे नयनालोकः, मम प्राणानां निःश्वासः, मम सुमनः।

नागरिकः—भोः, तस्य किं सञ्जातम्?

अम्बा—कुत्र स नीतः, नाहं जानामि। पूजार्थं मया भैरवमन्दिरं गतम्—प्रत्यावृत्याहं पश्यामि नास्ति सः, कुत्रापि नीत इति।

नागरिकः—तर्हि मुक्तधारायाः प्रतिरोधरचनार्थं स नीतो भवेत्।

अम्बा—मया तु श्रुतम्—अनेन पथा स नीतः—अस्माद् गौरीशृङ्गात् पश्चिमतः—तत्र दृष्टिर्मे न गच्छति। पश्चात् तस्मात् न हि दृश्यते मार्गान्तरम्।⁴

Many people died because of the dam. So the people of Shivtarai were in pain for their nearest ones death. But they had not the power to protest against this cruelty as the building up the dam was necessary for the kingdom.

In *Muktadhārā*, dūta asked the engineer Bibhūti about the fate of people who died in the work of constructing a dam on the stream Muktdhārā. D.N.Chakrabarti said--

दूतः--एतावत्कालम् अस्माकं मुक्तधारानिर्झरिणीम् अवरोधयितुम् त्वं बन्धनिर्माणे प्रवृत्तोऽसि। पुनः पुनस्तद्बन्धनं भग्नं जातं, तेन बहवो जनाः धूलिवालुकाभिवरुद्धाः समाधिं गताः, कति कति च प्लावनात् स्रोतसा दूरं नीयमाना विलयं गताः। अद्यत्वे तु अन्ते मे—

विभूति—तेषां प्राणोत्सर्गो न कदापि व्यर्थो भूतः। अवसितं मे बन्धनिर्माणम्।

दूतः—शिवतलाधिवासिनः प्रजाजना नाधुनापि वार्तामिमां जानन्ति दैवतेन यज्जलं तेभ्य कृते प्रवाहितं, केनापि मनुष्येण तन्निरुध्यते इति विश्वसितुमपिते न कदापि शक्नुवन्ति।

विभूतिः—दैवतेन तेभ्यः केवलं जलमेव प्रदत्तम्, मह्यं तु प्रदत्ता स्रोतोबन्धनार्थं शक्तिः।⁵

Bibhūti was not worried about the people of Uttarkūta as he knew that some people would die during the construction. So he needs not to be so anxious about that. He also knew that the paddy field would be dried because of the dam but he was proud for his construction as his name would spread everywhere and he would be famous everywhere for building the dam up. In the process of constructing a dam over the stream, Muktdhārā there were many damages. The engineer Bibhūti confessed that he had no idea about the possible damage. He said--

दूतः—तस्य क्षेत्रस्य विशुष्कीकरणमेव किं न ते बन्धननिर्माणे लक्ष्यभूतमासीत्?

विभूतिः—वालुका-प्रस्तर-जलानां कापट्यं व्यर्थीकृत्य मनुष्यबुद्धिस्तु विजयतामिति मे उद्देश्यमासीत्। किं च कस्यापि कृषिवलस्य किमपि यवक्षेत्रम् विनङ्क्ष्यतीति तदा नासीन्मे चिन्तावकाशः।

दूतः—युवराजः पृच्छति किमिदानीमपि चिन्ताकालो नायात इति?

विभूतिः—न हि, यन्त्रशक्तेर्महिमैव मया चिन्त्यते।

दूतः—क्षुधार्तस्य क्रन्दनेन किं सा चिन्ता न विदीर्णा भविष्यति?

विभूतिः—न हि, जलवेगेन बन्धनं मे न कदापि भग्नीभवति, क्रन्दनंप्रभावेनापि यन्त्रं मे न विचलति।¹⁶

Bibhūti built the machine upon Muktheadhārā. But, nobody of his kingdom was agreed with whatever plan is designed by Ranjit. Minister of Ranjit was anxious as the water of Muktheadhārā waterfall contributing to the paddy field of the peasant was drying up. So when Ranjit asked the minister why the minister was jealous and did not take interest in this matter then minister made Ranjit disappointed in his answer that they could not play like this childish way with the farmers who were very poor. If they will not get the water then their own paddy field will be destroyed and the farmer will die in hunger. As because the king had no experience to fight with the nature whatever the farmer could do so they should not do that. Rabindranath wrote—

रणजित्—शिवतलस्य प्रजागणान् केनाप्युपायेन वशीकर्तुं नाशक्नोस्त्वम्। व्यतीतेष्वेतेषु दिनेषु मुक्तधाराजलमायत्तीकृत्य तान् वशीकर्तुमुपायो विभूतिना प्रदर्शितः। किन्तु मन्त्रिन्, त्वयि तु तावन्न लक्ष्यते तादृशः समुत्साहः। किमत्र ईर्ष्याकारणम्?

मन्त्री—महाराज क्षमस्व माम्। खनित्र-कुर्दालकहस्तेन मृत्तिकाप्रस्तरेण सह द्वन्द्वयुद्धं नास्माकं कार्यम्। राष्ट्रनीतिरेव अस्माकमस्त्रम्; मनुष्यमानसैस्तु अस्माकं व्यवहारः। शिवतलस्य शासनभारो युवराजोपरि समर्पनीय इति मन्त्रणा मयैव प्रदत्ता। तेनैव यद्वन्धनं सुरचितं स्यात्, न खलु तत् नगण्यम्।

रणजित्—तेन किं फलं प्राप्तम्? वर्षद्वयं यावद् राजस्वं तैर्न प्रदत्तम्। ईदृशम् दुर्भिक्षं तत्र सदैव संघटते। तेन तु न भवति राजस्वं कदाप्यलब्धम्।

मन्त्री—राजस्वादपि महार्घं किञ्चित् संलभमानमासीत्—एतस्मिन्नेव समये तस्य प्रत्यावर्तनं भवता समादिष्टम्। राजकार्ये क्षुद्रास्तु कदापि नावजेयाः। जानीहि तावत्, यदा असहनीया अवस्था सञ्जायते, तदा दुःखस्यैव शक्त्या क्षुद्रास्तु समतिक्रम्य महतो भवन्ति महत्तराः।¹⁷

Rabindranath presented an irony that expressed his writing excellence and powerful thoughts for the mass. A small boy also used by Rabindranath as a speaker for the poor common people. We saw how the common people of Shīvtarāi had suffered for the water which had stopped to flow. When a group of student was going to take part of the joyous program like Bibhuti's felicitation then the students were asked by the king Ranjit that whether they know what Bibhuti did or not? Then all the students jumped with a clapping hand and said that they knew that Bibhuti stopped the drinking water. The teacher's taught every glorious matter about Shīvtarāi. But they could realize that they made good human being from students and the king apply them in his different work. But the teacher did not get his exact value from the king's kingdom.

रणजित्—युष्माभिः कुत्र गम्यते?

शिक्षकः—अस्माकं यन्त्रराजो विभूतिर्महाराजेनाद्य पुरस्कृतो भविष्यति। तेनानन्दोत्सवार्थं वालकैः सह गच्छामि। सञ्जाते उत्तरकूटस्य गौरवे शैशावादेव येनस्ते बालका गौरवमनुभवितुं शिक्षन्ते, तदर्थमेव न किञ्चिदपि उपलक्ष्यं परिहातुं कामये।

रणजित्—विभूतिना किं कृतमिति ननु सर्वैरेव एभि जायते?

बालकाः—(उल्लम्फ करतालं दत्वा) जायते; निरुद्धं तेन शिवतलस्य पानीयजलम्।

रणजित्—कथं निरुद्धम्?

बालकाः—(सोत्साहम्) तान् विपन्नान् कर्तुम्।

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शिक्षकः—उत्तरकूटस्य अधिवासिनः कदापि किं युद्धे पराजिता? किं जानीथ?

बालकाः—कदापि न।

शिक्षकः—अस्माकं महाराजस्य पितामहः प्रागजित् त्रिनवत्यधिक-द्विशतसंखकैः सैनिकैः सार्द्धसप्तशताधिक-त्रिंशत्सहस्रसंख्यकान् दक्षिणागतान् बर्वरान् न किं वितडयामास?

बालकाः—सत्यं विताडितवान्।

शिक्षकः—नूनमेव जानीहि महाराज उत्तरकूटात् वहिदेशे ये खलु भाग्यहताः मातृगर्भे जन्म स्वीकुर्वन्ति, एकदा एते एव बालकास्तेषु भविष्यन्ति विभीषिका रुपिणः। यद्येतन्न भवेत्, तदाहं मिथैव शिक्षकः। कीदृशः सुमहान् कर्तव्यभारो अस्माष्वेव न्यस्तः—नैतत्तु मनागपि मया विस्मर्यते।

वयमेव मानुषान् निर्माय ददमः। भवन्त अमात्यास्तु तान् एव संगृह्य व्यवहरन्ति। अपि तु, किं वा ते प्राप्नुवन्ति, वयमपि वा किं प्राप्नुम इति तुलनां विधाय विचार्यताम्।⁸

So, the cruel mind of the king Ranjit and Bibhūti was so dangerous that people of the Uttarkūta was frightened for that. The king destroyed the life of many people and they did not repent for their work. The king was selfishly played with the mind of the people of Uttarkūta. He jailed prince Abhijit as Abhijit was kind and soft upon the people of Uttarkūta. But on the other hand the man like prince Abhijit tried to stop the king to spoil the life and hope of the people of Uttarkūta. In one hand the festival of death had occurred by the king Ranjit. His policy fulfilled by Bibhūti and the people of Śhivtarai became helpless. They wanted a shelter which will save from the demon like Ranjit in disguise of a man. They ultimately depended on Prince Abhijit who suffered in pain and agony for the people of Śhivtarai. They admired Abhijit like God of themselves in this tough situation. As prince came to know that he was left by an unknown mother besides the waterfall Muktheadhārā. He said that he heard the call of his mother in the water of Muktheadhārā. He used to lie down besides the waterfall. So he had a peculiar feeling for the waterfall. He loved that place and people of Śhivtarai. He was supported by the people of Uttarkūta like Batu, Uddhava, Dhañanjoy, Biṣaṇa, Gaṇeśh, Sañjoy and above all Ranjit's uncle Biswajit.

Abhijit was jailed by the king and the people of Śhivtarai helped him to escape from the prison. The prince to free the affected people of Śhivtarai dies while he dismantles the machine and his death brings back the victory of spirit over machine, life over mechanism.⁹

In his drama *Muktheadhārā* the poet has amply described the evils of today, the ill-feeling between the conqueror and the conquered, the feverish anxiety to curb the natural flow of the spirit and the damning of life by sheer mechanical forces. In the drama, the poet deals with the irrational ferociousness of the iron-machine.¹⁰

He (Rabindranath Tagore) saw man being more and more pitted against the machine, humanity against ruthless power; and in his great play, *Mukta-Dhara*, he articulated “an eloquent protest against the onslaught of machinery on the ancient ramparts of man's individual freedom.” Either we concede the paramountcy of human values or we acquiesce in the movement that must inexorably maim destroy us all.¹¹

Muktheadhara is a protest against the Machine age. It records the deep sympathy of the poet for the ordinary people who have been victimized by the new system of production in an accumulative economy. The oppression, suppression, and exploitation by the machine are squeezing out the sweetness and tenderness of life. The ignorant, bewildered, helpless masses find the only ray of hope in the song of Dhananjay Bairagi who sings to the glory of man and call for protest against the machine.¹²

Conclusion:

The play shows how machine is an instrument in the hand of a relentless dictator. When the prince of Uttarkūta dies despite successfully breaking the dam and making the water-streams free, audience are spell-bound feeling the necessity of self-sacrifice in stopping the miseries of man by freeing nature from the shakles.¹³

Dam in the play symbolizes man's interference with nature through machine. As long as such interference is there man is bound to suffer. Rabindranath's *Muktheadhārā* as translated by D.N.Chakrabarti into Sanskrit has shown a dictation to be closer to nature with love and not to be far from it after its irrestorable exploitation.

Footnotes:

1. The Relevance of Tagore, Vivek Bhattacharya, B.V.Gupta, (Pub), Metropolitan Book Co.Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1979, pp.111-112.
2. *Muktheadhārā-Vārtāgrham*, Dhyanes Narayan Chakrabarti, Ramesh Ch. Mitra (Pub), Calcutta, 1988, pp.2-3.
3. *ibid*, pp 7-8.
4. *ibid*, p.4.

5. *ibid*,pp.4-5.
6. *ibid*,p.5.
7. *ibid*,p.8.
8. *ibid*,13-15.
9. The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, Benoy Gopal Ray,V.Kulkarni(Pub.), Hind Kitabs Ltd.,Bombay,1949,p.65.
10. *ibid*.p.65
11. *Rabindranath Tagore, A Critical Introduction*, K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, Sterling Publishers Private Limited,1987,p.107.
12. See Vivek Bhattacharya,et al,p.112.