

# The Śārdūlaśakaṭam As A Prakaraṇam

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## ABSTRACT

*The Śārdūlaśakaṭam composed by Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya is a prakaraṇam type of dramatic works. It is a five act play having no role of any women. Here, a picture of the poet's contemporary society is presented which is based on the lives of workers of parivahana-saṁsthā (transport department), West Bengal. It is notable that the poet himself was a chief controller of that transport department. He tried his best for the welfare and satisfaction of the workers of the department. In this play, the poet describes the pathetic condition of the workers, the difference between rich and poor etc. with great sensitivity. In this study, an attempt has been made to notice how far the characteristics of a prakaraṇam are reflected as set by the ālamkārikas (rhetoricians).*

**Key-words:** Śārdūlaśakaṭam, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, prakaraṇa, transport

## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was one of the scholars who contributed to the modern Sanskrit literary world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in 1917 in the present day district of Sylhet in Bangladesh. He was a professor of Philosophy. Moreover he was engaged in the administrative service of government of West Bengal and government of India. He did not write only in Sanskrit but published some philosophical books in English and ten poetry collections in Bengali also. There are 7 Sanskrit dramatic works of his literary contribution i.e., Kavikālīdāsaḥ, Śārdūlaśakaṭam, Siddhārthacaritam, Veṣṭanavyāyogaḥ, Gītagourāṅgam, Śaraṇārthīsaṁvādaḥ, and Śūrpaṇakhābhisāra. He was honoured with the D. Lit. for his contributions to the literary field of India in 1949. He died in 1942.

The Śārdūlaśakaṭam by Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya is a prakaraṇam. The poet himself has mentioned this in the utsargā (dedication part) of it. It is composed with an exceptional theme then the conventional stories found in other Sanskrit dramatic works. This is the first play that highlights the picture of the hard lives of the workers. The poet Bhattacharya saw the lives of the workers very closely and therefore he sincerely realized their problems and tried to solve them. This is clearly revealed in this play.

### Objectives:

The leading objectives of this study are-

1. To give a glimpse of Modern Sanskrit poet and Compositions.
2. To discuss the characteristics of prakaraṇam type of dramatic works.
3. To discuss how far the characteristics of prakaraṇam are reflected in this play as directed by the ālamkārikas .
4. To highlight how the modern poets bring a new trend to the Sanskrit literature.

### Methodology:

The analytical as well as the descriptive methods are used for the study. Both primary and secondary data are consulted here to prepare this paper.

## DISCUSSION

### Story of the Śārdūlaśakaṭam in brief:

**Act-I:** The play begins with the revolutionary slogans from some workers who observed the break of work. It is cleared from the conversation between Divākara, the leader of workers and others that the industrialists or the employers who were in high designation provided very little remuneration to the workers against their hard work. No other facilities or benefits

were also available to the workers. Moreover, the various aspects like the difference between rich and poor, employers' exploitation on the poor workers etc. were distinct through the conversation. Therefore, the workers protested unitedly. The officials offered bribe to some workers to break the unity amongst them. In such a situation too, they took care of the revolution to succeed and sang to boost their enthusiasm. In this way, through the journey of revolution the 1<sup>st</sup> act is come to end.

**Act-II:** In this act, there is a mention of cutting the salaries of the workers. Therefore, the workers protested. The authorities of the transport department knew about this and approach their highest authority Ādiśura. Ādiśura's sympathy for workers was well known. So, he assured to solve the problems of the workers.

**Act-III:** The third act begins with a scene of the municipal office. Ādiśura entered into stage. Apart from the parivahana-saṁsthā of Kolkata, the works of Dūrgāpur and Uttarabaṅga parivahana-saṁsthā were also entrusted to him. Ādiśura tried to introduce the Night Bus Service and decided to inaugurate it in the Kolkata by the Governor of the state. But it was informed that the workers would not co-operate in this programme. In this time the workers movement went on the Dūrgāpur also. But the sarvādhyakṣa (chief-controller) Ādiśura assured the workers to meet their demands and managed to quell the movement tactfully.

Indranīl, the leader of the workers and others praised Ādiśura due to his works like Dīghā-saikot service, rest room for the passengers built in Kharagpur, Bus stop etc. In addition to it, Ādiśura took initiative to run the bus service from Kolkata to Ranchi. In the last part of this act, Ādiśura went to see the preparation of the song which would be performed in the inauguration program of the night bus service.

**Act-IV:** It is suggested from the conversations in between Indranīl and Ratnākara that Citrabhānu, a worker was died in the movement. Therefore, a lot of problems occurred to his family. The workers, who were friends of Citrabhānu, tried to do something for his family. Some buses were stopped. The son of Amrit (a worker) passed well in examination. Indranīl and Ratnākara praised Ādiśura. A real picture of the workers was revealed through the conversation of Indranīl and Ratnākara.

**Act-V:** In this act, Nirmālya, Śaṅkhaghoṣa and Amitābha discussed about the misbehavior of the policeman with the workers. Here the mention was made about the President's Rule. During that period, the police traveled by the buses without tickets and harassed the bus workers. Therefore, the workers took out a procession in this issue. They informed their high authority about their problems. But he did not take any necessary actions in this regard. At last they decided to meet the Governor. Then, Ādiśura discussed with the secretary of the state and took initiative to solve their problems. The workers were glad and praised Ādiśura. They shouted with joy and said that it was Sarvādhyakṣa Ādiśura's victory. But Ādiśura told that it was the victory of the workers.

### **Characteristics of a prakaraṇam :**

Before going to study the Śārdūlaśakaṭam as a prakaraṇam, here it would be appropriate to discuss the characteristics of prakaraṇam as directed by the ālaṁkārikas. The prakaraṇam is one of the major types of the dṛśyakāvya. The ālaṁkārikas like Bharata, Dhanañjaya, Visvanātha Kavirāja etc. defined prakaraṇam in their works. The prakaraṇam type of dṛśyakāvya or rūpaka bears some special characteristic for which it is separate from others.

bhavet prakaraṇe vṛttam loukikam kavikalpitam //  
śṛṅgāro 'ṅgī nāyakasto vpro 'matyo 'thavā vaṇik /  
sāpāyadharmakāmāthaparo dhīraprasāntakaḥ //  
nāyikā kulajā kvāpi, veśā kvāpi dvayam kvacit /  
tena bhedastrayastasya tatrabhedastritiyakaḥ //  
kitabvadyutakārādiviṭaceṭaka saṁkulaḥ /

The definition of prakaraṇam mentioned by the Visvanātha Kavirāja almost covers the definitions offered by Bharata and Dhanañjaya. From the above mentioned verses it is clear that-

1. The plot of a prakaraṇam should be invented.
2. The principal sentiment (rasa) should be śṛṅgāra.
3. The hero should be a minister or a brāhmaṇa, or a merchant and dhīraprasānta (i.e., clam and self-controlled) type. He should be engaged in the present of dharma, artha and kāma in adverse circumstances also.
4. The heroine should be either a high born married lady, or a courtesan. Again, both these types of heroine can be introduced in the same play.

5. *prakaraṇam* is classified in three types-
  - i. *śuddhā* (simple) –when the heroine is a married lady.
  - ii. *dhūrtā* (artificial) – when the heroine is a courtesan.
  - iii. *miśra* or *saṃkīrṇa* (mixed) with the two heroines i.e., high born married lady and courtesan.
6. It contains abundance of rogues (gamblers, thief etc.)

In addition to the above mentioned characteristics there are some other characteristics also found. That are-

1. When the two heroines i.e., high born married lady and courtesan are present in the same play, they should not meet each other on the stage. Their language and behavior should be prepared properly if it is very necessary.<sup>ii</sup>

2. The hero should appear in every act of the play.<sup>iii</sup>

3. *prakaraṇam* should be named after the hero and the heroine.<sup>iv</sup>

#### ***The Śārdūlaśakaṭam as a prakaraṇam:***

From the characteristics of a *prakaraṇam* which are stated by the *ālaṃkārikas* like Bharata etc., it is seen that the theme of the *Śārdūlaśakaṭam* is realistic and poet's imagination is added to it. The main story of the play is based on the lives of the workers of the transport department, West Bengal.

Related to this story various aspects like exploitation on the workers by their officers or authorities, exploited workers protestation, harassment on the workers by the police, poor condition of the workers, unity is the strength etc., are presented here by the poet Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya.

It has already stated that there is no any heroine in the play. Even no female character is drawn here. (However, three women are found in context only-1. the sick wife of Citrabhānu, 2. the wife of another worker who was also sick and 3. a belligerent lady, wife of a worker). Therefore the lack of *śṛṅgāra* rasa is observed here. Instead of it, the *vīrarasa* is the principal rasa in this play.

The hero *Ādiśūra* is a *brāhmaṇa*, and possesses the qualities of *dhīraprasānta* type of hero. He tried to earn dharma etc. by well performing his duty. He was very kind hearted and always ready to serve the workers in their need.

Again, this play is not included under any of the three categories which are divided based on the heroine here. In addition to it, through it is found that some workers go to the wine shop to forget their sorrows, but the present of rogues are not observed in this play.

The hero is not present in the every act of the play. He is directly appeared in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> acts only.

Moreover, regarding the title it is not after the hero and heroine.

“*śārdūlamukham citritam yatsakaṭam tat śārdūlaśakaṭam*”

During the time of the poet, picture of the tiger's face was painted on the buses operated by the transport department of West Bengal. The poet Bhattacharya describes full heartedly the life story of the workers associated with transport department.

The title *Śārdūlaśakaṭam* is allusive and it creates curiosity towards the treatise. Therefore, the name *Śārdūlaśakaṭam* is an appropriate choice of the poet.

### **CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion it is clear that the canons laid down for a *prakaraṇam* by the rhetoricians as stated before are not fully followed by the poet. It is seen that the poet Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was a realistic person. Therefore he chose the theme prevailing then society. He introduced a new type of *prakaraṇam* (*abhinava-prakaraṇam*) in to the Sanskrit literature by depicting the poor workers in this treatise.

It is notable that Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya himself recognized the *Śārdūlaśakaṭam* as *prakaraṇam* type of *dr̥śyakāvya*. He wrote in the 'utsarga' (dedication) part of the play-

yatsaṁsthākarmisevā utsargaḥ pragaṇakuśalā kāmyā hi niyatam  
kṛtsna nityonnatiśca prathama prakaraṇam manyata iha naḥ /  
nindā yasyā dūnotiprathitivacanāṁ prīṇāti ca manaḥ  
tasyai santarpyate me prakaraṇamidam śārdūlaśakaṭam //

Again, the sūtradhāra (stage-manager) also introduced the play as - adya khalu upasthāpyate'tra vīrendrakumārbhattācāryyaviracitam śārdūlaśakaṭanāmakaṁ abhinavaprakaraṇam/<sup>v</sup>

In addition to it, it is also stated as nāṭakam in many places of the play but it can be considered as upalakṣaṇārthaka (synecdoche) as nāṭakam is used for all the dṛśyakāvyaś (dramatic works).

ataḥ sa pravahanasaṁsthākarminam jīvanayatraṁ varṇayitum ceṣṭamāno nāṭakamidamaracayat/ etc.<sup>vi</sup>

i Sāhityadarpaṇam, VI.224-227

ii Nāṭyaśāstram, XVIII, 86-87

iii Daśarūpakam, III, 33

iv Sāhitya Darpaṇam, VI. 143

v Śārdūlaśakaṭam, p.1

vi Ibid, p. 2

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