



Revival of Ancient literature through the works of Manoj Das

Saloni

Assistant Professor

Mukand Lal National College, Yamuna Nagar

Salonidhiman890@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Born on Feb 27th in Odisha, *Manoj Das* is one of the finest authors of the 20th century. He is famous for his short stories. A short story is a popular form in the 20th century. Basically, he is a bilingual writer who writes in two languages that are Oriya and in English. One can observe the touch of *Kathasaritsagra* and *Panchatantra* in his short stories. It has been skillfully employed by the writer. His famous short stories are *The Crocodile's Lady*, *The Kite*, *Dusky Horizon*, *The Birds*, *The Naked and the collection*, *Tales Told by Mystics* (2001), and *The Bridge in the Moonlight Night*. For his immense contribution to literature. He was awarded *Saraswati Samman* in 2000, *Padma Shri* in 2001, and *Padma Bhushan* in 2001. Many scholars compared him with *O' Henry*. His themes range from the most matter-of-the-fact happenings of everyday life to the events suggestive of the supernatural. The present paper is an attempt to highlight ancient literature, particularly the works of Manoj Das.

KEYWORDS

Kathasaritsagra, Ancient Short Stories, Revival, Tales

INTRODUCTION

The short story is one of the oldest forms of literature and has been present in numerous ancient cultures all over the world as legends, mythic folktales, fairy tales, urban legends, and fables. At the beginning of the 19th century, modern short fiction took shape. About the development of this genre *A.N. Dwivedi* has given some reasons: As with other genres, so with the Indian short story in English, the beginnings were made under the influence of Britishers, who had given us not only a steady nation but also an international language. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things to speculate that the Indian short story writer in English is an inheritor of the British legacy bequeathed to him by such eminent practitioners as *Henry, John Galsworthy, Somerset Maugham, Rudyard Kipling*, who themselves were greatly inspired by the French author, *Maupassant*.

Manoj Das is a short story writer. Who gave his immense contribution to the field of short stories.

Most of the stories are influenced by *Kathasaritsagra* and *Panchatantra* like *Sudha Murthy*.

Kathasaritsagra was an ancient piece of literature from the 11th century. It was also known as the ocean of streams of stories. It was compiled by *Somdeva Bhatt*. Actually, *Kathasaritsagra* was not the original work of *Somdeva*. It was adopted from *Gunadhya*, who has a sixth century, Indian author, who wrote *Brihatkatha*, an ancient Indian epic, written in a lost language known as *Paisachi*. Its several adaptations are *Kathasaritsagra, Brhatkathamajari, and Brhatkathaslokasamgraha*.

Kathasaritsagra had multiple layers of story within a story. *Somdeva* took these stories for the amusement of queen *Suryawati*, wife of king *Ananta*, who ruled in Kashmir during those days. It is adopted around 1073CE in Kashmir at king *Ananta's* court. *Somdeva* was a poet at king *Ananta's* Mahal in those days. He wanted peace in court that's why he started narrating tales.

Somdeva Bhatt divided *Kathasaritsagra* into 18 books, 124 tarangs and 22000 slokas.

Kathasaritsagra was retold by several writers in a post-modern era. E.g., *Girish Karnad's Hayavadna* is a two-act play written in Kannada language and the plot is based on *Kathasaritsagra*. The other one is *Meena Arora Nayak* who retold the *kathasaritsagra....*' The *Kathasaritsagra* of *Somdeva*'. It is the brilliant new retelling of *kathasaritsagra* and is the first major rendition of the epic in a quarter century.

C.H. Tawney translated *kathasaritsagra* Sanskrit into English titled... ' *The Ocean of the story* was later reissued by *N.M. Penzer* in 1924.

If we want to discuss the relationship between *kathasaritsagra* and *Manoj Das's* stories. There is a story of *kathasaritsagra* that is where "story of the jackal that was turned into an elephant" When the hermit saw that, being compassionate as well as endowed with magical power, he turned the female jackal into a female elephant, by way of kindness, to please both.

As we go through the story, we saw that there is a hermit named *Branmasiddhi*, who is possessed by supernatural power, and near his cottage, there was an old female named jackal, one day she was going to find food. He saw that the male elephant want to kill her because he was filled with anger because of his separation from her partner. That's why the hermit turned her into a female elephant. So, she escaped death. This story shows a magic element. This magic element can also be seen in *Manoj Das's* the *Crocodile's Lady*' As the story opens, we find there is a western professor who wants to see a real village. He was shocked that there is 97% of the villagers lived quite contented without having seen a locomotive or a cinema, on the other hand, villagers are also happy to see real sahibs in their village. In their conversation, he asked villagers about crocodiles. Then they told him that they have no fear as long as the crocodile's lady is there with them. Then the speaker tells the professor that one of the aged couples lived on the bank of the river. They had a daughter who was married at the age of there, and after one year of her marriage, she became widowed. It is recalled that seventy years ago once she took bathed on the bank of a river.

In the river, there was a crocodile. As he saw her for the first time, he started loving her. As he got the chance, he dragged her down and changed her into a female crocodile. But later he realized that the girl was separated from her parents. In order to compensate for its fall deed, he gave her a mantra. If she recited the mantrathrice she would turn into a human form again. But in the evening, she will have to return in crocodile form.

The crocodile tried his best to make her accept the condition in good humour. But he did not succeed. At last, the melancholy crocodile told her: ‘Well, then, take this mantra. Whenever you recite it thrice, you will resume your human form. But it will not work as long as I am near you, for, the moment you recite it, I cannot help reciting another mantra to counter its effect.’

So, there is a similarity in both stories to some extent. This shows that *Manoj Das* took the inspiration for these stories from *kathasaritsagra*.

This kind of resemblance can also be seen in *vetlapanchavimsati* or twenty-five tales of vetala. An anthology of twenty-five tales of Betal. It exists in the work of Somdeva. There is a collection of tales and legends within a frame story.

A vetala a heavenly spirit Pishacha, a celestial spirit, or a Bhairava, hangs the positive side of a branch and inhabits and activates dead bodies, shall capture the legendary king Vikramaditya assures a Vamchari. Bringing the vetala to the tantric is not easy for king Vikrama. The vetal delivers a story that ends in a conundrum each time Vikram tries to seize it. If Vikram is unable to provide an accurate response, the vampire agrees to stay in captivity. The king’s head will shatter into a thousand pieces if he knows the solution but remains silent. And if king Vikrama provides the right response, the vampire will flee and go back to his tree, therefore this vampire continues twenty-four times.

Manoj Das’s The Lady Who Died One And Half Times is a collection of twelve tales. In most of the tales, there is a mystic element. The pattern of vetal pachisi is followed by the writer here. As

we saw in Vetala Pachisi Betal told the tale to Vikram and Vikram had to give the answer. Several conditions are there if did not give the right answer. In *Manoj Das's* stories, Abolkara and Samanta two main characters are there like Vikram and Betal. Abolkara is servant here and Samanta is master. Samanta told the stories to Abolkara for the purpose of entertainment. So as we can say this is the modern version of vetala pachisi which is done by the great personality short story writer Manoj Das.

Moving toward the concluding part of this paper. Through the primary data of *Manoj Das's* stories and *Kathasaritsagra* tales. We can say that there is a resemblance between those stories. For his short stories, he took inspiration mostly from *Kathasaritsagra* and *Panchtantra*. He gave an immense contribution to the revival of ancient literature.

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