



Volga to Ganga - The Journey from Matrilineal to Patriarchy of Indian Society

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Abstract –Known as the father of Hindi travel literature, Rahul Sankrityayan is an Indian author, essayist, playwright. A well-known historian and scholar of Buddhism Sankrityayan played a pivotal role in giving Hindi travelogue a literary form.

Volga to Ganga is the story of human civilization at its early developmental stage. Through these short stories Rahul Sankrityayan explores the development of humans from homo sapiens living in small groups to the society with intricate complexities.

Keywords – civilization, matrilineal, patriarchy, feminism, history, stone age, feudalism

Through the 20 stories in Volga to Ganga, Rahul Sankrityayan takes us back eight thousand years through the time machine and shows man's eight thousand year journey in story form. The story begins with Nisha, a woman in a matrilineal society in six thousand BC. At the beginning of the story, Nisha's family consists of 16 people. But Sankrityayana presents the picture of tribal society before us. 45 years old Nisha is the head of the family. In those days, because of the free relationship between men and women, the father of the children was not known and the children were identified only by the mother. All these sons were known as Nishajans and in the next story, Diva, they are mentioned as Nishajans. The life of this family living on the banks of the Volga is very difficult. The family's life is a struggle due to wandering for hunting, facing natural disasters and constant gang wars. Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest comes from early stories. The heroine of the story is Nisha Nisha comes Nisha, the heroine of the story, is strong like men, she is the foremost among hunters, she is the foremost in bravery. In short, she has all the qualities of a male hero. She is fierce, cautious, trying to find her place in the tribe. She considers other women in the tribe who are her daughters and cousins as rivals. Nisha has the first right over the men of the tribe. The men have to bow to her wishes even when she likes other young women in the tribe.

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She can call any man she wants for sex. In a patriarchal society, as much rights as a man has, the rights are close to Nisha Maa. This Nisha Maa is near.

She is haunted by fear of losing power. Nisha Ma plans to kill her strongest daughter Lekha so that she can take her place. Nisha also dies when she is strangled in the river and both are sacrificed to Mileki Voga. The name of the next story is Diva. Nisha means night and Diva means day. In the state of Niche, the number of families is shown to have increased from 16 to 9. The number decreased due to attacks by wild beasts, internecine rivalry etc. But Dive's time is booming. 2500 years after the Niche, the number of Divas born went from 9 to 150 and over 300 in just 25 years.

The people of this family call themselves Nishajans. This means that even though families have their own identity for a long time, this small society is still matrilineal. Although a woman is still free to choose her partner, this freedom is only for one night. For a long time living as husband and wife as one partner is considered taboo in this society, so even if Diva wants to have sex with her favorite male Sur, she has to suppress her desire as she knows that the tribe will not allow her to do so.

The society in these stories is similar to the matrilineal Indian society described by Rajwade in his book 'History of Indian Marriage System'. Rajwade cites Mahabharata, Rigveda to prove that matrilineal institution emerged in the early stages of human progress. Children were known by mother's name and Brahmins produced subjects from father-daughter relationship. Rajwade says that the nuclear family system emerged from the time when children were identified by their mother's name.

Rajwade explains that although the men and women of the tribe freely interacted with each other, sisters began to live in separate huts with their children, and thus "communal motherhood was replaced by individual motherhood".(1)

Diva is long-lived. She lives more than 70 years. Like Nisha, she is a resident of Vogkatha. As powerful and cruel as her, ruthless. Divaputras have to seize that territory by attacking the population.

Sankrityayana says that although Diva and Nishajan are soft in nature, they have to make such a decision for self-nutrition. But once the war is decided, Diva, the leader of the tribe, does not stay behind. Men and women go to battle together. Diva smashes the heads of the three infants clinging to the mother's breasts on a stone. In wars, no one wants to be left alive. After committing such a

cruel act, naturally, these primitive tribes would have felt remorse somewhere deep in their hearts. So it was difficult for Nishjans to go alone in the field of Ushajana.

Many people saw ghosts dancing in the fire at night where the Ushajans were burnt to death. Diva also dreamed of three infants scratching her breasts. Nishajan used to worship fire. Jananayika Diva believed that her clan prospered due to the blessings of Agni. Thus Sankrityayana shows that the ideas of ghosts, bad dreams, deities 'Bhaga' came into existence. It was during this period that man learned the technique of rearing animals and sowing grass for their fodder and the emergence of agricultural culture. Man began to store grains as there was surplus production.

In the third story after this Amritashva happened in 2800 BC. There had been a lot of changes in the society. Amritashva is of Kaurava descent. Now that a man owns a woman, he can make her lie down with him to honor his guest. However, women have other rights like having temporary relationships with other men. During this period, the men who won the war would abduct men and women of the defeated side and used to make them slaves. The trend of polygamy was there. Surplus production changed the economics of the society, farm ownership and constant warfare came to men, and the era of restricting women's rights by keeping them in the home began. Vedic period things like Fire worship, somprashan practices from Vedic period continued. Men were busy in stealing cattle and wars whereas women were restricted to home and were not allowed to participate in war. From here on in the next stories, women were shown abused and were kept under control. With the establishment of slavery, the rate of exploitation of women is seen to get increased.

The Puruhut story is set in 2500 CE, just 300 years after the Amritashva story and shows that the society changed with fast pace. In the story of Puruhut, man got the origin of salt, pots, copper weapons, discovery of armour, discovery of gold-silver, use of grains like wheat-rice, marketing means trade, slavery etc. Along with that, the society created by Puruhut Indra and the concept of Indra as king came into existence. The progress some tribes made in 300 years was spectacular.

During the time of Amritashva, stone weapons started to be used by tribes, followed by copper sword-like weapons, and the nature of warfare became progressively more ferocious.

Rahul Sankrityayan has placed 4 recurring themes i.e. leitmotifs in the 20 stories of Volga to Ganga - Feudalism and Monarchy, War, Slavery and Stridasya, i.e. women's bondage. The history

of Indian culture with its origin at the bank's of the Volga to its development and permanent settlement at the bank's of the Ganges is a history of oppression, exploitation; the exploitation of others for the pleasure of some people.

This story of depression and suffering is not just the history of India, but the history of human civilization. The plague of monarchy, feudalism, feudalism has affected the society in the whole world and it is still there today. Globalization has put on a new mask and perpetuated the lust for power and luxury. The history of culture, civilization is a history stained with blood and exploitation. Grand temples, pyramids, Taj Mahal were built on the exploitation of slaves. Underneath everything that is grand in society is rests on the blood and gore of oppressed, marginalized people.

It is the trick of every culture and political system to use human beings as a battery for their wealth and happiness. Whatever may be the form of political system, man's insatiable hunger for power, selfishness and pleasure is supreme and he uses the existing systems and bends them to his advantage. There are good people like Puruhutu, Bandhulmal, Nagadatta, Prabha, Ashwaghosha, Suparna Yaudheya, Mangal Singh, Safdar, Sakina, Shankar, Sumer in Sankrityayana's stories, they try to bring about change, those changes are effective for some time but in the end human indulgence wins. A realistic picture has been painted by Sankatyayana.

Sankrityayana in the last story of Sumer expounded and endorsed the communism. The whole anthology is the Marxist Interpretation of history. Sumer opposes to the non-cooperation movement, and rejects to rot in the society as the lower castes - the 'Harijans', points out Ambedkar's limitations and advocates communism as the means to realize a utopian society of equality. Whatever may be the form of polity, the hunger for power, seeking epicurean pleasures at the expense of other's subjugation has been ingrained in human nature. Sumedh, and thereby Sankrityayan makes no comment on the essential error in human nature.

References

1. Rajwade, Vi. Ka., Indian History of Marriage Institution, page 16 https://marathipustake.org/Books/bharatiya_vivaha_sansthecha_itihaas.pdf