

Historicity of Amalgamation of ‘Matushka’ and ‘Maiya’: Based on Rahul Sankrityayan’s ‘Volga to Ganga’

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Abstract: *This research paper is a critical overview of ‘Volga to Ganga’ which has been one of the famous travel literatures by Rahul Sankrityayan, known as the Father of Hindi Travel literature. The decision to pick up the two major rivers Volga and Ganga shows a relation between the two. One relation is that both the rivers are accepted and recognised as the Mother Rivers. On one side in Russian culture Volga is called ‘Matushka’ which means Mother Volga whereas on other hand in Indian Culture Ganga is worshiped as ‘Maiya’ which means Mother Ganga. The book ‘Volga se Ganga’ is one of the classical historical fictions which were originally written in Hindi with the astonishing description along with the critical depths of the historical canvas. The works of Sankrityayan has guided the readers to have a new insight to the literature of travel literature.*

Keywords: Matushka, Volga, Ganga, Maiya, fiction, Aryans history

1. Introduction

The travel literature Volga to Ganga is a historical account of the successful evolution and migration of civilization in the subcontinent. Rahul Sankrityayan (1893–1963), he is truly known as the Father of Hindi Travel literature as he has played a pioneer role to grant travel writings a form of classical literature. He was one of the most widely travelled scholars who explored for forty-five years of his life away from his homeland. He travelled many unexplored places and gave his account in form of many travel writings. His description for his travelling experiences is taken as authentic and has enlightened the whole Hindi literature world. Some of his famous travel literature are ‘Tibbat me Sava varsha’, ‘Volga se Ganga’, ‘Meri Europe Yatra’, ‘Yatra Ke Panne’ and ‘Kinnar Desh Mein’, ‘Asia ke Durgam Bhukhando Mein’, ‘Athato Ghumakkad Jigyasa’.

Among his famous books in Hindi travel literature, one is ‘Volga Se Ganga’. Volga is the longest river of Russia whereas Ganga ranks the third in India. The decision to pick up the two major rivers Volga and Ganga shows a relation between the two. One relation is that both the rivers are accepted and recognised as the Mother Rivers. On one side in Russian culture Volga is called ‘Matushka’ which means Mother Volga whereas on other hand in Indian Culture Ganga is worshiped as ‘Maiya’ which means Mother Ganga.

The travel literature Volga se Ganga is one of the classical historical fiction which is originally written in Hindi with the overwhelming description along with the depths of the historical canvas. It can be taken as a complete historical account of the migration of the Aryans from Central Europe (Volga) to Bharatiya upmahadweep (Ganga) which stretched over about 20,000 years. The works of Sankrityayan has taught and enriched the readers and also gave a new look to the literature of travel writing. The book was basically published in Hindi in 1944 and later on translated in

English by Victor Kiernan in 1947. It is globally considered as a literary classic.

The Volga is the largest river in Europe based of discharge of water and watershed. The river flows through central Russia and submerges into the Caspian Sea and is regarded as the national river of Russia. Eleven of the twenty metro cities of Russia are located on the banks of Volga. The river Ganga is the third largest river in the India based on discharge of water. Ganga is a trans-county river of Asia and flows through the nations of India and Bangladesh. River Ganga originates from Gangotri, a glacier in the western Himalayas in the state of Uttarakhand. It flows across the Gangetic Plain of North India and pours its water into Bangladesh by name of ‘Padma’.

River Volga holds great sacred and symbolic importance in the culture of Russia and is often referred as Matushka-Volga (Mother Volga) in Russian literature and folklore. River Ganga too holds much more sacred importance in the culture of India. Ganga gets high place in the evolution of ‘Srishti’, Earth and is main character of the ‘Shiva Purana’. Ganga is referred to as Ganga-Maiya (Mother Ganga) in Indian literature and society. As per the Puranas, Ganga earlier used to flow in heaven and came to Earth to provide renunciation to hundreds of sons of King Sagar. King Bhagirath did immense worship and Ganga came to earth. Today Ganga is the most sacred river to Hindus. It is worshipped as the goddess Ganga in Hinduism.

The book, Volga Se Ganga (A journey from the Volga to the Ganges) shows one of the undiscovered facts about the migration of the Aryans. It shows the evolution of mankind beautifully tingled in short stories of historical fiction attached to the migration of Aryans from the mountain range steppes of the Eurasia to regions around the Gangetic plain. This book explores the history of the Aryans from the beginning of Aryans till the advent of the modern civilization. It seems as the reader takes the journey from

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6000 B.C to 1942 AD. It is about the history of Indo–Europeans who were later known as the Aryans. An anthology of 20 stories are woven which covered over the span of 8000 years and a distance of about 10,000 km.

Sometimes in the literary circles ‘Volga Se Ganga’ is taken as from Russia to India. It explores the history of Indo–European people who were later known as the Aryans in the Indian history. Although most of the stories are taken as fictional but in fact is considered as authentic source of information from the independent stories. It is beautifully woven over a span of 8000 years and a distance of about 10,000 km in twenty stories.

To begin with the very first chapter of the travel literature fiction, ‘Nisha’, is about cavemen living in south Russia, Caucasia in about 6000 BC. The society naturally and were matriarchal at that time. Hence, the story is subjected after the leader of the family, which is ‘Nisha’. All the stories are literally independent and are woven in a sequence in which they are organised and serves an important purpose. On in depth analysis one can find a literary depth and a steep transformation from a matriarchal society in first two stories, ‘Nisha’ (6000 B.C.) and ‘Diva’ (3500 B.C) to a systematic patriarchal society in the rest of mentioned stories. From ‘Amritashva’ (3000 B.C.) onwards the social change is visible. Reader can easily observe slavery taking over to freedom and finally from accepting the slavery from the cumbersome to likesome.

A feeling of apprehension for technological advancement is a bit shadowed down if the reader is to believe Sankrityayan. People were scrupulous and not accustomed of the tools which were substituting fast the older stone equipment as observed in the fourth story ‘Puruhoot’ (2500 B.C.). The story clearly mentions how the southerners accumulated the wealth at the expense of the people settled in north and the way the arms race gradually commenced during that era. The sixth story, ‘Angira’ (1800 BC) shows how a man decides and tries to save the Aryan race from shedding its individuality to other races by making them aware and acknowledging them their true culture referred to as the able precursor to Vedic Rishis. The eighth story, ‘Pravahan’ (700 B.C.) explores the fact after analysis as of how religion gradually became important to people and how the upper class along with priests manipulated religion for their own interests and conspired to keep lower class people in dark for at least 2000 years.

It also projects the development of human civilization and social fluctuations nicely carefully structured in religious pace. Vedas, Puranas, Brahmanas and Upanishads have been used as tools to manipulate Brahmanical religion. It shows that development of human civilization improved rationally and also projects how they successfully manipulated the scripts according to their intellect. Rahul Sankrityayan has very well reflected the inter mingling of the Indians and the Greeks in the times of Mauryan Empire in the tenth story ‘Nagdutta’ (335 B.C.). The attack of Alexander opened the trade routes thereby exposing the Indian culture to the Greek. It also shows how the mighty Athens fell to Macedonia following the philosophy of the philosopher classmate of Chanakya who travelled to Greece and Persia.

The story moves to an altogether different world in the period of Nagdutta where now a glimpse of Islamic trader’s arrival in India is mentioned. The eleventh story ‘Prabha’ (50 AD) describes the recognition of the famous and also projected as the first Indian dramatist Ashvaghosa who is well known for two classical epics i.e. Buddhcharitam and Saunderanand. It was he only who introduced the Greek school of drama into Indian culture in an artistic, classical and authentic way. ‘Baba Noordeen’ (1300 AD), the 15th story explores the historical facts on the rise of Sufism. The seventeenth ‘Rekha Bhagat’ (1800 AD) mentions the so called ‘Civilizing mission’ of the East India Company followed by the exploitation it brought to different regions of India. The final story ‘Sumer’ (1942 AD) moves and staggers to a different world telling story of how a man goes on to face the Japanese just because he wants to gain confidence of Soviets. According to him Soviet Russia was the nation which was the only hope left to save humanity.

If the readers observe critically it can be seen that, there is an interval of 642 years in between the fifteenth story ‘Baba Noordeen’ (1300 AD) to the final story ‘Sumer’ (1942 AD). The book reveals its class once observed the gradual evolution since the middle Ages till the present era. The evolution of social, political, economic and cultural trends is clearly expressed through the stories. Baba Noordeen, Rekha Bhagat, Mangal Singh and Sumer escorts us successfully from historical point of view presenting in such a soothing way that readers can easily feel the accomplishment and attachment with the whole journey. The stories have the essence of historical authenticity to such a great extent that it becomes nearly impossible to differentiate between fiction and history.

2. Conclusion

‘Volga Se Ganga’ is a literary classic with elucidative account of the evolution of Aryan civilization in the subcontinent. The book is a collection of as much as twenty historical fiction short stories. The book explores and defines the dynamics of the social relationship between the individual and society. It also explores the rise in complexity of society and the emotional and intellectual dimensions of a man’s reaction as they gradually evolved through time period. The considerable amount of learning has been picked up and the added progressive thoughts of the author increases essence of the literary fiction leaving the readers spellbound. It can be observed that Rahul Sankrityayan drew his own high standards for his own works to that level of excellence which cannot be challenged. There is no single unused or extra passage in the entire journey of man from Volga to Ganga.

Take the example of the first two stories which depicts the matriarchal nature of pre-historic times. One is named as Nisha, the head of a family and the second is Diva. The last story covers the time of 1942 and it is about a man's behaviour during the World War II. This was the time when Gandhiji have the famous slogan ‘Do or Die’ in the Quit India movement. This character of the story believed in communism in a fanatic way. The stories are independent of each other but somewhere they serve as a bridge towards

different cultures practiced in different places at different times.

Behind each single story of the writer, there is much substance with respect to that particular era which is rarely found in any of the comparative linguistics, world languages, stone, copper, Iron Age. Any symbolic or written literature, written or unwritten songs, stories or customs and sorcery or empiricism, all have been covered in a single book. In this way, this book has revealed its historical significance and its role to engulf social norms. It also it presents a sense of the attachment to the historical roots and much improves the understanding of the current socio-political environment.

The collection of stories of Rahul Sankrityayan is not only a heritage of Hindi fiction literature but also it cannot be denied that this particular work piece plays a vital role in many fields like sociology, political science and geography. The study of this book is much relevant and authentic for history even. The purpose to write this research paper is to provide brief information about 'Volga se Ganga' to learn through the factual parts of history and literature.

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