

AN INSIGHT INTO SOCIETY THROUGH KALIVIḌAMBANA

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ABSTRACT

The Kaliviḍambana or the 'Mockery of the Kali Age' is a wonderful work of Nīlakaṭṭhadīkṣita. Nīlakaṭṭhadīkṣita occupies a high position among the galaxy of Indian writers of eminence. In the work, a realistic picture of the society is met with. In the work, the author criticizes the immoralities prevailing in the Kali (present) age. The poet observed that different professionals of his time used fraud and deception in their professions. He depicts a degenerated society where people lead an immoral life. The poet uses satiric humour to expose hypocrisy prevailing in the society. The work attracts the attention of the readers due to its amazing insights about the society presented with lively humour.

Keywords: Society, Kaliviḍambana

1. INTRODUCTION

Nīlakaṭṭhadīkṣita the author of *Kaliviḍambana* lived in the 17th century A.D. He was active at the court of Tirumalai Nāyaka of Madurai. He was the son of Nārāyaṇadīkṣita and grandson of Āccāndīkṣita II, brother of the well-known poet Appayadīkṣita. Nīlakaṭṭhadīkṣita was a prolific writer. As many as eighteen works are known to have been composed by him. He was a great scholar. The *Kaliviḍambana* is a small poetical work of Nīlakaṭṭhadīkṣita. The *Kaliviḍambana* is a work in 102 verses. Kali means Kali Age and *viḍambana* means mockery. In the poem, the poet mocks the society of Kali Age. The work reflects his own observation. The work provides a catalogue of fallen characters. The poem exposes different professionals who used trickery and deception in their professions. Some of them include astrologers, physicians, scholars etc.

In the work, the author depicts a society where a scholar (*paṇḍita*) can triumph in a meeting by sheer shouting. The author says it in a humorous way that scholars should neither be afraid nor try to understand the opposite man's point of view, but win through by sheer shouting.¹ It is observed that during his time a academician won the debate by praising the king. It was not necessary for the scholar to have expertise in particular subject. If the mediator was not learned enough then one can win by shouting and if the mediator was learned then accused him of partiality. Nīlakaṇṭhadikṣita observed that monetary gain was the motive of the people of his time.

The poet in a humorous way says that one desiring success should have the primary quality of having overcome modesty and then should have power to make noise.² It was no matter whether one may gain real knowledge or not but one tried to gain fame by teaching and writing books. The author depicts a society where people tried to victory over a debate without gaining true knowledge but by making noise or shouting. They were not interested in gaining fame by acquiring true knowledge because it takes long time. They tried to obtain it by taking the easier route- writing books.

The author also ridicules the fool by saying that no one will praise him if he does not do it himself. ³ It is observed that during his time, teachers were not ready to teach. For the poet, if a teacher instructs a student to study well, then there will be no difficulties in learning a text. It was good luck for a foolish teacher that students always have blind faith on him.

In the poem, Sorcerers (*māṇtrikāḥ*) are also ridiculed by the author. The author satirically says that if one fails to master any branch of learning in a regular manner, there is no harm; one can become māṇtrikas, yogins or at least ascetics.⁴ According to the author, when success is immediate, sorcerers become celebrities; when there is a delay, extortionate rituals are prognosticated and they make money.⁵ For the author, mantra sorcerers are lucky because their livelihood benefit from both the happiness of the well-to-do and the pain of the villains.⁶ The Sorcerers of his time always remained quiet because he knew nothing.

In the society, Astrologers (*daivajñāḥ*) are very clever in expounding and foretelling things. The author satirizes those astrologers who instead of calculating the movements of the planets, always foretells after consulting the spies.⁷ Again, if someone asks about the sex of the future child, the astrologer wins their confidence by prediction. For a father the reply would be in favour of a son; for a lady, the reply would be in favour of a daughter.⁸ Moreover, if one asks about the length of life, the astrologer predicts a long life. By such a reply, those who are alive will naturally be pleased. Even if the person concerned dies, there is no harm because those who are dead will never ask the astrologer as to why prediction went wrong.⁹ Therefore, the author bitterly expresses his feeling that this earth is not free from astrologers. It reflects his concern for the society.

The poet also depicts a society where the physicians (*bhīṣajāḥ*) prescribes medicine but with a difficult diet to follow so that if the patient recovers it is by the greatness of the physician and if not, due to the non-observance of the diet.¹⁰ Physicians becomes happy and considers it as a fortune if someone suffers from prolonged incurable disease.

The author also condemns the poets (*kāvyaḥ*) who always praise those things which are already praised. According to the author, they are not in fact appreciative of virtues.¹¹ Therefore, according to the author, the poets who always praise vile, twisting everything with their empty talk cannot find salvation.

The author also makes criticism of the relatives (*bandhavah*) of his time. According to him, sons-in-law, nephews, maternal uncles and relatives of wife eat in the house-holder's home like mouse without his knowledge.¹²

The author also depicts a son-in-law of his time for whom it is an easy ride if his wife is the eldest daughter, a brother-in-law who is a child, a stubborn mother-in-law and father-in-law is outside the homeland.¹³ A daughter also loots her home and departs with jewellery, garments etc. The author clarifies that two wives, many children, poverty, and disease-each one is worse than the hell.¹⁴

The author also depicts a society where money lenders (*uttamaṛṇāḥ*) are seen as ghosts. In the work, the author depicts the nature of a money lender. According to him, even the god of death waits the last days of creatures but there is no time limit whatever for the money lenders to demand back the debt owed to him.¹⁵ No one can see sharp teeth in his mouth, nor does a snare in his clenched hand, even so, as soon as the money lender is spotted the mind becomes agitated. Therefore, the author says that when a money lender is remembered, the arms hang loose, when he is seen, the spirit vanishes.¹⁶

The author also describes the rich (*dhaninah*) who always think ordinary people to be worms. They always make fun of learned people and consider themselves as god. According to him, the rich people become egoistic as soon as prosperity increases. Though they can hear, though they see, they do not recognize others. They are ever lauded by those who ought to praise, he is served by those deserving his service, and despite this the wealthy men know no fear and no shame. The author bitterly expresses that the goddess of wealth lends a helping hand for a month or perhaps for a fortnight and then withdraws but the change she brings lasts forever, like the smell of garlic.¹⁷ But the author observes that when a rich person looks like a beggar no one cares.¹⁸

The author compares a greedy person (*lobhinah*) with ghost. He says that a ghost like greedy person never give anything to others.

The author satirizes the pious (*dhārmikāḥ*) for whom if the *mantra* is wrong, it is 'a tradition', when there are lapses in the rites, it is 'an applied procedure', when the behaviour is improper, it is 'a local custom'-this is the effective answer to those who protest. According to the author, remaining in the river until midday, worshipping the gods in public gatherings, always wearing a religious costume, it is nothing but hypocrisy.¹⁹

In the last of the work, the author makes criticism of the wicked people (*durjanāḥ*) of his time prevailing in the society. The author says that, if someone gives punishment to them, they become worse, on the other hand if someone shows kindness to them it makes them more worse. Wicked people always want something from others. If he gets little then becomes angry. If someone stops to give him then he goes to his wicked nature. For the poet one should not make relationship with such people. The poet points out that marital alliance with the son and daughter of the wicked people leads only to ruin. Therefore, the poets warns all to beware of wicked people.²⁰

2. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is observed that Nīlakaṇṭhadīkṣita has pointed out to all the evil practices existing in the Kali (present) age. A realistic picture of the society is met with in the work. He has brought under virulent criticism all the people belonging to different categories. The author says that just as the whole

scorpion terrifies living beings with the poison attached to its tail, so the whole of Time terrifies living beings with its tenth part, the Kali era.²¹

The author satirically praises the Kali era, where the words of the wife are the Veda, where religion is a means to making money, where one's own intellect is the authority-

yatra bhāryā giro vedā yatra dharmo'rthasadhanam/
yatra svapratibhā mānam tasmai śrīkalaye namaḥ// ²²

The satirical comments of Nīlakaṇṭhadīkṣita seem to remain relevant even to the professions of the present day. The author himself says that he composed the work specifically for the amusement of the royal court, as such, it was presumably intended as warning to the audience-

kavinā nīlakaṇṭhena kaler etad viḍambanam/
racitam viduṣām prītyai rājāsthānānumodanam// ²³.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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na bhetavyam na boddhavyam na śrāvyam vādinō vacaḥ/
jhaṭiti prativaktavyam sabhāsu vijigīṣubhiḥ// Kaliviḍambana .1
jigīṣunā hriyam tyaktvā kāryaḥ kolāhalo mahān/ ibid.5
stotāraḥ ke bhaviṣyanti mūrkhasya jagatītale/
na stauti cet svayam ca svam kadā tasyāstu nirvṛtiḥ// ibid.7
yadi na kvāpi vidyāyām sarvathā kramate matiḥ/
māntrikāstu bhaviṣyāmo yogino yatayo'pi vā// ibid.10
avilambe kṛtyasiddhau māntrikairāpyate yaśas/
vilambe karmabāhulyam vikhyāpyābāpyate dhanam//ibid.11
sukham sukhiṣu duḥkham ca jīvanam duḥkhaśāliṣu/
anugrahāyate yeṣām te dhanyā khalu māntrikāḥ// ibid.12
cārān vicārya daivajñairvaktavyam bhūbhujām phalam/
grahaacāra pariññanam teṣām āvaśyakaṁ yataḥ// ibid.14
putra ityeva pitari kanyaketyeva mātari/
garvaprāṇeṣu kathayan daivajñō vijayī bhavet// ibid. 15
āyuh praṇe dīrghamāyurvācyam mauhūrtikairjanaiḥ/
jivanto bahumanyante mṛtāḥ prakṣanti kaṁ punaḥ// ibid.16
bhaiṣajyam tu yathākāmaṁ patthyam tu kathinam vadet/
arogyam vaidyamāhātmyād anyathātvanapathyataḥ// ibid.25
stutam stuvanti kavayo na svato guṇadarśinaḥ// ibid.35
jāmātāro bhagineyā mātulā dārabāndhavāḥ/
ajnātā eva gr̥hiṇām bhakṣayantyākhuvad gr̥he// ibid.42
bhāryā jyeṣṭhā śisuḥ śyālāḥ svaśruḥ svātantrya vartinī/
śvaśurastu pravāsī ca jāmātur bhāgya kāraṇam// ibid.45
bhārye dve bahavaḥ putrā dāridryam roga sambhavaḥ/
jīrṇau ca mātāpitarau ekaikaṁ narakādhikam// ibid.49
antako'pi hi jantūnām antakālam apekṣate/ ibid.51

na paśāmo mukhe daṁṣṭrām na pāśaṁ vā karāṅcale/
uttamarṇaṁ avekṣyeeva tathāpyudvijate// ibid. 52, 59-65
dhanabhāro hi lokasya piśunaireva dhāryate/
kathaṁ te taṁ laghūkartuṁ yatante'parathā svataḥ// ibid. 70
āmadhyāhnaṁ nadīvāsaḥ samāje devatārcanaṁ/
satataṁ śuciveśaścetyetad dambhasya jīvitaṁ// ibid. 91
daṇḍtamānā vikurvanti lālyamānāṣtatastarām/
durjanānāmato nyāyyaṁ dūrād eva visarjanaṁ// ibid. 94
viṣeṇa puccha lagnena vṛścikaḥ prāṇinām iva/
kalinā daśamāṁśena sarvaḥ kālo'pi dāruṇaḥ// ibid. 99

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