CHAPTER - I

CREATIVE APPROACHES

TO THE CHARACTERS OF THE MAHABHARATA

BY MADHUSUDAN
CHAPTER - I
CREATIVE APPROACHES
TO THE CHARACTERS OF THE MAHABHARATA
BY MADHUSUDAN

1.00 INTRODUCTION

Michael Madhusudan Dutta is a prominent name in the History of Bengali literature. In his childhood, he used to hearken to the treatises authored by Krittibas, Kashiram Das etc. that were told to him by his mother. Later, that youngster who was a student of Hindu College, joined the 'Young Bengal' Movement and thus his unconventional demeanour had stunned everyone. As he got enriched with the assiduous study of Sanskrit literature, particularly of Greek literature enabled him to attain the profundity. During his sojourn in Madras, the essays and articles written by this intellectual genius were published in various magazines and journals. Although he had a long-cherished desire to attain fame as a great poet of English language, yet the poesy as well as the plays penned by himself in Bengali helped him attain great success. In that connection, various characters of the epic *Mahabharata* have been included in the writings of Madhusudan.

Now, we are going to discuss the transition of some of the
characters of the *Mahabharata* from the original text of the epic to the portrayal of those characters by Madhusudan, i.e., the extent of modification of those characters as depicted in the writings of Madhusudan as well as the extent of his fidelity to the original text, along with the explanation of the reasons behind the transition as well.

### 1.01 Gandhari

The epistle *Dhritarashtra Prati Gandhari*, composed by Madhusudan, was based on the character of Gandhari in the *Mahabharata*. It is an incomplete poem. It is one of those epistles which Madhusudan had begun to compose for the second volume of the poesy titled *Virangana*.

This poem, composed by Madhusudan, indicates that a divine mandate made Gandhari accept Dhritarashtra, the born-blind Kuru prince, as her husband, but this inference has not been drawn by Madhusudan with absolute fidelity to the original text. This incident is not found even in the Bengali version of the *Mahabharata* by Kashiram Das.

The aforementioned epistle penned by Madhusudan depicts the episode of binding Gandhari's eyes with a piece of dark silk for the
whole life because of her marriage with the sightless king.¹

However, this drastic and inhuman decision taken by Gandhari has been evened up her deportment at the very next moment as the way it has been depicted through the versification done by Madhusudan.

In the second phase of the epistle, Gandhari addresses the entire realm of Nature and laments that although she would no longer be able to look at them, yet she would never forget them.² Here, her irresistible allurement to Nature is active behind the subdued undercurrent of plaint in Gandhari's inner mind. This strain of Nature-worship is a modernistic feature of the poesy composed by Madhusudan. The portrayal of Gandhari's character by Madhusudan reveals this trait of sensibility in this female protagonist whereas this particular trait cannot be found in the portrayal of the same protagonist in the version of the epic by Vedavyasa. Here Madhusudan’s creative genius is reflected through the novel portrayal of the character of Gandhari of the Mahabharata.

---

1. ‘তত্তঃ সা পটুমাদায় কৃত্তা বহুগুণ শুভা।
বর্ণন নেত্রে সে রাজন। পতিত্রতপরাধী
নাতিশিশু পরিত্যাখিনী যশোমরিন্দ্র।’

[Then Gandhari, the extremely devoted wife, herself determined not to outmatch her husband bound her eyes with a piece of silk after folding it many times.]

Haridas Siddhantabagish, (tr.), Mahabharatam, Adiparva, 104.14, P. 1202.

2. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Ranchanavali, PP. 211-222.
Till Nineteenth Century, Nature was used in Bengali literature merely as a device, acting as the back drop of the love-affair between the chief male and female protagonist. During the Nineteenth Century, Nature was used in Bengali literature although the influence of the west triggered the trait of love for Nature in the poems composed by the Bengali poets. That very trait has been revealed in the portrayal of the character of Gandhari by Madhusudan. In this poem, Michael has dexterously expressed the keen anguish of this pious protagonist in depriving herself of the visual enjoyment of the beauty of Nature forever, just before wrapping her eyes as an exemplary act of devotion to her sightless husband. This poetic stroke evinces the humanist and creative outlook of the poet.

To some critic, the moment of the parting of Gandhari from the sensuous beauty of this world appears to be a pleasant as well as a doleful one. The reason behind this observation should be explored. If we glance over the personal life of the poet, we may observe that at the time of composing the poesy Virangana, Madhusudan did his utmost to become a barrister. That indicates his fervent passion for the attainment of the self-identity such as Michael M.S. Dutt, Bar-at-Law, instead of being known to be a poet. Hence, some critic thus opines in context of the rebuilding of this character,

[ Doesn't this line reflect the parting strain of the poet willfully from this aesthetic world?]

Besides, in the epic the *Mahabharata*, the least sensual weakness is perceptible in the act of binding her own eyes as the chaste and devoted wife of her born-blind husband. On the other hand, Madhusudan's portrayal of the same protagonist reflects the deep anguish in the innermost compartment of Gandhari's mind for the ensuing dissociation from the aesthetic beauty of the natural world. This protagonist, Gandhari, as she is portrayed by Madhusudan, is much more human and natural. Through the resuscitation of a mythological female protagonist, Michael has discarded our long-cherished and conventional concept of a chaste woman and outclassed that concept by introducing the ensign of Humanism. This cardinal trait of Renaissance–Humanism assumed the dignity and central position of human beings in the world led to the extolment of the human beings as a slogan for the Renaissance. In this way, Madhusudan added a new dimension to the epic titled the *Mahabharata* through his portrayal of Gandhari's character.

1.02 DRAUPADI

In the epistle titled *Arjuner Prati Draupadi* of the poesy titled *Virangana*, Draupadi appears to be an aggrieved ladylove who gives vent to her pent-up grief.

During the *Vanaparva*, a remark made by Draupadi to Yudhisthira in their sojourn at the Kamyaka forest is worth mentioning:

```
'হোহজ্জুনেনাঙ্জুনস্তলো' দিবাহ্বরহাটনা।
তমূতে পাওকাশষঠং বনং ন প্রতিভাতি মে ॥

শূন্যামিব চ পশ্যামি তত্র তত্ত মহীমিমম।
বহরাশচ্যামিকণ্ঠাপি বনং কুসুমিতজ্জম।
ন তথা রমণীয়ং বৈ তমূতে সবাসাচিনম।॥

নীলাঞ্জুচঞ্জরখ্যং মোতমাতসবিক্রমম।
তমূতে পূণ্যীকাঙ্ক্ষঃ কাম্যক্ষঃ নাতিভাবি মে ॥

যস্য স্ম ধনুধো হোতঃ শ্রায়তেহশলিনিভো।
ন ললে শখ্রু বৈ রাজন! তং স্মারস্তি কিরীতিনম।॥
```

[I don't like this forest without the companionship of the exemplary Pandava scion who, with his two hands is competent enough to beat Kartaviryarjuna who has as many as hundred hands.

Without the company of Arjuna, this world seems to be a bleak one, while this forest which is abound with extraordinary and blossoming trees, fails to attract me even with all its beauty.

"Without the company of Arjuna whose dusky complexion is just like a cloud saturated with water and who is as vigourous as a must elephant and whose eyes are as beautiful as lotus, this Kamyaka forest is not befitting enough to allure myself.

Your Majesty! whenever I remember Arjuna whose distinctive twang made by his bowstring seemed to me as the sound of a thunderbolt, I am unable to feel comfortable any longer.]

Similarly, in the epistle Arjuner Prati Draupadi penned by Madhusudan too, Draupadi is worried for Arjuna and thus says,

‘...অঞ্চল বিশ্ব এ গোল্ডা নয়নে,
ধার্ম রে, অঞ্চল নাথ, তোমার বিরহে —
জীবন্তা, রবীন্তা, মহারণ্য যেন!'

[O, Master, in your absence the whole universe appears to be dark, lifeless, soundless and like a great forest in my eyes.] The portrayal of Draupadi by Madhusudan does not contradict the portrayal of Draupadi in the original text of the Mahabharata.

While this female protagonist appears as the brainchild of ______

Madhusudan, in the epistle she raises the context of the splitting of the bow of Shiva into two and also that of the 'Svayamvara', i.e., the act of choosing of one's bridegroom oneself from amongst a number of invited suitors of Sita, again she has confused herself with Sita by expressing her desire to choose her husband following another similar incident of the splitting of the bow again. But this incident lacks absolute fidelity to the original text. This incident reflects the influence of the narrative of *Brahmavaivarta Purana* that was contemporaneously popular. Since that narrative states that in her previous birth Draupadi was the daughter of a sage and the same Draupadi appears as the Vedavati of the *Ramayana*. Again, in the Dvapara Age, Draupadi, the daughter of Drupada, appears as that delusive Sita.

In the royal court where the 'Svayamvara Sabha' was held, a host of valorous royal warriors encircled Arjuna, and Arjuna assured Draupadi, while his words of assurance were regarded with great esteem as the worthy sacred hymns by herself which are as follows:-

'আশারাপে মৌর পাশে দাঁড়াও, রূপসি!
দ্বিগুণ বাড়িবে বল চতুর্মুখ হেরি

```
(16)
```

7. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P. 159
8. Kalikishore Vidyabinod (tr.), *Sri Sri Brahmavaivarta Purana*, P. 133.
[Stand by my side, oh the charming lady! Your moon-like countenance will doubly embolden my vigour! Is anyone able to rob the king of snakes of its precious jewel on its head till it is alive?]

The memory of the aforementioned amorous words suffuses Draupadi's letter with her tears. The way the character of Draupadi is delineated in this letter, does not match the characterization of Draupadi in the epic, the *Mahabharata* rather, the portrayal of Draupadi here is pleasant with the impact of the much softer and much delicate trait common to a typical Bengali woman. Besides, in the original text of the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna had never talked to Draupadi in the Svayamvara Sabha whereas Madhusudan has prompted the protagonist to deliver amorous dialogues. The poetic genius as well as the creative imagination of Madhusudan contributes to this novelty. The seed of this great potential of creative imagination and poetic talent was sown long before, in his very childhood in the stillness of the rural retreat by the river Kapotaksha with shady trees and lush green vegetation around it. Apart from this, the narratives

of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Kabikankanachandi*, *Annadamangala* etc. that he used to hearken in his childhood, had also kindled his imagination and poetic quality to a great extent.

The portrayal of Draupadi's character by Madhusudan, reveals the trail of an indistinct distrustfulness\(^{10}\) for her husband, that was caused by the lack of the liberal trustfulness as well as her sense of duty. But the portrayal of Draupadi by Vedavyasa is devoid of this trait. It is true that, both the character-sketches of Draupadi by Vedavyasa and Madhusudan appear outwardly similar, since

\[\text{‘উভয়েই সেই হিন্দুরমণীর ‘সনাতন পাতিত্বতা’, সেই ধর্মপরামর্শতা, সেই রাজপদাভিলাষ, সেই মহত্ত্ব।’}^{11}\]

[Both the character-sketches possess the very traits of a typical Hindu woman, such as the eternal sense of loyalty to the husband and that of piousness, that desire for Royalty, that greatness.] But, a sincere study reveals the fact that the portrayal of Draupadi by Madhusudan points out many such aspects that are absent in the portrayal of the same protagonist by Vyasa. In this portrayal of Draupadi by Madhusudan, the beauty of Draupadi cannot be equalled with that peerless beauty which is a blend of suavity and firmness

\(^{10}\) Bishnu Basu (ed.), *Madhusudaner Sahitya : Sekaler Alochana*, P. 164.

and hence is befitting the better-half of Arjuna, the great archer and warrior, possessing the Gandiva, the mythological bow. Thus, Madhusudan has marred the beauty of Draupadi's character by adding the traits of tenderness and suavity which are distinctive of a Bengali woman, to it. Draupadi, as she is portrayed in the Vedavyasa's version of the *Mahabharata*, appears to be aware of the fact that her husband, Arjuna, had set out for his celestial journey to master the usage of the celestial supernatural weapons needed for the ensuing crusade, and instead of interrupting him in his activities, the duty of a befittingly virtuous wife is rather to encourage her husband in making his endeavour a fruitful one. Hence, nowhere in the *Mahabharata* penned by Vedavyasa, we notice Draupadi either to hinder the activities of her husband or to distrust her husband. But the portrayal of Draupadi by Michael lacks that epical trait of broadmindedness and sense of duty. A critic thus interprets:

‘ব্যাসের দ্রৌপদী-এ-রূপ নহেন। বৈর নির্যাতনের নিমিত্ত অক্ষ শিক্ষার্থ
স্বামী ইদ্রলোক গিয়াছেন, সে পর্যন্ত দ্রৌপদী বিরহে কাতরা হইলেও
kর্ত্তব্যের তাহার এত প্রবল যে, পতিক্রিয়াতে অন্যায় সন্দেহে বা বিরহানল
নিবাইবার জন্য স্বামীকে সৰ্গ হইতে ফিরাইয়া আনিতে তিনি প্রস্তুত

নহেন।’

[The image of Draupadi created by Vyasa is quite different from this one. She has been stricken with estrangement since her parting from Arjuna following the latter's journey to the 'Indraloka' in order to undergo a training in operating the weapons for vanquishing his antagonists, yet she is so dutiful that she is not ready to bring her husband back by breaking in on his celestial sojourn even after being distrustful of his character, or just to soothe her estranged soul.]

It can be noticed in the character of Draupadi as it is depicted in the epistle titled *Virangana* that a sense of fear worked on her mind lest the celestial nymphs would forcibly take possession of her husband there. But, this deportment of Draupadi should not be the only hallmark of Madhusudan reflecting the enlightened poetic mind of the Renaissance. Another poetic quest acted behind the portrayal of this female protagonist by Madhusudan which had earlier been depicted by Vyasa in his epic - i.e, whether any crisis regarding the clash of social laws and the heartfelt emotions was created in the personality of this woman.

Madhusudan discovered the root cause of the struggle within the heart of Draupadi from the incident of Draupadi's death\(^\text{13}\) for the vice of partiality. In consequence of it, a poem titled *Hari Parvate Draupadir Mrityu*, of the collection of quatorzains named

---

\(^{13}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Mahaprasthanikaparva*, 2.7 P. 13.
Chaturdasapadi Kavitavali was composed by Madhusudan. The dry and lifeless mythological facts being animated with the heartfelt truth has been solidified here. Madhusudan adopts a totally humanist attitude and outlook here. Unlike Bankim Chandra, he was not theoretical in his approach. He wanted to portray the 'Yajnaseni' of the Mahabharata as a real woman of flesh and blood who is a lovelorn one like Radhika. Hence, an esoteric truth of Draupadi's amorous self is revealed in the wide backdrop of her courtship and marital love. A critic's comment may thus substantiate it:

[In this long letter, the centre of attraction is the jesting nature of Draupadi, her self-sacrifice, her sentimental nature and at the same time her deep love as well as her latent trait of suspicion, her devotion to her husband as well as her act of shedding tears when she is estranged from her husband, which leads to the complicated and conflicting personality of a female protagonist.]

Draupadi of the *Mahabharata* has been created in a new form and with a fresh spirit in the backdrop of modern life. Hence, the novel and fresh approach to the portrayal of the character of Draupadi of the *Mahabharata*, reflects the hallmark of his creativity.

### 1.03. SUBHADRA

The *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* contains the episode of Subhadra where Arjuna was attracted by her charm and eloped her at the instance of Krishna.\(^{15}\)

But, the lines of the poem *Subhadra* composed by Madhusudan are as follows:

"पशिला निशाय हासि मंदिरे सुन्दरी
सत्याभामा, साथे भड्रा, फुल-माला करेन।"\(^{16}\)

[The beautiful Satyabhama entered the temple, accompanied by Bhadra who had a garland of flowers in her hand.]

However, Vyasa's account does not contain any such line, although the aforesaid lines have resemblance with the account of Kashiram Das\(^ {17}\) according to which, the poet emphasises the carnal

\(^{15}\) i. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 212.15-23, PP. 2026-2028

\(^{16}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P.186.

\(^{17}\) Kashiram Das (tr.), *Mahabharat*, P. 228.
desire:

‘তুমি পার্থ ভাগ্য-বলে জাগিলা সুক্ষ্ণে
মরতে স্রোত-ভোগ ভোগিতে সোহাগে।’

[O, Partha, fortunately you woke up at a favourable moment to enjoy the heavenly feeling of amorous caress in this mortal world].

The aforesaid account is devoid of any subtle and tender human faculty. According to a critic, “মধুসূদনের এই বর্ণনায় মহাকাব্যের যুগের দেহমিলনের আকাঙ্ক্ষাই রূপ পেয়েছে।”

[This account by Madhusudan is the embodiment of the fulfillment of the carnal desire which was prevalent in the epical era].

1.04 DURYODHANA

The Souptikaparva contains the episode of the dying Duryodhana, and Madhusudan has composed a poem based on the Kuru-king in a dying state.

The poem describes the extremely deteriorating condition of Duryodhana when he was taken out of the camp. When Kripacharya

20. i. Haridas Sidhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatam, Souptikaparva, 1.1-43, PP. 1-10.
was about to lay a cloth on the ground, Duryodhana forbade him from doing so, and preferred rather to sit on that bare earth that had held him when he had come out of his mother's womb. Duryodhana humbly added that he would not be able to sit on the covered ground since the great warriors like Karna, Dronacharya, Bhishma etc. were lying on that bare ground in the eternal sleep.21

This protagonist, as is presented by Madhusudan as the kind, great and humble Duryodhana, is not found in the *Mahabharata* penned by Vedavyasa. And the aforesaid incident too, lacks the absolute fidelity to the original text, and even the rendering by Kashiram Das too does not contain that incident. Not only that, the protagonist Duryodhana as is portrayed by Madhusudan, repents that he has summoned all the kings to this battlefield only to invite their death and thus has made the whole realm devoid of the Kshatriyas and it is nothing but his wrong-doing that has led to this destruction. Hence, every deed of earnest attention upon him is in vain. But the same protagonist portrayed by Vedavyasa is never seen to be a repentant of his previous misdeeds. The creation of this very trait of the protagonist named Duryodhana is distinctive of Madhusudan. And here, Madhusudan is creative. Yet, the specific traits distinctive of this protagonist portrayed by Vyasa such as undauntedness, conceit

etc. are also possessed by the same protagonist portrayed by Madhusudan which is reflected in Duryodhana's comment that he is never scared of the death of a valiant warrior in the battlefield, since it has been his long-cherished desire.\textsuperscript{22}

Here, the deportments of Duryodhana is truly regal and befitting. Even in the last moment of his life, the conceited Duryodhana declares himself to be the pillar of the glorious stately mansion of the whole Kshatriya tribe; but his downfall leads to the demolition of that stately mansion. The blazing Pandava camp makes him think that the moon has assumed a crimson hue while mourning over his dying state.\textsuperscript{23}

This trait, reflecting the Nature's response to the mourning humans is an influence of the Western literature on the poet here. According to poet Wordsworth, Nature is ever-sympathetic for the human beings. Hence, Wordsworth fancies the moon setting when Lucy passes away,\textsuperscript{24} i.e., the setting or declining of the moon makes the poet apprehend the death of Lucy. Similarly, the protagonist, Duryodhana's imagination of the crimson hue of the moon due to the mourning over the dying state of himself is in keeping with Wordsworthian imagination. And, from this point of view, Madhusudan is truly creative in his portrayal of the character of Duryodhana of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), \textit{Madhusudan Rachanavali}, P. 218.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, P. 218.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Willam Wordsworth, William Wordsworth Poems, P. 11.
\end{itemize}

(25)
In the poem composed by Madhusudan, the language as well as the style through which the protagonist, Duryodhana represents the Nature, reflects a mellow, passionate ardour for the Nature and at the same time implicates the self-reflection. Hence, it is properly said:

‘কবি সব আভরণ পরিত্যাগ করে উৎসের দিকে ফিরেছেন যেখানে মাতা বসুদেবরা জীবনের সব যন্ত্রণা করুণকোমল হতে লুপ্ত করেছেন। দেহের মৃত্যু এখনও দূরে। কিন্তু কবিতাম্বার অবসান অতি নিকট। তিনি তার অনুভব করেছিলেন। দুর্ঘোঁরনের মৃত্যুর মধ্যে নিজের আত্মার সমাপ্তিকাল কবি দেখতে পেয়েছেন।’

[The poet has reverted to the origin of his own, after renouncing all his ornamentation and embellishments, where the Mother Earth rids him of all his agonies of life with Her kind and tender healing touch. … his physical death is still a remote one, but the end of the poetic soul is approaching and it is felt by the poet himself. The poet envisages the closing phase of his own soul through the tragic end of Duryodhana.]
1.05 ARJUNA

The repeated mention of the protagonist, Arjuna, the third one of the Pandava quintet, has been done by Madhusudan. The poem titled *Gogriharane* is based on an account of a battle\(^{26}\) from the *Virataparva* of the *Mahabharata*, where the poet is faithful to the epical portrayal of Arjuna's valour when Arjuna fought in guise of Brihannala the eunuch who was the charioteer of prince Uttara in a battle against the army of Duryodhana in order to rescue the herd of sixty thousand cows from the cowsheds of the Virata kingdom which were stolen by their enemies. The following lines of the poem reflect Madhusudan's faithfulness to the original text:

'জহুঞ্জারি টঞ্চারিলা ধনু: ধনুজারী

dনজঞ্জয়, মুত্তুজঞ্জয় প্রলয়ে যেমতি।'\(^{27}\)

[The exultant Arjuna roared and made a twang of his Gandiva's bowstring like an immortal facing any great disaster]

The poem titled *Urvashi* penned by Michael contains the episode\(^{28}\) of the heavenly nymph Urvashi and Arjuna. The poet here portrays Arjuna as a continent person and he does it with an absolute fidelity to the original text. Besides, also in the poem titled *Kirata-

\(^{26}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, PP. 183-186.
\(^{27}\) Ibid, P. 185.
the poet, Madhusudan addresses Arjuna and thus advises him:

‘कि लाज, अर्जुन, कह हारिले ए रणे?
मृत्युयो रिपु तब, तुमि रथि, नर!’

[Be not ashamed, O Arjuna, despite your defeat in this battle - since your antagonist himself is deathless, while you are a mere mortal before him, O warrior!]

It is mentioned in the Mahabharata that, Arjuna had failed to vanquish the Kirata, i.e., the hunter, despite the former's rare courage and prowess. Later, when Arjuna became able to propitiate Mahadeva by chanting the hymns in praise of the latter and expressed his desire to obtain 'Pashupata', the fierce weapon of Shiva, then the propitiated Mahadeva in guise of the Kirata granted Arjuna that weapon and taught Arjuna the exclusive application and restraint of the weapon itself.

The valorous trait of Arjuna attracts the creative self of Michael, and this trait of valour reflects the poet’s faithfulness to the original text.

1.06 DUHSHALA

The Mahabharata authored by Vedavyasa contains the name of Duhshala. According to someone

[She is introduced as the only daughter of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari and the youngest sister of Duryodhana.]

An epistle of Madhusudan reveals that, subsequent to the killing of Abhimanyu, Arjuna vowed vengeance on Jayadratha and that made Jayadratha's wife Duhshala so much panicked that she wrote a letter to her husband Jayadratha.

Duhshala originally belonged to the Kuru lineage. One afternoon, when she sat at the foot of her blind father and was listening to the commentaries on the battle of Kurukshetra by Sanjaya, she suddenly came to know the grave vow of Arjuna, i.e., Arjuna would kill Jayadratha the following day to avenge the merciless killing of Abhimanyu. This is the incident on which the epistle on Duhshala was composed by Madhusudan.

Madhusudan's epistle points out that although she was well-aware\(^{32}\) of the heinous crimes committed by her husband, this woman was so blind to her husband's fault, that she blames her elder brother Duryodhana alone.\(^{33}\) She reminds her husband of the courageous feats

---

33. Ibid, P. 165.
and achievements of Arjuna and thus beseeches Jayadratha to retreat from the battlefield, and finally she appeals the king to leave the battlefield for the sake of his son:

‘তুলে যদি থাক মোরে, ভূল না লন্দনে,
সিন্ধুপতি; মনিভৃদ্ধে ভূল না, নৃমণি!’\(^{34}\)

[My Lord, you may have forgotten me, but you should not forget your only child, only son Manibhadra, O the king of Sindhu!]

Her anxiety and apprehension present a strange contrast in her words spoken to her husband:

‘কাহারে ডাও তুমি, সিন্ধুদেশ পতি?
কে সে পার্থ? কি সামর্থ্য তাহার নাশিতে
তোমায়?’\(^{35}\)

[Why are you ashamed of retreating from the battlefield to face Partha who has vanquished even the Gods? Who are you afraid of, O the king of Sindhudesha? Who's that Partha? Is he powerful enough to kill you?]

This undaunted spirit of Duhshala as portrayed by Madhusudan can also be discovered in the Jaimini Bharata where Jaimini also portrays her as a woman who is not frightened of the prowess of

\(^{34}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali P. 166.
\(^{35}\) Ibid, P. 166.
Arjuna, where that bereaved mother speaks to Krishna after disregarding Arjuna:

‘...অজুন আমায় স্বামীহইন, পুত্রহইন ও রাজাহইন করিয়া অশ্ব গাভী
পদানের প্রলোভন প্রদর্শনপূর্বক পুনরায় হত্তিনায় যাইতে অনুরোধ
করিতেছেন।’

[After making me bereft of my husband, of my son and my kingdom, Arjuna requests me to go back to Hastina and tries to allure me by giving me horses and cows in charity.]

Madhusudan has been influenced here both by Jaimini and Vyasa, while portraying the character of Duhshala. Hence, the portrayal of Duhshala in the epistle from Virangana is to some extent similar to the same protagonist portrayed in the Jaimini Bharata, when in a dauntless manner she assures her husband and also says,

‘ছুদবেশে রাজাদারে থাকিব দাঙ্গায়ে
নিশ্চিতে, থাকিবে সঙ্গে নিপুণিকা সখী,
লয়ে কোলে মনাত্মকে | এসো ছুদবেশে,
না কঙ্গে কাহারে কিছু! অবিলম্বে যাব
এ পাপ নগর ত্যাজি সিম্বুরাজালয়ে |

[I accompanied by my maid, Nipunika, will wait for you in disguise at night with Manibhadra in Nipunika’s lap. Do come there in disguise, without informing anyone. Then we will leave this vicious city and set for the royal palace at Sindhu, just the way the lovebirds fly to their cozy nest. Let the Kauravas and Pandavas face their destiny.]

Different critics observe the aforesaid lines of the poem from different viewpoints such as, someone discovers the reflection of the psychoanalytical ability of Madhusudan\(^3^8\) while someone visualizes the portrayal of the happy dream of Duhshala's conjugal love.\(^3^9\) However, the seed of this frightened and escapist trait of Duhshala's character was sown in the *Mahabharata* long before. During the *Ashvamedhikaparva* of the epic, when Arjuna arrived at the Sindhu Soubira Desha, riding with the sacrificial horse and vanquished the king of that country, then Duhshala came to Arjuna and besought the mercy of Arjuna to save the life of her grandson, named Suratha.\(^4^0\) Hence, the depiction of this escapist and unnerved

\(^{37}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P.166.

\(^{38}\) Bhananigopal Sanyal (ed.), *Virangana Kavya*, P. 41.

\(^{39}\) Shrabani Paul (ed.), *Virangana Kavya*, P. 103.

\(^{40}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr), *Mahabharatam, Ashvamedhikaparva*, 98.1-18 PP. 560-563.
trait is faithful to the original text.

We may thus conclude that, although the character of Duhsahla created by Michael reminds us momentarily of the same bold woman as portrayed by Jaimini, yet this female protagonist appears to be an impussiant house-wife of Bengal who is goaded by the desire of having mundane happiness and comforts enjoyed in a carefree and unworried life. And, through this novel portrayal of the female protagonist named Duhshala, Madhusadan’s hallmark of creative genius has been reflected here.

1.07 JANA

Madhusudan composes an epistle titled *Niladhvajer Prati Jana* based on the narrative of the queen of Mahismati, named Jana. According to this narrative, Prabir was the crown-prince of Mahismati kingdom who dared to obstruct the sacrificial horse followed and protected by Arjuna himself. Then Arjuna vanquished the prince in a battle. The king, Niladhvaja was unwilling to continue the conflict any longer and hence he agreed to the peace-treaty with Arjuna. But the queen, Jana was inconsolable at the bereavement of her only son Prabir and being forced to withstand this truce, she wrote a letter to her royal consort, king Niladhvaja.

In this poem, Jana the bereaved mother, becomes restless to
take revenge upon the killer of her only son, and thus urges her royal consort to avenge the wrongful killing of her son in an unjust fight by the enemy and that alone would console her bereavement since she is not only a bereaved mother, but also a woman belonging to the warrior-race called 'Kshatriya'. So, she says,

‘কি কাজ বিলাপে, প্রভু? পাল মহীপাল,
ক্ষেত্রধর্ম, ক্ষেত্রকর্ম সাধ ভূজবলে।’

[My Lord, instead of bewailing, you must observe the traditional obligations and duties of a Kshatriya, a chivalrous warrior by the strength of your arms.] But, instead of that she is amazed to see her consort worshipping Arjuna as the Naranarayana who is her enemy and the slayer of her only son. Jana is too sad to bear with this act of defamation faced by her consort. Here, Jana reminds her consort of the past episode of the illegitimate birth of Arjuna and censures Kunti as a 'Kulota', i.e, the woman who has brought disgrace to her family. Jana also associates the character of Draupadi and that of Vyasadeva. Besides, she also criticises Arjuna in particular and she is too agonized to see her submissive consort at the feet of that sworn enemy named Arjuna. She asks her royal consort— ‘কোথা বীরদর্প তব? মানদর্প কোথা?’

42. Ibid, P. 170.
[Has the pride of all your warrior like valour and dignity left yourself?]

In fact, the female protagonist, as she is projected in the epistle penned by Madhusudan, does not at all exist in the *Mahabharata* penned by Vyasa. The whole episode is different in the epical context there. Michael portrays this female protagonist with her accusatory remarks to her consort which is an outburst of her sheer contempt for Arjuna while in the chapter of 'Digvijaya', no trace of that Arjuna can be found in the narrative of the king Nila of Mahismati, and it rather mentions about Sahadeva.⁴³ Kashiram Das portrays Jana as someone rushing to her brother's house for help.⁴⁴ At last, Jana of Madhusudan, who is depicted as a grief-stricken wife in *Virangana*, resolves to commit suicide.⁴⁵

Different critics have observed this protagonist Jana from different outlooks. Someone among them magnifies the accusatory remarks made by Jana to her consort, and asserts that the theme of this epistle titled *Niladvajer Prati Jana* is ‘প্রেম-নয় বরং, স্বামীর বিরুদ্ধে নালিশ’!⁴⁶

[Not at all love, rather it is an accusation against her consort.]

---

Again, someone discovers ‘এক বর্বর জৈবশক্তির প্রকাশ।’

[The manifestation of a savage biological strength]

In spite of all these aforesaid observations made by different critics, most of them fail to infer that Jana is the ladylove and all her deportments pivot on her deep conjugal love for her royal consort. When that connubial love is hurt, the sour venom comes out. Obviously, it is true that the whole of this epistle expresses the inconsolable anguish of a bereaved mother. We may remember that relentless bewailing of Jana when she says,

‘হা প্রবীর ! এই হেতু ধরিনু কি তোরে,  
দশ মাস দশ দিন নানা যত্ন সয়ে,  
এ উদরে ?’

[Alas ! My dear Prabir, did I bear you in this womb for ten months and ten days only to face this fateful consequence?]

But her wifehood is also conscious when she says,

‘কিন্তু বুথা এ গল্পনা। ওরুজন তুমি;  
পাড়িব বিষম পাপে গল্পনে তোমারে।’

[But, this reproach is in vain, because you are venerable to me, and this act of reproach will drag me to the path of grave sin.]

47. Sureshchandra Maitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta Jibon O Sahitya, P. 169.  
49. Ibid, P. 170.
Jana has been projected here as a virtuous woman belonging to a lineage and the pangs of the grief-stricken motherhood of this bereaved mother who has become childless even after being blessed with a son. But Jana is not only a woman or a mother belonging to the warrior-race, but also she is the ladylove as well as the wife of Niladhvaja. Hence, in the concluding lines, the afflicted heart of Jana is revealed momentarily when Jana says:

"ফিরি যবে রাজপুরে প্রবেশিবে আসি, 
নরেশর, “কোথা জানা?” বলি ডাক যদি 
উত্তরিবে প্রতিক্ষি কোথা জানা?” বলি।"^50

[My Lord, when you'll return to this palace, and if you enter inside and cry out calling me "where is Jana?" then you'll only hear the echo of your own voice.]

The portrayal of the subterranean sentiment of the infuriated Jana (Jvala) to her consort in the Jaimini Bharat is behind Madhusudan's portrayal of Jana who goes into the sulks, often swayed by amorous sentiment. In the book titled Jaimini Bharat, a belligerent Niladhvaja at first is bamboozled by his ladylove's incitement and he wages a war against Arjuna and later returns exhausted from the battlefield after Arjuna kills Niladhvaja's pussian son and also lost his brothers along with his charioteer too. Being vanquished by

---

Arjuna, Niladhvaja rebukes his wife Jana (Jvala) by saying ‘রে দুঃষ্টি! তুমি যাও বা থাক, আমি অশ্রদ্ধ করিব।’

[Oh the wretch! I'll provide the horses, no matter whether you stay or not.]

Such deportment and gesture of her husband makes Jvala so infuriated that it is mitigated only after cursing Arjuna when she leaves her husband's palace to stay in her brother's place. It seems that, the character of Jana as portrayed by Madhusudan has been carved out of the dormant sentiment of an anguished wife who is deprived of conjugal love.

Although the protagonist Jana, portrayed by Madhusudan, reflects the traits like individualism, self-respect as well as a rationalist tendency distinctive of the Renaissance Age which also acts behind the valorous trait followed by the sentimental and touchy image of a wife and ladylove, yet Madhusudan's mindset typifies the Bengali origin of the poet. Hence, the touchiness and sentiment inherent in Jana's character originates from the poet's typical Bengali mindset. A critic thus interprets:

51. Chandranath Basu, (tr.), Jaimini Bharat, (Jaimini), P. 127
52. Ibid, PP. 127-128.
53. Ibid, PP. 129-130.
[She was a typical Bengali housewife who was dependent on her husband, who was proud of her wifehood and who was faithful to the social rituals. But the bereavement of her son turns her love to a break-up. Still she cherished the imaginatory picture of pain to be felt by her husband Niladhvaja in the palace in absence of Jana.]

This imagination by Jana appears to be the masterstroke by Madhusudan in his portrayal of Jana. Here it can be mentioned that, in comparison to the portrayal of the protagonist Arjuna, the portrayal of the female protagonist Jana by Michael although has much more modernistic approach, yet she ends up just as a lovelorn housewife. The reason behind this transformation is the deferential attitude towards the devoted Bengali housewives and according to some critic, ‘...হয়তো তাঁর মায়ের স্মৃতিই তার কারণ।’

[Perhaps the memories of the poet’s mother was active behind this attitude of the poet.]

And, from this point of view, the portrayal of this female protagonist is the token of the fruitful combination of the contemporary

55. Gargi Datta, Dhrupadi Madhusudan, PP. 46-47.
zeitgeist and the truth of a woman's life. And here Madhusudan is creative.

1.08 Bhanumati

In the Striparva of the Mahabharata, we come across Bhanumati, the wife of Duryodhana, when Gandhari tells about her daughter-in-law:

‘पुत्र रुधिरसंसिद्धमुपज्ञरतानिदित।

दुर्योधनस्तु बामारं पालिना परिमार्जित।’

[Duryodhana's exquisitely charming wife, who has a beautiful pair of thighs, is smelling the bloodstained lifeless body of her son Lakshmana and is wiping the body of Duryodhana.]

It may also be known from the words of Gandhari that this large-eyed wife of Duryodhana stands gazing at the lifeless bodies of her son and her husband and bursts out weeping on the chest of Duryodhana, striking her head with the open palm of her hand.  

Here the author of the epic does not mention the name of Bhanumati, instead introduces her as the mother of Lakshmana and the wife of Duryodhana.

This female protagonist herself is too silent to wail aloud. She

57. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatam, Streeparva, 17.27, P. 107.
is speechlessly gazing at her husband and her son while the sweet memories of her cozy family consisting of her husband and her son are uprooted. This fierce battle has ruined the entire dreams and desires cherished by herself throughout her life.

In the epistle titled *Duryodhaner Prati Bhanumati*, Madhusudan has picked up this potential ruin apprehended by Bhanumati as the central theme. The aforementioned epistle contains the feverish excitement of Bhanumati in absence of Duryodhana and an imminent nightmarish apprehension acts behind this excitement.

In the epic by Vyasa, the name of Bhanumati cannot be found while in the Bengali version of the epic by Kashiram Das, we get an account of the Svayamvara of Bhamumati. In the epistle, Madhusudan has followed Kashiram Das alone. A critic has also mentioned none other than Kashiram Das while delving into the fount of the creative genius of Madhusudan. He thus says,

‘ভানুমতী-সূচ মধুসূদন কাশীরামের কাব্য থেকেই পেয়েছিলেন। এবং কেন পূর্ব-সংস্কার না থাকায় চরিত্রটি তিনি সম্পূর্ণ নিজের মতো করে গড়ে তুলেছিলেন।’

[Madhusudan found out the thread of Bhanumati episode from the versified epic by Kashiram Das and was free from any prejudice]}

in moulding the character entirely by the figments of his imagination.]

This female protagonist has no great ambition at all—“জগত্তে
ভুলে নিজের স্বামীকে নিয়ে গৃহসূর্য উপভোগ-বাসনা?”61

[She only longs for enjoying the domestic happiness with her
husband, being herself oblivious to her surroundings.] And when
she is robbed of this domestic happiness, even a meek housewife
like Bhanumati flares up in protest and on this very footing, she
asserts her thoughtful opinion in regard to some of the prominent
personalities in the Mahabharata. Sometimes she chides Shakuni,
the sinful maternal uncle-in-law:

‘এ বিপুল কুল, মরি, মজালে দুম্মর্তি,
কাল-কলিরূপে পশি এ বিপুল কুলে।’62

[Alas! you, the evil minded entity, have endangered this great
lineage only after entering here as the 'Kali', the Infernal age!]

However, due to the modesty common to an ideal housewife
like herself, Bhanumati apologises for her chiding remarks to an
elder relative like Shakuni.63 At the same time, she attacks Karna
with great acrimony by asserting that the friendship between the son
of charioteer (indicated to Karna) and her husband has made her

61. Gargi Datta, Dhrupadi Madhusudan, P. 46.
63. Ibid, P. 162.
greatly ashamed. To the contrary, she eulogizes the virtues of the Pandava quintet in a befitting manner despite the fact that they are the prime antagonists of her husband. To her, the conjugal love and devotion and the welfare of the kingdom are not contradictory. Hence, she projects the miserable picture of the grief-stricken and bewailing members of the Kaurava lineage, and beseeches her husband's favour to prevent the Kurus from the utter ruins—

‘...কাঁদে মহিম্মী; কাঁদে কুরু-বধূ যত! কাঁদে উচ্চ-রবে, মায়ের আঁচল ধরি, কুরুক্ষু-শিশু, তিতি অশ্রুনীরে, হায়, না জানি কি হেতু।’

[The Queen as well as the Kaurava women weep bitterly while the children of the Kaurava lineage too cry aloud, holding the edges of their mothers' clothes without even knowing the reason.] Hence, it is properly said that

‘মধুসূদন এখানে প্রেমকে ব্যক্তিগতীয় উদ্ভিদ স্থাপন করে কল্যাণের সঙ্গে, সমগ্র সঙ্গে সংযুক্ত করার চেষ্টা করেছেন।’

[Here Madhusudan places the love beyond the limit of an individual's life and endeavours to transfigure this love into an exhaustive and benignant one.] This epistle contains her great regard

64. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 162.
for the Pandavas who are never deviated from the path of virtue and righteousness and Madhusudan's sense of ethics alone acts behind this, this is obviously not the viewpoint of an artist. A critic thus asserts:

‘তাঁহার সদাজাত্মা নীতিবোধ সর্বজ্ঞ তাঁহার প্রতিভাকে প্রভাবায়িত করিয়াছে। দুর্বোধনের স্ত্রী ভানুমতী এবং তাঁহার ভগিনী দুঃখলা যে দুইখানি পত্রিকা পাঠাইয়াছেন তাহাদের মধ্যে একটি কথা সুস্পষ্ট হইয়াছে, তাহা এই যে কুকুরপাঙ্গুলের যুদ্ধে নয়া ও ধর্ম পাঙ্গুলের পক্ষে। সুতরাং কৌরবের পরাজয় অবশ্য হবে।’

[His ever-vigilant morals influenced his genius everywhere. The two epistles sent by Duryodhana's sister Duhshala and Duryodhan's wife Bhanumati clarifies the fact that since in the battle of Kurukshetra, Pandavas sided with virtuousness and righteousness, hence the defeat of the Kauravas is inevitable].

Again, this epistle reveals equally the trait of womanly fright as well as the anxiety of the loving and well-wishing wife. Bhanumati is also conscious of Bhima, the sworn enemy of her husband. She has already the apparition of the terrible consequence to be faced by the Kaurava warriors in the battle of Kurukshetra, although she has not mentioned their names. In the concluding part of her epistle, she prays to Duryodhana with fervent hope of a wife, to stop the battle

and to come back in order to please his blind parents, wife and others.

This humble trait of her character obstructs us in considering Bhanumati as the befitting wife of Duryodhana who is the imperious and supercilious anti-hero of the *Mahabharata*. Besides, this pen-picture of an impussiant and timid ladylove in the epistolary compilation titled *Virangana* falls far short of our expectations of the natural poetic inclination of Madhusudan.

In fact, the reason behind the weak points in the characterization of Bhanumati by Michael are fundamental. The sketchy portrayal of this female protagonist in the *Mahabharata* by Vedavyasa never appears to us as someone extraordinary in comparison to the domesticated womenfolk of the *Mangalakavyas*, whose lives pivot on the happy family with husband and children. And, Madhusudan too, did not dare to transcend the original text.

Yet, this female protagonist is noticed to be vocal against the misdeeds of her husband, although it is influenced by the concept of the Woman's Emancipation during the Renaissance in Nineteenth Century.\(^{68}\)

It should be remembered that in the era of the *Mahabharata* even the wives of the Kuru scions protested against the injustice. So

---

\(^{68}\) Ujjalkumar Majumder, *Bangla Kavye Paschatya Prabhab*, PP. 82-83.
when Draupadi was brought to the court of Dhritarashtra by Duhshasana, then:

‘ভরতানাং ক্রিয়ঃ সর্বা গান্ধার্য্যা সহ সঙ্গতাঃ ।
প্রাক্রেশন: ভৈরবং তত্তদ দৃষ্টা কৃষ্ণং সভাগত্তম্।’

[When the wives of the Kuru scions saw Draupadi being fetched to the court, they along with Gandhari, were provoked to wrath to a great extent by the incident.]

Although the name of Bhanumati has not been specifically mentioned here, but obviously Bhanumati too is one of those wives of the Kuru scions. And they raised their protest against the inhumanity, their protest was not just swayed by the high tide of Women's Lib alone. Bhanumati has been characterized by Madhusudan as a protesting voice against the misdeeds of the Kauravas, although she ends up as a docile housewife. She may appear to be vocal about the criticism of the favourite persons of her husband, yet she has to owe an apology for that at some time, since Madhusudan was aware of the fact that–

‘এদেশে তৎকালে বাঙালী বধূর বুকের সূত্রা যতই আনন্দ দান করুক, 
মুখের মুখরতা বরদাত্ত করা হোত না।’

[In this country at that time, the nectareous invigorating and

69. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr), Mahabharatam, Sabhaparva, 78.17, P. 642.

(46)
pleasing nature of the Bengali wives was although considered pleasant, but their shrewish temper was not all tolerated.]

In fact, although the wave of Women's Lib stirred the world of thought at that time, it was far from the world of reality. In this backdrop, Madhusudan's portrayal of Bhanumati as a housewife is quite faithful to the original text as well as to the contemporaneous time too. Because, the creator's fidelity to the original text restricts her to her image of a housewife while her housewife-entity obstructs her protesting self whenever she raises her protest herself being swayed by the zeitgeist.

1.09 SHAKUNTALA

In the epic the Mahabharata composed by Vedavyasa, we notice the mentions about Shakuntala for the first time. Shakuntala is the female protagonist who is very familiar to the Indian literatures. In that epical episode, despite being a modest woman Shakuntala responds cool-headedly to the wedding proposal made by Dushmanta.71 There was little room for love affair in her response there. In his book of Verses titled Abhijnanashakuntalam, Kalidasa has transformed that episode into a dreamlike creation by embellishing it with blushing amours. In this way, this female

71. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatam, Adiparva, 87.22-23, PP. 1008-1009.
protagonist in the epic, named Shakuntala, has been appraised afresh from different viewpoints in different ages. Michael Madhusudan Dutta too has appraised Shakuntala from the vista of his own. In the epistle *Dushmanter Prati Shakuntala* called from the book of verses named *Virangana* penned by Michael, the Shakuntala of the *Mahabharata* has emerged before us with a novel image. In that epistle, Shakuntala is estranged from her lover, Dushmanta, and she appears with a sundered heart.

In the epic the *Mahabharata*, Shakuntala appears and talks in a wise yet shrewish as well as self-righteous manner,\(^\text{72}\) after she is discarded by Dushmanta at the royal court in presence of all. But, the same female protagonist, when portrayed by Michael, appears to be in a wanton mood although she absolutely lacks the trait of self-righteousness.

Vedavyasa portrays Shakuntala as a young woman having been reared in the atmosphere of a virtuous and sacred hermitage with all the sanctities of meditation, prayer by silently telling the beads of the rosary and chanting the sacred hymns by the sagacious and agrarian Brahmins. Hence, Vyasa's Shakuntala appears to be wise and self-righteous, while Madhusudan being himself a classical poet, tends to incline to the pen-picture of the same female protagonist sketched

\(^{72}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 88.16-108, PP. 1016-1037.
by Kalidasa in the delicate backdrop of a dreamlike natural environment. Yet, the zeitgeist of the contemporary rationalistic age make the Shakuntala created by Michael to be one who is far too conscious for her time. Nature fails to cast her spell on her, as Madhusudan has portrayed her, i.e., unlike the classic poems, Nature is not the backdrop of human mind; rather, human beings utilizes Nature here in this context. Hence, when Shakuntala says,

['মনোরথ-পতি তোরে দিয়াছেন বিধি,
কৃণা! লেখন লয়ে, যা চলি সত্তবে
যথায় জীবিত না থাক, মরি আমি
বিরহে! শৈশবে তোরে পালিনু যতনে;
বাঁচা রে এ পোড়া প্রাণ আজি কৃপা করি।'  

[Oh my dear stag, you are blessed with the pace of the heart's desire! Please convey this written message to that place where my Lord remains alive! Ah me, this sundered heart of mine! I reared you in your childhood; now, be kind enough to save my life, Oh dear!]

In this context through her asking the deer for repayment of her previous affection showered on it, Shakuntala's love

‘বন প্রকৃতিকে স্বতন্ত্র ও প্রাণময়ী রূপে কন্যা করেনি, আপন প্রেমের
পরিবেশ মাত্র মনে করেছে।’

[Has not fancied the nature of the wilderness as a distinct and animated one, but has fancied it as the befitting backdrop of amorous feelings.]

In the characterization of Shakuntala in *Virangana*, the trait of humbleness and wretchedness is revealed when she says:

‘জানে দাসী, হে নরেন্দ্র, দেবর্ষ-সদৃশ
এষ্টঃ মহিমা তব; অতুল জগতে
কুলী, মান, ধনে রাজকুলপতি!
কিন্তু নাহি লোভে দাসী বিভব! সেবিবে
দাসীভাবে পা দুঃখানি — এই লোভ মনে—
এই চির-আশা, নাথ, এ পোড়া হদয়ে! ’

[O my Lord, this maid-servant is well aware of your glory and the great opulence like that of the king of Gods; you are the scion of the royal lineage whose wealth, dignity and lineage-everything is matchless in this world! But this maid never hankers after your riches and opulence, instead she is eager to serve at your lotus feet just like a humble maid and wants nothing else.]

In this context, Michael's Shakuntala is diffident of her poverty which is absent in the portrayal of Shakuntala by Vedavyasa. Madhusudan's love for opulence is active behind this. Since his childhood, this poet was born with a silver spoon and was brought

75. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P.149.
up amidst opulence, and he was always attracted by wealth and opulence. Here, the deep and passionate ardour of love-making by Shakuntala is obvious, whereas in the epic the *Mahabharata*, Shakuntala has been projected either as the mother of a child or as the would-be-mother of a yet to be born child; whereas this motherhood of Shakuntala is absent in the characterization of Shakuntala by Madhusudan. In fact, just like the Roman poet Ovid, the poet of *Virangana* rather has endeavoured to sketch the character of an amorous ladylove.

It seems that there are similarities as well as differences in the characterizations of Shakuntala both by Vedavyasa and Michael. Above all, both the portrayals reflect the traits like materialistic tendency and household experience. The character of Shakuntala portrayed by Madhusudan is neither radiant with pride like the portrayal of Vyasa's Shakuntala, nor she is absent-minded and inexperienced\(^76\) like the Shakuntala as sketched by Kalidasa. She is socially conscious to a great extent, although she cannot boast of a matchless inner beauty of the heart. But this character is much more materialized and enriched with practical and mundane experience.

1.10 TILOTTAMA

In the episode of the two demons, namely, Sunda and Upasunda, in the Adiparva of the Mahabharata, we come across a mythological woman, a paragon of beauty for whom every male is solicitous. She was born to serve a particular purpose, i.e., to create dissension between the two demon brothers, namely, Sunda and Upasunda through alluring them to her exquisite charm and thus to perish them. In the Mahabharata, we notice that Tilottama succeeded in serving that particular purpose and himself seemed to be active enough to serve that purpose. Even she was noticed in the epic to dress up herself with the motive of fascinating the sterner sex by her irresistible charms. Yet, in the Madabharata, Tilottama is portrayed as

ত্রিযু লোকেষু যৎ কিঞ্চিদভূতঃ স্বরজাসমম্।
সমানয়ন্দনশিত্যং তত্তদ্বত্স বিশ্ববিৎ।।
কোটিশিরসঃ রত্নানি তস্যা গাত্রে নাবেশয়ৎ।
তাং রথস্যাত্মায়নিমৃত্যুজ্ঞঃ দেবরাপিনিমম।।”

[The limbs of the woman of incomparable beauty which were made by picking up the gemlike bits from all of the most beautiful things in the universe.]

This Tilottama who is portrayed by Vyasa is nothing but a mere

77. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatam, Adiparva, 204.9-12, P. 1974.
robotic woman devoid of any human emotion. To dress up herself with a dress of red colour was also a part of her work; i.e., to cast her spell of seduction over both the male demons named Sunda and Upasunda. But, on the other hand, Michael has attributed the feminine traits to the character of Tilottama along with the human feelings like fear, amazement and thrill.\textsuperscript{79} She is highly attracted by the reflection of her own image in the lake\textsuperscript{80} and this incident appears to some critic as something similar to the erotic interest in the feature of his own by Narcissus, a youth who fell in love with his reflection in water,\textsuperscript{81} whereas to some other critic this incident indicates to ‘আত্ম-আর্দ্রতা স্পৃহা’, \textsuperscript{82} i.e., the desire for self-enjoyment. This inanimate deportment of this Tilottama has made some critic think her to be a ‘প্রাণহীন জড়পিপিঙ্গ’, \textsuperscript{83} i.e., lifeless mass of insensate things. But, we should not forget that, despite attributing the traits of a heroine of a romantic poesy on the totally inexperienced and naive Tilottama, the poet has made her enter into the pleasure grove with the bashful footsteps of a coy and newly-wed bride.

These traits of herself such as coyness, fear, amazement and her enchantment by the attractive handsomeness of both the demon-

\textsuperscript{79} Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 43.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, P. 43.
\textsuperscript{81} Subodhchandra Sengupta, Madhusudan : Kavi O Natyakar, P. 48.
\textsuperscript{82} Sureshchandra Maitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta Jiban O Sahitya, P. 146.
\textsuperscript{83} Kshetra Gupta, Madhusudaner Kavi-Atma O Kavyashilpa, P. 96.
brothers, Sunda and Upasunda who are as attractively handsome as Indra have turned her into a woman from a mere spell of divine enchantment. Again, this can also be interpreted differently, i.e., any male gets attracted to Tilottama whoever looks at this paragon of beauty, since her sexual attraction is irresistible. It is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* that each and every limb of Tilottama attracts people.\(^{84}\) Hence, it is obvious that the lifelong bond of love between the two demon-siblings was severed in no time by this sexual instinct alone. This sexual instinct itself appears to be pre-destined spell of divine enchantment, cast by Kamadeva. Adopting this episode of Tilottama from the *Adiprava* of the *Mahabharata*, Michael composed a book of verse titled *Tilottamasambhav Kavya* in which he eulogized the human instinct of Tilottama. Apart from her momentary entrancement at sight of the highly attractive and handsome demon-siblings, nowhere in the verse Tilottama has ever been drawn by her instinct. Yet, her amazement at the sight of two handsome males in the solitary pleasure-grove overshadowed her instinctive and infatuating gaze at the manly charm of both the highly attractive males. This female protagonist lacks the amorous feminine gestures and she is totally unconscious about her exquisite charms and grace. That is, no efforts are noticed in Tilottama's character to make herself highly attractive to others.

---

The mind of the creator is the origin of Tilottama, and the analysis of that creative mind is the appropriate one for the pursuit of the nature of Tilottama. As some critic puts it, that Madhusudan

‘খুঁজিয়া ফিরিয়াছেন সেই ‘মানসসন্দরীকে’, সেই Impossible she-
কে, যাহাকে পূজা করিয়া তিনি নিজের রূপসদ্ধানকে সম্পূর্ণ করিবেন;
যাহাকে দেখিয়া বলিয়া উঠিবেন, সৃষ্টিরাদের ধাতু : অথবা:

"I wonder, by my troth, what thou, and I

Did till we loved ? [ Good Morrow : John Donne]

‘বাংলা সাহিত্যের মালঞ্চে তাঁহার প্রথম আবির্ভাব তিলোত্তমাতে,’85

[Madhusudan was a devoted pursuer of that 'Muse', that 'Eternal Feminine, that 'Impossible she' ...whom he would worship then his pursuit would be complete and staring to whom he would utter... or like the great Metaphysical poet John Donne, he would say... her first advent in the flower garden of Bengali literature was through Tilottama.]

1.11 SUNDA AND UPASUNDA

Both the characters of Sunda and Upasunda are the minor characters of the epic the Mahabharata. The episode containing
their character is unimportant. The book of verses titled *Tilottamasambhav Kavya* composed by Madhusudan is based on this episode.

In the *Mahabharata* it is mentioned that both the demon-brothers began to behave like dainty aristocrats after conquering the paradise. Both of them drank the deliciously divine beverage and with their reddened eyes they were made indolent by incitation of sexual or amorous desire at the first sight of Tilottama. The pen-pictures of both the demon-siblings drawn here are those of lascivious persons. But on the other hand, in the book of verses composed by Madhusudan, the primary reaction of Sunda at the sight of Tilottama at the pleasure grove was different. At first, both the demon-brothers advanced towards Tilottama in order to worship her lotus-feet, since they thought Tilottama to be the Goddess Bhagavati. But, no sooner had they advanced towards Tilottama than both of them were smitten by the arrows of love and lust by cupid, and held her two hands. The poet projects them as the restrained ones - who are greatly influenced by the arrows of cupid. Some critic thus remarks on the

87. Ibid, 205.3-8, PP. 1980-1981
88. Ibid, 205.11, P. 1981.
89. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P. 111
demon-brothers: ‘বিগত যুগের বাসিন্দা, মধ্যযুগীয়।’ [They belong to the bygone era, they are medieval.] Since they are not enkindled by a new ideology of life, they are rather attracted to the flames of lust after being smitten with carnal desires. Besides, they get involved in fratricide, because they only lust for the fulfilment of carnal desire, they have no desire for beauty at all. But, in no way, this view can be accepted.

The contemporaneous Romantic Movement in Bengal was active behind this decline of Sunda and Upasunda. The political uprising in America, French Revolution, the ideologist Philosophy of the German Philpsophers namely Kant and Hegel etc., gave rise to the Romantic Movements in America and Europe and its able successor was the Romantic Movement in Bengal during the Nineteenth Century. Basically, this Romantic Movement in Bengal aimed at liberating the individual from the clutches of prevalent social practice and system. Hence, the contemporaneous literature, thought, philosophy and the social stance reflected the conflict between the society and the individual. That ubiquitous Liberation Movement has been revealed in the book of verse titled Tilottamasambhav Kavya.

According to a critic, ‘এই রোমান্টিক আন্দোলনে সবচেয়ে বড় স্থান পেয়েছে সুন্দর— প্রয়োজন নয়।’

90. Sureshchandra Maitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta : Jiban O Sahitya. P. 144
[It was the beauty that was chosen in preference to Necessaries during this Romantic Movement.] And this very worship of beauty has been revealed through the characterization of Sunda and Upasunda. Obviously, Madhusudan eulogises the human instinct through the enchantment of both the demon-brothers by the divine charms of Tilottama. But it has binary sources.

It may be observed that the contemporaneous society in the \textit{Mahabharata} advances in the backdrop of eroticism, and treading the dark and perilous path where some time Kichaka is besotted with the charms of Draupadi and wants to ravish her while sometime Duhshasana tries to strip off the garments of Draupadi at the royal court before all; again, sometime Jayadratha pulls the edge of Draupadi's cloth. Overall, the \textit{Mahabharata} lacks the tender emotion of love, while an atmosphere of lust and craving for sensual pleasure is prevalent in the epic. In the modern period of Bengali literature, the presence of the graceful and tender emotion of love is felt in the literary works of Rabindranath who was greatly influenced by European literature and himself was a worshipper of sensuous romantic beauty. Through the portrayals of the characters of Sunda and Upasunda in the book of verse titled \textit{Tilottamasambhav Kavya} penned by Madhusudan, that very attraction towards beauty is reflected although being remained in a nascent, inarticulate and
immature state. That attraction towards beauty makes both the demon-siblings allured by the charms of Tilottama. Again, this beauty conveys inauspiciousness, and this leads to their premature death. According to a Western Critic, the romantics looked upon the concepts of 'Beauty and Death' as real sisters. He said: ‘...In fact, to such an extent were beauty and death looked upon as sisters by romantics that they became fused into a sort of two-faced herm, filled with corruption and melancholy and fatal in its beauty—a beauty of which, the more bitter, the taste, the more abundant the enjoyment.’\(^92\) In this context the poetry ‘Urvashi’ of Rabindranath is comparable.\(^93\)

The other source of Madhusudan's literary works is his absorption in English literature as well as Greek literature. Unlike the moralistic viewpoints of the composers of the Indian epics, the artistic viewpoint of the classic Greek writers of the epics, was adopted by Madhusudan. Hence, in the Mahabharata, the death of Sunda and Upasunda signifies the defeat of the ominous, whereas in Michael's verse, the death of the demon-siblings is caused by the counter-blown of beauty. According to a venerable critic,

‘তিলোত্তমাসন্ত্বর’-এর কবিকে বরং ইংরেজী সাহিত্যের সেই আধুনিক

“Pagan” (পাগান) কবিতায় কবিরই সমধিক নিকটবর্তী বলিয়া অনুভব

\(^{93}\) i. Rabindranath Thakur, Rabindra Rachanavali, Vol. III, P. 152.
[Rather, one might feel the poet of the *Tillottamasambhav* much closer to Keats, that modern Pagan poet of the English literature;... in the genealogy of the poets, 'Madhusudan' is Greek.]

### 1.12 SHARMISTHA

In the *Mahabharata*, Sharmistha, the daughter of Brishaparva was arrogant, quarrelsome and cruel. In the *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata*, we notice the rude-natured Sharmistha whose rage makes her impatient and ‘হতেয়মিতি বিজ্ঞায়’, *i.e.*, resolute to slay Devayani.

But, since Madhusudan has portrayed her as the chief female protagonist of his play, so this rude and arrogant trait of her character would have never been consistent with the schematic presentation of Madhusudan's plan. Therefore, Madhusudan

‘এই অংশটি সংক্ষিপ্ত করিয়া শুধু ইহার সারাংশ বকাসুরের মুখ দিয়া বলাইয়া লইয়াছেন।’

[Madhusudan has abridged this part of the episode and made Bakasura speak out the gist of this part.]

However, it is implicated in the *Mahabharata* that Sharmistha has the nice trait of adjustment to any situation, where Sharmistha tells Devayani—

‘যেন কেনচিদার্তনাং জাতীনাং সুখমারহেৎ।
অতস্ত্বামানুষাস্যামি যত দাস্যতি তে পিতা।’

[For the redressal of the difficulty of your kinsfolk, you ought to be ready to do anything; due to this reason, your father may commit you ceremonially to the charge of your bridegroom and I will follow you to your place.]

Despite being herself a princess, the wretched Sharmistha accepts her ill-luck in an unmoved manner as the consequences of the actions of a previous life. It can be noticed in the play where she speaks to her confidante Devika -

‘তুমি বিধাতাকে আমার জন্য দোষ দেও কেন, বিধাতার এ বিষয়ে দোষ কি?... আমি আপন দোষেই এ দুরদৃষ্টি পাতিত হয়েছি। আমি আপনি মিষ্টামের মহিলা বিষিক্ষিত করে ভক্ষণ করেছি, তাই আপনি দোষ কি?’

[Why do you blame the Providence personified? It is the fault of my own that has invited my distress. I myself have administered poison with the sweetmeats, then why should I blame anyone else?]

When Sharmistha, the chief female protagonist of the play titled

Sharmistha tells her confidante,

‘দেখ, দুঃখ-দুঃখ মনের ধর্ম; অতএব বাহ্য সুখ অপেক্ষা আত্মিক সুখই সুখ।’

[You see, happiness and sorrow are the properties of mind; hence inner happiness is rather preferable to outer happiness.] Then she is no way similar to that deceptive and self-conscious woman portrayed in the Mahabharata, did not remain satisfied only with her innermost happiness; rather her reflection at the news of Devayani's pregnancy is intentional enough.

In order to make her intention fruitful, she prayed to Yayati while her prayer was devoid of love and her only intention was to have a son. Besides, since Devayani has chosen Yayati as her husband, so Yayati has become the husband of Sharmistha also - and this reason adduced by her also fails to reveal that selfless love, while the portrayal of Sharmistha by Madhusudan succeeds in revealing the same. According to the protagonist, Sharmistha, in the play titled Sharmistha.

‘যেমন কোনো পরমভক্ত কোণো দেবের সুপ্রসন্নতার অভিলাষে পৃথিবীত্ব সমুদায় সুখভোগ পরিত্যাগ করে সন্ন্যাসধর্ম অবলম্বন করে, আমিও

98. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 222.
99. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatam, Adiparva, 70.6-9, P. 870.
100. Ibid, 70.13, P. 871
101. Ibid, 70.19, PP. 873-874.
[There are some great devotees who take to asceticism after renouncing all the mundane pleasures in order to propitiate his chosen deity; similarly, I too have abandoned all other pleasures just to propitiate the image of Yayati alone.]

In fact, that backdrop of the Nineteenth Century society was not at all suitable for that primitive trait of a woman who comes forward to ask for sexual intercourse. Because the taste of the reader has also been changed in course of time. Hence, Sharmistha could not speak her mind to king Yayati, although she was amorousy attracted to the King. Rather, it was the king himself who suggested for ‘Gandharva Wedding’,\textsuperscript{103} Hence, it is properly said, “…শর্মিষ্ঠা চরিত্রে মহাভারতীয় বৈশিষ্ট্য যোনি আনা বজায় থাকেনি |”\textsuperscript{104}

[In the characterization of Sharmistha the epical traits of the \textit{Mahabharata} have not been maintained thoroughly.] And the modern sense of decorum possessed by Madhusudan acts behind it.

The trait of tenderness in Sharmistha's character has turned her an equivalent to \textit{Shakuntala}, the chief female protagonist of the play titled \textit{Abhijnanashakuntalam} penned by Kalidasa.\textsuperscript{105} The tender and

\textsuperscript{102} Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), \textit{Madhusudan Rachanavali}, P. 238.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid
\textsuperscript{104} Sureshchandra Maitra, \textit{Michael Madhusudan Dutta – Jiban O Sahitya}, P. 134.
\textsuperscript{105} Sadhana Roy, \textit{Madhusudan Sahitye Prachaya Prabhab}, P. 156.
serviceable Sharmistha owes to the incident of massaging the feet of Devayani by Sharmistha, which has been mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and the *Matsyapurana*.\(^\text{106}\) Therefore, this trait of flexibility in the character of Sharmistha is followed with absolute fidelity to the original text. Yet, in the original text, this female protagonist named Sharmistha has never been afraid or repentant for her deeds. Besides, despite being herself a woman, she has hardly made any effort to understand the psychology of another woman, rather she has even adduced reasons in support of her deeds.\(^\text{107}\) In the *Mahabharata*, no reactions of Sharmistha can be found even when the sorrowful and young anxious king Yayati pursues the enraged Devayani.\(^\text{108}\) Subsequently, there is hardly any mention about Sharmistha in the narrative of Yayati; as if all the desires of Sharmistha end up with the birth of a male child. Yet, Madhusudan portrays Sharmistha with many other traits of her character even after the attainment of a male child born to her. Sometimes, herself being a chaste and devoted wife, she tries to understand the psychology active behind the cruel behaviour of Devayani,\(^\text{109}\) while sometime she turns sentimental when her husband talks about her

---

106. i. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 69.7-8, P. 857.
108. Ibid, 71.24-25, PP. 881-882.
co-wife Devayani. Apart from this, she remembers at least for a moment that Devayani is the sole responsible person for her wretchedness. And all these traits add the human elements to her character-sketch by Madhusudan. Despite being repeatedly humiliated by Devayani, she has never been disheartened, rather she has become perturbed by the irony of fate.

It can be mentioned in this context that this protagonist, Sharmistha has been portrayed in the epic the *Mahabharata* as a woman who was considered too insignificant by the composer of the epic to be stricken with that 'unattained grief' and Madhusudan was very much concerned for this 'unattained grief'. Therefore, Sharmistha ventures to become the writer of an epistle to king Yayati in one of the poems of the sonnet - collection titled *Chaturdashapadi Kavitavali* composed by Madhusudan. That very epistle describes the fact that Sharmistha was the apple of her husband's eye whereas she has suddenly been impoverished at present. The epistle further reveals that, the way the doe sets out for an unknown place along with her young ones in order to save their lives from a forest-fire, similarly, a wailing Sharmistha too sets out in search of an unknown place for a shelter along with her three children. During the concluding phase, her remarks reveal the sulks caused by the

111. Ibid, P. 247.
undesirable behaviour of her beloved, i.e., Yayati. The epistle reveals the fact that it was only for the sake of her love for Yayati that in spite of being a princess of the demon-lineage, she had to stay in the palace merely as a maid-servant. In her words,

‘কে তুমি, কে আমি নাথ, কি হেতু আইনু
দাসীরূপে তব গৃহে রাজবালা আমি?
কি হেতু বা থেকে গেনু তোমার সদনে,
দেত্যকুল রাজবালা আমি দাসীরূপে।’¹¹²

[Who you are, who I am, why have I come to your place as maid-servant although I am a princess? Why did I continue to stay at your place as a maid-servant in spite of being myself a princess hailing from the noble lineage of demons?]

This pen-picture of this woman who, in a bitterly weeping state sets out in search of a shelter, as ill luck would have it, is influenced by the personal life of Madhusudan himself. The memories of his first wife Rebeca must have influenced the subconscious mind of Madhusudan to a great extent at the time of writing a play based on this epical character. A critic thus remarks on this gentle and quiet-natured princess, ‘মাধব জীবনের মত্ত্বনা এই নারীকল্পনার অন্তরে আছে। যন্ত্রণা
নেই।’¹¹³

[The plans at the phase of the poets' life in Madras rather than

the afflictions and sufferings experienced at Madras acted behind the imaginary portrait of this woman.]

1.13 DEVAYANI

Devayani is the eldest daughter of Shukracharya, the preceptor of the demons. Devayani's mother Urjasvati is the daughter of Priyabru and Devayani was the apple of her father's eye. Devayani has been projected as a smart, harsh and wanton woman in the *Mahabharata*. To be precise, she gets married to Yayati almost by insistence. Since Yayati held her hand to lift her and thus to save her from drowning in a well, and as the holding of a woman's hand by a man in those days indicated their wedlock, so, citing this reason, Devayani almost forced Yayati to marry herself by insistence. However, Madhusudan portrays her differently to some extent, rather, he portrays her to be amorous and bashful, reticent and tender-natured. Besides, Madhusudan's portrayal of Devayani lacks the trait of proposing Yayati, through her “নির্লজ্জ উক্তি”¹¹⁸, i.e., an impudent

---

¹¹⁴ Sudhirchandra Sarkar (compiled), *Pauranik Abhidhan*, P. 234.
¹¹⁶ Ibid, 69.28-29, PP. 862-863.
¹¹⁷ *[Earlier, you had saved me from drowning in the well and being a male yourself, you had to hold my hand at that time. Now, you have to marry me, O king! And then you will get a thousand maids along with Sharmistha.]* Kashiram Das (tr.), *Mahabharat, Adiparva*, p. 83
remark, as it is seen in the Bengali rendering of the *Mahabharata* composed by Kashiram Das. And in the *Mahabharata* by Vedavyasa, Devayani herself chooses her husband and she hardly awaits the consent of her father in this aspect. Even after greatly enamoured of Yayati, Devayani is frightened of her father: ‘ভগবন্তি নিষেধ করে তাঁর কর্ণগোচর হলে, আর কি নিষার আছে?’¹¹⁹

[My Godlike father is a hot-tempered person by nature; and if he becomes aware of this fact, I won't be spared at all.]

The patriarchal society contemporaneous with Madhusudan had greatly influenced the portrayal of this protagonist by Madhusudan where hereditarily the womenfolk is subordinated sometime by father or sometimes by son or sometimes by the grandson. On the other hand, the character of Devayani in the *Mahabharata* is portrayed as the ‘মাতৃতাত্ত্বিক সমাজের অপরাহ্ন-কালের যোদ্ধা’¹²⁰ [The warrior of the waning matriarchal society.] When she came to know about the conjugal relation between Sharmistha and Yayati, she complains to her father Shukracharya:

‘এয়েআস্ত্যাং জনিতা পুত্রা রাজ্জানেন যথাতিনা।

দুর্ভগ্যায় মম দৌ তু পুনঃতাত প্রবীমি তে।’¹²¹

[Father! I tell you that, the royal fellow's copulation with Sharmistha resulted in three children whereas that with me resulted in only two children.]

This Devayani has been portrayed in the *Mahabharata* as a strong, harsh, conceited and materialistic as well as a power-loving woman. Michael too has characterized Devayani as a ‘অহঃকারিণী ব্রাহ্মণীনার’i.e., a vain Brahmin girl, according to Devika, the confidante of Sharmistha. This remark made by Devika has also been adduced by the comment of a critic:

‘দেবায়নী ব্রাহ্মণী, শূলকন্যা। তিনি অহস্তারী, স্বাধিকার প্রমন্তা এবং
নিরঙ্কুশ ক্ষমতালোভী।’

[Devayani is a Brahmin lady, the daughter of the preceptor.She is conceited, intoxicated by her self-privileges and absolutely power-greedy.]

Both the portrayals of Devayani by Vyasadeva and Madhusudan have some similar traits although the protagonist Devayani in the play titled *Sharmistha* by Madhusudan has been portrayed with a sharp contrast in comparison to the characterization in the original epic. In the *Mahabharata*, the only thing noticed is Devayani’s jealousy for her co-wife, whereas Michael portrays her with the

traits like “প্রেমের অবমাননার বেদনা” ¹²⁴ [Affliction caused by the dishonour of her love] and “প্রেমাকুলতার কাছে বৈষয়িক বুদ্ধির লোপ” ¹²⁵ [The loss of materialistic sense to the lovelorn state of mind.] Michael makes Devayani accuse Yayati before Shukracharya:

‘সে দুঃখারিণী দৈত্যকন্যা শর্মিষ্ঠীকে গান্ধর্ব বিধানে পরিণয় করে আমার যথেষ্ট অবমাননা করেছে।’ ¹²⁶

[He has greatly insulted me by willfully marrying that wicked demon-girl, Sharmistha through the system of Gandharva.]

Not only that, this woman who has been deprived of her love, even seeks permission for sacrificing her life by drowning herself in the river Yamuna when she fails to gather sympathy of her father to take side with her.¹²⁷ However, finally she has been compelled to come back home at the instance of her father, Shukracharya.

Although Sharmistha’s confidante Devika calls Devayani an ‘অসুচ্চরিত্রা স্ত্রী’ ¹²⁸, i.e. an ‘unchaste wife’, Devayani should not be called an 'unchaste wife' in the true sense of the word. Yet, the normal womanly trait of fright can be found in her when she sets for the demon-land after deserting her husband's house, and that too in a state of maddening rage and herself being devoid of the sense of

¹²⁷. Ibid, P. 245.
¹²⁸. Ibid, P. 245.
good and evil.\textsuperscript{129} Again, when she comes to know that her husband is enamoured of another woman, she makes a horrible remark: “এমন পতি থাকা বা না-থাকা দুই তুল্য;”\textsuperscript{130} [Having or not having a husband of such kind is equal.] And she also prays to her father to make her husband worn out of decrepitude so that her husband could no longer be able to draw any woman by his charms.\textsuperscript{131} However, her character reflects the outburst of deep repentance subsequently.\textsuperscript{132}

Michael has not shown us the reason active behind the sudden change occurred in this character. When she becomes furious at her husband, she is never moved by any of the factors like her memories of her love-life in the past or of the advice imparted by her father or of the duties of a devoted married wife whose husband is alive, whereas her heart gets overwhelmed and softened with repentance when her father's curse comes upon.

We can say that although Devayani's deeds done in a revengeful attitude, should not be termed 'praiseworthy' yet her deportment is human. Because it is her human nature that her immediate fury instigates her to subdue her husband in order to take revenge on her husband with the help of her powerful father. And this very human nature makes her burst out of her repentance, while subsequently

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{129}. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), \textit{Madhusudan Rachanavali}, P. 243.
\textsuperscript{130}. Ibid, P. 243.
\textsuperscript{131}. Ibid, P. 245.
\textsuperscript{132}. Ibid, P. 249.
\end{flushleft}
makes her seek the help of her powerful father in order to release her husband of that curse, only for the well-being of her husband. Although the character is taken from the *Mahabharata*, the youthful poetic vision of Michael nurtured in the atmosphere of the Renaissance leads the pattern of the portrayal through a different way. Therefore, it is properly said that, “এই স্বাতন্ত্র্যময়ী দৃঢ়নারী মধুসূদনের নিজস্ব সৃষ্টি।”

[This distinctive and bold woman is the creation of Madhusudan's own.]

### 1.14 YAYATI

Yayati has been introduced as the ‘চন্দ্রবংশীয় রাজা নূহের পুত্র। এঁর দুই স্ত্রী, দেবযানী ও শর্মিষ্ঠা।’

[Son of Nahusha who belonged to the ‘Chandra Vangsha’ or 'Moon Dynasty' and Yayati's two wives were Devayani and Sharmistha.]

Devayani is the first wife among the two. In the *Mahabharata*, we may notice that it was under the compulsion of the situation rather than the love instinct that made Yayati marry Devayani. But Madhusudan indicates that the wedding of Yayati with Devayani was...

---

134. Sudhirchandra Sarkar (complied), *Pauranik Abhidhan*, P. 446.
a love-match. It may be mentioned in this context that the composer
of the *Bhagavata* too has recognised the amourous instinct of Yayati
to Devyani. Although the proposal offered by Devyani was contrary
to popular practice and hence was undesirable to Yayati, yet he
thought it to be the grace of God and ‘मनस्थ तद्गृहतं’\(^{135}\) [Due to her rapt
attention and devotion to him]; and thus accepted her proposal.
Michael’s play titled *Sharmistha* reflects the portrayal of this
amorous Yayati, where the king is attracted to Devayani at the first
sight of her, before their wedding.\(^ {136}\)

Madhusudan portrays this protagonist, i.e., Yayati, as the able
successor of the kings depicted in the Sanskrit plays for his attraction
to the demon-princess named Sharmistha, even after living a happy
married life with Devayani, his first wife. Even in this play,
Madhusudan fails to portray the protagonist Yayati with absolute
fidelity to the original text, since the original text indicates that it
was Sharmistha who prays to Yayati for a child by asking for sexual
intercourse.\(^ {137}\) Obviously, although duty-bound, Yayati himself too
became very happy\(^ {138}\) through the act of love-making to Sharmistha
in order to make her happy. Besides, it appeared to Yayati that at the
very first sight, Sharmistha looked much more beautiful than

\(^{135}\) Srimadbhagavata-Mahapurana, Vol. II, 9.18.23, P. 1033

\(^{136}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P. 228.

\(^{137}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 70.21, P. 874.

\(^{138}\) Ibid, 70.25, P. 875.
It has also been mentioned in the play *Sharmistha* by Madhusudan that even after the wedding ceremony of Yayati and Devayani, Yayati himself being enamoured of Devayani, tells her that he had an indistinct vision of a beautiful woman belonging to the lineage of demons.\(^{140}\) Hence, the imagination of the great poet of the epic had also the root-cause of the love-affair between Yayati and Sharmistha dormant in it. Hence, the original text also indicated that the post-marriage conjugal life of Yayati and Devayani was really a happy one. As soon as Devayani came to know about the love-affair of Yayati and Sharmistha, she was so shocked that she was about to go back to her father's place while the king too pursued her in a sorrowful and worried state of mind and went on consoling her.\(^{141}\) Of course, the *Bhagavata* attributes Yayati with the adjective Kami, i.e., lustful and desirous for this behaviour.\(^{142}\)

A critic discovers the deficiency of the proper loving attitude in Yayati when he casts a lovelorn glance at Sharmistha just after expressing his overwhelming bliss to get married to Devayani.\(^{143}\) This apart, no inner conflict can be found in the character of Yayati, whereas he should have faced an inner conflict to a great extent.

\(^{139}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 69.14-17, PP. 858-859.  
\(^{140}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, PP. 234-235.  
\(^{141}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 71.24-25, PP. 881-882.  
\(^{143}\) Ramagati Nyayaratna, 'Madhusudan Dutter Sharmistha Prabhriti Natak', in Bishnu Basu (ed.), *Madhusudaner Sahitya : Sekaler Alochana*, P. 78
when he commits adultery despite having a devoted wife. No emotional clashes have ever occurred in this protagonist. Yet, a trait is common in the strokes of both Vedavyasa and Michael, and that is the fright of the fury of Shukracharya. However, in the original text, Yayati never uttered the name of Sharmistha after the departure of Devayani; whereas in the character of Yayati created by Madhusudan, the attraction of Sharmistha still remained intact.\textsuperscript{144} This sympathy and attraction that had drawn Yayati towards Sharmistha, also reflected a faint shadow of this personal life of Madhusudan; i.e., his deep love for his first wife named Rebeca dormant in his subconscious mind. This play by Madhusudan could make the task as impossible as an amazing fairy tale which he could never accomplish in his real life. According to a critic, ‘দুই নারী এক ছাঁদনাতলায় দাঁড়িয়ে এক পুরুষের সঙ্গে দৃষ্টিবিনিময় করলেন।’\textsuperscript{145}

[Both the women cast their glance with the same male standing under the same roof.]

However, the most important phase of this character named Yayati appears in the last phase of his life, when being decrepit after the curse of Shukracharya he enjoys his youthful pleasures even

\textsuperscript{144.} Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), \textit{Madhusudan Rachanavali}, P. 247.
\textsuperscript{145.} Sureshchandra Maitra, \textit{Michael Madhusudan Dutta Jiban O Sahitya}, P. 134.
through the borrowed phase of youth obtained from Puru, his son.\textsuperscript{146}

Yayati is also seen to do the same thing in this play, and thus the characterization of this protagonist follows the original text, although it is in keeping with the mindset of the Nineteenth Century. Hence, the contemporaneous backdrop is active behind the portrayal of Yayati by the playwright. Because,

[The extremely selfish king had not flinched from even rejuvenating his life span borrowed from his real son, only in order to gratify his lustful desires, and it is not improper to infer that in the contemporaneous society of banians and commercial agents, stories of this type under different titles were available. Polygamy was a very common phenomenon at that time. In that society where polygamy was prevalent, women failed to have a distinctive value of its own and Michael has projected that situation.]\textsuperscript{147}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{146} i. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), \textit{Mahabharatam, Adiparva}, 72. 27-35, PP. 892-894.

\textsuperscript{ii.} Ibid, 73.1-9, PP. 894-896.

\textsuperscript{147} Sureshchandra Maitra, \textit{Michael Madhusudan Dutta Jiban O Sahitya}, P. 134.
\end{footnotesize}
At the end of all discussion, we can find that the protagonist Yayati as created by Michael, lacks the traits of a great personality which is a blend of robust mundane consumerism, sagacity and renunciation, but it also lacks the trait of dutifulness of the same protagonist as it is depicted in the *Mahabharata*. Even the scruple of conscience and the pangs of repentance, observed in the character of Dushyanta as it is portrayed by Kalidasa,\(^{148}\) are also absent in the character of Yayati of the play titled *Sharmistha*. However, another facet of this character which remains unrevealed in the *Mahabharata*, has been revealed in this play penned by Michael, i.e., the lover self of Yayati. In the *Mahabharata*, Yayati loves in fact none of the two women named Devayani and Sharmistha. Although he fell in love with the charms of the former at the first sight, yet situation forced him to marry her and his dutifulness makes him marry Sharmistha. But, Michael has revealed the love of Yayati to both these women in this play. It can be mentioned in this context that according to some critic, Yayati in the *Mahabharata* was portrayed as a

\[\text{নারীদেহ লিপ্ত—কামাতুর | মধুসূদন তাঁর রচনায় উভয় ক্ষেত্রেই পূর্বরাগ পরিকল্পনা করেছেন; আর উভয়েই যায়তিকে করেছেন দেবযানী-শামিষ্টা দুজনেরই প্রণয়ভিক্ষু}^{149}\]

[A sensualist person stricken with carnal desire, whereas

Michael in his play makes Yayati court with both the women and portrays him as the lover-boy wooing both Devayani and Sharmistha.

Through this lover-boy self of the protagonist Yayati and through his attraction for Sharmistha, the playwright eulogizes also the instinct along with eulogizing the Love. The origin of the instinct is the Mahabharata which contains only the craving for the mundane desires. And the origin of the romantic love of Yayati is the European literature. The craving for charms and beauty as revealed in the portrayal of Yayati leads to nothing but woe in the long run, so Yayati has to be decrepit and infirm under the influence of this beauty. Not only that, the ominous spell of this beauty has also been expanded in the decrepitude of Puru, the son of Sharmistha and Yayati. Although Madhusudan portrays this epical character with absolute fidelity, yet the masterstroke of the playwright with the focus of the Occidental light in the various twists and turns of Yayati’s life, makes the protagonist a novel one.

1.15 SHUKRACHARYA

Shukracharya can be briefly introduced as,

‘...ইনি ভূঃশর পুত্র। সেইজন্য তিনি ভাগ্নিবন্ধে পরিচিত। ইনি দৈত্যরাজা 
বলির গুরু ও দৈত্যদের পুরোহিত ও গুরু ছিলেন। ইনি শ্রেতবর্গ ও 
শ্রেতবর্ত্তন্মারী। ইনি ছিলেন সর্ববশাস্ত্র প্রবক্তা।’¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰. Sudhirchandra Sarkar (compiled), Pauranik Abhidhan, P. 511.
[He is the son of Bhrigu and hence he is known as Bhargava. He was the preceptor of Bali, the king of the demons and he was also the preceptor as well as the priest of the demons. He was fair-complexioned and was dressed in white. He was well-versed in all the scriptures.]

He is very much affectionate to his daughter Devayani. The Mahabharata contains the narrative according to which, as soon as Devayani decides to marry Yayati, her desire is in no time approved by Shukracharya.\textsuperscript{151} And Shukracharya never appears to be a father burdened with the responsibility of arranging for the marriage of one's daughter. But in the play Sharmista penned by Madhusudan, Shukracharya comes to know about his daughter’s decision from her confidante, and speaks to himself:

‘...আমার চিত্রকাল এই বাসনা, যে, আমি অনুরূপ পাত্রে কন্যা সম্প্রদান করি; কিন্তু ইদানীং বিধি অনুকূলীয় প্রকাশপূর্বক মদীয় মনকামনা পরিপূর্ণ করিলেন। এক্ষণে কন্যাদায়ে নিশ্চিত হলেম। সুপাত্রে প্রদত্ত কন্যা পিতামাতার অনুশোচনীয়া হয় না।’\textsuperscript{152}

[For a long time, I have cherished the desire of committing my daughter ceremonially to the charge of a suitable bridegroom, but recently the Providence has bestowed his favour upon me by fulfilling

\textsuperscript{151.} Haridas Siddhantabagish (ed), Mahabharatam, Adiparva, 69.39-40, P. 866.
\textsuperscript{152.} Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 225.]

(79)
my heartfelt desire. Now I am free from the liabilities of arranging the marriage of my daughter. The parents have not to regret for their daughter who is married to a suitable bridegroom.]

His remark reveals the contemporaneous society in which the daughter was considered nothing but a liability. Hence, Michael portrays Shukracharya as a responsible father, whereas in the *Mahabharata* he is portrayed as a person who is well aware of the human nature. He knows that since the customs like polygamy and ‘Gandharva Vivaha’, i.e., the system of wedding of the willing couple without observing the customery rites, were common to the Kshatriyas, so it is quite easy to presume that king Yayati will definitely invite Sharmistha to be his bed-partner as Sharmistha is much more charming than Devayani. And this act of the king will make Devayani suffer and so it is undesirable for Shukracharya.

In the era of the *Mahabharata* too, polygamy was prevalent in the society. However, in spite of that, Shukracharya being himself an affectionate father who dotes upon his daughter Devayani, laid an interdiction on Yayati not to get any contact with Sharmistha - ‘মা চেনানি শয়নে হয়েঁ’

[Dont invite her to your bed as your bed-partner.]

Yet, in the play penned by Madhusudan, Shukracharya despite

---

being softened with affection for his doting daughter Devyani, is not at all enraged for disobeying his order when he comes to know about Yayati’s attraction for Sharmistha and says,

‘ক্ষত্রিয় রাজার সহিত যখন তোমার পরিণয় হয়েছিল, তখনি আমি জানি, যে এরূপ ঘটনা হবে, তা পুরোহিত এ বিষয়ের বিবেচনা উচিত ছিল।’

[I was apprehensive of such an outcome when you got married to a Kshatriya. You should have considered the fact beforehand and should have been apprehensive of the outcome before your wedlock with a Kshatriya.]

It is very surprising that in this play, Shukracharya did not adopt any preventive measure despite knowing the outcome, whereas in the epic composed by Vedavyasa, Shukracharya adopted the preventive measure in this regard.

The contemporaneous society of the Nineteenth Century Bengal was male-dominated. Shukracharya appears to represent that typical male-dominated society of contemporaneous Bengal in the play titled Sharmistha. At first, he becomes furious to hear Devyani's censorious comments on her husband, still Shukracharya's doting nature and fondness for his daughter makes him fulfil the ruthless and capricious demand of Devayani, by turning Yayati a decrepit. Again, himself

155. Ibid, P. 244.
156. Ibid, P. 245.
being a representative of a male-dominated society, he compels Devayani to go back to her husband's place. However, in this play, Madhusudan has not portrayed this protagonist with absolute fidelity, because in the Mahabharata, Shukracharya was not insisted by Devyani to curse Yayati, rather he was goaded by his own intention. But, in Madhusudan's play, Shukracharya was totally unwilling to curse Yayati since the latter was a “परम धर्मशील और परम दयालु पुरुष” [Highly virtuous and an embodiment of Kindness.]

Later, when Devayani threatened to sacrifice her life, he agreed to do that. In this play, Shukracharya appears to be comparatively better as an individual, tender-natured and considerate. That is why, he pleads the decree of Destiny in excuse of his curse. And subsequently, Devayani's tears melt him and then he redresses his curse. And then he blesses king Yayati at the royal court of Pratisthanpuri. However, in the original text of the epic too, Shukracharya prescribes the way of readressal of this curse and a request made by Yayati in regard to Devayani acts behind this readressal.

159. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 245.
160. Ibid, P. 245.
161. Ibid, P. 245.
163. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatam, Adiparva, 71.39, P. 885.
In the *Mahabharata*, no comment was made by Shukracharya on Sharmistha after declaring the way of redressal of the curse; whereas even after this incident, the same protagonist is portrayed by Madhusudan as a great well-wisher of Sharmistha and also with a fatherly affection committing her ceremonially to Yayati.\(^{164}\) Here, in the words of Shukracharya, Madhusudan himself recognises the wedding of Yayati and Sharmistha.

The protagonist, Shukracharya as portrayed by Madhusudan, although finds its origin in the *Mahabharata*, yet he is much more liberal and humane, because of the mindest of his creator. This humane trait possessed by Michael owes to his personal life as well as the zeitgeist of that time to some extent. In the words of a critic,

‘ফরাসী বিপ্লব, আমেরিকার মুক্তিযুদ্ধের শিক্ষা এবং বেকন, হিউম, টম পেইন, এলেটের প্রতৃতির রচনা, বাংলাদেশে নতুন জীবন চেতনা এনে দিয়েছিল। সে সবই ছিল মাইকেলের উত্তরাধিকার। উপরস্তু বিদেশিনী বিবাহ করে বুঝেছিলেন গাছার্ম মানুষের বহিরাবরণ। মানুষ সর্বদেশে এক এবং অকৃতিম। মধুর আত্মজাতিকতা যেমন সমষ্টিগত, তেমনই নিতান্ত বক্তিগত।’\(^{165}\)

[A novel consciousness of life swayed Bengal which was

---

inspired by French Revolution, the lessons of American Freedom Movement and the writings of Bacon, Hume, Tom Payne, Voltaire etc. All these inspiring factors were inherited by Madhusudan. Moreover, his wedlock with a foreigner woman made him realize that skin is only the outer cover of the human being; in all countries, human beings are the same and genuine. Mellow internationalism is collective as well as very much personal too.]

1.16 GANGA

In the Adiparva of the Mahabharata, we find the narrative of Shantanu and Ganga. The Divine Goddess as well as the river Ganga assumed the form of a woman of the earth for long and remained the wife of Shantanu, since she was bound by a promise of releasing the cursed Astavasus, i.e., the eight demi-Gods or celestial males, laid upon them by the great rishi Vashistha; and she was disappeared as soon as that promise was fulfilled. Later, when she returned her son Devavrata and described the qualities and capabilities of the latter to his father, she thus stated:

‘मया दत्तं निजं पुत्रं बीरं बीर ! गृहं नयं।’

[Take this great valorous son of yours to your palace who is

---

166. i. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), Mahabharatm, Adiparva, 92.24-55 PP. 1088-1095.
167. Ibid, 94.40, P. 1113.
given by me and who is a great archer and also well-versed in the execution of royal duties.]

Although Ganga falls in love with Shantanu at first sight,\(^{168}\) she is not at all moved by her weakness for Shantanu at the parting moment after giving the son back to his father. Even, Vyasa deva portrays Ganga as a character devoid of any revelation of weakness for upbringing the child.

Also in the epistle titled *Shantanur Prati Ganga* included in the book of epistolary verses titled *Virangana* composed by Madhusudan, and the poet is obviously loyal to the original text while portraying the character of Ganga through her self-introduction. Despite being ‘हर शिर निबासिनी हरप्रिया’\(^{169}\), i.e. the ladylove of Lord Shiva, and her abode is the matted hair of Shiva, Ganga had to stay as the wife of Shantanu and this epistle presents the narrative of the Astavasus as an excuse of her earthly sojourn. Jahnavi had to become the wife of Shantanu just for the sake of dutifulness; but when their son Devavrata (who was one of the cursed Astavasus) became grown up, she sent him to his father, king Shantanu, with an epistle written by herself.

In this epistle, Jahnavi wrote the letter to Shantanu neither as

\(^{168}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatm, Adiparva*, 92.29, P. 1088.
\(^{169}\) Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P. 166.
a wife nor as a ladylove. Rather she wrote—‘পত্নীভাবে আর তুমি ভেবে
না আমারে’ [Don't think me to be your wife any longer]. Eventually,
she severes the conjugal relation with her earthly consort forever
and thus says:

‘কি কাজ অধিক করে? পূর্বকথা ভুলি,
করি ঘৃণা ভেঙ্গিয়সে কামগত মনঃ
প্রণ সন্ধানে, রাজা! শৈলেন্দ্রনন্দিনী
রূপেন্দ্রগৃহীনি গঙ্গা আশীরে তোমারে!' [No need to say anything
further. Forget the past events and
lave your sensuousness in the flow of devotion and prostrate before
me, O king! Ganga, who is the daughter of the king of mountains and
the wife of Shiva, Blesses you].

It may be mentioned that the original text did not contain this
dialogue.

The heartache felt by lovelorn Shantanu at the sight of his
ladylove turning into a Goddess can be conjectured. Truly, this
characterization of Ganga is not only amazing, but also a 'thrilling'
one from which the 'queen spirit' is issued in place of 'devotional
spirit.'

171. Ibid, P. 167.
A critic efforts to delve into the mindset of Jahnavi, the royal consort of Shantanu in the light of her ascension into Godhead. He opines that Jahnavi was a bit affectionately attached to Shantanu because of her earthly sojourn being the wife of Shantanu for a long time. But, since she is a celestial Goddess, she must have to return to heaven after accomplishing her enjoined duty. Hence, according to a critic,

‘শান্তনুর প্রতি প্রীতিমূল্য হওয়া সত্যেও জাহানী অনন্যোপায় হয়ে এই পত্রে আপন দেবীত্বই প্রকাশ করেছেন।’ ¹⁷³

[In this epistle, despite having a loving attitude to Shantanu, Jahnavi has no alternative of revealing her divine image.]

Besides, Ganga's endeavour to sever the forthcoming delusive bonding between them based on false hope of the king, is active behind her harshness. Hence, Madhusudan has portrayed Ganga as a Goddess for serving the purpose.

The poem also reveals Michael as a well-versed person in human psychology. Jahnavi, despite going beyond the reach of Shantanu, tells him-

‘...অন্তরীক্ষে থাকি
তব পূরে, তব সুখে হইব হে সুখী,
তনয়ের বিধুমুখ হেরি দিবানিশি।’ ¹⁷⁴

[I will always cast a gaze towards yours place from the distant sky and be happy to behold the moonlike face of the son and your happiness will make me happy.]

Two aspects can be observed here. Firstly, Ganga wants to be happy at the happiness of Shantanu and this congenial spirit makes her a friend of Shantanu. According to the original text, Ganga said, ‘বস্ত্রো তেহম্বু’\(^1\), i.e., I wish your well-being,– where she has not extended her hands of friendship to Shantanu by sharing his happiness. Secondly, the original text does not reveal any weakness in Ganga’s character for her son, whereas Madhusudan’s portrayal of Ganga is mellowed by the glow of motherhood. It can be said that here Jahnavi’s character reflects ‘মহৎ পোমের এক শুচিমিশ্ল রূপ’\(^2\) [An immaculately pleasant trait of a sublime love]. Incidentally Madhusudan’s Mother’s name too was ‘Jahnavi’. This might have an extra influence on him in this direction.

Hence, Madhusudan has not always followed the original text with absolute fidelity in renovating the epical character of Ganga and he is guided by his creative romantic mindset in this regard.

In fact, *Virangana* has been influenced by the new trend of Romanticism that swayed Bengal in the middle of Nineteenth Century.

\(^1\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (ed.), *Mahabharatam, Adiparva*, 92.54, P. 1095.
and also by *Heroides* by Ovid. *Virangana*, more or less, contain the extension of imaginative sensibility– where the poet analyses the mythological characters in the light of the enlightened mindset of the Bengalis in Nineteenth Century and also in the backdrop of individual ideology.

### 1.17 Rukmini

Rukmini is ‘বিদ্বর্জয় ভীমাক্ষের কন্যা ও শ্রীকৃষ্ণের স্ত্রী। ইনি লম্ব্জীর অবতার।
এঁর ভাতার নাম রূক্মী।’ 177

[The daughter of Bhishmaka, the king of Vidarbha and she is the wife of Srikrishna. Her brother's name is Rukmi.]

In the *Mahabharata*, the incident of the abduction of Rukmini has been mentioned. 178 Besides, Rukmini is mentioned there not as a virgin, but as a married woman. But the portrayal of Rukmini by Madhusudan reflects the female protagonist as a virgin mellowed by the sweet and soft blushes expressing her first love–where a transparent veil of abashment enclosing the irresistible attraction for her lover blossoms within Rukmini who is an ardent lover of Krishna since her childhood.

In the epistle titled *Dvarakanather Prati Rukmini* included in

---

the book of epistolary verses titled *Virangana*, Rukmini wrote a letter to Dvarakanatha to this effect that, she loves Kunjabihari. Hence Dvarakanatha is beseeched by her first to abduct her and then to offer her at the feet of Kunjabihari.\textsuperscript{179} Here in this epistle, she is under the illusion of a lovelorn woman who under an illusion, imagines Srikrishna having two different selves of two separate individuals within the same entity of Srikrishna. Of these two separate entities one is her lover while the second entity is the mythological Avatara who is the protector of the earth during one after another era through his amazing activities.\textsuperscript{180}

Despite being herself a princess, Rukmini is humble and pious and is afraid of mental adultery when she says:

```
'কি লজ্জা! ভাবিয়া দেখে, হে দ্বারকাপতি
কেমনে অধর্ম কর্ম করিবে রুক্মিণী?
স্বেচ্ছায় দিয়াছে দাসী, হায় একজনে
কায় মনঃ, অনাজনে — ক্ষম গৃণনিধি!'\textsuperscript{181}
```

[What a shame! Just think over it, O, the king of Dvaraka, how can Rukmini commit such an immoral act while she has already surrendered her body and mind willingly so someone else? Oh no, I

\textsuperscript{179} Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P. 154.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, PP. 152-153.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid, P. 153.
beg your pardon, you are endowed with so many virtues!]

This Rukmini of *Virangana*, has been highly attracted after hearing the laudatory hymns composed to praise Srikrishna by saying the words as follows:

```
শুনি নিত্য স্বয়মিখে, হরিকেশ তুমি,
যাদবেন্দ্র, অর্থীর্ণ অর্ঘ্যা-মণ্ডলে
খণ্ডিতে ধরার ভার দণ্ড পাপী-জনে,
চাহে পদার্থর, নমি ও রাজী-পদে
রুক্মিণী, — ভীমক-পুত্রী, চিরদাসী তব;—
```

[In the words of the sages, I always used to hear that you are the Hrishikesha and the king of the Yadavas who has made his advent with a mission to unburden the earth by sentencing the sinners punishment. And now Rukmini, the daughter of Bhishmaka and your humble servant forever, seeks resort at your lotus feet].

Here like a devoted woman, Rukmini surrenders herself at the lotus feet of Dvarakanatha, while on the other hand, remembers Srikrishna whom she has already surrendered her body and mind willingly by accepting him as her husband-

```
লইনু শরণ আজি ও রাজিব-পদে;—
বিন্দ বিনাশন তুমি, হ্রাণ বিশ্বে মৌরে!'
```

183. Ibid, P. 153.
184. Ibid, P. 153.
[I resort to your lotus feet, you are the savior and remove all my impediments and obstacles].

In this epistle, Madhusudan tries his best to characterize the resplendent glory of her untarnished devotion and chastity as a perfect wife, just the way it has been described in the mythologies. Hence, it is properly said,

‘ভাগবতের রুক্ষিণী বীরাঙ্গনা কাব্যে বর্ণোজ্জ্বল — প্রেমভক্তির এক অনিন্দ্যসুন্দর চিত্র।’

[The character of Rukmini of the Bhagavata has been vividly portrayed in the Virangana Kavya— which is an immaculately beautiful pen-picture of love and devotion].

Rukmini speaks of worshipping the image of Shyama like a female ascetic in the core of her heart and that makes a critic discover the excellent synthesis of the devotion and sincerity of a female ascetic harmonized with the courtship of a heroine. According to some critic, this epistle contains ‘প্রেমের লালসাহীন উচ্চ আদর্শ।’

[The lofty ideal of love which is devoid of lust.] According to a critic,

‘রুক্ষিণীর এই সম্বাসিনী মূর্তি নিৰ্বৃত্তির নয়,আসক্তি-হীনতা তো নয়।’

---

185. Kshetra Gupta, Madhusudaner Kavi-Atma O Kavyashilpa, P. 34.
[This image of Rukmini as a female ascetic is made neither of renunciation, nor of detachment. Despite being itself a shy and an elevated one, this love is not continent; rather it is restless to reunite with the lover and is trembling passionately]. We would like to compare this ascetic image of Rukmini with that of Parvati who was engaged in austere practice longing for Shiva in the book of verses titled *Kumar Sambhava*.\(^\text{189}\) It can be mentioned in this context that the character of Rukmini in the *Mahabharata* too, contains, the single-minded amorous attachment to Srikrishna. Yet, the influence of an alien poet called Ovid is also obvious here. We can cite here the viewpoint of a critic,

‘...ওভিদের নায়িকারা যেমন স্বপ্ন দেখেছেন এবং সে স্বপ্নের বিবরণ জানিয়ে তাঁদের মিলনেক্ষাকে তীব্রতর করে তুলেছেন, তেমনি
মধুসূদনকেও শক্তিতা ও রুক্মিনীর মধ্যে এই কৌশল অবলম্বন করতে
দেখেছি।’\(^\text{190}\)

[The way the heroines of Ovid used to dream and to describe their dreamworld only to make their amorous union more passionate,
Madhusudan too seems to use this device in portraying the character

---

of Shakuntala and Rukmini.] However it is true that Madhusudan's compositions contained the native as well as the Indian tradition to the full extent. So, the character of Rukmini portrayed by Madhusudan is not only veiled by the portrayal of Rukmini in the Bhagavata-Purana as well as the portrayal of Radhika in the Vaishnava Padavali; moreover, this character in no way contradicts the portrayal of this character in the original text of the epic. It can be said that the pen-picture of Rukmini in the Mahabharata as if appears to be the future-portrait of this portrayal of Rukmini by Madhusudan.

1.18 MAHADEVA AND PARVATI

Throughout a full-fledged chapter of the Anushasanaparva, the divine power of Mahadeva has been described\footnote{Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr), Mahabharatam, Anushasanaparva, 13.1-426, PP. 139-232.} and that too is described by none other than Srikrishna himself. Besides, at the end of Dronaparva, the celestial grace has been delineated.\footnote{Ibid, Dronaparva, 25.107, PP. 9-121} Lord Shiva or Mahadeva is worshipped by Brahma, as well as by the pishachas. Parvati is the divine consort of Lord Shiva. It is mentioned in the Mahabharata that both Parvati and Shiva had granted boons to Krishna.\footnote{Ibid, Anushasanaparva, 14.1-11, PP. 232-235.}

It is obvious that the composer of the Mahabharata has
portrayed both the characters of Shiva and Parvati with gravity, but mostly in the *Meghanadavadh Kavya* penned by Madhusudan, that gravity has greatly been affected. particularly, Parvati's activities for interrupting in the deep mediation of Shiva and the highly excited state of Shiva out of great infatuation with the seductive beauty of Parvati, have made both the characters perverted ones. One of the critics has observed the influence of the Greek Gods and Goddesses in the portrayal of both these characters by Madhusudan. He thus comments:

‘মধুসূদনের দেবদেবীরা নামেই ভারতীয়, কার্যকাৰ্য তারা গ্রীক।...দেবদেবীর
চরিত্র পরিকল্পনায়ও হোমারের প্রভাব অনন্তরীকর্ষ। মেঘনাদধৰ্ম কাব্যে
মহাদেব ও পার্বতী, ইলিয়াড’-এর জিউস ও হিয়ার ইংঞ্চে চিত্রিত।’ 

[The characters of the Gods and Goddesses created by Madhusudan though posses the Indian identity, actually they are Greek. It is undeniable that in the designing of the celestial Gods and Goddessess, Homer has influenced him to a great extent. In *Meghanadavadh Kavya*, the character of Mahadeva and Parvati are cast in the mould of the character of Jeus and Hera of the Greek epic titled *Iliad.*]

Michael appears to possess the anthropomorphic faculty, and to both the characters of Shiva and Parvati, Michael attributes human

---

qualities remarkably. Subsequent to the death of Lakshmana, Rama began to lament and hearing that lamentation, Parvati expresses her reaction before Shiva\textsuperscript{195} and her dialogues projects her merely as a sentimental wife who employs her husband's love for her as a device. On the other hand, the profoundly wise Shiva of the \textit{Mahabharata} appears so helpless when he fails to prevent Lakshmana from the act of killing Indrajit at the instance of his wife; moreover, he has to beg for the permission from Parvati to console the bereaved father Ravana after the death of Ravana's son Indrajit—whereas Ravana was a devout votary of Shiva.\textsuperscript{196} Here the character of Shiva is out and out humane and it contradicts the original text as well.

1.19 VISHWAKARMA

In the \textit{Mahabharata}, Vishwakarma is portrayed as the divine architect. He is “শিল্পের শ্রেষ্ঠ কর্তা, সহশ্র শিল্পের আবিষ্কারক, সদ্ব্যক্তি কারুকার্য্য নির্মাতা”\textsuperscript{197}

[The supreme authority on architecture, the inventor of thousands of art and craft, and the innovator of each and every artistry.]

But, in the \textit{Tilottamasambhav Kavya} penned by Michael, the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 116.
  \item Ibid, P. 105.
  \item Sudhirchandra Sarkar (compiled), \textit{Pauranik Abhidhan}, P. 353.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
language used by Vishwakarma at the time of showing all the ornaments to Prabhanjana, displays the talent and subtlety of a great artist. Here the character of Vishwakarma lacks the trait of the weapon-maker who possesses the credit of making the fierce thunderlike weapon of Indra. ¹⁹⁸

Through the viewpoint of Prabhanjana, the achievements of Vishwakarma are reflected in the pen-picture of the Brahmapuri which is made of and inlaid with gold. It is learnt in the words of Vishwakarma himself that the design or the blue-print of the Brahmapuri was the brainchild of Brahma himself and Vishwakarma gave it a concrete shape by constructing the city, since ‘ধাতর প্রসাদে, দেব, এ শক্তি আমার।’¹⁹⁹

[By the grace of Brahma the Divine creator, I am empowered to execute the same.]

Here, even the creativity of Vishwakarma is also subjected to the divine decree. Still, the image of Vishwakarma while engrossed in meditation at the moment of creating a charming woman for entertaining the whole universe, appears before us as that of a true artist who is able to draw the whole world towards himself by virtue of his power of meditation. In this context, a remark by a critic appears

to be a proper one that, this Vishwakarma is “হোমারের হেফাইসটোসের
মতে সূক্ষ্ম শিল্পী।””

[An artist possessing subtlety like Hephaestous.]

1.20 YAMA

The *Mahabharata* contains the narrative of Savitri and Satyavana where Yama gave Savitri back the life of her husband. In Savitri's words, Yama is,

‘সমেন ধর্মর্ণে চ রজিতাং প্রজাস্ততঃবেহেখর ধন্মরাজাং’

[Yama has received the appellation of 'Dharmaraja', since he has pleased everyone by introducing the same faculty of virtuousness equally to all.]

In the *Tilottamasambhav Kavya* that 'Dharmaraja' Yama appears to be a mighty, physically strong person who lacks the trait of thoughtfulness. Because, he is unable to decipher the cryptical clues offered by Brahma. During the war waged against the demons, as soon as Yama found his fierce weapon called 'the snake' to be of no avail, in no time the God of death fled, mounting on his buffalo and gnashing his teeth in anger. His behaviour clearly reveals the fact

203. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), *Madhusudan Rachanavali*, P. 34.
that he bears grudge against his enemies. Here, the hot-temper of Yama has been depicted in this book of verses. The deportment of Yama, when Indra sought advice from the Gods of the solar orb after informing them of the plight of the Gods of heaven, bears witness of his irascible disposition-

‘...অতএব যদি আঞ্জা কর,
ঝিলের পতি, এই দেশ দণ্ডায়তে
নাশি এ জগৎ, চূর্ণ করি বিশ্ব, ফেলি
স্বর্গ, মর্ত, পাতাল— অতল জলতলে।’

[So, if you command me, O the lord of heaven, I'll destruct this world immediately in a jiffy with my staff and throw the Heaven and the Earth and the Netherworld into the unfathomable water.]

This penpicture of Yama who is irascible and at the same time unable to realize the divine sport of the Providence, can not be seen in the original text. A scene in particular when Yama is about to annihilate the creation of Brahma, can neither be seen in the Mahabharata, nor even in the writings of Kalidasa. Through this transformation of the character of Yama done by Madhusudan, the rebellious temperament of the Young Bengal Movement in the Nineteenth Century Bengal has been embodied here. This rebellion was against the customary rites keeping to the beaten track.

---

204. Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), Madhusudan Rachanavali, P. 27.
deportment of Yama can be interpreted in a different fashion too; this rebellion is against the indiscreet destiny which is the source of all power and which leads to nothing but failure. And this is greatly influenced by Greek tragedy.

1.21 INDRA

According to the Indian tradition, the character of Indra has been portrayed as an embodiment of truth, while at another account he appears to be wise. In the *Mahabharata*, Indra is the father of Arjuna and he procures the 'Kavacha and Kundala', wrongfully from Karna only for the sake of Arjuna and granted Karna the unfailing fierce weapon named shakti in exchange of the inborn armour and weapon of Karna.

Hence, it is seen that in the *Mahabharata*, Indra has been portrayed as a selfish person. Still, in the book of verses by Madhusudan, Indra has been portrayed as someone who is highly affectionate to those who seek refuge. Besides, in the *Tilottamasambhav Kavya*, the nature of Indra, unlike the original

207. i. Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.): *Mahabharatam, Vanaparva*, 263.23-25, P. 2525
Madhusudan's book of verses presents this protagonist named Indra with a total new dimension. In his book of verses, Indra has been portrayed as a virtuous and loving husband. His character reflects various positive traits such as valour, patriotic thought etc.

It can be mentioned in this context that through the portrayal of this protagonist named Indra, the fatalistic tone of Madhusudan has been influenced by Greek literature.

In the poetic work by Madhusudan, Indra has been portrayed as a solitary, depressed, thoughtful and pain-stricken entity who has already been dislodged from the heaven. This protagonist named Indra has although been harassed, oppressed and deprived of his rights by the demons, yet he is the sole reliance of the Gods, whereas he is portrayed as a God lacking his celestial glory. Because, this protagonist is in no way matches the character of the powerful Indra as portrayed in the epic the *Mahabharata*: rather he is the successful and exact reflection of the new consciousness and reality of Nineteenth Century. Hence, this character - sketch of Indra reflects the human trait. So, according to a critic,

[The ignominious defeat of the Gods and to restore their lost Kingdom resorting to deceitful trickery rather than fighting valorously– all these have an out and out human touch.]

Of course, the act of resorting to such a deceitful tricking owes its origin to the tradition of the *Mahabharata* still, Madhusudan adopts only the thematic extract of the facts and traits common to the character and disposition of Indra from the *Mahabharata* and in the backdrop of the thought wave of the new era, vividly points that character with all new strokes of different dimensions of taste. So, these deities love this mundane world differently, In fact, this love for the mundane world belongs to Madhusudan.

### 1.22 KARTIKEYA

In the *Vanaparva* of the *Mahabharata*, the narrative of Kartikeya as told by Markandeya in the chapter called *Markandeyasamasyaapurva*, portrays Kartika as a great valiant hero.\(^{211}\) He was such a valiant hero that he roared out with the bow


\(^{211}\) Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), *Mahabharatam, Vanaparva*, 187.20-21, P. 1936.

(102)
of the demon named Tripurasura when he was merely a child.\textsuperscript{212} And when he was ceremonially chosen as the commander of the Gods, leading the side of the deities in the war waged against the Asuras or the demons, he had totally rid the battlefield of the demons.\textsuperscript{213}

In the poetical work of Madhusudan, that very Kartikeya is seen to get wounded by the piercing arrows shot by the vicious demons and to have a hasty retreat mounting on his peacock.\textsuperscript{214} However, the “জরং জরং কলেবর”\textsuperscript{215}, i.e., the body covered by the wounds, I bear the witness of the utmost effort of Kartikeya for winning the battle. Again, in the assemblage of the devastated deities, even after confronting the hostile and destructive nature of Yama and Varuna, Kartikeya's remark reveals his steady, sober and quiet demeanour. Kartikeya believes in the policy of action and so says:

\begin{quote}
‘...আমরা সকলে প্রাণপণে যুঝি আজি সমরে বিরত, \\
এ নিমিত্তে কে, ধক্কার দিবে আমা সবে?’\textsuperscript{216}
\end{quote}

[All of us who had tried with the utmost effort in this die-game yet had to retreat from the battlefield; who will fie upon us for this?]

Also, when Yama and Varuna are aggrieved and questions the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[212.] Haridas Siddhantabagish (tr.), \textit{Mahabharatam, Vanaparva} P. 1936.
\item[213.] i. Ibid, 191.20-23, PP. 1956-1957. \\
\item[214.] Sabyasachi Roy (ed.), \textit{Madhusudan Rachanavali}, P. 16.
\item[215.] Ibid, P. 16.
\item[216.] Ibid, P. 28.
\end{footnotes}
unjustified design of the Inscrutable Providence, Kartikeya being a loyal and dutiful person, replies:

‘...রাজা, যাহা ইচ্ছা করে; প্রজার কি উচিত বিবাদ রাজা সহ?217’

[The king can do whatever he wishes; should his subjects be in dispute with him?]

The aforesaid remark of Kartikeya is but the remote resonance of the remark made by Kartikeya to Indra in the epic the Mahabharata that is, ‘অহং তে কিংকর’218, i.e., I am your servant.

Again, when he offers both the demon-brothers to appear in a duel, just with the intention of creating rivalry between them, the staidness of his character is revealed again.219

The aforementioned traits of the character of Kartikeya created by Madhusudan never follow the traits of the same protagonist in the epic the Mahabharata. Such a valiant warrior yet a hardcore fatalist – this portrayal of the character of Kartikeya is distinctive of Madhusudan alone.

1.23 SUMMARY

At the end of the discussion, it is found that Madhusudan's pen

is much more prompt in sketching the minor characters. While portraying the epical characters of the *Mahabharata*, in some places Madhusudan does it with absolute fidelity whereas in some cases he deviates from the track of the original characters portrayed by Vedavyasa. Sometimes, the characters like Gandhari, Draupadi, Duryodhana etc. are enriched with the new facts and observations which add a new dimension to those characters. Somewhere Madhusudan follows Kashiram Das in restructuring the characters of the *Mahabharata*, while elsewhere, Madhusudan has been influenced by *Jaimini Bharata* in restoring the epical characters.

Even the personal life of the author has also cast a long shadow over those writings. The character of Rukmini reflects Madhusudan's fidelity to the original text as well as the influence of Ovid and the character of Radhika of the *Bhagavata Purana* and *Vaishnava Padavali*.

The origin of his creation has two spearheads; on one end there, lies the materialistic consumerism of the occident, while on the other hand lies the attraction towards the concept of romantic beauty in the European literature. *Virangana* is the peerless manifestation of the Natural beauty which was influenced to a great extent by the Westernized concept of the same.

The fatalistic tendency in his portrayal of the characters of the
epic titled the *Mahabharata* owes to the influence of Greek literature and personal inspiration also to some extent.

Above all, the literary creations of Madhusudan are the standard-bearer of humanity as a whole. In this aspect, not only the human characters portrayed in the *Mahabharata*, but also the characters of the deities have imbued with the ambrosial spirit of humanness. The poet has attributed the human traits to the celestial deities while portraying their characters. And this sense of humanness enriching the imagination of Madhusudan owes itself to the zeitgeist to some extent and also to some aspects of his personal life.