CHAPTER – III
THE COMIC CHARACTERS IN THE
DRAMA OF GIRISH CHANDRA GHOSH

Girish Chandra Ghosh is a legendary figure in the dramatic literature in Bengali. He was a dramatic personal, playwright master in dramatics and even the founder of Bengali theatre. He erected his edifices of dramatic literature on the bases laid down by Madhusudan Dutta and Dinabandhu Mitra. He tried his and hand in historical and social drama but his talent reached the pinnacle of perfection in the jonre of mythical drama. However, he created a good many characters of variety while composing different types of dramas. His creations Jana, Prafulla, Vilvamangal etc. immortalize him in Bengali literature. He might not have created the best farce nevertheless he left an indelible mark in producing humour creating comic figures. His comic characters like Bidushak, Kanchuki etc. were attractive; and he showcased his expertise in producing humour through substandard characters.

The character of Bidushak in his drama Jana is an unique asset in the reportory of Bengali literature. The very character is influenced by Sanskrit literature. It carries the legacy of Sanskrit literature. In most of the Sanskrit dramas the presence of the character of Bidushak is common. In the hand of Girishchandra the character got a considerable change. In Sanskrit dramas such a character primarily acts as a faithful company to a kingly person. In Sanskrit dramas a Bidushak generally becomes a ignorant, gluttonous Brahmin. His appetite for food knows no bound. This very character
engages himself with the maids in hilarious activity as well. Sometime a Bidushak gets petulant. While conversing with the servants, sometime he uses vulgar or slang language. Mention may be made of such characters in the drama Karpurmanjari of Rajshekhar. In some plays such foolish characters divulges the mystery of the plot through their mistake and thereby complicate the plot of the play. But noble qualities of character too are attached to such characters. It is instinctive on the part of the Bidushak to be grateful, friendly and acknowledge the help of a person. He is a faithful friend of the king. Bidushak accompanies the king in his lustful activity. He remain get ready for any or every work of the king. The king too can not move a single step without him. Bidushak gives full effort to keep the happy, to ward off the bitter frame of mind. Such a character finds its fullest development in the play Mrichchakatika.4

The character of Bidushak in the Mrichchakatika is a unique and novel creation in Sanskrit literature. Unlike the conventional Bidushak character it refrains from humour. He is a friend of Charudutta; he accompanies the hero through thick and thin. He has a cordial relationship with Charudutta. In his distress he does not leave him. Even he turns down invitation from Brahmin Bhoj for beloved master. Here the character of Bidushak of Mrichchakatika is much more humane and pragmatic than the Bidushaks in Sanskrit dramas.

It seems that there are similarities between the characters of Bidushak in Jana and the character of Bidushak in Mrichchakatika. Girishchandra has imbued the Bidushak of Jana with his own thoughts beliefs while creating the character.
Sri Sri Ramakrishna Dev, the diksha guru of Girishchandra had equally influenced the personal life and the literacy creations of Girish Chandra. And the Bidushak character bears the very stamp of the life philosophy of Sri Sri Ramkrishna.

Still, the Bidushak of Jana remain distinct from conventional Sanskrit Bidushak. In Sanskrit plays Bidushak is a comic figure. Maintaining humour like all other conventional character of Bidushak in Sanskrit, the Jana’s Bidushak establishes himself on a particular ideal. Here his rusticity, humour are the camouflage of his character. He is originally a devote worshipper of Krishna (unflinching devotee). He appears in the play as a conveyance of preaching pure devotion. The character departs from the play having established the faith with which he appeared in the first scene of the first act of the play. We meet him in the first scene of the first act of the play.

Today Mahishmatipuri is filled with joy. Being pleased, Agnidev has at his will blessed the king, the queen and the prince with boons. Soon their desires will come to fruition. Being blessed everyone left the palace except Bidushak. He did not like overjoyfulness with Hari:

“বিদুঃ। আজ দেখছি তোমার ভারি বাড়াবড়ি, হরি নিয়ে ছড়াছড়ি ;
তাই হ’চ্ছে ভয়, কৃষ্ণ দরায়ময়, নাম করেই হন উদয়, কিন্তু দেখানে দেন পদাশ্রয়, দেখানে যে সর্বনাশ হয়,একথা নিষ্ঠুর।”

Here he acts as a wise brahmin. He described all the merciful Hari:

“বিদুঃ। পাথর চাপালেন মা-বাপের সুকে, তারপর বৃদ্ধিবে সুকে, গোপ
গোপিনীর হাতিয়া স্বাল, যশোদা মাগী নাকাল, অবধ রাখাল বেদে সারা,
নর্ম মিনুসে বিশেব্রাক; আর রাধা ? - তাঁর কোঁলা সার, একশ বছর
দেখলেন আঁধার, এলিকে দয়াময় হরি যমুনা পার, কাণ দেন না কথায়
কার, মেন কারুর কথনও ধারেন না ধার !’’

Not only does he wreck havoc, he is ruthless and cruel, he remains untraceable in time of distress. Here lies the humour of the character. When there is no sign of apprehension or ill-omen in the perspective, the unreasonable fear of the Bidushak creates humour. He apprehends a havoc in the name of the all salvatory Hari. But he is not so ignorant. His speech is rather a paradox. His words are examples of humour but not of frivolity. On seeing Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Chandra realized that such great men are normally abnormal and abnormally normal. They do not conform with the airs of common people. In this context mention may be made of Sri Ramakrishna whom everyone taunted as mad, who is innocent like a child. But Girishchandra has seen god in him. The Bidushak too reflects the same behaviour.

The character of Bidushak in Jana supplies enough humour, but he is is not dull. His every comment is full of wit. He is a company of the king. He does not want salvation. His pure belief is that God will come to him at one call. So salvation is within his reach. So he thinks of enjoying this life should be wiser. He gives his full effort so that king Niladhvaj with all his family can live for some more days here on this earth. But the boons of Agnidev on the royal family, has wrought doomsday and the Bidushak could not accept it. He said :

“বিদূ । ........................এতে ফেরে তার আশে, দয়াময় হরি তার নাকে আলো
বাঁধা ঘণ্টে । ’’

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That time it seems that to get more love the lover hurts his beloved.
He is adept in sarcasm. He retorts at Agni when he induces the
Bidushak of getting favour of Hari:

"বিদু । তোমার সাতাগুলী সে হ্রাস পাক । তোমার দেবলোক উদার
হ'য়ে যাক।! হাসন, নির্বাচন হয়ে পরম শশিতি লাভ কর,..............কৃষ্ণ
ভক্তি দিতে হয় শেষা-শেষি দিও, কিন্তু তাড়াতাড়ি বেন হরি দিয়ে
বেকুঠি পাঠিও না।! তা নইলে তোমায় সাফ বন্ধ, আমি বামুনের
ছেলে, হোম করতে তোমায় আবাহন ক'রে থি'র বললে জল চলে
দেব।""8

It has to be kept in mind that it is a satire. Desire to attain heaven is
not of god but of man. Salvation of god is mere a satire. The remark
reveals the Bidushak’s love for earthly life. Man is deeply attached to
this mortal earth and Bidushak too does not want to leave it, let the
heaven be salvaged, he cares little for that. The remark has a farcical
undertone too.

He has no fear of or curiosity in the life beyond this earthly
existence. So, he spontaneously speaks about the life beyond:

"বিদু । কি জানি বাবা, কে কখন বৈকুঠি থেকে রথ আনে, চতুর্ভুজ
হ'লে পাশ ফিরে হতে পারব না।""9

The words are examples his simple sense of humour.

However, main purpose of Girish Chandra was to established
the character of Bidushak as an ideal devotee. In the vein of rebuke he
has praised Sri Krishna. He has used wry words for expressing
devotion to Krishna. The character is an embodiment of devotion to
lord Krishna. The character reflects the spiritual renaissance which
Girish Chandra had felt when he came in touch with Sri Ramkrishna.
So the dramatrical significance of such character has to be acknowledged. The character hints at the conclusion of the play right at the first scene of the first act of the play. Even in weaving the plot the character plays active role. But in the subsequent part of the plot the character bears little importance. It is clear that Girish Chandra has purportedly created such character to preach the ideal of Sri Ramkrishna dev. Consequently the character has no or little evolution. The character remains an embodiment of an ideal. Asutosh Bhattacharya has said about this character:

Kanchuki in Pandav Gourav plays the same role as simple and a man of straight belief. Though aged, the character in heart is an embodiment of honesty, simplicity and ingenuity. His words are incongruous and humorous, but have implied meaning. The playwright has purportedly directed a submerged river of devotion through the character. The apparent contradiction, incongruous behavior, slang or loud reproach are but inner expression of devotion which he has tactfully injected in the character.

Kanchuki is a faithful rajpratihari (sentinel) of the king Rajdandi. He is also a faithful company of the king. The king has
fallen in love with Urbashi. Kanchuki can not approve and accept this affair. To him every woman is a half mare and half woman. For this reason he evade woman-association. His peculiar belief, conduct and conversation has created humour. He elaborates his view about woman:

“কেন্দু। তাই তো বলি! --কেন্দু নিয়ে কি কখন কেউ দিন রাতের থাকে। যা ঠাউরেছি তাই। ও একটা কেন্দু এনে কেন্দুর লাজ পরিয়ে রেখেছে। কত রকম বেরকম ঘোড়া--কেন্দু দেখলেম, কমিন্দুকের টেলের ভাজো থায়, আং সের গাওয়া দিথায়, সাজায় গা চলাই মলাই করে,এ কেন্দু না হয়ে যায়। কেন্দু বা বলিকি কি করে? তোরের বলা তো বেটা চিহ ডাকুলে, চট্ট ছড়েল, গা ভাঙুলে।--এ কালের কেন্দুগুলো সব পাড়ী হয়েছে, এদের কেন্দুর অংশে জন। কেন্দুগুলোর তো কেন্দুর মতন আচার-ব্যবহার চরিত্রনিভ। কেন্দুতে লাজ সোনায়, এরা চুল ঝাড়ে; চট্ট তো কেন্দুতেও মারে, কেন্দুতেও মারে। কেন্দুতেও হাড়ে কামড়ে ধরে, কেন্দুতেও হাড়ে কামড়ে ধরে। তবে এটার কিছু বাড়াবাড়ি।--হি-হি ডাকে। কি জানি বাপু কালে কালে কতই হয়। তা কেন্দুরা সব পাড়ে!”

Inspite of being a heart and soul Krishna devotee, he makes fun of Krishna and says to him (Krishna):

“কেন্দু। আমার তোরই মত একটি কেলে মৌড়কে দরকার। তার নাম কেন্দু।”

Krishna wants to sent him as his messenger to his own sister Subhadra at Viratnagar. But he refuses to do so. Because he fears woman, but when he is forced to go, he says:

“কেন্দু। আচ্ছা, তার কাছে তোর কি দরকার? আচ্ছা, তাকে বে করবি?”
We can not but laugh by his simple, fresh mentality. His deep
intimacy with Sri Krishna enables him to speak frankly without
thinking whatever comes to his mind. His deep bonding with Sri
Krishna has entitled him with such a capacity. The dramatist has
served two purposes. He established him as a faithful company of the
king and showed him as a candid devotee of Krishna. Because of the
candid devotion of Kanchuki to Krishna the king could liberate
himself of the love and infatuation of Urbashi and attain the blessings
of Krishna. At the request of Sri Krishna he took Subhadra, the sister
of Krishna, to the Ambika temple at Baneswar and received the
blessings and oracle of Devi Ambika. In the play he attained the
familiarity as a Krishna devotee as well as he devoted himself for the
wellbeing of the king. This apart, very little comes out of this
character. The character has no evolution.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. 1\textsuperscript{st} Pub. 1909
2. 1\textsuperscript{st} Pub. 1909
3. 1\textsuperscript{st} Pub. 1909
6. Ibid, p.356
7. Ibid, p.356
8. Ibid, p.356
9. Ibid, p.363
11. 1\textsuperscript{st} Pub. 1900
13. Ibid, p.513