CHAPTER – V

TRADITIONAL LIFE AND SOCIETY AS REFLECTED IN VERSION OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF KAVINDRA.

Kavindra has rendered the Mahābhārata in the early part of the sixteenth century. He has made a short rendering at the advice of his patron Parāgal Khān. In this endeavour, Kavindra is to discard manifold stories not related to actual Mahābhārata theme and takes initiatives to mould suitable episodes and incidents to give a clear and positive idea.

It is presumable that in pursuance of such a short rendering the poet has got little scope to show his poetic ability. But, as a real poet, he cannot overlook the society to which he belongs. That is why we find the true reflections of the society in his version. Actually, the reflection of the social custom and usage, rite and rituals of his time are all incorporated and inbibed inside his version of the Mahābhārata.

The Hindu society of the sixteen century is candidly and effectively dominated by the Brāhminical canon. The rites and rituals are performed accordingly to the Brāhminical canon. The yajnas are performed accordingly. To some extent the men of the society are familiar with the rites concerning yajna. In Sabha parva, Vyāsadeva advises Yudhiṣṭhira to perform Rājasūya yajña to achieve the goal of the sovereignty. Vyāsadeva of the
Sanskrit Mahābhārata has not mentioned the materials to be used in case of the performance of the yajna. But, Kavindra’s Vyāsadeva instructs Yudhiṣṭhira about the requirements of necessary materials in order to perform the yajna in a befitting manner:

\[
\begin{align*}
muni & \text{ bole kaho śuna Dharma nandana } / \\
sālhi sahasreka vipra karibā arccana & / \\
tīna lakṣa kumbha yta koli beipaḥ & / \\
tīn koli dhenu dība kahilo sakṣata & / 56
\end{align*}
\]

— Muni tells the son of Dharma, listen, sixty thousand of Brāhmans will worship, three lacs of pitchers of ghūṭa, one crore of ‘bilvapatra’, three crores of cows would be offered. This is what is I tell you.

In the Jaiminiśvamedha parva, we find no mention of banana trees, pitchers full of water ‘kusāpata’. But Kavindra has shown a different placements of certain objects near and around the altar of the yajña.

\[
\begin{align*}
kadali māpiyā lōlē pāte ghatabhāri & / \\
yajnasthāne kusāpata thuila śaśi śaśi & / 57
\end{align*}
\]

86. Sastri, Gaurināth, op.cit Sabha parvāv 685-687 p.26, Tulāpāt MS, p 59.

Banana plants are implanted and the pitchers full of water are placed near and under the banana plants, Kuṣaptra (the leaves of a variety of seed) are kept in rows in the place of yajña.

During the period in survey, this custom of implanting of banana plants and placing of pitchers full of water are in vogue in any auspicious ceremony. This custom is still practiced even in today in all auspicious ceremonies. In the yajña kuṣaptra is regarded as an essential ingredient in the Hindu society.

It is traditionally believed that if animals like a cat, dog or iguānā happens to touch or eat the food offered to God it becomes ceremoniously impure. Kavindra has reflected this belief in the Rājasūya yajña in the Sabhā parva. All on a sudden, a golden iguānā enters the vicinity of the yajña and starts eating the fruits offered there. The Pāṇḍavas except Yudhisthira try their best to drive away the intruder iguānā but fail miserably until it is tamed by Draupadī.

```hena kāle suvarṇara Gudhikā eka āila /
yajña kuṇḍata yai phalaka grāsila //
godhikā chulia kuṇḍa dekhi Bhīmasena /
gadā layā mārite dhāila yama yena /```
sehi ghāye mahāvira murcchāgata haila //
śrutijñāna nāhi vira bhumita paṭīla /
jvale yena sarvva anga kāpite lāgila /
murcchīla haile tāka dekhi Dhananjaya /
śāradhanu hāle layā galena nirbhaya //
tāhāka karila murcchā lāngura āśphāle /
Sahadeva Nakula sakala mahipāle /
 ēke ēke murccha karila ācāra kāmare //

——— At that time, a golden iguana enters the place of yajña, eats the fruits offered, seeing this outrage of the iguana, Bhimasen at first, rushes towards the animal by taking the mace in his hand to kill the iguana. The iguana hurts Bhīm with her tail and Bhīmasen becomes unconscious and fails on the ground and his body has suffered from the burning sensation and he trembles. Dhananjaya having seen Bhima’s fall, takes the bow and arrow in hand and approaches fearless by to kill the iguana. Arjuna also becomes senseless at the struck of the tail of the iguana. By throwing and biting one by one it has made Nakula and Sahadeva unconscious.

Generally, the social custom and usage is that whoever visits the house, he is welcome first and offered a 'piri' (a stool) to sit on. This custom is not found in the Jaiminiśvamedha parva. It is an indispensible custom still prevalent in present-day society of the people throughout Assam.

\[\textit{risīra āśrāme pārthe dekhila tikhana} \]

\[\textit{Arjuna dekhīyā risī basīte dīla pīrī} \]

— Arjuna has seen the hermitage then. By seeing Arjuna, the risi offers him a 'piri' to sit on.

In any domestic ceremony, generally the members of the family are engaged to receive the invited guest courteously. In the Rājasūya yajña of Yudhiṣṭhira (Sanskrit Mahābhārata) has not assigned any duty to Nakula and Sahadeva. As per the tradition of the society, Yudhiṣṭhira engages both Nakula and Sahadeva in some works. Accordingly, Nakula takes charge to distribute scented garlands, candana, dresses and ornaments.

\[\textit{gandha mālya candana vasana alaṁkāra} \]

\[\textit{Nakula virake dīla ehi adhikāra} \]

\[\textit{Sahadeva niyojila vasīte āsana} \]

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89. Ibid, op.cit, Aśvamedha parva, p. 231.

90. Ibid. Sabhā parva, v. 762-63 p.28. Tulāpāt MS, p.43.
Nakula is engaged to distribute scented garlands, candana, dresses and ornaments while Sahadeva is engaged to arrange sitting accommodation.

The betel-nut and leaves are considered as an essential material in social life. Betel-nut and leaves are used in daily life as well as in ceremonial functions. Generally, it is the custom that the elderly and respected persons of the family are engaged to receive the guest and offer the betel-nut and leaves. In the Sabhā parva of the original Mahābhārata of Vyāsadeva, we find that Kṛṣṇa has engaged himself to wash the feet of the Brāhmīns.

\begin{quotation}
caranakṣālane Kṛṣṇa brāhmaṇanāṁ svayamḥyabhut \end{quotation}

\begin{quotation}
sarvaloka samāvrittah piprikāh phalam uttamam \end{quotation}

With the intend of receiving blessing from the Brāhmīns Kṛṣṇa along with his relatives is devoted to wash the feet of the Brāhmīns.

But, Kavindra's Kṛṣṇa is engaged to offer the betel-nut and leaves.

\begin{quotation}
Tāmbula dibāra dīla Deva Nārāyaṇa \end{quotation}

\begin{footnotes}
91. Siddhāntavāgīś, Haridas (ed), Mahābhāratam, Sabhā parva, vol. 5, Adhyāya 34, v. 10

92. Sāstri, Gaurinath (ed), op. cit, Sabhā parva, v. 763, p. 28.
\end{footnotes}
Deva Nārāyana is engaged to offer betel-nut and leaves

According to Indian society the wife is supposed to offer betel-nut and leaves to her husband. Kavindra has actually reflected this tradition of the society which apparent in the Anuśāsana parva of his version of the Mahābhārata. This custom is seen practiced in the Assamese society till to-day.

It is a general belief of the society that the quivering of the left eye, the muscles of the left thigh and left arm are considered as ominous sign if there happens to occur to a male person. This belief is reflected wholly in the version of the Mahābhārata of Kavindra. The ominous sign is observed by Yudhiṣṭhira in the Vana parva.

\[bām ākhi spande uru bāma hāta\] / 93

The quevering of the left eye, the muscle of the left thigh and left arm have occurred.

The astronomical guideline has followed by the men of any society. We find in the Bhiṣma parva of Kavindra's Mahābhārata that Duryodhana moves out to the battle-field on an inauspicious day 'Mangalbār' (Tuesday), 'Maghā nakṣatra' and 'Aṣṭami tithi'.

Duryodhana sets out to the battle field at the moment when the moon enters in the nakṣatra named Maghā, Așṭami tithi and day was Mangal bār (Tuesday).

Beside, we find in the version of the Mahābhārata of Kavindra the glimpses of the performance of the funeral rites prevalent in the society of that time. In the Sānti Parva, Pāṇḍavas perform the last rites of Bhīṣma. They offer ten 'Pindas' in ten days and completed the last rite 'Srāddha' in thirteen days.

Pāce dasā pīnda dana kaila dasā dine

Sampurna karīla srāddha trayodāsa dine

Pāṇḍavas offer ten pindas in ten days. Completed the sraddha in thirteen days.
