CHAPTER 9

A: LANGUAGE OF KATHAMRITA

One of the reasons for the popularity of 'Kathamrita' is the language in which it is written. It is one of the characteristic features of the worth of the book. We come across Ramakrishna's message in some other authors' works too. But 'Kathamrita' is markedly different from them, for while presenting us with Ramakrishna's sayings the author of 'Kathamrita' also shows us the context and situations in which the saint uttered them, and this he does making only the fewest possible changes in the original works used by the speaker. These two aspects have enhanced the effect of the sayings to no small extent. Kathamrita and the other books do not differ a great deal in respect of the style and the sentiments to give out. In this context, we can recall the remark of the renowned author - "while other authors remain contented with only being able to put forward Ramakrishna's messages in whatever manner they can, Sri M. has presented them to us in his own language in the same manner as the speaker himself spoke in."1

"anyanyara ramkrishnar baktabya neta-sutि hajir korte
perei khusi, ar Sri Ma diechen tuar ekabare mukher kathaka
bachan bangir sang, 1\n
But though the language of Kathasrita has been
held to be consisting purely of the words of Ramakrishna's
own mouth, yet it goes without saying, that each and
all of them are not exactly the ones the saint himself
actually uttered.

A celebrated writer's comment may be quoted here -

"Though Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathasrita is
written in the kind of language Ramakrishna spoke, yet the
question as to whether it is a little revised or not
arises everywhere. In this respect ever Kathasrita has
failed to totally retain its own characteristics as
well as Ramakrishna's own words and his manner of
pronouncing them. Yet, the language is the closest to
the Ramakrishna's own." 2

"Sri Sri ramakrishna kathasrita abasya mukher
bhasa, tabu sarbatra kichu parimaranar pramana ethe,
sedik theke kathasrita o ekabare sabtai Sriramakrisna
bhasar yathayatha sabde o nectaran saha apan baisibhyya,
bajay rakhte pare ni. Rabo o bhasa tuar mukher bhasar
sabseye kachakashi". 3

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2. Chath, Pranabranjan - Sri Ramakrishna O Bangla Sahitya ed. Istaswin,1982 /P.255
3. Ibid.
In the language of Ramakrishna's conversation Sri M has made only as many changes as he has felt, is necessary to make his book a work of artistic value and literary value. It is only Sri M's ability to judiciously decide how much of the original he ought to retain and how much of it he should replace, that has made Kathamrita a work of high literary value. One of the critics, comparing Kathamrita with the books by Sri M's contemporaries, who too has compiled the teachings of Ramakrishna, says - "Both have the same view to put forward the same kind of language to be written in is yet there is a striking difference between them. In one, one sees a touch of expert cutist, in the others, signs of whole hearted attempt made by some devoted workers." ¹

"baktabya ek, bhaso bahu 'lanse ek, hintu pravedh akas-patal ek tite dhara yey siddha silpir chhona, anygulite karmir prayas avaksar." ²

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² Ibid.
Swami Vivekananda informed us to infuse our language with a new life by taking Sri Ramakrishna’s language as an ideal. About the style of the language he further points “Simplicity in the secret. My ideal of language is my Master’s language most colloquial and yet most expressive.”¹

Elsewhere he said in this respect:

“All the great personages from Buddha down to Chaitanya and Ramakrishna who came for the well-being of the world, taught the common people in the language of the people themselves.”²

Likewise, Sri Ramakrishna, also is found speaking on sometimes in colloquial and sometimes in local dialect also. Deep knowledge also can be expressed beautifully and easily in simple language, Kathamrita is the best proof of it.

In the opinion of other critics:

“This book leaves no room for doubt about the fact that the supreme being not only can enable even the common man to rise from a very low level to the

2. Ibid Vol.6, P.187.
highest in his spiritual life, but also turns simple common conversational language - by making it carry the divine messages into a superb medium of expression."

"ei grantha sandeshatitbhabe praman koreche samanya manuske asamanya kore tolen na, samanya bhasakeo asamanya kare tulte paren - tar anike dilyabanike sthapan kore." 

While recording what Ramakrishna deya has said, Sri M is seen to have adopted as his own easy and unadorned style of language spoken by Ramakrishna almost in its totality. But there are also the passages where he depicts the beauty of nature, or sometimes he narrated the situation or sometimes anything else, they are written in a literary style different from that of the saint’s spoken language.

This is the characteristics features of Sri M’s prose-style that has kept the work popular with the readers fill today. Let us now cast an analytical look at the characteristics of his language – the author of "Kathamrita" has written in three forms of Bengali -

2. Ibid.
Sadhu, calita and Kathya - In the places where the author is describing or himself saying something he writes in Sadhu, and sometimes in chalita. But where he narrated conversations he used 'Kathya' or the purely colloquial language. Thus Sri M' has found for himself a prose style which is between both the style of 'alali' or 'Hutomi', and that of Vidyasagar on the other. In his writings, he was also followed in the foot-steps of the great novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It is in this new prose-style which he himself has created and has written his book and this style can certainly be called only as his own.

Thus, we can say that having acquired sufficient command over the different Bengali prose styles in his times. Sri M' has been able to make his workout do all other prose-writings of his age in the matter of the simplicity of language.

An analysis of the Kathamrita's language brings out a few characteristic features. Let us first discuss the different classes of words used here. A reader going through the whole of the book comes across four categories of the words, such as 'Tatsama', 'Tadvaba',

'Desi', or 'Bidesi'. The uses of the 'Desi' words is comparatively rare while one comes across the 'Bidesi' words more frequently. It may be mentioned here, that whenever Sri Ma depicts nature, he uses 'Tatsama' words oftener. Some examples of 'Tatsama' words -


We may now turn our attention to the 'Tadbhava words occurring in the language of Kathamrita wherever Sri Ma records what Ramakrishnadev has said, he tried his best to free the language from the burden of high-sounding pompous words. Some examples of the tadbhava words used in Kathamrita are -

'āmiste, ūnnyo, ānt, ākhar, kuākāl, īndārā, kāmār, dhāi, bāmun, bhay-tarāse, kuōdol, chānd etc.

As said earlier, the use of deshi words too rare. Such as dhekur, 'dhneki', 'jhol', 'dab' etc. Regarding "bideshi" word it can be said, Arabic,
Persian, Portuguese, and a large number of English words we find in Kathamrita. It can be safely assumed that Ramakrishna deva's spoken language actually contained them. The following are some of the Arabic and the perisian words, that Sri Ramakrishna uses - "achi, akkel, umedar, nabhat, polao, sanai, hnu, mastul, nabalak, punaj, posta, masla, mahina, sai, hukum, etc.

The examples of some portugese words -
"Varanda, botol, mastul, cabi, khana, kapten, kerani, etc."

Besides these, there are innumerable English words used by Sri Ramakrishnaddev, as we find in Kathamrita. He used the words 'Thank you' and 'philosophy' frequently. He sometimes pronounces the word 'Philosophy', as 'fasosofy'. This throws some light on the saints unique sense of humour.

There are many other English words that have found their way into the language of Kathamrita through Sri N, from Ramakrishna's Kathamrita. Some of the examples are - "Beautiful, stick, Fever-mixture, Museum, (Asiatic Society) Susait, monument, deputy, hospital, dispensary."
Apart from this, the word as taken from Latin. In the narrative part, we find like 'tatsama' words there are also numerous sentences containing compound words. In some of the sentences in which compound words consist:

Svetakrnamarprastarabṛta mandīrtal', sopanyukta uccābedi, bārānasi celi pariḥita nanā kusumābhūsisātā, puspanālāsobhitā, maṇḍakābhrābedī, sīya-
samabhībyāhāre, bārābhayadāyini etc.

But though he uses long compounded words very frequently. Sri M, never used them senselessly or carelessly, but carefully refrains from destroying his language. Now, it may be mentioned about some words containing two or three words blended together. Some of them are mentioned below:

"Kalikatabhinukhe", 'prabhasamūdbhuta', 'premanuranjita', 'mahacidākāse', 'basantānil', kusumgandhabāhi, bṛdayopori, naṇabharamālanikṛtā" sandhyārati, snigdhojjjal etc.

The colloquial word, which are not used generally, also find in kathamrīta, such as "dhaā kṣačh". The word kach has came from the sanskrit word krītya.
The dictionary meaning of this word is acting or pretend. But this word is not accustomed to all his idea about the knowledge of word, is a great example of it.

Apart from this, the other words used in Kathamrita -

"rād-bocā", olā, kathenā, cyadābe, ugrāne, dhyamnā, paydā, belle, hedie, hisyā etc.

Again, we find in Kathamrita, the influence of style and tone of that locality. Such as -

"lun, leben, laben, iguno, uguno, nuci, nabet, tekre etc.

Next, we discuss the style of the writings of author of the Kathamrita. Generally sentences are short and simple there are also plenty examples of complex sentences. Besides this two type of sentences, there are also compound sentences. Such as -

"Please wringout my wet towel and put my shirt in the sun and my legs and feet ache, please rub them gently."

"amar gamchata nimde dāoe te gā, ār jāmātā sukete dāoe, ār pātā ektu kāmdācche, ektu hāt belie dite..."
Another example of compound sentence -
"Sri Ramakrishna believes in formless God
and God with form." 3

"thakur nirākārbādi kintu ābār sākārbādi." 4

Examples of complex sentences -
"But I must use a brass waterjar, and so I
tried to carry it after covering it with my towel,
but the moment, I touched the jar, I felt the same
acute pain in my arm." 5

Let us now look at the duplicated and the
anematepoetic words consisting in the language of the
book. Sri Ramakrishna is found to be using 'anemate-
poetic words very often. Sri N' is also seen to use
them often in order to make the descriptions which
he gives, as grayshic, as possible. He tries also to
retain as many words, actually uttered by the saint,
as possible. He duplicates words sometimes by pairing
synonyms and also at times by using both words and
their corrupted forms in pairs.

3. Ibid P.37
4. Ibid
The examples of 'samarthak' or 'anuparthak sabda, such as -
'talpa', 'putli-potla', 'bhabmacinta', 'jap-top'
'hillo-kallek', 'abol-tabol', 'gidim-midim' etc.

The examples of 'anukar' or 'bikarjata'
'sabda-dvaita' or duplicates words -
'pata-tata', 'alu-thalu', heu-dheu, hei-toi, nasakhata, etc.

There are also the anametapotic duplicates words in
which he uses to point the pictures were real.

"If you heat butter in a pan on the stove,
It makes a sizzling sound as long as the water it
contains has not dried up. But when no trace of water
is left, the clarified butter makes no sound. If you
put an uncooked cake of flour in that butter is
sizzles again".

"ghoee knaaca yatakshan thake, tatakshan
kalkalani paka ghir kono sabda thake na kintu paka
ghiya abar yakhan knaaca luci pade takhan arekbar
chhak kalkal kare."2

Besides these "dhanayanmak" words, in the Kathamrita, such as -

"jhan-jhan, kan-kan, dhub-dhub, dur-dur, hañhal kal-kal, bhak bhak, jhurjhor, fad-fad, bhyaat-bhyat, fasfas, bhudbhudi etc."

Apart from this, a considerable part of the book abounds with idiomatic sentences, phrases and words. It is also worth mentioning here that as we come across idiomatic uses of numerous words and phrases, in vogue in Bengali, so too do we find, in the book some other sentences, phrases in new special senses, i.e. made to carry new different meanings.

The examples of conventional distinguished sentences or words -

"unphajure, ekalseed, kagibagibhasma agastya yâtrâ, lok na pek, anna cintâ camatkârâ, dhokâr tati.
Sukhe páyrâ, satamâri bhâbedbaidyah' sahasramâri cikitsakah, 'sanâier pnu dharâ', 'kumâkata'batthâkur' 'yharer âge esentâta', etc.

In this context, it may be mentioned here that Dr. Susil Kr. Dey has mentioned of these sentences, phrases and words in one of his books. ¹

¹ Dey, Sushikumar - Bambah prabad - 3rd ed.1392.
But there are many other idiomastic expressions used by Sri Ramakrishna and many of them have become either new Bengali proverbs or new idiomastic expressions, being frequently and commonly used. They have enriched our language both colloquial and literary to a very great extent. Some of the examples of the proverbs are given below:—


Besides these, one of the characteristics of his language is the mixing of "apni o sani" frequently, Sri N did not not reject this. He also accept all this in toto. Such as—

"Please, go there and see what they are doing."¹

"apni ekbār yāo, dekhe, erā sab ki horebe."²

² Katha/Vol.2/17th reprint; 1387/P. 220.
Nagendranath Gupta wrote in his articles about Sri Ramakrishnadeva's language -

"There was the occasional mixing up of the two forms of you - (apni and tuhi) lack of elegance."

Thus, we find that the style of the language in which kathamrita has been written is a very important aspect of the book and this is a true also of even the proverbs it contains. So, we have to conclude that from the standpoint of its style. The work has to be considered a valuable addition to the Bengali literature.

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B. THE LITERARY VALUE OF THE KATHAMRITA.

The 'Kathamrita is a literature of completely different class and it has created a new current in the Bengali literature. Now, it may be seen through analysis, the literary value of Kathamrita.

It may be included in a biographical literature as it contains some qualities of biographical literature. The writer here, himself noticed and heard the language of the mouth of the character with his ears. The authenticity of the facts put forward, as a result of the circumspection of the biography, has no scope to rouse a sense of suspicion. But, inspite of having all these, it is not at all a fulfledged biographical literature. because, here, we donot have the picture of the entire life of Sri Ramakrishnadev. Only, the life of four years of his life are its main basic idea. of course regarding "forewords" (purbakatha) reference has been made to some words of his past life. But by depending it only, it cannot be called a biographical literature.

1. Ntha/Vol.1/17th reprint; 1387 .
   Introduction (Gvedam)
Again, it cannot be called a Charita-sahitya, like the Chaitanycaritamrita of middle age. It also fails to fulfil the demands of 'Charita-sahitya'. The whole events of the life of Sri Ramakrishnadeva are absent in it. It cannot also be called a 'Charita-natak' like 'Chaitanya Chandradaya'. Of course, some qualities of a drama are found in it. As for instance its realistic idea is appreciable. Regarding the factuality of the drama, it has been said, "Drama, is a factual art of mixed type. There, the dramatist keeping his own words conceal, remains more busy in telling about the actor and actresses on the stage." 

The same words are applicable in the case of Sri M, also put forward his sayings with factuality. He never put his own views in the lips of Sri Ramakrishna, the main speaker, or in the lips of any other character of the 'Kathamrita'. Or he did not make his sayings burdened by adding his own realisation to the book.

He, himself is one of the characters created by him. This character has become necessary to brighten any other character. Apart from this, as a writer, he never interfered where he had no authority. That is, in the portrayal of the characters of Sri Ramakrishna and other characters, he was very conscious. He felt the necessity of painting characters as real as possible. And so Sri N. has tried to put exactly in what situation, and in what sense, Sri Ramakrishna uttered words, in the 'Kathamrita'. He had to express many unpleasant truth many times at this.

For instance, many a time, we get many distasteful words or language in the lips of Sri Ramakrishna. Besides this, Ramakrishna remains seated like a completely naked boy - Sri N. introduced such scenery in Kathamrita as it is. Perhaps he would have modified, polished them with his refined taste. But thereby, it would have been impossible to keep in tack the beauty of the character of Sri Ramakrishna. In this context it may be mentioned here that Sri Ramakrishna told one day that when he is thinking about God, then his dress is not properly maintained.
What absorption and profundity of the feeling of the man absorbed in God prevented him from putting the dress worn by him in order. If Sri M. had not written it, then this aspect of his character, would not have blossomed fully. In this context, the remarks of Bankim Chandra regarding Dinabandhu Mitra, may be referred to:

"He could not avoid the language at the time of the expression of anger by 'Torap,' at the time of creation of 'Torap.' He could not leave aside the language of Ninchand in a drunken state, at the time of portraying Ninchand. To keep the face of refined taste, we would have got torn 'Torap,' deformed Aduri or broken 'Nin-chand.'"¹

"toraper srutikale torap ye bhasay rag prakas kore taka bad dite pariten na. ninchand gadibar samay ninchand ye bhasay matlami kare taka charite pariten na. ruchir mukh rakshe karite shnora torap kata aduri, bhanga ninchand amma paitan."²

¹ Jogesh Ch. Bagal / Bankim-ramaabali - Vol.2
² Ibid.
The same words are applicable in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, portrayed by Sri M. Though the character of Dinabandhu are imaginary, but Sri M, has seen Sri Ramakrishna himself, and he painted the character as he saw him in reality, even the language of his mouth. And, so, we see in the 'Kathamrita', his words uttered as a result of the mixture of "apni" and "tumi" as it exists, there is also an exact description of the colloquial language, through which he expressed himself. This pure and realistic observation, such sincerity in matters describable, have been made 'Kathamrita' more realistic and authentic. He was not led anywhere by his personal sentiments. Rather without uttering a personal words like a dramatists he was engaged in putting forward the sayings of the actors and actresses of the drama. Of course, it is needless to say the 'Kathamrita' is not at all a drama, because the essential characteristics of a drama are absent in 'Kathamrita'.

Now, the question may be raised as to whether it be included in the domain of novel? In the balance of the 'Kathamrita' is judged, it will become clear.

1. "Sri Ramakrishna - "se apni bolcho."

Katha/Vol.2/16th reprint; 1388 /P.220.
Like a novelist, Sri M. had subtle insight, microscopic attitude to apparently trifling matter. Therefore, like a novel, we find, sometimes in the Kathamrita, refreshing descriptive style, and sometimes the blossoming of characters through ordinary incidents. One day Sri Ramakrishna narrated his various desires -

Such as -

"Once I saw some coloured sweetmeats at Burra Bazar and wanted to eat them."¹

"bādabājarer rangkara sandoa dekhe khoto iccha hole, era amiye dile."² or

"Once I felt a desire to eat famous sweetmeats like "Khāicur of Dhenekhali, 'sarbhaja of Khanakul, Krishmanagar."³

"Dhenekhalier khaicur, Khanakul Krishmanagarer sarbhaja, the khote eauk hayehile."⁴ or

Once the idea came to put on a very expensive robe embroidered with gold and to smoke a silver bubble-bubble (gudgudi).⁵

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² Katha/Vol.4/17th Reprint; 1887 / P.162
⁴ Katha/Vol.4/17th Reprint; 1887 / P.162
"ekbar mone utthlo ye, khub bhaile jarir saj
parbo, ar rupar gudgudite tanak khabe."¹

In the midst of these desires, superstition or
miracle, are totally absent, rather what exists in it,
is humility; So, the humanistic touch which has been
exposed through these ordinary incidents is one of the
qualities of a novel. Apart from this, the self-centered
soliloquy or the description about the external nature
has made the 'kathamrita' attractive like a novel.

But, although, some qualities of a novel are
exposed in it, it is far from being a novel³ Because,
the hero of a novel cannot be a greatman. The miracle
that exists in the character of a greatman is not the
quality befitting the character of a novel. Apart from
this, the complexity of character of an actor, which is
the soul of a novel, is totally absent in the character
of Sri Ramakrishna.

Rather, it is a character devoid or demur or
conflict in which, there is hardly any expression of
complexity. Regarding the complexity of the character
of the hero of the novel, it may be said that this

¹. Katha/Vol.4/17th Reprint; 1387/P.162
complexity is not of the middle age, but a creation of modern age. As a result of the French Revolution or Industrial Revolution, the change that has come in literature, is 'neo-humanism' (nava-manabatabad). As a result of it, individualism, has been recognised in literature, and it is always changeable. But the character, we get in the 'Kathamrita' is hardly changeable. Rather it is eternal and without any change. Such a character can never be regarded as the character of a novel. Rather, in the character of Sri Ramakrishna, has the immensity and profundity of an ocean, like the hero's of 'Mahakavya' (Ramayana, Iliod etc.), but it is needless to say that it is not at all 'mahakavya.' In a word we may say although many literary qualities are visible in that book, it cannot be placed in a special current. So also, after this book no other new current of it, is visible. That is, its successor has not been created up to now in the Bengali literature.

Of course it may be called a religious literature. And the book has a great historical value also, no matter whether it is included in any branch of Bengali literature.
Sri Ramakrishna as well as all the characters and incidents are historical and therefore, it is realistically true. Even not only the characters and the scattered events are historical, the writer has put forward a linguistic pattern of Sri Ramakrishnadev and other characters. Of course, the literary value is not less than its historical value?

Now, we come to the matter of its humanism. Although it is a religious literature, and it can easily be said that it is devoid of the touch of the neo-humanism. But there is no doubt that human nature is the supporting matter of it. Sri Ramakrishna, also, discussed the various type of man. Therefore, we find in Kathamrita, not only the religious teachings, but also the various activities of man. Besides this, life itself is literature. The description of life in a fresh manner is an excellent literature. Sri Ma' created a good literature by describing the life of Sri Ramakrishna in refreshing manner?

Besides these, religion also humanic. In this context, the remark of the venerable Max Muller deserves mention:-

There is no more human matter like religion. The weakness of the human nature is not reflected in this
way, in any other thing. Whatever be the primary source of the religion, the rest of its evolution, from the beginning, is in the soft soil and it is called human nature.\(^1\)

"Dharmer mate manabiya bisay ar kichhi may. ar kichutei manab prakritir deurbalya swan kere prakasita hay na. dharmer adi utsa jai hek na prathamabadhi or kramabikaser sekhad ye saras satite, tar nam manabprakriti."\(^2\)

Thus it is found that though Sri N. did not try very much to make the 'Kathamrta' literary, yet the literary value of the linguistic quality that he has imparted through small incidents is not less.

Apart from this, there are similies of Sri Ramakrishnadeva, which have established the 'Kathamrta' in a special literary value. In the matter of the application of simile in Sanskrit poetry, 'upama Kalidasasya" although has become a proverb. Achinta Kr. Sengupta has installed Sri Ramakrishna in the

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1. Max-Muller - Ramakrishnadev. Life and Teachings- (Translated by Gaili Kr. Ganguli, 1972, Page-40.)
highest place, in the application of saying 'upama
'Sri Ramakrishnasayasa'. One or two examples of simile
are given below :-

The kitten knows only how to call its mother,
crying 'mew, mew'. It remains satisfied whenever, its
mother puts it, .... whenever it suffers, it cries only
- thats all it knows.¹

"bidaler chana kebal mew, mew kore make dake jane.
wa take yekhane rakhe, sekhanei thake - .... tar
kasta hele se kebal mew mew kore dake, ar kichu
jane na."²

That means eagerness is needed, dependence is
needed like the eagerness and dependance of cat.

In course of discussing what Brahma is, and it is
above word and mind, he said, after the realisation of
Brahma; he cannot express it any more; In course of saying
as to why he fails to do it, he said -

"A salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean,
but before it had gone far into the water it melted away.

². Katha/Vol.1/17th Reprint; 1387 /P.23
It became entirely one with the water of the ocean. Then who was to come back and tell the ocean's depth.\textsuperscript{1}

"thakhan ki abastha hay mukhe bala yai na.
nuner putul samudra mapte gichila, oktu nemai
gole gole. 'tadakarkarita'. takhan ke ar upare
eso sambad debe, samudra kato gabbir."\textsuperscript{2}

That means, no body can tell what is Brahma. Similar is the soul of his teachings. By giving examples he tried to explain the philosophical teachings in a easy manner. Regarding his similie some critics said - "Firstly, the marvellous application of similies and the freshness of of the original realisation of that. Secondly, the uncommon capacity of expressing the absolute truth of scriptures through colloquial language.\textsuperscript{3}

"prathamtha upamar ascarya suprayag obam sei
moulik upalabdhir sajibata. dvitiata calti
bhasar madhyane sastrer gudatama satyake prakas
kerbar asadharan kshamata."\textsuperscript{4}

A famous critics has regarded the Ramakrishna Katharita, as the highest spiritual literature and the best biographical literature.

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Gospel/Vol.1/7th ed. Dec. 1980 /P.197
\item[2.] Katha/Vol.1/17th Reprint 1379 /P.86
\item[3.] Ghosh, Pranab ranjan - Vivekananda O Bangla Sahitya 2nd ed. Aawin, 1377/P.50
\item[4.] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
In this context, he said more -

"The Kathamrita is the highest religious literature of the age. The reason is that it is a book containing the story of the life and Gospel of the highest religious personality."¹

¹Kathamrita, yuger sarboona dharma sahitya
eijanya ye, yuger sarbascho dharmiya byaktitVER
jiban o banie kahini ei grantha."²

If it is analysed in this way, it is found that as a religious and biographical book, the literary value of the Kathamrita, is not less in any way.

1. Basu, Sankari prasad - Vivekananda O Sankalin
   Bharatbarsha - 4th ed. Magh, 1392 /P.290

2. Ibid