

Comparative analysis of the Context of travel literature in Sanskrit and Nepali literature

Deepak Tewari

Associate Professor, Department of Nepali Sikkim Government College

Abstract

Travel plays an important role in the human and non-human life. All living creatures of the world have an innate tendency of travel. It is also associated with the human civilization. By traveling different geographical, cultural, and historical sites one can learn unseen things and gain new experiences. There is a long tradition of travel literature or travel contexts in Sanskrit literature. There are many examples of travel narratives or travel related stories found in the ancient Sanskrit texts like Vedas, Puranas, Aitareya Bahmana, Kaushitaki Bahmana, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Panchatantra etc. Nepali literature has also been greatly influenced by the context of travel or travel literature of the Sanskrit literature. There have been many translations of Sanskrit epics in Nepali literature. The Sanskrit texts like Ramayana, Mahabharata and different kinds of Puranas, Vedas have been translated into Nepali in abundance, which has been discussed in this article and tried to clarify the relationship of Sanskrit literature with Nepali literature in the context of the travel and travel literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel has an important place in human society since prehistoric time. All human beings, animals, birds, insects, moths or all living creatures in the world have an innate tendency of travel. The history of travel is also connected with the human civilization. People are curious by nature; they are always looking for new things, so they travel to different places. The travel is an integral part of human life, and has a great place in writing also. Travel literature has been popular from the past to the present. In fact, the foundation of world literature is found in travel literature. There is a long and old tradition of travel literature in India. Especially in Sanskrit literature, there are many cases of travel descriptions. Therefore, the travel cases and travel descriptions in Sanskrit literature, makes clear the prevalence of travel in the literary writing of that time. It has a great place in Indian culture inspired by Sanskrit literature. Since ancient times, the religion-culture of India has been connected with travel. Therefore, the words like pilgrimage and pilgrim are always used. If we look at the Indian Hindu Sanatan tradition the story of the traveling of gods and goddesses always found in the religious texts of Sanskrit. God and goddess used to travel by their own vehicles like Shiva Shankar on Nandi or Bull, Durga on Lion, Ganesha on Mouse, Bishnu on Garuda, Saraswati on White Duck and Indradev on Airavata Elephant are famous everywhere and the Rath Yatra of Shri Krishna and Arjuna is equally famous. In Puranas, Narad Muni is considered to be the greatest nomadic traveler who visited the fourteen worlds, it is the story of Sri Rama's wanderings in the Ramayana or the story of the Pandava's exile in the Mahabharata; all of them are based on travel.

2. Meaning of Yatra (travel) in Sanskrit literature

The word Yatra (travel) used in Nepali and Hindi languages is derived from the Sanskrit word. . It is derived from the **ya** dhatu of Sanskrit language which primarily means communication or going. The word Yatra is further described as leave, attack (war), Pilgrimage, celebration, livelihood; or the final vacation means salvation or death. In the Sanskrit book **Amarkosh**, Yatra has described as यत्रा ब्रज्याभिनिर्याणं प्रस्थानं गमनं नमः means the sense of departure or journey. Yatra word is used in Nepali language to describe the meaning as like as travel. In Sanskrit, the word **Yawavar** is used for traveler which means the horse of Ashwamegha and the Jaratkaru muni .

3. Travel Context in Sanskrit Literature

There is a long tradition of travel literature or travel contexts in Sanskrit literature. Therefore, the concept and writing of travel in Sanskrit literature has been going on since ancient times. The origins of travel can be found in the **Vedas, Puranas** and other religious-literary texts of Sanskrit literature. A lot of contexts that have a direct-indirect relationship with travel can be found in the Vedic and classical Sanskrit language texts. Sanskrit literature is basically divided into the following three eras by the scholars. An attempt has been made here to briefly discuss the context of thinking and description of travel in those eras.

1. Vedic Era (1500 BC to 200 BC)
2. Prehistoric Era (1200 BC to 600 BC)
3. Historical Era (600 BC to 1200 AD)

3.1. Vedic Era (1500 BC to 200 BC). In this era, the **Rigveda** the oldest book in the world and the other vedas were written in Sanskrit language. Other ancient books including **Aitareya Bahmana, Kaushitaki Bahmana, Shankhayana Bahmana, Shatapatha Bahmana** etc. were also written in this era. The word and term travel is used in those ancient books. It is confirmed by various mantras of the Rigveda that the Aryas used to travel by ship for trade. The navy was used for war. The pilgrims, horse traders all traveled everywhere. It is written in Rigveda that a ship was built with great effort, Varuna and Vasishtha went on a sea voyage.

आ यदुहाव वरुणश्च नावं, प्रमत समुद्रभीरयाव मध्यमम्। अधिय दयां सुभिश्चरावाप्रपेखं ईखयाव हे शुभकम्। वशिष्ट ह वरुणो ना व्याधा दृषिं चकार स्वायामहोमिः। स्तोतारं विप्रः सुदिनत्वे अन्हां षान्तु द्यावस्त तनन्यादुषासः।

Similarly, in the **Aitareya Brahmana**, which is considered to be a major branch of the Rigveda, for the spiritual and metaphysical advancement of man, the word चरैवेति, चरैवेति, is used as aphorism and emphasized that the men should constantly move always. In this book, it is also said that चरन् वै मधु विन्दति: means that by walking one can gets Madhu (Honey). It is said that the essence of the sweet pollen of the honey flower is the joy of every journey.

3.2 Prehistoric era (1200 BC to 600 BC) Ancient Hindu book like **Mahabharata** has written many episodes of travel and travelers. In this era, land travel was done by bullock carts and horses; while sea travel was by ship Repositories are found. There is a story in **Varaha Purana** that childless merchant named Gokarna was there who went for trade across the sea but got hit by a storm and drowned in the sea. Similarly in this Purana it is written that at one place that a merchant traveled to the sea to find pearls with some gem tests. Likewise there is a context in the seventh chapter of **Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana** that King Harishchandra went to Lord Varuna to beg for a son and promised to give him a son after getting it. Accordingly, King Harishchandra got a son named Rohita.

पुनस्त त्रैव गमने वणिग्भावे मतिर्गता।समुद्रयाने रत्नानि महास्थौल्यानि साधुभिः। रत्नपरीक्षकैः।सार्द्धमानिष्ये बहूनि चः।एवं निश्चित्य मनसा महासार्यपुरं सरा समुद्रयामिभिलोकैः सवदि सूच्य निर्गताशुकेन सह सम्प्राप्तो महान्तं लवर्णार्णवम् । पोतारूढास्ततः सबै पोतवारहैरूपोपिता ॥

But after having a son, King Harishchandra forgot his promise and on the same occasion, Indra reminds Rohita that by traveling to the pilgrimage site, one gets merit by traveling the earth

भूमेः पर्यटनं पुण्यं तीर्थक्षेत्रनिषेवणैः।रोहितायादिशच्छक्रः सोऽप्यरण्ये वसन्तसमाम् ।

Similarly, in the tenth skandha of this Purana, various journeys made by lord Krishna are mentioned, while in the latter part of this chapter, the various pilgrimages made by Balarama in North and South India are mentioned under the title **Baladev tirtha yatra nirupan**. Similarly, **Vamana Purana** encouraged to travel in life and suggested to travel to forests, rivers and pilgrimages without interruption. In this purana description of travel by pralada in the pilgrimage sites like Rudrakotitirtha, Prayag, Varanasi, Punkararanya, Kurudhwaja, Padmakshi, Kalanjar, Neelatirtha, Prabhas, Mahalaya, Uttarkuru, Saptagodavar, Daruvan, Kundin, Magadharm, Kankhal, Vajra, Kamrup, Dandavana, Sarvapapanashaka Srenthatirtha and Shaalgram are mentioned.

सरस्वत्यां नरः स्नात्यां यक्षं दृष्ट्वा प्रणम्य च। पुण्यं धूपं च नैवद्यं दत्त्वा वाचुमुदीरयेत्। तव प्रसादाद्यक्षेत्रंतस्तथा। भ्रमिषेयामि च तीर्थानि ह्यविघ्नं कुरु मे सदा।

Likewise in the **Matsya Purana**, the chronology for the journey of the kings is presented in 27 verses, and in this Purana, the journey of Mars and omens are described in 28 verses. In the same way, **Skanda Purana**, **Markandeya Purana**, **Kurmapurana** also contain many episodes of travel description, while Valmiki's **Ramayana** and Vyas's **Mahabharata** are great travel poems of the Sanskrit literature. From Balakanda to Uttarkanda, various travel episodes are found in Ramayana. In addition to Rama's fourteen years of exile, his journey to Mithila, Sringaverpur Yatra, Panchavati Yatra, Battle Yatra of Lanka, Hanuman's Sky Yatra and Sumeru Mountain Yatra including many mountains, rivers, seas, caves, islands are described in Mahabharata. The banar sena lead by hanumana went to many provinces in search of Sita, there is the context of the flight Puspak and many aircraft and sea vessels. From these journeys of Rama, we get good information about the social and political conditions of ancient India and we also get a lot of information about the then geographical situation.

As in the Ramayana, there are many episodes of travel in the Mahabharata. In this period, the means of travel were ships, chariots and the horses. In the Mahabharata, there are episodes of travel from Adiparva, Sabhaparva, Vanaparva to the journey to heaven. In the first part of Adiparva, Arjuna's pilgrimage, Pandava and Krishna's journey to Dwarika, Digvijaya from the 25th to 32nd chapters of Sabhaparv is found, while the journey of the Pandavas to various places of pilgrimage during the pilgrimage festival from the 80th chapter to the 156th chapter of the Vanaparva is described. In Sabha Parva, Bhima, Arjuna and Krishna's journey to Magadha, King Rituparna's journey to Vidarbha and in Van Parva description of natural beauty, geographical information, current customs, folk life, political and social system are found. Similarly in the **Panchatantra** it is said that one who does not travel in life and not acquire knowledge of various languages and costumes, his birth will be fruitless, saying that no man will acquire knowledge, finance and craft until he travels the earth happily from one country to another.

देशान्तरेषु बहुविधभाषावेशादि येन न ज्ञातम्। भ्रमता धरणीपीठे तस्य फलं जन्मनो व्यर्थम् । विद्यां वित्तं शिल्पं तावन्नाति मानवः सम्यक्। यावद् वज्रति न भूमौ न भूमौ देशादेशान्तरं हृष्टः।

In the same way, in **Manusmriti** there are lot of contexts of travel and sea merchants, things like travel being prohibited for Brahmins, payment of money to ship builders, fares to be paid by sea-going vessels

and passengers, safety of their belongings during the voyage, the passenger himself should be responsible for shipwreck in case of shipwreck are mentioned.

3.3. Historic Era (600 BC to 1200 AD)

This era is considered to be the most fertile period of Sanskrit literature; Gautam Buddha appeared in this era, along with the creation of Buddhist texts and many poetry, epics, dramas and historical texts. In this era, many books based on travelogues were also created. In this era famous book of poet Madha **Shisupala vadha**, the verses from the third to the thirteenth chapter, the story of Krishna's journey from Dwarika to Hastinapur is prominently presented. In Somadattakrita **Kathasaritsagara** (1081-83) there are many travel descriptions of sea and land. In it, there are contexts of Muktipur Island, Suvarna Dweep, Sumatra and Lanka. Similarly, in Sriharsha's **Ratnavali Natika**, a maiden of Sinhaleshwar Vikramabahu was ship wrecked and drowned in the middle of the ocean. He is said to have been rescued by mechanical traders.

अन्यथा क्वसिद्वादेश जनिता प्रत्यय प्राथितार्थाःसिंहेश्वर हृहितुःसमुद्रेयानभंगोत्थितायाः फलकासादनं क्व च कौशाम्बीयेन वणिजा सिंहलेभ्यः पत्यागच्छता तदवस्थायाः सम्भावनं रत्नमालाचिह्नाया प्रत्यभिज्ञानादिहानयनं च।

Similarly, in Kalhana's **Rajatarangini** (1149-50), in addition to various information about the historical aspects of Kashmir, information is given in one verse about the obstacles related to travel. Similarly, in **Harshacharitra** and **Kadambari** of Vana, there are many instances of travelogue, while in **Daskumar Charitam** of Dandi, the description of journey of ten princesses to different places is found. In Kautilya's **Arthashastra** we find information about the various paths of water and land. Similarly, in Kalidasa's famous book **Raghuvamsa**, there is a scene where Maharaj Raghu defeated the King of Banga in a war. Likewise the Himalaya description of the first chapter of his epic **Kumarasambhava** mentions the reference to the journey. The first half of the great poet Kalidasa's **Meghdutam** is based on the travel. In this poem Megh is introduced and the Places like Vindhyaachal Parvat, Rewa (Narvada) River, Vidisha, Vetravatinadi, Nirvindhya Nadi, Ujjayini, Devagiri Parvat, Charmanvati River, Dashpur, Bahmavarta Desh, Kurukshetra, Kankhal, Ganga River, Kailash Parbat, Mansarovar and Alkapuri are presented in a beautiful and vivid manner. At the very beginning of this poem, Megh is presented as a traveler and he gives information about the journey "O Megh, you first listen to me about the suitable route for your journey, then you will hear a message worth listening to with great desire. On which route you will be very weak from the exertion of the journey and will walk on the mountains and will be very weak and use the source of light water."

हे मेघ !प्रथमं मत्सकाशात्स्वप्रस्थानाऽकुलं मार्गमाकर्ण्य,तदनन्तरं साऽतिशयं श्रोत्रसुखोत्पादकं मदीयं सन्देशं श्रोष्यसि।यस्मिन्मार्गे त्वं गमनाऽऽयासेन परिश्रान्तिमनुभूय पर्वतेषु पादन्थासं विधायाऽतिकृशो भूत्वा गिरिनदीप्रवाहाणा लघु जलमुपभुज्य गमिष्यसि।।

Apart from this, Buddhist texts such as **Avadanshatak**, **Milind Prashana** and Jain texts such as **Vikramanka** many passages of travelogues are also found. Thus, there is a long tradition of writing of travel stories and travelogues from the Vedic period to the historic era in Sanskrit literature. It also provides a lot of information about the social, cultural, religious, political conditions of Indian life at that time, as well as various types of travel tools. So there is no doubt that the origin of travel literature or the oldest form of writing is found in the ancient Indian literature.

The influence of Sanskrit literature can be found everywhere in Nepali literature. In fact, Nepali literature has got its roots from Sanskrit literature. The source of Nepali language is Sanskrit language or the Nepali language is branched off from the classical Sanskrit and the modern Nepali language has an abundance of Sanskrit words. The relationship and closeness between language and literature is evident the beginning of Nepali literature is from the translation of various verse-prose compositions or works of

the Sanskrit literature. Nepalese religious beliefs are all related to ancient Sanskrit literature such as Vedas, Puranas, Srimad Bhagavata Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. The background of Nepali literature is based on the translation of different texts of Sanskrit literature. There seems to be a focus on completeness in preliminary and medieval period of Nepali literature seems to be influenced to a large extent and modern Nepali literature is partially influenced by the Sanskrit literature. Although there is no direct influence of Sanskrit literature in Nepali but in modern times, the vivid characters of Sanskrit literature are presented in abundance as myths and symbols in Nepali literature.

It seems that the Sanskrit texts glorifying travel had a direct and indirect influence on Nepali literature. Since the source of Nepali literature is Sanskrit literature, it seems that the discussions and descriptions of travel in Sanskrit literature have also entered in Nepali literature as a means of translation. Especially Sanskrit poems, the epics as well as the plays (drama) have been widely translated into Nepali. Ramayana and Mahabharata, which can be considered as travel poems of Sanskrit literature, have been translated into Nepali language by many Nepali translators, while other Sanskrit works related to travel have also been translated into Nepali language. For example, Valmiki Ramayana has been translated by Bhanubhakta Acharya, Ramakant Baral, Bhojraj Bhattarai, Hem Vallabh, Sita Devi Rimal, Homanath, Kedarnath and Shikharnath in full, while Raghunath Bhatt has partially translated it into Nepali under the name Sundarkanda.. Likewise Shambhuprasad Dhungel has translated some of the pravasa of the Mahabharata, Shaktivallabh Aryal translated Viratparva, Vijayananda translated Adiparva in Nepali. Similarly, Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda were translated from Sanskrit to Nepali by Tilak Prasad Luitel, Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana by Chiranjeevi Paudel, Uday Chandra Vashishta and Meenakumari Rimal, Harshacharitra of Vana is translated by Khemraj Keshavasaran, Ratnavali of Sriharsha is translated by Motiram Bhatt, Kiratarjuniya of Bharavi is translated by Muktinath. Similarly the Dashakumar Charit of Dandi is translated by R.B. Satyal and Udayananda Aryal, Panchatantra is translated by Bhuvaneshwari Satyal, Vijayaraj Acharya, Krishna Kumari Devi, Kalidasa's Meghdoot is translated by Chakramani Chalise, Tulsi Prasad Dhungel, Shiv Prasad Pradhan, Sri Prasad Upadhyay, Komal Prasad Adhikari and Kumar Prasad Koirala as well as kalidasa's Raghuvansh and Kumar Sambhava is translated by Komal Prasad Adhikari from Sanskrit to Nepali.

Conclusion

Travel has played a very important role in the human and non human life. Nepali literature has been developed from Sanskrit so it seems that Nepali literature has adopted the travel context and the seeds from the Sanskrit literature. So the various works of Sanskrit literature, where the travel context is found, they are found to be translated into Nepali language in abundance. So the closeness of Sanskrit and Nepali literature can be understood, and the direct and indirect influence of Sanskrit travel texts has glorify the Nepali literature in large extend.

References

1. Apte Vaman, Shivraj, (ed.), **Sanskrit Hindi kosh**, Motilaldas Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, 1989.
2. Jha Pt.Tarinesh, Tripathi, Ram Prasad, (trans.) **Matsyapurana**, Hindi sahitya sammelen, Prayag, 1988.
3. Kale M.R, (ed.) **Ratnavali**, Harshdev Bhaskar Press, Bombay, 1975.
4. Kalidas, **Kumarasambhava**, Chowkhamba Surabharati Publication, Varanasi, 1996.
5. Kalidas, **Meghdootam**, Chowkhamba Vidya Bhavan, Varanasi, 2013.

6. Mathur Surendra, **Yatra sahitya ka vikash**, Sahitya Prakashan, Delhi, 1962.
7. Regmi Krinnachandra, Regmi Purnachandra Sharma (Eds.), **Sanskrit trivashik kosh**, Krishna kumari Devi, Varanasi, 1990.
8. **Rigved**, Vedik Yatralay, Ajmer , 1941.
9. Sharma Vishnu, **Panchatantra**, Surabharati Chowkhamba Publications, Varanasi, 2011.
10. Tiwari Vishwamohan, **Hindi Yatra Sahitya Ek Vinhagam Drishti**, Arekh Prakashan, Delhi, 2013.
11. Tripathi Brahmananda, **Amarkosh, Kshatriya Varga**, Chaukhamba Surabharati, Varanasi, 2014.
12. Ved Vyas, **Vamanpuran**, Acharya Sriram Sharma, (trans.), Gautam Chamanlal, Bareilly, 1987.
13. Vedavyas, **Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana**, Sanskrit pratisthan, Delhi, 2013.
14. Wuhler, (ed.), **Varahapurana**, Trivandrum, 1942.