



DUTA-THE MESSENGER

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Abstract

Many influential literary works, highlighted as an example of richness, reflects the skills and expertise of the Poets, who have given so much importance to Dutas. This paper tries to explore the qualities of Dutas as described in various Indian literary works and attempts to examine the relevance and context of Dutas from ancient literature which could be imparted in different art forms even in this modern age.

Duta is the messenger who takes a message from one person to another person. The message could express a feeling, convey a situation, alert regarding an approaching happening, give information about an upcoming event, invite for a battle etc. In all such situations, the role of the Duta is vital as well as critical. If we take a closer look at Kavyas, we realize that the Duta acts like a pillar of strength. Like how a pillar upholds the entire structure of the building, the Duta plays a significant part. However the dutas were not portrayed as central or lead characters until Kalidasa's Megha Duta. Later a few Kavyas like Hamsaduta, Pavanaduta, Kokilasandesha etc; followed the footsteps of Megha Duta exposing the substantial role of the Duta.

Selecting the Duta itself is an art. The Duta should possess qualities that assure one that he/she is capable enough to carry the message and deliver it to the destined individual. The Duta should be trustworthy, brave, clever, persuasive, uncompromising, truthful, responsible, ready to sacrifice his/her life, filled with presence of mind, decisive, insightful etc. For instance, if we take the great epic Ramayana, Sri Rama chose Hanuman to act as his Duta because Rama knew Hanuman was the only one who was brave enough to challenge the obstacles on the way to Sita, who was strong enough to win those hurdles, who was capable of reaching the destination and meeting Sita, who was kind and reliable, capable of conveying Rama's feelings to Sita, who was clever enough to handle the situation in case he was caught, and trustworthy to bring back the right message from Sita.

Thus we can recognise significance of the Duta and further, in this article, the reader can enjoy studying more about Dutas from various texts.

Reference of the Duta from Rig Veda

The initial reference of Dutas dates back to the Rig Veda (X. 108), where Sarama (dog of the Gods) served as a messenger between the Panis (demons who kidnapped the cattle) and the Lord Indra, helping the Lord to find the path and recover the cattle. In the Epics - Ramayana and Mahabharatam, we have- the message of Rama through Hanuman, of Yudhishtira through Krishna and of Nala through the Swan.

(I) Duti Gunas from Natya Sastra (The ancient text on the performing arts):

The twenty fifth chapter; *Vaisikam* (Art of courtesans) in Natya Sastra lists the *Gunas* or qualities of a messenger.

- Vignana guna sampanna kathini kingini thatha/
Prathi vesya sakhi daasi kumari kaarushilpini// (9)*
*Dathri pashandini chaiva dhutya satvishanika thatha/
Prothsahaneshu kushala madhura katha dhakshinaa cha kaalagna// (10)*
*Ladaha samvrutha mantra dhuuthithvebhi gunou kaaryaha/
Thatha protsahanam kaarya nanadharshitha kaaranam // (11)*
*Yathoktha kathanam chaiva thatha bhava pradharshanam
Na jadam roopa sampanna naartha vantham na chaathuram // (12)*
*Dhuutham vapyathava dhuthi bhudhaha kuryath kadhachana /
Kulabhoga dhanadhikyaiha krithvadhi kavi kaththanam // (13)*
*Dhuthi nevedhayeth kama marthasha shaivaanu varnayeth
Nava kaama pravruthayah krudhvaya vaapi sangamaha// (14)*



The following types of women are to be employed as messengers in matters of love.

- One endowed with good knowledge and noble qualities
- One having the ability to narrate suitable stories
- One possessing a saintly nature
- One who lives in the neighbourhood
- One who is affectionate
- One who is ready to serve
- One who is in her youth
- One who is an artist capable of producing artifacts
- One who is fit to be a foster-mother
- One who could be a fortune teller
- One who could encourage the lovers by citing various reasons
- One who could truly communicate as what was told to her and further
- One who conveys the feelings of the person who employs her
- One who could convey the message of love after glorifying the qualities of her lady, like pedigree, ability to bring happiness and wealth etc.
- One who could also describe the various benefits that may increase for the hero by this union in future.

Major Six Qualities of the Female Messenger

- One who has expertise in prompting others (beloved or lover) to act
- One who has the capacity of engaging in sweet conversations
- One who has dexterity
- One who has knowledge of proper time
- One who is charming in behaviour
- One who has the ability to keep secrets

(II) Female messengers as described in Rasamanjari of Bhanudatta

Dutyavyaparaparangama duti/ tasya sanhattanavirahanivedhanadini karmani/

Duti (A female messenger) is one who is skillful in sending messages. Her duties are to communicate union, separation etc.

sanghattanam yatha:

Anchathi rajanirudhanchathi

Timiramidam cancati manobhuh

Uktam na tyaja yuktam

Virachaya raktam manastasmin // (98)

Union as: Night is coming. Darkness is rising. Cupid is active. Do not give up your word (keep your word of bringing the beloved). My mind is passionately engaged in him. (98) .

In this verse the plea of the nayika to duti - is indicated by the sentence "yuktam viracaya", do what is appropriate. She suggests that the duti should go and bring the nayaka to save her from the over whelming love and other provocative conditions. (98)

Viraha nivedhanam yatha:

Cakre candramukhi pradeepakalika dhatra dharamandale

Tasya daivavasaadyasapi sarama prayah sammunamilithi

Tad brumah sirasa natena sahasa srikrisna nishpayatam

snehastatra tatha yatha na bhavathi trailokya mandham tamah/ (99)

Communicating separation as: Oh krsna! The creator has created a bud of light (as radha) on the earth. By fate, her last stage even has arrived. Therefore we tell you humbly oh krsna! Throw your love on her (Put some oil / love on her / light) so that the three worlds do not become blindly dark. (99) .

The word sneha holds the key to understand the suggestive meaning in this verse. sneha means both love or friendship and oil. The poet describes radha as pradipa-kalika a budding lamp of light. When the oil (love) sneha exhausts in a lamp



naturally it gets put off. Therefore the duti pleads with krisna to see that the lamp is not put off by the lack of sneha and the three worlds do not plunge into darkness. (99) .

KAVYAS ON DUTAS OR MESSENGERS

The reference to Duta or messenger is made in different Kavyas (a literary style).Messenger poems are known as the *Duta kavyas* or *Sandesha kavyas*,and have a peculiar charm. Kalidasa's *Megha Sandesha* makes an e allusion to the Duta Kavyas in detail.

The short lyric poem tends to feature a pair of separated lovers, a messenger and message, and finally draws a description of the route to be travelled by the messenger. There are at least 70 *sandesha kavyas* in Sanskrit alone, and counting - poets are still writing them today. Most of the poems have between 100-200 verses, although some have as little as 30 odd stanzas and there's one that stretches to 374. The majority follow Kalidasa in using the metre known as *Mandakranta* (slowly approaching, a languid metre particularly suitable for the "love-in separation emotion" *Vipralambha-Sringararasa*) throughout, although several use *Sikharini* and the more ambitious mix and match with a handful of metres.

Messengers who changes depending the subject matter, one that brims over with *Vipralambha-Sringararasa*, have stock characters such as cuckoo or bee of *vasantha*(spring), the peacock of *varsha* (monsoon) and the swan of *sharat* (autumn). The moon and breeze are also put to service and one of the more impassioned gopikas sends Krishna's footprint as a messenger. The philosophical *Duta kavyas* kind of messengers with the dutas in the form of *manas* (mind), *smirti* (memory), *prajna* (transcendental wisdom) and *svapna* (dream).

Dutas in Ancient Literatures

(1) Ramayana

In first canto of Kishkinda Kandam in Ramayana, the lyric where the lake Pampa is described by Valmiki, Rama prepares to set off with his army the very next morning but just as dawn breaks he sees a swan, newly arrived from its monsoon retreat in the Himalayas and is suddenly overcome with intense longing for his beautiful wife. He decides to ask the swan to take a second message to Sita to console her and reassure her that he will soon rescue her. We also have Hanumantha duta wherein Hanuman goes lanka t to convey the lament of Lord Rama to Sita.

(2) Meghaduta or MeghaSandesha

It was Kalidasa who perhaps first wrote a separate work of considerable length of a purely lyric style consisting of about 115 verses in the *Mandakranta* metre. The theme of the poem is a message sent through cloud by a separated lover a Yaksha to his sweetheart who was far away in Alaka. Since the cloud, which cannot carry a real message, is portrayed as a messenger here, it is clear that the primary intent of the poet is to describe the feelings of a separated lover. In the first part called PurvaMegha, the various places that are to be visited by the cloud on its way from Ramagiri to Alaka are described with much beauty and power.

In the second part of Uttaramegha, we have the description of the city Alaka, the beauty of the Yaksha's wife, her diversions in separation and, lastly the message of the Yaksha. Many later poets who were inspired by the above work of Kalidasa have written *Sandesha* kavyas closely following Kalidasa in their content, style and even metre. The following are few well-known works that closely followed Megha Sandesam.

■ Pavandutam of Dhoyi ■ Hamsasandesha of Vedantadeshika ■ KokilaSandesha by uttandakani ■ Bhramara Duta by NyayaPancanana ■ Abdaduta of Krishna Sri Candara Nabhi

(3) Pavandutam of Dhoyi

Pavandutam of Dhoyi is a Duta kavya in which a Gandharva sends a love message through the wind to King Lakshanasena, the poet's patron. Dhoyi was one of the court poets of King Lakshanasena of Bengal during 12th century A.D. Jayadeva refers to him in Gita Govinda as one of his contemporaries.

(4) Hamsasandesha of Vedantadeshika

Hamsasandesha of Vedantadeshika, belonging to the latter part of 13th century A.D, is another beautiful and well-known Duta kavya in which Sri Rama sends a love message to his beloved Sita at Lanka through a swan. In this the author describes some sacred places in Tamilnadu, which the swan visits on its way to Lanka.



(5) KokilaSandesha

Uttandakavi is another author of a Duta kavya. Uttanda, a Brahmin from TamilNadu became an honored poet in the court of Zamorin of Calicut from where he composed Kokilasandesha in the early 15th century A.D.

(6) Bhramara Duta by NytyaPasina and Abdaduta of Krishna Sri Candara Nabhi are the two Sandesha Kavyas based on Ramayana. Here the bee and the cloud are used to carry the message from Rama to Sita who is held captured in lanka. The Natyasastra refers to the occasions of sending women as messengers (duti-sampresana) and the Kamasutra elaborates various duties (duti-karmani) of the different categories of these messengers. It is said that the patrahari messenger would carry the oral as well as written message or letter. She is helpful when there is intense intimacy between the lovers. She only has to inform the one or the other, the place and their time of next meeting.

In certain Duta Kavyas, poets describe the beauty of nature through the eyes of the Duta en route to meet Nayaka or Nayaki of the Kavya. Thus, exploring the remarkable role of Duta in such literatures and references exposes us to the poetic beauty of Duta kavyas. As a rasika, discovering the character of Duta facilitates me to appreciate the fascinating charm in the literary works. As a dancer and choreographer, true appreciation of literature can be achieved by admiring the aesthetic sense of the Kavya, envisioning the poetic depiction and visually bring out that stunning beauty, so that it reaches even those who haven't been exposed to the great literatures.

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