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Speak Up

BHĀVA NIKṢEPA: A PATH TO LEAD A PEACEFUL LIFE

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Stories have a special place not only in Indian tradition but all over the world. Stories do not only deal with entertainment but also express philosophy, culture, and conduct, and are the strength of stories. The story literature in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages has a rich heritage. Along with this, Jain Śvetāmbara monks wrote ample commentaries on canonical literature among which *Bṛhatkalpasūtra* holds a very important position in Prakrit literature. *Bṛhatkalpasūtra* is written by Muni Bhadrabāhu in the first century CE. It contains six chapters. Saṅghadāsa Gaṇi Kṣamā Śramaṇa wrote a commentary on this text in 6th-7th CE in 6490 *gāthās*. After almost 100 years, Malayagiri and Kṣemagiri wrote a commentary (*vṛtti*) on the main text of *Bṛhatkalpasūtra* and *niryukti gāthās* composed by Bhadrabāhu himself. There are almost 130 stories incorporated in this commentary by Malayagiri and Kṣemagiri written in 'Jaina Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit' which happens to be the mother of modern Marathi.

The concept of *anuyoga* is introduced by Bhadrabāhu in the *niryukti gāthā* on *Bṛhatkalpasūtra*. *anuyogas* are 12 in number. We come across the concept of *nikṣepa* also and *nikṣepa* is the first *anuyoga*. Bhadrabāhu counts seven *nikṣepas*, namely *nāma*, *sthāpanā*, *dravya*, *kṣetra*, *kāla*, *vacana*, and *bhāva*.

While commenting on *nikṣepas*, Malayagiri and Kṣemagiri gave seven stories for *bhāva-nikṣepa*. *Ahi-nakula* is one of these seven stories. It is difficult for a reader to understand the purport of the story without understanding other *nikṣepas*. Other than *nikṣepa*, these stories also help us understand the fruits of our thinking process and rationality.

Ahi-Nakula story from the Bṛhat-kalpa-sūtra-Bhāṣya (BKSB)

A mongoose (*nakula*) was born at the same time as a Brahmin mother gave birth to her son. She took care of the mongoose as her own son. One day when the mother was away, a snake (*ahi*)



came out from its hole. The mongoose saw the snake and sensing the danger to the human child, killed the snake. Its mouth was smeared with blood due to the fight with the snake.

When the mother returned and saw the mongoose with blood all over its face, she thought it had killed her son, and without wasting a moment, she killed the mongoose. On entering the house, she saw the dead snake which was killed by the mongoose, and then realized her mistake and felt guilty.

Philosophical Concepts in the Story

For the right knowledge, according to the commentators, one has to rely upon 12 *anuyogas* and the first *anuyoga* is called *nikṣepa*. With the help of these *nikṣepas*, one gets correct knowledge of the unknown things. *Nikṣepa* – the word is derived from *ni* + *kṣip* (to lay down). The seven *nikṣepas* are *nāma*, *sthāpanā*, *dravya*, *kṣetra*, *kāla*, *vachana* and *bhāva*. Umāsvāti, in *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 1.5 describes four *nikṣepas* – *nāma*, *sthāpanā*, *dravya*, and *bhāva*. Vīrsena added *kṣetra* and *kāla* in the Dhavalā commentary and *vacana nikṣepa* was added by the commentators of BKSJ.

The seven of them can be understood in short here:

1. Giving a name to any subject is *nāma nikṣepa*.
2. Superimposing one thing on another is *sthāpanā nikṣepa*.
3. The substance of which a thing is produced is called *dravya nikṣepa*.
4. Acquiring the knowledge according to the right place is *kṣetra nikṣepa*.
5. Getting acquainted with the thing according to the right time is *kāla nikṣepa*.
6. The conduct of a person in a particular situation or condition is *bhāva nikṣepa*.
7. Using the right words in a situation and understanding the right intention of the words is *vacana nikṣepa*.

In this Ahi-nakula story, the mother kills the mongoose without taking into account the actual situation. Therefore, this is an example of *bhāva nikṣepa*. At the same time, the mongoose was killed by the mother as he presented himself at the wrong place and wrong time. Therefore, it becomes the example of *kṣetra* and *kāla* respectively. The mother had a thought in her mind that the mongoose could become violent if needed. This thought was lingering in her subconscious mind all the while. Therefore, when she saw the mongoose with blood smeared on his mouth, her instant thought was her child was killed by the mongoose. She always allowed the mongoose



to play with her child but could never overcome the thought of the mongoose being violent. As a result, she killed the mongoose without checking the right situation and then repented.

Observations

My observations with this story are the following:

- BKSB is mainly written for Jaina monks and concentrates on the *nikṣepa* part of the story.
- The story is used to show the importance of the right intention, that is, *bhāva nikṣepa*.
- As the Sanskrit saying goes *sahasā vidadhūta nakriyām avivekaḥ paramāpadām padam* which means an irrational act always throws you in the wrong situation, just as the mother in our story who loses both of her children. The main intention of BKSB is to explain the rationality behind any action which is *anuyoga*.

This story professing *anuyoga* should be taken with reference to the conduct of an ascetic. It is possible that in a fit of a thought, a person renounces the world and gets initiated into the ascetic practice. but after some time, he may realize that he is not able to cope with the vows. Then his situation becomes worse like the mother in the story who loses both ends because then he is neither able to concentrate on spiritual development nor can leave the attachment to his previous experiences of house-holders life. In this way, his faith is deluded.

An ascetic must have the right faith regarding his teacher or *tīrthamkara* without any doubt that they will not lead him to any wrong situation. Similarly, in the modern age, the problems that we come across are due to the prejudices in our minds. We are not able to trust or have faith in anybody completely, and we are not sure about our own actions. Building trust will definitely lead us to a content and blissful life.
