

## 31

## Forster in Sinhala

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**"Forster's compilation of his series of lectures into a book form helped the literary scholar gauge the value of a fiction or a narrative in a broader perspective".**

A long standing need had been fulfilled by two scholars: Professor Kulatilaka kumarasinghe and Amali Boralugoda with their translation of E.M Forster's well known series of Clark lectures entitled 'Aspects of the Novel'. Forster is known to the English reading and speaking world as an acclaimed creative writer with his wonderful world packed with a series of novels. One outstanding novel is 'A Passage to India', which was later turned into a celebrated film by David Lean.

Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970), Known as a novelist, was selected to deliver the Clark lecture series at the Cambridge University in 1926/27. Ever since the appearance of the notes that went into the making of the series of lectures into a book form, the literary scholars knew it was seminal but significant work.

This book laid emphasis of much needed clarity on several salient factors in novel writing. They were classified by Forster under broad titles that went as story, people (characterization came to be used later), plot, fantasy (imagination was the term used later), prophecy (vision or point of view as used later), pattern and rhythm.

These features or factors were seemingly interesting from various points of view. I am not sure whether any other text preceded these segments as useful for the understanding of elements that go into the making of a narrative. Other standard texts used by the literary scholars happened to be Understanding Fiction by Warren and Brooks, Elements of Fiction by Robert Scholes and Theory of Literature by Rene Wellek.

Forster's compilation of his series of lectures into a book form helped the literary scholar gauge the value of a fiction or a narrative in a broader perspective. In fact as I see it the two translators have given better glossarial terms for these factors laid above. Story is termed as *katha pravurthiya* and prophecy is termed as *Bhavisyat Vidarshanaa*. Perhaps two better terms I felt were *katha vastuva* and *drushtiya* or *dekma*. Glossarial terms may not matter much in the understanding of narratology.

The pioneer insights of Forster are observable in his collection of essays titled *Abinger Harvest* (1936). Perhaps this is a rejoinder to *Aspects of the Novel*, which was widely discussed in England, America and India. Unlike most other English literary critics, Forster kept one step ahead by taking the oriental literature into serious discussion. In *Abinger Harvest*, he selects the works of Tagore, an indigenous creator who sprung up from the folk tradition. Perhaps there are certain creative traits in Forster's work *A Passage to India* (1924) that had seeped into the creative structure.

As such it is said that the fame of *A Passage* was as much political as literary, for a while it is absorbing in characterization and incident. Its impact was made as a presentation of the deep-lying racial resentments between Indians and their overlords and overladies under British rule. It is also said that the book probably did much to further the conviction that India must be made independent since Forster's novel had a considerable weight among British intellectuals. These factors had not overshadowed Forster's image as a literary critic. He was hailed by the Indian intellectuals as a sensitive creative writer as well as a penetrative literary critic.

Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* too may have been instrumental in the teaching process of narrative studies as at a formulating stage in the modern period of English fiction. Forster engaged in in-depth studies of Dickens, Hardy, Austen and Virginia Woolf. Some other critics who followed him such as Stephan Spender, Frank Kermode and William Cowley attempted to transcend him by selecting creative writers like Lawrence and Joyce as creative trendsetters.

In this direction Forster is followed by a galaxy of other literary critics who spring up from the English teachings and learning sphere. Indian literary critics had mixed feelings about Forster. While some of them disagreed with his creative vision in *A Passage to India* they seem to agree with him as regards his oriental influence via the major classical works of India.

The chapter denoted as 'prophecy' by Forster in his work. I reckon it as an eternal creative force. It had been the responsibility of much concerned creative writers of the calibre of Leo Tolstoy to lay down rules on the concept of prophecy. For instance Tolstoy upheld the view of immense humanism and spiritualism via creative works as the great beneficial means of writing. Perhaps Forster would have inherited or at least had been influenced by this stream of Tolstoyan thought. Forster, for a modern reader, may not look as so attractive from the viewpoint of his vision.

But it is quite necessary that Forster must be regarded a pioneer

visionaries in the creative force that linked the East and the West. Perhaps as I see it this may be the first ever attempt to introduce a work of Forster to the Sinhala reader.

I wish that the translation of Forster's work into Sinhala ought to fill a void. It was recurring from time to time. Finally it is necessary also to observe that critical works on narratology have changed over the years. In a future edition a better Sinhala preface as regards these developments is anticipated.

### 32

## කාලයෙහි ගලායෑම ගැන වින්තාවක්

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මහජුරු කුලතිලක කුමාරසිංහගේ තෙවන කාව්‍ය සංග්‍රහය ලෙස “වරෙන්තුව” හඳුන්වා දිය හැකිය. මීට පෙර ‘නැත ලොවේ අන් රසඳුනා’ ‘අසනිපාතය’ නමින් කාව්‍ය සංග්‍රහ දෙකක් නිකුත් කර ඇති කුලතිලක කුමාරසිංහ ඔහුගේ නවතම කාව්‍ය සංග්‍රහයට පද්‍ය රචනා 48ක් ඇතුළත් කර ඇත. විශ්වවිද්‍යාල මහාචාර්යවරයෙක් වශයෙන් තමන් ගත කරන ජීවිතයේ දී ඔහු අත්දැකීම් විවිධ සමාජ සංසිද්ධීන්, ප්‍රේමය, කාලයෙහි ගලා යෑම ආදී අත්දැකීම් ඔහු තම නිර්මාණ සඳහා වස්තු විෂය කරගෙන ඇති බව මෙම කවි රසවිඳින අපට පෙනී යන කරුණකි.

“වරෙන්තුව” කාව්‍ය සංග්‍රහයට පෙරවදනක් සපයන මහාචාර්ය විමල් දිසානායකයන් පවසා ඇත්තේ, කුලතිලක කුමාරසිංහ කවියාගේ බොහෝ නිර්මාණයන්ට පදනම් වී ඇති තේමාවන් අතරින් කාලය සහ එහි ප්‍රබලත්වය යන කාරණා ප්‍රමුඛස්ථානයක් ගෙන ඇති බවයි. කාලයෙහි ගලා යෑම පිළිබඳ දාර්ශනික වින්තාවන් මෙකී කවියා තම නිර්මාණවලට පාදක කරගත්ත ද එහි යම් අපූර්වත්වයක් පෙනෙන්නට ඇත. සාමාන්‍ය පුද්ගලයකුට නැතිනම් තරුණයකුට තම උපන් දිනය ප්‍රීතිය ගෙන දෙන දිනයක් වුවද කවියා එම උපන්දිනය දකින්නේ මරණ වරෙන්තුවක් ලෙසයි.

මට අවුරුදු පනස් අටයි  
මරණයේ දොරටුව අසලට  
කෙමෙන් කෙමෙන්  
බඩගාගෙන ළඟාවෙමින් සිටිනෙමි මම  
උපන් දිනය හඬ ගා මට  
මරණ වරෙන්තුවක් ලෙසින්  
උදෑසනම කන් බෙරයට  
හඬ ගා බෙරිහන් දුන්නේ

(පිටුව 51)

ග්‍රන්ථ නාම පද්‍යය මගින්, උපන්දිනය උත්සවයක් ලෙස ගෙන විවිධවූත්, විෂම වූත් අනර්ථකාරී ක්‍රියාවන් කරන සමාජය දෙස වෙනත් ඇසකින් බැලීමට කවියා උත්සාහ දරා ඇති බව පෙනේ. කුලතිලක කුමාරසිංහ කවියාගේ “වරෙන්තුව” පද්‍ය නිර්මාණය කියවන විට අපගේ සිහියට නිතැතින්ම හැඟෙන්නේ උදේනි සරත්වන්ද්‍රයන්ගේ “පුරාගත නැගණියෝ” කාව්‍ය සංග්‍රහයෙහි එන “කාල සර්පයා” නමැති පද්‍යයයි.