

The Classical Tale from the Markandeya Purana (Ritudwaj and Madalasha)

Poonam R L Rana, PhD

Associate Professor, CD Culture, TU
Poonamrlrana3@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper sheds light on the intriguing ancient love story of Ritudwaj and Madalasha that is recounted in the Markandeya Purana, this paper investigates the classical account of the Purana. The Eastern world today is more familiar with Western classical love stories like Romeo and Juliet, Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, Wuthering Heights, and Gone with the Wind, But Eastern readers have forgotten their classical legends. Ritudwaj and Madalasha's profound love is depicted in this undersea fantasy tale that delves into the classic love tale. This Pauranic tale is lovelier than Snow White or Cinderella. The researcher wishes to draw attention to the fact that our Puranas and other religious texts contain such beautiful love stories lost within the pages of such texts. This research aims to a) Highlight the ancient classical tale from Markandeya Purana. b) To open a venue for further research on such tales. The methodology used is exploratory based on the qualitative approach. This research is based on content study. (Library study).

Keywords: Classical, Tale, Markandeya-Purana Ritudwaj, Madalasha.

Introduction

Our ancient religious texts are well known for tales that are vibrant, fascinating, enchanting, mysterious and morally oriented based on *dharma* which is considered synonymous with righteousness, goodness, and virtue and is an attribute of all that is true, all that is austere and pure, all that has divine beauty and virtue – *satyam, shivam and sundaram*.

A.G Mitchell views Hinduism as an all-embracing word for which it is impossible to give a simple definition. (Mitchell, 2000, p. v) It is believed that the Aryans introduced this aspect, and since then it has been continuously modified in response to other religions (folk religion). The development of ideas and the needs of the local communities have led

to an amalgam of sects, cults and doctrines that have a great effect on our culture. (Mitchell, 2000, p. v) Despite the diversity, there are aspects such as the forms of the deities; and their tales of origin mentioned in the religious text particularly the Vedas, Epics and the Puranas.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact writing date of these sacred books. There are a lot of debates about it. The majority of academics agree that P.V. Karne lived between 4000 and 1000 B.C. is recognised as the Vedic Era.

Between 500 and 200 B.C.----- The Bhagawata Geeta Age.

300 B.C.–100 A.D.----- Kautaliya Arthasastra's Age.

200 B.C.–100 A.D.----- The Manusmriti Era

150 B.C.–100 A.D.----- The Patanjali Mahavasya Era.

Between 300 and 600 A.D.----- A few significant Puranic works, such as the Vishnu Purana, (Karne, 1964, p. 13)

A shift in the theological notion and an expansion of the pantheon occurred during the Purana era. This developed as a result of syncretism and assimilation. Based on the aforementioned dating, the Markandeya Purana can be dated between 300 and 600 A.D. Within the category of Hindu sacred books, the Markandeya Purana (Sanskrit) is one of the eighteen main Mahapuranas. It is written as if it were a conversation between the Vyasa student Jaimini and the ancient sage Markandeya. (www.puranamarkandeo.com). The first four questions in the book are those that Jaimini posed to Markandeya. Markandeya mentions the four knowledgeable birds who resided at Vindhyas. The four wise birds thus converse with Jaimini (Hazra, 1962, pp. 255-256). The stories of the 14 Manvantaras (the eras of the Manus) are told in Chapters 53–100. Of these, 13 chapters (chapters. 81–93) collectively constitute the Devi Mahatmya (Glorification of the Great Goddess), which is a part of this Purana. The Puranic dynasties' genealogy is covered in Chapter 111–137. answers to certain queries he had about the Mahabharata.

The Markandey Purana also discusses the fight between the Bak and Aadi birds, Balbhadrji's pilgrimage, and the tales of Dattatreya, Harishchandra, and Draupadi's five sons. This Purana also discusses the proper way for a person to live his life. It discusses a range of obligations and tasks. It highlights the significance of rejecting material existence and following the road to salvation. Dharma and generosity have traditionally been valued more highly than worship, incantations, and pujas. This Purana also discusses the value of yoga in daily life. It elucidates the significance of mastering both physical and mental control. It states that to become closer to God, one must dedicate themselves to Omkar. The path to salvation is worshipping Lord Brahma and giving up all desires and needs. Various stories have been used to explain all of this.

The Markandeya Puran also describes the disposition and nature of several saints and intellectuals. Avikshit, King Ritudwaj and Madalasa, their son Alark, Ikshvaku, Nal, Durgaji, and other people are discussed. The formation of the Earth, the birth of Lord Sun, the lineage of Saint Manu, and the tales of Mahatma Khanitra are also covered. The traditional story of Ritudwaj & Madalasa is covered in this article. (Hazra, 1962, pp. 255–257). The significance of Markandeya Puran the 137 chapters and nine thousand shlokas of the Markandeya Puran discuss a variety of significant events. Due to the involvement of Saint Markandeya, it is known as Markandeya Purana. Given that it primarily explains the beauty of Durga Saptashakti, this Puran is regarded as being of the Shakta sect.

Saint Markandeya discusses and provides a variety of obligations, responsibilities, and the proper way to live. This Markandeya Puran, explains how one might follow the road of redemption by denying all desires, cravings and needs and thereby attending salvation the ultimate goal of life.

The objective of this research is to

- a) Highlight the ancient classical tale from Markandeya Purana.(Ritudwaj and Madalsha)
- b) To open a venue for further research on such tales.

The methodology used is exploratory based on the qualitative approach. This research is based on content study. (Library study).

In order to fulfil the first objective of study the researcher has explored the Markandeya Purana and has chosen an interesting forgotten with time a Classical tale of Ritudwaj and Madalsha.

The Classical Tale Ritudwaj and Madalsa

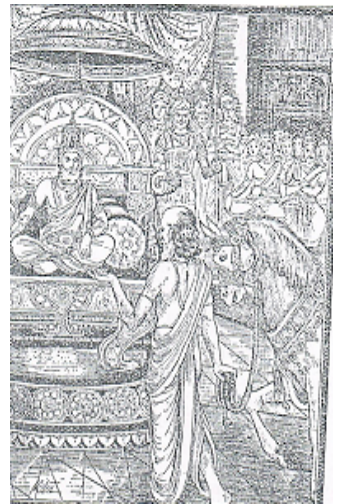
Long, long ago when the birds could speak and tell tales, when there were gods, demigods, elves, demons and mortals all involved with each other, this story is one of such many tales

Ritudwaj and the Horse Kuvalaya

Sumati says- O father! Now listen to the tale of a Brahmin named Alark. Long ago, there lived a king named Shatrujit who had a very knowledgeable son, Ritudhwaj. Prince Ritudhwaj had many friends with whom he used to play. Over time, two sons of his two sons Ashwatar, the king of Nagas (the snake deity) became his friends in the disguise of Brahmin boys. Both of them were young and good-looking and used to pass the entire day in day in the company of Prince Ritudhwaj and would return to their abode in abode the (underworld) only at night.

Their father Ashwatar the Naga King, enquired about their disappearance, and they revealed the reason for their late arrival at home. They said- 'O father! Up there on the land of the mortals is a prince named Ritudhwaj, the son of King Shatrujit. He is handsome, gentle, brave, truthful, knowledgeable and respectable. We love to be with him. On hearing this, Naga King.' Ashwatar said- 'Prince Ritudhwaj is blessed for even the meritorious people like you praise him. But have you done anything to make him happy?' His sons asked- 'What can we do to please him? We find ourselves incapable of pleasing such a person who has everything. Ashwatar the Naga King said- 'Even then, I wish to hear more about your new friend.'

The sons replied- O father! Once Prince Ritudhwaj narrated a tale, we are going to relate it. A **Brahmin named Galava** lived in King Shatrujit's kingdom. One day, he arrived in the king's court riding a horse and said- 'O king! For the past many months, a wretched demon has been tormenting me and causing severe disturbances in my daily rituals. The demon is capable of taking any guise at will. Disguising as an elephant, lion, tiger, wolf and many other wild animals, he terrorizes me. It has become challenging for me to do my meditation. One day in my frustration, I let out a deep sigh. This divine horse descended from the sky as soon as I did so. I heard a heavenly voice, which said- 'O Brahmin! This horse is capable of circumambulation of the entire earth without getting tired. It can climb lofty mountains effortlessly and run in all three worlds at the same speed. Hence, this horse shall be known as **Kuvalaya**. Riding this horse, the son of King Shatrujit will kill the demon that torments you day and night 'O king! That is why I arrived in your court with this horse. Kindly accept it and allow your son to ride on it and kill the demon.' King Shatrujit permitted his son Ritudhwaj to go with the Brahmin riding that divine horse and relieving him of the demons. **Ritudhwaj's journey to Patal Lok (underworld) & his marriage to Madalsha**



Rishi *Galava* and the King



Ritudhwaj chasing the Boar (Demon)

Prince Ritudhwaj stayed in the hermitage of sage Galava and helped him to perform his Yajnyas without being disturbed. The demons were unaware of his arrival in the hermitage. One day, a demon arrived in the hermitage disguised as a wild boar and began to rub his bushy head against the body of sage Galava. Seeing this, his disciples created an uproar.

Prince Ritudhwaj at once rode the ashwa (horse), with his bow & arrow and dashed after the boar. He was able to injure the boar with his sickle-shaped arrow. The demon fled and the Prince followed the boar through the mountains, valley, forests and riverbank. He was determined to slay the demon that had been disturbing the sage for long. Suddenly, the boar jumped into a huge pit; and Prince Ritudhwaj followed it with his horse, but could not see the boar. Instead, he saw a beautiful town and entered it. There he saw an extremely pretty girl who was walking briskly. Ritudhwaj tried to call her but she ignored him and climbed up the stairs of a palace. Ritudhwaj followed her to the palace and there he saw a beautiful fair delicate-looking girl sitting on a golden bed. As soon as the girl saw him, she fainted. Kamadeva (the god of love) had planted the arrow into his heart also. The prince enquired about the reason for her unconsciousness to the girl whom he had followed. Who then said- 'O stranger! This is the daughter of Vishwvasu, the king of Gandharvas. Her name is Madalasa.

One day, while she was playing in her garden, a demon Patalketu abducted her. Since then she has stayed here in his captivity. On the coming thirteenth day of this month, the demon will marry her. But he doesn't deserve to be her husband. Yesterday, she was ready to commit suicide but 'Kamadhenu the cow also known as Surabhi, assured her that a brave mortal from the earth would come and kill the demon, and would marry her. I am her friend. My name is Kundala. I am the daughter of Vindhyan and the wife of Pushkarmali. My husband had been killed by the demon Shumbha

Since then I have been touring various places of pilgrimage to receive salvation. That wretched Patalketu had taken the guise of a boar but a brave man had injured him with his arrow. I have arrived here only to investigate who that man is. Do not worry about my friend's unconsciousness. She fainted because she had fallen in love with you. The problem is that it has already been predicted that the man she is to marry is the one who has injured the boar. This thought has caused her to lose her consciousness. Now reveal your identity, dear man. Ritudhwaj said- 'I am the son of King Shatrujit. I have been staying in the hermitage of sage Galava to protect the sages. Just a few days back, a boar arrived in the hermitage and began to torment the sages. I have injured that boar with my arrow and then saw you.'



Ritudhwaj weds Madalsa

On hearing this Madalasa felt extremely happy as well as shy. Kundala then said to her friend- 'The

prince speaks the truth. The words of Surabhi cannot go wrong.' She then addressed Ritudhwaj thus- 'O brave man! Doubtlessly you have killed the demon, Patalketu. My friend Madalasa is blessed now. You now have to marry my friend and take her home as your bride.' At this, Ritudhwaj replied - 'How can I marry your friend without the permission of my father? I am still not fully independent of my promise' Kundala said- 'Please do not say this. My friend is a divine beauty, kindly marry her right now.' Prince who was also smitten with the arrow of love agreed to marry Madalasa there and then. Madalasa happily remembered their family priest Tumbaru who arrived there at once. In the presence of sacred fire, Tumbaru carried out the rituals of marriage and tied them in a nuptial knot. Thereafter blessing the newlywed couple, Tumbaru and Kundala took to their respective paths.

The Battle

When Ritudhwaj placed Madalasa on the ashwa his (horse) started to leave the underworld. The demons came to know of this and began to surround them. A fierce battle followed. In no time, Prince Ritudhwaj slayed the entire army and reached his kingdom. There he narrated the whole incident to his father Shatrujit. King Shatrujit was extremely happy and blessed them both. They then began to live happily

The Separation

The newly-wed couple had hardly spent a few months together when King Shatrujit once again instructed Ritudhwaj to ride on his ashwa (horse) across the entire earth and protect the holy Brahmins who were performing their religious yajnas, from the demons. Ritudhwaj obeyed his father. He scaled the great distances on his ashwa (horse) for the whole day and returned to his wife only at night.



Ritudhwaj fights the Demons

One day he noticed a sage performing meditation on the bank of river Yamuna. He was a demon by the name of Talaketu, the younger brother of Patalketu whom he had killed. But the prince could not recognise him. That sage approached Ritudhwaj and requested him to protect his hermitage, as he was about to start Yajna. He also requested the precious necklace of the prince on the pretext that he had nothing to pay in return after the yajna (Dakshina). The generous Prince Ritudhwaj gave his necklace to the sage. Then he requested the prince to guard the hermitage until he returned and the sage left.

This sage who was a demon arrived in the court of King Shatrujit. Madalasa was also present in the court. He said- 'Prince Ritudhwaj sacrificed his life fighting with the demon while protecting my hermitage. Before his death, he gave me his necklace. His horse has been captured by the demon. I have brought this necklace to you to inform you about that sad incident.' After giving the necklace to Madalasa, the demon returned to the hermitage. On hearing the news of her husband's death, Madalasa gave up her life. The palace was engulfed in sadness. On seeing the death of his daughter-in-law, King Shatrujit was in a dilemma as to whose death should he mourn his son or his daughter-in-law. A little contemplation led him to the conclusion that it would be futile to mourn his son- Ritudhwaj's death because he had died fulfilling his duty, for a noble cause. But his daughter-in-law had followed the steps of her husband, so her death should be mourned for. The queen also supported the king. Thereafter the king performed the last rites of both of them.



Disguised Demon addressing Shatrujit

Having avenged his brother Patalketu's death, Talketu returned to his hermitage, he found Ritudhwaj still protecting his hermitage. In a sweet tone, Talketu said- 'I am highly obliged, O prince! You have done your duty well. I have fulfilled my objective, so you may go now.' Prince Ritudhwaj then returned to his palace riding his horse

Madalasa's Rebirth

Everyone in the capital expressed happiness to see Prince Ritudhwaj when he arrived. The prince was taken aback by the dejected look on the faces of the monarch and queen, despite their blessings. The monarch answered all of the questions and explained how his wife Madalasa had passed away. Ritudhwaj was devastated to hear of Madalsa's passing. After receiving consolation from his parents and friends, he performed the proper rites to calm the spirits of his departed wife. He swore he would never get married.

"Oh father!," exclaimed the Naag sons. Ritudhwaj, the prince, now leads a penance-filled life. He just enjoys playing with others of his age and never looks at ladies. To



Raja Aswatar & Goddess Saraswati

keep him happy is the only thing we can do for him. The snake god, Nagaraj, became quite thoughtful after hearing the whole story. Afterwards, he laughed and shouted, "O sons!" to his boys. It is now my intention to do something that will make your darling Prince smile again. By saying this, Nagaraj Ashwatar and his brother Kambal arrived at Plakshaavataran, a holy site in the Himalayan foothills. They commenced performing intense penances to appease Goddess Saraswati, often known as the Goddess of Knowledge. Finally, Saraswati materialised in front of them and told them to ask for a boon.



Kambal & Ashwatar & Lord Shiva

Ashwatar asked her to grant them both a lovely, musical voice. Goddess Saraswati vanished after bestowing upon them this blessing. Both brothers became well-known singers thanks to her blessings. Then they started singing beautiful and melodic chants as they worshipped Lord Shiva. Lord Shankar, who was moved by their prayers, also requested that they ask for a boon. Then Ashwatar exclaimed, "O lord! In her previous roopa, or shape, I wish Ritudhwaj's wife Madalasa to give birth as my daughter. "With my blessings, your wish shall come true," declared Lord Shankar. Madalasa will be reborn when you consume the middle portion of the Pind, the food offered to deceased ancestors, during the Shraadh month

Following that, Ashwatar the Naga King and his brothers went back to their realm, Paatal Loka (the Underworld), and conducted a Shraadh according to the Lord's instructions, and ate the middle half of the food that was offered to the ancestors. Madalasa broke free from her death at once. Ashwatar made the necessary preparations to enable her to live in secrecy and kept this information from others. He gave his sons the order to summon their friend Ritudhwaj to the palace.



Ribirth of Madalsha

They forced him to visit their palace one day while they were playing. They were gratefully escorted by the prince to the Paatal loka or Underworld. They led Ritudhwaj through their kingdom's alleys and streets. In the end, they arrived at Ashwatar's palace. They greeted him with the words, "O father!" This is Ritudhwaj, our courageous friend. Ritudhwaj gave Ashwatar a polite greeting and accepted his blessings. He heard Ashwatar say, "Long live, O prince!" My sons sing of your

divine virtues all the time. I ask that you come live with us for a few months so that you can experience Paatal Loka's delights. (Below the surface). In Ritudhwaj's presence, King Ashwatar asked his sons what they needed to do to win his approval. They told the king that the prince was very eager to meet his late wife again and that nothing less than Madalasa would make him happy. Shyly, Prince Ritudhwaj said that he would be very grateful if Naagraj could assist him in seeing his late wife. Ashwatar exclaimed, "Oh son!" Come see your departed wife if you would like to witness the illusion. Naagraj called Madalasa, who was staying in his palace covertly, after saying this. "Look closely, O son, to see if she is your wife." The prince passed out, seeing his wife in front of him. He moved to touch her when he recovered consciousness, but Ashwatar stopped him, warning that she was an illusion and would disappear the moment he touched her. At the sound of this, Ritudhwaj passed out once more. The only thing he said after regaining consciousness was, "She's mine! She's mine!" When Naagraj saw the prince's pathetic state, he divulged the entire tale of Madalasa's resurrection. After he and his wife were reunited, Ritudhwaj's delight knew no limits. Then, he and his wife galloped back to their country on their miraculous horse.

Sons of Madalasa

Ritudhwaj told his parents the entire story of how he got back Madalasa after arriving back in his father's realm. They then started leading happy lives. Ritudhwaj became king after many years of rule by King Shatrujit. Madalasa gave birth to her first son Vikrant, following King Ritudhwaj's coronation. After a while, Madalasa gave birth to her second son, Subahu. Their third son, Shatrumardan, was born after that. Madalasa was amused by the name given to her son and burst out laughing during the third son's naming ceremony. Madalasa's three boys were able to become ascetics thanks to the metaphysical wisdom she imparted to them. When their fourth son was born, Madalasa gave him the name Alark at the king's request. The king laughed at the name and its meaning. Madalasa asserted that the names are only significant in the material world. She also brought up the point that their previous children's names were meaningless to the king.



Ritudhwaj & Madalasha with their son Alark



Alark with his mother Madalasha

As Madalasa began to preach her fourth son the king requested her to spare the fourth child so that he could grow up and become the king one day. Madalasa then blessed her son- 'you are blessed my son because you will rule the earth without obstacles. Now cultivate in your heart the desire to do well for others. Do not cast your eyes on women other than your wife.

Madalasa's preaching

Madalasa used to preach to the little prince while he played. When Alark attained boyhood, he asked- 'O mother! What should I do to master physical and metaphysical matters? How can I serve my subjects in the best possible way?' Madalasa said- 'Looking after the welfare of the subjects religiously is the supreme duty of a king. He should always be alert against the activities of his enemies. With the help of spies, the king should keep a watch on the activities of his minister so that he could not make friends with the enemies. It is unwise for the king to trust everybody but under certain circumstances, he may trust even his enemies. A king must control his lust but at the same time, he should make efforts to increase the boundaries of his kingdom. Surrendering to sensual comfort is like death for a king. A king should appear as all-pervasive and omnipresent. Thus, ruling his subjects with total righteousness.'

When Alark asks his mother - 'Tell me about the duties of the different classes and stages of life.' Madalasa says- 'Donation, Study and Yagya, these three are the religion of a Brahmin. Performing Yajnas for others, teaching and accepting donations are the three vocations of Brahmin. Donation, study and Yagya are also the religious duties of Kshatriyas. Protection of land and the use of weapons are vocations for Kshatriyas.

Religious duties of a Vaishya are also the same as that of the Brahmins such as donation, study and Yajna. For a living, Vaishya may take up animal rearing, agriculture and trade as a profession. Serving all these three above-mentioned castes as well as making donations and performing Yajna are the religious duties of a Shudra. Tilling the earth, serving Brahmins, feeding animals, and selling and purchasing items are professions of a Shudra. A person belonging to the Dwij class may relatively enjoy freedom until his sacred thread ceremony has not been performed. After the sacred thread ceremony, he should come to stay at the home of his teacher and observe celibacy strictly while studying the scriptures. There he is expected to serve the Guru sincerely. After completion of education, he should pay Dakshina to his Guru. He may get married and start the second stage of his life is Grihasthashram. He should then subsequently opt for Vanprastha and Sanyaas respectively.

After the completion of education and paying all the dues, the disciple is ready to start the second stage of his life which is Grihasthashram. For this, he should first find a suitable girl from his caste and get married. Grihasthashram is considered as the best stage of life. It is in itself a complete Yajna. As a householder, he is expected to foster those

who are dependent on him. During this stage of his life, he should earn his livelihood by occupations ascribed to his caste. He should please the deities by performing Yajna, and please his ancestors by making oblations, please Prajapati by producing children, spectres by offering sacrifices of cereals and society by showering love. Even the ascetics and celibates depend on married people for their daily bread. Hence married life or Grihasthashram is stated to be superior among all the Ashrams. When the children of the householder grow up and his body becomes senile, he should go to the forest after relinquishing the world. There, he should pass his time by indulging himself in austerities and religious activities. This stage is known as Vanprasthashram and is most necessary for the sanctification of his soul. This stage is followed by Sanyaas ashram- the stage, which requires complete renunciation, celibacy, control of senses and anger etc. The virtues like truthfulness, sanctity, non-violence, tolerance, forgiveness, kindness, generosity and contentment are the religious merits applicable to all the Ashrams equally. A king must first of all abide by the duties as prescribed for different Ashrams in his life and only then he has the right to punish those people who violate these dictates. Thus, the objective has been fulfilled, it has opened a venue for further research for other researchers.

It can be concluded that the classic tale is not only a love story but provides a picture of the fantasy world and presents us with policies and duties associated with the King and his subjects. It provides insights into the ashram system and the duties of those who belonged to a particular caste. This tale is a perfect tale that is vibrant, fascinating, enchanting, mysterious and morally oriented based on the Dharma from the Markandeya Purana.

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