

Abhijnanshakuntalam in the light of Karuna Rasa

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Abstract

The theory of Rasa has been mentioned in the sixth chapter of ancient Sanskrit text in Natyashastra. There are eight kinds of Rasas and these are produced with the combination of Vibhava, Anubhava and Vyabhicharibhava. It is a combination of word and its sense which blesses the reader with an emotional effect. It classifies the dramatic content on the basis of emotions. These emotions are a sophisticated concept of the response to the art. In production of a play, Rasa is created by the actor, is enjoyed by the spectator. This theory is mostly applicable to dance-drama. Kalidasa was a great poet of Sanskrit language in India. His works mainly based on Mahabharata and Puranas. Abhijnanshakuntalam, a play by Mahakavi Kalidasa, tells the story of king Dusyanta who meets Shakuntala while on a hunting trip.

Keywords- *Karuna Rasa, Poetics, Bhavas, Vibhavas, Anubhavas, Vyabhicharaibhavas Sattvika Bhavas.*

Introduction

Poetry is the means of amusement as well as reflection of society. A poet presents his ideas and feelings with the help of poetry. He composes a poem to formulate his ideas and feelings through the words. The aim of the poet is not only to amuse but to instruct with his creation, thus, it is a reflection of society. As it is known, poetry is a form of art, so to make it effective; a poet represents it in a systematic, rational and scientific way. For presenting it more effectively, certain rules and regulations have been developed to make the proper structure and to distinguish between poetry and prose that is known as 'Poetics'.

Indian poetics contains six schools- *Rasa*, *Vakrokti*, *Dhvani*, *Alamkara*, *Riti* and *Aucitya*. There are many scholars who belong to Kashmir such as Bharatmuni, Bhama, Dandin, Udbhata, Mammata, Vishwanatha, Anandvardhana, Jaganntha, Rudrata, Ruyyaka, Apyadikshit etc., have contributed a lot to nourish the Indian Poetics. The first work in the field of poetics is *Natyashastra* written by Bharat Muni in 4th Century A.D. The growth of poetics during this time accelerated and reached new heights. *Natyashastra* is the first treatise of Indian Poetics:

Bharata's *Natyashastra* is the most ancient text of Indian Poetics. The purpose of this treatise is to describe how to make the dramatic performance successful. That is why it contains discussions regarding the varied aspects of stories ranging from the auditorium to the actual stage performance of the play. The discussions regarding the dramatic poetry, as they appear in the treatise, follow from the discussions regarding verbal representation, and their purpose is to explain characteristics of poetry. (Deshpande 13)

Of the two theories- *Rasa* and *Dhavani*- which developed to be the first, is the most predominant factors among the sources of literary appeal, the former dates back in its origin to the first poet Valmiki, while the latter which arose in the wake of the *Rasa* theory, and which, incorporating within itself all its good features, served to check its excess, viz., the undue stress that it laid on the emotional element in poetry to the detriment of the imaginative and the intellectual element therein, could at the earliest have been formulated only a century before its greatest exponent Anandvardhanacarya, who lived about the middle of the 9th Century A.D.. Though in later works on Literary Criticism like the *Kavyaprakasa* and the *Rasagangadhara* *Rasa* is with some justification, treated as a sub-head under *Dhavani*, there is the propriety of historical antecedence for consideration of the history of *Rasa* before *Dhavani*. The other thinker of this theory are Abhinavagupta, Bhoja, Bhanudatta, Vishvanatha and Pandit Raj Jagannatha and their works are *Abhinavabharati*, *Sringaraprakash*, *Saraswati Kanthabharanam*, *Rasatarangini*, *Sahityadarpana* and *Rasagangadhar* respectively.

The history of the meaning of *Rasa* during the Vedic period affords an explanation and prepares the ground for its use by writers on literary criticism from Bharata downward to signify the 'aesthetic pleasure' or the thrill invariably accompanied by joy that the audience experiences, while witnessing the skilful enactment of a play rendered highly appealing to it through excellent poetry, music and action. In accordance with the general practice of Indologists to start any critical enquiry from the earliest literary monument of Indian culture, the history of *Rasa* is here considered from the *Rig Veda* itself.

In the *Rig Veda* *Rasa* is generally used in the sense of the juice of the *soma* plant. In the earlier *Mandalas* it occasionally denotes water, milk, and flavour. The *Atharvaveda*, while retaining its sense of the juice of plants, extends its usage to the sap of grain. Its use in water and milk is not found here, but the sense of 'savour' or taste becomes very common.

At the threshold of the development of the theory of *Rasa* stands Valmiki, the father of classical Sanskrit poetry, an incident in whose life, related in the second chapter of the *Ramayana* Balakanda, explains the origin of the *Sloka* metre in Sanskrit and also reveals the earliest germs of the conception of *Rasa* according to the later writers. The incident runs thus:- when once Valmiki went out into the forest in search of sacrificial wood and grass, he met a happy pair of *Kraunca* birds twittering with joy on the branch of a tree, one of whom was suddenly shot dead with an arrow by a hunter; and when the merciful sage witnessed the innocent male bird, that was killed weltering on the ground in his own blood, and the helpless female, bereaved of her loving mate, and being vaguely conscious of the untold sufferings that she would have to undergo without him, sending forth a shriek of terror and agony, his heart was touched with a deep feeling of pity for her grief; and the intense pathos of the situation that filled his heart flowed out to find expression in shape of that exquisite and melodious *Sloka*:

मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वमगमः शाश्वतीः समाः ।

यत्क्रौंचमिथुनादेकमवधी काममोहितम् ॥

Manishad pratistham tvamagamah shashvatih samah //

Yatkraunchamithunaadekamavadheeh kaammohitam II (Ramayana,

Balkanda 15)

“Onishad (hunter) you shall not come to any good in your life for you killed in your life for you killed one of the pair of loving Kraunches.”

Valmiki was struck with wonder and joy at this first involuntary emanation of measured poetry; and through deep introspection and analysis of the state of his mind at the time its utterance, he discovered for this mystery a solution which he gave out to his pupils in these words

“*shokartasyappravritto men slokobhavatunanyatha*” (Balakanda II. 18) means “that which proceeded from me who was overpowered by pathos shall be nothing but poetry or rhythmic expression.”

A statement understood in the light of the above *Kraunca* incident is rightly regarded by Anandavardhana as revealing the critic in Valmiki, and also as containing in embryo the theory of *Rasa* fully developed later. The wallowing of the dying bird in a pool of blood and the wailing of the surviving female to which the sage was witnessed were transported from the sphere of his perceptual experience to that of his imagination and presented there as the cause (*Vibhava*) and the ensuant (*anubhava*) that stirred up his instinct of pathos to its depths and developed it to that climax, of pathos, in which his personality was lost, resulting in his having only a sense of joy; and this pleasant feeling of pathos that overpowered him translated itself spontaneously into the form of *sloka* “Manishad... &c.” The sage surely meant something like the above when he enigmatically said, “from my intense feeling of pathos shall proceed nothing but rhythmic expression” (Sankaran 7).

The theory of *Rasa* is an earnest attempt to indicate the character of the emotional effect of the drama or it successfully explains the rise and nature of the aesthetic pleasure that a responsive audience experiences while witnessing the skilful enactment of a play. It was definitely formulated in its varied aspects for the first time by Bharata in his *Natyasastra*. It was briefly stated by him in that well-known aphorism “विभावानुभावव्यभिचारि य संयोगात् रस निष्पत्तिह” (Sukla, *Natyashastra* 235) (*Vibhavanubhavavybhichariyasanyogat rasa nishpattih*) It explains how *rasa* is relished. It conveys that *Rasa* is relished when a permanent mood or *sthayibhava* is brought to a relishable condition through the three elements viz. the *Vibhava*, the *anubhava*, and *vyabhicharibhava*. According to him “no meaning can proceed (from speech) without (any kind of) *rasa* (i.e., sentiment)” (Sharma 155).

“*Vibhavas* are certain causes or main spring of emotions like love, pathos etc. They are heroes and the excitants of love etc, like the spring season, pleasure garden, fragrance, moonlight etc” (Sankaran 15). *Vibhavas* are recognized as having two aspects – (i) *Alambana* (dependent) *Vibhava*, (ii) *Uddipana* (excitant) *Vibhava*. *Alambana Vibhava* is the person or the object responsible for the arousal of the emotion. They are the supporting objects that ignite the *Sthayibhava*. Without the presence of *Alambana Vibhava* the *Sthayibhava*, though present in latent form, cannot confine itself on a particular object. The *Uddipana Vibhava* is the environment that stimulates the emotions.

Anubhava is the external manifestation of the provocation of the *sthayibhava*. It is an indicator of the *bhava* and communicates the emotion felt by the characters. What is experienced by the characters of the play are made to felt and experienced (*anubhavayati*) by the eyes and eyebrows are produced by effort. Hence they are the voluntary expressions of the permanent emotions. The voluntary changes, otherwise known as *anubhava* are done for proper communication with others. Involuntary changes are considered to be *sattvika bhavas*. These are the permanent moods that are

excited automatically. These are again of two types- internal and external. Bharata has identified eight *Sattvika bhavas*. They are – paralysis (*Stambha*), perspiration (*Sveda*), horripilation (*Romanch*), change of voice (*Svarbheda*), trembling (*Vepathu*), and change of colour (*Vaivernya*), weeping (*Asrue*) and fainting (*Pralaya*).

The *sthayibhava* is the permanent or dominant mood, which are made manifest within the heart of the men of taste by the reading of *Kavya* or the witnessing of a dramatic performance. *Sthayibhava* always retains a dominant position when compared with other *bhavas*. It exists permanently in our mind in the form of latent impressions and are derived from actual experiences that are restored in our consciousness. Bharata has identified eight *sthayibhavas*. They are (i) Love (*rati*), (ii) Gaiety (*hasya*), (iii) Sorrow (*soka*), (iv) Anger (*krodha*), (v) Energy (*utsaha*), (vi) Fear (*bhaya*), (vii) Disgust (*jugupsa*), (viii) Astonishment (*vismaya*). There is a ninth *sthayibhava* recognized by Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta as passiveness (*nirveda*). The nine *sthayibhavas* are connected respectively with the nine sentiments (*rasas*), viz., *Sringara*, *Hasya*, *Karuna*, *Raudra*, *Veera*, *Bhayanaka*, *Bibhatsa*, *Adbhuta*, and *Santa*. *Samyoga* means connection with the *Sthayibhava*.

Vyabicharibhavas are transitory or evanescent emotions that tend only to develop the main sentiment, such as anxiety, anger etc. In the word *vyabichariah*, 'vi' and 'abhi' are prefixes of the root 'charaa' that means 'to go', 'to move'. Thus *vyabichariah* means those that move in relation to sentiments towards different kinds of objects. The *vyabicharibhava* does not have an independent status. It is the strengthening aspect of *sthayibhava*. The *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabichari bhava* blend harmoniously to arouse in the audience the thrilling climax of emotion which is called *Rasa*. Thus, it can be said that Bharata has referred to three kinds of psychological- durable psychological states, complementary psychological state and *sattvika* state. In total these psychological states are of forty nine types- eight durable psychological state, thirty three complementary psychological state and eight *sattvika* states. The thirty three psychological states are: *Nirveda* (detachment), *Glani* (weakness), *Shanka* (Apprehension), *Asuya* (envy), *Mada* (intoxication), *Shrama* (fatigue), *Alasya* (indolence), *Dainya* (depression), *Chinta* (anxiety), *Moha* (delusion), *Smriti* (recollection), *Dhriti* (contentment), *Vrida* (shame), *Chapalata* (agility), *Harsha* (joy), *Avega* (agitation), *Jadata* (stupor), *Garva* (arrogance), *Vishada* (despair), *Autsukya* (longing/yearning), *Nidra* (sleep/slumber), *Apasmara* (epilepsy), *Supta* (dream), *Vibodh* (awakening), *Amarsha* (indignation), *Avahittha* (dissimulation), *Ugrata* (violence), *Mati* (intellect), *Vyadhi* (disease), *Unmada* (insanity), *Marana* (death), *Trasa* (terror) and *Vitarka* (deliberation) (Ghosh, *Natyasastra*102-103).

Bharatmuni described eight kinds of *Rasas* and its *bhavas* in the sixth chapter of his dramaturgy *Natyasastra* which was written during the period between 200 BC and 200 AD. Each *Rasa* contains, according to *Natyasastra*, a leading deity and a specific colour. Bharatmuni established

the following: 1. *Sringaram rasa* denotes love, attractiveness. 2. *Hasyam rasa* denotes laughter, mirth and comedy. 3. *Raudram rasa* denotes fury. 4. *Karunyam rasa* denotes compassion, tragedy. 5. *Bhayanakam rasa* denotes horror, terror. 6. *Bibhatsam rasa* denotes disgust, aversion. 7. *Veeram rasa* denotes heroic mood. 8. *Adbhutam rasa* denotes wonder, amazement.

Bharata has also pointed out eight colors symbolizing these eight sentiments. The erotic sentiment is green (*syama*); the comic sentiment white (*sweta*); the pathetic sentiment grey (*Kapota*), the furious sentiment red; the heroic sentiment yellowish (*gaura*), the terrible sentiment black; the odious sentiments blue and the marvelous sentiment yellow. Bharata has attributed the eight rasas to eight deities: Vishnu is the god of the erotic; Pramathas of the comic; Raudra of the furious; Yama of the Pathetic; Mahakala (Siva) of the odious; Kala of the terrible; Indra of the Heroic and Bramha of the marvelous sentiments.

Bharata has also discussed various factors that enunciate *Rasa* realization. These he says are expressed through the four varieties of *abhinaya* (action). They are *angika* (action through limbs), *Vachika* (through speech), *acharya* (through dress), *sattvika* (certain outward expressions of emotion). These *abhinaya* are again subdivided into several types that promote the different *Rasas*.

Karuna Rasa

The *sthayibhava* of pathetic sentiment is sorrow. It is aroused (*vibhavas*) by the determinants such as suffering under curse, separation from or loss of dear ones, commotion caused by reversal of situation, death, captivity, fatal injury and other misfortunes. This is shown on the stage by the consequents (*Anubhava*) such as heaving of sighs, shedding tears, paralysis, lamentation, dryness of mouth, change of colour and loss of memory etc... The complementary psychological states (*Sancharibhavas*) are epilepsy, depression, languor, indifference, anxiety, yearning, excitement, delusion, fainting etc. *Sattvikabhavas* are change in one's tone of voice (*svarbhedha*), becoming tearful (*Asrue*).

The repudiation of Shakuntala is no doubt *vipralamba sringara*. But it also arouses the pathetic sentiment i.e., *karuna rasa*. The curse of Durvasa, loss of Dushyanta's memory is the cause of the lover's suffering. These determinants have led to the shedding of tears, sorrow and grief for both Dushyanta and Shakuntala. Such consequents combine with the *vyavicharibhavas* like the king's fainting to produce *karuna rasa*. Another example of sorrow in the drama is Shakuntala's departure from Kanva's *ashrama*, the scene is full of sorrow. There is tearing in every one's eyes. Even the dear (*sarangarava*), the trees shed tears while she is leaving for her husband's house. Though Kanva and the other hermits were happy that Shakuntala was going to her husband's house but the very realisation that their separation was permanent one could not stop sage Kanva also from sighing in grief:

How can my grief ever leave me,
O my beloved child, when I see
Grains of wild rice already scattered by you
Sprouting green shoots at the cottage door. (Rajan 295)

The scene of Shakuntala's departure and the lover's suffering in separation evokes *karuna rasa* in the spectators too. The *sthayibhava* of this *rasa* is sorrow or grief which is felt by everyone especially *Kanva* and the audience because Shakuntala is leaving to unite with her husband. Some scholars can argue that *Karuna Rasa* is not appropriate to call in this episode, because the *sthayibhava* (permanent emotion) of *Karuna* is *Soka* (sorrow) which is not evident here. Sakuntala is on her way to her marital way; a plan is being made for the ritual bath and is being adorned as a bride by the females of Kanva's *ashrama*. All pronounce blessings that she become the mother of a great hero, the senior queen and most beloved of her husband. The underlying sentiment in this scene is joy for Sakuntala's happy reunion with her beloved, for her joyous future as mother and wife. The tears that are shed, though real, are those of joy. The pathos too, is real; a beloved creature Sakuntala would wrench the hearts of all, including plants and trees, which she is leaving behind. But their gifts and blessing are tokens of joy and good wishes. So it can be said that the sorrow laden *Karuna Rasa* is not appropriate in this act. But, still the above mentioned sentiments show the *Karuna Rasa*. Sorrow of Kanva and the other human and non-human denizens of the Hermitage, as well as that of Sakuntala's, indeed touch on the most precious of qualities in creation: love, compassion and solicitous caring. The finality of separation has been attained and *Karuna Rasa*, therefore, finds full expression here. *Alambana vibhava* is Shakuntala and Kanva etc, who are facing separation from one another. *Uddipana Vibhava* is the ritual which has been performed as *Gandharva Vivah*, (secret marriage) in consequence, as a token a ring has been given; this is the proof of their marriage which works as *Uddipana Vibhava*, during the absence of Kanva. So for the full fruition of this marriage, Shakuntala is taking an adieu to meet her beloved. *Anubhava* is the crying of *Anusuya*, *Priyamvada*, *Kanva* and others. From the point of *sattvika bhava*, *swarbheda* (Change in the voice) and *Asrue* (tearful eyes) can be seen in the eyes of Kanava and her friends. In the matter of *Sancharibhava*, *glani* (weakness), *Smriti* (recollection) can be seen through Kanava, who is recollecting the memories of Shakuntala's childhood days and finds himself very weak even to think of the departure of her fostered daughter; Shakuntala.

Mahakavi Kalidasa has painted an engrossing picture of Dusyanta's disappointed love and his pangs of separation in Act VI. This portrait conveys a touching, delicate and comprehensive picture of the pangs of separation of the lover from the beloved.

This sentiment portrays the *Karuna Rasa* in the heart of spectator too. The sorrow of the Dusyanta can be depicted through these lines:

DUSHANTA (overcome by sorrow): From earliest times:

This dynasty of Puru, pure from its roots,

Descending in one uninterrupted succession,

Will now have its setting in my life, unfruitful,

Like Saraswati's stream lost in sandy wastes. (Rajan 325)

He lost consciousness.

This episode depicts that King is very worried for the succession of Royal dynasty of Puru who is in the womb of Shakuntala. He lost his consciousness and faints which creates a pathetic scene in the play. Hence, it is *Karuna Rasa*. The *sthayibhva* of this *Rasa* is *Soka* or grief which is felt by King Dusyanta, due to the separation of his wife Shakuntala. Here *Alambana Vibhava* is Dusyanta himself. *Uddipana vibhava* is the repudiation of Shakuntala who is gone way because of the loss of memory of her husband owing to the curse of anger prone sage Durvasa. *Anubhava* occurs due to the loss of consciousness and fainting and falling on ground with the pain of grief. In the matter of *sattvik bhava*, *Asrue* (tearing) can be observed although stage setting and dramatic performance does not depict it. As far as *sancharibhava* is concerned, *glani* (hatred) and *smriti* (recollection) can be seen. *Glani* can be seen because king hates himself when he recollects the memories of repudiation of his beloved and wife Shakuntala.

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