

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE KARUNA RASA-THE PATHETIC SENTIMENT IN THE PLAY 'KING LEAR' OF SHAKESPEARE****DR. SANDHYA JAIN**Associate Professor & Head
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Shakespeare has Always been an interesting challenge to readers, critics translators , directors and actors all over the world. All the major countries have responded to his plays in their own way. Though Shakespeare was born and brought up in England, he is ,no longer, the property of England but belongs to the whole world because of his universal appeal. The critics have applied their own approaches. German critics have offered philosophical interpretation of his plays. Whereas, American critics have made analysis of miscellaneous themes and techniques of his plays. In the same way, Russian critics have provided socialistic approach. Modern and post-modern approaches such as structuralism, feminism also, are being applied. But little has been done in the field of Indian Aesthetics. Indian Aesthetics is very rich and provides technically very sound approaches.Indian critics have their own role to play in the world of criticism. These instances from 'King Lear' prove very well that the Rasa theory in Indian Aesthetics is applicable to all the Shakespearean plays. It, not only provides a new perspective, but enhances the enjoyment also. Specially, 'King Lear' fulfills all the requirements of Rasanubhuti- poetic bliss. Ragini Ramchandra writes, "If Rasanubhava is the end of good literature, then it would be difficult to cite another work from western literature which is so aesthetically emotionally and spiritually satisfying as King Lear".

Shakespeare has Always been an interesting challenge to readers, critics translators , directors and actors all over the world. All the major countries have responded to his plays in their own way. Though Shakespeare was born and brought up in England, he is ,no longer, the property of England but belongs to the whole world because of his universal appeal. The critics have applied their own approaches. German critics have offered philosophical interpretation of his plays. Whereas, American critics have made analysis of miscellaneous themes and techniques of his plays. In the same way, Russian critics have provided socialistic approach. Modern and post-modern approaches such as structuralism, feminism also, are being applied. But little has been done in the field of Indian Aesthetics. Indian Aesthetics is very rich and provides technically very sound approaches.Indian critics have their own role to play in the world of criticism.

Indians can contribute a great deal to the enrichment of Shakespearean criticism by applying their own distinct philosophy, aestheticism, religion, dramaturgy to the interpretation of Shakespeare. Aristotle has provided solid foundation to the western aestheticism. In the same



way, Bharat Muni also has provided a base to the Indian aestheticism. The application of the Indian aestheticism will yield new facets of truth and beauty of Shakespearean plays. Much work is required to be done in the field of Indian approaches and their application to the plays of Shakespeare. His great tragedies have a special appeal to Indians and an ample scope for the exploration of the Rasa-aesthetic experience, specially the Karuna Rasa.

Karuna Rasa is the universal emotion of mankind. Literature has always shown an inclination towards pathos. Shelley has said “Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought”. Indian aestheticians have categorized this emotion as Karuna Rasa which is one of ten Rasas. Karuna-pity or sympathy is the heart-felt passion for another person who is suffering or is in distress. This feeling arises in the hearts of the people when they remember similar incidents in their past and identify with the sufferer. Aristotle argued (Rhetoric 2.8) that before a person can feel pity for another human, the person must first have experienced suffering of a similar type and the person must be somewhat distanced or removed from the sufferer. From his perspective, in order to feel pity, a person must believe that the person who is suffering does not deserve his fate. “It is an emotion that results from an encounter with a real or perceived unfortunate, injured or pathetic creature. A person experiencing pity, will experience a combination of intense sorrow and mercy for the person or creature.” (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia) Modern neurology asserts that pity consists of an initial aversion to the plight of the sufferer, which the higher parts of the brain make a more nuanced assessment of the situation.

Karuna Rasa suggests sadness, psychic pain, desire of what we have lost, depression. It is pertinent to Freud’s majestic metaphor describing melancholy and grief: “the shadow of the lost object falls upon the self”. This kind of pathetic feeling could be very intense and devastating, inspiring many of the master pieces in legacy of world literature. This emotion has been used to the maximum in literature. The readers or the spectators watch the manifestations of this emotion or the Rasa, They identify themselves with the characters and enjoy this Rasa. This Rasa is considered the highest of all the Rasas. Famous Sanskrit playwright Bhavbhuti maintains that there is only one rasa-the Karuna.

This Rasa embraces the whole range of human existence and touches the most vital cords of man’s heart. Its all-embracing nature makes it a pivot, round which all other Rasas revolve. It underlies various human experiences. Love is a happy experience only in the condition of its fulfillment. In the moments of separation or in its unaccomplished state, it turns into an agonizing experience. Laughter assumes a sad coloring when it is directed towards some deformed being. Heroism has its painful aspects in repulsion from bloodshed, slaughter and death of heroes and destruction of human life.

The Karuna Rasa-the pathetic sentiment arises from the Sthayibhav of Shoka- the dominant emotion of grief. (sokaatrasthaibhavah syacchochamalambanam matam./ Tasya dah-adi-kavast-ha bhaveduddipanam punah. 223 Sahitya Darpana). The Vibhavas-the excitants of karuna Rasa are various misfortunes of life such as Ishtanash-separation from near and dear ones, Mrityu- death, Ekaki Avastha-privation, Bahishkar-banishment and Atyachar-persecution etc..Ishtanash-the loss of cherished objects and Anishtaprapti-the attainment of undesirable objects creates pathetic situations in life. Thus the objects causing grief are its Alambana Vibhavas-main excitants. The pathetic condition of Alamban, the lost person’s

merits, their memories, the sight of the articles of their use, visit to their resident, the days of their anniversaries and the realization of misfortunes and the losses of life act as the Uddipan Vibhavas-subsidary excitants in the karuna Rasa. The Anubhavas-physicalconsequences (Anubhava daianindabhupatakranditadayah/ vaivarnyocchvas anihsvasastambha praalapanani ca.224, Sahitya Darpana)of this Rasa are Ashrupata-shedding tears, Pralap-lamentations, Vaivarnya-change in colour of face, Stambha-motionlessness, Swarbhanga-broken voice, Krandan-crying and sobbing etc..The Vyabhichari Bhavas-passing minor emotions [(nirvedamohapasmaravyadhiglanismrtisramah / visada jadataonmadacintadya vyabharinah.225, Sahitya Darpana) are Nirveda-detachment, Moha- attachment, Vyadhi-feverishness, Gani-remorse or repulsion, Smriti - memory, Vishad- distress, Jadata-patification, Chinta-worry etc.. All these ingredients are intensified, manifested and nourished , identified by the spectators create divine experience called karuna Rasa.

King Lear , one of the four great tragedies abounds in all the sentiments and a suitable subject for application of the Rasa theory, especially the pathetic sentiment. The whole play is replete with it and it is difficult to isolate a few instances which convey this tender emotion. At many places in the play, we see the sentiment of pathos dominating the whole content. Still some scenes are very touching. Cordelia's banishment, Lear's exposure to the storm, the reconciliation of Lear and Cordelia and lamentations of Lear at the death of Cordelia are worth noticing. All the four ingredients are very well traceable.

Firstly, a pathetic situation arises in the beginning itself, when King Lear dislikes the answer of Cordelia when he asks her how much she loves him. Cordelia answers that she loves him as much as a daughter should love a father. Lear who basically a kind- hearted and innocent man yet a spoiled old child, becomes angry with his youngest daughter and disowns her. She becomes ready to leave with a heavy heart. A pathetic scene is created. Earl of Gloucester tries to dissuade Lear but in vain. Lear is not ready to listen. Cordelia cries for her father. She tells that it is she who "understand her father very well.

*The jewels of our father, with washed eyes
Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;
And like a sisteram most loth to call
Your faults as they are named. Love well our father:
To your professed bosoms I commit him." (Act I Scene I)*

Here, the pathetic sentiment is created in a beautiful form. The Sthayibhava of Shok-grief is aroused through various Vibhavas and intensified by Vyabharibhavas. The ashraya-locus is Cordelia. The Alambana Vibhava-main excitant is King Lear. His haughty and arrogant temper creates sorrow in the hearts of Cordelia. The Uddipana vibhava-subsidary excitants are Lear's foul mood and terrifying anger. As soon as Lear misunderstands Cordelia, he starts shouting. All the people remain speechless. Finally Lear banishes her. Cordelia becomes very sad and starts crying. Her tears, red eyes and quivering voice work as Anubhavas. Various Vyabharibhavas are also found here which nourish the sentiment of distress. They are: Shanka-suspicion, Chinta-worry, Vishad- distress and Bhaya-fear. Cordelia is worried whether her sisters will care for their father.

One more situation arises when Lear, disillusioned by his daughters enters the forest. A violent storm breaks. Lear is so engrossed in his thoughts that he forgets about his physical

uncomfort. He welcomes the storm. He is in a condition of psychological wreck. He addresses the natural elements as if they are alive. He tells;

“Filial ingratitude

Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand

For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home:

No, I will weep no more. In such a night

To shut me out? Pour on; I will endure,

In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril!

Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all,” (Act III Scene IV)

King Lear asks the storm not to show any mercy to him as they owe nothing to him, the Emperor of England. He himself has loved his daughters who have turned against him. This is very sad to watch the downfall of all powerful, haughty and arrogant Lear. King Lear is hot tempered yet an innocent and kindhearted person who is loved by his subject. Of course, he has done injustice with Cordelia, yet he does not deserve these circumstances. This saddens the spectators. It is an ideal situation for the arousal of the Karuna rasa.

Here the Karuna rasa has been created by the pathetic condition of King Lear. Sthayibhava of Shoka-grief is highly strong here and touches a very high point. It has been stirred, intensified, nourished and universalized through the Vibhavas, the Anubhavas and the Vyabhicharibhavas in the hearts of the spectators and attain the superb experience of the Karuna Rasa. Ashraya is Lear, Alamban- the main excitant is the rough weather, violent storm in the jungle and Uddipana Vibhavas- subsidiary excitants are hails, lightening, hard blows of wind etc.

When Lear faces storm in jungle, he is reminded of ungrateful behavior of his daughters. His heart is filled with sadness. His face becomes pale-Vaivernya, he falters-swarbhang, tears start rolling down-Ashrupat,. These are unconscious natural efforts-Sattvikabhavas. Lear wants to control himself, but is unable to do so. He starts crying-Krandan, shouts at himself. All these are Kayika Anubhavas. Various feelings pass through his mind and intensify the main sentiment in the heart of Lear at first and then in the hearts of the spectators. These are remorse-glani, feeling of subjection-Dainya and patrifaction-jadata.

Life and death ! I am ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,

That these hot tears, which break from me per force,

Should make the worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee !

Th'untended wondings of a father's course

Pierce every sense about thee! old fond eyes

Be weep this cause again , I'll pluck ye out,

And cast you, with the waters that you loose,

To temper clay. (Act I Scene IV)

Another instance of Karuna Rasa is worth reading, when Lear is disillusioned with his two elder daughters Goneril and Regan. They have turned him out . He feels insulted, humiliated and cries. He is ashamed of his tears. He shouts.

It is very sad to watch the transformation of a haughty and arrogant Lear to a helpless old man who is at the mercy of his cruel daughters. Pity arouses in the hearts of the spectators or the readers. This is a suitable occasion for the aesthetic realisation. The emotion of grief-Sthayibhava is highly strong. It is stirred, intensified, nourished and universalized through the Vibhavas, the Anubhavas-physical consequences and the Vyabhicharibhavas – temporary minor emotions in the hearts of the spectators and attains superb climax of the Karun Rasa. Here the Ashraya – lokus is Lear himself. The Alambana – main excitants are his cruel daughter and son-in-law Goneril and her husband, the Duke of Albany. The Udiwana Vibhavas – subsidiary excitants are Goneril's refusal for keeping Lear's followers, impertinent behavior of both husband and wife. Many temporary and transient emotions churn in the hearts of Lear. He is stunned – Stambha. His face becomes red and his voice chokes – Swarbhanga. These are Sattvikabhavas – natural unconscious. Lear shouts at the top of his voice. He curses Goneril, himself and his own tears. He is ashamed of his lack of control over tears. Various minor feelings intensify the grief in the heart of Lear. These are Glani-remorse, Dainya-feeling of subjections worried – Chinta, Jatata-patification.

*“Howl. Howl! howl! O! you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever.
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She is dead as earth. Lend me a looking glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.” (Act V Scene III)*

The Karuna Rasa reaches its height in the last scene of the play when Lear is unable to comprehend that Cordelia is no more. He refuses to believe that she has died. He moves frantically on the stage looking for help. He is crying. He is the Ashraya. Alambana-main excitant is the deadbody of Cordelia. Uddipana Vibhavas are motionlessness of Cordelia, her pale face. Lear is stunned at first-Stambha, his tone halts-Swarbhanga, He trembles because of wrwth- kampa. He sheds tears-Ashrupat. He curses-Pralap. These are anubhavas-Physical consequences. Lear's mind is not at peace. Various minor feelings, continuously, churn his heart such as: Chinta-worry, Moha-attachment, Avega- impulsiveness, Smriti-memory etc.

Thus we see that the play 'King Lear' abounds in karuna Rasa. Characters of Lear, Cordelia, Gloucester and Edgar etc., in some or the other way arouse sorrow in the hearts of the spectators. Yet the character of Lear is most endearing. He is arrogant, haughty all powerful Emperor of England and a little spoiled too. When he is angry, he does not listen to anyone. Yet he is forced to remain at the mercy of his cruel daughters. His downfall creates pity and his remorse creates a feeling of catharsis, where spectators take a lesson as well. The spectators identify themselves with the characters and have the same sentiments felt by Lear, Cordelia or Gloucester. Basavaraj naikar writes, “King Lear is a play which depicts the misfortunes resulting from the filial ingratitude shown to Lear by his two daughters. The play depicts not only the sufferings both mental and physical which the old King undergoes but also the wholesome effect produced by this suffering on his character.”

In the first scene , we see a powerful king who banishes his innocent daughter Cordelia only for speaking truth. Gradually a great change comes in his life and leaves him helpless and vulnerable in front of his cruel daughters Goneril and Regan. His downfall stuns the spectators. Towards the end of the play when Lear loses his senses, becomes delirious ,frantically checks the dead body of Cordelia, none can remain buy feel sorry for him. “ In the end , he emerges as a man who wins all over sympathy and affectation and whom we look upon with pity.”Naikar.

These instances from ‘King Lear’ prove very well that the Rasa theory in Indian Aesthetics is applicable to all the Shakespearean plays. It, not only provides a new perspective, but enhances the enjoyment also. Specially, ‘King Lear’ fulfills all the requirements of Rasanubhuti- poetic bliss. Ragini Ramchandra writes,“If Rasanubhava is the end of good literature, then it would be difficult to cite another work from western literature which is so aesthetically emotionally and spiritually satisfying as King Lear”.

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