



THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF AESTHETICS: BHASA'S KARNABHARAMASA CONTEXTUALIZED PERSPECTIVE OF RASA-DHVANI

Devi S

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sanatana Dharma College,
Alappuzha, Kerala

Cite This Article: Devi S, "The Phenomenology of Aesthetics: Bhasa's Karnabharamasa Contextualized Perspective of Rasa-Dhvani", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 7, Issue 1, Page Number 18-21, 2022.

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and expression of beauty, as in the fine arts. In Kantian philosophy, it is the branch of metaphysics concerned with the laws of perception. Indian art evolved with an emphasis on inducing special spiritual or philosophical states in the audience, or with representing them symbolically. But far from being an adjunct of religion and metaphysics, it belongs to the traditional scheme of knowledge, to the realm of dance, dramaturgy and poetics; revealing and communicating the major moods and emotions of man. Sylvain Levi, commenting on the Indian theater, observes in the book *The History of Theatre* comments, "Indian genius produced a new art, the symbol and summary of which is the word Rasa, and which can be condensed in one brief formula: the poet (the sculptor or the painter) does not express, but he suggests." (Levy, Sylvain 51)

This 'suggestion' is the soul of artistic interpretation which is emphasized by the classical Indian theory of Dhvani. Krishnamoorthy. K comments in his seminal work *Anandavardhana Dhvanyaloka* comments, "That kind of poetry, wherein the (conventional) meaning renders itself secondary or the (conventional) word renders its meaning secondary and suggests the (intended or) implied meaning, is designated by the learned as Dhvani or Suggestive Poetry." (Krishnamoorthy 11-13)

Bharata, the mythical author of the *Natyasastra*, makes valid observations on rasa is the very essence of the aesthetic experience of plays, performances and other creative expressions such as music and poetry. Bharata notes that rasa originated from the Adharva Veda, the branch of Veda dealing with one of the four Vedas dealing with mysticism. The primary element is elements, the untainted strength of peripheral stimuli that create rasa: it is the basic foundation of basis of emotive and aesthetic rejoinders. Characters are the repository of latent emotional tendencies (bhava) and the mimetic interactions (anubhava) of a character with other dramatic persona and situations creates a series of transitory physical and mental states in a performance. The rasa experience is the embodiment of these striking and complex sensational occasions in an exhibition saw and experienced by the crowd. The second component in Bharata's meaning of rasa is Consequences that are the components of verbal and actual re-activities of the characters associated with an emotional circumstance. Short lived mental states, which are the third part of rasa, are the differing passionate reactions go with actual responses in an exhibition; bitterness supporting bliss as well as the other way around, for example. Indeed, rasa is tied in with arousing of inert passionate inclinations and traveling them onto mimetic degree of discernible sensations through the method for acting (abhinaya) prevalently founded on the body. Wishire Bruce in his seminal work, *Role-Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* writes:

Theatre is the paradigmatic mimetic art and it deals with the paradigmatically mimetic features of human life. The actor stands in for the character. But the character is a type of humanity with whom the audience member can identify, either as a stand-in for his own person, or indirectly as a stand-in for others whom the audience member recognizes, and with whom he can be empathetically involved. If the character is one who stands in for us, then we can also stand in for him, and indeed we do stand in for him through the actor's standing in for him. (Wilshire, Bruce 22)

Indian art, together with Indian myth and legend, by which it is constantly inspired and replenished, suggests rather than depicts inner visions and experiences. The quality by which we judge the visions and performances of the Indian artist is 'Rasa which in Indian poetics is characterized as 'Alouka' or that which does not belong to this world. Abstract, universal, and enduring sentiments and emotions, whatever be their nature, which the artist instills and which lead to delight and which is akin to the supreme bliss attained in contemplation of the Absolute, constitute Rasa.

The Rasa theory is a sincere attempt to depict the subtle shades and nuances of the emotional effect of drama. It seeks to explain the aesthetic pleasure triggered in the minds of the Sahrdaya (the audience) while viewing the enactment of a play. Though this theory was formally formulated by Bharata in his *Natyaasastra*, we can demarcate the strains of Rasa theory in the poetic outburst of Adikavi Valmiki in *Balakandha of Campuramayana*.

Valmiki upon witnessing one of the krauncha birds of a pair, shot dead by an arrow of a hunter, burst in to an exquisite and melodious poetic rendering. After a voluntary dissection of this utterance, the sage discovered a new phenomenon as regards poetry, that being, the embryo of the Rasa theory can be discovered in this poetic utterance of the great sage Valmiki. But this theory of Rasa found its full-fledged expansion in Sage

Bharata's *Natyasastra*. Comprising of thirty-seven chapters it delves upon the literary genres such as literary criticism, poetry and drama.

The *Natyasastra* itself has referred to sage Bharata as the author of the work. The sixth chapter popularly called 'Rasadhya' enumerates the concept of Rasa. Bharatamuni in *Natyashastra* states that, "Vibhavanubhava vyabhicari samyogat. Rasanispatih" (Bharatamuni, 154). Vibhava may refer to the causes. It can be classified into 'Alambana' and 'Uddipana'. The Alambanas are the heroes and heroines. The Uddipanas are those which increase the emotions, according to the occasions suited to the predominant bhavas. Anubhavas are the visible effect of the unfolding of the antagonist's or protagonist's mind. 'Vyabhicari bhavas' which are thirty-three in number are the intermediate or transitory emotions that help in the progress of the emotion or sentiment or Rasa. Schechner, in *Rasaesthetics* comments:

There is no natya without rasa. Rasa is the cumulative result of vibhava [stimulus], anubhava [involuntary reaction], and vyabhicari bhava [voluntary reaction]. For example, just as when various condiments and sauces and herbs and other materials are mixed, a taste is experienced, or when the mixing of materials like molasses with other materials produces six kinds of taste, so also along with the different bhavas [emotions] the sthayi bhava [permanent emotions experienced 'inside'] becomes a Rasa. (Schechner 29)

As a result of a skillful mixture and representation of these 'Vibhavas', 'Anubhavas', and 'Vyabhicari bhavas', the 'Sahridaya' or the audience invariably reaches the climax of an emotional buildup and experiences sheer joy or aesthetic pleasure which is an emotional manifestation of a blissful consciousness. This experience is compared equal with Parabrahmanada. Sage Bharata has classified Rasa's into eight in accordance with the emotional mood of a person when logically moulded transforms into Rasa. These eight moods are Srnagara or love, Hasya or Humour, Karuna or Pathos, Roudra or Wrath/Anger, Vira or Valour, Bhibhatsa or disgust, Bhayanaka or terror, Adbhuta or Astonishment. Some scholars have stated that Nirveda or detachment is the ninth Sthayibhava. This Bhava is resulted in Santa Rasa. Abhinavagupta, the principal authority on Rasa in the *Natyashastra*, insists on the un-worldly nature of Rasa, and its transcendence of temporal determinants.

Dhvani:

The *Dhvanyaloka* by Anandavardhana, a ninth century Indian author, delves on the fundamental aspects of Indian poetics. The English literature discovers similar tones in I.A. Richards' distinction between 'emotive language' and 'referential language', John Crowe Ransom's 'structure' and 'texture' of poetry, the classical rule of the unity of action and the neoclassical organic form. The modern ideas of 'ambiguity', 'implication', 'irony', 'language of paradox' has their counterparts in the different interpolations of dhvani.

All the elements of a play in a plot, characterization, style, setting and acting are controlled by the dictates of Rasa. This Rasa is the stepping stone of the great pyramid of Dhvani. The poet is inspired into creating imaginative outputs and paves the way for critical thought. Dhvani is the soul of poetry and Rasa is the soul of Dhvani.

Language is a medium that can communicate the intricate imaginations of the mind. The beauty of sense or meaning can primarily lie in the artistic turn of thought of the poet or imaginative creation, called 'vakrokti' and poetry is a beautiful evocation of this language using Alankara (figure of speech) guna, (quality) and Riti (Style or diction) to trigger Rasa. The English equivalent for Dhvani has been offered as "Suggestion". Dhvanyaloka, also called Kavyaloka or Sahridayaloka, written by Anandavardhana is a monumental book of Dhvani. It is in the form of verses with a detailed commentary called 'vrtti'. According to Anandavardhana's theory, in all good literature the implied sense overpowers the expressed sense. He attributes a special function called 'vyanjana' or 'suggestion for language' over the primary denotative power 'abhidha' or the 'metaphoric' or 'lekshana'. The expression and the suggested meanings may not correspond with one another superficially but on a contextual basis. The same expression may offer different ideas to different people.

Anandavardhana emphasised on Rasa as the most important yardstick in literature. The Angirasa theory has to be under principal consideration while constructing a dramatic plot, so as to minimize the conflict between Rasas. This rule of angirasa has been followed in all the great literary master pieces like the epics The Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Karuna is the Angirasa in Ramayana and in the Mahabharata, Santa is the Angirasa.

Rasa Dhvani in Karnabharam:

Bhasa is one of the earliest and most celebrated dramatists in Sanskrit. He is believed to have lived sometime during the 3rd century AD. In 1912 the Indian scholar Mahamahopadhyaya Ganapati Sastri, rediscovered Bhasa's literary output and genius through the unfolding of the 'thirteen Trivandrum plays. They are *Svapna Vasavadatta*, *Pratijnajnyaugadharayana*, *Avimarakam Charudattam*, *Balacaritham*, *Madhyamavyayogam*, *Pancharathram Dutavakyam*, *Dutaghatotkacam*, *Karnabharam*, *Urubhangam*, *Pratimanatakam* and *Abhisekanatakam*. Among the works cited, the first four are based on popular legends, the fifth on Harivamsa, the next six on the Mahabharata and the last two are based on the Ramayana.

The play *Karnabharam* has the burden of Karna as its central theme. Karna, the protagonist of the play, is the son given to Kunti by the Sun God before her matrimonial ceremony to Pandu, as result of a boon from sage Durvasa. Since he is born with earrings and armour, he is named Karna. From the onset of the events in the

play Karna's mind is burdened with distress. Even though he served his guru Parasurama with utmost dedication, all the knowledge acquired was a burden to Karna, as a result of a curse incurred from his preceptor that they would be futile in time of need. Karna tries to unburden his heaviness of mind by narrating his plight to Salya, his charioteer. The story of Parsurama's curse is heard by Saliya and he empathizes with Karna's plight. As a result of this curse, Karna was unable to employ his weapons during the war with Pandavas. Even though Karna was a brother to Pandavas, he remains unaware of this fact until mother Kunti reveals his sibling relationship with Pandavas. Kunti's extraction of a promise from Karna that he would spare all the Pandavs except Arjuna leaves him unsatisfied in his avenger towards Pandavas, which was the sole ambition of Karna. This mood of dejection permeates through the whole action of the drama, *Karnabharam*

Karna is profoundly conscious of his psychological burden (Bhara) and tries to overcome it by asking his charioteer to ride to the very place where Arjuna stands. Karna's passion for heroism as the supreme commander in the army of Kauravas is yet another burden when he realizes his helplessness to discharge creditably due to the loss of his armour and earrings at such a critical juncture in war heightens the terror of burden. In spite of recognizing Indra who has come in the disguise of a Brahmacari to help his son Arjuna, Karna has no hesitation in donating his armour and earrings as a gift or dana, fully aware that he would be endangering his own life. While Indira is a beggar requesting Dana, Karna's greatness in giving gifts is of profound importance in the Mahabharata. Vira or valour is categorized into four, they being Danavira, Dayavira, Yudhavira and Dharmavira. In *Karnabharam* the principle sentiment is Karuna mixed with Vira. The angarasa is Dana Vira. The play *Karnabharam* begins with the armies of Duryodhana and Yudhishthira gearing up for the seventh day of the Kurukshetra war. Karna took command of the Kaurava Army on the sixteenth day, after the death of Dronacharya. The messenger sent by Duryodhana finds a pall of gloom spread over Karna's visage and is surprised since Karna is known for his valour in battle. In the course of the journey towards Arjuna, Karna feels the angst of burden intensifying and he exclaims the reason of desperation to Salya. In Mahabharata Salya is presented as a friend who shares the agony of Karna.

Karna is very bold to narrate the story of losing warring skills and divine weapons acquired from his Guru Parasurama. By narrating this story to Salya, Karna tries to unburden his mind. Similarly the incident of Indra who comes in the guise of a brahmin to covet the most prized possessions of Karna heightens the vira rasa in the minds of the sahrudaya. Karna though warned by Salya against parting with the gifts, willingly parts with them. While Pandavas ridicule Karna that he is a Suta-putra, Karna says that birth is a boon given by God whereas valour is acquired by actions in life. After sacrificing the most crucial and precious parts of his life, Karna proceeds to the warfront to meet Arjuna.

The play opens on a note of oppression and pathos, due to the thoughts of Kunthi's request to Karna to spare all her other sons, except Arjuna, oppressing Karna's mind. Parsurama's curse heightens the note of disturbance. Agony plays havoc in Karna's physiological equilibrium when he reveals that his enemies are indeed his own brethren.

The two main sentiments Vira and Karuna occupy a central role in the whole play, though Hasya (comedy) to have been introduced to a lesser degree in the appropriate place. Karna, the protagonist of the play makes entry in high spirits with the announcement that he would reciprocate his gratitude to the Kurus only through his battlefield rendezvous with Arjuna. Duryodhana's messenger observes dark clouds of gloom cast over Karna's countenance, only to be pacified by Karna's confession of his mental agony, which permeates the whole atmosphere with pathos.

These heartfelt lamentations of Karna suggest the futility of his valour and slowly diffuse the strains of Karuna Rasa in the audience. This expression too suggests the mental and psychological angst of Karna which triggers the Karuna rasa in the drama. Salya is overcome with pity and distress as he perceives the helplessness of Karna only to be consoled by Karna who by way of self encouragement, invokes the blessings of cows and brahmins and extols the excellent qualities of his war horses. From the shadow of despondency, Karna glides to the stage of mental steadiness as he commands Salya, his charioteer to ride towards Arjuna. But the Sahrudaya or the audience perceives that there is no escape for Karna from the curse of his preceptor and that he is still a slave of misery and dejection, and hence the atmosphere is charged with pathos or 'Karuna' Rasa. Dhvani or suggestion evoked proves that Karna would be elevated to a state of blissful valour, thus indicating the strengthening of vira rasa.

Conclusion:

Karnabharam as a play offers great scope for emotional and psychological development of character though the main theme is that of Karna giving away the Kavaca and Kundalas to Indra. Even though there is minimal scope for action and movements, deft characterization and dialogue construction paves way for the progress of emotions. The theory that there is no loss in a war: the winner gets victory and land while the loser gets divine place in Svarga (heaven) after death, is depicted in *Karnabharam*.

Among the four 'Purusharthas', Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, Dharma occupies the supreme position. Bhasa treats a war as a sacrifice-'Ranayajna', where both the winner and the loser stand to gain. The victorious acquires the material possessions of the enemy whereas the loser or dead is assured of a place in

heaven, which makes his death momentous. This suggests that Karna's act of charity which subsequently leads to his defeat and death would immortalize him. Bhasa's *Karnabharam*, through an exquisite portrayal of the psyche through the maze of karna's revelations and contemplations, quenches the aesthetic thirst of the audience by unfolding the various shades of Karuna and Vira Rasas by the effective play of Dhvani.

References:

1. Krishnamoorthy, K Anandavardhana Dhvanyaloka, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1981
2. Levi, Sylvain. The History of Theatre, Vol. 1. Writers Workshop, Calcutta 1978
3. Mukerjee, Radhakamal. "Rasa as Springs of Art in Indian Aesthetics", The Journal of Aesthetics Masson and Art Criticism, Vol. 24, Oriental, 1965.
4. Organ, Troy. Indian Aesthetics: Its Techniques and Assumptions Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 9, No. 1, Special Issue: Aesthetic Edu. in Civilization Perspective. University of Illinois Press.1965
5. Rustomji, Roshni. "Rasa and Dhvani in Indian and Western Poetics and Poetry", Journal of South Asian Literature, Vol. 16, Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University.1981
6. T. K, Ramachandraaiyer. Karnabharam, R. S. Vadhyar & Sons, Kalpathi, Palghat,1988 Unni, N. P. Natyashastra, Nag Publishers, New Delhi, 1998