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Aesthetic experience in urubhangam

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Abstract

In Indian Aesthetics experiencing Rasa is the final profit of any artistic or poetic creation. Bharatamuni declares that nothing proceeds without rasa. According to Abhinava, rasa, the poetic pleasure means to taste or relish. But Anandavardhanacharya in his Dvanyaloka accepted Dhvani as the soul of poetry. Then he shows that the sentiments cannot be conveyed or perceived by any other faculty of speech except suggestion. It is this suggestion of sentiments that constitutes the soul of poetry. The main object of a dramatic work is the evolution of some rasa by means of vibhavas and anubhavas. Here is an attempt to find out how the drama Urubhanga fulfills the experience of beauty.

Keyword: Aesthetics, rasa, suggestion, karuna

Introduction

In Indian Aesthetics experiencing rasa is the final profit of any artistic or poetic creation. Here Bharatamuni declares that nothing proceeds without rasa.

न हि रसादृते कश्चिदर्थः प्रवर्तते ।

His followers also stressed the importance of rasa. According to Abhinava, rasa, the poetic pleasure means to taste or relish.

रस्यते आस्वाद्यते इति रसः ।

But Anandavardhanacharya in his Dvanyaloka accepted Dhvani as the soul of poetry. काव्यस्यात्मा ध्वनिः and he divides Dhvani into three varieties.

1. वस्तुध्वनिः - fact
2. अलङ्कारध्वनिः - figure of speech
3. रसध्वनिः - sentiment

Then he shows that the sentiments cannot be conveyed or perceived by any other faculty of speech except suggestion and concludes that,

काव्यस्यात्मा स एवार्थः तथा चादिकवेः पुरा
क्रौञ्चद्वन्द्वं वियोगोत्थः शोकः श्लोकत्वमागतः¹ ।

It is this suggestion of sentiments that constitutes the soul of poetry. For instance, it was the soka (pathos) kindled in the heart of the first poet by the separation of a pair of crouching birds, in times of yore, that found expression in the form of sloka (poetry). So, Rasa is the soul of poetry. The aim of every drama is the creation in the mind of the audience of sentiment (Keith S D. P. 276). The main object of a dramatic work is the evolution of some rasa by means of vibhavas and anubhavas. When we are going through a poetic piece, the rasa is being relished in us and our heart, becomes fulfilled by the emotions and one will experience a type of self-purification, as he is that much empathized. Here is an attempt to find out how the drama Urubhanga fulfills the experience of beauty.

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Development of rasa

The Urubhanga of Bhasa has its basis in the Salyaparva (Adhyaya 56,58) of Mahabharata, describing the fight between Duryodhana and Bhima. Though the Urubhanga is a short one-act play, it embodies several rasas. As a tragedy of the defeat and death of the Mighty Duryodhana, the main sentiment fully developed is Karuna or pathos, but other sentiments and feelings not opposed to Karuna and contributing to its development find their place in appropriate contexts. So, Urubhangam is a good example where many sentiments- beebhatsa, adbhuda, Veera, Karuna etc. and feelings like krodha, dainya, harsha, daya, vatsalya, vairagya etc. are depicted without any conflict among them.

In the Vishkambhaka (prelude) Bhasa has described the sentiments of Bhayanaka and Beebhatsa in the vivid description of the battlefield covered over with corpses and of the headless trunks walking forth by former momentum. The veera rasa is very significant in the description of the mace fight between Bhima and Duryodhana in the presence of Balarama, Vyasa and others. The roudra rasa is remarkable in Balarama's anger towards Bhima who violates the rule of mace fight. Veera and roudra which pave the way for Karuna are also suggested effectively along with the feelings of disappointment, pity, anger and grief. Thus, the prelude is utilized for providing the necessary ingredients for developing Karuna rasa.

In the opening scene, we see Balarama shouting that he is going to kill Bhima. Hearing this Duryodhana crawls in with great effort as his thighs are broken, and tries to pacify Balarama by saying;

जीवन्तु ते कुरुकुलस्य निवापमेघाः
वैरं च विग्रहकथा च वयं च नष्टः²।

When we see the disabled Duryodhana with broken thighs crawling towards Balarama appear on the scene of the battlefield, a feeling of pity and sympathy is evoked.

This feeling grows more when the aged and blind parents are accompanied by the King's wives (who had never before come out of the palace) and his infant son, appear searching for the wounded son on that vast and ghastly battlefield. Here is an occasion that gives great scope for the growth of the pathetic sentiment to a climax. All this pains Duryodhana to the most poignant than his physical injuries. The sight of his Queen's crying aloud, walking on foot and bare-headed without their usual veils, strikes a serious blow to Duryodhana.

भो कष्टम् । यनमयापि स्त्रियः रुदन्ति ।
पूर्वं न जानामि गदाभिघात —
रुचामिदानीं तु समर्थयामि
यन्मे प्रकाशीकृतमूर्धजानि
रणं प्रविष्टान्यवरोधनानि ।³

He says that he did not feel the pain caused by the blow of the mace till then, but when he sees his wives, coming to the battlefield with uncovered heads, he feels the pain.

The dialogue between Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Duryodhana develops karuna rasa gradually to its climax. When Dhritarashtra expresses his desire to salute him, Duryodhana tries to get up to fall at the feet of his father, but falls down again.

धृतराष्ट्रः — एहि पुत्र अभिवादाय माम् ।

राजा — अयमयमागच्छामि (उत्थानं रूपयित्वा पतति) हा धिक्, अयं मे द्वितीयः प्रहारः ।
कष्टं भो
हृत्तं मे भीमसेनेन गदापातकचग्रहे
सममूरुद्वयेनाद्य गुणेः पादाभिवन्दनम् ।⁴

Dhritarashtra feels the pain of being blind only when he is unable to see his son who is wounded and about to die.

“अद्यास्मिन् अयमहमन्धः, यो अन्वेष्टव्ये काले पुत्रं न पश्यामि”

His last wish expressed to the mother is that she alone should become his mother in his future birth.

अन्यस्यामपि जात्यां मे त्वमेव जननी भव ।⁵

It is not possible to express a more noble feeling than this. It reminds the feeling of Sita in Raghuvamsa when she was abandoned by her husband.

भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरे अपि त्वमेव भर्ता च विप्रयोगः ।

Gandhari's reply is still more touching. She says that her own desire was experienced by her son.

The scene between the father and the son Durjaya is the most pathetic, the most touching, in the whole range of dramatic literature. The dialogue between them is most touching and heart-rendering. When the tired child goes to sit on his father's lap but the father has to prevent him, the reason for which the child is unable to understand. When the child again innocently, asks to take him also to the place where his father goes, his answer causes an echo of Duryodhana's bitter feelings in the heart of the audience, ie, is the feelings of love, grief and hatred.

The love of Duryodhana for his child and his devotion to his parents have accentuated the main sentiment, karuna. Having developed karuna as the main sentiment, the dramatist makes the hero die a peaceful death with his heart's only desire getting fulfilled by the declaration of his son Durjaya as the king of Kuru country by Aswathama. This sudden change from karuna to the feeling of joy and peace is brought about by introducing raudra rasa in the speech and actions of Aswathama. It is remarkable in Aswathama's terrible rage at Bhima's unfair blow at Duryodhana and in his taking an oath to destroy Pandavas.

Conclusion

Bhasa's depiction of emotions is always realistic. The main scene of Urubhangam is Bhasa's own creation with great dramatic skill, he introduced Duryodhana with broken thighs crawling on the ground and gradually develops the pathetic sentiment by describing his meeting with his parents, infant son and wives with a deep insight into the depth of their hearts. Except Bhavabhuti, no other Indian poet has developed a pathetic situation to such a climax and Bhasa is the only Sanskrit dramatist who has bold and skillful enough to represent the death of the hero on the stage. Urubhangam is the only tragedy in Sanskrit dramatic literature and it is a good illustration of the skill of the poet in depicting several rasas without any conflict among them. “The sweetest things are those that tell of saddest thoughts”. In short, Urubhangam is a play that is a good specimen illustrating all the merits of Bhasa, skill in the construction of plot, selection of characters, development of sentiments and emotions, style, depth, etc.

Moreover, Urubhanga is the only real tragedy in the whole of Sanskrit literature.

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