

EXPLORING KALIDASA'S "ABHIJANASHAKUNTALAM" IN THE LIGHT OF RASA PRINCIPLE

Ajay Makwana

Assistant Professor

Government Arts College, Kawant, Gujarat

Abstract:

The present paper has been specifically designed to examine Bharatmuni's Rasa Principle in the selected play Abhijnanashakuntalam written by classical Sanskrit poet and dramatist Kalidasa. The play will be scrutinized through the lance of aestheticism by exploring different Rasas (Sentiments) into it. Abhijnanashakuntalam has been hailed as one of world's best plays. Originally, it was written in Sanskrit and then translated into English by many scholars. Classical Sanskrit literature was mainly written in poetry, play and epic form. There are different poetic schools propounded by different aestheticians. Rasa, Dhvani, Riti, Alamkara and Vakrokti are the leading aesthetic theories. Rasa theory is attributed to the ancient sage Bharatmuni. He discovered 'Theory of Rasa' in his magnum opus work Natyashastra. In Natyashastra, Bharatmuni has talked about every facets of dramatic art in depth. Rasa doctrine is considered as 'the essence of dramatic art'. Initially Rasa theory was associated to drama and later it was applied to poetry. Abhijnanashakuntalam is a classic seven act full length play that unfolds a story of Dushyant and Shakuntala. In the play, there are many emotional moods that leads to feel different sentiments .The play Abhijnanashakuntalam comprises different sentiments (Rasas) like Erotic (Sringara), Heroic (Veera), Wonder (Adbhuta), Pathetic (Karuna), Furious (Roudra) and Peace (Shanta).

Keywords: Aesthetic, Sentiments, Rasa, Dhvani , Erotic, Furious, Heroic, Peace, Wonder

Introduction:

The historical background of Classical Sanskrit literature goes back to the ancient period. Initially, Classical Sanskrit literature was mainly delivered in oral form and than it was composed in manuscript form. In written form, it was primarily produced in two major literary forms: poetry and drama. Drama has been eminent literary genre in Sanskrit literature endowed by acting, music and dance. Classical Sanskrit literature was enriched by skillful dramatists of ancient period. Bhavbhuti, Ashvghosh, Kalidasa, Sudrak, Bharvi, Magha, Harsh and Bhasa were the notable milestones of classical sanskrit literature who had produced magnum opus works in Sanskrit language.

Research Methodology:

The present research paper is based on the following research methodology:

- Kalidasa's play *Abhijnashakuntalam* is the main research tool of the present research.
- The play *Abhijnashakuntalam* would be examined in the light of Rasa Principle through extensive study and close reading.
- The findings and observations of the present research would be based upon the Primary and Secondary data.
- The present research paper would be descriptive and analytical in nature.
- Secondary data which are taken as source would be ethically cited in reference section.

Result Analysis:

There are six leading poetic theories in Indian aesthetics. They are theory of Rasa, Alamkara, Riti, Dhvani, Vakrokti and Auchitya. Among them, rasa theory has acquired prestigious position because of its strong relevancy and universal appeal. Bharatmuni has evolved total eight sentiments in *Natyashastra*. It is said that 'nothing proceeds without sentiments (rasa). If plot is the body of drama than rasa is the soul of drama. The sole aim of dramatic performance is to release different sentiments through appropriate gestures.

In the play *Abhijnashakuntalam*, different sentiments are thoroughly enjoyable. Love is the dominant sentiment that pervades in the entire play. On the whole, pathetic, grief, comic, terror, disgust and peace are the other sentiments which are gracefully evoked throughout the play.

Rasa Theory: A Critical Analysis

In Sanskrit language, the literal meaning of the word 'Rasa' means juice, taste or essence of something. In Rigveda, there is a reference regarding six types of rasa but Bharatmuni formulated his own aesthetic theory in which he evolved eight fundamental sentiments. In *Natyasastra*, Bharatmuni has stated that *Natya* was drawn out from Vedas, words from Rigveda, song from Samveda, action from *Yazurveda* and sentiments from *Atharva-veda*. With the synthesis of all these elements, Brahma created fifth veda- *Natya*- as a source of entertainment which could please both eyes and ears.

Bharatmuni in his *Natyasastra* has discussed the significant aspects of drama like plot, characterization, state setting, dialogue, song, performances and its central subject, Rasa. Rasa is a core aesthetic element both to the drama and poetry. It is the manifestation of Indian art forms which enhance the power of delight. The sole aim of Rasa is to create the sentiment in the spectators. Rasa is an emotional attachment which pleads both mind and soul. Bharatmuni's Rasa theory is based upon human emotions that is commonly found in everyday life.

Rasa-Bhava Relationship:

That which conveys the meaning intended by the poet through words, physical gestures and facial changes is a bhava. (Rangacharya: 64)

Rasa is evolved with concept of Bhava. Rasa-Bhava is interconnected and interdependent. One (Rasa) cannot exist in the absence of other (Bhava). Bhava is associated with various senses like feeling, sentiment and mental state. Bhava is an emotional intimacy; it makes an emotional appeal to the audience to enjoy a dramatic piece with aesthetic taste. Bharatmuni has deliberately scripted a close intimacy between Rasa and Bhava with illustration of species. He observes, just a various ingredients produce a delightful taste in cooked food, in a similar way a unique mixture of different bhavas produce aesthetic enjoyment. These different bhavas are the basic determinations in Rasa procedure.

There can be no sentiment without the states and no states without sentiments, and during the historic representation they are produced from their mutual relations. (Seturaman: 22)

In the sixth chapter of Natyasastra, Bharatmuni has defined his Rasa theory as follows: 'sentiment (Rasa) is produced from a combination of *Vibhava*, *Anubhava* and *Vyabhicharibhava*.

Vibhava:

Vibhav is a visual object which release an emotion. It is categorized in two forms: Alambana and Uddipna. Alambana vibhava means actors who produce certain emotions through their expressions. Uddipna vibhava means external circumstances or locations in which characters are placed. In the play *Abhijanashakuntalam*, Shakunta and Dushyant meet first time at Kanva's hermitage. So Shakuntala and Dushyant would be Alambana Vibhava and sage Kanva's hermitage would be Uddipna vibhava.

Anubhava:

Anubhava means bodily movements which renders an emotion. Anubhava is a physical reaction of experiencing a certain emotion. It is enacted by appropriate gesture or expression.

Vyabhicharibhava:

Bharatmuni has termed it as 'transient emotion'. These type of bhavas are short tempered in nature. Vyabhicharibhava is a minor feeling or state. Bharatmuni has discussed total thirty-three Vyabhicharibhavas in *Natyashastra*. They are discouragement, apprehension, weariness, depression, cruelty, anxiety, fright, jealousy, envy, indignation, arrogance, recollection, death, intoxication, dreaming, sleeping, awakening, shame, epilepsy, distraction, assurance, idleness, indolence, agitation, deliberation, dissimulation, sickness, insanity, despair, anxious, impatience and inconsiderate.

Sthayibhava

Sthayibhava is a major emotion or feeling. Sthayibhavas are called permanent emotions. There are total eight Sthayibhava as expounded by Bharatmuni in Natyasastra. Each Sthayibhava co-operate one sentiment (Rasa) respectively. They are as follows.

Sthayinhava	Sentiment (Rasa)	Deity	Colour
Love	Erotic	Vishnu	Green
Laughter	Comic	Pramatha	White
Grief	Pathetic	Yama	Grey
Anger	Furious	Rudra	Red
Valor	Heroic	Indra	Orange
Fear	Horrible	Kala	Black
Disgust	Odious	Shiva	Blue
Wonder	Marvelous	Brahma	Yellow

Literary Portfolio of Kalidasa :

Kalidasa was an eminent poet and dramatist of classical Sanskrit literature. There are different anecdotes are available regarding his living period. However, it is said that he might have lived between 4th -5th century CE. He has penned brilliant literary works throughout his literary career. His poetic skill and literary genius have been remained unsurpassed and unparallel even today. He is rightly credited as 'Shakespeare of India'. The writing of Kalidasa reveals that he had deeply studied ancient grammar, prosody, purans and vedas. Kalidasa's works are primarily based on the Ramayan, Mahabharat, Purans and Vedas. He has mainly composed drama and poetry. *Abhijnashakuntalam*, *Malvikagnimitram* and *Vikramorvanshi* are well acclaimed dramas. *Kumarsambhav* and *Raghuvansh* are his reputed epic poems and *Meghdut* was his lyrical composition.

Abhijnashakuntalam in the light of Rasa Principle:

Kalidasa's *Abhijnashakuntalam* or *The Recognition of Shakuntala* is a classical Sanskrit drama in seven acts. It is the most admirable play of Kalidasa across the world literature. The first English version was composed by William James in 1789 with the title of *The Recognition of Shakuntala*. The Original of drama is found in the Mahabharat, but Kalidasa refreshed it through his poetic skill and composed it with a greater degree of perfection. According to the traditional view, it is commented that, 'drama is the most

enjoyable of all the literary forms, the Shakuntala is the most enjoyable'. The play unfolds a story of Dushyant and Shakuntala. The main theme of the play is romance. There are many up and down in their journey but Kalidasa has given happy ending to the plot. The following are the major sentiments which are enjoyable throughout the plot.

Erotic Sentiment:

Erotic sentiment is concerned with love and romance. This sentiment is attributed as Rasaraja- means 'the king of all sentiments'. Erotic sentiment is delightfully presented in literature, cinema, art, music and painting. Erotic sentiment can be evoked in union and in separation. In union, it evokes the glance of pleasure and enjoyment while in separation it evokes the sense of loneliness and sorrow. Erotic sentiment is rich in pleasure, connected with desired objects, enjoyment of seasons, garlands and similar other things and it relates to the union of man and woman.

In the play, Recognition of Shakuntala romance is the dominant sentiment. It is gracefully projected by Dushyant and Shakuntala. Dushyant falls in love with Shakuntala at first glance. Dushyant become stuck after seeing her physical appearance He expresses the physical beauty of Shakuntala in an elegant words :

How lovely they look!

If such the beauty of maids, who dwell in the woodland, the like of which is not easily to be found in the recesses of a palace, then indeed are the garden plants will surpassed in the merit by the woodland creepers. (Kalidasa: 17)

This her youthful body, by reason of bark garment tied with delicate knots upon the shoulder, and covering the expanse of her twin breasts, does not exhibits its own charms, like a flower enfolded by a pale leaf. (Kalidasa: 17)

Truly her lower lips glows like a tender leaf, her arms resemble flexible stalks, and youth, bewitching like a blossom, shines in all her lineaments.

Dushyant expresses his warm passionate feeling to Shakuntala through this admirable appreciation and makes the atmosphere romantic and passionable.

Surely she can but be fit to be wedded to a kshatriya, since my noble soul has longing toward her.

As it is earlier noted, erotic sentiment can be evoked in separation as well. Shakuntala and Dushyant get separation because of Durvasa sage's curse. When Shakuntala reaches at Dushyant's palace, he rejects her from accepting as his wife. In state of loneliness, Shakuntala miss every moment that she had passed with Dushyant.

Furious Sentiment:

Anger is the dominant emotion of furious sentiment. It can be expressed verbally or physically. This sentiment is chiefly concerned with furiousness. It usually represents high tempered nature. Furious sentiment is supposed to be represented by wide opening eyes, movement of the lips and unusual movement of eye brows.

In the play, Recognition of Shakuntala, the furious sentiment is carried out by sage Durvasa. He arrives at Kanva's hermitage but Shakuntala was lost in the thought of Dushyant so she unknowingly did not welcome him. When Durvasa sage did not receive any kind of hospitality from her side, he becomes extremely angry and cursed her.

That man whose brilliance Robs your thought of everything including me,
A great ascetic fired by penance-
That man, though prompted,
Shall not remember you at all,
Like a drunken sot, who cannot recall
What he said in his cups three night before.

Durvasa cursed Shakuntala in a haughty mood and afterwards Dushyant denied Shakuntala from identifying as his wife.

Disgust Sentiment:

Aversion or disliking is the dominant emotion of Disgust sentiment. This sentiment is generally resonating the sense of dissatisfaction or displeasure. Disgust sentiment is basically denote the impulse of hatred, unpleasness and disesteem.

In the play, disgust sentiment is relished through the character of Sarvdata and the fisher man. The fisher man was arrested in charge of stealing a ring. When he appeared before Dushyant, a smell of raw flesh was evoking from his body. The unpleasant odor creates the impulse of disgust sentiment.

Another glimpse of disgust sentiment is visible when Servdata visits the palace of Dushyant. Having seen the atmosphere of city, he becomes uncomfortable and feels strange. The air of worldliness does not suit to him and the impulse of disgustness occurs through the following words.

Look on these people have devoted to worldly joys as a man just bathed
looks on a man smeared with oil, as the pure on the impure, as the waking on
the sleeping, or as the free man on the captive.

Terror Sentiment:

Terror sentiment is occupied with gothic elements. Fear is the dominant emotion of terror sentiment. Terrible sentiment is created by scary noise, sight of ghost, entering in an empty house or forest, darkness and fearful sight.

In the third act of the play, the shadowy appearance of man eating demons creates scary atmosphere. They arrive at the holy spot to ruin spiritual practices. Generally demons are being presented as evil spirit who usually put obstacles in ritual ceremonies. Their anti-spiritual activity and scary appearance evoke the sense of terror in the audience.

As the evening sacrifice is commenced, the shadows of flesh eating demons, brown as evening clouds. And scattered around the blazing altar, are fitting around and creating terror in a variety of ways.

Heroic Sentiment:

Heroic sentiment is an epitome of bravery and heroism. This sentiment represents boldness and heroic adventure. King, warrior, martyr are the idealistic models of heroic sentiment. It can be enacted by heroic spirit, delicacy, strong determination, self esteem and mental health. In Abhijnashakuntalam, the heroic spirit of King Dushyant is gracefully reflected through his personal bravery and valor. The following description speaks out the heroism of King Dushyant respectively.

It is not wonderful that he whose arm is long as the bar of a city (gate) alone protects the whole earth bounded by the dark ocean. For the Gods, rooted in their enmity with the demons, rely for victory in battles on his braced bow and Indra's thunder-bolt.

How great is the power of King Dushyant! Since his highness had no sooner entered the hermitage than we could continue our holy rites undisturbed. Why talk of aiming the shaft? For by the mere sound of bow string from after, as if by the angry murmur of his bow he disperses our obstacles.

Peace Sentiment:

Peace sentiment is fulfilled in the last act when Dushyant arrives at Maricha Ashram. He feels supreme kind of peace and relaxation there. Dushyant feels calmness which is far superior to worldly pleasures. The following words of Dushyant release peace sentiment effectively.

The place is more peaceful and satisfying than heaven. It seems that i am swimming in a pond of amrita (ambrosia).

Conclusion:

Thus, doctrine of rasa is fruitfully enjoyable in the play Abhijnashakuntalam. Kalidasa has delightfully accommodated different sentiments at appropriate place. Although Erotic is the dominant sentiment of the play but all the sentiments are gracefully inter-woven by Kalidasa through his literary genuineness.

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