

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER

ISSN-2321-7065

IJELLH

**International Journal of English Language,
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed), UGC Approved Journal



Volume 7, Issue 2, February 2019

www.ijellh.com

Dr Partha Sarathi Mandal.

M.A., PhD, Assistant Professor in English, Department of English,

Manbhum Mahavidyalaya, Manbazar, Purulia, West Bengal, India

dadhigopal@gmail.com

Rereading Owens's "Strange Meeting" in the light of Indian Poetics

Abstract : Indian theorist Anandavardhana points out that 'rasadi', is the life-blood of any poem. In fact, basic emotions like love, pathos, heroism, and diverse passing moods, or changing feeling-tones are the domain of 'Rasa'. Owen's "Strange Meeting" is a dirge or 'Vilapa-Kavya' as here the mood of pathos and futility pervades the situation and provides a fitting 'Vibhava' or correlative of the 'sthayi-bhava' of 'soka'(pathos) and 'Karunarasa' is the final outcome, what Owen says, "The pity of war, the pity war distilled." Bharat in his *Natyasastra* says "atmanubhavanam bhavo vibhavah paradarsanam" meaning what a poet feels in his heart manifests in his art, what Eliot says, 'emotion' and 'art emotion'. Here Owen makes the same thing. Besides, use of 'gunas' like 'samadhi' or poetic personification which according to Dandin is the heart of the matter of all poetry, 'madhurya' i.e. tenderness and 'prasada', i.e. keenness of judgment-- all contribute to make the poem a universal or 'sadhanikaran'. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze how the poet has made a journey from personal feeling i.e. 'svabhava' to the transmission of the imagined experience of the same feeling in others that is 'Vibhava'.

Keywords: Rasa; Vilap-kavya; sthayi-bhava; soka; svabhava; vibhava

India is a land of polas and lotus and the ancient seat of art and culture and therefore, there is a "weltanschauung" of Indian Aesthetic which establishes the relation between art and

conniseisure. It started with the concept of “Vak” which is the center of the universe and therefore, poetry is thought to be the center of all art. The concept of “Vak” gives birth to mutuality, sharing and the recognition of the mutuality and sharing results in “Sakhya” or “Sahridaya”. This “Vak” has a comprehensivity where experience and experiencer are unified and a kind of “Samarasya” or “Samanjasya” is being created, What Kalidas says in different context: “Paraspara Parasparena shobham”. Many theorists like Bharata in his *Natyashastra* probably fifth century B.C. Anandavardhana in his “Dhvanyoloka” and his commentator Abhinavagupta through his concept of “Dhvani” (suggestions), in ninth century A.D. Vamana put forth the doctrine of “Riti” dealing with the style, Dandin in seventh century A.D. took interest in Alankara school that deals with poetry as figurative expression. Last but not the least the concept of “Vakrokti” that is the concept of deviation and “anumana” school puts focus on the concept of inference in poetic composition. In fact Indian Poetics so well formulated and systematic that it evolves into a vibrant discipline and achieves the domain of “Sastra”. S. C. Sengupta rightly says:

Indian aesthetics has a long history, but we may take notice of only two masters, Anandavardhana (ninth century) and Abhinavagupta, who flourished about a hundred and fifty years later. Anandavardhana enunciated a theory of Dhvani, which is the most important contribution of Sanskrit literature to aesthetics; it was so elaborately and persuasively developed by his commentator, Abhinavagupta, that it passes under the joint names of Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta or simply as the theory of Abhignana the commentator. The starting point of this theory, with the technicalities of which we need not be concerned here, is that poetry or art gives us a special kind of relish which we do not get elsewhere. (Sengupta, 10)

Keeping in mind this vast field of Indian Aesthetics, I have taken Owens's "Strange Meeting" as here the poet is found to manipulate, what according to Indian Poetics, "Sabda, Artha of Kavya" in an artistic manner to express the "Rasa" or feeling content Bharata in his *Natyashastra* expresses different kinds of "Rasa": Sringara (love), Hasya (humour), Karuna (compassion /pathos), Rudra (wrath or anger), Vira (valour or heroism), Bhayankara (horror or terror), Bibhatsa (disgust), Adbhuta (wonder), Shanta (peace). This poem of Owen is a dirge or Vilapa - Kavya which is a popular genre in Indian Poetics. The predominant note of the poem is "the pity of war, the pity war distilled". The poem overflows with pity for those young men who die on the battlefield with all their promises unfulfilled and joy of life untasted. The dead German soldier bewails his death as putting to naught his hopes and his love of beauty that triumphs over time and preventing him from telling the world the truth about war, death, destruction and suffering that war spells to man and his civilization. This note of haunting uneasiness frustration and melancholy evokes "Karunarasa". This Karunarasa or pathos is executed with the help of "Vibhava" in the beginning of the poem. Besides "Bhayankara" (horror or terror) is also pressed into service with the reference to hell "I knew we stood in Hell".

Now let us have a discussion on what is "Vibhava". In his *Natyasastra* Bharata says "Atmanubhavanam bhavo vibhava paradarsanam" (*Natyasastra*, XXV 41) meaning what a poet feels in his heart manifest in his art, which Eliot much later says "emotion and art emotion". In fact "Vibhava" is the representation of "Svabhava" that is personal emotion in the medium of art. Here Owen does the same thing. In the preface to his Projected volume of poems Owen says: Above all I am not concerned with Poetry, My subject is war; and the pity of war. The poetry is in the pity" (Owen). These lines express his "Svabhava" and the very poem "Strange Meeting" is "Vibhava". In addition to that here the poet meets the German soldier in

dream and the dream is his personal emotion and what he writes is his “Vibhava”. In fact the very foundation of the Karunarasa is built when the poet says: “It seemed that out of the battle I escaped / Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped /Through granites which titanic wars had groined /Yet also there encumbered sleepers groined” (Owen, 122). This is called “Alambana - Vibhavas”. The undone years, the hopelessness of the dead soldiers are highly evocative “Anubhavas” culminates in Vibhavas. The references to “discontent, boil, bloody”, “blood had clogged their chariot wheels” (Owen, 123) evoke excitement and it is “Uddipaka - Vibhavas”. The poem overflows with pity for the young soldiers whose hopes and aspirations are ruined and the world is a “Waste Land”. In a war the world is deprived of the joy that he might have spread among mankind: “For by my glee might many men have laughed” (Owen, 123). In Indian Poetics it is called “Vyabharibhava” or the passing mood of “Nirveda” and “Glani” that is frustration culminating in “Krodha” or indignation against the armchair politician who make the world graveyard where “ignorant armies clash by night”. All these contribute to form the Rasa of the poem and that is “Karunarasa”.

E. Gerew points out “Poetics is (in India) a development of an interest in certain kinds of expressive devices that are grounded in language. Some devices are specifically linked to the Sanskrit language (metrics, prosody, alliteration, etc.) - What the poeticians will term Sabdalankara; others - the arthalankara,…” (Gerew, 222). In this poem the poignancy of Karunarasa is intensified with the appropriate use of these two types of “Alankara” in a perfect harmony. The use of “Vrttayanuprasa” and “Srutyayanuprasa” in the expression like “scooped through granites”, “Wars had groined”, “encumbered sleepers groined”, “no guns thumped”, “miss the march” remind us of verbal alliterations and assonances that is Vrttayanuprasa and Srutyayanuprasa. The use of “Upama” that is simile “They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress” is striking and homely. The use of “Slesa” in the expressions “sweet wells”, “retreating

world”, “now men will go content with what we spoiled” make the “Karunarasa” of the poem more poignant and pregnant with meaning. In Indian Poetics “Utpreksa” that is putting something as something else creates a sense of true poetic vision. In this poem Owen has used a number of “Utpreksa” such as battlefield as a “dull tunnel”, “sullen hall” or “Hell”, beautiful woman as “braided hair”, weapons of war as “chariot wheels”. All these remind us “Upameya and Upamana” that is metaphorical superimposition and in Indian Poetics it is called “Samasta - Vastu - Visaya - Rupaka”. In this context Pravas Jivan Chaudhury is worth quoting when he says:

Now, with regard to this sense of poetry another school of thinkers, known as that of suggestion (dvani) headed by Anandavardhana (of Kashmir, 9th century A. D.) and Abhinavagupta (Kashmir, 10th century A. D.) points out that it is not the literal, direct, and referential meaning that poetry properly expresses, but it is a suggested, indirect, and emotive meaning, and hence, though the words of a poem must be given their due importance, and the same with regard to the literal sense they denote, yet both the words and their direct meaning form but a medium for the emotive and indirect meaning to express itself. In good poetry this suggested meaning dominates over the words and their literal sense. (Chaudhury, 289)

The craftsmanship of Owen as a poet is also marked in his use of “Virodhabhasalankara” that is paradox. From the beginning the use of paradox is remarkable for examples “dead smile”, “distressful hands as if to bless”, “Men have bled where no wounds were”. This “Virodhabhasalankara” intensifies the note of sadness terrible and piteous.

In Indian Poetics “Porisamkhyā-alankara” that is the juxtaposition of negation and counter negation. This alankara is found to be used by the poet to suggest the sadness, terrible

and piteous of war and the result is “Karunarasa”. The expression like “here no cause to mourn”, “none”, said the other, “save the undone years” is an illustration to the point.

Now let us look into the use of different “Gunas” like “Samadhi” or poetic personification, “Madhurya” or tenderness, “Prasada” i. e. perspicacity. According to Dandin, “Samadhi” guna is the life-blood of poetry: “Tadetat Kavyasarvasvam Samadhirnama yo gunah” (Kavyadarsa, 1.10). In the expressions like “guns thumped”, “flues made moan ” are examples of “Samadhiguna”. The use of “Madhuraguna” is marked in the use of diction like ‘sing’, ‘rang’, ‘well’, ‘sleep’ and “Prasada” guna is also used artistically in a number of cases.

By applying the doctrine of “Dhvani”, we attune with Anandavardhana when he emphasizes the role of an artist is that of a creator or even more superior. Here Owen creates a world in his own sweet will and though it isa poem of “Karunarasa” but at the end when he refers to sleep ; “Let us sleep now”, the poem achieves the domain of true “sublime poetry” - “Dhvani Kavya” as it reminds us of a kind of rejuvenation and upliftment a sense of rest and peace.

To conclude we may say, here the Rasa of “Karuna” accompanied by its befitting “Vibhavas”, “Anubhavas” and “Vyabharibhavas” all is very poignant and Aesthetic pleasure is unmistakable. The artistic use of different “gunas” as well as appropriate “alankaras” present the poem a perfect specimen of “Karuna-Rasa-Dhvani - Kavya”. The poem starts with “I” and ends in “us” That is the process of Sadharanikarana in Indian Poetics is complete what Sidney in his “Apology for Poetry” says “Kathekeston” is turned into “Kathelou” that is regional becomes universal. The reading of this poem from Indian Poetics shows how the result is the same with that of Western Aesthetics. Therefore, the day is not far off when a universal Aesthetics will be formed by taking concepts from Indian and Western Aesthetic for the better understanding of art, literature and culture and above all humanity at large.

Works Cited

Chaudhury, Pravas Jivan. "Indian Poetics" pp 289, 1965.

Bharata Muni, *Natyashastra*. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1959.

Sengupta, S. C. *Keats: From Theory to Poetry*. Sahitya Samsad, 1986.

Lahiri, Himadri. *University Anthology of Poems*. The Burdwan University, 2010.

Gerew, Edwin. *Indian Poetics*. Otto Harrassowitz, 1997.