

ANGER AND ITS COMPLICATION IN GIRISH KARNADS *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

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ABSTRACT

Indian drama becomes incomplete without the touch and flavour of Indianess in it. When it comes to drama, especially the Indian mythological ones; the addition of the Rasas and Bhavas play a vital role in the stage performance. However it gets more beautified when the playwright too chooses to add the elements of Rasa to enrich his script. “The Fire and The Rain” is one such plays wherein Girish Karnad has gone an extra mile to add an aesthetic essence to the script of the play. The play is analysed on the bases of one of the Rasa element which is called the Rudrarasa (rage). The deliberate addition of Rudrarasa by the playwright deepens the aesthetic flavour of the play. Rage is considered the root cause for all the major actions in the play

Keywords: Aesthetics in literature, Rasa theory, Rage (Rudra Rasa), emotions

INTRODUCTION

The play *The Rain and The Fire* is a far-reaching creation of Girish Karnad. It is wholesome and involves all kinds of human feelings such as love, compassion, lust, hatred, revenge, respect, deceit etc. The play was originally written in Kannada, the language which Karnad chooses to write most often. It was written in the year 1995 and was published in English in the year 1998 by Karnad himself. The play was since then staged in Kannada, Hindi, Bengali and English in India and even abroad. It was adopted into a movie in the year 2002 casting leading Indian Artist like Amithab Bachchan, Jackie Shroff, Raveena Tandon, Nagarjun, Prabu Dev and so on.

One of the greatest reasons for the success of the script, drama as well as the movie of *The Fire and The Rain* could be considered the right proportion of emotions. When talking about emotions especially in drama, one cannot ignore the concept of Rasa Theory given by Bharathamuni in Natya Shastra. In this regard Namita Bhatia says

Rasa was originally considered as belonging to dramaturgy rather than to poetics proper. It was recognised as an element of decoration by the ‘Acharyas’ of the ‘Alamkara’ school, who did not assign any over-riding importance to it. It was only with the passage of time and with the progress of critical speculations that the ‘Rasa’ came to be identified as the central element of literary composition.

Rasa literally means juice or essence. So rasa is basically the emotions exhibited in drama or dance which beautify the whole show. According to Namita Bhatia “Rasa literally means tincture, taste, flavour, relish. It has been variously translated as sentiments, aesthetic emotion etc. Even more simply rasa can be described as the response to art.”

The Rasa theory consists of Eight major Elements and a ninth concluding element. The Eight elements are Śṛṅgārah (Romance, Love, attractiveness), Hāsyam (Laughter, mirth, comedy) Raudram (Fury) Kāruṇyam (Compassion, mercy) Bībhatsam (Disgust, aversion) Bhayānakam (Horror, terror) Veeram (Heroism) Adbhutam (Wonder, amazement) and the ninth concluding element is Śāntam rasa (Peace).

Girish Karnad is a master playwright of the contemporary period. He has excelled in the field of playwriting for a vast period of about forty eight years. Since his first play ‘Yayati’ (1961) to his last play ‘Crossing to Talikota’ (2019) he has outlived as a legend. He shined among great theatre directors of his time, like Ebrahim Alkazi, Alyque Padamsee, BV Karanth, Prasanna, Vijaya Mehta and Satyadev Dubey and so on. Karnad’s writings can be roughly categorised into three kinds, namely, historic plays, mythological plays, and contemporary plays. Despite the genre he chooses to write, Karnad is extremely considerate about two things, firstly as his plays are much related to the history and traditions of India, Karnad skilfully portrays Indianness throughout his plays. Secondly though he deals with myths and traditions he takes utmost care not to falsify facts. The Indian setting of Karnad’s plays has given much scope to view and analyse the embellishment of the Indian aesthetics which is otherwise called the Rasa Theory in almost all his works.

Brief outline of the chosen play

The play *The Fire and The Rain* is based on the myth of Yavakrita, extracted from the chapters 135- 138 of the Vana Parva (the forest canto) of the Mahabharata. It took thirty seven years for Karnad to accomplish this work. According to the myth, Yavakri a sage who had attained universal knowledge from Indra has a burning desire to revenge on his uncle, Raibhya’s family. Yavakri’s father Bharadwaja and Raibhya were brothers, they were equally learned, but Raibhya was getting more recognition among the two, this was the cause for the anger getting hoarded inside Yavakri. How he satiates himself and what are the consequences he faces contribute to be the source for the play. The genius playwright has added the flavour of rage to it and beautified the plot further.

The play *The Fire and The Rain* opens with a prologue wherein, preparation for a Yajna to provoke the rain god is going on. The ritual is in the final stage and the chief priest for the seven-year long yajna is Parvasu, the elder son of Raibhya. A Bhrama Raksha which is invisible to the eyes of others is moving around the pyre. Meanwhile an actor manager of a drama troupe comes asking for permission to enact a play, he says it would further satisfy lord Indra and bring rains to the land which has been suffering drought for about ten years. On hearing that Aravasu is one of the artists in the play, Parvasu gives them permission to perform. Aravasu is the younger brother of Parvasu. The Play within the play begins with the scene of Aravasu talking to his lady love, Nittilai, a tribal girl. Aravasu is a Brahmin by birth but he is fond of acting. Dancing and acting are considered as low-caste activities and Brahmins are forbidden from doing them. Their conversation is about Aravasu being ready to give up his high birth for the sake of his art and love. According to the tribal custom of

Nittilai's village, Aravasu had to proclaim in front for her village heads that he is man enough to satisfy a girl. They had arranged for a counsel and Aravasu was supposed to meet the village heads before sunset that evening. During their conversation the duo encounter Andhaka the blind sudra sage who guards the hermitage of Bharadwaja. Through him they come to know that Yavakri, the son of Bharadwaja is back in town after attaining universal knowledge through a rigorous penance of ten years. Nittilai being a witty girl asks many questions about Yavakri, like whether knows the time of his death, can he bring rains and so on. By the noon time Aravasu remembers that Yavakri had asked him meet him when the sun is above the head. Meanwhile, near Raibhya's hermitage, Yavakri encounters Vishaka who is returning home after fetching water. She is had been his lady-love whom he had abandoned ten years ago. Vishaka is now married to Paravasu. Yavakri tries to rekindle their love, Vishaka initially resists but later gives in. The reason for Vishaka budging is that she was unwillingly married to Paravasu, their married life was good for about a year, but after that Paravasu totally shunned her and started concentrating on gaining spiritual wisdom. Later Paravasu got an invitation to be the chief priest of the Yajna for which he left home and had not returned for seven years. After they quench their thirst for words, Vishaka and Yavakri further move into the bushes to quench their physical thirst. Aravasu and Nittilai reach the place exactly at this time and see the two of them physically involved. Vishaka runs homewards, while Aravasu carries the pot of water and follows her, to their surprise Raibhaya is back home. On knowing about the incident, Raibhya through his meditation invokes a *kritya* and sends a Bhrama Rakshasa to kill Yavakri. The only way for Yavakri to safeguard himself is by staying inside his father's hermitage. Vishaka and Aravasu run in two different directions to save the life of Yavakri. Aravasu runs towards the hermitage and conveys the message to Andhaka and moves on to meet Nittilai's father. Vishaka finds Yavakri near the banyan tree and pleads him to run away into the hermitage. It is then that Yavakri reveals to her that all these were planned events. He wanted to revenge on Raibhya's family for grabbing away all the honours due to his father. It was for this reason that he had taken up the rigorous penance and now he is all ready with consecrated water in his kamandalu by which he can burn the Bhrama Rakshasa into ashes. Yavakri even reveals to Vishaka that he was the one who called back Raibhya home earlier and also asked Aravasu to come exactly at that time, everything happened in favour of him so far. On hearing that Yavakri had used her true love as an instrument to his revenge, Vishaka pours out the consecrated water and the Rakshasa is almost near. Yavakri now runs towards the hermitage but the blind Andhaka does not recognise his footsteps. While he catches him on at the gate, the Rakshasa kills Yavakri. At Nittilai's village Aravasu is late and her marriage is arranged with a boy of her community. Disappointed he returns home and to their surprise Paravasu comes home after seven years. The news of Vishaka going astray was the reason for his return. On hearing that Raibhaya was jealous of his own son for grabbing the post of the chief priest and also he had been physically and sexually harassing Vishaka over the years, Paravasu shoots his arrow and kills his own father. He instructs Aravasu to do the last rites for their father and then come to the palace where the pooja was almost in the final stage. When Aravasu goes to the yajna, Paravasu cunningly puts the blame of their father's murder on Aravasu. The villagers hit Aravasu badly and he faints. On gaining consciousness he

learns that the actor manager and their troupe saved his life and Nittilai had left her husband and come to take care of Aravasu. The actor manager and Aravasu decide to reveal the truth to everyone by staging these incidents as a drama. They chose the story of lord Indra betraying his brothers Vishwarupa and Vritra. Aravasu takes the character of Vritra. According to the plot of the play, Indra is the son of Bhrama born in the Brahmin lineage, his brother Vishwarupa was born in the Kshatriya lineage and Vritra belongs to the demonic lineage. Indra is jealous of his brothers, he plans to kill Vishwarupa. So he invites him to ritual in the name of their father and asks Vritra not to enter the alter as he is a Rakshasa. During the fire sacrifice, Indra pushes Vishwarupa into the fire and kills him. On seeing this scene being enacted, Paravasu gets a self-realisation of the fatal sin which he has committed. Moreover the Brahma Rakshasa invoked by his father is also conversing with him asking for liberation. On knowing the truth about Paravasu the Rakshasa understands that he cannot grant him salvation. Paravasu at the peak of his realisation calmly walk into the fire without revealing the truth to the mass. Meanwhile as the drama is being enacted the mask worn by Aravasu has take control over him and he starts burning the stage. There is much tension and stampede among the crowd. The guards try to stop him, but in vain. Nittilai runs and pulls off the mask. With a sense of defeat that the death of his brother was unfavourable on his side as he could not prove his innocence, Aravasu and Nittilai start to move off but Nittilai's brother and husband find her and kill her. Aravasu who is in total defeat now walks into the fire carrying Nittilai's corpse. The fire extinguishes and Lord Indra appears in front of them. He grants Aravasu a wish of what ever he asks for. The crowd cry suggesting him to ask for rain, but Aravasu asks for the life of Nittilai. Indra gives him the realization that if the wheel of time roles back, all the dead would come back to life, Yavakri, Raibhya, Paravasu, and all the people dead. This would end up in a re-telecast of the tragedy again. Aravasu finally asks for the liberation of the Brahma Rakshasa which would have been Nittilai's wish too. Indra grants his wish and this act of humanity brings rain to the kingdom. With this the play ends.

Rage (RudraRasa) as an aesthetic element to beautify the play

The script of a drama is written by a playwright with full consciousness that it has to be enacted on a stage. Unlike a novelist whose ultimate end is the reading audience, a playwright has his work only half-done by writing the script, the script has to be further conceived by the director with the same understanding as the playwright and also enacted by the actors with the same emotions that the playwright tries to convey. As such the playwright needs to take extra care to describe the emotions clearly. Karnad being a genius in describing such emotions, skilfully inserts the required emotions within the script itself. As Dr.K.Sujatha states :

Karnad's re-working of the Yavakri myth in his play is a technique which most dramatists-follow. Not only does it allow the playwright to extend the dimensions of his art, but he is also assured of a definite set of emotional responses from his audience. (P.3)

The characters through which Karnad demonstrates the emotion of rage or the Rudra Rasa are, Yavakri, Vishaka, Rabhiya, Paravasu, Indra and Vritra. Though there is a little bit of this emotion seen in the characters of Aravasu, Nittilai and the Brahma Rakshasa, the emotion of compassion out beats the emotion of rage. If "The Fire and the Rain" is viewed as a revenge

play, Yavakri is the hero of the play. His burning desire for revenge against his uncle Raibhya is the reason for all the mishaps which follow. Even when Indra comes to grant his wish, Yavakri asks for knowledge for destruction

Yavakri: One night in the jungle, Indra came to me and said: 'You are ready now to receive knowledge. But knowledge involves control of passions, serenity, objectivity. 'And I shouted back: 'no. that's not the knowledge I want. That's not knowledge. That's suicide! This obsession. This hatred. This venom. All this is me. I'll not deny anything for myself. I want knowledge so I can be vicious, destructive!' (P.131)

Vishaka on her part, has a burning vengeance on her husband and her father-in-law. Her husband has abandoned her for seven years and her father-in-law has been physically and sexually assaulting her during these years. She is initially carried away that Yavakri has come in search of her out of true love, so she heeds to his request. However on knowing that it was all planned and she was used as an instrument by Yavakri, despite her urge to save his life she pours out the consecrated water which would destroy the Rakshasa.

Raibhya is another character who exhibits the Rudra rasa in the play. His reason for anger is that, though he is a learned senior, the king had chosen his elder son Parvasu as the chief priest for the yajna. As the yajna was supposed to be a seven-year long one, the king preferred Parvasu considering his young age. This enraged Raibhya, he showed all the resentment on Vishakha.

Vishakha : On the one hand, there's his sense of being humiliated by you. On the other, there's lust. It consumes him. An old man's curdled lust. And there's no one else here to take his rage out on but me. (P. 142)

Raibhya is being killed by Parvasu again out of rage. Parvasu is angry on his father for harassing his wife. Though Parvasu has abandoned his wife and doesn't love her anymore, he still cannot control his anger on hearing Vishakha's testimony. He further puts the blame on Arvasu because he is equally angry on him for having defying his caste by loving a tribal girl and having interest in acting.

The emotion of anger is also displayed in the story of Indra and Vritra enacted by the drama troupe. Indra is angry on his father Bhrama for making progeny in various castes.

Indra: ... After all, I am Indra, the King of the Gods. Should I then not be the Supreme in the three worlds? Should not Brahma the Father of All Creations, who gave me birth, have ensured that I stood unrivalled in all these domains? (P.166).

Vritra on his part has been instructed by Brahma to guard Vishwarupa as he anticipated danger from Indra. Vritra and Vishwarupa are inseparable, hence Indra is not able to harm Vishwarupa, so he cunningly plan a fire sacrifice in memory of their father and forbids Vritra from entering the altar as he is a demon clan. In the fire sacrifice Indra kills Vishwarupa. This enrages Vritra who wants to revenge on Indra,

Vritra: You can elude me, Indra. But you can't escape me. Even if you fly like a falcon across ninety-nine rivers I'll find you. I'll destroy you. I'll raze your befouled sacrifice to the ground. (P.170)

Along with these characters, even the serial deaths, the fire, the drought and many other situations are infused by Karnad to magnify the Rudra Rasa in the play.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, in drama, the playwright has a crucial requirement to fulfil. His script should be well written to convey the exact emotions to the director, actor and even the audience. Karnad, the master playwright is a genius in this skill. The script in itself carries the required emotions. On just reading the play one can understand proportion of emotions added by Karnad in the play. The play *The Fire and The Rain* has all the elements visible in the renowned revenge play *The Spanish Tragedy*. Rage is the most important ingredient in the play. The scripting of the characters like Yavakri, Vishakha, Raibhya, Paravasu ect are well scripted to exhibit the Rudra Rasa.

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