



## Bhasa's Style in the Pratimanataka

### KEYWORDS

Bhasa, Style, Sentiments, Figures of Speech, Pratima.

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### ABSTRACT

*Bhasa was one of the very early Sanskrit dramatists known from literary sources. Even though he was known from secondary sources, the texts authored by him were lost in the ravages of time. It was in the year 1909 that Mahamahopadyaya T. Ganapatisastri found a collection of his dramas in a Kerala temple and published them through the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series. The set of manuscripts, among others, included Svapnavasavadatta which is well known to be a drama by Bhasa. Mahamahopadyaya Sastri established the identity of Bhasa's authorship of all the plays not only on the evidence of the above manuscript collection in a single codex, but also on internal evidences in the dramas, like the dramatic structure, content and stylistic peculiarities. He derived materials for his plays from epic histories and Puranas as also from popular folk-lore, with his own modification to suit the dramatic purpose well. At first sight, the greatness of Bhasa becomes evident from his masterly handling of as many as seven types of dramatic art in Indian conception. These dramas may be divided into political - Pratijna, Dutavakya and Dutaghatotkaca, Social plays - Avimaraka, Swpna, Religious plays - Abhiseka, Pratima and Balacarita, Sociological plays - Madhyamavyayoga and Carudatta, and Ethical plays - Karnabhara, Pancaratra and Urubhanga. There is pure comedy like Avimaraka, pure tragedy and Urubhanga, serious comedy of morals like Pratima and Abhiseka with tragic incidents interwoven, and also plays like Karnabharam with tragedy brooding over it, but not actually bursting.*

Both in eastern and western literary criticism, style is considered signification in adjudging the merits of a literary work. Indian critics from Bharata to Jagannatha Pandita have dealt with this concept elaborately in their works. Style has attracted the attention of the western scholars also from Aristotle downwards. Style which is called in 'riti' in Sanskrit. Vamana has mentioned three styles, 1. Vidarbhi (peculiar to writers in the Vidarbha Country), 2. Gaudi (Peculiar to writers in Gauda, Bengal), 3. Panchli (peculiar to the Panchala-desa). Three are more are referred to by Bhojaraja:-Avantika (peculiar to Avanti or Ujjayini), Latiya (peculiar to Lata Gujarat and Magadhi (peculiar to Magadha or Bihar).

Style or Riti is declared to be the very soul of poetry by Vamana. Riti is a particular arrangement of words adopted for the enhancement of poetic charm. Other rhetoricians like Bhamaha, Rudrata, and Dandin have described 'riti' with their own norms. Aristotle opines that style should vary in accordance with emotion. A good style, according to him should have the virtues like simplicity, elegance and vigor. So, style in western tradition is related to the author's characteristic way of writing. Dr. Raghavan discusses the apparent contradiction in both the systems and comes to the conclusion that style is essentially the same in both the traditions.

Coming to the style of Bhasa, we find that his writings are more like those of Valmiki and Vyasa than of the later poets like Kalidasa and others. His style imbibes the qualities of smoothness, effortlessness and fluidity. In the pratimanata of Bhasa the dialogues are intensely dramatic, closely argumentative and direct. As in Valmiki Ramayana, the verses are often as extension of conversational speech. The dialogues are natural, realistic and always have a human touch. ( the dialogue between Dasaratha and Sumantra in the 2<sup>nd</sup> act, and Kaikeyi and Bharata in the 6<sup>th</sup> act). Thus the style Bhasa is unique and well suited to the dramatic purpose.

### Sentiments

Rasa or sentiment plays a vital role in the sphere of any type of literary work, be it a poem or a drama. The main function of a good style is to embellish the sentiment of the play. Most of the scholars view Karuna to be the chief sentiment of Pratima. Prof. Ganapati Sastri feels that the sentiment of this drama is Dharmavira mingled with Karunarasas. According to him "the dharmavira manifests itself in the enthusiasm displayed by the hero in cherishing the single thought of carrying out his dharma fulfilling the mandates of his royal father. Though the elegance of the language and the charm of the matter make these Natakas appear easy of comprehension yet the profundity of the sentiment therein makes an explanatory commentary a requisite to the student of Sanskrit" Prof. Dhruva. Prof. Pusalkar and others take 'Karuna' to be the prominent rasa here. Even though the drama ends with a happy note of Rama being coronated as the king, the body of the drama is permeated with the sentiment of pathos.

### Figures of Speech

Bhamaha and Dandin regard Alankara to be the main element in a literary piece. Bhasa has done enough justice in the employment of notable figures of speech like Utpreksa (Poetic Fancy), Rupaka (Metaphor) Upama (Simile). And Svabhavokti (Natural description) in the right contexts. For example, in the description of things around as seen from a moving chariot (III Act.2) and Dasaratha's condition at the separation of Rama, the playwright handles Utpreksa in a fine manner. An example of Rupaka is found in the description of different aspects of the Valkala in different ways (I Act. 28). Bharata's comparing himself to a thirsty traveler going to an empty river is a striking example of Upama (III Act.10). Bharata's anticipations reaching Ayodhya supply us with Svabhavokti (III Act-3 II Act-8).

Apart from the above important figures, Bhasa has also employed other Alankara appropriately. One such example is Sasandeha which we find in the Valkala incident as well as in Laksmana's mistaking Bharata for Rama on account of

their being very much alike. Besides the proper delineation of rasa and use of Alankara, Bhasa has some peculiar syntactic and semantic usages in this drama. From a strict literary standpoint they may be taken as defective, yet in the case a Bhasa, who did not adhere to the norms prescribed by the later-day rhetoricians, these so-called defects fit into the context and naturally add to the charm of the style of the dramatist. Like Valmiki and Vyasa, Bhasa has his own style which cannot be judged in the light to the criteria of later-day critics.

### Repetitions

Repeated use of one and the same idea or word is considered a literary defect except where a new shade of meaning or special emphasis is intended. Bhasa ably uses this technique without laying himself open to the charge of redundancy. **1. Words:** In Pratimanataka, Rama is compared to the moon in most of the places. Even though 'chandra' and its synonyms are repeated often, these acquire special significance and thus enhance the charm of the text. Usually Rama is called 'Ramachandra', so in the contexts like I Act. 4, IV Act. 12, this repetition does not mar the dramatic beauty of the play. Another such example is the word 'abhirama' which is used as an epithet to Rama in II-Act.4 VIAct.7 and other places. Here too the word Rama is used and it has the contextual relevance. **2. Verse:** The verse "Vaksah prasaray" occurs in two places (IV Act.16, VII Act.17). This verse is addressed by Rama to Bharata once at Citrakuta and later at the hermitage on the way to Ayodhya on Rama's return. Even though it is a repetition it emphasizes brotherly love and filial affection. Another such example is "narapati-nidhanam" etc. addressed by Sumantra in two places (IV Act.18, VIAct.8). In the context of a drama, this is not a flaw; rather it conveys the emotion and excitement of a devoted minister Sumantra.

### Unclear Expressions

The meaning of the passage "tate dhanurnamayi" (IAct. 22) is not clear. It can have two contrary meanings, when the word namayi is taken as a verb and again taken as a namayi (two separate words). As a verbal form namayi is incorrect, as the use of only an imperative first person singular form is appropriate in the context. The correct verbal form then will be namayi or namayai.

Another example of ambiguity is found in Rama's speech to Laksmana (IAct.20) when the latter takes up the bow and arrow on hearing of the stoppage of the coronation ceremony. Here, in the expression sa raja paripalyatam, it is not clear whether the word 'raja' refers to Bharata or Dasaratha.

### Words with rare meanings

Like Vyasa and Valmiki, Bhasa at times uses words in their etymological sense rather than the established one. A number of such examples are met with in thirteen plays. In Pratimanataka an example of this is the term Udghata. The usual meaning of the term Udghata is 'beginning'. But in the text Ko nu khalu udghata abhisekasya (I Act.4/5)

it is obvious that the poet uses udghata in the sense of 'obstacle'. But such a usage is not found elsewhere. In a later context the same word is taken to mean "a new fact" 'fresh evidence' etc. in the sentence "kena khalu udghatena mam (VI Act. 12/13).

### Literary defects

In literary constructions certain defects are to be scrupulously avoided according to rhetoricians. An unimportant thing should not be given undue importance and the sequence of events should be maintained by the writer. An example of Bhasa's departure from this is the speech of Sumantra in the 4<sup>th</sup> Act where he blames his long life that had compelled him to witness grievous happenings though longevity is usually taken to be a good and desirable thing. In the verse 'narapati ni dhanam bhavattpravasam' (IV Act.18) etc, Bhasa is not particular about the order of events though strictly the order is to be maintained. The last line of the same verse, 'guna iva bahvaparraddamasam me'(IV Act.18) is inadequate and obscure and does not fit in with the other three lines; such instances are called Visama.

Another example is the verse 'paksabhyam paribhuya' (VI Act. 3), which gives an account of Jatayu's efforts and exploits against Ravana. Here, the author has used active voice in the first two lines and passive voice in the last two lines. This is a rhetorical defect called 'Prakramabhanga'. It may be noted that Kalidasa in his Sakuntala indulges in such a mix-up of active and passive constructions. While some may consider it a literary flaw, the admirers of the poet may consider it a freedom the poet exercises in using Sanskrit.

**Conclusion:** On the whole, the style of Bhasa is quite peculiar to him. As there is no Alankara treatise contemporaneous with Bhasa, it is not possible to categorise his style technically. But as an ancient dramatist, he has set an excellent model of dramatic style for later writers to emulate.

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