THE RHYTHMIC ATTUNEMENT IN DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE

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The characteristic experience of creativity intrinsic to human consciousness that seeks aesthetic enjoyment and spiritual ability to conjecture with the reality or the absolute is a perspicuous convergence of Indian literary stimulus. It can be said that Poetry attains aesthetic enjoyment by the greatness in the ideological symbols combined with seriousness of language. The topological and mereological interconnections between poetry and spirituality are essentially the quintessence of devotional literature in India especially in Sanskrit. This is reflected in the Dhvanyāloka:

'Vācyānām vācakānām ca yadaucityena yojanam
Rasādiviṣayeṇaitat karma mukhyam mahākaveh
Vyangyavyañjakabhāvesmin vividhe sambhavatyapi
Rasādimaya ekasmin kavih syādavadhānavan
Prasiddhepi prabandhānam nānārasanibandhane
Eko rasongīkartavyasteṣāmutkarṣamicchatā'

The science of Poetics has a divine origin as it entails the proclaimed deliverance of it by Siva to Brahma who transferred it to others. This poetics later develops into 18 adhikaraṇas according to its teachers- like Suvarṇanābha, Pulastya, Parāśara, Kāmadeva, Citrāngada, Bharata etc. Generally, the poetic import of devotional literature in India is traceable to the Vedic period itself, though it occurs in a sutra form which is unstructured. The Upaniṣads also contain the spiritual pursuits of man in the form of Upāsanā that is again poetic elucidation aiming at the highest goal of human destiny. The magnificent display of devotional adumbration is distinctively embedded in the Purāṇas. The Bhāgavata seems to be the best source of devotional literature. Ramayana which is considered as the first and foremost expression of

poetics revealing the rasa of karuṇa and Mahābhārata articulating the rasa of śānta epitomize the sense of poetic aspects of devotion and are still implanted in the hearts of people to defend their emotional serenity on spirituality. The significance here is that through the poetics the singer makes differences of capacity of the hearers and readers directly relevant to the moral development as well as plausible preferences for salvation.

The Devotional Reflexivity in Ancient India:

The Vedas being the connoisseur of Indian imaginative thinking, the poetical rhetoric generally seems to be clothed in prose and is in the form of fervent prayers especially to Uṣus[1] and the Sun. Such poetical enumeration contains four Upamās. In RV.I.164.20, there is a tacit expression of an atiśayokti while in I.164.11, it is Vyatireka. The Rgvedic dialogues[2] seem to be highly poetic and imaginative some of which form the foundations of later dramas. Many of the hymns consist of figures of speech such as Upamā, Atiśayokti and Rūpaka Anuprāsa and Yamaka[3]. The aim of the sage here is to propitiate God through a new and forceful verse as a product of the speech[4]. It is held here that 'where men of wisdom create by their intellect verse after winnowing words, then men of equal knowledge understand meaning contained in it; In their verses (speech) blessed glory is enshrined'[5]). The implication here is that poetry brings bliss and glory to human beings.

The basic conception on Poetics is evident in Agnipurāṇa that is believed to be the encyclopedia on different classes of Vidyas which in the form of instructions by Agni to Vasiṣtha. Because of its divine nature the proper understanding of the Vidyas makes one omniscient. But some of the earlier works on poetics designated as kāvyālankāra of Bhāmaha, as well as the works of Vāmana and Rudraṭa deserve due place in the history of poetics. According to them, a good poet presents without hindrance things without cetana as cetana and vice versa (bhāvānacetanānapi cetanavaccetanānapyacetanavat). In the words of Mammaṭa, poetry does not directly teach religion, philosophy or morality but indirectly and implicitly. Bhāgavata says-

'Vartitavyam śamicchadbhirbhaktavanna tu krṣṇavat

Ityevam bhaktiśāstrāṇam tātparyasya vinirṇayah'.

Mammaṭa says: the poets get immediate and higher delightful experience. A true poet requires three essential prerequisites- pratibhā (imagination), vyutpatti (culture) and abhyāsa (constant practice)[6]. Pratibhā is the power wherein the poet sees the subject of his poem as steeped in beauty and gives to its readers in apt language a vivid picture of the beauty he has seen. Accordingly Pratibhā means 'mental faculty which presents ever fresh flashes of coruscations of ideas with unmeṣa or ever fresh delineations of pictures of the matters to be described with ullekha'. Pratibhā is also utpādya and aupādhikī which occurs as external agents like mantras, grace of God etc[7].. Goddess Sarasvati manifests in great poets' special imagination which is uncommon[8]. The Bhāgavata literature seems to be at the pinnacle of such poetic justification for all the three prerequisites are demonstrated pristinely in this. The experience of the seers as well as their imaginative power is transferred into the devotional manifestation. For Mammaṭa, a poet's work is 'hlādaikamayī'. Kāvya becomes endowed with rasa only by the emotional fervor produced by it. Poetry then is the 'ramanīyārthapratipādaka'. The common application of the 9 rasas leaves bhakti as ignoring it for a mere bhāva.

Significantly, the Upaniṣadic sage Yājñavalkya discloses that by reciting the sāmans according to rules without mistakes, a genuine singer reaches Brahman (realizes the supreme Reality). He extends the same reward to those who instead of the Vedic hymns sings the seven kinds of non-vedic ones called aparāntaka, ullopyaka. Mudraka, prakarī, uvenaka, sarovindu and uttara. He views that a repeated singing of the four kinds of other songs- mitākṣarā, aparārka (Bharata), viswarūpa (Nārada) and dīpakalikā (Viśākhila) leads to mokṣa (enabling the mind to concentrate itself on the supreme soul, and those who know the essence of playing on the lute, who are experts in the knowledge of srutis, jatis and know tala reach the road to mokṣa[9]. The seven songs are said to be promulgated by Brahma are holy and propitiate the Gods.

POETRY AND DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE:

In ancient India, poetry was the outcome of the vision of dharma. It is not simply an imaginary visualization but the effect of a concerted effort by the sages. It is an inquisitive attempt with the purity of

thought and self-instigating and is therefore endowed with the experience of bliss. A clear elaboration on poetics is brought out by Rudraṭa who incorporates the rasa of the Nātyaśāstra in kāvyas for the first time (Kāvyālankara). The rasa was included to evolve in the reader or hearer the rasa or emotional experience which is of four kinds- vibhāva, anubhāva, vyabhicāri and śāntirasa. The last one brings tranquility to the mind. The poem rouses certain dormant and permanent propensities in the minds of people through appropriate stimuli such as words or songs a pleasurable state of the mind. These permanent moods are called sthāyībhāvas. This cannot be broken up by any other bhāvas like vibhāva, anubhāva or vyabhicāri and only makes these subordinate to it. For Abhinavagupta, the śāntarasa is the greatest rasa, for; it is closely related to mokṣa, the highest goal of human life. The derived poetic pleasure is aloukika and is like Brahmāsvāda. The Abhinavabhārati calls bhakti as rati. The devādiviṣayarati is called bhāva and is separated from other rasas[10]. Śama is said to be the sthāyībhāva of śāntarasa while vairāgya, samsārabhīrutā are vibhāvas and mokṣaśāstracintā is anubhāva. Mammaṭa also speaks of the 9th rasa as śānta (VI.35) and says that the sthāyībhāva of śānta is Nirveda. According to Bhoja (Śrngāraprakāśa), rasa is only one, that poetry is beautiful because of its prema and the one rasa may be called śrngāra; it pervades the soul of man owing to the impression made on the soul in many births and it is the one cause from which spring many good characters of the soul[11]. The rasa realization is ānandamaya. Bhattanāyaka looks upon rasāsvāda as in the same category of Brahmasākṣātkāra. The two powers of the word- bhāvakatva- vyāpara and bhoga- give enjoyment to the reader is like the ānandāsvāda and it is like Parabrahmāsvāda.

The Dhvani theory is an extension of the Rasa theory. According to this, the best poetry is that which contains a charming vyangya (suggestive) sense[12] . Only those words which have particular qualities and are arranged in particular manner and contain a charming vyangya constitute a kāvya[13]. Vyangya is divided into rasādi, alankāra and vastu. The first includes all the 9 rasas and their ābhāsas. Vastudhvani means a mere fact is suggested by the words that expresses another sense.

sense. Alankāradhvani means what is suggested is an imaginative thinking which if expressed in so many words assumes the form of a figure of speech. According to Dhvanyāloka poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings (e.g.; Vālmīki in Rāmāyaṇa); but the poet himself not affected by this feeling. There is one devotional reflection of Alankāradhvani in the verse-

Nirupādānasambhāramabhitāveva tanvate

Jagaccitram namastasmai kalaslavyaya śūline-

The Dhvani school considers śabda, artha, guṇa, alamkāra and doṣa as only of secondary importance, for, these are the secondary appearances of poetry and it needs to be penetrated deeper into the poetry- the implicit meaning- the emotional atmosphere are moved that underlies the best poetry. As in Vedānta, objects of expression are held to be not the ultimate Reality but only the manifestation of Reality. So words and expressed meanings come to be regarded as the mere external appearance of the poetry and the emotional mood which a poem communicates to the readers came to be regarded as the essence of poetry.

In the above context, devotional poetry can be regarded as having a double purpose- viz. giving the highest delight (sadyah paranirvrti) and also contributing towards a higher mode of conduct and character (upadeśa) in a subtle persuasive way. When dhvani or rasa is said to be the soul of poetry, it is virtually employing the language of the Upaniṣads about Ātman and Ānanda. The remarkable similarity between the aesthetic experiences derived from reading a poem and spiritual experience obtained from Vedanta philosophy by one who has realized and contemplated upon the Reality are justified as Brahmāsvādamivānubhāvayan. But the difference is that poetic experience is temporary while spiritual is permanent. Abhinavagupta quotes from the dialogue between Bhairava and Bhairavi that there are five signs of a man who has attained the highest spiritual eminence- suniscalā rudrabhakti mantrasiddhi sarvatattvavaśitva kṛtyasampatkavitva and sarvaśāstrārthavettrtva[14].

The Credence of Kṛṣṇabhakti:

Bhakti representing a dedication of oneself before a higher personality leaves no other emotion in its generation. It is the combination of many a feeling harmoniously mingled together to produce delight in the mind of devotee and thereby to evolve a suitable atmosphere for bringing welfare and prosperity as well as spiritual conscience in one's life. The feeling of obedience and humility introduced in devotional literature suppresses the egoism that leads man to a negative morbidity. Bhakti is different from Upāsanā and worship. In Upāsanā, there is silence and it is without symbolic presentation. It is a meditative mood on Reality. In the case of worship, symbolism is at its zenith. Images of God in different names, bhāvas, rasas or exaggerations are impregnated into the mode of worship. It is mostly external and associated with karmakāṇḍa and therefore can be said as preliminary state of affairs. Bhakti involves some symbolism in the primary stages but later on all these get discarded off. Meditation is prescribed for those who have abandoned samsāra.

Uparicaravasu belonging to the ancient Sūrya dynasty can be said as the original architect of the Bhakti school which was a rebellion movement against the Yajña and Karma of Brahmanism. His system was called 'Pāñcarātra'. It is against the Pañcāgnividyā and Pañcamahāyajña and was also known as Bhāgavatadharma. Chāndogya describes it as 'Ekāyana' system. To this school belongs the greatest among the ancient Bhaktas like Nārada and Sanatkumāra. In the initial period, this favored the Vedic treatises and considered Bhakti, Ahimsā, Vairāgya, Satya and Brahmacarya as very important. Later, these concepts were relegated and transformed into a new version of Bhakti which considered Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as incarnates. Viṣṇu was considered as the greatest God who extends into the universe and beyond and is the permanent entity. This system was based on the Ṛgvedic hymn 'Viṣṇoh karmāṇi paśyata yato vratāni paścase Indrasya yujya sa vā'[15]. This mantra was made the foundation for dharma and this bhakti turned into Vaiṣṇavabhakti. This Bhakti movement gained momentum during the 8th century when the Alwar kings of Tamil Nadu wrote stotrakāvyas on Rāmabhakti which highlights mainly ecstatic dāsyabhakti.

Rūpagoswāmin was inspired as a poet to write on Krṣṇabhakti in the backdrop of the Vaiṣṇava movement led by Caitanya in Bengal on the basis of Rasa theory. Two of his works- Bhaktirasāmrtasindhu and Ujjvalanīlamaṇi are significant in this respect. It is said that religious hankerings and spiritual mysticism are clothed in the language and ideology of earthly love and passion. Rūpagoswamin refers to Krṣṇa as 'śrngāra incarnate' in Ujjvalanīlamaṇi and describes as 'ghananīla'. In the Bhaktirasāmrtasindhu, bhaktirasa which is the chief among the rasas (śāntaprītipreyovatsalojjvalanamasu) is displayed as of esoteric character. The bhaktirasa has the madhurā rati as sthāyībhāva and is called 'madhura' when it reaches the position of aesthetic enjoyment through the vibhāvas. The Ujjvalanīlamaṇi is in sthāyībhāvaprakaraṇa (verses 54-55) elaborates the six bhāvas as sneha, māna, praṇaya, rāga, anurāga and mahābhāva which are playful manifestations of love. Śrngāra is holy, appears attractive to the eye and pure. In the rasālambana, vibhāvas are Krṣṇa as the viṣaya of madhura rati and his lovers who are the āśraya of madhurarati. The quality of Krṣa, his actions and decorations are exciting uddīpanavibhāva. In bhakti, sraddhā is the sthāyībhāva; sneha and loulya are two other anubhāvas.

Rhythmic Attunement

The most obvious formal property of devotional literature is its bhaktirasa which deals with the dignified articulation of human emotional content to a higher realm as bhakti. It is expressed in the form of fervent prayers to the Gods. Through repeated recitations in a peculiar way, the poet imbibes a sense of instigation in the reader or hearer and also in him. Certain words are arranged in an extraordinary way so that repeated words are used in the beginnings or the end of the verse. Like the wind blowing over the ocean creates the movement in the form of waves there arise a movement in the mind of people that is an attunement to rhythmic singing. Finally the hearer as well as the poet become tranquil and feel the ecstasy of bliss (ānandāsvāda) that is equated with Brahmānandāsvāda because of the predominance of purity of thought in that. The power of speech is that it penetrates very deep and brings unmeṣa (exhilaration) and thereby a communion with the desired object of devotion. The prerequisites of a poet such as pratibhā, vyutpatti and abhyāsa are to be exhibited in the devotional attunement.

The pratibhā may be structured in the form of external agencies like mantras or connected with the grace of God and are sung rhythmically. The stotrakāvyas are the foremost expressions of this rhythmic attunement. Some of the stotras like Mahiṣāsuramardinīstotra composed by Rāmakṛṣṇakavi depicts the grandeur of rhythmic attunement in a fascinating way. Stotras by Śankara, Vallabha, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Madhusūdanasarasvati, Appayyadīkṣita, Melputtur, Pūntānam and the like deserve special mention in this regard. The Nārāyanīyam is the exemplary display of poetics delineating devotional elements. However, one should remember that the utterance should be in a proper rhythmic way and the implied meanings should be rightly understood.

Any discourse from Bhaktikavyas from the religious or philosophical perspectives would always provide an exciting challenge in that the discourse strives to raise the level of awareness on devotion through a proper understanding of the implied meaning. Being the offshoots of personal experience this intellectual ferment requires greater perseverance in that the poetic congeniality strides into the inner realm of other persons. It is in fact remarkable that this congeniality can be brought through what is termed 'dhvani' or pitch of the poetry. In application of the dhvani theory, the pitch provides the most important index of distinction between the Stotrakāvyas and other devotional literature. While the Stotrakāvyas are high-pitched and rhythmic, the other devotional kavyas either retain to a lesser degree the pitch and the rhythm or not. The main aim of these Stotrakāvyas is to pin one's faith in the idea of God which could enhance one's attention on it and realize what one is or his difference with God Itself.

The major tenet of the Dhvani theory is that there is a necessity in undertaking the true implications of the discourses. Through the real rhythmic recitation (dhvanana) can only the primary meaning of the words and their congeniality be realized and one could experience the ānandāsvada of the highest degree leading to paramānandāsvāda. For, in the strict logical sense, the recitation without rhythm implies a secondary meaning like the attributes of Brahman in the form of śrngara or rasabhāvas can be understood. The repeated dhvani in the proper pitch arouses the divine content in man (self) and when it peaks, one is completely immersed in the ecstasy of visualizing the respective at-

tributes. A continuous recitation makes one transcend into the higher realm wherein the attributes are discarded and bhakti becomes implanted deeply and finally he feels the oneness with the divine. In this state, the God flashes on to the devotees' mind and he feels the identity. This is in compatibility with the Upanisads 'one who becomes steadfast in Brahman, becomes Brahman itself'.

While the śṛngāra and the rasabhāvas predominate in the secondary understandings, the śāntarasa manifests to the maxim in its primary sense. As one transcends into the Absolute, one can hear the rhythmic sound of the conch, the flute, the drum, the bell etc. These give ecstasy and bliss.

Now, from the point of dhvani, three variants can be understood that leads to the spiritual progress-

1. A Loud utterance with the required rhythmic sound,
2. Utterance with the slight movement of the lips, and
3. without lip movement, silent utterance with full concentration.

These three stages are compatible with the Vedantic notion of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana. The third stage is steadfastness in Brahman and is nididhyāsana. He leaves the objective world for the attainment of Brahmabhāva.

Contemporary Apprehensions:

The aim of Bhakti is to develop a sense of good will in man or the awareness about the divinity and realize one's non-separateness from the divine. An analysis of the present contextual ideations shows that the aim of transformation into good will has given way to good wish that aims at seeking for satisfaction of one's needs or wishes. Because of the incommensurability component in bhakti, the straining of every means to innocent and sincere actions has been discarded. The so-called devotees decline to take the liveliest wish for goodness in place of wish. The activity of the faculty of desire is the determinant of action in one's lenient power incompatible with the good wish. Contrary to this, the works of some organizations in concretizing the essence of bhakti and imbibing the sense of good will in the minds of people aim at greater reflective propensity. In so far as the activity of good will is made attuned with Consciousness, there is spiritual growth and it leads

to oneness with the Supreme, dispensing off sorrows and pains. In order to arrest the social denigration, bhakti is the most acceptable panacea and let us hope move together. It is said in Gita: "Satatam kīrtayanto mām yatantaśca drdhavratāh".

References

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4. Ibid. X.71.2
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7. Kāvyānukramaṇikā of Hemacandra p.4-5
8. Locana on Dhvanyāloka I.6
9. Yājñavalkyasmrti.III.113-115
10. A.Bh.Vol.I. p.340
11.Srngaraprakasa. V.1-2.p.365
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