



Babar Bānī and Karana Rasa: Explanation of Oppression

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Indian thought there has never been any doubt that the emotional content or aspect of life has intrinsic value. So in Indian theories of art and literature, the states of mind, or say emotional states, bhāva, constitute the core aesthetic experience-art creates and communicates these states of mind, these dominant emotional states, and the reader/audience experiences these states of mind. If the art/literary composition succeeds in giving enjoyment by evoking some state(s) of mind, then the work is aesthetically satisfactory and is beautiful.

Ācārya Bharata, puts forth this by saying that each one of us is fitted with a built-in structure of sthāyībhāvās (basic sentiments) which are the modified forms of basic drives or instincts as a result of centuries of evolutionary process of humanization and social living. These sthāyībhāvās (basic sentiments) are heightened to rasadaśā (a relishable state) by the poet so that we have one rasa (aesthetic sentiment) corresponding to each of them. The corresponding rasas (aesthetic sentiments) of the sthāyībhāvās (basic sentiments) are śrṅgār (erotic), karuṇa (pathetic), raudra (anger), vīra (heroic), bhayānaka (fear), hāsyā (laughter), bībhatsa (disgust), adbhuta (wonder), śānta, bhakti and vātsalya. The poet succeeds in doing this by resorting to the devices of concretization. Bharata has put it in his Nāṭyaśāstra : “vibhāvanubhāvavyābhicārisamyogatarasaniṣapattih” : the savouring of the emotion is possible through the combination or integration of these elements, vibhāva (causes and determinants of the rise of an emotion) anubhāva (gestures expressive of what is going on in the heart or the mind of main characters, like casting a terrified glance, heaving a sigh or involuntarily shedding a tear) and vyābhicāribhāvās (transitory

Emotions which go along with and consequently reinforce prevailing mood or emotional disposition). The vibhāvā (causes and determinants of the rise of an emotion) are of two kinds: ālamban (supporting causes, usually the hero or the heroine or such objects) and uddīpan (features or circumstances that accentuate the feelings of ālamban (hero or heroine). The ālamban (supporting causes, usually the hero or the heroine or such objects) are again of two types--viṣayālamban (person or object of the rise of an emotion or the person or object for whom the emotion is awakened) and āśryālamban (person in whom the emotion is awakened). Through the conjunction of these elements the poet activates, with some kind of empathetic induction, the propensity of sthāyībhāvās (basic sentiments) in the reader and the movement it is consummated, the sahr̥daya experiences an afflatus or transport which is designed as rasa (aesthetic sentiment).

It was karuṇa rasa that was the first of all the rasas to be depicted by the first poet, Vālmīki as the principal rasa. Vālmīki, the first great poet in his exquisite verse emanated out of the sudden exposure to the incident of the separation of the karuṇa birds found outlet in the śloka metre. The verse bore the vehement passion of the wailing heart shocked by the incident of the innocent male bird weltering on the ground in his own blood, while the helpless female bereaved of her loving mate cried her heart out, being vaguely conscious of the untold suffering she would have to undergo without him. The incident sent forth a shriek of terror and agony. His heart was touched with a deep feeling of pity for her grief, and the intense pathos of the situation filled Vālmīki's heart leading to a sudden outburst of emotion in the form of exquisite intense śloka. The first great poet, Vālmīki would have witnessed many incidents in his life, but when he keenly experienced the vehemence of the karuṇa, it brought forth the melting of his mind to such a vigorous state that the poet lost himself in the total absorption of the incident. Bhavabhūti, the poet-dramatist too had the same vehement and all-engrossing experience of the karuṇa rasa.

The honour of giving a very important place to karuṇa rasa goes to Bhavabhūti who is considered to be a poet of great skill in delineating the karuṇa rasa, “kāruṇyambhavabhūtirevatanute” (Bhavabhūti alone knows how to delineate karuṇa rasa). Speaking about the karuṇa rasa he says, “ekorasahkaruṇaeva” there is only on rasa which undergoes various transformations like water which assumes the form of ripples and waves. The statement can be interpreted that only karuṇa rasa which is found to be manifested on account of the presence of the different causes such as vibhāva, anubhāvas, vyābhicāribhāvas becomes the object of experience of the sahr̥dayas, the aesthete in different forms like the vīra, and śṛṅgāra etc. Depending upon the circumstances the same water appears in different forms like the bubbles and waves. But, it is only the appearance, and there is no change in the nature of original water. Similarly, karuṇa too appears in different forms of different rasas. Bhavbhūti has thus attributed highest status to the karuṇa rasa which is owing to his over sensitive disposition. However, ānandavardhana does agree with bhavbhūti that the first rasa is karuṇa rasa, but disagrees that it is the only rasa. However, the most important aspect is the rasa realization by the sādharmaṇikaruṇa which can be achieved by the proper and effective amalgamation of the vibhāva, anubhāvas and vyābhicāribhāvas. The sthāyibhāva of the karuṇa rasa is śoka aroused effectively by the vibhāva (determinants), such as suffering or affliction under any circumstances or curse, separation from near and dear ones, loss of wealth, killing, bondage, extradition, suffering and death due to any circumstances etc. all serve as the vibhāva (determinants) depicted by the anubhāvas (consequents), such as heaving of sigh, shedding tears, paralysis, lamentation, dryness of mouth, discolouration of body, rapid breathing and loss of memory etc. The transitory emotions vyābhicāribhāvas are aversion, depression, sorrow, inquisitiveness, agitation, passion, weariness, fear, despair, piteousness, sickness, stupor, insanity, epilepsy, death, torpidity, trembling, discoloration, tears, change in tone etc. ĀcāryaShāradātanaya opines that karu (distress) which is endurable and whose dhī or consciousness is karuṇa or pity occasions the karuṇa rasa which is generated by kleśa or distress. Bharata considers bhaya or trāsa among the sañcārīs of karuṇa. Bhaya can be created by an act of offending ones’ suspicion, object or situation of suspense and trāsa by unknown factors, governed by powers beyond human control. It is to be noted that Bharata includes bhaya primarily among the sthāyīs or dominant emotions. As, sudden fear is transient in nature, trāsa imbued with pain becomes an ineffective transitory strain to evoke the karuṇa rasa.

Śrī Guru GranthSāhib is a religious scripture, a compilation of spiritual/mystical hymns with a common philosophy but written by different spiritual masters, prominent saints (Bhagats) and some others spiritual poets from the Indian subcontinent. The different authors whose writings are included in the scripture lived between the twelfth to the seventeenth century and belonged to different faiths and classes/strata of society. The Sikhs regard Śrī Guru GranthSāhib as a complete, inviolable and final embodiment of the message for them. There is to be no word beyond the Word. And that’s how their last guru, Guru Gobind Singh, spoke to the congregation on October 20, 1708 shortly before his assassination. "Those who desire to behold the Guru should obey the GranthSāhib. Its contents are the visible body of the Guru." The "Bānī", Gurus inspired utterance, had always been the object of highest reverence for the Sikhs as well as for the Gurus themselves. It was equated with the Guru himself. "The bānī is the Guru and the Guru bānī" sang Guru Ram Das in measure Nat Narain. By accumulating the canon, Guru Arjan wished to affix the seal on the sacred word. It was also to be the perennial fountain of inspiration and the means of self-perpetuation for the community.

Babar was a Muslim Emperor from Central Asia who founded the Mughal dynasty of India. In 1504, he made himself master of Kabul and so came in touch with India whose reported wealth was a standing temptation. In 1517 and again in 1519, he swept down the Afghan plateau into the plains of India. He entered the Punjab in 1520 on the invitation of Daulat Khan Lodhi, the governor of the province, and 'Alam Khan, an uncle of Ibrahim Lodhi, then Delhi Sultan who were seeking help in checking the growing strength of Khan Lodhi. He first devastated Punjab the traditional gateway to India. Guru Nanak in his "Babarbanī" describes the atrocities of Babar and his man in Punjab. Babarbanī has the four hymns alluding to the invasions by Babar (1483-1530), are collectively known in Sikh literature. The title is derived from third a hymn which says: "Babarbanīphiri gal kuiruna rot khai -Babar's command or sway has spread; even the princes go without food" (GG, 417). Three of these hymns are in Asaraag of the standard recension of Guru Granth Sahib and the fourth is in Tilangraag. In his first invasion, Babar came as far as Peshawar. The following year he crossed the Indus and, conquering Sialkot without resistance, marched on Saidpur (now Eminabad, 15 km southeast of Gujranwala in Pakistan) which suffered the worst fury of the invading host. The town was taken by assault, the garrison was put to the sword and the inhabitants carried into captivity. During his next invasion in 1524, Babar ransacked Lahore. His final invasion was launched during the winter of 1525-26 and he became master of Delhi after his Victory at Panipat on 21 April 1526.

Guru Nanak was an eye-witness to the havoc created during these invasions. The *JanamSakhis* mention that Guru Nanak was taken captive at Saidpur. The Guru was given a load to carry and Mardana a horse to lead. But Mir Khan, says the *JanamSakhi*, saw that the Guru's bundle was carried without any support and

Mardana's horse followed him without the reins. He reported this to Sultan Babar who remarked, "If there was such a holy man here, the town should not have been destroyed." The *JanamSakhis* continue, "Babar kissed his (Guru Nanak's) feet. He said, 'On the face of this fair one, one sees God himself.' Then all the people, Hindus and Musalmans, began to make their salutations. The king spoke again, 'O dervish, accept something'. The Guru answered, 'I take nothing, but you must release all the prisoners of Saidpur and restore their property to them'. King Babar ordered, 'Those who are in detention be released and their property be returned to them'. All the prisoners of Saidpur were set at liberty". A little of his, outside of Babar's hymns, indicates that he may have been present in Lahore when the city was given up to plunder. In six pithy words this line conveys, "For a pahar and a quarter, i.e. for nearly four hours, the city of Lahore remained subject to death and fury" (GG,1412). The mention in one of the Babar's hymns of the use of guns by the Mughals against the Afghan defence relying mainly upon their war - elephants may well be a reference to the historic battle of Panipat which sealed the fate of the Afghan king, Ibrahim Lodhi. Guru Nanak was travelling back home after his trip to Mecca, and reached Saidpur from Punja Sahib and stayed with disciple and friend BhaiLalo. Guru Nanak and BhaiLalo, along with other older men, women and children were imprisoned by Babar in 1520 when the latter made his third invasion. Babar wanted to do subdue Saidpur, a town of landowners and merchants. The inhabitants of Saidpur, not knowing Babar's savage intentions, resisted and in his wrath Babar ordered a bloody massacre of city dwellers. But Babar had to leave Saidpur because of attacks at his home in Afghanistan. According to the *PuratanJanamSakhi*, Guru Nanak and BhaiLalo were made to carry loads of wealth on their backs for Babar's troops to take away.

Having seen this brutal attack of Babar on the common masses, Guru Nanak composed Babar Bānī puts forth an audacious question to God, on witnessing the misery caused by Babar's brutalities to undefended and unarmed civilians. "Just as a herd of meek cows is attacked by a bloodthirsty tiger," as Guru Nanak puts it: *sinh pave javage*. Here *karuna rasa* intensifies the concept of individual and human responsibility to be directly concerned with oppression and tyranny on this earth, and to resist it instead of either remaining unconcerned about it, or hoping for extra-terrestrial intervention to destroy it. He explicitly holds that under such circumstances it becomes the duty of an enlightened and spiritually committed person to come forward and to organize with those who are similarly cultured to resist evil in hope and faith that God will give success. But never to sit in the corner, or the fence, feeling that it is none of my concern or saying that it is the concern of God alone, nor to retreat and live like an ascetic away from society. The implication is clear: God helps those who help themselves. This distinguishes the society that Guru Nanak founded, from most of the previous societies that have existed in the East or elsewhere.

The fight against social and political injustice has historically been an integral part of Sikhism. As a religious leader Guru Nanak did not turn a blind eye to political suppression or consider it outside the realm of religion, but undertook political protest through his writings, speaking out against the cruelty of rulers. Guru Nanak wrote a number of passages about the Mughal invasion of India by Babur and the brutalities that he eye witnessed first hand (Babur Bānī). Guru Nanak also spoke out about the suffering of people at the hands of unscrupulous rulers and government officials.

Babar's hymns are not a narrative of historical events like Guru Gobind Singh's *BachitraNatak*, nor are they an indictment of Babar as his *Zafarnamah* was that of Aurangzeb. They are the outpourings of a compassionate soul touched by scenes of human misery and by the cruelty perpetrated by the invaders. The sufferings of the people are rendered here in accents of intense power and protest. The events are placed in the larger social and historical perspective where a decline in moral standards must lead to chaos.

A corrupt political system must end in dissolution. Lure of power divides men and violence unresisted tends to flourish. It could not be wished away by magic or sorcery Guru Nanak reiterated his faith in the Almighty and in His justice. Yet so acute was his realization of the distress of the people that he could not resist making the complaint: "When there was such suffering, such killing, such shrieking in pain, did not Thou, O God, feel pity? Creator, Thou art the same for all!"

Babar came like a whirlwind in his third attempt to conquer and subdue India. "He advanced to Sialkot, the inhabitants of which submitted and saved their possessions; but the inhabitants of Saidpur, who resisted, were put to the sword; their wives and children carried into captivity, and all their property plundered" Streams of innocent blood flowed in the city and the whole of Saidpur was a city of corpses. Guru Nanak sang this song of protest and lamentation and even poignantly blamed God, for these sufferings of the lambs in the hands of wolves, though he felt God would not take any blame on Himself. God had saved Khurasan, but terrorised poor Hindustan of Guru Nanak. The Master beheld the city in flames, and witnessed the agonizing sight of the fiendish slaughter, and young Hindu and Muslim women torn from their homes and dragged like captured slaves in the streets. Agonising shrieks of terror rose out of the smoke of desolation caused by Babur's wanton destruction. Guru Nanak sang the following death-dirge over this horrible massacre.

The beginning of the hymn prepares the reader's mind for something darkly ominous and forbidding. The keynote is struck in the very first line: "Having attacked Khuraasaan, Babar terrified Hindustan." Nothing seemed to be right. Babar invaded India and further Guru Nanak writes, "The Creator Himself does not take the blame, but has sent the Mughal as the messenger of death. There was so much slaughter that the people screamed."

The poet produces horror and agony of grief in the minds of the readers. Karuna Rasa intensifies the feeling of 'śoka' (sorrow) in the hearts of the readers which is its 'sthayibhava'. Here sorrow is a state of mind when it is tormented by the destruction, occurrence of the death of common masses befalling of an unwanted unexpected calamity, loss of possessions etc. caused by Babar. The sthayibhava of 'śoka' is aroused here by the vibhava (determinants) that is suffering, separation, screams and killing of people. Common masses are vishya and Guru Nanak and the reader are ashryalambanvibhava and terror and screams are the anubhāvas which are the cause of physical changes. The emotions of aversion, weariness, fear, despair, death which are conspicuous in the suffering masses are transitory emotions (vyabharibhavas).

At this juncture, Guru Nanak feels compassion followed by a kind of agitation and hence he asks God: "Didn't You feel compassion, Lord?" He desperately puts forth a question to God,

"O Creator Lord, You are the Master of all. If some powerful man strikes out against another man, then no one feels any grief in their mind. || 1 || Pause || But if a powerful tiger attacks a flock of sheep and kills them, then its master must answer for it."

He grieves for the people who are killed. The anubhāvas of loss of lives and bondage are at its extreme here.

But we further see that Nanak involves the Almighty in Karuṇa Rasa and is in 'Śoka' to see the plight and suffering of the people, he further starts praising the lord by saying-

"This priceless country has been laid waste and defiled by dogs, and no one pays any attention to the dead. You Yourself unite, and You Yourself separate; I gaze upon Your Glorious Greatness."

Guru Nanak, in these lines is creating a mental picture in the minds of the readers by the use imagery. He calls Babar a powerful tiger and all the suppressants as a flock of sheep and he even paints a vivid picture of the army of Mughals by calling them dogs. He is not happy with the doings of God and seems helpless. He says that-

"One may give himself a great name, and revel in the pleasures of the mind, but in the Eyes of the Lord and Master, he is just a worm, for all the corn that he eats."

He says this in reference to Babar that he may give himself a great name and may have many pleasures in his mind but in the eyes of the Almighty he is just another worm feeding on the lives of the people. But then also Nanak is angry by the doings of God. He is blaming the almighty for the Rasa into Bhakti Rasa and one can feel the meditative anubhavas of prayer by closing of eyes and bowing of heads in front of the supreme power.

Babar died on 26 December 1530 at Agra. Several years later his body was moved to its present grave in one of the gardens of Kabul.

Babar's invasion and occupation of India impacted the life in India in all aspects. His generals forced people to be converted to Islam, his Zamindar's and other influential people bestowed lands and property on the newly converted Muslims. Babar himself became a Ghazi which in Islamic terminology is a positive epithet and it means "a muslim who has killed a non-muslim", such a person is guaranteed heaven with "beautiful women, wine and rivers of honey." Another thing to note is that Babar destroyed several Hindu temples all over Punjab, and UP. Reason being is because founder of Islam, Mohammad had done the same thing when he attacked Mecca and destroyed its temple and idolized Kaba. He made a pathway to Kaba using destroyed debris of the old temple, this tradition was continued by all the Mughal kings who invaded Indian, including Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurungzeb, they destroyed temples and converted them to mosques, even though it is not allowed in Islam as muslims claim but Mohammad himself had done it so they followed their leader.

The clash between Sikh and Islamic culture was inevitable and resulted in first small hostilities between Guru's followers starting with the Sixth Guru Hargobind Singh and later into full scale with Tenth Guru Gobind Singh.

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