

THE PROMOTION OF LOVE IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S DANCE-DRAMA

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In the arena of practice of Art in all forms Rabindranath Tagore contemplates on dance drama as he reaches more and more mature. It least almost at the end of his practice of art Rabindranath possessed a versatile talent ranging from Poetry, Plays, Songs, Art, Dance form and so on. His Dance drama happens to be the sum total of all the art forms to reader. They constitute the basis of all the ideas and practice of all the aforesaid branches of art and literature many researchers and scholars like..... believe that dance drama is the culmination of the expression of the poet's genius. The dance dramas of Rabindranath are the embodiments of the presentation of the play form with their music (song), poetry, dance all together.

Among the dance dramas of Rabindranath Tagore are Chitrangada (1936), Chandalika (1938) and Shyama (1939). Thematically there may be diversity in contents. But, one thing is common, that is predominant, ennobling factor, love. In this respect Rabindranath has woven this trio dance dramas in one thread.

In the depiction of love all the three dance drama is a unique one in its own. The unparalleled subject matter of Chitrangada is the dignifying love affair between Chitrangada and Arjuna. In Chandalika again the theme evolves round the love between Prakriti and Ananda. On the contrary in Shyama, the affair centres round between Shyama and Bajrasen. In all the Dance drama the special feature is that love has surpassed the physical urge of five senses and reaches to the level of soul. In the trio Dance drama mentioned above, sensual love has elevated to the level of human soul of the lovers and their beloved. In this way, Rabindranath has depicted the eternal benevolent aspect of love in this trio dance drama.

Chitrangada: In the dance drama Chitrangada Rabindranath deals with the theme concerning in the epic 'The Mahabharata', the particular episode from higher this idea has been extracted is 'Arjunbanabasparbadhyaya' in it Tagore has presented the infinite and boundless love between Arjuna and Chitrangada. Taking only the structure from the Mahabharata, Rabindranath has made it his own creation in the then contemporary model with the action of the dance drama sets in the Manipur dynasty. The tradition in that dynasty with the boon of Lord Shiva goes on like this: The Queen will only give birth to a prince. In spite of that when princess Chitrangada was born, she was reared as a prince. The princess was given formal education along with special training in warfare, archery and in politics as well. She develops herself as a skilled administrator too. Clad in the attire of a male counterpart and disguised a man while roaming about in the habitual performance of duty of a male in the jungle of Manipur, Chitrangada comes across Arjuna. Then Arjuna was performing the rites and rituals of a 'Brahmachari', the follower of the practice of celibacy. She almost regarded herself as a male entity before she met Arjuna. After meeting Arjuna, she, for the first time felt for her feminine self which was latent in her. She devoted her mind, life to one of the greatest Valliant warriors of the earth as soon as she saw him. But, apparently manly ugly Chitrangada fails to attract Arjuna. In the plea of Brahmacharja he turned her down. Being rejected in this and having failed in winning Arjuna's love, Chitragada's life philosophy went on a radical change. Though adept in managing the affairs of the state, Chitrangada for the first time realises the lack of grace and elegance in her appearance. Feeling insulted to the highest extent she prayed to the God of romance, to provide her with the alluring qualities of a beautiful lady— curved Eye brow, beauty, grace and oblique look. These will certainly pierce the male heart.

With the blessings of God of romance she is gifted with all the feminine qualities like grace, and boundless beauty for a year. Arjuna, the third of the Pandaba is infatuated at the daintiness and beauty of Chitrangada and gets rid of celibacy. He forgets all about his girt, prowess, valour and surrenders to her. The duo meets each other.

But, the flame of fire of this imposed beauty begins to torment Chitrangada's inner self. There is no self identity in this imposed beauty. So, she considers this to be pretence. She is able to

achieve her beloved, but there is no glory in this achievement. Only there is insult in it. Gradually Arjuna also gets exhausted at the outward beauty of Chitrangada. Through heresay he comes to know about princess Chitrangada who is regarded as a mother in terms of affection, a king in respect of might, a ruler and a savoir of Manipur. Arjuna became restless.

On hearing this Arjuna aspires to meet with Chitrangada, the princess of prowess. At long last Chitrangada returns the boon of Madana dev. Then she in a graceful and confident manner unfolds before Arjuna as the princess of Manipur. Arjuna also feels blessed to have Chitrangada and gets a sense of completeness.

Being rejected by Arjuna for her ugliness Chitrangada devoted herself in a kind of play to be called the paragon of beauty. As she receives the boon from the god of romance, Madan she is transformed into her beautiful form. This in its turn gives her the opportunity to be united with Arjuna. But, the love which is based on outward beauty is fragile, transitory. It lacks in depth. So getting rid of falsehood of her former form she devotes to her in the light of genuine love from the core of her heart. This also touches the heart of Arjuna as well. In the eternal benevolent light of true love bona fide bond of perpetual inclination between Chitrangada and Arjuna is established.

Chandalika: Rabindra scholar Pranay Kumar Kundu opines, 'As far as body, emotion, overall form and sheer significance are concerned, the dance drama Chandalika accupies a revolutionary place.' As to the literary aspects scholars on Tagore say that the inspiration Rabindranath had for this dance drama is from Buddhistic ideas.

At the core of the dance drama Chandalika the predominant theme is that of love. Being the daughter of a low caste Hindu the heroine Prakriti of this dance drama is unchaste in the eyes of the society. She is kept outcaste in every sort of social activity and festival. Her position is in a location of isolation far away from every individual human contact. People from every walk of life avoid her only because of her low birth. She is an object of despise to all. Being forced to face such humiliation develops a kind of intense aversion in the mind of Prakriti (Chandalika) against Bidhata, the Supreme Ruler. In such a situation a thirsty Buddhist monk Ananda reaches to Prakriti and asks for water to quench his thirst. Being

aware of her position in the society she declines to give him water citing her outcaste status. Then Anada says, 'The same human being as am I, so are thou. / The same shower of water that quenches a thirsty.' The water offered by Prakriti satisfies the thirst of the monk Ananda. He exits offering blessings to Prakriti.

To offer water to Ananda and the bestowing of blessings to Prakriti by the later constitutes the key note of this dance drama. The subsequent action of the play centres round on this very theme.

The right to offer water by an untouchable to a monk whom Ananda gave Prakriti so easily, gave a new kind of birth to Prakriti. The offering of a handful of water by her liberates Prakriti from the lifelong dishonour and disgrace of having low birth. But, the whole hearted respect and gratitude of Prakriti towards Ananda gradually transforms into a kind of attachment. Then, catching hold of the hand of this tenderness, earthly aspiration of union becomes much predominant one. Prakriti becomes restless mentally and physically to be united with Ananda. But the monk does not know a bit of it. He is beyond any worldly aspiration.

It is said that the low-castes are adept in many kinds of black magic. With an intense desire to have Ananda in the vicinity of her Prakriti loses her sense of rationality. Then she applies the art of sorcery. Thus, she is able to bring Ananda to her side. Anada reaches before her with the effect of that spell—exhausted, suspicious and gloomy. Seeing him in such dejected condition Prakriti becomes full of remorse and repentance. From sheer self reproach, eager crying, she begs pardon of Ananda. She also requests him to rescue her from that act of guilt. Even then Ananda offers her his blessings. He also prays for her wellbeing. The desire and eagerness of Prakriti is the other name of proclivity. Perhaps its way of expression is a bit different. Of course, the very leaning that entices the desire of aspiration an earthly love in her that very fondness sprays the holy shower of water of repentance in her and purifies her inner self. This brings an ethereal sense of heavenly love getting rid of the bondage of physical attachment. Being free from the bondage of physical love this tenderness sprayed its wings to the realm infinity. In this way, in the dance drama Chandalika the intimacy of Prakriti attends its fulfilment.

Shyama: In the life span of Tagore the third and the penultimate dance drama is Shyama. The subject matter of this dance drama concerns the 'Buddha Mahabastu'. The creation of this dance drama is seen as the result of the long life span of the playwright as well as his earlier experience of composing the two previous dance dramas Chitrangada and Chandaliika. In comparison of the first two creations of this genre, the thematic variations and overall plot development, the writer seems to be more matured and an adept artist.

In the dance drama Shyama the picture of love depicted is of two folds. The first picture concerns the affair between Shyama and Uttiyo. The second one, on the other hand relates to the attachment between Shyama and Bajrasen. The peerless beauty of the royal dancer Shyama receives the unconditional selfless love of the young Uttiyo. This one sided uneven love of this adolescent meets with an utter failure. Uttiyo meets a tragic end as he sacrifices his life for the sake of love. Shyama was regarded as a source of enlightenment in the palace court with her beauty and skill in dancing. At the same time she is responsible for the premature exit from the world of an innocent tender aged boy Uttiyo.

Foreign trader Bajrasen is in possession of 'Indramoni Haar' (Necklace). For that necklace he faced the rage of the palace court and was captured in the hand of Kotal, the executioner. After capturing him the executioner was taking Bajrasen to the palace court before the King. At this point the court ballerina Shyama beholds him. His magnificent beauty captivates Shyama. She makes an utmost effort to save the life of the foreign trader Bajrasen. Uttiyo, the beloved of Shyama willingly takes the responsibility of the possession of the necklace, and allegation put by the executioner. In the final judgement Uttiyo was sentence to death. In his lifetime Uttiyo failed to win the heart of Shyama. So he desires to leave a place in her heart by the way of sacrificing his life. To save the life of Coveted partner of Shyama, the teenager Uttiyo laid down his life. The fallen love story of Shyama and Uttiyo pave the way to the love affair between Shyama and Bajrasen.

But, in the long last even this love affair cannot be triumphant. After his release from prison got involved in an affair of fondness with Shyama. Then Bajrasen came to know of the tragic end met by Uttiyo and the fact that this (Uttiyo's death) enabled his release from the prison. Then thinking not even for twice he threw his utter curse to Shyama and rejected her

instantly. Meanwhile Shyama was able to make a place in his mind. So he cannot drive her out from his mind for ever. But at the same time, he can not accept Shyama forgiving offence. Similarly he can realise the fact that Shyama possesses a genuine attachment for him. He continues with the flame of the fire of great affliction and hesitation.

On his release from prison Bajrasen addresses: 'Ele Rajanir pore Ushasomo / muktirupa oii lakshmidoyamoyee' (You have appeared before me as dawn after the night is over/ You are to me as one bringing back freedom as the merciful goddess Lakshmi). In reply to this Shyama Says, "Bolo na Bolo na Bolo na ami doyamoyee" (Don't call me call me call me the merciful goddess Lakshmi). This genuine assertion has glorified her character a little bit. But, it has no way lessened the burden of his guilt. To get Bajrasen Shyama has led Uttiyo to the face of death to save the life of Bajrasen. Her level of fascination for Bajrasen had reached so high that she did not hesitate to be heartless to innocent Uttiyo. There was no wrong in her sincere expectation to have Bajrasen. But, this very expectation had its foundation unforgivable levels of offence. This in the long run turned out to be the only reason of not being able to build the temple of love of Shyama and Bajrasen.

Here the willing self- sacrifice of Uttiyo has established his greatness for the sake of love. On the contrary it also revealed the extreme self-centredness and cruelty of Shyama's character. For this ignoble offence of Shyama, Bajrasen has turned her down. Shyama was full of repentance for her deeds. She was also afflicted by her beloveds, curses, rejection, and the pang of separation. The same way Bajrasen also suffers from his lassitude and inability to forgive his beloved. After punishing Shyama he also suffers from the extreme self-sufferings. The inability of not being able to forgive is also a kind of sin. The relations of love in the dance drama Shyama have been purified by the eternal flame of fire through self-sacrificed, remora, regret, inability to forgive and the like.

Apparently this dance drama seems to be futile tale of a love affair. But, the sanctity of love has become victorious. The fact is that the love affair of Shyama and Bajrasen could not be materialised. At the same time they both had undergone unending sorrows, pain and remora. Hence, though their story of love does not end in a happy note, it is not a futile one. There is

not a single instance in Tagore's creation where the characters had undergone such a tragic love affair.

The dance dramas of Rabindranath were composed almost at the end of his life. The creative genius of Tagore has gathered every bit of diamond of experiences to create a composite whole. So on reaching the golden ripe old age he dedicated all his treasures of love in this trio dance drama Chitrangada, Chandalika and Shyama. The poet has penned a gem of creations in his literary and artistic career. Critics say that his dance drama trio are one of his wealthiest of creative genius.

About the creation of dance dramas the poet himself says, 'All the roads mingle at long last.' His dance dramas are fulfilment of all the creative originality of the versatile talent of the poet. In it his genius and creative originality find its truest expressions. In the formative period of his life Tagore explored all the major branches of literature—Verse, Song, Play etc at the same time. All these find their expressions in various musical plays.

In the long run poetry, music and drama flourish as different branches. After gaining maturity the creative bent of mind of the poet mingles in the form of dance drama as the flows of all the rivers unite in the estuary.

The key note in the trio-dance drama in discussion is the eternal fondness of man and woman. But, Rabindranath in each of his dance dramas has sketched the characters with a touch of cohesive artistic mastery. Each of the characters whether male or female has shown a kind of fidelity as far as their beloved are concerned. Their devotion was complete yet there is a sense of free thinking, self- confidence and self -respect in them. They have undergone the conflicts of mind and heart, trials and errors, regret and remora, stroke and counter strokes. While going on in these streams of ups and downs they have elevated themselves from the ordinary women folk to the level of prudent. They are able to get rid of external pomp and glory, physical desire and snare of illusion. In this way they elevated themselves to the level of stage of limitless inner sweetness and grace, the taste of tenderness. Thus the march of love has been possible with the aid of good will.

In his writing it is observed that Rabindranath is moved by the inherent theories of the 'Upanishad'. Similarly, the ideas and ideals of Buddha may an inroad in his creations. Tagore repeatedly emphasises, "Love is the utmost attribute of divinity of life, the valuable prosperity", he also says, "Love is suppose to be auspicious, the arrival of love will be through the ways of truth, justice, welfare. Love cannot be established through the path of vice." For example in 'Shyama', Shyama's love towards Bajrasen there was no dearth of piety or submission but that love came through a sinful way. For this that cannot be fulfilled. Sometimes great virtues like generosity and forgiveness chastise the human heart, fulfils the motto of love.

Lord Buddha says, "To forgive is the supreme and ideal aim." In Chandalika the Buddhist monk Ananda unconditionally forgives the offence committed by Prakriti and prays for her welfare. But, in Shyama Bajrasen suffers from the languor of not being able to forgive Shyama's guilt. Still, he could not forgive the offender. This was also a kind of offence. So they both are responsible for their unfulfilled love affair.

The dance dramas of Rabindranath bear inner ideas. These in many respects, try to touch the core of the trust of the heart. Rabindranath tries to establish love from the status of transitory glimpse to the stage of eternity. So he does not adopt the subject matter of the 'Mahabharata' or the Buddhist literature. Rather, he takes its fabric along. He adds structure and gives light to it. The characters in these dance dramas are very lively as if taken from reality. Here the heroes and the heroines are drawn to each other attracted by the outward beauty, no doubt. There also ruled by the biological needs, anger, greed, infatuation etc of the six enemies of oneself. To be united with the most coveted persons, they take refuge in deception, commit wrong, crime and again love. Consequently they suffer from guilt. While suffering from repentance their inner self gets purified. Outer layers from their eyes are removed and in its place inward eyes are opened. Self realisation makes the eternal love between man and woman pure. Attachment is the result of the attraction of man and woman for each other.

Transcending the physical attachment, overcoming the limit of biological needs the love that lays emphasis on the eagerness and expression of the inner self is significant and appropriate. As an eternal process this love takes a permanent place in the inward temple of

mind of man and woman. The bond between them develops in the form of intense joy forever. It elevates from the level of reality to ethereal. This love becomes the source of permanent eternal fulfilment of joy.

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