

Echo of Karun Rasa in Modernist Poetry with Especial Reference to the Waste Land

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Abstract:

This article attempts to explore the presence of Karun rasa in modern poetry with especial reference to The Waste Land by applying the magnetic theory propounded by the Sanskrit aesthetician Bharata Muni in his magnum opus *Natyashastra* a treatise written on drama. Later on this theory was developed and enriched by the rhetorician *Abhinavgupta*.

In The Waste Land there are a number of sequences where Karun rasa is evident, even right from the beginning of the poem. In the aftermath of the world war there was not only the physical or geographical damage but it also damaged the preestablished philosophical and cultural base of the world .

Key Words: Karun Rasa, Bharat Muni, The Waste Land, Modernist poetry

In the modern age the world witnessed the two devastating world wars so obviously the peace lovers wanted to reject the ramshackle and outdated philosophy to save the world and to maintain the harmony.

Right from the beginning of human history literature manifests the societal condition or change of the age or tries to explore the solutions for the prevailing problems.

Like Romanticism germinated from the seed of French revolution and industrial revolutions and echoed the condition of the age and the demands of the people and rejected the restrictions of the neoclassical age and could be easily noticed in the writings of Wordsworth and the other poets of the age.

In the same way modernist literature moved on from the philosophy of the preceding age and the romantics and tried to explore the solution for the existing problems of the age by diving deep into the past and different myths and religions. Rasa Theory is the most fascinating theory of Sanskrit aestheticism. This theory was propounded by Bharat Muni one of the eminent scholars of Sanskrit aestheticism in his magnum opus *Natyashastra* a treatise written on drama. It consists of 36 chapters and 600 verses in Sanskrit.

Karun Rasa or the pathetic sentiment is the most important rasa of Rasa Theory. It causes painful emotions and requires great skill and literary power to create the emotion successfully. According to *Natyashastra* it stems from sorrow or grief. Shoka is its permanent state.

Most of the modernist poems manifest or centred on the idea that the existing literature and philosophy is not enough to counter the modern horrible problems of human beings like world wars so there exists a quest for solution in literature of the age.

One can easily visualise the horror of World War I with the data of lost lives, almost ten million soldiers along with seven million civilians lost their lives in that war.

Just few months before his death in 1918, English poet Wilfred Owen, a significant war poet wrote about one of his books “This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except war. Above all I am not concerned with poetry. My subject is war and the pity of war”.

So the poets worded their opinions in their writings. We find karun rasa in most of the literary creations of the time because the two world wars shook and challenged the foundation of existing human philosophy of life.

In *The Second Coming*, *W.B. Yeats* allegorically describes the atmosphere of post war Europe. The poem was written in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War. Here, Yeats expressed his concern regarding the age especially after World War I.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer ;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold ;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and

everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity

(*The Second Coming* 1-8)

Here the poet talks about the centerlessness, spiritual chaos, change and anarchy in the modern age and arouses Karun rasa or the pathetic sentiments because the permanent state of Karun Rasa is Shoka or grief. In the above lines the speaker laments that only bad people seem to have any enthusiasm now a days. The best are paralyzed by lack of conviction, while the worst are outspoken and fired with enthusiasm, "passionate intensity" and power.

The Waste Land is a literary fusion of *Eliot's* scholarly and practical knowledge of many religions, myths, and true concern for the betterment of modern degrading society and to fill the spiritual chaos caused by our so called modern civilization which is actually uncivilized in spiritual sense. Here Eliot has done the same job as Matthew Arnold defines poetry.

Poetry is the best criticism of life.

Oftentimes, It has been said that *The Waste Land* is a complex and obscure poem but actually it is opposite in nature, it is just the true, literary and thought provoking picturization of our modern society and its human values. And no doubt it is complex because the nexus of our modern society is complex.

With the very epigraph of the poem there is an evocation of Karun Rasa. The epigraph has been taken from *Satiricon* a satire by Petronious a Roman poet.

The English translation of the epigraph reads -

For once I saw with my own eyes a celebrated

Sybil at Cumae, hanging

in a bottle and when her Acolytes(boys) asked,

"What do you wish , O Sybil?" she replied.

"I wish to die"

The epigraph presents a heartrending scene of the bottled Sybil who is begging for death .The death wish of Sybil is not only her allegorically the whole post war world .Here death does not represent the end but it is supposed that ,rebirth must be followed by death so she is worshipping for death. *Eliot* presents the picture of modern

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society by Sybil of Cumae in allusive way and the theme also -Death in life. Eliot has contrasted contemporaries with antiquity in this poem.

The Hollow Men was also the part of *The Waste Land* when the poem was being edited by Ezra Pound. So the theme and the temperament of the poem is the same. In this poem we find hopelessness and hollowness from the very epigraphs of the poem, the first epigraph is a quotation from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*-

Mistah Kurtz-he dead

This single line is very impactful and indirectly but emphatically pictures the current scenario of the world after world war. It stresses the hopelessness, helplessness, bareness and grief of the world that evokes Karun rasa in us.

In this poem *Eliot* defines us as hollow men -

We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

Leaning together Headpiece

filled with straw

(Hollow men | 1-4)

In almost every line of the poem, the poet evokes grief or shoka in the minds of the readers. After few lines he presents the complete horror of the contemporary life.

This is the dead land

This is the cactus land

Here the stone images

Are raised, here they receive the supplication of a dead man's

hand under the twinkle of a fading star.

(*Hollow Men ii*, 1-6)

This is the definition of *The Waste Land*.

The poem mainly deals with the spiritual life. In the first section of the poem, *The Burial of the Dead* which deals with the theme of disillusionment shows the opposite taste of the

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wastelanders, these lines are the parody of the prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer .

April is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

memory and desires, Stirring

Dull roots with spring rain

Winter kept us warm, Covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

(The Waste Land 1-7)

These lines present extreme level of hopelessness and denial of life. These parodied lines show how the wastelanders are different, spiritually dead and have opposite taste. They prefer winter in place of spring .While the parents lines from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* presents April as a month of zeal, enthusiasm, pilgrimages and gives the message of return of life to almost everyone who are living.

Whan that Aprille with his shoures shoote

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote

And bathed every veyne in swich licour of which vertu engendered is the

flour

.....

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.

(General Prologue 1-12)

Further, in this poem Eliot criticizes the love for our bodily comfort in the contemporary world by the character of German princess, she represents rootlessness and our futile madness for mere bodily pleasure.

Bin gar Keine Russian,Stamm'aus Litauen echt deutsch.

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(I am not Russian at all ;I come from Lithuania ;I am a real German.)

(The Waste Land -12)

He defines the modern civilization in very hammering words-

"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for what you know only

A heap of broken images

(The Waste Land 19-22)

In the upper passage Eliot calls the modern civilization as -a heap of broken images. Further there is an episode of Hyacinthgirl. The hyacinth garden scene is a poignant example of failure to establish a healthy, signifying love relationship-Beauty is lost in terror, there is a sense of loss .

Yet When we came back, late from the hyacinth garden,

Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

Speak, and my eyes failed, I neither

Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,

Looking into the heart of light, the silence

(The Waste Land 36-41)

In the second section of the poem entitled Game of Chess, Eliot shows the meaninglessness and vulgarization of sex which has been trivialized in modern world so he has just used copulation a word which is generally used for animal sexual act not human behaviour. In this section Eliot contrasts the material sexual relationships between Belladonna of upper strata of society and Lil of lower strata of society with Philomel.

The change of Philomel by the barbarous king

So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale

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Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried and still the world pursues,
"Jug' Jug" to dirty ears

(*The Waste Land* 117-121)

The Jug Jug sound is the articulation of *Philomel's* pain.

But in modern age ,the act is same but the result is not the invariable sound of the nightingale ,the sound is missing and it has been replaced by the meaningless, vulgar, and dirty sound of 'Jug' Jug'.

Like the *Hyacinth* garden scene, this is again an illustration of mutual incomprehension and nervous exasperation of lovers -

My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad stay with me,

Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak,

What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? I

never know what you are thinking .Think ,

I think we are in rats alley

Where the dead men lost their bones

(*The Waste Land* 131-136)

In this section of the poem *Eliot* shows that we are spiritually dead. These lines present the picture of sterile death, death which leads to no transformation of the bodily or spiritual elements. These lines give us a spine chilling visuals of the post-war landscape of the world.

In the third section of the poem, *The Fire Sermon* a title inspired by *Lord Buddha's* upadesh at Sarnath. Here, *Eliot* depicts lust outside the marriage bond in the free love adventures or the extramarital sexual relationship. The prime concern of this section is vulgarized mechanical sexual relationship. Sex, which in the ancient times was associated with religious rituals and regarded as the mastery of creation and fertility is shown to have been totally trivialized and mechanized in the contemporary waste land.

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In a note appended to the poem, Eliot himself says: *Tiresias*, although a mere spectator and not indeed a character is yet the most important personage in the poem uniting all the rest...what *Tiresias* sees, in fact is the substance of the poem.

What he sees is sordid love affair of the typist and the carbuncular young clerk. Considered as the substance of the poem, it points to an extremely of disgust with physical love which amounts to a complex.

She turns a moment in the glass,

Hardly aware of her departed lovers;

Her brain allows one half formed thought to pass

'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'

(*The Waste Land* 281-284)

In *The Waste Land* materialism has replaced the philanthropic spiritualism and now there is only sterility, hopelessness and liking for only bodily comforts are preferred instead of spiritual perfection.

This very thought has been corroborated by *W.B. Yeats* in *Sailing to Byzantium*.

That is no country for old men. The young

In one another's arm, birds in the tree

Those dying generations at their seas,

Fish, flesh or fowl, commend all summer long

Whatever is be gotten, born and dies.

Caught in that sensual music all neglect

Monuments of unageing intellect.

(*Sailing to Byzantium* 1-8)

Young men and women are so much involved in sensual delight that most of the time they are in close embrace. This is the condition in *The Waste Land* by *Eliot*. This section of the poem mainly deals with the sermons of *Lord Buddha* and *Sant Augustine*.

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Here, in this section again Eliot compares antiquity with contemporary and shows the incapability in achieving salvation by the comparison of Lord Buddha and *Sant Augustine* with our generation.

Here we know we can't get salvation because we have not suffered in the fire as *Lord Buddha* and *Sant Augustine* did.

The episode of female typist and the carbuncular presents also the vulgarized and mechanical sex. This section of the poem suggests everything has been vulgarized trivialized and needs to be sanctified in *The Waste Land*.

At the end of the fourth section of the poem the poet again makes us frightened or dreadful-

Burning, Burning, Burning, Burning

O Lord thou pluckest me

Out O Lord pluckest

Burning

(The Waste Land 360-363)

This agonizing and heart-rending situation has also been presented by Eliot's contemporary poet *W.B. Yeats* in *Sailing to Byzantium*-

O sages standing in God's holy fire

As in the gold mosaic of wall,

Come from the holy fire, perne in gyre,

And be the singing masters of my soul,

Consume my heart away; Sick with desire

It knows not what it is; and gather me

In the artifice of eternity

(Sailing to Byzantium 17-24)

The same thought or the desire has been expressed in *Sailing to Byzantium*. Since, literature is the artistic representation of human life and T.S. Eliot has very aptly described the modern society in *The Waste Land*.

In the fourth section of the poem *Death by Waters* points not to voluntary surrender like, the fertility myth to asceticism which would lead to salvation but to an enforced surrender which is absolutely futile and is not going to provide salvation.

Here the Phoenician sailor represents us and since, he did an enforced surrender so he is incapable in getting salvation.

Forget the cry of gulls and the deep sea swell and the profit and loss.

In *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold says - Population, bodily health and vigour considered as machinery may have a real value but they must be connected with a perfect spiritual condition. They must be connected with the formation of the spirit and character to evaluate properly their intrinsic worth.

In conclusion, it is worth saying that the chaotic situation of the world in the aftermath of world war -1 has been poetically depicted by *Eliot* with the help of many allusions and, myths from *Tiresias's* point of view.

Whatever *Tiresias* sees is horrible, loathsome and pathetic which evokes Karun in the minds of the readers.

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