THE PANCKRIYĀ THEORY AND THE MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL: A STUDY IN CREATIVE PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Since the very beginning, life and literature have been treated conspicuously for their togetherness in both Western and Indian aesthetic thinking. Plato, Aristotle and a host of others– in their theories of mimesis and delight in the Western aesthetic thinking, and Bharata, Bhamaha, Vamana, Anandavardhana, Kuntaka, Kshemendra and others in their theories of rasa, alankara, riti, dhvani, vakrokti and aucitya, look at this subject in their own ways, treating life and literature together. According to them, the act of the creative writer has been compared to the act of Creator, the Absolute. This is why the process of literary creation has been seen in term of the creation of life. It is noteworthy that the thinkers are of the opinion that if a literary composition does not have that process, it cannot be considered a great piece of literary composition. Keeping this hypothesis in view, the present attempt aims at analyzing T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in the light of the Panckriyā theory propounded in Kashmir Shaivism, a theory of creation of life which has five parts and representing how it is impregnated with the process as mentioned above.

KEYWORDS: Panckriyā; śṛṣṭi or Creation; Stithi or Preservation; Samhara or Transformation; Tirobhāva or Diffusion of Illusion; Anugraha or Grace; Rasa; Alankara; Riti; Dhvani; Vakrokti & Aucitya

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INTRODUCTION

The *Panckriyā* theory is a philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism that is designed into five parts for the formation of an ideal poetic composition. These five-fold activities serve as the constituents for the artistic creation which in turn imparts rasa or aesthetic pleasure. The term *Panckriyā* can be split into two morphemes, Panch and Kriya, where panch means five and kriya signifies activity. It is an innate process of evolution from gross to refinement, from imperfection to perfection, from idea to activity. It undergoes with observation, co-ordination and finally attains evolution. The theory as such is not propounded by any single philosopher, aesthetician, poetician or theorist. This is an outcome of Shaivism, the foundation of which is the Lord of the Universe i.e. Śiva, who performs the cycle of grace with perfect balance which is known as *Ardhanarishwara* (identity of male-female principles) or the balance of Nature. It can evaluate any work of art as well as any artistic activity. The poet in his artistic work passes through same stages of creation as the Universal Creator in the cosmos. The worldly objects do not galvanize him; instead, he along with his experience of the world which is also known as bliss indulges himself to perform his own activity. In this process, the center of the poet is his own heart wherein he performs his graceful dance to compose his poetry and engages himself in the similar process as is perceived in nature. The process continues until the goal is achieved. Therefore, each step of this artistic activity is crucial and purposeful for the poet to achieve perfection and refinement as per his abilities. Thus, the concept of *Panckriyā* is not only theoretical but also practical- oriented.

Further, this activity does not follow a certain direction but it moves freely in any direction only with the principle of this theory.

The five parts entailed in the *Panckriyā* theory for the process of creation of life are as follows:

- *Sṛṣṭi* or Creation which evokes a longing or an aesthetic intuition to create.
- *Stithi* or Preservation which means to endorse and sustain the course of thought,
- *Samhār* or Transformation which encompasses mixing of thoughts and thereby resulting in a new filtered form,
- *Tirobhāva* or Diffusion of illusion in which there is the identification and vision of reality.
- *Anugraha* or Attaining Grace which leads to sublimity and imparts aesthetic pleasure or *rasa*.

IMPLEMENTATION OF *PANCKRIYĀ* THEORY TO ELIOT'S *MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL*

As this fundamental principle is used for the process of artistic creation, T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* which raises the questions of life through the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, has been selected. All the five steps of this theory has been elaborated with the help of this verse drama in this way:

***SRṢṬI* OR CREATION: THE STAGE OF AN AESTHETIC INTUITION**

Being spiritual and philosophical, T.S. Eliot believes that a true martyr who is a unique model designed by God always stoops down for the service of mankind; he has an aversion for his own wills and desires. According to him, Martyrdom is a sort of ethereal suicide which detaches him from the recurring cycle of human life and leads him towards the eternal or heaven life. In other words, Eliot is of the view that a martyr's death is a sort of renunciation or new birth towards the eternal life. It is the venture of blood sacrificing and receiving grace which makes him aware and conscious of heaven and segregates him from the beasts. Eliot through Thomas Becket, his mouthpiece, suggests:

A martyr, a saint, is always made by the design of God, for

His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to

bring them back to His ways. A martyrdom is never

the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has

become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in

the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he has

found freedom in submission to God. The martyr no

longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom. (Eliot 49-50)

The very spirit of martyrdom which is marked by Eliot in the life of Thomas Becket instigated him to follow the track of spirituality. This is the first level of *śṛṣṭi* or creation in which there is the will or inspiration to create. This inspiration is evolved only by *parkāśa* which enters into the mind of the poet and ultimately the idea is developed. This

leads him to the state of his self- consciousness and so the activity or *vimarśa* gets started.

STITHI OR PRESERVATION: THE STAGE OF UPHOLDING OF THOUGHTS

The second step is known as *stithi* or preservation or sustenance which means to uphold and follow the course of thought. At the preservation level, all the aspects of ideas cover all over the mind of the creator and thus wave with crest and trough.

As per the historical details, King Henry II of England appointed Thomas Becket as the Chancellor of Canterbury. Becket was a kind of supercilious and conceited person who had a touch of hard professionalism immersed into his work with enthusiasm and efficiency. He was living with lavish splendor and enjoyed hunting, hawking, roaming and entertaining. When he was in his powerful position of Chancellorship, the courtiers, the citizens of Canterbury, and in fact, even the king flattered him, thinking him to be a furious and haughty personality and therefore acknowledged his every action to be true and appropriate. Becket always scorned his courtiers and in turn received scoffing from them. Besides this, he always tried to detach himself from the courtiers as well his subordinates and therefore remained a victim of aloofness like a lonely cloud in the sky. In other words, he felt himself to be superior to everyone in the domain and so he used to alienate himself from them but simultaneously, he increased his number of foes in the state. It was his pride which was stimulated by his ceaseless feelings of his own rectitude, unbiased and generous etiquettes. For this reason, he abominated to be under anyone's subordination like that of King Henry's secular authority and found himself only to lean under God's rule and not under any other person in this world. Thus, we can see that Becket was saturated with self-esteem, dignity and austerity. The first priest elucidates his pride as:

I saw him as chancellor, flattered by the king,

Liked or feared by courtiers, in their over bearing fashion,

Despised and despising, always isolated,

Never one among them, always insecure;

His pride always feeding upon his own virtues,

Pride drawing sustenance from impartiality,

Pride drawing sustenance from generosity,

Loathing power given by temporal devolution,

Wishing subjection to God alone. (16-17)

However, when Thomas Becket gained the rank of an Archbishop with the token of ring and the Archbishop's emblem offered by King Henry II, he performed his duty with great enthusiasm and loyalty. He completely dedicated himself for the service of mankind with the spirit of self-sacrifice and intrepidity having absolute faith in the Almighty God.

Gradually, the seeds of dispute and unrest were sprouted between the King and the Archbishop as Becket opposed to all the illegal matters that King Henry II wanted for his own political grounds by deteriorating the Church. He forced Becket to do many illegal deeds like killing innocent persons, conversion of Biblical rules as per his convenience and to do

corrupt works and persuaded him to sign his consent as well. Hence, the Archbishop supported the issues of the Church and ultimately became a victim of the annoyed King. This instigated him to flee to France in order to secure himself there. Having noble qualities hidden in him, he again returned to England after seven years, just for the sake of mankind. In discussion with the priests, Becket assures:

For a little time the hungry hawk
 Will only soar and hover, circling lower,
 Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.
 End will be simple, sudden, God-given.
 Meanwhile the substance of our first act
 Will be shadows, and the strife with shadows.
 Heavier the interval than the consummation.
 All things prepare the event. Watch. (23)

Thus, in this stage of *stithi* or preservation level, the idea is maintained with the preparation and resolution taken by Thomas Becket for protecting his countrymen against the enemies.

SAMHĀR OR TRANSFORMATION: THE STAGE OF PERPLEXITY AND ULTIMATE PRECISION OF THOUGHTS

The third step is *samhār* or destruction/transformation in which the poet entangles between pure and impure ideas during his creative process but there after all the negative thoughts set apart from the natural order and set forth a new direction. In simplest terms, in this stage, the net of confusion and conflict is cleared off by upholding the basic emotion. As a result, the clouds of perplexity, bewilderment and dilemma that overcast the mind are dispelled and the new thoughts are revitalized.

Thomas Becket became messed within himself when he was agitated by the four tempters. They impelled him to go back to the king for reconciliation and enjoy his former powers. The four tempters are actually the personification of Becket's own introspection and aspirations.

The first tempter primarily reminded him of his former delights and pleasures and then asked him to return to his autonomous and jovial life and became loyal to the King again:

Your lordship won't forget that evening on the river
 When the king, and you and I were all friends together?
 Friendship should be more than biting Time can sever.
 What, my lord, now that you recover
 Favor with the king, shall we say that summer's over

Or that the good time cannot last?

Fluting in the meadows, viols in the hall,

Laughter and apple-blossom floating on the water.

Singing at nightfall, whispering in chambers,

Fires devouring the winter season,

Eating up the darkness, with the wit and wine and wisdom! (23-24)

The second tempter claimed Becket that he created blunder by resigning his post of Chancellorship under the patronage of the king and accepted to be the Archbishop of Canterbury in turn. He advised Becket that he should once again join the position of Chancellorship so that he might help the people in every aspects and protect his country as well. Also, he should deviate himself from the spiritual life as his spiritual power was entirely useless and he would lead only a life of perdition in this way. In sequence, the third tempter suggested Becket that instead of winning the favour of the king, he should give assistance to the powerful barons to ruin the king's reign in England and attain Norman's liberty.

Different in perspectives from the earlier three tempters, the last and the fourth tempter appreciated Becket for not treading on the heels of the former tempters and following his own choice of religious piety. He suggested that if Becket became a martyr, he could enjoy the spiritual glory of heaven and he would be remembered even after his death. There was a kind of selfish motive here again that was dumped in the suggestion of the fourth one. In this way, Becket was in a perplexed situation as he was misguided by the evil powers and was oscillating to and fro between the good and the bad propositions.

Becket had somewhere humanity hidden in his heart. When he realized that he was being insisted or persuaded by the king to do injustice, he decided to turn down king's domination and work only for the sake of goodness of men. Also, he stuck only to the order of God and not the king. The following line clearly expresses his reverent devotion towards the Almighty: "I give my life, To the law of God above the Law of man." (71)

Thus, the whole process of confusion runs all over his mind as in a mirror but simultaneously gets cleared due to his good intrinsic nature. This manifests the third level of *samhār* or Transformation.

TIROBHĀVA OR DIFFUSION OF ILLUSION: THE STAGE OF LUCIDITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF VISION

The fourth step is *tirobhāva* or diffusion of illusion that ahead with the identification and the vision of reality. In this stage, the power of knowledge and consciousness which was concealed becomes lucid and unambiguous and thus steps forward by towering towards the peak of liberation and peace with strong resolution. Hence, the illogical doubts are obliterated and shrugged off maturing with emergence of new belief. The mind is enlightened with new vision and the wind of clarity, certainty and pure belief starts blowing in the mind of the poet with new feelings and thoughts just like nectar in a sieve left after passing it through.

The struggle gushing within Thomas Becket was now concentrated and attained a conspicuous shape which made him refuse the opinions provided by the tempters, the priests, the chorus and the knights and made him follow his

own way of spirituality. Therefore, he left his high position of Chancellorship and turned to the church and attained sainthood. Then he began to believe that his level of spiritual awareness was higher than that of priests, the knights and even the king. He had now achieved perfect composure and mental equilibrium and had excelled himself, above his ego and self-pride. He had immersed and united himself to the will of god. Thus, he had become entirely unworldly and separated himself from the materialistic world. Now his faith in God and Christ was unshakeable which was evident when he told the knights that he was a Christian who was saved by the blood of Christ and always stood ahead to sacrifice his own blood. He was of the opinion that as Christ had offered him his life, it was his duty to repay his debt by conveying his spiritual messages to all mankind.

I am a priest, a Christian, saved by the blood of Christ,

Ready to suffer with my blood.

This is the sign of the church always.

The sign of blood. Blood for blood.

His blood given to buy my life,

My blood given to pay for His death,

My death for His death. (72-73)

Becket's vigour and immense belief in Christ and God is very well unfolded by him in the sermon delivered by him on the Christmas eve. The famous line in the interlude section narrated by him as: "Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth peace, good will toward men." (47) All the above statements clearly exhibit that he is completely diffused from illusion and accomplishes the step of *tirobhāva*.

ANUGRAHA OR ATTAINING GRACE: THE STAGE OF ELEGANCE AND SUBLIMATION

The last and the fifth stage is *anugraha* or attaining grace which leads to sublimity and in turn imparts aesthetic pleasure or *rasa*. This can also be averred as the state of gratification, serenity and the complete realization of the idea. In simplest terms, the difference between the subject or *aham* and the object or *idam* is effaced and sublimated thought or truth is revealed.

T.S. Eliot achieved grace or sublimity when Thomas Becket finally sacrificed his life for the sake of humanity without caring the king's commands and surrendered himself only for the sake of mankind. Also, the four knights altogether made accusations against Becket and commanded that he should quit the country on the King's order. Becket, in staunch manner, responded that he would not leave his countrymen at any cost but would try to serve them and overcome their afflictions and miseries. On the insolent manner of Becket, the Knights while claiming him to be a traitor, took out the sword and stabbed him. This led to the end of the true martyr. In this way, we can see that a man who was initially so charged with self-regard and worldly happiness, had filled himself with serenity and poise in the hands of God till his end.

CONCLUSIONS

T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is impregnated with the process of creation of life as conceived in the *Panckriya* theory. This text is the symbolic representation of universe giving the feel of contentment to one and all. What Thomas Becket does in the text, is the process of life. Here T.S. Eliot pervading through the Absolute, passes through *śṛṣṭi* or creation, *stithi* or preservation, *saṁhāra* or transformation, *tirobhāva* or diffusion of illusion and *anugraha* or grace. The very spirit of martyrdom marked by Eliot in the life of Thomas Becket is the first level of *śṛṣṭi* or creation in which there is the will or inspiration to create. He progresses with the idea of martyrdom in his mind with the help of his rational character, Thomas Becket. In this stage of *stithi* or preservation level, the idea is nurtured by drawing up the plans followed by him for safeguarding his countrymen against the foes. The third stage i.e. *saṁhāra* or transformation is managed by bringing gradual variations in Becket's character and a perplexed state of his mind produced by the tempters, priests, knights and Chorus. But his victory over the mental conflict and the undesirable desires which were provoked by the tempters and others, strengthens his vision of attaining the way of spiritual sainthood and violating the king's sovereignty and thereby he accomplished *tirobhāva* state. Eliot eventually fulfills his *anugraha* stage when Thomas Becket sacrifices his life just for the welfare of the mankind and ultimately achieves the reverent glory of martyrdom. Thus Thomas Becket's actions prove him to be a man of society, a spiritualist, and a cultural moralist with the sense of rationality which serves as an instrument to initiate the right action or dharma.

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