



## Rasa Analysis of Edward II

### Introduction:

Edward II is considered to be the most matured of Christopher Marlowe's tragedies. It is typically applauded as an aesthetic achievement, a history play that brings form and meaning to the incoherent material of its chronicle source by retelling the king's slightly dull, twenty-year reign as a fierce and deadly struggle of a few willful personalities. Considered in the nature of the Marlowian oeuvre, Edward II again demonstrates the triumph of art and order over inchaote historical material.

For Marlowe, in a tragedy a hero's tragic flaw is his lust or quest for something. Faustus has quest for knowledge, Tamburlaine has quest for power and Barabas is hungry for wealth. Edward II, though a play different in nature, presents its hero as well as anti-hero with a lust or a quest. Edward II is blindly in love with Gaveston so much that he can't see anything or anyone beyond him. Anti-hero Younger Mortimer has quest for power that leads him to his own execution. Thus both the hero and anti-hero die at the end. From Western perspective or Marlowian point of view it is a tragedy. To evaluate it or examine it from a new perspective, we have Indian literary theories like Rasa, Dhvani, Aucitya etc. This paper will try to analyze Edward II from Bharat Muni's Rasa perspective. Rasa is the sentiment that emerges out of the combination of various Bhava in a literary work. The present play has Karuna as the major Rasa. The paper will trace how it emerges to become the dominant sentiment in the play. Before applying the theory, it is important to know Indian concept of Karuna Rasa.

### Karuna Rasa:

In Indian tradition, the exploration of sorrow usually has a relatively small role to play in literature. This is so, for there is hardly any scope for tragedy in our word-view. Still, Karuna Rasa, though it has for its central emotion sorrow or pathos, is a very important Rasa which is found very markedly both in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

### The Causes of Karuna

According to Natyasastra(VI.40) Karuna, the compassionate or the pathetic Rasa, comes from the primary Rasa of Raudra or the furious:

"The result(karma) of the furious should be known as the aesthetic experience of compassion."

- Aesthetic Rapture, p. 48

Karma is a very important word here. Apart from meaning 'result', it has also a string of other connotations like 'deed', 'consequence' etc. What this implies is that raudra is the cause which results in or leads to Karuna.

What does Raudra do? How does it manifest itself? It does so through violence, displacement etc., irrespective of good or evil. In other words, Karuna is generated from certain causes or Vibhava which are the consequences or the Anubhava of Raudra. Thus, Raudra is the source of Karuna and hence the primary Rasa to which Karuna can be related.

The features of Karuna Rasa are listed in Natyasastra(VI.61) as follows:

"Now (the Rasa) known as Karuna arises from the permanent emotion of sorrow. It proceeds from Vibhava such as curse, affliction (Klesa or affliction of curse), separation from those who are dear, (their) downfall, loss of wealth, death and imprisonment, or from contact with misfortune(Vyasana), destruction(Upaghata), and calamity(Vidrava).

- Aesthetic Rapture, Vol.I,p.52

The sthayayibhava of Karuna is soka or sorrow. In other words, the emotion or the mood that is generated and which persists throughout is that of unhappiness.

Its causes or the Vibhava are such as can be related to the Anubhava or the effects of Raudra Rasa: 'curses' 'affliction(from curse)', 'death', 'imprisonment', 'destruction' etc. But one might ask, what about 'separation from dear ones', 'downfall', 'loss of wealth', 'calamity' etc.? The answer lies in the last-mentioned cause-calamity. This is so for a calamity is an aggression which is not caused by man, but (in all literatures) by gods, the mother earth or simply by an impersonal nature. For instance, Siva's tandva dance or the anger of Indra (thunder and rain) can lead to Raudra Rasa. Hence, these are also the manifestation or the consequences (effects) of Raudra Rasa.

### **Who is the Aggressor?**

'Who is the aggressor', is an important question to ask in Raudra Rasa. The disaster can be caused by an external agent. But then, what about a man's own mistakes which lead to disaster (the way the Greek furies chase a man for his mistakes in Greek tragedies)? In the first place, such a disaster is of his own creation- in which case we normally cannot sympathize with him. But if his disaster far exceeds his mistakes (as happens with king Oedipus in Oedipus Rex-the punishment for pride is immensely more than it should be) we feel compassion. But such an effect of a disaster cannot be caused by any aggression or violence (from outside). So where is the possibility of Raudra here?

This can be answered (at least partly) by replying that the aggression here is the aggression of fate against one. Man is not in control of his life and thus, this is an aggression that is a creation of the interaction of himself and his surrounding.

### **Tragedy and Karuna Rasa**

A man's mistakes can at any moment lead to disasters. It is in fact this possibility that, in the West (especially in Greek and Renaissance literature), leads to tragedy. In the Indian context, the source of raudra can be traced back to that flaw which leads to the disaster.

In fact, a discussion of tragedy is essential for any discussion of Karuna Rasa. If we look closely we find that tragedy can be included within the categorization of Karuna. But not necessarily in all cases- for though, in a tragedy, the waste of good leads to sorrow, there is also a spirit of solution in it, for the very essence of tragedy is hope (not in modern tragedy, of course, where there is nothing glorious, nor any hope). And it is the loss of hope which is the essence of Karuna, for in Natyasastra(VI.38) it is said:

The compassionate(Rasa), on the other hand, consists in all loss of hope of ever meeting again.

Aesthetic Rapture, Vol. I, p. 50

This is where Karuna differs from Vipralambha Srngara where there is reunion again.

But a question creeps up, does it mean that in all cases of Karuna there is complete loss of hope? When a man loses his wealth, he might get it back again. When a man goes to jail, he might come back again. Yet, is the suffering felt here (both by the source of suffering and by the reader) made null and void when the original position is restored? It can be pointed out that, in Vipralambha Srngara the separation is temporary. Most important, the separated lovers know it. They live in uncertainty reliving their past- which is the source of both pleasure (when they think of the good times) and pain (since at that time they are separated). For their pain they also have certain pleasures. And the audience or the reader knows it. But in Karuna there is no hope of ever meeting again.

In a tragedy, the possibility of some achievement, some glory, some retribution is to be seen. When, in the end, good is destroyed, some evil is also destroyed along with it. But in karuna rasa what is emphasized is the aspect of sorrow. In a tragedy (at least according to the traditional concept of it) at the end there is hope and the establishment of order. Thus, whether a tragedy is a Karunantika or not will be decided by what dominates at the end-the sense of waste or something positive.

### **Rasa Applied to Edward II:**

As discussed above, Karuna Rasa has its roots in Raudra Rasa. In this play, the king's sorrow dominates and becomes Sthayi Bhava of Karuna. There are many situations and actions which stimulate king's sorrow. But before that, it is important to see what causes Karuna Rasa and how Raudra Rasa becomes next major sentiment after Karuna in the play.

The major characters of the play can be divided into two groups, one that favours the king, and the other is against king. The play begins with this conflict. The barons' anger towards the king reveals itself in the first scene when Gaveston arrives. The barons can't tolerate king's relationship with Gaveston for two reasons, Gaveston is low-born by class and king neglects his duties to the nation just because of his blind love for him. In the first scene itself, Bishop of Coventry is insulted by Gaveston as he like the barons dislikes him. It is the first manifestation of Anger which is the Sthayi Bhava of Raudra Rasa. King's and the barons' anger is mutual. King hates his barons because they dislike Gaveston. Thus, both groups are seen conflicting with each other and till half of the play, Krodha dominates as Sthayi Bhava. Mortimer is the major Alamban Vibhava of Raudra Rasa. Other barons Warwick, Lancaster, Elder Mortimer, Bishops of Coventry and Canterbury act as Uddipan Vibhava adding to Mortimer's anger and stimulating it. Mortimer and the barons' hatred for Gaveston generates anger in king and Gaveston's minds which is reflected during their conversations. Roots of Karuna Rasa are there in Raudrata of the barons. King's tragic condition is anticipated in the behavior and actions of the nobles. After Gaveston returns in the first scene, barons find an opportunity or the grounds on which they can force the king to banish him. Ill-treatment and insult to Bishop of Coventry acts as a stimulant to the barons' angry minds and the king has to banish Gaveston. The king is always found sad in Gaveston's absence. This sadness in the first half of the play is temporary till Gaveston is alive. The second half of the play sees the king deeply grieved and waiting for his death. All the actions of the barons emerge from anger. Drawing swords, wounding Gaveston, fighting against the king and lastly getting the king murdered are the actions that evoke Raudra Rasa. Anubhavas are the words expressing nobles' hatred and readiness to be violent to Gaveston and the king. There occur situation which are Alambana Vibhava. When during the war with the Scots, Mortimer the Junior gets captivated, Younger Mortimer asks the king to pay the necessary ransom to relieve him. King refuses and shows least concern for him and indirectly for whatever is happening in the nation.

Imagery also functions as a stimulant of Anger. King is full of rage towards his barons. There are situations and imagery stimulating his rage. Barons' not saluting Gaveston when he returns first time and their not so warmly welcoming him when he comes back second time anger the king more and more. Two imageries are used by Mortimer and Lancaster when the king asks them what symbolic painting they would like to have on their shields. Mortimer says,

"A lofty cedar tree, fair flourishing,  
On whose top branches kingly eagles perch,  
And by the bark a canker creeps me up.  
And gets unto the highest bough of all.  
The motto: Aequae tandem."

Lancaster wants to have the following image painted on his shield:

"Pliny reports there is a flying fish  
Which all the other fishes deadly hate,  
And therefore, being pursued, it takes the air;  
No sooner is it up, but there's a fowl  
That seizeth it. This fish, my lord, I bear;  
The motto this: Undique mors est."

In both images anger and hatred for Gaveston and the dull king is obvious. King also doesn't have any respect for his nobles, not even for Queen. In both the images, Gaveston has been believed someone who spoils the king and disturbs peace of the whole nation.

After Gaveston's death the darker phase of king's life begins leading him to the darkest. He immediately declares a battle with his nobles and wins it. Execution of Warwick and Lancaster is king's revenge against Gaveston's death. But Younger Mortimer manages to escape from prison and makes up his mind to dethrone and murder the king. From this scene itself, the king becomes a slave to Younger Mortimer and his supporters that include Queen and Kent. Mortimer's anger continues to be felt by readers-spectators. Though Raudrata is still prevalent, the king's sorrow slowly and gradually dominates and becomes prominent state. Mortimer's anger worsens and he devises a plot to have the king murdered. The plot is so cruelly carried out that the reader-spectators feel that the

king has to suffer more than he deserves. Thus, suffering exceeds the limit and from Raudra emerges Karuna as the major Rasa. In the process of Karuna Rasa emergence, actions play important part than words. The way the king is put to starve in the filthy surrounding and the way he is put to death is pathetic for anyone watching or reading the play. Raudrata is powerfully conveyed through words whereas Karuna is conveyed through extremely pathetic actions and pitiable conditions the king is put into.

After Gaveston's death, the king declares a battle with the barons and he wins. But Mortimer after escaping the prison declares a retreat against king's will and they win against the king. After this happening, fate of the king is totally in the hands of Mortimer. The readers-spectators start feeling pity for the king who is asked to give up his crown with the threat of disinheriting Prince Edward. Edmund Kent who has always gone for a wise path also pities the fate of his brother. Prince Edward too is well aware of what is happening around, and he is unhappy to see his father's sorrowful condition. On the other hand, there is no end to Mortimer's Raudrata who gets Spencer the Junior and Kent executed thinking them as obstacles in the implementation of his plan for the king's murder. Mortimer's cruelty goes to the extreme that he wants Metrevis and Gurney to be blamed for king's murder by using them as tools to carry out his plan. He is utterly selfish and power hungry who makes the Prince wear the crown and he himself wants to rule the nation in the reign of King Edward III who is still young and incapable to rule. Mortimer takes the best advantage of people's weakness and goes on satisfying his own desires until King Edward III knows about Mortimer being mastermind in laying down the plot of King Edward II's murder. Thus the anti-hero gets the punishment that he well deserves.

Hero's death is pitiful and anti-hero's death is deserved one. Sthayi bhava of Anger and Sorrow go parallel throughout the play. In fact, Mortimer anger continues till the king's murder. Should Raudra be a major Rasa or Karuna? It is Karuna Rasa. The reason is one's death arouses sympathy and pity while other's doesn't. Actually the hero's death is caused by the anti-heroes villainy and cruelty. We can say that the hero was the reason for anti-hero's anger, but not the only reason. Mortimer's desire to rule the nation is so strong that the king's weakness makes his path easy to attain power and he takes full advantage of the situation. The emotion of Anger is less strong in other barons though they too act against king and play active role in putting Gaveston to death. Mortimer's hatred towards the king makes him execute whoever is close to the king and is trying to support him in his dark times. Kent who had been supporting the barons when it was right to do that is executed just because he tried to free the king from slavery. At the end, Karuna for the king turns out to be stronger than our dislike or contempt for Mortimer. The death of the protagonist, thus, makes the play a Karunantika and leaves the readers-spectators with the experience of Rasa.

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