

Performative Analytical Study of The Play 'Raja' By K. N. Panikkar



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Abstract

The southern or Dravidian culture portrayed in Shri K. N. Panikkar's play has more focus on Natyashashtra which is based on the Rasa theory. The connect between the nation as a whole and an individual and a Vis –a-Vis gets portrayed as the play echoes the very rhythm of unearthly and personal rousing of an individual in their eternal quest for truth and beauty.

The movement to evolve an 'Indigenous Theatrical Idiom' employing arts and culture of Kerala Panikkar turned to –Indigenous Sources:

1. Traditional Theatre
2. Religious Ritual
3. Classical Dance
4. Martial Art
5. Sanskrit / Natyashastra Aesthetic Theory.

This impulse became "Our own plays about our own problems in our own forms."

Keywords: Tagore, K. N. Panikkar, Raja.

Introduction

To study The textual analysis, the performative analysis in Tagore's play Raja, whether it has any regional elements, does it have any sociopolitical context, and the content and the form relationship in the play.

Aim of the Study

In this article, a detailed study of the "Play: Raja (The King of the Dark Chamber) Designed and Directed By K. N. Panikkar" has been discussed and evaluated on the basis of –

Methodology

Macro Text/Sahitya Vs Micro Text/ Abhinaya

Performance Text

1. Thematic Interpretation:
2. Dramatis Personae (In Order Of Appearance):
3. Translator's Note:
4. Scene Wise Synopsis Of The Play:
5. Interpretation With Director Note:
6. Scene Wise Pictorial Analysis Of The Play:

Performance Text

Duration : 90 minutes
Language : Malayalam

Thematic Interpretation

असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।

AsatoMāSadgamaya
TamasomāJyotirGamaya
From Darkness Lead Me To Light

Dramatis Personae (In Order Of Appearance):

1. Queen Sudarshana
2. Queen Sudarshana's Maid Surangama
3. King (In Invisible Form)
4. King – In the Form of 'Cruel Terror'
5. King – In the Form of 'Sweetness as in Terror'
6. King Kanchi
7. Other Kings – Avanti, Koshala, Vidarbha, and Kalinga
8. Thakurda
9. Wayfarers
10. Suvarna - Pretender King

Shrinkhla Ek Shodhparak Vaicharik Patrika

11. Queen Sudarshana's Companion Rohini

Major Five Characters

1. Queen Sudarshana
2. Queen Sudarshana's Maid Surangama
3. King (In Invisible Form)
4. King Kanchi
5. Thakurda

Translator's Note

1. Creating a Malayalam version of Tagore's 'Raja – The King of the Dark Chamber' has been a unique experience, it cannot be a mere literal translation; nor is it a question of identifying verbal substitute in another language. Words, phrases and metaphors here do not signal a specific objective phenomenon as it happens in any other literary work. They function as symbols, profound and deep end of multiple layers of meaning. Hence there is no rigidity as regards to theme, characters, denouement; this unique creativity provides ample scope for free employment of an imaginative Director's innovative skill.
2. No wonder Tagore himself has proved this possibility by becoming his own Prekshaka / Viewer and critic and revising his own plays several times changing their names, sequence of incident and even the title of dramas. With all these changes the play has grown and at the same time maintained his dominant vision emanating from the innermost mind of the author. The play necessarily starts from the mundane level with familiar characters and down-to-earth dialogue and quickly picks up momentum to reach at the highest allegorical level of revelation. To convince the ordinary viewer, the playwright has to come down very often to common man's expression without disturbing the umbilical cord which relates to the Eternal. This in fact includes basically the vision of Bhagavad Gita and Gurudev's own Gitanjali.
3. To communicate this high philosophy through the medium of theatre is a formidable task confronting the writer and producer while formulating the sub textual implications. Apart from the symbolic and allegoric nature of the text, another major problem confronted by the translator is the rendering of songs into Malayalam. As a lyrical play, poetic interludes exceed, as poetic expression with its essential Natyadharmi quality and this is an integral part of Tagore's story-telling. Employing native rhythm and cadence to such songs was essential. All the songs translated are not included in the production script since the stage version did not demand such an exhaustive use of the original text.

Scene Wise Synopsis of The Play

Scene – I: Dark Chamber Scene

1. This scene is in the dark chamber of the palace where the Queen Sudarshana and her maid Surangama meet. The real Raja of the land is never seen by anyone; the queen too is no exception. The Raja makes his visitation to the dark chamber where He cannot be seen by either

the queen or her maid. But Surangama claims that she has the rare gift to identify the presence of the King in the dark chamber. However the queen neither perceives him nor feels His presence. She feels hurt out of her characteristic vainglorious nature.

2. Surangama, hearing the voice of the King feels that he is right at the door and pays obeisance to him. At this the queen further feels disturbed and jealous of her maid. The queen questions the maid on how she could develop an affinity to the King who had been cruel to her father. Surangama recalls the days when she was put to ruin and then she came into contact with the King, who appeared a cruel terror in the beginning and later turned out to be as matchless in sweetness as in terror.
3. The dark chamber is for Sudarshana as terrifying as death. She longs to see the King in broad day light. Now the King's voice is heard asking Sudarshana why she wants to see him as one among thousand things in the day light. When the queen persists on her demand and boasts that she would easily be able to pick him out among a million men, the King agrees that he will appear among the people in the ensuing 'VasantaUtsav –Spring Festival'.

Scene – II : VasantaUtsav Scene / Kanchi as well as Other Kings and trumped-up 'King' Suvarna Scene.

1. In the pleasure garden where the 'VasantaUtsav –Spring Festival' is on Thakurda makes his presence as a wandering pilgrim singing melodious songs conveying, profound thoughts on the colourful season that entralls the whole country.
2. The Kings – Kanchi, Avanti, Koshala, Vidarbha, and Kalinga; from the neighboring principalities arrive to participate in the festival as royal guests, they find no one responsible to receive them.
3. Suvarna, the pretender King enters the pleasure garden in stately grandeur. Under the leadership of Kanchi, Suvarna, the pretender King is exposed and forced to pay homage to them. They push him to remove all his royal outfits. Then the Kings conspire to accept him as the King of the land only to use him as a means to gain Sudarshana, the queen for them.
4. While Suvarna remains under the complete control of Kanchi and the other Kings, Sudarshana beholds his attractive figure from a distance. She becomes restless like a caged bird.

Scene – III: Queen Sudarshan and her companion Rohini, Palace Garden Scene

1. Queen Sudarshana sends her companion Rohini with a handful of flowers as a presentation to the King, conveying that she could recognize him. Rohini goes to Suvarna only to find that he was sitting silent like an idol who did not show any sign of recognition. On the other hand Kanchi took the initiative in accepting the flowers and also seizing a necklace of jewels from Suvarna and he bestowed this upon Rohini.

2. She returns to her mistress in a blissful spirit. The queen takes it as an awful insult and demands that Rohini should leave the necklace and accept another ornament instead from her.

Scene – IV: Palace Garden Fire Scene

1. Kanchi instigates Suvana to set fire the palace garden with a view to take advantage of the confusion to accomplish his sinister object of possessing the Queen Sudarshana. This is being overheard by Thakurda who tries to bring home to them the gruesome result of their plan. The fire lit by Suvarna unexpectedly spreads everywhere and people begin to run amuck in frenzy.
2. The whole plot develops as per the selfish design of Kanchi without the knowledge of the other kings who are all left in the dark about the confusion. Fire spreads everywhere, Sudarshana seeks a way to escape from the fire and desperately calls for help from her beloved King. To her great shock Suvana confesses that he is not the king but only a pretender.
3. Now Sudarshana has no other way but to offer herself to the God of Fire. Surangama, the enlightened maid guides her through fire and leads her to the dark chamber.

Scene – V: Dark Chamber Scene

1. The Queen Sudarshana once again converses with the King in the "Dark Chamber", with the gnawing sense of shame for she knows that she has betrayed herself by putting another's garland" around her neck.
2. Sudarshana, now an impoverished figure passes through the street in a spiritual journey, encouraged by Surangama and Thakurda. Complexity of her tormented soul, her anguish and ignorance, her passion and offended pride, her desperation and self-will.
3. King appears as an uncompromisingly cruel image.

Scene – VI: Self-realization of Queen Sudarshana

1. The kings assembled for the festival have their common objective of capturing the kingdom. They declare a war and fight among themselves.
2. Sudarshana, now an impoverished figure passes through the street in a spiritual journey, encouraged by Surangama and Thakurda. Surngama reveals that the real Raja deals with human errors so strictly that he at times appears uncompromisingly cruel. Yet he is full of compassion.
3. The warring kings fall down one by one fighting each other. Sudarshana realizes finally that the real king will never come down to her, instead she has to seek him and realize him. He is the very fire which engulfed her earlier. She has to shed away the last traits of her vanity and pride to attain the ultimate the goal.
4. She seeks the blessings of Thakurda and gets it as a graceful culmination of her trials and tribulations.

➤ Scene – VII: Reunion between Queen Sudarshana and King / Dark Chamber Queen Sudarshana and King Scene.

5. Play closes in the Dark Chamber where the play began. Queen Sudarshana finally meets the King. The Queen Sudarshan to whom the Dark Chamber was only Dark now sees Light in it.

Interpretation with Director Note

1. As many of the writers on Tagore have suggested, the play 'RAJA' signifies the spiritual journey of Man. Tagore interprets through the theme the great Indian philosophic vision laid down in the Upanishdic verse:

असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।

AsatoMāSadgamaya

TamasomāJyotirGamaya

From Darkness Lead Me To Light

2. From Darkness, lead me to Light; the mystical concept of the Dark Chamber, its allegorical meaning, its strangeness and symbolic significance arouse philosophic awe and dramatic curiosity in us.
3. What does the dark chamber mean? How is it to be represented on the stage and how does it relate to life? Who is to behold anything in thick darkness in theatre? How to depict darkness and make it comprehensible? Can it be made possible without the active interference of light? Have we to intensify the density of darkness and make it all audio-centric? Or, are we to reduce its opaqueness and create translucent visuals, blurred images, shadows, and augment the sense of mystery?
4. The parable nature of the theme has it that everyone can imagine his own way; and that is the very qualitative excellence of a classic. To the author himself the conceptual attributes of the king had developed through many a change. This enigma led me to innovate a stage-device in the form of a moving shell to represent the real King. The Raja is visible to many in different ways and at different times. He is cruel and at the same time full of benediction and charm.
5. A similar form to represent spirits is available in the folk ritual art tradition in my region – Theyyam. The figure woven by hay in one of the above Theyyam items is burnt at the end of the ritual. I have adapted this stage – device in the form of the shell.
6. In the Indian histrionics, the practice of effacing the visible from the eye of certain characters and making the same thing visible to other is very common. This depiction prevails at the auditory level too. Tagore definitely had known this Natyadharmi technique of acting.
7. The stage version of the play is not strictly and cannot be a paraphrase of the written text. We have to build up our own chronological sequences to probe into the essence – the formless content. The layers that the parable weaves around have to be broken to reach out to the inner energy. So here the function involved in the reinterpretation is converting matter into energy which thus identified, is to be further in another medium.

Conclusion

This article would be concentrating on play 'Raja' in the theatrical aspect considering the playwright and directors contribution but most importantly the "Indianness भारतत्व" brought forward by Rabindranath Tagore and K. N. Panikkar will be a new dimension for those who want to learn about the "Indian Philosophy, Indian Aesthetics, Theory of Purushartha; in their artistic and creative works.

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