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# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

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**Terrible Sentiment in the Selected Works of  
Anand Neelakantan  
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## **Abstract**

Emotion is a part of human being's life, after breathing if anything makes human alive that is emotion. One such emotion or sentiment is Terrible that one experiences throughout his life. Before any success there is always fear, before any achievement there is always fear, before any hurdle in life there is always fear. *Bhayanaka rasa* or terrible sentiment is one of the most common emotions found in mankind as well as living beings be it animals or plants like 'Touch Me Not' plant that out of fear of touch wraps itself up. Thus, Terrible Sentiment is one of the most important emotions for not only humans but for all the living beings' lives. Terrible Sentiment is one of the *rasas* depicted in *Bharat Muni's* work *Natya Shastra*. It is a part of Indian Aesthetics and has universality in it, for it signifies fear and it is an omnipresent emotion in human being's life as well as literature that one feels throughout his life. Anand Neelakantan is a renowned contemporary Indian Mythological and Historical fiction writer in English. This paper intends to study Terrible Sentiment or the feeling of fear depicted by the eminent contemporary author Neelakantan in his selected works such as *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*, *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*, and *Ajaya: Rise of Kali*.

## **Keywords**

Anand Neelakantan, Indian Writing in English, *Bhayanaka*, *Rasa*, Aesthetics, *Rasa Theory*, *Kala*, *Bhaya*, *Sthayibhava*.

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Aesthetics is a philosophical term concerned with the nature of art and with judgements concerning beauty. It is and has always been an eternal part of the Indian philosophy and differs in context and approach from that of the Western. *Indian Aesthetics* has always aimed for realizing the meaning of in-depth beauty of art and self. The practice of aesthetics in India has been from ages but it was never recorded until 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC with Bharat Muni's epic work on dramaturgy the *Natya Shastra*. It intensively discourses about the expression of art through limitation, transportation, unities, manners, etiquettes, acting, dancing, music, costume, make-up, spectacle, characters, limb movements, diction, gestures, and most importantly the 'sentiments' i.e., the *Rasa*. The *Rasa Theory* is an eternal part of *Natya Shastra* and chiefly the soul of it as discussed in its chapters 6 and 7. One of the *Rasas* discussed in *Natya Shastra* is Terrible Sentiment or *Bhayanaka Rasa*, the color of which is black and the deity related to it is Lord *Kala* (another form of Lord *Yama*). Its *Sthayibhava* (Durable Psychological State) is '*Bhaya*' meaning fear. The fear can be psychological, objective, situational, supernatural or even spiritual. All these have positive and negative impacts on humans. It arouses feelings like terror, trembling, fainting, anxiety, guilt. In literature, often psychological fears are depicted as the mental status of the characters or horror theme is employed. Fear from the almighty is also portrayed or subjective or objective fears such as loss of loved one or fear of being caught, serves as common highlights.

Neelakantan's novel *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* depicts the saga of Ravana's life and experiences through Ravana's own perspective. How he conquered the world and his journey of becoming a King from a poor untouchable Asura.

In the novel, *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*, author Neelakantan depicts the *bhayanaka rasa* or terrible sentiment in the incident when Bhadra gets to know that Deva army has attacked on his village and he gets very scared or them. The Deva army kills his little daughter and kidnaps his wife and rape her. The army burn the Asura people alive and put the whole village into fire. These terrible scenes make Bhadra very scared and he faints out of fear. In this way Neelakantan describes terrible sentiment in the work.

That is, until the night I was woken by my wife. I was angry to be rudely shaken from my sleep and wanted to thrash her for her impudence. Then I saw that there were strangers inside our bedroom... Slowly, fear crept on me. Who were these people? Why were they here? My neighbour, that idiot who spat red betel juice into my courtyard every day and enjoyed the fights that followed, was being burnt alive and brightly lighting up his front yard. In that ghastly light I also saw an orgy taking place in my neighbour's yard... the Deva warriors had taken our village. The whole village was burning. People were running about like scared chickens. I saw people being hacked. Houses were ablaze. Warriors on horseback with their fair, devilish faces, were jeering, howling and killing people. (45)

Further, author Neelakantan depicts the fear of Bhadra's wife, when she gets touched by the Devas' army. The mere presence of Devas fills the village with absolute terror. Then they kill Bhadra's daughter and rapes her wife. All these incidents make Bhadra very terrified. In this way Neelakantan describes the *bhayanaka rasa* or terrible sentiment in the novel.

The strangers were leering at my wife now and I could feel her trembling. I scrambled up and threw my arms protectively around my family... Someone hit me with the hilt of his sword. The bridge of my nose cracked and searing pain shot through my body. A boy, barely fifteen perhaps, lifted my daughter by her legs, swung her like a rag and smashed her hard against a mud wall. I heard my beloved daughter's skull crack open. Her blood and brains splattered across our faces. The devils laughed again. I went numb and collapsed onto the floor. My wife fainted. I desperately tried to grab my wife as they dragged her away into the darkness... My wife's shrill screams got lost among many similar cries rising all over the village. (45)

As the tale moves forward, Bhadra and all the Asuras of Bhadra's village become slave of Devas. They get beaten up by Devas very badly, most of the Asura people gets hurt and injured by Devas. All the fearful sights of the dark place and the state of his people make Bhadra very scared. In this way author Neelakantan depicts terrible sentiment in the novel.

Moreover, I was a civilian and not a soldier. I lay there with useless thoughts buzzing in my head which I tried to make sense of. The sound of people talking floated down to me, "Half of them will definitely not make it. The others might take at least a month to even start walking." The tongue was definitely classy Tamil, the kind used by educated and pretentious city folk. I realized I was not among foes. But the voices sounded matter-of-fact and their dark prophecy filled me with indescribable terror. (47)

*Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* is a novel of mythological fiction written by Neelakantan. The first novel of the *Ajaya* series depicts the story of the Kauravas. As opposed to the usual tale told from the point of view of the victors, this entire story has been written from Duryodhana's point of view. The novel *Ajaya* is the saga that narrates the story of *Mahabharata* from the perspective of Duryodhana, who is the lead protagonist of the book, popularly known as the one who lost the Kurukshetra battle.

As the story starts, the author Neelakantan depicts *bhayanaka rasa* in the incident when Karna and his father Atiratha go to meet sage Karipa, and Kripa comes closer to Karna. Karna gets afraid of touching Kripa because he is a brahmin and

touching him by a Suta is considered wrong in the society at that time. Karna recoils out of fear and tries not to touch the sage. His fear shows terrible sentiment in the novel.

“Aha! He wants to be a warrior.” Kripa jumped down from the platform he had been perched on and rushed towards Karna. He stopped inches short of Karna’s face and peered into his eyes. Karna recoiled instinctively and retreated a few feet. He was afraid of accidentally touching the Brahmin and breaking the caste taboos. (54)

As the tale proceeds, Neelakantan depicts the fear of Suyodhana that he has from his teacher sage Drona. He always scolds him and abuses him. Suyodhana is not allowed to ask any thing in the class. Soon, he starts getting afraid of his Guru sage Drona and his hate for the classes increases day by day. In this way author describes fear of Suyodhana from Drona in the novel.

Suyodhana was watching Drona, fear and anger battling for supremacy within. He hated these classes and wanted to be out in the forest, roaming about and watching the birds and butterflies. Every day of the past four years had been torture. His enduring memory was of sitting glassy-eyed, feeling like an idiot, while Drona heaped abuse upon him. Initially, Suyodhana had asked his teacher about various things. Kripa, who had instructed the Princes before Drona, had always been ready to answer any question with a smile. But everything changed when Drona came. (88)

Furthermore, author Neelakantan depicts *bhayanaka rasa* in the incident, when Eklavya goes to Guru Drona to tell him that he has attained knowledge of archery merely by watching him. He gets very scared of Drona because he belongs to a Nishada community that comes under the untouchable ones. He knows after knowing his identity Drona will scold him. He shivers out of fear of the thought of telling sage Drona about himself. He just wants to run away from that place. In this way Neelakantan describes terrible sentiment in the novel.

Ekalavya found his courage draining away with each step. He wanted to run back and hide in the bushes but it was too late. He heard footsteps behind him and knew that blasted urchin had followed him... Eklavya shuddered. He considered touching Drona’s feet as he had seen the Princes do every day and tentatively took a step forward... Eklavya just wanted to turn and run. He should not have come. This was no place for Untouchables like him. (113)

*Ajaya: Rise of Kali* is a novel of mythological fiction written by Neelakantan. The second novel of the *Ajaya* series, it tells the story of the Kauravas. As opposed to the usual tale told from the point of view of the victors, this entire story is written from Duryodhana’s view. The story of *Mahabharata* as told by Sage Ved Vyas is simple. It’s the story of the Kuru clan that was torn apart with internal politics and (to a greater extent) the personal ambitions of two women - Gandhari and Kunti - the first ladies of Kuru Dynasty.

In the work *Ajaya: Rise of Kali*, the author Neelakantan depicts terrible sentiment when Sushasana comes to grab Draupadi and drag her into the assembly of Hastinapura. Draupadi gets afraid of the behaviour of Kauravas and she feels the fear that she is not safe in the Assembly. Sushasana pulls her by her hairs and he does not think of her sister in laws respect, his wild behaviour makes every woman present there very frightful. Nobody has ever imagined this kind of behaviour towards the Queen of

Indraprastha. This horrible scene makes every woman unsafe and scared of the upcoming king Suyodhana.

Draupadi forgot to breathe when she heard heavy footsteps hurrying up the stairs. They were coming for her. Her words had not deterred them. She stood with her back to the wall, her heart thudding in her chest as fear crept insidiously up her body from dictated women don desperately clutched the single sari that custom dictated women don during menstruation. As the other women in the chamber watched in aghast silence, the door was kicked open. Prince Sushasana stood with his feet planted on either side of the threshold, a lopsided grin on his flushed face... The women of the royal household watched the brutish display in wide-eyed horror. (26)

Here, author Neelakantan depicts terrible sentiment in the incident when Aswathama goes to the Himalayan ranges and he finds the path very horrible and frightening. He gets scared of the cliffs and the boulders that suddenly falls on his path. The whole sight of mighty Himalaya and the narrow path scare Aswathama. Even his horse finds the path very scary and gets panicked. Aswathama's heart also pounds out of fear. In this way Neelakantan describes *bhayanaka rasa* in the novel.

When the dust cleared, Aswathama was still trying to steady his panicked horse. One missed step and he would follow the path made by the boulder and splatter like an eggshell a thousand feet below. His heart pounded in his chest. Had the boulder been an accident or was someone following them? He looked around; the place looked desolate and forlorn. Nothing stirred. Far below, the Deodar trees in the valley had turned white with their burden of snow. The eerie silence when the wind stopped howling was frightening. The mountain crouched like a wounded beast.(93)

Then,Aswathama and his people get chased by unknown people. They covered their faces with masks and attacked at Aswathama and his companions. The boulders make the horses very scared and the masked men follow Aswathama's team to kill all of them. In this way author Neelakantan describes terrible sentiment in the novel.

The Brahmin warrior and his daredevil companions rushed across the gravel-strewn goat trail. Boulders rolled down, frightening the horses and threatening to dash them all into the waters far below. Behind them, men with faces masked with the ends of their turbans, chased them towards their deaths. (95)

Thus, Terrible Sentiment has a universal theme and it is omnipresent as other emotions in living beings' lives. It serves as the main theme of Neelakantan's work *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*, *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*, and *Ajaya: Rise of Kali* and it has been depicted by him through the lives and experiences of the characters mentioned in the novels.

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