

ISSN : 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

Bimonthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Impact Factor 6.4

Vol. 11 Issue 5 October 2025

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

Email : editor@expressionjournal.com

www.expressionjournal.com



Heroic Sentiment in the Selected Works of Anand Neelakantan
Dr. Ranjana Upadhyay Pandey
Associate Professor, Department of English
Raipur Institute of Technology
Raipur, Chhattisgarh

.....

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 Heroic that one experiences throughout his life. The Heroic Sentiment is a sentiment of valor, courage, and determinism. The *Vira Rasa* tends to evoke a person with the thrill of overcoming obstacles, excitement to solve the problems and encouragement to stand against the evils of the world. Thus, Heroic Sentiment is one of the most important emotions for not only humans but for all the living beings' lives. Heroic 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 valor and courage 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 Heroic Sentiment or the feeling of valor and courage 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, Aesthetics, *Rasa Theory*,
Indra, *Utsah*, *Sthayibhava*.

.....



Heroic Sentiment in the Selected Works of Anand Neelakantan
Dr. Ranjana Upadhyay Pandey
Associate Professor, Department of English
Raipur Institute of Technology
Raipur, Chhattisgarh

.....

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 1st 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 Heroic Sentiment or *Veer Rasa*. Its color is light orange and the deity related to it is Lord *Indra*. The *Sthayibhava* for this *rasa* is '*Utsah*' which means zeal. In poetry, fiction, and drama, it is portrayed in terms of valor, courage, self-confidence and determinism not only in war fields but also in showing heroism to overcome from self-chaos, or daily life circumstances or peculiar situations.

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 *Vira Rasa* in the incident when Ravana gets upset with the life full of misery and poverty and decides to live a life filled with prosperity. He dreams to conquer the whole world in a very young age and departs from his hut to conquer the world. He desires to give a life full of happiness and riches to his mother and his siblings and for that he is ready to take any risk. In this way Neelakantan depicts the Heroic Sentiment in Ravana's courage in the work.

The next day, we would be leaving this island. I had heard that there are great nations to the north. I would travel across the length and breadth of India. I wanted to climb the snow-clad mountains of the Himalayas, swim against the dangerous currents of Ganga raging in her full monsoon fury. I dreamed of passing through the thick forests of the Vindhya and Sahyas and seeing the monkey men and the kingdom of the Yakshas and

Kinnaras. I dreamed of being in the music-filled world of the Gandharvas. Oh, what a world to conquer! What a life to enjoy! One day Ravana would rule the world. From the mighty Himalayas to Lanka, nay, from Lanka to the Himalayas; I would rule the world; with justice, peace and prosperity for all. (17)

Further, Neelakantan depicts Heroic Sentiment in the novel when Ravana departs from his hut and explores the outside world from Lanka. He sees the beautiful world there but controlled by his step-brother Kubera and thinks to settle down there for a while but then his dream to own all these things does not let him to stop there and pushes him to go further and gather his Asura people to fight for their rights and rule the world that is waiting for them.

My brothers and I travelled through the thick, evergreen Sahya forest. We saw glorious palaces and ports; ivory and sandalwood and peacocks and monkeys. We saw ships with kaleidoscopic-coloured sails sailing to distant lands, laden with gold and diamonds, pepper and spices. We saw temples where the Gods resided and demanded a portion of the earnings which men strived hard to earn. And we also saw the representatives of those gods who plundered in God's name. The cities were bright with lights as brilliant as the sun and the women, beautiful like those in paradise. I saw with mixed emotions of pride, jealousy and anger, the ships on which my half-brother's flags fluttered... But I was a dreamer. And I did not want to just get along in this world. I wanted to own it. (19)

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.

In the work, author Neelakantan depicts *Vira Rasa* or Heroic Sentiment in the courage of Karna when he gets beaten up badly by Sage Kripa to check whether he can bear pain or not for becoming a warrior. He feels immense pain but refuse to give up for he wants to fulfil his dream of becoming a warrior. His courage of withstanding the pain purposely given by Kripa shows the Heroic Sentiment in the incident.

Kripa pushed the boy and Karna staggered back. Then he grabbed Karna by his long hair and lifted him with one hand. He slapped Karna across the face and punched him in the stomach with his strong left hand. Karna winced in pain but refused to cry out... "Fool! You think this is a beating? Your boy has courage. With proper training, he can be a good warrior. He can withstand pain." (54)

Here, author Neelakantan depicts Heroic Sentiment in the incident when Karna gets rejected by Sage Kripa and Guru Drona for being a Suta. He thinks of ending his life because he does not want to live a life like a corpse who has no purpose and dream in his life. The feeling of living life as a charioteer breaks his heart. He only wants to be a warrior in his life. He thinks of ending his life but gathers some courage for his parents and decides to continue a lifeless life just for his duty towards his parents.

The temple bell clanged as father and son started back towards their hut. The occasional cawing of the crows and the laughter and shouts from Kripa's group, was carried them on the oppressive air as they walked forlornly through the dusty streets. Once they reached home, Karna went to the well in the backyard without a word. He looked at the wavering reflection of his handsome face in the dark waters deep below. For a moment he was tempted to jump in and finish everything. Then he heard his mother's sobs and

his father's broken voice, and he gritted his teeth. 'I have a duty to serve my parents,' he thought. It broke his heart to think he would be nothing but a common charioteer all his life. If not for the love he bore his parents, he would have taken refuge in the dark waters of the well that day. (57)

As the tale moves forward, Neelakantan depicts Heroic Sentiment in the courage of Eklavya. Eklavya belongs to a Nishada caste and dreams of becoming a warrior like the princes of Hastinapura. He just sits and watches Guru Drona imparting knowledge of Archery to Arjuna. Eklavya dares to see an impossible dream to become the best archer in the whole world and thinks of giving Guru Drona surprise one day. Jara laughs at the courageous dream of Eklavya but Eklavya knows what he wants from his life and sticks to his decision. His courage shows Heroic Sentiment in the novel.

From the thick green foliage of the mango trees, two pairs of dark eyes watched this drama unfold. While the Guru was beating his son, Jara asked Ekalavya, "You think he will teach you now? He was not even ready to teach a boy like Karna. We are Nishadas, far below Sutas." "Shut up, you fool! You talk too much. I am going to learn from him. One can learn as much by sitting here as by being there, like poor Suyodhana. We will watch what he teaches Arjuna and learn. No one, not even Drona, is going to stop me learning from him. And one day I will surprise him by defeating his favourite, Arjuna." Ekalavya turned to kick Jara, who was laughing at these audacious dreams. (63)

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 *Ajaya: Rise of Kali*, author Neelakantan depicts the *Vira Rasa* or Heroic Sentiment in the incident when Suyodhana and his friends conspires against him and trap him in the chakravyuha. The young Prince knows how to enter into the chakravyuha but does not know how to exit it. Despite the fact he dares to enters the chakravyuha with immense courage and aims Suyodhana to kill him.

Suyodhana turned and saw Abhimanyu's chariot rushing towards them at great speed. An arrow came flying towards Suyodhana. He deflected it with his mace. The *chakravyuhahad* been breached! Behind Abhimanyu, the Pandava cavalry charged at full gallop, sending the *chakravyuhainto* disarray. On Suyodhana's left, Karna's chariot came rushing to a halt in a cloud of dust. A finger length more and it would have crashed onto his. Shalya grinned. Karna's face was creased with worry. On Suyodhana's right, Aswathama's chariot raced up. Karna jumped into Suyodhana's chariot and shot an arrow with a single, fluid movement. It lodged in Abhimanyu's shoulder, drawing blood, but the young man did not bother to pull it out. His murderous stare was fixed on Suyodhana's face and his arrow caught Abhimanyu's other shoulder but Arjuna's son did not even flinch. He aimed at Suyodhana's throat. (379)

Then, Guru Drona attacks on Abhimanyu's chariot and Suyodhana, Karna, Aswathama and Jayadratha attack on Abhimanyu simultaneously. All of them admires his courage to fight with them alone. The young Prince does not get afraid of them, he fights with all his courage. In this way Neelakantan depicts the Heroic Sentiment in the courage of young Abhimanyu.

With a loud crack, the wheels of Abhimanyu's chariot broke loose and fell, throwing him to the ground. Abhimanyu looked stunned. The force of the fall had broken his bow in

two. The wheel pin lay on the ground with Drona's arrow through it... Abhimanyu leapt up, drew his sword and stood in combat position. His face betrayed not a flicker of emotion as he stood alone in the Kauravachakravyuha, there was no going back. Suyodhana jumped from his chariot and walked towards him. Karna, Aswathama and Jayadratha followed, swords drawn. Suyodhana could not but admire the raw courage the young man showed... "Halt if you value your life," Abhimanyu said, his voice clear and unafraid. "Four against one- is this *dharma*?" (380)

As the tale proceeds, Neelakantan depicts the heroic deed of Abhimanyu. How the young Prince at a very tender age, fights with four warriors and shows his heroic capabilities to everyone and stuns everyone present there. Despite knowing the fact that he will be killed by four of them, he shows his valor and handles them with all his courage. Abhimanyu is one of the most renowned epic characters when there is the reference of heroic characters in Indian Mythology.

"Uncle Suyodhana, stop this whining and fight like a man!" Jayadratha rushed at Abhimanyu, but the youngster moved away from the arc of Jayadratha's sword and pushed him away with his shield. Jayadratha lost his balance and fell. Abhimanyu laughed. Suyodhana felt pity stir in his heart as Aswathama swung his sword... Karna blocked the blow with his shield and swung his sword at Abhimanyu. The youngster blocked it with his own sword and angry sparks flew over them. In a moment, the sword had been dislodged from Karna's hand. Abhimanyu attacked like a whirlwind and Karna struggled to block his thrusts and blows with his shield. (381)

When four of the warriors find it difficult to defeat Abhimanyu, they cheat and kill him by deceit. The young Abhimanyu till his last breath shows the valor that one cannot imagine and achieves martyrdom. He shows the great example of a hero and Heroic Sentiment in the novel as well as the Mahabharata.

The *urumi*, the rope-like sword of the South, which Karna wore like a belt, shimmered in the sun. It rose high into the sky and then coiled itself around Abhimanyu's sword. The boy looked stunned as Karna prised the weapon from his hand. Before he knew it, he had lost his shield as well. Abhimanyu bent and picked up the broken chariot wheel, blood flowing from the wound in his shoulder. Karna and Aswathama walked towards him, but Abhimanyu's gaze was fixed on Suyodhana swung his mace and hit the flying wheel, smashing it to pieces... "Finish him!" Suyodhana ordered. (382)

Thus, Heroic Sentiment or *Veer Rasa* 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.

Works Cited

- Ghosh, Manomohan. *Natya Shastra*. Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1951.
Neelakantan, Anand. *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*. Leadstart Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2012.
Neelakantan, Anand. *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*. Leadstart Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2013.
Neelakantan, Anand. *Ajaya: Rise of Kali*. Leadstart Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2015.