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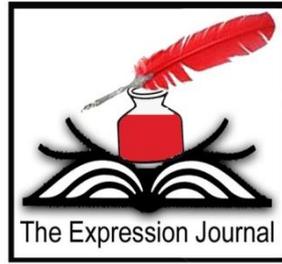
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## ***KARUNA RASA (PATHETIC SENTIMENT) IN ANAND NEELAKANTAN'S BHOOMIJA: SITA***

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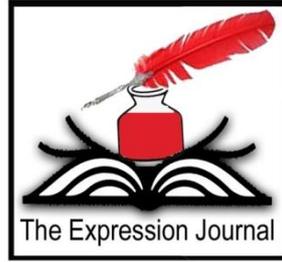
### **Abstract**

Human being is a model of emotions. For each phase of life there is a face that reflects catharsis of the situations or circumstances that one goes through all life. Some let these emotions go with the flow while others seek to channelize it. Over centuries, the best mode to channelize human emotions is through 'art'. Every nation, community, religion or tribe in this universe has a unique way of expressing special gestures and emotions through art. Especially in a country like India which has been a melting point of rich cultures, religions, and traditions over centuries; play with different forms of art to glorify their inheritance. These emotions are an eternal part of Indian aesthetics and *Rasa Theory* and exhibit the universality of *Rasa*. The paper intends to highlight one such emotion of *Karuna Rasa* which is a part of Indian Aesthetics with the reference to Anand Neelakantan's fiction *Bhoomija: Sita*. Neelakantan is a renowned contemporary author of Indian writings in English.

### **Keywords**

*Karuna, Rasa, Aesthetics, Rasa Theory, Yama, Shoka, Sthayibhava, Catharsis.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

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 imitation, 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 *Karuna Rasa*, it is ash-colored and the deity related to it is Lord Yama. 'Shoka' is its *Sthayibhava* (Durable Psychological State) and it deals with the feelings of sadness, grief and compassion, the feeling of tragedy and despair, heartbreak, sorrow caused by parting with a lover, the suffering caused by the death of a loved one are all *Karuna*. While the highest *Karuna* is compassion, the original Sanskrit word *Karuna* means sadness. It can also be referred to the catharsis of Aristotle which means purgation of pain and delight.

Anand Neelakantan's fiction work *Bhoomija: Sita* is a heartbreaking tale of two Krauncha birds, their killer and the heavy price they paid to get the creative juices of a poet flowing, so that he may compose an epic poem. Written with rare sensitivity and empathy, the tale pries open the eyes of those who are content to avert their gaze from the suffering of others as long as they themselves get to indulge in a life of privilege, uncaring that the ease they enjoy stems from the toil and trouble of others. It also serves as a beautiful reminder that this world belongs not only to humans but our four-legged, winged friends and other living creatures as well. *Karuna Rasa* can be seen throughout the work and it depicts the presence of *Karuna Rasa* in every living being's life, "Eat what you catch until someone catches you and eats you, was the rule of the world." (2).

Neelakantan's work *Bhoomija: Sita* is a heart wrenching tale of a Kraucha bird couple, their chicks, a hunter and his family, and a sage, who gets an inspiration to write an epic poem after seeing all the pathetic incidents. As the story moves further, it arouses Karuna Rasa intensively.

The tale is an emotional narrative of a mother Kraucha bird, who lost her chicks to a snake that had sneaked into her nest in the dead of the night. Her desperate fight to save her young ones had almost killed her, and it was a miracle that she had survived. She still blamed her mate for leaving her side that night. If only he had been there when the dark death had slithered up, they wouldn't have lost their darlings, the thought was constantly sinking her into profound grief. They had seen the cobra a few days earlier, sniffing at their droppings with its split tongue. That night, when the moon had hidden behind dark clouds and it was deep dark all around, the cobra had snaked up to their nest. For a moment, they had frozen in fear and then her motherly instinct had taken over. She was the one who attacked the snake first; her partner came to her aid later. They had fought and chased the cobra away, and somehow managed to save the lives of their chicks. Next morning her mate left her to go in search of a safer tree where they can live happily without fear of the snake, ignoring her desperate pleas to never leave her alone. He had promised to come back before nightfall, but failed to do so. He was not there with her when the snake attacked the nest again. The snake had bitten her and she lost her darlings. A man came to help her, he caressed her, applied a green paste on her bitten area of the body and saved her life. But she was constantly thinking about her chicks and got sadden when reality hit her hard. When she saw her mate was watching her a little distance away, she got more saddened and blamed him for not being with her at the time she needed him the most.

Her chicks would be hungry. She tried to pull herself up on her toes, but tottered. There were no mouths to feed. The sadness that had settled at the bottom of her heart, started spreading its poison through her veins again. It was then that she saw her mate.  
(3)

One of the characters of the story is Nishada, a hunter, who was unable to feed his family for a very long period and the whole family was starving. The pain of not being able to feed his own family as well as hunger was eating him alive. When he saw the Kraucha couple indulged in making love unaware of the fact that they would have got preyed and unable to save their lives, the Nishada hunted the male partner. The very fact of losing his partner again shattered the female Kraucha bird and she lost her will to live. The pathetic incidents taking place back-to-back, filled the heart of mother bird with deep sorrow.

The hunter was hungry. It was no big deal, for he was used to it. He was a Nishada and like his hunting dog, hunger followed him everywhere. He was not blessed with a sharp eye or an unwavering aim. He stood before his wife, shame washing over him like the waves, and slowly eroding his pride. The drought had been severe and game was scarce. His dog sat panting near his feet. His wife was running her fingers through the curly hair of his daughter, who was sleeping on her lap. She looked up and said to him, 'What will you say when she wakes up and asks for food?' (4)

The grief of not getting sufficient food for a very long time compelled the wife of Nishada to curse him for not being able to provide them basic needs of life. He was unable to express his agony because he knew he was hungry for a very long time and couldn't gather the energy to go for a hunt and prey a very good and sufficient meal for his family.

He wished he knew. The Nishada tries to say something and thought better of it. His wife continued, 'It's been months now since we ate properly. I am fed up of living with you. A man who cannot provide for his wife and child should not be a house holder. You have turned us into beggars.' (5)

After getting scolded by his wife, the hunter went out to hunt and fortunately saw his prey.

The hunter carefully took out his arrow. He could not afford to miss this time. He touched the ground with his right hand and said a silent prayer to Mother Goddess, to make him lucky this time, his little girl was hungry. Then dragged out his arrow and aimed at the Kraucha birds. The arrow flew and hit the male bird and knocked him down. The blood spreaded all over the ground slowly and the female bird watched his love, his mere reason to live, die in front of her and cried in deep misery. Sage Valmiki was watching the birds making love also cried in profound agony.

The saint let out a cry of anguish. The dog sprang towards the tree. The hunter stood still and watched the arrow pierce the heart of one of the birds. (7)

Here the author depicted the pathetic situation of Nishada's pet dog. The dog was also hungry and didn't get sufficient food for a very long time but he still was faithful, putting his suffering aside and tried to be devoted towards his master. He hid his pain and accompanied his master and helped him get food in every possible way.

The dog came holding the bleeding bird by its neck and deposited it near the Nishada's feet. It stood wagging its tail. The dog had also been starving for many days, and its mouth watered at the prospect of food, but it faithfully waited for its master to throw the crumbs. (8)

Further when Nishada got his best hunt so far, he was showing his gratitude towards mother Goddess for helping him get food for his family. He thought without her grace he wouldn't have done it. He thanked her for being kind towards him and saving his family from starving. On the other hand, this incident was a reason for severe pain and suffering for the female Kraucha bird.

When the hunter understood that nothing terrible had happened to him, he warily picked up the bird and ran back to his woman and child. He was feeling happy about his luck. Mother Goddess had been kind to him. His prayers had been answered. *My child will not go hungry tonight*, he thought as he said a word of thanks to his Goddess. The dog ran behind him, yelping and barking and vigorously wagging its tail. (8)

Thereafter when Saint Valmiki was watching the bird mates making love and engrossed in each other, he felt the utter happiness and described the love making as a pious act. Then he suddenly saw an arrow piercing the lover of a female bird, he was shocked and in severe pain. He was unable to imagine the pain of the female bird and sank into deep grief. He got very saddened and was crying helplessly by the banks of river Tamasa. He was in deep sorrow as well as angry at the hunter Nishada. He was then constantly cursing the hunter out of sorrow and anger for his evil act, but soon he forgave him after knowing that he and his family was starving, and was at the edge of death due to hunger.

Valmiki sat weeping on the banks of river Tamasa. The world was dark around him. Night had crept out of the shadows without him noticing, and enveloped everything. He felt angry and bitter. The world was too cruel. How could that Nishada be so heartless? Did he not see that the birds were in the act of love? A boor, a barbarian, an ignorant man who was worried only about his physical needs- words failed Sage Valmiki to describe the cruelty. The man had not even understood what he had said. (9)

The female Kraucha bird was watching the wife and daughter of Nishada, spending time together. She was missing his chicks after seeing both of them but when she realized that they were having his lover for dinner, the fact made her very sad as well as bitter. She was missing her chicks badly and now when she lost her partner, she was shattered and helpless realizing the fact that now she had lost her entire family and had no one whom she could call her own.

The Kraucha crane watched the woman and the child by the fire. Her heart was heavy with sorrow. She shouldn't have come here. By the crackling fire, she could see the human child eating her beloved with relish. The mother sat near the girl, running her fingers through her curly hair. The girl asked for more and the mother kept feeding

her. The girl shared what she got with the dog, despite her mother's affectionate chiding. It was him they were eating, the Kraucha bird thought bitterly. Yet when she saw the mother and daughter, she was reminded of her own chicks. She buried her head in her feathers and cried as the mother sang a lullaby to her little girl. (11)

After losing her chicks and then her male partner the psychological pain of female Kraucha bird was so severe that she lost her will to live and wanted to end her life at that very moment. For a moment she felt fear for dying but when she saw the hunter's family is still hungry, she as well as she had no one with whom she can continue living her life, she left the branch of tree and ended her life by falling into the fire.

But that did not lessen her sadness. She had lost her will to live. She could not imagine watching a dawn without him. She gazed at the blazing fire below. For a moment, a cold terror gripped her heart. She didn't want to die. She gripped the branch she was perched on and closed her eyes. She heard him calling her, but couldn't see his face. She let her grip slip away. She fell slowly into the fire. (13)

## Conclusion:

Thus, *Karuna Rasa* has a universal theme and it is omnipresent as other emotions in living beings' lives. *Karuna Rasa* serves as the main theme of Neelakantan's work *Bhoomija: Sita* and it has been depicted by him through the lives and sufferings of the characters such as Sage Valmiki, hunter Nishada, Kraucha birds, hunter's wife and family etc. In the end of the tale, author Neelakantan exhibits that compassion is the highest form of *Karuna Rasa*.

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