

Aesthetics Experience of *Ananda* in the Past and Its Significance in the Present

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Abstract

Popularly ‘Ananda’ is regarded as one of the types of emotion. But *Ananda* is not an emotion. While the word ‘emotion’ signifies someone to an action, *Ananda* denotes a state of mind. For an instance, fear is an emotion, which stimulates a reaction. This reaction may propel a person to escape or fight. When an individual experiences *Ananda*, he or she feels calm, contented, blissful. The mind and the body of the person would be composed. Modern electronic media and mass media, however, is more concerned with igniting the emotions of people than providing the ‘Ananda’. Hence this paper is an attempt to trace the revival of the notion of *Ananda* and its significance. This paper is divided into four sections: first section deals with introduction of *Ananda*; the second tries to locate it in the Indian *Kavya* in general and drama in particular; the third discusses the aesthetic experience of *Ananda* with the dramatic theory of Bharata; the fourth discusses the significance and the revival of *Ananda* at present times.

Keywords: Aesthetic Experience, *Ananda*, Emotion, Rasa Theory, Bharata’s *Natyasastra*

Introduction

The modern time is undergoing a phase where evoking the emotion of people have become the daily affair of mass media. This emotion and its expression, bring a sense of contentment among people. But this contentment is momentary. The momentary contentment again propels people to emotional outburst. In one or the other way, mass media tries to stir the emotions of individuals by operating their emotions. The word ‘emotion’ indicates or provokes an individual to an action. But the notion of *Ananda* is not an ‘emotion’. This paper attempts to bring the Ancient Indian notion of *Ananda* as a counter to the concept of *emotion*. This paper also discusses its significance in the present time.

I

M. Shivaram states *Ananda* is a Sanskrit word connoting one of the rare but extremely satisfying experiences that man can achieve in his life. It is difficult to translate it into English. The words “Bliss” or “Serenity” or “Pleasant Tranquility” are the nearest approach (Shivaram 1). The concept of *Ananda* basically is different from the concept of *emotion*; *Ananda* leads an individual to the peace of mind and to the maturity to understand the world. In the process of achieving *Ananda*, an individual

does not forget the present world and goes to a different world; rather he/she travels through the worldly things to reach *Ananda*. The individual is not considered *the other* from the mundane world; he gradually gets maturity in understanding the mundane world. Explaining this, M. Shivaram says,

During the experience of *Ananda*, one is not dead to the external world. In fact, he is keenly aware of the outer world, but is not ruffled or attached to anything in the outer world. In addition, the awareness gets enlarged. Awareness of the outer world and also the inner world of the mind. Spatiotemporal bounds seem to recede towards Infinity, during such awareness, Awareness, and in the ultimate stages Space-Time bondages disappear. Normally the world we live in is perceived as a Space-Time bound entity. But after experiencing are perceived, not hazily but clearly (Shivaram 2).

To understand the notion of *Ananda* clearly, one has to understand the notion of *visayAnanda* which can be translated as *worldly pleasures*.

Visayanada too is a type of *Ananda* but it is considered as the lowest kind of *Ananda* as it deals or focuses on the mundane life and sensual pleasures. In the course of attaining *Visayanada*, sensual pleasures such as eyes, ears, nose and the skin are given preferences. *Visayanada* is categorised into so many kinds by the Indian classical writers.

According to Gangabhatta (1620 AD - 1685 AD) the *Visayanada* or enjoyment is through eight means. They are Perfumes, Women, Clothes, Music, Tambula, Dinner, Bed and flowers. The king of Someshwara, the Chalukya of 1130 AD, categorises many *bhogas* in his work *Manasollasa*. They are smearing, smelling the aromatic smoke, wearing clothes, enjoying women, chewing betel leaves and nuts, having bath, wearing garlands, sleeping on bed, sitting on a seat and having food. Knowing about these or getting pleasure through these means can be considered as *Visayanada*. As the *VisayAnanda* deals with the mundane things, it is usually considered as the low kind of *Ananda*.

This paper further focusses on the question of “Is there any means of getting away from *Visayanada*? M. Shivaram has opined that the Experience of *Ananda* is intensely subjective. It is a personal experience and cannot be demonstrated to others (Shivaram 2). But this paper has a view that the *Ananda* can be demonstrated to others through *Kavya*, which scholars call as *KavyAnanda*.

II

Most of the Indian Mahakavyas try to imitate (*Anukaran*) -- the ways of the God. Mahakavyas lead an individual to the *KavyaAnanda*. The word ‘*Kavya*’ need not to be limited to poetry only. It encompasses *nataka/rupaka*, *sangita*, *nrtya*, *vastu*, etc. all art forms. *Nataka/rupaka* is regarded as the highest form of *Kavya* “*Kavyeshu Natakam Ramyam*”. *Natya* is regarded as such because it can instruct and at the same time entertain; it can be heard as well as seen. Addressing the aims or purpose of *Natya*, Bharata says that the two most noteworthy *prayojana* or purpose of the *Natya* is *Vyutpatti* and *priti*, i.e., instruction and entertainment. He says that *natya* is for *kridaniyaka*, *visrantijana*, and *vinodakarana*. In other words, it is for play, peace of mind and for entertainment. Hence, when a

spectator sees a *natya*, he/she gets *Vyutpatti* and *Ananda* at the same time. Hence, out of all the artistic creations, *natya* can provide such aesthetic experience which brings self realisation as well as experience of *Ananda*. This experience of *Ananda*, roughly translated as pure joy or bliss is comparable to *BrahmAnanda* or absolute bliss. Hence, Kavinath Vishwaraj calls *KavyAnanda* as *BhrAhmAnanda sahodara*, a twin brother of the creative ecstasy. One can get *KavyAnanda* through the performance of a *nataka/rupaka*. The happiness which one derives from *kavyAnanda* is superior to the *VisayAnanda*. *KavyAnanda* transports the individual from the mundane to the higher level of happiness by transcending the worldly and metaphorical. Shastri says, “Relish of happiness, by the way of aesthetic experience, is the aim of all the streams of Arts- literary as well as creative.” (p.7)

KavyAnanda is a property of *Kavya* and the aesthetic experience that one gets while reading or viewing the work of creativity. It makes one realise one’s true self. While the *kavyAnanda* makes the individual experience the similar events that he/she has been experiencing in day to day life, yet *Kavya* portrays with creativity and imagination that the mundane and the natural world lacks and thus the emotion that one goes through while relishing it is transcending the boundaries of this world and a state of immense bliss. Any artistic creation in Indian aesthetics is considered as a source of *Ananda*. The poet or the artist is considered at par with the Supreme creator, Brahma. In fact, the artistic creation is considered better than the creation of the Supreme creator. While the natural creation has both the beautiful and the ugly and one can experience pleasure and pain; the artistic creation- painting, music, dance or *natya*- whether depicting beauty or grotesque, its relish yields pleasure and leads to joy or bliss only. The creative work has one more advantage over the natural. That is, in nature, things are transient and only one aspect of it we see or observe, but the art along with the poet’s imagination, makes it permanent and also reveals many other sides which nature is not able to reveal otherwise. This *kavyAnanda* in Indian aesthetic tradition is mainly explored and discussed through the theory of *Rasa*. *Rasa* is the prime foundation of aesthetic pleasure or the *KavyAnanda*. Bharata to Anadvardhana and other later theorists and commentators have discussed and explored how this *Rasa* is produced and how it is received.

III

Bharata describes *rasa* in the chapters VI and VII of the *Natyasastra*. Bharata’s concept of *rasa* has become so popular in both eastern and western drama. Bharat Gupt opines that there is no word in the history of Indian aesthetics which has acquired a greater significance than *rasa* (Gupt, 260). Basically, *rasa* has two meanings. Literal meaning of the *rasa* is ‘juice’, or ‘fluid’. The other meaning is an ‘extract’.

Bharatamuni’s *Natyasastra* has sown a fertile seed of Indian aesthetics in the form of *rasa*. The main theatre aim of the *Natyasastra* is to relish the essence of *rasa* and aesthetic experience. One of the objectives of the *Natyasastra* is to provide relief to the audience by making them experience different emotions and thereby attaining the *rasaAnanda*.

To attain *rasa*, one has to follow the journey of *bhava*, *vibhava*, *Anubhava*, *vyabharibhava*, and *sthayibhava*. The journey of the *rasa* is also called the aesthetic experience of the *rasa*. Raniero

opines the aesthetic experience as the act of tasting of the *rasa*; of immersing oneself in it to the exclusion of all else. (Raniero 19)

There is a space for entertainment in theory of *rasa*, but it is considered as an effect but not as a primary objective. The primary objective of the *Natyasastra* is to produce *rasa* in the minds of *prekshak* (spectator). This can be understood through the journey of *Bhava*. According to Bharata, *Bhava* follows a systematic journey to attain *rasa*. The journey includes *vibhava*, *anubhava*, *vyabharibhava* and *sthayibhava*. With the union of *Bhava*, *vibhava*, *anubhava*, *vyabharibhava*, and *sthayibhava*, one gets *rasa* and *rasAnanda*. To relish the *rasa* or *rasAnanda*, the creator of the work of art should be an expert and the spectator should be a *sahridaya*. Vidya Nivas Misra puts it as

Rasa is the offering of the hindered self to the unhindered Universal Self. It is something far away from the world of common day passions, but not far away from individual passions, because it universalises passions. This universalisation is made possible through an adept experiencer and for that, the role of the *sahridaya* is needed. (Misra 117-118)

To attain the *rasAnanda*, the creator of the work of art needs to have an exceptional state of mind. Slobodan Markovic concludes in his research paper that Aesthetic experience is specified as an exceptional state of mind which is qualitatively different from 'normal' everyday mental states. (Markovic 17) When *Rasa* is the ultimate goal of the creator as well as the spectator, it leads one beyond the shackles worldly affairs and makes them one with the Brahman, the Supreme soul. The Indian aestheticians stress on being the *Sahridaya*. This attainment is pleasurable and peaceful. This state is the state of *Ananda*.

IV

If we observe the daily events in our present day lives, we find that there is no scope for *Ananda*; we are just the performers caught in a mundane and mechanic lifestyle; we perform our duty at home, workspace and to the extent we even perform relations. We do not lack emotion, but we lack the *Ananda*, the bliss of doing and being in performance and relationships. One of the major repercussions of such performance is boredom, the modern disease of modern human being. At the end of the day, we feel lonely, disturbed, and perturbed. To release ourselves of such boredom, we have taken recourse to media, especially the electronic media. We feel the urge of venting out our strong emotions that we have been accumulating in the process of our performance and hence leading ourselves to a void. While *Ananda* is also a kind of emotion, it does not lead to frustration like the modern experience of emotion leads us to; rather, it leads to sublimity, contentment, and calmness. The attainment of *Ananda* is a journey from being to becoming. It is a journey from being lonely to attaining solitude. We understand the world and we are part of this world; but we are at the same time blissfully detached. The pleasure comes by understanding the nature of this world, its existence, and our symbiotic relationship with it.

The bliss or *Ananda* is a panacea to all the problems of the world. The modern world is fraught with many problems and *Ananda* can surely bring the change much needed in this age. While the question certainly arises - when the world is full of sorrow, violence and apathy; when one has to deal with these every day, then how can *Ananda* be achieved, how can one experience *Ananda* when the contrary of this 'dukh' or sorrow is true, and happiness seems so transient? The answer lies in what Anandaunbhavis say: "one's life will be full of bliss, provided one can transcend one's limited self and realises Atman which abides within?" (Hayavadana, p.14)

The supreme happiness or *Ananda* does not get confined to the narrow boundary of class or caste nor gender and ethnicity - everyone is capable to attain the bliss because the world is the abode of bliss and one has to recognise the real form of the world. Shivaram remarks that "the experience of *Ananda* is so supremely satisfying, that such a person thereafter pursues *Ananda* preference to the worldly pleasures. Not that he does not enjoy the ordinary pleasures, but he does not hanker after them as others do." (Shivaram 23)

This notion of *Ananda*, if understood and realised, the modern world and its inhabitants can come out of the narrow divisions of caste, class, ethnicity which leads to violence, jealousy, sorrow, and apathy and feel the ultimate bliss which disconnects one from the world and its worldly affairs and desires but at the same time connects with other beings and develops an ecological ambience which is satisfying and peaceful. Hence, it is highly imperative to revive *Ananda* and stress on this aspect in modern day world of entertainment.

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