



A Critical Review on Pratimanataka

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ABSTRACT: The 'Pratimanataka' is a short drama written by the eminent Sanskrit dramatist Bhasa. It is based on the epic Ramayana. His style of presentation is very charming. Bhasa always gives more importance to his negative characters too. A critical study have been highlighting in this paper.

Keywords: Bhasa, Pratimanataka, Ramayana, Drama, Mahabharata

I. INTRODUCTION

'Bhasa' is one of the earliest and most honored Indian playwrights in Sanskrit language. Bhasa's date is undetermined, but it is apparently noted within the 3rd or 4th centuries CE. There are thirteen plays written by Bhasa. Mahamahopadhyaya T. Ganapathi Sastri invented Bhasa's plays in 1912. Bhasa's plays are noted for their speedy action and movements. Many of the characters, themselves, are heroes of action such as the legendary heroes like *Arjuna*, *Bheema*, and *Rama* and so on. Epics, mythology, legends, history and social life were all adopted by him for his work [1]. No other playwright in Sanskrit has written so many plays on so wide a range of subjects. Pratimanataka of Bhasa is the only play in the whole Sanskrit literature, which discerns virtue in all, and has a fondness attitude towards the famous bad characters too.

The Pratimanataka of Bhasa occupies a prominent position among Sanskrit dramas. The work contains seven acts which consist of one hundred and fifty stanzas. The language of the drama is elegant and simple, and is based on the popular Ramayana theme. Even then, the work occupies a highest position of virtue because of the beautiful style of presentation.

II. TITLE OF THE PLAY

The name of this play isn't mentioned anywhere in the Drama. Since Bhasa doesn't follow the practice of mentioning the names of the author and the play in the *Prastavana*. The name 'Pratimanataka' is given by the editor *M.M.T. Ganapatisastri* on the authority of a colophon at the end of the manuscript of the play "*asya natakasya maatrukagranthaanthadrushtha paadanusaarat pratimanatakami thi sajna*" [2].

It is quite probable that the author named the work as 'Pratimadasaratha' just like *Svapnavasavadattam* and *Pratijnayaugandharayanam*. Among the four statues, it is the statue of *Dasaratha* which makes *Bharata* cognizant of his father's death and the greed and cruelty of his mother and thus contribute for the further development of the plot. Just as *Svapnavasavadattam* is sometimes referred to as *Svapnanatakam*, *Pratimadasaratham* was probably called *pratimanatakam* by the *Chakyars* of Kerala by whom the play used to be enacted and was preserved in an abridged form [3].

III. SOURCES OF THE PLAY

The play 'Pratimanataka' is based on the *Ramayana*. It is based on same principal incidence of *Rama's* life as told in the *Ayodhyakanda*. The play has seven acts in all. The first four are based on the *Ayodhyakanda*, the fifth one and the interlude of the sixth, on the *Aranyakanda*. The sixth act mentions some allusions from the *Kishkindha* and *Sundarakanda*. The last act is based on the *Yuddhakanda*, in particular.

The play thus reproduces some topics and ideas from the Epic *Ramayana*. *Bhasa*, however, differs from the Epic in respect of genealogy. It is therefore probable that he might have been acquainted with the other versions of *Rama* story.

IV. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The play opens with the hasty preparations for the coronation of *Rama*. In this scene, *Kaikeyi* demands two boons: (1) *Bharata* is to be enthroned. And (2) *Rama* should go to the forest for a period of fourteen years. *Rama* proceeds to forest accompanied by his wife *Seetha* and the brother *Lakshmana*.

In the second act, *Dasaratha* is deeply grieved at the departure of *Rama*. He cannot bear the separation from *Rama*. *Dasaratha* is a prey to the evils of old age. In course of time he goes mad with grief and at last dies of a broken heart.

The beginning of third act, *Bharata* who was staying with his maternal uncle was immediately called. While he was waiting for the auspicious moment to enter *Ayodhya*, he happened to peep in to the statue-hall of his ancestors. At the sight of the statue of *Dasaratha*, he asked keeper of the temple, who most unwillingly informed *Bharata* of the circumstances. He thus came to know the news of *Dasaratha's* death. *Bharata* was overwhelmed with grief and repentance. Immediately he resolved to atone for the misbehavior of his mother. Having paid no attention to what his ministers said, he directly started in search of *Rama*.

In the fourth act, *Bharata* met *Rama* in the forest. He requested *Rama* to allow him to stay in the forest in the company of *Rama*, because his belief was that *Rama's* name was sufficient to protect the kingdom. But *Rama* told him how he was to fulfill the vow by obeying his father and how necessary it was that *Bharata* should return and protect the kingdom. In the end, *Bharata* agreed to rule the kingdom, in the name of *Rama's* sandal-shoes, till the expiry of the stipulated period of exile.

The fifth act of the play begins with the first death anniversary of *Dasaratha*. *Rama* was thinking how to perform *Dasaratha's shraddha* in the best possible manner. This very moment, there entered a Brahmin, who was none else but *Ravana*. He posed as an authority on many things such as *shraddha* - ritual and advised *Rama* to offer a deer called *Kanchanaparsva* to his dead father. *Ravana* thus created an illusion of the deer which took *Rama* away from their hermitage and *Ravana* abducted *Seetha*, who was all alone, *Lakshmana* being already sent to receive the *Kulapati*.

In the sixth act, *Ravana* fought with *Jatayu*, the friend of *Dasaratha*. While trying to save *Seetha*, *Jatayu*, was killed by *Ravana*. *Sumantra* who had gone to the hermitage of *Rama*, came with a sad news of *Seetha's* abduction, and *Rama's* friendship with *Sugreeva*, the Chief of the monkeys. *Bharata* wanted to raise an army to attack *Ravana*. In the meanwhile, *Rama* had already killed *Ravana*, crowned *Vibheeshana* in his stead and returned to his former abode in *Janasthana*.

In the seventh act of the play, *Bharata* arrived with large army. He was accompanied by his three mothers and ministers. The period of fourteen years was over. *Bharata* requested *Rama* to assume the burden of the kingdom. *Vasishtha* and *Vamadev* performed the coronation of *Rama*. The party sets out for *Ayodhya*, in the chariot, called *Puspaka* to witness the repetition of the ceremony there and the play ends happily.

V. OBSERVATIONS

Though *Ramayana* is the main source of the play, the dramatist doesn't follow the Epics lavishly. He introduces some of the changes on the main theme. These changes show the originality on the part of the dramatist. The changes are either to improve the character or to remove the improbability in the popular version of the story.

In the first act, the *Valkala* Incident is an important change in the play. *Seetha* said to *Rama* accidentally that she is interested in wearing the *Valkala*. The news of *Rama's* exile is brought there and the necessary bark-garments, befitting the exile, are received by her [4]. She actually receives them and this incident fore shadows her life in the forest. The author introduced this incident with a view to enhance the effect and to save the character of *Kaikeyi* from the offensive actions of the Epic. But *Bhasa* introduced this for dowry or *Shulka*.

This third act of the play describes the statue - hall. This incident is wholly an invention of the author. In the original *Ramayana*, *Bharata* entered the city of *Ayodhya*. In the drama he entered the temple. This incident is connected with the motif of *Kaikeyi*. Again a few touches are given to the character of *Bharata*. He is made more imaginative, sensitive and passionate. The statue of *Dasaratha* justifies the property of naming the drama after it.

In the fifth act, the poet made the wish of *Rama* to perform a befitting *shraddha* ceremony of *Dasaratha* give occasions for *Seetha's* abduction. The episode of the 'golden deer' does exist in the original Epic. In the drama

it is shown in a different context. This act gratifies the curiosity and sensual desire for *Seetha* in the epic, while in the drama; it is done in answer to the call of filial duty and love [5].

The meeting of *Bharata* and *Kaikeyi* in the sixth act is another innovation of our author. The poet makes an attempt to set *Kaikeyi* from the sin of sending *Rama* to the forest. Change of this type, of course, is not very uncommon in the later plays on the life of *Rama* – e.g: *Rajasekhara's Bala Ramayana*.

Rama's coronation in the hermitage is a pure invention of *Bhasa* in the seventh act, it includes that the deeds of duty and self-sacrifice are appreciated and rewarded. They do win eminence in the moral and spiritual world.

VI. CONCLUSION

Bhasa's plays are normally short equated to succeeding playwrights. Most of the plays are sketch the theme from the Indian epics, Mahabharatha and Ramayana. Bhasa serves his opponent characters with utmost compassion. To accomplish this, Bhasa takes more freedom with the story. In Pratimanataka, Kaikeyi who is the incumbent for the awful events in the Ramayana is displayed as abiding the defamation of all, so that a piece kingly end is acquired. Bhasa has been an equable authority of whim to all later playwrights.

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