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# Karuna Rasa- Aestheticized Pathos as Tragedy in Parashu Pradhan's The Telegram on the Table and A Relationship

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#### Abstract

Art and literature essentially depict a life and its emotions; the portrayed emotions in works of art touch the readers' heart. The readers feel both pain and pleasure in tragedy. The study aims to expose karuna rasa, pathetic, tragic emotions in Parashu Pradhan's The Telegram on the Table and A Relationship from the perspective of the rasa theory. This paper discusses the tragic feelings and pathetic emotions of Nepali people depicted and inferred in Pradhan's stories; it also analyzes the formation of karuna rasa, pathetic relish in reading his stories. This study is a library research and qualitative research; it has exploited Bharatmuni's rasa theory as a theoretical tool. The main finding of the research is that the main rasa, emotion is the emotions of pathos, karuna rasa in these stories. The death of Krishna's wife in the first story and the death of Ganga in the later one generate the pathetic sentiment, karuna rasa in the stories. The sufferings and miseries of Krishna and of Gyancha and Ganga in Kathmandu city in the later one evokes tragic emotions. Pradhan provides ample rooms for rasa evocation in the stories. The Nepali situation and environment intensify karuna rasa, aestheticized pathos and tragic relish in the stories. Although rasa realization may differ from one readers to next, pathetic sentiment, tragic feeling or karuna rasa is evoked in reading stories. The karuna rasa realization posits his writings grandeur in Nepali literature.

Keywords: Anubhava, karuna rasa, Nepali literature, pathetic emotion, rasa theory, sthayibhava, vibhava,

### Introduction

The study exposes and analyzes *karuna rasa*, pathetic emotion depicted in Nepali writer Parashu Pradhan's *The Telegram on the Table* and *A Relationship* from the perspective of *rasa* theory. Art and literature are basically about life and its emotions; the critics who applied *rasa* theory in literary works explore and discuss what and how *bhavas*, emotions are depicted, inferred and relished in the works of art. Parashu Pradhan was born in 1943 in Bhojpur district, Nepal. He has written short stories and two novels. "Pradhan's main themes are social contradictions and human relations, and he is admired for the poetic

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and symbolistic quality of his prose" (Hutt 284). His stories are collected in six volumes: Vakrarekha (Curved Line), Pheri Akraman (Another Attack), Yauta Arko Dantyakathd (Another Folktale), Asambaddh (Disjointed), Samudramd Aslaune Surya (The Setting Sun on the Sea), and Parashu Pradhdnkd Pratimdhi Kathdharu (Representative Stories of Parashu Pradhan). The Sanskrit word *karuna* means sadness, pathos, grief and compassion. Karuna is the feelings of hopelessness, heartbreak, sorrow, pain and empathy caused by the death of loved persons. The highest form of karuna (sadness) is sympathy, compassion and it is also empathetic. Sadness is the key ingredient of karuna, compassion. Karuna rasa comes out of the experiences of anguish, death, murder and torture. Tragedy results out of humans' own actions in mysterious ways, and comes out of human suffering in literary works. "Tragedy mingles with joy" (Widdison 87). The connoisseurs enjoy Karuna rasa in literature, and they wish to reread the literary work due to the enjoyment. But suffering happened in real life is not pleasant, and people want to escape from tragic situation in their lives. *Karuna* rasa emanates from tragic feeling and pathos experienced in literary works. Karuna rasa arises from the associations between separation, hurt, anger, wrath, pity, sorrow, tragedy. The application of the *rasa* theory in a work presents the aesthetic content of the work and aesthetic relish that the readers experience. Kalidasa wrote in *Malavikagnimitra*, "aaparitosat vibudhan na sadhu manye prayog-vijnanam" [The staged drama cannot be regarded as good unless the learned (spectators) are pleased with the presentation] (cited in Barlingay 92). The depiction and experience of *rasa*, aesthetic pleasure in art and literature make a literary work good, and readers become eager to read the work again. The objective of the study is to expose karuna rasa, aestheticized pathos in Parashu Pradhan's stories The Telegram on the Table and A Relationship from the perspective of rasa theory.

# Rasa Theory: A Theoretical Underpinning

The Sanskrit word 'rasa' refers to the relishable state of *bhavas*, fundamental emotion, provoked in reading literary works, watching movies, dances, paintings, and also in listening music. Bharatmuni introduced genre of drama, plot structure, types of characters, *bhava* and *rasa* theory in the *Natyasastra* written during between c.200 BCE and 200 CE. The denotative meaning of 'rasa' is a taste, juice, liquid, sap, flavor, joy or rapture. Bharatamuni associated the literal meaning of 'rasa' with the feelings and ideas of the relishable state of mind while watching theatre, dance and music. Rasa is the aesthetic pleasure experienced in varieties of arts, such as literature, painting, music and dance. Rasa signifies the aesthetic relish emerged from the *bhavas*, combination of various emotional factors. "[Bhava] lead to the meaning of arts" (Rangacharya 64). Bharatmuni provides an analogy of food taste, pleasure, relish and satisfaction attained from the combination of different food items and spices to clarify the rasa formation in various arts. "A meaning which touches the heart creates rasa" (Rangacharya 65). Bharatamuni describes eight rasas in his Natyasastra: sringara (erotic), hasya (comic), veera (heroic), karuna (compassion), raudra (furious), bhayanaka (terrible), bibhatsa (odious) and adbhuta (surprise). Abhinavagupta adds the concept of the ninth rasa, santa rasa; he explains santa rasa as the state of free from all material attachments and doubts and the attainment of neutral position.

Bharatamuni explains the process of the *rasa* formation in various arts, haratmuni writes, "Vibhavanubhava vyabhichari samyogad rasa-nispattih" - rasa comes from a combination of vibhava, anubhava and vvabhicharibhavas (Bharatamuni VI.31). Rasa is articulated with the conversion of *sthavibhavas* (dormant/ permanent emotion) with the combination of vibhava (determinants/causes), anubhava (consequence/ effects), thirtythree vyabhicharibhava (transitory) and eight saatvikabhava (involuntary emotions/ temperamental states). Sthavibhava are permanent emotion existed in humans; in rasa production, sthayibhava are conversed into rasa by other emotional factors. Bharatamuni classifies sthayibhava into eight correspondingly to eight rasa: rati (love), hasya (laughter), utsaha (heroism), soka (sorrow), krodha (anger), bhava (fear), jugupsa (disgust) and vismava (wonder). Abhinavagupta names the sthavibhava sama (peace) of santa rasa. Vibhava (determinant) evoke emotions. "Vibhava is that which leads to a perception. So vibhava is a cause. It is the cause of (the use of) words, gestures and facial expressions" (Rangacharya 64). Vibhava are classified into two, namely alamvana and uddipana. Alamvana vibhava denotes to the persons or objects that arouse emotions. Uddipana vibhava are environmental factors, such situation and condition in which persons and objects exist; it intensifies the emotional experiences. Anubhava (consequence) refers to the results and effects caused by vibhava in human characters. Anubhava is divided into angika and vasika. Angika anubhava refers to bodily expressions, and vasika anubhava denotes to speech or words. "A meaning conveyed by a *stimulus* (vibhava) is made intelligible by words, physical gestures and emotions (anubhava)" (Rangacharya 64). Vyabhicharibhava are short lived and fleeting in nature. "They are transitory states – both emotional and psychological – that accompany each stable state of *sthayibhava*" (Patnaik 29). They are bodily and mental transitory states. "They quicken and accelerate the movements of the *sthavibhavas*" (Poonam 18). They appear and stimulate the dormant human emotions, and fleet away.

Among nine rasas, this study deal with *karuna rasa. Karuna rasa* is a very important *rasa* which is a side of life. "According to *Natyasastra* (VI.40), *karuna*, the compassionate or the pathetic *rasa*, comes from the primary *rasa* of *raudra* or the furious: The result (*karma*) of the furious should be known as the aesthetic experience of compassion" (cited in Patnaik 121). *Soka* (grief) is the *sthayibhava* (dormant emotion) of *karuna rasa. Karuna rasa* is articulated from *vibhavas* (causes) which are the *anubhavas* (consequences) of *raudra. Natyasastra* (VI.61) says, "*Karuna rasa* arises from the permanent emotion of sorrow. It proceeds from *vibhavas* such as curse, affliction, separation from those who are dear, their downfall, loss of wealth, death and imprisonment, or from contact with misfortune (*vyasana*), destruction (*upaghata*), and calamity (*vidrava*)" (cited in Patnaik 122). The generated mood or the emotion is unhappiness. *Alamvan vibhavas* that cause grief to humans refers to the loss of near and dear ones through separation or death.

The memory of the lost persons are the excitants of the grief of the character and his suffering, pain and disappointment, etc. are the excitants of grief of the audience or the readers grumbling, etc are the consequents of his emotion. Detachment (*nirveda*), attachment (*moha*), remembrance (*smriti*), dismay (*visada*), anxiety (*chinta*), sickness (*vyadhi*), internal weakness (*glani*), etc. are transitory emotions which help the dormant emotion of grief to be relished as *karuna rasa*. (Poonam 33).

Karuna rasa touches human heart, and underlies various human tragic experiences. "Its effect is also very deep and strong" (Chaturvedi 96) in audience's heart. In the western concept of tragedy, the pity along with fear becomes dominant and controlling emotion in literary works. Although Eastern literature has not emphasized on tragedy, it depicts the pathetic sentiment as the supreme sentiment for the great literary works. While considering the pleasant experience on pathetic sentiment portrayed in the literary works, "Aristotle talks of cathartic pleasure that we receive as tragic relief and [Eastern] aesthetics talk about delight in Karuna Rasa" (Sharma 30). The readers or audience (sahrdayas) relish the pathetic sentiment (karuna rasa); they watch or read a tragedy or tragic work and enjoy even if they have tears in their eyes. They assimilate and generalize the tragic situations and experiences of the characters of any arts with their own and/or dear ones' difficulties, sufferings and miseries, and feels he is not the only sufferer in the world. The pity and fear excited while watching or reading tragic works get relief and aesthetic satisfaction. Thus karuna rasa is relished in various arts. Rasa theory emphasizes the importance of the sympathetic readers in reading literature and arts. It is a fruitful academic exercise to apply the rasa theory to Pradhan's stories, even though Bharatmuni in Natyasastra has basically dealt it with plays.

### Exposition of Karuna Rasa, Tragic Feeling in Pradhan's Stories

Pathetic emotion is a universal human emotion which becomes a source of aesthetic delight in literature. The contemplation of agony, pain and sorrow is the universal experience of human beings in art and literature. "The pathos (karuna) is inherent in the sorry scheme of human existence and preponderates in it" (Poonam 99). Karuna rasa plays a major role in the suffering and problems of human existence in Parashu Pradhan's stories 'The Telegram on the Table' and 'A Relationship'. He has remarkably depicted pathos in his stories. The pathetic and tragic feeling is the universal experience of humans in literature. Tragic feelings of characters in literature are suffering, disappointment, death, and pain. Pradhan presents social contradiction and human relations in his writings. His works depict human's predicament of the Nepali society, and conceive a tragic theme. Arthur Miller says, "The tragic feeling (stress mine) is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing- his sense of personal dignity" (cited in Nagar 91). In the story 'The Telegram on the Table', Krishna is ready to relinquish his family life and dearest one in Nepal to acquire a successful and meaningful life in America. In this context, pathetic relish is evoked in readers. The main character Krishna is from a village to Kathmandu city. He dreams to speak English to make his life more successful. He lives in a small rented room in Kathmandu. He gets a job as a tourist guide. He deliberately cease to think of his past, his family at the village. He indulges in daydreams about moving to America, his greatly desired place. His feeling of intense longing for New York does not touch his heart even if he got a telegram about his wife from his home. He fantasizes having love affair with a foreign girl and shift to America. He has lived in a very low standard and miserably inadequate condition in Kathmandu. His dreams has not been accomplished for a long years, and he becomes frustrated. Krishna is from remote rural to Kathmandu yearning for jobs and better life. He wants to get rid of dearth in the village, but cannot escape from his miserable life even in Kathmandu city. In this context, the emotions such as anxiety, delusion, agitation, depression are produced. In a night, he recalls the facts, events, situations of his village and relatives back into his mind; it causes to experience severe mental suffering. Then, the telegram laid on the table agonizes him, and "suddenly angry with himself, he tore it to shreds and burst into tears. He cried and cried, he knew not how long" (Telegram 286). Krishna bears pathetic condition in the town. Here, compassion results of the empathy of Krishna's suffering.

*Karuna rasa*, here, is experienced on the death of Krishna's wife. The *sthayibhava* of *karuna rasa*, sorrow is stimulated when Krishna seriously looks at the telegram. *Karuna rasa* is produced "by means of noticing the death of a beloved one or hearing unpleasant messages or words and so on" (Sajjan et al. 29). He cries and weeps in remembrance of his dead wife and the family lived in the village. The feeling and emotion represented by weeping quietly, faintly, lamenting, bewailing and exerting the body or striking it leads to *karuna rasa*, tragic relish. The death of Krishna's dearest wife generates *alamban bhibhava*, tragic emotions: "a telegram had come, and there it was written, "Your wife died yesterday." There could be no doubt about what it told him. Your wife died yesterday, it said; your wife died yesterday" (Telegram 286). The environmental conditions in which Krishna live serve as *uddipana vibhava* that intensify the pathetic emotional experience more:

He paid a high rent, but there were few amenities. If he got up too late, there was no water. If he kept his light on for too long, everyone complained. All sorts of houses had been built on the empty fields in front. The open sky was a long way off. He thought he would like to move somewhere else. Then he could invite that Miss Pande from the travel service home for dinner. But the room he rented was bad, and soon even that mundane wish dwindled away. (Telegram 286)

The environment of the room and his job intensify the tragic emotional experiences. The death of his wife and the miserable condition of his rented room overwhelm Krishna's heart: "Suddenly angry with himself, he tore it to shreds and burst into tears. He cried and cried, he knew not how long" (286). This results and effects on Krishna by *aalamban* and *uddipana vibhava* are *anibhava* in the story; the tragic message conveyed by the death of his wife (*vibhava*) is made intelligible by his emotional expressions, "burst into tears". *Vyabhicharibhava* refers to the transitory emotions appeared in the course of development of the narration. The fleeting emotions like detachment, disorder, indolence and insanity

to the village and his family occur when Krishna does not remember his past. Other transient emotions such as anxiety, eagerness, depression, delusion, fatigue are produced when Krishna is struggling in Kathmandu city for his better life and dreaming to move to America. Momentary emotions love and affection are generated when Krishna recollects the past experiences spent in the village, and with his relatives, and remembers his cultures and his wife. At last, the transient emotions such as grief, terror, stupor, stunning, choking of voice, trembling, change of complexion, tears and death are produced when Krishna heartily read the telegram of his wife's death. Thus with the combination and connection of all these *vibhavas*, *anubhavas* and *vyabhicharibhavas* with *sthayibhava* of *Karuna rasa* sorrow produce tragic sentiment, *karuna rasa* in Krishna who represents the pathetic condition of young generation of Nepal.

In Parashu Pradhan's next story 'A Relationship', *karuna rasa* is relished. Pradhan depicts death of Ganga and the tragic condition of poor people Gyancha and Ganga who sweep the roads of the Kathmandu city. Gyancha and Ganga love and care for each other, but the poverty hinders their love –

"Hey Kanchi, you crazy mule, get up! Your husband's here!"

"Truly I love you, you crazy woman. Why do you always elude me? Idiot! Am I some kind of monster?"

This narration stimulates sadness, pathetic emotion and compassion. The compassion results from the empathy of Gyancha and Ganga's suffering and Ganga's death. They feel pain, agony and torture because they love each other but cannot do anything for each other. The cause of his sadness towards Ganga's death is his love. Gyancha and Ganga do not have their own relatives:

Gyancha had thought of the smelly rooms of his house and recalled the silence and the loneliness there on that frightful evening when he first stood alone: all alone in the great wide world. He had held out his arms and begged then for a mother's embrace, a father's affection. But all he had been given was a sweeping brush, and now after all these long years he still went on accepting it. In summer and winter he wandered aimlessly through the great city. . . . ('A Relationship' 287)

Gyanch and Ganga are for each other. Ganga lives very tragic conditions- "she was weeping: "My husband died, I became a widow. My son died, now I'm all alone. The house, the land— it all went to the moneylenders." When Ganga dies, Gyancha feel sad, desolation and sorrow. Their tragic conditions, Ganga's death and miserable environment generate *karuna rasa*. "The same porters' platform, the same woman, Ganga, the same kind of pitiless morning. For two or three years she'd disappeared. But now here she is, lying prone on the platform. Gyancha sees that her teeth are revolting and her hair is tousled. She sleeps curled up like a dog" (288). It is caused by the separation of the nearest ones Ganga and Gyanch; there is no hope of their reunion and Gyanch loses the will to fight with the existing challenges. *Karuna rasa* is generated and represented by Gyancha's weeping quietly, faintly, lamenting, bewailing and exerting the body. The death of Gyanch's dear

and near Ganga generates the grief, *tamasika karuna rasa*. "A voice comes out of the crowd, "She has no relations; inform the city council." Slowly, Gyancha accepts the fact that Ganga is dead. She is just, a corpse without heirs. A great palace of dreams collapses. "Ganga cannot die," he shouts silently. "She can go mad, for sure, but that's all. ... " (288). The tragic and critical conditions of Ganga (Ganga's dirty and tangled hair, slept on cold stone. "Didn't you eat yesterday?" he asked but was puzzled by her silence. "Not even a cup of tea?"), and her death function as *alambana vibhava* (subject); Remembrance/ reminiscence of good qualities of Ganga are its *uddhipana* (stimulating forces) in *karuna rasa* generation:

Gyancha imagines climbing a mountain, clutching at trees for support. He sees the clouds and the wide blue sky. The sun appears and he goes on; his arms and legs are not tired at all. He arrives at the top, beneath a vast lovely sky—Ganga is there before him. When she sees him, she covers her mouth and smiles. Gyancha reaches out to her; he gathers her up in his arms, caresses and kisses her: Ganga, Ganga . . . but she runs away. He hears her voice in the distance: "You may not touch me, not even when I am dead." (288-289)

Gyanch's complain to God, asking for help, throwing body on the floor because of pain, dragging hairs, crying, etc. are *anubhāva* (signs) in this *karuna rasa*. His unconscious condition, speaking unconsciously, etc. are *sancharibhāva* (effect). The dormant emotion *shoka* (sorrow) existed in Gyancha and also in readers is transformed into *karuna rasa*. Readers feel pain and pleasure while reading tragic narratives.

Gyancha didn't know what to say. [...]

"Is she your wife?" Another question—Gyancha looks up. Everyone's eyes are on him, filled with curiosity. He breaks into a sweat, and it is as if he has suddenly lost his voice. As he stares, bearers pick the body up. "May the name of Rama be truth," they chant, as they carry it away to the river.5 The crowds do not disperse, and Gyancha lingers there for a while, wondering what it really was that linked him with Ganga, with crazy Kanchl. How was he involved in her death? Because he could not join the bearers, what did he have in common with the people left behind?

He had nothing to do with them really, he thought. Ganga's was just one more anonymous death at the platform. He, Gyancha, lived amid such deaths. He would be a death one day, too. Other than this, he was nothing.

He walks away and notices that sunshine is filling the street. "The inspector will give me the sack today," he thinks, and hurries off down the alley. (289)

The transitory emotions (*vyabhicharibhava*) such as detachment, remorse, fatigue ("Gyanch looks from tired eyes"), indolence, depression ("Gyancha symbolized weakness; he was hopelessness embodied. His weakness had driven him down to Asan: in front of Kal Bhairav he had clasped his hands"), anxiety ("he feels anxious"), delusion, agitation, stupor, dejection, eagerness, epilepsy, disorder, insanity, terror, deliberation, stunning,

choking of voice, trembling, change of complexion, awe, grief, death and tears appear in reading tragic story. These are some examples of pathetic emotions in his story. Pradhan's stories provide great aesthetic delight to the readers. The stories do not merely present real pictures of poor Nepali people, but stir human tragic emotions. Pradhan's both stories are true as P B Shelley in his poem 'To a Skylark' says, "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts." The tragic feeling and *karuna rasa* depicted and inferred in these stories heighten their magnificent and greatness in the realm of Nepali literature.

## Conclusion

The study discusses karuna rasa, tragic and pathetic emotions evoked while reading Parashu Pradhan's stories 'The Telegram on the Table' and 'A Relationship' from the point of view of the rasa theory. The ingredients such as subjects, objects, excitants, consequents, transitory emotions and dormant emotions depicted in the stories play the role to generate karuna rasa realization, pathetic sentiment. Pradhan's stories affords sufficient room for the evocation of karuna rasa. As Pradhan deals with the *sthayibhayas* (fundamental emotions) of humans, the readers are able to relish the full consummation of pathetic sentiments in his stories. The main emotion is the emotion of pathos, karuna in his stories. The strong pathetic emotional forces of the engrossing stories, characters, themes and settings endear Pradhan to his readers. The simple and grand emotional forces enable him to rise to tragic feelings that are appropriate for tragic themes of these stories. He intellectually portrays human's tragic emotions in the stories. The deaths, sufferings, miseries of Krishna and Krishna's wife in first story and of Ganga and Gyancha in the later one generate pathetic feelings in sympathetic readers. The pathetic social and cultural conditions and contexts depicted in the stories truly represent the deplorable conditions of middle and low class people of Nepal. The popularity and fame of Pradhan are everlasting because of his tragic grandeur. Because of emotional intensity and aesthetic beauty of his stories, Pradhan can be studied from the perspective of *rasa* theory. He is able to give aesthetic pleasure along with the various themes of the reality of the Nepali society to his readers, and he is taken as a great writer of Nepali literature. This study enrich the literary criticism in Nepali literature and expands the Nepali literary horizon to the global. In Malla's stories, the issues such as socio-cultural realism and Marxist reading may be explored for further research.

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