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## SENTIMENT OF PATHOS IN NARAYAN'S THE DARKROOM

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**Abstract:** *The Dark Room is the story of a bullying husband and a submissive wife. The wife Savitri is tyrannized over by a callous husband Ramani, who is in love with her probationer colleague Shanta-bai. To assert her freedom and to revolt against the love-affair of her husband Savitri leaves the home. She takes refuge in a temple but in night she feels homesick and very lonely. The dark room, in the novel, is an image of the mental condition born of oppressiveness which women of the orthodox Indian middle class are destined to endure. In the temple also she finds that she has to live in "dark room". "There was no escape from fear and charity" and "the whole air was oppressive, the surrounding objects assumed monstrous shape in the solitary hour". Her decision to return to her husband's house is again very pathetic. The final decision is very touching, "This is defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight. I am a bamboo pole...." Savitri's solitariness is the Object of pathos. Her home-sickness, memory of children and home and her own weakness are the Excitants. Her crying and sobbing are the Consequents. Her attachment to children, remembrance of home, worry and despair are the Transitory Feelings.*

**Key Words:** *Sentiment, Pathos, The Dark Room*

Delightful teaching is the aim of literature and it has been acknowledged by the critics and writers all over the world. Bharata talks of the emotional delight and postulates the theory of rasa. Rasa is a sort of bliss which the reader or audience enjoys while reading a poem or a novel or witnessing a play. The birth of rasa takes place, out of the union of determinants (Vibhavas), the Consequents (Anubhavas) and the Transitory Feelings (Vyabhichari Bhavas or Sanchari Bhavas). Here we are discussing the sentiment of pathos in R.K.Narayan's novel The Dark Room.

The importance of Pathetic Sentiment has been recognized both in the East and the West. Tragedy is considered superior to the comedy in the Western literature. In Eastern literature also, the great writers like Bhavbhuti consider the pathetic sentiment to be the supreme sentiment, though there is no conception of tragedy.

In his Uttarramcharit Bhavbhuti Says – Grief is the only sentiment. Critics give different interpretations of this line. One is that all the constituent factors – Vibhavas—determinants, Anubhavas,—Consequents Sanchari Bhavas—Transitory Feelings develop only in one sentiment that is Karuna – Grief. It is this sentiment of grief that is relished as different sentiments like love, heroism etc. by the sympathetic reader or audience. Just as the same water appears somewhere like bubbles and somewhere like waves. But the reality is that water is not changed into these forms it only appears in different forms. In the same manner only Karuna or grief appears in the form of different sentiments. It proves that this Karuna or grief is the base of the Rasas—sentiments. It is because the sentiment of grief is so pervasive (extensive) that it can include innumerable sentiments in it. It can cause pain to more and more people and intensity of feeling is also found much more in it.

Now the question rises if the dominant emotion of Karuna Rasa is painful namely grief then how it is able to give pleasure to readers or audience instead of pain, and how literature is the medium of delight. Indian aesthetics talk about delight in Karuna Rasa just as Aristotle talks of Cathartic pleasure that we receive as tragic relief.

Answering this question, Vishvanath says that there is pleasure in pathetic sentiment as well as in the sentiment of fear or disgust. This reality is proved as the spectators or readers like watching a tragedy or reading a tragic novel, nobody would see or read tragedy if only pain resulted from doing so. The poet takes the pain or pleasure giving objects of this world to the sphere of poetry or literature. These painful sensory experiences are raised and elevated by the poet who creates grand tragic effects in painful situations. As a result of it the readers or audience enjoy this sentiment and smile in their tears.

Ramani in the 'The Dark Room' is a hot tempered bully. The atmosphere of the house depends on his mood. Tension prevailed in the house as long as he was at home. He was eccentric and lawless in his taste. He would comment over everything— the vegetables selected for the meals, the way these were prepared, for polishing the boots, for folding the trousers, for leaving the coat on the frame with all the pockets bulging out. Every item of dress infuriated him and excited him to comment. Savitri never interrupted this running commentary with an explanation. Even her silence sometimes infuriated her husband. A calm fell on the house when he left for the office.

The cook was very sensitive to this criticism and everyday he smarted while his master criticized the dinner. One day Babu suddenly fell ill, at the time of school. In spite of Savitri's insistence Ramani did not allow Babu to stay at home and sent him school. After the departure of Ramani;

How impotent she was, she thought; she had not the slightest power to do anything at home, and that after fifteen years of married life. Babu did look very ill and she was powerless to keep him in bed; she felt she ought to have asserted herself a little more at the beginning of her married life and then all would have been well.(Narayan 6)

Ramani is the Object and his aggressiveness to send Babu to school though he was not well is the Excitant. Savitri's helplessness before her husband is the transitory feeling.

The helplessness of Savitri arouses the pathetic sentiment in the heart of the reader also. Ramani is aggressive and never cares for the sentiments of his wife and children. Everything should be according to his own desire.

Once he thrashed Babu after the failure of electric current in the house. Savitri could do nothing except crying. Saying that he was sick of that sentimental show and that Savitri was holding a stage show, he asked her whether she was coming for dinner or not. Then without waiting for her he turned and walked to the dining room. When he was gone Savitri went to the darkroom, next to the store and threw herself on the floor. Later the cook and the children also came one by one and tried to persuade her to take food but she refused. Here Ramani is the Object. His thrashing Babu is the Excitant. Crying of Savitri is the Consequent.

Savitri had no power before her husband. Her husband never cared for her and did whatever he liked. He made a daily habit to visit Shanta Bai, after club. He used to give her a ride and very often they sat at the river side and daily he reached home late. And one day when Shanta Bai was in a very bad mood, Ramani could not leave her and stayed with her the whole night. He returned home at 5 o'clock in the morning Savitri was in the verandah watching the milkman milk the cow. As he entered the house she asked where had he been and said that she was very anxious all night and that it would have been better if he had sent word. But asking whether she wanted him to shout his explanation from the street door Ramani entered the house. At about 8 o'clock she went into his room with a tumbler of coffee. She hesitated whether she should go away after placing the coffee on the table or should venture to ask a question. For the last few days there were many disturbing doubts and dull resentment in her mind. She was angry with her husband and unhappy at her anger.

It sapped all her energy. She would have given anything to lighten her mind of its burdens and to be able to think of her husband without suspicion. Just a word from him would do, just an unangry word; even a lie, a soothing lie. Unpleasant thoughts seemed to corrode her soul.(Narayan 93)

The whole morning a struggle was going on in the heart of Savitri whether she should ask her husband about what she listened about him or not. Then she consoled herself by saying that she should not believe such gossips and resolved to make peace. The unfathomable depth of the Indian women's patience, endurance is reflected in her decision "that it would be better to suffer in silence than to venture a question."(Narayan 93) She talked about the result of Babu and a letter she received from her sister but she found him quite indifferent to everything. When he was leaving for his office she gathered all her strength

and asked whether he was to be late that night too. He frowned at her without a reply. Saying that he could not answer such idiotic question he furiously went towards the garage.

Gangu visited Savitri that afternoon and informed her that her husband went to the picture with some other woman. Savitri broke down and told her. “ ‘He has not been coming home before midnight for weeks. And yesterday he didn’t come home at all; came only in the morning, and wouldn’t talk to me.’ She said, blowing her nose, ‘He is indifferent even to the children.’ ” (Narayan 101)

In the evening Savitri saw herself in the mirror. Her eyes were swollen and her nose was red. Her husband’s infidelity makes her reflect on her own inadequacy. “Perhaps I am old and ugly.... I am middle aged, old fashioned and plain.”(Narayan 101) It is the realistic picture of slavery to which Hindu wife is subjected in the name of tradition and religion.

It is her destiny to sulk and mope. She has to put up all humiliation. It is pathetic to watch her trying desperately to win her husband back by reviving her physical charms. She applied a little scented oil to her hair, combed it and coiled it very neatly. She washed her face with soap and water and applied face powder. After applying some perfumed paste between her eyebrows pressed vermilion on it and made it round with her little finger. Her husband always liked the forehead making a little larger. She scrutinized herself in the mirror and was more or less satisfied with her appearance. She then went out into the garden and plucked some jasmine and red flowers, strung them together and placed them in a curve on the coil at the back of her head because he always liked the red flowers with the white jasmine and always admired the curved arrangement.

When the children went away for their study and sleep. Savitri sat up with her heart in a flutter, would he come back that night or not. She went to the mirror and stole another look at herself and thought that if he saw her now he would like her and love her as boisterously as he had loved her in the first week of their marriage. She told herself again and again that he would not keep away that night because she had asked him.

She sat up quite late into the night. When overcome by fatigue she lay down, keeping her head lightly on the pillow for fear that she might crush the flowers or rumple the hair. He might come any time and she wanted to meet him fresh as she was in the, evening.(Narayan 106-107)

But of no use. It was only a dream that her husband would come home and held her in his arms. The night passed away and even the next day. Ramani is the Object. His coming home late at night because of his relation with Shanta Bai is the Excitant. Savitri’s break down, the swelling of eyes and redness of nose are the Consequents. Her patience, subjection, doubt, despair, pride are the Transitory Feelings. The suffering and pain of Savitri excites the grief and pathos in the heart of the reader also and their attachment, despair, worry are the Transitory Feelings.

Savitri was prepared to leave her husband's house without anything. When Ramani asked her to take her things, she retorted. " 'Things? I don't possess anything in this world. What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's, or her son's'. " (Narayan 113)

Her anguish born of self-pity and impotent anger is heartrending. She removed her diamond earrings, the diamond studs on her nose, her necklace, gold bangles and rings and threw them at him. She tried to take children with her but Ramani didn't allow her by saying that they were his children. She hesitated for a moment and then said "Yes, you are right. They are yours, absolutely. You paid the midwife and the nurse. You pay for their clothes and teachers. You are right. Didn't I say that a woman owns nothing?" (Narayan 113)

She broke down. Ramani offered her the ring, the necklace and the stud as those were given by her father. But she shrunk from them. "Take them away. They are also a man's gift." (Narayan 114) She threw a look at the children, at him and walked out softly closing the door behind her. Ramani is the Object. His refusal to send the children, with her is the Excitant. Savitri's breakdown is the Consequent.

Savitri left the house and after an hour's walking reached the river on the north end of the town. Her mind was numb otherwise she could not have walked through the town at midnight. Nothing seemed to matter now. Sitting on the steps of river she wondered whether she was the same old Savitri who could not go even a hundred yards from the house unescorted. She used to be afraid of everything. She realized

One definite thing in life is Fear. Fear, from the cradle to the funeral pyre, and even beyond that, fear of torture in the other world.

She pondered over the fate of a woman

Afraid of one's father, teachers and everybody in early life, afraid of one's husband, children, and neighbours in later life-fear, fear, in one's heart till the funeral pyre was lit, and then fear of being sentenced by Yama to be held down in a cauldron of boiling oil.... (Narayan 116)

She remembered all the relatives and had an intense longing to see her brother, sister and parents. She thought if she goes to her parents she would feed on her father's pension if goes back home would live on her husband's earnings and later on Babu's. What could she do by herself?

She thought over difference between a prostitute and a married woman- the prostitute changes her man but a married women doesn't, but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner. Thinking that, no one who could live by herself, had a right to exist she decided to commit suicide. She went into the river. Her firmness dwindled she thought she could not die she should go back home but no, she moved forward in the water. Here Ramani is the Object. Savitri's reflection on the condition of women in the society is the Excitant. Destruction of mental activity, numbness of her mind is the Consequent.



Mari saved Savitri from drowning. His wife Ponni had to have a lot of difficulty to bring Savitri to the village. It was only when Ponni threatened Savitri to call someone from the town to take her back that she agreed to go to her village on condition that Ponni won't trouble her to come under her roof or any other roof. Her decision to remain only under the sky show how bitter she felt in her heart at the conduct of her husband.

Ponni offered Savitri some plantains and coconut but Savitri was not ready to accept anything. When Ponni persisted and argued and there was no escape, Savitri had to confess, "I am resolved never to accept food or shelter which I have not earned." (Narayan 157) After a full day of hunting, talking and discussing a lot of people Mari was not able to find a place and work for Savitri. He started back home completely depressed. While passing through the old village temple, an idea came to his mind. He went to see the old priest of the temple. By appealing hard he somehow persuaded the old man to employ Savitri for the service of temple. In exchange he would give her a half measure of rice and a quarter of an anna a day.

Savitri felt very happy. She saw a new life opening before her. She thought it to be a very suitable life to serve a god in his shrine. A half measure of rice was more than she deserved and so could manage very well with it. She thought, "She would dedicate her life to the service of God, numb her senses and memory, forget the world, and spend the rest of her years thus and die. No husband, home, or children." (Narayan 170)

Savitri felt so bad at the attitude of her husband that she was not ready to accept anything as charity. At the one corner of the temple there was a shanty created by enclosing the angles of the high wall with corrugated iron sheets and wooden boards. It had a rickety door. The old man showed it to Savitri and said that she could live there. He said that it was a special concession for her and could not be claimed as a right. When Savitri came to know that it was given to her as charity. She refused to have that "Charity! Charity! Savitri was appalled by the amount of it that threatened one. 'All right, I will live in this,' she said choosing the lesser charity." (Narayan 181) She agreed to have that only when the old man said that he could not have Savitri there if she refused to take that room, as she could sleep nowhere else.

Now the problem was what she was going to do for food that day because she was going to get her half measure of rice only the next day. The old man said that Savitri could go to his house to get food but Savitri declined the offer. Ponni suggested to the old man that he might give a measure of rice in advance. The old man agreed to it adding that she will not get the money in advance on any account. Ponni requested the old man to give money also as it was difficult to do with bare rice. Some salt or something else was needed to go with rice. But the old man was firm not to give money. Then Ponni requested him to give a little firewood and a small vessel that he agreed. Ponni said she would bring some butter milk and salt for Savitri but Savitri again refused to accept anything from anyone.

After all the work of cleaning and tidying of temple, she lighted the oven and cooked a little rice for herself. " 'This is my own rice, my very own; and I am not obliged to anyone for this. This is nobody's charity to me.' She felt triumphant, and a great peace descended on her as she drank a little water.... "

(Narayan 184). Her satisfaction of having eaten her own food was slightly spoilt by the memory of the concessions she had to accept.

When late in the evening the old man was about to leave after bundling up all the offerings to the God, Savitri felt desolate. She would have to be all alone in that dark temple, with the dim oil lamp, and stars and the massive tree looming over the wall. Before leaving the old man offered that she could spend the night with the womenfolk in his house if she was afraid there. But she was adamant

“Of what should I be afraid?” asked Savitri. Was there no escape from fear and charity?

“How can I say?” said the old man

“I am not afraid of anything,” said Savitri, and added, “I am living in God’s house and He will protect me.”(Narayan 188-189)

But these brave words did not sustain her long. After the departure of the old man she regretted that she had not accepted his offer. Now everything terrified her. Surrounding objects assumed monstrous shapes in the solitary hour. She fled to her shanty and bolted the door. She lit a cotton wick in a little mud pan. Her fears increased as the hours advanced and the stillness grew deeper she was furious with herself. “ ‘What despicable creations of God are we that we can’t exist without a support . I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it....’ ” (Narayan 189)

She was feeling homesick she remembered everything children, home, accustomed comforts. Lying on the rough floor of the shanty beside the hot flickering lamp her soul was full of fears. She contrasted the comfort, security and un-loneliness of her home with this terrible state. She thought of children and longed to see them. The futility, frustration and her own weakness made her sob and cry. “A wretched fate wouldn’t let me drown first time. I can’t go near the water again. This is defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight. I am a bamboo pole.’ ” (Narayan 190)

Her love for children makes her still more restless. The pathos of Savitri’s yearning for the children is brought out with intensity in the ineffectual attempts at rationalization. “Did the birds and the animals worry about their young ones after they had learnt to move?” (Narayan 170)

Her instinct of motherhood would not allow her a moment of peace away from her children. Her attempt of suicide and a day’s menial work of a temple only make her realize that she cannot live away from home. She returns home almost half-dead emotionally. “A part of me is dead.”(Narayan 208) She reflects when Ramani tries to make her laugh by cutting a petty joke. Savitri’s solitariness in the temple is the Object of pathos. Her home sickness- memory of children and homely comforts and her own weakness are the Excitants. Her crying and sobbing are the Consequents. Her attachments to children, remembrance of home, worry, despair are the Transitory Feelings.

The pathos of her situation is further enhanced in the last of the novel. One day she was lying on the carpet in the hall. She heard the voice of Mari ‘Locks repaired Sir, umbrellas repaired’.(Narayan 209) She saw him passing in the street. She felt excited. She could give him food and some gift and inquire about her

great friend Ponni. Savitri almost called him through the window but suddenly checked herself and let him pass, thinking “Why should I call him here? What have I?”(Narayan 210) The truth about the predicament of a woman in society, that she owes nothing, whatever she has is her father’s, husband’s or son’s is the Object and the Excitant of the grief of Savitri.

The grief of Savitri excites the pathos in the heart of the reader also. Though she seeks self-realization right from the beginning of the novel, but as far as her roles of wife and mother are concerned she finds herself unable to do anything actively. Even after fifteen years of married life, she has no power to do anything at home. At the end of the novel also she is equally impotent and powerless.

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