

## Histrionic Approach in Bhasa's play

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**Abstract :** *In this paper, a brief portrayal was carried out on the histrionic approach contained in the famous Sanskrit drama writer Bhasa's tragical drama "Ūrubhanga". A careful analysis was exercised to appreciate various situations that were created by Bhasa for the inculcation of histrionic aroma to the drama, deviating from the original story in the Mahābhārata. Ūrubhanga is the spectacular recreation of Duryodhana's character from the epic of Mahābhārata, wherein through careful portrayals he finally became entitled for empathy and surfaced as a hero who in the original story is an anti-hero.*

*His heartfelt appeal to furious Balrama and Ashwathama for not to take revenge on Pandavas drawn an exquisite picture of a transformed Duryodhana who regrets on his past misdeeds at the doorstep of the death after being betrayed by Bhima. The painful interaction of the fallen Duryodhana with his parents at the battle field showed a man full of respect and love to the elders. His immense affection and love towards his son and wife was also portrayed with dramatic moments filled with emotions and pride. At the end, the reader would be convincingly delivered with a portrayal which is not about the killing of a 'cruel' Duryodhana by 'powerful' Bheema as depicted in the original story, rather the scenes had been visualized of Duryodhana who attained maturity at the doorway of death on inculcating the right consciousness. The drama and the character Duryodhana creates a positive thinking in the readers' mind only because of the creative greatness of Bhasa attributed chiefly to his histrionic way of writing style.*

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## **Introduction**

It was from Ganapathy Sastri's works, the Sanskrit literature world got the first proofs for Bhasa's plays, which were considered to be lost forever. Ganapathy Sastri, the versatile scholar cum poet discovered the palm leaves of 13 plays of Bhasa namely – *Dûtavâkyâ*, *Karònòabhâra*, *Dûtâghatôtkaã*, *Ûrubhanga*, *Madhyamavyâyoga*, *Pañãarâtra*, *Abhisòçkanâtaka*, *Bâlaãarita*, *Pratimânâtaka*, *Pratijñayaugandharâyanò*, *Svapnavâsavadatta*, *Avimâraka* and *Ãârudatta* and were published a book Bhasanataka cakra in 1912. This became a milestone in the history of Sanskrit researches and gave a new path to the advanced studies in this field.

Bhasa's writings were based on the popular stories from '*Râmâyana*', '*Mahâbhârata*', '*Bhrughath Kadha*' etc. Histrionic approach was more pronounced in his drama than the poetic approach. The peculiarities in his dramas were creativity, scope of acting, awesome portrayal, amusing narrations etc. Variety of the contents, glimpse towards the shallow part of human minds and the like are also some distinct features of his drama. The objective of this study is to explore the aspect of histrionic approach contained in Bhasa's one and only tragical drama called "*Ûrubhanga*".

Bhasa had made so many changes with the *Mahâbhârata* story to suit the festive mood of his audience. The repentance of Duryodhana on his wicked deeds, arrival of his parents, son and wives to the battle field and the verbal coronation of his son Durjaya by Aswathama are some instances for these variations.

## **Histrionic Approach in Bhasa's '*Ûrubhanga***

*Ûrubhanga* is the recreation of Duryodhana's character from the epic of *Mahâbhârata*. In this drama he was not only portraying Duryodhana as the hero who in original story is an anti hero, but also portrayed the death scenes of the character, thereby diverged from the well accepted drama related concepts at his times like death, marriage, war etc. should not be included the scenes and also the concept of a hero as per the '*Natyasasthra*'. These divergences are appreciable in the story and in the portrayal of drama.

The drama commences as the great war of '*Kurukshethra*' had begun. On the side of Kauravas only Duryodhana and on the other side only Pandavas were remained. The portrayal of the beginning of club (*gada*) fighting between Duryodhana and Bheema and subsequently the narration of the horrifying spectacles in the battle field of Kurukshethra were given. It was narrated in such a way that it could create a war inside each spectator's intellect.

After that was the narration of dramatic entry of Balram, the brother of Krishna, in to the scene. In the club fight the strike below the hip was forbidden. By

seeing that there was no other way to defeat Duryodhana, Bheema hit Duryodhana's thigh and smashed the bone. On witnessing this betrayal, Balram got extremely annoyed. With a loud horrifying noise he entered the scene and was going to take revenge on Bheema and Pandavas. But there observed an astonishing transformation in Duryodhana. He appealed to Balram humbly and told that being his guru he should show mercy. These happenings may be taken as a conclusion to all his cruelties. And he pleaded not to get agitated over Pandavas. On this Balram replied that he was furious since Bheema defeated Duryodhana through betrayal and hence he should be punished. But Duryodhana confronted him from taking any action against Pandavas.

Eventually, Duryodhana started to look back at his past - his depiction to set fire and kill mother Kundhi and Pandavas in 'Arakkilla', abusing of Draupadi, killing of Abhimanyu etc. He felt that he was ineligible to protest against Bheems on his betrayal by considering that he was paying price for all the cruelties. In these ways Bhasa is portraying the striking visuals of transformation of Duryodhana's immense revenge in to heartfelt regrets.

Subsequently the scenes of the entry of Duryodhana's parents Gandhari and Dhrutharashtra, his son Durjaya and his wives happens. It is from these stage onwards Bhasa's story deviates from the original story. In the original story in Mahabharata, Gandhari, Dhrutharashtra, Durjaya etc, were in Hasthinapuri at the time of Duryodhana's defeat. The meetings narrated were heart breaking. These scenes were filled with full of histrionic approach. By seeing them Duryodhana felt deep pain in his heart. Duryodhana was having paramount respect and concern to his parents. He tried to get up and greet his parents but he fell down and failed to greet. He was loaded with grief on his failure to greet them. His cries depicted were truly heart touching. Spectators heart would also got filled with more sorrow while going through the depictions of the weeps of his parents on seeing their son's tragedy.

When Durjaya reached near Duryodhana he told him that he came to the battle field since his father was delayed to reach home. Then he tried to sit on Duryodhana's lap as he usually does. Because of severe pain Duryodhana could not allow him to sit on his lap. On his son's enquiry on for what reason he was not allowed to sit, Duryodhana with great sorrow replied him that his seat on his father's lap had lost forever. One could observe here the deep pain of a father who was unable to show his love to his child as he wished.

In this drama, it is depicted Duryodhana's great affection towards his mother as:

*Samaskròtyavadâmi tvâm yadi punòyam mayâkròtam*  
*Anyasyâmapî jâtyâm mç tvamçva jananîbhava (50)*

It is described that, when Duryodhana enlightened his mother by saying that if he is having another life, bestow him as being his mother, she rejoined that she also wished the same. Duryodhana's conversations with his mother were rendered being as a perfect son. From this conversation between Duryodhana and Gandhari, portrayed were the thoughts of how greatly a son could love his mother and how deeply a mother could love her son.

Next, Duryodhana told his wives that they should not be crying for him since their husband was dying in the battle field like a Kshathriya for which they should be proud of.

Subsequent sequence was interesting as it clearly portrays the frames of Indian psychology. Duryodhana who had self realized the force of fate in the judgement for his deeds and who got matured long vision advised Durjaya that he should obey Pandavas as he obeyed his father. Also he should listen to mother Kundhi and consider Dhraupathy as his mother.

The histrionic approach reached its pinnacle with the entry of Aswathama in the scene. Pandavas had killed his father Dhrona by laying to him that Aswathama was dead, which made him to lose the hope to live. Aswathama wanted to revenge Pandavas for his betrayed father. He went near Duryodhana and asked how this misfortune occurred to him. Duryodhana replied him that his ungratified greediness had put him in this adversity.

Aswathama with utmost angry uttered that betrayers should be dealt with betrayal only and Krishna and Pandavas had to be eradicated from the face of this earth like the useless portraits being removed from house. Fallen Duryodhana calmly told him not to say like that. As all kings, Karna, Bhishmar as well as all of his ninety nine brothers who fought directly in the battle were dead there was no use of continuing the war anymore and told Aswathama to give up the weapons. Furious Aswathama replied that Bheema has not only had shattered his thigh but also his pride. On this argument Duryodhana's replied so interestingly that it was not the club but the remembrances of the deeds of sending Pandavas for begging after defeating them through betrayal, abusing of Dhraupathy and the murdering of Abhimanyu were those to shatter him.

In this drama, the portrayal is not about the killing of a 'cruel' Duryodhana by 'powerful' Bheema as depicted in the original story. Rather the scenes had been visualized of Duryodhana who attained maturity at the doorway of death on inculcating the right consciousness.

Even though Duryodhana had forgiven Bheema the betrayer, Aswathama was unable to forgive Pandavas for his father's death. He says to Duryodhana as this:

*Bhavatâ vâtmanâ âaiva vîralôkaih sapâmyaham*

*Niûâsamaramutpâya ranòe dhakshyâmi pândòavânò (64)*

The next sloka is the verbal proclamation of Durjaya as the holder of the country.

*Vinâbhisòçkam râjatvâm viprôktairò vacæanairò bhava (65)*

Here we see that Bhasa has consciously planned the purposive use of his dramatic art.

### **Conclusion**

Urubhanga in culminates a different experience in the spectators mind owing to the twist given to the characters and the divergence given to the contents from the original story. The drama grows form the limits of the contents in the original story to the happenings which torches a light in to the extension and evolution of human minds and situations.

Drama portrayed a character that attained self realization through crucial dramatic circumstances in his life. From the perspective of differentiation of good and bad by the outside world, Duryodhana's fate may be considered inevitable based on his deeds. But through the portrayals in this drama he finally became entitled for empathy.

Bhasa through his writing had tried to enter the minds of characters, which were considered of awful nature in Indian epics and in the general assumption of people. Grief is the most touching emotions among all the others. Even though it is a tragic drama, Urubhanga is still being read and performed on the stages and enjoyed by the readers as well as the spectators which prove the greatness of the dramatist in portraying the play in its histrionic way. The drama and the character Duryadhana creates a positive thinking in the readers' mind only because of the creative greatness of Bhasa chiefly the histrionic way of his writing style.

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