



Shakespearean Tragic Grandeur: A Reading of 'Natsamrat'

*¹Dr. Ashutosh Patil

*¹Professor, Department of Marathi, School of Language Studies & Research Centre, North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon, Maharashtra, India.

Abstract

Shakespeare's influence on world drama is incomparable. In Indian literature, particularly in Marathi mainstream literature, Shakespeare's influence has played magic in the form of adaptations. Shakespeare's *King Lear* inspired a stalwart in the world of Marathi drama, V.V. Shirwadkar to write a play named *Natsamrat* which has been casting its spell on Marathi mind since generations. Though some critics are of the view that *Natsamrat* is neither the translation nor the adaptation of *King Lear* but *King Lear's* story and Shakespeare's perception of human life and human psyche definitely reflects in *Natsamrat*. Shirwadkar has massively succeeded in grasping the tragic grandeur of Lear in the protagonist of *Natsamrat*, Appasaheb Belwalkar. Unlike Lear Appasaheb is the uncrowned king of the limelight world of Drama. He has enacted the heroes of Shakespeare during his career as an actor on Marathi stage. The huge applause and the social recognition and the resultant image of him gives him the feel of a king. Like Lear he receives the betrayal, insult and disbelief at his children's hand. Shirwadkar has minutely depicted the human understanding of relations and perception of life through his characters and this is achieved through Shakespeare's influence on him. Of course, the play being independent creation by the playwright has added the dimension of Indian family context. Though Shirwadkar tries to discuss the problem of old people in Indian context, it does disseminate the awareness of universality of human treatments to the person when he has stepped out of the glory of life. When Lear, the King and Appasaheb, the king of the world of drama, grow dependent on their children, the tragedy does not remain of an individual or national but becomes universal.

Keywords: Translation, Transformation, Shakespeare's Influence, Tragic Grandeur

Introduction

Like all common people; a writer perceives his experiences from his personal as well as social life. At the same time, he may perceive his experiences from the writings of other writers also. A writer can accept the experiences from great literary creations because those literary creations have the power of extending the experiences to the readers. When a writer reads his predecessors or contemporaries, their writing not only influences his personality as a reader but as an artist that experience catches hold of the writer which leads the writer to relive the experience. When an experience of a text disturbs a writer and he wants to accept that experience, what could he do? The possible answers of this question are-

- i). He will imitate that experience
- ii). He will translate that text
- iii). He will create a new text (this could be called transformation of the experience)

In imitation, the experience from the other's text is the attempt of putting the same experience in same form but in the imitator's style. Through imitation the imitating writer enter the literary personality of the source text writer. Imitation is not new creation; it is but the illusion of new creation.

If the writer is disturbed by the experience from the foreign literature; then his natural response is of translating the foreign literature. Translation is not a passive process. It may contain the spirit of new creation. The scale of spirit of new creation depends on the extent the writer is involved in the text to be translated. The translator tries to go as near as possible to the experience. V. V. Shirwadkar has rightly opined that 'A particular text is better understood while translating than while reading. (Shirwadkar, 'Baket', Lalit, Diwali issue 1973, p. no. 43)

Transformation of experience is different than translation and imitation. It can be said that, when a writer gets possessed, obsessed by any other text, the experience of that text enroots deeply in his mind. It culminates into the perception of equivalent experience and out of that takes birth the text of transformation of the experience.

V. V. Shirwadkar's 'Natsamrat' can be analyzed from this viewpoint. The story behind the birth of this play is popular. Basically, Shirwadkar wanted to trans create 'King Lear' but when his mind was lingering on the border of 'King Lear', thought slashed in his mind, why should not he write a new play based on Nanasaheb Phatak, the king of the Marathi stage. (Shirwadkar, 'Drama stands in a mind like this: Natsamrat', Lalit, Diwali issue 1972, p. nos. 23). Though the

experience of Natsamrat leaped up from 'King Lear', the experiences of both the plays are different. Therefore 'Natsamrat' is the transformation of the experience of 'King Lear'. Shirwadkar is admired as an able dramatist who shouldered Shakespearean tradition of drama effectively. Being a prolific writer, he was the worshipper of beauty and ideas. Along with intensity he had a longing for ideas and grandeur. Shakespeare was not only the object of his love and respect but was of devotion also and 'Natsamrat' illustrates his devotion to Shakespeare at its best.

The story of 'Natsamrat' is based on 'King Lear'. All the basic events from 'King Lear' are present in 'Natsamrat'. Shakespeare's Lear is simple to extent of fool, reckless and stubborn but egoist and like a real human being. He is troubled badly due to the ungrateful behavior of his daughters. Out of three daughters of Lear, the two elder daughters' merciless cruelty to Lear results into his tragic end. The hero of 'Natsamrat' Ganpatrao alias Appasaheb Belwalkar, the king actor of Marathi Stage has one daughter and one son. But their cruelty to Appasaheb is not as severe, merciless and horrible as Lear's. Therefore it causes sufferings to Appasaheb but not as tragic as Lear's.

Shirwadkar has once stated, 'While thinking about 'King Lear' instead of a King, an image of an Actor-king stood into of my mind's eye.' This statement brings it to notice that on the basis King Lear Shirwadkar's creativity delineated the world of an Actor-king. The content of which is the map of an actor's life, important events from the world of drama, legends, the study of drama and dramatics. The way these elements are incorporated easily, Shirwadkar has also minutely studied 'King Lear'. This makes 'Natsamrat', the tragedy of an artist. The pains of a man who is deprived of his creativity due to old age. The resultant vacuum in his life and his efforts for filling the vacuum, all this is effectively depicted in 'Natsamrat'. Had Appasaheb Belwalkar not been an artist, he would not have suffered the loss of his creativity. Then his life would have been piteous but not tragic. Creativity is the prominent value. The essence of humanity lies in creativity. Our being culminating into becoming is the experience of being alive. As long as this experience continues life becomes worth living. The moment it ends life becomes empty, hollow and meaningless. The character of Appasaheb Belwalkar is delineated on this equation.

First act of 'Natsamrat' depicts the development of Ganpatrao Belwalkar as an actor. It means it portrays the being of Ganpatrao into becoming. The event of his felicitation is the peak point of the phase of his development. He then declares that 'this is the end of Belwalkar as an actor. Now he is only the father of his children.' He has a pain his heart that his dedication to stage deprived him of his domestic role as father and husband. Actually he enjoys peaceful and happy family in comparison with Lear. His old age has feeling of satisfaction. His wife Kaveri tries to make him aware of the dependency in old age. Kaveri says, 'People are not bad. Old age is bad. Give your plate but not your seat.' Ganpatrao Belwalkar has developed an ego of being a great actor. So he behaves like a king throughout his life. Thus his ego keeps him away from adjusting himself with the rules and regulations of material life.

As he has retired as an actor or a creative artist, the vacuum created cannot be filled being a father. Consequently the vacuum results into meaningless activities. His shouting, his wandering, his loud reactions to the people in his family, are suggestive of his efforts for recompensating his loss of public and family attention.

At the same time Ganpatrao Belwalkar is also affected by the practical nature of his children who treat their dependent old parents as burden and weak parasites that could be insulted and suspected easily. The way Lear's daughters keep on insulting him and crushing his ego as a King and making him aware of his helplessness. Ganpatrao Belwalkar also experiences his degeneration at the hands of his children. Kaveri's death paralyses him completely. Though unlike Lear's daughters, Ganpatrao Belwalkar's children were in search of their father who has left not only their house but the world also.

Thus V. V. Shirwadkar has succeeded in capturing the soul of Shakespeare's tragic grandeur through his language and delineation of Ganpatrao Belwalkar.

References

1. 'Natsamrat: Samiksha', Editor: G. T. Patil, Chetashri Prakashan, Amalner, First edition; 11 June 1986.
2. 'Shakespeare and Marathi Drama: Comparative Literary study', V. P. Ginde, Shabdalya Prakashan, Shrirampur, First edition; October 2014.
3. 'Shokkarani ani Marathi Shokatmika (Tragic Element and Marathi Tragedy)', Madhav Altekar, Hindmata Prakashan, Mumbai, First edition: February 1952.
4. Shakespeare ani Marathi Natak: Taulanik Sahityabhyas, V. P. Ginde, Shabdalya Prakashan, Shrirampur, 2013.
5. Taulanik Sahityabhyas-Tatve ani Disha, Editor: Chandrashekhar Jahagirdar, Continental Prakashan, Pune, 1992.
6. Bhartiya sandarbhat Taulanik Sahityabhyas, Ganesh Devi, Saurabh Prakashan, Kolhapur, 1992.
7. Taulanik Sahitya: Nave Sidhant ani Upayojan, Anand Patil, Saket Prakashan, Aurangabad, 1998.
8. Taulanik Sahityabhyas, Mauj Prakashan Mumbai, 1981.
9. Tulanatmak Sahitya ki Bhoomika, Indranath Chaudhari, National Publication House, Delhi, 1983.
10. Taulanik Sahitya, Nishikant Mirajkar, Pratima Prakashan, Pune, 2016.