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The *Panckriyā* Theory of Creation and Coleridge's "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*": A Study in Application

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Abstract:

In a perfect artistic activity, there is always a free and contented emergence of will to create; knowledge is substituted by enlightenment which ultimately leads to a conscious state of activity. Only the poet possessing these qualities of mind can be considered to attain a higher state of mind for creating appropriate artistic work. To demonstrate this process of literary composition, the *Panckriyā* theory is a perfect paradigm that follows the five sequential steps of creation that take place in the mind of the artist when he conceives the idea of literary composition. The present paper is an attempt to use the *Panckriyā* theory as a model to demonstrate the process of literary composition of creation in Coleridge's "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*." In the attempt Coleridge's "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" has been put to test as to know how the five steps of creative process of the *Panckriyā* theory, i.e. *sristi* (creation), *stithi* (preservation), *samhar* (transformation), *tirobhava* (diffusion), *anugraha* (grace) are discernible in the text selected for the study.

Keywords: *Panckriyā*, Kashmir Shaivism, *sristi*, *stithi*, *samhar*, *tirobhava*, *anugraha*, Polar Spirits, crime, guilt, redemption.

Introduction

The *Panckriyā* theory is a philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, a monistic group, who believes Lord Shiva as the creator of the whole Universe. This group opines that it is only Lord Shiva who performs and maintains the cycle of grace in Nature with perfect balance. The term *Panckriyā* can be separated into two parts: *panca* and *kriya*, where *panca* means five and *kriya* signifies activity. Thus, the *Panckriyā* is defined as the five-fold activities that serve as the constituents for the creation and in turn impart rasa or aesthetic pleasure. It involves an elementary process of churning, managing, organizing, purifying and realizing the point of inspiration in the mind whose subject matter is idea. This theory is derived from the triad principle of *Trika Darśan* i.e. *Śiva*, *Śakti*, and the union of both. This philosophy is based on the belief that all the cosmic activities in the Universe are progressed with the combination of *Śiva* and *Śakti* where *Siva* refers to the light or *parkāśa* and *Śakti* to the activity or *vimarśa*. All the artistic activities develop on the same principle. As *Panckriyā* is universal in nature, it can be well applied to any limited activity in order to explain and evaluate such proposition. In the literary or artistic creation, the similar activities are evident. As in the cosmos, so in a work of art, Nature or poet (*Śiva*) wills it to happen, which is the natural and rational, therefore, the activity (*Śakti*) gets started. Thus, the *Panckriyā* theory is theoretical as well as practical -oriented.

The process of creation of any literary composition begins with the *sṛṣti* or Creation in which the will or aesthetic intuition generates in the mind of the poet to create an activity. The second step is *stithi* or Preservation which means to follow and promote the course of action. *samḥāra* or Transformation is the third step that leads to the purification and thereby resulting in a new shape and color of thoughts. The next step is *tirobhāva* or diffusion of illusion in which there is the clear approach and vision of reality. The concluding step is known as *anugraha* or Attaining grace which finally fulfills the objective of the poet and consequently provides grace to him with utmost perfection. These components of *Panckriyā* theory has been applied to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Application of *Panckriyā* theory to Coleridge's "*Rime of the Ancient Mariner*"

(1) *Sṛṣti* or Creation: The Emergence of an Aesthetic Will or an Intuition

This aesthetical intuition signifies the very first stage of *Panckriyā* theory which is known as *sṛṣti* or creation. It indicates the will or intuition that comes in the mind of the poet before composing any literary or artistic composition. The poet after deep ponderation collects experience from his surroundings and thereby generates the aesthetic idea through the pivotal character of Ancient Mariner who wants to convey that the killing of animal creatures is a great sin. Coleridge had always a tendency to know about the mystery of activities occurring in Nature just like his friend Wordsworth. Coleridge's morality and belief in the elevating power of Nature were almost similar to Wordsworth as he always lived in the sunshine of his friend, Wordsworth. When Coleridge as a metaphysician looked deeper into the mystery of the things of Nature including living and non-living, he found that the whole universe was covered under the umbrella of the supreme soul of the Almighty and life was the essence of all motions in this universe. So, according to him, there was the "one life" (Beer 169) within us and abroad. The idea of shooting which he has described in this poem explores the idea of 'one life' which shows the crime committed against that one life. According to his opinion, "Life was not simply a biological phenomenon, existing on a small planet in the mighty universe. It was in itself a reflection of the God who had created all things." (169) He believed that God was in everything, even in every minute molecules as the vast ever-acting energy and in every living creature as the first principle of life, thought and impulse as well.

Glory to Thee, Father of Earth and Heaven!

All-conscious Presence of the Universe!

Nature's vast ever-acting energy!

In Will, in deed, impulse of All in All! (*The Destiny of Nations. A Vision* 170).

Further, he believed that there were countless spirits in Nature and they were all embedded in various organic and inorganic forms of Nature. Besides, all of them serve under the permanent service of God who runs the whole universe. In this way, he sees the unity of all life in the world. This idea instigated him to narrate this poem which strongly emphasizes that man should always seek to respect and love living creatures rather than overpowering or conquering over them as they are also part of this beautiful nature.

(2) **Stithi or Preservation: The Sustenance of an Idea and Thoughts**

The second stage of the *Panckriyā* theory is *Stithi* or preservation which means to uphold and follow the course of thought. At the preservation level, the object of inspiration captivates the mind of the poet and thus waves all over with crest and trough.

Coleridge begins this poem with the introduction of his protagonist, the Ancient Mariner, who with his fellow sailors, happily set out on their voyage towards Southward. As the ship reached the Equator, they perceived a sudden rush of wind and a dreadful storm that overpowered the ship and was swiftly driven towards the south. They reached the polar region which was densely covered with snow and mist all around. It was a looking like a terrifying world without even a single living creature and the snow shielded mountain cliffs were producing cracking and groaning sounds. Meanwhile, the only so-called native of the region named Albatross came there through ripping off the fog and mist. The fellow sailors along with the Ancient Mariner greeted the bird like a 'Christian Soul' as it saved the ship from sinking and helped them to move on their way just as a Godly spirit does. They treated the bird like a guest by serving and enjoying it like a companion.

At length did cross an Albatross,

Through the fog it came;

As if it had been a Christian soul,

We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,

And round and round it flew. (Doré 14)

Then one day the ancient Mariner abruptly and whimsically killed the Albatross with his cross-bow gratuitously. He was unaware of his callous action which signifies his absolute disregard for the Godly creature. The fellow sailors initially approved and admired the Ancient Mariner considering his killing act like a good one as they believed that the Albatross only brought the fog and mist with it but gradually, they also felt embarrassed when they realized that they had

accompanied him for his brutal act for which they had to suffer a severe punishment. So, they started accusing him of his crime and simultaneously hanged the dead Albatross round his neck which would continuously remind him of his guilt.

Ah! Well-a-day! What evil looks

Had I from old and young!

Instead of the cross, the Albatross

About my neck was hung. (24)

In this way, the idea is maintained in the *stithi* or preservation with the crime executed by the Ancient Mariner and this will later teach him the harshest lesson for his sinful act.

(3) *Samhār* or Transformation: The Stage of Complexity, Destruction and Evolution of New Thoughts

Samhār or transformation is the third and an important stage of the *Panckriyā* theory in which the poet embroils between pure and impure ideas during his artistic process but gradually all the possible negative thoughts are eliminated from the natural order and a new mould of thoughts takes shape. As a result, the chain of confusion, uncertainty, and dilemma that overcast the mind are dispelled and the regeneration of the new thoughts sets in.

The fellow sailors who indirectly supported the Ancient Mariner also encountered the troubles along with him in the physical form given by Nature for taking revenge against the Albatross. The ship after reaching the Pacific Ocean got stuck and remained motionless in the still water. There was water everywhere but still, they had not a drop of water to drink and the boards of the ship started shrinking due to extreme heat. The Ocean also began to rot and stink and the creatures of the water could be easily seen crawling on the surface of it.

Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

As idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!

That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs

Upon the slimy sea. (20-22)

So, the Condition of sailors was so horrible that their throats were dry and lips were so scorched that they were not able to laugh or cry. Further, the Mariner noticed the two ghastly figures who were playing dice in the skeleton ship. Among them, the horrifying woman namely 'Life in Death' exclaimed with joy that the game was over and she had won the Ancient Mariner.

The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,

Who thickens man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,

And the twain were casting dice,

The game is done! I've won! I've won!

Quoth she, and whistles thrice. (28)

All the other fellow sailors stared at the Ancient mariner with great anguish and cursing eyes and everyone fell down one after another leaving him all alone on the board in such vast

ocean synchronously. So, he felt himself not only physically isolated but also socially detached as well:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

Alone on a wide wide sea!

And never a saint took pity on

My soul in agony. (32)

Being in great agony, he tried to pray to God but only the malicious words emit from his inside before starting a prayer.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;

But or ever a prayer had gusht,

A wicked whisper came, and made

My heart as dry as dust. (34)

The constant reproachful eyes of the dead mariners, the lack of drinking water besides having abundant water, the two ghastly figures, the all-time loneliness on the board, the incapability to pray somehow drags him to the stage of understanding and accepting his crime and helps him to move to the stage of catharsis. During this severe stage of agony and termination, Nature again offered an opportunity to him to evolve kindness and love for Godly creatures. The Ancient Mariner instantly noticed the water-snakes which were looking extremely beautiful and alluring in different colors of shades. Seeing their superfluous beauty, an enormous amount of love emerged out from the heart of the Mariner for those water snakes and he praised them in an exaggeration as:

O happy living things! no tongue

Their beauty might declare:

A spring of love gushed from my heart,

And I blessed them unaware
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware. (40)

This was the turning point where his heart got purified and the spring of love for the living creatures burst out from his heart and that very moment, the dead Albatross fell from his neck and he can pray to God now. This indicates the stage of *samhāra* where the Ancient Mariner was initially in a perplex state as the terrible incidents occurred with him after killing the Albatross. But later he realized his mistake after praising and blessing the water snakes and then he started understanding and accepting his crime.

(4) ***Tirobhāva* or Diffusion of illusion: The Unveiling of Illusion and The Embodiment of Vision**

The fourth step is *tirobhāva* or diffusion of illusion that ahead with the identification and the vision of reality. In this stage, the mind of the poet becomes precise towards his final thoughts and thereby acquires a new ascendance towards gaining liberation and peace. In layman's terms, we can say that the illogical doubts or illusions are annihilated and one belief emerges with a firm setting in the mind.

Praising the beauty and wishing for the water-snakes is the first step of the Ancient Mariner towards redemption which symbolizes the beginning of his love to the living creatures. The emotional dryness which was inhibited inside him for the living creatures has now been replaced to an unending love for them and after this event, everything turned good now and his loneliness no longer remained a punishment for him. The Ancient Mariner started praising Virgin Mary for she entered into his purified soul and provided him to take a soft sleep. He was now able to drink water and he found himself and his garments completely wet in heavy rain. He saw numerous beautiful flashes of fire flying to and fro and the light-colored stars were dancing here and there. He also observed that the lifeless souls that were engaged in working on the ship were the host of divine spirits. Besides this, he heard the skylark's song as well as the chirpings of the little birds. The redemption of the Ancient mariner becomes more evident when he heard two voices discussing with each other in numbness state. While accusing the Ancient mariner, the first voice

named 'Spirit of justice' asked another voice whether this was the cruel man who had killed the harmless Albatross with fierceness. The Another Spirit which was as soft as honeydew replied that this man has repented for his crime and it's quite sure that he will do the same kind of penitence in the future also.

Is it he? quoth one, "Is this the man?

By him who died on cross,

With his cruel bow he laid full low

The harmless Albatross.

....The other voice was a softer voice,

As soft as honey-dew:

Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,

And penance more will do." (50)

The last step of the Ancient Mariner towards redemption can be remarked when he decided to confess his sin before the hermit who along with the pilot and the boy arrived to save the members of the ship. He said:

I saw a third-I heard his voice:

It is the Hermit good!

He singeth loud his godly hymns

That he makes in the wood.

He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away

The Albatross's blood. (58)

(5) **Anugraha or Attaining Grace: The Aesthetic Experience of Sublimation and Divine Grace**

The last and the final stage is *anugraha* or attaining grace which excels the poet to the state of sublimity and in turn imparts rasa or aesthetic pleasure. In other words, in this stage, the poet achieves his intended objective or goal and reaches to the golden gate of gratification and serenity. It can also be averred as the stage of contentment and universal rhythm. Any poetic composition that possess this universal rhythm offers truth, meaning and produces aesthetic pleasure.

As the Ancient Mariner ends up with the confession of his crime before the hermit, he consequently noticed his soul free from the guilt and mind completely free from its burden.

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched

With a woful agony,

Which forced me to begin my tale;

And then it left me free. (66)

In this way, he achieves the grace or *anugraha*. After the great redemption, the Ancient Mariner decided that he would continue his incidental and deplorable tale to one whom he deserves suitable. Also, he gave a universal message to one of the wedding guests that all the living creatures are weighed equally in the scales of God and one who loves all human beings, birds, animals and even the smallest creatures of the Nature is the earnest lover of God.

He prayeth well, who loveth well,

Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best

All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,

He made and loveth all. (74)

Conclusion

Thus Coleridge's "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" aptly substantiates all the five steps of the theory. The process starts with the intuition of the poet and continues until the objective is achieved. In this poem, Coleridge accomplishes the Grace through his mouthpiece Ancient Mariner. His idea that one should not slay the living creatures but love them in turn as they are all harmonious in the eyes of God is *sṛṣti* or Creation. The abrupt and aimless sin committed by the Ancient Mariner to kill the Albatross maintains the idea of *stithi* or Preservation. It is only after that he encounters terrible situations all alone though he was completely unaware of his actions. But when God presents him an opportunity to arise love and compassion for all the living creatures by introducing the beautiful water-snakes in front of his ship, he realizes his sin after praising them. So, the bewilderment and later realization of the crime by the Mariner shows the level of *samhāra* or transformation in him. The decision to do repentance for his awful crime fulfills the level of *tirobhāva* where he confesses his sin before the hermit. Coleridge finally achieves his *anugraha* state when the Mariner after confessing his crime feels his mind completely free from the burden of committing sin and at last gives a moral lesson to one of the wedding guests in the poem that the best prayer to God is to love all the living creatures present in Nature. In this way, the mariner who was initially charged with passivity towards the mortal beings has eventually become conscious of the welfare of the universe which in *Panckriyā* terminology is *samprajāta stithi* (conscious state of meditative mind).

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