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# « NIGHT » AND « DAY » IN KUMĀRASAṂBHAVA: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SUGGESTIVE MEANING

To the two antithetical modes of human experience, logical and aesthetic, correspond two types of semiotic codes. The one deals with the objective perception of the outer world, the elements of which, are organized by Reason into a coherent system. The other deals with the intimate feelings which move man when he experiences beauty and truth. In this case the elements of his experience cannot be organized into a rational system; the signs or objects of experience are less conventional than logical signs; they do not mean something abstract outside of themselves, they carry wihtin themselves their own meaning « porteurs de leur propre signification »[1]. Poetry or poetic experience expresses itself with the help of this second kind of signs, which are language-signs.

These signs, in contradistinction to logical signs, are « iconic and analogical », they do not make statements but reveal the poet's experience in a concrete form. For, signs which are vague, insignificant, commonplace while standing apart, acquire within a poetic text a new significance because of their participation in a coherent structure.

These contentions are not new, though modern critics are rediscovering them in a somewhat different context. Using the terminology of the Indian *alaṁkārikas*, we can say that the poetic utterance, *varṇana*, which expresses an aesthetic experience, *darśana*, is made possible by means of language-signs, *śabda*. Bhartṛhari says, *sarvaṁ śabdena bhāsate* (*Vākyapadīya*, 1.123); and Tarapada Chakravarty commenting on him, writes: « ... a reality which is not associated with an articulate verbal form, does not form the content of our thought »[2]. But the question remains: How do the language-signs reveal the *darśana* of the poet?

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1. Pierre Guiraud, *La Sémiotique*, P.U.F., Paris, 1973, p. 11.

2. Tarapada Chakravarty, *Indian Aesthetics and Science of Language*, Calcutta, 1971, p. 5.

Ānandavardana tries to give an answer to this question. Poetry is evocation, suggestion, *dhvani*, not statement. *Dhvanivādins* however dealt with stray verses and tried to find out within the linguistic structure of a verse the hidden experience; they never dealt with a whole *kāvya*. But when we take into consideration a longer poem we find there too words within a certain structure acquiring a special significance or *dhvani*, these reveal concretely some significant aspects of the poetic vision.

In this paper we shall try to see how the words signifying « night », in their relation to those signifying « day », express the fundamental vision of *Kumārasaṁbhava*: destruction of *kāma* and the union of Śiva and Umā, by which Kāma is reborn.

« Night » and « day » form a simple structure. We could certainly study the theme of « night » or the theme of « day » separately, as often critics have done with significant images and metaphors of great poets. But, says Pierre Guiraud, « derrière ce qu'on traitait jusqu'ici comme des signes isolés on reconnaît aujourd'hui l'existence de systèmes d'oppositions d'où ces signes tirent leur signification »[3]. We too have found it more rewarding to take into consideration this system which seems at first sight to be a system of opposites.

We have a clear indication of this system within the poem itself. The Gods in their praise to Brahmā say:

> *sva-kāla-parimāṇena vyasta-rātriṁ-divasya te* (2.8)
> ... of you who have separated night and day by the measure of your own time...

« Night » and « day » are not absolute opposites, neither do they exclude one another. In fact when we consider the words meaning « day », *divasa, dina, diva, ahan* we find that they contain often the period of time which we call night. These words have therefore a greater temporal extension than « night ». On the other hand what they gain in extension they lose in intensity. *Rātri, rajanī, nakta, niśi, pradoṣa, kṣapā, vibhāvarī, triyāmā yāminī, śarvarī, niśītha,* though, in the sense of temporal expanse, cover a shorter period of time than « divasa » etc., yet they are metaphorically more significant. This fact is justified by the more frequent use of these words and also the manner in which they are used.

The words « night » and « day » may be thought to be opposite in respect to light and darkness. But it is not so. Though we associate *divasa, diva* with light, yet *rātri* etc. are not devoid of light; the day

3. Pierre Guiraud, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

excludes darkness — Kālidāsa speaks of the darkness afraid of the day taking shelter in the caves of Himālaya:

*divākarād rakṣati yo guhāsu līnaṁ divā-bhītam ivāndhakāram* (1.12)
he (Himālaya) who, in his caves, protects from the sun (= the maker of light) the darkness which clings to him in fear, as it were, of the day —

But the night does not exclude light; the images of stars, moon and lamps are abundant in KS. Because of this inclusion of light, — the significant element which makes *divasa* —, that « night » becomes poetically more significant. We see that the separation of « night » and « day » *rātri, diva* by Brahmā is not absolute; there exists therefore the possibility of an interplay between the two. It is this interplay which reveals their meaning within the general body of the poem.

Let us consider the description of the birth and growth of Umā. Describing her mother Menā, after Umā's birth, Kālidāsa writes:

*tayā duhitrā sutarāṁ savitrī sphurat-prabhā-maṇḍalayā cakāse* (1.24)
... she who gave her birth shone brilliantly with the splendour of the daughter who was surrounded by a glittering effulgence.

This line makes at once the association of Umā with light; the next verse shows that this light is born out of the night:

*dine dine sā parivardhamānā labdhodayā candramasīva lekhā* (1.25)
... she who was like the newly-risen crescent of the moon grew day by day.

Again Kālidāsa compares her with a lustrous flame, *prabhāmahatī śikhā* (1.28), which supports and strengthens the same significance.

If we now look at Śiva we can discover also some interesting indications.

*sa hi devaḥ paraṁ jyotis tamaḥ-pāre vyavasthitam* (2.58)
... he indeed is God; the supreme light, fixed beyond darkness.

The supreme light beyond darkness, — this light is different from the manifested light, the light which is on this side of darkness; for the lustre shed by Śiva's crescent moon is more luminous than day; when the moon-crested God arrives at Himālaya's capital, although it is day-time and the palace-tops glitter in the light, yet Śiva makes them twice as luminous by shedding moonlight on them:

*prāsāda-śṛṅgāṇi divāpi kurvañ jyotsnābhiṣeka-dviguṇa-dyutīni* (7.63)

When we take these two things together we find on the one hand the association of Umā with the light born out of the night, on the other, of Śiva with the unmanifested light beyond darkness. Here we should also notice that the expression *divāpi* as one of the terms of the antithesis day/night is there only to give value to the image of night.

In fact the element which gives value to « day », viz. « light », has been assimilated by « night »; it is within the night that we have the twofold light, Umā on this side, Śiva on the other.

We shall now try to see how these two lights grow and finally are united in the symbolism of the night. When we read the book of Umā's *tapas* (V) we find a significant verse:

> *śilāśayāṁ tām aniketa-vāsinīṁ nirantarāsv antara-vāta-vṛṣṭisu*
> *vyalokayann unmiṣitais taḍin-mayair mahā-tapaḥ-sākṣya iva*
> *sthitāḥ kṣapāḥ* (5.25)
>
> ... she lived outside her home, slept on a stony bed in unceasing wind and rain while nights stood like witnesses of her great tapas looking at her with open eyes full of lightning.

Here we have first to notice that the witness of Umā's *tapas* is the night; it is in the night that she purifies herself in order to become Śiva's bride. But then what are night's lightning-glances? In order to grasp the implication of this metaphor we have to refer back to Śiva, the Supreme Light beyond darkness. Then it will not be far-fetched to say that the witness is nothing but this Supreme Light itself, breaking through the night; it is Śiva presiding over and following the progress of Umā's tapas.

In the same book we find some more important implications of « night ». Śiva, as the *brahmacārin*, asks Umā:

> *kim ity apāsyābharaṇāni yauvane dhṛtaṁ tvayā vārdhakya-*
> *śobhi valkalam*
> *vada pradoṣe sphuṭa-candra-tārakā vibhāvarī yady aruṇāya*
> *kalpate* (5.44)
>
> Why have you in this early youth abandoned your ornaments to put on garments of bark fit only for old age? Say, does the night bursting with the moon and stars, long in its early hours for the dawn?

Here Umā is compared to *vibhāvarī*, *yauvana* to *pradoṣa*, *vārdhakya* to *aruṇa*. This shows that « night » gets a greater value than « day ». Night is the stronger and the more significant term. The metaphor of the starry and moonlit night, *sphuṭa-candra-tārakā vibhāvarī*, also indicates that Umā is now prepared for the great union. A foretaste of this union is again given in the framework of the night. Her friend says about Umā:

> *tri-bhāga-śeṣāsu niśāsu ca kṣaṇaṁ nimīlya netre sahasā vyabudhyata*
> *kva Nilakaṇṭha vrajasīty a-lakṣya-vāg a-satya-kaṇṭhārpita-bāhu-*
> *bandhanā* (5.57)
>
> When only the third part of the night remained, she would close her eyes for a moment but wake up at once uttering indistinctly,

« Where do you go, O Nīlakaṇṭha? » and throw her arms round a non-existent neck.

This leads us to the final aspect of the night: night as the time of union; the light which is on this side of night has grown through *tapas* and has become a luminous night, *sphuṭa-candra-tārakā vibhāvarī*. That which was earthly desire has deepened into its more mysterious counterpart.

There are many passages in KS where Kālidāsa emphasizes the night as the time of union.

*atha Madana-vadhūr upaplavāntaṁ vyasana-kṛśā paripālayāṁ babhūva*
*śaśina iva divātanasya lekhā kiraṇa-parikṣaya-dhūṣarā pradoṣam.*
(4.46)

And Kāma's wife, whom misery had worn out, awaited the end of the calamity, just as the crescent of the moon, appearing during the day and pallid through the loss of its rays, awaits the night-fall.

This verse conveys that it is during the daytime that beauty and lustre vanish — at night the lustre returns. Here it is the promise of Rati's union with Kāma, who will be reborn when Śiva and Umā are united. It is a poetic indication of the complete expression of joy and beauty in the night; in contrast the day, *diva*, is the sign of calamity, *upaplava*.

But it is in Book 8, the book of Umā's love, that the sign of night becomes complex and fully unfolds itself. Here we find two different aspects of the night; firstly, night as the unmanifest, the absolute negation, the non-existent; next as the manifestation. It is in this second aspect that Śiva and Umā meet; where the light that is born on this side and the light that is beyond unite and are fulfilled.

The negative aspect:

*nordhvam īkṣaṇa-gatir na cāpy adho nābhito na purato na pṛṣṭataḥ*
*loka eṣa timirolba-veṣṭito garbha-vāsa iva vartate niśi*
*śuddham āvilam avasthitāṁ calaṁ vakram ārjava-guṇānvitaṁ ca yat*
*sarvam eva tamasā samīkṛtam dhiṅ mahatvam asatāṁ hatāntaram*
(8.56-7)

The eyes do not go above, not even below, not around, not in front, not behind. This world enveloped by the membrane of darkness seems to be in gestation in the womb of night.

The pure and the impure, the fixed and the moving, the crooked and the straight, have all been indeed levelled by darkness. Fie upon the greatness of unreal things which destroys all differences.

The images of the membrane of darkness and the womb make it clear that this night is the night before creation. That Kālidāsa is not in sympathy wtih this undifferentiated state is evident from the word

« *dhik* » (fie!). Within the darkness the light manifests itself. And Śiva says that this night is like Umā herself, and he himself is like the moon:

*mandārāntarita-mūrtinā niśā lakṣyate śaśa-bhṛtā sa-tārakā*
*tvaṁ mayā priya-sakhi-samāgatā śroṣyateva vacanāni pṛṣṭataḥ* (8.59)
This starry night with the moon's form hidden behind the Mandāra-mountain, appears to me like you surrounded by your dear friends, and I listening to your words from behind.

The moon hidden behind the Mandāra-mountain echoes the idea of the Supreme Light behind darkness. But for the union the Supreme Light, in this case the moon, has to appear from behind the mountain. The following verse with a complex richness of significance speaks of this manifestation.

*ruddha-nirgamanam ā dina-kṣayāt pūrva-dṛṣṭa-tanu-candrikā-smitam*
*etad udgirati rātri-coditā dig rahasyam iva candra-maṇḍalam* (8.60)

The sky, urged by the night, reveals the moon as if he was a mystery, the moon who could not appear fully before the day's end and whose moonlight-smile upto that moment looked pale.

In this we have several important ideas: the moon is pale during the day; the day hides more than it reveals; and it is only when the daylight diminishes that the moon can rise in its full splendour; the quarter of the sky, *diś*, which held back the moon releases it when urged by the night, *rātri-coditā* — this suggests the manifestation of Śiva made possible by Umā's tapas; and finally, the moon is a mystery, *rahasya*. The association of the moon with Śiva which is a commonplace, has acquired a new dimension.

The image of night gets a definite contour; it is no more the symbol of darkness; in fact darkness has taken shelter in shallow places *nimna-saṁśraya-paraṁ niśā-tamaḥ* (8.66).

What remains is light; and in a later verse when the image of marriage is evoked we find that it is the marriage between two luminous attributes of night. Śiva tells Umā:

*eṣa cāru-mukhi yoga-tārayā yujyate tarala-bimbayā śaśī*
*sādhvasād upagata-prakampayā kanyayeva nava-dīkṣayā varaḥ* (8.73)

O lovely-faced One, behold, the moon and the brightest star with a flickering halo, are united, like a bridegroom with his newly-wedded bride trembling in fear.

Such is the significance of night. In this union the common day vanishes; there remains only the eternal night of union:

*sama-divasa niśīthaṁ saṅginas tatra Śambhoḥ*
*śatam agamat ṛtunāṁ sārdhaṁ ekā niśeva* (8.91)

Making no difference between day and night Śiva, in love's union, passed there hundred and fifty seasons as if it were just one *night*.

In this final verse of KS we find that the antithesis of ordinary day and night vanishes, *sama-divasa-niśītham*, and there is a synthesis and a fulfilment in an eternal night which is full of light and bliss.

In conclusion we may note in short that « night » and « day » and some other terms related to them, form within KS a significant structure. We have tried to analyse this structure which suggests by creating a complex system of *dhvani*, the poetic vision that Kālidāsa has tried to express.