

Drama in Performance: A Euphonic appreciation of Shakespeare's King Lear

Dr. Ajit Kumar Mohapatra

HOD, Dept. of English, R.D.S. Degree Mahavidyalaya, Kundabai (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 07 September 2018

Keywords

Euphony, Phonoaesthetics,
Foregrounding, Dhvani

ABSTRACT

Drama in performance is better appreciated in terms of sound-meaning, emotive and pragmatic basis as realized by the careful and critical viewership. In this context, viewing BBC Shakespeare's King Lear is a unique experience and analyzing the prominent phonemic units in the dialogs and the consonant clusters that altogether yield a good understanding of the purpose of the text. In this light, this paper is an outcome of the critical viewership of drama that leads to a phonoaesthetic study which helps us trace basically three foregrounded words like 'disposition', 'endurance' and 'foul-fiend' bearing deeper meaning. Besides, the languages of Lear, Edgar and Fool in different contexts and forms of madness excel in establishing a feature of register as well as moral philosophy in its texture. While discussing, references from both western and oriental traditions of euphony and dhvani for text analysis have been cited to make the approach impartial.

1. Introduction

No doubt, there are billions of global readership, viewership and appreciation of Shakespeare's King Lear across the centuries both in English and its translated texts. Thousands of dimensions, comparisons, contrasts and intersexual interpretations have already been done. But, still then the primary text of it bears focalization of some pragmatic aspects added with linguistic testimony that needs to be highlighted. It is pertinent enough to say that King Lear has been audio-visually and digitally produced differently in different times and places but, watching BBC Shakespeare's King Lear(2000) starring Michael Hordern, John Bird, Anton Lesser, Frank Middlemass, Brenda Blethyn and Michael Kitchen which is produced by Shaun Sutton and directed by Jonathan Miller gives us some preliminary euphonic perceptions which no doubt enhance the aesthetic value of the text in performance. Worth saying that the play has been analyzed textually, thematically and philosophically and it is proven to be a classic on the basis of the celebrated themes of nothingness, madness, family tragedy, metaphysical elements and the like. But, a multisensory and cognitive access of the dialogues in terms of sound-meaning relationship with a euphonic approach transcends its pragmatic gravity.

Euphonics as David Rush(2005) says the sounds that words and sentences make when you speak them. It is an important consideration in play analysis because plays are meant to be performed, and so words usually reach the audience through their ears rather than through their eyes. Words are meant to provide an aural experience rather than a visual one, and how they sound often carries as much meaning as what they symbolize.

In this sense, language of a play is very much like music or spoken poetry, in that it helps create mood by:

- The sounds of the vowels and consonants.
- The use of assonance, dissonance, and alliterations.
- The emotional quality of rhythm. (Rush 2005, 83)

The sound-meaning relationship in drama or euphonic or synonymously called the phonoaesthetic study in this regard values it as the inherent pleasantness or beauty (euphony) of words and sentences yield a better dramatic effect semantically. The natural chain of sound-meaning effect leads to cognitive and metacognitivestages of understanding. Finally, the texts in the communicative encoding process result in the decoding of the multi-folded contextual, socio-cultural temporal and pragmatic meanings. The process of the clusters of phonemes shared by a group of words in the dialogues which have deviational, repetitive and universality of opinion like feature make it more meaningfully attractive. This happens to be the key to oriental approach to analysis of poetry too. The psycho-phono-lexicosyntax relationship and its effect as formulated in Dhvanyaloka by Anandavardhana substantiates the rasa of emotive language through vacyartha (explicit meaning) or mukhyartha (primary meaning) is worth applicable for stylistic analysis of King Lear in performance too.

The performance of King Lear can be judged well adopting this as 'Linguistic sounds, considered as external, physical phenomenon' having 'two aspects which have subjective, social significance...' (Jacobson 1987, 5-6) and amounts to the understanding of 'linguistic intuition' of the text that is born out of nirvedu (disinterested serenity) that yields universal philosophical knowledge. The aim of considering this scale of appreciation is to express the realization of emotive phonoaesthetics, which is to initiate the reader to read the book based on emotion, not the story. The dialogues are meant to hold an underlining emotion which is then the plot or movement of the play. In fact, when we are stuck in life, we feel a stagnant hold that captures us. So thus, we are certain of these dialogues force the viewers to push through them and thus activate those same catalysts (actions) within self what in the words of Coleridge takes us to the stage of 'willing suspension of disbelief'.

2. Review of Literature

There are scores of critics evaluating King Lear from different angles. The most famous among them are chosen here for review on the basis of relevance for the present study. A.C. Bradley (1919) one unchallengeable pioneers on Shakespeare criticism says, 'King Lear is admittedly one of the world's greatest poems, and yet there is surely no other of these poems which produces on the whole this effect...' (Bradley, 142). On language of Lear, he adds, 'In the simplicity of its language, which consists almost wholly of monosyllables of naive origin, composed in very brief sentences of the plainest structure... The fact that Lear speaks in passion is one cause of the difference, but not the sole cause. The language is more than simple, it is familiar'.

In his *Wheels of Fire*, G. Wilson Knight (1964) says, 'King Lear is great in the abundance and richness of human delineation, in the level focus of creation that builds a massive oneness, in fact, a universe, of single quality from a multiplicity of difference of a purgatorial philosophy. But it is still greater in the perfect fusion of psychological realism with the daring flights of a fantastic imagination. The heart of a Shakespearian tragedy is centred in the imaginative in the unknown.... The peculiar dualism at the root of this play which wrenches and splits the mind by a sight of incongruities displays in turn realities absurd, hideous, pitiful. (Knight, 160). He however praises it saying, 'The play is a microcosm of the human race...' (Knight, 177-78) and '... a work of philosophic vision. We watch not ancient Britons, but humanity; not England, but the mankind.' (Knight, 180).

Focusing on a philosophical view, McGinn says, 'King Lear is more concerned with metaphysics than epistemology: it deals principally with questions of existence and causality rather than our ability to know reality'.

David Crystal (2008), the famous linguistic critic of our time however examines the play stylistically and puts emphasis on sounds and voice quoting the King: 'Me thines thy voyce is alter'd, and thou speak'st in better phrase, and matter then thou did'st (blind Gloucester to disguised Edgar: Lear 4,6,7)..... The trick of that voice I do well remember (Lear to blind Gloucester: Lear 4.6.106). (King Lear quoted in Crystal, 103-4). He means to say that the language of King Lear in speech acts in poetic form is more effective and provides aesthetic relish.

In the review, it is noticed that except Bradley and Crystal, others have discussed the play from socio-cultural, philosophical and psychological logics accepted in literary criticism traditionally. But, the fact remains behind that a play within its spatio-temporal textual set up can go beyond the natural reason and logic in our sense to foreground. The dramatic elements in the Aristotelian division of mythos, ethos, lexis, dianoia, opsos and melos.

3. Critical focus on Foregrounded Euphony in King Lear

A viewer response draws feedback from its effective staging. Thus, here the evaluation takes double line of the dramatic effect as displayed by the actors and actresses as well as the text it self. Thus, it is realized that in King Lear,

the sound effect as poetry and the dramatic presentation of the play adds to the value of its. A sincere viewer response thus corresponds to the repetition of the lexis 'disposition', 'endure' and 'foul fiend' spoken in different contexts. These words seem to be the tonal nucleus in the dialogues holding the theme. Mutually exclusive factors of these words constitute the strength of the protagonist in the play. An analysis of the three words are done below.

4. The Trait of Disposition

Many terms have been used lexically to describe what we mean by dispositions i.e. *syabha:vam*: 'ability', 'potency', 'capability', 'tendency', 'potentiality', 'proclivity', 'capacity', and so forth. Analyses of dispositions usually proceed on the assumption that, for any disposition, we can identify its stimulus conditions and manifestations. It is typically said that dispositions would exhibit their 'characteristic manifestations' under some 'stimulus conditions', the *va:sanas*. Philosophers find it useful to distinguish two sorts of dispositions, or alternatively, two ways of referring to dispositions. Conventional dispositions are typically expressed by such simple predicates as 'fragile', 'soluble', 'flammable', and so on, which include no explicit reference to their stimulus conditions and manifestations. It is the reflection on values, maximizing internal self, the natural qualities of a person's character, temperament, a tendency to behave in a particular way.

Reflection on 'disposition' of human self seems to be one of the key ideas in King Lear. It has been emphatically used in the play four times. Edmund, first of all says that the position, thought and action of human being are dispositioned 'by an enforced planetary influence' which seems to be 'a divine thrust' as he says: 'An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star'. (1.2.130-31). Owing to his bastard background, he claims, 'I am rough and lecherous'. (1.2.135). In his dialogues, the meaning of disposition is the manifestation of all the evil thoughts as reflected in his actions.

Then, Goneril in response to Lear's question: 'Are you our daughter?', replies: .. make use of that good wisdom and put away these dispositions that of late transform you from what rightly are. With this, Goneril makes it clear that the disposition of wisdom in reality is better than ego and emotion. Her use of 'disposition' implies a pragmatic and practical use of knowledge. On the third occasion, Goneril responds to Albany saying, 'Now, gods that we adore, where of comes this?' Goneril replies, 'Never afflict yourself to know the cause; But let his (the King) disposition have that scope that dotage gives it'. Here, the disposition takes the means of self experiential reality.

On the fourth incident, Albany says to Goneril, 'O Goneril! You are not worth the dust which the rude wind blows in your face. If ear your disposition'. Albany utterly rejects the activities of Goneril who exterminates herself from any rational thought that inflames the tragic intensity of Lear.

In the word 'disposition', the consonant prominence phonemes /d/, /s/, /p/, /z/ and /ʔ/ represent sharp and colder

moods altogether. This leads to a semantic interpretation of the natural tendencies of each individual to take on a certain position in any field. There is no strict determinism through one's dispositions or the choice of positions. On the four occasions, the two opposing conceptual meanings of 'disposition' have been clashed. The self reflective disposition in Edgar and Goneril are the antagonistic manifestations whereas the referential meanings of disposition for Lear are expressive of the right use of knowledge in pragmatic and experiential context. This logically makes us feel the presence of the two conflicted forces of good and evil in the play.

5. The Stoic Lear and Edgar

Another striking feature is noticed in the actions of both Lear and Edgar that they are stoics. They suffer pain or trouble in accordance with the highest perfection to which man could attain. It is clear that both Lear out of his misjudgement and Edgar due to his simplicity suffer. However, dramatically it is a way to display their heroism too. This is evident from their expressions. In an occasion, Lear intends to talk to Gloucester to cal Cornwall to know the cause of punishment to Kent as he says, '... we are not ourselves when nature, being oppress' d, commands the mind to suffer with the body: I'll forbear...'. Also Lear says, '... the tempest in mind doth from my senses take all feeling else save what beats ther'. '... No, I will weep no more.. pour on, I will endure.

Edgar says to Gloucester suffering blind injury, 'What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither; Ripenses is all : come on. This stoic nature of Lear is complemented by Kent at the death of Lear as he says, 'The wonder is, he hath endured so long. He but usurped his life'. In the utterance of this word, the vowel prominence of /l/, /j/, /u/, /?/ carry subtle emotional values. Forbearance or endurance of adversities at the cost of encountering spiritual crisis added to storm both internal and external proves the tow characters to be heroic.

6. The Exceptions Of The Drama Of Madness

Madness is the most impressive dramatic performance in the play justifying the implicit and metaphorical mode of disposition of the characters of Lear, Edgar and Fool. Really they discovered the 'fould fiend' among humans in madness. Thus, it projects three major personalities of the King, Edgar and Fool in three different ways. The performance of fool in pretension of being mad is wittiest whereas the utterances of both the Kind and Edgar as a bedlam beggar are astoundingly philosophical. It seems as if Shakespeare has fitted the texts of maxims of quality deliberately within the absurd texts of madness to make the discourse strategically meaningful and ideologically loaded. Edgar says, 'O, matter of impertinency mixed; Reason in madness'. In fact, there is no reason or coherence in both verbal and non verbal entities in madness. But, this happens to be one of the impressive dramatic performances in King Lear. Shakespeare has excelled in writing the language of madness. 'For much of the play, we watch as Lear loses his sanity because the injustice of his treatment and the resulting

emotional stress prove too much for him. In his madness, however, we see the beginnings of a new and wiser identity'. Edgar complements the insanity of the King but the dramatic importance of it remains intact as 'Shakespeare plays with the idea of real insanity and mock madness throughout the play' and this makes the euphonic effect stronger.

The language of madness in King Lear is systematically and outcome of a purgatorial infrection of gigantic souls of Lear and Edgar. After getting humiliated by the two daughters, the Kind admits that he is 'cut to the brains'. When he loses patience, he cries, 'Vegeance, plague, death, confusion!'. This is followed by another dialogue displaying his sense of humiliation and broken heart: 'Prithee, daughter, do not make me mad. I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell. The next moment, he lapses into suffocation as he says, 'I have a full cause of weeping; but heart shall break into a hundred thousand flaws.. I shall go mad'. He continues his reckless outburst of the preliminary symptoms of madness with a series of words with consonantal effects:

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads.
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch.
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous: caitiff to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
hast practised on man's life: close pentupguilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

The /k/, /t/, /d/, /m/ and /n/ prominence makes the dialogue aggressive, warner and clipped. The consonantal effect of 'concealing continets, and cry and 'sinn' d.. sinning'; the phonic clusters of consonants /gr/, /dr/, /tr/, /cr/, /pr/ express the graveness. The statement, 'I am a man...' is the prominent in the entire dialogue distinguishing Lear form his kingship and he hence forward turns to become a common man. The comparativity in the statement is tonally prominent as it is the self confession of Lear. Then, in the next dialogue, he seems to get confused and thus declares, 'My wits begin to turn.' This happens to be the turning point in this role. There is /t/ prominence there expressing the change of his mind. In the same dialogue he is transformed to be a philosopher by saying 'The art of our necessities are strange and can make vile things precious'. From a king to a man and then a mad man, the stages mark the development of his personality as his mind leads him from the state of ego to superego.

The staging of the storm scenes on the heath has high dramatic effect. The most profound storm exists in Lear's mind. The overall success of the scene, however, depends entirely upon Lear himself.

To quote Mulder, thematically 'Lear shouts at the storm, addressing the winds and rains almost as if they were human, both we and Lear recognize that a new view of

reality is appearing here. When in power and glory, Lear was accustomed to viewing life, nature and the consequences of cause-effect were as predictable, reasonable, and controllable. But, now things go beyond his royal egoism by over throwing him to a new reality quite ironically. Self-confession followed by experiencing irony makes him an ultimate stoic philosopher. What's more, dramatically, in the dialogues in Scene 4, his expressions reveal dichotomy of body and mind and the speeches give prominence to /p/, /b/, /t/, /m/, /n/ as he says:

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'ldst shun a bear;
But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,
Thou'ldst meet the bear i' the mouth.
When the mind's free,
The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there....O, that way madness lies;
let me shun that; No more of tha.

The dialogue seems to be partly incoherent semantically but, the two lines: 'But where the greater malady....' and '...the tempest in my mind doth from my....' are logically strengthening the stoic and cognitive state of the King. The words 'senses', and 'feeling' are linked to imagination which is in 'tempest' now which is the right metaphor for the state of madness.

Violence in nature internal matches with nature external and results in 'greater malady'. As a result, Lear declares that one loses the feelings through senses if mind is in tempest. The euphonics of madness enhances the pragmatic gravity of the play as it echoes his commitment to endurance rhetorically. It is evidential from the binary opposition of comparative degrees 'greater' and 'lesser' and the emphasis obtained in the use of 'scare' before the verb 'felt' and 'doth + take'.

Reflecting on eating dirty foods continuously reinforce the listeners' mind convey a subtle sense of the things that are connected together. Edgar, disguised as a bedlam beggar excels in speech as he says with /d/ prominence and repeats 'foul filed' echoing 'fair is foul' in Macbeth implying the gloomy atmosphere:

Edgar: Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the
toad, the todpole, the wall-newt and the water; that
in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages,
eats cow-dung for sallets, swallows the old rat and
the ditch-dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing
pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing and
stock punished and imprisoned; who hath had three
suits to his back, six shirts to his body.
Horse to ride, and weapon to wear,
But mice and rats, and such small deer,
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.
Beware my follower! Peace, Smulkin,
peace, thou fiend!

The consonant sound of /th/ is still dominating in the next dialogue with dog

imagery as he says:
Edgar: Tom will throw his head at them.
Avaunt, you curs.
Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite....

In the expressions of madness, there is compactness and illocutionary force. It can be marked from the following dialogue in couplet:

Edgar: When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind,
Leaving free things and happy show behind;
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
How light and portable my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the King bow.
He childed as I fathered. Tom, away.
Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,
In they just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the King!
Lurk, lurk.

The line 'He childed as I fathered' is lexical deviation but it has deeper meaning befitting to the dramatic background. It focuses on both Lear and Edgar as implicit characters. Factually, Lear was betrayed by his children and now, in madness, he behaves like a child; and at the same time, Edgar was ironically disbelieved by his father, but now, he is the support for him after he is blinded. The viewers succumb to the illusion of the play as reality only because of the texture of the play has a number of maxims bearing autonomy with independent sense relations with the viewers.

To quote Aristotle, 'No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness', which entails the idea that insanity is not a distinct and separate entity. There is a ring of truth, then, in the Fool's description of the world as a place where the 'upside-down' is normal. But the mystery remains regarding how everything that seems wrong can ultimately be right. It is noticed that in madness, both Lear and Edgar use denotative statements consisting of conceptual metaphors related to life in general. So, those statements are rather semantic metalanguage and can be taken as models of dialectic or discourse of madness. A close examination of the discourse feature of the dialogs in madness does not have single non-fluency features. So, it is evident that madness is the most important dramatic event and textually very vital in the play.

7. Conclusion

Earlier, King Lear has been discussed in many thematic and literary ways. In addition, some have given importance on the flaw or the tragic aspect of it. Some others focus on the theme of nothingness too. But, in our estimation, the seed of the dramatic thought as evidenced in viewership

appreciation construes on a logical relationship among 'disposition', 'endurance' and 'foul-fiend' which can be presented in an equation that personal bial (i.e. Lear's daughters) plus evil (the role of Edmund) effects in madness (Lear, Edgar and Fool) which constitutes the reresultant epistemic (metaphysical morality), existentialist

(nothingness) and stoic (endurance) features of normative approach of philosophy in the pretext of madness. The traditional interpretations of genre of kind Lear as a tragedy is a concept of Elizabethan Period but in fact euphony as an important part of drama proves it to be a drama with verbal gravity of deeper wisdom.

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