

The Story of the Struggle Between Human Life and Destiny – Vasant Vijay

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the profound spiritual and philosophical evolution of the prominent Gujarati poet and scholar, Mani Shankar Ratnaji Bhatt, widely known by his pen name "Kant." Born in Chavand near Lathi, Kant's life and work were deeply characterized by a relentless pursuit of truth, affection, and beauty. Driven by an authentic desire to understand existence, he openly doubted conventional religious doctrines, questioning the presence and compassion of God in the face of worldly inequality and injustice. His skepticism was not a rejection of faith, but a refusal to accept traditional dogmas without experiential validation. This profound inner struggle was further complicated by deep personal tragedy, notably the untimely death of his ten-year-old son, Pranalal, which led him to abandon his beloved sitar. Through his close literary and personal associations with contemporary luminaries like Balwantrai Thakor, Nanalal, Ramanbhai, Tribhuvandas, and Kalapi, Kant continuously engaged with the core elements of his poetic temperament. Ultimately, his sincere and experiential questioning culminated in a rare spiritual realization—an authentic vision that transformed him into a true believer. This paper highlights how his turbulent inner life and eventual spiritual awakening are mirrored organically within his poetry, flowing as naturally as water from the sky.

Keywords: *Poet Kant, Spiritual Realization, Religious Skepticism, Experiential Truth, Gujarati Literature, Poetic Temperament, Personal Tragedy, Divine Compassion*

Generally, a person accepts that human life is dependent on God and gradually trains the mind to believe in this dependence. There are also some individuals who possess a firm conviction about God from the very beginning, without any doubt. However, many ordinary people accept such beliefs superficially, without real experience or inner realization.

The poet's doubt about the existence of God—and if He exists, whether He is compassionate—arises from a deep desire to know the truth. He refuses to accept conventional doctrines merely because they are followed by tradition. Observing inequality and injustice in the world, the poet questions God sincerely and strives to discover truth through experience. Ultimately, he attains a rare spiritual realization—an authentic vision experienced with sincerity—after which he becomes a true believer. Kant refers to Mani Shankar Ratnaji Bhatt. He was born in Chavand near Lathi. He was an avid scholar and a deeply religious man. He was fond of music but gave up playing the sitar after the tragic death of his ten-year-old son, Pranalal. He had close friendships with Balwantrai Thakor, Nanalal, Ramanbhai, Tribhuvandas, and Kalapi. The

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desire for truth, affection, and beauty were central elements of his poetic temperament. His inner life is reflected in his poetry like water flowing from the sky.

Kant's poetic personality reveals him as a seeker of truth. He developed and popularized the poetic form known as Khandkavya, which stands between lyrical and narrative poetry. He wrote poems such as Rama, Mrigatrishna, Ati-jnana, Vasantvijay, Chakravakamithun, and Devayani. His poetry demonstrates excellence in object description, character portrayal, variety of meters, and structural organization of beginnings and endings. He wrote Vasantvijay at the age of twenty-two and composed other poems dealing with the tragic contradictions of life by the age of twenty-four. At such a young age, he had observed life more deeply than many contemporary poets.

Kant was deeply compassionate, especially toward animals. This compassion often caused intense emotional agitation within him. The depiction of the deer in Mrigatrishna reflects his tender sensitivity. In Ati Gyan, he portrays the unbearable condition of Sahadeva with personal intensity. In Chakravakamithun, the fear of separation and the emotional pain are narrated so vividly that it seems as though the poet himself has experienced them.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN HUMAN LIFE AND DESTINY IN VASANTVIJAY

The poem begins in the last watch of the night and concludes before sunset. Within this span of time, the poet unfolds a profound inner drama. The theme revolves around life as penance and the question of whether life should be long or short. Pandu awakens from a nightmare. Madri asks him to sleep again, as dawn has not yet arrived. Through subtle suggestion, Kant conveys deep emotional undercurrents. Madri also awakens—perhaps stirred by some inner emotion, or perhaps disturbed by a dream of her own. Though the poet does not explicitly state this, he creates an atmosphere of suggestion. Madri's life itself is like a dark night; the external darkness symbolizes her inner condition. Pandu appears broken, disturbed, restless, and dissatisfied. He has not experienced peaceful sleep. His responses to Madri reveal excitement, sadness, anxiety, and an attempt to conceal his turmoil. The repetition of “not, not” and his questioning tone reveal deep unrest. Sleep eludes him, and the urge to wander arises from within. His inner agitation and confusion cannot remain hidden.

Heroism requires not only physical strength but also spiritual courage. Enthusiasm and perseverance are essential weapons of a hero. However, in Pandu, such enthusiasm appears weakened. His mind is filled with unrest. Pleasant memories of the past intensify the pain of the present. He experiences a heartbreaking inner conflict. Throughout the poem, a cycle of emotions surrounds Pandu—sleep, dreams, numbness, sadness, logic, anxiety, inertia, doubt, labor, memory, restlessness, infatuation, pity, shame, passion, and madness. These emotions arise one after another. The open land, silent atmosphere, cold wind, and surrounding sounds further intensify his mental agitation. When morning arrives, Pandu declares it is time to bathe. However, even the ritual bath, which should bring peace, creates further disturbance. These conflicting emotions weaken his yogic detachment and inner peace. Whether we consider enthusiasm or peace as his dominant trait, both seem to disappear in this turmoil. After returning to the ashram, Pandu eats and rests briefly, having slept poorly. Later, he goes again into the forest. The cold wind feels painful. Returning to another cottage, he finds Madri alone; Kunti has gone out. The suppressed desire within him grows stronger upon seeing Madri. She is wearing a light veil, and despite living in the forest, her beauty remains radiant.

Pandu struggles intensely within himself. On one side stands the life of penance; on the other, the awakening of desire. Though aware of the sage's curse, he cannot control himself. Madri,

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bound by devotion and obedience, cannot refuse him. As they wander through the forest, it seems as if their former royal life has returned. Spring has spread everywhere. Nature is intoxicated with beauty. Blossoming flowers, gentle wind, the sweet song of the cuckoo—everything stimulates passion. The description of Maltimandap is particularly beautiful. The wind sways gently; flowers bloom in abundance; the atmosphere resembles heaven. Scene after scene moves the heart.

While the universe rejoices, turmoil reigns in Pandu's heart. Music fills the air with joy, yet it deepens his attraction toward Madri. He attempts self-control but fails. Madri sings sweetly, intensifying the emotional atmosphere. Pandu addresses her as "Sakhi," "Devi," and "Vhali"—friend, goddess, beloved. He seeks liberation from his suffering through her love. Overcome by passion, he loses control. Madri too, unable to witness his suffering, surrenders to destiny. Forgetting the curse, she embraces him. Pandu, inspired by nature's beauty, succumbs to desire despite knowing it will lead to death.

The uniqueness of Kant's Khandkavya lies in portraying characters who struggle against destiny rather than surrendering helplessly. Pandu defies fate, though aware of its consequences. The cry "No Nath!" heard at the beginning cannot prevent the tragic end. The poem portrays the victory of emotion—Pandu's victory—symbolized by spring. It is a triumph of human impulse against destiny. This struggle echoes throughout the Mahabharata lineage. Parashara was awakened by Matsyagandha (later Satyawati). Shantanu married Satyawati despite earlier vows. Vichitravirya died young due to excessive indulgence. Sage Kindama himself succumbed to desire. Pandu seems like an incarnation of this recurring weakness. Though aware that indulgence would bring death, he cannot control himself.

Kant's poetry employs meters such as Shikharini, Stragdhara, Anushtup, and Vasantilaka, enriched with poetic devices. The word "Nrip" is frequently used for Pandu, but at the end, Kant uses "Narendrabhuj," suggesting transformation. Madri's lament—"Hai! Hai! Nahi Nath!"—reflects inevitable tragedy. Pandu is ready to sacrifice everything for love.

As Shri Chandrakant Sheth observes, the poem beautifully depicts the confusion arising when good and bad intentions conflict, the repeated resolutions and failures of the mind, and how, despite understanding right and wrong, a person ultimately succumbs to weakness. The poet skillfully portrays this psychological struggle. Remarkably, the poem does not explicitly depict Pandu's death. Instead, it presents the symbolic victory of Pandu—Vasant (spring)—suggesting the triumph of human emotion. Pandu's righteousness is evident throughout the work, though his virtues appear overshadowed by his weakness.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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