

Metaphors and Symbols in Agiram Drama

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Abstract: Strictly speaking, the Agiram (阿吉拉姆) drama is blue mask drama, which is divided into three parts, namely “Dun” (“顿”(opening act)) , “Xiong” (“雄”(formal performance)) and “Tashi” (“扎西”(auspicious)) . By analyzing various kinds of metaphors in these three parts, the article explains the symbolic system constructed by Agiram drama.

Keywords: Agiram; Azimuth metaphor; Physical metaphor; Structural metaphor; Symbolic system

In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is not just an analogy, but represents people's thinking patterns, including azimuth metaphor, physical metaphor, and structural metaphor. Metaphor and symbol are closely related, but to be exact, symbols are often related to abstract concept, rationality, and collective consciousness, while metaphor is closely related to specific images, sensibility, relevance, etc.

1. Azimuth Metaphors in Agiram Drama

Azimuth metaphor is about spatial direction, so also called spatial metaphor, namely a concept or material as “up” or “down”, “before” or “after”, “deep” or “shallow”, these orientation are based on our body and their roles in the physical environment. Observing from the body and sense, we present a positive state when we are healthy. It is for the “up”. Our state is negative, and the spirit is depressed when we get sick or death. It is for the “down”.

1.1 Metaphor for Three Fixed Characters

The fixed roles appear in the opening “Dun”, respectively “温巴” (hunter or fisherman), “甲鲁” (elder), “拉姆” (fairy).

“温巴”, as a fixed character in the opening of Agiram drama, has been the first to appear with cleaning field. In the 《诺桑王子》, a fisherman (温巴), saving dragon god and eradicating the spell, is also “to clean the yard”. There are original sentence as evidence: “fisherman stares and says angrily to wizard: you dare to fight against the Buddhist Dharma and disturb the kindness of the king and i will destroy your evil root!”^[1]

“甲鲁” is the responsibility of welcoming the god and blessing. In the 《诺桑王子》, the elder as a celestial being and appeared. He tells the fisherman that there are the gods downing the world to bath at the first day of luck of the month, and he take the fisherman to welcome the gods to the earth in the auspicious day of the month. According to the original sentence: “With his right hand holding high the herb and with the mirror in his left hand, said: Om hum, praying to the ten Buddhas... Today is an auspicious day, please come down to the earth to play in this happy holy land.”^[2]

“拉姆” gives people a kind of aesthetic pleasure and enjoyment. There is the original sentence as proof: “Suddenly, all the goddesses come to earth like snow flakes, and they come to the holy land of happiness, playing music, enjoying the bath water... Unconsciously the sun set, it is evening, the fairies finish bathing and fly to the sky. After that, the fisherman and the big fairy also bath in the bath of spring that goddesses sprinkled nectar in.”^[3] The fisherman and the old man bathe in the water where the goddess has bathed, which means bathing in the blessing of the fairies. In addition, the play of goddess, for mortals, is also a kind of pleasure and enjoyment.

The state or purpose of the three characters is an upward trend and attitude, and it can be concluded that the three roles are “up” in spatial orientation.

1.2 Metaphor for story Characters

Throughout eight Tibetan traditional operas, there are some common characters in the play: ① Prince; ② Lover of the prince; ③ king; ④ Evil queen; ⑤ Servant and handmaid; ⑥ Religious believer; ⑦ Hero's helper.

Existence of the king explains a complete form of society in the field of the story, such as the state, tribe, family, and so on.^[4] But such a king, symbolizing social form and power, in plays, most of them exists in a cruel, violent, wavering and incompetent character. It can be seen that the king is the power to be overthrown at any time or the social law to be reformed on another level. 2) The prince is the embodiment of bravery and good fighting and the bearer of the reformed power. 3) The demon queen is the extension and subsidiary of the decadent rights, and they are all punished without exception, which also means that when the decadent power is overthrown, subordinate people are difficult to protect themselves. Similarly, courtiers and maidservants are also the types of villains, who are also an extension of decadent power. 4) Monks and nuns also often appear as villains. Their existence represents the religion behind them. As religious believers, instead of following the teachings, they repeatedly frame others, which is not difficult to cause people's reflection and remind people to believe in religion rationally. 5) There must be no shortage of people to help the prince openly and secretly, and the existence of such people also reminds us that we will not be alone on the road to justice, and we will never miss like-minded people.

Through the above roles, we find that the characters are good or evil, and the good side corresponds to "up", evil side corresponding to "down". Thus, in the drama, the king, demon, servant maid, monks and nuns mean "down"; and the hero such as the prince, prince lover corresponds to the "up" position in the spatial orientation.

2. Physical Metaphors in Agiram Drama

Physical metaphor is a way of mapping abstract concepts to entities or material things related to our own experience, turning abstract, vague thoughts, feelings, psychology, and so on into tangible entities.

In Agiram drama, the most distinctive feature is performance with masks, which has a wide variety of masks and rich colors, representing different characters.

2.1 Metaphor for Yellow Masks

Yellow: metaphor auspicious, merit. Religion occupies a very important position in Tibet, and pilgrims to come from a far can always be seen in front of the 大昭 Temple. The Buddha's color is yellow, and Buddha's clothes, religious supplies are all yellow. Apart from religion, the land where people live is also yellow. The land has nurtured generations of Tibetan people, so yellow exists as an auspicious color and a merit color in Tibetan opera.

2.2 Metaphor for White Masks

White: a metaphor for purity and kindness. In Tibet, the white snow on the top of the mountain does not melt all year round, and white sheep can be seen everywhere on the grassland. People drink white milk, ghee, and wear clothes made of sheep in white color. White is the color to maintain the lives of the majority of Tibetan people. So, it is an extremely important color and auspicious symbol.

2.3 Metaphor for Red Masks

Red: a metaphor for power, for majesty. The Potala Palace, a landmark building in Lhasa, Tibet, is composed of the White House and the Red Palace. The Red Palace is located at the top and is the palace where the emperor of the Tubo Dynasty exercises power, representing power and status. Therefore, in Tibetan drama, kings usually wear red masks.

2.4 Metaphor for Green Masks

Green: a metaphor for wisdom, for softness. It comes from the Green Tara and Princess Wen Cheng. It is said that Tara is changed by the tears of Guanyin Bodhisattva, so Tara is the God of compassion. Green Tara can eliminate the troubles of all living beings and meet the wishes of them. The posture of Buddha foot stepping on the lotus means being ready to go down the lotus pond to save the sentient beings suffering.

3. Structural Metaphors in Agiram Drama

Structural metaphor refers to the construction of another more abstract and vague concept based on a concept with a clear structure and clear boundaries.

3.1 Fairy-tale Mode

First of all, As being to concept, fairy tales, folk tales and similar fantasy stories have blurred understanding, especially regarding the understanding and use of the name are still not unified. Fairy tales as fantasy stories, originating from folk stories and fairy tales and the link between myths and folk stories, still need to make further understood. In the case of some important literature, Like "Folktale", "Magic tale", "Fantastic tale", "Fairy tale" in Prop's "Morphology of the Folktale", the same names are all used at the same time.^[5] The story of Agiram drama is similar to the fairy tales. These stories were gradually formed during the development of the Tibetan culture and history. They are the crystallization of the wisdom of the Tibetan ethnic compatriots.

Secondly, the characters in fairy tales are basically kings, princes, princesses, man-eating demons, old witches, old fairies, etc. They all create mysterious and magical colors through rich characters attract readers, especially children. The characters in Agiram drama have the same features.

Third, the story is not only in the world but in hell, and the text is full of metaphor, personification, symbol. Fairy tale links fantasy and reality through deep and keen insight to reflect the true part of social reality. Traditional Tibetan plays are just like fairy tales, filled with metaphors. These plays symbolize the shared perceptions and ideas of native people through metaphors.

Finally, "fairy tales are like salons. The boat crosses us through a world of common and eternal, sacred and secular; a world of past and future; a world where good and evil conflict, but truth, good and beauty are doomed to victory."^[6] The endings of Agiram drama are also perfect, such as positive characters get victory and villains are punished, which is to convey the theme and to make children believe in the power of justice; Agiram drama is in the consistent endings conveying Tibetan national optimism, positive outlook on life.

3.2 Entertainment God Ceremony

The full Agiram play is a metaphor for a grand ceremony of entertainment. Agiram performance is divided into three parts, namely "Dun", "Xiong" and "Tashi", and these three parts are fixed process. Also, "Dun" is divided into "温巴萨迦" (dispel evil), "甲鲁晋拜" (bless), and "拉姆鲁嘎" (songs and dances), they are three metaphors for exorcism, welcoming blessing, and a world full of kind and beauty respectively.

In other words, these three parts also mean welcoming God, celebrating with God and sending God, like a whole ceremony of entertaining God. This "tacit" understanding is not accumulated through years of experience, but supported by the common culture and cognition.

4. From Metaphor to Symbolism

4.1 Virtues

It is believed that 唐东杰布 is the originator of Tibetan opera. It is said that he invited seven sisters who can sing and dance to rehearse plays. From then on, Tibet has the first troupe. In order to commemorate the virtues of 唐东杰布, a table will be placed in the middle of the venue to set up his painting during the performance. In the opening lyrics of the play, the name of him also appears frequently. Therefore, to a certain extent, the performance of drama carries the contributions that he was to the people's livelihood in Tibet, and symbolizes the memory and praise of his achievements.

4.2 Rule

Throughout the plays of this drama, the characters reflect a kind or evil side; the colors of masks also have their own metaphors; the fairy tale ending tells us that the good returns the good and the evil returns the evil result. In general, these metaphors illustrate the order and harmony of the world. Tibetans express their world view intentionally or unintentionally through traditional Tibetan opera.

4.3 Expectation

From the memory and praise of 唐东杰布's achievements in the past, to people's expression and expectation of the normal order of the world, they all show the Tibetan nation's view of stability and quiet state to the world, which is also the most sincere wish for a better life.

5. Epilogue

Based on traditional Tibetan drama, the paper analyzes Agiram drama from the relevant theories of metaphor and symbol, and analyzes the various azimuth metaphors, physical metaphors and structural metaphors in plays, involving the characters, masks, plots and programs of drama. Further, the author explains the symbolic system constructed by this drama, namely the world outlook and values of the local people combining merit, order and prayer.

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