

REALITY OF LIFE AND THE IRRATIONAL SENSE OF SACRIFICE YAYATI & BALI (FROM AN ANCIENT JAIN EPIC)

Kuldip Sharma

Research Scholar, Jaipur National University, Jaipur, Ashok Vihar Colony Gurudwara Road, Dholpur, India

Received: 24 Jul 2018

Accepted: 28 Aug 2018

Published: 04 Aug 2018

ABSTRACT

Yayati is a play which is telling the story of a king who spoils the life of his own son to maintaining his young age as per his curse given by Sukracharya. He realized it very late that he was wrong in doing so because he must have taken the responsibility of his son. On the other hand, Bali is an attack on the Hindu rituals of sacrificing animals and birds to appease Gods and Goddesses. It is important to dive into these two matters as per the preceding texts. These two issues are very relevant for the society for reformation at the level of an individual or at the level of masses.

KEYWORDS: *Sanjivni Vidya, Sukracharya, Bali, Bertolt Brecht, Mahatma Gandhi, Non – Violence*

INTRODUCTION

It is a common practice the people give reference to the Mimetic theory given by Aristotle to understand the value of drama. Aristotle was prominent in showing that Catharsis is the real function of drama. In the post-colonial time, this theory has been replaced by the Epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht which is anti-cathartic. According to this new theory, the only purpose of the play is not to generate pity and fear but to tell the audience cause and effect.

Influenced by the Brechtian theatre, Karnard used the techniques of drama to create the same effect which this theory proposes where the spectator gets to know the pros and cons or effects and results. He uses the myths create an impact on the modern era.

His plays Yayati and Hayavadana are the major works which are based on the philosophy of this German playwright Bertold Brecht. Thus the Aristotelian concept of dramaturgy is opposed and a new concept is given.

The Greek philosopher and theoretician Aristotle popularized the concept of dramaturgy. His theories remained unchallenged till Brecht. According to him tragedy is a more refined than epic. According to him, “tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself..... in a dramatic not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.”(Malcolm 7)

Bertolt was not in favor of catharsis and empathy and he favored ‘Alineation Effect’. He went in the past to excavate the concept of this and where he expects the reader to deeply scrutinize the details of the play; this is called Epic Theatre. The elements of pity and fear are replaced with a readiness to help and an eagerness to know causality respectively. Karnad was influenced by certain important aspects of Brechtian theory such as „alienation effect“, „interruptive devices“, „complex seeing“ and „anti-cathartic effect“ but discovered them in his own theatrical tradition”.(Tandon 19)

Girish Karnard has modernized the themes of his plays and a lot of critics identify this quality of his plays where the real enactment makes a drama complete. R.K Dhawan opines “it is a well-known fact that the real success of a play can be tested on stage. A playwright needs a living theatre to put his work on the acid test, evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his performance.” (Dhawan 13)

Karnard watches his audience commenting and analyzing the details of the play.

He took the theme of Yayoi from an episode of The Mahabharata and gives it such a modernized angle which appeals to the contemporary audience. It is a drama based on the major theme of the responsibility. It was the episode of ‘Adiparva’. Where an age old story of an old-age fellow who usurps the youth of his own son for his young age.

This play has been written under the influence of Sartre and Camus following the theme of existentialism. Puru the son of Sharmistha’s son offered his young age for the sake of his father’s vitality. This leads the father towards a dissatisfied life and at the end of the play he left the throne and went to the forest with Devayani and Sharmistha. It became a moral burden on him as he ruined the life of his own son who got married recently. He went to the forest to pay penance.

All the plays of Karnard can be divided into two parts Myth and History plays. In *Nagamandala*, *Yayati*, *Hayavadana* and *The Fire and the Rain* there is a predominance of mythical aspect. In *Tale-Danda* and *Tughlaq*, we find a predominant historical structure.

The Mahabharat is known as such a great detail which carries out all the aspects of life. It is a great epic to make human beings understand life.

In Hindi Amrish, Puri played the major role of Yayati. In this play, the king Yayati got married with the daughter Devayani who is the daughter of Sukracharya and later Sharmistha too. Getting married with Sharmistha creates the problem. Sukracharya gave the curse to Yayati of the senility and decrepitude for this because own daughter was suffering. The condition was given that if someone would be ready for taking this curse than Yayati would live always young. The king Yayati was a lusty man and he wanted his young age again. His youngest son Puru became prey for it. After this he becomes young for forever and for thousand years he enjoyed his lecherous life and then got fed up with this realization that he did wrong by sacrificing the life of Puru. Now only the king realized that there is no end of desires and they don’t diminish thought fulfilled many times. After a lot of symbolic realization, he reached this conclusion. The theme of the play is human relations which are suffering in the modern time too as it was in the past time in certain cases. The sensuous and worldly pleasures are capturing the human mind with a lot of complexities. In the present time, man is not able to make his identity.

The modern man is similar to Yayati in approach in life. People to become over-ambitious in life become restless and discontented. Rabindranath has also written a play on Kacha and Devyani. This episode has been taken into account for writing and making the thoughts travel through generations.

The main cause of the trouble is that people have grown up irreligious and they have a weak faith system. They don’t believe in Gods and Goddess. All the sufferings are because of this and all sufferings are tests coined by the God to put the human beings on the right track. It is the duty of the human being to set their ego aside and become submissive. With this attitude, the divine grace will descend upon them.

The Sanjeevni Vidhya is popular enough in the myths, and Gods and Rakshasas have been fighting for this with each other. Men want to get the same power to become immortal but the meaning of eternity has not been understood by them. Sue to this they fail several times in the quest of achieving immortality.

The play is of four acts; in the beginning, Puru returned with his wife Chित्रलेखा after marriage. The palace was decorated and the chamber of his mother was opened on his demand and it was decorated. Swarnalatha is found complaining Devayani against Sharmishtha. Swarnalata is defending Sharmishtha while complaining because she does not respect Devayani as her marriage with Yayati took place because her father was Shukracharya who can bless the king with the boon of immortality.

The play is full of women characters Devayani, her maid and friend Sharmistha and Swarnalatha including Chित्रलेखा. Only two male characters are there Yayati and Puru.

The status of the women is expressed at the beginning of the play. A Sutradhar comes at the stage with a female character with tied up hands. This character is not able to speak. This shows the mute life of females in the society. "Sutradhara. He comes on the stage followed by female Sutradhara with her hand and tied with a rope. She does not speak. It is only the male Sutradhara who narrates. A clue has been given about the theme of the play. (Yayti 3)

This character represents the condition of Devyani in the play. She gets married to the King and her friend gets jealous out of this. Sharmistha was her friend from childhood and both wanted to get power in the male-dominated world. In jealousy, they become the arch enemy of each other and in one scene Devyani was about to fall in the well and saved by Yayati. The conversation between Yayati and sharmishtha goes on:

YAYATI: Don't be stupid, Sharmishtha. You pushed Devayani into a well. And now you are plunging down a crueler abyss.

SHARMISHTHA: But you turned up in time to pull her out. I am a barbarian. My arms have thorns. (She is about to drink the contents of the vial when Yayati jumps forward and grabs her right hand.)

YAYATI: Drop it, Sharmishtha. Instantly

The king is caught between the responsibilities of two women. He was a lecherous man and he himself confessed it. He was highly fascinated for women and due to which he faced trouble. The significance of physical pleasure was reflected in his words. Karnard targets the class, caste, and race feud in the play.

Talking about the race, Yayati is kshatriya, Puru is the msiture of Kshatriya and Rakshasa; the father Yayti and mother Sharmistha from Rakshasa. Devayani was Aryan Brahmins. Sharmistha is the representative of uncivilized, plain, strong, revengeful and chaotic; Devyani is the representative of cleverness and power.

Devyani always made her friend Sharmistha feel good as never made any difference between the Sur and Asur. Neither Devyani told Sharmistha to leave the palace in the beginning nor Yayti and the problem was precipitated by this. Living in the palace, she became very close to the king and Devyani could not do anything. Later stage, Devayani told her to leave the palace but the king Yayati stops her.

Puru became the victim of his father. This news was given to the wife of Puru by Swarnalatha that her husband has accepted to take the curse of his father and he was to turn old. At this information, Chitrlekha was stunned but went in the stance where she declared her husband a great man. She is absolutely stunned but takes courage to say:

Chitrlekha: Cry? Why should I cry? I should laugh. I should cheer... except that I have been so unfair to him. So cruelly unjust. I thought he was an ordinary man. What a fool I have been! How utterly blind! I am the chosen one and I... Which other woman has been so blessed? Why should I shed tears? (Yayati 55-56)

Moreover, she starts imagining that her husband has got the curse at the right time otherwise after marriage he would be suffering. Puru tried to take the support of his wife and she gave it. Her wife was able to handle it at the early stage but when she finds the old man face of her husband then she realizes that she is facing a great problem. She starts feeling low as she is not capable to help her husband to come out of this curse.

Puru tells her that she is going to hear the name of her husband in the annals of history as per his great sacrifice for the sake of his father. She shows resentment against it and then she was ordered her as an authority to bear the situation. She is still adamant and asks for understanding her pain as a newlywed girl. Chitrlekha dies and Puru realizes her mistake. It is a very significant episode where all the women are shown subjugated before the odd decisions of the males.

In the other play *Bali: the sacrifice* was written by Karnard, again the ritual of Bali in Hindu religion is presented. It is based on the myth of "cock of Dough" which he came across in his young age.

The play works against the ritual of sacrificing animals or birds to propitiate gods and goddesses. In this way, some of the critics take this play as the tribute to Mahatma Gandhi because he also supported the idea of non-violence. In the play, Buddhism and Jainism are against the Brahmanism.

Karnard wants to make people feel that they are living a dull life and are totally dissatisfied because of hollowness in life. They are living a barren life. *Bali* is not focusing on more than one issue as the other plays are doing. It works upon the issue of wrong rituals. The plot of the play has been taken from the 17th -century work *Yashodhara Charitra*. It is the English translation of the play *Hitting Hunja* written in 1980 by Karnard.

The dominating idea of the play is non-violence and the curtain rises with the song of the queen.

This song is about the tussle between the two forces one is violence and other non-violence. This play has four characters the king, the queen, the mahout and the queen mother. The king and the queen are facing a problem since their marriage they were childless. It was a matter of worry because they want heir for their kingdom. The queen Amritamtai goes for the option of adultery and finds herself in the arms of dirty Mahot. She later refuses to do this. The queen was not aware of his presence in the temple. He makes the sounds of lovemaking to make unwanted people run away from there.

B. V. Karanth's words deserve mention here: In this play, man-woman relationship is of great importance. Man-woman relation as mother and son, as husband and wife, but above all as a man and a woman. (Pandey 1)

The king suffered a lot knowing that her queen was with an elephant keeper Mahout. This incident became public.

This pain is described in the following way.

Woe betide the times

Where the king sits alone

Outside on the steps

Racked by sighs

While the queen is trapped

In her lover's thighs.

(Bali 74)

The king hears the voices of Mahout in the temple and findshimself helpless; he runs from there and reaches in the other part of the garden where his mother has been praying her god; the king says that why he is in such a state where he is feeling incapable of doing anything though he is an authority. The queen is not at all at guilt for involving with the Mahout as it was not planned at all. She does not like the wagging tongue against her as being a childless lady. She is now pregnant and the whole kingdom is rejoiced listening to this.

The queen tries to give some money to leave that place and the king also tries to make him go away from that place. Mahout is not ready to go away from there as he is the man of honor he insults the king by saying that kingdoms are run by the people like him otherwise kingdom cannot survive.

Mahout speaks against the king: People mock at mahouts. Call us 'low-born'. But where would all your princes and kings be without us, I want to know. What would happen to their elephants? No elephants. No army. No pomp and splendor. No processions. No kings! Ha! (Bali 80)

On her pregnant status, the mother queen offered a suggestion to given sacrifice for saving the life of newborn, king, and queen. The queen was not ready to do it because she was the follower of Jainism and she was not at all in favor of any of such rituals. She rejected the wish of the mother queen. The king took the decision that a cock made of dough can be sacrificed to escape the bloodshed. It was a very common thing that a husband was oscillating between his mother and wife. Even to please his wife, he adopted Jainism. His wife, the queen accused him of betraying his religion for the sake of loving a woman.

It was clear in the vision of Mahatma Gandhi that nonviolence was extremely important in the growth of the country. Violence has been the hot topic of discussion in the history of this country. The Vedic violence was objected several times to the animals were sacrificed to appease Gods and Goddesses. Jain came against this and later Buddhism was with them. The Hindu religion people changed their way of doing it by making the dough of animals for this rituals but the Jain and Buddhist was against this also because it was a kind of replacement of bloodshed with the intention of it and such intentions were also wrong.

Karnard gives the details that: *Thus the priests had merely replaced actual violence with violence in intention, which, said the Jains, was no less dehumanizing. This argument gave the debate a much more complex ethical twist. The Jain position raises the question: if intended violence condemns one as surely as actual violence, that is, if one is morally*

is responsible for merely intending to commit an act one has not actually carried out in real life, is one not shutting oneself up in a solipsistic world, a bleak, guilt-ridden existence with no hope of absolution? (Karnad 69-70)

The marriage of the king was actually against the will of the mother queen because the girl was Jain and that was against the tradition of their religion. In the result, the mother queen and the queen both were at clash all the times.

In the matter of sacrifice, the queen agreed for the sacrifice of the dough cock but later refuses to participate in the ritual. In the end, the queen participates but she felt that the actual live cock was sacrificed and she found bloodshed as per her hallucination due to obsession. At the end of the play, she admitted the sin of adultery and the meaning of sacrifice. The knife which was brought for the sacrifice of the cock, she died falling on the same one and she became the real sacrifice. Aparna Dharwadker says: Karnad has shown us how the matter of the myth and legend resonates in modern experience... and how the past history of the nation prefigures its present. (Dharwadker 87)

The scene of sacrifice is very intense and worth mentioning telling the human deficiency and traumatic conditions:

QUEEN: Cluck... Cluck...Have some.

KING: Have you gone mad? It isn't alive! Its dough—

QUEEN (ignoring him): Come, Cuckoo... Have shum...

KING: I said stop it—Look!

(He picks up the dough and squashes it into a mass.)

It's dough. Plain and simple! Dough.

(The Queen looks up at him in sudden hatred, picks up the sword and lunges at him to stab him. She freezes. She stares at the sword in her hand, horrified. A cock crows outside. That takes the King by surprise. He turns to the door. Suddenly, she presses the point of the blade on her womb and impales herself on the sword. Collapses into his arms. The king holds her, uncomprehending, listening to the cock's crowing. It's dawn.

The queen is lit by a beam. She stands up and they both sing.)

(Bali 124)

Karnad is the first Indian dramatist to reflect really typical Indian characteristic in his plays, as he has consciously resisted the influence of the western theatre, which fails to take cognizance of the Indian milieu in its entirety. (Dhanavel 98)

Presenting the myths where the man and God coexist is a bit rare in the present world because it is marked by realism where such things have not placed. An author like Karnad has opted for this rare option and recalls the old hidden and ignored myths. He has revived many old myths through his works about which people have no idea. Myths represent the basics of life like talking about absurdity, dreams, sacrifice, jealousy, and desires.

The reality of life is the gratification of senses which is the most important part of life. This is called Id in the language of Sigmund Freud. Yayati is representing ID in the best manner. Psychosexual and Oedipus complex are two things which are important theories. Freud says that the purpose of life is decided by the pleasure principle. This is called

Id. The Id of the king was more powerful than the Ego or Super Ego.

The aim of Sharmistha was to get close to the king and she has had an argument with almost all the people in the palace and she becomes the talk of the palace. The king noticed her and her argument with the queen made her very close to him. The argument proves troublesome for the queen and beneficial for Sharmistha.

Thinking about the strategy party of Sharmistha, it is great to notice that she has prepared a very clear aim in life to get involved with the king and she does it purposefully and she has been following this plan for a longer period and completes her mission successfully. For doing it she creates a serious problem for all others. It has been proved in the world that if you have a clear goal in life one can achieve it sooner or later. So, the clarity of goals is always recommended. The king represents Id, Sharmistha Ego, and Deviyani Super Ego.

It is worth mentioning that Karnard revives the old tales and myths which are not very popular or widespread. He relates the issue of the past to the issues of the present. The fundamental of life is same whether it is past or present. He believes in this concept and finds a great similarity between the past and present; even one can predict the future also.

To elaborate it more, it is like no one likes hypocrisy, corruption, duplicity, treachery, and violence. The shortcomings at the level of society and individual are shown with the acts and their results. Ultimately it is great to see the humanitarian approach of Karnard who is writing for the betterment of an individual in the society. This kind of global approach is always appreciated and welcomed by the people.

The approach of an existentialist is damn visible in his writings. The search for identity is an endless quest and most of the human beings end it with the confusion of deeming that they possess only one identity. The sense of responsibility is deeply penetrated by the author in Yayati.

It talks about the problem of patriarchy in the Indian society. The characters like Chitrlekha and Deviyani show rejection of patriarchy but they are made the victims of it forcefully by the name of sacrifice or traditions.

The relationship between the mother and son has also been presented in the play where the son is found bound by the moral obligations. He is not able to disobey his mother though the mother is following the old practices which have been running under the influence of outdated traditions and rituals. The relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter in law is also depicted as it has always been full of controversy. In the present time, the same relation is a problem because of the difference in the ideologies. The problem persists as it is in the present time. People have made fund such situations a lot of movies are also having the same theme. For instance, in Hollywood, there is a movie "Monster-in-law" which is sarcastically calling the mother –in- law, monster- in- law.

The focus on the extramarital relation puts a question mark on having and maintaining only one sexual partner. People are there who are involving with many girls secretly and they are treated as reputed one because their relations have not been exposed. Those who openly go for such option are always condemned. Now it is a question that a person can live with only on the physical partner or not. Since ages, there have been Gods who have been more than one relation and they are adored by the millions of people without any objection. Moreover, those who are powerful are never objected to by anyone having such involvements. It is a matter of discussion that is it possible to live with one partner only throughout the life or it is the biological implications which make a person pray to multiple relations.

It is noticed that Karnard is a personality who is not at all influenced by the western world. He has taken a deep plunge into the mythology of his own motherland. To understand any county knowing the myths and legends of that place is very important. The legends of a particular place reflect the universal truths of that place. Karnard has a firm belief in the art of theatre which is a very powerful tool as cinema to show the hidden truths and revelations before the audience.

It was the first time that the first play of the Karnard *Yayati* came and with it, he has understood that he was not a poet at all. He had his interest in theatres. Identification of his own interest has made him so successful that he is famous everywhere for his emphatic style of showing the minute details of the myths based on the human flaws and merits. He is a versatile film producer, actor, TV artist, and a prolific playwright. He took the myths as a very serious intellectual property of any society. He was the man who understood the importance of them in the very early phase of his career. He studied a lot of myths and legends and then reached the conclusion that those were very important and even archived for the purpose of enlightening the humanity. Basically, he was interested in the cultural revival and he did it. He is now a stalwart figure in the field of literature as well as in Bollywood. If one can watch the greater part of human life then there is no better option than revising history. The Greek epic author Homer is an example of collecting old myths of Greece on which the country survived.

The heroes and heroines of epics are the incarnations of Gods and Goddesses which are powerful and no less than a superhuman. It has been always fascinating to study such material which seems fictitious but showing the reality of civilizations.

Yayati is present in all of us because we all long for worldly pleasures. We live life with open eyes but the actual vision is missing. Living life without the clear goal is never fruitful.

In the words of Prof. O.P. Budholia: He is such a skilled dramatist who has extended the theatrical importance and the role of poetic imagination in the art of drama. As a playwright, poet actor, critic, and translator, Girish Karnad occupies a distinct and distinctive place not only in India but also in the world. (Budholia 11)

CONCLUSIONS

Happiness should be the goal of life but people take the materialistic goals as the source of happiness. It is the reality of life that up to an extent we need materialist things for life but going mad for this creates a problem. To be happy without any reason is the real art of life but practically it is difficult to follow in the real sense. The environment is such that people are in a competition to gain more and more money as the epitome of success. Tragedies are an inseparable part of life because human beings are liable to commit sin without fail; this leads them to a tragic end. Some people are powerful enough that they cop up with this situation and some are not able to do so. The conclusion is that all human beings are susceptible to troubles and they are definitely going to have a tough time but the spirit of rising from the worse situation to the good one is the essence of life. Sorrow is the center of life and without it, no one can lean or rise in life. Karnard is a dexterous person for doing it. He is always appreciated for showing the dark reality and solutions for the complexities of life.

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