

Girish Karnad “Yayati”: The Cultural Values

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ABSTRACT

Girish Karnad Yayati and how it's portray the cultural values of people, condition of caste system and woman in our society. Karnad was keen observer of Indian Society and he is successful to provide a realistic picture of corrupted souls of Indian Society.

Keywords-- Cultural Value, Condition of Caste System, Indian Society, Corrupted Souls

I. CULTURAL VALUES : YAYATI

Girish Karnad play Yayati aims to discuss the cultural values of society. His play impact, seem to be a kind of commentary on the cultural values of India which mould the very personality of men and women and have a great bearing on the best part of their life. Actually, for an Indian the values are the very essence of his existence and if he digresses from them, he is ex-communicated from the society. Culture, in Indian context, is all comprehensive and man's action is judged in the light of his being cultured or not.

Having defined 'culture' and values separately the study how proceeds to observe the cultural values depicted in the first play of Karnad, 'Yayati.'

The Play depicts the cultural values of the Mahabharata period. The play revolves round the mythical figure Yayati who may be seen as an epitome of his time. He represents the royal culture. Like a time king, he believes that "Kings are the breathing images of god on earth." According to royal cultural values, kings should not be scared of death as they are supposed to deal with it everyday and it is part of their culture to think of themselves as a messiah, a sort of immortal being who is born to kill and not die.

Yayati Says to Sharmishtha: The only death real to me is that of someone else. Not mine. I never think of my own death. That is not for me a possibility at all. When I ride out into combat, I know I shall return alive. (1)

II. CONDITION OF CASTE SYSTEM IN YAYATI

Karnad's play 'Yayati' points out how the caste hierarchy sets certain cultural values on the basis where of the whole system operates. Brahmins, even if very poor, are treated as the best and then come the Kshatriya, then the Vaishya and the last of all come the Shudra. In the play, Devyani, the daughter of a destitute Brahmin,

receives gifts, jewellery, diamonds and other precious stones from Sharmishtha, yet she considers herself superior to Sharmishtha. She does not like Sharmishtha's wearing her blouse and this exchange of blouse by mistake leads to a quarrel which converts into a fight the moment.

Devyani says to Sharmishtha: You poor people. You only have to get into piece of arya attire. And you start fantasizing. (2)

This caste culture has been a part of Hindu society ever since the Hinduism came into existence and as long as it operated properly, there was no problem in India. But the moment the system came to be replaced by an egalitarian system, things have gone from bad to worse. However, this caste hierarchy should not be based on 'birth', rather it should be predicated on the 'profession' the person takes up.

Karnad also points out the ancient Indian culture in which an 'Arya' was considered better than an 'Anarya'. In the play 'Yayati' Sharmishtha explains how despite being a rakshasa princess, she felt inferior to Devyani because of her 'Arya Pedigree.'

Sharmishtha says: I was the princess of the rakshas. You were off spring of a destitute Brahmin, dependent upon my father. I had everything. Beauty, education, wealth. Everything except birth – on Arya Pedigree. (3)

III. CONDITION OF WOMAN IN YAYATI

The Playwright finds a chance to refer to the gender culture in India where traditionally it is one of the qualities of women to be submissive and obedient to men. women, not only in Indian societies but also all over the world, are treated as slaves and as domestic animals whose wills and vileness are suppressed.

Sharmishtha says to Yayati: You own hundreds of slaves. But have you ever wondered what it does to a person to be made a slave? It turns that person into animal. An domesticated animal. One's will to act it destroyed. One's selfhood humbled into grateful submission.

"Accept that crumb, wait for a pat on the back".

To be a good slave is to have all your vileness extracted from you. (4)

Another cultural fact that is against women is the fact that man commits every sort of sin and then shifts the burden of responsibility on the head of woman.

Yayati says: Old age! Decrepitude! By nightfall! And then? Then what? Sharmishtha. You she – devil! You are

the cause of all this. You are responsible. You trapped me with your wiles. (5)

IV. CONCLUSION

In Yayati, Karnad presents a picture of society that includes the mythical figures like Yayati, Devyani, Sharmishtha and Pooru. The son sacrifices his youth for his father who is given to enjoying sensual pleasures. The play speaks of a society where the human and rakshasa lived together and even married together. Even in the Pre-Mahabharata, upper caste women like Devyani had love-affair with men of their choice, as she had with Kacha, though their affair ended in smoke. At the time, prostitution was a social practice and men from upper class of society regularly visited brothels.

REFERENCES

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- [2] Ibid., p.20.
- [3] Ibid., p.10.
- [4] Ibid., p.17.
- [5] Ibid., p.42.