

SHIV PARVATI SAMVAD: THE DIVINE MASCULINE AND THE DIVINE FEMININE – A FACE OFF (PART 1)



(Enter Shiva as a mendicant)

Mendicant: O Tripurasundari! How shocking it is to see a paradigm of delicacy as you performing such a rigorous penance! What is it that has provoked you to leave your father's paradise and come to this snowy wilderness to cause yourself such agony?

Parvati: Salutations to you shree Guru. I am here to fulfil my most coveted desire to marry the Lord of the three worlds!

Mendicant: O! Is it? Yes. Indeed, I must say then your desire is worthwhile.

Parvati: I am so pleased to hear this from you shree Guru. Indeed. I tried explaining this to my mother and father who are so adamant in their standpoint of labelling my desire to marry Shiva as unwarranted!

Mendicant: What? You are performing the rigors to marry SHIVA?

Parvati: Yes. Be doubtless about your listening skills Shree Guru. They are flawless. You have heard it right. It is him...My Lord and Master Shiva. I want to be his ardhangini! It is he whose desire has instigated this urge in me to continue appeasing him with my offerings unless he agrees to bless me by granting my wish to marry him.

Mendicant: And I am sure this all would have been planned by that shrewd Narada if I am not incorrect in my conjecture?

Parvati: Yes. And I am so glad he explained it all to me that I needed to perform this enduring penance in order to win my Lord's grace in my favour. So blessed will I consider myself if he happens to accept me as his sevika.

Mendicant: Sevika...you mean his slave. What a menial desire! O! Tripurasundari, have you seen yourself ever in the mirror to speak so lowly of yourself! How can you be so unfair to your unparalleled beauty that can stimulate many to submit in front of your unprecedentedly captivating, indomitably alluring visage, your incessantly long black tresses that can powerfully entwine the fate of many who claim to have solved the most intricate of all labyrinths and the above all your charming and graceful personality, your sweet voice that can cause even the best of nightingales to shame! Your doe-like eyes impair the best of sights when they dare to even compete with them! Perhaps you do not seem to have an idea of the unbeatable strength of your indisputable attraction that can hypnotize anybody who proclaims to stay indifferent to Kama's

shoot!

Parvati: Shree Guru. First and foremost, I bow down to you for your kind words. I think I am not worthy of such appreciation as had I been the way you have described myself to me, the god of Love would not have failed in his attempt, the way he did! I am just another 'ordinary' woman with no such extraordinary appearance as you have described me. All I can say is – 'thanks' for the adjectives you have used for me as they are indeed flattering for any woman and do give her the joy of being "recognized" and the pride of not being "bypassed".

Mendicant: I do understand Tripurasundari. I do construe the immense sadness caused when a MAN ignores a woman. I heard the way HE did to you! Simply intolerable! To just reject the advances of a celestial nymph as YOU! Horrible! But you know. You need not feel sad. He is just unworthy of your attention. Trust me! He deserves to be left the way he is! My beautiful lady! You simply do not know you can avail ANY MAN you want in your life! What have you to do with such a personality as Shiva? I fail to understand!

Parvati: Shree Guru. Applying conventional wisdom to my understanding of a personality as you, I do acknowledge that if someone as respectable as YOU is stating something, it has to be in my favor as you cannot be unkind towards me and wish ill of me. Having said so, I hereby request you to explain me the cause of your concern. I wish to obtain the Lord of the three worlds as my husband. As mendicants are not oblivious of past, present and future, you, I suppose, already KNOW my association with him is not of this birth but of the past many births and that we are destined to be together as we are inseparable. My earthly form as Parvati is germinated as per the need of the hour but YOU certainly possess the caliber of viewing us in our ardhanareshwara swaroopa the indivisible Shiv and Shakti. Therefore, I am incapable of fathoming your LEELA at the moment shree Guru! What on earth has provoked you to deter me from following my determination? Kindly explain.

Mendicant (laughs): Now that you are so resigned to gather the reason of my objections towards your desire Trailokyasundari! Let me tell you the full-fledged TRUTH that is unavoidable and that has provoked me to express my concern and thwart you from making the same mistake that you've been making since eons! Listen to this very carefully. YES. Indeed I am well aware that you are the incarnation of Shakti that is born to seek Shiva. In the countless births that you've taken since the inception of this universe, you have been desiring the inseparable UNION of shiva. But...THAT IS NOT THE POINT. The point here is did you EVER OBTAIN SHIVA? The answer is NO. NEVER! You have been perpetually seeking his union and have perpetually remained incomplete. The inception of Shakti as the embodiment of Shiva and yet left to yearn for eternal union with him! Remember your birth as SATI. What did you attain? You had to finally give up your life! Again the chakra continued. Your incarnation as Parvati – And in this birth too...you are being tortured for attaining his union. Remember, even after you unite with him, you will have to bear the agony of separation. It is written in your destiny Parvati, you will have to suffer. You will have to take numerous births and in every birth, you will have to pass through the continual strife for uniting with him. My question is...when you already KNOW this; why on earth do you want to undergo this hellish experience again and again? Why do you not stop this? Why do you agree to experience this travail when you have the power to discontinue this tradition? Why do you wish to endure the torture? Disagree. Tell that ruthless shiva you no longer want to participate in the cycle of striving to unite with him. Tell him to let you be in your original form as Shakti, the power within the shiva that gives him life and the strength to sustain the universe. Deny; Parvati or else you'll never be able to attain beatitude. You will be incomplete for infinity! Mind you! This division that shiva has inflicted upon you is nothing but a CURSE!

Parvati: Shree Guru, firstly, I express my sincere gratitude

to you for your concern. Having said so, I would like to make certain clarifications with the limited intelligence of mine that I have obtained by the grace of many a learned people as you. The ceaseless travail that I have been undergoing since the inception of this universe is the self-imposed strife that I have chosen to experience as without experiencing separation, it is virtually impossible to experience LOVE. Since my feelings for my lord and master are beyond definition, I have always wanted to feel every bit of him. As I happened to recognize myself in him, I yearned for a separate identity; a form different from that of his because only by extricating myself from him could I avail the pleasure of pining for his union and valuing it so dearly. Remaining within him I was simply lifeless. I obtained my "identity" in the process of separating myself from him and became KNOWN as "Shakti", shiva's "better half". I was no longer shiva's entity- somebody of Shiva. I was another "entity" who was important for defining his existence as he required my presence to introduce himself fully as ardhanareshwara the composite of Shiva and Shakti wherein both are equal- not a tinge of gender difference. So, when we both are one in our separate identities, why do you think I should erase every possibility of the divine union happening through acknowledging the "difference" between the two of us? Why should I refuse to become his ardhangini, his wife when I know that it is only by choosing to be one I would be able to attain the inseparable union with him that would give me the recognition I truly deserve- of becoming indispensable element in his life. Remaining unrecognized within him, I lose the privilege of making my presence felt as the energy in him that keeps him charged for anything and everything, as the divine soul that keeps an entity alive, as the motivation that he avails of breathing life into this lifeless universe. Shree Guru. With utmost humility I hereby declare that Shakti is the requisite of shiva and when despite very well recognizing this, if Shiva chooses to ignore or bypass the eternal truth, it is Shakti's duty to make him realize her mandatory presence

in his life. I am NOT here to give up so easily. I am here to stay. I am here to remind shiva of his promise of enabling me attain unison with him because HE NEEDS ME to keep the cycle of creation and destruction ongoing, to regulate this cosmos or else, everything pertaining to creation will come to a halt. Everything will become unresponsive if the sublime prakriti that is the root of all creation does not unite with shiva to engender CREATION. I hope your doubts are clear shree Guru?

Mendicant: O! So you think so. But, Tripurasundari. Let me tell you. Listen carefully. That shiva does not believe in a tinge of what you have told me right now I suppose. Had he thought the same about your indispensable presence in his life, he would not have caused you this agony. And if he is testing you, I do not see any point in doing so as he already happens to KNOW you since eons. So, why is he being so unkind towards you and why do you take the onus of getting back his short-lived memory of your importance in his life since time eternal is my point. Can't be he accept you without causing you such misery? What is the point in making you suffer so much? He is behaving foolish that's all I can say by refusing to accept your pre-destined presence in his life? Can someone who is actually the Lord and the master of the three worlds be so gullible? I doubt in his so-called divinity now after seeing you in such misery!

(To be continued)

For comments (if any) please enter in the box given below.

By: Dr. Payal Trivedi

RAMAYANA: FRACTURED, FIXED AND FORETOLD Oglam Presentation- Janardan Ghosh's Narration.

The Concept:

Ramayana has been told and retold over centuries but the difference lies in the way it is reiterated. Not with the perception of recounting a tale but with an intent to reinvent it to unleash the hidden secrets of this unbound narrative we attempt to retell again and again taking the artistic liberty that it affords timelessly to revisit it with an innovative perspective. The project is an enterprise to endorse the epic as a narrative that is much ahead of its times in its intrinsic potential to dislodge our linear interpretations of this colossal tale as a religious account of Hinduism. The endeavour is to re-evaluate the learn by rote method through which we have perpetually studied this epic; any change in the script is a larger than life or a utopian idea. In a country like India where the myth goes beyond the circumference of the story and becomes a 'sacred tale,' to conceive certain alterations in the script is a indeed a formidable venture. Yet, this redoubtable interpretation on our part has been an outcome of our humble initiative of making the narrative appear different and hence more thought- provoking as it raises questions on the fundamental aspects of human existence without tampering with the organic theme in a unique way. The Ramayana is fractured, fixed and foretold for an audience of today that's intelligent enough to accept variations in established Literature if it offers food for thought. This differently abled understanding of the epic cognitively sheds light on the of presence of the elements that demystifies the glory of this mythological narrative making it a poignant tale

of a King's sacrifice, struggle and his confrontation with the ultimate evil that is insurmountably challenging. Accompanying him is the divine feminine- the motherly prakriti, his consort whose worthiness being questioned every moment despite her inevitability in life is a tragic disclosure. When Nature is so serene and comforting, why do we exploit her? Is the question that resounds in every chant of the story teller who happens to have taken the onus of narrating the epic his own way without letting the cliché notions of propriety affect him. It is the kathavachna tradition that comes to the fore in the process wherein the kathavachak tries his level best to arrest the attention of the spectators who have gathered around him to witness his ability of telling a tale fascinatingly.

The alterations made in the tale are the result of an adaptation of the epic on which it is based. Nonetheless, the fact remains that these changes are made to inspire a generation of listeners to re-read the epic with an open mind without being influenced by the halo of divinity that revolves around it. This performance is towards giving Ramayana a form and shape that traverses the boundaries of conventions, religions and even Nations becomes a tale of global reality that surrounds human existence today. Our utilitarian approach towards nature, her exploitation under the garb of progress and development are universally undeniable truths that prevail in this tale of a magnanimous King who readily sacrificed everything in his life. His tales of heroism that prevail in our memory must not be confined to the deeds of valour but beneath there lies a purpose – to make the realization that the victory of good over evil comes with a price to pay. Divine Prakriti is insulted, hurt when the divine masculine shows his worthiness ascertains his valour and she ultimately chooses a silent retreat into the oblivion. Ramayana is indeed fractured at this juncture but the fact remains that it has to be fixed and again told for the generations to come and the Kathakar takes up this responsibility. Everything we see is an

illusion, it is just a dramatization of a popular tale but it aims at restructuring and reframing our often erroneous understanding of the tale as synonym of dictation of certain principles. It is therefore that often every time the tale adopts a new form and incidents do not coincide with the actual epic. Shoorpanakha becomes Mareecha and Sita Swayamvar takes place after the exile of Rama and Laxmana in the forest; only to make us comprehend that the kathakaar's choice to tell a tale remains uninterfered which opens up newer possibilities of engendering a CREATIVE PIECE- retold with a purpose: to enlighten. This is Ramayana – Fractured, fixed and foretold.

The Performative aspect:

The finer aspects of the kathakar's(Janardan Ghosh's) stage presence are intrinsically interwoven in the tale so inseparably that his gait, the gestures, the postures the expressions all depict a conceptual assertion of the Ramayana. The fluidity of the narration is indelible and the intonation is deliberately controlled to suit the parameters of excellent dialogue delivery which ought to have a thunderous proclamation of the epic coupled with a subtle yet effective volume that's verbose and yet aptly restrained. There is a performative glory inseparably blended with the musical beats of a folk rendition that invites the onlookers to participate in the performance. The Kathakar's splendid stage presence with his enormous voice modulations make the characters live in stage; needless to say- male or female. There's a quaint androgyny that Janardan Ghosh establishes on stage with his one man army – himself who appears as a reservoir of actors essaying different roles evocative of the Bahurupi artists that are used to playing diverse roles and yet one at a time. Slow and steady wins the race is the strategem that the Kathakaar deliberately adopts when he narrates simultaneously playing varied roles- Rama, Sita, Shurpanakha and above all the colossal Ravana. The entry of Ghosh defines folk narration that's charming endearing and at the same time prudent in its

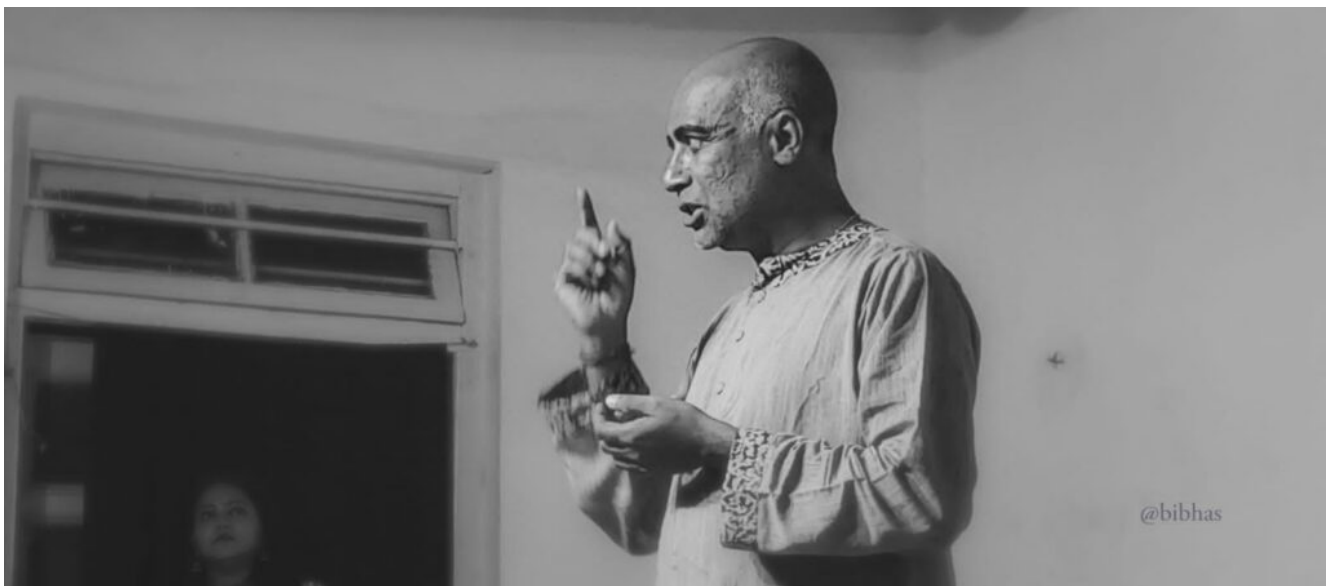
discretion of becoming stern when the narration becomes the somber from the recreational. It is a folk teller whose telling of the tale exploiting all the assets of performative aspect become more than conspicuous. He cries and groans and shouts and screams and laughs and proclaims and sits and stands and jumps and circumambulates the stage as if capturing it from all its directions. Yet he releases the stage equally well and comes back to himself as he knows the tale will speak for itself. The brilliance of a learned actor becomes visible in Ghosh's choice to be Indian in his compassionate and anxious mannerisms of flourishing a folk tale of his nation and yet intelligently global in his approach towards narrating it objectively putting up a universal concern: Eco feminism. A subject matter of relevance for all across ages, Sita... a woman of education he so confidently he says and ends it so poignantly saying and in the end she immersed herself in the earth. And we automatically question " Why? Why do we hurt her – the one who nurtures us so fondly? The divine feminine. Ghosh brings the ties together: Of Sita's separation from Rana and of her being deserted in the end: Both are aligned. Whether she got accidentally separated from him when Ravana abducted her or when he sent her away, in both cases, she is the sufferer. The performative narration impresses upon re-reading the epic independent of the notions of divinity attached to it.

Dr. Payal Trivedi

For comments(if any) please use the comment box given below.









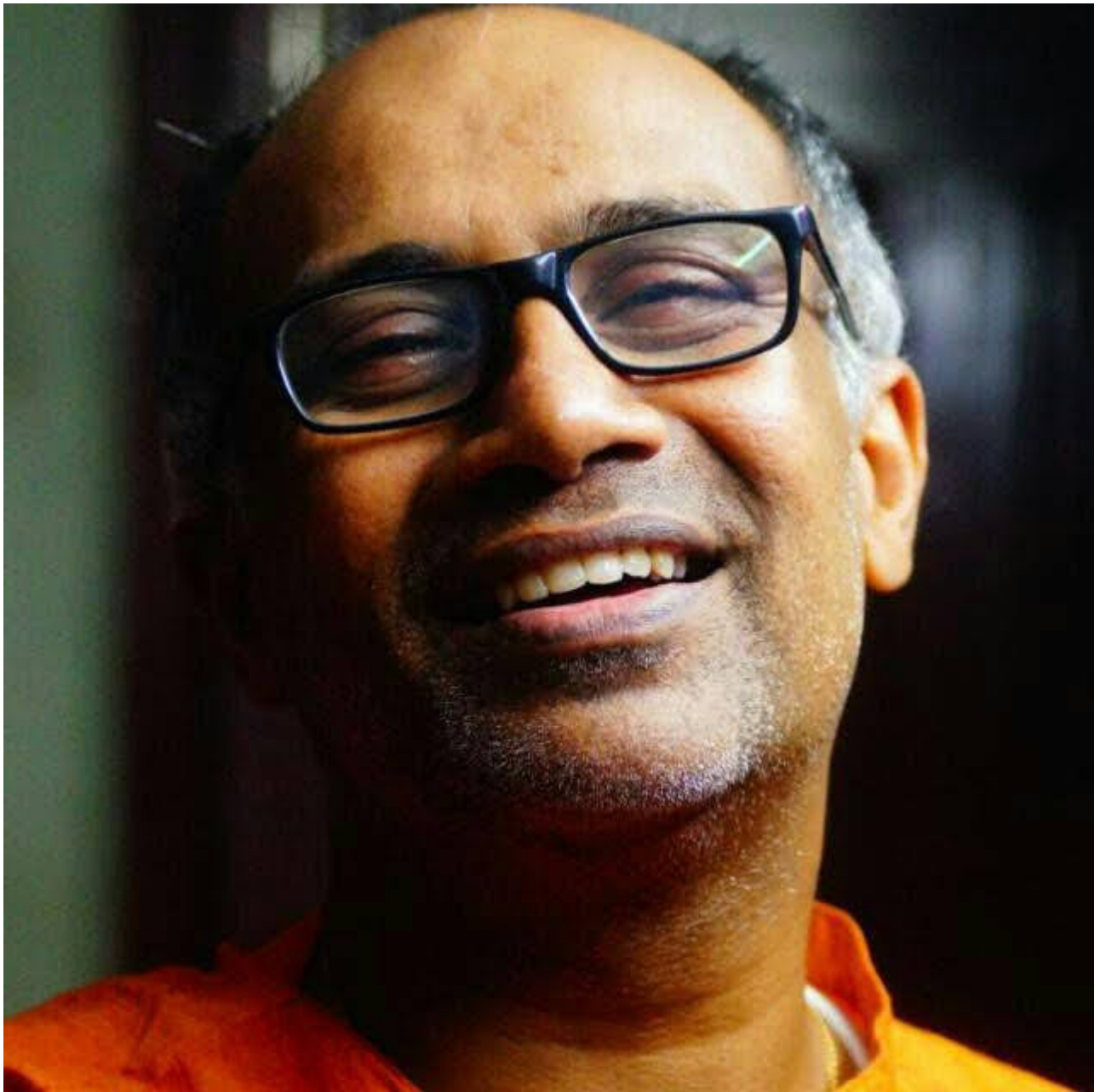
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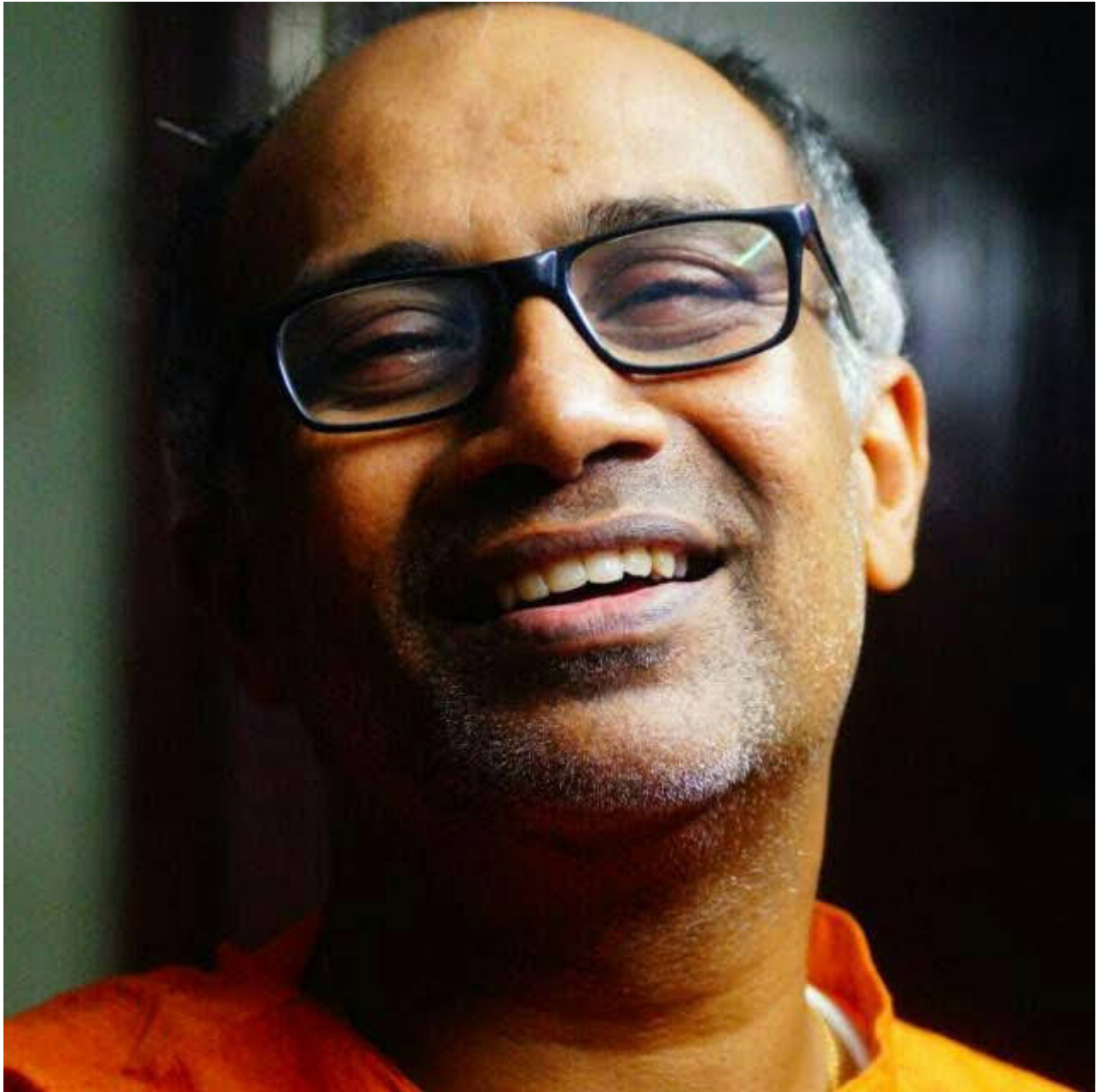


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Janardan Ghosh's Kayantar – Towards the need for Transformation



KAYANTAR- A film co-directed by Rajdeep Paul & Sarmistha Maity

The lead actor in the film, Dr Janardan Ghosh, is really versatile and multi talented. He is a performing artist, academic, theatre director, film actor, playwright, performance coach and storyteller (Katha 'Koli, a new art of storytelling) whose practice includes the use of traditional theories, contemporary performance vocabulary, and interactive media. His research-based work engages the indigenous practice methods in urban spaces exploring the perspectives of historicity, spiritual consciousness, intertextual dialogue, and body-space dynamics of myths, tales and gossips.

Kayantar- is a poignant tale of religious discrimination that leads to repenting circumstances for those that are forced to quietly endure and hence implicitly exploited to endorse conformity to the extent of losing their identities and eventually their lives. Moreover, it is a tale that has a subplot dealing with the pathos of the Bahurupi artists who beg in front of the people for their survival; their art not being recognized as a respectable profession but being condemned as a demeaning activity, pursued by those that are financially underprivileged and become nomadic thus imploring in front of the people for alms in order to make both ends meet.

The film is heart-wrenching as we see how the Bahurupi Muslim artist (played by Dr. Janardan Ghosh) dressed as the Hindu Goddess Kali appears in front of his two children; only to consecutively become crippled and hence forcefully passing on his legacy to his son who dislikes pursuing his father's profession. The son has a point. He being a Muslim roaming around in the apparel of a Hindu Goddess is disparaged by the religious stalwarts of his community, is mocked at by the children of the village and is boycotted by many conservatives as 'Bhikhari' – a pauper. These facts reiterated in an overtly painful and innately stark undertone are enough evidences to make the pangs of the young man believable and evocative of the viewers' empathy for him.

That the innocent youth who has not acquired this profession by his own choice and it has been rather forced on him comes as a harsh and undeniable truth that grills our thinking capacities to the extent of questioning all our modern theories of global indivisibilities of culture and religion. When the young lad takes an anomalous decision to choose a girl of the rival community and loses his life because of being engulfed in the holocaust of communal riots that take place in his village, our conscience gets stirred and we as viewers of the film are compelled to revise our notions of living in an industrialized, progressive world. We are made to

rethink whether the circumferences of culture, creed, race and religion only exist on national borders or are they still prevalent somewhere within our psyches and we are only ignoring these under the pretext of being the civilized community.

Within the framework of a story that so effectively becomes pertinent with the theme of universal relevance as we still find the world divided into castes and communities and people identifying themselves through their religions, there is a very intriguing story of Asia, the young girl who wishes to adorn herself as Kali and pursue her Bahurupi father's profession with confidence and dignity. The tale comes as an pleasant surprise when Asia is founded engaging herself in painting her body coal black and rejoicing to see herself in the gruesome look. It seems a woman's reclusive identification of the other dimension of the divine feminine that exists within her apparent demure image of a meek girl.

That Kali chooses Asia's body to be her abode is also a fact that demands our prudent understanding of the fact that religious differences prevail only on the superficial level as the Bahurupi keeps singing "Apanar Apni fana hole shei bhed jana jai"- Means that realization comes only when the distinction between mine and yours gets erased. Such an indubitable truth of the oneness of divinity is fondly repeated as a backdrop of the entire film makes the theme of the movie apparent- It is not by dividing but it is by uniting that humanity can realize in the oneness of this universe wherein every entity is the fragment of that supreme energy that we call God. The philosophical context in the film does not let the film lose its ties with an integral theme of gender discrimination.

Asia takes the permission of her father to dress up as Kali and pursue her profession as a Bahurupi. Nonetheless, the Bahurupi, her father, gets annoyed with her and says that he cannot allow his daughter to wander on the roads as a

prostitute. Why the man who has earned a living with the same profession disallows his daughter to follow his footsteps? The film gives us a jolt when we hear these words of the Bahurupi. If it were such a demeaning profession, why on earth did he adopt it? Was he also forced by his family to adopt it and with great reluctance he went on from door to door dressed up as Kali and asked for money from the people? The film does not answer these questions but raising these queries in our minds the film acts as a thunderbolt when we see a Muslim girl adopting her father's profession ultimately when her brother dies in the communal riots and she has to earn a living for her home ultimately as her father is crippled and is unable to do anything to make a living. Though she finally opts to become Kali, the intimidating figure of the bloodthirsty goddess who is so venomous becomes the most pensive image of pathos; she has to become Kali only to support her family and this time her father is helpless and cannot stop her even if he wants to. She walks on the railway track fearlessly continuing her journey on the route that has her brother's remnants that remind us of the gruesome ending that the young boy faced due to his unfortunate choice.

Diluting the conformist image of Kali as a fearsome goddess, Kayantar presents another facet of hers as a sad feminine figure who wanders helplessly for recognition. When she walks on the road men do not fear her ghastly appearance. They in fact dare to tease her which undermines her ferocity only to expose the truth that a woman's frightening exterior cannot dismantle the atrocities meted out to her in a man's world. She may be regarded as an epitome of Kali and the goddess may have chosen her to manifest her form but the fact remains that she is an ordinary woman confined within domestic sphere that does not allow her to operate according to her will and discretion. Her life is what a man wants it to be. She may dress up as Kali but she will never be regarded equal to the formidable goddess of the temples and the cemeteries. She will remain as an ordinary woman. When the Bahurupi tries to

disclose the truth in front of her thus refusing her to wander on the roads as Kali, it is this harsh reality that he tries to explain to her which remains unadulterated truth pertinent to all times.

That a woman is exploited under the pretext of granting her equal rights and overt sexual violence and tacit manipulation are indeed a part of this so called man's world even today are not hidden realities but are undeniable truths. Kayantar shows that if Kali wanders as an ordinary powerless woman Asia, she will be shamed. The film aptly demystifies the wrathful image of Kali and extracts the ordinary femininity in her that seeks recognition till date.

When the goddess Kali accidentally stepped on Kala- Lord Shiva as per the mythical account, she was unhappy and wailed for the fact that she had made a grave mistake of putting her feet on her husband's chest; a sinful conduct for a woman as per the conventional theories of Hinduism. It is not Kali's pathos that is underpinned in the temples when we worship her as the mother goddess. It is her ire that is being continually recognized and the red tongue that lolled accidentally out of her mouth due to her unconscious act of putting her feet on Shiva's chest is ironically regarded as a mark of her fearful image. Kayantar shows the other aspect of this horrific Kali and that is – Kali as the one that resides in the domicile of an artist who earns his morsel of food by emoting her from door to door. When the Kayantar takes place and the Bahurupi allows her to possess him, the possession is just on the level of the exterior. There is no internal possession because the artist cannot afford it. He is supposed to be submissive and not exert his redoubtable image in front of others. He is a beggar.

The film talks about the pathos of the village artists that pursue their profession only as a means of earning the basic necessities in life. With the advent of complex technologies in the realm of entertainment, these artists are deprived of

their due recognition. Kayantar – the transformation is of the body and not the soul but this is what the film seems to have intended. The ardour of transforming one's soul is explained through the restraint that the Bahurupi imposes on himself and his son who both dress up as Kali only because they have to earn money to win their bread and butter. There is no philosophical enlightenment in the process of transforming themselves. It stays at the superficial level even after the Bahurupi keeps singing the song 'Apnar Apni fana hole shei bhed jana jai- which talks about the need to escalate beyond the boundaries of time and space to realize divinity.

The song remains merely a song and the spiritual message ingrained in it is only a matter of speculation. In the end, the Muslim girl Asia adopting Kali's image does undermine religious discrimination but it does not become prominent because; the extremely painful state of a girl who takes up a vocation on account of a drastic change that occurs in her life of losing her own brother is a telling tale that completely dilutes the fury in the image she adopts and brings out the agony of an ordinary woman incarcerated in the prison of conformity that she is unable to challenge or disown.

All in all, Kayantar is a film that stimulates us to understand religion beyond the confines of the right and the wrong and urges us to revise our cliché associations of Gods and Goddesses as intimidating figures of the temples who possess their disciples that invoke them in the temple rituals. It certainly is an eye-opener to the fact that the transformation of our soul is needed but is often occluded by our senses governed by selfish motives that thwart the spiritual awakening which engenders the realization of truth.

For comments on the article please write in the box given below:

TRUE LIE

Mithi knew she was lying. She had no option but to lie. She lied and lied and became a mythomaniac. One day she did not want to lie. But the mania would not leave her. Her mouth emitted a lie that her heart did not consent. She became frustrated as she was continually telling lies all the time when she could avoid doing so. One day, she went to a Babaji and told him to give her a remedy. Babaji smiled and said, "when you are tempted to lie, just imagine that the truth that you are speaking is a lie. You will do alright." Next day, Mithi experimented it. Her father asked her, "Mithi did you take 200 rupees from my pocket?" Mithi replied, "YES." And while she spoke yes, she imagined it were a lie! And yes, she got rid of the habit!

STORY SAYS, "Your thoughts make it true or false."

For comments if any please write in the box given below.

SHE WANDERS IN THE WILDERNESS

I am Pather Panchali

I roam in the wilderness of dawn

The mystic magic of the woods attracts me,

The silence of the grassy meadows lures me,
I have an existing exile in the region,
I know not any.

I don't own your doubts about me,
I don't care about your suspicions,
I am here to wander in the leisurely hours,
Feeling detached of all and sundry.

Why do you think I am?

Who do you think I am?

I cannot answer your questions,
For I am a response never tread upon,
All those that see me, feel none of my pangs,
They are just there to frown upon my torn and tattered land.
People call me dowdy, trollope and laugh at my misery,
Some even slap my urge to seek solace,
Some negate my identity,
Some call me unfairly keeping funny names,
And some insult me with their horrible words of disdain.
Yet there IS something that keeps me going,
And certainly this one thing helps me survive,
These wild plains I inhabit,
Keep me intact.

I sit and cry here for hours and they hold me tight in
embrace,

They tell me everything would be alright, when I learn how to
fight.

They tell me " YOU are an amazon" do not give up your strife,

For there will be a day when you will be rewarded for all that
you sacrifice.

The right to be treated nicely is what I give up everyday,

And the woods restore my lost spirits comforting my soul each
day.

I know not the language of the rich,

I know not the luxury of the privileged.

But the woods tell me they know I will earn it all some day.

So here I am treading amongst these forests,

Waiting for that one clear call,

That can lead me to my desired destination.

I am the pather panchali,

Thus I roam in the wilderness of the dawn,

In search of a divine messenger,

That can lead me towards the kindly light of the fair morn.

For comments if any please write in the box below:

ROBOTIC THEATER

Two Robots were brought on the stage along with two actors. They were given the same dialogues as the actors. They spoke the dialogues with trained expressions duly. The actors were asked to speak the same dialogue. They looked at each other brought the emotions in and when it was time to begin, one of the actors forgot the second dialogue he was about to speak. So instead of that dialogue, he spoke another one and the other actor had to continue with the new idea as the previous dialogue had been changed.

Now, the entire presentation was changed on the part of the humans.

Next day, the programmed Robots were brought in. One of them encountered a technical error and could not utter the programmed dialogue. The other Robot kept quiet as it was commanded to speak only after listening to the dialogue of the first Robot. Now, the act came to an abrupt halt. Suddenly, both the Robots bowed down to the audiences and left the stage. They were programmed to do so ONLY after the presentation got over. But, they did it beforehand and went off stage. What made them act in spite of the mechanics?

None knows but conjectures are that there's a sixth sense programmed in them which gets activated as soon as their technical glitch occurs.

For comments if any, please write in the box below:

AND...THERE COMES A FOLKTALE

There was a Queen. She killed every 4th husband of hers. None knew the reason she spared 3 and killed the 4th one. One day, a mantri asked her the reason. The Queen replied, " Every 4th MAN reminded me of my mother's 4th husband who killed her. Mantri decided to stop the Queen. He brought a commoner for the Queen on her command to marry the 4th time after she killed her x 4th husband. She killed him. The mantri said, " I consulted a sage. He said this man was the incarnation of your mother's 4th husband. Now no longer is the need to kill anyone else."

The atrocity stopped after that.

The commoner who was last killed was the chief of the Queen's enemy who had encroached upon the territory to kill the Queen.

Since then every 4th day of the month, the people of the village offer 4 things to the Queen's soul who happens to be their deity now and organize a festival in her memory.

It is that it is a day when everything 4 in number is honored. The fourth house, the fourth child, the fourth wife...and anything less than 4 is destroyed. Thus, those that have four houses, destroy the previous three, those that have three children, discard the 1st three and so goes with the wives. Three of them are divorced and 4th one remains. The Queen blesses this ritual. As she likes HONORING FOUR.

For comments, if any, please write in the box below:

RIKSHAW DRIVER AND LADY— AN ABSURD PLAY (ONE ACT)

In the middle of LINTON road, a rickshaw comes and stops in front of the woman. She intends to hire it for going to a destination. The rickshaw driver looks at her and assents to take her to the desired stop.

Sc –I

Woman – Will you drop me at this address?

Driver- Yes madam. Please sit.

Woman- Be quick. I don't have time.

Driver- yes madam..

Woman- Thank you.

Driver- No thanks. I am there to take people to their desired stops. But...

Woman- But? Are you worried about your fare? Do not worry. I will give you cash.

Driver- No. I am not worried about money. I am thinking that YOU are going to give my your life.

Woman: What?

Driver- No madam. Nothing. I just said nothing at all. Don't worry. Come, it's going to be night soon and this road becomes quite isolated. It is not safe to be here for a long time.

Sc II

(The rickshaw starts with a jerk. The woman gets a strong jolt)

Woman- Oh! Driver what's this? Be careful.

Driver- At times, it isn't in our hands madam.

Woman-But it is in our YOUR hands only!

Driver- No. I have to take many abrupt decisions while driving. This was one of them. I did not intend to put sudden jerk otherwise. The road's quite open to receiving jerks when we start off.

Woman- Whatever. Let's go.

Driver (speaks softly)- Go. This word has the implication of going and when I am going, I have to be on the go and when I am on the go, none disturbs me. Get Set Go!

Woman- What are you muttering?

Driver- Nothing madam. Yes, you said go. But...

Woman- But what?

Driver- We cannot GO.

Woman- What! Just a moment ago you said you are ready to go and now you are denying.

Driver- I am ready to go madam. But not ready to go now.

Woman- What? What are you talking?

Driver- Just wait madam, wait for some time. We need to. Or else, it might get too late.

Woman- What nonsense is this? You said we must start off quickly as it might get isolated here soon and now you are telling me to tarry?

Driver- Life is unexpected madam. The clutch wire just broke when I gave the jerk.

Woman- Oh! Now it would be needless delay. Never mind. I will hire another rick.

Driver- Not possible madam. It is not going to be easy for you to get another vehicle here.

(She stands there and tries to call other rickshaws. None of them stops. Comes back to the same rickshaw driver. Stands there.)

Woman- Ok. I am waiting here. Be quick.

Driver- Am trying my best. At times things are not in our hands madam.

Woman- But the wire is in your hands.

Driver- But its intention to get repaired or not does not lie in my hands madam.

(After almost an hour's time, he is able to repair the clutch wire)

Woman- Now let's go. Enough of waiting here.

Driver- Yes madam. Sit inside the auto.

(As she moves towards the auto, her foot twists unexpectedly while walking and she cries in pain.)

Woman- Oh God! I did not notice this stone in the middle. My foot got twisted! I am feeling awful. I never did think anything of this sort would happen. Thought I would hire an auto and reach home quickly.

Driver- At times, life shows us what we do not expect madam. Do not worry. I will support you and help you to get in the auto. Come, lean on my shoulder.

(He supports her)

Woman- ok. Now finally should we set off!

Driver- Yes madam.

(He starts the auto and takes it off. The woman sits quietly in the seat at the back. He keeps driving.)

Woman -(calls her friend) I will reach in no time. Actually, I can explain (suddenly, there's a speed breaker and the rickshaw crosses it very quickly. Once again, she gets a heavy jerk.)

Woman- Drive slowly. Will you. Can't you see the speed breaker?

Driver- Madam. At times we are forced to drive quickly. You said you need to reach fast. I thought...

Woman- So that does not mean you drive haphazardly. Drive carefully.

Driver- Ok madam.

(Suddenly stops the auto)

Woman- What? Why have you stopped?

Driver- Madam. It is dinner time for me. I need to eat my food. You need to wait.

Woman- What?

Driver- yes.

Woman- But you drop me first then have your dinner. What are you up to?

Driver- Up to nothing madam. I am telling you one simple thing. I cannot drive ahead without my food. I need to finish my dinner. Wait in the auto. I will come in no time.

(She waits reluctantly and knows well that no rickshaw was available in that area. He comes after almost forty five mins)

Woman- Now should we go?

Driver- If you ask me madam, it means you are taking my permit. I am nobody to decide.

Woman- But you are the DRIVER. Driving me is in your hands.

Driver- No madam. Driving both of us is in someone else's hands.

Woman- What absurdity is this? You drive take me to my destination.

Driver- You think you have a destination. (Laughs.) Everybody thinks so. But none has any.

Sc III

(She looks at him almost frantically.)

Woman- Why are you talking wierd?

Driver- Nobody makes any sense in the world madam. Especially lower class people like us, we often become senseless in front of everyone.

Woman- See right now it is not the time to check whether you are sensible or senseless. Now is the time to drive safely and help me reach my destination. I am wanting eagerly to reach at a place.

Driver- That's what I am doing madam. Helping you reach your destination.

Woman-With the kind of slow speed that you are driving, I do not think we will reach there ever.

(stops the auto. The woman looks at him irritatingly.)

Woman- Why did you stop the auto?

Driver- I need to get the CNG filled.

Woman- Listen, do it afterwards. I do not want to be late.

Driver- Madam. There is no fuel left.

Woman- What? Why didn't you tell me earlier. I would not have hired your auto.

Driver- Madam, it will take 5 mins.

Woman- Ok.

(Gets the fuel tank filled. The woman waits.)

Woman- Now can we get set go?

Driver- Madam, wait. I need to get the change to give them money.

Woman- Wait, here I am giving you change. Take it. Give it to them. Let's leave.

Driver- Ok madam.

(He makes the payment at the petrol pump. They start off and come at crossroad)

Driver- Madam. Two roads diverge. Which one to take?

Woman- The left one. Wait, perhaps, I would have to check on my phone. Ok , here it is the right one. That's the direction it shows.

Driver- But madam, this road is very long. It will take time.

Woman- My mobile does not lie. It is the most convenient road it shows.

Driver- So I should take this one right?

Woman- Of course.

Driver- So be it.

(He turns right. The road continues and has many lanes. After some time the woman gets annoyed.)

Woman- What is this? Lanes after lanes?

Driver- Madam, I told you this road is long but you did not listen to me.

Woman- Now what to do?

Driver- Let's go back.

Woman- Ok.

(He takes a reverse turn, in just a few mins, they come to a specific point where there is traffic jam)

Woman- O my God! We did not have it while we took this road, now where did this come from?

Driver- It is a procession that has just started madam.

Woman- We are stuck!

Driver- We are often stuck in the middle of roads madam.

(After almost an hour's wait, the traffic heals. They move ahead.)

Woman- I wanted to reach there two hour before. Little did I know I would get so late!

Driver- We often do not know the future madam. But better late than never.

Woman- What do you mean?

Driver- Meaning, we would reach there some time, some day.

Woman- What? What are you talking?

Driver- Nothing madam. The fact of life. The crux of living this life is an eternal journey that never ends. Right?

Woman- Don't be philosophical. I do not have time.

Driver- None has time. Time has everyone.

(Puts a sudden break. Stage goes dark. The next moment we see bright light on the stage and many people having gathered there.)

Person I – Oh sad, very sad the accident.

Person II- The autowala is dead.

Person III- The passenger?

Person I- Nowhere to be found.

Person II- Let us inform the police.

(They call the ambulance and the police who come and do the needful in the case.)

The next day, a woman stands in the middle of the LINTON road. She stops an auto, hires him.

Woman – Will you drop me at this address?

Driver- Yes madam. Please sit.

Woman- Be quick. I don't have time.

Driver- yes madam.

Woman- Thank you.

Driver- No thanks. I am there to take people to their desired stops. But...

Woman- But? Are you worried about your fare? Do not worry. I

will give you cash.

Driver- No. I am not worried about money. I am thinking that YOU are going to give me your life.

Woman: What?

(Next day in the newspaper. Linton road seems to be haunted. A driver with an auto is seen moving around and a lady comes and boards it. They both act as passenger and auto driver. After a while, people hear a loud shriek, an auto driver in the same locality is found dead.)

Lights off stage darkens. After a while there is light all around.

For any comments please write in the comment box below:

Garbage Free Society

Today's Indian and Hindi cinema in particular seems the kind of garbage in and out- Irrelevant data producing irrelevant output. This general perception justifiably springs from the conspicuously lavish supply of extravagant violence and sex that's become an inseparable part of the films we see today. Nonetheless, if the makers of films are supposed to be held responsible for displaying such content, I feel, the audiences are equally responsible for paying undue attention to such frivolous foolery that is not worthy of even an iota of today's extremely busy minds that have much serious and deservedly important tasks to dwell upon. My question is "why do we even talk about such content?" The moment we see a sleazy or excessively violent film trailer, why do we not discard it from our vicinity instead of just investing our

time writing critical articles, dislodging them or engaging in mass protests against them.

If banning a film could have saved our highly vulnerable youth extremely anxious to watch age restricted videos, we could have successfully been able to divert their concentration towards participating in intellectual activities rather than getting hooked to violate all rules of censorship under the pretext of modernity. Indeed it is the gusto of radicalism that provokes the younger generation of today to watch violence and sex that spoils their mind and deviates them towards unwarranted actions.

If juvenile delinquency is a major concern today, it is not because of only films, it is because of our inability as responsible adults to rationally explain the youth the adequate reason beneath our denial to watch such explicit content on Television. Yes, somewhere down the line we have failed as parents and guardians to make our children understand the detrimental factors of becoming susceptible to the addiction of such films and hence we see the generation today watches all the provocative material.

Imposing the rule of not watching Netflix or OTT platform will not help. The rules are supposed to be broken is the anthem of many such youths that are unregulated on account of the fact that they are misguided. Many a times, the working parents and guardians are too engrossed in their own problems to fathom the necessity of counselling curious minds.

It is not by stringent principles but by a forthright and sensitized counselling that the youth of today can be made to understand the need to focus on the ethically correct and age appropriate matter. Three four days back, I found a very young 8th standard student reading a novel that wasn't compatible with his age. On asking, he told me that the book was given to him by a girl of his class and on further inquiry it was discerned that the girl had got it from one of her friends who

happens to be outside of the academic organization. This means that the child is being persuaded to pursue something that isn't good for her. She's influenced and does not even realize that someone has tried to intoxicate her with the wrong thoughts through a very indirect mode of approach.

Apparently, in today's times, it has become very easy to spoil young minds by implicit method of exposing them to inapt literary and entertainment media. The reason these hypnotise young minds is that these vouch as tempting modes providing access to all that is apparently denied to them. The prohibited content is like a forbidden fruit that appears more irresistible and therefore getting carried away by it is evidently easy. Argument, altercation and stipulating precepts against watching the sensitive content does not make any sense and does not work. It is only a healthy and candid discussion with them that enables them to cultivate the understanding that they are not mature enough to get exposed to mature content.

When we advocate sex education to the youths of today for their safety, it must be ensured that they learn the subject with decency by appropriately highlighting the health hazards involved in the same. Similarly, the jeopardy of inculcating violent traits in nature by watching exorbitant violence needs to be adequately explained. Most importantly, these notions enter into the minds of those that have been honourably initiated into culture and tradition which endorses decency and sobriety.

It is my personal observation as a teacher that unless young people have very strong ethical values taught to them by their parents and guardians, they do not comprehend the benefits of living a sober life. This is true in case of every child because it is a blatant reality that children that do not have a proper guidance in their youth are directed towards delinquent behaviour very frequently. Teaching the worthiness of abstaining from matter that does not complement the age is

the indispensable responsibility of the parents and guardians. The centres of education like the schools and colleges may hold on value education classes but the primary teaching of ethics and principles certainly comes from the family; this fact cannot be dispensed with.

We cannot expect a clean society without attempting to clean it. Merely sitting comfortably on our chairs and critiquing a certain realm of enterprise will not help. It is our moral duty to ensure we guide our youth in the right direction rationally without dictating the dos and don'ts to them in an old school fashion. Today's times I find the dearth of such matured adults that construe the need to focus all their energy and attention towards constructive ways of living life and becoming true mentors for the present day youth. What I find is a bunch of critics that raise a barrage of complaints against violent and sexually explicit content, burn effigies of celebrities or rant continually against them. The moment we mind our own business and not indulge in such foppery to avail media attention, we would make this world indubitably a better and safer place to live in. It is not by ruthlessly protesting and banning films but by educating our youth rightfully that we would ultimately gain immunity against such inappropriate content. It will not affect us anymore and therefore whether it is displayed or not displayed in front of us will make not a tinge of difference. We would not get susceptible to it in any way. **This is how we make a garbage free society, not by pouring out our anger against these content creators in a rancorous way.**

For comments (if any) please post in the box given below.

Surrealism as the means of escape in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*

It is very easy to remain in the pragmatic world of apparent realities. Seeing is believing but if this were the ultimate truth, people would never have felt the need to escape the bondage of the so called empirical reality and plunge into a land of possibilities which does not comply with the parameters of tangible realism and yet has immense possibilities of excavating the depths of inner human psyche within which lies the unadulterated truth of their lives. What is the reason for the real world often becoming fake when it comes to projecting human conscience? It is because reality occludes people from presenting themselves as they are with their personal beliefs founded on unconventional notions that more often than not disregard the fundamental principles of propriety or righteous behaviour assigned to them. Girish Karnad's plays *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* explore deep recesses of human conscience that often remained unexplored by practical human efforts.

In *Hayavadana*, Padmini's secret desire is that she wants a man with a sound brain and a good physique instead of a weakly built Devadatta, her husband. In *Naga-Mandala*, Rani's secret desire is that she desires a loving man in her life instead of the tyrant husband she has in reality. Both these heroines are essentially tabooed by the society from expressing their wants openly and they are intelligent enough to comprehend the fact that crossing the boundaries of morality for them both would typify them as adulteresses. It is therefore that another world altogether different from the real one is recreated by both these women in which their desires are met, rather subtly but conspicuously. Moreover, despite the fact that they manage to fulfil their wants, they aren't stereotyped as illicit or

wrong in their conduct. This is the speciality of their created worlds that are far removed from the realistic life.

Padmini's world includes Kali, the goddess who wakes up suddenly from her sleep and grants her the incredible boon of a man with brain and brawn. This is actually impossible in reality. Nonetheless, when we read the play or watch it, we accept this improbability whole heartedly as we are somewhere aware that the deliberate use of surrealistic setting acts as an apt device to counter our expectations of a 'good Indian woman' who is known for her strong ethical values. When Kali makes an impossible phenomenon a reality with her trick Padmini does not have two men but has only one man with two distinct qualities of two men. This apparently magical reality is accepted readily by the us because we are indoctrinated so strongly to accept anomaly in imagination but not in our reality. It is therefore that educated readers and audiences of the play do not dismiss the story as absurd or unreal because there is no need for providing any official approval to the heroine for her conduct of desiring intelligent Devadattta and the able bodied Kapila as she has them both in one man because of a divine intervention. We are practically saved, I would say, from the onus of giving our opinions on the legitimacy of the choice. Similarly, when Rani makes love to a serpent disguised as her own husband in *Naga-Mandala*, we are absolutely free from being judgmental about her in any sense of the word. Rani is shown as an innocent village girl who hardly has the calibre to deduce the reality of the man who appears to her every night in the guise of her husband. It is so comfortable for the proponents of morality to convince themselves that Rani is to be acquitted from the blame of fornication. Thus, surreal acts as the device of escaping reality that is stringent and demands an absolute insistence on ethical conduct. While we know that Rani has a tyrant husband who does not love her and the serpent has brought a lot of love to her, we cannot apparently approve this extra-marital relationship of her. Nevertheless, it becomes a lot

easier to bypass the illicit element in the relation of the two if we accept the imaginary folk tale of the serpent lover as true.

The point here is, not only does surreal drama acquits the protagonists from the blame of disloyalty; it relaxes the recipients from the cumbersome task of giving an honest verdict for the two. As soon as the readers/audiences are released from this requirement, there germinates a whole range of viewpoints in relation to both these characters that are far removed from the idea of stringent categorization of good or bad. This is what the playwright Girish Karnad intends to execute in both these plays. He seems to provide us the luxury of freely interpreting Padmini and Rani as victims of patriarchy or shrewd creators of their own desired reality. Ultimately, this dual interpretation dismantles conventional bigotry in a very intelligent way without dismissing the ethical notions value education we study in our lives. Karnad does not undermine ethics and morals; he dislodges the fetish for these that often we have in our lives. In addition to this, he gives those the emancipation to liberate themselves from these notions completely who feel that they do not require them at all and their life is a personal matter in all its entirety. Thus, both these characters expose our expectations for an orderly social living as well as our keen desire to break the set concepts of 'morally correct'. There is a Padmini and a Rani in all our lives who don't want to comply with the rules but our reluctance to accept them in public is also a matter of perception in these plays. If we secretly support extra marital alliance, why don't we have the courage to voice our feelings out in the open? Why do we have to have double standards in our lives promulgating loyalty in marriage on the one hand and carrying on a tacit affair on the other? Our perspectives of modernity are also challenged in the plays through the use of the surreal. We want the surreal as a means to escape reality of our misbalanced living that is both conventional and anomalous at the same time. Only surreal

can divulge these inner secrets and can be digested by the people today who superficially cling either to their culture or to unconventional ways of living. If Padmini and Rani were vocal enough to claim their likings, am sure people would have then(when these plays were published) and even today would have comfortably judged them as wrong. At the same time, it would have been done by the same people whose notions of ethics and propriety and very vague and far from being culturally sound. Unlike these people, those that cling to ethics strongly would have completely dismissed both these characters as inappropriate in their desires. Surreal prevents both these extremes and gives us thankfully some space to think and decide which school of thought would we like to belong to – the ethical or the modern and how.

For any comments please send in the box given below