



THE FIRE AND THE RAIN : A WAR BETWEEN THE ARYANS AND THE DRAVIDIANS

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ABSTRACT

Inspired by C.Rajagopalachari's abridgement of Mahabharata, Girish Karnad writes his play, The Fire and The Rain, which is based on Yavakrita myth of Vana Parva (Forest Canto). The play shows the polarity between Aryan and Dravidian cultures, their way of life, ideology of knowledge, relationship among men and women, and treatment of power ect. Thus, the play becomes a battle ground between Aryan and Dravidian communities. But the end the play establishes the importance of Altruism over egoism, knowledge over ignorance, simplicity over hypocrisy, and finally humanity over selfishness. India is the treasure house of different ideologies, cultures, believes, religions, castes and races. The Indian subcontinent had faced various attacks of the foreign invaders, but either they had to compromise with Indian way of life, its soil, its climate and its diverse culture to save their signs on its sands, or they had to vanish in flow of time for their almighty mentality. Similarly, Aryan had to compromise with the native non-Aryan civilization to live in India. Though, there were many instances of clashes among them, they both were effected by the culture of one another. Girish Karnad's The Fire and the Rain shows the importance of multiculturalism in a country like India, that is full of diversities. The characters of the play come in contact with each other and through their encounter, the play aptly shows the battle between Aryans and Dravidians.

KEYWORDS : Varnashrama, Familial Bond, Brahminism, Non-Aryan belief, Diversity, Humanity, Altruism.

The fire and the Rain is actually the English translation of Girish Karnad from his kannada play Agni Mottu Male. The play is based on Yavakrita myth of the great Indian epic, Mahabharata. Sage Lomasha narrated the Yavakrita myth to Pandavas in the Vana Parva (Forest Canto) of Mahabharata. Karnad was highly inspired by C. Rajagopalachari's abridgement of this great Indian epic. After 37 years of planning Girish Karnad wrote his play but infused his modern temperament into it. The marked shift of the Asian theatre has been noticed in its return to Nativism , return to the traditional roots. Indian dramatist Girish Karnad amalgamates myth and symbols with the modern theatrical elements. The post- modernist spirit and the insight of a psychologist in Karnad give the basis of humanism to the play. He deals with the philosophical, social, cultural and psychological conflicts of the characters and thus shows polarity between the Aryan and the Dravidian.

War is not only fought with weapons. The great war lies in the mind of the human beings. The war of the mind effects cultural , religious, philosophical and psychological settings of all the characters of a society . The fire and The Rain becomes a battleground between Aryan and the Dravidian in this context.

According to history and anthropology non- Aryans were the aboriginal (adivasis) of the Indian subcontinent and they were the ruler of the country before Aryan invasion. The Aryan invaders imposed their own culture upon the adivasis. The horrified encounter between the Aryans and the non Aryans created a great gulf between them. Aryan ruler formulated Varnavyavastha and non Aryan Dravidian came to be regarded as Shudras. The play opens with a Yagna to please the God of rain and ends with the performance of Natya . The Brahminical ritual Yagna and the non Brahminical Natya are the apparent contradictions of this play .Two worlds clashing together with their approaches to life, knowledge formation, way of worshipping ,man -woman relationship , idea about marriage and fellow feelings . The story is based on the myth of Yavakri who is guided by the fire of revenge. His egoism, repulsive passion, hunger off flesh -make him like a Flint ready to burn the tinder like quality of Vishaka's body. His unconscious mind is filled with mortal passion which leads him to death . Along with Yavakri, Parvasu who is also the representative of Aryan blood is to be seen as a failed priest to bring rain ,though he is a learned Vedic scholar in shastras. In spite of maintaining a cordial mutual relationship with his wife, he maintains the relationship of an explorer and the explored. Burning with the fire of his father's treachery he kills his father and imposes the allegation on his brother Arvasu . Raibhya, Arvasu's father, in spite of being a Vedic scholar ,is a victim of jealousy ,sexual passion ,hypocrisy and slang language. As a counter to all these above representatives of the the Aryan community ,Nittilai appears as rain of love. She is the daughter of a hunter, a dalit girl, a non Aryan Dravidian. She is rational in her way of life, views about knowledge ,remarks about Aryan community and Aryan gods . Her love for Arvasu knows no boundary.

Girish Karnad highlights the hypocrisy and snobbery of the Brahminical Aryan community with the presentation of Nittilai who stands for the tribal openness and simplicity. She criticizes the Aryan culture thus : "But what to know is why Brahmins so secretive about everything?... You know , their fire sacrifices are conducted in uncovered enclosures. They modify themselves in the dark of the jungle . Even their gods appear so secretly.

Why ?what are they afraid of? Look at my people. Everything is done in public view there. The priest announces that he will invoke the deity at such and such time on such and such a day. And then there, right in front whole tribe, he gets possessed. And the spirit answers your questions. You can feel it come and go". She questions Yavakri's knowledge thus: " What is the use of all these powers " if they cannot solve day to day problems. Their(Dravidians) views about Aryans are psychologically made and proves to be true when Arvasu fails to attend the meeting arranged by Nittilai's father .Nittilai's father is clear about his views about the Aryans as said by Nittilai: " These high- born caste men are glad to bed our women but not to twed them ". As a true humanistic scholar , Girish Karnad shows Arvasu as a bridge between Aryan and Dravidian community .Though his Aryan instincts engulf him and he cremates Yavakri's dead body, he is ready to become outcaste. He plays the role of Vritra and makes Parvasu able to realise the meaning of life and importance of self sacrifice. He sacrifices his love to bring rain for the sake of humanity. Again, Girish Karnad present a Stark comparison between Nittilai a Dravidian married woman, and Vishaka a Brahminical married woman. Though Vishaka is a married woman she maintains the illicit relationship with his former lover, Yavakri and she is guided by sexual passion. But Nittilai is ready to maintain the relationship of a brother and sister with her former lover ,Arvasu as she is loyal to another, and helps Arvasu only on the ground of humanity. The latent impulses of both Yavakri and Vishaka are shown through their secret meeting.

There are conspiracies everywhere in the Aryan community .Raibhya kills Yavakri to disturb Parvasu in the final stage of fire sacrifice. Arvasu is a victim of conspiracy of his father and brother. He says to Nittilai: " It's conspiracy , don't you see, it is all planned because I wanted to marry you. Because I was ready to reject my caste, my birth ". Arvasu curses Parvasu and says to Nittilai about the poisonous effect of his brother in the fire sacrifice. He says that it will be the rain of blood if Parvasu still continues the fire sacrifice. Nittilai's father stands in comparison with other members of the Aryan community . He is a Dravidian ,does charitable works among the draught stricken people . He tries to keep faith in Arvasu but his faith becomes futile. Andhaka and Brahma Rakshas are shown as shudras.

Parvasu reminds Brahma Rakshas that the sacrificial enclosure are protected against all unnatural Spirits . Finally as an altruist, Nittilai shows the religion of humanity. She calms down Arvasu's feelings for revenge and vengeance. She acts as a lamp into hurricane . She says

: ``Leaves to the the gods, Arvasu. Look at your family . Yavakri avenges his father's shame by attacking your sister in law. Your father avengers bye killing Yavakri. Your brother kills your father. And now in your own turn want vengeance where will it all end? ``. Finally the performance of Natya, at the place of Yagna, leads Parvasu to self sacrifice .Parvasu's sacrifice, Nittilai 's humanity and Arvasu' s performance bring rain.

The ending shows the essence of altruism over egoism, Joy of humanism over caste biasness. The essence of a composite Indian culture is shown here. The triumph of humanity rescues Brahma Rakshas ,and Arvasu sits clutching Nittilai's dead body.Arvasu announces: `` it's raining, Nittilai! it's raining``.

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