



KANYASULKAM

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ABSTRACT

Gurazada Appa Rao's *KANYASULAKAM*, which means "bride price", is more than what the title just conveys. It is, undoubtedly, the greatest Telugu drama that conveyed the woes of young widows, social atrocities, greed and cheating of people and many in a hilarious way. It is not just sermonizing and makes the hearts to melt but at the same time bubbling with laughter.

KEYWORDS

KANYASULAKAM is considered a pure comedy but a tearful theme and a masterful blending of comedy and tragedy and a great intermingling of sobs and laughter. This play touches the heart. The theme is universal and the characters are real and can be seen all over. The dialogues are often quoted for all occasions as they are memorable and everlasting.

OF KANYASULKAM AND ITS AUTHOR

What gives *KANYASULAKAM* its philosophical profundity is only its human touch. It cannot simply be had for the mere asking. The author, Gurazada Appa Rao was an avid student of philosophy both in and out of school. "Comic spirit" was, therefore, Gurazada Appa Rao's unique possession, the characteristic property of his soul. To mistake it for mere fun-making and fun-loving is certainly to degrade it and to vulgarise it. He was indeed taken for a joker, as ill luck would have it.

This great Telugu play was performed on the stage nearly 130 years back. Coming to the foreign sources of inspiration, if not models, the author himself acknowledged his mentors, the foremost of them being of course, Shakespeare. Shakespeare's imprint is there for anyone to see in the opening scene of the play and it is so heavy an imprint that one could venture to call it a carbon copy of a scene KING HENRY FOURTH, part one, in which Falstaff feigns deafness in the forbidding presence of an undesirable personage. Also the scenes of ribaldry in Shakespeare's *MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* and the like also left the impress on some of the memorable, if less edifying, scenes in *KANYASULAKAM*.

Coming to the characters in this great play, each and every character is important. The hero, again it is debatable as who is the hero of this play, is a trickster and a liar. Girisam can be called the protagonist of this play. He is the hero as well as the villain in some respects. Most of the times he is heroic. There is absolutely no doubt about it.

Girisam is the most lovable character of Telugu people. This is probably because of his diabolic nature and fun-loving attitude. In those days he was the representative of the modern style and new generation. He is the most lovable character in the play. He is not affluent and with abundant of worldly nature, he survived anywhere and can fool anybody. He is a comic villain but not the true embodiment of the quality.

Madhravani is of course, another great character in this play. She was born in the family of prostitutes. In the first edition the author made her character a mere character but in the second edition there was a sea change. Gurazada Appa Rao himself, while writing a letter to his close friend, Ongolu Mun-

imanikyam that "In the first Edition Madhuravani was colourless iniquity. Now she has fully grown." On many occasions Gurazada Appa Rao went on saying that as the drama took many changes, he began to love this character very much.

Madhuravanimis the pivotal character on which all the characters and the entire plot revolves around. The great Sri Sri says, "Madhuravani is the most important character in the play. She put the track of the plot in the right direction. She is bold and never hesitates to help the needy and weak. She has the ability to solve any problem faced by any character."

KANYASULAKAM is surely an epic in Telugu Literature. Also it is the greatest drama of Telugu Literature. The following are the reasons for terming this drama as an epic. Firstly the theme and the universality. *KANYASULAKAM* was written with a purpose by the author, not just for fame. The writer was extremely pained to see the woes of young widows and small girls suffering a lot by the greed of the people. So he wanted to highlight these social atrocities to the world boldly. *KANYASULAKAM* has succeeded in its mission. That's why we can call it as an Epic.

As far as language is concerned, *KANYASULAKAM* had set the trend. This play was written in colloquial language. This is really a great innovation by the author and he has succeeded. He wanted to be as nearer as possible to his readers and the people who watch the play on the stage. We can emphatically say that the greatness of *KANYASULAKAM* is because of the language only. It reached all most all Telugu speaking people. A layman as well as an illiterate can happily read this play and understand it and enjoy it. There is no need for any person to explain the intricacies of the play. "

Another reason for the greatness of the play is Humour". In terms of categorization, it is a comedy. But the theme is heart touching. That is the greatness of the dramatist. He did not want to simply preach but tried his best to make the people to understand the reality and feel for it so that a change would take place. A character Lubhdhavadhanlu is actually very old and ailing man. People know his reality but urge him to marry. Poor fellow he believes and is ready for the marriage. Ramappa Panthulu, another prominent character is really in debts and lives by cheating people but poses as if he was a rich man. Girisam poses as if he had studied in Poona Decan College and even offered to work in the court of Nizam for a huge salary but he declined. There are quacks who can catch hold of ghosts and robs people. There are *bairagis* who profess that they can fly in the air and are age less. All these fellows are drunkards and imposters.

All these characters were created by Appa Rao just to tell the common people to know about them and be careful with them. The readers surely laugh at them and pity at them and also know about them. After knowing about them they keep them away and will not fall in their trap. Already the readers are well advised by another great writer Veeresea lingam Panthulu through his RAJA SEKHARA CHARITRA.

Some great comments about the author of *KANYASULAKAM*,

Sri Pada subramanya Sastry while writing in Bharati magazine says, "Gurajad Appa Rao Panthulu is really a shining star in the Telugu Literary world. He is a model and this is true. He is kavisekhara and also Telugu Valimiki"

Sri Chinta Deekshitulu says, "There is nobody in Telugu writers who did not praise Appa Rao. He is the model writer for all the young poets of Telugu literature surely."

So to sum up age cannot wither the infinite beauty of the drama *KANYASULAKAM*. Gurazada Appa Rao also continue to shine as the brightest star in Telugu Literature. He achieved the status of a poet, dramatist and social reformer.

References:

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