

**Girish Karnad's *Bali: The Sacrifice: A Voice of Woman*  
Against Family Traditions**

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Indian English Drama having a very rich tradition and Indian Playwrights has enriched it. Girish Karnad as a Indian playwright has written his plays in his regional language Kannada and translated them into English. His plays are based on Indian myth, culture, tradition and history.

The present play *Bali: The Sacrifice* (2004) is English translation of his Kannada play *Hitting Hunja* (1980). It is based on the myth of 'Cock of Dough' which Karnad came to know his teenage. It deals with the theme of violence versus non violence and Brahminism versus Jainism.

The play is considered as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. The act of sacrifice of animals, birds and coconut is an age old tradition in orthodox culture. It offers to please the Gods and goddesses. Jainism condemns violence in any form. The playwright takes up the issue of blood sacrifice as an act of violence and issue of orthodoxy culture. The aim of present paper is to focus on the voice of Jain woman against the family traditions.

The theme of the play *Bali: The Sacrifice* has been derived from the thirteenth century Kannad epic 'Yashodhara Charite' by Janna. There are four characters in the play. Queen, King, Queen Mother and Mahout are portrayed without their personal name. The play revolves around the woman character Queen who belongs to Jainism and strongly opposed violence. She is very bold and assertive character. Queen Mother believes in orthodoxy traditions and strongly support to blood sacrifice. The playwright presents conflict between violence and non violence through Queen and Queen Mother. Queen represents the Jain principal of non violence. She believes in the principal of pity, love, kindness and compassion of Jainism in her life. She has decided to get inter religion marriage to king who belongs to Hindu

religion. Jain and Hindu strongly look up on marriage as a sacrament but Queen in sake of child crosses her Jain principle and establish extra marital relation with Mahout. Queen Mother believes superstitious rites and strongly respects to family traditions. King has married a Jain Queen against the wishes of Queen Mother who despises her daughter in law considering her defiant and rebel against family traditions she rebukes her son for marrying a Jain.

The play opens with the song of Queen:

*As the world is divided*

*Into two orbs:*

*One lit up by the sun*

*The other hid in the shade... (p 73)*

This song presents the two sections of the life. One driven by violence and other shunning it. The King and the Queen are married for fifteen years but they are remain childless. The couple is under the psychological pressure for an heir to fulfill their obligation to the kingdom. The Queen Amritamati opens herself in the arms of an ugly Mahout in the sanctum of a ruined temple. The headless idol is the witness to their lovemaking. It calls same upon the Queen but she refuses to have committed adultery. She is neither ashamed nor regret what happened. But she dislikes any person using bad words towards her husband. Mahout raises question about her husband, she strongly opposes him as:

*Mahout: That's all right. I liked it. I like everything about bed. Everything. That's why I*

*am good. I am good. Aren't I? Better than your husband?*

*Queen: How dare you!*

*He is the best of men. (78-79)*

When Mahout doubts about King's ability at that time Queen reacts angrily and shows her love

towards her husband. But she is very self- possessive and bold lady. She does not want to miss the body of the Mahout. The playwright raises the question on the long social institution of marriage. He points out that marriage is an institution founded on the convenience of the people.

The King has followed the Queen. He sat on the steps of the temple. The Mahout and the Queen are in the inner sanctum and produce the sounds of lovemaking to send away all the unwelcome strangers. But the King has entered in the temple and pained to see his wife in love with an ugly Mahout. The Queen is not ashamed of her guilty. She feels fuller, richer and warmer. She explains that it was not planned by her but it was just a passion. She likes no tongues wagging against her in the palace and in the kingdom. By becoming pregnant, she desires to see the entire kingdom rejoice with the news with festivities and celebration. In fact the King embraces the Jainism in sake of love of his wife but she abhors the violence of the Kshatriyas. The infidelity of the Queen, Amritamati seems a matter of shame since it raises the question about his virility. His wife crosses the boundaries of family traditions and betrayals her husband. The King at last confesses the truth to his mother. Mother Queen becomes angry and spites at him in anger:

*King: Calm down- mother. Please-*

*Mother: What kind of a man are you? You have lost your manhood. You, you impotent.. (Spite in his face. Her reels back. But that action suddenly calms her. She suddenly realizes what she has done. Quickly moves forward and wipes his face). (p 108).*

The blood sacrifice is very honorable tradition for Mother Queen's family. She is always worried about the heir of Kingdom. The King has no child for fifteen years of his marriage. Mother Queen has kept different kind of animals to sacrifice and she scarified some of them to Goddess praying for a child to her son. But King has denied worshipping the gods by offering the Bali and it is the denial of his mother's traditional honor. She asks all family members to follow the family tradition of scarification. She is very orthodoxy and bold enough in her behavior. She keeps commanding nature and wants to control her son. When she comes to know that her son is not in mood to listen her advice of scarification, she decides to leave palace and wants

to live in cottage where she keeps the sacrificial animals. The King tries to console her, she says:

*Mother: My gods have already been expelled from this house and live, shunned and starved, like outcastes. I should have followed them out. But I was blinded by my love for you.*

*(Pause)*

*But I want you to promise me something.*

*King: Yes?*

*Mother: I shall live away from the palace, in a corner of my own. And there, I shall live as I please. With my gods. My sacrificial animals. No further interference from you two.*

*(p 98-99).*

After the confession of the King, Mothe Queen comes to know about the infidelity of her daughter-in-law. She feels shame and dishonor about her daughter-in-law who breaks the family honor and rich tradition. Mother Queen wants to punish her daughter-in-law. She asks her son:

*Mother: Oh horrible! Horrible! Where is she? Tell me- In some hole? A god forsaken garret? Where? Where did you see them?*

*King: Control yourself-*

*Mother: Has she fallen so low? The Whore\_ And you. How can you stand here like this? I should cut her to pieces---feed her t wolves and vultures. Do it , son, now!*

*King: Don't be hysterical, Mother-  
Mother: Throw he bones to the dogs. She has betrayed you. You are not bound by your vows now. All this nonsense about non-violence. It had to go. Let it go. Kill the harlot and her lover. If you won't do it, I'll do it. Let me fetch my sacrificial knife from the temple. I'll- (p107).*

The illicit relation of Queen raises question against the Mother Queen's family traditions. Quen makes violence against the Kshatriyas. To avoid the problem catastrophe, the Mothe Queen suggests offering sacrifice to which the King has agreed. But his wife objects abd reminds him o the Jain tenet of non-violence. After a long heated argument, the Mother Queen finds a solution to sacrifice a cock made of dough instead of a live one. But the Queen is strongly opposed to that proposition and refuses to take part in it and tried to defense the Jainism tenet

of non-violence. The Queen forgets that she did not consider her illicit relation with the Mahout as harmful as creates violence in wife-husband relation. Her extra-marital indulgence is very dishonorable for Queen who belongs to royal family. It is true that woman in the society, whether of high or low social standing is always looked down upon by virtue of being a woman.

In the play, playwright tries to show that the family tradition of blood sacrifice is an act of violence and the daughter-in-law of the family has been strongly opposed to sacrifice tradition of family. The whole play revolves around the violence and non-violence, tradition and modernity, relationship, status among the family members. Karnad exemplifies the clear notion of animal sacrifice as an act of violence and he discloses it through the voice of Queen.

### References

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