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Theory of Purushartha: Girish Karnad's *Bali: The Sacrifice*

Atish Chandrakant Akade

Asst. Prof.

Mahatma Phule Mahavidyalaya, Ahmadpur,
Dist. Latur, Maharashtra.

Abstract:

The present research paper is attempted to explore, through renowned theory of *Purushartha* of Hinduism and dramatic characters of the play, *Bali: The Sacrifice* by Girish Karnad by applying four ethics of *Purusharthas-Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha*. The paper chiefly focuses on the theory of *Purushartha* viz. *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha* and further tries to show how the playwright makes his characters move towards the recognition of their *Purusharthas* in context of modern life.

An overarching theory that can provide a quantity of guidance to modern man is Indian theory of *Purushartha*. The concept 'Purushartha' means the aims of human life. Karnad's play, *Bali: The Sacrifice* projects the impatience and dilemma of modern man and yet another facet of man-woman relationship in the framework of marital life. In this play, worldly materialistic life and established moral values are juxtaposed with the basic conflict of a man who is entrapped between the two and forced to choose between them. Thus, central concern is to explore the relevance of *Purusharthas* in the context of modern era.

Keywords: *Purusharthas-Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, Modernity and Family breakdown.*

Introduction:

'*Purusharthas* (Sanskrit: "that which is sought by man; human purpose, aim or end") refers to a goal, end or aim of human existence. It is a key concept in Hinduism and refers to the four proper goals or aims of a human life.'¹ The word 'purushartha' literally cohesive of two words 'purusa' and 'artha'. *Purusa* means human being and *artha* means aim or goal of human life. *Purusharthas* means objectives of man. According to Hindu way of life, a man should strive to achieve four chief objectives (*Purusharthas*) in his life. They are: 1. *Dharma* (duty with social moral code and conduct) righteousness, 2. *Artha* (material wealth) livelihood, 3. *Kama* (desire of sex) pleasure and 4. *Moksha* (spiritual) liberation. The idea of *Purushartha* inspire Indians to lead the life of Brahmacharya (celibacy), Grahastha (house hold), Vanprastha (pilgrimage) and Samnyas (renunciation).² In this context, Dr. Rajan Misra aptly quotes,

'The word *Purushartha* literally means the goals of human, or what men live for. Its four categories are descriptive in the sense that these are the goals generally desired by human being. The value of *dharma* and *moksha* together constitute the ideal of

shreyas, which is the essential goodness of the good man and the good society.’³

Person being in a society is anticipated to attain these four objectives and seeks achievement in his life before departing from here. The concept of *Purusharthas* obviously establishes the fact that Hinduism believes a life of balance, achievement and fulfillment. *Bali: The Sacrifice* is the translation of Girish Karnad’s Kannada play, *Hittina Huja*. It deals with the issue of non-violence. Even Girish Karnad says about its source and theme as:

Bali worried and excited me. It is a discussion play that interrogates the notion of ‘violence’ and is based on a thirteenth century Kannada epic, ‘Yashodhara Charita’, which refers to various other texts dating back to the ninth century. ... The mere thought of bloodshed or brutality can condemn one as much as the deed would. The play debates the conflict of faith.⁴

It seems that war, violence, bloodshed are issues of everyday behaviour in modern age. Modern society observes a number of problems such as terrorism, patricide, matricide, bloodshed in materialistic era. In this relation Girish Karnad puts in front of audience the clash between violence and non-violence. Here it is observed that according to first principle of Purushartha that is *Dharma* (duty with social moral code and conduct) act of violence is denied for self beneficial.

The main female character in *Bali: The Sacrifice* is Queen, Amritamati. Though she belongs to Jainism with certainly believes in the principles like pity, love and compassion, she has done inter-religion marriage with Hindu King. She loves her husband. Even she describes her husband as:

Queen: Marvelous person, affectionate, gentle and trusting, he is the best of men.⁵

Nevertheless, she is very self-possessive woman. She controls behaviour of her husband. She has managed to convert her husband into Jainism. Also she controls his state affairs. Even she does not allow her mother-in-law to celebrate her joy at the Queen’s pregnancy. Thus she tries to control over the family. In this backdrop, at one midnight, Queen Amritamati leaves her bedroom to follow a harmonious song and finds herself in the arms of an ugly Mahout who is gifted lovely voice. It is very important to note that the ugliness, the low caste and status of Mahout does not stop her from her passionate love with him.

Mahout wants to share his emotion and love with Queen Amritamati. And Queen has not opposition related to Mahout’s ugliness. Even she assures him that he is not as unpleasant as he thinks of his presupposing in psyche. But she is ignorant that her husband is following her. But Queen Amritamati is fascinated by Mahout’s voice and his strong physical appearance. She affectionately believes that he is more cultured than anyone else and is influenced by him. Even she says the truth:

Queen: I came here because I heard you sing. I had to come. But let me tell you something. Nobody has ever talked to me like you have. Nobody.⁶

The words of Queen Amritamati expose the truth that she is in love with Mahout. It is clear that Queen Amritamati keeps extra-marital relationship but first she was not conscious that her husband was following her in the devastated temple where Mahout and she met. When the King and the Queen Mother find the Queen with the Mahout in the devastated temple and realize the situation, the Queen Mother demands the King to kill both of them suddenly. But the Queen comes out to defend the Mahout. She accepts the gathering of her with Mahout means the relationship of one-night. She says to Mahout:

Queen: Go on. Go on. Don't hesitate now. Throw it out. Don't be afraid, Mahout. Go ahead. Nothing'll happen to you. You've my word.⁷

It is remarkable to state that Queen Amritamati is bold and has dominant nature and she does not apologize for her disloyalty against her husband. She shatters conventional notions of familial values and the husband-wife relationship within marital life. It seems that queen Amritamati looks like a modern woman who a lonely figure is facing the experiences of loveless married life and she just like specially a modern woman in atmosphere of contemporary elitist society where men groups are busy with making money and fame. But she does not possess the third principle of Purushartha theory that is *Kama* (desire of sex) pleasure limited within husband and wife relationship. Therefore it would not possible for her to get acquainted with the fourth principle that is *Moksha* (spiritual) liberation. Instead she justifies her betrayal as a misfortune in her life. About her infidelity she replies:

Queen: I do not regret anything that has happened. I will not disown him or anything he gave me....because it just happened. Without my willing it. It just happened. That's all.... I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer. Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn't plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful.⁸

By this way she wants to prove that her disloyalty is not infidelity but only a misfortune. Also it is especially vital to note down that she forgets the principle of woman's chastity or purity of conduct in nuptial life. Amritamati could not follow the third principle of Purushartha in her life consequently the relationship between husband and wife leads to end when Queen sacrifices her life by killing herself and falls into the arms of her husband who embraced her with love. In the context of marital life, Girish Karnad presents conflicting elements of Indian cultural ethics and modernity. By the presentation of queen Amritmati character in *Bali: The Sacrifice* Karnad has brought to our notice is the importance of Purushartha theory and how the principles of Purushartha theory play especially central role to save ruined marital life in the backdrop of modern context. In this connection Dr. Rajan Misra aptly writes:

What is deduced is creative and harmonious synthesis of the foundational principles of **Dharma** with the modern perception of human values. We can then call it the modern Indian values tradition and rely on it to provide guidance for resolving the values crisis in the contemporary human society. ⁹

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