

**Symbolic Representation of Bloodshed or Blood as ‘Creator’ or ‘Destroyer’ in the Play**

*Bali: The Sacrifice*

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**Abstract**

The main concept of this paper is to evaluate the thickness of the colour ‘Red’ as a major representative of bloodshed in the play Bali: The Sacrifice written by famous Indian playwright Girish Karnad. The whole play survives on the base of blood .i.e. Sacrifice. The two contrasting images of blood as a ‘Creator’ and as an ‘Executor’. In between these two opposite ideologies how people suffers mentally, emotionally and physically as well. The paper also shows these unpronounced human sufferings and its consequences on mankind. The unseen weight of responsibilities, the extreme sense of guilt which leads to take a reckless action, eventually leads to the breakdown of mankind and many more similar issues will be interrogated in this section.

Keywords: Girish Karnad, Indian Myth, Violence and Non Violence, Patriarchal Society, Bali or Sacrifice, bloodshed, Existentialism, Historical incident, Social strata, child marriage, Sin, Redemption and Damnation.

**Key Words :**

The term Girish Karnad mostly belongs to the postmodern world. He was one of its own kinds of gem in the court of Indian English Playwrights. He had a unique ability of consuming the historical events of past and blends it with our cultural myths to create a sculpture of modern man. His plays always force man to rethink their existence and their flaws. The present paper Bali: The Sacrifice shows such ability of the playwright. The play originally written in Karnad’s native language i.e. Kannada with the title Hittina Hunja, during 1980s and later translated into English language by the creator himself during, 2002. The play mostly has the major influence of thirteenth century Kannada work, Yashodhara da Charitra by Janna which in turn refers back to the ninth-century Sanskrit epic Yashastilaka by Somadeva Suri. (Shailja B. Wadikar p.59) This Sanskrit Literature

connects its link from the ancient historical incident of 7th century AD.

The story mostly revolves around the axis of sin and most importantly the way of its redemptions. The whole story consists of just four major characters The King, The Queen, The Mother Queen and The Mahout (elephant tamer). Every character in the play has his unique kind of suffering and no other can empathize with the other. The play begins with the Queen’s declaration of her inner turbulence with the lines, ‘As the world is divided into two orbs: one lit up by the sun, the other hid in the shade, so also the human soul...(p73) This shows how extremely the queen was pressurized by the society. Her soul has been divided into parts, one with a role of the first lady of the royal court with her counter part of original, innocent girl living within the body of Queen. Being in the same situation for such

a long time she has started feeling tormented. She just wanted some peace and wanted to have her own life without any feeling of responsibility of others. While hearing the melody of Mahout, the Queen mesmerized and suddenly started feeling free of her cursed life. She has just followed her heart and followed the music leading her to the ruined temple which was also Mahout's shelter. Mahout has some disabilities regarding his physical beauty. He has got some birthmark on his face which was always referred as a scar by the society, 'I'll tell you something, you haven't seen me properly yet. I am ugly. Ugly as a banicoot.'(75) So for Mahout this ruined building was his safe house where no one points out about his weakness. Although he has got the tough body with some extraordinary power in his arm and also his work (taming the elephants) makes him outstanding but still he feels unsafe in the society. His lack of facial beauty not only overshadowed his melodious voice but also his extraordinary power.

The suffering of Queen and Mahout were relatively similar which resulted in getting the peace in each-other. The play begins with the sin of committing adultery, where both the characters are unaware of the real identity and were only attracted because of the sense of purity of souls. But their action draw the most tragic complexities, not only in just the two's life but also the persons related to them. Being the followers of Jain Ideology, the Queen's concept of redemptions varies from the belief of the Mother Queen. Here, the main issue of how any sin must be repentance. The main conflict between the beliefs of the Queen and the Mother Queen made the situation more suffocative. The Queen was a strong

believer of Jainism and so was the Mother Queen. The Mother Queen was a firm believer of Hindu Ideology, who believes in the concept of Sacrifice in order to repay their sin or as remorse. On the other hand we find that the Queen believes in peace and self-remorse as redemption.

The clashes between the Queen and the Mother Queen can be seen from the very beginning of the play. It is clearly visible that their relationship was not at all normal. The Queen totally discarded the thought of hurting others just for the sake of once own action. She believes that one should be responsible of his/ her own action. But this is slightly different in the case of the Mother Queen. She believes that once action can be equalize by the same amount of incentives. So the Mother Queen always offers different kinds of 'Bali' or in English Sacrifice. She always tends to offer something in respect of the things happening. When Mother Queen heard about the news of Queen's Pregnancy she blessed them whole heartedly, 'You have made our family tree bloom. May you get a son whose glory blinds the eight directions'. (94) As the mother Queen said that she will celebrate this happiness in her shrine. Queen was quite aware of the type of celebration mother queen usually have. She knows that mother queen will offer sacrifice of some animals. 'The animals are graded according to the occasions...Sheep, goats for the important rituals. Then buffalo.'(96) The Queen hates this kind of offerings where animals were directly proportional to the kind of sin and virtue. The Queen knew that on hearing the news of getting an heir, the Mother Queen will definitely sacrifice a whole lot of animals because she had heard that, when the King was born, the whole city had been drowned into sacrificed blood as a

celebration. 'They say when you were born, every inch of the earth for miles around was soaked in blood.'(97)

Being impressed by the Jainism Ideology, the King has transformed his faith from Hinduism. That made a reason for Mother Queen not to like The Queen. The Queen was aware of the fact but couldn't help. 'Because of me, you deserted her faith- her Mother Goddess'. (95) And her infertile situation makes this worse. The inability of not being able to give an heir to the throne pressurizes the Queen most. She has been targeted not only by the Mother Queen but the servants, maids, court ladies, and royal members. 'Can you even imagine what it feels like? To pretend you are unaware of their gaze as they scrutinize the roundness of your belly, the stain on your thigh!'(95) The Queen's mental agony on hearing the sentence '(blood/ menstrual) stain on her thigh' can easily be apprehended. She was dying slowly inside.

The Queen was living in this kind of hell from a very long period, slowly reaching to her threshold. The daily routine of taking the precious lives of animals, where she was unable to give birth to a new life, had started making her feel insane. Living in such internal chaos she once felt relieved in the melody of Mahout. Mesmerized with the sweet melody she just drowned towards the elephant tamer in a ruined temple and revolting against the societal norms she committed adultery/ infidelity. Nevertheless, the climax of the play was not this event, but rather when the Mother Queen brings the dough of cock to sacrifice as a redemption of this sin. The momentary action of Queen leads to the mingling of the two ideologies. The Queen was well aware of her sin and also that this will only make the King feel

more guilty of her situation.

When this disastrous action has been caught by the Mother Queen, the real fear of Queen exposed. She knew that she (Mother Queen) will definitely offer some kind of sacrifice in the repentance. The Queen believes the purity of thoughts. She knew that the sin was not when she was committing the adultery but actually when she was having the thought of betraying her marriage vows. So it's not about the actual action but the thought or intention itself. This acute disagreement ended up with the sacrifice of the Queen.

The whole argument revolves around the concept of the blood. One meaning is quite visible, which is 'death' or as a 'destroyer'. The bloodshed could lead to death to any living body. This is the reason why the concept of Red always gives a horrific feeling. The bloodshed always gives the horrible sites and of course it is never being accepted in any civilized society. So we can say that yes, the image or symbol of blood always leads to the concept of destroyer. The Queen expresses her fear as '...line after the line carrion crows, watching, waiting, ready to caw at the palmful of blood that spurted. And spurt it did- every month- every bloody month. How I hated myself when that happened.'(95) The Queen has experienced this traumatic event many times before (miscarriages), so she hates the scene of blood. Deep down she knew that these blood stain were the reason of the death of her fetuses.

Flipping the coin we can also find that these bloods are the reason of new sprouts. And this side has always been ignored by the society. The Mother Queen refers this shade of life at the end when she reveals her concept of blood. She asked the Queen 'you

seem so averse to blood that I wonder you didn't prefer to remain a virgin' (115). She was referring to the blood that shed at the time of birth and also the pain one bears to carry the new life into this world. Queen Mother has never expressed her pain and sufferings to anyone. Finally in the end she defended herself in front of the Queen to show the real image of blood. Blood, that is a baby's ocean for nine months. The baby has swim across in this ocean to come to this world.

"they said the foetus was set transverse in the womb. For four days and nights I screamed in pain. I prayed for death so my child could live. Ultimately they pinned me down to the floor, spread-eagled, and the nurse shoved her hand into my uterus, twisted him around and pulled him out. I was screaming through the gag they had thrust into my mouth...I caste one last glance at my darling son- a farewell look. I thought- and saw him drench in blood, half wrapped in my placenta, and I began to laugh. I lived" (115) Mother Queen's confession.

The Mother Queen has been shown as

the protestant religious in the play. She has been criticized by the Queen in the whole play. But as the play ended the audiences also saw the real face of a woman or a royal lady. She was not ready to accept the change. She was the lady of her words. She also left the castle and started living separately but she never forced Queen or the King to believe in her faith. She just quietly practices her faith which she was carrying as an ancestral faith. She not only just carried her son in her womb safely, but also the rituals and traditions of her ancestors as well. So the Queen and the Mother Queen both have made the contrary concept of the same colour, according to their own experiences. The same colour has given them different traumas. The Queen after listening the logic of Mother Queen, felt that she couldn't be able to become destroyer or a creator. In the same zone the Mother Queen has seen both the side of blood. Blood as a destroyer as well as a creator which gave her the personality of destroyer as well a creator.

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