

OEDIPUS COMPLEX- A DOMINANT ELEMENT IN GIRISH KARNAD'S YAYATI

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Abstract:

The present paper aims at unfolding the mystery of occult relationship between a father and a son in relation to a mother. The son's attraction for the mother and his ill wish to have sexual relations with the latter and the intervention of the father which disrupts the plan of the son are the key themes of the play, Yayati written by Girish Karnad. Oedipus complex seems to dominate the entire plot of the play.

Keywords: *Oedipus complex, incestuous relationship, mythology, male child, male parent.*

Introduction:

Girish Karnad is a modern Indian playwright who pens works of art in his regional language. Besides being a famous actor as well as a director of theatre and films, he earned image as an innovative and creative dramatist after independence. Originally, he wrote the plays in regional language and they were translated later in other languages such as English, Hindi etc. There is a deep impact of existentialist views of Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus on Girish Karnad. He is much fond of conventions and customs. He finds apt material for plots in his own culture and history but presents them in modern way. Thus he promotes the spirit to think over modern happenings through the historical and mythical perspectives.

The Oedipus story as described in the Greek mythology holds historical and cultural significance. It is quite apt to take the tale of Oedipus into consideration before taking the stock of its dominance and influence in the play Yayati written by famous Indian playwright Girish Karnad. The tragedy of Oedipus needs to be studied in connection with the ancient age, culture and the spirit of the primitive era. The prediction of an oracle proved true as the Oedipus killed the king Laius who was none other than his own father and married the queen who was actually his mother. Oedipus tries his best to escape misfortunes but finally he has to meet with the disastrous destination, a point at which he finds that nothing is left to be thought as good and

encouraging to continue the journey of life. Even so, all the miserable and unfortunate incidences that occurred in the life of Oedipus were the result of ignorance and unknowingness. Oedipus doesn't kill his father knowingly nor does he marry his own mother wittingly. But when he realizes the bad and bitter truth of life, he blinds himself while the queen, on the other hand, commits suicide. Destiny cunningly deceives him. He, however, holds himself responsible for whatever sinful happens in the life.

Oedipus complex, according to Sigmund Freud denotes the incestuous attraction of a male child toward the parent of opposite sex, that is, a mother. The male child looks at his father as a barrier on his way to fulfilling sexual desire with his mother. Calvin S. Hall comment on this strange relationship between a son and a father in relation to a mother as follows:

Prior to the emergence of the phallic period, a boy loves his mother and identifies with his father, when the sexual urge increases, the boy's love for his mother becomes more incestuous and as a result becomes jealous of his rival, the father. This tail of affair in which the boy causes the exclusive sexual possession of his mother and feels antagonistic towards his father, is called as the Oedipus complex.¹

Having taken above view expressed by Hall into consideration, it can be said that the relationship that exists between a father and a son in Girish Karnad's Yayati suffers from Oedipus complex. Plays written by Girish Karnad are replete with the scenes in which, the exchange of dialogues with the use of abusive and foul words frequently takes place. Yayati is typically a play which falls in the abovementioned category. The nexus between Yayati and Pooru seems to have been dominated by Oedipus complex. Karnad's Yayati who is a king establishes sexual relationship with his attendant for which he is punished with untimely old age. But his son Pooru took the curse upon himself and he became old in place of his father. In this way, Pooru replaced his father to satiate his carnal desire of sex with his mother. Since early

childhood, Pooru seems to be treasuring the wish of corporal intimacy with his mother while he equally dislikes his father. Whenever he goes away from his mother, he is haunted by her thoughts. Each and every object associated with his mother makes him feel immensely nervous in her absence. He misses even the room where he would spend time with his mother. That's why he expresses the urge as '.... My dear room! The room of a few moments of joy in life'²

Through every possible way, he tries his best to tell his father that he is deeply attracted toward his mother. His entire life is obsessed with the ideas, feelings, memories and thoughts of his mother. Pooru is not even a bit ashamed of declaring love for his mother. He outspokenly tells his father that his life is devoted to his mother and he is alive for his mother otherwise he would have died. In this way, the decision to take the curse of his father upon himself is actually to come up as a substitute of his father in relation to his mother.

Oedipus complex is the central theme in the play Yayati. In Hindu mythologies, it can be seen that the hatred of a male child for his male parent is sensed by the latter. The male parent handles the matter so deftly that the son becomes fully helpless. The tragedy in terms of the hardships the son suffers occurs only because of the unjust imposition of personal wishes on the sons by the fathers. For instance, Rama, Bhishma and Pooru had to swallow the bitter draughts of pains and pangs due to the extravagant and irrelevant desires of their parents. Having recognized the underlying animosity of the male children for their male parents as they stand as an obstacle in their way of getting physically united with their mothers, the fathers chalk out a shrewd plan to paralyze their

children so that they should not challenge their status and position. Accordingly, the male parent asks his son to do something highly painful and self-destructive in the play Yayati. The reason behind son's tragedy is the incestuous desire he possesses for the parent of opposite sex. If the sons had not wished for sexual relationship with the female parents, they would not have suffered at the hands of their male parents. Girish Karnad in Yayati focuses on the Oedipus complex, that is, a queer chemistry of relations between a son and a father in relation to a woman who is mother to a son and wife to a father. The whole story of the play, Yayati seems to be revolving round the oedipal theme.

Conclusion:

Thus the play Yayati is dominated by the Oedipus complex as the son Pooru gets destroyed by the father Yayati for having desire to have sexual joy with none other than his own mother and the wife of his own father. Yayati shrewdly asks his son to incur the malediction given by Shukracharya on himself and imposes untimely old age on his own son. Oedipal passion brings about the tragedy of a quality person like Pooru. The entire plot of the play seems to be moving round this theme of Oedipus complex.

Reference:

1. Hall, Calvin. *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*. New York: The New American's Press, 1957. 110.
2. Karnad, Girish. *Yayati*. New Delhi: Sarswati Press, 1964. 42.