



Topic : New-Morality in Girish Karnad's 'Tale-Danda'

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Bhalchandra Nemade, a serious critic, advanced the term New Morality as a modern literary value to set a very high premium on the morality of the writer. Nemade dichotomizes morality into two divisions viz. old morality and new morality which is more akin to Mahatma Phule's true morality and false morality, expressed in his book entitled "Sarvajanic Satya Dharm" (The Universal Religion of Truth). According to Phule, Morality, as expressed in *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata* is unreal, untrue and unbelievable; however, what annoys Phule here is false and unreal morality of spurious, wicked and bogus scriptures. For example, in an imaginative (romantic) *Ramayana*, Ravana had ten noses, twenty eyes, twenty ears and twenty hands but only one anus and two legs. It seems unnatural and magical. Phule objects Seeta Swayamwara (system of choosing bridegroom); Rama's being monogramous, on the ground of false morality and prefers true morality in Aesop's stories.

Nemade believes that existence of the novelist implies community and his group consciousness. The novel as a social document essentially embodies value judgements and imposes some kind of morality on the novelist. The writer has to employ his own scale of values, which are based on the original social values. Since literature is an art form the writer must imply a plane, a condition which goes beyond social values. This is what Nemade means by the morality of a writer.

It is impossible to grasp what Nemade really had in mind, when he spoke about New Morality, without considering Gandhi's view of morality and the imperative need for moral commitment to self-chosen values. True morality, for Gandhi-New Morality, for Nemade consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves and fearlessly following it. Gandhi's moral concern, like Jotirao Phule, tended to simultaneously subvert Brahminic and Kshatriya orthodoxy following the basic construction : centrality of the periphery of Indian culture (Gandhi's assassin was a representative of the centre of the society that Gandhi was trying to turn into periphery). The Maharashtrian Brahmanic elites who were at the centre

of society contributed to the development of Marathi literature but this developed literary language reflected only one segment of the social life, hence New Morality proved to be *avant garde* nature of *Satyashodhak* movement and Gandhian way of life.

The novels of Khandekar, Phadake and Madkholkar which depicted false optimism, romantic sentimentalism and conventional morality represented the canonized crest while the others, for example the novels of Sane Guruji, are not canonized and existed obscurely. It is Nemade who has canonized the 'other, obscure, suppressed or subcultural literary phenomenon by using the nativistic literary value : New Morality. Nemade advanced New Morality in such a manner that the formalistic aesthetic criticism in Marathi had to shut its mouth.

Indeed morality is an adherence to personal value judgement. Values are general principles, guidelines and standards to regulate our day-to-day behaviour. As a moral idea and general conception, values include interests, needs, preferences, attitudes, sentiments and dispositions. It means that values are means to achieve desires, dreams, hopes and ideals of life which expresses moral imperatives. Independence, fraternity, justice, equality, friendliness, desires, objectives, interests, needs, ideals, wealth and general tendencies are some mentionable values.

Girish Karnad's 'Tale-Danda' (1989) is the most popular historical play. It is written when Karnad observed the atrocities over the issues of Ram Janam Bhumi - Babri Masjid and Mandal Commission Report. These two thorny issues gave birth to violence, horror and bloodshed in various parts of the country which shows a great similarity with the 'Protestant Movement' launched by Basaveshwara in socio-religious field in the twelfth century Karnataka. Infact this movement, too, results in scornful sanguinary things. So this play is a critical commentary on contemporary India which compels people to rethink about the traditional social and political values rationally, more particularly about caste and religion.

Egalitarianism is the prime principle of Basaveshwara's life mission. So he opposes the

discriminative pre-existed class, caste and Veda-oriented Hindu social system. Caste, the product of *Chaturvanna* system, is the chief cause of social divisions and it is the worst enemy of values like equality, fraternity, peace, justice, liberty etc. In order to create casteless and classless society, he decides to prefabricate society on humanitarian and democratic basis. First of all, he treats King Bijjala as a human being and a friend though he belongs to barbar's race. Infact, King Bijjala is a silent sufferer of caste-ridden Hindu society and who is disrespected by the upper-class people. The other example of equality is reflected in marriage of Sheelvant, a cobbler boy, to Kalavati, a Brahmin girl. However the parents of boy and girl are *Sharanas*. Therefore, no objection has been taken by any one except orthodox Hindus of Kalyan. Basaveshwara supports this marriage though he is startled and troubled by this incident. Indeed, his object is to destroy the demon of caste and observe social equality by eliminating the social deformity. It means that Basaveshwara's *Sharana* society advocates equality in socio-religious and spiritual field alongwith equal status, opportunities and other rights to all including women. Thus he lights the lamp of equality in order to originate fraternal community and universal brotherhood. In short, Basaveshwara's goal is to establish casteless, classless and democratic society which is an unique work and weird example of his personal value judgement.

All pervading honesty is another crowing example of new morality of Basaveshwara. Sovideva, the son of King Bijjala, suspects that Basaveshwara is lavishly spending money from Royal Treasury on hospitality of his devotees. So he tries to inspect the account in absence of Basava which proves false later on. On the contrary, people believe that Lord Shiva made miracle for him. He becomes miracle-monger for them. But nobody believes the honesty of Basava except King Bijjala. In this regard King Bijjala says, "When Basavanna puts something down on paper, it's there for good. As if planted by Brahma himself. And that's why he continues to be the King's Treasurer' (Karnad, Girish:1993:12). Infact King Bijjala knows that the traders belonging to Jains or Vaisha or other communities gives gifts to Basava willingly which he uses them to give foods and clothes to his devotees. It shows Basava's renunciation to earthly things and gifts. Even he works 'in the Treasury not for the King's pleasure but because that wealth belongs to the people' (Karnad, Girish:1993:19). Indeed Basava, an ascetic, uses all the gifts for social betterment. And his unquestionable honesty and impressive earthly duty as a

King's Treasurer displays his top-most personal value judgement and social commitment.

Duty is an important aspect of morality. It is honest work. Work is worship. It is deity. This value has been reflected in Basaveshwara's '*Kayaka*' philosophy. *Kayaya* means to earn one's daily bread with honesty and truth by persuing a profession. Extra earnings and profit is completely prohibited. All extra earnings should be utilized for the betterment of society. This is basic philosophy of *Kayaka* theory. Such duty-oriented 'honest' *Kayaka* philosophy gives economic prosperity and peace to Kalyan. It is very similar to Gandhiji's '*bread labour*' philosophy which teaches the dignity of labour. Self-sufficiency through hard work lies at the core of this philosophy. But it carte blanches occupational equality and mobility. On the contrary, Basava tells King Bijjala fearlessly that duty is casein in one's life. He says, "Kingship is calling. A source of living, yes, but also a duty and a service to humanity. It is not an inheritance, not a family gift but a right to be earned, to be justified by diligent application' (Karnad, Girish:1993:20). Thus Basava gives divinity and dignity to duty or labour which displays his devotion to new morality.

Basaveshwara advocates simple philosophy like 'do not steal, do not kill, do not ever lie, do not rage (Karnad, Girish:1993:15). This is simple teachings like *Ten Commandments* of Jesus Christ. Social welfare, moral and spiritual advancement, peace, prosperity and co-ordination is the prime object behind it. This non-violent philosophy is tasteless and undigesting to sham and hypocritical ruler King Bijjala, he who believes in temple building for subjects' happiness. He says, "I've built temples to keep my subjects happy. But the one truth I know is that I exist and God doesn't" (Karnad, Girish:1993:15). Thus King Bijjala represents false morality. He desires to inscribe his magnificence on rocks by starting new campaign. As a priest of peace, Basavanna knows the evil consequences of war viz. the creation of a few thousand fresh widows, orphans, wave of taxes, demands and extortions. So he advices King Bijjala that he should think about the welfare of human-beings, then his magnificence or glory will be sung by the people automatically. Such is a true new morality advocated by Basava.

The doctrine of non-violence is another commendable supreme value of judgement of Basaveshwara. This is anti-violence or the doctrine of sword. So he condemns every kind of violence. Infact non-violence is origin of most of values like humanity, charity, equality,

sympathy, love etc. like the philosophy of Gautam Buddha. When he hears that some of his people in Maddur have occupied a Jain temple by force, threatening to smash the naked idols in it and turn it into a Shiva temple, he decides to go there in order to rebuke his people's violent deed. It shows that he is implacable enemy of violence. So he says, "Violence is wrong, whatever the provocation. To resort to it because someone else started it first is even worse. And to do so in the name of a structure of brick and mortar is a monument to stupidity" (Karnad, Girish:1993:29). Indeed he believes that every individual is untouchable who does not follow the doctrine of non-violence. Thus he advocates the moral value of non-violence in a new form. He knows that violence is not always useful. If there is a danger to life-long cherished ideals and noble values, violence is inevitable for their protection. In this way, he clears the perverted meaning of non-violence. This is what his new morality.

Basava's *Anubhava Mantapa* is a social and spiritual institution. It is called 'Socio-religious Academy'. Its main purpose is to create a new casteless and classless society, based on human values like love, equality, non-violence, truth, fraternity etc. Being a cultural centre of equality and fraternity, it promotes and spreads the religion of humanity. Even it offers freedom of thought and expression to every individual which is an important aspect of democracy, sign of modernity and new morality. Many problems are discussed in it. The members put their opinions, thoughts, doubts and outlook and then decisions are taken in it. Equal treatment is given to all without any distinction of caste and creed. Thus *Anubhava Mantapa*, the first ideal Assembly of experience-oriented enlightened people, follows the democratic way of life and put the foundation of democracy. Indeed it is an important innovation of Basava which served for humanity by solving the problems like caste-system, ritualism, theoreticism and other evils of society. Even the inter caste marriage between Sheelvant, an untouchable boy, and Kalavati, a Brahmin girl, too, discussed in it. On the whole, the establishment of *Anubhava Mantap* in twelfth century is a rare example of Basaveshwara's new morality in the direction of democracy.

In sum, Basaveshwara as described by Karnad, is a true nativist, socio-spiritual leader and beacon light to the twelfth century, brings about social revolution by practicing the uncommon principles like liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, freedom of thought, expression and occupation. He propounds egalitarian and secular doctrines.

In order to re-establish new values in society, he revolts against all social evils and gives a shower of blows to Vedic tradition, orthodox Brahminism, caste system and traditional outlook. While purifying all sectors of life which he seems to be his earthly duty, he introduces many new principles and values like liberty, fraternity, social justice, non-violence, freedom of thought and expression, dignity to labour etc. All these values and principles present his adherence to morality, new morality and modernity. Indeed, Basaveshwara is a staunch follower of the doctrines of Gautam Buddha.

References :

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