

Gender Based Violence in Indian Folklores and Human Dignity

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Abstract

The greatest quality of literature is its fine blending of instruction and amusement. Folklore is marked by this quality. There are four impulses behind the creation of literature. In the first place, man is interested in self expression. Secondly, he has a keen interest in other people and their actions. In the third place, he is fascinated by the world of reality and imagination. With all these he loves the form as form. Folklore has all these impulses behind it. It emerges from man's interest in self expression. Everyone has something interesting to say which is of common interest. Several of the tales have their roots in these common truths. The urge to tell something is resistible.

Keywords- Gender Based Violence, Indian Folklores, Human Dignity, Self Expression.

Introduction

The physical instinct so overpowers them that one day they are noticed by the king in a state of physical union. The consequences can easily be imagined. The queen had taken off her clothes and was saying to the naked shepherd, come now, put the peg in the keg. Well bathe afterwards. The king could not bear to see the sight. He walked right in and cut them both down with his scimitar, right there in the bathhouse.

"A Flowering Tree" is one such tale. A gentle woman willing to do good to others suffers at the hands of her nonsensical sister-in-law. She leads a deformed and miserable existence separated from her husband for long. After a prolonged spell of undeserved misery fate comes to her rescue. She is brought back to her beautiful form and united to her husband. The evil sister-in-law gets her due in the end : Then the king had seven bards of burning lime poured into a great pit and threw his youngest daughter into it. All the people who saw it said to themselves. After all, every wrong has its punishment. The mother in law-daughter-in-law relationship is typical of its kind. It is full of love and hate. Rivalry and jealousy are at the core of it. An old woman depends on her son and her existence outside the family is hardly respectable. Consequently, she wishes to be dominating in order to live a respectable life within the family. The story of the clay mother-in-law presents a benevolent old woman who is loving and grateful to her daughter-in-law even after her death. The following words highlight the innocence of the daughter-in-law :

She said every now and then, pouring out her breathless tale of her adventures in the night-how she had been driven out, how frightened she was, how she had staged in a tree with her mother-in-law, and all the rest of it. She ended by saying it was all her mother-in-laws doing that they now had all this wealth.

As man is a social animal he is interested in the activities of others. This knowledge adds to his experience and enables him to understand life in a better way. In the tales one read about kings, princes, monks, beggars, priests, gypsies and women of all ranks and ages. One passes through a picture gallery which is immensely varied. The tale The Past Never Passes can be taken as an example. A king marries

a gypsy woman and gives her all the luxuries of a queen. But she grows thinner and thinner. The minister advises the king to take away all the luxuries and to let her survive on piecemeal. The trick works. The moral of the tale is that one's past is never lost :

The queen began to find a piece of bread in a hole, a handful of vegetables on a window ledge. So she ate piecemeal as she had always done. In a week, her body rounded out and seemed even to emit rays of light. The king was happy and said, 'The past-its smells are never lost, are they?'

The Prince Who Married His Own Left Half, is a tale which is about a prince's obsession with marrying his own left half. As the prince is a little abnormal, he refuses to marry. When compelled, he agrees to marry his own half. His body is cut into two halves. One is buried in flowers. There emerges a beautiful woman who marries the other half

The husband-wife relationship is at the core of several folktales. The two Kashmiri folktales Why the Fish Laughed and The Wife Who Refused to Be Beaten deal with the wisdom of two woman who enjoy an edge over their husband due to their worldly wisdom. In the former it is the farmers daughter who solves the riddle of the fishs laughter. The Wazir readily accepts her as his daughter-in-law. In the second tale the daughter of the iron smith shows her incisive wisdom and becomes the daughter-in-law of the rich merchant. She saves her stupid husband from troubles and establishes her clear superiority. Ramanujan divides the women tales into two types, those about women and those told by women. He incorporates all such tales into his study. These include tales related to goddesses which also contain human principles. What Ramanujan aims at is a study of these tales from the angle of the literary principles which they contain and on which they are based.

The wise queen transforms the destitute house of the peasant into a prosperous abode while the irresponsible wife of the peasant reduces the palace to a mismanaged house. The queens wisdom is favoured by the benevolent fate and a garuda drops a precious necklace at her place the peasant has the taste of prosperity. On the other hand the king suffers the pangs of having a reckless house holder. The romantic tale tells the truth that the woman of the house is the true Lakshmi :

The queen explained, Now you know. The woman in the house is like Lakshmi, the goddess of good fortune. Even in the poorest household if she is tidy and manages with care and looks after the welfare of the man who works, Laskhmi will seek out that house and dwell in it. Otherwise, you know very well what misery follows."

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