



SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-RESTRAINT IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S CHANDALIKA

T. David

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English (DDE), Madurai Kamaraj University,
Madurai, Tamilnadu

Cite This Article: T. David, "Self-Control and Self-Restraint in Rabindranath Tagore's Chandaliika", International Journal of Applied and Advanced Scientific Research, Volume 3, Issue 1, Page Number 329-330, 2018.

Abstract:

The play *Chandalika* portrays the various themes which happen in our Indian society. Rabindranath Tagore portrays a clear cut picture of "untouchability" but as per the title on discussion it differs from Tagore's main theme. Tagore's "Chandalika" has an obvious and unique message to convey to the readers. Ananda tells the Chandal girl, Prakriti, that she should not think herself lower to other human beings in any way, and that, therefore, she has every right to give him water to satiate his thirst. This play could well be described as a tragedy even though the manner, in which it ends, fills the readers with a sense of relief and even with a feeling of exhilaration and joy. The play depicts the tragedy of self-consciousness that exceeds its limits. Prakriti's most esteemed desire which prevent Ananda with her and the tragedy lies in the frustration which she experiences. This play gives the readers a significant message of life. All human beings are equal. But self-consciousness should, in no condition, cross sensible limits. And finally, every human being should have self-control and should be maintained in all situations. Self-control is the chief element in self-respect and self-respect is the chief element in courage. Thus, if one conquers himself with self-consciousness, then he conquers the world.

Key Words: Unique, Self-Consciousness, Self-Control, Self-Respect, Courage & Untouchability

The play *Chandalika* portrays the various themes which happen in our Indian society. Rabindranath Tagore portrays a clear cut picture of "untouchability" but as per the title on discussion it differs from Tagore's main theme. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and many other writers mainly write their works in the description of problems which arise in the society. They want to revive the society without any discrimination by using their writings. But still the situation goes on what they what to revive. They mainly wrote about freedom struggle, untouchability, whims of society in India. But still in the case of untouchability it goes on in the form of caste problem in India. Tagore's *Chandalika* has an obvious and unique message to convey to the readers. Tagore wrote this play not only for reader's entertainment but also for depicting the condition of our society. It is absolutely a play with a message. And even *Mukta-dhara* and *Natir puja* are plays with specific and obvious message. In other words, each of these three plays is didactic, though each of them has considerable entertainment value as well as message.

The play *Chandalika* teaches the readers, firstly, that all caste and class distinctions are false, and that all human beings are in fact equals. Ananda tells the Chandal girl, Prakriti, that she should not think herself inferior to other human beings in any way, and that, therefore, she has every right to give him water to satiate his thirst. The perfect message in one line is "Self-humiliation is a sin, worse than self-murder". So no one could put down themselves in any such matter. This play could well be described as a tragedy even though the manner, in which it ends, fills the readers with a sense of relief and even with a feeling of exhilaration and joy. The play depicts the tragedy of self-consciousness that exceeds its limits. Prakriti's most esteemed desire which prevent Ananda with her and the tragedy lies in the frustration which she experiences. But at the same time she is more than compensated for this frustration by her sense of relief and her triumph over her sensuality. Thus, the readers experienced mingled feelings of sadness and joy at the end, though the joy exceeds the sadness. The death of Prakriti's mother too saddens the readers; and, while Prakriti's frustration would leave a permanent mark on Prakriti's mind, Prakriti would also always feel proud of her triumph at the end.

The play has beginning, middle, and an end; and, although it is a very short play, it does not practice in us any sense of brittleness or incompleteness. Everything in the play contributes to the development of the theme which is the arousing of a sense of identity in the mind of a chandal girl, and rapid growth of that sense of identity into a feeling of excessive self-importance. An exaggerated or inflated sense of one's own importance would inevitably lead to frustration and a painful acknowledgment of one's own limitations. Each one of us is important; but the importance of each one of us is limited and restricted by the importance of others. The play rigidly and scrupulously adheres to this theme; and there is neither a word too many or too few in it. Certainly, Tagore appears in this play as a master of craftsman. Tagore used his poetic languages for Prakriti it still remains to be pointed one. There are many lyrical utterances by Prakriti in this play.

Once in the eager mood, Prakriti tells herself that she should not have tried to pull down Ananda, the heroic, from the plinth in order to satisfy her whims and fancies. Both Prakriti and her mother surrender themselves to Ananda and ask for his mercy. They pronounce victory to Ananda and this constitutes the third stage of the quest, the exhalation of the hero. The impurities of Prakriti have been purged off under the benevolent influence of Ananda. Repentance and realization lead her towards salvation. Ananda is glorified for

redeeming her twice. About this, K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar comments, “the transforming power of the pure in heart and angelic in compassion” (Balachandran 242). Ananda continues his quest expressing loyalty to Buddha. By following the path of devotion, one cannot possibly miss one’s goal and his success has been assured. Viewed in the proper viewpoint, it is the character of Ananda which adds attraction and excellence to the story of Prakriti. The greatness of Chandalika lies in the fact that within a short span, the writer is able to exemplify so many higher ideals which make human life distinguished and notable. Tagore has depicted many women characters as a wife, daughter, sister, mother, beloved etc. But Prakriti is different from all these characters. Tagore has depicted Prakriti as a woman who is asking for her own identity and the authorized recognition of her identity by the others, which is still denied by the society.

No doubt, the Hindu concept of caste division based on one’s birth is inhuman. It should be completely wiped out and equality tinged with humanity should be established. Yet, for the better implementation of the social order, some moral and ethical manacles should also be exercised by the newly awakened human beings. This could be the idea of Tagore in dramatizing Ananda (the legend) through ‘Chandalika’.

Prakriti, the Chandal girl, in the end of her tragic experience, realizes the necessity of moral values in her new birth. Eventually, she corrects the mistake of overhauling the human ethics that she had committed earlier and turns a better and spiritual woman in the end. In the Indian context, a holy man asking for water from an untouchable violates a social as well as a religious rule. To receive and to give food or water were blasphemous for both. The monk’s extraordinarily radical request awakens Prakriti’s awareness of her own inborn Self. Through the universal image of water, Tagore intertwines the ideological revolution reflected in the social, religious, and political scene of his own time. Prakriti’s self-assertion imbued in desire is manifested in her love for the young monk. Infused by erosion, Prakriti’s love ascends to astonish through dedication and remorse to liberation. It is through love that Prakriti transcends her socially imposed caste and eventually signifies herself as a radical human being. This play can rightly be called a play of deliverance. Tagore is a poet of spirituality. But he did not ignore earth and earthly men and women. In several of his writings, he emphasized the need of finding personal joy in the company of our fellow men and women. In the lines under reference, Prakriti seems to suggest this philosophy of the poet and dramatist

It seemed that the torture form I saw was not his only, but mine too; it belonged to us both. In those awful fires of gold and the copper had been melted and fused(C 11).

Hence, Tagore, through Prakriti and the multifaceted working of her mind, offers a lesson of self-control and self-restraint. Unrestrained carnal desire should be suppressed, if it trespasses the moral boundaries. Ananda has taken a vow of celibacy; hence such a holy person should not be made a prey of undesired passion. This play gives the readers a significant message of life. All human beings are equal. But self-consciousness should, in no condition, cross sensible limits. And finally, every human being should have self-control and it should be maintained in all situations. Self-control is the chief element in self-respect and self-respect is the chief element in courage. Thus, if one conquers himself with self-consciousness, then he conquers the world.

References:

1. Tagore, Rabindranth. Three plays; Mukta-dhara, Natir Puja, Chandalika. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975.
2. Iyengar, Srinivasa K.R., Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1984.
3. Balachandran K., Critical Responses to Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Roshan Offset Press, 2004.