

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.4., 2017 (Oct-Dec)

ISSN INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS RITUALS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO RABINDRANATH  
TAGORE'S SACRIFICE

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ABSTRACT

In India there are many religious people who follow several practices and rituals. Each religion believes that their rituals could evoke the spirit of God. So many rituals, acted as a symbol to reach God, by offering materials and sacrificing animals. But slowly the era of Science and Technology has made people to understand that, those rituals followed earlier are now a superstitious beliefs and brutal act. So in this way how Tagore's *Sacrifice* depicts the edifice of superstition and brutality is the main focus of this paper.

Key words: Religious, practices, rituals, superstitious, brutal, sacrifice.

Religion is one among the important social institutions all over the universe. Human cannot live without religion as it is part and parcel of one's life. From early era to till date, religious people followed various rituals and certain practices. Though the practices and rituals vary from region to region, yet there are certain common characteristics like offering materials, sacrificing animals etc. However in the name of religion, especially in India, there are certain foolish rituals of superstitious acts like breaking coconuts, pumpkins etc and as well as brutal act of slaying animals like goat, hen, rooster, cow, ox, etc is done. In fact today even many people are killed and murdered. To this context Charles Kimball rightly remarks, "More wars have been waged, more people killed and more evil perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional fore in human history. The sad truth continues in our present day". (67)

To witness this Tagore's *Sacrifice* stands as an evidence to present the foolish rituals that is prevailing in the society. Tagore examines such injudicious act of religious through a small girl. Raghupathi, the priest of the temple convinces Queen Gunavathi to offer an animal sacrifice to Goddess Kali, so that their childless mark would disappear and she could give birth to a child. So with the help of Jaising they snatched a poor girl Aparana's pet goat. The small girl's motherly love for the goat softened king's heart and so when the goat was taken into the temple to sacrifice, King Govinda commanded them to stop such foolish acts and forbidded them to shed blood in the temple. This infuriated Raghupathi and he persuaded king's brother Nakshatra Rai to sacrifice the royal blood of king Govinda, as Goddess Kali is demanding it. Jaising who believed it as true, accepted to slain king in front of Goddess, but at one stage, he feels guilty of killing and so disapproves it, as he was the kinsman of king. Again this raises the temper of Raghupathi and so he yells and curses him. Finally Jaising states that Goddess Kali is demanding love as it is the more required than the blood sacrifice. He states as, "Stop master. Is then love a falsehood and mercy a mockery and the one thing true, from the beginning of time, the lust for destruction? Would it not have destroyed itself long ago? You are playing with my heart, my

master. Look there, she is gazing at me. My blood-thirsty mother, wilt thou accept my blood? Is it so delicious to thee? Master, did you call me? The mother, who is thirsting for our love, you accuse of blood thirstiness!" (Sacrifice, 31)

But again the adamant and arrogant priest forces Jaising that finally makes him to stab and sacrificed himself to Kali, as he also considered to the family of royal blood. Towards the end, the death of Jaising awakens a reality of faith in religion of God and he relished that rituals of blood sacrificing is a criminal act against the nature of God and law.

Through this play, the small girl awakened the spirit of true religion within other people, especially of king and so his command of power has made others also to be aware that brought great changes. Jaising though he was also strong in his rituals and customs, yet the girls love and humanistic approach towards an animal (goat) has inspired him and awakened the fact of true religion. So he sacrificed himself to show the image of true religion to his master Raghupathi and as well as to his society. To this context, K.R.S.Iyengar states as, "The extirpation of an old ethic in favour of a humane new ethic is the theme...and blood thirsty Kali...are exceeded by humane divinity." (IWE, 128)

Tagore criticizes the dogmatic and false religion and says that true religion must develop oneself as well as others and no living being must be hurt. He also further states that true worship of religion lies not in the performance of rites and ceremonies, but one must extend their help for the need. He also said that God could be found in nature, love and humanity as this stands as a back bone of all religion.

To wind up, Tagore has used Jaising death as a symbol of sacrifice who acted to salvate the society. He has broken the ancient rituals and brought out the reality of the merciless religious people who sacrifice innocent animals and sometimes even innocent human beings. Through Aparna, one can also understand that a true religion lies not in a brutal and fatal act, but in humanity and love in every being. In short, this play gives the reader a message and warning to stop the practice of sacrificing animal or human and insists that such ridiculous rituals must be abandoned, as it is a violent act.

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