

SOLACE OF KRISHNA ELEMENT IN THE LIFE OF RADHA, KUNTI AND DROUPADI: A STUDY OF ARUNA DHERE'S KRISHNAKINARA

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Abstract: *From our early childhood, we have met the three legendary women, Radha, Kunti and Droupadi in different mythological stories and poems. We have got influenced by the way they led their lives. The distinctness in them is their level of understanding and strength to face the situations came into their way of life. The lives of these three women are incomplete without the name Krishna. That might be the only solace they come across. Aruna Dhere's collection of three long stories entitled Krishnakinara gives us an opportunity to peep into the minds of these three extraordinary legendary women. The paper analyses the book as a literary piece with a different perspective.*

Key words: *Mythology, legendary, Puranas.*

The world of tradition has always been astonishing and full of Wonder. It talks about philosophy, the mysterious depth of human mind and sometimes the noble grandeur of human beings. The scriptures and *Puranas*, the folktales, the legends and far ancient stories captivate human mind with its glimmer. But sometimes below its fledgling there are caverns of darkness as well.

History has seen the massacre of women in its caverns. Some are gone in the name of deity; some drank the poison of loyalty while some were sacrificed under the name of innocence. The smell of death in the caverns disturbs conscience of human mind. This has not stopped with the course of time; we go on meeting those women in the temples sitting in the guise of “Devi”, in the guise of a character in books or novels and in cinemas and sometimes in real life as well. The same suffocating experience we get through Aruna Dhere's collection of three long stories entitled “Krishnakinara”. When we meet the three mythological female characters Radha, Kunti and Droupadi who, at the end of their lives try to find out the solace in the name Krishna and try to be empty, peaceful, leaving behind any grudge for life, people and suffering they met. Radha in this book is not the usual Radha young and beautiful who used to spread the colors of love with her beloved Krishna or kanha; or not the one who is supposed to be the idol of love. This Radha is someone whom Dhere visualized in her cellarage. The second character from mythology is Kunti; as a mother and a woman and the third one is Draupadi. Kunti and Draupadi were from the Mahabharata and Radha from *Bhagwat Purana*. The lives of these three women are woven with the common thread of Krishna element. Without this thread their lives are incomplete.

Actually, Dhere wanted to write on women, as a human being and she came across these three legendary women. The life of these three women is incomplete without Lord Krishna who is supposed to be “Purn Purush” or Purna Purushottam Narayan. This Purna Purushottam Narayan is supposed to be one Supreme God who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and yet compassionate. The importance of Krishna in the lives of these three women is incontrovertible. Here Dhere tries to trace out the Krishna element in different way; as if he is an unending, unfathomable sea. At the same time she tries to trace the relations of these women with one another.

There may be a debate about the existence of Radha. But this legendary figure has always occupied Indian poetry, art, music and devotional feelings as well. The perspectives through which Radha could be

explored are diverse. This seems surprising to us that the old Radha comes to Dwarka to take an adieu of king Krishna. The place where they decide to meet is the sea shore. Dhere while comparing the sea of Dwarka to the river Yamuna tries to relate the journey of Radha's life with the vast and limitless existence of Krishna. The unlimited and unfathomable sea frightens and makes Radha lonely when she thinks;

“Why did I come here? Is it to see this desert and ocean? But is it true that I am watching this for the first time! What thirst and terrible voice of Time is this? I have seen the water engulfing the golden rays of Sun many times before. Why do I want to experience this at the end of my life? Or will this always be around me now onwards. What do I try to find out under the pretense of meeting Krishna? What could be the significance of this meeting? Where would it turn my course of life? (P 17).

Radha herself is unable to understand this thirst of her to meet Krishna and so she tries to seek the answer from Krishna when she asks him;

“Tell me after getting such white headed, after undergoing a lot of pain and suffering why I come so long Krishna?” (P 17).

Once Krishna leaves Gokul, suffering becomes the part and parcel of the lives of Radha, Yashoda and the Gopi's. He has never been there after that. Dhere here compares the suffering of Radha with the suffering of Nature. Suffering is an integral part of women's existence as if this is the whole reason of their birth itself. Many of them may not be conscious of the suffering they are destined to or maybe some are aware of it; and others may be incognizant, blind or numb. Some are like Gandhari, who intentionally make themselves blind; but Radha is not like that neither Draupadi is. Radha has certain reasons and many questions to ask before she dies. These are the after war days when we meet Radha in this book. Dhere in one way tries to trace out the difference between the mindset of Radha, as a woman and Krishna as a God figure. Radha gets surprised to see the nature of acceptance in Krishna, she says;

“How far you went flowing like water in every situation, like this ocean. At those particular moments you put those colors on. But now not a single mark of those colors, not even of that ghastly war! Look at me otherwise, so many marks! So many scars I carry on my body, so many stains! But you remain the whole and clear. Can you see the difference Krishna?” But Krishna knows that there is much difference between the water of a river like Yamuna when he says, “Life has become much salty and sour. What else could be the taste of after the war ash! The ocean is bound to be salty as it is bound to be voluminous; however it wishes to be sweet like river, but it couldn't be like that.” (P 34, 35)

Radha was a barren, childless and so she feels she could not easily be free from life. She felt she could not meet the salvation like Yashoda. When a woman becomes a mother, the way of salvation becomes easier for her. At one time she feels how could Krishna leave for Dwarka keeping her in the Gokul? Why did not he take her with him? But once her lamentations and madness fades away with the passing of time, she herself realizes, how could she leave Gokul, how could she grow somewhere else? It is there that she has her roots. Krishna is like the unlimited sky and she is a little climber. For her the air and light of Krishna touch is more than sufficient.

In Dhere's Krishna Kinara we meet these legendary women, at a period of time, when they are at the dusk of their lives. We meet Kunti at the end of her “Vanaprastha” with Gandhari and Dhritrashtra after the war. Kunti alias Prutha is the daughter of Shursena and the foster daughter of his cousin Kuntibhoja. Her part in the book portrays her relations with Gandhari, Shri Krishna and the finally with Droupadi.

The havoc of deadly war and suffering brings Kunti and Gandhari, the two lonely women closer and there explores the new threads of relationship in them. There is the only one way of communication now where one has lost all children and another was having children but left them far behind. For them this is the dead end and there is nothing to hide now as everything is so clear like the approaching of death. Now

both can talk about anything; right from the molestation of Draupadi to the death of Gandhari's so-called hundred children. These old women were the victims of men, power and politics. After the death of Pandu, Kunti came to Hastinapur taking her five children and lived there under the shelter of Bhishma and Vidur. But after the incident of 'Dyut' Kunti felt ashamed of herself for relying on Bhishma. Had there been something in the hands of these women, the Mahabharata would have long been really very different but both Gandhari and Kunti accepted everything as their final destiny. Both of them were well aware of the right from wrong and always endeavored to follow the path of dharma with grace, dignity and unusual strength of character.

The second part in Kunti section explores her relationship with her nephew Krishna. Though she was a daughter of Shursena, Kunti was given to King Kuntibhoj by Shursena as he was childless. Despite being an aunt of Krishna; the incarnation of God she leads unbelievable life. Krishna was much more near and dear to Kunti. Even Draupadi knows that it is Krishna who knows Kunti more than her own sons. So is the fate of Kunti that she remains a mother only through and through. Before knowing anything in life she becomes a mother of Karna and later on a mother of Pandavas. Once Pandu dies she remains a pure mother who brings Pandavas to Hastinapur and fights for their share in Kingdom. When Krishna says her,

“Aunt, Life gave you only motherhood isn't it? Being a wife was just a dream for you.” One can imagine the life of kunti when she replies to Krishna, “What dream Madhava that was a burning truth only! Are not these five sons of mine the proofs of it?” (P 54)

One thing is clear to her, that her motherhood and womanhood are not woven together now. She could feel her crystal like motherhood only as if this may be her last confession of life that Kunti was making to Krishna. For her Karna was the only son of her. She says to Krishna,

“But what about Karna Madhava? Just like Karna was only my son, like wise Dharma, Bheem and Arjun were my son's only! And still Karna and I could not become mother and son before the world. This is just because there was no one who could give the dignity of his name as a husband to me; though he may not be the father of my son.” (P 56)

These are all the unbearable episodes in her life and her life was full of such episodes only right from the birth to the end. In that case she says,

“Be an unmarried mother in your next birth Madhava or be just a woman only”. (P 57) And Krishna did not have any answer to this.

The third part of Kunti's story deals with Draupadi and her relations with Kunti and Krishna. It was Kunti, who decided the fate of Draupadi after her marriage. At that time when Kunti asked to divide the begging amongst the five Pandavas, the courage Draupadi showed was extraordinary. Kunti's commitment to Draupadi was with that courage and Kunti remains indebted to that courage throughout her life. Being a mother of Pandavas, Kunti knew the limitations of her sons and at the same she was aware of the urge of a woman like Draupadi.

It takes Kunti so many years to understand Draupadi's love for Arjuna. Now she realizes that it was Krishna behind Droupadi's love for Arjuna when she says,

“I used to feel Arjuna won you. His velour, his handsome body might be attracting you towards him more. But that was not the case Narayani you liked Arjuna because he is the beloved of Krishna (Krishna Sakha)! How mad am I? I have heard it was Krishna who made Parth ready to fight on the battlefield. I should have to understand the limitations of my son and the urge of a woman like you, shouldn't I?” (P 63)

The thread of suffering and loneliness ties these two women together. Kunti did not let anybody have his hold on her and so is Draupadi who despite of being Panchali, (a wife of five) protected her soul. She kept it consciously her own and that part of her and her love was totally untouched, enacted by anybody. This loneliness of her is definitely different from the loneliness of Kunti, who has always been

lonely through her long life. After the death of her husband or rather even before his death she has never felt any companionship for him.

Draupadi honestly feels Kunti as a mother of Karna only, rather than the mother of her three sons. At a certain point she felt poor for Kunti, when Krishna takes Kunti to meet Karna just before the one day of the war. Droupadi feels that Keshav, to beat down the enemy has interpolated many plans and this amongst might be the one.

“With the help of my mother-in-law just before the day of war, he cleverly extended the painful mentality of karna with Kunti. Whatever answer might have been given by karna but to distract and disturb him, there couldn't be any one else then Kunti. Who else could make karna helpless and strength less than Kunti?”(P 65)

Keshava or Krishna, for Draupadi has always been a mysterious, unknown and an incomprehensible figure: and still he surprisingly spreads over and becomes an easy inborn native to everybody. This was all the plan of Krishna to make karna helpless and defeated and Kunti who could not recognize her nephew. Droupadi feels sorry for her mother-in-law when she imagines it was and feels that “Is woman a just medium for him to fulfill his motive? Not like anyone with loosely but at very micro-level he uses the means and that too in unavoidable situations only. It is because of this he is eligible to forgive or at the end he is a man only and one should condemn him or is it the way management of relations exist forever.

It is Krishna who always assures Droupadi as about the war to be taken place against the Kourva's. He assures her about the valor of her husbands and about the fulfillment of her revenge and all her wishes. Draupadi was born out of 'Yagya', the burning fire and remained like a burning fire till the end of her life. She is very much aware of her own restless self and the efforts made by Krishna to fulfill her revenge against Kourva's. She says,

“Still then Krishna I will remain, restless. Because to acquaint with the fire in my blood, with my five husbands fiery manhood I have burnt my life and to fulfill my wish you have spent your brain, your strength. I can never forget this, will never forget this”. (Page 98)

Krishna was well aware about the injustice happened to Droupadi. This is because of this feeling of injustice happened to Droupadi Krishna stood committed by the side of Droupadi till the end. He becomes her friend, philosopher, guide and protector. But at the same he is well aware about the course of actions those take place in the lives of human beings. Once he says to Radha,

“---- I cannot create anything by force here. You also don't insist me. I am no more a creator here, no more a controller. Let things happen by it!” (Page 97)

Sill sometimes it becomes difficult for Draupadi to accept many things in her life when there is an existence of the entity named Krishna. Once she says

“Krishna, I have always felt that you are the 'Purna Purush' and because of that there is a great lacuna in you. You cannot be a half woman; you cannot understand the pain of womanhood; you have always been unjust to women in every relation with you. You are just like Bhishma: you remember all women who have come in your life as mother, sister, and wife. My restlessness is much greater as we don't have name to our relation, it is free but the fate of our relation like ours is restlessness! Why is it so? Or is it not possible for a man and a woman to nourish a relation beyond any name, justice or injustice?” (Page 99)

Despite of being a divine principal he is unable to control the fate of these three women but whatever power he has with him through those he tries to provide solace for them, tries to convince them that they are not alone he is a part and parcel of their lives. The three women at the end of their lives leave for the endless and limitless journey of their soul by taking a farewell of him. But as Yashoda says to Radha, when insisting her to meet Krishna for the last time,

“Listen, you and me, he doesn't have any other person to say his own. We made him long and tall, he grew up almost amongst us. I am not going to see him again in my lifetime, rather there is no wish remained in me, but if you feel like seeing him don't take yourself aback; don't keep the feeling of honor and dishonor. Remember this would not be his favor on you. If you meet him he would be able to die peacefully. His life would be complete! But if you feel like going, then only go otherwise die mausily like me and then we are destined to meet again in the next birth”(P 32)

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