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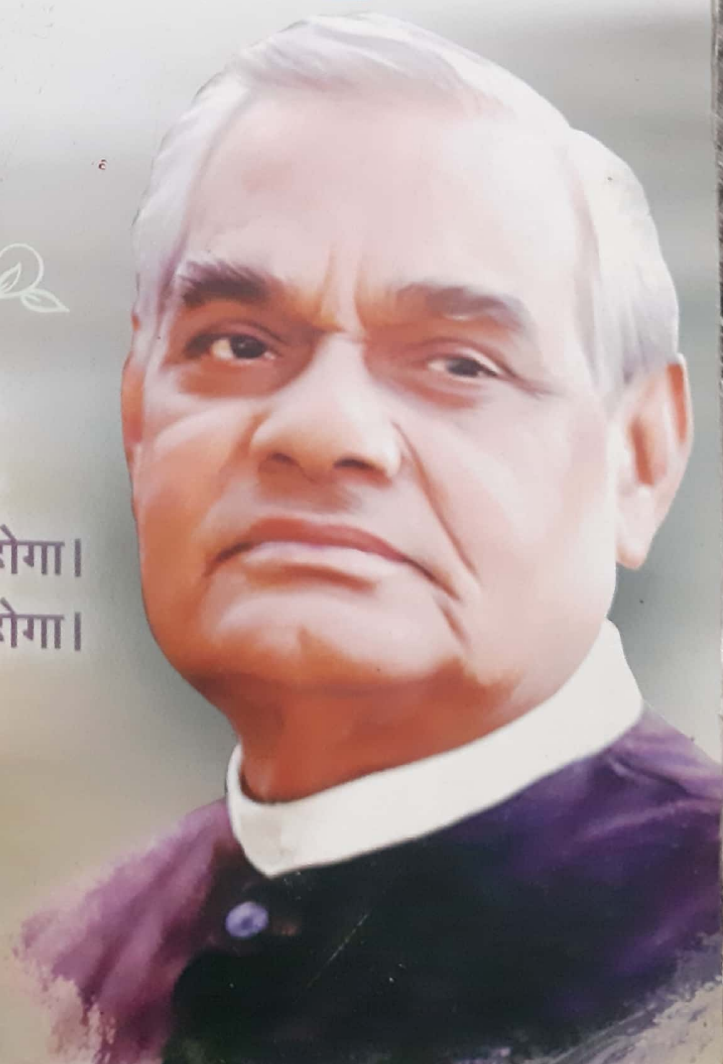
Half Yearly Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences

मङ्गलम्

मानविकी एवं समाज विज्ञान की अर्द्धवार्षिक शोध-पत्रिका

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परहित अर्पित अपना तन-मन,
जीवन को शत-शत आहुति में,
जलना होगा, गलना होगा।
कदम मिलाकर चलना होगा।



Editor
Dr. Dinkar Tripathi

विषयानुक्रम

सम्पादकीय

क्र०सं०

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Yayati : A Study Of Caste Consciousness

Dr. Ranjeet Singh *

Yayati, published in 1961 in Kannada, is the seminal work of Girish Karnad. Its English translation, by the author himself, came out in 2008. The play retells a mythical lore in *Mahabharata* that tries to portray the “consistent harping on responsibility which the existentialists indulge in...” (Karnad, 1971: n.p.). However, the play seems to epitomize much more than personal objectives that converge to the center of conflict between expectations and responsibilities. The play is a dramatization of a legendary tale, frequently marked by the playwright’s creative imagination, which offers scores of interpretive aspects. Aparna Dharwadkar makes an apt remark about the play:

Yayati establishes at the outset of Karnad’s career that myth is not merely a narrative to be bent to present purposes, but a structure of meanings worth exploring in itself because it offers opportunities for philosophical reflection without the constraints of realism or the necessity of contemporary setting (2006: xvii).

Besides the existentialist dilemma, there is another level of meaning as well, that is, caste and race. These concerns fascinatingly illumine the characters and their motives in the play; thus, making them relevant in the hierarchically stratified social structure that transcends the comparatively smaller confines of family.

The play manifests the struggle between two divergent classes—the Brahmin and Asura—which form the basic dyad privileged/underprivileged. The first segment of the binary is made up of the dominant hegemonic class which convinced of its ‘natural’ and ‘universal’ pre-eminence nurtures a sense of aversion for the so called inferior others. Simultaneously, it tries to repress their opposing voices via tangible chastisement that are justified on the moral and ethical touchstone. Alternatively, the oppressed and subjugated section fabricates designs in order to trap the authority and relish the sadistic pleasure in their angst.

The first episode of the play brings Swarnalata, a palace factotum, to Devayani, the Daughter of the sage Shukracharya and wife of the king Yayati. She airs grievances against Sharmistha, an Asura princess who has been damned to proffer her indentured services to the queen. Though the queen

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