

DE-BRAMINISING THE MUSIC:
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF K.V.RAGHUPATHI'S RAJESH,
THE MUSICIAN

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Abstract:

Rajesh, the Musician is one of the short stories of K.V Raghupathi's *The Untouchable Piglet* (2015). The short story *Rajesh, the Musician* aims at depicting the social irony and scintillating satire on the human conditions of the modern world. It is about how a boy belongs to the marginalised sections was denied the art of learning the so called divine karnatic music. As the caste taboo prevails with a blind belief that the Sanskrit is the language of God so as the Karnatic music – the music of the divine, one can learn the music provided he or she should be a Brahmin else others will not be entitled to learn it.

Rajesh is the protagonist of the story and through his character the author puts forth the struggle of a small boy whose eagerness and interest to learn the Karnatic music was under arrest by the chains of insult and discrimination as the boy is a not a brahmin by birth. However the boy was not stunned by the limitations instead he took the curse as the challenge and mastered the so called Dalit denied and Brahmin owned Karnatic music. The meeting place of the boy who grew into a master of Karnatic music who meets the Brahmin masters by whom the boy was insulted in the name of caste which in return made the boy feels that he should develop himself as a true master of the so called denied music and with an aim that there will be day where he can perform the Karnatic music to the surprise of the cunning Dronacharays. The paper looks into the socio-cultural aspects of the Indian society and how the talented youth of the country are being denied

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the opportunities to exhibit their innate talents due to a particular reason 'Caste'. The paper is deconstructive in tone and content.

Key Words: caste discrimination, humiliation, passion, taboo, marginalization.

Author Introduction

K. V. Raghupathi is an Indian author. He was born in 1957. He is best known for his poetry in English language but in Indian mood. His poetry is rooted in the abundance of philosophy, nature, transcendentalism, imagery and social perspectives, and replete with similes, metaphors, personifications, apostrophe, irony, climax, anti-climax and full of rhetoric and symbols. More often he takes the readers on the spiritual exploration of radical philosophical thoughts which strongly speak through all the collections. K.V. Raghupathi received Post-graduate degree in English Literature and Ph.D. in 1979 and 1997 from Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. He holds PGDTE from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.

He began writing seriously in 1985. Since then he has published Fourteen books which include: Ten Books in English Verse: Desert Blooms (1987), Echoes Silent (1988), The Images of a Growing Dying City (1989), Small Reflections (2000), Voice of the Valley (2003), Wisdom of the Peepal Tree (2003), Samarpana (2006), Dispersed Symphonies (2010), Orphan and Other Poems (2010) and Between me and the Babe(2014); Four Critical Books: Emerson's Orientalism (2007) and Brave New Wave: 21 Indian English Poets (2009), and Critical Exposition of Gopal Honnalgere Poems (2011); Two Books on Yoga: Yoga for Peace (2006) and Yoga and Zen: A Monograph (2007) and Two Novels: The Invalid (2012) and The Disappointed (2014). He has attended many conferences and seminars and presented papers on literature, language and philosophy. He has published innumerable articles in various international journals. After having taught for twelve years in S.V.University, Tirupati and Yogi Vemana University, Kadapa for four and half years he moved to Central University of Tamilnadu, Thiruvarur, where he has been teaching in the Department English since 29.12.2011. He is a great lover and promote of classical Karnatic music.

(Authors blog <http://kvraghupathi.webs.com/myprofile.htm>)

He is a recipient of several awards that include Michael Madhusudhan Dutt Award, Kolkata in 2001, H.D.Thoreau Fellowship, Dhvanyaloka, Mysore in 2000, The Best Chosen Poet for 2003, Poetry Society of India, New Delhi, A Citation and Cash Award by Chennai Poet's Circle, Chennai and Rock Pebbles National Award for 2014, Bhubaneswar.

Short story is way in which the story can be told in the other way and every word in the short story has meaning. It is easy to read and people get to know the plot of the story very soon. It has limited characters and the setting is also simple with the direct theme. It gives a moral within few pages. The *Untouchable Piglet* is a collection of Short stories by K.V.Raghupathi in which I have chosen one short story named *Rajesh, the musician* which tells about the passion of music and caste based problem which acts as a hindrance to learn the divine music.

The first question which was imposed on Rajesh was what was his caste? This question came like a sharpen knife and hit his consciousness. Rajesh is a young boy who is 22 years old and has just finished his post-graduation in Philosophy in Sri Venkateswara University in Tirupathi. He has a wheatish complexion medium built with moderate height and penetrating eyes. He has a desire for Karnatic music to learn the music and get a good appreciation in it. In his home town he used to attend the concert and enjoy the passion and love of music though he didn't know the nuances of the music he would enjoy the music. With the thirst for music he went and approached a master to learn Classical Karnatic Music there he was encountered with the above question of what caste he belonged to.

The master was a well built man and he had three stripes of ash marks on his forehead with a vermilion in the middle of the stripes in between his eye brows and his face was well shaven. It was he who imposed the question of caste to Rajesh. "Tell me your caste, I will teach you, I will tell you whether you could make it up" (*The Untouchable Piglet* Pg 96). Rajesh never expected this question and in fact he was bewildered that to learn music will they need to know one's caste. All the thoughts came into his mind before he could answer the question the master asked him "Are you a Brahmin? He paused a while and resumed "If you are a Brahmin, I shall teach you grammar of karnatic music" (*The Untouchable Piglet* Pg 96). Rajesh got angry and he said if

I am not a Brahmin am I not eligible to learn the music. With this note the master came to know that he wasn't a Brahmin and he won't be able to teach him the divine karnatic music as

“I will teach, but you won't get it simply because you are not a Brahmin. The music you want to learn is Brahminised. This music will be learnt through a family tradition and with nista(Discipline)... this music is associated with the divine hence it cannot be learnt nor acquired in a school or a collage. It can only be transmitted from a guru to a disciple in a family tradition” (*The untouchable Piglet Pg 97*).

In order to learn music one need to be a vegetarian and satvic in nature only the Brahmins have the twin quality. The Brahmin blood itself will get the art of music very soon and he tells Rajesh that all of his students are Brahmins they learn the music very soon as they have sharp intellect and can get along with the music so well. Rajesh remains silent for all the things the master utters and finally master comes to a conclusion that Rajesh is not a Brahmin and there is no use in talking to him about music as he will never learn the divine music which is closely associated with God and the people who know the language of God that is the Brahmins only can learn it as the other caste people can only listen to the music of the upper caste.

Rajesh lost his patience and he asked the master that he will pay twice the money his Brahmin students pay him will he be able to get to know the divine music for which the master rejects him and tells him that it's not about the money it's about the qualities which one holds. “Even if you pay what my students are paying, you won't get it. The point here is not money, but qualities you need to have such as dhrti (steadiness), dhairya (perseverance), Ksama (patience), Virya (energy) and Sraddha (faith) besides dedication (Pg *The Untouchable Piglet 97,98*). By saying this master avoids Rajesh and he tells him the inability to take him as his students because he is not a brahmin with the innate quality to learn the music. Master tells him to concentrate on the post graduate philosophy and earn a life for his daily living. All through his life Rajesh had the best quality which he got from his teacher and parents so he never argued with the master or uttered a dis-respectful word he just walked off.

Rajesh family is low caste people his father and mother are coolie. He has two sisters and with the money his parents brought home he managed to lead a life of suffering and poverty though he was educated in a normal village school he developed some innate qualities from the environment of his teachers and parents like being obedient to the elders and keeping the consciousness pure and helping others. He has imbibed the so called qualities of Brahmin without being a Brahmin from the nurture. Rajesh was confused of how he got the urge to learn the music of the Brahmins which has colonized has come to him though being from low caste the thirst of music is hindering him from learning philosophy. He felt that it was his previous birth karma that is making him to get the fragrance of the music which is not at all associated with him.

When Rajesh was about to leave the place the master asked him what was his caste and when Rajesh uttered that his caste was Jangama which means Begging the master was shocked how a boy from the low-caste whose life depended on begging can learn the divine music. Even when Rajesh hindered and told him that he no longer begs it was his forefather who went around begging but now he is refined and his parents are working as coolie and earn money for lively hood but still the master could not tolerate it. when master insulted him after knowing his caste Rajesh spoke out to prove his talent he said to master that he had all the qualities to learn the art of music as he is obedient, honest and has an undying interest to learn the music. Master laughs at his words and says these qualities alone aren't enough to learn music as young boy you will have many distractions and concentration level will be less. Chewing the betel nut the master declared that he won't be able to take him as students and he has more work to organize the concert and teach other students in different places and asks Rajesh to leave the place. Rajesh leaves the place with disappointment but with his unsatisfiable desire to music.

Rajesh approaches other teacher this time the teacher was a women named Vasanthi, a vocal teacher in music collage run by TTD. He goes straight to her house and he pressed the calling bell a slender lady with nice silk saree hair neatly tucked with jasmine asked him for the purpose of his visit. Rajesh introduced himself and told the lady to spare some time for him, without letting him inside she spoke to him. When he said that he is twenty two years old non-Brahmin and want to learn music she said it would be impossible for him to get the art of music as at this

age the Brahmin boy would be doing concert and at the age of eight and seven is the prompt age to learn music only at that age the mind will be fresh without any distraction and only a Brahmin can get to taste the divine music. Rajesh was not able to convince her she said “You are not a Brahmin, I am sorry, you may seek the help of someone who is ready to impart you” (*The untouchable Piglet* Pg103).

He left the house dumb and on the way many thoughts haunted him. He questioned himself that why the language of the God Sanskrit did was accessible to only the Brahmins and it was not easy in reach of the other caste people. It was the nations language as these Brahmins made the hymns, religious rituals, and sacred texts only for the upper caste people the language of God started to demise and it is no longer in usage except the few Brahmin use it to grace and invoke auspicious occasions. If the divine Karnatic music is accessible only for the Brahmins then it will no longer be in the society as the Sanskrit got extinct so will the fate of karnatic music to, he got to know that Tirupathi will no longer help him to learn the music so he packed his things and next day he left to Chennai which is called the Mecca of Karnatic music. His friends guided him to reach Madras Music Academy which is located in TT Krishnamachari road and it was December a ripened season for karnatic music as four thousand concerts was taking place in different places of the city. Rajesh went and met Venkata Sesha Iyer a great vocalist he was giving his live concert and when he came out all the admirers crowded him. Since Rajesh never had the ticket to get into the concert he stayed out till it gets completed. When Seshan headed to the car with daring courage Rajesh ran to him and asked him to spend some valuable time. Seshan soon gave his visiting card and fixed the appointment at Seven in the morning and the car swiftly mixed with the mainstream.

Next day morning Rajesh heeded to Alwarpet and reached the house of Sesha it was a asthetic ambiance house. He met Sesha and told his desire get a master who will teach him just to learn the grammar of the music to become a good rasika and he wants nothing more than it. When Sesha asked his name he said Rajesh Sharma with the surname Sesha understood his caste and got to know his interest for music and the only inhibition he had was his age as he was twenty two. Rajesh knew that he would say it and he again expressed his mind of learning only the grammar to become a good rasika of music and no other intention to give concert. Sesha

accepted him and told him to meet him daily at five to seven to attend the classes which will be assisted by one of his senior student. The joy in Rajesh's heart has no bounds. The fee to learn the music was one thousand a month and an advance of two months though it was too high for him he managed to take parttime job as as told by his master. He joined classes he never missed a single day he managed his part-time job and classes. Initially he felt that he was the only elder among the teenage students later he felt comfortable as the passion of music drove him crazy.

Six years passed by learning the basics of music, after seeing his performance Sesha himself trained him in Manodharma Snageetham nine years passed and in the tenth year he first did his maiden performance the invitation of his performance was given to all the people it was in Saraswathi Mahal in Nungampakkam. He got the attention of the people and many appreciated him for his voice, he got many invitation to do concerts his fame reached heights

One day he was invited by S.V Music College Tirupathi where all the teachers of divine music were occupying the first row in which one of the teachers he approached named Vanitha and the master were also seated. He started the concert and changed different ragas and performed very well it was a delight to the audience. After the concert people rushed to him for autographs and photos when all the things got over Rajesh went straight to the master and asked him whether he could recognize him and he approached the teacher and asked the same. They could not recognize him so he revealed that he was Rajesh Sharma who was denied the art of learning divine music as he belonged to the low caste and now he is ruling the karnatic music. When he revealed his true self both the teachers cringed in shame and it was a slap on their ego. Through he belonged to the low caste he was able to get the art of the divine music it is not about the caste, class, race in human it is all about the honesty, discipline, perseverance, determination and passion to get things in life. When the human treats his fellow human with respect and dignity there the nation will be a developed and refined one.

Reference

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