

# Sanctity of Marriage in Khandekar's Yayati

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Abstract: The present paper is a close study of the marital happiness and its satisfaction above all moral crisis in the marriage, infidelity in partnership are some of the deep soul cracking topics in Khandekar's Yayati. Marriage in India is seen as an Institute where it is celebrated not just for bonding between two people but as a binding force between the two families also. The modern society poses threat on the ethics of the family with live-in-relationship and gay marriages. Earlier marriage was seen as sexual licence for reproduction but now the younger generation holds a different perspective on life and marriage. Divorce rate is increasing so they want to try the compatibility with the companion before marriage by opting for live-in-relationship thus denying the rules lay down by the institute of marriage. They don't believe in the concepts of marriage which is based on sacrifice and selflessness. They deny it for taking the couple for granted which decreases the love by enslaving each other. Live in relationship or same sex marriage is still a taboo and larger section of the Indian society is opposing it. But our law has legalised gay marriage on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Even adultery is no more a crime. "If someone "lives in adultery", the partner can file for divorce. The law became defunct on 27<sup>th</sup> sep, 2018 by supreme court of India. The Supreme Court called the law unconstitutional because it entreats a husband as the master".

**Keywords: sanctity, marriage, infidelity**

From his childhood Yayati had inclination towards beauty. Yayati at the age of six was angry with his mother for not feeding him and wanted to call Kalika as his mother. He had brought tears in his mother's eyes by being cold towards her. She was afraid that even he would leave her like Yati. In his youth Yayati had got attracted to a maid Alaka and had kissed her lips passionately and was transposed to heaven, when he had met with an accident and was bed ridden. When Yayati's father was in his death bed he had slept with his maid. Yayati's mother after learning the truth about him avoided his meeting with Alaka and says "You are not at fault. It is my fate which is to blame. It is in your blood. As a wife I suffered a lot. I was hoping that suffering would not be my lot at least as a mother".(77) Yayati's great grandfather had made Urvashi as his queen after fighting the demon who had kidnapped her. Devayani was madly in love with Kacha but he had refused her love. She was heartbroken and gave a curse that the power he had earned from her father would be useless. Kacha had pronounced a cruel curse on her that a Brahmin's son would not accept her hand for marriage. Devayani was angry with her father when he was depressed and worried about her marriage. She say's "It is true the power of Sanjeevani was lost. That may be! But Devayani stil had her beauty. On the strength of that alone she—". (86) Devayani means that with the power of her beauty she can earn anything. Devayani, daughter of Maharishi Shukracharya is not

an ordinary woman. She says, “No, I will not sit and fret like other women. I am made of sterner stuff. God has given me beauty and father has given me intelligence and education”. (83) She was having strong faith in her beauty. She had the clue that even the princess Sharmishtha, the king’s daughter was always envious of her. She plans to outshine Sharmishtha by wearing the red saree presented by Kacha, brought by heaven. In reality Devayani was jealous of Sharmishtha that’s why she hoodwings to put her to shame at the festivities. She wanted to break her pride of king’s daughter. At the festival event Devayani volunteered for a swimming competition with Sharmishtha. She was overconfident that she would win but she lost and what made her furious was that when she came out to the bank she saw Sharmishtha wearing her red saree. The verbal fight between them moves to the manhandling level. Sharmishtha humiliated Devayani when she was adamant to have her dress. In this fight Devayani falls into the open well. She was burning for revenge and sobbing like a child in the cold water. She was lucky enough to be saved by king Yayati. She was lifted from the well by arranging the arrows like a lotus to make a cradle. Yayati was enchanted by her beauty. Before looking at Yayati by hearing he is king Yayati Devayani had planned her future she was very good opportunist to give her right hand to Yayati and say he had taken her right hand in marriage. When Yayati questioned about marriage between Brahmin and Kshatriya she was smart enough to mention the illustration of Lopamudra. Even she convinced him of her father’s approval and wanted Kacha to witness this revenge she had taken on him. After becoming the queen of Hastinapur she wants to punish Sharmishtha for pushing her into the well. Sharmishtha’s father king Vrishaparva had fallen at Shukracharya’s feet and asked Devayani to punish her. Devayani had thoughtlessly uttered “Sharmishtha must be my maid. She must go with me to Hastinapur, to wait on me all her life”. (94) From their childhood days both Sharmishtha and Devayani were not in good terms. Devayani always wanted to excel and had developed nasty competition with Sharmishtha and never wanted her to win. But now Sharmishtha’s offensive words to Devayani had ruined her life. She had dreamt of being a queen of Hastinapur and is reduced to being a maid to the queen of Hastinapur. “To be a maid to that heartless stone image in love with herself?”. (97)

Sharmishtha’s father though a king was helpless in this as he wanted Shukra’s favor to save his kingdom. But the death of individuality was killing Sharmishtha’s soul to accept the punishment. Sharmishtha wonders how Devayani and Kacha belonging to same Brahmin caste defer with each other. Kacha was so brave to come to her kingdom to earn Sanjeevani at the stake of his life. He was a good man with selfless deeds and so affectionate that she wanted him to be her brother. It was by mistake that Sharmishtha had worn Devayani’s saree presented by Kacha. Kacha had truly loved short tempered and egoist Devayani. He had chosen duty above his love for her. Before leaving Kacha had confessed his love to Sharmishtha and told her to tell Devayani that “Kacha’s heart is wedded to duty. But a corner of that heart is forever hers”. (100) These words of Kacha served as a beacon light to Sharmishtha and she declared to be Devayani’s maid. While she was leaving the palace her father touched her feet and said that she was not a daughter but a mother. She had asked her father to feel proud as if she was a boy sent to war. Sharmishtha’s dedication towards her people is noteworthy. Like Kacha she is also inspired to devote her

life for the people and at the same time keep the fire of love intact in her heart. Devayani and her mother-in-law used to quarrel a lot as both of them were arrogant. As Sharmishtha was Kshatriya the Queen mother used to pamper her just to make Devayani insecure. But Sharmishtha used to take solace by her motherly touch. A renowned palmist had predicted that Devayani would get a son within a year and Sharmishtha's son would become king. This prediction disturbed both the ladies. Sharmishtha knew Devayani would never allow her to marry and to have kids was farfetched imagination. Devayani who was vigilant had taken care of Sharmishtha that she never comes close to her husband. She had kept them apart. On their nuptials Devayani had fought with her husband for drinking wine and that romantic night was spoilt by her venomous tongue. She had asked Sharmishtha to wait outside and she had seen her flung in anger. Yayati had taken Devayani's hand to marriage as a sweet revenge to his mother who was the cause for the death of the innocent girl Alaka. Even he had thought his father-in-law would help him in warding off the curse on him. But Shukra had given advice to his son-in-law alone. Devayani was not told to adjust in her in laws place. Maharshi Shukra had warned him "Remember her happiness is my happiness". (111) Both Yayathi and Devayani wanted to get benefitted from their marriage. They are using it as a tool to secure their future but after marriage they are shattered by the impossibility of their dreams.

Devayani is spoilt child of Shukra's pampering and over solicitous attention. As a father he had not disciplined her and left to her will which resulted in her stubborn nature. Devayani was successful in taking promise from Yayati not to touch the drink in future. It was difficult for him to give that oath but she was adamant and he never wanted to hurt the new bride. "But he saw the smile of a pretty woman, who in her arrogance thought she could reduce a man to utter subjection". (115) Union with such a beautiful lady made his nights very colorful. Later he was able to learn about her true personality. She was admirer of her beauty and all beautifications were solely for her 'self'. "Devayani lived for herself and only for herself".(116) Yayati took great pleasure in his bodily pleasures. He wanted more and when the day departed them made him restless. Devayani always talked about herself. Devayani though gave him bodily pleasure she was disinterested many a times. The first year of their married life was spent happily but he started slowly drifting from her. "My loneliness, my imperfection, my incompleteness remained to torment me. If we were near each other body, we were poles apart in mind. (117) Yayati started travelling alone on the path of his love life and Devayani never noticed this. He was thirsty for the love which would escape him from all fear and unhappiness. But when he was with Devayani that sort of oneness never occur to him. "I was unsatisfied even with a beautiful wife like Devayani is the truth – nothing but the truth. (118) His dejection was undiscovered by her. She had married Yayati to be the queen of Hastinapur and he knew he was used as an instrument for fulfilling her wishes. Devayani who suffered from love failure never thought of loving Yayati. Her only goal was to take revenge on Kacha. Though there was physical union between husband and wife there was no mutual love and understanding. They never opened up their heart to each other. They could not express their true feelings and unhappiness dawned on them. Devayani was insensitive, self-centered who indulged in self-thought and self-worship. But a mere touch of Sharmishtha while putting tilak to Yayati was enough to tinkle the desire on her. Her

hand was like that of a delicate flowering creeper for him. After that Yayati had noticed tears rolling from her eyes which never passed from Devayani as she was an unemotional lady. Yayati was attracted and sensed solace of a lover with Sharmishtha.

Yayati had doubted Devayani's relationship with Kacha. In her dreams she was talking to Kacha pleading him to braid the flowers in her hair which he had collected. Yayati had understood that it was above friendship a love which had evolved in her for him. It is very clear what is in her mind had come in dreams. She was unable to forget Kacha even after marriage and love Yayati as she loved Kacha. Her love had evaporated. She had locked herself after the loss of first love and had become dispassionate for the rest of her life. On the pretext of the sacrifice she had sent invitation to Kacha. She was waiting for his arrival desperately and grieved as Devayani not as a queen. She was able to hide her real self and masked herself and showed off as a queen of Hastinapur. Kacha was a man of strong will. He never uttered his love to Devayani but she understood by his gesture and his feelings how much he loved her. If she had asked her hand she was damn sure that Kacha would have not given. He was self-disciplined and unyielding. Devayani was able to take advantage of Yayati by the look he was looking at Devayani. "A woman can instinctively read passion in the eyes a man. She is certain from his avid eyes that he would be an easy prey". (131) Devayani was determined to spend her life in the intoxication of being the mistress of herself. When she realized that the man standing on the edge of the well was the king of Hastinapur she was determined to be his favorite queen. She wanted "To forget the pangs of unrequited love, I needed the intoxication of splendor, the arrogance of power and a husband who would dance to my tune... A lusty husband would stay in my control.(132) She had kept the flowers of his choice in a golden vase to please Kacha but she did not consider his advice to free Sharmishtha from bondage. Kacha had seen both Devayani and Sharmishtha as his sisters. Queen Mother abandons palace and accompanies Kacha in search of her first son Yati who had come to palace but in insanity. Yati wanted to convert all women to men so that there would be no sin. He had forgotten that he had come from a woman. Kacha had praised Sharmishtha for her courage to accept the challenge of Devayani. He said in his eyes she is a gracious queen "The slave is Devayani. She is slave to her splendor, dignity and ego. The man whose soul is prey to selfishness, desire and enjoyment is forever a slave in this world."(149) Kacha saluted Sharmishtha for being mother to the whole demon kingdom and her inner strength which prompted her for this sacrifice.

Sharmishtha's first love was Yayati she had dreamt to marry him but Devayani had snatched him and married but she had failed to take away him from her heart. She had drawn a picture of Yayati and worshiped him like a god and garlanded it. It was because of Devayani Yayati had dressed like a sage and had gone to meet her at Ashokavan. Yayati was overjoyed to witness his picture and promised his royal would come and meet her from the passage in the wall and she should press the catch by his call "Shama! Shama!". As Devayani moves to her father and then delivers a baby boy, in her absence Yayati meets Sharmishtha daily at dead night and had gratified nights. Yayati had never felt the sensuous love from Devayani as in Sharmishtha. "Even in her kisses, I felt as if she was hiding something".(172)

Sharmishtha becomes pregnant and the news is spread and heard by Devayani. She scolds her for having illicit affair and calls her wanton. Motherhood brings completeness to Sharmishtha's life. She had named her son Pururava after his majesty's great grandfather and to hide it called him Puroo. Devayani wanted to test the old palmist so she gave similar dresses to her son Yadu and Puroo. The palmist said that Yadu was unfortunate and Puroo would be a great king. Now Devayani wanted to know the father of Puroo and she put Sharmishtha and Puroo in cellar and gave a nights time to reveal the truth. Yayati managed to free Sharmishtha with the help of his friend Madhav. As it was raining heavily on that night Madhav had picked up fever and was struggling to live. Yayati was torn apart from his death and the separation of Sharmishtha and his Puroo. He cursed himself as treacherous lover, passionate sex ridden husband and irresponsible father and drunkard. The guilt of not saving those two lives of beloveds and the fear of death tormented him like hell for momentarily. He took shelter in the wine and sex. The intoxication of wine made him senseless. Shamishtra was a brave lady to walk so many miles to keep herself and Puroo far away from Hasthinapur. She kept walking till she met yati in a sane form she had confessed her heart to him. Yati was saved by Kacha and his mother on the Bhrigu Mountain. Yati's matured thoughts to her, "the body and the soul are not enemies of each other; they are the two wheels of a chariot. To torture the body for the uplift of the soul or to deaden the soul for physical pleasures are both wrong. The relation of man and woman is just like that of the body and soul". Not by hating each other but rather by intense love for each other, love so great that each one forgets self, man and woman attain heavenly bliss in work a day life" (194). Devayani had cursed Kacha for the disuse of power Sanjeevani after that Kacha wanted to go penance for peace on earth. Devayani's father Shukra was in search of a destructive power to kill by just wishing. Puroo grew at hermitage and learnt art and Vedas. At his very young age he revealed his valour and Sharmishthta had feared about this. Puroo when he comes to know that Hastinapur Kingdom is attacked by Dasyus he leaves to war without telling his mother and she follows him to Hastinapur after eighteen years.

The prediction of the palmist had made Devayani to doubt Shamishtha and her husband having an affair. She was intelligent to make out by broken words of Madhav. She was jilted and deceived by the king and she wanted to avenge Sharmishtha and her son. She had announced prize reward for those who would bring Shamishtha and her son Puroo. She was restless as it was not possible to take revenge on her. Yayati drifted from palace. Devayani looked after the administration and her son. Yayati indulged in wine and women. Devayani was hurt that Yayati wanted to make Shamishtha as his queen and maintained the secrecy from her that hurt her even more. When she said why he had come to her in Sharmishtha's absence then he laughed a ghostly smile and said "I am the son of king Nahusha. I want Sharmishtha. I want Devayani. I want every pretty woman on earth. Every day a fresh woman". (208) These words of Yayati reveal his true attitude towards women. He never respected women and used them like a plaything to satisfy his animal pleasure. Man is always sanctioned by our religious books to utilise woman as his commodity and women are always victims of patriarchy. Manu, the sacred text writer says "A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust. A

woman who is unfaithful to her husband is an object of reproach in this world; [then] she is reborn in the womb of a jackal and is tormented by the diseases born of her evil". The angered Devayani by the words and foul smell of liquor from his mouth provoked to take promise from him not to touch her. Thus they got separated. Even Devayani had guilt feeling as an irresponsible wife. When her son is captured by Dasyus and Yayati is not helping she thinks it was all her sin. Devayani was unable to render selfless love to anybody even it is demonstrated by the curse she bestows on Kacha. She was always egoistic and when her ego is hurt she goes mad. Yayati was tormented by Devayani's rejection he wanted to commit suicide at that time he was soothed by Mandar's philosophy which was based on physical pleasure and there was no immorality in enjoying it. What Yayati did not realise is "in life the smallest happiness of any individual is circumscribed by his temperament, circumstances and the incompleteness of life". (229) Devayani had sacrificed her nuptial pleasures for eighteen years. Yayati was very ruthless in his lust and wronged Madhavi his friend Madhav's fiency who committed suicide and very young Taraka who had gone crazy shouting snake snake because of him. Yayati had seen Taraka playing with her dolls. Mukulika who was the first lady to introduce him to the world of sexual pleasure became the mediator in supplying ladies to him. He kept on asking for golden hair lady and they had brought his future daughter-in-law who was finally rescued. Yayati feared his youth would end by the growth of grey hair as yet he was not satisfied. Maharshi Shukra who is a great sage and can gain great power by his penance is having a weakness towards his daughter and can't control his anger and pronounced curse on Yayati thoughtlessly. He cursed him to turn into a decrepit old man. With the petition of his daughter and son-in-law Shukra pronounced a counter curse that if a young man of his flesh and blood exchange his youth for his old age then he can become young again. His son Yadu was not ready and left with his mother. Puroo without any second thought readily accepted to exchange his youth to his father's old age. But hearing Sharmishtha's sobbing and tears crushed his self and desire to have sex with a golden haired lady. He was ashamed and reduced to nought in front of Shamishtha who is the epitome of sacrifice. Yayati was now ready to die and return his son's youth. Kacha who had come timely saved Yayati by restoring Puroo's youth. The impure Yayati becomes a renewed man after that.

Ultimately Yayati learns to sacrifice and renounces household and moves towards jungle. Shamishtha followed him was natural but Devayani too followed after the transformation of her heart. Puroo wanted his elder brother Yadu to be throned and asked Devayani's motherly love. "I want you as mother, I want yadu as brother. I don't not want kingdom. I want mother and a brother". (250) These words of Puroo had a great impact on Devayani and softened her stone heart. Yayati yearned for immortality and Devayani longed for authority which resulted in the damage of their marriage. Kacha's duty towards his people was his priority so he becomes a great person without any weakness. When duty is at the topmost priority of any man then he will not be succumbed to any desires. Khandekar rightly opines "desire is never satisfied by indulgences like the sacrificial fire, it even grows with every offering". (251)

Yayati fell into the well of loneliness indulged in lust. For eighteen long years Yayati never thought of Devayani or Sharmishtha. If he could break Devayani's promise and drink wine he could have broken the promise on her touch also and looked after the affairs of the kingdom. He failed as a king, husband and father. He even could have gone in search of his lover Sharmishtha in those eighteen years. Yayati indeed was jealous of Kacha when he had heard Devayani murmur in her dreams. If he had craved for true love then he would have loved like Kacha. Yayati was after sexual love and never savoured platonic love of Kacha. Yayati took the opportunity to do adultery when his wife was pregnant and had gone to delivery. Sharmishtha's love interest was Yayati and wanted to get married. Devayani also wanted to marry Kacha but he had declined it. After marriage Devayani accepted to be sister of Kacha and never wanted to sleep with him like Yayati who slept with sundry women, he came across. Devayani and Sharmishtha never thought of any other man in their lives and maintained the sanctity of marriage. Even Sharmishtha who had taken the Moon as the witness and married maintained her morality. It has been ingrained in women to remain loyal to their husbands from their childhood. Even Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 1 text 40 says, "When Irreligion is prominent in the family, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt, and from the degradation of womanhood, O descendant of Vrishni, comes unwanted progeny." Devayani, Sharmishtha have never failed as mothers. Devayani had looked after the kingdom and son in her husband's absence and Sharmishtha had looked after her son Puroo and brought him up in a respectful way. All the women characters in the novel are virtuous wives even the maids. Yayati meets Alaka in a wood when she is in a devastating situation. He saves her from drowning but unable to save her life. She was married to a farmer who staked her in gambling. Her life was unbearable because of his friend who knew black magic. So she had managed to save herself from them and had lost her sense in fear. Yayati though wanted to console her by his kiss she avoided him telling she belongs to other man. Yayati was moved by her confidence in him. Alaka's mother had nursed him so he took her as his sister. He was very patient to her and even allowed to sleep her in his tent but she was restless and saw the ghost of Mandar. Finally she rests to peace in Yayati's arms. Both Yayati and his father Nahusha have failed to maintain the sacredness of marriage. Yayati's mother declines her son's promise on his father and says "I was not the great Queen, I was the great maid. I danced to his tune all my life. I refuse to do so any longer". (68)

Marriage which was sacrament and lifelong togetherness is losing its ethics with time. In early civilization when man was working in the field he wanted wife, more children to work. Now it is the time where woman can become mother without sexual intercourse by artificial insemination and man can become father by surrogacy without marriage. Children bring stability in marriage that is evident in Khandekar's Yayati, whatever may happen if life partners decide to be loyal to each other and respect each other's privacy then there would be many more successful marriages and decline in the number of divorces. Modern Technology with Facebook, twitter and whatsapp relations are made and broken easily and are used to spy on each other. Men expect virtuous women for marriage; Man can go for polygamy is it possible for man to tolerate his wife having extra marital affair or polygyny? If men were morally good

then women would have not sold their bodies for money. Earlier there used to be separate area for prostitution now it is done secretly. The Women in prostitution did not suffer much rape as women goes through in a marriage. Sexual freedom is much more in prostitution than in the Institution of marriage. Earlier there was fear of getting sexually transmitted diseases. With the invention of condoms and contraceptives man is free to have sex at any time. But if a man is brought up in a family where human values are inculcated then he would move in the right path and never befall to the pit of physical pleasure and restrain himself by self-control. In this modern world moral education is side-lined even sex education based on morality is essential for present generation to save them from the doom. The Supreme Court has declared if a man and woman “lived like husband and wife” for a long period and had children; the judiciary would presume that the two were married”. The children born out them will not be termed illegitimate. The adultery law in India is giving freedom for adultery but still India is not fully westernised to accept it. Some have maintained the sanctitude of marriage and to have children without marriage is unwelcomed by the orthodox minds. It is crucial to sustain the sanctity of marriage and endorse it all the time to lay a strong foundation for the overall personality development of the next generation.

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