

A SAGA OF RETREAT IN ALL FOR LOVE

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ABSTRACT:

Dryden fits to the period of shift between refurbishment and Augustan. England after the death Charles II met with the inner insurgencies, Socio-political threat was created in the nation until the Georgian came to the power. The rule of Queen Mary after 1688 was not in order. Though the rationalism became the voice of the people, it had led the society into anarchy. The social unrest of the period was converted into a literary theme and many of the writers began to deal with it. The rationality of the people thought of love and honour not with the touch of sentiments but with the social consciousness. In this connection, Dryden felt to choose the story of Antony and Cleopatra for one of his heroic plays and has reconstructed the historical into a rational story. But his treatment does not dissociate the sentiment from reason. The treatment of the historical facts is transplanted into the cultural thoughts in the play All For Love. He tries to relate the condition of England after the death of Charles II to the historical event of Rome after the death of Julius Caesar. The socio-political panorama of both Rome and England was almost the same. Therefore, Dryden thought of taking another representative hero for his purpose of exploring not only history and the politics of sociology, but also of the cultural affinities which are relevant even to understand the contemporary society. Therefore, the concept of myth can be applied in the appraisal of his works specifically his All For Love.

This article encompasses the thought of discussing the play as a myth, that too exploring myth to understand the political life of an individual and its effect on society in general. The Anglo-American critics introduced to celebrate the heyday of the myth movement occurred between an after the great wars. The critics like Richard Chase, Francis Ferguson, Wheel Wright and others led the movement to show the new relationship between myth and literature because myth can local and universal, dynamic and static, contemporary and archaic, human and divine at once. Though the stuff of myth is primitive and pre historic, it keeps on recurring in all the ages and becomes the integral part of the society. Myths signify pagan religion and folk lore. They were the ingredients of the classical literature. Even in the modern literature the folk and the pagan become the inseparable parts of the literary art. The historical fact which is chosen as the theme is not static in its interpretation. It is flexible. Its flexibility is creatively used in the construct of a literary work. A myth can be transplanted in the media representing the cultural and political diversity. Dryden's All For Love is an example where the story of Antony has been flexibly used to represent the political and cultural diversity in his own period which can be condition of the society in any age.

The story of Antony and Cleopatra, in Dryden, is a human story of virtues and the weaknesses Like in any myth. In the explorative myth of Antony every odd thing is converted into a meaningful object in the context of myth. Its touch makes the trivial, into a tremendously significant thing. Dryden signifies the story of Antony and Cleopatra only to speak about love and honour. But to say something mysterious that controls the human life and society. The futility and the emptiness of individual life or period is restructured into a discipline or thought by such of these writers and artists as those of Shakespeare and Dryden. Even in the modern writing one can refer to the name of T.S. Eliot who attempts to install a sacred thought in a godless society. The myth of Antony may help weaving a literary fraternity and the human nature from the mythopoeic, broad natural system to narrow system of self-centeredness and absurdities of both the 18th century society and the pre-Christian era in Rome. But the writers like Shakespeare and Dryden provide examples through their dramatic writing, applying the tales of Antony and Brutus and projecting the human virtues and weaknesses in all the ages, with its virtues and vices.

The particular sketch of Antony's life can explain general thought about the human life. A historical narration becomes a sub text in the making of a universal text. The myth criticism always penetrates into the text to see and recognize the sub text in itself from where it tries to generate the new meaning. The story of love in the

life of Antony and Cleopatra is the sub text of in the historical concept of Rome and Egypt. Dryden signifies the sub text for substantiating the title of his play *All for Love*. The myth theory can be used to analyze the sub text in *All For Love* to understand the weaknesses of Antony and Cleopatra. A great philosophy is one which tries to interpret the human weaknesses. In fact, modern existentialism is an attempt of philosophizing the weakness. Therefore, Sartre celebrates the follies in the human nature. Dryden does the same work of celebrating the honorable weakness of Antony and Cleopatra. Myth criticism can be applied for its understanding.

Usually myth criticism is considered other worldly which sought refuge from the nightmare of history and as a result it was oblivious and indifferent to the underlying cultural and political factors which are operated in history. But the effort of the research in this context is to transform the history in to a historical in its operation and make it fit for any literary work, because literature is not an escape from the society. It does not say a break to the past. It articulates the issues and concerns of the society and the people that it addresses. It must have the reality whether the historical or the contemporary. Shakespeare and Dryden have given the dramatic works making them at once contemporary and universal. In fact, a literary artifact in order to be significant must thrust upon the contemporary issues focusing on them the light of the archaic world. The myth becomes a method to understand the link between archaic and the contemporary. In this context, the play '*All For Love*' or '*The World Well Lost*' is discussed. The method of discussion explores the historical facts and the psychological odyssey which are presented in the text. The play opens with the astrologer who is also the priest speaking about the present condition of Rome and Egypt. The beginning of the play introduces the irony because Dryden in the age of reason permitted the superstitious women through the mouth piece of the priest. There are evil omens and supernatural prodigies suggesting the devastation. Serapion, the priest depicts the present condition in which there is the disorder and the chaos. Both the men and beasts are carried together to show that everything is now turned into ups and down. The man from Cleopatra looks at them and tries to hear hiding himself what Serapion has been speaking to his another priest. But the priest speaks on the need of Antony for the Egyptians to protect them and make them citizens otherwise Egyptians become the slaves to Octavius Caesar. They refer to the battle that Antony has lost during the last battle. In the battle of Octium between Antony and Octavius, Antony is made to go by the sea according to the Cleopatra's advice and Antony proves himself dubious and weak by the sea. Hence he loses the battle. His defeat is the defeat of Egypt and the priest has been dreaming of Antony to bring back the noble day for the Egyptians. They speak Antony's need as a soldier. Alexas intervene the priests and he tries to impress upon the priest that Egypt is now doomed and Cleopatra is to be survived rather driving her to become to the victim to the revenges'. The priest talks of Antony and Cleopatra. They introduce the main characters Antony and Cleopatra and their prominence in Egypt. Serapion, the priest has a faith on the strength of Antony who can stand firm and fight the proud Rome to bring back fortune to the Egyptian empire. He brings the comparison between Rome and Alexandria. Rome is glorious and splendid because of its victory by Octavius. The astrologer hopes Alexandria will have an equal glory if Antony prepares his mind protecting it. He compares the strength of Antony to the mythical character in Greek literature Colossus. In the romantic poetry of the Elizabethan and the 19th century period the image of colossus is used to show the gigantic personality and whom the ships can move. Antony is compared to Colossus so far as his strength is concerned and his hero ship is concerned. But the things have occurred quite against the belief. Alexas is a character who represents the age of Cleopatra and also the age of Dryden who thinks that the priests are the dictators in the state. It is another way of saying that destiny is made a power and not at all the human reason. Alex stands for the power of human reason. The myth in this way combines the past and the present to show that the new enlightenment is needed for eradicating the chaotic situations. The thought must be the result of the enlightenment. Antony should come back as a thought so that the society can be saved. Alexas therefore, requests the priest not to speak about the ill omens and their evil effects. He focuses on the binding of mind and heart as a humanist. Dryden presents the social consciousness of his age in the idiom of Alexas.

At last, *All for Love* becomes a tragedy by the death of Antony and Cleopatra. Their death is not based upon the clichés. They die a noble death sacrificing the material world for the sake of love. The love is not elevated to the romantic space of spiritualism. But it is confined to the practical world of the possibilities. Antony's myth deals with the heroic temperament that is the spirit of the age. The rational mind of the period is mediated by the romantic love. The rationality of the people can create genuine happiness in the human society. Dryden tries to give a new interpretation to the colonial power through the character of Antony. In this regard, Antony is recreated not as a character or a person, but as a 'Thought', a thought that imbibes in itself, the emotional and the rational constructs of the human mind. The occasions and the situations that Antony confronts are recurrent even in the present society. He continues to exist as a paradigm of thought. Antony myth combines in itself, the collective consciousness and the collective unconsciousness.

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