

The Social and Moral elements of the play ‘The Pot of Gold’ by Plautus

In the play ‘The Pot of Gold’ Plautus throws light on human follies and vices-avarice and miserliness. His main aim is to expose and make fun of wrong and evil aspects. His main objective is to satirize the follies of individuals. The playwright is vigilant about the social life of the people of that time.

‘The Pot of Gold’ is set in Athens but the themes and other issues of the play are Roman. All his comedies are a reflection of the society pertaining to his time. The play gives an insight into Roman life of that time and social aspects in particular. His society is not aristocratic but low. The playwright shows the position of women and slaves of that time. Thus, he depicts the low kinds of people of that time in the play.

In Roman times women did not have much freedom and they had no say in their own matter and they were subordinate to men. Marriages were arranged and dowries were given to them. Dowry system was a social evil at that time. At their young age the marriages of the girls were arranged but real marriage took place at their adulthood and after it they could be companions of their husbands at all social ceremonies but they were always subordinate to them.

In the Roman society slavery was a common evil. Much of the Roman economy was dependent on the exploitation of the slaves. They managed the public works. Educated slaves assisted in private industries and administration. They were regarded as a symbol of richness for the owner. The play ‘The Pot of Gold’ has got sufficient evidence in this connection.

Plautus lays an emphasis on a number of moral doctrines essential to keep life happy and full of peace. Money can never make life happy if one does not know its right use. In this way Megadorus makes his nephew, Lyconides understand that money can never be their master. It must be used for getting happiness not only for himself/herself but for others too. So he asks him that if the slave is ready to return the pot of gold in exchange for his freedom, it is a good proposal as it will bring happiness to three persons-Euclio, the slave and Lyconides.

The playwright points out that greed for gold brings unnecessary anxiety and anger to Euclio. He restores himself to mental peace and satisfaction by handing over the pot of gold to the newly married couple. The parting remark of Megadorus is worth quoting: “Contentment, peace of mind and sound sleep at night are worth more than a dozen pots of gold.” The play is a shining picture of the contemporary social conditions and moral needs regarding a happy and peaceful life.

NOTE: Notes prepared through open sources