



## MYTH, FOLKLORE AND REALITY IN THE PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD

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### Abstract

The Research article entitled “Myth, Folk – lore and Reality in the plays of Girish Karnad” seeks to examine the use of myths in Karnad’s selected plays. It is divided into five chapters.Chapter I Entitled “Introduction” explains the basic features of Drama and the western playwrights ‘influence of Girish Karnad. Indian English Drama found itself lagging behind the other genres till the 1970’s. This phenomenon can be attributed to lack of a ‘live theatre’ and ‘Live Audience’.

The playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Badal sircar induced a new vigour and life into the Indian Drama with their novel themes and bold experiments on the stage 1970 onwards. Among them Girish Karnad occupies an important place in the galaxy of India English dramaturgy and classical and folk conventions in his plays. He expresses a different view however, stating that what is surprising and upsetting about India is its total lack of plays despite the regional traditions. There is no theatre in India and no meaningful tradition.

Girish Karnad has been creating a rich and Vibrant drama in tradition and yet suited to modern stage. He is highly influenced by the folk art form of India. The growth of Indian theatre has a queer history. Modern Indian theatre emerged under British influence in three cities were founded by the British and had no previous Indian History.

Keywords: Phenomenon, Vigour, Dramaturgy, Vibrant, Queer

### INTRODUCTION

It deals with the growth of Indian English drama. Contemporary Indian Drama deviates from the classical and the European models. It is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. It is not the out the shoot of any specific tradition but it has laid the foundation of a distinctive tradition in the History of world drama by reinvestigating history, legends, myth,

religion and folklore in the context of contemporary socio-political issues.

### Reality in Girish Karnad’s Plays

It reveals the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment (126). Karnad’s drama assists to teach, amuse, educate and give happiness, peace and moral upliftment. It communicates one’s duty and liberates one from his difficulties. It is deceptive that his plays display a

meditative nervousness for man, a troubled announcement of the bodily and qualified life and compellingly perceptive modern social importance. When all his plays are observed, what overwhelms us as to how conventionally his plays are? His plays assist as a vehicle for collaborating man's goals, quest for excellence, broadness and unending fight of cravings. It is quite true in the case of dramatist Girish Karnad.

Mahabharata, forms the source of two of the complex plays of Karnad. *Yayati*, the first play, is from the first book of the epic Adiparva and

*The fire and the Rain* is from the third book of the epic *Vanaparva*. *Haryavadana* is indirectly based on the epic with reference to the episode of the abandoned child Shakuntala.

In Karnad's plays, the one who smarts for the choices and schedules of others is always a woman. Though Chitralkha in *Yayati* is almost a minor character, she is the only soul who has to bear the weight of her husband's irritation against his inheritance. Padmini in *Haryavadana* is also a victim of the forces that she can neither control nor comprehend. Similarly in *Naga – Mandala*, Rani has been represented as a helpless woman shut up in an old and huge house for most part of the day and the night. She has to suffer barbaric torments and through this Karnad makes a severe accusation of the male subjugated Hindu Society. Rani has become a passive casualty in a fit of settings that are beyond her.

Rani in *Naga – Mandala* and Nittilai and Vishakha in *The fire and the Rain* are the passive and orthodox wounded who according to Ramachandran are "Caught up in a whirlpool of Hindu Patriarchy and are sucked down helplessly" (29). The picture of modern and represented in current prose is that of an individual tormented and preoccupied by the well-known agreements of society and religion. People live in despicable unhappiness and this seems to be the largest mystery of human reality. Karnad's mark of intellect is quite plain from his picture of real characters in real settings.

### **Treatment of reality Evil**

It deals with what is right and wrong. According to Karnad Sin and Evil are the result of evil will and therefore it is within man himself. The writer deals with the social evil of cast system that eats into the vitals of the social fabric of India. Regarding casts According to one of the great epics of India, the Mahabharata, there are four major social classes. They are Brahmins (priests, poets, teachers, ministers), Kshatriyas (Kings and Warriors), Vaishyas (tradesmen), Shudras (craftmen) and Panchamas (menial workers). The degree of workers prevents them from being united and makes them easily exploitable. According to Manusastra, a Brahmin may compel a Sudra to do servile jobs and he is given the privilege even to punish him if he reads the Vedas, which is considered as an abuse to the higher – class people. The Panchamas are in a pitiable state and as they are painstaking to be outsiders, they are oppressed and exploited. This is the most inhuman practice of the Hindu culture. Caste system has given the Brahmins and other high caste people a privileged position and they have never tolerated any violation, including an inter – caste marriage. This condition has not changed till now.

Uncivilized murders are committed on Sudras and Panchamas by the so-called high – class people even now in the modern age of democracy. The people of higher castes enjoy several privileges at the cost of the people of lower castes. They look down upon the retainers and workers and exploit them. The lower class people accept their humiliation as a way of life and workers exploit them. The lower class people accept their humiliation as a way of life and this is psycho – culturally programmed. They do not raise their voice even if they are paid low.

In *Tale – Danda* the concept of evil is projected through Sovideva, the King's son, When Sovideva learns from his messengers about the chaotic state in Kalyan, he holds Damodara to be accountable for rape, murder, prowling and rioting. Girish Karnad successfully offers the full concentration of truth through his imagination. He has successfully tested evil on the stage. Nothing is safe; he accommodates murder, killing, adultery,

treachery, and takeoff-all within his plots. He offerings an excess of evil on the stage not for theatrical effects but adhering to the Aristotelian dictum that an extra of the tragic elements lead to catharsis. His plays have universal appeal and test of time.

#### **Treatment of Fantasy**

Girish Karnad's first play *yayati*. It is a self-consciously existentialist drama which through shape-shifting contemplates the spectators and enlightens the theme of liability. Though according to Sinha, "Karnad's interpretation of the familiar old myth on the exchange of ages between father and son seems to have baffled and even angered many of the conventional critics" (106), this fantastic incident helps focus the attention of the listeners on one of the old myths of Kannada that the filial loyalty of the son shall at times descend even into blind loyalty. Conversely, it also helps in highlighting the facts that 1) how disastrous one's non-acceptance of his responsibility for his own evil deed can become, 2) the loyalty of the focus cannot be taken for granted and 3) all cannot be always foolishly and blindly loyal even if it is for the kingdom hand out on a platter.

The images of imaginary seem to unfold one after the other in this play. We can see a sturdy degree of social and class prejudice here. *Yayati* belongs to the Aryan race and his son Puru is born to a Rakshasa woman. In spite of his Rakshasa origin, he is expected to rule the kingdom. Puru thinks he is unfit for this great position and he feels obliged to his father for bestowing him with something greater than he deserves. Devayani is a Brahmin lady married to the Bharatha king but Sharmishtha is Rakshasa princess.

Fantasies are purely in a world of the imagination and make – believe. *Hayavadana*, *Tughlaq*, *Tale - Danda* and *The fire and the Rain*. The way one tries to direct the other and the way some of Girish Karnad's letterings struggle to dominate, shows his curiosity in the matter of power politics. The way he deals with the theme of Power politics in superb and it leaves an stubborn imprint on the minds and hearts of the students and the spectators both.

#### **Treatment of Myth**

It states that Myth is imaginative and it is learn that has no real survival. Northrop Frye prints: Myth is primarily a certain type of story...The Things that happen in myth are the things that happen only in stories: they are in a self – contained literacy world (163-64).

It is an unidentified story set in prehistoric beliefs. Myths are the tales that have been accepted on from one generation to another and they have become conventional. Karnad's themes emerge to build a stronghold in the air; he took protection in the myths and legends and made them the vehicle of a new vision. His childhood exposure to street plays in Karnataka villages and his knowledge with western dramas has made him to secure legends of India to suit the modern milieu. An enthusiastic vivacity that examines the past for apt myths to consider the present has been the characteristic of Girish Karnad. Karnad's ingenious lies in taking up fragments of historical – legendary practice and blend them into a dynamic assertion. By using the 'grammar of literary archetype', Karnad links the past and the present, the standard and the factual. Issues of the current world find their analogous in the myths and legends of the past, giving new meanings and is nights reinforcing the theme. By exceeding the limits of time and space, myths present glint of impending into life and its ambiguity. They form an important part of cultural perception of the land, with different implication and it replicates the currents issues. All his plays are literary excavations of the Indian communal past-the cultural, mythological, renowned and the the chronological as they have a strong contemporary relevance.

Identical as the tales and stories, the origin of the myths can also be copied back to the aboriginal days of the human being. Though myth is always measured opposite to history and science, the truths of the human difficulties in reflects in the mode of made – up and the position of it in empathetic the nature of the human being cannot be inflated. By performing a triple meaning, formalized, emblematic and typical, myth expresses the collective blackout of the people.

By using these myths he tried to reveal the absurdity of life with all its elemental obsession and conflicts and man's eternal resistance to achieve precision. So, Karnad considers deep into the traditional myths to spell modern man's distress and predicament that are fashioned in his mind. Karnad does not take the myths in their total; he takes only portions that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his thoughts to make his intrigue interesting. His interest was not in recreating old myths and folktales but in place of them to suit his creative principle. Karnad himself has expressed that: Theatre can simultaneously be entertainment, political commentary and artistic statement and can be composed in traditional, realistic and post modern forms like masks worn by actors that allow them to express otherwise hushed truths, Indian theatre enables immediately, manipulative representations of reality.

His first play *Yayati* was a major achievement on the stage; he borrowed the myth moderately from Mahabharata and other Puranas. In the Mahabharata, *Yayati* was one of the six sons of King Nahusha. Devayani, whose love for Kacha stayed behind unanswered, marries *Yayati* to spite Sharmisha for whom she looks like Aristotle's Poetics and Fergusson's The Idea of Theatre.

Karnad's Creative involvement into Myths Karnad does not take Myths in their entirety. He takes them only in parts that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his fancy. He combines the story of the transposed heads taken from Thomas Mann with the story of *Hayavadana* which is, in part, Karnad's own imagination and invention. While construction use of an ancient myth, Karnad makes certain changes in the original myth. For example, he has changed the names of characters. He commented that he had changed the names deliberately, for he wanted the names to be, generic terms applying to all human beings, because the characters are all types. "In Sanskrit, any person whose name you do not know is addressed as 'Devadatta'. Kapila means dark and therefore earthy and Padmini is the name of one class of women in *Vatsyana's Kamasutra*". Karnad's Preference for the Non – religious, Karnad is attracted in the non-religious dimension of myths. Most myths have a

strong emotional significance and the audiences have set responses towards them. Karnad re-interprets these myths from a non-religious dimension and exploits their inherent potential to arouse and sustain human emotions.

### Conclusion

The researcher wants to examine the above issues in this study and wishes to prove that the playwright is a gifted son of India who indianized the literary form of the Drama.

Chapter Sixth, the concluding chapter sums up the arguments of all the previous chapters in a nutshell and also offers some suggestions for future study related to the area of research. An updated Bibliography of works cited is annexed at the end.

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