

Representation of mythologies in works of Girish Karnad

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Indian English drama, beginning in the early nineteenth century has walked a long tedious path to the present, where it has received a breath of fresh air and life from such emerging dramatists as GirishKarnad, Vijay tendulkar, Mahesh dattani etc.,. Amongst this new breed of play rights, Girish Karnad is a name that strikes a chord of recognition for many. A known playwright, he is also a critically acclaimed movie actor. Starting his writing carrier with Yayathi, Karnad has moved on to give many more though provoking and symbolist plays that are richly immersed in myth and local culture. A highly learned and intellectual person. Karnad's plays are his mouthpiece to many of the contemporary issues plaguing man and society.

Girish Raghunath Karnad was born in 19 may 1938, he is an indian actor, film director, writer and playwright, who predominantly works in south indian cinema. His rise as a play wright in 1960s marked the coming of age of modern Indian playwriting in kannada, just as Badal Sarkar did in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi.

As a youngest, Karnad was an ardent admirer of yakshagana, and the theater in his village. His family moved to Dharwar in Karnataka when he was 14 years old, where he grow up with his two sisters and niece.

He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and statistics from Karnataka arts college, Dharwad (Karnataka university), in 1958. Upon graduation Karnad went to England and studied philosophy, politics and economics at Lincoln and Magdalen colleges in oxford a Rhodes scholar (1960-63), earning his master of arts in philosophy, political science and economics.

He served as director of the film and television institute of India (1974-75) and chairman of the SangeethaNatakAcademy, the national academy of the performing arts (1988-93).

Karnad was conferred padmashri and padmabhushan by the government of India and won four filmfare awards , where three are filmfare award for best director kannada and one filmfare best screenplay award.

Karnad's plays in kannada are: "Maa Nishaadh" (one act play), "Yayathi" (1961), "Tuglaq" (1964) (translated in Hindustani), "Hayavadana" (1972), "Anjumallige" (1977) "HittinaHunja" aka "Bali" (the sacrifice) (1980), "Nagalamandala" (playing with cobra) (1988), "Taledanda" (death by beheading), (1990) in hindi it is known as "Rakt-Kalyan" translated by Ram gopal Bajaj. "Agni mattu Male" (Agni aur Varsha), (The Fair and the Rain) (1955), "TippuvinaKanasugalu" (the dreams of tippu sultan), "odakallubimba" (in hindibikrebimb); and in English, "a hip of broken amages" (2006), maduve album (wedding album) (2006), "flowers" (2012), "bendakaalu on toast" (2012).

Girish Karnad, wrote so many Kannada as well as English plays, in those Yayathi is a first play of Karnad, which was published in 1961. Yayathi interprets an ancient myth in the modern context. The plot of this play has been borrowed from the Mahabharatha, where in Puru, an obedient son, accepts In his fathers old age in the prime of life for a sexual misdemeanor of his and tries to circumvent the catastrophe by demanding that his son, Puru, lend him his youth in exchange for the curse. This unusual myth about a parent's aggression against his offspring has inspired some of India's most eminent writers to explore it in fiction, poetry and drama.

In Karnad's plays, the whole action takes place in one night. As the play begins, Yayathi has already married Devayani, and marries Sharmishtha during the action of the play. It is an existentialist play on the theme of responsibility. The mind of modern man disturbed by worldly desires and sensual pleasures is drifting towards chaos. The play is also a sublime form of Karnad's protest against his being suffocated by the responsibilities entrusted on him by his parents. In this play Karnad employs the dramatic technique of classical theatre and folk theatre of India.

Tughlaq (1964) dramatizes five years of Muhammed Bin Tughlaq's reign from 1327 to 1332, when he shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. Tughlaq ruled over India for about twentysix years from 1321 to 1351. The action of the play begins in Delhi in the year 1327, then on the road from Dalhi to Daulatabad and around the fort in Daulatabad.

Though the plat of Tughlaq is based on historical events, the play is not only a history play as there opens up a multiplicity of motifs and perspectives in the course of its study. Karnad's handling of the historical events and his interpretation of Tughlaq's character is new and original. Tughlaq is a rational, philosopher, and curious mixture of the ideal and obnoxious. He is not only alienated, estranged from the society and the individuals around him, but also

from his own religion. The orthodox Muslims are annoyed by Tughlaq's idealism, humanism and departure from fundamentalism and fanaticism. Hence, the play represents a conflict between the old and the new, between orthodox religion and modernity. As the plot advances the conflict develops. Tughlaq asserts his allegiance to the Koran (Quran) as the word of God. But at the same time he refuses to accept the Quran as the sole receptacle of truth. He cannot reject Greek philosophy and the truth contained in other religion like that of Zarathustra or Budha. He is torn between his allegiance to the Quran and his appreciation for other forms.

U.R. Ananthmurthy writes in his "*Introduction to Tughlaq*" that the play "reflects as no other play perhaps does the political mood of disillusionment which followed the Nehru era of idealism in the country". Karnad writes in Enact, June 1971: "what struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. And I felt in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction. The twenty years period seemed to me very much a sticking parallel".

There are undoubtedly some allegorical elements in the play or U.R. Ananthmurthy rightly observes that "the play is more than a political allegory". In his movement from idealism to tyranny, Tughlaq resembles Camus' protagonist Caligula, whose existential alienation drove him to be a tyranny. The play largely dwells on the devices of parallelism and contrasts. U. R. Ananthmurthy remarks, "Both Tughlaq and his enemies initially appear to be idealist, first in the pursuit of the ideal, they perpetrate opposites. The whole play is structured on these opposites. The ideal and the real; the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue".

Hayavadana (1971) is a play on the theme of completeness Karnad has borrowed its theme from Kathasaritsagar, an ancient collection of Sanskrit stories. Though Karnad has based his work on Thomas Mann's Transposed

Heads, a mock heroic transcription of the original Sanskrit tale, the theme of the play is modern. There is an irresistible urge for completeness and search for identity in the heart of Padmini, the heroine of the play. The main characters in the play *Hayavadana*, Devadutta, Kapila and Padmini are fractured personalities suffering from want to wholeness. After the transposition of heads of Devadutta and Kapila, they naturally become fragmented creatures. Padmini, torn between the two, is also a shifted personalities. The child, Devadutta's son, is an orphan and is accepted by the forest people as Kapila's son Rejected by them as a child of the city he is an alienated creature dumb and morose. He is hopelessly incomplete, for he has lost the child's natural feelings to laugh and wonder at things. Hayavadana, who combines the human and animal elements in him, is also incomplete. In the subplot Hayavadana is completely transformed into a horse. His search for completeness ends comically. In a world of absurdity of human condition the attainment of completeness is a distant mirage.

According to Karnad, the plot of the play *Nagamandala*(1988) has been borrowed from two tales which he heard several years ago from professor A. K. Ramanujan. In his introduction to *Threeplays*, Karnad emphasizes that we need not look for Brechtian techniques of epic theatre in order to produce the effect of *verpremdung* (alienation or estrangement). Brecht questions the value of *Enfulang* (identification or empathy), and assume that when we abandon *enfulang* we can see the object as it really is. In *Nagamandala* Karnad attempts at instilling *Verfemdung* effect by using 'non-naturalistic technique' of the traditional Indian theatre. He has made use of the folk-tales and the 'mixing of human and non-human worlds' as distancing device which brings in the element of *verfremdung* in the play. The folk-tale elements of *Nagamandala* and the magical power which the Cobra possesses continually remind the spectator that he is only watching a play. The play leaves the audience in possession of their critical facilities, so that they may learn something conducive to social realism.

There are underlying and connotative meanings in the play. It leaves the audience to reflect on the inefficacy of the social laws which discriminate a woman from a man and which demand a wife's faithfulness even to her callous husband. There is sufficient cause for us to think that the Naga alludes to Rani's paramour. Rani is required to undergo the trail in order to prove her innocence. But Appana can afford to indulge in adultery with impunity. Since neither Rani nor the cobra can claim to be chaste, the spectator may ponder over the idea that in this world dominated by compromise happiness is incompatible with purity. Though in the heart of their hearts both Appana and Rani know that their child is born out of wedlock, they accept the child as their own. They do not share the secret even with each other. They probably think it better to let the secrets remain buried in their hearts, and keep the family together.

Girish Karnad's play *Tale-Danda* (1993) deals with the problem of hypergamous marriage which is considered to be sacrilegious according to Hindu religion. The play may also be called a history play, because it is based on recorded historic events which took place eight hundred years ago in the city of Kalayan. The play deals with the few weeks of the rise and fall of Sharana movement during which the vibrant prosperous society of Kalayan plunged into violence and bloodshed when a Brahmin girl married an untouchable boy. In the preface "to the play Karnad writes that the plot of the play ends in A.D 1168".

In Hindu religion one finds two types of inter-varna marriages. One type of inter-varna marriage is known as Anulom (hypogamous) marriage which is tolerated but not encouraged. But the other type pratiloma (hypergamous) marriage, i.e., the marriage of a lower varna man with a higher varna woman, is unequivocally condemned. According to Manu, the offspring born of pratiloma marriages are the 'Fierce' untouchable similar views as given by Manu are expressed in some other ancient Indian scriptures such as Arthashastra of Kautilya, Baudhayana Dharma Sutra, Amarkesha and Vasisthasmriti.

The play *Tale-Danda* is about the ills of the systems and marriage 'laws' laid down in ancient Indian scriptures which plague Indian society and deny dalits even their basic human rights. Though Karnad does not offer any specific solution to the problems which are eating into the vitals of our society, the play makes us think about the efficacy of the laws of Hindu religion with regard to hypergamous marriage. The movement led by Basvan represents the voice of the Dalit in an emotive language and brings home to us the need to re-examine the laws of caste systems and hypergamous marriage prescribed by Hindu religion.

"*The Fire and the Rain*" is based on a little-known myth from the "vana parva" of the Mahabharata. In criticism the term 'archetype' denotes recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, or images which are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature. The play, *The Fire and the Rain* dramatizes universal themes of love, jealousy, sex and loneliness. The play symbolizes fire of jealousy and Rain of humanity, kindness and love. It is a play of conflicting nations of good and evil, moral and immoral, broadmindedness and conservatism. The two saint friends in the play, Bharadwaj and Raibhya, hold quest for knowledge as the supreme goal of life. But their dharma becomes a game of adharma for achieving the post of chief priest of the fire sacrifice. Pravasu, who kills his father, changes his brother Arvasu of patricide. Nitilai advises Arvasu to be forgiving and compassionate to his brother. Yavakri is a modern man whose ambition is to get the supreme knowledge direct from gods. He wants "the whole world at his feet". He is a cursed Brahmin who is compelled to live eternally on the earth as an under-deemed soul. This play is a criticism of the elitist society of modern India and stress on the maintenance of human values.

Conclusion

So in a nutshell, Karnad's plays are deeply rooted in our Indian tradition. He draws the sustenance for his platform the umbilical cord of Indian myths

which is replete with Kathasaritsagar, myths, folk-tales, and historical events. But he gives a symbolic interpretation of Indian myths from a contemporary angle. Consequently his plays, possess universal overtones. Nagamandala, it is a feminist play not because it is pathetic story of Rani but because it very brilliantly captures the insanity of violence against an innocent woman in the background of a conservative patriarchal society of which Rani is no doubt a victim. Karnad's Nagamandala is a feminist play. It questions patriarchal moral code which demands the faithfulness of a woman to her husband but not the faithfulness of a man to his wife. It can be described as a problem play. It presents the problem of a married woman, the position and status of a woman in her relation to her husband and home.

Consequently his plays possess universal overtones. Tughlaq illustrates how in order to achieve the ideal Tughlaq makes pragmatic decisions which consequently make him alienated and drove him to be a tyrant. In Nagamandala the cobra alludes to Rani's lover. Since the cobra is also a phallic symbol, the myth has overtones of female sexuality. There is a dichotomy in the play. The serpent's death symbolizes that Rani has to sacrifice her female sexuality under male subjugation. In the contrary ending of the play, i.e., comic ending, the cobra lives because Rani hides the snake in her long tresser where he lives happily. This symbolizes that Rani nurses and perpetrates her sexuality clandestinely. Hayavadana symbolizes that without satisfying body's needs life of intellect is incomplete. Since a horse symbolizes madness, the play dramatizes the conflict between intellect and animal nature, the disparate tempers of human mind. But man's predicament is that he can never be complete. The Tale-Danda, deals with the stigma of casteism and the predicament of Shudras. The intertwining strands of diverse dramatic techniques, both ancient and modern, Indian and western which go into the making of Karnad's plays and make his plays original.

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