



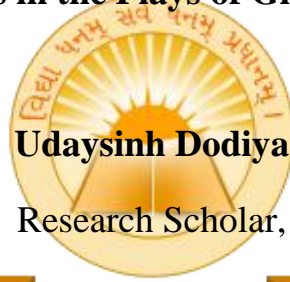
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Mythological Aspects in the Plays of Girish Karnad: A Study



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ABSTRACT

The tradition of writing dramatization has a long and rich history in a nation like India. The foundation of Indian dramatization lies in the Vedic Era Convention of Sanskrit Prose. In the old-Sanskrit period, plays were played in front of spectators. The specialty of execution coupled with music and melodies in ancient India was an integral part of customs and strict celebrations. Such dramatizations were straightforward in style and dependent on Mahabharata, the Bhagavat Gita, and the Ramayana subject or scene. The present paper is an analysis of mythological aspects as reflected in the plays of Girish Karnad.

Key Words: Myth, mythology, dramatization, tradition, customs

Introduction

Girish Karnad is a flexible character and skilled writer in the Indian English Drama Convention who restored the custom in contemporary Indian Literature. Karnad has primarily written his plays in Kannada. Later, he himself has translated his plays into English. These plays have contributed him an international reputation. As a result, he has become the pre-eminent contemporary playwright. He has enriched the Indian literary atmosphere by his contribution to art, culture, theatre and drama. The most significant contribution he endeavoured to Indian English Drama is an attempt to retrieve the cultural and mythological rich tradition of the Indian past.

Mythological Aspects in Karnad's Plays

Karnad won the Kamaladevi Award of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh in 1972 for his play Hayavadana. Its plot is based on the Katha Saritsagar tale, which Thomas Mann used for his short novel The Transposed Heads. It is a play on the search of identity in a world of tangled relationships. Ganesh Pooja stands for a curious contraction in life at the very beginning. The husband of Riddhi and Siddhi, Lord Ganesha, who



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shines like a thousand suns and sits on a snake-decorated mouse, is the single tusked destroyer of incompleteness. How can the destroyer of incompleteness be a single-tusked-elephant-headed God? In the opening scene, the note of burlesque, topsy-turvy, of incompleteness and search for identity is introduced. Lord Ganesha's following invocation implies the transposition of the head, which is the key theme of this play. Ganesha Bhagvata's invocation says:

An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly- whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom this mystery that this is very Vakradunta, Mahakaya, with his crooked face and distorted body is the Lord and Master of success and perfection? Could it be the Image of purity and Holiness, this mangalamoorti. intends to signify by his very experience that the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend. (1)

Devadatta is a renowned intellectual and poet, "comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence." Kapila, dark and plain to look at is par excellence in deeds that require drive and daring, in dance, strength and physical abilities.' (2) The two young people are intimate friends who remind the people of Dharampur of Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshman, Krishna and Balarama, so diametrically opposed both in appearance and characteristics.

Devadatta is married to Padmini, the daughter of Dharampur's chief merchant. Devadatta and Kapila's friendship continues to flourish. Devadatta, Padmini and Kapila are like Rama, Sita and Lakshman to the admiring citizens of Dharmapura. As Rama, Sita and Lakshman did, can these people representing opposites and contradictions live harmoniously and retain their relationship? Can those opposites be reconciled? Rama, Sita, and Lakshman's myths are both suggestive and ironic. This implies that such a relationship cannot be maintained with sanctity in the absence of proper understanding and in the presence



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of worldly passion. The meticulous and impeccable handling of myth and legend is consistent with Hayavadana. To the last, Girish Karnad retains both suspense and surprise. Padmini, who has a child, has a sensual nature and is fascinated by the sturdy physique of Kapila. She contrasts Kapila and Devadatta: "And what an ethereal shape, an ocean with muscles rippling across it such a broad back, and then that tiny, feminine waist that looks so helpless" (25)

In love, they fall. At heart, Devadatta is sick. Kapila and Padmini go to Kali's temple. He cut his head off in utter anguish. Kapila and Padmini are back in the cart, and when they do not find Devadatta, they are in a fix. Kapila, leaving her all alone, runs towards the temple of Kali. Padmini, who only cares for herself, doesn't really appreciate Kapila going there. She says, "He's gone, he really seems more worried than I am about Devadatta" (29)

Kapila too beheads himself. Padmini goes to the temple in the cover of darkness too and is terrified of the ghastly scene. She's egotistical. Instead of Devadatta or Kapila, she loves her very own self. Kapila, who looked at her with the eyes of a dog, was condemned for selfishness and unkindness.

She praises Goddess Kali, who gives her the boon that she can revive them to life by adjusting their heads to their trunks and pressing them with the sword. She transposes their heads in the darkness. The tale reaches a climax. Commenting on the heads transposed by M.K. The irony of the transposed heads on the bodies of two friends who stand at opposite poles of personality, that is, the intellectual versus the activist, is used here to raise the issue of identity, Naik says. (263) Head transposition results in a confusion of identities that reveals the ambiguous nature of the personality of man. In the beginning, Devadatta (Devadatta's head on the body of Kapila) acts quite differently from what he was before. But he changes to his former self gradually. Kapila is also undergoing a transition. Devadatta does not write poetry and Kapila is haunted by memories in Devadatta's body. By and through, Padmini, who has enjoyed the best of both men, is disillusioned. She is tired of Devadatta, and in Kapila's cottage she takes refuge. They're fighting a



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duel again and killing themselves. Padmini climbs the pyre of their funeral and performs sati. Hayavadana is not a disaster. The deaths of Devadatta and Kapila and Padmini's Sati reveal the logic of the situation's absurdity. Karnad does not fully invest the fundamental conflict in the play with the required intensity, Naik says, but his technical experiment with an indigenous dramatic form here is a triumph that has opened up new lines of fruitful exploration for the Indian English playwright.

By treating it on another plane, the sub-plot of Hayavadana, the horse man, highlights the significance of the main theme of incompleteness. Hayavadana is dissatisfied with the head of his horse and wants full identification as a horse. Bhagavata concludes the play with an appeal to Lord Ganesh, who also has a transposed head: the mercy of the Elephant-headed Ganesa is indeed unfathomable. His search for completeness ends comically with his becoming a complete horse. He fulfils the desires of all: a grandfather's grandson, a child's smile, a horse's neighbour. How can one, indeed in our poor disabled words describe his glory? (71) The sub plot burlesques the main plot and deepens the irony that the main plot implies. Girish Karnad's chorus uses Bhagavata. Like the chorus in ancient Greek drama, he describes all the significant events and developments that are vital to the development of the plot. In Hayavadana, other folk tales and folk theatre devices and conventions such as masks, curtains, dolls, the storey within a storey, etc. are used. Thus, Tughlaq and Hayavadana's plots are precise, well-knit and remarkable for their architectural quality. The unity of effect is contributed by various events and actions of characters.

Nagamandala is an Indian woman's socio-psychological study of a richly textured dramatic transmutation of two Karnataka folk tales. In the patriarchal Indian Society, it deals primarily with gender-bias search for oneself, and the subjection of women. Rani of Nagamandala, the protagonist, married a man who was "rich and his parents died" (27). Rani's parents are the least bothered by Appanna's character and wrongdoing. They are equally liable for their suffering and they never visit Rani after marriage.

Rani is a symbol of any woman who once she leaves the defensive threshold of her parents' home, is



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not prepared to face life on her own. Marriage is used by the Patriarchal Society as a tool for the physical emotional, intellectual, sexual and social exploitation and tyranny of women on so many levels. The play deals with Rani and Appanna's married life. Between them, there is no normal conjugal relationship. "Marriage is not only an honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it allows a woman alone to keep her social dignity intact and at the same time to find sexual fulfilment as a mother and a living one." 2 He brings his young wife to his house and keeps her under lock and key. Only once in the afternoon does he come and find his lunch ready. He spends his days and his nights with his concubine and Rani, like a deserted wife, spends her life. She shatters her dreams of a happy married life.

In her solitary cell, Rani has no one to support her, except her parents, who come to console her in their daydreams. She misses her parents so much that she is hallucinated by them. Appanna's solitary imprisonment of Rani in the house symbolises the chastity belt of the middle ages, the decline of female housework talents, and the absence of women from enlightenment and enjoyment. In the dramatic world of Karnad, women within and without wedlock are subjected, in one way or another to different forms of deprivation, humiliation, violence and torture in almost every walk of life. The playwright not only exposes the system's arbitrariness where women are regarded as "second sex," "other," "non-persona," but also questions the way women are socialised to internalise the prevailing hegemonic ideology and degrade their own position to perpetuate the subordination and subjugation that is ongoing. The man who is ruled by the motive of mastery has placed his limits on her. She, for biosocial reasons, accepts it. In his life, Appanna treats Rani only as his housekeeper and cook. He doesn't allow her to have any social contacts and connections, and he first brings home a watch dog and then a mongoose to ensure her complete isolation.

Karnad has returned to Indian folklore again in Bali-The Sacrifice, but from a completely different point of view. He chose an ancient thirteen-century Jain legend, Janna's Kannada epic Yashodhara Charite, which alludes to Somadeva Suri's ninth-century Sanskrit epic Yashastilaka. Writer, from different points of



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view, in this dramatisation manages the discerning, social, good and strict structure of the trust of a person.

Karnad takes a deep view of Indian culture, which is full of complexity and decent variety. Jainism and Hinduism are shown against one another in the play. The play refers to Indian philosophy's social good, and social problems, which include values, moral conflicts, and the uniqueness of Indian life and society. The play's four unique characters refer to different settings. The Sovereign is pursuing Jainism and the path of peace. Then again in light of his peacefulness theory, King moved his conviction from Hinduism to Jainism. The Sovereign Mother is a supporter of the Hindu convention and values and believes in penance, while Mahout has a low position, is a man and takes care of the elephants of the ruler. It shows that in a solitary family that creates problems and wrecks the family, two different kinds of religions are drilled in. To her significant other, she says:

All these years I've been pretending that it does not exist. That I couldn't hear the bleat of sheep being taken out at night. For slaughter... You sleep through it. You've grown up with those sounds. I haven't. They wake me up— Keep me awake. But I've pretended I didn't mind. (Bali, 212)

Karnad symbolises the Vedic act of penance of creatures where in the various classifications and circumstances the creatures are evaluated by their event. Day-by-day customs are offered for poultry. In the play, the Queen goes for an unlawful relationship as she is pressured by the Queen Mother for not having the option of bringing a child forward. Be that as it may, the Queen does not deliberately but inadvertently present this ethical depravity. The Queen Mother chooses to forfeit a hundred fowls to appease her goddess, in order to stay away from the terrible results of this demonstration. Through the speech demonstrations of his characters, Karnad censures the vicious convention of Indian culture.



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Conclusion

Karnad has taken this jump to give the fantasies and legends new significance and has examined them from the vantage point of the present. Karnad himself supported that he returned to the old legends, narratives and oral storeys not because he does not have an astonishing creative power, but because even in the current setting they are particularly important. Despite the fact that legend is old, in the current environment, it is deciphered and obtained according to the need alongside particular changes by the writer. So, it tends to be called exceptional inventive creation. Kohli comments: "The use of myth and folk elements by Karnad to deal with a theme of striking contemporary relevance is entirely authentic and salutary and has the weight of an experiment successfully produced in contemporary world literature."

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