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**Critiquing the Select Plays of Girish Karnad with Special Reference to
Myth and Mythological**

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Abstract

Human civilization has always included myths and folktales. Several current Indian English playwrights have used this strategy to introduce us to this genre. For instance, the dramatist Girish Karnad included mythology and folklore in his works. Indian myths, stories, and folklore provide consolation to Karnad, who adapts them to serve as platforms for fresh ideas. His artistic talent combines disparate pieces of legendary and historical experience to make a potent point. This essay will examine the myths and folktales he employed in his plays and the inspirations that helped him become a gifted playwright.

Keywords: Myths, Folklore, Plays, Drama, Legend, Civilization



Introduction

One of the most accomplished Indian playwrights of the modern era who writes in English is Girish Karnad, who is highly recognized. His plays' subjects, which were developed by meticulously analyzing folklore, mythology, and history, represent the problems and difficulties of contemporary life. By addressing these themes, sports seek to build a link between the past and the present. The themes of Karnad's plays are developed in the furnace of his imagination and personal experience, and he uses them as a vehicle to convey his feelings, thoughts, and interpretations of those experiences. Karnad is a creative thinker who can clearly observe his plays' themes through his own eyes. Because of his exceptional command of dramatic techniques, vivid imagery and symbolism, and extraordinary ability to depict some of life's harshest and most terrible facts with straightforward simplicity, his plays are read and admired by many despite the contentious subject matter of many of them.

Use of Mythology and Folklores

Karnad has a wide range of interests but has only given the Kannada Stage depth through his acting and directing skills. On the Indian stage, he has shown how mythological ideas and folklore may be thoroughly investigated to recreate a modern awareness. However, the most challenging issue was finding out how to apply these traditional conventions to his work in a city. At this moment, a well-known dramatist named Bertolt Brecht intervened to assist him. Karnad's exposure to Brechtian concepts profoundly influenced him, resulting in a heightened awareness of the inventiveness and power that are inherently present in Indian theatre.

Karnad's extensive understanding of the stage was shaped by his in-depth study of the modern European theatre, his familiarity with Western dramatic literature, and — most crucially — his theatrical sense. He has shown the Indian and global theatre communities how the past and present may converge to give the gift a purpose and the theatre industry a direction. Karnad skillfully incorporated elements from all three musical traditions: classical, folk, and Western current. When these three traditions are used discriminately and intelligently, a new form and, consequently, a unique production style are discovered, giving



Karnad's plays a distinctively Indian quality. Myths offer brief glimpses of understanding into existence and its mysteries by transcending the bounds of time and space. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica VII volume:

Myth fulfils in primitive culture an essential function; it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; safeguards and enforces morality; vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for man's guidance. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or artistic imagery but a pragmatic character of primitive faith and moral wisdom (58).

Yayati, Karnad's first play, was written in 1961 and was awarded the Mysore State Award the following year, in 1962. It is based on a scene from the Mahabharata when Sukracharya, his father-in-law, curses Yayati, one of the Pandavas' ancestors, with an early death because he is furious at Yayati's adultery. Yayati could only break this curse if someone were prepared to trade their youth for theirs. At the end of it all, his son Puru offers to do this for the father of his own volition. The drama examines the issue arising from Puru's decision, as well as the difficulty that this situation presents for Yayati, Puru's young wife.

Yayati is the archetypal representation of the ordinary man; he is constantly dissatisfied despite his various delight and is always frantically searching for new pleasures and amusements. He misinterprets fleeting animal pleasure for everlasting contentment. Karnad interprets the old concept in a contemporary setting. In the Mahabharata, Yayati wandered into the darkness of material and sensual pleasures. Similarly, the average man in today's society is walking into the night of earthly and sensual pleasures. He finds himself in a society where the older spiritual values have been entirely abolished, and the newer spiritual values have not yet been found. He is at a loss to know what to do. He is at a loss to know what to do. The greatest religion of life and the ultimate aim has evolved into the heedless pursuit of pleasure.



For his third play, Hayavadana, Karnad received the Bharatiya Natya Sangh's Kamaladevi Award in 1972. The narrative of Katha Saritsagar, which Thomas Mann utilized as the inspiration for his collection of short stories titled The Transposed Heads, served as the inspiration for his idea. A universe full of tangled relationships serves as the setting for this drama about the search for identity. Kapila, a man of the body, and Devadatta, an intellectual, are good friends. The most attractive woman in Dharampura village, Padmini, is married to Devadatta. Kapila and Padmini fell in love with one another. Both of the pals are committing suicide. In a humorous scenario with major tragic overtones, Padmini switches their heads, giving Devadatta the body of Kapila and giving Kapila the body of Devadatta.

It causes identity confusion and highlights how complex human personality is. The predicament is getting more challenging. They are once more murdering themselves as they run from a duel. Padmini, performed by Sati. The play's storyline contains a rich subtext that is both comic and sarcastic. The horseman's (Hayavadana's) simultaneous search for fulfilment reaches its humiliatingly hilarious climax here. He still has the human voice but transforms into a whole horse! Vijaya Mehta was in charge of the piece's direction, which took place in Germany and was performed at the Deutsches National Theater in Weimar, Germany.

Two Kannada folktales inspire the novel Naga-Mandala by Girish Karnad, which the author first heard about from K. Ramanujan many years ago. Karnad wrote Naga-Mandala while a guest professor at the University of Chicago. It was performed at the university with the assistance of coworkers and students, after which Sanket performed it throughout India. Karnad himself first published Naga-Mandala in Kannada before translating it into English. He claims that the Naga Mandala is formed from two Karnataka folk stories that he first heard about from Professor A. K. Ramanujan many years ago. These traditions are said to have been passed down through the generations. During his time as a visiting lecturer at the University of Chicago, Karnad published the book Naga-Mandala. It was performed at the university with the assistance of coworkers and students, after which Sanket performed it throughout India.



The drama comprises two acts and a prologue, and the cobra has a significant part to play—or, to put it another way, the hero portrays the King Cobra. Three separate tales are included in the play's action. However, they are beautifully connected to create a magnificent dramatic unity. Before the play's exposition, Karnad tells the audience about the man's life tales. The action starts in the destroyed temple's inner sanctuary, where an idol has been smashed, moonbeams are shining on a man who is yawning and struggling to stay awake, and the man is telling stories about his curse and how he would die the next morning. He wrote plays, which kept many people up at night, so if he fell asleep, his life would be over. To avoid the curse, he fled his house and travelled to the temple, where he tried to stay awake. Then, a large number of flames appear and talk about their own experiences in a lot of different houses. The flames are portrayed as living beings, and finally, a woman tells the story to the audience. She describes the miserable Rani and how her husband treated her horribly during their marriage.

The tale of Rani is supposed to be full of miracles, and the protagonist, a distressed lady, is saved by an elderly blind woman who, in the hopes that the woman's husband will come to appreciate her, bestows various charms onto the rescued woman. Rani made food, but when she added the appeal, she felt overcome with terror and tossed the meal next to an anthill. The Naga approached her as her husband since King Cobra had eaten it. She was content but puzzled by her husband's odd behaviour (the Naga). When she got pregnant, the village leaders prepared a trial; however, the Naga protected her, and the people began to adore her as a deity. She gave birth to a child. Before Naga could come, ultimately transforming into her long, black hair and living on top of her head, her husband was required to consent to everything. In this way, with the assistance of Rani's narrative, the guy could stay awake by appeasing the flames by retelling the story in a female character's voice. In the end, everyone is content because he gets saved.

Conclusion

Many contemporary authors have included myths and tales in their works to convey their emotions and worldviews. This technique has elements of legend, and it is a recurrent pattern. Dramatic stories based on myths were utilized in ancient Greece and India. Retelling or re-



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enacting old myths in current ways emphasizes the universality of the experience captured in storytelling.

Karnad's use of myths and folktales as the basis for his plays lends his creations an immediate allure. However, it's crucial to remember that the audience is interested in seeing how the dramatist handles the original material since they are familiar with it. In addition, they were more likely to detect the playwright's deviations from the original tale since they had an open mind about the play they would attend. Karnad utilizes this advantage in his plays to engage the audience in moral or intellectual concerns.



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