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**Use of Myth in Girish Karnad's *Fire and the Rain*:
A Critical Appreciation**

Asha L. Bavarava

Assistant Professor in English,
RO Patel Women's College, Morbi





Abstract:

Girish Karnad's *Fire and the Rain* is the sixth successful play which is based on mythological episodes from Mahabharata. The play was originally written in Kannada as "Agni Mattu Male" translated as Fire and the Rain in English. Girish Karnad is the master of using ancient myth into his plays. He skilfully derives old myth and with necessary changes utilizes into his plays to give the contemporary spirit. In the same tradition, this play by Karnad is based on the myth of 'Yavakri', 'Yajana' and 'Indra' which occurs in the Mahabharata. In the preface of *Fire and the Rain*, Karnad himself explains the source of the play in the following words.

The myth of Yavakri (or Yavakrita) occurs in Chapters 135-38 of the Vana Parva (forest Canto) of the Mahabharata. It is narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the Pandavas as they wander across the land during their exile. I have met Sanskrit scholars who were unaware of the existence of the myth: it is easy to lose track of a short narrative like this in the tangled undergrowth that covers the floor of that epic.....It was fortunate for me that Rajaji did not do so, for the moment I read the tale, I knew it had to be turned into a play. (18)

The play is remarkable for its main as well as sub plot. Karnad uses the play within the play technique in *The Fire and the Rain*. The play is about murder, jealousy, power and political and Karnad tries to examine human nature by creating certain characters in the play. As Rama Nair writes:

The play begins with the dominant myth Yavakri. It places the action that follows in the realm of the mythical and the elemental. The quest for personal and social meanings through the myth contribute to the cohesive structure of the play. It involves the nature of the world



analysis of the concept of morality and emotion and emotion which leads one to the essentiality of human experience itself. The myth of Vritra and Indra acts as catalyst to free Parvasu and Arvasu from the human bondage of fear and vengeance. The prologue and the Epilogue are inevitably conjoined to project a holistic view of life.

(35)

The play narrates the story of Aravasu, a Brahman by caste, who becomes a performing actor and misunderstood by the people. At course of time Aravasu falls in love with Nittilai, a tribal girl. She also loves Aravasu, but wanted to take permission from his parents and village elders before the marriage. In the play a character called Parvasu appears who is a brother of Aravasu. He performs rituals and ceremony of prayer to please the God Indra so the village may get rain. Raibhya is the father of Aravasu and Parvasu dislikes his sons. He has doubt that Paevasu's wife having affair with Yavakri. In fact, Yavakri has wanted to worship Devraj Indra for ten years and therefore he wanted to leave his relationship with Vishaka. When he returns he finds that Vishakha married to Parvasu who lives with her happily. On finding that, Vishaka meets with Yavakri as an enraged Raibhya summons Brahman Rakshas, a demon to kill Yavakri. In a way , the story moves around all these characters and the dramatic environment is beautifully created by Karnad.

The play also focuses on the man and woman relationship. It brings two important woman characters Vishakha and Nittilai, a tribal girl. It shows that how women have been mistreated in the society and remain the tool in the hands of orthodox environment. Vishakha never wish to marry Paravashu but could not retain from the social custom. On the other hand, the character of Nittilai also attracts the reader's attention. She has many good quality and attractive personality. She



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