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**A Study of the Major Aspects applied by Girish Karnad in his  
Select Plays**

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## Abstract

In a country like India, the practice of dramatic writing has a lengthy and rich history. The Vedic Era Convention of Sanskrit Prose serves as the basis for Indian theatre. There were public performances of plays throughout the ancient Sanskrit era. In old India, the skill of execution along with music and songs was an essential component of the disciplined festivals. These dramatizations were simple in form and based on an incident or theme from the Ramayana, Bhagavat Gita, or Mahabharata. The current essay examines how Girish Karnad's plays depict fantastical elements.

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

## Introduction

The Indian English Drama Convention was revived in modern Indian literature by Girish Karnad, a versatile character and brilliant writer. Kannada is the language used most often in plays by Karnad. Later, he produced English translations of his plays. He has gained international recognition as a result of these plays. He has thereby established himself as the foremost modern writer. By advancing art, culture, theatre, and drama, he has improved the literary climate in India. His effort to recover ancient India's rich cultural and mythical legacy is his most notable contribution to Indian English Drama.

## Mythological Aspects in Karnad's Plays

For his play Hayavadana, Karnad received the Bharatiya Natya Sangh's Kamaladevi Award in 1972. The story of Katha Saritsagar, which Thomas Mann reworked for his collection of short stories titled The Transposed Heads, served as the inspiration for the plot of this film. It is a drama about trying to find oneself in a complicated world of connections. Ganesh Pooja symbolizes a peculiar constriction at the start of existence. Lord Ganesha, the husband of Riddhi and Siddhi, is known as the "one-tusked destroyer of incompleteness." He is depicted sitting on a mouse adorned with a snake and glows brighter than a thousand suns. How is it possible for a God with just one tusk and the head of an elephant to be the one who eradicates unfinished business? The opening scene gives off an impression of burlesque and presents themes such as topsy-turvy, incompleteness, and the search for identity. The subsequent request by Lord Ganesha alludes to the major plot point of this drama, which is the switching of the positions of the heads. According to the invocation given by Ganesha Bhagvata:



An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly-whichever you look at him, he seems to embody imperfection and incompleteness. How can one fathom this mystery that this is very Vakradunta, Mahakaya, whose crooked face and distorted body are 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 well-known poet and philosopher, "comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence." On the other hand, dark and unattractive Kapila is the master of tasks requiring zeal and audacity in dancing, strength, and physical prowess. (2) The citizens of Dharampur compare the two young people, who are good friends, to Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshman, and Krishna and Balarama. However, they are significantly different from one another in terms of their appearance and demeanour.

Padmini, the wife of Devadatta, is the daughter of the most successful trader in Dharampur. The relationship between Kapila and Devadatta is flourishing up to this day. The devoted people living in Dharmapura think of Devadatta, Padmini, and Kapila in the same way they think of Rama, Sita, and Lakshman. Can these individuals who embody contradictions and contrasts coexist peacefully and maintain their connection, as Rama, Sita, and Lakshman did? Can such contradictory ideas be combined? The legends of Rama, Sita, and Lakshman are provocative and sarcastic. This suggests that without the correct knowledge and worldly emotion, such a connection cannot be sustained with holiness. Hayavadana is continuous in its careful and perfect portrayal of myth and folklore. Girish Karnad maintains surprise and suspense to the end. Padmini, a sensual woman with a child, is captivated by Kapila's strong figure. She contrasts Devadatta with Kapila: "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)

They aren't as affectionate as they used to be. To the very centre of his being, Devadatta is sick. Padmini and Kapila pay a visit to the temple dedicated to Kali. He was in such excruciating pain that he severed his head in an attempt to end it. When Devadatta is nowhere to be found, Kapila and Padmini are again in a pickle. Kapila leaves her by herself and heads for the Kali temple. Padmini doesn't appreciate Kapila going there because she thinks about herself. She claims, "He's gone; he seems more worried than I am about Devadatta" (29)



And Kapila cuts off his head. Padmini also enters the temple in the shadows and is horrified by the spectacle. She is arrogant. She loves herself more than Devadatta or Kapila. Kapila was criticized for being egotistical and cruel because he regarded her.

She thanks Goddess Kali for bestowing her the ability to bring them back to life by thrusting the blade into their trunks and repositioning their heads. In the shadows, she shifts their heads. The story culminates. Commenting on M.K.'s heads swapped According to Naik, the irony of the two friends' swapped heads on their bodies, the academic and the activist, respectively, is utilized to address the topic of identity. (263) Transposed heads cause identity confusion, which displays the complex character of a man's psyche. Devadatta (Devadatta's head on Kapila's body) acts considerably differently than he did in the past, particularly in the beginning. However, he does ultimately return to the state he was in before. Kapila is also going through a transition at the moment. The body of Devadatta is tortured with memories that torment Kapila and Devadatta does not create poetry. Padmini is ultimately let down after having witnessed the finest that both guys have to offer. She seeks sanctuary at Kapila's home since she is sick of Devadatta. Once more, they duel while also committing suicide. Padmini performs sati while on the funeral pyre. It's not a catastrophe, Hayavadana. The deaths of Devadatta, Kapila, and Sati, who were Padmini's, help to underline the absurdity of the logic that led to this predicament. Even though Karnad does not completely engage the basic conflict in the play with the requisite intensity, according to Naik, Karnad's technical experiment with an indigenous dramatic form here is a success, and it has opened up new avenues of promising research for the Indian English writer. This is the case even though Karnad does not completely engage the indigenous dramatic form.

In Hayavadana, the story of the horseman, the fundamental issue of the story, which is incompleteness, is shown on a new platform in the secondary plot, highlighting the significance of the original problem. Hayavadana is dissatisfied with the head given to his horse and desires to have full recognition as a horse. In the play's last scene, Bhagavata makes an impassioned plea to Lord Ganesh, who likewise has his head in the wrong place, claiming that the latter's generosity is genuinely beyond comprehension. His quest for completion humorously ends as he transforms into a finished horse. He satisfies everyone's needs, including those of a horse's neighbour, a grandfather's grandchild, and a child's grin. How is it possible to adequately depict his majesty with our vague language? (71) The subplot satirizes the main narrative and highlights the irony that it alludes to. The chorus of Girish Karnad includes Bhagavata. In a manner analogous to that of



the chorus in traditional Greek drama, he recounts all of the significant events and occurrences necessary to the story's progression. Other folktales and traditions associated with folk theatre are included in Hayavadana. These traditions include using masks, curtains, dolls, the storey inside a storey, and many more. The layouts of Tughlaq and Hayavadana are so precise, intricate, and remarkable in terms of their architectural quality. The many events and character behaviours all contribute to the overall experience.

An Indian woman's socio-psychological investigation of a finely detailed theatrical transformation of two Karnataka folk stories is called Nagamandala. The subjugation of women and the gender-biased search for oneself are the main issues in the patriarchal Indian society. The main character, Rani of Nagamandala, wed a wealthy man whose parents had passed away (27). Rani's parents are the least affected by Appanna's bad behavior and character. However, they share equal blame for their pain, and after being married, they stopped coming to see Rani.

Any woman who, after she crosses the protective threshold of her parent's house, is unprepared to confront life on her own is represented by Rani. The Patriarchal Society uses marriage as a vehicle for the physical, emotional, intellectual, sexual, and social exploitation, oppression, and tyranny of women on several levels. The marriage of Rani and Appanna is the subject of the play. There isn't a typical marital bond between them. "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 home and keeps her hidden behind closed doors. He only finds his meal ready once in the afternoon when he returns. While Rani has the impression that she is an impoverished wife because he spends his days and evenings with his concubine, She crushes her expectations for a marriage that will provide her happiness.

Except for her parents, who visit her in her lonely cell to comfort her while they daydream, Rani has no one to turn to for assistance. She misses her parents so much that she sometimes sees them in her dreams. The isolation of Rani in the house by Appanna represents the loss of women's domestic skills, the exclusion of women from knowledge and pleasure, and the medieval equivalent of today's chastity belt. In the tumultuous environment of Karnad, married and unmarried women are subjected to various forms of oppression, including exploitation, humiliation, physical assault, and psychological torment, in practically every aspect of their life. The dramatist raises issues about how women are trained to embrace the dominant hegemonic



ideology and devalue their own position to continue the cycle of subordination and subjection that has been going on for a long time. Not only does she reveal the capriciousness of the system under which women are treated as second-class citizens, but she also "second sex," "other," and "non-persona." She is subject to the restrictions set by the mastery-driven male. She agrees to it for biosocial reasons. Rani is solely acknowledged in Appanna's life as his chef and housekeeper. To assure her full isolation, he forbids her from having any social links or interactions and initially brings home a guard dog before moving on to a mongoose.

In Bali's *The Sacrifice*, Karnad revisits Indian legend once more, but this time from a different angle. He selected *Yashodhara Charite*, written in Kannada in the thirteenth century by Janna and made allusions to *Yashastilaka*, which was written in Sanskrit in the ninth century by Somadeva Suri. In this dramatization, the author handles the critical, social, upright, and stringent framework of a person's trust from several points of view.

Karnad examines Indian culture in depth, highlighting its richness and good diversity. In the drama, Jainism and Hinduism are pitted against one another. The play refers to the social good and societal issues that Indian philosophy addresses, such as moral dilemmas, values, and the distinctiveness of Indian life and society. The four distinctive characters in the play allude to various locations. The road of peace and Jainism are the goals of the Sovereign. Then again, King changed his mind about Hinduism and switched to Jainism in light of his peacefulness hypothesis. The Sovereign Mother upholds Hindu tradition, ideals, and the concept of penance, whereas Mahout occupies a low position, is a male, and is in charge of the ruler's elephants. It demonstrates how two distinct types of faiths are taught in a dysfunctional, isolated household. She utters the following phrase to her partner:

All these years, I've been pretending that it does not exist. 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 pretended I didn't mind. (Bali, 212)

In the different classes and conditions, the animals are judged according to their event in the Vedic act of penance known as Karnad. For poultry, daily customs are provided. In the play, the Queen enters into an illicit relationship under pressure from the Queen Mother since she cannot have her children. Whatever the case, the Queen unintentionally exposes this moral decay rather than doing it on purpose. The Queen Mother



decides to kill one hundred birds to appease her deity and prevent anything bad from happening due to her performance. Through the spoken deeds of his characters, Karnad expresses his disapproval of the inhumane customs of Indian culture.

## Conclusion

Karnad made this leap to give the myths and tales fresh meaning and to study them from a contemporary perspective. Even though he had a great creative force, Karnad endorsed the idea of turning back to the old mythology, stories, and oral histories since they are still of particular significance in the present. The writer deciphers and obtains the tale in accordance with the demand and makes specific alterations despite the fact that it is ancient in the modern world. Therefore, it is often referred to as an amazing creative creation. Kohli commented: "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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