

SEARCH FOR COMPLETENESS IN HAYAVADANA AND CLASH OF EGOS IN *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

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ABSTRACT

Girish Raghunath Karnad is a front rank dramatist in Indian English literature. Karnad is regarded as one of the three great writers of the contemporary Indian drama, the other two being Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar. Girish Karnad has been a leading dramatist earning international praise as a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic, and translator. Girish Karnad has gone back to the roots of Indian myth, tradition, and culture and has recreated for us the rich and vibrant picture of Indian society culture and its people. With the help of the living texture of myth, history, and legend, Karnad constitutes a bond between past and present, between author and audience, and in this way shares his interest and excitement with the audience at large. Girish Karnad addresses the contemporary problems by employing the devices of myth, folklore, legend, and history. He uses these devices not to merely visit the past but also to rethink the present and to anticipate the future. He chooses events and episodes from Indian mythology to question their values and relevance in the present context.

KEYWORDS: *Indian Myth, Tradition, and Culture - Myth, Folklore, Legend, and History*

INTRODUCTION

In his plays, Girish Karnad addresses the contemporary problems by employing the devices of myth, folklore, legend, and history. He uses these devices not to merely visit the past but also to rethink the present and to anticipate the future. He chooses events and episodes from Indian mythology to question their values and relevance in the present context. In *Hayavadana*, he deals with the theme of the search for completeness which is quite contemporary. In essence, according to K. Narasimha Murthy: “Karnad’s *Hayavadana* is a play employing native folk theatre strategies to present man’s tragic futile aspiration for perfection or completeness” (Murthy, 30). Hence, everyone has his/her own way of feeling complete, but the basic concept which runs everywhere is that one should be comprehensive and think of the world as his/her own. There must be a detached attachment. One should feel the world as a celebration and feel complete in his own way. And since Padmini fails in it, she fails in her quest for fulfillment. In spite of the four males in her life she feels as vacant as she has been in the beginning. Padmini’s preference of doing Sati and her plan for her son exposes that her quest for fulfillment is to go beyond life. The predicament of the human being is to remain incomplete, imperfect and unfulfilled and if there is any perfection it lies within the terms and condition of society and grace of divine being. What is the end of perfection for one person might be the beginning of the search of perfection for another. Hence it’s very difficult to attain perfection.

The Fire and the Rain, a complex play revolves on the clash of egos, revenge, and misuse of knowledge which are quite contemporary. The inflated egos of Yavakri, the son of Bhardwaj, and his cousin Parvasu clash and upset the bonds of tolerance, understanding, love, and tenderness in familial relations. Bhardwaj and Raibhya are renowned sages. Both are brothers, learned and wise. Both are endowed with spiritual powers. Both have egos and fight for supremacy. Yavakri, Bhardwaj's son is jealous of Raibhya, his uncle, and his son Parvasu, who has obtained the chief priest-ship for performing the seven years long fire sacrifice. Yavakri is jealous of Parvasu. He feels that his father has been humiliated and has not been given respect. He burns with the feeling for revenge and hatred.

The tussle of supremacy presents the theme of hatred between two brothers. The Fire and the Rain deal with jealousy, hatred, the clash of inflated egos, violence, betrayals, pride, jealousy, and anger. In the contemporary society, there is a tussle for power among the politicians and clash of egos among the family members which remind us of the mythical characters like Parvasu, Arvasu, and Raibhya. Yavakri is the embodiment of the modern man who misuses the knowledge for his own welfare.

Karnad's mythical plays cannot be comprehended without understanding the conventions of folk theatre. His plays are meant for enactment. Hence he followed the conventions of folk theatre meticulously. The decline of Sanskrit Drama saw the emergence of the folk Theatre in various regional languages from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. The Folk Theatre inherits many of the classical conventions of Sanskrit drama such as Sutradhar (stage manager), Bhagavata and Purvaranga (stage preliminaries). They all are essential features of both Sanskrit and Folk Theatre. Folk Theatre offers a valuable insight into the local dialect, dress, attitude, humor, wit and wisdom of the region in which they are staged, for instance, watching a Tamasha in Maharashtra one can know more about Peshwas, the heroism of Marathas, their rugged landscape, music, etc. The same function is performed by Yakshagana, the opulent folk opera of Karnataka. It reveals the tradition, temple, worship, and the peculiar music and ritual of its people.

Yakshagana is predominantly a dance and musical form of drama. It portrays heroic characters from mythology and history. It attempts to evoke heroic emotions. It is performed in an open field on a small platform enclosed on three sides with a simple curtain which covers the front. The actor uses dazzling makeup and wear fabulous costumes and stage an allnight show. The Bhagavata narrates the story through songs while the players dance the sequence to the accompaniment of loud drums. Women usually do not take part in these shows and men play the women's roles. The play begins with the Bhagavata's invocation. The Bhagavata is supported by a chorus of singers. Stock characters like fool commence the story and then disappear. Then the main characters emerge one by one. Throughout the performance, the Bhagavata accompanies them with his tala and singing. Thus these shows are a combination of songs and stylized dance.

Girish Karnad deftly uses the conventions and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre. They are 1. Story within the story 2. Masks, 3. Curtains, 4. Dolls 5. Shape - Shifting, 6. Use of chorus.

Story within the story: In Hayavadana main plot deals with the story of Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini. The sub-plot deals with the story of horse-headed man Hayavadana. Besides these stories, another story is craftily interwoven with it, which is the story of Hayavadana's parentage. This story is narrated by Hayavadana to Bhagavata. Hayavadana's mother was the princess of Karnataka. She was a charming girl. Her father wanted her to choose her own husband. So princess of each and every kingdom was invited. Princess from China, Persia, Africa, and Arabia turned up. But she wanted to marry a stallion which carried the prince of Arabia. Everyone got startled and ultimately she was

married to the white stallion. She lived with him for fifteen years. One morning she found a beautiful Celestial Being, a Gandharva in the place of the horse. Then she came to know that this Celestial Being had been cursed by the God Kuvera for his misbehavior. The Celestial Being asked her to accompany him to his abode, whereas she refused. As a result, he cursed her to become a horse. Thus Hayavadana is left behind.

In Nagamandala, the story is personified. In fact, Nagamandala is based on the story's story. In the prologue, it has become one of the characters. It enters into a conversation with flames and a man. In the prologue, the writer explains through one of the flames, how the story of Nagamandala was born. He says that an old woman knew a story and a song, but she told neither the story to anybody nor sang out the song. The Song and the story remained imprisoned in her mind. They felt choked and wanted to escape from the prison. One afternoon the woman opened her mouth during the nap to snore. The story and the song found their way out of the prison. The story became a young woman and the song a sari. The young woman wrapped herself in the sari. The old woman saw this young woman coming out of the room in which her husband was sleeping. She grew so jealous that she instantly woke up her husband to quarrel with him. Thus the story in the form of woman reaches the temple and finds a man sitting in the sanctum of a ruined temple. The man in the temple thought that he would die if he slept because one mendicant warned him that he should keep awake throughout the night. Taking this as the opportunity to stay awake, the man comes forward to listen to the story's story which is the story of Nagamandala. Throughout the night he listens to the story's story and in the morning he finds himself alive and becomes so happy.

Girish Karnad is regarded as one of the leading lights of The New Drama in India. He is one of the brightest shining stars of India. He is a distinguished playwright who has relied upon Indian culture available in the forms of history, myth, and folktales. He is a crusader against evil in all its manifestations. He has not spared any social institution like religion, family, politics, caste system. Myth, history, and folk-tale form the basis of all his plays. He is quite fascinated with the myths of India. It is not because the western audience likes to see Indian myths but because he feels that drama should be rooted in the Indian soil. His plays become an eye-opener to look at the glorious heritage of myths, legends and all such precious pearls that our country possessed. Karnad handles traditional sources as spring-boards. A swimmer goes back in order to jump forward. Likewise, Karnad goes back to myths and legends to mirror the present and future society.

Girish Karnad's plays reflect the problems and challenges of contemporary life and endeavor to forge a link between the past and the present. He is the creative intellectual who views the subjects of his plays from his own perspective, and develops them in the crucible of his imagination and personal experiences, and employs them as a medium to communicate his independent and original feelings, thoughts and interpretations.

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