

PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD AS A SOCIAL DOCUMENT

Shweta Pandey¹ & Gulshan Das²

*¹Senior Assistant Professor, Department of English, Pandit Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University,
Chhattisgarh, Bilaspur, India*

²Senior Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bilasa Gilrs' P.G. College, Chhattisgarh, Bilaspur, India

Received: 25 Jan 2018

Accepted: 07 Feb 2018

Published: 13 Feb 2018

ABSTRACT

“To subvert is not the aim of literature, its value lies in discovering and revealing what is rarely known, little known, thought to be known, but in fact not very well known of the truth of the human world [1]. It would seem that truth is the unassailable and most basic quality of literature.”

The words of Gao Xingjian that the literature is to find out the things which are actually important for the society, but also to be present in a form where it should be useful regarding society [2]. Girish Karnad Works truly exemplified these words of Gao. Karnad's plays in which he has taken the thought from ancient myth and history, but his aim to present the beauty as well as the ills of Indian society [3]. This paper is a study about the different aspect through which Karnad has used to present and compare the scenario of human and as a human being his part and duty in society[4].

KEYWORDS: *Karnad, Literature, Society, Myth and History*

INTRODUCTION

Girish Karnad has no need to specific recognition, because he has his own very prestigious place in the Indian English drama[5]. Karnad is a literary figure who is not known due to his name as a regional dramatist, but also a very inspiring dramatist and lots of other qualities, he is a great writer, thinker, dramatist and actor. Karnad's name is also decorated with many prestigious awards [6].

Literature is itself a part of society. Karnad's plays are the true form of representation of Indian society. Karnad has vast knowledge regarding Indian ancient scripture and history [7]. From his childhood, he was a very minute observer of everything through which he surrounded it and then while in maturing sense, he put all of his experience into a form of drama[8]. Indian society, especially ancient Indian society has the wisdom, rituals and depth, but due to some reasons the things may convert into some ill for society. Karnad's aim to show the past and connect those things with the present scenario and if it has something wrong to change them [9]. Time has changed most of the things, but certain problems remain as it is. Karnad's aim to put attention, through his plays to those problems and remove them from society [10].

Karnad is actually a social reformer through most of his plays. Karnad put attention towards the social problems, caste/class system, gender discrimination, patriarchal family system, situation of women, not only Karnad talks about those basic problems of Indian society but also the belief, superstition. Most of his plays Yayati and The Fire and the Rain are

mythical stories from the Mahabharata [11]. Naga-Mandala based on a folk tale, Hayavadana from 11th century Indian folk story and Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads*. Tughlaq based on 15th century King Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* is about a fearless, great moral and a patriot King of Mysore [12]. Tale-Danda is a Bhakti movement in southern part of Karnataka in 12th century. So all of his plays are concerning with some social issues [13]. The technique which he has used is a plot and character, most importantly stage through which it can connect direct towards the audience. His aim is to realize the reader and audience that it is time to accept and change the flaws we have [14].

Yayati is a mythical play. Karnad has taken this myth from the Mahabharata, the plot and character of the play present absurdity of human life with all its elemental passion and escapism from responsibilities and self-sacrifice, dreams and desires, identity crisis and situation of women in patriarchal society. This play also having deep insight about ancient Hindu cast system [15]. How Yayati was married to Devyani, daughter of Sukracharya a Brahmin, and he had an illicit relation with Sharamistha, a daughter of Asura. When Sukracharya knows about this he gave a curse to Yayati to become old [16]. Yayati exchanges his old age with Puru his son. Puru's wife Chitrlekha she was a true victim of society where nobody is concerned with the will of a woman [17].

Hayavadana is a play by ancient Indian myth from *Vetalpanchavimsati* and Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara*. Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads* is also inspiring him to recognize the superiority of human head over body. *Hayavadana*, the things which are too discussed in this play are to search man's eternal quest for completeness, on self-realization, love and sex. Padmini belongs to the woman of society where women have no choice to do express her desire. Karnad uses folklore and tools of folk theatre like mask, female choros, commentator and dolls in *Hayavadana* to present problems of women in the family and society [18].

In *Naga-Mandala* a man has allowed to leave his wife locked into home and spend his time with a concubine, and a female is never supposed to be chosen her own choice. Even she is not allowed to ask a question from her own husband [19]. Rani with the help of Kappana uses some aphoristic roots to make a form of paste put into a curry and gives it to Appanna so that he will start making love to her. But unfortunately she pours it into an ant hill then Naga comes in a form of Appanna at night. When Rani becomes pregnant then the question of her chastity has come. Why a woman is always a victim of any conduct she did nothing wrong she had a relation with a person who disguise her in a form her husband. Like in the *Ramayana* Sita has to prove her chastity by *agni-pariksha* (an ordeal of fire) by which she proves her purity before accepting by Rama [20].

The Fire and the Rain is based on the story of the Mahabharata in which theme of alienation, love, family, loneliness and hatred are found. Though the different kind of characters which shows completely all the forms of Indian society. Girish Karnad used various myths like *Yavakri*, *The Yajan* (Fire Sacrifice), *Indra*, *Vritra* to focus on man-woman relationship, woman's condition in male-dominated society and to present contemporary problems related to the women in the society [21].

Bali- the Sacrifice is about the conflict between a Jain queen and her husband a Hindu King. Queen is a Jain and she marries a Hindu King who has accepted Jainism. One day the Queen enchanted by the beautiful voice of a low cast ugly, Mahauat, the Elephant-keeper, mates with him. When King and the Queen-mother know about this, the punishment which is to be decided into a form of Sacrifice. Though she is a Jain, so the punishment was in a form of mock sacrifice,

a dough-cock is decided to be sacrificed, which suddenly comes alive. The sacrifice of the dough cock turns into the sacrifice of the Queen herself and she dies[22]. Thus, the woman in the Indian society, whether she belongs to the high or low class/caste is always looked down upon by virtue of being a woman and ill-treated by the society. Karnad has raised the question through this that why women, whether a Queen or a simple one, women are always relegated to the background forming a marginalized group in the patriarchal order[23].

Tughlaq is a story of fourteenth century empire Muhammad Bin-Tughlaq who was known for some of his great mistakes, but simultaneously he was a great thinker too. Through the character of Tughlaq, Karnad tried to show an arrogant human nature despite having a great sense [24].

Tipu Sultan was not only a great warrior, but a great social reformer. He was a dreamer too. Karnad through Tipu's secret dream wants to show how great thinker and a great patriot he was[25].

Tale-Danda is basically a play about the socio-religious condition of Southern India in twelfth century A.D. during Bhakti movement. Eight hundred years ago in the city of Kalyan. The plot of Tale-Danda has two stories one is Sovideva's intrigue to make differences between Bijjala, his father and Basavanna. The main thing which becomes the reason to fight is the marriage between a Brahmin bride and a Cobbler bridegroom. Karnad has compared that with Mandal and Mandir conflicts[26]. At that time modern Indian society was reeling under Mandal and Mandir when the Mandal and the Mandal movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and the religious fanaticism that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered".

CONCLUSIONS

In above mentioned all the plays, first Karnad has tried to show a picture of society and from every single play, he raised a voice on some problem regarding society which is quite important to be discussed. India is a country which is very rich in culture because India is decorated with different casts, religions and languages. Karnad has not only presented society and social values very prestigiously, but also presented a picture of society which is needed to be required for the welfare of human being. Each and every society has some positive and some negative qualities, but as a literary figure, it is a duty of a dramatist to do something in the field that a new form of society is to be created in which that society is free from all of its flaws.

REFERENCES

1. Chakravartee, Moutushi. "Moutushi Chakravartee talks to Girish Karnad." *Tenor*. 1991.
2. Dhanvel, P. "The Humanistic Vision of Girish Karnad." In *Contemporary Indian, Literature in English: A Humanistic Perspective*. Ed. Mithilesh K. Pandey, New Delhi: Kalyani. 1999.
3. "Girish Karnad's Hayavadana: A study in Condensation." *The Quist*. 1997.
4. "The Romance of Influence: A Bloomain Perspective on Girish Karnad's Hayavadana." *Indian Journal of American Studies*. 1993.
5. Gokak, V.K. "Indian Literature as an Expression of Indian Culture." In *India and World Culture*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1986.

6. "The Concept of Indianness with Reference to Indian Writing in English." In *Indian Writing in English*, Ed. Ramesh Mohan. Madras: Orient Longman, 1978.
7. Karnad, Girish. *Hayavadana*. Oxford University Press, 1971.
8. *Naga-Mandala*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
9. *Tale-Danda*. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1993.
10. *The Fire and the Rain*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
11. *Tughlaq*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1964.
12. *Two Plays by Girish Karnad: The Dreams of Tipu Sulta, Bali: The Sacrifice*, New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004.
13. *Yayati*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.
14. "Acrobating between the Traditional and the Modern." *Indian Literature*. 1989a.
15. "Theatre in India." *Daedalus*. 1989b.
16. "Interview with Kirtinath Kurtkoti," *Contemporary Indian Theater: Interviews With Playwrights and Director*. New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1989.
17. Murthy, U. R. Anantha, Prasanna and Girish Karnad. "Girish Karnad, the Playwright: A Discussion," Trans. Sukanya Chandrasekara. *Indian Literature*. 1995.
18. "Introduction." In *Karnad*: vii-x. 1983.
19. "A Note on Karnad's *Hayavadana*." *Literary Criterion*. 1976.
20. Paul, Rajendra. "Girish Karnad Interviewed." *Enact*. 1971.
21. Ramachandran, C. N. "Girish Karnad: The Playwright in Search of Metaphors," *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*. 22. 2: 1999.
22. Raju, B. Yadava. "Race and Gender in *Yayati*," *Girish Karnad's Plays: Performance and Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Tutun Mukherjee. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2006.
23. Ramanujan, A. K. "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. January 1989.
24. Ramnarayan, Gowari. "A New Myth of Sisyphus." *Theatre: The Hindu Folio*. 1989.
25. Raykar, Meenakshi. "An Interview with Girish Karnad." *New Quest*. 36 Nov- Dec, 1982.
26. Saletone, R. N. *Encyclopedia of Indian Culture*. Vol.1. New Delhi: Sterling. 1981.