



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.07.104>

## DELINEATION OF MYTHOLOGY INTO MODERN BACKDROP IN GIRISH KARNAD'S PLAYS

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Mythology has been Girish Karnad's most interesting area. He has given genuine platform for Indian mythology by interpreting folktales and legends from epics like Mahabharata into a modern backdrop. Girish Karnad uses this myth with an idea to reveal the absurdity of life with all emotions, passions and conflict. Girish Karnad wants to show human being's struggle to attain perfection.

Yayati was written and produced in Kannada. It was a great success. Introduction and presentation of myth irritated orthodox people. But more critics appreciated the new approach. The great success for Yayati is introducing ancient into a modern background.

His best play Tughlaq came three years later. Tughlaq is a politics based historical play which deals with last five years of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. The action of the play takes place in Delhi, then on the road from Delhi to Daulatabad five years later. Tughlaq was first staged in Kannada. Like Yayati it was a great success. Then it was translated into Marati and Bengali. An English production of Tughlaq in Bombay was a grand success.

Girish Karnad's play Tughlaq is the history of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. Tughlaq is the central character of the play. When Karnad reads many history books, he was especially influenced by the strange character of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Tughlaq is the most prominent character to come to the throne of Delhi.

Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq is a powerful emperor. He does not show his weakness in executing kingly duties. He has a firm determination, personality and strong will. He strongly executes his ideals into action. In giving awards, we can see the strength of his character. In giving punishment also, he shows his strong character. For example, when he gets the news that his stepmother is responsible for the murder of Najib he immediately says that death is the only punishment for treachery.

Tughlaq's plan to shift capital from Delhi to Daulatabad for administration purpose is a very big failure in his career. The shamelessness of planning a conspiracy to murder his own brother and father at prayer hour shows that he is a merciless person. The frustration at the end of the play shows that he is not understood by his followers and people who are living under his administration.

Hayavadana is the one of the interesting plays of Karnad. It achieved greater popularity on stage. It deals with archetypal theme mythology, folk theatre conventions. Main theme of Hayavadana is taken from Somdeva's Brihakatha Saritsagar, an ancient story in Sanskrit. The central theme of Devadatta and Kapila is based on a story from vetala panchavimshika, but Karnad has taken the theme from Thomas Mann's novel Transposed Heads a mock-heroic work of Sanskrit tale. Horse-man's search for self is Karnad's original idea. Hayavadana is a play about search of identity in a world of tangled relationships.

Devadatta, the intellectual and Kapila man of body are close friends. Padmini marries Devadatta. Kapila and Padmini fall in love with each other. These two men kill themselves for the love of Padmini. After that, Padmini transposes their heads, fixing Devadatta Kapila's head and Kapila Devadatta's head, so confusion of identity took place. It shows the ambiguous nature of human mind. The situation becomes complicated. Devadatta and Kapila again start fighting and kill themselves. Padmini performed Sati.

S. Ramasami has rightly said about Girish Karnad:

Karnad transmutes and transforms his source material to such an extent, being an actor and theatre man himself, that the modern, contemporary, individual talent incorporates the tradition into a transcreation that is rich and strange. The Rhodes Scholar and Practical man of theatre and Cinema blend into a recreation of the myth and legend of India with a novel blend of traditional material and contemporary narrative technique which is quite challenging in bringing folk and elite theatres together. (21-22)

Girish Karnad presents the position of Indian women in our society through Naga-Mandala. It is a play based on two stories of Karnataka told by older women of the family while feeding children in the kitchen. The other persons who are present in the kitchen are also women. Therefore, these stories, though told to children, often it is a way of communication among the women in the family.



Cover Page



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These stories were heard by Girish Karnad from Professor A.K. Ramanujam. Then he converted into dramatic form. It is the traditional story of a cobra becoming man at night and visiting women. Then it is based on the traditional belief that a night long watch in a temple can protect you from death.

Karnad himself commented on the role and significance of these stories:

They also express a distinctly woman's understanding of the reality around her a lived counterpart to the Patriarchal structures of the classical texts and institutions. The position of Rani in the story of Naga-Mandala, for instance, is seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband only in two unconnected roles – as a stranger during the day and as a lover at night. Inevitably, the pattern of relationships, she is forced to weave from these disjointed encounters must be something of a fiction. The empty house Rani is locked in could be the family she is married into. (Author's Introduction 17)

The play tells a story of male-dominated world to give the message that it degrades both sexes. In modern world, men and women have to work to maintain progress. In many cases, exploitation of women is revealed these days. The play reveals gender discrimination and suppression of woman in Indian orthodox society. The female protagonist Rani and Kurudavva are main characters who stand for Indian woman. Though the play is a result of dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka, Karnad deeply examines contemporary socio-cultural and philosophical concerns.

Rani lives in a place where orthodox conventions, and cultural taboos exist. Patriarchy is a big blow to existence of Rani. Apart from patriarchy she accepts male superiority. Even in thought she does not oppose her husband. To her, husband is a replica of god. It is an invisible conspiracy to degrade her position in society. She practices new ways to change suppression of woman. Rani is helpless because she is surrounded by evil forces. She is tortured by alienation and frustration. She continues her struggle to prove as a woman, as a wife and as a mother. Message of the play is obvious.

Though she feels that she is alienated by the society, frustration and antithetical conditions a woman should continue her struggle for her existence. Patriarchy, social practices of Appanna, Naga, and Elders of the village, Parents of Rani, Naga, Dog and Mongoose etc... are the characters that are used as a tool to perpetuate exploitation of Rani. M.K. Naik has explored the symbolism embedded in the play:

The two folk-tales were deftly blended in presenting the two allied themes of the nature of art and the relationship between art and imagination on the one hand and mundane reality on the other. The tale of the failed playwright seemed to suggest that art demands everything from the artist and that he will die if he cannot fulfil his mission. The Rani-Appanna-Cobra tale was evidently an allegory of the nexus between the world of art and the world of reality. Rani, who is away her time making up fairy tales is the artist, and the Cobra, the power of imagination, while Appanna represents the work-a day world. The fact that the Cobra assumes the form of Appanna suggests that Art is, and also in not, the same as reality. That the Cobra finally finds permanent refuge in the hair of Rani is perhaps indicative of the permanent alliance between Art and Imagination. (NM 46)

Whenever Girish Karnad wants to tell important problems that are not taken seriously, disastrous results would follow again. Ramaswami finds Karnad a dramatist with a different whose motive behind playwrighting is too held:

Pulse of the socio-cultural-historical-political facets of India and Indian life... his plays have always aimed at providing message in the contemporary context. In Tughlaq and Tale-Danda Karnad employs history to comment on the pathetic and corroded state of Indian modern-day politics, and through which he engages in an intellectual debate of our time. (105)

Basavanna's dream of egalitarian society and emotional politics is the dream of Karnad himself. In the play he raises many questions and some suggestions are given but many are left to the audience to think and find solution.

The story of Yavatri deals with the misuse of knowledge and heavenly powers that human beings get from gods after great penance. Yavatri, gets the knowledge of the Vedas from Indra after undergoing sincere penance for the years. He uses this heavenly knowledge to hurt on Raibhya who is a close friend of his father. Yavatri is the son of sage Bhardwaj. Both Bhardwaj and Raibhya are learned and they have been given heavenly powers. Yavatri feels that his father does not get proper respect which he deserves. But Bhardwaj warns his son against the misapplication of knowledge.



Cover Page



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To Yavati, knowledge is the tool to take revenge. His father thinks that Yavati uses his knowledge to corner Vishaka who is the daughter-in law of Raibhya. Raibhya also takes revenge on him. He creates a demon, a Brahma Rakshasa, a spirit which resembles Vishaka then he sends it to murder Yavati. The death news of Yavati makes Bhardwaj to curse Raibhya. The curse is Raibhya will be killed by his own son. Bhardwaj kills himself in guilty consciousness.

Paravasa, son of Raibhya, mistakes the deerskin which his father is wearing, for a wild animal and kills him. Paravasa, a knowledgeable man also misuses the spiritual knowledge. He accuses his elder brother Arvasu for Patricide. Arvasu begins his own penance and prays the sun god for getting knowledge and power. The sun god gives him boon. Arvasu requests the sun God to give life to Yavakri, Bhardwaj and Raibhya. Then Paravasa gives up doing evil act. When Yavakri comes back to life, Gods scolds him for his mistake and advises him to use knowledge in a right way.

Karnad takes this leap to give new meaning to the myths. Karnad himself has told that he goes back to old myths and history because it is relevant to our present situation. The main purpose of drama is to interpret the life of our universe. Here Girish Karnad uses myth which has been portrayed the present world. There is no wonder he is hailed as one of the best successful dramatists of modern Indian theatre.

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