

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

REALITY AS MORAL DISCOVERY IN THE PLAY OF GIRISH
KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA.

1. *P. Lakshmilavanya,*

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, P. V. P. SIDDHARTHA INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY, KANURU, VIJAYAWADA. .lakshmilavanyapotturi@gmail.com

2. *Dr. B. Karuna,*

ASSOC .PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY,
GUNTUR.
karb@rediff.com

3. *Rafi Shaik,*

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, QUIZ INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY, ONGOLE.
rafibcas@gmail.com

**P. Lakshmilavanya, Dr. B. Karuna, Rafi Shaik, ; Reality As Moral Discovery In The Play
Of Girish Karnad's Hayavadana. -- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of
Egypt/Egyptology 17(9). ISSN 1567-214x**

Keywords: Modern Indian Drama, languages, translations, heritage & bleak future.

Abstract:

India has been a land of articulate feelings, eloquent speeches and diverse manifestations; Indian drama comprises all the three. Kalidas, the undomitable, Bhavbhuti, the unimitable and Keshav, the unforgettable, are a few names that enhance this particular sensibility. As regards Indian English drama, it has assumed mythical stature due to its poor growth, right from its inception, as a sheer legacy to be proud of, K.R.S. Iyengar admits the fact while writing, "Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor, on the whole, of high quality. Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English, but seldom for actual stage production."¹

Going back to the days of launching of Indian English drama, like other genres, it is also imitative and derivative in nature, including translations from other languages, carrying forward its heritage with alien inclusions. Krishna Mohan Banerji is the beginner with his *The Persecuted* (1831), then came the flow of translations: Michael Madhusudan Dutta's *Ratnavali* (1858), *Sermista* (1859) and *Is This Called Civilization* (1871) followed the corpus of Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and others modelled after the Elizabethan concept and structure, we may easily diagnose the encounter of two cultures (as in K.M. Banerji's *The Persecuted*), at

times compromise and at present a sort of reconciliation and appetite of creation and urge for performance existed, providing ample scope to a bleak future.

“Drama is composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage and through that medium reacts of the mind of the audience”.(Naik, 1984, 151)

Introduction:

With advent of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, Indian English drama got a new impetus. Though these two great literary figures had great impact of the West, considered as gift of the West, their role in enhancing this particular genre cannot be denied. Tagore has been hailed as 'the father of modern Indian Stagecraft' and his drama,

"From eros to cosmos, from the pastoral to the Modern age, from a religious bigotry to social comedy, from entertainment and romantic love to martyrdom...the changing scenarios, but each with a thesis, open or hidden, reveal a complex, evolving mind, a repertoire of versatility and development in theme, treatment as well as choreography far beyond the professional playhouse."³

(Ghosh, 1986, 57)

The journey of Indian English drama, from its beginning till date is a story of silent walk, striving hard for its identity to liberate itself from the cultches of conventional taboos and with an urge to be absorbed in the West. But we could not achieve either of the two; we could not divorce our scriptures and the West is not ready to accept us. Prof. Sisir Kumar Das is of the view that,"

The attempt towards the creation of a new dramatic literature followed two distinct strands: one the exploitation of the available popular traditions with some adjustment with classical drama, and the other creation of a dramatic literature on the European model. Both the strands however continued side by side, and each group remained distinct from the other." (Das, 1991, 118)

These attempts invited the wrath of the public, evident in their articulation, such as."Indo-English theatre had absolutely no relevance for India, and if not dead, should be so."(Reported in Enact, 79, July 1973, n.p.).and Dnyaneshwar Nandkarni declares in "Butcher the Indo-Anglians,""Butcher them (the Indo-Anglian playwrights), castigate them and force them to write in their native Hindi or Urdu or whatever Indian Languages their fathers and mothers used to speak."

This dilemma is one of the prominent reasons of the arrested growth of Indian English drama. The choice of them is followed by the existence of theatre because stage performance is the primary factor for success of any play. As M.K. Naik explains about the relationship between drama and the theatre,

"...there is a fundamental problem of the indissoluble bond between drama and the theatre, a relationship which is constituted of a signal advantage and a limitation for drama vis-a-vis other literary forms". (Naik, 1984, 151)

The early theatres, set in Calcutta, in 1735 and 1775 were not open to Indians. However with the production of Shakespeare, Sheridan or Goldsmith, a small group of young Indians were attracted towards the stage and sought entry. Then came a deluge of theatres such as Hindu Theatre,

Sham Bazar Theatre, Bombay Theatre, etc. and thus continued the opening of theatres, their running and closure too. Truly speaking, Indian English drama started as imitation and continued as experimentation in different techniques and forms, T.P. Kailasam's attempt in poetic drama and Currimbhoy's in prose drama are remarkable beginnings. Experimentation continued and we kept on hovering between the two, the East and the West. We cared least of our rich and varied Indian dramatic tradition, the 'fifth veda,' enshrined in 'Natyasastra' expounded by Bharatmuni, "...taking the 'word' from Rigveda, 'Gesture' from Yajurveda, 'Song' from Samaveda and Rasa from Atharveda, the art of drama was meant to promote the fulfilment of all the four purusharthas, Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha".

(Iyengar, 1962, 244)

Another significant factor that marred the growth of Indian English drama is the unacceptability of English as a common language of India. Dr. S. Ramaswamy says in his essay, "Legend as Poetic Drama," "In the area of Commonwealth Literature, drama is the weakest and least prolific form and poetic drama is an even rarer genre"⁵.

(Reddy, ed., 1994, 94)

It is here that we accept Indian English drama as a myth and non-entity, though we cannot confirm its death as we have practitioners even today trying their best to keep it alive. Among the contemporary Indian dramatists Girish Karnad heralds with his proclamation, "theatre often gropes towards the past, looking for meaning with the tools of the present."⁶ He feels that modern writers find it hard to respond to the well-ordered universe taken for granted in these plays, in which everyone from the gods to the lowest mortals finds an allotted slot and in which few of the basic values are open to question. Some of the ten dramatic forms listed by Bharatmuni in his 'Natyasastra' refer to the more popular varieties.

Such enormous diversity of performing arts in India cannot be denied and there conflicting philosophies, historical situations and cultural attitudes may act as shaping force and prominent motivating factor. Indian English dramatists prone to exploit the available indigenous resources and not the West. Karnad is conscious of his own weakness, and perhaps of his colleagues too, and so prefers to call himself "Indian dramatist and not an Anglo-Indian dramatist which is a different tradition altogether"⁷ (Rama, 1992, 143).

Indian Drama:

Indian English drama has not been so fortunate as poetry and fiction in Indian English because drama requires specialized skill and talent in selecting a theme which is presentable on the stage and in picking up a technique which appeals to the audience. Language is one of the greatest hurdles in the growth of Indian English drama. The participation of the audience is made possible through the mother tongue than a Foreign language. Thus, Indian drama mostly flourished in regional languages. The other reason for the setback of Indian English drama is its inability to plant itself in the Indian ethos. India has been a rich storehouse of myths and legends, of folk tales and customs, of historical events and cultural heritage.

Our dramatists ought to have made use of them in their creative writings. But, unfortunately, most of them have failed to do so. But, dramatists of today like Girish Karnad has skillfully employed and his plays in order to "interpret contemporary social and political situations"¹⁰, as Satish Kumar (1993: 2) observes. Karnad's Tughlaq and Hayavadana are the best examples of it.

The third reason for the setback unsuitability on the stage. That's why; it has suffered greatly in theatrical effects. In this connection K.R.S. Iyengar (1984: 226) remarks: "Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor on the whole of high quality. Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English—but seldom for actual stage production." Finally, because of the writers like Badal Sarkar and Girish Karnad contemporary Indian English drama is getting richer with innovative themes and techniques.

Girish Karnad, an actor, a film producer and a TV artiste is regarded as a very significant playwright of the post-independent Indian literature. He is one of the most prolific writers of modern Indo-Anglian drama. He has, so far, written over eight plays, three of which into English. His plays are as folio Tughlaq (1964), Hayavadana (1975), HiltinaHunja, Anju Maltige, Agni Mallu Male (1984), Nagamandala (1990). Thaledanda. (1994) etc.

Tone and expression of the play:

Girish Karnad's Hayavadana (1975) a play in two acts, is his third play. Originally written in Kannada, the play was an immediate success on the stage and received the prestigious Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya award of 1971. Like Samuel Beckett translating his own play from French into English 'En Attendant Godot Waiting for Godot', Girish Karnad, also inspired by the success of his play, translated it into English retaining, however, the original title. Hayavadana. Originally published in Enact, it was published by Oxford University Press in 1975 in the New Drama in India Series, and since then it has been performed in different translations and adaptations around the world with great success. Karnad, like T.S. Eliot, follows the sense of history and tradition in Hayavadana He was highly influenced by the trends in Kannada literature and he took y, tradition and myth for the plots of his plays like Tughlaq. Hayavadana respectively.

"Hayavadana is based on folk tale and hence, all the ingredients are deeply employed in it. KirtinathKurtkoti (1975:vi vii) observes:"Karnad uses the conventions and motifs of folk theatre-masks, cilrrains, dolls, the story within a storyto create a bizarre world. It is a world of incomplete individuals, indifferent gods' dolls that speak and children who cannot, a world indifferent to the desires and frustrations, joys and sorrows of human beings. What is real is only the tremendous, irrational energy of the horse and the writer who move round the stage symbolising the powerful but monotonous rhythm of life"¹¹.

Karnad's plays have 'the tone and expression of great drama ' Let us discuss in detail the aspects of the sense of history and tradition in his play Hayavadana.

Hayavadana literally means that ones with a horse's head 'is a novel kind of drama which combines tradition, history and modernity. The drama has one main plot and one subplot. There are twenty-five stories about King

Vikrama and Vetala in it. Each these poses a riddle at the end, which Vetala challenges the king to solve.

The stories in *Vetalpanchavimsati* and *Kathasaritsagara* are basically the same except some changes in place names and in the caste of the characters. Having a strong liking for tradition, Karnad moulds this ancient story to serve the purpose of modern drama in India. However, a modern source of the plot of *Hayavadana* is Thomas Mann's long short story, *The Transposed Heads*. Karnad has used this story as a source of this play. His handling of the sources of his plot in the play makes it clear that his interpretation differs from Mann's story. He invests an old myth with a new meaning. His modification of the old legend is suited to his treatment of the theme. As a matter of fact, *Hayavadana* is a bold experiment in the use of folk motifs, like the *Bhagavata* narrator, masks, miming, the chorus etc.

The entire play is cast in the form of traditional Indian folk drama which took several features of ancient Sanskrit drama. Karnad uses the conventions and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre in it. In the treatment of its theme and in the use of stage conventions, Karnad uses the literary and theatrical traditions of the East and the West. The *pooja* and prayer of Lord Ganesha in the beginning of the play, the role of

Bhagavata as a controller of the play's movement and as narrator and occasional interpreter and the use of "*Yakshagana*" curtains are some Indian traditions. '*Yakshagana*' is a special feature of the folkdance drama of coastal Karnataka.

While writing the play. Karnad uses the folk form and assimilates into it the tradition of Indian classical drama, the western dramatic conventions to convey his perception of contemporary reality. The play opens with the offering of worship accompanied by singing to the Lord Ganesha. This is perfectly in keeping with the Indian classical tradition, where in the beginning of a drama some god or goddess is invoked for blessing. In '*Yakshagana*', it is Lord Ganesha, the god of success that is invoked.

At the beginning of the performance a mask of Ganesha is brought on the stage and kept on the chair. In the *pooja* and prayer, Lord Ganesha is addressed as 'single tasked destroyer of incompleteness' (p. 73). Here, the choice of the elephant-headed god is significant because Lord Ganesha with human body and animal head properly suggests the central theme of incompleteness of being. Lord Ganesha is worshipped as the "destroyer of incompleteness." *Bhagavata* rightly comments: "An elephant body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly—whichever way you look at it he seems to be an embodiment of imperfection of incompleteness" (p. 73). By invoking the Lord Ganesha and its myth Karnad reconciles the tradition and modernity into a harmonious whole.

Bhagavata, who introduces the story is the stage manager of the classical Sanskrit drama. By using *Bhagavata* and the kind of role which Karnad assigns to the *Bhagavata* far outgrows the traditional role. However, in keeping with the folk tradition he narrates the story in the manner of a folk tale: "Our duty is irrefrably to pay homage to the elephant-headed god and get on with the play" (p. 73) and he begins: "This is the city of Dharmapura. ruled by King Dharmasheela whose fame and empire have already reached the ends of the eight directions" (p. 73). *Bhagavata* takes charge of the

play's opening when the Nata frightened by a speaking Hayavadana. creates a disturbance on the stage.

He also decides the time when the half-curtain must be brought in or withdrawn. He initiates the discussion and invites responses to the actions of the characters. He is involved intimately with every character. He expresses sympathy for Kapila when he is forsaken by Devadatta and Padmini after the transposition. When Padmini transposes her head there is a problem of identity. Bhagavata solves this problem by the Rishi's verdict. He suggests Hayavadana to go to the temple of Kali at Chitrakoot.

Thus, the role of Bhagavata is of a helper, a part-narrator, commentator and an interpreter of the events. The play opens with Bhagavata's prayer of Lord Ganesha and ends with his praise of Lord Ganesha. He says that the mercy of the Elephant-headed Ganesha is unfathomable. Finally, there is a chorus prayer. 'Grant us O Lord, good rains, good crop, prosperity in poetry, science, industry" (p. 75). Bhagavata remains on the stage practically all the time and control the action in a significant way. It is said that Bhagavata becomes a Brechtian type of narrator. His role as a link between the actors and the audience and the characters is as a mediator.

The other important device drawn from the folk theatre tradition is the use of half-curtain. Half-curtain is used throughout the play as a very important stage property. Karnad believes in the presentation of the play on stage. He gives full freedom to the directors of his plays. Half-curtain is effective in the presentation of Hayavadana. By bringing down the curtain the horse is exposed and concealed a few times.

With a device of a curtain depicting a blazing fire, the impression is given on the stage that Padmini is consumed by the fire. Behind the curtain the terrifying figures of goddess. Kali with the blood-red uplifted palms and mouth open with tongue lolling out is shown. While using the folk strategy of half-curtain, Karnad modernizes by giving it a symbolic significance. While dealing with complex states of minds, the half-curtain comes in very handy.¹²

We have already pointed that Karnad uses mask in the play which is the characteristic feature of Indian folk theatre. The first mask to be used is that of Ganesha, the destroyer of obstacles. Later Devadatta in the opening of the play appears on the stage wearing a pale coloured mask and Kapila a dark mask. Later in the play, masks are transposed to indicate the transposition of heads. Kali, the goddess, appears in a terrible mask and Hayavadana appears at first wearing the mask of a horse's head and later when he becomes a complete horse, he wears the mask of a complete horse. In the classical drama, the chorus plays a very important role. He sang and dance on the stage In Hayavadana, the chorus plays a subordinate role to Bhagavata is the head of the musicians, stage manager and the interpreter. The play begins with a prayer to Lord Ganesha. In Act II, we listen to the female chorus. Bhagavata throws light on Padmini's predicament by giving an example of a river and a scare crow. The female chorus then sings:

***"The river only feels the
pull of the waterfall.
She giggles, and tickles the rushes
On the banks, then turns..." (p. 57)***

When Padmini performs Sati, the female chorus sings a dirge. Here, the chorus ironically celebrates Padmini's desire and voluntary death. The women declare. "Our sister is leaving in a palanquin of sandalwood. Her mattress is studded with rubies which burn and glow. She is decked in flowers which blossom on tinder- wood and whose petals are made of molten gold. How the garlands leap and cover her aflame with love" (p. 65). In the last song of the female chorus, the women ask the question, "why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many petalled, many-flowered lantanas why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?" (p. 70). Here, Karnad has introduced the chorus with a definite purpose. He uses the female chorus just like T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* but he puts it in a different sense.

Another important folk devices are the use of mime and the use of painted curtain. The action of the play is often mimed. For example when the three characters like Devadatta, Padmini and Kapila proceed to Ujjain, a cart does not really appear on the stage. We are just told: "Kapila followed by Padmini and Devadatta enter miming cart ride. Kapila is driving the cart" (p. 94). The play, in fact is well provided with instances of miming. But this simple act of miming, the cart driving assumes symbolic significance. Padmini's comments on the occasion lend a symbolic significance to the cart driving. "How beautifully you drive the cart, Kapila! Your hands do not even move, but the oxen seem to know where to go" (p. 95).

Hayavadana a dramatic version of a folk-tale. I here are two dolls as the characters. The two dolls have the capacity to converse with each other. They are able to see even the dreams of the characters. They are also gifted with the power to judge the thinking process of the character's!! In fact, Devadatta has brought these two dolls to the Ujjain fair. The dolls see the dreams of Padmini. They say that a person other than her husband visits her in dreams. It is Kapila. The dolls read her memories about Kapila. The two dolls quarrel and they tear their attire. Padmini asks her husband to change the dolls. They devadatta when he goes to replace them. But, Padmini's son is very fond of these dolls. In this way, the dolls play a very important role in the play.

The story of *VetalPanchavimsati* enables Karnad to see in it the seed of story of search for completeness. Karnad introduces a subplot the story of Hayavadana which is a pathetic story of search for identity and search for completeness. Hayavadana is a man with a horse's head. He is introduced in the very first act of the play Hayavadana terrifies the actor on the roadside and then comes to the theatre He tries to hide his face in shame and sobs loudly. Bhagavata asks him to come to the central stage and reveal his Hayavadana tells his story to Bhagavata. "My mother was the princess of Karnataka. She was a very beautiful girl...He cursed her become a horse herself. My mother became a horse and ran away happily. My father went back to His Heavenly Abode. Only I the child of their marriage was left behind....! have tried everything. But where's my society? Where? You must help me to become a complete man." (p. 79-80).

Coming back to this brief story of Hayavadana, Karnad tells the story in the manner of a folk tale where curse and transformation are common. Karnad has given a touch of modernity to Hayavadana's identity crisis. The sub-plot

is linked with the main story when Hayavadana enters the life of Padmini's son who is very much delighted by the horse having the gift of the tongue. In Hayavadana's makeup, the three elements of the divine, the human and the animal are seen. Karnad skillfully blends the main plot with the sub-plot of Hayavadana.

Karnad's treatment of Kali is no better. In the first place when Padmini visits her temple she is just sleeping and she wakes up only when Padmini's turn for suicide comes. And when Hayavadana goes to her temple to pray for becoming complete man, she doesn't wait for him to complete the sentence, "Make me complete man" and Hayavadana ironically, becomes a complete horse. The goddess Kali is described as funny. Her appearance is dreadful and it evokes laughter. The goddess grants boons to her devotees in her sleepy mood.

Karnad follows the simplicity of images and symbols. The repetition of words is a modern phenomenon in literature. Karnad also repeats the words for making an emphasis on a particular idea. The words like "Riddhi. Siddhi. Iru. Alpana. Namaskar. Rishi. Vande Mataram. etc." are Indianized English. Karnad's handling of mythological and historical if the complication of human relations in the situational contexts envisage his dramatic genius in the days to come.

The setting is minimal and is indicated by printed curtains held up by stagehands in full view of the audience. Change of locale is shown by characters walking around. There is frequent use of asides, characters freeze when the narrator, Bhagavata is commenting on the action and the sword fight between the two friends is stylized like a dance. The use of songs and soliloquy has also added to the beauty of Hayavadana.

The imagery is specifically Indian. Devadatta characterizes Padmini as "the Shyama Nayika -born of Kalidasa's magic description as Vatsyana had dreamt her." (p. 14). Padmini describes the coming of the dawn in the forest: "The shadows of twigs draw alpanas on the floor. The stars raise arati and go" (p. 52). Padmini's situation is beautifully summed up by the images of the river and the scare crows in the choric songs. When Padmini observes a Sati, the females declare, "our sister is leaving in a palanquin of sandal wood. Her mattress is studded with rubies which burn and glow. She is decked in flowers which blossom on tinder wood and whose petals are made of molten gold. How the garlands leap and cover her a flame with love:" (p. 47) This imagery is suggestive. Instances of Indian Idiom are, 'one has to collect merit in seven lives to get a friend like him' (p. 21) and Padmini's description of her husband as "you are my saffron, my marriage thread, my deity" (p. 21). Here only a return to its roots in ancient Sanskrit and Indian folk drama can revitalize his art. In short, Hayavadana is a play that remarkably reconciles the sense of history and tradition.

Our sensibility is accustomed to distinguish between myth and reality as binary opposites. Yet in literary appreciation, discursive thinking and imaginative apprehension are not as far removed as the two terms may initially suggest. By suggestion, myth and reality are antonyms; by implication, they cohere and co-exist. Within the structural framework of the plays, they are usually yoked together not by violence but by subtlety.

A literary artist, whatever is the genre, draws upon imagination but not to the exclusion of discursive thinking because the mind carries on with the

processes of selection and rejection. In other words, no work of art is just inspirational; it also involves intellection, as Wordsworth's famous definition (740) informs us. Whatever may be the vicissitudes of fate, in a myth the hero and his followers "live happily ever after".

An important aspect of a myth is this 'pleasurable' thought where virtue, after trials and tribulations, meets with satisfying experiences and ends with a sense of having come full circle. From a psychological point of view, myth stands for some sort of wish-fulfilment. Since it concerns not the individual nor a small group, but a whole race, it may be conceived of as the daydream of the race as Fluget (273) points out.

Transmit mythology:

Myths are generally dateless (unhistorical?), transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, often retaining the kernel but undergoing transformation in details. Whether such people as found in the myths really existed or not may be a moot point; what is important is the nature of a myth's basic content in which human wishes find both expression and fulfilment. The 'unhistorical-ness' of myths finds affinity with the mind of man which, according to Jung (229) is also 'unhistorical' as far as his racial memory is concerned. It needs to be pointed out, however, that this 'unhistorical-ness' does not mean rootless-ness.

Nor do myths become irrelevant to contemporary sensibilities. But they make the very concept of Time fluid. It is axiomatic that the past would change when confronted from the perspective of the present; similarly, the present is under constant fission as it changes moment to moment. The pressure ensuing from the 'criticality' of the situation results in conflict. Yet without conflict life would be insipid, and literature, just like a piece of deadwood!

Christopher Caudwell once said (30) that since "man's emotions are fluid and confusing, it would be unsafe to predict about human behaviour"¹³. What may only be vouchsafed is that every human being nurtures fantasy and the fantasies that myths project reflect both individual and social preoccupations. To that extent at any rate, fantasy expresses a social truth born of 'associated experience'¹⁴ or what is designated as 'the Collective Unconscious'.

In short, the 'truth' contained in the myths is dependent not necessarily upon physical reality but on a psychic one. Hence, now and then, literary artists take recourse to myths to focus upon certain instinctual human drives, irrespective of their morality. Because a playwright is primarily a communicator, his expressive style depends on the interaction he wishes to cultivate with the people around him, with whom he lives and relates to. Also, by virtue of being an artist, his sensitivity makes him aware of the presentness of the past. This makes him conscious of a certain kind of 'tyranny of the past' from which he tries to extricate himself by accepting the past as unalterable and true and attempting to modify it in the imaginary world he creates. Myth is thus a palpable presence for the playwright who experiments with it within his genre by relating, interpreting, re-visioning and re-fashioning it within the structural framework of his art.

To some extent, modern man's worldly sophistication might have severed him from myths, but his primitive - perhaps congenital - interest in listening to stories has not waned; he has not been weaned off from the primary

instinct of asking 'what then?' Both Forster (138) and Yeats (347-48) use the words "and then" and "what then"¹⁵ for different purposes; but both of them accept the implications of those words in the narrative process. Man's quest for knowledge and his unfailing interest in stories cater to a primeval desire to communicate concepts and ideas that often defy simple explanations. One is strongly reminded of Shaw's ideas regarding the origin of drama (144).

Invariably, the writer (poet/author/playwright) becomes the 'ancient mariner' capable of holding the hurrying wedding guest spellbound by his art of weaving a tale!

Karnad once explained to me in an interview that since he felt incapable of inventing stories, he drew his plots from history, folklore, myths and legends. Indeed, all his plays derive from pre-existing material, yet, like Shakespeare, he transforms the raw material into a unique drama of human emotions and feelings.

It attempts a study of Hayavadana and Nagamandala, the two plays that draw upon folktales. Two women hold the centre-stage in these plays: Padmini (Hayavadana) and Rani (Nagamandala); the former worldly and full of feminine wiles than the latter. There is a covert suggestion that women are manifestations of 'divine energy' or 'life force' and it is they who hold the centre stage. Into the basic fabric of the stories which he has taken from "Vetala Panchavimsati"¹⁶ and folklore, Karnad weaves new patterns.

In Hayavadana, the thrust is made more psychological, and thereby the mythic content of the transposed heads is given a turn of the screw. On the superficial level it is the tale of three lovers, Devadutt-Padmini-Kapila. Padmini, who is initially very happy after her marriage to Devadutt, is gradually attracted by Kapila's strong physique. However, her inner urge must remain repressed and her fidelity as a good Hindu wife must never be in question. The irony lies in the fact that neither Devadutt nor Kapila have the slightest inkling about her sexual inclinations. The dramatist has already taken strides beyond the basic story material.

It seems difficult to blame Padmini when she in a state of paroxysm, she attaches the heads to wrong torsos. She is unnerved, obviously, by the sequence of events. It is not surprising that when she rushes to attach the severed heads as soon as her prayers were answered, she would commit such an error in the darkness of the temple. As soon as she realizes the mistake that is too late to mend, she cries repeatedly in helplessness and despair, "What have I done?" (34); yet, is it really as simple as it appears to be? While Devadutt and Kapila rejoice that they have now become one, Padmini realizes the complexity of the situation. Who would now be her husband? Finally, they appeal to a sage for a solution. The sage says that the body with Devadutt's head is her "rightful husband" (40).

Not only is Padmini's desire for Kapila's body is fulfilled, Kapila's body also finds the pleasure of a union with Padmini it was seeking, as is demonstrated by Devadutt's (with Kapila's body) joyous dance and amatory utterances (40-41). While such an incident is possible within the dramatic world of make-believe, every spectator is aware that it is implausible in the everyday world. Society functions within the framework of certain norms that have to be followed by all its members. If Padmini symbolizes the erotic principle or the life force, her nature might not easily accept the curbs

put on the instinctual urges. When Iago said, "Virtue: a fig!" (I, iii: 322) and "Reputation is an idle and most false imposition" (II, iii, 268-69), he was referring to the complex social presumptions which regulate human behaviour. Karnad's play refers to such complex human predicaments that can have no easy solutions. Mankind cannot bear too much reality. A myth helps to dramatize the ideal-real conflict that can factor in the notion of identity that continues to struggle with the paradigm of nature and culture.

The question of identity is the burden that both the plays carry. Padmini and Rani appear to be embarking upon their respective voyages of discovery. It hardly matters whether they are conscious of it or not. However, the dramatist remains acutely pre-occupied with the question as he ties it up the question of identity with the idea of completeness. None of the main characters in Hayavadana is complete. Padmini desires a completeness and in the discussion on the subject that ensues with Kapila, she does not hesitate to refer to "Your body in the river, swam and danced in itYour head too must submerge in that river ... Until that's done, you'll continue to be incomplete" (58). This incompleteness is a human predicament, sometimes carrying tragic consequences, which modern man has realized too well.

Hayavadana seeks completeness too. He is the offspring of a princess and a divine being. While his parents had each found their society through transformation, his transformation was left incomplete. When he prays to the goddess, his prayers are granted hastily by the exhausted goddess and instead of becoming human becomes a "complete horse" though with a human voice. The dramatist emphasizes the way our desires are fraught with anxiety and lack proper articulation that often complicates the human situation further.

Finally, Padmini's son, grave and unresponsive to human questions and requests, gladly responds to Hayavadana and sings a song that he had learnt from his mother. He even laughs in the company of Hayavadana, who is apparently uncorrupted by avarice, greed, lust and human frailties.

The play does not have a romantic subject nor is its treatment without irony. The dialectics of materiality that Karnad introduces in the play merely uses the myth it draws from as the scaffolding. Playwrights love to draw from folk-tales, the storehouse of rich symbolical narratives. Many Indian playwrights have used folkloric material as the backdrop for their dramatic analyses of contemporary life. One of the most fascinating of such plays is Karnad's Nagamandala.

Using the apparent simplistic structure of a folktale, the play opens with a conventional device of explaining the reasons why the failed writer must keep awake the whole night. The Flames from the village homes assemble in the temple and share stories. One such is the story of Rani whose husband is enamoured of another woman and is reluctant to spend time with her, much less consummate their marriage. An old woman gives her a magic root that is a potent love potion. Rani mixes the root in the food and cooks it. The solution turns blood red and Rani throws it away in fear. The mixture happens to fall upon an anthill within which lived the King Cobra Naga. He tastes the love potion and falls in love with Rani.

He assumes the shape of her husband Appanna and starts visiting her every night. Though perplexed initially by her husband's rudeness during the day

and amorousness in the night, Rani learns to accept it. When Rani informs Naga-Appanna that she is pregnant, Naga is anxious for her and tells her to follow his directions without fail. Rani's husband Appanna is aghast when he learns of Rani's pregnancy and accuses her of infidelity. She demands a "snake ordeal" as test of her chastity and following the advice of Naga-Appanna, thrusts her hand into the anthill, pulls out the venomous King Cobra and allows it climb up her limb and hang around her neck like a garland. The whole village acclaims her "a goddess incarnate" and her husband is forced to accept her as such. Rani's acceptance by her husband has tragic consequences for Naga. He cannot visit Rani any more. He entangles himself in the hair of his beloved and kills himself. Rani has now understood everything. She honours Naga's supreme sacrifice by making his son light his pyre as is the customary filial duty.

Karnad has deployed all devices used with the folk-tale and/or mythic patterns, like the imputation of superhuman qualities to humans and non-humans, the use of magic elements, extraordinary ordeals. The Flames, the Naga taking Appanna's form, the magic roots, the imputation of divinity to a woman - all conform to the needs of folktale and myth. Indeed, within the folkloric framework of the play, Rani's attainment of divinity does not jar. Her adultery seems the proper lesson for her adulterous husband. As a powerful popular mode of expression, drama integrates within it, the fantasies of the human mind.

In real life, however, Rani does not crave for any extraordinary status. She craves for happiness with her husband. She becomes quite vocal when she knows that she is going to be a mother. She feels the quickening of life not only in her womb but in her entire being. She asserts herself, "I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot. Not a cat or a sparrow. Why don't you take it on trust that I have a mind and explain this charade to me?" (32). After the "snake ordeal," she is happily united with her husband. But that brings another and an expected, complication. Naga-Appanna's route of entry into and the exit from Rani's home is sealed off.

After having ensured his lover's safety and being madly in love as he is, the only way left for Naga is to commit suicide. So he decides to put an end to his life by entangling himself in Rani's long tresses. A folk-tale and a myth must end on a pleasant note not only for the protagonists but for the spectators. The supreme sacrifice by Naga, so that Rani can live happily ever after, wins him accolades from the audience. The deep irony is the truth of Rani's adultery and Naga's nocturnal sexual adventures. The psychological complexities of sexual relationships are woven subtly into the play. Credulity and intelligence are in conflict as Karnad highlights the absurdity of the situation. Like Hedvig of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, Rani cannot bear too much reality. She is happy to fill her life with half-truths and partial knowledge, or what Ibsen would call, "life lies".

The craft of making up tales or of fantasizing to endure mundane lives is a psychological mechanism of the human mind. In the world of folk-tale and myth where fiction and reality meet and where the human and the non-human coalesce to emphasize certain truths of life, make-belief rubs shoulders with subliminal truths.

Myth and folk-tale may be the starting points for both Hayavadana and Nagamandala but the end products are neither one nor the other. Karnad locates Padmini's and Rani's existential dilemma in their self knowledge, an unenviable human predicament. The realization of truth led to the death of the protagonists in Hayavadana. It led to Naga's death in Nagamandala and perhaps subsequent life of ennui (instead of lasting happiness) for Rani and Appanna.

The solutions provided by the tales that were Karnad's story material did not satisfy Karnad's modern sensibility and he understood that they would not make his audience happy. The modern mind must grapple with reality not by myth-making but by trying to re-vision and re-interpret life by exploring various possibilities and complexities that one may encounter in one's journey through life. Through the stories of Padmini-Devadutt-Kapila and Rani-Appanna-Naga, Karnad seems to ask like Keats ("Lamia": 229-30): "Do not all charms fly / At the touch of cold philosophy?" Like Tagore's Nandini in Red Oleanders, Rani and Padmini are the embodiments of *élan vital*. Out of the 'pleasure principle' that fantasy provides them, they must learn to come to terms with the 'reality principle' of social norms and bear the tragic consequences.

A society aspires to attain certain ideals and goals and imposes some restrictions upon herself for maximum welfare of human being. Gradually such ideals and goals are established as the value system of that society. According to Alery Deyev, a Russian thinker, values are:

*... material and spiritual objects and phenomena capable of meeting certain requirements of an individual, class or society as a whole and serving as ideals, percepts and goals of human activity....*¹⁷

(Philosophy and Social Theory, p. 196)

The famous historian Gordon Childe says that:

*... To deal with this spiritual environment they {societies} behave as if they need a spiritual equipment just as much as they need a material equipment of tools.*¹⁸

(What Happened in History, p. 21)

Values are such equipments of any society which helps attaining spiritual and material betterment of its people smoothly. While some people try to defend and nourish these values, others¹⁹ pose challenge before them. They try to manipulate the situation for their personal cause. So, the conflict begins. This conflict between these two groups goes on from generation to generation. Those who fight for defending those values are considered to be the heroes of the society. The story of their struggle, suffering and sacrifice for such values turn into myths of that society or race.

When writers depict the myths and legends of the society in their works, the conflict between good and evil finds expression in them. Fortunately in India, each state has a rich regional language and a well-established literary tradition in it. So far as English is concerned, it is not the language of a particular state in India but the language of upper-middle-class or of creamy layer of Indian society. Most of the Indian writers in English belong to this class. They, with their inherited Indian cultural background and adopted modern social values, remain in a state of dilemma. Girish Karnad says that the Indian middle class aspires "to 'look' like its British counterpart"²⁰. He writes:

... *The social values of this class were shaped by English education it had received and by the need to work with British in trade and administration.*

(*Introduction* to Three Plays, p. 4)

Indian writers in English appear to be radical but show every little change at heart. Some of them are busy in multiplying their money by cultural smuggling and present a distorted image of Indian culture and society in the market of the Western world. But none of them has courage to accept the truth that they feel in regional languages and write in English. So, their works are, to use the term of Plato, imitations of imitations. But those writers who write in regional languages and then translate their own work in English are in a better position. They achieve success in their depiction of grassroot reality and in making appeal to the audience.

Girish Karnad frankly accepts: "I write in Kannada. English is the language of adulthood. This translation must therefore be seen only as an approximation to the original".

(*Note* to Naga Mandala, Three Plays, p. 20)

But we cannot deny that his translation is very much approximate to the original. In his trilogy Karnad has raised several basic questions related to the crisis of human values in the society. Individual's relation with individual, family, society and state has been tasted. In Naga Mandala the relationship between Rani and Appanna is typical one. This play has successfully depicted that Rani is acceptable either as a slave by her husband or as a 'whore' by society or as a goddess by her husband and society both, but not as a human being. So numerous questions, related to her, raise the issue of crisis of human values. According to Kurudavva, Appanna "keeps his wife locked up like a caged bird" (Three Plays, p. 30). Appanna spends his night and day with a 'harlot' (p. 29).

It is a burning problem of faithlessness of a husband towards his wife. While "there is no one to talk to" Rani (31), Appanna enjoys his time with the prostitute. Rani cannot laugh or even weep. She is "bored to death" (p. 31). Indirectly, Karnad has hinted at the condition of millions of housewives in India who spend their entire life surrounded by four walls and do what they are asked to do. In their life there is no herbal 'root', as in case of Rani, to try on their husbands. They get joy out of trifles of their life. In case of Rani even these trifles are absent. It is only the unbelievable magic love of the Cobra that keeps Rani's life going on.

In Hayavadana Karnad creates a different female character in Padmini. Her husband Devadatta is a learned and intellectual young man. But Padmini is not completely satisfied with him. She is attracted by powerful body of Kapila, the son of a blacksmith and close friend of her husband Devadatta. Her split personality indicates her possessive nature. When Devadatta and Kapila both chop their heads in the Kali temple and the head of Devadatta is jointed on the body of Kapila and that of Kapila on Devadatta's body, Padmini accepts the earlier one as her husband. She feels satisfied after getting the body of Kapila and head of Devadatta in one. Her remark is full of joy when she says: "Fabulous body fabulous brain fabulous Devadatta" (Three Plays, p. 113). When her baby is born, Padmini's wish is that he should be brought up in the forest for few years and then he should be sent to Devadatta's father Vidyasagar. Her plan is that her son should have a

healthy body and a brilliant mind together. She wants to develop him as a child of her own dream.

This nature of Padmini indicates her possessive nature as she tries to impose her own wishes on the child for her wish fulfilment. When we think of the son of Padmini and the example of Hayavadan, who is also a neglected child, we remember the remarks of Bhagawan Shree Rajneesh who says that the problem lies in the lack of sensitivity in the parents. He says that "we enjoy sex and the child drops in, in between"²¹ (From Sex to Superconscious, p. 152). What can we expect from such unwelcome and accidental children? Such a child, who is deprived of affection and proper care, gives to the society what he receives from her. Such children feel themselves alienated. Hayavadan, bearing the head of a horse and body of a man is unable to identify himself. He does not find any place and role in the society.

He wants to take "interest in the social life of the Nation" (Three Plays, p. 81) but he has no society of his own, for he is not a complete man. The Bhagavata blesses him that he may "become successful" in his "search for completeness" (Three Plays, p. 82) but this search is never complete. So such individuals, for whom there is no place in the society and who fight their own way all alone, seldom bother about society when they get success in their life. If some young man like Kappanna bears the responsibility of his blind mother Kuruddava like Srawan Kumar, he is praised by the society, but if he is attracted towards a dream girl he is declared mad. Such quick changes in attitudes of the society indicates some elements of deterioration in it. So the value system is also at flux. J. Krishnamurti has remarked that :

Society is always in a state of degeneration. There is no perfect society. The perfect society may exist in theory, but not in actuality...

(Commentaries of living, p. 32)

If society cannot be perfect, how can we expect perfection from an individual. In such a society we are bound to face crisis of human and social values. It is because, in such societies, says J. Krishnamurti:

... from the biggest politician to the village manipulator, from the highest prelate to the local priest, from the greatest social reformer to the worn out social worker, each one is using the country, the poor, or the name of God, as a means of fulfilling his ideas, his hopes, his Utopias. He is the centre, 'his' is the power and glory but always in the name of the people, in the name of the holy, in the name of downtrodden...*²²

(Commentaries on Living, p. 32)

But what are the causes that lead to such condition? Perhaps the lack of human values (including social, moral, religious and spiritual values) lies deep as the root cause. Gordon Childe also hints at the same point when he writes that:

...Without such spiritual equipment not only do societies tend to disintegrate, but the individual composing them may just stop bothering to keep alive...

(What Happened in History, p. 22)

Now, what are the reasons for such crisis of human values in any society? Sometimes it is due to dominance of animal passion. Even Mahatma

Gandhi has realised harmful impact of animal passion. Referring to a moment of crisis in his life, Mahatma Gandhi remembers the night when his father died. Just before the death of his father Mahatma Gandhi was massaging him. He was relieved by his uncle few minutes before the death took place. Mahatma Gandhi says that he was very 'glad' and went straight to his "bedroom". His wife, the "poor thing" was sleeping. But he "woke her up". In five or six minutes there was a knock at the door and the servant informed that the father was no more. Here Mahatma Gandhi writes in his 'Experiment' with 'Truth' :So all was over ! I had but to wring my hands. I felt deeply ashamed and miserable. I ran to my father's room. I saw that if animal passion had not blinded me, I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moments. I should have been massaging him, and he would have died in my arms...

(An Autobiography, p. 126)

Another reason for crisis of human values lies in the formation of what A.K. Ramanujan calls "Western-style nuclear families with their 2:2 children"²³, (Introduction; Folktales from India, p. XIII). Such nuclear families are the results of the same disintegration. Certain human values such as sense of help, service, sacrifice and cooperation, which get their birth in and are nourished by joint families, are unknown to nuclear families. In Hayavadan there is no one to take proper care of the children. Hayavadan is left alone after the dispute between his parents. Similarly, the child of Padmini is also left alone in the end. They are deprived of the love and affection that a child gets in a joint family. What can we expect from such children who are doomed to-be alienated just after their birth?

Unfortunately, most of the Indian writers in English have not delved deep into the social structure to deal with humanitarian problems faced by the untouchables, weaker section of the society, poor farmers, lower middle-class families and working women. Few women writers and feminists have drawn attention toward the problems related to women but they lack complete sincerity in dealing with their problems. Some women writers refer to their sufferings as a girl child and as a bride in their autobiographies but become silent about their own role as a torturing mother-in-law and stop their autobiographies in the midway. No woman writer has raised her voice against the growing tendency of getting a girl child aborted.

Similar is the case with most of the Indian writers in English. Though I agree with K R. Srinivasa Ayenger that "Indian writing in English is one of the voices in which India speaks", I do not agree with his view that "it is as much Indian as the others" ('Introduction' to Indian Writing in English, p. 3). I am of the opinion that Indian writings in regional languages are far more superior to Indian writing in English. The reasons are obvious. Indian writers in English have not shown sincere efforts for understanding Indian theory of poetics or Indian myths and culture properly. Indian writers in regional languages have deep-rooted experience in understanding socio-economic and cultural problems of the society and deal with the theme of human values in a better way.

Conclusion:

Girish Karnad has successfully dealt with the theme of crisis in human values in society. It is because what I feel, his plays are his own translations of original Kannad versions. But Karnad is unable to provide any solution

to these problems. All of three plays in the Trilogy are unable to give any solution. In *Naga Mandala*, Appanna is back to Rani owing to fear that she is a goddess. We do not know what will happen to him in future and will he love her in fear or worship her? In *Hayavadan*, the child is left alone and we do not know the fate he is going to meet. In *Tughlaq*, Muhammad opens his eyes and "looks around dazed and frightened as though he cannot comprehend where he is" (*Three Plays*, p. 221). So, almost all plays by Karnad are open ended and the riddle of man is not solved. Rather, he presents a sense of shock and fear about the future because we notice in *Naga Mandala* that there are herbal roots that can change the venom of a Cobra into love but there is none that can change the brutal and poisonous mind and heart of man.

References

- Iyengar, K.R.S.**, 1985, *Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Naik, M.K.**, 1984, *Dimensions of Indian English Literature*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Ghosh, S.**, 1986, *Rabindranath Tagore*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Das, S.K.**, 1991, *A History of Indian Literature, Vol. VIII*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Reddy, D.J.P.N.**, 1994, *Literary Spectrum*, New Delhi: Arnold Associates.
- Iyengar, K.R.S.**, *The Adventure of Criticism*, London: Asia Publishers.
- Rama, K.P. (ed.)**, 1992, *Critical Interactions*, Jaipur: Pointer Publishers.
- Iyengar, K.R.S.** *Indian Writing in English. 4th ed.* New Delhi St Publishers Pvt. Ltd.. 1984
- Karnad, Girish:** *Hayavadana*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press. 197 (subsequent references are to this edition).
- Kumar, Satish:** *A Survey of Indian English Drama Bareilly: Prakash Depot, 1993.*
- Kurtkoti, Kirtinath Hayavadana.** *Introduction*, Calcutta Oxford Univt Press, 1975
- Naik, M.K. and Punekar, Mokashi:** *Perspectives on Indian Dram English*, Madras: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Caudwell, Christopher.** *Illusion and Reality*. Delhi: People's Publishing House Ltd, 1956.
- Fluget, J.C.** *Man, Morals, and Society*. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books, 1962.
- Forster, E.M.** "Scott," *Modern Essays in Criticism*. Ed A.S.Cairncross. London: Macmillan, 1967.
- Jung, C.G.** *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1962.

- Karnad, Girish. Hayavadana.** *Calcutta: Oxford Univ Press, 1975, 1988. Nagamandala. Delhi: Oxford Univ Press, 1990.*
- Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa,** *Indian Writing in English, Sterling Publishing Private Limited, New Delhi, 1962.*
- Childe, Gordon,** *What Happened in History, Penguin Books, 1942. Deyev, Valery, Philosophy and Social Theory; An Introduction to Historical Materialism, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1987.*
- Gandhi, M.K.,** *An Autobiography or The Story of My Ex peri men ts*> with Truth, Navajeevan Publishing House, Ahamedabad.*
- Karnad, Girish,** *Three Plays, Naga Mandala, Hayavadan and Tuglaq, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994.*
- Rajgopal, D. (ed.),** *Commentaries on Living, J. Krishnamurthi, third series, Krishnamurti Foundation of India, Chennai, 1992.*
- Rajneesh BhagwanShree,** *From Sex to Super consciousness, Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1988.*
- Ramanujan, A.K.,** 'Introduction', *Folktales from India, New Delhi, Viking, 1993.*