



STUDY ON MYTHS AND LEGENDS IN PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the exploration of myths and legends in the plays of Girish Karnad, a prominent Indian playwright. Karnad's works often draw inspiration from Indian mythology, folklore, and historical events, weaving them into contemporary narratives. By analyzing selected plays such as "Hayavadana," "Tughlaq," and "Nagamandala," this study aims to examine the significance of mythological elements in Karnad's dramatic works. The research delves into the role of myths and legends as a source of cultural identity, social commentary, and artistic expression in Karnad's plays. It explores how Karnad skillfully incorporates mythological characters, motifs, and narratives to explore universal themes such as identity, gender, power, and morality. Additionally, the study investigates the ways in which Karnad reinterprets and subverts traditional myths, offering fresh perspectives and challenging societal norms. By employing a combination of literary analysis and cultural contextualization, this study aims to shed light on the rich tapestry of myth and legend in Karnad's plays. It seeks to demonstrate how Karnad's use of these elements adds depth, complexity, and relevance to his narratives, while also providing insights into the cultural and historical contexts in which his works are situated.

INTRODUCTION

The exploration of myths and legends has been a recurring theme in literature and theater across various cultures and time periods. These timeless tales have captivated audiences, offering glimpses into the human condition, cultural beliefs, and societal values. Girish Karnad, a renowned Indian playwright, is known for his incorporation of myths and legends into his plays, infusing them with contemporary relevance and artistic vision. Girish Karnad's works are deeply rooted in Indian mythology, folklore, and historical events. He skillfully weaves these elements into his narratives, creating a tapestry of stories that resonate with



audiences and provide insights into the rich cultural heritage of India. Karnad's plays such as "Hayavadana," "Tughlaq," and "Nagamandala" have received critical acclaim for their exploration of complex themes and their masterful blend of traditional and modern storytelling techniques. This study aims to delve into the

significance of myths and legends in Girish Karnad's plays, examining their role in shaping the narratives and contributing to the overall meaning and impact of his works. By analysing selected plays, we will explore how Karnad draws from mythology to address universal themes such as identity, power dynamics, gender, and morality. We will also investigate the ways in which Karnad reinterprets and subverts traditional myths, offering fresh perspectives and challenging societal norms. this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which Karnad's plays are situated. By examining the mythological sources and their relevance to the contemporary Indian society, we can appreciate the depth of Karnad's artistic vision and his ability to bridge the gap between the ancient and the modern. Through a combination of literary analysis, cultural exploration, and contextualization, this study aims to shed light on the intricate tapestry of myths and legends woven throughout Girish Karnad's plays. By unravelling the layers of symbolism, allegory, and cultural references, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the artistic brilliance and thematic richness that define Karnad's contribution to Indian theater. the significance of myths and legends in the plays of Girish Karnad, showcasing their transformative power in shaping narratives, challenging societal norms, and illuminating the cultural fabric of India. By undertaking this examination, we hope to provide valuable insights into the enduring relevance and artistic brilliance of Karnad's works, while fostering a deeper appreciation for the intersection of mythology and contemporary drama.

Reality in Girish Karnad's Plays

Girish Karnad, a celebrated Indian playwright, is known for his ability to depict the complexities of reality in his works. His plays often blur the boundaries between the real and the surreal, challenging conventional notions of what is considered "real." Karnad's exploration of reality is deeply rooted in Indian culture, history, and mythology, allowing him to delve into universal truths and societal issues.

One aspect of reality that Karnad examines in his plays is the interplay between the past and the present. He skillfully weaves historical events, myths, and legends into his narratives, creating a layered and textured reality that reflects the continuous influence of the past on the present. By integrating these elements, Karnad emphasizes the interconnectedness of different time periods and highlights the lasting impact of history on contemporary society.

Furthermore, Karnad's plays often portray the collision between tradition and modernity, presenting conflicting realities that exist simultaneously. He explores the tension between old customs, beliefs, and social structures and the forces of progress and change. This clash of realities raises questions about identity, cultural values, and the challenges of navigating a rapidly evolving world.

Karnad's plays also delve into the subjective nature of reality and the complexities of human perception. Characters in his works often grapple with conflicting interpretations of events, memories, and personal experiences. This exploration of multiple perspectives challenges the notion of an objective reality and invites audiences to question their own understanding of truth and authenticity.

In addition to these thematic explorations, Karnad's plays demonstrate a keen observation of social realities and power dynamics. He addresses issues such as caste, gender, and socio-political hierarchies, highlighting the realities of marginalization, oppression, and the struggle for power. Karnad's plays serve as a mirror to society, reflecting the complexities and injustices that exist in the real world. It is important to note that Karnad's depiction of reality is not limited to a literal representation of the world. He incorporates symbolism, allegory, and theatrical techniques to create a heightened reality that evokes emotions and engages the audience on a deeper level. Through these artistic devices, he captures the essence of reality, going beyond surface-level portrayals to reveal underlying truths and complexities.

GIRISH KARNAD'S PLAYS' THEMES

Girish Karnad's plays explore a wide range of themes that reflect the complexities of human existence, societal dynamics, and cultural contexts. Some of the prominent themes found in Karnad's works include:

Identity and Self: Karnad delves into the exploration of personal and cultural identity. His plays often depict characters grappling with questions of self-discovery, cultural heritage, and the tension between individual desires and societal expectations. Karnad raises questions about the formation and negotiation of identity in a rapidly changing world.

Power and Politics: Karnad's plays critically examine power dynamics and political systems. He explores the abuse and manipulation of power, the struggle for authority, and the consequences of unchecked authority. Karnad's works often highlight the impact of political decisions on individuals and society, shedding light on the complexities of governance and its effects on people's lives.

History and Mythology: Karnad draws heavily from Indian history and mythology, intertwining ancient tales with contemporary narratives. His plays explore the significance of historical events and mythological figures, offering fresh perspectives on their relevance in the present. Karnad examines how history and mythology shape collective memory, cultural identity, and societal values.

Gender and Patriarchy: Karnad's works engage with gender issues and patriarchal structures prevalent in Indian society. He challenges traditional gender roles and highlights the oppression faced by women. Karnad's female characters often strive for agency and challenge societal norms, reflecting on the complexities of gender dynamics and the struggle for equality.

Fate and Free Will: Karnad explores the interplay between fate and free will, contemplating the extent to which individuals have control over their own lives. His plays often feature characters who navigate predetermined destinies, grappling with the limitations imposed by societal expectations and cosmic forces. Karnad raises questions about the choices individuals make and the consequences that follow.

Cultural Conflicts and Tradition: Karnad addresses the clash between tradition and modernity, examining the tensions that arise when traditional values and customs encounter the forces of progress and change. He explores the challenges faced by individuals caught between preserving cultural heritage and embracing new ideologies. Karnad's plays reflect on the complexities of cultural identity and the impact of globalization on traditional societies.

Love, Desire, and Relationships: The exploration of love, desire, and relationships is a recurring theme in Karnad's plays. He delves into the complexities of human emotions, the intricacies of romantic and familial relationships, and the conflicts that arise from societal expectations and personal desires. Karnad's works often depict the transformative power of love and the consequences of unfulfilled desires.

These themes demonstrate the depth and breadth of Girish Karnad's plays. His works tackle social, political, and personal issues, inviting audiences to reflect on the complexities of the human condition and the challenges of navigating a rapidly changing world. Karnad's

exploration of these themes contributes to the richness and enduring relevance of his dramatic works.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shah, M. A. S., & Aslam, M. (2012). in her article "Women Characters in the Select Plays of Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar," expresses that "he consciously writes about the condition of women and their right to choose over accepting what is given". The woman Karnad explores in his plays like Hayavadana, Yayati (1961), and Naga-Mandela can be perceived as described by Dhantal. G. Ruba finds Hayavadana a play that entirely deals with the complex human relations and the search for identity and further mentions it as "Karnad exemplifies incompleteness in three levels human, animal, and celestial of creation in the world".

Parveen, B. Wet al (2015)., in her article "GirishKarnad'sHayavadana: Analysis of Text and its Theatrical performance," observes as "Hayavadana is a realm of incomplete individuals, substantiated with imperfect god Ganesha and vocal dolls to present a world apathetic to the longings and frustrations, ecstasies and miseries of human beings".

Mahadevan, A. (2002). "Conclusion." Girish Karnad's Plays: This research explored Karnad's female characters in the modern context. The writer commented that Karnad's female seems to have marked an apogee in Bali: The Sacrifice. Also, Girish Karnad very dexterously pictures the condition of a typical Indian female, ruled by the patriarchal order bounded by tradition, but whose spirit remains unbounded. Such comments are noteworthy while researching Karnad's female characters in the context of modern life.

P.Chaitanya. An International Journal in English, Vol.II, ISSN-09768165, Research Paper: GirishKarnad'sYayati and Bali: The Sacrifice: -A literature review is discussed on published various research papers in National and International referred journals and books which are related to present research work as follows, Journal-The Criterion: A Study in Female Sexuality.

Basu, S. (2014). SrinivasaIyengar, Indian Writing in English, Sterling pub. 2003(ed)- This book reviewed my research work. The author has explored Indian drama, Indiadramatists and Indian contribution to English literature. The review of this book reveals that K.R.S.Iyengar's book is almost encyclopedic in scope and reflects his scholarship while discussing Indian English drama. This review is useful for my present research work and gives ideas for me to look deep into my objectives for research. However, the author has not commented on Karnad's woman characters and thematic level or in the modern context. So, my research

area is concerned with this book contains only the history of Indian English drama. Nevertheless, this study will help to write an introduction to Indian English drama. Book-*Collected Plays-GirishKarnad, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.2005.*

This book serves as both a main and secondary source for me. On the one hand, it offers an introduction to the book by A. Dharwadker. A. Dharwadker makes observations about Karnad's literary creation in the Introduction. She says that by juxtaposing myth and the contemporary plight of man, Karnad's third drama, *Hayavadana*, signalled yet another significant shift of course. Such comments would be examined in the research in a highly scientific way. However, the focus of my current research is on the tradition and modernity in the plays of Mohan Rakesh and Karnad: a comparative study appears to be a new field of study.

In this book, texts and performances are introduced briefly. The plays of the playwright GirishKarnad are well-known. It is important to remember that different writers' perspectives widen the distance between literature and performance as distinct fields. It is really helpful for my research work. The author remarked that GirishKarnad, who is attracted by the extensive body of Indian folklore and mythology, takes material for his theatre from it, which provides me with an idea about critical writing as well. These ideas cleared the path for researchers to look for Karnad's sources in connection to the plays' themes. Anita Myles' *Contemporary Indian English Drama* was published in 2010 by Sarup Book Publishers in New Delhi.

The book review is really important to my research and critical thinking. Indian Drama in English is not a disappearing tradition, and it may prove more influential in academic circles than other forms like poetry, fiction, or prose, according to research done for this review of the book. The current work is a highly thorough historical-cum-critical endeavour that examines the conception, gestation, and development of theatre. Additionally, the detailed evaluations of playwrights like Mahesh Dattani, Vijay Tendulkar, and GirishKarnad validate their attempts to carry on the theatrical legacy. To introduce Indian English Drama and dramatists in general, particularly modern Indian English dramatists, this review is helpful. Book-Gill L.S. *GirishKarnad's Hayavadana A Critical Study*, Asia Book Club, New Delhi, 2005. This book begins with a very noteworthy Introduction. In this book author discussed textual analysis of the play, *Hayavadana* also, in section II, 'Critical Perspectives', several scholars contributed their research papers on Karnad's play, *Hayavadana*. These research

articles present different views and perspectives on the writing of GirishKarnad's Hayavadana. Another aspect that is highlighted in this book is the discussion about the main plot of Hayavadana. The plot has been taken from Vetalapanchvinshati, a constituent of Somdev's Kathasaritasaga. Thus, the present book provides knowledge about the sources of Karnad's literary work of art

In "Indianness (1988) in Girish Karnad's Nagamandala," T. Pushpanathan draws on the typical mindset of the Indians in particular and of the inhabitants of the Subcontinent in general. Parents always long to locate a proposal for their daughters' matrimony where the man should be wealthy, and amusingly, in case his parents have departed, he would be the final option. Pushpanathan relates this fact with Karnad's Nagamandala (1988) by claiming that Rani's parents preferred Appanna for their daughter for two traditional causes; first, because he was a rich man, and second, because he was all alone with no parents. By doing so, they did not realize the aftermath of this marriage which Rani could bear in the absence of any other human in her husband's house.

Girish Karnad has been widely acclaimed by both the theatre and drama critics for certain aspects of his plays: plot construction, characterization, song, symbolism, use of myth and folktales, reinterpretation of history, and projection of contemporary social and psychological problems. As rightly said by Julie Sanders, "Myth is continuously evoked, altered, and reworked, across cultures, and generations and Karnad's play Yayati is a rich depiction of these aspects in its rawest form. In Yayati, Karnad has taken the traditional Puranic theme from the Mahabharata and given a fresh interpretation to it. Yayati is the story of a king named Yayati who was a man of an amorous disposition, his infidelity to his wife Devayani brought upon him the curse of old age and infirmity from her father, Sukracharya. Though the play retells the age-old story of the mythical king from the Mahabharat, Karnad has given the traditional tale a new meaning making it highly relevant to today's life. The symbolic theme of Yayati's attachment to life and its pleasures and also his final renunciation are retained. The play is rich and infused with the theme of the duties and responsibilities of the father upon the son and vice-versa. Even though the play is motivated by each protagonist's concept of the opposite sex, it does try to allow the characters enough space to seek their own identity. The play begins around 1327 and spans the next five years of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign. This phase of Tughlaq's reign is etched with his "idealistic" measures, for which he is much misunderstood and ultimately branded as "mad Muhammad". In the words of Ananta

Murthy: “No play in Kannada is comparable to Tughlaq in its depth and range. It is a classic in Kannada literature”. Karnad first read about Tughlaq in one of the books of Ishwari Prasad, an Indian historian. did extensive work on rulers such as Muhammad bin Tughluq, Humayun, and Aurangzeb.

While Karnad takes the readers down the lane of history, Kambara, on the other hand, leads through the lane of myth and folklore in his play *The Shadow of the tiger* which deals with illusion and reality, and like *Tughlaq* deals with the search for truth. Another point of similarity in both plays is the way the tragedy of a ruining society is symbolically depicted. *Tughlaq* gives a close-up of the destruction of the people and society when the emperor tries to shift his capital from Delhi to Daultabad. While *The Shadow of the Tiger* deals with the personification of evil and the road to destruction in a purely mythical and symbolic fashion. Kambara has tried to personify the idea of evil in the form of a tiger, but the depiction of the tiger is in shadow and is not seen in the entirety of the play, but the spectre of destruction shrouds the village and is the cause of all strife and suffering.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

Myths and legends are traditional narratives that have been passed down through generations. They typically involve gods, goddesses, heroes, and supernatural beings, and often explain natural phenomena, cultural origins, and moral lessons. These stories play a significant role in shaping the beliefs, values, and cultural identities of communities around the world. Myths are ancient stories that are rooted in religious or cultural traditions. They often involve deities and explain the creation of the world, the origins of humans, and the establishment of societal norms. Myths can also contain symbolic elements that represent fundamental human experiences, such as love, betrayal, and heroism. Legends, on the other hand, are stories based on historical events or individuals. They may feature extraordinary characters or events that have been embellished over time through oral or written tradition. Legends often blur the line between fact and fiction, and they can provide insights into a society's history, values, and aspirations. One of the functions of myths and legends is to provide explanations for natural phenomena and the mysteries of the world. They offer origin stories for natural elements like the sun, moon, and stars, as well as geographical features such as mountains, rivers, and forests. Myths and legends also serve as a way to understand the human condition, offering insights into the complexities of emotions, relationships, and the struggle between good and evil. These narratives often convey moral and ethical lessons, teaching communities about right and wrong behavior. They can provide guidance on virtues like courage, loyalty,

and justice, while cautioning against vices such as greed, jealousy, and arrogance. Myths and legends can also reinforce societal norms, customs, and traditions, serving as a means of cultural transmission from one generation to another. Myths and legends play a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of collective identities. They embody a group's shared history, values, and worldview, fostering a sense of unity and belonging within a community. These narratives are often performed through rituals, ceremonies, and storytelling, further strengthening social bonds and cultural cohesion. In contemporary society, myths and legends continue to be a source of inspiration for literature, art, and popular culture. Writers, filmmakers, and artists draw upon these traditional stories to create new narratives that resonate with modern audiences. Myths and legends provide a timeless and universal framework for exploring fundamental human experiences and the complexities of the human psyche.

CONCLUSION

The study on myths and legends in the plays of Girish Karnad has provided valuable insights into the significance and impact of these elements in his theatrical works. Through the analysis of selected plays such as "Hayavadana," "Tughlaq," and "Nagamandala," we have explored how Karnad skillfully incorporates myths and legends to address universal themes, challenge societal norms, and provide a deeper understanding of Indian culture and history. One of the key findings of this study is the way in which Karnad seamlessly blends traditional mythology with contemporary narratives. By drawing from ancient tales and characters, he brings a sense of timelessness and cultural depth to his plays. Karnad's reinterpretation and subversion of these myths offer fresh perspectives, enabling audiences to reflect on timeless themes in a modern context. The exploration of identity is a recurring theme in Karnad's plays, and myths and legends serve as a powerful tool to examine this aspect. By incorporating characters with complex identities and exploring their struggles, Karnad prompts us to question our own notions of self and the influences that shape our identities. Through mythological narratives, he challenges societal expectations and encourages a reevaluation of established norms. Moreover, Karnad's plays highlight the significance of power dynamics and their impact on individuals and societies. By using myths and legends as a backdrop, he exposes the abuse and manipulation of power, reflecting on the consequences that follow such actions. The inclusion of mythological figures allows for a

broader exploration of power struggles and their ethical implications. In addition to thematic exploration, this study has shed light on the cultural and historical contexts in which Karnad's plays are situated. The use of myths and legends provides a connection to India's rich cultural heritage and allows audiences to engage with the country's traditions and values. Karnad's plays serve as a platform for preserving and celebrating Indian mythology, ensuring its relevance and continued appreciation in a contemporary setting. The study has demonstrated that myths and legends play a vital role in Girish Karnad's plays. They enhance the narrative depth, provide a cultural framework, and offer a platform for exploring universal themes. Karnad's incorporation of these elements showcases his artistic brilliance and his ability to bridge the gap between the past and the present, resulting in compelling and thought-provoking theatrical experiences.

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