



## CONVALESCENCE OF INDIAN CULTURE AND TRADITION IN GIRISH KARNAD'S *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

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### ABSTRACT

*Drama being an audiovisual medium of expression has been a very effective and powerful genre in the world literature. Indian Drama has development of drama from Greece, Roman, England and India give special importance upon the fact that it has always been an included as part of a whole culture, highlighting and value of moral commitments, religious convictions, philosophical approaches, and social and political changes in various countries. The origin of Indian drama can thus be traced back to the Vedic period. The long history of thousand years, Indian drama is a unique phenomenon in the literary world. The nature of English drama changed once again, from being other art from the European life style, to put on display Indian culture and tradition and spread the ideas of freedom, and after independence it is being a broader representation of the social political and economic life of the country. Girish karnad is the most celebrated media personality in the contemporary India, most important playwright and a very skilled practitioner of the performing arts. His drama are mostly written in kannada and then decoded into other languages. The English translations of his plays are his own. He has enhanced the Indian fictional scene by his involvement to art, culture, theatre and play. But the most essential contribution which he has made to Indian English drama is his effort to get back the cultural and mythological rich tradition of the Indian past. In his plays we find that he goes back to the roots and tries to renew the local culture and tradition. India is a post-colonial nation having its own distinctive culture and colonial histories. It is also multicultural in character in that it has a strong presence of indigenous traditions, culture and ethos which are unfortunately submerged and dominated by the imported culture of Europe. Girish karnad is one such dramatist who makes an attempt to recover the treasure of culture and tradition.*

**Keywords:** Indian Drama, Colonial Histories, Freedom

### INTRODUCTION

Girish Karnad is the well-known appreciated media personality in the contemporary India, leading playwright and very skillful fractioned of the performing arts. The English

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translations of his plays are his own. They have brought him international appreciation as the pre-eminent contemporary playwright. He has value of the Indian Literary scene by his contribution to art, culture, theatre and drama. But the most important provide something which he has made to Indian English drama is his attempt to get the cultural and mythological rich tradition of the Indian past. The argument of this paper would be to highlight Karnad's involvement in this direction.

In his plays we find that he go back to the roots and make an efforts to sturdy again the local culture and tradition. India is a post-colonial country having its own different culture and colonial movement. It is also multi cultural character in that it has make a occurrence of native traditions, culture, philosophy which are regrettably push and triumph over and bring under control by the imported culture of Europe. Girish Karnad is one such playwright who makes an effort to get an extremely important object of culture and tradition. Culture and social colonization of the native culture by the leading foreign influence has not only resulted in never done modify in social and cultural ethos of India, but it has also be present by a fluctuation of the economic development of our nation. And worst affected are the traditional arts and crafts. Because of this that writers like Girish Karnad make a challenge in their writing to convey about a 'cultural renaissance' on the Indian fictional scene. He has been exactly called the "Renaissance Man", whose famous person is based on decades of creative and consistence output on inhabitant soil.

He belongs to a generation that has produced Dharma veer Bharati, Mohan Rakes and Vijay Tendulkar who have formed a nation theatre for contemporary India which is an amount of money on his generation. Hence their "return to and discovery of tradition was stimulated by a search for roots and seek individuality. This was part of the entire process of decolonization of our life-style, morals, social institutions, creative forms and culture moods". In other words, like Bertolt Bercht, Karnad makes the listeners to respond intellectually rather than sensitively to the act of the play, with his artistic skill, he unites myth realism, past and present and show the linked parts of the modern life. Karnad's literature is extremely influenced by the renaissance in western literature. During his formative years, Karnad went through various actions that went long way into determining his dramatic taste and genius. One of the actions on him was that he was exposed to literary scene where there was a straight conflict between western and native tradition. Karnad has exploited Indian mythology with a definite purpose in his mind. Indian mythology is based on a written textual tradition that has nonstop to live time and foreign influences and attempts at institution. The folk tales and traditions that reflect the social and cultural ethos of the nation are ingrained in oral tradition that requires immediate attention and preservation from to save them extinction. Much of these folk traditions and culture have survived into the contemporary period through the efficient average of folk theatre. But strong action of the dominant colonial culture and later the current modes of entertainment from the west are in cinema or the modern theatre



pressed the provincial forms of literature to the object. Girish Karnad is one such contemporary dramatist who has contributed immensely to the genre.

Belonging to the post-colonial group of writers, his plays are rich in Indian sensibility and tradition, drawing inspiration heavily from the classical Indian dramatic tradition, myth, legends and folktales. He has always taken his enthusiasm from the Indian mythology, history and folklore. In his plays, he has hard work to maintain the Indian spirit and culture damage from side to side the use of a wide choice of techniques and procedure adopted from the folk theatre. Exploring his great involvement to the revival of folk theatre, Tutun Mukherjee commentary that Karnad has “Made available thee rich resources of the great and little tradition, the classical and the folk elements of Indian literature”.

In his a variety of plays karnad has tried to show not only the contemporary society and its predicament but has also extensively employed the various predictable folktales and techniques and devices of the folk theatre: Masks, dolls, curtains, chorus, commentators-narrator, story-within –a-story, supernatural elements, etc... In fact, Karnad’s involvement to the revitalization of the art of folk theatre by bringing it out of regional context into the mainstream of national theatre is great inheritance and noteworthy. He has used native theatre modes like Yakshaganga, the Parsee Natak models and other folk theatre forms based on a rich dramatic heritage pattern its lineage to the days of Natyashastra, karnad has honestly given a new life to the art of theatre as is evident from an analysis of some famous plays.

Karnad’s drama focuses on the hurdle of human relationship and contains an indirect vital assessment of contemporary Indian society. In each of his plays, a renowned / mythical or historical story, we notice “subtle and constant juxtaposition of the past and present” honestly which has been “a common feature of karnad’s dramatic art”. Karnad began his literary career as a dramatist with the publication of his play *Yayati* (1961). Drawing his source from the Mythological character of *Yayati* in *Mahabharata*, Karnad depicts the contemporary dilemma of everyman caught between the contrary pulls of delight and responsibility, materialism and possession.

Apart from the Mythology upon which the play is based, Karnad has employed the person of Sutradhara modeled on the narrator- commentator of folk theatre. The Sutradhara notify the audience about the Mythological origin of the play as well as the idea of the play which highlights the importance of supplied up to one’s accountability in life. Karnad has given traditional tale a new meaning and significance highly applicable in the context of life today. The figurative theme of *Yayati*’s attachment to life and its pleasures, as also his finishing possession, is continued. Karnad’s originality lies in working out the inspiration behind *Yayati*’s ultimate choice. Karnad’s reading of Jean Paul Sartre and other existentialists helped him vastly to give a shape and meaning to his play.



*The play Fire and the Rain* is a play based on the myth of Yavakri taken from “Vana Parva” of the *Mahabharata*. The myth whose source can be finding back to *Rig Veda* presents the play its structure all along with ceremony which forms a significant part of the narrative structure. The play begins with a prologue and ends with an Epilogue, and is separated in three acts. In its structure the play look like Samavakarna, a type of drama as mentioned in Bharatmuni’s *Natyashastra*. Through the use of myth Karnad gives a modern viewpoint to the story. He uses the brother disloyalty issues of the play myth and adds to it the ritual of the fire sacrifice to represent the web of shine and gender politics in our society. Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* transports the audience to the imaginary world of the *Mahabharata*, but without dissociating them from day-to-day realities.

*The Mahabharata* myth of Yavakri has been beautifully presented along with the Rig Vedic myth of the slaying of the demon Vritra by Indra in this play, with certain digression the playwright has made the play all the more interesting, impressive and relevant to the contemporary audience and theatre. Here, Karnad makes use of myth for the purpose of social change and amelioration of the low-caste people. Girish Karnad not only sources his themes and narratives from folk tales and mythologies but also employs the various devices and techniques from India’s rich tradition of folk theatre.

Karnad’s use of techniques and devices used from Sanskrit play, company Nataks, parsi theatre, Yakshagana, Bayalala, have helped him to bridge the gap between the actor and the audience as is typical of traditional performances. The possibility is one of the reasons of the wide global acceptance and application of Karnad’s plays. These devices help him to transforms the written word into action and life into the text. “Theatre leads to the unsatisfactory of the usual limitation of man and man’s power.

Karnad provided something to a great extent the part of the native culture and tradition through the use of folk tales, myths and legends and the form of folk theatre. He has proved helpful in re-affirming and establishing the national identity firmly on the contemporary ground of foreign culture influences and invasion. Extensive use of folk techniques and crafts have generated newer interests in elements of arts and crafts, their life, tradition and culture there by contemporary drama has helped generated a new scope for livelihood for the various artisans and folk artists.

In his dramatic movement he instrumentalists India’s myths, folklores and history to propagate India’s cultural heritage, philosophical beliefs, religious thinking, political understanding, social values and customs among the people of the west. His creative imagination is originally Indian. His evolution as a dramatist is based on the rich and varied Indian tradition and with the use of rich and elements of Indian traditions and which the use of rich or excessive amount of something of Indian myths, folk elements and historical facts.



As an actor, director and scriptwriter, Karnad is very much artistic to weave Indian tradition, culture and social settings in his plays.

In dramatization of mythical, folklorish and historical varied his projects man women relationship and Indian's cultural plurality with women sensibilities. Karnad takes myth as a faith builder for individual's spiritual evolution. He uses folklore to connect the magic and reality and history as a positive concept to analyse life and society. The past is not always dead for Karnad.

Karnad uses myth in his plays to express meaning for the contemporary life. He believes that the significance of myth never dies. In an age of post modernism and globalization, he observes people's craze for materialism and their simulation of western civilization. So as conscious dramatists, he valorized myths, parables, legends and folktales in his plays. He rewrites them in his plays as they provide immense scope for living. While he uses mythical episodes in his plays he significantly aims at using them for social, religious and philosophical purpose.

He presents certain episodes of myth from the *Mahabharata* and contextualizes them in contemporary human situations. It is observed that his plays on myth are rooted in the ancient Indian dramatic tradition of "dharma, artha, karma and moksha". In the mythical imagination of his plays he revives the ancient dramatic tradition in the celebration of the human and humane. Presenting myths in human condition he links the present with the eternal and the contemporary with the archetypal.

Karnad links the past with the present, the archetype with the real. Issues of the present world find their parallel in the myths and fables of the past which lend new meaning and insights through analogy, reinforcing the theme. By transcending the limits of time and space, myths provide flashes of insight into life and its mystery. They form an integral part of the cultural consciousness of the land, with their associative layers of meaning, their timelessness and relevance to contemporary issues.

Karnad deals with mythical incident in his plays and interprets them in contemporary reality. Linking the ancient and the modern dramatic tradition in his plays he links the natural and supernatural phenomena in human conditions. He takes refuge in Indian myths and makes them a medium for new vision. In the use of myths he presents the absurdity of life with all its elemental, conflicts and individual's eternal struggle to achieve perfection. While dealing with ancient myths he aims at reducing us into the sentiment of devotion because our suffering in this world is that we have forsaken our faith in gods. In terms of forms and content his plays focus on new discourses on Indian myths. Investing bits of myth, Karnad introduces us with India's ancient tradition and culture which provides us hope and consolation.



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