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**VASANTA COLLEGE FOR WOMEN**

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# **VASANT SAHASTRADHARA :**

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**(Bi-annual & Bi-lingual)**

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**(Pedagogy and Performance: From Text to Stage)**

**Editor**

**Prof. Alka Singh**

**Principal**



अप्य दीपो भव

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## EDITORIAL

In the Western tradition, the distinction between drama and theatre is a comparatively recent phenomenon. While the word ‘play’ is used in the sense of literary composition, ‘drama’ is generally associated with ‘theatre’, their differing emphases evident from the different root words from which they originate. Also, in the Western tradition, drama, especially tragedy, is the imitation of action which is basically external. This is quite different from the Indian tradition where the imitation is internal (*bhavas*). In the Indian tradition, there is no clear-cut distinction between drama, theatre and performance. In the *Natyashastra* too, performance and drama are inseparable because the body movements/ dances/enactments become the medium for the expression of the *bhavas*. There is thus a disconnect to be addressed when dealing with Western and Indian understandings of the terms.

There is also a tussle regarding authority. Due to its commercial aspect, theatre, for some, is a vacuous and trivial enterprise while drama has a transcendental element giving the dramatist a God like status. For example, in colonial India, Shakespeare’s projection as a colonial icon existed side by side with theatre in practice, which was mostly a copy of cheap melodramas, drawing room comedies etc., performed with an amateurish cast. For many others though, ‘drama’ becomes one of the several components of the composite art form called ‘theatre.’

Drama can be in the form of a prose or verse composition delineating a story full of human emotions and conflicts. But when it is performed on stage with actors donning the roles of the characters in the text, the text becomes more than just mere words on a page. A production involves sound, lights, design and performance and, crucially, an audience responding to all this. The two-dimensional structure, which can also be subjective or abstract at times, thus transforms into a concrete, three-dimensional one as the performers bring the literary text to life. This shift from the hierarchical model, where the dramatist is at the apex with the director interpreting his/her intention on stage, is aptly pointed out by theatre critic Hans-Thies Lehmann through his term “post-dramatic theatre”. He proposes to shift the gaze from the writer to other theatre-makers – like collaborators, directors, acting cast members, technical crews which may consist of lighting, sound, set and costume designers – whose contributions are equally important.

Spectators are an integral part of the theatre, but in most cases, they do not directly participate or play an active role in it. However, there are certain forms of theatres both in the East the West where spectators become a part of the performance, like Brecht’s “epic theatre” or performance of the traditional *jatra* or *palagaan*. In an attempt to redress the minimized role of audiences in the traditional theatre, Augusto Boal developed a theatrical method which attempted at transforming audiences into active participants in the theatrical experience. For him, this method of turning spectators into “spect-actors” would not only allow spectators to perform



actions that are socially liberating but also lead to a reflective and evaluative discussion of various socio-political issues.

While many critics are of the opinion that performance is one of the many aspects of theatre, performance studies theorists look at the issue differently. Richard Schechner is of the view that theatre is just a genre of performance, similar to a sport like baseball or football, which are narratives of performance containing certain elements like mythical journey or class consciousness, or wrestling, which too is characterized by theatricality. “All the world’s a stage, [a]nd all the men and women merely players”, as Shakespeare put it. This all-encompassing nature of performative theory brings the aspect of performativity out of realms of theatre and connects it to the everyday life – from issues of gender politics to the analysis of various strategies of resistance.

The present theatre issue of the Journal is an outcome of the seven day workshop organised by Department of English, Vasanta College for Women, Rajghat on “*Pedagogy and Performance: From Text to Stage*” from 12 to 18 November 2018. The Workshop was an attempt to initiate participants into the writing, reading and staging of drama, both theoretically and practically. In this first issue of theatre volume, a diverse range of topics are covered from Natyashastra and dramaturgy, Indian drama, forms and practices to the theatre practices existing in the World including folk performances and street plays to the contemporary theatrical discourses and other related fields.

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# **Living the Myth—Lessons in Folk Performance and Cultural Preservation Learnt During My Trip to Varanasi**

**Rajnish Dhawan\***

Is there a connection between living the myth through performance and the preservation of one's cultural heritage? Is the pedagogical significance of the folk arts and folk performances in a culture strong enough to counter the mega-narratives supported by the mass media, money and muscle power targeted at the obliteration of the said culture?

In 2008, the Canadian government constituted a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to document the history and lasting impacts of the Canadian Indian residential school system on Indigenous peoples of Canada and their culture. The commission presented its report in 2015 and since then the above mentioned questions have been knocking at my cerebral recesses.

The Canadian Indian residential school system was established in the second half of the nineteenth century. Outlining the purpose of this system the Prime Minister of Canada John A. Macdonald, stated in the Canadian Parliament:

“When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission established that Canadian government actively participated in the Cultural Genocide of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

“The residential school system was based on an assumption that European civilization and Christian religions were superior to Aboriginal culture, which was seen as being savage and brutal. Government officials also were insistent that children be discouraged—and often prohibited—from speaking their own languages. The missionaries who ran the schools played prominent roles in the church-led campaigns to ban Aboriginal spiritual practices such as the Potlatch and the Sun Dance (more properly called the “Thirst Dance”), and to end traditional Aboriginal marriage practices. Although, in most of their official pronouncements, government and church officials took the position that Aboriginal people could be ‘civilized,’ it is clear that many believed that Aboriginal culture was inherently inferior.”

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About half a century prior to the establishment of the Canadian Indian residential school system, a similar philosophy was put forth by Thomas B. Macaulay in the British parliament where he was presenting his argument regarding the need for using a new model to “educate” the Indian population. As was the case with Macdonald, Macaulay too aimed to establish the superiority of the European race and culture over that of the native Indian culture. He too sought to suppress and subsequently replace the Indian languages, literature and culture with the European model of thinking and acting for the simple reason that he, like many of peers, deemed the European model to be superior. Macaulay stated:

“I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic.--But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value.....that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.....It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England.....We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions of whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.”

For more than a century, The European settlers made concerted efforts to alter or obliterate the cultural practices of the colonies but, despite having all the resources at their disposal they failed to do so. The damage to the native culture was substantial at some places, while at certain other places they could hardly make an impact. As the Truth and Reconciliation commission recorded:

“Despite the coercive measures that the government adopted, it failed to achieve its policy goals. Although Aboriginal peoples and cultures have been badly damaged, they continue to exist. Aboriginal people have refused to surrender their identity.”

As a student and practitioner of performance arts, I have often juxtaposed myth and modernity to tell my stories. So, when I found myself face to face with the collective realities of the Indigenous peoples of Canada and compared them with the colonial experience of my native land India, I began to wonder what forces within a culture’s private sphere have the power to provide a counter-narrative to the oppressor’s attempts at annihilating that culture by forcing a hegemonic discourse in the public sphere?

I was grappling with these questions when I received an invitation from the Principal of the Vasanta College for Women in Varanasi. Vasanta College is a hundred year old college situated in the world’s oldest city. Its Principal Dr. Alka Singh invited me to conduct a playwriting workshop on the campus. I didn’t think twice before accepting the invitation.

As the Maruti Suzuki van that picked me up from the airport meandered through the crowded roads of Varanasi, the city felt like any other Indian city on a hot autumn day.



The roads had space for everything and everybody and that western phrase to describe India— “Organized chaos”, manifested itself at every intersection and at every roundabout. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh was in the city and we all know what that means. A VIP in the city automatically relegates the common man to an existence that makes the latter’s commonness look like a privilege.

After more than hour long drive I reached Vasanta College for Women. It is a very serene place, not too far, yet very far away from the madding crowds of buses, cars, motorcycles, auto-rickshaws and cows that I had just left behind. Three members of the English Department, Saurabh, Manjari and Rachana (All three are much younger to me so going by the Indian tradition I am addressing them by their first names) were there to receive me. After depositing my bags in the guest house, the faculty members led me to the Principal’s office. As I walked on red clay laden pathway, I could see, just beyond the boundary wall of the college, the mighty Ganga flowing in all her grandeur. This wasn’t my first meeting with the Bhagirathi. I had seen her at Haridwar, at Rishikesh, at Prayag, but Ganga acquires a new meaning in every city, and nowhere is its meaning more profound, more impactful than at Varanasi.

As we strolled through the trees, Rachana, probably by way of breaking the ice, remarked that the red clay path is the one upon which Mr. Krishnamurthy, a renowned philosopher and the founder of the college, used to take a stroll every day. I had never read anything by Krishnamurthy and wasn’t even aware of the Krishnamurthy foundation till a few months ago. But this casual remark had a two-fold effect. It transformed that public sphere into Krishnamurthy’s private sphere, with the boundaries of the two spheres melting one another. At the same time, Krishnamurthy’s private space transformed into a performance space and there it was—in front of me, a character within a scene, and that character was interacting with the most dominant aspect of nature as far as the Indian psyche is concerned—the Ganga. This was just the first taste of the platter of performances that I was going to savour during the next four days and, in the process find an answer or at least find a lead to the answers to the questions that I have previously mentioned.

We reached Dr. Alka Singh’s office and after a formal welcome and a cup of masala chai, Dr. Singh offered to arrange a boat that would take me up and down the Ganga. “You can see our world famous Ganga Aarti,” she said. I readily accepted the offer.

With the plastic modernity of the world’s oldest city still etched in my consciousness, I hopped on to the diesel engine powered boat and it chugged off from the AdiKeshava ghat towards the Assi Ghat. Saurabh accompanied me. The water was unclean. I could not believe that it had the power to cleanse one of one’s sins anymore. The first couple of minutes were rather mundane. Saurabh tried to add some spice to the proceedings by giving me some fun facts about the ghats. The boat powered its way upstream and once it had crossed the bridge at Raj ghat, the spectacle of Kashi, alive, breathing and pulsating to the rhythm of its myth started unfolding in the form an unending,

performance; a performance that has been continuous for millennia and will continue to be so till the next great flood or the *pralay*. My NRI sensibilities that had shuddered at the thought of touching the water saw, with amazed detachment, the enthusiasm of the people taking a holy dip in the Ganga. They were not tourists. They were the locals, for whom Ganga is not simply a river. Ganga is the myth, the myth they live through every moment of their respective lives. They were oblivious to the filth because the filth was temporal. The power of Ganga to cleanse their souls is eternal. They bathed, they rinsed, they prayed at one or more of the hundreds of temples on the ghats and they vanished through the stairs that led them away from the ghats to the labyrinthine streets of Varanasi. Some of them stayed by the riverside to meditate.

The boat moved along and reached the Dashashwamedh ghat. This is where the spectacle of the Ganga Aarti awaited us. The Aarti was a synchronized performance complete with setting, music, costume, props and a narrative. Although in an effort to market the performance, there seemed a disconnect between the worshipper and the worshipped.

Usually an Aarti is performed in front of an idol or a living human being. In both the cases the eyes witness the performance and the gaze of the worshipped is the reward of the performer. But during the Ganga Aarti, it was us, the supposed spectators whose gaze was being catered to since we were in a boat and we were one with the Ganga. Once the performance was over, organizers wandered through the crowd asking for donations appealing to the satisfaction of the gaze of the spectator rather than that of the Ganga. Usually the money is offered to the gazer, but in this case, I, the gazer donated money.

Once the show was over, the boat moved further upstream and passed by the Manikarnika ghat. Here was a spectacle and a performance unmatched by any other performance in the world. At least twenty boats filled with tourists, were moored side by side. Most of these tourists were foreigners, and they were watching the burning pyres. The western sensibilities which are generally “grossed out” by any unpleasant sight were, consuming to their heart’s content, the spectacle of burning bodies and also recording this spectacle for posterity. Within a span of a few hundred metres, the story, the myth and the lives of the people living that myth changed and neither of was less impressive than the other. If the Aarti at the Dashashwamedh ghat kept the myth of Ganga being a bountiful goddess alive, the burning pyres at the Manikarnika ghat kept the myth of Ganga being a vehicle to salvation alive. And in keeping the myth alive, the people whose life’s course is enmeshed with these myths, continue to live those myths day in and day out.

During the boat ride from AdiKeshav Ghat to Assi Ghat and later on walking along all the ghats and through the narrow lanes and bylanes of Varanasi, as I observed a mass of humanity living the myth through performance, I could not help but wonder if this eternal presence of the myth in everyday life is somehow responsible for the

preservation of the culture that was under attack by very powerful sources; sources that had all the conceivable means to decimate and obliterate these cultures.

During the workshop, I had a lively discussion with the participants about various aspects of performance and story-telling in the Indian culture. The workshop was entitled “Pedagogy and Performance—from Text to Stage.” The first question that came to my mind as I looked at this title was, “What defines text?” Is its scope limited to the printed pages available in the market? What about the unwritten texts? Should the oral narratives and improvised performances that are inherent in a culture be a part of studies in pedagogy and performance? The market is controlled by money, power and vested interests and it caters to certain social, political and even religious ideologies. It used to do so during the colonial era and it continues to do so in the neo-colonial/neo-liberal world. And in that process the market very cunningly tries to obliterate certain cultural narratives that are incongruent with its ideology. This success of this manipulation by the market was visible during the workshop.

The participants were from various parts of India. There were young students as well as faculty members from various institutions from all over India. Most of them had been exposed to the Diaspora Literature but interestingly enough none of them had come across references to native Canadian culture in the texts that they had read. I too, was oblivious of the native Canadian culture before I immigrated to Canada in 2009. The market had kept that narrative away from them.

The culture of the native people of North America rarely finds mention in the Indian university curricula or at the academic conversations. But the fact that both, Indian and Native American/Canadian cultures resisted the onslaught of the European hegemonic discourse and still managed to preserve their cultural identity warrants a deeper study into the factors that contributed to this unique phenomenon.

My first introduction to the Indigenous literature in Canada was through Tomson Highway’s play “The Rez Sisters.” Through this play I was introduced, for the first time, to the life on a Canadian Reserve (a piece of land reserved for the Native people of Canada as per their treaty with the European settlers) and also the character of the Trickster that, in addition to being an important character in the “Rez Sister”, is also a regular feature in many other samples of indigenous literature. As I walked along the ghats of Varanasi, I came across a Bahurupiya who had disguised himself as god Shiva. As this character walked on the ghats, it attracted multiple reactions from the consumers of his performance. There were curious tourists, largely foreign tourists, who were eagerly clicking pictures, there were a couple of young Indian boys who took a selfie with the god. Then, there were a couple of devotees who saw god Shiva in this trickster, and happily offered him money in return for a blessing. And finally, there were local shopkeepers who ignored the performance but were more than eager to reap the rewards of the performance by selling their wares to Shiva.

This remarkable similarity between the Trickster and the Bahurupiya combined with the absence of the culture and literature of the mistaken Indian (red Indians as the Indigenous peoples were once derogatorily called) in the literary discourse of the real Indians has opened a new avenue of academic research for me. The trip to Varanasi has put me on a path to a new area of academic research that involves comparative study into the performance narratives of both the cultures within the context of performance as resistance. For this, I shall always remain indebted to Varanasi and the students and faculty of Vasanta College for Women.

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# Karnad's Agnivarsha: An Encrypted Narrative of the Genesis and Challenges of the Fifth Veda

Sonjoy Dutta-Roy\*

There is a remarkable observation about the nature of Drama, Theatre, made by Girish Karnad in the appendix to his **Collected Plays, Volume 2**. He has noted that modern critics of theatre have also not taken note of it. Karnad does not go into a detailed exposition of the implications of his insight. But reading it teased my imagination into the creation of a narrative for theatre in India: its genesis and challenges. Karnad's observation stems from a hint that exists in Bharatmuni's Natyashastra. That hint is implicit in the very structure of Natyashastra, and the very nature of the fifth Veda, Natyaveda that was created mythically by Brahma. The observation is: "the Natyashastra is sandwiched between two performances, neither of which could be described as a success". Karnad of course is providing this insight as a note for his play *Agnivarsha* (translated as *Fire and the Rain* by him). But for me the implications are far more manifold and widespread than what Karnad envisages here. These two performances, one in the beginning and one in the end of Natyashastra, are disrupted and disturbed. But the nature of disruption is different in the two cases. The first disruption is by the demons, who are kept out of the Yajna rituals as well as the Theatre performance. The second disruption, interestingly is by the Brahmins, the powerful elite class and caste. Ensnared within these two disruptions is a format for an evolution and challenges faced by Theatre in the Indian context. But for that we have to move deeper into the nature of these disruptions and also the symbolic implications of the mechanism of these acts of disturbance.

Let me begin by saying that these disruptions were, and are, inevitable when we look at the nature of Theatre as conceived, very rightly in the Natyashastra, as the fifth Veda. It is well known, the story of the fifth Veda, but it can still warrant a retelling because new meanings can emerge, that might have been missed out in earlier retellings. Around 500 B.C, the frame story of Natyashastra tells us, the moral fibre of society was collapsing, the necessity of the percolation of Vedic knowledge to the lowest strata (castes, tribes) of society was felt. This knowledge interestingly was the possession and property of the upper caste Brahmins. The Natya Veda was created so that this percolation could take place. It was created by Brahma, on the imploring of Indra, out of the four Vedas. The text was to be from the Rig Veda, the art of performance from the Yajurveda, songs from Samaveda, and Rasa from Atharvaveda. Interestingly, the Gods were considered unfit to deal with this new form. Thus the human medium, Bharata, was chosen. He, with the help of his hundred sons and some nymphs (specially created by Brahma), staged the first play on the Banner Occasion to celebrate Indra's victory over the

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demons. This play, which was a collaboration between the Gods and the humans (of upper caste), saw the demons as enemies that were subjugated and defeated. Naturally, the demons felt left out and demeaned and disrupted the performance using supernatural powers paralyzing the speech, movements as well as the memory. Indra, enraged by the mischief of the demons, uses his thunderbolt, killing many. But the demons persisted in disrupting. Bharata again approached Brahma, suggested building a protective enclosure to keep the disturbing elements out and for uninterrupted performance. Here onwards, and in between (this disruption and the next one), the nature of Drama is realized as it traverses and reenacts the state of the three worlds in an all inclusive act. During this realization of the nature of Drama, the actors, performers must have undergone a tremendous evolutionary process as they entered areas of representation and expression that they had never earlier been exposed to. After all they were Brahmins and their experience was limited to their caste's limitations. This leads to the future problem and in the last chapter Bharatmuni talks of another performance. And another disruption. This time the disruption is from the Brahmanical side and the actors (originally uppercaste) are cursed to become outcastes. At this point, it might be a good idea to pause in the narrative and focus on some points that emerge from the narrative. This will help in the formulation of the superstructure of my narrative on Theatre in India.

Classical Theatre did have an elitist Sanskrit/ Brahminical foundation. But within it the disruptive elements had already been incorporated as part of the very structure. Yajna, which is also the ritualistic originator of the Theatrical performance, creates the framework for the same structure of open air performance and disruption followed by the building of an enclosure and the ritual moving into the enclosure, keeping the demons and natural disturbances out. Both the elitist exclusiveness and the disruptions are very important signposts when one tries to work out a structure for a narrative for Indian Theatre. The enclosure and the open spaces are other signposts that would figure in the narrative. And most important will be the nature of the two disruptions, how they are different and how they play themselves out from time to time in the narrative of Theatre in India.

Let us begin with the phenomenon of exclusiveness and question its importance in the Classical tradition. Who were the demons and why was there this need to exclude them both from the Yajna and the Theatrical performance? Why were the Vedas exclusive knowledge for the Brahminical Caste/ Class or the gods and deities? When the crisis happened and it was thought that this knowledge had to percolate down to the lowest castes and classes, why were the demons kept out? Why, when the fifth Veda, Theatre, was created to traverse the three worlds in performative fiction, actors were to be enlisted only from the upper Brahmin caste? Such exclusiveness and caste hierarchies are integral to Indian society even now. It is interesting to note that thousands of years back, a fifth Veda, or Theatre was conceived as a possible way of breaking through these rigid exclusions and expand into an inclusive and comprehensive embrace of all

the three worlds and the lower castes and classes. It is only natural that such a revolutionary act could not take place without major disruptions. In a way, disruptions thus became intrinsic to the conception of Theatre, and remains so, till date. In a strongly hierarchical and feudal social structure there will be the elite classes and castes, holding powerful positions centrestage, and there will be the masses, the folk, the tribals, the dalit, the marginalized, who are excluded from the mainstream stage. But such exclusion is possible only when one creates exclusive literate knowledge areas and bases, exclusive languages, and a division that divides the literate and the illiterate. Sanskrit and the Brahamanical Traditions created just such a division and exclusion. Later, the Persian tradition also created another exclusion and even later, as we see now, the English language and its smart baggage of knowledge accessories for the English literate has created a marked divide in our nation. Theatre happens to be the only form of art, knowledge, entertainment and communication that physically traverses all the worlds; incorporates within its folds all the other forms of creative communication; is oral, performative in nature and yet can transport knowledge of sophisticated literary and literate accessible texts to the illiterate masses. This is actually what the fifth Veda was supposed to be as originally conceived. But two major disruptions were required for such a thing to be realised. These disruptions still happen as Theatre makes its journey across time and history. But before we try to understand these disruptions, we have to deal with the closed and the open spaces of Theatre, which is connected to the closed and opens spaces in Life, society and human interaction and communication. One should note that originally both Yajna and Theatre were conceived as performed in open space. But these open spaces, as we slowly understand, were merely physical open spaces. We are concerned more with the mental spaces. Despite the physical openness, there was mental closure. It was only natural that the excluded would intrude into these psychological closures and cause disruptions. At the physical level, nature would intrude in the form of rain, thunder, lightning and its other forms. This physical disruption, I feel, should be seen as nature's way of making its natural presence felt. What was natural had to be recognized and taken into cognisance both in the Yajna and the Theatre performance. The so called demons were a part of nature. That had to be recognized for both the Theatre and the Yajna to be able to include and traverse the three worlds. The disruption by the demons, in the mischievous form of making the actors forget their dialogues, the movements and act in ridiculous manners was to be seen as nature's way of asserting the importance of an entire section of its reality. A section that seemed to be ridiculously excluded from both the rituals, the sacred and the secular.

The solution certainly was not to build a physical enclosure that would physically block and exclude the natural world, both in the form of thunder, lightning and rain but also the demons (part of that natural world) from entering into the sacred precincts thus created. It worked in creating an elitist theatre (the Yajna was always elitist), something that one would associate with the proscenium with its clear cut divisions and blocks

between the stage, the auditorium, and the open natural spaces with curtains, walls, wings, technical nuances, high entry fees etc. Interestingly, within the precincts of these closed protected structures where the theatrical performance must have taken place, the demons did feature as represented in the plot and stories that the plays enacted. But the roles were allotted to the actors who belonged to a high caste (Brahmins). The Natyashastra tells us that the first plot was to celebrate Indra's victory over the demons in the form of the story of that grand battle. Naturally the demons would interfere into this biased representation that gave greater importance to the Gods and the Upper caste Humans. My reading is that the upper caste actors who represented the demons in this story must have started empathizing with the demons and their situation. One way of understanding the experience of an actor in the course of acting a part is to enter into the role and become one with the character represented. Whatever happened in the course of these performances has to be surmised by what it led up to. It led to the second disruption, which has to be understood perhaps in the context of this background.

Why should the upper caste Brahmins denounce the actors (of their caste) and make them outcastes? Did acting the parts of demons make them impure because they must have, through empathy, become the demons in their acting. This disruption, where the elite and powerful caste got active in their dismissal of their brethren actors due to their being contaminated through empathy and sympathy with the lower castes and so called demons, gets connected to the earlier disruption of the demons due to their exclusion. Together they explode the enclosed and protected space of theatre to bring it out again into the open. But this time it pans out to embrace nature and its denizens, the folk and the tribals (the demons?) in the truest sense. The fifth Veda had been originally envisioned to traverse the three worlds but got clogged by the elitist Brahmanical (upper caste) biases that dominated society then. They dominate even now. Thus Drama is still perilously traversing the three worlds. It is in a play like Agnivarsha that this major explosion is explored in its seed form.

I feel that Karnad did not explore the full ramifications of the two disruptions in a discursive format or language. He merely hinted at some possibilities that could be further explored by Theatre practitioners as well as theorists. But in Agnivarsha he creatively charts out the full implications of these disruptive forces and encapsules the explosion that releases folk theatre from the stranglehold of the elitist Brahmanical Classical Sanskrit Theatre in play within a play within a play form. At one level is the Brahmanical world of Yavakri, Raibhya, Parvasu and the Yajna that is being performed to bring rain and fertility back to a cursed land. This world is caught in a web of power politics (the world of knowledge has its own power politics) and ego battles between the great Brahmanical seekers of wisdom and spiritual divine powers. It expresses itself through sexual power and ultimately leads to fratricide. The natural forces are brought under human control as the Brahmarakshas is created to seek vengeance. To top it all Parvasu falsely implicates his brother Arvasu in the fratricide that he committed. The purity of the Yajna is sullied by these acts of power and ego of

the upper Brahmanical caste. It is Aravasu, the younger brother, also a Brahmin, who is unsullied and pure. This is because of his disinterest in the Brahminical power games and his interest in Theatre. It is Theatre that connects him to the world of demons and tribals. His connection with Nittilai, the tribal girl requires the same flexibility of caste identity that Theatre requires. Aravasu thus becomes the important link between the various worlds, and also the link between Theatre and Yajna. And this brings us back to the disruptions and the ultimate explosion.

Aravasu is made an outcaste, because of his involvement with Theatre and his involvement with the tribals. When he plays the role of Vritta, the demon brother of Indra, his empathy makes the spirit of Vritta enter his bodily frame and it leads to violent disruption and disturbance of both the Yajna and the Theatrical performance. The Indra Vritta story in the theatrical performance runs parallel to the Paravasu Aravasu story in the Yajna sequel. Aravasu, being driven out of the Brahmin caste, identifies himself with the demon brother Vritta. Indra and Paravasu get connected in their corrupt power and ego games and the violence of fratricide and the killing of one's brother. These are faultlines in the Theatre plot as well as the Yajna plot. The Yajna can never be successful in bringing rain and fertility back to the cursed land as long as corrupt Brahminical agents like Paravasu are performing it. And Theatre will remain an elitist show as long as Indra's unfair victory over the demon brother Vritta is celebrated in it. As Aravasu becomes the demon Vritta, acting and reality converge, Yajna and Theatrical performance are disrupted. This disruption becomes symbolic of both the disruptions: the demons' disruption of Yajna as well as Theatre; and the Brahminical disruption of making upper caste actors outcastes and persecuting them.

Karnad merely suggests and appeals to the imagination through the epilogue in Agnivarsha. As the play within the play and Yajna proceeds, strange forces are unleashed within the plot itself. Indra plots the murder of his brother Vishvaroop by calling him to the Yajna site and then surreptitiously, from behind, uses his thunderbolt to strike him dead. Vishvaroop was Indra's half human brother. Vritta who is his half demon brother has the job of protecting Vishvaroop from Indra's cunning plan. He too is temporarily fooled. But when he realizes what has happened, in anger he chases Indra across the three worlds with his tremendous power of destruction. Aravasu, while acting this part, becomes Vritta in his wrathful vengeance and goes out of control and destroys the Yajna site, which now is vulnerable to the intrusion of the tribals and so called uncivilized savages. He can only be controlled by Nittilai the tribal girl. But unfortunately she too is killed by her husband and brother for going back to her lover Aravasu. As he carries her body to the Yajna fire, the Gods descend to give him a boon. He is caught in a state of dilemma. He can either bring Nittilai back to life. That would mean a rollback of time and many of the other Brahminical figures would also return to play the same power games again. Aravasu even considers that with his knowledge about the chain of events he can prevent the same things happening again. But there is a sense of doubt, whether such a control is possible. The other option is to release the

forces of nature trapped in the Brahmarakshasa. For this, time has to move forward and Aravasu would have to give up Nittilai along with his brothers and father. Aravasu decides on the second option, thinking that Nittilai would have wanted him to do that. It is a selfless act, with the larger good in mind. When he asks for this boon strange things happen. Nature responds and rain comes to the parched land. The Yajna site becomes a site for celebration where tribals, lower castes along with the upper castes sing and dance in happiness and the theatre arena, space, opens to embrace the folk in the truest sense of the fifth Veda.

These two disruptions, metaphorically embedded in the Natyashastra, and symbolically explored in the Agnivarsha performance, thus bring certain major issues related to theatre (and also connected to Literature) into focus. Broadly speaking they bring face to face the fundamental contraries in a posture of creative challenge. This interaction and its essential requirement for the comprehensive growth of cultures has been recognized in different terminologies. I will briefly refer to the concept of the “picaro” and the “naïve” and the concept of the “marga” and the “desi”. For this I will use G.N Devy reference to these terms in his keynote address in a Sahitya Academy Seminar on Nativism that is published in the book **Nativism: Essays in Criticism**. I have also referred to M. Sriramannarayana Murthy’s elaboration on the terms “Marga” and “Desi” in his lecture on “Cultural Discourse” included as an essay in the same book. Native goes back to “naïve”, meaning people who are landlocked, bound to their village and soil. They do not travel much and produce something of use to their community. In contrast “picaros” were widely travelled men of the world, morally flexible, their knowledge derived from a study of human nature. Now if we see this contrast in terms of “desi” and “marga”, an interesting relationship can be discovered. “Marga” (from “mriggya”) is the path of the hunter as he hunts, captures, domesticates to civilize “cleanse” and “purify”. Marga presupposes for its motif the existence of something wild, savage, fierce, passionate, growing in a state of nature, uncivilized and uncultivated. This has to be domesticated, cultivated, tamed, controlled. The emergence of marga from desi is a process of contraction and convergence of ideas to yield uniformity and universal acceptability, assimilation and system in communication (even the concept of nation/language/laws). But interestingly, systematising and codes of rules produce monotony. It needs divergence, expansion into the desi for vitality and fresh life. Such cyclicity and correspondence become imperative. In India, Sanskrit, Persian and English, assumed the marga and the picaro status and the vernacular languages and dialects the native, desi status. In theatre, as the fifth Veda was conceived, as expressed in the frame story of Natyashastra as a kind of bridge between these elitist languages and cultures and the native vernacular languages and cultures The Marga and the Desi or the Picaro and the Native posed themselves as Blakean Contraries. The creative force in Theatre was born out of the energy produced out of the clash of such contraries. The Brahmanical Vedic knowledge that had to percolate down to the lowest caste and level had already assumed a sacred divine character, sanction and authority: the grand



Canonical and Classical status. From open ended Poetic works they became closed Sacred texts. But the antisacral voices were always alive and vibrant in the folk narratives that coexisted simultaneously. It is through their manifestation in Theatrical performances that the subversion of the sacred Brahmanical texts would take place. Theatre, the fifth Veda carried in itself, in seed form, this force of disruption that I have tried to show. The closed sacred narratives get opened, the voices and stories of the neglected, ignored classes, castes and genders enter into the chain of unending tales. Perhaps no sacred book was originally ever sacred. Priestly interpretations created the so called Apocrypha. Perhaps Sacred books are made from poetic books by interpreters. The priestly caste these interpreters) were the Brahmins and they created the sacred, its laws and codes and canons to entrench their own power in the social system. Naturally this was at the cost of the marginalization of the lower castes as well as the tribals and dalits. I have brought Blake's ideas into the Indian context as I feel that they have a universal significance. This is the same universal significance that I find in Nietzsche's statement when he says "art owes its continuous evolution to the Appollonian-Dionysiac duality...their constant conflict and periodic acts of reconciliation". The two major disruption that Bharatmuni's **Natyashastra** talks of connects with this Appollonian Dionysiac duality and the Marga Desi duality as well as the more recent Picaro Native duality to show Theatre (the fifth Veda in the Indian context) to be the creative space where this duality and conflict is centrally destined to work itself out in the history of the performing arts. Karnad must have had this somewhere in his mind as he creates the plot of Agnivarsha that creatively plays out these conflicts in the Blakean Nietzschean sense, anchored deeply in our **Natyashastra**.

This is the narrative on contemporary Indian Theatre emerges out of the creative tension that these metaphorical disruptions symbolize. On one end are the demons, tribals, lower castes entering into the sacred Brahmanical and divine precincts of the Yajna and Theatre space at the end of Agnivarsha, dancing singing and celebrating the end of the curse and the coming of rain and fertility back to the land. Symbolically this could represent the explosion into folk rituals and theatre. This demanded the posing of a serious challenge to the upper caste dominance of Parvasu, Raibhya, Yavakari on the one hand and the challenging of the divine story of Indra, Vishvakarma and Vritta from the folk, tribal and the demoniac point of view. Aravasu, a Brahmin turned actor is the agent, medium, for this challenge. His caste identity becomes fluid and flexible as he connects to Nittilai the tribal girl and her people on the one hand to the demon Vritta in the Indra story on the other hand. For these connections he has to pay a heavy price. His own caste drives him out of its powerful fold. Nor can he become a tribal and enter their fold though they are willing to accept his relationship with Nittillai, This is the outcome of the second disruption that is recorded by Bharatmuni, where the upper castes and powerful elite hound the actors for forsaking Brahmanical purity through the empathic affinity with the demons, tribals, lower castes they represent in the stories they enact. Overarching these creative and destructive disruptions is the cursed situation where the

Powerful Gods and Upper caste Brahminical figures are caught in their ego and power games enslaving nature and its denizens and resources into subservient positions and making them slaves. The curse is lifted only when these enslaved forces are released back into nature (symbolically shown through the BrahmaRakshasa being released from his slavery by Aravasus). Theatre and divine rituals reach their native and natural sources.

My reading of the implicit narrative that I feel Karnad might have subtly woven in. I have gone into this story telling act, so that I can take off into a way of looking at Theatre in India that can bring a lot within its parameters. The Brahmanical hold over Yajna and Theatre, as shown in the Natyashastra, can be symbolically seen as the power held by any elitist sociopolitical upper strata group. Proscenium theatre in the metropolitan or urban centres can easily be maneuvered by state sponsoring or Corporate funding. I will come to this later. The Britishers introduced their theatre and the Proscenium theatre held sway over our imagination. But interestingly the disruptive elements have always been active, both in a positive and negative sense as shown in Natyashastra, and in the story line of Karnad's Agnivarsha. State power mechanism as well as the upper class, upper caste power mechanism has used its powers to keep the so called demons out of Theatre as well as religious rituals. They (the upper castes and the powerful elites) even used their destructive powers to disrupt performances. Often through violent means. This as I will show in my narrative is still prevalent. Representation of lower castes and classes, tribals, was made by the upper castes and classes as shown in the original plan. Bharata's sons and the nymphs were elites. Folk theatre, even now occupies the rural uneducated spaces in India. The urban folk theatre is folksian, state sponsored, with a vibrant discourse about it, as I will show later. Always there is the danger of using the folk elements more for the sensational value divorced from the context and ambience, of which it is an integral part. Bharata had touched this discourse when he recognized that upper caste actors can empathically acquire a flexibility of class and caste identity as part of the performance act, and represent the demons and their ways. But this would not be the same as the demons themselves creating their own theatre. But this was a major step in the right direction of creating a communication chain that would lead to the lower castes and classes. This had brought about the Brahmanical disruption in the form of making Brahmin actors outcasts, as shown in Agnivarsha through Aravasus. So we come back to the metaphor of the two major disruptions.

On the one hand you have the elitist forces powerfully aligned in superior feudal hierarchy (political, economic, patriarchal, educated and literate), having usurped the performance and literary spaces protected and canonized with limited and reserved entry. On the other hand you have the banished, the marginalized, the peripheral forces (economically and politically deprived, gender discriminated, uneducated and illiterate) out in the unacknowledged open spaces (or in closed imprisoned confines), unprotected, natural, with their own songs and dances. These contraries align themselves in Blakean

terms (I will clarify), having a strange creative energy latent in the very act of disruption potent in them. Important questions regarding truth, knowledge, and their representation are embedded within these contraries. Who are the keepers of knowledge, religious or secular? Does it reside in canonical texts, appropriated and acknowledged by powerful caste, class or patriarchal lobbies? Does it move downwards in this hierarchical structure, from the learned to the masses? Is the learned teacher the truest medium through which this knowledge makes its journey downwards? Or is theatre a truer medium, with the director replacing the teacher and the actor performer replacing the text (theatre was conceived as the fifth Veda with this in mind)?

The alternate series of questions would be different and somewhat like this: Does truth and knowledge dwell in the book of nature and are nature's denizens (human in this case) the truest keepers of this knowledge? Does knowledge move upwards as the urbanized, sophisticated and civilized elites relearn truths forgotten in the march of progress and civilization? As there might not be written canonical texts in this case, is theatre, performance, song and dance the true representation of this lost knowledge and truth? Can the actor or performer representing this truth be any other than the native who represents it? For that matter can other marginalized and sidelined people (and this includes women) be represented by any other but themselves?

In the larger context of Post Colonial Studies these questions have been addressed in vaster terms. My focus has been and will be specifically focused on Theatre and I will clarify a theoretical premise that will be central in forming the framework and perspective on theatre. One feels that Theatre, because of its peculiar position has been neglected in these discourses and dialogues in India. As a performing art, it refuses straitjacketing into Literary textual studies. Yet it is a part of Literary textual studies, and here it takes a strictly academic avatar, which it certainly cannot be. Practitioners shun this academic verbosity as a lot of theoretical high level word and scholarship industry that cannot come to grips with the hard core ground reality of performance and its grass root connections. As Literature, Theatre, as literary text, is taught in classrooms of the most high level Universities in the world and has propagated infinite scholarship in Journals and Books of the highest academic standards. On the other hand, as a Performing Art, it simultaneously and ritualistically belongs to the people who may be illiterate as far as the written and printed word is concerned. It is the major form in which the oral traditions and narratives are alive and which incorporates within itself so many art forms. It is this duality that seeks a nonhierarchical negotiation. My entire effort when I dwelt on *Natyashastra* and *Agnivasha* was pointing in this direction. The two disruptions in *Natyashastra* deconstruct the central metaphor of the Fifth Veda created by Brahma. The one way (downward) mobility of Vedic knowledge, necessitating the creation of Theatre, has a Brahminical bias potent in it. Though the identification of Theatre as the right medium for traversing the three worlds is a remarkable metaphor, it is scarred by this bias, that needs to be deconstructed The seeds

of the demolition of this bias is subtly and quietly planted in the Natyashastra, through the two disruptions.

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# **A Contemporary Dialogue on Sexuality, Politics and Resistance in Feminist Drama: Swarnakumari Devi and Poile Sengupta**

**Alka Singh\***

Karen Warren defines the logic of domination as a "structure of argumentation which leads to a justification of subordination". The structure sustains itself by self/other dualism, refusing to accept any connections for it believes in a self that is separate and atomistic. Every centric structure divides the society in binaries which are viewed as oppositional and the higher values being associated with the self and the negative ones with the other. In the "Book of Genesis" God says about men:

..... let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Absorbed in its partiality this megalomaniac view undertakes to dominate over all other forms of life that exist to serve 'man's' needs only. The world thus became anthropocentric and Man's supremacy established, the canonized domination and oppression became the ways of the world.

Sexuality far from being something biologically given is a cultural construct which the society imposes on its beginners. What one does or does not do is basically the cultivation of the existing norms within a society. One's body was seen not as one's own rather something to be tamed and its needs to be suppressed to prove one's rationality. The binary of the mind and the body steers one to condemn the irrational or animal like and nature and body become mental constructions in opposition to the thinking man. This mindset is not innate or socially constructed as Grene says, "we are biologically formed to be cultured animals."

Feminism is an attempt to problematize the notion of gender as a given reality, the mechanism of power relations, to expose the masculinist bias and to rationalize the spaces claimed by women's subversive strategies as sites of resistance. Tutun Mukherjee says that theatre is an art form that makes its author more visible to public scrutiny since it is a form of a performed discussion of any issue/content. Mukherjee points out that "... drama belongs to author, theatre belongs to people" and further explores the reasons for marginalization of women in theatre. In the second half of the twentieth century, Indian English drama brought to the fore feminist thoughts thereby endorsing the presence of women in public space. It is not confined to merely presence but the difference that this presence makes which is multi-faceted. The discussion of sexuality and desire, the manner in which they position women as subjects, projecting

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women's issues and problems has become the major concern of a number of women playwrights. Thus, the script, as well as the production, is characterized by consciousness of women as women, patriarchal power undermined by performances that deconstructed sexual differences. Recognition and creation of women characters in the subject position lead to transformation at the structural level.

Women who had either been on the periphery or out of theatre history have now been pursued by feminist dramatists, critics, directors and actors. The theatre then functions as a source of empowerment for it gives a platform to the women to speak and also serves as a media for self exploration and expression. This language, idiom, and manner of communication is their very own and challenges the established concept of the theatre. There may have been women playwrights and women actors on the stage but what was missing was essentially the female voice and the stance and contribution unwritten. This endeavour deconstructs the patriarchal metaphysics and raises pertinent question to phallogocentrism.

The plays taken up in the paper do not merely highlight the presence of women but the difference that presence makes in terms of representation of real life women belonging to a distinct social space and yet bound by the virtue of being a woman. The 'voicing' of the 'silence' is an introspection worked out through a rich narrative of feminine consciousness. This outlook becomes an important postmodern phenomenon which gives a new meaning and interpretation to the old and established contexts.

Swarnakumari Devi (1853-1932) the elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore wrote quite a few plays and novels.\* Few of her novels being *Mibar Raj* (1877), *Chinnamukul* (1879), *Malati* (1879), *Snehlata* (1892) and plays *Rajkanya* and *Divyakamal*. She is the recipient of the award by University of Calcutta with Jagattarini Gold Medal in 1927. She also became the President of the Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan in 1929. *The Wedding Tangle* published and performed in 1904 is anchored in the marriage proposal of the son of the family (Binode) who having fallen in love with the widowed maid (Soshi) wants to marry her while the father (Master) wishes him to get married to the daughter of Hari Babu who is a rich associate of his and is willing to give dowry, as well as forget about the loan that he had given the Master. The apparent conflict is twofold—the Master is supposed to be a progressive man, a public figure, champion for the cause of widow marriage and a man who was not expected to ask for dowry. The Mistress, on the contrary, is not willing to get her son married to Hari babu's daughter due to the issue of dowry\* for oblivious of the loan that her husband had taken she demands double the amount of dowry offered and yet at the same time agrees to the marriage with the maid for she is dependent on the maid for the household work. The other vital conflict involves the validity of each decision of marriage. Soshi, the maid unaware of what the others want is in love with Chandra, another servant of the house. She also knows that the mistress is dependent on her. The play revolving around the choice of a daughter-in-law surrounds the domestic space. The mistress is presented as a stereotyped, nagging and loud, a typical woman who uses every strategy to attract attention and make herself

heard. Her dramatic utterances, the exaggerated gestures present her as an interesting character despite her hypocrisy. The one strategic move is to cry with every issue, exploiting gestures to impose herself: "The mistress enters wailing loudly." (39) "slaps her forehead" (40). She finds it difficult to stick to a single mindset or emotion and immediately settles most comfortably with the change of attitude. Loud and fickle her anger and compassion alternate. She is a loving wife and the very next minute an angry woman. The use of third person for her husband in moments of anger creates a kind of distance and exhibits her unhappiness: "He's already accepted five thousand without letting me know" (41). The attention seeking habit is to emphasize the importance of the domestic happenings and also the control she exercises as the mistress of the house. The household thus functions as a place for subversion of patriarchal control. She nowhere directly revolts against her husband but nonetheless manages to exert control over her husband. The strategies employed by her are essentially feminine and often seen as weakness—crying, sob, wail, slapping her forehead or any other exaggerated gestures but yet they manage to influence the decision of her husband. She also exploits the use of threat and especially the one about leaving the house if her wish remains unfulfilled. Her manipulations, the exploitation of the very feminine strategic moves which exhibit a unique idiom for women in general endorses her efforts to keep the domestic space and her family within her grip. This reversal of domination must not be interpreted within a narrow perspective of understanding of feminist ends rather an attempt at voicing women's concerns and the articulation of women's ideas and the manner in which they do so. The articulation appears to be a vociferous criticism but it is to undo the shackles of vulnerability: "You men pretend to be blind with eyesight and dead when alive, when it comes to dealing with us. Small girls hardly ten or twelve years of age are widowed the day after their wedding, and it becomes a social taboo to even mention their remarriage. But if I die today, then tomorrow you..." (56) She also emerges as a wise woman or an opportunist for she knows when to bring variation in her behaviour. Despite the fact that she wanted Soshi, the maid to marry her son but on learning that Chandra had helped her family out of public shame she agrees to get Chandra married to Soshi. The ability to coax and allure her husband and at the same time to be able to take a decision without any false ego sustains her throughout. She reverses the concept of emotional behaviour and sentimentality from femininity to a possible attribute on the part of men as well: "Must you become so emotional even at such dire moments?" (66).

At the superficial level, the play is about a domestic situation but on a deeper study, it is about the class struggle, the power relations between the mistress and the maid, widow marriage which varies when it comes to men. It is not the situation of a single woman but the processes that are involved which privilege one position over the other.

Poile Sengupta, a versatile writer has to her credit one act plays, columns for children in the Deccan Herald, Times of India, Midday and a number of other powerful plays like *Inner Law* 1994, *A Pretty Business* 1995, *Alpha* and *Thus Spake Shoorpanakha*, *So*

said Shakuni 2001, Samara's Song 2007 and many others. Her play *Mangalam* 1993 is a subtle protest and throws light on increasing gender consciousness. It was first performed in 1994 in Bangalore. The first Act is a play within the play and the spectators of this act are the characters in the next act. They comment on the character Mangalam although their own life is not very different.

A Tamil Brahmin middle class family where Mangalam and Dorai with their five children live in constant fear of the society. The exposition of their personal lives intersect with the morbid dread of losing their so-called self-respect. Mangalam belonged to a superior family, was raped prior to her marriage and was pregnant at the time of marriage. For monetary benefits Dorai considers himself to be a scapegoat though at that time he had succumbed to the device. The anger centers itself on her in some way being superior—the feigned self respect of the family and the girl child.\* ... she was always the superior one, she had to marry a poor priest's son because nobody else would have touched her not one decent man would have touched her" (109) and further "Her father bought me. To keep his self-respect, for his daughter's self respect" (109). The self respect purchased at the cost of life long suffering of Mangalam. Dorai tortured her mentally and physically to know the name of the man. Her silence, her stifled sobs were mistaken for being obstinate. No brutality would render her speak: "You mocked her and taunted her, you tortured her, I have seen the marks of your hands on her body. Your nail marks"(121). She died with all the allegations thrust on her, her silence in the name of the family self respect for she was raped by her sister's husband. This is the play within the play while the second act introduces the spectators of the first act who play a major role in the second act. The two couples Nari and Vaidehi, their children Radha and Vikram and the other couple Sreeni and Thangama and their children Suresh and Sumati.

The play progresses and through the character of Sumati who belongs to an educated family, a subtle discrimination between the brother and sister is evidenced: "... when we were children, it was because you were older than me; and you wanted to be boss. You hated me, you thought Amma loved me more than she loved you" (130) Sumati's awareness that women, in general, are mere objects to be possessed in a patriarchal culture is significant. She concedes that she does not go through conventional deprivation but this consciousness of victimization of women is a move towards responsibility. "...a woman who allows herself to be soft, who relinquished her weapons, well she gets chewed up, doesn't she? I know it's a terrible expression, but then it's a terrible state to be in" (149). Talking of her own bringing up she says: "You brought me up efficiently, correctly, but without soul" (130). Her mother Thangama is tight lipped, suffers in silence the presence of another woman in her husband's life for the sake of her family respect. This is worse when she knows that her daughter Sumati is brutally handled by the man she's engaged to yet may not refrain from getting her married to the same person as Radha voices her fears: "You know how aunty feels about keeping up appearances" (142).



The dialogues of Sumati and Radha carry a message for the women in general and project the effort of the playwright to subvert expectation. With a gradual death of sensibilities the women accept the 'body blows' and these acts of patriarchal violence becomes a way of their life. It is here that that women function as complicitious agents of patriarchy and perpetrators of the same violence. The play is to create a kind of awareness of the responsibility on the part of women and to understand how far they are responsible for their own victimization. It is only through a little courage and an introspection that they can initiate positive changes in their own lives. The in borne emotions should be channelised to create a cognitive world and a politics born out of bottled up silenced anger from times immemorial. G.P. Deshpande, a Marathi playwright says: "... discussion of the political world would not be complete without reference to the new women in Indian theatre." The game of sadism reaches its climax with the screams of Sumati off stage, who is molested by Nari, the father of Radha and Vikram "... uncle! No... Appa! Appa! (150). If Mangalam is the victim of rape then Sumati the audience is a victim of molestation. The play is a self critique for women, a potent force in society and their emotive strength stimulated to ignite the fiery debate of feminist issues.\* They must review themselves with increased self-awareness and along with others learn to love themselves. Despite the grave situations the women in the play are not to be defeated for they together recite—

*"As for the women, the gods said  
Let them be strong, rooted like trees  
For it is they who shall hold  
The ends of the world together,  
And there will be storms  
And the winds will blow very strong  
But the women will stay like trees,  
They will hold the world together. (151)*

The play throws light on personal history, the silence and the screams and the meaning surfaces through context and characters rather than plot. By presenting a number of characters it also subverts the traditional theatres tradition which had focused on a single character. The underrepresented experience, agony and the strength of women is brought to light which suggests an altering and redefining of the parameters of social process and action. Demonstrating the politics of the personal will go a long way in empowering the women as well as the theatre.

Strength and dignity are her clothing,  
and she laughs at the time to come.  
She opens her mouth with wisdom  
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.  
—*Old Testament, Proverb 31-verse 25, 26.*

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# **Conflict between Art and Society in *Dance Like A Man*: A Stage Play in Two Acts by M. Dattani**

**Manjari Jhunjhunwala\***

The paper foregrounds the notion of social realism wherein attitudes towards arts, artists, human relationships have continued to tangle and age-old battle between tradition and youthful men and women in contemporary India soars high. In keeping with recent trends such topics are always debated on societal plane are inevitably discussed in vivid literary genres such as dramas and also exhibited on stage in a very wholesome fashion. In the present paper, I have endeavoured to study Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like A Man* in this light.

Dattani's play *Dance Like A Man* was first enacted on stage in 1989 September 22 in Bangalore. In the play there is throughout clash between the father Amritlal Parekh, a Freedom fighter cum social reformer who becomes rich by buying up British bungalows when they left and reselling them and who represents the older generation who straddle pre-Independence and early post-Independence India more than his only son, and his son Jairaj who wants to become a dancer. The conflict between art (Jairaj's passion for dancing) and society (Amritlal Parekh's non-approval to such a career) stands for much more in today's progressive and developing world, because it is a powerful and subtle study of what it means to be a man. The title of the play itself suggests that a man is supposed to do the work which suits man (as per tradition in India) and not pursue career in anything else, which makes them less of man. Amritlal Parekh, a social reformer, does not want his son to become or behave like a dancer (artist) and that it is noticeably unmanly and this very issue in the play gradually gathers speed in the lives of three generations, their personal aspirations, sacrifices, struggles and compromises, conflicts and the way all of them cope up with the conflict between art and societal dogmas in the house expressed in the form of debate between the father and son and daughter-in-law.

Jairaj. I can't have a decent rehearsal in this house.

Amritlal. I thought it was just a fancy of yours. I would have made a cricket pitch for you on our lawn if you were interested in cricket. Well, most boys are interested in

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cricket, my son is interested in dance, I thought. I didn't realize this interest of yours would turn into an...obsession.

Jairaj. Didn't you have your obsessions?

Amritlal. If you mean my involvement in fighting for your freedom, yes, it was an obsession.

Jairaj. You had yours. Now allow me to have mine.

Amritlal. How can you even compare the two?

Jairaj. As far as I can see, I can.

Amritlal. As far as you can see! You can't see far, that is your trouble. Where is your dance going to lead you? (p.36)

The play is tragic one so much so for revealing what are the ingredients of traditional society itself, which do not allow the artist (man or woman) to survive on his own, therefore, the discovery is tolerable and does not ruin the characters and audiences both.

Amritlal Parekh is a Hindu Freedom fighter who is well educated in English and is sharp businessman. He represents upward social mobility and at the same time is a nationalist, traditional, secular, liberal and progressive but slightly, in wearing a shawl and telling his son Jairaj take up *Bharatnatyam* as a hobby and also marry outside the community and to show that he wants the reformation of '*Devdasis*', yet would like to retain his own superiority of his caste and class. Jairaj even taunts him by stating, "Don't pretend. It suited your image-that of a liberal-minded person-to have a daughter-in-law from outside your community". (P. 37)

It is against such a rock like figure that Jairaj the son, tries and has to assert himself, while fighting against insuperable odds. Jairaj is the other. He is more of the idealist as opposed to his father who is a realist. His masculinity does not feel threatened by aspiring to take up dance as a career, having an inter caste marriage, that too to someone who is from *Devdasi* clan, growing his hair to improve his *abhinaya* (enactment) learning *Kuchipudi* where one has to dress as a woman and on having a *Guru* whom his father does not like for his long hair or suspects as a gay. Instead of seeing Jairaj as an artist Amritlal sees him as an effeminate, virile and financially foolish.

A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman's world is pathetic. (p.50)

Jairaj's wife Ratna too measures him less and puts him through the humiliation of dancing in a woman's outfit. At many a places Jairaj's sensitivity and passion for his art is misunderstood and underestimated as well.

Jairaj. There were times when we didn't dance.

Ratna. And look where we are.

Jairaj. We are fine! At least I am.

Ratna. You! You are nothing but a spineless boy who couldn't leave his father's house for more than forty-eight hours.

Jairaj. Ratna! Don't...

Ratna. You stopped being a man for me the day you came back to his house... (p. 21)

Jairaj leaves his father's house in pride and comes back because Ratna's uncle is a leech and also because an artist cannot find job in India and 'most of them have given up their 'art' as (one) calls it and have taken to selling their bodies'. And also he is not understood in his love for his son Shankar to the point where all the decisions are taken by his wife and father, followed by Shankar's death when Ratna was more responsible for it.

Jairaj. (scornfully) Feeding the baby. That won't be necessary. He is fast asleep. He won't miss his meal.

Ratna. How do you know? He usually wakes up at this hour.

Jairaj. Not on the nights you perform.

Ratna. What do you mean?

Jairaj. The ayah.

Ratna. Go on.

Jairaj. You wouldn't know. An old trick handed down from one generation of ayahs to the next. I know. I was raised by one.

Ratna. (grimly) Opium!

Jairaj. Effective, isn't it? He hasn't cried at all. Don't worry, they always give just the right amount.

Ratna. (panicky) she too?

Jairaj (gets up) what do you mean?

What did you say? She too has given Shankar? What did you say...

However, Ratna whose horrific compromise with its resultant gruesome comeuppance can be understood better only if one realizes the background she is from. For Jairaj she is not other but an ayah.

Jairaj has an urge to pursue art (dance) as his career but is helpless and enfeebled mentally by his father's overbearing nature and in the critical way by his father's evil planning with Ratna to prevent him from pursuing his only passion for art i.e. dancing.

Ratna. Yes! He realized he couldn't stop me. But he could stop you-through me.

Jairaj. You mean he would sooner watch me turn into a drunkard than see me dance?

...I think you prefer it this way. He lets you do what you want and you have me out of your way. (p.70)

In Mahesh Dattani's plays the:

"...focus is on the family as the representative unit of the corruption of the culture and morality in whose midst the politics of ambition takes on the most ruthless forms". (Ghosh, *Form and Content*, 298-99)

Jairaj's choice of dance, a feminine pursuit, too, disturbs the patriarchal setup in India and leads to the unending conflict between the society and the art. The play records how the wide socio-cultural discord with the culturally disruptive image of male dancer jeopardizes the intimacies and sense of belonging in a family. How the members in their need to belong, interrogate the deviation. Though Jairaj's masculinity does not feel threatened by wanting to take up dance as a career, having an inter-caste marriage, that too to someone from a '*devadasi*' background, in growing his hair to improve his *abhinaya*, learning *kuchipudi* where one has to dress as a woman, or having a guru whom his father dislikes for his long hair and suspects may be bisexual or gay.

The human relations deteriorate under the cowering pressure of social set up and the sense of failure shimmering beneath surface erupts every now and then from the caldron of fuming emotions. With the brand of social reformation people like Amritlal try to promote the monolithic India, which damages a culture so rich in variety. Motivated by the zeal of reformation they destroy an indigenous and traditional art form under the guise of rehabilitation. The noble mission of eradicating some ‘shameful practice’ and preventing the turning of ‘temples into brothels’ is conducted by power-holders who can neither understand nor respect the ancient cult of performative arts and merely stir conflict between the artist and the society in which he lives.

Amritlal makes a deal with Ratna. He says that he will allow her career to take off only if she helps him pull Jairaj out of his passion and make him ‘more masculine’. Ratna criticizes Jairaj without any remorse when she states, “why didn’t you accept those invitations when they came? Was it because of me or were you too afraid that if you danced alone, your mediocrity would be exposed? Yes, ask yourself your true worth and you will get your answer. Yes, I did cut you off but then you deserved it! (p. 71)

Mahesh Dattani uses the motif of traditional dance as a medium to portray the conflict between the art and the society in the play. He chooses topics, which are usually never being spoken about in society. Such topics are always debated in the society and are exhibited in his plays meticulously. The characters are Indians and have some problems, which are not socially unacceptable. Mahesh Dattani comes here and shows how the society and the idiosyncrasy of individual work. Amritlal would never accept his son becoming a dancer and surprisingly enough Jairaj is blamed for not being an artist as to earn money and recognition both and support the family. *Dance Like A Man* itself suggests that a man is supposed to do the work, which suits the man, and not pursue their career in anything else, which makes them less of a man. Here, literally the title means to say that the protagonist’s father doesn’t want his son to become or behave like a woman and that he should not pursue his career in any art. The play deals with gender specific roles assigned by the society and individual’s artistic flavor and how one is sidelined by the society if one transgresses the borders between art and societal norms.

All this lead to the conclusion that in Indian society and social constructs stereotypical attitude to art has continued to prevail and consequently one succumb to the situation even without interrogating it.

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# The Dramaturgy of Girish Karnad

Saurabh Kr. Singh\*

During the last five-six decades India has witnessed the emergence of a national tradition in drama and theatre, perhaps for the first time in the country's post-Independence history. The playwrights of this era are immensely affected by the form of modern Western drama. Their modernity, however, is shaped by the keen awareness of their political autonomy and new nationhood which inspire them not to imitate the Western models of drama and theatre blindly but to imbibe their spirit and enrich their indigenous theatrical traditions. In this process they try to evolve a new mode, a new dramatic form, and a new presentational style. This results into a new form of drama which suits our contemporary requirements.

Here we have witnessed a phenomenon that besides a few noteworthy Indian English playwrights like Cyrus Mistry, Dina Mehta, Uma Parameswaran, Mahesh Dattani, Mahesh Elkunchwar, and Manjula Padmanabhan a substantial number of plays in different Indian languages and the plays in English translation have registered a remarkable growth. During the last few years, many plays originally written in various Indian languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, and Kannada have been translated into English. Some of them have been translated by others and some of them have been translated by the original writers. In this way they are not translations, but transcreations. These plays as translations and transcreations should be taken as important component of Indian English drama as they have immensely contributed to the formation of contemporary creative consciousness. These regional dramas have also paved the way for a "national theatre". Referring to it, G.P. Deshpande provides insightful observations by arguing that the term "regional" is a misnomer in Indian context. To him the tradition of each linguistic region is really a national tradition because "you can not belong to the whole of India without belonging to a specific part of India" (94-95). Deshpande has further made his stand clear in the following lines:

When we speak of national theatre we do so with almost no knowledge of the various Indian theatres. Part of the reason for this ignorance could very well be the attitude or tendency to treat these concrete theatre tradition as "regional" or pradeshika against an abstraction of national or Indian theatre. It must be emphasized that this polarity is neither realistic nor useful in terms of our theatres... It is essential for our self-understanding that the unity of Indian cultural expression is achieved through the

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plurality of linguistic (in this case theatrical) expressions. For that reason the terminology of "regional" is misleading when it comes to cultural production. Each mode is uniquely important; each mode is uniquely Indian. In that sense there is no regional theater in India. There are several equally valid and legitimate Indian theatres (ibid 95).

In this connection the plays of Mohan Rakesh – *One Day in Asadha*, *The Great Swans of the Wares*; the plays of Badal Sircar –*The Mad Horse*, *The Whole Night*, *The Pleasant History of India*, *Procession*, *Bhoma*, *State News*, and *Evam Indrajit*; the plays of Vijay Tendulkar – *Sakharam Binder*, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *To Hell with Destiny*, *The Tour*, *His Fifth Woman*, and *The Cyclist*; and plays of Girish Karnad – *Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, and others have not only created a history in their regional languages, but they also occupy the place of representative plays of Indian theatre and drama in English. These playwrights have invented bold innovations and fruitful experiments. By their cumulative attempt and labour they have given Indian drama and theatre altogether a new direction.

In the scenario of modern Indian theatre, Girish Karnad is one of those rarest creators who have devoted best of their creative personality in the writing of the plays and their productions. Girish Karnad, who is an ardent seeker of perfection, can only be compared to great poet Vyas among world literary figures. Girish Karnad has been a serious student of Mathematics and hence he plans his plays like the formula of Mathematics. To Karnad a play can only get its life only on the printed pages when it passes through the channels of continuous thinking process, changes and alterations, modifications and excellent theatrical sensibility. Due to this tough and long process of playwrighting he completes a play in four or five years, and sometimes it takes fifteen to twenty years. This is the reason that Girish Karnad is quite clear and confident not only about the storyline, sub-storylines, contexts, characters and their gestures and behaviours, entrance and departure of the characters, and the dialogues but also about the very meaningfulness, theatricality and appropriateness of sound, words and silence.

In Karnad we discover a highly sophisticated postcolonial intellectual who endeavours to come to terms with India's cultural legacy which is full of misinterpretations. Karnad has participated vigorously in most important debates and initiatives especially those concerned with the formation of distinctive Indian modern drama. Karnad's burning ambition to construct an Indian theatre springs from a desire to reflect the collective cultural memory and historical experience that can provide an appropriate orientation to our relationship to art and culture

Girish Karnad, one of the India's highest shining stars, a playwright, a poet, an actor, director, critic, and a translator was born on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1938 in Matheran, Maharashtra in a Konkani speaking family. His childhood was spent in Sirsi, a small village in Karnataka where his father was a doctor. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics and Statistics in 1958 from the Karnataka University, Dharwad, Afterwards he came to Mumbai for higher studies. Meanwhile he received the prestigious Rhodes scholarship (1960-63), and went to England for further studies. There in England he studied at Lincoln and Magdalen Colleges and earned his Master of Arts degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics.

Girish Karnad's initiation into theatrical world began from his childhood. His parents had deep interest in plays. In his home there was a living tradition of Marathi theatre. The only pastime he and his parents could have had was to listen to regional myths and legends that had the characters from supernatural world. In an interview with Alex Mendoca in *Times of India* (26 Jan. 2003) Girish Karnad remarked:

At seven or eight in the evening it felt like midnight. So we read or told stories, fairytales and mythology. Mother recounted stories, father exaggerated the machismo. The jungle stretched far into the horizon. Ghosts, spirits, animals from the tales took on a realism that was larger than life. I have never bothered what tale to invent, I dip into my mind, into our culture. (Circle of Reason)

These folktales were being staged by several Natak companies, which toured Karnad's native place occasionally. This left an indelible mark on young Karnad which later formed the basis of his vision as a modern Indian playwright.

After acquiring these experiences he went to Bombay where while watching Strindberg's *Miss Julie* directed by Ebrahim Alkazi, the unconscious playwright in him suddenly began to take birth:

But when I walked out of the theatre that evening, I felt as though I had been put through an emotionally or even a physically painful rite of passage. I had read some western playwrights in college but nothing had prepared me for the power and violence, I experienced that day. By the norms, I had been brought up on, the very notion of laying bare the inner recesses of the human psyche like this for public consumption seemed obscene. What impressed me as much as the psychological cannibalism of the play was the way light faded in and out on the stage. Until we moved to the city, we had lived in houses lit by hurricane lamps. Even in the city, electricity was something we switched on and off. The realization that there were instruments called dimmers that could gently fade the lights in or out opened up a whole new world of magical

possibility.... I have often wondered whether it wasn't that evening that, without being actually aware of it, I decided I wanted to be a playwright. (Karnad 1994:12)

Karnad's career as a playwright was launched just before leaving for England. His first play *Yayati* (1961) is an existential drama which explores the complexity of responsibility and expectations within the Indian family. This is the story of the king Yayati who is cursed to old age in prime of his life due to his moral transgression. He approaches his son to exchange his youth for the old age. The son accepts the exchange and curse. Here Karnad expresses his own deep anxieties, his own resentment with all those who seemed to demand that he should sacrifice his future by not going to England. Karnad here expresses his personal dilemma between his family's demands and his own desire for freedom. For this play he got Mysore State Award in 1962. Meanwhile during his days in England he developed his interest in literature and culture, playwrighting and performing arts. After his return to India Karnad joined Oxford University Press, Chennai, which provided him an opportunity to get exposed to various kinds of writings. Meanwhile his second play *Tughlaq* which was based on historical Mohammad Bin Tughlaq came out in 1964. The play captures the disillusionment of many Indians with the idealist politics of early Independent India, the reign and period of visionary Pt. Nehru. He was inspired to write this play by Kirtinath Kurtkoti's statement that there is not a single first rate historical play in Kannada Literature. Another source was commercial theatre from Siddapur, Jamkhandi, and Gokak. As Karnad in an interview to Kurtkoti in *Cotemporary Indian Theatre* remarked:

My *Yayati* imitated the form of modern Western drama. Now I thought that I could see the form of our commercial drama. Most of the critics try to discover the influence of Brecht in my play which is not there at all. *Tughlaq* has the spaciousness of our commercial drama (1989: 79-83).

In the same year (1964) his one act radio drama *Ma Nisada* came out. Here Karnad emphasizes the importance of ordinary man for the hero Rama in the epic *The Ramayana*. The protagonist of the play is Padmanabha, a washerman in Rama's kingdom, who gets infuriated at the mention of Rama's name. The play suggests the possibility of looking at Rama as a jealous king who is obsessed with his wife's purity and fidelity, and uses helpless washerman as the scapegoat to send Seeta away from him to gain eternal fame as the 'ideal king'.

During 1970-72 he received Homi Bhabha fellowship for creative work in folk literature. In the year 1971, his third play *Hayavadana* came out. *Hayavadana* is based

on a story from a collection of tales *Kathasaritsagara* that also appeared in the Sanskrit tale of *Betaal Pachchisi*. Thomas Mann, fascinated by its metaphysical potential, rewrote it as the *Transposed Heads*. Karnad's version of this story comprises *Hayavadana*, a horse headed man, Padmini, Devadutta, Kapila, and the child, to deal with the question which one is superior— body or mind? For this play he received *Kamaladevi Award* of the Bhartiya Natya Sangh for the best Indian play of the year in 1972. In the same year (1972) he got Sangeet Natak Academy Award for playwrighting. In the year 1979 he received Padam Shri Award from the President of India. During the year 1974-75 he worked as Director, Film and Television Institute, Pune. In the year 1977, Karnad wrote *Anju Mallige* (literally frightened Jasmine). This play is unique in the sense that it is his only early play that has a contemporary setting – British during the early 1960's. In the year 1988 he wrote *Naga-Mandala* (play with a Cobra) which is based upon oral tales whom he had heard from India's renowned scholar of oral traditions – A.K. Ramanujan. Here he combines two tales, the central one focusing on the snake lover motif while the frame story explores the notion of stories having a life independent of their narrators. Here Karnad presents a domestic drama featuring Appanna, Rani, Kurudavva, and the Naga. The position of Rani can be taken as the metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she finds her husband in two roles – as a stranger during the day and as a lover at night.

In the year 1992, he received Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the most creative work of 1989. During the years 1988-93 he worked as the Chairman of Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. His next play *Tale-Danda* (1990) retells an episode of the life of twelfth century lingayat saint and the founder of the movement, Basavanna. The play was prompted by the political situations at the time of writing- in Ayodhya the agitation regarding the alleged birth place of Rama on the site of the Babri Masjid, and the Mandal Commission's policy of caste reservations. Karnad, by exploring the aspects of the lingayat tradition from more than eight century earlier, criticizes contemporary religious fundamentalism, and the violence committed in the name of religion. The play bestowed many awards on Karnad: "Writer of the year" Award from Granthaloka Journal of the Book trade in 1990; B.H. Sridhar Award in 1992; Karnataka Natak Academy for the Best play of 1990-91 in 1992; Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award in 1993; and Sahitya Academy Award in 1994.

In the year 1992 Karnad received prestigious Padma Bhushan Award from President of India. In the year 1994 another major play *Agni Mattu Male* (The Fire and the Rain) came out. Here Karnad deals with traditional controversy between asceticism and ritual by using an episode from his favourite *Mahabharata*. The words of the character (Yavakri) might be applicable to Karnad as a dramatist as well when he says,

"The past isn't gone. It's here inside me". Likewise, Karnad too strives to relate the past to the present through myths, epics, folktales, and historical narratives. His third historical play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* came out in the year 1997. In this play, he draws on Tipu Sultan's dream diary. In the year 1999 Girish Karnad became the seventh and most recent writer from Karnataka to win the Jnanpith Award. Adding to this celebration the Madhya Pradesh Government decided to bestow the Kalidasa Samman on him. In an interview published in *The Kashmir Times* (28 May 1999), he was asked if he had hit the roof by bagging the Jnanpith Award, he calmly answered: "Awards and honours can only be encouragements for further excellence and if it curtails creativity, they lose their meaning. I am naturally happy about the award which has come as recognition to my literary efforts. But that cannot be the end."

In the further continuation he rewrote the English version of *The Dough Rooster* (1980) as *Bali: The Sacrifice* in 2002. His two monologues in English – *Broken Images* and *Flowers* (2004) form a radical coda to Karnad's forty years of career as a playwright because they initiate new subjects and forms. *Broken Images* takes up the issue of politics of language in Indian literary culture specifically in relation to the respective claims of modern Indian languages and English which now must be recognized as an Indian though not an indigenous language. *Flowers* in spite of being folklore focuses on the male desire rather than female desires. In a recent interview held with Tutun Mukherjee, Karnad revealed his future plans:

As for my future plans there are several possibilities. But the gestation period of an idea varies! I'm toying with the idea of a wedding album as a pastiche or with a collage like structure. OR, may be I would attempt a review of the history of the last day of Vijayanagar Empire (2006:55).

Accordingly in the year 2009, he comes up with *Wedding Album* dealing with an issue which is at the centre of every Indian middle class family: arrange marriage of a girl to suitable expat boy which in turn so fraught with anxiety that it has provided the background for many tele-serials and commercial films. In Indian cultural ethos wedding is not simply a simple occasion for party, dance and dinner. Instead, a typical Indian wedding is expected to bring about the notion of solidarity two families and clans, a sort of mutual concern. Ironically the whole affairs of arranged marriage, in its bosom contain many anxieties, riddles, confusions and resentments. Here we are made aware of a stark and naked truth that the forces raging on the global level strongly exert their presence and bring about some new apprehensions, tensions and worries to this holy performance of Hindu marriage. Here we without any fail notice the wide gap between older generation and younger generation which in turn make former one feel

defunct in the new technological scenario. They fail to cope with new powerful scientific revolutions such as computer, internet, chat, webcam, video recording etc. If old generation is not feeling at ease in amidst these revolutions, the younger generation is extraordinarily buffeted by various aspirations to easy name, fame, prosperity, notion of sexual liberation, dreams and phantasms. Yet it has acquired on ironical twist in it: the above mentioned aspirations and desires are ardently desired but vaguely grasped or least realized. Not only this, they also bring about a plethora of nightmares as they come/float all the way from the other side of the globe (West). These hankerings, desires and aspirations are earnestly lacking spiritual elements in them which could justify and give the life a new turn and valid meaning.

His latest play *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014) is related to the founding myth of the city of the Bengaluru or Bangalore, which is today designated as 'Silicon Valley of India.' This 'Silicon Valley of India' has a well-defined historical account after its naming as Bengaluru or Bangalore. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, king Veera Ballala went out for hunting but lost his way in the jungle. After wandering a lot in the night, quite exhausted, he approached a lonely hut where an old woman served him a handful of boiled beans (benda kaalu in Kannada native tongue) and saved his life. In sheer gratitude, the king named that place 'Bendakaaluru', the place of boiled beans, which in the passage of time got corrupted into 'Bengaluru' and later on anglicized by the colonial masters as 'Bangalore', the chief protagonist of the play *Boiled Beans on Toast*

In the same interview with Alex Mendoca in *Times of India* (26 Jan. 2003), Girish Karnad speaks:

The notion of originality is a romantic tradition Edgar Allan Poe didn't need it. Neither did Shakespeare. What I do is to hold a mirror to the present incorporating elements not so much from the past, as that of our collective story felling traditions.

Of course, Karnad's themes, stories, characters emerge from the deep ocean of Indian civilization and gain pith and sap from the values upheld in Indian Philosophy, scriptures, and epics. In his mammoth attempt to forge a theatre of our own, Karnad has discovered and re-invented the diverse patterns of Indian and world theatre by drawing on myths, histories, and folktales, and thus have rejuvenated, expanded and energized the poetics of contemporary Indian drama. In this way he allies himself with Ratan Thiyam and Habib Tanvir to refashion the very course and direction of Indian drama. In this respect he comes to the category of world dramatists like Peter Brooks, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Phillip Zarrilli, Suzuki Tadashi and Wole Soyinka.

Apart from the theatre personalities of Kannada literature like Dr. Bendre and K. Kurtkoti, he was equally influenced by the writings of European modernists like Albert

Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, Samuel Becket, Karl Marx, Lenin, Sigmund Freud, Eliot, Joyce, and Ezra Pound. His first encounter with the Western culture and his rootedness in the mythical past provide his plays a distinctive mood of dilemma and tension. This dilemma and tension was further strengthened by the joys and challenges of new Independent India. This phase was the unique mixture of the joy of freedom and new fears and challenges. Simultaneously two things were taking place: departure from the past and the continuity with old. Thus Karnad always goes back to past, rich cultural and mythological past, that affirms its full value and significance in contemporary scenario.

Girish Karnad's worthy predecessors of Hindi literature like Suryakant Tripathi Nirala and Dharmvir Bharati have taken recourse to grand narratives of Indian tradition and culture to describe a society that is devoid of any sort of Purushartha. Dharmvir Bharati in his *Andha Yuga* (The Blind Age) brilliantly comments over the aftermath of Kurukshetra war and draws our attention to the contemporary scenario of futility and anarchy. This is what Girish Karnad too does: His very stress upon the living texture of myth, history, and legend in contemporary culture constitutes a blend between author and audience. His main objective as the playwright is to share his own excitement and experience in the brilliant narratives with the audience at large. Karnad invents his plots from myths, folktales, legends, and historical narratives and reinterprets them according to his contemporary sensibility. As Karnad spoke in the programme *Meet the Author* organized by Sahitya Akademi and the India International Centre (16 Nov. 1988):

Well, if it's only a play about the past; then it is not worth it. The point is, the story may be from the past. But the play must be about the present. Plays must be contemporary. No. I don't deliberately try to make it contemporary subject. If I have contemporary consciousness it will become modern because I am a modern writer writing about it. If I have no contemporary topic, that will look like a Puranic play. It is not the subject matter that makes it Puranic. It takes the sensibility of the writer. If that sensibility is really modern, if it is contemporary, if it is sensitive to present day issues, well you can write *Tale-Danda*. So, the sensibility is never there in the subject. It is there in the writer. And if I have it, it will be contemporary.

When we look at Western literature, we find that this mythic puranic, historic impulse has characterized the playwrighting since the period of ancient Greeks and continues to appear again and again in the playwrights like Ibsen, Shaw, O'Neill, Miller, Anouilh, and Stoppard.

Karnad's plays are outstanding as they embody the tradition of myth, history, legend, and folklores. Karnad's rewriting and remaking of myths and folktales bear



some strong intellectual and emotional angle. It was Ramanujan who once described these tales as blissful congruence of food, sleep and love. Karnad's plays from *Yayati* to *The Fire and the Rain*; from *Bali: The Sacrifice* to *Flowers: A Dramatic Monologue* have a strong mixture of orality and print, but depend exclusively upon printed materials for their textual complexity and weight. Karnad very significantly imbibes the spirit of tradition and individual talent as has been rightly stated by T.S. Eliot in his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*:

Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer more acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity (1982: 37).

The burning issues of the day – adoption of new modernist techniques, a legacy of colonial rule, and adherence to rich cultural past of country, have been assimilated by Karnad in his plays. To Girish Karnad folk theatre signifies the continuity of tradition which was silently disrupted by the introduction of Western theatrical concepts and practices in India. He strongly opined that post-Independence India should evolve its own theatricality. Considering its performance traditions, we should leave the habit of mindless pursuing of Western style of drama. He was the first dramatist to feel the necessity of visualizing theatre on the basis of indigenous techniques, though it is undeniable that many of the Western modes of expression and theatre practices influenced his plays like *Yayati* and *Tughlaq*. Basically Karnad started his experiments in Indian theatre after acquiring a thorough knowledge of what was happening in the West. In this way he was able to make a composite proportion between the techniques of Western drama and Indian tradition. Girish Karnad was looking at Bharata's *Natyashastra*, and the folk traditions to evolve a new kind of theatre that is Indian. He showed his interest in the performative styles of *Yakshagana* and *Baylata* that inspired him to use the maximum of masks, puppets, snakes and dogs as well as the folk styles of enactment with "framing tales" or the 'Bhagavat'. The result was the emergence of perennial favourites *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*.

Girish Karnad has enduring interest in history. In Indian context it is known as 'itihasa'. This 'itihasa' is a collective cultural conscience that is conveyed through various traditions and thus transmits the cultural values from generation to generation. Karnad's brilliance lies in the fact that he does not approach history as a remote unitary past but reconstructs and reinvents the past by his subjective self, which has been shaped by various modes and institutions such as family, religion, and state. Karnad's continuing interest in 'itihasa' can clearly be perceived in his plays like *Tughlaq*, *Tale-Danda*, and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*. These plays have been written in terms of power-relations which are embodied in complementary and conflicting relationship in society in the configuration of race, class, and gender. These plays exhibit the growing fundamentalism and communal frenzy and the individual's attempt and endeavour towards communal integration during epochs of violence. Karnad's treatment of history can clearly be understood as Lukacs puts it:

The realm of history is where past and future, no longer and not yet, come together in a single moment. What we usually call in drama is self-appraisal; from the past is born the future which struggles free of the old and of all that stands in opposition (1965: 146-170).

In Karnad's approach to history we perceive a passionate and sincere commitment to a high-ordered liberal humanism that provides him a vantage point to review the past to understand the failures of present. His treatment of history is more psychological than historical. He invests them with certain dream like quality and mythic timelessness as it exists in human consciousness.

Karnad's career as a playwright should be taken as a Journey, a Journey through the plays in search of proper forms that could embody his multi-perspectival approach to themes. Apart from using 'itihasa' and oral tales Karnad also has exploited the techniques which are provided by modern technology. One of his plays *A Heap of Broken Images* has received many acclaims for its brilliant use of technology as part of characterization as well as dramatic denouement. His *Flowers: A Dramatic Monologue* is famous for its poetry.

Karnad's concept of theatre has been formed by Sanskrit poetics. His whole dramatic activity is totally drenched in the norms prescribed by classical Sanskrit drama. He is aware of the infinite and comprehensive nature of Indian theatre. Though he is acquainted with the techniques of Sartre, Camus, Brecht and Pirandello, he owes his basic dramatic sensibility to the Indian dramaturgy. The main contribution of Brecht is that he sensitized him to the potentialities of non-naturalistic techniques available in our own theatre. To Karnad our Indian theatre never had the concept of unified

spectacle. Incongruous and diverse episodes have always been the part and parcel of Indian dramaturgy. Karnad draws a close analogue between the fire sacrifice (Yajna) and the art of theatre. In Vedic era this five-sacrifice was taken as a central metaphor to underline the importance of any activity. Life itself is a Yajna or fire sacrifice. In this connection Karnad quotes Kalidasa who describes theatre as the "desirable fire sacrifice of the eyes" (Kantam Kratum Chakshusham).

Karnad is the only major contemporary playwright who himself has translated most of his plays into English. He has translated all his major plays from Kannada into English, and reversed this process with five recent plays – *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, *Broken Images*, *Flowers*, *Wedding Album*, and *Boiled Beans on Toast* which he wrote originally in English and then rendered them into Kannada. He also has translated Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*. This very practice of translation has enriched the standard of contemporary theatre activity. In this connection Dr. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker's comment is very significant:

Plays in translation moreover are not merely texts for circulation, they are a sign of close community that existed between the first generation of post-Independence playwrights and directors during the 1950's and 1970's and the interest they took in each other's work. Regardless of language, the successful production of a play in translation is a major theatrical event, and it is in part owing to Karnad's example that such events have multiplied since the 1970's (1999: 83-90).

Famous performance writer Richard Schechner writes: "When efficacy and entertainment are both present in equal degrees – theatre flourishes". (2004:139). Schechner also explains that whenever there is efficacy, theatrical performances are universalistic, allegorical, ritualized, and moreover they are tied to the established orders. And whenever there is dominance of entertainment, theatrical performances are class-oriented, and they are individualized show business. In this respect Girish Karnad achieves a striking balance in accommodating both efficacy and entertainment. His major concern is his urge for a socio-cultural integration like Bhasa, Kalidasa, Badal Sircar, and Vijay Tendulkar. Among the Western playwrights this integration can be equated with William Shakespeare, Moliere, Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, John Strindberg, Eugene O'Neill, Bertolt Brecht, T.S. Eliot, Samuel Becket, and Tom Stoppard. The cumulative effect of this integration is the outcome of brilliant plays which are universalistic, allegorical and ritualized. And at the same time they are individualized and entertaining show business as immensely successful theatre productions.

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# The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus can be the Tragedy of the *Homo Sapiens*

Suchitra Awasthi\*

Doctor Faustus is a universally known play by Christopher Marlowe. Faustus' overweening lust for power carves his path for eternal damnation. This play by Marlowe holds relevance in the present times for the homo sapiens. It is our solipsistic attitude towards life that has been responsible for the crises that planet Earth is facing today. If we the homo sapiens do not mend our ways, we too will face the same fate that the legendary Faustus faced. His arrogance and presumptuousness sends alarm bells ringing for the entire human race which too seems to be treading the same path as Faustus did many centuries ago. In this paper, I try to trace how Faustus can be considered to be a prototype for the modern thinking man and how his road to perdition can be a lesson to be learnt for the homo sapiens. The present study included qualitative methods which mainly included textual analysis and interpretation of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

Christopher Marlowe needs no introduction to scholars of English literature. He was one of the University Wits, a group of English playwrights in the late sixteenth century, all of whom were educated at either Oxford or Cambridge. The University Wits were the predecessors of stalwarts like Shakespeare and were acknowledged by him in being instrumental in paving his way towards greatness in the realm of theatre.

Marlowe is regarded as the true founder of English drama by many eminent critics. Marlowe had a humble upbringing yet his talent and hard-work took him from Canterbury, his birth place to the University of Cambridge and later on to London where he became a promising actor at a very young age. In 1587, at the age of twenty-three, Marlowe produced his first play, *Tamburlaine*, which brought him instant success and recognition. Soon his other prominent plays like *The Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus* also saw the light of day. However, he has a short life as he was stabbed to death in a drunken brawl in a tavern.

Marlowe was an erudite scholar. His knowledge of the Classics and his close acquaintance with Roman mythology gave him an edge in all his writings. However, in contrast to his learning, Marlowe had the reputation of being an atheist, epicure and a mocker of religion during his lifetime. His contemporaries, Thomas Kyd and Richard Baines, brought against him many charges of blasphemy, heresy and atheism. Nonetheless, Marlowe was one of the great representative figures of his time, capable of the fullest experience of the intellectual and moral troubles of his generation. Before his untimely death at the age of twenty nine, he had founded English romantic tragedy, had

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written one of the greatest poetical dramas in the English language and had converted the stiff mechanical blank verse of *Gorboduc* into a vital verse form, which was further mastered by Shakespeare who utilized it in the speeches of his great characters. But Marlowe was truly a trailblazer and his name continues to shine bright in the firmament of Drama. No one save Milton has been able to equal the grand style of Marlowe. His plays have the power to carry the reader away by the sheer power and beauty of their language and by the great visions which they call up in the mind. Marlowe's forte lies in making the ordinary and humble rise above the drudgery of life and emerges victorious in life. His portrayal of Tamburlaine, Barabas, Faustus are extraordinary in their own right. Each one of them is governed by lust of power which brings about his downfall. These are all symbolic tragedies whose protagonists embody the spirit of Renaissance, and the over ambition of these protagonists and their lust for power lead to their damnation.

Indeed, Marlowe was the first successful playwright who wrote successful tragic dramas in English. As mentioned earlier, his most powerful characters Tamburlaine and Faustus are men of humble origin, however with superhuman desires. His *Tamburlaine* represents the triumph of physical force and it proved enormously popular in its days because it became instrumental in enthusing a positive spirit in the English people after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Similarly, *Doctor Faustus* deals with a necromancer who pledges his soul to the devil in return of supreme knowledge and supreme power, and who is thus able to satiate his appetite for twenty-four years prior to his eternal damnation. In *The Jew of Malta*, the Jew, Barabas, having been unjustly deprived of his property by the Christians, avenges himself on them by an extraordinary series of crimes. Compelled to use cunning in order to achieve his purpose, he becomes Machiavellian by nature. However, before Barabas becomes a criminal maniac, he has both dignity and greatness and irrespective of his misdemeanours, like Tamburlaine and Faustus, retains the sympathy of Marlowe and the readers till the

Thus, Marlowe occupies an important place in the field of English drama. He is considered to be the father of genuine Blank Verse and mature English tragedy. Although due to his untimely death, Marlowe's career as a dramatist came to an abrupt end, yet in his brief life he left a lasting legacy in the domain of English Drama. His plays not only help us gain an understanding of the Elizabethan drama but are very relevant in contemporary times as he universal in his representation of man and life. Through his plays, Marlowe stirred the imagination of his readers/ audience and was able to give them a taste of loftiness and exuberance too and won him the awe and admiration of the audience.

Furthermore, Marlowe showed an admirable capacity for character portrayal. The characters in his plays were not puppets or types but living and breathing realities. Marlowe made his audience feel the fierce exaltation of the conqueror, Tamburlaine; the vibrant passion and rapturous longing of Faustus; and the angst of Barabas. Marlowe has been called the father of English dramatic poetry He not only glorified the

subject matter of Drama but also vitalised the manner in which it was delivered. Further, Marlowe made the Blank Verse supple and natural and quickly established itself as the most appropriate medium for writing the English poetic drama.

Marlowe was truly the creator of Blank Verse and employed it beautifully in *Doctor Faustus*. The final monologue of Doctor Faustus is the most striking specimen of the Blank Verse. Ben Jonson was so impressed with the poetry in Marlowe's drama that he called it "The Mighty Line". Similar tributes were paid by Leigh Hunt who placed Spenser and Marlowe in the same league and said, "Marlowe and Spenser are the first of our poets who perceived the beauty of words."

One of the most powerful plays by Marlowe is his *Doctor Faustus*. *Doctor Faustus* has streaks of Morality, Renaissance and Reformation in it. It is a Morality play as it is a fusion of the medieval allegory and the religious miracle plays. The general theme of the Moralities was theological and the main one being the struggle between good and evil powers for capturing man's soul and the journey of life with its choice of eternal destination and the aim is to teach ethics and doctrines of Christianity.

*Doctor Faustus* may be called a morality play largely as by selling his soul to the Devil, Faustus lives a very opulent and sensual life for twenty-four long years. His vanity makes him insult the clergy too. Over the course of the plot here is a fierce struggle in his soul between his ambition and conscience, between the Good Angel and the Evil Angel. However, we find Faustus surrendering to the temptations of the Evil Angel and thereby paving the way for eternal damnation. When his final hour approaches, Faustus, longs to repent realizes however as his sins are unpardonable, nothing could rescue him from eternal damnation. Faustus' anguish finds voice in his final soliloquy.

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!

Alders and serpents let me breathe a while!

Ugly hell, gape not: come not Lucifer:

I'll burn my books: Ah Mephistopheles!

Moral Sermon or Didactic Aim

*Doctor Faustus* is didactic in tone like any Morality play. It brings home the message that whosoever shuns the righteous path is destined to eternal damnation. Like in morality plays the characters are personified abstractions of vice or virtues, so too in *Doctor Faustus*, we find the Good Angel and Evil Angel, the former standing for virtue and the latter for sin and damnation.

Besides this Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is replete in Symbolism and Allegory and this is the beauty of the play as these two embellishments have carried the significance of the play right from the Renaissance to the present times as well. A close and critical reading of the text enables one to plunge into a deeper understanding of the hidden truth that the plot has to offer.

*Doctor Faustus* is an engrossing tale of a proud and an extremely ambitious medieval conjurer who sells his soul to the Devil. The play is a moral allegory of universal significance. At this point, it would be interesting to note that although Marlowe was an agnostic and atheistic his *Doctor Faustus* has a moral tone and gives out a clarion call for all those who shun the path of virtue, denounces and align themselves with the demonic forces. These demonic forces are not just the Biblical ones but any malevolent force, within or without, that corrupts the goodness of our souls. In this context Hudson has rightly said: "No finer sermon than Marlowe's Faustus even came from the pulpit. What more fearsome exposure was ever offered of the punishment man brings upon himself by giving way to temptations of his grosser appetites?" And the mournful monody of the Chorus makes the moral allegory of the play crystal clear:

Faustus is gone; regard his hellish fall, Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise  
Only to wonder at unlawful things, Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits  
To practise more than heavenly power permits.

Every time I read this play, equate it with the overweening competition, and lust for power of the modern day man, I am compelled to think whether the plight of Faustus could become our plight as well, if we do not leash our greed and ever increasing desires. The Renaissance brought man Centre stage and ever since then, man has mistakenly believed that he is at the centre of the Universe and all the resources of Earth and even beyond ate there to satiate his hunger in some form or the other. Man has stopped coexisting harmoniously with the environment around him. He has ruthlessly tamed the rivers, lopped down trees, emitted pollution, culled and harnessed animals just in order to emerge as the master of everything around him. Thus, today it is just not us but the entire planet that has been put in jeopardy because of our misdoings and each one of us could face the fate of Doctor Faustus if we do not mend our ways. Like Faustus who for twenty-four years of his life enjoys the pleasures of the flesh, is compelled to confront the spiritual conflict within the soul, we too could face the same ordeal.

In many ways, Faustus stands as the symbol of man in general with the strange amalgam of virtue and vice in his soul. Similarly, the good and the evil angels also appear in the play with their own symbolic significance personifying the two different dimensions of Faustus's character. The former stands for virtue conscience and temperance while the latter represents the baser aspects of Faustus; his overweening passions and 'unlawful' desires. There are many parallels that can be drawn between Marlowe's Faustus being an embodiment of the Renaissance man who in turn can be considered to be a prototype for the Modern man. For instance, Faustus's fascination for Helen, as "the only paragon of excellence" reveals the infatuation of the Renaissance individuals with art and beauty. Likewise, Helen on the one hand exemplifies the charms of classical art, learning and beauty and on the other hand she is also the symbol of sensual pleasures of life, however, they are fleeting. This lusting after something temporal is what brings the unredeemed damnation of Faustus which does ring alarm



bells in the ears of the *homo sapiens* who stand on the threshold of extension in the twenty-first century.

Another important motif used by Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus* that can correspond to the situation of the *homo sapiens* is the significance of the Show of the Seven Deadly Sins. The Seven Deadly Sins, according to Christianity are Pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. In the play, there is a pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins in the sixth scene or second scene of Act II. This spectacle also shows that Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus* adopted some of the elements of the old Miracle and Morality plays. The Seven Deadly Sins: Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth and Lechery that are explored in the Morality plays are also exploited by Marlowe to cheer up the wavering and dejected soul of Doctor Faustus. Nonetheless, Marlowe does not just slavishly imitate the Morality depiction but is quite original in his treatment of the scene. It would be interesting to note here that during the Renaissance it was not just Marlowe who presented the seven deadly sins, even writers such as Spenser, in *The Faerie Queen* invoke this pageantry which might have been a source for Marlowe. The motif of the seven deadly sins is very central to the Weston tradition. Writers such as Dante also explore the Seven Deadly Sins in *The Divine Comedy*. Coming back to *Doctor Faustus*, some critics are of the view that the pageant is meant to be a comic relief for the audience. However, on a subtle level, it is really a means of goading Faustus to relinquish his baser self and seek refuge in a higher power. However, Faustus is beguiled and after the pageantry comes to a close expresses his delight after the show: "Oh, this feeds my soul!"

If one explores the symbolic meaning of the parade, it means that Faustus' helpless surrender to the seven Deadly Sins that lead to the road to perdition. However, Faustus' debauchery leads to the damnation of his soul. Coming back to the pageantry, it is Pride who leads the procession as it is considered to be the most malignant of all the sins, capable of bringing instantaneous downfall. Faustus, as we all know was swollen with pride and soaring too high with his "waxen wings" which results in his eternal damnation. The Seven Deadly Sins should be borne in mind by the *Homo Sapiens* too. Our reckless living and exploitation of the resources has brought the Blue Planet to the brink of extinction. Today the health of our planet is fragile. The growing population, depletion of resources, drastic climate change issues have put the existence of our planet into jeopardy. It is now the collective responsibility of all the children of Mother Earth, whether we be the general public or the policy makers, to help restore the health of the planet which we have taken for granted hitherto. Sir Martin Reese, a well renowned British cosmologist has predicted that planet Earth just has a chance of surviving the twentieth century by 50%! This is appalling and surely should make us undertake some serious contemplation and action regarding safeguarding our only home.

Our Seven Deadly Sins, pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth, are the demons that plague us. Serving these evils can be analogues to Faustus selling his soul to Mephistopheles. Faustus is so blinded by his over-ambitious drives that he becomes a

slave to Mephistopheles who is Lucifer's vice-regent. Our "Seven Deadly Sins" like Mephistopheles lure us to over-indulgence and are paving the path of our destruction. But have we succeeded in creating a Utopia here? The destruction caused by atomic bombs, ballistic missiles, the misuse of bio and cyber technology all is causing serious threats not just to the human race but to the entire planet! To make matters worse, our pride, like Faustus' pride acts as a hurdle to doing introspection. Until we recognize that each one of us is to blame for this catastrophe, we cannot think of redemption. Our recognition and collective strategic action towards restoring the health of our planet can be our soul Messiah.

The Renaissance was an age of rediscovery and revival of learning was also the age of Humanism which was a movement for the advancement of humanity which set new standards for the advancement of the *homo sapiens*. In many ways, the Renaissance can be considered the progenitor of the Modern age. The Renaissance like the two headed Janus could be equated to an age of a new beginning and transition, much like our times. At this critical juncture we need to bear in mind both the past and the future because the direction we take today will determine our future trajectory. Like Faustus, the demons that we need to tackle lie buried in the recesses of our *own* souls which find manifestations in the otherwise benign technology that we tend to dehumanize and demean. In stating all this I do not want to sound like a sceptic. Like everyone, I too have reaped the benefits of science and technology. The advancements made by humankind are indeed marvels that need to be acknowledged and need to be furthered for the benefits of posterity. A great deal is also being done by government agencies, environmentalists, philanthropists and individuals to resuscitate the planet, but we need to take considerable strides, create awareness specially among youngsters, and launch a crusade to save planet earth from destruction. Our conscience can act as our most qualified doctor. Any kind of power without conscience is dangerous. In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* it was Faustus' arrogance and his unconscientious hunger for power that ultimately resulted in his damnation. In *Doctor Faustus* Mephistopheles sometimes warns Faustus against the evils of practising the necromancy. However, Faustus with his raging pride and over-ambition turns a deaf ear to all this, abandons the path of virtue which leads him to eternal damnation. Like Mephistopheles, our inner voice tries to guide us towards the right path but our hubris and avarice come on the way and act as impediments which make us go astray. We should always pay heed to our saner voices which lead to paths of betterment rather than playing slaves to the demons that lead us to perdition.

Coming to the theme of Renaissance again, Faustus was a man of Renaissance. In the very opening scene, like a typical Renaissance man he rejects the traditional subjects of study and turns to black magic. Faustus vied for the "world of profit and delight, of power, of honour, of omnipotence" which he hoped could be attained through magical art rather than through a study of the traditional subjects. These were precisely the attributes of a typical Renaissance man, which was the age of discovery and charting

and discovering new horizons which has culminated in the forging of the Modern man. A number of allusions in the first scene of Act I hint towards this. Faustus desires gold from the East Indies, pearls from the depths of the sea, pleasant fruits and princely delicacies from America. His friend Valdes refers to the Indians in the Spanish colonies, to Lapland giants, to the Argosies of Venice, and to the annual plate fleet which supplied gold and silver to the Spanish treasury from the New World. There is much in this scene that hints that Marlowe was, to a large degree, arousing the audience's support for Faustus to chase away the prince of Parma from the Netherlands. After all, only the defeat of the Spanish Armada had prevented Parma from invading England in 1588. Englishmen knew also about "the fiery keel at Antwerp's bridge", the Italian inventor of which had been in the service of England in 1588. Thus Faustus's dream of power included much that had a strong appeal for the English people including Marlowe himself. Likewise, the people who wield power in our times too vie for power and collude both directly and indirectly, in underhand dealings which is not good in the larger interest of people.

Indeed, Faustus embodies the enquiring spirit of the Renaissance and although Marlowe expresses his empathy and subtle endorsement for the Renaissance spirit nevertheless, he is also raises his concerns regarding the dangers related to it. This danger is clearly seen in Faustus's last soliloquy in which Faustus wishes to get rid of his magic books and longs for just one natural day so that he is able to atone his sins. This Faustus we witness in the last act, scared and helpless, stands in stark contrast to the proud and confident Faustus who appears in the former acts. This last scene resonates very well with our millennial crises. It is an era when we stand on the brink of our own made apocalypse where a dearth of everything that has the capacity of sustain life on Planet Earth has been almost obliterated by our reckless ambitions, we really need to do learn our lessons and do some soul searching so that we may save our planet from the brink of extinction.

Faustus may be considered to be the first modern man. The story of Faustus' twenty-four year action narrated by Marlowe in a few vivid scenes depicts a soul ripped between the desire to acquire knowledge to attain power and to receive redemption with great dexterity. The legend of Faustus is a brilliant example of Renaissance aspirations. Indeed, Faustus was a child of the Renaissance who could not resist the devil's temptations which brings about his ultimate downfall. Thus the tragedy of *Doctor Faustus* is very significant for the *homo sapiens* who are poised in a very critical juncture today. It is the collective responsibility of all the *homo sapiens* to restore the health of our planet.

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# Repressed Revolutions: Understanding the Mind of the Audiences

Pratyusha Pramanik\*

Art in general and theatre in particular has always been a reflection of society and as a result has been used as a medium of protest against any social suppression, exploitation and corruption. The immediacy of interaction with the audience makes theatre the most favoured frame of protest. While issues like women empowerment, public health and environmental awareness have been themes of many modern plays, since the Russian Revolution political theatre, dealing with political ideas and concepts usually in an attempt to attack or support a particular political ideology, has become popular. Sometimes protest theatre aims at conscientization- seeking political and social action based on these changes. But the essence of protest theatre is that it challenges the power of an authority—political, religious, or social. Even when it does not seek to change beliefs or exhort to action, protest theatre is valuable in giving intellectual and emotional support to the already converted. As such it can be an important force in political and social change. (Sundar, 123-138) Street theatre has its origin in low quality theme based theatre created to educate the workers in Marxist ideology; it was performed in streets and factories. From Russia it spread to Europe and USA in the 1920s. The anti-establishment theatre became a tool of the radical student movement and other allied protests against dictatorship and imperialist governments. It was used in Philippines, Latin America and all over the world to resist the suppression of the establishment.

Post Independence effort was made by Indian dramatists to decolonise the Indian theatre and adopt conventions from art forms native to the Indian culture. The local forms of storytelling, such as- *Tamasha*, *Hora*, *Jatra*, *Pala*, *Kathakata*, *Pawada* was used as a bridge between the uneducated masses and the performers. The methodology was successful and people's positive response provided the much necessary impetus for this theatre to develop further. The attraction of the performance came not only from spectacle, but from the accompanying music, dance, drama and unconventional acting techniques. With rising resonance among the peasants these *lok natyas* became propagandist in nature, offering social criticism and also helping the audience in formulating their worldview. The pro-left IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) not only presented an ideology under the wraps of popular entertainment but also through strategic conscientization offered a moral approval to the people's right to resist

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the government and defend themselves even by violent means. Not satisfied with playing to a middle-class audience, or in some cases wanting to make a particular statement to a particular group of students, workers, or politicians, some playwrights took to the streets. Badal Sircar of Bengal was one of the first practitioners of street theatre in India. In 1983, dismissing the then common notion that street theatre is not art, he wrote:

This concept is based firstly on the mistaken notion that anything done in a "proper and decent" theatre hall automatically becomes art, and anything outside is non-art by definition. [. . .] Whether theatre would be art or not depends on the theatre workers, irrespective of their working in theatre halls or working in streets. And as for propaganda, every theatre, in fact every art, is propaganda, as it propagates something or other. Street theatre propagates change, the so-called pure theatre propagates status quo. (Sircar, 22)

Jana Natya Manch (People's Theatre Forum) one such group of radical theatre amateurs was founded in 1973, who sought to take theatre to the people. It was inspired by the spirit of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). Its early plays, though initially designed for the proscenium, were performed on makeshift stages and chaupals in the big and small towns and villages of North India. It also experimented with street skits. Janam's street theatre journey began in October 1978. Most of Janam's shows are arranged by local trade unions or communist parties for election campaigns. While Janam has depended largely on local leftist parties for arranging their shows, this paper intends to study whether this association has been successful in together mobilising a resistance or creating a political impact; if they have fulfilled the goal that they had set for itself at the beginning of their journey and largely to examine the role that street theatres may play in providing political and sometimes pedagogical weaponry to the working class by helping them develop leadership for engaging in collective struggle. The paper looks into the initial days of Janam, before the death of Safdar Hashmi its founding member and analyses the changes that took place in their ideology after the mishap. I further intend to study the role of a radical theatre group in electoral campaigns, and try to understand the difference in approach between this theatre group in New Delhi, India in the late twentieth century and political street theatre in Paris, France in 1968-69, finally, I will seek to situate the contribution of cultural movement in the leftist movements in India of the post-Independence era-whether they could use political shifts as political opportunities and offer alternatives through cultural frames to the masses.

## **Janam-The Birth of Plays for the People**

Janam is based in Delhi and was born from the fragments of IPTA aiming to take quality theatre to the people. 'Their objective was to take quality, robust and politically enabling theatre to the nontheatre-going audience.' (Ghosh 6). They had started with proscenium theatre raising money for the organisation by performing in various cultural program, they rehearsed in the office of the CPI(M) Delhi State Committee with the encouragement received from the secretary of the Delhi State Committee, Major Jaipal Singh. Kavita Nagpal speaking about the role of CPI(M) leadership says: 'Com. Major [Jaipal Singh] was very cooperative and sympathetic to our efforts. He used to help us organise most of our shows. He never interfered only facilitated our work' (Ghosh, 29). But under the government repression and strict vigilance during and after the Emergency (1976-77) the local organizations of workers, students or youth on whom Janam depended for hosting their shows were weakened, especially the trade organisations. The host organisations were not in a position to spend ₹500-700 for the stage, props and lighting essential in arranging a proscenium play, yet they needed Janam's plays to reorganise themselves. Janam tried to organise the necessary equipments by itself but was unsuccessful. It was then, that Janam like many other theatre groups across the world facing similar crisis decided to 'take short plays' to the people and to write their own plays. (Hashmi, 58-59) They aimed at producing plays which will satisfy the constraints of limited resources.

Janam's first play was a reaction to a case of Herig-India, a chemical factory in Ghaziabad.

At Herig-India, the workers made two very simple demands from the management-one, as they came from very far off (10-20 kilometers!) on their cycles, they wanted a cycle stand; two they wanted a canteen to heat their tiffin and prepare tea. The management refused. The workers went on strike. The guards fired on the striking workers, killing six of them. Also, at this time the Janata party government decided to introduce a new Industrial Relations Bill in Parliament. The Bill, authoritarian by nature, would allow government sweeping powers to crush trade union actions and make preventive arrests. (Ghosh, 35)

*Machine* was written to inform the workers of their importance in the capitalist system. Through the metaphor of a machine created by the body of the artists they communicated with simple but not simplistic questions and answers to the audience how important it is for each part of the machine to coordinate to function effectively.

The fault it was pointed out does not lie in one person but in the system. Ghosh points out-

In what for me is one of the most beautiful and meaningful scenes in street theatre is that the factory owner leading in a gesture of victory and those behind him progressively bent, covered by the burden of exploitation. The Sutradhar explains “*Kuch log hi hain jo badhte hi gaye aasmano ki taraf, jinke hisse mein hain is jahan ki sabhi daulaten*” (On the one end are people who went on progressing toward the high skies, to whom have fallen all wealth of the world.) At this point the tableau alters, the actors turn around 180 degrees, and the factory owner is now seen raising the baton driving the workers. The Sutradhar continues: “*Aur dusri taraf lakhon muflison ki hujum, pyramidon se taj jisne banaye, fan ke mahir yeh khoob. Is dhara se us gagan tak aaj jinke johar ki machi hai dhoom*” (And on the other end a procession of people, those who made everything from the pyramids to the Taj. The glory of their strength is written across the horizon). (Ghosh, 39)

Hashmi had shared an experience of performing before 2,00,000 workers, where the organizers would not allow them to perform; they were not convinced what a theatre could do to a gathering of trade union delegate session. It was only after they had performed and moved the audience gloriously, that the union leaders realised how a performance could move more audience than a loaded speech. The message of *Samrath: Madari-Jamura* has been the underlying philosophy of Janam’s plays- ‘theater itself cannot bring about any change, it can only highlight issues and channelize thought’ (Ghosh, 54)

Janam on January 1, 1989 went to Jhandapur, Sahibabad for performing *Halla Bol!* It was being performed to support Subhash Tyagi the CPI (M) candidate for the Ghaziabad municipal elections. Safdar Hashmi and Ram Bahadur a worker were killed there by a mob of the opposition party. After Hashmi’s death on January 2, 1989 the group went back on January 3, 1989 to complete the show that was interrupted. This murder of the artist performing his art was condemned by artists all over India. This was a direct infringement of the freedom of expression. Going back to complete the show reflected the group’s sportsman spirit and the ability to keep the political above the personal. Street Theatres too depend on campaigns and other politically stirring issues to develop their content and present before an audience. Although Janam preferred not to be seen campaigning for any particular party but a lot of what they produced were a response to the crisis of the New Left movement inside and outside India.

## **Election Campaigns and Street Theatre**



Janam's first election play *Aya Chunaw* (The Elections Are Here, 1980) was produced for the 1980 Parliamentary Elections, held in the backdrop of the first non-Congress government since Independence in 1947. In 1977, repulsed by the excesses of the emergency, the people of India voted out the Congress, but they did not vote in any single party. The resultant motley coalition failed to last its total term of five years. Janam's next participation in an election campaign came after a gap of almost a decade in the November 1989 Parliamentary Election. This time the ruling Congress had moved closer to adopting neoliberal policies, which led to immense corruption and hardship for the people. These elections were also shadowed by the growing presence of the Hindu right. In such a situation the CPI (M)'s political line was to consolidate a non-Congress alternative at the national level. This was the only occasion in which Janam performed for a candidate who ultimately won the elections-Subhasini Ali, a veteran trade union leader from Kanpur. In this campaign Janam performed *Hai Lal Hamara Parcham* (Our Flag is Red, 1989). (Ghosh, 172-173)

Before the 1990s only the Left utilized street theatre but gradually other political parties including the Hindu Right adopted Street Theatre as an effective medium of campaign-being low cost, having the flexibility to articulate local issues and swaying public opinions more intimately. But most ruling parties in post-independent India have used symbols and slogans to mobilise public and generate popular views. The use of hand as the symbol of the congress, dams, factories and temples as manifestations of modern India, slogans like '*Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan*' or '*Mandir wahin banayenge*' have a huge impact on the minds of people. From door-to-door campaign to big budget propaganda or sometimes relying on ethnic loyalties are still used to influence public opinion in the times of election. But what has been common in all of these media is the idea of world making by generating innovative narrative strategy-sometimes reformulating existing narratives and at other times creating new ones. The power of these narratives could be quantitatively measured only in terms of election results. Janam, having always performed in and around Delhi which not being a strong constituency of the Left, could never secure success in terms of election campaign. Arjun Ghosh concludes his views after accompanying the group to Kanpur for their 2004 election campaign-

The outcome of the elections proved that there is no value in romanticizing the potential of street theatre campaigns to affect the election results. Although the BJP-led coalition lost its government and the Left reached its highest tally in its history, the CPI (M) candidate of Kanpur constituency suffered an abject defeat. In West Bengal, however, the Left swept the polls. The election results are not an indicator of

the effectiveness of the Jana Natya Manch. Street theatre only has the ability to consolidate the gains made by the efforts of the Party. In areas where the CPI (M) has a marginal presence, Janam's campaign is at best an eye-opener, not a mobilizer. (Ghosh, 181)

The question then arises, what purpose does Janam serve? Any change in people's ideology can only be reflected through a change in the election result or a people's revolution against the undemocratic government that Janam so actively criticises. In this context, it would be helpful to take a glimpse of the culture of street theatre in the aftermath of the civil unrest of May 1968 in France. A group of amateur street theatre artist writes the following about their experience

The piece lasts only about two minutes but it is not uncommon about discussions to go on for more than an hour, vigorously and passionately. These free discussions enable many who would not "normally" dare to do so to transgress the law of silence and accomplish direct communication (similar to what happened in May when the streets were liberated for a while of the Police State's rule). We consider this a modest but a valid answer to the problem of information and communication since the people who partake in these impromptu discussions usually blast off on their particular experiences in whatever here and now situation they are alienated by: *their* factory, *their* office, *their* school, how the union bureaucrats betrayed *them*, how *they* think *they* should get rid of the owners and run the factory. The debate often centers on reform vs. revolution, on whether to work within the system or to overthrow it. The conversations often get technical. It is interesting that such a large number of the working population is actually aware of the revolutionary movement, its motivations and problems. This indicates that people expect another revolution, soon, than one would think: "But this time it will be a real one, we will go all the way, we will take it into our own hands, we won't let the social-democrats and the bureaucrats f\*\*k it up, we won't give back the factories we occupy ..." These words spoken by a young steelworker after one of our performances last week made us think that even theatre can lead to revolution-if that's what you really want to do. (Lebel, 117-118)

Janam never lost its autonomy to any political parties by being financially independent. They did not mention their allegiance during campaigning, but their leftist ideology was obvious to the public. The general public opinion about the candidate and the political party never allowed the viewers to rise above their existent belief and participate in the world making process of Janam. The theatre of the street was designed to bridge the gap between the audience and the performers, the hierarchy was to be broken and a dialogue initiated between them, this was not meant to be preaching from the pulpit. The experience of the theatre group from

France can be used to understand how the common people are well aware of their social position the existent injustice, what they require is an effective understanding and motivation to strike back. Especially in today's time of a hyper-active media it is not difficult for people in the remotest part of the country to be informed about what is happening around them. Janam performs in the vicinity of Delhi, so it is obvious that this audience does not expect a mere eye-opening alternative. The alternative that the public is expecting and deserve is one which is not ambivalent in their stand. Janam could not offer an explanation for the technicalities of the CPI (M)'s ideological commitment with the government while simultaneously opposing the 'pro-imperialist' stand of the nuclear deal. Nor did it offer any cultural response to the Left position in Nandigram crisis in Bengal. In the obituary that Rustom Bharucha wrote in Economic and Political Weekly for Safdar Hashmi he asserted and warned that-

Art and politics can be separated only through evasion, ignorance, or an act of violence to the self. Not only is there a place for a self-conscious political theatre in the enormous field of theatrical idioms and languages, there is a particular necessity for it in centres of power like New Delhi. However, let us also accept that there is 'good political theatre' and 'bad political theatre'. We should not succumb to the vanity of the anti-establishment by assuming that all endorsements of protest and affiliations to the party necessarily elevate whatever we do. (Bharucha, 781)

Bharucha was afraid of the bureaucratisation of the practice of street theatre in general and Janam in particular. He ended by stressing on the importance of the death of Bahadur Singh the spectator; most documents related to street theatre and protests staged after the incident mourned the death of the Artist and his Art but not the Spectator, thereby legitimising the actor-spectator hierarchy. Janam in spite of its immense popularity felt the pangs of not being accepted within the larger sphere of mainstream artists. The death of the artist legitimised his art and his effort. Janam continued his legacy to perform for the people and pleaded for their participation before and after the performance. Most documentation on Janam includes the performance for the people but does not speak of the performance of the people. The enthusiasm and enjoyment of the people to watch a play being performed get mentioned but their critical participation is not adequately evaluated. Every counter-discipline has the tendency to succumb to the pressures of the existing disciplines and establishing itself. Safdar's dreams which he had told to Eugene van Erven- of People's Theatre Institute, where groups like theirs could come for training, their touring the country around creating more such groups; bringing Shakespeare, Gorky, Chekov and Tolstoy to the working class replacing the popular Bombay films tends

towards submitting to stereotypes and passivity. Safdar hoped for development but in a way that the conventional theatre had progressed. Largely most of these goals still remain unachieved and the path that Janam took after Safdar's death does not align with their radical objectives like most of his dreams. If Janam is performing plays for the people it is largely ambivalent of what kind of mobilisation of mass do they intend; do they plan to reform or to revolt, to work within a given system, or to overthrow it, to align with the union bureaucrats or to reveal their duality.

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# Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in the Light of Rasa Theory

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The Rasa Theory is one of the oldest theories in the history of Indian aesthetics that has been propounded by Bharatmuni in Chapter VI of *Natyashastra*. According to Bharatmuni, the sentiment is produced (*rasanispattih*) from sthayibhava (permanent emotion) which is a combination (*samyoga*) of determinants (*vibhava*), consequents (*anubhava*) and transitory states (*vyabhicarins*). Bharata lists eight permanent irreducible mental states or Sthayibhavas which can be developed into full-fledged aesthetic moods. They are *rati* (love), *hasya* (laughter), *soka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *vira* (courage), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsa* (aversion), and *ascharya* (wonder). The eight corresponding *rasas* are *Sringara*, *Hasya*, *Karuna*, *Raudra*, *Veera*, *Bhayanaka*, *Bibhatsa* and *Adbhuta* respectively. The remaining transient emotions only act as attendant feelings to the basic emotions helping to intensify and stabilize it. The present paper is concerned with the application of Rasa Theory in Shakespeare's timeless classic *Macbeth* as the strength of this theory lies with what is common to all mankind at all times – emotion.

The opening scene of the famous play *Macbeth* arouses a feeling of wonder (*adbhuta rasa*) and then strikes a note of fear (*bhayanaka rasa*) among the readers at the mention of the three weird sisters (*alambanavibhava*) who have gathered on a desolate heath in a stormy weather (*udipanavibhava*) to decide when the three should meet again. The emotion of fear and wonder are intensified in the last words of witches in Act I Scene i:

“Fair is foul and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air”

Along with fear, there is an element of heroism (*vira rasa*) at the mention of the wounded captain who fought valiantly and is praised by Malcolm. The captain also recollects the events detailing Macbeth's achievements:

“Like Valour's minion carved out his passage Till he faced the slave”

Thus, Macbeth is presented as an outstandingly talented fighter with a fierce desire to win the battle even before his appearance on the stage. King Duncan welcomes him: “O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman” and “Great happiness” stimulates the *vyabhicarin* of joy (*harsa*). Macbeth fights valiantly which proves his loyalty towards Scotland and is rewarded by the King as the “Thane of Cawdor”.

In Act I, scene iii, the witches' evil plan of killing swine and taking revenge from the sailor-husband of a chestnut-munching woman generates *bibhatsa rasa* in the mind of the readers. Later their greeting of Macbeth by his present title (Thane of Glamis), by his newly bestowed title of which he does not know yet (Thane of Cowdar) and the

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third proclamation that he will be the King hereafter create *adbhuta rasa* in the readers. All these prophesies especially the third one which stun Macbeth and cause him to “start” producing the *sattvikabhava* of horripilation (*romanca*). The words of the witches have an indelible impact on Macbeth whereas Banquo exhibits courage, firmness and rationality arousing the *vyabhacarin* of contentment (*dhriti*). The witches respond by prophesying that Banquo will be “Lesser than Macbeth, and

greater.”; he will be “Not so happy, yet much happier.”; and he “shalt get kings, though thou be none”. On the contrary, Macbeth, who is submerged into his thoughts, now comes to terms reflecting the *vyabhicarins* of anxiety (*cinta*) and stupor (*jadata*) and requesting the “imperfect speakers” to tell him more but, without answering his compelling questions, the witches vanish into the air. When the audience feels uncomfortable in the presence of the wicked daughters on the stage Macbeth’s request to them to stay little longer is indicative of his wicked side of his personality.

Immediately after this Ross and Angus enter the scene and inform Macbeth of his happy coronation as the Thane of Cowdar by King Duncan. Thus, the first prophesy of the witches becomes true arousing the *vyabhicarin* of joy (*harsa*) in Macbeth who also conceives “the greatest”, that is, kingship in an aside (*atmagata*) reflecting the *vyabhicarins* of dissimulation (*avahitta*) as he conceals his thoughts from Banquo whom he considers his competitor rather than a friend. However, Banquo has expressed the *vyabhicarin* of suspicion (*sanka*) as he says that “the instruments of darkness” are not trustworthy enough for they can give assurances on insignificant matters and later mislead us on important issues.

In scene ii, Macbeth and Banquo are warmly welcomed by Duncan who later announces that his eldest son Malcolm will be the prince of Cumberland following by Macbeth’s aside:

“The prince of Cumberland! That is a step On which I must fall down, or else o'er leap,  
For in my way it lies”

In the last three lines of this dramatic aside (*atmagata*), he buries his conscience and decides to covet kingship by the heinous crime of murdering Duncan:

“Stars, hide your fires,

Let not light see my black and deep desires,  
The eye wink at the hand. Yet let that be,  
Which the eye fears, when it is done to see”  
Macbeth’s agitation (*vyabhicarin*) and furious imagination manifests itself as *raudra rasa* and stimulating the *vyabhicarins* of envy (*asuya*), cruelty (*ugrata*), inconstancy (*capalata*) and indignation (*amarsa*). By the end of this scene, Duncan happily announces his wish to visit Macbeth’s castle at Inverness. Hence, Macbeth leaves for his castle to take this news to his wife and prepare a grand reception for the king. But in the core of his heart, he has the criminal tendency to murder the king though his conscience is yet not dead.

In Scene v, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are shown to be deeply in love (*sringara rasa*) with each other as he looks to his wife for advice in important decisions and also promises her good fortune. But it is the humanity of Macbeth and the natural goodness in him that Lady Macbeth believes to be an obstruction in his aspirations. In the following soliloquy (*atmagata*) she allies herself to the evil forces to neuter her and deprive her of the womanly qualities so that she can prepare her husband for the murder:

Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.

And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty!

That my keen knife sees not the wound it makes.

This goose-bumps (*sattvikabhava*) inducing speech culminates into *bhayanaka rasa* as the darkness of her mind is revealed. Though her love for her husband arouses *sringara rasa*, but it also triggers *bhayanaka rasa* in the readers for they know that a kind and generous ruler is about to be brutally killed by his most trusted soldier. According to Janet Adelman, “the most horrifying expression” of the *bhayanaka rasa* is:

“I would, while it was smiling in my face, Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,

And dashed the brain out”

It proves that she wants to fulfill her lust for absolute power by any means as she tells her husband that she can even kill her own infant child that she would feed if needed. The above lines create Vyabhicharibhavas such as agitation (*avega*) and cruelty (*ugrata*). By the end of Act I, Lady Macbeth instills courage and hope in her fickle-minded husband by unfolding a well-organized plan of liquidating Duncan’s bodyguards.

The opening lines of Macbeth’s soliloquy in Act II set the tone of questions: “Is this a dagger, which I see before me,

The handle towards my hand?”

Macbeth’s hallucination about the dagger reflects the *vyabhicarin* of surprise and the *sthayibhava* of astonishment (*vismaya*). The dominant emotion (*sthayibhava*) of fear (*bhaya*) can be traced in the scene where Lady Macbeth waits anxiously for her husband to return after accomplishing the murder of Duncan. The shriek of the owl and the cries of the cricket stimulate the *vyabhicarins* of agitation (*avega*) and restlessness. The same expression can be found in the reader who seems to be in cold sweat imagining about the dreadful act which is not presented in the stage. The porter scene (scene iii) arouses some kind of comic relief or the emotion of laughter (*hasyabhava*) as the porter cracks drunken jokes but it does not evoke laughter (*hasya rasa*) in its true sense because

Duncan's tragedy still looms large on the reader's mind. Prof. A. C. Bradley rightly puts it, "The Porter does not make me smile: the moment is too terrific. He is grotesque; no doubt the contrast he affords is humorous as well as ghastly; . . . not comic enough to allow one to forget for a moment what has preceded and what must follow". In Scene iv, Ross and an Old man deliberate (*vitarka*) (*vyabhicarin*) upon the various unnatural happenings initially evoking wonder although it is overpowered by *bhayanaka rasa* and *bibhatsa rasa*.

Macbeth's soliloquy "To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus" shows anguish (*glani*), worry (*cinta*) and despair (*visada*) about his worthless status as the King of Scotland. The fact that Banquo would be the father of the future king disturbs Macbeth mentally because if it happens to be true then Macbeth's own children cannot succeed the throne which he has acquired by heinous crime. At the same time, Banquo suspects him of murdering the King which too makes him Macbeth's rival. Hence, he has sent professional murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance even before the great feast in order to secure his position as the King of Scotland and the throne for his children in future.

As Banquet scene (III, iv) opens, Macbeth is aghast and terror-stricken at the sight of Banquo's bloody ghost (which seems invisible to other characters on the stage as well as audience) evoking *adbhuta rasa* in the audience which is immediately followed by *bhayanaka rasa*. According to A.C. Bradley, "The deed is done: but, instead of peace descending on him, from the depths of his nature his half-murdered conscience rises; his deed confronts him in the apparition of Banquo's ghost and the horror of the night of his first murder returns." However, Lady Macbeth displays her presence of mind and tries to calm down the situation by tactfully laying the blame of her husband's strange behaviour upon a disorder that had afflicted him in his youth.

In Act V scene i, the same Lady Macbeth is portrayed as a traumatized woman carrying a candle in a trance-like state who revives the crimes that she has helped Macbeth to commit. She demands that a light be kept constantly by her and regrets an imaginary stain which she is unable to wipe out. Her intense and agitated hand-washing evokes *bibhatsa rasa* associated the secondary emotional feelings (*vyabhicarins*) of insanity (*unmada*) and despair (*visada*). She completely loses her self-control : "What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed." generating *bhayanaka rasa* dominantly, which is, however, accompanied by *karuna rasa* at her incoherent ramblings and her pitiable condition, as the doctor says: "What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged." invested with the *vyabhicarins* of sadness and dejection.

Similarly, Macbeth is filled with joy (*harsa*) at the impossible nature of the prophecies as witches assure him that Macbeth can never be vanquished until the Great Birnam wood shall come to Dunsinane hill which is quite impossible. They even declare that Macbeth need not be afraid of any person born of women. But in Act V scene iii, Macbeth acknowledges the possibility of his defeat and the worthlessness of his life



expressing weariness (*srama*), depression (*dainya*) and dejection (*nirveda*) and thus stimulating *karuna rasa*. He resolves that he will fight until his flesh has been chopped off his bones and calls for his armour. Later he has “almost forgot the taste of fear” stimulating the secondary emotional state (*vyabharibhava*) of insensibility or stupor (*jadata*) and recollection (*smriti*). After knowing about Lady Macbeth’s death, Macbeth utters:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
... That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.

As it is a tragedy, Macbeth finally recognizes his fault and honestly assesses his shortcomings in an effort to weed out his despair (*vyabharibhava*). He talks about the futility and insubstantiality of human life reflecting upon life as a bubble of water. The man is here only to perform his role on the stage of life temporarily according to his karma and finally meet death which is the ultimate and permanent truth. His spiritual anguish generates *karuna rasa*. In the second part of the scene, a messenger enters to inform that Birnam wood seems to be moving to Dunsinane. Macbeth is shocked (*vyabharibhava*) and shouts angrily and threatens to hang him (the messenger) alive if he is lying and if it is true he would treat himself in the same way. As the scene ends, he begins to doubt and suspect the so called prophecies of the witches “that lies like truth”. No doubt, Macbeth is disappointed but he decides to embrace death gracefully and die as a warrior and not as a coward displaying contentment (*dhriti*).

In Act V scene viii, Macbeth gets a jarring blow and is numbed with shock (*vyabharin*) when Macduff reveals that he “was from his mother’s womb / Untimely ripped”. He feels embittered and dismayed (*vyabharins*) and decides not to fight Macduff for he loses all his hopes. He realized that the pronouncements of witches have only befooled him. However, when Macduff calls him a “coward”, Macbeth reacts aggressively (*vyabharin*) with the same heroic courage to protect his self- esteem and finally dies (*marana*) bravely generating *karuna rasa*. Macbeth due to his ‘vaulting ambition’ brings all his prosperity into an undignified end. In the end Malcolm, the new King, thanks everyone and his speech reflects that Scotland is a safe place. He also rewards his thanes and friends exhibiting the *vyabharibhava* of joy (*harsa*).

Though the play is filled with a string of emotions- *vismaya*, *jugupsa*, *sringara*, *hasya*, *vira* and *karuna* but the dominant emotion (*sthayibhava*) is of *bhaya*(fear) that reigns supreme throughout the play. As Hobgood says in *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England*: “Macbeth is a play about fear and driven by fear”. Fear dominates the play from the act of Duncan’s murder of which the dagger is an externalization. Even after the hideous murder of Banquo, Macbeth turns into a killing machine destroying his (Macduff’s) entire family on the pretext of suspicion. The tension aroused in the sleep-walking scene is finally pacified in the death of Macbeth. Thus *karuna rasa* has become

more prominent (*pradhana rasa*) dominating the *vira rasa* and other rasas to create the tragic effect.

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## Concept of Absurdity in *The Zoo Story* and *The Bald Soprano*

Kumari Ruchi\*

The concept of absurd or absurdity of life goes long back to the earlier times though in small fragments and parts even before Albert Camus elucidated the concept of absurdity in his *Myth of Sisyphus*. The lines quoted here are from the soliloquy of Macbeth which is an example of the existential crisis of a human being:

“Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more.” (202)

World War, the Second was the catalyst that finally brought the Theatre of Absurd to life after witnessing the futile and precarious conditions of life. And it was not a particular person’s great, groundbreaking discovery but living under the threat of annihilation, the thought of absurd life became an average person’s daily idea. The long speech of Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* raises the questions that were the monumental scientific discoveries or philosophies able to stop the millions of death, destruction and the terribly awful Concentration Camp. The dictatorship which was the fatal ruling element of the time can also be seen in the one-act play by Dharamveer Bharati’s, *Neeli Jheel*, where one of the characters speaks the voice of a dictator. With an insensitive, heartless tone, the speaker says that he only ordered and his people fought, their blood flew and the war kept on happening and soon the common people got addicted with the taste of the blood. The gruesome pictures of the repercussions of such authoritative rule were well realized in the then contemporary time especially by the playwrights.

In the *Zoo Story* a stunning tour de force by Edward Albee which was premiered in 1958, the American playwright presented the growing isolation, separation and the compartmentalized life in the modern world, the pre-occupation of people with themselves and the failure of the so-called American Dream. Edward Albee wrote this play in the post World War, the Second period when the United States was witnessing the affluence and prosperity of the white middle class. The consumer culture urged the Americans to strive for luxurious, materialistic items and the popular TV shows of the

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time abided by the traditional gender norms, presenting an idyllic suburban prosperity of a nuclear family with a well-earning father, a mother looking after the house, pets and children.

This play came with a wave of harsh criticism of the dominant culture prevalent in the society in Albee's time. Albee has very deftly presented the confrontations of two individuals belonging to two different strata of the society. The character of Peter, an upper middle class publishing executive living a comfortable life with his wife, two girls, two parakeets, a cat far away from the hardships of the other side, belongs to the dominant culture. Jerry, the other character who seems to be carrying a part of the playwright himself is recklessly dressed, fed up with his surrounding, unable to cope up with the blind race of the American Dream, trying to make connection with a dog and a homosexual belongs the other class, ignored, economically and socially unprivileged. Jerry calls himself:

“I am a permanent transient.”

He believes not in a typified way of living but in constant change keeping up with the surrounding. He denies the definitive norms of the society and tries to bring Peter in light with the conditions of his class, his “laughably” small room in on the upper West Side, a coloured queen, a Puerto-Rican family.

But a different aspect should also be seen which is through the eyes of Peter who overshadowed by the overpowering effect of Jerry. People tend to be more emphatic towards the powerful, heart-wrenching stories of the working class. And that is completely justified but the burden of morality carried by middle class is somewhat side-tracked understanding that the middle class lives quite a comfortable life which they do live, a good salary, a wife, two daughters, two parakeets, a happy, contented life. Is it all? Or a wife who is ideal in all the conventional aspects, demands a better conversation, craves for a better physical relationship with her husband or a husband who has actually forgotten his self in the deep abyss of the fulfillment of the American Dream. This point is later pondered over by Edward Albee in his 2004 addition to the play *At Home At Zoo*.

The spectators of the Theatre of the absurd are thus confronted with a grotesquely heightened picture of their own world; a world without faith, meaning, and genuine freedom of will. In this sense, the Theatre of the Absurd is the true theatre of the time. Arthur Adamov truly remarked,

“Theatre for me is the outward projection onto the stage of an inner world.”

Another important instance is the seminal work of the Theatre of the Absurd *The Bald Soprano*, the first play by the French-Romanian playwright and dramatist, Eugene Ionesco was first opened in Paris in 1950 breaking the boundaries of the conventional cluttered theatre, the play received the first reaction of the public, that of incomprehension and rejection. It is only after some critic’s remarks that viewers came to watch it and it became a success but such plays disorient our logical faculties and dramatic expectations, compelling us to think and realize the ghastly situation through the demonstration of disgust for the tangible world, distrust for communication. There is no protagonist, no antagonist in the play, mindless conversations form the content; full of silences in parentheses.

In this play, Ionesco had set out to write a tragedy of understanding a new language through the help of a primer and that is, English. The opening paragraph of this play gives the reader the hilarity of the situation as well as the uselessness of language;

“A middle-class English interior, with English armchairs. An English evening. Mr. Smith, an Englishman,

seated in his English armchair and wearing English slippers, is smoking his English pipe and reading an English newspaper, near an English fire.

A long moment of English silence. The English clock strikes 17 English strokes.”

The repetition of the word ‘English’ stresses on its absurdity. Through this play, Ionesco wants to deliver that words no longer matter. They are mere empty, hollow formations of alphabets demonstrating nothing. In the above lines, the idea of the playwright’s parody of the general English life could be seen. The couple Mr. and Mrs. Smith don’t seem to be considering who they are or the reason for their existence; they are not truly living but only sustaining. Their wish to pass the time comfortably without any reason can remind one of Vladimir and Estragon’s activities in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.

The middle-class couple, Mr. and Mrs. Smith have episodes of unreasonable, chaotic conversations. The earlier two titles, first *English Without Toil* and secondary, *It’s raining cats and dogs* show the uselessness of the sophistication of the English Language and also mocking the vanities of life. Escalating even the trivial things and seeing them as wonders because as the world have already witnessed the failure of the

big, huge things. The repetition of the name Bobby Watson and the usage of the typical English name, Mr. and Mrs. Smith remind me again of the 16<sup>th</sup> century playwright, William Shakespeare, “What’s in a name?” For instance- the futility of names is evident in the extract where all the big names signify nothing more than few futile words. The playwright has represented the amalgamation of the famous names in a haphazard way, providing a touch of humour and depicting the vanity, inefficacy of the eminent writers and philosophers:

MR. MARTIN: Robert!

MR. SMITH: Browning!

MRS. MARTIN, MR. SMITH: Rudyard.

MRS. SMITH, MR. MARTIN: Kipling.

MRS. MARTIN, MR. SMITH: Robert Kipling!

MRS. SMITH, MR. MARTIN: Rudyard Browning. (17)

For instance, Mr. Martin in the play describes an event in such a way

*“One sees things even more extraordinary every day, when one walks around. For instance; today in the underground I myself saw a man quietly sitting on a seat, reading his newspaper.”*

As pauses signify the vanity of language in *The Birthday Party*, the use of silence serves that purpose in *The Bald Soprano*. When Nietzsche said, “God is Dead,” it’s strongly felt for the Theatre of the Absurd, “Word is Dead.”

Martin Esslin in his seminal book *The Theatre of the Absurd (1961)* states,

“The playwrights of the post-Absurdist era have at their disposal, then, a uniquely enriched vocabulary of dramatic technique. They can use these devices freely, separately and in infinite variety of combinations with those bequeathed to them by other dramatic conventions of the past.”

It is just as true that the playwrights of The Theatre of the Absurd have forever altered our response to the theatre.

For instance- Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* which was premiered the same day as *The Zoo Story* carries the minimal number of props, an abstract concept, an old man

listening to his own recordings still carrying a meaning behind its whole meaninglessness.

The depiction on the stage matters the most for it brings out the real effect which we cannot sometimes perceive simply even in the texts. For instance, when Stanley in *The Birthday Party* vents out his frustration, the utterance of the expression, “eh!” makes us understand his depression with life but when we watch the eminent actor Robert Shaw enacting it in the movie, we feel it in our deepest core.

Thus while looking at this type of theatre that is in the anti realistic, new theatre, it is not so much a matter of what happens (even if often very unexpected things happen), but rather the possible meaning of what is happening.

It can be concluded not only on the Theatre of the Absurd but on any type of drama or a piece of literature by quoting Terence McNally, a contemporary of Edward Albee, for he aptly gives the description of what theatre does;

“I think theatre teaches us who we are, what our society is, where we are going. I don’t think theatre can solve the problems of a society, nor it should be expected to..Plays don’t do that. People do. But plays can provide a forum for the ideas and feelings that can lead a society to decide, to heal and change itself.”

These two plays, *The Zoo Story* and *The Bald Soprano* which came in the same decade carried the power to clear the cluttered stage of the traditional, conventional drama following the fixed set up of proper middle class life. The Second World War shook the people of the time and it was evident in these plays belonging to the category of the Theatre of the Absurd. In an interview in 2004, Edward Albee said:

“Most people apparently want to go to the theatre and not have anything happen to them. Or something that it does happen it’s so boring and ephemeral that you can’t remember it five minutes you leave the theatre.”

Eugene Ionesco’s remark is quoted in Safransky’s *Sunbeams: A Book of Quotations* (1990) “Ideologies separate us. Dreams and anguish bring us together.”

Thus, this concept of the absurdity in life dismantles logic and rationality and shows the disintegration of language. A significant factor is carried in almost all the plays of this genre that there lies meaning even in the gargantuan of the meaninglessness of life.

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## Elements of Myth in Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala*

Priya\*

*Naga-Mandala* (1988) is one of the finest plays written by Girish Karnad. It was first published in Kannada language and then translated into English by Karnad himself. This play is dedicated to Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan. The play combines folk elements with mythical and surreal to present a domestic drama. Karnad's creative genius lies in taking up fragments of historical experience and fusing them together with the contemporary Indian cultural and social life. *Naga-Mandala* is the story of a young girl, Rani, newly married to Appanna (any man) and their gradual understanding of the role and responsibility of the institution of marriage.

*Naga-Mandala*, as the title of this play, is not the name of a human character, but it is that of the snake. As the name suggests, it revolves around a woman and a serpent and the latter plays an important role in the formation of the plot. In *Three Plays*, Girish Karnad has mentioned that "Naga-Mandala is based on two oral tales from Karnataka" (p.20).

In this book, he has revealed that theatre can simultaneously be entertainment, political commentary and artistic statement and can be composed in traditional realistic and postmodern forms like the masks worn by actors that allow them to express otherwise hushed truths. Our early playwrights writing in English like Sri Aurobindo and Kailasam selected their themes from myths and legends of Indian literature. Karnad themes appear to build castles in the air, he takes refuge in the myths and legends and made them the vehicle of a new vision.

The word 'myth' is originated from the Greek word 'Mythos' which means story. It is a kind of traditional story which embodies a belief regarding some facts or phenomenon of experience especially the one concerning with the earlier history of the people or explaining a social or natural phenomenon. It typically involves supernatural being or events. For example: We can consider the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as a myth. J.L. Shastri in his work *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology* says that:

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“Myth, at all events is raw material, which can be the stuff of literature”. (p.229)

Myths come from racial collective unconscious and there may be a real meaning concealed beneath its apparent meaning. Earlier, myths were the important and dominant source of entertainment. With the passage of time, the role of myths in literature started diminishing. But, Girish Karnad, a major Indian playwright remains deeply rooted with that tradition and exuberantly presents it in his plays where it serves the purpose of connecting the past with the present. In *Yayati* (1961), *Hayavadana* (1972), *Nagamandala* (1988) and *The Fire and the Rain* (1998), we find the predominance of mythical element. By using myths in the play *Nagamandala*, Girish Karnad has raised some socio-cultural issues.

In *Naga-Mandala*, Karnad explores Indian themes and experiments with Indian mythological heritage. The title itself is full of tantric connotations. Dr. Sudhir Dixit in his work has quoted from the book *Indian Drama Today: A study in the Theme of Cultural Deformity* by Manchi Sarat Babu where he writes:

“Mandala is a tantric concept indicating inner concentration, a source of energy. *Naga-Mandala* is a magico religious ritual invoking Naga, the snake-god of Hindus, who grants the wishes of his devotees, especially the wish for fertility”(Myths in Girish Karnad Plays,87)

The story of *Naga-Mandala* contains various myths in which some are very prominent. There is a myth of Ichchhadhari Naga present in the play. In Indian society, it is very popular. People believed that Nagas can assume any shape according to their choice.

Story: “As you know, a Cobra can assume any form it likes.” (38)

They are treated as divine beings. In the play, Naga assumes the shape of Rani's husband Appanna and comes at night. The actual husband comes only in the afternoon to take lunch and then goes back to the concubine's house. Rani realizes the difference between her husband's days and night's visits.

She says to him: “You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a...stupid snake” (42)

Moreover, Naga tells her that this difference she has to accept and come to terms with.

Naga: “I am afraid that is how it is going to be like that during day. Like this during the night. Don't ask me why.” (43)

Apart from this notion of Ichchhadhari Naga, the famous Ahilya myth is also present in this play. The *Ramayana* tells the story of Ahilya where it is said that Lord Indra in the absence of Gautam rishi assumed his shape and took advantage of her. Similarly here Naga entered in the house of Rani in the guise of her husband Appanna. In a way, we can say that this 'magical transformation' has always been the part of our myths.

As Ahilya was cursed and turned into the stone. Rambhawas also converted into a stone after the curse of sage Vishwamitra. Here, in the play, Flames assumed female voice and they were gossiping inside the temple. The Story was present in the shape of a young woman.

Myth of Mirror has been also used in the play which weaves a plot line in a very interesting manner. As it is said that: "A Mirror never lies". So, there was a myth about mirrors that it had some magical power of telling the truth and the real identity of creatures like ghost, witches, snakes, who assume human shape can easily be revealed in the mirror. Karnad has used the magical concept of mirror to a remarkable effect. For example,

Rani says: "When I looked in the mirror, I saw there...where you were sitting...instead of you, I saw a (Mimes a cobra hood with her fingers) ..." (42)

Girish Karnad mentions the prevalent belief in Indian society where a serpent is not called by its real name, for naming it can be taken as an invitation by the serpent to enter the household. This is why a serpent is not normally by its proper name, but usually euphemistically as 'animal' or 'insect':

Naga: What? A cobra

Rani: (Silencing him) Shh! Don't mention it.

They say that if you mention it by name night, it comes into the house... (43)

This belief is quite similar to a saying: "Name the devil and the devil is here." Obtaining progeny or lover by magical herbs were quite usual incidents in the myths. In the *Ramayana*, the birth of Rama and his brothers were the result of Yagyn Prasad- a bowl of Kheer, which was distributed by king Dashratha among his queens. The birth of Karna takes place by the mantras chanted by Kunthi.

So, in this play we find that a non- human agent becomes a proud father. In our society, Nagas are treated as a fertility symbol. They are associated with progeny and when Rani

pours the magic herb into the ant-hill, unknowingly she invokes the Naga and her offering was accepted and she received the blessings of motherhood. Earlier, Rani was only aspiring for affection. She was sexually frigid. Naga cures her frigidity by introducing her to the world of love and pleasure.

P. Dhanavel in his work *The Indian Imagination of Girish Karnad* says:

“The borrowed myths are reinterpreted to fit pre-existing cultural emphasis”. (58)

By using myths Karnad portrays the socio-cultural problems and the evils of the society. We find that Rani gives the snake ordeal to prove her chastity. Though Naga was her lover even he could not help her. She had to speak the truth though in an ambiguous way otherwise the snake would have bitten her. She managed to save herself. This reminds us of Sita's ordeal of fire to prove her chastity. And the presence of this myth in the play reflects the situation of women. It shows that from Sita to Rani; from past to present, women are the one who undergoes through these kinds of test. What about the Chastity of male? Appanna had also an extra-marital affair and it was known to the entire village and still nobody asked about his moral status of chastity. Appanna boldly scolds his wife and abuses her.

Appanna: “You shamed me in front of the whole village. You, you slut...” (56)

We can quote here the statement of Simon De Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* rightly stated: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (267).

The next myth which comes across in the play is the myth of cremation by the son. It is a strong belief in the Hindu society that the soul of a person does not attain salvation or liberation unless the eldest son sets fire to the funeral pyre. In the play, after the death of the snake, Rani proposes that her son should light the fire of King Cobra's funeral.

She says: “But our son has been given the gift of life by the cobra, as by a father. When we cremate this snake, the fire should be lit by our son” (63)

Karnad uses the mythical conflict between Snakes and Eagles. These two creatures not only want to destroy each other, but also extend their animosity to warfare, where weapons have been named after the two. Even before the entry of Naga, we find the Eagle's story.

“Beyond the seven seas and seven isles...Under the tree, your parents wait for you.

Rani says: “Do they? Then please, please take me to them immediately.”(28)

The eagle here becomes the symbol of frigidity. As Rani wanted to run away from her husband's house to her maternal house which was sexless and secure. The words of Naga remind us of this mythical conflict.

“Now you don't be silly I am not a mongoose or a hawk that you should be afraid and soon afterwards he exclaimed: “What a beautiful, long hair! Like dark, black, snake princess.”(41)

Karnad delves deep into the traditional myths but he does not take the myths in their eternity, he takes only fragments that are useful to him and rest he supplements with his imagination to make his plot interesting. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has written in his work *Indian Drama* that When Karnad was asked the reason for his handling of myths and legends, he replied that his sole purpose was to narrate the particular story effectively and so “the borrowed tales are given a turn of the screw, as it were, which works wonder...” (8)

We can say that myth plays a major role in the formation of the plot of this play. For Girish Karnad, mythology is never a dead past. He employed the myth-structure to synchronize the past and the present, to blend appearance and reality and to put the contemporary scenario side by side, with history. The setting, scheme, structure, and symbols of the play, all contribute to the author's aim. The setting is a temple, the Hindu temple being a mandala, a representation of the whole universe, of the cosmos. The stories of this play are interconnected and the plot of the main one moves towards the liberation and fulfilment of Rani, the Indian woman, through her relationship with the cobra. Here lies the beauty of the playwright because by using myths, Karnad has shown the journey of a woman from her enslavement to her emancipation.

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# पुनर्नवा / शेक्सपियर की पुण्यतिथि के चार सौ साल 'किंग लीयर' का नाट्यशास्त्रीय पाठ

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रंगकर्म की रचनामिति का आधार है भरत मुनि का नाट्यशास्त्र। यह रंगकर्मियों को रंगशिल्प का ऐसा व्याकरण प्रस्तावित करता है कि कलाकार की प्रतिभा स्वतः प्रकट हो। यह व्याकरण हर देशकाल में प्रथम महत्व के स्तर पर प्रासंगिक है। प्राचीन समय में ग्रीस को यदि ज्यामिति के कारण दुनिया भर में जाना गया तो भारत को व्याकरण के कारण। लेकिन यह व्याकरण सिर्फ वैदिक समय, संस्कृत भाषा और काव्यशास्त्र तक ही सीमित है यह आधुनिक दृष्टि की बनायी गयी सीमा है। भारतीय व्याकरण की वृहत्तर परिधि संस्कृत साहित्य में इस तरह है कि उस परिधि में कलाओं के ग्रन्थ मुख्यतः समाहित हैं जैसे नाट्यशास्त्र और चित्रसूत्र, ऐसा मौजूदा समय में माना नहीं जाता। इसका नतीजा पिछले पचास-साठ सालों में सामने आया है जब हम 'नाट्यशास्त्र के अनुसार रंगकर्म' का अर्थ सिर्फ संस्कृत नाटक से लेते हैं, लेते आ रहे हैं। या हम नाट्यशास्त्र को भारतीय काव्यशास्त्र का मुख्य ग्रन्थ नहीं समझते और पाते हैं कि पिछले एक-डेढ़ हजार सालों में हमने इस शास्त्र में वर्णित काव्यसम्पदा की सिरों से अनदेखी कर दी है।

अरस्तु या भरत का नाट्यशास्त्र किसी भी नाट्यालेख को मंचस्थ करने का गहन व्याकरण है। इस रंगरचनामिति के आधार पर किसी भी नाट्यालेख या पाठ्य को रंगकर्म पर प्रस्तुत किया जा सकता है चाहे वह संस्कृत में लिखा हो या अंग्रेजी में। इस आलोकचिन्हित आस्था के आधार पर पिछले दिनों हमने बनारस में विलियम शेक्सपियर के नाटक 'किंग लीयर' का रंगमंच पर पुर्नपाठ शास्त्रीय ढंग से किया। यह नाट्यशास्त्र ही है जो किसी भी पाठ्य या टेक्स्ट को डीकन्स्ट्रक्ट करने यानी नाट्यालेख के पुनर्नवा का सटीक दिशानिर्देश देता है। चूंकि हमें काशी हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय में अंग्रेजी विभाग के स्नातकोत्तर विद्यार्थियों को लेकर यह प्रयोग करना था और उनके पाठ्यक्रम में ये तीनों विषय निहित हैं यानी नाट्यशास्त्र, शेक्सपियर और उत्तरआधुनिकता, तो फिर हमारे लिए अकादमिक दायरे से बाहर आने का मौका भी पर्याप्त था। जैसे, विद्यार्थियों को यह सीखना था कि, भारतीय रंगदृष्टि निर्देशक को अभिनेता से विस्थापित करती है, कि किंग लीयर को डीकन्स्ट्रक्ट करने का अर्थ है उसका बिल्कुल नये ढंग से पुनर्पाठ। उसकी कहानी का रंगमंच नहीं बल्कि लीयर के नाट्यालेख का नाट्यशास्त्रीय अन्तरण।

दृष्टि ही रचना है। भारतीय रंगव्याकरण लेखक और अभिनेता को हर बार एक नयी दृष्टि सौंपता है और भरोसा बढ़ता है भरत के नाट्यशास्त्र पर। भरत ने वृत्ति का प्रस्ताव रचा है। वृत्ति को हम आज की भाषा में दृश्यविधान या सीनिक ऐक्शन कहते हैं। यदि पाठ्य या नाट्यालेख शब्दबहुल है तो फिर यह भारती वृत्ति में लिखा पाठ्य है। रंगमंच पर इसका पाठ करने यानी भावानुकीर्तन के लिए भारती वृत्ति से ही दृश्यों का विधान करना पड़ेगा। और फिर तब हम सीखते हैं कि शब्द किस तरह दृश्य बन सकते हैं रंग या रंगमंच पर। इसी प्रकार चार वृत्तियों में से एक अन्य वृत्ति है आरम्भटी वृत्ति जो ऐसे नाट्यालेख की कल्पना करती है जहां क्रियाओं और घटनाओं की अधिकता हो। घटनाबहुल कहानी नहीं, घटनाबहुल नाट्यालेख। आलेख में नाट्य

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\* कलाविद् एवं रंगकर्म

होना अनिवार्य है। इसीलिए ऐसे रंगकर्मी जो किसी कहानी के रूप में लिखी कथावस्तु को रंगमंच तक ले जाते हैं वे भूल जाते हैं कि यह रंगव्याकरण के अनुरूप नहीं, सिर्फ एक प्रयोग है। ऐसा करते रहने से ही यह हुआ है कि पिछले तीन दशकों में हिन्दी में नये नाटक कम से कम लिखे गये।

भरत यह भी कहते हैं कि आप भारती वृत्ति में लिखे नाट्यालेख को आरभटी वृत्ति से मंचस्थ कर सकते हैं। या आरभटी या सात्वती वृत्ति में लिखे नाट्यालेख को भारती वृत्ति से मंचस्थ कर सकते हैं। एक वृत्ति की मुख्यता में अन्य तीनों वृत्तियां अन्तर्निहित हो सहयोगी होती चली जाती हैं। उनका वृत्ति-अभिप्राय सिर्फ पाठ्य तक ही सीमित नहीं है। लिखे जाने से लेकर प्रयोग और प्रस्तुति तक वृत्ति का अनुप्रयोग उन्होंने विस्तार से बताया है। और हमने ऐसा ही किया। हमने लीयर के पांच अंकों में विस्तृत चौबीस दृश्यों को उनकी शब्दबहुलता के रूप से बदलकर संवाद और दृश्य के संतुलन का आरभटी रूप तैयार किया और उसी आत्मा पर एक नया पाठ्य तैयार किया जहां रूपविधान ही कलामिति है। भरत कहते हैं कि यदि पाठ्य को वृत्ति में कहा गया है यानी सीनिक ऐक्शन या दृश्यविधान में प्रस्तुत किया गया है तो पाठ्य का अन्तर्वक्तव्य या भरतवाक्य दर्शकों तक कलात्मक रूप से पहुंचेगा ही, वे पाठ्य का रसास्वादन करेंगे ही। यह भरत का रंगव्याकरण है। बिल्कुल ऐसी ही बात दौस्तोव्स्की भी कहते हैं कि, यदि आर्टिस्ट्री या कलामिति अच्छी है, यदि पेंटिंग या मूर्तिशिल्प, या नृत्य या संगीत प्रभावशाली है तो उसमें कही गयी बात लोगों तक अपने आप पहुंच जायेगी। कहानी या उपन्यास या कविता लिखने के लिए उसका पहले कहानी या कविता बनना महत्वपूर्ण है।

वृत्ति का रस से सीधा सम्बन्ध है। और भरत एवं उनके व्याख्याकार अभिनवगुप्त के अनुसार नाट्य ही रस है। तो हमें पहले नाट्य यानी उस टेक्स्ट पर ध्यान देना था जो सीनिक ऐक्शन यानी वृत्ति पर आधारित हो। यह वृत्ति हमें पाठ्य तैयार करने में भी मदद करेगी और उसे रंगस्थ करने में भी। नाट्य का रस अभिनेता में और फिर प्रक्रिया में प्रतिक्षण यह रस दर्शकों में गहन प्रभाव के रूप में ढलता चला जायेगा।

दुनिया अभी शेक्सपियर की पुण्यतिथि के चार सौ साल मना रही। अवसर यही था किंग लीयर के मंचन का। इसकी कहानी बहुश्रुत है। वृद्ध हो चले राजा लीयर अपना राजपाठ अपनी तीनों बेटियों में बांट कर, और थोड़ा- थोड़ा समय उनके घर रह कर शेष जीवन सुख से बिताना चाह रहे। वे पहले अपनी दोनों बड़ी बेटियों गॉनरिल और रीगन से पूछते हैं कि वे उन्हें कितना प्यार करती हैं। राज्य और सम्पत्ति पाने के लिए वे पिता की झूठी प्रशंसा करती हैं और वे इसमें सफल भी हो जाती हैं। अन्त में अपनी छोटी बेटी कॉर्डेलिया से पूछते हैं जिसे वे सबसे ज्यादा प्यार करते हैं। अपनी बहनों की झूठी तारीफों से खिन्न होकर वे अपना सच सुना देती है कि वह पिता से भी प्यार करती है साथ ही इतना ही प्यार वह अपने पति और बच्चे से भी करेगी। लीयर असंतुष्ट होकर उसे फूटी कौड़ी भी नहीं देता। फ्रांस उससे विवाह कर उसे अपने राज्य ले जाता है। लीयर अपने मातहतों के साथ कुछ समय बड़ी बेटी और कुछ समय मझली बेटी के साथ रहना चाहता है लेकिन उसे कमशः दोनों से ही अपमान और तिरस्कार मिलता है, और गहरी यन्त्रणा में वह छोटी बेटी को याद करता लगभग पागल से जंगलों में भटकता है। एक के एक बाद हुए युद्ध में पिता और तीनों पुत्रियां कमशः मारी जाती हैं।



वृत्ति को रूप और रूपकों की मां कहा गया है शास्त्र में। जो नाट्य या नाट्यार्थ को रूप देते हैं उसे रूपक या मेटाफर कहते हैं। अर्थ का रूपण करने वाले प्रत्येक रूप के दस-दस रूपक हो सकते हैं इसलिए भरत ने इसे दशरूपक कहा है। साहित्य में जो रूपक है वही फिल्म में इमेजरी है। नाटक का कथानक सच्चे प्रेम की तलाश पर केन्द्रित है। इसके मंचन के लिए भरत की वृत्तिदृष्टि से एक सटीक रूपक या मेटाफर की कल्पना हमारी पहली जरूरत हो गयी। जिस राजा के राजमहल में प्रेम और विश्वास दुःख में परिणत हो गया हो उसे वह जगह राजमहल नहीं, श्मशान प्रतीत होगा। तो हमें श्मशान का प्रतीक रूपक के लिए अधिक उपयुक्त लगा। पण्डित ओंकारनाथ ठाकुर प्रेक्षागार के पूरे मंच को हमने कब्रिस्तान का रूप दिया। अपनी कब्र को सिंहासन समझते हुए उस पर पांव टिका कर लीयर राज्य और सम्पत्ति अपनी बेटियों को देता ह और दर्शकों को स्पष्ट होता रहता है कि जिसे वह गर्व से अपना सिंहासन समझ रहा वह उन्हीं बेटियों के कारण उसकी कब्र बनने वाला है। एक शक्तिशाली रूपक की रचना यदि वह पूरे पाठ्य के अर्थ के आधार पर तैयार की गयी हो तो वह पूरी नाट्यप्रस्तुति के दौरान पूरे कथानक के अर्थ को प्रभावशाली ढंग यानी रस के साथ प्रस्तुत करता रहेगा यही भरत की शास्त्रीय वृत्ति दृष्टि है। और ऐसा ही हुआ।

आरम्भ में दर्शक दो व्यक्तियों को लीयर की कब्र के पास यह कहते सुनते हैं कि बेटियां कृतघ्न हैं। पीढियां कृतघ्न हैं। यह दृश्य शेक्सपियर के अन्तिम नाटक 'टू किन्समैन' की ओर इशारा करता है। ये आत्माएं लीयर की आत्मीय हैं। गहरी रात की बारिश में कॉर्डेलिया की आत्मा लीयर की कब्र पर मोमबत्ती जलाती हैं जिसे बाकी दोनों बेटियों की आत्माएं आकर बुझा देती हैं। परवर्ती दृश्यों में जब दोनों बेटियां झूठ बोलती हैं तब दो बार राजा के वफादार महामंत्री केन्ट की हथेली से मुखौटे गिरते हैं जिन्हें अन्तिम दृश्य से पहले कॉर्डेलिया पेड़ पर टांग कर आग लगा देती है। इस जलते मुखौटों से सजे पेड़ को आकर लीयर बताता है कि मुझे पहचानों मैं पागल नहीं मैं राजा लीयर हूँ। इस दौरान मूर्खों का समूह नृत्य भी होता है और वे उस गीत को गाते हैं जिसे शेक्सपियर ने अपने नाटक ट्वेल्फ्थ नाइट में लिखा था ताकि दर्शक जो चार सौ साल को याद कर रहे उन्हें याद आ जाये कि इन दोनों नाटकों में एक सूत्र है और इन्हीं दो नाटकों के बीच ही लेखक ने ओथेलो, मैकबेथ और हैमलेट लिखा था। नृत्य और गायन में हमने भरत प्रस्तावित करण और ध्रुवाओं का प्रयोग किया। करण का अर्थ सिर्फ गति या सिर्फ स्थिति नहीं। करण एक ही समय में स्थानक भी है और गति भी (अध्याय चार, कारिका साठ)। यह स्थानक यानी स्थिति और गति की एकान्विति है। इसी प्रकार ध्रुवा का ध्रुवपद से कोई सम्बन्ध नहीं है, न प्रत्यक्ष न परोक्ष। न ही यह कोई अमूर्तन है जिसे आज गाया नहीं जा सकता। गायन की एक प्रभावशाली मधुर शैली है ध्रुवा जिसका प्रयोग पहले संक्षेप में पूर्वरंग में और फिर मंचन के पूरे दौरान किया जाता है। नाट्यवेद के अध्याय बत्तीस में दर्ज 530 कारिकाओं में इसे गाने की विधि स्वरलिपियों के साथ बतायी गयी है जिसका प्रयोग हमने इस प्रस्तुति में किया। पूर्वरंग में भी और प्रस्तुति में भी। प्रस्तुति की भाषा अंग्रेजी थी, शेक्सपियर की भाषा के अनुरूप वाचिक में।

शेक्सपियर के समय में इतना ही किंग लीयर नाटक था लेकिन चार सौ सालों के बाद हमने इस रचना को और विस्तार से देखना चाहा। जैसे शुरुआत हमने योगवासिष्ठ की उस कहानी के संकेत से की जहां तीन राजकुमारों की जीवनशैली और जीवन की व्यर्थता का उल्लेख है। अन्त हमने बोर्हस की इस काव्यपंक्ति से की जब लीयर अपने कब्र के पास और अधिक कुछ कहना नहीं चाहता सिर्फ कब्र पर सो जाना चाहता है ताकि उस कब्रिस्तान के पेड़ों पर सो रहे चिड़ियों की शान्ति में व्यवधान न पड़े, कि इस बार वह इस उत्तल कब्रनुमा गर्भ में पवेश करे तो किसी

पुनर्नवा / शेक्सपियर की पुण्यतिथि के चार सौ साल 'किंग लीयर' का नाट्यशास्त्रीय पाठ

और देशकाल और देहकाल में जन्म ले जहां प्रेम मिले, मृत्यु नहीं। इस प्रस्तुति में तीनों बेटियों की हत्या का दृश्यविधान किया गया है लेकिन अपनी मृत्यु का आख्यान लीयर स्वयं करता है। और कब्र के पास जल रही मोमबत्ती को बुझा कर वह कब्र पर सिर टिका देता है। सोते हुए वह सिर्फ इतना कहता है, बोर्हस के शब्दों में कि, वी मस्ट मेन्टेन दी सायलेन्स ऑफ दी स्लीपिंग बर्ड्स। सायलेन्स ऑफ दी स्लीपिंग बर्ड ही इस प्रस्तुति का नाम रखा गया। आरम्भ में कब्रिस्तान पर पैन्टामाइम शैली में भूतों का नृत्य संजोया गया जिसके साथ बीथोवेन की पियानो सोनाटा नम्बर सत्रह डी माइनर का प्रयोग किया गया जिसके प्रयोग पर स्ट्रिन्डबर्ग ने नाटक लिखा था जिसका प्रयोग बर्गमैन ने अपनी फिल्म सेवेन्थ सील में किया था। इसे मूल रूप में पुनर्नवा करना यहां अभिष्ट था। शेक्सपियर की मृत्यु के बाद बाख, मोजार्ट और बीथोवेन इस दुनिया में आये। उनका संगीत इस प्रस्तुति में दर्शकों के सांगीतिक कान बने। मृत्यु के इस प्रेमस्पर्शी आख्यान को मंच पर कहा और जिया आशीर्वाद जैन, अंकिता दत्त, प्रतिश्रुति प्रामाणिक और अनिन्दिता बिस्वास ने कर्मशः लीयर और उनकी बेटियों के रूप में। दिव्या तिवारी ने लेडी मैकबेथ और डेस्डिमोना के संवादों से वृत्ति रूपान्तरण को अभिनीत किया। केन्ट, फ्रांस, बर्गन्डी आदि चरित्रों को कर्मशः रितेश, शंखदीप चट्टोपाध्याय, दीप्तरूप घोषदस्तिदार, सौभिक, पुष्पेन्दु और शोभन ने निभाया। प्रकाश और ध्वनि का सहअस्तित्व सुमित श्रीवास्तव और प्रतीति राय के कारण सुन्दर बन पाया। मृत्यु की पदावली में प्रेम का यह मंच-आख्यान बनारस के रंगपरिवेश में बहुत दिनों बाद सम्भव हुआ।

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## ABOUT THE COLLEGE

**Vasanta College for Women** is one of the oldest colleges (Estd. 1913) of Varanasi, admitted to the privileges of Banaras Hindu University and runs under the aegis of Krishnamurti Foundation India, a world renowned foundation devoted to the cause of education. The college is recognized under Section 2(f) and 12 (B) of the UGC Act, 1956.

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