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## Myth and realism in Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana

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### Abstract:

*Girish Karnad is a well-known playwright. He wrote various plays. His all plays can be categorized as feminist plays. One more aspect of his plays is his treatment of myth in his plays like, 'Bali: the sacrifice', 'The Fire and the Rain', 'Naga-Mandala', 'Hayavadana' etc. All his plays are based on folktales which are an integral part of Indian culture. He tries to give justice to the female characters through his plays. His plays are flourished with the elements of myth and reality which are told in folktales. He is a perfect master of handling myths, rituals, traditions and customs in Indian society. The present study is to find out mythological elements in Girish Karnad's play 'Hayavadana' and its connection with realistic elements in Indian society. Though he portrays events, characters, socio-cultural problems in historical and mythological folktales. He handles all situations from modern methods. Girish Karnad gives solutions to the problems through his plays. Girish Karnad makes myths, legends, culture and folktales as a medium for his new vision for creating his masterpieces through his plays. His most of the plays are a humanist retelling of history. The present study aims to know about Girish Karnad's contribution in handling myth, culture, history and legends in his plays.*

**Key words:** Myth, Legends, folktales, realism, archetype.

### Introduction:

Girish Karnad is a well-known Indian playwright. He is also a poet, director, actor, critic, and translator. He was born on 19 May 1938 in Matheran, Maharashtra. He is the recipient of the Jnanapitha Award that is the highest literary award in the field of literature. He has honoured Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan from the Indian government. Karnad wrote most of his plays in Kannada which are later translated into English and several other Indian languages. He is identified as a master of retelling history and mythology. Though his plays are based on folktales in Indian culture,

they are not mere imitations of those folktales. Girish Karnad reproduces these folktales through his wit and consciousness in a new form of a story. He also suggests modern methods, techniques, and solutions for the problems in history. He strongly opposes bad customs and traditions in Indian society and depicts new situations through scenes in his plays and gives an idea about reforms to the spectators and readers of dramas.

### **What is myth?**

Myth is a tale or narrative with a symbolic meaning in any civilization. Natural and supernatural elements are part of a myth where human and superhuman factors play an important role. Events, situations, and characters in the myth create a magical effect on readers and listeners. Many folktales have no written records they just transferred from one generation to another generation. There are chances of modifications in these mythological stories or folktales according to the contemporary era. Therefore, we can't say about their author and creation period. Most of the mythological stories are based on normative nature. They follow rules, regulations which are set by society on moral grounds. The deep-rooted caste system, class distinctions, beliefs, and misbeliefs, superstitions, male dominance, patriarchy, female marginalization are the characteristics of folktales. All these mythological stories have great emphasis on the minds of the people of the modern age. They believe these stories and blindly follow those stories. Mythological stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad-Gita, Vedas are integral parts of our lives. We come to know the concept of 'Dharma' that is what to do? and what not to do? Today also we believe in the teachings of stories given in these great epics.

### **Myth and realism in Girish Karnad's play Hayavadana:**

'Hayavadana' play is based on Kathasaritsagara in Sanskrit. Kathasaritsagara is a collection of Sanskrit stories. 'Hayavadana' is a story of the heads got switched to each other. In this play. The main character is a woman, the whole story is related to her. Padmini is a beautiful woman who is self-centred. Padmini represented as a selfish woman who fails to handle her sexuality and her carnal desire brings great doom in the life of Kapila, Devadatta, and herself. It is the story about the human quest for perfection or completeness, we all run behind luxury in life. The problem arises when we expect others to be perfect. Padmini married Devadatta who is intellectually strong but physically weak and Kapila is intellectually weak but physically strong. Padmini wants both qualities in her husband. she loves her husband Devadatta but attracts to the body of Kapila. Devadatta stands for brain and Kapila stands for the body in the play. In Padmini's subconscious, she craves both intellect and sexual satisfaction. Devadatta is a delicate man, a son of Brahmin who gets social appraisal through his wisdom so Padmini chooses him. Kapila is the son of an iron smith but has great strength. We also can see a deep-rooted caste system in Padmini's choice of husband. Padmini gets married to Devadatta and them three remain friends. Padmini becomes pregnant with a son and the

three friends decide to go on a trip together. Devadatta is not willing to go on the trip but Padmini convinces him. Devadatta feels that Padmini is getting attracted to the physical strength of Kapila and he became jealous of Kapila. Devadatta wants to spend some more time with Padmini alone but Padmini is not in the mood to listen to her husband and they all three went for the trip together.

When they are traveling Kapila fulfils every wish of Padmini. Kapila jumps off from the cart to grab a flower for Padmini. Padmini also praises Kapila's enthusiastic skill of driving the cart. Devadatta is a wise man he could guess the desire in the mind of Padmini. He is fired with jealousy. When they passed the temple of Kali. Devadatta remembers one of the promises and he cut his head. When Kapila saw the headless body of his friend Devadatta he also cut his own head in the temple of Kali. Though Kapila also attracted towards Padmini, he loves his friend Devadatta too. So, he decides to kill himself by cutting his head too.

Soon Padmini appears there and sees two headless bodies of his husband and friend. He starts mourning the two dead bodies and she decides to kill herself. The Goddess Kali stops Padmini from committing suicide and assures her that she can get back her husband and friend by just reposing their heads on their body. In excitement, Padmini accidentally transposes their heads on each other's bodies. Devadatta and Kapila become alive with each other's heads on their bodies. Padmini fulfils her carnal desire by doing so. Padmini becomes so excited because she got both qualities in the same man.

Kapila's head with Devadatta's body claims Padmini as his wife because at the time of marriage those hands gave her a promise to protect her as a wife and she is pregnant with his present body. But Devadatta's head with Kapila's body claims that though his hand gives promise and Padmini is impregnated from that body but the head is always king of the body and in body, parts head is given first priority so Padmini will remain his wife only. Now Padmini got both qualities in the same man so she decides to be with Devadatta's head with Kapila's body. Through this, she can get social approval as the wife of the wise man and she can fulfil her sexual desires too. Kapila leaves their lives forever.

Padmini starts enjoying her life with Devadatta. But Devadatta as a scholar doesn't know how to retain his strength and he starts reducing his manpower. Padmini decides to leave Devadatta and live with Kapila in the forest. After meeting Kapila she comes to know that Kapila has regained his male power and for that how he has to struggle to regain it. Padmini gets attracted to his muscle powers and decides to live with him happily. They spend happy nights with each other. company. One day Devadatta found two of them together and being jealous he decides to kill both. Devadatta and Kapila kill each other because they both want to get back from the confusion of their body and head. After the death of Devadatta and Kapila, Padmini performed 'sati'. She burns herself on the funeral pyre of her husband.

### **Conflict between myth and reality in ‘Hayavadana’:**

According to mythological stories Padmini by mistake transpose the head of her husband and friend on each other’s body. But Girish Karnad develops a story showing Padmini’s passionate feelings towards her husband’s friend. She accepts Devadatta as a Brahmin as her husband because she wants social recognition. She wants to become an ideal wife in eyes of the society but secretly wants to satisfy her sexual needs too. Padmini’s situation is the conflict between myth and reality. The myth about ideals and image of women in Indian society and reality about her carnal desires.

### **Conclusion:**

Girish Karnad uses archetypal myth in his all plays. In his play ‘Hayavadana’ he uses the same techniques. His technique to handle myth and reality is part of his collective consciousness. Many critics call his plays a modern recreation of folktales.

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