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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN GIRISH KARNAD'S PLAY *HAYAVADANA*

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Abstract:-In the field of Indian English drama, it is Girish Karnad whose arrival on literary scene during the formative years of this genre proved to be epoch-making. Karnad goes deeper into the roots of Indian culture its myths, legends, folklores and popular history to reflect the dilemma, conflict and predicament of humanity in the contemporary world. Known internationally as a playwright, a poet, an actor, a director, a critic and a translator, Girish Karnad has emerged as an emissary of Indian culture and dramatic art before the eyes of the world. Karnad's dramatic writing, though influenced by Western existential thinkers and dramatic theoreticians is well rooted in the native soil of Indian dramatic traditions, myths, legends, folklores and histories. Karnad himself finds Indian culture so much affluent in myths and legends that Indian writers need not go anywhere else for subject matter or for inspiration.

Keywords:Social and Cultural Values , Girish Karnad's Play Hayavadana , dramatic art .

INTRODUCTION :-

Centuries old folklores provide the basis of some of Karnad's famous plays like *Hayavadana* (Horse-Head, 1971), *Naga-Mandala* (Play with a Cobra, 1988), and *Flowers: A Monologue* (2004). Ancient Indian myths work as motifs in plays like *Yayati* (1961), *The Fire and the Rain* (1994) and Bali: *The Sacrifice* (2002). Karnad has used these age-old myths, folklores and legends to read the contemporary India and her social and cultural ethos. The flexible nature of folktales provides Karnad with enough freedom to manipulate his plot in accordance with the nature of the theme. Significant episodes and personalities from Indian history provide the content of the plays like *Tughlaq* (1964), *Tale-Danda* (1990) and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997). Only two recent works of Karnad Broken Images: *A Monologue* (2004) and *Wedding Album* (2008) have contemporary setting without any obvious reference to Indian myths, legends or folklores.

Karnad's magnum opus *Hayavadana* (1975) is a representative work of drama in the post-Independence theatre of India; and there are reasons for that: in a single play there is a fine amalgam of ballad, classical, popular, urban-rural theatre, dance, music, choral songs and folk narratives. In *Hayavadana*, Karnad retells the story of Padmini who is not fully satisfied with her sheer intellectual husband Devadutta. Her elemental thirst of life for vitality and physicality, she pines for instinctual fulfilment beyond the mores of culture and civilization. Driven by this blind desire she crosses the marital and patriarchal limits and starts aspiring for the strong and supple body of Kapila, Devadutta's fast friend. When Devadutta comes to know of her desire for Kapila, he beheads himself before the idol of the goddess Kali out of shame. Kapila also commits suicide by beheading himself at the same spot. When Padmini is also about to kill herself, the goddess Kali intervenes and tells her to put their heads to their respective trunks. Here what Padmini does is of the great significance. She deliberately replaces their heads in such a way that when they come to life, their bodies are exchanged. Now Padmini's longings are fulfilled at least for some time as she has the man with Devadutta's head but Kapila's body as her husband. She exclaims with joy: "My celestial bodied Ghandharva ... My Sun-faced Indra..." (Karnad in *Collected Plays* Vol. 1 2005: 151). For the time being she forgets Kapila altogether and immerses herself in her conjugal and domestic life with Devdutta. But her happiness does not prove to be long lasting as Devdutta soon loses his strength and begins to become delicate and tender as he has been earlier. Once again Padmini starts pining for Kapila who has now again developed muscular body. She sends Devadutta to Ujjain on the pretext of bringing new dolls for their baby. And as soon as he leaves for Ujjain, she also leaves the home and goes in the forest where Kapila lives. She is delighted to find that Kapila has regained his earlier stout physique. After a few days when Devadutta comes back and finds Padmini with Kapila, he fights with him. Consequently both kill each other. Grief-stricken Padmini makes a large funeral

pyre and performs Sati with the dead bodies of her both lovers.

In the traditional patriarchal system, woman has always been an abject figure on which everything that man does not understand or does not want to understand can be projected: all that he desires; all that he fears. Unlike the traditional texts, *Hayavadana* does not show a female identity being determined by male gaze; rather identities of Kapila and Devadutta here are shaped interestingly by Padmini's subjective gaze. Devadutta changes; Kapila changes; but Padmini remains as she has been. Though Devadutta and Kapila both desire her, it is she who is the consumer of both. In the centre of the play *Hayavadana*, Karnad puts the question 'What is a woman and what does she desire?'

Karnad's treatment of the theme of love in the play highlights that the traditional image of a woman in society is largely constructed by male chauvinistic ideology. He questions the ideal concept of the Indian woman to be a *pativarta* while for man there is no such strict concept of moral behaviour. Karnad, despite being a male himself, allows Padmini to go beyond the male-dominated cultural confines and assert her individuality freely. The divine figure Kali, a female who must have an insight into a female heart, assists her in her endeavour. The song of the Female Chorus in the play reveals the aspirations of a freedom loving woman: "Why should love stick to the sap of single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of many petalled, many flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?... I have neither regret nor shame" (Karnad in *Collected Plays* Vol. 1 2005: 116-117).

In Indian social milieu, a marriage is not something that takes place merely between two individuals but something that unites two families. The concept of marriage in traditional Indian society has been destabilized in Karnad's *Hayavadana*. Devadutta and Padmini's marriage is also described by Bhagavata as two families coming together. The other aspect of the traditional marriage is that the elders play the decisive role in arranging it, and the bride and groom rarely have any chance of making their own choices. At the very outset, Kapila realizes that Padmini is not made for a tender and soft man like Devadutta. And within six months of the marriage it is obvious that Kapila's athletic body attracts her more than Devadutta's beauty and learning. In this way, Devadutta and Padmini are intellectually and physically mismatched couple. Devadutta represses his emotions while Padmini accepts and faces the reality boldly. In comparison to Devadutta and Kapila, she is more clear-headed and outspoken. She does not repress her love and attraction for Kapila. Rather she deploys all her feminine guiles to enjoy the attention and company of both the men.

The sub-plot, i.e., the story of a half man-half horse named Hayavadana, highlights the theme of identity in the play. Like Devadutta and Kapila, Hayavadana also suffers from the incompleteness and, like Padmini, strives for perfection. Padmini achieves her objective by finding the warmth of both the intellectual mind and the muscular body whereas Hayavadana reaches his destination by turning into a complete horse. The very presence of Lord Ganesha in the form of "An elephant's head on a human body, a broken tusk on a cracked belly" (105) in Indian mythology questions the notion of completeness and fixed identity. The traditional view is that in human anatomy head is superior to body. But Karnad does not seem to be comfortable with this view. His play depicts that even a body is sensitive enough to think and feel, and at times, it can govern the head as well.

Girish Karnad has fused beautifully Indian and Western theatrical traditions in the dramaturgy of *Hayavadana*. The story has been narrated and presented on the stage in the ballad style. The Bhagavata sings the story of Devadutta, Padmini and Kapila before the audience: "Two friends there were one mind, one heart. They saw a girl and forgot themselves. But they could not understand the song she sang" (116). The gestures and postures of the singing Bhagavata along with other effects on the stage can be described as a dramatic narrative with strong theatrical elements. Bhagavata performs the role of Sutradhar here. The Bhagavata is used to be the chief narrator of the story in the Yakshagana, the most popular theatrical forms of Karnataka. The life force of Yakshagana is the Bhagavata who holds the narrative together while artists indulge in dialogue in verse and prose to carry the plot forward. Karnad's Bhagavata fulfills many roles in this play apart from being the key to the play, he simultaneously plays the roles of a detached observer, one of the characters of the play, the confidant of the heroine, and most significantly, he serves as the link between the audience and the dramatis personae. Along with ballad other narrative modes of the folk theatre have been intermingled with the classical one. For instance, the female chorus represents Padmini's voice and presents the story from a feminine point of view. Likewise, the two dolls in the play too perform the function of the chorus. They provide commentary on the hypocrisy of the male protagonist Devadutta and serve as the psychological means to reveal the innermost desires of the female protagonist Padmini.

CONCLUSION

Karnad's play *Hayavadana* reveals the spirit of his artistic creation, which aims to project not only the desirable aspects of enriched Indian culture but also to its shortcomings and insidious effects on the people. His dramatic endeavour conforms to the notion that drama since its birth is meant for the common people. In Karnad's aesthetics the word 'demos' does not mean only common people in terms of social or economic status; rather it connotes all the human beings who are considered inferior and weak and whose images have been subtly constructed through social and cultural conditioning. Karnad's endeavour seems to break these age-old stereotypes in order to instruct, elevate and liberate ordinary humanity. As a dramatist he is well conscious of the importance of theatrical devices in the plays and undoubtedly his theatre has been richer than that of any of his contemporaries, but his basic concern is human spirit.

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