CULTURAL STUDIES IN GIRISH KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA

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Abstract

The present study attempts to explore Karnad's use of myth, in the select plays. "Myth" always becomes a challenge to modern readers. Karnad gives a new facelift to the mythological characters with his contemporary relevance and characterization and a new mode of applying the concepts in many of his plays. Despite the fact that his plays are based on mythology, personal tales, and legends, the subject matter and treatment are very modern. Karnad's characters make the readers think and figure out how to solve these problems. He has never given a final product before, instead leaving it to his readers or viewers to consider.

Introduction

Mythology is included in narrative form, connecting symbolic representations, mostly of an anonymous origin and partly traditional, that relates original events and is especially associated with religious believers of the particular region. It is differentiated from cultural and symbolic representations and specific places or objects. Myths are stories related to super natural beings involved in exceptional happenings or circumstances in an anonymous time but which is often accepted believed by the common folks.

Myth is used as a symbol highlighting the culture and tradition of a particular country. Myth is presented in the form of a story by a writer orally or in any written form.

The historical achievement, wartime adventures, existential elevation, remarkable heroism, the participation of Gods and Goddesses are used in myths along with symbols, signs, and some new concepts. Myths symbolize the structural principles of literature.

Myth is a complex phenomenon. Every myth can yield several inter pretations.The word myth is derived from the Greek word 'mythos' which means story or fiction. Though all the mythological stories of different timelines narrate supernatural events, they seem to have no actual account of proof or evidence. Yet it has its account of having existed since the inception of the human race. People have believed those

mythical characters as an irresistible common core. Myth has existed in almost every society. Examples are seen in Indian mythology, Greek mythology, Norse mythology, and other kind of literatures. Myths are very much interconnected with people and their existence over the cosmos. It has been travelled across age and generations.

Themes

In Hayavadana, Karnad has made use of the ancient myth and attempted to solve the problem of man's identity in a world of complicated relationships. Karnad does not use the myth merely to modernize the situation and characters to show their pertinence to our day. He seeks to portray a new human reaction to basic situations. He has interpreted Padmini, a mythical character, as a modern woman. She is placed in an extreme situation when she has to love her husband and at the same time cannot control her desire for the strong body of Kapila. Her problem is a basic one. Karnad has presented this situation, having social dimensions in his mind. By making Padmini go against the moral law, Karnad presents a new human reaction to basic situations. The existential analysis of myth seems to be the most essential of the potential methods, for the issue of seeking an identity for himself or obtaining a self-understanding seems to be inherent in man's very mode of life and more fundamental than questions of how things started.

The story of Hayavadana initially gave him scope for "the use of masks and music." "Western theatre has developed a contrast between the face and mask – the real inner person and the exterior one presents, or wishes to present, to the world outside." "The mask is just the face 'writlarge,' since a character portrays not a specific metaphysical being but an ethical archetype, the mask merely presents in expanded detail its basic moral nature," according to conventional Indian theatre. There are no unique or actual names for the characters. Padmini is the protagonist, and she is named "after one of the six types into which Vatsyayana classified all women. Her husband's name is Devadatta, which means a formal way of meeting a stranger, and his friend's name is Kapila, which means "the dark one." "Music – usually percussion – then further distances the action, placing it in the realm of the mythical and the elemental" (Three Plays 13).

Hayavadana is the play on the search for identity in a world of tangled relationships, Karnad has employed the satirical elements of hypocrisy and tried to bring out the sheer qualities of cowardliness. Hayavadana pathetically asserts that he has been facing an identity crisis ever since his birth. In the sub-plot Karnad narrates, in the manner of folktale, the mythical story of a Gandharva and the shapeshifting to stallion due to a curse. In a very artistic way, Karnad interconnects Hayavadana's desperate search for completeness with that of theprotagonists in the main plot. It is to be noted that the sub-plot of Hayavadana is an entirely new creation of Karnad.

Commenting on its thematic significance, Mohit Ray aptly remarks: The story of Hayavadana introduces a sub-plot – an original invention of Karnad – and it is thematically integrated to the main plot, so far as the theme of the identity is concerned. The idea that the title is taken from Hayavadana's subplot or tale shows its thematic significance, and Hayavadana is the character in the play who poses the identity dilemma more vividly and authentically than anybody else. The subplot allows Karnad to approach the issue from two perspectives: philosophical and socio-cultural. To put it another way, Karnad deals with the moral dilemma in the main plot and the metaphysical dilemma in thesubplot.The play Hayavadana proves the dictum that no man can live in the artificial mind and body, having the body of one man and the head of another. Myth is used to prove this the incompleteness of the two men becomes the conflict and alienation to the life of all the three. Their identity crisis brings out the final death of both men and Padmini's 'sati' to end her life. Not only these three characters but also the people have this kind of incompleteness in this life. Karnad's final suggestion is that an animal can be complete as it is connected with nature. But humans can never become complete as they have the human behaviours of jealousy, anger, sensual pleasures. The only character which accomplished his identity is the Hayavadana.

The love triangle is something unusual or abnormal which creates the conflict between the body and the mind. The dolls are used as symbols to show Padmini's bodily pleasures, Padmini's dreams, and eventually her conflicts of living with both the strong bodies Kapila and brainy Devadatta. Here the physical body with lust is fighting with mental thinking with logic. The final outcome is only death, the tragic lesson, a lesson to be cautious of the weak heart with its lust and pleasure

Hayavadana shows the gifts of nature perceived in primordial primal vision as imperfection in the form of Devadatta and Kapila which needs to be sacrificed, as everything has the divine purpose to achieve as assigned to everyone. They are sacrificed to regenerate into the perfect being by the imperfect Padmini, but their metamorphosis back to their original selves is in obedience to the law of nature. Here, there is a point to be noted that not only the Hayavadana which wanted its completeness but also Padmini who feels incomplete without getting a perfect man, intellectually and physically. Yet she regrets her action of mixing up the bodies to have her fulfillment. The woman has to walk through the double-cross-fire. She punishes herself.

Conclusion

Karnad deals with the theme of the search for identity and human relationships. Through the existential interpretation of Padmini, Karnad has unlocked great areas of meaning and revealed the complexity of Man's self-understanding, and the hard core realities. Karnad's Hayavadana explores the complex psychosocial dimension of the problem of a human identity crisis, as different from the moral aspect of the Indian and untangled relationships. Hayavadana reveals the essential ambiguity of human personality which is shaped or shattered by the human environment. Fundamentally incomplete and imperfect, human beings search and strive for attaining the unattainable ideal of completeness and perfection. They usually tend to seek the assistance of some supernatural beings

The theme of human beings searching for the unattainable is explored in Hayavadana. In a world of intertwined relationships, Karnad raises the issue of human identity. When the two heroes-the two intimate friends, kill each other by beheading, there arises the complication of identity. Padmini, the malcontented woman tries to perform sati. Here he deals with the social conditions which are cruel to women and also about the ridiculous blind superstitious belief inGod.

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