

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE IN GRISH KARNAD NOVELS

V. MUTHU LAKSHMI, M.Phil.,(Scholar) English

PRIST UNIVERSITY, THANJAVUR.

Dr.K.B. JASMINE SUTHANTHIRA DEVI, M.A., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D(Education).,
Ph.D(English)

Department of English,

PRIST UNIVERSITY, THANJAVUR.

Abstract - This article is mainly focussed on the contemporaneity of Karnad's play Yayati. Though the play retells the age- old story of the mythical king, Karnad has given the traditional tale a new meaning highly relevant to today's life. In the play, there is the presence of the theme of duties and responsibilities of father upon son and vice-versa. In this paper it was well analysed between Yayati, father and Pooru, son. Contemporaneity of the play is wonderfully depicted in Chitrlekha-Yayati dialogue. Chitrlekha tries to take a place in a male-dominated world. Chitrlekha challenges the social obligation and moral laws. Even though the play is motivated by their own concept of the opposite sex, they do, consequently try to seek their own identity. **Keywords:** Accord, Adamant, Demoralize, Endowed, Immortality, Jubilant, Mantle, Myth, Patriarchy. Girish Karnad, perhaps,

the most renowned media personality in the contemporary India, is India's leading playwright and an adept practitioner of the performing arts. (1999:n.p.) His plays are primarily written in Kannada and then are translated into other languages. The English translation of his plays is his own. They have brought him international recognition as a pre-eminent contemporary playwright. To his credit Karnad has Yayati, Tughlaq,

Contemporary Relevance in GRISH KARNAD Novels

Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, Tale-Danda and The Fire and The Rain. He has been widely acclaimed by both the theatre and drama critics for certain aspects of his plays: plot construction, characterisation, song, symbolism, use of myth and

folktales, reinterpretation of history, projection of contemporary social and psychological problems. In this paper, an attempt has been to examine critically Karnad's depiction of contemporaneity in his play, *Yayati*. By exploiting myths and legends, he tried to show how they are quite relevant in portraying a modern man's dilemma. In other words, the myths and legends provide him ample scope to take up significant issues like problems of identity, patriarchy, man-woman relationship and pervasive sense of alienation. Vol. IV 7&8 Jan. - Dec. 2012 *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies* 238 In *Yayati*, Karnad has taken the traditional Puranic theme but has given a fresh interpretation to it. The play has pioneered a style, which blends the elements of indigenous theatre. It is a story from the history of the unknown past but the problem discussed in the play is most modern one. Karnad employed myth in the play. But the function of myth is to transcend its own factual case by magnifying it, elaborating upon it, refining it and then enriching itself at each telling and retelling. The myth of *Yayati* has been reported time and again. It traverses the generations, it has liberated itself from time frames and spatial constraints. Karnad uses this myth in theatre within the three unites of time, space and

action. In this way universal and most modern qualities of the myth have been exposed to the audience. In this regard Veena Noble Dass opines that: "By using these myths, he tried to show that absurdity of life with all its elemental passions and conflicts and man's eternal struggle to achieve perfection." (1990:44) *Yayati* retells the age-old story of the mythical king who in his longing for eternal youth sought to borrow the vitality of his own son. Karnad has borrowed the myth from the *Mahabharata*. Karnad has given the traditional tale a new meaning and significance highly relevant in the context of life today. The symbolic theme of *Yayati*'s attachment to life and its pleasures and also his final renunciation are retained. As the play opens, the *Sutradhara* informs the audience that it is a mythical play—a page from the history of the unknown past. The characters, the incidents and circumstances are related to the old times. However the reality depicted in the play is applicable to modern time as well. The *Sutradhara* says that neither a scholar nor an ordinary person can escape the burden of responsibility wherein lies the joy of life. Whether it is an old man in search of lost youth or a saint lost in the darkness or the mute. The *Sutradhara* brings forth the theme of responsibility. The play starts on a quiet note, with

Swarnalata complaining to Devayani against Sharmistha. Though Devayani defends Sharmistha, Sharmistha does not accord proper respect to Devayani because she knows too well that Yayati married the latter as she was Vol. IV 7&8 Jan. - Dec. 2012 Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies 239 the daughter of Shukracharya who could bless him with immortality. When Sharmistha and Devayani have an argument Sharmistha tells Devayani: "Sharmistha: Except that he is not lusting for you. You poor darling, he lusts for immortality. Your father's art of sanjeevani." (2008:11) When Devayani insists that Yayati did not know her identity when he married her, Sharmistha sarcastically comments: Sharmistha: ...even with prostitutes picked off the street, the first thing a man does is ask her name'. And you say with you, the king dispensed with even that formality? You knew what would happen if you didn't act quickly. I mean, you didn't want the Kacha experience again! (13) Despite the on-going order the latter to go away from the palace. Thus she is the one who is responsible for Sharmistha in the palace. When the crisis in the life of Yayati comes, instead of owning up her responsibility, Devayani leaves the palace. She refuses to yield and the result is the

curse of premature old age on Yayati. When Yayati learns that Shukracharya has cursed him with old age he does not accept the responsibility of what he has done. The curse demoralize Yayati. Yayati loses control on himself and does not know how to handle the situation.

Sharmistha tries to pacify Yayati by asking him to accept what has come his way. Yayati gets violent and refuses to accept old age. He remains adamant. He goes to the extent of saying that Pooru must be celebrating the occasion for it gives him an opportunity to assume the mantle of the King immediately. When Pooru comes back and informs that Yayati's curse can be redeemed if some young person accepted his old age. Yayati is jubilant. Again when Pooru informs Yayati that nobody is ready to accept the curse, the latter does not believe it. Pooru ask Yayati to accept his old age and go to the forest but in return Yayati cries bitterly and with folded hands begs at Pooru. He decides to accept the curse of senility inflicted on his father. When Pooru proposes that the curse given to Yayati should be transferred to him, Vol. IV 7&8 Jan. - Dec. 2012 Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies 240 Sharmistha tries to dissuade him. She then reminds him of his responsibility



towards his wife. But Pooru doesn't resist from his decision. Yayati, thus succeeds in transferring his old age and his sins to Pooru. The argument that he puts forward is that his people need him as a king and therefore he is doing this but to his own self, it is clear that this is not the truth.

REFERENCES

Karnad, Girish. 2008. Yayati. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2005. Collected Plays.

Vol.I. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Panday, Sudhakar and Barua, Freya. 1990. Studies in Contemporary Indian Drama. New Delhi: Prestige Books.
Wale, N.G. 2011. "The Use of Myth in Karnad's Yayati". The Quest. Volume 25, No. 1. Research Scholar, Deptt. of English, Manipur University, Imphal. Vol. IV 7&8 Jan. - Dec. 2012