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RESEARCH ARTICLE



POWER POLITICS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA AND TUGHLAQ

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ABSTRACT



Through the centuries, Indian drama has been one of the means of discovering how a human being can achieve an optimal human existence—cultural, social, political, material, and spiritual. The staging of patriotic plays in modern Indian theatre boosted operative energy in the freedom movement. The spirit of liberty provided significant impetus to the revival of various forms of performing arts. After independence, Karnad, along with other playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar, Mohan Rakesh, and Badal Sircar, conducted 101 theatrical and thematic experiments in order to free individuals from the shackles of superstitiously internalized socio-cultural constructs.

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INTRODUCTION

The radical movement of Sharanas was influenced by power politics and orthodox religion. The prospect of a marriage between a cobbler boy and a Brahmin girl sparked outrage among traditionalists. Damodar Bhatta, the queen's priest, regards the proposed marriage as a significant blow to Vedic civilization and an audacious attack on Hindu religion. He believes that inequality is inherent in nature and that hierarchy is therefore a fundamental requirement of human existence. He still believes in the age-old Vedic Dharma principle that one's caste is one's home and is intended for one's welfare. Damodar Bhatta intends to seize control of the kingdom in order to oppose this radical change. He incites the king's reckless son Sovideva's wrath against the king. Manchanna Kramita, a power seeker and opportunist, joins forces with him. Thus, the plot of priest Damodar, politician Manchanna, and the rash heir Sovideva dethrones Bijala from the throne. After gaining power, they mercilessly use violence to thwart Sharanas' plans and efforts to achieve their goals. The bride and groom's fathers are apprehended and brutally murdered. Sharanas disperse, and at the behest of politician Manchanna, new king Sovideva orders his soldiers to kill every sharana in sight. The failure and bloodshed of Sharanas draws our attention to the troubled state and chaos of our modern India.

The maniacal pursuit of perfection by man is fleeting. Karnad recognised this and successfully channelled it in *Hayavadana* through the characters of the three worlds: Divine, Human, and Animal. While contemplating the personalities of Padmini,

Kapila, Devadatta, and Hayavadana, the fundamental teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita comes to mind.

The majority of man's problems stem from his misunderstanding of the true nature of the Self. There is no reason to be sad, as stated clearly and correctly in the Bhagavad-Gita. Every fundamental problem stems from the fundamental human problem of the insufficient self. Life will continue to be a problem unless one discovers oneself to be an adequate self. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna reveals that any human being—indeed, any being—is a complete adequate self. The sense of inadequacy stems from a lack of understanding of the true nature of the Self. The understanding of oneself will eliminate feelings of inadequacy.

When one realises that one is a whole and complete being, the conflict and grief fade away. Happiness becomes natural, and life becomes far more than worthwhile. The stories in the *Vetal Panchavimshati* and Somdeva's *Brihatkatha Saritsagar* are essentially the same, with a few differences in the latter, such as place names and references to character caste names. The plot is as follows:

In a temple in the city of Shobhavati, Prince Dhavala married Madansundari, the daughter of a king named Suddhapata, with the blessing of goddess Gauri. Svetapata, Suddhapata's son, then returned to his own country with his sister and her husband one day. On the way, he passed another temple dedicated to the goddess Gauri. Dhavala entered the temple to pay his respects to the goddess. He cut off his head with a sword he happened to see there and presented it to the goddess out of some inexplicable urge. Svetapata went inside after Dhavala did not



appear after some time. When he discovered what Dvavala had done, he also severed his own head and presented it to the goddess. Madansundari then went into the temple, realising her husband and brother had been gone for a long time, and saw their dead bodies lying before the goddess, and in great grief, she began to cut off her own head. Just then, the goddess Gauri appeared in front of her and stopped her, offering her what she desired. Madansundari naturally asked the goddess to bring her husband and brother back to life. The goddess requested that she place their heads on their shoulders. However, she joined her husband's head to her brother's body out of excitement. Madansundari realised her error when they resurrected. Vetala wants to know who Madansundari's husband is. The king responds, "Of course, the person who carries Dhvala's head on his shoulders."

Karnad's play, in typical fashion, begins where the Vetala story ends. How would the woman react if it actually happened, and would it solve her problem? are the intriguing problems that the artist in him faces. Karnad takes this kind of leap from the original story and develops it further in all of his plays. This subsequent development is the artist's imaginative play, and it challenges the glib solutions offered in the original stories.

Let us now look at what happens in Karnad's play *Hayavadana*. It's a daring and successful folk experiment. Karnad successfully employs folk tale and folk theatre conventions and motifs. Masks, curtains, dolls, and a story within a story have all been expertly used to create a strange world.

Padmini curses both of them after some time of waiting for him. She is terrified because it has begun to get dark. As a result, she also visits the Kali temple, only to discover the severed heads of Devadatta and Kapila. She lets out a sob. She blames them for killing themselves and abandoning her. She is puzzled. How could she possibly return home? What will she say to those present? These are the thoughts that haunt her. They would undoubtedly doubt her and believe that they both fought and died for her. She makes the decision to follow Kapila and Devadatta. Padmini is frozen as she lifts the sword to make the offering and hears the goddess' terrible voice. The goddess is overjoyed and requests a Varadan. Padmini requests that Devadatta and Kapila be brought back to life. The goddess Kali instructs Padmini to place the heads on their bodies and the sword around their necks to bring them back to life. The goddess and Padmini then have a brief conversation. The goddess now requests that she hurry up. Padmini makes a mistake in her haste. She puts the wrong heads on the wrong bodies as a result of the darkness and excitement. Both of them come to life, and all three are taken aback. Devadatta's head is now on Kapila's body, and vice versa. As a result, she enjoys the best of both worlds: Devadatta's mind and Kapila's body.

This happiness, however, is short-lived because when it comes to returning, Kapila with Devadatta's body claims Padmini. His argument is that Padmini took her marriage vows before the sacred fire with his body, and the child she was nursing in her womb is the seed of that body alone. Padmini and Devadatta are perplexed and distressed by it, and Devadatta's explanation that it is the head that matters is meaningless to Kapila. Finally, they agree



to go to a wise saint, whose words will be final and binding on them. The sage declares that, just as Kalp-Vraksha is supreme among all trees, the head is supreme among all human limbs. The man with Devadatta's head is, in fact, Devadatta. With this decision, Padmini and Devadatta are ecstatic, while Kapila is devastated. The parting of the ways begins here. Kapila departs for the forest, and the couple returns to their marital bliss. Karnad has succeeded in establishing an authentic Indian atmosphere in *Hayavadana*. He has incorporated a number of words from Indian languages into his English translations, which he then Indianized. Hayavadana is a Sanskritised word that means "horse-faced." Furthermore, Lord Ganesha is known by names such as Vighneshwara, Vakratunda-Mahakaya, and Mangalmurthy. He employs terms such as Gandharva, Ganesha, Kali, the names of Indian Gods and Goddesses, Yakshagana and Kathakali - Indian dance styles, rishi, Kalpavraksha, Pativrata, Sita, and others. As a talented playwright, he has the ability to transform any fictional or mythological situation into an aesthetic experience, as Kirtinath Kurtkoti points out.

Each successive line and dialogue of the play contains elements of power politics. The entire play tells the story of power politics, whether through the characters, the theme, or the atmosphere. The author has successfully intertwined the themes of mythology and power politics. It's the brightest and most appealing aspect of the text. Girish Karnad employs mythical and historical episodes to highlight issues that confront modern India on multiple levels. In his first play, *Yayati*, based on a story from the Bhagavata, he addresses the issue of responsibility.

TUGHLAQ

Tughlaq, published three years later, takes a chapter from Muslim history and draws striking parallels between India then and India now.

The Sultan made every effort to ensure the comfort of the people on their journey from Delhi to Daulatabad. Shady trees were planted along the route; free food and water were provided to the people every three kilometers of travel; all were provided with transportation; all were compensated for the loss incurred in leaving their assets in Delhi; and all were provided with free residence and food in Daulatabad. Despite these conveniences, the forty-day journey from Delhi to Daulatabad was an extremely trying experience for the people of Delhi. The migrants endured unspeakable hardships during the march. The forced exodus from Delhi to Daulatabad caused untold suffering, poverty, hunger, and starvation among men, women, children, young, and old alike. Tughlaq's relief measures were misappropriated by corrupt officers. The people were rebellious after long periods of hunger, starvation, and other humiliations, and Tughlaq punished them severely. K. A. Nizami, a modern historian, writes on page 528 of his famous book *Comprehensive History of India*:

"The Sultan began to punish both the guilty and the innocent on mere suspicion in the hope that bloodshed on a large scale would terrorize his officers and make them obedient; on the other hand, his officers, knowing his military weakness, preferred rebellion to punishment without trial." (K. A. Nizami, 528)



The experiment was a colossal failure, and Delhi was restored as the capital after seven years. Sultan's plan was a complete failure. It failed for a variety of reasons. When the Sultan summoned the people of Delhi, including the elite, to Daulatabad, he made a blunder. He should have only shifted his court, and the rest would have followed. The common people were neither prepared nor required to relocate to an unknown and distant location. Daulatabad was also a long way from the empire's northwestern border. It was difficult to repel Mongol invasions from there. Furthermore, the consolidated north India provided the empire with greater security than the newly conquered south. As a result, the Sultan chose the wrong location and used the wrong methods to transfer his capital. Sultan's rash and reckless act of relocating the capital to Daulatabad made him very unpopular, and he lost the sympathy of his people.

No ruler in our mediaeval history has sparked as much interest and debate as Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. He inherited a vast kingdom that included not only northern India but also the Dakhin. His accomplishments, on the other hand, were negative. As a result, when he died, the Sultanate of Delhi shrank. The Dakhin was almost destroyed. Sindh was almost out of his grasp when he breathed his last. Some modern historians believe that Muhammad was not to blame for his failure as a ruler because circumstances were not in his favour. His failure was due to his typical limitations as well as some strange decisions. He had it all-intellect, power, and a kind heart-but he lacked common sense and practical wisdom.

The entire play is a repository for power politics. It is possibly Karnad's only play that is entirely

concerned with the theme of power politics. The play is full of policies of the so-called mad Tughlaq and his saga of power politics, from the shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad to the token currency episode.

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