



M.A. ENGLISH
PART - II

ENGLISH PAPER VIII
INDIAN LITERATURE IN
TRANSLATION

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MA PART – II
English Paper VIII,
Indian Literature In Translation

The objective of this paper is to offer an exhaustive study of Indian literatures in the various Indian languages through English translation. The paper will cover the history of Indian Literature from the medieval times down to our own. It will concentrate on major movements, trends and tendencies, besides the major authors and literary texts. Since the paper concentrates on Indian literature in translation, not on the act of translation itself, the focus will be on the literary movements, texts and authors. Nevertheless a brief acquaintance with problems and issues involved in literary translation also forms a part of the paper.

The outline and short history of Indian literature from twelfth century to our times.

Various movements swept across the nation and their impact on Indian life and literature:

- a) The Bhakti movement: A reaction against the Brahminical social structure and the way of life. A resistance to the Sanskritised. Devotion to spirituality and efforts to it down to the masses. A sense of social equality and grievances against the caste-system. A cultural revolution. The medieval Indian Renaissance.
- b) The influence of Islamic culture on Indian life and literature: The Muslim invasions in the medieval period. Wars with the native rulers and their effects. Social customs like sati, purdah, etc. The Mughal period. Baburnama. Akbar's initiatives towards communal harmony, Din-e-Ilahi, Aina-e-Akbar. The Mughal architecture. The emergence of Urdu as an Indian language and its literature.
- c) The colonial Impact on Indian literature: The Battle of Plassey in 1757. The introduction of English in India education. Anglo-Indian literature. Novel as a new literary genre. Romanticism and modernism and their impact on Indian writings. The colonial critical notions. Formalism, Surrealism, the Freudian analysis of the human mind and personality.
- d) The recent trends in Indian writing: The Indian national freedom movement. The spread of education among the masses. The spread of democratic values. Mass movements, mass literature. Literature of the rural life and of tribal experiences. The 'crisis' of language and the related issues.

II: Issues and problems involved in translating literary texts:

- a) transference of meaning from Source Language to Target Language
 - i) decoding & encoding of meaning,
 - ii) constraint between major and minor languages

- b) The concept of equivalence in translation.
- c) Loss of meaning in translation
 - i) Loss of culture-specific features
 - ii) Loss of genre-specific features
- d) Free and faithful translation
 - i) Faithfulness to the original text
 - ii) Liberties taken in the act of literary translation

Texts

Poetry:

1. Selections from Akka Mahadevi: from, A.K. Ramanujan's Speaking of Shiva and from, The Golden Treasury: An Anthology of Urdu Poetry, Ajmed Ali (ed.)
2. Kabir: Bijak of Kabir, translated by Linda Hess and Sukhdev Singh.
3. Selected Poems by the following Contemporary Indian Poets:
 - a. Jibanananda Das)
 - b. B.S. Mardhekar) The Department shall make the selected
 - c. G.K. Adiga) poems of these poets available in .
 - d. Namdeo Dhasal) English translation
 - e. Daya Pawar)
 - f. Dalpat Chavan)

Novel:

4. Munshi Premchand: Nirmala, Translated by Alok Rai, OUP, 1999
5. S.S. Piliyai, Cheemen
6. O.V. Vijayan, The Legend of Khasak

Drama:

7. Girish Karnad: Nagmandala.OUP
8. Premanand Gajvee: Kirwant, Seagul,2005
9. Dhiruben Patel: Bhavai.Trans.Ketan Mehta.

Recommended Reading:

1. Bassnett, Susan. Translation Studies. Routledge, 1991.
2. Sujit Mukherjee. Translation as Discovery. Orient Longman, 1994.
3. C.D. Narsimhaiah (ed.). Indian Literature of the Past Fifty Years (1917-1967).
4. R.K. Dhawan (ed.). Indian Literature Today, Vol.I, II. Prestige Books, New Delhi, 1994.
5. Gangadhar Gadgil. Indian Literature: Issues and Explorations. B.R. Publishers, New Delhi, 1995.
6. Arjun Dangle (ed.). Poisoned Bread: Translations From Modern Marathi Dalit Literature, Orient Longman, 1992.

7. Holmes J. Lambert J and Lefevere A. (eds.): Literature and Translation, Louvain, ACCO, 1978.
8. Paul Selver. The Art of Translating Poetry, London, John Baker, 1966.
9. Olive Classe (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation in English, London, Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999.

Since Critical books in English on Indian writers may not be readily available, students are advised to refer to Indian Literature, Sahitya Akademi's Bi-monthly journal which carries regular articles on Indian writers and on the problem related to Indian Literature.

Examination Pattern:

100 marks Theory Paper

Q.1 On Background themes and issues with three internal options.

Q. 2, 3 & 4 on texts, with three internal options, with combination of texts

As per UGC norms each theory paper has been assigned one hour of tutorial per week; and the same is reflected in the time table of the Department.



GIRISH KARNAD'S *NAGMANDALA* PART- I

Unit Structure:

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Modern Indian Drama: A Brief Survey
- 14.3 Girish Karnad: Life and Work
- 14.4 *Nagmandala*: A Brief Overview
- 14.5 Conclusion
- 14.6 Important Questions
- 14.7 References

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, the students will be able to understand:

- The Development of Modern Indian drama and the status of Indian Drama in English
- Important features of Modern Indian Drama
- The oeuvre of Girish Karnad
- The brief overview of the play *Nagmandala*.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

As far as Indian drama is concerned, it has a long unbroken history of over two thousand years. These years are generally classified into three distinct phases: 1. The Ancient or Classical Period of Sanskrit Theatre (200 BCE to 1000 CE). Bhasa, Kalidasa, Shudraka, Vishakhadatta, Bhavabhuti and Harsha are the playwrights who contributed the classical period. 2. The Medieval Period or The Traditional Theatre (1000 CE to 1857 CE). During this phase, regional literatures and folk and ritualistic theatres emerged and flourished 3. The Modern Indian Drama' (1857 CE to the present).

14.2 INDIAN DRAMA: A BRIEF SURVEY

- **Modern Indian Drama:**

The developments of Modern Indian Drama can be described by taking into consideration three phases: The Orientalist Phase (1827 to 1920), The Nationalist Phase (1920-47) and The Post-Independence

Nationalist Phase (1947 onwards). Actually there are no water-tight compartments among these phases.

In Bengal western drama started exercising its influence on the Indians under the rule of the East India Company. Herasim Stepanovich Lebedeff, a Russian violinist, staged a Hindi and Bengali mixed-language version of a short play in 1795. It was the first performance with the native actors. Though it did not exercise much influence, it has historical importance. In 1831 Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjea wrote the first modern Indian play, *The Persecuted*. This was the first play by an Indian to show follies and foibles of the actual conditions of the time. It had no impact on other writers. Therefore, it was never performed. In the 1830s, first Bengali-language theatre emerged which was different from the traditional Indian theatre. A number of Indian theatre enthusiasts began staging their own plays in their respective languages in Calcutta, Bombay and several parts of North and South India from the 1850s. These plays were Western proscenium style and clearly Indian in character.

Vishnudas Bhave, Marathi playwright, practiced the commercial strategy of selling tickets for the play in order to make drama more democratic and modern in 1853. It was limited to invited audience and dependent on the support of the rich natives. It was confined to private family theatre houses no longer. The Parsi and Gujarati theatre started following his example. As a result, modernism was established commercially in Bombay. The Bengali theatre could not practice this but included modernism thematically and produced many plays on social issues. Tarakaratna, Bengali playwright, criticized Polygamy custom in his play, *Kulin-kulasarbaswa* (1857). Assamese drama also produced plays like Gunabhiram Barua's *Ram Navami* (1857) that criticized social realities and evils. The similar attempts were made by Bhartendu Harishchandra in his play, *Vaidika Hinsa Hinsa Na Bhavati* (1873) in Hindi, by Jagmohan Lala in *Babaji* (1877) in Oriya and by Ranchhodbhai Dave in *Lalita Dukhdarshak*, 1878.

A stream of urban drama emerged by the late 19th Century. It was influenced by Anglo-European traditions. This new theatre made connections with the older traditional theatre and folk forms. Therefore, it created a hybrid identity. It was neither completely western nor original. This new Indian theatre had become a completely commercial venture independent of patronage of the rich natives by the end of the late 19th century. Both in Calcutta and Bombay, plays became highly sensational by using ornate costumes, monumental sets, and thrilling stage effects from the 1870s. This theatre, unlike traditional folk and tribal theatres, was staged inside theatre. The plays were often a conglomeration of melodrama, humour, romance and social criticism. Until the emergence of cinema, it was the only source of mass entertainment. By 1970's, entertainment theatre was gradually supplanted by popular cinema in some states in India due to the emergence of cinema. This theatrical practice remained popular for five more decades. Then it brought about two types

of developments: the musical plays and the plays concerned with social realism. A Marathi play like Deval's *Sharada* (1899) is the best example of the musical play and the social realist play. Anti-colonial spirit influenced these types of the play. In Bengal, some plays like *Sirajudaulla*, *Emperor Sivaji* were openly nationalist and in Maharashtra like Khadilkar's Marathi play *Keechak Wadh* (1907) was actually a satire on Lord Curzon's brutal rule. Even Dinabandhu Mitra's Bengali play *Nildarpan* (1872) was openly anti-British. From this play onwards, Bengali theatre started presenting more and more patriotic and nationalist trends. Due to such continuous patriotic exhibiting, the colonial rulers passed the Dramatic Performances Act in 1876 to control the anti-colonial tendencies. This act is still used today against the writers who do one or other such trends.

After the nineteenth century, drama mainly became a medium to express nationalist thought. We can see political themes and seeds of nationalist thought in Hindi and Bengali plays before nationalist movement in India. Then there was the emergence of the Mutiny in 1857 and the Indigo Revolt in Bengal in 1859-60. These plays attacked colonialism and invoked glorious India. The anti-colonial sentiment reflected both in the Indian theatres and outside in the early decades of the twentieth century. Drama in Marathi, Hindi, and other Indian theatres made use of mythological and historical elements to spread the spirit of revivalist Hinduism. The plays stressed the moral duty towards the nation to push the anti-colonial action more and more. They also touched the class and caste issues to show a strong social perspective. In Telugu and Tamil too, theatre was used as a means of propaganda by the nationalists from 1919 to 1945.

Even the poets of different Indian languages played an important role in this regard. Rabindranath Tagore made his major contribution immensely to the genres of drama, poetry and fiction in Bengali. He created his own drama and theatre elements taking from the western as well as the Indian theatrical forms. His plays were a mixture of poetry, symbolism, cosmic vision and socio-political criticism. His major work such as *Chitrangada*, *Post-office*, *Muktadhara* and *Roktokoribi* made a special impact on the modern Indian drama. The poets in other Indian languages also contributed majorly for the development of Indian drama. Bhartendu Harishchandra and Jaishankar Prasad in Hindi, Samsa and Kuvempu in Kannada, Subrahmanya Bharathiar in Tamil, and Sreekanthan Nair in Malayalam are the best example of it.

In the 1940s, Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) was established. It was the cultural part of the Indian Communist Party founded in 1922. During this time, Bengal and Bombay branches of IPTA successfully challenged the non-ideological commercial theatre. The dramatists of this association had the intention of classless society. Their creation, as an anti-colonial and anti-fascist strived to reach the masses. Therefore, these dramatists accepted the theatre as the proper means for

social change. It was the movement that became the strongest in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Bhishma Sahani in North and Toppil Bhasi in the South are the prominent examples of it. The plays of Ibsen and Bernard Shaw made their influence on the theatre of social criticism. In Telugu, Vireshalingam Pantulu's play, *Kanyashulkam* criticized the dowry-system. In Kannada, most of the Adya Rangachary's plays attacked many social evils present. In the contemporary time, there were amateur theatres that attempted to bring in social change were not associated with Communism. In 1944, Prithviraj Kapoor, the movie star, founded Prithvi Theatre that was the best example of it. The impact of IPTA began decreased after 1947 while amateur theatre continued to flourish in metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore. Utpal Dutt, playwright, director, actor and producer and Shambhu Mitra, a playwright, a film and stage actor and director, were the major figures of the time. Through his significant productions, *Teen Talwar* and *Surya Shikari*, Utpal Dutt made his contributions to political theatre. He also adapted popular folk theatre *Jatra* to convey present-day political message. Shambhu Mitra started a new theatre movement in Bengal with his group 'Bohurupee' established in 1948.

As the theatrical needs of the independent nation, a drama seminar was held in 1956. The participants opined that post-Independence Indian drama should be a combination of the Western and pre-Colonial original elements and find a middle path between imitation and revivalism. As a national theatre institute, National School of Drama was established for this purpose in 1959. The Sanskrit drama also got revived and produced Sanskrit plays for the modern audience with the Kalidasa Festival in Ujjain in 1959. Most of the prominent directors and theatre groups of the country majorly contributed for this. It was the revival that became the strong support for the development of the 'theatre of the roots' trend which was mainly influenced by the local traditions, ritual and folk performances. Due to the connection with the authentic ancient Indian tradition, the Sanskrit drama and the theatre of the roots became the significant factor of the national theatre. Thus, the roots movement stressed the anti-modern point of view. It also strived to define the intricacy of the modern theatre through the classical and folk categories. For example K. N. Panicker experimented with traditional dance forms in Kerala. Habib Tanvir used Chhattisgarh tribal forms. K. Shivarama Karanth made use of folk arts of coastal Karnataka in his drama.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Badal Sircar experimented with space through his 'Third Theatre' and 'Free Theatre'. He rejected commercial ticketing and the traditional forms. In the 1980s, such issues as interculturalism and the status of Indian theatre in world began to get critical attention.

- **Indian Drama in English:**

Indian Drama in English began with Krishna Mohan Banerji's *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindu Society in Calcutta* which was published in 1831. But actually development of it started with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization* (1871). During pre-independence period, a number of such playwrights as Sri Aurobindo, Tyagaraja Paramasiva Kailasam, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, A.S.P. Ayyar, and Bharati Sarabhai made their impact on Indian writing in English. During post-independence period, most of such playwrights as Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, and Gurucharan Das made successful experiment of their plays in England and U.S.A. In addition, playwrights such as Lakhan Deb, Nissim Ezekiel, Pratap Sharma, Gieve Patel, Cyrus Mistry, Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanabham, Dina Mehta, Poile Sengupta and Uma Parmeswaran have made their major contribution for the development of Indian English Drama.

- **Features of Modern Indian Drama:**

Now let's look at some of the features of the modern drama in terms of themes, forms or techniques, language, music, etc., used by the drama of this period.

The themes have become social and political in modern theatre. During the first half of the twentieth century, anti-colonial movements, social reform movements and two World Wars made their arduous influence on the themes. Furthermore, Marxism, psychoanalysis, symbolism, surrealism continued the same sort of exercise. After Independence, postcolonial issues, feminism, transgender issues, caste and class inequalities, urban anxieties, minority communities had become the subject matters of the modern Indian drama.

The modern Indian drama was dealt with different such forms and techniques as "mythological dramas, folk forms and rituals, historical revivals and transformed versions of Euro-American plays, notably of Shakespeare and Brecht, and through *avant garde* experimentation" (Bhatia xiii).

Music had been modernistic device in Indian plays. So, forms of musical theatre came into existence in 1880 in Parsi, Marathi and Bengali theatres. Marathi Sangeet Natak and Bengali Gitabhinay can be some of the examples. Particularly in Marathi theatre, Kirloskar experimented with music by mixing folk songs, devotional kirtans, Hindustani and Carnatic music and even he used actors instead of chorus to sing them. Tagore used classical ragas and inserted Western music too in his plays. In Hindi, Bhartendu Harishchandra in his *Andher Nagari* (1881) experimented with a musical political satire

Dance and folk forms became an important part of Modern Indian drama. *Yakshagana*, *Jatra*, *nacha*, *dashavtari*, etc., were used in plays.

Men performed the roles of women in the classical and medieval theatre. Modernity, however, was not limited only to these elements; it influenced all the spheres of the Indian drama – where the plays were performed, theatre architecture, patronage, stage, lighting, commercialization of the theatre.

- **Modern Indian Dramatists:**

When we have the survey of the modern Indian drama, it would be inevitable to see the place of Girish Karnad in the major contributors who gave the huge canvas and complexities of Indian modern theatre and shaped it and left the lasting marks on it.

Dharamvir Bharati (1926-1997), his verse play in Hindi, *Andha Yug* (1953), presented as an allegory of the consequences of the partition of India. It is related to the "theatre of the roots" movement and is today recognized as a major play in Indian theatre. He was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1988 for this play. **Mohan Rakesh** (1925-1972) has written three important plays, *Ashadh ka ek Din* (1958), *Lehron ke Rajhans* (1963) and *Aadhe-adhure* (1969). These plays deal with the intricacy, tension and suffocation in man-woman relationship in particular and ruthless problems of modern life in general. His play *Aadhe-adhure* is translated as *Halfway House* in English. So, his work is considered as a landmark in Indian theatre. He was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1968. **Badal Sircar** (1925-2011), Bengali dramatist, experimented with anti-establishment plays during the naxalite movement. He contributed to the street theatre and experimental Bengali theatre through his "Third Theatre". His plays became milestones in Indian theatre such as *Evam Indrajit*, *Basi Khabar*, *Saari Raat* and *Evam Indrajit*. **Vijay Tendulkar** (1928-2008), Marathi playwright, criticized violence and gender inequalities in Indian society especially in his play *Silence! The Court is in Session*. Most of his plays like *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Gidhade*, *Ghashiram Kotwal* represented Indian theatre at the international gatherings about 1980. Tendulkar used the Marathi medieval dramatic forms like *tamasha*, *keertan*, and *dashavatar* as the form of the play. Therefore, he is considered as an influential dramatist who had been the recipient of Padma Bhushan in 1984 and Sangeet Natak Academy fellowship in 1988. **Girish Karnad** (1938 –2019), modern Kannada playwright, was conferred Jnanapitha Award in 1998. He made use of mythology; folktales and history in his plays reveal contemporary social issues. His plays such as *Tughlaq*, *Yayati*, *Hayavadan* and *Nagmandala* are the examples of it. His place in modern Indian drama is similar to Badal Sircar in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. **B. V. Karanth** (1929–2002), Kannada playwright, contributed not only to Kannada theatre but also extended his experimentation in this field in Telugu and Tamil theatres. He brought in change in the old formal style of the Kannada theatre by making innovations of the music drawing for classical and traditional folk forms. His plays such as *Jokumara Swamy*, *Sankranti*, *Huchu Kudure* and *Oedipus* are the best examples of it. **Mahashweta Devi** (1926-2016),

Bengali playwright and socio-political activist, agitated against the injustice to the tribal people of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Bihar. Her writing reveals the cruel subjugation of untouchables and the tribal people done by the government officials, money-lenders and landlords. **Mahesh Elkunchwar** (b.1939) is the most advancing and influential playwright in Marathi and in Indian theatre. His literary works such as *Yatanaghar Garbo*, *Vasanakand Magna Talyakathi*, *Party*, *Wada Chirebandi*, *Pratibimb*, *Yuganta*, *Sonata*, *Eka Natacha Mrityu*, *Raktapushp*, etc. made major contribution for the Indian drama. He honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 2014. **Mahesh Dattani** (b.1958), first playwright in English, was the recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award. His works mainly focused on such sensitive issues as communalism, female infanticide, homosexuality, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, condition of the eunuchs in Indian society. He made his contribution for the modern Indian drama by writing plays such as *Where There's a Will* (1988), *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Final Solutions* (1992-93), *Do The Needful* (1997), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1998), *Thirty Days in September* (2001), *Uma and the Fairy Queen* (2001), *Where Did I Leave My Purdah* (2012).

14.3 GIRISH KARNAD: LIFE AND WORK

Karnad is one of the prolific writers of Indian drama. He with his innovative techniques, artistic perception has altered conventional concept of Indian English theatre. His contribution to the Indian English drama is unprecedented and incomparable. As a post-independent dramatist and a multifaceted personality, he has earned international praise as a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic and translator. He has written ten plays out of which he has translated five into English.

Girish Ragunath Karnad was born in Matheran, near Bombay on 19th May 1938. His initial schooling was in Marathi. He spent a major part of his childhood at a small town, Sirsi at Karnataka. His father was a physician at the Sassoon Hospital in Pune. His father had love for Marathi performances by *Balgandharava* and *Keshavrao Bhosale*. Karnad also acted in various Marathi and Kannada plays during his school days. Karnad family moved to Dharwar from Sirsi. Girish Karnad completed his graduation at Dharwar and shifted to Mumbai for Masters' degree. He was selected as a Rhodes Scholar for study in England. Therefore, he went to the University of Oxford where he did his M. A. in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (1960-1963). He had also been a President of the Oxford Union in 1963. His writing career already started in England. He came back to India to continue his writing and to work for the Oxford University Press in Madras (1963-70). He composed many prominent plays in both Kannada and English. Since 1970, he has received many honors in recognition of his dramatic writing such as Homi Bhabha Fellowship for creative work in folk theatre (1970-72), the Padma Shri Award (1974), the Karnataka Nataka Academy Award (1984), and the

Padma Bhushan Award (1992). He was also honored with four Film Fare Awards of which three for Best Director in Kannada and one for Best Screenplay. He was conferred the highest literary honour in India, Jnanapitha Award for Kannada in 1999. He remained World Theatre Ambassador of the International Theatre Institute (ITI) of UNESCO, Paris. He has given a humble service as a Director to Film and Television Institute of India and The Nehru Centre, London and as a Chairman, The National Academy of the Performing Arts. He was awarded Doctor of Letters (D.Lit) degree by the Karnataka University, Dharwar. He was influenced by Alkazi and Satyadev Dubey. He developed his interest not only in Marathi, Kannada and English but also in the classical Sanskrit stage. Karnad has probably provided the most genuine platform for Indian Mythology by changing folktales and legends from epics like *Mahabharata* into a modern context.

As far as his work is concerned, it is deeply rooted in Indian mythology and history. His first play *Yayati* which is a retelling of the Hindu Myth on the theme of responsibility came in 1961. His *Tughlaq* which was written in Kannada in 1964 was translated into English in 1976. *Hayavadana* (1971), a story by Thomas Mann, is based on *Transposed Heads*. His well-known plays are *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1964), *Ma Nishada* (1964), *Hayavadana* (1971), *Anjumallinge* (1977), *Hittina Hunja* (1980), *Nagamandala* (1988), *Taledanda* (*Death by Beheading*) (1990), *Agni Mattu Male* (*The Fire and the Rain*) (1995), *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997), *The Fire and the Rain* (1998), *Bali the Sacrifice* (2002), *Odakalu Bimba* (*Broken Images*) (2005), K.P.S. Iyengar rightly expresses his view about Karnad's three plays, "In all his three plays (*Yayati*, *Tughlaq* and *Havavadana*) be the theme, historical, mythical or legendary - Karnad's approach is modern and he deploys the conventions and motifs of folk art like masks and curtains to project a world of intentions, uncertainties and unpredictable denouements." Although rooted in Indian mythology and history, Karnad's plays at the same time displays a strong and unmistakable western philosophical sensibility. As a playwright mythology has been his most favourite a subject of deep thinking.

14.4 NAGMANDALA: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Nagamandala by Girish Karnad is a two-act play including a prologue written in 1987 and published in 1988. The prologue is set in the inner sanctum of a ruined temple. The idol was broken and it was difficult to identify the presiding deity. It was night time and the moon lights swept.

Nagamandala means 'a play with cobra'. It is basically a Kannada play which is later on translated into English. The history and mythical elements are blended in the play. The story of the play is taken from the Kannad folklore heard from Karnad's mentor and poet A. K. Ramanujan. The narrator of the play is 'the story' and is narrated to a man.

The whole story of the play moves round Rani, the protagonist of the play. The story dangles between her husband's indifferent attitude towards her and her unaware affair with King Cobra (Naga). Rani loses her husband, Appanna to a paramour and becomes anxious about the situation. Kurudavva, a blind lady, suggests Rani to apply two magical roots, a small one and a big one, over Rani's husband that can bring her husband back to her. Rani does it accordingly, but fails to fascinate her husband. So she pours the root-paste mixed in curry into an ant hill where a King Cobra eats it. After that the King Cobra follows her. He takes the appearance of Appanna and replaces him at nights. Rani becomes pregnant from King Cobra (Naga). Appanna gets angry with her because of her suspicious conception. He brings her to village elders. On the advice of Naga, she takes an oath on a cobra. The cobra starts moving around Rani's neck just like garland. The elders believe that her birth is divine and her innocence is proved. Finally Appanna accepts her and the child and they lead their life happily.

14.5 CONCLUSION

Thus, this unit deals with the survey of contemporary Indian English Drama. It shows the works of Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani that represent a powerful and resurgent Indian Drama. These playwrights with their innovative and experimental work of contemporary relevance have given a new direction to the Indian Drama. It also draws our attention towards life and work of Girish Karnad who mainly exploits mythical and historical episodes in his plays to highlight problems which confront the modern Indian at various levels.

14.6 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Write a detailed note on the contribution of Indian English playwrights to Indian drama.
2. Discuss the development of Modern Indian drama with reference to major dramatists in Indian languages.
3. Write a brief note on the major features of modern Indian drama.

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GIRISH KARNAD'S *NAGMANDALA* PART- II

Unit Structure:

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Synopsis
- 15.2 Characters in the Play
- 15.3 Themes
 - 15.3.1 Love, Marriage, Sex and Motherhood
 - 15.3.2 Identity Crisis
- 15.4 Critical Aspects of the Play
 - 15.4.1 Feminism
 - 15.4.2 Supernatural Elements
 - 15.4.3 Symbolic Layers
- 15.5 Conclusion
- 15.6 Important Questions
- 15.7 References

15.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to:

1. make the students understand the synopsis of the play
2. examine the merits and demerits of the characters
3. explain the main themes in the play
4. interpret the major critical perspectives of the play

15.1 SYNOPSIS

The technique of Prologue sets the mood of the play where the audience is taken to a world of make-believe. The narrator in the Prologue is a man. He addresses the audience about his plights. Being a playwright and story-teller, he is cursed. Amendant advises him that he will not die if he can keep awake at least one whole night. In order to overcome the death curse, he keeps himself awake at the very last day of the month. He determines not to sleep. After a while, he hears the voices of the flames. These are female voices. Each flame narrates her story. All these stories represent the loose morals practised in the society and the hallucinations spinning in the minds of the women. Karnad, in *Nagmandala* (1988), shifts his view from the classical traditions to the local Kannada folk tales, which he had heard from Indian's renowned scholar of the oral traditions,

A. K. Ramanujan. In this play, Karnad weaves two folk-tales together. The first one comments on the paradoxical nature of oral tales in general. The tales are passed from one story teller to another and from one generation to the other. It is a story of an extra-ordinarily beautiful girl Rani who marries Appanna and suffers nothing but loneliness. The marital relationship between Rani and Appanna is not balanced one. The condition of Rani is just like a slave who suffers from violence, deprivation and torture. The playwright tries to bring in Rani some energy to overcome the patriarchal value system which helps man like Appanna subjugate woman like Rani on various walks of life. Karnad refuses patriarchal value system and fuses balance in their relationship. At the end Rani accepts her husband and Appanna also changes his attitude and appreciates her beauty and begins to treat her as a human being. So Rani gets dignity and status in her conjugal life. The play binds together lover and courtesan in the thread of marriage. The playwright illustrates his visionary coexistence of fruitful conjugal relationship. For harmonious and healthy human relationships, he insists upon such human virtues as tolerance, love, trust and mutual understanding. In this play, his humanitarian approach urges to raise the subaltern voice. The play, *Nagmandala* depicts the suppression of patriarchy or upper class hierarchy over depressed, disposed, and downtrodden class. It leads to the contemporary democratic and civilized world where constitutional bodies like Human Rights Commission renders justice to those people who are suppressed at various levels. Karnad's intention is not only showing their sub-human plight but also to support them to protest against the life-denying system. In one way or the other, women have been victims of torture, violence, humiliation and deprivation in Karnad's play. He criticizes the system where women are considered as a second sex. He also questions the way women are socialized in the reigning hegemonic ideology. He fuses the energy to them to degrade their subordinate and subjugate position and come up with equal level. Being realized their innate powers and potentialities, patriarchal hegemony always impose its dominance on them. Therefore, a gender equality is still remained a myth. In the male dominance society, the relation between man and woman has been set down not by woman but by man. All the limits in such society have been imposed on her. She accepts it for the sake of social harmony as Rani does at the end of this play. So, the story of the Rani represents every girl and woman in India.

15.2 THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

- Rani- Appanna's wife
- Naga- a cobra who assumes the form of a human being
- Appanna- Rani's husband
- Kurudamma – a blind woman
- Kappanna- Kurudamma's son
- **Rani:** Rani is the protagonist of the play. She is supposed to be the pivot of the play because the whole story revolves around her whose plight

in the story resembles every girl and woman in India. The act of keeping her locked in the house symbolises that she has no choice and voice having contacts outside without the permission of her husband. Due the suppression of hegemonic system, she sacrifices her dreams, desires, needs and necessities. She is conditioned by such factors as cooperative and cordial, tolerant and timid, submissive and shy in her conjugal life. Therefore, she loses her own courage and confidence and becomes weak to raise the question against the oppressive and exploitative system. Sarat Babu rightly makes his remark, "This solitary confinement of Rani by Appanna in the house symbolizes the chastity belt of the Middle Ages, the reduction of women's talents to housework and the exclusion of women from enlightenment and enjoyment". Rani, like other Indian wives, feels the lassitude in her marital life and emerges as a symbol of their long enduring. Though she sincerely observes all her traditional and domestic duties, she inhibits her psychological, sexual and social impulses. She does not make any complaint against her husband's rude and cruel behaviour. She mutely bears all his mental tortures and continues as an obedient and dutiful wife like a traditional Hindu wife. She is also not exception being worried about the safety of her husband. No tradition-bound Indian woman prefers to see her husband die before her death. She knows that the life of widow is more painful than the life with her exploitative husband. Rani is, no doubt, a religious, virtuous, cultured, loyal and devotional woman. Nobody objects man for his wrong doings. On the other hand, all blames are fixed on the chastity of woman in Indian society. Appanna shamelessly keeps an extra marital relationship, but the village elders who sit in judgment do not notice any fault in him. Rani also commits the sin of adultery due to lack of knowledge of the real identity of Cobra. She cannot differentiate between her husband and Naga's appearance in the form of her husband. This inability of identification is the root cause of her suffering. When she comes to know the real identity of Naga, she doesn't allow him to enter the house. But the society never forgives a woman who loses her chastity whether knowingly or unknowingly. At last, Rani stands for good morality while her husband represents false and egoistic morality in Indian patriarchal culture.

- **The Naga:** In order to convey many messages, Naga, as the traditional symbol, is used artistically in the play. The lives of many in general and many relations of Rani and Appanna in particular are redefined by the role of the snake here. The snake's acts bring in change not only in the life of Appanna but in Rani's life also. It is the snake which is particularly worshipped for fertility. Snake is an age-old symbol of male sexuality while long black hairdo is of female sexuality. 'Night' is represented as the personal aspect while 'day' as the public front in the play. The festival of Nagulachaviti' or 'Naga- panchami' in south Indian villages is ritualized by the women by pouring milk in an ant hill where cobra enters it. This festival comes at the fourth day and the fifth day of the waxing period of the moon once in a year. It is supposed to be the festival of appeasing the phallic symbol which is naga. Unmarried girls and desolate women worship it to get good husbands and to become

mothers. As Rani gets a good husband and becomes a mother in the play. There is also another fertility rite of setting up of naga icons that is the divine union of male and female snakes. The act of pouring the paste of the roots in the ant hill is a kind of invitation to the phallic symbol to fulfil a woman's secret desire. Rajinder Paul aptly points out that "it is a play where a cobra plays the lover and proves to be better behaved than his human counterpart who is as insensitive as a husband as we read about in bad tales. In Indian cultural context, Naga symbolizes vertebral column present in human body. A per the ancient yogic system of India, the energy in that column can be channelized with long thoughtful concentration. As a result, the practitioners can experience the magnificent life due to the divine blessings elevated out of this energy. This energy can take an ordinary man to an extraordinary position. In this play, Rani also experiences blissful and divine life due to the Naga's kundalini energy. Therefore, Rani is treated as goddess at the end of the play.

- **Appanna:** Appanna is the typical image of patriarchal culture. He represents Indian masculinity. His act of locking his wife and concomitant her selfhood in the house discloses his male supremacy. Being male chauvinist, he seems to be very egoist in the play. He treats his wife, Rani like a doll which has no feelings and emotions. He keeps extra marital relationship. Appanna and Naga are the double-standards of masculinity during day and at night. Karnad himself says, "The position of Rani in the story of *Nagmandala*, for instance, can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband only in two unconnected roles – as a stranger during the day and as a lover at night. Inevitably, the pattern of relationships she is forced to weave from these disjointed encounters must be something of a fiction." Actually, the male-hegemonic social system shapes the male tendency like Appanna. His inhuman treatment with his wife is the epitome of the supremacy of patriarchal culture. Though he behaves rudely with her under the cover of patriarchy, he is the wild beast in the guise of man who represents false morality.

- **Kurudavva:** Kurudavva is a blind lady who plays an important role in the play. She is a mother of Kappanna and a friend of Appanna's mother who is no more. Though she is blind, she has a special wisdom. As her moral duty, she takes care of Appanna to get set in his life. She is a kind of character in folktale. In the play she gives dynamic motion to the action. She represents a typical traditional India mother who always remains in the worry for the betterment of her daughter. Myth that builds necessary facet of a folktale is exploited through Kurudavva's initiative. She hopes making Rani free from the locked house that shows her motherliness. She is very much anxious about Rani who is leading her life in loneliness. The communication between Rani and Kurudavva reveals the secrets of Rani and Cobra. When she knows the inharmonious relation between Rani and Appanna, She suggests her the way of applying root-paste to Rani's husband.

- **Kappanna:** Kappanna is a son of Kurudavva. He does his duty towards his blind mother affectionately and devotedly. Therefore, he remains the epitome of an ideal son's duty to his mother in Indian culture. He suffers from backache, but continues his service of carrying his mother on his back. He always worships god Hanuman for bestowing him strength for making service of his mother more and more. This love and affection between mother and son that rarely finds in today's youth teaches the lesson of good morality.

15.3 THEMES

15.3.1 Love, Marriage, Sex and Motherhood:

The theme of love and marriage and motherhood is bound in the frame of Indian culture. In Indian society marriage is arranged by the parents and it provides an opportunity for love, sex and motherhood for the first time in life. This play is a kind of a family opera in the folk tale tradition in Karnataka. Rani accepts Kurudavva's offer of a mystical root for the sake of getting love from her husband. After cooking root, it takes horrible red colour. So she pours it in the ant hill and cobra (Naga) drinks it. Due to it Naga takes the form of her husband, Appanna at night and falls in love with her. He admires her beauty and treats her with care. He also fulfils her sexual needs as a sensual lover. She gets confused with the discrepancy in behaviour of her husband. But Naga's deep passionate love and Appanna's egoistic, male dominance do not allow her to ask question to them. In such condition, Rani becomes pregnant that makes Appanna more angry. He blames Rani saying that it is not his child. Though she has done nothing wrong, she has been taken to the village panchayat to prove her innocence by undergoing a chastity test. She proves her purity by passing this test. Her husband accepts her along with child and they lead their lives happily ahead.

15.3.2 Identity Crisis:

The story of the play is based on a folktale which is metamorphosed into the married woman. In the Indian society, the woman has to go through three phases of her life: as a daughter, as a wife and as a mother. She is considered to be complete only after marriage. She always remains dependent as a daughter on parents, as wife on husband and as mother on children. As we find Rani's reliance as a daughter on her parents and as a wife on her husband, Appanna. As a mother Kurudavva's handicap is dependent on her son, Kappanna. Her own identity is merged in the masculinity. Her situation in the Indian society is but an outsider. She belongs to neither her parents' house nor her husband's one. She never gets her own home where she has the freedom of expression. However, Rani is locked in her own house by her husband. Appanna's dominance suppresses her individuality. Later on the door is opened in the form of a cobra who seduces her. She is unknowingly brought into the adultery. Rani seeks shelter in dreams, fantasies and fairy tales in order to escape from the stark reality of her existence. She has the intense feelings of dislike to the institution of marriage. Most of the critics have shown her

how she is confined and victimized gender self and how she finds her space in society. Her husband questions her as an adulterous woman but actually he is in illicit relationship with courtesan. On the contrary, such hypocritical patriarchal society doubts Rani's chastity and virtues. We find a miracle in Indian myth that becomes inevitable for the woman to prove her purity. There may be Sita, Shakuntala or Rani. The story of the play makes us perceive the concepts such as existence, identity and individuality in the form of a woman. The story has no role to play without listener and perceiver. So the flames in the play emphasize the idea of passing on for the survival of the story. The playwright is a man, and the story is personified as a woman. The playwright assists the existence of the story by virtue of told and re-told. Likewise a woman has her own existence and lives by virtue of significant reproduction. Thus, the central meaning of the story runs parallel. Eventually Rani is proclaimed as an incarnate of goddess and Appanna turns into a mere instrument to prove her divinity.

15.4 CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE PLAY

15.4.1 Feminism

The source of the play is two oral stories from Karnataka. It displays the exploitation and incarceration of women that emerges from the marriage institution. The myth exposes the male dominance that restricts the rights of women. The idea of chastity is criticized here. The play aims at the emancipation and empowerment of women. The setting of the play is rural. Rani represents modest rural Indian woman whose marriage is arranged by her parents with a rich man, Appanna without caring her wishes and emotions. Rani accepts it quietly and goes to her husband's house longing for having a happy conjugal and domestic life. But all her wishes turn into indifferences there. At the very first day, she is locked in the house by her husband. His regular going to meet his mistress and neglecting the needs of Rani reveals the sub-human or rather nonhuman masculine tendency. She is confined to communicate the society and to undergo patriarchal set-up. However, women have no space for questioning on the wrongdoings of men but men have definite space for counter questioning if women break the patriarchal condition. In the play, Rani can't question her husband. She must obey whatever she was told by her husband. Here even nobody gives permission to Rani to question. This is not the predicament of Rani only but all Indian women who face one or the other such kind horrible reality. They are simply objects and not human beings with the agencies of their own.

15.4.2 Supernatural Elements:

Supernatural elements play an important role in the play as we generally notice in most of the folktales. Beliefs in the old tradition are the root cause of generating supernatural elements. There is belief of magical root that Kurudavva gives Rani brings in twist in the play. There is also another belief that the cobra has a divine power that it can take any form it wishes. Here Naga appears in the guise of Appanna who seduces Rani.

She has nothing to do with this illicit relationship. Naga saves Rani from the dangerous situation of her chastity because of his supernatural powers. In the case of Appanna, there is another belief that he is kept away from his wife by some fairy or witch. His unfaithfulness is shown as a mysterious deed. The unknown mistress whom Appanna meets is a mystery. Such types of events in the lives of human beings are inevitably caused either by divine or by Karma and anecdotal interpretations justify all these. When Appanna denies as the father of Rani's child, she has to undergo the ordeal of the snake. At the very moment of the ordeal, Naga makes an umbrella with his hood over her head and also makes a garland of his moving around her neck. It proves that she is loyal wife. Thus, the anxious and scared woman like Rani finds within herself confidence and courage and gains social dignity. She gets status only through public trial. But there is no any change in her material reality. Indian society is still patriarchal and exploitative in nature. She will get emancipation only when she becomes goddess with the help of some supernatural events.

15.4.3 Symbolic Significance:

There are various signs and symbols presented in the play for getting the deeper meaning of the play. It is the play that mainly centers the cultural symbols that constitute Indian attitude through Hindu Myth. These cultural symbols and signs open certain messages secretly. The set up of flames, ruined temple, story and man has the symbolic significance. The prevalence of the evils in the society is represented by the Flames. The ruined temple marks the decreasing structure of the modern society both morally and ethically. Another symbol is man who represents possible reformation and survival of modern generation from the demise having connection with their roots. The dog symbolizes the will power of Appanna and the death of it suggests the death of his will-power. The symbols and signs also represent the imbalance in Indian society and the sentimental condition of the Indian women. Rani gets rid of her suppression and urges symbolically by dreaming of an eagle coming taking her far away from Appanna's world. This dream is her inner imaginative expression that fulfills her moral sensitivity.

15.5 CONCLUSION

Thus the play, *Nagmandala* signifies the socio-cultural practices in India. It also discloses the situation of the Indian women. The characters in the play reflect as the tools of Indian culture. The play carries such main themes as love, marriage, sex and motherhood and identity crisis. The critical attention of Karnad is focused in the aspects of feminism, supernatural elements and symbolic significance. The playwright examines the lop-sided and imbalanced conjugal relationship. His zeal for humanity impels to magnify the subaltern voice. He also insists that repression of the natural urges puts tremendous impact on the psyche of an individual in Indian society.

15.6 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Critically comment on the plot in Girish Karnad's *Nagmandala*.
3. Write merits and demerits of the characters in the play, *Nagmandala*.
4. How does Girish Karnad render the main themes in his play, *Nagmandala*?
5. What role does a supernatural element play in Karnad's play?
6. Write a brief note on the feminism and symbolic significance in the play?

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