

## HISTORY IS A FACT IN THE PLACE OF GIRISH KARNAD

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### **Abstract:**

Theaters are established every part of the world. Any event that involves the interplay of time, space, performers, action and spectators may be understood to carry the possibilities of theatre. Indeed, historians, archeologists and anthropologists assure us that evidence of performance - that may be taken to represent forms of drama or theatre - occur among all the peoples and cultures of the world and can be traced as far back as human knowledge can go. According to Richa Ord Schechter, dancing, singing, wearing masks and/or costumes, impersonating other humans, animals or supernatural, acting out stories, presenting time 1 at time 2, isolating or preparing special places and/or times for these presentations, and individual or group preparations or rehearsals are coexistent with the human condition. Such co-existence of the phenomenon of theatre or performance with human communal life finds ample corroboration through cave paintings, temple art, archeological finds, ancient manuscripts, rites and rituals.

**Keywords:** Theaters, spectators, history, facts, plays, time, action.

### **Introduction:**

Theaters are established every part of the world. Any event that involves the interplay of time, space, performers, action and spectators may be understood to carry the possibilities of theatre. Indeed, historians, archeologists and anthropologists assure us that evidence of performance - that may be taken to represent forms of drama or theatre - occur among all the peoples and cultures of the world and can be traced as far back as human knowledge can go. According to Richa Ord Schechner, dancing, singing, wearing masks and/or costumes, impersonating other humans, animals or supernatural, acting out stories, presenting time 1 at time 2, isolating or preparing special places and/or times for these presentations, and individual or group preparations or rehearsals are coexistent with the human condition. Such co-existence of the phenomenon of theatre or performance with human communal life finds ample corroboration through cave paintings, temple art, archeological finds, ancient manuscripts, rites and rituals. It is also clear that in specific ways, performances of various kinds fulfill a variety of social functions, the most significant being 'idealizing' and/or 'criticizing' the norms of living in a particular society and/or drawing attention to certain inalienable truths about human life and character.

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It is a commonly held theory that theatre originated in religious ritual. For instance, Greek tragedy is understood to have developed from the dithyramb celebrating the primal Dionysian Bacchanalia, while it is assumed that Greek comedy grew out of the phallic dances that were a later outgrowth.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Indian theatre traces its beginnings to the Fifth Veda as Natyasastra that was revealed to Bharatamuni by the Creator Brahma himself to celebrate ancient rituals and seasonal festivities of the country.<sup>2</sup> The growth of Christian drama too is linked with the scriptural enactments in the nave of the Church through the middle ages and the Renaissance.<sup>3</sup>

However, Performance Theorists like Erving Goffman, Victor Turner, Ray Birdwhistell, D.W. Winnicott, Richard Shechner, Rebecca Schneider, Clifford Geertz, James Clifford and 'George Marcus insist that ritual must be considered as one among the several other activities like games, sports, dance and music that are performative (and therefore contain an element of theatre). They hold the view that all these activities - along with rites, rituals and carnivals - together comprise the performance sphere of the human beings. According to the theorists, all these activities are primeval and present in all cultures, showing variations only in their formal representations.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, they are so interlinked with one another that it is often difficult to classify them separately even for etymological purposes. A common feature with every activity is that each entails the creation of a unique spatio-temporal frame to generate a symbolic reality within which a "play" that is governed by specific rules integral to its structure and form may be enacted. Shechner explains that such "special rules" are formulated and persist because these activities are "something apart from everyday life". He maintains that these "special worlds" are not gratuitous but form a vital part of human life that "no society, no individual, can do without it" (13).

Performance is an essential part of our lives but it is not an easy concept to define. It is equally difficult to write about performances. To state in simplistic terms, it is an activity by an individual or a group enacted in the presence of another individual or a group.<sup>5</sup> Many such performances endure around the world and comprise our collective cultural heritage. But whatever be the activity, what is handed down through posterity very often comprises the essential features of a performance. For instance, a dance form will retain certain basic steps to which variations can be added by individual performers. Similarly, in the Indian classical music tradition, the basic raga has remained the same through centuries and is passed on through the oral tradition of guru-sishyaparampara, though individual interpretation and rendition of it determines the finesse and class of the vocalist. Similarly again, the ancient martial art form of Kerala, *kalaripattuis* still performed with the same basic movements that are both athletic and theatrical. The 'essence' therefore consists of certain rules and performative patterns which Performance Theorists describe as the 'text' or 'script' that pre-exist any given enactment and continues from enactment to enactment,

sometimes through centuries, despite individual variations and interpretations. Thus a performative activity is always already 'scripted'.

Drama, theatre, script and performance are all loaded terms with intriguing conceptual interlinking. One may follow the tips given by Schechner (70-94) to define each separately. According to Schechner then, drama is what the playwright writes and is the domain of the author, the composer, the shaman. It is a tight, verbal narrative that allows little improvisations; it exists as a code independent of any individual transmitter and can be transported in time and space unaffected by the people who carry it; it is or may be easily made into a script. Script is the interior map of a particular production and is the domain of the teacher, director, master. It can be either tight or loose knit or developed through the performance. Theatre comprises of a set of specific visible/sonic gestures and is the domain of the performers. It is the visible aspect of the script, the exterior topography of the interior map. Performance encompasses the whole event and includes the receptors, performers and technicians, although the audience is the dominant element of any performance. But drama, script, theatre, and performance need not all exist for any given event. When they do, "they enclose one another, overlap, interpenetrate, simultaneously and redundantly arousing and using every channel of communication" (Schechner, 94).<sup>6</sup>

Our purpose here is to examine drama, script, theatre and performance as an integrated enterprise and argue for a convergence between 'drama' that is understood as a 'scripted text' and 'theatre' that is supposed to be governed by a 'performative text'.

To proceed towards this end, one must first tackle some attitudinal differences. For example, there exists a troublesome disagreement in the understanding of a 'play' as a literary written text to be interpreted or as a theatre script to be performed. This has been so for many years and has created a strange separation in the minds of the receptors of 'drama' (to be classified into 'genres' and consumed by literature departments) and of 'theatre' (to be handled by the theatre departments). It is often a matter of debate whether these two kinds of textual structures/semiotics can be brought into the same field of investigation (Hornby). There are many reasons why the breach between 'drama' and 'theatre' is allowed to continue for

*...in the great ages, the drama flowed 'naturally' from the existing theatre, while, from Goethe on, the poet-dramatist rejects the theatre, writes plays which are 'too good for it' and then calls for the creation of the kind of theatre which will be good enough for the plays. (Bentley, 424)<sup>7</sup>*

While some writers (like Bettetini, de Marinis and Ruffini: all cited by Elam, 3) rule out the dramatic text altogether as a legitimate concern of theatre studies, other theatre practitioners emphasize the total autonomy of the theatre world, citing its unique kinetic system of expression.<sup>8</sup> Theatre's capacity to give visual embodiment to ideas with its

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distinctive language/semiotics awards theatre a unique system of intelligibility. Artaud, as is well known, takes this as a major achievement for theatre and explains that theatre's non-verbal language might incorporate but would not finally need the language of written texts (68-69). Hence, he argues, theatre provides an independent way of knowing that is not otherwise available. This no doubt confers a special status upon theatre but besides raising questions about theatre's relation with the outside world, the norms of verisimilitude, notions of 'theatricality' and so on which have been major pre-occupations of all theatre practitioners through the past century, adherence to the viewpoint that theatre existed only for and by itself would evidently make that very world of theatre ephemeral. After all, if any representation remains exclusively rooted in theatre semiotics, what use can be made of it in the outside world, and indeed, how can it be subsequently 'taken away' by its spectators?

The point to note here is that these views deepen the gap between literature and performance as separate domains and rare are the occasions when the twain is allowed to meet! Such an unhealthy separation cannot, understandably, encourage a healthy environment for drama/theatre to prosper, though it must be clear to all that to assume a bias towards any one stance and allow the cut between drama/script and theatre/performance to fester is being both unfair to the text and limiting its performative potential. It is obvious that while the 'literary approach' would insist on a 'written' text and confine itself to the thematic explorations of that text (as though the theme were not a product of performance!), the 'theatrical approach' would take the theatre productions as interpretations of the drama script even though they might or might not do justice to the spirit or the possibilities of the text. For the 'literary approach', the dramatist 'controls the meaning'; for the 'theatrical approach', the director and the performers have the ability to 'manipulate the meaning'; and so on.<sup>9</sup> The theatre and drama researcher is expected to deal with apparently dissimilar - although intimately correlated - types of textual material: one that is produced for theatre and another that is produced in theatre.

However, whatever justification might once have been claimed for separating the domains of literature and theatre, it seems untenable in the face of widespread awareness of the efficacy of performative strategies in enhancing affective and cognitive learning capabilities even in the most general sense.

To settle this contentious matter therefore, the ideal would be to reconcile the two "types of texts" as being complementary to each other and insist upon an accompanying theatre environment to give life to a dramatic text. This would mean that if indeed performance is to be accommodated within the concept of 'genre', it would entail the acceptance that each new performance is capable of carrying within it the potential of a fresh interpretation and the possibility of a new 'genre'. This would necessarily suggest that the persuasiveness of an interpretation depends upon its ability to base itself in a 'written text' or

a theatre production, yet remain open to the suggestion of potential thematic values that might emerge in the context of shifting theatrical values. As has been pointed out by Jacques Derrida (in his revolutionary essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences"), since each and every thought is 'scripted' even before it is 'spoken', any performance, however impromptu, is inevitably based on a 'script'.

As for the 'unique language' of theatre that is distinctive from that of drama, the role of the 'director' becomes essential here as the expert in the language of the theatre to access the whole range of the dramatist's language for performative 'application', in the manner of - though not exactly as - a reader/critic of the drama interacting with the play-text in the literary domain. It should not be thought that a reader of a drama will construct the dramatic world in the same way as a spectator. Not only will the latter have to deal with more varied and specific kinds of information conveyed through the stage properties, but the perceptual and temporal conditions in which the spectator operates are also different. The reader is able to imagine the dramatic context in a leisurely and "pseudo-narrative" (Elam, 89) fashion, while the spectator must "process simultaneous and successive

acoustic and visual signs within strictly defined time limits" (Elam, 89). Despite the given differences in reception, one could still propose that the activity of 'application'/interpretation could constitute the performance itself - of encountering the audience/readership whose response would identify and establish the 'text for contemporary times'.

The reconciliation in the critical attitude to drama and theatre is extremely desirable. Through the twentieth century, dramatists and theatre practitioners have manifested their concern for the renewal of drama through theatre. In fact, the urgent need for rigorous study and analyses of performances from which drama theories can be generated has been expressed by theatre practitioners like Konstantin Stanislavski and Bertolt Brecht who belong to a European tradition which bases itself on the premise that thought is action and hence the "doers" are also "thinkers".<sup>10</sup> Consequently, they have advocated that theatre categories be based on a comprehensive understanding of the way (a) the local detail of a play or its texture relates to (b) its overall thematic shape or its structure; and (c) its use of performance space or its theatrical function; as well as (d) its social structure or function outside the theatre (Quigley, 6-7).

Generally, drama criticism tends to focus only upon the thematic concerns of a play in relation to its social impact, with negligible - or at best intermittent - reference to modes of performance; whereas, a play is always written with its performance in mind. Drama finds fulfilment as theatre. Changes in the texture, structure and theme of a play would embody changes in the nature of the theatrical event. It is an acknowledged fact that though theatre may be a circumscribed domain, what goes on within it is not fixed and unvarying, but changeable and often surprising. A balanced and thorough appreciation of a play, therefore,

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would link its texture, structure and the 'scripted' theme to the mode of performance that may be characteristic of a particular kind of a play in a particular context and theatre space.<sup>11</sup>

Karnad has spoken on many occasions about his interest in the performance styles of "folk theatre" - of which India possesses a rich resource of enviable diversity and of the Bhakti poets of the medieval period. He has always questioned the monolithic view of Indian culture and the performing arts and presupposes a continuity of culture in which "conflicting philosophies, historical situations, and cultural attitudes may have shaped these different forms and may motivate them still today" (1989, 338).

For him, folk theatre exemplifies a continuity of tradition, which was disrupted by the introduction of western theatre concepts and practice in India. Though he did not belong to any 'movement' or subscribe to any ideology as such to 'consciously revive' Indian folk forms, he did believe that post-Independence India should evolve its own theatrical idiom considering its rich performance traditions, instead of mindlessly aping the western styles of drama. Evidently, his interest in the performative styles of Yakshagana and Bayalata inspired the choice of plots which would enable the use masks and puppets, snakes and dogs, as well as folk styles of enactment with 'framing tales' or the 'Bhagvat'. Thereby emerged the perennial favourites Hayavadana (1971) and Nagamandala (1990). The oral tradition bases of these plots enrich their interpretive and performative possibilities which have been taken advantage of by both literary critics and theatre directors. Nagamandala, especially, has been given a choice of two endings, emphasizing the open-endedness of all folk-tale material. Suresh Awasthi explains, "An important factor that determines the scenography in this kind of theatre is the nonrealistic treatment of time and place" (38).

All who know Karnad's work understand and appreciate his enduring interest in myth and history. In Indian languages, the analogous term for 'myth' is 'itihasa'. It is 'itihasa' as a kind of collective historical conscience that is conveyed through the oral traditions and the performative traditions through which much of the teaching and transmission of cultural values to the subsequent generations takes place. In his re-presentation of the myths, Karnad telescopes onto those selected moments of cultural and historical crises when individual choices had to confront 'the burden of culture'<sup>13</sup> and the way those choices effected social-cultural-historical transformations. According to Freud, the central reality for any individual is the internal one and that social, cultural and political systems have no independent existence but are collective responses to or defences against the turbulence of the inner world (vol. 21,113).

Freud insists that it is the individual's 'central reality' that determines the person's choices; indeed, such occasions are rare when personal interests are subsumed by societal interests. Karnad's interest in 'itihasa' is in its re-contextualized use to provide analogues for contemporary times when similar choices require to be made by an individual or a

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community. Such, for instance, is the use of myth to structure the plot of his spectacular play *The Fire and the Rain* that explores the motivations of the Purusharthas through its characterization and the high point of which is Arvasu's realization of the 'central reality' of his being and his deliberate choice to sacrifice of his selfish interest for communal good.

Karnad's continuing interest in 'itihasa' is reflected in *Tale-danda* (1993) and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (2000). In addition to urging a re-view of history, these plays written against the backdrop of growing fundamentalism and communal frenzy in the country present individual endeavour towards communal integration during epochs of violence. The social awareness intrinsic to Karnad's plays is not so much iconoclasm as a reflexive venture to recuperate the collective values and strengths of society to fight moral insensitivity and cultural lethargy of the times. Karnad's treatment of history to understand the present and prepare for the future is as Karnad's plays like *The Fire and the Rain*, *Tale-danda*, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, *Driven Snow* (Anju Mallige) and *Flowers* (2005) would answer to the description of what Turner describes as aesthetic drama. But it would be difficult to categorize plays like *Tale-danda* and *Bali: The Sacrifice*. What these plays aim at is a kind of total transformation that Turnerian social drama would seek. While reflecting a section of the Turnerian formula of breach-crisis-redressive action, these plays of Karnad's move more towards transformation rather than re-integration.

This is the signal achievement of the playwright. Likewise, it would be even more problematic to place Karnad's latest play, *A Heap of Broken Images* (2004), that he has co-directed and which has received rave reviews for its brilliant use of technology as part of characterization as well as dramatic denouement.<sup>14</sup> This play would have to be placed at the cusp of the two dramatic types. Moreover, in Karnad's dramaturgy, the two types feed each other. Social dramas affect aesthetic dramas and vice versa, rather in the manner described by Schechner thus, "The visible actions of a given social drama are informed - shaped, conditioned, guided -by underlying aesthetic principles....Reciprocally, a culture's visible aesthetic drama is informed - shaped, conditioned, guided - by underlying processes of social interaction" (215).

(Traditional Indian theatre has certain characteristics that modern avant-garde or experimental theatre shares. For instance, there is a flexible concept of time and space and the ability to transform one space into many places - in traditional theatre through the skills of the performer and in modern theatre through stage design and technology; transformational characteristics of the characters; seeming mobility between spheres of realities: connectedness with the audience.) A playwright like Karnad who is steeped in the tradition of performance styles in India would not hesitate to deploy such strategies in his plays. What he does is to develop a braided structure to continually interrelate ritual, performance and entertainment, but at all times maintaining a dialectical tension between the

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'efficacious' and 'entertaining' tendencies. As noted by Schechner, "when efficacy and entertainment are both present in equal degrees - theatre flourishes" (134). He goes on to explain that when efficacy dominates, performances are universalistic, allegorical, ritualized and tied to the established order. When entertainment dominates, performances are class-oriented individualized show-business (134). (Karnad's plays have been able to strike a balance accommodating both efficacy and entertainment in good measure, because his interest is to urge a socio-cultural interrogation through his plays without burdening them with overt ideology. As a result, his plays are universalistic, allegorical, ritualized) [feeding a growing drama scholarship] as well as individualized and entertaining show-business [as immensely successful theatre productions].

(As all great playwrights of the century have done before him, Karnad has undertaken a journey through his plays in search of forms to embody his multi-perspectival approach to themes. From the use of 'itihasa' and oral tradition to technology [A Heap of Broken Images] and poetry [Flowers: A Dramatic Monologue], Karnad's rich repertoire showcases thematic configuration through performance techniques. No study can do justice to Karnad's work that does not take into consideration the performative features that structure his plays.)

Karnad's plays exemplify his ideal of total theatre that combines drama, dance and music. The effort of this volume, Girish Karnad's Plays: Performance and Critical Perspectives is to demonstrate the way elements of performance imbue Karnad's dramaturgy and how his plays illumine and extend the horizons of the two contiguous [and - overlapping] domains of drama and theatre. The volume brings together thirty-two essays by scholars and practitioners of drama and theatre respectively, which study each of Karnad's twelve plays as bi-or multilateral and pluridimensional texts to illustrate how with the slightest shift - in the critical perspective or in the use of space, in the handling of the characterization or in stressing the evocative language, in the use of stage props or in the use of literary tropes - the texture, the structure and the social function of the plays can be modified or given a different thrust which, in turn, can lead to new levels of signification. Vishakha's character is etched in our minds as poignant and tragic. The only time she attempts to break free from her oppressed enslaved sexuality and take a decisive step is when she empties Yavakri's kamandalu of charged water in the interest of her husband's family. Though she saves her family from falling into the wicked hands of Yavakri, her act appears to be only unconscious and incidental.

Some questions that haunt us till the end of the play are: Why doesn't Parvasu kill his unfaithful wife? Is there sympathy in Parvasu for Vishakha's infidelity, or does he think her guilt to be punishment enough for her to suffer in private, stricken by her conscience to be driven to suicide eventually? Does he choose to pardon her misdemeanor? Does he consider her to be of no consequence? Or, is it because he finds Raibhya's accusations more

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intolerable? Is it a deliberate act of patricide or does he lose control over his passions? Or, like Yavakri hasn't he 'grown up' at all? Why does he return to the sacrifice knowing that he has morally lost his position of the Chief Priest? How can his behaviour towards Arvasu be justified? Does he think that Arvasu, by declaring his love for theatre and for Nittilai, has lost his caste and hence can carry the guilt of patricide on his shoulders? When the tribals rush into the sacrificial site, is it already desecrated by Parvasu? Arvasu's rampaging action as Vritra at the end of the play is reflective of his anguish and anger and makes him an agent of retributive justice. Perhaps, in the act of immolation, Parvasu sees redemption for his treachery and for the land of its famine. Immolation is his final acceptance of defeat and surrender to the powers of justice.

(Nittilai alone of all characters, and as a gendered subject progress towards self-definition by emphasizing her difference and by reflecting an evolving consciousness. She grows from an innocent tribal girl wandering in the forests, observing and tracing animal footprints and its flora and fauna, to questioning the goals of sacrifice and ritualistic religion, to attain the stature of a benevolent nurturing archetype of universal motherhood tending to the hungry and nursing the sick. She exercises a harmonizing influence on the life around her. This growth in consciousness lasts till she is attributed with miraculous powers of healing which is at once "liberative and dynamic, creative and effective" (SY 117), an assertion of her joy and freedom. In contrast, we notice in others, including Vishakha, a total reversal of this since they fail to transcend the physicality of their existence.

The slow and gradual rise of Nittilai's personality is rendered complete with her reification through tragic death. Her death, though dastardly, takes place in front of her tribe as an honour killing, an act of appeasement for the men of her family. In her death she is also the 'sacrifice' offered to appease the unrelenting rain gods Indra and Vritra): "She lies there, her eyes open, bleeding, dying like a sacrificial animal" (FR 58). The play appears to legitimize male centrality and her marginality as a woman, however powerful her sexuality may appear as an ideal aesthetic construct. Even in her death, she helps through her intervention the simple-minded Arvasu to rise to heights unknown and unanticipated before, to commune with God, first, through wearing the mask and later in a more direct manner. Arvasu is asked to choose between bringing her back to life or to lose her to bring rains to the starved earth. As he confesses, he has grown from stupidity to wisdom and is urged by his conscience towards making the right choice: that of partaking in a universal consciousness.

This growing, evolving consciousness in Nittilai brings enlightenment to Arvasu, wherein lies his painful decision to give up his claim on Nittilai in the greater interest of restoring fertility to the land. In consequence, Arvasu realizes the objective of Vedic sacrifice that is at once restorative at both individual and societal levels. Hence, the

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consciousness of both Arvasu and Nittilai is principally to be seen as restorative and regenerative in character. Stretching the symbolic meaning further, though Vishakha represents fire of passion, she does not contain the other attributes of 'Fire' like self-knowledge and sacrifice - characteristics that Nittilai and Arvasu exemplify.

What unites Vishakha and Nittilai is the sameness of their experience of gendered oppression, the familiarity and specificity of it; what differentiates them is their journey in life and death in opposing directions. Vishakha's death is as secretive as her life, in silence and in the recesses of the hermitage: from "pristine nothingness" to tragic anonymity. The silence that envelops her in life shrouds her in death. The image of an empty water-pot covered with cobwebs, lying in a corner, discarded, to be replenished with life-giving water, is suggestive metaphorically of the condition of Vishakha's life - dry, barren and empty. The futility of her life stands in marked contrast to Nittilai's at every juncture. (The two qualities that help Nittilai to tower above the male characters with their foolish pride in their knowledge are: her ability to recognize and appreciate goodness in people around her; and of placing social responsibility above the personal. She defines her position continually in relation to men, family and society. By acquiring a subject status, from being an object, she threatens the status of the male. In contrast, Vishakha remains till the end of the play an object of male desire and manipulation, despite being privileged as an upper-caste Brahmin woman that falsely invokes caste superiority as fair, beautiful, powerful, knowledgeable, etc. Nittilai's firm words to Arvasu, "kick that world aside", indicate her determination to set up a good and innocent world beyond the present one. Arvasu recognizes this quality only in her death,) to "provide the missing sense of our lives" (FR 60), not remain "an unregenerate sinner in the eyes of the world" (FR 44).

Karnad, in *The Fire and the Rain*, looks at the contentious issues of women in India. How does a myth long forgotten, help to throw fresh light on this burning issue? Karnad takes up this challenge by juxtaposing female oppression with that of caste. He does not allow the problems to remain incomplete and inconclusive. The play's triumph lies in the treatment of the politics of difference that underlies the paradigms of gender and caste.

Karnad's mastery lies in his successful weaving of the contradictions and dilemmas that the myth from the Mahahharata glossed over. (He re-interprets and re-presents the myth to make a definitive statement in the context of the present. Her dislike for Indra, for instance, since immortal and changeless, on one hand, and support to Vritra, since capable of undergoing change, on the other, is a case in point. It is self-explanatory of her view and end of life:

Ironically, Nittilai in spite of fore-knowledge of her untimely death, she still blossomed and by dying re-created herself in triumph, and facilitated Arvasu to change while still living.

(She realized that reconstituting herself at higher realms of selfhood and shading off into a subject position, constitutes a recreation of self through conscious choice of death. In this, she is indeed a flower blossoming in death.) At the level of myth and i";a, she transcends problematics of gender and caste, but at the level of life ridden with complexities, she hardly does. She seems secular and free as long as s he does not enter into the contractual world of marriage forfeiting her right to freedom of choice and life. Chiefly, the patriarchy and the familial system have to be seen as implicitly male constructs, at which level she still remains a victim of mindless killing.

### Conclusion:

(Vishakha and Nittilai, thus, are not mere literary constructs but women real and material, carrying within them their collective histories as women, and caste oppression of Nittilai, not surprisingly, gains a new political significance as part of an unhistoricized past. The need is for a sympathetic understanding of their oppressive past in grappling with our present-day reality, in which also lies real humanity. In a way, the intellectual ability to creatively reflect on and analyze human problems knows no gender or caste, Karnad seems to say. The boundaries that separate them constantly blur. He does not, at the end, restrict his pen to problematic of power alone, instead, compels a reflection on the immeasurable depths of the deep darkness that pervades life in general. Here the famine is real and metaphorical. The intent of traditional Yoga 'marga' is not self-mortification, nor the end of all sacrifice personal gain, but to make the body a perfect instrument of the spirit. That ultimate knowledge Nittilai gains and Arvasu learns, staying in the midst of life not away or outside it - a sign of true perfection.)

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