



MYTHOPOEIC PRESENTATION OF INDIAN CONFLICTS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

Swarupananda Chatterjee

PhD Fellow,

Department of English,

Mahatma Gandhi Central University Bihar

Motihari, India.

Abstract: This paper is premised on the adaptions of myth in Girish Karnad's *The Fire and The Rain* and how this recontextualisation of myth re-presents various conflicts in Indian milieu. Beginning with some anecdotes from Indian mythology, this paper analyses the human psyche in different conflicts of father against son, wife against husband, man against God, ritual against sacrifice, man against woman and the topmost- brother against brother. The play has a structural link with the myth of The Mahabharata and this research explores the Indian ethos and modern man's apathy towards complicated human relationship. This researcher here analyses the struggle between the brothers and simultaneously the tension between the genders. The challenges of female characters against the male whimsicality in dealing with women in the name of divine order or sexual morality or rather a fascistic inclination of sacrificing an individual for the collective good against her wishes have been clearly dealt with in this article. The final section concludes that this jealousy or fratricidal conflict is very much symbolic of modern Indian familial and political scenario. A dramatization of this deep-rooted and reiterative issue certainly can offer the audience a cathartic release.

Index Terms - Myth, Fratricide, Gender, Conflict, InIndianness

I. Introduction

Myth, an established story of apparently historical events is used to explain or understand part of the world view of a culture. Legends, parables, and facts combine to form a heady mix, which is used to explain the practices and beliefs of a set of people, or even natural phenomenon. Over a period, these oral tales that are handed down from generation to generation crystallize and are almost accepted unquestioningly. Thus, they become an important part of life, and in a sense give an identity to the people of that culture. For instance, the Hindu mythology has become so deeply ingrained in the psychology of most Indians that some of them would argue that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, with all their magical elements, happened exactly as they are related in the epics. However, in the present times the word "myth" is used in an almost all-encompassing manner and is used to refer to even folktales or legends. So, to understand the meaning of "myth", it is necessary to explain these terms. If a story, even if it comprises heroic elements, involves humans rather than supernatural beings, it is a legend, and not a myth. Similarly, even if a story has supernatural elements and beings, if it is not part of a systematic mythology, such a story would be considered as a folktale and not a myth. This negative definition shows that myth is a story that involves supernatural beings as part of a systematic mythology. Myths are generally shrouded in mystery. Considering the origin of myths, this is understandable. This mystery element, as well as the heroic quality of most of the stories, makes myths very appealing to writers. In fiction, as well as in poetry and in drama, authors have unsparingly used myths. They do this to either compare the sequences with what is happening in the present day or to contrast the heroism in myths with the lack of heroism in the present day. Hence, we have novels such as Mary Shelley's (1797-1851) *Frankenstein* (1818), which was published with the subtitle *The Modern Prometheus*. In the novel, Shelley compares *Frankenstein* to *Prometheus*. Shelley's protagonist, in a manner similar to the Greek hero who steals fire from Zeus and gives it to humans, brings the knowledge of creation--which is in a sense was patented by gods-to humans. The trials and tribulations that *Frankenstein* faces due to his act clearly bring out the similarities between him and the Greek hero. Poems such as Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792-1822)

elegy to John Keats (1795-1821) "Adonais" (1821), similarly, contain references to the Greek goddesses Urania and Venus. He refers to Keats as the god of fertility, Adonis, and calls upon Adonis' mother Urania to mourn his death. By such allusions, Shelley suggests that with the death of Keats a death knell has rung for fertility in other words, creativity. Similarly, George Bernard Shaw's (1856-1950) play *Pygmalion* (1912) is loosely based on a Greek myth. However, unlike in the myth, where the sculptor falls in love with the statue that he carves, the erstwhile hero in Shaw's play hardly notices the cultured person that he had trained. Through this allusion Shaw contrasts the happenings in mythology with what happens in an unromantic modern world. Thus, authors have used myths regularly in their works, irrespective of whether the genre that they are dabbling in is romantic poetry or problem plays. They have used myths to compare and contrast, and thereby strived to provide a vivid depiction of the various characters in their works. Damien Grant's remark is suitable in this context, "The coherence theory of realism on the other hand is the consciousness of literature its self-awareness, its realization of its own ontological status. Here realism is achieved not by imitation but by creation, a creation which working with the materials of life, absolves these by the intercession of the imagination from mere factuality and translates them to a higher order" (Grant, p.32). This new realism can be seen in the play as the story has as much relevance to our times as it had in the days of the *Mahabharata*.

In this context, this researcher looks at how mythic narrative is a form of social argumentation, a form of interpretation of the human condition, a construction of knowledge. It is constructed in a way that attempts to explain social practices, customs, rules, duties, and particular situations in human life. It also attempts to interpret natural phenomena like drought, rain, flood and so on for those who believe in it. In this explanation a myth involves a metaphysical reality, an invisible, "divine" realm. Mythical narratives and rituals exteriorize and give a structure to both the invisible divine order and the inner world of human consciousness. With the help of those metaphysical or archetypal representations men and women may attain release from inner conflicts and crises, and cope with their psychological problems concerning love, jealousy, hatred, grief, atonement, and reconciliation. Thus, myths have a timeless and universal relevance. Therefore, modern writers find a scope for appropriating myths - selecting, shifting, altering, and rearranging mythic components in their works in order to comment and throw new light on contemporary human problems. In a group of his plays Girish Karnad has employed myths (in some cases folktales and legends) as the raw material of his plays. However, his purpose is not merely the dramatization of a particular myth. He selects, alters, and recombines the ancient mythical episodes and characters to shape a serious dramatic plot redolent with contemporary relevance. Here the recontextualisation of myth represents various dichotomies and conflicts in Indian milieus. The concerned play in this paper *The Fire and the Rain* has a structural link with the anecdote narrated in Chapters 135-138 of the Vana Parva of the *Mahabharata* and this research explores the Indian ethos and modern man's apathy towards complicated human relationship. This researcher here analyses the struggle between the brothers and simultaneously the tension between the genders, conflicts between the castes and the dichotomy between the traditions also. Sometimes Karnad also inscribes, in these classical 'high cultural' versions of narratives, subplots of his own creation, usually with a subversive function. Girish Karnad transforms it into a masterful piece of drama by depicting conflicting human emotions through the characters. Signifying the relevance of myths, Mircea Eliade aptly states: "traditional cultures participate in mythical/cyclical time by revivifying certain myths or sometimes by attributing archetypal meanings to worldly events" (Eliade, p.20). Modern cultures, notes Eliade, have a historical/linear view of time.

II. Conflict between Brothers

It is quite evident that Karnad has made extensive alterations in his adaptation of this *Mahabharata* myth. First, he has presented Raibhya and Bharadwaja two brothers, and not two friends to highlight the theme of "brother destroying brother". This change not only shows the estrangement between the elder sages or the two brothers Paravasu and Aravasu, but also between Paravasu and Yavakri, the two cousins. Then, in the play-within-the-play in the Epilogue, this enmity is replicated with some variations on another level - that of the superhuman: between Indra and his brother Vritra. This myth had originally appeared in the *Rigveda*. It narrates that the serpent-demon Vritra had swallowed all the rivers and hidden the waters in him but then Indra killed him and released the waters. But in its reappearance in the *Mahabharata*, we note Indra first killed his brother Viswarupa treacherously as he feared that he might usurp him from his throne. So Tvastrī, their father and Creator, had another son, Vritra, by a female demon to kill Indra. But Vritra was also murdered by Indra in deceitful manner.

Karnad has combined these two versions of the Indra-Vritra myth with some variations in the Epilogue of his play. It is also a kind of prototypical story of love, betrayal and fratricidal horrors. In Karnad's version we note that Indra wants to have all the powers to rule the three worlds of heaven, earth and the nether world. He cannot accept the fact that his stepbrother Vishwarupa, born of a human mother, should be the King of Men. He envies the wisdom, gentleness and immense popularity of Vishwarupa. But all his schemes to kill him are frustrated because of his other stepbrother Vritra, born of a female demon; Vritra, commanded by his father Brahma, always accompanies Vishwarupa to protect him from the conspiracies of Indra. But the wily Indra invites him into the sacred precincts of the fire sacrifice supposedly organized to pay homage to his father whom he has already destroyed. He does not allow Vritra to accompany Vishwarupa as the former is a demon. Vishwarupa naively trusts Indra's promise of his safety, but Indra now having Vishwarupa alone in his sacrificial enclosure offering oblations to the yajna fire plunges his thunderbolt into Vishwarupa from his back. In Karnad's remaking of the myth Vritra acted out by Arvasu cries out, "Why, Brother? Why, why, why? Brother, why? Why? Another treachery! Another filthy death! How long will this go on?" (Karnad, p.170). Arvasu-as-Vritra then puts the sacrificial enclosure into fire; and the hungry villagers - 'the tribals - the savages' run to the burning pavilion and begin "eating and drinking the food kept for the gods" (Karnad, p.171). This transmutation of the *Mahabharata* myth concerning Indra and Vritra is a reiteration with variation of the story of the betrayal of Arvasu (or Aravasu) by Paravasu, or in a slightly remote way perhaps, that of Bharadwaja by Raibhya, too. Indra's will-to-power is also a source-myth of the cultural domination of the subalterns, of those men and women having a less exalted birth, of the tribal, the so-called nagas (snakes), dasyus (robbers), monkeys and rakshasas or demons. Brahmā, the supreme Father has crowned Vishwarupa and Vritra as the Kings of Men and of the Nether World respectively, as he has made Indra the King of the Gods. But Indra's hunger for absolute

power leads him to kill both Vishwarupa and Vritra, the children of the same father, and thus to release the cycle of evil and violence in the universe. This cosmic episode is not merely an appendage in the Epilogue to *The Fire and the Rain*; rather it reflects and comments on the central action in the main plot and, with this principle of reiteration with-variation, helps us to understand what is happening in the play.

The fratricidal war is a very powerful and recurrent theme in Indian mythology, history, society and culture. Karnad himself mentions the fratricidal obsession between the Pandavas and the Kauravs, Sugriva and Bali, Ravana and Vibhishana; more perceptively, he sees the fraternal bonding among Rama and his brothers in the Raghu family as expressing "another facet of the same deep anxiety" (296), perhaps in a reverse order. In present-day familial or political situations the fratricidal bloodletting is no less a cause of anxiety and pain among the literary practitioners, thoughtful citizens or members of the civil society in general. In the Indian context, the recurrent sectarian feuds, communal riots or sub-national conflicts, even the Tamil-Singhalese hostilities are instances of the same fratricidal conflicts on another plane. On the universal plane, if we believe all humans are children of the same father, then any civilizational clash between man and man, or nation and nation, because of vain egoistic reasons or misconceptions or foolish rivalries, is equally distressing. A dramatization of this deep-seated and recurrent problem can lead to a cathartic release in the audience.

III. Struggle between Genders

Vishakha, a female character of strong will, is married off to Paravasu who seems to have made her extremely happy exactly for one year, as she says, "He plunged me into a kind of bliss I didn't know existed. It was heaven - here and now -at the tip of all my senses" (Karnad, p.123). But soon after the end of the first year Paravasu, leaving her at the hermitage, goes away at the invitation of the King to be the Chief Priest of the fire sacrifice. For seven years he has never returned to her even once, although the yajna site is only a couple of hours away from their hermitage. This seemingly endless loneliness has made her 'parched and wordless' (Karnad, p.122).

Obviously, Karnad intends to portray the exploitation of women, both psychologically and physically, through the characterization of Vishakha. Yavakri arouses her sensual passion but does not hesitate to abandon her to follow his own private agenda. She has to meekly submit herself to her father's demands and marry Paravasu against her wishes. However, she yields to him unrestrainedly in intense physical pleasure; but Paravasu, as she realizes later, has used her body as well as his body, "like an experimenter, an explorer. As instruments in a search" (Karnad, p.123), although she does not know what the search is all about. His experiments are not for her sake - her happiness is only a by- product of a search of which she has had only the vaguest idea. She is merely a passive partner in Paravasu's experiments: "I had a sense he was leading me to something. Mystical? Spiritual? We never talked", says Vishakha (Karnad, p 123). After the first year of their marriage their conjugal life consists of only silences: "My silence again followed by yours. Silences endlessly repeated" (Karnad, p.141). Paravasu has his rituals at the fire sacrifice to remain preoccupied with. For Vishakha this loveless marriage is thrust upon her like a heavy burden. That is not the end of her suffering. After the departure of Paravasu for the fire sacrifice, of the three members left in the hermitage, Arvasu is never home. She suggests rather ambiguously that consumed by an old man's perverted lust, her father-in-law Raibhya sexually abuses her with his wizened body, the scratchy claws, and the blood, cold as ice' (Karnad, p.142). She is subjected to beating, kicking and extreme verbal abuse by him in the absence of her husband. More painful is her disillusionment with Yavakri. She thinks she is the initiator in her sexual union with Yavakri after so many years of waiting for the fulfilment of the longing of their youth. She says to him: "I'll give you the knowledge Indra couldn't give you. My body - it's light with speech now" (Karnad, p.123). But Yavakri spikes her sense of agency a little later by disclosing that their serendipitous sexual act is part of a scheme of avenging his father's humiliation at the instance of her father-in-law and her husband. He has asked Arvasu to arrive at the riverbank exactly when the sun is overhead to discover them having sex; he has prearranged to send for Raibhya at the hermitage to find Vishakha in a disheveled condition with her torn clothes and her back covered with mud'. He has planned to provoke Raibhya to attack him and to mar the fire sacrifice by distracting Paravasu with the news of Vishakha's faithlessness and making him step out of the consecrated site. This would give him an opportunity to confront and destroy them with his new-found power granted by Indra. Vishakha realizes that she has been merely used by Yavakri to satisfy his hate and lust for revenge: his sweet talk of love for her is nothing but a ruse, a camouflage to use her as bait. She says to him quietly: "I was so happy this morning. You were so good. So warm. I wanted to envelop you in everything I could give." In her absolute despondency she cries out: "Why is life so contrary, Yavakri? One thinks one has stepped on to a bit of solid ground - a little haven - and the earth gives way" (Karnad, p.132). This elaboration and shaping up of Vishakha's character and function - going much beyond the *Mahabharata* story – helps Karnad to foreground the multiple victimization of woman from the ancient past down to the present day. He also appears to contest the oft-repeated claim of a homogeneously exalted position of women in Indian culture and vividly represents the physical as well as psychological abuses, anguish and humiliation of many women trapped in loveless marriages.

However, Karnad portrays the resistance, too, mounted by Vishakha against her maltreatment by the androcratic society. She flouts the terms of a loveless marriage contract - for her marriage is not an eternal relationship determined in heaven – by choosing Yavakri, in order to assert and demonstrate her sexual autonomy and choice. Since she did not enter the marriage contract with Paravasu as an independent subject, now she feels she is, therefore, not obliged to obey the terms of the contract. In any case Paravasu has not kept his vow to satisfy her physical needs as husband. After being beaten and kicked by Raibhya, Vishakha calmly declares her right to control her own sexuality: "Yes, there was somebody else there. Yavakri! And he had come to see me. Alone". Raibhya's outburst "You whore - you roving whore!" (Karnad, p.127) is the frustrated response of patriarchy's failure to regulate women's sexuality. She sarcastically tells her husband: "I was sure you wouldn't come home even if I were on my deathbed. But my fornication was reason enough, wasn't it?" And then she bluntly informs him: "Whatever you heard about Yavakri and me ... was no rumour" (Karnad, p.140). She subsequently becomes experienced enough to understand the similarity in attitude to women between Yavakri and Paravasu and says so in clear terms: "How much you resemble each other. You both go away when you feel like it. Come back without an explanation." And she challenges this male whimsicality in dealing with women in the name of a divine order or sexual

morality, or rather, a fascistic inclination of sacrificing an individual for the collective good against her wishes. "As though Indra is explanation enough! He isn't. Not for me. Why did you go away like that?" She has become 'sick of silence', longs for common human happiness, and so asks Paravasu: " Will you come home once the fire sacrifice is over? I suppose that would be too human. But what's wrong with being human? What's wrong with being happy, as we were before you got Indra into you?" (Karnad, p.140-1). She responds to the needs of the flesh unashamedly when Paravasu looks at the dead body of Raibhya and suggests attending to the old man, Vishakha says to him: "He's had a long life. Why should he be in a hurry now?" and they look at each other. The stage darkens on them. For her life is life and death cannot put a full stop to its needs.

Vishakha's passionate lovemaking with Yavakri is a quiet but firm assertion of her right and freedom of choice over her body and soul; she retorts to Yavakri's request to her for not going away, "Have I gone? I am still here. You are a fool, Yavakri. And you talk like one." And she enjoys the pleasure of their passionate kiss: "Gently! Don't rush. Oh, Yavakri! The pleasure of calling someone a fool" (Karnad, p.122). But when she learns that Yavakri has duped her to detain her there using his mournful reminiscences of their youthful memories of love, with calm deliberateness she pours out all the consecrated water from the kamandalu, knowing fully well that this action will lead to his annihilation by the Brahma Rakshasa; it is her silent chastisement of Yavakri's heartless abuse of her emotions and passions. And yet immediately afterwards she urges and pushes him to run to his father's hermitage hurriedly to save his life. The complexities in her are portrayed by Karnad with unflagging insight. Having completed the funeral rites of his father Arvasu comes home, calls out Vishakha, and getting no reply, goes inside the hermitage and finds 'the water pot, covered with cobwebs' (Karnad,147). Vishakha has earlier told Arvasu to refuse his brother's order to perform the funeral rites as he is innocent of his father's murder and has urged him to live his own life. Significantly, Karnad's stage direction ("the water pot covered with cobweb") indicates that Vishakha has left the barren confinement in the hermitage and has gone away probably to live her own life in her own terms.

IV. Dichotomy Between castes

The Arvasu-Nittilai subplot is an invention of Karnad and has been employed in the play with an invitation to make a fresh appraisal of the Dalit social and cultural institutions and thereby to subvert the superiority-claim of the Brahminical culture. Karnad's Arvasu, unlike in the *Mahabharata* story, is unwilling to conduct the royal fire sacrifice like Paravasu, or to perform penance in the jungle like Yavakri. He claims he likes to dance and sing and act and his ambition is to become an actor although a Brahmin is not allowed by the scriptures to be so. From his childhood he has played with the tribal children like Nittilai's brother and his friends. He is happy to give up all the privileges of the higher castes for a life marked by unpretentious simplicity and genuine love. Thus the generous, charming, good-natured Arvasu is intended to be a counterpoint or a foil to orthodox intransigent upper caste characters like Paravasu and Yavakri. On the other hand, Nittilai as belonging to the hunter Tribe is made to question the discourse of Brahminical powers. Significantly, Karnad makes the shudra Andhaka to narrate how Yavakri has conducted his rigorous tapasya for ten years in the deep jungle - his self-mortifications, austerities, fasting, meditation, prayers, his offering of all his limbs including fingers, eyes, tongue and heart to the fire standing in a circle of fire, and then the appearance of Lord Indra with a boon. When Nittilai asks him whether Yavakri has told him all this, Andhaka replies: "Don't be silly. A man of his stature wouldn't talk about himself ...". To Nittilai's further query regarding how anybody can know what happens in a remote corner of a forest, Andhaka reiterates that Yavakri has received his divine knowledge directly from the gods. The brahminist discourses, rituals and spectacles internalized by Andhaka during his whole lifetime in a hermitage as a menial have robbed him of his own language to articulate his independent views. It is ironical that Andhaka is a blind shudra - his blindness is not merely physical, but it symbolizes his lack of insight to grasp the cultural politics and the process of knowledge-construction involved in order to overwhelm the dominated caste/group with the rhetoric of the supernatural, of tapasya, of the tejas (inner spiritual power) of a Brahmin. But Karnad makes Nittilai ask penetrating questions incessantly about the cultural discourses and praxes of Brahminism: why are the Brahmins so secretive about everything? Why are the fire sacrifices conducted in covered enclosures? Why do their gods appear so secretly in the dark of the jungle? Why didn't Yavakri ask for rain from Indra, their God of Rain, for the drought-affected land and its distressed people? Can Yavakri make it rain and revive the earth and save dying children with his god-given power? Can he predict his moment of death? The blind shudra Andhaka mouths the Brahminist ideology 'that such powers shouldn't be used to solve day-to-day problems. They are meant to lead one to - to - inner knowledge' (Karnad,117), though his fumbling makes it clear that he does not understand the so-called 'inner knowledge'. Nittilai further grills him: "Then what's the use of all these powers?" Andhaka gives up by saying: "Ask Yavakri, when you meet him. He won't mind. In fact, he'll like it. He's a gentle soul" (Karnad,117). In fact, he cannot be more wrong about Yavakri's gentleness. Later in Act One when indeed she meets him (Karnad,124) and correctly guesses that he has seduced Vishakha, she cannot but become angry about the moral hypocrisy of this kamandalu-carrying self- proclaimed ascetic claiming to practise physical mortifications and austerities. She angrily says, 'Some people put the treacherous viper to shame. Yavakri does not hesitate to threaten the whelp' with his Brahminical power of curse to dominate and silence the low-caste dissenter and transgressor of social and cultural boundary, as he says: "I don't know when I'll die. But I promise you this- you'll be dead within the month" (Karnad,125). The shocked Dalit young woman has to recoil and disappear from the scene.

V. Conflict between Individual and Collective

The dramatist makes it clear that Nittilai, both as a Dalit and as a female in her own caste, suffers from double victimization of caste bias and gender bias: she suffers humiliation in the wider social sphere as a Dalit girl; Raibhya refers to her as a "savage!" (Karnad,126), just as Yavakri disparagingly calls her a whelp (Karnad,125); Nittilai thinks that Arvasu has not yet informed his family of his intention to marry her because as a Brahmin he is perhaps 'ashamed' of announcing his marriage to a girl belonging to the hunter caste. She has heard her father always express his apprehension of the Brahmin's exploitation of those belonging to the lower rungs of social hierarchy: 'these high-caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them' (Karnad,114). Because of her unconscious tension engendered by a 'Brahmin groom' (Karnad,111) she urges Arvasu to go and meet the elders of her community: 'If we are late, the elders will be angry with us and ...' (124). Karnad appears to project shudra culture in a more positive light. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker rightly points out: "The play thus associates brahminism with mind-games, egocentrism, sterility, and ruthlessness, and shudra culture with love, compassion, freshness, and hope, although the contrast is not simplistic or absolute." In the Introduction she refers to how Girish Karnad himself points out that the transgressive woman Vishakha" is chastised but not punished, whereas ... Nittilai pays with her life for choosing Arvasu over her husband" (xviii-xix). Thus, regarding gender bias, shudra culture is not free from patriarchal attitudes and stances, and Nittilai has to become a helpless victim of a rigid male order. Within the tribal social code, she has the freedom to choose her husband. But once Nittilai and her chosen bridegroom Arvasu fail to profess their loyalty to the social code, Nittilai loses her agency role and is forced to accept the collective decision. Her father decides to marry her off to another young man of their tribe - Nittilai's opinion is no more taken into consideration. They decide on how or with whom she will be happy. Once she decides to cross the boundary of custom - for whatever benevolent purpose it may be - she invites her doom: her husband, with the active connivance and assistance of her own brother, slashes her throat.

But Karnad has made this subaltern girl a symbol of selfless and unstinted love, too. She can be compared to Cordelia. She is the voice of protest, of resistance, against male dominance, too. Her unselfconscious love for Arvasu is a quiet protest against the caste-ridden society. After her marriage with the young man of her community, she might have led a happy domestic life, she herself says, with her 'always smiling' husband (Karnad, p.151). But she gives up all the temptations of that secure life, and risks everything for the sake of Arvasu when she learns that he has been pounced upon, kicked and dragged to the cemetery and left there dying, with his sacred thread torn off by the soldiers. She nurses and brings him back to life. She responds to the call of selfless love or '*agape*'. It is the 'Universal Knowledge' in the true sense, and not what Yavakri and Paravasu claim to have attained.

VI. Dichotomy between Great and Little tradition

As Brahmanism and shudra culture are opposed here, the 'fire' and the 'rain' of the title of the play are also used contrapuntally. In the original Kannada title Karnad has used the Sanskrit word 'Agni' for fire and not the Kannad word 'benki'. Agni, Karnad points out, is associated with holy and ceremonial things and occasions like yajnas, weddings and funeral rites (Karnad, p.290-1). But the playwright has used the Kannad word 'male' for rain in the Kannad title. This word lacks 'the aura of romance, mystery and grandeur' that a Sanskrit word can evoke. But these connotations of the opposition between the great tradition (marga or classical) and the little tradition (*desi* or folk) of Indian culture through these two words (*agni* and *male*) have been totally lost in the English renderings of these words. However, if we remember the original title (*Agni Mattu Male*) along with the English title and think of their relationship with the action of the play, we cannot but have the impression that the play wishes to invest the *desi* or little or folk tradition with more positive qualities, with creativity, fertility and hope.

VII. Conclusion

Through the interpretation of myth, Karnad advocates that knowledge without love, compassion, understanding and humanity can lead to inflated egos, jealousy and complete destruction as mentioned in *The BhagwadGita* :
Krodhadbhavatisammohah
Sammohatsmrti-vibhramah
*Smrti-bhramsa**d**buddhi-naso*
Buddhi-nasatpranasyati (Goyandka, p. 63).

(From anger arises infatuation; from infatuation, confusion of memory; from confusion of memory, loss of reason; and from loss of reason, one goes to complete ruin).

The play ends with Arvasu clutching Nittilai's dead body and whispering: "It's raining, Nittilai! It's raining" (Karnad,176). It is not only that the fire is opposed to the rain, Arvasu's sacrifice is perhaps a counterpoint to the fire sacrifice, too. The rain that comes in the wake of Arvasu's sacrifice would end the drought and make the barren waste land fertile and fruitful. Thus, Girish Karnad has ended his play in a completely different way from how the *Mahabharata* myth of Yavakri ended. The transformation of the conclusion of the myth in his play is commensurate with his own *weltanschauung*.

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