

## GIRISH KARNAD'S PLAY "TALEDANDA" IS A FINE EXAMPLE FOR SUBALTERN LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** *Girish Karnad, being a Kannada writer, cultivated to write in English along with Kannada. His stay in abroad provided him ample opportunities to communicate in English. Taledanda is one of the most discussed plays as his other plays like Tughlaque, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, Yayati, Agni mattu Male which occupied prominent place both in Kannada and Indian writing in English literature. He exposed himself to the subaltern and postcolonial literature. His play Taledanda related to Basavanna, who lived during 12<sup>th</sup> century in Karnataka state. This play closely interwoven with politics and social strata existed during the reign of King Bijjala in Kalyana. Girish Karnad composed this play during the sensitive time of the mandir and Mandal developments in India. Furthermore, no doubt, it is an effort to discovered delineation in an 800-year-old story in Kannada language and took place at Kalyana in Karnataka*

**Key Words:** *Postcolonial, Subaltern Literature, Basavanna, Bijjala, Kalyana, Sharana, Brahmin, Untouchable.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Postcolonial literature provides a lot of knowledge about the British reign in India. Shades of colonialism are reflecting after Indian Independence in the name of postcolonial literature. It is a product of real life of creative art. Girish Karnad is one of the influential writers in India. He used to write his plays first in Kannada language and later translated in to English. He succeeded to keep up consistency and managed his distinct identity not only in India but also in the international level. Critics have put their views on his plays without fail. Girish Karnad has an endowment of rootedness that can't be sufficiently esteemed. He comprehends the mythic subtext of our lives and realizes that it is in these old hereditary re-arranged words that the pointers to our baffling conduct lie covered. Over and over he plunges into the past, hauls out a legend intense with representation, and recasts it with a capable contemporary reverberation. Throughout the decades, Yayati, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala have all made for convincing theatre; as did Tale-Danda, which was composed and organized in Kannada five years back, and now has at last been converted into English by the creator.

There are interpretations regarding subaltern study in the literary field and most of the writers produced literature on subaltern thing. It is noteworthy in this context that, Gramsci's detailed explanation regarding the methodological criteria for the history of subaltern classes in which he identifies the 'integral historian' as: "1. the objective formation of the subaltern class through the developments and changes that took place in the economic sphere; the extent of their diffusion; and their descent from other classes that preceded them; 2. their passive or active adherence to the dominant political formations; that is, their efforts to influence the programs of these formations with demands of their own; 3. the birth of new parties of the ruling class to maintain control of the subaltern classes; 4. the formations of the subaltern classes themselves, formations of a limited and partial character; 5. the political formations that assert the autonomy of the subaltern classes, but within the old framework; 6. the political formations that assert complete autonomy, etc." (Gramsci, Selections 52) In The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explained as, "All post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neocolonial domination and independence has not solved this problem. The development of new elites within independent societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/invaser societies – all these testify to the fact that postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin)

Further, another writer Pramod. K. Nayar defines it as "postcolonial subalternization" (Nayar 69). In addition he tried to explain, If the native was the subaltern during colonial rule, postcolonialism created its own subalterns. Women, 'lower' castes, and classes, ethnic minorities rapidly became the 'Others' within the postcolonial nation-state. The new elite were as oppressive and exploitative as the colonial master. Democratic approaches failed, and economic and social emancipation slipped across the horizon as millions of 'postcolonials' saw themselves colonized by the new powers." (Nayar 100) Girish Karnad has been generally used the theme on socio-political significance of his theatre or his political responsibility for being a playwright. During his interviews and discussions Karnad revealed about his

views about postcolonial and subaltern issues. he generally stayed away from any such discussion and instead focuses more on discussions about form of this plays. Citing one of Gramsci's own statements, Green states: " This is not a complete, a historical, or essentialist methodology since Gramsci contends that these phases of study could be more detailed with intermediate phases and combinations of phases, and he states: The historian must record, and discover the causes of, the line of development towards integral autonomy, starting from the most primitive phases (Notebook , 1971.). From this statement one can deduce that these six phases do not just represent the methodology of the subaltern or integral historian, but also represent the phases in which a subaltern group develops, from a primitive position of subordination to a position of autonomy. That is, the phases represent the sequential process in which a subaltern group develops and grows into a dominant social group or, in other instances, is stopped in its ascent to power by dominant social groups or political forces". (Green 9-10)

The elucidation is magnificent, holding the stream and sauciness of the first; and, in any occasion in understanding, Taledanda is the kind of play that prizes examining. The play is set 800 years beforehand, in the city of Kalyan, which for the most part was an onlooker to a reformist improvement unmatched in Karnataka for its courage and imaginativeness. The improvement was driven by Basavanna (whose free-verse verses A.K. Ramanujan had implied stunning effect in *Speaking of Siva*), an essayist blessed the individual, who collected around him an astounding get-together of mystics, rationalists, craftsmen and social progressives. He composed Tale Danda because of the developing danger of Hindu enthusiasm, rotating around the Ramjanmabhoomi development, and the apparition of standing based threat, foregrounded by virtue of the administration's choice to execute the suggestion of the Mandal Commission with respect to bookings for in reverse groups, for example, those having a place with Scheduled Castes and Tribes. In his preface to Tale Danda, written in 1989 but first published in English in 1993, Karnad confesses that ... "the 'Mandir' and 'Mandal' movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers [the Virasaivas] were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and the religious fanaticism that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered" (Karnad: 1, xiii).

Highlighting the achievement and glory of Basavanna and his followers, Karnad writes, "Together they created an age unmatched in the history of Karnataka for its creativity, courageous questioning and social commitment. Spurning Sanskrit, they talked of God and man in the mother tongue of the common people. They condemned idolatry and temple-worship. Indeed they rejected anything \_static\_ in favour of the principle of movement and progress in human enterprise. They believed in the equality of the sexes and celebrated hard, dedicated work. They opposed the caste system, not just in theory but in practice." (Karnad: 1, 2)

In Karnad's play, it isn't Basavanna who is the most intriguing character, yet the master of Kalyan, Bijjala, a man improved with quality, doubt, regard, and an inward voice. Bijjala is an adjacent admirer and companion of Basavanna - who for quite a while was his famous treasurer-yet does not dither to cross him in chat about. Bijjala's begetters begun from the lower standings, and he, better than anything Basavanna, fathoms that rank is a skin you can't shed, paying little heed to how much impact and money you utilize. Unavoidably, Bijjala-having consented reluctantly to the predetermined union is the primary loss of the inferno that discharges. "Girish Karnad has a gift of rootedness that cannot be valued enough. He understands the mythic subtext of our lives, and knows that it is in these ancient genetic anagrams that the pointers to our frustrating behaviour lie buried. Time and again he dips into the past, pulls out a legend potent with metaphor, and recasts it with a powerful contemporary resonance. Over the decades, *Yayati*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala* have all made for compelling theatre; as did Tale-Danda, which was written and staged in Kannada five years back, and now has finally been translated into English by the author. The translation is excellent, retaining the flow and sauciness of the original; and, at least in translation, *Tale-Danda* is the kind of play that rewards reading. The play is set 800 years in the past, in the city of Kalyan, which historically was witness to a reformist movement unmatched in Karnataka for its courage and creativity. The movement was spearheaded by Basavanna (whose free-verse lyrics A.K. Ramanujan had translated to stunning effect in *Speaking of Siva*), a poet-saint, who gathered around him an astonishing assemblage of mystics, philosophers, poets and social revolutionaries. This congregation, sprung from a variety of backgrounds and social strata, displayed a marvellous egalitarian, liberal, modern soul. Spurning the heaviness of Sanskrit, they spoke the language of the common people. Though notion-ally worshippers of Siva, they railed against idolatry and empty rituals. Thoroughly progressive, they believed in the ethic of hard work and opposed any gender bias. But it was at the altar of that most ancient of Indian constructs, the caste system, that they ended up sacrificing their movement." (www.indiatoday.in)

Golwalkar's announcements are really conceived out of his tireless disappointment with such activists, their associations and the political and authoritative upgrades, however questionable and delicate, that have been introduced post-freedom India. This ends up noticeably unequivocal when he states: " Separatist consciousness breeding jealousy and conflict is being fostered in sections of our people by naming them Harijans, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and so on and by parading the gift of special concessions to them in a bid to make them all their slaves with the lure of money." (Golwalkar 110) At a time when even shadows were deemed capable of contaminating others, such an act was bound to raise orthodox uproar, especially in the context of a society which would not even allow famine-hit refugees

to move to the other side of the river-bank for fear of pollution. An anxious Basavanna cautiously responds: Until now it was only a matter of theoretical speculation. But this – this is real. The orthodox will see this mingling of castes as a blow at the very roots of varnashrama dharma. Bigotry has not faced such a challenge in two thousand years. I need hardly describe what venom will gush out, what hatred will erupt once the news spreads. (Karnad: 1, 45) His feelings of dread are shared by the elderly untouchable holy person Kakkayya, who likewise tells Haralayya, You know my profession is tanning. In terms of ‘\_caste’, that’s low, even lower than you, Haralayya. When one grows up that far down, there’s nothing one doesn’t know about the horrors of caste. So I ask you: have you given this alliance enough thought? (Karnad: 1, 44)

In any case, the juxtaposition of such study with the authentic setting of factional strife amongst Veersaivas and Jains in twelfth-century Karnataka contains significantly more radical ramifications. Paulo Freire, in his pedagogy of the oppressed, cautions us that: “But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or —sub-oppressors. The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped... Many of the oppressed who directly or indirectly participate in revolution intend conditioned by the myths of the old order — to make it their private revolution. The shadow of their former oppressor is still cast over them.” (Freire 45-46)

The prosperous Kalyan transforms into a burial ground and even as the sharanas escape in a few headings, Sovideva's Brahmanical threatening vibe shows itself through requests of heartless oppression that mean to guarantee the strict quieting and deletion of the subaltern: “Pursue them. Don’t let them escape. Men, women, children – cut them all down. Set the hounds after them. Search each wood, each bush. Burn the houses that give them shelter. Burn the books. Yes, the books! Tear them into shreds and consign them to their wells. Their voices shall be stilled for ever – ... From this moment all sharanas, foreigners and free thinkers are expelled from this land on pain of death. Women and lower orders shall live within the norms prescribed by our ancient tradition or else they’ll suffer like dogs”. (Karnad: 1, 101) As Thipperudraswamy explains, “Kayaka cuts at the root of traditional Varna or caste hierarchy, embodying in itself the principles of the equality of all men and also the dignity of labour” (Thipperudraswamy 41).

It is this reality which is reliably foregrounded, even before the focal emergency ejects, through a progression of discourses that alarm us to this inconsistency, as exemplified by the accompanying trade amongst Basavanna and Bijjala:” Basavanna: For a sharana, physical parentage is of no consequence. A person is born truly only when the guru initiates him into a life of knowledge. Bijjala: That’s what you believe. As a child you tore up the sacred thread and ran away from home. Birth, caste, creed mean nothing to you. But don’t you delude yourself about your companions, friend. If you really free them from the network of brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, uncles and second cousins, and let them loose in a casteless society, they will merely sputter about like a pile of fish on the sands and die.” (Karnad: 1, 27) Bijjala's reasonable contemplations fill in as a thwart to the perfect vision of Basavanna. We ought not, in any case, assume Bijjala to be a delegate of the conventionality. Truth be told, is really a hair stylist by a station, King Bijjala remains intensely mindful of the centrality of Basavanna's development. He plainly admits: “I am a Kalachurya. Katta churra. A barber...you ask the most innocent child in my empire, what is Bijjala, son of Kalachurya Permadi, by caste? And the instant reply will be: a barber! One’s caste is like the skin on one’s body. You can peel it off top to toe, but when the new skin forms, there you are again: a barber – a shepherd – a scavenger.” (Karnad: 1, 21)

## 2. CONCLUSION:

Girish Karnad is one of those few Indian dramatists who have managed to establish for themselves a distinct identity in the international scenario. Not only have many of his plays been performed outside India on several occasions but he has also received critical acclaim from different quarters. His plays especially ‘Taledanda’ represents as the best example of subaltern literature in Indian writing in English who utilized an historical event which took place at Kalyana in Karnataka state. After reading and interpretation once again there is a clear shade of post-colonialism depicted in literature.

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Dr. Basappa Y. Bangari has 15 years of teaching experience both in UG and Post Graduate level. He is in the educational sector since 1996. He served as an Associate Professor and Head, Department of Indian and Foreign languages at Garden City University, Bengaluru and contributed his experiences while preparing syllabus for UG and Post Graduate level in English language and literature. He also served as a Private Secretary to the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor of Karnataka Janapada University, Gotagodi for seven years. He also served as Teacher Educator for three years. Apart from these he is serving as a casual News Reader at All India Radio, Dharwad. He Served as a Special Correspondent for 'Samajveer' Kannada Daily for 25 years. He has been engaged in research activities in Folklore of Karnataka and social sciences along with English language, literature and translation. Apart from participation and presented papers on various topics in National, International seminar and conferences, published 14 books and 31 research papers in refereed journals related to language, folklore, culture, communication and translation. His six translation books are ready for publication. Presently he is perusing his second Ph.D from Department of studies and research in English of Tumkur University, Tumakuru. "From Orality to Textuality: Transition of Folk Epics across Ritual and Textual Contexts in Rural Karnataka" is his research topic.