

Contemporary Literature
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Module No. # 01

Lecture No. # 24

Good morning. So, we continue with Girish Karnad's play Nagamandala, a play which he wrote in 1990. As we have been discussing so far, the play reworks some of our legends and myths; also its Karnad's take on our well established legends and folk tales. So, what is a myth? A myth is something, something which Karnad draws on very frequently. So, myth is defined as a story at which we can do nothing, but wonder; it involves the root of being and reverberates there; that is William Golding's definition. According to Northrop Frye, myth is a drive towards a verbal circumference of human experience. So, myth is a tale of wonder, that is what we should take away from these two definitions. Now, what roles do myths play when Karnad decides to interpret or reinterpret them? So, in his representation of myth and history, Karnad focuses on those selected moments of cultural and historical crises, where individual choices had to confront the burden of culture.

That is what we should understand, from Karnad's reinterpretation, or representation of myth and history. We will continue with, we are at the end almost. So, it is on page 39. If you remember, where we stopped of course, Rani is oblivious to this. So, the cobra slides up her shoulder and you know, almost, hood takes the shape of an umbrella over her, as if protecting her. And, there is a commotion; there is, the villagers are overawed; they are totally enchanted by this miracle. It is a wonderful sight, because, they have never seen anything like, like this before. They have never heard of anything like this, before. The villagers fall at her feet; of course, she becomes, almost like a goddess for them; the crowd surges towards, forward to prostrate itself before her.

Appanna stands, uncomprehending; the elders shout, palanquin, music. They lift her into the palanquin; then, as an afterthought Appanna is seated next to her. Now, see, the, there is a reversal of roles. So far, Rani is the obedient, silent, unquestioning one; she is

supposed to do whatever is asked of her; whatever is, you know, whatever she is ordered; whether it is by her Naga lover or by her husband. She has to accept everything unquestioningly. Her husband is God; that is what she has been brought up to believe; but now, the tables have turned. Appanna, as an afterthought, is made to sit next to her. Now, he is no longer important; she is the goddess, **ok**. He is not the, so called God anymore; the husband, that the husband, who is supposed to be her lord and master. So, it is the, **the** situation has changed. The couple is taken in procession to their home. Elder 1, the village elders, Appanna, your wife is not an ordinary woman; she is a goddess incarnate. Do not grieve that you judged her wrongly, and treated her badly; that is how goddesses reveal themselves in the world; you were the chosen instrument for revealing her divinity; spend the rest of your life in her service. So, you see, she was, earlier it was the wife, it was Rani, who has supposed to spend her life in Appanna's service; but now, things have changed. Appanna is asked by the village elders to spend his life in Rani's service. You need merit in ten past lives, to be chosen for such holy duty. So, it is your privilege to be Rani's husband. All disperse, except Rani and Appanna. Appanna opens the lock on the door; throws it away.

He goes in and sits, mortified; baffled. She comes in and sits next to him. Long pause. Suddenly, he falls at her feet, forgive me, I am a sinner; I was blind. Rani gently takes him in her arms, music starts in the background, and the words they speak to each other, cannot be heard, and that is, the story's story; you remember the story, which came out of the old ladies mouth and the story wearing a sari and she is sitting on the stage and this is the story. So, the story is over; it is, it is a happy ending of course. And, the story says, so, Rani got everything she wished for; a devoted husband, a happy life; she even got a lifelong servant to draw water for her, for her home; and that is the mistress, Appanna's former mistress. And, once she witnesses the miracle, she, **she** repents for her life of sins and then, decides to devote the rest of her life to Rani and serve her. In due course Rani gave birth to a beautiful child, a son. So, she is showered with blessings, a devoted husband, a servant, a beautiful child, a son; that, that is, Rani lived happily ever after with her husband, child and servant. Her last sentence is drowned in the hubbub created by the flames, as they prepared to leave.

That was a nice story; has it dawned yet; I do not want to be late, etcetera, **etcetera**. So, just like, you know, a bunch of audience, a regular, you know, audience comes and

attends theatre, the flames also, leave the stage, commenting on, you know, that was a good story, and let us get home, let us get back home, it is getting late and all. Now, the man, the man who is the playwright, the storyteller, he is exasperated; these flames are worse than my audience; cannot they wait till the story is over. He does not buy this ending; you see, for him, the story is not yet over. Flame one, but is it not; man, it cannot be; no one will accept this ending, story; but, why not; man, too many loose ends; take Appanna's disappearance, for instance; you know, because last scene, Kurudavva was looking around for her son; and if you remember, Kappanna used to see a certain figure; certain form and shape of a woman. We are never told, who that, who exactly that person is; whether it is a ghost, or you know, any kind of an apparition, a super natural presence, but who is it. So, it is left, it is very open ended; we do not know, who that creature is, and now, Kappanna has disappeared.

Story, oh, that is Kurudavva's story; you see, that is the beauty of a story. In every story, there are major characters, as well as minor characters; and here, of course, this is Rani's story; Rani, it is a love triangle; it is a triangle; it is Rani's relationship with two men; Kappanna and Kurudavva, they are just minor characters in this story; but some other day, at some other time, there would be Kurudavva's and Kappanna's story, where Rani and Naga and Appanna, if they appear, they would play minor roles. So, we have to understand, that is the nature of storytelling. Everyone cannot have the lead role, the leading part. If you are interested in that one, you will find her yet; meet her unexpectedly, as you met me here; in somewhere remote place, even in the market place perhaps, or someone in the audience may know; or you can invent the missing details, that would be quite in order. I am only Rani's story. So, you see, there are different ways of finding out about a story, and I am not concerned with Kappanna's story at all. So, you can find Kappanna anywhere; perhaps, you may bump into her somewhere, in the market place, or perhaps, the, some member of the audience, that person may know Kappanna's story; but not me; I am not here to tell Kappanna and Kurudavva's story. Even then, the present ending, just does not work; and why not, it is alright to say Rani lived happily ever after; you see, that is, that is what we expect most of the time, a happily ever after ending.

But this man, who is an intellectual, who is a thinker, who is a serious dramatist, he is unconvinced. He cannot buy this kind of ending. What about Appanna, her husband; as I

see him, he will spend the rest of his days in misery; and now, we see another ending for the play. So, Karnad gives us a choice, of endings; three kinds of alternative endings. So, you see, a, one ending is acceptable to most, happily ever after; the husband has been chastised and he, **he** returns home to his wife; they have a son and life is all roses for them. But the, **the** playwright does not buy this; you know, it cannot be the ending, and because, that does not explain what Appanna feels. So, now, we come to the alternative (()) ending; what am I to do; Appanna, is the whole world against me; have I sinned so much, that even nature should laugh at me; I know I have not slept with my wife; let the world say what it likes; let any miracle declare her a goddess; but I know; what sense am I to make of my life, if that is worth nothing. Story, well done, what about her; Rani does not speak, but responds restlessly; the stories, the following dialogue.

Story, no two men make love alike and that night of the village court, when her true husband claimed to bed with her, how could she fail to realize, it was someone new; even if, **if** she had not known earlier; when did the split take place; every night this conundrum must have spread it is hood out at her; and do you not think, she must have cried out in anguish to know the answer. Man. So, the story is not over then; in Appanna is not happy; he feels cheated; **he, he is live, he, he** is forced to live a life of lies with Rani; he does not accept that, that Rani is virtuous and, **and** that, the child is his, because he knows the truth; and what about Rani. Rani has been with another man, who looks, although like her husband, but he is not really her husband. So, she has been with another man, and now, when her real husband is with her, she would know the difference, between the two men. So, remember, it does not make for a happy ending.

When one says, and they lived happily ever after, all that is taken for granted. You sweep such headaches under the pillow and then, press your head firmly down on then; it is something one has to live with; like a husband who snores, or a wife who is going bald; you know, happily ever after, it is, it is a blanket term. When, whenever fairy tales end with this, when you, **you** know, very typical kind, very clichéd sentence, clichéd line, and they lived happily ever after; it is taken for granted that, they must be having a good relationship. These things, these nativities of relationship, these complexities, these complications, they are not to be taken into account. That is this nature of story telling. As the story speaks, Rani and Appanna come together, smile, embrace and (()) into darkness; man, but, that ending lacks something; of course, the cobra, and what becomes

of the cobra, because, after all, he was such an integral part of the entire story; how can you just write him off; how can you just wish him away.

Story, yes, the cobra. So, let us have him integrated in the story. One day, the cobra was sitting in its anthill, and it thought of Rani, and said, why should I not go and take a look; during the above dialogue, the cobra enters the house, takes on his human form; Naga, why should I not take a look? So, now, see, the story is being told from Naga's point of view; the ending is, from Naga's point of view. So far, we had Rani and Appanna; but now, we are having, we get to see what Naga thinks; why should I not take a look; I have given her everything; her husband, her child, her home, even her maid; she must be happy; but I have not seen her; it is night; she will be asleep; this is the right time to visit her; the familiar route, at the familiar hour; hard to believe now, I was so besotted with her; goes into Rani's bedroom; Rani is sleeping next to her husband, her head on his shoulders, her long loose tresses, hanging down from the edge of the cot.

A child is by her side; there is a quiet smile of contentment on her face. Naga looks at the group, and recoils in sudden anguish; covers his face, as though he cannot bear to see the scene. Naga, Rani, my queen, the fragrance of my nights, the blossom of my dreams, in another man's arms; in another man's bed; does she curl around him as passionately every night, now; and, dig her nails into his bed; and here I am, a sloughed off skin, on the tip of a thorn, an empty sack of snake skin. No, I cannot bear this; someone must die; someone has to die; why should not I kill her; if I bury my teeth into her breast now, she will be mine; mine forever; now, he is consumed with jealousy; all those, you know, blissful moments of passionate love, they come rushing by and he is, he just cannot let go of her. I gave her, her marital bliss. So, why should not I be the one to possess her; so, he is mad with rage; just gets carried away with jealousy; enraged.

But, as he is about to bite her, he stops; no, I cannot, he says; my love has stitched up my lips, pulled out my fangs; torn out my sack of poison; withdraw your wails of (()), flames; let my shame float away in the darkness; do not mock; yes, this king-cobra is now, no better than a grass snake; yes, that is it, a grass snake; a common reptile, that is what I am and I had forgotten that; I thought, I could become a human, turning to my own creation; no, I shed my own skin, every season; how could I even hope to retain the human form; for me, yes, only her long locks. Remember, the first time Naga and Rani meet, he comments on her long tresses; they remind her of a snake's coil; they are as

long, thick and dark; and that is what he thinks of; a dark, jet black snake princess; they are like me, reptilian, cold, long; they are right for me; I shall summon my magical powers for the last time, to become the size of her tresses; to become so thin, so small, that, I can hide in them, play with them, swim away in the dark flow. So, that is what he desires to be; to be with her forever; presses her hair to his body; becomes their size now; enter her tresses; they have no sensation; they will not disturb her dreams; a beam of light on him; the rest is plunged into darkness; long dark hair appear to descend and cover him; he covers himself and dances. Finally, Naga ties a tress into a noose, and places it around his neck; the stage slowly becomes dark; long silence; then, Kurudavva's voice is heard in the distance, son, where are you.

Kurudavva's voice; Kappanna, Appanna, yes, what is it; I thought, I heard someone calling me; Rani, the poor soul, Kurudavva; **tries to say** Rani tries to sit up, groans and clutches her hair. My head, it feels so heavy; remember, it is the cobra which is hiding there; can you give me a comb; my head weighs a ton; let me comb my hair; he gives her a comb; she tries to comb her hair, but cannot; there is something caught up in her tresses; could you please; Appanna, certainly; he combs her hair; but, he has to struggle, to get the comb through; at dead cobra falls to the ground; a cobra; stay away; they look at it from afar; Rani, oh, poor thing, it is dead; Appanna, you know, it seems to have got caught in your hair, and strangled itself; your long hair saved us Rani, the elders were right.

So, this is the second miracle that has happened in their lives; first miracle, when the cobra could not bite her; second miracle, Appanna assumes that, the, that the snake is there to bite them; and because of Rani's long tresses, he got entangled in them and died; the elders were right; you are no common person; you are a goddess; he too, finally, accepts that; we are not important, but our son is the blossom of our family; he has been saved. He has been given the life of, life by the cobra, as by a father. So, Rani, now recognizes, it is the same cobra, who is actually the, **the** father of her son. So, she now knows that, the cobra has made the supreme sacrifice for her sake; for the sake of her family; a cobra, it has to be ritually cremated; when we cremate this snake, the fire should be lit by our son, and every day on this day, our son should perform the ritual to commemorate its death; Appanna, but are you not going too far; I mean, that is done

only for one's own father, and I am still alive. Rani, please do not say no; of course, the, Appanna says, there is no question of saying no.

Now, see, how Rani has come into her own, from someone who, **who** could not say a word in the presence of her husband; now, she demands something, which is so far-fetched; but, she wants her son to perform those rites for this cobra; and Appanna cannot refuse; and what a change, what a shift in Rani's character, from when we first see her, and as we, as the play comes to an end. So, there is a total transformation in her character. He exits; she sits staring at the snake; her eyes fill with tears; she bows down to the dead snake; then, picks it up and presses it to her cheeks; freezes; it gets brighter; the flame disappear one by one; story, of course, is gone; see, story is no longer interested, because, her story is, this is not her story. Flames, is it really over; oh, what a lovely tale, etcetera; man, no sign of any light yet; pity, it has to end like that; flame too, these unhappy endings; flame four, why can things not end happily, for a change; man, but death, it is the only inescapable truth, you know; you know, death is the final truth; you cannot escape it. So, you know, every time we can, we cannot grant the audience, those typical, those familiar, cheap, happy endings; one has to accept this as well.

Flame five, do not be so pompous; flame one, then, why are you running away from it; if you are so, if you are not afraid to die, then, why are you running away from death; go and accept it. If darkness was the only option, we might as well have embraced it at home; man, but that is how the story is; that is how it ends; I am not to blame; flames, stop making excuses. Now, see, flames can also be taken for the members of the audience; they do not want this story; first, happily ever after, the simplistic kind of ending, is not acceptable to the writer; this, **this** tragic ending, the Rani ends up weeping and pining for her dead lover, is not acceptable to the audience; this is too tragic; the story may be over, but you are still here and still alive. Listen, we do not have much time left; get on with it, for goodness's sake. Man, alright, alright; let me try. So, now, there is a third ending.

So, you see, there is, every point of view is respected and that is what Karnad is trying to do here; you know, there cannot be a final, definitive ending. He refuses to provide a specific closure to the story; there, there cannot be a definitive end to any story. So, he leaves it open ended, you know, you, we are given a choice of endings; take whatever you want to, that is the idea, **ok**. So, **so**, there is another ending now, offered to us. The

flames rush back to the corners and wait expectantly. So, now, the audience is back and they, **they** are, they want another ending and they wait. Rani and Appanna are sleeping with the child next to them; Rani suddenly moans and sits up holding her hair; Appanna wakes up; what is it; my head, it hurts; as though someone were pulling out my hair, please, can you give a comb; I cannot bear the pain; he gives her a comb; she tries to comb her hair, but cannot; she gives the comb to Appanna; would you please; he takes the comb, combs her hair; a live snake falls out of her hair and lies writhing on the floors.

So, now, look at the difference; it is not the dead snake; is the, it is a live snake; a snake stowaway; it is tiny, but it is a cobra, alright; how did it you get into your hair; thank god, for your thick tresses; the, they saved you; wait, we must kill it; **it** backs away from the snake, then, runs out shutting the bedroom door behind him; searches for a stick in the kitchen; Rani watches the snake, transfixed. She says softly to the cobra, you, what are you doing here; that she now recognizes, it is her lover; he will kill **you**. No, not that way; go away; he is there; what shall we do; why did you ever come in here; my hair, of course, come, quick, climb into it. She lets her hair down to the floor. Quick, now, get it; are you safely in there, good; now, stay there and lie still; you do not know how heavy you are. Let me get you, use to it, you use to you, will you. Appanna comes in with a stick and she lies to her husband, the cobra went away towards the bathroom; Appanna rushes out of the bedroom, towards the bathroom, looking for the snake. Rani plaits her hair; this hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss; live in there happily, forever.

Now, which, one act like this; she accepts the presence of her lover in her life, forever, and this could be another interpretation, another acceptable ending for the play, **ok**. It is not too tragic, the melodramatic tragic; it is not the cheap happy ending; but now, there is another twist in the ending, twist in the story, where Rani gets to keep her husband, her son, and her lover as well, and what a shift in Rani's character; she lifts the baby up, starts feeding it; she and Appanna freeze; it gets brighter. The flames disappear one by one; we are back in the inner sanctum of the temple. The man is sitting alone. He looks up. Sunlight pours in through the cracks in the temple roof. So, when the play begins, the moonlight pours in through the cracked roof. Now, it is the sunlight; it is morning. The man vigorously stretches himself, bows to the audience, and goes out, and that is how the play ends.

Now, at this point, I would like to draw your attention to the meta theatrical aspect of the play. Now, meta theater was the term coined by Lionel Abel, in 1963, in a book called Meta theater. Some of the prominent features of meta theater are, the play within play structure, as we have seen in Nagamandala, and Karnad also very effectively uses the same structure, in Hayavadhana also, a play which he wrote in 1971. So, the play within play, can be an inset kind of a play, where the inner play is secondary; here, we have seen, the inner play is primary. So, it is called the framed structure. This is, I say, inner story; the play is the story of Rani, Appanna and Naga, which is most important. So, it is the, **the the the** story, the, **the** man's story, the playwright's story, the flames and the story's story; that is a frame; it provides for a very effective frame, within which is contained, the love triangle of Rani, Appanna and the cobra, or the Naga, **ok.**

So, the framed structure, and play within play story. Then, another characteristic of meta theater, is ceremony within the play, and you will, if you do very careful reading of the play, you will find, you know, there is a wedding, there is a, an inquests; there is, there are all kinds of games; there is music; there is dance, rituals; you have the procession; you have, in one of the alternative endings, you have a funeral. So, all kinds of ceremonies are contained within the play. Another characteristic, is the role playing, within the play. So, role playing could be voluntary, actors are playing their roles; involuntary, where you are, there are, the actors are not aware that, they are doing a role; and then allegorical; so, you see, the man is a man; Appanna is any man; Rani, we call her Rani, because, she is a pampered, over-indulged, only child, of rich parents; and of course, then, you have Kurudavva, the blind one, Kappanna, the, **the** dark one; so, very representative, very stereotypical characters, which are, which are representative, which are allegorical, **ok.**

Then, we have, literary and real life references. Now, we will come to it, when we look at, in Nagamandala, you find it to an extent, but this kind of, this characteristic of using literary and real life references, citations, adaptations, etcetera, you find more prominently in Karnad's Hayavadhana, and, I will just read it out to you. And, of course, self reference; self referencing is nothing, but calling attention to the play, to the, to the artist, craft, to the work of art and as we have seen, throughout the play, the idea that we have been told a story, is very much present. The story begins, with the man lamenting the fact, that he has put audiences to sleep, all these years, **ok.** So, there is the, the

playwright is being extremely conscious about his art; it is play within play, and as self references, this, these are nothing new; even Shakespeare used it. And then, later, when playwrights like Tom Stoppard, he does a reworking of Shakespeare, then, for example, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*, there too, we have a play within play structure, which is extremely self referential and self conscious.

So, these are the basic tenets, or features, of meta theater. I will read out another passage from *Hayavadhana*, which will enforce, what a meta theatrical technique is all about. See, the play, in a very classical tradition, it begins with, *Nandhi stuthi*, which is invoking the Gods, taking the blessings of the Gods. So, you have the role, a very typical standard role, of the *Bhagavata*. *Bhagavata* is thus, narrator, the storyteller; he is also the *sutradhar*, a character, who remains on stage and he, who comments on the proceedings of the stage, whatever happens on, in the story; as well as, he can also, at times, play a prominent role in the play. So, this is the way *Hayavadhana* starts. The stage is empty, except for a chair, kept center stage and a table on stage right; I will skip it a bit; at the beginning of the performance, a mask of *Ganesha* is brought on stage and kept on the chair; *pooja* is done.

The *Bhagavata* sings verses in praise of *Ganesha*, accompanied by his musicians. So, see there is the ceremony; there is a ritual; the statue of *Ganesha*, the mask of *Ganesha* is placed on the stage and the *sutradhar*, the *Bhagavata*, he does, you know, performs the ceremony and seeks the blessings of *Ganesha*; may *Vigneshwara*, the destroyer of obstacles, who removes all hurdles, and crowns all endeavors with success, bless our performance, now, **ok**. Seeking the blessings of Lord *Ganesha*, that is what is referred to here; and this is also, this is the technique, which has been directly borrowed from *Kalidasa's*, not just *Kalidas*, but also, the classical writers, of the *Sanskrit* language.

I am going to read you out, a passage from *Kalidasa's Abhigyanam Shakuntalam*, where, after the invocation, enters the *sutradhara*; and look again, at, you know, there is the reference to the invocation, you know, seeking the blessings of the, of the Gods, and then, also *sutradhara*, who is a narrator, who is the commentator on the proceedings of the play, and also, he can also be, at times, be an actor, **ok**; one of the dramatists, personae on stage, in the story. So, after the invocation, enter the *sutradhara*; *sutradhara*, looking back stage; lady, if you have finished dressing, please come here; actress, sir, here I am; *sutradhara*, dear, this audience is full of learned people and we are presenting

a new play Abhigyana Shakunthalam, whose plot has been composed by Kalidasa. Therefore, let every actor be well prepared, and, all this is going on, not back stage, but on stage, before the play starts; that, we are now going to begin a play by, **by** Kalidasa; Kalidasa's latest, most recent play, Abhigyana Shakunthalam and we are presenting this play, not before any riff-raff, but extremely learned and informed audience; so, we may as well be, **be** well prepared; actress, because of your masterly performance, sir, nothing will appear ridiculous; dear, to tell the truth, unless the wise are completely satisfied, a performance cannot be considered masterful; for, however expert one may be, there is still lurks in the mind, a sense of diffidence; actress, sir, let it be; just give the command, what should be done, **done** next, sir; sutradhara, what else, but delight the ears of the members of this audience; sing a song about the summer season that has just began, and is still enjoyable; actress, surely.

She sings. Sutradhara, well sung, dear; ah, your melody has transfixed the mind; the whole body of this royal theater is motionless, as in a painting; what play are we going to put on now, to please it; actress, but the honorable ones already ordered a performance of the unprecedented new play Abhigyana Shakunthalam; sutradhara, dear, it is good, you have reminded me; for a moment, indeed I forgot, for I have been carried away by the haunting, passionate melody of your song, asking Dhushyanth here, by the swift running until (()). And, that is how, the transition between the opening, the prologue and the main play is performed, **ok**. So, there is an invocation, the, **the** blessings of the Gods are sought, the, **the** members of the audience, who are present there, they are praised, and then, the characters are introduced. There is a song, there is a performance, and then, how, you know, it is, the entire song blends into the main story of the play; I am enchanted, the way King Dhushyantha, who is the hero of Abhigyana Shakunthalam is enchanted, or ensnared by the beauty of that antelope, and thus begins the play, **ok**.

So, meta theater, in other words, then, serves to provide an on-stage microcosm of the theatrical situation, and such techniques, as the use of parody, (()) and self references, to draw attention to literary or theatrical conventions. So, this is a major theatrical trope, which is used to convey a number of meanings. In Karnad, for example, he uses it to subvert, certain established conventions. What does he do in Nagamandala? What does he subvert? The established notion, or the understanding, that women should remain unquestioning; here, the ending is ridiculed by an, by any means; he, we are shown that,

at the end, the wife gets to keep the lover, as well as her husband, as, **as** well as her husband, and why not; it is not just a prerogative of a male, to be a pleasure-seeker; women can also have desire, and this is a very frequently occurring theme, in all the plays of Karnad, **ok.**

The same idea is presented in Hayavadhana also, which is the story of her, you know, he blends to plays, two stories; the story of The Man with a Horse's Head, which was written by Thomas Mann, the German writer and also the story of Vikram and Vethal. The idea is that, in an ancient city, an ancient Indian city, you have a woman Padmini, and she has a husband Deva Dutta, who, who is a learned man, an intellectual; Deva Dutta has a very a loyal friend, who is a wrestler; who is not an intellectual, but a bodybuilder, a wrestler, a man who is, you know, who delights in doing all kinds of a physical works; his name is Kapila. So, while Padmini is attracted to Deva Dutta's, you know, face and her, and his intellect, at the same time, she is also attracted by Kapila's physical strength, his build. So, her husband realizes this, and he decides to make a sacrifice, to keep her, to keep his wife and Kapila happy, who is his best friend.

He goes to the temple of Kaali, and you know, cuts off his head as, and offers it to Kaali and seeks the blessings of the goddess for his wife and his friend. Kapila, who is driven by guilt, he comes and sacrifices himself; he also chops off his head in the temple. Padmini, when she returns and she sees both the men dying, she is baffled and she prays Kaali to restore these lives; and the Kaali says that, why do not you try putting these heads back on their respective bodies. Now, as in a Freudian slip, she places the wrong head on the wrong body; that means, she puts, places Kapila's head on Deva Dutta's body and vice versa; now, she gets the husband, she has always wanted; a man, who is extremely intelligent, his head, and who has Kapila's strong body; whereas, Kapila gets nothing; he gets Deva Dutta's body and his own, under Kapila's head.

Now, that the conflict is, who gets the woman, and it is where, it is here, that the story of Vikram and Vethal is invoked; the idea is, is to establish the supremacy of the head, over body. So, the man who has Deva Dutta's head, gets the woman, although he may have Kapila's body. So, again, Karnad uses the myth, and establishes his own ideas, about gender relations, human desires, sexuality, etcetera. So, this is the way Karnad uses myths, legends and folktale narratives in his plays. And, his folk theatre, derives from the

open theater conventions of Bayalata and also that of Yakshagana, both extremely popular folk tale forms, theater forms in the state of Karnataka.

So, Yakshagana also uses plenty of tales, you know, from Ramayana and Mahabharatha, and Karnad uses these tales, but reworks them, in order to subvert the established notions and themes, and the, and the, and the prevalent ideas about various social conventions, and, you know, questions the relationships the people have; interrogates the socio-political, cultural and gender issues, by using, by reworking tales from our folk theater. So, there, Girish Karnad, one of the most important playwright of our times, along with Baadal Sarkar and Vijay Tendulkar; but he is important, in the sense, in the way he uses the, the folk narration, and folk theater, in our literature. Thank you very much.