

SIRISAMPIGE: A FOLK PLAY WITH MYTHOLOGICAL CONTEXT

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Folk Literature The oral tradition like sharing of stories by word of mouth can be called as folk literary practice. In the folk literature the importance of the story teller is stories, in oral traditions which are created thousands of years ago - No one knows the first storytellers - New storytellers add and change details - cultural perspective – view of the world - viewpoints are shaped by story teller’s background and experiences. The themes used in the form are the central idea, message, or insight about life that a story conveys are universal themes as we can get themes that are repeated across many cultures and over many time periods which express insights into life that many people understand for example: the struggle of good against evil, moral – a lesson about life that is stated directly, usually at end of story. The intention used in folk form of a literature is the reason it was written for example: to explain or teach, or to entertain. Different concepts like- Myths – tales that relate the action of gods, goddesses, and the heroes who interact with them For example: Greek mythology -mythology – collection of myths, and the concept like Legends – traditional stories based on real-life events...as retold, fact often changes to fiction For example: Robin Hood, King Arthur, Knights of the round and sometimes Tall tales – often focus on a central hero who performs impossible feats For example: Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, and Johnny Appleseed and we may also find Folk Tales – may deal with real people or magical characters, and they reflect the values and beliefs of the culture for example: Little Mermaid, Chinese folk tales about respect, and Cinderella. The concept of Fables – brief stories or poems that often feature animal characters who act and speak like humans, and they usually end with a moral For example: Aesop’s Fables. And Epics concept – long narrative poems important to the history of a nation or culture, and they tell of great hero going on a dangerous journey, or quest For example: Beowulf. The Characteristics of Folk Literature are observed as followed:

1. Heroes and heroines – larger-than-life figures who over-come obstacles or participate in exciting adventures Often featured in....myths, legends, epics
2. Trickster – a clever character who can fool others but often gets in trouble Often featured in....folk tales, fables Characteristics of Folk Literature Continued
3. Personification – a type of figurative language in which nonhuman subjects are given human qualities Often featured in....myth, fables
4. Hyperbole – a type of figurative language that uses extreme exaggeration Often featured in....tall tales, myths, epics Characteristics of Folk Literature Continued
5. Dialect – language spoken by people in a particular region or group Often featured in....tall tales, folk tales
6. Main Idea – what the text is mostly about

7. Supporting Details – additional information that explains, defines, proves, illustrates, clarifies and describes more about a main idea. They can be facts, examples, and statements.
8. Textual Evidence – the details you get from your readings that support your answers and claims
9. Allusion – an implied or indirect reference in literature to a familiar person, place, or event
10. Analysis – using a close reading of texts to examine the relationships/connections among ideas, details, and/or examples
11. Inference – a judgment based on reasoning rather than on a direct or explicit statement. An understanding based on “reading between the lines”.
12. Text Dependent Analysis – information based on specific evidence within a reading passage and being able to interpret the meaning.

Taking clue from the traces of folk literature in Indian English literature the selected writing *Sirisampege* the play in fact folk play by Chandrasekhar Kambar who is a leading poet, playwright, folklorist, film director in Kannada language and the founder Vice-Chancellor of Kannada University in Hampi. He was born on January 2, 1937 at Ghodageri village in Belagavi district, Karnataka. Right from his young age, he evinced keen interest in folk arts, local culture and ritual. He felt comfortable with north Karnataka dialect of Kannada and relied on it for his poems and plays. During the period, the use of north Karnataka dialect was not common and he happened to be the progenitor. In fact, his skillful use of the dialect in his plays and poems placed him on par with the stalwarts of the day.

Kambar cherishes the experiences of ordinary people among their gods and goddesses and their unique rituals. “Chandrasekhar Kambar, steeped in the folk traditions of the region, has been most innovative in form, using songs, recitation, movement and rituals” (Hochman 1984) and he has written “more than twenty plays in Kannada, some socio-political, such as ‘Jokumaraswami’ and ‘Rishyashringa,’ and more recently comedy, such as ‘Siri Sampige’” (Dinkgrafe and Dinkgrafe 2002).

Kambar defies logic in most of his plays and tries to reflect the intricacies of the world through them. As he finds the complex network of life that evades concrete meaning, he faithfully reflects the same in his plays. A reader must not try to read his plays with the curiosity of a scientist to discover facts through logical reasoning. “An apparently wild opulence is what greets the reader as he delves into Kambar’s writings. It is better that the reader relaxes into that opulence. For if he insists on taking a framework of logic into his reading, then that very frame might trip him up” (Taranath 1989). The lack of logic does not deter a reader or a spectator from sharing the message of the author. On the other hand, it helps the author capture the neglected aspect of human life.

Kambar borrows the texture of his plays from the environment and faithfully reflects it through his plays. In ‘My Writing,’ Kambar (1999a) proclaims that “I draw my texture of experience mainly from my *sense of place*. It forms the main core of my writing. It gives me every ingredient of texture.... Environment to me, comes primarily as a sense of place.” He belongs to the class that observes and learns from its environment. The people of the class try to preserve their own tradition through art forms such as oral and written.

In a sense, not belonging to the upper class has helped him enormously. His people, illiterate and oppressed, sang vividness in order to preserve experience. Sensuous memory was, in fact, all knowledge to them. And so when literacy and writing came to him, their son, it came as unique excitement, not as routine. Therefore, he builds. He does not, because he cannot, reduce and classify (Taranath 1989).

Kambar was a major figure in the movement of 1960s that tried to correlate the folk and modern. “His ‘Jokumaraswami’ had electrified the theater with its folk structure. The feudal master, the servant who is the strong male, the women who turn between the two (symbolic of earth) ... all these had made a vivid impact on Kannada culture” (Akshara 1991) and possibly it “is the most popular amateur play in Kannada. It attracts the imagination of the common audience also” (Datta 1988).

Kambar’s contribution and service to folk theater is really commendable. “It is Chandrasekhar Kambar who brought the vital folk element into the Kannada theater. His depth of imagination made him one of the important playwrights in modern Kannada drama. He achieved a synthesis of modernity in thought and folk style in expression” (Datta 1988). He explored the folk elements thoroughly and brought out their power to transform mundane into extraordinary. The events that seem insignificant gained magnificence through such a treatment. In addition to them, “his most significant contribution to Indian theater is the use of Bayalata, the folk form of North Karnataka, and the Sangya-Bayalata, a folk play of Karnataka. In his plays, he is concerned with human relation with the beyond” (Dinkgrafe and Dinkgrafe 2002).

In fact, the effort taken by Kambar to adopt folk form is natural rather than cultural. He avers that “I belong geographically to a village, and sociologically to what was considered to be an oppressed, uneducated class. I am, therefore, a folk person simply because I honestly cannot be anything else” (Kambar 1989). He further says in ‘Folk Theater as I See It,’ that his first long poem ‘Helatena Kela,’ ‘was entirely drawn from’ his ‘soil.’ He looks at his poem after 25 years and comments that most of his writing “is thematically connected with that long poem.” He warns that it does not mean creative bankruptcy rather “the sheer comprehensiveness and opulence of the experience ... articulate the creative urge of my people. I might make bold to state that the kind of folk medium which made ‘Helatena Kela,’ possible also made ‘Jokumaraswami,’ and other plays of mine possible” (Kambar 1989). It is the spontaneity of expression that makes his treatment of folk form unique and grand.

Kambar celebrates myth in his plays. In his ‘Introduction,’ Kirtinath Kurthkoti (1999) observes that “Since Kambar uses the theater of the folk, we have to search time and again for the interconnections between a folktale and a myth. I would say they are similar theoretically, except that a folktale is set in a specific regional milieu.” Moreover, “Kambar’s plays choose their plots from folk tales and myths which address the collective consciousness of a community” (Kurthkoti 1999). His uniqueness rests on his ability to rework mythology so as to suit the present condition. As he is brought up in the country that treasures mythology and its magnificence, the use of mythology becomes natural to Kambar (Kurthkoti 1999). Compared to other cultures, Indian culture stands supreme in cherishing mythological events and details. “Behind all the Upanishadic monism, India is mythical. Because we still bargain with our gods and walk among them and sometimes as them, our worship is essentially participatory.... In this, we Indians are a mythical people” (Taranath 1989). In ‘My Writing,’ Kambar proclaims that:

I write. In writing I build what I feel. My feelings are my experiences and I build with words, which are stories, pictures, pieces of tales, all of which have been a

part of my environment. Indeed, my sense of environment both in time and space, are stories, the fantasies, the images I use.... My

environment has simply to be mine. In order to make it mine, I have to build it. And in this task, I give a character to my environment and receive a character as a poet. We make each other (Kambar 1999a).

Kambar's sagacious treatment of modernism is quite relevant to the current situation of the world. He "writes at a time when a version of western modernism is the presiding tone in Kannada literature. Indeed, some of his less important writings show a naive anxiety to be 'Contemporary'" (Taranath 1989). He determines to reflect his own tradition through his plays. He guards himself from the influence of a foreign culture and upholds nativity. Kambar unveils his views on modernism:

I am aware of movements like modernism, with its insistent rejection of everything that is facile and lacking in integrity. I am also aware of the profound influence it has had on some of the excellent writers in contemporary Kannada literature. I think a small part of my own writing shows this influence. Standing at this distance, however, I wonder if the structures of modernism as they have come to us from the West are necessary springs in the task I have of relating with my environment (Kambar 1999a).

The research paper presents that of *Sirisampige* which is the complete and intense expression of the dualities of human existence. Written in Yakshagana style, the play improvises on the folk tale narrated by A.K. Ramanujan and other stories he had heard in his village. Through the concept of split, the play revolves round the separation of body and soul resulting in dualities tormenting both. The myth of Narcissus is given an innovative treatment lending it multidimensionality. In fact what *Narcissus* lost on the stage *Sirisampige* grabbed it from the audience. *Sirisampige* is a different extension of Kambar's *Narcissus*. The failure of the powerful but very tough symbolism in *Narcissus* is transformed into grand success through a very sensational folk story and Yakshagana presentation. The sufferings of incompleteness and the human yearnings towards completeness are reflected in the protagonist Shivanagadeva and others. Bhagavata's prayer introduces the theme of duality. What is a game in the hands of Shiva is a tragedy in human beings. Shiva, the integration of masculine and feminine principles is at once the symbol of duality and unity. The mythical duality becomes an expression of zeal towards perfection. The tragedy of Shivanagadeva begins with the major tragic flaw -searching a perfect beauty for marriage. The mother's advice in response to this wish - "Which maiden is flawless? Son, if you want such a maiden, then you yourself must be your own wife" (Kambar 9) foretells the coming tragedy. The lamp maiden that enters his body is the exact concretization of the abstraction of self love, but the protagonist mistakes this self love for the love for the maiden and goes in for splitting. From this ritualistic splitting Shivanagadeva splits not only his life but the life of the nearer and dearer ones. The body and the soul get separated and the duality and incompleteness push him to the abyss of death and destruction. The love-hate relationship between Shivanagadeva and Kalinga, Shivanagadeva and *Sirisampige* is the result of the duality between the body and soul. Through unravelling the psyche of the character Kambar exposes the tragedy of disintegration. The tragedy of splitting has created a strong illusion in the mind of the prince. The dualities are the destroyers of clarity, conviction and decision. Shivanagadeva's descriptions

of his experiences near the pond are used in the analysis to show the confusion regarding his spiritual ecstasy and later the news of Sirisampige's pregnancy transforming the same spiritual ecstasy into a hellish experience where he is eating his own corpse symbolizing the destructive quality of self love.

The writing throws light on Sirisampige's suffering. Her justification for her immorality echoes the voice of a liberated woman. The boldness and clarity with which she explain the reasons for her immorality challenge the critical comments of few critics who say that Kambar's women characters lack individuality and independence.

The suffering of Shivanagadeva reaches such an extent that he is forced to conclude that body is pure but the soul is sinful. The paper highlights their unique point where the common notion of soul being pure and body impure gets reversed and shattered. It also throws light on the strong influence of conjugal jealousy over narcissism and spiritual glorification. The downfall of mistaken spiritual ecstasy into conjugal jealousy is again the product of the dualities.

The subplot of Awali, Jawali and Kamala cannot attain the philosophical height but it parallels the main plot with the same amount of suffering. The physicality of the subplot in a way reflects mankind's too much indulgence in physical activities namely love and sex which in turn leads to violence, jealousy, hatred and destruction.

The attempt stresses on the suffering of Kalinga also. Shivanagadeva at the end while dying realizes the horrible mistake, and gets the glimpse of the heavenly unity in the eyes of Kalinga. He dies with a warning that his wife should take care of their son so that he does not venture the sin of splitting. Thus Kambar's intense metaphysical probing into the dualities of existence finds a near perfect dramatic expression in Sirisampige.

The most fundamental duality of human existence namely the duality between life and death has been a great metaphysical concern in human beings. Death as a meaningful frame work to human life has been regarded as one of the fundamental truths. It is absolutely clear that everything in the human existence must filter through the duality and reality of our consciousness. The complexities of human condition are the thematic concern of Kambar's plays. Mankind is caught in the eternal sticky network of dualities from which it can never escape. These dualities are regarded as strengths and weaknesses in the long journey of human beings towards completeness.

The play begins with Bhaagavata's prayer offering salutations to Savalagi Shivalinga. It is a combination of prayer to the almighty and an introduction of the theme. It also differentiates the human misery from Gods game indirectly hinting that Shiva, the integration of masculine and feminine principles is at once the symbol of duality and unity. What is a game in the hands of Shiva is a tragedy in human beings. Duality forms the focal point in many myths. The multiple layers of meanings the play presents make the audience delve deep into the religious philosophy, psychology and fundamentally the human predicament caught in the dualities. The conflict of the dualities reflects these truths.

The king of Shivapura with his death leaves behind Mayavati, his wife and one year old Shivanagadeva. Mayavati takes up administration of Shivapura and sees that he is perfectly trained in all aspects. The family god foretells that Shivanagadeva should be married soon after his voice cracks and that he should not see his own reflection in the water. The anxious mother has decided to arrange the marriage of Shivanagadeva with Pushparaja's daughter Sirisampige. Shivanagadeva disagrees as he wants a perfect dame. Mayavathi gives him a week's time. If he fails to find one, he should marry Siri Sampige. One night Shivanagadeva encounters a lamp maiden coming out of an idol alive dancing and entering his body. Shivanagadeva is certain that

she is the girl whom he wanted to marry. He explains his mother that he has agreed for the marriage on a condition. His body should be split into two equal halves. The parts should be separately kept in two pots and buried in the midst of flowers. The next full moon day the pots should be opened. From one pot comes a handsome Shivanagadeva and from the other comes the pretty damsel with the lamp. A marriage should be arranged between the two, if not he remains a bachelor. With great anxiety and reluctance Mayavathi and the elders of the village agree. The ritual as explained by Shivanagadeva is done accurately. But on the full moon day, when the pots are opened, Shivanagadeva comes from one pot and from another comes a king cobra. Completely dejected Shivanagadeva, as per the agreement marries Sirisampige reluctantly. Shivanagadeva, after the marriage restlessly disappears as in search of something and returns hopelessly resulting in the sorrow of Sirisampige and his mother Mayavathi. Mayavathi appoints Jawali to follow the prince and find out where he goes and what he does. They realize that prince Shivanagadeva sits before the lake and pine looking at his own reflection. On the other hand, the cobra Kalinga succeeds in attracting Sirisampige and enticing her towards this extra marital, immoral relationship. When the prince comes to know that Sirisampige is pregnant he doubts and forces her to go in for the trial by ordeal. Sirisampige accepts the snake ordeal which involves the test and also the punishment if she proves to be wrong. Naturally she wins the trial as the snake is Kalinga. Later the prince takes out the truth from his wife. The tortures of Shivanagadeva reach the zenith, and he decides to kill kalinga who has come to see the new born babe. He escapes in the form of the snake but is killed later. Soon after the death of Kalinga he collapses with severe weakness. After realizing that Kalinga is his own half he sends for sirisampige and Mayavathi to explain the truth. At the end of the play, while dying he advises his wife Sirisampige to take care of the baby so that he doesn't split himself like his father.

The sub plot which consists of Awali, Jawali and Kamala also faces the same problem of duality. While Shivanagadeva is reluctant to marry Sirisampige, Awali and Jawali are fighting with each other to marry Kamala. When kamala realizes that both are aspirants, she arranges a fight and decides to marry the wiimer. Jawali wins and Awali goes to forest. Jawali marries Kamala but carnot consummate his marriage because he feels the presence of Awali everywhere. Kamala laments that she could not win her husband's love. The reappearance of Awali creates confusion. She believes the family god's oracle that she should make a garland of Jasmine flowers grown on the anthill and put that garland around her husband's neck. If done like that the husband comes in the form of snake and make love. She exactly follows the advice of her family god. Jawali transforms into a snake and makes love to his wife. But Awali kills the snake and also the eggs of Kamala. Kamala gets wild and plucks her breasts, throws them on Awali and disappears; later Awali also dies as he jumps into water to fight with Jawali looking at the reflection in the water.

Sirisampige, through dramatizing the cruelty and frustration involved in the marital relationship between Shivanagadeva and Sirisampige deals with the duality between the material and spiritual, between the body and mind. The main plot and the sub plot are perfectly grafted to achieve a meaningful unity and philosophic beauty. Though they emerge from different grounds, they compliment each other. The main plot reflects a tragic outlook from the beginning of the play. Whereas the subplot outwardly reflect the comic and as it progresses it gains the strength of supporting the main plot with its tragic end. They stem from different grounds but unite at the end giving the tragic experiences. Even one can feel the dualities of tragic and comic overtones, between the main plot and the subplot. The disintegrating elements finally achieve a kind of

integration to give a final meaning to the play. The coordination between the two is a wonderful achievement of Kambar's structural skills.

The love hate relationship between Awali and Jawali stands as a strong support to the same kind of relationship between Shivanagadeva and Kalinga. The experiences of both the pairs towards oneness though they are not one outwardly are presented in an excellent manner through the confusing network of duality and unity. Sirisampige stands as a superb example of Kambar's handling the theme of dualities of human existence. Kambar's intense metaphysical probing into the dualities of existence finds a near perfect dramatic expression in Sirisampige.

The techniques of Yakshagana adopted by Kambar in Sirisampige are made to suit the structure and the theme of the play in a very natural manner. Bhagavata's role has gained more importance in the play. He not only represents the tradition of yakshagana, he works as a narrator, commentator, singer and an actor also. He becomes an integral part of the play within his limits partaking with the joys and sorrows of other characters especially with those of the clowns Awali and Jawali. The sub plot which consists of these professional clowns has a very meaningful organic relationship with the main plot. With their comical foolishness they move parallelly to the experiences of the characters in the main plot and gradually unite with it because fundamentally their problems are same, the problems of duality. The prolific use of music, songs sung by chorus, the Bhagavata and the prose reWorks Citedcompliment the theme and structure. They not only arrest the attentions of the audience, but also attempt to unravel the psyche of the characters. The conflicts between the body and the soul are an abstract concept. Kambar tries to give this abstract a concrete form through the process of splitting the body into two as a kind of an experiment in the play. This inherent desire to reach the difficult and complex world of abstract through not so complex world of concrete is a familiar quality of Kannada writers. D.R. Nagaraj recognizes this rightly saying that the Kannada mind delves deeply into the concrete. It always expects to get the abstract through the concrete. It is but natural for Kambar to choose the folk myth, folk tales and other folk models to achieve his goal. The folk tale with its concrete super natural events is suitable for Kambar to probe deep into the metaphysics.

The play enables metaphysical probing through various aspects. But some critics have analysed the search for the lamp maiden as a mythical expression of the symbolic truth. According to them it symbolizes the prince's search for the transcendental truth or ideal image or spiritual light. The image of lamp is the connotation of spiritual light as well as the physical light. The fact that Shivanagadeva rejects Sirisampige who is very pretty, coming from a royal family, shows that the prince is above the mundane world who has an hunger for higher truths. His description of the experience near the pond reveals multiple aspects of mystic or transcendental experience as codified in all the organized religions of the world. The mythical consciousness always perceives Man-God relationship as a mutual affair. God will not descend to man until and unless man ascends to god. And human endeavours are always to visualize the invisible and reach the spiritual heights. Thus, there is always a balance between desire and satisfaction, quest and fulfillment. But the quest and desire in people like Shivanaga exceeds too much and such people are never at rest. His life will be meaningful only when he attains the divine consciousness or spiritual harmony with the absolute. The union between man and god has been viewed as yoga Samadhi. The prince has achieved such a mystical union at the pond. The experience of Shivanagadeva raises many questions. Is the lamp-maid his lover, or his own spirit? If it is just lamp maid the prince's lover, the excessive love for the other may reach the spiritual height leading to mystical experience. Then the above analysis seems reasonable. But if you consider the lamp-maid as the symbol of Shivanaga's self-love, the analysis seems unreasonable, because self

love pushes one to the dark depths of the abyss. There is no spiritual elevation. Shivanaga can mistake and confuse the love for the self as love for the other because he is caught in duality and illusion. But readers and critics need not get caught in the same confusion and duality. Later the prince himself comes and explains his misunderstandings by saying that the reflection was neither God, nor the lamp - maid and was not even his reflection, but the corpse. The tragedy of splitting has created a strong illusion in the mind of the prince. The dualities are the destroyers of clarity, conviction and decision.

There is always a tendency of preferring soul to the body; the same tendency urges us to think that Shivanaga, the representative of mind and soul represents the luminous side of human life. Kalinga represents the dark side of the same. He is obviously a dark God of the nether world. The prince represents the angelic aspects of human life. He belongs to the upper world. Kalinga represents the devilish aspects of human life and belongs to the nether world. So, the duality between the soul and body is also the duality between light and dark, upper world and the nether world and between conscious mind and unconscious mind respectively. The confusing network of multiple dualities in the play gives a mystical and metaphysical out look to the play. The zeal to understand the mysteries of human life becomes Kambar's main concern.

The mythopoeic qualities of Kambar's plays are strong enough to bear the weight of the abstract metaphysical probing. The folk tale narrated by A.K. Ramanujan with variations has been dramatized with Yaksagana techniques to present before the literary world the fragrant beauty of Sirisampige. The concept of total theatre as conceptualized by Kambar includes music, dance, action, dialogues not as embellishments, but they are the play. In Sirisampige, he uses Yakshagana techniques because there are similarities between his total theatre concept and yakshagana techniques. The Bhagavata performs as a grand master, a director controlling the songs, actions, dances, dialogues and in totality the whole play.

The usage of these techniques are analysed by Purushottan Bilimale. Whether Kambar is using folk techniques or yakshagana techniques, the critic feels that kambar uses them as commodities. There is a difference between the way they are used in their original forms and the way they are used by Kambar in his plays. Kambar himself has agreed that it is inevitable and there has to be this difference. He says:

Folk dramatist will become one with his composition. But the modern playwright, because he writes with personal consciousness, there establishes a gap between him and the folk elements. To speak about myself, it is not possible for me to use the folk elements wholly as they are. I use it as a technique for a definite purpose. I make music and dance not as mere embellishments, but to perform a deed, because I write for the Bangalore audience. So I try to turn folk qualities towards various possibilities (qtd. in. Bilimale 82).

The compromise between the folk consciousness and the modern consciousness seems natural and inevitable. The critic searches reasons for this in colonial education. It may be true, but we cannot deny the fact that any writer for that matter cannot escape the temporal and spatial influences. In fact they determine a writer's thought process. If duality is an inescapable truth in the life of human beings, there is no problem in accepting the duality in Kambar's literary career also. It is true that the unsplit world that has been internalized by Kambar splits and shatters. But the eternal search of Kambar's poetic consciousness is always towards that completeness and total unified world. The unsplit world of Shivapura is shattered by the entry of the onslaughts of modernism. This aspect brings tragic elements in Kambar's world of plenitude and celebration. Though plenitude is an internal condition in Kambar, the condition of his body, mind and extends towards the life of Shivapura, it is disturbed by the destructive elements of modernism. H.S. Shivaprakash

differentiates Bendre's harmony from that of Kambar's and says that Bendre's world is an harmonized world blessed by the mercy of Shiva (Shiva Karune) But Kambar's harmonized world is threatened by the cruelties of the colonial onslaughts as a result there is tragic interplay (Rudravilasa). H.S. Shivaprakash's analysis is acceptable but it should have gone a step ahead to realize the fact that the present practicality of world doesn't reflect the mercy of shiva alone. It is just the shadow of the truth or half-truth. This half- truth will attain the quality of absolute truth only with the realization of the fact that the human world has to encounter the tragedies that the terror of history Kambar's search is always towards reaching that Utopian world blessed by Shiva's mercy. But the journey towards that ideal is distracted by the cruelties of time which are inescapable. This tragedy man has to bear because it is his making. It is his hubris and his own tragic flaw. Repentance and Suffering is the only way to get purged in the purgatory, catharsis is a very long tedious process. Kambar's world reflects this search, the tedious journey troubled by fundamental questions of the whereabouts of this catharsis. Shivanagadeva of Sirisampige suffers and spreads that suffering to the nearer and dearer ones because of his tragic flaw i.e. splitting. His splitting is enforced by his desire to marry a perfect maid. This desire for perfection is also enforced by self love. This is a hidden truth which he realizes later. The play not only deals with the duality between the body and the soul but also with another problematic human aspiration, i.e. self love. The myth of Narcissus is also a strong reconstruction in the play. The folk tale is modified to suit the purpose of Kambar. While conceiving the character of Shivanagadeva, Kambar has reconstructed the myth of Narcissus.

The fact that Kalinga, the cobra came out from another pot is not told to Shivanagadeva. Mayavati and other elders try to give evasive answers and Shivanagadeva is married to Sirisampige as per the agreement. But the obsession of the lamp maid doesn't allow him to love Sirisampige. The same obsession keeps him away from the palace and attracts him towards the woods. In the forest the pool is the point where Shivanagadeva tries to find a kind of satisfaction because the Narcissism that he suffers from comes to the surface as he looks at his reflection. Jawali who has gone there as a spy reports:

JAWALI .His reflection came up there like a floating corpse. The moment he saw it, his face shone, tears of happiness came to his eyes. In his ecstasy no word came from his mouth. As if silently talking with that corpse, he sat there, still.

MOTHER. Strange! And then,

JAWALI. He caught the reflection in his cupped hands and looked at it. The water spilled out between his fingers. Again he caught it and again it spilled. Then, as if the whole forest were crying, he raised his voice saying maiden, maiden and weeping. (Sirisampige vii 27)

Jawali's report where he describes the reflection in the water as a floating corpse is a wonderful imagination of Kambar. Too much of self love leads to total destruction. This truth is reflected in the lines as a kind of warning but Shivanagadeva will never take heed of this warning as he is totally obsessed with lamp maiden, not knowing that she is his own spirit. Shivanagadeva does not realize that he already has in himself what he seeks for outside. The antipodes of this situation is something which is very disturbing. Shivanagadeva who is buried in self-love does not understand the true nature of the self This cheating of the self takes place because the story uses a concrete lamp maid for an abstract called self-love. The romantic, love sick Shivanagadeva can never perceive self love beyond the lamp maiden. He can never understand the abstract beyond the concrete. Self acceptance allows access to divinity, longing for it makes it possible. Reaching and touching it causes it to be elusive. One should understand the longing.

Self-knowledge is never a curse, but blind infatuation blocks all the ways leading to self-knowledge. This is what happens exactly in Shivanagadeva. Reflection on the water surface is always illusive, disappears in the touching. His zealous attempts to hold the reflection of himself which he sees as the lamp maid shows his illusion. He is sure that he is in search of the lamp maid. Self love in the concretized form of love towards a maid is a wonderful deviation from the myth. In the myth of Narcissus, he spurns and rejects all lovers including Echo and falls in love with himself, not knowing that it is the reflection of his own beauty. Kambar makes Shivanagadeva search for his lover. He is made to see the lamp maid in his own reflection. Love towards the self is mistaken as love towards the other. The duality of the self and the other is the main problem that torments Shivanagadeva. The ambitious egoistic and ruthless pursuit of seeking the lamp maid becomes a character disorder and hence the suffering.

Kambar has tried to reach the abstract through the concrete. But Shivanagadeva fails to understand the abstract which is in the form of the concrete. The lamp maid is a creation of Kambar's genius. The original folk tale narrated by A.K. Ramanujan doesn't have the lamp maid. The duality between the abstract and the concrete adds to his other duality of the body and the soul. The amalgamation of the folk tale with Narcissus myth is harmonious. Listening to Jawali's report, mother Mayavati is sure of the resulting sorrow. Because the family god's oracle had said that he would become monk if he saw his own reflection in the water. But instead of becoming a monk, Shivanagadeva is infatuated by the lamp maid. The infatuated and obsessed prince describes in an ecstatic manner the harmony between himself and the reflection, himself and the lamp maid. His description shows the depth of his obsession. The self indulgence without having the strength of introspection and self control leads towards self-deception and self-destruction. The whole process with these chain- reactions pushes him towards the total destruction, destroying the nearer ones also. He does all this in the name of pure love towards the lamp maid. The harmony he describes to Jawali reach spiritual heights. This glorification of his harmonious love and spiritual experience make us realize how deep he is in the abyss. But he says he has reached the zenith of spirituality. What a difference! This is a stroke of genius. Kambar achieves a fantastic dramatic irony through this scene. After listening to the prince, Jawali condemns it and tries to make him realize that it is his own reflection, but in vain. Again Kambar makes us realize the irony of the situation. Jawali can make plenty of advices to the prince but he himself cannot come out of that illusion in his life. There are three Narcissuses in the play. All the three, Shivanagadeva, Awali and Jawali, Suffer from illusions. They are caught in the dualities. The duality begins in their confusion regarding their age. They don't know who is younger and who is elder. Throughout the play they address each other as either younger brother or elder brother. Like yin yang theory, Awali finds an element of himself in Jawali and Jawali also finds an element of himself in Awali. While this is the case with the brothers, Kamala's confusion is also problematic. Kamala's marriage, love, procreation all the three are destroyed because of these dualities. Even god's oracle doesn't solve her problem. The sub plot with the scenes of Kamala's confusion and sorrow, Awali and Jawali's competitions for love, sex, hatred and jealousy show the tragic conditions of human beings who suffer because of those weaknesses and dualities.

Jawali and Awali cannot understand the philosophy of body and soul. They cannot rise up to the level of the prince and his suffering. But they also suffer and get destroyed by their intense competition to win Kamala's love. Superficially it seems their love, sex, hatred and jealousies are responsible for their tragedy. But the origin of all the weaknesses is in the duality. Jawali cannot rise up to higher levels. The physicality of the sub plot in a way reflects mankind's too much indulgence in physical activities namely love and sex which in turn leads to violence, hatred,

jealousy and destruction. Jawali humorously expresses his understanding of the soul through the body. He says:

JAWALI. To me 'body' means an empty stomach and soul means a full stomach. What do you say? (Sirisampige vii. 30)

In contrast to this, the main plot has the touch of spirituality in the very problem of duality. Comparatively it is Sirisampige, who is less tormented by these dualities. While Shivanagadeva spends his life pining before the pool, Sirisampige falls prey to Kalinga's attraction. In the beginning she shows all the signs of chastity and fights back Kalinga's advancement, knowing very well that she is losing her self control. The outward show continues. She declares that her virtue is in her hands. But it doesn't take much time to yield to his attractions.

The speed with which she yields to the sexual attraction of Kalinga reflects the reality of carnal desires of human beings. Once she establishes her illicit relationship she is not afraid. There is clarity in her mind and expression. She may be suffering, but she knows the reason. Kambar's women characters in the plays are quite bold in their sexual ventures and choices. They have always preferred virility. Sirisampige is not an exception. She accepts her adultery boldly at the end. If she had given the chance to explain before the snake ordeal she would have told the truth. But she doesn't get the right chance. She accepts the snake ordeal because she was quite confident that Kalinga would save her. In the eyes of the people of Shivapura she becomes an angel as she succeeds in passing the snake ordeal. She expresses her guilt and also her suffering before the prince without any fear or hesitation. She is ready for the punishment also. She says to the prince when he condemns her for cheating the elders and towns people's faith:

SAMPIGE. That is your ill fortune. My immorality started, my lord. When you forgot the body and began craving for the god, and slipped away from our bed.

PRINCE. Do you know the punishment for immorality?

SAMPIGE. Was I born for half men? I was born for and I am seeking the wholeness of the linga of God Shiva. But what fell to my lot was a child born illicitly to an incomplete being. A child born to a widow, you have come here to kill the woman who gave birth to an illegitimate child? Look, I am ready! (Sirisampige. xiv. 58-59).

The above words of Sirisampige reflect her helplessness, boldness, clarity, suffering and her preparedness to get the punishment. Indirectly she voices her opposition for the prince's behaviour. She reminds him of his failures as a husband. Her questionings echo the voices of many women in search of liberation. Very importantly she comments on the splitting of the prince. She explains how his splitting has split her and her life also even in her illegitimate relationship she gets a half. She laments how her life's search for completeness ended up in a split. At the end of the scene when the prince goes to kill his enemy Kalinga, Sampige exclaims:

SAMPIGE. Now I am a complete widow [Sirisampige. xiv. 59].

If this is the sorrowful tale of Sampige, the sufferings of Shivanagadeva are of another intense kind. The prince who was expressing his ecstasy at the harmony near the pool has now realized the deception. Now his yearning is of a different kind. The soul needs a body. The abstract needs the concrete. He explains this to Sirisampige. This realization may be partly due to the fact that Sirisampige is pregnant. Probably at this point of time he realizes that he has no body, and it has been stolen by somebody.

Now the question of how and why the prince realized his bodylessness is a significant one. The experience of the prince near the pool, as he himself explained was an engrossing one. The prince had almost forgotten the world around him. But, as soon as he realized that Sirisampige is

pregnant, he shakes off his numbness and realizes that his body has been stolen. Is this realization a normal, gradual self-realisation or an enforced realization which comes through a strong suspicious and conjugal jealousy? The male dominant behaviours are clearly reflected here. The conjugal jealousy questions the violation of the male ownership of the female body. This is the major disturbance which disturbs his engrossed experiences near the pool. The mist of Narcissism melts before this problem. The realization and the reason for the realization both are worth pondering over. The prince comes and tells his wife that what he saw in the pool was neither a lamp maiden, nor a god and not even his reflection and he was enjoying his own destruction through eating his own dead body. It is not an ordinary enlightenment. The bodylessness becomes a prominent problem because of the conjugal jealousy and suspicion listening to the news of his wife's pregnancy. Shivanagadeva behaves like a true husband now! All of a sudden the authority of a husband is awakened. Though the shrouded mist of Narcissism melts, the problem of the split persists.

The above analysis has a point to prove because soon after his explanation not minding that its midnight he quite authoritatively orders for a trial the next morning. The mother and servants are puzzled. Kambar works miracles through this story. The multiple layers of meanings in the play are hidden like a treasure. The treasure hunt is a challenging and exciting task. The male domination at any point of time gets alerted and starts functioning. Kambar has packed this truth neatly in the prince. He tells his wife commenting on the dirt on his face and body, that body is pure, but the soul is dirty. Sins are visible to the soul.

Kalinga's suffering is of a different kind. Kalinga, the representative of the body enjoys love and sex with Sirisampige but realizes that he too lacks something. He speaks of a dark shadow between them. He says to Sirisampige before the prince tries to search and attack him.

KALINGA. Before, I saw your body. Now I see nothing but the shadow. That shadow is the truth between us, I feel. (Sirisampige. xii. 55-56)

Kalinga feels lighter after sharing this experience with Sampige. Kalinga and Shivanagadeva experience, a kind of love hate relationship. The problem of duality peeps here also. The prince explains this to his mother that even his hatred is split into two. He is unable to hate the queen wholly. He is curious to see his other half. He is a confused mixture of admiration, jealousy and half hatred. The all-powerful split appears and haunts like a ghost with its omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. There is an encounter between the two resulting in a battle. Shivanagadeva kills the snake but doesn't feel victorious as he sees in Kalinga's eyes, the truth. Shivanagadeva quickly realizes that Kalinga is his body and Sirisampige has not committed the sin of adultery. He also realizes that the whole tragedy began with his splitting. The unity of body and soul, the snake and eagle is reflected in the eyes of Kalinga. Shivanagadeva observes that and explains it to his mother:

SHIVANAGADEVA. In his eyes the lovely blue sky was reflected. I saw in the sky an eagle and a snake flying together. The snake, which had within it all the dark black secrets of the nether world, was not in the claws of the eagle but was wound around its neck and body in friendship. The duality of the snake and the eagle had been erased and they had become one. The mercy of Siva's divine eyes was falling on them in the form of the sun's golden rays. What I saw now was like a snake playing in the sky, opening his hood. Only the snake was visible, having completely taken over the eagle, and it looked as if the snake with its open hood had sprouted

wings and was flying. Then that eagle, with its forehead set to the streaming sun, climbed fearlessly into the eternity of the sky. (Sirisampige. xvi 65-66)

The conflict between the serpent and the eagle is a popular image appearing in various myths across the world. The serpent is bound to earth and the eagle symbolizes the spiritual flight. The harmony between the two creates the wonderful dragon, a serpent with wings. These images are seen in Polynesian and Egyptian myths.

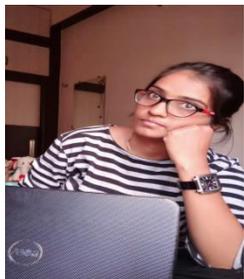
But in Sirisampige, the image is shown in the eyes of the dying Kalinga. The image symbolizes the enlightenment. But the enlightenment occurs at the point of death and destruction. Shivanagadeva and Kalinga, reach this enlightenment after destroying their lives. Shivanagadeva after killing Kalinga feels the spines knot slipping. While dying he requests that the young prince should perform the last rites for both Kalinga and Shivanagadeva. He also advises his wife to take care of the son, so that he does not split himself. The play ends with the realization of the grave mistake and caution for the prevention of the same in the future.

The relationship between self-love and self-destruction gets gradually concretized and clear in the play. It also reflects the truth that the splitting of a person into body and soul, not only destroys the completeness but the separated body and soul decay beyond repair. The dualities of human existence haunting Kambar from the beginning have taken the shape of incompleteness in *Sirisampige*. Thus Kambar exploits the mythopoeic symbolic form and successfully gives a dramatic shape to his meditations on the dualities of human existence.

The community consciousness with which Kambar enriches his works enables him to concentrate on personal conflicts and also on how these give way to the cultural community conflicts. The myth consciousness of Kambar presents them to reflect the contemporary anxieties and at the same time universal truths also. Kambar has attempted effectively to extract the symbolic power the folk myths contain. For him they are rich sources which palpitate with vigorous vivacity. Kambar's reworking of myths is not only inspired by the desire to experiment innovative techniques in theater but it also reflects the pressure of the community's cultural politics. Caught in the ferocious network of modern conflicts, writers like Kambar struggle to seek the vital spirit and amalgamation and obviously myth becomes an affluent infinite treasure bunch for them.

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