

## ANIMAL IMAGERY IN GIRISH KARNAD'S PLAYS

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To a creative mind which Girish Karnad undoubtedly is, the entire universe from dust particles to stars is a source of imagery. Moreover, he can create some images with his imagination without resorting to outside objects. That may be taken as a kind of internal images. External and natural phenomena are a rich and inexhaustible source of images. A great writer invariably makes use of the two fecund-resources of images – one object based images and the other fancy-created. Among the numerous sources of images quite commonly exploited, are flora and fauna, the sky, the earth, rivers, history, science, mythology and legends and so on.

Girish Karnad's images are so variegated, so divergent and the same time so full of significance that one wonders how such an abundance of imagery could have enriched the works of a dramatist. Whether it is mythological or legendary or historical play his images adorn and enrich the work. Girish Karnad has a very rich reservoir of knowledge and experience, consequently the images that occur in his plays are suited to the theme, mood, occasion and characters of the plays.

By the use of animal imagery, Girish Karnad brings to our mind not only external features of characters but also their feeling and motives. Their hearts are laid bare before us. Girish Karnad uses animal imagery mainly for characterization. His characters are not the mouth-pieces of the dramatist but are complete individuals in their thinking, speaking and actions. The traditional use of animals for characterization was generally confined to their sizes, dimensions and colours to depict the outward features of these characters. Karnad uses imagery for such purposes also.

Karnad's animal imagery mainly comprises the tiger, the lion, the bison, the porcupine, the mongoose, the panther, the horse, the camel, the wolf, the goat, the donkey, the cow, the buffalo, the deer, the elephant, the rabbit, the sheep, the stallion, and the bull. The animals used in images are wild and domestic according to the nature of the character using them, or according to the comic or tragic scene.

A few of wild animal images are: 'fight like lion' (*HV, p.61*) 'Howl of wild wolves and the answering bay of street dogs, (*Tughlaq p.54*), The pig, the whale (*NM, p.45*), 'tiger bellows for his mate (*NM, p.45*). These wild animals are fierce, monstrous, harsh, and savage. They are yoked in Karnad's plays to portray rough, dehumanized and contemptuous nature of human beings. In *The Fire and The Rain*, Andhaka, the door-keeper of Raibhya hears a terrible sound of a wild horse, --- a boar? A bison. (p.10). When Aravasu and Nittilai were looking for Vishakha, Aravasu says 'They say panther has strayed into these parts' (p.17). Nittilai responds 'No tracks of braking deer. A couple of porcupines. A family of mongoose. No sign of panther' (p.17).

At Devadatta's insistence Kapila searches the house of Padmini. Kapila finds 'This is a lion. A tiger, --- A horse, --- a rhinoceros --- another lion (*HV, p.16*). In *Tughlaq*, Muhammad tells about the ominous sounds. "I have heard only the howl of wild wolves and answering bay of street dogs" (*Tughlaq p.51*).

Besides these images from wild beast, we also find others from domestic animals. Domestic animal images are: ‘like a buffalo that has been rolling in mud’ (*TFAR*, p.19); ‘The era of camel’ (*TDTS*, p.36); “Goats have to be sacrificed and buffaloes slaughtered (*NM*, p.45); “Die like a sick dog’ (*TD*, p.50); “Skinning dead buffalo’ (*TD*, p.40); ‘To run like a rabbit’ (*TD*, p.11); ‘Like a dog pissing’ (*TD*, p.13); ‘Millions of cows’ (*TD* p.14); Divine bull Nandi (*TD*, p.6); ‘Privilege on this ass’ (*TD*, p.49); ‘Buffalo fatted’ (*TD*, p.77); ‘Like a bull-elephant’ (*TD*, p.86). These animals have been used as images, often for conveying the pertinent emotions and feelings and states of human beings as exactly as possible and frequently.

‘Buffalo’ has been used in Karnad’s plays to symbolize ignorance, stupidity, and simplicity. In *The Fire and The Rain*, Raibhya gets annoyed when he sees Vishakha covered with mud. Raibhya takes her to task ‘Why are you so filthy? You look like a buffalo that has been rolling in mud’ (*TFAR*, p.9). In *Naga-Mandala*, Rani speaks to Naga. It is a hard nut to crack to make you speak in morning even ‘goats have to be sacrificed and buffaloes slaughtered to get a word out of you in the mornings’ (*NM*, p.45). In *Tale-Danda*, Lalita speaks of skinning dead buffaloes (p.40). In the same play Haralayya treats Sheelavanta as a foolish man and calls, "He has grown into a proper buffalo".(p.36)

‘Bull’ has been used to show stupidity and violence. In *Tale-Danda*, Jagadeva calls Basavanna as ‘The divine bull, Nandi’ (p.6). The dog is usually used to portray a bombastic and over-speaking man. Bijjala is red with anger when his son Sovideva is not able to kick Kallappa then he calls him ‘Why are you stuck there, leg out, like a dog pissing’ (p.13). Bijjala sees that Kallappa is ‘like a sick dog’ (p.50). Pigs, donkeys and asses are other animals the names of which have been used for abuses. To Bijjala his son Sovideva is no more than an ‘ass’ (p.19). King Bijjala asks Basavanna ‘will any jack-ass’ (p.49) of a king agree to place himself willingly in such a mess. Kallappa tells the primary qualification of a king ‘You need to have been a donkey in your last’ (p.12). Abusive Devadatta pushes Kapila and shouts aloud ‘Get away, you pig’ (*HV*, p.37). Rani compares herself with ‘The pig, the whale, the eagle’ (*NM*, p.45) when Basavanna comes on the scene, Sovideva attempts to run ‘like a rabbit’ (p.11).

Sometimes Girish Karnad does not mention any particular animal. Instead he uses ‘animal’, ‘cattle’, or ‘beast’ as a general term or idea for the purpose of comparison to ascribe and pinpoint – the things and behaviour generally associated with animals. In *Tughlaq*, Muhammad does not “want his people to be dumb cattle (p.19); Muhammad knows that “They are only cattle yet but I shall make men out a few of them (p.21). ‘The bells of cattle returning home indicate the arrival of evening’ (*NM*, p.50); ‘Manchanna recalls the old days when, ‘animal ritually slaughtered before the Vedic gods consented to descend on the earth’ (*TD*, p.22).

Karnad's animal images like his other images are fascinating in their details. Through his animal imagery Karnad brings animal and debased human nature together to suggest a similarity between the two. The details in these images show his observation of the habits and the nature of all creatures. Girish Karnad's imagery in his plays has evinced that Girish Karnad has been successful in making a perfect blend of tradition and individual talent.

**Work cited**

For the consideration of space the title of the plays in the text have been giving in their abbreviated forms as HV for *Hayavadana* NM for *Nagamandala*, BTS for *Bali: The Sacrifice*, TD for *Tale-Danda*, TDTS for *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* and TFAR for *The Fire and The Rain*.

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