

**GIRISH KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA AND ANGELA CARTER'S NIGHT
AT THE CIRCUS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDIAN AND
WESTERN TRADITION OF STORY TELLING**

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If story writing is an art than storytelling is also an art which is prevalent in Indian from ancient times and has become a part of our culture and tradition. Not only in India but this tradition is also famous around the world. Story telling which means to convey events in words, images and sounds, often by improvisation and embellishment. Stories are being told by the grandparents to their grandchildren, by parents to their children or by any other means. In this way, there are many stories famous in India in which some of them are not in written form. As India is a multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic country so in different regions different stories are famous. This is also with the rest of the world.

Stories which are also known as narratives have been shared in every culture around the world as a means of amusement and education. They also serve in culture preservation and to instill moral values among new generations. There are many elements of storytelling and the crucial ones are plot, characters and narrative point of view. There are two forms of storytelling, traditional and modern forms. Modern storytelling is different from traditional forms as it has a broad purview for example- fairytales, folktales, mythology, legends, fables etc. It has also extended itself in representing history, personal narrative, and political commentary and has served in evolving cultural norms. The special quality of contemporary storytelling is that it is widely used for addressing educational objectives.

Storytelling has now been used for learning as it has become a means for sharing and interpreting experiences. Stories are not only used for entertainment but they have universal appeal as they can bridge cultural, linguistic and age-related divides. They can be used as a method to teach ethics, values, and cultural norms and differences. Story telling has a great significance in literature be it English, Hindi or any other language. But it the tradition of storytelling varies from place to place as the Indian way of storytelling is different from Western. There are many writers who are following the tradition of storytelling of their country. Girish Karnad of India and Angela Carter of England are very fine examples of it.

Karnad has written many plays, which are based on stories from the past and can be categorised into three forms, mythical, historical and autobiographical. His mythical plays include- *Yayati* (1960), *Hayavadana* (1975), *Nagamandala (Play with a Cobra)* (1990), *The Fire and the Rain* (1998), *Bali: The Sacrifice* (2004) and *Flowers* (2005). His historical plays are- *Tughlaq* (1972), *Tale- Danda* (1993), *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (2004) and *Broken Verses*

(2005) is his only auto-biographical play. All his plays have Indian background telling stories which are famous in India from generations while some are myths but some are historical also.

Hayavadana comes in the category of mythical play describing about a story from the past. Karnad's wrote *Hayavadana* in 1970 and later translated it into English in 1975. The play is a bold experiment on folk theme which comes from *Kathasarita*, an ancient collection of Sanskrit stories. But Karnad has also based his work on Thomas Mann's work, *Transposed Heads*, a mock-heroic transcription of the original tales. M.K. Naik says in this context:

The irony of the transposed poles of personality viz., the intellectual versus the activist is employed here to the problem of identity. The subplot of the man with a horse's head, who achieves integration when he finally becomes fully equine, brings out the contrast between the fundamental simplicity and the essential complexity of animal and human life respectively.(275)

Hayavadana belongs to the category of Modern Indian Drama. Girish Karnad, the master of history and mythology in drama penned brilliantly the Indianness of India. Karnad is very much inspired by the folk-tales of India and this can be seen in his work, where he has successfully used the conventions and motifs of folk-theatre and folk-tales. It is one of Karnad's most performed plays.

Hayavadana proves that Modern Indian Drama is attached with the traditions of the country. The story comprises of two friends, Devdatta and Kapila and former's wife Padmini. There is a love triangle showed in drama where Kapila falls in love with Padmini. The plot revolves around the love, jealousy and guilt of the three characters. The sub plot deals with *Hayavadana*, half man and half horse character and his quest for completeness. Many critics call it a tale of love identity and sexuality and it is true also. But it is also a story about Indian culture and people who belong to this culture. So, *Hayavadana* is a mythological triangular love-story based on the search of identity.

Hayavadana is the victim of the fate because he has inherited the character of the progenitor i.e. the head of a horse and the body of a man. Because his mother, a Princess marries a white stallion so he comes to have a monstrous figure. Being unable to fit himself in the society, he wishes to become complete. Therefore he was advised to go on a pilgrimage so that his desire to become complete can be fulfilled. He made his efforts to go to all the pilgrimage places irrespective of caste and religion and tried to perform all the religious activities, but all in vain and his desire was not fulfilled. The story is about two friends, Devadutta and Kapila, who are living in Dharampura, which is ruled by King Dharamsheela. Padmini is also one of the main characters of the play because it is she who fights with Fate in the end and determines the behavior of the two other main characters, who are supposed to be her lover.

Devadutta represents the acme of intellect, being the son of Reverend Brahmin Vidya Sagar. He has conquered the mightiest pundits in the kingdom in debates on logic and love, and greatest of the poets of the world with his poetry and wit. On the other hand, Kapila, who is a son of an iron-smith, is dark and plain in looks. Yet nobody is equal to his deeds requiring drive and daring, in dancing, in strength, and in physical skills. So, he represents masculinity. Devadatta and Kapila are very good friends. Devadatta fell in love with a girl at first sight and was very distraught because of it. Kapila is such a good friend that he goes in search of that girl, but when he saw Padmini he was dazzled by her beauty. But being a loyal friend he tried hard and was succeeded in marrying Padmini to Devadatta. Padmini is the daughter of the leading merchant in

Dharampura. So it is a marriage of learning and wealth. This marriage brought three of them together and for the people of Dharampura, they were like- Rama-Sita-Lalshmana.

Now the twist in the play is that both Devadatta and Kapila love Padmini, and Padmini also loves both of them. She loves Devadatta for his handsome face and astounding learning, and she loves Kapila for his physical prowess. The loving trio goes on a trip to Ujjain against the wishes of Devadatta. This shows Devadatta insecurity and jealousy for his wife and friend. This is the feeling of any average Indian towards his wife. On the way, Padmini is more fascinated by Kapila skills of driving cart, his masculinity, his sense of humour and jovial nature. And this inclination and fascination of Padmini towards Kapila is very well observed by Devadatta. But he blames himself for not being so strong like his friend and feels agonized. She tries to compare Devadatta with Kapila and in doing so she not only humiliate Devadatta but also hurted him very badly. He felt so disgusted that didn't accompany her to the Temple of Kali and asks Kapila to escort her. Being hurted by the infatuation towards his friend, he wished them goodbye.

But as Padmini and Kapila set out for the temple, he goes to the temple of Kali to fulfill his promise to the Goddess that he would come to bow before her if he succeeded in getting Padmini. Going towards the temple, he finds an abandoned sword. He cuts off his head his head to offer it to Goddess Kali. Kapila goes in search of Devadatta but he finds his truncated body. Kapila also cuts off his head in remorse and repentance. Padmini is aghast to see the dead bodies of two friends. She also proposes to go their way but Goddess Kali forbids her to do so, and asks her :

Put these heads back properly. Attach them to their bodies and then press that swords on their necks. They will come up alive. Is that enough?

So as per the commands of Goddess kali, Padmini puts the heads on the two bodies, but in her excitement she puts Devadatta's head on Kapila's body and vice versa. Then she presses the sword on their necks exactly according to the instructions of the Goddess. Now as they come alive, they find themselves in a difficult situation. As their heads have been exchanged to each other so now, Kapila wants Padmini to go with her since she was married to Devadatta's body which he possesses now. But Devadatta disagrees and believes that the head is the sign of man. But Kapila opines that the hand which has accepted her in the wedding has the claim. The two friend claims and counterclaims to the hands of Padmini and finally, Devadatta take her away. But Kapila is very furious and says, "Go. But do you think I will stay put while you run away with my wife? Where will you go? Only in the city, after all. I'll follow you there. I'll kick up a row in the streets. Let us see what happens then?" So with his angry statement the Act I come to its end.

Act II deals with Padmini's problem and the solution of it. The writer says that such a question was posed by Vaithal to Vikramaditya, but the rational answer given in the "sacred text" will not be acceptance to the characters and audience- "The future pointed out by the tongue safe inside the skull is not acceptable to us." So to settle the dispute, all the three unfortunate friends went to a Rishi, who knew the text, he gave his verdict:

As the heavenly Kalpa Vrisksha is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs. Therefore the man with Devadatta's and he is the rightful husband of Padmini.

Hence Padmini was asked to go with the man having Devadatta's head. Padmini is overwhelmed as her desire is fulfilled to have a man with completeness- head of Devadatta and body of Kapila means "fabulous mind and fabulous body."

But it was difficult both for Devadutta and Kapila to maintain each other's body and hence soon they were transformed into the previous state which was very depressing for Padmini. She feels disappointed and did not like the change coming over in Devadutta, she again yearns for virility of Kapila. At this juncture of life, Devadutta and Kapila, who were very good friends became enemy and finally killed each other. Seeing this Padmini performs Sati, leaving his child under the care of Bhagvata. So, Hayavadana begins with a simple love- triangle but ends in a complicated twist of fate and destiny. *Unlike Girish Karnad*, Angela Carter is one such storyteller in English literature that is famous for her magical realism, surrealism, fantasy, gothic, science fiction and picaresque works. Because of all this, she is considered as a unique and original writer of 20th century. She was ranked tenth in the list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945" by *The Times* in 2008.

Carter had very successfully included Surrealism and Fairy Tales in her writing. She had always possessed a gift for controlled grotesquery, stylistic flourish, and thematic elegance. This is quiet excellent on her part as she has expanded her *oeuvre* from a Gothic Revival novelist, into something quite different. And by doing so, she has proved herself, with the intellect and instincts to become a novelist of the first rank. As Brian Stableford put it at the time:

. . . it is only in her most recent work that a general concern with the existential predicaments of the modern era has been narrowed down to a concentration on the politics of sexual relationships. This narrowing down has given her more recent stories both intimacy and intensity, and has saved her from the remote detachment which characterizes certain other writers who have followed similar lines of development from mild surrealism to wholesale fabulation. (1215)

So, she is a writer who uses fairytales or other stories famous in the West and interprets in her own ways. She has used fairytales, myths, dolled up lies and interpreted in her novel, *Night at the Circus*. Being a storyteller, she has webbed all her characters in the novel with a narrative voice that will spell bound the readers.

The narrative style of Carter is magnetic, carefree and elusive with facts, forcing the readers to get carried away by the portrayal of the characters in her works. She has done this by giving us the unverifiable details. In the novel which deals with the story of Fevvers, who has been given many names by the critics like Finney had called her as the "prototype of the New Woman" and another critic as "contemporary monster", and Carter herself describes her as "Look, not touch." So it is a very fine example of her narrative technique.

The story of the novel is quite different from other fictions because carter has chosen to tell Fevvers's story through the stories of the characters. This is a very unique quality as it gives her freedom to do things within her narrative that she otherwise would not have been able to do. It is this acquired freedom through which she is able to lie to the reader, and her characters which are being created by her also gets opportunity to reign freely. Though she has deceived and downright lies by embedding the narrative within the stories of the characters, but still she is not a trickster. It is her quality which is very rare to be found in others writers.

There are many characters in the novel like- Fevvers, Lizzie, Walser, Buffo, the Shaman, and the clowns and there is a story behind each of them. And all these characters let us know

about themselves through their storytelling and performance. They are also free to let the readers focus on them when they want by sharing details occasionally and are able to form their identities as they desire to. Sometimes they also doubt themselves like Fevvers wondering whether she is fact or fiction. This also reflects that whatever the characters are speaking, they are saying it in an interrogative way which means allowing the writer some kind of anonymity. In this way, Carter is trying to explore some of the metafictional elements of the narrative. And because of it, sometimes even the readers are confused that whether they are reading a science fact or science fiction, such is the magic of Carter.

In the entire first third of the novel, the novelists had shown her spotlights on Fevvers, which is accompanied by Lizzie. In this episode she is telling her history to Walser, who is a London-based journalist. Walser, being a journalist is skeptic by nature and is trying to get the scoop on the circus freak with wings. But he is soon overcome by Fevvers's clever weaving of unverifiable fact with unquestionable poise. Fevvers begins with what she claims is the only lie ever tells:

My feathers, Sir! I dye them! . . . That's my dreadful secret, and, to tell the truth and nothing but, the only deception which I practice on the public! (25).

In this way, in the beginning of the interview, Fevvers is trying to let Walser to set aside any doubts he has and make him remember that she has promised that she only lies about the color of her feathers. But here, novelist also gives the clue that Fevvers might be lying as the factual evidences which she is providing to Walser with the help of Lizzie is just for the theatrical additions to the story. There a few many others doubts which was raised by Walser but Fevvers very cleverly tries to give evidence against it and after clearance of many doubts by Fevvers. Walser was not successful in his attempts and after much interrogation he became very lethargic, mentally and physically. One notable thing about the personality of Fevvers which makes her a lively character is her ability to keep herself a wonder of fiction, which is a unique quality. She keeps herself fictional throughout the novel, even while giving the interview to Walser. Carter has describe the magnetic charm of her in the following words:

Her dark, rusty, dripping, swooping voice, imperious as a siren's," is the tool with which she seduces Walser (43).

Walser was swept by her cavernous, sombre voice and became a prisoner of it. The novelist has very nicely described it:

It was as if Walser had become a prisoner of her voice, her cavernous, sombre voice, a voice made for shouting about the tempest, her voice of a celestial fishwife . . . Yet such a voice could almost have had its source, not within her throat but in some ingenious mechanism or other behind the canvas screen, voice of a fake medium at a séance" (43).

Carter through Fevvers keep alive the interest of the listeners with the purposeful movements of her body, especially with the help of her eyes, which is the mirror of truth of human soul. She is fully aware of the limits and capabilities of her body as is reflected by Laurie J. Cella in Narrative 'Confidence Games' in *Frontiers* 25, no.3 (2004):

is keenly aware of her audience and takes care to construct herself and her stories to suit a media-inspired mythos of beauty, fantasy, and illusion" (Cella 56).

Fevvers, being a very good narrator, keep her myth alive in the novel from beginning till end and this is the greatness of Angela Carter. Even in the form of Walser, she has given a very fine example of a character, talented with the use of words and the capability of his suspension of belief and called him as "connoisseur of the tall tale." (11) He is a reporter with sharp mind and capability to reject any kind of belief or narrative. Carter has described him as a man who is also aware of the reality that all it takes to accomplish mass hysteria and the delusion of the crowds" is "a little primitive technology and a big dose of the will to believe" (16).

Carter, being a good story-teller and narrator has used the character of Walser to show her excellence in terms of the influence of narrative on reader and listener. She has made it cleared that even the wisest and smartest person can be cheated and mystified. There are many major characters in the novel like Fevvers, Lizzie, Walser, the clowns, and the Shaman, who have their own role and importance in the story but they are all slave to their narrative, which is the quality of Carter. The audience, the newspaper readers, the crowds, the masks, the religious townspeople, are although have minor role in the novel but they have their own relevance. The presence of these minor characters and ultimately their physical surroundings are a type of curtain for the major characters. This is quite reflected in the following lines of Fevver in the end of the novel, as she says:

I fooled you, then!' . . . 'Gawd, I fooled you!' . . . 'You mustn't believe what you write in the papers!' . . . 'To think I fooled you! (294).

This is a very different style of Carter from other storytellers, who have their own way of telling the story by fooling others or by concealing their pains. There is an instance in the novel when "Fevvers had to explain her story to Walser the way she did. But still, she lived with her performance, which was the only way for her existence like the remaining characters of the story. And at the end, she is heralded as the New Woman. After reading the works of these two writers, we find that both are unique in their way of storytelling, while Karnad uses Indian myths, legends and folklore in his writing Carter uses Western myths and folklore.

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