Abstract

The thesis is structured into five chapters as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part comprises a brief survey of the historical course of drama in India, including Indian drama in English translation, Indian English drama in pre-independence and post-independence times. Contemporary Indian dramatists such as Asif Currimbhoy, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Badal Sircar etc. and their literary contribution in Indian English drama is discussed in detail. So also, the term ‘drama’ is explained with reference to the definitions given by different scholars. This chapter discusses ‘Drama’ as an independent form separately. A few historical implications that cause the rise of the ‘drama’ prove that the drama is not merely a literary phenomenon but a social phenomenon too. Indian culture has family-bound traditions and customs. Indians regard the family as an institution which continues for the rest of their lives. On this consideration, first of all, the concepts, ‘tradition’, ‘modernity’ and ‘human relationship’ are discussed.

Besides this chapter covers the significant period of time which marks the change in the position of woman in the Indian social life as reflected in the modern age. Due to various social political movements during the British period and after Independence woman enjoyed a remarkable progress in her status. Further, some of very crucial points such as ‘Traditional Indian Culture’ ‘Indian Family system from ancient times to modern age’ related to present study are discussed. The present researcher opinions that the modern Indian dramatists provide a picture of the literary development in which woman changes from her submissive role to the role of an independent woman. The third part briefly studies literary contribution of Girish Karnad with his early life and education. At the end Mohan Rakesh is studied as a playwright.

Chapter II: Hayavadana and The Fire and the Rain

This chapter is a detailed analysis of Girish Karnad’s plays under study, made on the basis of the theme, character, structure and dramatic technique in the context of tradition and modernity. It is seen that Girish Karnad makes use of motifs of folk theatre viz. masks, curtains, songs, commentator, dolls, chorus, horse-man to convey his ideas and exploring different characters and to interpret human situation with reference to contemporary experience. It is the
opinion of present researcher that Girish Karnad gives the message through conjugal life of Padmini and Devadatta. Padmini’s quest for perfection remains unfulfilled. For instance, ‘evil’ is manifested through Padmini’s adultery in Hayavadana. Padmini commits adultery knowingly. There are occasional references to Padmini’s infidelity in the play. She is drawn towards Kapila. Since Kapila is Devadatta’s friend, it is her moral duty that she should consider him as her brother. But she keeps an incestuous relationship with him. Karnad projects reality in twentieth century which has been an age of great materialistic stress and finds problems such as confusion, frustration, disintegration and meaninglessness. The existential encounter with nothingness (hollowness) is typical strain of modern man’s life. The charms or Maya of materialistic life is very difficult to avoid because it seems that modern man pursues to get physical satisfaction from material things but many times the inner mind’s (soul) satisfaction is not there.

In the context of Indian traditional moral theory is concerned ‘theory of Purushartha’ is one of the ethics of the Indian civilization. The present researcher thinks that this theory is projected by Karnad and it is very relevant to modern man. Girish Karnad projects a microscopic picture of man-woman relationship in conjugal life. For instance, Karnad projects the conflicts between Dharma (religious, social and moral righteousness) and Adharma through Kapila’s character. Kapila exhibits characteristics of Adharma, for instance, according to the principles of dharma it is believed that it is illicit act to see friend’s wife as beloved or wife. Here, Kapila loves his friend’s wife named Padmini. This proves to be the cause of pain and suffering for Kapila and also for Devadatta and Padmini. The present researcher thinks that Girish Karnad goes back to the rich traditions of the Vedas, the Purusharthas and Bhagavad-Gita in order to dramatize moral fables and social virtues of Gods (popularized by legends, mythology) to people on the earth. Similarly, the researcher has attempted to show how the playwright makes his characters move towards the realization of their Purusharthas in modern contextual life.

The researcher is of the view that Karnad’s plays under study are particularly concerned with the dilemmas and conflicts between tradition and modernity experienced by the modern Indian men and women in different social situations. The mythical and symbolic plan of The Fire and the Rain is so designed that the play shows its link with the original myth of The Mahabharata to project Indian ethos and modernity apathy towards human relationship. The researcher views that Girish Karnad wants to convey a moral message of Karma-yoga (The Bhagavad-Gita Chapter-three) through suffering of his character, Yavakri. Yavakri suffers from
the weaknesses of ambition, revenge and lust. Yavakri is victim of lust. It is narrated that how lust is the greatest enemy of the living entity in the verse 3.37 in *The Bhagavad-Gita*. In this verse, the Lord Krishna explains that when desire is unfulfilled, it turns into anger; anger is altered into fantasy, and fantasy continues the material existence. Consequently, yearn is the highest opponent of the living being. In this regard, Yavakri’s scholarship and his knowledge fail to recognize sacred way. Yakakri’s Universal knowledge could not liberate him from *Kama* (Lust), *Krodha* (Anger), *Lobha* (Greed), and *Mohya* (Desire). Yavakri used Vishakha to avenge Raibhya and Paravasu. Yavakri seduces Vishakha by showing false love to her. The present researcher attempts at assessing the plays under study of Girish Karnad with the tool of the critical analysis and in the contexts of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ and the critical opinions of the recognized critics. It is revealed that Karnad propounds the values of love, kindness and humanity as the rarer virtues of mankind. Therefore the dramatist has organized a platform for love and human values against hatred, revenge and cruelty.

**Chapter III: Halfway House and The Great Swans of the Waves**

This chapter examines Mohan Rakesh’s plays under study in the context of Indian traditional ethos and impact of modernity. Mohan Rakesh presents an image of a middle class in his plays, *Halfway House*. Rakesh registers his deep insight into the life and reality of cities. Rakesh presents Mahendranath’s family as a modern type family in ‘Halfway House’. It is a nuclear family which has been broken with the Indian tradition of joint family. It is also a family where the traditional gender roles are changed. Mahendranath’s wife, Savitri is the breadwinner of the family. Consequently the present researcher thinks that Rakesh poses urban reality and culture where the family turns from the patriarchal to the matriarchal system. Rakesh portrays some subtle ironies related to marriage directly. Traditionally in married life human beings have to strive and adjust for smooth and steady life but Rakesh presents condition of modern life where human beings can never be fully satisfied especially those who desire too much from life partner.

Savitri seems to ignore long-lasting relationship between happily wedded husband and wife in our Indian ethos. Besides, Mohan Rakesh subtly suggests through his Halfway House that marriages must be arranged not on the considerations of character and love. It is a fact that
Savitri wished her daughter, Binni, to be married to someone who had a status and wealth. Savitri had no idea about the likes and dislikes of her daughter.

Rakesh projects Savitri as a modern woman who is highly ambitious, aggressive, and has an attractive and provocative figure. It is her unrealistic dream of a glorious life which takes her to wrong directions. Rakesh’s play *The Great Swans of the Waves* based on the distant historical past explores the restlessness and predicament of modern man. This play deals with the historical story of Nand, Sundari, and Alka, and the sub-plot deals with the story of Buddha, Yashodhara, and Bhikshu, Anand. Rakesh presents the greatness of Indian tradition and spiritualism. On the contrary, Nand’s behaviour symbolizes the basic conflict between people representing materialism and spiritualism. Rakesh presents to us Sundari, a female character who is shown as protesting against the male-dominated society. Mohan Rakesh’s support of the age-old philosophy of *Panchsheel*, that is, the five valuable precepts is evident through the projection of Bhikshu, Anand, and Yashodhara.

In a nutshell, this chapter gives us a glimpse into traditional Indian ethos of which we Indian are proud. At the same time, Rakesh introduces his readers/audience the modernist way of living life in India.

Chapter IV: Comparison

This chapter is separated into three points. The first point deals with *Tradition and Modernity in Karnad’s Plays*. First, it is observed how Girish Karnad presents tradition and modernity in *Hayavadan* and *The Fire and the Rain* by using mythical aspects, folklore, and folktale. Further, it is discussed in detail how Karnad links the question of identity with the idea of completeness. Consequently, none of the main characters is complete in plays. The female characters possess traits of modernity and they are more energetic and dominating than their male counterparts. Women in *Hayavadana* and *The Fire and the Rain*, besides being objects of pleasure, seek something beyond what society permits them. They want to have contact with men they cannot legitimately have and find the means of enjoying freedom within the family frame.

The second part deals with *Tradition and Modernity in Rakesh’s Plays*. It is studied in detail how Mohan Rakesh delineates tradition vis-a-vis modernity in his plays. In *Halfway House*, the family of Savitri is modern type family. It is such family that has broken down the
custom of Indian shared family unit. Savitri is educated and is employed and being a modern woman she invited her boss in house. Also, she likes to keep relation with Juneja, Jagmohan and Singhania and she is very bold to say that she has extramarital relationship. It seems that as a consequence of the break with the traditional institution of the joint family. Mohan Rakesh’s play *The Great Swans of the Waves* based on the distant historical past brings out the restlessness and predicament of modern man and yet another facet of familial relationship. In this play, modern aspiration and traditional spiritual solace are juxtaposed against the basic conflict of a man who is entrapped between the two and compelled to choose between them.

The third part deals with **Comparison**. A writer is generally shaped by the age he lives in. It is an enlightening enterprise to study any author in the context of his age. History and socio-political life is reflected through the works of great men of letters. In the opinion of the researcher Girish Karnad and Mohan Rakesh have presented tradition and modernity in the context of familial life. This bears strong relevance to the present day family structure i.e. nuclear family and challenges of woman’s boldness, career-oriented aspirations and search for a unique social identity. So also, the aspects of tradition and modernity in the context of the family institution in the plays Karnad and Rakesh are discussed on comparative lines. At the end it discussed on comparatively to assess the writers’ works and their ability, in portraying women characters, familial life and Indian ethos realistically and bring out the writers’ similarities and dissimilarities on the perspectives of tradition and modernity.

**Chapter V: Conclusion**

Girish Karnad and Mohan Rakesh are both creative writers and modern playwrights. Their plays have been translated into English from original Kannad and Hindi, respectively. After comparing their plays similarities and dissimilarities found by this researcher are discussed.