

Astute of Women in Myth and Real Life

Dr. G. Siva Balan ¹ & M.M. Keerthi Verma ²

1. Associate Professor, (Supervisor) & Head Scholar, Department of English, Sourashtra College, Madurai.
E-mail: sivalalanenglish@gmail.com
2. Ph.D Full Time Research, Sourashtra, Madurai. Reg. No: MKU22FFOL10628
E-mail: keerthiverma28@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is about culture which talks about the myth and curses of women goddess who has suffered to prove themselves to the world though they have not committed any mistakes.

Keywords: *Culture, Astute, Myth, Sufferings, Curse, Religion, Believes and Feelings.*

INTRODUCTION

The topic here we are going to discuss is about Cultural study of our Culture and Indian Myth incorporated with English Literature. To describe the term 'Culture' is a strange and capacious category. Cultural studies and feminism have shared a substantive interest in issue of power, representation, popular culture, subjectivity, identities and consumption. To compare the modern and ancient feminism through our drama and temples. It's also like to give the meaning of the word Astute, it means being very clever, good at judging behaviour or people. Which are basically women who are good at knowing others.

Which also helps them in many ways and get them into trouble sometimes. In this paper, it has been decided to talk about the feelings of women in the dramas and it would be mostly compared with the reality from then to now. For that we must learn the creation of the world from various texts and myths. That's what we, have tried to do in this paper by researching and writing down from some of the myths like Hinduism, Christianity and Greek mythology.

From reading these myth and folklore we tend to understand that many of these resemble each other in various forms, structure, patterns and character sketch. In all of the myth the only plot is that truth triumphs and evil will be destroyed even though evil has upper-hand in main plot at climax it is defeated and good wins.

The books of my choice are Nagamandala, Yayati and Hayavadana. All these are written by Girish Karnad. In his drama Girish has mentioned the sufferings of women differently and deliberately which might make us feel bad for them and the things they have gone through to prove them. To make it comparable we have chosen few stories from specific myths and folklore to compare with my paper.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

The drama of my choices are all related to Myth and folk-lore. So we have compared the main women character to the stories from myths. To know more about the sufferings that Girish has portrayed.

Background

Exploring the differences to discuss the cultural conflict in this society.

Origin of humans from myth

The motto of Hinduism is Moksha.

“Moksha is the ultimate aim in life for Hindus. It means to be saved (salvation)”

Each and every religion and country has their own myth and believes about the creation of human races. We have narrow down few myths and we are going to use it in this paper. First we, would like to start with Indian myth. There are three main gods in Hindu mythology, they are lord Bhrama the creator of universe, it is said that the world was born from within himself. Then it is Lord Vishnu who protects all the living being and as part of the life cycle where a life ends and be reincarnated it is the duty of lord Siva the destroyer who maintain the balance of this world if not the world might get collapsed. We live in a world everything has a rule and format. There is also another story said that all the living being came from an enormous egg which burst and formed into this universe.

The motto of Christianity

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life".

Next I, would like to talk about Christianity, in this where most of us know the story. Where god takes seven days and each day he creates a species of life. Day 1- the first thing bought to the world was light. Day 2- the sky above us where created. Day 3- at third day lands, seas, mountains, plants and trees where created. Day 4- on fourth day the solar system with gigantic sun, moon and stars where created. Day 5- fifth of the day the creatures of the sea and sky was created. Day 6- this is where it gets interesting this is the day where the animals on land was created and god creates Adam and Eve. Day 7- god decides to gives himself a day off for creating all such wonderful beings.

“The motto symbolized and still symbolizes the resolve of the people of Greece against tyranny and oppression.”

The third myth is from Greek mythology where many was lost without being recorded. From one of the few source were known as The Theogony and Works and Days, by Hesiod. He was an oral poet at the time 750-650 BCE, in one of the Hesiod’s writing he has told about the first woman Pandora whose name means “gift giver”. The story of Pandora was well known to many. The story is about a girl who was given everything by gods with a box which was told by them that she must never open it, but out of curiosity she does open it and that’s when evil was released from that box which must have never be opened. It was named as Pandora’s Box.

Beginning there was only chaos and from that void where Gaia (earth) was born and other celestial beings like Eros, Abyss, Erubus they were all woman goddess. Without male assistance Gaia gave birth to Uranus (sky), the she was fertilized. From their union the 12 Titans were born 6 of them were male Cronus, Hyperion, Cirus, Iapetus, Oceanus and Coeus and the name of 6 females are Rhea, Themis, Phoebe, Tethys, Mnemosyne and Theia. After Cronus was born Gaia and Uranus decided no more Titans should be born. Cronus wanted to more and the only powerful, he overthrew his father and came to his place. His own son Zeus came to power and captured all the 12 Titans and he became the God of Olympus. That’s when Zeus thinks of creating humans who would worship and follow him to the last.

“At end of hardship comes the happiness”

Now we, would like to write about the Korean myth from the histories of the Theogeny or Enuma Elish. Korea's most preserved myth is its own creation from the existing earth with the humans, it starts from the dawn of time where there was primal chaos until an unexpected tear appears and separate's sky from earth. This is about the mighty Heavenly Prince Hwangun whose father was the ruler of Heaven, the princ upon ruling the earth he does that. He becomes the ruler of mankind his father thinks that his son would bring joy and happiness to the human kind and he allows it. Hwangun chooses the Mount Taebak and creates a holy city. The prince brings 3 ministers the Earl of Wind, the Master of Rain and the Master of Clouds with them he also brings 3000 loyal spirits from heaven. The story takes another step and moves where a bear and tiger comes in this with a desire to become a human. So they are to perform a certain task of shunning sunlight and eating the only assigned food to them by Hwangun. Where the Bear sustains and succeeds in it and becomes a beautiful woman named Ungyo and marries Hwangun but the tiger fails and flees the forest. Ungyo and Hwangun has a son named Tangun, he becomes the king of Sandolwood not only that he was also the first king of Korea when it was called as Choson. He ruled it for more than 1500 years. Tangun thinks of retiring and hr retreats to Taebak-san to become a god mountain. Through the tales of Tangun we can know that the earth was already existing. It is also recorded that Korea was not created through violence it was built through efficiency.

What's the Role of Women?

Who is woman and what's her role in this world? According to Hindu myth woman is the most empowered and divine force of the universe. From birth to death a woman goes through lot to get her own place even for her own freedom. Which is a great struggle till now in this modern era. To know the role and struggles of women played in myths other than the dramas I have chosen for my paper, I have picked up some of the folklore from various myths, that would be relatable to this paper, and compiled as a collection.

Sakunthala Dushyanthan

This is a tale from Mahabharatha. Sakunthala is known to be the mother of the great Indian empire whose name was Bhartha. Later our country named after him. Now about Sakunthala she is the daughter of the great sage Vishwamithra and Menaka. Menaka was sent be the kings of god Indra to seduce the sage from his meditation and she did it and concieved a baby girl from the sage, but neither of them could stay and take care of the girl they left her after the birth. That baby girl was found by another sage named Rishi Kanva, he named the baby as Sakunthala and bought up as her own. She also grew into a beautiful elegant woman.

One day the king Dushyanthan went to the forest with a great army for hunting the route lead deep into the desert leading to a beautiful forest inhabited by ashrams and heritage. The king aimed and shot at a male deer which ran to a hut and it was nursed by a beautiful girl. They both fell in love and they get married, the couple spends time together for a time being since there was a chaos in the capitol Dushyanthan has to leave to sort it out. He told her he will come back for her, but time rolls and Sakunthala starts to day dream about her handsome husband which makes her distracted all the time. One day a powerful sage Durvasa comes to the hut but Sakunthala was distracted in her thoughts forgets to greet the sage properly and it leads him to rage of anger and he throws a curse at her telling she would be forgotten by the person who she was dreaming about her friends come to her rescue explaining the situation the sage which makes him feel bad and he tells her if she has received any token of love from that person after seeing it they would recognize it. The time rolls Sakunthala delivers a baby boy

and names him Bhartha. Sakunthala takes her son and goes to the capitol with her father to meet the king. On the way they see a river flowing Sakunthala washes her face and that's when the ring which was given by the king slips off her finger and she doesn't see it, she goes to the court but she was humiliated by everyone. She takes her son and leaves her father's hut and goes deep into the forest where she brings up Bharatha who was surrounded by only wild animals he grown into a strong youth. Simultaneously in capitol a fisherman finds a roayl ring inside a fish and he brings it to the king. After seeing the ring he gains his memoeries and runs to find his wife on the way he sees a young man who was counting the teeth for a pride of lions seeing him the king enquire about him the young man tells him that he is the son of the king Dushayantha and Sakunthala he leads him to his mother. Finally they are reunited.

Curse of Ahalya

Ahalya was created by lord of creation Bhrama the creator himself, he made her without any flaws and named her Ahalya meaning "the one without ugliness" in sanskrit. He sent her to the hermitage of Rishi Gauthama untill she attains puberty, whereas lord Indra has set his eyes on Ahalya from the start. When Ahalya attains puberty Gauthama sent her to lord Bhrama. When Bhrama saw her he sends her back to Gauthama to marry him. They both were happily married but one day lord Indra disguise himself as Gauthama and comes to his hermitage knowing the sage was not there and he request for making love with Ahalya, Ahalya not knowing that was not her husband. When they were making love Gauthama returns in a short period of time and finds lord Indra in his disguise and rages in anger and throws a fit of curse by telling lord Indra would be having thousands of women genitals covering him and Ahalya turned to be a stone. Ahalya asks for forgiveness and Gauthama, he feels bad and reduces their curse by telling Indra that the genitals may change into thousand eyes and about Ahalya's curse he tells that when the son of Ayodha's steps on the stone she will regain her old form. As he said after thousand year Lord Ram passes through the forest and the dust from his foot falls on the stone and Ahalya gains her old form Lord ram takes her blessing which makes Gauthama happy and he accepts Ahalya and they lead a good life.

Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve where the first humans created by the heavenly father himself to lead a life on Eden garden. The garden was covered with all sorts of botanical creatures. God forbidden them eating a fruit from only one plant and they also obeyed to him, but a snake came into the garden and seduced Eve by telling her that if they taste that fruit they would know the difference between evil and good. Eve was tempted by his words and she plucked a fruit from the tree and took a bite and she also offered it to Adam he also took a bite willingly.

When god came to visit the garden he searched for them but he couldn't find them and called them out loud, he found them hiding behind a bush. He asked them that did they eat the fruit from the forbidden tree and they answered yes. He got angry and punished them by sending them out of the Eden garden. Since they knew the difference between good and bad now they were separated from god and forced to start a family.

Tale of Medusa

Medusa was one of the trio of Gorgon sisters she was not immortal among them, Medusa was appointed as the priestess in the temple of Goddess Athena. Medusa was supposed to oblige the chastity but she falls in love with the sea God Posidon and loses the chastity which makes Athena furious and she transforms Medusa into a hideous figure where her hair is transformed into snakes and her skin is transformed green scales. If anyone looks at Medusas

face would turn into stone. The hero Persus was sent on a quest to bring the head of Medusa. He was able to complete the quest by using his shining shield which reflects Medusa and turns herself into a stone statue. In Athena's shield she has the head of Medusa.

Plot of my paper

Nagamandala

Nagamandala is said to be one frame story. It has very limited characters. The main theme of this is to prove the efficiency of the protagonist Rani. The sufferings and humiliation she has faced by her husband was the greatest pain that was caused to her. She was forced to prove her innocence and purity in front of entire village. Yet she does that, by picking up the snake by wearing it around her neck as a garland. Suddenly she becomes a goddess in front of the same people who spoke ill about her and telling she has committed adultery. This is about Rani and now I would like to talk about the second woman character Kurudavva the blind old lady who lost her son and she was a motherly figure to Rani. Whenever Appana leaves the house he locks Rani within the house so she could not leave. That's when Kurudavva would come near the window and keep her company.

Kurudavva gives Rani Two piece of root to make her husband fall in love by mixing it to the curry. At her first attempt Rani gets scared and pours it into a cobra hill which was tasted by a Naga and falls in love with Rani at the moment he meets her. Whenever Appana leaves the house Naga takes the form and disguise as Appana and showers his love to Rani, but Rani doesn't know that is not her husband and she gets confused at times by Appana's behaviour. At morning he shows his love and at night he is rude and not letting her near him. That's when she gets conceived with Naga's child. Which rises a suspicion to Appana. He claims that this is not his baby and he was not the reason behind her pregnancy, and calls the village elders filling a petition against Rani. She also proves her innocence.

Hayavadana

This story has two plot which is intertwined with each other. In one plot is talks about Padmini, Devdatta and Kapila's relationship. The second plot is about Hayavadana. The common connecting factor in these two plots or the goddess Kali. Hayavadana is born from the love of a celestial horse and an earthly lady. Hayavadana has human body and horse head. He becomes complete horse by getting the boon from goddess Kali. About Padmini she falls marries Devdatta and falls in love with Kapila. On the way to town they visit Kali temple where Devdatta sacrifices his head and next Kapila also does the same. When Padmini comes to see what has happened after seeing both of them lying dead she gets heart broken and she tries to sacrifice herself but before that goddess Kali appears and tells her to keep the head to the body. Padmini does that but in an urgency she misplaces the body and head of both of them, Kali also brings them back to life. Now the consequence of changing the head becomes a problem to Padmini.

Yayati

In Yayati the three main female characters or Devyani, Sharmishtha and Chitrlekha. This story starts with the king Yayati who marries Devyani and falls in love with Sharmishtha and he gets cursed by Devyani's father. Due to this curse the king is cursed to be old he requests people from his kingdom to accept his curse but no one comes forward other than his son Pooru who was married on the same day, before his nuptial night he accepts the curse and goes as old

man in front of his wife. After seeing him in this condition his wife Chitrlekha commits suicide. Yayti feels bad and gets back his curse.

Summation

All these stories are about culture, myth, sacrifice, hardship, cruelty, punishment, sufferings, humiliation and curse. These were all undergone by each and every female characters from myths and folk-lore. The hard and sad truth from this paper is that still in this modern era we can see that many of these things are not changed. I have compared Indian myth, Story from Bible and Greek myth. In many myths women are portrayed to be strong characters and good at judging things but when it comes to reality. They are not given the chance. All their dreams and life would be decided by their family and this society. There are set of foolish rules set by this society for women how to lead her life inside and outside her house. The title of this paper is Astute of women in myth and real life.

WORK CITATION

Primary Sources

- 1) Karnad, Girish. Naga-Mandala. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- 2) Karnad, Girish. Hayavadana. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- 3) Karnad, Girish. Yayati. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Secondary Sources

- 1) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zv2fgwx/revision/7>
- 2) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zg3vxfr/revision/1>
- 3) <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/doherty/plan2/colbergcreation.html>
- 4) <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/big-history-project/what-is-big-history/origin-stories/a/origin-story-greek>
- 5) https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&sxsrf=ALiCzsZoxJdwoisOyAIsJdjV1MpMSd_VaA%3A1672235750380&lei=5kqsY5XtFuSq4-EPt6Kx2Ao&q=7%20days%20of%20creation%20list&ved=2ahUKEwiV-IbPu5z8AhVk1TgGHTdRDKsQsKwBKAJ6BAhSEAM&biw=1366&bih=643&dpr=1
- 6) https://www.mahabharataonline.com/stories/mahabharata_story.php?id=6
- 7) <https://www.tell-a-tale.com/deliverance-the-story-of-ahalya/>
- 8) <https://www.thoughtco.com/greek-mythology-medusa-1524415>
- 9) <https://www.greeka.com/greece-myths/arachne/>
- 10) <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/old-testament-stories-2022/adam-and-eve?lang=eng>
- 11) <https://smartenglishnotes.com/2022/06/17/naga-mandala-play-by-girish-karnad-summary-and-analysis/>
- 12) <https://www.gradesaver.com/hayavadana/study-guide/summary>
- 13) <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Girish-Karnad>