

Human concern and Relationship in Karnad's *Yayati*: - A critical Assessment

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Abstract

Girish Karnad's *Yayati* is a significant modern Indian play that reinterprets a well-known episode from the *Mahabharata* to explore the complexities of human desire, responsibility, relationships, and existential anxiety. Through the mythological figure of King Yayati, Karnad examines the perpetual human longing for youth, pleasure, and fulfilment, while simultaneously questioning the consequences of selfish desire on interpersonal relationships. The play presents a complex network of relationships among Yayati, Devayani, Sharmishtha, Puru, and Chitrlekha, revealing how individual desires frequently come into conflict with familial obligations and social expectations. Yayati's refusal to accept the natural process of ageing and his demand for his son Puru's youth expose the ethical and emotional consequences of excessive self-centredness. The relationship between parent and child, husband and wife, and individuals bound by social and emotional obligations becomes a crucial site for examining human concerns. Karnad's treatment of these relationships moves beyond the mythological framework and addresses universal questions of identity, sacrifice, desire, freedom, and responsibility. The play therefore functions as both a reinterpretation of an ancient narrative and a critical commentary on modern human relationships. This paper critically examines how *Yayati* portrays the tension between individual desire and relational responsibility, demonstrating Karnad's ability to use myth as a powerful medium for articulating contemporary human concerns.

Keywords: Girish Karnad, *Yayati*, human concerns, human relationships, desire, responsibility, sacrifice, existentialism, mythology, modern Indian drama.

