



Myth, Symbolism, Tradition, and Modernity in Girish Karnad's Yayati and Hayavadana

Ravi Kumar Suryavanshi

Research Scholar, Department of English, Malwanchal University, Indore

Dr. Dhananjay Patil

Supervisor, Department of English, Malwanchal University, Indore

Abstract

This paper examines the interplay of myth and symbolic imagination in two foundational plays of modern Indian theatre, Girish Karnad's *Yayati* (1961) and *Hayavadana* (1971). Drawing on the *Mahabharata*, the *Kathasaritsagara*, and indigenous folk-performance traditions such as *Yakshagana*, Karnad reconstructs inherited narratives not as static religious relics but as dynamic cultural discourses capable of addressing contemporary psychological, ethical, and existential concerns. Through close reading and comparative analysis, the study argues that Karnad transforms mythic material into a symbolic language for exploring desire, moral responsibility, identity, completeness, gender, and human consciousness. The symbolic exchange of youth and old age in *Yayati* and the exchange of heads in *Hayavadana* function as central metaphors through which the plays interrogate the tension between individual aspiration and social obligation, body and mind, tradition and modernity. The paper further situates Karnad's dramaturgy within postcolonial cultural nationalism and archetypal criticism, demonstrating that his theatre preserves India's civilisational heritage while engaging critically with patriarchal authority and the fragmented condition of the modern self. It concludes that mythology, when reinterpreted through symbolic imagination, remains an indispensable medium for negotiating cultural identity in a rapidly changing society.

Keywords: Girish Karnad, myth, symbolic imagination, *Yayati*, *Hayavadana*, cultural identity, Indian English drama, folk theatre

1. Introduction

Girish Karnad occupies a singular place in the history of modern Indian drama as a playwright who returned repeatedly to India's mythological and folkloric heritage in order to interrogate the conditions of contemporary life. Rather than treating myth as a fixed body of sacred or historical narrative, Karnad approached it as a living cultural resource capable of generating fresh meaning across successive historical contexts. His plays participate in the broader project of postcolonial Indian theatre, which sought a dramatic idiom rooted in indigenous forms yet responsive to modern intellectual questions (Dharwadker, 2005). Within this project, *Yayati* and *Hayavadana* stand as complementary experiments in the reinterpretation of inherited stories through symbolic imagination.

Yayati, Karnad's first play, reworks an episode from the *Adi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* concerning a king who exchanges his premature old age for the youth of his son. *Hayavadana*, composed a decade later, draws on a tale of transposed heads from *Somadeva's* eleventh-century *Kathasaritsagara*, mediated in part by Thomas Mann's novella, and enriches



it with the conventions of Yakshagana folk theatre. Although the two plays originate in distinct narrative traditions, they share a governing dramatic objective: the examination of universal human experience through culturally specific symbols (Mukherjee, 2016).

The choice of myth as dramatic material was, for Karnad, a considered aesthetic and political decision rather than an incidental preference. Writing in the decades following independence, Indian playwrights confronted the problem of forging a theatre that was neither a derivative imitation of European realism nor a nostalgic revival of Sanskrit classicism. Karnad resolved this dilemma by returning to the storehouse of myth and folk performance, which offered ready-made archetypes, non-linear structures, and a mode of audience address alien to the proscenium stage. In doing so he participated in a wider cultural conversation about the meaning of indigenous modernity, a conversation shared by contemporaries such as Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar (Mee, 2016).

This paper analyses how Karnad reconstructs myth by integrating archetypal characters, ritual motifs, folk-performance techniques, and philosophical inquiry into modern dramatic structures. It attends in particular to the ways symbols—youth and old age, the horse-head, masks, dolls, and ritual performance—operate as artistic devices that reveal the psychological and cultural dimensions of human existence. The study proceeds through ten sections that move from Karnad's general approach to myth, through the mythological foundations and symbolic architecture of each play, to a comparative account of their treatment of identity, gender, cultural memory, and consciousness. The central argument is that Karnad's symbolic imagination converts myth into a medium of intellectual reflection and cultural dialogue, preserving heritage while contesting the assumptions embedded within it. Methodologically, the analysis is grounded in close textual reading informed by archetypal criticism, postcolonial cultural theory, and studies of Indian performance tradition, allowing the plays to be read simultaneously as literary texts and as scripts for a distinctly Indian theatrical practice.

2. Karnad's Dramatic Approach to Myth

Karnad's dramatic approach to myth is distinguished by creative reinterpretation that addresses contemporary human concerns without diminishing the cultural and philosophical depth of the source. Unlike dramatists who merely reproduce mythological episodes, he reconstructs myths as dynamic frameworks that illuminate modern society, individual psychology, ethical dilemma, and cultural identity. His plays demonstrate that myths are not relics of the past but living cultural texts capable of generating new meaning across historical contexts (Naik & Narayan, 2018). Drawing on the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Kathasaritsagara, the Puranas, and indigenous theatrical traditions, Karnad establishes a dialogue between inherited value and contemporary reality that permits the examination of identity, desire, morality, alienation, power, sacrifice, and self-realisation.

2.1 Myth as Dramatic Structure

Karnad employs myth not merely as thematic background but as the structural foundation upon which dramatic action unfolds. Myth supplies the narrative framework, symbolic characters, archetypal situations, and philosophical conflicts that shape the progression of



each play. In *Yayati*, the Mahabharata episode becomes a structural device for examining existential responsibility and the consequences of selfish desire; in *Hayavadana*, a mythological folktale is transformed into an exploration of fragmented identity and the search for completeness. This structural use of myth allows Karnad to connect ancient cultural narratives with universal human experience and thereby to expand the interpretative possibilities of modern theatre (Budholia, 2015).

2.2 Contemporary Interpretation and Symbolic Imagination

One of Karnad's principal achievements lies in his capacity to reinterpret traditional myths in the light of contemporary social, political, and psychological realities. Rather than presenting mythological characters as idealised figures, he humanises them by exposing their emotional conflicts, moral ambiguities, and psychological complexity. His reinterpretations question rigid social convention, patriarchal authority, and inherited moral assumption while preserving the symbolic richness of the original narrative. Symbols, metaphors, dreams, rituals, masks, and transformations function as integral components of his dramatic language rather than decorative devices (Tripathi, 2019). In *Yayati* the exchange of youth signifies moral burden and humanity's insatiable desire; in *Hayavadana* the horse-headed figure and the exchange of heads become emblems of psychological fragmentation and the conflict between body and intellect. Through such symbolism Karnad transcends literal realism and communicates philosophical truths concerning identity, consciousness, and the human condition.

3. Mythological Foundations and Symbolic Imagination in Yayati

Karnad's *Yayati* is firmly rooted in the Mahabharata, yet it is far more than a dramatic adaptation of an epic episode. Reimagining the ancient narrative through a modern literary perspective, Karnad transforms a familiar myth into an exploration of human psychology, ethical responsibility, and existential anxiety. The mythological foundation provides a framework through which timeless questions concerning desire, duty, sacrifice, mortality, and identity are examined in relation to contemporary society, while the introduction of new characters and expanded conflict deepens the philosophical inquiry (Pandey, 2017).

3.1 The Mahabharata Source and Karnad's Reinterpretation

In the *Adi Parva*, King Yayati, son of Nahusha, is cursed with premature old age by the sage Shukracharya for a moral transgression involving Devayani and Sharmishtha. Unwilling to accept the curse, Yayati seeks to exchange his old age for the youth of one of his sons; only Puru consents, out of filial devotion. After years of indulgence Yayati recognises that desire is endless, returns youth to Puru, and embraces renunciation. Within the epic the episode functions as a moral allegory illustrating the futility of uncontrolled desire and the principles of dharma, karma, and self-realisation (Rao, 2020).

Although Karnad retains this essential framework, his reinterpretation emphasises psychological complexity and existential inquiry over moral instruction. *Yayati* appears not simply as a king driven by desire but as a conflicted individual struggling with fear, guilt, and responsibility; the focus shifts from divine punishment to human consciousness. Karnad expands the roles of Puru and, crucially, introduces Chitrlekha—Puru's bride, absent from

the epic—who becomes a powerful voice questioning inherited responsibility, patriarchal authority, and the moral justification of sacrifice. Through these innovations the myth becomes a modern meditation on personal freedom, individual accountability, and generational conflict (Pandey, 2017).

3.2 Symbolism of Youth, Old Age, and Desire

The most powerful symbol in *Yayati* is the exchange of youth and old age, which extends beyond its supernatural literalism to represent the universal human desire to escape mortality and prolong worldly pleasure. Youth signifies vitality, ambition, and the endless pursuit of gratification, while old age signifies decline, responsibility, and the inevitable consequences of action. *Yayati*'s refusal of premature old age reflects humanity's persistent attempt to resist the natural order, and his desire to retain youth becomes a metaphor for insatiable ambition and the illusion that material fulfilment yields lasting happiness. The transfer of age to *Puru* demonstrates that the consequences of individual action are often displaced onto future generations, rendering desire not merely a personal weakness but a social and moral burden (Budholia, 2015).

3.3 Duty, Sacrifice, and Existential Conflict

Karnad's symbolic imagination is equally evident in his treatment of duty, sacrifice, and moral responsibility. *Puru*'s surrender of his youth evokes the traditional Indian ideals of filial devotion and obedience, yet Karnad refuses to present this sacrifice as an unquestionable virtue, exposing instead how inherited responsibility imposes unjust burdens on the blameless. *Chitrlekha* challenges conventional assumptions about sacrifice, symbolising a modern consciousness that refuses to accept inherited suffering as inevitable moral obligation. The play's existential dimension emerges in *Yayati*'s inability to find satisfaction despite regaining youth—an image of the futility of seeking fulfilment through external achievement—and in *Puru*'s alienation as one who bears consequences not of his own making (Sharma & Kumar, 2021). These conflicts transform the ancient story into an existential drama in which external events mirror the internal struggles of consciousness.

The psychological complexity of these characters significantly enhances the symbolic richness of the play. Rather than depicting mythological figures as idealised heroes or villains, Karnad presents them as emotionally vulnerable individuals whose inner conflicts reflect broader cultural concerns. *Yayati* symbolises the divided personality torn between desire and duty, ambition and responsibility, demonstrating that psychological suffering originates not merely from external circumstance but from unresolved moral contradiction within the self. *Puru* symbolises innocence burdened by inherited obligation, illustrating how identity is shaped by the expectations imposed by family and society, while *Chitrlekha* embodies intellectual independence and the modern individual's refusal to accept norms without critical examination. Through these psychologically nuanced figures Karnad shows that myth is not confined to supernatural event but functions as a symbolic language for interpreting the deepest dimensions of human consciousness (Pandey, 2017).

4. Cultural Identity and Philosophical Concerns in Yayati

Yayati integrates cultural identity with philosophical inquiry, employing mythology not merely to celebrate tradition but to examine how inherited values continue to shape contemporary behaviour and ethical decision-making. The play reflects the philosophical foundations of Indian civilisation—dharma, karma, sacrifice, renunciation, and moral accountability—while questioning their relevance within changing social realities. Cultural identity thus emerges as neither rigid nor static but as a dynamic process of negotiation between inherited tradition and modern consciousness (Dharwadker, 2005).

4.1 Dharma, Karma, and Ethical Dilemma

The concepts of dharma and karma constitute the ethical foundation of the play. Yayati's refusal to accept the curse symbolises a violation of dharma, as he attempts to evade the consequences of his own actions by transferring suffering to his son. Puru's acceptance reflects the traditional virtue of filial devotion, yet Karnad questions whether such sacrifice can be ethical when it issues from unequal power relations. Chitralekha's resistance further complicates the moral landscape by exposing the emotional cost of inherited responsibility. Through these conflicts the play illustrates that ethical decisions are rarely absolute and that genuine morality demands self-awareness and accountability rather than blind adherence to convention (Rao, 2020).

4.2 Tradition versus Individual Desire and the Identity Crisis

The conflict between tradition and individual desire dramatises the wider tension experienced by societies undergoing cultural transformation. Traditional society emphasises family honour, duty, and collective welfare, whereas individual desire seeks personal fulfilment and self-expression. Karnad neither rejects tradition nor glorifies unrestricted individualism; he advocates a balanced relationship in which cultural values remain meaningful only insofar as they promote ethical integrity and respect for human freedom (Sharma & Kumar, 2021). The theme of identity crisis is central: identity is portrayed not as a fixed attribute determined by birth but as a continuous process shaped by ethical choice. Yayati's pursuit of youth reflects an identity crisis rooted in the refusal to accept human limitation, while Puru's predicament illustrates how individuals inherit responsibilities created by earlier generations. The play affirms that freedom cannot exist without moral obligation.

5. Mythological Foundations and Symbolic Imagination in Hayavadana

Hayavadana represents one of the finest examples of mythological reinterpretation in modern Indian drama, integrating ancient myth, folklore, and indigenous theatrical tradition with contemporary philosophical and psychological concern. The principal source is a tale from the Kathasaritsagara concerning the accidental exchange of heads between two close friends and the dilemma of the resulting individuals' identity. Karnad expands this narrative into an exploration of the relationship between body, mind, intellect, desire, and human completeness, adding the wholly original figure of the horse-headed Hayavadana, whose search for wholeness parallels that of the human characters (Mukherjee, 2016).

5.1 Folk Theatre, Yakshagana, and Dramatic Innovation

A defining dimension of the play is Karnad's extensive use of Yakshagana, the folk theatre of Karnataka that combines music, dance, storytelling, costume, improvisation, and symbolic performance. The Bhagavata functions as the traditional narrator who guides the action and interacts directly with the audience, while songs, masks, stylised movement, ritual, and supernatural transformation reinforce the symbolic atmosphere. Rather than relying on realistic representation, Karnad employs these folk elements to create a theatrical space where myth and imagination coexist naturally (Zarrilli, 2020). His innovation lies in blending indigenous convention with modern literary form, producing a play that is simultaneously traditional and experimental and that revitalises indigenous performance heritage for contemporary audiences.

5.2 The Horse-Head and Head–Body Duality

The horse-headed figure is among Karnad's most powerful symbols, representing incompleteness, transformation, and the universal longing for perfection. Born with a man's body and a horse's head, Hayavadana embodies the fragmented human condition; the horse traditionally signifies instinct and untamed energy, the human body reason and social order, and their combination dramatises the conflict between instinct and intellect. His eventual transformation into a complete horse suggests, ironically, that fulfilment may arrive through the acceptance of one's authentic nature rather than the pursuit of socially constructed ideals (Naik & Narayan, 2018).

The exchange of heads between Devadatta and Kapila constitutes the central symbolic event. Devadatta represents intellect and artistic sensitivity, Kapila physical strength and instinct; their transposition raises the fundamental question of whether identity resides in the head or the body. Padmini's attraction to both men underscores the impossibility of complete satisfaction through either intellectual or physical perfection alone. The head–body duality thus symbolises the divided condition of the modern individual, and Karnad's refusal to resolve it demonstrates that human completeness cannot be achieved by combining ideal qualities (Tripathi, 2019).

5.3 Masks, Dolls, and the Bhagavata as Symbolic Narrator

Theatrical devices deepen the play's symbolic texture. Masks signify the multiple identities individuals assume within society, concealing the authentic self beneath socially sanctioned roles. The talking dolls belonging to Padmini's child act as symbolic observers who voice hidden truths, unconscious fears, and emotional tensions the human characters fail to recognise, thereby serving as expressions of the subconscious. The Bhagavata, drawn from Yakshagana, functions as more than a narrator: he symbolises the continuity of cultural memory and collective wisdom, mediating between mythological narrative and contemporary audience and demonstrating that storytelling itself is an instrument for preserving cultural identity across generations (Zarrilli, 2020).

6. Identity, Completeness, and the Existential Quest in Hayavadana

Hayavadana is fundamentally a philosophical drama exploring identity, completeness, and the existential quest for self-realisation. Every character seeks a completeness that ultimately



proves elusive: Hayavadana desires a human identity, Devadatta aspires to unite intellect with strength, Kapila longs for refinement, and Padmini imagines an ideal man combining Devadatta's intelligence with Kapila's vitality. These aspirations collectively symbolise humanity's universal longing for perfection, yet every attempt at absolute completeness generates new contradiction. The exchange of heads produces confusion rather than fulfilment, and Hayavadana's transformation into a horse resolves his suffering only by abandoning his original desire (Mukherjee, 2016).

The relationship between body, mind, and self forms the play's core philosophical issue. Karnad deliberately withholds a definitive answer to the question of where identity resides, presenting the self as an inseparable interaction of physical existence and psychological consciousness. Padmini's emotional conflict demonstrates the impossibility of separating intellectual attraction from physical desire, while the wider duality reflects the conflict between reason and instinct, civilisation and nature. Influenced by Indian conceptions of selfhood and complemented by modern existential thought, the play proposes that human beings must accept incompleteness as an essential feature of existence rather than pursue unattainable ideals of perfection (Sharma & Kumar, 2021).

The psychological and philosophical dimensions of the play elevate it beyond mythological adaptation into a sophisticated study of modern consciousness. Its characters experience internal conflicts that symbolise universal existential concerns relating to freedom, alienation, desire, and self-realisation. Hayavadana's dissatisfaction with his physical form represents the struggle for self-acceptance and belonging; Devadatta suffers the anxiety of intellectual life; Kapila confronts the inadequacy of physical strength in achieving emotional fulfilment; and Padmini's divided affection reveals the complexity of human desire. Karnad demonstrates that suffering arises not merely from external circumstance but from contradictions inherent in consciousness itself, and his symbolic use of mythology allows these concerns to transcend their cultural context and acquire universal relevance (Singh, 2023). The play affirms that the existential quest for identity is an ongoing process of self-discovery in which psychological growth, moral understanding, and cultural consciousness are inseparably connected.

7. Comparative Analysis of Yayati and Hayavadana

Though derived from different sources—the Mahabharata and the Kathasaritsagara—both plays share the objective of transforming ancient myth into explorations of identity, ethical responsibility, psychological conflict, and cultural continuity. In each, Karnad departs from literal adaptation, humanising mythological characters as psychologically complex individuals and reconstructing narrative to explore modern existential concern. Myth thus functions not as a static source but as a dynamic literary framework that retains vitality through creative reinterpretation (Budholia, 2015).

7.1 Comparative Symbolic Structures

Symbolism forms the artistic core of both plays, though each employs distinct symbolic structures. In Yayati the exchange of youth and old age symbolises the endless pursuit of desire, the inevitability of mortality, and the moral burden transferred across generations. In



Hayavadana the exchange of heads, the horse-headed protagonist, masks, dolls, and folk devices symbolise fragmented identity and the search for completeness. Where Yayati relies chiefly on moral and existential symbolism rooted in epic mythology, Hayavadana fuses symbolic imagery with fantasy, folklore, and theatrical innovation to generate multiple interpretative possibilities (Tripathi, 2019).

7.2 Identity, Desire, and Tradition versus Modernity

Identity, desire, and human consciousness constitute the shared philosophical concerns of both plays. In Yayati identity is shaped by moral responsibility and the consequences of desire; in Hayavadana it becomes a problem arising from the separation of body and mind. Desire in the former is associated with worldly pleasure and power, in the latter with intellectual, physical, and emotional fulfilment. In both, Karnad demonstrates that desire remains insatiable and that self-realisation cannot be achieved through external transformation alone (Naik & Narayan, 2018). Above all, both plays establish a dialogue between tradition and modernity: Karnad neither rejects Indian culture nor accepts it uncritically but reconstructs inherited myth to reveal its continuing relevance, integrating modern concerns of individuality, freedom, and gender equality without diminishing symbolic significance. Tradition, in his hands, is not a static inheritance but a dynamic process continually renewed through interpretation.

8. Gender, Power, and Archetypal Patterns

Gender, power, and symbolic representation constitute significant dimensions of Karnad's dramatic vision. He presents gender not as a fixed biological category but as a dynamic cultural construct shaped by power relations and ethical choice. The female characters—Chitrlekha in Yayati and Padmini in Hayavadana—challenge patriarchal assumptions by questioning inherited tradition and the unequal distribution of authority, while the male characters reveal the limitations of conventional masculinity through their struggles with ambition, identity, and emotional vulnerability (Bhatia, 2022).

8.1 Masculinity, Femininity, and Patriarchal Structures

Yayati initially embodies masculine authority and patriarchal privilege, yet his craving for eternal youth exposes the insecurity beneath this appearance of strength, revealing that masculinity founded solely on vitality is fragile. Chitrlekha and Padmini challenge conventional femininity by expressing independent thought and personal desire: Chitrlekha refuses to accept inherited suffering without questioning its legitimacy, and Padmini openly acknowledges her attraction to both intellect and strength, resisting restrictive definitions of female behaviour. Karnad exposes the ethical limitations of patriarchal power while also showing that its rigid ideals of heroism and sacrifice burden men as well as women, so that the resulting psychological conflicts transcend gender division (Bhatia, 2022).

8.2 Archetypal Patterns and the Collective Unconscious

Karnad's characters and symbols function as archetypes representing fundamental aspects of human experience. In Yayati the king embodies the archetype of the flawed ruler whose ambition leads to suffering, while Puru represents the sacrificial hero, an ideal Karnad complicates by exposing its ethical cost. In Hayavadana, Devadatta and Kapila serve as



complementary archetypes of intellect and strength, and Hayavadana becomes the eternal seeker whose incompleteness figures humanity's continuous search for wholeness. Archetypal symbols—the cyclical exchange of youth and age, the curse as ethical consequence, the horse-head, masks, forests, and temples—evoke patterns embedded within collective cultural consciousness, so that culturally specific myths come to represent universal human experience (Frye as applied in Pandey, 2017).

9. Dramatic Technique, Myth, and Human Consciousness

Karnad's theatre combines the structural richness of Indian mythology, classical dramaturgy, and folk performance with modern experimentation. Rather than recreating historical reality with literal accuracy, he constructs a symbolic theatrical space in which myth, imagination, philosophy, and lived experience coexist. Yayati relies on symbolic stage situations and psychologically charged dialogue, while Hayavadana adopts an elaborate folk structure incorporating the Bhagavata, songs, ritual sequences, and parallel storylines that allow reality and fantasy to merge. In both, symbolic dialogue and visual imagery externalise internal conflict, enabling audiences to perceive abstract philosophical concepts through concrete theatrical representation (Zarrilli, 2020).

The relationship between myth, psychology, and consciousness is perhaps the most profound dimension of Karnad's vision. External mythological events—the curse, the exchange of youth, the transfer of heads—symbolise internal psychological realities, shifting attention from outward action to inward experience. The exchange of youth and the exchange of heads resemble dream sequences that reveal hidden fear, desire, and unresolved conflict, while memory connects characters with inherited moral value. Karnad transforms myth into psychological reality, demonstrating that mythological imagination provides a symbolic language capable of revealing the unconscious more effectively than literal realism (Sharma & Kumar, 2021). By integrating Indian conceptions of selfhood with modern psychological insight, he establishes mythology as a living expression of human consciousness rather than a relic of religious tradition.

10. Conclusion: Myth as a Medium of Cultural Identity

Across Yayati and Hayavadana, Karnad establishes myth as one of the most powerful media through which cultural identity is preserved, reconstructed, and reinterpreted in modern Indian literature. Myth transcends its traditional function as religious or legendary narrative and becomes a dynamic cultural discourse reflecting the historical consciousness, philosophical values, and collective experience of Indian society. By adapting the Mahabharata, the Kathasaritsagara, and folk tradition, Karnad reconstructs ancient narratives in ways that preserve their symbolic significance while rendering them meaningful for contemporary audiences and inviting critical engagement with inherited belief (Dharwadker, 2005).

Beyond their philosophical concerns, both plays operate as instruments of social consciousness. The transfer of old age in Yayati dramatises the tendency of one generation to impose the consequences of its actions upon the next, raising questions of ethical responsibility and social obligation, while Hayavadana exposes the psychological cost of

pursuing externally defined ideals of perfection. Through these symbolic narratives Karnad encourages audiences to question rigid social structures and patriarchal tradition while appreciating the moral wisdom embedded within Indian mythology, demonstrating that myth remains an effective vehicle for critical social awareness because it connects timeless human experience with contemporary reality (Verma, 2024).

The comparative analysis undertaken here demonstrates the consistency of Karnad's dramatic vision. Whether through the symbolic exchange of youth and old age or the exchange of heads, both plays reject simplistic moral conclusion in favour of complex philosophical questions concerning desire, completeness, freedom, and self-realisation. They interrogate patriarchal authority, examine the fragmented condition of the modern self, and negotiate the tension between individual aspiration and social obligation. In doing so they reveal that cultural identity is neither fixed nor homogeneous but evolves through continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity.

Karnad's achievement lies in showing that mythology, when interpreted through symbolic imagination, unites historical memory with modern consciousness. His theatre preserves India's civilisational heritage while expanding the expressive possibilities of modern Indian drama, affirming that myth possesses enduring vitality because it embodies universal truths about human existence while remaining flexible enough to accommodate new historical realities. *Yayati* and *Hayavadana* thus stand as enduring masterpieces that establish myth as a living cultural discourse and an indispensable medium for exploring identity, morality, and the shared experience of humanity.

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