

Basavaraj Naikar's Sangya-Balya: Betrayal: A Folk Tragedy

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... Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

[*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene ii., lines 15-21]

Drama constitutes an integral part of any civilised society. It is true that the dramatic instinct is quite universal. The theatre whether in sacred or secular form has never failed to hold its powerful appeal to man. Undeniably every nation and every race has its own dramatic history. Drama as the best form of literary composition mirrors the social, political and cultural history of a people and the characteristic nature of the genius of any nation cannot be fully comprehended and appreciated without its study. Since 'a nation is known by its theatre', the impact of drama and theatre over the masses cannot be easily ignored. One can learn about the character of a particular nation more from its immortal plays than from the pages of a formal historical treatise or the records of the nation. Drama, which is the outcome of human nature and human character, "is an imitation of people, their environment, emotions, feelings, situations they are found in, mental and physical states and actions" (M.L. Varadpande 273). In the words of G.B. Tennyson, "Drama is a story that people act out on a stage before spectators" (3). Eric Bentley observes: "The theatrical situation, reduced to a minimum, is that A impersonates B while C looks on" (150). Marjorie Boulton remarks: "Drama, at its best, is an exercise of the imagination not only for writer, producer and actors but also for the audience. The writer of plays creates characters and places them in situations that are interesting and in some way relevant to general human experience" (196). The rich variety of the drama as an art form and its indispensable human nature have been remarkably highlighted and summed up by the great theatrical producer, Max Reinhardt as follows:

It is to the actor and to no one else that the theatre belongs. This does not mean, of course, the professional actor alone, but the actor as poet, as director, stage-manager, musician, scene-designer, painter and certainly not least of all, the actor as spectator, for the contribution of the spectators is almost as important as that of the cast. The audience

must take its part in the play if we are ever to see a true art of the theatre—the oldest, most powerful, and most immediate of the arts, combining the many in one.

[quoted in Hemendra Nath Das Gupta ii]

According to Professor H.H. Wilson, the primary object of dramatic representations is “to convey instructions through the means of amusement and with this view, they must affect the minds of the spectators with the statements which they express” (ii). From the artistic point of view drama and the stage indubitably possess an ethical and a historical value of their own.

The art of drama, considered to be the fifth ‘Veda’ in India, is quite ancient. Undoubtedly India possesses a rich and glorious dramatic tradition going back more than two thousand years. The phenomenal growth and development of drama in India had its origin in Sanskrit dramas. A.B. Keith is of the view that “Indian tradition, preserved in the ‘Natyasastra’, the oldest of the texts of the theory of the drama, claims for the drama divine origin, and a close connection with the sacred Vedas themselves” (12). A.L. Basham, the well-known historian, observes: “The origin of the Indian theatre is still obscure. It is certain, however, that even in the Vedic period dramatic performances of some kind were given, and passing references in early sources point to the enaction at festivals of religious legends, perhaps only in dance and mime” (434-435). Indian drama is absolutely and precisely of Indian origin. It evidently grew and developed quite independently of any occidental influence. Affirming the unique and the independent nature of Indian dramas and the outstanding quality of the Sanskrit language, Sir William Jones remarks that Sanskrit which is “more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin and more exquisite than either” (quoted in Hemendra Nath Das Gupta 2) could easily produce dramas quite independently of the Greeks or the Yavanas.

Bharata, considered to be the father of Indian dramaturgy, inscribes in *Natyasastra* that the primary aim of a drama is that it should give knowledge to the ignorant. Moreover, it should both be a source of entertainment and enlightenment. The major constituents of a drama, according to *Natyasastra*, are plot, actors and aesthetic taste. Though renowned dramatists like Kalidasa, Bhasa, Bhavabhuti, Shudraka, Ashvaghosha, Shri Harsha and Vishakhadatta mostly affirmed the views expressed in the ancient treatise on drama, they started writing dramas in Sanskrit with a few modifications regarding the nature of drama, as an art. The dramas of these great and outstanding artistic personalities are remarkably known for their elegance, rich and graceful poetry, proper execution and delicacy of subtle dramatic art. They not only depicted wonderfully the human sentiments but they also revealed “a deep acquaintance with the mechanism of the human heart as well as with nature” (Hemendra Nath Das Gupta 54).

Though India is known for its heterogeneous culture, customs, languages, habit and outlook, the traditional theatre of India got ample inspiration from great epics: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Puranic literature. The playwrights drew stories and characters for their plays from these sources. The stories found in these ever-cherished epics and

puranas have been orally passed on from generation to generation and also through the artistic medium of puppetry and other performing arts and ultimately through written texts. These stories have not lost their enduring and everlasting charm and even now serve as essential and generative source for creative expression in literature and art.

Drama as an extensive and a comprehensive art delineating the variegated saga of human life in all its complexity includes the performing arts of dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments. Obviously, India is one of the great store-houses of performing arts, especially the traditional or classical, folk and devotional dramas. Though folk theatre in India follows the widely accepted dramaturgical traditions of *Natyasastra*, it has emerged as a powerful medium of social communication in traditional societies or communities. As it is spirited, dynamic and ingenious in form and rich in variety and colour, it expresses the cultural heritage of a region very effectively. While stressing the fact that folk theatre happens to be a very powerful medium of communication in folk cultures, J.C. Mathur observes:

Folk theatre freely uses songs, dances and instrumental music, blends dialogue and acting. This multiple approach results in a form that is self-contained and a complete entertainment. It is more than entertainment, it is a complete emotional experience and aims at creating an environment of receptivity in which communication of ideas is an effortless process.[3]

As an indigenous form, the folk theatre makes cultural explorations, influences the psyche, and strengthens the time-honoured value systems of the people. Dissanayake makes a relevant comment in this context. According to him, folk theatres “provide entertainment, disseminate information, include socially accepted norms and values and perform a general socializing function” (12). Folk theatre represents a combination of singing, dancing, prose-dialogue and music with elements of social criticism. What Eapen says of folk media in general can easily be applied to folk theatre:

There is a commonality about them. Acceptability, cultural relevance, entertainment value, localised language, legitimacy, flexibility, message repetition ability, instant two-way communication, etc are among their virtues. [18-19]

Every State in India has its own distinctive forms of folk theatre. Folk performance generally forms a part of a community or social celebration. The various elements found in folk performances invariably appeal to both the educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, the young and the old and children with their exciting themes, melodious music and songs. Unlike the classical theatre which has rigid rules, the folk theatre allows spontaneity. Among several types of folk plays, religious plays, social plays and historical plays are significant ones. Religious plays depict stories and characters from the puranas and epics. Social plays portray social evils which affect people in their day-to-day life. Historical plays deal with historical characters and themes.

The folk theatre of North Karnataka has a rich and glorious tradition. It is known by different names like Dodddata, Hire Ata (Grand play) or Bayalata (open-air play), etc. Dodddata can be differentiated from Sannata (small play) or Dappinata (*Dappu* = little flat drum, *ata* = play). "Whereas Dodddata is characterised by grand themes, grand stage properties, grand costumes, grand songs and dances, Sannata is marked by simple themes, simple stage costumes, simple songs and dances" (Naikar, *The Folk Theatre of North Karnataka* 14). Dappinata is a play (Bayalata) which contains songs sung to the accompaniment of a Dappu or small drum. The label Sannata is used to differentiate Dappinata from Mudalapaya (or Dodddata).

The translation of Indian drama into English, unlike the translation of novels and poems, is quite scanty and inadequate. Some of the well-known dramatists who have translated their works from Indian languages into English are Rabindranath Tagore, Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, R.S. Badal, C.C. Mehta, Mahasweta Devi, Vijay Tendulkar and Gurujada Apparao. Many dramas written in Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, and Marathi have been translated into English. These translations have undeniably enriched the corpus of Indian drama in English. Basavaraj Naikar's *Sangya-Balya: Betrayal*, an English translation of Rayappa Pattar's folk play in Kannada, is unquestionably a welcome addition to the corpus of Indian drama in English translation.

Basavaraj Naikar's translation of Rayappa Pattar's Kannada folk play into English marks the fame and reputation of the Sannata from as a part of the glorious tradition of the folk theatre of North Karnataka. According to Naikar, "*Sangya-Balya: Betrayal* is a *dappinata*, in which songs . . . play an important part" (*Sangya-Balya*, ix). Moreover, the element of music which is an integral part of the folk theatre is an impressive characteristic of this folk play. Dance also happens to be an indispensable component of the play. The oral text of the play is said to have been composed by Rayappa Pattar, a native of Bailawada village of Basavanagouda taluk of Belgaum district in North Karnataka. While acknowledging the sources of the play, Naikar observes: "The text of the present play is taken from the oral version recited by Sri Basavanagouda Patil, Gangappa Mulimani and Fakirappa Madiwalar of Mutanala village (in Belgaum district) and published by Dr. Malikarjuna Latthe, retired Professor of Kannada at Gulbarga University, Gulbarga, in 1991" (xii).

Sangya-Balya: Betrayal (2004) is a folk drama which "deals with the elemental passions of love and betrayal as they interweave with the destinies of ordinary mortals" (Ravi Shankar Rao, 75). The action of the play is set in North Karnataka as it is very popular there. The central thematic concerns of the play are love, immoral sex, poverty, betrayal and revenge. Though the playwright has taken the theme of the play from a real event which took place during his lifetime, he has made it a memorable one by providing "an artistic image of his vision about human relationship and values" (*Sangya-Balya*, x). The author's fine blending of fact and fiction is quite remarkable in the play. *Sangya-Balya: Betrayal*, is a folk tragedy. The tragedy in the play occurs due to the serious violation of long-cherished social and moral norms relating to chastity, trustworthiness and loyalty. Like a typical Elizabethan

tragedy, this folk drama depicts common human weaknesses and the play excellently shows how these vulnerable tendencies such as love, lust and revenge finally end in a cruel tragedy and the loss of precious lives. The protagonist of this play, Sangya, is murdered ruthlessly and the lives of Ganga and Virabhadra are ruined irretrievably. The point of ruination starts when Sangappa (fondly called Sangya), a handsome and rich young man, is enthralled by the bewitching beauty of Ganga, the young wife of a rich landlord and businessman named Virabhadra (fondly called Irranna or Irya). Knowing that her husband is on a long business tour, Sangya persuades his friend, Balya, a poor man in the same village, "to brainwash Ganga so that he can have her in his bed" (*Sangya-Balya*, 53). Balya, though he happens to be a childhood friend of Sangya, expresses his unwillingness to act as a go-between. He even advises his friend:

Balya : Listen to me, dear friend, Sanganna,
 Ravana lost his heart to another's wife
 And consequently lost everything,
 Lest you should suffer like him,
 Remove the idea from your mind . . . [49]

Owing to his utter poverty and keeping in mind the generous nature of Sangya, Balya finally meets Ganga and reveals the intention of his friend to her. But as a chaste wife of a respectable man in society Ganga rejects the whole idea at once and sends him away. Sangya's malicious plan of buying her with money and costly gifts also miserably fails. Being obsessed with the bewitching attractions of Ganga, Sangya himself directly goes and meets her and expresses his uncontrollable desire to possess her. Ganga censures Sangya for his evil and unethical desires and tries to reason out with him:

Ganga: Why do you pester me, Sangya?
 How shall I bear the public charge?
 This affair cannot last long,
 You may receive a dangerous jolt.
 Don't you remember the story of Kama?
 How Kama lusted after the woman
 And was burnt to ashes by Lord Siva
 Who was angry beyond measure?
 Remember the evil angrezi government,
 I advise you to be very careful,
 Lest you should suffer like a monkey
 Which has eaten lime paste by mistake.
 You better go back to your wife,
 And live with her happily,
 I am sorry, man, I cannot oblige you . . . [63]

Yet Sangya is highly adamant and without any scruples. Once again Ganga tries to point out the evil nature of his intention.

Ganga: This is not the right thing
 For you to do, man
 Be not subject to maya,
 Lest you should ruin yourself.
 Don't you know the story
 of the ten-headed Ravana?
 He abducted chaste Sita,
 And suffered a lot of trouble. . .
 Don't you know the story
 of Dushyasana the evil one,
 And what happened to him finally?
 Try to understand everything, fool
 I am doing my best to convince you . . . [65]

Unable to convince Sangya about the impending danger awaiting him, Ganga furthermore adds:

Ganga: Why are you mad after my form?
 Like a firefly you enter the lamp.
 Don't you know my terrific husband,
 Virabhadra, feared even by tigers?
 He may hack you to pieces,
 In broad daylight, fool,
 Unnecessarily, nincompoop? [66]

Still unconvinced, Sangya seeks advice from a *koravanji* and based on her advice he approaches Paramma who is willing to take up the mission of arranging a clandestine meeting between Sangya and Ganga for a pair of sarees, a pair of blouses, a pair of golden bangles and a pair of buffaloes. When she tries to persuade Ganga to yield to Sangya, Ganga tells her:

Ganga: I join my palms in reverence to you
 Paramma, speak not of such a thing, lest
 It should ruin my happy marriage.
 Don't burden my head with ill-fame.
 . . . I don't want it at all [73]

Like one of the three witches who ensnare Macbeth into the eternal world of curse and tribulation, Paramma with her artful and crafty words ultimately pulls Ganga into an irredeemable trap. Ganga is unable to be firm in her moral stand and eventually falls prey to the lustful wishes of Sangya. One can be sure that Ganga's fall from her long-cherished traditional moral code in life will certainly end in a terrible tragedy. The following words of Ganga reveal her innate weakness and turpitude:

Ganga: I have invited you, young man,

Out of my deep love for you.
 Let us put aside the fear of Irya
 And unite like milk and fruit.
 I have full sympathy for my husband.
 I fear the ruination of my marriage. . . [77].
 Come on, my dear youngman
 Let's ascend the bed
 And have a great deal of pleasure.
 Let's enjoy ourselves as sweetly
 As milk fermented into curd, and
 As the sweet siesta in the afternoon.
 . . . O dear,
 God has brought us together like
 A combination of pearl and amber. . . [78].

When the whole village begins to gossip about the affair between Sangya and Ganga, Balya realises the inevitable doom of both. He fears that "Sangya will have to face the blade of a sickle" (79). The illicit love affair between Sangya and Ganga continues undisturbed till Virabhadra, Ganga's husband, returns home from his business trip before his scheduled time. He becomes furious after hearing about the relationship between his wife and Sangya. He rushes home and finds the two together. Ganga's total degeneration and moral debasement is revealed when she tells Sangya the following words even after knowing that her husband has come home and is knocking at the door:

Ganga: I have fallen deeply in love with you,
 Our union has been sweet like milk and ghee.
 Fie on my bad luck, I don't like my husband,
 I shall sunder my relation with him
 Tomorrow itself. I don't care for what
 The people of the village might say. . . [82].

Virabhadra charges his wife with adultery and accuses her of bringing disrepute and dishonour to his family. He, therefore, sends his wife away from home after confiscating all the gold ornaments and other valuables from her. Moreover, he conspires to murder Sangya and in order to succeed in his effort he wants to wean away Balya from Sangya. He tells Balya:

Virabhadra: You must get Sangya for me,
 I shall give you hundreds of rupees,
 Sixteen oxen and a sturdy cart.
 I shall even give you my house,
 And landed property for the favour. . . [90]

Balya tells him that since he and Sangya happen to be childhood friends and trust each other

deeply he cannot betray his bosom friend. But he finally agrees to betray him when Irya threatens to cut him into pieces. Fearing for life and being avaricious, Balya finally makes up his mind to join hands with Virabhadra and hasten the tragic death of Sangya. He even stoops to the level of altering a letter from Ganga in which she reveals the conspiracy of her husband to kill Sangya and asks Sangya not to come to her place at any cost. But Balya changes the content of the letter to suit his treacherous plan. Sangya believes the content of the letter and goes to the village of Ganga. Ganga tells Sangya about the conspiracy hatched by Virabhadra in connivance with Balya. Sangya understands the wicked nature of Balya when he is left alone in darkness in a strange place after Balya takes leave of him on some pretext. The pathetic condition and the mental agony of Sangya is revealed in the following speech:

Sangya: I trusted Balya far too much,
 Did you betray me at last, Balya?
 Did you talk sweetly with me
 For the sake of gold?
 And leave me at the hands of hooligans?
 Did you forsake my company
 For the sake of a pair of buffaloes
 And kick me out?
 You took thousands of rupees from me
 And sneaked away from me, Balya.
 You left me alone in the jaws of death . . . [97]

Sangya is cruelly murdered with sickles and axes by Virabhadra and his brothers. They murder him to regain the honour and prestige which they had enjoyed in society. Then Virabhadra begins to be afraid of the consequences of the murder. He reveals his fear to his brothers:

Virabhadra: My dear younger brothers,
 We could not simply guess
 The consequences of this murder.
 Why did we murder Sangya? . . .
 We were bold until killing him,
 But now are scared of the government.
 My dear brothers,
 I cannot foresee the future . . . [99]

Then they surrender to the *mamledar* (magistrate) and confess their crime. The story ends in a tragedy: Sangya loses his life. The illicit affair ruins Ganga's married life. The lives of Virabhadra and his brothers are ruined irrecoverably because of their hasty, emotional and unbalanced decision to do away with the paramour of Ganga. Though Paramma is asked by Vira before he leaves for his business trip to 'guard' Ganga, she has betrayed him for money

without any qualms. Ganga also believes that her husband gives more importance to money than to her. She tells Paramma:

Ganga: . . . The wealth of the
family is called goddess Laxmi
My husband must have asked
you to guard this goddess and not me . . . [33]

When Vira tells his wife that he is going on a business trip to seek his fortune, Ganga tries to dissuade him by saying:

Ganga: My dear husband, please tell me how I should live alone in this three-storeyed mansion. Being a young wife, I cannot live away from you. Please take me along with you . . . [30]

But Vira does not accept her idea and proceeds on his business tour after telling her:

Virabhadra: The purchase of pearls and jewels will yield me a profit. [31]

The irony is that though he has purchased pearls and jewels for profit in the future, he has lost his wife. Thus the play deals with the themes of illicit love, lust, avarice for money, betrayal and revenge. It also depicts very clearly man's moral infirmity and decrepitude excellently.

Obviously the folk audience enjoys the romance that takes place between Sangya and Ganga and at the same time learns a lesson from the play, namely, that loose morals and the violation of established social and moral codes would lead to one's downfall and ruin. Extramarital love and sex are taboo in traditional society. The moral codes of society call for appropriate justice and punishment. That is the reason why Sangya has to meet with a cruel murder and Ganga loses her happy married life. Commenting on the relevance of the play, Ravi Shankar Rao observes: "The Sannata is an operatic performance that, unlike the other types of Bayalata, brings folk theatre to the social plane. It is essentially a social play which takes up for dramatic representation issues and concerns that are central to the society of its time" (77). The playwright points out that one should not give too much importance to money through the characters of Virabhadra, Paramma and Balya. They become corrupt and morally debased due to their avarice for money. Sangya and Ganga become morally corrupt and weak because they give too much importance to bodily pleasure. Though both know very well that their illicit relationship can only be a temporary one, they still continue their immoral relationship without any fear of society and its moral values. Though both are married people and, in fact, Sangya has children, they do not care for the voice of their consciences and become mindless of the future consequences. While commenting on the play Naikar observes:

It [the play] is also a comment on the fallibility of man in general. Sangya's improper attraction for Ganga, her yielding to sexual temptation, and Balya's treachery towards Sangya caused by his poverty and helplessness are several instances of the fallibility of man. The tragic end of Sangya is affected by the inexorability of the moral law of life. Sangya, who tries to negate the moral principles of life (like the sanctity of matrimony), gets himself liquidated by the moral law of life manifested in Virabhadra's vindictive act.

[*Sangya-Balya*, xii]

Structurally, the play comprises five acts and like any Shakespearean drama it contains dramatic elements like exposition, crisis and denouement or resolution. The plot of the play is simple and straightforward. Every event takes the story forward and events from the first scene in Act I to the last scene in Act V are coherently and logically linked with one another. As a Sannata, the play gives importance to music and songs. Throughout the play songs are followed by prose dialogues containing summaries of the songs. In his introduction, Naikar, the translator, points out: "Almost every song is followed by a prose dialogue containing the summary of the song, which may look like unnecessary repetition to Western readers. But this would be very effective on the stage in the presence of a live audience" (xiii). The themes dealt with in the play are popular and appealing to a folk audience. The play is popular among both village and urban audiences because of its style, language, diction, images and metaphors. As in a Greek tragedy, the Chorus plays a vital role, indicating the impending serious action in the play. The playwright does not fail to use irony and satire. The scene which takes place in the Marwari shop and the scene of conversation between Paramma and her old husband are deliberately introduced by the playwright to satisfy the aesthetic sense of the groundlings of the folk audience. Moreover, as in Shakespearean tragedies, these scenes act as comic interludes followed by serious actions which ultimately lead to the tragic end of the play. When one reads these scenes one is reminded of the Porter scene in *Macbeth* and the gravedigger scene in *Hamlet* to some extent. The songs and the music in the play never fail to appeal to the spectators. The images which reflect the day-to-day activities of rural people have a freshness and originality. The play has several memorable passages which abound with splendid images. Describing the beauty of Ganga, Paramma says:

Paramma: See how the young lady walks
 Fast and straight like a mail carriage.
 Look at her beautiful body
 Her legs are like plantain trunks,
 She moves about with such grace
 Like a stringed puppet, like a puppet.
 Her nose stud sparkles like a splint
 Struck on another splint
 And like a star in the sky,
 She is clad in a shining silken sari.
 Her neck is decked with golden garlands.

Behold this pretty young lady.
Behold her bewitching beauty. [40]

Appreciating the beauty of Ganga the priest in the temple of Lord Basavanna says:

Priest: Who is the pretty lady
Standing behind you?
She has the complexion of a lemon . . .
Whose wife is the pretty lady
Who has a big bust like a hefty bull,
And who has a narrow waist,
Whose eyes are lined with collyrium
And whose complexion is like that of a cobra? [42]

The moment Sangya sees Ganga in the temple fair he is bewitched by her beauty and he later reveals his heart to his friend Balya:

Sangya: Balanna, my dear friend,
I saw a young lady beautiful
Like the veritable goddess Rati,
Her waist slender like a snake
And decked with a silver girdle,
Her breast was covered with
A blouse with a floral pattern,
Her teeth immaculate, like
The tiny seeds of pomegranate,
Her cheeks as clear as a mirror.
I saw a young lady in the fair
Who looked like a royal parrot.
She carried a platter on her head. [48]

While expressing his deep love to Ganga, Sangya tells her:

Sangya: Ganga, my dear Ganga,
Your face is like the moon
Exuding bewitching light on the earth.
The lustre of your pretty face
Is like a lamp lighting the world. [61]

Painting a verbal picture of the beauty of Ganga, Sangya tells Koravanji:

Sangya: What a beautiful figure she has!
It is like the curls of incense smoke.
Getting Gangi into my arms
Would be like tasting pancake and ghee. [69]

The playwright has succeeded in creating characters with great mastery. His characters are neither gods nor people with extraordinary powers but real human beings with common human vulnerabilities and susceptibilities. Undeniably, they have the solid reality of life itself. Sangya, Balya, Ganga, Virabhadra and Paramma are real human beings one comes across in everyday life. They have nothing artificial about them. Unlike the characters of Ben Jonson the characters in the play are not types representing particular virtues and vices. They are well-rounded, whole. With their rapturous songs and thoughtful dialogues they enthral the folk audience. They have universal characteristics which elicit our sympathy characters such as Sangya, Ganga, Balya and Virabhadra are moved by elemental passions and instincts such as love, lust, greed and revenge. Even minor characters like Paramma, her husband, the Marwari and the Koravanji are highly memorable. They also reflect the folk consciousness of society. In the words of Naikar: "The character of Ganga which is central to the play is a memorable one in the history of the folk-literature of North Karnataka" (*The Folk Theatre of North Karnataka*, 84). On the whole, the characters undeniably bear witness to the fecundity of the dramatist's imagination and his animating powers. What Hudson remarks about Shakespeare's characters is applicable to Naikar's characters in the play: "Shakespeare has endowed them with the reality and the mystery of life" (187).

Basavaraj Naikar's translation of Rayappa Pattar's *Sangya-Balya: Betrayal*, originally composed in Kannada, is a milestone in the realm of Indian drama in English translation. Being a novelist, well-known short story writer, and renowned critic, Basavaraj Naikar with his artistic ability and genuine craftsmanship introduces the play to the English readership. Himself "a product of North Karnataka" and "rooted in its soil, its culture and customs" (Thirumeni, 11), Naikar shows a remarkable ability in transmuting the essence of the oral text in Kannada to an English translation. As a translator he is able to bring out the moral vision of the original play. He himself says: "I undertook the translation of this play into English as I feel that the elemental theme ingrained in it has universal appeal and therefore deserves international publicity" (*Sangya-Balya*, xii). Commenting on the universal appeal of the play, Thirumeni remarks:

The play will be a success in any language and in any country, because it plays with the basic instincts of common people; adultery is an absorbing theme in any theatre and the audience will be eager to see through the adulterous affairs of the protagonist to the end. It is Claudius' adultery that killed his own brother and paved the way for his own death at Hamlet's hands.

[Thirumeni, 11]

Though Naikar feels that "the melody and rhythm of the original Kannada poetry cannot ever be dreamt of being expressed" (*Sangya-Balya*, xiii), he not only has succeeded in making the translation clear but also in employing apt words for dramatic situations which appeal to both the vast reading population and to theatregoers. With his incisive and thought-provoking dialogue in English, Naikar is able to communicate the central vision of

the play. His effective use of the spoken language of the people and of images shows his proficiency in dramatizing a situation suitably. He does not introduce rhetoric jugglery and grandiloquence. His words and images are natural, genuine, and straightforward. He seems to translate the play with ease and confidence, and without any artificiality. As a true artist, he paints pictures vividly and effectively. Naikar's ability to create convincing dramatic dialogue in English shows his dramatic capability and theatrical craftsmanship. However, he does not fail to provide a detailed glossary to enable English-speaking readers to understand the meaning of certain terms used in the Kannada language, particularly by the people of the North Karnataka region. Unlike the 'closet' dramas of some writers, Basavaraj Naikar's *Sangya-Balya* with its powerful dialogue, melodious music, and enrapturing dance can be effectively staged. The play is certainly a welcome addition to the corpus of Indian drama in English translation.

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