

a. You have worked with Mr. Karnad in *Hayavadana* and were co-stars in films *Tarang* and *Apne Paraye*. Any interesting incidents or experiences with him that you can share with us?

IT'LL BE INCORRECT TO SAY THAT I WORKED WITH GIRISH KARNAD IN 'HAYAVADANA'. I ACTED IN GIRISH KARNAD'S 'HAYAVADANA' IN THE HINDI THEATRE PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY late SATYA DEV DUBEY IN 1972. THIS PRODUCTION WAS A GRAND SUCCESS; IT MADE WAVES AT NATIONAL LEVEL WHEN INDIARA GANDHI (THE THEN I & B MINISTER) APPLAUDED THE PERFORMANCES OF THE THREE LEAD ACTORS – MYSELF, AMRISH PURI & SUNILA PRADHAN. NONE OF US INTERACTED WITH GIRISH DURING THE PROCESS.

I ACTED WITH GIRISH IN 'TARANG' DIRECTED BY KUMAR SHAHANI & 'APNE PARAYE' DIRECTED BY BASU CHATTERJEE. SINCE OUR PARTICIPATION AS ACTORS IN BOTH THE FILMS WAS NOT NECESSARILY TOGETHER (IF MY MEMORY SERVES ME RIGHT, THERE WAS ONLY ONE DINNER SCENE IN 'APNE PARAYE' IN WHICH GIRISH & I SHOT TOGETHER), THERE IS NO PARTICULAR INCIDENT THAT CAN BE QUOTED.

b. Both you and Mr. Karnad largely take inspiration from Indian literature, classics, myths etc. Within this framework, how has Karnad's treatment of contemporary issues and portrayal of women been different from yours?

THERE ARE A FEW STRIKING DIFFERENCES IN HANDLING WOMEN IN OUR RESPECTIVE WORKS OF ART. MOST OF MY THEMES ARE WOMEN CENTRIC HOWEVER THAT CANNOT BE SAID OF GIRISH'S PLAYS. CERTAIN ANGLES OF HIS THEMES REVOLVE AROUND WOMEN OR THEY MAY BE CATALYSTS BUT THOSE ARE NOT THE CENTER THEMES. HIS PLAYS SET IN THE POST COLONIAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT, MOSTLY DEALT WITH IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS & OUR CULTURAL PAST WITH THE MODERN MORES OR SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS LIKE FIDELITY, VIOLENCE, CHASTITY ETC. HIS CHARACTERS INTENSELY BRING OUT THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THEIR OWN SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS QUA THEIR INSTITUTIONALIZED POSITION.

ON THE CONTRARY, MY PURSUIT IS MORE FROM WITHIN – QUESTIONS DIRECTLY DEALT WITH BY MY WOMEN CHARACTERS WITHOUT USAGE OF METAPHORES.

c. Mr. Karnad's plays have had unconventional themes. (*Anjumaalige* dealt with incest, *Hayavadana* with infidelity, *Nagamandala* with sexuality etc.). Do you think his plays were ahead of his time?

IN 1960s & 70s, BADAL SIRCAR, VIJAY TENDULKAR, MOHAN RAKESH & GIRISH KARNAD SHAPED THE RENESSANCE PERIOD OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN THEATRE. THEY ARE REGARDED AS THE FOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT PILLARS OF MODERN, CONTEMPORARY INDIAN THEATRE MOVEMENT BECAUSE EACH ONE OF THEM IN HIS DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT STYLE, LANGUAGE, THEME & CONTENT, EXPANDED THE POSSIBILITIES OF THEATRE SPACE. ALL OF THEM DEALT WITH THEMES WHICH WERE AHEAD OF THOSE TIMES.

HOWEVER, GIRISH AS A PLAYWRITE GIVES ME A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE THAN OTHERS MENTIONED ABOVE. SINCE I AM ALSO A PAINTER, I CAN EXPLAIN IT

IN VISUAL TERMS. READING HIS PLAYS AND SEEING ITS PRODUCTIONS GIVE ME DIVERSE EXPERIENCE. WHILE READING, I FEEL LIKE I AM LOOKING AT A CUBIST PAINTING – EACH CHARACTER DEFINED IN ITS OWN SPACE EVOLVE PAGE AFTER PAGE WHILE UNFOLDING THE COMPLEX INTER SE PLAY ON THE CANVAS OF THE THEME. I ENJOY THIS PROTHCESS MUCH MORE AS I FEEL I AM CLOSER TO THE PLAYWRITE.

**d.** When did you first meet Mr. Karnad and what were your initial impressions about him as a person?

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER SEEING HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1966-67. THE FIRST SHOW OF GIRISH'S MAIDEN PLAY 'YAYATI' WAS PERFORMED AT RANGBHAVAN OPEN AIR THEATRE AT DHOBI TALAO; IT WAS A MAJOR PRODUCTION DIRECTED BY SATYA DEV DUBEY FOR INDIAN NATIONAL THEATRE (WITH A STAR CAST OF AMRISH PURI AS YAYATI, TARLA MEHTA AS SHARMISHTHA, SUNILA PRADHAN AS DEVAYANI, SULABHA DESHPANDE AS A MAID. DUBEY HIMSELF PLAYED PURURAVA WHILE INTRODUCING A NEWCOMER CHITRA MURDESHWAR AS CHITRALEKHA). AT THE END OF THE PERFORMANCE, WE WERE SIMPLY OVERWHELMED AND WERE ON OUR FEET APLAUDING THE TEAM. THEN I RECOLLECT THE WAVE OF ADMIRATION SURGING THROUGH THE CROWD WHEN A YOUNG, TALL & HANDSOME PLAYWRIGHT CALLED GIRISH KARNAD WAS INTRODUCED TO THE BOMBAY ART WORLD.

I MET GIRISH MUCH LATER – I THINK, AFTER THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF 'HAYAVADANA' AT TEJPAL AUDITORIUM, GOWALIA TANK. THAT TIME HE WAS ONLY A 3 PLAYS OLD PLAYWRITE.

**e.** You have remained good friends with Mr. Karnad over the years. What is the one thing about his personality that you like the most?

OUR FRIENDSHIP IS BASED ON OUR MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S CREATIVE PURSUITS! I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRER HIM AS ONE OF THE FINEST INDIAN PLAYWRIGHTS; HAVE LIKED HIS DIRECTORIAL WORK IN FILMS SUCH AS 'ONDANANDU KALADALLI', 'KAADU', 'CHELLUVI' & 'UTSAV', I ALSO HOLD HIS ROLE AS THE DIRECTOR OF FTII IN HIGH ESTEEM. ABOVE HIS MULTI-FACETED PERSONALITY, GIRISH IS A VERY WARM, LOVABLE MAN WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED IMENCELY TO THE INDIAN CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL SCENE.