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# मङ्गलम्

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## Girish Karnad's *Tale-Danda* : A Study Of Caste-Consciousness

\*Dr. Ranjeet Singh

### Abstract

Girish Karnad's play *Tale-Danda* draws on the year 1268 in Kalyan which marks the ascendance of Basavanna. He got together a remarkable group of poets, reformers and philosophers who geared up an intrepid era of enquiry and social modification unrivalled in the history of Karnataka. These reformers led the Bhakti movement called Virasaivism. The movement castigates caste prejudices; and therefore, defies the suppression, domination and control imposed by it. The movement with its alternative points of view threatens to dismantle the entrenched hierarchy. It attracts the wrath of the upper caste. As a result, the adherents of the movement undergo harrowing experience with their houses burnt down and people massacred. Virasaivism, thus, enables its adherents to emancipate themselves from the "fetters of acculturations, even the bond of reverence for those things they once found most praiseworthy...flee whatever has been one's previous spiritual world" and leads "to a reconsideration of matters that previously had been taken for granted" (Magnus 31).

The words 'Tale Danda', denote the death by beheading. It is, indeed, a suitable caption for the play in which the power literally beheads those who dare to cross the thresholds of the hierarchal caste norms. The friction and the dialogic interplay between the two conflicting powers, the *Vernic* institution and the Virasaivism, the iconic and the iconoclastic, and the gory consequences that ensue, form the fulcrum around and across which the plot of the play develops.

Basavanna's doctrine of *Kayaka* exhorts *sharanas* to fulfil their occupational duties with full devotion since "one's work serves both as an offering to God and a means of

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