

GURAJADA'S *KANYASULKAM* IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

M.Nagabhushana Sarma

To evaluate a regional play from a global point of view is like catching fish in mid-ocean. But, I presume, all plays are regional *per se*, and are bound to be so because all sensible plays are rooted in the soil, choose the locally vibrant people as characters and discuss locally relevant themes, though in a larger perspective. All great plays use an idiom which transfers the cadences of the language into meaningful speech rhythms; use typically representative *persona* and infuse fresh life blood into them and place them in a proper temporal and spatial framework. All great playwrights do this in their own different ways, keeping in view the aesthetic exigencies of the local audience.

Several of these great writers are also fortunate in obtaining the services of an ace regisseur directing their plays with resourceful translators bringing them into a globally-relevant language. Both the play and the creativity of the director are strongly backed by innovative professional groups - a Stanislavsky for Chekhov ; a Meyerhold for Gogol and Ostrovsky, Granville Barker for Shaw, Otto Brahm for Hauptman, Andre Antoine for Ibsen, Strindberg and Tolstoy and Brecht for Gorky and others - the list runs long - always strengthened by innovative professional groups - Moscow Art Theatre, the Second Laboratory Theatre, Theatre Libre, the Berliner Ensemble and so on. No play is complete and wholesome unless the intellectual and creative bearings of the playwright are successfully brought to insightful visuality through a stage production.

Since every great play of any language addresses itself to its own local people within the social, aesthetic and artistic conventions, one can only evaluate a play or an author from this standpoint and compare him with other playwrights of other nations on the basis of certain general modalities. The prescription of such modalities could be on two levels – comparing with contemporary writers since contemporaneity demands common aspirations and common goals ; or placing a playwright in an aesthetic and artistic tradition – in this respect, with the comic tradition. Let us look at both these models and try to relocate Gurajada and *Kanyasulkam*.

The contemporary context first.

Gurajada was born in 1862 and died in 1915. Always a sick man with an alert and enquiring mind ; seems to be always in a hurry, to complete a life's mission ; always concerned not only with the daily chores of people but with their aspirations and agonies ; conversant with their foibles and failures – endowed with a sharp intellect which can, like the divine bird, Hamsa, distinguish the genuine from the false ; solid grain from chaff. A busy body all through his life engaged in court cases concerning his benefactor–patron, learnt on his own to scan through the archival materials of a native state while teaching at the Rajah's local school and college, Gurajada's literary output was meagre compared with the other 'greats' of the contemporary western world – a play and a half, half a dozen short stories, a handful of poems, some stray notes, etc. But each one of them could equate entire life's output of each of these great writers, not simply because he put his heart and soul into each one of his artistic creations in each genre, but also because the trajectory of other writers' output shows a steady growth and assimilation of artistic capabilities, whereas Gurajada

ventured into writing after assimilating the diverse needs of his trade. As many believe, Gurajada is not a born genius ; he acquired it by hard work, incisive introspection, objective assessment and, more than anything else, a sympathetic understanding of the human being, with all his perversities, foibles, failures, hopes and aspirations.

The mid-19th c. to which Gurajada belongs is an age embroiled ~~with~~ an artistic upheaval all over the world. It is an age aspiring for changes, in artistic values and practices. Realism, which hitherto branded as a deterrent to free thought and imagination, has established itself as a meaningful medium for the exposition of the hitherto entrenched souls and their helpless outcries. Backed by strong and new sociological, psychological, political and artistic theories, Realism reflected the ramifications of the agonies of distressed souls, angry minds and aspirational spirits. Gurajada is one Indian writer, perhaps along with ^{Bankimchandra and} early Rabindranath, who has heeded to this clarion call of a New Age.

^{in Western theatre}
The New Age's herald ^{was} Georg Buchner (1813-1837), a German playwright, whose plays *Danton's Death* and *Woyzek* anticipated the modern dramatic movement with a kind of drama in which human fate broke through social hierarchies and class distinctions to display itself in the least distinguished persons and most denuded souls. Added to this, his firm refusal of fantasy and myth-making, his clear rational consideration of the physical world as non-illusory reinforced the theories of reality. It was in this context of seeing ordinary life with remarkable steadiness and clarity and his refusal to fantasize his way to dwell upon the "nobler" and the "higher" that Buchner was today considered the spiritual father of the realistic movement. However, historically speaking, his impact on contemporary thinking is almost negligible. But, in the area of dramatic writing, his way of analyzing the elements of

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social history without bias or prejudice and his belief that “the poet is not a teacher of morality” (a much bolder and rebellious position to have been taken at that time than it would be now) drastically changed the traditional beliefs and established reason and good sense as sane elements to wade through human predicaments.

21/ It is unlikely that Gurajada read Buchner, but was familiar with the work of his
22/ Norwegian contemporary, Ibsen, who also imbibed these seminal theories of realism and the need to implement them in his writings. Gurajada's approach to realism is similar: he laughed at people's fantasies which led to disastrous after-effects.

In the history of modern theatre, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) is a cult figure. Starting his career as a stage manager in a provincial theatre, Ibsen studied the changing fortunes of his native Norway and the ensuing psychological and social upheavals in human beings due to societal and familial disturbances. After a considerably long apprentice period as a playwright in several Norwegian theatres, Ibsen had his first break with two of his most important early plays – *Brand* (1866) and *Peer Gynt* (1867) – both studies of human failure under excruciating circumstances, both intended to be romantic “over – reachers” and both of them treated with hostility by the audience.

Of the eight plays that belong to Ibsen's realistic phase *Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881) and *An Enemy of the People* (1882), are the most popular. Interestingly, *An Enemy* had the highest number of translations in Telugu (eight), *Pillars* (five), *Doll's House* (four), and *Ghosts* (one). The reasons for Indians to prefer *Enemy* and *Pillars* are obvious : they are studies on the decline of social mores and morals, whereas *Doll's House* and *Ghosts* are studies of shockingly rebellious social phenomena that India's conservatism had not yet begun to rebel against.

A Doll's House is now considered the first important modern drama, both because of the quality of the work and the impression it made on public consciousness. A woman leaving her husband and children to gain her soul's freedom was considered scandalous and shocking. The play is a many-layered study of appearances and realities, though the feminists made that play a statement of their credo. *Ghosts* is the play in which Ibsen's realistic form reached its perfection. It is in fact a continuation of the problem posed in *Doll's House* : in *Doll's House* Ibsen portrayed a person caught between social and familial restrictions and false social conventions; in *Ghosts*, Ibsen chose moral depravity as his subject – syphilis, adultery, free love, incest and euthanasia. Though the play's theme – the inevitable fact that one's past haunts throughout, has metaphysical overtones, the play remained a strong plea for relieving oneself from the shackles of society and also from one's own imprisoned souls.

If the inner structure of these major plays dealt with contradictions between man and society or man outside and inside, the outer structure Ibsen chose was the “well-made play”, a medium of “almost entire visibility”, which is to say it possessed almost no dimensions beyond what was literally placed before the audience's eyes and ears.

Ibsen moved from realism to symbolism in his later plays which are studies of individual characters and moral dilemmas within a realistic framework, but treated with mystical and symbolic overtones.

Ibsen's strong theatrical voice and vehement appeals for freedom – freedom of the woman from male domination, freedom of the self from rigorous environs and freedom of perception from moral obligations – reached the Indian shores early (the first Indian translation of *A Doll's House* in Bengali was in 1905). Gurajada was aware of Ibsen's work

and shared with him his concern for realism as a tool for artistic expression and imbibed his spirit of freedom. The horrifying position of the woman in a man's life, in a family and in society shocked Gurajada as much as it did Ibsen. (Venkamma's utter helplessness, Subbi and Bucchamma's pitiable life in the family, Meenakshi and Madhuravani's position in the society are the main concerns in the play). But their purposes and approaches are different, though their premise is the same. Ibsen's seriousness of purpose, almost like a prophet's, needed a thrusting medium of presentation and so he chose the well-made play. Gurajada's purpose, no less serious, chose a more vulnerable dramatic medium – comedy – so that less literate audiences would get to know the sad state of affairs prevailing in different fields of human activity. The well-made play is an incisive medium for an in-depth study of individual frustrations leading to the tragic realism of life whereas the society's failures and deep-rooted conventions needed a comic mode to reach to a larger, less literate audiences. One is to expose and condemn and the other is to expose and laugh.

Emile Zola (1840-1902), ~~a French playwright~~ and August Strindberg (1849-1912) are usually credited with the starting of a sub-genre (or a super genre?) of realism, popularly called naturalism. ^{at the time} ~~Thinking that~~ French theatre was caught in romantic theatre conventions and ~~sought~~ to reform it (as did Gurajada in the cause of Telugu theatre). Emile Zola, ^{pioneered the new genre.} ~~was~~ equally against romanticism and the well-made play. He shunned romanticism because he found it to be "the last citadel of falsehood" and was against the well-made play since it led to the distortion of psychology in order to create sympathy and reward the character at the end of the play. "There should not be any school or formula anymore; there is only life itself, a great field where each may study and create as he wishes," ^{said Zola.} Gurajada held similar opinions

and always looked at life and its perennial variations of human relationships as the source book of his creativity.

Zola's well-known play, *Therese Raquin* (1873) is labeled as "a fragment of existence" and involves the fate of two disconsolate souls together and ^{the} ensuing tragic consequences. In fact, the play's major interest lies in Zola creating a correct environment – a lower middle-class room that serves as bedroom, parlour and kitchen; hung with drab wallpaper and cluttered with household implements. Likewise, Strindberg's two plays- *The Father* (1887) and *Miss Julie* (1888)- belonged to the naturalistic school, mainly concerning with the power of external and physical forces over human behaviour.

Though important for a study of the western theatre, Zola and Strindberg seemed to Indian audiences too much indulged in the problems of human psyche and the environment and heredity that conditioned their lives. Except for their insistence on a study of life around as an important source for playwriting and creating strong motivations for human actions – both of them being general principles – their impact seems to be minimal.

on the theatre practices outside the western hemisphere

The one playwright who has several external similarities with Gurajada is Germany's

Gerhart Hauptman (1867-1946), whose famous naturalistic play *The Weavers* (1897) was ^(and performed) published in the same year as *Kanyasulkam* was. Like Gurajada in Andhra, Hauptman was his country's most respected modern playwright. (He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1912). Abburi Ramakrishna Rao wrote ^{an} wonderful article comparing the two dramatists. Fortunately for Hauptman, he found the most imaginative stage director, Otto Brahm as the director of his play and his equally famous Freie Buhne as its producer. Both

The Weavers and *Kanyasulkam* are studies of rural life with an all – pervasive focus on moral frailties.

The Weavers is about the uprising of the Silesian (a weavers' village in Germany) Weavers and its failure. Hauptman comes from a weaving family and his family had participated in the futile uprising. In spite of his own psychological involvement in the revolt, Hauptman never takes sides. This objectivity in narrating the events and in creating characters made the play the finest of the naturalistic school.

Interestingly, both *Kanyasulkam* and *The Weavers* have one significant feature in common – the absence of a one single protagonist. As in *Kanyasulkam*, the focus shifts from act to act and each act, with one central character, takes the action further. Thus it is said that the Weavers as a group become the protagonist. We may not be able to say this about *Kanyasulkam* because of the diversities of action–locales and divergent objectives of the characters, most of the times in opposition to the others.

Another interestingly common feature between the two plays lies in the making of the text. The unsuccessful Weavers' mutiny took place in 1844 on which the play, *The Weavers*, was built. In 1890, Silesia had suffered a famine and Hauptman had visited the place in 1891 to see the suffering and the squalor of the weaving community. In *The Weavers* Hauptman had dared to apply the principles of authenticity for the first time to history, as Gurajada had done with the materials his mentor, Ananda Gajapati Raju, got prepared on selling girls as brides. Both treated their subjects as if they were contemporary.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) is another kindred spirit that can be compared with Gurajada favourably. Both of them are writers of problem plays, their medium is comedy, and their plays are amusing. He is closest to Gurajada in thought and in craft. Shaw championed Ibsen (*The Quintessence of Ibsenism*) because, as he declared, he was a practical man seeking to reform the world through drama. Whatever be his motto, Shaw, like Gurajada, illuminated the problems and exposed the paradoxes in society.

Shaw's first play, *Widower's Houses* (1892) was a polemical attack on what he called "Slum Landlordism." The play dramatises the story of a self-righteous protagonist, Harry Trench, who, having come to know that his fiancé was the daughter of a Slum Landlord, wanted to cancel the wedding. When the marriage finally took place without the finances of the landlord, the couple had economically deprived existence and Trench came to know that even the money he was earning hitherto was from the slums. Trench then joined his father-in-law. Shaw was here criticizing the unthinking philistinism of "respectable" people. With this debut play Shaw established himself as a new playwright of problem plays who realized that the stage could provide a powerful platform for one who had something to say, especially if he was a little messianic. Both Shaw and Gurajada share this idea of the role theatre can play in educating people, the only difference being that Shaw thought he was a messiah and Gurajada thought he was a friendly counselor.

Plays flowed from Shaw almost in a row. His daring play, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893) is Shaw's moral study of the economics of prostitution. Gurajada touched this problem marginally, but elevated the nuances of it when he made Madhuravani say that she would as well be a humble farmer's wife instead of continuing in this profession. The

magnanimity of this thought has everything to do with the economics of the profession, but goes beyond it to add a touch of anguished humanism to it.

Shaw's next three plays. *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1895) and *You never can Tell* (1899) are some of the best problem comedies he wrote. *Arms and The Man* attacks romantic notions of love and war. *Candida* is a play on a wife's choice to stay with a husband who needs her rather than to go away with a poet who is self-sufficient.

Among the later popular plays written between 1900 and 1915 *Major Barbara* (1905) and *Pygmalion* (1913) are the most noteworthy. In the former Barbara who joined the Salvation Army realized soon that her father, an ammunition trader, looked after his workers much better than the Salvation Army's doling out of charities. *Pygmalion*, which continues to be a popular play even today, owes its popularity partly to the hitherto untried subject of language being a decider of social status and partly due to the amazing ballet made out of it, *My Fair Lady* (1956).

The last of Gurajada's great European contemporaries is Anton Chekov (1860-1904), whose productions of the three plays – *Uncle Vanya* (1897), *The Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) – by the famous Moscow Art Theatre with that stage icon, Stanislavsky as their director – brought Chekhov world-wide fame. Each play is set in rural

Russia and treats the life of a now-disintegrating land-owning community and shows the vast gulf between aspiration and accomplishment. ^{Though both Chekhov and Gurajada chose ~~this~~ to describe disintegrating rural lives,} Chekhov showed the impact of the changing conditions on the desolate souls, whereas Gurajada vivified how the moral depravity of the people impacted a whole community. Seemingly simple, both Gurajada's and Chekhov's plays are among the most complex in the modern repertory.

In all Chekhov's plays important dramatic action takes place off-stage and its repercussion are discussed on stage, with seemingly trivial dialogue alternated by more common place bodily action. But each move, each piece of dialogue adds to the depth of the meaning of off-stage action and provides the spectator with a texture that is unique and bewildering. Even in Gurajada, the most important actions occur off-stage and are discussed on the stage subsequently. *the elopement scene is the best example.*

There are no villains in Chekhov; there are none in Gurajada. All Chekhov's characters are victims of conflicting social and psychological forces. What happens to each is a direct result of the kind of person he is. Thus character is fate ; they are one. As a play progresses Chakhov strips his characters of their illusions and reveals the anxieties which lie beneath – a similar technique Gurajada employs to strip Gireesam of his illusions of himself and also of others' /illusions of him.

Chekhov is known for his undaunted courage for pursuing a unique objectivity in the treatment of his subject matter. He refused to moralize. He always believed that observation and a careful study of human life in its own natural environment were the essential prerequisites of a writer.

We can clearly see that Gurajada holds similar views on the craft of playwriting as Chekhov. We have no evidence that he knew about these plays. But what kindred spirits! In upholding human dignity, in maintaining unbiased neutrality in the choice and treatment of the subject matter, in sympathizing with each of his characters as though they belonged to one's own household : Gurajada is undoubtedly in the company of the greatest masters of

modern drama. He did what he should. He did what a great playwright could do. It is the Telugu theatre that failed him.

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If in many of his social concerns and the new dramaturgical methodologies, Gurajada is one with the greatest of the modern dramatists contemporaneous to him, it is not to be construed that he was influenced by them. In the changing global perspective in the last quarter of the 19th c. and the first quarter of the 20th, one had to deduce, great minds thought, *reacting to the contemporary dramatic and theatrical situations existing at that time* alike, practised their vocation alike, *in different continents*. More than others, Ibsen, Hauptman, Shaw and Chekhov have many things in common with Gurajada. Ibsen's meaningful realistic endeavors in finding appropriate motives to his otherwise struggling souls, Shaw's no-nonsense character creation, and small climaxes with amusing words and deeds, Chekhov's insistence on objectivity as a dramatic principle – these are all shared by Gurajada as well. In some he even excelled his European contemporaries. Gurajada's specific purpose of stripping the masks of each of his characters in a language that is humorous and yet sharp and his finding a form suitable to his play's purpose and, more than anything else, his couching the play's serious purpose in hilariously comic actions and incidents is a unique achievement and a rare distinction.



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GURAJADA AND THE COMIC TRADITIONS:

and varied

The west has a long ~~drawn-out~~ comic tradition – from Aristophanes to the Roman Plautus, from Shakespeare and Ben Jonson to Wycherley and Congreve, from Oscar Wilde to

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Shaw and so on. Gogol and Chekhov, the inimitable Moliere and scores of others gave us comic experience, though critics often gave them different names for historical specificity. Romantic comedy, Satiric comedy, Sentimental comedy, Comedy of Humours and comedy of Manners, Festive comedy and even Black Comedy. ("Give it a name and hang it" is an old adage.) Further, comedy is also divided according to its nature and function. Satire, irony, farce, buffoonery, wit and so on. Similarly Indian aestheticians found it convenient to designate a low comedy as *Prahasana* and the high comedy, found in *Nataka* and *Prakarana* is assigned to the Vidushakas and some minor characters. The one play in which both comedy of character, wit and situation are supersly assimilated is Sudraka's *Mrichakatika*, which has a pervasive influence on *Kanyasulkam*. While the comic elements in *Kanyasulkam* that could favourably be attributed to *Mrichakatika* have been variously discussed by Rambhatla Krishna Murthy and my late friend U.A.Narasimha Murthy in a detailed way, I shall make some general observation on the nature and extent of the influence of several western comic writers on Gurajada's handling of his play.

Firstly, Gurajada's knowledge of the western comic tradition seems to be both vast and deep. Talking about the nature of his drama, he rejects the idea that it belongs to the category of the Comedy of Manners and adds that it has sound characterization, deep human interest and is written in an idiom that suited the play's subject matter. Evidently, his play goes beyond the writings of the Western writers of the Comedy of Manners, but even the one Telugu writer, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, when wrote in that strain, wrote only Comedies of Manners.

Gurajada was writing the play for "less-literate" people, as he claimed in his "Preface." His first concern was to create character-names in a way that the name would define the character, or at least to describe it. Such a naming was prevalent in all kinds of comedy, but it was specifically practised by Ben Jonson, a later Elizabethan playwright, who called such a play a "Comedy of Humours," a type of comedy in which character eccentricities, decided on the theory of bodily humours or fluids, decided the nature of the character. According to Renaissance medical practices, there are four primary fluids in the human body - blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy. A dominant fluid in one's body decides the person's nature and temperament. For example, if a person's body has more blood, it made the person sanguine and so on. Ben Jonson attributed character-types to the nature and extent of fluids in one's body and the dominant nature, which indicated the person's temperament was suggested by naming the person so. Sir Foppling Flutter (a 'fop' who always oscillates between one decision and the other), Horner (who has horns and so can outwit any other male - a western image for forcing his way in his relations with women), Pinchwife (who always pinches or scolds his wife and Alithea (a white, pure woman) are the people we come across in his comedies. In *Kanyasulkam*, Agnihotravadhanlu (a person in whom blood fluid dominates and so is temperamental and angry) was given that name. So are Lubdhavadhanlu, a miser and Karataka Sastrulu, a wily man. Even Madhuravani can be taken as indicative of a positive humour -- 'sweet' speaker.

Gurajada himself speaks of the "Comedy of Manners" and its limitations as a dramatic form. It is a type of comedy perfected in England in the 17th century. It is concerned with the artificial manners of behaviour of leisurely classes, especially belonging to the upper

classes. It often satirizes and has usually intelligent and witty dialogue. And so it is also called comedy of wit. In Comedy of Manners, wits (intelligent, upper class gentlemen and gentle women, whose speeches are reflective of their education and upbringing) make the rules and define the criteria by which persons are judged. The Comedy of Manners formula is therefore very simple : everything that violates social norms and expectations is subject to ridicule. They often quote conventions and rules as guiding principles. The Indian version of the Comedy of Manners is very obvious in the short satirical pieces Kandukuri Veeresalingam Panthulu had written. In 19th c. India, influenced by western manners, Gireesam would be a wit and in the non-western tradition of rural India Ramappantulu would both be a wit and also a victim of city wits. Wits, fops, libertines and cheats make up most of the comedies and they are aplenty in *Kanyasulkam*.

Though not a “humour” character, the name ‘Gireesam’ (“a mountain head; or a mountain god”) is symbolic in so far as it indicates the stubborn nature of a man who is not easily moved. He is a wit and a libertine. Like many “likable” wits, Gireesam is a fine speaker, resourceful, inventive as a lover and “quoter” of poetry. He has the deftness and agility of mind to succeed in social life. Such wits (both male and female) are found in abundance in Restoration plays of Congreve and Wycherley and a fine representative of such wits in *Kanyasulkam* is Madhuravani, though she goes beyond a type character of a wit and remains a full-blooded character of humanist comedy.

The character of Gireesam does not have any past models either in the Sanskrit tradition or in the Western tradition. Critics thought he was modelled after ‘Sakara’ in *Mrichakatika* or even ‘Sarvilaka’ of the same play. Sakara is too hotty and fearsome; rude

and positively abhorrent. He comes nowhere near the pleasing, soft-spoken, poetry-reciting, love-making philistine that is Gireesam. Similarly he is compared with Sarvilaka, the hero of the sub-plot. But even this will not stand to reason for Sarvilaka's political activism is far superior to Gireesam's easy-chair lecturing.

Among the Western comic characters he is equated with Falstaff, a sturdy Shakespearean creation. Sir John Falstaff is a comic figure of unusual proportions: he is a splendid figure, a great talker and actor. But he can be compared with Gireesam only in the element of talking intelligently, but as *King Henry IV*, Part I & II shows Falstaff is also deeply involved in political plots as are seen in the scenes of Prince Hal. Shakespeare also introduces Falstaff in the military scenes, which aspect would be completely out of tune with Gireesam.

Gireesam can only be seen as a villain-hero, to explain his actions and his speech. We have a large number famous (or notorious) villain-heroes in Moliere, Ben Jonson, Congreve, Wycherley and even in Oscar Wilde. Moliere's Tartuff becomes positively menacing as the play *Tartuff* goes on, as Gireesam does. He fascinates us by his amazing and unaccountable success with people as does Gireesam, twisting each adverse revelation to his advantage.

Lubdhavadhanlu, the miser, is like Harpagon, in Moliere's *The Miser*, lovable in a simpler and more direct sense. He is an eccentric, cantankerous, greedy old gentleman (as Harpagon is). His amorous persuasions (intention to marry in an old age as well as his reactions to Madhuravani's menouring), his lamentations latter in the play when he dreamt about his new wife's former husband who had threatened him with murder make him look more a victim of his own indiscriminating behaviour. Like Harpagon, he also laments about

the loss of the golden bracelet and could not decide which one was a greater loss: the loss of the new bride or the loss of the bracelet.

Comedies like *Tartuff* and Wycherley's *The Country Wife* also point out to some of the techniques of hiding and revelation that *Kanyasulkam*'s dramatic action is concerned with. When Tartuff attempts to seduce his benefactor, Orgon's wife, Elmire, Orgon is made to hide under the table to hear Tartuff's amorous talk; by which Orgon's blind belief in the piety of Tartuff is exposed. "Disguise" and "Discovery" are two comic principles that Gurajada uses bringing out the incongruity attached to both Gireesam and Ramappantulu hiding beneath the cot before the entry of "Putakoollamma"- the hotel owner.

In Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, the author uses a similar device to hide the women who love him and sends them to hide, behind a curtain, one after the other. One can presume that Gurajada's wide study and awareness of western dramatic techniques helped him to create his own versions.

It is evident that many of the comic manipulations are in practice all over the world for a long time. It is only natural that Gurajada must have been exposed to them early in life. While writing his mammoth comedy, he recalled the tricks, the buffoonery, the tags and several other devices and used them imaginatively and sensibly. The spectrum of Gurajada's comic vision is multi-faceted and multi-hued and is a perennial source of laughter and enjoyment. The play is as much a classic of human concerns as it is of comic vision. Except perhaps Moliere's *The Miser* and *The Misanthrope*, no other play can come closer to *Kanyasulkam* in its comic diversity.

As Gurajada vouchsafed in his "Preface", he went beyond these comedic models and gave the world a rare kind of a humanistic comedy, in which humane considerations of love and sympathy are revealed through comic theatre conventions.

Prof. M.Nagabhushana Sarma

11-4-35/18/A, Chilakalaguda,

Secunderabad-61

Tel : 9246103316

Email: modalisarma@rediffmail.com