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Raktaksi:
An Example of a Cultural Adaptation of *Hamlet*

Shakespeare was such a great genius that his plays have not lost their appeal and relevance even today. His vision of life is so universal that it can easily transcend the barriers of time, place and even culture. An illustration of such a phenomenon may be seen in the cultural adaptation of *Hamlet* by the great Kannada poet, critic, dramatist and novelist Kuvempu (or Dr. K. V. Puttappa, the Jnanapitha Award Winner for his epic *Sri Ramayana Darsanam*) who has tried to respond to Shakespeare in his own creative manner.

It is a matter of common knowledge that translation is an adventurous task of transforming one linguistic code into another, which obviously requires a bilingual competence and creativity. But this process of translation becomes all the more difficult when the translator has to translate not only the linguistic code, but also the cultural code. In fact, the cultural transplantation of the theme happens to be more difficult and challenging than the normal linguistic translation especially when the source culture and target culture happen to be radically different from each other, like, for example, the western and the eastern; or the British and the Indian; or the Christian and the Hindu. Thus cultural dissimilarity poses a great challenge to the translator who, when he cannot find exact equivalents in the target cultural codes, has to make minor changes in the plot or structure,

characters and texture to convey the essential vision of the source cultural codes in a manner acceptable to the readers and spectators of the target culture. Such an adaptation (or *rupantar*) may involve the process of altering the scenic sequence, the number of characters, the units of action and the chronotope etc., to suit the expectations of the audience for whom the work is primarily meant. Nothing that jars on the sensibility of the spectators of the target culture has to be retained in the text by the cultural translator. Such circumstances demand a creative but marginal change in the structure as well as the texture of a work of art, especially a play that achieves its completion in the presence of a live audience. Such a problem was faced by myself when I tried to Indianize J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk-Circle* and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* in my cultural translation into Kannada.

Kuvempu faced the same difficulty in his cultural translation of *Hamlet* into *Raktaksi*. We all know that *Hamlet* is one of the great tragedies of Shakespeare giving expression to his tragic vision against the background of British, Elizabethan and Christian culture, in the linguistic code of the sixteenth century of England. Kuvempu who is separated from Shakespeare in time by four hundred years and in space by about three thousand miles and in culture to a great extent has not only accepted the challenge but also has happily succeeded in it to a large extent.

The first thing that strikes our attention is the conspicuous change that Kuvempu has brought in the title of the play. Instead of retaining the proper name of Hamlet for the play, he has named it as *Raktaksi* which means "The bloody eyed girl," which suggests the preponderance of bloodshed that is typical of a tragedy. In Kuvempu's play, it is Ophelia who is named as Rudrambe who becomes a "bloody eyed girl." Thus the play being named after a lady instead of being named after a man holds a mirror to Kuvempu's creative shift of emphasis from the inactive male to the active female which is in tune with the Hindu philosophical belief that woman is a manifestation of *Sakti* or cosmic energy as well as with the modern feminist philosophy which considers woman not only as equal but even superior to man. Kuvempu has given a very appropriate name to the heroine Ophelia by calling her 'Rudrambe' which comes from the Vedic god Rudra and which connotes the terrific or the ferocious element and sentiment.

Kuvempu has exercised his creative imagination in the very selection of the historical story of a Virasaiva royal family of Karnataka, which can be the nearest equivalent to that of Hamlet and which can, therefore, be amply adequate to express the tragic vision of Shakespeare without upsetting the cultural norms of Indians, especially Hindus. His selection of a story of a Virasaiva royal family of Keladi Kingdom in the seventeenth century

Karnataka helps him to appropriate it for the expression of Hamletian predicament. The relationship between the members of the royal family and between the Kingdom of Keladi and that of Hyderali of Mysore and the usual political intrigues obtaining between them have been intelligently employed by Kuvempu by being invested with the tragic spirit of Shakespeare's play. Once the story of a royal family and its relationship with a neighbouring kingdom is selected, the translator has to adhere to the cultural codes also presupposed by these kingdoms. Any value that is not acceptable to the story structure of the target culture has to be eliminated inevitably. Thus Kuvempu being himself a poetic dramatist in Kannada, has exercised his creative discrimination in eliminating certain scenes and characters of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in line with the cultural requirements of the story as well as the technical and contingent requirements of the Kannada stage. Thus in the process of trans-cultural transplantation what is lost in one respect is gained in another qualitatively if not quantitatively.

The chief cause of action of *Hamlet* happens to be the unjust murder of the King of Denmark by his queen Gertrude and his younger brother Claudius and the usurpation of his throne by the present king, Claudius. The central action of *Hamlet* thus happens to be double dimensional i.e. sexual and political. This core theme of *Hamlet* has been properly captured by Kuvempu, but he has made some minor changes in the positions, if not in the relationship between the characters. Basavappanayaka happens to be the king who has been unjustly murdered by Captain Nimbayya (equivalent to King Claudius) and Rani Cheluvambe (equivalent to Queen Gertrude). But an important difference between Claudius and Nimbayya is that Claudius has occupied the position of a King and that of a husband of Gertrude. Thus both his kingship and husbandhood have been legitimized although not wholly approved by Hamlet. But in *Raktaksi*, Nimbayya remains only a Captain of the army and not the legitimate King. Similarly he remains a clandestine lover of Rani Cheluvambe and never married to her publicly. Thus his political and sexual power remains illegitimate and clandestine and therefore acceptable to the Indian, especially Hindu culture which is a hiding culture as against the exhibitiv culture of the West. Had Kuvempu made Nimbayya the King of Keladi and married him to Rani Cheluvambe, the plot would have suffered from the violation of the law of probability in the Hindu context and therefore unacceptable to the Hindu spectators who are likely to view such action as shameless.

The murder of the King of Denmark has taken place before the beginning of the play *Hamlet*. The similar situation is retained by Kuvempu in *Raktaksi* where King Basavappanayaka has already been murdered and appears in the form of a ghost initially seen by a sentinel called Kenchanna who is an equivalent of Bernardo. Kuvempu has retained

one sentinel instead of two ie. Bernardo and Francesco, in order to reduce the number of characters to the minimum possible ones for achieving the theatrical economy and cohesion of dramatic effect on the Kannada spectators nourished on concise plays of various kinds.

The supernatural appearance of the ghost of Basavappanayaka is noticed by the sentinel Kenchanna who goes on publicizing it among the members of the palace. He tells the news to Honnayya (which means the 'goldenman') who is an equivalent to Horatio. Honnayya is also surprised by the appearance of the ghost of Basavappanayaka. Both of them compare their experiences and confirm the veracity of the same.

The incest motif which is central to Shakespeare's tragedy has been slightly altered by Kuvempu in *Raktaksi*. Rani Cheluvambe's illegal and secret relationship with Captain Nimbayya is parallel to Gertrude's with King Claudius. Her name 'Cheluvambe' is significant in that it denotes the meaning 'a pretty lady' and seems to be deliberately chosen by Kuvempu. Her physical beauty has perhaps made her prone to the illegal sexual attraction for Captain Nimbayya who happens to be a cunning and clever person. Prince Hamlet's philosophical and melancholic nature making him oversensitive to his mother's incestuous indulgence has been qualitatively maintained by Kuvempu. Prince Basavayya broods philosophically about the complexity of life and wishes he were never born. Although Kuvempu has invested Prince Basavayya with a philosophical nature, he has been careful enough to give a Hindu, especially Vedantic flavor to his philosophization. For example, Prince Basavayya never wishes to be born again because of his awareness that every birth is followed by the balance of *Karma* like a shadow. At times, Kuvempu has retained the secular, universal and essential element that is ingrained in Hamlet's philosophical speech. Prince Basavayya curses his stepmother as a Sani (i.e. planet Saturn) who has started an illegal relationship with Captain Nimbayya before the grass has grown on his father's grave and before the tears of the mourners are dry. He exclaims rhetorically, "O frailty, is not your name woman?" He invokes the thunder to clap on his mother and her paramour.

On the whole, Hamlet's melancholy, philosophical brooding and poetic waxing is brought out well and beautifully by Kuvempu, although the context is generally Hindu, especially Vedantic. Prince Basavayya suspects that there is some fraud in the death of his father Basavappanayaka. But Somayya, son of Captain Nimbayya (equivalent to Laertes, son of Polonius in Shakespeare's play) tries to console him by reminding him of the Vedantic lesson taught by his guru that birth and death are but part of *maya* and that man should not worry about them. But Prince Basavayya finds it difficult to accept sorrow as part of *maya*. He soliloquizes about the fraud – whether it is in others or in him. He expresses his sorrow

homologically by comparing the world to a colourful dome, which hides the truth that is white. In his opinion, a fool likes a fool and a wise man appears like a fool in a majority of fools.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, King Claudius revels at midnight. But this scene is eliminated by Kuvempu in *Raktaksi* perhaps because of his own puritanical nature or because of his desire to make the play concise. When Hamlet worries about the death of his father, his suspicion is removed and his vindictive motivation is intensified by the ghost of his father. Kuvempu has wisely retained this central scene in *Raktaksi*. Prince Basavayya dreams a dream in which he sees his father shedding tears and later he meets the ghost of Basavappanayaka at midnight (not in the palace but outside the city of Bidanur in a nearby forest). The encounter with the ghost is not presented directly but is reported by Prince Basavayya. He tells Minister Linganna that he has seen his father's ghost who appeared to him in the moonlight in a dignified manner; that it, while shedding tears, narrated the event and divulged the secret. He has learnt from the ghost that it was Rani Cheluvambe and Captain Nimbayya who got King Basavappanayaka killed by mixing poison with medicine and cleverly getting it administered to the ailing King; that Rani Cheluvambe has been dallying with her lover Captain Nimbayya thereby neglecting the family honour; that the ghost ordered for the burning of the two culprits so that it could have a sense of satisfaction; that Basavayya should save his own life and protect the Kingdom both of which are likely to be snatched away by Captain Nimbayya. Thus Prince Basavayya's subjective fear is corroborated by the objective event of encounter with the ghost. The event shown in direct action on the stage in Shakespeare's play is presented through indirect action in Kuvempu's play.

Hamlet suffering from the emotion of love is common to Shakespeare's play as well as Kuvempu's. In *Raktaksi*, Rudrambe (equivalent to Ophelia) is a sixteen-year young lady who is as delicate as strong and terrible. Kuvempu appropriately describes her as pretty as a far-off lightning. Unlike in Shakespeare's play where Ophelia is cautioned to be careful with Hamlet and to cold-shoulder him, Rudrambe in Kuvempu's play is asked by her father, Minister Linganna to entertain Prince Basavayya and ease the burden of his soul. Rudrambe appears to be slightly more mature than Ophelia, as she wants to share her lover's happiness as well as sorrow. She requests him to tell her the cause of his suffering. Although initially he hesitates to reveal the real reason for his suffering, finally he expresses it frankly. But Rudrambe finds it difficult to believe in the evil intention of Rani Cheluvambe. On the whole, the relationship between Prince Basavayya and Rudrambe is characterized by a lyrical beauty and sweetness and mutual trust. Kuvempu's depiction of the Prince and Rudrambe

appears to be more affirmative than Shakespeare's depiction of that of Hamlet and Ophelia. In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet's love for Ophelia is tinged with melancholy and Ophelia's response to Hamlet is one of suspicion, distrust and caution. Ophelia does not reciprocate his love properly. Hamlet, therefore, curses her to go to the nunnery. She never understands the intensity of Hamlet's love, which is not equalled by the love of even forty thousand brothers. But Kuvempu's picture is slightly different from Shakespeare's in that Rudrambe is never cold and rigid like Ophelia in her relationship with her lover. Rudrambe shows a sense of trust in the value of love. Likewise, Prince Basavayya loves her sincerely but never to the extent of going mad or losing the balance of his mind. Kuvempu has given a clarity of motivation to Prince Basavayya and Rudrambe, whereas Shakespeare has brought in an element of ambiguity and abnormality in his characterization of Hamlet. Kuvempu has eliminated the character of Laertes i.e., brother of Ophelia totally from his play. Instead, he has created a rival for the Prince in Sivayya (Somayya's friend) for the love of Rudrambe. Such an emotional rivalry is not to be found in Shakespeare's play.

Once Hamlet learns from his father's ghost the crime of Claudius and Gertrude, he decides to take revenge upon his uncle in power. But before that, he accidentally gets a chance of arranging a stage-play entitled *The Mousetrap* with the help of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and to catch the conscience of the King. The meta-dramatic device used by Shakespeare happens to be one of the most interesting scenes in *Hamlet*, which enables the over smart protagonist to watch the awakening of the conscience of King Claudius and Gertrude. The scene has a psychological as well as moral dimension about it. Hamlet becomes a drama-director in order to expose the drama of his uncle and mother. The whole situation with many of its details is conspicuous by its absence in Kuvempu's *Raktaksi*. Kuvempu's elimination of the whole situation has undoubtedly impoverished the play by avoiding the psycho-moral dimension of the play within the play. The reason for Kuvempu's removal of this situation cannot be accounted for in clear-cut terms, though one can, of course, attribute it partially at least to his taste and temperament if not to the theatrical requirements of the Kannada stage. The liberty that he has taken with Shakespeare's play happens to be too blatant to be excused, especially when we know that he had the creative capacity to retain it and make the best out of it.

In *Hamlet*, King Claudius and Gertrude's conscience is pricked by the spectacle of the play arranged by the Prince. But in *Raktaksi*, Captain Nimbayya and Rani Cheluvambe are alerted by the public opinion, which makes them feel guilty as well as apprehensive about the imminent coronation of Prince Basavayya. They feel that the event of coronation will defeat the

very purpose of their illegal sexual relation and grabbing of political power. They, therefore, think of getting Prince Basavayya and Minister Linganna initially imprisoned and subsequently murdered. A good deal of political intrigue is brought in by Kuvempu to develop the theme to its logical end. Captain Nimbayya tries to brainwash Rani Cheluvambe and make her agree to the fact that the Kingdom of Keladi should go to his own son Somayya after the murder of the Prince. Rani Cheluvambe who is deeply under the sexual influence of Captain Nimbayya seems to agree to his suggestion. But the Kingdom belongs to the subjects as well. The public opinion, thus, begins to be mobilized by the well wishers of the Kingdom like Minister Linganna and others. People are eager to coronet Prince Basavayya as the King of Keladi. Thus the two antagonistic groups begin to work against each other through espionage and counter-espionage, intrigue and conspiracy so common in the political life of any kingdom. Kuvempu shifts the emphasis from the private conscience of the Prince to the public conscience of the Minister, courtiers and other administrators who try to restore the political and moral order in the Kingdom.

Timmajetti, for example, who had poisoned King Basavappanayaka, has been now appointed to murder Prince Basavayya also. But even such a hired murderer feels the pricks of conscience and hesitates to carry out the order. He feels totally helpless as he can neither obey nor dare disobey the secret orders of Captain Nimbayya. Since Kuvempu has eliminated the character of Laertes from *Raktaksi*, he has made a few suitable changes in the plot according to his own creative imagination. He has also avoided the scene where Polonius eavesdrops Hamlet's conversation with his mother and where he accidentally kills Polonius hiding behind the arras. Kuvempu suddenly jumps to the situation where Prince Basavayya and Minister Linganna are led to the prison. The imprisonment of such two noble personalities upsets the moral conscience of other courtiers and people who are about to rebel against it, but Captain Nimbayya has worked out a systematic conspiratorial plan of getting the persons out of the prison and have them murdered conveniently in the nearby woods. But the operation of moral order is shown through the external political force of Hyderali of Mysore and his army. Counter-spying overtakes spying. Ramaraya, a spy of Hyderali, who has assumed the guise of a sanyasi learns the secret of murder-order from Timmajetti, tries to avoid it systematically. He gives sleep-inducing medicine to Sanganna, the guard of the prison and helps Sivayya and Honnayya to take out Prince Basavayya and Minister Linganna from the prison. While the two persons i.e. Sivayya and Honnayya are taking out the two prisoners separately, the sanyasi gives a letter to Prince Basavayya and asks him to hand it over secretly to Hyderali of Mysore camping at Sivamogge.

One of the innovations brought into the plot by Kuvempu is that he creates in Sivayya, a rival for Prince Basavayya for the love of Rudrambe. Sivayya knows that he cannot have the love of Rudrambe as long as Prince Basavayya stays alive. He, therefore, tries to cheat the Prince on the way to Sivamogge. He tries to prejudice him against Rudrambe though the Prince is not easily convinced by him. Finally he deceives the Prince by drawing his attention to the beauty of Nature around him. When the Prince is looking down the valley, Sivayya pushes him down and is happy to imagine that the Prince is dead. Prince Basavayya screams and moans piteously and curses the treachery of Sivayya who rides away hurriedly from there.

A little later, when Honnayya brings Minister Linganna to the same spot, they hear the moaning of the Prince in the valley and learn from him the treachery of Sivayya. Before dying, Prince Basavayya hands over the letter to Minister Linganna and asks him to reach it to Hyderali camping at Sivamogge and to avenge the death of King Basavappanayaka.

Sivayya has already met Hyderali at Sivamogge and gives him a false impression that he is Prince Basavayya himself. But Minister Linganna comes there at the right time and exposes the double-dealing and pretension of Sivayya Hyderali, convinced by the honesty of Minister Linganna and exasperated by the hypocrisy of Sivayya, understands the chaos that is prevalent at the Kingdom of Keladi. He orders Sivayya to be arrested and promises to help Minister Linganna defeat Captain Nimbayya and his paramour Rani Cheluvambe. This part of the play is strikingly different from that of *Hamlet* and holds a mirror to Kuvempu's creativity. The agent of moral order or justice comes from outside the Kingdom of Keladi. While Kuvempu has retained the law of vengeance which is a kind of wild justice and the chief motif in *Hamlet*, but has adapted it to suit the cultural context of Karnataka. He has creatively shifted the operation of the law of justice from the palace to the outside force represented by Hyderali of Mysore. This alteration in the plot contributes a great deal to the capturing of the attention of the Kannada audience who know the political relationship between the Kingdom of Keladi and that of Hyderali, father of Tippu Sultan of Mysore.

Captain Nimbayya and Rani Cheluvambe are afraid that the situation has gone out of their control. When they learn that Minister Linganna has escaped from the Kingdom of Keladi and sought the help of Hyderali and that there is a rebellion of the native citizens also, they grow desperate and wish to win the war through foul means i.e. by squandering money on soldiers. The lover and the beloved grow more and more dependent upon each other and decide to live or die together.

The whole situation connected with the young lady Rudrambe is a new one created by Kuvempu and not to be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Kuvempu, for example, has avoided the situation of the duel between Hamlet and Laertes and the Queen drinking the poison accidentally and Hamlet and Laertes dying by mutual wounding. In Kuvempu's play, Prince Basavayya has already died, but the law of vindictive justice has come into operation.

In *Raktaksi*, Kuvempu has brought in his own changes. In order to please Captain Nimbayya, Honnayya has taken upon himself the crime of murdering the Prince although the latter is actually murdered by Sivayya. Honnayya is a well wisher of the Prince secretly. He, therefore, arranges a decent burial for the dead Prince.

But Honnayya's fake confession of being the murderer of the Prince has exasperated Rudrambe, beloved of the Prince. The course of action takes an unexpected direction. It is here that Kuvempu's creative innovation and cultural adaptation can be felt very strikingly. He has made Rudrambe not a very innocent girl like Ophelia, but a figure bubbling with the elemental vitality. When Rudrambe learns the false news that Honnayya has killed her lover-prince, she grows ferocious and wants to kill Honnayya. In the outer lane of Bidanur, she comes clad in old rags and in a fierce mood of anger and despair and behaves in a mad fashion in the moonlight. She addresses the stars as merciless and the shine of the moon as sepulchral and wants to kill the moon. She feels a blankness in her and requests the mountains and forests; the sky and the ocean; the sun and the moon and the stars, the cosmos, time and space to fill in her blankness. She is eager to kill Honnayya, the murderer of her lover. She claims to be a "bloody-eyed girl" i.e., Raktaksi. Just a little while after Honnayya has rendered a decent burial to Prince Basavayya, the rag-covered Rudrambe rushes to the spot where she stabs Honnayya indiscriminately. Honnayya feels sorry that he could not reveal the truth to Rudrambe earlier. He cannot identify Rudrambe but after knowing her identity, he tells her that it was Sivayya who murdered the Prince but that he took the blame on himself just to give the dead Prince a decent burial. Now that Rudrambe realizes the truth, she falls on Honnayya and repents of her indiscriminate and incorrigible action. Before dying, Honnayya reminds her to wreak vengeance upon Sivayya according to the last wish of Prince Basavayya. Honnayya dies happily as he now has the satisfaction of revealing the truth of events to Rudrambe. True to her name, Rudrambe assumes a terrific mood and invokes the spirit of Lord Siva and invites Him to suck her poisonous milk; she requests the three-eyed Lord (Siva) to burn her as He burnt Kama; she invokes Lord Bhairava to inspire her and to spark off an untimely thunder and to enable her to fulfil her lover's wish. She also

prays to the Lord not to shake her faith in Him. After crying like this, Rudrambe remembers something and begins to dig up the mud of the grave with a spade lying about there. Kuvempu has thus invested the character of Rudrambe with a greater liveliness and energy than Shakespeare's Ophelia who appears to be relatively cold, passive and weak with a suicidal tendency. Rudrambe becomes a striking medium of the operation of the law of justice or vengeance initially broached by the ghost of King Basavappanayaka.

Whereas Rudrambe is the internal agent of vengeance, Hyderali of Mysore with his large army happens to be the external agent of vengeance. The two agencies combine to punish the culprits and restore the law and order in the Kingdom. For example, Captain Nimbayya and Rani Cheluvambe are unhappy to know that their messengers are captured by Hyderali of Mysore. Captain Nimbayya orders Rudrayya to keep the army ready and burn the palace as soon as the enemies attack it. He wants to take his paramour Cheluvambe away from the city through a secret passage. But all their expectations are nullified. The messengers come and report that the army of Hyderali has attacked the city of Bidanur. Rani Cheluvambe is deeply worried. Captain Nimbayya tries to enhearten her by promising to take her to a safe place and return to the battlefield. Both of them change their dress and try to escape in disguise, but to their surprise, they discover that the door has been locked from outside. The external agency and the internal agency of vengeance are combined at this juncture. They see Rudrambe through the peephole. They order and even request her to open the door, but she refuses to do so and accuses them of having had Prince Basavayya murdered. The two lovers remain totally helpless. Rani Cheluvambe repents of her sin and crime and invokes the spirit of her late son Basavayya and sags to the floor. But Captain Nimbayya hardens himself to die along with his beloved in the overwhelming flames. In Hyderali's camp at Sivamogge, Hyderali thanks Ramaraya who was in the guise of a sanyasi. Hyderali is happy to have punished the evil but unhappy not to have protected the good people. He is unhappy about the death of Prince Basavayya. Minister Linganna is worried about the whereabouts of his daughter Rudrambe. Muhammadali, Captain of Hyderali's army wants to send his soldiers to search for her. Hyderali suggests that Minister Linganna should punish the culprits, but the latter refuses to punish them in spite of his despair. He wants everybody to be happy. His only wish is to see his daughter once. He wants to bless everyone and never tries to curse anyone. This line of action is, obviously, in line with the Hindu philosophy of life, which is highlighted by Kuvempu. By that time a soldier comes and reports that a mad girl rushed in to the prison and murdered Sivayya and stabbed herself. Minister Linganna is heart-broken to learn

this tragic news. The dead body of Sivayya is lying in a pool of blood. Rudrambe is dying slowly. Minister Linganna comes there and falls on his dying daughter in a very sorrowful manner. Hyderali and Muhammadali also come there and witness the tragic scene helplessly. Thus the play *Raktaksi* ends with a lot of bloodshed and death thereby suggesting a sense of tragic waste and affirming the moral order of the universe.

Raktaksi thus holds a mirror to Kuvempu's creative ability to transplant Shakespeare's tragic vision from the British and Christian cultural setting to the Indian and Hindu cultural setting. Although he has taken liberty with the original play *Hamlet* by eliminating certain characters and situations, he has retained the basic motifs like the illegal sexual relation, the supernatural element (of the ghost of King Basavappanayaka and its instruction to the Prince), the revenge motif, the court intrigue, the reflective tone about death and ephemerality of life and the sense of tragic waste by adapting them to the Kannada cultural pattern thereby making it acceptable to the Kannada spectators. One of the striking changes that Kuvempu has made in the characterization of Hamlet is that he has made Prince Basavayya relatively more firm and clear in his attitude to life than Hamlet. Hamlet's interminable oscillation or dilemma has been minimized by Kuvempu in the creation of Prince Basavayya's character. Consequently we see in the character of Prince Basavayya less psychologization and morbidity and relatively more action than in Hamlet. But the reduction of Hamletian dilemma and psychologization and enlargement of action cannot be quantified exactly though it can be felt by any sensitive reader of *Raktaksi*.

A comparative overview of Shakespeare's imagery in *Hamlet* and Kuvempu's in *Raktaksi* shows a world of difference between the two. Kuvempu's translation of the British and Christian cultural codes into Indian and Hindu cultural codes may be seen in the texture expressed in the native imagery employed by the various characters in the play. Whereas the images of disease and corruption are predominant in *Hamlet* and contribute to the morbid atmosphere of the play, *Raktaksi* is studded with a variety of typically Hindu images drawn from Hindu religion, myths, superstition, philosophy, yoga and Nature. Although the images of disease and corruption are not very dominant in *Raktaksi*, there are many Hindu images, which qualitatively reveal the idea of corruption. The images of snake, snake-hole, kiss of a snake, the *Kalakuta* poison of Lord Siva, the graveyard of sky, funeral pyre, dark night, *Sunya* (Void), hell, planet Sani's (Saturn's) adverse effect, *Karma* and Yama's servants create an atmosphere of corruption, disorder, unhappiness, tragic death and futility. The universal images like labyrinth, net, prison, scissors are also used by Kuvempu at appropriate places but these images are combined with those drawn from Nature and cosmos also. Kuvempu who happens to be an excellent lyrical

poet in Kannada and who is deeply steeped in Kannada classical poetry, has tried to bring in the images of Nature and cosmos at all the opportunities in *Raktaksi*. The images of the sun, the moon, the moonlight, thunder, lightning, rainbow, pole star, spring, autumn, garden, river, crocodile, tree, lotus etc., are employed by many characters in *Raktaksi*, especially by Prince Basavayya. These images provide a qualitative balance to the ones connoting death and poison and to tone down the melancholic atmosphere of the play.

Linguistically, Kuvempu provides a parallel to *Hamlet* by mixing prose and verse in *Raktaksi*. Being a lyric poet as well as an epic poet, Kuvempu is known for his poetic prose. In *Raktaksi*, he has employed prose for the depiction of normal situations, but poetry for the expression of intense moments of experience. For example, Prince Basavayya's philosophical reflection about death and ephemerality of life, the frailty of woman; his poetic description of Nature; Honnayya's philosophization about the illusionary nature of *maya* etc., and even Captain Nimbayya's amorous dialogues with Rani Cheluvambe are fine examples of poetic passages known for their beautiful metaphors and mellifluity.

Raktaksi is, thus, an example of how Shakespeare can be presented to the twentieth century Kannada readers and spectators and how the barriers of time, place and culture can be overcome by the creative genius of writers like Kuvempu. The extraordinary popularity of *Raktaksi* in Karnataka is proved beyond doubt by the very fact that it has run into ten reprints by now, although it was originally published in 1932. It is a fine example of how one great poet of one country receives the vision of life of another great poet of another country and transforms it in the alchemy of his imagination.

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