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## INTRODUCTION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL EXISTENTIALISM IN THE PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD

### Article Particulars

Received: 01.01.2018

Accepted: 27.02.2018

Published: 27.03.2018

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Indian Drama in English is soaring high making bold innovations and fruitful steps, progressively more of history, folklore, myth and legend striking the chord of life and recognition with ease. G.P. Deshpande observes:

A Search for authentic 'Indian Theatre has begun ... This search had two distinct features. It postulated a comparable if not uniform 'Indian' theatre. It also postulated a notion of theatre which is civilization-specific. It would be a theatre of Indian forms which would be completely understandable; it would also be theatre of 'Indian timeless content' which is not easily understandable (Deshpande, x).

The plays have been written in their native tongue and later translated into English by the authors themselves. These works cannot be called as fully English plays but though still can be viewed as such, as most of them are transcreations rather than mere translations. Rabindranath Tagore, Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad and many more have set foot as representatives of Indian English Drama.

Karnad describes himself as the first generation playwrights after India got Independence. He has spent his childhood in Karnataka and grew up watching two types of theatres, touring productions or natak companies and the folk theatre performance called the Yakshagana. Karnad recognizes the role of the Natak Mandalis and says:

It may have something to do with the year that in the small town of Sirsi... Natak 'companies, would come, set up a stage, present a few plays... I loved going to see them and the magic has stayed with me. (Karnad, Three Plays, Vol.1, vi)  
This explains how Karnad was able to integrate the native way of life performance into the modern post-colonial playwriting in India.

. . . it is impossible to write the pleasurable embodiments we call performance without tangling with the cultural stories, traditions, and political contestations that comprise our sense of history. (Goodman and Gay, 66).

At any point of time, all performance carries a tinge of the customs, culture, history, and ethics of the land. Every performance stands as a window, to light the world, with the cultural practices which evolve as social practices with nativity. It is impracticable to detach performance from culture and tradition of the nation. Anthony D. Smith describes the role of history and culture in escalating the notion of nationalism as "historical ethno-symbolism". Absorption of the folklore, myth and history of the nation into postcolonial theatre signals the restructuring of the nation's traditional past. This calls attention to the historicity of the nation. A nation is built on and strengthened by the myths and memories of the past. The modern national distinctiveness is restored in each generation, from these essentials of myth, tradition, symbol and memory that as the nation copes with new challenge.

Demonstration such as Myths, history and folklores echo the cultural tradition of India and are inherently connected to the performance traditions of Indian culture which also serve to remind the ancient, pre - modern and pre-colonial past. Myths are fictions about divine and heroic human negotiator of Indian culture. The mythic characters are very powerful with which the Indian mind has always been identified with and its presence is felt through different aspects in the Indian culture.

History signifies the verbal and printed account of lives, both pre-modern and modern times. Folktales are another set of illusory narratives. Folk Lore's often hint to the magical world of humans and animals of a place. Their charisma in postcolonial plays express ". . . the ubiquity of the past in the theatre of a new nation . . ." (Dharwadkar, 168)

Karnad writes his plays in regional language and then translates them to English to make it popular worldwide. Historical works in recent outlook becomes supreme delight when Karnad emphasizes the existing issues creatively by taking up a historical subject and giving it a symbolical remake. Mahesh Dattani comments that Karnad has a historic revelation but a contemporary voice, which makes his plays universal.

The dark niche of human psychology is uncovered by history and the past aids to figure out the present. History helps us appreciate the fact that past is not sheer ideology of a particular historical moment, but it is a significant proxy that still has left its impact in various camouflage fusion on us. Rightly as Karnad says that one must know history, as it always helps to bring depth to whatever one does. History repeats itself is a famous saying. Name and face differs but the motives, stance, and aspiration of many historical characters bear a resemblance to many people we meet in our day – to – day life. A surprising and striking coincidence!

Embracing of history is not a novel technique for the artist. Great writers from Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw, Walter Scott, T.S. Eliot and various Indian writers have used history. Karnad comments that it is a fact that for the Indians, history is "itihasa" or myth. History was used as a constructive perception to investigate life and humanity by the Muslim historians. So, he says his notion was, to give history a try as a tool to construe Indians life and times. Thus he started to delve into history.

### Aparna Dharwadkar Writes

The history plays draw extensively on printed sources, combine real-life individuals with fictional characters, and recreate particular places at particular moments in time. More than any of his contemporaries, Karnad therefore possesses a dramatic imagination that ranges widely in time and space, and allows him to 'speak through' a remarkably diverse cast of characters. (6)

Karnad by compiling the three brilliant masterpieces due to his navigation through a vast and wide range of history has fabulously plugged the emptiness of glorious historical plays in Indian literature. The procession of history plays progress from Tughlaq (1964) to Tale – Danda (Death by Decapitation, 1990) and The Dreams of Tipu Sultan (1997).

For Indians the pre-modern past is the part of real life experience. The Indian culture reflects through performance arts the myths like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the national history, the affluent regional folklores and the very old ethnicity and mores.

On the whole they cannot be adjudged as fabricated and their existence goes beyond the frontiers of myths, as Dharwadkar observes:

In India, the pre-modern past is not in itself either merely "invented" or merely "imagined": as the accumulation of the complex political, religious, social, and cultural formations of three millennia, it has an archival, textual, and cultural existence independent of its modern uses. (169)

The vital part of the general awareness and the philosophy of the Indians lie in the pre-modern past

K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar has rightly said that "Indian Writing in English is one of the many voices in which India speaks" (21). The British rulers of our country had introduced their language here, just with the view to communicating with the people and making them obey their orders issued in their own language. They would not have perhaps dreamt that a language so innocuously introduced would assume such vast proportions as to produce remarkable literature of admirable magnitude called Indian Writing in English. No doubt the medium of English used by Indian writers for expressing themselves is not much the same as British English, nor is Indian Writing in English the same as British literature. History of English reveals that it has never shied at mixing or even borrowing. The growth of language and the variety of literature available in it is primarily due to its resilience and inherent charm. According to Srinivasa Iyengar, "Indian English is a child of the illegitimate marriage between British presence and Indian sensibility" (48) It will continue to be loved by Indians for its fine charms of expression and rich collection of vocabulary. Dr.Mulk Raj Anand had said that "English was the language of the intellectual make-up of many Indians" (49).

All the former British colonies have taken kindly to English. They have taken liberties with it too. But the result has been the variety of literature contributed in English by all these colonies. Amusingly, we find that only the language of these writings is English.

That too not the same English as the one spoken by the native speaker the themes and milieus are diverse. In them we find, by and large the cultural and social cross currents of the writers and their countries rather than those of Britain. The body of such literature is so vast that it has been recognized, identified and named as Commonwealth Literature, Indian English writing and Indian Writing in English and so on.

It is said that a language is bound up with the culture of its native speakers. When a Britisher writes in English, this may be the case. But what about Indian Writing in English ? Often we find that the locale is Indian, the characters are Indian, the philosophy is Indian and the myth is Indian. When all these are expressed in a foreign tongue, a foreign reader may perhaps feel a kind of 'incongruity'. An orthodox connoisseur of English literature may even adopt 'Hayavadhana' as a symbol of this incongruity at its height.