

Conclusion

Postcolonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon. It engages in a dialectical relationship between the “grafted” European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to (re)create an independent native identity. A return to or a rediscovery an absolute pre-colonial purity is practically unfeasible. This is because culture is porous and heterogenous. In a colonial situation social formation are conditioned by colonial domination. So it is also impossible to create national or regional formations entirely independent of their historical implications in the context of European colonial enterprise. The possible way out is to accept the marginal space as sites of “resistance” or of “survival” and try to subvert the centrality of colonial hierarchy of power relations.

Such an acceptance and celebration of the marginal space are effected in literature by the responses made by the once colonized communities. The most remarkable renovation of this marginal space into an effective site of resistance is offered by the postcolonial theatre. As the most effective public form of arts, theatre serves as a visual paradigm for the powerful portrayal of resistance strategies. It involves a radical dismantling of the European theatrical codes by the incorporation of indigenous performance forms. This has resulted in a postcolonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant theatrical practices. It is in no way continuations or simple adaptations of the dominant European traditions. Rather, it is an alternative hybrid discourse,

aimed entirely at gaining a new literary space that ensures an effective articulation of the cultural resistance and the construction of the postcolonial identity.

The question of culture and cultural difference of the postcolonial societies emphasize the relevance of the concepts like nation and nationalism. A nation and its unique culture turn out to be instrumental for the postcolonial playwrights to reclaim their identity lost in the vagorics of European colonization. Hence nation and its strengthening structures like myths, folklores, legends and history reiterate its presence in the dramas of the postcolonial dramatists. They help in foregrounding the cultural difference as wells as in developing resistance strategies for the dramatists.

The postcolonial hybridity and resistance leave clear manifestations in plays of Girish Karnad. Karnad breaks the conventions of dominant theatrical traditions and secures a distinct place in the theatrical space. He revitalizes the Indian theatrical space by reviving the cultural past of the nation. There is always a cultural “return” seen in his plays effected through the incorporation of indigenous practices into western theatrical forms. But, there is no complete recreation of the traditional models intended. Hence, for Karnad theatre has meant both traditional indigenous performance, and theatre that the colonialists brought with them from the metropolitan centre. It is a hybrid or syncretic form, fit to convey the dual existence of the

postcolonial mind. It is an interfusional theatre that truly represents the ambivalence of the postcolonial mind.

Karnad evolves as a spokesman of postcolonial social experience. His literary engagement with postcolonial and intercultural paradigm rationalizes our understanding of narratives and narrative engagement with the contemporary issues of socio-political importance. His plays seriously reconsider the prominent issues of postcolonialism like nation and nationalism, culture and cultural difference, articulation and resistance, history and historiography. They serve to challenge the dominance of the Western traditions and subvert them with concepts of hybridity, cultural fusion, difference, heterogeneity and syncreticism.

An exploration of the concepts of nation and narrative shows the conflicting nature of nations in the contemporary times. The conventional approach of defining nations in terms of the possession of a common language, race, religion, culture or descent, a distinct territory, and so on, seems insufficient in the constitution of a modern nationality. A nation is proved to be a "soul" or a "spiritual principle" beyond the divisions of language, race, religion, culture, territory, and so on. It is a rich legacy of memories, a valuable heritage, and a shared history passed on from generations to generations. The nation is thus an intermediate between an object and an idea: it fluctuates between a manifest form and a conceptual form.

Nations are found to be both new and historical. They are often caught between the historians' perspective of the objective modernity of nations and the nationalists' perspective of their subjective antiquity. The "new" entity of modern nation-state is grounded on centuries old cultural systems and the nations are found to be cultural artefacts of a particular kind. Modern theorist like Bhabha, Anderson, Timothy Brennan and so on, foregrounds the relevance of cultural antiquity in the concept of the nation. When Bhabha emphasize the "cultural temporality" of the nation, Anderson sees nations as "cultural artifacts."

Literary narratives share an intrinsic relation with the concept of the nation. The conflicting situation of the modern nations and the ambivalence is reiterated in the ambivalence of its narratives also. Bhabha regards nation as analogous to narration. He identifies nation as a cultural elaboration where nation itself is a form of narrative which holds culture as its predominant force. This narrative of the nation uses its culture as a tool for both subversion and revival. Hence, the nation's narrative plays a vital role in the creation of the nation. Literature complements the political movements that lead to the creation of the nation. The structure of the narrative finds a parallel in the political structure of the nation.

The concepts of nation and culture attain an unprecedented prominence in the postcolonial literary space where literature itself is a political discourse which is anchored on the analogous structures of nation

and culture. The relation between the nation and the narrative constitutes the central concerns of the postcolonial world: nation, culture, hybridity, hybridized space in nation, culture and politics, centre and margins, alienation from native culture, quest for identity, cultural Othering, unhomeliness, and so on. The narratives show that writers of the postcolonial world have appropriated the language and the discourse of the masters, gaining strength from their marginality and hybridity. The nation and its narratives find a significant position in the postcolonial literary space. The ambivalent existence of the nation and the narrative it represents in the postcolonial space makes the relationship between them problematic. Postcolonialism holds nationalism as an inseparable part of its theory and the narratives of the postcolonial writers reveal the nation-centredness of the postcolonial world.

There is an essential correlation between the nation's narratives and its function as a tool of resistance. The investigation into the postcolonial dramatic space reveals the methods used by the dramatists to effect a cultural resistance to the dominant traditions of the European models. They incorporate a variety of languages, native narrative techniques and styles into the conventional mode and make their narratives powerful tools of resistance. These incorporations of indigenous techniques can be seen as a form "cultural resistance" on the part of dramatists: "culture [is] used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the

dominant political, economic and/or social structure” (Duncombe, 5). Thus, the dramatists convert the “free space” offered by cultural resistance for developing alternative theatrical practices. Their appropriation of the free literary space is an alternative and counter-hegemonic use of the theatre and the language. This tendency is especially remarkable in nations with a history of cultural antiquity and colonial legacy: the essentially postcolonial new nation-states.

The postcolonial theatre is the paradigm of cultural resistance visually enacted through the elements of everyday practice. Hence, the elements of national life like rituals, carnivals, indigenous traditions, music, songs, dance, and so on become the part of resistance, visually conveyed to subvert the conventional theatre. The postcolonial inclusions of traditional enactments such as rituals and carnivals, indigenous music and dance, contribute to the hybrid form of theatre. The explicit difference of these traditional elements from the western realist forms makes the postcolonial dramatists use them to construct their cultural identity. The practitioners’ use of these elements is an oblique form of politics: “a politics that doesn’t look like politics,” where culture is used to attain the desired results: the construction of identity (Duncombe, 82). Hybridity becomes the defining feature of the postcolonial dramatic genres.

The postcolonial theatre is identified as a kind of theatrical interculturalism as it holds hybridity as the predominant trait.

Interculturalism in theatre evolves around the world due to varied reasons. Whereas the revival of the Western realist theatre leads to the intercultural trends in Europe and Japan, colonization and subsequent decolonization encourages it in the Third World countries. Intercultural theatres facilitate in the creation of a “universal language of theatre” (Pavis, 38). Hence, theatrical interculturalism, like the postcolonial theatre, can become a form of resistance against standardization and Europeanization of super productions. It can generate a search for new identities in culture, aesthetics and politics.

Postcoloniality, hybridity and interculturalism find their finest manifestation in the plays of Girish Karnad. Karnad’s postcoloniality lies in his extraordinary manipulation of the conventional theatrical tradition and making it a strikingly hybrid form of theatre by his incorporation of the Indian native elements. He retains the use of the dominant theatre language, and many thematic and structural concepts of the western tradition. But he transforms them beautifully to represent the experience of the Indian psyche. A thematic analysis of Karnad’s plays based on myths and folktales reveals the fact that Karnad very convincingly gives voice to the ambiguous concerns of the postcolonial age. Thus, the conflicting themes like the existential questions and conflicts of modern man, incompleteness, hybridity, unhomeliness, alienation, search for identity, gender placement, metaphysical dualism, and so on manifest through different characters and

situations in his plays. Existential alienation, incompleteness, and search for identity engage him in *Yayati* (Yayati and Pooru), and *Hayavadana* (Hayavadana, Devadatta and Kapila). Karnad deals with the basic human conflicts in *Bali: The Sacrifice* (conflict between Jainism and Hinduism), *The Fire and The Rain* (between Brahmanism and Sudra world), and *Flowers: A Monologue* (spiritual love ad erotic love).

Karnad attempts to question and subvert the national/conventional hegemonic structures through the themes of his plays. He impressively exposes the hegemonic structures of the nation like patriarchy in the plays like *Yayati*, *Naga-Mandala* and *Flowers: A Monologue*. In some of his plays, Karnad demystifies the concept of chastity, a concept that facilitates the patriarchal oppression of women. Characters like Padmini of *Hayavadana*, Rani of *Naga-Mandala*, the Queen of *Bali: The Sacrifice*, Vishaka of *The Fire and The Rain* deflate this age-old concept. These plays celebrate female sexuality from a woman's point of view. Most of his plays reveal a transformation which empowers women characters. His female characters are portrayed as liberated women who possesses a distinct voice of their own: Chitrlekha, Devayani and Sharmishtha of *Yayati*, Padmini of *Hayavadana*, the Queen of *Bali: The Sacrifice*, and Vishaka of *The Fire and The Rain* get empowered through the defiance of convention. Karnad exhibits a remarkable insight into the struggles of the women's world.

Karnad addresses the humans concerns and conflicts of contemporary times through the context of the past. The problems of contemporary India like sexual freedom, communal discrimination, quest for political power, exploitation, and poverty are discussed through the patterns and symbols from the mythic contexts. Human conflicts find a powerful expression in the myths and folktales that Karnad employs in his plays. He analyses the present day problems of human beings in terms of the patterns and structures of the myths, folktales. A thematic analysis of Karnad's plays based on history and contemporary issues reveals how he constructs a cultural identity or a meaning of the past/history by connecting it to the present. In terms of thematic engagement, Karnad's history plays too effectively handle the alienation and identity crisis that individuals experience in the postcolonial world. These concerns echo in the words and deeds of his characters in plays like *Tughlaq* (Tughlaq and his subjects), *Tale-Danda* (the *sharanas*) and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (Tipu). Karnad is seen as contemporizing Indian history and drawing striking parallel between the premodern/modern history and contemporary India. *Tughlaq*, which deals with the history of the idealist and the tyrant ruler, Muhammad ud Din Tughlaq, is a reflection of Indian political scene in the post-independent times. *Tale-Danda* recasts the twelfth century reform movement, *Veerashaivism*, in Karnataka, as a discussion of the political situation in India in the 1990s. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, written at the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence, deals

with the themes of anti-colonial resistance under Tipu Sultan. Karnad's project of contemporizing history is also seen in his treatment of religious conflict in the ancient history to reflect the present internal conflicts of communalism in India as a nation. Hence, the plays reconsider the issues like, casteism, classism, inter-religious conflict, intra-religious conflict, and so on. Karnad makes a perfect technique of dealing with the present through the historic narratives of the past.

Karnad makes a shift of interest from the past to the present and deals directly with the contemporary concerns of the globalized India. In his recent plays like *Broken Images* and *Wedding Album*, Karnad deals with the concerns of the contemporary world without referring back to the past. *Broken Images* explores the question of language, an important aspect of postcolonial plays and discusses the conflict between English and native/regional languages in postcolonial India. *Wedding Album* presents the true picture of the contemporary globalised India and portrays the transition of the society in the new age of global culture. The plays provide critical insights into the postcoloniality of Karnad's theatre.

Karnad's dramaturgy is a search for the postcolonial Indian theatre. An analysis of the literary techniques and devices in Karnad's plays throws light on the complex dramatic structure that he weaves out of divergent traditions. Karnad utilizes the power structures of the nation like myths, folktales and history: here is god's plenty in his dramaturgical oeuvre;

it includes the traditional enactments like rituals; the techniques of *Yakshagana*, the folk theatre of Karnataka; the puppet theatre of ancient India; folk conventions like half-curtains, songs and dancing, oral style of narration, and so on. The plays also highlight the Western influences on him: masks, miming, chorus, Brechtian, Shakespearean and Greek elements. The Brechtian techniques of alienation, defamiliaration and historicization are employed by Karnad through the devices of the indigenous theatrical traditions. The coexistence of these conflicting traditions in Karnad's theatre makes it an example for theatrical interculturalism. Karnad does not make his interculturalism an explicit one. The Eurocentric/western elements are incorporated and beautifully blended into the indigenous forms making his theatre a uniquely hybrid one.

The hybrid nature of theatre reveals Karnad's politics as a postcolonial playwright. The politics of a writer manifests not only in the content but also in the techniques he explores to represent the content. Karnad's employment of retrospective narratives of the nations - myths, folktales and history- and the native theatrical techniques can be interpreted as his strategy to bring in the native culture to subvert the dominant western theatrical tradition. His careful incorporation of the indigenous narrative elements into the Eurocentric dramatic form also serves as tool of resistance against the dominant traditions. These blending of different forms make Karnad's theatre truly syncretic, interfusional and hence, postcolonial.

Karnad proves himself as a true postcolonial playwright both in terms of themes and techniques. Whether in themes or in narrative techniques, a perfect blend of the two conflicting traditions are seen reflecting his hybridity. Regarding his thematic engagement, Karnad has embraced the Western concepts like existentialism and alienation along with the abundance of native themes like casteism, inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts on the one hand, and has also dealt with universal themes like racism, sexism, patriarchy, women empowerment and so on, on the other. In terms of narrative techniques, Karnad makes a conscious mingling of native and western theatrical traditions appropriate to his postcolonial enterprise.

An analysis of his plays reveals that Karnad attempts to subvert and challenge the national/conventional hegemonies through his themes and techniques. The situations and the characters in his plays radically question the native hegemonic power structures like casteism, conflicts of faith, chastity, and unequal treatment of women. His plays help to re-inscribe the place of the subaltern and attempt to perceive history from their angle. He also tries to subvert the dominance of the European theatrical traditions through an incorporation of indigenous elements/techniques in his narrative structure. He attempts a linguistic mediation of his cultural identity in the postcolonial context. The extent of mediation is fully realized in the English version of his plays. He negotiates the postcolonial identity at once through the verbal and visual texts of his plays. His mastery as a playwright is

reflected in harnessing both the texts: verbal and visual. Karnad reacts against both forms of hegemonic structures: Indian and Western. Since the postcoloniality in India encompasses the subversion of both the hegemonies, Karnad's dramatic art places him as a true postcolonial Indian playwright.

Karnad attempts to create a counter-theatrical practice through the unique form of his theatre. His theatrical practice subverts and resists the western Eurocentric concepts of culture and traditions. It also aims at subverting the Indian elitist historiography which completely erases the space and the voice of the Subalterns. Karnad tries to re-inscribe these spaces through the re-visions of ancient myths in meta-narratives, and lends voice and meaning to the Subaltern. Karnad's attempt can be seen as a search for an alternative concept of theatre and counter-culture through his critical engagements with concepts of nation, nationalism, history, narrative, culture and counter-culture. His theatre makes a remarkable intervention in the socio-political life of contemporary India. The whole question of postcoloniality and postcolonial project in his plays, particularly his subversion of the western hegemonic discourses and their claim to superiority, elevates his theatre as a radical medium of enlightenment and entertainment. His theatre is a perfect synthesis of his politics and aesthetics which manifests itself at several levels. Karnad's dramatic art is the visual paradigm of a quest for postcolonial identity.