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VISIONS OF RESISTANCE: IMPACT OF COLONIALISM ON DIFFERENT NATIONS

VINEETHA VIJAI

Post graduate student

Mar Augusthinose College Ramapuram, Kottayam

Vineethavijai3@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

Narrative, an inevitable part of our lives, is implicit in everything which we interact with. It is, in fact, a universal form found in every human culture. Aesthetically, narrative is an integral and pervasive element in all forms of literary and artistic expression. It can be anything that tells or presents a story; be it a text, a picture, a performance or a combination of these. In other words it is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters in genres like novels, plays, films, comic strips and so on. Narrative can be appropriated to represent the self or the identity in various discursive practices. Language or its analogues often assumes the centre in many narratives. Postcoloniality is more about engaging one's social and cultural past in a contemporary context, thereby providing a new insight into the epidemic quest for ethnic identities. In this article I highlight the impacts of colonialism on different nations, with specific reference to works by GirishKarnad and his continuing engagement with postcolonial projects to counter the legacy of colonialism.

Key words: Narrative, Resistance, Postcoloniality, colonialism

Introduction

"I am trying to create a tradition of my own."

- GirishKarnad in an Interview to ChamanAhuja (*The Tribune* 21 March 1999)

GirishKarnad (1938 -), reckoned as one of India's foremost modern playwrights, is a multifaceted personality with a fine sense of humanism. Known primarily for his work in theatre -- fourteen plays till date --, he is much more than a playwright. A poet, actor, film, television, and theatre director, translator and critic, Karnad wears all these hats with equal competence. He is one of the most awarded and appreciated creative writers that independent India has produced. He is a playwright with a unique voice. His uniqueness lies in his preferential and conscious option to move away from trodden paths, preferring to go to the Indic roots of theatre so as to retrace the lost paths and comment on the contemporaneous present. If one looks deeper into the nitty-gritty of his plays, one finds how his plays foreground the state of the human mind, seized by a kind of restiveness in the midst of conflicts which mark the shaking of values which were considered eternal, possessing absolute meaning, truth, and wisdom, a restiveness that hovers around problematizing, dismantling and deconstructing. Karnad's contribution to the evolution of Indian theatre through the interface of modernity and tradition is enormous and significant. This interface revolves around Karnad's choice and predilection for revisiting and contemporizing Indian myths and history which facilitates an ambience for 'complex seeing', to use a book title

phrase of Berthold Brecht, one of the finest theatre practitioners of the 20th century, of contemporary issues, reflecting multi-perspective dimensions and plurisignifying connotations. The modern thought he ingrains in his plays reflects his deep insights into the human psyche vis-à-vis contemporary Indian subjectivity. The newness of Karnad's art-emotion lies in his capacity for 'complex seeing' of the existential angst of the contemporary Indian problematic, in his genius to familiarize the audience / readers with certain new critical idioms such as 'intertextuality', 'hybridity', 'dialogicity', 'Otherness', and 'subalternity', and in his showcasing the literary word and the world as 'temporal categories and agencies' for promoting liberal humanism. Karnad himself admits in one of his 'Introduction' to *Three Plays: Nāga-Mandala, Hayavadana, and Tughlaq*, how Brecht's influence has gone "some way in making me realize what could be done with the design of traditional theatre". Karnad's play, *Tughlaq* may be referred here as an instantiation. As Shyam Babu remarks, the idea of "multiple consciousnesses" in Karnad's *Tughlaq* can be read in the light of Brechtian 'complex seeing' "since the play proposes to signify not only a medieval sultan Muhammad bin- Tughlaq in a linear narrative but at the same time the disillusioned government of India envisaged after its political independence and the prevailing political anarchy, in the subversive dramatic technique very graphically". The multi-layers of meaning he connotes in and through artistic dramatic endeavours vis-à-vis contemporary themes and issues inspire readers and critics to see him as a cultural aesthete, a "culture-smith", as Vanashree Tripathi compliments, "with uncanny ability to awaken the intelligentsia in the contemporary world from cultural amnesia". The interface of tradition with modern thought he displays in his dramaturgy provides not only ample space for negotiation of meanings for contemporary times but also showcases his affinities with the rasa-aesthetics of the 'theatre of roots'.

His Works

This paper is about the plays of Girish Karnad, and so in this paper we will discuss his plays and what they are about in brief. Karnad has not been very prolific in writing plays; instead he has been very careful in choosing his subject. As a result, he has given a balanced literary output with a limited number of plays which are absolutely magnificent in their creative element. He has, however, never compromised the quality of the plays and in almost every one of his play, the reader and the audience reaches the place where Karnad wants them to get.

Yayati (1961)

He wrote *Yayati* in 1961, his first proper play. It was written in just a few weeks in 1960. He wrote the play in a hurry as he was leaving India for Oxford as the Rhodes Scholar. He was going against the wishes of his parents and hence the theme of parents trying to live vicariously through the 'achievements' of their children is reflected well in the play. It shows that the older generation demands sacrifices from the younger generation. The legend of Yayati is a famous one in the *Mahabharata*. Indian and Puranic mythology remembers the myth again and again. According to the story, he had two wives, Devayani and Sharmistha. From Devayani he had the son Yadu, from Sharmistha, he had the son Puru. They were the respective founders of the two great lines of the Yadavas and the Pauravas. He had in all five sons, the others being Druhyu, Turvasu and Anu. He engaged in infidelity to Devayani and he was cursed by his father-in-law of impotence. But after much asking of forgiveness, Shukracharya, his father-in-law allowed that the curse could be passed on to someone who was willing to take it. He asked his sons, and only Puru accepted it. Hence Puru overtook his father's decrepitude, so that Yayati could live the life of sensuality. Girish Karnad reinterpreted the *Mahabharata* and the Puranic tale with twists which made the story appropriate to display the psycho-sexual narratives of the contemporary life. Karnad was much influenced by Eugene O' Neill at that time. Hence he made *Yayati*, a play of psychological and physiological needs of man and his social obligations. Though the story of Yayati has been adapted many times by Indian litterateurs, Karnad has given it a unique twist by inventing the character of Chitrlekha. He has made it a story of discontent, futility and death. Chitrlekha, the new wife of Puru cannot accept the injustice that Yayati has done to his son, and her husband Puru. She also does not accept the 'sacrifice' of Puru, as his sacrifice does not at all incorporate the life of Chitrlekha. Refusing to accept the status quo, she commits suicide in revulsion. Thus Karnad changes the Puranic and the *Mahabharata* myth, in which the implications of Puru's acceptance of his father's curse are not considered. Karnad invents Chitrlekha to force home these implications. This along with other strong female characters, such as Sharmistha and Devayani, *Yayati* became a play to remember. "Yayati establishes at the outset of

Karnad's career that myth is not merely a narrative to be bent to present purposes, but a structure of meanings worth exploring in itself because it offers opportunities for philosophical reflection without the constraints of realism or the necessity of a contemporary setting." *Yayati* established Karnad's reputation as a playwright and it gave him one of the resources from which to draw his subject-matter; Indian mythology.

Tughlaq (1964)

Tughlaq, his second play and his most famous so far, achieved another milestone. While *Yayati* drew on Indian mythology, *Tughlaq* drew on Indian history; however both of them commented upon the contemporary sensibilities. The play is based on the historical character of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the Islamic king of Delhi Sultanate, who vandalized and destroyed more than half of India. Muhammad was the second ruler of the Tughlaq dynasty of Delhi. He ruled from 1325 to 1351. Delhi Sultanate was one of the most iconoclastic kingdoms in the history of humankind, and India and the Hindu society suffered miserably during his reign. He relegated the Hindu population of India to a second class status, by even employing the *zizya*. However, he thought of himself as a great king who was destined to do great things, just like any other megalomaniac king. Under this self-delusion he undertook many measures, but all of them flopped. One of his greatest flops was the changing of Indian capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in Maharashtra. At that time, although north India had fallen to the ravaging armies of Islamic invaders, the Deccan and south India were still largely independent. The Hindu culture was going on uninterrupted in most of the peninsular India. Daulatabad, before its destruction by foreign Islamic invaders, was known as Devagiri and was a great Hindu centre of politics, arts and learning. It was the capital of the great Yadava dynasty of the Deccan. Tughlaq wanted to conquer south India and establish the Islamic rule in India once and for all, destroying all vestiges of indigenous culture and civilization. The same bug was to bite Aurangzeb three centuries later. However, south India was a bit too much for Tughlaq and in the process of changing the capital of the Sultanate from Delhi to Daulatabad, Tughlaq lost most of his power. He forcibly moved the entire population of Delhi to Daulatabad. However, it turned out to be a great disaster. A large number of people died and the capital was reverted back to Delhi again. Karnad plays on this historical event in his thirteen scene play, portraying the contemporary reality of India by telling the tale of the turbulent time in Indian history. Tughlaq in the play is portrayed as an Islamic idealist who calls upon the creation of a new empire based on new un-Indian ideals of universal solidarity commanded in Islam. He embarks upon the homogenization of Indian population based on the monotheistic egalitarian ideals of Islam. The play depicts him as a man having big ideals and a grandiloquent vision, but which ended in absolute disaster. It was a time of great anarchy in India. Karnad meant his play to be a political commentary on contemporary politics of India. Tughlaq of Karnad was modelled on Nehru of India. Nehru also began with foreign ideas and foreign idealism. He also wished for a homogenous India based on the secular and socialist ideals inspired by the Soviet Union. He also embarked upon new and ambitious new policies but which ended in disaster, which later resulted in economic and social disaster from which India is still recovering. "For the audience of the 1960s, Karnad's play certainly expressed the disenchantment and cynicism that attended the end of the Nehru era in Indian politics. A decade later, the play appeared to be an uncannily accurate portrayal of the brilliant but authoritarian and opportunistic political style of Nehru's daughter and successor, Indira Gandhi." The play depicts the problems of leadership which are still relevant today like the issues of trust, credibility, authenticity and legitimacy. The particular art of drawing from ancient sources and moulding them to showcase contemporary problems became a trademark of Karnad after *Tughlaq*.

Hayavadana(1971)

In *Yayati*, Karnad had drawn his source material and story from Hindu mythology. In *Tughlaq*, he drew it from Medieval Indian history. In *Hayavadana*, he drew his source material from folk tales of India. "Karnad's third play, *Hayavadana* (1971), marked another major change of direction, not only in his playwriting but in post-independent theatre as a whole, because it was the first work to translate into notable practice the debate over the usefulness of indigenous performance genres in the development of a new, quintessentially 'Indian' theatre." The story of the play, *Hayavadana* was inspired from a story from *Kathasaritsagara* of the medieval ages. It is a story of switched heads, in which two friends of quite different demeanours switch their heads and then interesting things take place in the context of what would be called now as split

personality cases. In the *Kathasaritsagar* story, a woman is travelling with her husband and her brother. They meet an accident and both of them are beheaded. Through a boon in the Parvati temple she gets the power to bring them back to life by placing their heads back on their bodies. But she makes a mistake and switches the heads. It is a play of lost and switched identities. The story was played through folk arts and folk medium in what is known as the folk tradition of Yakshagana. Another inspiration for the story of *Hayavadana* was the novella *The Transposed Heads* by the German author Thomas Mann. Mann's play is a parable of proscribed desire and conjugality along with an accidental invasion of identity. Karnad used a distinct view of femininity and a reflexive double frame in his play. Its unique appeal was its mixing of two genres, the urban theatre and the folk drama. "In keeping with Karnad's interest in a usable 'structure of expectations', the outstanding quality of *Hayavadana* as an 'urban folk' play is that it joins the conventions of Yakshagana folk performance (stock characters, music, dance, masks, talking dolls, etc.) with a core narrative that poses philosophical riddles about the nature of identity and reality." Karnad also played on the identity of the changed selves of the two men. While one man is intellectual and artistic, the other is physically strong and attractive. When the heads are switched, they start adapting to their respective bodies and an interesting drama ensues. However, Padmini, the heroine of the play is torn in her desires. Formerly she loved the intellect of Devadatta, but the attractive body of Kapila. And when the heads are switched, one body becomes perfect as it has the head of Devadatta and the body of Kapila, meaning the best of the mind and the body. The play gives a window into the patriarchal scheme and juxtaposes a subaltern alternative worldview in which the sexual desires of women are not considered unnatural, even while they are labelled as amoral. The play became very popular due to its originality and it is still one of the most performed plays of Karnad.

Bali: The Sacrifice (1980-2001)

Though, the first Kannada draft of this play, *Hittina Hunja* of Karnad was done in 1980, unlike other plays; took twenty years for its development and evolution in English and the final form was only published and performed in 2001 in the form of *Bali: The Sacrifice*. This play also draws its source material from a pre-modern source, a 13th century Kannada epic called *Yashodharacharite*. It is based on yet older works in Sanskrit. "Through the same process of 'realistic' fictional elaboration that marks his approach to myth and folklore from *Yayation* ward, Karnad transforms the story of the dough figurine that comes alive at the moment of sacrifice into a mature philosophical exploration of love, jealousy, desire, betrayal, and violence between men and women who are bound by the ties of blood and marriage, or encounter each other in the perfect freedom of anonymity." In *Bali*, the queen is childless and the king is incapable of fulfilling her wish. Unlike the similar characters of *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*, where they are just unwitting accomplices of fate where they are 'tricked' or 'forced' into adultery, the queen in *Bali* courts the *mahout* for anonymous coupling. She is not only clear about her desires and motives but she is also bold and nonrepentant when confronted by the world. She breaks the boundaries of caste and class, and she is proud of it. Her presence in the play is transgressive. The play breaks the marital orthodoxies in every way. The queen couples with the *mahout*, who is rough and potent, and the king is left aside, who is learned but impotent. The play delivers an egalitarian message where the two seemingly different classes come together, breaking all the orthodox boundaries, defying and shaming the society in the process. The play, like all others of Karnad, is an attack on the social system which most of the individuals, who form the society, submit unwittingly to. Most of the plays of Karnad are conscious of the political debates raging on in India. Karnad is very firmly on the politically correct side of the secular and socialist India and uniformly bashes the orthodox Hindu sentiment. In *Bali*, the central debate is not the sexual promiscuity of the queen, but the debate between her Jainism and the covertly Hindu ethos of her husband. The central issue is that of violence, which is a recurring theme in Karnad's work. The orthodox Hindu side of the king is pitted against the unorthodoxy and Jainism of the queen and the episode with the *mahout* places the sexual pleasure on the side of the ethically correct plank, while the covertly Hindu king is placed on the other unethically side which is portrayed as the epitome of the Hindu universe. The politically correct side of Karnad, with his Hindu-bashing and majority Marxist narrative is very clear in the play *Bali*.

Naga-Mandala(1988)

Naga-Mandala created variations on many of the themes already used in the play *Hayavadana*, which just preceded it in the chronology of the plays of Girish Karnad. *Naga-Mandala* is also based on the folk literature of India. Karnad had heard two tales from A K Ramanujan, his friend and mentor. These oral tales influenced Karnad very much and he created *Naga-Mandala*, years later. "*Nagamandala: A Play with a Cobra*, based upon folk belief and myth, is a deceptively simple play whose complexity consists in a concurrently coordinating the elements of myth, magic, folk belief and romance. The Prologue sets the tone and mood of the play. The audience is taken into a make-believe world; drama itself being such a world. As Man says in Prologue, the audience, like the wedding guest of "The Ancient Mariner", has no choice but to enter the world of fantasy." The play uses another reflexive-frame in which the fictional playwright can keep living only if he keeps awake for one whole night. It also uses magical elements like talking lamps. There is a play within the play in *Naga-Mandala*. The outer play has lamp flames which gather in a village temple in order to exchange gossip about the people and the houses they inhabit. It is just an artistic device to put an observer into the subjects' homes. The inner play consists of a story where a beautiful woman is visited by a cobra in the human form, taking the form of her husband. It is personified as a young beautiful woman in a *sari* who tells its own story to flames and the playwright. The unusual setting of the play makes it interesting. Karnad was experimenting with the form and structure of his plays at that time; and *Nagamandala* was a result of his innovations.

Tale-Danda(1990)

Like all other plays of Karnad, *Tale-Danda* also draws its material from history in order to illustrate a point of view at present. *Tale-Danda* also takes its source material from the medieval history of India. In *Tughlaq*, Karnad being true to his politically correct socialist secular stance downplayed the holocaust played out against Hinduism to the point that it is not even visible in *Tughlaq*. On the other hand, the barbarism and the genocide traits of Muhammad Tughlaq are attributed to unrequited love. In *Tale-Danda*, the theme of socialist secularism of the Indian brand is played further. Here, it is shown that the plights of Hinduism are due to its own inherent faults with no fault of others and that the violence is inherent in Hinduism with non-violence argued by Jainism and Buddhism against the violent Hindu society. Karnad adopted northern-Karnataka as the region of his activity for a long time in his life. This special region with separate history and distinct geography influenced his writing. Northern Karnataka is much different from central and southern Karnataka in the sense that while the south of the state was not in the hands of the medieval Islamic invaders for long, the northern part of the state remained mostly in the hands of the Islamic kings till India's independence. This area saw much destruction at the hands of the invaders and there is not much heritage left in the region except the Islamic monuments which the invaders built after they had destroyed the previous Hindu civilization and its monuments. During the period of 11th to 14th century this process became fast and the invaders from the north started ravaging the country. It is interesting to see that Karnad skips the entire rampage that happened after the invasions and chose instead a time when Basavanna, the great Lingayat guru was teaching in north of Kalyana at the capital of the Kalachuri king Bijjala. Basaveshwar also called as Basavanna, was a polymath, who was adept at many disciplines. While he was a great scholar, he was also good at economics, politics and other related subjects which demanded practical knowledge. Basaveshwar became famous and was called at King Bijjala's court. Here he created the Kalyan Mantapa, an open democratic platform for holding democratic discussions. Kalyan was the prime city of knowledge, learning and arts of the region at that time, being the capital of the Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas and the Kalachuris from time to time. The city was completely raged to ground by the foreign invaders after the events of this play, which is not mentioned by the playwright. Basaveshwar was a man of free thoughts and his revolutionary ideas of equality did not find much favour with the established elite of the times. He created controversies by eating with the members of many Jatis and Varnas at his own house. He even visited members of other Jatis and ate at their place. One event changed his entire life. He supported and facilitated the marriage of a Brahmin woman and an untouchable man. This enraged many orthodox members of the Court. Some of these courtiers went to King Bijjala and told him a distorted and exaggerated version of the story. King Bijjala was afraid of the power of the entrenched social elites and he ordered the expulsion of Basaveshwar from his court. He ordered the unorthodox marriage to be annulled and the couple punished severely. Basaveshwar came forward in support of the couple and said that as

they were both the member of the Lingayat community; the Jati rules were not applicable to them. Bijjala asked Basaveshwar to remain either silent about the issue or leave the court. Basaveshwar, true to his commitment, left the court and marched towards Kudala Sangama. Basaveshwar had given some revolutionary ideas to the society and as a result the lives of many of them had improved considerably. Many of his followers revered him like a god and they were very enraged at the bad treatment of Basaveshwar at the hands of King Bijjala. One such extra-zealous follower went and killed King Bijjala in a rage. This completely turned the tables against the group of Basaveshwar in the court. There was a severe crackdown and the followers of Basaveshwar were followed, hunted and many of them were killed. "The survivors fled Kalyani and went to Kudala Sangama after Basaveshwar. From now on, Basava took on the role of a spiritual preacher and taught the people lessons about humanity, morality, simplicity, honesty, dignity of every kind of labour and most of all about equality of all human beings. Basava died in 1196 C.E., leaving behind him a rich legacy. His thoughts reinvigorated the Lingayat philosophy. Karnad plays the incidents of this historical event to blame caste system, and claiming it to be an innate feature of violent Hinduism as against the egalitarian Jainism, Buddhism and Islam. The socialist imperative of bashing the majority community and glorifying the minorities is thus complete in *Tale-Danda*. This study will go deep into this and other plays and analyze how Indian cultural ethos is portrayed and through which lens in the plays of Girish Karnad.

The Fire and the Rain (1995)

This play is based on a minor story from the *Mahabharata*. But like other plays, it also deals with the contemporary life and contemporary reality, discussing universal themes like "alienation, loneliness, love, family, hatred -through the daily lives and concerns of a whole community of individuals". The play was so well-received in its Kannada and English rendering that it led some critics to say that it is Karnad's best work and one which he will never be able to surpass in artistic creativity. The source of the play is a small cautionary tale in the *Mahabharata*. "Yavakri, the son of sage Bharadwaja, acquires knowledge of the *Vedas* from Indra after years of *tapasya*, but uses it to molest the daughter-in-law of sage Raibhya, whom he resents. Raibhya in turn creates a demon (*rakshasa*) and spirits in the form of his daughter-in-law both of whom pursue Yavakri and kill him. Bharadwaja places a curse on Raibhya – that he will die at the hands of his own son – and then kills himself in remorse. Sometime later Parvasu indeed mistakes the deer skin, his father Raibhya is wearing for a wild animal, and accidentally kills him. Involved with his younger brother Arvasu in a fire sacrifice, Parvasu initiates another cycle of evil when he falsely accuses the latter of patricide (and hence of brahminicide). Arvasu then begins his own penance to the Sun God, and when granted a boon, asks for Yavakri, Bharadwaja, and Raibhya to be restored to life. Lives that were destroyed due to human lapses are restored through divine intervention." In Karnad's version, the relations between the characters are closer than the real story and their actions are more intentional. He plays on the themes of parricide and fratricide. Karnad uses the symbolism of death as an act of expiation. Both human and magical characters in the play have to quality of active volition. Neither is Vishakha just a victim and an unwitting accomplice, nor is Parvasu an innocent son. The invented parallel story of Arvasu and the tribal girl Nittilai again brings the socialist secular urge of Karnad to hit on the real and imaginary orthodoxies of Hinduism by bringing in caste angles and the imaginary Aryan-tribal divide. While the evil Parvasu is a follower of orthodox Hinduism, the good Arvasu is the one who defies the Hindu ethical and cultural system. This in a way completes the socialist secular circle of Karnad. *The Fire and the Rain* is a Metatheatrical play, "one in which performance is not just a framing device but a thematic preoccupation and an intrinsic part of the main action."

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan (1997)

After going through mythology, ancient history and the medieval Indian history as his source material, in *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Karnad goes to the British Raj and the times preceding it, for his source material. The setting of the play is just at the brink of the British Raj in India, the time of Tipu in the kingdom of Mysore. In *Tale-Danda*, Karnad had taken the geographical area of northern Karnataka as his theatre of action. In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, he shifts his focus to southern Karnataka, a region which is much different from northern Karnataka, in its history, culture and even dialect. The play is based on the secret diary of Tipu Sultan, in which he recorded his dreams. It draws from the historical context, but it also adds imaginary dimensions in order to prove the socialist-secular point of view to which Karnad is politically committed. The play also involves the

stand-off of East vs. West, white vs. non-white, colonizer vs. colonized, and so on. Tipu is presented, not as a blood-thirsty despot, as is evident by history, but as a dreamer and a visionary who was caught in such circumstances which forced him to commit atrocities on non-confirming non-Muslim populations, once again proving the politically correct socialist-secular paradigm. Arguing further in vein of the NurulHasan school of state-approved scholarship, Karnad argues through this play that it was a time when there was no national feeling, nationalist perspective in India and it was just thousands of small and petty kingdoms fighting against each other. Here Karnad argues from the British colonialist perspective, justifying the British rule over India, arguing that as India was not united and fighting bloody battles against itself, so it was all right for the British to come and subjugate the Indian kingdoms. The argument is extended to the medieval age too, when the marauding Islamic armies that captured India are justified on the basis that the Hindu kingdoms were fighting each other. The play operates on three layers. In the first layer, the historian Hussain Ali Kirmani is attempting to write a history with 'objective' account of the life of Tipu. In the second layer, the scenes from the life of Tipu are shown. This structure gives the play an elegiac quality as the death of Tipu is always evident. In the third layer, the dreams of Tipu are shown, making a case for his being a visionary and dreamy leader. The historical and the real Tipu is quite a different character from the Tipu of Karnad. The real Tipu was a religious bigot, a racist and a genocidal despot who wanted to further his own goals besides the Islamic religious goals. The Tipu of Karnad however, becomes a visionary, a dreamer and a nationalist leader with pan-nationalist vision who fought the British, just because he had to fight the British. The fact that the Marathas also fought the British along with many other indigenous kingdoms, never urged Karnad to write a play on the man to declare them having a pan-nationalistic vision. Doing something like that would have broken his socialist-secular narrative in which the majority community would not have been the culprit behind every problem. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* was written originally in English and argued by many to be the most poetic of his plays.

Flowers (2012)

Flowers mark the return of Karnad to the folklore tradition for drawing his source material. The play is set in the central Karnataka, the Chitradurga region. It plays on a folk tale which is famous in this region. The tale became even more famous outside Karnataka when the Kannada writer T R Subbanna adapted it for his 1952 novel *Hamsageethe*. In the original folk tale a priest is having an affair with a woman. One day, the chieftain discovers a hair in the offerings by the priest. He demands an explanation. The priest prays to the god, Lord Shiva and swears that the Shiva Linga is growing hair and he will show the chieftain that. If not being able to do so, he will cut off his head. Next day, the chieftain comes and the priest is ready to cut off his head but instead they see that the Shiva Linga has indeed grown a tuft of hair. When the priest pulls the hair, the Shiva Linga bleeds. Mortified at the thought that he has hurt the god, the priest cuts off his head. Karnad, being true to his love for human drama, turns the insignificant characters of the priest's wife and the mistress into important characters and the play shows the net of the triangulated desire, between a man and two women. The play is also meant to 'unravel' the Brahmin orthodoxy, hence once again proving the socialist-secular narrative. The play is different in the sense that Karnad has a male character and his desires the focal point of the play, something which he has done for the first time in his career as a playwright. However, the play is part of his plays based on folk tales and stays true to most of its truisms.

Postcoloniality

The term "postcolonial" refers to the complex phase that politically engages the erstwhile colonies after the cessation of European colonization. Post colonialism designates the terrain of discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism. It foregrounds the cultural transformation effected by European colonization and the struggles endured by the once colonized subjects to reclaim their cultural identity prior to colonization. It elucidates the dilemmas of the cultural conflict between the two worlds: the colonizing and the colonized. It also points to the socio/cultural formation in the new nation states. The origins of postcolonialism can be traced back to the natives' historical resistance to colonial oppression and imperial control. The success of the natives to resist and overthrow the colonial rule empowers them to offer a radical challenge to the political and conceptual structures of the systems on which such domination had been based. It serves to challenge the hegemonic structures of the colonizers that inscribed themselves as the "ideal" and "civilized" and denigrated the natives as "wild, barbarous, and uncivilized." The postcolonial

subjects have recognized the strategy of “cultural Othering” used by the colonizers to domesticate, subordinate and control the colonies. In Edward Said’s phrase, cultural Othering is an Orientalist discourse/practice in which the Orient is constructed as the “cultural Other” of Europe. The colonized began to re-inscribe hegemonic structures of the Empire that silenced them for ages. Hence, postcolonialism involves an engagement with, and a contestation of, the colonizer’s discourses, power structures and social hierarchies. It works through the process of “writing back” to the Empire; “re-writing” and “re-reading” its canonical texts to explore the disparate treatment meted out to the pre-colonial people. It consists of the practice of “describing” the empire in which the canons of imperial discourses are re-written to retrieve the cultural identity lost in the colonial oppression. The writing back or the de-scribing can be done in many ways. One of the means is to decolonize the landscape: to imaginatively reconstruct a landscape where the residues of colonization are conspicuously absent. Novelist like Chinua Achebe and R.K. Narayan and dramatists’ like Wole Soyinka and Girish Karnad construct locales emptied of colonial markers with a view to reconstructing their cultural identity. They landscape their resistance to dominant power structures in life and dominating literary forms in writings. This is a way to expurgate both the consciousness and imagination of the ensnaring images of colonization. Rather, it is spade work to cultivate a postcolonial identity. Postcolonial studies arise as an alternative to dominant discourses of colonization. It attempts to contest and subvert the colonial assumptions of the colonized world and tends to reconstruct reality from the perspective of the former colonial subjects. It has effected a destabilization of the Western modes of thinking, thereby creating a space for the subalterns or the marginalized groups, to articulate and construct alternatives to dominant discourses. The colonial subjects realize that their marginality is a consequence of cultural difference and they re-inscribe it as a site of resistance, especially against power structures of neocolonialism and neo-imperialism. Postcolonialism leads to the emergence of derivative discourses. The writers of the colonies adopted and appropriated the dominant colonialist discourses for their politics of resistance. These derivative discourses are appropriated sites for the articulation of resistance to colonial oppression and cultural domination. As a critical discourse, postcolonialism is an expression of the conflicts experienced by the previously colonized cultures. It acknowledges the fact that the once-colonized world is full of conflicts, and contradictions: the conflict between the nation’s colonial past and the postcolonial present, between the pre-colonial identity and colonial legacy, and so on. It acknowledges hybridity as the predominant trait which is the result of the contact and conflict between the colonizers and the natives. The indigenous traditions of the nation’s past confronted with the modernizing impulse of the colonizers turn the postcolonial individual into to a cultural hybrid. This has resulted in the grooming of a new generation of populace who find themselves caught between the two conflicting cultures. This “hybridity,” as Homi K. Bhabha explains, leads the postcolonial people to an equally ambiguous condition of “unhomeliness,” a state where the individual is not at home even in him. The hybridity and unhomeliness in the postcolonial communities induce them for a search for their cultural identity prior to colonization. Thus, they attempt to reconstruct, rediscover or retrieve a cultural identity erased by the hegemonic power structures of colonization. Hybridity or the mixing of divergent traditions forms the defining feature of any postcolonial writing. Hybridity is affected in the postcolonial writings by the incorporation of the indigenous forms into dominant European traditions. The dominant tradition brought in by the colonizers is thus “contaminated” by the indigenous narratives of the nation like ancient myths, folktales, and history, both modern and pre-modern. Bhabha defines these sites of mixing as a powerful space; he maintains that the postcolonial world should valorise this space as it offers the most reflective challenge to colonialism. It helps in subverting the dominant Eurocentric traditions; it is also instrumental in bringing the indigenous traditions to the centre spot. Hybridity in a way reinforces the fact that colonialism can never be erased completely to restore a pre-colonial purity. But the hybrid space formed by different cultural influences can be re-inscribed as a powerful slot for resistance strategies to the dominant tradition and residual power structures of colonialism that lingers, especially in the postcolonial mindscapes. Hybridity is the direct consequence of the specific nature of culture. No culture is pure and insulated/isolated. Culture is porous with the vulnerable points where cultural contact/invasion is possible. The porous nature of culture leads to intercultural interactions leading to cultural hybridity. So purity of culture is a fallacy propagated by the dominant ethnic groups to continue the subordination of cultural Others. The former colonial powers still try to control cultural communities of the colonized through

the structural patterns of neo-colonialism. The questions of culture and of cultural difference dominate the experiences and writings of the postcolonial people. The western mode of training and the encounter with the revived traditions have made the postcolonial writers identify their cultural difference from their colonizers. The transformation into a cultural hybrid, alienation from indigenous culture, their inherent difference from the received culture, and so on make the postcolonial individual to search for a unique cultural identity. They attempt for reclamation of their cultural identity through their writings. In order to give voice to their differences the writers undertake to domesticate the dominant European narrative forms by incorporating native traditional narrative forms. It involves the construction and representation of a cultural identity of the colonized community on the one hand, and the articulation of cultural resistance and attempts at decolonization on the other. Postcolonial literature, which resonates with the cultural conflicts, emerges as a result of the interaction between Eurocentric narratives and the native/indigenous narrative forms. Nation and culture become the predominant concern for the postcolonial societies. Both the concepts turn out to be powerful symbols for the postcolonials to inscribe their distinct space in the contemporary world. A nation is built on and strengthened by the myths and memories of the past. It is from these elements of myth, memory, symbol, and tradition that modern national identities are reconstituted in each generation. Hence, nation and nationalism evolve as an inseparable part of postcolonial writings and every writer, in one way or the other, shows his/her adherence to the nation. Literature is in a way formed with the idea of nation in mind and this explains the nation-centeredness of the contemporary writings. The ambiguous state of nation, as a sign of modernity and as a historic symbol gains prominence in the postcolonial context. The ambiguous state of nation is often reflected in postcolonial literature. Nation is a sign that mediates between an object and a concept. In the context of colonization, nation is a historic symbol. But the concept of cultural hybridity is closely related to Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community. Anderson thinks that a psychological geography consolidates a physical geography: the nation has a geography and a psychography. The idea of the nation as one with a metropolitan centre and distant peripheries is conceived on the framework of the empire: the imperial power ruling the distant colonies with an oppressive state apparatus. The recent acts of terror like 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre deconstructs the structure of the nation: no place is fit to be called the centre. The structure of the nation can be mapped on the language also: the centre is the focal area of the principal dialect and peripheries map other marginalized dialects. So empire, nation and language have analogous structures. As part of the decolonizing project, the postcolonial writer works against the standardization of language. National and cultural identity gets foregrounded in all postcolonial genres of literature, especially in the drama. As a visual paradigm of cultural identity, theatre forms a prominent genre where cultural differences get a meaningful portrayal. Accordingly, the postcolonial drama exhibits distinctive cultural features which differentiate it from conventional European dramaturgy. The interaction of European dramatic conventions with traditional forms of native oral narratives in the postcolonial drama radically challenges the perspective of the genre with rigid structuring and definite categorizing. The interface of the same has led to alternative readings that enable the writers to conceive new patterns of narrative structures. So, drama in this context becomes neither a European mimetic form nor an indigenous representation; it is a hybrid of both. This hybridity, with its defining cultural difference, represents the paradigm shift in the postcolonial drama. The dominant feature of the postcolonial literatures — hybridity — forms the central trait of postcolonial drama also. The syncretic or hybrid nature of postcolonial drama is, in most cases, a conscious, programmatic strategy to evolve a new form of theatre in the light of colonial or postcolonial experiences. It employs theatrical codes from quite disparate performance and cultural traditions, utilizing in parts the linguistic and performance codes of western theatrical sensibility while retaining the unmistakable signature of native performance aesthetics. Hybridity is thus apart of the postcolonial dramatist's challenge to resist or to domesticate the techniques of western dramaturgy. Postcolonial drama is a textual paradigm of cultural hybridity. Postcolonial theatre is essentially a hybrid or interfusional theatre with native narrative forms blended with dominant Eurocentric forms. It is a revivalist attempt to resurrect the classical and folk traditions of the erstwhile colony which were marginalized by Western hegemonic discourses of theatre propagated by the colonizers. Postcolonial drama is an attempt to naturalize or domesticate the western dramatic elements to suit the theatrical experiences of the postcolonial generation of the colonized.

It creates a sensibility which is neither western nor native, but a blend of the two and helps to make performance a new experience in which the postcolonial identity is visually constructed. Karnad's theatre is a visual presentation of the resistance to colonialist discourses of theatre. It is a theatre in search of completeness of Indian experience. He has gradually evolved a postcolonial Indian theatre, Indianizing each of the western dramatic elements embedded in it. Karnad's play *Hayavadana* is in fact his understanding of the Indian theatre where each character seeks a completeness of experience. He has been gradually ridding himself of the western influence he has incorporated in his early plays. Karnad has revived and improvised Indian folk/classical tradition to produce alienation effect in his plays. He has reconstructed the past on the stage and reinvented its meaning in the context of the present. He has contemporized mythologies and mythologized human concerns in his plays. Karnad has developed a new performance aesthetics that resonates with the postcolonial identity of Indian nation.

Narrative and Resistance

Narrative, an inevitable part of our lives, is implicit in everything which we interact with. It is, in fact, a universal form found in every human culture. Aesthetically, narrative is an integral and pervasive element in all forms of literary and artistic expressions. It can be anything that tells or presents a story; be it a text, a picture, a performance, or a combination of these. In other words, it is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters in genres like novels, plays, films, comic strips, and so on. Narrative is, therefore, an indirect way of representing a reality. Narrative can be appropriated to represent the self or the identity in various discursive practices. Language or its analogues often assumes the centre in many narratives. In postcoloniality resistance is an inevitable response to and consequence of oppression. Resistance spontaneously evolves out of the inequality of power relations. Resistance is variously expressed as centrifugal reactions like different forms of counter culture. Mainstream narratives endorse the hierarchy of power relations and conform to conventions of language and other forms of hegemony. Narrative appropriated by the colonized are counter hegemonic and alternative forms of discourses. They try to retard the oppressive strategies perpetuated by the colonialist discourses, manifested in the narrative forms of Eurocentric genres. Therefore, in the postcolonial context, narrative's relationship with resistance is vital. Of the diverse uses of narratives, its use as a tool of resistance is the most significant one. The conventional narrative styles followed by different genres of literature are too rigid to defy structural patterns. As this rigid mould seems to be an obstacle to the true representation of the self, many contemporary writers try to subvert the structures of the conventional narrative. They incorporate different kinds of languages, narratives and styles, to the conventional mode and make the literary genres a site for new experiments. Thus, the writers of the postcolonial world, be it poets, novelists, or playwrights, use the power invested in the narratives to resonate with their resistance to dominant European forms. As paradigms of language, narratives are endowed with latent power which can be challenged as forms of resistance. So narratives, like derivative discourses, can be appropriated into analogues of power. The postcolonial theatre is, therefore, a part of this resistance echoed in literature by the colonial subjects. In order to foil the dominating tendencies of western forms the postcolonial dramatists have conducted experiments in the narrative strategies and in their theatrical performances. They have generated new theatrical forms by negotiating between indigenous performances modes and imported imperial culture. The traditional, "contamination" of Standard English and the "hybridization" of western forms which they have explored are part of a programmatic strategy used by the postcolonial dramatists to subvert the hierarchies of power. The result is a wholly new form of theatre, which is neither a western mimetic form nor a purely indigenous one, but a hybrid of both. Thus, the colonial people have used theatre as a cultural/political tool of resistance and as a weapon in the struggle against European neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. The widespread cultural domination and oppression by the colonial powers is one of the defining features of postcolonialism. Postcolonial drama can be traced to the articulation of resistance to the cultural dominance and oppression. The long years of colonial subjugation robbed the indigenous writers of their own voices and reduced them to mimicry or silence. Their cultural identity was submerged in the invasion of the colonial culture. They were devoiced or silenced by the cultural hegemony practiced by the colonizers. The educated modernized subjects' unquestioned adaptations or mimicry of western plays failed to reach the common people as they could not appeal to their sensibility. These dramatists

began to perceive the existing western theatrical tradition inadequate to express their cultural ambivalence. The playwrights themselves were confronted with an identity crisis in such adaptations. Their decisive realization that a return to their indigenous culture and traditions alone could bring a distinct voice and identity, resulted in the emergence of the postcolonial theatre.

Visions of Resistance

Postcoloniality is more about engaging one's social and cultural past in a contemporary context, thereby providing a new insight into the epistemic quest for ethnic identities. Both Girish Karnad and Wole Soyinka employ theatre to this effect, though in different ways. Rooted in their respective postcolonial situations, they create a hybrid theatre language to address the contemporary socio-political situations in their countries. Both Nigeria and India have experienced the extended periods of imperial hegemony, which left a lasting imprint on these nations' culture. While attempting to subvert the influence of colonisation, their respective cultural traditions that are rich in their pre-contact forms aid both Soyinka and Karnad, who make ample use of this abundance as vehicles for driving home the political messages of their literary works. In this process, the hidden potential and subtleties of inferences available within the myths and rituals are exploited to accentuate the issues of the present. Devices, ranging from on-stage properties like costumes and masks, which give direct allusions to the cultural repertoire they bank their plays on, to abstract assertions of cultural purity, like rhythm and music of folk art forms, are employed to maximum effect in the plays by both Soyinka and Karnad. At the same time, their plays also bring out the different manners in which the same tools are employed in postcolonial hybrid cultures. For example, while the European theatrical tradition uses masks to hide the real nature of their characters, the indigenous art forms use them to bring out the inner self of characters. Unlike in European theatre, the characters in postcolonial theatre transcend their real selves to assume traits connoted by the masks. This attributive nature of masks is effectively used by Soyinka while dealing with Egungunian myths and Karnad when his characters stage play within play as in *The Fire and the Rain*. Both Soyinka and Karnad endorse the indigenous cultural notion that masks are not just stage properties with aesthetic justifications, but are keys to shift from one character to another inside the structure of the play itself. Again, both these playwrights improvise on the use of myths to adapt it to contemporary theatre aesthetics and use them as medium for socio-political criticism, thus attributing a new role to these stage props. The first hand experience that Soyinka and Karnad have of the colonial theatre help them to draw elements and techniques from both the indigenous and European theatre to generate syncretism and hybridity required to reflect the composite cultural realities of contemporary times effectively. Since the colonists made use of different strategies to command control over the different parts of the globe, so does the experience of postcoloniality differ from region to region and from person to person in accordance with the intensity of the colonial experience that each one undergoes. Through their reinterpretation of age-old myths, Soyinka and Karnad not only bring out the richness and vitality of their respective indigenous cultural tradition but also use them as powerful tools in subverting colonial idioms and power positioning attributed to individuals within social hierarchy. Thematically, both these playwrights exhibit common postcolonial traits as they place stress on the need of personal sacrifices for the general good of the community, which is again a subversion of the prominence attributed to individual over the community during the colonial phase. Unlike the Western world view where individual acts as the pivot, African society pitches community as its focal point and individual is just part of the collective. In both his ritual-based plays, *Death and the King's Horseman* and *The Strong Breed*, Soyinka brings out the need for personal sacrifices for the cosmic cycle to move along smoothly. And it is the younger generation, be it Yemen or the Western 1920s educated Olunde, who ultimately shows that extraordinary courage is required to overcome all odds and successfully complete their duty towards the society. Myths and rituals form the base of many plays of Karnad too. Pooru and Arvasu also belong to the younger generation, who make personal sacrifices for the general good. They are daring enough to lay down their individual interests for the cause of the community. Arvasu, just like Olunde, also depicts the spirit and energy that the postcolonial nations need to overcome the burden of centuries of psychological and political oppression. Thus Soyinka and Karnad return to the roots of their traditional wisdom and reinterpret the myths and rituals and add a shade of contemporaneity to them. By doing so, both Soyinka and Karnad assert their faith in humanity. While both of them borrow characters from their respective histories and legends, the characters

they invent better stand testimony to their innate sense of profound concern for man as a social being. Another factor that connects both Soyinka and Karnad is that they expound the native faith in a cyclical pattern of temporal reality, which is in contrast with the linear pattern imposed by the colonial legacy. Plays of Soyinka and Karnad are marked with characters, who always return to their roots after being exposed to Western system of education that is often projected as superior to native wisdom. Olunde and Daodu in *Kongi's Harvest* are brought closer to their own culture by their exposure to Western culture and education, as it happens with Tipu Sultan, who takes leverage of his exposure to Western education to counter the British imperial motives. Similarity in problematising the postcoloniality with reference to their political past notwithstanding, Soyinka and Karnad show differences in tone and timbre of expressions, as their respective postcolonial experiences are quite different. Hence Soyinka, who is overtly political in his dealings with the postcolonial condition, time and again emphasises the need for the harmonious development of the community, for the African world-view gives prime importance to the community. Karnad, on his part, raises the postcolonial issues of caste and gender that cripples the Indian society and leaves subtle pointers drawn from national history to addressing this issue. Through his plays he gives voice to the marginalised and those who exist in the fringes of the society – thereby dismantling the authority wielded upon by the patriarchal society. In Karnad's plays, the characters representing the patriarchal society attains the political shades of the colonial master just as the power mongers in Soyinka are the reflections of the colonial period, while the protagonists, who stand up to them, symbolise the emerging postcolonial identity. These playwrights also borrow characters from history and treat them with insights obtained over passage of time, thus bringing out shades of meanings to their actions that were most often wrongly interpreted by colonial historians. The authenticity of history has always been a topic of debate in postcolonial discourse, especially since history has been used by the imperial powers as a major instrument to control the subject people. History is used as a counter discourse strategy by both Soyinka and Karnad. Both of them evoke the collective memory of the people about their history and try to caution the people not to commit the same mistakes over and over again. Thus they both idealise the past and bring out the past of their nations with all the historical deformities. In *A Dance of the Forests*, Soyinka brings out the horrifying reality of slave trade and corruption that haunted the kingdom of Mata Kharibu and throws light on the continuation of the same mistakes in the present day through the life of Demoke and Madame Tortoise. The character of the General acts as the symbol of indomitable will ready to speak against injustice in the face of all dangers. By making the people face the unpleasant past Soyinka depicts a clear picture of the past. Similarly Karnad in his *Tale-Danda*, depicts a precolonial Indian society afflicted with the caste consciousness through the life and dreams of Basavanna who yearned and stood for a secular society. Through their works both Soyinka and Karnad exhort the people to consciously overcome the postcolonial amnesia and move forward. Another recurring motif in works of Soyinka and Karnad is the native historian, who is shown as attempting to challenge the colonial recording of local history. These characters are overt manifestations of postcolonial urge to revisit one's own past with a new perspective. Another device that Soyinka and Karnad employ to highlight the chinks in their national histories is by depicting the power struggles that existed in the past, which indirectly helped the colonial domination. *Kongi's Harvest* presents the clash between traditional power structures represented by Oba Danlola and the despot Kongi craving for absolute power. Soyinka advocates that the present postcolonial scenario demands an amalgam of the tradition and modern qualities. He brings out the destructive qualities of the phenomenon of Kongism and demands the eradication of the phenomenon. Similarly, in *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* Karnad presents a native version of the life and dreams of Tipu Sultan, a picture quite contrary to the colonial representation of the great patriot. Along with that he also presents the picture of the native Indian rulers quarrelling among themselves, which served as a booster for the British encroachers and their strategy to rule India by the 'divide-and-rule' policy. Finally, both Soyinka and Karnad identify rightly and employ effective language as a potential counter discursive tool for the postcolonial framework of their plays. Language has been a major tool employed by the colonisers to thrust their authority upon the colonised and all native languages were deliberately sidelined by them to establish English as the stamp of authority. By using English as their medium to convey their postcolonial realities, both Soyinka and Karnad use the same strategy used by the colonisers to counter the oppression imposed upon them. They deliberately induce the style and diction of their native tongues into the English language and adapt the

coloniser's language to suit their purpose. But in keeping with the postcolonial contexts of their native countries, these playwrights differ in the way they manipulate the coloniser's tongue. Soyinka makes use of techniques like mimicry, code-switching, code-mixing and the use of Pidgin English along with extensive use of proverbs, poetry and music from the native Yoruba culture to highlight the postcoloniality of his plays. On the other hand, Karnad draws extensively from the language structure and patterns of classical Sanskrit and the linguistic pattern of Kannada, his natural language, to create this effect. Karnad uses proverbs and songs, which are loosely translated from the original language, and woven intelligently into the English narrative pattern of the play. The imagery and diction used in these verses effectively give characteristically Indian tone to the play, which augments the choice of theme and tenor chosen by the playwright. Both Soyinka and Karnad also bring in elements of native speech rhythms into the English language and successfully make use of the alien tongue to reflect the native sensibility— native symbols and images which invoke the collective memory of an abundant and rich native tradition. However, Soyinka experiments more with language as he stretches English to its limits and explores the potential of appropriation, whereas Karnad more or less adheres to the classical spirit of adapting a foreign language to express the postcolonial quest for indigenous identity. It is evident from the fact that Karnad wrote primarily in his natural tongue of Kannada and then translated the plays to English so as to reach out to a wider audience. Even when he writes in English, he makes sure that this element of Indianization holds good. In that manner, both Soyinka and Karnad encounter colonial legacy by their use of mixed and hybridised language to capture the essence of their fragmented history and richness of own culture.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to analyse the impacts of colonialism on different nations, with specific reference to work by Girish Karnad and his continuing engagement with postcolonial projects to counter the legacy of colonialism. As Soyinka and Karnad highlight through their works, issues of political suppression and corruption of values do not end with the colonial era. Writers and artists in the postcolonial period find their mooring points by returning to roots and re-interpreting their past with a new insight. The assimilation of the indigenous culture happens in many levels. It can be seen that Postcoloniality evokes similar reactions, even while retaining individual characteristics. While Soyinka puts up an intensely political stand against the White domination, Karnad attempts to assimilate the lessons of colonialism to his contemporary realities subtly. The undercurrent of both attempts, however, remains to highlight the resurgence of pride in national consciousness. They reiterate the need to place the community ahead of the individual. This subversion of the colonial tenets bonds these two playwrights and leaves scope for furthering the enquiry into the issues raised by them in their plays.

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