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Language: Colonization, Decolonization, and Politics in Girish Karnad's Broken Images

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Abstract: The word 'Language' originates from the Latin term "Lingua," which translates to "tongue." The idea that language holds in itself culture is largely believed, and culture bears all of the values that shape our understanding of who we are and where we fit in the world, especially through literature and art. As a result, language becomes intrinsic to our individual identities as human beings, with unique qualities and histories as well as unique connections to the outside world. Recognizing the crucial role of language and culture, colonial powers deliberately used language as a cultural instrument to stealthily spread their beliefs, viewpoints, and practices throughout the colonization era. By using a nuanced approach, they attempted to strengthen the colonization process and made it easier for their beliefs and methods to permeate the civilizations they wished to rule. In many instances, local languages were systematically forbidden by colonizers, and colonized countries were forced to refrain from speaking their native tongues due to the colonizers' linguistic encroachment. The conquered civilizations were frequently forced to bow to the authority of the colonialists due to their diminished linguistic and cultural power. These conquered nations occasionally even absorbed elements of the linguistic and cultural supremacy of the colonialists. This was the modus operandi of the British colonizers in India too, English writing in India became increasingly popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, partly due to the rise of nationalism. The English language developed into a powerful and incisive tool for emotional expression.

Key Words: cultural power, colonialism, nationalism, lingua.

In Indian literary circles, the medium an author chooses to represent the Indian context is often tied to the author's identity when it comes to language issues. The use of the language English by non-native English speakers is something that now happens rather frequently but in the later 20th century after the Independence of India, it was a matter of great debate over loyalty to the nation. This leads to ascertaining, via literary representation and medium, how an individual's identity is created and constructed within the cultural and sociopolitical context.

Whether Indian writing in English is superior or inferior to the literary works produced in other Indian languages is one of the key issues raised in this context. Key polar themes that are utilized in these circumstances include artificial/genuine, replica/artistic, analytical/oblivious, ignorant/profound, and so on.

Hindi was designated as India's official language by leaders after India gained freedom from the colonial powers of the British in 1947 to promote national cohesion and facilitate interregional communication. However, Hindi and English continue to be recognised as official languages today.

Girish Raghunath Karnad was one of the 20th-century playwrights who transformed Indian theatre into a national institution. This genre has been improved by his abilities as a performer, director, producer, poet, writer, critic, and translator. He travelled the world representing India as an ambassador of culture and the arts. India's highest literary award, the Jnanpith Award, was given to him in 1998. His plays, which are a part of the postcolonial literary movement, are full of Indian sensibility and customs. Returning to its origins,

he revitalized Indian English play and demonstrated how myth, folklore, and history can be an effective tool for dramatizing current events.

One of the very rare writers who expressed themselves creatively in many languages is Girish Karnad. He wrote in Kannada at first, then translated it into English. Despite receiving a coveted Rhodes Scholarship to study at Oxford University, he wrote the majority of his plays including *Yayati*, *Tuglaq*, *Hayavadan*, *Nagamandal*, *Bali: The Sacrifice*, etc. in his native language, Kannada. He examined and made observations on modern society in his writings in Kannada, taking into account the socio-cultural sensitivities of the local Kannada speakers as he related current events to historical, mythical, and folk settings.

Even a cursory glance at Karnad's body of work reveals an intriguing detail: the dramatist preferred to express himself literary in his native Kannad, but once his works were translated into English, they gained more recognition. He began doing this at the request of his fellow theatre professionals, particularly well-known actor Alyque Padamsee, who was eager to present his *Tuglaq*. According to Karnad, faithfully translating the plays necessitates transforming the original language's culture into a new one. These seem to be the clear explanations for Karnad's decision to do his English translations of his plays.

Indian authors who write in English are blamed do so because it gives them access to a wider readership, more exposure both inside and outside of India, and a wider range of publishing channels. Writers like Mahasweta Devi, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir, Mahesh Elkunchwar, Harindra Cattopadhyaya, and Girish Karnad, who wrote in both English and vernacular, had been puzzled by these enduring problems.

One of the pioneers of modern postcolonial criticism and cultural theory, Homi K. Bhabha (b. 1949), took the word "hybridity" from biology. An organism created by crossing two separate creatures or species is referred to as a "hybrid" in science. To explore the identities and subjectivities created within the colonial subject relationship, Bhabha appropriated the word and idea.

In Bhabha's theory, hybridization—which is comparable to the scientific notion—refers to the formation of new mixed identities as a result of the blending of many cultures. Thus, interaction between two or more cultures can lead to the process of hybridization.

Broken Images by Girish Karnad, which was released in 2010, addresses the topic of language politics in Indian literary circles. Karnad addresses topics like the argument over language between Kannada and English. He discusses the concern Indian-language authors have for their native tongue, given that English-language writers enjoy more literary recognition and significant career advancements.

The play addresses the politics in India associated with the use of language in literary culture, especially concerning the assertions made by writers in English and other Indian languages. The monologue's title and preface are borrowed from *The Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot, which also tackles the problem of a strong identity. In this context, the title of the monologue is a signifier of the divided identities, which are indicated by the semiotic figure of Manjula Nayak, who illustrates the predicament faced by Indian authors who write in both English and vernacular. The drama exposes the protagonist, Manjula Nayak's avarice in trying to capitalize on the skills of his deceased sister.

Karnad illustrates how the uneven worldwide status of the genre produces hegemonic divisions within the Indian literary world in this monologue, which links language to the genre and dramatizes the whole discussion. Manjula Nayak is charged to have physically and socially distanced herself from Indian literary tradition with her having published a best-selling English novel, which has come to symbolize this entire dispute. However, this accusation also raises other issues because she is subsequently charged with being unfaithful to Indian sensibilities, a charge she attempts to refute in the interview by presenting her photo. Karnad dispelled the notion that no writer can genuinely express themselves in English by stating in his play *Broken Images* highlighting the point that writers who produce in their native language might be doing the same.

Karnad was inspired to write the play after hearing Shashi Deshpande describe how Indian English authors publishing in India got fewer positive reviews than those published overseas. Referring to the state of Indian literature, Karnad claimed that whereas regional writers must struggle to obtain recognition, financial support, and critical acclaim, English writers have similar benefits. The objective of this study is not to prove the supremacy or dearth of regional or English literary works. Instead, it seeks to integrate literature in the English language with an Indian identity into the mainstream of Indian writing. "Indian-ness" ought to be developed as a topic only for identifying Indian literary works.

Indian-English authors Arvind Krishana Mehrotra, Nissim Ezekiel, and P. Lal contend that "English was not a deliberately chosen or elitist medium, but simply a natural expression of their private and social experience." Karnad too stated this through these lines in *Broken Images*:

"I wrote the novel in English because it burst out in English. It surprised even me. I couldn't understand why it was all coming out in English. But it did. That's all. There is no other explanation."

Later, in an interview about the "politics of writing," Girish Karnad also stated the following: "It's not just me; it's the whole genre of Indian writers in English who are attacked. It's the money and recognition that English brings which is a point of envy."

The identical defenses Manjula made in *Broken Images* in response to the announcer's question are also made there:

"Intellectuals whom I respected, writers who were gurus to me, friends who I thought would pat me on my back and share my delight—they are all suddenly breathing fire. How dare I write in English and betray Kannada!"

In his essay "Imaginary Homelands," which was published in *Granta's* 1992 collection of the same name, Salman Rushdie contends that authors may and must use the English language to address the problems facing recently independent or developing countries, rather than viewing it as something to be ignored or undervalued.

"One of the changes [in the location of anglophone writers of Indian descent] has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the opinion that we can't simply use the language the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our purposes. Those of us who do use English do so despite our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free."

Through the following lines, Karnad poses the question of what constitutes unethical behavior when money is generated by creativity if one gets their bread honestly.

"A pundit for instance has stated that no Indian writer can express herself—or himself—honestly in English. 'For Indian writers, English is a medium of dishonesty.' Of course, one could also ask how many Kannada writers are honest in what they write—in Kannada. But if you did that, you would be immediately condemned as a traitor. "

The play's protagonist, Manjula, is accused of betraying her tongue and committing a crime. She exchanges her artistic ability for cash and those who write in English are labeled as "prostitutes." The author appears to be stressing the fact that authors who write in their native language accept royalties and trade their works for them as well. What's wrong with a writer promoting his culture to a global audience in a widely spoken language? Manjula contends that

"A writer needs audiences where she or he can find them! My British publishers said to me: 'We like your book because it's so Indian'"

In a brief conflict, one of the most remembered exchanges was between the author Vikram Chandra and late Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee. Meenakshi Mukherjee had observed that certain Indian writers in English have a propensity to exoticize India needlessly, creating modern-day equivalents of sadhus and maharajas in an attempt to create authenticity. Mukherjee highlighted the usage of terms like Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha in the titles of Chandra's collection of short tales, *Love and Longing in Bombay*, as an illustration of this tendency. In a rebuttal to Meenakshi Mukherjee's argument that Chandra and other writers from the diaspora failed to capture the essence of India, Vikram Chandra, said that Indian critics like Mukherjee, whom he labeled "commissars" and "self-proclaimed guardians of purity and Indianness," had built a "cult of authenticity" around a nationalist dream of Indianness.

The stakes of the issue escalated tremendously through this kind of divisive discourse, culminating in inflexible and ultimately pointless binary oppositions: desi vs paradise and genuine versus treasonous.

When it comes to the writing styles of Indian authors in English, a notable characteristic of a large portion of their work seems to be the stylistic influence of the regional tongues. Another characteristic of Indian English authors is that they have acculturated English in terms of an "Indianized context," rather than merely "nativizing" stylistic features of the British mother tongue.

In response to the accusation that she writes in English for pay, she says:

“A Kannada proverb says: ‘A response is good. But a meaningful response is better.’ Meaningful: Arthapoorna. The Kannada word for Meaning is Artha—which also means money! And of course, fame, publicity, glamour...power.”

Even so, when Manjula is shown to be a plagiarist, all of her defenses are refuted.

Indian legends, myths, history, and folklore, figures with deep roots in culture in India, Natak Company conventions and Yakshagana combined with Classical Indian performing arts methods, and English which is Indianized to fit the setting and context—all of these indigenous subjects chosen by Karnad for the plays he wrote established to be detrimental to colonial stereotypes, drama theories, and hegemony of culture.

He not only created an ideal for writing but also responded to colonialism; this is a wonderful example of how to achieve "decanonization and decolonization" and advance the cause of intellectual and cultural freedom (Avadhesh K Singh. *Interventions*. 13). Karnad embarks on a mission to decolonize Indian English drama, revitalize Indian cultural and historical heritage, and free it from the chains of Eurocentric rule.

Karnad also opposed the colonizer's method of inducing mental servitude, which involved: (a) hurting or disregarding a community's culture, work of art, etc.; and (b) purposefully elevating the language of the colonizer. To preserve or revive the notion and reality of community against the colonial system, he employs ideological opposition. His plays powerfully represent his fight for artistic independence, as well as the demolition of the European "construction" of the Oriental region as the Dark Other.

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