



Studying natural reality in the compulsive decisions by the protagonists of Girish Karnad's plays

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Abstract

The paper intends to focus on the questions: Why do the protagonists seem to be following the same pattern, in the selected plays and why don't the protagonists attain their dreamt aim? How and why the protagonists were or were not 'legitimate', when they imposed their 'assured ways on the 'people'? These questions have been explored in the light of different defining factors and kinds of definitions, generally come across about reality.

In a wider sense, reality includes everything that is and has been, whether or not it is observable or comprehensible. In simple words reality embraces everything that has existed, exists, or will exist. It can be inferred that reality is the conjectured state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear or might be imagined. The author has formulated his view on the postmodern observation that society exists for the good of its members; that society is divided into two opposing classes; that knowledge is worth seeking for its own sake. Some meta-narratives are described as 'grand narratives'. These are general accounts of human society and its history, as provided by Christianity, Hegelianism or Marxism. The view that history is a process of human emancipation is another 'grand narrative'.

However in the plays of Karnad the protagonist come across situations, which compel and force them to act and respond either in accordance to traditions or to take decisions, as they deem fit. The grounds in the characters' temperament, desires, and moral nature of their speech and actions prove to be of 'anti-foundationalist'. The one group of the protagonist exercises its 'authority' to create the 'ideal' world, (for example Tuglaq) and the other 'group' (people who protest) resists against the change.

Keywords: protagonists, anti-foundationalist, grand narrative

Introduction

Natural Reality is studied under Naturalism. According to M H Abrams, "natural reality is claimed to be more accurate depiction of life than realism. Naturalism "is not only, like realism a special selection of subject matter and a special way of rendering that material; it is a mode of fiction that was developed by school writers in accordance with a particular philosophical thesis. This thesis, a product of post-Darwinian biology in the 19th century, held that a human being exists entirely in order of nature and does not have a soul nor any mode of participating in a religious or participating in a religious or spiritual world beyond the natural world.; and therefore such a being is merely a higher order animal whose character and behaviour are entirely determined by two kinds of forces, heredity and environment."

Grand Narrative, according to Thomas Mautner, "Stories that under pin the legitimacy of a commitment or activity. The concept was introduced by Lyotard. Examples of such stories are: that society exists for the good of its members; that society is divided into two opposing classes; that knowledge is worth seeking for its own sake. Some meta-narratives are described as 'grand narratives'. These are general accounts of human society and its history, as provided by Christianity, Hegelianism or Marxism. The view that history is a process of human emancipation is another 'grand narrative'. Lyotard does not favour adherence to some 'grand narratives' because they are characteristically modern. Lyotard favours the 'postmodernism' because human affairs are more fragmented

and neatly structured than such meta/grand narratives (2).

My Observations about Characters of Girish Karnad with Reference to *Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga mandala*

Time and again, I read the plays - *Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga mandala, Wedding Album, Boiled Beans on Toast, Two Monologues: Flowers*, and *Broken Images* - by Girish Karnad. A common pattern, in the actions of the main characters of the selected plays, compellingly caught my attention. Karnad had presented the main characters (protagonists) in such way that they seemed to put in their heart and soul in the efforts to create an ideal atmosphere. The principal reason behind their acts was that they wished for harmonious living for everyone around them. A person inherits two "compulsive instincts – especially hunger, the drive to accumulate possessions, and sexuality" – and then comes the turn of "the social and economic forces in the family, the class, and the milieu" where the person is born. This idea has been explored much by the French literarian Emile Zola and he termed it "le roman experimental", which means the novel organized in the way of a scientific experiment on the behaviour of the characters. American writers, such as Frank Norris, Stephen Crane Theodopre Dresier made efforts to present their characters with scientific objectivity, elaborated documentation and medical frankness. In the author's estimation, the same ideas are applicable, when the characters of his selected plays. The selected those characters who were the victims of "glandular secretions

within and sociological pressures from outside. In contrast to the classical literary characters, (who were either protagonists or antagonists in the web of “will against gods, enemies and circumstances”), these characters proved to be “pawns” disintegrating or “wiped out under multiple compulsions” (P. 335-36).

The term reality has been defined in *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English*, Oxford University Press, 2005, as "reality • noun (pl. realities) 1. The state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them. 2. A thing that is actually experienced or seen. 3. The quality of being lifelike. 4. The state or quality of having existence or substance." Thus in a wider sense, reality includes everything that is and has been, whether or not it is observable or comprehensible. In simple words reality embraces everything that has existed, exists, or will exist. It can be inferred that reality is the conjectured state of things as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear or might be imagined. (32).

Philosophers, mathematicians, and other ancient and modern thinkers, such as Aristotle, Plato, Frege, Wittgenstein, and Russell, have made a distinction between thought corresponding to reality, coherent abstractions (thoughts of things that are imaginable but not real), and that which cannot even be rationally thought. By contrast *existence* is often restricted solely to that which has physical existence or has a direct basis in it in the way that thoughts do in the brain.

‘Realism’ is an attempt to explain ‘reality’ in different context. According to the, *Dictionary of Philosophy* (2), The meaning of realism varies with the context in which it is used. An attitude of ‘hard headedness’ is not given to speculation and individual but keeping a firm grasp of what is actually the case- this is called a realist attitude. Entities of a certain category exist independently of what we believe or feel about them. This attitude about reality is discussed under some conceptual headings.

Ontological Realism

It is the view “to effect that entities of a certain category or kind exist independently of mind or what we think.” As a result, the entities are to be discovered. Due to this, ignorance and error is possible. It is accepted that we live in a world that exists independently of us and our thoughts, and hence some facts may be beyond our grasp, in the sense that we are unable to confirm that they obtain metaphysical realism.

Conceptual Realism

It is the view “that universals exist independently and objectively, and do not owe their existence to the particular individuals of which they are attributes, nor to being conceived by a mind.”

Scientific Realism

The view is that “most of the theoretical entities such as electrons and quarks, which are postulated in a true scientific theory to explain observable phenomenon are real, independently existing things.” Some writers, like Girish Karnad use scientific realism in a more general sense for various kinds of realisms that are in harmony with a scientific world view.

Moral Realism

“There are moral facts independent of our beliefs and attitude. This is called moral objectivism or moral cognitivism. There are moral facts independent of the will of divine or of human law givers.” Moral realism is used to in an entirely different sense for the realistic view of human character and conduct.

Epistemological Realism

This view states that “a mind – independent world exists in combination with the view that in perception we mentally grasp qualities and objects that are part of that world.” The contrast is with idealism, according to which ultimate reality is mind, and the external physical world is a mind dependent construct.

Legal Realism

The aim was to purge legal thought of political and religious ideology and instead develop “a legal theory that could serve as a sound basis for legislative and and judicial decisions.”

Political Realism

It contains 3 points. A. the empirical, value free, approach to the study of politics. B. that politics is or ought to be the art of possible, realizing and accepting that constraints imposed by existing condition and to act that within that frame work, in contrast to those, who chose to resist it. C. moral consideration ought to be irrelevant to political decisions; that only power and self-interest count; that might is right.

Literature

Realism is a style which aims to keep imagination within bounds and to avoid embellishments, in order to keep faith with the way things really are, presenting common place things and events in the lives of ordinary people.

This discussion about reality, till now has brought forward the following facts that: 1. Reality includes everything around, universe, life in other words, ‘total existence’ whether concrete or abstract with all the definitions/isms. 2. Reality is a state of things, as they actually exist, rather than as they may appear or might be imagined. There is a reality above and beyond, where man has no access or control, in a sense that the interaction between the reality and man is not at par, since the man is a very small part of the whole existence. 3. The man being at the centre in this drama of whole existence, who feels, analyzes, responds - to reality or the reality on bases of his/her perceptions, understanding and requirements – the way he/she deem fit. 4. The man has some awareness of reality or the reality; therefore he/she has truths, speculations, expectations, which are part of his life.

Protagonist

According to M H Abrams, “the chief character in a plot, on whom our interest centre is called the protagonist (or alternatively, the hero or heroine), and if the plot is such that he or she is pitted against an opponent, that character is called the antagonist.” Therefore Hamlet is the protagonist and King Claudius the antagonist in Shakespeare’s play, *Hamlet*. Similarly Tuglaq, is the protagonist in the Karnad’s play Tuglaq. The relation between him and his opponent is of conflict. If the antagonist is evil, or capable of cruel and

criminal actions, he or she is called villain. In additions to the conflict between individuals, there may be conflict of a protagonist against fate or against circumstances that stand between him and a goal he has set himself. The conflict happen between opposing desires or values in the protagonist's own temperament." (P. 294).

In the play, *Tuglaq*, for example Tuglaq, dreams an ideal state where people of different religions can cordially dwell together. He is convinced that the aim can be achieved by shifting the capital a thousand miles away from Delhi to a distant place. However, the reestablishment of the capital in that distant place results in bloodshed, treachery, unhappiness and destruction. The pattern reveals that, there is an 'aim' and there is an 'assured way' to get it (In case of *Tuglaq*, the shifting of the capital). The 'assured way', is followed by the protagonist, yet the desired legitimate 'aim' remains elusive. The same pathetic situation with the protagonists gets repeated in rest of the selected plays. They persistently follow their 'assured ways', yet the desired destination of freedom, respect and happiness remains unattainable. Some questions arise from this situation. Why do the protagonists seem to be following the same pattern, in the selected plays and why don't the protagonists attain their dreamt aim? How and why the protagonists were or were not 'legitimate', when they imposed their 'assured ways on the 'people'?

The situation also reveals that there are different types of people, which can be put in 'groups'. Since these groups have common 'voices' therefore these groups in my opinion may also be called the 'protagonists'. The one group of the protagonist exercises its 'authority' to create the 'ideal' world, (for example Tuglaq) and the other 'group' (people who protest) resists against the change. Here the question arises- Is Karnad, through the one group of protagonists trying to expose legal or 'legitimate' politicized post-colonial practices, like, the 'right' to exercise 'authority' against the 'resistances'?

It is possible that Karnd might be having some soft deliberations for the postmodern ideas of Lyotard and Baudrillard. One possible response takes shape in this nuance. Postmodernism interrogates any notion, philosophy or ideal of general, universal or totalizing theory, a common ideal and aim (Marxist- ultimate emancipation, Enlightenment idea of Science, Freudian-Repressive psychosis of all civilizations). According to Lyotard-this is the resistance towards all "grand narratives". It celebrates plurality, heterogeneity, and the small, local innovative, marginalized and unfinished narratives that respect differences and specificities of cultures, individuals and regions. It is thus "anti-foundationalist", refusing any stable or unified foundation to subjectivity, lives, history and reality. It prefers the liminal (border figures, thresholds, mobile and constantly reforming) positions rather than stable or fixed locations. However in the plays of Karnd the protagonist come across situations, which compel and force them to act and respond either in accordance to traditions or to take decisions, as they deem fit. The grounds in the characters' temperament, desires, and moral nature of their speech and actions prove to be of 'anti-foundationalist'.

Conclusion

The narrative in Girish Karna's plays is a story, involving

events, characters, and what the characters say and do. They are explicit narratives that are told by a narrator. In his drama, the narrative is not told but evolves by means of the direct presentation in the context of the actions and speeches of the characters. The position of Karnad's characters the social, economic and political state, modernism is the intellectual, philosophical and theoretical enterprise, which seeks and finds refuge in the state of postmodernity. The chief habit of the characters is alliance to the thought that signification and narration are as ends in them, rather than as sources of any truth. This means that the process of representation seeks not to offer any insights into reality, but to call attention to itself as nothing more than a game of representation. Thus they are making efforts in Lyotard's formulation, to "present the unrepresentable".

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