

## Impact of Brechtian Theory on Chandrashekhara Kambar an Analysis of Jokumaraswamy

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### Abstract

Drama is very popularly known as the 'fifth Veda'. Since ages the concept of drama has been to provide entertainment & pleasure to the audience. The Indian as well as Western playwrights have written plays with instruction and entertainment as their objectives. But what actually is the effect of these plays on the audience? Many theorists have given their principles on the dramatic ends and Aristotle is the most prominent among them who has proposed 'catharsis' as the function of drama. The present paper throws light on the impact of Brechtian theory on Chandra Shekhar kambar's play 'Jokumaraswamy' as opposed to the principles foregrounded by Aristotle. In the postcolonial stance the mimetic theory of Aristotle is replaced by the 'Epic Theatre' of Bertolt Bercht which depicts the function of drama as 'anti-cathartic'. He mentions that the resultant effect of drama is not only to evoke the elements of pity & fear but make the audience think about the cause and effect of the play. Being influenced by the Brechtian theatre Kambar uses it in the Kannada context and adds new dimensions to the Kannada theatre. This paper explores how Chandra Shekhar Kambar exploits the traditional myths in the modernized terms and reflects Brechtian impact on the above mentioned play.

**KEYWORDS:** anti-cathartic, Brechtian theory, catharsis, mimetic theory, myths.

### Introduction

Karnataka has had a deep-rooted Theatre Tradition. It can easily be dated back to the seventh century. Yakshagana of the Coastal districts, Doddata, Sannata, and Krishna Parijatha of the northern districts and the Moodalapaya of the old Mysore area are some living examples of this great tradition. From the very beginning the Kannada dramaturgy is influenced by the Sanskrit folk and western dramatic traditions. The panorama of Modern Kannada drama is bound by history, lineage, folklore and mythology. All these aspects link the theatre to the past and are highly significant as they serve as the roots and soil; nourishing and sustaining the Kannada mind. Owing to the legacy of the British regime and the western education, the twentieth century Kannada drama becomes a blend of the east and the west. The drying sap of Kannada drama was revitalized by the great Kannada dramatists such as Karnad, P.Lankesh, Chandrasekara Karnbar and Chandrasekara Patil conscious of both the Western norms and the Indian tradition have contributed and enriched the contemporary Kannada drama. All these playwrights enrich the contemporary society delving deep into the myth and history of kannada culture. Among these well-known dramatists Chandra Shekhara Kambar is a unique dramatist because of his works with folklore background. We can say that no other dramatist has used absolute folk theater to his dramatic expression as Chandra Shekhara Kambar did in modern Kannada Theater. Kmbara's experiment of expressing modern experience through folk - style is a distinct one in Kannada Theater. He is one of the former generation of Kannada playwrights who have made efforts in reshaping the Kannada

theatre and initiated in framing his dramatic range when there was a direct clash —between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions and finally between the various visions of future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. Although rich in tragedy the Indian mind does not assess the tragic situation exactly in the manner of the west. The various dramatists mentioned above have made sporadic efforts to amalgamate the eastern and western tradition of theatre. The present paper is an endeavour to illustrate the impact of western dramatic principles over contemporary Kannada drama. For this we have analyzed the waves of Aristotelian concept of dramaturgy, its evidential opposition by a German playwright Bertolt Brecht and finally his idea of Epic theatre and non-Aristotelian approach practiced by a popular modern Kannada playwright Chandra Shekhar Kambar in his play Sambashiva Prahasana .

### **Western Dramatic Concepts and Brecht’s Non- Aristotelian Theatre**

For more than 2000 years the great Greek philosopher and theoretician Aristotle propounded principles of dramaturgy. His theories remained unchallenged with respect to the creation and production of a play. According to Aristotle’s principles – tragedy is a higher form of drama than epic due to its concentration and economy. It must essentially have a certain magnitude and leave a cathartic effect on the audience, purging the emotions of pity and fear. He defines tragedy as, “tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself..... in a dramatic not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear where with to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions .”[1]

But this idea of tragedy was questioned by a German playwright Bertolt Brecht, who advocated the “non – Aristotelian” theatre. He leads his way to a rejection of Aristotle’s term catharsis, empathy and imitation in favor of “alienation effect”. Being a rationalist Brecht, combined the past theatrical traditions and arrived at the concept of theatre of alienation. He demanded a theater of critical thoughtfulness which he called as an “Epic Theatre.” His non-Aristotelian Epic Theatre substitutes the elements of pity and fear with a readiness to help and an eagerness to know causality respectively. Through the close readings of Kambar's plays we can identify several factors which supports the point that Kambar was influenced by certain important aspects of Brechtian theory such as 'alienation effect', 'interruptive devices', 'complex seeing' and 'anti- cathartic effect' but discovered them in his own theatrical tradition. Considerably disillusioned and dissatisfied by the established theatre he chose the “epic theatre” as proposed by Brecht which heightens the alienation effect in the audience. He successfully adopted the Brechtian dramaturgy in his plays. Like Brecht, Kambar employs mythology to achieve “alienation effect.” Efficiently using the mythological traditions in his plays Kambar has tried to modernize his themes, focusing on the identity crisis in Jokumaraswamy and. 'Prof. Rajendra chenni a well known Kannada critic opines that “In the mythological based play 'Jokumaraswamy', Jokumaraswamy is the most devoted folk god for the sake of sexual-fertility. Kambor's open expression of comic sexuality of the native land ,conflict and tragedy all these interwoven in this play. Even though this play has its Own independent livelihood as well as the in-depth irony is hidden. Throughout the play this irony is carried so I called this as Brechtian irony not only to find out the impact of Brecht on Kambar to understand the indifferent ironic features maintained by Kambar on

language and act".[2] A playwright needs a living theatre to put his work on acid test, evaluate its total effect on the audience and thereby get a chance to improve upon his performance. And Brecht's epic theatre proved to be a living stage for Kambar where the audience was left not just purgating their latent emotions but analyzing and commenting on the situation of the dramatic characters.

### **Theory and Practice in the light of Sexual fertility and Feudal oppression and Alienation Effect in Jokumarswamy**

The play Jokumarswamy is based on a traditional folk tale and follows the theme of the "sex and love intertwined with the act of devoting the folk god Jokumaraswamy for Sexuality-Fertility's sake." In spite of considering it just as a tale about the infertile women's devotion to Jokumaraswamy to bless her child and freed her from the accusation of infertility from the rigid mindset of the traditional society. Juxtaposing the Western influence on the Kannada mythology Kambar mentions that even the sexual relationship of the protagonist with the wife of feudal lord will not liberate the protagonists from their natural sociological demands. In Jokumarswamy Kambar employs native folk theatre strategies to present tragically futile aspiration for perfection. For Kambar, this mythological folk tale express the domination of feudal system on downtrodden people this conflict ,tragedy not only affect the audience by making them involved seriously at the same time it tends to be think on the class conflict which goes in accordance with the Brechtian theory of 'alienation effect' . The two protagonists in Jokumaraswamy - Gowda representation of dominant upper community and Basanya with a arrogant attitude towards the domination of Gowda. Agony strikes Gowda and makes him to think about his existence. He questions to his servant Gurya "Eh Gurya bloody son tell me who am I?"[3] As Brecht aimed to subvert the sympathy of the audience with the actors and the identification of actor with his role, Kambar also dealt with the interpretation of the ancient Kannada story which not only differs substantially from his originals but also indicates a bold attempt at investing an old legend with a new meaning. This proves to be an urgent relevance to present day thinking about man and his world. Brecht's main idea was to encourage his audience to criticize and oppose rather than passively accept what the eyes are seeing in the same way in the play Jokumaraswamy the protagonist Basanya seems like an avatar of Jokumaraswamy there is a complete resemblance between these two characters."They are calling come Jokumara" this dialogue of Basanya shows how he project himself in front of the people. In North Kannada Folk rituals Jokumara is the goddess of lower class. Mainly he is the symbol of fertility. The dialogue of Servant about Gowdthi "That is dham dham Gods Field" depicts the relationship between The Land and Female. This story gets resolved when the Gowdthi wife of Gowda gets convinced by Bassi to devote Jokumaraswamy to get Fertility and finally she gets it from Basanya who is the symbol of Fertility. All the stories about Jokumaraswamy ends with his death. But there is no tragic voice in this death. Because Goddess Jokumaraswamy is eternal. He born every year Wherever his blood flows that land become fertile . In Kambar's play death of Basanya is inevitable. But There are accurate clues which shows that death is not merely a death. "Mad girl she has forgotten me who is in her womb" this saying of Basanya is symbolically meaningful By rebirth power Basanya become immortal. Gowda died Even though he lives. It is here that the dramatist brings the case to court so the audience can judge it. Brecht wanted to distance or alienate his audience

from the character and the action; in the play Jokumaraswamy, Kambar also aimed to make certain distance emotionally from the characters and the action on stage, so that the audience could be able to reach such an intellectual level of understanding. In this process while alienated emotionally from the action and the characters, the audience would be empowered on an intellectual level both to analyze and perhaps even to try to change the world, which was Brecht's social and political goal as a playwright and the driving force behind his dramaturgy. The various Kannada dramatic conventions as the use of Sootradhara, unrelated episodes and representing god by common man by attributing him resembling qualities in Jokumaraswamy facilitates a „complex seeing“ in the audience. He is the connecting link to introduce the other characters and action in the play and a sort of vehicle to reveal the deepest thought of a major character. Kambara opines that they “permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative altitudes to the central problem. If we analyze the scene in Act I where Sootradhara's conversation with the audience we realise that Jokumaraswamy is a mythological story told in the modern context where the author analyses the situation of the protagonists not leading to catharsis but making the readers ponder about the real reasons of a happiness and contention diverting the tragic end with repose.

### **Conclusion**

The influence of western dramatic theatre cannot be ignored as it helps the native dramatists to dwell on novelty and effectiveness. This search for a naturalistic technique made Kambar follow Brechtian impact in his plays. The Brechtian „Epic Theatre“ opposes the theatre of illusion as proposed by Aristotle. Along with the recreation of established norms and traditions, Kambar has emphasized on the emotional relief obtained by the audience in their own individualistic states. Kambar delves deep into the traditional myths to spell modern man's anguish and dilemmas that are created in his mind. He does not take the myths in their entirety rather picks only fragments that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his imagination to make his plots interesting. Kambar's profound skill is at its fullest play when he attributed the goddess Jokumara to protagonist Basannya in natural way..In this way Both Brecht and Kambar reveal and establish modern man's relationship with the past and explored the dimensions of contemporary problems by placing continuous parallel between antiquity and contemporaneity. Apart from the purgation of the elements of 'pity and fear' the audience is rendered capable of rationalizing the dramatic situations after witnessing the drama. Kambar traversing the path paved by Brecht renounces the classical principle of pity and fear and favours of the process of alienation of modern man.

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