

Western trends of Marathi Drama in the context of “Garbo”

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Abstract

The impact of the massive world wars led to universal disintegration. The two uninterrupted world wars had completely violated the established system, philosophy, social and political order and finally brought the absolute hopelessness around the world. Although these wars have indirect impact in India but the same temper and emptiness can be perceived in all Indian creative writing of post independence era. The consequences of such upset time have led to theories and practices of modernity and modernism reflected in all field of literature especially drama and theatre in India. Modernity was became the probing mood of the 1960s and 1970s in literature and the arts in India. Traditions were being challenged and new forms and principles in writing and performance were being coined. Whether it was in Marathi, Bengali or Kannada playwrights across the country were dealing with these upset and vexatious concerns in their creative works. In the world of Marathi theatre Elkunchwar has become one of the leading light to spread modernism through his playwriting. He seems taking inference from western literary world in handling the techniques and bold representation of ideas, but at the same time he remains more original and real as his art is not a mere imitation but a blend of his creative inspiration which he adopts to reveal the changing Indian scenario in modern time.

The present paper will highlight the concept of multitude modernities as its realities to modern Indian Marathi theatre practice. The method will involve an examination of one of the selective plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar at certain scale of modernistic approach to gauge its mobilizations and understandings of the modern. The paradigms used to measure the modern are theatre of absurd, lost self, escapism and optimism in the play Garbo.

KEYWORDS: Modern, Marathi drama, absurdity, meaninglessness, hopelessness, lost self, filth, escapism and optimism.

Introduction:

Modern Indian theatre attained maturity due to the revolution in economic and socio political- system in India. The two continuous world wars had completely sullied the established system, philosophy, social and political order and finally brought absolute hopelessness, not only in India but around the world. A new class of Litterateur formed who were exhibiting common atrocities, vulnerabilities, disorder, frustration, disappointment through their works. Such up roaring emotions in writing brought many literary forms forth as avant-garde theatre, expressionism, existentialism, theory of alienation, realism, naturalism, symbolism, surrealism, absurdism, etc. Although these wars have indirect impact in India but the same mood and hollowness can be seen in all Indian creative writing of post independence. A wave of experimentation with modern approach has spread in all sphere of Indian writing such as Hindi, Kannada, Bengali and Marathi.

Like other Indian theatre, Marathi theatre has established a stronghold of modern Indian theatre. Freud and Marxism, War and peace, finances and sociology, science and technology, Sexuality and probity have changed the imperialistic and traditional-bound Marathi theatre. The period from 1945 to 1975 was remaining the most creative and experimental in Marathi literature. During this period the idea about the nature of literature underwent a radical change. The carnage of World War II, the great massacre which was an outcome of partition, deficiency of basic merchandise, inflation, shady dealing, and job crisis coupled with man's brutality and the demonstration of his wicked nature together with defilement of social norms generated in the litterateurs a mood of emptiness and vulnerability. Feeling of frustration, Futility, despair and hopelessness has given birth to a new type of literature in Marathi writing. Vijay Tendulkar, P. L. Deshpande, Mahesh Elkunchwar and Satish Alekar are those eminent names in Marathi literary world whose ceaseless effort influenced modern Marathi theatre throughout India. In fact in the post-independence era, besides Bengali theatre, Marathi theatre has been a singular driving force behind innovations and significant dramaturgy in Indian theatre. (rubin196)

The way Badal Sirkar's '*Evam Indrajit*' revolutionized Bengal theatre in 1963, similarly Mahesh Elkunchwar's '*Garbo*' was an epoch-maker in Marathi Drama and its theatre in early seventies which displays highly modernistic temperament and predicaments of current life, although for Elkunchwar it was remained a risky "proportion". Both plays are about the generation whom Elkunchwar called "We Young People" they are the class that does not believe in any throwback culture of system. People in both the plays share the same dissatisfaction and frustrated within and outside of their lives. In *Indrajit* individuals are conscious enough of happenings in their lives and live with the crumbling dreams they aspired. Samik Bandhopadhyaya marks difference between the two,

If Sirkar, from an early generation, could only lament the collapse of youth aspirations, with a precarious reaching out to an *Indrajit*, who is different from Amal, Bimal, and Kamal lost in the mire of mediocrity, Mahesh Elkunchwar's young people, a generation later, would rather break out into the defiance of living out their own lives with non-conformism for a credo; throwing up in the process, a small minority culture, containing within itself its own seeds of self destruction (Bandhopadhyay).

Unlike Sirkar, Elkunchwar wanted to show a rebellious youth who do not follow any system or tradition. His individuals only believe in acute freedom which seems hard to handle and ultimately lead to their down fall. In present paper an endeavor has been made by taking Elkunchwar's *Garbo* to confer an advanced change from the traditional Marathi drama by following ways.

***Garbo* and the Theatre of Absurd:**

In particular world war second was remained the medium that brought the absurd drama into existence. The resulted post war trauma made absurdity an essential part of common person's daily existence. The term 'Theatre of the Absurd' was introduced by Martin Esslin in his epoch making work *The Theatre of the Absurd* in 1961. Although the works of this style were violating the set principles of writing but still they were accepted and get succeeded. Works espouse this new trend of theatre in writing imply that the

human condition is essentially absurd for this Esslin martin stretched a fine difference between the absurd theatre and conventional theater.

“If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judge by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good plays has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerism of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflection of dreams and night mares; if a good plays relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogues, these often consist of coherent babblings.” (Esslin 21)

Elkunchwar adopts many of the techniques from the theatre of the absurd in the convention of Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, John Osborne and others. In many aspects *Garbo* falls into the category of absurd drama as in whole we do not find anything meaningful and conventional in entire play although characters tries to create some meaning but remain hopeless. An absence of lucidity and logical arrangement is visible in plot. It also portrays human predicament in face of death, loneliness and false impression of all kind, leading to apparent purposelessness and ultimate goal of life remain missing. Characters like Intuc, Pansy, Shrimant and Garbo are mainly doomed individuals ; who are lost and floating in an unfathomable universe and abandon the rational modes of thinking as these approaches are derisory. Play starts with an illogical beginning and ends with an unexpected abrupt murdering of Garbo without any concrete reason, thus there is a lack of development of plot from exposition to solution. Similar to *Waiting for Godot* , here in *Garbo* meagerness of language displays lack of meaningful human involvement; for instance most of the time we find characters are often indulge in bantering games and sometimes their words seem like bubble of air. It displays psychological realism, where external clashes expose inner disarray of human life and ultimately individuals confronts audience with cruel facts of lonely life in an unknown world. Thus *Garbo* is an absurd play where reality is meaningless, God seems nowhere and character’s life revolves around to a mere circular process from nothingness to nothing.

Lost self and Modern drama

In Elkunchwar’s *Garbo*, characters experience dilemma about their true identity and their possible roles in society they live. They would live a happy life if they get a chance to become what they intended to be but they seem alienated from their own society and find solace in each other’s company. It is due to as they do not find any possible meaning to exist. They do not live in their true selves and this bewilderment precipitate the formation of not only private but a social tragedy. Any Tragedy becomes inescapable when characters are unable to free themselves from the conflict between who they are and who they are supposed to be. Here characters belong to a weak community who are afraid to live with reality of their present lives and mostly guise the role which they find comfortable to uphold. Intuc who a professor who claims to be a famous writer of Maharashtra, but inside his heart he knows the very reality of his artistic genius. In the later part of play he himself admits the reality that how he has been always remain fake writer and his art in no great work but a terrible copy of others. Shrimanta the other

individual who is a small-time businessman and keeps hide his reality of being impotent and pretends to be the self which he is not in reality.

Escapism a general human application:

“Escapism is the avoidance of unpleasant, boring, arduous, scary, or banal aspects of daily life. It can also be used as a term to define the actions people take to help relieve persisting feelings of depression or general sadness.” (Wikipedia) An escapist escapes from true reality and love to reside in their own made reality, which is the product of their brain. In fact individual believe that they are in full control of their reality. Though they live in their own reality but still they have a sense that there is another world out there which controls but they chooses to ignore.

In *Garbo* Social reality which encircles the individuals of drama makes them feel suffocated and unhappy. They all seem living in their self created cocooned life as their life is nothing but a bundle of filth. All character in *Garbo* seems escapist who find shelter in a small flat in Mumbai. Here Pansy a poor young boy who is abandoned by his family and given shelter by Shrimant a rich businessmen who also harasses him sexually that he once attempt to commit suicide As he finds this an easiest way to escape from the filth of his life. Shrimant and Intuc a professor who are also a victim of social reality has explicit experience of outer world, keep themselves busy in any trivial entertainments or sexual use of *Garbo* because reality of their life is cumbersome. *Garbo* a B-grade film actress, whenever she feels dishearten or cheated from the ways of the worlds she comes to visit trio though it is her short time escape after that she goes back in the same grimy society. By the end all characters realize that there is no escape from the dirt of their lives except surrendering in the filth.

INTUC: Let's return to filth. The world we desired was not for us, could never have been. (laugh bitterly.) we are idiots, out to turn dreams into reality .(pause.) Let's go back to our old world now. The world of filth. As a punishment. And as a sort of consolation too. (49)

At one point when Pansy begs for going back to his home Intuc says, “There's no escape for you, Pansy. Even if you leave this place you are not free. And where can you go? (51)

Optimism

Optimism is a disposition or tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome (“Optimism”). Here in the middle of devastated dreams we find a ray of hope through some characters. They try to make their life more meaningful out of the filth they are living in. When *Garbo* casually slipped the information about her pregnancy it becomes the real matter of concern in the scene. Now the great question about finding the real responsible person behind this comes forth. When Intuc and Shrimant start shirking the responsibility, all of a sudden a thought of salvation came in Intuc's mind. Suddenly they start seeking salvation in a collective parenthood, “We are doomed people we have neither seen, nor experienced nor created anything beyond filth. Let us grab this opportunity. It's our only hope. We will create something beautiful out of this filth. The world will know that there is a life somewhere which is beautiful, pure, fearless, innocent...(40). This turnaround of shared fatherhood brings a new meaning to the play. Shrimant who has become impotent now

gets a solid solution to resolve his problem, on the other hand Intuc being an artist who couldn't create anything real or meaningful also gets a refuge' "their only chance to create something beautiful' in their life. Although this optimism give them a hope that three men fall under the spell of their own words but soon their all dreams get shattered when they find out that Garbo has lost the child while shooting a stunt scene. With the shamle dreams the weak community is once again is on the verge of collapse, as Pansy decides to go back to his home and Intuc move back into the old life, "Lets return to filth. The world we desired was not for us, could never have been we were idiots, out of turn dreams into reality. Lets us go back to our old world now. The world of filth. As a punishment. And as a sort of consolation too" (49).

To conclude we find that *Garbo* is a modernistic Marathi drama with all its western phenomena. Nothing significant turns up in the drama. There is no story or no meaning, in fact play ends by a sudden killing of Garbo when in hatred Shrimant stabs Garbo to death as she takes away their last chance to survive. This play is an absurdist play like *Waiting for Godot* they too keep waiting for Garbo. As Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* expects some hope or meaning from the arrival of Godot likewise Pansy Intuc and Shrimant also aspire dreams which Gorbo is going to fulfill but nothing happen except hopelessness. The main reason behind *Garbo's* acclaimed success in theatres is its depiction of situations which has a general human application. It pricks today's problems and focuses upon the young people as "we young people", "Who would rather break out into the defiance of living out their own lives with non-conformism for credo; throwing up in the process a small minority culture, containing within itself its own seeds of destruction" (Bandhopadhyay). Elkunchwar who defies orthodoxy in Marathi drama portrays truly this dilemma of all modern men in this play.

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