

**ECHOES OF EXPRESSION: NAVIGATING PSYCHE AND LANGUAGE POLITICS IN  
KARNAD'S BROKEN IMAGES**

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**Abstract:**

Shifting the context of his plays from myth, folklore and history Girish Karnad concentrates his dramatic imagination on modern man's post-colonial situation and existential angst in his monologue- *Broken Images*. It is significant that Karnad projects life and society in the real world which suffer from internal vacuity and external vanities. In some of his recent plays he has presented the contemporary human situation in varied manifestations. Portraying the contemporary reality in his plays he highlights morality on one hand and negotiates with the essentiality on the other. His contemporary classics *Broken Images* and *Wedding Album* have their groundings in the technology affected and culture infected Indian society. While the former is a dramatic monologue the latter is a one act play of nine scenes. In both the plays Karnad presents the subjective of life in the objectivities of purpose.

**Keywords:**

Linguistic prejudice, technology, psyche, betrayal, literary theft

Girish Karnad, born in Matheran (Maharashtra) in the year 1938, was one of the Modern India's greatest cultural figures; an accomplished actor, a path breaking director, innovative administrator, outstanding translator, and above all *the most extraordinarily gifted playwright of his times*. His plays were originally written in Kannada and later he had translated them into English. Girish Karnad's monologue- *Broken Images*, in Kannada ' *Odakalu Bimba* ' is derived from T.S. Eliot's literary masterpiece *The Waste Land* (1922) which is called the epic of modern era. The lines are:

“For you know only, the heap of broken images,  
Where the sun beats, where the dead tree  
gives no shelter.”

Unlike Karnad's other plays, it is not based on myth, history or folklore but it is complete shift from his continuous set pattern of writing. *Broken Images* is out and out a modern play, with introducing modern technology as T.V. Recorder, video shoot etc; so much so that advancement in scientific technology in India marks a noticeable description. as the monologue states:

“Ah! I see. New technology. Isn't it scary? The rate of obsolescence? (Listens) of course I have in London. And in Toronto. But when you think of Indian television studios, you always imagine them cluttered.”

The above dialogue shows scientific advancement in India as in London and Toronto. In an interview with Tutun Mukherjee Karnad says:

“When I returned to Bangalore in early 2004, I realized the extent to which technology pervaded and affected our lives. To me technology wasn't depressing at all. This was the age of image. We needed to understand its aesthetics and use it.”

The monologue is about a woman- Manjula Nayak. It is a monologue by her except few dialogues of the announcer of the Shree studio. She is forty years old and has a confident stride. She is a teacher in Bangalore, more at home in her regional language- *Kannada* than in *English*. She lives with her husband and sister Malini who is physically crippled. Manjula has been called to Shree Studio to give an interview regarding her novel- *The River Has No Memories*, which has got immense popularity not only in India but also abroad. However, the reality of the author of the novel is appalling, as the novel was written by her crippled sister—Malini Nayak not by her. The novel is about to be broadcast in the form of a tele- film in *Kannada*. However, the novel being written in *English*, has created a fiery debate over language politics. She is accused of betraying her regional language *Kannada*. For this, she has

been constantly denounced by critics. Being a Kannada writer and writing in English also reveals Karnad's situation in limbo. Aparna Dharwadaker writes:

“Indeed, it is intriguing to consider the figure of Manjula Nayak as a displaced version or anti- self of Karnad himself, in terms of both gender and experience. Karnad occupies a special place in the language debate by virtue of writing originally in Kannada as well as in English, and in translating from one language into another.”

After giving the interview about the novel when Manjula Nayak proceeds to leave, an image of herself (Manjula's) pops up on TV screen and starts interrogating her. It is her image that unfolds the truth of Manjula that she has betrayed her sister Malini and stolen her novel. She tries to cash in on a dead sibling's talent. She received a huge advance amount for her novel from British Publishers. In the process of the interrogation Manjula Nayak accepts to her image that she has stolen the novel of her dead sister Malini and got it published with her name on it. Karnad is of the view that technology could immensely change and affect the lifestyle of the people especially in cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad. He views that technology can speak to us and can become a tool to interpret us.

**Languageism: A Threat to Modern Indian Society** Languageism is a discrimination based on language. This is a continually growing serious problem in India. India is known for its diversity, and it includes the officially recognized languages and those languages and dialects which are not officially recognized but are used by people in the country. In the Post Independent era India has seen a rise in the controversies arising because of linguism/languageism. Even separate states were bifurcated because of linguistic differences. And people of some of the major languages feel threatened by the people of other major languages and this has resulted in serious conflicts at many times. Karnad has shown the linguistic conflicts with the help of two languages Kannada, the native language of Karnataka and English. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right and so is the use of language through which one wants to express. But some people for political gain play with other people's sentiments and create conflicts based on various languages.

Karnad states in an interview:

“The idea for the play came to me when I heard Shashi Deshpande talk about the problems of the writers of regional literature. I was advised to change the title because it had a literary rather than general appeal.” (in the interview with Tutun Mukherjee)

Manjula has written a novel which is in English and has got her fame throughout the world, but people of her own language get upset at her using English as the language of her novel and accuse her of treachery. She says:

“I have been accused of writing in English. Accused! As though I had committed a crime.” (264) But the reason behind this criticism and accusations are not literary or sentimental but they are based on jealousy and money. She later states:

“Yet the accusation hides- or perhaps reveals- a grim anxiety. As is clear from the dictum of the President of the Academy, what is at issue is not creativity but money. What hits everyone in the eye is the money a writer in English can earn. The advance I received for my novel- the advance only, mind you- helped me resign my job and concentrate on writing. Of course, it is a cause for jealousy.” (265)

In an Interview, the eminent Indian English Writer – Shashi Deshpande opines that English is growing increasingly and Indians have a great fascination for it, because of the glamourization of the language. However, she categorically emphasizes the fact that one should not distance oneself from the native language that proves to be the quintessential mode of expression. Language is a living entity, therefore needs to be felt and expressed. Manjula, in the monologue, betrayed not only her sister-Malini, but her language of expression also. She feels at home in Kannada and expresses her ideas potentially in this language, but she is not comfortable in teaching English.

**A Psychological Perspective of Manjula** The character of Manjula changes as the monologue proceeds and Karnad shows the depth and hidden parts of her personality. The development in her character can be compared with the three parts of consciousness as described by Freud in his

Psychoanalytical Theory. Id, Ego, and Super-ego are the three parts of the Psychic apparatus defined in Sigmund Freud's Structural Psyche, of which these are the three theoretical constructs in terms of whose activity and interaction our mental life is described. According to this model of the psyche, the id is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends; the super-ego plays the critical and moralizing role; and the ego is the organized, realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. The super-ego can stop one from doing certain things that one's id may want to do.

The beginning of the play shows the persona of Manjula's character, she shows a kind of personality that she wants to be seen by people. Here the mark of super-ego is evident on her personality as she seems to be highly moralistic and idealistic and confident enough to defend herself and criticize her opponents. However, with the entry of her Image, her character unfolds, and she is seen in a new light where she is challenged and poked by her image which symbolizes her unconscious mind. Her unconscious mind activates her ego which tries to defend her actions by justifications and lies resembling to truth as her ego tries to make a compromise between her super ego and her id, but the attempt fails. The continuous poking and interrogation of Manjula by her unconscious mind makes her personality unfold completely to its full limit and in the process showing the true colors of the personality of Manjula. The interrogation of Manjula by her unconscious mind reveals that though she thought that her super ego was having the upper hand in the matter of the control over her personality, but it is the id which is having the upper hand as it is revealed that her behavior is mainly driven by impulses and not by wisdom or reasoning. It is her need for recognition and her ambition that she lets her id take over her personality and that makes her steal the work of her dead sister. Taking her sister's novel and claiming it as her own puts Manjula under the radar is seen guilty of a serious intellectual crime—literary theft.

Plagiarism is an innovative form of the evil of cheating. Wikipedia defines it as the “wrongful appropriation” and “stealing and publication” of another author's ‘language, thoughts, ideas or expressions and the representation of them as one's own original work. It is considered as academic dishonesty and a breach of journalistic ethics.

Manjula is a successful author of short and long fiction in Kannada and a teacher of English in a college at Bangalore, though she never feels at home in English. On the other hand, her sister Malini is very good at English whose Kannada is limited to the maid and cook of the house. When Manjula unexpectedly publishes a novel in English that transforms her into literary phenomena of the decade, critics started pinpointing her that she has betrayed Kannada for the sake of fame, fortune and a vastly expanded audience. Though Manjula says that she loved her sister, yet her monologue reveals that she was not truthful in saying so. Her image makes her confess that she brought Malini to her house to inherit the big house left for Malini by their parents. In fact, she accepts that she never loved her. Manjula says:

“At that moment I knew--- that I hated the cripple. I had always hated her. I was only waiting for her to die” (285) The personality of Manjula develops from a talented, loving, caring person to a deceitful, jealous, cunning and opportunist one. The monologue reveals that the work, for which she is getting all the things of the world, was not her creation. It is gradually revealed that in the last days of her life Malini was busy typing in her laptop, Manjula was aware that Malini was writing something, but she did not know what it really was. So, after Malini's death, Manjula searches it and finds the printed copy of the novel and she immediately recognizes the power of the words of Malini. She remarks:

“It was brilliant. A masterpiece. You know that as a writer you could never dream of such heights. The passion. The clarity. The insights. The total control. A work of genius.” (283)

The work was signed as “M Nayak” which meant Malini Nayak, so Manjula takes advantage of the fact that she was also M Nayak (Manjula Nayaka) prior to her marriage and decides to get the work published in her own name. She mails a publisher in England who accepts the novel and pays her a huge advance. Plagiarism is a very high and sophisticated evil/act of crime as it does not hurt people physically or openly, but it hurts them emotionally and economically. The name, fame and money which should have been received by Malini as it was her creation, were received by Manjula. If Malini was not dead it would have been a brutal assault on her mind, creativity and talent and it would have affected her financially but as she was dead, she was not there to complain. Manjula hated her sister;

therefore, it was finally revealed that whatever she did, she did it deliberately. She stole the work because she hated her sister and was just looking for the right time. She says:

“... for six years, from her wheelchair, she had watched me, stalked me in every move. Then she had pinned me down in coruscating prose.... I had to do something she could not have possibly anticipated. I had to solve all problems at one stroke. I had to survive”. (285) (Pause)

And this time I had one advantage. She was dead and I was not. (Pause)

I published the novel in my name. I won! (The image claps. Manjula takes a bow. Smiling) (286)

Image: Wait a bit. Perhaps... she did win in the end?

Manjula: How do you mean?

Image: If she meant to prove to you that you were a fraud, she certainly succeeded. .... I am Malini Nayak, the English novelist. Manjula Nayak, the Kannada short story writer was decimated the moment she read my novel. She thus obliterated all differences of ink and blood and language between us and at one full stroke morphed into me.” (286)

In Girish Karnad's "Broken Images," the narrative revolves around Manjula Nayak, a successful writer struggling with the complexities of identity and self in the garb of language. As the central character of this monologue, Manjula becomes a prism through which the esoteric interplay of linguistic and language politics unfolds. Readers/audience witness a compelling turn as Manjula engages in a dialogue with her own image, both metaphorically and literally. Karnad skillfully chisels this psychological drama, revealing the internal conflicts of a writer haunted by the choices she has made in her literary endeavors. Manjula's odyssey becomes a mirror reflecting the broader societal landscape, where linguistic choices become means and medium of power. The characters, while minimal, play crucial roles in accentuating the linguistic dynamics at play. Through the lens of Broken Images, Karnad navigates the convoluted terrain of linguistic manipulation, questioning the appropriateness of medium of language. Karnad's narrative prowess shines in this monologue as he invites the audience to confront the multifaceted nature of language politics, assessing the psyche of the character and ultimately challenging preconceived notions about power, identity, and the profound impact of words on the human psyche in the backdrop of human relationships.

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