

EXISTENTIAL TRAITS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S BOILED BEANS ON TOAST

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ABSTRACT: Girish Karnad's play Boiled Beans on Toast distinctively depicted with various kind of characters. We perceived that almost all characters have some existential attributes. Existentialism is a philosophy which was developed in the 19th century. The main notion of existentialism is "Existence precedes Essence". How the individual looks and comprehend the world. Everyone in the play is depicted with an essential of existence of individuals in the society. After the spread of Covid-19, individuals are aware about the importance of existence, even better than before. In this era our lifestyle is merged with technology, we are lacking our human values. The main objective of this paper is to bring out how human beings are exist as individual in the world and how they are finding essence in their life. We will analyze the fundamental existential themes such as, Existence, Essence, Alienation and Freedom of choice in the play Boiled Beans on Toast.

KEYWORDS: Existence, Essence, Freedom of choice, Alienation, Individuality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Girish Karnad is known for his plays such as Tughlag, Hayavadana and Naga-Mandala. This play Boiled Beans on Toast is initially written in Kannada. Later it was translated into English and published in the year 2014. This play was named as "Benda Kaalu on Toast" in Kannada. He remains as a versatile person, script writer, actor, producer and director on Indian cinema. He has been honoured with the Padma Bhushan and was given the renowned Jnanpith Award for his scholarly accomplishments. This new play by Karnad has a reference to the establishing legend of Bangalore, in which an eleventh century Lord Veera Ballala was spared by an elderly woman who gave bunch of bubbled beans. In appreciation, the King named the spot "Benda Kaalu, the spot of bubbled beans. World War II creates a lot of impact to the people. It affects literary persons also. Before World War II most of them didn't realize the importance of existence, everyone concentrating on various themes. They felt they are living in the safest world. During the war time they witnessed casualties and holocaust. After World War II existentialism prevails to the society predominantly. Existential philosophers consider human beings more individually. Previously they were presenting the world in optimistic way, now they concern about the challenges that often had no solutions. Covid'19 also resembles the same scenario in the 21st century. Such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Berdyaev, Jaspers and Satre were contributed a lot to the existentialism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Girish Karnad is one of the remarkable writers in contemporary Indian English. Kirtinath Kurkoti stated: "His work is in the tone and articulation of extraordinary show. It has virtuoso and capacity to change any circumstance into a stylish encounter." Tughlaq and Hayavadana have been extremely successful on stage. Karnad made genuine emotional stanza system of Indian English dramatization. This is an enduring commitment. Generally speaking, show can't stay in disengagement from the scene. It is intended for portrayal of entertainers who imitate the saints of history. He utilizes folklore and history to handle contemporary issues. His Dreams of Tipu Sultan is considered as a best representation of historical work. He used Bangalore as background for this play Boiled Beans on Toast. This play is connected with set of people from different social strata. It explores several modern themes such as urban aspirations, consumerism, and environmental issues. He vividly presented the untold stories of ordinary Bangalore citizens and their struggles. In his work he

explains about existential crisis such as struggles and madness of modern people through day to day life activities.

III. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Boiled Beans on Toast is, as we discussed, a play which well expresses the value of human life. It painted with so many characters with different perspectives. In this paper we are going to analyse the individuals with existential characteristics. The word “existence” connected with state of living, individual’s own life and experience. The existentialist used the word existence to refer human existence. We are going to experiment play with the basic concepts of existentialism. Existentialism has many themes such as existence precedes essence, importance of choice, alienation, anxiety and anguish. We are mainly concentrates on Prabhakar, Anjana, Kunaal, Dolly Iyer and Vimala.

IV. DISCUSSION ON EXISTENTIAL TRAITS

A. Existence precedes essence:

1. The fundamental theme of existentialism is “existence precedes essence”, which conveys everyone exist in the world with or without their wish but they are trying to find their essence through their actions. The play is filled with twenty one characters everyone act as their own will. Dolly alies Rajalakshmi Iyer remains as a close friend for Anjana, throughout the play. She behaved as a resourceful person in the society. Through her conversations we are able to believe that she is well known so many powerful personalities in the society. When she was beaten up by her husband for pretension – it reveals her level in the society. For the sake of creating her essence she cheated other people.

2. Kunaal, son of Mr. and Mrs. Padabidri, wants to be a guitarist. But his family member demands him to be a Veena player. From their aspect he is good at Veena. He received basic training in Veena. Even his parents’ looks after him, he remains as a rebellion – Rebellion against their parents. Throughout the play he struggles a lot to find out his essence.

3. Anusuya, a gracious old lady, mother in law of Anjana, in her seventies spend her time with horse racing. She doesn’t involve in family affairs mostly. When Kunaal conveys that he will sleep over at Nandita’s house who is singer in their band. It makes her angry but she doesn’t reveal anything to Anjana or even Kunaal.

4. The cancer patients, who lived without hope in hospice, are portrayed with existential traits. When they are in pain, the patients can’t think of anything else. It fills every crack in their consciousness. It blanks them from the world. But when they are given palliatives and pain begins to recede – they begin to discuss their problems with you. Their hopes, plans. It’s wonderful. It clearly demonstrates the concept of existence precedes essence.

5. The maid servants in Anjana’s house are Vimala and Muttu. When the play opens conversation between Muttu and Vimala shows their individuality. Vimala is accused of stealing jewellery from another house in which she works. She is adept at lying and it is very difficult for the cops to find out where she lives. The anonymity that the city offers, provides a convenient cover to her. She accuses Muttu, the second maid servant for stealing her job in Padabidri’s house in her absence. She blackmails Muttu by telling her that her brother, Shankara is lying wounded in the hospital but does not reveal the name of that hospital. Their quarrel looks like meaningless but they are fighting for their essence.

B. Freedom of choice and Choice of Freedom:

1. Freedom for man exists in two paradoxical forms namely ‘freedom of choice’ and ‘choice of freedom’. Accordingly, if man is free, he must be free to choice, but he can either make a right choice which really sets him free or a wrong choice which enslaves him.

2. Two characters namely Kunaal and Prabhakar enjoy their freedom to take their decisions. When Anjana asks about the future of Kunaal – How are you going to make a living playing guitar? What kind of future - Kunaal says that please let’s not go over that again. I know every argument. I’ve to have a guitar. And I need it now, while I’m struggling to make a name for myself. Not when I’m bent and old and thirty-five. He bought a new guitar against their parents wish but in the money of their parents. It shows he enjoys a freedom of choice with some constraints. He is strong in his decision. At last he proves that he had taken a right decision.

3. Another active character in the play is Prabhakar Telang. He is about thirty five. His appearance shows that he is from village. Now he is in temporary position at his office. But he leads a comfortable and happiest life with his wife and daughter. He also enjoys freedom of choice in his life. He believes that he is fortunate to be in Bangalore otherwise he could have been in Mundgod where he was born and brought up. But the meeting with Dolly Iyer in Coffee café changes his whole life. Otherwise we are saying, his wrong choice made him to be a slave. Dolly offers that there is a regional manager vacancy is there in singapore branch Wipro office. Without knowing about the reality he is ready to fly over to Singapore. For entering into new job he had taken a loan of seventy thousand.

4. Even he is ready to send his wife and daughter to his native place. Mrs. Prabhakar argues with him that if he got a job in Bangalore, it makes me so happy. But he is strong in his decision he uses Dolly as a medium to convince his wife. He is not ready to listen his wife words.

5. But as for Prabhakar concern he had taken wrong decision. So he lost his job and land in native place. Now the life is absurd for him.

6. Anusuya enjoys her freedom in the way of spending her time with horse racing. Even for sake of horse racing she is ready to pawn her precious jewellery.

C. Alienation:

1. Alienation is another important aspect of existentialism. Alienation refers a person is surrounded with people but they felt some kind loneliness within themselves. This play is filled with nearly a dozen of characters but maximum characters are depicted with alienation. The central character Anjana is weeping on axing rain tree clearly expresses her loneliness. She not only weeps because of rain tree it closely related with her strength that is her husband. But he went to foreign for his business development. Most of the time she tries to kill her time. She also spends her most of the time in hospice which was started by Kishore in Karunshraya for cancer patients. Really now she is running the show completely.

2. In the beginning of the play Shankara forces his sister to arrange the rituals of Kalpana (come-of-age) in the home town (Karimangala). But Muttu don't say any answer to him. She says that she will discuss with her husband and inform you later. But Shankara again stresses that he is not agreeing with rituals in Bangalore. Finally the rituals are arranged in home town. In that celebration he is called for to pick up Kapalna, he says that what's she to me? What am I to you? Nothing, no relation. Don't you know that? He argues with his mother that what she had done for him. He complains his mother didn't do anything for him and his family. He quoted that his wife undergone two deliveries but you didn't support us even for that time also. Finally he says that you are not a mother of myself but a mother of Bangalore Muttu. Author vividly portrayed the alienation of Shankara through this incident. (page 48)

3. When Kunaal express his wish, as he want to be a Guitarist. This makes him as an alien within his family. Their parents want him to take his career as Veena player. His father Mr.Padabidri takes a medium of Anjana to communicate with him. It reveals the relationship between father and son. This is prevailed in most of the families in today's society. The relationship between Vimala and her sister in law shows that they are also filled with alienation. Even they are living in the same house they don't have good relationship with one another.

D. Anguish:

1. Another existential concept is anguish it remains as an extreme level of anxiety. In this play Mr. Prabhakar and Mrs.Prabhakar's portrayal clearly shows that they are leading their life with extreme level anxiety. Prabhakar enters to the house of Mr. Padabidri, he says that Mr. Padabidri asks him to meet in his house. But Mrs. Padabidri conveys her husband is not available. He will back on three or four days later only. It gives anxiety feel to the Prabhakar. She introduces Mrs. Dolly Iyer to him, enquires about the reason. He hesitates to reveal. "Please, please, don't misunderstand me". He continues he is in temporary position in his office. He is on probation. But Mr. Padabidri assured that there is one vacancy in Singapore office (regional manager). These words clearly express Prabhakar's anguish to the readers.

2. Mrs. Prabhakar expresses her anxiety when her husband reveals that he got job in Singapore. She even pleads him. She shows her wish by saying if you got a job here in our living i am so happy. But prabhakar convinces her, for this he uses Dolly Iyer as medium. Mrs. Prabhakar tries to find her essence but she fails in that.

3. You can hold up here. Don't worry about it. I trust you wouldn't fret my saying as much, sir. In any case, since I joined Wipro I've never known about Mr Premji or his partners suggesting anybody like this by and by. It's altogether against the soul of Wipro. Individuals are chosen on merit. When he realises that he was cheated by Dolly suddenly he is filled with anguish.

E. Inner feelings:

1. Anjana is a devoted housewife who sacrifices everything (her talent) for the sake of her family. Even her husband didn't aware about her talent in singing. Throughout the play she exists as a perfect wife. She doesn't reveal her emotions/interest to the society. As for Anjana's concern life is absurd. "The idle rich house wife"(26). But at the end of the play with the help of her son she got her essence.

2. The young man Prabhakar is a small-town job seeker in Bangalore city. From the beginning onwards he tries to find his essence. His character revolves around so many existential concepts. The another concept of existentialism is giving important to inner experience. He was born in Mundgod. "I'm fortunate to be in Bengaluru – Bangalore. That's what I care about. This itself is release. These words depicts he is happy with his life in city. It reveals his inner feelings to the readers.

3. Both the male characters namely, Mr. Padabidri and Mr. Prabhakar are not understood, not ready to hear the inner feelings of their wife. Mrs. Prabhakar pleads him to neglect the job in Singapore. As for Mr. Padabidri concern until the end of the play he doesn't understand or to know about the inner feelings of his wife. His main purpose is to make money for the sake of his family.

4. When Kunnu knows about the talents of his mother and her relationship with Bengali he understands something about his mother feelings. He asks his mother to sing a song in his group.

5. The existentialist philosophers have often used the phenomenological method, but their main centre of interest is the existence of the individual. It is therefore no wonder that they want to analyze the aspects of individual existence in his participation in world of everyday life. It has been pointed out by Merleau-Ponty that Husserlian ideal of phenomenology cannot be carried out, for man is a Being – in – the world. This idea of man's existence has also been accepted by other existentialist thinkers like Heidegger and Sartre, though their interpretations of human existence differ from each other. All this shows that the relation of man with the world is very intimate.

IV. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded, Girish Karnad was one of the important play writer, who demonstrated real life situations in Bangalore. The writer reveals challenging life of people to the society and how people had experienced their individuality. To be an individual, Inner experience, Alienation, Importance of choice, Fear, Anxiety and anguish are analyzed in Girish Karnad's "Boiled Beans on Toast". Having thoroughly analyzed the characters, setting, psychological surrounding we came into following conclusion:

A. Girish Karnad as a pragmatist author portrays way of life of the individuals in existential traits.

B. His insight into human instinct has made him an incredible on-screen character and writer.

C. His writing style differs from other writers with its myth and imagination.

D. Boiled Beans on Toast is a play which contains about twenty one characters. They are altogether different from one another, have a place with broadly disparate social strata and originate from various geological territories. But no one is considered as a protagonist.

E. Existence precedes Essence is clearly stated in their play. All characters exist until the end of the play. No one is lost their life in this play. The central character Anjana exists as a perfect wife until the story. At the end of the story her son Kunaal helps her to gain her essence. She sings a Purandara Dasa's song in Kunaal's group.

F. For sake of creating her essence Dolly continuously cheated the people like Prabhakar and Young Dancer. She makes others life as a prey for her own sake. Even her husband has beaten; she remains as a cheating person – till the end of the play. It clearly depicts current scenario to the society. Some of the people are destroying the life of others of their own wish.

G. Doctors know the truth that the patients are going to die within sometime. But they don't say truth to the patient directly. They are saying "I'm sorry" – this is vividly example for basic concept of existentialism. We must make the patients to believe that they are going lead their life. It gives them confidence. When they are relieved from pain- they are discussing so many things to you such hopes and future plan also.

H. "To be an individual" is main existential concept. Here in this play all characters remains as an individual. Anusuya remains as an individual thorough out the play. She needs money for horse racing without any hesitation she borrowed money from money lender nearly about two- and – a half lakhs by pawning her prestigious jewels.

Freedom of man exists in two paradoxical forms namely 'freedom of choice' and 'choice of freedom'. Kunaal chooses his career against his Poomalar K has completed her Bachelor of Arts in English from NKR college for women, Namakkal and Master of Arts in English from PGP college of Arts and Science. She has pursued her M.Phil degree in English from Bishop Heber College, Trichy. Her area of specialisation is ELT and in that she has presented many papers in National and International conferences conducted by various institutions. She has been working as an Assistant Professor at M. Kumarasamy college of Engineering, Karur since 2007.

I. parents wish, he struggles a lot to succeed in his profession. Any way at the end he is able to succeed in his profession. His right choice sets him free.

J. But on the other hand, Prabhakar used his freedom to select his own profession. But he takes wrong decision it leads him to lose everything such as village land, huge amount of debt and current job. Now he is a jobless person. His wrong choice enslaves him.

I conclude, Author portrayed various themes of existential traits which prevailed in today's society. We are living as an individual, everyone is searching for their essence nobody is bother about the society. It leads to the level that Bangalore remains as a Big Black Hole city. Now we are losing our human values. Hereafter we must give some importance to Human Values it develop the society in perfect manner. Unfortunately now World is suffered with Covid'19 - but it makes us to understand the human values. It reminds us the basic concept of Existence precedes essence, Anxiety, Alienation and Freedom of choice also.

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