

**CRISIS OF BEING IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF MAHESH
ELKUNCHWAR**

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Abstract

Mahesh Elkunchwar is one of the prolific playwrights in India and more widely acclaimed in Marathi theatrical sphere where he has written number of absurd plays, worked as an actor in theatres and also acted in Bollywood movies. The two most remarkable plays which will be discussed briefly in this article are “Flower of Blood” and “Party”. The evaluation of the characters will be based on psychoanalytical study involving Sigmund Freud work such as Civilization and its Discontents. Further the plays will be analyzed through the existentialist work of Martin Heidegger that is “Being and Time” for the discussion and analysis of Crisis of Being. The study of these work will help to understand problems pertaining to Indian culture and the absurdity which the characters of these play find themselves in. For this, the paper will employ discursive and qualitative analysis of the plays “Flower of Blood” and “Party”

Keywords: Absurdity, Culture, Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, Apolitical

INTRODUCTION:

Mahesh Elkunchwar, the name in Marathi theatrical circle that has catapulted itself from the regional circuits of Maharashtra across India and even to the globe. The name Mahesh Elkunchwar resonates that much because it illustrates the very absurdity and meaninglessness in human being's life which becomes a subject to every entity on this planet. He is not a philosopher but his characters in the play weave philosophy through their words. He has that ability to feel and understand human brains and that very ability to dissect human psyche is beyond imagination. Like his contemporaries Badal Sircar, Mahesh Dattani, Mahesh Arlekar he has that ability to observe and sense emotions and, in a way, empathize with humans who are so much engrossed and stranded within a gyre of problems both material and emotional that really ends those beings in depression rather in a perplexed situation.

The character's in Elkunchwar's play are full of life like every human being on earth they don't want to remain in gloomy state. There is an extent to what a human being can grieve. There is limitation with shedding tears. It dries up with time. Examining the characters in his play

“Party” which has a very large canvas of characters each having different traits one thing is common that they all are in some sort of struggle and pain which they are hiding with their fake mannerism and empty smiles. They find intoxicating themselves as a solution for their pain. Observation of the larger picture gives a view that the characters rather open up after getting intoxicated. The characters in the play all of a sudden start speaking reality and the younger characters who are striving for something and behave in orderly to make a sort of reputation for themselves or to leave an impression on others. Like the communication between characters such as Bharat, Malavika, Mohini, Barve, Vrinda and Damyanti goes like.

BHARAT. At least I’m not a rotten communist.

MALAVIKA. Truce now.

MOHINI (more drunk). They’re fighting! Are they? Are they?

BARVE. No, Mohini.

MOHINI. I hate fighting. (Loudly.) No fighting. (Laughs)

VRINDA. Bharat drinks because Barve drinks. And Bharat dreams of awards too!

BHARAT. Look, I’ll . . . I’m not going to. . .

DAMAYANTI. Leave him alone, Vrinda. (Elkunchwar, 96)

This is the way conversation is happening between the characters. The play FlowerofBlood gives an illustration of dynamics of Indian familial relation such as Husband-wife, father-daughter, mother to her daughter, Father-son, Mother- son, and Brother and sister. Here, a family behavior and situation change when it faces death and that too of a son in the family. The change in the mother is quite tremendous her name is Padma. She is merely forty but her health has deteriorated massively. Her relation and conjugality with her husband have changed substantially. She easily gets angry and agitated and has also developed a kind of jealousy against her own daughter Leelu. Leelu does all the household chores and the very thing that she gets all the attention of her husband Bhau increases her rage even more. She finds her son’s image in a boy whose name is Raja who resides in her house as a paying guest and she seeks all the attention from him. The situation is quite interesting over here as no one understands in the family how to go about it. The Indian society which has lot of limitations and constraints in it sometimes can create a sort of CrisisofBeing and the people just get stuck in it having nowhere to go. We observe a tension rise during a conversation which takes between Bhau and Padma.

BHAU. Don’t be a fool. You must complete the course now that you’ve started it.

PADMA. I’m fed up. And in any case, there’s nothing wrong with me.

BHAU. Let’s not go into all that again. Just finish the course.

PADMA. I see, So I must finish the course since I started it.

BHAU. God! It’s difficult these days to talk to you, even about simple things.

PADMA. Do I insist that you talk to me? Do you know why I want **Raja** in the house? He’s the only one who cares to talk to me of his own accord, with sincerity. That’s why or else between the two of you you’d have driven me mad with your indifference. How should I pass my days? Tell me how. How? (Elkunchwar, 28)

Mahesh Elkunchwar is a master in a humanist as he always has apolitical view of the scenario and he even puts that in his play. Observing him understand both facets of situation is pleasing to the audience.

Albert Camus in his essay called as Myth of Sisyphus highlights about embracing the absurdity in a human lives, it can help humans in general to get over that crisis which is present in the lives like in the essay the mythical character Sisyphus finds himself liberated even during the punishment like pushing the boulder and that happens only when a being is able to bifurcate the desires from the boundless labor.

“The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in that gap which opens between man and his life, between a conscious being and the world that envelops him” (Camus,11)

The same could be observed in the Elkunchwar’s play Party characters such as Barve is kind of person who has lost his true essence, emotions and is reluctant to change. He has lost his interest towards his wife Mohini and has dedicated his life towards attaining the power and recognition which is a kind of byproduct of his writings. On the other hand, his wife Mohini who loves him passionately and seeks his attention.

There is definitely a psychoanalytical side to both the plays Party and Flowers of Blood by approaching Sigmund Freud’s essay “Civilization and its Discontents” he gives the very reason for the crisis of a being. 1) The conflict between instincts and civilization according to which human beings are governed by two facets that is Eros, that drives connection, love, and creativity, and the death instinct. The other is Thanatos, which seeks destruction and aggression. There is tendency that society imposes restriction on these primary instincts to achieve communal harmony and might lead a being into a crisis. The suppression of superego is among the reason for that feeling of alienation in human. For instance, in Party there is conversation between Mohini and Sona where Mohini feels that she has lost her external beauty which according to the societal standards which depresses her.

SONA. Pull yourself together.

MOHINI. So I use make-up. But it’s strange. The fashions these young girls flaunt. They look so fresh and blooming. I’d look ten years older if I happened to be in crowd. I’ve lost touch with the outside these years. I’m so involved with Diwakar.

SONA. Don’t bother with fashions. You don’t need fashions. They’ll never be you with all the fashions in the world. You’re you. (Elkunchwar, 109)

This conversation highlights the impetus of society on human minds. Humans attach themselves too much with the external factors which is basically the cause of the frustration.

In the play “Flowers of Blood”, tension is observed for two reasons 1.) Death of young son in the family has caused a sort of absurdity in the relatives behavior like parents Bhau, Padma and their daughter Leelu which has been highlighted in his concept of Eros. 2.) Frustration of the couples especially in case of Padma. Her health has considerably declined and she can see her husband’s inconsiderate behavior. Padma also sees her daughter as reason for the tension in their marital status. That is again one of the aspects of Eros as described in his Freud’s essay Civilization and its Discontents. The conversation between Padma and Leelu highlights the tension between mother and daughter eg.

LEELU. What suddenly gets into you, Aai?

PADMA. Oh, you little witch. How could you forget your little brother?

LEELU. Aai, don’t call me names, I’m warning you. I think you’d better go and lie down in your room.

PADMA. There is nothing wrong with me.

LEELU. That's obvious you act like this when your period is delayed. (Elkunchwar, 46)

Here, tension between a mother and daughter could be observed, Padma is quite young mother but because she has kid that old, she feels that she has aged but her inner self resist to that thought creating a case of depression in her case. Death of her son has made the conditions severe in this case. Elkunchwar has described the unsaid problems particularly in Indian society graciously.

According to "Martin Heidegger" as described in his book "Being and Time" has illustrated about the reason for the "Crisis of Being" to quote "Every one is the other, and no is himself. (Heidegger,165) this illustrates a condition where an individual confirms to the societal norms despite not really having a likeness for any such thing creating a sort of crisis for an individual. This situation is quite evident in both the plays "Flowers of Blood" and "Party" the characters are trying to be someone else and that whole process creates a sort of alienation to pour own self.

The whole idea of this article is to recognize the Crisis of Being through the characters of Mahesh Elkunchwar's play and work toward liberation of the being which is stranded in illusion and delusion again created by society to keep humanity in check. Time and again people like Plato, Plotinous, Immanuel Kant, Martin Husserl, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul-Sartre, Martin Esslin, Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus, eg; have tried to look for a solution or understood a being's adversity to an extent to come up with various answers which has given some sort of solace to the human civilization on the whole. Mahesh Elkunchwar has highlighted the problems through characters in Party such as Mohini, Barve, Soni and Amrit who is central part in the play and people have made him hero only because of hypocrisy that they don't really want to come from their comfort level and the characters only praise Amrit and highlight the problems he is going through rather solving them. Elkunchwar has highlighted the dual behavior of the same society who believe in setting demarcation and rules. In play Flower of Blood the characters are observed as getting succumbed to the same rules and conventions of the society. Death is also the theme in the play which is basically the reason for the absurdity int the characters.

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