

# Reconstructing the Image of Tipu Sultan in Girish Karnad's *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*

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## Abstract

This paper scrutinizes the alternative image of Tipu Sultan created by Girish Karnad in his 1997 play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*. Girish Karnad has treated a controversial historical figure, Tipu Sultan, in this play. He portrays a positive image of this ruler of Mysore. In doing so, he has greatly deviated from the conventional image of Tipu Sultan constructed and propagated by colonial hegemony. Tipu Sultan is branded as a notorious ruler by the Europeans to justify the colonial legacy. But, Karnad has endeavored to restore his image convincingly using historical documents, records and other sources and has created a counter-discourse as well. This paper aims to focus on how Karnad has challenged the colonial narratives by offering a counter-narrative from the perspective of the colonized. It shows that Karnad's purpose behind this is not only to create the history of the colonized but also to bring the marginalized "Other" from the periphery to the "center". In order to do so, a postcolonial approach of the politics of representation is applied in this paper to analyze this text.

## Keywords

Tipu Sultan, Girish Karnad, Colonial Discourse, Counter-discourse, Hussain Ali Kirmani, Reconstruction, Representation

## Introduction

Girish Karnad, a prominent Indian playwright, has chosen a historical figure as the central character of his much-discussed play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997). This two-act play is written for BBC to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Indian Independence. After dealing with the pre-colonial Indian history in two of his earlier history plays titled *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda*, Karnad treats British colonialism in its early stages of military and territorial expansion in *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*. Doing so, he portrays an image of the last independent ruler of Mysore which is opposite to the prevailing image of Tipu Sultan. This new-fashioned image of the tiger of Mysore is an attempt to reconstruct a counter-history defying the tempered and distorted narration of the history from the perspective of the colonizers. The playwright uses four dreams from the Dream collections of Tipu Sultan which were originally composed in Persian language by the ruler himself.

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The play presents some historically crucial events that happened during the last years of Tipu Sultan. The action of the play starts very dramatically at the point where it ends. In the opening scene two historians, Colin Mackenzie and Hussain Ali Kirmani, are shown to be engaged in a conversation about the progress of a particular work. While the occidental historian, Colonel Mackenzie, insists upon writing the history of Tipu Sultan, the oriental historian Kirmani lingers the act. The confrontation of these two historical characters presents the collision between the west and east, occidental and oriental, European and non-European, colonizer and colonized, 'I' and the 'other'.

However, in this play, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Girish Karnad exposes the role of power in determining and deciding the relation between the colonizer and the colonized and how it shapes the history of the latter. The playwright makes an attempt to produce a counter-discourse subverting the distorted and perverted image of Tipu Sultan propagated by the colonizer's history. To do so, he presents a positive portrayal of this legendary ruler of Mysore as a patriot, a dreamer, and a fighter for the cause of independence, an intellectual, a visionary, a seer, a poet, a good diplomat, a dutiful husband and a loving father as well. This paper aims at justifying the positive portrayal of Tipu Sultan and the causes behind such portrayal. It also aims at presenting Karnad's effort to bring the marginalized to the "center" offering a counter-narrative through such portrayal.

### Existing Critical Assertion

Karnad's *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* is a greatly discussed play. A good number of research studies have been conducted on this play. But all of them together fall short in penetrating into the depth of the play. Nevertheless, some ground-breaking works, though a few, which primarily provoke the faculty of thought need critical examination. In this regard, Abha Shukla Kaushik's "Subaltern Historiography: Girish Karnad's *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*" (2010) deserves critical attention. Here, she offers a postcolonial approach towards the play. But her stance is not clear because on one hand she terms the play as a poetic attempt to rework the texts of the colonial period, on the other hand, she blames the playwright for not being able to draw any conclusive end.

To her, Girish Karnad has just posed some questions through this play regarding the British Colonial policy of divide and rule; the shortsightedness of Marathas, Tipu's lack of killer instincts, etc. This critic identifies this piece of text as a historical play. However, her critical analysis of this play has drawn immense attention from the readers and other critics. Another noteworthy critical work is Imad M. Khawaldeh and Shadi S. Neimneh's "Reclaiming the Lost Hero in Girish Karnad's *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (2017)". The author of this work argues that Karnad has created an alternative character of Tipu Sultan as being humane and noble in spirit so as to construct a "counter-historical project."

Similarly, Channabasappa Inalli's "History of the Colonized Justified in Girish Karnad's 'Dreams of Tipu Sultan'" (2022) discusses how Karnad has foregrounded the reality of the colonizer's deceit and cunning scheme offering a real image of Tipu Sultan.

Godwin and Victor have studied the inner anguish of Tipu Sultan as a ruler in the light of Freudian Unconscious in their “An Inner World of Insight in Girish Karnad’s *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*” (2023). They have also put light on the enigmatic consciousness of the ruler to build a power kingdom as expressed in the play. Likewise, Malas & Abhinandan. (2017) have explored various unconscious aspects of Tipu’s characteristics as a sovereign ruler. The critics have intended to reveal how this unconscious mind as being depicted in this play is part of Indian culture and history.

All these critical works, despite some commendable critical observations, do not offer any comprehensive, in-depth study of Karnad’s play on Tipu Sultan. Albeit, some of them have inclined to superficially prove that Karnad has composed this play with a determination to forward a counter-history, but none has made it clear and evident with providing a transparent discussion. And also how this “counter-history” acts in challenging and correcting colonial history and makes a place for the suppressed colonized in the realm of mainstream history remains unaddressed. This current investigation dives into the depth of these issues. In addition to this, the discussion that follows succinctly seeks to demonstrate the way the play combats the mass Indian opinion on Tipu Sultan in the present political context as well as providing a brief, yet informative, explanation of this controversial piece of work.

### **Distorted and Marginalized Representation of Tipu Sultan in the Colonial Narratives**

Tipu Sultan is among those few Indian rulers who receive much disdain historically and politically. Tipu challenged the British rule in India and cherished contempt in his heart for them. In return, he was no less hated. Even after his defeat and death in the 4th Anglo-Mysore War, the British colonizers were haunted by his valor and sceptor. And that’s why they portrayed a deviated and negative image of this ruler which Girish Karnad felt the urge to rebuild. Tipu Sultan, the last independent king of Mysore, was born in 1750 to Haider Ali who was at the service of the Hindu rulers of Mysore. Haider Ali rose to the power of Mysore as a seizing power unlawfully from the weaker and sybaritic Hindu rulers like Krishnaraja Devayar II. Ambitious Haider Ali rapidly expanded his territory through conquest. This alarmed the neighboring rulers like the Nizams, Marathas and English colonizers. Consequently, these three powers formed an alliance and started their joint expedition against him. In the First Anglo-Mysore War (1766-1769), Haider Ali defeated the English and drove them out to the outskirts of Madras. The Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780–1784) resulted in Haider Ali’s capturing the Carnatic. The English forces were defeated and the English commander Brigadier Mathews, along with a huge number of soldiers, was arrested. During this war, Haider Ali died of Cancer in 1782 and Tipu Sultan ascended the throne in the same year.

Tipu Sultan continued his father’s contempt towards the English colonizers and attained success in the first war he fought against them. This time the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Mangalore (1784). Referring to this treaty, Charles Malet says in the play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, “The treaty of Mangalore is forced upon us.” (Karnad, 2005, p. 31)

The Third Anglo-Mysore war (1790 – 1792) ended in Tipu's defeat to the English forces and their allies while Tipu had to give up half of his territories and send two of his younger sons as hostage to them. However, with a view to recovering his power, he attempted an intervention from Napoleon of France. But Governor General Lord Mornington, who was appointed as the British General of India in 1799, decided to fight and do away with him forever: "Lord Mornington was in a belligerent frame of mind and saw his opportunity to subdue Tipu once and for all." (Brittlebank, 2017, The Man section, para. 20). Finally, with the demise of Tipu in the fourth and last Anglo-Mysore war (1799), the dream of keeping the British colonizers away from Mysore came to a standstill.

Now to the colonizers' eye, Tipu Sultan was the incarnation of oriental brutality who was a monster and a bigot. By fabricating a very distorted and tempered image of Tipu Sultan, they had shown him as a tyrant who inflicted torture and enforced religious conversion upon the Hindus. Hence, his defeat to the English force was depicted as a triumph over the unruly, unethical bigot in history. The Mysore wars were very technically recorded and dealt with as a colonial discursive component by colonial history and literature. As Kate Teltscher indicates, "(The Mysore wars) were more extensively chronicled than any preceding campaign." (Teltscher, 1995, p. 229).

Different opinions were there about this Sultan of Mysore but commonly accepted was the nugatory effigy. Among various commentators of Tipu Sultan, Colonel William Kirkpatrick was the first English officer whose account of Tipu Sultan had ignited much of English imagination. His *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries* (1811) played a very crucial role in making a colonial discursive component though he declared:

In making the present selection from about a thousand letters, I have confined myself, almost entirely, to such as either appeared to exhibit the Sultan in some new light; to unfold some of his political, financial, or commercial views; or to elucidate some historical fact. Those which merely related to the details of ordinary business, without eliciting anything peculiarly characteristic of the writer, have been passed over. (Kirkpatrick, 1811, p. x)

But his portrayal of Tipu Sultan is in no way unbiased because he, according to Kate Teltscher, was "framed to conform to expectations of despotism". (Teltscher, 1995, p. 237) Rather Kirkpatrick unfolded the history of Tipu Sultan in some new but unfavorable light. In the "Preface", he drew a very unflattering image of Tipu listing down the vices of this ruler:

... the cruel and relentless enemy; the intolerant bigot or furious fanatic; the oppressive and unjust ruler; the harsh and rigid master; the sanguinary tyrant; the perfidious negotiator; the frivolous and capricious innovator; the mean and minute economist; the peddling trader; and even the retail shop-keeper. (Kirkpatrick, 1811, p. xiv)

Mark Wilks, another English officer who served as a resident of Mysore for several years, had firmly confirmed the image of Tipu Sultan depicted by William Kirkpatrick. In his book *Historical Sketches of the South of India in an attempt to trace the History of Mysoor*; he constructed a primitive, savage, and criminal portrayal of Tipu Sultan.

Kirkpatrick and Wilks' account of Tipu shaped the opinions and views of a good number of future European writers about Tipu and his administration. The 19th century English novelists were greatly influenced by the account of these historians. Their understandings of Tipu Sultan were much closer to their reading of these given accounts and accordingly, they misrepresented him in their literary works.

Sir Walter Scott's *The Surgeon's Daughter* (1831) stands first in this line. In this novel, Tipu plays a very insignificant role. Scott depicts him as a stereotypically lustful oriental ruler who has an intense sexual urge for the white woman. He is also shown as a murderer who mercilessly kills Richard, an Englishman, for exposing his crime to the English. Interestingly enough, in the 'introduction' of the play, Scott admitted that his friend, Mr. Train had told him "the principal incident on which it turns". (Scott, 1831, p. 5) But in reality, Train's narration had no mention of Tipu Sultan. He mentioned only an unnamed "native Rajah" (p. 9) as a rogue in his narration. Unfortunately, Scott used the name of Tipu Sultan as a substitution for that unnamed villain.

Another notable English novel is Philip Meadows Taylor's *Tippoo Sultan: A Tale of the Mysore War* (1840). This novel tries to shed light on the interior of Tipu's mind and thoughts. The course of the novel deals with the intellectual degeneration of Tipu which leads to his ultimate damnation. *Tippoo Sultan* is a novel about the adventures of two protagonists where the character of Tipu, though not focused upon, is sufficiently highlighted and unfolded, unlike the previous novel. But in this novel too, this Padsha is successfully attached to a negative image. Taylor gradually unfolds the image of a brutal, merciless, ideologically hypocritical and erratic ruler who is always ready to kill or punish unethically to save his cause. Taylor's drawing of Tipu Sultan is strongly based on the historical accounts of Kirkpatrick and Wilks. While criticizing Tipu's administration and soldier recruitment system, this novelist has directly quoted a remark from Wilks "...his were the pranks of a monkey, with the abomination of a monster." (Taylor, 1840, p. 602). To Taylor, Tipu's experimentations with trade, business, and medicine are a huge failure which has caused distress to his people. This novelist exerts to demonstrate that the period of Tipu's rule was a derailed one and the English colonizers had rescued Mysore and its people from the grip of a savage ruler.

The novel *Tippoo Sultan* has very vivid and graphic pictures of violence and punishment. Taylor portrays a monster in Tipu who savagely punished the English prisoners and converted them to Muslims. The author aimed to show Tipu as very harsh and rude to the Hindus and at the same time a despotic ruler who forced the Hindu men to embrace Islam and Hindu women to be "rudely torn away from their families" (p.487) to keep them as concubines. Taylor's portrayal of Tipu Sultan incurred immense criticism even from the English readership. The reviewer of *Athenaeum*, while commenting on Captain Meadows Taylor's *Tippoo Sultaun, A Tale of Mysore War* has brought such representation of Tipu Sultan under criticism:

... Tippoo Sultan, though not portrayed by Captain Taylor as the monster, with whom it was the fashion some fifty years ago to terrify women and children, is yet drawn with darker shades than reality will justify, in order that his overthrow, an act of questionable policy, may appear a measure of substantial justice. (The Athenaeum, 1841, p.73)

The irony is that the last line of this British reviewer indicates the nasty political game behind this nugatory presentation of this historical figure. Tipu's physical structure also is not spared from Taylor's sharp criticism:

His eyes were full and prominent, but the whites of them were of a dull yellowish tint, which, with their restless and suspicious expression, gave them a disagreeable look, and one which bespoke a mind of perpetual but not profound thought... (Taylor, 1840, p. 273)

Another English novel under consideration is George Alfred Henty's *The Tiger of Mysore: A Story of the War with Tipu Saib* (1895). This literary work is far from the notions of a historical novel despite the historical implication of the title. Basically, it is an adventure novel where India serves as a backdrop for the sake of the narration. Tipu Sultan is the only connection to reality and here also he is portrayed as an antagonist. Henty, in this novel, makes a gesture to justify the British colonization of India. In his 'Preface' to this novel, he narrates that the British rule in India has a positive impact and it is done for the common welfare at a larger scale. He believes that the British rule has brought happiness, peace, law and justice to the land of Mysore which were absent during Tipu's reign. In the "preface", he craftily accuses Tipu Sultan of alluring the British into war. As he says:

... our struggle with Tippoo Saib was, on the other hand, marked by a long endurance of wrong, and a toleration of abominable cruelties perpetrated upon Englishmen and our native allies... Tippoo... reveled in acts of the most abominable cruelty. It would seem that he massacred for the very pleasure of massacring, and hundreds of British captives were killed by famine, poison, or torture, simply to gratify his lust for murder. Patience was shown towards this monster until patience became a fault. (Henty, 1895, p. 1)

By dint of this discourse, Henty comes to conclude the Anglo-Mysore wars as a moral battle. Though Tipu is shown as the main antagonist, he physically appears as a character only once throughout the course of the novel. However, not his irresponsibility but rather his callousness is reported to us through a technically built-up narration.

Very consistently indeed, these three novels share one thing in common. All of them accuse Tipu of violating women's honor. Henty abominably depicts that Tipu not only plunders women to meet his lust but also delivers them to others while in Scott's novel, Tipu's attempt to violate the honor of a woman is repelled in the end. As a matter of fact, all three novels spotlight the violation of the chastity of the women by the Sultan. A very clear and obvious political design is noticeable in their portrayal of Tipu in these novels: "When articulated through images of violence against women, a resistance to British rule does not look like the struggle for emancipation but rather an uncivilized eruption that must be contained." (Sharpe, 1993, p. 7). Along with this, all these three novels fabricate an unjust Tipu who persecuted the Hindus. Pertaub in Henty's novel is forcibly converted to Islam while Nair in Taylor's novel also faces the same fate.

### **An Epistemological Method of Domination**

All the same, as discussed earlier, this conventional representation of Tipu Sultan both in popular history and literature produced by the colonial authority must have a purpose.

In all these representations, Tipu's reign is portrayed as an era of misrule from which the British emancipated the people of Mysore. This singular discourse was designed from the standpoint of the colonial (mis)conceptions and ideas. According to Teltscher, "if the sultan is tyrannical, the British must be blameless" (Teltscher, 1995, p. 231).

Edward Said, a prominent postcolonial critic, terms this as a "discursive component". According to him, this is the literary discursive creation of the colonizers, which has been widely accepted as true. To Edward Said, this "discursive component" prescribes the misrepresentation of the non-European culture and history of the East in the literary-documentary and ideological construction of European thought. The technique of manipulated representation i.e., literature, history, political theories are used by the European colonial power in order to fabricate the East and its culture in a particular way. This epistemological domination of the East by dint of false, tempered documentation enables Europe to obtain and exercise power upon the colonized. Also, this (mis)representation of the East is so integral to the whole process of the conquest of the East that it has enormously contributed to the political and military power of the Europeans over the natives. This epistemological construction, for Said, is Orientalism:

Orientalism is the European construction of the East as primitive, savage, pagans and criminals. Such a construction then enabled the Europeans to justify its presence. The poor, weak native needed to be governed and 'developed' and it was the task of the Europeans to do so. (Nayar, 2010, p. 160)

It is very obvious that the representation of Tipu Sultan in European history and literature shockingly plays a vital role in justifying the killing of this ruler and looting and ravaging his people as well.

Said thinks that the West assumes a patronizing attitude towards the East to consolidate it as static and underdeveloped. Therefore, the West fabricates a notion of Oriental culture and history. This fabricated view is inseparable from the colonizers civilization and reputation. Colonizers' civilization stands upon the dehumanized history of the colonized. This fabrication establishes the idea that the culture, society, religion, and civilization of the colonized is irrational, inferior, and underdeveloped than that of the colonized. Hence is the necessity of the presence of the colonizers to civilize it.

### **Counter-History and Centralizing the Periphery**

Until now, the natives' opinions on native reality were denied and overlooked. But a native version of history to counteract the ideological representation of the East by the colonizers has become a pressing need of the time. As such is the situation, Girish Karnad, on the occasion of the Independence of India, felt the necessity to come out with a counter-history of the life and time of Tipu Sultan. A counter-history is a must to recreate the history of the colonized. The playwright satisfactorily writes a counter history through *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* where he juxtaposes two historians, one from the West, Colin Mackenzie and the other from the East, Hussain Ali Kirmani.

Engaging these two historians in a dramatic conversation, Karnad intends to show how the history of Tipu Sultan is distorted and misrepresented to fulfill the evil design of the colonizers.

The play starts with a conversation between Kirmani who was a court historian of Tipu and Mackenzie, an oriental historian. Through recreating these two historians, Karnad subverts the officially circulated and accepted colonial history. The history of the colonized is written in the play from a different perspective. Utilizing Kirmani's memory, Karnad succeeds in presenting the Sultan's attempt to defeat the emerging colonial power and to retain a sustainable economic growth in his land. For this, the author has used four of historically documented dreams from the *Dream Collections* of Tipu.

Hussain Ali Kirmani is the missing link who performs the figure of an "insurrection of subjugated knowledge". (Medina, 2011, p.12) Subjugated Knowledge refers to the kind of experiences that are suppressed and pushed to the margin and regarded as invalid and unworthy by the prevailing hegemonic discourses. Insurrection of this kind of knowledge means bringing those marginalized experiences to the foreground in order to overthrow the existing power politics. From the memory of Kirmani, Tipu Sultan is presented to contemporary readers. Kirmani is the mouthpiece for the lost and marginalized history of one of last independent Indian rulers. As Foucault (2003) postulates:

Counter History ..... breaks the continuity of glory..... It reveals that the light ..... the famous dazzling effect of power---is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into darkness. (p.70)

A counter-history talks of those people who are by force kept on the periphery to remain in the shadow, "the discourse of those who have no glory or of those who have lost it and who now find themselves, perhaps.... darkness and silence." (Foucault, 2003, p.70). For Foucault, a Counter History links to those "epic, religious, or mythical forms which...formulates the misfortune of ancestors, exiles and servitude." (p.71) Therefore, the historical defeat of Tipu Sultan in the hands of the British and their allies is revisited in *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*.

The play unravels the hidden hegemonic play of the colonizers. To do so, Karnad has made use of the lost diary of the dreams of Tipu Sultan through which he endeavors to unfold the real history of Mysore during the reign of this ruler. This history is contrary to the British representation of the Sultan. Karnad remains neutral to the portrayal of Tipu and other British colonizers. In the 'note', he suggests:

Those who wish to stage the play should kindly resist the temptation of using masks, special lighting or costumes for the dream scenes. It is essential for a total impact of the play that the dreams are staged absolutely realistically. (Karnad, 2005, p.4)

The playwright's request not to use any artificial impact while staging the dreams of Sultan indicates that these were merely not his lazy dreams but his goals to achieve. In reality, Tipu is misunderstood along with his dreams. His vision to get rid of the British wins a tag of a 'traitor' for him.

The Western Knowledge of the East never goes unalloyed of falsification; rather, it is highly manipulated. In truth, the Western academic knowledge is aligned with and supportive towards the Western colonization and materialistic gain.

Consequently, the image of Tipu Sultan is purposefully designed as an antagonistic “Other” This manipulated knowledge now incites a Counter discourse. Girish Karnad ‘s work is an endeavor to free the actual image of Tipu from the perverted version of the West and post it to its rightful state of the subjugated knowledge. To this context, Helen Teffin (1995) recounts in her essay “Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse”, the necessity of rewriting the colonial history by the colonized:

Process of artistic and literary decolonization have involved a radical dis/mantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses. This has frequently been accompanied by the demand for an entirely new or wholly recovered ‘reality’, free of all colonial taint. Given the nature of the relationship between colonizers and colonized, with its pandemic brutalities and its cultural denigration, such a demand is desirable and inevitable. (p.95)

According to Helen Teffin’s description, an “entirely new” or “wholly recovered reality” of any form of (miss)representation of the East must be rendered. Tipu is widely depicted as an “Oriental despot in diabolical design of oppressing his people and subverting the Company’s respect in India.” (p.5)

Karnad’s purpose of relieving Tipu Sultan from a disrespectful position in the hegemonic discourse is much evident at the outset of the play. In this regard, the setting is very crucial to the play, as it starts with Kirmani rewriting the history or in other words Kirmani’s attempt to write a counter-discourse. Kirmani, the court historian, is pressed by the oriental historian, Mackenzie, to “develop a certain objectivity” (Karnad, 2005, pg. 7) and write the history of Tipu Sultan from a “dispassionate distance” (Karnad, 2005, pg. 7). Few years after the appearance of several Western historiographies, Kirmani is asked to rewrite it. But the process of recalling and rewriting “it hurts” (P.7), as Kirmani mutters. The pain becomes doubled when he realizes that Tipu is already (mis)represented by the British historiographers to save their reputation. The oriental historian wonders why Kirmani is being remorseful:

Mackenzie: Surely you’re being melodramatic now. Every bit of evidence we’ve gathered proves he asked for it. (p.8)

This evidence Mackenzie is talking about had derived from the Western fabrication. A historian like him played a very significant role in fabricating history in a way so that every bit of it justified the unlawful killing of Tipu. Kirmani answers:

Kirmani: For you, he’s made up of bits of evidence, bits of argument that prove that your side was right. And that’s what I don’t understand. You have your version of history, all worked out. Why do you want my side? Why do you care?

Mackenzie: I am interested in the other side. You could say that’s how we Europeans are brought up.....to be interested in the other side as well. That I suppose is our strength. (p. 8)

Kirmani feels guilty of betrayal having a deal with the enemy of his lord. He tags himself to be a “traitor” (p.8).At this moment Mackenzie reminds him that now his only loyalty is to be shown to history, relating the fact from the memory, which is literally very difficult for this historian.

Kirmani starts writing his counter-narrative by selecting some certain moments of the last days of Sultan. This counter-narrative eliminates some banal Western narrative about Tipu Sultan making an effort to bring the "Other" from the margin to the center.

Kirmani's act of remembering begins with the recollection of the last dream of the Sultan. With this dream, the reign of this ruler came to an end, and the British sun started to come up in the sky of Mysore. He describes the scene when Tipu heard of the unwanted news of the sudden attack of the British army. Before that, he praises the strong army of Tipu who has beaten the British and their allied parties in the first and second Anglo-Mysore war. But this time, he was cheated by his army and got defeated. Tipu handed over an envelope to Kirmani which contained his last dream. But Kirmani forgot all about it until he discovered it inside his pocket the next day, "Kirmani: ...His last dream. With that my history ends. Yours begins. (p.9)"

Kirmani and Mackenzie's conversation acts as the chorus for the play. Both of these historians come out with their own views and opinions about Tipu and his reign. Both describe the ruler from their own point of view. But Kirmani's "objective" view of history is contrary to that of Mackenzie. Though in reality, Kirmani is a less known and less esteemed historian, in this creative work, he succeeds in establishing a counter-narrative against that of Mackenzie. The first act of the play exposes a long search for the dead body of Tipu. Qilleder Nadeem Khan, a traitor, identified and confirmed the body of Tipu. An English soldier is reported to chop off the mustache of Sultan with a penknife in what Mackenzie calls an "act of vandalism will not be forgotten" (p.15). And to Kirmani, "It was a perfect prelude to a night of unprecedented rapacity. Every house looted, every available woman raped. Soldiers throwing out precious jewelry because they could not carry anymore" (P.16). This act of remembering shows how the British looted Mysore to suffice their economic interests. The rapturous behavior of the British soldiers indicates their sole disdain towards Tipu and his independence. Karnad highlights, through this narrative, the lustful attitude of British colonization towards the colonized property and wealth.

Once and again, Kirmani is requested by Mackenzie to write. Kirmani "don't know what to write" (p.16) while Mackenzie advises him to write about Tipu's embassy to Mauritius. By the way, denies the existence of such a deal in reality though in the later part of the play, we find the truthfulness of this deal. Kirmani moves on to the diary which was found under Tipu's bed chamber pillow after his death. This diary with all his dreams also is a part of this counter-discourse because the most significant dream included in that diary is Tipu's wish to wipe out the British colonization from his land. But to Mackenzie, that piece of work is just "an odd little book. A pleasantly inconsequential conversation piece" (p. 17). Kirmani informs the latter that there were some blank pages in the diary which were kept to record Tipu's unrevealed dreams. Now, Tipu's diary of dream collection is incomplete and the task of completion is rendered by Kirmani. In those "blank pages", Kirmani dots down a counter-narrative to stand and fight with Western knowledge.

The choric conversation proves that Mackenzie is not at all interested in the dreams of Tipu; rather he is interested in the people who spoke to or were spoken to by him. He impatiently suggests Kirmani "You keep the dreams to yourself" (p. 18).

It notifies how the colonial hegemonic power suppressed and buried the colonized version of history. They are fond of their version which is supportive of colonization. But Kirmani brings in his memory and narrates the dreams. He relates Tipu's one of the dreams of stopping by a big temple and meeting two women who were seeking salvation for many years. Tipu asked them to occupy their minds with the thought of God and left the place, promising that he would repair the temple. It expresses Tipu's veneration for all kinds of religion whereas the Western narrative represents him as a tyrant, a religious fanatic who tried to convert the Hindus into Muslims. That's how Kirmani keeps on offering a parallel narrative besides Mackenzie's one.

In another dream, narrates Kirmani, Tipu was gifted with a white elephant and horses as a sign of friendship from the Chinese Emperor. Through this dream, Kirmani establishes Tipu as a great ruler of Mysore who was honored by the mighty rulers of the neighboring countries and who was as valorous and vigorous as Alexander the Great. Kirmani, in the later act of the play, proves that Tipu would have remained invincible unless the British colonizers had adopted an unfair means to defeat him. Through Kirmani, Karnad has shown that Tipu was a cunning and clever statesman who was able to foresee. He wanted to prosper in the business and trade of Mysore so that he and his people could be economically independent of any foreign country. His desire to create a financially well-off economy for Mysore makes him a visionary. He flourished in the sandalwood business and also founded the silkworm industry only to be an eyesore to the British. Before the end of the second act, we find Mornington muttering with anger, "Mornington: In fact, Tipu should have been got rid of after the last Mysore war by Cornwallis. But he didn't. And since then Tipu has grown in power and prestige..." (p. 56)

This remark clears that Tipu's economic goal, power, and prestige threatened the British to a greater extent. Hence, they decided to get rid of him and accordingly they designed a blueprint in the darkness of night. Moreover, Tipu's alliance with Napoleonic France put the colonizers into tension. As a result, they started to scheme against him. They attacked him all of a sudden without any prior warning and forced him into the war. They decided to dispatch a letter to him "only after he (Tipu) and General Stuart have entered the Mysore territory" (p.58). Karnad very distinctly depicts this ugly side of British colonization which is totally absent from the Western discourses.

*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, as a counter-discourse, brings out the British secret game of "divide and rule" policy to the foreground. This policy was used to weaken the strength of the untamed rulers who denied British subjugation. At the end of the play, we see how Nizams and Marathas were seduced to isolate Tipu. The local princes played against one another. Tipu is shown to be a true patriot who remained unmoved despite the provocation of the colonizers. He understood their intentions and warned Nana Phadnavis about their approaching destruction. He realized that the British were friends to none rather used the natives to serve their purpose.

Kirmani recounts Tipu's patriotic zeal. In the third Anglo-Mysore war, he sent his two younger sons as the war captives to Lord Cornwallis to save his people. While his people requested him not to comply with this shameful demand, "Please, please your majesty, do not accept this humiliation.

We would rather die” (p. 40). He ignored them for the sake of common welfare because he cannot let them be destroyed. An image of Tipu Sultan is molded by the playwright to generate a perfect parallel for the existing colonial portrayal.

To Karnad, The British killed Tipu Sultan only to satisfy their anger and save their ego. Mornington, we can see in the play, is very well aware of the mobilizing speed of Tipu Sultan. That is why he decides to send no warning letter to Tipu before declaring a war that has gone against the existing law of the land. Besides, Mornington asserts to dispatch a letter to Tipu seeking an explanation only after the commencement of the war. He also sends a confusing message to the Governor in Madras, “So keep our instructions to him (Governor) brief: “Tipu must go” (p. 58). Again, Mornington confers the responsibility to lead the assault on Braid, a British soldier who bears a personal grievance against Tipu. This exposes the colonial truth that the act of killing Tipu was a political necessity for the British colonizers to teach a lesson to the uncontrollable Indian rulers.

Besides Kirmani and Mackenzie, Captain Mark and Colonel William Kirkpatrick are included as active characters in the play. The historical narration of all these characters immensely contributed to making a negative image of Tipu Sultan as mentioned earlier. Kirkpatrick in the “preface” of his *Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan to Various Public Functionaries* tarnished Tipu’s image by using a group of adjectives like “cruel and relentless”, “intolerant”, “furious fanatic” (Kirkpatrick, p. xiv). Mark Wilks also drew a similar kind of image of Tipu Sultan in his *Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore* only to confirm the description given by Kirkpatrick. In the play, the British soldiers enter into the Palace to search for Tipu’s body under Wilk’s captaincy. He is seen to have much interest in finding Tipu's corpse. For Wilks, Tipu is nothing but a monster with monkey pranks having “big twirly moustaches, round face....” (Karnad, 2005, p. 9). But this description “fit most of these bastards” (p. 10), answers one of his soldiers.

By the way, Wilk continues a long conversation with his soldiers while the search is going on. The language they use shows the attitude of the colonizers towards the natives:

Wilks: Ask that black there.

Soldier: ...if the bastard’s really lying dead somewhere here, we should let him rot in the sun—feed him to the dogs! (pp. 10-11)

The language used here suggests that the colonized are the inferior “Other” to the colonizers. They can be addressed as “bastards” or can be made fun of or can be “rot in the sun”, and can be “fed “to the dogs”. Karnad dismantles the colonial attitude towards the colonized and attempts to prove that the ill image of Tipu Sultan in popular history and literature has resulted from such an attitude. This attitude reveals the hatred of the oppressors towards the marginalized “others”.

In fact, Karnad, in this play, has adopted a humanistic approach towards Tipu who was dehumanized in the conventional discourse. He has presented Tipu as a patron of knowledge with a fascination for science and technology. Tipu’s iron-cased rockets were the first of this type to be deployed for any military use.

Tipu used these rockets successfully in the Anglo-Mysore war against the British. The British borrowed this technology to advance European rocketry. Karnad focused on Tipu's great potential for warfare techniques as a gifted warrior on the battlefield. He was defeated not because of the fault in his military skills rather he lost, first, due to the betrayal of a good number of his confidants and second, for the collaboration of the local princes like Marathas and the Nizams with the British colonizers.

Tipu is presented as a man with proper self-respect, a man of dignity in *The Dreams*. Towards the end of the second act, we find a bereaved Tipu who has just lost his wife and finds himself forced to send his two sons as war captives. He becomes more astonished after exploring the terms and conditions imposed upon him by the British to release his sons. In this context, we find him a man of composed nature with firm resolution. He subdues his anger assuring the citizens that the British will not cause any harm to his sons. When his citizens protest this decision, he tells them that it is only because he will never allow "the destruction of the city" (p. 42).

Nevertheless, only fear he has in his mind is that the English will teach their language to his sons:

Tipu: The danger is: they will teach my children their language, English. The language in which it is possible to think of children as hostages. All I can try to do is agree to their terms and conclude the treaty in a hurry--- before my children have learnt that language. (p. 43)

Finally, Tipu's sons are received by Lord Cornwallis and Tipu eagerly waits to hear about the event. When Kirmani says: "The English seemed stunned by our magnificence. The princes were received with twenty-two-gun salute" (p. 48), Tipu's heart swells up with pride. Also, Tipu takes pride when he hears that his sons "hardly looked at" the gold watches given to them by Cornwallis. His pride is wounded when he is told that Gaulam Ali Khan has requested Cornwallis: "These children were this morning the sons of the Sultan, my master. Their situation is now changed and they must look up to your lordship as their Father" (p. 48). Tipu murmured with a strong sense of disgrace, "Tipu: Oh God! God! Why didn't I die before I heard these words...How did I come to this?" (p. 48).

Because he knows what it means by colonizers' parenthood. For him, it is also suggestive of his inability to be a ruler and a father as well. But, Karnad demonstrates that the colonizers' parenthood is an imposed one and cannot diminish the original parenthood of Tipu. His sons keep the teachings of their father upheld and have saved their and his honor. That's how *The Dreams* projects a counter-narrative against the Western knowledge.

As Tipu was largely misinterpreted by the colonial discourse, such a counter-discourse is very crucial to challenge Western knowledge. A counter-discourse seeks to expose and consume the biases of the 'dominant discourse' (Tiffin, 1987, p. 18) which Karnad's play successfully does. Girish Karnad, through his play, has questioned the foundations of the ontologies and epistemological systems of the dominant colonial version and creates a discourse from the bias of the dominated so that the latter co-exists with the previous.

He has explored multifarious positive aspects of Tipu Sultan in *The Dreams* for a specific purpose to reveal the historical truth of the ruler's life and time. In the play, he admires the Sultan for his personality, foresightedness, contemplative nature, etc. going against the traditional discourse about this tiger of Mysore. Even in one of his interviews, while he was asked about this particular play, Karnad remarked, "Tipu was a thinker and visionary who represented the best of Karnataka". (The Hindu, 2005). In another interview Karnad declared, "I think he was a great King, he was a great thinker, a great strategist, and he did so much for Karnataka. I stand by what I said, I admire him." (India Today, Nov 12, 2015)

## Conclusion

To sum up, this paper argues that Girish Karnad challenges the so-called negative image of Tipu Sultan designed and propagated by the Western Colonizers weaving a counter-discourse. This counter-discourse is indispensable in creating the history of the subjugated colonized who were pressed to keep their voice inside. This play greatly contributes to bringing the marginalized "Other" to the "center" from the periphery of the Western narratives about the East. *The Dreams* are a slap on the face of colonial hegemony. It works to bring the lost image of Tipu back and to restore it to a righteous place as well.

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