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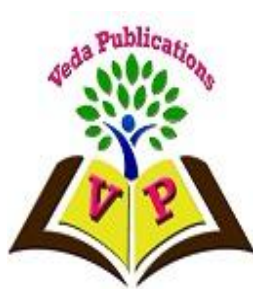
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THEME OF LOVE AND ALIENATION IN THE PLAY *THE FIRE AND THE RAIN*

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ABSTRACT

Love is one of the most essential things for human being in case of living a life. It should be dependent on the choice of the individual. But in the past orthodox society, patriarchy doesn't give free space to the lovers. Socio-Political issues of the society entered forcefully into the love affairs of the individuals. Class, caste, rules, regulation, rank etc became more important in case of love. Women were the main victims of in these matters. Girish Karnard that's why highlighted the situation of the Indian society of the past and showed to us that how the lovers, specially the women were brutally oppressed, tortured, suffered by the society to love according to their free will. As a result when they tried to cross the boundaries, they were not only alienated from their lovers but also murdered.

Keywords: *Alienated, Deprived. Free-will, Love, Oppressed.*



INTRODUCTION

The postcolonial Indian theatre frequently counters our tradition. The reason is to rediscover our tradition which was strongly inspired by our strong roots of identity politics. This was probably the part of the whole process of decolonization of our tradition, some moral values & ethics, pre mature ideology, creative forms and cultural attitudes. Girish Karnard, a famous Indian playwright, entered into the Indian past to re-interpret it and made it important for present times. Karnard's *The Fire and the Rain* is inspired from the myth of Yavakri. The myth of Yavakri was written in chapters 135-138 of the "Vana Parva" of *Mahabharata*. Love is one of the most important issues in *The Fire and the Rain*. Different characters loved their lovers but they are alienated from their lovers due to class problems, caste struggles, social issues and many other problems. Although they faced so much danger and torture, they became dare to come close to their lovers and as a result they were affected and tortured by the orthodox society and marginalized by norms and customs.

In the play *The Fire and the Rain*, Nittilai is a hunter girl and Arvasu belonging from a Brahmin family. Though both of them has different class and caste but they loved each other from their inner most core of the heart. On the other hand both Visakha and Yavakri both belong to Brahmin family and they love each other. Though both Nittilai and Visakha loves their lover intensely but they are not able to get their men as husband and they are bound to marry other men due to the pressure of their family. They are tortured, marginalized, oppressed by the patriarchal society as their gender is 'female' and society creates their body as taboo. Having female body they should not be able to focus on their choice which patriarchy demands. As a result they become 'abject'. But they tried to break the social norms and customs as well as the 'herd morality' and come close to their lover many times in spite of having restraint from the patriarchy. Patriarchy doesn't allow women to break the rules and regulation of orthodox society. As Nittilai and Visakha did this, they are victimized by the society. Finally they are murdered even.

Arvasu loves Nittilai very much and there is no doubt about Arvasu's profound love for her. But the notion of class hierarchy is always already there in Arvasu's psyche. This idea we find clearly when he said to Nittilai that- "You hunters- you only know minor spells and witchcrafts- spirits slithering in shallow caves or dangling on trees. But Yavakri and Father and Brother can bring out the terrors from the womb of the earth and play with them (Karnard 43)." Also Nittilai's love for him is intense but she has not huge respect for Brahmin that we find when she says to Arvasu that- "Do you know why father called the elders in such haste? He always says : 'These high-caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them' (Karnard 8)". Due to the class and caste status they are facing problems from the very first of the play and even for this reason they are alienated from sexual satisfaction before their marriage, as Arvasu said to Nittilai "All these days I couldn't touch you because Brahmins don't touch other castes. Now you can't touch me because among hunters, girls don't touch their betrothed (Karnard 6)". But Arvasu is "ready to reject his caste" (Karnard 43)) to marry Nittilai. He is ready to reject everything to get Nittilai as a wife.

Arvasu has the schedule to meet Nittilai's family members to get the permission of his marriage with Nittilai. But he doesn't able to come in the right time and as a result Nittilai's family members reject Nittilai's marriage with Arvasu and forcefully give Nittilai's marriage with another person. But even after her marriage with another person she doesn't forget Arvasu and her love for him doesn't diminish also. In the words of Pablo Neruda from the poem 'Tonight I Can Write The Saddest Lines'- "Love is so short, forgetting is so long (Neruda)." Even at the time of acting, Arvasu wants Nittilai's face from the audiences- "I don't care for this sea of smiling faces. I want yours (Karnard 55)." Patriarchy doesn't allow woman's extra-marital affair and as a result she is killed by her brothers and husband. Though Arvasu gets the offer from Indra to lead Nittilai into life, but for sudden problems he can't do that.

At a sudden point of time Yavakri goes to forest for acquiring eternal knowledge from Indra. As a result they can't marry each other and Visakha is



married to Parvasu. In spite of not having interest on Parvasu she is bound to marry him due to the pressure of her family. But Parvasu has been selected as a chief priest at one point of time in fire sacrifice. At that time Visakha is separated from both Parvasu and Yavakri. During the absence of her lover (Yavakri) and husband (Parvasu), Parvasu's father raped him- "An old man's crudled lust. And there's no one else here to take his rage out on but me (Karnard 32-33)." A patriarchal man who is strongly devoted to his culture, class and caste but he doesn't able to control her sexual desire upon his own son's wife. The same thing was happened in Mulkh Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable*. Though the priest of the temple doesn't allow Bakha's sister to come in the temple as she belongs to lower class, but he doesn't forget to seduce her. Though Visakha in the play *The Fire and the Rain* belongs to Brahmin caste but the similarity between her and Bakha's sister is that they can't protest against the patriarchal male figures because the Brahmin custom are not ready to listen the protest of female figures. Where the patriarchal figures freely shows their masculinity upon females by taking sexual advantage forcefully from female and it is the duty of the females to keep their mouth shut.

Though Visakha marries Parvasu but her love for Yavakri remains. Also In the novel *Wuthering Heights*, though Catherine marries Edger Lington but her love for Heathcliff remains. But Visakha is forced to marry Parvasu, where Catherine marries Edger according to her own decision to get financial security. But Visakha is very much conscious about her marriage and she knows patriarchy does not allow her illicit relationship with another person. So she tells Yavakri to avoid intimacy with her by the words- "I am a married woman (Karnard 12)." Though Yavakri separates himself from Visakha for ten years but she remained loyal to her as he said "Ten years ago I swore to you that I would not look at another woman. I kept my word (Karnard 12)." Yavakri remembers the moment of intimacy between him and Visakha and now he becomes mad to do that again with her- "The sweet sick smell of the jack-fruit, the maddening hum of a fly. The smell of your body. Ten years later I opened my eyes and I knew I was

hungry for the moment (Karnard 14)." When Raibhya, Visakha's father-in-law found his son-in-law shares some secret moments with Yavakri, he becomes angry and murders her. He is a typical patriarchal, Brahmin person who is ready to spoil his son-in-law but not ready to tolerate her extra-marital affair with another person.

Patriarchy locates woman's body as 'other'. Their body is recognized as a weaker body. They are described as a sexual object. Men are always eager to take sexual pleasures from that. They are least bother about the demand of women. As if women are created in this world to fulfill the sexual urge of the men. That's why Visakha said to Yavakri- "My husband and you! He left no pore in my body alone. And you- you think a woman is only a pair of half-formed breasts (Karnard 16)."

If the heroines (Nittilai, Visakha) in the play *The Fire and the Rain* marry according to their own will and continue extra-marital affair then it would be right to call them sinner. But they are forced to marry other man. As a result their love for their former lovers remains still. Patriarchy rather orthodox society is least bother about the choice of woman and patriarchy thinks it is their duty to dominate them. The heroines in this play try to overcome the oppression and domination of male dominated society. As a result they are not only alienated from their lovers, even they are murdered. I think readers would have pity for them after reading this text.

Due to the patriarchy, class bias, caste problem Nittilai and Visakha become the victim of torture and ultimately they are dead also. They are oppressed by both society and the own family members. Girish karnard does not want to tell that any culture is superior. It is not the Brahmin culture rather tribal culture which is responsible for Nittilai's inability to marry Arvasu and it is the Brahmin culture which is responsible for Visakha's death. A culture is amazing when it does something good for humanity and respects other culture as well as weaker gender also. But when it forcefully creates another culture and gender as 'other' and hurts humanity it is not good. Any culture does not talk about to hurt others. But the persons who are the bearer of the culture spoil their own culture by the misconduct. So by the



fire sacrifices I think Girish Karnard wants to diminish all the things which hurt other things and person related to class, caste, rules and custom. I think he also wants to bring harmony between different cultures and genders.

CONCLUSION

Hegel incorporates a theory, i.e. 'remembering the past'. He wants to proclaim that we can't deny past, rather we should take lessons from the past. Girish Karnard in *The Fire and the Rain* incorporates the myth of Yavakri and wants to locate that in spite of being stepped in the post-modern era, the problems of past also remains in the present. In case of love- class, caste, rank should not be the prime issue. We should recognize either the person is loyal, gentle or not. The personality of a person is least important than class and caste in case of love affair. So the bride can't be able to get their lover as life partner and ultimately some of them get unhappy married life. In some cases they become the victim of death. In the play *The Fire and the Rain* Girish Karnard wants to make his readers aware of these issues. As love is one of the most precious things in the world, it is not necessary to highlight class and cast in case of love. Lovers should not be alienated by these types of typical orthodox norms.

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