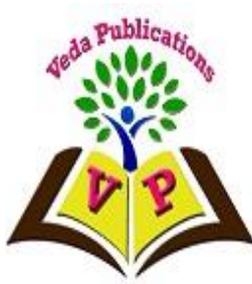


**FEMALE IDENTITY IN THE PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD**

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*(Ph. D Scholar, OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan.)*DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9115>**ABSTRACT**

Feminists have taken a renewed interest in studying the earlier texts of women writers and interpreting them in new ways to determine how women's writings share commonalities with male writing and how much they are part of it. Feminist writers primarily focus on women's perspectives and expressions about their own lives. In the current era of postcolonial literature, women have become the focal point of debate, not only in India but also in Western countries. Amartya Sen mentions two main reasons for gender inequality in his book "more than 100 million women are missing." The first is cultural bias and discrimination while providing nutritious food and general medical treatment. Cultural biases always maintain male dominance at the top. Silvia Wallaby depicts patriarchy as a system of social structures and practises in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women in her article "theorising patriarchy."

Keywords: *Patriarchy, sexual, subcultures, traditional*



Girish Karnad's plays are extremely important from a feminist standpoint. As a living legend in contemporary Indian English drama, he is regarded as one of the most important Indian dramatists. He assesses all of his female characters critically. There is a lot of room for them to express themselves. They go above and beyond social norms in order to fulfil their desires. They are the embodiment of strength, directness, and a protestor against the social structure that oppresses women's positions.

Gender bias in society and patriarchal oppression of women are important themes in Karnad's plays. Karnad depicts the condition of a typical Indian female in his plays, who is ruled by patriarchal order and bound by tradition, but whose spirit remains unbounded. Karnad, as a humanist, sincerely attempts to give a voice to the silenced majority through his plays. Yayati's Devayani, Sharmishta, and Chitralkha, Hayavadana's Kapile and Padmini, and Naga-Rani mandala's and Kurudavva. Tribals, such as Mitilai and Vishakha in *Fire and the Rani*, Mahout in *Bali*, the *Sacrifice*, Chandravati in *Flowers*, Malini in *Broken Images*, and Rahabai in *Wedding Album*, represent Karnad's effort to give them a voice.

Girish Karnad is internationally recognised as a play right, but he is also a highly skilled communicator and a person of diverse accomplishments and interests. Based on his serious explorations of folklore, mythology, and history, the subjects of his plays reflect contemporary problems and challenges, and he strives to forge a link between the past and the present. As the creative intellectual that he is, he obviously draws inspiration for his plays from his own experiences and uses them as a

medium to communicate his own-independent and original feelings, thoughts, and interpretations.

The 'Rakshasi,' or 'madwoman,' is another representation of femininity found in mythology. As previously stated, this type represents the sexual woman who is regarded by the public as monstrous and insane, and who is locked away and silenced in order not to infect society with her 'sickness.' "He returns to ancient Indian culture, myths, mythologies, and folklore, studies puranas, and takes women as presented in the then-prevailing culture but combines them with the contemporary world where women are struggling to establish their identity and space of honour" (Dasaradhi). The sexual woman has changed into the speaking subject and now enters the stage of Karnad's writings in form of the 'New Woman'. The expressing of a woman's sexuality is not seen as detestable anymore, but is regarded as necessary for a fulfilled life by Karnad. In some ways, the 'New Woman' might still be considered as 'monstrous', if one thinks of Vidula's outer appearance for example. However, this 'monstrosity' is a positive one; a positive 'differentness' from traditional images of women and a revolt against male expectations of femininity. So, again, attitudes towards this type of femininity have changed significantly from the original myths to Karnad's drama. The hideous creature of the 'madwoman' has transformed into the celebrated star of Karnad's stories.

Girish Karnad uses mythology to present femininity in a unique way. The goal of his unique depictions of women is to express his feminist beliefs while also making his readers or audience aware of the issues that women have faced and continue to



face. Girish Karnad disseminated their political and philosophical ideas through the literary mode of mythology. Their methods were unquestionably different from those of Karnad, but their intent was the same. To revolutionize the perception of women and their position in society, Karnad presented them as post-modern creation. The concept of women merely as wife and child-bearer was abandoned. Among the feminist dramatists, Girish Karnad's writing came as a revolution that was to be perceived in the male sensitivity to the unfair or highly limited roles of women, to their restricted representation in society and its literature. Karnad has portrayed many women who overcame odds and liberated their selves from male and social oppression at various levels. He has focused on female self definition in spite of the position they have been pushed to by patriarchy. Girish Karnad rejects the plea that his drama is a trumpet for women's liberation. In fact, his drama is a struggle for the women and their undertaking for being considered as human beings.

The present study attempts to analyze the plays highlighting the feminist ideology embedded in them. It seeks to specify to what extent his feminist inclinations has lead him, and how far he is different from the other feminists of the time. He is not for creations mythical nonsense to glorify women and then allow them to be subjugated by men, but to put an iron-heart and an iron will lain every woman. His plays are meant to create a new body and soul for woman. He touches the very quintessence of feminism when he dwells elaborately on women's construction and liberation. Karnad's plays project his comprehensive vision as to what a liberated woman of the future should be. It is growth exploring how

Karnad constructs even the mutest aspects of this New woman after sounding the death know of patriarchy which has reigned supreme to the determent of women's freedom. This is also an attempt to find out how far his unconventional ways of making his feminist design clear puts him in the postmodern line. This study seeks to assess how far those aspects of postmodernism which are traced in Karnad's plays are conducive to his feminist design. In his attempt to articulate the aspirations of women he uses techniques and strategies that evince postmodern tendencies.

Even Chitrlekha disregards everything including kingdom and high reputation of Bharath dynasty and wants "space" for herself. She decides to die rather than yield before old conventions and assigned roles set for women also representing yearn for emancipation. In Hayavadana Padmini as a family member of leading merchant of Pavanaveethi of Dharmapala and enjoys commanding position. Padmini duel hind talks about her interest in both Peemikapila and Devadatta. She is in love with kapila's body and Devadatta's mind. At the climax in duel Devadatta and Kapila exchange forgiveness and kill each other subsequently Padmini finds herself nowhere. She suffers from alienation and perplexing situation exports. She is abetted to perform sati- for the sake of the glory of her son or she couldn't live without Devadatta and Kapila.

Fireand the Rain is the translation of Karnad's kannada play agminated male is the mythological play, it is expressed in Girish Karnad in the opening para of preface. Even women character splays an important role in this play. There are two women characters: Vihakha and Nittilai. Vishakha is twenty-



six years old Brahmin women married in high-class Brahmin family. Parvasu is her husband and Raibhya is her father-in-law. Both are intellectuals and learned, has super natural power too. But their family possesses the traits of patriarchal family system. Vishakha is suffered by male dominance. It is observed that Vishakha was forced to marry when she loves Yavakri. It is basic principle of orthodox patriarch that girl's consent is not considered when her marriage settled. In story *The Weed* talks about the same thing related to least-bothered condition of women in case of her own marriage. Vishakha's father gets her married to Parvasu against her wish. Even she had to follow her father's decision. She becomes a part of great sorrow for the sake of her father's happiness even Nittilai, a tribal girl got married the other against her wish, even she is in love with Arvasu. Both women caught between the real and romantic. They both counter traditional values and more further to fulfil their emotional desires, even their moment consider completely against social norms in patriarchal society. Vishakhasentral marital relationships may appear like impure merles through the vision of society, where all blames are kept on women. Even men are a part of it, and from a feminist standpoint, Vishakha's relationship with Yavakri is not an unforgivable blunder. It's a very natural occurrence in all animals. Vishakhare introduces it. In the case of Nittilai, she came forward even after her marriage to save Aravasu's life by opposing all social norms and cultural biases that favour male dominancy. Nittilai's love is quite different from Vishakha's love for Yavakri in that it is unconditional, pure, and transcends sexual relationships. Both women play counter-roles in a male-dominated society.

Two female characters appear in the other play, *Bali*. The other character is the Queen's mother, and the other character is the Queen. The queen mother is the king's mother, and she follows tradition. The Hindu faith. She firmly believes in Hindu religion's traditions, rituals, and cultural activities; she worships gods and goddesses and enjoys offering blood sacrifices to gods. She expects all family members to adhere to Hindu traditions, which have a long and illustrious history. However, the other character, queen, wife of the king, has an extramarital relationship that queen mother is aware of. She orders her son to kill his wife, not quoting the above reason, by quoting as she doesn't bare a child. It indicates orthodox mind setup of queen mother, who formed in patriarchal society, the norms are deep rooted in her life. She could not digest her daughter-in-law's extra marital relationship. Instead of finding the fault with her son, instead of blaming her son, for not able to fulfil his wife's desires, she blames queen and thinks that she is impure, disloyal to her husband, Karnad tries to introduce both the characters in two different way on the one, queen mother as an embodiment of tradition in patriarchal society, on the other, queen is an modern woman, who has all the rights to fulfil an individual's desires beyond the deep rooted social norms in the society.

CONCLUSION

Girish Karnad's plays, on the other hand, all represent feminine aspects that are oppressed in male hegemonic patriarchal society. However, in order to analyse it thoroughly, his six plays *Yayati* (1961), *Hyayvadana* (1972), *Bali: The Sacrifice* (1980), *Nagamandala: Play with Cobra* (1988), *Wedding Album* (2009), and *The Fire and The Rain* (1998) were



chosen. The chapters that follow are concerned with female issues in the family, in marriage, and on a physical and social level. Finally, Girish Karnad presents a New Woman who is an ideal human being, and her image awakens patriarchal society's males. All women characters in Karnad's play suffer in male dominated society. Their repression is more severe because they attempted to cross the line in the male-dominated social structure. Males have a voice, presence, and power, whereas females are silent, absent, and powerless. Karnad was successful in reducing the great injustice done to women in patriarchal society by providing strength, allowing them to follow their internal words by opposing social norms, rites, and rituals in a deeply rooted male dominated social structure. It concludes with some of Amartya Sen's suggestions in his "more than a hundred million women are missing" to improve the status of women in a male-dominated society.

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