

## **De-Colonised Women Characters In Girish Karnad's Plays.**

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### **Abstract:**

In the present era in the post-colonial literature woman has become the centre of discussion, not only in India but also in western countries. Amartya Sen in his “more than 100 million women are missing” mentions two main reasons for gender inequality, first thing is the cultural bias and discrimination while providing nutritious food and general medical treatment. Cultural biases always keep the male domination at the top. Silvia wallaby in her “theorizing patriarchy” depicts patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women.

Girish Karnad’s plays are very significant from feministic point of view. As a living legend in the contemporary Indian English drama considered one of the most significant Indian dramatists. He critically evaluates all his women characters. Much scope is given for their self-expression. They go beyond the social norms—to fulfill their desires. They are embodiment of strength, straightforwardness and protestor against social structure which suppresses woman’s position.

Spivak accentuates that the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominate and female in shadow. There for role of women should be redefined. It should be done in two ways, first to be within the family and then in public where there is patriarchy of men.

The gender-bias in society and the oppression of women by the patriarchal order form an important part of Karnad’s plays. In his plays Karnad picture the condition of a typical Indian female ruled by patriarchal order bounded by tradition but whose spirit remains unbounded. As a man of humanism Karnad sincerely tries to give the voice to this silenced majority through his plays. Devayani, Sharmishta, Chitrlekha in Yayati, Kapile and Padmini in Hayavadana, Rani and Kurudavva in Naga-mandala. Tribals: Mitilai and Vishakha in the Fire and the Rani, Mahout in Bali, the Sacrifice, Chandravati in Flowers, Malini in Broken

Images and Rahabai in wedding Album, represent the Karnad's effort to give them the voice to speak.

In mescaline society where woman is identified as 'other' or 'second' sex, despite her high position in the society. Karnad doesn't stick to idealization of son's self-sacrifice rather raises voice against this. Devayani, the queen has to suffer humiliation and finally becomes insane. Swarnalata is tortured by her husband's doubts of infidelity insults and is finally deserted; Sharmishta is an easy prey of Yayati's sexual gratification. Though Chitrlekha also faces similar conditions, she emerges as a new woman who boldly challenges the decision of Pooru and false rhetoric of yayati. She doesn't allow pooru to enter into her bedroom-who accepts the course of his father for his moral miss demeanor and becomes old.

“I will not let my husband step back into my bedroom unless he returns a young man”

The present paper discusses various philosophical and theoretical aspects of women who struggle audaciously against patriarchy, male dominance and gender discourses. Karnad as an embodiment of a rich culture of this land. This is how women characters of his plays become subject of discussion in various ways.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Girish Karnad is internationally known as play right, but is also highly talented communicator and a person of wide accomplishment and interests. Based on his serious explorations of folklore, mythology and history, the subject of his plays reflect the problems and challenges of contemporary life and Endeavour to forge a link between the past and the present. The creative intellectual that he is, he obviously views the subjects of his plays from experiences and employs them as a medium of communicate his own-independent and original feelings, thoughts and interpretations.

"Gender equality still remains a myth... the discussion of the relationship between man and women have been prescribed by man not by women"-Krishnayami. Karnad's more focus is on Re-examining and re-reading the historical stories, myths and legends. Karnad succeeds in redefining his women characters. Unlike Henrik Ibsan's character Dora in 'Dolls House' who takes a radical changing decision by moving outside the home in midnight by leaving her husband and children, Karnad's all most all characters oppose the social structure with all cultural biases which upholds the male dominancy being within the structure. Most of the time their silence speaks a lot. In some of his plays he introduces two types of

characters. One represents tradition of patriarchal society and the other represents 'educated' woman of the period of women empowerment. How Usha in 'Kamala Markandayya's 'Kartavya' relishes of self 'and all relationships as illusions..... internal words are beautifully expressed between lines through her great silence. That's how even women in Karnad's plays are rational more in deeds than in words. Close observation of each character helps to understand in a real sense.

Women characters are presented in Karnad's play's in two ways some of them are the subject of suppression in male dominated society. Glimpses of this fact is illustrated through another relationship that forms the sub-plot of the play the swarnalata episode it is maid character women's innocence for the injustice is expressed through swarnalatha's character. Some other character in his plays though they are not modern in a real sense, they are strengthened to express themselves. Chitrlekha is Karnad's another character, Chitrlekha: I did not push him to the edge of the pyre, sir. You did. you hold forth on my wifely duties what about your duty to your son? Did you think twice before hoisting your troubles on a plaint son? Chitrlekha seems to be in search of a man who would define her and provide her some recognitions in society ruled by males. Finding herself in such a sad plight she says to yayati: chitrlekha: what else is there for me to do? You have your youth, prince pooruhas his old age. Where do I fit in? she seems to be "new women" not in the sense that she challenges the patriarchy but in the sense that she challenged the social obligation and moral laws. She remains a rebellious figure within the male dominated world.

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 dharmapula and enjoys commanding position. Padmini duel hind talks about her interest in both peesmikapila 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.

Female chorus justifies Padmini's misdemeanor

“why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petaled many-flowered lantana why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?-I have neither regret –nor shame”.

Karnad’s attempts to give due space to women in human society where she is marginalized since time immemorial. The play presents evolution of women and quest for better position in the world.

One of the other well-known plays of Kannada is Nagamandala (1988). Different phases of men and women are explored in the play, even the great injustice done to women in patriarchal society. Women’s great agony and anguish is shown in the play.

Though the great injustice is done to her but stealthily deflates the concept of chastity. Through the story of Rani by Appanna in the house symbolizes the chastity belt of the middle ages. The reduction of women’s talents to house work and the exclusion of women from enlightenment and enjoyment. Karnad brings within the play, the strong association between oral narrative tradition and women’s sub-culture existing within the patriarchal societies. Cultural biases in male dominating patriarchal society. Women are treated as foolish and ignorant, their intellectuality is not all recognized, they have lack of freedom to express themselves in the world. Identity is still a question mark in case of women. In the present play Rani is representative of all women of that period who undergoes social formation in patriarchal society. She respects values in society superficially. Her appearance is orthodox but she stands as woman of daresness, confident and self-trust, gets ready for any examination to prove herself as pure and succeeds in that. Indiscrimination of gender only the truth is endeavoring. Karnad succeeds in proving this through Rani’s character. In case of Tale Dandi as a religious play gives more concentration for casteism. Reformation, at the same time women’s position is expressed through the character of Rambhavathi, women’s suppression. Vulnerable condition is of no difference in case of women of high status and below. Rambhavathi is also a subject of suppression as Jagadevas’ mother and wife of middle class.

Fire and the Rain is the translation of Karnad’s Kannada play Agnimattu. Male is the mythological play, it is expressed in Girish Karnad in the opening para of preface. Even women characters play an important role in this play. There are two women characters: Vishakha and Nittilai. Vishakha is twenty six years old Brahmin woman 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 Paravasu 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 fulfill their emotional desires, even their moment consider completely against social norms in patriarchal society. Vishakha's marital relationships may appear like impure or less through the vision of society, where all blames are kept on women. Even men is a part of it, from feminist point of view Vishakha's relationship with Yavakri is not an inexcusable mistake. It's a very natural phenomenon with all animals. Vishakha presents it. In case of Nittilai, even after her marriage she came forward to save Aravasu's life by opposing all social norms and cultural biases which are in favour of male dominance. Nittilai's love is quiet different from Vishakha's love towards Yavakri, it is unconditional, pure and beyond sexual relationship both women play counter part in male dominating society.

In the other play Bali, there are two women characters. Queen mother and the other character is Queen. Queen mother is the mother of king and she follows tradition. Hindu religion. She firmly believes on the traditions, rituals and cultural activities of Hindu religion she worships god and goddesses and like to offer blood sacrifice to gods. She expects all family members must follow tradition of Hinduism which has rich great history. But the other character queen, wife of king has an extra-marital relationship which is known to queen mother. 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 fulfill 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 fulfill an individual's desires beyond the deep rooted social norms in the society

### **Conclusion**

All women characters in karnad's play suffers in male dominated society. Their suppression is more because they tried to cross the threshold in the male dominated social structure. The male has voice, presence and power, where as female is silent, absent and powerless. For some extent karnad succeeded to reduce the great injustice is done to women in patriarchal society by providing strength, to follow their internal words by opposing social norms, rites, rituals in deep rooted male dominated social structure. It is concluded with the some of suggestions by Amartya Sen in his "more than hundred million women are missing" to improve the status of women in male dominated society. He says only through gainful employment outside the home could be increased her status. Her suggestions are well-comed in family affairs. By becoming a part of bread-winner role, she could have equality to male gender, slowly society would turn towards woman with high respect and equality. may all cultural biases favourable to male dominancy could vanish.

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