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THE PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD: A FEMINIST STUDY.

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to bring out the position of women in the plays of GirishKarnad with reference to his plays Hayavadana and Nagamandala. Bringing out the ideas of Karnad on women and his views on this paper attempts to bring out the position of women in the plays of GirishKarnad with reference to his plays Hayavadana and Nagamandala. Bringing out the ideas of Karnad on women and his views on their role in the society, this paper examines how he presented the characters of women. With the help of instances taken from the selected plays, this paper gives a clear view of Karnad's mind towards women. role in the society, this paper examines how he presented the characters of women. With the help of instances taken from the selected plays, this paper gives a clear view of Karnad's mind towards women. The research paper presents the feminist approach in GirishKarnad's Naga-Mandala (1988) in the framework of postcolonial gender analysis. Naga-Mandala (1988) addresses the continued uneven power relations between female and male gender.

Key words: Feminism, patriarchy, courageous, dominating, liberty, strength, Gender issues, Male-dominance, Patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

GirishKarnad was one of the great Indian dramatists, steadily made successful dramas on myth, folk tales and historical plays. He has marked his success in both written as well as stage performance. His plays serve as a good reference for exploring the feminist writings. Karnad's plays tell different stories in a different plot but everything related to the traditional societal issues. He focuses on the problems faced especially by woman in the society. He gazes at the domestic issues in all his plays and tries to give solutions through the plot. He has mixed several aspects in his plays including the concept of existentialism, epic theatre technique, historical and

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mythological stories in a folk plot which deals with the contemporary socio-political problems and domestic issues which grabs much attention from the critics as they usually paid much feminist design in his plays. His portrayal of women characters speaks about his understanding of Indian women in a better way. He has made his female characters subjected to all the critical stages of life especially guiltiness. Almost all his plays are in some way dominated by the female in it. He used his full freedom to describe the role of women in his stories. He has introduced several other techniques of portraying both the traditional and modern archetypal female characters in plays. There are four main varieties of plays written by GirishKarnad and the picturization of women in all these types varies according to the need and plot. In historical plays women are made as subservient characters because during the ancient times women were not subjected to socio-cultural, political and economical issues. This point is well evidenced in his most famous plays Tughlaq and The Dreams of Tipu Sultan.

In the play, Hayavadana, Bhagavata introduces to Devadatta's love for his friend Kapila in Dharampura. The account is legendary and the actions are only probable. The two youths are two bodies. They have one heart and one mind. Devadatta is a Brahmin, studying Shastras and living up to his tradition. This god-given one is the son of one who possesses the ocean of wisdom. Above all the name of the place is significant. It is a force for all to act and behave according to the norms of Dharma – act, truth and justice. Kapila is the son of a smith, a wrestler and the friendship of theirs is to be taken for granted defying the caste or Varna system. Devadatta falls in love at first sight. This is unrealistic when one considers his fifteen adventures already he has gone through. It is again a daughter of a merchant and not a Brahmin girl. He wants to marry her and he uses Kapila as his messenger to contact her. Kapila succeeds in getting them married. Devadatta has vowed saying that if he gets Padmini he would offer his head to Lord Rudra and his hands to Goddess Kali. This is a strange vow, unrealistic. One dies when he fails to get the desired thing. But, the unbelievable thing is heard from a learned Brahmin. If he offers his head, where is the sense of getting the woman he has loved? It seems like a perverted thing. Yet, Devadatta belongs to the time when 'Dharma' was observed meticulously and honestly. However, Devadatta spends a few happy married days and soon he comes to know that Padmini is in love with Kapila. He tries to dissuade her saying that Kapila is not used to women. Padmini answers in a paradoxical way,

“You mean, it is dangerous to be with him.”

However, he could not avoid Kapila's visiting Padmini.

When the fair of Ujjain comes near, Devadatta plans to go to Ujjain with Padmini. Even now, he tries to evade Kapila. But, he could not and Kapila is to drive the cart. They stopped for a while in the forest. Devadatta observes that Padmini takes more interest in Kapila and he knows that a woman cannot resist herself when once she happens to see him. So, when Padmini wants to go about in the forest, he says he would stay near the cart and she should go with Kapila. Here, he says this intentionally. He does not want to come in the way of her love. They go to the temple of Rudra and Devadatta goes to the temple of Kali which is a little away from it. There he decides to sacrifice his life for the sake of Padmini, so that she could be free from the bondage of

marriage and unite with Kapila. He takes the sword lying there and cuts his head off and dies. Devadatta thinks he has obeyed his vow. Perhaps, this fate was pre-determined and hence, he was obliged to vow in that way. But, he is not destined to die. Kapila's sacrifice makes Padmini pray Goddess Kali and with her grace both come to life. Here, due to the mistake by her Devadatta's head is joined to Kapila's body. So, from now onward, there is a mixture of personalities in both friends.

The main purpose of the research paper is to show how in *Naga-Mandala*(1988), the female protagonist, Rani who in the start of the play is dominated, revolts against the limitation of social customs and eventually upsurges from her important position to a goddess. This study is to establish how GirishRaghunathKarnad (1938-2019) presents the conventional images of women that have always been imposed on them by patriarchy. GirishKarnad is the foremost playwright of the contemporary stage. He has given the Indian theatre richness that could probably be equated with his talents as actor cum director. He has represented India in foreign lands as an ambassador of art and culture. His plays are staged in theatre all over the world. He is well known writer, playwright, director and actor. In his play *Naga-Mandala* (1988), Karnad offers an insight into the private lives of women. The protagonist is Rani, Right from the beginning the flames that appear in the prologue of the play represents the metaphorical terms the different lives of the women of the village. The flames gather at mid-night to tell tales about the private lives of couple and rejoice in their findings.

In his drama, Karnad cleverly depicts the state of a representative Indian woman, controlled by the patriarchal order constrained by convention, but whose temperament is uninhibited. Karnad is considered a celebrated Indian film director, actor and a playwright. He performed not only in plays but also in several outstanding films.

The first story about the lamp flames that gather in a village temple to exchange gossip about the households they inhabit, is part of the outer play and gives imaginative expression to the idea of communicative life. The second story, about the woman who was visited by a King Cobra in the form of her husband, is personified in the play as a beautiful, smart and young woman in a sari. Feminism in India is an award-winning digital intersectional feminist media organisation to learn, educate and develop a feminist sensibility among the youth. It is required to unravel the F-word and demystify the negativity surrounding it. It amplifies the voices of women and marginalised communities using tools of art, media, culture, technology and community. Feminism is carefully presented in most of the plays of GirishKarnad. Karnad very effectively expressed the condition of a typical Indian Female ruled by the patriarchal order bonded by tradition, whose spirit remains unbounded. This issue of the gender bias in society and the oppression of woman by the patriarchal order happen to form an important part of Karnad's plays. Karnad also depicted women entrusted with feminism fighting the unjust norms at

the patriarchal order. Actually women's encounter with patriarchy lends the women to death or disaster. In this research paper I would like to study the treatment of female characters in plays of Karnad based on myths.

The past story of Hayavadana is built only by his mother „the princess“. The character of the princess is constructed as the stubborn character here. Whereas in another plot of the same play, Karnad moves the whole plot with the Padmini character who loves Devadatta's soul and Kapila's body. She boldly messed up the condition by changing the heads of both the men. She didn't miss the chance to live with the soul of Devadatta and the body of Kapila. This is in a way an illicit relationship but she justifies it through her arguments. Devadatta never suspected her for the happenings but he fights with Kapila till the end. Padmini never gave her senses to the chaos she enjoyed her life to the fullest. Even she decides the death of both the men.

PADMINI: They burned, lived, fought, embraced and died. I stood silent. If I'd said, „yes, I'll live with you both“, perhaps they would have been alive yet. But I couldn't say it. I could say, „yes“. No, Kapila, no, Devadatta. I know it in my blood you couldn't have lived together. You would've had to share not only me but your bodies as well. Because you knew death you died in each other's arms. You could only have lived ripping each other to pieces. I had to drive you to death. You forgave each other, but again, left me out. She also given liberty to decide the fate of her child whom she claims as the son of both Kapila and Devadatta.

PADMINI (without looking at him): yes, please. My son is sleeping in the hut. Take him under your care. Give him to the hunters who live in this forest and tell them it's Kapila son. They loved Kapila and will bring the child up. Let the child grow up in the forest with the rivers and the trees. When he's five take him to the revered Bhramin Vidhyasagara of Dharmaputra. Tell him it's Devadatta's son. However at the end of the story she gives her child to Bhagavata and decided to die in the funeral pyre of both Kapila and Devadatta. Karnad finally puts the weight in the character of Padmini as she is responsible for the tragic end of the story. Kapila helped Padmini and Devadatta in their marriage and so he was portrayed as Hanuman. This is not actually healthy way to project a woman's character. Padmini's son laughs in hands of Bhagavata for the first time in his life of five years. This shows that Padmini is not even a good mother. Projection of female in such a way is not a healthy portrayal. In a patriarchal society, a woman is supposed to obey the orders made by men in the family but Karnad made Padmini as a decision maker and made the story end up in tragedy. The patriarchy insists that a women should listen to her parents words before her marriage and totally rely on her husband's words after marriage. But in case of Padmini, Karnad breaks that rule and allows Padmini to speak out and take decisions on her own. The following conversation between Padmini and Devadatta expresses her decision taking boldness against her husband. The conversation follows thus“Devadatta: But... you will be disappointed. Padmini : Me? Of course not. We'll do as you feel. You remember what the priest said – I'm your „half“ now. The better half! We can go to Ujjain some other time... in another couple of months, there's the big Ujjain fair. We'll go then- just the two of us. All right? We'll cancel today's Trip. There is something that Karnad tried to

insist upon through the character of Padmini. Karnad projected her as a woman who longs for perfection, she longed for a perfect husband who is perfect both physically and mentally. She wanted a perfect life that was not given to her even by Goddess Kali. The point to be noted is, even Kali did not give that perfection to Hayavadana and that is evident at the end of the play.

Karnad's *Naga-Mandala* is a feminist Play. It question patriarchal moral code which demands the faithfulness of a woman to her husband but not the faithfulness of a husband to his wife. It can be described as a problem play. It presents the problem of a married woman, the position and status of a woman in her relation to her husband and home. The dramatist does not express his opinion about rights of women or the emancipation of women. But he merely presents the tragic consequences of the subordination of a married woman to her heartless husband. The play shows how the woman is excessively controlled by her husband. GirishKarnad appears as a dramatist of social realities in this play. He is definitely on the side of Rani who wins our sympathy too.

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