



A Critical Study of Feminism in Girish Karnad's Plays

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Abstract : An influential Indian writer of his era, Girish Karnad (1936–2019) was a multifaceted individual who wrote extensively on Indian culture, particularly the performing arts. Girish Karnad is the most well-known figure in Indian drama as an actor, filmmaker, social critic, cultural philosopher, and artist. He experimented with commercial TV series, contemporary social and political topics, folk theater, and feature films on art and culture. He received a Padma Bhushan, a Padmashree, and a Doctor of Letters from the Indian President. Writing plays is aided by Karnad's extensive intellectual background. He defies social norms and assumptions that dictate women should remain at home and work.

IndexTerms – Society, Feministic Concerns, Cultural Ethos, Female Issues, Freedom

I. INTRODUCTION

Girish Karnad (1938–2019) was a complex person and an important Indian writer of his time. He does a great job of writing about Indian society and performing arts in particular. He is one of a kind in Indian English literature written after freedom because of how great a playwright he was. Girish Karnad admits, "I have been fairly lucky in having a multi-pronged career. You know I've been an actor, a publisher, a film-maker. But in none of these fields have I felt quite as much as at home as in playwright". (Interviewed by Aparna Dharwadker. 362)

Girish Karnad was an actor, director, filmmaker, social philosopher, and artist. He is the most famous person in Indian drama, having worked in folk theater, art and culture films, commercial TV shows, and plays about modern social and political problems. The President of India gave him a Doctor of Letters, a Padmashree, and a Padma Bhushan. Karnad has a lot of intellectual knowledge that helps him write plays. He has read works by Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Kafka, Soren Kierkegaard, and others. Some critics say Karnad is an existentialist, which is why he paints such a big picture of human feelings, desires, compassions, and so on. He looks at humanism and nihilism in a more general way. Existentialism is a new way of thinking about philosophy that says people are the most important thing in the world. He is free to decide what to do and how to act, but sadly, things happened that made him a victim. He is responsible for what happens because of what he did or how he reacted. Here, we can look at Hamlet's "To Be or Not to Be" and Arjuna's "undecisiveness" on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In fact, Karnad goes above and beyond by giving his female characters, like Rani, The Queen mother, The Queen, Chitralkha, Shrmishtha, and others, important roles. He changes the usual way people think of female roles. They are in the middle of things. This paper is a simple attempt to look at the different points of view of feminist issues that fall under the term "feminism."

Women should have the same rights in society, the economy, and politics. This is called feminism. Even though it started mostly in the west, feminism can be seen all over the world and is backed by many groups working to protect women's rights and interests. Karnad doesn't agree with any of society's patriarchal rules. He gives his female figures a long rope to play with and shows the colors of their feelings and passions that are hidden.

Naga-Mandala is a feminist play by Karnad. It is written from the point of view of a male feminist and humanist. Rani is stuck in a marriage without love because her husband, Appanna, cheats on her with a "concubine" or "a harlot" on the first night they were married. She's "caged bird-like" locked in a room where no one talks to her. She's "bored to death. The role of Naga makes her pregnant and removes her frigidity. We can compare the Snake Ordeal to Agnipariksha, which happened to Sita in the Ramayana. Finally, Rani turns into a goddess for Appanna, who admits he was wrong and blind. Rani's situation is very hard because she is alone, doesn't fit in with her family or society, and goes through a lot of personal and emotional pain. Karnad does a great job of making her feel alone and isolated in both social and personal ways.

Naga-Mandala is a story about a young girl named Rani, who is married to Appanna and is called "the Queen of the Long Tresses." Appanna is mean and doesn't care about her, so he locks her up in his house and only comes to see her for lunch. An angry twenty-something guy named Kappanna tells the blind Kurudavva that he has been very upset ever since he found out that

Appanna has a mistress. Kurudavva, who is blind and is friends with Appanna's mother, touches Rani's beautiful skin and says, "Ayyo! Höw beautiful you are. Ears like hibiscus. Skin like young mango leaves. Lips like rolls of silk. How can that Appanna gallivant around leaving such loveliness wasting away at home" (Naga-Mandala, 11). Her magic root is turned into a paste and added to a curry by Rani. She tells Rani to give it to her husband and see what happens. She tells Appanna, "Once he smells he won't go sniffing after that bitch. He will make you a wife instantly" (Karnad, 13). It turns a terrible red color when Rani adds the paste, though. Rani, who is scared, pours it into an ant hill. After eating the dish, Naga falls in love with Rani and goes to see her every night in the form of Appanna. Rani doesn't get how her mean husband, who only comes to see her in the middle of the day, can turn into a sensual lover at night.

Appanna insults Rani in front of the village leaders and says she is cheating on her husband when she finds out she is pregnant. Rani agrees to the "Snake Ordeal" and puts her hands in the snake pit to show that she is not guilty. The snake wraps itself around her and doesn't bite when she pulls it out. It is said that she is a goddess. Appanna asks her to forgive her and is happy to live with her and the baby.

Rani becomes a well-known person in society after "Snake Ordeal." She likes being called a Goddess. In this case, the playwright makes her major character. Now Rani's husband is her slave, but he doesn't really accept how pure and godly she is. Karnad gives his female characters more power again.

Bali: The Sacrifice, which is based on the Kannada tale Yashodhara Charite from the 1300s, gives us a new way to look at man's mental struggles and moves. It shows the cultural, moral, and religious dialogue in the setting of the war between reality's losing grounds and the conscious right to social survival. It's a fight between the useless essentialist position and the imagined work of living.

People in Bali seem to be talking to each other on psychological, cultural, religious, and social levels. The Queen, Amritamati, forgets about her social standing and falls back into enjoyable moments with Mahout, the elephant owner. With the Queen's promise to return to the liberal social norm, the King seems to be okay with the way things are. He hopes that this will help him feel better, which the Queen is giving him as a gift. The Queen Mother tries to hide this flaw by performing bloody rites, which makes the Queen very angry. Rituals give the Queen Mother a good way to leave. All of these attempts are just a way to hide the truth while keeping your head high. They are a consensus reached by balancing moral structure and natural morality. The Queen refuses to succumb to the conceptualised dictates. Mahout's laughs and the Queen's refusal to give in to the King's demands are the opposites of what society thinks is right and wrong. The different effects of the subject method come together in the end to form the Queen Amritamati's free vision. The goal here is to figure out why the characters do what they do and make a place that can be thought of as a free zone.

The Queen loves Mahout, but she doesn't want to hear anything bad about her husband. She doesn't feel bad about enjoying private moments, but she makes sure no one else knows about it. The King, who has been waiting outside, knocks on the temple gate. The Queen and Mahout are scared, so to keep the person who is banging on the door from coming in, they act like they are having a secret good time:

With a light in hand, the king walks into the temple as soon as the door opens, to find the Queen, Amritamati. He calls out in a confident voice, and the Queen comes to him. In an unbelievable way, Mahout is shocked.

Queen (gently): Why did you come here? (pause) Why did you? Until he says you...

King : I'm concerned about you. You about him.

Queen: I am talking about us both. (Pause) Until he saw you he didn't know who / was. / was just a woman, any woman. Now he can gloat (Karnad, 87).

Queen isn't remorseful, and King doesn't hold a grudge against her. The queen is shocked to learn that the king had been following her and sitting at the doorstep the whole time she was inside with Mahout. The king's only thought is, "What else could I do?" Because he can't manage a woman with the right kind of power, he feels helpless and looks for other things to do. She is important to him because she is honest, because that's what it means to be a guy, and because of how people see him. He has turned away from his faith, let down his mother, and let off Mahout because the queen worries too much about him. He turns down his mother's idea to sacrifice a hundred birds because the queen threatens to give up her son and go with Mahout.

In the social and moral scheme of things, Mahout is aware of the "other" group he is put in because of his unique physical and mental traits. He is also aware of the social role and experience the ruling class is not exposed to. Hierarchical set-up is based on the logical structure and ordering of things, the idea of aesthetic perception, patterns of behavior, and the idea that there is a plan behind everything that happens. Mahout fights it out on all levels, including the mental, the logical, the moral, the practical, the intellectual, and the physical. He's even aware of how his work and sense of belonging help the system that has been around for a long time. As he says:

People mock at mahout. Call us low born'. But where would all your princes and kings be without us, / want to know. What would happen to their elephants? No elephants, No army. No pomp and splendour. No processions. No King! Ha! (Karnad, 80).

Karnad gives the main female character, the Queen, a place to explore her feelings. She breaks established rules and falls in love with Mahout, the elephant owner, a lower caste creature. On the other hand, she is aware of her social standing. That's why she

doesn't say who she really is. She wants to enjoy the company of a lower-caste Mahout and keep her social ease and pride. Karnad again puts her at the centre where she dominates.

The Fire and the Rain is another great example of Karnad's female play. In this one, jealousy, rivalry, desire, and betrayal cause trouble. There is a fight not only between friends, but also between a father and son, brother and brother, and a husband and wife. Raibhya and his son Parvasu are at war because Parvasu wants to be chief priest. Parvasu and Arvasu are fighting because Parvasu is afraid of Arvasu, and Parvasu and Vishakha, who are married, are separated and alone. However, Arvasu and Nittilai are the live embodiments of compassion and love that provide rain and joy to the planet. It's a play about politics and sex, and the characters are at odds with each other and at war. But on their own, each character is, in some way, the lonely, split-personality, stranger, and outsider in their own world. That which makes the play interesting and thought-provoking are the characters' sad, real-life, and spiritual problems and situations.

When we talk about how ancient myths are being used again in modern English theater, Karnad's play "The Fire and the Rain" stands out. The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, asked Karnad to write it. Like all of her other plays, it was first written in Kannada and then turned into English. The play's plot is based on a story from the Mahabharata, which is a long story that contains a lot of Indian morals. The play has a play-within-the-play and a number of different themes that run through it. Because of all of this, the play is very complicated, but Girish Karnad masters it and turns it into a great story by showing how different people feel through their characters. According to Mircea Eliade, "traditional cultures participate in mythical/cyclical time by revivifying certain myths or sometimes by attributing archetypal meanings to worldly events" (Eliade, 20). This shows how important myths are. People today think of time in terms of history and lines.

Another play by Girish Karnad is called Tale-Danda. In it, a group of people fight because of their race. It's about a Brahmin girl who marries a boy from a lower caste. Karnad wants to show that we are still living in the Dark Ages or the Stone Ages even though it is the 21st century.

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