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इस पुस्तक के किसी भी अंश को किसी भी माध्यम में प्रयोग करने के लिए प्रकाशक से लिखित अनुमति लेना अनिवार्य है।

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# भारतीय साहित्य विविध आयाम

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## Cause of Silence Indian Women in the Plays of Girish Karnad

Dr. Vinita Virgandham,

Feminist Literary Criticism is linked to the political movement to end discrimination against women. Feminist criticism seeks to uncover the ideology of patriarchal structure of society in the works of art. It reads literary texts for their representations of women, and argues that category these representations mark socio political oppression of the category of women by justifying this oppression and naturalizing it.

Karnad championed the cause of silenced women fold in Indian orthodox society through his plays. Karnad was well acquainted with feminist ideologies and the havoc wrought by patriarchal ideologies in Indian society. His plays abound with subalterns especially women subjected since ancient time by patriarchy or upper hierarchy of the society. Karnad has not only exposed their subalternity but also fused energy in their lives so that they can speak; shifted their position from "margin" to "centre". Yayati, Hayavdana, Naga-Mandala, Tale-Danda, The Fire and the Rain, Flowers, Broken Images and Wedding Album illustrate the above proposition.

Key words: Humiliation, Emancipation, Secondary, Patriarchy, Inferior.

Yayati the first play of Karnad is highly relevant as far as the socio psychological study of women is concerned. In the play, the characters of Devyani, Sharmishtha, Swarnlata and Chitralekha

are generic. They symbolize the subalternity of woman in Masculinist society where she is identified as the "other", "non-man" or "second sex" despite her high position in the society. Karnad does not adhere to traditional glorification of the son's "self-sacrifice". Devyani, the queen has to endure every sort of humiliation and becomes insane; Swarnalata is tortured by her husband's unfounded doubts of infidelity, insults and finally deserted; Sharmishtha is sexually exploited by King Yayati. Though Chitrlekha faces similar conditions, she emerges as a new woman who boldly challenges the decision of her husband Pooru of accepting the curse of his father for moral transgression and turning old. She frankly elaborates the reason of her marriage to Pooru: "I married him for his youth, for his potential to plant the seed of the Bharatas in my womb, qualities for which I married him." She defies everything, the high reputation of Bharat Dynasty and kingdom and prefers to die rather than yield before old conventions and assigned roles set for woman. She succeeds in subverting the male world through an assertion of their rights and privileges. Her death endorses new women's quest for emancipation.

Padmini in Hayavadan enjoys commanding position. She is now Karnad's Naga-Mandala is a close study of Indian Women. It exposes the ugliness of a society where woman is given secondary treatment. Patriarchal dominance has prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibility. The play also suggests remedial measures and slaps the orthodox society by an act of reconciliation between Rani and Naga. In the play Rani, the protagonist and Kurudavva, the other female character, both are generic, representing the extreme physical torture and mental trauma, struggle for their identity as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. Rani is treated in a slavish manner, imprisoned like a caged bird, neither is she allowed to talk outsider nor outsider is allowed to do the same. Despite her chastity and fidelity, she is forced to face the Naga ordeal. Appanna (Rani's Husband), Naga (Cobra), Dog, Mongoose, Three Village Elders and the orthodox society have been used as the forces of subjection. Rani's acceptance of Naga as her own is a curt reply to the question extra marital relation in which only males are allowed to go freely, even after getting married, to concubine, as her husband does, whereas the yardstick of morality

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is imposed upon woman. The prologue to the play introduces Four Flames, which animated, symbolic representations employed to report the sufferings of women.

In *The Fire and the Rain* Vishakha and Nittilai belong to two different socio-cultural background. Vishakha is the wife of Parvasu, a Brahmin and daughter in law of Raibhya, a learned ascetic whereas Nittilai hails from a tribal community. Despite cultural polarities, both experience similar socio-psychological taboos and restrictions and feel bounded. For Nittilai, subjection is more intense apart from patriarchy her inferior position in social hierarchy deteriorates her standing in the society. Vishakha represent the subalternity of women that has been highlighted by the playwright exposing the ugliness in our society restricting their place and creativity in human society. Vishakha loves Yavakri who leaves her helpless, alienated, frustrated in search of knowledge directly from Gods for ten years. Subsequently, she is married to Parvasu who offers up Vishakha's life, first to his sensual appetite and then to his lust for fame. Later Vishakha meeting with her former lover Yavakri infuriates Raibhya who physically assaults her and thereafter she is left to be handled by her husband. She is an easy prey to Raibhya's anger over his rejection as the Chief Priest by the King. Vishakha is bold and acknowledges her meeting with Yavakri to her husband candidly. Nittilai, a tribal girl of 14 loves Arvasu, a Brahmin of 18. She is exposed to face the world and know how cruel and ruthless it can be. Hers is a romantic love, a world of teenage phantasies ignorant from caste and cultural distinctions.

The Queen Mother and Queen in *Bali: The Sacrifice* represent two conflicting ideologies, one is static, traditional and deeply rooted in age old social conventions while the second is progressive, sensitive, open-minded, and rebellious in spirit. The Queen is a Jain who follows the path of non-violence; on the other hand, Queen Mother is a Hindu who frequently indulges in blood sacrifice. Kamad has developed two sets of women fold to demonstrate their socio-psychological evolution. The Queen, despite her high position in the society, feels alienated and desperate. Though she is witty and eloquent in speech and rebellious in spirit she falls prey to filthy sexual gratification. She is haunted by libidinous compulsions and

alienation, hence, swayed by the enchanting song of the Mahout she fails to resist herself.

The two monologues, *Flowers and Broken Images*, also throw light on the feminine issues. *Flowers* show that a woman body is always a target of man's lustful eyes. Man conspires as a predator to exploit her sexually and make her an easy prey. Even the unnamed priest in the play feasts his eyes and indulges in sensual pleasures with Chandrawati, a courtesan, and develops an extra marital relationship with her. His wife though aware of this tolerates everything silently. Later Chandrawati goes away and the priest devotes his full time to Lord Shiva and hopes his wife would assist him. He announces, "I was among the chosen of the Lord and she could not possibly think of herself as a wife now, only as a slave and guardian, all shades of the marital bond expunged in favor of her devotion to me, her good fortune in having me for her husband". He does not understand the feminine sensibility. Thus idea put forward by Karnad is that a woman is used the way man desires- sex item, slave, and guardian or bound to carry out whatever role has been assigned to her. The other monologue *Broken Images* depicts the changing role, status and transformation in feminine psyche in the modern world.

The play, *The Wedding Album* deals mainly with women and their two worlds, traditional and modern cyber world. But these two extremities merge into each other. Even the traditional elder are fused with energy, hope and modern sensibility. Younger types enjoy liberty in education, love, courtship through distance technology and marriage. The play deals with middle class Saraswat Brahmin family which has structured into multiculturalism and cosmopolitan ideology. The family is made of Father Nadkarni, a doctor, Mother, an intelligent housewife, Hema, the eldest daughter married and living in Australia, Vidula, younger daughter Vidula and son, Rohit. Vidula who has undertaken modern education is the product of modern cyber world. She regularly visits Internet Café to find her life partner. Hema, though born in modern age, educated and married and lives in Australia, is rooted in conservative practices and customs of Saraswat Brahmin Family.

Karnad has developed deep and comprehensive understanding

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of women in his plays. Through his plays he has brought them from the margin to the centre. His plays are the platform where he raises the socio-political and cultural problems of women prevalent not only in India but found universally. The above discussion has undoubtedly confirmed that Karnad's journey of dramatic genius from *Yayati* to *The Wedding Album* portrays the evolution of his vision of feminine issues.

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