



Analysis of Selected Works of Girish Karnad on Female Characteristics of His Plays

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ABSTRACT

Drama is the most creative and socialized form of drama. Drama bridges the gap between reality and fantasy. It has long rooted in India literature. After independence, a new form of Indian drama in English, came into existence. For the writers like Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad and Badal Sarcar brought the drama at new heights with their bold and innovative experiments. An important development in the post-independence period is the rise of the 'feminist literature'. A new consciousness of the peculiarity of women's outlook and social role opens up new directions for feminist writing. For a dramatist like Girish Karnad drama became a canvas to challenge the hegemonic practices of a gender-based society. Karnad has abandoned the concept that women are merely a wife and child-bearer.

Keywords: Drama, feminist writing, development, female characteristics

INTRODUCTION

There has been a significant increase in the quantity of writing that is self-consciously feminist in tone, plainly supporting the principles of female equality, since the inception of the women's movement. Feminists have taken a fresh interest in researching early works by women authors and interpreting them in new ways in order to determine how women's writings have parallels with male literature and how much they are part of it. Women's perspectives and expressions about their own lives are the primary emphasis of feminist literature. If one considers the history of writing, only men wrote and expressed women's perspectives, so the feminists' primary goal is to place women at the center and elevate them to positions of authority so that they can express their own voices, be heard and believed, and exercise authority over their own lives and experiences. Feminists have taken many previous women authors seriously in order to explore them from fresh viewpoints in order to hear women's voices in literature. Take, for example, the Greek poet Sappho, whose work is primarily concerned with women's perspectives. Because it is about women, it was deemed trivial at best and immoral at worst, and it has nearly completely vanished from the literary heritage. Christine de Pizan is an example of a fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writer. *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405; *The Novel of the City of Ladies*, 1982) is her first book, and it conveys new notions such as the horrors of rape and domestic violence. She went on to refute the masculine stereotype that women aren't as clever as men. She contends that a man's assumption that women are incapable of managing money is incorrect. It was translated into English for the first time in 1982 and is now available to current readers. Since then, it has become a feminist literary classic. Even though the book is from the Middle Ages, this work serves as an example of how women's writing vividly portrays female opinions, experiences, and voices. The purposeful destruction of Sappho's work, as well as the publishing history of this book, demonstrate that women's voices have not been valued or deemed literary until today.

William Blackstone, a renowned professor of law at Oxford in the seventeenth century, defines marriage as a "civil death" for women. Millett cites his *Commentaries on the English Constitution* and *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, claiming that marriage unites husband and wife and that the legal existence of women is suspended during marriage or that her whole essence is absorbed by her husband. Everything she does must be done under her husband's supervision, protection, and care. (Millett, page 68)

John Smart Mill, a staunch male advocate of women's rights, expressed considerable worry about several of the concerns identified by Wollstonecraft in his book *The Subjection of Women* (1869). He, like her, believes that better education for women in all fields is crucial to their dignity, and that earning power is essential to women's dignity. Mill was a sincere democrat and a defender of liberty who battled for individual rights. He saw women's subjugation as a result of the system, and he called it "domestic slavery." Mill decried ideas that officially subordinated one sex to the other and restricted existing social ties between men and women, and he saw this subjugation as the greatest impediment to human progress.

Some women authors in nineteenth-century India authored articles on women's issues, but they were not given enough attention. Tarabai Sindhé, for example, was a dedicated feminist and a contemporary of Savitribai Phule and Pandita Ramabai. Tarabai Sindhé's *Satri Purush Tulana* (*A Comparison Between Women and Men*) was India's first feminist work. Pandita Ramabai, who married outside her caste, was dissatisfied with Hindu society's patriarchal structure and caste system, thus she converted to Christianity in the 1880s. She argues that women should be educated to their full potential

and trained to think critically. She compared women's plight to that of slaves. She wrote on the issues that women face in jails as well as the issues that women face when their spouses are aggressive. She also wrote on the difficulties faced by working women, as well as the discrimination they face.

The first girl's school in India was established in 1848 with the goal of providing better education to females in order to improve their possibilities. It was good in terms of providing education to women, but other than teaching, there were no other respectable vocations available to women. Women gained the confidence they needed as a result of education, and a huge number of women engaged numerous sectors of social service, including jail reform, alcoholism, child maltreatment, anti-slavery campaigns, and fighting for feminine issues such as revisions in marriage and divorce laws. The next step was to demand political liberty. Several nations gradually gave women political rights. New Zealand (1893), Finland (1906), Norway (1913), Denmark and Iceland (1915), the Soviet Union (1917), the United States of America (1920), the United Kingdom (1928), and India after independence were the first countries to grant women electoral equality to men. Suffrage was granted to women in many other countries around the world after World War I or in the aftermath of World War II. The feminist movement was transformed into a revolution in the 1960s.

During colonial control, the first wave of Indian Feminism began in the 1820s, which "created the backdrop for the first collective attack on conventional views about women's position" when some males wanted equality in many sectors for women. Its efforts were aimed at increasing women's educational chances. Early nineteenth-century reformers claimed that the distinction between men and women was a specific feature that enslaved women to their social duties. Kadambini Ganguly was the first woman admitted to the University of Calcutta in 1878. Women protested in great numbers alongside men in the 1830s for the eradication of Sati's evil, and a significant number of men and women came to dispute the customary framework of woman's position. They believed that women should have the same rights as males in terms of personal growth, education, and political participation, and they battled for it.

Despite all of these efforts and accomplishments, conventional beliefs regarding women's roles have continued to negatively impact women's positions. Women were paid less for the same job as men since it was assumed that women worked just to get additional money for frivolous items. Many periodicals promoted the "cult of domesticity," telling women they should be modest, meek, obedient, and pious—qualities that are practically equivalent to piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. With the passage of time, many more qualities, such as youth, appearance, and submission, were added to the list.

In the commonwealth nations, including India, the women's movement remained a fringe movement from the early nineteenth century through the 1950s. The English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxieme Sexe* (authored in 1949) emerged in 1953, and it had a significant impact on the women's liberation movement. Simone de Beauvoir is a radical feminist who was part of the first wave of new feminists. She focuses substantially on biology, psychoanalysis, political economics, anthropology, philosophy, and history in *The Second Sex*. She investigates themes such as a girl's education and unrewarding labor in depth. Her personal life, as well as her friendship with Jean Paul Sartre, looked to be a role model for strong women. She met Sartre at the Sorbonne while they were both in their twenties and lived with him until his death.

DISCUSSIONS

The use of flames, tales, dreams, and fables by Karnad to express women's experiences and ambitions is thoroughly examined and interpreted as postmodern tendencies. His deft use of magical realism to create an imaginary environment in which facts are better understood is seen as a postmodern tool for exposing patriarchal truths. Karnad uses fantastic creatures, weird occurrences, and the magical realm in an innovative way to highlight today's serious female issues.

Between feminism and postmodernism, a fruitful debate has begun. Postmodernism is working to pave the road for Postmodernism and feminism to work together successfully. They keep each other going because the postmodern skill of overthrowing the mainstream narrative lends itself to feminism. It represents the subversion of established hegemonies, despite the fact that it is solely political in origin. Feminists may express radical feminist ideas in new ways thanks to postmodernism. Because reality is so chaotic, authors must use a medium to describe the world's realities that are beyond the realm of common belief. This helps to explain why feminists often use tales and imaginations to experience the inconsistencies and contradictions that exist between social appearances and the underlying realities.

Postmodernist drama makes a case against realism by questioning, transgressing, and disconfirming conventional assurances and experiences, establishing a break with probabilities through improbable and uncanny redefinitions that are "radically discontinuous with reality, causing a disturbance of our senses" (Nash 175). It is also noted that postmodern fluff is anti-realist not just in terms of content but also in terms of style, dismantling our traditional reading habits. The competitors are cannibalized by postmodernist activity, or things are become tipsy curving. Feminists have been fighting male oppression, male supremacy, and male so dom since the seventeenth century. When liberal feminists were content with equal work prospects and salary for women, radical feminists focused on more radical components of women's movements, such as male power criticisms, sexual policy, and women's communities. Gender role stereotyping, women's subjugated position in the household and workplace, the political relevance of lesbianism, criticisms of male aggression in terms of power proof in rape male gaze, and paragraph are all topics that radical feminist theorists investigate.

Karnad's interest in psychoanalysis as a means of achieving his feminist goals is a postmodern trait. Feminism favors psychoanalytic ideas, unveiling the feminine mind in the process. As a result, the psychoanalytic aspects that underpin male-female relationships, as well as female-female relationships, are examined in this chapter. Masculinity is widely considered as an aberration of distortion, whereas femininity is increasingly recognized as the behavioral standard. The different issues that make up psychoanalysis' corpus, such as bisexuality, lesbianism, dreams, fantasies, rape, incest, claustrophobia, and psychosis, are examined, as well as the significance that Karnad places on them in his study of women.

In Karnad's plays, a lot of the agonizing challenges that women face in today's society are discussed. *Yayati* (1961), his first full-length drama, depicts a series of women who suffer from spouses who are continuously unfaithful and unsympathetic, such as King Yayati, Puru, and Swarnalata's husband. The unpinned Rani works like a puppet in a closed mansion held by her husband, the embodiment of patriarchy, in *Nagamandala: Play with Cobra* (1988). The role of ideology and force in sustaining a male-supremacist calmer is explored in this drama, as well as the role of beating as a technique for subjugating women. All of the ladies in this play are immensely dissatisfied with the fact that their only source of disappointment is

patriarchal males. Hayavadana (1971) is a drama that straddles the line between magical realism and fantasy. It's the tale of a rivalry between two close friends for the affections of a lady who adores both of them. With his play *The Fire and the Rain*, Girish Karnad established himself as a feminist (1998). He depicts an arrogant Brahmin abandoned in the jungle abandoning his wife Vishakha, father Raibhya, brother Arvasu, and all worldly interests in order to perform the fire sacrifice. "Through this play, Karnad had intended to emphasize the egotism present in current society by linking it with legendary events of the past," writes G.A. Ghanshyam in his essay (186). Nitilai, a figure who starts the frame and splendor and becomes the model of a free woman, is another character. She is a symbol of feminine aptitude, ingenuity, and wit. The narrative of Pratibha and Vidula is told in his play *Wedding Album* (2009). Paternity is called into doubt, and maternity is no longer a biological certainty.

Girish Karnad elucidates the haziness of the borders established by postmodern tactics such as intersexuality, parody, irony, and ambivalence in women's attitudes. Millions of opportunities for women's liberation are created as a result of these efforts. The blurring of lines between man and woman, oppressor and oppressed, observer and observed, civilized and savage, past and present, and so on, goes a long way to demonstrating that postmodern storytelling approaches enable the challenge of male hegemony and comprehension of a woman's situation. Such a detailed examination of Karnad's plays provides us with full portraits of the new lady that Karnad has created. Madhubala Saxena talks about the four main characters who represent human desires. The critic points out the two 'orbs,' one of which depicts love and compassion and the other of which depicts slaughter, brutality, and violence. "Karnad has bared the inner psyche of these individuals, and they depict the struggle – inner and exterior – leading to the ultimate outcome," Saxena maintains (125). Girish Karnad's neighborhood is dominated by women of all kinds. However, many of his critics and researchers are more interested in the folk stories and myths that he uses than in the feminist concepts that have such enormous potential. It is critical to comprehend the feminist message he presents in his plays as a whole by looking at them all together. His goal is to problematize the woman's place in the family unit, and by highlighting the inconsistencies in the sexes' relationships, he brings attention to the flaws and holes in patriarchal systems and institutions. Adjust your magic and dreams, as Karnad himself confesses. His characters, too, are a challenge to patriarchy's colorization. Girish Karnad, in reality, conducts psychoanalysis on women via his plays. Because Karnad's plays contain such a wealth of promise, this thesis focuses on his portrayals of women and their potential for freedom from patriarchy. An serious endeavor has been made to trace the aspects of feminism in his plays, as well as to see whether his unorthodox way of speaking about women and their experiences reveals some postmodernism quirks. Finally, the last chapter proves that it has made the best use of the unorthodox technologies. He makes the New Woman more acceptable to men's biased minds by using 'other-world fancies' and psychoanalytic insights. It should be noted that the scope of his research was mostly restricted to Girish Karnad's plays. Despite the fact that his other plays and monologues give stronger or more vivid instances of feminism and postmodernism, they are not the subject of this study. However, his plays alone are adequate proof of Karnad's keen commitment in advocating women's liberation.

Girish Karnad's plays, on the other hand, all depict feminine elements that are suppressed in a patriarchal society dominated by men. His six plays *Yayati* (1961), *Hayavadana* (1972), *Bali: The Sacrifice*(1980), *Nagamandala: Play with Cobra*(1988), *Wedding Album*(2009), and *The Fire and The Rain*(1998) have been chosen to evaluate it thoroughly. The chapters that follow concentrate on female concerns in the home, in marriage, and on a physical and social level. Finally, Girish Karnad introduces a New Woman, an ideal human being whose picture awakens patriarchal society's men.

CONCLUSION

Scholars have always been interested in the feminine qualities that are relegating throughout the history of women's literature. In a retrospective assessment of the cultural and social significance of the 1960s, Girish Karnad speculated that manners had not been so liberal and expressive since the Mugal rule, with the absence of syphilis compensated for in the morality stakes by the arrival of drugs; indeed, the sex and drugs that seem synonymous with sixties culture were simply elements of a larger phenomenon, the youth culture's valorization of total freedom. Incorporating this method into a postmodern pastiche, Karnad says, inverts this paradigm. Love is more likely to elicit terror and disgust than tears and compassion, and it is a case study in how not to deport oneself in its tragic consequences.

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