



Social Aspects of Female Identity in the Novels of Girish Karnad

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ABSTRACT

A person's social environment is very important in helping him or her to grow as a person. Individual progress is limited by social restraints and other constraints. "The largest impact that has happened" is, ironically, "to the feminine sex" (Hunter 186). Each nation, state, culture, region, group, and so on has its own social origins, particularly when it comes to women. She has been subjected to many constraints across the globe, such as the veil custom, burka regulation, class segregation, and women's liberty zone. Similarly, in India, the multiplicity of groups exacerbates women's issues while restricting their ability to grow and develop as human beings. Women have to suffer in every aspect of their lives. The purpose of this research is to look at the social dimensions of female identity in Girish Karnad's books.

Keywords: Social aspects, female sex, female identity, communities

INTRODUCTION

Karnad acknowledges that women have as much faith in reason as men, but this must be built on a different foundation than the male understanding of reason. Karnad seeks a reason that is not characterized by binary oppositions such as masculine and feminine, reason and unreason, cognition and emotion. He seeks a paradigm that does not pit reason and cognition against emotion and sensation. He desires a paradigm for human relationships that is built on reciprocity rather than exclusion as a means of self-definition. The thesis is Chandravati of Flowers, and the antithesis is Priest's wife, since both are hopeless, and neither considers the possibility of a synthesis of their ways of being, capable of both cognition and emotion. The Priest is never confronted with an item – or a person – who is simultaneously enchanting:

I desired her. I'd never lusted for a woman before, and this unexpected vulnerability made me feel emasculated. Despite this, I couldn't put out the fire that was roaring in my loins. (CP vol.2, 245, Karnad)

The humane paradigm is one of reciprocity, mutuality, or communication, in which human beings interact as both subject and object, as thesis and antithesis, individually. It is the paradigm that keeps humanism alive and prevents rationalism from collapsing in on itself. Chandravati's past as a prostitute and the rationale that underpins her ability to charm even the Priest and exorcise what a priest would only gift to 'linga,' she aspired to the same offerings and affection for herself. She possesses the libertine's freedom, the outlaw's freedom, which provides what the Priest termed "a whole new universe of patterns" (CP, 250), something the linga lacked. Karnad's reciprocity model aims to retain reason as a function of the 'whole new universe of patterns,' rather than as a quality of the transcendent subject. In any event, reason as a transcendent subject's prerogative is entangled in a logic of negation and collapses in on itself. Priest's use of sexuality to investigate Enlightenment philosophy reveals the ideology's inadequacy as a way of sustaining human existence in general. Priest's sexual relationship with Chandra gave him 'flower themes' a 'new evolution' (CP, 251). Karnad closes his monologue by outlining his concept of reciprocity and mutuality using the more emotional word 'love,' which he had used throughout his speech in a discourse that focuses on philosophical language and holiness. "Why has God done this to me?" he asks, contrasting the egocentricity, isolation, and alienation that he sees Priest's work describing and investigating with the reciprocity of thought and emotion properly represented by the term love.I am guilty of sacrilege and egregious neglect of duty. I was guilty of being unkind to the two ladies I loved. Why should God vote for me if He doesn't have to? Because I was in love with him? "Does God have the right to scoff at justice in the name of love for Him?" (CP 260).

The feminism of Karnad is mainly comic in nature. He addresses both women and men as equals, hoping to avert catastrophe by creating ways to resolve conflict. The postscript to Angela Carter's *The Sadeian Woman* from Emma Goldman's "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation" (1910) ties very beautifully with Karnad feminist ideas:

Equal rights in all areas of life is a reasonable and fair demand; but, the most important right is the ability to love and be loved. Indeed, if partial liberation is to become a full and real emancipation of women, the absurd assumption that being adored, darling, and mother is equivalent with being a slave or submissive must be abandoned. It will have to abandon the ridiculous concept of sex dualism, or that man and woman constitute two opposing realities... Conqueror and conquered have no place in a genuine understanding of the sexes' relationship. (SW151, Carter)

'Universal' reason, on the other hand, is not given any type of absolute philosophical grounding in the Priest, as I have seen, such that it remains unchangingly outside of human social experience. The Priest's definition of reason is neither absolute nor absolute relative. It's something that can update itself, to remedy mistakes it's made in the past, such as barring women from the realm of logic, and to strive towards a more inclusively enlightened state. In this approach, The Priest believes that the remedy to the enlightenment's flaws is to seek deeper enlightenment rather than canceling all enlightenment principles. The capacity of rationality to criticize the enlightenment's exclusive reason is still part of the enlightenment's legacy. Priest's reconsideration of the enlightenment notion of reason is a load on his shoulders, not a throwaway.

The social and political ramifications of the Priest's opposition to postmodern relativism and endeavor to preserve enlightened humanism principles. Chandravati's ornamentation, according to Jain, "becomes a form of personal expression and discovery" for the Priest. "Instead of the stone stump, there is a live, breathing, sleeping body, bright and energetic," he continues. It is a private area; there is no public centre." 349 (Jain) However, a complication arises as he is decorating Chandravati with linga flowers and hears the sound of a cannon. He took the flowers Chandra had used to beautify her and walked up to the linga. As we've seen, Pratima Chaitanya claims that the flowers have been "utilized" and are now "leaves, contaminated discards." "The very ceremonial and righteous priest, who takes a long bath in the holy tank before performing the pooja, who is incredibly devout and pure in his priestly responsibilities, uses the same flowers to adorn the linga in order to save himself and commits a premeditated act of sacrilege," she continues. However, Feminism requires coherent subjects and has devised a number of means of expressing them that avoid the fetishization of Pure Reason as the centre of subject hood, as well as the irrationalism that results from this ideal's apparent failure.

Pratima Chaitanya mentions the Priest's effort to recast and thereby resurrect the enlightenment's humanist principles, noting the links between his religious obligation and much contemporary passionate love that he himself does not accept. She says Jain:

"Up to this moment, flowers' journeys had been unidirectional, but now they undertake a reverse journey—from the courtesans body to the lingam, thereby obliterating the distinction between the clean and the defiled..." Jain (350)

Girish Karnad's fictional portrayal of the Priest in *Flowers* selecting 'linga' for 'to save my face,' and his assaults on rationalism without compassion in *Yayati*, fall into this idea of someone working with a model that isn't incompatible with the Priest's. It's a paradigm that foreshadows Karnad's exploration of the necessity for a reasonable assessment of heterosexual identity in *Naga-mandala*, the drama that came after *Hayavadana*. While *Hayavadana* addresses the topic of gender relations, *Naga-mandala* does it in a more important and direct way.

Although *The Fire and The Rain* was written a few years before *Flowers*, it contains concepts and themes that reoccur in *Naga-mandala* and are explored more abstractly in *Hayavadana*. Above all, *The Fire and The Rain* is a fictional exploration of the anti-brahminic notion of 'unambiguous intentionality into their actions,' the notion that brahminism is associated with 'mind-games, egocentrism, sterility, and ruthlessness, while shudra culture is associated with love, compassion, freshness, and hope, though the contrast is not simplistic or absolute.' It is not an immutable human universal that the masculine and feminine are totally based via flesh. Nittilai, a fourteen-year-old hunting girl, is introduced at the start of *The Fire and The Rain*. We also meet her childhood fantasy, an actor called Arvasu, who is one of the sons of a Hindu pantheon Brahmin family. Arvasu's play requires him to act with low-caste individuals, and a Brahmin performing with shudras is frowned upon by traditional Brahmins like Arvasu's brother Pravasu. Arvasu is eagerly anticipating Nittilai's arrival to see his performance. "...You and I were going to be married," he said, pointing her out. Begin a new chapter in your life. And I had to meet your tribe's elders." (109) (CP) Arvasu will encounter Nittilai as a married lady later in the play, when he is dying.

Nittilai sees Arvasu and attempts to persuade him to visit her elders, but Arvasu, being a Brahmin, is hesitant. When he tells her, "I want to take her as my wife," he expresses passionate love for her. I am a formidable opponent. "I'm sure I'll be able to meet all of her requirements..." (110, CP) Arvasu has not informed his father or brother about his love for a low caste girl, possibly because he knows his parents would not accept it, but Nittilai is a brave and forthright girl who told her father about Arvasu. Nittilai doubts Arvasu's boldness and egotism, saying,

"And you've confronted your own people?"

Have you told them yet?

(No response.)

You haven't, right? Do you have any feelings of shame?

But Arvasu, a Brahmin and sensual lover, interprets her words differently and responds erotically, "Ashamed?" Let me show you—here!" he says, taking her hand in his and pulling her close to him. Nittilai, on the other hand, is an intelligent young lady who is fully aware of the societal conventions that have been established for her. Nittilai (Scandalized): Let go of me! she protests with him. Allow me to leave! What will the general consensus be?

Arvasu: Can you tell me why? Isn't it true that I don't have any rights—?

Nittilai: Not till we've tied the knot. The girl is not allowed to touch her soon-to-be spouse till then. That's how we do things around here—
Arvasu: Mother of mine! For you, I'm ready to abandon my caste, my tribe, and my whole legacy. For my sake, can't you remember a tiny custom?

Nittilai: It's a lovely tradition. Sensible. It's worth noting.

Arvasu: I couldn't touch you all these days because Brahmins don't contact other castes. You can't touch me now because hunters don't let their betrothed touch them. Are you certain that after we're married, no one will think of anything else? (CP 111-112)

All of Nittilai and Arvasu's conversations reveal their caste-based prejudices. They are clinging to their caste rigidities and don't want to let go of them.

Brahmins were symbolized as orthodox in Hinduism, and their pseudo-philosophical or spiritual claims were conveyed via this image of a union of opposites. "Love is the only redeeming power in life," Payel Sinha says, "and... the struggle inside man is due to a never-ending pursuit of his own obsessions" (23). Arvasu associates the disintegration of form in which he lives with the concept of a primordial oneness in which all disparities are overcome. It's a dissolution that Arvasu sees as an opportunity for innovation.

"You two are bold," the Andhaka says, wishing them well in their marriage plans and tacitly warning them about society. It's one thing to live together as a family when you're a kid. But you're no longer children. You're old enough to understand how vicious and brutal the world can be." (CP 112)

Arvasu believes his sibling to be "a mother, father, brother, nurse, teacher—all wrapped into one." "I can't give up Nittilai," he says, even if it means becoming an outcast. She is the center of my universe. I can't imagine my life without her; I'd rather be an outcast." (CP, 113) When Arvasu inquires about her father's unexpected counciling, Nittilai informs him of her father's remark concerning high-caste people and what they want, "So father's to blame?" Do you know why your father hurriedly summoned the elders? 'These high-caste guys are happy to bed our ladies but unwilling to wed them,' he usually adds. (CP, 114) Nittilai's father is correct in his assessment, since high-caste people are more strict and traditional than lower-caste people. She is educated and rational, much like her father, and while Arvasu and Andhaka were discussing Yavakari's "Ten years of hard penance" and praising his sacrifice to satisfy Lord Indra, she said, "Did he tell you all this, Grandfather?" "How can everyone know what occurred in a distant area of the woods—miles away from the closest prying eye?" she continues, referring to his 10 years in the bush. (CP, No. 115) She continues her reasoned arguments with Andhaka and Arvasu, and eventually they virtually agree with her ideas since they are irrationally following Brahmin heresay:

Nittilai: But I'm curious as to why the Brahmins are so secretive about everything. Arvasu: Oh, my goodness! She's in one of her acrimonious moods now!

(Takes a short walk away.) (Stands and concentrates.)

(Continued) Nittilai: You're aware that their fire sacrifices take place in enclosed areas. They humiliate themselves in the jungle's darkness. Even their gods emerge under a cloak of secrecy. Why? What do they have a fear of? Take a look at my crew. Everything is done in full view of the public. The priest proclaims that he will summon the god at a certain hour and on a specific day. Then he becomes possessed directly in front of the whole tribe. And the spirit responds to your inquiries. It comes and goes, and you can feel it. You're well aware of its presence. Andhaka: Take cautious, youngster. This isn't just hearsay. Their priest seeks a deity considerably more powerful than yours. Don't mention the two in the same sentence.

Nittilai: My argument is that if Lord Indra came to Yavakari, and Indra being their God of Rains, why didn't Yavakari request a few decent showers? ... and they've all vanished! And, according to Father, all the land needs is a couple of strong downpours. That will resurrect the planet. Is that too much to expect of a God?

(Half agreeing) Andhaka: However, they argue that such abilities should not be exploited to tackle everyday concerns. They are intended to guide you to inner awareness.

Nittilai: What is it, Nittilai?

Andhaka: I'm not sure. Yavakari's father used to say something similar.

Nittilai: So, what's the use of having these abilities?

Andhaka: When you see Yavakari, ask him. He's not going to mind. He'll like it, in fact. He's a sweetheart.

Nittilai: Actually, I have two questions for Yavakari. Is he capable of making it rain? Is he then able to predict when he will die? ... There are just two of them. What good is knowledge if you can't cure dying children or forecast your own death? (CP, 116-117)

She has deftly highlighted the hypocrisy of high-caste individuals who deceive others with false appearances. By disputing with them, she has shown her cleverness to the utmost extent possible. She portrays Karnad as one of the finest heroines, capable of debating with men in public and convincing them that her side is more rational than theirs. She elevates women to the forefront of intellectuals, demonstrating that a woman may be more intelligent and sensible than males, as patriarchy dictates.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious how much the patriarchal environment has an impact on the lives of women. Although their mother position seems to be a source of pride, it really serves to hold them in place. They may be each other's helpers in times of need, but they're also competitors vying for a man's favor. The teenage heroines in Karnad's play can see how their mother figure's existence is hampered by their relationships with the male figures in their lives. Karnad has exposed such restriction and rigidity and has found a solution as well as some alternatives. The web of reciprocal reliance between men and women becomes apparent and free of appearances in his sub-plot of Yamuna, a mistress, and thus ironically seems to liberate the women. The position of mistress gives her the impression that she has no restrictions on her freedom. To some degree, a girl's adolescence may be seen as her leaving the mother's care and protection and entering a world that operates according to the father's rules. The heroines' adaptation to new realities and a new phase of their life is examined in the following three subchapters. At the same time, it's being examined how their relationships with men alter as they age into mature women and sexual objects.

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