

Feministic sensitivity and quest for identity in Girish Karnard's *the Fire and the Rain*

Khusnuma Perween¹
Dr. Atal Kumar²

Research Scholar ,Department of English ,Magadh University, Bodhgaya¹
Associate Prof.Gaya College, Gaya²

Abstract

Women has been subjected to many constraints across the globe, such as the veil custom, burka regulation, class segregation, and women's liberty zone. The depiction of woman in Indian English as the silent sufferer and supporter of the customs as well as conventional standards of family and civilization, has undergone a fabulous change and is no longer presented as a submissive character. Feminism is used to describe political, cultural or economic movement aimed for establishing equal rights and legal protection for women in society. The word feminine is used for the inner units of the self and sensibility in the fragrance of an artist's personality. It means an artist is identified and distinguished by their sensibility that is self- identity. Feminism is used to describe political, cultural or economic movement aimed for establishing equal rights and legal protection for women in society. Girish Karnad's plays are very significant from feministic point of view. His feminist sensibility is allowing his heroines to struggle for their identity with respect. In Girish Karnad's works, female characters constantly rebel against the traditional position of women in Indian society and try to find their own way. His works make fun of the unjust values of the patriarchal society, which does not care about women's feelings and regards women as only inferior people who are absolutely loyal to him. Thus, *The Fire and The Rain* raises the voice for women who are being oppressed in the patriarchal society. It reflects the subjugation of women. This article will focus Karnad's view on the shrewd nature of masculinity and patriarchy that are responsible for exploitation of the self-identity of women.

Keywords: Feminism, Identity, Society, Gender, Psychology.

Girish Raghunath Karnad is a contemporary writer, playwright, actor and movie director in Kannada language. The *Fire and the Rain* was first written in Kannada titled *Agni Mattu Male* in 1995. Later, it was translated into English by Karnad himself. Women are mercilessly denied an opportunity for open expression of their true feelings in the tradition bound Indian society. In *The Fire and the Rain* Girish Karnad wants readers to understand that everyone has desires, but not only men, women also have desires that society should treat equally, and everyone has the right to realize their desires without fulfilling them. Through the play *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad again explores different feminist issues which include the social role of womanhood, sex role, identity, liberation and reflection of socially imposed values on women in a diverse manner. In Karnad's plays, *the drama of women lies in the conflict between her fundamental aspiration as a human subject and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the subordinate and the inessential* (Bhagwat, 67).

The playwright here has woven out a magnificent texture of love, betrayal, passion, jealousy and sacrifice around the relationship between Nittilai and Arvasu and between Vishakha and the three men in her life - Yavakari, Paravasu and Raibhya. In this play, the two women figures Vishakha and Nittilai representing their emotions, passions and power by locating themselves in the world of gendered oppression which gradually turns them from bewildered and supplicating into strong and rational women. Vishakha is under the shadow of some man who curbs her natural growth and is not keen on building up a permanent and sensible relationship with her. She has been given a secondary position to. his other pursuits, social and personal. Before her marriage she had a passionate relation with Yavakri, the son of Bharadwaj rishi. But, before their bond could achieve fruition in marriage, Yavakri goes to the forest to do penance. In his absence, Vishakha is forced to Marry his cousin Paravasu, the son of Raibhya. The couple commences their cornubial life, without any serious commitment to each other, as Paravasu knows that

Vishakha was not willing to marry him and he, on the other hand, is more fascinated with the spiritual and mystical aspects of life, than to remain confined within the boundary of an ordinary household. He makes his Wife happy for a year by bestowing upon her an unprecedented physical bliss, but after this he ceases to be a lover and becomes only a dutiful husband who is very particular in paying off his wife's natural due or demand while cherishing, his desire for social recognition. The question of happiness recedes into the background as sexuality turns into a mindless mechanical activity without love and emotion where the body becomes more important than soul, it is no longer passion but a routine that symbolizes the couple's last bid to sustain an otherwise incompatible conjugality. Vishakha is twenty-six years old Brahmin woman married in high class Brahmin family. Parvasu is her husband and the father-in-law is Raibhya. Both are intellectuals and learned. Raibhya has supernatural powers too. But their family possesses the traits of patriarchal family system. Vishakha is suffered by male dominance. It is observed that Vishakha was forced to marry Parvasu when she loves Yavakri. This is very basic principle of orthodox patriarchy that girl's consent is not considered when her marriage settled. Vishakha's father gets her married to Parvasu against her wish. Even she had to follow her father's decision. In this manner father's decision has to be followed in patriarchy though Vishakha becomes unhappy. Vishakha does not want to marry Parvasu but she was forced by father to marry. And Vishakha's father was very happy because his daughter obeyed his orders. It means that Vishakha is suffered from very beginning by male-dominated principles. Girish Karnad shows women are considered as tools in the hands of orthodox men of male-dominated society. Vishakha's whole life suffers because of male-dominated tradition. Vishakha's family is typical Indian family ruled by male-dominance where man orders women and women have to follow orders. In her family husband plays very dominant role. Parvasu neglects Vishakha's emotions, her equal rights in family. Parvasu used Vishakha's body only for sex and he does not think about her love, emotions. Vishakha becomes very happy when she married Parvasu because he promised her that he will make happy. Even she enjoys romantic life after marriage Vishakha feels that her husband accepted her as true wife. But her happiness does not remain long. Parvasu is very ambitious person. He wants to attend the Fire Sacrifice. When he becomes main Priest of the Yajana, he suddenly wants to leave the house. He does not think about Vishakha's love. He leaves home for seven years. Vishakha speaks about her bad condition when her husband without considering her emotions leaves her alone in house. She says that:

Then on the first day of the second year of our marriage, he said: 'Enough of that. We not start on our search'. And then it wasn't that I was not happy. But the question of happiness receded into the background. He used my body, and his own body, like an experimenter, an explorer. (TFTR 79)

Thus, through presentation of Vishakha, Girish Karnad presents the problems of traditional woman who lives under dominance of male in Indian society. Parvasu presents as a male personality of male-dominated society who does not care much about wife's emotions and feelings. Here all power and authority are possessed by only Parvasu. He intentionally ignores Vishakha's emotions and love. She shares her life with her jealous, cruel and maniac father-in-law Raibhya. Raibhya, a slave of his own ego, fails to welcome his son's prosperity and wit his "wizened body, scratchy claws and ice-cold blood" makes his helpless daughter-in-law a pathetic object of his vain anger, abuse and dissatisfaction. Having internalized oppression, Vishakha is no better than a living corpse, a parched tree in the scorching heat of a desert. Vishakha is made a sacrificial lamb in the hands of Raibhya too. Raibhya promptly grabs the opportunity to defame his own son by using her adultery as a reason. On the pretext of punishing Yavakri, he actually plans to foil Parvasu's endeavour to lead the fire sacrifice to a peaceful conclusion. To condemn the scandal, he goes to the extent of treating his own daughter-in law brutally Through woman character of Vishakha Karnad explained the problems of woman before the marriage and after the marriage. Vishakha's consent is not sought when her marriage is settled. Her husband does not consider her emotions and love when he is leaving for fire sacrifice.

Conclusion

Women protagonists of Girish Karnad are very ambitious and they search for perfection which leads them to tragedy in their life. Girish Karnad presents his male characters as traditional husbands try to command over their wives in many ways in the conjugal life. They believe that wives are physical and emotional slaves. The dramatist projects his women characters struggle as struggling for achieving their equal rights in male dominated society. In *The Fire and the Rain* Karnad deliberately uses female characters to make a strong voice against injustice and oppression, which has had a positive impact on our society. Karnad explored the symptoms of modern sensitivities that allowed them to fight against the accepted norms of the patriarchal society.

Reference

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