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Female Consciousness in Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain*

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Abstract:

Girish Karnad is one of the most distinguished dramatist of modern era who innovated his own dramatic tool which explores ancient myths in modern relevance. He explores broad concept of drama in his most celebrated work, *The Fire and the Rain*. In this drama main source of myth Yavakreet is borrowed from forest canto of the Mahabharata. It is originally written in Kannada with title *Agni Mattu Male* later translated into English. The story of play deals with multiple social issues of misapplication of spiritual knowledge, existentialism, revenge and conflict between relationships. Vishakha and Nittilai are main female characters of play. On one side Vishakha is a woman of ambitions and Nittilai is a girl of self-sacrificing. Both carry individual and contrast characteristics or values but because of social patriarchy system they face violence and suppression. These two characters do not object openly for their suppression but somehow they managed to whisper against their exploitations and their existentialism. Karnad tries to convey his view to encourage women condition in our postcolonial society. He raises issues of gender discrimination in various level of social, political and financial. And by this play he suggests that women empowerment is only path to attain social balance. The main motive of this research paper to tell that awakening of female consciousness is the only remedy for female's pitiable condition. And he spotlights on the journey of female's suffering from ancient to modern time which is still same as it was earlier.

Keywords: Female-Consciousness, Suppression, Existence, Patriarchy, Gender-Discrimination.

Change is the law of nature but in the condition of woman, there is only outwardly change we find barely any development in an idea of woman empowerment from ancient to modern era; these are only two different eras but from the ages woman situation is same. Our society has long history of more than hundred years but still we are struggling from the rudimentary problem of equality. In this modern age a person's ability are identified on the basis of gender. Both genders are created in the equal form by Nature but discriminated by world. Women are considered as a second gender. And their condition are still miserable, they face infidelity and indignity on the name of culture or tradition. She has to give up her rights even her consciousness of being equal and individualistic. From the beginning of her life she is trained as contingent on others. According to Indian society's rules regulation women should synchronize their desire under the

social orthodox boundaries. In present condition women have to fight for their basic needs of equality as social, political and economic levels. Legally government is running many programs for women equality, education and dowry system but in reality it is only outlying vision, society is not ready to give women's rights. Awareness of female consciousness is the only source to come out from these all problems. Female consciousness means awareness of her fundamental rights and self-existence. Female consciousness provides individual vision towards life without impression of any institution. It gives freedom and motivation to rise against hypocrisy of social organization. It is a foundation of women empowerment. Female consciousness compels her to think toward herself and reassess her circumstance in light of individual existence.

Today we are moving with 4G generation where everything become enriched with technology and advancement but unfortunately in the case of female still we are miles behind from basics. As in the world of literature we regarded Girish Karnad a legendary writer in the field of contemporary Indian modern dramatist. He is one of those writers who presents perfect amalgamation of tradition and modernism with the help of myths in his pieces of creativity. Literature is the reflection of society as in his work, Karnad tried to mirroring status of women in our society. The present paper discusses psychological and philosophical crosscurrent of thoughts in female behavior by his glorious work *The Fire and the Rain* is a trans-creation of *Agni Mattu Male* which is published in 1998. This play bluntly focuses on double standard norms of society and how spontaneously it makes women suppressed. He provides a kind of consciousness to his female characters by which she played story turning role in spite being in state of crises. Karnad elected amazing example of females, who has been dominated by males, they stand against parameters of traditional society. Girish Karnad's *The Fire and The Rain*, explores myth of the Mahabharata. In this play find that history of women's unfair exploitation still repeating itself in modern content. This paper's motive is to convey importance of female consciousness, to make her think about her existence and rights. Girish Karnad's experiments with myths is different from traditional and his contemporary dramatists. His technical experiments makes his work interesting he does not follow myth as it is he alters them according to his demand of story.

In *The Fire and the Rain*, Girish Karnad presents two categories of women who portray differently, one is Vishakha who is twenty-six years old newly wedded Brahmin girl who symbolize dreams and desires but she has to suffer in every stage of her life because of patriarchal society's norms and conditions which grip shackles in her feats. She is not allowed to get married to her opted choice. She has to give up her feeling for her lover Yavakari for sake her father's reputation and after marriage she is exploited by her husband Parvasu and in-laws Raibhya. After marriage Parvasu assures Vishakha that he will take care and love her but after one year he left her for fire sacrifice to act as a chief priest. She becomes as a sex tool for him. In Parvasu's absence his father sexually humiliates his own daughter in law because of his

frustration and inferiority complex. Vishakha complaints to her husband about his father:

Something died inside your father the day the king invited you to be the Chief Priest. He's been drying up like a dead tree since then. No sap runs in him. On the one hand, there's lust. It consumes him. An old man's curdled lust. And there is no one else here to take his rage out on but me. (Karnad 32-33).

Vishakha's hellish experiences of marriage give her awareness of self-consciousness and she decides to break the lines of social boundaries. Instead of behaving in traditional way, she elected the way of her desires. She is ready to give-up her social attire of loyal wife because of repressed physical want and ready to surrender herself in hands of Yavakari without knowing his malicious intention of disgracing her family.

I will give you the knowledge Indra could not give you. My body- it's light with speech now.(Karnad17).

Girish Karnad magnificently describes the pathetic condition of Vishakha in the shelter of social and legal male protectors. As truth comes in the light of illegal meeting of two. Because of that she is objectify as a social symbol who disgraced her family. Karnad shows how she is suppressed in pathetic manner because of that she is ready to compromise her consciousness. Out of that when she comes to know the fact that she is trapped by Yavakari because of revenge on her family. She finds that her feeling are again unfairly abused by male rages. Yavakri exploits Vishakha's helplessness. After that she makes her mind to teach lesson to Yavakari, She knows that Yavakari has sanctified water in Kamandal, she pours the entire water and becomes the cause of his death.

Vishakha's truthfulness is an elementary characteristics of the play's plot construction, the reason behind it is that being a Brahmin girl having a high social status, in spite of all that she has to suffer from beginning to end by the hands of so called legal male protectors. This character of drama shows that how women are humiliated in every aspect of life, when she tries to stand for her rights, she is punished for being helpless woman so this character breaks traditional image of female.

On the other hand, Karnad's character Nittilai exemplify morality and modesty. He highlights in his work that how female suffers in every conditions of life being two different women having various characteristics but at the end of the time both attain suffering and humiliation in the absence of female consciousness. Nittiali is a fourteen year young tribal girl who is honest towards her family and love .She is not blindly swayed by feelings. When Arvasu holds her hand, she denied with grace and 'Not until we are married' and same time Karnad shows his great art of expression by quoting that her father says that:

These high caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them.(Karnad 8)

In spite of being tribal belonging she is wise and intelligent, she questions Yavkari's penance and says that "there is no use of attainment of universal knowledge which is not utilizes for public welfare". Karnad created Nattilai's character with qualities of ideal women despite of that she has too experience misery. Being the true lover Arvasu fails to prove his love over family crises as a part of male chauvinism society, he has chosen his family over Nittilai's pious love. Because of that she becomes victim of circumstances and again here, we find that she has to step down in front of his father's wish as Vishakha did. Being married to tribal youth her consciousness did not allowed her to suppress her love for Arvasu. She run away to save his lover's life by contrasting her principles as Vishakha. Although she loves Arvasu but she does not betray her husband by which she shows how socially over power her emotions. Now she is in the most critical condition neither she can marry with Arvasu nor want to deceive her husband. She is at the extreme of poor condition from where she does not have any way to get rid of this situation which created by her supportive male pillars. Granting all this, her love for Arvasu is noble and self-sacrificing. She says Arvasu:

When I say we should go together-I don't mean that we have to live together- like lovers or like husband and wife. I have seen vicious enough to my husband. I don't want to disgrace him further, let's be together like brother and sister. You marry any girl you like. Only spare corner me. (Karnad 42).

She dynamically presents her inner sense of self-consciousness in her own way and break the Indian stereotypes image of ideal woman characters. Karnad has made Nittilai as an ideal icon of female, but at the end of play she too has to sacrifice her life because of traditional hypocrisy of society who believes in making women as a doll who dance on their tones. Despite of several years of penance men are not able to occur rains but Finally, Nittilai's innocent sacrifice brings rains which is symbol of fertility and aspiration and to pacify the fire of self-concerned approach.

Girish Karand in builds sense of self-consciousness in his characters. By which these two characters Nittilai and Vishakha realize their consciousness and follow their inner voice, later and they break the stereotype frame of Indian women In this play we find that women characters suffer despite of this fact that they both tried to justify norms of society at their best level. With these two striking dramatic personae one thing is very evident that being suppressed and dominated still they stand for their rights. Karnad explores suffering of women for decades to present importance of female consciousness. Above brief perusal of female characters in Karnad's work shows that in every aspect of life female has to surrender her dreams, desires, morals and principles for the justification of imposed norms of patrician society.By the word

modernization we mean process of adapting new habits and needs but in case liberalization of female it is hardly noticeable. If we really want to change, we should look female not as a second gender but as a person who have equal rights which is only possible when we will understand the power of female consciousness.

Girish Karnad, describes psychological picture of Indian women from the perspective of female sensibility and explain in his works. In our social structure gender discrimination is a huge problem. It is deep rooted in our culture which is unnecessarily burdened over females under the influenced of patrician approach. Women are facing this problem in their regular life from decades in every field of life. It takes place at the time of birth her own family does not treat her as an equal gender they trained her as a jailbird, she does not get equal opportunities even for education, she is not allowed to go outside from her preset boundaries by males because they are not able to maintain security issues. In this modern country town girls have to give up their dreams of higher education and careers for the sake of these narrow minded traditional approaches. Every time women ought to submit their fundamental rights for social stigmas like marriage. After marriage women socially compiled to drop her identity that is her surname and own house for ideological regulation of patriarchal social system in which male holds power of policy makers. In her own family from her whole life she is considers as an outsider and suffers in search of identity. Women are victimized for religious issues .She is not allowed to go many place to justify old regulation. Her normal menstruation period becomes social taboo for her it turn out to be part of social issues because tradition. Women are not allowed in religious places during her menstrual interval, suddenly she is claimed impure. Because of this trauma many girls are attempted suicide under depression which is proved by many researches. This kind of mental and physical torture could not be justified at any level.

Social issues create huge challenges in female life, not only in personal life but also in professional life too. We are soon going to become the part of developed which is growing very swiftly. But in case of females status we are at back foot. Women are still countenance discrimination and inequality in the workplace too. Despite of having equal qualification she does not get same opportunity as man does. Our social system following old approach of female existence in social references:

Man for the field and woman for the hearth: Man for sward and for the needle she: Man with the head and woman with the heart: Man to command and woman to obey: All else confusion.(Kincid, part 5, line 427-431)

With such approach we are visualizing our bright future which is not possible at all and unrealistic. This professional gender inequality clearly notices in our present working system. In present one of the most attacking issue is inequality, in working areas males are considered more

capable and active and females are portrayed as a cosmetic element and inefficient in corporate culture. Males are getting more opportunities and pay scale than their female co-workers that make their condition worst socially, economically and professionally which saturates their individuality. Providing job opportunity is not enough for complete development, she needs professional equality and opportunity. For females it's not easy to maintain proper balance between her personal and professional life, in many cases after marriage girls are compelled to leave her job and studies for family and children. Her abilities are not cherished and rewarded. We can easily notice hypocrisy of patriarchal society every one look for educated and professional eligible bride to decorate their houses. We have made many laws to prevent this but it is exist still. At most solution of this discrimination is awareness of gender consciousness.

If any society wants to grow up, they should provide equal chances and opportunities to every gender. For the development of society, it's necessary to change their old traditional approach towards women. They should not treat them as a second sex. We should encourage girl child and empower her with deserved confident and make her believe that her dreams can fly on her desires wings. We should train our daughters to take stand against suppression and decimation at political, social, moral, religious and economical. For the sake of our individual benefits, we need to train our daughters as fighters who have courage to boldly face the world not as escapist who do not have guts to solve their own problems. We require to inbuilt courage in them which give power to protest for their rights. Consciousness gives voice to female to ask for equality and rights for freedom from violence and decimation. Including rights of education, vote and economic equality, women's right are human rights which can strength women and our society as well as.

Main cause of gender discrimination is lack of education and dependency over males. Dependency dimities her power of decision making. In Karnad's play *The Fire And The Rain*, we observe that both characters Vishakha and Nittilai both are suffered due to the province by males and social limitations. Female characters present picture of Indian modern women who are physically and mentally not satisfied. They are dwelling in dilemma between social and inner voices. In our present cultural condition, we have many examples of female agonizes. Women need to be empowering instead of treating them as a victim of male dominating system. The most famous saying by Jawaharlal Nehru is:

To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.
(https://en.m.wikiquote.org/wiki/Jawaharlal_Nehru).

For social progress we should eliminate dowry system, sexual and mental arrestment, illiteracy, domestic violence, child marriage prostitution, physical abuse and gender inequality. By empowerment of women, we can change our social scenario and then we are able to modify our male chauvinist society into balance civilized society. This research paper's purpose is to design

new outlook towards female self- identification and sensibility towards sexism. And we want to pave new ways for female liberal democracy.

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