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# 1 Redefining Feminine Sensibility in Girish Karnad's Selected 2 Plays: The Fire and the Rain and Naga-Mandala

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## 6 **Abstract**

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8 **Index terms—**  
9 Redefining Feminine Sensibility in Girish Karnad's Selected Plays: The Fire and the Rain and Naga-Mandala  
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## 11 **1**

12 Feminine word is related to women or girl and it's considered suitable for them. The word feminine is used for  
13 the inner units of the self and sensibility in the fragrance of an artist's personality. It means an artist's (women)  
14 is identified and distinguished by their sensibility that is self-identity. Feminism is used to describe political,  
15 cultural or economic movement aimed for establishing equal rights and legal protection for women in society.  
16 Girish Karnad's plays are very significant from feminist point of view. His plays ridicule the unjust values of the  
17 patriarchal society which does not care for the feelings of a woman and considers her a subordinate that exists  
18 only to serve him with absolute loyalty. The plays -The Fire and the Rain and Naga-Mandala these elements  
19 are all there to serve the purpose of the dramatist. The paper highlights the pathetic condition under gone by  
20 the women characters in selected play of Girish Karnad. The paper present Girish Karnad effort to redefine the  
21 position of women in the society that has always limited their opportunities. His feminist sensibility is allowing  
22 his heroines to struggle for their identity with respect. He presents truth about human life and emotions contained  
23 in ancient Indian stories with alteration of social or moral values and modern norms.

24 Keywords: feminine, patriarchal society, selfidentity, pathetic condition, social and moral values.

## 25 **2 I. INTRODUCTION**

26 The word 'Feminism' comes from French word 'Feminism' means 'of the female sex' or 'Mature Woman'. The  
27 feminism is a cultural structure of marginality in relation to patriarchal orthodox society. Its origin is the fact  
28 that in all societies which divide the sexes into different cultural, economic or political spheres. Women are  
29 always referred in sub-ordinate position as objects or show piece where men are treated as subject which is  
30 always argumentative in nature. In broadly, we can say that feminism to consider as the social relation with  
31 reference to patriarchy and gender-bias. It is a critical theory aimed at analysis gender in relation to the true  
32 position of women in society. Feminism is a women's movement which struggle or aim for equal right for women  
33 and men involving in a fair competition with male dominated society. However, this movement has, to face many  
34 challenges different issues like stereotype sex role, politics of patriarchal system etc. Hole and Levine point out  
35 that "the socially unequal position of women throughout history is not the result of biology, but is due to the  
36 value which society has placed at any given time on the biological differences between the two sexes" 1 (Bhagwat,  
37 p.30) According to Janet Richards, "The essence of Feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean  
38 only that there are excellent reasons for thinking that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of  
39 their sex, the proposition is to be regardless as continuing Feminism" 2 (Janet, p.03).

40 The play 'The Fire and the Rain', (1998) is the most successful play, based on the myth of 'Yavakri' from the  
41 Mahabharata. It is an English trans-creation of a play in Kannada with the title "Agni Mattu Male" (1994-95)  
42 with his own playwright. In play, the writer show different feminist issues which include the socio-political, role  
43 of womanhood, sex role, identity, race, London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences liberation  
44 and reflection of socially imposed values on women in a diverse manner. Vishakha and Nittilai are two major  
45 female characters pushed into the tangled network of the action, controlled by the male domination in the play.

## 2 I. INTRODUCTION

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46 The study of the characters of Vishakha and Nittilai demands the analysis of belonging to two different social-  
47 cultural statuses in society. Karnad, through the character of Vishakha, openly criticize the typical image of  
48 a women constructed by the society where a women is expected to remain 'silent' or 'dumb' as an object of  
49 suppression. Karnad thinks nothing is wrong in extramarital affairs of married women and he boldly shows  
50 extramarital relationship in his most plays. In an interview with Tutun Mukherjee, when he says, "I used to  
51 know a married woman once who positively blossomed after she had an extra marital affair" 3 (Mukherjee, p.43).  
52 So, he wants his reader to understand that every human being has desires not only men, but a woman too has  
53 desires which should be given an equal opportunity in the society, without granting cheats in masculine system.

54 In this play, the two women characters Vishakha and Nittilai, the innocent women who were victimized and  
55 subjected to tremendous pain, insult, suffer from gender injustice which gradually helped them to be bewildered  
56 and supplicating into strong, bold and rational women. Vishakha, a Brahmin girl is married to Paravasu, sage  
57 Raibhya's elder son in a high caste Brahmin family. After one year, Vishakha's married life became joyless  
58 and companionless and she falls easily to the hand of the male persecution and loneliness torments who wish  
59 (seamlessly) explore her body as an experiments or even worse. Vishakha affirms, "There was no happiness in  
60 that exploration as we experimented with our bodies. He used me as an instrument for search; I didn't know  
61 what the search was for. I yielded to him and let my body be turned inside out, as he did his own. I didn't know  
62 whether it was a mystical or spiritual search for something which could not be defined. Only the sense pervaded  
63 the air" 4 (The Fire and the Rain, p.68). Then Nittilai is a virtuous and beautiful tribal girl belongs to a lower  
64 caste family which shows women are equally subjected to harsh behavior, displacement and inevitable victims  
65 beyond social order as patriarchal system denies the backgrounds of women's social status. Vishakha's openly  
66 objection against being treated as an instrument of exchange between men as she had to meet the expectation  
67 to fulfill the sexual desire of both her husband Paravasu and her former lover Yavakri. Vishakha, expresses  
68 her feeling, "My husband and you! How different the two of you are! He didn't leave even a pore of my body  
69 unexplored-and you think that a women is only a pair of half-formed breasts" (p.68). Nittilai also has to face  
70 many challenges to create place for herself within her own society although being low caste tribal community. It  
71 doesn't matter whether a woman belongs to which class or caste but there is little chance for women to escape  
72 the suffering of the gender-bias. Karnad makes a very clever use of Nittilai character who courage to challenges  
73 the oppression imposed upon her by the violent and male dominant subjects. Nittilai is frank, bold and fearless  
74 girl. She is a fearless critic of Brahmanism and rationally exposes its deceitfulness, hypocrisy and opaqueness.  
75 She proudly quotes what her father says; "These high-caste men are always glad enough to bed our women but  
76 not to wed them" (p.60). She is criticizing of the secretiveness of high-caste Brahman. As a reformer Karnad  
77 wants to reform his society for which he has uncovered the hypocrisy, double standard and hollowness of the  
78 Brahmins who always held the highest position in society. As a social reformer Nittilai asks very brave questions  
79 to Yavakri who claims to earn pursuit of knowledge. She says that she would ask just two questions about his  
80 Universal Knowledge. "First, can he make it rain? And, second, can he predict the hour of his own death?"(p.62)  
81 At this point Nittilai's thinks, all knowledge is fruitless if it doesn't lead to the well-being of the people.

82 Vishakha is another revolutionary character Karnad has portrayed. She is a passionate person but her personal  
83 life is ruined and left to suffer alone, homeless and without any support to flower in her youthful age. "Women  
84 were less valued than man" 5 (Kosta, p.200). Vishakha London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social  
85 Sciences becomes the victim of the power struggle among the male dominate characters of upper-class bigotry  
86 to which she gradually appears more intensely conscious to control their fates. Now time allowed her to take  
87 revenge on Yavakri, in his unpleasant plan which she came to know that Yavakri, in his obsession of desire for  
88 revenge, molests her to retort the misbehavior done to his father, by her husband's family. Vishakha thinks that  
89 she has been used by Yavakri as instrument, weapon of vengeance and Universal Knowledge that he attained  
90 couldn't help him to possess noble idea. So, it's time now to take final step to save her family from giant Yavakri  
91 when she pours out the sanctified water from Yavakri's kamandalu. Vishakha empties the water: Vishakha starts  
92 emptying Yavakri's kamandalu by pouring the water out, calmly and slowly. Yavakri's looks at her and shouts.  
93 (p.76) Yavakri has to become the fall guy (scapegoat) of her treachery which exemplifies her intellectual presence  
94 of mind. She does not forgiveness Yavakri even when he cries out: "I love you, Vishakha. I have not looked at  
95 another woman in my whole life. Is it my fault that you happened to marry Paravasu?" (p.76) Hence, Yavakri is  
96 killed by Brahma Rakshasa as she takes her revenge and now realizes her strength or full potential to free from  
97 abused enslaved sexuality.

98 Rani, the female protagonist of the play 'Naga-Manadala', as her names itself justifies she is beautiful and  
99 looks like a princess. Karnad describes her personality as "Queen of the whole wide world. Queen of the long  
100 tresses" 6 (Naga-Mandala, p.56). She was married with Appana Rani feel happy for her new life starts with  
101 husband but her happiness was not for a long time. The day entered her husband house she was treated like a  
102 maid-servant for which she is thrashed in tears. And Appana has enjoys openly extra-marital affair with a bazaar  
103 harlot. He locks her in the alone house where she lives a life without any hope and identity. Rani is neglected  
104 by her husband Appana and the rights of a wife are given to that concubine. At the starting Rani appears as  
105 the image of an ideal Indian woman bashful and unquestioning just as the ensign of 'subordinate' where Rani  
106 is looked in her own husband house. She obeys her husband order like a dumb. Women in India are taken for  
107 granted as men have failed to understand that she too has emotion and feeling. She is exploited easily because  
108 she is an innocent girl and no one care to ask for her sentiments. In the alone house of her husband, Rani is

109 lockedup "like a caged bird?" (p.88) symbolizes the chain of restrictions placed around women, which denies ever  
110 her legal rights and blocks her natural growth.

111 Presently ,Rani realizes the importance of selfidentity that awaits another point of view as though it seems  
112 Karnad is giving a twist to theseold custom by portraying Rani's resolve to get release from the oppression of  
113 these situation. This way Karnad's seems to legalise the sexual intercourse between human and inhuman world  
114 that provide enjoyment and peace. In fact Karnad ask question and expose the problem of the identity of women  
115 that provide him a space to tackle the women issues. The story starts with Rani who for the start of new married  
116 life from complete sincere to fulfillment of experience to assert her identity. It is at the instruction of Kurudavva,  
117 an old blind women is a close friend of Appanna's mother. She offers Rani magic root that is a powerful love  
118 potion. With the help of that magic root, she finds Naga (King Cobra) mythical snake falls in love with Rani.  
119 Naga provides the role of passionate lover to give the sexual pleasure to Rani. Karnad locates the complicated  
120 suspense of Rani's circumstance which ultimately helps her to break-out of the moral codes imposed by society.  
121 She also wants a male partner in her life with whom she desire for love and happiness. Her inner urge remains  
122 repressed and at any cost she has to fulfill her sexual desires with the first appearance of Naga, Rani gets faith  
123 and commitment in her body. She feels heavenly marital joy or happiness in company of Naga that become a  
124 wonderful world for her. By which Karnad gives a twist to the Indian tradition. Naga who become the form  
125 of Appanna and starts visiting her during the night whose love helps her to forget the demonic world of her  
126 cruel husband. Her capability to recognize her own selfness leads London Journal of Research in Humanities and  
127 Social Sciences her place or value to acquire a subject status beyond the status of male. She looks to be a free  
128 woman who shows the dare to overcome the model of gender-bias society. The Cobra-a passionate lover Naga,  
129 who fulfills the wish of his beloved Rani with gift of motherhood, finally has to sacrifice his life for the sake of  
130 love." Naga presses Rani's hair to his body" (p.96). Whatsoever the special care and love she doesn't get from  
131 her husband in real world, Rani gets it from Naga. In the presence of Naga, she starts to feel in safe hand, happy  
132 and comfortable thus breaking her isolation when she says to Naga," Let it come. When you're there by my side,  
133 I don't care" (p.76).

134 Rani gets to experience the wedded bliss in the company of her lover Naga. Further, she forces Appanna who  
135 represents patriarchal maledominance in his misbehavior to accept the reality of his wife in front of the village  
136 elders when she becomes pregnant. While Appanna questions her chastity when she is put on the ordeal to prove  
137 her loyalty by virtue of the snakeordeal in front of the society without thinking her mental and physical condition.  
138 All villagers bring to heel her position. No one shows the sympathy for innocent and pregnant woman everyone  
139 wants to prove her purity.

140 Rani puts on snake-ordeal and proves her chastity. And everyone applauds Rani's innocence and the village  
141 elder declare that she is not a simple woman, but a 'Divine Being', 'a Goddess' and her husband Appanna is  
142 forced to accept her with respect in front of public as the Elder announces:

143 Elder I: Appanna, your wife is no ordinary woman. She is the incarnation of a goddess. Don't feel sorry that  
144 you doubted her and ill-treated her. This is how goddesses reveal themselves to the world. You were chosen as  
145 the instrument to reveal your wife's divine status to the world. (p.93).

146 Karnad thus making a challenging task by balancing the power to remove patriarchal dominance society and  
147 the identity is restored when he declares, "Rani gave birth to a beautiful child. It was son. And Rani lived  
148 happily ever after with her husband, child and servant."(p.94) and Rani recovers her identity as a respectful wife  
149 and mother.

150 In the two plays the fire and the Rain and Naga-Mandala Karnad's has intentionally refined sensibility the  
151 women characters to raise their powerful voice against injustice and suppression which signifies a positive message  
152 on our modern society. By exploring the lives of women caged by patriarchal dominated society. Karnad has  
153 taken the responsibility of underlined women to free their lives from the bondages of male chauvinism. Actually,  
154 through these women character Karnad has explored the symptoms of refined sensibility which has enable them  
155 to fight against traditional rules of patriarchal society. It is observed that here Vishakha endeavour to create  
156 space for herself in the crossroads of conventional custom. Nittilai free herself from a forced shackle of marriage  
157 despite the traditional norms of patriarchal system. Even Rani recovers her position from total declension to  
158 unique power. <sup>1 2 3</sup>

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