



## PRESENTATION OF WOMEN AS EMOTIONAL SCAPEGOATS IN GIRISH KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA AND NAGA-MANDALA

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Deepa Rani and <sup>2</sup>Palak Kumar

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Guru Nanak Khalsa College,  
 Yamunanagar, Haryana India

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, GurukulKangri University, Haridwar

### Abstract

The research paper studies the symbolic illustration of women in *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* and discusses how women are an embodiment of cultural expectations in the patriarchal configuration and serve as scapegoats. Through the character of Rani and Padmini, Girish Karnad presents a psychological picture of the Indian mindset. Karnad employs myths and folklore to criticize patriarchal thought process and explores female desire for freedom, identity, equality and dignity. At the same time Karnad also presents the situation of women through the character of Rani and Padmini in the Indian society. Rani is timid, shy and fulfils all the characteristics prescribed by the society but still struggles, in contrast, Padmini is an audacious, bold and sagacious woman who accepts her desires fearlessly without thinking of society but is still not accepted by the society. Virginia Woolf rightly said that women in society are considered either as Virgin Marry or witches. They do not have the option of simply being humans. By employing qualitative approach of close textual analysis, the paper highlights the importance of women's self-acceptance and society's transformed recognition of women's new emerging position in the Indian society. This paper highlights the impact of myths, feminism, and psychoanalysis on cultural representation and picturization of women as scapegoats. It offers a new standpoint of women representation in Indian society with a broader discussion on women desires, quest for independence, self-identity and love within the Indian society.

**Keywords:** Audacious, Configuration, Embodiment, and Scapegoat.

### Introduction

The issue of women subjugation in different societies is not new. In male dominating countries like India, where patriarchy holds authority in the family, women are fortified to accept subservience. Girish Karnad, one of the prominent writers of India, presents the inner desires and struggles of women that coerce audiences to think about entrenched norms and equality in the society. Karnad's plays offer a rich and layered portrayal of women's status in the Indian society and his female characters often struggle against societal expectations, rigid traditions and gender roles that deny them autonomy and identity. Padmini is an educated and strong willed girl. She is married to Devadatta who is a learned man. After marriage, Padmini loses her interest in Devadatta and is allured by Kapila. She doesn't feel any shame to accept it even in front of Kali she is the only person who admits the truth. Neither society nor the male ego accepts her decision, so at the end she decides to be sati in Devadatta's funeral pyre so that her son can gain dignity in the society. Karnad through *Naga-Mandala* presents the realistic situation of women in the Indian society. Rani is dominated by her husband. He doesn't show any concern towards her. He locks her up in the house and remains outside during nights with a strumpet. When Rani became pregnant he humiliated her in front of the whole village and abuses her without knowing the whole truth. Women have been shown as easy targets in front of the society.

### Research Methodology

In this research paper qualitative approach, grounded in feminist criticism and cultural studies, is used to examine and interpret the portrayal of women as emotional and cultural scapegoats in Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*. Through textual analysis, this paper investigates how Padmini, Rani and princess of Karnataka are the victim of societal pressures, emotional burdens and are presented as symbolic vessels for the male's gratification. It offers a new standpoint on women's representation in the Indian society with a broader discussion on women desires, quest for independence, self-identity and love within the Indian society.



Cover Page



## Presentation of Women as Scapegoats

The concept of scapegoat is a biblical one which appears in the Hebrew *Bible* where Aaron (brother of Moses') was ordered by God to choose two innocent goats for sacrifice. Before sacrificing the goats he kept his hand on the head of the goat and confessed all his sins. Then the goat was pushed away from the cliff in order to complete the sacrifice. It indicates the transference and restitution of sins and repentance of a person onto the innocent being. It was the first time that the term 'scapegoat' was encountered by the common people. In the Indian society women are presented as scapegoats. The theory of feminism shows how blame is shifted on the women for every misfortune. For centuries, women have been subjugated. Susan Faludi in *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* clearly says that it is very normal to blame women for their own faults. She clearly indicates that besides patriarchy, media and cultural narratives play a vital role in creating such problems. In the Indian texts women are generally presented as caregivers, mothers, faithful wives and are expected to remain silent in every condition. Even in the mythological text *Ramayana*, Sita suffered throughout her life. Even after clearing 'trial by fire' she was thrown out during her pregnancy after hearing the words of a washer man.

Girish Karnad is a highly prolific dramatist, actor, and film producer. He was born to a Brahmin family in Maharashtra. He won the Jnanpith, Padma Shri, and Padma Bhushan awards. In his works, he explores a variety of themes, including existentialism in *Tuglaq*, identity problems in *Hayavadana*, women's struggle in *Naga Mandala*, parental obedience in *Yayati*, and so on. Karnad uses the Yakshagana narrative style in his writings. Karnad did an excellent job with this duty and elevated drama to new heights. *Naga-Mandala* (1988) is one of Karnad's most accomplished dramas. It was first published in Kannada and then translated into English by Karnad. In *Naga-Mandala*, Rani was the only daughter who is extremely beautiful. She was married to Appanna and all her illusions about the perfect marriage were shattered. She suffered from loneliness and depression, her isolation is presented through her dreams. Women are presented as less rational than men and it is a conception set by the patriarchy that whatever they are doing is for women's welfare. Appanna regularly visits his wife but keeps her locked to save her from the evil eye of the society. When Rani is impregnated by Cobra [that regularly visits Rani in disguise of Appanna] she was brutally beaten by him. He humiliates her publically.

APPANNA: Aren't you ashamed to admit it you harlot?

I locked you in and yet you managed to find a lover !tell me who it is whom did you go to with your saree off?

Rani : I Swear to you I haven't done anything wrong'

Appanna: You haven't ? And yet you have a bloated tummy. Just pumped air into it, did you? And you think I'll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole

Village, you darken my face, for slut-! (52)

He himself visits prostitutes and never feels ashamed. On the other side he raises a watchdog so that his wife cannot go outside without his knowledge. Appanna proudly confesses that he never touched Rani and questions her pregnancy. Villagers insist Rani to go through a trial to prove her chastity. But no one questioned about the sins that were committed by Appanna. Here, Girish Karnad presented Rani as a cultural scapegoat. Rani cleared that test and she is accepted as the incarnation of a goddess by the villagers and Appanna as well. He accepts her son as his own son as he believed that she is a deity. The concept of binary opposition is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology that simplifies female's identity into moral categories that serve social control. Rani is treated as Virgin Mary and Padmini is placed in the second category. Padmini is a strong educated woman who never feels ashamed in accepting her desires even when they are against social norms. She wished for a man who is a perfect combination of good physique and brain. After marrying Devadatta, she is bored and attracted towards Kapila, a boy with good physique. Devadatta could not handle this and out of jealousy he beheaded himself in the temple of Kali in the name of a vow fulfilment. When Kapila reaches in the temple and saw Devadatta's body, he is



Cover Page



afraid about what the people will say, and sacrificed himself in the name of friendship. Karnad presents the hypocritical nature of patriarchy. None of them thinks about Padmini. They even did not have the courage to accept the truth and they both hid the cause of their death even from goddess Kali.

Padmini: Then why didn't you stop them.

Kali: Actually if it hadn't been that I was so sleepy, I would have thrown them out by the scruff of their necks...

Padmini: But why?

Kali: The rascals! They were lying to their last breaths. That fellow Devadatta – he had once promised his head to Rudra and his arms to me! Think of it—head to him and arm to me! Then because you insisted on going to Rudra temple, he comes here and offers his head. Nobly too—wants to keep his words, he says—no other reason!

Then this Kapila. Died right in front of me –but 'for his friend'. Mind you! Didn't even have the courtesy to refer to me. And what lies Says he is dying for friendship. He must have known perfectly well he would be accused of killing Devadatta for you. Do you think he wouldn't have grabbed you if it hadn't been for that fear? But till his last breath –'Oh my friend! My dear brother!'

Here, Karnad presents Padmini as a cultural and emotional scapegoat. Padmini is a courageous woman who accepts the reality as it is in front of goddess Kali. Goddess Kali, who is happy to see the true nature of Padmini, appears and ask her to connect the heads to the respective bodies. She exchanges their heads intentionally to fulfill her desires and enjoys the company of new Devadatta (head of Devadatta and body of Kapila). Her desire to marry a perfect man is now fulfilled. As soon as Devadatta loses his physique Padmini loses her interest. Her desire takes her in the search of Kapila. At the end, when Kapila and Devadatta kill each other in a dual, Padmini decides to be a Sati in the funeral pyre. She is a bright woman who understands the aspect that society will never forgive her for their death. So, she decides to sacrifice her life like a scapegoat to save her son's future. Here, the dual standard of the society have been presented by Girish Karnad. When she decided to offer herself in Sati, women sang songs to glorify her death, to show her piousness. In the sub plot of *Hayavadana*, the princess of Karnataka is also presented as an emotional scapegoat. She is married to a White Stallion. In reality, the Stallion was a Yaksha who was cursed by a sage. After marriage, when the princess devotes herself to her true love, his curse was broken. He appeared in his real image and offered the princess to accompany him and when she denied, he cursed her into becoming a Stallion. Here, she is presented as a scapegoat. Yaksha, who suffered from the same curse for centuries, curses her own wife with the same curse, without thinking of its consequences. The princess is the scapegoat. A similar example of the same 'scapegoat' can be traced in the character of the mythological figure, Ahilya who was innocent. She was cursed by Gautama Rishi, and was transformed into stone. It was not Ahilya who committed the sin but it was Indra who disguised himself in the form of sage Gautama and intimated with her. But nothing happened to Indra. In the Indian society, women oppression is so much naturalised that even women fail to realise that they are victims. Simone De Beauvoir rightly argues in *The Second Sex* that women are not born but rather become a woman. Legal feminist theorist, Catherine Mc Kiner says "Naturalisation is built into our mainstream thinking about equality, namely, the Aristotelian conception of equality that means treating like alike and unlike alike." (thesis pg. 35)

On the basis of the principle of 'scapegoat' three interpretations can be drawn (1) where scapegoats are innocent (Rani from *Naga-Mandala* is one of the best example of it) (2) scapegoats are sinners (we can trace the same characteristic in the character of Padmini) (3) scapegoat as ritual exile. Guilt absolution that can be traced in the character of Padmini is one of the prominent reasons of scapegoat. An individual who chooses moral path never tries to find out a way to come out from the guilt but an individual who admits sin looks for a path to escape. Padmini, who admits sin by having illegitimate relation



with Kapila (her husband's best-friend) searches a way to come out to clear her image. In Indian society, having multiple partners is a taboo. To secure her son's future, she decides to be a scapegoat.

## Conclusion

Through the characters of Padmini, Rani and princess of Karnataka the lamentable disposition of the Indian women in their cultural contexts since time immemorial has been reiterated. Indian epics like *The Ramayana* have a great impact on the lives and conscience of the people, so much so that the society's impression of pious women and heroic men has been so compartmentalizing that they have failed to humanise individuals in reality. The research paper highlights how Karnad's female characters with varied personalities have all suffered the burden of being the scapegoats of the Indian society. Now, however, they have begun to put forth their own view of thoughts and contradict the societal and gender norms. They may no longer accept themselves as scapegoats but express their impulses, experiences and expressions as boldly as their progress in the society. They may have had to suffer the same end till now, but the transformation, transition and the representation of women, from Rani to Padmini is, in itself some progress, which only suggests the emerging self-accepting and strong headed women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and their rightful and transformative representation in front of the Indian society and in literature.

## Works Cited and Consulted

1. Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Cornell University, Harcourt College Publishers, 2001, Print.
2. Chakravartee, Moutshi. "Myths and Symbols as Metaphor: A Re-Consider and Hayavadana". *The Literary Criterion*. 26.4 (1991):31-40, Print.
3. Chandra, N.D.R. *Contemporary Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons Publication, 2008. Print.
4. Daniel, Jemima, "Myth in Indian English Dramas", *IJIRSET*. 2.5 (2013):1551-1555. Print.
5. Dhavanel, P. *The Indian Imagination of Girish Karnad*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2000, Print.
6. Dodiya, Jayadipsinh K. *Girish Karnad: The Man and the Writer*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1999, Print.
7. Evans, Bergen. *Dictionary of Mythology*. New York: Dell Publication, 1970, Print.
8. Ghatak, Adrita Dey. "Girish Karnad: The mirror of Indian Theatrical Identity." n.d web. 22Jan. 2017. <<https://www.indiaopins.com/girish-karnad-theatrical-identity>>.
9. Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to Present*. New Delhi: Wiley India Pvt. Ltd, 2008. Print.
10. Hudson, W.H. *An Introduction to the study of literature*. New Delhi: Kalayani Publishers, 1991. Print.
11. Ions, Veronica. *Indian Mythology*. London: Paul Hamlyn, 1996. Print.
12. Iyengar, Carl. *Archetypes of Collective Unconscious 20<sup>th</sup> Century Criticism*. United States: Princeton University Press, 1969. Print.
13. Jung, Carl. *Archetypes of Collective Unconscious 20<sup>th</sup> Century Criticism*. United States: Princeton University Press, 1969. Print.
14. Karnad, Girish. Interview. *Girish Karnad's Plays Performance and Critical Perspective*. By Tuntun Mukherjee. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2008. 30-35. Print.
15. Katri, C.L. *Girish Karnad's Naga-Mandala: A Critique*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 2006.
16. Kennedy, X.J., Dana Gioia, and Mark Bauerlein. *Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language Theory*, 2005. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2007.
17. Kosta Abhishek. *The plays of Girish Karnad: A Study in Myths and Gender*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd., 2012. Print.
18. Kumar, Nand. *Indian English Drama: A Study in Myths*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2003. Print.
19. Madhuri, j. Naga. "Myth and Mythology in Girish Karnad Contemporary Plays". *RJELAL*. 1. 3 (2013) : 241-244. Print.
20. Marjorie, Grene. *Introduction to Existentialism*. London: Chicago University. Print.