

Vol II Issue VIII Feb 2013

Impact Factor : 0.1870

ISSN No :2231-5063

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

Golden Research

Thoughts

Chief Editor
Dr.Tukaram Narayan Shinde

Publisher
Mrs.Laxmi Ashok Yakkaldevi

Associate Editor
Dr.Rajani Dalvi

Honorary
Mr.Ashok Yakkaldevi

IMPACT FACTOR : 0.2105

Welcome to ISRJ

RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

International Advisory Board

Flávio de São Pedro Filho Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	Mohammad Hailat Dept. of Mathematical Sciences, University of South Carolina Aiken, Aiken SC 29801	Hasan Baktir English Language and Literature Department, Kayseri
Kamani Perera Regional Centre For Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka	Abdullah Sabbagh Engineering Studies, Sydney	Ghayoor Abbas Chotana Department of Chemistry, Lahore University of Management Sciences [PK]
Janaki Sinnasamy Librarian, University of Malaya [Malaysia]	Catalina Neculai University of Coventry, UK	Anna Maria Constantinovici AL. I. Cuza University, Romania
Romona Mihaila Spiru Haret University, Romania	Ecaterina Patrascu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest	Horia Patrascu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania
Delia Serbescu Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania	Loredana Bosca Spiru Haret University, Romania	Ilie Pinteau, Spiru Haret University, Romania
Anurag Misra DBS College, Kanpur	Fabricio Moraes de Almeida Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil	Xiaohua Yang PhD, USA
Titus Pop	George - Calin SERITAN Postdoctoral Researcher	Nawab Ali Khan College of Business Administration

Editorial Board

Pratap Vyamktrao Naikwade ASP College Devrukh,Ratnagiri,MS India	Iresh Swami Ex - VC. Solapur University, Solapur	Rajendra Shendge Director, B.C.U.D. Solapur University, Solapur
R. R. Patil Head Geology Department Solapur University, Solapur	N.S. Dhaygude Ex. Prin. Dayanand College, Solapur	R. R. Yaliker Director Managment Institute, Solapur
Rama Bhosale Prin. and Jt. Director Higher Education, Panvel	Narendra Kadu Jt. Director Higher Education, Pune	Umesh Rajderkar Head Humanities & Social Science YCMOU, Nashik
Salve R. N. Department of Sociology, Shivaji University, Kolhapur	K. M. Bhandarkar Praful Patel College of Education, Gondia	S. R. Pandya Head Education Dept. Mumbai University, Mumbai
Govind P. Shinde Bharati Vidyapeeth School of Distance Education Center, Navi Mumbai	Sonal Singh Vikram University, Ujjain	Alka Darshan Shrivastava Shaskiya Snatkottar Mahavidyalaya, Dhar
Chakane Sanjay Dnyaneshwar Arts, Science & Commerce College, Indapur, Pune	G. P. Patankar S. D. M. Degree College, Honavar, Karnataka	Rahul Shriram Sudke Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore
Awadhesh Kumar Shirotriya Secretary, Play India Play (Trust),Meerut	Maj. S. Bakhtiar Choudhary Director,Hyderabad AP India.	S.KANNAN Ph.D , Annamalai University,TN
	S.Parvathi Devi Ph.D.-University of Allahabad	Satish Kumar Kalhotra
	Sonal Singh	

**Address:-Ashok Yakkaldevi 258/34, Raviwar Peth, Solapur - 413 005 Maharashtra, India
Cell : 9595 359 435, Ph No: 02172372010 Email: ayisrj@yahoo.in Website: www.isrj.net**



REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN GIRISH KARNAD'S FLOWERS

TAPASHREE GHOSH

Lecturer, Calcutta Girls' College, University of Calcutta.

Abstract:

Representation is not free from the politics of representation. Who is representing whom, from what position, for what purpose and at which juncture- all these questions and many more determine, influence and problematic representation. The paper attempts to analyze representation of women in Karnad's monologue Flowers. Multiple questions arise when the priest represents his wife and the courtesan he visits for sexual pleasure named Ranganayaki. Why the priest never mentions the name of his wife? Is she a silent victim? Does she protest? What is her attitude towards sexuality and nakedness? Is it in contrast to Ranganayaki's attitude towards the same? Is she more liberated than the priest's wife? It is true that true evaluation of the play can only be done if in future the play is performed on stage nevertheless this paper tries to assess the representation of women(women's body, mind and soul) in the play.

KEYWORDS:

Gender role, nakedness, sexuality, representation.

INTRODUCTION:

Indian English drama is born out of colonial encounter. Plays originally written in English and English translations and transcreations of regional language plays have enriched this genre of literature (RID, 8). English language, taught by the colonial masters to the native population with an aim to create petty clerks, was used as a weapon to write back to the Imperial Centre. Indians did not write like the English. They Indianised the colonizers' mother tongue. The result was a hybrid language reflective of the culturally hybrid lives of Postcolonial India.

Girish Karnad, a leading light in the realm of Indian English drama, occupies a unique position as he is the translator of his plays (from Kannada to English) as well. Karnad, through their plays such as Nagamandala, Hayavadhana, Bali, the sacrifice and The Fire and the Rain have addressed complex and intertwining issues of gender, gender roles, sexuality and position of women in society. Thus, Karnad turned to monologues-Flowers and Broken Images at a mature and crucial moment in his career. With this relatively new experiment in form and content he is pushing the envelope further and embracing new challenges as a playwright. To quote Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker the two short monologues "form a radical coda to Karnad's forty-year career as a playwright because they initiate new subjects and form". (CPII, xxvii)

In Flowers, the priest's gaze forms the single point of entry into the play. The drama arises from thoughts, memories, dilemmas, analysis and recapitulations happening within his mind. Other characters are seen, explained and analysed from his point of view. The format also gives greater play to the drama happening within the theatre of his mind.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse representation of women in the play. I am aware that

Title : REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN GIRISH KARNAD'S FLOWERS
Source:Golden Research Thoughts [2231-5063] TAPASHREE GHOSH yr:2013 vol:2 iss:8

representation is not free from the politics of representation. Who is representing whom, from what position, for what purpose and at which juncture- all these questions and many more determine, influence and problematise representation. Again position, views, beliefs and outlook of the playwright (albeit indirectly) further problematise representation.

In Flowers, the priest who claims to possess an in depth knowledge of astronomy is looking back at the life he has lived, mistakes he has made before committing suicide. He is aware that this sinful act will lead him to damnation. As he desperately wants release from the life he is forced to lead, he decides to die on his own terms. In the closing moments of his life, he is dissecting the life he has lived and in the process that of the two women he claims he loved. (Karnad, CPII 260)

He carefully constructs the picture of a dutiful, shy, submissive, concerned, caring and loving wife. But what is her name? At the end of the text we remember Ranganayaki's name but not that of the priest's wife. Her name is not mentioned in the text. She is the priest's dharmapatni:

Karyeshu mantra, karmneshu dasi
Rupecha Laxmi, Kshamaya dharitri
Bhojyeshu mata, Shayanesthu Rambha
Shat karma Yukta, Kula Dharmapatni

To the priest she does not have any other identity. Her identity is only with respect to the roles she is supposed to play to perfection-that of wife, daughter-in-law and mother. Her thoughts, desires, sorrows, humiliations betrayal as a woman matter little to him. It is here that we start comprehending the politics of representation- here is a husband representing his wife, even comparing/contrasting her with the courtesan he visits for carnal pleasure.

Indian society is structured in such a manner that it exploits the labour of its womenfolk. Women engage themselves in household chores from morning till night but do not get any payment for their labour. Furthermore, there is no acknowledgement of the amount of labour they put in. The priest's house is no exception to this lack of division of labour. Hence, the priest's wife is constantly working, either at home or at the temple where she has to assist her husband for the flower ceremony. Her day's work does not end with the evening aarti. She has to dutifully wait for her husband to return home after visiting the courtesan so that she can have dinner once her husband finishes his meal. Thus, duty as a wife is given more significance than basic personal needs like food and rest.

Sexuality has been a taboo word for the women especially in the Indian backdrop. Women are taught to hide their desires even from themselves. The priest's wife too is uncomfortable with her nakedness:

I had never seen a woman completely naked. At home, we all bathed in the open, in the corner formed by the neem and the banyan tree in our backyard, so my wife covered herself with a sari even when she bathed. On the days I wanted her, I would give her a look she had come to recognize and late at night when everyone was fast asleep, she would crawl up to my room for a furtive scuffle in bed which demanded minimum of uncovering. There were our two children and my old parents in the house and you never knew who might call out for help. The problem however was more basic. My wife would have died of shame than be seen naked even by herself. (Karnad, CPII 248-249)

Contrasted to his detailed descriptions of his act of love making with Ranganayaki, the priest uses minimum words to describe his union with his wife. The words "furtive scuffle in bed" (Karnad, CPII 248) is derogatory and reveals his contempt. Again he only cares for the wants of his body. Desires of his wife remain unreciprocated. Perhaps he never thinks of her wants as a woman.

The priest is aware of the life he is supposed to lead as a priest. He knows that association with a courtesan is a "breach" (Karnad, CPII 245) of conduct. But that not lessen her attraction for her. Even before the priest notices the mole peeping through her dress and gets attracted to her he knows that she is a courtesan as courtesans live in the margins of society and are last to visit the temple. But he fails to come to terms with his desires. Perhaps he would have repressed his desires had she been somebody else's wife. His desires get fueled by that fact that she is a courtesan and hence available.

Each day during the week of Shivratri celebrations he notices a fresh aspect of her body and at night he puts "them together as in a jig-saw puzzle". (Karnad, CPII 246) Curves of her body invade his imagination as well.

At Ranganayaki's house, the priest prepares Ranganayaki for the decoration by undressing her just as the way he cleans and prepares the God for the ritual decoration. He uses same flowers to decorate the lord and the prostitute thereby living in sin. But, the two acts are not an exact replica of each other:

Each day I coaxed the flowers to say something special to god and then something entirely different to Ranga. (Karnad, CPII 251)

Ranganayaki is comfortable with her body. Her body belongs to herself and she has the rights to do anything she wishes with her body. She is able to execute that right. Religious rituals and religious faith are intricately connected in our minds. She is able to dissociate the two. She can think of herself as a pure canvas where rituals of the flower decoration can be explained.

The beautiful form of Ranganayaki and the natural smell of her body illuminate the desires of the priest. He pities the Linga for offering a less pleasant form:

I pitied it, felt exasperated at its unimaginative contours. Why did its shape have to be so bland and unindented that one had to balance garlands precariously on it and improvise superfluous knots to hide some ungainly strings? Why didn't the Lord offer a form which inflamed invention like Ranga did? (Karnad, CPII 250)

Thus, the beauty of a prostitute is raised on a higher pedestal than the Shiva Linga by a priest.

It is the priest who is unable to focus solely on Ranganayaki and the way the flowers enhance her beauty. By comparing the Lord and the courtesan he is mixing the religious and the profane. In contrast to him Ranganayaki can concentrate on themselves and can claim love to be her religion. "I worship you..." (Karnad, CPII 252)

The flower decoration becomes an act of foreplay. Ranganayaki's house is like a cavern where the animal instincts of the priest come alive. But he avoids consuming food in her house. It is here that caste barrier comes in—he is a Brahmin and she is a fallen woman. The hypocrisy of the priest startles us. Is there any other reason behind avoiding food at Ranganayaki's house? According to convention, a wife is supposed to feed her husband as earnestly as his mother would feed him. Hence, that role is reserved for his wife. A courtesan does not have social rights of a wife. Her worth is only in terms of her body. Hence, throughout the play Ranganayaki's representation is only limited to her body and the desires she arouses in the priest.

The priest is aware that his adulterous association with Ranganayaki is a breach of marital trust. He defends himself by claiming that the situation is beyond his control. His words reveal his chauvinism:

But I was distressed at the pain I was causing my wife. I loved her. I knew I had made her a target of vicious gossip. I sensed her anger, her humiliation and felt ashamed of myself. Conversation in the house was reduced to fragments and we stopped even looking at each other. But there was nothing I could do. (Karnad, CPII 251)

We wonder whether he would have been as silent and helpless if his wife had broken the vows taken during marriage and had been unfaithful to him!

The play rushes to its climax as flowers travel from Ranga's body back to the Linga and Ranga's hair lands on the plate carrying the prasada. Until then flowers had travelled only unidirectional: from the Linga to Ranga's body but now the two worlds—religious and profane merge thereby heightening the sin committed by the priest (GRP, 350). The chieftain leaves challenging the priest to prove that God has long hairs. The priest surrenders to the Lord and the Lord answers his prayers by sprouting hairs on the Linga. He becomes the state saint by God's design.

Close study of the monologue reveal subtle changes in the portrayal of the priest's wife as the play approaches its climax. She uses meaningful gestures to invite her husband into an act of love making within the temple. It reveals her mental emancipation from conventional ideology. She comes across as more courageous and liberated than the passive wife who had become a target of communal gossip. Is she using her body as a bait to prevent her husband from going to the other woman for sexual pleasure? But her desires fade as the priest picks up flowers thereby asserting his choice of Ranganayaki over her. To quote Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker, "sensuality is the province of the always ripe and ready courtesan, the world of dull duty and routine belongs to the shriveled wife". (CPII, xxxiii)

Her final transition from a docile wife to one who asserts authority over her husband takes place as the priest becomes the state saint. She rescues her husband from the villagers as they fall to his feet seeking blessings. At night she serves him food. Using to brief sentences she voices her innermost thoughts:

The only thing she said was: 'She is gone. She and her old woman left town the very next day.'

(Karnad, CPII 259)

She had not deserted her husband in the hour of crisis thereby adhering to the marital vows. The words also mark her victory over her rival and subtly remind the priest of his failure as a husband. Thus, the words at once register her protest and victory. Protest does not necessarily mean shattering the bond of marriage. To quote Shashi Deshpande, "The problem is that rebelling is generally understood to mean walking out on a marriage (the echoes of the door Nora banged behind her seem to haunt us!), the problem lies in thinking that walking out is a liberating process." (WFM, 159)

The relationship between the priest and his wife undergoes further changes as sainthood distances the couple from each other:

The courtesan was gone and had been replaced by Lord Shiva. (Karnad, CPII 259)

Unable to live in terms of God's design the priest is about to commit suicide. Thus, the monologue ends where it begun. The priest's representation of the two women-his wife and his mistress reveal his chauvinist position. Complex issues of gender, gender roles and sexuality are fore grounded through the play. It highlights intricate connections between power and gender and (re)examines the accepted ideas of what is regarded as religious and profane.

Drama is a mimetic art and real assessment of the monologue as Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker opines can only happen when in future the play is performed on stage(xxxvii). Representation of sexuality, nude female body is central to the play and perhaps someday Indian theatre shall overcome barriers of nudity to represent the play onstage as recently the challenging character of Dopdi (based on Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi") has been represented on Indian stage.

REFERENCES:

- Deshpande, Sashi. *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*. New Delhi: Penguin books, 2003. This book is mentioned in the paper as WFM.
- Dhawan, R.K.ed. *Recent Indian Drama in English*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2010. This book is mentioned in the paper as RID.
- Dharwadker, Aparna Bhargava. "Introduction". *Collected Plays, Vol 2*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Karnad, Girish. *Collected Plays, Vol 2*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005. This book is mentioned in the paper as CPIL.
- Mukherjee, Tutun,ed. *Girish Karnad's Plays: Performance and Critical Perspectives*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2008. This book is mentioned in the paper as GKP.
- Nimsarkar, P.D. *Women in Girish Karnad's Plays: A Critical Perspective*. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2009.

Publish Research Article International Level Multidisciplinary Research Journal For All Subjects

Dear Sir/Mam,

We invite unpublished research paper.Summary of Research Project,Theses,Books and Books Review of publication,you will be pleased to know that our journals are

Associated and Indexed,India

- * International Scientific Journal Consortium Scientific
- * OPEN J-GATE

Associated and Indexed,USA

- EBSCO
- Index Copernicus
- Publication Index
- Academic Journal Database
- Contemporary Research Index
- Academic Paper Databse
- Digital Journals Database
- Current Index to Scholarly Journals
- Elite Scientific Journal Archive
- Directory Of Academic Resources
- Scholar Journal Index
- Recent Science Index
- Scientific Resources Database

Golden Research Thoughts
258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005,Maharashtra
Contact-9595359435
E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com
Website : www.isrj.net