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## The Portrayal of Traditional Women Image in Girish Karnad's Tale Danda

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### Abstract:

*Women of all strata in Tale-Danda are made to suffer the trauma resulting from men's actions. Sapped and Sopped by the callous disregard of patriarchy their condition clearly indicates the difficulties their gender encountered in the historical past daring to transcend privately or individually the mundane, materialistic man-made constructs. ( Vanashree Tripathi:117-118:2004)*

*Girish Karnad is the most significant and foremost dramatists in the field of Indian English drama. In male-dominated Indian cultural traditions, women have hardly provided any scope to enjoy their social and political freedom for fulfilling their desires and dreams and developments of identity what they want. Karnad's Tale-Danda bluntly spots light on the double standard norms and measurements of patriarchal society and how systematically it makes women surpassed. It is concerned with the uglier aspect of Indian society through the portrayal of women characters- Queen Rambhavati, Sovidevi's wife, Basavanna's wife and Sharana Jagadeva.. It points out the issue of the cast system as bloodthirsty regime through the intercast marriage between a Brahmin girl and a cobbler boy which results in bloodshed and calamity for the Sharanas.*

**Key words:** *Indian Cultural tradition, Female consciousness, Patriarchal society, Gender discrimination, Suppression.*

Man for the field and woman for the hearth: Man for sword and for needle she : Man with the head and woman with the heart: Man and woman to obey: All else confusion.(Kincid:427-431: 2013)

Girish Karnad is the most prominent and the foremost playwright in the field of Indian stage. He has contributed a lot to the Indian theatre not only as an actor but also as a director who has directed films, documentaries and television serials in Kannada, Hindi and English. He has performed multidimensional roles as an actor in Hindi and Kannada art films, commercial movies and television serials. He has provided glory to India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture through his bold innovations, fruitful experiments and new direction which draw the history of Indian drama as important mark of achievement. He has evolved a symbolic form out of a tension between the archetypal and mythic experience and a living response to life and its values in his plays. The paper aims at presenting a critical analytical interpretation of Karnad's play –*Tale-Dande* which in turn reflect the Indian social milieu and the role of the individual woman character or the groups of characters play for individual or social development. The portrayal of the patriarchal society in the play is very much common in particularly in Indian culture.

*I wrote Tale-Dande in 1989 when the Mandir and Mandal movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and religious fanatics that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered.(Karnad:3:1993)*

Karnad's *Tale-Dande* exposes the ugly deformity of the Hindu society by depicting the twelve century communal struggle in the city of Kalyan in North Kanara under the rule of King Bijjala, a Shurra, a barbar by caste but the deformity of the Hindu society has not changed much for ages. And the position of women from upper class to the lower class from ancient to modern era remains marginalized. In our social structure, gender discrimination between and woman is major issue. It is bitter reality of Indian traditional culture which is anyway created burdened over woman under the influenced of male-dominated approach. Women should surpass their desires under the social orthodox boundaries. Women have hardly provided any scope to enjoy their social

and political freedom for fulfilling their desires and dreams and developments of identity what they want. Karnad's *Tale-Danda* bluntly spots light on the double standard norms and measurements of patriarchal society and how systematically it makes women surpassed. It is concerned with the uglier aspect of Indian society through the portrayal of the position of women characters- Queen Rambhavati, Sovidevi's wife, Basavanna's wife- Gangambika, Madhuvarasa's wife- Lilitamba and Sharana Jagadeva.

In Society, the man has voice, presence and power, whereas the woman is silent, absent and powerless. Women remain committed passive, servile and silent, bearing and rearing children, and gratifying the sexual needs of their husbands. In *Tale- Dande*, Karnad represents the stereotypical position of the higher caste women who are docile, shouted at, told to mind their own business, or rose still, rejected and packed off to their parents through the character of Queen Rambhavati, King Bijjala's wife. There is no equal position in the relationship between husband and wife when she discuss with his son – Sovideva about the certain social and political issues of kingdom. When Sovideva felt the emotion of fooling of him by the Sharanas in the treasury episode, that time, her mother answers him: *Do you as you wish. Just don't upset your father, that's all. He turns his bad temper on me and I can't take it any longer.* (Karnad:8:1993) Even though Rambhavati is the queen of the kingdom but her real position is just equal to the servant of the palace. It is not that King Bijjala does not love her. He is fond of her and cares of her but the deep-rooted patriarchal attitude made him feels superior and behaves most of time in a rude manner. So when Sovideva accuses her of being favour of the Sharanas's mystic-saint leader Basavanna, she replies: *What am I to do? Do you think your father ever listen to me?* (Karnad:8:1993) .

Rambhavati represents the image of tradition woman which is devoted to her husband in any condition in life. Though she scolded and berated for her interference in the matter of the father-son antagonism. She willingly provides emotional succor to a suffering and tormented Bijjala who remains brusque with her even in such critical condition of his life. Her not minding the inferior position is the outcome of the deep-rooted patriarchal approach surpassed women in society. The position of Rambhavati is perfectly presented in the words of a famous freminist, Elaine Showlter:

*We have seen our foremothers as mindless, downtrodden souls, accepting century after century the fetters of their lot with passivity, unheeding or incapable of perceiving their exclusion from society.* (Bennet:229:1990)

Sovideva's wife is other more pathetic woman character in the Royal household in comparison to her mother-in-law. Sovideva's attitude is always insulted for her wife. He has discarded her and sent her in her parents, not bothering to bring her back. He reveals the important scheme of things with a prostitute, Indrani instead of his wife. The wife or women have to listen to male, even the male is considered as a characterless, or without great achievements. Sovideva is advised to visit his father-in-law for support and bring back her queen back when he is confused and afraid in the aftermath of the beheading of Madhuvarasa and Haralayya.

*Manchanna: And then pay a brief visit to your father- in-law, Sir?*

*His support may come in handy.*

*Sovideva : Yes, And see our queen again! She is our Queen after all, frigid bitch though she is. (Karnad: 48:1993)*

The reply of Sovideva is revealing the irony and male egocentricities in society. It is noted here that woman is valued for her functional utility only, not for her intrinsic worth as a human being. Here there is lot of similarity in the male domination in the minds of Kakasaheb in Vijay Tendulkar's play- *Kamala* and Sovideva because both provide a testimony to the fact that the urge to subdue woman is integrated in male psyche. Both glorifies their own role as husbands and take pride in their irrational authority. Kakasaheb defends the male domination in the relationship between husband and wife when he comments:

That's why he's a man. And that's why there's manhood in the world. I too was just like this. Don't go by what I seem to be today. I gave your aunt a lot of trouble. As it was my right. I didn't care what she felt at all. I just marched straight ahead looking in front of me. I was confident she would follow, even if she was limping, and she did follow. (Tendulkar: :47)

The other representative character of traditional woman is Lalitamba who is shown in the most important event of the wedding between a high-caste Brahmin's daughter and a Cobber's son in the play. The marriage has become possible because both families have embraced Sharana religion but Basavanna's fears on account of this commingling of the high and the low cast through marriage turn out to be real. Basavanna says: *Untill now it was only a matter of theoretical speculation. But this-this is real. The orthodox will see this mingling of castes as a blow at the roots of varnashrama dharma. Bigotry has not faced such a challenge in two thousand years. I need hardly describe what venom will gush out, what hatred will erupt once the news spreads. (Karnad:38:1993)* The girl's mother Laliamba's reluctance has no weight or meaning,

because it is her husband Madhuvarasa's decision which matters. She points to the practical problems, besetting the alliance of Brahmin girl with a cobbler boy but her objections and fears are not satisfactorily resolved by her husband and they are overridden, the marriage takes place. As a result, Madhuvarasa and Haralayya are brutally murdered in the aftermath of the violence that engulfs the city after the weddings. A typical characteristic of patriarchy is that men are in control and it is they who wield power. Women remain voiceless.

There is no equality principal observed in the life of Basavanna's wife – Gangambika as described in the religion *Sharana* – A new religion, risen in revolt against the narrow-minded, ritual-ridden Brahminism preaches equality of human being. Caste does not add value or attach stigma to people. In the eyes of Lord Shiva, whom Sharanas worship, all are equal but there no rule of equality between the sexes, particularly women. Gangambika does seem to enjoy a better position than many other women in as much as, she takes part in the conversations that occur at Basavanna's house. Her husband is respectful towards her and she has voice but what is the fate of her. Her husband leaves home for search of God and ignores Gangambika's thoughts and feelings which are not shown in the play. Like other women, Gangambika suffers. The condition of Gangambika is rightly presented in the words of Jane Tompkins:

*I saw that I had been socialized from the birth to feel and act in ways that automatically excluded me from participating in the culture's most valued activities. (Tompkins: 124:1989)*

Sharana Jagadeva provides the most relevant example of the shabby treatment meted out to women. It is for men to become achievers, gather laurels and reveal in glory by attaining their coveted goals. Martial responsibility does not matter. Woman is treated as a worm that can be easily trampled upon. Jagadeva's wife frequently visits to the place of Jagadeva 's practicing marshall rituals in order to inform him about his mother's illness but Jagadeva's dogged refusal to meet her is an example of the voicelessness of women among the *Sharanas*. When Gundanna told that she has come four times to meet him the previous day. The shocking answer of Jagadeva :*I can't see her. Tell her to go away. She knows I have sworn nt to look upon a woman's face till we have achieved our goal....she has to attend to her mother-in-law. (Karnad:71-72:1993)* It is the irony of Patriarchal society that she will attend to her mother-in-law but what Jagadeva's responsibility towards his own mother. He is not bothered about he serious illness. It is the duty of his wife to do the job. He imposes his authority on his wife, as if she is muted dead property, a

stone image without any choice. Men command and women to obey it silently without any kind of protesting sound against the injustice to her. Hogue Wyckoff, a transactional analyst admits:

*As women and men are socialized to develop certain parts of personalities while suppressing development of other parts. This programming promotes a predetermined, stilted and repetitive of acting life. (Wyckoff:1980:196)*

Every woman is an individual with distinctive identity of her own and her identity cannot be shadowed in the male identity.

At last, it can be said that the condition of women the traditional Indian society reflects women's slavery and exploitation in patriarchal society. The exploitation of women can be described to the ancient period of time in the play – *Tale Dande* through the characters- Queen Rambhavati, Sovidevi's wife, Basavanna's wife- Gangambika, Madhuvarasa's wife- Lilitamba and Sharana Jagadeva but it is applicable even to the 21<sup>st</sup> century women too. Girish Karnad shows harsh reality of exploitation and slavery of women in traditional Indian patriarchal society which can relate to the modern Indian society as well. Women remained a marginalized and suppressed group, without voice, without power, and may be even without consciousness of their peripheral position in society. Thus, Michel Foucault views that *women in our society fall into an extremely complex system of relations and his system is based on 'highly intricate mosaic' (power/knowledge) of man-woman relationship.*(Foucault, Micheal:1977:05)

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