

Vishakha as a Symbol of Objectification: A study of Girish Karnad's 'The Fire and The Rain'

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Abstract: Girish Karnad is the front rank dramatist in Indian English Literature. K.Chandrashekhara says, "His Journey from 'Yayati' to 'The Fire and The Rain' holds a mirror to the very evolution of Indian English drama during nearly four decades". Karnad's drama "The Fire and The Rain" is about the existential problems of brahminism, seduction, deception, treachery, ego, revenge and sexuality. The main victim is the female character Vishakha. This paper is an attempt to show how Vishakha has been used as a symbol of objectification by most of the male characters of the drama. In this drama Karnad reinterprets the mythical theme from Mahabharat in the modern context.

Keywords: Objectification, Seduction, Sexuality, Mythical, Lustful fornicate.

Introduction - Objectification means the action of degrading someone to the status of a mere object. In the play 'The Fire and The Rain' Vishakha is only a sexual object in the hands of Parvasu, Yavakri and Raibhya. No male character understands her feelings. They all used her as though she is only an object.

In 'the Fire and The Rain' there are only two female characters namely Vishakha and Nittilai. Vishakha is a Brahmin girl aged twenty six. She is married to Parvasu, who is the elder son of sage Raibhya. Vishakha's married life is not happy. His husband Parvasu has no love for her. In the beginning of their married life Parvasu gives all that married woman imagines but after one year he used her only for her sensual appetite. He used Vishakha body and his own like an experimenter. Parvasu was searching something in sex. Vishakha made no objection being used only as a tool in his experiment she was only a thing for him that can satisfy his lust. Their relationship is devoid of any love. After one year when he got invitation from the king to act as a chief priest in the fire sacrifice he immediately leave her without taking her consent. Parvasu performed the job of a chief priest for seven years he has not come back in all these years even for an hour. Although the site of the fire sacrifice is only a couple of hours away from his house.

Vishakha was left by Parvasu in the care of his old and lustful father, Raibhya, whenever Raibhya wants to fulfill his lust he made sexual relation with her. She couldn't oppose her moves. When Parvasu returns he tells him, how his father Raibhya tortures and molested her in his absence.

So first Vishakha suffers at the hand of his husband

Parvasu and secondly his father – in – law made her life miserable. There were none to hear her sufferings. She became the victim of objectification in the male dominated society.

When Raibhya comes to know about Vishakha's fornication by Yavakri, he uses abusive language for her. He says "why are you so filthy ? You look like a buffalo that's been rolling in the mud. "

Yavakri, the son of sage Bharadwaj also loves Vishakha passionately before she was married to Parvasu but Yavakri went to forest for observing penance living Vishakha all alone. When Yavakri returns after ten years penance, he still wants to have her though he knew that Vishakha is Parvasu's wife. He wanted to take revenge from Raibhya and Parvasu he coaxes Vishakha and fornicates her. Yavakri tactfully seduces Vishakha. He says her that he wanted to relive the moments which he spent in her company. He says to Vishakha :

"The sweet, sick smell of Jack fruit, the maddening hum of a fly. The smell of your body . Ten years later I opened my eyes and i knew i was hungry for the moment."

"He cunningly and deceitfully exploits Vishakha's helplessness and have sex with her."

All these incidents show that no male character feels emotionally about Vishakha. She was feelings very lonely when Yavakri meets her. She says :

"Alone I have become dry like a tinder. Ready to burst into flames at a breath."

Her love for Yavakri once again resurfaces. She speaks"

"You are hungry for words, And so I am. So let's talk."

Although she was married but she couldn't get solace in her married life. She was only used as a lust

symbol by her husband. So she willingly offers herself before Yavakri for consensual copulation. When Parvasu returned she is not shy or ashamed of her act. She frankly and straight forwardly tells Parvasu how she enjoyed Yavakri's company. But Yavakri has fornicates her only to take revenge on her father – in – law and her husband. On knowing this fact she was very upset she again feels that nobody loves her. All three male characters used her only as sexual object. She decides to teach a lesson to Yavakri. She knows that Yavakri has sanctified water in his Kamandalu. She tactfully diverts Yavakri's attention and pours the sanctified water on him. Thus she takes her revenge.

In the conclusion we can say that Vishakha has been indeed a victim of objectification Vishakha's choices and desires are disregarded. The play ' The Fire and The Rain

also critique how women are objectified and exploited within patriarchal societies Thus Vishakha's character is a powerful commentary on the objectification of a woman.

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