

# EXISTENTIAL CRISIS OF WOMEN IN THE SELECTED PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR, MAHESH DATTANI AND GIRISH KARNAD

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## Abstract

Notably, the existential crisis of women is not a primary or common issue in the works of notable Indian playwrights Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, and Girish Karnad, each of whom has his or her own distinct style and thematic concerns. We may, however, examine the representation of gender and women's experiences in a few of their well-known plays. Tendulkar's plays are renowned for tackling social themes. He explores the nuanced interactions between men and women in "Sakharam Binder," "Kamala," and "The Silence! The Court is in Session," highlighting the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal culture. In Tendulkar's plays, female characters frequently struggle with societal expectations and the restrictive systems that restrict their autonomy. Dattani is renowned for his investigation of identity, interpersonal interactions, and societal challenges. In pieces like "Final Solutions," "The Bravely Fought the Queen," and "Tara," he explores women's lives in relation to communalism and family life. In Dattani's plays, women may be experiencing an existential crisis that centres on issues of identity, autonomy, and social expectations. Though they might not directly address women's existential crises, Karnad's plays frequently reference mythology and history and offer insights into gender roles and power relations. Karnad tackles questions of identity and love in "Hayavadana" and "Nagamandala," where the female characters could have existential difficulties with social expectations. The larger background of Indian society must be taken into account while evaluating the plays of these authors, as gender roles and expectations have changed significantly over time. Every dramatist approaches these topics in a different manner, and the way that women are portrayed in their works may serve as a prism through which to look at cultural expectations and the difficulties that women experience.

## Paper Identification



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### Introduction:

Women's existential crises in society are a complicated, multidimensional problem that has changed throughout time. Even while many countries have made strides towards gender equality, obstacles still exist, and women still struggle with a range of existential issues. It is crucial to remember that experiences might differ greatly depending on a range of factors, including culture, location, financial level, and personal situations. A patriarchal society is one in which males predominate in positions of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and property ownership in addition to holding main power. The belief in male supremacy and the idea that males have an innate right to rule and make choices, along with the practice of frequently relegating women to subservient roles, define this system. Throughout history, patriarchy has been observed in various cultures, albeit to varying degrees of strength. While these traits broadly characterize patriarchal civilizations, it's crucial to remember that different cultures and historical times may have varied degrees of patriarchy. The promotion of gender equality, the questioning of conventional gender roles and the support of women's rights and empowerment are frequently included in efforts to confront and combat patriarchy.

Vijay Tendulkar is regarded as one of the most brilliant Indian playwrights of the post-independence era. He was one of the first male dramatists to borrow topics from the emerging feminist movement of the mid-twentieth century. His plays, in which characters often function as representations of a certain socioeconomic class or culture, spoke to a new kind of audience: the educated woman who was torn between her professional obligations and her duties as a wife and mother. Tendulkar's concern for social problems plaguing Indian culture, particularly women, has inspired his work. He is a recognised contemporary of feminist dramatists such as Mahesh Dattani and Girish Karnad. Tendulkar examines and isolates one distinct female character in his plays, whether it is that of a wife, mother, daughter, sister, mistress, or professional woman, all within the framework of contemporary society. Tendulkar's latest drama is heavily seasoned with social consciousness, as he continues to broaden his focus from the concerns of middle-class, educated women to a variety of political and moral quandaries. Tendulkar is also known for his literary expertise, having translated into Marathi nine books, two biographies, and five plays by other authors.

One of the few Indian writers working in English is Mahesh Dattani, who recognises the pervasive brutality in postcolonial discourses and, by giving voice to the oppressed, advocates for an inclusive democracy in the future. Insofar as they experience social exclusion and suppression, the oppressed and subalterns might be equated. Dattani uses the tension between contemporary western discourses and traditional cultural beliefs to illustrate his picture of subjection. According to Dattani, societal assumptions and actual life circumstances are seldom the same. For instance, it is unrealistic to expect a son to be submissive to his parents or to follow them blindly at all times. A

superb portrayal of this dilemma may be found in the 1988 drama, *Where There's a Will*. Dattani addresses the problems with the patriarchal code in the play. Indian culture has long been deeply rooted in tradition and patriarchy. Because sons are expected to carry on the family name and because they hope to fulfill their own ambitions in them, fathers have always desired sons. This has resulted in the fathers expecting their sons to obey without question, which in turn denies the son the chance to grow up on his own.

Girish Karnad attended Magdalen College in Oxford, where he studied philosophy, politics, and economics. Girish Karnad was elected president of the Oxford Union in 1962–63. Girish Karnad had residencies at a number of institutions throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including the University of Chicago, Fulbright University, Oxford University Press, and the Film and Television Institute of India. *Nagamandala* premiered at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis during his time in Chicago. In 1972, the Indian government bestowed the Padma Shri on Karnad. The writers of the period wanted to choose a topic that seemed completely foreign to their original country. *Yayati*, his play, was published in 1961, when he was 23 years old. Karnad's *Yayati* story is based on the Mahabharata's "Adiparva." The performance retells the age-old narrative of King Yayati, who, in his quest for endless life, has ruthlessly snatched the youth and energy of his son. Karnad gives the story complete freedom and weaves numerous elements into the narrative, which is based on the classic Indian epic Mahabharata. Karnad adds new characters to Yayati's fabled narrative, and he changes the plot to give the drama a more modern feel. In the narrative, Karnad has added two new characters. They are Chitrlekha, Pooru's aristocratic wife, and Swarnalata, his maid confidant. The dramatist gives present life and reality new meaning and importance by delving into the king's intentions. Karnad's first film, *Samskara*, was released in 1970. Karnad's second well-known drama, 'Hayavadana,' was written two years later. In this play, Karnad explores the themes of incompleteness and the quest for identity in the midst of complicated connections, resulting in identity confusion and revealing the uncertain nature of human individuality.

### **Gender-based Violence:**

Women are vulnerable to a range of violent acts, such as sexual assault, harassment, and domestic abuse. According to de Beauvoir's book, women have been forced to live in subordination to men under patriarchy, a situation that is similar to that of racial minorities even though they make up at least half of humanity. She contends that rather than being the result of inherently "feminine" traits, this secondary position is maintained by strong external factors such as societal norms and education that have historically been dominated by men. Because of men's dominance over women's lives, women have been unable to fulfil their true potential as independent, autonomous human beings. **This has made it more difficult for them to progress in a variety of professions and given birth to a number of societal ills, especially when it comes to men and women having sex. Women see themselves as the "Other," but men see themselves as the Subject and the Absolute as in Beauvoir's** *The Second Sex*: "She is referred to as "the sex," implying that she appears to the man as a sexual person. She is sex to him—absolute sex, no less,... She is the ancillary, the non-essential in contrast to the essential. She is the 'Other,' he is the Subject, he is the Absolute."<sup>1</sup> (P.44)

It is important to note that Karnad disagrees with any kind of exaltation of a mother figure as a comforter and ultimate giver and feels that this notion of the mother is just another construct that keeps people in slavery before talking about the influence that mothers and other mother figures have on their daughters. Karnad believes that the legendary mother figure is typically an exaggerated manipulator. As was already mentioned, the mothers in the texts

under investigation differ in terms of their traits as well as how they behave and relate to their daughters and sons. The mother of Rani in Nagamandala is one example of the variety of options in Karnad; she hasn't even told her daughter anything about married life or how to communicate with her husband or family after marriage. The same is done by Kurudavva, her mother-in-law who has taken on the role of her surrogate mother. The second mother figure is the Queen Mother, whose son wed Queen Amritavati in defiance of his mother's wishes. The Queen Mother considers her daughter-in-law to be a rebel as she disobeys the royal family and its traditions. She is hated by Queen Mother, who finally revealed her infidelity to her husband. Queen Mother turns as Queen Amritavali's enemy rather than her mother. The Queen Mother was a traditional and pious woman who supported the custom of animal sacrifice and superstitions. It might be argued that the mother myth, which perpetuates the idea that being a mother requires being a selfless, loving mother who is there for her children and their father no matter what, contributes to the status of women. The mother myth suggests female authority, yet it appears that this power is only appropriate inside a patriarchal structure. According to Kiranth, there is a theory that motherhood, like in Nagamandala, is the primary basis of patriarchy. ".....an Indian woman realizes that childbirth bestow upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her society can,"<sup>2</sup> (P-57).

With age, the relationships that girls have with other women shift. Girls grow up to be classmates, equals, and, in a sense, the adult women's heirs. They start to observe and take part in interactions with women. This article explores the nature of some of the relationships that daughters have with their moms as well as the influence that mothers have on the young heroines. One of the many facets of the mother-daughter bond is sisterhood and compassion born out of their shared grief and fate. For instance, this is the situation with Rani of Nagamandala and her husband's aunt Kurudavva.

The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis hosted the world premiere of Girish Karnad's Nāga-mandala, a play based on his own original Kannada drama translated into English. Two oral Karnataka folktales serve as the foundation for the performance. These folktales were passed down orally from generation to generation, told by the elder women in the household to their offspring and other women. These stories function as an additional means of communication between the women in the community. In Karnad's play, a snake that takes on the form of the woman's husband satisfies the woman's need for love instead of her spouse.

A brief prologue to the play starts with the inner sanctuary of a destroyed temple, where the idol of the ruling deity has been smashed, making the deity unidentifiable. There was a man sitting there, who was presumably a dramatist trying not to nod off. A mendicant cursed him, saying that he would die if he didn't wake up at least one night this month. As in *The Critical Idiom Modern Verse Drama*, he informs the audience: "I may be dead within the next few hours. I asked the mendicant what I had done to deserve this fate. Moreover, he said, "You have written plays. You have staged them. You have caused so many good people, who came trusting you, to fall asleep twisted in miserable chairs that all that abused mass of sleep has turned against you and become the Curse of Death."<sup>3</sup> (P- 22-23)

Since the beginning of the women's movement, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of writing that is overtly feminist in tone and supports the ideas of female equality. In an effort to ascertain the degree to which women's writings are comparable to and separate from male literature, feminists have developed a renewed interest in studying early works by female authors and interpreting them in novel ways. Feminist writing focuses mostly on the viewpoints and sentiments of women regarding their own life.

### **Gender Discrimination:**

Women may face barriers to employment, healthcare, and educational prospects as a result of gender-based discrimination. The systematic and institutionalised disparity between men and women, wherein women often have fewer opportunities, rights, and freedoms than men, is known as gender inequality. According to Gornick and Moran's epigraph in *Strong Feminism*: "The blame rests not in our stars, hormones, menstrual cycles, or vacant interior spaces, but in our institutions; woman is formed, not born"<sup>4</sup> (P- 83),

These feminists oppose sexism in all its forms. Women's captivity may be caused by patriarchal culture and familial systems rather than by personal male malice. The assumption that a woman's identity should grow out of and become one with her duties as a wife and mother is the root of the issue. Raised with indoctrination that elevated this ideal as the only benchmark to which a "good" woman should strive, female children believed that biological disparities were not the reason, but rather cultural conditioning. Therefore, women were exhorted to overcome gender inequalities and rise to positions of prestige and responsibility in order to resist this conditioning. Dattani belongs to the category of authors who place women at the core of their fictive world. Emphasis on the Patriarchal Discriminatory Social Order Feminist authors have effectively brought our attention to the numerous problems associated with the terrible situation of women as well as the flaws in the patriarchal social structure. Among the writers who have alerted us to the unfairness and prejudice against women in our society is Dattani. He portrays the feminine side that is constantly at odds with a world that is ruled by men. Even though women's emancipation and enfranchisement are often discussed, all women are inherently aware that they must overcome significant obstacles created by males in order to overcome the hardships they face in all spheres of life.

Three couples that are each in a hierarchical relationship with others are the subject of the play. The Trivedi family, consisting of two brothers, Jiten and Nitin, together with their spouses, Dolly and Alka, is the focus of the drama. Sisters Dolly and Alka. All relationships are upheld rigorously by a set of guidelines. For the two sisters, Praful is the sole brother. The pair Lalitha and Sridhar, whose identities are still developing, make up the third family associated with the Trivedi house characters. Lalitha is socially submissive to the two sisters in this hierarchical relationship as Sridhar works for the Trivedi brothers. Dolly and Jiten Dolly, the wife of Jiten the eldest son, is treated like a slave by him at all times and is seen as only a tool. For fifteen years, Dolly has been wed to Jiten, who has consistently mistreated and physically assaulted her. She tells him that when she was pregnant, he had kicked and abused her at the behest of her mother Baa. She thus gave birth to an early and spastic daughter named Daksha, who is currently enrolled in a spastic school and aspires to be a dancer. Her sole desire is to forget her sufferings and the emptiness of her existence by listening to Naina Devi's evocative thumris. Until the play's conclusion, neither the husband nor the wife feels comfortable discussing Daksha. *Bravely Fought the Queen*: "ALKA: She must like you very much. She hardly ever mentions her daughter to anyone. DOLLY: Stop it! ALKA: She doesn't tell anyone.... DOLLY: Stop it, I said!"<sup>5</sup> (ACT- I, P-34)

By hearing her daughter's name, Dolly is always reminded of the anguish she endured while pregnant. Dolly, Alka, and Praful's father was allegedly not lawfully wed to their mother and that he and his four children resided somewhere else.

This demonstrates his disdain for her as he views her as merely a puppet to be obeyed, not someone to demand and command. Baa, Dolly's brother has been lying about their parents, and the mother-in-law keeps filling in the details

from higher up. Dolly admits to her husband that she assumed her spouse knew everything before they were married and that she was unaware of what Praful had told him about their father. However, the harm had already been done. It was implied that Praful and the two sisters were born outside of marriage and that their mother was the man's lover during the time Dolly and Alka's father lived with his wife and four children. When Baa learns the truth, she is very upset and declares in *Bravely Fought the Queen*: “BAA: Your mother is a keep...a mistress! My sons have married the daughters of a whore! DOLLY: Your mother never understood that. She blamed it on us! BAA: Throw them out of the house.(BFQ ACTIII 96). Dolly takes up for her mother: “My mother didn’t know about his wife till later. She was deceived too!”<sup>6</sup>. (ACT-III, P- 96)

Jiten is a womaniser who plays with all of the females that are models for him. Dolly says nothing and never presses him about it. Jiten is reminded by Dolly that she has only ever prevailed in one disagreement with him—that being when she became pregnant—and that he usually gets his own way. Before they dispute any further, Jiten asks Lalitha to leave the house. Dolly is adamant, though. However, it seems that Nitin begs her to remain at home, and he leaves alone. In *Bravely Fought the Queen*, he tells Sridhar: “It is the biggest advantage of having an office on Grant Road. It was pointed out to me by the bugger who sold this place to me. No checking into seedy hotels in City Market. Just drive down Lavelle Road and pick one up. Bring her here and pack her off in half an hour. You save a lot of time..... it is a regular thing for Nitin and me. Driving out and picking a couple up.”<sup>7</sup>(P-67)

It is clear that neither of the brothers values women; they have been abusing their wives, beating them, and evicting them from the house.

### **Multiple identities:**

The experiences of women are influenced by a range of overlapping characteristics, including sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and disability. This results in distinct issues for diverse groups of women as in **Beauvoir’s** *The Second Sex*: “..... equality and liberation would be achieved only by destroying the male’s superiority and refusing to succumb to a traditional role...women were “imprisoned” by the roles of mother, wife, and sweetheart.” (P. 797)

During puberty and adolescence, girls develop into and get ready for new roles, such those of adult women, mothers, and mothers' friends. They look to their mothers and other mother figures for direction, model conduct, and inspiration. The way that young women relate to their mothers, aunts, and other women changes as they become rivals and equals. This article examines the role of mothers, the kind of role models that the mother figures in the texts are for their wards, the characteristics of patriarchal women's relationships, and whether there is any possible alternative.

There is nothing deterministic and certain in the realm of absurdity, thus anything can happen and yet fall upon us. We discover this in Tendulkar's *Silence!* The Court has convened. A fake trial of the US president for his role in the spread of nuclear weapons is set up by a group of amateur players. However, they set up a fictitious trial for an unmarried lady, isolating her from them by falsely accusing her of infanticide. Unprepared, Benare finds itself in a ridiculous predicament. She starts to feel isolated from other people after being charged with infanticide. Three different types of creatures are mentioned by Sartre in *The Critical Idiom: A Modern Verse Drama*: “objects have being 'in-itself; people have being 'for-itself' because they have consciousness whereas objects have not; and, finally, we all have being 'for-others- which is to say that we all exists in the eyes of other people and think of ourselves on the evidence of what other people think of us”<sup>9</sup> (P-32-33)

From the perspective of Sartre's three entities, we may argue that Benare is created in the minds of those who accuse her. They approach the witness one by one to present derogatory testimony against her. They disparage their current and former lives. She must behave and act in a way that complies with the requests. However, all of their wishes are in vain. She doesn't back down from their demands like a coward. Similar to Orestes in Sartre's *The Flies*, Benare appears to understand that following the accusers' lead entails a certain amount of surrender to them. However, like Orestes, she also recognizes that she has the freedom to act independently and make her own decisions. However, because she defies some enforceable social norms and standards that are ingrained as social values in nationalist ideology, she discovers that her needs are not met and that the anarchy she lives in is unsatisfactory. She is criticized as an outsider for breaking the rules. De views this kind of criticism as a betrayal of her dreams of love and motherhood as well as an affront to her right to personal freedom.

Nevertheless, she attempts suicide twice as a result of the lack of a corresponding need and its fulfillment. These suicide attempts, despite the fact that her body was spared, may be seen as an attempt by her to break free from poor faith. Her birth was a decision she made for herself. She suffers because of this, but she does not run from suffering in a dishonest way, which Sartre describes as running away from suffering, freedom, and responsibility. Without sugarcoating the truth, she informs Samant about her outlook on life in *Silence! the Court is in Session*: "Forget about the sage Tukaram. I say it- I ,Leela Benare, a living woman, I say it from my own experience.lifeis not meant for anyone else. It's your own life. It must be. It's a very important thing. Every moment, every bit of it is precious"<sup>10</sup>(P-8)

She feels agonised by this kind of decision because she is aware that it deviates from institutions and societal standards, which are regarded by tradition and religion as sacred and pure. As accusations against Benare's character pile up one after another, her distress in court starts to grow. The accused and the judge unite upon the presentation of evidence, and she receives a harsh verdict in *Silence! The Court is in Session*: "no memento of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore the court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed" (P.76)

This verdict projects many options before her. She is free to choose any one of them in order to flee anguish. She may comply with the verdict by destroying the baby or she may commit suicide or she may try to live for giving birth to the baby by any mean. Her existential problem in *Silence! The Court is in Session*: "to be or not to be- she solves by refusing to comply with the verdict: "No! No! No! I won't let you do it-I won't let it happen- I won't let it happen!"<sup>12</sup> (P-76)

Karnad addressed the issue of anomalies in modern life in *The Fire and the Rain* by drawing on the Yavakari story. It is an indictment against Brahmin culture. However, his method is existential and grounded in reality. He has managed the force of myth in a lovely and artistic way. The drama tells the intricate story of Arvasu's brother Paravasu's treachery. Paravasu is the top priest who sacrifices fire in order to bring rain to the region that is suffering from a drought. The playwright has attempted to demonstrate how the struggle between good and evil has persisted throughout history and into the present day.

### **Stigma and Shame:**

Societal stigma surrounding mental health issues can prevent women from seeking help for challenges such as anxiety, depression, and trauma. Many of the excruciating difficulties that women encounter in modern society are

covered in Karnad's plays. In his debut feature-length drama, *Yayati* (1961), he portrays a number of ladies who suffer from consistently unfaithful and insensitive husbands, including King Yayati, Puru, and Swarnalata's husband. In *Nagamandala: Play with Cobra* (1988), the unpinned Rani functions like a puppet in a locked house owned by her husband, the personification of patriarchy. This drama explores the function of beating as a method of subduing women as well as the role of ideology and force in maintaining a male-supremacist regime. The fact that patriarchal men are the sole thing bringing them disappointment makes all the women in this drama extremely unhappy. A play that hovers between magical realism and fantasy is *Hayavadana* (1971). It's the story of two close friends competing for the love of a woman who adores them both. Girish Karnad made his name as a feminist with his play *The Fire and the Rain* (1998). In order to carry out the fire sacrifice, he portrays a haughty Brahmin who has been left behind in the wilderness, leaving behind his brother Arvasu, father Raibhya, wife Vishakha, and all other material possessions. Another character is Nitilai, who initiates the frame and splendour and turns into the archetype of a liberated woman. She represents feminine intelligence, resourcefulness, and charm. His play *Wedding Album* (2009) tells the story of Pratibha and Vidula.

Miss Leela Benare is a well-educated, self-sufficient woman. She has an unwavering energy and a strong "lust for life." She falls prey to the vicious game played by the members of this corrupt society. No woman in this culture is permitted to be the head of her own life. Benare makes the following claim: "Who are those people to say what I can or cannot do? My life is my own - I haven't sold it to anyone for a job! My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill those - no one! I'll do what I like with myself and my life!"<sup>13</sup> (P-5)

However, suppression also goes by the label of patriarchy. When the chance arises, they attack their tooth-and-claw-wielding prey. So the "hunting" begins, in the interest of a fictitious trial. The accusation brought against her at the beginning of the trial was infanticide. The group laughs heartily at the revelation of Benare's personal life and takes pleasure in their illicit connection, which resulted in pregnancy, between Benare and the married, family-man Prof. Damle, an intellectual. In the play, Damle makes no appearances at all. Benare, the single mother is prepared to encounter many forms of animosity towards her child. In an attempt to provide her child with a loving environment and a legitimate father, she forfeits her dignity and looks desperately for a spouse. Remarkably, the final decision is the same as the first accusation. Finally, the fictitious court rulings: "Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed."<sup>14</sup> (P-76)

Beneath its complacent facade of morality and honesty, the society's false standards and dishonesty are revealed. Silence's narrative has come under fire for purportedly taking inspiration from Friedrich Durrenmatt's seminal German work *The Dangerous Game*. The objectives of the two authors differ, nevertheless. Durrenmatt's work is based on the absurdity of human existence, whereas Tendulkar's drama examines a female protagonist's helplessness in this ostensibly lovely environment. Tendulkar's primary focus is the state of humanity as In Conversation with Vijay Tendulkar "... the basic urge has always been to let out my concerns vis-à-vis my reality, the human condition as I perceive it."<sup>15</sup> (P-19)

Violence exists in both society and the individual psyche. Through his plays, that brutality is expressed in various ways.

### **Inconsistent Enforcement:**



The efficacy of laws can be compromised even in the presence of uneven enforcement. The mid-1970s to mid-1980s saw Girish Karnad's most ambitious and fruitful creative period, partly due to his ability to modify two distinct literary traditions to suit his own purposes. His epic theatrical and existentialist experiments culminate in *Hayavadana* and *Wedding Album*, while *Yayati* and *Nagamandala* skilfully blend myth and folklore themes. Even though *Hayavadana* and *Wedding Album* contain aspects of the Magic Realism and Fantasy traditions, the plays' profoundly existential concerns eclipse these characteristics. Mythology is only a means of description when discussing these works, and "Magic Realism," while "reader-friendly" compared to surrealism, ignores the writing's context and scholarly integrity. Magic Realism is primarily an expression of emotion and the mystical, often exhibited via strange happenings occurring in a realistic context. Despite the passion with which he tells his stories, Karnad has a tough intellectualism and a proclivity for interpreting theatre as sociology and satire, which scarcely fits within the limitations of Magic Realism.

In *The Fire and The Rain*, Karnad addresses women's subalternity, which the writer emphasises by presenting patriarchal structures that limit their ability to be creative and their position in society. A stunning tale of love, grief, and sacrifice set against the backdrop of spiritual discipline, Vedic traditions, and ethical and societal divides among human beings has been masterfully crafted by Girish Karnad. The way in which the feminine world is portrayed, as well as how women are viewed, subjugated, and their status is changing, are equally noteworthy. In *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India*, Trivedi noted:

“In *The Fire and the Rain*, Girish Karnad deals with the universal theme of ‘love’, ‘jealousy’ and ‘isolation’. He tries to interpret the past in terms of the present and vice versa, by exploring the universality of some basic human emotions and sentiments. Like his other plays, *The Fire and the Rain*, has the influence of folk tales and different traditions. Karnad employs mythical, historical and folk theme as a frame of this play as well, and through this he conveys a message to the modern-day world.”<sup>16</sup>(P- 5)

### **Male Dominance and Female Challenging Freedom:**

Men have positions of authority and influence in a variety of societal domains, such as politics, business, and religion. Literature is analysed by feminist literary critics according to their philosophies. It looks at how women are portrayed in literary works. Women are "marginalised," "repressed," or "silenced," according to feminist critics, in literary works on a regular basis. Therefore, feminist critique aims to expose culturally conditioned errors and attitudes by reinterpreting the works of past writers of both genders. Feminist criticism is unwavering. There is a certain kind of political speech that disapproves of patriarchy and sexism. Its primary goals are social and cultural. It has the same perspective as the Marxist critic, seeing literature not as a "aesthetic creation" divorced from social reality, but as a production of a particular society. Literature is viewed as a form of life criticism by feminist criticism. It opposes the notion that the experiences of men are universal and does not consider the experiences of women to be "secondary" in *The Second Sex*: “..... equality and liberation would be achieved only by destroying the male’s superiority and refusing to succumb to a traditional role...women were “imprisoned” by the roles of mother, wife, and sweetheart.” (P-797)

During puberty and adolescence, girls develop into and get ready for new roles, such those of adult women, mothers, and mothers' friends. They look to their mothers and other mother figures for direction, model conduct, and inspiration. The way that young women relate to their mothers, aunts, and other women changes as they become

rivals and equals. This chapter examines the role of the mother, the kind of role models the mother figures in the texts are for their wards, what is said to be a defining characteristic of patriarchal women's relationships, and whether there is any possible alternative.

It is important to note that Karnad disagrees with any kind of exaltation of a mother figure as a comforter and ultimate giver and feels that this notion of the mother is just another construct that keeps people in slavery before talking about the influence that mothers and other mother figures have on their daughters. Karnad believes that the legendary mother figure is typically an exaggerated manipulator. As was already mentioned, the mothers in the texts under investigation differ in terms of their traits as well as how they behave and relate to their daughters and sons. The mother of Rani in Nagamandala is one example of the variety of options in Karnad; she hasn't even told her daughter anything about married life or how to communicate with her husband or family after marriage. The same is done by Kurudavva, her mother-in-law who has taken on the role of her surrogate mother. The second mother figure is the Queen Mother, whose son wed Queen Amritavati in defiance of his mother's wishes. The Queen Mother considers her daughter-in-law to be a rebel as she disobeys the royal family and its traditions. She is hated by Queen Mother, who finally revealed her infidelity to her husband. Queen Mother turns as Queen Amritavali's enemy rather than her mother. The Queen Mother was a traditional and pious woman who supported the custom of animal sacrifice and superstitions. The mother in the play Wedding Album is a perfect example of repentance and altruism. One of the peculiar aspects of mother-daughter relationships in our Indian context is the retaliatory behaviour displayed by Mother and Hema, which demonstrates a completely different type of mother-daughter bond. The biases and egos of the mother-daughter relationship are powerfully displayed via mother and Hema. Not to mention that despite his attempts to refute the mother myth, Karnad does not downplay the significance of his own mothers. Nonetheless, given that this picture was purposefully presented as the only choice throughout the recording and canonization of folk tales, it seems inevitable to undermine the notion of a mother who is always kind, caring, and self-giving within the context of folk stories. As a result, the older depiction of mothers, which had fewer positive, giving, and self-sacrificing examples, was restricted and warped to just one viable image, rendering anything else unacceptable and unthinkable.

It might be argued that the mother myth, which perpetuates the idea that being a mother requires being a selfless, loving mother who is there for her children and their father no matter what, contributes to the status of women. The mother myth suggests female authority, yet it appears that this power is only appropriate inside a patriarchal structure. According to many theories, motherhood serves as the foundation for patriarchy in Collected Three Plays. Hayavadana, Tughlaq, and Naga-mandala: ".....an Indian woman realizes that childbirth bestow upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her society can,"<sup>19</sup> says Kiranth (P-57).

Even if a woman and her child may view the birth as a private moment deserving of special attention and a ritual, same grateful mindset can rapidly turn against the mother and push her to the periphery, where she must battle for her own survival as well as the survival of her child. Though the mother appears to be receiving acclaim, she is actually the target of persecution. On the surface, the mother myth highlights women's unique role in raising their children, their willingness to make sacrifices, and their capacity to care for and sustain life. However, in reality, it restricts women by offering them limited options and behavioural patterns. By proving that moms are just people who might be strong or weak, good or wicked, and who can approach their mothering role in a number of ways,

Karnad rejects this skewed image of mothers. The sati ritual has become more important to Padmini than her obligations to her kid.

With age, the relationships that girls have with other women shift. Girls grow up to be classmates, equals, and, in a sense, the adult women's heirs. They start to observe and take part in interactions with women. This article explores the nature of some of the relationships that daughters have with their moms as well as the influence that mothers have on the young heroines. One of the many facets of the mother-daughter bond is sisterhood and compassion born out of their shared grief and fate. For instance, this is the situation with Rani of Nagamandala and her husband's aunt Kurudavva. They have to put up with the challenges of sharing a patriarchal society. This entails carrying out Rani's instructions without question, refraining from speaking to anybody or leaving the house, and constantly trying to figure out how to avoid upsetting Appanna. In such a setting, they become friends, and Kurudavva gives her support even when she is terrified of Appanna. They also appear to have a wordless understanding. Kurudavva attempts to lessen Rani's pain by showing her love and compassion after seeing that she is being oppressed and manipulated. It's possible that they don't think their relationship is essential as women often find it easier to be understanding, sympathetic, and kind to one another.

### **Women duty and Expectations:**

Both men and women are required to do specific tasks as outlined by society. Men are often expected to be aggressive, competitive, and the breadwinners, while women are expected to be nurturing, obedient, and mostly responsible for home tasks. Karnad exposed the fundamental human failings of love, passion, alienation, obligation, freedom, adultery, betrayal, forgiveness, and loss via the depiction of Indian ceremonies. The four main characters in the drama are the king, the queen mother, the queen, and an elephant keeper/mahout. It depicts a man and woman's relationship in great detail. The play is basically about the religion and violence. Karnad writes in *Collected Plays, Vol. one*, what he thinks about violence as in Girish Karnad's *Yayati* and *Bali: The Sacrifice: A Study in Female Sexuality*:

“[Violence is] the central topic of debate in the history of Indian Civilization. Vedic Fire sacrifices, conducted by Brahmin priests, involved the slaughter of animals as offerings to the gods, which the Jains found repugnant. To the Jain, indulging in any kind of violence, however minor or accidental, meant forfeiting one's moral status as a human being. Later, the Buddhists too joined the debate, arguing for non-violence, but from their own philosophical standpoint.”<sup>20</sup> (P- 316)

*Bali: The Sacrifice* tells the story of a Hindu monarch who developed feelings for a Jain lady. They have a solemnised marriage. The Queen was able to convert the King from Hinduism to Jainism after their marriage. Furthermore, the Queen Mother, a devout Hindu woman, disapproves of the King's action. She is also not fond of her daughter-in-law. She disagrees with King's choice to choose nonviolence over their ancient practice of animal sacrifice. However, one evening the Queen, who loves music, hears a wonderful voice that turns out to be the ugly Mahout's voice. The Queen followed him to the abandoned temple and committed adultery because she was unable to resist the amazing voice. Queen Mother demands that the King use violence to teach the Queen and the Mahout a lesson after her adultery is revealed, but the King is a Jain and cannot use violence. The king finds himself torn between his spouse and mother. He finds himself in a situation akin to Hamlet's, where he must decide whether or

not to be. In order to atone for the Queen's transgression, Queen Mother finally proposes offering a dough cock as a sacrifice rather than a real cock. To everyone's complete amazement, however, the dough cock was actually the Queen. She used the sword to end her own suffering and release herself from torment. Karnad has given the play a lot of ideas to work with. One of these is the social evil of child-marriage which grabs the innocence of a child and brought him/her under the load of responsibilities. The Queen was still a child when she was married. She was loaded with many responsibilities and expectations to bear a child.

### **Social Marginalization:**

The father or oldest male relative is often the leader of the household, with families being structured around male authority. Usually, the male line is used to trace ancestry and inheritance. Socialist feminists argue that women's subjugation stems from a society built on private property and class distinctions. They believe that comprehending the workings of society's class-based hierarchical sexual ordering is essential. These feminists believe that altering the economic structure by itself will not result in a shift in the patriarchal mindset. It would be essential to coordinate campaigns against capitalism and patriarchy simultaneously. According to socialist feminists, sexuality, reproduction, production, and childrearing are the four main socioeconomic factors that lead to women's lack of agency. The family is a major factor in the oppression of women. The family and the company are impacted by unequal and hierarchical sex roles.

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* makes clear that women will fight back and challenge men's dictatorship, therefore the oppression of women cannot persist forever. Alka very bravely challenges her husband's authority and demands an explanation for his betrayal. She also reveals her brother's treachery for keeping her spouse and brother's gay relationships a secret. The play's female characters are all suffering, and these kinds of women are still common in urban, educated households. They also serve as illustrations of how women will rebel if their voices are not heard or are silenced for an extended period of time. Men As Victims of Their Own Rage As Simone de Beauvoir perceives and comments; "The position that women occupy in the society is comparable in many respects to that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race"<sup>21</sup>(P-21)

### **Social Status and Position:**

Women's financial independence and autonomy are often restricted by men's stronger control over economic resources, property, and decision-making processes. The socialist feminists think that women's subjugation originated in *Scientific Organism in Patriarchal Norms*. "as a consequence of capitalism,"<sup>22</sup>(P-77) not because of the supremacy of male authority. As a result, socialist feminists are unable to "accept the separation of women's oppression from all other oppressions...in a class society, women had to form alliances with other exploited and oppressed groups to free themselves and their sisters...in a class society, women had to form alliances with other exploited and oppressed groups to free themselves and their sisters...in a class society, women had to form alliances with other exploited and oppressed groups to free themselves."<sup>23</sup> (P- 79)

### **Crisis of Identity of Women:**

People are socialized into gender roles that uphold the patriarchal standards and expectations that are in place from a young age. Gender inequality is maintained and strengthened by this socialisation. Long before the women's liberation movement, many authors wrote about the harsh circumstances that women faced in countries where males predominated. Nineteenth-century women authors including Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Mrs. Gaskell, Dorothy Richardson, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Margaret Drabble foresaw some of the contemporary feminist challenges in their writings. In the twentieth century, women have attempted to speak more consciously and articulately for themselves and the experiences that are pertinent to them. Subsequently, they began looking for their own forms, symbols, pictures, and grammar.

Kamala is a two-act play written by Vijay Tendulkar. The main idea of the play is a flesh trade. This is the true story of Jaisingh Jadhav, a journalist who wants to be the best in his field. The dramatist conveyed the middle-class Indian woman's never-ending suffering via her art. He examines the bond between a man and a woman in his plays. In Kamala, he portrays a complex relationship between Jadhav and his wife Sarita. The drama is gynocentric because Sarita, the main character, transforms from a submissive housewife to an aggressive, responsible wife. Sarita, a highly educated woman, is still a subservient wife, imprisoned within the confines of traditional social expectations. Kakasaheb, Sarita's uncle, leads a simple life guided by Gandhian ideals. Furious phone calls in Act I set the tone for labour that has to be done with caution. Its failure leads to dishonour for Jadhav and domestic discord. Sarita's helper Kamala does almost all of the housekeeping. Sarita is a very frank and understanding wife who respects her husband's choices and wishes. She looks after her husband in the way of a model Indian wife. Despite her being an educated and self-sufficient woman, it is difficult to comprehend what makes her act in such a subservient manner towards her husband. Kakasaheb says in the play in Kamala: "You may be highly educated, Sarita, but you are still a girl from the old Mohite Wada."<sup>24</sup> (P-5)

Regarding Jadhav's safety as a journalist, the whole family is quite worried. Jadhav disregards his wife's counsel when it comes to his personal security, paid 250 rupees to purchase Kamala from a Bihar village, reserving all rights for Jaisingh Jadhav. Thus, Vijay Tendulkar raises the subject of the flesh trade that occurs in remote areas of India. A journalist bought Kamala for 250 rupees with the idea of introducing her to the conference to get recognition and his name. She believed that Jadhav bought her house so he could continue to have her as his mistress. The threatening calls Jadhav receives during the play don't phase him. In response, Kakasaheb says: "You're being threatened with murder." (P-8)

### **Female Subjugation and Domestic Violence:**

It's possible for women to be underrepresented in or excluded from significant roles like elected office and decision-making bodies. The female characters of certain of Karnad's tragedies, such as Nagamandala, which has a tale with a particular atmosphere, are examples of the "Puppet-Woman." It is possible to see the elderly Kurudavva and the youthful Rani as embodiments of Karnad's puppet-style femininity. Rani is utterly subjugated to Appanna and his despotic rule; she can never freely express her own will or behave in accordance with her own desires as she lives in constant fear of his harsh deeds. Rani's emotions are made evident in the Nagamandala, among other places: "But the moment she steps in, Appanna slaps her hard. Rani collapses to the floor. He doesn't look at her again. Just pulls the door shut, locks it from outside and goes away".<sup>26</sup>(P- 38)

Girish Karnad has skillfully shown the many roles that society imposes on women in his theatre. In Nagamandala: Play with Cobra, the characters, Rani and Kurudavva serve as examples of how women are portrayed as "puppets." It has been demonstrated that the omnipotent men in their environment have actually reduced these female characters to puppets. They must see how the male-dominated culture makes decisions for them because they have little power over their own life. The puppet type represents passivity in all its forms, and this is also true of their sexuality; instead of being able to satisfy their own wants and desires, they must put up with men who unscrupulously take advantage of and mistreat them in order to satisfy their appetites.

### **Sexual Norms of Society:**

Women who experience pressure to meet unattainable beauty standards may develop problems with their bodies and a persistent feeling of inadequacy. De Beauvoir discusses taboo topics like female sexual pleasure and initiation in an open manner. She says that a woman has been denied the right to pleasure for a long time and that she is not free to pick the man who would realise her sensual destiny. She also says that her needs and pleasures are at the mercy of an institution. Man is contradictory; he desires passion from his spouse but is not at all interested in other men. He wants for her to be his exclusive belonging. She has so been duped since the day he marries her. When a woman is dependent on one man and has children to support, her life is over. She believes that being married is the only path to success for her. According to De Beauvoir, the basis of a man-woman relationship should be mutual love and consent. She also talks about the issues surrounding abortion, single moms, and unwanted pregnancies. In contrast to the emotional propaganda that was widely disseminated about maternity, many women were pleased to learn that De Beauvoir portrayed parenthood with contempt. Simone de Beauvoir believed that women ought to be freed from the bonds of slavery. Contrary to common conception, there is not always animosity between the sexes, nor are women weak. She thinks that the best way to resolve disputes in man-woman relationships is by sharing.

Tendulkar employs a textualized connotation of "silence" to strategically highlight the corruption of independent India from a variety of perspectives. Tendulkar presents a very deft presentation of the Indian court system, the marginalised and victimised individuals regardless of class or gender, and the so-called corrupt intellectuals like Prof. Damle. However, he doesn't provide the answer himself; instead, he lets his characters, audiences, and readers figure it out. According to his own words as In Conversation with Vijay Tendulkar :

"I cannot read life subjectively. I cannot create life, can I? The creator, is after all one and different. I have been a witness of life, so I imitate what I see I leave the end to the characters, to the point they have reached and then probably the continuity behind the ending of the play. Everything can not end with the play but something continues like life continues. Life never ends any point." <sup>27</sup>(P- 21)

### **Conclusion:**

Addressing the existential crisis faced by women in society requires comprehensive efforts, including legal reforms, changes in societal attitudes, and the promotion of equal opportunities. Empowering women to assert their rights, fostering inclusivity, and challenging gender norms are crucial steps towards creating a more equitable and supportive society. The growth of 'feminist literature' was a significant development in the post-independence

period. A fresh awareness of the uniqueness of women's perspectives and social roles offers up new avenues for feminist literature. Modern play became a canvas for feminist authors like Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, and Girish Karnad to question the dominant norms of a gender-based society. Women were no longer thought of as just wives and child-bearers. Girish Karnad's work was a revolution in the feminine sensitivity to the unjust or excessively constrained roles of women, as well as their limited representation in society and literature, among these feminist dramatists. Many of Karnad's depictions of women have defied male authority and triumphed against the odds and societal oppression inflicted on them, whether mental, physical, social, or otherwise. Regardless of the situation patriarchy has placed women into; he has concentrated on female self-definition. Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Dattani, dismiss the claim that their plays are called to women's emancipation. In truth, their plays are about the fight that women face in order to be recognized as human beings.

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