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**Abstract:** This study delves into the nuanced exploration of human emotion, specifically focusing on the manifestation of compassion through the aesthetic lens of Karuna Rasa in Manjula Padmanabhan's play, *Lights Out*. Emotions constitute a fundamental aspect of the human experience, and this research aims to unravel the intricate layers of compassion as depicted in the narrative. Drawing inspiration from classical Indian aesthetics, performing, and theatrical arts, Karuna Rasa encapsulates a complex ecstatic and emotional spectrum associated with compassion, empathy, and benevolence. Through a meticulous examination of Padmanabhan's portrayal and its impact, this study enhances our interpretation and understanding of the profound role played by Karuna Rasa in invoking and navigating compassionate sentiments. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research scrutinizes how Karuna Rasa is encapsulated, manifested, and expressed by the characters, contributing valuable insights into the intersection of emotions, artistic representation, and human experiences. By illuminating the interpretative dimensions of compassion within *Lights Out*, this study adds depth to the existing discourse on emotions in literature, offering a nuanced perspective on the transformative power of compassion in the realm of dramatic expression. This detailed analysis not only underscores the significance of Karuna Rasa but also highlights its ability to evoke a deeper empathetic response from the audience, thus enriching the literary and emotional fabric of the play.

**Keywords:** Karuna Rasa; Bharat Muni; Manjula Padmanabhan; Indian English Drama; Women Playwrights; Rasa Theory

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**Introduction**

In the vast tapestry of human experience, emotions serve as the vibrant

threads weaving together the intricate narratives of our lives. At the heart of this emotional landscape lies compassion, a

profound and transformative sentiment that has been explored across various artistic mediums, including literature and drama. This study embarks on a comprehensive examination of human emotion, with a particular focus on the implementation of compassion through the lens of Karuna rasa in Manjula Padmanabhan's evocative play, *Lights Out*. As a powerful vehicle for self-expression and understanding, literature has long been a mirror reflecting the kaleidoscope of human emotions. From joy to sorrow, love to anger, the exploration of these emotional dimensions enhances our ability to connect with characters and narratives on a profound level. Amidst this rich emotional tapestry, compassion emerges as a compelling force, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries. It beckons readers and audiences alike to engage with characters' vulnerabilities, forging empathetic connections that resonate deeply. The term karuna in Sanskrit encompasses emotions of sorrow, pity, sadness, and the highest expression of which is compassion. Genuine compassion arises from the ability to empathize with the suffering of others. The root of sorrow lies in the mirage and illusion of love. When someone or something retreats from our lives, the sadness we feel is a consequence of our attachment and affection for them. Love becomes the source of our pain. Sadness emerges when we must detach from those we hold closest and dearest. Witnessing or hearing about the tragic or critical conditions, or the loss of a beloved person or thing, creates a distinct emotional response in the heart known as karuna rasa. This emotional state is a result of the separation from those nearest and dearest, with no prospect of reunion. In the words of Patnaik, "Karuna will surface where man has not only lost hope, but even the will to fight. ... A character hopes inside a work. But we as readers know the case to be hopeless" (Patnaik, 1996: 137-138). Karuna rasa, rooted in traditional Indian aesthetics and performing arts, provides a nuanced framework for interpreting and expressing compassion. The

term encompasses a spectrum of emotions associated with empathy, benevolence, and a profound understanding of suffering. Karuna rasa is the feeling that triggers us to weep or become emotionally upset and is the source for us to feel pain, even when we are not directly involved in the situation. This rasa is invoked or instigated by malediction or curse, disaster or adversity, separation and loss of near and dear ones, death of loved ones, and others. Anubhava (consequents) consists of changing of colour of face, tear shed, paleness, sagging of limbs, distraction and inattentiveness and sighing, misfortune, lament etc. Viyabhicari bhava (transitory emotional feeling) includes physical weariness and weakness, worry, panic, longing, confusion, fear, tear, change of voice etc. (Masson & Patwardhan, 1970: 61). The renowned scholar Rangacharya has described Karuna rasa as "...produced by seeing dear ones die (or killed) and by hearing unpleasant thing. .... Is acted by weeping, fainting, lamenting and crying loudly and also by acting physical fatigue and hurt" (Rangacharya, 1996: 59). The sthayibhava (permanent mental state) of this rasa is grief (or soka) and is exhibited by weeping.

Karuna rasa has been a recurring theme in literature across cultures and epochs. In classical Indian literature, it is one of the nine rasas or sentiments that form the basis of artistic expression. Karuna rasa, the sentiment of compassion, holds a cherished place in Indian drama, serving as a powerful tool to engage emotions, explore ethical dilemmas, and connect audiences with the complexities of the human condition. It encapsulates the deep sense of compassion and empathy felt towards the suffering of others. It involves transcending one's own perspective to enter the emotional space of another, sharing in their pain and struggle. This emotional resonance serves as a bridge between characters and audiences, fostering a connection that transcends cultural, societal, and temporal boundaries. For example, Great epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are imbued with characters who exemplify

karuna rasa. For instance, Lord Rama's compassion towards the suffering of his subjects and Arjuna's empathy for his opponents on the battlefield are instances where this sentiment is prominently featured or the famous work of Rabindranath Tagore *Chandalika*. Set against the backdrop of caste-based discrimination, the play revolves around Prakriti, a young low-caste woman, who experiences transformation through the compassion shown by Ananda, a Buddhist monk. Ananda's karuna rasa becomes a catalyst for Prakriti's self-discovery and empowerment. Ananda's compassion challenges the social norms that relegate Prakriti to the margins of society, emphasizing her inherent worth. This act of kindness ignites a sense of agency in Prakriti, prompting her to overcome the limitations imposed upon her. Another play *Evam Indrajit* by Badal Sircar delves into the existential crisis of the protagonist, Indrajit. The karuna rasa is evoked as his struggles with societal expectations, personal aspirations, and the quest for identity unfold. The audience is drawn into his emotional turmoil, prompting introspection about the human search for meaning. Thus, the above examples of drama demonstrate how karuna rasa becomes a vehicle for social critique and personal transformation, reinforcing its significance in Indian drama as a catalyst for change and a mirror to the intricacies of the human heart and society. The portrayal of compassion and empathy adds layers of complexity and relatability to characters, encouraging audiences to connect with their journeys and reflect on the broader human experience.

#### **An Overview of the Play**

The drama depicts a horrifying true story of gang-rape, maltreatment, and other brutal violence committed against a defenceless female victim in a flat that went unreported for weeks in a middle-class urban community in Bombay, present day Mumbai. The play is the outstanding exemplification of masses ignorance and lack of interest towards the suffering of women and in particular, of

the rape victim. The drama is the exposure of the barbarous violence against women witnessed by a group of middle-class people without taking any measure to put an end to the crime. The play criticizes the mental set up of the people, their attitude and behaviour towards the victim and the various kinds of violence inflicted on women on a daily basis. The drama is an important instance of violence inflicted on the poor innocent woman in a patriarchal society. The drama is a sure cut depiction of sexual and domestic violence on women by their perpetrators and near ones. The women in the said play is exploited both physically and psychologically both in the society and by the family members. The most heinous crime of witnessing the rape happening in their locality and acting merely as witness without taking any action shows the horrible alarming and distressing mentality of the people. The natural morality of people has degraded to such low level that they tend to save their skins without thinking of others welfare and benefit. The play starts with a grave and pressing discussion on the crime going on for a week without any hindrance between the young middle-class couple Leela and Bhasker in their neighbourhood. Leela was terrified and unsettled with the constant scream and crying of the victim which Rai described "destroy the fabric of domesticity of a middleclass couple." (Rai, 2006: 22). Manjula Padmanabhan skilfully employs the aesthetic nuances of Karuna rasa to navigate the complexities of compassion within the context of her narrative. This exploration unfolds against the backdrop of societal and personal challenges, offering a canvas upon which the characters grapple with their own emotions and the emotions of others. Set within the framework of a family facing unforeseen trials, Padmanabhan's play delves into the intricacies of human relationships, societal expectations, and the innate capacity for compassion amid adversity. The narrative unfolds with a dynamic interplay of characters, each navigating their own emotional landscapes as they confront the

shadows cast by societal norms and personal dilemmas.

### Literature Review

In their article “Women and Violence in the Selected Works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta And Kishwar Desai” (2024), the authors Khanna and Singh investigate how the works of notable Indian writers Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai depict and treat women. Their stories primarily centre on women and question traditional gender roles and biases in Indian society. A detailed examination of the chosen plays reveals a repeating theme: women's empowerment and opposition to traditional male restrictions.

In her 2023 article titled “Manjula Padmanabhan’s Writing: A ‘Machete Strike’ At the Realities of Indian Society,” Padma examines Padmanabhan’s play *Lights Out*, which delves into the activities linked to the darkness of both physical and mental realms. She also explores the renowned play *Harvest*, which addresses the trade of human body organs by external and internal forces, highlighting the exploitation of impoverished individuals in India through the lens of advanced medical technology.

In the article titled “Dystopia in Disguise: Disintegrated Societies in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest* and *Lights Out*” (2023), Sunghee Pak explores the profound significance of Padmanabhan’s portrayal of two distinct worlds, illustrating how dystopia is intricately woven into reality, making it highly relevant to contemporary audiences. *Harvest* presents itself as a fictional dystopia, yet it retains enough realistic elements for modern viewers to identify with. Conversely, *Lights Out* begins as a realistic drawing-room drama rooted in a social incident but gradually incorporates dystopian qualities so extreme that the audience is inclined to deny their plausibility. Despite utopias and dystopias being theoretically non-existent, Padmanabhan's depiction of dystopian societies that intersect with everyday life amplifies her critique and commentary on the existing world.

The article “Beyond Reproduction: An epistemological Search for a “Woman” in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Escape* and *The Island of Lost Girls*” (2023), Amrita Basu and Priyanka Tripathi have tried to find out the answer of the question, who is a woman. In today's gender-fluid world, answering this question requires exploring non-linear and nonbinary possibilities. As the biological definition expands to include fragmented identities, it becomes increasingly complex to pinpoint a simple, clear truth of recognition. Within third-world dynamics, this question gains additional layers. Against the backdrop of mass female genocide due to the pursuit of perfect cloning, Manjula Padmanabhan addresses the issue of womanhood in her futuristic dystopian works. She navigates this topic to reach a philosophical space that allows the modernist concept of ‘woman’ as a well-defined category to be reborn within a postmodern framework. This shift moves women beyond their traditional roles of reproduction and menial labour. By analyzing these selected works, this research article aims to define a model of womanhood and illustrate the plurality of truth in action.

In their article “Rereading the Impressions of Violence on Women's Identity and Mental Health – A Literary Analysis through the Works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai (2023), Khanna and Singh aim to explore the impact of violence on women's identity and mental health through a literary analysis of the works of Manjula Padmanabhan, Poile Sengupta, and Kishwar Desai. The purpose is to investigate how these prominent female authors depict the effects of violence on the lives, self-perception, and psychological well-being of women in their writings. By examining these authors' works, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between violence, gender, and mental health. The authors aim to highlight the specific challenges women face in societies affected by violence. The findings of this research could provide policymakers, mental health practitioners, and social



advocates with valuable insights to inform the development of tailored interventions to support women who have been affected by violence.

Azmat Ara in 2022 in the article “Gender Studies in Works of Manjula Padmanabhan” investigates gender studies and concerns in Padmanabhan’s works, including *Harvest*, *Lights Out*, and *Escape*, which are mostly about women. Padmanabhan addressed gender issues in them. Jaya, Leela, and Mejie are popular female characters who confront discrimination, gender issues, and subjection.

In the article “Echoes of Phallogocentrism in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out*” (2021), Nandini Vyas sheds light on the phallogocentric, voyeuristic, sexist, and exhibitionist mindset that is impotent to solve the enigma, reflecting on Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out* as a cruel contradiction on the postmodern, urban, and educated, hypocritical phallogocentric men and women.

In their 2021 article titled “The Theme of Gender Violence in Manjula Padmanabhan’s Play *Lights Out*,” Shivam Singh and Gunjan Sushil analyse Padmanabhan’s play *Lights Out* through the lens of gender insensitivity and violence.

In their article “*Lights Out*: The darkness in the lives of Women” (2020), Mane and Deshmukh examine the play in the light of gender insensitivity and its implications on women in Indian society.

In the year 2020, Mona Gupta and Abha Panday in their article “Gender and Communication in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out*” have highlighted prominent ideas pertaining to language in relation to gender disparity and explore their relevance within the context of the play.

Bathina Rajesh Kumar in his article “Feminine Sensibility in the Select Play of Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out*,” (2017) aims to explore and examine the feminine psyche and sensibility of the protagonists in Padmanabhan’s work, while also addressing the broader challenges faced by Indian women within the urban and patriarchal

context of Mumbai. The play primarily centres on the marginalization and sensibility of women, highlighting the harsh realities of their lives in India. Manjula Padmanabhan aims to shed light on the suffering and hardships that women endure. The play captures the emotional and psychological turmoil that women experience.

In the article “Surrendering to the Menacing Darkness of Silence, Fear and Inaction in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out*”, Anindita Ganguly (2014) examines the consumption of violence and the resulting fear, subtly depicted through the elements of silence and fear in Manjula Padmanabhan’s play *Lights Out*. Inspired by a real event, the play portrays a gang rape that could have potentially been prevented by the terrified, silent onlookers who passively witnessed the crime, thereby consuming violence with indifference. The play emphasizes the dramatization of helpless spectators, who, instead of intervening, engage in debates and speculate about the events happening in the neighbouring building. This scenario reveals the ‘near-schizophrenic’ existence within a metropolitan setting, where the “lights out” symbolizes not just something hidden behind closed doors, but a profound darkness in human compassion and humanity itself.

### **The Purpose of the Paper**

The primary objective of this study is to dissect and interpret the multifaceted implementation of Karuna rasa in *Lights Out* by Manjula Padmanabhan, focusing specifically on how compassion is portrayed, embodied, and expressed by the characters and for this purpose, the paper examines and assesses numerous occurrences in the text to identify and point out instances and expressions of compassion through the perspective of Karuna rasa. Through a meticulous examination of the characters’ emotional journeys, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between artistic representation, human experiences, and the transformative power of compassion.

### Novelty of the Study

The importance of this research lies in its potential to enrich our comprehension of compassion as a central theme in literature, particularly within the realm of dramatic expression. By unravelling the artistic nuances of Karuna rasa in *Lights Out*, the research contributes to the broader discourse on emotions in literature and theatre. Moreover, the study's findings will have implications for readers, audiences, and scholars alike, fostering a deeper appreciation for the portrayal and interpretation of compassion in the realm of dramatic arts.

### Materials and Methods of Research

The primary source for this exploration is the text *Lights Out* by Padmanabhan. By employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, this research seeks to unravel the nuances of Karuna rasa, shedding light on its role in evoking and managing compassionate sentiments and this is complemented by the collection and analysis of secondary data. The author gathered information by reading books and article reviews, and conducting an Internet exploration to gain a deeper understanding of Karuna rasa. The procedure involved taking down notes and highlighting key points. The collected data was then organized and refined to extract essential information. Consequently, the study is specifically aimed at observing how Karuna rasa is depicted in the chosen work.

The Rasa theory, originated by Bharata Muni in primeval India in his renowned work *Natyashastra* stands as a fundamental notion in Indian aesthetics and the performing and theatrical arts. Rasa, denoting “essence” or “juice”, signifies the aesthetic encounter or spiritual and emotional resonance induced in the spectator through artistic expression. It establishes a structure for comprehending and assessing the emotive effect of artistic and creative performances. As per the Rasa theory, number of primary rasas exist is nine: love (sringara), laughter (hasya), compassion (karuna), anger (raudra), valor (vira), fear (bhayanaka), disgust (bibhatsa), wonder

(adbhuta), and tranquillity (shanta). All the rasas are linked to a particular emotional state (bhava), conveyed by characters or performers. The depiction of rasas encompasses diverse components like vibhavas (stimulants or determinants), anubhavas (consequents), sthayibhava (permanent emotional state), and alamkaras (ornamental enhancements). Vibhavas present the setting and stimulation for experiencing emotions, whereas anubhavas include artists' appearances, physical movements, vocal variations, and other physical aspects. The sthayibhava serves as the foundation for rasa manifestation, while alamkaras (ornamentation or adornment) enhance the aesthetic attractiveness. (Chakravarty, Thenmozhi, 2023: 387-393).

Rasa, according to Bharata, is a synthesis of bhavas (sentiments or emotions transmitted by a performer). It is the depiction of an individual's psycho-physiological state in a certain scenario. Rasa can also be found in music, dancing, painting, poetry, or any other artistic work capable of eliciting emotions or a psycho-physiological state. Bharata notes in his *Natyashastra* that rasa is formed by the mixture or combining of the vibhavas (stimulants or determinants), anubhavas (observable manifestations), and vyabharibhavas (transitory emotion) respectively. Bharata's famous statement regarding Rasa theory is *Vibhava-nubhava-vyabharicari-samyogaad-rasa-nispattih* (*Natyashastra*, VI). This is the key sentence for comprehending the rasa notion. Many other interpretations have been proposed, but the simple meaning of this sloka is that, the maturing/ripeness/appearance/production of rasa takes place/happens as a result of the combining, co-appearance – combination – of vibhava (determinates), anubhava (consequences), and sancaribhavas (transitory mental states). He also provides one example to further illustrate this concept. “When various condiments and sauces and herbs and other materials are mixed, a taste is felt, which is different from the individual tastes of the components and when the mixing of

materials like molasses with other materials produces many kinds of tastes, so also along with the different bhavas the Sthayi bhava (prevalent or permanent emotional state) becomes a taste, which is rasa, flavour or a feeling” (Rangacharya, 1996: 54-55). It implies that when we study a poem, a play, or a novel, there are certain reasons, certain events which bring us happiness, a few that produce gloom and sadness, and others that may even make us mourn because they trigger and stimulate our psychological and physical modes of body and we begin experiencing things this way.

The Rasa theory acknowledges the vital role of the spectator in accomplishing the aesthetic experience. The spectator’s emotive openness, compassion, and connection with the performances are pivotal for the realization and enjoyment of rasas. The full actualization of rasas occurs through the interplay among performers, characters, artistic elements, and the audience. This interaction is fundamental to the comprehensive experience of the emotional and aesthetic aspects. The theory maintains its influence in contemporary performing arts, spanning theatre, dance, music, and literature. It furnishes a comprehensive terminology and structural framework for dissecting and enjoying the emotive and aesthetic facets of artistic articulation. Delving into and mastering rasas not only enrich the artistic encounter but also offer profound insights into human emotions and the capacity of art to elicit and convey those emotions. This study examines the manifestation of Karuna rasa, with the primary focus on the play *Lights Out*.

### **Findings and Discussions**

*Lights Out* by Manjula Padmanabhan deals with domestic and sexual assault on a woman and how it disrupts the neighbourhood’s complacent equilibrium. The play opens with conversation between Leela and Bhasker, the middle – class couple in whose locality the crime (the gang-rape) is taking place. The indifference of the male characters (Bhasker and Mohan) towards the crime is indeed an abominable act which is

horrifying. The pleading urge of calling the police by Leela to put an end to the crime is always overheard by both her husband and the others. The unbearable screaming of the innocent victim becomes intolerable for Leela but for Bhasker and Mohan, it becomes the source of never-ending discussion. First, Bhasker was in the phase of avoidance and deny Leela’s call to inform the police. Second, the visit of Mohan starts the denial phase where they both unaccepted the fact that the rape is happening and start discussing the crime in the light of religion, exorcism and others. Third, the denying happens with Bhasker and Mohan reluctant to accept the fact that the rape is happening daily in front of their apartment and trying their best to tag it with ridiculous explanation of their own. Male arrogance and prejudice are at its height when Bhasker’s friend Mohan stands with the former and mockingly refers to Sushila, Leela’s friend and neighbour as an intellectual while laughing at her assessment of their involvement in the crime. Although Leela is on the edge of losing her mind because the image of the abused woman lingers in her memory both consciously and subconsciously, the masculine world is unaware of the seriousness of the crime.

Leela patiently waits for them to conclude which never happens and ultimately, she loses her sanity, cries out in hopelessness and wiggle in pain as the perpetrators leave the crime scene. She accepts her fate and registers to the fact that she has to bear and continue with the pain of witnessing the rape happening outside her apartment daily. She wanted remedy for the problem whereas her husband is totally indifferent to the situation and tagged the crime as “minor little offenses” (BB, 5) which is not even worth for mentioning to the police. Bhasker ignores and overlooks Leela’s emotional degeneration and left her alone to face the problem all by herself. Her repeated cry to call the police was ignored again and again

LEELA: The police. Call the police.

BHASKER (makes a face): Oh, for god’s sake! (going back to his paper).

You're still worrying about that thing?

LEELA: All the time!

BHASKER: Look – what do you want me to do?

LEELA: Call them – you said you would!

BHASKER: But there's no point!

LEELA: Have you tried?

BHASKER: No. (Tries to concentrate on the paper) ....

LEELA (suddenly): You don't care what I feel, what I go through every day!" (BB, 2000: 4).

Through Leela's character, the sense of loss, fear and the feeling of hopelessness run through the play from the very beginning till to the end, giving rise to the Karuna rasa. The rape of the hapless unknown woman acts as the vibhava (cause) and the consequent or anubhava is Leela's pathetic mental state, her tears and fear, her despair and her utter state of despondency. The sthayibhava or the permanent mental state of her character is hopelessness, despair and pity. This pathetic state of Leela, the complaint, sadness and the despondency can be felt from the beginning of the play in her and is very clearly stated by her conversation with her husband

LEELA: I feel frightened. All through the day, I feel tense – ... My fear, it's – as if my insides are knotted up. ... I carry it around all day. ... it's like a shawl, ... wraps itself around my shoulders .... I start to shiver .... The sounds are bad enough! (Pause) And... you're sure we can't call the police?" (BB, 2000: 5-6).

Bhasker's indifference to interfere to other's business and lives makes Leela more and more helpless and hysterical. She suffered a lot due to negligence from her husband and amplified Karuna rasa throughout the play. Both Leela and Bhasker's way of interpretation of the crime is poles apart. Leela is consumed with fear because of the shrill screaming of the victim whereas Bhasker is casual and composed. Leela is sympathetic towards the women being raped, feels pity for them for their suffering, them being the victim of men's libidinous desire.

This may be because of the fact that she being a woman feels guilty and responsible towards the sufferer which in the words of Miceli and Castelfranchi is "The feeling of guilt is social where victim and bearer both suffer for the injury inflicted on victim and emphatically share the latter's suffering" (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1998: 291). She urges her husband for help but all in vain. She strongly feels that "that by watching it, we're making ourselves responsible -" (BB, 2000: 6). For Bhasker, the screaming of the victim holds no place of pity and sympathy for him and he excused himself by saying that "If the police had to worry about things like that they'd be psychiatrists, not policemen .... I don't want to stick my neck out, that's all ..." (BB, 2000: 7). Thus, both Leela and Bhasker's outlook for the crime is different. Bhasker is more casual and callous minded towards the crime whereas Leela is sympathetic, more humanistic and she suffers at the pain and distress of the victim. She, thus, evokes karuna rasa. Also, as the conversation between the two proceeds, we came to know that Bhasker is secretly watching the crime taking place and this revelation makes Leela more hysteric, sick and vulnerable. The screaming is enough for her to make her sleepless and restless all through day and night. She is anxious and perturbed as the sounds are loud and taint the idea of her clean home. The horrible sound outside her home is so scary and disturbing that it paralyses Leela to such an extent that her daily life has come to an abrupt stop. She loses the capacity to act and behave like a normal human being.

LEELA (struggling in his half embrace): But their sounds come inside, inside my nice clean house, ... Why do they have to do it here? Why can't they go somewhere else? ... I feel awful, I can barely eat, I feel so sick" (BB, 2000: 8 – 9).

Leela's suffering from the unwanted disturbances created by the perpetrators in her life is manifested not only by her mental degradation but also by her physical gesture. Weissbecker & Clark has stated in their research article that "pains in the heart or



chest, nausea or upset stomach, dizziness” (Weissbecker & Clark, 2007: 914-919) are the best examples of physical and mental maladjustment whereas Pill on the same subject has described “chronic pain, ..., cardio-pulmonary, sexual, or conversion symptoms, ... signs of physical disorder that result from psychic or emotional disturbance” (Pill et al., 2017: 180).

The mental stress and paranoia of being constantly nagged by the hoarse and loud cry of the victim and the perpetrators add more intense physical pain for Leela. Desperate to stop the sound made by the raped woman and her perpetrators from reaching her, she “holds her head with both hands, covering her ears” (BB, 2000: 35). Because of her high level of compassion and empathy and pain for the raped woman, her body language and gesture indicate how she herself is suffering and traumatized from the crime and exhibiting the same through her bodily and psychological signs. She is so paranoid about the crime that even when the incident is not happening, she imagines the same and undergoes the same horrifying agony and experience. She starts to hallucinate and gets so hooked on the bellow that prior to the rape commences she conveys how awful it makes her feel. It is also noticed that the screams become so realistic to Leela that even when it is not happening, she imagines them and becomes obsessive which is gradually taking a toll on her, consuming her and disturbing her whole day routine. She openly admits to Bhasker that the screams of the victim in real or in her imagination affected her body extremely, wrapping her like a shawl. Thus, the atrocity committed outside her home made Leela so pathetic and grief stricken that she started showing bodily symptoms of nausea and loss of appetite, issue with mobility, sleep deprivation and “off balance” (BB, 2000: 17) resulting in her unsuccessful attempt to cope up with the physical and psychological distress and agitation. In the words of Lieder “unlike Bhasker, Leela experiences the daily screaming outbursts profoundly through expressing bodily agony ... describes as

affective response, or the physical embodiment of another’s pain” (Lieder, 2015: 525). Leela feels and understand the pain of the raped woman as she herself is going through the pain and trauma caused and inflicted by others. Caruth’s analysis and study in “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History” the witness hears the cry of anguish and pain in her own thoughts since she has personally felt it. Although the two aches may not specifically relate to one another, somehow one pain is able to or can communicate with the other (Caruth, 1995). Throughout the play, Leela diligently waits for the other members of her circle to act, to stop the crime and the ugly horrific sound but to her utter dismay, no one came forward to act, they continue with their discussion how to handle the situation which ultimately break the barrier of Leela’s patience and she suddenly breaks down amidst all the chaos.

LEELA: AAAAAAAHHHHH

BHASKER: Frieda, water!

NAINA: Leela, Leela!

LEELA: AAAAAAAHHHHH

MOHAN (at a safe distance): Come on, now, come on –

NAINA: Don’t take it so hard, Leela, no-one’s going to hurt you

LEELA. ... The sounds torture me. Tell the police I can’t sleep at nights . . .

tell the police the goondas must go away and take their dirty whores somewhere else! (She is losing control again.) . . . out of my hearing . . . out of my life . . .

(The hysterical note has returned.)” (BB, 2000: 43–44).

Leela’s continuous crying, yelling and refusing to drink or socially interacting with others are the signal she displayed of her inner turmoil and the pain she is going through. By bursting out, she releases all her pent-up emotion and fear. She tries her uttermost to keep herself calm, cool and patience both physically and mentally by practising yoga as suggested by her yoga guru. On the same note, to avoid the noise from interfering her daily routine and her

relationship with others, she picks up conversation on any topic with her friends. Like with Naina, she started conversing on random topic to keep her sanity intact and also to distract Naina's attention towards the commotion happening outside the house. For example, when the screaming started, Leela started talking with Naina, constantly changing the subject of discussion to divert her attention. Also, Leela's behaviour display moments of hysteria and anxiety and disconcertment as her husband informed her of an impending arrival of a guest to their home for dinner. Her way of dealing and handling the whole situation, the way she took breaks and pauses in her way of speaking all indicates the immense pain she is undergoing and her inability to deal with it. She was stiff and unfriendly towards Mohan, the guest, not because she wants to but the painful scenario she is in, made her act unfriendly and unresponsive. Her debacle to smile and sit comfortably or held a conversation and her looking out for the watch (the time when the animalistic shouts of the perpetrators and the hapless cry of the raped victim began) at regular interval reveals her inner turmoil and her inability to adjust with the painful situation. Her current situation is too painful for her to handle giving rise to her emotional breakdown and her character strongly evokes Karuna rasa.

Throughout the play, Leela embodies compassion, yet she remains powerless to stop the violence or even to convince others to care. This helplessness in the face of overwhelming apathy is a key element in evoking Karuna rasa. Leela's sorrow is deepened by her recognition that her compassion has no outlet, no way to effect change. As Leela's compassion is repeatedly thwarted, the audience is led to feel a profound sense of pity for her. They see her as a tragic figure, someone who feels deeply but is rendered ineffective by the social structures around her. This evokes a deep emotional response, fulfilling the purpose of Karuna rasa. In the climactic moments of the play, Leela's emotional state reaches its peak.

Her realization that no one will intervene, and that the violence will continue unchecked, leads to an emotional breakdown. The tragedy of her situation is fully realized, as the audience is left to contemplate the full weight of her sorrow. By applying Karuna rasa to Leela's character, her compassion and the resultant pity are brought to the forefront of the narrative. Leela becomes a tragic figure whose deep empathy and concern for others isolate her and lead to her emotional downfall. The audience is moved to pity her, not only for her compassion but also for the societal indifference that makes such compassion a source of personal pain. In this way, Leela's character serves as a powerful vehicle for evoking Karuna rasa, making the audience feel deep sorrow and empathy for her plight.

During the creation and emergence of Karuna rasa, the gang-rape of the innocent woman, and the perpetrators served as vishayaalambanavibhava (the cause and the reason) whereas the cry of the victim herself and Leela act as ashrayaalambanavibhava (the result of the cause and reason). The atmosphere of the whole neighbourhood, Leela's apartment and the animalistic cry serve as uddipanavibhava (the external stimulus). The anubhava (consequents) of the whole situation is Leela's conversation with the other family members, tears in her eyes, her pathetic condition and pale face. The transitory feeling or the Vyabhicharibhavas is weakness, anxiety, distress, terror, trembling and tears. Grief or shoka is the permanent emotion or sthayibhava in this condition. Leela begged repeatedly to her husband and the others to call the police and put an end to the crime happening outside her apartment daily and the criminals should be punished. The ongoing crime has disturbed and destroyed the peace of the neighbourhood and Leela's both, and had made her worried beyond words. This dreadful and devastating condition evokes the feeling of pity into the minds of the readers (shadharanikarana) and they realize the sentiment of pity, thus evoking karuna rasa.

Another character in the drama who strongly arouses *karuna rasa* and compassion is the unknown and unseen raped woman. The physical and mental harassment of the victim started and continued for a long time. The victim's cry for help is unheard and ignored by the people of the neighbourhood. Because of the fear and threats of the perpetrators, the people of the neighbourhood from the evening closed their windows and put the lights off. While Leela pleaded with her husband and his friend Mohan to call the police, they simply avoided the situation by saying that they have no right to interfere in others personal life. The victim's cry of help was unanswered only because people are opinionated about the woman's status, that she doesn't belong to the upper-class. They are sceptical about the rape. They even started the discussion as whether the rape is actually happening or it is some kind of religious rituals of the lower-class masses. Even they dare not go to the police as the role of police is doubtful in their mind. Even they went to the extent of tagging the woman as a prostitute who doesn't need to be saved from the clutches of her perpetrators stating that "Why should we get involved with some filthy woman and her paramours? .... A decent woman would never be with four men at once." (BB, 2000: 40-41). They very clearly sort out the difference between a decent woman and a prostitute, a prostitute has no sense of decency and can't be respected in the society and can be abused and taken advantage of at any time.... "You see, if she were a decent woman, we people would go to her rescue! (Pause). She is not, and so she's being left to her fate!" (BB, 2000: 41).

Amidst their heated debate about the ferocity of the crime, they do forget the fact that even for a whore, rape is both a psychological and physical torture inflicted on a woman and in the whole process, her self-dignity and her existence as a human being is denied and violated. As Paul Gilbert observed: "Shame, stigmatization, and ostracism are part of the process by which a group of others decide whom to associate and

cooperate with, and whom to exclude, reject, and avoid." (Gilbert, 2003: 1216). It has been an established fact revealed by various study that rape terrorize and threaten the moral dignity and awareness of a woman. Both her mental and physical state is shattered by this heinous crime and left her in a state of utter shock and disintegration. It has been explained by the famous psychologist Griffin that "rape victim's entire inner self is disintegrated by this physical and emotional exploitation, ... annihilation of woman by men as a human being" (Griffin, 2015: 129). Thus, rape is a deeply traumatic experience that can have profound and long-lasting effects on a woman's physical, emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The consequences of rape extend far beyond the immediate act itself, encompassing a complex array of physical and psychological challenges that can reshape the trajectory of a woman's life. The same happened with the innocent victim. She was in a state of shock and was shattered by the torture inflicted on her both mentally and physically. Her constant plea and cry for help was ignored and overheard by everyone present. Instead of helping her, they were busy discussing the intensity of the crime and whether to report the crime to the police or not. In their animated and intense discussion, they forget the naked truth that it is pointless and fruitless to point out and tag the identification of a woman who has been harassed and tortured to the point of death and whose "life is over. She will commit suicide, if she lives at all" (BB, 2000: 46).

At the beginning, the voice of the woman crying and screaming for help was heard clearly and distinctly. The voice was truly ragged and hoarse. At first, it was intense and fresh with determination and robust, the woman fighting against her perpetrators "let me go", (BB, 2000: 29), seeking and crying for help "help me" (BB, 2000: 29). But as the time passes, her voice gradually reduces to "general screaming, sobbing, with a jagged, tired edge to it." (BB, 2000: 29). With the passage of time she grew

tired and exhausted, screaming replaced with hiccups, and ultimately by the end of the evening, it stopped totally “must be over for tonight.” (BB, 2000: 53). The goons left after they are done with her, leaving her shattered, broken and scarred for life. The whole scenario is sombre and serene. The physical and mental condition of the victim, the helpless innocent woman cannot be determined and gauged. Her feelings and thoughts were far more complicated to be analysed and understood from the mere understanding of Bhasker and Mohan and others. Within the timespan of an evening, she went through a tough phase of pain and misery inflicted on her both psychologically and physically.

The raped woman’s helpless situation, her constant plea for help, to save her from the criminals, to save her from being dishonoured garners the sympathy of the readers. She is a victim full of empathy and pity, thus evoking Karuna rasa. Through the character of the rape woman, Karuna rasa is powerfully evoked in *the play*. Her unseen suffering, helplessness, and the injustice she endures all serve to draw out deep feelings of compassion, pity, and sorrow in the audience. Her character becomes a symbol of broader societal issues, making the emotional impact of her plight even more profound. The rape woman’s tragic fate, combined with the indifference of those around her, creates a compelling and heart-wrenching experience of Karuna rasa, leaving the audience to grapple with the intense emotions her character evokes. The whole scenario poignantly reflected Karuna rasa. The reason or the vishayaalambanavibhava in this case is the rape taking place, the evil deeds of the perpetrators and the ignorance of the people. And the result or the ashrayaalambanavibhava of this evil deed is the helpless cry and effort of the raped victim to free herself from the clutches of her abuser. The grim atmosphere and the animalistic cry of the goons act as the external stimuli or uddipanavibhava. The anubhava or the consequents of the situation consists of victim’s helpless cry for help, and

the horrible pathetic situation she is in. The transitory feeling or the Vyabhicharibhavas consists of fear, anxiety, distress, and terror. The permanent emotion or sthayibhava is pity and grief (shoka). This horrible and catastrophic circumstance creates compassion in the minds of the readers (shadharanikarana), and they recognize the pity, invoking karuna rasa.

### Conclusion

Thus, it is revealed that the characters in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out* suffers throughout their time span. The pain, suffering and the pitiful state of the characters stir up our sentiment of Karuna rasa. The characters, Leela and the unknown rape victim present pathetic illustration of humanity’s unending helplessness and inherent shortcomings. The drama depicts the harrowing and terrible journey of Leela and the raped woman in a few hours. They evoke and symbolize universal human emotions such as empathy, sympathy, and compassion. Because of their struggle and the suffering, they experienced at the hands of patriarchal society, the audience’s sympathy grows for them. The main (or the angī) rasa produced in the play *Lights Out* is karuna rasa. Padmanabhan has masterfully evokes Karuna rasa through her characters, creating a profound emotional experience for the audience. Leela's deep empathy and moral struggle embody Karuna rasa, as her compassion becomes both her strength and her source of profound sorrow. Her visible distress, isolation, and emotional breakdown evoke pity and sorrow in the audience, who are moved by her futile attempts to incite action in an indifferent society. Through Leela, the audience experiences the tragic consequences of unheeded compassion, leading to a powerful sense of Karuna rasa.

The rape woman, though never seen, serves as the emotional core of the play. Her cries of suffering, combined with the indifference of the surrounding characters, create a potent atmosphere of pathos. The audience is compelled to feel deep compassion for her plight, as she symbolizes



the broader issue of societal apathy towards gender-based violence. Her character elicits a profound sense of sorrow and pity, reinforcing the play's overarching theme of helplessness in the face of unchecked brutality. Together, these characters and their experiences weave a narrative that consistently draws the audience into an emotional journey filled with compassion and sorrow. *Lights Out* thus becomes a powerful exploration of Karuna rasa, leaving the audience with a lingering sense of pity, empathy, and contemplation about the moral failures of society. The play's ability to evoke such deep emotional responses underscores its significance as a work of contemporary Indian drama, with Karuna rasa at its heart. By applying Karuna rasa, the analysis uncovers the deep layers of emotional and ethical complexity within the play. The characters, their responses, and the tragic atmosphere they inhabit are all crucial to understanding how Padmanabhan uses compassion to critique society and evoke a powerful emotional response in the audience.

In the grand tapestry of human emotions, karuna rasa stands as a testament to our capacity for understanding, empathy, and compassion. It is a force that transcends cultural, geographical, and temporal boundaries, uniting us in our shared humanity. Whether found in the pages of literature, the science of psychology, or our everyday lives, karuna rasa serves as a guiding light, inspiring us to alleviate suffering, foster connection, and build a more compassionate world.

It's crucial to recognize that Karuna rasa, as a creative and artistic notion, predominantly resides within the domain of aesthetics and theatrical and performance studies. Although there might be research endeavours delving into associated aspects like the emotional or physical impacts of emotions like compassion or pity, it is imperative to distinguish between the artistic notion and scientific investigations into sentimental feelings and emotions. Additional research is encouraged to delve into how Karuna rasa can be employed in various

artistic expressions and its possible therapeutic significance and emotional and psychological well-being.

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