2.1 Introduction: Hayavadana:

*Hayavadana* is the third successful play of Girish Karnad written in 1975. Girish Karnad himself details the genuine causes for the choice of *Hayavadana* and folktale:

I was thinking about the use of masks in theatre and discussed the possibilities with Karanth. I told him the story of *The Transposed Head* and wondered if we could make a film. The tale from *Vetala Panchavimsati* had been used by Mann to address the question: after the heads have been attached to wrong bodies, who would be considered the woman’s husband? The tale answers that since the essence of man is represented by the head, the husband’s head will identify the husband. Mann continues the logic to its ultimate end that since the head is the man, the bodies transform themselves to fit the heads so that men become exactly as they physically were at the start of the story. So the woman’s problem remains unresolved. Karanth was enthusiastic but suggested that we do a play, not a film. That’s when the plot of *Hayavadana* began to take shape in my mind.  

Besides, Girish Karnad states in his ‘Note’ to *Hayavadana*:

The central episode in the play—the story of Devadatta and Kapila—is based on the tale from the *Vetalpanchavimshika*, but I have
drawn heavily on Thomas Mann’s reworking of the tale in *The Transposed Heads* and am grateful to Mrs. Mann for permission to do so.²

Thus, it is obvious that the main theme of *Hayavadana* is derived from one of the stories from *Vetalpanchavimshika* (Twenty-five stories about king Vikrama and Vetala.) which forms part of Kshemendra’s *Brihat Katha Manjari* and Somadeva’s Sanskrit tale *Kathasaritsagara*. Each of these stories poses a riddle at the end, which the Velal challenges the king to solve. In this regard the comment of Aparna B. Dharwadker in her ‘Introduction’ to G. Karnad’s Collected Plays Vol-I, is worth-quoting: ‘In the *Kathasaritsagara*, the story of ‘The Heads That Got Switched’ contains a simple riddle. A woman travelling with her husband and her brother discovers the men’s decapitated bodies in the temple of Parvati, receives a boon from the goddess to bring them back to life, but switches their heads by mistake. The resulting problem of ‘true’ identity has an unambiguous solution in this version:

‘individuality recognized with the head.’(In some versions of the story, however, the second male is a friend rather than the woman’s brother.)³

On this basis the resource it is clear that the main theme is derived Mann’s story in ‘Transposed Heads (1940). In this story Sita is married to Shridaman who is delicate and sensitive but she feels an intense physical attraction for his friend Nanda who is strong and emotionally crude. In Mann’s version, the husband beheads himself in Parvati’s temple out of jealousy and despair, further the friend follows suit out of guilt and fear and the pregnant wife prepares to die in order to avoid ignominy for herself and her child. However, she is gifted boon to switch heads of husband and friend to live. However, Sita is tremendously content at the changing of heads, for it offers an opportunity that she gets brain and a muscular body. But gradually, the intellectual head transforms the body, making it lose all its virility and Sita is dissatisfied again. Therefore she finds herself yearning once again for the man with the friend head and husband-body and returns to him. The consequence of her action, Shridaman and Nanda kill each other in the forest, and Sita commits Sati on their funeral pyre. In this regard, the story of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini in Karnad’s *Hayavadana* follows elements of
characterization and the order of events in Mann’s story. But Karnad tries to pose existential ideas like the problem of human condition appears as essentially one of disunity and imperfection culminating in death. For this, it seems that he combines the human condition of transposed heads with the Hayavadana story, which is entirely his own invention.

Besides, Girish Karnad projects tragedy of human by placing it alongside two other realms of experience- the divine and the animal. Lord Ganesh, despite his comical appearance, the elephant-headed and pot-bellied is the patron deity of scribes and performers, the remover of obstacles (*vighneshwara*) who is the god of all auspicious beginning-an embodiment of both divinity and perfection. On the other hand, Hayavadana, the horse-headed man who gives the play its title, lacks any vestige of divinity and appears painfully suspended between the animal and human world. Unlike the God, Hayavadana cannot endure to remain mixed up; unlike the humans, he does not possess a prior self that can reassert itself. But as in the human world, the head determines identity, even if that means the triumph of the animal over the human

The sub-plot of *Hayavadana* deals with the horse-man which is Karanad’s own invention. The play is predominantly concerned with the identity crises of Padmini in the main plot and of Hayavadana in the sub-plot. As Kirtinath Kirtkoti, in his ‘Introduction’ to *Hayavadana*, has accurately remarked:

Karnad’s play poses a different problem, that of human identity in a world of tangled relationships. The result is a confusion of identities which reveals the ambiguous nature of human personality.⁴

Hayavadana is a man with the head of a horse. Also name, Hayavadana itself implies that ‘haya’ means horse and ‘vadana’ means face. He is the son of the Princess of Karnataka, a very beautiful girl, who fell in love with a white stallion. She was married off to the horse and lived with him for fifteen years. One day, the horse turned into a beautiful celestial being and revealed that he was a Gandhara cursed by the God Kubera to be born a horse for some act of misbehavior. After fifteen years of human love, he had become his original self again. Released from his curse, he asked the Princess to accompany him to his Heavenly Abode. But she wanted him to become a horse again. So he cursed her to be a horse herself. She become a mare and galloped away without thinking in the least of Hayavadana, the product of her marriage with the white stallion.
Henceforth, Hayavadana wants to get rid of his horse’s head and become a complete man. At the end of the play, hayavadana goes to the Kali temple and threatens to chop off his head. The goddess grants him boon, ‘makes him complete’, but in her hurry to fulfil it, she makes him a complete horse instead of a complete man. However, Hayavadana still retains his human voice. In this context, Kirtinath Kurtkoti, in his ‘Introduction’ to *Hayavadana*, comments accurately as:

The horse-man’s search for completeness ends comically, with his becoming a complete horse. The animal body triumphs over what is considered the best in man, the *Uttamanga*, the human head! 

2.1.1 Karnad’s Use of Folklore:

It is particularly essential to focus on Karnad’s motives of using folk tales. Besides, Girish Karnad in his play makes use of motifs of folk theatre i.e. masks, curtains, songs, commentator, dolls, chorus, horse-man to convey his ideas and exploring different characters and to interpret human situation with reference to contemporary experience. Folktale can never be dismissed as belonging to the past, because a great deal of its charm lies in its principal quality that of repeating itself. Thus the age-old folktale is presented again in disguised form to confront. Whether it is the snake man in *Naga-Mandala* or the horse-headed one in *Hayavadana*; in other words they are disguised creation of characters that are encountered every day. However, according to M.H. Abrams, G.G. Harpham ‘folklore’ means:

At least primarily, by word of mouth and example rather than in written form.

The play opens with *Ganesh Puja* means the offering of worship accompanied by singing to the God Ganesha. It is very symbolic and related to the theme of the play. Besides, Girish Karnad himself says the true implication for the invocation of *Gajavadana* in *Hayavadana*:

The classical tradition shows all plays-except perhaps Bhasa-beginning with Nandi or the invocation of the divine for the successful completion of the endeavours. The usual deities are Nataraja or
Ganesha; Ganesha, especially as the remover of all obstacles. After Ganesha had been beheaded and his original head was lost, Shiva brought him back to life by substituting an elephant’s head. On the stage, he is often represented as a young boy wearing a mask. Ganesha’s mask says nothing about his nature yet the elephant-head represents the thinking part of the person, that is, the intellect. However, it did not seem fair to use a god to challenge the logic of the riddle. Divinity is supralogical and constitutes a different category. I felt the need to let the dialectic develop out of grosser levels so there is the story of the horse-headed man, Hayavadana, as the frame for the central story of the two friends. 

Besides, the most striking point is the element of Indianess, that is, the opening verse in praise of Lord Ganesha. The choice of elephant-headed God is significant because Lord Ganesha with human body and animal head aptly suggests the central theme of incompleteness of being. As the Bhagavata says:

An elephant’s head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly-whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda-mahakaya, with his crooked face and distorted body, is the Lord and Master of Success and Perfection? Could it be that this Image of Purity and Holiness, this Mangala-moorty, intends to signify by his very appearance that the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend?

However, to see Ganesh as deity in the context of a ritual is to receive darshan. Darshan which literally means ‘seeing’ refers to the ‘visual perception of the sacred. Further more
specifically, *Darshan* is an exchange—the devotee goes to see god and to be seen by the deity. In *Darshan* human sight mixes with divine insight to dispel *maya* or illusion. In other words, *darshan* helps human being to see or understand more clearly. Therefore, it seems that Lord Ganesh is brought onstage to give *darshan* to audience and Karnad has reminded audience to worship God before starting work.

Girish Karnad employs the folk device of masks to project the personalities of different characters. Critic, S. Goel aptly writes on usage of Karnad’s mask as;

> In the beginning of the Hayavadana, Devadatta appears on the stage wearing a pale-coloured mask and Kaplila a dark mask. Later on, to signify the transposed heads, their masks are transposed. Lord Ganesha wears an elephant-headed mask and Kali, a terrible mask. Initially Hayavadana appears wearing the mask of a man and in the end the mask of a horse.\(^9\)

Wearing mask represents two things, one is the act going on in front of audience is not real in the literal sense and second is it is rather symbolic or an artistic presentation.

Girish Karnad used the techniques such as *Sutradhar, a doll* etc. of Indian tradition of drama and fuses a rich mixture of already available elements in the Indian theatre to explore his ideas. Karnad employs *Sutradhar* in Hayavadan. In this regard, V.Tripathi explains concept of *Sutradhar* in relation of Bharata as:

> Bharata, the master thinker and technician proceeds to expound the concept of *Sutradhar*: one who has the strings in his hands, who controls the development of the plot in almost all variations of drama.\(^{10}\)

Bhagavata is the narrator, commentator and interposer in the play, *Hayavadana*. He keeps audience abreast with the information both on stage and for the audience. He comments on the past, present and future. The Bhagavata’s role is crucial in the play, Hayavadana, since he performs a great variety of functions. He is the narrator who introduces the major characters in
the story and later supplies the connecting links in the action, informing the audience about major developments such as the marriage of Devadatta and Padmini in Act-I and the problem of the transposed heads in Act-II. Also, some of his songs reveal him as a commentator on the action. For instance, he is the vehicle for the revelation of deepest thoughts of a major character, as in the scene in Act-II where Padmini meets Kapila with the transposed head in the forest. At times, he becomes a minor character in the action, as when he tells Devadatta where Kapila lives in the forest. Besides, midway through the play, he indicates the end of the action by telling the audience:

Bhagavata: What? What indeed is the solution to this problem, which holds the entire future of these three unfortunate beings in a balance? Must their fate remain a mystery? And if so shall we not be insulting our audience by tying a question-mark round its beck and bidding it good-bye? We have to face the problem. But it’s a deep one and the answer must be sought with the greatest caution. Haste would be disastrous. So there’s a break of ten minutes now. Please have some tea, ponder over this situation and come back with your own solutions. We shall then continue with our enquiry.  

In Hayavadana, Karnad through the use of dolls reveals very effectively to the audience the thought processes and inner psyche of character. The two Dolls brought by Devadatta from the Ujjain fair talk with each other but their conversation is inaudible to the other characters. Girish Karnad projects Padmini’s inner psyche by using two dolls who see into and narrate Padmini’s dreams about Kapila as she sleeps, revealing the illicit desire she feels but cannot, as a married woman in Indian society, articulate:

Doll I: He goes to her..

Doll II: …very near her….

Doll I: (In a whisper.) What’s he going to do now?
Doll II: (Even more anxious.) What?

(They watch)

Doll I: (Baffled.) But he’s climbing a tree!

Doll II: (Almost a wail of disappointment.) He’s dived into a river!

Doll I: Is that all he came for! \(^{12}\)

It seems that the dolls allow Karnad to introduce the voice of “society” in the play. The dolls are not at all necessary to the plot, which can move forward without them, but they are important because they remind audience, the presence of society. Their attitudes provide some of the motivating force for Padmini’s behaviour in that she does some of what she does because of what society will say, and some of what she does in spite of what society will say. For instance, the dolls are gossipy and judgmental, like neighbours as:

Doll I: As the doll-maker used to say, ‘what are things coming to!’

Doll II: …Especially last night-I mean-that dream….

Doll I: Tut-tut-one shouldn’t talk about such things!

Doll II: It was so shameless….

Doll I: I said be quite…

Doll II: Honestly! They way they…\(^{13}\)

However, the female chorus projects the contrast ideas to the dolls’ insulting condemnation of Padmini. The Female chorus reveals a more mature and sympathetic perspective the character, Padmini. For instance, they sing:

Female Chorus (sings): Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower? A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor
shame. The blood pours into the earth and a song branches out in the sky.  

It is very noteworthy that song of female chorus sets up Padmini’s story at the beginning and provides the last comment on her at the end. The chorus projects yet another perspective on Padmini that she is not interested in being like Sita (the heroine of the Ramayana who has long-suffering and she is often recognized as a model of correct female behaviour). The chorus indicates audience not to judge Padmini according to orthodox social conventions as expressed by the Dolls. Or, at the very least to recognize these social strictures as conventions rather than inherent truths. Here, it seems that Girish Karnad wants his audience to examine these conventions and think about whom they serve. Thus, every theatrical device offers another perspective at Padmini.

The entire play is cast in the form of traditional Indian folk drama which took several features of ancient Sanskrit drama but adapted them to its own special needs as a popular form of art. The particular form of drama that Karnad draws upon is Yakshagana of Karnataka but this form has much in common with other traditional forms extant in the different parts of the country. In this respect, though a multi-dimensional personality, Girish Karnad is at his best in playwriting. He admits:

I had never fancied myself a dramatist. In fact, I had tried my hand at writing poetry. When I was at Dharwad, which was the cultural capital of Karnataka, having produced writers like Bendre, Gokak and so on, I would very often pass by the famous Kannada publishing house Manohara Granthamala and wonder if my work would ever be published by them! During the weeks preparation for my departure to England, I found myself writing a play. This was Yayati.  

2.1.2 Family life in Hayavadana:
The main plot of Hayavadana revolves around the search for a perfect human being—the best of brain and body. Devadatta and Padmini and Kapila are the main characters around whom the storyline develops in the play. The only son of the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara, Devadatta is pundit and poet who knows the Vedas and writes the greatest poetry ever. His friend, Kapila is a total anti-thesis to him—he is wrestler and a man of steel. They are very good friends. Even Bhagavata describes:

**Bhagavata:** The world wonders at their friendship. The world sees these two young men wandering down the streets of Dharmapura, hand in hand, and remembers Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana, Krishna and Balarama. Two friends there were—one mind, one heart.  

Devadatta, unrivalled in intelligence, a born poetic genius, the only son of a Brahmin, marries Padmini. Devadatta’s friend Kapila, dark and plain to look at, having no equal in physical strength, is the only son of an ironsmith. Devadatta and Kapila are the closest friends. It is important to noteworthy that right at the moment when the marriage of Devadatta and Padmini is arranged, Kapila realizes that Padmini is not meant for Devadatta. Because Kapila confesses Devadatta that Padmini would not be good for him and what she needs is a man of steel. However, Devadatta ignores Kapila’s realization and marries Padmini. Further, Padmini attracted to Kapila. Even symbolically the Female Chorus has already given an idea of the feeling of Padmini as:

Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? when the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower? A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame. The blood pours into the earth and a song branches out in the sky.
Thus, both Padmini and Kapila start attracting towards each other. Besides Kapila praises her beauty instinctively and Padmini enjoys his company whenever he comes to see her husband. Even Devadatta is not unaware therefore he becomes jealous as a true husband. He shows his anger through his thoughts:

**Devadatta:** (aside). Does she really not see? Or is she deliberately playing this game with him? Kapila was never the sort to blush. But now, he only has to see her and he begins to wag his tail. Sits up on his hind legs as though he were afraid to let her words fall to the ground. And that pleading in his eyes—can’t she really see that? Padmini, Kapila isn’t used to women. The only woman he has known in his life is his mother.  

Thus, being husband Devadatta feels very jealous and rejects the proposed journey on the cart to Ujjain which disappoints Kapila. Therefore Kapila expresses his thoughts to the spectators:

**Kapila:** (aside). So it’s off. What am I to do for the rest of the day? What am I to do for the rest of the week? Why should it feel as though the whole world has been wiped out for a whole week? Why this emptiness…Kapila, Kapila, get a tight hold on yourself. You are slipping, boy, control yourself. Don’t lose that hold. Go now—don’t come here again for a week—Devadatta’s bound to get angry with you for not coming. Sister-in-law will be annoyed. But don’t come back. Go, Go! Well then—I’ll start.  

Considering Kapila’s disappointment, Padmini insists on continuing with the arrangement of going to Ujjain. For Padmini, Kapila is more attractive than Devadatta because as representative of the energy and he has greater vitality and potential than Devadatta. In other words, Devadatta is a man of intellect while Kapila is a man of the strong body. Therefore, on
way to Ujjain, she praises the charm of Kapila’s strong body when Kapila climbs the tree to bring her the fortunate lady’s flower. Also she praises Kapila’s strong as:

**Padmini:** He is like a Celestial Being reborn as a hunter….How his body sways, his limbs curve-it’s a dance almost.  

According to Indian familial tradition, it is not fair in married life that wife is affectionate towards another person and praises to love husband’s friend. In this regard, Padmini is not pious wife. Consequently, familial life of Padmini and Devadatta is going to ruin, as Padmini and Kapila go to see the temple of Rudra. Devadatta excuses himself for a moment to go to the temple alone. Then in a sudden outburst of emotion and in frustration, he decides to sacrifice his head to Kali. He acts this way because he is unable to bear the pangs of jealousy and frailty of his wife. It can be observed when he says:

**Devadatta:** Good-bye, Kapila. Good-bye, Padmini. May the Lord Rudra bless you. You are two pieces of my heart-live happily together. I shall find my happiness in that. Give me strength, Lord Rudra. My father, give me courage. I’m already trembling. I’d never thought I would be so afraid. Give me courage, father, strengthen me. Bhavani, Bhairavi, Kali, Durga, Mahamaya, Mother of all nature-I had forgotten my promise to you. Forgive me, Mother. You fulfilled the deepest craving of my life-you gave me Padmini- and I forgot my word. Forgive me, for I’m here now to carry out my promise. (Picks up the sword.) Here, Mother Kali, here’s another. My head. Take it, Mother, accept this little offering my head.  

In this respect, Devadatta’s the real reason of the sacrifice is his refusal to share Padmini with Kapila. Thus, familial life of Devadatta and Padmini ruined because of Padmini’s frailty. Here, it seems that Girish Karnad wants to convey the importance of traditional Indian culture
which always sticks to moral virtue and paves the way of pious relationship in married life. Further the sight of the dead body of Devadatta shocks Kapila and Kapila says that he is sacrificing himself out of his love for friend but actually he wants to avoid the scandal due to Devadatta’s death. However, both Devadatta and Kapila were telling a lie is made clear by Kali that Devadatta would offers his head and it is promised by him.  

When Kali pleased with Padmini grants her a boon-the lives of the two men. As commanded by Kali, Padmini shuts her eyes and puts the heads, i.e. masks back. But in her excitement Padmini mixes them up so that Devadatta’s head goes to Kapila’s body and vice-versa. Then Kapila’s head and Devadatta’s body and Devadatta’s head and Kapila’s body-this act of transposition brings about initial excitement but it dies down with the question of who owns Padmini. However, Bhagavata intervenes and states a similar situation in Vetal-Pachavimsti where king Vikram gave the solution. Bhagavata reports that the three unfortunate friends go to a great rishi and the rishi remembering what king Vikram had said- gave the answer:

As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs. Therefore the man with Devadatta’s head is indeed Devadatta and he is the rightful husband of Padmini. 

Thus, the problem is solved by rishi. Devadatta and Padmini go back to the city where Devadatta enjoys the benefits of Kapil’s well trained body for a year. He succeeds in exploiting Kapila’s body to Padmini’s satisfaction. But mankind cannot live with perfection for a long time. Devadatta’s head fails to keep the liveliness of Kapila’s body. Strong body begins to wear off owing to the lack of physical exercise. It is very noteworthy that the changes in the Devadatta’s body are conveyed through the dolls. When Devadatta touches Doll I, the latter feels the change and comments:

**Doll II:** Why? What happened?
Doll I : He touched me, and …. 

Doll II: Yes?

Doll I : His palms! They were so rough, when he first brought us here. Like a labourer’s. But now they are soft-sickly soft-like a girl’s.

Doll II: I know. I’ve noticed something too.

Doll I : What?

Doll II: His stomach. It was so tight and muscular.

Now…..

Doll I : I know. It’s loose. 24

Devadatta’s head with Kapila’s body regains its former self- a delicate body. Consequently, Padmini who had felt that she had the best of both the men gets disillusioned. Padmini starts missing Kapila therefore she tactfully sends Devadatta to the city and she rushes to the forest for Kapila, holding a child in her arms. Here, it seems that Girish Karnad projects Padmini is fascinated by both Devadatta and Kapila and this creates the problem. Traditionally the two men cannot accept each other when it comes to sharing woman. In such situation two men certainly would fight each other. When Devadatta arrives in the forest to challenges Kapila to a fight into death. Both Devadatta and Kapila are ready to challenge as:

Devadatta: What a good mix-No more tricks. *(They laugh)*

Tell me one thing. Do you really love Padmini?

Kapila : Yes.

Devadatta : So do I.

Kapila : I know. *(Silence.)* Devadatta, couldn’t we all three live together-like the Pandavas and Draupadi?
Devadatta: What do you think? (*Silence. Padmini looks at them but doesn’t say anything.*)

Kapila: (Laughs) No, it can’t be done.

Devadatta: That’s why I brought this. (*Shows the sword*) won’t end has to be cut.  

Thus, the play ends with Devadatta and Kapila fighting a duel in which the heads roll again. When both Devadatta and Kapila are dead, Padmini decides to perform *Sati*. She asks the Bhagavata to make a large funeral pyre because they are three. Before sacrificing herself, Padmini makes it clear that she can not hope to get completeness even in her next life. As she prays:

Padmini: Kali, Mother of all Nature, you must have your joke even now..  

In this regard, it seems that Girish Karnad wants to illustrate man’s universal predicament i.e. quest for the perfection. In familial life, Padmini to get full satisfaction of loving persons, she just wonders from one person to another person but at the end she realizes that the perfection is only illusion.

It is noteworthy that Girish Karnad wants to give the message through conjugal life of Padmini. Padmini’s quest for perfection remains unfulfilled. Karnad projects reality in twentieth century which has been an age of great materialistic stress and finds problems such as confusion, frustration, disintegration and meaninglessness. The existential encounter with nothingness (hollowness) is typical strain of modern man’s life. The charms or *Maya* of materialistic life is very difficult to avoid because it seems that modern man pursues to get physical satisfaction from material things but inner (*soul*) satisfaction is very important in life.

2.1.3: Characters in *Hayavadana*:

The play, *Hayavadana* is resonant with multilayered social messages. In this play, dramatist projects the core problems, ‘what does a woman desire?’ ‘Quest for completeness’ and ‘identity crises. While these presenting, it seems that re-visions all eternal issues featuring in the traditional Indian thought and literature: man-woman relationship, duty-desire, and virtue-sin.
The theme of human desire for perfection, feminine frailty and tragic love is feature as traditional theme to expose nuisance of society. Padmini’s portrayal raised several questions such as ‘what made her do as she did?’ ‘Is her betrayal of Devadatta acceptable to society?’ However, the tradition of Indian culture paved social rules for not only for woman but also for man. For instance, women are obliged to adhere to one man (husband) and it became sinful for them to deviate from this.

In Hayavadana evil is manifested through adultery. Padmini commits adultery knowingly. There are occasional references to Padmini’s infidelity in the play. She is drawn towards Kapila. Since Kapila is Devadatta’s friend, it is her moral duty that she should consider him as her brother. But she keeps an incestuous relationship with him. She fails to resist the charm of his body. Even she describes Kapila’s attractive body as:

Padmini: How he climbs- like an ape. Before I could even say ‘yes’, he had taken off his shirt, pulled his dhoti up and swung up the branch. And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back-like an ocean with muscles rippling across it- and then that small, feminine waist which books so helpless.  

It is noteworthy that there are several indications that she enjoys physical pleasure from both the men. At the end of the play, she herself admits that her child has two fathers. Without fear, she admits to Bhagavata: 

Padmini: Yes, Please. My son is sleeping in the hut. Take him under your care. Give him to the hunters who live in this forest and tell them it’s Kapila’s son. They loved Kapila and will bring the child up. Let the child grow up in the forest with the rivers and the trees. When he’s five take him to the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara of Dharmapura. Tell him it’s Devadatta’s son. 

Thus, it is evident that she has kept illegal relationship with Kapila and Padmini is guilty of infidelity. According to the Indian tradition a woman should keep her chastity till death and
should consider it evil to cohabit with a man other than her own husband. There are several examples found in rich traditional Indian culture such as Sita in the *Ramayana*, Savitri, and so on. The love of Padmini is not spiritual one but mere passion for physical pleasure.

Several Indian dramatists have explored the theme of marriage as a social problem in their writings. However, Girish Karnad explores the problems related not only marriage system but also relationship in marriage life in the modern context. Since most of Karnad’s plays have their origin in Indian myths, folklore project Indian situations and Indian cultural norms in his plays. In India culture the bride and groom rarely meet before their marriage and elders play an active and crucial role in fixing marriages. In *Hayavadana*, Kapila goes to Padmini’s house with a marriage proposal from Deavadatta. At the gate Kapila is stopped and questioned by Padmini. Even meeting between Kapila and Padmini is very symbolic because Kapila understands that Padmini would not be good match for Devadatta as he admits:

**Kapila:** Devadatta, my friend, I confess to you I’m feeling uneasy. You are a gentle soul. You can’t bear a bitter word or an evil thought. But this one is fast as lightning-and as sharp. She is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can one do? You’ll never listen to me. And I can’t withdraw now. I’ll have to talk to her family.²⁹

Actually Kapila confesses to Devadatta because he realizes at a very early stage that marriage of Padmini and Devadatta would not be successful. It seems that he may stress that they never touch the minds of the elders of the two families who ultimately fix the marriage of the two. In the Indian context, a marriage is not something that takes place between two individuals but something that brings two families together. Therefore, it seems that the marriage of Devadatta and Padmini is ironically described by Bhagavata as signifying two Goddess i.e. Wealth and Learning with question mark:

**Bhagavata:** Padmini is the daughter of the leading merchant in Dharmapura. In her house, the very floor is swept by the Goddess of Wealth. In Devadatta’s house, they’ve the Goddess of Learning
for a maid. What could then possibly stand in the way of bringing the families together? 30

Besides, Padmini seems to have very modest say as far as fixing of her marriage is concerned. Further within six months of her marriage, it is clear that Kapila’s body attracts her more than Devadatta’s delicate beauty and learning. It is obvious to Devadatta that the frequent visits Kapila makes to his house are not just to meet him. When he voices his irritation Padmini discloses her own role in the matter. She is willingly agreed her fault even she is not responsible for it because she also wants to meet Kapila. For this purpose she tells lie as:

   Padmini: Don’t blame him. It’s my fault. He learnt a bit about poetry from you and I thought he might enjoy Bhasa. So I asked him to come...He didn’t want to- but I insisted. 31

Here, Padmini’s point of view, it seems that Devadatta is physically mismatched. Contrary, it is clear that Devadatta is no match either for Padmini’s sharp tongue or her clear thinking. Among Kapila, Devadatta and Padmini, she is the boldest one. She does not shy away from the awareness of the attraction she feels towards Kapila. She does not possess the qualities of pious wife. She hurts Devadatta’s fragile ego again and again by her admiration for Kapila’s physical fitness and expertise. Therefore it seems that Padmini is not devoted wife in marriage life. Consequently, conjugal life of Devadatta and Padmini leads to break down at the end of play.

In the context of Indian traditional moral theory is concerned ‘theory of Purushartha’ is one of the ethics of the Indian civilization. The present researcher thinks that this theory is very relevant to modern man. Therefore let me try to show how the playwright makes his characters move towards the realization of their Purusharthas in modern contextual life. Girish Karnad’s play, Hayavadana projects the restlessness and predicament of modern man and yet another facet of man-woman relationship in the context of conjugal life. About this, more shall be discussed a little latter. First let me explore the theory of Purushartha.

‘Purusharthas means to refer to a goal, or aim of human existence.’ 32 The word 'purushartha' exactly combined of two words 'purusa' and 'artha'. According to Hindu way of life, a man should struggle to gain four main objectives (Purusharthas) in life. It consists
of four major elements such as –a). Dharma b). Artha, c). Kama and d). Moksha. ‘Purushartha, the term that indicates and paves moral way related to proper livings engage the pursuit of referred goals and it is discussed and projected in the great traditional Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata’. 33

Besides Girish Karnad elucidates the concept, the Purusharthas to his contemporary audience/readers:

The ‘purusharthas’ are the four ethical goals of human existence: ‘dharma’, ‘artha’, ‘kama’ and ‘moksha’. Very roughly, ‘dharma’ relates to the spiritual sphere, ‘artha’ to the realm of political and economic power, and ‘kama’ to that of sexual or aesthetic gratification. In these cases, what a person understands as his or her ‘purushartha’ could vary according to his or her background, stage of and station in life, sex etc., as well as the nature of the crisis he or she is facing. The fourth goal, ‘moksha’, is release from the cycle of births and deaths and hence final liberation from human bondage. This is the supreme goal, the achievement of which relates the human being to the Absolute. The concept therefore belongs to a realm beyond where the first three are relevant. Thus the harmony of the first three may be seen as a means to realizing the fourth. Abinavagupta states that drama should direct one’s mind toward the realization of the ‘purusharthas’.34

Girish Karnad, in Hayavadana, projects not only a microscopic picture of man-woman relationship in conjugal life but also presents the alteration of principles in modern society of India. In Hayavadana Girish Karnad presents a couple Devadatta and Padmini with Kapila who is friend of Devadatta. Padmini has very intellectual husband but she is sad with her companion
for weak physical. Therefore she attracts towards Kapila. Yet, Padmini, similar to any contemporary lady, is fairly conscious of her power as a modern woman she praises the charm of Kapila’s strong body when Kapila climbs the tree as:

**Padmini:** He is like a Celestial Being reborn as a hunter….How his body sways, his limbs curve- it’s a dance almost. 35

The praised words for Kapila’s body and his physical movement disclose Padmini’s strong desire for a strong and steel body of Kapila. Devadatta realizes that Padmini is in love with Kapila when he observes her, her interest in Kapila’s body and her secret thought to possess him. Padmini is a hypocrite and wise woman. Padmini does not publicly admit her love for Kapila because she is aware of the socio-cultural limitations which prohibit a married woman from developing extra-marital relationship which would destruction of marriage institution. She admits Devadatta that she will not commit that mistake again. She says:

**Padmini:** What are you afraid of, Devadatta?...Kapila’s gone out of my life-forever. I won’t let him come back again. 36

In this context, critic, B.T. Seetha aptly comments:

*Artha* and *kama* considered as lower values are termed *adhama*

while *dharma* and *moksha* are considered *uttama* or higher values.

Padmini’s dilemma of choice between Devadatta and Kapila is akin to such a movement…it is the ever-present existential conflict of a human mind to overcome pain and suffering that leads to this movement. 37

Besides, the four *purusharthas* play a crucial role in various degrees. It seems that Girish Karnad projects the conflicts between *Dharma* (religious, social and moral righteousness) and *Adharma* through the character, Kapila. Kapila exhibits characteristics of *Adharma*, for instance, according to the principles of *dharma* it is believed that it is illicit act to see friend’s wife as
beloved or wife. Here, Kapila loves his friend’s wife, Padmini. This illicit act is the cause of pain and suffering not only for him but also for Devadatta and Padmini. The following conversation between Devadatta and Kapila before they begin their sword-fight may be cited in support to reveal Kapila’s love for Padmini:

**Devadatta:** What a good mix-No more tricks. *(They laugh)*

Tell me one thing. Do you really love Padmini?

**Kapila:** Yes.

**Devadatta:** So do I.

**Kapila:** I know. *(Silence.)* 38

Thus, Kapila does not hesitate to express his love for Padmini. In this respect, it is noteworthy that if human being exhibits such characteristics that are animal-like and instinctive. It means that human reasoning and instinct do not work together and Kapila follows the principles of *Adharma*. Therefore Kapila cannot attain the values of *Dharma* and *Moksha*. In this respect, critic B.T. Seetha explains *Purusa* according to Sankhya Yoga which is very relevant to behaviour of Kapila and Devadatta. As she explains:

According to Sankhya Yoga, ‘*Purusa*’ is mere sentience. It is changeless, eternal and omnipresent.’ It sees *purusa* as a derivative of *prakri*, thus recognizing two ultimate entities. *Prakrti* becomes the cause of the universe, wherein even time and space are represented as its aspects. *Sattva, rajas* and *tamas* termed as *gunas* are considered the essential characteristics of the physical universe. These characteristics form the basis of human nature and ‘forge a chain for binding the self’. *Prakrit* that is ever evolving/involving, “not only binds but also liberates the self from bondage; indeed *purusas* liberation is the ultimate purpose for which it evolves”. *Prakriti* is in fact the ‘finitising’ principle. To all
perception it is finite and makes form in the ‘infinite formless consciousnesses’. Satvaguna reveals consciousness, Tamasguna suppresses or veils consciousness it is the Rajasguna that makes active ‘it works on Tamas to suppress Satva, or on Satva to suppress Tamas’. Purusa symbolizes reason and intellect, power and physique. Prakrti on the other hand represents feeling and emotion, beauty and benevolence. Nagamandala and Hayavadana exemplify the evolution/involution from the ‘unmanifest’ complex prakrti to a simple ‘psychic entity’ of the self.39

Thus, there are called three gunas such as Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Different proportions of three gunas in any individual determine his nature. A person dominated by Satvaguna is a gentle, contemplative seeker of knowledge. A Rajasguna is an active and dynamic person who thirsts for possession. Tamasguna is aggressive and angry person who also thirsts for possession. These three gunas help man to reach his goal, namely Moksha or salvation. Critic Jacob George C. observes Karnad’s characters such as Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini through three gunas:

One of the major issues in the play is the conflict between two polarities which could be categorized as the Satwa-guna and the Rajaguna. Devadatta, “comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled intelligence…logic and love…poetry and wit,” is portrayal as Satwic in nature. Kapila, the only son of an ironsmith “is dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds which require drive and daring in dancing, in strength and in physical skills, he has no equal” Rajo-guna obviously dominates in Kapila. The play firmly establishes the opposition between reason and instinct; culture and primitive nature; brains and loins; mind and body; and spirit and flesh; through Devadatta and Kapila.40
Thus, both Devadatta and Kapila are presented by different *gunas* and are trapped in their own respective *gunas*. However, Kapila’s *gunas* are causes to fail in attaining *Moksha* because he fails to follow principles of *Purusharthas*. On the other hand Devadatta may be attained *Moksha* because he acted according to *Satwa-guna*.

It is very crucial to note that Girish Karnad presents Lord Ganesh to reveal the completeness on the perspectives of *Purusharthas* theory in the play, *Hayavadana*. In this context, critic Jacob George C. aptly writes:

In *Ganapathi Atharava Seersha* which is an *Upanishad* of the *Atharava Veda*, mantra no.6 invokes Lord Ganapathi as one “beyond the three *gunas*.” The three *gunas* (*Satwa, Rajas* and *Tamas*), which literally mean “ropes,” shackle a *jeeva (soul)* to *Maya*; and therefore quest for completion involves the attainment of release from the fetters of *gunas*. Lord Ganesha, being “Gunapathy” (the master of all the three *gunas*), represents the ultimate desired by all aspirants for completeness.41

### 2.2 Introduction: The Fire and the Rain:

*The Fire and the Rain* is a translation of Karnad’s Kannada play *Agni Mattu Male*, published by Oxford University Press in 1998. On translation perspectives, ‘Agni’ is the Sanskrit word for ‘fire’, ‘Mattu’ means ‘and’, a spoken Kannada word ‘Rain’ is a translation of ‘Male’, which means ‘rain, pure and simple’. *The Fire and the Rain* is based on the myth of Yavakri,
Indra and Vritra. It seems that by using myth Girish Karnad projects the eternal conflict of good and evil continues from the period of the *Mahabharata* to the modern contemporary society. The myth of Yavakri is a story of ambition to achieve the Universal Knowledge directly from the Gods but not from the human gurus, which is unjustified and immature. Knowledge without experience is dangerous to humanity and it was the last message of Gods to Yavakri as well as to human beings on earth.

In *The Fire and the Rain* Karnad gives a contemporary meaning to an ancient legend taken from *The Mahabharata* in which Yavakri resorts to harsh penance to win the boon of knowledge from Indra. Besides, knowledge does not bring wisdom to Yavakri who suffers due to this and falls a prey to lust. However, through this play Karnad points out the danger of knowledge without wisdom. Karnad alters the original myth by incorporating the scene of drought in the entire land due to Yavakri’s sin. In the end of the play rain arrives giving relief to good persons. The play is highly symbolic in interpretation. The ‘fire’ is that of lust, anger, envy, violence and death while rain is the symbol of self-sacrifice, compassion, forgiveness, divine grace, revival and life. However, it is correctly discussed by Vanashree Tripathi about the relationship between the theme and source of the Karnad’s play, *The Fire and the Rain*:

*The Fire and the Rain*, is a translation of Karnad’s Kannada play, *Agni Mattu Male*. Its story drawn from the *Mahabharata* is deeply implicated in mythological, ritualistic matrix and psychological significations. Karnad’s rebuilding of the past liberated the contemporary consciousness from the shackles of the present. We find ourselves set free into the primordial soil of the *Mahabharata*: the deep forests in which the hermits, the demons lived, the gods and the demons fought, where ordinary humanity lived in joys and sorrows. All of history, not just that of modern man. This is not to say that religious cultures of the ancient world did not have drawbacks, some of which modern culture has corrected.42
2.2.1 Karnad’s Use of Myth:

Girish Karnad tries to uphold the rich cultural heritage of India by using myths and traditional stories in his plays. It seems that he has made great an effort to uphold Indian values and its cultural ethos. However, according to M.H. Abrams, G.G. Harpham ‘myth’ means:

> A myth is one story in a mythology—a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rational for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives.43

Besides, critic Om Prakash Budholia aptly states that how great literary writers used myths:

> Almost all the great writers of the world such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Homer, Dante, Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and others have worked out the universal validity of literature in their writings. They have either steered the operation of the mythic properties or maintained the symbolization of human thoughts for displaying the universal elements of human emotions.44

Girish Karnad chooses an ancient Yavakri myth from the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata for the dramatic construction of his play, The Fire and the Rain. Also, it is clearly confessed by Girish Karnad in the preface of this play:

> The myth of Yavakri (or Yavakrita) occurs in Chapters 135-38 of the Vana Parva (forest Canto) of the Mahabharata. It is narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the Pandavas as they wander across the land
during their exile. I have met Sanskrit scholars who were unaware of
the existence of the myth: it is easy to lose track of a short narrative
like this in the tangled undergrowth that covers the floor of that
epic.....It was fortunate for me that Rajaji did not do so, for the
moment I read the tale, I knew it had to be turned into a play. 45

It is very crucial to note down myths such as Yavakri, Indra, Vritra as explained by
Girish Karnad to understand how Karnad employed these mythical aspects in his play. The myth
of Yavakri is narrated in the ‘Notes’ of The Fire and the Rain by Girish Karnad:

There were two sages, Bharadwaja and Raibhya who were good friends. Raibhya was a learned man who lived with his two sons while Bharadwaja
concentrated on his ascetic practices Yavakri, Bharadwaja’s son, nursed a grievance
against the world for the felt his father did not receive the respect and recognition
which was his due.

He therefore went off to the forest and did “tapasya” (penance) so that he
could obtain the knowledge of the Vedas from the gods direct. The rigours of his
ascetic practice were such that Indra, the lord of gods, appeared to him, but only to
persuade him that there were no such short cuts to knowledge. Knowledge has to be
obtained by studying at the feet of a guru. But Yavakri was so adamant that Indra
ultimately relented and let him have his wish.

Bharadwaja, being a wise man, was anxious lest the triumph turn his son’s
head and cautioned Yavakri against delusions of omnipotence. But his fears
unfortunately proved well-founded. For one of the first things Yavakri did was to
corner Raibhya’s daughter-in-law in a lonely spot and molest her.

Yavakri’s misdemeanour incensed Raibhya. He invoked the ‘kritya’ spirit. He
tore a hair from his head and made an oblation of it to the fire. From another hair he
similarly brought forth a rakshasa (demon). Then he sent the two to kill Yavakri.

The spirit in the form of the daughter-in-law approached Yavakri seductively
and stole the urn which contained the water that made him invulnerable to danger.
The rakshasa then chased him with a trident. Yavakri ran toward a lake in search of
water, but the lake dried up. Every spot with a bit of water in it dried up at his approach. Finally Yavakri tried to enter his father’s hermitage. But a blind man of the Sudra caste, who was guarding the gate, barred Yavakri’s entry. At that moment the rakshasa killed Yavakri. When Bharadwaja learnt from the Sudra how his son had died, he was naturally distressed. Although he knew his son was to blame for all that had happened, he cursed Raibhya that he would die at the hand of his elder son. And then shocked at his own folly in cursing a friend, he entered fire and immolated himself.

Raibhya’s two sons, Paravasu and Aravasu were conducting a fire sacrifice for the king. One night when Paravasu was visiting his home, he mistook the black deerskin which his father was wearing for a wild animal and unintentionally killed him. When he realized what he had done, he cremated his father and returned to the sacrificial enclosure. There he said to his brother Aravasu: “Since you are not capable of performing the sacrifice alone, go and perform the penitential rites prescribed for Brahminicide. I’ll carry on with the sacrifice.” Aravasu did his brother’s bidding. But when he returned to the sacrifice, Paravasu turned to the king and said: “This man is Brahmin-killer. He should not be allowed to enter the sacrificial enclosures.” The king promptly ordered his servants to throw Aravasu out, although the latter kept protesting loudly that he was innocent. Aravasu retired to the jungle and prayed to the Sun God. When the gods appeared, he asked them to restore Yavakri, Bharadwaja and Raibhya back to life and make Paravasu forget his evil act. The gods granted him the boon. When Yavakri came back to life, the gods reprimanded him on his folly and asked him to pursue knowledge in the right manner.46

Thus, the play is based on the myth of Yavakri and his fruitless penance which appears in the Mahabharata. Lomasha, the purohit of Yudhishtir narrated the myth to Pandavas. Lomasha’s objective was to impart the teaching regarding the dangers of false knowledge and the evils resulting from lust, pride, jealousy and anger. Girish Karnad projects this myth with new dimensions which are related to modern context. However, first, it is very crucial to understand the myth of Indra and Vritra as narrated in the ‘Notes’ of The Fire and the Rain by Girish Karnad:
The slaying of the demon Vritra by Indra is one of the archetypal myths of India. It is found in the *Rigveda*; it appears again, needless to say with variations, in the *Mahabharata* nearly a thousand years later. In the *Rigveda*, Vritra, ‘the shoulderless one’ (a serpent) swallows rivers and hides the waters inside him. Indra, by killing him, releases the waters and ‘like lowing cows, the rivers flow out’. The importance of this deed to the Vedic culture is borne out by the epithet, ‘Vritrahan’ or the slayer of Vritra, by which Indra is repeatedly hailed. Yet a passing reference in the myth to how Indra, frightened, fled ‘like a falcon across ninety-nine rivers’ suggests that even the Rigvedic version probably had elements not entirely complimentary to Indra.

In the *Mahabharata*, Indra has lost his central position in the Hindu pantheon. The sectarian gods, Vishnu and Shiva, now hold sway. In the later version of the myth, Indra is anxious that Vishwarupa (also called Trishiras, the three-headed one), son of Tvastri, may dislodge him from his throne. He therefore destroys Vishwarupa treacherously. Tvastri then gives birth to another son, Vritra, by a female demon, and tells him: ‘Kill Indra’. Indra, unable to overcome the new enemy, again has to resort to ignominious trickery to survive. Having killed Vritra, he suffers from the guilt of Brahminicide.47

Thus, Girish Karnad draws thematic properties from the ancient myth of the Mahabharata for his play, *The Fire and the Rain*. Through myths such as Yavakri, Indra and Vritra Karnad explores the question of identity, crisis between good and evil, *dharma* and *adharma*. In this regard, it seems that Girish Karnad is influenced by great traditional Indian myths to reveal some psychoanalytic features of modern men. The following remark of N.M. Nigam is relevant in the context of Girish Karnad:

The genius of Karnad lies in the fact that he uses these myths weaves them into a spell-binding modern play. Along with myths and folk tales he mixes issues relating to human existence. Love and hate; trust and treachery; penance and unethical conduct; power and weakness; sacrifice and murder and juxtaposed to each other in the
play. There is fire of jealousy, lust and incest in the play vis-à-vis the rain of pure love.\textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{2.2.2 Family life in The Fire and the Rain:}

Girish Karnad projects two pairs, one is Parvasu and Vishakha are husband and wife and second is Arvasu and Nittilai are lover and beloved who are planning to get married. Both two pairs grow and encounter Indian situation and Indian cultural norms. According to Indian culture, it is believed that the bride and groom hardly ever meet before their marriage and father and mother, in other words elders play crucial role in arranging marriage. In \textit{The Fire and the Rain}, Vishakha loved Yavakri but she was forced to marry Paravasu. Even she comments on her patriarchal family where father arranged her marriage:

\begin{quote}

\textbf{Yavakri:} Your father must have felt relieved that I went away.

Paravasu was a better match. I was only his miserable cousin.

\textbf{Vishakha:} Yes, Father was happy. I was married off to Paravasu.

I did not want to, but that didn’t matter.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, Vishakha was quite happy on first year of her marriage. Even she expresses her joy how she was happy with her husband:

\begin{quote}

\textbf{Vishakha:} He plunged me into a kind of bliss I didn’t know existed. It was heaven-her and now-at the tip of all senses.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Thus, Vishakha feels happy despite her reluctance to marry Paravasu but her joy could not survive long enough in marital life. On the first day of the second year of her marriage, Paravasu left her in the house and went to participate in Fire Sacrifice as Chief Priest for seven years. In this regard, he did not think about his wife’s emotions such as loneliness, loveless life etc. Therefore Vishakha openly blames Paravasu:

\begin{quote}

\textbf{Vishakha} But I knew he knew…we never talk. Only the sense pervaded the air. \textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}
However, the traditional Indian woman always wishes her husband to provide not only physical but also emotional satisfaction in the family life, but here husband is unable to provide such things and even he could not understand Vishkha’s love so Vishakha found her life meaningless with her husband. Therefore, after seven years of separation from her husband, Vishakha falls an easy prey to Yavakri’s artificial love. But it is true that she is not pious wife to Paravasu. Here it seems that Karnad beautifully satirizes frailty of woman who represents the elitist woman of modern society. The elitist society of modern India is intended to attack the social virtues of upgradation of human values and positive and constructive approach to life. Girish Karnad emphasizes on the roots of downfall of modern society in the country and stresses on the maintenance of values which are superior to caste, religion. In this context, Punam Pandey rightly writes on Karnad’s characters and modern theme:

In the postmodern era, man’s struggle lies in the quest for money and power which keeps him away from his family and other relationships. He hardly values personal relationships. He simply aspires for prosperity in order to achieve the social status, identity and prestige, and is forced to face the unpredictable predicament. Such madness leads him to hell and subdues his roots of happiness, compassion and pleasure in life. We can witness such rat race of materialism and power in Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain*.

In *The Fire and the Rain* Vishakha witnesses such rat race of materialism and power not only in familial life and social life where Paravasu wishes to be the supreme priest. To achieve his ambition, Paravasu does not care the emotions of his wife, his bother. Paravasu’s brother, Arvasu is humble brother, who is ready to sacrifice everything for him. It is clear in following lines of Arvasu:

**Arvasu:** Hard? Never to me. To me he’s been a mother, father, brother, nurse, teacher—everything rolled into one. He who
taught me to win at marbles and play tunes on reeds. I owe everything to him.  

However, it is the tragedy of Arvasu that Paravasu could not understand the love and affection of his brother in familial life. At the end Arvasu comes out of his repentance and agony and he jumps into sacred fire. It is a sort of existential struggle which makes him a victim of circumstances. Therefore, it seems that characters such as Paravasu, Vishakha, Arvasu strive very hard and sacrifice everything to solve the familial problems. In this connection, how clearly Joshi Rakesh writes on Karnad’s character and his characterization:

Characterization is the very soul of a drama. It is character which issues out in action and results in catastrophe. Characterization is all important; the characters in a drama must be real, living, breathing human beings like us, and not monsters of wickedness virtue. The characters in the plays of Karnad are like us. They are mixture of good and evil in different proportion. Girish Karnad pays adequate attention to his characters. Though his characters are from history, but they are not devoid of life and vitality. They are living characters.

In *The Fire and the Rain*, couple, Nittilai and Arvasu is presented to criticize caste-system; Nittilai belongs to low-caste people on the one hand, while on the other, Arvasu belongs to elitist class of the society. Girish Karnad even after such dissimilarity and distance, presents the love of Arvasu and Nittilai as true love beyond the walls of caste and creed. They represent the bond of love as a supreme structure even beyond the supremacy of caste. Here it seems that Karnad’s approach is realistic and existential. It is not caste that upholds the society, but virtue that maintains the quality of life on earth. This moral consideration is greatly important as it is presented through Nittilai. Also, researcher thinks that Girish Karnad through the character, Nittiali, it is immorality or vice which is attacked and criticized and after rehabilitation of values, the face of contemporary society will emerge in rich design of human and moral values. Though
Nittilai, a hunter girl of jungle tradition, loves Arvasu from very bottom of her heart. Even her father warns her:

These high-caste men are glad enough
to bed our women but not to wed them. \(^{55}\)

On the other hand, Arvasu also loves Nittilai. He tells Andhaka, a blind man of Sudra caste:

**Arvasu:** I can’t give up Nittiali. She is my life. I can’t live without her- I would rather be an outcaste. \(^{56}\)

The words of Arvasu reveal the truth that he is not only ready to sacrifice his caste but also he is ready to marry Nittilai. Even Nittilai is ready to marry and she believes that Arvasu is pure and acts without self-interest. However, they could not marry but it seems that Nittilai plays a very crucial role in this play as a mouthpiece on behalf of the dramatist. She sometimes acts like a innocent girl while sometimes she behaves like a mature woman who is busy in solving problem. Even sometimes she represent questioning mind. Even she raises the question about God and Fire Sacrifice:

**Nittilai:** you know, their fire sacrifices are conducted in covered enclosures. They mortify themselves in the dark of the jungle. Even their gods appear so secretly. Why? What are they afraid of? Look at my people. Everything is done in public view there. \(^{57}\)

Thus, it seems that through the words of Nittilai Karnad points out the problems related to low-caste people who are denied to attend Fire Sacrifice. Nittiali raises questions about the secretly performance of Fire Sacrifice. Further, she doubts Yavakri’s method of acquiring Universal Knowledge:

**Nittilai:** My point is since Lord Indra appeared to Yavakri and Indra is their God of Rains, why didn’t Yavakri ask for a couple of good showers? ….actually, I want to ask Yavakri two questions. Can he make it rain? And then, can he tell when he is going to die?...just two. What is the point of any knowledge, if you
can’t save dying children and if you can’t predict your moment of death. 58

Further, Nittilai is only partially successful in conveying Arvasu from the act of vengeance. Nittilai does not hesitate to warn him:

**Nittilai:** Leave that to the gods, Arvasu. Look at your family.

Yavakri avenges his father’s shame by attacking your sister-in-law. Your father avenge her by killing Yavakri. Your brother kills your father. And now you in your turn want vengeance—where will it all end? 59

Thus, Nittilai is able to stop Arvasu initially from joining the violent game. Here, it seems that Nittilai symbolizes true and selfless love. Further, Vishakha is exploited by her husband, father-in-law and her lover. She becomes a sexual weapon in the hands of the male to avenge each other and the male search for knowledge and power uses her. Vishakha suffers from the repression of emotions and desires, and the lacks the freedom even to communicate with her husband though she is surrounded by learned and scholar men. Actually her relationship with Paravasu is one of compromises through which she tries to remove the memories of her previous lover, Yavakri. When her husband, Paravasu is called to be the Chief Priest for the Fire Sacrifice, she is abandoned for seven years to dwell in her private fears. Consequently, she becomes the victim of lust of Yavakri. Vishakha experiences denial of a meaningful role within the family. The silence that surrounds her life is of loneliness. Vishakha fails to realize her full potential since she is forced to live in a male-dominated and exploitative family. She cannot even hope to enjoy the kind of freedom that Nittilai has.

However, Nittiali and Vishakha are both victims of male control. Nittiali is marginalized from the mainstream as belonging to Sudra caste. But she is portrayed as being more creative, democratic and humanitarian than those of the high castes. On comparative lines, Nittlai alone woman character who progresses towards self-definition in other words she grows from an innocent tribal girl wandering in the forest, observing and tracing animal footprints and its flora and fauna, to questioning the goals of sacrifice and ritualistic religion, an assertion of her joy and
freedom. In comparison, Vishakha seems very reversal of Nittiali. In this regard critic, Mala Renganathan aptly writes on Karnad’s women characters:

Karnad puts his women protagonists in an Ibsenian complex that appears to challenge patriarchal tradition. He revises traditional folktales and myths in order to create heroines enmeshed in the crossroads of tradition. But he tends to present women as ‘cardboard characters’, as persons torn between the ideal and the pragmatic or between the illusive and the real. Their dilemmas do not seen to transform them into mature or triumphant individuals, but to only lead them either to their death or to their survival as victims of conflicting forces. Vishakha and Nittiali in The Fire and the Rain also follow similar trends.60

2.2.3 Characters in The Fire and the Rain:

Girish Karnad explores the theme of marriage as a social predicament in his writings. However, Girish Karnad, in The Fire and the Rain, projects problems related to relationship of man-woman in marriage life in the modern context. Since Karnad’s plays have their source in Indian myths, folklore project Indian situations and Indian cultural virtues in his plays. Karnad’s play, The Fire and the Rain based on the Yavakri and Indra myth presents two pairs. Paravasu and Vishakha are husband and wife and Arvasu and Nittiali are lovers who are planning to get married. Vishakha loved Yavakri but was forced to marry Paravasu at the insistence of her father after Yavakri left in search of knowledge.

In The Fire and the Rain, the marriage is on verge of decline. While tying couples into marriage life, in The Fire and the Rain, consent of Vishakha, Nittilai is not considered. Vishakha, Nittilai reluctantly approve their will for getting married. In other words they are forced to marry. Vishakha admits:
Vishakha: Yes. Father was happy. I was married off to Paravasu. I didn’t want to, but that didn’t matter. The night of the wedding, my husband said to me: ‘I know you didn’t want to marry me.’

According to Vishakha, despite her reluctance to marry Paravasu she was quite happy on the first year of her marriage. But she blames Paravasu about her sad married life as:

Vishakha: The night of the wedding, my husband said to me: ‘I know you didn’t want to marry me. But don’t worry. I’ll make you happy for a year.’ And he did. Exactly for one year. He plunged me into a kind of bliss I didn’t know existed. It was heaven-here and now-at the tip of all my senses. Then on the first day of the second year of our marriage, he said: ‘Enough of that. We now start on our search.’ And then-it wasn’t that I was not happy…

Thus, Vishakha and Paravasu could enjoy only one year in married life. Henceforth, Paravasu went to Royal Fire Sacrifice. Meanwhile, after seven years of separation from her husband Vishakha falls an easy prey to Yavakri’s lovable talk. This tragic event occurs in Vishkha’s married life because the relationship between Vishakha and Paravasu is a troubled one. There is a complete failure of communication. Paravasu refuses to answer any questions put to him by Vishakha. There are several references to the silences that existed between Paravasu and Vishakha in the early period of their marriage. Later on, when after hearing about his wife’s infidelity, Paravasu returns to his hut under the cover of darkness and he refuses to answer the questions put to him by his wife. Ultimately, her questions become either rhetorical or mere statements. In other word, they fail to communicate each other as husband and wife. For instance:

Vishakha: (In a low voice.) How are you, Husband?

(No reply.)
Only occasional bits of news about you. When someone from her goes to the city and attends the sacrifice—

(No response.)

Are you well? Or do you still drive yourself to the point of illness-like a demon?

(No reply.)

I was sure you wouldn’t come home even if I were on my deathbed.

(No reply.)

But my fornication was reason enough, wasn’t it?

(No reply.)

Thus, Vishakha is fed up of the perpetual silence of her husband. It seems that there is an attempt to keep the wife isolated and out of the picture of the external world. The husbands try to exert their monopoly over their wives in various ways and when they feel that they have failed to retain their absolute hold over their wives, physical and emotional selves they get emotionally charged and destructive. In fit of jealousy, in Hayavadana, Devadatta kills himself, in The Fire and the Rain, Paravasu leaves the sacrifice incomplete and comes looking for revenge. However, it is truth that they failed in married life. In Hayavadana and The Fire and the Rain, marriages are presented as mockeries. The failure of marriages affects the lives of not only the couples but also others. Padmini, Vishakha suffer in their own ways and as a result, Kapila, Yavakri and Raibhaya lose their lives. In this regard, Joshipura Pranav aptly comments:

Karnad is generalizing the issue, which is really harmful.

Suppose, the society grants this liberty, then where would it stop? It would certainly pose a great harm to the society. Third, suppose one is attracted to another sex, which is natural, but then there should be
equal norms for man and woman. Fourth and last, Karnad shows that
if one goes for extra-marital relations, then the end is death.\textsuperscript{64}

It is vital to note that Girish Karnad goes back to the rich traditions of the \textbf{Vedas and the Purusharthas} in order to dramatize morals and social virtues from Gods to men on the earth in the play. The following comments by Girish Karnad may be cited in support to reveal how Vedas play the crucial role in man’s life:

It was a time when the moral fibre of the society had weakened, irrational passions held sway and people had surrendered themselves to their baser instincts. Knowledge of the Vedas (which presumably could have saved the situation) being restricted to the upper strata of the society, a medium was required that entertained and could restore the health of the society by reaching out to all the people, regardless of their position in the social hierarchy. On being implored by Indra and the other gods to provide such an instrument, Brahma, the Father of the Universe, took the text from the \textit{Rigveda}, the art of performance from the \textit{Yajurveda}, the song from the \textit{Samaveda} the rase (aesthetic experience) from the \textit{Atharvaveda} and created a fifth Veda called \textit{Natyaveda}.

But Indra realized that the gods were unable (or unfit) to deal with this new form and passed it on to a human preceptor, Bharata. And Bharata, with the help of his hundred sons and some nymphs specially created by Brahma for the purpose, staged the first play. The play was performed on the occasion of the Banner Festival, held to celebrate Indra’s victory in a battle over the demons. The theme of the play was the victory of the gods over the demons, the event which the festival was meant to celebrate. Drama serves varied functions—providing for instruction, entertainment, enlightenment, happiness, peace and moral upliftment.\textsuperscript{65}

Thus, Indra’s victory of gods over demons which is symbolic of the conflict between good and evil, the story of eternal battle between Gods and demon in the heaven and good-doer and evil-doer on the earth. In this sense, Karnad’s play, \textit{The Fire and the Rain}, projects conflicting values of good and evil, moral and immoral, justice and injustice in other words crisis between \textit{dharma} and \textit{adharma}. This play points out a relationship between gods and men on the earth from the period of the \textit{Mahabharata} to the modern contemporary society. It mirrors
the growing war between saints (*rishis*) and evil persons, man and woman to achieve the height of superiority and power.

Besides, Girish Karnad projects the theory of *Purusharthas* to reveal man’s true face in the society. Even he states:

The ‘purusharthas’ are the four ethical goals of human existence: ‘dharma’, ‘artha’, ‘kama’ and ‘moksha’. The fourth goal, ‘moksha’, is release from the cycle of births and deaths and hence final liberation from human bondage. This is the supreme goal, the achievement of which relates the human being to the Absolute. The concept therefore belongs to a realm beyond where the first three are relevant. 66

The theory of *Purusharthas* is very relevant to the play, *The Fire and the Rain*. In this play, the characters such as Bharadwaja and Raibhya-two saint-friends- try to achieve supremacy of knowledge. But their *dharma* becomes a game of *adharma* for achieving the post of Chief Priest of the fire sacrifice as a symbol of *artha* means political and economic power. Again as concerned to the characters such as Paravasu and Yavakri are also a part of such political ambitions. Yavakri is involved in fulfilment of his *kama* with the wife of Paravasu and finally, they are deviated from the moral strands of *Purusharthas* which create a hell for them. Therefore, they do not find any liberation from human bondage and become victims of their attitudes. In other words these characters represent the modern men of present-day society who are striving to attain their goal of political heights without caring for *dharma*. In this respect, *Moksha* is finally eluding the modern people who have no option except to share their pleasure of hell created by them for themselves.

Here, it seems that Yavakri is a modern man who seeks to get the super knowledge without going to Gurus, but direct from gods. And such short-cut to get knowledge may lead the humanity to disaster and may throw it out from heaven to hell. Such insatiable ambition to be great is an act of evil ambition and like Yavakri, modern man may be compelled to lead a miserable life on the earth. Yavakri does not follow the path of *dharma*, even Indra appeared before him several times and said: by rejection, Yavakri, you unable to master facts. 67
But Yavakri is a symbol of an ambitious person who wants to get knowledge without maturity and experience, not knowledge from human gurus. In this regard, Yavakri represents the contemporary scholar of knowledge who tries to remove all ladders of experience and to reach the peak of knowledge and seat of learning with less experience and less knowledge. The story of Yavakri is a lesson to modern people that knowledge should be pursued in the right manner. In other word, knowledge should be pursued according to the principles of dharma.

When Paravasu decides to go to the Fire Sacrifice, he leaves Vishakha in the security of his father, Raibhya, and leaves the hermitage for the sacrificial place for performing the rituals of Fire Sacrifice (Yajan). But Vishakha as a young wife feels lack of desire and she meets Yavakri to fulfil her desires. In other words, it seems that she wants to fulfil her own desire but she fails to recognize traditional Indian woman’s virtue, piousness of a wife but she shares not only her emotional feelings but also physical desire to another person. Even she reports them in front of Yavakri:

**Vishakha:** Then on the first day of the second year of our marriage, he said: ‘Enough of that. We now start on our search.’ And then-it wasn’t that I was not happy. But the question of happiness receded into the background. But I knew he knew. Nothing was too shameful, too degrading, even too painful. Shame died in me.  

It is essential to note that Vishakha, the wife of Paravasu, goes to the extent of sharing physical desire with Yavakri. At least being the wife and matured enough she should have thought about consequences of her illicit relationship with Yavakri. But she is bold enough to describe her physical gratification through Yavakri:

**Vishakha:** I was so happy this morning. You were so good. So warm. I wanted to envelope you in everything I could give. It was more as a mother that I offered my breasts to you.  

Thus, words of Vishakha make clear that she realizes the deeper and mysterious meaning that originates from the union of man and woman, body and soul. Thus Vishakha is not pious
wife to Paravasu. Her dharma becomes a game of adharma for achieving physical gratification, as a symbol of illegal Kama, she keeps extra-marital relationship. Vishakha involved in fulfilment of her kama with Yakakri and finally, they are deviated from the moral strands of Purusharthas which create a hell for them. Therefore, they do not find any liberation from human bondage and become victims of their attitudes.

It is essential to note that Girish Karnad goes back to the great tradition of the Indian mythology, Bhagavad-Gita owing to dramatize morals and social virtues from Gods to men on the earth in the play. The mythical and symbolic plan of The Fire and the Rain is so designed as it links in its structure with the original myth of the Mahabharata to project Indian ethos and modernity apathy towards human relationship. Here, it seems that Girish Karnad wants to convey a moral message of Karma-yoga (Chapter-three of Bhagavad-Gita) through the character, Arvasu. Karnad has successfully tried to prove the supremacy of the Karma-yoga through the presentation of Arvasu’s acts. Actually, Karma leads to salvation and the superiority of devotional service is presented in the Bhagavad-Gita: (B.G.- 3.3) 70 This verse, the Lord Krishna explains that the path of action is a means of liberation, which is quit capable as that of knowledge. In other words, a person without self-interest, action spring from the depths and is governed by the Supreme secretly seated in the heart. It seems that Arvasu follows path that is devotional service. He tries to be helpful to everyone without any presupposed intention. For instance, while he is engaged in cremating Yavakri, he reaches late to the village elders and thus loses Nittilai whom he loves most. The conversation between Nittilai’s brother and Arvasu may be cited in support to reveal Arvasu’s confession about his late coming is devoid of self-interest:

**Arvasu:** You judge for yourself. I was on my way her

when I saw Yavakri running. He was scared. I knew his

life was in danger. I ran after him when I got to his

hermitage, he was lying there. Dead.

**Brother:** Dead?

**Arvasu:** Blood was still spurting from his back. Andhaka was there too-but had gone stone-deaf. He couldn’t hear anything I said to him. Blind. Stunned. How could I leave the dead body with him
there and come away? The blood was fresh. It was gushing out. And wild animals had already started appearing in the bushes. Hyenas. Wolves. Ready to tear into Yavakri-into the old man, too. I had to cremate the body on the spot….what would you have done.

**Brother:** the Elders have all gone home.

**Arvasu:** I’ll go to each one’s house and explain. I’ll touch their feet. I’ll ask their forgiveness. Perhaps the Elders can meet again tomorrow-

**Brother:** Meet again? To do what?

**Arvasu:** To bless me and Nittilai!

**Brother:** Arvasu, since you failed to attend the Council meeting, the Elders decreed that Nittilai will marry another boy of our tribe.

Thus, Arvasu proceeds to cremate the body of Yavakri according moral duty or devotional service without self-interest and this act may be governed by the Supreme secretly seated in the heart. Even at the end of the play when Indra pleases and grants him to boon, he releases the Brahma rakshasa thinking that Nittilai too would have wanted it. Thus, he sacrifices his own pleasures for the sake of others. So, whatever he does, he does it without self-interest. That is why, Arvasu, at the end of play, is successful in bringing rain. And it is noteworthy that rain could not be brought by neither the Chief Priest of the Royal Fire Sacrifice, Paravasu, nor even Raibhya and Yavakri, who have acquired Universal knowledge. It seems that they are pretender as mentioned in *Bhagavad-Gita:* karmendriyani samyamaya (B.G.-3.6)

In this verse, the Lord Krishna explains that some of men on this earth are cheaters who make a show of being a yogi or priest like Yavakri. Again for instance, Raibhya is ambitious and selfish. He, instead of getting pride of fathering a son who is invited and honoured to be the
Chief Priest of the Royal Fire Sacrifice, was himself ambitious of getting the invitation from the king to become the Chief Priest. But the king thinks of his old age and invites Paravasu. At this stage, Raibhya is angry and says:

Raibhya: I see. So you measured my life-span, did you— you and your king? Tested the strength of my life-line? Well, the sacrifice is almost over and I’m still here. Still here. Alive and kicking. Tell the King is shall outlive my sons. I shall live long enough to feed their dead souls. Tell him the swarm of dogs sniffing around my daughter-in-law’s bottom keeps me good shape.  

However, no one can deny Raibhya’s scholarship and his knowledge. In fact, he should be the first person to have invited for the Fire Sacrifice. But if he is not invited and his son gets the chance, why should he feel that he is being humiliated or insulted? Actually his son has only surpassed him. In fact, he should become happy that his son has proved equal to him. Therefore it is noteworthy that in the end, his ambition invites his death by the hand of his son, Paravasu. Raibhya’s jealousy and ambition lead to his death. When Yavakri seduces Vishakha, Raibhya, in an extreme reaction, tells Vishakha to go and tell her lover that he had accepted that challenge. Raibhya invokes a Brahma Rakshasa, a demon soul, to kill Yavakri. Thus, a scholar like Raibhya also goes to the extent of planning the death of Yavakri. At least being old enough he should have thought about bloodshed. But he is ready to die of he failed in his attempt. He says:

Raibhy: I shall invoke the ‘kritya’ and send a Brahma Rakshasa, a demon soul, after him. Let Yavakri save himself. He need only go and hide in his father’s hermitage. I loved my brother and will not desecrate his altar. Let Yavakri cower in there like a dog. If he steps out, he will be dead. Tell him this, too—that if he can manage to stay alive for another twenty-four hours, I, Raibhya, shall accept defeat and enter fire.
Even, Paravasu is ambitious to the extent of using his wife’s body for his physical gratification. It is very crucial to note that the chief reason behind to attend Fire Sacrifice is that he wanted to be immortal. Moreover, Paravasu accepts the invitation of becoming the chief Priest of the Royal Fire Sacrifice not because he wants to use his Divine Knowledge in bringing rain and helping the common people. But he treats Fire Sacrifice as an instrument of his gratification. Even he clearly explains:

It is the responsibility of men because of human being this adversity is occurred on this earth in such critical situation even god is unable to do anything.  

Thus, Paravasu is ambitious and wants to challenge Indra and to be equal with God. This is one of the human weaknesses. He doesn’t have faith in the Fire Sacrifice. He considers it as a formal structured ritual. So, he doesn’t involve emotionally and spiritually, therefore researcher thinks that he should be called as a pretender according to the verse 3.6 of Bhagavad-Gita. Even, Ghanshyam G.A. and Singh R.R. rightly comments on Karand’s characters:

Karnad has presented Paravasu as the symbol of supreme egotism. Paravasu through the fire sacrifice was trying not to seek blessings from Lord Indra but to equal him. Paravasu lost all human sentiments in his effort ‘to shed all human weakness’…there is a great difference in the attitude and sentiments of Paravasu and Arvasu. What Paravasu lacks, Arvasu has full to the brim- a zest for life and a love for others.

Another major character in the play is Yavakri also suffers from the weaknesses of ambition, revenge and lust. Yavakri is victim of lust. It is clearly stated that how lust is the greatest enemy of the living entity in the verse 3.37 in Bhagavad-Gita: B.G.-3.37) In this regard, Yavakri’s scholarship and his knowledge fail to recognize sacred way. Yakakri’s Universal knowledge could not liberate him from Kama (lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), and Moha (desire). For instance, he clearly confesses to Vishakha:
**Yavakri:** Oh Vishakha! it’s so wonderful to have you here. Because you used to console me—don’t you remember—when we were young? I cried at the humiliations piled on my father. He was one of the most learned men in the land. Probably the most brilliant mind. But he was scorned while this unscrupulous brother of his grabbed all the honours.

**Vishakha:** Why are you bringing up all these grievances now, Yavakri? It’s hardly the time—

**Yavakri:** Grievances! You don’t even compliment me. 

Here, words of Yavakri reveal that he is not devoid of anger, hatred. It seems that his hard penance may be fear rousing to the world. Even he used Vishakha to avenge Raibhya and Paravasu. To avenge, Yavakri seduces Vishakha by showing false love to her. Therefore, lust is the greatest enemy of the human beings, and it is lust only which induces the pure living human to remain entangled in the material world without *Moksha*. Actually, in true sense after the sacrifice of Arvasu and Nittilai, all condemned souls are released, all tragedies are turned into the comedies, all tensions are mitigated. *Moksha*, the ultimate desire of man on earth, takes place because of *Purushartha* of Arvasu and sacrifice of Nittilai as a settlement of opposite.

Thus, therefore selfless task is the best *Karma* and one should act constantly without having any expectations of any reward and such *Karma* that is the best of action. It is noteworthy that Arvasu, the son of Raibhya, is a superior Brahmin in the play and is presented as a spokesman of the playwright’s secular trends and *Karma-Yoga* moral duty of human beings as prescribed in *Bhagavad-Gita*. He propounds the values of love, kindness and humanity as the rarer virtues of mankind. Therefore it seems that the dramatist has organized a platform for love and human values against hatred, revenge and cruelty. In *The Fire and the Rain*, characters such as Arvasu, Nittilai, Andhaka definitely represent the greater virtues of goodness, humanity, love, kindness and sense of human touch and human belonging. The characters such as Paravasu, Yavakri, Raibhya represent a class of higher status who lack of impassioned hearts. They are objects of criticism by playwright.
To conclude, this chapter is a detailed analysis of Girish Karnad’s plays under study, made on the basis of the theme, character, structure and dramatic technique in the context of tradition and modernity. It is seen that Girish Karnad makes use of motifs of folk theatre viz. masks, curtains, songs, commentator, dolls, chorus, horse-man to convey his ideas and exploring different characters and to interpret human situation with reference to contemporary experience. It is the opinion of present researcher that Girish Karnad gives the message through conjugal life of Padmini and Devadatta. Padmini’s quest for perfection remains unfulfilled. For instance, ‘evil’ is manifested through Padmini’s adultery in Hayavadana. Padmini commits adultery knowingly. There are occasional references to Padmini’s infidelity in the play. She is drawn towards Kapila. Since Kapila is Devadatta’s friend, it is her moral duty that she should consider him as her brother. But she keeps an incestuous relationship with him. Karnad projects reality in twentieth century which has been an age of great materialistic stress and finds problems such as confusion, frustration, disintegration and meaninglessness. The existential encounter with nothingness (hollowness) is typical strain of modern man’s life. The charms or Maya of materialistic life is very difficult to avoid because it seems that modern man pursues to get physical satisfaction from material things but many times the inner mind’s (soul) satisfaction is not there.

In the context of Indian traditional moral theory is concerned ‘theory of Purushartha’ is one of the ethics of the Indian civilization. The present researcher thinks that this theory is projected by Karnad and it is very relevant to modern man. Girish Karnad projects a microscopic picture of man-woman relationship in conjugal life. For instance, Karnad projects the conflicts between Dharma (religious, social and moral righteousness) and Adharma through Kapila’s character. Kapila exhibits characteristics of Adharma, for instance, according to the principles of dharma it is believed that it is illicit act to see friend’s wife as beloved or wife. Here, Kapila loves his friend’s wife named Padmini. This proves to be the cause of pain and suffering for Kapila and also for Devadatta and Padmini. The present researcher thinks that Girish Karnad goes back to the rich traditions of the Vedas, the Purusharthas and Bhagavad-Gita in order to dramatize moral fables and social virtues of Gods (popularized by legends, mythology) to people on the earth.

The researcher is of the view that Karnad’s plays under study are particularly concerned with the dilemmas and conflicts between tradition and modernity experienced by the modern
Indian men and women in different social situations. The mythical and symbolic plan of *The Fire and the Rain* is so designed that the play shows its link with the original myth of *The Mahabharata* to project Indian ethos and modernity apathy towards human relationship. The researcher views that Girish Karnad wants to convey a moral message of Karma-yoga (*The Bhagavad-Gita* Chapter-three) through suffering of his character, Yavakri. The present researcher attempts at assessing the plays under study of Girish Karnad with the tool of the critical analysis and in the contexts of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ and the critical opinions of the recognized critics. It is revealed that Karnad propounds the values of love, kindness and humanity as the rarer virtues of mankind. Therefore the dramatist has organized a platform for love and human values against hatred, revenge and cruelty.
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