CHAPTER IV
INTER-TEXTUAL STUDY OF WOMEN
IN THE FOUR PLAYS

4.1 Portrayal of Women Characters in Karnad’s Plays:

Karnad was deeply influenced by the Indian myths, tradition, history and the Natak Company plays of his home town. As a creative artist, Karnad concentrates on Indian myths, history, tradition, folklore, legends and theatres and carves out a new face of modern man struggling for a new horizon with a new identity. Girish Karnad derives the material for his plot from history and mythology mostly but interprets the past in the context of contemporary relevance. In this context, observations on portrayal of women characters in the four plays of Girish Karnad are discussed on comparative lines as follow:

4.1.1 Women’s quest for completeness:

The context of the mythical play of Girish Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* is relevant, morality-oriented and thought provoking. It possesses the merits of morality with shades of reality and ideology. Fire is used as a myth in *The Fire and the Rain*. Fire, that is ‘Agni’, is worshipped as a deity in Indian mythology. All the rituals and rites are to be performed in the presence of this deity. In this play, it is presented for various reasons, such as for penance in the case of Yavakri, for warning Nittilai and for cremation of Raibhya. And rain is also equally important in this play. From the beginning to the end it is Indra that is rain, who plays the most crucial role in story of the play. Whether it is Yavakri or Paravasu or anyone else like the King, all are seen trying their best to please Indra who grants the last will of Arvasu and gives rain to the world.

Karnad projects his women characters as voice of wisdom which the male counterparts fail to understand it. The death due to jealousy, rivalry and violence could have been averted if the male characters had listened to female wisdom. Vishakha in *The Fire and the Rain*, is the protagonist who projects her wisdom but male counterpart fails to understand. Similarly, Nittilai is only partially successful in dissuading Arvasu from the act of vengeance. Nittilai does not
hesitate to express her wisdom and she is able to stop Arvasu initially from joining the violent paternal game. But once the ‘mask takes over’, Arvasu is unable to control his desire for vengeance, which finally takes its charge in Nittilai’s life.

Nittilai in *The Fire and the Rain*, due to traditional system, marries the man her elders choose for her. But when she learns the problems of her past lover, Arvasu, she comes running away from her husband, family and everything only to help him. She also says:

**Nittilai:** I don’t mean we have to live together-like lovers or husband and wife. I have been vicious enough to my husband. I don’t want to disgrace him further.¹

Here Nittilai proves to be an Indian woman as she feels that in no circumstances she should spoil the reputation of her husband. But her husband and her brother do not understand the truth and out of suspicion kill her. It is very the ethos of Indian society which cannot accept a woman being in love with two men at one and the same time. In this respect, the play exposes male oppression of women and the great injustice done to them by men and patriarchal culture. Girish Karnad’s women characters are portrayed as prisoners who are unable to escape from their miserable existence. Karnad’s mark of genius is quite evident from his portrayal of real characters in real situation.

Girish Karnad projects the significant changes in the female character, for example his female character, Padmini who is ambitious and she wants to keep a combination of qualities-intelligent, handsome, scholar and physically strong in one person and that would be her ideal husband. For her, Devadatta is very intelligent, handsome, a scholar and poet. Kapila is rough, rugged and the embodiment of bravery and steal strong physical body. So, Padmini intentionally mixes up the two heads in the Kali temple, for her suppressed desire to get a perfect man. And her dream of a perfect man comes true when she finds that Devadatta has acquired the body of Kapila. In this sense, Padmini’s search for perfection comes to an end and she starts the life of enjoyment. But this enjoyment does not lead longer in her life because Devadatta could not survive Kapila’s strong body because basically he is a scholar and a poet. He starts losing the strong muscles, so Padmini complains:

**Padmini:** Your body had that strong, male smell before –I liked it…²
Further, Padmini again makes plan to send Devadatta to Uajjan fair to purchase new dolls for her son, and she would get chance to meet Kapila in the forest. She is drawn towards Kapila. She waters her mouth looking at the charm of Kapila’s body. This is not fair on the part of an ideal wife. The scope and the meaning of pativarta is being questioned here. Thus, she tries to enjoy the phallic pleasures of Kapila and the intellectual powers of Devadatta. At the end, she herself admits that her son has two fathers. When Devadatta and Kapila die, she asks the Bhagavatha to make a large funeral pyre for them and she jumps into it, which proves that she has had illegal relationship with Kapila. Thus Padmini is guilty of infidelity and her quest for completeness leads to death.

It is an opinion of the researcher that quest for completeness of Karnad’s women characters lead their life towards alienation. Therefore this researcher supports the comment of P.D. Nimsarkar when he writes:

Padmini’s quest of completeness and perfection brings downfall in her and is alienated. Her performance of ‘sati’ is a social demand for infidelity in married life. She tries to revolt against socio-cultural forces which engulfed her. These forces alienated her from the worldly life she does not with to compromise with and finally she finds relief in death.³

Girish Karnad’s *Hayavadana* is based on a tale found in *Kathasaritasagara*, a collection of stories in Sanskrit dating from the eleventh century. And Karnad also draws upon the further development of the story in Thomas Mann’s *The Transposed Heads*. He borrows from both the sources but adding the sub-plot of Hayavadana, the man who has a horse's head but of which he wants to rid of himself in order to attain “completeness” as a man. Hayavadana’s search for completeness ends ironically with his becoming a complete horse. It is the opinion of the researcher that Girish Karnad tries to explore in this play the problematic identity of the contemporary Indian man and woman. Modern man uses various material devices to get satisfaction in modern life but it seems that he brings home the complexity of the problem.
Girish Karnad’s female character Queen Amritmati is projected as a woman who strives to achieve her quest for completeness. Karnad’s female has become bold, assertive and selfish. The quest of female here, expressed through the character of the Queen. Her sexual wildness of the bold female is referred to in the play in this conversation:

MAHOUT: … But I tell you. I have known a few women. They say there are six types of women…

KING (gravely): And what about the seventh?

MAHOUT (stumped): I only thought there were six.

KING: No one’s written about her. While she sinks her teeth into the man and drinks blood, plucks his entrails like strings, the man’s head only laughs and sings.  

The Queen becomes very aggressive to achieve her desire and she wants to control over her husband and her mother-in-law. Bali: The Sacrifice is a projection on the choice between non-violence and violence. The Queen firms on the non-violent stand. She belongs to Jain religion and sacrifice is strictly prohibited in her religion. But her refusal to sacrifice the cock of dough is not so much from her non-violence as it is the reality that she did not consider sex with the Mahout as harmful or sinful. It is not so much a matter of sacrifice to her. Critic Vanashri Tripathi aptly sums up the character of Padmini thus:

In her persona, the poetry of Hayavadana points at the possibility of reconnecting, thinking and speaking with the body. in the body Karnad’s Padmini seeks the corporeal ground of her intelligence in her perennial quest for fulfillment.  

4.1.2 Image of Traditional Woman:

In the Indian theater tradition, there has been a strong impact of mythology and history though it has not produced anything of permanent worth. Girish Karnad is aware that this tradition has tremendous potential, as the elements of myth and history are very common to India
English Drama. So Karnad makes use of such myths and legends as metaphors for contemporary situations. By using myths, Karnad projects the women are oppressed and exploited more than men in our society and it remains culturally patriarchal in spite of democracy.

The researcher thinks that Girish Karnad presents an image of traditional Indian woman through his female protagonist in his plays under study. Indian woman suffers in male-dominated society. Karnad shows the miserable position of woman in Indian society. From ancient times Indian society follows feature of patriarchal culture, where woman has second place in family. On the other hand, male child is considered to have important role in performing religious rituals in Indian society. There is always try to keep the woman isolated and out of the scene of the external world. The husbands try to command over their wives in many ways in the conjugal life. Traditionally it is believed that wives are as physical and emotional selves. Such kind of suppressed image of Indian woman is portrayed by Girish Karnad in his plays. Traditionally in Indian culture the family members fix the marriage of female child. The girl is not consulted but is told to marry a boy whom her family has chosen for her. And she has to accept it without any complains. She is taught to stand for her husband. Women are supposed to live pious life after their marriage. For example, without consent of Rani, her family members choose Appanna as her husband and she has to accept without any complaint. Rani as a wife is oppressed by her husband. Though she says:

**Rani:** Why are you humiliating me like this? Why are you stripping me naked in front of the whole village? Why don’t you kill me instead? I would have killed myself. But there’s not even a rope in this house for me to use.6

Rani shows her very miserable condition of her conjugal life. It is observed in the play that Rani’s husband is very rich person and he goes to meet whore. Appanna performs as a role of jailor to his wife. He locks Rani in house and whenever he comes home, he humiliates her. Rani suffers lot in her conjugal life therefore she becomes ready to suicide instead of living with her husband. Girish Karnad presents his female character, Rani as a traditional Indian wife who suffers a lot in conjugal life without any complain. Rani like traditional Indian woman does not dare to ask a question to her husband. Even Rani does not dare to do any act against her husband.
By this way Girish Karnad exposes the problems of traditional women and presents the real picture of their life.

Researcher thinks that Girish Karnad’s play Naga-Mandala projects the lack of responsibility of his cruel husband Appanna who barely and abruptly talks to his imprisoned wife Rani during the day and goes away at night to his concubine after locking the wife in house. Indian women think of their husbands to be all in their life. In reality, it is very difficult for a patriarchal man to be perfect and devoted husband in conjugal life. Karnad’s male protagonist fails in his duty as a husband, as he does not even satisfy the needs of his newly wedded wife Rani. The young wife is even ignorant of sex, while he visits his concubine regularly thus resulting in a meaningless wedlock.

Girish Karnad presents his modern and democratic view on the problems related to women in traditional Indian families having patriarchal system through his women characters. He projects two terms, ‘arranged marriage’ and ‘inter-caste marriage’ to expose the suffering of woman in conjugal life. Traditionally in arranged marriage, girl is not asked to choose her husband, her likes and dislikes even her consent is not considered in arranged marriage. A girl has to follow orders of her father in family. Karnad presents Vishakha, Nittilai are victims of arranged marriage system in male dominated Indian society. Vishakha and Nittilai are not given a right to choose their husbands according to their wish in The Fire and the Rain. Even Nittiali is banned to do inter-caste marriage when Arvasu fails to fulfil the desire of her family tribe. According to traditional Indian culture parents are given full freedom to select a bridegroom and a girl must accept all decisions of her parents without complaining. Karnad being a modern playwright criticizes the patriarchal customs and practices related to be arranged marriage system. Vishakha is not allowed to marry her lover. If they married, they would have happily lived in family life. It can be said that family life of Vishakha and Nittilai remains tragic due to traditional arranged marriage system. Actually parents should think at least once before imposing their decision on their marriageable sons and daughter. Vishakha’s father gets her married to Paravasu against her wish. She feels very unhappy and she could not do anything except to follows father’s orders. Further she complains:

Vishakha: Yes, Father was happy. I was married off to Paravasu.

I didn’t want to, but that didn’t matter.
Thus, Vishakha expresses her inner desire that she does not want to marry Paravasu but she was forced by father to marry. And Vishakha’s father was very happy because his daughter obeyed his orders. It means that Vishakha is exploited from very beginning by principles of patriarchal society. Simultaneously Girish Karnad criticizes male-dominated society and behaviour of male of patriarchal society. Vishakha’s husband Paravasu fails to realize his responsibility as a husband. Just for a year, he satisfies the desire of his wife Vishakha and then leaves her isolated to her fate for seven long years. The girl is completely ruined by her own father-in-law Raibhya, and a young man, her past lover, Yavakri from whom she seeks comfort and support.

Girish Karnad presents his woman character Queen Mother as a traditional woman in Bali: The Sacrifice. She firmly believes in Hindu religious principles and she wants to convey and impose her thoughts on her family members. Queen Mother does not like to accept her son’s love marriage therefore the King and the Queen Amritmati are under much stress in their conjugal life. Queen Mother hates whenever she finds her son with his wife who belongs to Jain religion. Even Queen Mother says:

**Mother:** You were not born a Jain. You were born my son. But you

betrayed me and my faith. Instead of choosing the woman and

bringing her to your faith, you chose hers.\(^8\)

It is the opinion of the researcher that Queen Mother is a traditional Indian woman who believes in orthodox principles of religion and strictly wants to impose her thoughts on her family members. In this regard the comment of Binod Mishra is remarkable:

The old Queen or the King’s mother is a traditional and an orthodox believer in rites and rituals. Like all ladies of such age, she looks forward to a grandson who would become the future king and keep the royal flag aloft. A blind follower of myth and unreasonable beliefs, she often gets infuriated to listen to even a word against her religious practices.\(^9\)
4.1.3 Image of Modern Woman:

Girish Karnad represents the new face of womanhood. This is perhaps due to the changes in the perception of women brought about by the new awakening in women, the reform movements and the influence of realism and economic independence of the women in the modern age. Karnad’s women openly protest against being treated as an object of exchange between men. Women characters of Girish Karnad challenge the authority of her husband and questions and the religious tenets that prop up patriarchal power. In this respect Nittilai in *The Fire and the Rain*, not only does she free herself from a forced marriage shackles but boldly expresses her commitment to her first love, Arvasu. In her, it seems that the image of the free independent and self-respecting modern woman. However, it is observed that Vishakha appeals to her husband to grant her the rights and respect due to her as a woman and wife. Though she does not fight patriarchal domination in the true sense but merely marks a beginning in the long process of reform in the existing social system in the Indian context.

However, in *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad explores modern woman’s desires though the torture of the youthful woman, Visakha. Visakha openly deniers Paravasu’s orders and wants Aravasu not to follow him. The character of Visakha not only poses of the conditions of elite women in ancient India who were fettered by the man-made laws of society, worshipped, abused and exploited but also provides an example of certain shades of her personality which are attributed to the feminist movement in the present times.

Girish Karnad poses his women protagonists in such way that appears to challenge patriarchal tradition. He revises tradition folk tales and myths in order to create heroines enmeshed in the crossroads of tradition. While Karnad’s presentation of the woman is romantic, the solutions offered in his plays for the woman’s dilemma is realistic, with patriarchal overtones. The woman character seems destined to hover between the man made rules. It can be observed through dialogues between Vishakha and Parvasu as:

**Vishakha:** Will you come home once the sacrifice is over? I suppose that would be too human. But what’s wrong with being human? What’s wrong with being happy, as we were before you got Indra into you? I shouldn’t ask. I should be silent. And you, in any case, will be silent. My silence again followed by yours.
Silences endlessly repeated. Perhaps they too will describe a whole universe. But I am sick of silence. All right. Then do me favour before you go back. Please. I’ll lay myself open to you as a devoted wife.

Parvsu: You want me to kill you?

Vishakha: At last, a question from you.¹⁰

As above mentioned conversation between husband and wife, Parvasu and Vishakha reveals that Vishakha, though surrounded by learned man, suffers from the repression of emotions and desires, and lacks the freedom even to communicate with her husband. Vishakha fails to realize her potential since she is forced to exist in a male-dominating and exploitative family. She cannot even hope to enjoy the kind of freedom that a common woman has. It is observed that here Vishakha strives to create space for herself in the annals of religion, ritual, knowledge, enlightenment which in fact, are different paths in the woman’s journey toward realizing own individuality, rights in the society. And it is a sign of true perfection in the modern context of the society.

Girish Karnad poses the predicament of modern woman through his women characters like Padmini, Vishakha and Queen. In this connection critic Pranav Joshipura correctly writes:

In Hayavadana, the predicament of Padmini, the female protagonist, can easily be compared with the predicament of a modern woman. She marries Devadatta in order to find a complete man. But she gradually realizes the weakness of Devadatta, and hence starts drifting towards Kapila hoping that she would be able to find a perfect man in him.¹¹

Researcher is of the opinion that Girish Karnad presents an image of modern woman through his character like Nittilai who is just aware of her equal right and her individual identity in conjugal and social life. Therefore she raises a number of questions against the male-dominated society. For example, the character Nittilai is that traditional woman who cannot dare
fully to oppose the principles of male dominated society, but she focuses the shocking condition of tribal woman. She blames upper class:

**Nittilai:** So Father’s to blame? Do you know why Father called the elder in such haste? He always says: ‘These high-caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them.’

Thus, Nittilai states her bitterness against upper class. In a male dominating society, women do not have any other alternative but to speak against tragic practice of male-dominance. Girish Krand attempts to highlight the difference between low-caste people and high-caste people, their behaviour and presets how high-caste men are glad to use low-caste women from very ancient times. Through the character of Nittilai Karnad exposes the social problems like class system, orthodox religious principles and the hypocrite nature of chief priest.

Nittilai does not hesitate to expose the emptiness of the term ‘universal knowledge’. Yavakri gets ‘universal knowledge’ from god, Indra. Yavakri should have asked the rain for help and rain would be helped many ways to common people. Such intelligent hope and question about Yavakri’s false and selfish nature is exposed by Nittilai. She comments:

**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? You should see the region around our village. Parched.

Every morning, women with babes on their hips, shrunken children, shriveled old men and women gather in front of my father’s house-for the gruel he distributes…. And father says all the land needs is a couple of heavy downpours. That’ll rearth.

Not too much to ask of god, is it?

Thus, Nittilai is very conscious about needs of common people and she focuses on the selfish nature of Yavakri. Yavakri did not ask for a couple of good shower because he wanted to get universal knowledge from god. Nittilai is conscious about problems of human beings. She presents very philosophical questions like a modern woman. Arvasu Girish Karnad focuses on
the problem of inter-caste marriage between high caste boy and low caste woman and shrew
ture of scholar person like Yavakri.

Researcher is of the opinion that Girish Karnad shows an image of modern woman
through his character Padmini who is aware of her equal right and her individual identity in
conjugal life. Padmini does not like to behave like a traditional Indian woman in her conjugal
life. She possesses very qualities of modern woman like frank behaviour in front of husband’s
friends, without hesitation she comments on husband and she likes to talk interestingly to her
husband’s friends. For example when Padmini asks about Kapila to her husband Devadatta she
does not realize that husband becomes angry to know that her interest in Kapila’s daily life. The
following conversation of Padmini and Devadatta reveals the fact:

**Padmini:** Where is Kapila?

**Devadatta:** … and drool over Kapila all day.

**Padmini:** What do you mean?

**Devadatta:** What else should I say? The other day I wanted to read

out a play of Bhasa’s to you and sure enough Kapila drops in

**Padmini:** Oh! That’s biting you still, is it?..but why are you blaming me? He

was your friend even before you married me, wasn’t he? He used to
drop in every day even then.  

The conversation between Padmini and Devadatta reveals the fact that she is not aware
about the traditional psyche of the husband who does not like to accept the relationship between
his friend and his wife. Therefore Devadatta becomes very angry but Padmini does not
understand this principle of patriarchal society because she behaves like a modern woman and
she believes in the principles of modernity. In this connection Pranav Joshipura opinions:

The role of Padmini can be questioned as her approach to

Devadatta and Kapila is merely physical, or sexual, if put more
bluntly. But it can also be considered as the right of a woman to express herself freely.  

It is the opinion of the researcher that Girish Karnad’s woman character Padmini reflects the characteristics of the modern woman who wants to be at par with man in the society and also in her conjugal life.

4.1.4 Extra-marital relationship:

Girish Karnad, as he is influenced by the rich Indian folk and mythic lore, draws from it the material for his drama. The plot of *Hayavadana* derives from *Kathasaritsagara*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. Karnad deals with the question of Head and Body with a different purpose. Interestingly, the main and the sub-plot of *Hayavadana* deal with the moral and philosophical aspect of the problem raising more important issues relating to the human existence. *The Fire and the Rain* is a translation of Karnad’s Kannada play *Agni Mattu Male*, published by Oxford University Press in 1998. ‘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. The eternal conflict of good and evil continues from the period of the *Mahabharata* to the modern contemporary society. Naga-Mandala is based on two oral tales that Girish Karnad had heard from his friend, A. K. Ramanujan. Girish Karnad used myth of cock of Dough in his play, *Bali: The Sacrifice*. Cock of Dough is very ancient myth which believes on one of the non-violence principles of Jainism. There are two main female characters in *Bali: The Sacrifice*, one is Queen Mother and second is Queen. Queen mother is the mother of King and she follows tradition Hindu religion. She firmly believes on the traditions, rituals and cultural activities of Hindu religion.

Girish Karnad used mythical aspects in *Hayavadana*, and *The Fire and the Rain* in the modern context to expose the nuisance of modern life. Also, Karnad’s motives of using mythical aspects in his literary works of art to show the morals virtues through some of his women characters and the reflective depth of Indian literature in general and Indian English writing in particular. Myth is important medium to spread ones philosophical use through characterization. In short Karnad derives women characters which belong to myth and rich Indian tradition of
folklore, folktale. This researcher thinks that Girish Karnad presents traditional women characters as well as attempts to peep into psyche of modern women through their behaviour. Karnad shows the shortcoming of women characters in the relation of material life and traditional social code and conduct. For example, Vishakha in *The Fire and the Rain*, Padmini in *Hayavadana*, Queen in *Bali: The Sacrifice* are presented in traditional Indian social life but they have some kinds of qualities which are possessed by modern Indian women like quest for completeness, eager to achieve equal rights in marital and social life. On the other hand Girish Karnad presents traditional women who follow the traditional patriarchal rules and possess the quality like pious nature in marital life, for them chastity means everything, they believe husband as god, and they have not any complaints about their secondary place in family.

Some of women characters are derived from Indian myth, folklore and folktale by Girish Karnad. But Karnad mix his own creativity while portrayal of women characters to expose nuisance of modern life. It is observed that women characters like Padmini, Vishakha, Queen and Queen Mother are derived from Indian myths but these characters are not portrayal as they are in original source. Karnad poses some kinds of modern women’s qualities in the women characters like the bold nature, dare to break the traditional shackles, oppose the rules of patriarchal culture, indulge in extra-marital relationship and desire for material life etc. For example, Padmini has thirst for materialistic and physical affection of Kapila when she says:

**Padmini:** Let’s go. Wait. *(she runs to Kapila)* Don’t be sad, Kapila. We shall meet again, shan’t we? *(in a low voice, so Devadatta can’t hear.)* It’s my duty to go with Devadatta. But remember I’m going with your body. Let that cheer you up. Good-bye, Kapila.  

Padmini breaks the moral social code and conducts in her conjugal life. Being wife Padmini must not keep physical relationship with Kapila and she must not promise to meet him again. Here the researcher opinions that she is like Vishakha possesses extra-marital relationship in conjugal life. Padmini must not tell lie to her husband but she is such woman who tells lie and deceives her husband in the married life. Women are believed to live pious life after their marriage. In conjugal life, women are not permitted to join other person. Extra-marital relationship of woman is assumed as immoral act in Indian social system. Woman’s extra-
marital relationship is condemned. In the conjugal life, woman has to be faithful, paying respect to the elder relatives in the family and remaining loyal to her husband and relatives to preserve the honour in society. Therefore the present researcher agrees with critic, Vanashree Tripathi who aptly comments on the behaviour of Padmini:

Padmini is cast with a shadow of ambiguity. Her self-speaking and silences, nonetheless also force us to discover, moments of female transgression-disobedience of social laws.17

4.1.5 Love-triangle in Married life:

It is the opinion of the researcher that Girish Karnad projects triangular relationships in the plays under study. Triangulation between two men and a woman comes again and again in Karand’s plays while portraying conjugal life. Girish Karnad’s female protagonists search for something other than what society offers them. They want to get men they cannot legally have and find the means of enjoying freedom within the family structure of traditional Indian society. Triangular relationships in the plays under study can be explained as the extra-marital relations of Padmini with Kapila in Hayavadana, Vishakha with Yavakri in The Fire and the Rain, Queen Amritmati with Maout in Bali: the Sacrifice and Rani with the Naga in Naga-Mandala turn disastrous for them as well as for their conjugal life. Further Karnad blames the male characters as they fail to understand their beings and let them lead a loveless and alienated life. The conjugal life of female protagonists has been barren, dull and meaningless. Consequently, the wives search for satisfaction and they find liberation in the extra-marital relationships. It is the opinion the researcher that Girish Karnad conveys that sexual betrayal finds as a powerful aspect bringing in disintegration of the families in the modern age.

It is observed that female protagonists are faced with the dilemmas of modern times in Hayavadana, The Fire and the Rain, Bali: the Sacrifice and Naga-Mandala. The plays under study are centered on the conflict in the mind of a female who is so entangled in the patriarchal principles of chastity and duty that she is unable to make a choice between the husband and the ideal lover. The portrayals of family in Girish Karnad’s plays are relevant to the present modern life situation. In the modern age men and women are very busy to earn and achieve material things but they forgets that the real meaning and virtue of traditional Indian family institution which offer inner satisfaction in conjugal life.
This researcher is of the opinion that female protagonists of Karnad keep love-triangle in their conjugal life because their male counterparts fail to understand their love and emotions. For example, in Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain*, Paravasu leaves his wife isolated in house and he goes to perform in Fire Sacrifice for seven years. In absence, Visakha is subjected to Raibhya’s jealousy and lust. Vishakha is leading her conjugal life without her husband. It becomes her prison, like that of Rani in Naga Mandala, but here the jailer oppressor is her father in law, not her husband. Yavakri takes advantage of her wretched condition. She trembles at the sight of Yavakri, when he rekindles her need to talk. Yavakri reminds her of the love moments of their youth, and rises her desire for sex. He expresses his regret over his penance. Vishakha feels over praised, who is habituated to abuses of Raibhya, and offers herself to Yavakri. Unlike Rani in *Naga-Mandala* who takes lessons of sex from her lover the Naga, Vishakha yields herself to Yavakri saying:

**Vishakha:** I’ll give you the knowledge Indra couldn’t give you. My body it’s light with speech now.\(^{18}\)

In fact, Vishakha falls prey to Yavakri’s trap. He uses his former beloved to settle his scores against his cousin Paravasu and uncle Raibhya. He deliberately invites Aravasu, Vishkha’s brother in law at the spot, where he seduces her, and thereby invokes Raibhya’s anger and disturbs Paravasu who is working as the chief priest. He makes her betray her husband, commit adultery, and cross the corridors of family. In a way, Paravasu’s long absence from Vishakha and the ill treatment she receives at the hands of Raibhya estrange her from family and push her in the arms of Yavakri who makes her betray her matrimonial ties. Her yielding to Yavakari is part of his plans, had she not given in, he would have seduced her by force.

Vishakha, later, realizes Yavakri’s designs and becomes an instrument of his death. But she does not appear to be sorry for her adulterous act. She boldly admits to her family that she has slept with Yavakri and is ready to bear punishment. She reacts to Raibhgya’s questions:

**Vishakha:** It’s my fault. I’m willing to face the consequences punish me.\(^{19}\)

Unlike Rani’s unconscious adultery in *Naga-Mandala*, Vishakha’s conscious and willing betrayal to her husband does not empower her but makes her life worse than before. She realizes that she has been used as a tool in the game of revenge. She becomes wise and laments. But there...
is no test for her to prove her faithfulness. Her life becomes desolate. Yavakri is killed, Raibhya is dead and Paravasu immolates himself. She is witness to their deaths. Her life becomes a long exile with no hope for escape. She becomes an instrument in destruction of her family, and her life becomes tragedy for her.

The Queen Amritamati in Bali: The Sacrifice is more asserting as well as impulsive. More than any other female characters of Karnad, she is self-possessed. She controls and dominates behaviour of her husband. She has managed to convert her husband to her faith, Jainism abdicating Hinduism he was born in. Also, she gradually controls his state affairs. She makes him forbid all kinds of bloodshed in the state. She does not allow her mother-in-low to celebrate her joy at the Queen’s pregnancy. She has fully captivated the King’s affairs and has full control over the family. At one midnight, the Queen Amritamati leaves her bedroom chasing a melodious song and finds herself in the arms of an ugly Mahout, the master of the heavenly voice. The Queen’s sexual betrayal is quite unconvincing. Her husband attends her more than any other things in the world. For her happiness, he makes his own mother live separately. For her sake he left his family tradition of sacrificing animals.

Unlike the heroines of the earlier plays, Queen Amritamati’s act appears sheer betrayal, as she has no obvious reason to betray her husband. It appears more impulsive than her dissatisfaction in family. Perhaps she is tired of the King’s obeying nature. She wants somebody robust to rule her. But the poor King is caught in an unalterable hell like situation. The Queen wants to impose her principle of non-violence upon the King and the Mother Queen, and in the beginning she succeeds also. However, after her adulterous act, the Mother Queen gains ground. She makes the King insist the Queen upon involvement the act of sacrificing the dough cock. Finally, she pushes the Queen mad and at the end, the Queen offers herself as a sacrifice. In other words, the Queen kills herself.

Karnad’s *Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, The Fire and The Rain* and *Bali: The Sacrifice* reveal various women characters who to love triangle in their conjugal life and break shackles created by circumstances they live in. They even fight with a few people closely associated with them, the people who have their various rights at part with men.
4.1.6 Women’s Clash of egos:

Girish Karnad is playwright of Post-independence times therefore he is aware of social changes in modern times. He presents on woman’s desire to achieve her equal rights and her self-identity in family and social life. In the modern age woman is aware about her equal rights and she has right to take decision in conjugal life. Karnad projects his female protagonists like Padmini, Mother of Hayavadana, Vishakha, Queen Mother and Queen Amritmati who strive to achieve and dominate on their male counterparts. They find their individual image and they possess their ego. But female protagonists find themselves an isolated and helpless when men forced to follow patriarchal rules and in such critical situation Girish Karnad exposes women’s clash of egos as finds in the modern society.

It is the opinion of the researcher that Karnad aims at presenting the conflicts of the ego to prove that men should provide some kind of free space to women. Karnad presents Padmini as a modern woman who is aware of her equal rights in social life therefore she behave life a modern woman. For example Kapila’s ego is wounded permanently in the very first meeting with Padmini. Padmini has her own ego for recognition of her selfhood which is truly the ultimate desire for assertion of her selfhood. Such an ego of Padmini is presented clearly in her interaction with Kapila who comes proposal of his friend’s marriage. Padmini’s ego can be observed through her dialogue:

**Kapila**: Please, please-call your father or the master or both, or if they are the same, anyone…please call someone!

**Padmini**: No.No. That won’t do.

**Kapila**: No one here. Still I have to find out her name. Devadatta must be in pain and … He will never forgive me if I go back now. Madam, please I have some very important work. I’ll touch your feet…

**Padmini**: You will? Really? Do you know? I’ve touched everyone’s feet in this house some time or the other, but no one’s ever touched mine? You will? 20
Padmini goes to the level of asking Kapila to touch her feet. Naturally, it is very hard for Kapila to overcome her. Therefore Kapila thinks that his good friend Devadatta is no match for her because only an iron man will suit her. Padmini is a self conscious woman and like a modern woman.

Karnad presents his female protagonist Vishakha as a modern woman who is very conscious of her selfhood, ego and equal rights in conjugal life. Vishakha tries to break husband’s supremacy when she talks to her husband. She is courageous enough to ask her husband to behave at least like human. Because she knows that her husband left her alone to get status of chief priest in Fire Sacrifice. He did not consider his wife’s emotion and love in front of his achievement. Further clash of ego can be observed when she blames:

**Vishakha:** Will you come home once the fire sacrifice is over? I suppose that would be too human. But what’s wrong with being human? What’s wrong with being happy, as we were before you got Indra into you? I shouldn’t ask. I should be silent. And you, in any case, will be silent. My silence again followed by yours. Silences endlessly repeated. Perhaps they too will describe a whole universe. But I am sick of silence…. **Paravasu:** You want me to kill you? 21

Vishakha and Paravasu do not response like husband and wife because they may come across their clash of ego. Actually Vishakha finds clash of her ego because she is forced to listen and follow male-dominated principles in her life. She has no right to suggest her husband. Girish Karnad presents clash of ego of his female protagonists and consequences as they became the victims of power struggle in male-dominated society. Vishakha and Nittilai loss their individuality and become ready to sacrifice their life for men but they became victims.

4.2 **Comparative study of Women characters:**
4.2.1 Padmini, Vishakha, Queen and Mother Queen:

It is the opinion of the researcher that Girish Karnad’s female characters like Padmini, Vishakha, Queen and Mother Queen possess some kinds of common features of behaviour. Such observations are analyzed as follows:

It is the opinion of the researcher that women protagonists of Karnad are very ambitious and they search for perfection which leads them to tragedy in their life. Padmini is very ambitious protagonist in Hayavadana. Padmini desires to live with such a person who possesses qualities of an intelligent, handsome, scholar and physically strong. She desires such an ideal husband. For her, Devadatta is very intelligent, handsome, a scholar and poet. Kapila is rough, rugged and the embodiment of bravery and steal strong physical body. Therefore, Padmini deliberately mixes up the two heads in the Kali temple, for her suppressed desire to obtain a perfect man. Padmini’s dream of a perfect man comes true when she finds that Devadatta has acquired the body of Kapila. In this regard, Padmini’s search for perfection comes to an end and she starts the life of enjoyment. But this enjoyment does not lead longer in her life because Devadatta could not keep Kapila’s strong body because basically he is a scholar and a poet. He starts losing the strong muscles, so Padmini complains as

“Your body had that strong, male smell before –I liked it…”

When she knows that Devadatta could not possess the qualities of an ideal husband she becomes thirsty for the quest for perfection. Therefore, she again makes plan to send Devadatta to Uajjan fair to purchase new dolls for her son, and she would get chance to meet Kapila in the forest. Padmini is very motivated to achieve her inner desire. She would like to share her emotions with Kapila. That is the reason why she instantly becomes ready when Kapila comes with cart to go for Ujjain trip. But unfortunately her desires could not come in reality. At the end of the play she has to sacrifice her life in the quest for perfection. In this regard this researcher agrees with the comment of Rakesh Joshi:

Padmini has to love two persons only for a very brief while did she live in perfect happiness with one Devadatta who had the head of Devadatta and body of Kapil. But soon she realizes that the perfection is only an illusion.
Vishakha is the main female protagonist in The Fire and the Rain. She desires quest for completeness in her conjugal life. Vishakha breaks the rich Indian tradition of pious woman and she meets Yavakri. She gets physical satisfaction with Yavakri. Even she does not hesitate to state her wish to Yavakri. She becomes passionate and says:

**Vishakha:** I was so happy this morning. You were so good.

So warm. I wanted to envelop you in everything I could give.

It was more as a mother that I offered my breasts to you.\(^2\)

On the moral consideration it is unfair that Vishakha expressed her physical desires and fulfilled desires with Yavakri. But Vishakha is filled with strong urge of physical and as a result she breaks the traditional image of a pious wife. Therefore she has to sacrifice her life at the end of the play.

Queen Amritamati the main female protagonist in Karnad’s Bali: The Sacrifice firmly believes on the traditions, rituals and cultural activities of Jain religion. She expects all family members must follow tradition of Jainism. Even she conveys her husband to adopt the Jain religion. Because of her wish King accepts the principles of Jainism. Therefore King’s mother, Queen mother becomes very disturb. She is not happy to listen that her son married a girl from Jain tradition. Her son’s inter-religion marriage hearts her. She becomes very unhappy to know that her son adopted Jainism. She always wants that her son must accept the principles of Hinduism. After all King is very disturbing one. But for Queen Amritamati this is nothing but a mere her victory over her mother-in-law and becomes happy because her quest for completeness comes into reality. But at the end of the play Queen Amritamati has to sacrifice her life because of her quest. She fails to understand the real meaning of the conjugal life which is based on the love, affection and happy relationship.

Researcher views that Karnad wants to convey the importance of traditional Indian cultural norms of conjugal life therefore he presents his women protagonists keep extra-marital relationship in their conjugal life which leads them to give up their lives.

Padmini keeps extra-marital relationship in her conjugal life. She loves her husband as well as her lover, Kapila. Padmini keeps inner feelings and love for Kapila and she compels her husband to go to the Ujjain fair to buy new dolls. By this fair reason Devadatta would go out so she would find an opportunity to go in search of Kapila. In the absence of her husband she goes
to forest with her small baby to meet Kapila. First Kapila refuses to listen to her and requests her to return to her husband. But Padmini turns emotional and with pain she conveys her emotions as:

Padmini. No, don’t say anything. I know what you’ll say and I’ve told myself that a thousand times. It’s my fault. I mixed the heads up. I must suffer for it. I will. I’m sorry I came- I didn’t think before I started-couldn’t. But at least until my child wakes up, may I sit here and look at you? Have my fill for the rest of my life? I won’t speak a word.......(Kapila raise his head and looks at her. She caresses his face, like a blind person trying to imprint it on her finger-tips. Then she rests her head on his chest.)

…..My Kapila! My poor, poor Kapila! How needlessly you’ve tortured yourself. 25

Thus, Padmini manages to convey her love for Kapila and she tries to keep both the persons under her control. But at the end Kapila and Devadatta stand face to face and the fighting between Devadatta and Kapila turns into their horrible death. At the end of the play Padmini knows that she is responsible for the death of Devadatta and Kapila. It is the opinion of the researcher that Girish Karnad wants to convey that extra-marital relationship in conjugal life leads to tragedy in life. Therefore traditional Indian cultural norms of marriage institution hold upper hands and are very important to follow in conjugal life.

Vishakha keeps extra-marital relationship with Yavakri in The Fire and the Rain. She never hesitates to state her sexual desires to her lover Yavakri. She meets Yavakri and shares her body without thinking about the rich tradition of morality and culture. Vishakha says:
**Vishakha:** My husband and you! He left no pore in my body alone. And you—you think a woman is only a pair of half-formed breasts.

**Yavakri:** enough now.

**Vishakha:** I’ll give you the knowledge Indra couldn’t give you.

My body—it’s light with speech now.²⁶

Vishakha conveys her deep desire of sexuality to her lover. In the absence of her husband Vishakha meets Yavakri to fulfil her physical desire. However norms of Indian tradition morality teaches that she must keep control over desires and she must not share her sexual desire with another person except her husband. But Karnad’s female protagonist, Vishakha breaks the traditional rules and keeps extra-marital relationship with Yavakri. She forgets that after marriage wife is expected to lead pious and faithful life with her husband. Therefore when Vishakha’s father-in-law comes to know the extra-marital relationship of Vishakha, he calls her whore. Consequently, Vishakha has to sacrifice her life for her illicit relationship in conjugal life.

Queen Amritamati keeps extra-marital relationship but first she was not aware that her husband was following her in the ruin temple where Mahout and she met. When the King and the Queen Mother find the Queen with the Mahout in a ruined temple and realize the situation, the Queen Mother demands the King to kill both of them abruptly. But the Queen comes forward to defend the Mahout. She says:

**Queen:** Go on. Go on. Don’t hesitate now. Throw it out. Don’t be afraid, Mahout. Go ahead. Nothing’ll happen to you. You’ve my word.²⁷

It is significant to note that like other female protagonists of Karnad’s plays the Queen Amritamati is bold and dominant nature and she does not regret her betrayal against her husband. Instead she justifies her betrayal as an accident in her life. When King asked about her betrayal she replies that:
Queen: I do not regret anything that has happened. I will not disown him or anything he gave me. …because it just happened. Without my willing it. It just happened. That’s all…. I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer. Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn’t plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful. 28

The words of Queen Amritamati show her shrewd nature and she wants to convey that her betrayal is not betrayal but only an accident.

Researcher thinks that Karnad projects how women struggle to achieve their rights in a male-dominated society. He shows women opposing patriarchal principles therefore they feel despair, loneliness and the sense of futility in their life.

Women in India must listen to their parents before their marriage and husband after marriage because they don't have good source of income. So they depend on their parents and husband. So they have no equal rights in family and society. Padmini is one of the major characters in Hayavadana. She is caught between the patriarchal rules. It is observed that she tries to break the rules of male dominated society. For example, it can be observed through dialogues between Padmini and Devadatta as:

Devadatta: But ……you will be disappointed.

Padmini: Me? Of course not. We’ll do as you feel. You remember what the priest said-I’m your ‘half’ now. The better half! We can go to Ujjain some other time…. In another couple of months, there’s the big Ujjain fair. We’ll go then-just the two of us. All right? We’ll cancel today’s trip. 29

As above mentioned conversation between husband and wife, Padmini and Devadatta presents how Padmini’s boldly expressed her desire and forced to do her husband as she wished. It is important to note that Padmini remembered her husband that she is his ‘half’, means a life
partner and she has right to take decision. Karnad presents his women characters oppose patriarchal principles so they feel despair, loneliness and the sense of futility in their life.

Vishakha struggles to achieve her right in male-dominated society in *The Fire and the Rain*. Vishakha’s family is shown as a typical Indian family ruled by male-dominance where men order women and women have to follow orders. In Vishakha’s family husband and her father-in-law play very leading roles. Her husband Paravasu neglects Vishakha’s emotions, her equal rights in family. Paravasu used Vishakha’s body only for sex and he does not think about her love, emotions. Vishakha asked her husband why he did not come to meet her. But there was not any response from her husband. She becomes aware of her personality and she wants to share her emotions and love with her husband but he did not come home for seven years. Infact, Girish Karnad presents Vishakha has equal right to ask questions in conjugal life. But it is the characteristic of patriarchal system that husband does not care wife’s suggestions. Here Vishakha says that:

**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.) 30

Thus, it is important to note that Vishakha breaks the shackles of male-dominated society and becomes very courageous to ask question to her husband. But she becomes despair when she comes to know that there is no any response from her husband. Her husband is a symbol of patriarchal person who leaves her alone in house and he denies his company. Therefore, she finds her love in Yavakri. And same thing happens with Queen Amritamati says that:

**Queen:** I live surrounded by such men and I am sick and tired of them
The words of Queen Amritamati present the truth that she is tired of the King’s nature and she is surrounded by all royal men and women who are only aware about their status but do have in beauty, sensuous satisfaction.

Girish Karnad criticizes on traditional patriarchal norms which exploit women from very ancient times to modern. In Naga-Manadala, female protagonist Rani quite bravely faces the snake-ordeal to prove her faithfulness to her husband. The miracle during the snake-ordeal turns her into a master of her house. Her unconscious relationship with the Naga proves fruitful and brings her motherhood. She stains what she does not get in the frame of conventional frame of family. But somehow the miracle helps her hide the fruit of her extra-marital love under the cover of family and accords it not only social sanction but also mastership of her family. The roles of Appanna and Rani are exchanged. What Padmini in Hayavadana cannot achieve, Rani successfully enjoys it, not at the cost of her family protection.

The scene of Rani’s trial reminds of Sita’s trial in *The Ramayana*. Sita undergoes *Agni Pariksha* to prove her chastity. Rani finds herself in a similar situation like Sita who has to pass the test of fire, to prove her chastity. In this connection critic M. S. Babu comments:

> Chastity is such a value invented by patriarchal culture and accepted by women. It is one of the most powerful yet invisible cultural fetters that have enslaved women for ages since the dawn of patriarchy. The *Ramayana* in which Sita undergoes the fire ordeal to prove her chastity to Rama has been a cultural guide to Indians for more than two thousand years. 32

Karnad here exposes the patriarchal moral code, which emphasizes loyalty of a woman to her husband but does not question the frailty of a man. Though men commit the worst sexual crimes, only women are accused of violating the moral codes of society. In short, Rani is a typical Indian woman who is ready to suffer at the hands of her husband without complaining in the hope that husband will return to her in the end. She expects nothing, yet she is ready to make any sacrifice.
Researcher is of the opinion that Girish Karnad presents through his female protagonists an image of modern woman who breaks the shackles of traditional orthodox beliefs. Girish Karnad projects his women characters like Vishakha, Padmini, Queen Amritmati and Queen mother as modern women in male-dominated society. Vishakha is strongly influenced by modern thinking and she is aware of her equal right in conjugal and social life. Vishakha is the central character who protests principles of the male dominated Indian society where women are denied the freedom to act according to their willpower. Women are treated as secondary and mere man’s shadow-self. The role of women in society has been changing in the modern age. Vishakha is far more self-confident, domineering and bold in comparison to her male counterparts. She is not submissive and a traditional Indian woman. She is not guilty about her affairs and attitudes. She does not lead a life which is defined by her husband. She follows her natural instincts and makes her own rules. For example she without fear blames her husband:

**Vishakha:** He used my body, and his own body, like an experimenter, an explorer. As instruments in a search. Search for what? I never knew. But I knew he knew. Nothing was too shameful, too degrading, even too painful. Shame died in me. And I yielded. I let my body be turned inside out as he did his won.\(^\text{33}\)

Thus, it is observed through Vishakha’s dialogue that she becomes aware about her identity and in male dominated society position. She becomes much aggressive and quick to take decision. Though Vishakha is repressed by the power of patriarchal values, she is brave and frank unlike the traditional Indian women.

Girish Karnad’s another woman character Padmini who represents herself as a modern woman and predicament of modern woman. Padmini becomes glad when she gets Devadatta having obtained Kapila’s body in him. While departing to Kapila Padmini plays her plan by communicating to Kapila that she has not broken down her relationship with Kapila. She says:

**Padmini:** Let’s go. (Pause.) Wait. (She runs to Kapila.) Don’t be sad, Kapila. We shall meet again, shan’t we? (in a low voice, so Devadatta can’t hear.) It’s my duty to go with Devadatta. But
remember I’m going with your body. Let that cheer you up.

(Goes back to Devadatta.) Good-bye, Kapila.  

Thus, Padmini reveals her inner desire and she assures Kapila that she is going with Devadatta under the pressure of traditional code and conducts of society. She could not accompany Kapila, for it would have been a scandal. But she assures Kapila that they would meet. In this connection, the present researcher agrees with the critic, Rakesh Joshi when he observes psyche of modern woman in Karnad’s woman character, Padmini:

Karnad tries to reveal through Padmini is the predicament of a modern, free and bold woman who is born between polarities, a woman who loves her husband as well as someone else of two different aspects of their personalities.  

4.2.2 Rani, Nittilai:

Researcher views that Girish Karnad portrays his woman protagonist Rani to criticize orthodox principles of patriarchal society in Naga-Mandala on the other hand Karnad presents his female character Nittilai to focus on the suffering and humiliation of the lower-class people in Indian society in The Fire and the Rain. Nittilai is a submissive and timid traditional Indian woman who exposes the drawback of upper class. She blames:

Nittilai: So Father’s to blame? Do you know why Father called the elder in such haste? He always says: ‘These high-caste men are glad enough to bed our women but not to wed them.’  

Through the words of Nittilai, Karnad exposes the plight of the traditional Indian women who are used by the men folk in male-dominated society. From the ancient times till the modern age women are expected to do house hold duties and especially lower caste women have been humiliated in society so the situation has remained the same. Nittilai is not an individual, but a representative of the early twentieth century Indian woman.

Girish Karnad presents his woman character Rani who tries to free herself from the orthodox rules of the male-dominated society in Naga-Mandala. The submissive and suppressed
woman has started to understand her equal rights in conjugal life. Rani has stared reacting against the orthodox male-dominated society. For example Rani says:

**Rani:** I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot. Not a cat or a sparrow. Why don’t you take it on trust that I have a mind and explain this charade to me? Why do you play these games? Why do you change like a chameleon from day to night?  

Rani presents herself as a aware woman who tries to achieve her equal rights in the conjugal life. Karnad’s women characters Rani, Nittilai are representative of post-modern Indian women, who want to make the patriarchal society aware of the awakening of women and ask for their rights and position in the society as a equal to man. They represent the everyday life and matters of Indian women. Nittilai declares that both man and woman have been awarded with same qualities by God and equal position in the world too. But it is the man who has drawn a line of limitations before the woman and wants to rule over her. And the truth remains one for all that allows no distinct identity for women and restricts them within their limited boundaries to act like the shadows of their male’s personality.

It is observed the complete surrender of females to male-dominated society. The mute acceptation of the norms made by the men is considered the most appreciative quality of a woman who is expected to represent Sita and Savitri in her every step moving ahead towards life. In other words, under the impression of these legendary symbols, woman has no right to establish her individuality; rather her existence finds its shelter under the shadow of her male’s personality.

### 4.3 Dramatic Techniques of Girish Karnad:

Girish Karnad has dealt with myth, folklore and folktale in a new way. He employed his own dramatic devices like ‘the dolls’, ‘masks’, ‘female chorus’ etc. to present the pathetic and authentic state of Indian social life. He creates the myth structure to match the past and the present, to blend the illusion and reality or in other words, to put contemporary issues just side by side with history. It is discussed as follows:
4.3.1 Bhagavata, the Female Chorus, the Dolls and Masks:

Girish Karnad as a modern playwright introduces his own dramatic devices like the Sutradhara or Bhagavata, the female chorus and the dolls in his plays under study to present contemporary reality. It is noteworthy that Karnad experiments boldly with the folk and myth while using traditional devices to fuse with modern stage devices like light and sound. It is the opinion of the researcher that Karnad uses his dramatic devices according to his intention. For example, the main function of chorus is to narrate the story and comments on the proceedings and gives information, ‘female chorus’ and ‘dolls’ are used to focus on psych of female protagonists in his plays.

Bhagavata is the narrator, commentator and a participant in Hayavadana. He can be called Sutradhar in the tradition of Indian drama. The role of Bhagavata means to convey Girish Karnad’s mouth-piece on the some of the critical situation. For example, the Bhagavata describes Lord Ganapati as an imperfect and incomplete being striking the theme of the play. Though Lord Ganapati is incomplete and imperfect, he is the destroyer of obstacles who removes hurdles. As a narrator, Bhagavata offers the introduction to the main plot that takes among the behavioural personality of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini, is linked with mythological characters like Lava and Kusha, Rama and Lakshmana and Krishna and Balarama in order to show the intensity of feeling and bonds of relationships between Devadatta and Kapila. Thus, by using Bhagavata Karnad exposes the presence of Hayavadana in the beginning of the play and suggests the myth is related to the sub-plot of the play.

It is the main use of Bhagavata that he is the narrator, commentator and interposer. He keeps audience abreast with the information both on stage and for the audience. He comments on the past, present and future. For example, in the beginning of the Act Two in Hayavadana, Bhagavata appears and poses the question regarding the superiority of head or body to the audience. Then the Bhagavata offers the solution by giving reference of King Vikrama when he ruling the world, shining in glory like the earth’s challenge to the sun, he was asked the same question by the demon Vetala. In this way, Bhagavata comes in the play from time to time and either through questions or answers to move the story in the right directions.

Another important dramatic device of Girish Karnad is the Female Chorus. In Hayavadana, the Female Chorus chants;
Female Chorus: 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?  

Female Chorus introduces the stand taken by the playwright as well as Padmini who is the central character and focuses on the major theme of the play. When Padmini comes in the forest to meet Kapila, he accepts her when Kapila is convinced that she comes to the forest just to convey her interest and love breaking the conjugal relationship. Kapila takes Padmini inside his hut to make love to her. Female Chorus comments on their union:

Female Chorus: The river only feels the pull of the waterfall.
She giggles, and tickles the rushes on the banks, then turns
a top of dry leaves
in the navel of the whirlpool, weaves
a water-snake in the net of silver strands
in the green depths, frightens the frog
on the rug of moss, sticks and bamboo leaves, sings, tosses, leaps
and
sweeps on in a rush-

The female chorus offers connotative information which is very important to understand implied meaning of dramatist. Here female chorus becomes symbolic to express the hidden intents of human mind and the situational referents. As Girish Karnad states in the Introduction to *Three Plays*:
The chorus, the masks, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of human and non-human worlds permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem.  

Girish Karnad uses the folk device of masks to show the individuality of different characters of Kapila and Devadatta in his play *Hayavadana*. When Padmini joins heads of Kapila and Devadatta to their bodies but she changes their bodies. This researcher views that to show this critical situation of changing heads of Kapila and Devadatta Girish Karnad uses the masks. In this regard critic, S. Goel comments is worth quoting:  

Karnad employs the ingenious folk device of masks which is a typical feature of ‘Yakshagana,’ to project the personalities of different characters. In the beginning of the Hayavadana, Devadatta appears on the stage wearing a pale-coloured mask and Kapila 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.  

Karnad uses mask to represent two things, one is the act going to present in front of audience is not real and second it is rather symbolic one to focus on the central issue of theme related to the play. Girish Karnad introduces his own dramatic device, ‘the two Dolls’. Two dolls are brought by Devadatta from the Ujjain fair. Two dolls converse with each other but they are inaudible to the characters on the stage but audience can hear them. Dolls notice the change in the body of Devadatta. They also talk of the pregnancy of Padmini, then about her son and the family atmosphere in a serious and non-serious way. When Padmini informs Devadatta about the death of Kapila’s mother as told by their maid, but Devadatta is not interested in it. In such critical situation, the conversation of Dolls is very important as:

**Doll I**: Each one to his fate!
Doll II: Each one to her problems!.

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 thing!

Doll II: It was so shameless….

Doll I: I said be quiet…. 42

Dolls keep in arguing about life of Devadatta and Padmini and they curse Devadatta and Pdamini when they decided to throw them out because they are torn. They abuse Padmini calling her a whore and bitch. Further, dramatist presents the conversation between the dolls which reveals the truth i.e. the image of man in dream of Padmini is not related to her husband but Kapila one. Through dolls conversation, playwright presents Padmini’s dream to meet Kapila and she loves Kapila. Girish Karnad’s usages of dramatic devices like dolls, female chorus, and Sutradhara or Bhagavata are typical features of his plays. His dramatic devices play a very central role in the development of the plot. They inform the audience of the gradual physical change in the body of Devadatta and of the inner thought-process of Padmini.

4.3.2 Irony and Humour:

The irony and humour come in great quantity in Girish Karnad’s plays under study. For example in his play Hayavadana, Hayavadana is the child of a Karnataka Princess and a celestial being in the form of a horse. A product of unusual marriage has got to be unusual and Hayavadana is born with the body of a human and face of a horse. It is the duty of parents to save child from troubles but her mother and father neglect Hayavadana. The celestial gandharva too does not show any concern for his son and without making any mention of him or showing any trace of responsibility he leaves for his Heavenly Abode. As a matter of fact, Hayavadana needed love and care of his parents more than anybody else but he does not get it. He is left to wonder for himself and has to endure the laughter and insult silently. He regards himself an incomplete being and desperately wants to get rid of his face. Irony lies in the fact that despite being child of the two fine persons (one is celestial and the other is aristocratic) Hayavadana gets neglect and has to suffer problems largely because of them.
The basic irony in the *Hayavadana* is that all the characters are leading a dual life who dare not confess openly what they feel in heart. Padmini likes Kapila but she does not want her illegal relationship to be known to Devadatta. The irony lies in the dialogue of Padmini when she was becoming sati. Her request to Bhagavata reveals the truth that she is very thirsty for perfection. In her life she tried to achieve the perfect husband but could not successful to bring such perfection. Such perfection is not possible and even Goddesses Kali has not given to Hayavadana also, but Padmini could not understand it. She requests Bhagavata as:

**Padmini** : Yes, Please. My son is sleeping in 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.  

Padmini becomes *sati* like Sita. The irony lies in itself that Padmini is becoming sati but she is not moral and pious wife to Devadatta. She keeps extra-marital relationship. Even she is described as a true widow who prepares to follow her husband to the next world. Earlier she says that if goddess Kali could have saved any of the two males she could have found a reason to live. Goddess kali appreciates her truthfulness and honesty. Her love for one male is always questionable. Thus, the desire of Padmini to seek love outside marriage and her cruel nature also comes under the irony.

**4.3.3 Use of Indian Myth and Folktales:**

It is the opinion of this researcher that Girish Karnad has taken the plunge into the depths of Indian myths, folktales and legends to look for the subject matter for his plays. In the “Author’s Introduction” to Three Plays, Girish Karnad writes:

I remember that the idea of my play *Hayavadana* started crystallizing in my head right in the middle of an argument with B.V. Karanth (who ultimately produced the play) about the meaning of
masks in Indian theatre and theatre’s relationship to music. The play is based on a story from a collection of tales called the *Kathasaritsagara* and the further development of this story by Thomas Mann in ‘The Transposed Heads’.

Thus Girish Karnad confesses that he derives plot of Hayavadana from *Kathasaritsagara*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. In *Kathasaritsagara*, the story of ‘The Heads That Got Switched’ contains a simple riddle. As far as his play *Naga-Mandala* is concerned Karnad writes:

*Naga-Mandala* is based on two oral tales I heard from A.K. Ramanujan. These tales are narrated by women-normally the older women in the family-while children are being fed in the evenings in the kitchen or being put to bed.

Girish Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* is based on the myth of Yavakri, Indra and Vritra. The eternal conflict of good and evil continues from the period of the *Mahabharata* to the modern society. The myth of Yavakri is a story of ambition to achieve the Universal Knowledge directly from the Indra but not from the human teacher, 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. Karnad in Bali: The Sacrifice has used the ancient myth of a Jain king and his queen in a long, single act of intense psychological confusion interspersed with songs and with intermittent preludes of the couple parts of life. It is a simple tale of adultery of the queen for the king’s mahout, the elephant keeper. The king is devastated to discover that queen Amritmani, is involved with the elephant keeper. In order to avert the evil consequences of her infidelity, he is forced by his mother, who is a devout and ritualistic Hindu, to sacrifice a cockerel to please the gods. But he is a Jain and non-violence is the fundamental principle of Jain faith. So in desperation, he substitutes a bird made of dough, which in turn has unexpected results.
Girish Karnad’s play, *Naga-Mandala* (1988) is based on two Kannada folk-tales which he heard from A.K. Ramanujan, is full of mythical wonder. As the play opens, Appanna is portrayed as a very dominating and cruel husband who exercises superiority over his bride. Rani is an extremely innocent woman. However, the main transformation in the play is that of the cobra assuming the form of Rani’s husband, Appanna to make love to her. Karnad traces the movement of Rani (the Indian woman, in general) from enslavement to empowerment. Here, in this regard the comment of Veena Noble Dass is worth-quoting:

Karnad remains the most important dramatist of the contemporary Kannada stage. He has given the Kannda Theatre a richness that could probably be equated only with his talents as an actor-director. He has shown the Indian stage as to what depths the mythical themes could be taken to in order to recreate a contemporary consciousness.\(^{46}\)

Girish Karnad uses Indian myths and folktales to present Indian lives and exposes the problems related with the traditional Indian patriarchal system. For example, Karnad in his *Bali: the Sacrifice* shows a typical Indian woman character Rani. She is a traditional Indian woman who is ready to suffer at the hands of her husband without complaining in the hope that husband will return to her in the end. She expects nothing, yet she is ready to make any sacrifice. Karnad through his woman character Vishakha shows the problems related with Indian woman from ancient age to modern age. In Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain*, Yavakri uses Parvasu’s wife to take revenge by seducing her. It is the tragedy of woman from ancient to modern times as she is believed as only tool to fulfill emotional, physical desires and is used as only tool to avenge some lost pride and reputation of the family. This researcher thinks that Karnad uses myth of Yajana to present how lower caste people prohibited to attend the ‘Fire Sacrifice’ in play *The Fire and the Rain*. It is believed from ancient times that some events related to Gods such as pelage to God, penance of God must be done by only upper class people.

In brief the majority of women in Karnad’s present plays are presented as bold, experimenting, opposing age-old customs and acting as per their own conscience.
References

13. Ibid., p.10
19. Ibid., p.
28. Ibid, p. 234-235
39. Ibid.pp.58-59
43. Ibid.p.62
45. Ibid.p.16