CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN HAYAVADANA AND NAGA-MANDALA

2.1 Introduction- Hayavadana:

Girish Karnad’s third play, *Hayavadana* (1971), is noteworthy play because it is the first work to translate into notable practice the debate over the usefulness of original performance genres in the development of a new, quintessentially ‘Indian’ theatre. Girish Karnad has derived myths to look for the subject matter for his play. In the “Author’s Introduction” Three Plays, Girish Karnad writes:

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’.

In Hayavadan, 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. Girish Karnad projects the female character in very different manner. His female character possesses qualities like attractive, clever, energetic, and more dominant than male character in the play. Through female character, Girish Karnad presents image of modern woman who is caught between two ideas, one is her quest for completeness and other is her search for individual rights in male-dominated society.

Girish Karnad presents his female protagonist relevance to modern context to show weakness of male-dominated Indian social system. In this respect, observations on woman character in *Hayavadana* are discussed in detail. It is important to note the plot structure of Hayavadan to understand the central theme of the play.

2.1.1 Plot Construction of Hayavadana:

Girish Karnad presents main plot and sub-plot in the Hayavadana. He derives main plot from the creative source *Kathasaritsagara*, and sub-plot is the further development of his story is
based on Thomas Mann’s text, *The Transposed Heads*. The main plot depicts the story of Deveadatta, Padmini and Kapila and the sub-plot deals with the story of Hayavadana.

Girish Karnad links the thematic contents of this sub-plot with the main plot at the end of the play presenting a union of the energy of the horse in relation to human world. This sub-plot presents the problem of Hayavadana’s desire for completeness. In the main plot, through the character, Padmini shows the human’s desire for completeness. At the end of the play, dramatist shows that human’s desire for completeness cannot be fulfilled. Also, Goddess does not fulfil the wish of Hayavadana. As Hayavadana says:

**Hayavadana:** The goddess appeared. Very prompt. But looked rather put out. She said—rather peevishly, I thought—why don’t you people go somewhere else if you want to chop off your stupid heads? Why do you have to come to me? I fell at her feet and said, ‘Mother, make me complete’. She said ‘so be it’ and disappeared— even before I could say ‘Make me complete Man!’ I become a horse.  

Girish Karnad presents the superiority of head not only in the main plot but also in sub-plot. In the sub-plot, Hayavadana possesses the head of horse therefore Goddess turns him into a complete horse. In the main plot, Padmini misplaces heads of Devadatta and Kapila to get a perfect husband for her. In other words she wants to possess a complete man who has head full of intellect like Devadatta and strong body of Kapila. But, Devadatta no longer possesses the strong body of Kapila and he starts to loss strength of body. Thus, the story of the sub-plot reasserts the central thought of the main plot. The main and sub-plot merge together at the end.

Girish Karnad makes use of the traditional myth and theatre of India along with the techniques of modern drama. The fusion of the traditional and modern elements imparts a unique dramatic effect in Hayavadana. It achieves a unity of structure and produces a very cohesive dramatic effect displaying the mastery of dramatic craft of the playwright.

### 2.1.2 Women in Hayavadana:
Girish 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, critical comments of the researcher on woman character in Hayavadana are discussed:

i. **Padmini:**

In *Hayavadana*, Padmini is one of the major characters. She is a beautiful female character. *Hayavadana* is multi-dimensional play presenting a love triangle involving Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. Padmini is innocent, beautiful, perceptive cleaver, energetic and cruel; all these qualities ingrained in her make her a matchless personality. Padmini, the centralized figure, is wonderfully dramatized in the play. She is a beautiful woman gifted with charming body. As Devadatta says:

**Devadatta:** How can I describe her, Kapila? Her forelocks rival the bees;

her face (both Devadatta and Kapila praise) is a white lotus.

Her beauty is as the magic lake. Her arms the lotus creepers.

Her breasts are golden urns and her waist. ³

As concerned to the familial background of Padmini; she is the daughter of the leading merchant in Dharmapura. Padmini is quite considerate and rational, and being born and brought up in a rich family, she seems to have been loved to her utter satisfaction, her every desire fulfilled by her parents. It can be seen when Kapila proposed to Padmini for his friend, Devadatta, she accepts it immediately, even before the parental permission. The marriage proposed from such a well known family, the revered family, makes her happy and proud. As Kapila describes Davadatta ;

Devadatta has gifted these fine qualities in his personality, but he is fragile in body, is emotional and sentimental. Devadatta loves Padmini, her beauty and her body but has not applied his reasoning power to read her mind, nature and personality. On other hand, in the very first meeting with Padmini, Kapila realizes that she is an unfit match for Devadatta. Even Kapila expressed his feelings to Devadatta as;

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.

Therefore, the married life between Devadatta and Padmini does not look to be full of happiness and satisfaction. Devadatta who is a weak and delicate is unsuitable; her expectation of a muscular and physically powerful person takes her away from her husband towards his friend, Kapila. She keeps a secret desire for Kapila, awaits his arrival and become restless if Kapila does not visit the house. But Devadatta does not like Kapila’s over presence in the married life and even in the house. When Devadatta complains about Kapila’s disturbs in his reading of Bhasa’s and also blames Padmini for his over entertainment. Without compromising, Padmini reacts, “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.”
Thus, she plays the role of a rescuer whenever Devadatta holds Kapila responsible for disturbs in his married life.

Padmini wants her husband should pay much attention for her desire but Devadatta spends much of his time in reading poetry or plays or writing and Padmini needs a man in her company who can fulfil her desire. So the trip to Ujjain is an opportunity for Padmini which would offer her much of the time to spend in the company to Kapila. Consequently, Padmini insists for journey to Ujjain after Kapila comes with the cart and forces Devadatta to load personal belongings. Padmini projects her passion for the ‘iron-black-body’ of Kapila when she observes him, from the very close side when he goes to bring “the Fortunate lady’s flower that is meant for a married woman…” 7. The great appreciation of Kapila’s body and his movement described by Padmini as;

**Padmin.** 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 looks so helpless. 8

The words for Kapila’s body and his physical movement reveal 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. Therefore while going to Rudra’s temple Devadatta expresses his emotions as;

**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. 9

Padmini grows self-centred and conscious of the possible events. She knows that she would be held responsible for their death: “And who’ll believe me? They’ll all say the two fought and died for this whore. They are bound to say it. Then what’ll happen to me?” 10 The
people would certainly discuss that Padmini had extramarital relationship with Kapila and in their fight to take possession of her body both have killed each other. Under the social burdens she decides to offer her life in sacrifice in front of the goddess Kali.

It is for the first time, Padmini accepts her love for Kapila. She pleas the goddess to save her from the difficult incident in which her husband and lover have killed themselves. By accepting her prayer, the goddess Kali asks her to put “these heads back properly. Attach them to their bodies and then press that sword on their necks.”  

So, they can come alive.

But she misplaces the heads, Devadatta’s head on Kapila’s body and Kapila’s head on Devadatta. This misplacement of heads serves her dual purposes; in one stroke she has now got Devadatta’s mind and Kapila’s body in one person. Padmini can be termed a hypocrite and shrewd woman. Padmini does not publicly admit her love for Kapila because she is aware of the socio-cultural restrictions which prohibit a married woman from developing extra marital relationship, a relationship which would violate of marriage. When Kapila claims her as her wife on the ground that it his body with which Padmini spent days and night also he says “This body she’s lived with all these months. And the child she’s carrying is the seed of this body”  

Devadatta’s argues “When one accepts a partner in marriage, with the holy fire as one’s witness, one accepts a person, not a body. She didn’t marry Devadatta’s body, she married Devadatta- the person”  

And Devadatta proves that according to the Sacred Texts with all the human limbs the topmost-in position -is the head. So he has Devadatta’s head and it follows that he is Devadatta. Also, Padmini goes with Devadatta because she finds security and stability in Devadatta having obtained Kapila’s body in him and she can save herself from the criticism and blames of the society. She feels very happy having obtained a complete man with intellectual mind and strong body together. Both Devadatta and Padmini express their joy as follow:

**Devadatta:** You know, I’d always thought one had to use one’s brains while wrestling or fencing or swimming. But this body just doesn’t wait for thoughts-it acts!

**Padmini:** Fabulous body- fabulous brain- fabulous Devadatta.
Devadatta tries to show his manliness and strength and Padmini is perfectly satisfied with fabulous body and brain in one person for her. But this joy does not remain long ever when Devadatta turns to study, to read and write. The strength and the steel body of Devadatta going weak after a few days consequently body degenerating into lean and thin as it was earlier. Thinking about this Padmini feels disappointed and her thoughts take her back to Kapila when she says;

**Padmini:** What are you afraid of, Devadatta? What does it matter that you are going soft again, that you are losing your muscles? I’m not going to be stupid again. Kapila’s gone out of my life-forever. I won’t let him come back again. *(pause)* Kapila? What could he be doing now? Where could he be? Could his body be fair still, and his face dark? *(long pause)* Devadatta changes. Kapila changes. And me?  

Padmini’s words reveal her inner feelings for Kapila and she compels her husband to go to the Ujjain fair to bring new dolls. She says ‘it’s unlucky to keep torn dolls at home’  

By this fair reason Devadatta would go out so she could get an opportunity to go in search of Kapila. Further she manages to send Devadatta to Ujjain and in the absence of her husband she goes to forest with her small baby to meet Kapila. She shows Kapila the child having mole, “the same mole on his shoulder.”  

When Kapila refuses to listen her and requests her to return to her husband, Padmini turns emotional and with pain she admits,

**Padmini:** I will. But can I ask a little favour? My son’s tired. He’s asleep. He has been on my arms for several days now. Let him rest a while. As soon as he gets up I’ll go. Yes, you won, Kapila. Devadatta won too. But I –the better half of two
bodies- I neither win nor lose. 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.(p.57)…..(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.  

By this way Padmini manages to express 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 last Padmini knows that she is responsible for the dance of death with such bloodshed. She laments the reason for their death as well for her own act as “Kali, Mother of all Nature, you must have your joke even now. Other women can die praying that they should get the same husband in all the live to come. You haven’t left me even that little consolation.”  

ii. Mother of Hayavadana:

The play is named after Hayavadana. Hayavadana is a character with a horse’s head and a man’s body who appears at the beginning and end of the play to frame the central plot. When, Bhagavata raises a question in front of Hayavadana about his incomplete form either as a man or an animal. He says that his mother married to white stallion. Here, Girish Karnad shows the contents of the Puranic tales when he makes the marriage takes place between a stallion and a human being. Hayavadana’s mother is a beautiful princess of the Karnataka. She decides that she
she should choose her own husband. Therefore, the princes of every kingdom in the world are invited. The princes from China, Persia, Africa and some other countries participate, but she does not like any of them. The last one to come is the prince of Araby who is sitting on his great white stallion. Finally she says she would only marry the horse! She wouldn’t listen to anyone.

At the end she marries the stallion and lives with him for fifteen years. One morning, the stallion changes into the form of *gandharva*. Apparently this stallion has been cursed by the god, Kuvera to be born a horse for some act of misbehavior. And after a span of fifteen years of human love he has become his original self again. Gandharva becomes happy and invites his wife to accompany him to his Heavenly Abode. But she wouldn’t like to go in Heaven. She says she would come only if he becomes a horse again. So he curses her to become a horse herself. In this manner, Hayavadana’s mother becomes a horse and she runs away happily. Hayavadana’s father, Gandharva goes back to his Heavenly Abode. And the only Hayavadana, the child of their marriage is left behind.

Mother of Hayavadana is very ambitious to live with the horse without caring of her child. Even she does not care when she is cursed to become a horse by her husband. She runs away happily. If she would go with her husband in the Heaven Abode, it may possible that life of her and her child would be different.

### 2.1.3 Women’s Ambition, Clash of ego, Despair and Sense of Futility:

Girish Karnad projects the significant changes in the female character, Padmini. Ambitious Padmini 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
Padmini is a hypocrite and shrewd woman. Padmini does not publicly admit her love for Kapila because she is aware of the socio-cultural restrictions which prohibit a married woman from developing extra marital relationship which would violation of marriage institution. She tells 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.  

Padmini is very ambitious to achieve her inner desire. She would like to accompany with Kapila. That is the reason why she instantly becomes ready when Kapila comes with cart to go for Ujjain trip. But Padmini is very clever woman, she first denied trip for the satisfaction of Devadatta on account of her headache. But when she finds Kapila with Devadatta, she becomes ready to go without any consent of her husband. Also, her consent for trip shows her reason of headache is false one, as she says:

**Padmini:** What’s wrong with me? I’m perfect. In had a headache this morning. But a layer of ginger-paste took care of that. Why should we cancel our trip for a little thing like that?  

**Kapila:** No. really, if you have a headache….

**Padmini:** I don’t have a headache now!  

As above mentioned conversation between Padmini and Kapila reveals the truth that how Padmini changes her commitment to achieve company of her lover, Kapila.

The sub-plot of the play, *Hayavadana* deals with mythical story of Hayavadana and his mother and father. Mother of Hayavadana is one of the minor mentioned characters by Hayavadana. Mother of Hayavadana was very ambitious to get her desire into reality. Mother was a beautiful princess of Karanataka. She married the stallion and lived with him for fifteen years. Fortunately the stallion becomes a *gandharva* who was cursed by the god Kuvera. And
gandharva asked mother to accompany him to his Heaven Abode. She is very strict to stand on her words, she refuses his offer to follow him to his Celestial Abode, and it is mentioned by Hayavadana as:

**Hayavadana:** released from his curse, he asked my mother to accompany him to his Heavenly Abode. But she wouldn’t. She said she would come only if he became a horse again. So he cursed her to become a horse herself.  

Mother is very ambitious to stand firmly for her desire to live with horse therefore she was cursed by her husband. Her terrible deed is responsible for her own doom in the life. Even she was not careful about her child who is Hayavadana having horse’s head and a man’s body.

Girish Karnad does not glorify the love of Devadatta, Padmini and Kapila and does not idealize the friendship of Devadatta and Kapila. He aims at presenting the conflicts of the ego and consequences. 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 affirmation of her selfhood. Such an ego of Padmini is presented clearly in her interaction with Kapila who is on the negotiating mission for his friend’s marriage. The interaction between Padmini and Kapila as:

**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?

Kapila: I’m finished –decimated-powdered dust-powdered into tiny specks of flour. (To Padmini) My mother, can I at least talk to a servant? 24

In conversation Padmini goes to the extent of asking Kapila to touch her feet. Naturally, it is difficult for Kapila to conquer her. But then, Kapila is equally a real fighter, when he advances fearlessly and forcefully does she take her heels calling after her mother. At this stage, Kapila realizes that his good friend Devadatta is no match for her because only an iron man will suit her. Padmini is a powerfully witty and wild woman as she proves herself throughout the play. Padmini requires a man of similar temperament who will accept her as she is.

Therefore, when Padmini does not hesitate to seek out Kapila in the forest, Kapila is angry with her because he was hurted in very first meeting with Padmini. Even Kapila asks her again why she has come to him, she replies confidently, ‘I had to see you’ 25. It is very important to note that here Kapila is confused about Padmini who is married to Devadatta even she comes to see and express her interest. They interact as:

Kapila: Fortunately, yes. Now I can run ten miles and not stop for breath.

I can swim through the monsoon floods and fell a banyan. The stomach used to rebel once-Now it digests what I give. If I don’t, it doesn’t complain.

Padmini: Must the head always win?

Kapila: That’s why I am Kapila now. Kapila! Kapila with a face which fits his body.

Padmini: What a good mix - No more tricks -Is this one that Or that one this? Do you remember the song we sang in the Kali temple?
Kapila: So?.... why have you come away from him?

Padmini: What do you want me to say? 26

Here, Kapila could have remembered the first meeting of Padmini and her ego of asking to touch feet. That is why; first Kapila is angry and hesitates to believe her. But later he accepts her when Kapila convinced that she comes to the forest just to express her interest breaking the marital bond. As the Bhagavata intervenes between Kapila and Padmini and reveals inner feeling and desire of Padmini:

Bhagavata: How could I make you understand? If Devadatta had changed overnight and had gone back to his original form, I would have forgotten you completely. But that’s not how it happened. He changed day by day. Inch by inch. Hair by hair. Like the trickling sand. Like the water filling the pot. And as I saw him change – I couldn’t get rid of you. That’s what Padmini must tell Kapila. She should say more, without concealing anything: ‘Kapila, if that rishi had given me to you, would I have gone back to Devadatta someday exactly like this?

But she doesn’t say anything. She remains quiet. 27

Also, it is important to note that Hayavadana’s mother, the princess of the Karnataka, is not presented as a character in the play. Even then her marriage with the white stallion that carries the prince of Araby is important from the viewpoint of her ego. Marital life is the physical, psychological and social need. To fulfill this need, the princess could have chosen one of the princes who come from different regions for marriage. But she chooses the horse instead of the horse rider. She possesses such an extreme ego that she is not ready to accept advice of anyone. Here, Hayavadana describes her as:

Hayavadana: Yes. She wouldn’t listen to anyone. The prince of Araby burst a blood-vessel. 28
That is the reason why her ego is responsible for her doom. Again, her ego is responsible for her ruin when the opportunity presents itself before her for the joining of Heaven Abode, she denied to grant this opportunity of her husband though she had lived fifteen years with him as wife and even she is not careful about her child, Hayavadana. An innocent Hayavadana is left alone on the earth to search for his society.

Girish Karnad presents problems of women not only in their familial life but also in social life. He projects how women struggle to achieve their rights in male-dominated society. Also, he shows women oppose patriarchal principles therefore they feel despair, loneliness and the sense of futility in their life.

Mother of Hayavadana is the minor female character who strives to achieve her right in male-dominated society. When she was asked to select her husband, she decided to marry with white stallion. Her father deeply tried to convince her but she strictly stands on her decision. As Hayavadan describes:

**Hayavadana:** No one could dissuade her. So ultimately she was

married off to the white stallion. She lived with him for

fifteen years.  

Here, it is important to note that mother of Hayavadana broke the shackles of male-dominated society. Also, she could not be convinced by anyone. She became despair when she had come to know that the white stallion turns into *gandharva*. Also, she denied firmly when her husband asked to come with him in the Heavenly Abode. Her husband was a symbol of patriarchal person who cursed her when she denied his company. Therefore, she ran away lonely without thinking about her child, Hayavadana. She may think that her existence is futile on this earth.

Padmini is major character in main plot of Hayavadana. She is caught between the patriarchal rules. It is observed that she tries to break man dominance rules when she talks to her husband. It can be observed through dialogues between Padmini and Devadatta as:
Devadatta: A pundit’s coming to see me. He wants me to explain some verses to him. Can you keep some sweets and lime-juice ready?

Padmini: Yes. Did you hear…..? The maid was telling me…

Devadatta: What?

Padmini: Kapila’s mother died this morning. Poor thing! She’d been bed-ridden all these years, ever since….

Devadatta: What did you expect me to do about it? Get the lime juice ready soon.  

As above mentioned conversation between husband and wife, Padmini and Devadatta presents how Padmini’s desire is pressed by her husband and forced to do his orders. It is important to note that Padmini though surrounded by learned man, suffers from the suppression of emotions and desires, and lacks the freedom.

2.1.4 Image of Modern Women:

In ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status and rights as with men in all fields during the early Vedic period but the status of women began to decline in medieval period of India. Medieval period of India was not progressive for women. In this period, many foreign cultures came in contact with Indian culture which resulted in the decline in women's status. In order to protect women, Indian women started using 'Purdah', (a veil), which covers body. Due to this their freedom also became affected. They were not allowed to move freely and this lead to the further decline of their status. People began to consider a girl as misery and a burden, which needs extra care. Traditions among some communities such as sati, Jauhar, and devadasi have been banned and are largely outdated in modern India. But, some cases of these practices are still found in remote parts of India. The purdah is still practiced by Indian women among some communities.
In the medieval period, woman’s rights disappeared and patriarchy began exercising control over her position, restricted woman’s freedom and suppressed her identity. Woman must be kept in custody by the male of the family, her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth and her son protects her in old age. Thus, woman is never fit for independence. Even though the husband willingly is not to follow virtue and seeks pleasure elsewhere, he must be worshiped as God.

The status of woman in modern India is a sort of a paradox. On one hand she plays role of mother, sister wife etc. on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence on her by her own family members. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to strive for their rights in society. In the modern age, women have established themselves as equal with men. But in India they are yet to get their equal rights in the familial life. There are many problems which women in India have to suffer day to day life. These problems have become the part and parcel of life of Indian women and some of the women have accepted their problems as their fate.

Girish Karnad presents the suffering of the youthful woman through Padmini, the wife of Devadatta in Hayavadana. Her family represents a higher class of society. Karnad displays Padmini as a lonely figure facing the experiences of loveless marriage like any modern woman of contemporary higher class of society where men are busy with making money and fame. The problems of the modern alone woman are not much different. Therefore, Padmini’s confession of her betrayal and her forceful justification of it to her husband is like the modern woman.

Girish Karnad wants to reflect through Hayavadana the face of modern woman. This is perhaps due to the changes in the modern women brought by the new awakening in women, the reform movements and the influence of 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 Karand challenge the authority of her husband and questions to the religious principles that support patriarchal power. In this respect, Padmini not only tries to free herself from forces shackles of marriage life but also boldly expresses her commitment to her love for Kapila. In her, it seems that the image of the free independent and self-respecting modern woman. 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. Here the comment of Jaya Kapoor is significant to quote:
Karnad finds a special interest in the rich wealth of Indian mythology which offers him ample threads to weave his stories where he is not just narrating a tale but constructing and exploring narratives at various levels. The richest in this multi-layered narrative explorations is his play ‘Hayavadana’.  

Karnad presents modern woman’s desires through the youthful woman, Padmini who openly denies Devadatta’s orders and wants to follow Kapila. The character of Padmini not only presents the condition of higher class of women in ancient India who were fettered by the man-made laws of society but also provides an example of certain shades of her personality which are related to the women in the present times.

Girish Karnad presents his women protagonists in such way that appears to challenge patriarchal tradition. He uses myths in order to create heroines trapped in patriarchal 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 caught between the man made rules. It can be observed through dialogues between Padmini and Devadatta as:

**Padmini** : You mustn’t say ‘no’-at least this time.

**Devadatta** : Yes.

**Padmini** : We’ll take him to the lake.

**Devadatta** : In this cold?

**Padmini** : what if it’s cold? He’s older now. There’s no need to mollycoddle him. I grew up running around in around I heat and cold and rain-and nothing happened to me. I’m all right…”
**Devadatta**: No, it’s unnecessary trouble? What’s happened to you these days? You sit at home all day. Never go out. You’ve forgotten all your swimming and sport.\(^{32}\)

As above mentioned conversation between husband and wife, Padmini and Devadatta shows that Padmini, though surrounded by learned man, suffers from the suppression of emotions and desires, and lacks the freedom. Padmini fails to realize her potential since she is forced to exist in a male-dominated society. It is observed that here Padmini strives to create space for her development which in fact, is difficult path in the woman’s journey toward realizing own individuality, rights in the society.

### 2.1.5 Women and Moral Social code:

Women in the modern society enjoy far more freedom. They have easy right to learn and people are more liberal in their approach to educate women. The status of women in modern age is better than that in the medieval age. But it is observed that Indian women have to follow some moral social code and conducts in their life.

The family members fix the marriages in India. The girl is not consulted but is told to marry a boy whom her family has chosen for him. And she has to accept it without any complains. They are taught to stand for her husband. Women are supposed to live pious life after their marriage. In married life, women are not allowed to mix with other person. Extra marital relationship of woman is labeled as immoral deed in Indian social system. Woman’s extra marital relationship is condemned. In the married life, woman has to be faithful, paying respect to the elder relatives in the family and remaining truthful to her husband and relatives to preserve the honour in society.

Girish Karnad’s female character, Padmini seems to break the moral social code and conducts in her life. Being wife Padmini should not tell lie to her husband but she is such woman who tells lie and deceives her husband in the married life. For example, when Devadatta and
Padmini talks together to decide about visiting to Ujjain fair, Devadatta does not willingly ready to visit Ujjain with Kapila therefore he asks Padmini to cancel the trip. Also, Padmini with her husband decided that they would not go to Ujjain fair. Even Devadatta asked about her disappointed but she tells lie to her husband and she says:

**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.  

The conversation between Padmini and Devadatta reveals that Padmini though she becomes disappointed because she is denied to journey by her husband but she does not show her agony and she accepts the psyche of male dominated society. It is the principle of patriarchal society that husband is to take decision in conjugal life. However, Padmini’s psyche is described by dolls. The dolls express the feeling in the unconscious level of human psyche in Hayavadana. Padmini thinks of breaking the social code when she is alone. The dolls work out of Padmini’s mind and decodes the inner sensibility of Padmini into a language before the audience. Thus, the presence of dolls becomes functional in order to show the audience the contents of unuttered thought of Padmini. For example,

**Doll I:** Behind her eyelids. She is dreaming.

**Doll II:** I don’t see anything.

**Doll I:** It’s still hazy-hasn’t started yet….do you see it now?

**Doll II:** Yes, yes.

**Doll I:** A man….
Doll II: But not her husband.

Doll I: No, someone else.

Doll II: Is this the one who came last night?  

Thus, the conversation between the dolls reveals that the image of man in dream of Padmini is not related to her husband but someone else. The image of man means nothing but Kapila one. It means that Padmini dreams to meet Kapila and she loves Kapila. It is the breaking of the moral social code and conducts which do not permit to wife to see another man’s existence in her life without her husband. In this connection the comment of Gauri Jha is noteworthy to quote:

Obviously, Karnad’s *Hayavadana* is a post-colonial offshoot of a matured post-colonial mind highlighting social and psychological problems, interrogating human ideas and ideals. *Hayavadana* represents everyman’s predicament more authentically, and tries to access the definition of his place in this indifferent universe.  

Padmini is not pious wife even she prefers to Sati. And this Sati episode reveals how Padmini breaks the moral social code and conducts. The Sati episode begins when Devadatta comes back from Ujjain and enquires about the presence of Padmini. Bhagavata tells him about her presence in the forest with Kapila. Devadatta comes to the forest and a fight takes place between them and both of them die. Padmini declares to be a *Sati*. This *Sati* episode becomes comic and ironic one. Padmini before becoming a *Sati* gives out the hidden and the mysterious speaks of the human relationship which reveals her illegal relationship with Kapila. She tells Bhagavat, about her child as:

**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. 36

Padmini becomes Sati, but the idea of Sati becomes humorous and ironic, because the
comment of Bhagavata specifies the act of Sati thus:

**Bhagavata:** Padmini became a sati. India is known for its
pativaratas-wives who dedicated their whole existence to
the service of their husbands -but it would not be an
exaggeration to say that no “Pativrata” went in the way
Padmini did. And no one knows the spot where she went
sati 37

According to the moral social code and conducts in married life, woman has to be
faithful, and remaining truthful to her husband and relatives to preserve the honour in society.
But Padmini is not pious wife to Devadatta. It is observed that when Padmini gets perfect man in
the form of Devadatta who possessed the body of Kapila. So she should be happy to achieve
perfection in her life. But she is such immoral woman who while leaving with Devadatta, she
secretly comes near to Kapila and says as:

**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. 38
Thus, Padmini presents her excitement for Kapila and goes on to praise him and seeks to meet in the future. It is immoral act on the part of Padmini for being the wife of Devadatta she should not talk to Kapila like this.

2.1.6 Irony and Humour :

The irony and humour abounds much in *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. In 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.

Just like Hayavadana Padmini’s son is no better. Devadatta is too concerned to settle, to study etc. and does not think of the future of his child. He speaks in high-sounding words to Kapila and challenges him to a duel where he exhorts him to kill him and get killed in the process. Padmini too after the two are dead prepared for the funeral for becoming sati and unmindfully requests Bhagavata to care her child. Thus, the result is two sons lack of parental love.

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. No doubt, they try to remove gap but their effort lacks courage. Padmini likes Kapila but she does not want it to be known to Devadatta. Kapila lives Padmini but he too is not ready to confess it openly. Devadatta starts disliking Kapila after his marriage, but he will not tell Kapila clearly. The first initiative to break this dual structure of relationships is taken by Kapila, that too in the absence of Devadatta. But it is too late now. This gap in what they feel and what they outwardly pose brings in irony. As a result though Devadatta and Kapila are referred as Lava and kusha, Krishna and Balrama or Rama and Lakshmana, they killing each other and Padmini becomes sati like Sita.
The scene at the temple of Kali provides irony of situation along with humour. After the heads are transfixed, the involved characters have full laughter. Even the words of Kali cause slight humour as she is also jealous and arrogant like any common human being:

**Kali:** The rascals! They were lying to their last breaths. That fellow Devadatta—he had once promised his head to Rudra and his arms to me! Think of it—he had promised his head to him and arms to me! Then because you insisted on going to the Rudra temple, he comes here and offers his head. Nobly too—he wants to keep his word, he says—no other reason! Then this Kapila. Died right in front of me—but ‘for his friend’ Mind you! Didn’t even have the courtesy to refer to me. And what lies! Says he is dying for friendship. He must have known perfectly well he would be accused of killing Devadatta for you. Do you think he wouldn’t have grabbed you if it hadn’t been for that fear? But till his last breath—‘Oh my friend! My dear brother! Only you spoke the truth.’

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 Godesses 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.

2.1.7 Role of Bhagavata, the Female Chorus and the Dolls:

In some of his plays Girish Karnad uses traditional devices like the *Sutradhara* or Bhagavata, the female chorus and dolls in *Hayavadana*. Also, it noted that not only does he experiments boldly with the folk and myth but also uses traditional devices and fuses them with modern stage devices like light and sound. The main function of chorus is to narrate the story and comments on the proceedings and gives information.

The Bhagavata plays very important role in *Hayavadana*, in association with the female chorus and the two dolls. Bhagavata is the narrator, commentator and a participant in the play. He would be called Sutradhar in the tradition of Indian drama. Also, the Bhagavata becomes Girish Karnad’s mouth-piece on the some of the myths and beliefs.

Bhagavata (the sutradhar) starts the play by invoking *Ganapati* and describes him as an imperfect and incomplete being striking the theme of the play. Though he is incomplete and imperfect, he is the remover of obstacles and hurdles. As a narrator, Bhagavata gives the introduction to Dharmapura, Devadatta and Kapila. 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 as Bhagavata expresses; “Two youths who dwell in this city are our heroes.” *(Hayavadana-P.1)* Again Bhagavata raises a question to Hayavadana about his incomplete form either as a man or as an animal. He says that his mother married to white stallion. 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.
Bhagavata 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, it is observed that the Bhagavata engages Hayavadana in conversation and audience comes to know the past of Hayavadana, which is useful to understand the form of the sub-plot.

In the beginning of the Act Two, Bhagavata appears and presents 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. And King offered a solution even without, as it were, batting an eye–lid. The Bhagavata says;

**Bhagavata:** So our three unfortunate friends went to a great *rishi* in search of a solution to their problem. And the *rishi*-remembering perhaps what King Vikrama had said-gave the solution: 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, Bhagavata steps into the play from time to time and either through questions or answers to helps to move the story in the right directions. When Kapila grieves for the loss of his body and injustice to him, Bhagavata comes out on the stage and consoles him, by saying, “Kapila-Kapila….Don’t grieve. It’s fate, Kapila,” and But Kapila does not listen to him and goes without reply. Then Bhagavata gives the commentary as to where Kapila went and what did he do in the subsequent years and also informs audience about married life of Devadatta and Padmini as;

**Bhagavata:** So the roads diverged. Kapila went into the forest and disappeared. He never saw Dharamapura again. In fact he never felt the wind of any city again. As for Devadatta and
Padmini, they returned to Dharmapura and plunged into the joys of married life.  

Thus, as has been said before Bhagavata plays an important role in the play. At the end of the play Bhagavata meets Devadatta who has come in the forest in search of his wife and tells him the way to Kapila’s hut. Bhagavata is asked to take care of Padmini’s child and to be handed over to the hunters who live in the forest and when child grows up in the forest. When he is five takes him to the revered Brahmin Vidyasagara of Dharmapura. After Pdamini’s act of sati Bhagavata gives a satirical remark on her satihood as;

**Bhagavata:** Thus Padmini became a *sati*. India is known for its *pativrata*-wives who dedicated their whole existence to the service of their husbands-but it would not be an exaggeration to say that no *pativrata* went in the way Padmini did. And yet no one knows the spot where she went sati.  

**The Female Chorus** in the beginning Bhagavata talks of the two friends and introduces their friendship. When Kapila and Devadatta saw a girl, 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?  

This 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 express her love for Kapila thinking of breaking the marital bond. Then, Kapila takes Padmini inside his hut
to make love to her. The Bhagavata comments on their union and the Female Chorus joins in describing the ecstasy of their union as:

**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 in the play gives hidden information and ideas of human relationships. Here female chorus becomes symbolic to express the hidden intents of human mind and the situational referents. The dramatist makes visible both Padmini and Kapila and their emotions, their relationship between bodies by using the image of bathing in a river. As Padmini earlier says, “Your body bathed in a river, swam and danced in it.” (P.58) it also connotes bodily joys and physical relationship. The female chorus also sings, “The riger only feels the pull of the waterfall.” Thus, by presenting the female chorus in the play, Girish Karnad presents the inner feeling and human psyche.

**The two Dolls** brought by Devadatta from the Ujjain fair converse with each other but they are inaudible to the other characters. The two dolls are happy that a rich person who has a good house buys them. They 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 bout the death of Kapila’s mother as told by their maid,
but Devadatta is not interested in it. So he asks her, “What did you expect me to do about it?” (P. ) At this moment, the conversation of Dolls are very important they reads;

**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….

Then 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.

The usages of dramatic devices like dolls, female chorus, and Sutradhara or Bhagavata are typical features of Girish Karnad’s plays. They play a very important role in the development of the plot. They not only inform the audience of the gradual physical change in the body of Devadatta but also of the inner thought-process of Padmini. They also suggest the idea of meaninglessness and nothingness in human life. The dolls make fun and comments on familial life of Devadatta and Padmini.

### 2.1.8 Hayavadana on Karnad’s Perspectives:

Girish Karnad presents the life of the modern man that is very lacks in wholeness. His employment of the myth and old tales are to focus on the absurdity of modern life with all its conflicts. He criticized the modern Indian living life under the impact of western systems of behavior from different angles. In this relation, Girish Karnad comments in the Introduction to *Three Plays: Nagamandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq* as;
My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It therefore had to face a situation in which tensions implicit until then had come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self-justifications, tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once that common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries. 47

Thus it is important to note that the conflict in the play of Karnad is not of traditional as between the good and the evil but it is related to the behavioral changes in the modern man. So, the plot of Hayavadana is related to the conflict between the complete and the incomplete. Hayavadana is very important character in the sub-plot whose sorrow represents the idea of incompleteness. The irony reaches its climax when the character, Hayavadana pursue for completeness, but he becomes a complete horse. Now he wants to get rid of human voice. In order to do so, he has been singing patriotic songs. The scene is highly comic, as well as ironic. This is a hint towards the absurdity of human life.

Girish Karnad never advocates any religious or spiritual idea in through his play. He presents Gods and goddesses interact freely in the play. In the play, Hayavadana, goddess Kali appears as a character but she does not help the characters in solving their problems. Instead, she appears as angry and indifferent to human suffering. She appears as witness and even Padmini blames her for being responsible for two deaths as she stood a mute witness. Instead of having any sympathy for Padmini, she starts narrating her own story of complaint against the dead. The portrayal of the goddess, Kali is a superior being and before goddess man feels helpless.

Girish Karnad presents complexity of human relationships in the play, Hayavadana. For example, first, Devadatta and Kapila were best friend but Devadatta disliked Kapila’s frequent visits to his place when he observed that his wife’s attraction for him. On the part of Padmini is
concerned, Padmini is not pious wife because she loves Kapila. Thus all the three characters are victims of this complexity and duality in their behavior in life. Of the three, Padmini is the worst sufferer. Being victim of the complexity of human relationships, watching Devadatta and Kapila fighting and at last she has to prefer *sati*. In this concerned, Girish Karnad comments on the character, Padmini as follow:

> The characters are motivated by their own desires. Each character represents not only a complex psychological entity but an ethical archetype. That is why they are so named. Padmini, one of the six types of women form *Kamasutra*; her husband is Devadatta, a formal name for any stranger; his friend is Kapila or the “dark one.”

Thus the idea of completeness and in pursuit of completeness the three characters, Padmini, Devadatta and Kapila meet their death but the feeling of completeness could not be fulfilled.

Girish Karnad makes use of the traditional techniques of the Sanskrit drama and folk theatre of India. Use of dolls is a typical feature of Indian classical drama and the role of the dolls is very important to move and develop of the plot. In the play, Hayavadana, Dolls inform the audience and represent the mouth words of the dramatist. Also the role of Bhagavata means as a *sutradhar* who also gives information for the audience. Some of the complete and some half-complete sentences spoken by dolls and Bhagavata are comic, serious and satirical as the dramatist comments in the particular situation. In this concerned, Girish Karnad comments on the dramatic techniques as;

> I was looking for suitable techniques and modes to express what I felt. Many fascinating techniques are used in Sanskrit plays and by natak companies and natak *mandalis*. The use of the sutradhar is one such technique. But the Bhagavat of *Hayavadana* is identical neither with the Sutradhar of Sanskrit plays nor with the Bhagavat of
Yakshagana. Another such technique is the use of dolls/puppets, recalling the Shiva-Parvati *samavad* of *lok paramapara*. The flexible treatment of space and the actors'/sutradhar’s ability to move easily between different spheres of reality are the other features of traditional performances. 49

Girish Karnad is influenced by the mythology. The practice of going back to mythology is not totally new in the Indian English drama. The playwrights before Girish Karnad have drawn stories from mythology and introduced them in a new way. Girish Karnad went back to myths and folktale, folklore then made them a tool of a new vision. By using myths and folktales, Karnad tried to present the hollowness of the modern man’s life. In this sense Girish Karnad does not lose the Indian tradition of drama. By using myth and folktale Karnad brought central idea and he mingles his own talent to create a new story. Girish Karnad comments on an idea about the usage of folktale in relevance to modern situation as;

The tale from *Vetala Panchavimsati* had been used by Mann to address the question….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…..that’s when the plot of Hayavadan began to take shape in my mind. 50

As above words reveal that Girish Karnad has fused myth and folktale with his own idea to create his plot. He is a playwright whose play offers together a mythical or folktale and separate problems of modern man. In other words Girish Karnad is fascinated with the rich Indian folk and mythic lore and draws from it the material for his plays. His plot and structure derive from the myth, folk tradition to present psyche and problems of modern man or woman.

It is the genius of Girish Karnad that his retelling an ancient story, or mythical story he has invested it with a new meaning which presents the philosophical concerns of life. The play
presents a rich experience of theatre not only for the dramatic scenes, but also for the humour employed throughout the play, in the modern Indian theatre performance.

### 2.2 Introduction- Naga-Mandala:

Girish Karnad’s Naga-Mandala is originally written in Kannada published in 1990. Naga-Mandala is based on two oral tales that Girish Karnad had heard from his friend, A. K. Ramanujan. These two tales are mentioned by Aparna B. Dharwadker as:

The first story, about the lamp flames that gather in a village temple to exchange gossip about the households they inhabit is part of the outer play and gives imaginative expression to the idea of community life.

The second story, about the woman who was visited by a King Cobra in the form of her husband, is personified in the play as beautiful young woman in a sari and it ‘tells itself’ (as the inner play) to an audience composed of the playwright and the flames. ⁵¹

Above mentioned comment of Aparna B. Dharwader is very right while observing the influence of two oral tales on Girish Karnad’s writing. It is very significant to note that Girish Karnad used the second story as inspiration to write Naga-Mandala. And it is observed in Karnad’s Naga-Mandala that Rani is visited by a King Cobra in the form of her husband, Appanna in the night. Even Girish Karnad himself admits:

Naga-Mandal 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. The other adults present on these occasions are also women. Therefore these tales, though directed at the children often serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family. ⁵²
As above mentioned words of Girish Karand exposes two things, one is that Karnad admitted himself that he is influenced by two tales and second thing is that two oral tales have moral things which are good for human beings. Therefore the researcher thinks Girish Karnad uses these two oral tales in his Naga-Mandala to teach moral lessons indirectly to an audience. Naga-Mandala is a play within a play begins with Prologue is written in two acts. The character of the Prologue is the narrator-character of the play proper and their story constitutes the sub-plot of the play. In Naga-Mandala Karnad projects a kind of case for emancipation of woman who is exploited by male-dominated society. The play has become a sociological study of the Indian woman who is still suffered in society.

Naga-Mandala is the story of a young girl Rani who just married to Appanna and their gradual understanding of the role in their conjugal life. This story is presented in the play by a woman-narrator, a ‘story’ which has come to tell a story. The play begins in a temple of a village where a passerby stops at night for shelter. There are many ‘flames’ entering the premises which then start talking to each other. All the ‘flames’ have come from different households in the village. Each flame is a female, a story-teller, sharing with the others her observations and new experiences. The stranger, a writer himself enters into their conversation and listens to a new tale that has just escaped from an old woman’s head. This incident is presented to understand female context and women’s feeling in man-oriented society. Karnad brings play within play the strong association between oral narrative tradition and women’s emotion existing within the patriarchal societies. Traditionally women tell many of these folk tales, myths and legend when putting children to bed or while doing their household duties. In short the female experience expressed in female narratives is woven within the folk tale as the ‘flame’ tells her story to the male playwright. In the connection of the play’s title Pranav Joshipura comments:

The title of the play takes not after any human character, but after a snake-Naga. The story of the Cobra suggests that the play not merely dramatizes the folk tales in modern interpretation, but it applies a deeper meaning at various levels. In the Hindu mythology, the Naga represents several images. In South India, many houses have their own shrine that is often a grove reserved for snake, consisting of
trees, festooned with creepers, situated in a corner of the garden.

Snakes are also the symbols of human maleness and strength. 53

It is the opinion of the researcher that Girish Karnad has used the folk tales which is related with human and serpent with its magical power. In the tradition of folk tales, it is believed that Cobra can assume human form. King Cobra visits Rani in the form of Rani’s husband Appanna and such critical situation creates number of problems to criticize some issues for example the injustice of the patriarchal moral code that demands the faithfulness of woman to her husband but not the faithfulness of a husband to his wife. In this regard the comment of S.R. Jalote is noteworthy to quote:

In Naga-Mandala if the Cobra is regarded as a totem possessing magical powers, the play is a folk drama. 54

2.2.1 Women in Naga-Mandala:

i. Rani:

Girish Karnad presents the story of a young girl, Rani in the play, Naga-Mandala. Rani is the only child of her parent and she is their queen. She is very attractively described by the story (Sutradhar) as, ‘When her hair was tied up in a knot, it was like King Cobra lying curled up at the back of her neck, shining one coil upon another. When her long hair hung loose, it flowed in waves of black down to her silver anklets.’ 55 When Rain grew up, her parents get her married to a young man who is rich and his name is Appanna whose parents are dead.

Appanna marries Rani and brings her to his house. Rani is very loved and caressed in parents’ house, forced to face difficult condition and problems in her married life. On the very first day in Appanna’s house, her humiliation and harassment presented. In the married life, wife enters husband’s house with great feelings and expectations of happy life. Rani arranges for husband’s bath and serves him lunch. After lunch, Appanna locks her in and goes to his concubine. Thus, Rani feels lonely and miserable. Even the next day before Appanna leaves, Rani says her plight as;

**Rani:** Listen-(Searching for words.) Listen- I feel-frightened-alone at night.
**Appanna:** What is there to be afraid of? Just keep to yourself. No one will bother you. Give me some rice now.

**Rani:** Please, you could-

**Appanna:** Look, I don’t like idle talk. Do as you are told, do you understand? I’ll return tomorrow, for lunch. (Appanna washes his hands, locks her in and leaves. Rani keeps on watching him through the window.)

As above mentioned dialogues between Appanna and Rani present troubles of Rani. She enters the house where the wild treatment is given. Appanna asks his wife to stay inside, shuts the door, locks it from outside and leaves the place. Such a danger treatment breaks her into pieces and in the absence of love and care, under the stress of loneliness and isolation, she dreams like a child, longing for parents and their affection and carried away by an Eagle. Rani asks Eagle, ‘where are you taking me? And the Eagle answers, ‘Beyond the seven seas and seven isles. On the seventh island is a magic garden where stands a tree of emeralds. Your parents wait for you under that tree.’ Rani asks, ‘Do they? Then please take me to them-immediately. Here I come.’ So the Eagle carries her clear across the seven seas. Rani does not know what is happening in her married life. She dreams like child and she feels that the Eagle is rescuer from the difficult condition in her life. She falls asleep and cries softly for her mother and father in her sleep. It is observed that this dream makes Rani forget the torture that her husband gives her.

Rani suffers and she finds in the locked room converts her into meek and alienates from family and society. Appanna spends nights with a concubine and for a short while in the days in his own home with his legal wife, particularly for food and freshness. Appanna presents the role of a man who represents the patriarchal authority and male dominance so extend on women in the traditional social life. He leaves his wife alone from himself and from the world outside. He visits her once a day only to feed himself and he ignores her. He denies his company as wife and as a living being. In this regard Vanashree Tripathi comments:

Naga-Mandala, based on a Kannada folk tale, combines folk elements with mythical and surreal to present a domestic drama featuring
Appanna, Rani, Kurudavva and Naga. Rani suffered the neglect and humiliation by her husband. ⁵⁸

Rani is a sensible woman who does not think of breaking the pious relationship of marriage with her husband. In true sense, she shows wisdom and social responsibility in diverting her husband from his wrong doings. Another female character Kurudavva comes to help Rani. Kurudavva was an elderly woman and she was old friend of Appanna’s parents. She suggests some tricks to Rani to make her husband as love maker. Kurudavva gives some roots to feed him in his food. After tasting the roots what happen is explained by Kurudavva as:

**Kurudavva:** Once he smells you, he won’t go sniffing after that bitch. He will make you a wife instantly. ⁵⁹

Rani tries to offers liquid of root through food to Appanna but she fears if there would be negative consequences of that root on her husband. Therefore she puts the liquid of root into the anthill. Even she explains:

**Rani:** Oh my god! What horrible mess is this? Blood. Perhaps poison. Shall I serve him this? That woman is blind, but he isn’t. How could he possibly not see this boiling blood, this poisonous red? And then-even if he doesn’t see it-how do I know it is not dangerous? ⁶⁰

As above mentioned words of Rani shows her innocent and pious nature to audience. She behaves like a traditional Indian woman who fears to do any act against her husband. It is very Indian tradition forbids her to offer such kind of roots to her husband and she wants to remain faithful to her husband in conjugal life. Even she says:

**Rani:** Suppose something happens to my husband? What will my fate be? That little piece made him ill…No. No. Forgive me God. This is evil. I was about to commit a crime. Father, Mother, how could! Your daughter agrees to such a heinous act. No, I must get rid of this before he notices anything. ⁶¹
The researcher thinks that Rani is very traditional Indian woman who does not dare to do any harmful act against husband. Therefore she pours the curry into the anthill to destroy it. But there is a King Cobra which is called Naga tastes that liquid and starts love to Rani. A cobra can assume any form as it likes. Naga which eats that liquid enters the house through the bathroom drain and took the shape of Appanna. Naga feels very pity on Rani for her dismal condition he goes to close Rani when she was sleeping. When she wakes up she assumes that her husband Appanna comes in home. Naga starts to love very affectionately:

**Naga:** Quite right! That won’t do any more. From tomorrow I want you to be fresh and bright when I come home at night-

**Rani:** At night?

**Naga:** Yes. I shall come home every night from now on. May I? May I sit by you now? Or will that make you jump out of your skin again?

**Naga:** Don’t be afraid. Put your head against my shoulder. Now, don’t be silly. I am not a mongoose or a hawk that you should be so afraid of me. Good. Relax.62

The conversation between Naga and Rani reveals that first Rani fears but when she comes to know that her husband Appanna starts to love her at that moment she becomes ready to response. But reality is that Naga is in the form of Appanna. However, Rani is not aware that Naga comes to meet her in form of Appanna in night, but real Appanna comes in morning. Rani thinks that Appanna changed his behaviour so she greets him naturally without burden but Appanna does not respond nicely to her. She gets very confused to see the double behaviour of her husband who loves in night very passionately but in the day time he maintains distance with her. Therefore she complains to Naga:

**Rani:** What can I say if you behave like this?

**Naga:** Like this.
**Rani:** You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a … stupid snake. It’s all very well for you to laugh. I feel like crying.

**Naga:** What should I do then-stop coming at night? Or during the day?  

As above mentioned that Rani expresses her confusion about her husband’s double behaviour and she cannot understand the reality. It means that she meets Naga and enjoys his company as assuming that he is her husband.

**ii. Kurudavva:**

Kurudavva is one of the female characters in Karnad’s play Naga-Mandala. Kurudavva is an old woman observes the problems of Rani. Kurudavva sympathizes with her and gives her pieces of the root to solve the problem of Rani. She says:

**Kurudavva:** Take this smaller piece. That should do for a pretty jasmine like you. Take it! Grind it into a nice paste and feed it to your husband and watch the result. Once he smells you he won’t go sniffing after that bitch. He will make you a wife instantly.

Kurudavva instructs Rani and explains her experience when she had used such root on a boy distantly related to her. She describes:

**Kurudavva:** One day a boy distantly related to me came to our village and stayed with us. That day I ground one of the pieces into paste, mixed it in with the food, and served him…he finished his meal, gave me one look and then instantly fell in love. Married me within the next two days. Never went back to his village. It took the plague to detach him from me.
It is the opinion of the researcher that Kurudavva helps Rani to get satisfaction in conjugal life by using some magical power of root. But her trick fails when Rani prepares the paste of this magical root and pours it into the curry which instantly turns red. Afraid of the consequences of such paste she pours the liquid into the tall ant-hill. Actually, Kurudavva wants to help Rani because she learns that Appanna still visits his concubine though he has a beautiful wife. Kurudavva is a typical Indian woman who strives to solve the problems of Rani. Even she wants to help Rani when she knows that King Cobra meets her. Kurudavva comes in the morning with Kappanna who observes Naga and mistakes him for Appanna. They find the front door locked. She thinks that Appanna is doing trick to cheat people and for making love to Rani inside the house. She becomes very happy because her root has worked for making good relationship between Rani and Appanna. But Kurudavva and Kappanna do not understand how Appanna has gone out while the lock is still there. Kappanna sees a King Cobra coming out of the house. Kurudavva advises Rani to burn block the drain to prevent the entry of King Cobra to save Rani from consequences of Cobra’s relationship.

Girish Karnad presents woman character Kurudavva to expose intimacy and understanding between two women. Kurudavva is presented as a typical Indian woman who shares the emotions and strives to solve problems of other woman. In this regard K.V. Surendran comments:

Kurudavva the blind woman plays a significant part in the play. The only way she is connected with the plot of the play is that the Cobra falls in love with Rani because of the magical influence of the root given by Kurudavva to Rani. 

2.2.2 An Image of Traditional Indian Woman:

Girish Karnad presents through his women characters Indian women who suffer in male-dominated society. Even he presents the deplorable state of women in Indian society. From very ancient times Indian society possesses very unique characteristics like patriarchal culture, women have second place in family, male child is considered to play very important role in performing religious rituals in Indian society. There is always try to keep the wife isolated and out of the scene of the external world. The husbands try to command over their wives in many ways in the
marital life. Traditionally it is believed that wives are as physical and emotional selves. The husbands do not hesitate to humiliate their wives. Such kind of suppressed image of Indian woman is portrayed by Girish Karnad in Naga-Mandala. For example, Rani as a wife is exploited by her husband. Even she cannot bear the pains so 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.  

The words of Rani present her very sad condition of her marital life. It is observed in the play that Rani’s husband is very rich person and he goes to meet prostitute. 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 marital life therefore she becomes ready to suicide instead of living with her husband.

Girish Karnad shows his female character, Rani as a traditional Indian wife who suffers a lot in marital 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. The old lady Kurudavva gives Rani some kinds of root and Kurudavva asks her to make paste of the root and gives it through meal to Appanna so he would love her. But Rani cannot do so because she afraid to do such kind of things. Even she says:

**Rani:** Suppose something happens to my husband? What will my fate be? That little piece made him ill. Who knows….? (slaps herself on her cheeks.) No no. Forgive me, God. This is evil. I was about to commit a crime….No, I must get rid of this before he notices anything.  

Above mentioned words of Rani presents her personality as a traditional Indian wife who believes her husband as a God in her life. Rani slaps herself on her cheeks when she believes that she is going to do something against her husband. It is clear that Rani has much social pressure so she behaves according to the norms of male-dominated society. The researcher thinks through
the image of Rani Girish Karnad presents the evils related to female in patriarchal society. Traditional institution of marriage is not good for women in Indian society. Because in such tradition women have very secondary place and they are not given equal rights in marital life.

Girish Karnad presents the problem of chastity which is majorly related with women and they must care more for chastity than men in Indian society. Traditionally the concept of chastity is patriarchal term that has been used to weaken women and to control them in male-dominated society. *Ramayana* is the great epic of Hindu mythology. The female character Sita has to face fire ordeal to prove her chastity in the presence of the all elders and her husband. It is a kind of example which shows that from very ancient times women are exploited on the name of chastity. In the same way, Girish Karnad presents ‘Snake ordeal’ for Rani to prove her chastity in Naga-Mandala. The concept ‘ordeal’ is related with only women from very ancient age to modern age. Also such incidents show the reality that women in Indian society have very secondary place and they have to suffer on the name of purity in marital life.

Indian society possesses the principles of patriarchal culture from ancient age. In male-dominated Indian society every mother along with father and all elders teach her daughter that chastity is more important than her life. And if a girl loses her chastity in her life, it means she loses everything of herself. Traditionally a daughter is assumed as very responsibility of family and some of the traditional evil concepts are closely associated with her responsibility like her marriage ceremony must be arranged by her family and dowry system is very followed as mal-practice. In this context Santosh Gupta comments:

Girish Karnad’s plays reflect upon contemporary Indian cultural and social life through the use of folk tales, myths and historical legends. He weaves together time-less truths about human life and emotions contained in ancient Indian stories with the changing social mores and morals of modern life. His plays are particularly concerned with the psychological problems, dilemmas and conflicts experienced by the modern Indian men and women in their different social situations. 69

### 2.2.3 Women in the Patriarchal Society:
Girish Karnad presents his female characters in the patriarchal structures of the traditional families in Naga-Mandala. Karnad’s women characters like Rani and Kurudavva behave according to the principles and norms of patriarchal structures. Karnad’s women follow the instructions of male without any complains in their marital life. For example, Rani is very innocent powerless and depends on parents. When Rani’s parents arrange her marriage to Appanna, she accepts without any complain. Rani’s marriage changes her happy life into sad life. Marriage for Rani means the loss of the secure world of childhood and parents’ love. She has to adjust with her husband. Rani’s husband Appanna is very cruel one and he restricts her daily life. In the connection Girish Karnad writes:

The position of Rani in the story of Nag-Mandala, for instance, can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband only in two unconnected roles-as a strangers during the day and as lover at night. Inevitably, the pattern of relationships she is forced to weave from these disjointed encounters must be something of a fiction. The empty house Rani is locked in could be the family she is married into.  

Above mentioned words are true when we observe the Rani’s condition in her home. Rani’s husband, Appanna locks her in house and visits her only in a day for lunch. Appanna has a concubine. Appanna just orders Rani and she has to follow them. The very opening dialogue presents the truth as:

**Appanna:** Have we brought in all the bundles?

**Rani:** Yes.

**Appanna:** Well, then, I’ll be back tomorrow at noon. Keep my lunch ready. I shall eat and go. (Rani looks at him nonplussed. He pays no attention to her, goes out, shuts the door, locks it from outside and goes away. She runs to the door, pushes it, finds it locked, peers out of the barred window. He is gone.)
Above mentioned conversation between Appanna and Rani presents the truth that Appanna is not interested in her. He does not care her. He just wants to know that his wife is at home or not. He just orders her for daily needs. Rani is like a traditional Indian woman who follows the instructions of husband in the family. Appanna’s behaviour presents the patriarchal culture which suppresses woman’s rights in the family. Patriarchal cultural men always ignore women’s rights and they deny the freedom to women.

‘Snake ordeal’ plays very important role in Naga-mandala. It shows how women are exploited in male-dominated society. It shows how women are exploited in male-dominated society. ‘Snake ordeal’ can be compared with ‘Fire ordeal’ of sita in Ramayana. Rani is very innocent woman who pours the past into an ant-hill because she does not dare to offer it to her husband. But in the ant-hill, Naga tastes that paste and falls in love with Rani. Naga assuming Appanna’s form in night and comes to visit Rani. But Rani cannot understand the difference between Naga and husband. Also she believes that Naga means her husband and maintains husband-wife relationship in the family. But the real problem arises when Rani becomes pregnant. Her husband Appanna knows that he himself did not keep physical relationship with Rani, therefore he accuses Rani:

**Appanna:** Aren’t you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in, and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is.

Who did you go to with your sari off?

**Rani:** I swear to you I haven’t done anything wrong!

**Appanna:** you haven’t and yet you have a bloated tummy. Just pumped air into it, did you? And you think I’ll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, you slut-! (he beats her.)

Above mentioned dialogue between Appanna and Rani presents the truth that Rani is very innocent woman who does not know why Appanna accuses her of adultery. Even she is very badly beaten by Appanna. Here the researcher thinks Girish Karnad criticizes patriarchal man’s behaviour within the institution of marriage. Rani looks like as mere toy in the hand of
man. Appanna regularly goes to meet prostitute. But he is not accused by his wife. Here male-dominated social attitude can be seen where a man is allowed to enjoy freedom to have extra-marital relation. But when woman consciously or unknowingly keeps extra-marital relation, she is punished by society. In this connection, Girish Karnad presents the problem of fidelity and morality only related with women in the institution of marriage.

In Karnad’s Naga-Mandala, Appanna and Rani enjoy extra-marital relationship but Rani has to face ‘Snake ordeal’ to prove her chastity in the society. The researcher thinks Girish Karnad presents the problem of social attitude which makes injustice to women. At end, to prove her chastity Rani accepts the ‘Snake ordeal’ and she puts hands into the snake pit. When she pulls the snake, snake binds itself around her and does not bite. She is declared as a goddess. Appanna asks her pardon and lives with her.

Girish Karnad presents his female characters who try to free themselves from the orthodox rules of the male-dominated society. The submissive and suppressed woman has started to understand her equal rights in family and society. The suppressed woman has stared reacting against the orthodox male-dominated society. Even Rani says:

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

Above mentioned words of Rani presents herself as conscious woman who justifies her equal rights in the family. She does not hesitate to raise questions about the dominance of male-dominated society where women are exploited. She is presented as a tool in the hand of male and it is closely related traditional Indian women who expressing their plight in social structure existing in modern Indian society.

2.2.4 The exploitation of Indian woman by the concept of Chastity:

Girish Karnad exposes the exploitation of Indian woman on the name of chastity in Indian society. The concept of chastity is originated by patriarchal culture and enslaved woman
for ages since the dawn of patriarchy. Number of examples can be explained from Indian mythology like, *The Mahabharat, The Ramayan* etc. which expose that the concept of chastity is created to exploit especially woman. For example, the female protagonist Sita has to prove her chastity by performing the fire ordeal in *The Ramayan*. Female protagonist Rani has to prove her chastity in front of the elder of village by performing ‘snake ordeal’ in Naga-Mandala. Rani’s husband Appanna complaints to the three elders of the village so they ask Rani to perform ‘snake ordeal’. A crowd of villages gathers around to hear their verdict on a husband publicly expressing doubts over his wife’s chastity. Appanna says that he hasn’t touched Rani since the day of their marriage, and yet she is pregnant. The traditional test in their village has been for the accused to take the oath of chastity while holding the King Cobra. The news has spread and large crowd has gathered to witness Rani’s ordeal. Even elder warns Rani:

Listen to us even now. If something goes wrong and the Cobra

bites you, not just your life but the life of the child you carry will be in

jeopardy. We risk the sin of killing your unborn child. 74

The words of elder reveal the truth that elder knows the consequences of ordeal. But he asks Rani to perform ordeal. On the other hand irony lies in itself that Rani’s husband regularly visits prostitute and locks his wife in house. He does not to follow the principle of chastity in his life. Even Appanna does not help his wife when she scared and runs back. Rani says:

“I am scared. Please-if the Cobra bites me, what shall I do? I am afraid.” 75 She runs to Appanna seeking his help, but he calls her a whore and pushes her away. Seeing her plight, the elders advise Appanna not to be so bitter and vengeful. Rani might have been indiscreet and committed a mistake. Even they are scared at the sight of the cobra. They ask Rani to confess her guilt so that they can think of a suitable punishment for her. “Remember, child, you have a choice of ordeal even now.” 76

Innocent Rani insists that she is sacred. She looks at the ant-hill and opts for taking her oath of chastity by holding the red-hot iron. This disappoints the crowd, but the elders are delighted. They say that it is a load off their conscience and they order that the iron rod be quickly heated. This does not please Appanna and he says:

This is ridiculous! You can’t allow this harlot…” 77
In such critical situation Rani has not another option than to prove her chastity. Rani goes
to that ant-hill and puts her hand in, pulls out the King Cobra and declares:

Since coming into this village, I have held by this had, only
two…..my husband and this Cobra.. yes, my husband and this King
Cobra. Except for these two I have not touched any one of the male
sex. Nor have I allowed any other male to touch me. If I lie, let the
Cobra bite me. 78

At the same moment when Rani taking oath the Cobra slides up Rani’s shoulder and
spreads its hood. Rani cannot understand what is happening as the Cobra slips back into the ant-
hill. The village elders hail it as a miracle. They accept Rani’s chastity and declare her as
Goddess. By this way Girish Karnad exposes how Indian woman is exploited on the name of
chastity. Indirectly Karnad criticizes the age old principles of patriarchal society where women
have to follow the rules and regulation and they do not have right to rebel against them. Hindu
wives have no voice in anything. Everybody knows that Appanna goes to a concubine but none
dares ask him. Rani bears all the sufferings without speaking a word of revolt.

When Rani proves her chastity in front of the elders, the village people including her
husband are so much impressed with her act. Village elder declare:

Elder I: Appanna, your wife is not an ordinary woman. She is a
goddess incarnate. Don’t grieve that you judged her wrongly and
treated her badly. That is how goddesses reveal themselves to the
world. You were the chosen instrument for revealing her
divinity. 79

The words of the elder person reveal the fact that he wants to tell that it is not an ordinary
woman, because it is not possible for an ordinary woman to hold the Cobra in her hand. They
believe that Rani is an incarnation of a goddess. They advise him therefore to feel sorry for
misunderstanding. On the other hand this speech shows that people in general are ignorant and
uneducated. They make a woman as a goddess. The problem of Rani is that Appanna considered
her as an adulteress and now he has to accept her as a goddess.
It is the opinion of the researcher that Rani is acceptable to her husband Appanna only as Goddess. He first believes his wife Rani as a whore but when she proves her chastity he accepts her in the form of Goddess. Even the village elders refuse to take her seriously till they get convinced that she is a pious woman. In this relation modern critic Rakesh Joshi comments:

Girish Karnad’s Naga-Mandala presents the deplorable state of women in Indian society. The playwright wants to say in the prologue that man is a bundle of weakness, but he is either not aware of them, or he cannot get rid of them. ⁸⁰

2.2.5 Dilemma of Man and Woman in Conjugal life:

Girish Karnad’s Naga-Mandala presents the dilemma of modern man and woman of Indian society. The playwright wants to say in the Prologue that man is a bundle of weakness, but he is either not aware of them, or he cannot get rid of them. The modern man fails to realize the significance of conjugal life. He takes life very lightly and breaks into laughter because he takes interest in material things and physical satisfaction. Rani’s husband Appanna visits a whore and fulfills physical need but he ignores his conjugal life. Even man insists:

Even then the present ending just doesn’t work….it is all right to say Rani lived happily after. But what about Appanna, her husband?

As I see him, he will spend the rest of his life in misery. ⁸¹

Appanna does not understand the real meaning of life. He just wanders here and there to get satisfaction but bodily pleasures are never ending so inner satisfaction is very necessary. Therefore Appanna talks to himself:

What am I to do? Is the whole world against me? Have I sinned so much that even Nature should laugh at me? I know I haven’t slept with my wife. Let the world say that it likes. Let any miracle declare her a goddess. But I know! What sense am I to make of my life if that’s worth nothing? ⁸²
Appanna’s words reveal that he has dilemma and he does not understand real meaning of conjugal life. Sex, for this man is a tool, which can be used to get satisfaction but it creates many problems in his life. When Rani proves her chastity and declares as Goddess at that moment Appanna accepts her as a pious wife. Even the village elders refuse to take her seriously till they get convinced that she is pure in her married life. But irony lies in itself that there is always an attempt to keep the wife isolated and out of the picture of the external world. Her husband tries to exert his monopoly over his wife in various ways. Appanna is portrayed as very dominating and cruel husband who exercises absolute superiority over his wife. He has money to spend and spare. He goes to a whore who has bewitched him to the extent that he fails to see the beauty of his wife and also to perform his role of a husband. He becomes a jailor to his wife. Karnad poses Rani as a traditional Indian woman who is shocked but has to accept the order of her husband. She keeps Appanna’s house clean and neat. She sweeps, mops the floor and cooks food though she feels very lonely and miserable. In this connection the comment of P.D. Nimsarkar is noteworthy to quote:

The Indian women are parasite on men and patriarchy; their minds have been chained by the rigid socio-cultural customs and practices and at the moment of crises their minds stop working or they get tangled into bewilderment. In Rani’s case she is guided by two women, first the Kurudavva who advises her to mix paste into the milk and then with curry and second by the story who tells her to pour the curry into the anthill. Both these ways have created problems instead of offering solution to amend the disturbed relationship between husband-wife.

It is the opinion of the researcher that Karnad presents the man and woman pass through several stages of doubt, uncertainty and even failures before they become mature and learn to live harmoniously as husband and wife within the married life. Karnad projects the significance of the institution of marriage. Husband and wife have to adjust and understand each other in their married life. Even because of their marriage they are honoured in the community. Both man and
woman accept the social pressure in putting aside personal feelings about selfhood, dreams and self freedom. When Appanna becomes mature one in his married life, it is observed that Appanna’ self centered and physical relationship with the prostitute are given up and he takes interest of the family and community.

Rani is in dilemma when she does not understand what the reason is so she is blamed as a whore. Indian ethics does not permit a woman to have extra-marital relations even if the woman is a deserted wife. Naturally Rani is shocked when she realizes that she is blamed as a whore. In such critical situation she expresses:

**Rani:** All these days I was never sure I didn’t just dream up these nightly visits of yours. You don’t know how I have suffered. When I saw your scowling face in the morning, I would be certain everything was a fantasy and almost want to cry. But my real anxiety began as the evening approached. I would merely lie here, my eyes shut tight. What is there to see after all? The same walls. The same roof. As the afternoon passed my whole being got focused in my ears.  

Words of Rani reveal that she is in dilemma and she does not understand the real role of her husband. She is confused like modern woman who is engaged in day work and finds nothing in conjugal life. She just searches many material things to get satisfaction but the real satisfaction remains in the best married life. But the real reason lies on the part of her husband who is not interested in married life. Appanna finds physical satisfaction in his whore but does not in his wife. In this connection the comment of Santosh Gupta is noteworthy to quote:

Appanna’a behaviour reflects his divided emotional and physical selves. In fact the emotional aspect of his personality seems to be underdeveloped, as he treats both Rani and the prostitute in an unfair manner. Neither of the relationships is complete and satisfactory. Rani and Appanna are strangers to each other.
2.2.6 **Song, Talking Flames and Prologue:**

Girish Karnad uses unique dramatic devices such as ‘The Prologue’, ‘Song’ and ‘Talking Flames’. Let us discuss them.

The Prologue is a new idea in the technique of play-writing. In this manner, Karnad gives information related to theme, situation and characters. The man and the four flames converse one another in the prologue of Naga-Mandala. For example, Karnad explains in detail in prologue:

The inner sanctum of a ruined temple. The idol is broken, so the presiding deity of the temple cannot be identified. A man is sitting in the temple. Long silence. Suddenly, he opens his eyes wide. Closes them. Then uses his fingers to pry open his eyelid.⁸⁶

Girish Karnad uses dramatic technique ‘prologue’ to present information related with stage property with some of the character which converse one another. Naga-Mandala starts with a prologue in which Man is *Sutradhar* who addresses the need of the story-telling to the audience in a mode of fantasy. He narrates his encounter with four personified characters of Flames and one of the Story. Naga-Mandala is the story of a Cobra turning into a man at will. It is told to the Man by the Story itself. Girish Karnad uses ‘song’ as his typical dramatic device. The song offers connotative information which is very important to understand implied meaning of dramatist. Female chorus becomes symbolic to express the hidden intents of human mind and the situational referents. For example, Song of the flames:

Come let us dance
Through the weaver-bird’s nest
And light the hanging lamps
Of glow-worms
Through the caverns in the ant-hill
And set the diamond
In the cobra’s crown ablaze
Through the blind woman’s dream
Through the deaf-mute’s song
Come let us flow  
Down the tresses of time  
All light and song.\textsuperscript{87}

Song of flame reveals that Rani and Naga are in bed together. Naga plays with her loose hair. She suddenly laughs. In this regard K.V. Surendran comments:

The noble features of this drama are the use of chorus and music. In Naga-Mandala all the songs are sung by the Flames. The flames are the metaphors of the women of the village who have gathered at the time of the night to tell tales and sing songs.\textsuperscript{88}

References

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