3.1 Introduction:

*The Fire and the Rain* is the translation of Girish Karnad’s Kannada play, *Agni Mattu Malale*. Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* is based on Indian myths. This is explained by Girish Karnad in the opening para of Preface of *The Fire and the Rain*:

The myth of Yavakri (or Yavakrita) occurs in Chapters 135-38 of the Vana Parva (forest Canto) of the *Mahabharata*. It is narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the Pandavas as they wander across the land during their exile. I have met Sanskrit scholars who were unaware of the existence of the myth: it is easy to lose track of a short narrative like this in the tangled undergrowth that covers the floor of that epic.....It was fortunate for me that Rajaji did not do so, for the moment I read the tale, I knew it had to be turned into a play.¹

So it is obvious that Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* is based on the myth of Yavakri comes in Chapters 135-38 of the Vana Parva of *Mahabharata*. The basic myth story is very important to have understanding of theme of *The Fire and the Rain*. Girish Karnad himself has narrated in the ‘Notes’ to *The Fire and the Rain* as:

There were two sages, Bharadwaja and Raibhya, who were good friends. Raibhya was a learned man who lived with his two sons while Bharadwaja concentrated on his ascetic practice. Yavakri, Bharadwaja’s son, nursed a grievance against the world for he felt his father did not receive the respect and recognition he deserved. He further went off to the forest and did
‘tapasya’ (penance) so that he could obtain the knowledge of the Vedas from the Gods direct. The rigours of ascetic practice were such that Indra, the lord of Gods, appeared to him, but only to persuade him that there were no such short cuts to knowledge. Knowledge has to be obtained by studying at the feet of a guru. But Yavakri was so adamant that Indra ultimately relented and let him have his wish.

Bharadwaja, being a wise man, was anxious lest the triumph turn his son’s head and cautioned Yavakri against delusions of omnipotence. But his fears unfortunately proved well-founded. For one of the first things Yavakri did was to corner Raibhya’s daughter-in-law in a lonely spot and molest her. Yavakri’s misdemeanor incensed Raibhya. He invoked the ‘kritya’ spirit. He tore a hair from his head and made an oblation of it to the fire. From it sprang a woman who looked exactly like his daughter-in-law. From another hair he similarly brought forth a Rakshasa (demon). Then he sent the two to kill Yavakri.

The spirit in the form of the daughter-in-law approached Yavakri seductively and stole the urn that contained the water that made him invulnerable to danger. The rakshas then chased him with a trident. Yavakri ran toward a lake in search of water, but the lake dried up. Finally the rakshas killed Yavakri.

When Bharadwaja learnt from the Sudra how his son had died, he was naturally distressed. He cursed Raibhya that he would die at the hand of his elder son. And then shocked at his own folly of cursing a friend, he entered
fire and immolated himself. Raibhya’s two sons, Paravasu and Arvasu were conducting a fire-sacrifice for the king. One night when Paravasu was visiting his home, he mistook the black deer-skin, which his father was wearing for a wild animal and unintentionally killed him. When he realized what he had done. He cremated his father and returned to the sacrificial enclosure. There he said to his brother Arvasu: ‘since you are not capable of performing the sacrifice alone, go and perform the penitential rites prescribed for Brahminicide. I’ll carry on with the sacrifice.

Arvasu did his brother’s bidding. When he returned to the sacrifice-ceremony, Paravasu turned to the king and said, ‘this man is a Brahmin-killer. He should not be allowed to enter the sacrificial enclosures.’ The king promptly ordered his servants to throw Arvasu out, although the latter kept protesting loudly that he was innocent.

Arvasu retired to the jungle and prayed to the Sun God. When the gods appeared, he asked them to restore Yavakri, Bhardawaja and Raibhya back to life and make Paravasu forget his evil act. The gods granted him the boon. When Yavakri came back to life, the gods reprimanded him on his folly and asked him to pursue knowledge in the right manner. ²

This researcher views that Girish Karnad uses the myth of ‘Yavakri’, ‘Yajana’ and ‘Indra’ as the source for his play, The Fire and the Rain. Even he adds his own creative sub-plot in this play. Also he presents his characters in tragic events and they are punished for their immoral deeds. On the other hand his moral characters like Nittilia and Arvasu are rewarded virtuous life and God’s bless. In this relation Girish Karnad presents his two types of characters in front of audience to expose difference between the moral and immoral characters. He exposes the nuisance of modern life through the behaviour of his characters.
Girish Karnad used various myths like Yavakri, the Yajana (Fire Sacrifice), Indra, Vritra to focus on man-woman relationship, woman’s condition in male-dominated society and to present contemporary problems related to woman in the society. Karnad uses folklore, folktale and tools of folk theatre like mask, female chorus, commentator and dolls in *Hayavadana* to present problems of women in the family and society. This researcher views that Karnad uses myths from the *Mahabharata* to present social and moral truth for human beings. He wants to teach a few moral lessons to modern man who thinks of various material things of temporary happiness and pleasure as the ultimate goals in his life.

Karnad presents problems of class system in Indian society by using myths, folklore. In *The Fire and the Rain*, Vishakha, is related to upper class of society and Nittilai is related to lower caste tribe. Karnad presents how Nittilai is forced to marry within her tribe. The researcher feels Karnad uses myth of Yavakri, Indra, Yajana to present how lower caste people prohibited to attend the Fire Sacrifice. It is believed from very ancient times to modern times some events related to Gods like pelage to God, penance of God must be done by only upper class people.

Karnad used prologue and epilogue in *The Fire and the Rain* to present the co-relationship between dramatic theme and myth to know audience. In prologue it is explained that the ritual begins for a seven years long fire sacrifice. It is explained in the prologue that in which condition and what reason the King and the chief priest performing the Fire Sacrifice. At the end of the play epilogue is given to explain that how Arvasu puts on the mask. There is a roar of drums and then a sudden silence. Arvasu gives a roar and jumps up. He dances violently. The play is on. The Actor-Manager dressed up as Indra enters from one side. The Actor playing Vishwarupa enters from the other and conversation between Vishwarupa and Indra begins. This information is presented in Epilogue. So it is one of Karnad’s dramatic characteristics to present his prologue and epilogue to interlink or relate to the main theme of the play and audience should be aware about it. Rama Nair observes about importance of myth thus:

The play begins with the dominant myth Yavakri. It places the action that follows in the realm of the mythical and the elemental. The quest for personal and social meanings through the myth contribute to the cohesive structure of the play. It involves the nature of the world analysis of the concept of morality and emotion and emotion which
leads one to the essentiality of human experience itself. The myth of
Vritra and Indra acts as catalyst to free Paravasu and Arvasu from the
human bondage of fear and vengeance. The prologue and the Epilogue
are inevitably conjoined to project a holistic view of life. ³

Thus, researcher feels that Rama Nair is right to say that Karnad’s use of prologue and
epilogue are inevitably conjoined to project a holistic view of life to present the moral lesson or
teach some moral to audience. So it is one of the dramatic characteristics of Karnad to use
prologue, epilogue and myths in his plays.

3.1.1 Women in Male-dominated Society:

India is a male dominating society from very ancient times. In Indian society, males
dominate on women in relation with the equal right. Male does not offer equal right in the family
and society to woman. For example, if some guests visit our house males in the house order
whatever to female to get water or tea etc. Financial independence plays main role in
domination. Even women in India have to listen to their parents before their marriage and
husband after marriage because they don't have good source of income. So they depend on their
parents and husband. So they have no equal rights in family and society.

In Indian society parents think that female child is a kind of burden on their family. They
think that for female child they have to do many things like they have to arrange large dowry for
girl, they should choose right bridegroom etc. From childhood to last breath of life women have
to take support from males of their family because it is one of the principles of male dominated
society. In Indian society, sister has to depend upon her brother, daughter has to obey father for
taking up decisions, wife has to agree with husband while taking decisions in family, mother
depends on husband and sons and widow can’t move without her son. Thus it is believed in the
Indian society that women essentially need males support for their smooth life.

Traditionally in Indian society women have to do the whole household duties. It is one of
the principles of the male-dominated society that women must do household duties without any
single complain. Males must earn to fulfil for economic demands of family and they should not
do household duties like cooking, caring child, maintain home cleaning etc. It is important to
note that though women suffer illness; they have to do all house work themselves. It means that males are not going to help them in their duties in house.

It is one of the characteristics of male-dominated society that man has authority to follow polygamy principle and woman is not allowed to follow polyandry system in society. A man can marry as many times as he likes but society keeps mouth shut. And the principle of monogamy is only for woman. Widows are looked down upon and insulted Indian society. Even in the very ancient times there was a tradition of Sati for woman only in the male-dominated society. The Sati tradition means when woman’s husband dies and his body is to be cremated at that time his wife must jump in cremation and sacrifice her life for husband because after the husband’s death wife’s existence is meaningless in society.

It is one of the principles of the male dominated society that wife must stay home for house work though husband is away from her for long time in the family. And she must follow the principle of chastity in the family. She must not complain about her husband’s absence. It is expected that she must follow the instructions of father-in-low and mother-in-low in the family in her husband’s absence. If wife possesses extra-marital relationship in absence of husband, she must face tragedy in society. Even she innocently or unknowingly breaks the rules of chastity; she loses her pious nature in the family and moral right in the society.

In male-dominated society woman is used as only tool to fulfil all demands in family and society. It is believed that husband must order his wife and she should follow, she must take care of children. Even sometimes she is used as a tool for taking revenge. For example, she is falsely blamed on her pious nature to endanger status of family, sometimes male falsely blames on woman as she keeps extra-marital relationship because she cannot clarify it openly in the society; some male uses someone’s wife to take revenge by seducing her. It is the tragedy of woman from ancient times to modern times she is believed as only tool to fulfil emotional, physical, social, desires and even she is used as only tool to avenge some lost pride and reputation of the family.

3.1.2 Women Characters in The Fire and the Rain:

There are two main women characters in Karnad’s The Fire and the Rain, one is Vishakha and another is Nittilai. Vishakha is twenty six years old Brahmin woman married in high class Brahmin family. Paravasu is her husband and the father-in-law is Raibhya. Both are intellectuals and learned. Raibhya has supernatural powers too. But their family possesses the
traits of patriarchal family system. Vishakha is suffered by male dominance. It is observed that Vishakha was forced to marry Paravasu when she loves Yavakri. This is very basic principle of orthodox patriarchy that girl’s consent is not considered when her marriage settled. Vishakha’s father gets her married to Paravasu against her wish. Even she had to follow her father’s decision. In this manner father’s decision has to be followed in patriarchy though Vishakha becomes unhappy. She says to Yavakri that:

Yavakri: Your father must have felt relieved that I went away. Paravasu was a better match. I was only his miserable cousin.

Vishakha: Yes, Father was happy. I was married off to Paravasu. I didn’t want to, but that didn’t matter.¹

Here, Vishakha says that she does not want to marry Paravasu but she was forced by father to marry. And Vishakha’s father was very happy because his daughter obeyed his orders. It means that Vishakha is suffered from very beginning by male-dominated principles. Girish Karnad shows women are considered as tools in the hands of orthodox men of male-dominated society. Vishakha’s whole life suffers because of male-dominated tradition. How they suffer in life is explained by Mala Renganathan:

Karnad’s postmodernist attempts to highlight and romanticize the suppressed categories (such as the lower castes, the demons, the artists), are not effective with woman’s question. The two women characters-Vishakha and Nittilai-become victims of the male paradigmatic struggles. Both get caught between the real and the romantic, and they are reduced to nothingness, one to insanity and the other to death. Vishakha is exploited by her husband, father-in-law and by her lover.²

Above mentioned comment of Mala Ranganathan is appropriate for Karnad’s women characters like Vishakha and Nittilai. He correctly explained how women caught in problem between the real and the romantic. Vishkha in reality does not want to marry Paravasu but she
has to marry. This is a real situation in Vishakha’s life but she becomes happy and romantic only for one year when Paravasu loves Vishakha from the bottom of his heart.

Vishakha’s family is typical Indian family ruled by male-dominance where man orders women and women have to follow orders. In her family husband plays very dominant role. Paravasu neglects Vishakha’s emotions, her equal rights in family. Paravasu used Vishakha’s body only for sex and he does not think about her love, emotions. Even Vishakha retells Paravasu’s words that:

Vishakha: My husband said to me: ‘I know you didn’t want to marry me. But don’t worry. I’ll make you happy for a year’. And he did. Exactly for one year. He plunged me into a kind of bliss I didn’t know existed. It was heaven-here and now—at the tip of all my senses.

Above mentioned words of Vishakha describe that Vishakha becomes very happy when she married Paravasu because he promised her that he will make happy. Even she enjoys romantic life after marriage Vishakha feels that her husband accepted her as true wife. But her happiness does not remain long. Paravasu is very ambitious person. He wants to attend the Fire Sacrifice. When he becomes main Priest of the Yajana (a religious rite) he suddenly wants to leave the house. He does not think about Vishakha’s love. He leaves home for seven years. Vishakha speaks about her bad condition when her husband without considering her emotions leaves her alone in house. She says that:

Vishakha: Then on the first day of the second year of our marriage, he said: ‘Enough of that. We not start on our search’. And then—it wasn’t that I was not happy. But the question of happiness receded into the background. He used my body, and his own body, like an experimenter, an explorer. As instruments in a search. Search for what? I never know.
In this way, Vishakha without thinking as a traditional wife, she blames her husband that he used her body only for sex satisfaction for one year. And when he wants to achieve the place of main priest in Fire Sacrifice that time he forgets his wife. So Vishakha blames her husband as he used her as physical instrument in their married life. Paravasu presents as a male personality of male-dominated society who does not care much about wife’s emotions and feelings. Here all power and authority are possessed by only Paravasu. He intentionally ignores Vishakha’s emotions and love.

Thus, through presentation of Vishakha, Girish Karnad presents the problems of traditional woman who lives under dominance of male in Indian society. In male-dominated society, woman is expected only to do household duties and obey orders of men. Even men do not like to give equal rights to women in the family and society. Emotions, feelings and love of woman is not very important for men in male-dominated society. All these aspects are presented by Karnad in the play, *The Fire and the Rain* through various situations. Through woman character of Vishakha Karnad explained the problems of woman before the marriage and after the marriage. Vishakha’s consent is not sought when her marriage is settled. Her husband does not consider her emotions and love when he is leaving for Fire Sacrifice.

When Paravasu left Vishakha alone in home many problems come in her life. It is one of the principles of male-dominated society that when husband is not in the house at that time wife must listen instructions of father-in-law or brother-in-law. Sometimes women become victims of sexual exploitation by father-in-law. This happens to Vishakha. So Vishakha blames her father-in-law that:

**Vishakha:** On the other hand, there’s his sense of being humiliated by you. On the other, there’s lust. It consumes him. An old man’s curdled lust. And there’s no one else here to take his rage out but me. (Raibhya’s steps are heard in a distance, as he returns.) Here he comes. The crab! Scutting back to make sure I don’t defile the chief Priest as I did Yavakri. Grant me this favour, please. Kill me.
Vishakha explains how cruel and lusty her father-in-law, Raibhya is cruel and lusty. Being father-in-law he should behave like father in family but he does not behave well in absence of Paravasu. Traditionally husband must care his wife, he must provide all facilities to her but her Paravasu does not do so. When he is appointed as Chief Priest of Fire Sacrifice for seven years, he just leaves home without any responsibility and never comes home to meet his wife. So Vishakha is suffered much in his absence. Therefore she complains Paravasu as under:

**Vishakha:** Will you come home once the fire Sacrifice is over?

(No answer)

I suppose that would be too human. But what’s wrong with being human? What is wrong being happy, as we were before you got Indra into you?

(No answer)

I shouldn’t ask. I should be silent. And you, in any case, will be silent.

(No answer)

In this manner, Vishakha blames Paravasu that he is responsible of her suffering. It is Paravasu’s responsibility that he must have come to meet Vishakha. Thus Karnad explained that how women are exploited in male-dominated society and how women are ignored in family. Vishakha’s husband is not ready to respond her. In this way Karnad shows the woman’s sad condition in Indian patriarchal family. In a male-dominated family woman’s voice, her equal rights are stopped and they are asked by male only to follow men’s orders.

In male-dominated family husband always plays dominant role. He forced his wife to follow such things which are not possible in modern age. Paravasu does not care Vishakha’s physical desire when he leaves for seven years to perform Fire Sacrifice. So Vishakha breaks the rich Indian tradition of pious woman and she meets Yavakri. Even she does not fear to express her desire to Yavakri. She becomes passionate and says that:
Vishakha: I was so happy this morning. You were so good.

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

It was more as a mother that I offered my breasts to you.\textsuperscript{10}

Traditionally it is not in keeping with moral consideration that Vishakha expressed her physical desires and fulfilled desires with Yavakri. But Vishakha is filled with strong urge of physical because her husband is responsible for this critical situation. Vishakha’s husband left home for seven years, he does not care about her physical need and feelings. So she breaks the traditional image of a pious wife in urban as love with Yavakri. In this way, she is seen as a modern woman who is capable to take her own decisions. The modern woman is very conscious about her desires, her equal right in family and society. The modern woman is educated and sometimes employed also. She knows how to behave in society to achieve her equal rights. When she finds that her husband is not careful and helpful to her so she behaves like a traditional husband. Such qualities of modern woman are found in Vishakha. Vishakha does not fear to show her extra-marital relationship. Even she confesses in front of her father-in-law. A brief conversation between herself and Raibhya is worth quoting here:

Raibhya: Where can she go? I want the truth and I’ll kill her if necessary. Let me go! I know how to handle her-

Vishakha: let him go, Arvasu. Yes, there was somebody else there. Yavakri! And he had come to see me. Alone.\textsuperscript{11}

In this way Vishakha expresses that she went to meet Yavakri. Researcher thinks that Vishakha keeps the qualities of modern woman who has courage to speak about her desire and she does not like to care about pressure from men. And Raibhya’s behaviour is not good. He does not treat Vishakha well. According to Hindu acceptance and Indian tradition father-in-law must assume his daughter-in-law as his daughter in whatsoever critical condition. It is not expected from father-in-law to beat or to abuse daughter-in-law. But Raibhya beats and abuses Vishakha so she does not have respect for her father-in-law. Raibhya abuses Vishakha in this way:
**Raibhya**: You whore-you roving whore! I could reduce you to ashes-turn you into a fistful of dust-with a simple curse.\(^{12}\)

This researcher thinks traditionally Indian culture teaches us how to keep good relation in family. Each member of family has his own duties according to his/her role in family. Raibhya being father-in-law by legal relation should not have beaten his daughter-in-law. Raibhya presents himself as member of male-dominated society. Here Karnad presents bad condition of daughter-in-law. How Vishakha is tortured and humiliated by her father-in-law and her husband in male-dominated family.

It is to be noted that Yavakri has exploited Vishakha in his own bad manner. Yavakri shows his false love to Vishakha. He wants to take revenge upon Vishakha and he wants to turn his tables Raibhya Vishakha’s fanther-in-law. Here Girish Karnad presents the high caste educated people’s ill behaviour. He presents high caste people like Yavakri, Paravasu and Raibhya who use Vishakha as tool in their hand. Vishakha and Paravasu are wife and husband but the relationship is not virtuous. About their married life and their relationship P.D. Nimsarkar writes:

Marriage in the high caste Brahmin society where virtue is highly honoured, is reduced to ‘mating and sex enjoyment’. From the very first day the conjugal life is perturbed, it is a loveless tie, temporal and transient. Husband’s responsibility has been deliberately ignored by Paravasu whereas Vishakha’s one sided expression of faith and affection remain sterile. The lack of understanding and failure of communication ruin the secret concept of marriage and wreck the family.\(^{13}\)

This comment by P.D. Nimsarkar is very apt to describe marriage and conjugal life in *The Fire and the Rain*. Vishakha’s true love for husband is not felt by Paravasu. She is used as an instrument by Yavakri, Raibhya and Paravasu. In this manner, Vishakha’s personality presents the traditional tragic condition of woman in male-dominated society.
Nittilai is one of the important women characters in Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain*. Nittilai possesses good qualities and well behaviour and is beautiful girl belongs to hunter tribe. She is virtuous and always wants to help others. She follows rich tradition of Indian culture. She is illiterate as compared to Vishakha who belongs to a high caste society. But Nittilai has rich qualities like love for humanity this so called sacrifice, helpful nature which differ from high class society. Though she is tribal girl but she does not believe in orthodox principles of male-dominated society. Even she does not fear to say that she loves Arvasu who is high class Brahmin. Actually the love relationship between Nittilai and Arvasu is highly ideal because they are ready to sacrifice for each other’s happiness. Nittilai loves Aravasu without any intentions like, selfishness, demands for money. Aravasu loves deeply Nittilai. Arvasu says to Andhaka:

**Arvasu:** I’ll tell him: ‘I can’t give up Nittilai. She is my life. I can’t live without her- I would rather be an out caste.’

In this way Arvasu expresses his love for Nittilai. He is ready to sacrifice his status in the high class Brahmin society. The character Nittilai is that traditional woman who cannot oppose fully and openly in society but she just explains the bad condition of tribal woman. She blames upper class when she says:

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

In this way Nittilai expresses her grudge against upper class. In a male dominating society, women do not have any other alternative but to speak against bad practice of male-dominance. Girish Krand attempts to highlight the difference between low-caste people and high-caste people, their behaviour and presets how high-caste men are glad to use low-caste women from very ancient times. Through the character of Nittilai a number of problems are presented in Girish Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain*.

Through the character of Nittilai Girish Karnad presents the social problems like class system, orthodox religious principles and hypocrite nature of priest. Nittilai an uneducated girl presents many social problems in front of audience. She does not understand the term ‘universal knowledge’. She thinks as to what is the use of universal knowledge and she said that instead of
acquiring universal knowledge, rain is important for common people. Yavakri gets universal knowledge from god, Indra. Yavakri should have asked the rain for help and rain would be helped many ways to common people. Such intelligent hope and question about Yavakri’s false and selfish nature is exposed by Nittilai. Even Nittilai says:

**Nittilai:** My point is since Lord Indra appeared to Yavakri and Indra is their God of Rains, why didn’t Yavakri ask for a couple of good showers? You should see the region around our village. Parched.

Every morning, women with babes on their hips, shrunken children, shriveled old men and women gather in front of my father’s house-for the gruel he distributes…. And father says all the land needs is a couple of heavy downpours. That’ll revive the earth. Not too much to ask of god, is it?16

In this way Nittilai is very conscious about needs of common people and she focuses on the selfish nature of Yavakri. Yavakri did not ask for a couple of good shower because he wanted to get universal knowledge from god, Indra. Nittilai becomes very angry when she thought and discussed with Andhaka about usage of knowledge and scholar person like Yavakri. So she says:

**Nittilai:** Actually, I want to ask Yavakri two questions. Can he make it rain? And then, can he tell when he is going to die?. just two what is the point of any knowledge, if you can’t save dying children and if you can’t predict your moment of death.17

Nittilai is very considerate about human beings and problems of human beings. She is humanist. She presents very philosophical questions about Yavakri. Though Nittilai is the illiterate lower caste girl, she loves Arvasu and she keeps herself very pious in love relationship. When Arvasu wants to embrace her, she says that not until they get married. The girl is not supposed to touch her husband until married. And through love of Nittilai and Arvasu Girish Karnad presents the problem of intercaste marriage between high caste boy and low caste
woman. When Nittilai says to Andhaka that she would like to marry Arvasu who is high caste boy, Andhaka being old man says that:

**Andhaka:** You two are brave. It’s one thing to frolic together as children. But you’re not children any longer. You’re enough to know that the world can be cruel and ruthless. ¹⁸

Here, Andhaka makes aware the traditional rules and regulations of Indian society the inter-caste marriage between high caste boy and low caste girl in not easily allowed. It is the knowledge and experience of old man conveyed to Nittilai that she stands against the traditional social rules. If inter-caste marriages take place, society shows cruelty and ruthlessness for that couple. And marriage between Nittilai and Arvasu cannot take place but Nittilai’s love for Arvasu remains very spiritual. Nittilai marries a boy from the same tribe of her and becomes happy. But when Nittilai knows that Arvasu is facing problems, she offers help to him. She takes care of Arvasu and shows her spiritual love. She rejects the concept extra-marital love for woman. She says:

**Nittilai:** Let’s. If your legs have gained as much strength as your voice, we should be able to cover a fair distance today! Arvasu, when I say we should go together- I don’t mean we have to live together- like lovers or like husband and wife. I have been vicious enough to my husband. I don’t want to disgrace him further. Let’s be together-like brother and sister. You marry any girl you like. Only please, Arvasu-spare a corner for me. ¹⁹

Here, Nittilai shows her pious nature and wants to live like an honest woman in society. She is very conscious about her married life and responsibilities of wife. So, she indicates that Arvasu should marry any girl. She is not like Vishakha who encourages Yavakri to keep extra-marital relationship. Nittilai wants that Arvasu should keep distance from his brother. Even she does not encourage Arvasu to take revenge over his brother for his attempts to ill-treat Arvasu.
When Arvasu wants to meet his brother and ask why did he go to wrong with him? But Nittilai wish that Arvasu would not meet Paravasu. So she tries to convey him. She says:

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

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

Thus, Nittilai wants to convey the moral lesson to Arvasu that is patience is very important in life. In short through the character of Nittilai Girish Karnad presents a number of social problems of women like woman’s tragic condition in patriarchal society, problem of high caste and low caste, false nature of Yavakri’s desire to get universal knowledge etc. Vanashree Tripathi describes Nittilai in her article:

The playwright’s interest in exploring the varieties of ideological that have replenished the Indiacivilization through ages is represented in Nittilai…A hunter girl, Nittiali is the most humane of the entire gamut of characters.  

### 3.1.3 Role and Place of woman in Society:

Girish Karnad presets traditional Indian patriarchal families in his *The Fire and the Rain*. Karnad focuses on traditional Indian woman characters and describes their tragic life in male-dominated society. Though sometimes women try to break tradition but they are forced to follow orthodox patriarchal principles. Women are not given equal rights in family and society. Karnad presents two main women characters, Vishakha and Nittilai in *The Fire and the Rain*. Through these women characters Karnad focused on the problems of traditional Indian women. Even in the modern age problems of women remain same though they have been given equal rights according to Indian constitution. Girish Karnad is playwright of Post-independence times so he is aware of social changes in modern times. So he focuses on woman’s desire for completeness,
how she strives to achieve her equal rights and her self-identity in family and society. P.D. Nimsarkar describes the topic of post colonial literature in his book:

Woman has become a centre of study and discussion in the post colonial literature in India as in the western countries and the subject has received serious attention after several movements started working for women’s liberation from the control of patriarchal culture and male dominance that ruthlessly exercised violent atrocities on them. The lives of women have been manipulated by the patriarchy in all ages, in all cultures and in all countries though in different ways by prescribing values, norms, gender roles, methods and ethics to keep male dominance at the top.  

In this way, P.D. Nimsarkar discussed the tragic condition of women in male-dominated society. Women are forced to follow rules of patriarchal society. Women are exploited in the names of traditional cultural values, norms, gender roles, ethics and traditional secondary role in family and society.

Through his women characters Girish Karnad focuses his socialistic a view on women-related problem in families having patriarchal system. He focuses on the terms like ‘arranged marriage’ and ‘inter-caste marriage’. Traditionally in arranged marriage, girl is not asked to choose her husband, her likes and dislikes even her consent is not considered in arranged marriage. A girl has to follow orders of her father in family. Karnad presents Vishakha, Nittilai are victims of arranged marriage system in this regard. Vishakha and Nittilai in this play are not given a right to choose their husband according to their wish. Even Nittiali is prohibited to do inter-caste marriage. According to Hindu marriage system parents are given full freedom to select a bridegroom and a girl has to accept it without complaining. Karnad being a modern playwright wants to criticize the age-old orthodox patriarchal customs and practices related to be arranged marriage system. Vishakha is not allowed to marry her lover. If they married, they would have happily lived in family life. It can be said that family life of Vishakha and Nittilai remains tragic due to some loophole in the tradition arranged marriage system. Actually parents
should think at least once before imposing their decision on their marriageable sons and daughter.

Girish Karnad treats woman’s extra-marital relationship as her natural desire. Traditional psyche regarding marriage does not permit woman to have physical intimacy with any other man except her husband. After marriage wife is expected to lead pious and faithful life with her husband. But Girish Karand gives the women characters equal space as that of the men. Even woman’s extra-marital relationship means a kind of adjustment as to psycho-physical satisfaction. Karnad has experienced in views in an interview in this manner:

I used to know a married woman once who positively blossomed after she had an extra-marital affair. If womanhood finds fulfilment in love that happens to be outside marriage, why should that be considered wrong? Radha’s love for Krishan was such.

Perhaps the second reason is the way I grew up. I was an adolescent when I learnt that both my parents were married before they married each other. In fact, my mother was a widow when she was nineteen but instead of being confined within her home, she showed extraordinary courage and became a nurse. And that is how she met my father. Father had an ailing wife who required nursing. They must have lived together before they finally got married. That made me realize that my mother was human and had human desires. There was yet another dimension that may have contributed to my sensitivity to the matter. I had several cousins, all girls, who lived close to us. The relationship between cousins in south Indian families is quite ambiguous. My cousins were like sisters to me yet they were also potential wives. We played together as children; they shared their confidences with me as adolescents…this not only made the entire growing-up experience extremely intriguing, it also made me understand their emotions and feelings. 23

In this manner Girish Karnad himself explained that why he has dealt with woman’s sexuality and adultery with such honesty, treating them as ‘normal’ human response and not as something ‘sinful’. Actually Karnad’s experiences from childhood to adulthood make influence on his attitude. He treats woman’s adultery as normal human response and it is his personal view but in Indian society woman’s adultery is not treated as normal human act but sinful act. This is
fact that woman’s adultery is sinful act in modern society also. But it is one of the features of
Karnad he explained that how woman’s adultery leads to tragic family life. Vishakha keeps
extra-marital relationship and because of it her family ruins. Though Nittilai went to meet and to
take care of Arvasu without intention of sexual desire but in eye of husband it is act of adultery.
So at the end of the play, Nittilai’s husband pulls out a knife, grabs Nittilai by her hair and
slashes her throat in one swift motion. In this way because of woman’s extra-marital relationship
wives suffer in their life and marriage fails to maintain happiness in life.

Karnad’s women characters are courageous to express their sexual emotions without
giving much respect to traditional morality and patriarchal term of chastity. Karnad develops
critical situation for women which enables them to think about their desire and own identity.
Vishakha had love affair with Yavakri before her marriage. Even she was very bold enough to
draw Yavakri physically close to share her body. Their meeting is described by Yavakri himself:

Yavakri: Ten years ago I had come to your house to bid you
goodbye. And you led me quickly to the jack-fruit grove behind
your house. You opened the knot of your blouse, pressed my face
to your breasts, then turned and fled. I stood there stunned.  

The words of Yavakri show that Vishakha was very bold and courageous to share her
body with her lover, Yavakri. Vishakha was very bold and courageous to keep extra-marital
relationship with Yavakri. She never hesitates to express her sexual desires to Yavakri. When
Yavakri returns after ten years penance to meet Vishakha, she meets Yavakri and shares her
body without thinking about the rich tradition of morality and culture. Vishakha is courageous to
say that:

Vishakha: My husband and you! He left no pore in my body
alone. And you-you think a woman is only a pair of half-formed breasts.

Yavakri: Enough now.

Vishakha: I’ll give you the knowledge Indra couldn’t give you.
My body-it’s light with speech now.  

24

25
In this way Vishakha expresses her deep desire of sexuality. In the absence of her husband Vishakha meets Yavakri to fulfil her physical desire. But according the norms of rich tradition of Indian morality she has to keep control over desires and she must not express and share her sexual desire with another person. But Karnad’s woman character, Vishakha breaks the traditional rules and extra-marital relationship with Yavakri. Even she expresses her sexual desires and encourages Yavakri to keep extra-marital relationship.

Girish Karnad presents problems of women like despair and sense of futility in family life. He shows that women characters oppose patriarchal principles so they feel despair, loneliness and the sense of futility in their life. Vishakha is the major female character who strives to achieve her right in male-dominated society. When she asked her husband why he did not come to meet her, there was no any response from her husband. She becomes aware of her personality and she wants to share her emotions and love with her husband but he did not come home for seven years. Actually, Girish Karnad wants to show that Vishakha has equal right to ask questions in family and shares the emotions. But it is the feature of patriarchal system that husband does not care wife suggestions. Here Vishakha says that:

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

(No reply.)

Only occasional bits of news about you. When someone from her goes to the city and attends the sacrifice-

(No response.)

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

(No reply.)

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

(No reply.)

But my fornication was reason enough, wasn’t it?
Here, it is significant to note that Vishakha 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 there is no any response from her husband. It suggests that in male-dominated family husband is not ready to response of wife’s every question. Her husband is a symbol of patriarchal person who left her alone in house and he denied his company. Therefore, she finds his love in Yavakri.

Vishakha is caught between the patriarchal rules. It is observed that she tries to break man dominance rules when she talks to her husband. She is bold enough to ask her husband to behave at least like human. Because she knows that her husband just left her alone to get seat of chief priest in Fire Sacrifice. He did not consider her wife in front of his achievement. Therefore she becomes very despair and says to Paravasu that:

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

You want me to kill you?  

It can be observed through dialogues between Vishakha and Paravasu that her husband is not like to response because he may come across his fault so he becomes very angry. In this manner woman has secondary place in family. She is forced to listen and follow male-dominated principles in her life. She has no right to suggest her husband. Here Vishakha’s expressed that how her desire is pressed by her husband and forced to do his orders. It is important to note that Vishakha though surrounded by learned man but suffers from the suppression of emotions and desires, and lacks the freedom. Girish Karnad presents his female characters as the victims of power struggle in male-dominated society. Vishakha and Nittilai loss their individuality and
become ready to sacrifice their life for men but they became victims. Vishakha belongs to an upper-caste family and is dominated by learned men.

Through the women characters in *The Fire and the Rain*, Girish Karnad gives importance to rich Indian tradition values simultaneously shows faults of it like woman as a victim of the patriarchal order, women are secondary to men in the patriarchal culture and the caste based difference and conflicts related to inter-caste marriage. Women characters like Vishakha, Nittilai are victims of the male-dominated society. The marriage between Nittilai and a boy who belongs to her tribe also the marriage between Paravasu and Vishakha is settled by the parents without considering bride’s consent. Even women are used as instruments to avenge, for completion of lust. It is one of the characteristics of Girish Karnad that he focuses on modernity, shrewd nature of modern man and how male-dominated society is responsible to exploit the women by using rich ancient myths. He uses myths to show that how patriarchal system begins from very ancient times and it is present in modern times. In this background Om Prakash Budholia writes in his book:

*The Fire and the Rain*, as a symbolic and psychological interpretation of the myth of the *Mahabharata*, revivifies the Yavakreeta myth in modern contexts. The same myth also happens to be analysed by C. Rajagopalachari in his abridged version of the *Mahabharata* which becomes an inspiring source to Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain.*

3.1.4 Use of Mask, Prologue, Epilogue:

As a modern playwright, Girish Karnad introduces traditional devices like the mask, prologue and epilogue in *The Fire and the Rain* to show his own theme and with his desired form. Also, it is important to note that he experiments boldly with the myths which are taken from the great mythology of India, *Mahabharata*. The Fire and the Rain has been divided into three acts along with the prologue and the epilogue. The main function of prologue and epilogue is to narrate the story and comments on the proceedings and gives information to audience. Girish Karnad gives all background and surrounding information of characters and theme of the play to audience. The prologue starts as:
It has not rained adequately for nearly ten years. Drought grips the land. A seven-year long fire sacrifice (yajan) is being held to propitiate Indra, the god of rains. Fire burns at the centre of step-like brick altars. There are several such altars, at all of which priests are offering oblations to the fire, while singing the prescribed hymns in unison. The priests are all dressed in long flowing seamless pieces of cloth, and wear sacred threads. The king, who is the host, is similarly dressed but has his head covered. Paravasu is the conducting priest. He will be called the Chief Priest, since he is the most important of them all. It is his responsibility to see that there are no errors, either of omission or of commission, in the performance of the sacrifice. He is about twenty-eight. 29

In this manner, Karnad provides much information related to theme, situation, characters and stage property of the play. Even he gives the information of character’s age, his intention and place on the stage. For example, Karnad explains in detail in prologue that:

A Courtier enters with the Actor-Manager. The latter is made to stand at a distance from the fire sacrifice since as an actor he is considered low-born. The Courtier rushes into the protected enclosure of the fire sacrifice and talks to the King. The priests surround them. There is heated discussion. 30

In the prologue, it is presented through the dialogues of King, Courtier, Actor-Manager and Paravasu that what is mean the fire sacrifice for them and how important to pledge the gods without breaking the pious nature of Yajana. In this background Om Prakesh Budholia writes that:
The entire plot structure of The Fire and the Rain is based on the performance of Vedic rituals, tradition and the art of Natya. On the pattern of Bharata’s *Natyasastra*, Girish Karnad follows the pattern of The Fire and the Rain. Bharata’s *Natyasastra* is extant work of Indian Poetics, and it becomes helpful to common people, especially the people belonging to the lower castes, for all kinds of entertaining features and visionary perceptions as well. According to Bharata, Brahma created this fifth Veda for the teachings of all authoritative works (*sastras*) and it will give the essence of all arts, and crafts. Karnad also follows the line of Bharata for the creation of this fifth Veda for the well-being of people eemasse at the instance of the Vedic rituals and sacrifices. 31

**BALI: THE SACRIFICE**

### 3.2 Introduction:

Bali: The Sacrifice is the translation of Girish Karnad’s Kannada play, *Hittina Huja*. It deals with the sacrifice of ‘the cock of dough’ and takes up the issue of non-violence to discuss. Even Girish Karnad says about its source and theme as:

Bali worried and excited me. It is a discussion play that interrogates the notion of ‘violence’ and is based on a thirteenth century Kannada epic, ‘Yashodhara Charita’, which refers to various other texts dating back to the ninth century. It deals with the idea that violence is pervasive, lying just beneath the surface of our everyday behaviour
and is often masked by a conscious effort. It also posits that human thought, intention and action are all interlinked. It debates the Jain notion that intended violence is as condemnable as the action itself. The mere thought of bloodshed or brutality can condemn one as much as the deed would. The play debates the conflict of faith.32

As above said by Girish Karnad that war, violence, bloodshed are issues of everyday behaviour in modern age. In the modern age there are number of problems like terrorism, patricide, matricide, bloodshed faced by human beings. In this connection Karnad puts in front of audience the conflict between violence and non-violence. Karnad connects the issue of violence with one of the principles of Hindu philosophy that is ‘sacrifice’. From very ancient times-from Vedic period to modern time ‘sacrifice’ means all kinds of offerings to God, from fruits to animals is part of Hindu tradition. But it is paradoxical principle or tradition in Jainism. It is believed in Jainism that any kind of violence even a minor one or killing an animal in symbolic way is regarded as violence. For showing violence vs non-violence Karnad used very ancient myth of ‘cock of Dough’. A Jain King is forced to make a sacrifice of a cockerel, in order to avoid the consequences of his queen’s adultery or infidelity with elephant keeper. In this way the title of the play has very strange paradox.

‘Bali’ and ‘sacrifice’ are synonymous when a person is sacrificing another living being like animal to gods. But ‘Bali’ and ‘sacrifice’ are not exact synonymous when the word, ‘sacrifice’ means giving up something for someone. This meaning is related with the theme of the play when King sacrifices his religion for love but he could not remain true to his sacrifice. When the word ‘sacrifice’ is seen on Queen’s point of view, it is observed that first Queen suggests that compassion and non-violence go hand in hand of a Jain. But she is not ready to possess this principle of Jain because she does not show compassion for her husband in the way in which she causes him very agony or angry. It is very paradoxical that she forgets the main principle of wife’s chastity or purity of conduct, she keeps extra-marital relationship and she suggests her husband to follow the principles of Jainism. In short P.D. Nimsarkar writes in his book that:
‘Bali: The Sacrifice’ presents a dialectic confrontation between two traditional ideologies, violence and non-violence, associated with two religions namely Hinduism and Jainism, respectively. It is true that as P.D. Nimsarkar explains that ‘Bali: The Sacrifice’ deals with violence and non-violence and it is related with the religion principles of Hinduism and Jainism.

### 3.2.1 Jain Myth of Cock of Dough:

Girish Karnad uses myth of cock of Dough in his play, Bali: The Sacrifice. Cock of Dough is very ancient myth which believes on one of the non-violence principles of Jainism. Karnad writes about his usage of myth in Bali: The Sacrifice:

I first came across the myth of the Cock of Dough when I was still in my teens. Since, then my career as a playwright has been littered with discarded drafts of dramatized version of it. But looking back, I am happy closure eluded me, for the myth continued to reveal unexpected meanings with passing years.

In this way Girish Karnad shows his intention to use myth of Cock of Dough to reveal unexpected meanings with passing years. In Bali: The Sacrifice, the first song is presented to show the tradition related to two religions. These two religions are the Hindu and the Jaina. Through the first song Karnad intends to show that the practice of animal sacrifice from very Vedic culture. O’ Flaherty focused on the Vedic rituals of the sacrifice of animals as:

In Hinduism, especially the royal level, the stallion remains a sacred animal; it is primarily a sacrificial animal, for horse sacrifices continued to be performed, albeit rarely long after the general rule of non-injury to animals put an end to most Hindu sacrifices.

Girish Karnad presents violence principles of Hinduism through the character of mother queen and the non-violence principles of Jainism through the character of Queen. First, like traditional Indian woman mother queen decides to offer a hundred fowl in sacrifice to her
goddess in order to avoid disaster invited by the Queen’s adulterous deed. The Queen strongly objects to this act and makes the King prevent his mother from this sacrifice which is related to bloodshed. At the end as a solution, mother suggests to sacrifice a dough cock instead of a live one to be performed by the King and the Queen. The Queen has objections even to that symbolic violence. The hot dialogues between King and Queen to convey each other on the issue of a dough cock as:

**King:** This is the offering. A sacrifice of dough. A substitute for a live fowl. It’s dough. Inanimate. All you have to do is place you right hand on the back of my fist. Like this. And I’ll push the blade into this lump of dough. We will together. That’s all. That’ll be the end of it.

**Queen:** This is a temple! You want to violate it?

**King:** But it’s only dough. There’s no violence in it.

**Queen:** But..but…this sword. This plunging in of the blade. The act….it’s violence.

**King:** There’s no bloodshed.

**Queen:** Then why are you doing it? Why? Blood at least makes sense if you believe in bloodthirsty gods. But this…you can’t knowingly fool yourself. 36

In this way Queen presents the principles of Jainism and wants to convey the King that the very act of killing a cock, though of dough, is act of violence. Even King belongs to Hindu religion though he converts himself into Jain for love of Queen. He presents and wants to convey sacrifice that has been his family tradition. In this way Girish Karnad presents the conflict between two religions on the violence and non-violence principle. Om Prakash Budholia explains that the aims of using myth in Karnad’s play as:
The myth of Cock of Dough, borrowed from the Sanskrit literature, serves the theatrical purposiveness. Girish Karnad makes an application of the four fold aspects to the thematic contents of Bali: The Sacrifice: the dialectics of culture, philosophical configurations of the Hindu and the Jain religions, the folk motifs of the drama and the art of dramaturgy. The two ways- the violence and the non-violence become the dialectic of culture.37

3.2.2 Women characters:

There are two main female characters in Bali: The Sacrifice, one is Queen Mother and second is Queen. Queen mother is the mother of King and she follows tradition Hindu religion. She firmly believes on the traditions, rituals and cultural activities of Hindu religion. She worships gods and goddess and likes to offer blood sacrifice to gods. She expects all family members must follow tradition of Hinduism which has rich great history.

Queen mother’s relationship with her son King is very disturbing one. She does not like that her son adopted Jainism. She is not happy to listen that her son married a girl from Jain tradition. Her son’s inter-religion marriage hearts her. She becomes very unhappy to know that her son adopted Jainism. She always wants that her son must accept the principles of Hinduism. Mother Queen performs blood –sacrifice as the rich tradition of Hinduism. Even she says :

Mother Queen: The animals are graded according to the occasion.

Poultry is offered at daily rites. Sheep, goats for the more important ritual. Then buffalo38

Mother Queen explains that blood-sacrifice is very tradition of family. She is very worried about the King has no child. Mother Queen has kept different kinds of animals to sacrifice and she has sacrificed some of them to the goddess praying for child to her son. But King has denied to worship the gods by offering ‘Bali’ and it is the denial of her mother’s principles of Hinduism.

But Mother Queen asks all family members to follow the principles of family tradition. Mother keeps commanding nature and wants to control her son. Even she is very orthodox,
inhuman and bold enough in her behaviour. When King confesses mother that Queen has illicit relationship with the Mahout, Mother becomes very angry and wants to punish her. So Mother asks her son:

**Mother Queen:** Has she fallen so low? The whore. And you. How can you stand here like? I should cut her piece…feed her wolves and vultures. Do it son now!

**King:** Don’t be hysterical, Mother.

In this way mother suggests her son to kill his wife. There is reason that son’s wife keeps extra-marital relationship with Mahout. Her words suggest that she became much angry and she did not think what would be the consequences in future life. Even she did not think that in which situation or in which state of mind Queen keeps extra-marital relationship. She does not like to keep sense of human principles. She is very traditional woman who believes on the principles of patriarchal society where woman is expected to faithful to her husband. She finds that Queen is not pious wife. She feels that it is very disgust to know that Queen of the palace has kept extra-marital relationship with a low caste and ordinary person like Mahout. So she becomes very furious and says:

**Mother Queen:** Throw her bones to the dogs. She has betrayed you. You are not bound by your vows now. All this nonsense about non-violence. I had to go. Kill the harlot and her lover.

If you won’t do it, I’ll do it. Let me fetch my sacrificial knife from the temple. I’ll- 

Mother Queen becomes angry and she forgets the sympathy, kindness, and all virtues of motherhood. She wants to punish her daughter-in-law. In this way she becomes very bold and energetic more than her son. Even she forgets that killing daughter-in-law is not the solution of problem because son is not ready to take hasty action and he possesses the principles of Jainism. The extra-marital relationship is beyond her imagination. She is a traditional woman who believes on principles of male-dominated society. She could not bear that her daughter-in-law has illicit relationship with Mahout. So Mother queen asks furiously to her son:
**Mother Queen:** What kind a man are you? You have lost your manhood. You, you impotent. You love her. But such love is meant for harlots. She drowned our family in sin. She has called out demonic forces.  

Mother Queen uses very harsh words like harlots, whore etc. for her daughter-in-law. Mother surpasses the limitations of motherly behaviour and she challenges her son to take revenge. She forgets the great traditional culture which teaches that elder should not use very low words for one’s guilt. Actually mother queen being mother-in-law should have not used very harsh words for her daughter-in-law. She must have understood feelings of daughter-in-law. At another level the conflict between Mother Queen and daughter-in-law looks like the cultural war for their religion principles.

Mother Queen is like a modern woman who does not compromise in life and she just likes to convey her ideas. Here Mother Queen wants to convey her son to follow her path of violence and principles of family tradition. But her son is not ready to accept her thoughts. That time Mother Queen becomes very frustrate and feels alienated in her life. And she prepared to leave the palace. Therefore she says:

**Mother Queen:** I shall live away from the palace, in a corner of my own. And there, I shall live as I please with my gods. My sacrificial animals. No further interference from you too.

Mother Queen gives threats to convey her son to follow family tradition. But when she understands that son is not ready to accept her suggestions then she compromises with the sacrifice of a cock of dough. Mother Queen compromises because she is very worried about consequences of Queen’s adultery. She wants to offer ‘Bali’ to goddess to avoid the disaster because of Queen’s misdeed. The mother queen is religious woman who believes in gods and goddess. Even she follows the superstitions like offering *bali* with bloodshed to gods. And she does not think that offering *bali* means one kind of crime or sin. In this relation Aparna Dharwadker explains that how theme of the play and character of Mother Queen is interrelated each other as:
Karnad also chooses to address not the public and political carnage of war and conquest, but the legitimation of violence in ritual practices that individuals (such as the queen mother) regard as private acts of faith and worship. The central ‘problem’ in the play is thus not the queen’s adultery but the deep spiritual rift between her Jainism—which aligns itself with compassion, mercy, and non-violence—and the traditional Kshatriya ethos of her husband’s family.43

Another main female character in *Bali: The Sacrifice* is Queen. She is also named as Amritamati. She belongs to Jain religion and firmly believes in the principles like pity, love, kindness and compassion of Jainism in her life. She has done inter-religion marriage with King who belongs to Hindu religion. She loves from the bottom of her heart to her husband. Even she describes her husband as:

**Queen:** Marvellous person, affectionate, gentle and trusting, he is the best of men.44

Also, Queen keeps much understanding and respect to her family. Even she does not like any person uses bad words for her husband or her family. When Mahout doubts King’s ability at that time Queen reacts very angrily and shows her love towards her husband. But she is very self-possessive woman character of Girish Karnad. She controls and dominates behaviour of her husband. She has managed to convert her husband into Jainism. Also she controls his state affairs. She makes him forbid all kinds of bloodshed in the state. Even she does not allow her mother-in-law to celebrate her joy at the Queen’s pregnancy. Thus she tries to control over the family.

At one midnight, Queen Amritamati leaves her bedroom chasing a melodious song and finds herself in the arms of an ugly Mahout who is endowed heavenly voice. It is very important to note that the ugliness, the low caste and status of Mahout does not stop her from her passionate love with him. Even Mahout says that what kind of ill effects of stars on his birth as:

**Mahout:** I was born on a full moon. There was an eclipse. As you know, the worst thing you can do to yourself is to be born during
an eclipse. The sun or the moon - the god whose eclipse it is - is already in the grip of the demon.⁴⁵

Mahout wants to share his thought and love with Queen Amritamati. And Queen has not objection related to Mahout’s ugliness. Even she assures him that he is not as ugly as he thinks of his presupposing in mind. But she is unaware that her husband is following her. Her husband loves much to her. Even for her sake he has left his family tradition of sacrificing animals. But Queen Amritamati is fascinated by Mahout’s voice and his manner. She considers him more cultured than anyone else and is influenced by him. Even she says the truth about his description as:

   Queen: I came here because I heard you sing. I had to come. But let me tell you something. Nobody has ever talked to me like you have. Nobody.⁴⁶

The words of Queen Amritamati present the truth that she is in love with Mahout. It is clear that she keeps the extra-marital relationship with Mahout. The researcher thinks she is tired of the King’s obeying nature and she is surrounded by all royal men and women who are only aware about their status but not in beauty, sensuous satisfaction. Even Queen Amritamati says that:

   Queen: surrounded by men with tall, fair with an aquiline nose and ruby lips, and is sick and tired of them.⁴⁷

It is clear that Queen Amritamati keeps extra-marital relationship but first she was not conscious that her husband was following her in the ruin temple where Mahout and she met. When the King and the Queen Mother find the Queen with the Mahout in a ruined temple and realize the situation, the Queen Mother demands the King to kill both of them suddenly. But the Queen comes out to defend the Mahout. She promises meeting of her with Mahout means the relationship of one-night. She says to Mahout:

   Queen: Go on. Go on. Don’t hesitate now. Throw it out. Don’t be afraid, Mahout. Go ahead. Nothing’ll happen to you. You’ve my word.⁴⁸
The words of Queen present her bold and dominant nature. It is significant to note that most interesting fact about her is that, like other female characters of Karnad’s plays the Queen Amritamati is bold and has dominant nature and she does not regret her betrayal against her husband. Instead she justifies her betrayal as an accident in her life. When King asked about her betrayal she replies:

**Queen:** I do not regret anything that has happened. I will not disown him or anything he gave me. …because it just happened. Without my willing it. It just happened. That’s all…. I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer. Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn’t plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful. 49

The words of Queen Amritamati reveal her shrewd nature. She wants to prove that her betrayal is not betrayal but only an accident. Also it is vital to note that she is not ready to participate in the rite of sacrifice. She refuses to do it on the ground that she is a Jain. But it is ironical that she supports the principle of non-violence of Jainism and she forgets the principle of woman’s chastity or purity of conduct in life. In this way she is very shrewd woman who wants to hide her betrayal and she does not regret about her deed. Therefore Aparna Dharwadker very cleverly describe:

In Bali the queen is childless and although this lack is an inescapable point of reference in her life, it is not (at least for her) a source of obsessive guilt or shame. Aroused by the mahout’s osng, she seeks him out for an anonymous coupling that violates the boundaries of caste and class, but when challenged, refuses to profess guilt for her action or to atone for it through a propitiatory ritual. More than any other female character in Karnad’s drama, she is a transgressive presence, deprived of conventional feminine roles by chance and
circumstance, but self-possessed and cerebral enough not to surrender
to the pressures of conformity. 50

In this way Aparna Dharwadker rightly describes true face of Queen Amritamati who keeps principles according her view and uses to benefit her. It is significant to note that Queen Amritamati plays very dominant role in the relationship of husband and wife. She always treats her husband as an attendant to follow her commands. He becomes secondary to her. Queen’s husband is caught in her love. First the Queen desires to impose her principle of non-violence upon the King and the Mother Queen and in the beginning she succeeds. But after her adulterous deed, the Mother Queen gains a chance to overcome and Mother Queen asks King to follow her instructions and she insists that Queen must participate in the act of sacrificing the dough cock. At the end Queen offers herself as a sacrifice.

3.2.3 Women’s Relationship in Family:

The relationship between the King and his Mother Queen are not nature as assumed in Indian families. It is observed in male-dominated Indian society that male performs very dominant role in the family. But in the family of King, Mother Queen plays very dominant role. King is born and brought up by his mother in a Kshtriya way of life. He obeys the family tradition of sacrificing animals. But after King’s marriage, the King disobeys mother and accepts Jainism as the precondition of marriage. He accepts and follows the principles of Jainism by heart. Therefore when he comes to know that illicit relationship of his wife, he fails to punish her and her lover. Though his mother, Mother Queen challenges his manhood but in vain. His mother desires him to kill the Queen and the Mahout but he fails to act.

Mother Queen plays very dominant role in family. She succeeds in awakening the impulse of violence and family sacrifice and makes him agree to the sacrifice of a dough cock. That cock is not a live one. The King is inclined to obey her and makes the Queen participate what she refuses to do. At the end Queen kills herself. In this way Mother Queen imposes her decisions on her son and daughter-in-law. In this way the play is relevant in the modern times in the connection of conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Here it is seen that the royal family undergoes tragic suffering because the religious beliefs enter in the family matter. And the female characters behave according to their respective religious doctrines to
support their personal deeds. Such situations occur in modern family because in the modern times inter-caste and inter-religion marriages take place and because of different principles of religions or caste modern people face same problems as faced by Mother Queen and Queen Amritmati in the family life.

Superstition and the religious fundamentalism are reasons to arise problems in the family relationships. Mother Queen wants to offer a hundred fowls to her goddess as sacrifice to save the King from the probable disaster invited by the Queen’s illicit deed. But Queen strongly believes on principles of Jainism and she denies sacrificing animals to goddess. Even Queen finds violence in the substitution for the live fowls, a cock of dough to be slaughtered by the royal couple. The King and the Mother Queen find it quite essential to overcome the situation, but Queen finds foolishness in it. Even Queen says:

**Queen:** I don’t want to hurt her. She can live by her beliefs.

But we are Jains. Our son will be a Jain. He will have to uphold the principle of compassion for all living beings, of non-violence. Should we allow a blood rite to mark his arrival? It would be wrong. Terribly wrong!  

Queen firmly believes in the principles of Jainism. In this way conflict arose in the relationship of husband and wife. But at the end King conveys his wife on the ground that there is no harm and violence in slaughtering the cock of dough as it does not involve bloodshed. After a long argument, Queen agrees to participate in sacrificing act but surprisingly, the cock of dough comes in life. Under the pressure of the King and the Mother Queen, Queen in desperation stabs herself with knife and offers the sacrifice of her own life.

There is not natural and cooperative relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Being mother-in-law, Mother Queen always tries to overcome and controls her daughter-in-law, Queen. Also, Queen Mother and the Queen Amritmati are representatives of two opposite ways of life. Mother Queen advocates the violence in the form of animal sacrifice to goddess. On the other hand, Queen is Jain and believes to follow the principle of non-violence in life. Queen has her fundamental opposition to violence in any form and compassion for all living beings. On
this background Mother Queen and Queen Amritmati try to overcome and control each other. Even Queen says to her husband:

**Queen:** You are sure your mother isn’t unhappy?

**King:** Unhappy! Are you mad? She’s wanted a grandson as badly as we’ve wanted a son.

**Queen:** All these years, she had some hope of getting you another queen. Now… 52

Queen expresses her negative emotions about her mother-in-law. Queen without fear says that her mother-in-law desires another wife for King. In such critical situation King tries to compromise and convey for good relationship between his wife and his mother. In this way this play is very close to present family of modern times. In the modern times such problems occur in family where son is caught in critical situation. Son has to follow the instructions of elder family members like father, mother etc. and has to convey their thoughts to his wife. In the modern times females are aware about their equal rights and they want to convey their own desires to family members and arises conflict in the family.

Queen Amritmati’s adulterous act was nothing to do with the non-violence of the Jainism, not have the sacrifices anything to do with atonement of her deed. But the Queen becomes fixed not to admit her deed as a sin, and instead she becomes aggressive to settle her scores against the Mother Queen. The latter also tries to have her revenge. The royal family becomes relationship affairs leading to their doom. The message is that a family should not be carried away by any religious dominance.

Girish Karnad presents the drastic results of the orthodoxy of the religious nature in the multi-cultured and diverse country like India. In a country like India, with competing religious and cultures, religious and cultural tensions leading to satisfactory compromises are expected. Girish Karnad focuses on such religious tension and the resulting ruin condition of characters therefore he tries to show that compromises are very important in family and society. The policy of compromise and tolerance of co-existence at the individual and the society level is very important in modern times because the modern world has been facing a number of problems related with clash between Hindu and Muslim community and Christian and Muslim community.
The intolerance and fundamentalism in all religions has to reject before the liberal co-existence based on compromise that would affect into peaceful living in the country and in the world.

The King forgets the truth that the relationship between man and woman cannot be confined only to high-sounding ideals but also to the love of the heart and desires of body. The King fails to understand what Queen Amritamati desires. Even King expresses his emotions in his first monologue:

Woe betide the times
where the King sits alone
outside on the steps
racked by sighs
while the Queen is trapped
in her lover’s thighs

Through monologue King expresses his grief. King fails to understand where he falls short to fulfil Queen’s desire. King loves Queen and expresses his desires to her. When King comes to know the illicit relationship of Queen, he cannot understand why did it happen? Even King asks Queen about her meeting with Mahout as:

**King:** How can you be so crass? So brazen? You-

**Queen:** Because it just happened. Without my willing it. It just happened. That’s all.

**King:** And you didn’t pause to ask if I deserved it? I who have loved you all these years- above everything-

Conversation between King and Queen presents the truth about their husband and wife relationship. Here King being husband loves much to Queen. But he disturbs to know the extra-marital relationship of Queen. And he burns in his heart and wants to know that why Queen Amritamati appreciates Mahout. He grows jealous of the Mahout and Queen. And King is unable to understand the mind, desires and psyche of the Queen. It is important to note that King has dual problems, first he cannot understand his wife and second he cannot follow the instructions
of his mother. He is like a tennis boll that moves between Queen and Mother Queen. He is much attached to his wife and to his mother. He cannot live alone without any of the two. Even he says:

**King:** I can’t bring myself another mother. She can’t get herself another son. And I won’t look for another wife. So that seems to be a fairly unalterable situation.  

King is good human being and loves his mother as well as his wife as Indian family tradition. He does not possess such features like dominant nature, boldness and characteristics of patriarchal system kept by female characters in this play.

Queen pressures psychological violence on her husband in many ways. Also Queen Mother wants to control King’s behaviour and asks to follow her instructions on the name of family tradition. Because of love, King cannot go against their decisive actions. Queen is a follower of kindness, non-violence, compassion but she does not show to her husband. Queen commits adultery and confesses it. Even she supports her lover, Mahout. But she does not think that her extra-marital relationship may raise agony in her husband’s mind and would disturb her conjugal life. In this way Queen Amritamati is a complex character who changes her behaviour according to changing situation in her life. She does not remain true to her nature. She plays very shrewd game by mind and body.

In Bali: The Sacrifice, the relationship between husband and wife leads to end when Queen sacrifices her life by killing herself and falls into the arms of her husband who embraced her with love. But she wants to prove the principle of compassion. But being husband King fails to understand Queen’s feelings and physical desire. Also King is a victim of weakness. For example, Mahout calls him impotent. It may be reason that King’s impotency that incites his wife to be attracted towards Mahout. Queen Mother calls King ‘manliness’. King has accepted the principles of Jainism and becomes too weak to punish neither his wife for her illicit relationship with Mahout nor Mahout for seducing his wife. King’s mother challenges his manliness but King did not do any aggressive deed.

Male character is very weak as compare to female character in Karnad’s *Bali: The Sacrifice*. King loves his wife very much and it creates problems in family life. He converts himself Hindu into Jain. He cannot heart her. He cannot convince his wife that his mother is not
wrong. Mother Queen is very traditional Indian woman who cannot change her behaviour in her old age. Being young husband and wife must have understood the feelings of age old mother. Shubha Mishra writes in focusing on the relationship of theme of Karnad’s *Bali: The Sacrifice* with contemporary reality as:

> Within this frame of reference, the reading of *Bali: The Sacrifice*, opens up many veiled socio-psychic aspects, of the individual characters and eventually in the larger context of the society. Even though the play is based on an ancient myth, it presents the contemporary human dilemma very significantly. The Queen mother is like an institution by herself. she symbolically enfolds within her stature, the power of her religion, represents ‘motherhood’ and also power of the state. A staunch believer in the patriarchal system expects women to behave in a set frame of norms and values.

The words of Shubha Mishra present the image of Queen Mother’s character, her nature, her principles of patriarchal system and focuses on how patriarchal system is survived from ancient times to modern age. In the modern age, Indians like to accept western life style, scientific knowledge but behave in traditional way. In modern times, most of Indian families believe on patriarchal system where women have secondary place in family. Also women have to follow traditional rules and regulations related with religion, rituals and their respective caste. In this relation woman character, Mother Queen likes to follow the traditions of Hindu culture and she expects from all her family members must follow them. Whenever one of the family members tries to break tradition that person is criticized in society. Such situation can be observed in modern age also.

It is very significant to discuss what the concept of marriage conveys in the Indian society. Generally speaking ‘marriage’ is understood as an ever-lasting relationship between man and woman. It also connotes man and woman sharing love, affection, companionship, understanding, security, sex, etc. The relationship between man and woman in married life in the
Indian context has gained considerable holiness. The pious woman is given importance and treated respectfully. The qualities of piousness, chastity and generosity are pushed on her and married woman is expected to follow traditional woman role like Sita and Savitri. A girl-child in India is brought up with the view that she is to be at last married.

On the thinking of Indian concepts, ‘marriage’, man-woman relationship in conjugal life Girish Karnad’s woman characters are not following the age old tradition related to woman. Queen does not remain pious in conjugal life. Mother Queen fails to share love, affection, companionship, understanding and provide security to her daughter-in-law. In this way researcher thinks that Girish Karnad criticizes woman who is not following rich and glorious principles of Indian culture which teach human beings that love is more important in life.

In the modern age, women are still considered pathetic and weak. Also it is believed that men have to protect them in society. The growth of literacy and awareness of social conditions should have brought greater awareness among women. Most of women in modern age believe the principles of male-dominated society and they are following without any complaints. Therefore it may the reason that Girish Karnad focuses on the female character, Mother Queen and Queen in relation with traditional orthodox principles of religions and how they have been following though they came in tragic problems in their life. And Girish Karnad points out the problems like woman’s ego, search for completeness, selfishness etc.

Girish Karnad presents the problems of women in male-dominated society and their problems in conjugal life in his play, Bali: The Sacrifice. Generally many women are unable to get out of their relationship because of many reasons. Sometimes they may be economically dependent or emotionally dependent on their husband. The reason it may be that the Indian women are imposed by traditional principles of society and that make it very difficult for women to move out. Also the women, in most cases are aware of their positions but cannot do any action against traditional principles of religion. In Bali: The Sacrifice Queen is aware her position as Queen in the palace and has equal rights but she has to follow some instructions of her mother-in-law and her husband. First Queen is not ready to participate in sacrifice ritual. For Queen animal sacrifice to god is one kind of brutal violence but she is convinced by her husband in following manner as:

**King:** This is the offering. A sacrifice of dough. A substitute for a live fowl….all you have to do is place your right hand on the
back of my fist. Like this. And I’ll push the blade into this lump of dough. We will, together. That’s all. That’ll be the end of it.

**Queen:** this is temple! You want to violate it?

**King:** But it’s only dough. There’s no violence in it?

**Queen:** But...but...this sword. This plunging in of the blade. The act...it’s violence.

**King:** There’s no bloodshed.

**Queen:** Then why are you doing it? Why? Blood at least makes sense if you believe in bloodthirsty gods. But this...you can’t knowingly fool yourself.  

In the conversation of above mention presents the truth that Queen tries to convey the meaning of violence. She tries to explain that only act and thought of killing animal is one kind of violence. She is not ready to perform a sacrifice of dough. Though King conveys her dough means a substitute for a live fowl without bloodshed. King does not understand her and her principles of Jainism. She belongs to Jain religion. She does believe on the principle of non-violence which is one of the principles of Jainism. But at the end she has to participate in the ritual of a sacrifice of dough.
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