VOID – A SPACE TO MEDITATE

In this chapter, the focus will be on the silence that prevails when the Thanatos subsides. Thanatos is followed by a lull, a Void. It’s the calm after the thunder. It is a space for meditation. It is where one descends deep into one’s psyche and tries to analyse the situation and discover the roots of his/her emotion. This space is the realm of questions. It is the realm of the Self which is attainable through reflection, questioning and doing away with the ego. This place makes one accept the negative aspects of one’s unconscious that make one uncomfortable. Von Franz In the Process of Individuation says:

It is, of course, natural to become annoyed when others who are “no better” criticize you because of shadow faults. But what can you say if your own dreams—an inner judge in your own being—reproach you? That is the moment when the ego gets caught, and the result is usually the embarrassed silence. Afterwards the painful and lengthy work of self-education beings—a work, we might say, that is the psychological equivalent of the labours of Hercules. (174)

It becomes a realm of healing when one assimilates both the negative and active components of one’s psyche. But as the above statement points out, this realm dilates as well. If one tries to suppress the assimilation of these elements of the psyche, one becomes lost. Neuroses are the result of a person’s failure to confront and accept the shadow component of the unconscious. It makes this zone both dark and enlightening at once. It is also the realm of confusion where one can either get lost in it or attain wisdom. Bettina describes Void as:

To the mystic, the word “Void” connotes future potential. The Void indeed contains all that existed before creation, when the cosmos “was without form, and void” (Gen 1:2). For the Hebrew Kabbalist, therefore, this state of formlessness or void paradoxically implies plenitude. It is replete with prima materia, that is, invisible primal matter made up of what we would today term “subatomic” or “supergalactic” particles. To prove the veracity of their intuitions, the Kabbalists customarily had recourse to language: the Hebrew word for “nothingness” is ain, and for “I” (or “something”), ani. By simply
transposing a single consonant, the word “nothing” becomes “something.” (Knapp 30)

This Void comes when the cycle of Eros and Thanatos dissolve and one has to accept both the negative and the positive aspects of one’s psyche. It is the realm of wisdom. Therefore, one can call it the realm of God. Phillip Frank in Philosophy of Science mentions that this void is considered identical to God by Newton.

In Newton’s Principles of Natural Philosophy, the “void” is the basic concept. A body in motion preserves its velocity relative to the “void.” Newton stressed the point that this law does not refer to any physical body of reference, but to “absolute space”. . . it is impossible to determine by any physical experiment the speed of the earth (or of any material body) relative to absolute space; therefore, this space has no operational meaning. Newton understood this difficulty very well. In order to give an operational meaning to “absolute space,” he preserved some elements of organismic physics. As in Aristotelian physics, it was assumed that there was a divine being in every moving sphere of the heavens, Newton assumed that absolute space was identical with the “sensorium of God.” (117-118)

It manifests the silence of the Pralaya and the Apocalypse. Pralaya means the death of the world. The world is symbolic here as it is the world of Maya, an illusion. Roshen Dalal in The Religions of India: A Concise Guide to Nine Major Faiths describes Pralaya as:

Pralaya: A Sanskrit term that refers to the dissolution or ending of objects. Most commonly, Pralaya refers to the end of the world after a KALPA or a cycle of YUGAS, also known as Brahma-pralaya, but there are other types of pralaya as well. Nitya-pralaya is the destruction of living and non-living things that happens on a daily basis. Prakriti-pralaya is the great deluge or flood caused by nature (PRAKRITI) that ends creation. Atyantika-pralaya is the dissolution of the individual through union with the divine. (289)

_Pralaya_ marks the dissolution of _Prakriti_. When _Pralaya_ occurs, the ego is broken down and its _gunas_, Eros and Thanatos are disintegrated. It makes one sit in silence to accept the opposite elements within one’s psyche and form equilibrium
between them. It is a space that is its own antithesis as it is dark yet sacred. It is a
space to contemplate the abyss of one’s personality and to create room for new
beginnings. It is in this realm that Individuation of a person takes place. D. P.
Chattopadhyay in *Environment Evolution and Values* defines *Pralaya* as:

Strictly speaking, *Pralaya* is a *quiescent* or tense state and not steady
state. The effects of human action (*Karamphala*) are said to be
indestructible. According to the *Samkhya*, *Pralaya* takes place when
the actions of all human beings (*Purushas*) collectively require a
temporary suspension of all experience. The *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* think
that the Supreme Intelligence brings about *Pralaya* in order to give
respite or rest to all living beings. All produced things disintegrate. The
atoms and the souls with all their *Dharma*, *Adharma*, and past
impressions remain suspended in their own inanimate condition.

*Adrsta* as the accessory cause (*sahakari karna*) grounded in God’s will
brings about dissolution and set in motion the forces of creation,
disturbing the quiescent state. During a time of dissolution when
everything returns to its original seminal position, the effects of human
karmas are also preserved in a seminal form. Nature preserves the
balance between all its elements. (91-92)

*Pralaya* reduces things to ‘nothingness’ so that a ‘new consciousness’ comes
into being. Thus, it is where the one cycle of Eros and Thanatos dissolve and re-
creation of another cycle of Eros and Thanatos takes place. Jungian Psychology calls
this period the ‘Spiritus Creator’ that is ‘giver of Life’. Lorena Stookey in *Thematic
Guide to World Mythology* compared *Pralaya* of Hindu tradition with Apocalypse
(19). Apocalypse is composed of two Greek words, “Apo” and “Calypso” and
together they come to mean uncovering of the divine knowledge. Today in the
popular culture, it has come to stand for the end of the world. Edinger in *Archetype of
the Apocalypse: Divine Vengeance, Terrorism, and the End of the World* define
Apocalypse as:

“Apocalypse” means the momentous event of the coming of the Self
into conscious realisation. Of course, it manifests itself and is
experienced in quite different ways if occurring in the individual
psyche or in the collective life of a group; but in either case, it is a
He further explains:

When the imagery of Apocalypse archetype comes up in an analysis, it can be immediately recognized as the part of the phenomenology of the individual process: representing in an individual the emergence of the Self into conscious realization. And those four aspects that I mentioned earlier with regard to apocalyptic literature apply also to an individual manifestation: Revelation, Judgment, Destruction or Punishment, and a New World. Here, 1) “Revelation” has the psychological correlate of a shattering new insight accompanied by the flow of transpersonal images into consciousness. 2) “Judgment” is experienced in the form of an abrupt profound awareness of the shadow, which at times can be so overpowering that it can threaten complete demoralization. When someone is confronted with his dark and dubious nature that he has known only abstractly and intellectually, but then suddenly it comes into focus as living concrete reality—that is a big shock. 3) The theme of “Destruction or Punishment” is manifested as the individual’s anxiety in the midst of this transformation ordeal. 4) Finally, the coming of a “New world” corresponds to the emergence of mandala and quaternity images within the psyche—as there begins to appear the possibility of a conscious relation to the Self and its wholeness. (7)

Goddess Aditi is the archetype of Void in the Indian ethos. She symbolises the energy of Void. She is said to be formless, boundless and therefore a goddess of vast and limitless possibilities. She is the goddess of great darkness and luminous void. She represents both the union and dissolution and the thoughts and vacuum. She is nothingness and infinity. It is in her realm that one attains primordial consciousness because she represents Shunyata. It is in the emptiness that one attains the wisdom of being free from ego and all the attachment. Ashok Bedi in Awaken the Slumbering Goddess describes:
The name Aditi is derived from the root word *Da* (to bind or fetter) and suggests another profile of Shakti. As a *Diti* she is the unbound, free one, and it is evident in the hymns that she is called upon to free the petitioner from the various hindrances of Maya and its Karmic consequences. Aditi also plays the role of the guardian of *reta* (*the Spiritual Way*) the spiritual connection between the individual soul and the primal spirit. As such, she is called a supporter of the creature by providing or enforcing *reta*, those ordinances or rhythms that delineate order from chaos. (Bedi 155)

Aditi is described in the Vedas as a Goddess Mother associated with Cosmos and atmosphere. Her creation is a debatable topic as in Rig Veda; it is said, “From Aditi, the unfettered mother, was born Daksha, the dextrous father. From Daksha, the dextrous father was born Aditi, the unfettered mother” (GIN 17). The cosmic significance of Aditi is reiterated in the following lines by Pupul Jaykar:

In a creation myth common to the countryside in India, the Aditi Shakti, the primordial ever-young goddess, spins the threads of creation. As she conceives and creates, she, in turn, is vanquished by the male gods, the static masculine order, who are born of her; she passes to them the power that ensures her own destruction, for she conveys the wisdom that in Srishti, or creation, is the seed of bija of samhar, or destruction. In such a scenario of ending and beginning, death is an ending and yet passage to a new beginning. (29)

The above remark suggests that she is a goddess that grants the ultimate knowledge of the eternal truth of life in death and death in life. Her symbol is a pot. In archetypal psychology, pot symbolizes both a womb and a tomb. A womb is a place where one re-enters (a soul taking a human shape), and a tomb is a place of decomposition. Therefore, in the zone of Aditi, all the hierarchies are abolished. Another name for Aditi in the Indian pantheon of Gods and Goddess is Dhumavati. As her name suggests, she is what is left after the smoke; the smoke and darkness of Thanatos. She is the goddess of primordial darkness. David in *Tantric Yoga and the Wisdom Goddesses* says that she is “the good fortune that comes to us in the form of misfortune” (121). Her appearance is deceptive. In her outer form, she personifies all that is unwanted such as poverty, suffering, trials. But beyond all this pain resides the
knowledge; the knowledge that the integration of consciousness with unconscious brings bliss. Dhumavati and Aditi thus represent the destructive and benevolent forms of Void.

The Greek Goddess that stands closest to Goddess Aditi because of same attributes is Goddess Gaia. Goddess Gaia is one of the primal gods of Greek mythology. She is the Earth Goddess. Aditi is related to Holy cow, which is a symbol of ‘Earth’, called ‘Bhudevi’ (Earth Goddess). Gaia stands as an equivalent to Goddess Aditi because she too can create and destroy. The origin of Goddess Gaia and Goddess Aditi is similar to an extent; the former has originated from Chaos, and the latter has its roots in ‘Mahapralaya’. Therefore, they both represent the realm that is beyond time and space, a realm between consciousness and matter. The realm of Aditi is dark and endless, not everyone that enters in it come out as wise. At times, it devours and split and reduces a person to the state of depression. It demands contemplation and a will to endure. It requires awareness. Those who succumb and give up too soon only suffer.

In Hayavadana, Padmini enters the zone of Void when both the figures of her desires, Devadatta and Kapila die at each other’s hand. She laments, “You forgave each other, but again, left me out” (Karnad 1:176). They both died and left her life meaningless. She suffers from alienation and a loss of meaning. A space that is not bounded by meaning or is empty of meaning is an area of Void. Whenever one comes up with something that they don’t understand, one touches a space of Void. With the meaninglessness attached to her life, Padmini is all set to end her life. Ashton in From the Brink says, “Whenever there is dissolution this implies the liquefaction or loss of shape or discreteness of something and return to the swirling waters of the amniotic sac or the dark waters out of which the creation occurred. The ego no longer has solid ground on which to stand”(12).

She decides to perform Sati. The space left by the loss of loved ones, eventually get filled with time, but the loss faced by Padmini opened up an emptiness that can never be filled. Neither can she grieve for Kapila as the society won’t allow it nor can she grieve for Devadatta as she has left him on her accord. Padmini in her double bind of Eros and society’s non-acceptance of it takes an extreme step and performs Sati. Death seemed the only possibility to her in her situation as she was uncertain. In her state of Void, she was dry and empty of love and Eros and every
other action except for death seemed impossible to her. She voices the emptiness inside her when she says, “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 lives to come. You haven’t left me even that little consolation” (Karnad 1:177). She feared the labels a society gives to the woman who transgresses and Sati is the punishment she gave herself on the part of the community. Helen says, “The ignorant and gullible, the stupid and silly, the clever and rebellious, it made no difference whosoever broke the rules forfeited her life, not so much so to an avenging God as to an implacable society that provides no respectable way to live on” (31). Sati, in ancient Indian culture, was seen as a noble act on the part of the woman, who doesn’t want to live anymore after the death of her husband. Pratt explains:

In Jung’s schema, as in much of Western theory, ego, or consciousness, is symbolically identified with “the masculine” and the world of the unconscious with “the feminine.” The realm of personal dreams and memories, which I would term the subconscious, reflects these daily experiences. To the degree that women are alienated from full participation in society, they are also alienated from these “upper” realms of the ego and the subconscious. (138)

For Padmini, Sati is the mask with which she covered her real identity, an archetypal symbol that she could not assimilate. In the end, her persona of being a culture-approved woman remains alienated from her inert materials; she could not come to terms with the imperfection of the world, and the journey of her Individuation remains uncompleted. Karnad in Hayavadana points out how society judges and mocks almost every act of the woman.

BHAGAVATA: Thus Padmini became a Sati. India is known for its pativratas, 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 performed Sati. (Karnad 1:177)

Bhagavata here becomes the mouthpiece of the society that has never been easy on a woman. She is mocked for the choice of her sacrifice. But before she hands over her son to Bhagwata she says:
My son is sleeping in the hut. Take him under your care. Give him to the hunters who live in the 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 Reverend Brahmin Vidyasagar of Dharamapura. Tell him it’s Devadatta’s son. (Karnad 1: 176)

The quest for perfection for Padmini doesn’t end with the death of Kapila and Devadatta; she further leaves this legacy to her son. She wants her son to spend the early years of life with hunters in the forest, that way he will attain a robust body by doing gymnastics and all sort of activities. A Forest is a dark place, a place where the survival of the fittest rules. Only with the best body reflexes can sustain oneself in it. She wants her son to spend his later years in the Dharamapura, the residence of culture, where people worship strong mind and intellect. In her personal quest, she tries to impose same values on her son, which turns him into an ‘autistic’ child. The Void is a space where one discerns between what one reconstitutes around oneself to feel the safety net and what is. It is a space to meditate upon things, and the meditation results in shattering all the illusions. Padmini somehow fails to fall deep into the chasm of the Void and repeats her fatal idea of a perfect and complete world on her son and rolls the cycle for Eros and Thanatos for him. But Jung has said:

The sad truth is that man’s real life consists of a complex of inexorable opposites- day and night, birth and death, happiness and misery, good and evil. We aren’t even sure that one will prevail against the other, that good will overcome evil or joy defeat pain. Life is a battleground. It always has been, and always will be; and if it weren’t so, existence would come to an end. *(M&S 75)*

None of the three characters achieved perfection; they all died in their unending quest. Though compared to the likes of Kalidasa, Sudraka and Vatsyana’s categories of womanhood, she fails to attain that greatness herself. But the desire stayed. Though dead herself, she left behind the legacy of the quest of completion for her son.

Karnad introduced Hayavadana and Padmini’s son in the play in the end. When we first met Hayavadana, he was a half-horse and half-man. He has now turned into a man with horse’s voice and yearns for the completion of the body and the mind.
Bhagavata: Tell me: you went to the goddess to become a complete man, didn’t you? What happened?

Hayavadana: Ah! That’s a long story. I went there, picked up a sword which was lying around -very unsafe, I tell you -put it on my neck and said: ‘Mother of all Nature if you don’t help me, I’ll chop off my head!’

Actor I: Then?

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 people 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 a complete man!’ I became a horse.

Actor I: I am sorry to hear that...

Hayavadana: Sorry? Whatever for? The goddess knew what she was doing. I can tell you that. Ha Ha! Being a horse has its points. (Pause). I have only one sorrow.

Bhagavata: Yes?

Hayavadana: I have become a complete horse- but not a complete being! This human voice- this cursed human voice--it’s still there! How can I call myself complete? What should I do, Bhagavata Sir? How can I get rid of this human voice?

Bhagavata: I don’t know what to advise you. (Karnad 1:183)

The desire of completion is a strange loop, it never ends. One desire gives way to another. Hayavadana’s achievement of a complete horse’s body leaves him with another desire of having an animal’s voice. The son of Padmini is a silent child, who doesn’t speak or laugh. His only companions are the dolls left to him by his mother. The Silent, mute and tattered dolls are the only ones that Padmini’s son knows intimately in this world. The companion of this silence is one’s unconscious. It is the dark abyss into which a person floats to come out with wisdom. Language provides structure to human thought. It gives definition to random and chaotic psychological reality, but it also limits the thought. Through language, a man tries to control what is
outside of it. Man seeks to designate meaning to everything and in that attempt builds a barrier and creates misunderstanding. Language is about moving outside, and Silence is about looking inside. It is not bound by time and is fluid and disorganised. Silence thrashes hierarchies as it observes and reflects. In silence, one lives in a void and acquires the knowledge of unconscious. The silent dolls are the unconscious of his mother. The dolls left by Padmini didn’t provide her son with any awareness of the language of the outside world but with the animal unconscious of his mother. Padmini’s son didn’t find pleasure in anything human but laughs for the first time at seeing Hayavadana’s laugh.

It is interesting to note that in the Jungian Psychology, the horse is an archetype of change and transition. It symbolises the animal side of the human unconscious. In the Katha Upanishad, it is said “Know the self as a rider of the chariot, and the body as simply the chariot. Know the intellect (or soul) as the charioteer and the mind (emotions) as simply the reins. The senses they say are the horses, and sense objects are the path around them. When the Self is yoked with the mind and the senses, the wise call it the enjoyer” (Muller 12). It is when Padmini’s son sits on the back of Hayavadana; he finds his voice and laughter back. It is when he controls his animal unconscious, sits on the wild horse of his unconscious that he finds his voice again. He sings a song and laughs as well. He forgets about his tattered dolls which are the sign of past that is dead and starts clapping which is the sign of life. Padmini’s son and Hayavadana gained happiness in each other’s incompleteness. When he asks Padmini’s son to sing another song:

Boy: I don’t know...
Hayavadana: Then sing the same song again.
Boy: You laugh first.
Hayavadana: Laugh again? Let me try. (tries to laugh.) Ha Ha Ha! No, it’s not easy to laugh—just like that.
Boy (Mimes whipping): Laugh—Laugh...
Hayavadana: All right. All right. I’ll try again. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!—Huhhuh...Heahhh..

(His laughter ends up as a proper neigh.)
All: What's that?
Bhagavata: Hayavadana—Hayavadana...

Hayavadana: Heahhh...

(His human voice is gone now. He can only neigh and leaps around with great joy.). (Karnad 1:185-186)

The two offspring of two incomplete marriages find completeness in each other’s incompleteness. The incompleteness of both was the result of the choices of their parents. The main plot and subplot merge to give a conclusion. The Void in the life of both the child and Hayavadana provides them with the wisdom and nourishes them to find happiness in their incompletion, which their respective parents couldn’t do. Hayavadana is Karnad’s reimaging of the Indian mythological figure Hayagriva. Hayagriva is considered to be a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, in the form of a man with a horse head. D. Shridhara Babu in his book *Hayagriva* has associated this *avatar* of God with wisdom. George Simon in the foreword to the book has said that Hayagriva is a deity of wisdom and learning. He further says, “The horse-head is the sun as a symbol of illumination, the sun as the destroyer of the darkness of ignorance. Dr. Babu draws our attention to the fact that in the Vedic myth of Dadhyanc Atharvana, the horse-head is connected with the idea of secret knowledge” (Babu i). The secret knowledge, Babu explains in the book, is that of Vedas. He mentions that it is in the form of Hayagriva that the Lord Vishnu has compiled the Vedas.

Karnad made Hayavadana his mouthpiece and talks about the polarities of life. He challenges the happily-ever-after conventions that polarise the good and bad in society. When Bhagavata glorifies the innocence, Karnad puts his words in the mouth of Hayavadana, “It’s this sort of sentimentality which has been the bane of our literature and national life. It has kept us from accepting Reality and encouraged escapism” (Karnad 1:185).

It is Grief, disillusionment, and despair that fill the realm of the Void. This period usually comes after a life-changing loss. The blackness that it engulfs one into is cold and bone-chilling. One becomes naked and walks on the bones of the dead. In the play *Yayati*, Swarnalata falls into the chasm of Void and turns mad. Maureen says, “To make this journey a woman puts aside her fascination with the intellect and games of the cultural mind, and acquaints herself, perhaps for the first time, with her body, her emotions, her sexuality, her intuition, her images, her values, and her mind. This is what she finds in the depths” (Maureen 90).
Swarnalata had been left alone by her husband on the charges of having an affair with her teacher. His thoughts of suspicion tormented him but he never did any wrong to Swarnalata. To save him from himself, Swarnalata lied about the affair. Swarnalata’s lie cleared his doubts, and he left her forever. A husband gives social status to a woman in India and living without a spouse is the worst thing that can happen to a woman in traditional India. People looked down upon Swarnalata as mad and helpless. Everyone in the palace believes that he has died, but she has kept the whole thing a secret. It made Swarnalata suffer, and her life became a living hell. Clarissa Estes says that every woman has a secret personal story which is embedded like black gravel under the skin of the soul. The problem with these secret stories, she says is that they are surrounded by shame, which burdens the psyche and cuts the woman off her instinctive nature. These make a woman more protective unless they cause her already chronic pain to crest to an even more intense level. She says that a woman who carries a secret is an exhaustive woman (Estes 404-8).

With no one to talk to, Swarnalata’s psyche went into a dark void, never to emerge. In Chitralekha’s situation, she found her double. She asked her to cry her heart out because “for women, tears are the beginning of initiation” (Estes 404). Estes further says, “Tears are a river that takes you somewhere. Weeping creates a river around the boat that carries your soul-life. Tears lift your boat off the rocks, off dry ground, carrying it downriver to someplace new, someplace better” (404). Swarnalata tells Chitralekha, “I have been churning out this old tale, for I can’t think of another tale with which to divert you. We are alone in our unhappiness, devi. Sometimes a distant cry from another unhappy soul—it helps” (Yayati 60).

Swarnalata fell into the void because of the circumstances that were out of her control. To save her husband, she had to lie. But in Chitralekha’s situation, she started perceiving a pattern that was similar to hers, and unconsciously projected her idea of death on Chitralekha as a form of release.

Swarnalata: That is the great thing about death, isn’t it? The assurance of peace, the deliverance from uncertainty?

*(She takes out Sharmishtha’s vial of poison.)*

Chitralekha: What is it?
Swarnalata: The vial of poison which Sharmishtha carried. I found it as I was cleaning the room this afternoon. It promises instant death-release from living hell. But I don’t have the courage it takes. (60)

Patriarchy organises itself and works in such a way that any woman who violates the norms of marriage is forced to think of death as the only release. The smoke of Swarnalata’s pain enveloped Chitralekha as well. In the Void of Dhumavati, one has to adjust their eyesight to the blackness to find the spring-well of the wisdom. Dhumavati demands one’s inner equilibrium to be strong to bear the collapse. But Chitralekha had Swarnalata, who was herself a victim of patriarchy. Chitralekha committed suicide by swallowing the poison as neither her intelligence allowed her to succumb to the threats of patriarchy nor it provided her with any solution.

The poison of Sharmishtha was symbolic of her rage. It carried Swarnalata’s pain, and in consuming that poison, Chitralekha opened herself up to the “accumulated anger of millions of wounded women, layered into the collective unconscious, demanding some form of release” (Kempton 135).

Chitralekha dies, and Swarnalata turns mad.

(Swarnalata starts laughing to herself. Bursts into a small spasm of laughter in between moans and sighs.)

Swarnalata: But I wanted to help her. She was in such pain, I only wanted to release her.

Sharmishtha: What is that Swarna?

Swarnalata: But she found no peace. ‘Save me Swaru.’ There is no release in death. Poor darling.

(Sharmishtha shakes Swarnalata, trying to wake her up, but she is in her own fog. She keeps stroking Chitralekha and moaning.). (Yayati 67)

With Chitralekha’s death, Swarnalata utters the truth that she learnt in the state of Void, but couldn’t release herself. She realises that there isn’t any release even in death. The cycle of life and death keeps on going with hurdles and obstacles on each and every turn. Yayati too realises this truth. Sharmishtha becomes the Aditi archetype in the life of Yayati and makes him ponder about his lustful intentions and its consequences. She tells Yayati, “So here is the foundation of your glorious future,
Your Majesty. A woman dead, another gone mad, and a third in danger of her life” (68). Frawley commenting on the appearance of Goddess Dhumavati, who is the presiding deity of Void, says that her outer appearance is a warning for one to stay away from lust. The basket that she holds is for separating the husk from the grain symbolises the need to separate the illusionary from the real consciousness (Frawley 128). Sharmishtha came in the life of Yayati and aroused passion in him, but at the same time, she warned him of it and its consequences. The period of Void usually falls after the loss of someone or something precious, and it becomes a compulsion. Yayati’s descend into the Void becomes a need for his sanity. He experiences the falling away of the parameters of power he had made, and the gut-wrenching pain of being turned inside-out. He speaks to himself:

I thought there were two options-life and death. No, its living and dying we have to choose between. And you have shown me that dying can go on for all eternity. Suddenly, I see myself, my animal body frozen in youth, decaying, deliquescing, turning rancid. You are lying on your pyre child, burning for life, while I sink slowly in this quagmire, my body wrinkleless and grasping, but unable to grasp anything. (Yayati 68)

The Void makes him realise the consequences of untamed lust. It is in the darkness brought by the death of Chitralekha and madness of Swarnalata that Yayati finds the light. His initiation into the process of Individuation begins after the life-changing loss of Chitralekha. Jung said, “Real liberation comes not from glossing over or repressing painful states of feelings, but only from experiencing them to the full” (A&CU 89). The Goddess Aditi is also known for her motherhood and nourishment attributes. She guards, renews and redeems the one who petitions her. Sharmishtha is the cause of the Thanatos and is also the one in whom Yayati seeks solace. She tries to protect Yayati, and Pooru finds it strange

Pooru: You love him. You actually love father. I had never imagined a person could be capable of that. You are offering to share his wretched fate. I can’t understand it.

Sharmishtha (laughs): I suppose it is a little bizarre. I suspect even your father finds it so. But I don’t know whether I’ll make sense...

Pooru: I could try.
Sharmishtha: All he has to do, to get out of this situation, is to let go of me. Send me away. But he won’t think of it.

Pooru (*laughs*): That is what moulting feels like. Everything has suddenly started making sense. (*Yayati* 50)

This conversation is the crux of the camaraderie between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* provides the stimulus to the *Purusha* inside each man to be one with the eternal consciousness. But *Purusha* engages himself with *Prakriti* and forgets about its primary aim. All it has to do is to understand the impermanence of desires to emerge wise. The period of Void is harsh just like moulting, but it does result in new growth. Sharmishtha with all the negativity around her doesn’t succumb to the aridness of Void, as she recognises her feelings and honours them too.

Honoring Aditi can be experienced as swimming in the archetypal soup. Our thinking function can be said to have reached its limit in discerning the message of Aditi, and it is our feeling function that zeroes in on most accurate promptings of the goddess. In any given enterprise, when we have followed our hunches, examined all the details, thought through all the logical options and are still uncertain about the path, it is our feeling, our assessment of what we value the most in any given situation, that guides our final decision. It is the heart, the feeling function, which is the final arbitrator of our most crucial choices. (Bedi 158)

In Yayati, resided Sharmishtha’s Eros, and as an Aditi archetype, she is the only one who loves him even after this catastrophe that he has brought. She agrees to follow Yayati in his wilderness. Yayati returns Pooru’s youth back to him and goes into the wilderness with Sharmishtha to meditate about his actions. Dhumavati’s old crone appearance is a reminder that youth and beauty fade with time but one’s divine Self always remain intact if one accepts the inevitable. Sally comments:

Tantric practitioners contemplate the dissolution of body as a way of transcending fear of death and also as a way of acquiring various yogic powers. Investigating Dhumavati can give you empathy for the unlucky (and for your own unlucky self) and can show you how freedom really does come when there’s nothing left to lose. (225)
Chitralekha’s death in the end ties all the threads. Pooru who is unsure of the meaning of the life gets the courage to ask the question, “What does all this mean, O God? What does it mean?” (Yayati 69). Yayati renounces his desire of youth and accepts the consequences that his act has brought. He trusted Sharmishtha and begins his journey towards the knowledge of the Self in the wilderness. Trust emerges only when there is true love and one is willing to die. It emerges when there is faith to be taken as gullible, vulnerable and not being judged. Though the Sutradhara informs the readers that the play might have ended in the convention of happy endings of Sanskrit play, Pooru’s lamentation at the dead body of Chitralekha is a reminder of the life’s never ending cycle of Eros and Thanatos, when he says, “We brought you here only to die. But our senses are blighted, and we shall never grasp the meaning of all that you taught us” (69). Maureen says:

One of the greatest challenges of the heroine’s journey is to experience the deep sadness a woman feels about her separation from the feminine, to allow herself to name and grieve this loss in whatever way is appropriate for her, and to then release it and move on. When she is in a state of sadness and despair she needs the support of the positive feminine, a mother or sister figure, man or woman, to contain her safely while she expresses it. (121)

Queen in the play Bali: The Sacrifice has been separated from her feminine with her miscarriages. The pain got stored in her psychology. She recalls the pain and how it haunted and bruised her psychology.

Can you men even imagine what it feels like? To pretend you are unaware of their gaze as they scrutinize the roundness of your belly, the stain on your thigh! Line after line of carrion crows, watching, waiting, ready to caw at the palmful of blood that spurted. And spurt it did-every month-every bloody month. How I hated myself when that happened. (Karnad 1:211)

Her pregnancies were fruitless, they made her suffer, but more painful was the gaze of people. It made her feel naked, exposed, and raw. She turns to the song of Mahout for healing and goes to the discarded sanctum of the temple in the middle of the night. The night is a symbol of the darkness of Void. Queen’s journey alone in the midst of the night and entering into the dark temple is a metaphor for her descent into
the realm of Aditi, where she would discover her strengths and overcome her weakness. She leaves the security of the palace and makes a descent to heal and be one with her feminine. Though she loves the King but her sadness made her take the journey that crosses the threshold of rules. She is not the conventional woman. The aim of her journey is to “integrate herself with her self and not with a society she has found inimical to her desires” (Pratt 136). The journey was of her Individuation, from where she came back refreshed.

Jung defines Wiedergeburt as involving either renovation or transformation of an individual so that all of his or her faculties are brought into conscious play. This may involve a “renewal without any change of being, inasmuch as the personality which is renewed is not changed in its essential nature, but only its functions, or parts of the personality, are subjected to healing, strengthening or improvement.” (Pratt 136)

Murdock quotes Travers, “Sadness lies at the very core of being. Lay the heart bare of every other feeling and inevitably you will come upon sadness, ready, like the quickened seed, to put forth its green leaf” (Murdock 16). She was in need of love, after her rebirth experience. But she was welcomed with another road of trails. Her body is still a source of scrutiny; her choices are still questioned. Her realm of the Void was reduced to a sin by all the other characters of the play. Archetypal feminism puts emphasis on the friendship between two women as it can generate a unique energy and strength for both the women who try to survive in a man’s world. Pratt writes, “Rebirth, rejuvenation and full personal individuation can occur through friendships with members of one’s own sex” (98). Queen needed the support of Queen-Mother, but Queen-Mother asked her to make a sacrifice to purge her sins. Neither was her moment with Mahout shameful to her nor making a sacrifice was acceptable to her. In the end, she submits herself to the wishes of King in order to save him from the suffering.

Frawley in his book Tantric Yoga and the Wisdom Goddesses summarises that in the religious texts, the origin of Goddess Dhumavati is attached to the suicide of Sati. One believes that the Dhumavati had arisen from the fire as smoke when Sati jumped into the fire yajna of her father Daksha, as a mark of her husband’s insult. So Dhumavati is the angry goddess that comes into being as a result of outrage when one
is insulted. The energy of Void becomes dangerous when it is shackled and denied a free expression. Though Queen agrees for the sacrifice, but her rejected energy finds its expression in the dough-cock. The moment they try to plunge the sword in the cock, the cock begins to crow. It becomes alive.

Karnad’s plays are at once mythopoeic and magical. His plays in the mould of folktales and mythology talk about psychic adjustments and primitive imaginations. In *Flowers*, the energy that cascades from belief is again highlighted when the Chieftain asks the Priest, “I did not know God had long hair” and the Priest replies, “If we believe that God has long hair. He will have long hair” (257), and the long hair came cascading from the Linga. This magical transformation of beliefs in reality in Karnad’s plays is the zone of metamorphosis, where old changes into new, and the dying procreate, and the ending results in the new beginnings.

The time spent in the womb of the temple with Mahout is suggestive of re-energising of her barren womb as the dough cock came alive. All her motherly instincts come out, and she starts to play with it. She appears mad to King.

Maureen suggests that the society usually categorises the descent of a woman in the realm of the Void as depression which must be medicated and get rid of as quickly as possible, whereas this journey is a sacred one. If one decides to honour this descend as “sacred and as a necessary aspect of the quest to fully know ourselves, fewer women would lose their way in depression, abusive relationships. They could experience their feelings without shame, reveal their pain without apathy” (Murdock 90). To get rid of her psychotic state King picks up the dough and smashes it.

*The Queen looks up at him in sudden hatred, picks up the sword and lunges at him to stab him. She freezes. She stares at the sword in her hand, horrified.*

*A cock crows outside. That takes the King by surprise. He turns to the door.*

*Suddenly, she presses the point of the blade on her womb and impales herself on the sword. Collapses into his arms.* (emphasis in original) (Karnad 1:240)

Not honouring the realm of Void has its consequences. Queen’s healing was broken in between the process. Her bruised womb is the storehouse of the pain of her psyche. The society shattered her healing process of turning the wounds of being
called barren into an experience of thorough understanding. The society stopped her healing process of learning to release the locked pain in the body. She couldn’t get back the hold of her body and couldn’t reclaim it. It is in disgust that she stabs her womb. Pratt says:

The problem, as we have seen, is that “insanity,” whether literary or clinical, is often a perfect mirror of the feminine persona’s place within society, an image of the enclosure and of its victims, and thus the transformed hero who has survived this layer of her unconscious is unlikely to be able to reintegrate herself fully into “normal” society. (142-3)

The stabbing of her womb has a dual meaning. One suggests of stabbing the society’s selfish rules, where a woman is not an intelligent creature but merely an object for reproduction.

When heroes in the novel of marriage internalize dictates from the patriarchy, rebellion is more difficult, when, in addition, the hero has a heightened consciousness, the ironic boon of intelligence, her discomfort becomes even more excruciating. For the adult hero, as for the adolescent one, critical intelligence is a curse. (50)

And on the other, it suggests of Pralaya. In stabbing her womb, she stabs all life and creates a tomb, a Void. She becomes an archetype of Dhumavati and dissolves all life by transforming her womb into a tomb, where no life will be created further. The bloody climax is therefore not merely a spectacular melodrama but an essential element in the archetypal pattern of sacrifice-atonement-catharsis. Not only must the King die who symbolises the rigid rules of society, but the Queen herself must suffer death before the Kingdom can be purged of her sins. But Karnad doesn’t end the play just here. In his typical style, Karnad leaves the audiences with the image that reflects life in its essentiality.

*(The King holds her, uncomprehending, listening to the cock’s crowing. It’s dawn.*

*The Queen is lit by a beam. She stands up and they both sing.)*

*Both : In the World once divided into two orbs-
One lit by the sun,
the other, hid in the shade,*
the orb in the shade
opens itself to the light
And warmth of the sun.
Night gives in to day.
Death yields to life.
Like monsoon piled on monsoons
So life follows life.
And through the days,
Through endless rainy nights
Through life after life
We hear the cock crow. (Karnad 1:241-2)

The night is a metaphor for the profound Void into which the souls enter for rest and contemplation, and the dawn is a metaphor for a new beginning. The light is symbolic of hope, intellectual renewal and illumination and Queen lit by a beam of light suggests her attainment of wisdom. Both Queen and King stand up and sing the song of eternal wisdom where light and darkness are both the part of life. Their song presents life as a circular trajectory with all its opposites.

Nittilai in the play *The Fire and the Rain* is the benevolent form of Aditi. Amid all the chaos caused by the greed for power, Nittilai provides the much-needed nourishment. Being betrayed by Paravasu, he is left alone to die. He dreams of a nightmare and confides it in Nittilai.

It’s the nightmare. I told you about. I am dying of thirst. But there’s no water. Then I peep into a huge well. There’s water there, but it has my reflection in it. I stare at it. And the reflection snarls: ‘Why are you staring, wretch. Go away,’ It says: ‘You think so, do you.’ And the reflection leaps out of the water. Gorges my eyes out. Chews up my face in its jaws. I scream, but I have no face...it keeps on returning, that nightmare, so that now I’m not all sure it’s me standing here and not my reflection, all ready to attack. (Karnad 2: 163)

Channa says that dreams are the metaphor of human psyche and symbolises one’s hidden emotions (89). Water is an archetype for rebirth and resurrection. Arvasu’s thirst for redemption after being ditched by his brother finds a voice in his
nightmares. The reflection is none other than his brother. Nittilai as an archetype of Aditi in his life who makes Arvasu understand the true meaning of life and encourages him to be strong to face his demons. As she tells him “How long are you going to turn your face away from it then? Face it. Not in hate, Arvasu. In the play. Show him how good you are. I’m sure the play will wash off the fear-the-anger-” (Karnad 2:164). As an Aditi archetype, Nittilai provides an answer to the problems of Arvasu. She asks him to face his fears head on because fear makes the intellect feel debased. “From fear is born the ego (ahamkara). The ego contaminates the mind to comfort the intellect. It focuses on events and memories and desires that validate its existence and make it feel immortal and powerful. It shuns all that it makes it feel worthless and mortal” (Jaya 234).

She asks Arvasu to play the role of Vritra.

Nittilai: I’m glad you’re not playing Indra. I don’t like that god of yours.

Arvasu: Why?

Nittilai: He is immortal. When someone doesn’t die, can’t die, what can he know about anything? He can’t change himself. He can’t- can’t Create anything. I like Vritra because even when he’s triumphant he chooses death. I always wonder-If flowers didn’t know they were to fade and die, would they ever blossom? (164)

As an archetype of Aditi, Nittilai has the wisdom that death is the necessary part of the cycle of life. She understands the importance of cycles of change and accepts the dark sides of one’s instincts. In liking Vritra over Indra, she understands that there is meaning in suffering as it is the way to light and she wants to teach Arvasu the same. Karnad’s play runs parallel with the theme of Mahabharata. Arjuna in the battlefield was in dilemma of killing his brothers and was saved by the teachings of Krishna. In the same way, when Arvasu was in a dilemma to face and confront Paravasu, he was saved by Nittilai. In some oral stories, Krishna and Kali are related, and Krishna is said to be the incarnation of Kali, who has incarnated itself on earth to destroy egos and to make one understand the purpose of life.

Arvasu played the role of Vritra and wore the Mask. The Mask overtook him and gave vent to all the humiliation, pain, and grief inflicted on him by Paravasu. In Jungian psychology, the persona is an archetype that represents mask. It is a
component of the psyche that human beings wear in public. ‘Persona’, when translated from Latin to English means ‘Mask’. It is what lies in between one’s ego and the outer world. It is what one present oneself as in front of society and masks the primary side. It is another identity, which is artificial and made up. One has different masks for every occasion. But the literal mask brought the dark elements of Arvasu’s unconscious to the surface.

It brought his unconscious which he was suppressing to the forefront. It brought out his pain, humiliation, and conflict. He surrenders to it.

Actor-Manager: This is the mask of Vritra the demon. Now surrender to the mask. Surrender and pour life into it. But remember, once you bring a mask to life you have to keep a tight control over it, otherwise it’ll try to take over. It’ll begin to dictate terms to you and you must never let that happen. Prostrate yourself before it. Pray to it. Enter it. Then control it. (165)

The unconscious of Arvasu find its way out in the mask of Vritra. The characters in the Play within the play runs parallel to the characters of the play *The Fire and the Rain*. Indra with his will to supremacy is identical to the power-obsessed Paravasu and Yavakri, and Vrirta as an outcast is parallel to the innocent Arvasu. Indra’s plan in the Play within the play is to kill Vishwarupa through fair or foul. Killing Vishwarupa is next to impossible because he is guarded by Brahma’s third son, Vritra; a demon. It is now Vritra’s duty to protect Vishwarupa from Indra. Indra’s plan is to invite Vishwarupa to a fire sacrifice to be held in honour of Brahma. The Occasion provides him with the way to isolate Vishwarupa as Vritra being a demon; he can’t enter into the sanctum of fire sacrifice. Indra says, “His mother was a demoness and demon blood flows in his veins. A demon may not be permitted near the altar lest he is tempted to desecrate it. The rules are more ancient than us. We can’t temper with them” (168).

In the words of Indra, echoes the words of Paravasu who forbade Aravasu, his brother, to stand in the sacrificial precincts on the false charge of patricide and levelled him to a demon and thrashed out his innocent and obedient brother. The Mask is another identity, which imposes itself on the wearer. Karnad says that a character is not a complex psychological identity but an archetype and the mask in the play merely highlighted it. Horvath compares a dramatic Mask with emptiness in her
book *Modernism and Charisma*, where she says that though the mask itself is a state of void but it becomes a catalyst for making the man meet its unconscious.

We wonder at the masks not because they show up the animal vigour of a state of nature, but because they fiddle with the abyss inside us. These radically contrasting aspects of the sub-human and the superhuman are brought together . . . The mask is a nullity, the embodiment of the zero, but it also has a positive identity. It is pure nothingness, a fake, which is unproductive, impotent, unable to complete anything and to be real or true; and yet, at the same time, it is capable of miming to gain position . . . In one moment, it is just an obscure, marginal figure, ignored or enslaved by everybody, not taken seriously, an object of laughter and the butt of bad jokes; but in an instant, without any precedent or warning, with a quick and sudden leap it is up to gain possession, hunting down the others, forcing them to copulate with its void. (87)

The Mask of Vritra overpowers Arvasu. It unleashed his piled up emotions of hurt and betrayal. It highlighted the vicissitudes of his life, which assigned him the two roles, that of a wronged brother and Vritra. The Mask turns the innocent, untutored and meek Arvasu into a man with volcanic energies. The whole play becomes chaotic, and the area catches fire. The actions of Play within the play aroused the emotions of fear and pity and catharsis in Paravasu. Paravasu walks into the blazing fire out of guilt and in the fire he sacrifices his ego.

Nittilai as a benevolent form of Aditi rushes into the blazing fire to free Arvasu from the chains of Mask, without caring for her life. She saves Arvasu, and the whole community gathered, by snatching the Mask away from Arvasu’s face. Both Nittalai and Arvasu decide to go away. But the Fire Sacrifice demands Sacrifice and it requires the sacrifice of an innocent. Nittilai’s husband and brother slash her throat. “*(She lies there, her eyes open, bleeding, dying like a sacrificial animal. The commotion dies away as Arvasu stares numbly at Nittilai.)*”(172). The archetype of Sacrifice looms large in the plays of Karnad. Nittilai as an archetype of martyr did everything she thought to be right. She was enlightened, selfless, and had the strength to endure the opposition of society but in the end, she met death at the hands of laws of patriarchy. Pratt says:
Men’s rebirth journeys so frequently provide them with images and symbols that have analogous in known mythological and religious material, even androgyny (the incorporation of their “feminine” components) may serve as a boon to the societies to which they return. Women’s rebirth journey, in contrast, create transformed, androgynous, and powerful human personalities out of socially devalued beings and are therefore more likely to involve denouncements punishing the quester for succeeding in her perilous revolutionary journey. (142)

She enlightened Arvasu even in her death. When Indra asks Arvasu for a boon, he asks for the resurrection of Nittilai. But Brahma Raksha tells him to release him from the Void, from the eternal cycle of life and death as Nittilai would have wanted the same. But Arvasu doesn’t relent.

Brahma Rakshasa: You can, You can. Don’t abandon me.

Indra: There’s another consideration, Arvasu. Not even the gods can guarantee a soul the ultimate release. That is a law beyond us. I may grant his release from birth and death because you ask for it. But there is every chance it may not work. In that case, his situation will remain unchanged and you’ll lose Nittilai.

Arvasu: You heard that, Brahma Rakshasa. So forgive me—

(The souls draw closer to Arvasu, their eyes pleading with him.)

Brahma Rakshasa: I don’t forgive. I can’t. But you are a human being.

You are capable of mercy. You can understand pain and suffering as the gods can’t—

Arvasu: I don’t want to listen to you. Go away! Go away!

Brahma Rakshasa: And when Nittilai comes back what will you tell her? Will you tell her that because of her a soul writhes in pain—

Arvasu: Shut up! She is not at fault—

Brahma Rakshasa: Nittilai came to help you because she cared for you. She would have cared for me. Wept at the thought of my endless life in death. If you bring her back, you’ll have destroyed what made her such a beautiful person— (Karnad 2:175)
The dialogue between Brahma Rakshas and Arvasu is the dialogue between one’s desire and wisdom. Whereas ego is made up of selfish desires, wisdom is about everyone’s welfare. Brahma Rakshasa tells Arvasu that he is blessed with intellect and has the choice to make the decision. He tells Arvasu to make a decision which doesn’t abuse the memories of Nittilai. As a tribute to Nittilai and her kindness, Arvasu asks for the release of Brahma Rakshasa. The real beauty of love lies not in possessing but in giving. Aravasu’s selfless act purged the earth of sins and it starts raining after a long drought: “The smell of wet earth. Of fresh rains. It’s raining. Somewhere. Nearby. The air is blooming with the fragrance of earth. It’s raining-Rain! The Rain! (176). The realm of Aditi takes away desires that are selfish and grants a person with the maturity to think for a bigger cause. Arvasu experienced Void in the death of Nittilai, but Brahma Raksha reminded him of the goodness in Nittilai and made him honour that Void, thus, creating the framework for a new beginning. “Often Aditi is experienced as a new creative impulse just at the moment when the individual is exhausted and preoccupied with outer life. Jungian psychoanalyst Von Franz describes this as Spiritus Creator in the unconscious that manifests as a creative impulse and stirs up new possibilities” (Bedi 156).

In her death, Nittilai illuminated Arvasu’s mind with spiritual fire known as Tap. It burnt the elements of jealousy, betrayal, and greed for power and showered him with light and warmth and wisdom. Monier Williams in his Sanskrit-English describes Tap as the energy that comes out when one gives away the selfish desires and meditates. The aim of this meditation is to unknot the mind and make it aware of the whole truth. Nittilai’s death as an archetype of Aditi in Arvasu’s life granted him wisdom and took away the desire for vengeance. It filled him with peace, resulting in his Individuation. He realised that forgiveness brings the greater joy. “For when a man or woman submits to the laws or principles of his own being and gives up the personal orientation of the ego he gradually defines the limits of his own nature and the individuality crystallizes within him” (Harding 245). Thus, the fire and the rain came full circle in Arvasu’s life because of Nittilai.

In the sub-plot of the play Naga-Mandala, there is a MAN who has been cursed to die. He informs the audience directly:

MAN: I may be dead within the next few hours.

(Long Pause.)
I am not talking of ‘acting’ dead. Actually dead. I might die right in front of your eyes.

(Pause.)

A mendicant told me: ‘You must keep awake at least one whole night this month. If you can do that, you’ll live. If not, you will die on the last night of the month.’ I laughed out loud when I heard him. I thought nothing would be easier than spending a night awake.

(Pause.)

I was wrong. Perhaps death makes one sleepy. Every night this month I have been dozing off before even being aware of it. I am convinced I am seeing something with these eyes of mine, only to wake up and find I was dreaming. Tonight is my last chance.

... I asked the mendicant what I had done to deserve this fate. And he said: ‘You have written plays. You have staged them. You have caused so many good people, who came trusting you, to fall asleep twisted in miserable chairs, that abused mass of sleep has turned against you and become the Curse of Death.’

... I swear by this absent God, if I survive this night I shall have nothing more to do with themes, plots or stories. I abjure all story-telling, all play-acting. (248)

The Man is cursed to die and he has come to the inner sanctum of the ruined temple to spend his night. The symbols are of importance here. The inner sanctum of a temple is called the ‘Garbhagriha.’ ‘Garbhagriha’ is a Sanskrit word which means ‘Womb-Chamber’ when translated into English. The womb represents a cocoon, a cave and therefore is an archetype of Void. It is a symbol of initiation and a force that nurtures. Anat Geva and Anuradha Mukherji in their article *A Study of Light/Darkness in Sacred Settings: Digital Simulations* explain the Garbhagriha as:

The black square in the center, the garbhagriha (the womb chamber), is the location of the central shrine, the place for the main deity, the seat of Brahman (one of the chief Indian Gods, known as the creator of all living beings) [27], [31]. Other parts of the temple are organized
around this chamber. Other parts of the temple are organized around this chamber. The sequences of porches and halls, normally aligned on an east-west axis, lead in a succession of spaces towards the object of worship [25]. The black square (chamber) in the center of the temples follows the Hindu faith. It is believed that when a worshipper is in the presence of the divine, there should be nothing to distract his/her senses, including vision. God shall reveal himself to his devotee gradually [26]. Therefore, the innermost sanctum of the temple is shrouded in total darkness and the progression into the temple is a ritual movement where the devotee goes through the dynamic experience of the darkening spaces before reaching the darkest sacred chamber [25],[31]. This journey is both spiritual and physiological. The treatment of light ensures that by the time the pilgrim reaches the innermost chamber (garbhagriha) his/her eyes slowly become accustomed to the darkness and his/her state of mind befitting worship and is no longer plagued by worldly thoughts. During this procession, one passes through many doorways, colonnaded halls and corridors, which are decorated with sacred carvings. These sacred symbols have a profound impact on the mind of the devotee; they simulate the mystery that envelops the universe and the divine spirit that illuminates the universe [26]. Reaching the holy sanctum, the worshipper enters a place for individual self realization and personal relation with the divine. (511)

It is in the inner sanctum of the temple that the MAN meets the Flames and The Story who tell the Man the story of Rani. Karnad gives The Flames and The Story the female gender. Santosh Gupta in Naga-Mandala: Story of Marriage and love states:

The identification of the flames with young, sprightly and vocal women, stories that they tell each other is a brilliant device used by Karnad for creating a particular female context and content in the ‘man-oriented’ folktale. He brings within the play the strong association between oral narrative, tradition and woman’s sub-culture existing within the patriarchal societies. (250-51)
Karnad gives generic names to his characters. His characters do not tell the stories of a particular person but the whole human kind. It is in the Story that MAN found the rescue from his curse. She becomes the deity, the source of his Individuation, and the force that nurtured the story-teller in him before he emerged into the world again. But she has a condition, “You can’t just listen to the story and leave it at that. You must tell it again to someone else” (Karnad 1:252). The wisdom when spread becomes useful.

In the realm of Aditi, one’s feelings are elevated and become more enhanced when one listens to them. Rani in the play Naga-Mandala had to undertake the Snake-ordeal in order to prove her chastity. But with the divine interference of Kurudavva, she began to trust her intuition and was elevated to the position of a goddess. The truth is complex. The object of her test is the object she testified against. In her recognition of a Divine Being, she comes closer to the real meaning of her name.

People fall at her feet: “(The crowd surges forward to prostrate itself before her. Appanna stands, uncomprehending. The Elders shout, ‘Palanquin! Music!’ They lift her into the palanquin. Then, as an afterthought, Appana is seated next to her. The couple is taken in procession to their house)” (emphasis in original) (293).

The Elders to whom Appanna went for judgement decided that his wife is an incarnation of Goddess. He is not only advised but ordered to serve her well. “(All disperse, except Rani and Appanna. Appanna opens the lock on the door, throws it away. He goes in and sits, mortified, baffled. She comes and stands next to him. Long pause. Suddenly he falls at her feet.) Appanna: Forgive me. I am a sinner. I was blind” (293). Appanna used to avoid Rani, cage and slap her and even insulted her in the front of the whole village but was confused and felt devoid of identity after the Snake Ordeal. The whole thing had been a cycle of Eros and Thanatos for him. Appana’s unconscious was stirred by Rani and it entered into the realm of Eros but when his conscious never seem to embrace Rani’s presence, it had to face the brunt of Thanatos. But in the end, Rani got everything she wanted.

Karnad is never convinced with happy endings. As to him, the drama is a reflection of life, so he makes the endings similar to the ambiguity of life. Therefore, he provides two endings to the story of Rani and leaves it on the audience to accept whichever it finds most real. In the first ending, the Man voices the dilemma Appana must be in. Appana tries to understand:
What I am 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 what it likes. Let the miracle declare her a goddess. But I know! What sense am I to make of my life if that’s worth nothing? (294)

Hurt, humiliated and embarrassed, Appanna feels miserable. The ‘I’ represents ego. Though he has accepted her in the eyes of society but there hasn’t been a harmony within his own conscious. The miracle hasn’t shut his ego, though his mouth is shut by the elevated position of Rani. Franz describes this behaviour of ego as:

The actual process of individuation—the conscious coming-to-terms with one’s inner center (psychic nucleus) or Self—generally begins with a wounding of the personality and the suffering that accompanies it. This initial shock amounts to a sort of “call,” although it is not often recognized as such. On the contrary, the ego feels hampered in its will or its desire and usually projects the obstruction onto something external. That is, the ego accuses God or the economic situation or the boss or the marriage partner of being responsible for whatever is obstructing it. (169)

It is not Appana who is confused, but Rani is in the state of bafflement as well. The Story rightly puts her case as:

No two men make love alike. And that night of the Village court, when her true husband climbed into bed with her, how could she fail to realize it was someone new? Even if she hadn’t known it earlier? When did the split take place? Every night this conundrum must have spread its hood out at her. Don’t you think she must have cried out in anguish to know the answer? (Karnad 1:294)

It is in the nature of woman that she can never forget her first love and especially if it had opened the pleasurable channels of her body which had been kept in safety by her for long. Freud explains this fact in his *The Taboo of Virginity*:

Whoever is the first to satisfy a virgin’s desire for love, long and laboriously held in check, and who in doing so overcomes the resistances which have been built up in her through the influences in
her milieu and education, that is the man she will take into lasting relationship, the possibility of which will never again be open to any other man. This experience creates a state of bondage in the woman which guarantees that possession of her shall continue undisturbed and makes her able to resist new impressions and enticements from outside. (Richard 265)

The realm of Aditi thus makes one mature to accept certain truths of life. There are certain situations in life where one is not happy or satisfied but one has to follow the code of Dharma, as it is the right thing to do. Naga decides to visit Rani. He enters into Rani’s bedroom and sees the contentment on her face, with a husband and a child by her side. Naga looks at the group and recoils himself in sudden anguish, he can’t bear to see it. The feelings and anxiety are described in an artistic way:

Rani! My queen! The fragrance of my nights! The blossom of my dreams! In another man’s arms? In another man’s bed? Does she curl around him as passionately every night now? And dig her nails into his back? Bite his lips? And here I am- a sloughed off the skin on the tip of a thorn. An empty sac of snake-skin. No, I can’t bear this. Someone must die. Someone has to die. Why shouldn’t I kill her? If I bury my teeth into her breast now, she will be mine. Mine forever!

(Moves to her swiftly. But Stops.)

No. I can’t. My love has stitched my lips. Pulled out my fangs. Torn out my sac of poison. Withdraw your veils of light, Flames. Let my shame float away in the darkness. Don’t mock gecko. Yes, this King Cobra is now no better than a grass snake. Yes, that is it. A grass snake. A common reptile. That’s why I am and I had forgotten that. I thought I could become human. Turn into my own creation. No! Her thighs, her bosom, her lips are for one who is forever a man. I shed my own skin every season. How could I even hope to retain the human form? For me- yes, only her long locks. Dark, jet black snake princesses.

(Smells them.)
They are like me. Reptilian. Cold. Long. They are right for me. I shall summon my magical powers for the last time—to become the size of her tresses. To become so thin, so small, that I can hide in them, play with them, play with them, swim away in their dark flow.

(Presses her hair to his body.)

Become their size now! Enter her tresses! Make love to them. They have no sensation. They will not disturb her dreams. But for you, that will suffice.

(A beam of light on him. The rest is plunged into darkness. Long dark hair appears to descend and cover him. He covers himself with the hair and dances.

Finally, Naga ties a tress into a noose and places it around his neck.)

(296)

He thinks that somebody has to die, and he thinks of killing her, but in the end, it enters her tresses and strangulates itself. The realm of Aditi is the realm of transformation. It involves the crossing of perilous boundaries, but the process is difficult and may at times involve death or annihilation. The realm of Aditi granted wisdom to Naga that the love is not hurtful, even though he had to sacrifice himself. True love never possesses rather it sacrifices itself for the betterment of the lover. That is why it is seen next to God. Naga dies in its death elevates Rani to the position of the goddess. The Flames get sad about the unhappy ending of the story and ask the MAN for another happy ending.

MAN: But—that’s how the story is. That’s how it ends. I’m not to blame.

FLAMES: Stop making excuses! You are a playwright, aren’t you? The story may be over. But you are still here and still alive!...Listen, we don’t have much time left...Get on with it, for goodness’ sake, etc.

MAN: All right! All right! Let me try. (299)

Karnad provides another ending to the play. The best quality of folklores is that they have a life of their own and are highly flexible. As A.K.Ramanujan points out, “Folktales are not written text, though ephemeral they have a long life— they have
lived long because they are constantly being told and with each telling they change. The more mouths, the more telling” (Tripathi 21). In the second ending, Naga lives in the tresses of Rani, away from the knowledge of Appanna, symbolising a constant threat to the husband and patriarchy. In both the endings, Naga and Appanna fail to realise the Self. The Self is the amalgamation of both the conscious and unconscious elements. But their respective egos never extended behind the conscious mind. The whole process of their inner journey stimulated by Rani failed as their egos never left the narrow bounds of the persona and the social mask. The MAN in the ending of the play bows to the audience and goes out. He had completed the process of his Individuation. Karnad has brilliantly blended the two stories. M.K.Naik writes:

The two folk-tales are deftly blended in presenting the two allied themes of nature of art and the relationship between art and imagination on the one hand and mundane reality on the other. The tale of the playwright seems to suggest that art demands everything from the artist and that he’ll die if he cannot fulfil his mission. The Rani-Appnana-Cobra tale is evidently an allegory of the nexus between the world of art and the world of mundane reality. (10)