CHAOS – A STATE OF FLUX

The gunas are always in a constant state of flux and change. The cycle of gunas is ever moving. The transition phase between gunas is important because it creates an awareness which is beyond consciousness. This period makes one see the materials of personal unconsciousness. If one is not alert and flexible, the transition can cause Chaos. Antonio Morandi and Antonella Della Fave in *The Emergence of Health in Complex Adaptive Systems* say:

The interaction of Prakriti and Purusha – the eternal and unmanifest consciousness principle - gives rise to the manifestation of the cosmos that fulfils the purpose of Purusha to fully enjoy experiences and to be released and liberated from them. This introduces a conscious orientation into the intrinsic but nondirectional tension of Prakriti, breaking the balance between opposite Gunas and leading to systems characterized by progressively increasing levels of the organization, differentiation, and complexity.

In this process of transformation, the three Guna interact in a variety of different patterns and configurations, thus evolving from the indefinite and qualitatively indeterminate condition of Prakriti to progressively more definite and qualitatively determinate states... A particular Guna can become predominantly manifest in a specific phenomenon, while the others become latent... A ceaseless process of change indeed characterizes the individual’s self-perception, based on moment-by-moment fluctuation of the different Maha-Guna and of their combination across a variety of patterns, depending on internal as well as environmental pressures. (172-173)

The urge to prioritise one Guna over other causes chaos. Chaos occurs in the lives of these heroines when their Eros is left unsatisfied. In the plays of Girish Karnad, the Chaos takes place when his heroines prioritise Eros over social responsibilities.

Indian philosophy sees the world as a permanent movement where Chaos is the confusion that is eternal to life. It is what Prakriti brings with itself. As long as there are desires, there is bound to be chaos as well. In Indian thought the world is a
place of interactions where desires are always moving, fighting, and bumping into each other, creating a state of perpetual confrontation. Chaos in Indian philosophy is a divide, a dichotomy to choose between different desires. Karnad’s heroine’s Chaos is both social and personal. It is personal because they couldn’t decide between their desires and their responsibilities. The social chaos occurred because their desires are a threat to the social order. Chaos, therefore, marks the period of flux, change, and transition for these heroines.

A study in the period of change is done by Van Gennep, in his work *The Rites of Passage*. These *Rites* are the rituals that take place when one transits from one state to other. He termed the transition period as ‘liminal phase.” ‘Liminal’ in Latin means ‘threshold.’ According to Van Gennep, certain rites accompany every change that takes place in society, place, position or age.

Van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or ‘transition’ are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifies “threshold” in Latin) and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a “state”), or from both. During the intervening “liminal” period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the “passager”) are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. (Victor 359)

Victor Turner was mainly influenced by the liminal phase and studied the effect of threshold and transition period further while studying the tribes of Ndembu and raised it from its limited relation to the ‘rites’ and argued that liminality is important in the sense that it shaped personalities. It is a ritual in which one ‘passes’ from one realm or one experience of life to another. He further discussed that people who go through the threshold phase are ambiguous as they are in the period of transition. He even named them as ‘threshold people.’ According to him, the people of threshold phase are disillusioned because it dissolves their previous identities and open possibilities for new ones. Though Turner limited his study of liminality to the small tribes of Zambia, Agnes Horvath further worked on it liminality in his work
Modernism and Charisma and applied it to the historical events to get a better understanding of liminality in sociological situations. For Agnes Horvath, Liminality is a period that marks chaos, disorder, anguish, uncertainty and crisis. He says:

Liminality does not require a major collective crisis like a war, a revolution, a general economic depression or a particularly devastating natural catastrophe; quite often the exact opposite happens, as the greatest prosperity of Athens brought upon them the Sophist; similarly, the peak of Renaissance resulted in the proliferation of hermetic Gnostics who escaped from the crumbling Byzantium world. To provoke a liminal crisis, methodological doubting is sufficient in itself, even as a relatively minuscule aspect of the ruling culture and its values. It gradually undermines normal, everyday social order, gathering up momentum in a spiralling manner, like a storm, into the real threat of catastrophe or revolution. Under such situations, the ordinary becomes questioned and the limits set to contagious imitative processes are broken down. (96)

The liminality in the lives of Karnad’s heroines evokes the image of ‘threshold,’ where one step further from the threshold changes the reality of the past and creates a new reality. It marks the place where the old egos break down and mark their passage into the new vision. Like Peter Homans pointed out in Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of Psychology, that Chaos builds itself gradually in the lives of people when they start questioning the values of submission taught to them. Jung points out that it is in the state of liminality where the archetype of persona dissolves (persona is an image which a person keeps up to be acceptable in the society), and the process of Individuation begins. It is the place where one starts questioning the social order and becomes aware of one’s desires. But this liminality, threshold or Lakshmana Rekha is itself a place of disillusionment, ambiguity and crisis as the heroines can’t decide between the demands of ruling social values and the matters of the heart. Archetypal Feminism marks Chaos as a threshold of confusion, disillusionment, alienation, and despair. This threshold is the place where heroines identify their unconscious anima and separate themselves from the society’s idealism. Maureen suggests that this threshold is particularly tough and is characterized by
anxiety and loneliness because it is from this place that the journey of heroine’s struggle begins. The struggles are both philosophical and psychological.

Chaos, therefore, in the lives of Karnad’s heroines represents the threshold period between desire and duty. *Lakshmana Rekha* is the Indian archetype of the threshold and Chaos that occurs because of the divides between nature and culture; between *Prakriti* and *Sanskriti*. It is a metaphor for the ‘in between’ stage and dilemma for the woman. *Lakshman Rekha* comes from the ancient Indian text *Ramayana*. Jasbir Jain in *Purdah, Patriarchy, and the Tropical Sun* traces the evolution of *Lakshmana Rekha*:

Lakshmana is supposed to have drawn the demarcation line, the *Lakshmana-rekha*, around his sister-in-law Sita, when she compelled him to go to his brother’s rescue. The popular legend goes that because Sita crossed the boundary, stepping outside the line, she was abducted by Ravana, the demon king who lusted after her. The abduction generated the rest of the story: war, Ravana’s defeat, Sita’s return, and her agnipariksha. . .woman’s life, whether she likes it or not, every now and then comes up against Lakshmana-rekha and agnipariksha. In Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, Lakshmana leaves Sita to the care of the forest deities. In Kamban’s *Ramayana*, she is left to her dharma, her sense of inner control, and to the lordship of Jatayu, the eagle. In *Ramcharitamanas*, Sita is again given to the care of the forest deities and the four directions of the sky, that is, the world of nature. ...The *Ramayana* story, in its multiple readings, reinterpretations, and retellings, defines first the limits of legitimate sexuality and violation of those limits. The controlling figure remains male: definitions and purificatory rites are male prescriptions. Passed on through oral tradition, these two episodes- the mythical Lakshmana-rekha and agnipariksha-define Indian womanhood...and form a part of the socialization process, working at both the conscious and unconscious levels. (236)

Radheyshyam’s *Ramayan* states that Sita crossed the *Lakshmana Rekha* absentmindedly because she was the daughter and daughter-in-law of emperors and she was conditioned to welcome the guest in keeping with the tradition of Indian
“Athithi Devo Bhava.” Guest is considered supreme. He is given the position of God in Indian Puranas. According to his Ramayana, Sita had to cross the boundaries because according to Ravana, the act of giving alms demands free will.

In the Indian context, Lakshmana-Rekha has come to represent a limit, a convention, which keeps the desires in check, and doesn’t let one transgress the rules made by society. Within the Lakshmana Rekha is the Dharma or the moral code, the residence of consciousness and outside it is the residence of wilderness, the realm of unconscious. It is the threshold between repressed instincts and social rules. A place where one rejects certain things and accepts another, a place of separation and incorporation. It symbolises a period of change.

Man sees a woman as Prakriti personified. Like Prakriti, she is a nurturer, with life-bestowing energy and a throbbing biology. Her body is in sync with nature’s procreative law. Every month her body sheds blood and is reminiscent of her potential to produce. Her womb is a place where life takes place, and her breasts are the nurturer. She accepts her biology claimed by nature, and Man sees himself as Purusha, the mind. For the mind, it is not acceptable to be subservient to the limitations offered by biology. To fight it, the mind creates rules, society, and culture via which it tries to cage the body and make it work according to its way. But biology doesn’t adhere to the rules of society:

FEMALE CHORUS (sings): Why should love stick to the sap of a single body? When the stem is drunk with the thick yearning of the many-petalled, many-flowered lantana, why should it be tied down to the relation of a single flower?

BHAGAVATA (sings): They forgot themselves and took off their bodies. And she took the laughing heads and held them high so the poring blood bathed her, colored her red. Then she danced around and sang.

FEMALE CHORUS (sings): A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye. A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame. The blood pours into the earth and song branches out in the sky. (Karnad 1:116-117)
Patriarchy forbids this passion or Eros in a woman. It is almost criminal in a society where the position of man and woman is radically different. The man considers himself to be the subject and female to be the object. It is from her that patriarchy draws resources. As she is the source of all the life, patriarchy tries to control her procreative powers. Her sexuality is fatal for the society so it tries to fence her and decides on what should and shouldn’t germinate in her. Kavita in her research article on *Mahabharata through the Eyes of women* observes:

Pandu talks of a time in the Mahabharata when women were not immured within their houses nor were they dependent on their husbands and relatives. They were free to go wherever and to whomever they wanted and were still considered virtuous because that was the accepted customary usage. Swetaketu, son of the ascetic Uddalaka, however, curtailed their freedom. One day a Brahmin came and invited Swetaketu’s mother to come with him in the presence of Uddalaka, his father. She readily agreed but Swetaketu did not like it and got angry in spite of his father telling him that there was nothing wrong with it, as that was a sanctioned practice. Swetaketu laid down rules of conduct for women by whom they obliged to adhere to one man and it became sinful for them to deviate from this. However, Swetaketu also made it imperative upon man to treat chaste and loving wife well otherwise they would be guilty of sin. Further, he prohibited women from raising offspring from another man at the behest of their husbands. Thus morality got circumscribed. (Web)

Thus, the female body has always been inherited as a source of pleasure as well as a threat. Maureen in *The Heroine’s Journey* says, “Women access their spirituality through movement and body awareness, so a denial of the body inhibits the heroine’s spiritual development”(24). So when a woman’s bodily instincts are repressed because of sociological pressures, the outcome is always a conflict in the psyche; a state of Chaos.

“A triangular, between two men and one women or one man and two women, reappears so consistently in Karnad’s myth and folk-based plays as to constitute a basic plot device as well as a central thematic” (Dharwadker xvii). Karnad’s plays have a tendency of doubling and splitting of husbands and suitors, which split the love
of heroine into two figures, a “dark” and a “light” one. The ‘dark’ lover is the shadow aspect of these heroines. This dark part of her anima is unacceptable by the society. The ‘light’ loving society gets uncomfortable with the darkness as it is the place where all those elements reside that can cause mayhem. Karnad’s understanding of human psychology is timeless as his plays project this polarization of society subtly in the sense that though his heroines marry a social male but find pleasure in his antithesis. Bedi in his work Awaken the Slumbering Goddess says:

Whenever the individual or the collective psyche is at one extreme of values, the latent code activates the opposite energy to balance it. This process is what Carl Jung conceptualized as the phenomenon called enantiodromia. Enantiodromia means ‘running counter to’ and designates the play of opposites in the course of events, the view that everything that exists turns in the course of time into its opposite. From the living comes death, and from the old, youth; from waking, sleep, and from sleep, waking. The stream of generation and decay never stands still. (5)

Karnad creates opposites and highlights the ways by which the society corners a woman into making a choice. The choice is either to tear free or to stay and withstand its rigor even if it makes her squeeze into something smaller than herself. This tension to choose between the marriage and a lover unacceptable in society is the reason for the chaos in the lives of these heroines.

This Chaos can be seen in Padmini in the play Hayavadana. She had been attracted to the virility of Kapila against the fragility of Devadatta. The disturbed Devadatta cut off his head and gifts it to Goddess Kali. This extreme action of Devadatta is the result of the accumulated aggression and guilt about his inability to satiate Padmini. His excessive self-criticism turns into a death-wish. On finding Devadatta dead, Kapila cuts off his own head out of the guilt. He laments, “I did wrong. But you know I don’t have the intelligence to know what else I should have done. I couldn’t think- and so pushed me away? No, Devadatta, my brother, my guru, my friend...” (138).

Unconscious guilt is too powerful to recover of all the obstacles in the human psyche. Kapila held himself responsible for the death of Devadatta and out of guilt cuts off his head as well. Padmini is horrified at their action and laments in front of
the Goddess. Padmini regrets in grief as she can’t go back home, or else people will hold her responsible for the death of two. The world of seducer is not so much the world of dread as the society itself. Annis Pratt says, “Visions of hell are not needed here, nor even is very much the gothic: the iron hand of the patriarchy constitutes the evil force against which the women heroes struggle in vain” (Pratt 77). She further pleads that, if Goddess Kali had saved either of them, she would have been spared of this terror and agony.

PADMINI: "No! Kapila's gone, Devadatta's gone. Let me go with them. side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame. The blood pours into the earth and song branches out in the sky. (Karnad 1:116-117)

Goddess Kali pleased with her honesty stops her and grants her the boon to make them come back to life by joining their heads. In utter confusion or it wouldn’t be wrong if one calls it a secret caprice, she transposes their heads, adjoins the fabulous mind with the fabulous body and creates the personality she desired. John Taylor in Eros Ascending says:

Our ordinary lives are often characterized by a painful sense of separation from one another and by a strange metaphysical longing for a unity we do not know we have forgotten but still feel as an absence. But as individual points of flame burst forth from a gas ring on the stove, yet have their roots and cause the one fire of which they are each single manifestations, so we human beings are, at the root level, united in a single blaze of divine love. When we “fall in love” we are re-experiencing and re-remembering that one flame of love. It is a core awakening of our own innate but forgotten divinity. So we don’t actually “fall in love” with another person, but fall into a state of love within ourselves and through that, with the other person. (51)

The personality, thus, formed by transposing the heads is Padmini’s true anima. It was what she truly wanted all along, an intelligent mind with a virile body. George Bernard Shaw with his life-force theory rejected Charles Darwin’s theory of ‘Survival of the fittest’ and has proclaimed that life is about creative procreation. Taflinger in his article Taking advantage, Social basis of Human Behaviour: Sex argues the same point and says that the females desire the alpha-male for breeding;
they desire the man with both the physical strength and intellect so that her offspring gets the best possible genes. Padmini’s act of transposing their heads reveals the unconscious desire of her psyche, the desire of producing an offspring from a man with an intelligent head and a strong body. With the head of her husband and body of her lover, she tried to succeed the society by putting forward the Persona/mask of a compliant woman, a woman who stays within the boundaries of Lakshmana Rekha.

The goddess Kali couldn’t resist herself on remarking, “There should be a limit even to honesty. Anyway-so be it” (Karnad 1:142). Hindu thought is quantitative, unlike the Western thought which is qualitative that sees everything as either true or false. In India, God is called “Bhagwan” and the worshipper “Yajman”. Pattnaik says, “Everyone has access to a slice (Bhaga); the one who sees slices of truth is Bhagavan. Limited truth is mithya. Limitless truth is Satya. Satya is about including everything and being a whole (Purnam)” (mG 6-7). Though Padmini tried to hide her unconscious desires from her conscious self, because of the fear of its consequences but the goddess, omnipresent and all-knowing, sees all of it and can see the beginning of chaos for Padmini. In transposing the heads, her innermost nature becomes the reality of physical worlds. Devadatta Head is combined with the Body of Kapila. The friends are overjoyed to get a life once again, not knowing the seriousness of the exchange of heads. They revel in the fact that though they were two persons with individual bodies and minds earlier, now they have been united both emotionally and physically and have become friends in the real sense. They are thrilled and exclaim: “Devadatta—how fantastic! All these years we were only friends. Kapila—now we are blood-relations! Body-relations (laughing) what a gift” (Karnad 1:144).

Even the friends are overjoyed to get their lives back not knowing about the chaos waiting for them. They revel in their illusionary happiness, but it proves to be a curse as the question arises, “Whose wife is she?” (144). According to Kapila with Devadatta’s body, she belongs to him “This is the hand that accepted her at the wedding. This is the body she’s lived with all these months. And the child she’s carrying is the seed of this body” (146). Frightened at this logic, and fearing going back to Devadatta’s body, Padmini runs to Devadatta with Kapila’s body. At this Kapila gives voice to Padmini’s desire, “I know what you want, Padmini. Devadatta’s clever head and Kapila’s strong body” (148).
According to Jung, the body has its pre-established individual definiteness. The effect of Kapila’s robust body in Devadatta finds an expression in the use of his violent language, “Get away, you pig” (147). The initial excitement of transposition of heads dies down as the chaos regarding who owes Padmini begins. There are arguments, quoting of sacred texts, pushing each other, stepping in between, threats of creating scandal in the city, and the final crack in friendship: “You’ll have to kill me before you’ll really escape me” (148). Bhagavada intervenes and cites a similar situation in Betaal Pachchisi where King Vikram gave the solution. His report informs us that three unfortunate friends go to a great rishi and the rishi-remembering what King Vikram had said gives the verdict: “As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksa is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs. Therefore the man with Devadatta’s head indeed Devadatta and he is the rightful husband of Padmini” (151). From time immemorial the head has been held supreme, the home of our conscious, subconscious and superego. The head is the place where all the actions take place first, and body is the place where they are executed.

The new arrangement sends Padmini in intense euphoria; it is an ideal setting of Padmini’s inner desire that too within the Lakshmana Rekha of social norms, the wedded husband Devadatta (head), the strong Kapila (body). She got the best of both, without undergoing any change herself; she got the combination of intellectual vigour with masculine virility. The union signified her temporal happiness and her own stability of mind. She expresses her ecstasy in comments like: “My celestial-bodied Gandharva...My sun-faced Indra...” “My Devadatta comes like a bridegroom with the jewellery of a new body” (151). One sees a contrast between the Princess of Karnataka of subplot and Padmini of the main-plot. The Princess was offered the celestial being but rejected it for an earthly being. Padmini has two choices between the mortals, but her desire is something more, it is a desire for something beyond earthly, it is the desire for Celestial Eros. The new arrangement not only made Padmini happy but also benefited Devadatta. Devadatta got a perfect mind and a perfect body. He feels nothing wrong in the attraction of Padmini towards Kapila’s body; he finds it to be natural for a woman to get attracted to a fine body of a man. The rules of patriarchy change only according to its convenience. After attaining strong and a shapely body of Kapila, Devadatta feels complete, begins to gain his confidence back. He jumps into wrestling pits and fights because his new body
makes him feel ‘inspired’. Keeping a woman happy and providing her with every kind of pleasure is what drives a man the utmost. Devadatta is happy with having Padmini completely to him, with the help of this new body which she always loved silently. It was Kapila with Devadatta's body who feels dejected and becomes rootless and is left without any identity. He has neither the desired head nor the desired body, ‘Why am I Kapila?’ (152), and questions his identity. He withdraws himself and opts for a solitary life in the deep forests.

The euphoria must come to an end; the head must govern the body. Devadatta, being a Brahmin has a family tradition of reading and writing to maintain and how long can he go with this robust display of body? His body surrenders to his head. The fun of newly gained muscles and strength begins to fade, as the head finds its comfortable abode in reading and writing. The unwashed, sweaty smell of Kapila's body is soon replaced by the sandalwood oil. It causes spilt in Padmini's utopian world. Devadatta gifted Padmini two dolls. Karnad uses these dolls to interpret Padmini's psychic warfare as dolls symbolise all that lies buried in human that is mystical. Clarissa writes:

Dolls are one of the symbolic treasures of the instinctual nature...For centuries humans have felt that dolls emanate both a holiness and mana – an awesome and compelling prescience which acts upon persons, changing them spiritually...Dolls are believed to be infused with life by their makers...the doll is the symbolic homunculi, little life. It is the symbol of what lies buried in human that is numinous. It is a small and glowing facsimile of the original Self. Superficially, it is just a doll. But inversely, it represents a little piece of soul that carries all the knowledge of the largest soul-Self. In the doll is the voice, in diminutive, of old La Que Sabe, The One Who Knows.

The doll is related to the symbols of leprechaun, elf, pixie, fairy, and dwarf. In fairy tales, these represent a deep throb of wisdom within the culture of the psyche. They are those creatures which go on with the canny and interior work, who are tireless. The psyche works even when we sleep, most especially when we sleep, even when we are not fully conscious of what we are enacting.
In this way the doll represents the inner spirit of us as women; the voice of inner reason, inner knowing, and inner consciousness. The doll is like the little bird in fairly tales who appears and whispers in the heroine's ear, the one who reveals the hidden enemy and what to do about it all. This is the wisdom of the homunculus, the small being within. (91-92)

The dolls are the alibi of Padmini's changing feelings for Devadatta and her dreams of Kapila. Even at the unconscious level, there's a split in Padmini’s psyche that's why two dolls instead of one. One can not decide the sex of the dolls, as the conscience is free of sexuality, “Doll II: with his rough labourer’s hands. Doll I: Palms like wood. Doll II: A grip like a vice . . .” (155)

After six months the change in Devadatta is registered both by Padmini and the dolls.

Doll II: Why? What happened?
Doll I: He touched me, and...
Doll II: Yes?
Doll I: His palms! They were so rough once, when he first brought us here. Like a laborer's. But now they are soft-sickly soft-like a young girl's.
Doll II: I know. I've noticed something too.
Doll I: What?
Doll II: His stomach. It was so tight and muscular. Now...
Doll I: I know. It's soft and loose. (158)

Devadatta’s changing body begins to create the chaos in Padmini’s psyche. Her ideal, celestial Gandharva is becoming mortal again. Her longing for a handsome man, unconsciously comes back to her, she weaves her ideal concept of her man in her dreams:

Doll I: A man.
Doll II: But not her husband.
Doll I: No, someone else.
Doll II: Is this the one who came last night?
Doll I: Yes- the same. But I couldn’t see his face then.

Doll II: You can now. Not very nice, rough. Like a labourer’s. But he's got nice body- looks soft. (160)

The dream is an escape hatch or a safety valve through which repressed desires, fears or anxiety seek an outlet into the conscious mind, the emotion in question is censored by the conscious mind so it has to enter a dream in disguise. Dreams are the symbolic form of wish fulfilment (Barry 70-71). Padmini's unconscious craves for that strength of Kapila’s body again. The repression of those feelings finds a way in her conscious by projecting themselves in her dreams. Kapila's appearance as a disguised man in her dreams is suggestive of symbols like 'labourer’s hand’, ‘palm like wood’. Dreams don't make explicit statements; they tend to communicate indirectly avoiding direct representation and meaning. Jung in *Man and Symbols* says:

Dream symbols are for the most part manifestations of a psyche that is beyond the control of the conscious mind. So, by means of dreams (plus all sorts of intuitions, impulses, and other spontaneous events), instinctive forces influence the activity of consciousness. Whether that influence is for better or for worse depends on the actual contents of the unconscious. (53)

The wishful object of Padmini’s psyche is a man of strength. Her constant repression of this wish results in singing a lullaby of a rider, full of images representing sexual desires. Day-by-day Devadatta's gradual return to his fragile body intensifies Padmini's longing for the body of Kapila. Devadatta's confidence begins to be replaced by his original gullible nature. Though he appears to be calm, but he is aware of Padmini's longings. His vulnerability is visible where he is still making fruitless attempts to go to the gymnasium to attain the body that Padmini longs. Padmini is also aware of the vulnerability that Devadatta is acquiring. Devadatta is changed; Kapila is changed, and this change in their bodies marks the return of her ambiguous psyche. Partly out of her guilt and partly out of her anger, she coaxes Devadatta into believing that she loves him. She makes Devadatta believe in her commitment to him. But her dream of Kapila visits her again, showing her increasing longing for him. Devadatta is completely changed now, and the dolls talk about the revisiting guest in Padmini’s dreams, voicing her growing passion. The fight between
the dolls is representative of her dilemma to choose between the rules of society that she has internalised or to choose her heart:

Doll I: Each one to his fate!
Doll II: Each one to her problems!
Doll I: As the doll-maker used to say, ‘What are things coming to!’
Doll II: Especially last night—I mean—that dream . . .
Doll I: Tut! Tut! One shouldn’t talk about such things!
Doll II: It was so shameless . . .
Doll I: I said be quiet . . .
Doll II: Honestly! The way they . . .
Doll I: Look, if we must talk about it, let me tell.
Doll II: You don’t want to talk about it. So.
Doll I: You don’t understand a thing. They . . .
Doll II: What do you know? Last night . . .
Doll I: Let me! In that dream . . .
Doll II: I’m . . .
Doll I: Shut up!
Doll II: You shut up! (Karnad 1: 162-163)

The torn and tattered condition of the dolls mirrors the chaos and despair of her psyche. Finally, in the rage of passion, she makes a fool of Devadatta and sends him to Ujjain fair for new dolls and leaves with her child and starts a journey towards Kapila.

Doll I (to Doll II): Did you hear that? She wants to throw us out...
Doll II: She wants new dolls.
Doll I: The Whore.
Doll II: The bitch. (Karnad 1:163)

Karnad has skilfully brought out the constraints within one's psyche. Padmini is the product of the society where a female's sexuality and her desires are not acceptable, and if she rejects the norms of this society, she'll be held immoral. The
dolls act both as a mouthpiece of society and her superego that has internalised the social norms. The result of which is self-doubt and blame. She begins to consider it apt and is convinced that “whatever happens to her as a result of her eroticism is “her own fault” and that she has her punishments “coming to her”, she is thus, “a victim of both external, societal structures and self-flagellation” (Pratt 75).

Feminist archetypal critics say that marriage is an archetypal enclosure for women. It is one of the tools used by patriarchy to dull and restrain a woman’s Eros. “Each attribute of authenticity meets with its opposite: early ideal lovers are banished, to be replaced by a husband who resembles the gothic villain; erotic freedom is severely limited” (45). Nittilai in The Fire and the Rain is in love with Arvasu but is married to another man and runs off when she hears about Arvasu’s health. Her husband and brother set out to hunt her down. In all this Chaos she asked Arvasu to hide, but when he doesn’t listen, she flies into a temper.

Nittilai: Do you think I want to die? You think I want to be hunted down by my brother and my husband? If they had come separately, it might have meant anything. But they’re –together! And they sat there by the fire—still. Alert. Listening. We never talk when we are on a hunt. We only listen. And my husband wasn’t smiling. He looked—so sad. That scares me, Aravasu. I’m still young. I don’t want to die.

*(She starts weeping.)* (Karnad 2:161)

Nittilai’s freedom to leave and attend her wounded love wouldn’t have been approved by the tradition of marriage. Therefore, she ran off. But this puts her life in danger. Her marriage to the man of her tribe was not her decision but that of the society. Nittilai and Arvasu weren’t a match as they both belonged to different caste and culture. Arvasu was a Brahmin and Nittilai was a hunter. The caste system is deep-rooted in the Indian civilisation. Everyone is trapped within the limits of his/her caste. In the mythic genealogy of Caste, Brahmins are assigned the supreme position whereas Shudras are assigned the lowest position. A very interesting Freudian analysis of Caste system and Untouchability in India has been given by Alan Dundes, a prominent folklorist in his book *Two Tales of Sparrow and Crow*. According to him, the real source of this Caste prejudice lies in the pattern of rearing a child. He names it “Pollution Complex.” According to him, Caste and Untouchability have roots in the human body. The top caste is called Brahmans, and they have emerged from the head
of Creator whereas Shudras or the lowest class has emerged from his feet or anus. The head is considered clean as it crowns the body and the feet that come in contact with all the dirt lurking around is considered impure. Dundes says it is the fear of contamination of clean mouth from the contact of dirty feet that untouchables are met out with discrimination. Nittilai was rejected on the grounds of her caste by Brahmins and forced into a marriage with someone else by her people. Nittilai’s Eros suffered twice.

Affection and sensuality are two currents whose presence is necessary to ensure an entirely natural attitude, but in the case of Vishakha both of them are missing. First of all her marriage wasn’t her decision. “I was married off to Paravasu. I didn’t want to, but that didn’t matter” (Karnad 2:122). In India, marriages aren’t mainly a move towards companionships but a contract between two households for the exchange of benefits. A woman’s desires are mainly repressed in the name of society, culture, and caste. Conforming to the norms, Vishakha tried to find happiness in her marriage, but it proved futile, as her husband left her to perform Yagna, leaving her behind to dry up both in body and mind. In a conversation with Yavakri, Vishaka recalls:

The night of the wedding, my husband said to me: ‘I know you didn’t want to marry me. But don’t worry. I’ll make you happy for a year.’ And he did. Exactly for one year. He plunged me into a kind of bliss I didn’t know existed. It was heaven- here and now- at the tip of all my senses. Then on the first day of the second year of our marriage, he said: ‘Enough of that. We now start 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 knew. But I knew he knew. Nothing was too shameful, too degrading, even too painful. Shame died in me. And I yielded. I let my body be turned inside out as he did his own. I had a sense he was leading me to something. Mystical? Spiritual? We never talked. Only the sense pervaded the air. You’re still lost in the fragrance of jackfruit, Yavakri. I have known what it is to grow heavy, burst open, drip and rot, to fill the world with one’s innards. Then one day he received
the invitation from the King. To be the Chief Priest of the fire sacrifice. And he left. The site of the sacrifice is only a couple of hours away from here. But in all these seven years he hasn’t come back. I know he can’t. But I look forward to having to see him come home once the seven years are over. Alone, I have become dry like tinder. Ready to burst into flames at a breath. To burn things around me down at the slightest chance. (123)

Her statement provides an insight into the chaos brewing inside her, which at the slightest chance can turn into Thanatos and burn things down. It also gives an insight into the cultural constructs of the society. Woman’s cultural identity is only because of her sexuality. Paravasu’s treatment of Vishakha has reduced her to a commodity. They are estranged and isolated even within the bond of marriage. Even the years they spent together were less of emotional bonding, but more of sexual hunger. Vishakha’s image in her nine years’ marriage conjures up to that of the sexually exploited and emotionally drained women. Her story is the story of victimization. Her body is both used and abused by her husband. It was in search of some esoteric knowledge that Paravasu’s tantric practice of copulation subjugates Vishakha. Even though she has suffered but she still awaits Paravasu’s return. He is that aspect of the Purusha that suppresses Prakriti in order to attain his mystical goals. Prakriti is neither hostile nor indifferent in Purusha’s search for the Self rather it helps him out by educating him of himself by helping it in its movement. In Indian philosophy, Matter exists solely for making Spirit free from the slavery of fear and anger. But Paravasu doesn’t understand this and abuses this relationship by being selfish. He feeds on Vishakha’s subjugation which causes drought in her life.

The draught of the state for which the yagna is being performed is directly parallel to the condition of Vishakha who has become dry like tinder. The complexities had started taking place in her psyche. The repression, depression, and alienation had injured her instincts of growth, her instinct to get one with her Self; starving her Eros. When Eros is starved, “A ravishing hunger for the soul-life rushes to the surface of the psyche, taking whatever it can lay its hands on, for it knows it will soon be repressed again” (Estes 253). Yavakri becomes the source to quench that thirst.
What you have done is to rekindle, my need to talk. I thought that was dead and gone. Gently! Don’t rush. Oh, Yavakri! The pleasure of calling someone a fool. Of the desire welling up inside one to protect him. I live in this hermitage, parched and wordless, like a She-devil. And words are like water-precious. I was afraid to bathe. Listen to me. You went away. I was married off. (Karnad 2:122)

Yavakri created the state of conflict for Vishakha. At one hand, she is hungry for Eros that is provided by Yavakri but on the other hand is the bond of marriage. Though Paravasu doesn’t stay with her anymore, she is still enclosed in the marriage. In her choice to wait for Paravasu, one sees that she chose to stay within the boundaries of Lakshmana Rekha even when it reduced her to an object.

Marriage takes away the freedom from these heroines. “The freedom to come and go, which involves the right to make a decision about one’s own time, work, and other activities, is a basic element of authenticity” (Pratt 45). Rani’s marriage with Appanna in Naga-Mandala results in her confinement. Her confinement is both physical and emotional. He keeps a dog as a guard, outside the home for fear of intruders. He doesn’t want Rani to come in contact with anyone. Her autonomy is watched and even her movement is limited. She is not allowed to have a say in anything. She complains, “Don’t ask questions. Do as I tell you. Don’t ask questions. Do as I tell you. No. I won’t ask questions. I shall do what you tell me . . . But day or night, one motto does not change: Don’t ask questions. Do as I tell you” (283). He mercilessly keeps her starved of affection and love which are indispensable for the growth and sustenance of humankind. The instinct to love and to be loved is the most important instinct in human beings. In Naga, Rani found love. Though he always comes to her in the form of Appanna, it is interesting to note that he never crosses the threshold of the house. The threshold symbolises consciousness. Crossing the threshold would have meant that it was conscious of his unconscious side. It always enters her house through the drain.

In archetypal psychology, drains and dungeons are dark places, places of instincts, initiation, through which one descends deeper into one’s unconscious. Rani’s unconscious had registered the difference between the two, as is seen in the mirror episode. A mirror is a true source of reflection. When Rani sees Naga’s reflection in the mirror, it moves with a lightning speed and pulls her away from the
mirror. He shields his image from Rani and himself as well, as he can’t face his true reality; a mirror is too much for him. Rani realises the difference, “Your blood is so cold. It’s the way you wander about day and night, heedless of wind and rain” (273). Also, “But last night… he had blood on his cheek and shoulders. Now . . . ”(281). It is to be noted that Naga comes in the night alone. “Night is the time when one is closer to one’s desires, closer to essential ideas and feelings, that don’t register so much during the day” (Estes 357). Naga is the desire and Appanna symbolises rules. Naga is a man of the spirit- instinctual and sexy. Appana is the man of the head- Practical and boring. The conflict in front of her was to challenge his ambiguity and choose between the one. Neither could she ask Appanna directly about his changed behaviour and caress at night for fear of his outrageous behaviour nor could she ask Naga about his scowls in the day for fear of losing him.

The Chaos reaches its climax when Rani learns about her pregnancy and discloses the news to Naga. The mirth of her pregnancy was overtaken by the emotion of sorry and the pride by the feeling of shame. “What shall I do? Shall I have an abortion? I may find a sharp instrument in the kitchen-a ladle, a knife or I can ask Kurudavva’s help. No, it’s too late. It’s five months old. Too big to be kept a secret. Forgive me. I know it’s my fault. But the secret will be out whatever I do” (284). In Rani’s story, the transition zone begins with the end of the unconscious relationship. Pregnant Rani instinctively knows that she is about to be abandoned, left on her own with no one to love. Naga (her desires) is about to leave, and Rani becomes incapable of coping up with the Chaos

(*He turns to go.*)

Rani: Wait!

(*She suddenly runs to him and embraces him.*)

Please hold me tight. I’m afraid. Not of the Cobra. Nor of death! Of you. For you. You say you’ll become my slave tomorrow. That we will be together again. Why then does your heart hammer so frantically? I had not even noticed it until now. And now, why is it fluttering like a bird ambushed in a net? Why this welcome to my child?
(He slowly moves her away. Unable to look at him, unable to keep quiet, she leans her forehead against the wall.)

The night is almost over. You must go. But I know this is not a morning like any before. Tomorrow won’t be a day like any other. I don’t want any tomorrows. Or days after. I want this night to last forever. Remain Unchanged. I mustn’t let you go. I must listen to my heart and hold you back. Take you like a baby in my arms and keep you safe.

(As she talks, Naga moves down the steps, turns into a snake and goes away. She suddenly turns to him. He is not there.)

Listen. Please. Wait.

(She rushes out. Runs to the front door. Lifts her hand to open the latch. And freezes.)

But the door...I had locked it from inside. And it is still locked.

(A new thought occurs to her. Almost unconsciously, she runs to the bathroom. Looks inside, it is empty.)

Where are you? Where are you? [emphasis in original] (Karnad 1: 287-88)

All this is evidence of her unconscious being aware of the differences between the two. In confiding in Naga about her pregnancy, she brings to surface the reality. Naga wanted a clandestine and hidden affair with Rani, but it is too late as the pregnancy wouldn’t be accepted by the consciousness-Appanna. Rani betrayed his admonishment, which was to keep the things as they are. He wanted her to remain unconscious, not to change anything; that’s why he perpetually insisted on—“Dont ask questions, do as I tell you.” (281), but when he gets to know about her pregnancy, his unconscious (Naga) is awakened and hurt and his conscious (Appanna) blames, beats and smashes her.

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

Appana: You haven’t? And yet you have a bloated tummy. Just pumped air into it, did you? And think I’ll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village. You darken my face, you slut-! (285)
Society is a man made construct. In nature, sex is natural whereas society tries to regulate sex and passion through ideas such as marriage. Nature’s only concern is to reproduce, but society is concerned with the legitimacy of this reproduction. Culture sees marriage as sacred and infidelity as a sin. Marriage is society’s way to legitimise a woman’s Eros. Laurence in *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England* writes, romantic love and physical attraction are considered the unsafe basis for an enduring marriage since both are violent mental disturbances, as both are only of short duration (271-72). Marriage ensures that by giving chastity a higher rank on the list of wifely virtues (which includes other qualities like modesty, prudence, and obedience) it subordinates woman. Annis says:

Throughout my analysis of the novels of enclosure, however, I have noted prohibitions against Eros for women: the limitations on sexuality placed upon adolescents, the monogamous structures for married women, and the degradation accorded both married and unmarried women who make love out of wedlock. (Pratt 74)

The spouse who never cared to talk to his wife, who himself goes out to sleep with a prostitute in public acknowledgement calls his wife a harlot, a slut. This is typical of patriarchal hierarchy, where a man’s adultery is justified but a woman doing the same is called names. Patriarchy organises itself to subordinate women in both the domains of culture and instincts. A woman’s sexual needs aren’t given acknowledgement. Appanna easily blames Rani for adultery but finds it hard to accept his own duality.

To test Rani’s chastity, he takes her to the elders of the society. The elders ask her to give a Snake-trial. It invokes the archetype of *Agni-Pariksha*. *Agni-Pariksha* is a parameter to judge a woman’s chastity. Devdutt Pattanaik explains, “Many patriarchs concluded that the best way to test a woman’s fidelity was to make her go through a trial by fire, or *agni-pariksha*. If the fire did not harm her, it meant she possessed sat by remaining true to her husband. The most famous trial by fire in sacred Hindu lore is that of Sita, the embodiment of wifely virtue” (*GIN* 116). This trial has always been the part of women’s life. In the story of Psyche and Eros, when Eros left Psyche, she went to Aphrodite who in turn gives her hardest trials possible. Naga voices this fact of the woman undergoing trials since time immemorial and tells Rani, “I can’t help it Rani. That’s how it has always been. That’s how it will always be” (*Karnad* 1: 287).
This theme of Chastity looms large in the play *Bali: The Sacrifice*. Though married to the King, whom she loves and whom she finds “the best of man”, “a marvellous person-affectionate, gentle, trusting” (195). Queen still commits adultery with a low-born Mahout. The Mahout considers himself to be ugly and couldn’t comprehend this transgression on the part of a married Queen. When he questions her, she replies, “You wouldn’t understand that” (195). “I came here because I heard you sing. I had to come.”(198) Queen is the new woman of Karnad, she is not ashamed of her Eros. She is in sync with it. She is free-spirited and felt restless and claustrophobic in the palace. On hearing the song of Mahout, she crossed the *Lakshman Rekha* of palace and walked towards the darkness of the temple sanctum in the middle of the night. Palace is the archetype of culture and represents the rules whereas the temple sanctum symbolises the internal universe, where one enters to seek solace. When King questions her for hurting his feelings, she replies:

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 have loved you all these years- above everything-

Queen: I was sleeping by your side. His singing woke me up. The song was so- don’t know how to describe it. But suddenly the notes caressed me, enveloped me. They carried me away. For a brief moment, nothing mattered. The Palace. Me. You. Only the Song. I felt like a flame burning bright. Pure. When I came to my senses, I was here. By his side. That’s all there is to it. It just happened. (235)

Queen’s explanation illustrates a power that originates in the psyche, the power of trance instigated by the signing of Mahout. “In mythos, singing is considered to issue from a mysterious source, one that enwisens the whole of creation, all the animals and humans and the trees and plants and all who hear it” (Estes 170). Songs have the power to heal the wounds, the pain and to breathe a new life. The continuous abortions and the constant scrutiny of her barren womb had left her psyche wounded. But the song of Mahout made her feel one with the riches of her body again.

Queen: And what happened was beautiful.
King: No. I can’t believe it’s you. This isn’t you! Why are you doing this to me? Because I blamed the miscarriage on you?

Queen (gently): No, of course not.

(Pause.)

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.

(Karnad 1:235)

Music can put one in a state of trance. Songs have a special language and a magic that the spoken language doesn’t.

The word Pneuma (breath) shares its origin with the word Psyche; they are both considered words for soul. So when there is a song in a tale or mythos, we know that the gods are being called upon to breathe their wisdom and power into the matter at hand. We know that the forces are at work in the spirit world, busy crafting soul. So the singing of song and using the heart as drum are both mystical acts awakening layers of the psyche not much used or seen. The breath or pneuma flowing over us shakes open certain apertures, rouses certain otherwise inaccessible faculties. (Estes 171)

But her personal trance doesn’t go along with the social consciousness. Though the King loves her, his people (his mother) are not acceptable of Queen because of her being a Jain. She is constantly under the scrutiny, under the ‘gaze’ of people. She laments, “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” (211). Foucault in his work The Birth of the Clinic reintroduced the term ‘gaze’ in the term of power dynamics. Laura Mulvey, a feminist film critic, later on, expanded his idea into ‘the male gaze’ where she suggested that a female is reduced to an object for the male pleasure. The male gaze is thus the symbol of being seen. It suggests scrutiny and judgement of a woman on the part of the society. It baffles the person who is at the end of the gaze. The gazes reduced the Queen to an object and resulted in the psychological conflicts.
King is supposed to be an archetype of *Maryada-Purshotam*. “Maryada” means “Morality” and “Purshotam” means “the ideal man”, being a king, he has to watch all that is not in alignment with the moral code and is considered wrong to punish it accordingly. To purge Queen of her sin of committing adultery, Queen-Mother asks King to perform the ritual of Bali, by sacrificing a cock, thus, emphasising the position given to chastity in society. Rituals in all cultures have a purpose: to ward off and purge the community from all the evils. They have been there since time immemorial; they fulfil man’s need to work for his desires. To fulfil desires, men continuously repeat several actions till the desire takes shape. The ritual of Sacrifice is there in almost all the cultures. Greek sacrificed animals, sometimes consuming part of the offerings in a celebratory meal as a way of establishing communion with gods. The ancient Chinese also practiced human sacrifice and made offerings of domestic animals and food to gods and ancestors. In the same way, Karnad mentions: “In Vedic thought, as in the Iranian tradition, there was a conception of the world as due not to a change encounter of elements but as governed by an objective order, inherent in the nature of things, of which the gods are only the guardians” (Karnad 2: 293).

But being a Jain Queen believes in the doctrine of non-violence. She once told King:

QUEEN: Because of me, you deserted her faith – her Mother Goddess.

(The Queen moves to the window. Looks out.)

I’m afraid.

KING: Of what?

QUEEN (points out); That bit of thatched roof there. You have considerately built a wall round it to hide the shed. But the roof shows. As though it refuses to be dismissed.

KING: The earth there couldn’t take a higher wall.

QUEEN: It’s the shed in which your mother keeps her animals.

(Pause.)

All these years I have been pretending that it doesn’t exist. That I can’t hear the bleat of sheep being taken out at night.
(Pause.)

For slaughter.

(Pause.)

You sleep through it. You’ve grown up with those sounds. I haven’t.
They often wake me up – keep me awake. But I’ve pretended I didn’t mind. (212)

Therefore the demand of Bali is the archetype of Agni-Pariksha for Queen who believes in the doctrine of non-violence. But she puts up a fight by disagreeing with what the society demands of her against her beliefs and conscience.

According to Campbell, the task of the true hero is to shatter the established order and create the new community. In doing so the hero/heroine slays the monster of the status quo, the dragon of the old order-Holdfast, the keeper of the past. On a cultural level, the established order is one of deeply entrenched patriarchal values, those of dominance and control by the stronger, more vocal and more powerful male population. (Murdock 14)

Though she puts up a fight, King suffers. Her love for King and his suffering makes her weak. Her conflict is between accepting the moment she had with Mahout as a sin (which she doesn’t regret) and to sacrifice the cock for the contentment of King.

Instincts are wild and are a threat to the patriarchy as they can instigate the women to create anti-patriarchal space. Patriarchy domesticates woman to avoid the revolution. It puts a high value on things like polite tone and obedience. Those who oblige and comply are appreciated, and others are labelled. It is a sad space as it ceases their Individuation and the ability to develop; it injures them and reduces them to the rank of a slave. Sharmishtha voices this vulnerability when she tells Yayati:

You own hundreds of slaves. But have you ever wondered what it does to a person to be made a slave? It turns that person into an animal. A domesticated animal. One’s will to act is destroyed. One’s selfhood humbled into submission. (Yayati 17)

Sharmishtha is the princess of a Rakshasa clan; a clan known for its wilderness, generosity and arrogance in Indian ethos. They follow the rule of the
jungle, known as Matsya Nyaya in Hindu scriptures. Pattnaik explains, “According to this code might is right, big fish eats small fish. This code offers no reprieve for the weak, the helpless, the downtrodden. Only the fit may survive” (MM 97-98). Being a Rakshasi, she is undomesticated and is the archetype of wild women. Therefore, she feels out of place in the Palace of Kshatriya Yayati. She feels claustrophobic in the palace of Yayati and couldn’t make it her home. Home is a place where one is at peace, losing home brings chaos, despair, and breakdown.

Home is an internal place, a place somewhere in time rather than space, where a woman feels of one piece. Home is where a thought or feeling can be sustained instead of being interrupted or torn away... Home is a pristine instinctual life that works as easily as a joint sliding upon its greased bearing, where all is as it should be, where all the noises sound right, and the light is good, and the smells make us feel calm rather than alarmed. How one spends one’s time in the return is not important. Whatever revivifies balance is what is essential. That is home. (Estes 307)

But jilted by Devyani, for whom she cared and loved, Sharmishtha lost her home. The brief friendship that they both shared was brought down by Devyani’s pinching words and her mocking the foibles of Rakshasa clan.

Sharmishtha: One day we went for a swim in the lake. We two had grown closer since her Brahmin lover, Kacha, had spurned her. I liked to think I was nursing her bruised self back to health, guarding her against further hurt. I wanted to be like her. I even dressed like her.

We finished our swim and stretched out on the grass, our hair spread out to dry in the sun. I could feel myself being sucked languidly into a stupor, when Devayani woke me up. ‘We have exchanged our blouses, I think’, she said.

I felt a sudden stab of anger that the delicacy of the moment had been so needlessly disturbed. ‘I was on the brink of a beautiful dream’, I replied, ‘You’ve ruined it.’ I was smiling, of course, but the suggestion of bitterness in my words must have stung her. I suddenly
felt alarmed at my thoughtlessness and wanted to make up for it... when the world fell into shivers around me.

Yayati: Why? What happened?

Sharmishtha: ‘You poor people,’ she said. And I realized with rising panic that she had never ever used that phrase before. Never talked of us in plural. ‘You poor people. You only have to get into a piece of Arya attire. And you start fantasizing.’ (Yayati 19-20)

Though she had made a mistake by throwing Devyani in the well, she has also hurt herself in the process. The words of Devyani poisoned her psyche. Her suffering got elevated to another level when her father sent her off with Devyani as a maid to Yayati’s palace, stripping her of her home, her freedom, and wilderness. She was reduced to an object in her punishment by her father. Kshatriyas in Hindu scriptures are known as the upholder of morals and disciplines. They tame and discipline the natural urges, and apply codes of Dharma. From a princess to a slave, from a Rakshasi to a tamed maid, everything was against the training of Sharmishtha. It made her psyche suffer. The sacrifices, injustice and disappointment, had scarred Sharmishtha’s psyche. All that was natural to her was injured, and she was in a constant fight with herself. She hungered for soul-food; she needed someone to hear her story. She tells Yayati, “No, sir, but you have helped. Perhaps during these two years, all I needed was someone to listen to me. You have done that, and that is enough for me. I am grateful” (Yayati 20).

When someone listens to the deprived and arid Eros, the Eros favours the relationship with that person as it offers the support to the soul. But Sharmishtha in her vulnerable state made a poor choice in Yayati. She crossed the Lakshmana Rekha inside which resided peace and brought herself to the wilderness of chaos. Sharmishtha knew that in her union with Yayati, she was bringing up more than he could handle. Yayati doesn’t know that he is about to have all his power tested. In his love for Sharmishtha, he becomes blind as a bat. She tries to put some sense in him and warns him of Devyani’s father Shukra’s anger.

Sharmishtha: I don’t know whether she’ll be jealous. But she will most certainly be livid. And along with her, her father. I should tread warily there if I were you.
Yayati: Oh! But surely, he can’t be such a prude. He is a guru in your father’s court. He must be used to worse.

Sharmishtha: Let us not get into that, Sir. Let me just warn you that by spending this half an hour with me, you have already lit the fire. Better douse it before it explodes into a conflagration.

Yayati: Let it. I don’t care.

Sharmishtha: You see yourself as awesome and powerful, a figure towering over your vast possessions, a demi-god if not god himself. You are so busy visualizing the grand design of life, you have no sense of the traps and snares waiting in the grass. You have no sense of how illogical suffering can be and therefore how terrible.

(Pause.)

You don’t know what a disaster you could be. (Yayati 25)

Yayati in the fire of his passion doesn’t pay any heed to Sharmishtha’s warnings which are coming from her personal experience. Her conflict thus is twofold: inner and personal and outer and cultural.

The chaos for Chirtalekha arises as her eros is left unsatisfied. The only source of eros’ fulfilment has gone, the youth of Pooru has faded, and he has turned into an old man with decrepitude. The ambition of Yayati destroyed her desire to reproduce. In her innocence and naiveté, she praises Pooru for his idealistic martyrdom but gets the shock of her life when she sees him in person. “Chirtalekha takes the lamp to his face and moves it in a circle in front of it, performing an aarti. The flame casts its light upon his face. His withered features look even more terrifying in the dim light. Chirtalekha screams and drops the lamp to the floor” (57). Though she rejects her husband, but feels guilty of her act and considers herself to be a sinner.

Annis Pratt says, the women hero have internalised the social dictates against erotic authenticity to the extent that they deny their individual aspiration. “Self-censorship, both conscious and unconscious, drowns the revolutionary power of Eros” (89). Yayati tries to pacify the condition by putting morals into Chitralekha and telling her of her wifely duties.

My blood froze when I heard your scream. I was panic-stricken lest you bring the names of both our families into disrepute. But nothing
is beyond repair. Go, welcome Prince Pooru back. You don’t know how grateful the people will be to you. Go. Escort him back. (*Yayati* 61)

By placing this moralising language in the mouth of Yayati, Karnad has provided a sarcastic commentary on the ways by which patriarchy practices its tyranny and uses gender norms for its benefit. Yayati projects his own wrongs on Chitralekha. Jung explains, “Projection is an unconscious, automatic process whereby a content that is unconscious to the subject transfers itself to an object so that it seems to belong to that object. The projection ceases the moment it becomes conscious; that is to say when it is seen as belonging to the subject” (*Archetypes* 60). He indirectly asks her to succumb to the suppressing rules of patriarchy by renouncing her desire of a young and competent husband. But Chitralekha got her composure back by listening to Swaralata’s story. Swaralata becomes an archetype of savior and redeemer for Chitralekha. She tries to calm down Chirtalekha with her profound reflection on life. She brings hope to her in this hopeless and desperate situation. “For internal or external reasons, the hero cannot accomplish this himself, the knowledge needed to compensate the deficiency comes in the form of a personified thought, i.e, in the shape of this sagacious and helpful old man” (217).

She infused with knowledge, rejects everything that Yayati has said.

Chitralekha: Yes, I was keen to become your daughter-in-law. But so were you to accept me as one. Even apart from my family, because of my accomplishments, because of what I am. And now you want me to meekly yield to your demands?

Yayati: Please try on understand. I am whatever I am. I am the king. There is no me if there are no subjects, no people. I cannot forget my duty by them and at this moment my duty is to ensure that the forces of chaos will not overwhelm them.

Chitralekha: Is that the choice now-the forces of chaos on the one side and my husband’s youth on the other? (*Yayati* 62-63)

The chaos becomes a pit for the woman of Karnad. The rules of society push her down into the abyss, but she holds on and pulls down every rule that didn’t let her make the climb.