



Translating Land into Stage: Observations on the Patterns and Presentations in Girish Karnad's 'Hayavadana' and 'Nagamandala'

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Abstract— This research paper examines the patterns and presentations in Girish Karnad's major plays. Girish Raghunath Karnad (19 May 1938-10 June 2019) was the foremost Kannada playwright of India. In addition to writing plays, he was also an actor, film director, and a Jnanpith awardee, who dominated in the fields of Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, and Marathi films. His ascent to prominence as a playwright in the 1960s signaled the advent of contemporary Indian playwriting in Kannada as Badal Sarkar, Vijay Tendulkar, and Mohan Rakesh did in Bengali, Marathi, and Hindi respectively. He used his intellectual power to use distilled themes from history, folktales, and myths. He is able to give identity to Indian art and culture in other countries. *Tughlaq*(1964), *Yayati*(1961), *Hayavadana*(1971), *Hittina Hunja*(1980), *Nagamandala*(1988), *Tale-Danda*(1990), *Fire and the Rain*(1995)



Keywords— Culture, feminism, myth, stage, translation, theatre.

I. INTRODUCTION

A prominent writer Girish Karnad had the incredible art of writing in a varied and balanced manner, keeping in mind the periphery of cultural and political aspects. Apart from being a well-known Indian playwright, he was also a poet, director, actor, critic, and translator. He was born on 19 May 1938 in Matheran, Maharashtra in a Saraswat Brahmin family. He was the winner of the Jnanpith Award (1999), which is considered the highest literary award in the field of literature. He was also awarded Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan. He received four Filmfare Awards, three for Best Director and one for Best Screenplay. He was also featured on a weekly science magazine programme "Turning Point" that aired almost in 1991 on DD National. Plays originally written in Kannada were later translated into English. The main themes of his plays revolved around the problems faced by women in society, where the origin of the story lay in Puranas and myths. Karnad is intellectually able to convert those stories into a capsule by obeying the necessity

of time (cutting short the long time to short). Karnad spent a lot of time in Sirsi and after that, his family shifted to Dharwad.

The title for the research paper is 'Translating Land into Stage': Observations on the Patterns and Presentations in Girish Karnad's two most popular plays. This includes how the folktales and myths travelled from the pious ground and soil of the author's homeland to the illuminating stage as well as the common patterns and problems in the play, 'Hayavadana' and 'Nagamandala' from the lens of existentialism and feminism. The dramatic and narrative structure also plays a very vital role in his plays. In a speech "The Structure of the Play" Karnad told the rudimentary rules and regulations that a director of the drama should implement to make it a compact play. He says that whether it is a historical play or a mythical, one has to ask questions and find solutions. He further adds up to say that each and every character of the drama should know the reason behind each and every incident taking place. He compares this very

characteristic to an architect who knows the reason behind the placement of every room and the pillars placed at the suitable site in a building. The above-mentioned factors become the spinal cord or the foundation on which Karnad's dramas are based upon.

II. GIRISH KARNAD: A LEGENDARY PLAYWRIGHT

Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, and Asif Currimbhoy, as playwrights, left a remarkable impact on the history of contemporary Indian dramaturgy. Girish Karnad is one of the most famous playwrights and an eminent practitioner of the performing arts. His enthusiasm for watching Yakshagana and Natak Mandali took him to greater glory. All his plays have the ability to touch the core of the human heart. He was awarded the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary award and the Padma Shri Award, a highly reputable civilian Award. He, in his drama, encompasses mythological and historical elements and chose themes that were in a state of harmony with the conditions prevailing in the lives of the people. He has been called the "Renaissance man" as he tried to blend myth and reality, and the link of our cultural roots and Indian spirit with modern life. He used the treasure of traditional techniques, principles of folk tales and folk theatre- masks, curtains, the story within a story, the supernatural, magic and toned the best of the traditions to create the world of truth. His works stand out for their universality, allegory and multifaceted approach to folkloristic and complex themes. He says in his opening lines to three plays:

The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their head. The various conventions-the chorus, the masks, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of human and non-human worlds-permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem (Karnad 14).

2.1 An insight into Karnad's autobiography: the journey of translation of folktales

The world we live in has changed a great deal in the past few decades and is likely to change in the next few decades. The human brain and its mechanism are very complex. The events (good and bad) that take place in the earlier stages of life build the foundation of the mind known as 'mindset'. This mindset acts similar as a needle of a sewing machine, which is responsible for the embroidery of good and fine art on a plane called 'life'. Thus, paving the path towards one's glory or decline.

The reason for Girish Karnad writing about myth plays and folklore lies in his childhood. In those days, water clogging in Sirsi was a major issue due to a lack of a proper drainage system and because of this, Karnad found himself locked in his house for several days, listening to folk stories in childhood from his grandparents. The local plays that moved from place to place were very common in those days. Yakshagana made a deep impact on Karnad's mind. These are the main sources of Puranas and history. He learnt a lot by interacting with the Havakya community. He was able to appreciate the depth of their cultural practices and the richness of their oral traditions. Girish, who grew up in Sirsi, acknowledges that the only things to do when there wasn't electricity were Yakshagana shows and the sporadic movies that the town would occasionally show. (Prajwal bhat, 2019). In an interview, he said that films teach us to be brief, films have the power to make one visualize storytelling and the aesthetic impact of cinematic technique.

He adds, "One particular year that day, I saw children in our neighborhood catching hold of a chameleon, making a cross from twigs, and crucifying the helpless creature." (Mint News). He describes what happened on Good Friday. It kept sticking out its tongue and shaking its head fiercely while they prayed and threw flowers at it. A boy from that gang made a comment during the ceremony, stating that it was time for the chameleon to turn around because it had mocked Christ during his crucifixion.

His father worked and retired from the post of a doctor whose duty was to perform postmortems. Their family lived in the hospital compound. There was a lot of rush of bodies, which suffered accidents, suicide, burns, murder, and internal injury. A lot of things happened there, unexpectedly, and theatrical, but continuously. Nobody was there to stop Karnad and his sister Leena from being a mute witness to all these and the screams reaching those little ears. They were able to perceive the mental state of his father in the working room, cutting, and piercing the flesh of unknown identities. However, they stayed away from the post-mortem rooms.

2.2 Myth: An Overview

Myth refers to a tale or narrative with a symbolic meaning in any civilization. Myth encompasses both natural and supernatural elements, weaving together human and superhuman elements to captivate readers and listeners with their magical impact. Folktales, which are frequently passed down orally lack modern written records and may evolve over centuries to adapt to the changing context of the modern world.

The majority of mythical tales are grounded in normative principles. They abide by the laws and norms that society has established for moral reasons.

It can be regarded as the deep-rooted rigid caste system, beliefs and distrust, superstition, and patriarchy which are buried into the earth. *Vedas* are an integrated part of our lives. Myths can describe how the world was created and occasionally even how it will end. They explain the manners in which gods made humans. They portray the interaction between different gods and humans. They offer a set of moral principles to live by. Furthermore, myths depict the lives of heroes who stand for societal values.

History, folk tales, and legends have always been devoted to either the most dominant or the trivial. The persevering tradition of parables, myths, and legends design the culture and define its values. Karnad has long been known for his ability to explain the present by fusing stories from the past.

Historical, legendary, and mythical sources display the reality of life and give insight into its mystery. The fables transcend the boundaries of time and are the soul of the culture of a land. Karnad borrowed vital fragments from the past and based his plot on folk tales to dive into the ocean of life and dwell deep into the fortress of the human mind to describe its distress and intricacies. Myth, story or any archetype has never been contingent on languages. During 1960s, dramatists started to ponder over significant questions, For example how to tap into different fibers of the traditional theatre- some of them had become estranged from city life. Karnad's *Hayavadana* a play that explores human incompatibility in relationships and the pursuit of perfection has its roots in *Vetal Panchavimshati* and *Somdevas Brihatkatha Saritsagara*. Karnad's comments on the play: "it was when I was focusing on the question of folk forms and the use of masks and their relationships to theatre music that may play that is 'incompleteness' and the quest for 'completeness' or 'perfection'" (Karnad 9). The way Bhagavata narrates the story is a style adopted from a folktale: "this is the city of Dharampura ruled by King Dharamsheela..." (Karnad 1). It is very difficult to attain harmony between spirit and flesh in human life. *Hayavadana* is Karnad's creative addition to demonstrate the theme of incompleteness. The subplot of the play serves to be the prologue and epilogue. A character like *Hayavadana* depicts the inner conflict between mind and body.

III. KARNAD'S HAYAVADANA

The term *Hayavadna* comprises two lexical morphemes (those words which can stand alone with meaningful ideas). *Haya* + *vadana*. *Haya* is the synonym (such as *Haya*, *turang*, *vaaji*) word for horse in Sanskrit while *vadana* means the face or body. Combining the two, means one with a horse face. This title is enough to convey the theme of the play,

where a character is condemned to possess a horse's face leading to profound questions about identity, completeness, and the complexities of human existence.

There is a little difference between Thomas Mann's approach to the tale and Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadna*. In *Kathasaritasagara* translated as "Ocean of the Streams of Stories" gave Thomas Mann the idea of switching heads to incorporate in his novella, inspired by this Karnad wrote "Hayavadana", which is a drama that blends modernism with heritage. The drama has one main plot and one subplot, while the main plot has been taken from Somadeva's *Kathasaritasagara* of the 11th century. Karnad said, "the central episode in the play- the story of Devdutta and Kapila is based on a tale from *Kathasaritasagara* but I have heavily drawn on Thomas Mann's reworking of the tale in "The Transposed Heads". (Collected Plays Girish Karnad Volume 1, p 102).

The play is divided into two acts, where the play starts when Bhagavata (the Sutrardhar) is interrupted in between when an actor of the same group shocks him by saying he has seen a character who is part human and part horse. The character would like to be whole i.e. either a whole horse or a human being. So Bhagavata sends him to Goddess Kali. Now Bhagavata returns to the primary plot. There were two best friends. They were in love with the same woman named Padmini. She accepts the marriage proposal of Devdutta and marries him. They both have their own bodily richness. Devdutta is highly intellectual, on the other hand Kapila gain victory over many popular wrestlers in the town. The story leaps six months and Padmini is pregnant, and they decide to go on a trip to Ujjain, but Devdutta is hesitant as he has a notion that Padmini is attracted towards Kapila. Padmini's decision to cancel the trip is changed when Kapila arrives. On the way, she again complements Kapila. The group passes through a temple where Devdutta completes his promise, made earlier that he would give his arms and his head to have Padmini. Kapila finds him dead, and he also repeats the same.

Padmini finds her husband and friends in a pathetic condition and tries to kill herself, suddenly Goddess Kali intercedes. She tells Padmini to replace the men's heads, but Padmini in her overexcitement replaces wrongly their heads by swapping them.

On returning the two men start to prove themselves as her loyal husbands Kapila's head states that his body created the child in her womb while Devdutta argues that the head is the control center of the body. At last, Padmini chooses Devdutta's head.

Soon after that Devdutta bought two dolls from Ujjain for his child's preparation. He told about a man from whom he fought using Kapila's body. One day on a trip to the

forest, Padmini discovers him in the woods. In the meanwhile Devdutta's body became delicate and Kapila regained his inner strength. Padmini is able to find out similarities between his newly born son and Kapila. Padmini lives in the woods with Kapila. Devdutta tried to find out her wife and he found her with Kapila. The two men start to fight finally leading to death.

Padmini instructs Bhagavat, to take his son to a hunter and confess to him, he (son) is Kapila's own part and after five years take him to Devdutta's father and tell him he is Devdutta's son. She told him that she was planning for sati, lying on her husband's pyre.

At last, *Hayavadana* comes to the scene, Padmini's son is also there and Sutradhar says he is unable to speak or laugh. *Hayavadana* asks Goddess Kali to make him whole, she made him a horse. The story makes the boy laugh. *Hayavadana* starts to neigh. The play ends with a celebratory Ganesha for the success of the play.

Existentialism affirms the dignity of man, just like humanism does. Existentialism is deeply incarnated in man. The man tends to nourish and shape his own choices according to himself until death arrives to extinguish the fire of desire. *Hayavadana* addresses the issue of identity-seeking and human relationships as well. The search for meaning and the struggles to find one's own identity in a world full of uncertainties is the installation of a philosophical approach in the play. The characters in the play just try to find a place in this fragmented and ambiguous world in the same way as the mason tries to find a small space to adjust his last broken brick while making a boundary. The constant questioning of self-identity, origin, family, love, fidelity are evident in every act of the play.

Karnad uses the character of *Hayavadana* a horse-headed man, who desires to be complete either as a human or animal. *Hayavadana* struggles to reconcile his human desire with his less-found, or rare horse-face nature. His hybrid nature adds absurdity to his life. The internal turmoil reflects the existential angst experienced by the individuals, tattered, and torn between their various roles. The book that fascinated existentialists was Kierkegaard's "The Concept of Anxiety" which was published in 1844, he emphasized the word "angst" He said life can be understood in back experience but we must live forward. Our constant angst means that unhappiness is more or less written into the scripts of life, thus supporting the role of essence as the prior element to existence. Ultimately angst highlights the piercing intersection of an individual's autonomy and the enigma of existence. So it might be the angst in the characters of *Hayavadana* who has scripted most of the characters to suffer.

The theme of existentialism is very well portrayed in '*Hayavadana*'. In '*Hayavadana*' the absurdity of life has been highlighted in the prevalent norms of societal behavior and Karnad has employed a very existential approach to human life. To solve his problem the protagonist '*Hayavadana*' fights back with his identity without blaming the proper cause of his present scenario. He suffers this identity crisis as their parent's marital agreement (animal-human). He finds himself unstable in the same way as the noble elements (He, Ar, Ne) need to combine to find their identity in the universe. His half-animal and half-human body symbolizes the incompleteness of man, the uprooted culture of one's own country. Padmini also grapples with conflicting desires and emotional turmoil. She is unable to decide with whom to proceed with her life after her mistake of swapping heads. She fights between her personal desire and the situation created by destiny or in philosophical language the angst. Karnad himself agrees to the fact that G.B Shaw wrote indoor dramas, i.e. dramas that have less to do with society, while his plays were drawn from local street dramas, and natak companies culturally rooted images. In addition, he told in the interview with Bangalore literature festival that he wrote half a dozen of songs in '*Hayavadana*' to convey his hidden love for his beloved.

In his plays, Karnad delves into the characters' sense of isolation, spiritual turmoil, internal turmoil, tension, and sense of being incomplete. He emphasizes the inner emotional landscapes over external factors like weather or physical surroundings. The characters' inner conflicts mirror their quest for meaning and the psychological intricacies that reflect humanity's preoccupation with internal experiences. A good reason to die is the same as what is referred to as a reason to live (Albert Camus, *The Myth of the Sisyphus*, 1975, 12). This line fits aptly for the characters in '*Hayavadana*'. "Men are never willing to die except for the sake of freedom," Death in the case of Devdutta and Kapila is not the liberation of their souls, because they all cut off their heads as the promise and devotees respectively. They are brought back to life after Goddess Kali's blessings, but with their heads swapped again, proving themselves incomplete and posing a moral problem on the three dimensions namely Devdutta, Kapila, and Padmini. After coming to life they are again caught in the complicated question of who is the real husband of Padmini. Padmini seems to be the Supreme authority holding the threads tied to both of these humans and she plays the puppet. Padmini is blessed by Goddess Kali but she pours slag on herself by her own act of being overjoyed and committing the mistake of wrong arrangements of heads. Also, look at the irony of destiny, she swapped those heads which she was very much familiar with or one may guess she tried to assimilate virtuous qualities and

biological genes in a single person which actually was not possible. Faced with the bitter truth of life and the incongruities of existential monotony, these characters are mere puppets.

PADMINI--- I knew it. I knew you
wouldn't touch my feet. (Act I, 18)

Society has a perspective that women should touch men's and seniors' feet, but not theirs. For a male person to touch a woman other than his mother's feet is regarded by men as the height of dishonor. Padmini discovers that she is a victim of patriarchy. She urges Kapila to touch her feet without thinking twice because she wants to exact revenge on men. She has decided to overthrow the patriarchal hierarchy. Devadatta and Padmini wed with Kapila's assistance. Devadatta has a deep passion for Padmini. Padmini, however, adores Kapila.

When Devadatta sees Pavana Veethi, he is surprised by her beauty. He feels that his life would be cipher without her, and he makes a vow to Lord Rudra and Goddess Kali in front of Kapila that he will sacrifice both of his arms. He claims that without her, his poetry could not live in this mundane world. Devadatta develops an obsession with Padmini's attractiveness because he believes she is more capable than him in his line of work, his obsession knows no bounds. He claims that without her, he could not be a good poet. He couldn't figure out how to get in touch with her, so he started to get crazy. He says lyrically that he doesn't have a cloud or a bee to communicate his message.

The name 'Padmini' is 'generic', and it also represents a class of female elements in Vatsyana's *Kamasutra*. The portrayal of Padmini is that of a complex character who grapples with her own identity symbolized by the themes of swapping heads. Karnad's exploration of a love triangle led him to seek inspiration from myths and mythologies. It's essential to consider the mythical influences shaping the plot. Padmini's character embodies the idea that every individual is bound by psychological constraints imposed by nature. Padmini becomes a canvas on which the playwright highlights questions about the human condition, exploring the blurred lines between desires, fulfillment, and the consequences of seeking perfection. Padmini's internal struggles mirror the broader societal conflicts portrayed in the play, providing a lens through which the audience contemplates the intricacies of love, friendship, and the quest for identity. Her character is both a product and a critic of societal norms, inviting the audience to reflect on their own belief and values.

Considering the difference in the character shown by Ved Vyasa in *Shakuntala* (matriarchal society) and *Shakuntala*

(patriarchal society), she is both at once. In Padmini, beauty and charm are a perfect harmony of both. She may be called as "Shyama Nayika" since she was born as the creation of Kalidas. She is not only beautiful but has some magical powers which surround her. Her life seems to be polarized and moves to and fro between a traditional woman who loves her husband on the other hand She is magnetized with another person which is a modern aspect

3.1 The Role of the translator

Translation is the most complicated job with a simple side and a tough one on the other. For some, it distorts the original meaning while for others; it carries it forward. Art always links the physical and spiritual life of humans just like translation but never focuses on its consciousness in any of its works. No poem is meant to be read by someone else. There must be some explanation as to why expressions exactly similar in English or any other language are almost impossible to translate. One should remember that Karnad does not translate the language itself; rather, he translated what that language means.

The translator's task includes knowing how far this intention can go into the target language via a simulation of an echo of words in another tongue. Translation most importantly is a writer's job which could also mean being a poet because none of them thinks about using their native languages as such but rather pays attention to their specific linguistic contexts only. According to Linen D Hulst (2010), it is possible to view it from two distinct perspectives thanks to the combination of translation and history. The first one emphasizes how translation helps understand the past of cultural practices while the second one discusses how history can aid in understanding (the task of the translator). Since the idea of translation has evolved over time Joseph Graham makes a valid point when he asks what the translator's role should be:

"Translator like the critic has been traditionally considered as inferior to the creative writer. But now, thanks to the post-structuralism, the critic is taken as co-creator and criticism as co-creation". (Anukriti, March 2015).

The role of translators has been extremely important, and if we analyze Indian writing in English we see a lot of writers have written ample dramas, poems, etc. In Indian English writers, we have Rabindranath Tagore, Girish Karnad, and Manoj Das are worthy of detailed consideration. The most popular Indian writer Girish Karnad wrote his plays in Kannada and then he himself translated into English. Not only did he translate his plays into English but to some other Indian languages. Karnad did not write his plays in English or in Konkani (his mother tongue) instead he wrote in Kannada his adopted tongue. The Western literary Renaissance had a significant

influence on Kannada literature when Karnad began penning his plays.

IV. KARNAD'S NAGAMANDALA (AN AURA OF NAGA OR A PLAY WITH COBRA)

In his Beginning Theory, Peter Barry has this comment: 'This is the distinction that Simone de Beauvoir refers to in the famous opening sentence of part two of *The Second Sex* (1949): Girish Karnad has borrowed two oral tales from Karnataka and based his play *Nagamandala* on these tales, which are said to be narrated by the elderly women to the children in the family. The dramatist employs non-materialistic techniques of traditional Indian theatre and derives material from the oral tales. As a result, his plays give a manipulative portrayal of reality focusing on a contemporary issue. The title of the play, "Nagamandala" comprises "Naga" and "Mandala". The play is named after a snake and holds great significance. A "mandala" is a triangle with a square. The three vertices of the triangle represent the characters of the play: Rani, her husband, and the serpent. The four sides of the square provide a framework for the drama and signify the flames, the tale, the Man, and the audience. The play has two addresses of the story that want to be heard and passed on: The man who listens to the flames and the audience. The play has been skilfully written starts with a prologue and sets the tone. It begins with a fictitious playwright struggling to not fall asleep, who can sustain oneself only if he stays awake for one entire night, for he has been cursed for writing and staging plays. He laments, "I was wrong perhaps death makes one sleepy." (Prologue, p 3)

The fictive elements can be observed as the writer meets the lamp flames that cluster together in a ruined temple to exchange gossip about their kindred house and find a flame who has a tale to tell. A tale about an old woman who knew a story that slipped out of her mouth inadvertently while she was asleep and it transformed into a young lady and the song accompanying it turns into beautiful sateen. The story that appeared from the old woman's mouth is about King Cobra, who used to meet a woman, Rani disguised as her husband. Rani, a durable and passive girl, is a creation of a patriarchal ideology that subjugates and exploits women in the name of marriage. Rani was grief-stricken because her husband, Appanna, caged her in the house and she was left hopeless with no voice. The other two individuals, Kurudavva and her son are crucial characters who help Rani attain the love and respect she deserves.

Kurudavva, the blind woman, who was a friend of Appanna's mother, supplies Rani with a magical mixture. Finally, she spills it into an anthill where King Cobra resides. Belief has it that the holy Naga are closely

associated with an anthill. It is not only regarded as their sacred dwelling but also looked upon as an entryway that leads to an enigmatic world of serpents.

The Naga loses his heart and starts paying a visit to Rani during the night, disguised as her husband, Appanna, who used to come home once a day in the afternoon and lived with concubines for the rest of the time.

Naga being present in the guise of Rani's husband is how Karnad pacts with mythological events in the play. Popular myth in India narrates that serpents are associated with Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Indra. A snake is rendered as a divine being that emblemizes the process of creation, conservation, and ruination. People are of the opinion that the serpents are beneficent yet can emerge as the most vindictive creatures when disrespected or disregarded. Serpents are considered as the heralds of felicity and prosperity and that generated a sense of awe for them among the people. They were also adept at coming to the aid of humans, by transforming their appearances. For instance, Naga in *Nagamandala* is enamored of Rani and changes her life for good. He takes on the form of a devoted husband at night, being at odds with the atrocious husband who visits Rani during the day. Appanna had imposed her limits on her and treated her like a slave but Naga listens to her grievance and provides her with all the chances to discover herself and outgrow the doubtful existence. She was confined in her own domain of expression and lived a fearful life. With the arrival of Naga in her life, the terror changed to euphoria. Rani says "I don't feel afraid anymore, with you beside me". (Act 1, line 221, p 13)

In the yoga custom, the Kundalini Shakti, or the human energy is figured as a resting coiled snake. The procedure of growth is its awakening. When it readily draws up, the world has it that it assumes the form of spirals, the entwining of two vibrant cobras. For instance, Rani's vital energy moves up when Naga introduces her to conjugal love. His love gives her heavenly bliss and makes her feel fulfilled. Realization of her pregnancy makes her assert with confidence, "But now I'm a woman, wife, and going to be a mother". (Act 2, line 14, p 35)

Naga facilitates her emergence from a fragile and submissive wife to a dauntless woman. She undergoes a snake ordeal when Appanna questions her chastity and doubts her uprightness. The cobra doesn't harm her when she declares that she has never touched anyone except her husband and cobra. She is proclaimed as an incarnation of Goddess by the villagers. Naga in the Hindu cultural context, is nearly connected with lord Shiva, who is a metaphor for the perfect husband. In the play, Naga manifests himself as the ideal husband by giving

recognition to Rani, making her attain complete harmony with herself, and preserving her chastity.

The play is out of the ordinary as it offers multiple endings. Appanna is almost on its wits' end trying to accept the actuality, for he knows he did not impregnate Rani. However, he accepts her as his wife and it elucidates Rani's feat at achieving the reverence. The second ending considers both distrust of Appanna and Naga's distraught state of mind at the thought of losing his love, Rani. He decides to take his own life by hiding in his beloved's hair. Appanna has to give consent to Rani's bizarre suggestion that their son should perform yearly 'Pinda—daan' in remembrance of Naga.

Karnad, in his third ending, dares to unfollow the orthodoxy of Indian myths. In the third end of the play given by the playwright, the serpent doesn't perish. Instead, he finds a safe haven in Rani's dark and long tresses. She saves him by giving him a place in his life and the play finishes with her soulful words, This hair is the symbol of my marital bliss. Live there happily forever (the last lines of Act 2) The ending may challenge her moral conduct but the author gives preference to a woman's innermost wishes and fantasies. Thus, Nagamandala is a philosophical play uprooted from folklore, that communicates the aspirations of a woman and regards the efforts of Rani's semi-divine lover, Naga, who frees her and whose love leads to her complete enhancement.

4.1 Nagamandala: A Celebration of Female Yearning

Girish Karnad's "Nagamandala" is a powerful exploration of feminist themes within the constraints of Indian society. The play centers around Rani, a woman trapped in a loveless marriage, subjected to neglect and mistreatment by her husband Appanna. The stark gender inequality is evident not just in Appanna's controlling behavior, but also in Rani's lack of agency within the household. Symbolically, Rani is kept locked in her room, as she expresses, "This room is my cage, with its painted birds and this barred window" (Act I). This confinement reflects her limited control over her own life.

Despite facing such oppression, Rani demonstrates remarkable resilience throughout the narrative. Her act of seeking solace and a deep connection with the serpent deity is a symbolic act of defiance against societal norms and expectations. This unconventional relationship signifies her quest for freedom and self-realization. Karnad's masterful use of symbolism elevates this connection. The serpent, often associated with fear and danger in mythology, becomes a symbol of Rani's liberation. This is further emphasized when Karnad describes their encounters using sensual imagery, a stark contrast to the barrenness of her marriage with Appanna. Here, Rani sheds the traditional

role of the chaste and passive wife, instead claiming her sexuality as a source of power. As Rani expresses her yearning, "I yearn for something beyond the walls of this house. Something beyond the touch of Appanna's hands" (Act II), it becomes clear that the serpent represents the fulfillment she desires.

"Nagamandala" goes beyond just portraying Rani's struggle. It also critiques the patriarchal structures that restrict women's freedom and agency. Rani's transformation into a snake can be interpreted as a symbolic rejection of societal norms and a reclaiming of her independence and self-determination. This transformation can be seen as a form of empowerment, although some might argue it's an escape rather than a solution. However, by embracing this transformation, Rani challenges the limitations placed upon her and asserts her right to define her own existence. This critique of patriarchy is further emphasized by the village elders who readily accept Rani's transformation as divine, highlighting the societal expectation for women to conform to a submissive role. The First Elder's words, "The ways of the divine are mysterious. We must not question them" (Act III), exemplify this blind acceptance of the status quo.

Furthermore, the play emphasizes the importance of female solidarity and community support. While initially ostracized by the village women for her unorthodox behavior, Rani eventually seeks guidance from them. They provide her with a sense of empowerment and wisdom, highlighting the strength of women's collective resilience in the face of adversity. This is evident in scenes where the women share stories of their own struggles and offer Rani support, as exemplified by the words, "We all have our burdens, Rani. But we women learn to carry them together" (Act II).

In conclusion, "Nagamandala" critically examines feminist themes such as gender inequality, female agency, sexuality, and the critique of patriarchy within Indian society. Through Rani's journey and interactions with other characters, the play celebrates women's resilience, autonomy, and solidarity. Karnad's masterful use of symbolism and evocative imagery strengthens the play's message, offering a powerful portrayal of feminist ideals and struggles.

V. CONCLUSION

Literature is a performative art. It is matter plus manner in time. The overarching themes present in a literary work often mirror the broader societal context, historical period, and geographical setting in which the author has placed the characters. It is the reader of the play who has the duty to understand it properly. This paper dealt mainly with how

Karnad transformed veiled tales in front of the audience which wrapped the themes of alienation, subjugation, identity crisis, incompleteness, and error in judgment.

In the paper above it is most often seen that existentialism plays a very vital role in answering, questioning, and reframing ideas from their own establishment of the control over different problems in the society. It has an effect on the larger section of society. Even scientists wonder the reason behind the existence of the universe. The myth stories, tales, and other ancient scripts regulate the minds of common people in the olden days.

During Karnad's time, the idea of a stage proved to be a platform where author used to solve complex narrative and social issues. The stage served as a powerful medium to spread cultural stories, historical events, and personal experiences to a diverse audience. Karnad's inventive approach to stagecraft produced a vibrant theatrical experience. Through his creations, the theatre was transformed into a forum for defying expectations, scrutinizing power structures, and considering the complexities of interpersonal interaction. As the landscape of socio-political revised, Karnad's idea of the stage as a transforming venue resonated, providing an orifice to view the current events. In addition to pushing all his creative limits in the forward direction his introduction to these plays brought much awareness in the audience.

The major characters of the play *Hayavadana*, namely Padmini, Devdutta, and Kapila become the prey to incompleteness in the fragmented world. The story starts with Devdutta as a lover, rising to jealousy and then it makes a sudden twist when Devdutta cuts his head and arm to sacrifice himself but by Goddess Kali's grace gets his life back but again loses his life in the end fighting with Kapila. The actions done by Devdutta were pure (love for Padmini and fulfillment of his promise to Maa Kali), but the mind, body incompatibility and a friend like Kapila, who himself loved Padmini ended everything.

In *Nagamandala*, Rani suffers her ill-fate. She was married to a man, who never loved her, besides was a concubine lover. The ill effect of the magical plant acted on a non-human form proved soothing in the day as Naga took his husband's form but at night his real husband's behavior led her to think that she was suffering from a mental illusion. She proved her chastity in front of villagers accepting the ordeal. She became a divine being. As Naga devta is worshipped and is a divine deity, it made Rani a divine being by living with her for a short period. To sum up, Girish Karnad took splendid tales and folklores to invoke, love for art and theatre.

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