NOTES: THE FIRE AND THE RAIN:

By Girish Karnad

About the playwright:

Girish Raghunath Karnad (born on 19 May 1938) is a contemporary writer, playwright, actor, and movie director in Kannada language. He is the latest of seven recipients of the Jnanpith Award for Kannada, the highest literary honour conferred in India. For four decades, Karnad has been composing plays, often using history and mythology to tackle contemporary issues. His plays, written in Kannada, have been widely translated into English and all major Indian languages. Karnad is also active in the world of Indian cinema, working as an actor, director, and screenwriter, earning many awards along the way. He was conferred Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.

About the play Fire and Water:

Girish Karnad wrote the "Fire and the rain" play. The main title of the play is "Agni Mattu male" in the Kannada language. It was originally written in Kannada in 1995 and published in English in 1998. It took thirty-seven years for Karnad to accomplish this work. It is a meta-theatrical play about love, violence and sacrifice. Based on the myth of Yavakrita from chapters - 135-138 of Vana Parva in Mahabharata. Set in the late eighteenth century, and focuses on the taboo subject of marital fidelity. This follows the idea that we cannot separate the romantic love of protagonists from the practical and social implications of their decisions raises moral questions about marriage and social expectations. We find many themes in this play like Alienation, Love, family hatred, religion and art, yagna and theatre, etc. The play explores the idea of the individual being liberated through the power of fire. The characters seek redemption and salvation through fire in the end.

Structure

"The Fire and The Rain" is divided into three acts, along with Prologue and Epilogue. The structural play of "The Fire and the Rain" runs into three parallel streams: Raibhya and Vishakha at the hermitage, the sacrificial place with Paravasu as the Chief Priest and the story of Nittilai and Arvasu with the company of the theatre. The most significant addition to the myth in the play is the story of Indra and Vritra taken from Rigveda. It is presented through the play-within-the-play enacted by the troupe of actors and Arvasu to emphasize the treachery of a brother against a brother.

Major Characters: In this play "The Fire and the Rain", we find some major characters like Bharadwaja, Raibhya, Yavakri, Arvasu, Paravasu, Brahma Rakshasa (Demon) King and actor-manager. We find two women characters, Vishakha and Nittilai.

The Summary:

The Prologue:

The initial prologue of the play focuses on the ritual of fire sacrifice. The land is drought-ridden and the King is determined to conduct a fire sacrifice. The king, who is the host, is dressed similarly, but his head is covered. A seven-year-long fire sacrifice for Lord Indra, the god of rain, has been conducted. This is to propitiate him and enable rain in a land that has been parched with years of drought. Paravasu is the Chief Priest who conducts the ceremony of fire sacrifice. He is the eldest son of Raibhya and is about 28 years old. Priest offers oblations to the fire at several altars while singing the prescribed hymns. It is his responsibility to see that there are no errors, either of a mission or of commission, in the performance of the sacrifice. It is an impressive panorama. Brahma Rakshasa, a Brahmin soul trapped in the limbo between

death and rebirth, is moving around the sacrificial precincts. A human can see him. The afternoon session is over. The priests began to disperse.

The courtier entered with the actor-manager, who was made to stand at a distance from the fire sacrifice, as actors are considered lowborn. The Actor-Manager of a troupe requests them to permit him to stage a play in honour of the fire sacrifice. The Actor Manager said to the Brahmins that Brahma, the Lord of all creations, extracted the requisite elements from the four Vedas and combined them into the fifth Veda, thus giving birth to the art of drama. He handed it over to his son, Lord Indra, who in turn passed on the art to Bharata, a human being, for the gods could not indulge in pretence. He further, says that if Indra is to be pleased and bring an end to this long drought, a fire sacrifice alone is not enough; a play must also be performed. If we offer him entertainment in addition to the oblations, God may grant us the rain.

When they discovered that Arvasu had been given the role in the play, all the Brahmins, the priests, were quite shocked that a Brahmin would be acting. The actor-manager refers to Arvasu 's message which reminds Paravasu's words that the sons of Bharata were the first actors in the history of theatre. They lost their caste due to their profession, resulting in a curse that caused them to be in disrepute and disgrace. However, despite this, Arvasu accepts the profession and is a criminal who has killed his father, a noble brahmin. He requests that his path not be barred by this. Paravasu agrees to allow the play to be performed. As the play was about to begin, Arvasu was hoping that Nittilai would be in the audience watching the play.

Arvasu is searching for Nittilai in the audience but cannot find her. He hopes she is watching the play and pleads with her to watch it. This play is about to begin after many years, although it is a fictional story borrowed from myths. The real play began somewhere else, a month ago. He further says that they were set to get married and Arvasu had to meet the elders of her tribe. The

Prologue throws light on the inner world of the characters that represent them as the embodiment of fiery desires.

Act: I

The first act focuses on the love and marriage between Nittilai, a tribal girl, and Arvasu, a younger son of Raibhya. Arvasu and Nittilai were in love. Arvasu was going to ask the tribal council of elders for Nittilai's hand in marriage. Arvasu was apprehensive of his impending meeting with Nittilai's tribesman because he was afraid of facing the questions of tribal elders in public. Arvasu is afraid of young tribal men because he believes they are brutal. He is also worried that his friends, brothers, and others attending the council will take advantage of the situation. She is hopeful that the elders of their tribe will agree to the marriage. She believes it is a matter of honour to get their daughter married to a Brahmin groom.

Arvasu grabs her hands and pulls her nearby. But she says to Arvasu that she cannot be touched by a man before the marriage. Arvasu pleads that he is giving up his entire caste, his people, and his whole heritage for her. But why can't she forget a minor custom for his sake? However, Nittilai says that this is the only custom that is worth observing because she kept her modesty and reputation. According to the tribal custom of Nittilai's village, Arvasu had to proclaim in front of her village heads that he is man enough to satisfy a girl. They had arranged for a counsel and Arvasu was supposed to meet the village heads before sunset that evening. At Nittilai's village, that is the day Nittilai’s father summoned the villagers to meet Arvasu to approve of their marriage. Arvasu ’s arrival in Nittilai’s village was delayed because of cremation duties and other family matters. Her father loses patience and her marriage is arranged with a boy, the first volunteer in her community.

Andhaka, the blind Shudra enters the scene in the play and overhears the conversation between Arvasu and Nittilai. Arvasu expresses his desire for

happiness and joy with Nittilai. He does not have the spiritual ambitions of his brother, father and cousin Yavakri. He says he doesn't want to be lonely like his father or uncle, conduct royal sacrifices like Paravasu or perform penance like Yavakri. He only wants to dance, sing and be with Nittilai. He says his father doesn't care if he is alive or dead and his sister-in-law lives in her world.

Andhaka asks Arvasu what would happen if Paravasu forbids their marriage. Arvasu said that he would tell him that he could not give up his Nittilai as she was his life and he could not live without her and that he would rather be an outcast. Andhaka warned Paravasu couldn't be moved easily. Nittilai's father called the tribal elders council to meet quickly because he thought the high-caste men wanted to have sex with the tribal women but not marry them. Arvasu declares that he would soon marry her. Andhaka says his cousin Yavakri will be very happy.

Then through Andhaka, Nittilai and Arvasu heard of Yavakri's plan to gain the favour of Indra. He did penance for ten years, but Indra didn't oblige. As a last resort, Yavakri stood in a circle of fire and began to sacrifice his limbs, until Indra finally appeared to him and granted him the boon he desired. Andhaka, later on, told Arvasu that every Brahmin on the face of the earth wanted to gain spiritual powers, but few succeeded; he said he had only known two who had, namely Bharadwaja and Raibhya. While they got their knowledge from human gurus, Yavakri received knowledge from the gods.

Andhaka, in the role of Sutra Dhar-actor, refers to the penance and achievements of Yavakri, the son of sage Bharadwaj. Nittilai is questioning the purpose of the Brahmin priests' rituals, comparing them to the rituals of her tribal community, which are more visibly performed. She is curious why the Brahmin rituals are done in secret and why priests are afraid. Nittilai and Andhaka debate the efficacy of divine powers in solving day-to-day problems. Nittilai suggests that Yavakri should use his powers to create rainfall and revive

the region, while Andhaka believes that divine powers should lead to inner knowledge. Nittilai then questions the point of any knowledge if it cannot be used to save dying children or predict one's death. Vishakha is depicted pouring water into a metal urn at the hermitage of Raibhya. She is in a loveless marriage; her husband has left her to be a chief priest at a fire sacrifice. She is now in her father-in-law's care. Vishakha is shocked to see Yavakri after so many years. Yavakri learns that Vishakha, his childhood mate, has married Paravasu, his rival cousin.

Despite the time away, Yavakri has not changed and is still driven by his lust for Vishakha. She cannot stop him from making advances towards her. Vishakha succumbs to Yavakri's fascinating words after her initial resistance. However, Vishakha is secretly pleased to see him. Yavakri describes his arduous life in the forest. He said that it isn't as easy as one might think to gain universal knowledge from God and that it requires more than just performing austerity in the name of a deity. He described his life in the forest as being sheer hell with flies, giant ants, beetles, pests, leeches, vipers, dust, and relentless heat. He said that he was never certain if God had come to him or not. He said that when God appeared, conversations were not very profound and that when he disappeared, nothing was left behind to prove he had ever been there. He said that God had chided him for being stubborn, saying that one can't cross a full stream on a bridge of sand. But Yavakri refuses to listen. He’s determined to win in the end.

Vishakha and Yavakri were having a conversation in which Vishakha explained her marriage. She said that on the first day of their second year together, her husband wanted to search for something, and she wasn't unhappy, but happiness wasn't a priority. For her, happiness was simply living and being happy with her husband, while he wanted to seek absolute knowledge. Her husband used her body as an experimenter, explorer, and instrument in his search. They never

talked and then one day he received an invitation to be the chief priest at a fire sacrifice and left, never to return. Vishakha felt he was only interested in pursuing his interests, leaving her trapped in a loveless marriage. She blamed Yavakri and Paravasu for only being interested in their selfish ends. Then both of them go behind a champak tree on the bank.

Arvasu and Nittilai discover Yavakri and Vishakha secretly talking along the banks of a river. When Arvasu walks in, Vishakha escapes and her clothes are torn with mud on her back. Arvasu discovers that Yavakri is having an affair with Vishakha. But he did not tell his father about the affair. Yavakri contemptuously curses Nittilai when he meets her. Nittilai wants to know from Yavakri when he will die. Yavakri, through his divine knowledge, says that he doesn't know when he will die, but promises Nittilai will be dead within a month.

Vishaka was horrified to see her father-in-law, Raibhya, when she was about to enter the hermitage. Raibhya suspected Vishaka of having an affair and scolded her, calling her filthy and rolling her in the mud. Raibhya grabbed her by the hair and started beating and kicking her. He thought Vishaka had an affair with Yavakri and was very disgusted with her. He threatened to reduce her to ashes with a simple curse. Raibhya decided that it was Paravasu's responsibility to take care of discipline.

Raibhya creates a "Kritys" spirit, a Brahma Rakshasa, to kill Yavakri, who has insulted the family. Vishakha has been instructed to inform Yavakri of the challenges he has accepted. Yavakri had to hide in his father's hermitage to be safe from Brahma Rakshasa. Raibhya respects the sanctity of his brother's hermitage and wants Yavakri to stay safe there. He states that if Yavakri can stay alive, he will accept defeat. Vishakha is determined to save Yavakri and goes looking for him. Arvasu and Vishakha search in opposite directions and

Arvasu is unable to find Yavakri. Vishakha discovers Yavakri meditating and informs him of Raibhya's intentions.

Yavakri is warned by Vishakha that his father-in-law has invoked a Kritya spell and has created Brahma Raksha to kill him. However, Yavakri is not afraid as he has magical water in his Kamandalu which he believes will render the demon powerless. Vishakha is unconvinced and pours water into the earth, leaving Yavakri betrayed. This causes him to panic and he rushes to his father's hermitage for safety. Yavakri will be safe from Brahma Rakshasa. Andhaka has been placed on guard at the Hermitage of Yavakri's father. He does not recognize Yavakri's footsteps and grabs him, preventing him from moving. However, Brahma Raksha appears and kills Yavakri with a trident on the spot. This is a tragic twist of irony, where Vishakha is the only one who can keep Yavakri alive by enabling his death. Thus, Act I of the play ends with Yavakri's death.

Act: II

Act II of the play begins with Arvasu arriving late to meet the tribal elders of Nittilai's village. Despite the delay, her father arranged her marriage with the first volunteer in her community. Arvasu's brother intervenes and stops him from further shaming her in public. This leads to Arvasu being very upset that he has lost his chance to marry Nittilai. He then staggers home. Paravasu enters Raibhya's house in the dark, where he is still awake. The scene ends with Arvasu leaving in despair.

Paravasu returns home against the rules of the fire sacrifice to meet his wife Vishakha. Raibhya was horrified to see that his son Paravasu had left the sacrifice just a month before completion, having heard of his wife Vishakha’s sexual misdemeanour. Vishakha meets and talks to Paravasu after many years, for the first time. Raibhya goes off after knowing that Paravasu wanted to talk to his wife. Paravasu then meets Arvasu and permits him to act in the play.

Arvasu then runs away, saying he will be at Tamarind. Vishakha and Paravasu have an exchange of words. Vishakha believes that Yavakri and Paravasu are similar in the way they use her rights for their sensual pleasure. Furthermore, both of them go away whenever they feel like it.

Paravasu then speaks of different techniques used to make the gods appear, such as practising austerity, standing in a fire circle, and torturing oneself. Paravasu states that people have resorted to various austerities to make the gods appear and grant them their wishes. He then speaks of different techniques used to make the gods appear, such as practising austerity, standing in a fire circle, and torturing oneself. He also mentions that people have done this to gain things like rain, cattle, sun, wealth, and even formal rights. He claims that one should not beg but despise it, and that is why he has gone to perform fire sacrifice the formal right.

Paravasu is seeking absolute power and wants to overcome his human weaknesses for this. He is willing to make a fire sacrifice to gain access to the gods and their favours. This sacrifice involves no emotional attachment or acrobatics from the participants, and if anything goes wrong, it has to be set right by a man. It is a structured discipline that goes beyond the personal obligations of emotions and attachment. Vishakha does not understand his obsession with absolute power and questions what's wrong with living a human life, with attachments and love for humanity. She remembers Yavakri as warm and gentle, making her forget her wizened body and scratchy claws, yet he paid for it with his life.

Vishaka talks to Paravasu about her father-in-law Raibhya's feelings of humiliation at the hands of Paravasu and also his lust. Paravasu finds out that his wife was seduced by Yavakri and his father. His hatred for his father leads to him killing his father in a fit of rage. He justifies his actions in front of Vishaka, claiming his father killed Yavakri to disturb him in the last stages of

the sacrifice. Arvasu returns to his hermitage to find his father has been killed. Paravasu lies that he mistook him for a wild animal and shot him with an arrow. Arvasu must perform the rites of penitence for his father and Paravasu also requests he does the same.

Arvasu completed the funeral rites of their father and then went to the sacrificial area. Paravasu falsely accused Arvasu of killing their father and the Brahmins refused to let him in. Soldiers were called to take hold of Arvasu and he was dragged away. The Brahmins and the king then attacked Arvasu on Paravasu's order, causing him to be wounded. Paravasu's betrayal of Arvasu is an example of the evil in human nature, as is the mutual hatred between family members.

Act: III

Act III of the play begins with Arvasu lying outside the city gates with Nittilai sleeping next to him. He is surprised to find Nittilai among the starving villagers there for the sacrifice. Nittilai comes to nurse Arvasu back to health and tells him she ran away from her husband. She suggests that they should live together like lovers, or at least like brother and sister. She requests Arvasu to marry any girl he likes but to spare a corner for her in his heart. She is willing to think outside the bounds of marriage, and to continue living with her husband while having some kind of relationship with Arvasu even if it is not one of marriage or a romantic relationship, outside marriage.

Arvasu is determined to avenge the death of his father Raibhya. He tells Nittilai that it is a conspiracy planned by Yavakri, his father and Paravasu and that he wants to make them all pay. He expresses his desire to marry Nittilai, disregarding his caste and background. Nittilai tries to dissuade him from this path, reminding him of the spiralling cycle of violence and bloodshed in his family. She recounts how Yavakri avenges his father's shame, which leads to Raibhya killing Yavakri and Paravasu killing Raibhya. She urges Arvasu to leave the vengeance to the gods and to focus on his family.

Nittilai is concerned about Arvasu's desire for vengeance. She questions where all the violence and vengeance will lead. Arvasu insists that he is not going to sit idly by and do nothing. Nittilai encourages him to be better than the man that hurt him. The actor-manager reveals that Arvasu and Nittilai come from different worlds. He acknowledges that anything is possible in uncertain times and that their relationship has become a topic of discussion in town. He is grateful to Nittilai for nursing Arvasu. She has been able to access food from the woods and the family has become dependent on her for food, nursing, and laughter. The actor-manager doesn't know where the woman gets the food from. He is thankful that she has been able to provide food for his babies as they were starving before she came.

Later on, Arvasu plays the role of Vritra in the play The Triumph of Lord Indra. Nittilai is glad he is not playing Indra as she dislikes the fact that Indra is immortal. She admires Vritra as even when triumphant, he chooses death. She encourages Arvasu to show his face to his brother Paravasu, not in hate, but in how well he can perform. Nittilai's husband and brother are searching for her, and she fears her husband will kill her. She doesn't want to die. Nittilai wishes that Arvasu’s dancing will bring rain and bid him goodbye. Then she smiles and disappears. The actor-manager is rehearsing a play with costumes and masks. Arvasu is wearing the mask of Vritra, the demon. The actor-manager wants Arvasu to surrender to the mosque with great emotion. He has to keep tight control over the mask to prevent it from taking over him. If he surrenders to the mask, it will take over and gain a life of its own. This is what happens in the play.

The third act of the play juxtaposes two different worlds. The first world is full of greed, wickedness, and sensuality. The second world is full of love and generosity. Raibhya Paravasu and Yavakri represent the first world. Nittilai and Arvasu represent the second world. The playwright explores the two contrasting

worlds. The act concludes with the Actor-Manager instructing Arvasu about the rules of mask performance. The Actor-Manager instructs Arvasu on how to perform with a mask. The play ultimately contrasts the two worlds of wickedness and benevolence.

The Epilogue:

The epilogue is the Play within the play. The Shakespearean technique of play-within-a-play bridges the gulf between the main plot and subplot. This technique brings about a reversal of events. The epilogue brings the audience from the world of Yavakri to that of Indra-Vishwarupa and Vritra. This play is an allusion to the relationship between Arvasu, Paravasu and their father Raibhya. In the play, of course, there are these three characters: Lord Indra and his half-brothers, Vritra and Vishwarupa. Arvasu will perform the role of Vritra in this play within a play. He puts on the mask of Vritra. The actor-manager is dressed up as Indra enters from one side. His brother dressed up as Vishwarupa enters from the other side of the stage. Vishwarupa and Vritra, sons of Brahma, meet each other and embrace. Since Vishwarupa is limping, Vritra dances holding Vishwarupa's hands emphasising their affection for each other.

Indra watches from a distance and talks to the audience. Indra is the king of gods, supreme in the three worlds. He wondered if Brahma had not made that he was unequalled in all these areas. He speaks about Vishwarupa, the king of men. Vishwaroopa is Brahma's son, with a human/ mortal woman, whom everyone admires and sings his praises. Vishwaroopa has won the praise of everyone for his wisdom and his gentleness. This made him feel like the eclipsed moon. Indra feels like his glory has been eclipsed by Vishwaroopa. It threatens the sovereignty of the world. Hence, he wants to kill Vishwaroopa. Indra then speaks about Vritra as the half-demonic son of Brahma. Vritra, a demon was made the king of the nether world. His mother was a demoness and demon blood flows in his veins. Brahma told Vritra to protect Vishwarupa as he

anticipates danger from Indra. Hence, Vritra and Vishwarupa are inseparable. Indra is jealous of his brothers. To separate Vritra and Vishwarupa and to kill Vishwarupa Indra cunningly organises a fire sacrifice in memory of their father. Indra has invited Vishwarupa. Indra stopped Vishwarupa from entering because of Vritra's presence. Indra forbids Vritra from entering the altar as he is a demon clan.

During the fire sacrifice, Vishwarupa offers oblations to gods while Indra moves behind. Indra pushes Vishwarupa into the fire. Vishwarupa collapses, screaming because of Indra's actions. Of course, Indra betrays Vishwaroopa and he kills Vishwaroopa. Ultimately, Vritra enters the enclosure and he sees Vishwaroopa dying. This enrages Vritra, who wants revenge on Indra for his brother's death. Vritra is furious at Indra's treachery and they have a duel in the fight with the actor-manager playing Indra and Arvasu, who's playing Vritra. Vritra said that Indra could elude him, but he could not escape, even if he flew in like a falcon, adding that he would find him, destroy him, raise him, and befall him to the ground and burn down the sacrifice.

Then he rushes into the sacrificial pavilion. Arvasu flies in the smoke like Rakshasa. Arvasu completely surrenders to the mask, which brings Vritra's character to life. The very distinction between fiction and reality is completely collapsed at this moment. The actor-manager pleads to stop Arvasu in the role of Vritra. He cries out that it is because of the mask. Arvasu has to be restrained or else there will be chaos. The guards try to stop him. As he is uncontrollable, the guards step back. Vritra further said that he was a Brahmin and warned that if anyone tried to stop him, he would kill himself, and the sin of killing a Brahman would then be on their heads. He also declared that he was a rock show and would kill anyone who tried to stop him.

The increasing noise and movements perplex the audience on the stage. Meanwhile, Brahma Rakshasa pleads with Paravasu for his release. Brahma

Rakshasa eventually leaves Paravasu. Paravasu calls the demon Brahma Rakshasa loudly, and this causes Arvasu to recognise himself as Vritra-the Demon. Reality is doubled and tripled as Arvasu enacts two roles to avenge Indra's fratricide. Paravasu, Indra and Arvasu are parallel characters. Vishwarupa's dying exclaimed, "You, Brother? Why? I trusted you." This makes Arvasu remember the betrayal of his brother. Indra's laughter, Vishwarupa's screaming and Paravasu's outbursts all seem to lead to an emotional explosion. The emotional explosion is growing towards a climax. Vritra (Arvasu) attacks the actor-manager in the role of Indra with ferocity. Paravasu reacts to watch the play within the play. The event of fratricide renders Paravasu guilt-conscious. Paravasu calmly enters the blazing fire and Aravasu follows him. The sacrificial structure burst into flames.

Nittilai tried to intervene to save Arvasu from the fury of the mask that took over Indra. The Brahmins are furious because the entire sacrifice is being desecrated by the tribal’s and Arvasu who were going to destroy the sacrifice. The hungry mob loots the fire sacrifice. Suddenly, Nittilai's brother and husband arrive at the spot. The brother knocks down Arvasu and pins him to the ground. Her husband grabs Nittilai by her hair and is killed with a knife. The two go away and Arvasu gets up but it's too late to save Nittilai. Arvasu takes her corpse to the sacrificial place. Indra's voice is heard in the skies and he offers Arvasu a boon. The cry tells Arvasu to ask Indra for the rain. Arvasu asks for the life of Nittilai, his beloved to be restored. Indra says that it is no big deal bringing Nittilai back to life. But once the wheel of time starts rolling back, it will bring back Yavakri and Nittilai, everyone to life. Arvasu asks to let them all be brought to life. Indra warns that if they're all brought back to life, then there may be a repetition of the same tragedies. But then, Arvasu says that may not happen. Because now, having lived this life of sacrifice, he has become and grown wiser. Hence, he will not commit the same mistakes again.

Indra is on the verge of granting him the boon of bringing back Paravasu Yavakri and his father to life when the Brahma Rakshasa intervenes and begs Arvasu to release him from the bondage of life and death. Aravasu learns to be selfless Though Arvasu, remembering Nittilai's benevolent nature, asks Indra to liberate Brahma Rakshasa, the soul of Kritya. Rain comes at the end, at the exchange and realization of sacrifice and the land becomes fertile. The play ends in the rain, which is symbolic of the human sacrifice of Nittilai. The rain is symbolic of the grand self-sacrifice of Arvasu.

Comprehension:

I. Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences:

1. What was the Actor-Manager's plea to the chief priest in the play?

   The Actor-Manager requested the chief priest for a play to be performed along with the fire sacrifice.

2. Why was Arvasu apprehensive of his impending meeting with Nittilai’s tribesman?

   Arvasu was afraid of facing the questions of tribal elders. He believes that the tribal young men are brutal and that friends, brothers, and others attending the council will take advantage of the situation.

3. Why did Yavakri spend 10 years in the forest?

   Yavakri went to the forest and practised hard penance for ten years to get knowledge of the Vedas directly from the gods.

4. What were the two questions Nittilai wanted to ask Yavakri?

   Nittilai, being a clever girl, thought of inquiring Yavakri if he had the power to cause rain and if he knew the time of his death.

5. Who is Vishaka?

Vishakha was born into an upper-caste family and was married to Paravasu, Raibhya's elder son.

6. How is Vishaka related to Yavakri?

Vishaka was in love with her childhood mate, Yavakri. After her marriage to Paravasu, Yavakri tries to rekindle their love and molested her.

7. Who is the blind character in the play?

Andhaka, Yavakri's servant, plays the role of a blind character.

8. What is the major theme of the play?

Jealousy, lust, and anger are prominent themes of the play.

9. What does Nittilai symbolize in the play?

Nittilai is a symbol of compassion. Nittilai and Arvasu represent a world of love and benevolence.

10. Who sacrifices their life at the end of the play?

The end of the play presents human sacrifice as Nittilai and the grand self-sacrifice of Arvasu.

11. How did Raibhya intend to punish Yavakri?

Raibhya intends to take revenge on Yavakri and creates a "Kritys" spirit.

12. Yavakri hated Raibhya's family. Why?

Yavakri felt his father did not receive the recognition he deserved because Raibhya grabbed all the attention.

13. How did Yavakri die in the play?

Brahma Rakshasa killed Yavakri with a trident that Raibhya had created through his Kritya.

14. How did Paravasu defend the killing of his father?

Paravasu defends the killing of his father. Because his father killed Yavakri, to disturb Paravasu in the last stages of his fire sacrifice.

15. How did Paravasu take revenge on his brother?

    Paravasu revenges his brother in two ways, one by denying his permission to act and by creating circumstances in which he could not get married to Nittilai.

16. What does fire and rain symbolize in the play?

    Fire symbolises negative states of mind such as revenge, anger, betrayal, lust, and jealousy. Rain symbolises positive states of mind, such as forgiveness, sacrifice, revival, regeneration, and fertility.

Write about the characters in the play.

Sketch the character of Yavakri:

Yavakri is the son of the learned sage Bharadwaja, who held a grudge against Raibhya's family. He perceived that his father, Bharadwaja, had not been given the recognition he merited because of Raibhya's prominence. Despite loving Vishaka, Yavakri left her to undertake hard penance to get knowledge of the Vedas directly from the gods. Ultimately, after ten years, Lord Indra granted him Universal Knowledge. This made him arrogant. On his return, he finds Vishaka married to Paravasu. He molested Raibhya’s daughter-in-law, believing no one could challenge him.

Raibhya discovers Yavakri's illicit relationship with his daughter-in-law and violently rips out a single hair from his head, throwing it to the ground. Brahma Rakshasa appears and he runs toward Yavakri. Arvasu, unable to find Yavakri in his hermitage, asks the blind gatekeeper Andhaka to be vigilant and not to allow Yavakri to come out of the hermitage. Vishakha, however, discovers Yavakri beneath the banyan tree and warns him of Raibhya's plan. Yavakri

remains confident, but Vishakha slowly pours water from the kamandala. Yavakri soon regrets his confidence, longing for just one drop of water.

Ignoring Vishaka’s advice to hide in his father’s hermitage, he proudly claims that he had triumphed over Indra. However, as soon as Brahma Rakshasa appears, he runs. When he is about to enter the hermitage, Andhaka, not recognizing him, jumps up and grabs him. He struggles to enter the hermitage, but Brahma Rakshasa comes and spears him. Yavakri collapses in Andhaka’s arms. The demon pulls out a trident and goes away. Thus, Yavakri receives his punishment for molesting Vishakha. Despite receiving knowledge, Yavakri could not free himself from selfhood. Yavakri's superficial knowledge does not help him conquer the evils within. Instead, knowledge boosts Yavakri’s passion and pride for revenge. Yavakri's story serves as a warning against over-reliance on knowledge.

What was Yavakris’ plan to take revenge against Raibhya’s family?

Bharadwaja's son Yavakri is the hero of the play. He held a grudge against the world, and especially Raibbya's family. He perceived that his father, Bharadwaja, had not been given the recognition he merited because of Raibhya's prominence. He, therefore, went to the forest and started hard penance to get knowledge of the Vedas directly from the gods. Ultimately, after ten years of austerity, Lord Indra granted him Universal Knowledge. This made him arrogant. He still hasn’t gotten rid of his malice and lust. Despite abandoning Vishakha for ten long years, uses her to spite his rival and also to satisfy his base desires. He molested Vishakha, believing that neither Raibhya nor Paravasu could challenge him. His burning desire for revenge against his uncle Raibhya is the reason for all the mishaps which follow. Even when Indra comes to grant his wish, Yavakri asks for knowledge of destruction.

Sketch the character of Raibhya:

Raibhya is another character who exhibits the Vritra rasa in the play. He is the brother of Bharadwaja, a learned sage. He is thin and shrunken, but physically active. Raibhya lived with his two sons Paravasu and Arvasu, who learnt about Vedas and became famous scholars. Raibhya dislikes both his sons and wishes that he cremate them before his death. His son Paravasu shunned Vishaka and started concentrating on gaining spiritual wisdom. Later, Paravasu got an invitation to be the chief priest of the Yajna for which he left home and had not returned for seven years. Raibhya, though a learned senior, is jealous of the opportunity given as the chief priest for the yajna to his elder son instead of himself. Enraged Raibhya showed all resentment towards Vishakha and had physically and sexually harassed her over the years.

Raibhya suspects Vishaka of having an illicit affair with Yavakri and hates her. On knowing about this, Raibhya, through his meditation, invokes a kritya and sends a Brahma Rakshasa to kill Yavakri. Raibhya showed all resentment towards Vishakha. Paravasu ignores all the norms of the religious ritual, returns home though for one night. Vishaka reveals to him Raibhya's physical and sexual harassment over the years. Hearing all about his father, Paravasu shoots an arrow at his father Raibhya, who instantly collapses without even a whimper. Thus, Raibhya was killed by his son Paravasu again out of rage.

Sketch the character of Paravasu:

Paravasu is the elder son of Raibhya. He is about 28. He was selected as the chief priest for the seven-year-long yajna. As the yajna was supposed to be a seven-year-long one, the king preferred Paravasu, considering his young age. Meanwhile, the actor-manager of a drama troupe comes asking for permission to enact a play. On hearing that Arvasu, the younger brother of Paravasu, is one of the artists in the play, denied permission to act and by creating circumstances in which he could not get married to Nittilai. Though Paravasu has abandoned his wife and doesn't love her anymore, he still cannot control his anger upon

hearing Vishaka's testimony. He further blames Arvasu because he is equally angry with him for having defied his caste by loving a tribal girl and having an interest in acting.

The news of Vishaka going astray made Paravasu come home after seven years. On hearing that Raibhya was jealous of his son for grabbing the post of the chief priest and also, he had been physically and sexually harassing Vishaka over the years, Paravasu shoots his arrow and kills his father because he disrupted the sacrifice by killing Yavakri and he had behaved indecently with his daughter-in-law Vishakha. Thus, Raibhya was killed by Paravasu again out of rage. He instructs Arvasu to do the last rites for their father and then come to the palace where the pooja was almost in the final stage. When Arvasu goes to the yajna, Paravasu cunningly blames their father's murder on Arvasu.

In the play within the play, Lord Indra betrayed his brother Vishwarupa by pushing him into the fire and killing him. Paravasu, watching the entire play, realizes that the play is an allusion to him. He gets a self-realization of the fatal sin which he has committed. He tries to stop the destruction. Paravasu at the peak of his realization calmly walks into the fire without revealing the truth to the mass. The play informs that Paravasu was also not devoted to the betterment of the public but just aimed at enhancing his social standing and reputation as a learned man.

Give a character analysis of Arvasu :

Arvasu, son of Raibhya, a Brahmin boy, became a wiser man in the drama. A local theatre manager offers him to take part in his play. He had always wanted to act but had been barred from doing so by Paravasu and society as Brahmin was not supposed to act in a play. Arvasu is convicted and denies all social rules. His elder brother and his community disowned Arvasu because his love for performing arts was considered to be meant for the so-called lower castes. The love affair between Nittilai and Arvasu was famous in the

village. According to the tribal custom of Nittilai's village, Arvasu had to proclaim in front of her village heads that he is man enough to satisfy a girl. They had arranged for a counsel and Arvasu was supposed to meet the village heads before sunset that evening. At Nittilai's village, that is the day Nittilai's father summoned the villagers to meet Arvasu to approve of their marriage. Due to cremation duties and other family matters, the arrival of Arvasu in Nittilai's village was delayed. Her father loses patience and her marriage is arranged with a boy, the first volunteer in her community.

Arvasu complies with the orders of his brother, which results in his being accused of murder and beaten almost to death. The blame for killing Raibhya is cunningly put on Arvasu and the mob beats him severely. Nittilai, who has married away to a boy of her caste, leaves her husband to nurse Arvasu. Arvasu wanted to take revenge for the betrayal by his brother because he was convinced that the chain of events that had occurred recently happened. After all, he was about to reject his caste by getting married to Nittilai.

He plays the part of Vritra in the myth of Indra, Vishwarupa and Vritra. Arvasu wears the mask of Vritra and becomes cruel. He ends up bringing the mask to life and ends up destroying the sacrificial altar and killing Paravasu. Indra offers a boon to Arvasu. Arvasu asks for the life of Nittilai. But Arvasu learns to be selfless and asks Indra to liberate the soul of Kritya. Arvasu has a redemptive function to play in the play. He works for the greater good of his community, even at the cost of losing Nittilai. Arvasu sacrifices his happiness with Nittilai for the sake of the Brahma R, as released from life and death. Rain comes at the end, at the exchange and realization of sacrifice and the land becomes fertile.

Give a character analysis of Vishaka.

Vishakha was about 26, born into an upper-caste family and was married to Paravasu, though she was in love with Yavakri. Their married life was good for about a year, but then Paravasu concentrated on spiritual wisdom and left home

for seven years. During this time, her father-in-law Raibhya has been physically and sexually assaulting her. Hence, Vishaka has a burning vengeance on her husband and father-in-law.

Yavakri, her childhood mate, meets her and tries to rekindle their love. Initially, Vishaka resists but is eventually swayed by Yavakri's words. She believes his request is out of true love and gives in. Yavakri corners her in a lonely spot and molests her. On knowing about the incident through his meditation, Raibhya invokes a kritya and sends a Brahma Rakshasa to kill Yavakri. Vishakha does not trust or have any faith in his power. She finds Yavakri and pleads with him to run away into the hermitage. Vishakha informs Yavakri of her father-in-law's evil intention. She discovers that Yavakri used her love to take revenge and pours out the consecrated water. Rakshasa catches Yavakri at the gate and kills him. Thus, she brings about Yavakri’s death.

Paravasu returns home to meet his wife Vishaka after seven years. The news of Vishaka going astray was the reason for his return. She daringly puts forth her argument that is the sole cause of her adultery. Further, she accuses his father, as he is the root cause of everything that happened. Paravasu shoots his arrow and kills his father after hearing that Raibhya was jealous of his son for grabbing the post of the chief priest and also, he had been physically and sexually harassing Vishaka over the years. Further, Vishakha stands for her boldness even after committing adultery with Yavakri. However, Vishakha is not punished, she's just iced for her sexual transgression. Her husband, father-in-law and former lover all use her as a sexual instrument. Her loneliness is portrayed in the play because of the selfishness of those around her. Vishakha experiences exploitation and neglect because of Brahminic patriarchy. She is given no privilege because of her social position. Men dominate her life, taking advantage of her to gain knowledge and power.

Sketch the character of Nittilai in the play

OR

The play ends in the rain. Rain is there not because of a sacrificial ritual, but because of the sacrifice of Nittilai. Discuss.

The character of Nittilai pulls in the reader's consideration. Nittilai, a tribal girl of fourteen, is a symbol of compassion. She belonged to a family of hunter-tribes and was very close to nature. She has many noble qualities and an attractive character. She is away from the universal attitude and has no dread about coming clean. Nittilai is Arvasu’s lady love. She is initially modest and does not wish to be touched by a man before the marriage. So, she says to Arvasu that she cannot be touched. Arvasu pleads he is giving up his entire caste, his people, and his whole heritage to her. But why can't she forget a minor custom for his sake? However, Nittilai says that this is the only custom that is worth observing because she kept her modesty and reputation.

According to the tribal custom of Nittilai's village, Arvasu had to proclaim in front of her village heads that he is man enough to satisfy a girl. They had arranged for a counsel and Arvasu was supposed to meet the village heads before sunset that evening. At Nittilai's village, that is the day Nittilai’s father summoned the villagers to meet Arvasu to approve of their marriage. Arvasu’s arrival in Nittilai’s village was delayed because of cremation duties and other family matters. Her father loses patience and her marriage is arranged with a boy, the first volunteer in her community.

Nittilai is a witty girl. She asks many questions about Yavakri, such as the time of his death, if he can bring rain, etc. She leaves her husband, family, and everything to help her past lover Arvasu with his problems. It is to take care of Arvasu to help him get better. She advised Arvasu not to take revenge on his brother, as she believed it would lead to more violence. While playing the role of Vritra, Arvasu tried to murder Paravasu, and Nittilai threw the mask of Vritra in Arvasu's face. Unfortunately, Nittilai's brother and husband murdered

Nittilai. The true love of Arvasu died. She is the victim of a male-dominated society. The play ends in the rain. Rain is there not because of sacrificial ritual, but because of the human sacrifice of Nittilai and the grand self-sacrifice of Arvasu. Nittilai becomes a victim of the tribal patriarchy. Through Nittilai's character, Karnad attacks this *knowledge* that Yavakri and other Brahmins boast of having "acquired" by their strict penance. Nittilai ends up becoming a scapegoat for the rivalries between these different Brahmin men and also for Arvasu's desire to seek the welfare of his community.

What role does Andhaka play in Fire and the Rain?

Andhaka, the blind Sudra sage, was guarding the hermitage of Bharadwaja. This Shudra character was blinded in the play. He was happy about the love affair between Brahmin Arvasu and a tribal girl Nittilai. He encouraged them to stay and chat. He even said that listening to them makes him feel happy. Through him, it is known that Yavakri, the son of Bharadwaja, is back in town after attaining universal knowledge through rigorous penance for ten years. When Brahma Rakshasa chased Yavakri to kill, Andhaka was guarding the hermitage. Arvasu tells Andhaka to convey the message to Yavakri to stay inside his father's hermitage. When Yavakri is rushing towards his father's hermitage, Andhaka cannot recognize Yavakri, his footsteps and he catches hold of him. Meanwhile, the demon Brahma Raksha overtakes Yavakri and is impaled with a spear.Once Andhaka said that as people recognise the man by his face, he recognises Arvasu by the sound of his steps. Ironically, now he cannot recognize Yavakri's footsteps and catches hold of him.Thus, indirectly helping the demon and the death of Yavakri.

Who created Brahma Rakshasa in the play? Explain the role played by Brahma Rakshasa.

Brahma Rakshasa, a Brahmin soul, is trapped in the limbo between death and rebirth. Raibhya, through his meditation, invokes a kritya and sends a Brahma

Rakshasa to kill Yavakri. The Rakshasa is almost nearby. Yavakri now runs towards the hermitage. The blind Andhaka does not recognize his footsteps. While he catches him at the gate, the Rakshasa kills Yavakri. Brahma Raksha pleads with Paravasu to help him liberate him and also reveals the truth that Raibhya gave him a new birth and they are brothers.

Brahma Rakshasa is moving around in the sacrificial precincts. He reminds Arvasu of the beautiful nature of Nittilai and the superiority of human beings compared to either spirits or gods. Brahma Rakshasa tells Arvasu that he is a human being and is capable of mercy and that he could understand pain and suffering as the gods could not. During the fire sacrifice, the Brahma Rakshasa asks for liberation. Indra grants Arvasu a wish of whatever he asks for. The crowd cries, suggesting him ask for rain. Arvasu finally asks for the liberation of the Brahma Rakshasa, which would have been Nittilai's wish too. Indra grants his wish and this act of humanity brings rain to the kingdom. Thus, he plays an instrumental role in the purification of Arvasu and the resultant rain.

Sketch the character of Indra:

Indra is the son of Brahma and the King of the Gods. He is supreme in the three worlds. He wishes that Brahma; the Father of All Creations, ensured that Indra stood unrivalled in all these domains. Indra is angry with his father, Brahma, for making progeny in various castes. Vishwarupa is his half-brother, whom Brahma produced him in a human womb. Everyone admires Vishwarupa for his wisdom and gentleness. Indra is jealous of his brothers; he plans to kill Vishwarupa. Vritra, another half-brother of Indra, has been instructed by Brahma to guard Vishwarupa as he expects danger from Indra. Vritra believes that Indra is treacherous. So, Vritra and Vishwarupa are inseparable. Hence, Indra cannot harm Vishwarupa. Therefore, Indra cunningly organises a fire sacrifice in memory of their father and forbids Vritra from entering the altar

as he is a demon clan. During the fire sacrifice, Indra pushes Vishwarupa into the fire and kills him. This enrages Vritra, who wants revenge on Indra.

Sketch the character of Vritra:

Arvasu takes the character of Vritra in the play within the play. And he wears a mask in the play too. Indra, Vishwarupa and Vritra are the sons of Brahma. Vritra belongs to the demonic lineage. Vritra is the half-demonic son of Brahma. His mother was a demoness and demon blood flows in his veins. Brahma made him the king of the nether world and told him to protect Vishwarupa, the king of men. Vritra has been instructed by Brahma to guard Vishwarupa as he anticipates danger from Indra. Hence, Vritra and Vishwarupa are inseparable.

Indra is jealous of his brothers; he plans to kill Vishwarupa. He cunningly organises a fire sacrifice in memory of their father and forbids Vritra from entering the altar as he is a demon clan. During the fire sacrifice, Indra pushes Vishwarupa into the fire and kills him. This enrages Vritra who wants revenge on Indra. Vritra says: "You can elude me Indra, but you can't escape me, even if you fly in like a falcon. I'll find you; I'll destroy you; I'll raise you, befall sacrificed the ground; I'll burn down the sacrifice.

Explain the symbolism used in the play Fire and the Rain.

Fire stands for the symbolic representation of both positive and negative states of mind such as revenge, anger, betrayal, lust and jealousy. Whereas "rain" is known as a gift from God, which nourishes the Earth and symbolises forgiveness, sacrifice, revival, regeneration and fertility. “Agni works as anger and revenge in Raibhya, Paravasu, and Yavakri. In Vishakha, it burns as lust; and in the people as hunger because of the persisting drought. In all of them, except in Vishakha, Agni burns as sacrificial fire without its accompanying grace as vision or light. However, this overarching element of Agni (Fire) in the

title of the play burns to convey the lessons the human being must learn about the subjugation of one's ego to the Universal Being. Both 'fire 'and 'rain' are worshipped as Gods in the Hindu religion and both are strong elements of nature. The tragic consequences in the lives of the learned men like Raibhya, Paravasu and Yavakri in the play occurred because of their inability to cope with the universal power they had gained. Karnad has shown that when humans worship nature, he gains, but when he breaks the rule of nature by crossing their limits of passion, he ruins himself.

Comment on the play within the play) The Triumph of Lord Indra)

The play within the play is called the Triumph of Lord Indra. The actor-manager and Arvasu decide to reveal the truth to everyone by staging the myth of Indra, Vishwarupa and Vritra. They chose the story of lord Indra betraying his brother Vishwarupa Vritra. The play itself takes the form of a play, within a play. That's why it's, it's a meta-theatrical play, where the performance itself becomes a theme in the play.

According to the plot of the play, Indra is the son of Brahma, born in the Brahmin lineage, and his brother Vishwarupa was born in the Kshatriya lineage, Brahma's son with a mortal woman. And Vritra belongs to the demonic lineage, a Brahma son with a dear female demon'. Indra, the king of the Heavens, is very insecure about and jealous of his brother Vishwarupa. So, he plans to kill Vishwarupa. Therefore, Vritra offers to protect Vishwarupa from Indra. Hence, the two are inseparable because they are paired, always trying to save each other from Indra's wrath. Indra organizes a fire sacrifice in honour of Brahma and he invites all the gods and men to the sacrifice. Indra even invites Vishwarupa and asks Vritra not to enter the altar, as he is a Rakshasa. During the fire sacrifice, Indra pushes Vishwarupa into the fire and kills him. Vritra tries to protect Vishwarupa, but Indra drives him away and kills Vishwarupa. Vritra is very upset at his brother's death and enters the enclosure. He sees Vishwarupa dying

and he is furious at Indra’s treachery. And they have a duel. In the fight, the actor-managers play Indra and Arvasu plays Vritra. He completely surrenders to the mask, which brings Vritra's character to life.

The very distinction between fiction and reality completely collapsed at this moment. Vritra said that Indra could elude him, but could not escape. Even if he flew like a falcon, he would find and destroy him. The actor's manager begged them to stop him. He warned that if anyone tried to stop him, they would be responsible for the sin of killing a Brahman, as he was a Brahman and he would kill anyone who tried to stop him. The actor-manager attempts to take the mask off Arvasu's face, however, Nittilai is successful.

The Brahmins become enraged as their sacrifice is disrupted by the tribals. Paravasu notices the play is an allusion to him and tries to stop it. He knocks out and pins Arvasu to the ground. Nittilai's husband pulls out a knife, holds her by the hair, and slashes her throat. Arvasu attempted to intervene and save Nittilai from the mask's fury, but it was too late. Indra's voice could be heard in the skies, telling Arvasu not to grieve, expressing their pleasure with him, and saying that he should ask for any boon and it would be granted. The distinction between fiction and reality is gone between the play's world, outside the play, and the play within the play. Thus, the play is an allusion to the relationship between Arvasu, Paravasu, and their father Raibhya.

> Girish Karnad reveals the ugly human side of the self-proclaimed godly Brahmin caste as men of vices. Explain with reference to the play "The Fire and the Rain".

The play "The Fire and The Rain" explores the futility of false knowledge and evil resulting from pride. Girish Karnad reveals the ugly human side of the self-proclaimed godly Brahmin caste as men of vices in the play. The Priestly class is portrayed as immoral and dominating over lower-class people. It portrays how human beings should not be enslaved by others. Karnad uses the motif of

revenge to portray the futility of false knowledge and the feebleness of human nature. Yavakri, Raibhya and Paravasu are victims of egoism. The pursuit of knowledge does not make them free from evil resulting from pride.

Yavakri held a grudge against Raibhya's family. Though Yavakri loves Vishaka left her to undertake hard penance to get knowledge of the Vedas directly from the gods. Ultimately, after ten years, Lord Indra granted him "Universal Knowledge" and this made him arrogant. On his return, he molested Vishaka Raibhya's daughter-in-law, believing that neither Raibhya nor Paravasu could challenge him. Karnad highlights the futility of Yavakri's knowledge received directly from Lord Indra. Even after receiving knowledge, he could not free himself from the bondage of selfhood. He is unhappy because of his knowledge. His knowledge does not help him overcome the bad things inside him.

Raibhya, though a learned senior, is jealous of the opportunity given as the chief priest for the yajna to his elder son Paravasu instead of himself. He dislikes both his sons and wishes that he cremate them before his death. He showed all resentment towards his daughter-in-law, Vishakha. He had even been physically and sexually harassing Vishaka over these years. He suspects Vishaka and detests her. On finding that, Vishaka having an illicit affair with Yavakri, Raibhya summons Brahman Rakshasa, a demon, to kill Yavakri. Paravasu feels that his father killed Yavakri to disturb him in the last stages of the sacrifice. Raibhya's character is a lustful, suspicious and revengeful murderer.

In the play, Paravasu, Raibhya's elder son, conducts a major prayer ceremony to appease Indra so that their region may get rain. Though Paravasu has abandoned his wife and doesn't love her anymore, he still cannot control his anger upon hearing Vishaka's testimony. He further blames Arvasu because he is equally angry with him for having defied his caste by loving a tribal girl and having an interest in acting. Paravasu shoots his arrow and kills his father. However, Paravasu cunningly blames their father's murder on Arvasu. Paravasu's

character is the immoral Chief Priest of the fire sacrifice. He killed his father deliberately.

Vishakha belongs to an upper-caste Brahmin family, but her position is not privileged. Her husband has long left her to be the chief priest of the fire sacrifice. Vishakha herself is chastised in the play, but not punished for transgressing the boundaries of female chastity. Because she has an affair, she continues to have an affair with Yavakri, even after she's married. However, Vishakha is not punished for her sexual transgression. Again, like Nittilai, Vishakha is not the woman in the play who questions the hypocrisy of Brahminical discipline and asceticism. She blames both Yavakri and on, and Paravasu, for being these typical Brahmin men, who are only interested in their selfish ends. Thus, Karnad portrays the futility of false knowledge and the feebleness of human nature through revenge.

Revenge And Violence in the Play

Girish Karnad's play is about murder, revenge and jealousy between two families: Raibhya and Bharadwaja. The play is dense and intellectually ambitious. It is structured around ideas and relationships that unfold with a rare economy and intensity of words and emotions. Karnad reconstructs the world of Hindu antiquity. The entire play depicts negative human impulses, such as anger, violence, bloodshed, jealousy, pride, false knowledge, hostility, hatred, greed, treachery and revenge. Karnad finds this myth relevant to contemporary society. The story is one of passion, loss and sacrifice in Vedic ritual and spiritual discipline. It explores social and ethical differences between human agents and interrelated forms of performance. The play reflects on the consequences of selfishness and sinfulness. "The Fire and the Rain" is a powerful exploration of the human condition.

Title of the Play:

The play is titled Agni Mattu Male, written in Kannada. Agni is the Sanskrit word for fire, which carries connotations of holiness, ritual status, and ceremony. Agni is lit in sacrificial altars, weddings, and cremations. Agni is also the name of the god of fire. The fire in the title is the fire of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, violence, and death. The fire connotes both positive and negative human impulses. These impulses include anger, jealousy, revenge, betrayal and lust. Rain represents human love, sacrifice, compassion, forgiveness, revival and regeneration.

Agni works in anger and revenge in Raibhya, Paravasu, and Yavakri. In Vishakha, Agni burns as lust, and in the people as hunger due to the persisting drought. Agni burns like a sacrificial fire without its accompanying grace like a vision or light. Agni in the title of the play conveys the lessons the human being must learn about the subjugation of one's ego to the Universal being. Much of the agony in the lives of the major characters is played out on the canvas of human consciousness until they learn this all-essential lesson of humility. The play conveys the importance of learning the lesson of humility. Agni serves as a symbol of enlightenment throughout the play.Abuse of knowledge leads to the destruction of the world.

Fire is perceived as a pervasive symbol of all its potential in the play. Yavakri seeks final liberation in the funeral fire and Paravasu in the sacrificial fire. Fire is a powerful symbol throughout the play. Brahminic culture is symbolized by "fire" and tribal culture by "rain". The conflict between the Brahmin traditional community and the benevolent tribal community. The title of the play is used to suggestively portray the conflict. Brahminic culture is destructive, tribal culture gives and sustains life. Brahminic culture is rigid and ritualistic. Tribal culture is community-oriented. Thus, the title of the Play communicates a powerful message.

Critical Interpretation and Appraisal:

Discuss the theme of the play "The Fire and the Rain”

In "The Fire and the Rain," Karnad portrayed modern civilization as stressful, strained, confusing, and frustrating. Karnad’s humanistic approach and commitment to human values are evident in the play. The theme of revenge, hatred and violence is pervasive. Rain symbolizes the triumph of good. Nittilai and Arvasu gain ultimate knowledge by staying in life, not outside of it.

The play explores the futility of false knowledge and evil resulting from pride. The pursuit of knowledge does not make them free from evil resulting from pride. Fire sacrifice is organized to propitiate the god of rain. Low-caste people are prohibited from entering the holy area. Priests are directed not to leave the precinct and not to talk to the Shudras. The playwright focuses on the problem of the caste system. Karnad's play is a comment on caste and gender-biased society.

Both female characters try to raise a voice of rebellion, but the level of their resistance is determined by their caste and gender. Karnad adds additional dimensions of gender and caste to the narrative of Arvasu and Nittilai. Vishakha suffers unnecessary oppression due to her social position. Nittilai suffers unavoidable suffering due to caste division and gender bias in society. Both characters are victims of male control, resulting in oppression and exploitation. Karnad's play is a comment on the systemic injustices of the Indian social order. Nittilai and Vishakha are in search of identity. Nittilai belongs to the family of hunters. Vishakha belongs to an upper-caste Brahmin family, but her position is not privileged. Both of them suffer from a male-dominated society in which they are subjected to violent displacement and silencing. Women have been used by their male counterparts as stepping stones in their power struggles. Both

female characters try to challenge the oppression but meet with a tragic end. Both female characters are witnesses of womankind's endless suffering in the male-dominated society.

Karnad's plays focus on the position of women in a patriarchal society. Vishakha is exploited by her husband, father-in-law and her former lover. Nittilai is a victim of tribal patriarchy. Women are victims of patriarchy. Vishakha and Nittilai experience oppression in a patriarchal culture. Brahminical patriarchy reduces women to sexual exploitation and neglect. Tribal patriarchy is lethal towards women who don't follow the rules set by male elders. Vishaka's loneliness in a male-centric world is depicted in the play. Vishakha is betrayed by her selfish lover and self-centred husband. Vishakha's loneliness is depicted as an empty water pot. The play shows the consequences of a patriarchal society on women. Women are sexual tools used by male characters to avenge each other.

Existentialism is the dominant theme in the play. Yavakri and Arvasu find themselves in existential situations. Possession in love, friendship and brotherhood, isolation and alienation, difficulty in communication, and the quest for identity and meaning is existential themes presented in the play. Yavakri's hatred for Paravasu hinders him from understanding knowledge. Arvasu is shocked by his brother's treachery. The play highlights the impossibility of possession in love. It also shows the illusion of friendship and brotherhood. Yavakri, Raibhya and Paravasu are victims of egoism. Vishakha's seduction and the killing of the father by his son are themes of hatred and revenge in the play. The play ends with good prevailing over evil.

The Myth of Yavakri

"The Fire and the Rain" is Karnad's most complex play. The play is based on the myth of Yavakri (or Yavakrita) which occurs in Chapters 135-38 of the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata. It is narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the

Pandavas as they wander across the land during their exile. According to this myth, Raibhya and Bharadwaja, two learned sages, were good friends. Raibhya lived with his two sons Paravasu and Arvasu who learnt Vedas and became famous scholars. Bharadwaja's son Yavakri held a grudge against the world, especially Raibhya's family. He felt his father did not receive the recognition he deserved because Raibhya grabbed all the attention. He, therefore, went to the forest and started practising hard penance to obtain knowledge of the Vedas directly from the gods. Ultimately, after ten years of austerity, Lord Indra granted him "Universal Knowledge" and this made him arrogant. He molested Raibhya's daughter-in-law, believing that neither Raibhya nor Paravasu would be able to challenge him. But Raibhya invoked the Kritya spirit and created a lookalike for his daughter-in-law and rakshasa. While the former stole Yavakri's kamandalu which contained the sanctified water which would save him from any attack, the latter chased him and when Yavakri tried to enter his father's hermitage, he was held by the blind Sudra gate-keeper of the hermitage. At that moment the rakshasa killed him with a trident. When Bharadwaja learnt how his son died, he cursed that Raibhya would die at the hands of his son. But soon realizing the extremity of what he had said about his friend, Bharadwaja felt remorse and immolated himself. On the other hand, after some time, his curse turned out to be true. Raibhya's sons were conducting a fire sacrifice for the king.

Paravasu visited his home one night. He mistook his father's deerskin for a wild animal and killed him in the dark. Paravasu asked Arvasu to go back to the hermitage. He wanted Arvasu to perform penitential rites for their father, as he had not died naturally. Arvasu obeyed, but when he returned to the sacrificial enclosure, Paravasu blamed him for committing patricide and Brahminicide and had him thrown out. Arvasu went to the jungle. The gods granted his wish in response to his prayers and brought Yavakri, Bharadwaja, and Raibhya back to

life. They also made Paravasu forget his evil deeds. Also, the gods scolded Yavakri and told him to pursue knowledge correctly and not to take shortcuts.