CHAPTER - V

THE REALM OF MYTH AND RITUAL
(The Fire and the Rain & Bali: The Sacrifice)

Myth constitutes the system of stories, beliefs and world views collectively held by a community in their collective unconscious, rites and rituals. Ritual leads to myth what performance is to a text. Rites are sacred performances affected at crucial stages of each member of the community whereas the rituals are practiced to put the member back in tune with the community, the ancestors and the cosmos at large.

Primitive communities across the world have devised ways of guiding human beings through the crucial stages in their life cycle; birth, puberty, marriage and death. At each one of these stages, the transition made constitutes a traumatic experience. The infant’s entry into the world is a decent into a the strange and unknown realm of the human world both for the mother and infants. Different birth rights are practiced to guide both of them safely through the crisis. The naming ceremony is also one of the birth rights to upclimatize the infant to the community. In many communities the new born is named after a departed ancestor to ensure continuity and familiarity. Some times most ten of purificatory rituals like vedic also takes place. The attainment of puberty when a grown up boy or girl discover the sexual fertility is another crisis. The rights of passage
involved here are varied, according to the history and geography of the community. For instance, the tribes of southern Gujarat have devised a very dramatic rite. Grown up boys and girls gather on the day of Diwali, the festival of lights, at the centre of a nearby town Chota Udaipur. The young boys woo the variously decked girls by playing on the long flute. Having already partaken of mahua (a flower intoxicant’), they begin to dance together in a group. In the process each boy and girl selects his or her partner and then they elope into the jungle. They live and enjoy together in the forest for fifteen days. Thereupon they return to the community and declare themselves man and wife. The ritual of marriage is celebrated soon after. Marriage itself involves elaborate rituals and constitutes a rite of passage in its own right. After old age it is time to depart from the world. This is another great trauma for every human being. It is also a trauma for those who suffer bereavement. The wisdom of primitive communities has devised different means to ferry both the dying and the surviving across this greatest crisis of human life. In the community of Vajrayana Budhist in Tibet, the dying man listens to the reading out of the Tibetan Book of Dead. This sacred book instructs the dying man to practice different kinds of visualizations and meditations, which involve seeing himself being absorbed into the mandals of Budhas and Bodhisattvas. In one of the tribal communities of the Japan after people get old they voluntarily walk out of the community and go into
secluded place where so many ancestors have gone there to die in isolation without disturbing the community of living. The rights of passage at this stage also involve different ways of disposing of the dead body, which is symbolic of the dead body being reabsorbed into one of the elements. The burial rites restored the body to the earth: “Oh man though comest from dust and to dust thou shall return”. The community which cremate the dead return the body to the fire. There are also rites involving the throwing of ashes of the dead into the river, which involves return to water. Some communities abandon the dead body to the mercy of nature to be prayed upon by eagles and egrets, worms and insects.

Many communities visualized the return of the dead person to the world of Gods and ancestors as a journey and provide the necessary accompaniments. Sometimes food and water are buried alongside the dead. In ancient China when a king died hundreds of soldiers would be sacrificed to follow him to serve in the next world. At some point of time this custom cease and terracotta soldiers replaced actual soldiers. Wole Soyinka depicts this in the play *Death and the King's Horse Man* to show how in Yoruba community of Nigeria, when a king dies, elaborate mourning ceremonies are held for a month after which his favourite horseman sacrifices himself to follow his master into the world of Gods. Different kinds of mourning ceremonies are part of death rites which
enable the surviving to accustom themselves to the departure of the dead person.

Unlike rites, rituals are enactments of the myth attuned to the cycle of seasons. Just as individuals go through a live cycle, nature too goes through a cycle in the course of a year. At spring there is a new birth everywhere, after winter, the season of death, which can be unusually long and hard in some regions like northern Europe and North America. The spring is welcomed through various kinds of rituals. In most parts of South India, on the first evening of Chaitra month, the members of the community watch the new moon, which is believed to purify them of impurities gained over the previous year. The next day animals are sacrificed and their meat partaken. The holy festival celebrated in different ways in different parts of India is also a fertility ritual in celebration of the return of fecundity to nature. Males and females of the community give themselves more freedom than usual and pour colours over each other. In parts of South India, abandoned clothes are gathered and assembled around a bamboo pole erected at the square of the town or a village and set on a fire in the evening. This is symbolic of Lord Siva burning the God of lust with his third eye. But Kama’s death is not death as is instantaneously reborn as Siva’s desire for the young Paarvati, the daughter of mountains.
The death of the year is celebrated through various winter rituals around the world. Christmas is the Christian version of ancient pagan relation across the world in which the whole community participated symbolically in the death of a nature God. In between the birth and death of the year occurs the season of fertility, autumn, the period when corns and fruits are gathered. In India festivals like Navaratri and Diwali, symbolizing the triumph of life over death, of light over darkness are celebrated. Navaratri is the re-enactment of the mother-goddess fight and victory over demons. In parts of North India this myth is combined with the myth of Rama’s conquest over Ravana, the demon. The performance of different kinds of Ramlila is enactment of this mythical victory. It concludes with burning down of a colossal effigy of Ravana, the villain of the Rama story.

Both myth and ritual are spacio-temporally distinguished from the time and space of everyday experience. The events narrated in the myth do not happen in historical time. The birth and death of Gods, the victory of divine beings over forces of anarchy happen in a time before time. Marcea Eliade calls this sacred time as opposed to profane time, the historical time. (Patterns in Comparation Religion, Sted and ward Ltd, 1971. 1) Being the enactments of myths, rituals take us back from profane time to sacred times. Correspondently rituals happen in a space marked off
from everyday space. Thus shrines and places of worship in different cultures are considered sacred and repositories of great magical power. That is why Moses approaches the Burning Bush in *Old Testament*. The voice of God tells him to take off his shoes as he is now treading the sacred ground. People who are considered impure are not let into such sacred sites. For example menstruating women are not permitted to enter Hindu shrines and temples.

Similarly some casts considered impure were traditionally barred from temple entry. A similar taboo exists in Islamic mosques. Only mean can go and pray inside the mosque. Even in the tombs of great sufi saints like Hazrat Nizamuddin, Oulia or Qwaza Bande Nawaz of Gulbarga, women are not given entry to the inmost shrine. The breaking of such taboos results in desacralisation. Once this happens purificatory rituals have to be followed. There is a belief in South India that if one sees a cat or shaven headed widow while undertaking a journey, one has to stop his mission as it is a bad omen. There is a poem by the medieval saint poet, Basavanna about this superstition. A certain snake charmer was on his way along with his broken-nosed wife to find the match for their son. The charmer was carrying a snake in his hand. He encountered halfway another snake charmer accompanied also by a broken-nosed wife and carrying a snake in hand. He was also in search of a match for his son.
On seeing the second snake charmer the first snake charmer said to his wife: “Bad omen! Let us go back”. Thus they gave up the match making exercise. The above example illustrates how bad omen violates, the expectation about the sacred and call for a purificatory rituals.

Myths happen in sacred time as opposed to profane time and rituals are enacted in sacred space as opposed to profane space. The origins of theatre around the world are traced back to rituals. The connections of Greek-tragedy to rituals of Dionysus and that of comedy to rituals of Satyr are well-known. In the Indian tradition Bharata, in his *Natyasastra* calls natya, a theatrical performance, natyayagna (theatre-sacrifice) because he too believes in the relationship between theatre and ritualistic sacrifice. He therefore gave injunctions as to how the space of performance has to be purified ritualistically to word it off from the interference of negative energies. One of the rituals involved is the erection of Indra Dhwaja (the staff of Indra) to mark the victory of Gods over demons. There are conjectures also about ritualistic origins of Elizabethan drama: the comedy took shape out of spring festivals and the tragedy from out of winter festivals.

As Clyde Kluchhohm, the famous anthropologist rightly says in his essay “Myth and Rituals: A General Theory”, “To a considerable degree, the whole question of the primary of ceremonial or mythology is as
meaningless as all question of “the her or the egg”. What is really important, as Malinowski has argued is the intricate interdependence of myth with ritual and many other forms of behavior” (*Myth and Literature*, 37).

When ritual becomes transformed into theatre, the process of increasing secularization accompanies it. Though Greek drama has its origins in Bionisan fertility rituals, one of which is vividly depicted in Euripides’s plays, it still retains the weightage of those rituals during annual Athenian theatre festivals. It had out grown its religious origins by this time. Catharsis, not ritualistic communion, is the objective of Greek tragedy.

By the time theatre had completely divested itself of its religious and ritualistic origins, theatre space became completely secular. This is when naturalism and realism in theatre arrive, making, not the mythical world, but the world of scientific mechanical materialism, the model of theatre. With this change, theatre attains a great deal of technical perfections resulting from technological progress. However, the myth, magic and mystery have gone. The process of desecularisation is complete, as is conspicuous from what is depicted during the epoch of the theatre of the Absurd. Strangely enough, it happened when theatre begins to long and
crawl back to its origins in myth and rituals. As Cyde Kluck hohn justifiably points out,

…. Myth and Rituals are adaptive from the point of view of the society in that they promote social soil deity, enhance the integration of the society by providing a formalized statement of its ultimate value attitudes, affords a means for the transmission of much of the culture with little loss of content – thus protecting cultural continuity and stabilizing the society (Myth and Literature, 40)

Some of the manifestations of experimental modern theatre like Athraud’s Theatre of Cruelty and Grotowskin theatre are unconscious efforts to bring back magic and mystery to theatre. What happened to theatre at the level of production and performance had long started happening at the level of playwriting. It is paradoxical that Strindberg, initially a crusader of naturalism gradually moves towards drama that becomes more and more religious and metaphysical. The Irish theatre movement led by W.B. Yeats and Madam Gregory was also a movement away from realism and naturalism. W.B. Yeats is said to have walked out of a theatre in Dublin while watching a performance of Ibsen’s Doll’s House, a paradigmatic model of realism shouting, “If this is theatre, I am not a playwright”. The plays of Yates, J.M. Synge and Madam Gregory constituted an attempt to restore the magic and mystery of Celtic tradition to the stage. The wheel
became a full circle. Theatre having its genesis in ritual and religion gradually cuts off its umbilical cord and becomes completely secularized in realism, naturalism, theater of the Absurd and epic theatre. There are simultaneously attempts to restore myth and ritual to the theatre.

Indian drama during pre-colonial period was a close allay of religion and ritual. The kind of confrontation that characterized the history of European drama between theatre and religion was never part of Indian tradition. In spite of Lord Buddha’s strict injunctions against arts and theatre the later schools of Buddhism incorporated a lot of dance theatre and performance into their fold. During medieval period various regional Bhakti movements led to new forms of theatre, mostly known as actaas or lilas, which were qualitatively different from ancient drama. However, it was during the colonial period that the background was set for the complete divorce between ritual and theatre. The imitation of the colonial naturalistic theatre led to Parsi theatre in different metros of India, which became the chief source of mass entertainment for the swelling urban populations. At the same time, as a result of the concerted efforts of different language writers the new genre of literary drama emerged, which was broadly based on colonial models though there were rare exceptions like Rabindranath Tagore, who created his own individual genre of drama. The modern Indian theatre of the post-Independence period exemplified by
Alkaji and B.V. Karanth was again based on Euro-American paradigms. It was in the seventies that traditions, both folk and classical, came to be revived on Indian stage thanks to the skilled directors like K.N. Panikkar, Ratan Thiyam and several others. These changes were reflected in the playwright also.

Girish Karnad’s active career as a playwright has spanned between the emergences of modern theatre in the sixties till the second decade of the twenty-first century. His playwriting as a whole shows an oscillation between the demands of modern realism and pre-modern non-realistic traditions. His early plays like Tughlaq, Yayati and Sacrifice are firmly set in the mould of realism though the latter two plays return to mythology for the material. Soon by mind-seventies Girish Karnad is writing Hayavadana, a completely nonrealistic play. He follows this up with Naga-Mandala, a non-realistic play again. When he wrote Tale-Danda in early nineties, it was written with realism once again. After this he wrote an unusual play that dramatizes his characteristic tension between ritual and realism, myth and history. It may be mentioned in passing that Karnad’s later plays, Broken images, Flower and Marriage Album, are much less powerful than earlier ones that dramatise the creative tension between the opposite poles of realism and non-realism.
Indian culture has been the site of confrontation and collaboration between Vedic and Non-Vedic culture, just as the western world has oscillated between Hellenic and Hebraic cultures. One of the chief attributes of Vedic rituals is the centrality of fire. Non-vedic traditions on the other hand have always privileged water as being central to their rituals. This can be illustrated by the fact that fire plays an important role in vedic rituals and water, in agamic temple rituals. A corresponding difference is seen in the symbolism of vedic and non-vedic versions of *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. In the vedic versions of The Ramayana, Sita is asked to perform a fire ordeal to prove her chastity after Rama wins her back from Ravana. The same Sita is asked to perform rituals involving water in non-vedic folk and trial versions of *The Ramayana*. Karnad’s *The Fire and The Rain* dramatizes the tension between vedic and non-vedic cultures in India. The hero Aravasu, though born in vedic traditions, opts for forbidden love for *Nishada girl*. *The Fire and The Rain* represents the tension between ritual and theatre, the sacred and profane, the mythical and the realistic.

Karnad revives the ritualistic and symbolic aspects of drama in *The Fire and the Rain*. The actor-manager in the play who stands away from the sacrificial enclosure relates,
Sirs, as is well known to you, Brahma, the Lord of all creation extracted the requisite elements from the four Vedas and combined them into a fifth veda and thus gave birth to the art of Drama. He handed it over to his son, Lord Indra, the God of the Skies. Lord Indra, in turn passed on the art to Bharata, a human being, for the God cannot indulge in pretence. So if Indra is to be pleased and brings to an end this long draught, which ravages our land, a fire sacrifice is not enough. A play has to be performed along with it. If we offer him entertainment in addition to the oblation, the God may grant us the rains we are praying for. (*The Fire and The Rain*, 2-3).

Thus the performance of a play is equated to a *yagna*. The play which deals with the seven year long yagna concludes when the rains arrive and in the same way begins when the actor manager requests the courtier to allow them to perform a play and the play *The Fire and The Rain* concludes when his play (Play with in the play) gets performed. Thus the conclusion of the play has a religious ring as it almost becomes a catharsis which brings out an effect of purgation of emotions through pity and fear. As Karnad himself arrows,

> Thirty seven years is along time to live with a myth for company. It inevitably grows and changes with one. Somewhere along the line I became aware that the shape of
the myth it was dealing with had uncanny parallels with that of Aeschylus, Oresteia …. I was irresistibly drawn to delve deeper into Oresteia and then the rest of Aeschylus, (*The Fire and The Rain*, 74).

Thus the play *The Fire and The Rain*, almost becomes ‘tragedy’ but for the test scene where Arvasu almost gets the dead people alive and the play concludes with the coming of rain. Even then it has the effect of a catharsis as it has a “therapeutic effects; after the storm and climax there comes a sense of release from tension, calm” (*Dictionary of Literacy Terms and Literary Theory*, 115). Discussing the relationship between the theology and tragedy, George Luckas observes that in a tragedy myths project carefully in terms of fables, man’s vital emotions concerning the most profound problems of his life.

By virtue of being polycentric, the myths are subjected to multiple displacements. Though the tragic situation is projected into the dark distance of time, its subject, and aesthetic modes are shaped in terms of the contemporary life. As if a great deal of our life partakes of the tragic drama inherent in the myth; a core content, that passed along from our ancestors and without which life could scarcely be imagined (“The sociology of Modern Drama”, *The theory of Modern stage* Eric Bentley, Penguin Books, 1968, 445-446).
The play *The Fire and The Rain* has two rituals right from the beginning to the end: the seven-year rite for the rains, the actor-manager’s performance of the play. With the orders of the king, Paravasu, the elder son of Raibhya conducts a fire sacrifice to propitiate Indra and to get rains from the draught-ridden country. *The Fire* sacrifice, the yagna is a ritual of sacrifice derived from the practice of the vedic times which includes worship, prayer, praise, offering, oblation, and sacrifice. It is always a performance to please the Gods to attain certain wishes. It is believed that everything that is offered in the fire will reach the Gods. The entire play *The Fire and The Rain* revolves around the yagna performed by Parvasu, the adhvarya priest who is assisted by a number of other priests. The fire-sacrifice is arranged by the kind for the welfare of the country and the time allotted to it is seven years.

As per the Vedas, the fire-sacrifice has an outer aspect and an inner aspect. The outer aspect of it consists of building an alter, mostly with brick, kindling the fire using specific types of grass and wood and then pouring into it oblations such as ghee, food grains to the accompaniment of chanting of sacred verses of Vedas. The inner or the hidden aspect of the yagna is known to the scholars who are well versed of the vedic rituals. In the ninth chapter of *Bhagavat Gita*, Lord Krishna proclaims
I am kratu (vedic ritual), I am yagna (sacrifice), Svadha (offering), ausadham (medicine), mantra (Chant), ajyam (ghee), agni (fire) and hutam (burnt offering) (The Bhagavat Gita, Chapter 9, versel 6, Krish Store, Delhi, 2008).

Chandogya upanishat points out that yagna can be compared to the world, God rain, the earth, man and woman. For the world as yagna, the world is the fire, sun is the fuel, rays are the smoke, the day is the flame, the moon is the coal, stars are the sparks, faith is the oblation and finally soma is the result. (Chandogya Upanishad, Satyasai Book Centre of America, 2000).

For the rain as yagna, rain is the fire, air is the fuel, cloud is the smoke, lightening is the flame, thunder is the coal, thundering is the sparks, some is the oblation and rain is the result. For the Earth as yagna, earth is the fire, year is the fuel, space is the smoke, might is the flame, quarters is the coal, intermediate quarters are the sparks. For the man as yagna, man is the fire, speech is the fuel, breath is the smoke, tongue is the flame eyes are the coal, ears are the sparks, food is the oblation and semen is the result. And finally for woman as yagna, woman is the fire, sex organs are the fuel, desire is the smoke, value is the flame, friction is the coal, pleasure is the sparks, semen is the oblation and fetus is the result. (Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Chandogya Upanishad). The play The Fire and The Rain which presents life of the people belonging to the world,
discusses the efforts of the people of the world to get rains, asserts the earthliness of the people and presents a critique on the man-woman relationships and combines all the ingredients of the different yagnas thereby illustrating the same results in a highly creative and dramatic way.

*The fire and the rain* were the two physical elements which are antithetical in nature. Karnad himself points out in the notes he provides to the play, “Agni is the Sanskrit word for fire. And being a Sanskrit word it carries even when used in Kannada, connotations of holiness, of ritual status, of ceremony, which the Kannada word for fire (benki) does not posses. ‘Agni’ is what burns in sacrificial alters, acts as a witness at weddings and is lit at ceremonies. It is also the name of the god of fire…. ‘Male’ is a Kannada word. It means rain, pure and simple. It has none of the aura of romance, mystery and grandeur that surrounds Sanskrit words of rain when used in Karnad’ (*The Fire and The Rain*, 63).

The fire is worshiped as a God who destroys the sins, treacherous things, darkness and who discovers prosperity and nourishment during the vedic period. The fire, Agni, which is considered an interlocutor between the human and divine, is always used as a sacred symbol in Hinduisim. At the higher plane it represents the philosophical and spiritual desires and at the lower plane it represents the physical and passionate yearnings of
human beings. The play *The Fire and The Rain* portrays both the aspects of human beings.

According to the Vedas there are five fold Agnis which purify the atmosphere: daan (practice of cultivating non-attachement), tapa (practice of fruition of aspirations), Kama (practice of self-purification) and Swadharma (practice of liberation). They should be practiced for a happy and peaceful living. The importance of the yagna’s involving the fire-ceremonies is discussed in detail in the Vedas and the great epics of Hinduism, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharatha* depict the way they were conducted by all the Kings and the saints regularly to appease the Gods and to provide comfort on the earth for the human beings.

The play *The Fire and The Rain* is constructed around the central metaphor, fire sacrifice. The yearning of the people to propitiate the Gods is presented along with their passionate cravings to satisfy their emotions and passions. The myth of yavakri” which Karnad uses in the play provides ample scope for the portrayal of the diagonally opposite aspects of human desires. In a way the play is about the search for the basic nature of the things and people. The play begins with a prologue which presents a king who wants to perform a yagna to propitiate Indra, the God of Rains, to salvage the thirst of the land suffering from a relentless draught for more than ten years. The irony of the fire-ceremony is that it is meant to
propitiate a God who is always a personification of selfishness and jealousy.

Indra, the presiding deity of the yagna is considered the son of Brahma. The epics The Ramayana and The mahabharatha and many other myths clearly illustrate the way Indra struggles to keep his throne secured and his long wars with many antagonists to be on the throne for ever. There are some myths like that of the myth of Ravana, Hiranyaksha and so on according to which he is dethroned for a long time and suffered servocracy. Finally he regains the throne in all the myths through dubious and unjustifiable means. His conflict with Vritra, a demon, is one among such archetypal myths. He is a serpent who used to quench the river and steal them. By killing him, Indra brings back comfort to the nature and earth. But he has to suffer from the guilt of “Brahminicide”. In a way the demons are the brothers of the Gods according to the mythologies and so their conflict presents the efforts of these two races to claim the kingship. According to the myth, Indra has to take a bath on the bank of river to cleanse himself of the sin of killing Vritra. Karnad says that he got fascinated to know that the story of Aravasu and Paravasu took place on the banks of the same river. He imagines that Yavakri should be their cousin though The Mahabharatha does not mention it explicitly. Thus
these ironic associations reveal their self reflexivity. As Karnad rightly understands,

A myth seems complete in itself and yet when examined in detail, contains subconscious signals which lead you onto another myth which in turn will act as a conduit to a third one while illuminating the one you started with (The Fire and The Rain, 69).

In The Fire and The Rain, Karnad has taken more liberties with the myth to make it a play encompassing many aspects of the modern life. The complex web of the texture of the plot of the play is woven in such a way that it can reflect the complexities of the contemporary man. The entire drama proceeds from the fire-sacrifice performed in order to propitiate Indra, the God of rain and quite ironically and also naturally becomes a re-enactment of the story of Indra’s jealousy and agony thereby suggesting that the evil is only produced from an evil.

The antagonism continues through the characters of Bharadwaja and Raibhya, the two brothers who want to be supreme in their field of ascetic practices and learning. Thus Karnad transforms them into brothers where as they are mentioned as friends in The Mahabharatha. While Bharadwaja concentrates on his ascetic practices, Raibhya’s practice is not as projected as that of his brother as he is more interested in the worldly things. The
king of the country invites Paravasu, the elder son of Raibhya to preside the yagna as the chief priest. So Yavakri, the son of Bharadwaja gets infuriated as he thinks that his father and himself are deprived of the privilege by his cousin. As Karnad relates in the notes given to the play:

He therefore went off to the forest and did tapasya (penance) so that he could obtain the knowledge of the Vedas from the Gods direct. Therigors of his ascetic practice were such that Indra, the Lord of Gods, appeared to him, but only to persuade him that there were no such short cuts to knowledge. Knowledge has to be obtained by studying at the feet of guru. But Yavakri was so adamant that ultimately relented and let him have his wish (*The Fire and The Rain*, 64).

His desire to acquire the knowledge through an unnatural method is similar to that of Dr.Faustus who comes to an agreement with the Mephistopheless and the consequences of their desires are the same.

A true knowledge never harbours hatred and jealousy. That the knowledge Yavakri gets no a true one is evident in his words. He complains to Vishaka, the daughter-in-law of Raibhya,

I cried at the humiliations piled on my father. He was one of the most learned men in the land. Probably the most brilliant
mind. But he was scorned while this unscrupulous brother of his grabbed all the honours (The Fire and The Rain, 2).

In spite of the rigors tapash he performed to appease Indra for ten years and even after getting what he wants from him, he is not a reformed as he is still ruled by the same hatredness and jealousy. He cries,

What matters is that I hate your husband’s family. My father deserved to be invited as the chief priest of the sacrifice. But this too went to paravasu, your husband. But I the midst of my austerities. I wept when I heard the news (The Fire and The Rain, 22).

Though Bharadwaja warns his son not to run after the delusions, Yavakri follows the same dubious path to avenge against his arch-enemy. The way that he seduces Vishakha, the wife of Paravasu, clearly exposes not only the viciousness of Yavakri but also the vulnerability of Vishaka. Though Karnad depicts a myth, he never deviates the human plane and he is attracted to the myths more because they provide the fertile land for the sustenance of the stark human nature.

The relationship between Vishaka and Paravasu reflects the conflict between the human ambitions and physical cravings. Paravasu is so engrossed in grabbing the opportunity of being the chief priest of the Yagna that he has no time to think of his wife at all. The way that he
neglects his wife clearly reflects the nature of the man in a patriarchal world who comes to his wife “between long conferences, a fish coming up for air, and was warm in (my) her arms and inarticulate” (“The Invitation”, Kamala Das, Ten Twentieth century Indian poets, 26).

Karnad presents the gross selfishness of the man in a way that it shocks the audience but never deviates from the track of realism. Paravasu has a rival not only in his cousin but also in his father and Raibhya too feels the same way. When Paravasu says that the King preferred him to his father for being the chief priest as his father is old and the yagna is a seven-year rite, Raibhya prowls,

So you measured my life-span, did you – you and your king? 
Tested the strength of my life-live? Well, the sacrifice is almost over and I’m still here. Still here. Alive and kicking. 
Tell the king I shall outlive my sons. I shall long enough to feed their deed souls…. (The Fire and The Rain, 29).

Like the relationship between Ephraim and his sons in Eugene O’Neils Desire and the Elms, the father-son relationship in the The Fire and The Rain is tainted strongly by selfishness and possessiveness. Raibhya never has the paternal affection for his sons. He jeers, “How could I have fathered two such imbeciles? I told the King, “Mark my words, my son
defecates wherever he goes. And he will defecate in your sacrifice” (The Fire and The Rain, 29).

The fate of Vishaka is that of a typical woman. She has to suffer between “the husband who neither loved nor used her” and a lover who “loved her not enough being selfish” (“The sunshine cat”, Kamala Das, Ten Twentieth Century Indian poets, 25). Yavakri is ruled by the passions when he was young and by jealousy when he becomes a middle aged man. He does not realize that the woman is also a human being at any time. When young he does not realize the importance of a good relationship with Vishaka and when he came to her after ten year’s tapash, he simply uses her ‘body and his own body, like an experimenter and explorer’ and for him she is nothing but ‘a pair of half-formed breasts. (The Fire and The Rain, 16). Thus the life of Vishaka becomes a critique on the patriarchal system which has been in force from times immemorial. As A.B. Dharwadker rightly points out,

Her marriage itself appears to be an arid contract after a frendzy of sexual gratification, Paravasu has abandoned Vishaka to Raibhya’s care and the relationship between the three are starting in their lovelessness and malevolence (collected plays vol.II, viii).
In the portrayal of the bare instincts of the man, Karnad always resorts to naturalism. While reprimanding his son Paravasu for leaving the fire-ceremony before the completion, Raibhya rebukes, “Tell him the swarm of dogs sniffing around my daughter-in-law’s bottom keeps me in good shape.” (*The Fire and The Rain*, 29).

As Mr. Trench is a symbol of the Greenland of *The Power and Glory*, Vishaka is the symbol of draught-hit land dried up without a drop of love. Her quest for a right relationship is also a yagna but her sensuality itself is the reason for the unfruitfulness. Overwhelmed by the sensuality, the grabs Yavakri and presses his face to her breasts and then turns and runs off. The role of the sex in the man-woman relationship is not unimportant but it should proceed from a genuine commitment on the part of the each other. That the insensitivity of love varies from each others is the reason for their failure in establishing a concrete bond. Thus the physical side of the human predicament is strongly asserted in the play. As D. Mary also asserts, “Vishakha’s willing surrender to Yavakri is more an involuntary submission to the demands of the body than act of love” ("Karnad’s *The Fire and The Rain* : A Return to Indigenous Tradition,” *The Literary criterion*, 71-72).

Karnad clearly points out that the living itself is a yagna and the God who is to be propiriated determines the success of it. Raibhya, the old man
who is very much dissatisfied as he is not asked to be the priest is not
dissimilar to Indra who is always dogged by jealousy. The jealousy that
know no bounds tarnishes his entire outlook. In spite of the long tapash,
he performs during his life, his nature remains crude and barbarian. He
suspects that his second son, Arvasu has an illicit relationship with his
daughter-in-law. He even beats her which is quite opposed to culture and
civilization according every creed and religion. His outburst simply
unveils his inner psyche which is very malevolent and muffled. He cries,

You whore – you roaming whore ! I could reduce you to
ashes turn you into into a fistful of dust – with a simple curse.
But let the husband of yours handle you. Paravasu, chief
priest of the sacrifice. Let him clean up his own shit! (The
Fire and The Rain, 43).

The knowledge of a bad man always creates evil in all religions. Very
much like that of Dr.Faustus in the west and even that of Viswamithra and
Doorvasa of Indian mythologies, Raibhya’s knowledge can only create a
Brahma Rakshasa who neither lives happily nor allow others to live
happily. The yagna of his life can never get fulfilled and the consequences
of abandoning it in the middle can only create a disaster to himself. The
knowledge preserved in a Kamandalu is also a symbol of human frialily to
capture beyond its strength. The way that a woman in the form of Vishaka
enters Yavakri’s hermitage and pours out the conseccreated water
seductively from the Kamandalu is also symbolic of the failure of the ultimate yagna, i.e. the life of himself, of Yavakri. That he gets killed in the embrace of Andhaka, the blind, is also symbolical as it clearly illustrates that he is the victim of his own inner darkness.

Karnad believes that the man is naturally prone to weaknesses and no one is an exception to it. Even Bharadwaja, the most pious of all the characters of the play falls into a pit of anger and curses Raibhya to die in the hands of his elder son. But he is the only one to get repentant of his own weakness and so the entire yagna of his life gets nullified at one stroke. By presenting the pathetic death of Bharadwaja who immolates himself and ends his life, Karnad asserts a typical existential conclusion that every life ends in frustration, alienation and unfulfillment.

One of the most important things to be done in a yagna is a sacrifice. The Vedas and the epics described how cows and other animals are sacrificed in the holy fire and there are some references where even a human being is offered as a sacrifice. The fire that starts even before the beginning of the play, appears yelling for a human sacrifice and the intelligent audience will wonder who will be the ultimate person to be sacrificed. Vishaka requests Paravasu to liberate her from a hellish life by making sacrifice for the yagna. Yavakri wants to disturb Paravasu by molesting her and Raibhya, inspite of his aversion for his son, gets furious
at his son who leaves the yagna before the completion. But the yagna of the play craves for more sacrifices as most of the characters fell prays into the flame of passions. Like the passions of the human being, the quest of the yagna for the sacrifices seems to be endless and unsurfeiting.

Karnad is successful in transforming many details of the myth symbolical of the nature of the man in general. The way that Yavakri shoots an arrow into darkness and kills his father symbolizes man’s blindness to the reality. He tells his brother Arvasu, “In the dark – I mistook him for a wild animal” (The Fire and the Rain, 34). The entire play is filled with animal imagery which clearly establishes the animal nature of the man. The irony is that Raibhya is realy a wild animal killed by his own passions.

The fire that rages in the hearts of the people is so furious that it never gets dissolved even when they see many of their kith and kill falling into it and get swirled up into ashes. Paravasu’s becomes, in spite of performing the yagna for a long time, being the presiding priest, such a monster that he throws the whole blame of patricide on his brother Arvasu and prepares to retain his priesthood at the cost of his brother’s life. The Bhrahma Rakshashe who requests Paravasu to free him is an external manifestation of the demonish nature in every one of the play. As Bhagabat Naik perceptively analysis,
His prayer for moksha reveals that the asuric spirit seeks liberation in the hope of getting satisfaction in human life but in contrast to this in the human world men with knowledge and power like Bharadwaja, Raibhya, Yavakri and Parvasu became asuric for their jealousy, anger, lust gender and caste biases and ignorance. Ironically, when the human world craves for immortality (that invites suffering), the Brahma Rakshasha’s asuric spirit seeks death and finale release for mortality that provides happiness in life. (Girish Karnad’s plays: study in Archetypes and Aesthetics, 58-59).

The story of Aravasu and Nitlilai is almost the original creation of Karnad as there is only a hint of their relationship in the original myth. As a means of providing a critique on the caste system prevalent in India, Karnad developed it into a sub-theme besides giving a complexity to the theme of the play. The opposition to their union from the two sides from the Brahmin as well as the tribal clearly establishes the incompatibility of the people in Indira. Besides that the rituals of the Brahmins are juxtaposed with those of the tribals there by illustrating the development of a religion from a basic understanding of the universe to the ritualistic approach to it. But the reactions of the Brahmin expose their snobbishness and highbrow attitude where as the tribal reaction shows their sense of inferiority and suppression. Nitlilai’s fate has close resemblances to those of the black
woman in Afro-American novels where they are the victims of racial discrimination as well as male chauvinism. But Arvasu loses Nittila as he fails to meet the elders of her tribe at the appointed time as he has to attend to an important ritual exactly at the same time. One has to sympathise with Arvasu as his love is sincere and the reason for not meeting the tribal elders on time is valid. As the birth of a man has been determining his fate, it is extremely difficult to get rid of it. As Praneshcherya of U.R. Anantamurthy’s *Samskara*, Arvasu might have given up is Brahmanism but the Brahmanism does not give him up.

Karnad consciously juxtaposes the wife and husband relationship of the Brahmins and those of the tribal to show the rigidity and idiocy of the upper class. Nittila is matured enough to meet Arvasu even after the marriage when he needs compassion and sympathy. Like the goodness of the protagonists of Henry Fielding’s novels (like Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones), she is instinctively good and attends to the injured people instinctively. When Arvasu is expelled from the yagna, she runs to him and consoles, “When I heard what’d happened to you …. I almost died when I heard that they, thrashed you. I got up and ran all the way here….” *(The Fire and The Rain, 41)*. She is not only a source of sympathy but also source of enlightenment for Arvasu. When he wants to take revenge on
his brother as he feels that it will rain blood at the end of yagna conducted by an evil man like Paravasu, she admonishes him,

Leave that to the Gods, Aravasu. Look at your family. Yavakri avenges to his father’s shame by attacking your sister-in-law. Your father avenges her by killing Yavakri. Your brothers kills your father. And now you in your turn want revenge – where will it all end? (*The Fire and The Rain*, 45).

She is the only mature character who behaves and conducts gracefully. She behaves always with a sense of responsibility and always adjusts herself to the expectations of the society. To be true to oneself and to treat welfare of the others more important than oneself is the goal of life and sincere living itself is a true yagna according to the dramatist. As Karnad demolishes the old belief that the people born in a higher class are civilized, he is acclaimed as an iconoclast by the critics like Nand Kumar (*Indian English Drama: A study in Myths*, 172).

The Epilogue of the play reminds one of the epilogue of G.B. Shaw’s *St. Joan*. By dramatizing Aravasu’s wish to restore some of the people died as he thinks that they are good and deserve life, Karnad not only proves that the time can’t go back but also gives a soothing conclusion to an otherwise grim tragedy. The arrangement of the play
within the play adds to the soothing effect besides giving a suitable conclusion to the efforts of the Actor-manager. Moreover the performance of a play which is considered another type of yagna too gets completed thereby providing scope for fulfillment.

The use of mask in the play within the play adds more dramatic irony. The Actor-Manager tells Arvasu,

Here, it is the mask of Vritra, the demon, now surrender to it.
And pour life into it. But remember once you have to keep a tight control over it, otherwise it will try to takeover. It will begin to dictate terms to you and you must never let that happen. Prostrate before it. Pray it. Enter it. Then control it

(*The Fire and The Rain*, 52).

As per the tradition, the man’s body is a horse and his soul is the rider and the nature of the man gets determined how the rider controls the horse. The way that Karnad intertwines the play and the play within the play clearly shows the forces which shape the world into an organic whole. The mask performance of Aravasu demands a kind of “deep acting” to use the words of Stainslavsky (*The Theatre Experience*, 234). The “deep acting” of the play has a close parallel to the “intensive living” of the human existence which too demands a similar instinctual awareness. As Mikhail Bakhtin rightly observes, “The mask is related to transition,
metamorphosis, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nick names.” (Rebalais and His World, Trans, 40). As Vanashree Tripathi rightly points out,

The mask performance brings about Arvasu’s metamorphosis as Vritra – the loss of individuality and thus the assumption of multitude of identities, but it ironically transforms him from an obsequious, meek adolescent to a grown man, fully conscious of his volcanic energies in his elements (The Plays of Girish Karnad, 135).

To loose one’s own identity in the multitude is symbolically performed in a yagna in which the human sacrifice denotes the mingling of the individual into the universal. Thus the ritual, the yagna of the play The Fire and The Rain, deal with a symbolical fire which burns passion, lust, revenge and betrayal to give went to a rain of love, compassion and harmony. Karnad universalizes a minor myth chosen from The Mahabharatha to extract a complex web of meaning and significance.

As the yagna of the play The Fire and the Rain discusses the need for burning off of the passions of a man so as to enjoy the rain of happiness and harmony, the sacrifice of the play Bali; The Sacrifice describes the need of the sacrificing of the unethical discrimination of the woman to the God of Equality and justice. Rabindranath Tagore exposes the cruel system
of sacrificing the animals to the God in his play *Sacrifice*. *In Bali: The Sacrifice* Girish Karnad discuss the struggle of woman to denounce the animal sacrifice upheld by the Rigveda and also her bold fight against the patriarchal system. Thus the dramatist present the conflict between the private and public selves of the people. The entire play *Bali: The Sacrifice* rotates on the pivotal of the animal sacrifice which the queen denounces and the queen Mother upholds.

The ritualistic Hinduism and the Jainism which emerged as a result against it, provides the needed dramatic conflict from which the dramatist creates a scene full of dramatic irony to present a universal and also a contemporary issue. Jainism which opposed the slaughtering of the animals as offering to Gods and then the Buddhism which followed the same line of thinking were the products of the reformative zeal of the ancient India. But the man’s inclination towards the rituals is so concrete that it becomes very difficult to dispel them in toto. The belief in the propitiation of the God by sacrificing the animals is so implanted in the human psyche that the miniature figures made of dough were made as substitutes for living animals and they were sacrificed.

Karnad draws the myth of dough animal sacrifice from two sources. In the introduction to the play, he relates,
For The Sacrifice, I have drawn upon the thirteenth century Kannada epic, Yashodhara Charite by Janna which in turn refers back through an eleventh century Sanskrit epic by Vadirajyi to nineteenth century Sanskrit epic, Yashastilaka by Somadeva Suri. (The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Bali: The Sacrifice, 70).

In an interview to Tutun Mukherji, he adds, “It deals with the idea that violence pervasive laying just beneath the surface of our everyday behavior and is often masked by a conscious effort. It also posits that human thought, intention and action are all interlinked. It debates the Jain notion that intended violene is as condemnable as the action itself. The mere thought of bloodshed and brutality can condemn one as much as the deed of the world. The play debates the conflict of faith (“Of text and Performance: Girish Karnad Plays”, Girish Karnad’s Plays: Performance and critical perspectives, 49). Thus the play is about the conflicting ideas and values.

Bali, is a ritual intended to propitiate the Gods. The play Bali: The Sacrifice dramatizes the ritualistic practice of transforming the actual violence into violence inintention. Karnad takes liberties with the original myth to project the relationship between the cruelty of the psyche and the passive alteration of the sacrifice. By dramatizing the conflicting
ideologies of Hinduism and Jainism, the dramatist illustrates how infidelity is forbidden in all religions. Thus the dual moral code of the patriarchal system is questioned and the basic human nature is analysed.

The struggle of the man to find out a balance between his/her nature and the social obligations also forms an important strand of the theme of the play, *The Queen, Amritamati*, has to rise up to the public expectations and reject her personal interests. Once again Karnad presents an existential dilemma in his character – the need to choose between the private self and the public self. That she is also a human being is something every body also can forget, but she can’t escape from the existential burden. But Karnad makes his character bold enough to break the mould and assert her individually. By forcing the King to take up her religion, she can prove her cultural domination. But she has to shed the royal burden in order to prove that she is not barren woman.

The Mahout who provides psychological, emotional, conceptual and physical gratification at the cost of ethical elitism is developed into a symbol of Dionysius spirit which is as essential as the Apollonian spirit for the continuation of life and the sustenance of the world He is presented as ‘ugly bandicoot’ who has very sweet voice only to show the two sides of the reality. He tells the queen,
You know why I am so ugly? I was born on a full moon. There was an eclipse. As you know, the worst thing you can do to your self is to be born during an eclipse. The sun or the moon – the God whose eclipse it is – is already in the grips of the demons. The beneficial powers of that God are weak at that moment, often ineffective. A baby about to be born is fair game. It will be maimed or blind or even if it looks normal, something will be wrongly inside. The brain may be damaged… you won’t know till the baby grows up… *(Bali: The Sacrifice, 80).*

The dramatist is in need of an abnormal creature like the Mahout to measure the abnormality of the world. The Mahout is not only a bohemian, masochist but also good lover. He never wants to sneak into the world of the so-called cultured people, but the queen gets attracted to him instinctually. In an interview Karnad points out,

The Mahout is the catalyst who releases the repression of the different characters in the play, especially the Queen. He is ugly and crude but that does not matter to the Queen. She is seduced by his music and is foretelling all inhibitions and barriers of decorum, commits adultery in thought even before their physical union. Likewise she is shocked to realize that, not necessary through explicit behavior, one can be violent in
intent or thought. Her violence is aroused when the lock of dough that she had been caressing like baby is snatched from her and the entire edifice of her ideology crumbles. (Mukherjee, 50).

The Queen simply uses him to her personal interest of keeping the royal heritage intact. She evades all his questions by telling lies. Though she opposes the animal sacrifice, she is prepared to use the Mahout as a scapegoat of a different sacrifice. Thus Karnad poses a fundamental question: Is it possible for a man to sacrifice his basic instincts like ego, lust and ambitions? The song of the Mahout which is sonorous is also a symbol of the spell of the basic instincts which are crude and barbarous. When she encounters him, she is happy to shed all the superficial gadgets and hypocrisies cherished in populated among the higher circles. She declares that she got fed up with the sycophants and that she needs truth. Her yearning for a child is symbolized of her need for a truth as she got disgusted with miscarriages and fickle wombs.

She seems to have chosen a Mahout for her conception so as to keep it a secret and she takes all precautions to hide the secret for ever. But the sexual gratification she receives from the crude and barbarious Mahout makes her fallen, richer and warmer. Though the king gets infuriated by her infidelity in the beginning, he realizes that she tries to save him from
public humiliation and sympathizes with her. So he tells her, “We are
coupled in the eyes of God. We need not be ashamed of anything. We
must strip ourselves of any sense of shame. Became naked like our
saviours” (Bali: The Sacrifice, 120).

The feign signs and heaves the Mahout and the Queen produce to
deceive the people outside the temple are also like the dough animals
ironically representing the innermost recesses of the human psyche.
Though the main characters are the King and a Queen, the dramatist
presents them as typical human beings. The Queen proclaims, “Only the
song. It felt like a flame burning bright. Pure. When I came to my senses,
I was here. By his side.” (19) and the king also tells, “I opened my eyes,
saw you press yourself against the window and listen. And then slip away.
I followed.” (101).

Karnad makes his characters humane by means of using animal
imagery and by stressing the physical side of the reality. He never hesitates
to present the human craving for sexual gratification and presents their
physical indulgences without inhibitions. The Mahout tells the queen, “I
am probably bleeding all over. There you have almost scratched my skin
off. Such long nails….” (78).

Karnad is an adept in transforming the physical things into symbols.
The Queen and the Mahout indulge in sex in the sanctum sanctorum of a
temple in which the Mother Queen wants to sacrifice the dough-animal. The deity of the temple is not in proper state. The feet of the standing deity survives as the other part is destroyed. From the realistic point of view, it presents the way that the status of the Hindu Gods were destroyed by the Jains (And the Jain temples were destroyed and transformed into Hindu Temples afterwards). But symbolically it denotes the fragments of the reality that the human being cherishes and worships.

The play is full of parallels and juxtapositions. The nature of the Mahout provides a foil to the character of the king who is a symbol of sophisticated culture. He is not tempted by the jewellery offered to him by the Queen. When the king tries to use his power to coerce him, he gets prepared to leave his patronage and declares that the pomp and the power of a king is meaningless without the servants like him.

The fourth important character of the play, The Queen Mother, has a significant role in the dramatization of the ritual, the mock sacrifice. In her the anxiety of a mother to see that her son begets a child, the power of a Queen to keep her respectability intact and the arrogance of a woman to control her sister-in-law are combined in a curious way. She is clever enough to find out the truth though her son tries to evade it. She is prepared to sacrifice hundred fools to the Goddess. Unlike her son who is vacillating between the sacrifice-prone Hinduism and non-violent Jainism,
she has strong belief in a God who is attired in silk robes, eats chicken and craves blood.

The play reaches the zenith when the Queen openly declares to relinquish the King and prepares to go to Mahout. The King gets devastated as he can’t decide whether to tolerate his wife’s infidelity or to accept his mother’s intention to sacrifice animals.

The infidelity of the queen and its consequences tarnish the relationship between the king and the queen and the mother and the son. They became perplexed as they are unable to come out with an answer that satisfies them. The Queen Mother is not happy with her son who embraces the religion of her daughter-in-law and then gets prepared to pardon her infidelity. The Queen on the other and prepares to leave with the Mahout. The King finds himself in a fix as he can’t provide justice to either one. He has to face even a question regarding his ‘manhood’ also. He cries, “Is there no way to escape this hell?” (106). The Psyche of a man that gets only pacified by the killing of animals and the spilling of the blood has to be analysed impassionately and perceptively. The Queen who insists that all kinds of non-violence has to be forbidden is not able to find out the violence in her nature. As Karnad observes, insists that all kinds of non-violence has to be forbidden is not able to find out the violence in her nature. As Karnad observes,
if intended violence condemns one as surely as actual violence, that is, if one is morally responsible for merely intending to commit an act one has not actually carried out in real life, is one not shuttling oneself up in a solipsistic world, a bleak, guilt-ridden existence with no hope for absolution. (70).

Karnad is successful in presenting the multi-dimensions of a truth. The complexity of the human nature can be perceived only by symbolical means. Compassion and non-violence are the two great values of Jainism. But the queen who denounces the violence can’t have the true compassion for her husband’s agony. It is because of this triat that she is scorned by the Queen Mother. As Shalini Umachandran rightly points out.

It is a play about conflict beliefs. The Mahout is not merely the reason for the Queen’s transgression, he symbolizes the belief in a listening, logical God. The Queen believes that salvation comes from living a life of compassion, and the Queen Offer follows a Goddess who needs to be satiated with blood to be benign. In between is the King who has forsaken the faith he grew up into embrace Jainism and is now torn between guilt and confusion about the right path. (“Powerful palys”, 4).
Karnad’s use of lyrics enhances the ritualistic nature of the play. He uses a few songs in the other plays also, but they are all translation of Kannada songs by the other. But in Bali: The Sacrifice, he writes many songs which, besides adding to the ritualistic nature of the play, serves as a dramatic device to attach the various episode together. Instead of dividing the play into acts Karnad simply uses the songs in such way that they signify the division and at the same time uniting the scenes by a harmonious way. The songs are at once a relief and also passage from one scene to the other. The seven songs intrelocting the seven scenes together glorify the intricacies of the myth and by using the rhetoric enhances the understanding of the audience. The first song sung by the Queen discusses the two sides of the world, the light and the shadow. The split of the ‘orb’ signifies the duality the play discusses, the violence and non-violence, loyalty and passionate inclination and responsibility and desire. The song of the King presents his agony and helplessness:

Woe belied the times
Where the king sits alone
Outside one the steps
Racked by the sighs
While the queen cannot
Escape her lover’s thighs (74)
The fourth song sung by the singer heightens the emotional range of the play by using a metaphoric language.

Memories slides
Melt and fuse
Discrete moments
Get flung together
String in a single moment
Then the moment
Distends, spreads
Into years (93)

The dramatist uses the state of amnesia of the characters as a symbol of their inclinations. As O.P. Budholia rightly points out, “One out of the remaining three songs with its staying of disgust gives some reflection of bibhatsa rasa through racked signs and the abnormal conditions of human mind – “does my heart tremble / at the hound’s burning eye?” (Myth as Aesthetic experience in Bali: The Sacrifice, 99)

The remaining two songs suggest the dichotomy of the two cultures. The reference to the image of ‘fowl’, ‘bird’ and ‘cock’ of nine new months suggest the plight of the characters. As O.P. Budholia once again perceptively observes, “… the poetic imagination of the dramatist creates the sense of alankara (image), rasa and dhvani, and finally they coalesce
together to form ‘rasa-dhvani’ theory. (Myth as Aesthetic experience in Bali: The sacrifice, 100). The last song encapsulates the central concept of the myth in a highly rhetorical and philosophical way. Repeating some of the lines of the first song, it not only rounds off the play but also leaves an indelible mark on the consciousness of the like audience:

Night gives in to day
Death yields to life.
Like monsoons piled on monsoons
So life follows life
And through the days,
Through endless rainy nights
Throughout our lives
We hear the cock crow (125)

Like the chanting of a ritual, which is also highly symbolical, the songs of the play provide a holy atmosphere which creates a perfect setting for the enactment of a serious debate by the characters. As Bhagabat Naik observes,

Karnad makes a strange paradox of Bali, which synonymous with a person’s sacrificing of another living being to propitiate the devine and giving up something as a prize which the king does with his religion for his love (Girish Karnad's plays : Studies on Archetype and Aesthetics, 80).
Thus these two plays *The Fire and the Rain and Bali: the sacrifice*, present the myths which are closely bound with the rituals – Both of them prove what Kluckhohn finally asserts about the nature of the myth and the rituals: “ritual is an obsessive repetitive activity – of a symbolic dramatization of the fundamental ‘needs’ of the society, whether ‘economic’ ‘biological’ ‘social’ or ‘sexual’. Mythology is the rationalization of these same needs, whether they are expressed in overt ceremonial or not. Some one has said “every culture has a type conflict and a type solution. Ceremonials tend to portray a symbolic resolution of the conflicts which external environment, historical experience and selective distribution of personality types have caused to be the characteristic in the society. *(Myth and Literature, 44)*. Myth may be confined to the past but the rituals are continued even new and one can surmise that many myths pass on to the present in the form of rituals. By using these popular aspects of the society, Girish Karnad creates a play that spell binds the audience and also make them think of the crucial issues of their existence.

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