CHAPTER - II

NEW VISTAS

(The Fire and the Rain, The Dreams of Tipu Sultan & Bali)

Girish Karnad’s *The Fire and the Rain* (1995) has opened new vistas in Indian Drama. The play has displayed the effective combination of mythology, history & post modernity. It has effectively dealt with the problems of the infertility of the land and the barrenness of nature vis a vie the attempts of the man in overcoming the problems by evincing his strong faith in the tradition. The play in its stride to combine the emotional and passionate relationships of the human beings, tried to dismantle the sociological barriers observed by the conventional ridden societies. Karnad derives the story from the myth of Yavakri from Mahabharath.

The play speaks about the wronged and misunderstood Brahmin Aravasu, who becomes a performing actor. His love towards Nittilai finds reciprocation, but demands approval from Nittilai’s father and village elders. To liberate the region from the continuous barrenness, Aravasu’s brother Parvasu conducts an appeasing ceremony to Gods for the immediate rains. Overlead by jealousy towards his own sons, for not being recognized as the representative of Tradition, Raibhyu the father of Aravasu and Parvasu wishes for cremation before his death, Raibhyu suspects Parvasu’s wife Vishaka, of having illicit relationship with
Yarvaki. Before Vishaka’s marriage, Yarvaki loves Vishaka but leaves her to worship Indra for ten years. On his return he finds Vishaka married to Parvasu. Parvasu after leading the married life for three years leaves Vishaka to conduct a ceremony for Devandra. On finding the illicit relationship of Vishaka, Raibhyu summons Brahma rakshasas (demon) to kill Yarvaki. The demons kills Yarvaki and Aravasu is delayed for marrying Nittilai caught in the work of cremation. The delay makes Nittilai to marry another tribe. Parvasu hearing the death of Yarvaki, kills his father. He blames Arvasu and beats him to the verge of death. Nittilai comes to rescue and nurses Aravasu. She understands that her husband and her brother are on the watch out for killing her. The narrator who enacts the role (sutradhar) arranges an entertainment to please Devas. In the enactment Aravasu goes berserk. Nittilai who exposes herself is killed by her husband. Admitting the failure Paravasu cremates himself. Aravasu loses all his close relationships. Appeased by these things Devendra allows Aravasu to seek a wish of his choice. To fulfill the wish Aravasu is haunted by the idea of brining back Nittilai to life. As the sacrifice comes to close, the theme takes a different shape unraveling the complicated entanglements. The theme takes a clear shape. Paravasu for the sake of performing the holy fire sacrifices every earthly pleasure including his family life. Paravasu’s younger brother Aravasu marries a tribal girl, Nittilai and presents himself before the elders of the tribe. Yavakri after
ten years of severe austerities, returns triumphantly with universal knowledge. He seduces Paravasu’s wife Visakha with revenge motive. Offering us an irrevocable chain of events that destroys the relationships, the play establishes the purity of Aravasu and Nittalai’s love bringing salvation to the land.

The enigma of the story lies in the complicated relationships effectively drafted by Karnad. The incomprehensibility of the mythological narrations of Mahabharatha are evoked by Karnad with the aim of subverting the complicated human relationships that got away with the legitimacy and consent of the common people. The play has reflected the space where several forces are found to be in conflict with each other. The element of dramatic tension and conflict has caught the attention of many of the scholars and critics.

As a playwright Girish karnad has vision marked by double thinking. There is always a tension between two polarities: he seems to hang between the two. The dramatic plot he chooses to deal with explores varying aspects of this tension. The description for this he seems to have inherited from the generation he belongs to: “My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British Rule. It therefore had to face a situation in which tension implicit until then had come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self
justification: tensions between the attractions cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western mode of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave tense to my plays and those of my contemporaries” (29).

The title of the play *The Fire of the Rain* is the obvious reflection of the perennial tension of two antagonistic elements: Fire & Rain. Here Rain is recalled through ‘Fire’ and there lies the tension in the plot. Girish Karnad holds: “Thus the phrase Agni-Mattu-Male in addition to counterpointing the physical elements normally seen as antagonistic, also sets up several other oppositions: between an Indo-Army (Sanskrit) and a Dravidian (Kannada) language between the Pan-India and the regional points of view, between the classiscal ‘marga’ and the less exalted ‘Desi’ traditions between the elevated and the mundane, and even perhaps between… the scared and the secular. (*The Flowering of Indian Drama.*149)

So the major point of tension is between the elevated and the mundane or the scared and the secular. The elevated and the sacred is represented by the religious requiring the ‘Yajna’ to be performed. All those who are party to pleasing Indra – the god of Rain, by performing the
fire sacrifice headed by Paravasu – as the Chief Priest – represent the scared. The ‘secular’ is represented by the Actor Manager, his limping brother, Aravasu, Nitilai and Vishaka. The two groups of characters move freely into each other’s domain only to emphasize the tension between the two. Even the appearance of the god Indra in person puts the world of Arvasu, the artist on the higher pedestal. The God who could not be propitiated with the seven years’ long Yajna, is pleased by Arvasu’s acting. Arvasu is a criminal in the eyes of the people of religion’ like Paravasu and the kind. The opening sentence of the play spoken by the king under whose supervision the ‘Yajna’ is being performed is in compete tension with the last sentence which is very affirmative in nature. “No, impossible! It’s not possible” and the last: “It’s raining: It’s raining” are contradictory in terms. The man who found it ‘impossible’ to enter the place of sacrifice makes rain possible for which the king, along with his team, was struggling hard for the last seven years.

The secular aspect that is presented as a contrast to the fire sacrifice is somewhat uncommon i.e., the power of drama or theatre. The playwright expounds the mythical significance of Drama through the Actor-Manager. He opines that Brahma extracted theatre from the four Vedas and combined it into the fifth Veda and thus gave birth to the art of Drama. The god Brahma put further responsibility of the theatre on Lord
Indra, the God of skies. Because the gods cannot indulge in human practices, he assigned this responsibility to Bhatra – a human being. Thus Drama or Theatre is also equipped with the background of Gods and goddesses like any other religious practice.

After the fire-sacrifice fails to bear fruit and the priests feel “dreary” and need to “freshen” their minds, the Actor-Manager with his limping brother and Arvasu stage a play along with the audience. Indra, the god of Rain, is pleased by the acting of Arvasu and asks him to demand anything he wants. Arvasu’s acting is not given any metaphysical meaning, he is shown missing his beloved Nittilai even when acting. He is a man of the world, with earthly feelings and desires. When Paravasu permits him to act as an actor, the first thing he remembers is his beloved Nittilai. He wishes to have her sitting among his audience so that she could see him acting. For his inner feeling the real theatrical activity is the mutual attraction between his and Nittilai. For Arvasu, Their liking for each other is far better a theatrical activity than the mythical one. So real is the drama of life but not the one which is meant to please Indra. It is the real life that gets the upper hand.

If Paravasu’s world identifies human beings on the basis of caste and religion, Arvasu and Nittilai’s pair stands for selfless love. Arvasu and Nittilai’s love each other without letting social obstacles stand in their way.
Arvasu is an ‘outcaste’ Brahmin and Nittilai is a girl from Hunter’s tribe. Both are ready to a sacrifice their blood relationships for the sake of each other. When Andhaka asks how he would react to Paravasu’s prohibition for not marrying a girl from hunter’s tribe, Arvasu asserts, “I’ll tell him I shall not give up Nittilai. She is my life I can’t live without her – I would rather be an outcaste”. (5) Thus the two different worlds Arvasu and Paravasu are held in deep tension.

The conversation between Nittilai and Andhaka about the knowledge of Yavakri further intensifies tension between the ‘elevated’ and the ‘mundane’. Andhaka says that Yavakri has spent Ten years to seek God and has the knack to Gods in person after mortifying himself and practicing austerities. He narrates Yavakri’s mystic experience thus: “Ten years of rigorous penance and still Lord Indra would not oblige. Finally, he stood in the middle of a circle of fire and started offering his limbs to the fire – first his fingers, then his eyes, then his entrails and tongue and at last his heart – that’s when the God appeared to him restored his limbs, and granted him the boon”. (9)

Very logically Nittilai questions Andhaka whether Yavakri himself told him everything about his experience in the forest. Awarding his answer a spiritual touch, Andhaka holds that a man of his status wouldn’t talk about himself. Nittilai points out the weak spot of Andhaka’s
argument: “then how does everyone know what happened in a remote corner of the jungle – miles away from the nearest prying eye?” (9) Before Andhaka could give a rational answer to her question, she imparts a second stroke i.e., why are the Brahmins so secretive about everything. Comparing the Brahminical attitude with ways of her own tribe that makes no secret of anything, she is critical of the former.

She questions the validity of the knowledge professed by the Gods if they cannot stop the starving: “My point is since Lord Indra appeared to Yavakri and Indra is their God of rains, why didn’t Yavakri ask for a couple of good showers?” (10) When men, women and children are dying of hunger, she finds it odd not to make mention of it before the god of Rani. Andhaka “half” agrees with her. Defending his point of view, he desperately holds that such powers shouldn’t be used to solve day to day problems. Finding a nice opportunity to attack Andhaka’s views, she gives a final blow to it: She questions the utility of such knowledge that demands so much from a human being but is otherwise useless for human life. She poses two questions to Andhaka about Yavakri who is said to have gained the spiritual knowledge. Her first question is if Yavakri can save the dying children by making it rain for them. Second, can he tell when he is going to die? If he can neither save the dying children nor does he know the
moment of his own death, there is no use of gaining such a hard earned knowledge.

The tension in the play further intensifies with characters possessing opposed natures. Nittilai is a humane and compassionate character in contrast to the likes of Yavakri and Paravasu. Yavakri is a revengeful and cruel man who is bent upon using his knowledge against nature and humanity. Nittilai has a sympathetic nature and proves it by helping Arvasu when he is badly beaten up and is thrown out from the sacrifice premised by the king’s soldiers. The news of Arvasu’s suffering melts her. We see her “mopping up his vomit, wiping your (Arvasu’s) bottom, like a body”. (45) She never compels him to marry her. When she argues him for a joint living she doesn’t mean that they should live like lovers or like husband and wife. She is ready to live with him even as his sister. Arvasu also promises her not to marry any other girl. Nittilai soothes him and asks him to forget the humiliation, he has met at the hands of his brother. To the contrary, Yavakri even after gaining universal knowledge remains a revengeful person, he leaves for the forest life only to take revenge on Raibhya. After being a man of knowledge he does not spare even his old love. He makes her an instrument of his revenge on her father-in-law.

As a contrast to the selfless world of Nittilai, Parvasu who heads the religious exercise is of a criminal mind. After slipping away from the
sacrifice, he kills his father. He even wrongly punishes his own brother calling him “demon” for being murderer of his father. Arvasu rightly puts it, “Yavakri, and father and brother (Parvasu) can bring out the terrors from the womb of the earth and play with them. They can set the foul nature against you.” (43) She not only helps her lover by guiding him in his mission but also helps the straying people who are dying because of no rain. Even the Actor-Manager feels indebted to her for helping his hungry children. She helps everyone with food, nursing or even laughter. In this way, Nittilai proves herself a contrast to all those in the play who nourish a feeling of hatred and jealousy for others. With her humane nature, she becomes the exact opposite of Yavakri who is a man of universal knowledge. He utters a prophecy about the death of Nittilai saying that she will die within one month; Nittilai also prophesizes but it is bout life not about anyone’s death: “I am sure your dancing will bring the rains. Good bye” (52) Nittilai creates another tension: between mortality and immortality. She does not like Indra, the God of rains, for his immortality. Those who do not have the fear of death cannot enjoy life: life loses its meaning without the idea of its end, feels Nittilai. Rightly she puts it thus, “when someone doesn’t die, can’t die what can he know about anything. He can’t change himself. He can’t – can create anything. (51) She likes Varitra. Despite being triumphant according to the story in the myth, he chooses death. She elaborates her point, “I always wonder – if the flowers
didn’t know they were to fade and die, would they have ever blossomed.”

(52) When Arvasu wants Nittilai back in his life as he feels she died for his sake, Indra warns him of consequences in disturbing the order of nature. If the wheel of time rolls back, says Indra, with Nittilai along with the likes Yavakri, Raibhya, Paravasu and others who died on the earth they would also come to life and that will result in unprecedented suffering. But when Indra is to grant him this boon by fulfilling his wish, Brahma Rakshasa appears and pleads for his release. He unfolds their own story of suffering which is only because he is immortal and cannot die. At this Arvasu, remembering the compassionate nature of Nittilai, asks for the Rakshasa’s release. He knows that Nittilai herself would have made the same choice. That is why he prefers the release of Brahmin-Rakshasa over Rain and Nittilai’s life. Here the god Indra fails but Arvasu wins as it rains at the end. Thus the play ends upon a note: who is more capable to do good for human beings? Can immortal gods do everything and mortal human beings are insignificant?

*The Dreams of Tipper Sultan* (1998) is another play that reflected the Dramatic conflict. This play deals with the world of dreams secretly recorded by one of India’s most famous king. In 1996, the BBC Commissioned Karnad to write a radio play to celebrate to Fifth Anniversary of Indian Independence. The plot obviously had to deal with
some aspect of Indo-British relations and he immediately thought of Tipu Sultan, one of the most politically perceptive and tragic figures in modern Indian History.

As the play opens, in 1803, We see the house of historian, Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani in the city of Mysore. Clonel Colin Mackenzie, the Oriental Scholar, is taking off his shoes, as though he has just arrived. Here Mackenzie asks Kirmani to write about the Indian history. But Kirmani says that we can not write. Mackenzie asks him to write about the death of Tipu Sultan but he says that not the way he died but the way he was killed and destroyed. Mackenzie forced Kirmani to write about the last day, when Tipu was killed. Kirmani slowly remembers the last day vividly. Tipu was staying in the caravanserai on the northern ramparts. He had been there for a couple of days, with the soldiers, watching the English noose tighten. It was sweltering hot. We were half way through our lunch. The English has launched their assault. The Sultan washed his fingers and got up. He buckled on his sword belt, took out an envelope from his pocket, sealed it and gave it to Kirmani. ‘Keep it till I come back’, he said. At the moment, news came that Syed Gaffar had been killed by a Connon ball. He mumbled a prayer and left. I remember thinking; I’ll never forget that expression on his face. But I have for the life time, I can’t remember his fact at that moment. It is such…. Betrayal!. Kirmani says that he has
forgotten all about the letter which is given to him by Sultan. The next day he found letter in his pocket in which Tipu had recorded the last dream he had the previous night.

Tipu was killed by the English brutally. The English soldiers were searching for the Tipu’s Corpse through the piles of bodies during the midnight. At last they found the Tipu’s Corpse with the help of Tipu’s men who identified the body of Tipu. When the British were taking the body of Tipu to the Palace they heard women in the palace wailing.

Kirmani tells that at the time of war it was raining heavily. Doors and Windows in the city had already been torn down by the British Soldiers. Most houses were roofless. And now, through the night, the rain lashed with a fury that made the soldiers rampage seen like child’s play. It destroyed all my papers. Wiped away every word written in ink. Within a night, all recorded facts became memory. Nature did with that dream what Munshi Habibullah was a fool. He should have destroyed the diary, when he found it. It was a dairy in which my master had recorded his dreams. He had kept it concealed from his closest confidants. I did not know of its existence. None of us did. I could not believe my eyes when I saw the words written on its first page, in the Sultan’s own hand. The Sultan had hidden the diary under his pillow and there it had alaigned after his death…… until that idiot Munshi stumbled on it. It was sacred, personal.
There were blank pages in the diary, what dreams Tipu meant to record there and why he didn’t, will never be known. It was evident that he recorded the dreams that spoke to him.

**The first dream of Tipu Sultan**

On the third day of the month of Thamari, the last night of the month Ramzan followed next morning by odd in the year of Dalw 1213 from the birth of the prophet, he was returning with his army from Farrukhi near Salamabad when he had the following dream. He had been on an elephant shikhar and on his way back was walking with Porrnaiya, the Finance Minister, when they saw a big temple. It was in a dilapidated state. It looks quite mysterious. Here Tipu wanted to go in but Purnaiya told him not to go in. Tipu’s wants to go in and inspect the human images in the temple. They had never seen these images. They saw these human images mourning. Among those human images two women in the last row stood up. They are wearing nine yard saries. Tipu asks them who are you? Women reply that they are living women. The rest of us these men here, are merely images. We have been here for many centuries now, praying to God and seeking our salvation. Then Tipu says: “I am sorry, I have disturbed you, I will help you if you need any help”. Then they walk out of the temple. When two old men, with long beards, in flowing silk gowns, approach them. Beside them are two white elephants and several footmen carrying spears and guns.
Old man tells greeting to Tipu. Then Tipu asks him who are you? From where he was coming? Then the old man says that they are the envoys of the Emperor of China. Tipu invites them in and tells them to be seated. The old man tells Tipu that the Emperor of China wants to be a friend of Tipu. That is why he sends a white elephant and two horses as a token of his friendship and affection for you.

Then Tipu tells that the elephant and horses are beautiful and he was deeply touched. I know from Hadrat Naizami’s book Sikandar-namah, that the Emperor of China had sent a present of white elephant, a horse and a female slave to the Great Alexander. Then the old man tells Tipu, that the Emperor has never sent a white elephant to anyone except the Great Alexander and now to your presence.

The next morning he got up and interprets this dream in this way. The God Almighty and our prophet will make me another Alexander.

Tipu wants to send a delegation to France. Ghulam Ali Khan and Osman Khan have to lead the delegation. He tells these two men to convey the message to the Kind of Louis XVI France that this state of position in India and unless they are aware of these English men in India. The English will gobble up the whole of India. So ten thousand army must be sent from France to fight with English in India under his guidance.
Tippu wants his sons Fath Haidar, Muizudding Abdul Khalig to be present there when he is talking with the delegation.

Purnaiya tells Tipu that English and French have signed a treaty in Versailles, by which neither is allowed to enter into the local affairs in India. Then Tipu tells him that he might be correct. But after all, the French and the English are neighbours they can’t be friends forever. They are bound to start quarrelling. Then Purnaiya tells him that the new Governor General has been specially instructed by the Board of Control not to get into trouble with us. But Tipu tells him that why English had sent Cornwallis to India. Why because he led the English army in the Americas and he lost the war. So he wants to vanquish one man in India – only one – Tipu Sultan. We will soon have the Shadow of the English falling across our doorstep.

**The Second Dream of Tipu Sultan**

On the sixth day of the Khusrawi month in the year of Burd, as he was preparing for a night attack on the Maratha armies of Hari Pant Phadke at Shahnur near Devagiri, he had a dream.

Tipu saw a young man, turbaned like a Maratha, coming to him. He was a fairy skinned and light-eyed. Then Tipu asked him who he was and why doesn’t speak? But the young speaks in a female voice and tells that he is hand-some. Then Tipu tells him to come and sit beside him. The
young man bows in front of Tipu and asks Tipu take off his turban. Then Tipu came to know that this is not at all a man but a woman. Then the young woman asks Tipu to unbutton her blouse. Then Tipu asks her that she does not know that whether he would admit a strange woman into his presence. Tipu asks her to leave at once because of tricking him. Then the young woman left. Tipu interprets this dream in this way. May it please God. Though these Marathas are dressed in male attire, they will in fact prove to be women.

The English will know that without isolating Tipu from Marathas they can’t defeat Tipu. So they had proper plan in their mind. They want to turn all the kings of southern India to their side so that they would definitely defeat Tipu. Nana Phandnavis is the Maratha statesman and Chareles Malet is the representative of Lord Cornwallis.

Malet tells Nana that the Marathas, the Scindia the other Maratha Chiefs, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nawabs of Carnatic and Cudh, the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin are their friends. Then Nana asks Malet why this Tipu is missing from the list of their friends. Then Malet tells him that they are having little trouble with him. Nana tells him that they had signed a treaty of friendship with Tipu Sultan Khan Sahib not so long at Mangalore.
Then the Malet tells Nana that Tipu had returned all territories except the vast territories of Maratha which are taken unjustly by his father. He says the Marathas have been robbed. The Nizam has been robbed. The Rajah of Travancore has been attacked. To be honest, sir, we the English, don’t like his repeated attempts to join hands with the villainous French, though of course they are our friends after recent treaty. The Governor General hopes that the Maratha Chief will use this opportunity to obtain separation and recover the territories seized unjustly by Tippu Sultan’s father. Haider Ali will join us in punishing a man who we believe is the enemy of all mankind. In this way the English made Marathas to fight against Tipu Sultan along with English and other princes of India. Now Tipu can be defeated easily. But these things will not be known to Tipu. He believes in everyone to fight against the English. Here Tipu needs the help of Maratha to defeat the English.

Then Tipu tells his wife Ruqayya Bhanu that he had returned all the territories to Maratha that he had gained from them and is not worried about Marathas. While he was talking these things to Ruqayya Bhanu, Hasina tells Tipu that the honorable Mir Sadiq is herewith our vakils from Pune. Hasina tells Ruqayya Bhanu that the Vakils are driven out from Pune, and the Marathas want to fight against us along with the English. By hearing the news Ruqayya Bhanu dies. On 23rd February 1792, the square
made by the British in front of the big mosque in Seringapatnam, was packed with senior citizens, generals, and courtiers. A buzz of anxiety and suppressed excitement prevails, which subsides when Poornaiya stands up to speak.

Poornaiya tells the people who have gathered in the Court that the Queen Ruqayya Bhanu is not feeling well. She had been ill for a long time. But no body knows what is the reason for her sickness. The Tipu enters and asks them apology for making them to wait for a long time. The Tipu asks Poornaiya to read out the four conditions that were made by the English and put forward to us. He says that all these four conditions should be accepted by us. Otherwise they will fight with us along with Maratha, the Nizam and other princes. So we have to accept these four conditions whether they are bearable or unbearable:

**The first condition:** Are all the English prisoners taken by his Majesty as well as his father of hallowed memory, Haidar Ali, to be released, unconditionally. Ghulam Ali Khan who went to the English and returned with some message will talk on that. He says that we have illtreated the English prisoners and all of them must be released.

**The second condition:** Cession of half our domain, adjacent to the territories of the English, the Maratha, and the Nizam. On the condition Nadeem Khan will speak out what should be done. Nadeem Khan says
that it is difficult to defeat the English. Because we are blocked by our own people. Our own people are supporting them. We can’t defeat them now. But people say that we don’t accept these conditions; Instead of accepting them, fight with them. But Tipu asks the condition of the army. Qamaruddin says that the army has been fighting for the last two years. So they need rest.

**The third condition:** An indemnity of six crores, Gulam says that at this point the English asked us to produce our revenue receipts. Our Chief Peshkar produced them. The English said they doubted the figures. He keeps on saying that we pointed similar accounts no such accounts would be forth-coming.

**The last and the fourth condition:** Two hostages to be handed over to the English to be kept with until the terms of the treaty are agreed upon, signed, and sealed and two of my sons hostages. Then the crowd uproars and protests with anger. But Tipu silences the crowd and says that Lord Cornwallis assures that our princes will be looked after as their own children. But the Crowd says not to accept this unbearable condition, instead of accepting this condition we should fight with them whether we win or lose. Tipu says that the danger is not that they would poison, or kill them; I am not worried about these things but I am afraid of their language. If they teach their language to my children they will come to know that
they are brought as hostages of war. It hurts me more. Then he says to bring the seal to affix his signature.

The most obvious analytical reading of *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* brings to the fore the genuine attempt of Girish Karnad to restore the name of Tipu Sultan in relation to the Secular Fabric of India. It is known fact that the Tipu Sultan is the only king that defied the colonial hegemony of the British. Cutting across the lines of Islamic religion, Tippu’s rule has liberated the downtrodden India from the social hierarchy of the so called Hindu religion. The Hindu fundamentalists have tried their best to defame the name of Tippu and tried to crucify him within the religious frame work. Girish Karnad as a progressive writer resisted these attempts and tried his best to prove that Tipu even in his dreams stood for self respect, dignity and secularism through this play. The ideological pinnings of the play demand a serious examination which will carry in the next chapter.

Published almost in the same year the play *Bali* has created a cultural consternation. The play has invited the critical attention of the intellectual class. It has parodied and exposed the customs of sacrifices observed by the kingly class. The religious rituals and the sacrifices are considered to be compensating the sins of the kingly class acquired through their interaction with the common people. Jainism that emphasized on non violence becomes a symbolic significance of the
violent social practices fearing the contamination of the common man. The mayhout becomes an important character who plays a significant role in the mobility of the kingly class. The presence of the mayhout in a dilapidated building and the unconscious coming of the queen creates a conflict which decides the course of the play. The narration of the theme of the play can be understood in the following way: The title (Bali), explicitly evinces the content. Everyone can understand what it means and what could it be. We see four main characters in this play namely Mahout, Queen, King and the King’s mother. Karnad has drawn upon the thirteen century Kannada epic, Yashodara Charite, by Jansa, which in turn refers back through an eleventh-century Sanskrit epic by Vadiraja to the ninth century Sanskrit epic, Yashastilaka by Somadeva Suri. Some elements of the tale have been traced back to the first century stories and legends play multiple roles in Indian culture.

When the play begins, we see two indistinct figures inside the sanctum: the mahant and the Queen. They are sitting apart from each other. The king enters the courtyard of the outer temple. He has a torch in his hand. He enters and sits on the outer steps of the temple. The two in the inner sanctum are unaware of his presence. Now the story of this play begins. The mahant is the care taker of the king’s elephants and has to supply Elephants at the time of the battle of the King. The Queen is also
there in the sanctum of the temple. The Mahout asks the Queen “who are you? The Queen does not give any reply. Many times the Mahout asks the Queen that “Who she was”? If she does not tell her name he wants to see her face so that he will know who she is exactly. But when she wants to leave the place, before her departure he would like to know at least her name. But she refused to say her name. Still the Mahout is unable to find out who she is? Here the queen wants to leave the place as immediately as possible. But the Mahout objects her to leave the place. He would like to know her name first. When the queen is about to leave the place he comes to her to go out. He does not like her without telling her name before she leaves. Then the mahout says to the queen that some one is there in the court yard of the temple. But when the queen wanted to see him he leaves the place. So she is unable to find him out who he is exactly. But when they see the man he is none other than the King. So both of them are afraid of the king. Then only the Mahout comes to know that she is none other than the Queen. Then the Mahout says that they did nothing wrong inside the temple. He begs pardon from the king. Even the Queen says to the king that she is still an innocent woman. But the king did not hear their words and took his sword to kill the Mahout. But at juncture the queen mother comes and stops the king from killing Mahout. She says that they are Jains to they should not kill living creations in the world. Then the Mahout feels very happy that he is not going to be killed by anyone.
Then the Queen’s mother asks the King to enquire about the queen why did she come out at this time. What are the reasons that made her to come out from the palace. Then the king questions the queen. The she says that she wants to get some cold breeze so she came out. But king says since it is winter no one will come out to get cold breeze. But she says that she had a dream in which she saw swans come out and playing. But one of the swans has happened to be in the mend and unable to come out. So she says that the queen mother tells them the meaning of this dream contains a bad indication. So something should be sacrificed to the God in order to save the king. But this kind of sacrifice is not liked by the queen.

The queen has become pregnant. The king asks the queen to tell this happy news to his mother. Then the king calls out mother. The she comes out asks him why he was shouting. The king asks her to bless them. She says that you will have my blessings always, what happened now? The King said that they are going to have a baby. But she had a doubt of this news. She asks him about the certainty of the news. He assures her of the certainty. She also felt very happy by listening to the news. The king’s mother wants to offer something to the God. The queen knows that the king’s mother is going to sacrifice one animal to her mother goddess. But this kind of sacrifice is hated by the queen. So the queen says to the king there will not be any bloodshed in the name of our child. The king says to
the queen that she has accepted the fact that we will not be party to her violent rites. And she carried them out in her own separate shrine. Then queen says she can live by her beliefs. But we are Jains. Our son will be a Jain. He will have to uphold the principles of compassion for all living beings, of Non-violence. Should we allow a blood rite to mark his arrival? It would be wrong. Then the king asks his mother not to get upset. Mother asks the king to tell her directly about. The King says to the mother there will not be any blood sacrifice in honour of his child. The king’s mother had understood her son’s words. She came to know that they don’t want any kind of sacrifices in the name of their son. She says that he too will be his grandson she too has prayed for him, for me he is the gift of goddess. If they do not accept this sacrifice she would be living in a separate house. She would leave the palace. But the king says to his mother that the palace belongs to her. After this argument they came to one understanding that he will arrange cottage. The king’s mother asked her son whether she is pregnant or not. Still she had some doubt about her pregnancy. But the king says this time she is surely pregnant.

The king asks the Mahout why he was hanging on here still. Mahout says that he would have been killed by the king. The king asks the queen what made her to come to this old temple at midnight. She says to him that she unconsciously came to this temple. While this conversation
was going on, the king’s mother enters the ruined temple and asks them what were they doing at this time? The king did not reveal what had happened so far. But the king’s mother had a doubt in her mind. She could not believe her son’s words. With that doubt she asks him whether he is fine or not. The mother asks him what is wrong with him. He says nothing. Then king asks his mother what does her son want to tell her. Mother could find something wrong. The king says in the dream he saw that the royal swan in the garden got caught in mud and was flapping its wings. Then the mother asks him, was it seeking for help? The king says that he woke up and came out. The king asks his mother whether she believed his words or not. But she says that it’s a bad dream. Dreams speak to us. They come to warn us. Why because whenever I ignore dreams I suffer a lot like when I lost your father. Mother says to the king to go to his bed. She asks him to leave the dream to her. The king asks his mother what is her intention regarding this dream? She says that she would offer the goddess a hundred fowls in sacrifice.

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