Chapter V
Time and Space
5.0. The Concept of Time and Space

Time and space have much more to do with an action in terms of 'when' and 'where' respectively, i.e. an action always takes place at a particular time at a particular place. This is why time and space have got the label of universality. However, there are differences among the ways from culture to culture and therefore the same time and place may be or may not be suitable to different persons for the same or different purposes.

5.1. The Concept of Time

As regards the concept of time, it is neither good nor bad in itself. Nonetheless, people often allege time for their certain loss and also they credit certain profit to it. Undoubtedly, time is a continuum, even then man has divided it into fractions for his own sake, i.e. present, past, and future on the one hand; when to sleep, when to awake,
when to go for a walk, when to meet somebody, and so on and so forth on the other, whereby some time may be proper and some time may not be proper for a specific purpose.

In the plays of Girish Karnad, we frequently come across directions of different time-periods or fractions thereof that contribute to the core of meaning. Time being the most important organ of context plays multidimensional roles by assigning sufficient or insufficient, short/long amount of it to an action — verbal and non-verbal — as is required. Pauses and silences are measured by intervals of time. Duration of time is a crucial factor in human life to decide his ways of doing anything, such as waiting, walking, running, standing, and other temporal adverbs. Aspects and tenses are all realisations of time.

Here, we are concerned with such time-references that have to do with shaping the matter and manner of the plays. In 'The Fire and the Rain', for example:

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"It has not rained adequately for nearly ten years. Drought grips the land. A seven-year long fire sacrifice (Yajna) is being held ..." (Preface, p. 1)

It clearly shows the condition of people living in the land and gives a firm background to the actions that follow.

When the priests say:

"Priest Three : It's three years since we saw a play.

Priest Four : And there was a time when we had four plays a month!"

then it can be inferred easily that they need act plays from time to time so as to keep the art and enjoyment of the people alive.

Actually, time is a dominant and prominent factor in human (or non-human) life. If, for example, in 'The Fire and the Rain' in place of "Nittilai, a girl of fourteen", say, forty or fifty, "comes and stands next to Arvasu", then the whole
context will change and thereby the network of relationship can't be saved from changing.

Time also decides propriety of an action, i.e. a proper action at a proper time-point means life is smooth, if not, then life is hazy, e.g. in 'Naga-mandala', the following extract:

"Rani: Till this morning once the housework was over ... what was there to do? I used to sleep through the day and lie awake at night. Today this wretched dog has been barking away since it was brought here. That's why I was dozing when you came in. I'm sorry — " (p. 40)

Here, sleeping during the day-time and lying awake at night is unnatural which causes undesirable situation — dozing, for which Rani apologizes saying 'sorry'.

The day-time per se is meant for not only working and seeing as far as one can, but also opening all knots of mistery as clear as the sun, whereas the night-time, especially the dark night, aggravates the situation. The following direction
(bracketed: material) at the beginning of 'Act Three' of 'The Fire and the Rain' shows how the night speaks out the context:

"(Night. The outskirts of the city. The stage is filled with bodies of people sleeping. Nittilai sleeps next to Arvasu.

Arvasu wakes up. Sits up. Looks around, and as though frightened by the night, begins to crawl across the sleeping bodies.)"

(p. 39)

On the contrary, the 'full moon night' and the 'new moon night' are famous for their favourable pleasing effect, e.g. in 'Hayavadana':

"... even now on full moon and on new moon nights a song rises from the roots of the tree and fills the whole forest like a fragrance." (p. 132)

In 'Naga-mandala', the difference between 'day' and 'night' has been purposefully maintained. Rani, the newly married girl, gets frightened alone at night (p. 28), as her husband Appanna is used to
coming home during the day-time. On the other hand, Naga in the form of Appanna comes home at night, Rani could not resist her astonishment on seeing Appanna and cries —

"Rani : You — you —
Naga : Don't get up.
Rani : But when did you come? Shall I serve the food?
Naga : (Laughs.) Food? At midnight?"

(p. 39)

Here, it may be seen, the serving of the food at midnight is unusual.

As Rani is unaware of the fact that Appanna coming at night is actually Naga — a Cobra, so she is put in a dilemma seeing the dual behaviour of Appanna and says:

"Rani : You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to open my mouth and you hiss like a... stupid snake."

(p. 42)
The following conversation between Rani and Naga suggests how puzzling is the riddle:

"Naga: What should I do then — stop coming at night? Or during the day?

Rani: Who am I to tell you that? It's your house. Your pleasure.

Naga: No, let's say, the husband decides on the day visits. And the wife decides on the night visits. So I won't come at night if you don't want me to.

Rani: (Eyes filling up.) Why do you tease me like this? I am sick of being alone. And then tonight, I was terrified you might not come — that what I remembered from last night may be just a dream. I was desperate that you should come again to night. But, what am I to say if you spin riddles like this?

Naga: (Seriously.) I am afraid that is how it is going to be. Like that during the day. Like this at night. Don't ask me why."

(p. 42-43)
Night is said to be illusive, i.e. full of magical power. Legends mainly dwell upon such things as are supernatural, e.g. in ‘Nagamandala’, Rani sees a cobra in the mirror and when Naga utters ‘cobra’, then -

"Rani (silencing him.) Shh! Don’t mention it. They say that if you mention it by name at night, it comes into house." (p. 43)

Time-reference, sometimes, is necessary to maintain the relevance of context. In ‘Tughlaq’, for example, the play takes place first in the year 1327 and lastly five years later (cf. p. 146). This is another way of maintaining the historicity of the characters and events in the play.

Silences and pauses have mostly to do with time, i.e. long silence, silence for a while, long pause, pause, etc. Karnad has frequently used this device in his plays which speaks more than it is intended (cf. Chapter 3).

Sometimes the reference of time is an essential part of the action or event to follow it, e.g. in ‘Naga-mandala’:
"(... It is night. Moonlight seeps in through the cracks in the roof and the walls.)"

(p. 22)

This is then easy to say that different points of time have their own nature and characteristics and so they affect human or non-human activities to a great extent. This is why we hear visiting time, business-time, school-time, tea-time, and so many schedules of time according to the convention. In 'Tughlaq', Muhammad reminds Aziz saying that "It's time for the prayer." (p. 218)

We frequently come across temporal adverbs, viz. now, then, today, tonight, tomorrow, yesterday, last night, last year, next year/day/month, etc. in the plays of Girish Karnad. As concerns the use of 'now' and 'then', they are deictic elements. "Deictic elements relate an utterance to its person, space, and time coordinates. Now and then are time deictics because they convey a relationship between the time at which a proposition is assumed to be true, and the time at which
it is presented in an utterance. In other words, now and then are deictic because their meaning depends on a parameter of the speech situation (tune of speaking)." (Schiffrin, 1988 : 228)

In 'The Fire and the Rain', for example, in the utterance below, 'now' expresses the present situation in relation to the prior one :

"Actor-Manager : A message from a brother : Dear elder brother, you once said to me : 'The sons of Bharata were the first actors in the history of theatre. They were Brahmins, but lost their caste because of their profession. A curse plunged them into disrepute and disgrace. If one values one's high birth, one should not touch this profession.' And I accepted this. But today I am a criminal. I have killed my father, a noble Brahmin. I already stand tarnished. I may now become an actor." (p. 3)

When Arvasu grabs Nittilai's hands and pulls her near, she gets scandalised and tries to go away thinking what people will say. But when Arvasu takes it to be his right, Nittilai reacts as follows ;
not until we're married. Until then the girl is not supposed to touch her husband-to-be. That's our custom —

Arvasu: All these days I couldn't touch you because Brahmins don't touch other castes. Now you can't touch me because among hunters, girls don't touch their betrothed. Are you sure someone won't think of something else once we're married?" (p. 6)

The subsequent answers and questions depend on the previous matters and only then they are meaningful.

In the 'Prologue' of 'Naga-mandala', the monologue of the man shows the time-references very effectively due to their deictic features, e.g.

"Man: I may be dead within the next few hours."

A mendicant told me: 'You must keep awake at least one whole night this month. If you can do that, you'll live. If not, you will die on the last night of the month'.
I was wrong. Perhaps death makes one sleepy. Every night this month I have been dozing off before even being aware of it. I am convinced I am seeing something with these eyes of mine, only to wake up and find I was dreaming. Tonight is my last night.
(Pause)
For tonight is the last night of the month." (p. 22)

Again, in the same play, the conversation between the flames also indicates the value of deixis as follows:

"Flame 1: You are late. It is well past midnight.

New Flame: Ah! There was such a to-do in our house tonight." (p. 24)

In 'Hayavadana' too, there are ample deictic uses of 'now' and 'then' along with other time deictics like 'when', 'this morning', etc, e.g.:
"Bhagavata: ... Now, tell us, what's the matter?

X X X X

Now, tell me everything quietly, slowly.

Actor: I was on my way here ... I was already late ... didn't want to annoy you ... so I was hurrying down when ... Ohh!

Bhagavata: Yes, yes. You were hurrying down. Then?

Actor: ... I had drunk a lot of water this morning ..." (p. 75)

Now, let us see the magic of 'now' and 'then' adding values of anaphora:

"Aziz: No, truly listen. If you remain virtuous throughout your life no one will say a good thing about you because they don't need to. But start stealing — and they'll say: 'What a nice boy he was! But he's ruined now ...' Then kill and they will beat their breasts and say:"
'Heavens! He was only a petty thief all these days. Never hurt anyone. Bus alas!
Then rape a woman and the chorus will go into hallelujahs: 'He was a saint, a real saint and look at him now...'
(p. 197)

Scene Eight of 'Tughlaq' starts with the conversation of a young man and an old one which, however, expresses the importance and delicacy of time for a sentry:

"A.D. 1332. Five years later.
The fort at Daulatabad. Two watchmen — one young, the other past his middle-age. Night

Young Man: What time do you think it is, grandfather?

Old Man: Must be just past midnight.

Young Man: Only that? Good God! When I was in the army, less than two seconds seemed to divide the lamp-lighting hour from the daybreak. Now the night scarcely moves.

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Old Man: It's only when you wait for the morning that the night stands still. A good sentry must forget that morning even exists." (p. 192)

5.2. The Concept of Space

The concept of space varies from time to time and culture to culture. For example, as Hall and Whyte put the fact: "In North America, the "proper" distance to stand when talking to another adult male you do not know well is about two feet, at least in a formal business conversation. (Naturally at a cocktail party, the distance shrinks, but anything under eight to ten inches is likely to provoke an apology or an attempt to back up.)

To a Latin American, with his cultural traditions and habits, a distance of two feet seems to him approximately what five feet would to us. To him, we seem distant and cold. To us, he gives an impression of pushiness." (1966: 571-572)

In almost all plays of Girish Karnad the concept of space has been adopted according as the cultural setting. In 'The Fire and the Rain', for
example, the Vedic tradition of the 'Yajna' (sacrifice) has been carefully maintained in that there is an altar at the centre of which burns fire. The Brahma Rakshasa is moving around at the sacrificial precincts. The Actor-Manager is made to stand at a distance from the fire sacrifice since as an actor he is considered low-born. (p. 1)

Again, the bracketed matter —
"Nittilai, a girl of fourteen, comes and stands next to Arvasu. Though they are obviously fond of each other, they do not touch, except when specified," (p. 4) — shows that Nittilai and Arvasu love each other and they have keen desire to embrace each other. This is attested by his further action:

"Nittilai : ....... Do you feel ashamed?
Arvasu : Ashamed? Let me show you — here!

(Grabs her hands and pulls her near.)" (p. 6)
On the contrary, Vishakha, the wife of Paravasu, aged about twenty-six, does not like Yavakri as can be inferred from the situation: Vishakha is coming home putting the pot full of water and Yavakri is standing right in the middle of her path. She stops but avoids looking at him. Yavakri's yearning for her can be smelt from the following lines:

"Yavakri: At last, a word! After waiting for four days — I practically had to wrench it out of you by blocking your path.

(As he moves aside and sits down on a rock, she takes a few steps towards her house.)

Stay, Vishakha — Please. There's no one there in your house. Your father-in-law has gone out. Your brother-in-law is never home. What's the hurry?"

(p. 12)

The 'village square' is one that is known to be used for settling public matters open
to all. This indicates the social setting of villages continuing since long, as is said by Nittilai:

"If any other girl had done what I have done, I'd be the first to thrash her in the village square." (p. 40)

The folk belief that some spirits are there around us has always created mystery. In the conversation between Nittilai and Arvasu, his reply expresses as follows:

"Arvasu: You don't understand. You hunters — You only know minor spells and witchcrafts — spirits slithering in shallow caves or dangling on trees. But Yavakri and Father and Brother can bring out the terrors from the womb of the earth and play with them." (p. 43)

In 'Naga-mandala', the following description of the place depicts the deteriorating religious status of people:

"(The inner sanctum of a ruined temple ... Moonlight seeps in through the cracks in the roof and the walls.)" (p. 22)

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In Act One, what we confront with is a house as described below:

"(The locked front door of a house with a yard in front of the house, and on the right, an enormous ant-hill. The interior of the house — the kitchen, the bathroom as well as Rani's room — is clearly seen.)" (p. 27)

And this is the whole world of Rani, which "is clearly seen". Which is not seen is her inner world full of pity and tears. See:

"Appanna: Well, then. I'll be back tomorrow at noon. Keep my lunch ready. I shall eat and go.

(Rani looks at him nonplussed. He pays no attention to her, goes out, shuts the door, locks it from outside and goes away. She runs to the door, pushes it, finds it locked, peers out of the barred window. He is gone.)" (p. 27)

Rani's sitting alone in the corner of the room (p. 27) of a house already locked from outside aggravates the
path of Rani's life. Her monologue reminds us of the fairy tale as well as Rani's unfulfilled dreams of womanhood:

"... So Rani asks him: 'Where are you taking me?' And the Eagle answers:
Beyond the seven seas and the seven isles. On the seventh island is a magic garden. And in that garden stands the tree of emeralds. Under that tree, your parents wait for you.'" (p. 27-28)

Kurudavva, a blind woman and a friend of Rani's mother-in-law, calls her son Kappanna to bring the root to solve Rani's problem, i.e. to enchant Appanna to make him love Rani. This too is the remnant of old stories told by grand-mothers:

"Kurudavva: Listen, Son. Run home now. Go into the cattle shed — the left corner —

Kappanna: The left corner —

Kurudavva: Just above where you keep the plough, behind the pillar, on the shelf —

Kappanna: Behind the pillar — on the shelf —
Kurudavva: There is an old tin trunk. Take it down. It's full of odds and ends, but take out the bundle of cloth. Untie it. Inside there is a wooden box.

Kappanna: A wooden box. All right —

Kurudavva: In the right hand side of the wooden box is a coconut shell wrapped in a piece of paper. Inside are two pieces of a root, Bring them."

"(P. 32-33)

How curious as well as interesting the specification of space is!

In 'Hayavadana', the space — the stage — is specified as follows:

"(The stage is empty except for a chair, kept centre-stage, and a table on stage-right — or at the back — on which the Bhagavata and the musicians sit.

At the beginning of the performance, a mask of Ganesha is brought on stage and kept on chair ..."

(P. 73)
'Tughlaq' being a play of historical theme needs more care for space to accord with the royal decorum which Karnad maintains skillfully. Act One starts with the following spatial arrangement:

"The yard in front of the Chief Court of Justice in Delhi. A crowd of citizens — mostly Muslims, with a few Hindus here and there." (p. 147)

And the shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is one of the causes that is responsible for political and administrative chaos in the kingdom of Tughlaq. As may be noted, despite his announcement:

"Announcer: Attention! Attention! The Merciful Sultan Muhammad has declared — that within the next month every citizen of Delhi must leave for Daulatabad. No one should remain behind in Delhi. Anyone who attempts to stay behind or go elsewhere will be severely punished. All arrangements have been made to
ensure the comfort of citizens on the way to Daulatabad. All the needs of the citizens, regarding food, clothing or medicine, will be catered to by the State. It is hoped that every citizen will use the amenities to the full and be in Daulatabad as soon as possible. Attention! Attention!" (p. 187)

Despite the above announcement, as the following scene (Scene Seven) shows, the Hindu Woman has to face lots of problems only due to shifting of the place:

"A Camp on the Delhi-Daulatabad route ...\n
Hindu Woman: Please let me go, sir ... My child .... please have mercy on it ... only for a day sir ...

Aziz: I told you I can't. No one can be allowed out of sight until we reach Daulatabad. I'm sorry, but I have my orders.

Hindu Woman: But I'll return tomorrow ... I swear by my child I will ... It's dying Your Excellency, I have to take it to a doctor ..." (p. 188)
The conversation between the two watchmen in 'Tughlaq' also gives a sarcastic remark on the shifting of the capital:

"Young Man: (Looking down the side of the fort.)
What a fantastic fort! I have a good head but even my head goes round when I look down. And isn't that long white thing the road from Daulatabad to Delhi?

Old Man: Yes.

Young Man: They say it's the widest road in the world. But it looks no bigger than a thin snake from here.

Old Man: And four years ago that snake bit a whole city to death." (p. 192)
5.3. **Reciprocity of Time and Space**

Time and space are coterminous with each other, i.e. it is often found that a particular time may or may not be suitable for a work at a particular place. If time and space be presented diagramatically, it would be as follows:

![Diagram](image)

Here, as is clear, time being a continuum is vertical, whereas space having been spread everywhere is horizontal. What can be inferred here is that no action or event can take place without space. Likewise, no event or action can be possible to carry on without owing to the time-factor. Thus, time and space contribute to each other in that the same place may not be suitable for an action at a certain period of time with respect to the situation around it.
In all the plays of Karnad there are instances that prove the reciprocity of time and space. In 'The Fire and the Rain', for example, the following is one:

"Arvasu: But it's not sunset yet! Nittilai said the council would go on till sundown — I'm here well before then — " (p. 27)

In the 'Prologue' of the same play, the scene on the stage shows this reciprocity in a somewhat concrete way thus:

"(Nittilai, a girl of fourteen, comes and stands next to Arvasu.) (p. 4)

In 'Hayavadana', Kapila's monologue attests time and space interrelated:

"Kapila: (Aside.) So it's off. What am I to do for the rest of the day? What am I to do for the rest of the week? Why should it feel as though the whole world has been wiped out for a whole week? ... now — don't come here again for a week ..." (p. 94)
Time and space both provide room for all actions and events. 'Tughlaq' being a historical play, can't be meaningful without proper mention of the actual time and the kingly places. Karnad has maintained both by first giving the year of event, viz. AD 1327 and five years later, e.g.:

"The action of the play takes place first of all in Delhi in the year 1927, then on the road from Delhi to Daulatabad, and lastly in and around the fort in Daulatabad five years later." (p. 146)

In 'Naga-mandala' too, there are several instances of the reciprocity of time and space. The conversation between Rani and Naga reveals it as follows:

"Naga: (Teasing.) Quite right! That won't do any more. From tomorrow I want you to be fresh and bright when I come home at night —

Rani: (Uncertain.) At night?
Yes. I shall come home every night from now on. May I?" (p. 40)

One other example is that which belongs to the folk belief, e.g. :

"Naga : What? A cobra?
Rani : (Silencing him.) Shh! Don't mention it. They say that if you mention it by name at night, it comes into the house."
(p. 43)

Naga's liking and love for Rani inspires him to have a look of her happy home and life. So he takes on the human form :

"Naga : Why should I not take a look? I have given her everything. Her husband. Her child. Her home. Even her maid. She must be happy. But I haven't seen her...
It is night. She will be asleep. This is the right time to visit her. The familiar road. At the familiar hour."
(p. 61)

That is, Karnad has followed the realistic tradition of situating his plays in proper times and
at proper places by ways of narrating the real, historical time in special and different occasions in general all of them related to particular places of events and actions, which, however, accords with, for example, in 'The Fire and the Rain', the Indian (Vedic) tradition and culture:

"A special area is consecrated for each performance of a ritual and the sacrificer undergoes a consecration setting him apart from the profane world. In essence, the sacrifice can be regarded as a periodic ritual by which the universe is recreated." (p. 65)

"The decoration of a fire sacrifice varied and some stretched over years. The 'Mahabharata' opens with a sacrifice that was to go on for twelve years.

The daily activity of a sacrifice is cyclical. And there are intervals between the ritual actions when the priests are free and can devote their time to other activities, not directly connected with the sacrifice." (p. 67)