CHAPTER THREE

THEATRICAL TECHNIQUES

... that drama is not made of words alone, but of sights and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationships and responses. Yet; these relationships and responses are not those between characters, rather those between actor and audience. (Styan vii)

When the modern playwright wants to express himself, existing dramatic forms fail him. This forces him to find a new form and this urge induces him to go back to traditional forms with a new outlook. He does not mind going to the West either. Modern Indian drama reveals two main tendencies. One is, the Indian playwrights have gone back to tradition for their themes and techniques and the other is making use of what are considered modern trends in the theatre. These two tendencies are seen in the theatrical activities of the 1960s and 1970s. This led to an unconscious awareness of oneness or "Indianness" of Indian theatre. The modern playwright has achieved a synthesis of all the three traditions - classical, folk and contemporary Western. It was the intelligent use of those, that led to the discovery of a new style of production, which became the nucleus for the evolution of Indian theatre.
Plays written in various Indian languages are being translated into English and other languages and they are produced and appreciated in the various parts of the country. A closer contact is established through these translations. Plays written in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Kannada have initiated in the fifties and sixties a new experimental theatre. This experimental theatre has cross-cultural manifestations. As a result, important writers emerged in these four languages.

Karnad remains an important dramatist of the contemporary Kannada stage. He has shown the Indian stage to what depths the mythical themes could recreate a contemporary consciousness. Karnad has many advantages to do it—his knowledge of contemporary European theatre, his exposure to the Western dramatic literature and above all his theatrical sensibility. He has shown to the Indian theatre community how our past and present put together can create the present day existence meaningful. Thus he has created a new direction to theatre activity in India.

It is interesting to note that in Karnad the use of Western techniques help to attract the rural and the elite audience alike. In the case of other Indian English playwrights it is a problem. But in the case of Karnad, his plays are very successful with both the rural as well as the urban audience. In the scholar’s interview, P. Ramamoorthi observes:
I have watched a Karnad play in a very small village in Karnataka called Ranibannur and in Bangalore city. In both places the performances were very successful and the audience were very happy. I would not say that Girish is an out and out Western influenced playwright. The local influences are stronger than the Western influences. Say the influence like the company drama, like that of Gubbi Veernana or the Yakshagana and because of his exposure to *Natyashastra* and the other traditions in India. I would say that the Indian influence is much stronger than the Western influence even in terms of techniques. How were you know that he has read Camus, he has read Sartre, he has read Anouilh and he has read Shakespeare. And as one of the earliest critics points out that there is a kind of Western influence on Girish Karnad. He is given to all that kind of isms and existentialism and all such things. But I think they all exist in a superficial level. The major influence, I think is Indian. That is precisely the reason why he is very much successful in India. I know playwrights like G.P. Deshpande and Mahesh Elkunjuvar who are predominantly influence by Western thinkers. And
that is the reason why they are not as successful as Girish Karnad. He bases all his plays on folk, legends or the epics or history of India. Right now, he is doing a work on Tippu Sulthan (Appendix I).

It is an accepted fact that Karnad has very successfully transformed *Artha into Kriya* and again *Kriya into Ranga Kriya* in his plays. Perhaps this is one of the secrets of Karnad's success as a playwright. This transformation is universal in its appeal.

Karnad is a master craftsman. Right from the beginning of his dramatic career - from *Yayati* to his latest *The Fire and the Rain*, he has invented many innovative techniques. Even though the themes are mythical and legendary in all his plays Karnad's approach is modern. He is an expert in the use of conventions and motifs of folk art, like masks and curtains. In his introduction to *Three Plays*, Karnad writes:

> The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their head. The various conventions - the chorus, the masks, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of human and non-human words - permit the simultaneous
presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem. To use a phrase from Bertolt Brecht, these conventions then allow for 'complex seeing'. (14)

Like Brecht, Karnad also strives to break the 'illusion' of the theatre by which the spectators become so engrossed in a play that they forget, for the time being, what they are. Like Brecht, Karnad leaves the stage apparatus visible, presents synoptic announcements, and has narrators talking directly to the audience. All this compels the audience to respond intellectually to the action of the play and to question it, instead of responding emotionally and merely accepting it. Karnad is against the 'willing suspension of disbelief' syndrome.

Karnad takes liberty with the original myth in *Yayati* and invents some new relationships to make it acceptable to modern sensibilities. He openly confesses: "there had been no dramatic structure in my own tradition to which. I could relate myself." (Three Plays 3) Puru willingly offers his youth to his father Yayati and Yayati is drenched in sensual pleasures. He indulges in it for a thousand years. In the myth Yayati takes Sharmishtha as his wife apart from Devayani. In Karnad's play, he marries Sharmishtha during the action of the play. Karnad introduces two characters, Puru's wife Chitralekha and confidant Swarnalata. In Karnad's play the whole action takes place in one
night and this intensifies the emotional attitude of the audience. Karnad twists the puranic end and it gives more dramatic effect to the play. The interchange of ages between father and son in Yayati, though a technique used by Karnad to emphasize the theme of responsibility, baffled many conventional critics. But one has to accept the daring experiment of Karnad in the challenging characterisation of Puru.

In his second play Tughlaq, Karnad tried to make use of the Parsi stagecraft. If one makes a close analysis of the play Tughlaq, one could easily understand how the scenes are arranged. There is a mechanical succession of alternating shallow and deep scenes. Usually the shallow scenes are played in the foreground of the stage, with a painted curtain - normally depicting a street - as a backdrop. Prominence is given to 'lower-class' characters with comedy. They serve as link scenes in the development of the plot. As Karnad points out,

The spatial division was ideal to show the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, between the mysterious inner chambers of power politics and the open, public areas of those affected by it. But as I wrote Tughlaq, I found it increasingly difficult to maintain the accepted balance between these two regions. Writing in an unprecedented
situation where the mass populace was exercising political franchise, in however clumsy a fashion, for the first time in its history, I found the shallow scenes bulging with an energy hard to control. (Three Plays 8)

One of the basic concepts of theatre is that theatre is an illusion. Theatre is a fleeting shadow, a vision and a dream like experience. One could draw a parallel between life and theatre. Life is theatre like and vice-versa. But one should remember that life is not theatre and theatre is not life. In order to achieve the desired dramatic effect Karnad uses certain images. These images suggest that the audience is undergoing a theatrical experience. In Tughlaq, references are often made to acting, theatre and performance. Throughout the play Mohammad acts. He behaves and speaks like an actor. He does show business. The show business is too much in Tughlaq. In the opening itself his theatricality is expressed. The show business in Tughlaq is a positive quality. This brings in the desired epic distancing technique of Brecht. The audience feel that they are only watching a play. A skillful playwright, Karnad very easily achieves this effect.

This may be the reason why Karnad has created an acting protagonist in his play. Mohammad is always an actor, in public and in private. Mohammad does this acting when Mohammad leaves the crowd. The Guard uses the
sentence "The Show's over!" consciously or unconsciously. And it carries the right effect. The scene reminds one of a street theatre, where the audience lingers on even after the players' departure. They make comments. Here in *Tughlaq* the Guard's shouting at the crowd is a critical assessment of the Sultan.

His Step-mother sees the Sultan as an actor. To a simple question, the reply is a lengthy, theatrical discourse. He speaks as if he is addressing a learned audience. The speech is poetic, stagy and full of grandiose statements:

Then again I want to climb up, up to the top of the tallest tree in the world and call out to my people: Come, my people, I am waiting for you. Confide in me your worries. Let me share your joys. Let's laugh and cry together and then let's pray. Let's pray till our bodies melt and flow and our blood turns into air. History is ours to play with - our now! Let's be the light and cover the earth with greenery. Let's be darkness and cover up the boundaries of nations. Come! I am waiting to embrace you all! (*Tughlaq* 10)

It is a pertinent question that why Karnad makes Tughlaq a performer, an actor. Perhaps the acting and the performance manifest the troubled self of a dreamer.
Again the gestures and speech behaviour of Mohammad are theatrical. He indulges in 'role-playing'. Like a skillful actor he keeps changing roles. Mohammad is made an actor-type by Karnad. He plays the role of a true ruler at one time. Yet another time, he is restless and as time and occasion necessitate, he becomes warm enough to greet somebody. Professor P.Ramamoorthi in his analytical essay "He that Playeth the Sultan: A study of Tughlaq," writes:

It is an actor's responsibility to make things obvious for the audience, either directly or indirectly. The pensive mood is replaced by an imposed cordiality. Like a skillful actor, Muhammad keeps changing roles. Where there is an opportunity, he becomes theatrical in action also. (40)

In scene six, in order to gain support Tughlaq kneels before the Amirs. They are surprised by his theatricality. Again in the scene, where Amirs have come to kill Tughlaq, he manages a 'play' before them. He waits till the climax. He could have arrested them in the beginning of the scene itself. When the Amirs step forward to attack him, the Hindu soldiers overpower them. "While all this is going on, Muhammad goes on praying unconcerned, only after finishing the prayer does he step down from the throne." (Tughlaq 41-42) As everything is planned, Tughlaq has to strike the climax and wanted to attain the desired result. The actor-type Muhammad is always in search of an
audience. There is a constant desire in him for an audience. Theatre has to be driven by the performance of a live person up there under the arc lights. Theatre has to be determined by the amount of energy and passion that person can communicate to the audience. It has to be live. It is only live, human, actor-driven theatre that will survive and hold audience. The Actor-type Muhammad has the urge for "role-playing" as "role-playing" highlights the relationship between life and theatre. As Professor P.Ramamoorthi says: "Disguise in Tughlaq is a symbol of role-playing." (The Plays of Girish Karnad 158-159) To quote again Professor Ramamoorthi, "The whole play is a projection of Muhammad's "divided self." (The Plays of Girish Karnad 159) The "divided self" is a theatrical technique. "Divided self" could be visualised through "role-playing". Muhammad is at war with himself in Tughlaq. Aziz is also a genius in "role-playing". Professor Ramamoorthi sees Aziz as Muhammad's "shadow", his "other". (The Plays of Girish Karnad 159) Muhammad wears masks and disguises himself as Aziz. Aziz plays various roles - that of a Brahmin, of a victim Vishnu Prasad, that of Khalif. Aziz converts life into a stage. One can notice that the whole play is structured on the opposites. This point is stressed by U.R.Anantha Murthy in the introduction of the play "The whole play is structured on these opposites: the ideal and the real; the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue." (Tughlaq ix)
juxtaposition of the opposite is a dramatic technique in Tughlaq. In the words of Professor Ramamoorthi:

*Tughlaq* is an excellent tragedy that depicts the struggle and failure of a poet who wants to become a ruler, a visionary who desires to establish a Utopia. The struggle becomes significant as it ends in the failure to effect a synthesis between the poet and the ruler and the failure to find a new world." (44)

One can approach Tughlaq as a theatrical representation of history. Karnad has created true drama in his play *Tughlaq* in the Priestleyan sense. In the main plot Tughlaq appears to be idealistic but instead he practices selfish political games. In order to win the political game he practices all sorts of things. Throughout the play one finds elements of dualism in the character of Tughlaq. As an idealist, he aims at the welfare of the people, but practices hypocrisy to the core. In this powerful play politics is deftly linked with religion. Besides religion, history is linked with politics. Karnad displays great talent in the delineation of the character of Tughlaq. As a pious Muslim he prescribes the custom of prayer, five times a day, but as a crafty politician he indulges in deft intrigue. He kills his father, his brother and Shihab while they are at
prayer. Tughlaq is highly resourceful and imaginative. He can solve any problem in chess. Barani rightly says:

You are a learned man, Your Majesty, you are known the world over for your knowledge of philosophy and poetry.

History is not made only in statecraft; its lasting results are produced in the ranks of learned men (*Tughlaq* 55)

The 'Archetypal pattern' in literature is well established in *Tughlaq*. When the 'Idea of History' is applied to the play, one can understand what Tughlaq has done, what such men will do. Thus history becomes timeless and spaceless. Through this Archetypal approach, literature's implicity presents what is stated in history. The play is not just a political allegory either. It has the puzzling qualities from the ambiguities of Tughlaq's character. S. Ravindranathan rightly puts it:

The play has an elusive and haunting qualities which it gets from the character of Tughlaq who has been realized in great psychological depth. (220)

The play demonstrates "Tughlaquism." In the words of S. Ravindranathan

Some of the statements made in the play reveal the nucleus of the historical situation. It is simultaneously timeless and temporal. (22)
Karnad has a pattern even in the handling of dialogue. This makes the play very effective. He has chosen English to reflect the idiom of the language of character. A Karnad sentence often performs two or more functions at once. It throws light on the character speaking, on the character spoken about and it develops the plot. It also ironically conveys to the audience a meaning different from that conveyed to the character. A close reading of the following lines illustrates the point:

Muhammad: No one can go far on his knees. I have a long way to go.
I can't afford to crawl - I have to gallop.

Imam-ud-din: And you will do it without the Koran to guide you?
Beware Sultan, you are trying to become another God.
It's a sin worse than parricide.

(*Tughlaq 20-21*)

This passage shows Tughlaq's aspirations to become a Universal Conqueror. He does not like to crawl, but likes to gallop. Naturally the dialogue gives an insight into the political theme of the play and the playwright's power to handle this theme.

A phrase or an idiom in everyday conversation may mean ordinary things. But when it is used on stage by an actor, it assumes special connotations. In the words of Styan, "the context into which it is put can make it pull more than its
conversational weight, no matter how simple the words." (The Elements of Drama 11) For example, Tughlaq who has brought about the death of Imam-ud-din declares a day of mourning in honour of the Sheikh and says, "When men like him die, it's a sin to be alive" (Tughlaq 28) These words acquire an ironical pull and it is a technique on the part of the playwright.

*Tughlaq* is notable for its poetic value. Tughlaq is poetic when he speaks of his interest in the Greeks. He says:

Don't I know it? I still remember the days when I read the Greeks - Sukrat who took poison so he could give the world the drink of gods, Aflatoon who condemned poets and wrote incomparably beautiful poetry himself - and I can still feel the thrill with which I found a new world, a world I had not found in the Arabs or even in Koran. (Tughlaq 21)

Poetry makes the play precise to both the actor and audience. Poetry, here expresses patterns of thought and feeling of the character. People from the lower strata of life, like servants and soldiers use simple and direct language. The following is a case in point:

Old Man : God, What's this country coming to!

Young Man: What are you are worried about, Grandfather? The
country's in perfectly safe hands - safer than any you've seen before.

Old Man: I don't know. I've been alive a long time, seen many Sultans, but I never thought I would live to see a thing like this.

*(Tughlaq 1)*

Karnad chooses such characters and situations to make the dialogue realistic and effective. A dialogue between two minor characters - perhaps choric - is more revealing than a Tughlaq-statement. The contrast between the statements of a cynical old man and an inexperienced young man makes the context clear to the audience / reader.

Silences and pauses mark a silent interplay of conscious and unconscious motivation. In the encounter between Tughlaq and Imam-ud-din in scene iii, one finds a long silence in the middle of the dialogue. The long silence suggests that Tughlaq is a crook. He is interested in killing Imam-ud-din. In his conversation with his Step-mother Tughlaq pauses for a while when he describes the death of Imam-ud-din. This reflects the negative side of Tughlaq. These silences and pauses reinforce the meaning of the play. Silence becomes more powerful than spoken words.
Tughlaq is considered a piece of theatre "par excellence", Karnad experiments with a variety of theatrical techniques in Tughlaq. These are attempted to create visual and auditory images. This will produce the desired dramatic effect on the stage. He employs a variety of theatrical devices, such as spectacle, quick shift of scenes, black out etc. He tries to control the movement of the play and its impact on the audience by these theatrical devices. Spectacle refers to all the visual aspects of production, scenery, lighting, costume, make-up and the movement of the actors. In the very beginning of the play, the public announcer announces the judgment of the Chief Justice in favour of one Vishnu Prasad followed by a loud discussion among a large number of people. The very appearance of Tughlaq in his striking costumes adds a lot to the element of spectacle in the play.

The announcement regarding the arrival of Sheik Imam-ud-din adds to the visual appeal of the play. Muezzin's call for prayer, the marching of the Amirs to the throne of Tughlaq, the announcement about the shifting of the capital, the call for the banning of prayer and the revival of it, the play of music and the anguish expressed by the common masses during the shift of the capital are some of the elements of spectacle in Tughlaq. They assume an organized psychological role in the theatre and they reinforce the meaning of the play.
The thirteen scenes in the play are arranged with a forward and backward movement. The scene of action is shifted from the yard in front of the Chief Court Justice to a room in the palace, then to a yard in front of the Big Mosque, again to the palace, then to a house in Delhi and then to the palace again. It shifts to a camp on the Delhi-Daulatabad road. Suddenly it goes to the fort in Daulatabad, to a hide out in the hills, then to a plain outside the fort of Daulatabad and back to the palace. The playwright also presents the following sequences to throw light upon the complex personality of the Sultan: the affair of Aziz and Aazam, Tughlaq's attempt to levy heavy taxes on the poor farmers, his order to change the capital, the futile conspiracy of the Amirs to kill the Sultan while at prayer, his cruel punishment of his Step-mother, because she was responsible for the killing of Najib, Aziz's impersonation of the invitee - Caliph Giyaz and its consequences, and finally the fall of the Sultan. These episodes follow each other and they focus attention on Tughlaq as a complex character - with various dimensions.

Karnad uses other techniques also. Irony is one which he uses to make his play more theatrical. There are two types of irony in Tughlaq, one is situational. The manner in which prayer is sought to be used as an instrument of murder against the very man who has made prayers compulsory in the state, the role played by Aziz are examples for irony of situation. Again Aazam and his death, Ghiyasudhin's preferring "the bloody streets" to the palace are examples
of situational irony. The beautiful bodies, which are eaten up by corruption and stuffed with straw and hung on the poles, are other examples.

The other kind of irony is verbal. The past Sultans of Delhi could not bear the weight of their crowns. They could not leave it aside. So they died senile in their youth or they were murdered. Barani, a historian is interested in playing chess with the shadows of the dead. The prayers offered by Tughlaq are ridden with disease and his sins have become shadows that entwine round his feet. It is ironical Tughlaq and the Sheik look alike though they do not think alike.

Symbolism is another technique, which is effectively exploited by Karnad to make his play powerful on the stage. One could find four major symbols in the play. They are prayer, sleep, the game of chess and the rose. Prayer symbolizes the religious idealism of Tughlaq. It connects man's unconscious need for divine protection and guidance in an hour of anguish. In the beginning prayer is made compulsory. Later it is banned and again after a few years it is revived. It is reduced to mockery when the Sultan's life is threatened at the time of prayer. Sleep, on one level represents the need for rest in man's life. At another level it becomes symbolic of peace which eludes man often. The rose is a symbol of aesthetic and poetic qualities in Tughlaq. Later it becomes a symbol of the withering away of all the dreams and the ideals in Tughlaq. On the macro level chess is an ordinary game which is popular in
India. It also symbolizes the political game in which Tughlaq is checkmated by an ordinary washer-man. Through this symbol the playwright has created the right political atmosphere in the play.

Tughlaq's existential alienation is made more poignant by juxtaposing it with his earlier idealism. Karnad uses the flash back technique here. In the idyllic scene on the ramparts of Daulatabad, Tughlaq shares his youthful aspirations with a young guard. He recaptures the magical moments of his youth. He is nostalgic here. Towards the end of scene viii, there is yet another juxtaposition of Tughlaq's earlier idealism and present degeneration. Such a contrast becomes an important structural device and it is repeated again and again.

The game of chess and the rose garden are two important recurring images which are part of the inner structure of the play. They are metaphors of alienation and may be related to Tughlaq's alienation. The game of chess symbolizes Tughlaq's game-approach to life. He regards other people as pawns. In an essay on "Karnad's Tughlaq as an Alienated Protagonist", Christine Gomez writes:

The rose garden which becomes a rubbish dump is a perfect objective correlative of Tughlaq's idealistic aspirations meeting with defeat, frustration and disillusionment. It
becomes an image of the absurd, the unbridgeable gulf between man's expectations of orderliness and the chaos and irrationality, which confront him in the Universe.

(The Plays of Girish Karnad 125)

Karnad's highly acclaimed play Tughlaq presents a tortured man. Karnad employs a particular type of language to reveal this dreamer personality. Tughlaq's logorrhea is a verbal manifestation of his dreams and troubled self. According to Pramod K. Nayar:

Logorrhea is an aphasic problem where the victim is extremely voluble. However his / her speech may be replete with meaningless cliches and errors. S/he no longer comprehends the "meaning" of the speeches. (The Plays of Girish Karnad 162)

Tughlaq's logorrhea can be read at various levels of unmeaning, or misplaced questionable meaning. Tughlaq's speeches to his Step-mother, to Aziz, to the Amirs are full of empty signifiers. He does not mean what he says. He refers to Aziz as "Your Holiness", knowing that he is Aziz and not Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid. Thus the epithet is without any significance or rather, has ironic significance. Tughlaq's words locate him at a point where the
signifier and the signified are completely divorced. This is a technique adopted by Karnad to highlight the hallucinatory character of Tughlaq.

The great cultural renaissance of the post-colonial period generated a meaningful encounter with tradition in theatre. The return to and discovery of tradition was inspired by a search for roots and a quest for identity. During the 1960s, dramatists wanted to draw upon various strands in the traditional theatre.

Karnad is one among those Indian playwrights who have rejected the imitative pursuit of the West and have ventured into indigenous territory for their themes and techniques. Karnad sought after the style and form of the theatre which is closer to the consciousness of people, consistent with cultural tradition, entertaining and yet aesthetically satisfying. Karnad thought over the fact and as to how the paraphernalia of the folk theatre can become meaningful outside its context and become relevant in the modern context. Karnad points out:

\[\ldots \text{it was when I was focusing on the question of the folk form and the use of masks and their relationship to theatre music that may play Hayavadana suddenly began to take shape in my head.} (Daedalus Fall 1989 346)\]
In *Hayavadana*, Karnad draws heavily upon the rich resources of the native folk theatre - *Yakshagana* and other folk forms with great deftness and how the element of supernatural plays a significant role. Karnad employs the conventions of folk tales and motifs of folk theatre i.e. masks, curtains, mime, songs, the commentator, narrator, horseman, the story within a story facilitating mixture of the human and the non-human to create a queer magical world. It is a realm of incomplete individuals, magnanimous gods, of vocal dolls and mute children. Karnad brings back into this play, poetry, music, a sense of gaiety and celebration associated with a theatrical event. He employs folk theatre strategies as technical devices to convey his ideas.

The play *Hayavadana* initiates with the bringing of the mask of Lord Ganesha, the presiding deity of traditional theatre on the stage and his worship like a typical *Yakshagana* play. At the outset the theme of the play is introduced as Ganesha possessing the head of an elephant and the human body. It symbolizes incompleteness. The *Bhagavata* narrates the story in the manner of a folk tale. Padmini appears as a symbol of emancipated woman. Karnad depicts her unrepressed nature and her inner feelings through the use of a folk device - the female chorus. The chorus chants:

*Why should love stick to the sap of a single body?*

*and*
A head for each breast. A pupil for each eye.

A side for each arm. I have neither regret nor shame.

(Hayavadana 11)

Karnad through the strategy of the borrowed stories, examines the concept of the rational and the physical and weaves a mazy pattern of relationships. In Hayavadana there is no formal division of acts into scenes. Act One concludes on a controversial note as who is the rightful husband of Padmini. Act Two initiates with the Bhagavata posing the question directly to the audience. The animate dolls are used as a device to make known the audience from moment to moment what is going on in Padmini’s mind. The sense of time passing is given by making the dolls report to each other what Padmini dreams, what reveries she indulges in.

Through the use of stories, Karnad provides a profound insight into the meaning and significance of the play and portrays that the perfect union of the spirit and flesh in human life is not possible. The device of folk tale helps the playwright in transcending the limitations of time and place. The story of the horse-man or "Hayavadana" in the sub-plot "provides the out panel as in a mural - within which the tale of the two friends is framed."

(Theatre in India 347)
The Playwright in an Interview with Kirtinath Kurkoti, asserts that in the manner of folk theatre, *Hayavadana* depicts "a world of inarticulate and nonhuman beings who create a typology of functional characters." (Interviews with Playwrights and Directors 1989 82) The character of Bhagavata is functional in the sense that he simply narrates what he sees. The horse-man is not a complete human being and the inarticulate son of Padmini rides him. Goddess Kali gives away boons.

*Hayavadana* is full of mythical wonders. It is enshrouded in a realm of magic and supernatural, which is a frequent feature in a folk play. Goddess Kali, a supernatural element in the play is portrayed as a terrifying figure but possesses human attributes. The goddess fully comprehends the motives behind the acting of the characters and fully aware that the two friends are lying. By employing this strategy, the playwright stresses the fact that there are no smooth and practical solutions to human problems.

The dolls are used with a definite purpose. Karnad by using the dolls reveals the thought process and inner psyche of Padmini. Her visualization of Devadatta and Kapila finds expression in the words of the dolls. They report that in her reveries she perceives a man, not her husband, who looks rougher and darker, climbs a tree and dives into a river. Devadatta's transfiguration is also communicated by the doll. When Devadatta touches Doll I, it feels the change.
In the role of Bhagavata one could notice a Brechtian narrator figure. It is a technical achievement of Karnad. Bhagavata is primarily intended to draw the audience to the play. He is able to step out of the play, talk to the audience explaining the action with his insightful comments. The playwright widens the scope of his role. He is not only the commentator and omniscient narrator but also one of the characters. This is amply portrayed in Act Two, when Bhagavata and Kapila converse before the arrival of Padmini at Kapila's hut, and also when Bhagavata talks to Padmini before she performs Sati. The dramatist has introduced this device in the play, perhaps because of his childhood folk theatrical experience of Yakshagana.

There is a strong contradiction regarding the Brechtian alienation in Karnad's plays. There are critics who feel that the Brechtian alienation is not something which has been imported into India. It was there in the traditional theatre and the critics do not see them as Brechtian alienation in Karnad's plays. P.Ramamoorthi, in the scholar's interview asserts:

Alienation is one of the important factors of Indian dramas, especially in the folk theatre tradition, in the Therukoothu and in Yakshagana. This alienation is an important aspect of performance. So when they see Tughliq or when they see Hayavadana or Naga-Mandala or The Fire and the The
Rain, they won't say this is Brecht. This is from Yakshagana. This is how the distancing is done in Yakshagana. So the rural spectators are not worried about Brecht's alienation or existentialism and all that. They are not worried about the theory. They see it and immediately recongise it as part of the Indian theatre tradition. Only academics talk in terms of it as Brechtian alienation etc., etc. I don't think it is Brechtian alienation at all. It is alienation that we have in the Indian folk theatre tradition and nor is Girish so particularly inclined towards the Brechtian alienation. Because one thing marks the difference. Brecht's purpose was totally different from Karnad's. Brecht had the kind of a-yes, this has to tell you this, that directly. He has also used history and also myth or legend or history does not aim at a debate or propaganda. He might be aware of Brecht, but I don't think he is in any way using Brechtian alienation in this plays. (Appendix I).

Karnad employs the ingenious folk device of masks which is a typical feature of Yakshagana to project the different personalities of different character. In the beginning of the play, Devadatta appears on the stage wearing a pale-coloured mask and Kapila a dark one. Later on to signify the transposed
heads, their masks too are transposed. Lord Ganesha wears an elephant headed mask, and Kali a terrible mask. Initially Hayavadana appears wearing the mask of a man and in the end the mask of a horse. This transposition what is called Shape-Shifting is a means to work out some ideas. The playwright forces the audience to think by introducing the artifice of Shape-Shifting. This is deeply imbued in the spirit of drama itself. In any play, an actor playing a character pretends to be someone else. Drama itself depends on Shape-Shifting. A mask, which is one of the central metaphors of theatre is symbolic of Shape-Shifting. The artifice of Shape-Shifting is a modern aspect in Karnad's plays. It is traditional, ritualistic, mythical but the outcome is tragic in a modern sense. Shape-Shifting is a central metaphor in Karnad's plays. It has a structural device. It is structural because it reflects the kind of drama he practices. It allows a person to be someone else for a short while in order to provide recreation to both the audience and the performer.

In Hayavadana, various conventional elements of stage craft are used. They are integral to the action of the play and the actor's stage business. Half curtains and painted curtains are used to convey some facts. When Padmini performs Sati, the curtain has a blazing fire painted on it and as it is lifted, the flames seem to leap up. There is no front curtain and there is no elaborate stage set up.
The action of the play is mimed. For example when the three characters proceed to Ujjain, a cart does not appear on the stage, rather "Kapila followed by Padmini and Devadatta, enter miming a cart ride - Kapila is driving the cart." (*Hayavadana* 25)

The play is replete with instances of miming. For all these techniques, Karnad owes a great deal to folk theatre. In *Hayavadana* the theatre idiom transcends regional or linguistic barriers without losing its rootedness. It becomes obvious that the main thrust of Karnad's search was not to revive tradition but to understand and assimilate it for creative use, mainly to express the contemporary situation and its varied manifestations.

Karnad's trend-setting play *Hayavadana* strikes a significant note by exploring the dramatic potential of the ancient Indian myths, legends and folk traditions. Karnad begins the play with *nandi* and concludes it with *Bharatha Vakya*, recalling the traditions of ancient Sanskrit drama. *Hayavadana* is a 'play' in more than one sense of the word. It communicates both as "theatre" chooses for its narrative the ambience of folk drama. As folk drama it incorporates the elements of *Yakshagana*. Again the play is set against the backdrop of classical Sanskrit drama which has a longer tradition in India. Karnad's choice of the folk form instead of the classical speaks about the deliberate choice with regard to *Bhagavata* to speak to the spectator on the one hand, to act with the
actors on the other hand to the narrative of Hayavadana an aspect of folk drama that opens it up for a 'free' play of response.

Karnad observes that his Naga-Mandala is based on two oral tales from Karnataka, which he first heard several years ago from Professor A.K. Ramanujan. In his "Introduction to Three Plays Karnad writes:

These tales are narrated by women - normally the older women in the family - while children are being fed in the evenings in the kitchen or being put to bed. The other adults present on these occasions are also women. Therefore these tales though directed at children, often serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family (16-17)

It is a remarkable achievement of Karnad's play that he adapts this 'man-oriented' folk tale in such a manner that it becomes a representation of the experience of man and woman in the psychologically transitionary phase.

Naga-Mandala is the story of a young girl, Rani, newly married to Appanna, and their gradual understanding of the role, function and responsibilities of the institution of marriage. The story is presented in the play by a woman - narrator, a 'flame' which has come to tell a story. The play begins
in a temple where a passer by stops at night for shelter. He finds many 'flames' entering and start talking to each other. The stranger enters into a conversation with the 'flames' and listens to a new tale that has just escaped from an old woman's mouth. The interesting point is that, the stranger is a writer.

Here Karnad uses a brilliant device for creating a particularly female context and content in the 'man-oriented' folk tale. Karnad brings within the play the story association between oral narrative tradition and women's sub-culture existing within the patriarchal societies. The female experience expressed in female narratives is woven within the folk tale as the 'flames' tells her story to the professional male playwright.

Identity for women is usually a matter of relationships. There is a psychological self-division in the case of Appanna. The folk tale gets over the psychological self-division through the device of the snake-cover. Karnad made use of the folk tales and the mixing of human and non-human worlds as a distancing device, which brings in the element of alienation in the play. The folk tale element of *Naga-Mandala* and the magical power which the Cobra possesses reminds one that he is watching a play. The play is interspersed with observations and narrations reminding the spectator that he is only 'watching' a play. In the play Karnad has rejected the value of emotional identification. The folk theatre always upholds traditional values. It has the means of
questioning these values. The use of various conventions like the chorus, the mask, unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of the human and non-human, worlds present alternative points of view and alternative attitudes. In the Brechtian style the convention allows for 'complex-seeing'.

Two notable features of this play are the use of the chorus and music. All the songs are sung by the 'flames'. Karnad admits Brecht's influence on this play:

And it must be admitted that Brecht's influence, received mainly through his writings and without the benefit of his theatrical productions, went some way in making us realise what could be done with the design of traditional theatre.

(Three Plays 14)

The oral tradition in Karnad is very strong. By adopting the oral tradition Karnad adds effect to the telling technique in his plays. In the interview with this scholar P.Ramamoorthi states:

I think the oral tradition is a very strong point in Girish Karnad. The story is carried on by some kind of a narration.

Either a Bhagavata or the story in Naga-Mandala. It is this oral tradition which he has got from, say the Yakshagana,
the Bajan or the Keerthan. It has helped him a great deal.

Kambar also uses it. But Kambar is limited because of his limited exposure to Karnataka. He has not seen much of the Indian theatre as Girish has seen. He has not seen as much as the Western theatre as Girish has seen. So these are the reasons precisely why we think that there is a kind of a greater Westernism in Girish Karnad. (Appendix I)

Epic Theatre codified by Bertolt Brecht is a reaction against the traditional Aristotelian theatre of illusion. The essential point of Epic Theatre is that it appeals less to the spectator's feelings. It appeals more to his reason. In the traditional theatre the audience is watching an illusion of reality, accepting what S.T.Coleridge calls "... that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." (92) Brecht questions the value of identification or empathy. The theatrical alternative to empathy according to Brecht is Alienation or Estrangement. According to Brecht one should not identify oneself with the characters. One should stand back from them. Brecht does not agree with the theory of pity and terror, "... the twin yoked classical cause of Aristotle's catharsis." (Perspectives on Drama 271).

Brecht's theory of Epic theatre is illustrated in its most significant form in The Life of Galileo (1937 - 39), The Good Woman of Setzuan (1938 - 41) Mother Courage (1941) and The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1948).
Kamad exploits the Brechtian artifice of Epic Theatre in *Naga-Mandala*. He claims that the play strikes a departure from the emotional world of traditional values. In the play, Karnad attempts at instilling an alienation effect by deriving the materials of the play from the folk tales. He also uses the "non-naturalistic techniques" of the traditional Indian theatre. The title of the play is that of a snake. The story of the Cobra implies a deeper meaning. Through the folk-tale element, Karnad has rejected the value of emotional identification and catharsis in the play. In an epic theatre there are scenes of narration and commentary. The narrator-character analyses the action or comments on it. *Naga-Mandala*, a play within the play begins with the 'Prologue'. The characters of the 'Prologue' are the narrator-character of the play proper and their story constitutes the sub-plot of the play. The setting of the 'Prologue' is in the inner sanctum of a ruined temple. A man is sitting in the temple. He is sad because a mendicant has told him:

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. (*Naga-Mandala* 22)

That night is the last night of the month. His guilt is that he has "written plays", says the mendicant and thereby caused so many good people "to fall
asleep twisted in miserable chairs." So there is the "curse of Death" on him. (Naga-Mandala 22-23).

In Naga-Mandala, there is the notable feature of the epic drama, the use of chorus and music. The Man hears female voice. The flames are metaphors of the women of the village who have gathered at this time of night to tell tales and sing songs. Then enters the story in the form of a woman dressed in a new colourful sari. The flames gather around her to listen to her. In the rest of the story the Man and the Story play the part of the narrator-character. When the curtain rises, the opening speech is delivered by the Story. Thus the 'Prologue' is connected with the main plot.

As in an Epic theatre, in Naga-Mandala, there are many loosely connected episodes. Kurudavva plays a significant role, her marriage with a distantly related boy, her love for her son Kappanna form a sub-plot of the play. Kurudavva is connected with the main plot by providing the magical root to Rani and thus the Cobra falls in love with Rani. Act One ends with a brief narrative speech of the Story. In the rest of the play the Cobra in the disguise of Appanna is called Naga.

The events that take place in Act Two may be seen both from the supernatural and temporal levels. There is a dichotomy in the Naga's relationship with Rani. On the supernatural level the Cobra is a totem for the
Hindus. It falls in love with Rani and takes the human shape and form in order to extend happiness to her. But on the temporal level the Cobra alludes to a lover who is enthralled by Rani's beauty and visits her in the night. The diametrically opposed behaviour of the Naga and Appanna confound her. She says to Naga:

Goodness! Goats have to be sacrificed and buffaloes slaughtered to get a word out of you in the morning. But night - how you talk! Snakes and lizards may do what they like, but human beings should have some sense of shame. (Naga-Mandala 45)

In Naga-Mandala, Karnad uses the Epic Theatre technique of distancing to remind the spectator that he is only watching the play. Epic stage directors press into service moving or revolving platforms, treadmills carrying pieces of scenery, charts, cartoons and projected films. In Naga-Mandala the setting changes abruptly as in a cinematograph. As soon as it dawns the Naga takes a step to go. The lights change from night to mid-day. "In a flash, Naga becomes Appanna: Pushes her to the floor and kicks her."

Appanna: Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in, and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is who did you go to with your sari off.
When Appanna exits the lights change to night. Naga comes in and comforts her. Naga says: "your husband will become your slave tomorrow. You will get all you have ever wanted." (Naga-Mandala 54) He moves down the steps and turns into a snake and goes away. There is sudden commotion in the stage. Crowds of Villagers fill the stage. Here Karnad adopts the technique of shifting the scenes within a flash.

Towards the end of the play, when Flames prepare to leave, a conversation follows between the Man and the Story in the form of a panel discussion about the appropriate ending of the play. The discussion brings home to one that in this play the Man is the metaphor of the playwright and his critical faculty, the Story is that of his poetic imagination and the flames may stand for both the village women and audience. The flames prefer happy ending and the Man holds the view that death is the inescapable truth. However for the gratification of others, the Man gives the alternative ending in which the play ends happily. Karnad has rejected the professional stage established by Kailasam and Sri Ranga. He has tried to bring in his play a first-hand knowledge of practical demands of the stage and a better understanding of dramatic technique. Karnad deals with social inequality and the failure of Basavanna's reforms in eradicating it in Tale-Danda.
The play of power-politics makes *Tale-Danda* a fascinating play. The play is based on a historical incident of the twelfth century. But Karnad with the spirit of a true artist raises the issues that are extremely relevant in contemporary society. The plot is very simple. There are no twists and turns. Karnad makes a direct approach to the historical incidents and turns it into a remarkable work of art.

One could say that a play should have a beginning, middle and an end. *Tale Danda* is the simplest play Karnad has so far written. The characters are introduced in such a way that they fit into the situation. King Bijjala is kind and straightforward. The ugly game of power-politics played by Bijjala's son Sovideva corrupts the society.

One wonders why Karnad has not used the usual techniques in *Tale Danda* which he employed in his other plays. Perhaps he wanted to make the people realise the seriousness of the issue and that the theme should reach the people directly.

Basavanna is a social reformer in the modern sense. Sincerity has no place in the corrupt society and it is questioned. There are people like Damoder Bhatt and Manchanna Kramita to spoil the mind of people like Sovideva.
There are certain movements in the play which create telling effect. Sovideva wants to win his father's favour by making Basavanna unpopular. He plans to open the Royal treasury. Perhaps this is the first movement in the play and this furthers the plot. Jagadeva a Sharana comes to know about Sovideva's plan and he gathers thousands of Sharanas and encircles the Royal treasury. Meanwhile Basavanna comes and takes Sovideva into custody and finds the treasury intact. He releases Sovideva. He is deeply frustrated and he decides to avenge on his father and mother.

Jagadeva's story may be considered as a sub-plot. He doesn't take that much care for his father, mother and wife. Jagadeva has sacrificed his life for a noble cause. He does not take any interest in his personal affairs. He is a devoted Sharana and finally it is he who kills Bijjala.

The proposed marriage between Kalavati and Sheelavant forms the pivot of the play and the play moves on this sub-plot. Basavanna is invited for the betrothal. He is shocked and he cannot say anything. Sharanas are unhappy. Basavanna explains his apprehension:

It's a question of life and death for these children. From tomorrow the wrath of the bigoted will pursue them like a swarm of snakes to strike as they pause to put up a roof or
light an oven. Who will protect them then? Elementary prudence demands that - (Tale-Danda 38)

Sharanas misunderstand Basavanna. The play moves on. Bijjala apprehends the danger and requests Basavanna to stop the marriage. But the marriage takes place and the Sharanas are jubilant about their great achievement. The marriage infuriates the orthodox Hindus.

This leads to the final blood bath. Sovideva persecutes Sharanas. The crowning ceremony of Sovideva goes on as the city of Kalyan is ablaze. Karnad had worked on this theme for long fifteen years to get the feel of the times. In an interview with Gowri Ramnarayan, Karnad says:

It is issue based, focusing on the philosophical implications of the two forces which clashed the Sanathana dharma and the Bakthi movement. (74)

There is a large cast of characters. The scene in which Jagadeva stabs Bijjala to death is highly dramatic. The Sharanas want to revenge Sovideva for the persecution of Sharanas. They do not find Sovideva and Jagadeva leads them to the inner shrine of Shiva, where the old king hides. Jagadeva lies that they are sent by Basavanna and the king comes out. In spite of the request of the other Sharanas, Jagadeva is not ready to spare the king. After the killing
of the king, he requests the followers to leave him alone. Then he commits suicide. When Basavanna learns all these, he is greatly agitated and talks to himself philosophically. Throughout the play there is the smell of blood, though many of the killings are reported by messengers. Events and incidents are reported by messengers for the characters on the stage as well as for the audience. This is a technique used by Shakespeare in Macbeth as well as his other tragedies. Karnad uses this technique to inform the audience what happens off the stage. In a sense, Karnad is Shakespearean in using this technique.

The merit of Tale-Danda lies in its historical truth and its character drawing. In the field of characterisation, Karnad reigns supreme. Karnad endowed historical characters like Bijjala, Basavanna etc. with life. They are alive, they change and evolve before the very eyes of the readers / spectators.

Tale-Danda is a structural triumph of Karnad. It is a well planned and well constructed historical play. Tale-Danda has a well-knit plot and dramatic conflict. There are two antagonistic forces in the plot. Sharanas headed by Basavanna and Sovideva supported by Damodara and Manchanna form the hostile groups. The conflict between these two groups proceeds with varying results. It is the king who suffers most because of the conflict. One of the noteworthy features of the play is the utmost economy exercised by
Karnad in the presentation of the historical theme. Always dramatists have a disadvantage because they have to compress their materials. Karnad eliminates what is not essential and only selects the most important incidents and situations. Karnad's skill as a dramatist lies in the successful presentation of the events that took place in the twelfth century for years within the short compass of a play.

*Tale-Danda* is historical like *Tughlaq*. The play throws light on the inhuman practice of caste system that has prevailed for ages in the Hindu Society. *Tale-Danda* dramatises the suffering of *Sharanas* giving a contemporaneous touch. The play of power-politics in *Tale-Danda* is fascinating. The issues that are raised are extremely relevant. There is a terrible blood shed at the end of the play. The whole city of Kalyan is drowned in a sea of blood. The Hindi translation of *Tale-Danda* is very aptly titled *Rakt Kalyan*.

Karnad's *Tale-Danda* deals with the few weeks during which a vibrant prosperous society plunged into anarchy and terror. To achieve this end Karnad makes history move with long strides and quick phases. The events are foreshortened and detailed, the scenes are not allowed to grow tedious and wearisome. The opening scenes of a play are the real test of a dramatist's skill. In *Tale-Danda*, Karnad's dramatic technique is very well exhibited in the opening scene itself. The purpose of the first scene is to
acquaint the audience with the basic situation in which the subsequent events are rooted. The treasury episode is introduced in the first scene of the First Act using reporting technique. The scene also introduces the social condition of Kalyan. Bhagirathi says:

Why can't that Basavanna see some sense? In every household in Kalyan, its the same story. Father against son - brother against brother (Tale-Danda 2)

Basavanna, through his path-breaking ideal has been able to gather round him a number of people - Sharanas, who believe in his ideal of a casteless and classless society. This movement has the motto "Work is worship."

A succession of important and exciting events develop between the crisis and the final catastrophe. It is a test to the dramatist's skill to keep the spectators interested in the play. Karnad does succeed in keeping alive the audience's interest. The tragedy is in the success of Prince Sovideva, Damodara Bhatta and Manchanna Karmita in destroying the momentum of a new reformist movement with progressive ideas which rejected idol worship, rituals, class distinctions, casteism, superstitions, profiteering and other obscuruish ideas. The news of the marriage celebrations between an Untouchable boy and a Brahmin girl (now belong to a Sharana family) proves to be the last straw as tempers are already running high in certain sections
of the society. Damodar Bhatta convinces Sovideva the Prince to revolt against his father, because the king has failed to stop the marriage and has instead tried to protect the Sharanas. The chronicle narrative is transformed into a regular play. Instead of the older method of panoramic representation, Karnad deliberately chooses his scenes. He even alters historical relation to make the story fit into a preconceived design. Usually the writers of chronicle plays present a series of scenes instead of a regular plot and are thus episodic in nature; Karnad in *Tale-Danda* gives a well-knit and well-designed plot. One could see unity of design and the regular dramatic conflict in *Tale-Danda*. Series of scenes are also properly linked together.

Karnad draws correspondence from the past to the present, from history to real life to meet his thematic needs. In *Tale-Danda* also he uses the structural pattern of techniques to suit his thematic needs. In this play he examines the need and structure of the caste system in India, once hailed as ideal. With historical cum political background, for his plot, he moulds his theme for *Tale-Danda*. Thus Karnad's *Tale-Danda* is an act of deconstruction of caste and religion to arrive at its real, proper meaning and to restructure the same for the benefit of the society and the Country. Treat everyone "a human being" only is the argument of *Tale-Danda*. 
There is a continuing search in Girish Karnad, for a moral order. His plays present this problem in different contexts to generate discourse about Man as both subject and object. The engagement with this theme began in his *Yayati* and continues in *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala*, *Tale-Danda* and perhaps culminates in *The Fire and the Rain*. The technical aspects also reach its culmination in the *The Fire and the Rain*, where Karnad very brilliantly juxtaposes *Yajna* and theatre and finally concludes that theatre is superior to *Yajna*. One remembers here how T.S. Eliot in his *Murder in the Cathedral*, successfully reintroduced a ritualistic form into drama. This ritualistic elements are familiar to a Christian audience. The audience knew the Becket story. Like that here Karnad uses the ritualistic elements of *Yajna* to recreate a ritualistic theatre in his *The Fire and the Rain* in the Indian tradition.

A Karnad character seeks to achieve a moral order. *The Fire and the Rain* explores the possibilities before the seeker using a very refreshing and inventive dramatic idiom. Here Karnad uses the myth of Yavakri as the fulcrum of his play. *The Fire and the Rain* is a link in the continuing thesis of Karnad that life is a conundrum. The story of Yavakri and Paravasu is a riddle. One who tries to understand the riddle can understand what is 'knowledge'. In the Prologue of the play, Karnad emphasises the importance of the Fifth *Veda*. 
Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* is mainly based on the myth of Yavakri from the *Mahabharata*. It is Karnad's dramatic skill that makes "this seemingly peripheral tale" a great work of art. (*The Fire and the Rain* ix) The moment Karnad read the tale he wanted to turn it into a play. Karnad says in his preface to *The Fire and the Rain*:

For the next thirty seven years, I struggled with it, trying to fit all the ramifications of the myth within some sort of a manageable shape. (ix)

Karnad uses all kinds of techniques to attain perfection. Myth should be elaborated and when it is elaborated it magnifies its factual core. Theatre is the best means to validate myth.

The daily quest in the theatre is the actor's participation in the mysterious process by which he himself multiplies. The performer has to bring the myth alive in the evening with the beginning of the play and destroy it at the end of the play. The performer feels imbued with the power of the myth, that has been given to incarnate and succeeds in the act. There are three entities on the stage - the actor person, the character myth and the mask transitioned device. In *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad employs all these in the character Arvasu. Arvasu never fuses himself with the role he plays. Fusion with the role one plays is done by the exorcists, the shaman and the witch-
doctor. When Brahma Rakshasa asks for the 'final release', Arvasu though hesitant in the beginning, agrees for it. This can only be done by Arvasu, because he is a human being. According to K. Chandrasekhar, in his article "Before the Curtain Fall",

... the stage is a Garba Griha which confers the performer the status of a permanent outsider, he crystalises a society's memory and knowledge of itself even as he serves to subvert it." (III)

The plot of the play The Fire and the Rain falls into three parts. It is like a trilogy. Each part has its own action and lead characters. But as Karnad points out in the Notes appended to the text of the play, "the similarities with Aeschylus's Oresteia is only external." (74)

The play is divided into three acts with a Prologue and The Epilogue. Theatre is a ritual, a myth in action. Theatre is a participatory ritual. The performers and the spectators participate in the action. They also share the fruits of action. Like Yajna, theatre also establishes social activity. It is a sacred performance. What links the play The Fire and the Rain with the Myth and the social reality is the fact that theatre is Yajna.

One possible expression in the play is the polarity between the Aryan
culture and the Dravidian. The Kannada title justifies this expression. 'Agni' communicates a deeper meaning than the English equivalent Fire. The Sanskrit word Agni has a ritual status. 'Male' is a Kannada word without any ritualistic expression. Karnad uses the juxtaposing technique in the title also. The title also signifies that the plot is not confined to a simple physical juxtaposition between Fire and Rain. Karnad suggests in the 'Notes' that:

Several other oppositions: between an Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit) and a Dravidian (Kannada) language, between the pan-Indic and the regional points of view, between the classical 'marga' and the less exalted 'desi' traditions, between the elevated and the mundane, and even perhaps between (here one needs to read cautiously) the sacred and the secular." (The Fire and The Rain 63)

Karnad is concerned with these differences in the play.

Paravasu is a representative of the Aryan community. He is respected by the King and is invited by him to be the chief priest to perform the 'fire sacrifice', to propitiate Indra. As a counter to Paravasu, Nittilai is to be seen. Unlike Paravasu she is all alone and her love pervades humanity. She represents the Dravidian community. Karnad visually picturises a religious/ritualistic Yajna performed by people like Paravasu, Raibhya and Yavakri and
also relates to a theatrical performance by the low-born actors. It is here Karnad succeeds as a dramatist of the high quality by juxtaposing Yajna and theatre, and giving theatre its due importance.

Arvasu is set as a link between the two streams, between Yajna and Theatre, between the Aryan and the Dravidian represented by Paravasu and Nittilai. By birth Arvasu is a Brahmin, but he is banished from his community. He falls in love with Nittilai the hunter girl. He has none of the scheming slyness of either of his father or brother. Though he does not possess the Vedic knowledge he has concern for his fellow human beings. There is a point in the play that he does not belong anywhere. At the time of crisis he has to make choices. Arvasu is thrown out of Yajna and Nittilai saves him. Later he joins a theatre group and agrees to act in the play 'The Triumph of Indra'. Arvasu as an actor, captivates the fellow actors and the spectators as well. When the sacrificial Yajna does not bring the rains and when the theatre group performs Indra Vijaya, Arvasu participates in the sacrifice as an actor and spectator. He is not allowed as a priest to perform the Yajna, because his very presence will defile the sacrificial space. But Arvasu enters the magical space of theatre and performs what he would have performed as a priest. It is a technique adopted by Karnad and Karnad is triumphant in linking and hinting at the possible meaning of Theatre and Yajna.
In the Epilogue to the play Karnad signals the essence of theatre. Theatre has also a legitimate claim to please Gods as a Yajna does. Theatre is sacred as Yajna and purposeful, sometimes superior to Yajna because anybody can be a spectator. The Natyashastra, a theatre practical manual is very much respected by Karnad. The play - within - the play is performed as a part of Yajna to make the Yajna more meaningful. Parvasu feels: "It's a bond that we can't break. Let's have the play. We shall all watch." (The Fire and the Rain 4) One could easily understand that there is a bond between the Yajna and Theatre. Parvasu orders that the play be performed, as part of the Yajna to make the Yajna more meaningful.

The Fire and The Rain is Meta theatre. It is a play about playmaking and the nature of performance. This technique is adopted by many playwrights in India. Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session, Parasuram Ramamoorthi's Kohinoor are instances which use this technique. Arvasu is a performer in the Great Tradition who brings alive the myth each evening and destroys at the end of the performance. The play chosen for performance is Indra Vijaya. Karnad uses the superimposition technique here to make it more authentic. Though the story is from Rig Veda, it has close parallel to the story of Arvasu and Parvasu. Arvasu transits between the two layers of the story, because of his powers as a performer. The play exposes the guilty conscience of Parvasu. One is reminded of the play within
the play in Hamlet and the guilty conscience of Claudius and Gertrude and
the reaction of Hamlet. The correspondence between Reality and the Play is
striking and everyone realises it, the performer and the spectator. The mask
takes possession of Arvasu. He enters the Yajna enclosure and reduces
everything to ashes. Paravasu is also reduced to ashes.

The spectators play a vital role in theatre. Theatre can have all kinds of
spectators, unlike Yajna where the expected audience is gods. There must be
something in the performance to satisfy everyone in the auditorium. The
reaction and the appreciation of the spectators is very important for the success
of the performance. Karnad tries to convey the fact that Theatre is a superior
Yajna. Arvasu remains an actor-person until he identifies himself with the
character myth.

The play could have ended melodramatically. Karnad gives it a new
ending. This new ending marks the beginning of something new. The emotive
atmosphere is turned into something else with an ethereal colour. Indra is
satisfied with the performance rather than Yajna. Indra responds to the
performance. He grants a boon to Arvasu and finally Arvasu chooses to let
time roll forward. The dramatic technique reaches its climax, when the
natural order is upheld in keeping with the spirit of Nittilai:
(Wind blows. Lightening. Thunder. People shout 'Rain! It's raining!' Suddenly the Brahma Rakshasa roars with laughter and melts away. Only his laughter can be heard for a few moments, reverberating mixed with the rolling thunder. It pours. People dance with joy. They roll in the mud. Arvasu sits clutching Nittilai's body)

Arvasu: It's raining, Nittilai! It's raining!

(The Fire and the Rain 62)

In a democratic civil society, there is an area of multiple voices and dialogue. It is a place where various regional and ethnic voices converge and articulate their aspirations. In regions like West Bengal, Maharashtra or Karnataka where there is a flourishing theatre tradition, playwrights like Tendulkar, Sircar, Karnad and Mahesh Elkunchwar have emerged. Anywhere in the world a good and successful playwright has always functioned in conjunction with a particular theatre movement or company. Brecht and Shaw were both intimately connected with the production of their scripts. They were successful as playwrights because of their close association with theatre. In the case of Karnad also this is true. In his Preface to The Fire and the Rain, Karnad writes:

What literally forced my hands was a commission, in 1993, from the Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis, USA, to write a play
for them. In October 1994, a workshop was organized in Minneapolis in which I worked with professional American actors at making the script stageworthy. (ix)

Karnad is a committed playwright. It is surprising to note that Karnad a gifted actor never acted in any of his plays and yet another puzzle is that the gifted director never directed any of his own plays. He gives a free hand to the directors of his plays. For example, in his London production of Hayavadana, P. Ramamoorthy made use of two Bhagavatas instead of one in the text of Karnad. Ramamoorthy explains in his interview with the scholar:

This production also saw two Bhagavatas. In Karnad's text there is only one Bhagavata, a team to speak. But in my production, there were two Bhagavatas, one male and one female. I would touch an issue here. However much we try to be objective in narrating a story, in narrating an incident there is no hundred percent objectivity in narration. There is always some element of objectivity in our narration. Even if it is a story being narrated, there is an element of subjectivity. This is precisely why we chose two Bhagavatas – a male Bhagavata and a female Bhagavata narrating. The male Bhagavata could probably have some
kind of a subjectivity in the attitude towards Padmini and a female *Bhadra* has some kind of an objectivity towards Devadatta, so there is an element of subjectivity in narration however trained the narrator is. That is why we used two *Bhagavatas* instead of one. (Appendix 1)

Karnad never interferes with the production of his plays.

According to Styan, "a play must communicate or it is not a play at all." *(Drama, Stage and audience)* 1 If one could apply this principle to Karnad's plays, they are plays because they all communicate. For this communication purpose, Karnad allows maximum freedom to the producers and directors of his plays. But one is not supposed to ask whether a play communicate for ever; one is only supposed to ask do "a play communicate in its own time, through its own medium, for its own community." *(Drama, Stage and Audience)* 1 Again it is true of Karnad plays. There is communication and one could easily understand that Karnad's plays communicate powerfully using the media and the communication is maximum to the benefit of the community. The line of communication takes place by "the transmission of signals between stage and audience." *(Drama, Stage and Audience)* 1 When a Karnad play is staged, the play actually communicates and the perception in the theatre is wild, immediate and alike. *Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala* and *The Fire and the Rain* do
this type of communication. Drama has to communicate for the attainment of *purusharthas*. "The *purusharthas* are the four ethical goals of human existence: *dharma, artha, kama, and moksha.*" *(The Fire and the Rain 71)*

Karnad's plays suggest many things and one among them is the undefined truth, that the audience has to approach. Theatre goers secretly seek this experience and Karnad offers this to his audience through his plays. To understand the undefined truth one must know the theatre. Karnad knows the theatre very well and especially in *The Fire and the Rain* he achieves this.

Styan explains the role of audience in his *Drama, Stage and Audience*:

The study of the drama is the study of how the stage compels its audience to be involved in its actual processes.

The spectator interprets and so contributes to and finally becomes a play, whose image is all and only in his mind (4)

This observation well suits Karnad's play *The Fire and the Rain*. The involvement of the audience with the performance is indicated in many ways. It is the interpretation and contribution of the spectators that finally makes *The Fire and the Rain* 'the play.' It is involvement of the audience that makes the theatre at its best. This involvement could be seen in the other plays of Karnad. Theatre achieves what *Yajna* could not.
The range of characters, the intricacies of the plot, the universality of the theme, the beauty of the dialogue, the power of the writing and the theatrical techniques of a master craftsman have made Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* a *tour de force* in Indian English drama. One wonders how Karnad was able to knit the various trans of the plot together into an effective dramatic experience without forsaking any of the vital elements of drama. The myth is used to conjure up the mood of the atmosphere. The question of theatre and *Yajna* is introduced in such a way without sacrificing continuity and cohesion.

Thomas R. Whitaker in his *Fields of Play in Modern Drama* writes about the participation of the audience for the fulfillment of the play:

A play is no external object. It does not "make a statement" about a human condition from which it has somehow withdrawn. Nor does it merely "imitate" an action. A play is a present action, a form of attentive playing, and its full meaning must therefore include the fact of our participation in it. (6)

The actors in Karnad's plays witness what is happening on the stage and when the audience witnesses a Karnad play, they attend to actors. An actor is an implicit witness and an audience is an implicit actor. In Karnad's plays the moment of such reciprocity is shaped in such a way. This shared acting and
witnessing lead to a new kind of interpretation to modern drama. Karnad's plays *Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala* and *The Fire and the Rain* thus manifests themselves to this new type of interpretation. For example, one could talk about the complex studies of role-playing in the presentation of the character *Tughlaq*. Again in *Hayavadana* the transposition of heads lead to role-playing. In *Naga-Mandala*, a lot of role-playing is there in Appanna and Naga. The role-playing in *Tughlaq* paramounts with the political element, the intrigues manipulation and power politics.

In Karnad, the characters play hide and seek with an intense realm of authenticity and it is nothing but theatre. The characters whether drawn from myth, legend, folk or history they play with their anxieties and anguish. Though there is the distancing technique, the audience share the play's ruthless control of its action, because drama is an art of man with man. A play always exists among the spectators. There are no characters but only roles played by actors for the audience. The *dramatis personae* are not people but the partial masks of the actors' lives.

Karnad's plays are grounded in spontaneous reciprocity, inherent mutuality. His plays focus that reciprocity and reflect it further. One should not forget that a play is a collaborative miming and is lifted moment by moment into the light of the attention. Thus the actor as well as the spectator is at the same
time 'outside' and 'inside' its action. Then only a play's full meaning could be
assimilated. The meaning of the play resides in its total form of acting and
witnessing. This acting – witnessing technique is fully utilized by Karnad in his
plays namely Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, Tale-Danda and The Fire
and the Rain. In Tughlaq it is achieved through the minor characters. In
Hayavadana it is done very effectively, using Bhagavata. It is interesting to note
that towards the end of Act One, Bhagavata speaks to the audience:

So there's a break of ten minutes now. Please have some tea,
ponder over this situation and come back with your own
solutions. We shall then continue with our enquiry.

(Hayavadana 39)

Here, Karnad reaches the zenith of his dramatic skill in using the technique of
acting - witnessing.

The Man, The Flames and The Story in Naga-Mandala act as the story
tellers like Bhagavata in Hayavadana. The Actor-Manager in The Fire and the
Rain plays a similar role. The story tellers take the narration in the play forward
and backward and bridge the gap of time and space. The dynamic stage filled
with action needs these type of story tellers to give the play the expected vitality.
They also contribute to the structure and thought process of his plays.
Talking about theatre techniques used in Karnad plays, special mention should be made about transformation and impersonation. *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* abound in these techniques. The mixing up of the reality and illusion is a special feature of Karnad's plays. In *The Fire and the Rain*, one is doubtful which is real and which is illusion and at times it is difficult to distinguish between the two.

The external elements of the plays help to gain the quality of spectacle. In Karnad's plays, the various aspects of Indian aesthetics *Angika* and *Vachika* are combined effectively with the *Aharya* and the *Satwika*. The space used, the outdoor auditorium, the minimum sets and props, the intimate theatre created by partial use of the stage, the music which acted as the interlude between scenes and the mood created of each scene to follow, the simple, yet elegant costumes all enhance the total quality of Karnad plays.

When a person wears a mask, one wonders and wants to know whether it represents his personality – his face are mask. In the Western theatre the mask is used in contrast to the face. But in Indian traditional theatre the mask is only face writ large. Hence there is a problem of identity in Karnad's plays. This problem is examined with reference to Karnad's *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala* and *The Fire and the Rain*. Pirandello makes the six characters wear masks in his famous play, *Six Characters in Search of An Actor*, "in order to
give the impression of figures created through Art," says Susan Mc – Guire Bassnet (37). But Karnad uses mask for his characters to discuss the Divided-Self, identity crisis, private self, public self and identity with others in his plays.

_Natyashastra_ upholds that drama teaches the path of virtue to those who do their duty; it admonishes the uncivilized, encourages self-control, makes the coward bold and the Wisdom of the learned one is enhanced. Thus the performance is a commentary on the society. A play like _The Fire and the Rain_ gains meaning not in the meaning of the myth, but in its applicability to the situation today. The play is about India, about performance and the relevance of theatre in the present age.

What is interesting in Karnad is, he combines the East and the West so naturally that he has actually created a "new" theatre - the blending of the East and West. He has so much of the theatre in him - basically he is an actor and a producer as well - he recreates a theatre suitable for his play. His plays are as varied as possible. It is very difficult to categorize all his plays under one caption. If _Tughlaq_ is a political satire, Karnad uses 'irony' as the main technique, but the inexplicable sense of alienation experienced by _Tughlaq_ is the underlying theme of the play. The play gets various dimensions. It is at once a political allegory and a treatise on existentialist alienation. If _Hayavadana_ has "change" as its unifying theme, Karnad's explicit instruction
that the play should be read as a matter for laughter makes the play mysterious. *Naga-Mandala* is about "King of Snakes" as well as 'feminism'. Though *Tale-Danda* deals with social deformity, caste and religion there is an attempt to deconstruct caste and religion to arrive at its real, proper meaning. Treat every one as a 'human being' is the argument and Karnad establishes that 'knowledge' is the right canon to judge a human being. In *The Fire and the Rain*, it is meta-theatre and a megaplay. Theatre and *Yajna* are both rituals with social purposes. Karnad signals the essence of theatre in *The Fire and the Rain*. The rain towards the end of the play adds to the theatrical performance. No doubt Karnad's theatre is *Yajna*.

As great art, Karnad's theatre lends itself to many layers of interpretation. He has so much of theatre in him - East and the West blending so naturally in him that Karnad's theatre become unique. It is his art / craftsmanship that makes his plays, poems.