Chapter Two
Return to the Roots: The Muse of Influences in Karnad’s Dramaturgy

In an interview to PTI, titled “Theatre Will Survive.”, Karnad avers that “I cannot invent plots therefore I use myths. I cannot invent stories and hence I go to history” (“Interview to PTI” Indian Express 28 March 1999). This averment of Karnad gives an idea of why myths mean ‘continuity’, and why they are viewed as modes of representing reality conveying a ‘timeless experience’. Readers familiar with myth and meaning making, or with myth criticism will know how myth has emerged as an influential discourse in the world of literature and literary criticism. A perusal of the book, Form, Individuality and the Novel: An Analysis of Narrative Structure in Early German Prose by Clemens Lugowski, originally published in 1932, and translated into English and published in 1990, will give a perceptive glimpse of how Jungian notion of ‘depth psychology’ and ‘primordial images’, Maud Bodkin’s path-breaking emphasis on ‘psychological studies of imagination’ in his book, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (1934), Northrop Frye’s articulations on mythical patterns underlying all kinds of literature in his canonical work, titled The Anatomy of Criticism (1957), Claude Levi-Strauss’s books, Structural Anthropology (1958), The Savage Mind (1972), and Myth and Meaning (1978) which treat “myth as a kind of thought, half-way between precepts and concepts”, and Ronald Barthes’ book, Mythologies (1973) wherein he speaks of progressive signification in meaning-making and cautions about, “no denunciation without its proper instrument of close analysis”, have all contributed to studies related
to myth and archetypes which as system of signs touch on ‘subconscious language’. They inform readers how myths of bygones eras can be transformed into aesthetic structures and devices to represent reality and serve as “analogues for a view of the world as a form of timeless experience” (Lugowski 42).

In one of his critical reflections, K. Satchidanandan, poet and critic, writes:

A.K. Ramanujan once retold a folktale where a woodcutter claims that his axe has been in the family for generations. Questioned further, he admits that its handle has been changed many times, so too its blade; yet he thinks it is something like an heirloom, passed on to him by his ancestors through successive generations. (6)

The above two quotes and citations may be taken as significant pillars of matrices on which the strength of this chapter lies. They give the rationale why Karnad opts for ‘acrobating between tradition and modern’ or ‘return to the theatre of the roots movement’, to use his own terms, for negotiating modernity in India. As A.K. Ramanujan implies and Satchidanandan reiterates, ‘tradition, as a social construct’, has an evolving nature within it, and in the hands of a creative artist, it serves the purpose of creating a series of innovations, and the ability to create something new is act of a genius. In the process, this newness, as T.S. Eliot suggests in his seminal essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1922), reconstitutes tradition initiated at different periods of history, and keeps getting reconstituted again and again. By virtue of the diverse elements ingrained in it at different moments, defining it for all time becomes ‘an impossible task’.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand and appreciate the varied influences which contribute to Karnad’s efforts to foreground hybridization of thought and dialogic imagination that celebrates polyphony of voices in terms of meaning.
making. This chapter highlights how these influences have a consorting and converging-effect in his dramaturgy. This converging confluence is elucidated within a framework of highlighting very briefly and just to the extent necessary certain theoretical idioms and notions of select thinkers and critics like Bakhtin (Dialogic Imagination and Discourse), Brecht (Epic Theatre vs Dramatic Theatre), Bhabha (Third Space Encounters and Hybridization of Thought), and Spivak (Subalternization of the Feminine and Vice Versa). This researcher assumes, in the light of attempts made in the recent past as the review of literature shows, that some of the critical idioms of these thinkers can be discerned or applied in the dramaturgy of Karnad. Keeping in mind the caution G.N.Devy makes regarding “Indian talent getting wasted in pursuit of theory” (106), this chapter tries to make a judicious balance with a focus on the Indic dimension of the confluence of influences in Karnad’s plays. In the course of the elucidation, the chapter reiterates, and that is this study’s significant contribution, what stands out in the dramatic perception and aesthetics of Karnad. What stands out is the convergence towards the Indic rasa-aesthetics impacted by dhvani and vakrokti that overarch his interstitial plot-structures and dialogues ensuring an ‘understanding-culture’ rather than an ‘abstraction-culture’, summing up Karnad’s deep-rooted humanism. Borrowing these two phrases from the book of A.S.Dasan, titled The Rains and the Roots: The Indian English Novel Then and Now (2006), wherein he postulates and argues, vis-à-vis the Indic tradition of thought and the Indian novel as a social act, that ‘understanding culture’ foregrounds experience and experiments while ‘abstraction culture’ saturates with knowledge episteme / logistics’, this researcher goes on to substantiate how Karnad’s dramaturgy is a confluence of varied influences which showcases hybrid and cosmopolitan ‘understanding culture’ that exudes the contours of Karnad’s eclectic humanism.
Karnad stands out as one of the significant playwrights who contributed to the modernization of the stage after India’s independence (1947). That was the time when “the Indian theatre” as Anuparna Mukherjee informs, “was suffering from acute identity crises, being torn between its ancient cultural past and its more recent colonial legacy, which gave birth to hybrid dramatic forms” (1). Karnad, along with a few other theatre personalities like Satyajit Ray, Habib Tanvir, K.N. Pannikar, RatanThiyam, Vijay Tendulkar and the Marxist theatre veteran, Utpal Dutt, showed an abiding interest in, articulated the aspirations of a newly independent nation by attempting to, as Anuparna comments, “decolonize the aesthetics of modern Indian theatre by retracing its roots in the repository of India’s classical and folk traditions” (189). Under the impact of pervasiveness and indigenization of western influences, they looked for divergent ways of returning to the roots vis-à-vis Indian myth, history, literature, society and politics. In other words, the twentieth century modern Indian drama may viewed as a blend of the East and the West by virtue of the double legacies Indians have, namely the legacy of Western education under the impact of the British regime, and the legacy of Indic traditions which have been there for ages.

As Badal Sircar expressed, the playwrights of the time were particular and endeavoured to capture and respond to complexities and contradictions of the complex world they were in. Or, as Suresh Avasthi observes, they were particular to problematize “the colonial course of contemporary theatre” in India by “recovering from amnesia the traces of their roots as a way of asserting their cultural autonomy” (48) by dramaturgically mediating through a range of material, institutional, and cultural practices of the newly emergent nation, such as civics, politics, patriotism, nationalism, and Indianization. Plays like Satyajit Ray’s Pather Panchanli and Karnad’s Hayavadana, as Anuparna notes, “watershed marks in shaping the cultural
history of post 1947”. If Ray’s play served as “a succinct metaphor for the opening of the eye of Indian consciousness searching for a collective and national self-definition”, Karnad’s play was viewed as a dramaturgic act of “awakening into a new realization, a gaze that now looks inward at its own history to enable the present and reinterprets myths and traditions to patch and darn the rich tapestry of its Indigenous culture” (190-191).

A reading of Partha Chatterjee’s book, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1986), *or in The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993), and the evocative commentary of Dipesh Chakrabarty on Partha Chatterjee’s first book in *Economic and Political Weekly* (1987) helps this researcher see how ‘an ideological structure of nationalism, a progeny of the post-Enlightenment of European Modernity, was imported to India by the colonizers themselves’, and how within this hegemonic framework of a received or borrowed knowledge, ‘Indian nationalists shaped their own modes of anti-colonial expression to overthrow the yoke of Western domination in the subcontinent’. In the course of combining the traditional and the modern, these playwrights made significant attempts to shape an intercultural and hybrid narrative through their return to the roots movement. An intercultural narrative was an imperative by virtue of the fact, they were keenly conscious of, that Indian civilization “yokes together such heterogeneous cultural practices and performance forms under its portal”, and hence the indispensable necessity “to negotiate more than one self, one history, one language” (Bharucha 78). The point to be emphasized here is that ‘the Roots Theatre’ opted for capturing the nuanced complexities of the time and “went beyond the simplistic binary of tradition and modernity, urban and rural, to create a platform for experimenting with various
performance forms—Tamasha and Lavani of Maharashtra, Bhavai of Gujarat, Yakshagana of Karnataka, Koodiyattam of Kerala, Therukoothu of Tamil Nadu and Chhau of Orissa and Bengal” (Anuparna 198). Therefore, it would be a naïve oversimplification to brand the Roots Movement as anti-modern. The fact that the ethos of Indian modernity comprising various regional/vernacular alterities, as critics like Mee and Bharucha conclude, ‘cannot be separated from the folk resources which constitute ‘the memories of their childhood, family, community, and tradition’.

These readings propel this researcher to see, understand and appreciate how Indian modernism emerged from the colonial encounter, one, which distanced itself from, but also assimilated tradition, and how the aesthetics and sensibilities of the first generation of major post-independence playwrights were shaped precisely by values rooted in cosmopolitanism and critical attitudes towards India as a nation. Dipesh Chakraborty’s essay, “Subaltern Histories and Post-Enlightenment Rationalism” (2002), gives enough scope to read Karnad not only as a playwright who opted for the return to the roots but also pursed subaltern aesthetics as alternative modes of perception of contemporary realities and as poetic agencies of self-authenticating subjectivity through subalternization.

Reading Karnad’s plays facilitates readers to understand why people wish to revisit the past. Revisiting the past means going back and getting sensitized towards appreciating and assimilating the significance of lost traditions, traditions which constitute a reservoir of timeless values which could provoke the present generation to admire or criticize vis-à-vis the contemporary problematic. Girish Karnad’s attempts to shape modern India drama ‘as a medium to present the antique and the contemporary’ and to dramatize mythical stories and characters through intertextualities notable in the
subplots woven into his plays, conveying multiple layers of meaning which the
audience / readers could discern, are geared towards achieving several purposes
simultaneously, such as providing opportunities for ‘an exploration of Indian culture --
history, tradition and folklore --, and connecting it to social and contemporary issues
such as politics, corruption, caste, patriarchy, gender and equality.

Karnad’s predilection for the theatre of the roots and his open-ended
dramaturgic vision of modernity are occasions for him to accommodate varied other
influences. His knowledge of Greek dramas, especially experimentations effected by
playwrights like Sophocles and Euripides, Roman dramatists like Seneca and his
impact upon Elizabethan playwrights, and the Elizabethan playwrights’ dramatic
exposure of the aspects and dimensions of human vulnerability evident in the plays of
Shakespeare comes handy in his commitment to revolutionize the Indian drama. The
late nineteenth century playwrights like August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen
challenging their contemporaries and the people to focus on contemporary existential
issues have had their impact upon Karnad especially in his exploration of feminist
themes.

Karnad himself admits in his interview (2013) to Devina Dutt that it was Anton
Chekhov’s plays, more than Beckett’s or Ibsen’s, which had impacted his dramaturgic
vision. Anton Chekhov stature as ‘a moral compass’ for generations of Russians who
have measured their lives against Chekhov’s moral vision, influenced Karnad
significantly in his reflection of the role of authors in contemporary Indian society.
Karnad had similar views, like those of Malaev-Babel vis-à-vis Chekhov, that
Chekhov’s artistic works, as F. Joseph Dresen notes and quotes, meant that ‘no sermon
could make a lasting impression’ and that, Chekhov himself suggested, ‘his fellow
Russians should make their own personal choices and solve their own moral dilemmas’ (http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/anton-chekhov-the-role-author-russian-society). Karnad was aware of the plays of John Millington Synge who deviated from the old notion of tragedy dealing with the fate of the upper strata of society and focused on the predicaments of ordinary human beings. ‘Expressionist techniques’, used by American playwrights like Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, aiming at portraying the inner self of central characters, fascinated him.

As noted in the review of literature in Chapter One of the study, a considerable number of essays have been written on Brecht’s influence upon Karnad. Brecht, using epic theatre, tried to void the sense of dramatic illusion in the course of watching a play and insisted that it was possible for the audience to analyse the thematic content of a play by their active participation with the help of, as Jacobus points out vis-à-vis Brechtian vision of epic theatre, “stark, harsh lightning, blank stages, placards announcing changes of scenes, bands playing music onstage, and long discomforting pauses” (622). The view that Karnad is profoundly impacted by Brechtian perspectives of drama can be substantiated with reference to his plays such as Yayati, Tughlaq, Nāga-Mandala, Hayavadana, The Fire and the Rain, Bali: The Sacrifice and Tale-Danda. Karnad’s affinities with Brechtian dramaturgic techniques lie in his creative genius for adaptation to suit his dramatic requirements. Like Brecht, Karnad is not interested in keeping the audience in a “trance-like state” (150), to cite T. Marx. To him, theatre is a stage where the audience have a role in analysing ‘why an event has happened, what caused it, and it can be prevented from happening again’. This way, one can counter the effect Aristotelian dramatic technique imposes upon the audience. ‘Epic theatre’ is a dramatic strategy to stimulate the audience to deal with
contemporary social problems. Brechtian dramaturgy democratizes the audience participation and perspectives and liberates the audience from ‘alienation effect’. The ambiguous ending Karnad provides in Hayavadana, and the double-perspective ending he textures in Nāga-Mandala in order to sensitize spectators / readers to look for different perspectives instead of assenting to stock endings may be cited as instances where Brechtian impact is noticeable. In the roles played by the Announcer in Tughlaq, the Bhagavata in Hayavadana, and the Story personified in Nāga-Mandala, readers can notice that they, as Marx points out, ‘directly address the audience in view of interrupting any emotional identification’ (153). The characterization of Padmini in Hayavadana vis-à-vis her fascination with both Kapila and Devadatta is such that the audience at times can develop repulsions against her vis-à-vis her fascination for Kapila, and at times can sympathize with her when decides to perform ‘Sati’, viewed as a ‘sign of self-sacrifice’.

The Brechtian kind of historicizing Karnad does with the re-reading of the history of Tughlaq reminds readers of what U.R. Ananthamurthy states in his ‘Introduction’ to the play, namely “although the theme of the play is from history..., Karnad’s treatment of the theme is not historical” (144). This conveys the paradoxical position Brecht maintains vis-à-vis history in the contemporary context. Like Brecht’s Life of Galileo, Karnad’s play, Tughlaq presents the life of a history play not in terms of its historicity of the past but in terms of the contemporaneity of the present. From this point of view, Bakhtin’s idea of ‘sideward glancing’ and ‘dialogic imagination’, Julia Kristeva’s notion of ‘intertextuality’ and ‘interstiality’ and Bhabhan notion of ‘hybridity’ and ‘encounter for third space negotiation’ can be contrapuntally and relationally applied in analysing all the above mentioned texts of Karnad.
To put it briefly, Bakhtin’s approach to dialogicity hovers around discerning ‘the non-hierarchical representation of characters’, characters representing ideas or ideological spaces, and capturing the author’s effort to interrelate them as voices, sometimes understood as ‘double-voiced quality’ and meant to be part of parody. A browsing of Andrew Robinson’s examining of Bakhtin’s theoretical approach helps this researcher to note that Bakhtin “operates somewhere between a structural and constructivist approach to discourse”. As Michael Holquist explains, Bakhtin “is a system-builder, but not in the sense of methodological closure. Rather, his system consists of open-ended connections, and refuses to view issues in isolation”. Bakhtin insists that “things exist in themselves, but only in their elations”. As a literary analyst, he emphasizes that the speech-genres deployed by authors are to be located in their spatial and temporal context. All these usher in “polyphony” meaning “multiple voices” or “plurality of consciousness” which cannot be reduced to a single perspective. Thus, the literary text is seen as an interstitial site for “an interaction distinct perspectives or ideologies, borne by the different characters” (qtd. in Andrew Robinson 1, 2). This is how Bakhtin’s notions of ‘dialogic imagination’ and ‘sideward glancing’ work. Bakhtin’s dialogical principle is counterpoised against the idea of ‘homophony’, or ‘monologist single-discourse’.

Julia Kristeva, by essaying to combine both Bakhtin’s dialogical principle and Ferdinand de Saussure’s idea of the relational nature of the word emerging from a vision of language seen as a generalized and abstract system, argues that it is not possible to glorify “the originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object”, be it a painting, or a novel, or a drama, and therefore it is right, proper and relevant to foreground the notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in the
course of reading a literary text. Her idea of ‘intertextuality’, its coinage attributed to her, Kristeva avers that “the text is not an individual, isolated object but a compilation of cultural textuality” (14-15).

The critical idioms of these two thinkers lead the researcher to the Bhabhan notion of “hybridity in the third space” that argues for the conceptualization of an alternative space that “blurs the limitations of boundaries and engenders new possibilities”. Bhabha, a leading figure in contemporary postcolonial and cultural discourse, argues that the concept of hybridity, its cultural intelligence, emancipative in nature and scope, has the potential to locate, as Hoogvelt paraphrases and puts it, “the in-betweeness the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (158). As a productive mode of articulation, the third space, according to Bhabha, is ‘an ambivalent space’ where cultural meaning and representation have ‘no primordial unity or fixity’. It is “interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative”. Despite its ambivalence, it subverts dualistic, binary categories and oppositional positioning, and accommodates inclusivity “as a new sign of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation (Bhabha 1, 7), implying that Otherness as an agency is a powerful strategy in the postcolonial discourse / hermeneutics.

Influenced by her readings of Marx and Gramsci, Spivak, in her essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), and later in her another essay, “Righting Wrongs” (2004), elucidates the idea of subalternity in a much broader context of the South, the so-called third world, and includes her feminist perspectives into it. Insisting that subalterns are unequivocally subjugated and dominated group, but the margin of marginalization cannot be restricted within the class or caste structure, she widens the literary sphere of the subaltern discourse incorporating gender sensitization vis-à-vis feminine
subalternity positing femalesubjectivity at the centre against the impact of patriarchy, marginalization, suppression, and silence.

Theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhaba have also analysed the parallel literary and critical movements beyond modernism and in terms of postcolonialism and postmodernism. The literary techniques used in postmodernist and postcolonial narratives are marked for self–reflexivity, irony, parody, pastiche, satire and re-interpretation of history and authoritative discourse about the past. Like postmodernism, postcolonialism challenges earlier legitimating narratives. Critics like Friedman argue that the modernism emerges from the nationalistic and decolonizing impulses of postcolonialism.

In the light of the knowledge of these critical idioms, the researcher goes on to posit and defend how Karnad, as a contemporary postcolonial playwright, being aware of, or inspired by such critical idioms, dramaturgically strikes at the core issues of the existential Indian problematic and his dramaturgic portrayals, more than mere musings on human life, are diverse critical reflections upon Indian society, its systemic structures, its hegemonic patriarchy, its blind adherence to certain irrational and untenable social and cultural norms in the name of tradition and its struggle to cope with varied forms of violence, internal and external, haunting the nation. His plays – Nāga-Mandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq, and Tale-Danda -- are outstanding examples critiquing the hegemonic ways of subalternizing the people, especially women and low-caste people, people who are on the edge of margins, and upholding subaltern subjectivity beyond the constricting divisions prevailing in Indian society vis-à-vis class, gender, caste or religion. As this Chapter limits the discussion to ‘the level of diverse influences upon Karnad’, the researcher has ensured that Chapter Three of the study is a lengthy reading of these issues under four domains of thought. The critical
idioms noted above form the matrices on which the analyses and discussions have been done in Chapter Three.

In terms of historicizing Karnad’s return to the roots, Karnad is unique vis-à-vis his return to the roots of Indian theatre. His historical sense and consciousness and his modernist presentation of the contemporary Indian problematic intertwined in his dramaturgic structures and plots come from a variety of cultural and literary influences enabling him to connote and project an eclectic worldview through his postcolonial eye that has a Gramscian outlook and Spivakian ways of subalternizing his characterization. Diverse influences, starting from his early childhood experiences of witnessing to street theatre, passing through the furnace of his concerted interest in drama and related researched readings, and decisively impacting his dramaturgy, his formal textures and stage presentations, form a collective matrix wherein a confluence of cultures and ideas converges together towards dialogicity conducive to the projection and reiteration of the Other points of view.

In some of his essays on the evolution of Indian Theatre, Karnad speaks of his personal heritage vis-à-vis confluence of influences and hints at the impact it has had on his dramaturgy. In the essay titled, “Theatre in India” (1989), he writes:

In my childhood, in a small town in Karnataka, I was exposed to two theatre forms that seemed to represent irreconcilably different worlds. Father took the entire family to see plays staged by troupes of professional actors called natak companies, which toured the countryside throughout the year. The plays were staged in semi-permanent structures on proscenium stages, with wings and drop curtains, and were illuminated by petromax lamps … The stage, a platform with a canopy and a back curtain, was erected in the open air and lit by torches…By the time I was in my early teens, the natak
companies had ceased to function and yakshagana had begun to seem quaint, even silly, to me. Soon we moved to a big city. This city had a college and electricity but no professional theatre. (330-332)

In an essay authored and titled, “Citizen as Soldier” (1997), Karnad writes:

As a playwright, I have had the good fortune to be closely associated with some of the most gifted people on contemporary Marathi stage. But beyond that, because of my parents, I have always looked upon the Marathi Natyaparampara as my personal heritage. My father had seen the original Sharada and Sainshay Kallol and talked about them all with great love. And my mother often demonstrated to us how in her teens she would twirl her padar round the tips of her fingers in imitation of Bala Gandharv - needless to add, when no adults were watching! I only saw the Kannada Natak Mandalis in the post-war era when they were already in a bad shape, but they still carried enough of the stamp of their great Marathi models to excite and inspire me.

Being at the confluence of two such immensely rich cultures is a very fortunate position for any writer as the output of the great Kannada poet Da Ra Bendre or the scholar Sham Ba Joshi will prove. They spoke Marathi at home. They were neighbours in Dharwad, and like all good neighbours, they quarrelled. But they quarreled in Kannada. Historians tell us that the Bhakti movement originated in Tamil Nadu, spread to Karnataka, where it produced the great Vachana literature of the Lingayat Sharanas, then flowed on to Maharashtra to blossom out in the works of Dnyandev (who wrote his Dnyaneshwari here in this region) and his colleagues, then took a U-turn to come back to Karnataka to inspire the Vaishnava saints, and then spread...
northwards. In religion, in literature, in the performing arts, in thinking itself, the give-and-take between these two languages has been so complex as to be almost impossible to analyze. (523-525)

In his ‘Introduction’ to his book, *Three Plays – Nāga- Mandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq*, he states:

My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It, therefore, had to face a situation to be resolved without apologia or self-justification: tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries. (1)

In another context, Karnad also reminiscences how “the year spent in the company of south Asian scholars at the University of Chicago has stimulated my interest in orthodox Hinduism and the complex organization of Hindu society” (qtd. in Aparna Dharwadker 16)

All these quotes need no further explanation as they are crystal clear about the confluence of influences which impacted him as a child and youth, and how the rich plethora of Marathi culture enabled him to develop hybrid thoughts. These quotes are cited here to reiterate the fact that Karnad as a playwright is deeply rooted in the Indic tradition of storytelling, and the Indic mythopoeic tradition is conducive to dialogic reasoning and hybridization of thought, and from this point of view, he is also aware of the fact that the Indian theatre has far greater ideas to contribute than the Western theatre. The point is that the complex cultural fabric of India fascinates and facilitates Karnad to make a fine fusion between his dramatic craftsmanship and Indian aesthetics.
and ethos. Karnad is personally convinced and is deeply conscious of how Indian myths and stories are known for dealing with perennial problems in human life – problems related to love, war, sin, tyranny, courage, fate, hatred, and ambition, and upholding, or problematizing high moral standards in society. As part of aesthetic experience of literature, Indian myths and stories try to reconcile the mundane and the spiritual. His familiarity with theories like Dhvani, Rasa, and Vakrokti has also inspired and influenced him to see how Indian mythopoeic presentation of life is a powerful agency of suggestive language with a cluster of meanings implied. As R.G. Joshi points out, “a word used in myth can have several meanings” (36), and this dhvani-centric connotations contribute to the re-making of the myth relevant to contemporary times and cultivating ‘understanding culture’, rather than ‘abstraction culture’ which the Western epistemology is known to foreground.

Karnad’s predilection for the theatre of roots propels this researcher to view the playwright as a connoisseur of the Indian rasa-aesthetics through his grasp and connotations of the contemporary existential concerns and anxieties. Unlike in the Western drama, the stress in the Indian drama is more on rasa rather than on catharsis. Rasa-aesthetics, according to Bharata’s Nataysastra, the oldest handbook on Sanskrit drama, denotes the flavour of a drama resulting in a pleasant experience in the spectator. It also denotes that drama is a serious form of art suitable for complex viewing of individual predicaments which have social ramifications. Theatre, to Karnad, is life presented with philosophical musings, which accommodate problematizing in the existential context, and with dhvani-centric connotations ushering in the arousal of rasa as dramatic experience. Indic poetics insist on the idea, as the guide of this research study often emphasized during the researcher’s discussions with him, that ‘arrival at meaning or meaning making is not a straightjacket exercise or
endeavour. Instead, it cherishes the prospect of discovering that meanings are crisscrossed and twisted like the child in the womb of a would-be mother’. K. Ujjwala in an essay titled, “Indian Aesthetics in Sri Aurobindo’s Criticism” (2015), observes:

Indian poetics broadly developed into eight schools – Rasa, Alamkara, Riti, Guna / Dosa, Vakrokti, Svabhavokti, Aucitya and Dhvani – corresponding roughly to western theory of pleasure, rhetoric/figures of speech, theory of form, oblique poetry, statement poetry, propriety and suggestion. The central tradition of Indian aesthetics originating in Bharata, the first and the oldest known exponent of the dramaturgic school of rasa, enriched by Anandavardhana, an exponent of Dhvani theory, Bhamaha, an exponent of Alamkara system, Kuntaka, the main proponent of Vakrokti, Vamana, the most notable exponent of Aucitya codified by Mammata, Viswanatha and Jaganatha is a veritable treasure house of insights into problems related to creation, analysis and evaluation of works of literature. (1)

Sethuraman’s observation sums up the spirit of Indian aesthetics Karnad is familiar with:

Ananda, the joy of the spirit in itself, carrying in it a revelation of the powers of its conscious being, was to the ancient Indian idea the creative principle, and ancient poetry did thus creatively reveal to the people its soul and its possibilities by forms of beauty and suggestions of power. (413)

Karnad’s affinities with Indian aesthetics are discernible in almost all the plays, particularly in Hayavadana and The Fire and the Rain, which mark his return to the roots. A perusal of the essay on “Girish Karnad: Pioneering the Theatre of Roots” (2013) by Gitanjali Bhatia enables this researcher to note that Karnad’s pioneering of the theatre of roots takes into account his awareness that Bharata’s Natyashashtra is
one of the world’s earliest treaties on theatre, that the ancient Indian drama embraces a mythic structure on the pattern of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, “representing the state of the three worlds – the worlds of gods, demons, and humans, projecting the dynamics of connection between rites, rituals, and drama as mutually conditioning, incorporating the ethical goals of life at three levels, namely the sensuous, the secular, and the spiritual”; and that, above all, Bharata’s treatise illustrates a dramaturgic principle among others, on how in Indian drama, “the playwright, the performers, and the audience form a continuum” (2).

Like other Indian dramatists – Dharamvir Bharti, Mohan Rakesh, Mahesh Dattani, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Mahasweta Devi, Bibhas Chakravarty, Chandrashekar Kambar -- Karnad uses the dramatic device of reconstructing the past in order to critique the present. Foregrounding the postcolonial present within the matrix of modernism, Karnad combines realism with several structural innovations which in turn reflect his creativity, authorship, form, content, and language. This combination accommodates the psychodrama of the modern man and his existential moments and milieu. In the process, “the cultural ambidexterity”, to use another phrase of Aparna, of the playwright communicates cosmopolitan modernism reinforcing the fusion between the playwright’s cognizance of Western movements and his commitment to indigenous aesthetic experiences. It is important to emphasize here that Karnad’s adaptation of certain techniques from the Western theatre is in no way a hurdle to him to have a closer connectivity with Indian myths, history and folklore that, indeed, gives him the subject to respond to the contemporary Indian problematic. Therefore, one can argue without any hesitation that Karnad’s notion of modernism is very much Indian exuding an eclectic worldview enlightened by the complexities of cultural hybridization of thought.
A good number of Karnad’s plays illustrate how Karnad’s adaptation of modernism vouchsafes a postcolonial cosmopolitan approach to modernism that tends to problematize traditional values, and contemporize Indian subjectivity with hyphenated alternative aesthetics. Karnad’s modernity of thought revolves primarily around his complex plot structures and his multidimensional viewing of the experiential world of contemporary Indian citizenry. Karnad’s dramatic technique is conspicuous for its excellent plots, characters, setting, style and language contribute to create the unity of effect in the plays. To go back to his plays again, In *Yayati*, Karnad re-tells the age-old story of the king who in his longing for eternal youth does not hesitate to usurp the youth and vitality of his son. Karnad’s sense of modernity rejects the traditional exaltation of his son’s ‘self-sacrifice’, and places the young prince and his bride with tragic choices in the midst of lust, jealousy, and racial tensions. Karnad could do this at the age of twenty-two, in 1961, when he was just a student. The impact of the *Yayati* myth from the Mahabharata is so deep in him that he could use the Indian myth to critique excessive attachment to life and its pleasures, in the process, explore the tension between ‘selfish paternal authority’ and ‘blind filial loyalty’, and make his audience/ readers see the horrific consequences the tension brings in.

The play, *Yayati*, like *Bali: The Sacrifice*, can also be read as a study in female sexuality vis-à-vis oppression of women and the emergence of the new woman whose subjectivity becomes an agency of challenging patriarchy and its hollowness of male chauvinism and articulating feminine modernist ethos. The vibrancy of the female principle finds a poignant articulation in the conversation between the Mahout and the King in the play, *Bali: The Sacrifice*:

Mahout: “But I tell you. I have known a few women. They say there are six types of women…”
King (gravely): “And what about the seventh?”

Mahout (stumped): “I only thought there were six”.

King: “No one’s written about her. While she sinks her teeth into the man and drinks blood, plucks his entrails like strings, the man’s head only laughs and sings”. (232)

In Tughlaq, Karnad’s plot structure coils around multiple thoughts swinging as if on a pendulum moving from justice and compassion to violence in the persona of Tughlaq, the king, whose failed idealism is viewed through the prism of a split personality within him. As Sarat Babu points out, “on account of the ambiguities of Tughlaq’s character, his tortured inner self and corruption combat at their very source and the country is plunged into a political chaos” (131). Karnad’s complex viewing not only problematizes the received history, Barani’s account vis-à-vis Tughlaq’s reign, but also gives him an occasion to embed, ‘the syncretic present’, as Swapna Sundar remarks, and comment on the dilemmas faced in the contemporaneous political leadership, the dilemmas associated with Nehruvian socialism, in India. Reuse of history is geared towards, as Shyam Babu adds, “pondering over the existing socio-economic condition in a broader way so as to unfold the intricacies of ‘false superstructure, to use a Marxian terminology” (3).

The intersection of two Indian folktales in Nāga-Mandala artistically blends together the dialectic relationship between tradition and modernity, dichotomizing morality into two conflicting divisions in terms of old and new morality. The two tales are used by Karnad, as G.S.Kuldeep analyses, “to deconstruct the discourse of marriage as an essential and fulfilling union and depict how marriage is used by patriarchy to confine and exploit women” (78). The structurality of the plot and the complexity of human relationships wrought in make readers feel that a folktale can serve as a tenable
agency to challenge traditional values. Positing that the play, Nāga-Mandala, interfaces myth and history from a feminist perspective, Anupama Mohan concludes that the play “builds on the folkloric tradition implicitly and has intimate connections with the ways mythic systems of belief coexist with ontological realities” (2). The prospect of the past illuminating the present is amply evidenced in the play, Hayavadana. By projecting the theme of fundamental ambiguity of human life, Karnad makes the play an interesting study of man’s quest for completeness. The combination of the myth of transposed heads vis-à-vis the plot of Mann, and the Hayavadana story which is Karnad’s invention, provides a dramatic scope for him to present one of the contemporary problematics with a Jungian perspective which also justifies the Brechtian kind of complex seeing Karnad is fine with in the play. The ‘shape-shifting’ device is used impressively in the play with Lacanian connotations of incompleteness. But Karnad would not end his plays with a sense of disjointedness, fragmentation, incoherence, and incompleteness. Instead, he tends to opt for a complex synthesis, synthesis leading to erasing of incompleteness. From this point of view, Karnad’s presentation of the Lord Ganesha myth, the god with human body and animal head, has oxymoronic connotations.

In The Fire and the Rain, Karnad brings in a complex mythic pattern of storytelling that exposes the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of the priestly class in the ancient society within a framework of power politics. Raibhya, Paravasu and Yavakri are the representatives of the ancient society who are particular gain power, prestige and social recognition by any means that includes unethical ways of acquiring power. The play also critiques the unequal and inferior treatment meted out to women in the patriarchal pavilion of a traditional society. Karnad uses the plot structure to attack the
double standards, snobbery, and egoism of the male dominated society involved in the power politics.

In *Tale-Danda*, bringing in Basava (c. 1105 -68) of history and tradition, Karnad reflects on “the historicity of the past from a religious study perspective” (Julia Leslie 228). To Basava of history, the convergence of humanity was possible and plausible, and Sangama or Kudalasangama (the Lord of the Meeting Rivers) was a metaphor for this convergence. Karnad’s recreation of Basava is a cogent dramatic allegory on two major controversies in India in the 1980s -- the temple versus mosque agitations in Ayodhya, and the Mandal Commission in north India on the policy of caste-reservation. Karnad’s interface of tradition with modern thought revolves around his dramaturgic visionary concerns such as, as Julia Leslie sums up, his critiquing angst against’ the fabled tolerance of Hindus’ vis-à-vis communal tensions and relationship with Muslims, the need for ‘abandoning discriminating caste-system’, promoting ‘gender relations’ in terms of mutual respect for the dignity of persons, and pursuing resolutely ‘the values of work ethics which has economic implications’.

Though his plays embody mythical, historical, social, and psychological aspects, the issues that build the plot are drawn from the experiential world of readers / spectators. He writes his plays by keeping in mind the modern context of their performance. He believes that drama finds its fulfillment as theatre. He links its texture, structure and the ‘scripted’ theme to the mode of performance. In this regard, *Drishya*, a Calcutta-based film appreciation and research group’s website comments as follows:

Girish Karnad is a playwright whose plays offer together a reengagement between the apparently separated worlds and makes the autonomy and accessibility to drama and theatre complementary rather than contrasting domains. His plays figure in university syllabi around the world to be taught in
classrooms as texts; they are equally popular as performance texts re-produced many time and again by different directors. It is remarkable that whatever the physical or behavioral embodiment be given to the mythical, historical, social, or psychological horizons of the plays, the issues that build the plots are drawn from and remain firmly grounded in the experiential world of the readers/spectators but bearing larger implications capable of transcending cultural specificities to reach out towards a universality of human knowledge.

(http://www.calcuttayellowpages.com/adver/108436girish.html)

The wealth of knowledge he gathers from his own experiences as actor, director and translator gives him broader space not only to opt for the return to the roots but also for using the everyday language he is familiar with and for ‘adapting and applying’ the diverse influences which have impacted him in given texts, his plays.

His play, *Flowers*, premiered at the Ranga Shankara Theatre Festival 2006 may be cited here as another example. As the Ranga Shankara website states, the plot of the play centres on a pious priest who violates both his ‘*dharma*’ and his ‘*bhakti*’ because of his love for a courtesan. Torn between his love for his god, Shiva, and his love for Chandravati, between his duty to the king and his duty to his wife, the priest tells the story of his life after matters have come to a head and all his loves and his duties collide on a single night. Building on a folk tale from Chitradurga in Karnataka about such a human predicament, Karnad refreshes it with a contemporary sensibility that embraces love, loyalty and honour. Karnad’s interest doesn’t lie in giving historical or mythical facts but in conveying their social and cultural significance to the modern society. Karnad’s play, *Bali: The Sacrifice* is another text that may be referred here for the way it deals with and negotiates ‘the earth-shattering’ question of violence.
Within Karnad’s dramaturgic representation of tradition and modern thought, his recourse to the use of masks is part of his commitment to indigenous traditions. Using masks as a dramatic device through a complex set of symbols, Karnad attempts to reveal the selves and anti-selves – inner contradictions -- of his main characters. His plays, *Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, and *Nāga-Mandala*, are fine illustrations of such inner contradictions. The characterization of Sultan Muhamad-bin Tughlaq of the 14th century India may be cited here as the most outstanding among such characters. In this characterization the mask as a dramatic device becomes a tool in the hands of the dramatist to bring out both the heroic and anti-heroic dimensions of the character. Moreover, in terms of correlation, Karnad’s contemporizing can be noticed in his effort to correlate the main action in the play to the disenchanting contemporaneity of Nehruvian India. The correlation gives readers/the audience a glimpse of how India was struggling to define itself as a modern nation under the impact of Nehru’s vision of modern India. In terms confronting the postcolonial present vis-à-vis re-reading history, another play, *Tale-Danda* may be read as another site wherein, as Rupalee Burke points out, Karnad “employs history to comment on the pathetic and corroded state of Indian modern-day politics, and … engages in an intellectual debate of our times (107).

The brief analyses of select plays done above point to the direction towards which Karnad moves. His moves are permeated with a profound sense of postcolonial modernism hyphenated with Indic cosmopolitanism. One tends to agree with Aparna Dharwadker who argues that “modernism in Indian theatre is, therefore, a postcolonial (and still unfolding) phenomenon, and the dominant aesthetic of the period (1955–1975) during which such playwrights as Dharamvir Bharati, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad, and most notably, Mohan Rakesh, produced their pioneering
work” (136). Reading her essay, “Mohan Rakesh, Modernism, and the Postcolonial Present” (2008), inspires readers to discern and redefine “the spatio-temporal boundaries of modernism” vis-à-vis colonialism and postcolonialism, and reading the essay along with the writings done by Simon Gikandi, Susan Stanford Friedman, Ariela Freedman, and others can help see how the twentieth-century modernism “is predicated on cultural interflows rather than on a unidirectional and hierarchical relation between the Western centre and its non-Western peripheries” (138).

The open-ended and cosmopolitan convergence of literary modernism Karnad is comfortable with is a reflection of his judicious use of modernity that marks his sense of discernment, like that of A.K. Ramanujan, which enables him to follow a middle path vis-à-vis modernism and postmodernism. His judicious use has certain affinities with that of Raymond Williams whose approach to modernism enabled him to have closer connectivity with ‘cultural materialism’ and took him beyond the limits of providing mere academic, or political commentaries. Karnad’s connectivity with modernism is open-ended. He eschews elitist affinities, attributed to T.S. Eliot and a few others, and shows no signs of conscious integration into the modern international capitalism and consequent moving into bourgeois, or commercial culture. This way, he is closer to Raymond Williams in his perception of the contemporary problematic leaning towards pro-poor and pro-subaltern worldviews.

To go back to Aparna Dharwadker, in her essay, “The Postcolonial Present”, she observes:

In specific relation to the West, this Indian-language modernism appears more inevitable than deliberate: it is not so much that certain authors set out self-consciously to emulate Euro-modernism in the mid-twentieth century, but that, given their cosmopolitan conditioning, aesthetic
proclivities, and historical circumstances, they compulsively reinvented modernism for their own time and place (137).

She further states that postcolonial modernists turn obsessively to Indian myths and history to ingrain modernity of thought. They re-imagine the past as a radical analogue for an imperfect present. They reveal realist portraits of the modern urban individual caught in the nexus of familial claims and societal norms. From this point of view, Karnad is one of the foremost dramatists to sustain freedom of thought and expression within the framework of complex viewing, diachronic-synchronic reasoning and dialogic hybridization of thought to which Indian mythmaking is attuned.

In the light of the observations made on Indian modernism in Chapter One and additional highlights done above in this chapter, it is more or less clear that, in the context of Indian theatre, the cultural dialectics of modernism harbingered a constructive wrestling with native cultures, facilitating an increased awareness on the part of the writers of the modernist school of thought about the need and urgency to return to the roots. As the West had already entered into the realm of postmodernism by the time Indian modernists began to mediate through Indian literary modernism, the literary works of Indian modernists had to grapple with the tenets of postmodernism too in the course of writing modernist narratives. Indian modernism does not make any clear and tangible distinction between ‘modern’ and ‘modernity’. In Indian languages, both the terms are often referred to as ‘adhunika’ and ‘navya’. They appear with greater frequency in all the genres of literature, fiction, drama, and poetry. They form part of the discourses on modern India ushering in a new and modern way of thinking about, say, society, family, sexuality, gender, and identity. Within this broad canvass of modernism, Karnad’s cosmopolitan and syncretic approach makes significant attempts in terms of conveying alternative, subaltern and Other-centred perspectives and
aesthetics by foregrounding the voices of the marginalized and exploited, and thereby, implying that solutions to contemporary social problems lies in listening to the voices emerging from the world of subalternization. Karnad knows that listening to these voices and perspectives mediated through distinct cultural codes within Indian society will eventually strengthen the hybrid cultural roots of India.

In an era of globalization and cross-disciplinary of discourse, Karnad is also aware of the fact that resistance to intercultural inflows is inevitable in a society where age-old traditions of caste and class-savvy hegemony, gender-oppressive patriarchy, and neglect of the marginalized continue to have their negative impact. Such resistance, as part of the cultural angst or dilemmas, is a locus for conflicting tensions. Karnad’s characterization of Chitraleka in \textit{Yayati}, Amritamati in \textit{Bali}, Padmini in \textit{Hayavadana}, Rani in \textit{Nāga-Mandala} and such other characters in other plays has to be appreciated against this backdrop of the cultural dilemmas. The Queen in \textit{Bali} commits adultery without embarrassment, hesitation or fear. She has the courage to leave the King lying next to her and slip away from the palace towards the ruined temple in search of fulfilment of the desire of her physique and the womb by mating with the elephant keeper, a man from a low class and caste at the middle of the night and then confront her husband in the face and refuse to profess guilt and to atone for it through a propitiatory ritual. She has her own logic to defend her love-making with the Mahout, and has no moral qualms about describing it to her husband as ‘natural, spontaneous and beautiful’. She says:

\begin{quote}

Because I didn’t plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful. (235).
\end{quote}

This not only invites resistance from defenders of hegemonic traditions and traditional values but also delineates her existential dilemma vis-a-vis fulfillment of desire and
maintenance of her conjugal fidelity. In Karnad’s plays, moral transgressions lead to collision between the old and new cultures collapsing the existing walls of moral boundaries. His dramaturgic focus on paradigm-shifts towards new knowledge modes and new moral codes which cause culture-clashes, or cultural angst or dilemmas conditions his complex viewing wherein the audience / readers are facilitated to have their dialogic say on the artistic distance the dramatist may maintain, the ambivalent moods the artist may perpetuate, and on the archetypal or poetic stances characters and voices represented in the plays may foreground. This is where readers are encouraged to see the Brechtian impact upon Karnad’s way of dialogic imagination which has also its affinities with Bakhtinian poetics in terms of ‘non-hierarchical representation of characters and voices’, ‘sideward glancing’, and ‘heteroglassic dialogic quality’.

Like Brecht, Karnad believes that the epic theatre is apt for a scientific age wherein people question rather than believe what is said or offered to them. The theatre should be a platform for entertainment giving aesthetic pleasure and a panel for rational thinking and thus, socially productive. He is particular that theatre is capable of changing the social consciousness of the audience and encouraging transformation required in terms of human relations by active intervention of the audience in social processes. Karnad believes in Brecht’s notion that the theatre should make use of ‘dialectical materialism’ making dialects into a source of enjoyment for enhancing our efficacy for life and happiness. While applying dialectics to drama, Karnad, like Brecht, attempts to envisage contrapuntally the contradictions, the binaries or the ‘tussle and tension’ of opposite forces among individuals, classes or societies in all realms of life. The dialectical approach enables the playwright and his readers to develop a complex-seeing towards the ambiguities, ironies, and paradoxes of life in general, the play in particular. Karnad portrays his characters as fractured identities or as an anti-thesis to
characters in real life only to project the subliminal pressure or conflict of the modern man, in a serious or comic fashion. Complex-viewing is needed when the society is so polyphonically complex. The traditional theatre with a traditional solution to contemporary issues will not be adequate.

*Nāga-Mandala* is modelled after Brechtian principles and techniques. The folk story, narrated to Karnad by A.K Ramanujan, serves as a parable to show how a newly-wed young girl, neglected and ill-treated by her husband, reacts. Against the impact of her husband’s indulgence in sadomasochism, Karnad seems to justify the adulterous relationship of Rani with the Other Appanna, who comes in the form of the Snake. The Otherization Karnad brings in chalks out a climactic moment for poetic justification where she is rewarded with all that she was craving for in the course of defining her feminine subjectivity and identity. The entire drama thickly adopts and adapts folk theatre forms and techniques with devices of magic, miracle, superstitious beliefs, mime, narrator, story-within-a-story, and subplots mixing human and non-human worlds. The audience have enough occasions to think rationally and not emotionally, with a sense of detachment, of the implications of the events and episodes as they unfold. They are facilitated to be in a position for Brechtian kind of complex seeing.

The play, *Hayavadana*, poses a moral problem, with the help of juxtaposed intertextual texts -- Western and Indian, bordering on human desire for completeness. For Karnad, the confusion of the identities reveals the ambiguous nature of the human personality which goes in tune with the Brechtian theory of identity crisis. ‘Historicizing’ is another Brechtian concept which Karnad uses deftly in his historical plays. In her analysis of Brecht’s technique of historicizing with reference to Karnad’s plays, N. Velmani observes:
Theatric action takes place through gestures supported by histrionic and mimetic action. The interest of the audience watching a play is more on the elaborate depiction of histrionic skill and not so much in the unfolding of the story which being based mostly on epics are often already familiar. The actor steps out of role to assume another role or series of roles, at the same time, has a meta-function. Indirectly, acting establishes the non-illusory nature of the play, drama is a pretense, to see it is to accept and recognize its pretensions. Music, songs, dances should function as interruptive devices so that spectators might interpose their judgment on the episodes presented dramatically. (27)

In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Karnad’s imaging of Tipu compels the audience to see Tipu as a hero beyond history and rethink about his patriotism without selfish and self-seeking motives. The play alerts them to compare and contrast the present political leaders with Tipu and provokes them to criticize the present-day leaders in the contemporary Indian society. Thus, the theatre becomes a unique mode of knowledge because of its ability to figure not only as a mirror to the world, but for its ability to even replace the latter and go beyond it. In the play, Karnad gives broad hints to convey to his audience that ‘culture’ can never be a ‘holistic construct’, that it is open to ambivalence and multi interpretations that there is no singular meta-narrative governing and defining the periphery of a culture. We are exposed to the Bhabhan-kind of ‘in-between space’ between the two constructs of identity which results in the hybridization of our identity.

Karnad’s dramaturgic rendition of the multiple voices of ‘the Other’, or ‘the Subaltern’ in his plays is an earnest attempt to redeem the marginalized woman who is oppressed in patriarchal society. He plays reflect an awareness of subaltern study-
related discourses which are primarily concerned with socio-cultural and historical aspects of the society incorporating the entire community of people subordinated in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office, or in any other way. The subordination Karnad textures displays the psychological trauma subalterns endure. Krishna Singh comments and remarks that subalterns “feel bounded and defeated by their subject positions. They have no representatives or spokesperson in the society they live in and so helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential part as human beings” (13).

Gayatri Spivak perceives the silence of subalterns differently. She states that “between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the `third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization…The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away” (98).

Karnad, on the contrary, and by going beyond the psycho-traumatic realm, makes subalterns speak. In his postcolonial articulate subjectivity, the oppressed are heard or listened to when they speak the language of the oppressor. His characterization of Vishakha in the play, *The Fire and the Rain*, is an archetypal role model in this regard. In her protest-modes she reacts to Yavakri:

Paravasu used my body, and his own body, like an experimenter, an explorer. As instruments in a search. Search for what? I never, knew… you are still lost in the fragrance of the jackfruit, Yavakri, I have known what it is to grow heavy, burst open, drip and rot to fill the world with one’s innards. (88)

Polyphony as an agency of foregrounding multiple meanings is well interspersed and negotiated through subtlety of characterization and dialogues in the play, *Tughlaq*. For
instance, the Tughlaq-Barani relationship wrought into the play may be read as an arena of the Bakhtinian kind of dialogicity, or of the Kristevean kind of intertextuality that reflects a contrasting relationality. Moreover, Karnad also shows that the play can also be an arena for historicizing vis-à-vis history and the modern-day leadership and governance. Using the mode of intertextuality, Karnad proceeds to show that in the process of text creating a sub-text or sub-texts, the original text loses its power paving the way for dialogic in-betweeness in the Bakhtinian sense of inter-relationality and the Bhabhan sense of contestation and inclusivity. With a strong emphasis on the dialogic relationship between the author and characters, between characters and the ideological spaces they represent through dialogues, and between the text and the audience/readers, dialogism represents and reflects a postcolonial processing of Otherized articulations in terms of multimodality of voices converging towards multiperspectival complex seeing that has an appealing relevance to modern thought and contemporary consciousness.

All these reflections on the Muse of influences impacting Karnad’s dramaturgy point to how Karnad strikes a purposeful and meaningful balance between myth, tradition, and modernism. The fusion he makes through his conscious return to the roots, mythification, mythopoeic visions and techniques, and integration of variegated influences is a kind of Bakhtinian kind of ‘carnivalesque’ that accommodates subversive aesthetics with Indic touches liberating the human mind from all kinds of conforming, subjugating and nauseating silences which keep people in a state of predicament, as if ‘what cannot be cured has to be endured’, and inspiring readers to see the plausibility of problematizing the contemporary Indian subjectivity and poetic, if not concrete, ways of finding solutions to life-constricting negatives.