Chapter – 2
The Plays of Girish Karnad

Born in Matheran, hailing from a Saraswat Konkani family, Girish Karnad (1938) spent his early years in the rural parts of Maharashtra, watching, enjoying and internalizing Yakshagana and the Natak Mandali performances in his village. After graduating from Karnataka College, Dharwad in 1958, he moved to Mumbai for his postgraduate studies. At the end of his studies there, he received the Rhodes scholarship and went to England and completed his Masters in Arts in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford. He cultivated a keen interest in art and culture and on his return from England he joined Oxford University Press, Madras in 1963. He was appointed as the Director of Film and Television Institute, Pune in 1974. Almost after a decade and a half, in 1987, he was awarded Fulbright Scholar–in– Residence at the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago.

His journey from a small village of rural Maharashtra to international institutes of repute shaped Karnad as a proponent of secularism, multi-culturalism and the freedom of expression. Popularly known as a renaissance man, Karnad, is one of the torch bearers to Indian dramatists. In the realm of contemporary drama his place is noteworthy. He has directed and acted in many films in Kannad, Marathi and Hindi. He has found a new approach in Indian drama by drawing historical and mythological sources to tackle contemporary themes. As a multifaceted dynamic writer he has a historic vision but a contemporary voice. He is one of the
most prolific writers of Indian drama writing at the beginning in Kannada and translating himself his plays into English. *The Tribune* has praised him as:

Far from being an introvert, as most writers are, Girish Karnad enjoys the reputation of being an articulate thinker. In fact, he has been a man of many parts and a man of all seasons — a mathematician, a Rhodes Scholar, a great performer on stage and screen, a TV compeer, a filmmaker, and a cultural administrator who has headed such prestigious institutions as the Sangeet Natak Akademi in Delhi and the FTII at Pune. His stature in the Indian culture and his knowledge of the media at home and abroad lend to his views a touch of authority. (The Tribune, 1999)

**Career**

Karnad made his acting as well as screenwriting debut in a Kannada movie, *Samskara* (1970), the first President's Golden Lotus Award for Kannada cinema, based on a novel by U. R. Ananthamurthy and directed by Pattabhirama Reddy. Over the years he had acted in a number Hindi and Kannada feature films, and worked with directors like Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and Shyam Benegal. Best among his appearance on the silver and well as the small screens is his role of Swami’s father in TV series *Malgudi Days* (1986–1987), based on R. K. Narayan’s books. He made his directorial debut with *Vamsha Vriksha* (1971), based on a Kannada novel by S. L. Bhairappa, which won him National Film Award for Best Direction along with B. V. Karanth, his co-director. Later, Karnad directed several movies in Kannada and Hindi, including *Godhuli* (1977) and
Utsav (1984). He has made number of documentaries, like one on the Kannada poet D. R. Bendre (1972), Kanaka-Purandara (English, 1988) on two medieval Bhakti poets of Karnataka, Kanaka Dasa and Purandara Dasa, and The Lamp in the Niche (English, 1989) on Sufism and the Bhakti movement. Many of his films and documentaries have won several national and international awards. Some of his famous Kannada movies include Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane, Ondanondu Kaladalli, Cheluvi and Kaadu and most recent film Kanooru Heggaditi (1999), based on a novel by Kannada writer Kuvempu. His Hindi movies include Nishaant (1975), Manthan (1976), Swami (1977) and Pukar (2000). He has acted in Iqbal (2005), Dor (2006), 8 x 10 Tasveer (2009) and Aashayein (2010). He has also acted in Kannada movie Aa Dinagalu.

He served as the Director of the Film and Television Institute of India during 1974-1975, as the President of Karnataka Nataka Academy during 1976-1978, as the Indian Co-chairman for the Joint Media Committee of the Indo-US Sub-Commission on Education and Culture during 1984-1993, and as the Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi during 1988-1993.

Karnad’s plays reflect remarkable influence of Ibsen, Shaw and Shakespeare on one hand, on the other, his plays are highly characterized by trends in Kannada literature and he used legend, history and myth for the plots of his plays. Karnad established himself as a noted and talented dramatist after the publication of Yayati (1961) and Tughlaq (1964). His creative currents went on and as a result, Hayavadana (1971), Anjumaliga (1977), Hittina Hunja (1980), Naga- Mandala (1988), Tale-Danda (1990) and Agni Mattu Male (1995) were published. These
plays, originally written in Kannada and after their translation by Karnad himself, became rich contributions to Indian English Drama. He himself translated *Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala, Tale-Danda* and *The Fire and the Rain*. His plays are equally appreciated in India and abroad and they received universal praise in the European countries as well as in the United States of America. *Tughlaq* was translated into Hungarian and German languages. *Hayavadana* was directed by Vijay Mehta and presented at the Berlin festival of Drama and Music in Germany. It was renamed Divided Together and was staged in New York in 1993. *Naga-Mandala* was staged at Leipzeg and Berlin for the Festival of India in 1992. Gutherine Theatre in Minneapolis performed his play *The Fire and the Rain* in 1993. His plays deal with the themes of Indian myths, history, traditions, folklore and theatres and are a vehicle for communicating man’s desires, jealousies, madness, quest for perfection and completeness, eternal conflict of passions and are successful in giving a local habitation and a name to man’s aspirations and desires.

**Awards**

Major awards that Karnad received include the Mysore State Award for *Yayati* (1962), the Government of Mysore Rajyotsava Award (1970), Presidents Gold Medal for the Best Indian film for *Samskara* (1970), the Homi Bhabha Fellowship for creative work in folk theatre (1970-72), the Sangeet Natak Academy (National Academy of the Performing Arts) Award for playwriting (1972), the Kamaladevi Award of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh for the Best Indian play of the year for *Hayavadana* (1972), the National Award for Excellence in Direction for *Vamsha*
Plays of Girish Karnad

Karnad’s plays are characterized by myths, legends, and folktales and histories not only for literary purpose but also as a surrogate to portray the contemporary situations. In order to attain deeper insight to study and analyze Karnad’s plays, it would not be incongruous to discuss how he has employed myths, legend and history in his plays.

As literature reflects the society, playwrights like T. P. Kailasam and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya has made use of the sociological aspects, which

\textit{Vriksha} (shared with B.V. Karanth - 1972), the Mysore State Award for the Best Kannada film and the Best Direction for \textit{Vamsha Vriksha} (1972), the Presidents Silver Medal for the Second Best Indian film for \textit{Kaadu} (1974), the Padma Shri Award (1974), the National Award for the Best Kannada film for \textit{Ondanondu Kaaladalli} (1978), the Karnataka Nataka Academy Award (1984), the Nandikar, Calcutta, Award for Playwriting (1989), the Golden Lotus for the Best Non-Feature Film for \textit{Kanaka Purandara} (1989), the National Award for the Best Non-Feature Film on Social Issues for \textit{The Lamp in the Niche} (1990), the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the Most Creative Work for \textit{Naga-Mandala} (1992), the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for Best Play for \textit{Taledanda} (1992), the National Award for the Best Film on Environmental Conservation for \textit{Cheluvi} (1993), a Special Honour Award from the Karnataka Sahitya Academy (1994), the Sahitya Academy Award for \textit{Taledanda} (1994), the Jnanpith Award (1999) among the others.
motivated Karnad to portray the society in his plays. In this respect, Karnad was a dramatist with a difference as his plays were exclusively written for the stage. Karnad makes use of such myths and legends as metaphors for contemporary situations and this has induced the present researcher to make a study of his plays. Regarding the use of myth Hazel E. Barnes’ remark is very pertinent, “In a period when values are relatively stable, authors tend to use the classical myths merely allusively, enriching the poetic quality of their work with layers of older connotations. In an age more obviously transitional there is likely to be more of new interpretation.” (1984: 110)

Karnad uses myth in arguably the richest and the most complex ways. He explores the resources of myth, folklore, legend and history to construct his dramatic universe. *Hayavadana, The Fire and the Rain* and *Yayati* are rooted in Indian myth. *Bali* is based on both myth and folklore. *Naga-Mandala* draws on folklore, while *Tughlaq* and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* are inspired by history and legend. Karnad uses myth and history from the vantage point of the present and to view the present in a better light. Myth and history in the hands of Karnad are not just instruments to visit the past, but are used also to contemplate the possibilities which the future seems to hold. He taps myth and folklore, the hidden sources of shared meaning in the community for which his plays are meant to disturb some of the prevailing perceptions of this community. According to Karnad, “The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning those values, of making them literally stand on their heads” (The Tribune: 1999)
Based on his serious explorations of folklore, mythology and history, the subject of his plays reflect the problems and challenges of contemporary life, and endeavour to forge a link between the past and the present. The creative intellectual that he is, he obviously views the subjects of his plays from his own perspective, develops them in the crucible of his own imagination and personal experiences, and employs them as a medium to communicate his own independent and original feelings, thoughts and interpretations.

Diverse influences have formed Karnad's mind as he came across literacy scenes where there was a direct clash between Western and Indian tradition. He, though highly influenced by his contemporaries, differs from them to a great extent, as he understood that the purpose of literature is essentially the enhancement of life and the propagation of human values. Karnad's aim is to bring about a co-existence between man and all creatures. In order to achieve his target, he took refuge in the myths and legends and made them the vehicle of a new vision. His childhood exposure to street plays in Karnataka villages and his familiarity with western dramas staged in Bombay have induced him to retell the secular legends of India to suit the modern context. A vigorous vitality that combs the past for apt myths to analyze the present has been the hallmark of Girish Karnad, the pre-eminent Indian playwright in the Kannada language.

Karnad's creative genius lies in taking up fragments of historical-legendary experience and fusing them into a forceful statement. By using the 'grammar of literary archetype', Karnad links the past and the present, the archetypal and the real. By using these myths he tried to reveal the absurdity of life with all its
elemental passions and conflicts and man’s eternal struggle to achieve perfection. Karnad delves deep into the traditional myths to spell modern man’s anguish and dilemmas that are created in his mind. For instance, in *The Fire and the Rain*, he employs one of the archetypal myths of ‘slaying of the demon Vrita’ referred in the *Rig Veda* and again with some variation in the *Mahabharata*. Karnad incorporates this myth in the play to reinforce one of the central themes of the play. He states:

The myth can be seen as expressing a deep anxiety which informs the whole of Indian mythology, the fear of brother destroying brother. This fear branches out fully and nakedly in the *Mahabharata*, where the bonding of brothers within the Pandava and the Kuru clans is as close as the enmity between the cousins is ruthless and unrelenting. …

The tale of Arvasu and Paravasu fascinated me as unusual variant of this Indian obsession with fratricide and it seemed logical too that Yavakri should be their cousin, though the *Mahabharata* does not explicitly say so, …A myth seems complete in itself and yet when examined in detail contains subconscious signals which lead you on to another myth which in turn will act as a conduit to a third one while illuminating the one you started with. (Preface 1998)

Noticeably, Karnad does not take the myths in their entirety, he takes only fragments that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his imagination to make his plots interesting. His interest was not in recreating old myths and
legends but in representing them to suit his artistic purpose. Karnad takes leap from the original story and develops it further. This further development is the play of the artist’s imagination and it challenges the glib solutions offered in the original stories.

In fact, Karnad has taken this leap in order to provide new meaning to the myths and legends and has examined them from the vantage point of the present. Karnad himself has justified that he has gone back to the old myths, histories and oral tales not because he does not have an amazing inventive power, but because they are very much relevant even in the present context. The purpose of drama is solely to depict the life of the whole universe and Girish Karnad through the element of myth has effectively portrayed the contemporary world making his portrayal universally appealing. There is no wonder that he has been hailed as one of the most appealing and successful dramatist of the contemporary Indian theatre.

The fusion of the past and the present is also a technique of Girish Karnad to make his historical plays relevant to the present-day situation as we find it in Tale-danda. As he mentions, “I wrote Tale-danda in 1989 when the ‘Mandir’ and the ‘Mandal’ movements were beginning to show again how relevant the questions posed by these thinkers were for our age. The horror of subsequent events and the religious fanaticism that has gripped our national life today have only proved how dangerous it is to ignore the solutions they offered.” (Tale-danda “Preface”)

YAYATI
Karnad’s Yayati, (1961) initially written in Kannada, conveys the message of performance of duty and acceptance of responsibility. In this play, Karnad presents the age-old story of the mythological King Yayati who was the tenth in the line of the Brahma’s family. Once a conflict arises between Devayani, the daughter of Shukracharya, the guru of the asuras, and Sharmistha the daughter of Vrishparva, the King of the asuras, and the latter pushed Devayani into a well and escaped. Fortunately, King Yayati who came there saved her. Since then, Devayani started loving Yayati and Sharmistha was punished with serving Devayani forever along with her maidservants. With the consent of Shukracharya the marriage between Devayani and King Yayati was solemnized and Sharmistha as a result of her punishment was sent to King Yayati’s kingdom along with his bride Devayani. But Sharmistha develops secret relationship with Yayati and when Devayani comes to know this she complains to her father, who in turn, curses Yayati to become old. Yayati is unable to bear this; he loses control over himself, becomes violent, adamant and refuses to accept the old age. When his son Puru informs that Yayati can be redeemed if some person accepts his old age, he becomes very happy. But when Puru informs that nobody is willing to take up his old age, he is unable to accept the reality as he is of the wrong notion that all his subjects would readily accept his old age. Karnad has portrayed the contours of the real world, i.e. when you laugh the world will laugh with you, but when you are in sorrow you will be alone, deserted even by your kith and kin. Yayati feels very much disheartened because old age had not come
to him in its normal course but by a curse. So he feels that if somebody accepts it at present he would relieve him from his old age within five or six years. Puru proves to be the best son as he gladly accepts the curse inflicted on his father and willingly exchanges his youth for the old age of his father. Though Yayati succeeds in transforming his old age and his sins to Puru, he acts in the most irresponsible way by usurping the happiness of his son and daughter-in-law. Rajinder Paul has commented that “the protagonist in Yayati asks for eternal youth which his son sacrifices at the altar of paternity, a very Indian theme of a self-denying son indulging the whim of his unreasonable father.” (Radhai, 2006: 26) In the process he feels disillusioned and looses faith. Though his subconscious mind tells him that it is not fair on his part, he justifies that it is only for his people he is doing like this. In actuality King Yayati exchanges his old age with the youth of his youngest son for the satisfaction of his own youthful urges. In the end Puru’s wife Chitralekha commits suicide. Through this action the dramatist makes Yayati to accept his responsibility for the sin he had committed. Yayati asks Puru to take back his youth and be a good king as he felt that there could be no better lesson than Chitralekha’s death. He also asks Sharmistha to accompany him to the forest, as he has to wash his sins by doing penance in the forest. He finally says that he has spent his youth in the city but will spend his old age in the forest. When Chitralekha dies, her husband Puru is astonished, but he does not shed even a drop of tear. Only when he regains his youth he repents for the disastrous blunder he had committed. It is pathetic that King Yayati and his son Puru realize their evil deeds only at the cost of a life, Chitralekha. The
dramatist portrays the selfless nature and the helpless plight of the Indian women who, by willingly sacrificing their lives, make the members of their family to realize their nobility. Thus Indian women serve as a contrast to Indian men. The dramatist, through the portrayal of the character of Yayati, focuses on the theme of attachment to life and its pleasures. Yayati realizes the horrors of his selfish action of exchange of youth in the later period, only after the suicide of his daughter-in-law and he readily owns the responsibility for the havoc that befell the family and returns the youth of his son Puru and retires to the forest as a hermit. Through the life of Yayati, the dramatist brings out the fact that selfish paternal authority and blind filial loyalty could bring ruin to a family when it is misappropriated. Almost every character except Sharmistha is irresponsible. Yayati who is cursed for his adultery transfers the burden most irresponsibly to his son. Puru, his son, who is married to Chitralekha and owes a dharmic responsibility to ensure her happiness, equally irresponsibly vitiates her marital bliss by exchanging his youth with his father for the sake of preserving the latter’s happiness. He is caught between the devil and the deep sea - filial loyalty and conjugal felicity, and whichever he chose; he would still be caught in the web of irresponsibility. Devayani acts impetuously, brings a curse upon her husband King Yayati, and runs away irresponsibly when he is visited by the ugly consequences of the curse. The on-going conflict between Sharmishtha and Devayani dovetails the course of the play. At one point Sharmishtha says:

Yayati hopes for only one thing: nectar to be immortal. (14)
Who does not want to be immortal? He accepted you in the hope of immortality. As soon as he came to know that you were Devayani, he had an urge to conquer death. (15)

When Devayani insists that Yayati did not know her identity when he married her, Sharmishtha comments:

Yayati asked your name only after your marriage? Even a prostitute’s name is asked beforehand! Without bothering about your virginity, he would have passed you by. (16)

Sharmishtha is responsible for the turmoil in Yayati’s life. The character of Chitralekha, an invention of Karnad’s imagination, plays a catalytic role and shapes the end of the novel. In the course of time, Chitralekha, unable to bear the consequences of her husband Puru’s exchange of youth with his father, commits suicide instead of fighting to restore her rights. The only character that is willing to accept the responsibility for the consequences of what she does is Sharmistha. The purpose and theme of the play are revealed through the character of the Sutradhara. The Sutradhara says that neither a scholar nor an ordinary person can escape the burden of responsibility. Karnad himself in his interview with Meenakshi Raykar has revealed, “Every character in the play tries to seek escape from the consequences of its actions.” (2009: 25)

At another place he says:

The story of King Yayati that I used occurs in the Mahabharata. The king, for a mortal transgression he has committed, is cursed to old age in the prime of life. Distraught at losing his youth, he
approaches his son, pleading with him to lend him his youth in exchange for old age. The son accept the exchange and the curse, and thus becomes old, older than his father. But the old age brings no knowledge, no self-realization, only the senselessness of a punishment meted out for an act in which he had not even participated. The father is left to face the consequences of shirking responsibility for his own actions. 

While I was writing the play, I saw it only as an escape from my stressful situation. But looking back, I am amazed at how precisely the myth reflected my anxieties at that moment, my resentment with all those who seemed to demand that I sacrifice my future…. Oddly enough the play owed its form not to the innumerable mythological plays I had been brought up on, and which had partly kept these myths alive for me, but to Western playwrights whom until then I had only read in print … (Karnad 2009: 23)

Thus in the moment of self-expression and an attempt of exploring his insecurities, Karnad has given this traditional tale a new meaning and significance highly relevant in the context of life today. The symbolic theme of Yayati’s attachment to life and its pleasures and also his final renunciation are retained. In the Mahabharata Yayati recognizes the nature of desire itself and realizes that fulfillment does not diminish or end the sexual desires. In Karnad’s play, however, Yayati recognizes the horror of his own life and assumes moral
responsibility after a series of symbolic encounters with reality. Thus the playwright takes liberty with the original myths and invents some new relationship to make it acceptable to modern sensibilities. Karnad seems to have used this myth with a view to exposing the absurdity of life with all its elemental passions and conflicts, and also to show man’s eternal struggle to achieve perfection.

Karnad’s interpretation of the familiar old myth on the exchange of ages between father and son seems to have baffled and even angered many of the conventional critics, states A. K. Sinha. According to him, “But to others, who are trying to root their contemporary concerns in old myths. Karnad’s unheroic hero Puru is a challenging experience. Karnad places the individual person at the centre of his picture of the world and shows that each man is what he chooses to be or make himself. In his psychological exploration, the playwright shows an impressive insight and introduces concepts which greatly extend the area of moral self-knowledge and self-awareness.” (2009: 56)

**Naga-Mandala**

Karnad, in another play, *Naga-Mandala*, also projects the lack of responsibility of his cruel hero Appanna who barely and brusquely talks to his captive wife Padmini during the day and goes away at night to his concubine after locking the wife in. “In *Naga-Mandala*, Karnad weaves two Kannada folk-tales together. The first one comments on the paradoxical nature oral tales in general: they have an existence of their own, independent of the teller and yet live only when they are passed on from one story teller to another…” (*Naga- Mandala* back flap) Indian women think of their husbands to be the be all and end all of their life. Though in
reality it is highly difficult for a man to be an Adam or Samson it is quite possible for one to be at least a human being. But Karnad’s protagonist fails in his duty as a husband, as he does not even satisfy the needs of his newly wedded wife Rani. The young maid is even ignorant of sex, while he visits his concubine regularly thus resulting in a meaningless wedlock. Everything in the play is from the perspective of Rani’s fantasy. The Naga taking the shape like Appanna and appearing only in the absence of Appanna are pointers to the fantasying inclination of Rani. This play gives the public what it wants. It has the ingredients present in the dreams of every individual. The title of the play is not the name of a human character, but it is that of a snake. As the name suggests, it revolves around a woman and a serpent. As this play is based on a folk tale it could be observed that the serpent plays an important role as in most such narrations all over the world.

_Naga-Mandala_ is a story within a story narrated by Story to a playwright condemned to die if he is unable to stay awake the whole night in return for the abused mass of sleep that he induced in his audience Karnad’s own subjectivity merges into the subjectivity of the character he has created. The playwright himself is a character and the distance between the writer and the character appears to vanish. Karnad good humouredly appeases the audience of the play and seems to be also mocking the critics. The Sutradhar of the play, the Man, is trying to keep awake in a dilapidated temple, as he is told, “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.” (22), while he was sitting in the temple
on the last night, he hears female voices approaching. To his surprise, he witnesses a group of naked flames walking towards the temple, talking animatedly. Each flame has a story to tell, weaving a pattern of stories within stories. The man, addressing the audience says, “I had heard that when lamps are put on in the village, the flames gather in some remote place and spend the night together, gossiping. ...(24) The flames can be taken as metaphors of the woman of the village, who have gathered at that time of the night to tell tales and sing songs.

One of the flames tells the incident of the Story and the Song who pops out of the mouth of an old woman who has kept them confined, not narrating them further. This story has taken the form of a young woman and the song that of a sari. The playwright hints that the story is born to be kept alive by repeated narration. It cannot be bottled up, but would escape at the earliest opportunity. It must grow both vertically and horizontally. The incident emphasizes the ineluctable uninterruptedness of the storytelling process: a story demands to be told over and over again. Story too reaches there and the flames offer to listen to her, but Story is despondent because the flames cannot pass her on. The Man then comes forward and offers to repeat Story in the form of his new play. Story accepts the offer and starts narrating the story of Rani, who is married to Appanna. Thus the opening scene goes as follows:

Story: A young girl it doesn't matter. But she was an only daughter, so her parents called her Rani. Queen. Queen of the whole wide
Rani’s problem in Appanna’s house could be taken as a problem of any woman in Indian household. Appanna treats Rani cruelly, locking her up in his house and visiting the house only to have his bath and lunch. The lock signifies the whole patriarchal discourse of chastity which is used to confine women. Appanna visits his concubine without any moral or social reservations and is never required to explain anything or prove his fidelity or purity through a snake/fire ordeal. Karnad hints at the double standards of patriarchal institutions where men are not accountable for their social/moral conduct while a woman always is. A woman is expected to be faithful even to a husband who treats his wife cruelly and is unfaithful to her. Appanna’s behavior shocks Rani and her dreams of a blissful married life are shattered. Appanna says to her, “Aren’t you ashamed to admit it? 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? I swear to you I am not my father’s son if I don’t abort that bastard! Smash it into dust!...” (33) She begins to dream of a rescuer who would free her from the clutches of her demon husband. She longs to go back to her parents. The condition of a woman in a male dominated Indian society is presented accurately in these words, “You darken my face, you slut...open the door, you whore!” (33) Innocent Rani is ill-treated in this manner while he himself passes his every night in the house of a concubine. The truth
that is highlights is, in a male dominated society, only woman has to not only observe but prove her chastity and man should remain unquestioned about his own loyalty to his wife.

When Kurudavva comes to know of Rani’s predicament, she gives her an aphrodisiac root to lure Appanna back. Rani mixes the root with his food but seeing its blood-red color is horrified and throws the gravy on the ant-hill in which Naga, the cobra, lives. The cobra is smitten with love for Rani and starts visiting her in the guise of her husband. The relationship between the animal (snake) and the human suggests a certain continuum and a relation between the two. Firstly, it suggests that man is equally vicious like a snake. Secondly, if we discard the human lens, a relation of equality and independence can be perceived between the animal and the human. In other words, we are called upon to have the ability to look at the human being freed from the limitation of our conception of what a human being entails and to get rid of the limited ideas in which we are apt to confine it. One has to identify, thus, with the otherness of the other. At the level of ideology, the animal human continuity also undercuts the humanist idea of man as the crown of all creation. Rani is surprised to find Appanna paying a visit at night, as he usually comes for lunch and leaves after that. She asks him if he wants anything. The patriarchal arrangement requires the woman to be subservient and Rani does not expect her husband to come to her without any demand. She is quite surprised to find him in a mood for idle talk and caresses. But Naga wins her over with patience and compassion. Rani begins to enjoy his company and affection, and waits for him every night. One afternoon she tries to
talk to Appanna, who snubs her again, making Rani suspicious that the incident of the previous night exists only in her fantasy. She keeps on oscillating between the twin poles of credulity and knowledge. The question is whether it is just Rani who oscillates between truth and fiction or whether it is a general human predicament. Naga makes use of his patriarchal authority and silences any doubts that Rani may begin to have she is prepared to silence all her doubts, in return for the love and affection she had been seeking in the strange new home. She does not ask any questions and waits for Naga every day. It is difficult to say whether Rani guesses that Naga and Appanna are not one but two different persons. But do both of them not stand for the suffocating discourse of patriarchy, silencing women in one way or another? Appanna’s mistreatment of Rani and his visits to the concubine hints at the ways patriarchy can use the instrument of sex to demean women. It demeans the concubine by using her as a sex object, while it demeans Rani by denying her the relationship that forms the basis of marriage. Karnad deconstructs the discourse of marriage as an essential and fulfilling union and depicts how marriage is used by patriarchy to confine and exploit women. The play makes a world of desire, frustration, insatiated libidoes represented by the thin ambivalence between the real and the surreal; the natural and the supernatural. Rani furnishes some complementation to story when she compares Appanna with a snake in conversation with Naga who has assumed the form of her husband: “Rani: You talk so nicely at night. But during the day I only have to
open my mouth and you hiss—like a stupid snake (Naga Laughs)
It is all very well for you to laugh. I feel like crying” (52)

As in Sakharam Binder too, patriarchal arrangement in a marriage is shown to mirror the class relations between a capitalist and a worker. Appanna expects Rani to do all the household work, prepare meals for him, yet in return he does not even talk to her, but orders her around, locks her in the house and mistreats her. Yet the institution of patriarchy also has its roots deep in the psyche of women like Rani who cannot bring themselves to protest. Rani submits to the orders of Appanna and does not question him about his whereabouts. On the contrary, she is concerned when Appanna falls ill after drinking the milk containing the aphrodisiac root. Naga too makes use of the same patriarchal discourse to subjugate Rani into silence, although he claims to be in love with her. He is only concerned about satisfying his desires, and not about what its consequences can be for Rani. He betrays Rani when she becomes pregnant and leaves her to face the consequences alone. Rani is unable to comprehend her husband’s behavior when Appanna confronts her about her pregnancy, blaming her of infidelity. Even if Rani had been unfaithful, it is only Naga who would know about it, but he does not even care to enlighten her about it. He leaves her to face the ordeal all by herself and does not admit his role in causing all this suffering to her. It is difficult to guess exactly when Rani starts differentiating between Naga and Appanna. The play hints at many such occasions which should have consolidated Rani’s belief about Naga not being
Appanna, yet it appears that Rani ignores the witness of all these occasions – such as Naga’s wounds, his image in the mirror and his being able to enter a locked house. It appears to be a willing suspension of disbelief on Rani’s part not to have arrived at the right conclusions. Or if she had guessed it earlier, she yet spontaneously goes on playing the role of an ignorant woman, since it suits her best. The same applies to Appanna who willingly suspends his disbelief of Rani’s chastity and goes on to perform the role of an ideal husband and father near the end of the play. It is difficult to find out whether he really accepts the myth of the goddess surrounding Rani, or submits before the collective pressure of the village elders and the people. It is difficult for Rani to decide whether to act as a goddess or as a real woman. Clear demarcations are hardly possible. She must perform multiple roles at the same time. Story raises the issue of Rani’s dilemma when she comes to know that Appanna is not Naga. Story offers the man a choice of endings among which he may prefer any, suggesting how far our lives are shaped by narratives, fictions and half-truths. Truth is always contingent and fragmentary, and leaving the ending open suggests the impossibility of reaching a final version of truth, if there is any.

One has to construct one’s own truths. So she suggests an ending in which Naga strangulates himself with Rani’s hair and Rani starts exercising her newly gained goddess status and gets Appanna to ritually cremate Naga. But the play does not end here. The Man goes on to offer another ending at the request of the flames which are of the opinion that the ending given by Story is not proper so the Man tries and brings out a happy ending in which Rani allows Naga to live in her
tresses. The comparison, frequently made, between a woman’s hair and the snakes stands out (as in Greek mythology Medusa’s hair are believed to be snakes). The open ending suggests the flexibility of narratives which go on changing as they change mouths. Truth is a construction of narratives, as in Tendulkar’s play Silence! The Court is in Session, Samant reads an incident out of a novel, which becomes the reality for Benare. Similarly, subjectivity is also a narrative and discursive construction. The ritual cremation of Naga does not denote the end but its integration and acceptance into the community. In this way, the two endings can be read as not being radically different from each other.

*Naga-Mandala* is a sociological study of Indian women, richly textured dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka usually narrated by women while feeding children in the kitchen. It not only exposes the ugliness of a society where woman is considered ‘second sex’, ‘other’, ‘subject’, ‘non-man’ - women are taught in the process of being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology—e.g. male superiority; and so conditioned to derogate their own sex and to cooperate in their own subordination. Patriarchal dominance has prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibility. The play also suggests remedial measures and slaps the orthodox society by an act of reconciliation between Rani and Naga. Karnad was well acquainted with feminist ideologies and the havoc wrought by patriarchal ideologies in Indian society. *Naga-Mandala* appears to be a battleground where ideological conflicts, power relations, and the struggle for identity have been dramatized effectively.
In *Naga-Mandala* Rani—the female protagonist, and Kurudavva—the other female character, both are generic, represent the extreme physical torture and mental trauma, struggle for their identity as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. Four Flames, Story, and the Man also reflect the sufferings and exploitations of women. Rani is treated in a slavish manner, imprisoned like a caged bird, neither is she did not allow talking to outsider nor outsider is allowed to do the same. Despite her chastity and fidelity, she is forced to face the Naga Ordeal. Appanna (Rani’s husband), Naga (Cobra), Dog, Mongoose, Three Village Elders and the orthodox society have been used as the forces of subjection. Karnad has treated ‘eternal-triangle’ unlike of G. B. Shaw. Shaw in Candida gave a different twist to ‘eternal-triangle’ where Candida is a New Woman and finale brings the impression that conjugal love must be fostered and glorified whereas Karnad exposes the hollowness of male-chauvinism. Rani’s acceptance of Naga as her own is a curt reply to the question of extra-marital relation in which only males are allowed to go freely, even after getting married, to concubine (as Appanna does) whereas the yardstick of morality is imposed upon women. Karnad in the play tries to “fuse artistically dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity” (Singh 2007: 11)

Rani gets to keep both the devoted husband and the besotted Naga in the coils of her hair. In fact, Karnad has proposed two endings to the play. The first ending suggests the death of Naga, while the second ending suggests Naga’s relegation into Rani’s consciousness. In a way, this implies that Rani is condemned to
oscillate forever between fantasy and reality. But whether or not this indecisiveness is a punishment is not definitely answered by the text. Obviously, Karnad, by using mythology, has questioned our value system. The play, by its subtle treatment of the theme of alienation suggests that a present day ‘human being’, though living within his/her social ambit is often an alien to his/her world. It is significant to note that the title of the play comes from Naga, a non-human character. The story of the cobra, as discussed earlier, suggests that the play not merely dramatizes the folk tales in modern interpretation, it also implies a deeper meaning at various levels. In Southern India, many households have a separate place reserved for snakes in the back yard. At a different level, snakes are the symbols of masculine power and strength. Nagas are sometimes portrayed as charming men, or half-man and half-reptile. Karnad has conveniently and aptly used all available beliefs rooted in the psyche of Indian folk, and by mixing of human and non-human worlds, brought in the element of alienation in the play. According to him, “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 heads. The various conventions – the chorus, the mask, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of human and non-human worlds – 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’ …” (Karnad 2009 : 25)
Karnad himself has admitted Brecht’s influence on the play. He observes, “...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 realize what could be done with the design of traditional theatre.” (1994: 20)

Noticeably, Karnad uses an invisible female character, who is the former wife and queen of Yayati. Through this character, Karnad “provides the social, socio-religious and political milieu the play is embarked upon. The dramatist, through the unnamed woman, discusses the race-conflict and populous misconceptions.” (Nimsarkar 2009:78)

Towards the end, Puru realizes his mistake and proposes to Sharmishtha to accompany him to the forest before the nightfall, “We should wash our sins by doing penance in the forest. I have spent my youth in this city but will spend my old age in the forest.” (82-83) Thus the women characters of the play dovetail and shape the play as well as destiny of the characters.

**Tughlaq**

Karnad’s *Tughlaq* is an outstanding, contemporary Indian plays, perhaps one of the earliest in the series New Drama in India. Commenting on the greatness of the play, Raju, B. Yadava rates the play as follows: “No play in Kannada is comparable to *Tughlaq* in its depth and range. It is a classic in Kannada literature. In this play Girish Karnad has artistically integrated the two aspects, the historical and the universal, the temporal and the timeless, in the fascinating
character of Muhammad Tughlaq, one of the most idealistic and intelligent kings to ascend the throne of Delhi.” (2006: 81)

U. R. Anantha Murthy, in his introduction to this play, mentions, “…the play is more than a political allegory. Although the theme of the play is from the history, the treatment of the theme is not historical” (Tughlaq 1986 ‘introduction’ : viii-ix)

The play is about “the life of eponymous hero in relation to his subjects”, says Basavraj Naikar. According to him, the play depicts two contradictory cultures and religions, presenting two kinds of conflict affecting each other adversely. (2002: 171)

enigmatic character, the doomed dreamer, very well resembles Martin Luther King and Jawaharlal Nehru, whose dreams were also shattered by destiny. Tughlaq is, in a way, a genuine history play in English and that it is an answer to criticism which deplores the absence of Indian play in English, which go back to history (and myths) to establish modern man’s relationship to history, to interpret contemporary problems, to work out ideas or theses through historical material and which establish the modern Indian relation to history. It is a tragedy that depicts the struggle and spectacular failure of a personality who dreams of becoming an ideal ruler and establishing a utopia. The play greatly appealed to the Indian audience because it reflected the political mood of disillusionment, which prevailed in the Nehru era of idealism in the country. In this context, it will be apt to remember the comment of Nibir K. Ghosh: Karnad’s magnum opus is a veritable link between received history and its relevance in the contemporary frame of reference.” (Radhai, 2006: 52) An interesting and dominating character,
a brilliant but spectacularly unsuccessful fourteenth century Islamic Sultan of Delhi popularly known as mad Muhammad, when he took over the reins of power, was at the dawn of youth, marked by zeal, glory, and heartfelt hopes and dreams. In the opening scene he declares, “I shall build an empire which will be the envy of world”. He is always preoccupied with thoughts of his state. Acutely aware of the short span of life and the stupendous task before him, like Asoka the great, he seems to dedicate his life for the well-being of his subjects. He feels restless and keeps awake during nights. His preoccupation with the idea of establishing a utopia for the welfare of his people does not allow him to sleep. Muhammad claims that a king is no king unless he is one with his people. He takes great pain to correct all the errors committed by the past Sultans of Delhi in order to spread the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Within a short span of twenty years, this tremendously capable personality is shattered to pieces and all his dreams lie deflated. Karnad projects the sufferings and mishaps endured by the people under the rule of this daydreamer. The King appears as a ‘carnivorous animal’ and as he fails to realize the limits of the human power, he pays an unexpected penalty in the end. Unlike other rulers, he wanted to be an ideal King. He not only strives for the impossible – Hindu-Muslim unity, but treats everyone alike before justice. This is evident from the announcement made to restore the property of Vishnu Prasad, a Brahmin of Shikar, whose ‘land had been seized illegally by the officers of the state’. The Sultan’s sense of justice and impartiality is further revealed when he offered the said Vishnu Prasad a post in the civil service to ensure him a regular and adequate income. This man
of justice and personality is miscarried by a feeling that whatever he does is perfect. Being an idealist and in order to fulfill his dream, he foolishly announces, “Later this year the capital of my empire will be moved from Delhi to Daulatabad (44).” By shifting his capital to the city of the Hindus, he hopes to win the confidence of the Hindus and help foster the Hindu – Muslim unity. But in actuality it leads to disastrous problems. The ruler who hopes to establish an empire, which will be the envy of the world, due to his lack of foresight and inability to steer clear through the situations falters and resorts to solving all the problems with a dagger. No advice is sought, no consultation takes place. Being despotic and devoid of human concern, he arrogantly and inhumanly says, “I want Delhi vacated immediately. Every living soul in Delhi will leave for Daulatabad within a fortnight. I was too soft, I can see that now. They’ll only understand the whip. Everyone must leave… Nothing but an empty graveyard of Delhi will satisfy me now.” (44) Like Marlowe’s heroes namely, Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus and Jew of Malta, Tughlaq, like a egomaniac, is fully convinced that he alone knows what is good for others and he alone is capable of achieving it for them. His principle is similar to that of Machiavellian’s principle, i.e., the end justifying the means. Though he is blind towards reality, he just wants to fulfill his ambitions and desires. The schemes of relocating the nation’s capital from Delhi to Daulatabad and introducing the copper currency causes a lot of havoc and hardship among the people, which he fails to realize. The Sultan fails to make allowances for the innovations he makes and so with the best of intentions,
excellent ideas, but no balance and patience, his life ends in a transcendent failure. Sarat Babu M. rightly says:

Tughlaq’s idealism clubbed with his Machiavellian craftiness causes a split in his personality and led to his precipitous fall. In his acts of cruelty, at times he resembles Camus’ Caligula who wishes to get the moon and whom, too, absolute power corrupts absolutely. 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. (2009: 131)

The seeds of communal riots caused by disharmony have already been sown centuries ago. These seeds that were in dormancy have sprouted due to violence and hatred and recently it led to the demolition of Babri Masjid. Religion has become the dominant basis in power politics. In the recent years, religion and politics have become so deeply intermingled that they are threatening the very unity of the nation. Tughlaq’s tragic tale reflects the problems of the Indian society. It aims at showing that the idealism of the ruler will fail and will ruin the idealist. Secularism, equality and unity in a country like India are the concepts very much ahead of the times. The Muslim Saints like Bokhan of Delhi and the Iman of Garib Nawaz of Ajmer have been going round propagating the views of their party and so the people tend to believe them more than a politician. Life of the people is corrupted by the nexus between the saints and the politicians. People, even today, become victims and they suffer as they suffered during the reign of Tughlaq. The greatest truth is that religious saints cannot wash away the filth from the society and when Aziz, the dhobi, masquerading as a saint, is exposed, he pleads with the Sultan for his life and says, “when it comes to washing away filth, no saint is a match for a dhobi.” (53)

In Tughlaq, Karnad depicts the predicament of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq, the fourteenth century monarch of Delhi. The idealism of Tughlaq and the
subsequent political disillusionment of the period are often compared to those of
the era of Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru indeed shared with Tughlaq an over-
ambitious dream to build a glorious India. Tughlaq forsook his rest and sleep to
fulfill his dream but his idealism and vision were probably ahead of his times and
his subjects could not fit into his scheme of things, resulting in widespread social,
economic and political upheaval and chaos. Tughlaq paradoxically resorted to
violence and cruelty for the implementation of his idealistic plans meant for public
welfare. This later phase in Tughlaq’s career as bearing a resemblance with the
rule of Indira Gandhi in contrast to the earlier phase that resembled the Nehru
era. Critics have noted that characters like Aziz, Barani, Najib and Sheikh Imam-
ud-din are just various facets of Tughlaq’s persona. Tughlaq derives a sense of a
multiple and constructed self from various “discursive locations” of religion,
history, law politics and morality, In Tughlaq Sheikh Imam-ud-din, Najib and
Barani are the personae of Tughlaq, with the Sheikh symbolizing religion, Najib
politics and Barani both history and spirituality. Nevertheless, each of the
characters has an independent existence and is not merely an aspect of
Tughlaq.

Precisely, in Karnad’s play, Tughlaq is presented as an alienated protagonist
who experiences interpersonal and social alienation, existential alienation and
self-estrangement. Many of the other characters in the play are also seen to
experience alienation, which serves to highlight Tughlaq’s predicament. (Gomez
2009: 125)

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan
Karnad chooses the historical figure of Tipu Sultan “Tiger of Mysore” as his subject for the play. On the occasion of fiftieth anniversary of Indian Independence B.B.C. Radio broadcasted this play. He has written the play keeping in mind the requirements of a Radio play; still the play has got all other qualities which are essential for staging the play. The play was staged on 17th February 2000 by the Madras Players at the YMCA Amphitheatre, Chennai. Even the play in its Kannada version was staged on 15th, 16th and 17th May 2004 at Dariya Daulat, Srirangpatnam, where Tipu’s body was interred and later from 21st to 25th May at Rangayan Mysore on the 200th Death Anniversary of Tipu Sultan. Tipu Sultan was killed on the battlefield on 4th May 1799 but the play begins in 1803.

""He was a thinker and visionary, who represented the best of Karnataka. Unfortunately he has been misunderstood by the people of his own country and a lot of untruths were spread about him, Tipu Sultan has been misrepresented in history books and early works written on him as a fanatic and someone who converted his subjects. But this was largely because what was written was largely influenced by what the British spread and wrote about him as `they were out to destroy him.’ said noted playwright and actor Girish Karnad about Tipu Sultan.” (The Hindu, 2005)

The play The Dreams of Tipu Sultan is divided into two acts. There is constant flux in between dream and reality. Though technically Karnad has not divided the play into scenes there are various scenes in the play. The scenes shift from one
place to other and from one time to the other. The time moves from present to
the past and vice-versa. Karnad’s instructions in the Note to the play suggest that
the dreams scenes are to be staged as realistically as possible without the use of
mask, special lightings or costumes and the scenes must follow each other in
rapid succession. The next scene is battlefield and takes us to the night of fourth
of May 1799. The battle has come to an end and Tipu is killed. Mark Wilks and
his soldiers are searching for the dead body of Tipu. Tipu’s servants are brought in to help identify his body. But they identify a dozen corpses as the Sultan’s.
They make the English troops fool. Colonel Arthur Wellseley says that they have
got to decide whether Tipu is dead or in hiding or has run away before they can
take the next step. At last it is Nadeem Khan, Quiledar, the Manager of the fort
helps the English soldiers to identify the body of Tipu Sultan. Wellesley mentions
him as the ‘Tiger of Mysore’. The body of Tipu is not honored properly by the
English soldiers. One of the soldiers takes a pen knife from Mackenzie and
chops off one of Tipu’s mustaches. Next scene is once again Kirmani’s house
and he is talking with Mackenzie. Karnad has narrated atrocities done to the
Indians by the British during the battle. In a very inhuman manner the Indians
were treated by the British soldiers.
Kirmani mentions about the dairy written by Tipu. Before the touch of Munshi
Habibullah the dairy was a sacred thing. Kirmani is of the opinion that the Munshi
should have burnt it down. But as he was a fool he did not do that. Tipu is in the
habit of writing his dreams in the dairy. There are some blank pages also, and
these blank pages raise curiosity in the mind of Kirmani. The following scene is
but a dream of Tipu Sultan. When Tipu is returning from Farrukhe near Salamabad he sees this dream. In dream Poornaiya, the Finance Minister, is accompanying him. They see a big temple and they go inside to see it. There are strange figures in the temple. There are stone images and they are moving their eyes. Out of these images two women rise and say that they are seeking for their salvation. They want total isolation. Tipu gives orders to repair the temple and these seekers after God are not to be disturbed. This shows Tipu’s respect for worship and his secularism. Outside the temple they visit two old men. These are the envoys of the Emperor of China. One of the envoys tells Tipu that the Emperor of China has sent a white elephant and the horses as token of love of his friendship and affection for him. He also adds that this sort of present he has sent only to the great Alexander. Tipu, when arises, interprets the dream as God Almighty and our prophet will make him another Alexander. After the dream scene the scene of the play shifts to Diwan-i-khas. We see Tipu with Pornaiya and Mir Sadiq at his conference. He is discussing commerce and other factors regarding his state from Tipu’s dialogues we come to know that what is needed for the state from the outside and what is available in his state for the trade.

The protagonist of Girish Karnad’s another historical play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* is caught in an ethical dilemma. Tipu Sultan, one of the most politically perceptive Indian Kings during the British rule, keeps on wavering between nationalistic sentiments for India and everything Indian and his respect for the British way of life, British people’s undying love for their nation and their great passion for trade. Tipu knows that the English are thriving in India owing to their
clever political machinations and their stronghold on trade. He wishes the Indians to wake up to this fact and instead of leaving the Indian resources open to exploitation by the British, be their own masters and earn profits by trading Indian goods. That is why Tipu sends delegations to China, France and Istanbul and so on to develop trade relations with these countries. He imports technology from these countries and exports rare Indians products to them, thus strengthening the economy of his own kingdom and building a trading empire. Though Tipu is full of nationalistic and patriotic feelings, he can still not help wondering at European enthusiasm and energy. Tipu fears that his own trusted officers might stab him in the back when the moment comes. He envies the British nationalism, their love for England and their steadfastness. In a dream, while talking to his father, he discloses his deepest fears and his admiration for the British in a long speech. Once again there is a dream of Tipu shown by Karnad. Tipu sees a fair skinned and light eyed man (a woman disguised as a man) approaches him and praises Tipu’s handsomeness. Later Tipu comes to know that the person who has approached him and appreciating him is a woman disguised as a man and Tipu asks her to quit. Tipu interprets this dream as though the Marathas are dressed in male attire; they will in fact prove to be women.

The next scene is the Maratha court in Pune and Nana Phadanvis, the Maratha statesman is talking with Charles Malet, representative of Lord Cornwallis. Malet has come to give assurance to the Maratha rulers that they are the good friends of theirs’. But Nana Phadanvis is wise politician and he suspects the intentions of the English. He is worried about the policies implemented by the British
regarding Scindia, the Maratha chiefs, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nawabs of a Carnatic and Oudh, the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin. When Nana mentions the name of Tipu, Malet says that the English are having a little trouble with him. Nana is disturbed with the Treaty of Perpetual Peace in between Tipu Sultan and the English. The next scene shifts to the inner chamber of Tipu’s palace. We see Tipu with his queen Ruqayya Banu. Offstage we get the sound of boys playing with mechanical tiger and we listen to the life like screams of a human doll. Tipu is talking with Ruqaiyya about politics and the English. Though he hates the English, Tipu has learnt many things from them. Once again the scene shifts to Kirmani’s house and we see Mackenzie and Kirmani are talking about the war between Tipu and the English. The incident which took place on 23rd February 1792 are shown at the beginning of second act. The square in front of the big mosque in Seringapatam, packed with senior citizens, generals and courtiers. Poornaiya addresses the nobleman and he informs that senior hakim has come to attend the Queen. After some time Tipu joins the meeting and addresses the noblemen and makes them aware of the situation.

The next scene takes place in the inner chamber of the palace. In the scene we see Ghulam Ali Khan convincing the sons of Tipu Sultan to go to the troops of the English as their guests. Muizuddin and Abdul Khaliq, the sons of Tipu are convinced by Ghulam Ali Khan. It is a test for Ghulam Ali and he becomes successful in it. The next scene is at Diwan-i-Aam and Tipu is with Kirmani, Poornaiya and Mir Sadiq. Tipu is eager to know what happened when his sons were taken to the English camp. Kirmani narrates the procession of Tipu’s sons
and how it was led by camel harakaras and standard bearers- followed by a hundred lancers with spears invalid with silver-entered the English camp and how they were taken these on caparisoned elephants. He also tells Tipu that princes were received with a twenty-one gull salutes and Lord Cornwalllis took each prince by hand and sat them down on the right and left of their chair. When Kirmani narrates all these things Tipu is psychologically disturbed. Next scene is dream of Tipu once again. In his dream his father Haider Ali has come to meet him. His father tells Tipu that he is maimed and he has no limbs, they are cut and handed over to the enemy. This dream is also symbolic. Tipu has returned the territories which his father has won from the Marathas. He says that Tipu spends too much time with his account books. Tipu tells his father that English are stronger than his time. Haider wants to know why Tipu let Cornwallis escape. Tipu likes the mentality of the English soldiers. He says that there is never any treachery against own kind, no back-stabbing. They believe in the destiny of their race. The English fight for something called England. It is just a dream, for which they are willing to kill and die. Tipu assures his father that he will do something to restores his limbs. The next scene opens in the Maratha camp. Hari Pant Phadake and Tipu discuss over the political issue. Tipu asks why the Marathas helped the English in attacking him. Hari Pant's answer is the Nizam stood by the English and the Marathas were outvoted. According to Tipu the Marathas are the real victors and they should not have allowed the English to dictate the terms. Tipu advocates his friendship with the French because they are not dictators like the English. When Hari Pant advocates Cornwallis and expresses his satisfaction
for the share, the Marathas have received. Once again the scene shifts to Kirmani and Mackenzie. Kirmani tells that Tipu’s sons were restored to him. Mackenzie tells that Lord Cornwallis was succeeded by Sir John Shore and there was peace for seven years and then came Richard Wellesley, the Second Earl of Mornington. The incidents which took place in 1798 in Calcutta are shown in the next scene. We see on the stage Richard Wellesley, his younger brother Arthur Wellesley and Colonel William Kirk Patrick. Mornington is of the view that they have to liquidate Tipu. He is of the opinion that when Tipu sought help from Napoleon at that time only serious action would have been taken by them. This was a sort of flirtation against the British and it should not be tolerated. The very night Tipu sees his last dream. In his last dream he sees that everybody is reporting him the good things happening in the case of his state. Poornaiya reports that the nine planets have been placated and offering made to the guardians of the eight directions. Even the cannons are accurate and have an extraordinary range. Mir Sadiq reads a letter sent by the Nizam who has seen his folly in backing the English. Even the Marathas have decided to throw in their lot with Tipu. Qamuruddin reports about the withdrawing of the English. Tipu orders to call entire zenana out to celebrate the victory. This is the last dream of Tipu Sultan. All these things take place in his dream. The reality is different. In the last scene of the play we see again Kirmani and Mackenzie talking about the defeat of Tipu Sultan. Kirmani tells Mackenzie how Tipu was defeated. On that very afternoon Tipu Sultan is killed on the battle field. Mir Sadiq conducts treachery and is lynched by his own troops. Nadeem Khan takes his troops away from the
battle field. Poornaiya slips with alacrity into the post of Prime Minister under the new regime. Qamaruddin is by his side. The battle of Seringapatam is lost before it has begun. Mackenzie tells about how the tigers are killed the very next day and the mechanical tiger is taken away to England. Tipu Sultan’s sons are moved out of Seringapatam and end in Calcutta.

Karnad has written a Post Script for this play, in that he mentions the tragedy of the descendants of Tipu Sultan. The play takes us to the time of Tipu Sultan and narrates the tragedy of a wise King. It is the tragedy of an Indian Hero though he was conscious about the encroachment of the colonists. The tragedy takes place not due to the English people only but the treachery committed by the Indians is responsible for the fall of Tipu Sultan.

**The Fire and the Rain**

In *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad treats the problem of amoralism in contemporary life. It is a criticism of the Brahmin society on the one hand, while on the other hand, his approach is realistic and existential. He has artistically and beautifully handled the power of myth. The play has a complex framework with a central myth assuming the form of a framework of the story of Arvasu’s betrayal by his brother Paravasu, the chief priest performing a yajna to bring rain to the drought-stricken land. It is a play, which is based on the myth of Yavakri, Indra and Vritra. The eternal conflict of good and evil continues from the period of the *Mahabharata* to the modern contemporary society. The myth of Yavakri is a story of ambition to achieve the universal knowledge directly from the Gods but not from the human gurus, which is unjustified and immature. Knowledge without
experience is dangerous to humanity is the message passed on by Gods to Yavakri and to mankind on the earth.

The contemporary dramatist Girish Karnad has said in *The Fire and the Rain* Brahma, the Lord of all creation extracted the requisite element from the four Vedas. He pulled out the text from the *Rig Veda*, songs from the *Sama Veda*, the art of acting from the *Yajur Veda* and Rasa (aesthetic experience) from the *Atharvana Veda* and combined them into a fifth Veda “Natya Veda” and thus gave birth to the art of drama. He then handed it over to his son, Lord Indra, the supreme God of Gods. But Indra, Lord of Gods, realized that Gods were unfit to the new form and passed it on to the human preceptor Bharata who organized a troupe with his hundred sons and twenty-five Apsaras. Narada and others were engaged as musicians, Gods and demons became the spectators; Nandi and Anukrati were the commentators.

Vishakha and Nittilai in the drama belong to two different socio-cultural backgrounds in *The Fire and the Rain*. Vishakha is the wife of Paravasu, a Brahmin, and daughter-in-law of Raibhya, a learned ascetic whereas Nittilai hails from a tribal community. Despite cultural polarities, both experience similar socio-psychological taboos and restrictions and feel bounded. For Nittilai, subjection is more intense—apart from patriarchy her inferior position in social hierarchy deteriorates her standing in the society.

Although the play is based on C. Rajgopalachari’s prose retelling of the *Mahabharata* especially the myth of Yavakri in Vana Parva. Karnad writes, “For the next thirty-seven years, I struggled with it, trying to fit all the ramifications of
the myth within some sort of manageable shape.” (1998: preface) Karnad constructs a story of passion, loss, and sacrifice in the contexts of Vedic rituals, spiritual discipline, social and ethical differences between human agents, and interrelated forms of performance still close to their moments of origin, yet the treatment of feminine world, images of women, their subjection and changing status is not less remarkable. Vishakha, an archetypal character and Nittilai, Karnad’s invention symbolize the subalternity of women that has been highlighted by the playwright exposing the ugliness in our society restricting their place and creativity in human society.

“In The Fire and the Rain, Girish Karnad deals with the universal theme of ‘love’, ‘jealousy’ and ‘isolation’. He tries to interpret the past in terms of the present and vice versa, by exploring the universality of some basic human emotions and sentiments. Like his other plays, The Fire and the Rain, has the influence of folk tales and different traditions. Karnad employs mythical, historical and folk theme as a frame of this play as well, and through this he conveys a message to the modern-day world.” (Trivedi 2009: 5)

The story revolves around two sages - Bharadwaja and Raibhya and their sons. Both were priests gifted with profound spiritual supremacy but only Raibhya was chosen as a Royal Priest. Raibhya has two sons. Paravasu was the eldest son. Paravasu had forsaken all worldly pursuit, his wife (Vishakha) and his brother (Arvasu) for the fire sacrifice which he had performed for seven long years. The fire sacrifice was to appease the gods and get rain for the drought-ridden land. Paravasu was very confident but was a bit ambitious. He officiated as the chief
priest for the sacrifice. This humiliated his father Raibhya. Vishakha, his wife, noticed the humiliation felt by her father-in-law (Raibhya). Paravasu's dignified position as a Chief Priest of the sacrifice created dispute and hatred within his own family, from his father Raibhya to his cousin Yavakri. Yavakri was Paravasu's cousin as well as his opponent. He was the son of Bharadwaj. He had the grievance against the world that his father did not receive the respect and appreciation which was his due. He returned home after ten years of meditation, armed with the boon of eternal knowledge bestowed upon him by the Lord Indra. Ten years of rigorous penance. And still lord Indra would not oblige. Finally, Yavakri stood in the middle of the circle of fire and stated offering his limbs to the fire… and that's when the god appeared, restored him the limbs, and granted him the boon… Yavakri wanted to take revenge at any cost. He made a penance and gained knowledge as the boon from Lord Indra. On the other hand, Paravasu's younger brother — Arvasu, was in love with a tribal girl called Nittalia. He wanted to challenge his upper caste Brahmin norms and marry her. But his Brahmin background did not allow him to get away from the manipulations of his brother Paravashu, his cousin Yavakri, and his father Raibhya. He was forced to choose between love and duty. Arvasu demonstrated humanity at large in the final act of the play. He learnt forgiveness and compassion at the hands of Nittalia. He tells Lord Indra that:

Lord I have been an ignorant fool all my life… But after what I have been through, I am wiser. I can now stop the tragedy from repeating itself. I can provide the missing sense to our lives… (41)
In *The Fire and the Rain* Girish Karnad gives some focus to the betrayal of a brother against another. “The story of Arvasu and Paravasu fascinated me as unusual variant of this Indian obsession with fratricide...I cannot remember, when I decided to incorporate the Indra-Vitra legend in my plot, but years later, while rereading the original version, I was astonished to find that right at the beginning of the tale of Yavakri, Lomasha mentions that the whole story took place on the banks of a river in which Indra had bathed to cleanse himself of the sins of killing Vitra! One of the fascinating aspects of dealing with the myths is their self reflexivity.” (1998: 68-69)

In *The Fire and the Rain*, Paravasu fails to realize his responsibility as a husband. Just for a year, he satisfies the desire of his wife Vishakha and then leaves her secluded to her fate for seven long years. The girl is completely ruined by an elderly man, her own father-in-law Raibhya, and a young man, her past lover, Yavakri from whom she seeks comfort and solace. She is subjected to humiliation and insults. Raibhya uses derogatory words, calling her ‘a buffalo that’s been rolling in mud. (19) He rebukes her in front of Arvasu, “You whore – you roving whore! I could reduce you to ashes – turn you into a fistful of dust – with a simple curse.” (29) Thus Vishakha’s dream of home and family life is trashed. Her desire, like that of any other woman in Indian context, to have significant role and place in the family organization is never realized but is rewarded with death penalty. Against all her expectations she “experiences denial of a meaningful role within the family, and hence in the public domain.” (Jayalakshmi 2006: 26)

The Myth behind *The Fire and the Rain*
*The Fire and the Rain* is based on a little known myth from the *Mahabharata*. *The Fire and the Rain* is originally written in Kannada, titled *Agni Mattu Male*. It was first staged in Minneapolis, USA in 1994. Agni is the Sanskrit word for fire. And being a Sanskrit word, it carries, even when used in Kannada, connotation of holiness, of ritual status, of ceremony, which the Kannada word for fire does not possess. Agni is what burns in sacrificial altars acts as a witness at weddings, and is lit as cremations. It is also the name of god of fire.

**Action in *The Fire and the Rain***

The action of the play revolves around a seven year fire sacrifices intended to persuade the god of rain, Indra to send rain. The sacrifice is to end the devastating curse of famine. The play is full of unremitting tensions like betrayal, assassination and reduction enmeshing the characters who live out their destinies in the mayhem of elementary obsession with its philosophical underpining. The play illuminates, as stated earlier, the universal theme of 'love', 'jealousy; and 'loneliness' as it sweeps towards an unexpected denouement. It begins with the prologue when the king says, "A fire sacrifice is nearing completion. We have conducted it without a blemish for nearly seven years. Once it rains, we can have as many plays as we like." (17) As a sacrifices approaches completion, demon gathers in the shadows. The danger of disruption increases. The prologue explains the purpose of Yagna (Sacrifice) and the dilemma of Arvasu.
Karnad has presented Paravasu as a symbol of supreme egotism, who is trying through the fire sacrifice not to seek blessings from Indra but to equal him. He regards Yavakri beneath contempt. He says to Vishakha:

One can practice austerities like your fool, Yavakri, to coerce the gods to bend to one’s will. Stand in a circle of fire. Torture oneself. So many techniques, all equally crass to make the gods appear. And when they give in what do you do? Extend the begging bowl: ‘Give us rains. Cattle. Sons. Wealth. As though one defined human beings by their begging – I despise it. I went because the fire sacrifice is a formal rite. Structured. It involves no emotional acrobatics from the participants. The process itself will bring Indra to me. That’s why when the moment comes, I shall confront Indra in silence. As an equal. For tat it is essential that on shed all human weakness. Be alone. Absolutely on one’s own to face that moment. Become a diamond. Un scratchable.’

(31-32)

A Drama within Drama

The troupe of actors decided to stage Indra-Vitra legend. The scene between Indra and Paravasu, Vishwarupa and Arvasu and Vitra and Brahma Rakshasa was woven skillfully in the play. Vishwarupa was struck from behind by Indra’s thunderbolt while entering Indra’s fire sacrifice. Paravasu immediately jumped to his feet when he saw the enactment and rebuked Indra for his treachery. Vitra (played by Arvasu) was restless, unmanageable and runs for Indra’s life. Everybody along with the actor manager thought that the mask of Vitra worn by
Arvasu has come alive. There was stampede as the crowd started rushing here and there. Paravasu was called by the chief priest to get the situation under control. Paravasu carried on with the fire sacrifice and finally went up in flames. Arvasu stood there watching everything. Paravasu enters the fire to redeem for his sin and showed a step towards renunciation. The final scarifies of Paravasu made Indra appear and asked Arvasu for the boon. *The Fire and the Rain* begins at the place where the fire sacrifice was being held and the play ends at the same place.

A lesser known puranic or mythic story gets a brighter and benevolent treatment in the hands of Girish Karnad. Petty squabbles are turned into significant episodes for uplifting human soul. Frozen or fossilized symbols come alive in the narrative and action. Girish Karnad has effectively employed all the dramatic devices to give the story a productive meaning.

The chapter on Arvasu and Nitilia has a special significance in the play because the play begins with them and ends with them. They sound more like folktale characters. And this lends a helping hand to the readers and audiences not familiar with the story to follow this complex mythical story. Karnad uses them as storytellers, chorus, commentators and, above all, as our contract with the protagonist. As in other plays of his, Karnad uses myth to weave it into a modern play by including significant issues like love and hatred, faith and deceit, power and lust and unethical practices. Karnad has used mythology as a source to explore the hidden meaning of the complex life, a modern man and woman is forced to face.
Hayavadana

The story of Hayavadana comes partly from Thomas Mann’s story titled ‘Transported Heads’ which in turn is based on one of the versions of the story in Vetal Panchavimshati. However, Karnad's play poses a different problem, that of human identity in a world of tangled relationship. Karnad uses the conventions and motifs of folk tales and folk theatre – masks, curtains, dolls, the story within story - to create a bizarre world. Hayavadana means 'the one with the horse's head', is named after horse-headed man, who wants to shed the horse's head and become human. As the tale goes:

A young woman is travelling with her insecure and jealous husband and his rather attractive friend. The husband, suspecting his wife's loyalties, goes to a temple of Goddess Kali and beheads himself. The friend finds the body and, terrified that he will be accused of having murdered the man for the sake of his wife, in turn beheads himself. When the woman, afraid of the scandal that is bound to follow, prepares to kill herself too, the goddess takes pity and comes to her aid. The woman has only to rejoin the heads to the bodies and the goddess will bring them back to life. The woman follows the instructions; the men come back to life - except that in her confusion she has mixed up the heads. The story ends with the question: who is now the real husband, the one with the husband's head or the one with his body? The answer given in the Kathasaritsagara is: since the head represents the man, the person with the husband’s head is the husband.

Mann brings his relentless logic to bear upon this solution. If the head is the determining limb, then the body should change to fit the head. At the end of Mann’s version, the bodies have changed again and adjusted to the heads so perfectly that the men are physically exactly as they were at the beginning. We
are back to square one; the problem remains unsolved. The play succeeds in
dramatizing the situation successfully though it does not point to any clear
answers. It confronts the dualities and contradictions, without suggesting the
possibility of any easy reconciliation. The symbolic core of Hayavadana
comprises the philosophic crisis of estrangement between mind and body.
Girish Karnad’s Hayavadana, performed under the title of ‘The Jumbled Heads’
at the Michigan State University in East Lansing, is considered a valuable
addition to the existing body of Indo-English drama. In this play, Karnad
combines the western techniques with Indian folk psyche, socio-cultural and
political reality. The entire play is cast in the form of traditional Indian folk drama,
which took several features of ancient Sanskrit drama. Karnad in Hayavadana
strikes a significant note by exploring the dramatic potential of the ancient Indian
myths, legends and folk traditions. The play, in other words, stands as an
outstanding example for a play in which the playwright has used the folk form
without diluting the contemporary appeal. One of the striking features of
Hayavadana is the introduction of the device of making inanimate objects
animate. This play portrays the lack of responsibility of Hayavadana’s parents.
He is born with a horse’s head as his mother married a stallion, a cursed
Gandharva. The mother doesn’t care about her son who is striving to become
complete through various religious penances and social services. The male
protagonist Devadatta also fails to realize his responsibility as a husband as he
leaves his newly wedded young bride Padmini in the thick forest with his friend
Kapila on their way to Ujjain fare. He goes to the Kali temple and beheads
himself, failing to understand the feeling of his beloved whom he had strove hard to marry. The female protagonist Padmini also lacks the responsibility of a beloved mother. After the death of her husband and his friend, she performs sati ignoring her son. Thus Padmini, like Hayavadana’s mother, leaves her son to the vagaries of fortune in an irresponsible manner. Padmini’s son and Hayavadana who do not have a choice in the matter are left to suffer as a result of the parents’ irresponsible act.

Padmini and Kapila define subalternity in *Hayavadana*. Padmini is unlike of Rani of *Naga-Mandala*. She belongs to a family of leading merchant of Pavana Veethi of Dharampura. Though, in the play she enjoys commanding position, she is close to the spirit of Cleopatra of Shakespeare, succumbs to Dionysian tendency and indulges into cuckoldry. Many similarities can be traced in the structure of *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*. Both the plays are centred on the conflict in the mind of a female subject who is so entangled in the patriarchal discourses of chastity and duty that she is unable to make a choice between the husband and the ideal lover.

What begins with a simple love triangle ends in a comedic and confusing twist of fate in Karnad's *Hayavadana*. Devadatta and his beautiful wife Padmini find themselves traveling with their faithful friend Kapila. The suspicious husband, convinced of his wife’s love for Kapila, beheads himself. The distraught friend, upon learning of Devadatta’s deed, takes his own head as well. Left alone, the pregnant Padmini dares the dark evening in the forest and to her horror stumbles over the bodies and exclaimed, “How selfish you are – how unkind?” (31) She
wails and in order to escape blame decides to offer her head too. The Goddess intervenes and shows her a way out, however, Padmini attaches Devdatta’s head to Kapila’s body. The astound Goddess, seeing Kapila’s head on Devdatta’s body and that of Devdatta’s on Kapila’s body, says, “My dear daughter, there should be a limit even to honesty.” (33) The real dilemma is who should be considered the real husband of Padmini after this transmutation of head and body. Devdatta puts forth his case by saying, “The head is the sign of man.” (37) They seek an advice from a sage and decides to abode by it. The sage answers that mind is what a man is. Hearing it, Padmini says to Devdatta, “Let’s go quickly where the earth is soft and the green grass plays the swing …What else canopy do I need?” (42) She considers this new combination – a “fabulous body – fabulous brain – fabulous Devdatta.” (42) But Devdatta’s present body lacks in the former vigour. Disappointed Padmini says, “Your body had that strong smell before.” (44) After some time Devdatta exclaims, “It was fun the first few days… All that muscle and strength. I have the family tradition to maintain – the daily reading, writing and study.” (44) As the play advances, the complex situation gets more complicated. Padmini wails, “It’s almost my autobiography… Kapila, Devdatta! Kapila with Devdatta’s body! Devdatta with Kapila’s body! Four men in one life time.” (56)

This way, “the theme of the play is a complex one. Karnad good-humouredly yet critically manipulates the very concepts of the rational and the physical. The multiplicity of characters and their individual psychic circles playing into each other build up a complex pattern of human relationships. And by projecting these
human sympathies against a gradually intensifying clash of personalities.” (Joshipura 2009: 199)

Thus, Hayavadana is situated in the interstices of an invigorating legacy of traditional Indian folk and modern Western theatre. According to Khatri and Arora:

Girish Karnad cleverly binds an 11th century Indian fable with Thomas Mann’s 20th century The Transposed Heads. At the heart of the story is a confusing philosophical question— if two heads switch bodies, just who becomes who? However, Hayavadana is layered with more. A love triangle, a snide goddess, a pair of living dolls, a man with a horse’s head—this American premiere is a truly unique theatrical experience. Hayavadana is a riddling philosophical (not just psychological) thriller, in the truest vein of la comédie noire. The idea of the play Hayavadana started crystallizing in his head right in the middle of an argument with B. V. Karanth (who ultimately produced the play) about the meaning of masks in Indian theatre and theatre’s relationship to music. (2008: 121)

**Wedding Album**

Wedding Album (2009) is an exceptional play of Karnad because he uses neither myth nor history as the base of this play. The truth which the playwright wants to highlight is, “The Indian wedding is expected to bring the clan together in a display of solidarity and mutual concern. Yet it is known to light the fuse of anxieties and resentments long buries within the bosoms of the family.” (Wedding Album cover page II) Karnad generally writes the plays based either on mythological characters or historical characters. In Wedding Album he has taken
the characters from the contemporary life. In it he gathers some vignettes from a
typical Indian arranged marriage. Karnad explores a traditional Indian wedding
with a view to exposing the strained relations which come to the fore on the
occasion of a wedding when even the farthest relatives come together to
celebrate the wedding. In addition to this, Karnad uses the occasion to explore
several contemporary issues related to relationships and society. A delightfully
poignant tale of love and longing in the form of *Wedding Album*, Girish Karnad
explores the traditional Indian wedding in a globalized, technologically advanced
India. On the surface it is a familiar picture- a joyful event when members of the
clan come together to celebrate and reaffirm loyalties, but behind the picture
perfect smiles, simmer long suppressed suspicions, jealousies, frustrations and
aggression hidden.
The play deals with a normal urban middle-class family: a daughter who lives
abroad with her professional husband, a brother who is a software designer, a
younger daughter happy enough to marry a suitable boy from the U. S. she has
never met, and then, of course, there is the doting mother and the loyal cook.
Utkarsh Mazumdar plays the role of Appa. Each snapshot of family, which is
educated, liberal, and modern, shows its members frozen in a projection of
respectability, but each figure has a double image, with the shadow of a hidden
life. It is a hilarious spectacle. And hopefully, both revealing and moving. The
play deals with the wedding of Vidula and Ashwin Panje mainly but at the same
time it comments on many characters and many other issues. Being an
experimental writer, Karnad, while writing this play has not narrated the incidents
in a chronological manner, as scene one and scene five take place about three years after the rest of the play and the play is not divided into Acts but only in Scenes and there are nine scenes in the play. As the play is based on contemporary characters and theme we find Karnad making his characters the use of cell-phones, video-shooting, the internet and other modern means of communication. This happens first time in the plays of Karnad. The play opens with Vidula, an extremely self-conscious twenty years old lady busy in self introduction which is being shoot by her brother Rohit and it is to be sent to the U.S. to her fiancé’ Ashwin Panje. From her self-introduction we come to know that she is B.A. in Geography and she doesn’t play more attention to her looks and her C.Q. (Cooking Quotient) is not great either. She also talks about the other members of her family and Karnad has become successful in using the scene as scene of exposition. This is the recording done by Rohit before 3 years which he is showing to Pratibha Khan who is concerned with tele-serials and seeking theme for her new tele-serial. For Pratibha Khan a marriage taking place just by exchanging video-tapes, SMS and talks on phones is all out dated.

The second scene opens with the living room of Nadkarni family. The scene is about the preparations of the marriage ceremony which is not fixed yet. Vidula is to get married with Ashwin Panje who is working at the U.S. and they have not met each other personally yet. He is to come to India after some days and if both of them like each other while seeing each other in a couple of arranged meetings, then the marriage is to take place and for the marriage the saris are being purchased. Hema, the elder sister of Vidula is married and she stays in
Australia with her husband and her son. However now she has come to India for the marriage of Vidula. We find her all the time thinking of her husband and her son. She compares her conditions with her Ma. Vivan, a son of Kaikini Chandrika, who lives in the neighborhood of Nadkarni is a complex character created by Karnad in the play. The boy borrows books from the Nadkarni family and returns them. He has borrowed Madame Bovary for reading. When Hema says that he should not read these types of books he reacts that he has even read Lady Chatterley’s Lover. One cannot understand that a boy of thirteen or of fourteen can have sexual desire for a woman of his mother’s age. “While analyzing Freud’s theory of sexuality it is stated by David Stafford – Clark that “Sexual life does not begin only at puberty – but starts with plain manifestations soon after birth.”” (Kumar 1993: 56)

Karnad has touched many corners of human life in the same scene Vidula is in the habit of visiting Internet café and we find her hurrying for that. In the same scene there is a phone call from Isabel a Catholic Christian lady and Rohit, Vidula’s brother is in love with her. We find Radhabai and Mother quarreling on some trivial issue.

The third scene of the play is about Rohit and the guests who have come with the marriage proposal to him. Mohan Hattagadi and Mira Hattangadi have suggested Rohit as the proposed husband for Tapasya the daughter of Gopal Sirur and Vatsala Sirur. It was Mohan who used to visit Rohit regularly and requested him to give consent to the marriage. Now Sirurs and Hattangadis have come with the proposal of Tapasya who has a first class in MA in Sociology and
according to Gopal Sirur she is a modern girl – educated and sensitive. The scene is very comic as we know that as Rohit is in love with Isabel and he is not interested in the proposal. But later on we see that Rohit is married to Tapasya and not to Isabel. The scene is used by Karnad to comment on Indian culture in a sharper manner. Scene five is continuation of the scene first and we find Rohit and Pratibha Khan discussing Radhabai’s daughter’s case in relation to the theme of their tele – serial. They discuss about the meeting in between Radhabai and her insane daughter Yamuna. While discussing the tele – serial they talk about their private life. Rohit is married to Tapasya and Isabel has joined Pratibha Khan’s office. Scene six takes us to the Internet Cafe where we find Vidula has come for Internet Game. The scene is most symbolic in the play. Vidula visits a male voice on the equipment of the café and he is named as Ananga, the bodiless. Later we find Vidula introducing herself as Radhabai’s daughter Yamuna. She invites the voice and requests him to come and buy her. It is followed by the dialogues which are concerned with the sexual union of them. When Vidula is busy with the Internet two Hindu Youths who are worried about the Indian culture arrive there and they threaten to the attendant of the Internet Café. Karnad is more sarcastic in the scene and he criticizes the so called Indian culture lovers.

In this play Karnad comments on the modern changed approach of youngsters towards marriage.

“Rohit: *We live in a modern world. A divorce is okay. It’s no shame.*” (22)
Karnad comments on the young generation and their approach to their parents here. The meeting in between Ashwin Panje and Vidula is shown in the Scene Eight. Ashwin talks about his expectations from Vidula. The scene reflects the spiritual crisis through which the young generation working in abroad is passing through, and how they are boiling inside like a volcano. The play comments on the approaches of the old generation and young generation towards the marriage ceremony. For the elders the marriage is a ceremony and it is to be celebrated whereas for youngsters it is but all fuss and a tamasha and marriage is like a bond to be signed in the Registrar’s office. The play ends with Radhabai seeing her daughter Yamuna on the television and we find Radhabai hiding herself from Yamuna. Radhabai is the symbol of the persons hiding themselves and running away from the reality. Karnad has become successful in raising certain questions in the mind of the audience about the Indian culture which is changing fast. But he has also suggested that Hinduism and knowing oneself will solve the problems of the young generation.

Karnad’s deep-rooted humanism allowed him to give voice to the silenced majority through his plays. The plays of Karnad abound with subalterns especially women and lower caste people subjected since ancient time by patriarchy or upper hierarchy of the society. Karnad has not only exposed their subalternity but also fused energy in their lives so that they can speak; shifted their position from the ‘margin’ to the ‘centre’. Devayani, Sharmishtha and Chitralekha in Yayati, Kapila and Padmini in Hayavadana, Rani and Kurudavva in Naga-Mandala, lower caste people in Tale-Danda, tribals, Nitilai and Vishakha in The Fire and the Rain Mahout in Bali: The Sacrifice, Chandrawati in Flowers, Malini in Broken Images and Rahabai in Wedding Album display subalternity of
the class they represent. Karnad as a cultural administrator goes beyond this and attempts to provide them their due space and defy the traditional hierarchies prevalent in Indian society. His plays are the medium where through he raises socio-political and cultural problems prevalent in Indian society and calls upon us to discuss and evolve a common consensus rather than provide a readymade answer to the problem. Karnad’s stand on morality can be seen in the light of Nietzsche’s views who consider morality as a weapon of the weak to get even with the strong. The weak label the strong as “evil” and, in turn, themselves as “good”, and they uphold their tendencies as virtues but condemn those of their opponents as vices, creating an arbitrary system of morality to protect their interests. Nietzsche does not see any divine basis of morality but, of course, morality forms an important discourse in the ideological processes to suppress certain tendencies supposed to be dangerous to the state and society.

Puru in *Yayati*, Appanna in *Naga Mandala*, Paravasu in *The Fire and the Rain*, Devadatta in *Hayavadana*—all fail as husbands. The Indians consider man to be the head of the family and responsible for the welfare of all. If the chief in the family shirks the responsibility, then the whole family has to suffer. If men fail to perform their duty women become the victims ultimately.

**Bali: The Sacrifice**

The play was first brought out into Kannada in 1980 by the name of *Hittina Hunja*, but was not translated in English at that time. The source of the play is an ancient Kannada epic, *Yashodhara Charite*, which itself draws on several other sources. The play is one that has multiple ideological issues. Though based on an ancient Kannada epic, the story, characters and incidents are often overshadowed by overt ideological concerns as relevant today as they were.
many centuries ago. The play is a treatise on the viability of violence and non-violence in the present scenario. The plot of Bali: The Sacrifice comprises of four characters, the Queen, the King, the Queen-Mother and the Mahout. The Queen is a Jain and she marries a Hindu King. Out of love for his spouse, the King converts into Jainism but is unable to come to terms with the new faith. Jainism dictates non-violence and Hinduism believes in the practice of sacrifice or Bali, which means violence. The Queen-Mother is a devout Hindu who believes in sacrifices. The King vacillates from one end to the other, from Hinduism to Jainism, from the Queen-Mother to his wife but is unable to come to terms with any faith. In the climactic event of the play, the Queen enchanted by the beautiful voice of a low caste ugly, Mahout, the Elephant-Keeper, mates with him. Soon after the incident it comes to the knowledge of the King and the Queen-Mother. Being a Jain, the King cannot indulge into violence by killing the Mahout and avenging the wrong of desecrating the sanctity of marital bond. The question which haunts the King and the Queen-Mother is how to placate the gods and goddesses for this act of sin. Finally the Queen-Mother tells the King that to placate for the sin committed, a sacrifice has to be made. The Queen does not want to indulge in this mock sacrifice but is forced to by the King. Since no real blood can be shed, a dough-cock is decided to be sacrificed, which suddenly comes alive. The sacrifice of the dough cock turns into the sacrifice of the Queen herself and she dies. The question posed is whether intended violence is as offensive as real violence, and whether the thought of mock-sacrifice is equivalent to actual sacrifice.
Karnad’s female seems to have marked an apogee in Bali. For the first time the emboldened female desires seem to cut through the patriarchal order unabashed and unashamed. In Bali, femininity has become bold, assertive and blatantly selfish. The female here, voiced through the character of the Queen, has laid bare the inner recesses of her heart, and more importantly of her body, her need for flesh, her desire for sexual gratification for its own sake and not as conscious attempts to produce children, have come to the fore. The sexual ferocity and vibrancy of the audacious female is referred to in the play very strongly. While Rani in *Naga-Mandala* and Padmini in *Hayavadana* indulge in an extra-marital relationship, they do not express their desires openly. By supernatural aid, both these women are able to satiate their desires. But the Queen in *Bali* is unembarrassed, bold and resolute. She has the cheek to leave the King lying next to her and slip away from the palace, past the gardens, and make her way to a ruined temple to mate with an Elephant-keeper, a man from a low-class/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 describes her love-making to her husband as natural, spontaneous and “beautiful”. In *Bali*, it appears as though the woman has emboldened enough to openly express her desire. At the same time, she knows how to preserve her identity and breaks the century’s long patriarchal custom to convert into her husband’s religion. Her power can be acknowledged from the fact that she makes her husband convert into her religion, thus thrashing the norms of patriarchy.
Karnad has admirers and detractors in equal number, indicating there’s no way he can be ignored. But his admirers contend this and say that is precisely what makes his plays always contemporary and it is his art and craft which are more noteworthy, that his is the work of poetry in dramatic action.

As a concluding remark, one can say that Karnad’s theatre does not register the memory of colonialism or India’s freedom struggle, his ideas, nonetheless, regarding the ‘Indian Theatre’ put forward “some trenchant arguments with reference to the disabling impact of colonial acculturation on Indian creativity after independence.” (Tripathi 2004:11) Karnad’s plays create moments of anxiety, terror, pondering and revelation from real life situation.

**REFERENCE**


