CHAPTER – III

DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES IN KARNAD
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Of all genres in Indian writing in English, drama until 1970s had been a very weak form. With the arrival of Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar on the dramatic scene and their introduction and experimentation of contemporary and traditional themes drama attains a meaningful existence. While Badal Sircar and Tendulkar write in their mother tongues (Bengali and Marathi) Girish Karnad is a bilingual who writes his plays in Kannada and later translates or transcreates them in English. Karnad operates in a complex framework of myth, folklore and history effecting a perfect synthesis of eastern and western dramaturgy.

For Karnad, a play is a company natak. As a child he was exposed to two kinds of drama the company natak plays and the Yakshagana performances and the technical aspects of these plays have gone into the making of his plays. His later acquaintance with Western theatre especially those of Brecht, Camus and Sartre have had influence on his dramatic art. His first play Yayati for instance as U.R. Ananthamurthy comments, “Yayati [is] a self consciously existentialist
drama on the theme of responsibility. And those of us writings in the Kannada ‘Navya’ movement of the time can still remember the excitement when we first read it in 1961. His interpretation of the familiar old myth on the exchange of ages between father and son baffled and angered many conventional critics but, for others, who were trying to root their contemporary concerns in old myths, Karnad’s unheroic hero, Puru, was a great experience.¹

In the original myth Yayati realizes the unquenchable nature of desire whereas in Karnad’s play he recognizes the horror of his own life and takes moral responsibility for his actions. Hence the emphasis shifts from intellectual awareness to moral and even spiritual awakening. Structurally Yayati is Karnad’s powerful play offering adequate scope for character realization. The play also follows the three Aristotelian unities. The mythic content also fits into Western format in the mould of Anouilh, Sartre, O’Neill and the Greeks. The presence of Sutradhara appears to be accidental and he functions in the manner of Greek chorus by rendering prologue throwing light on the main concerns of the play. The technique of recapitulative narration is another interesting feature of his play which reappears again in The Fire and the Rain.

Tughlaq the most widely performed of all his plays can be enjoyed and appreciated at various levels. U.R. Ananthamurthy points out that the play has an interesting story, an intricate plot with scope for spectacle and uses dramatic

conventions like the comic pairs Aziz and Aazem (the Akara and Makara of Natak performance), to which theatre audiences readily respond. The play moreover has an elusive haunting quality which it derives from the character of Tughlaq who has been realized in great psychological depth. The symbolism of the game of chess, the leitmotif of prayer, the theme of disguise, Karnad frankly admits that the play takes its the parallel story of Aziz who reflects one side of Tughlaq's personality and succeeds precisely because he lacks the duality of this emperor's nature—all invite critical analysis form from the Parsi theatre because he was fed up with Anouilh and Sartre. This involves a mechanical succession of alternating deep and shallow scenes, the deep scenes being played on the stage showing the interiors and being occupied by the main characters and the shallow scenes are played in the foreground of the stage with a painted curtain usually depicting a street reserved for the lower class characters. As Karnad revealed, "this spatial division was ideal to show the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, between the mysterious chambers of power politics and the open public areas of those affected by it".

K.S. Ramamurthy makes a pertinent remark on the play. "Tughlaq is not only good literature but also good theatre, a play in which the intellectual, symbolic-allegoric levels harmonize with the levels of external dramatic action with a proper balancing of theatrical and literary concomitants. More than

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1 Karnad, Girish. "Introduction", Three Plays OUP; 1994. p.8
everything else, it is essentially modern, certainly more modern than most other Indian plays written in English".

_Hayavadana_ derives its plot from Thomas Mann's *Transposed Heads* which in turn has its sources in the ancient Sanskrit collection of stories _Kathasarithsagara_. The Sanskrit tale poses a moral riddle whereas Mann uses it to question the logic that holds the head superior to the body. Karnad develops his argument in the way Mann does to explore the theme of identity in a world of tangled relationships. The play intends to demystify traditional values and concepts and presents multiple points of view that generate a dialogue on the cardinal tenets of life. This is further developed by the mixing of three levels of experience, the divine, human and animal.

_Hayavadana_ makes use of various theatre traditions and hence it can be called "total theatre". It also makes use of _desi_ and _margi_ traditions although the emphasis is on the folk idiom. The play is a synthesis of classical Sanskrit drama and the Kannada _Yakshagana_. What adds to the effect of the play is the employment of masks and painted curtains by distancing the audience and drawing our focus on the main issue of the play. _Hayavadana_ is a landmark at the performance level and a model which underscores the dramatic potential of our native traditions and folk arts and establishes what is essentially an Indian

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1 Ramamurthy, K.S. "Some Aspects of Indian Drama in English with special reference to Tughlaq". *Littcritt*. 1(1979) p.22
aesthetics. P. Dhanvel makes an important observation on the play and says that “the play operates within several overlapping frames, which increases the dramatic allure of the play”\(^1\). Past and present, fiction and reality have been brought together with the help of the subplot which constitutes a link between dramatic action and thematic scheme.

*Anjumallige* and *Hittina Hunja* are not very successful plays on the stage. *Anjumallige* is the only play which is set outside India. *Anjumallige* and his most recent play *Wedding Album* remain outside his usual thematic preoccupations. *Anjumallige* is the only naturalistic play which has two equally important themes — the tragic incestuous love of a woman for her brother and émigré experiences of Indians in England. One must take note of the insights that the play offers despite its failure on stage. *Hittina Hunja* derives its story from Janna’s *Yashodhara Charite* which is redolent of religious tensions and debates on the dynamics of sex. The play seems to suggest that intended violence is no less offensive than the actual one; and adultery, committed in mind is equal to actual adultery.

*Naga-Mandala* abounds with rich tradition of folk theatre and exploits the device of the frame story. The form retains the oral tradition from which the story is taken. There are two Kannada oral folk tales which Karnad heard from A.K. Ramanujan. The first tale provides a commentary on the nature of the oral tale and

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the second presents the story of Rani, an innocent and simple girl who finds the necessity to create tales to fill the vacuum of her life. It is essentially a woman centric play which deals with the experiences of a woman presenting her growth into selfhood and maturity.

The play uses various, dramatic conventions like the use of the chorus, the song and the dance. "Mr. Sharat Babu points out that "the playwright has modified the traditional Yakshagana to suit his purpose"¹. The man and the story assume the role of the Bhagavatha while the flames form the chorus. The play is designed in the Brechtian mould in order to distance the spectator from the world of emotions and traditional values. Naga-Mandala makes a serious study of the woman's feelings and expectations in contrast with the reality of her situation and in this respect can be compared with Hayavadana. Padmini's quest in Hayavadana ends like all dreams do in death while Ram's search settles in compromise. Naga-Mandala exposes the double standards of Indian patriarchal society in which man despite his deficiencies gets recognized as a significant entity and woman is looked down upon as an object, slave and sometimes a goddess but unfortunately never attains her identity as woman.

Tale-Danda derives its story from the twelfth century Virasaiva movement of religious reform and protest, led by the poet-saint Basavanna which flourished

¹ Babu, Sharath. M, "Myths and Folk Element in Karnad's Tughlaq, Hayavadana and Naga Mandala", diss., Nagarjuna University, 1988
for a time in the city of Kalyan under the patronage of king Bijnala. Basavanna assembled a congregation of poets, mystics, social revolutionaries and philosophers who opposed idolatry, rejected temple worship, upheld the equality of sexes and condemned the caste system. The social movement was a damp squib despite its high ideals ending itself in sheer violence when a Brahmin girl married a low-caste boy. The play is a brilliant analysis of the canker that plagues Hindu society. At the surface level the play reveals the opposition of the Sharanas by the orthodox sections of society but deep down it also exposes the division that exists amidst the Sharanas themselves. The caste system is so deeply rooted in mind that it cannot be annihilated. Speaking about the relevance of the play Karnad says “I wrote Tale-Danda in 1989 when the Mandir and 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.”

Agni Mattu Male is Karnad’s most complex play. It is based on the myth of Yavakrita borrowed from the Mahabharata. Karnad has brought in some new characters like Nittilai, the tribals and the actors who together with Arvasu make up the subplot. Visakha who remains at the periphery in the original myth acquires new dimensions in Karnad’s story. The structure of the play is intricate. The

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narrative is compressed into three sparse acts but is given greater depth and
density by being grafted onto the matrix of ritual and sacrifice. Karnad himself
points out in his notes to the play, “the ‘Yajna’ is favorite metaphor for theatre
activity, both involving human performances, precise gestures, speed and a
carefully worked out action leading to a predetermined denouement. A second
layer of myth, the archetypal story of fratricidal violence between Indra,
Vishwarupa and Vritra, is superimposed on the base narrative”¹. The story of
Arvasu and Nittalai which begins as a subplot develops in significance and
towards the climax takes centre stage.

The play can be analyzed at three different levels. It can be viewed as a tale
on the universal themes of love, jealousy and loneliness. It can be seen as a
criticism of the brahmanical mode of life and established institutions of religion
which lack genuine passion and devotion. It also promotes the setting up of
opposites – the classical and the regional, the elevated and the mundane, the
religious and the secular. K. Chandrashekhar remarks that the play is “in the
nature of a sophisticated speculation on the essence of theatre, dense and thought
provoking, yet perhaps a trifle obvious in its desire to foreground in philosophical
preoccupations”².

¹ Karnad, Girish Collected Plays, Vol.2. Delhi: OUP. 2005
The *Dreams of Tipu Sultan* was written for BBC to commemorate fifty years of Indian Independence. Kamad chose Tipu Sultan because he was the only prince who never compromised with the British from the beginning. The play uses the dreams of the Sultan who recorded them in a diary. The dreams actually form part of the dramatic action.

Kamad’s the most recent play *Wedding Album* is about the real account of a pending marriage in a middle class, Karnataka based Saraswat family – the Nadakarnis. *Wedding Album* works as modern myth, whose condensed logic straddles both the real and the tech-simulated world of today, to help us confront our own mixed-up, amoral, craven, unhappy selves. The narrative thread revolves around the constellation of sexual, conjugal, caste, class and age related behaviours and attitudes of selfishness and sacrifice, chastity and commerce, obedience and authority all integral to modern Hindu marriage.

Kamad paves a new way to Indian English drama by experimenting with folk traditions, Sanskrit drama, Brechtian techniques and strategies of avant-garde. Among the various elements of folk theatre importance is given to *Yakshgana*. It is essentially a dance drama and has a history of three hundred years. It draws its themes from the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha. Its temperament is tandava, full of valour anger and terror. Therefore all *Yakshagana* plays have
battle scenes, even those dealing with marriages. The term literally means “songs of the demi-gods”. The performance is known as *Yakshagana Bayalata*.

Karnad’s relationship with Yakshagana began early in his childhood. He used to watch the performance in the company of his servants. As Karnad grew older *Yakshagana* began to appear quaint, even silly to him. *Hayavadana* makes use of the motifs and conventions of this form to create a new and rich drama giving fresh life to the stagnant Indian drama. The play has all the features of *Yakshagana* with some changes to suit the modern stage, subject matter and audience. The play begins with ritual worship of Ganesha, the Mangalamoorti. The *Bhagavata* or the narrator-commentator takes charge introducing the characters and setting the scene. Some characters use masks. Songs are included to unravel the hidden thoughts of the characters. Mime and dance movement are also used to create a sense of the dramatic. *Hayavadana* does not have a battle but it has a brawl between Kapila and Devadatta. Painted curtains are used to set the scene and to carry the action forward. Karnad employs the conventions of the traditional puppet-show to create a bizarre world where the animate and inanimate come together and multiple view points are presented. The play ends with a valedictory prayer/bharata vakya and a customary bow to the audience.

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All Yakshagana plays make use of the narrator-commentator figure called Bhagavata. The Bhagavata is the director of the play and also the main singer and the success of a Yakshagana play invariably depends on his artistic execution of the play. The term Bhagavata has been interpreted to mean bha-devotee of Bhagavan (God) gh-devoid of garva (pride), va-profound in vak (speech), tat-tattva-nirnaya (sound in judgment). The Bhagavata alone has the privilege to transit between the real and the fictional worlds. He alone sings and speaks to the characters. He comments on their actions and connects events. Bhagavata acts as a detached observer, reporter and commentator and at times sings on behalf of the characters, identifying himself completely with the role. He introduces each character through singing. The Bhagavata in Hayavadana has several points of similarity with his counterpart in Yakshagana. M.K.Naik makes a comprehensive list of the functions of the Bhagavata in the play. The Bhagavata recites the ‘Nandi’ and the benedictory prayer, beginning the play in an auspicious manner. It is traditional in all Yakshagana performances that Ganesha, the remover of obstacles is paid homage. The Bhagavata sings the benedictory verse and then lends a prose rendering which also foreground the concerns of the pay. After executing the initial form of duty Bhagavata again takes change of introducing the characters and actualizing the setting.

In *Hayavadana* the main plot has Dharmapura, ruled by king Dharmasheela as its immediate terrain which has a grand and heroic atmosphere, a prominent feature of *Yakshagana*. The introduction of the lead characters serves to enhance the grandeur. The protagonists are towering figures. Karnad’s strategy is apparently in the vein of *Yakshagana*. The folk as well as the epic traditions in India find sustenance in the polarising of certain stereotypes like Deva/Asura, Nara/Rakshasa and so on. The construction of Deva image instantly demands the positions of the Asura image. The beginning description of Kapila appears to live up to such a stereotype. Kapila though lower in social hierarchy is a hero in his own right.

The use of the Bhagavata to set up the love triangle before the three characters are presented on stage becomes evident in expository passages. “Two friends there were – one mind, one heart. They saw a girl and forgot themselves but they could not understand the song she sang”(Collected Plays vol.1 p.106). The *Bhagavata* narrates important events which are not enacted on stage and provides missing links to ensure that they are no breaks in sequence. The news of the marriage of Devadatta and Padmini is conveyed to the audience in elegant terms. Again one of the crucial moments, the consultation with the rishi and his verdict is revealed to the audience by the *Bhagavata*. Kapila’s exit to the forest and the return of Padmini and Devadatta to Dharmapura too is narrated by him.
The song of the Bhagavata, poetic in content, throws light on the audience and adds to the audiences' appreciation of the play. It is Bhagavata's prerogative to lead the valedictory prayer called the 'antima' in Yakshagana, thanking god for the successful completion of the play and other blessings. The stage presence of the Bhagavata is thus felt throughout the play. The Bhagavata often acts as a device deciding the tempo and pace of the action and remains as the fulcrum of the play around which characters, events and the spatio temporal parameters get actualized.

_Naga-Mandala_ does not follow the traditional _Yakshagana_ in so many ways. The play does not make use of _Bhagavata_ as a formal dramatic category. _The Man and the Story_ taking the form of a woman draped in a sari (the song) clearly function as entities fulfilling the dramatic functions performed by the Bhagavata. They stay on the stage through the course of the play narrating the events and making the actions move forward. The play derives its story from oral folk tales and hence Karnad preserves the let me –tell you a story mode retaining the oral aroma. The man who is a playwright in the play has little function for most of the play. He listens attentively to the story and supplies no details. The only information given by him is the name Appanna. While the man undertakes the directorial duty of the Bhagavata, dramatizing the action narrated by the story, the story satisfies the narrational functions of the Bhagavata, holding every thread of the story together. The story's narration does not change into poetry and tends
to be simple, direct and clear. She begins the tale of Rani, it is she who informs the audience of the transformation of Cobra, it is she who tells of the death of the mongoose and the days of separation endured by Rani and Naga. She also indicates the clear discrepancies between Naga of the night and the Appanna of the day. The only time she speaks directly to the characters is when Rani asks her permission to mix the root and she assents.

Towards the end of the play the man assumes the role of the critic, acts as the mouth piece of reason, assuring the story to take the tale further, tying up loose ends and providing more realistic endings. The result is the provision of two alternative endings- one sad and romantic the other is happy and more realistic. Therefore these complementariness of Bhagavata in Naga-Mandala restrict their involvement to the twin realms of narration and direction without partaking any of the traditionally recognized functions such as singing and acting as an outlet to the inner feelings of characters. Even then the play does not suffer from loss of charm and vibrancy of folk theatre despite its conventional departures.

Every Yakshagana performance begins with a cluster of rites. The ritual invocation of duties is the most important of these ceremonies. Ganesha is the presiding deity of any Yakshagana performance. His favour and blessings are necessary for the success of any performance. In traditional Yakshagana the image of Ganesha is worshipped by the actors in the dressing room. Actors heavily dressed in different roles bow before the image chant mantras, close their eyes,
meditate and walk towards the stage as if possessed. The opening song of the *Bhagavata* is in praise of Ganesha and his mammoth powers. Generally two men hold up a small, brightly embroidered curtain. Either the figure or head of Ganesha is shown from behind the curtain, Ganesha is never impersonated as he is not a character but a deity to be worshipped.

Karnad’s *Hayavadana* carries on this tradition with a little change. A mask of Ganesha is placed on a chair in the centre of the stage. The *Bhagavata* sings the benedictory song in praise of Ganesha with musical accompaniment. The song is followed by a prose rendering which explicates the benedictory verse. Ganesha is extolled in his various ‘avatars’, his omnipotence is highlighted and a humble supplication is offered to ensure the success of the play. In Karnad this ritual invocation is rich in connotation which appropriately suits the thematic and structural unity of the play. In *Hayavadana* Ganesha is not merely a presiding deity but the very embodiment of the ideal that the play attempts to discuss. Ganesha combines within himself the introduction and elucidation of the concept of completeness and incompleteness. The idea of totality of being is best left to the gods, it is an objective which is beyond human limitations.

"An elephant’s head on a human body, a broken tusk and a cracked belly—whichever way you look at him he seems the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness. How indeed can one fathom the mystery that this very Vakratunda–Mahakaya, With his crooked face and distorted body, is the Lord and
Master of Success and Perfection? Could it be that this Image of Purity and Holiness, this Mangalamoorthy, intends to signify by his very appearance that the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend?" (Girish, Karnad, Collected Plays. Vol. 1, p. 106).

According to Jacob George, "The figure of lord Ganesha which represents a perfect blend of three different worlds or experience – the divine, the human and the animal - becomes central within the frame and the sub plot too, since it foreshadows the character to Hayavadana." As Karnad says, "it is unfair to establish a thesis using a god, God being beyond the bounds of human comprehension. The dialectic had to grow out of grosser ground and this demanded the inclusion of the character of Hayavadana." Hence the ritualistic invocation of Ganesha goes beyond the traditional prescription and acquires meaning at several levels.

_Naga-Mandala_ discards the traditional conventions of the recital of benedictory song. _Hayavadana_ preserves the heroic or epic aroma of _Yakshagana_ but _Naga-Mandala_ in that sense is more in the cast of a 'domestic drama'. The play also discards the services of _Bhagavata_ who is replaced by the man and the story. The Ganesha myth which constitutes an important part in the mould of

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Hayavadana does not have any implication for the thematic content of Naga-Mandala. The play is set in the precincts of a temple. An old idol is visible but broken so that the presiding deity cannot be identified. We have a world where human beings do not depend on divine intervention, a world where Kurudavva takes the place of Goddess Kali and where Rani is extolled and glorified as goddess due to her own courage in handling the fearsome Cobra.

The spirit of apology inherent in folk drama is carried even further in Naga-Mandala with a direct and relevant apology. The man is portrayed as a playwright facing severe punishment for boring the audience with his dull and uninteresting plays. Keeping self-preservation as a goal he pledges to abjure playwriting but ironically finds that he ultimately has to stage a play in order to save his life. An apology is therefore offered to the audience.

"So now you know why this play is being done. I have no choice. Bear with me, please. As you can see, it is a matter of life and death for me." (CP, Vol.1, p.252)

Music and theatre have always gone hand in hand in India. Yakshagana being a dance drama depends on the use of song to create the right atmosphere and to illustrate events and narrate action. Bhagavata has the sole privilege to sing being the chief singer. He is expected to possess a strong and flexible voice, sound training in the intricacies of classical music and a profound knowledge of the dynamics of stage performance, to carry out his function effectively. The songs of
The songs in *Hayavadana* have great variety and poetic content and are introduced at important junctures in the play. They verbalize the emotions, strong feelings, intellectual and philosophical musings of characters. They also help in bringing about dramatic communication. In *Naga-Mandala* the musical element is brought in only twice in what looks like a theme resounding song. Karnad carefully uses the verbal, rhythmic and musical patterns of folk theatre. The songs in folk drama usually derives its vitality from everyday images and symbols enmeshed with metaphysical and philosophical depth and meaning. Repetitions of songs emphasize the musical and thematic structure of the play. In the Indian context, music and dance have always been closely associated with theatre and this could be the reason why realism as a phenomenon has never taken root in the native theatrical set up.
Karnad uses mime and stylization in both *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*. Mime can be defined as an art of telling a story, expressing a mood or an emotion or describing an action without resorting to words. Instead the artist uses movements and gestures made with every part or the body which thus becomes an instrument of expression, guided by imagination and knowledge of the way people behave, feel and work. *Hayavadana* makes use of mimetic gestures to present various actions. The duel fought between Devadatta and Kapila is a typical example of the kind of stylization found in *Yakshagana*. The duel is choreographed like a dance. The emotion and passion is evident but the swords do not even touch. *Naga-Mandala* also makes use of mimed and stylized acting. Ram's cooking, Appanna's act of eating and bathing are all converted through mime. Ram mimics emotions of shock, fear and confusion according to story's narration.

Indian classical tradition gives prominence to stage setting and decorations to stimulate reality. The convention of willing suspension of disbelief is inherent in folk theatre. Folk drama uses no scenery and a modicum of stage machinery. The audience is encouraged to visualize the halls of kings, the vastness of plains and mountains of the horrors of corpse-strewn battlefield. Stage setting becomes part of the narrational function of the singer commentator and improvisation can be done according to the area and performance or 'rangasthala'. Hence the creating of space is the reciprocal exchange between the audience and the
performer. The theatre of Karnad closely follows the model offered by folk theatre. As S. Gopalie observes “For Karnad, locale is just a pretext to say what he wants to say. In other words his plays would go well even without the background he describes—though one must admit he describes very little”. Emphasis in Karnad’s plays rarely rests on the outer paraphernalia involved in the making of the plays, it is always on the theme and the action. Probably the reason for this could be greater involvement of the audience and the audience fills the details based on the clues provided by the playwright. The audience is also conversely distanced so as not to get emotionally involved in what is depicted on stage to retain a state of rationality. Therefore, what follows is the simultaneous sharpening of creative and critical faculties of the audience. In doing so we will have a more meaningful theatre. Karnad always seeks to project the inner reality, his concern is with the lives of human beings, the intricate working of their minds and hearts.

Karnad hardly makes reference to costume or stage property but he uses masks in *Hayavadana* and *The Fire and the Rain*. Modern playwrights have extensively made use of masks in various contexts; sometimes the mask complements the theme of the play and most of the time it serves as an integral and necessary device for the theatrical presentation. Playwrights such as Luigi Pirandello, Eugene O’Neill and Bertolt Brecht have experimented with masks in their plays. The masks in their plays help them in representing the visual

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expression of their abstract ideas. Karnad’s theatre approximates total theatre fusing together Eastern and Western theatrical traditions by keeping away from naturalism and realism around which the professional theatres in India revolved. This new theatrical equation laid emphasis on certain folk idioms including the use of masks.

Masks usually work at two levels. One as a metaphor in the text and two as a device on stage. *Hayavadana* is the only play which makes continuous use of the mask and the mask functions as a theatrical device. The motives behind the choice are purely practical. The transposition of heads could not be shown in a more convenient fashion. The two characters appear on stage wearing different masks soon after the transposition of heads. They exchange masks to denote change. This technique of changing masks immediately assumes symbolic connotations in the context of the play. Devadatta and Kapila are introduced wearing masks. Devadatta a pale and Kapila a dark one. This instantly places the two characters in opposition. Devadatta is recognized as a member of highest social hierarchy, the Brahmin class whereas Kapila belongs to the lower stratum and is a shudra. The classification is furthered by showing Devadatta as Satvik-intellectual and representing the thinking side of man. Kapila on the other hand is Rajasik-instinctive, representing bodily prowess. The mask thus facilitates the personification of abstractions. John Styan observes “the concept of character derives from the mask. The mask imposes a tight control of one aspect of reality to
represent it simply. Basically it dispenses with the need to act for antithetical masks juxtaposed upon one stage provide the substance of a situation and the plan for a play".  

In the Western tradition mask represents the public face distinct from the true or private one. In India the mask is just the face writ large. The mask represents archetypes and reflects basic emotional and mental states. It is a standard both convention which adds to the ritual aspects of the play and also helps to develop a sense of ‘objective reality’. Hayavadana successfully conducts and fulfils such functions.

There has been the recurrence of the use of masks in the play-within-the play in The Fire and the Rain. Arvasu who plays the role of Vritra, the demon brother of Indra wears a mask. During the course of the play the mask takes control of Arvasu igniting his innermost feelings of vengeance and anger. The very concept of mask taking control over its wearer dates back the history of the theatre and its origin in ancient ritualistic arts. Hence such a phenomenon suits the serious atmosphere of the Yajna. Roger Caillois, speaking about the function of the mask sates that “for man the basic aim of masking is freedom, the liberation of the true personality. The masks confer the freedom of anonymity and of transformation on the masker”. This exactly works in Arvasu. He is liberated in

the sense that mask frees him of his personality as brother of the chief of priest and it also frees him from his inner feelings of hurt, anger and confusion at fraternal betrayal.

Yakshagana uses only one stage property that is the 'ratha' a small four legged stool on wheels. It can be used to represent a throne, a chariot or a mountain. It is always undecorated. In Hayavadana this is replaced by a chair which is first utilized for the Ganesha worship and later for seating purposes. Yakshagana also admits the use of weapons like bows, arrows, swords and spears. The use of swords in the beheading scenes and the duel perpetuates this Yakshagana tradition. When the characters enter the stage their headgear and feet are concealed from the audience. They dance and tease audience by showing themselves little by little as the curtain is gradually lowered. The same technique is used in Hayavadana at the entrance of Hayavadana and the Goddess Kali. In Yakshagana this practice is in use at the entrance of all major characters. Kamad in Hayavadana has limited it only to these two characters. Hayavadana with his horse’s mask and Kali with her horrifying look stun the audience when revealed, unlike the other characters. In Hayavadana the playwright also makes use of painted curtains to denote the setting. The Kali temple is denoted by a curtain with the picture of the Goddess. The scene of Padmini’s ‘sati’ is shown with the help of a painted curtain with leaping flames behind which Padmini disappears. The use
of masks and curtain do not appear to be an attempt to follow convention or revive
the traditional past but to attain a certain utilitarian purpose.

Indian folk and tribal arts have a puppet theatre stream which often appear
to be more vibrant and dynamic than the "live theatre". The elitist theatre
traditions regard puppetry as crude and prosaic. Karnad’s exposure to native
theatre forms perhaps makes him realizes the malleability of puppetry. Puppets
can be used to demonstrate the intricacies of art and highlight the skill of the
puppeteer or to illustrate narratives. Puppets are of four kinds, string puppets
glove-puppets, rod puppets and shadow puppets. The rich structural texture of
Yakshagana sometimes accommodates puppets. Hayavadana uses dolls which are
distinct from puppets. The schematic functioning of these characters is in the vein
of puppets show. The doll enters in the second act of the play Karnad appears to
have experimented certain subtle strategies of puppetry to strengthen the thematic
and technical design of the play. The dolls act as choric commentators exhibiting
the insider’s point of view. The dolls become effective objects or instruments in
proving that the human point of view is not the ultimate. Haman standards may
not be correct and applicable everywhere. Puppets allow for the presentation of
"different levels of reality"¹ says Julie Taymor. The nature of the puppet itself
involves a "double vision" that acknowledges the "object of the puppet as having

¹Taymor Julie, “working with puppets: Bruce Schwartz, Theodora Skipateres, Julie Jaymor”. Interview
life". Puppets allow the artist to speak with remarkable freedom. Puppets being inanimate present a corrosive portrait of human beings and their actions. The dolls are shown capable of prophetic vision forecasting events to come. Padmini’s sojourn into the forest in Devadatt’s absence is indicated by them. They are able to perceive the core of the matter. They also serve as interpretative commentators on the lullaby of Padmini. The dreams of Padmini are brought to the knowledge of the audience through the hectic conversation of the dolls and their excited curiosity creates an air of suspense. In the initial stages the dolls project the inanimate point of view, but later on they proceed to possess the voice of society. Padmini’s yearnings are presented and a simultaneous critique is made of society’s vulgar and biased stance.

The comic pair the ‘Akara’ and ‘Makara’ is another interesting folk convention. The convention makes use of Burrakatha, an important folk drama of Andhra Pradesh. The pair function as assistants to the lead/narrator-singer. The Akara stands to the right of the lead Singer. He enumerates general concepts of life, topical themes etc. A favourite topic is contemporary politics which offered the performer an opportunity to castigate local leaders and political figures. The Makara stands to the left of the lead singer and narrates incidents about himself, sometimes humorous and elucidates concepts propounded by the Akara.

The Akara and Makara folk convention has been elevated far above the comic effect in Karnad. Aziz plays the Akara while Aazam plays the Makara. Aziz
observes and comments on the ways of the world around him. He is a shrewd politician who analyses the political situation and exploits them for his personal gains. Aazam on the other hand listens to Aziz, accepting his superior intellectual acumen. Aziz and Azam in Tughlaq form vital links in both the thematic and structural design. They act as catalysts in creating the seriousness of the play and also execute situational comedy. Their dialogue is carried out as per the tradition but they assume greater significance through the depiction of their individual personalities Aziz stands for the cunning, devious, ruthless and self centered side of Tughlaq. Aazam stands for the humane side of Tughlaq although without his intelligence. Therefore it is significant to note that Aziz kills Aazam who cannot put up with Aziz's barbarity. These two characters being the two separate parts of Tughlaq represent the better side (Aazam) is always defeated by his arrogant, calculating and barbarous side (Aziz).

We must remember that Karnad uses the subplot and the characters like Aziz and Aazam in order to analyze Tughlaq as a split personality. The comic figures also serve to illustrate, explain and present a critique of the main action. The use of this conventional device in a modern serious play is justified for it serves a vital link in the action of the play. The comic element is an essential aspect of folk theatre. The humour we see in Karnad's plays is modelled in tone and presentational devices on the various folk forms in South India. In folk theatre
humour is always improvised, farcical and situational hinging heavily on the modes of irony and wit.

Too many divergent forms of folk theatre in India either directly or indirectly have their origins in the classical tradition of Sanskrit drama. The rich heritage of Sanskrit theatre has had its indelible impact on the art of the masses. Most theatre forms in India are the modified or simplified versions of the classical Sanskrit drama. The basic structure remained the same although changes were brought in language, mode of presentation according to the theme and tempo of the performance and expectations of the audience.

Karnad acknowledges the significance of Sanskrit drama when he mentions that after the age of Sanskrit theatre, the only other meaningful drama has been produced in the post Independence age. Karnad himself makes an appropriate use of the techniques and devices present everywhere in Sanskrit theatre in several of his plays. Structural components like the ‘nandi’ and bharatavanya and the narrator-figure are apparent in Hayavadana. Other important features like expository devices, the use of subplot and the unified plot are evident in all the plays. Karnad’s The Fire and the Rain rigidly follows Sanskrit plays in structure and convention. Sanskrit drama has a set cast of characters within which improvisation can be made. The most important and necessary character in this set is the Sutraddhara also called the ‘Natyacarya’ or Prayoktr or simply ‘Nayaka’. The Sutraddhara is the director of the play and is responsible for the success of it.
He is versatile and accomplished not only in dramatic theory and practice, music and dance but also in language, rhetoric and the various arts and sciences. This character of classical drama can be seen as the predecessor of the ‘bhagavata’, ‘sarathi’, ‘dooti’ ‘Songadya’, of folk theatre.

Sutradhara facilitates the framing device which is a remarkable feature of Indian drama. The Sutradhara, musicians and chorus form the outer frame within which the play is set. Thus the drama constitutes two worlds—the outer world of reality and the inner world of illusion. The Sutradhara acts as a link between these two separate worlds. Unlike the Bhagavata of Yakshagana who traverses between the two terrains but remains strictly grounded in the world of reality, the Sutradhara belongs to both worlds. In plays where the duties of Sutradhara are limited he may play an important character role whereas in plays where Sutradhara’s presence is needed more frequently he may play a minor role of servant, traveller or messenger. The Sutradhara’s involvement in both worlds serves to bring the world of reality closer to the world of illusion. Though the Sanskrit dramatic form is rigid the role of the Sutradhara is seen to be more flexible. The Bhagavata in Hayavadana though closer to the folk model shows this flexibility of the Sutradhara.

The Sutradhara of classical Sanskrit plays was entrusted with two important duties. The first was to conduct the elaborate rituals of the ‘purvaranga’ and the second was to introduce the play in an agile manner. The Bhagavata in
Hayavadana intones the nandi, which is followed by the offering of the benedictory prayer. This is in keeping with the convention which demanded that the ‘nandi’, the most vital aspect of the ‘purvaranga’ be followed by the recital of benedictory prayers. These preliminary ceremonies are followed by an introduction of the play, the characters and the setting. This is achieved usually through the prologue or foescene which is presented as a conversation between the Sutradhara and a Nata(actor) or Vidusaka (jester). The scene serves to provide the background information required for a proper understanding of the play. Hayavadana betrays a slight modification in procedure. The Bhagavata begins his narration on the protagonists of the main plot. The setting is classical—a prosperous kingdom, Dharmapura ruled by a worthy King Dharmasheela. The protagonists are mighty youths, heroes in their own way personifying the ideals of brain and brawn. The lofty epithets and eloquent poetic language used by Bhagavata suit the classical standards achieved in the description. The polarity in characterization gives a prior hint of dramatic tension.

The prologue as exemplified in Sanskrit drama now begins with unexpected intrusion of the Nata. The dialogue that ensues leaving the former tale half told unfolds a new dramatic situation. It is through such technique that Karnad shows the importance of the subplot in the play. The classical characters are introduced through narration in the classical mode, the character of Hayavadana, half man, half horse oscillating between the boundaries of fiction and reality is introduced.
appropriately with the tantalizing lowering of the half curtain. The story of *Hayavadana* is revealed through the dialogue between the *Bhagavata*, the *Nata* and *Hayavadana*. The forescene, which is an admixture of humour, philosophical speculation and dramatic foregrounding easily appeals to the audience and warms them to the action. The *Bhagavata* introduces the site of the main action that causes all the confusion by advising *Hayavadana* to seek a solution to his problem. The classical ambience is retained by the story of the *Gandharva* and the references to *rishis*, *punyasthalas*, and *patirvatas*. The Bhagavata’s final words to *Hayavadana* in the scene, “May you become successful in your search for completeness” (CP, Vol.1, p.116) announces the theme of the play and foreshadows Hayavadana’s own outcome. The *Bhagavata* also makes use of the opportunity to make passing references to the audience, another aspect of classical drama. The *Bhagavata* plays minor roles in the drama. He leads Devadatta to Kapil’s abode in the forest. The *Bhagavata* is like any curious ill-wisher here to spark off trouble. Padmini entrusts her child with *Bhagavata* who is to take him first to the hunters and then to the city. The *Bhagavata* also assists the stage hands when he places a sword before the Kali temple. He thus shows noticeable influence of both the classical and folk models of narrator figures. The ritualistic intoning of the benedictory verse is an essential aspect of Sanskrit drama. The expression ‘*Nandi*’ etymologically derives its expression from the root ‘nand’ which means to rejoice. Since the conventional aim of drama was to delight, dramatists founded a practice of making the nandi the first substantive part of the
drama to reach the audience. The singing of *nandi* began to play on an auspicious note and added to its seriousness and beauty. Traditionally the *nandi* included an invocation to the gods, the King and the Brahmin. In the modern context Kamad has restricted the invocation to the Gods alone. Ganesha is the God to be propitiated, a selection which not only becomes absolutely appropriate but also enlightens the thematic content. The *nandi* is followed by the benedictory prayer. The prayer ends fulfilling the additional function of fore grounding the main concerns of the play and offers a theatrical framework within which the main premise of the play is set. Kamad changes the customary conventions by giving them greater meaning and significance. The ‘*bharatavakya*’ the closing part of every Sanskrit play is also included in *Hayavadana*. The ‘*bharatavakya*’ traditionally presents a thanks giving to God for the successful completion of the play.

Music has been an indispensable element of Sanskrit drama and is inseparably welded with the speech and movements of the characters. According to the dictum of Bharata, without song the *natya* fails to appeal to the audience, “just as a picture without colour would fail to appeal to the eye.” (Bharata, *Natyashastra*, p.436) The director of the play along with the actors need be proficient in music. The initial songs of benediction are sung by the *Sutradhara* while the others were rendered by the actors themselves or a chorus. Folk theatre employed a maximum of four musicians whereas Sanskrit theatre had a veritable orchestra insisting on
the formal function of songs in the drama. Karnad’s statement “But what were we, basically city-dwellers, to do with this stream: what did the entire paraphernalia of theatrical devices, half-curtains, masks, improvisation, music and mime mean?” indicates that Karnad thinks of music as part of the folk-stream. *Hayavadana* which constitutes several folk-elements has a number of songs presented by the *Bhagavata*, the female chorus and Padmini, the female protagonist. *Naga Mandala* on the other hand has a single song presented on two occasions by the chorus consisting of the female flames. *Tale-Danda* uses the original songs composed by the historical figure Basavanna being translated by A.K. Ramanujan. The songs are rendered by Basavanna himself and strengthens the thematic thrust. *Tughlaq* and *The Fire and the Rain* have no songs. *Tughlaq* does not suffer from the omission of songs. *The Fire and the Rain* would have been a better play had it used songs because the theme and form of the play seem to offer scope for musical presentation. Several songs in *Hayavadana* are in the mould of those found in Sanskrit dramas. The refrain of the female chorus is an important instance. Sanskrit drama uses songs of a symbolic nature ornamented with equivocation and allusion, the purport of which are not explicitly expressed.

In Sanskrit drama, the *Sutrathara* does not sing after initiating the initial formalities. The *Bhagavata* of folk theatre sings throughout the play keeping

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himself on the stage, Karnad's *Bhagavata* and the nature of his song is very often reminiscent of the classical form. For example Padmini's lullaby is another song in the classical mould revealing her deep inner longings.

*Hayavadana* also makes use of background music in order to add to the effect of scenes. When the marriage news of Devadatta and Padmini is being disclosed, marriage music is played. Loud drum beating is used to create horrific effect when the Goddess Kali is brought before the audience. This is in accordance with the Sanskrit dramatic tradition which required the playing of instruments at the arrival of character. The use of drum beating is more prevalent in South Indian folk drama.

Unlike in folk theatre where very frequently vigour, strength and energy hold sway, in Sanskrit drama emphasis is laid on delicate movement to preserve aesthetic effect. Sanskrit dramatic convention was based on a tacit agreement between audience and performance to accept certain signs as acts. Karnad appears to have followed this stylized form of acting in both *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*. *Naga-Mandala* has certain stereotyped actions like eating, cooking, serving and bathing which signify the static, drab routine of Rani's married life. *Hayavadana* uses some of the stock situations of classical Sanskrit drama. One of the significant conventions of Sanskrit drama was on the covering of a long distance. The actor would circle the stage once or twice to give the impression of ground traversed. This convention is repeatedly used in *Hayavadana* in the
opening scene the *Nata* comes rushing onto the stage, runs round it, then sees *Bhagavata* and addresses him. The same device is modified to mark the passage of time after the birth of the child. Devadatta and Padmini with the child in her arms circle the stage talking to the child to fill the gap in action. At the end of the play also *Hayavadana* and the child circle the stage miming riding. All other actions in the play are mimed. For instance, the cart ride to Ujjain is mimed with Kapila playing the driver and Devadatta and Padmini as the passengers. The chariot ride was a favourite act in several Sanskrit plays in precisely the same manner. Another stock action was the plucking of flowers (imaginary). Kapila mimes bringing a handful or red flowers and dropping them in Padmini’s lap. Padmini mimes putting the crying child to sleep. Again Kapila mimes cutting a tree when accosted by the *Bhagavata* in the forest. The use of mime expands the parameters of performance. The playwright is therefore given greater freedom to visualize situations and dig up new dramatic possibilities.

Dramatic devices like the aside and soliloquy, play-within-the play were long present in the Indian classical tradition. Karnad uninhibitedly uses these devices to unravel the inner thoughts of his characters. The most interesting example of the aside takes place in *Hayavadana* during the cart ride to Ujjain. Kapila assures to collect the Fortune Lady’s flowers to Padmini. He leaves the stage but the alternating asides of Devadatta and Padmini give a commentary on his actions. The dramatic tension that began in the beginning episode culminates
in this scene. Padmini’s hidden attraction for Kapila comes to the notice of Devadatta. The asides move with the pace of the dialogues of the puppets, the female points of view being unexpectedly corroborated by the male one.

Padmini (aside): He is like Celestial Being reborn as a hunter.
How his body sways, his limbs curve—It is a dance almost
Devadatta (aside): And why should I blame her? It’s his strong
body—his manly muscles. And to think I had never ever
noticed them all these years! I was an innocent—an absolute baby.
Padmini (aside): No woman could resist him.
Devadatta (aside): No woman could resist him—and what does
it matter that she’s married? What a fool I have been..... (CP, Vol.1, P. 134).

This simple dance helps in preparing the ground for the climax. Such a device helps the dramatist in the effort of giving explanation leading up to the event.

Soliloquies are also used in the play for example, when Devadatta reveals his disappointment at having to take the trip to Ujjain rather than spending time alone with his wife. Another instance is when Padmini voices her inner feelings of transformation and helplessness. Similarly Rani’s soliloquies in Naga-Mandala when she is locked up in the house. The soliloquies show Rani’s fears and mixed feelings of confusion, disappointment, sorrow and resignation. The soliloquies also depict the plight of the average Indian housewife who keeps up a facade
during the day going through a host of physical and monotonous chores and can voice her feelings only to herself.

The Play - within - the play was a later innovation of Sanskrit drama. It throws up great dramatic possibilities. It was also used to carry forward dramatic action. Karnad’s use of this technique in *The Fire and the Rain* effectively brings about reversal in events. At the end of the third act, there is a stagnation in the action of the play and the play-within-the play helps to revive action and give a new direction to the plot. The inserted play portrays the fratricidal violence between Indra, Vishwarupya and Vritra which has resonances with the main plot. The play-within-the play provides a defense for play acting, for while strict Brahmanical codes of Yavakri and Paravasu fail. Arvasu the black sheep who brought disgrace to his family by joining an acting troop brings rain to the land, ensuring its prosperity.

Sanskrit drama provides a solid foundation to Karnad’s theatre which in turn rediscovers and reveals before the audience and literary public the depth, range and scope of the classical form.

The Indian audience especially the educated elite has had adequate exposure to the dramaturgy of the west through the performances of professional theatres in the metropolitan cities like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. Being part of the educated elite Karnad’s exposure to the plays of Samuel Beckett, Strindberg, Camus, Anouilh and the like has been more than adequate. Karnad’s
remarks "My three years in England had convinced me Western theatre had nothing to offer us". A closer analysis of Karnad’s theatre however makes it clear that Karnad has adapted several strategies of Western dramaturgy. Just as English becomes the language of his adult intellectual self, the elements of Western theatre must have helped shape his dramatic art. Karnad’s theatre is essentially Indian. The influence of western drama on Karnad is not negligible. The most notable influences are those of existentialists- Samuel Beckett, Anouilh, Satre, Camus and so on and that of German playwright Bertolt Brecht. Karnad uses Brechtian devices like the alienation effect (a conscious mode of distancing) and the agro-effect (Violence on stage) to create a drama, the impact of which is only cerebral rather than emotional. Beckettian influence can be noted in thematic concerns and character conception. The impact of Anouilh can be traced in the manner of the incorporation of myth in his dramatic formula.

Brecht brought about a radical change in the very concept of theatre with his epic theatre that broke away from the traditional theatre of illusion, to establish a theatre of instruction. His theatre established with a conscious and concrete social and political purpose, intended at arousing the spectator’s capacity for action. The epic theatre was therefore narrative, episodic in structure devised to expose the separation of the elements of drama. Epic theatre through careful choice of theme and formal structural means sought to inculcate in the audience

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the detached, distancing attitude of the historian towards the events portrayed. The intention of epic theatre was not just to present a situation but to surprise us into a fresh and critical appreciation of the causes and process underlying whatever is enacted on the stage. Karnad speaking about the influence of Brecht’s theatre on the use of indigenous dramatic forms says, “And it must be admitted that Brecht’s influences, 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.”¹ Karnad is not merely happy with the production or representation of events but he always works towards a re-examination of events, a fresh and contemporary mode of looking at situations. Karnad uses Brechtian devices with the folk design of his plays, thus transplanting the audience from the world of illusion to the practical world of reality. *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala* being folk plays exploit Brechtian techniques.

Epic theatre generally takes recourse to old and familiar tales. It does not intend to bring anything sensational on the stage. The playwright has several advantages in using existing tales. Having realized this he uses familiar tales in all his plays. While the historical plays draw our attention to the political and social aspects of our lives, the mythical plays probe deeper into more complex issues relating to the basic tenets of our lives. *Hayavadana* very effectively subverts the generally accepted notion of the superiority of head over body, brain over brawn

¹ Karnad, Girish. “Interview with Rajendra Paul”. Enact 54(1971) p.6
while making a critique of futile and unreasonable human hopes and aspirations. *Naga-Mandala* also uses a familiar story to present an argument that of the woman’s role in patriarchy. *The Fire and the Rain* again a very familiar story goes several steps further to question the accepted notions of ethics and morality. This is wonderfully carried out in the play-within-the play where the actions of Indra are challenged and proved treacherous.

Epic theatre makes use of loosely connected episodes. Therefore the emphasis is on isolated incidents not on the pattern which involves conventional plot. The isolated incidents contain within themselves the first of dramatic action. *Hayavadana* suitably illustrates the natures of such a structure with its series of episodes that help build a substantial story. Karnad projects core issues and does not follow conventional pattern. The marriage of Devadatta and Padmini is only narrated in brief. He deals with other episode in deeply as they hold water in the scheme of events and throws light on issues of identity and the man-woman relationship.

The epic play differs from the traditional modes of drama in creating space for the audience. It will have narrators and sometimes actors themselves directly address the audience. The play is recognized as a device produced for the benefit of the audience which responds to the intellectual needs of the audience rather than the emotional appetites. The spectator keeps away or distances himself from the event. Rather than participating he stands outside and carefully analyses it.
Therefore the epic theatre creates an alienation-effect, also known as estrangement or *Verfremdung*. The alienation effect can be defined as a device which is employed to make familiar aspects of reality seem strange and so as to prevent the emotional identification or involvement of the audience with the characters and subject matter of the play. Epic theatre makes use of several alienating devices which convince the spectator that what he is watching is a play and not a part of life. This mode of defamiliarisation is very different from the kind of ‘distancing’ seen in Indian drama. Where the principle is inherent in the form and not a consciously created effect through inserted devices. Kamad makes use of Brechtian device of alienation in conjunction with those present in the folk and classical forms to achieve greater aesthetic distance.

Brecht’s depiction of violence on stage is one of his techniques by which he arouses his audience. This goes against the traditional Indian dictum on the suitability of subject matter for the stage. All Karnad’s plays have violent and gory scenes. In *Hayavadana*, the beheading scene, the duel and the performance of sati are shown with the help of theatrical props as in the case of trail scene in *Nagamandala*. In *Tughlaq*, *Tale-Danda* and *the fire and the Rain* such scenes are enacted realistically.

Kamad by working on familiar tales opens up new avenues of thought and creates a greater human and social consciousness. In the story of the transposition of heads for example, earlier writers like Thomas Mann saw only a philosophical
argument. Women characters are generally marginalized as in real life. They do not seem to protest against injustice and oppression in the male dominated society. Karnad gives a more comprehensive picture in *Hayavadana*, portraying Padmini’s mixed feelings, which must necessarily constitute a vital segment of the action. Besides creating space for the woman, Karnad uses the tale to question and subvert valorized and over-emphasized concepts of marriage. Even *Naga-Mandala* also makes use of a known story to expose the hypocrisy and falsehood of our social machinery and seems to effect a change based on equality of the sexes.

Karnad’s use of myth as dramatic material can be compared with Jean, Anouilh. The use of myth to project a ‘greater reality’ can be viewed as a twentieth century preoccupation, not only in drama but also in poetry and fiction. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* are significant examples of twentieth century literature. According to Gilbert Highet “the most important reason for playwrights to exploit myths in their dramatic scheme is that myths are permanent”¹. Anouilh like Sartre recognized the potential of myth to reflect universal and eternal values while facilitating the creation of a contemporary consciousness through reinterpretation.

Jean Anouilh makes use of Greek myths suitable for his dramatic purpose and strips them of their spatio-temporal bearings. His mythical characters are

archetypes, manifestations of general human characteristics placed in a contemporary context and dealing with contemporary situations. Anouilh’s mythical plays as a rule end in tragedy. Anouilh’s theatrical practice is revealed in the words of Count Tigre in La repetition on L’amour Puni.

“Naturalness and truth in the theatre are the most unnatural things in the world. Life is very pretty, but it has no form. The object of art is precisely to give it one, and through all possible artifices to create something that is truer than truth”\(^1\).

The amalgamation of reality and theatricality becomes the essence of Anouilh’s theatre. The dramatic world of Anouilh is inhabited by characters who are convincing, alive and at the same time possess a symbolic meaning leading to what may be called as ‘philosophical’ drama. Raymond Williams says that Anouilh’s plays present “legend recreated and modified into substantial contemporary terms”\(^2\). This observation is true of Girish Karnad’s work too. Myth in Karnad is reworked in such a way so as to make it immediately significant to the modern audience. Karnad admits, “if I have a contemporary sensibility anything that excites me as a writer should have contemporary relevance.”\(^3\) Myth in both Karnad and Anouilh is a basis on which they establish a framework of

\(^1\) Highet Gilbert. “The Reinterpretation of Myths”. Virginia Quarterly Review. 25(1949). p.100

\(^2\) Williams, Raymond. Drama from Ibsen to Eliot. London: Chatto and Windus. 1952. p.199

\(^3\) Karnad, Girish. Interviewed with Rajendra Paul. Enact 54. 1971. p.6
ideas. In Anouilh it is most often used to illustrate disparity in social classes and in Karnad it renders to negative norms established by society.

Such a creative and critical reworking of myth can be seen in Hayavadana, Naga-Mandala and The Fire and the Rain also. In Anouilh the rich are ‘good’ because life treats them well and the poor are degraded due to the filth and corruption of their environment. In Karnad the higher caste is debauched and degenerated while pristine goodness is reflected in the low tribals.

As in Anouilh, in Karnad also the main character is alienated from his class and is afflicted with the opposite class. Arvasu like Anouilh’s protagonists can’t have his way, he has to give up Nittilai and save the land. Similar situations can be seen in Hayavadana and Naga-Mandala. Padmini who is on par with Kapila can’t be part of his world. Naga inspite of his being a lover and husband to Rani cannot dream of an actual existence with her. Despite one’s emotional and physical propensities one cannot forgo one’s social and metaphysical boundaries. One has to remain constant within the vortex of one’s background. As in Anouilh’s plays, the end in both Hayavadana and The Fire and the Rain can be considered tragic. The characters however accept failure and fate. When the impossible cannot take the shape of reality and the opposites can’t be reconciled the only alternative is death. Padmini in Hayavadana, Nittilai in The Fire and the Rain die and they remind us of the spirit of Greek tragedy.
The works of Samuel Beckett, Camus and Sartre must have had a profound influence on Karnad, perhaps shaping his theatre into a theatre dealing with human predicament in opposition to the traditional theatre of character. In such a theatre the emphasis is not on character development rather interest is centered on man and his destiny. Character becomes representative of man as a whole rather than an individual. In the words of Sartre, thus theatre seeks "to explore the state of man in its entirety and to present to the modern man a portrait of himself, his problems, his hopes and his struggles."\(^1\) Karnad's theatre in its thematic and conceptual content, revolves round the condition of man in the modern world. The characters though individualized, represent some of the basic characteristics inherent in man as a generalized entity. Karnad's plays present certain existential themes namely, the isolation and alienation of man, illusion of friendship, the difficulty of communication and the quest for identity and meaning in an uncertain and unintelligible world.

Karnad uses dream or fantasy as a device. Padmini in *Hayavadana* daydreams about the lover which she could never possess in real life. Rani in *Naga-Mandala* lives a major part of the life in fictional world of dreams and stories. Rani's life follows a dull and monotonous routine after marriage. Her life becomes an endless waiting for change, for something to happen. Therefore she

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\(^1\) Sartre, Jean Paul "Forger of myths". *Theatre Arts* 33, 1946. p. 324
withdraws into a world of make believe and beguiles herself with fantastic tales to conceal the emptiness of her existence.

To put it in a nutshell, Karnad makes use of techniques that are already an integral part of folk and Sanskrit theatres in India. His dramatic acumen is greatly appreciated for he was able to expand the horizon of drama by assimilating the western dramatic techniques with our own.