

*PHENOMENOLOGY OF SUBALTERNITY IN WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE, GIRISH KARNAD AND RATAN THIAM: A
STUDY IN POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES*

(Thesis submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)

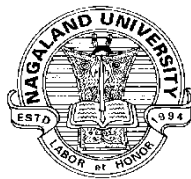
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2017

DECLARATION

I, Yangerla. B, do hereby declare that the thesis entitled *Phenomenology of Subalternity in William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam: A Study in Postcolonial Perspectives* is a bonafide research done for the award of Ph.D. in English under the supervision of Prof. Nigamananda Das during the period of 2014-2017 and that it has not been submitted either in full or in part or previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or title on the same title to any other university.

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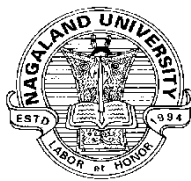
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This is to certify that thesis entitled ***Phenomenology of Subalternity in William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam: A Study in Postcolonial Perspectives*** is a bonafide record of research work done by Ms. Yangerla B, Regn. No.696/2015, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2014-17. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC regulations 2009 and 2016 and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances-OC-4, sub-section 5(i) of the section-9 for submission of the thesis.

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(Yangerla. B)

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PREFACE

The postcolonial subaltern ideology is understood as universal because there is no denying that every human being is subalternized by someone or the other. There is no escaping the fate that one is destined for, whether it is good or bad. The subalternization of one another by human beings has brought about the issue of power struggles and ultimate violence in trying to claim one's freedom and individuality. Thus, the quest for power and domination has blinded humanity and has driven them to be on top of one another mercilessly killing each other.

The superiority that one feels over another person has also lead to the subalternization and exploitation, making them hate each other. From time immemorial the desire to have the upper-hand over others has been a crippling issue. Wars are waged, natural resources are destroyed, and innocent people are killed just because of the selfish desire to dominate.

There is no peace or equality in the world and this has been proven over and over by different characters in various plays in the present study. The postcolonial theme of subalternization runs throughout the various plays and show that people haven't changed their desire to dominate and exploit, rather we have become more sadistic in our selfish quest.

The present study focuses on three prominent playwrights who have intentionally or unintentionally exposed the evil desires of human beings to destroy or dominate. Time becomes insignificant among the three playwrights as their view on human nature corresponds in parallel to the theme of subalternization.

(Yangerla. B)

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonialism is a theoretical perspective that attempts to study the effects of colonialism on a particular society's politics, history, economics and culture which dates back to the sixteenth century till the present day. Postcolonialism also reflects a quest for cultural identity where a nation reclaims its true individuality by discarding its colonizer's imposition of their culture. Postcolonialism is thus a "theoretical approach in literary and cultural studies, but it also, as importantly, designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority which extends back across the twentieth century, and beyond" (Boehmer 340).

To understand the true nature of postcolonialism, past colonial and imperial rule of the European countries must be looked into. Colonialism, as it is so called, is the process of expansion of a nation's rule over an area beyond its boundaries and subjecting another populace under its political ascendancy. Colonialism not only conquers the physical territory of a place but also the culture, mindset and individuality of the population, whereby, they are forced to accept their inferiority without complaint. The colonizer controls the social, economic and political structures of the colony by implementing fundamental decisions for their own selfish interests and in the process it adversely affects the colonized people. The belief of the European superiority lead to their rejection of cultural compromise with the colonized nations bringing in a rift between the superior and the inferior, thus, leading to opposition, resistance and confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized resulting in the end of colonial rule. The 'white man's burden' of obligation negates itself with the way they ruled their colonies by projecting a gory atmosphere where the colonized had to salvage what was left of their dislocated nation. Thus, "the postcolonial(ism) is that which questions, overturns, and/or critically refracts colonial authority – its epistemologies and forms of violence and

its claims to superiority. Postcolonialism therefore refers to those theories, texts, political strategies, and modes of activism that engage in such questioning, that aim to challenge structural inequalities and bring about social justice” (341).

Postcolonial studies gained prominence since the 1970s in the western academy with the publication of *Orientalism* by Edward Said in 1978 which critiques the European mindset of the Orient. Earlier, “Commonwealth” or “Third World” literatures were being tagged to Postcolonial writings but these names were incorporated with the publication of the book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* in 1989 by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin and the word postcolonialism gained its momentum. “‘Commonwealth’, which denotes the loose grouping of the independent nation-states which are historically linked by having once been colonized by Britain, is less favoured nowadays for its seemingly imperial associations” (343).

There are a lot of debates over the clear-cut limitations of the definition and field of the term postcolonialism. Thus:

Responses to the category of postcolonialism have been equally varied. While some critics consider it an enabling category which facilitates self-assertion, others are conscious of its limiting and controlling nature as it persists in exclusion rather than inclusion. There is a third response which bases on a refusal to be included. It looks upon postcolonialism as a position which emphasises difference (Jain 13).

The Oxford Dictionary defines postcolonialism as “the political or cultural condition of a former colony” (“Postcolonialism” <http://en.oxforddictionary.com>); the Collins Dictionary defines postcolonialism as “existing or occurring since a colony gained independence” (“Postcolonial” <http://www.collinsdictionary.com>) and the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “from or relating to the period after colonialism” (“Postcolonial” [Dictionary.cambridge.org](http://dictionary.cambridge.org)). These definitions are being used rather loosely in practice because of the diverse status of the colonized countries. Postcolonial studies include not only countries that have gained independence but those that are still struggling to achieve freedom from the colonizers and also those minorities in a European country, and even those independent countries which are

under threat from “neo-colonial” forms of subjugation through capitalism and globalization. Postcolonialism can be broadly seen as:

There is always an awareness of an authority, of an imposition, of a hostility which needs to be combated, opposed or controlled. There is also a simultaneous awareness of a dived past and the inability to accept it as it has been presented, projected or interpreted. Further, there is consciousness of the need to confront- the past, the reality of one’s inheritance and one’s position, and the imposition of an external authority. Postcolonialism thus comes to represent a conflict within one’s own self, a conflict through which the subject tries to step outside his colonial self, the western training, the history of the imperial phase and to approach his own past, history and reality from this position (Jain 14).

Postcolonialism can be tagged to other theoretical perspectives such as Structuralism, Feminism and so on. Because of its relevance to contemporary literature, many writers have identified themselves with postcolonialism and research in its field has grown enormously. The construction of empire, the brunt of colonization on postcolonial history, economics, science and culture, the cultural productions of colonized societies, entrepreneurship (capitalism) and the market, feminism and postcolonialism, environmental concerns, agency for marginalized people are some of the major concerns in the field.

Most postcolonial writers prefer to use their own native language rather than English because, though English is the universal language, it is the language of the colonizer, thus, these writers do not want to use the colonizer’s language as it identifies their colonized state (even though they have been independent). They want to totally wash away their former colonized self and be free from the colonizer’s clutch. One of them is Ngugi wa Thiong’o who mostly writes in his own native language Kikuyu. The superimposition of the colonizer’s own values upon the colonized have been the thriving force of these postcolonial writers for their daring attack and stand against the colonizer’s culture. Though it is impossible to totally do away with the colonizer’s imposition of their culture, there is the understated abhorrence towards the European culture which the colonized cannot shake off. “In

most postcolonial literatures, language is another category which needs to be examined and appropriated for one's own purposes which both the writer and the critic need to acknowledge. Thus, at the heart of the postcolonial project is the need for the production of knowledge – knowledge of self, of context, of history, of tradition and of power relations” (14).

Postcolonial theory embraces no single method or school. It deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization of the native people. It questions the effect of empire and raises issues such as racism and exploitation. Postcolonial theory also offers a counter-narrative to the long tradition of European imperial narratives. Some of the prominent postcolonial theorists are Edward Said (1935-2003), Gayatri Spivak (1942), Franz Fanon (1925-1961), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1938), Chinua Achebe (1930-2013), Leela Gandhi (1966), Homi Bhabha (1949), Gareth Griffiths (1943), Robert Young (1950), Helen Tiffin, Hamid Dabashi (1951), Bill Ashcroft, Khal Torabully (1956) and the likes. “Edward Said's *Orientalism* gave a newfound legitimacy to a form of critique that gradually began to be labelled 'postcolonialism', but the impetus of this critique shared much in common with predecessors as varied as Mohandas Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Patel, Franz Fanon, C. L. R. James, Amilcar Cabral, and Chinua Achebe” (Desai 2).

Prior to independence of any nation, there was the ever present feeling of uneasiness and unrest and thus:

Resistance to colonial domination took the form of widespread physical conflicts during the decolonizing period from the end of the First World War onwards. While that was the case, it should also be borne in mind that the empire was never altogether free from outbreaks of violence in one form or another, examples being slave revolts, Maori wars, and, as variously described, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 or India's First War of Independence. In cultural and symbolic terms, resistance was a struggle for agency in the representation process, that is, for the power among different colonized peoples to

reinvent themselves as the subjects of their own stories and histories (Chew 2).

Names like Mahatma Gandhi and Franz Fanon are famously used in the representation of postcolonial struggles because, unaware of their future influence on many postcolonial writers, they have radically fought for the independence of their countries. In fact their strategies to fight against colonial rule is different as Gandhi takes to non-violence and non-cooperative tactics, Fanon embraced violence as the only policy in achieving independence.

Franz Fanon was a psychiatrist, philosopher and freedom fighter who fought for the Algerian struggle for independence. In his essay *On National Culture*, Fanon describes three phases to decolonization, namely 'assimilation', 'disturbance' and the 'fighting phase'. Fanon believed that the only solution to an ongoing tussle between the colonizer and the colonized is violence as he asserts "For these individuals, the demand for a national culture and the affirmation of the existence of such a culture represent a special battlefield" (Fanon 199). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon discusses about the psychological effects of colonial rule and as the title suggests, his idea of Colonialism is racial, black against the white. His contribution to Postcolonial theory is controversial as he believes in violently standing up against the oppressor or colonizer. Nevertheless, his ideas paved the way for so many other theoretical perspectives.

Indeed, Fanon's ideas have helped more generally to mould, or are claimed to have moulded, a number of different interpretations of postcolonial resistance. *The Wretched of the Earth* became a virtual primer for such different movements as 1960s African-American Black Power led by Malcolm X; the intellectual Ngugi wa Thiong'o's revolutionary Marxism in Kenya in the 1970s, and the activist Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa (1960s-1970s). It has, very differently but powerfully, informed the Marxist postcolonialism of a critic like Neil Lazarus in *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* (1990), but also Homi Bhabha's psychoanalytic readings of the colonial process, as in his introduction to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1954)(Boehmer 345).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* is considered as the “catalyst and reference point” of Postcolonialism (Gandhi 64). Said moved colonial discourse into the first world academy and into literary and cultural theory with the publication of *Orientalism*, where he talks about the misrepresentation of the natives as uncivilized, culturally lacking, savage, stupid and cruel. The term orientalism describes the double relationship between the *Orient* and the *Occident*. The Europeans look at the Orient as “anonymous masses” and not as individuals with feelings and a mind of his/her own, of stereotypes as they lack knowledge and imagination. Most importantly they looked at the Orient as the ‘other’ whose understanding is mediocre compared to their standards as well as intellect. The process of othering actually creates binary identities of opposition to the western ideals. “At the same time, and paradoxically, the East is seen as a fascinating realm of the exotic, the mystical and the seductive” (Barry 186). Simply put, Orientalism refers to the sum of the West’s representations of the Orient. “... The discourse orientalism that Said proposed was also fiercely contested on a number of fronts. It was targeted in particular for its generalizing and universalizing aspects (the implication that all empires functioned in similar ways), and for its apparent assertion of an alternative humanism or human-centeredness, directed against the tainted humanism of oppressive empires” (Boehmer 351). Born as Edward Wadie Said in 1935 in Mandatory Palestine, Said got his Bachelor’s degree from Princeton University and his Master’s and Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature from Harvard University. Said joined Columbia University in 1963 as a teaching faculty of English and Comparative Literature and worked and taught there until his demise in 2003. He was the Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University in 1974; he was a Fellow of the Centre for Advanced Study in Behavioural Science during 1975-76 at Stanford University. In 1977, Said became the Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Colombia University and subsequently was the Old Dominion Foundation Professor in the Humanities department. Later in 1979, Said went as the Visiting Professor at Johns Hopkins University in the Humanities department. He was a controversial intellect as he openly opposed the Muslim insurgent groups of Arab as well as Israel.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak became known as a prominent figure in World Literature with her publication of the preface to Jacques Derrida’s *De la*

grammatologie. She is a feminist critic, literary theorist in postcolonial writings and a voice for the subalterns, especially women. Her famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1983) has established Spivak among the ranks of feminists who consider history, geography, and class in thinking woman. Spivak acclimatizes with Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction in dealing with the subaltern struggle for identity and individuality. "Spivak's focus is... rigorously directed to points of contradiction or cognitive failure in a text, where it lays bare the gaps or 'aporia' within its own ideological assumptions" (Boehmer 354). Spivak's fight for identity and individuality, especially of women in a society where men dominates sheds new light on the understanding of feminist theory and also on Subaltern studies. Although, her Marxist views of the struggle for identity are contested, she has contributed to postcolonial theory in general and the subaltern and feminist theories in particular. Spivak was born in 1942 in Calcutta, India, completed her secondary education at St. John's Diocesan Girl's Higher Secondary School and graduated in 1959 from Presidency College under the University of Calcutta and also got her Master's degree from the same University and was one of the first women to be a member in the Telluride House. She got her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Cornell. Spivak joined as a University Professor at Columbia University and became the first woman of colour in 264 year history to achieve the highest faculty rank.

Homi. K. Bhabha is an Indian postcolonial theorist who is known for his key concepts such as mimicry, ambivalence, hybridity and difference.

...There are two main areas of preoccupation which distinguish the work of this Indian-born theorist... the first area (as with Spivak) is an interest in the productive instabilities and ruptures of colonial discourse. The second area, which has developed more recently, is a growing concern with the, to Bhabha, still incomplete manifestation of the *in-between*. His in-between might be roughly defined as the creative, malleable indeterminacy involving feelings of simultaneous repulsion and desire that exists at the interface between self and other, or between the polarities of unequal world that we still inhabit, of what Bhabha calls 'ongoing colonial present (354-355).

Mimicry emerges when the colonized nation tries to imitate the colonizer's culture. The imposition of European educational systems, teaching of English, wearing western clothes are some of the examples of mimicry of the native people which destroy the historical structures that was built before the advent of the colonizers. With the colonization of a particular nation, there is ambivalence or the duality of identity of the colonized. This leads to the ambivalent notion of the colonizer as inventive and authoritative and the colonized as weak and unimaginative. This ambivalence also leads to other dimensions like; difference, where the colonized realizes that however he tries to mimic the colonizer he can never be identified as equal to the colonizer, thus he is labelled as stereotype who the colonizer can easily manipulate to their own whims. This leads to the enunciation of the colonized about their individuality and uniqueness. Bhabha explains that colonized history or past history of a nation still intrudes the present culture where the colonized can't shake off the colonizer's influences thus, there is the mixture or hybridity of culture and identity. He applies the post-structuralist methods of signifier and signified to the colonizer and the colonized. Homi Bhabha was born in 1949 in Mumbai, India and graduated from Elphinstone College at the University of Mumbai. He got his M.A, M.Phil and D.Phil degrees from Christ Church of Oxford University. He now works as a Professor of English and American Literature and Language at the Anne F. Rothenberg and also the Director of the Mahindra Humanities Centre at Harvard University. He received the Padma Bhushan award in the field of Literature and Education from the Indian Government in 2012. Bhabha is considered as one of the most influential figures in Contemporary Postcolonial studies for his enormous contribution.

Over the years, postcolonial theory has been influenced by different people with their individual involvement in the field of literary theory. Nevertheless, the contributions made by Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha in the growth of postcolonialism as a theoretical perspective cannot be ignored. It is true that there are a lot of different technical and practical shortcomings in their theories, but it led to more serious revaluations and offshoot theories of Postcolonialism today.

According to Peter Barry, there are three phases in postcolonialism just like Feminism; *adopt*, *adapt* and *adept*. The adopt phase is where the colonized try to

imitate the colonizer's form and subject matter, especially in their writings; the adapt phase is where the colonizer's form is acclimatized to fit the colonized own native subject matter; the adept stage is where the colonized totally breaks away from the colonizer's form or subject matter and finding his own individuality.

All postcolonial literatures, it might be said, seem to make this transition. They begin with an unquestioning acceptance of the authority of European models (especially in the novel) and with the ambition of writing works that will be masterpieces entirely in this tradition, this can be called the '*Adopt*' phase of colonial literature, since the writer's ambition is to adopt the forms as it stands, the assumption being that it has universal validity. The second stage can be called the '*Adapt*' phase, since it aims to adapt the European form of African subject matter, thus assuming partial rights of intervention in the genre. In the final phase there is, so to speak, a declaration of cultural independence whereby African writers remake the form to their own specification, without reference to European norms. This might be called the '*Adept*' phase, since its characteristic is the assumption that the colonial writer is an independent 'adept' in the form, not a humble apprentice, as in the first phase, or a mere licensee as in the second. This stress on 'cross-cultural' interactions is a fourth characteristic of postcolonialist criticism (Barry 189).

Controversies and oppositions surround the theory of contemporary Postcolonialism, nonetheless, despite of differences in opinions critics and writers alike are finding new dimensions in Postcolonial Literature to adapt and adopt best to the various cultural identities they represent.

...It could be said that postcolonialism is caught between the politics of structure and totality on the one hand, and the politics of the fragment on the other. This is one way of suggesting that postcolonial theory is situated somewhere in the interstices between Marxism and postmodernism/poststructuralism. It is in a sense, but one of the many discursive fields upon which the mutual antagonism between these competing bodies of thought is played out. Seen as such,

postcolonialism shifts the scene of this long-standing contestation to the so-called 'third world' (Gandhi 167).

The term subaltern is derived from two Latin words *sub* meaning 'below' and *alternus* meaning 'all others', thus by combining the two words together it means to be under an authority. In fact, the term subaltern was used by the British to mean an officer of a lower rank. Several synonyms are used to denote the term subaltern like, inferior, poor people, lower class/caste or minority, weak, under-privileged and so on. The British Historian, E. P. Thompson used the phrase "history from down below". From then on "History from Below" was the name given by the western world to the literature of the sub-ordinate nations. But the term came into prominence with its use by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) an Italian Marxist thinker, during his imprisonment by the Mussolini army. He piloted the Peasant Revolt in Italy after the First World War against the dictatorship of Mussolini which led to his arrest in 1926. Gramsci wrote several articles while he was inside the prison by collecting first-hand information on the political and social injustices meted on the prisoners and the usage of the term subaltern was a code-word. He explained that the subalterns are the under-privileged or sub-ordinate class who are being used as puppets under the dominant elites. His articles were later on published under the titles *Selections from Political Writings* and *Selection from Prison Notebooks*. Thus, the term subaltern in general may mean lower in position, authority, status and action.

Historians also use the term subaltern in history with the same connotation but they give the subalterns a voice of their own by reviving their past history of suffering. The generalization of the term subaltern or subalternity became more specified with the usage of it in relation to literary theory and criticism by some postcolonial theorists. Several writers were concerned about the history that has been written about the masses in through the eyes of the elites. With a lot of different ideas and discussions, the *Subaltern Studies Group* was established in the 1980s spearheaded by Ranajit Guha which was to create a new account of the history of India and the South Asian countries. The *Centre of South Asian Cultural Studies* was founded with the statement that history can never be justified without knowing the experiences and works of the lower classes.

In the end of the 1970s, Ranajit Guha... and a group of young historians based in Britain embarked on a series of discussions about the contemporary state of South Asian historiography. From the onset, the underlying principle which united the group – Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardiman and Gyanendra Pandey – was a general dissatisfaction with historical interpretations of the ‘Freedom Movement’ in India which celebrated elite contributions in the making of the Indian nation while denying the ‘politics of the people’. At one level, the idea for subaltern studies was conceived as a historiographical ‘negation’ of both a rigidly formulaic ‘orthodox’ Marxism and the ‘Namierism’ of the Cambridge School in Britain, both of which failed to account for the dynamic and improvisational modes of peasant political agency. Guha tried to situate the subalternist critique of historiography within a tradition reaching back to the nineteenth century, when Indian intellectuals began publicly debating the relationship of politics to scholarship (Chaturvedi vii-viii).

Guha has stated that one of the main objectives of the group was “to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian Studies, (another important aspect was to study) the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (Guha vii). The group wanted the common people to speak about their experiences and not branding them as a whole. They also wanted to give these people their true identity and individuality which was stolen from them by so many historians and elite classes. The Oxford University Press in Delhi consented to publish three volumes and thus in 1982 the *Subaltern Studies I* was published. Subsequently, in 1983-85 there were another three publications. “For Guha, a new epistemology was required to understand the antinomian dimensions of subaltern politics. Meticulous thick descriptions of insurgency could disclose the otherwise concealed political character of peasant consciousness by reconstructing the vantage point, the spontaneous ideology of the peasant rebel” (Chaturvedi x). The first four publications were mainly focused on rectifying the common notions of subordination by the west or the elite and to give

back the voice and identity to the subalterns. In the preface to its first publication, Ranajit Guha unequivocally states that:

The aim of the present collection of essays, the first of a series, is to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian studies and thus help to rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area... The dominant groups will therefore receive in these volumes the consideration they deserve without, however, being endowed with that spurious primacy assigned to them by the long-standing tradition of elitism in South Asian studies. Indeed, it will be very much a part of our endeavour to make sure that our emphasis on the subaltern functions both as a measure of objective assessment of the role of the elite and as a critique of elitist interpretations of that role (Guha vii).

The early subaltern theorists heavily relied on Marxism to augment their stance on different essays. Eventually:

By 1986, the Subaltern Studies project was confronted with internal debates about its future development: the tradition of historical materialism had come to be seen by many as a significant, and yet limited, resource for a project which now claimed to contest Eurocentric, metropolitan and bureaucratic systems of knowledge. In addition, what had been an integral part of the project – the search for an essential structure of peasant consciousness – was now no longer acknowledged as valid. The repudiation of that search was, in a sense, a ‘post-structuralist moment’ (Chaturvedi xi).

Later Subaltern theorists postulated Foucauldian discourse and the perspective of the ‘other’ in post-structuralist deconstruction as well as *signified* and the *signifier* to base its arguments against the western historiography as well as within one’s own history. This is so because they disputed with the early subaltern theorists by commenting that some of the minority class cannot identify with another class as they are totally different from one another. The contestation within the subaltern theorists provided another dimension and also helped in broadening the narrow perspective of subaltern studies. “Many subjects have entered the purview of the

historians of *Subaltern Studies*, and considerably inflected the meanings of subordination and dominance. Issues of ethnicity and gender have simultaneously broadened the dialectic of subordination and power, as well as revealed the limits of a universal and permanent bipolarization which pits elite against subaltern” (Chatterjee 49). Thus, the subaltern theorists are of the view that the lack of a particular trend or subaltern theory and the differences in ideologies within themselves is rather strength than weakness.

The last two decades of the twentieth century have witnessed the emergence of diverse themes within the subaltern historiographical school. Historians have noticed that the later volumes of the *Subaltern Studies* were dominated by the desire to analyse the portrayal of subalternity by the dominant discourses. Apart from these volumes a number of books appeared in the decades of 80s and 90s. Historians like Partha Chatterjee made notable contributions in this respect. His works proved crucial at this juncture to understand that engagement with elite themes is not all together new to the subalterns (Biswas 202).

Though the *Subaltern Studies* was accepted and appreciated in India, it was given less importance in some significant parts of the world like Britain and North America, and they criticised about the narrowness of its approach. They argued that even though the writings have contributed to the development of history in a new dimension, the theoretical approach was becoming rather tedious and out of date. However, America welcomed the *Subaltern Studies* and its approach to history from below. They appreciated the Indian intellectuals for voicing out their own independent identity. The *Subaltern Studies* also influenced many other countries and individuals who were marginalised. “In the 1990s, *Subaltern Studies* became a hot topic in academic circles on several continents; a weapon, magnet, target, lightning rod, hitching post, icon, gold mine, and fortress for scholars ranging across disciplines from history to political science, anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, and cultural studies” (Ludden 2).

Whereas, *Subaltern Studies* began as a critical engagement with Marxism in the early 1980’s, much of the writing from the collective

in the following decade, having shifted methodologically and theoretically, could best be identified with what may be called ‘a certain spirit of Marx’. What was initially a project of uncovering subaltern agency and consciousness as a means of revising political histories of the Indian nationalist movement, underwent a shift towards critical theories of discourse which challenged the foundations of Enlightenment thought while attempting to maintain vestiges of a negotiated Marxist past... As a globalized academic institution, its impact has been felt far beyond the reaches of the Anglo-American academy, and is evidenced by its presence in the intellectual cultures of nations such as Bolivia, Japan and Senegal (Chaturvedi xiii).

Ranajit Guha was born in 1923 in Barisal Division Bangladesh and then got his university education in Calcutta where he was involved in the fight for freedom struggle during the last phase of Indian independence. Guha was sent as a student representative to Europe after India got its independence in 1947. He travelled the world from Europe, Middle East and South Asia and then came back to India in 1953. Guha migrated from India to the UK in 1959 and worked in England till the late 1970’s. During this period he taught History at the University of Sussex, England and also worked as Professor of History, Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. The idea and discussions about the Subaltern Studies were given birth during his time at Sussex. In *Elementary Aspects of Peasants Insurgency in Colonial India*, which was published in 1983, Guha argues that the main reason for the peasant insurgencies or uprisings were caused due to the neglect and pre-eminence of the elites like the Government officials, landlords and money lenders. The domination of these privileged class were mainly focused on politics and economic exploitations. The peasants had to raise their own voice to stand against these exploitations.

In Subaltern Studies, there were seventy-six essays published from volumes 1 to 10 where Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee each contributed sixteen papers; David Arnold, David Hardiman and Gyanendra Pandey wrote five papers each; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gautam Bhadra, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sahid Amin contributed more than one paper each. With these prolific writings that were an

assortment of the core study of the unappreciated, under-privileged subordinates, history was questioned and a new order of writing from the point of view of the subalterns gained its momentum. “In 1985 Gayatri Spivak threw a challenge to the race and class blindness of the western academy, asking ‘Can the subaltern speak?’. By ‘subaltern’ Spivak meant the oppressed subject, the members of Antonio Gramsci’s ‘subaltern classes’, or more generally those ‘of inferior rank’, and her question followed on the work begun in the early 1980s by a collective of intellectuals now known as the Subaltern Studies group” (Gandhi 1).

The growing dimensions of the project have raised the question of the direction of Subaltern Studies in the context of a world-capitalist economy undergoing globalization and opened up a new series of possible futures. The exigencies of contemporary politics, as seen in the issues of caste, gender and secularism, would have a central role in defining new agendas. Another possibility involves the construction of a critical theory of subalternity which goes beyond the context of colonial India and the nationalist movement, addressing concerns of late-twentieth-century imperialism and the future of new international social movements. It is testimony to the perennial importance of the issues made central by the original Subaltern Studies collective that the problems of agency, subject positions and hegemony constitute to the ontological resistance of all varieties of historical determinism, techno-economic of cultural (Chaturvedi xiii).

Phenomenology was not given its proper name but was used loosely with different philosophies which were similar to it like, epistemology, ethics, ontology and logic. The twentieth century saw the emergence of several philosophers who tried to distinguish phenomenology from the other philosophies. These influential philosophers are Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. All these philosophers have defined phenomenology in their own way which has brought about different types of phenomenological issues such as intentionality, consciousness, qualia, first-person perspective and so on. The word phenomenology is derived from the mixture of two German words *phenomenon* and *logie* - ‘phenomenon’ and ‘logy’ which means ‘the study of the development of

human consciousness and self-awareness'. Thus, phenomenology is the study of the configurations of consciousness as experienced by a person first-hand. A distinctive definition of some of the similar philosophies could provide a more easy understanding of the word phenomenology: epistemology is the study of knowledge, ethics is the study of right and wrong, ontology is the study of beings, of what is, and phenomenology is the study of one's experience.

In literal term, phenomenology is the study of phenomena: things as they appear in our experience, appearances of things or the ways we experience things. Basically, phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, social activity. The structure of these forms of experience typically involves what Husserl called *intentionality*, that is, the directedness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that it is a consciousness of or about something. "The intentionality of the human mind is, then, its capacity to receive pictures from the external world and also to create new pictures of its own" (Sajama 1-2). Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty talk about pure experience of lived experiences. On the other hand, Heidegger speaks about the art of interpretation in context, especially social and linguistic context.

In recent philosophy of mind, the term 'phenomenology' is often restricted to the characterization of sensory qualities of seeing, hearing, etc.: what it is like to have sensations of various kinds. However, our experience is normally much richer in content than mere sensation. Accordingly, in the phenomenological tradition, phenomenology is given a much wider range, addressing the meaning things have in our experience, notably, the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our 'life-world' ("Phenomenology" <http://plato.stanford.edu>).

There are three main types of phenomenology namely; transcendental phenomenology that studies how objects are constituted in transcendental consciousness, existential phenomenology studies the concrete human existence and asserts that the observer cannot separate himself from the world, and realist phenomenology studies the structures of consciousness and intentionality which is brought by the external and not by consciousness. There are various theories and interpretations to the theories related to the term phenomenology, but simply put, phenomenology is the study of one's lived experiences in reference to our senses.

A unique and final definition of phenomenology is dangerous and perhaps even paradoxical as it lacks a thematic focus. In fact, it is not a doctrine, nor a philosophical school, but rather a style of thought, a method, an open and ever-renewed experience having different results, and this may disorient anyone wishing to define the meaning of phenomenology ("Phenomenology" <http://en.m.wikipedia.org>).

Thus, phenomenology is the study of experience and how human beings experience. It studies structures of conscious experience as experienced from a subjective or first-person point of view, along with its intentionality. It then leads to analyses of conditions of the possibility of intentionality, conditions involving motor skills and habits, social practices and language. As such, phenomenology does not place itself outside the sciences but, rather, attempts to make understandable what takes place in the various sciences and thus to thematize the unquestioned presuppositions of the sciences.

William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam being very significant playwrights have contributed profusely to portraying subaltern characters. Othello, Caliban and the like being Shakespeare's subaltern characters have become myths. Girish Karnad exploring the Kannada history and folk tradition has exquisitely reflected on the subalterns. Rattan Thiyam has amply exploited myths and history from local and national traditions to exemplify a significant subaltern phenomenology.

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Chapter II

PHENOMENOLOGY OF SHAKESPEARE'S SUBALTERN IDEOLOGY

The world of dramatic art captures the audience with its intense emotions, actions and dialogues. Started out from the churches during the fifteen century, drama has evolved through the passage of time. Unlike poems and novels, plays link the mind and emotions of both the audience and reader, taking them into a flight of imagination with mere words and exposes their inner feelings making them vulnerable towards others. "A drama text is not the same as a novel or a poem. And stage drama is different from radio drama which is different from television drama which is different from film. Although we have the printed text, in one sense it only becomes realized in performance, in front of an audience" (Sanger 1). Some of the different types of drama that have evolved are tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, comedy of manners and so on.

The most celebrated dramatist of all times, William Shakespeare's absolute excellence in contemporary society is simply unparalleled. The most important thing the reader or audience cannot miss in Shakespeare's plays is the intimate relationship between the plays and the reader. There is always a contemporary relevance of the plays to the reader. Thus, Shakespeare has a special place in every reader's mind because, consciously or unconsciously, the reader internalises and personalises the feelings.

It happens very rarely in the history of literature that a craftsman who has acquired perfect control of his medium and a masterly ease in handling the techniques and conventions of his day is also a universal genius of the highest order, combining with his technical proficiency a unique ability to render experience in poetic language and an uncanny intuitive understanding of human psychology (Daiches 246).

The enormity of Shakespeare's role in shaping the world drama cannot be ignored and one can only wonder at the authority that he has over the use of language and universal themes, and his works have been translated into around eighty different languages. The contemporaneity of Shakespeare's themes cannot be overlooked and his works are being studied in schools, colleges and universities not only because of his use of language but also for the relevance of themes to the contemporary readers. In fact, Shakespeare's themes are so pertinent to the modern man that one marvels how he incorporated such psychological and philosophical themes to make the reader reflect on his inner self. The usage of Modern English language is influenced to a great extent by Shakespeare's use of language. The augmentation of English language was through Shakespeare's regular satirizing of his contemporaries with their use of methods, dialectic alterations, archaism and he even experimented with other kinds of novelties. The uniqueness and individuality of a particular character is done through the amalgamation of different languages by Shakespeare, thus, differentiating one character from the other according to their strengths and weaknesses. The audacity to use striking metaphors, phrases and words can be considered as one of the most distinctive features of Shakespeare's use of English language. "Although it has become clichéd to say that Shakespeare is a playwright for all time it is clearly the case that some of his plays seem to enjoy a certain immortality on the stage" (Cerasano 1).

Most of Shakespeare's plays were borrowed from other sources nevertheless; he made sure to make it his own with his use of creative imagination and language. The materials that he found were transformed into masterpieces by his ingenuity. "Shakespeare of course, takes liberties with his 'sources'. He combines variously and makes new wholes. When his handiwork is complete, it has suffered 'sea-change', has become *original* in interest and in impact. To understand the logic of the changes he brings about is to confront the great mystery of artistic creation itself" (Kantak 35-36). Shakespeare was famous not only for his plays but also for his skill as a good actor. In fact, he started his career as an actor before his later recognition as a dramatist. It is through this ability that Shakespeare came to identify ingredients to spice up a good play for his audience.

The most unfortunate thing is that historians fail to give an exact date of Shakespeare's birth and his education and life is shrouded in mystery. Many years have passed since historians had tried to come up with accounts of Shakespeare's past with the help of some sparingly meagre information by doing guess-works. Historians found two primary sources which gave clues and helped them discover more about Shakespeare; the official documents of church and court records and Shakespeare's works such as plays, sonnets and poems. But these sources are limiting to the extent of exposing only a brief sketch of specific events in Shakespeare's life thus providing little evidence on the personality of the individual who experienced those events. The period from 1585 to 1592 is considered as the "lost years" because during these years there are no documentary evidences of Shakespeare. He was not one of the celebrated actors of the period, although it is reported that he did act exceedingly well. He worked with the Lord Chamberlin's company of players which was later known as the King's Men. He is also known for his sonnets (154 sonnets in total). Shakespeare's first plays were adaptations, nevertheless, there is evidence of a dramatist in the making with these experimental plays on history and comedy like; *Henry IV* part I, II, III (ca. 1590-92), *Richard III* (ca. 1592-93), *Mid-summer Night's Dream* (ca.1596), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97) and so on. After the history and comedy plays came the tragedies like; *Hamlet* (1600-01), *Othello* (1603-04), *King Lear* (1605-06), *Macbeth* (1606) and others. The final group of plays like *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* are so called romances or love plays which are believed to have been written between 1609 and 1612.

Shakespeare's early plays like comedies and most of his history plays are social in character. These plays revolve around social issues which at the end lead to happy endings which bring social integration. Shakespearean comedies have dramatic storylines (unlike traditional comedies), but the involvement of comic incidents alters the drama into comedy. Some of the characteristics of a Shakespearean comedy are; mistaken identities recurrently involving disguise, struggle among young lovers in overcoming complications in their relationships often created through the interference of elders, helpful and clever servants, the ever-present element of separation and reunion, complicated linked plots, strained relationships within family members which gets resolved at the end, and the witty use of satire and puns. Hence it is said:

The tradition associated with the form gave but a general direction to his attitudes. 'What distinguishes Shakespeare's Comedies from most contemporary ones is the amount of blending. Each play is sharply individualized, and yet nearly every one contains in different proportion all the elements of the others'. The peculiar blend of several modes has produced a kind of 'polyphonic music'. To use Miss Bradbrook's phrase, asking of the reader a continual switching of interest and also a capacity to respond with a kind of multi-consciousness to the situation. This 'manifoldness' of Shakespeare's comic form discourages any attempt to define its organizing principle (7).

The historical plays of Shakespeare shifts its focus on famous monarchs of his time, characteristically discussing and portraying the situation of their time of exploring and finding new worlds, civil wars and depicting social and political problems that prevailed. Shakespearean tragedies centre more on the dramatic and serious plots with the tragic death of the protagonist at the end of the play. The main features of Shakespearean tragedy consist of total chaos in the kingdom or the isolation of the main character which leads to the inevitable breakdown of the whole system of the story and the ultimate sacrifice of the protagonist. The main character of the play hails from a noble family or of noble position who meets his/her downfall due to a particular flaw in his character which leads to his subsequent death. Shakespeare's later plays are considered as his most mature plays showing his excellent skill as a dramatist. This final phase of Shakespearean plays concentrated on romance, changing the tone to more magical, light and happy endings.

The virtually universal appeal is one of the most astonishing features of the Shakespeare phenomenon: plays that were performed before glittering courts thrive in junior high school auditoriums; enemies set on destroying one another laugh at the same jokes and weep at the same catastrophes; some of the richest and most complex English verse ever written migrates with spectacular success into German and Italian, Hindi, Swahili and Japanese (Stephen 1).

Shakespeare's work of art is noticeably helped in setting the outline for the development of modern dramatic world. The use of modern prose in drama was also popularized by Shakespeare and his artistic use of the English language cannot be overlooked. "The celebration of Shakespeare's genius, eloquently initiated by his friend and rival Ben Jonson has over the centuries become an institutionalized rite of civility" (1). No doubt, Shakespeare has touched readers and audience alike through his exquisite blend of different emotions and feelings into drama which becomes personal and one can identify oneself with the characters. With the passage of time one can only wonder at the influence that Shakespeare commands on the contemporary literature. The relatedness of contemporary literature and Shakespeare cannot be basically disregarded.

There is no other work, however beautiful, that does not seem monotonous after Shakespeare. Free of every theory, accepting all of life, rejecting nothing, uniting the real and the poetic, appealing to the most various men, to a rude work-man as to a wit, Shakespeare's drama is a great river of life and beauty. All who thirst for art or truth, the comic or the tender, ecstasy or satire, light or shade, can stoop to drink from its waters, and at almost every instant of their changing moods find the one drop to slake their thirst (Legouis 438).

The universal appeal of Shakespearean drama to so many people across the globe and its appeal to every century make the plays timeless. The themes are universal in nature which captures the hearts of both the readers and audience. The characters in the plays are representative of individuals who are intimately associated to the psychology of the reader. Many theoretical perspectives refer back to Shakespeare to prove their authenticity of theory and others refer his works for linguistic augmentation. "Among the many post-colonial reworkings of canonical texts, Shakespeare's plays figure prominently as targets of counter-discourse" (Gilbert 19). As such, many postcolonial theorists and writers alike identify themselves with many of Shakespeare's character and plays. The postcolonial struggle for identity, individuality and independence are connected to the various themes of Shakespearean drama. Shakespeare has unknowing struck the chords of the postcolonial search for freedom.

As described in the previous chapter, phenomenology is the study of phenomena, that is, to experience a situation as they are. A subaltern can be conceived as a person that is under an authority or rule that could be a slave, lower in position and so on. Thus, the characters in Shakespeare's plays experience different situations wherein they are subalternised.

Othello can be read as a postcolonial text in terms of its relevance to the postcolonial preoccupation with themes of identity, otherness, subaltern ideology of both men and women. The sub-title of the play hints at the ideology of identity crisis, *The Moor of Venice*. The western subordination of the coloured people as inferior to their race is being portrayed.

The play begins in Venice, Italy where Roderigo and Iago are in conversation. From the very first line of the play it is seen that Iago is not a trustworthy person and Roderigo accuses him of giving false hope as well as taking his money, "Never tell me, I take it much unkindly that thou (Iago) who hast had my purse, as if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this" (Shakespeare 4). Their conversation revolves around Othello whom they both abhor for one reason or the other. They both mention about the look and colour of Othello, calling him 'thick lips', 'black ram', 'the Moor' which shows that Othello is not liked most because he is of a coloured race and inferior to them. But his superior rank makes it impossible for them to abuse him in any other way. Perhaps, Iago would have just let go of his revenge had Othello been of his own kind. "What has happened in the historical relations between whites and blacks, is that because of its belief in its radical superiority, associated with the economic and military dominance of colonialism, the white race has disrupted the reciprocity of this fundamental process of recognition" (Crow 3). He boils with anger and frustration because he cannot bear the fact that he was defeated in rank by none other than a coloured man which makes him psychologically disturbed and thus, plans his revenge.

Iago also acts as the chorus informing the reader about certain incidents that happen somewhere else. Thus, he informs that Othello has already married Desdemona without her father's knowledge which further angers Roderigo as he is in love with Desdemona. Iago also is angry with Othello because he did not give him the position of Lieutenant which he was hoping for. They both go and inform Brabantio

of his daughter's secret marriage which puts him in a rage. Iago goes and tells Othello that Brabantio has come to know about his secret marriage but Othello is confident that he is worthy of Desdemona:

Let him do his spite;
My services, which I have done the Signiory
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,
Which when I know, that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate. I fetch my life and being,
From men of royal siege. And my demerits
May speak (unbonneted) to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd. For know Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona... (Shakespeare 9).

Othello's explanation can only prove his inferiority towards the rest of Venice because he says that he also accepts his 'otherness' but he can identify himself with the others through his superiority in position thus, giving him a hybrid identity; his true identity as a moor or coloured person and as a person with power and position. Othello is accepted into the elite society only because of his ability as a strong general. "Not I: I must be found. My parts, my title, and my perfect soul shall manifest me rightly" (10). Brabantio meets Othello and accuses him of seducing Desdemona with some kind of black magic:

Oh thou foul thief,
Where hast thou stow'd my daughter?
Damn'd as thou art, thou has enchanted her
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
(If she in chains of magic were not bound)
Whether a maid, so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage, that she shunn'd
The wealthy curled darling of our Nation,
Would ever have (t' incur a general mock)
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom,
Of such a thing as thou: to fear, not to delight?
Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense,

That thou has practis'd on her with foul charms,
Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals,
That weakens motion. (11)

This speech leads to another dimension in the play where focus shifts to Desdemona. The word 'stow'd' means kept, but if interpreted into the feminist point of view it would mean to store a thing. Thus, Desdemona is viewed and considered by the men as a possession or a thing to own. And when Brabantio talks about Othello and his 'sooty bosom', he cannot imagine his fair and beautiful daughter to have fallen in love with a 'thing as thou'. The interplay of words hints at Brabantio's discrimination of Othello as a beast or an animal and not as a human being.

Othello is summoned by the Duke and they all go to meet him. Othello is one of the most courageous generals that Italy has and the Duke trusts him for his abilities. The Duke wants Othello to go to Cyprus where the Turks are advancing toward. But in the mean-time, Brabantio comes and accuses Othello in front of the Senators that his daughter was forcefully taken captive by Othello. But Othello declares that Desdemona fell in love with him all by herself and says that even Brabantio was fond of him:

Her father loved me, oft invited me:
Still question'd me the story of my life,
From year to year: the battles, sieges, fortune,
That I have pass'd.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bad me tell it.
Wherein I spoke of my dangerous chances:
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breath 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach;
Of being taken by the insolent foe,
And sold to slavery. Of my redemption thence,
And portance in my traveller's history...
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs;
She swore in faith 'twas strange: 'twas passing strange,
'Twas pitiful: 'twas wondrous pitiful...

She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I lov'd her, that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have us'd (17-18).

The past that Othello relates gives an insight into his struggles of overcoming not only his fears but also his identity as a coloured person from being a slave to an able general. These fantastic experiences also throw light on the Europeans' view of the Orient which is represented by Othello. In this relation, Edward Said rightly comments that "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said 71). The appearance of Desdemona confirms Othello's declaration of their mutual love and marriage. She says:

My noble father'
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life, and education:
My life and education both learn me,
How to respect you. You are the Lord of duty,
I am hitherto your daughter. But there's my husband;
And so much duty, as my mother show'd
To you, preferring you before her father:
So much I challenge, that I may profess
Due to the Moor my Lord (Shakespeare 18).

Desdemona's plea clearly shows not only her love and respect for both her father and husband but also reveals the treatment of women in sixteenth century England. The text is suggestive of women as inferior to men and were trained and educated only for marriages and not to become independent and individualistic. Desdemona's 'duty' shifts from father to husband exposing her life-long subordination by men in a patriarchal society where she has no voice but be dutiful, obedient and passive. When the senator tells Othello to "use Desdemona well" (21), he meant to take care of her but a postcolonial reading of the text and the meaning of the word 'use' is questionable. And the Duke's consolation of Brabantio, "If virtue no delighted beauty lack, Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (21), though meant in a good sense mocks the very individuality of Othello's existence as a coloured being.

Brabantio can only lament about his daughter who is won over by Othello and gives his blessings. Othello and Desdemona happily plan to go to Cyprus and Roderigo is left devastated because he can no longer fight for Desdemona, but Iago feeds him with more lies about Othello's character and what they can do to win over Desdemona's heart:

It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will... It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor... these Moors are changeable in their wills... the food that to him now is luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly, as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body she will find the errors of her choice.... If sanctimony, and a frail vow, betwixt an erring barbarian, and super-subtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits, and all the tribe of hell, thou shall enjoy her... (22-23).

The misconception of the white man about the coloured man comes to light with the above explanation of Othello by Iago. He describes Othello as weak willed and that he can easily be manipulated. Desdemona is also described as being in love with Othello out of pity and enchantment. The mysteriousness of the so called Orient is depicted through Desdemona's attraction towards Othello and his stories. The differentiation that Iago puts between Othello as a 'barbarian' and himself as a 'super-subtle Venetian' also indicates his superiority to Othello and his jealousy and hatred.

The scene shifts from Venice to Cyprus where news is heard that the Turkish fleet had been destroyed in a storm and that Cyprus was safe. In the mean-time, Desdemona and Emilia (Iago's wife) also come to Cyprus with Iago and Roderigo who are welcomed by Montana, Governor of Cyprus and Michael Cassio. To cheer Desdemona, Iago composes some of his own tunes and entertains her. Even though Desdemona is considered as a subaltern, she cannot be spared from the critic when she compares a fair lady with that of a coloured one which can be seen in the following lines:

IAGO: If she be fair, and wise: fairness, and wit,
The one 's for use, the other useth it.

DESDEMONA: Well prais'd:

How if she be black and witty?

IAGO: If she be black, and thereto have a wit,
She'll find a white, that shall her blackness fit.

DESDEMONA: Worse, and worse (28-29).

These lines throw light on subalternization of coloured women by the western women who consider themselves superior.

Othello arrives at Cyprus safe and reunites with his wife:

It give me wonder, great as my content
To see you here before me.
Oh my soul's joy:
If after every tempest, come such calms,
May the winds blow, till they have wakened death:
And let the labouring bark again as low,
As hell 's from heaven. If it were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy. For I fear,
My soul had her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this,
Succeeds in unknown fate...
I cannot speak enough of this content,
It stops me here: it is too much of joy (30).

His love for Desdemona is pure and he cannot believe that she loves him back. It is Othello's low-esteem as an individual and as a coloured person which would trigger his emotions to give birth to jealousy later on in the play.

Iago cannot stand Othello's happiness and swears to take revenge for not giving him the position of lieutenant and also suspects that Othello had an affair with his wife too. "Modern rationalization about 'colour' tend to be different from those of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. We are powerfully aware of the relativism of viewpoints; we distinguish easily between different racial cultures; and explicit arguments about the mingling of the races usually begin at the economic and social level and only move to questions of God's providence at the lunatic fringe" (Hunter 181). As such, Iago is threatened by a so called outsider who has come to take over

what is supposed to be his. His confession in the following lines throws light on his innermost feelings and desires:

The Moor (howbeit that I endure him not)
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think, he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband...
But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Had leap'd into my seat. The thought whereof,
Doth (like a poisonous mineral) gnaw my inwards:
And nothing can, or shall content my soul
Till I an even'd with him, wife, for wife.
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor,
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgement cannot cure. Which thing to do,
If this poor Trash of Venice, whom I trace
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
Abuse him to the Moor, in the right grab
(for I fear Cassio with my night-cap too)
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass,
And practicing upon his peace, and quiet,
Even to madness. 'Tis here: but yet confus'd,
Knavery's plain face, is never seen, till us'd. (Shakespeare 33)

Othello declares celebration and feasting where he gives charge to Cassio to look after everything and retires for the night. But Iago has a different game to play with Cassio, as Cassio, if drunk becomes wild and gets into fights he cannot control. Even though Othello trusts Iago which can be seen when Othello calls him 'honest Iago' or 'most honest', Iago cannot let go of his vengeance and hates Othello even more calling him 'black Othello'. When Iago invites Cassio for a drink, he declines but with Iago's insistence he obliges and later gets into a fight and wounds Montano.

Othello has no option but to strip Cassio of his rank, “thy honesty, and love doth mince this matter, making it light to Cassio: Cassio I love thee, but never more be Officer of mine” (41). It fulfils Iago’s evil plans but he hides everything perfectly by declaring to Cassio that he is an honest man, “As I am an honest man, I had thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation” (42). He then encourages Cassio to go and plead his case with Desdemona who could help him restore his reputation by talking to Othello in his place:

You, or any man living, may be drunk at the time man, I tell you what you shall do: Our General’s wife, is now the General. I may say so, in this respect, for that he had devoted, and given up himself to the contemplation, mark: and the devotement of her parts and graces. Confess yourself freely to her: Importune her help to put you in your place again. She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, she holds it a vice in her goodness, not to do more that she is requested. This broken joint between you, and her husband, entreat her to splinter. And my fortune against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love, shall grow stronger, than it was before (43).

Innocent Cassio is caught in Iago’s bait and he plans out his villainous plot:

How poor are they that have no patience?
What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
Thou know’st we work by wit, and not by witchcraft,
And wit depends on dilatory time:
Does ’t not go well?...
Two things are to be done:
My wife must move for Cassio to her Mistress:
I’ll set her on myself, a while, to draw the Moor apart,
And bring him jump, when he may Cassio find
Soliciting his wife: ay, that ’s the way:
Dull not device, by coldness, and delay (44-45).

Taking the advice of Iago, Cassio goes to meet Desdemona in the absence of Othello and pleads his case but when Iago leads Othello (knowingly) to Desdemona, Cassio

avoids Othello as he is ashamed but Iago pretends that there is something more to Cassio's avoidance of Othello. Desdemona, unaware of Iago's plans, begs Othello to reinstate Cassio back to his position but he would not listen to her. Desdemona is helpless and leaves Othello saying, "be as your fancies teach you: whatever you be, I am obedient" (50). The very word 'obedient' draws the picture of a subaltern ideology as it meant that Desdemona is forever bound under Othello's authority. She is not only bound by her marriage to Othello but also by the patriarchal rule where women should be submissive and passive.

Iago's evil counsel against Desdemona makes Othello mad with rage and when Iago says "Men should be what they seem, or those that be not, would they might seem none" (52), he unintentionally reveals his double-mindedness. He also warns about the evil effects of jealousy which he has already planted in Othello:

Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio,
Wear your eyes, thus: not jealousy, nor secure:
I would have your free, and noble nature,
Out of self-bounty, be abus'd: Look to 't:
I know our country disposition well:
In Venice, they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands.
Their best conscience,
Is not to leave 't undone, but keep 't unknown (54).

Iago falls further from grace when he tells Othello how Desdemona had deceived her father by marrying him, "She did deceive her Father, marrying you, and when she seem'd to shake, and fear your looks, she lov'd them most" (54). Othello's pure intentions are poisoned with Iago's lies and he starts to doubt his own existence:

...For O am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chambers have: Or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years (yet that 's not much)
She 's gone. I am abus'd, and my relief
Must be to loathe her. Oh curse of marriage!

That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses, yet 'tis the plague to Grat-ones,
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base,
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:
Even then, this forked plague is fated to us,
When we do quicken, look where she comes: (56-57).

Othello's confidence starts to shake a bit because he now looks at himself and finds his uniqueness. The only strings that attach him to the elite are his position as a general and his marriage to Desdemona. If he is stripped of these two positions, then he becomes an ordinary black moor. "...Caution is necessary about the issue of language in subordinated cultures, which as Fanon and others have shown is crucially related to the need for a secure cultural identity, and to the achievement of self-worth and self-determination" (Crow 6). Thus, Othello is subordinated to the extent that he fails to recognize his abilities and become more exposed to the outside influence. He also realises that whatever he does, he can never be accepted as a normal commoner or for that matter, a respectable general.

The most crucial moment in the play is when Emilia finds the handkerchief given to Desdemona by Othello which Iago had asked Emilia to steal it for him several times. When Emilia tries to present Iago the handkerchief, he cannot stand Emilia's presence calling her "a foolish wife" (Shakespeare 58), but when she gives him the handkerchief he promptly dismisses her. Iago's treatment of Emilia (even Desdemona and Bianca) discloses his attitude towards women. He treats his wife as a slave and uses her for his selfish gains. Emilia is seen as an ardent wife trying to please her temperamental husband by doing everything he asks for in the hope of getting a little love and affection but to avail. Her affection and duty binds her to Iago. When Othello asks for proof, Iago manipulates his mind further by injecting more lies which Othello blindly believes:

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore;
Be sure of it: Give me the ocular proof,

Or by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my wak'd wrath (59).

Othello unconsciously hints at the real nature of Iago by calling him a dog. Othello believes Iago's accusations on Desdemona and acknowledges his jealousy and anger. Most importantly, he accepts his own blackness; "My name that was as fresh as Dian's visage, is now grim'd and black as mine own face" (60). Iago's false disclosure about the missing handkerchief makes Othello blind with fury and calls Desdemona a 'lewd minx' dragging her further into the abyss of a subaltern. When Desdemona lies to Othello about the lost handkerchief in fear, Othello becomes even more suspicious about Desdemona's ardent plea for Cassio's reinstatement and gets into a rage.

When Cassio and Iago appear before Desdemona and Emilia, Iago is elated to see his evil plans taking its tool. Desdemona's confession to Cassio about her futile attempts is an exposition of the general flaws in men, "Men's nature wrangle with inferior things, though great ones are their object" (68). These lines criticise men as individuals who are incapable of controlling their emotions. The appearance of Bianca throws new light on the treatment of women as early as the Elizabethan era. They were used for men's pleasure and as possessions or goods that can be bought and sold by money. Bianca and Cassio get into an argument because of Desdemona's handkerchief as Bianca thinks that Cassio has found another lover. Iago's lies have poisoned Othello's mind and he cannot act or think like a sane person anymore and falls down in a trance. When he regains his consciousness Iago makes him hide and hear the conversation of himself (Iago) and Cassio. In actuality, they are talking about Bianca but Iago makes sure that Othello misinterprets it as otherwise. This is the last blow on Othello's ego and he prepares to punish and avenge Desdemona for her unfaithfulness. Lodovico, Desdemona's cousin comes to meet them and Othello mistreats Desdemona in front of everyone. Othello is torn between his love for Desdemona and his vengeance as he cannot hate or love her at the same time:

LODOVICO: Truly obedient Lady:

I do beseech your Lordship call her back...

OTHELLO: Ay, you did wish, that I would make her turn:

Sir, she can turn, and turn: and yet go on
And turn again. And she can weep, Sir, weep.
And she 's obedient: as you say obedient.
Very obedient: proceed you in your tears.
Concerning this Sir, (Oh well painted-passion)
I am commanded home: get you away: (77-78).

Desdemona's subaltern identity fully grows with the above description. She almost identifies to a slave who is obedient and passive. The change in Othello's character can be seen from the following lines when Lodovico is unable to recognise Othello. He also becomes savage in his bearings:

Is this the noble Moor, whom our full Senate
Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature
Whom passion could not shake? Whose solid virtue
The shot of accident, nor dart of chance
Could neither graze, nor pierce? (78).

Othello questions Emilia about Desdemona and she tries to prove Desdemona's innocence, but Othello does not believe her and bids her to call Desdemona. Othello's fury makes him lose his sanity to the extent of failing to recognise his wife when he asks, "Why? What art thou? ...Come swear it: damn thyself, lest being like one of Heavens, the devils themselves should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double-damn'd: swear thou art honest" (80). He could not believe that of all the people Desdemona whom he loves dearly and trusts has deceived him but Desdemona in all her innocence reminds him that she is "Your wife my Lord: your true and loyal wife" (80). Her declaration proves her innocence in true nature as a devoted wife. She is even ignorant about the sin she has been accused of and is confused when Othello says:

Was this fair paper? This most goodly book
Made to write whore upon? What committed,
Committed? Oh, thou public commoner,
I should make very forges of my cheeks,
That would to cinders burn up modesty,

Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed?
Heaven stops the nose at it, and the Moon winks:
The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets,
Is hush'd within the hollow mine of Earth
And will not hear 't. What committed?
Impudent strumpet! (81).

Othello's use of the words such as 'whore' and 'strumpet' depicts the mental code of men towards women who are considered nothing but possessions. Desdemona fails to recognise Othello because he has turned into a totally different person and Emilia consoles Desdemona to no avail and she regrets about the past.

Roderigo also becomes impatient of Iago's delayed promises and accuses him "Every day thou dafts me with some device Iago, and rather as it seems to me now, keep'st from me all conveniency, that supplies me with the least advantage of hope: I will indeed no longer endure it. Nor am I yet persuaded to put up in peace, what already I have foolishly suffer'd" (85). But Iago strikes again and Roderigo is caught in the web of lies. Roderigo actually discloses Iago's true manipulative nature.

Later Othello plans to kill Desdemona and asks her to wait on him in their chamber. As she prepares for bed aided by Emilia she asks Emilia:

DESDEMONA: I have heard it said so. O these men, these men!
Dost thou in conscience think (tell me Emilia)
That there be women do abuse their husbands
In such gross kind?
EMILIA: There be some such, no question.
DESDEMONA: Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?
EMILIA: Why? Would not you?
DESDEMONA: No, by this heavenly light.
EMELIA: Nor I neither, by this heavenly light:
I might do 't as well i' th' dark.
DESDEMONA: Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?
EMILIA: The world 's a huge thing:
It is a great price, for a small vice (89).

The above conversation opens up a whole new side of the masochistic character of men in general. The conversation can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it talks about the treatment and abuse of women by men in society and secondly, it talks about the physical abuse or domestic violence of women. A woman is full of love and compassion and she would never doubt or have second thoughts about a man's love and trusts in her, but men tend to shift their loyalties with just the right amount of lies.

Iago is someone who is a villain of the worst kind who seems to have no remorse for his evil deeds and has no room for love for anybody but himself. He only thinks about his selfish gains and is happy to see the final results. He is a man who is blindsided by greed and jealousy. Iago plans well but he could only wound both Roderigo and Cassio (and flees). Othello appears at the scene and realises that 'honest' Iago has done his job and goes to kill Desdemona now that he has proof. Meanwhile, Lodovico and Gratiano hear someone crying for help and Iago also joins them and discovers that both Roderigo and Cassio are still alive thus, Iago quickly kills Roderigo and helps Cassio and bids Emilia to inform Othello of the news.

Desdemona pleads with Othello not to kill her and she even tries to save Othello in her dying breath that she killed herself: "No: I myself, farewell: commend me to my kind Lord: Oh farewell" (99). She dies a 'guiltless death'. For Othello Desdemona becomes "a liar gone to burning hell", but to Emilia "Oh me more Angel she, and you the blaker Devil" (99). The contrasting interpretation of Desdemona by Othello and Emilia can be compared to real interpretations by men and women towards the true character of a woman. Realization dawns on Emilia when Othello tells her that her husband was the driving force behind exposing Desdemona's infidelity. When Iago, Montano, Gratiano comes to meet Othello Emilia interrupts their conversation to expose her husband's villainy:

Good Gentlemen, let me have leave to speak:
'Tis proper I obey him: but not now:
Perchance Iago, I will ne'er go home...
'Twill out, 'twill out. I peace?
No, I will speak as liberal as the North;
Let Heaven, and men, and devils, let them all,
All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak (102-103).

When Iago tried to stop her she stands up and boldly relates the whole story and of Iago's evil deeds thus, standing up against the traditional norm of patriarchal domination. She is no longer afraid of losing a villainous husband or of society for standing up against their norms. Emilia becomes wiser as the play progresses and come full-circle at the end of the play with her brave protestations against not only her husband but also of the patriarchal society. Before Othello kills himself he tries to amend his possession and unforgivable deed towards Desdemona:

Soft you; a word or two before you go:
I have done the State some service, and they know 't:
No more of that. I pray you in your letters,
When you shall this unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me, as I am. Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.
Then you must speak,
Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well:
Of one, not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Preplex'd in the extreme: Of one, whose hand
(Like the base Indian) threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe: Of one, whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this:
And say besides, that is Aleppo once,
Where a malignant, and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian, and traduc'd the State,
I took by th' throat the circumcised dog,
And smote his, thus (106-107).

Othello realizes that he had been used as a puppet by Iago for his evil desires. But after he kills Desdemona in cold blood, he cannot forgive himself for the heinous crime that he has committed. He becomes a subaltern of the worse kind who unknowingly dug his own grave. Iago is the mastermind and colonizer of the rest of the characters who become pitiful subjects under his domination.

A postcolonial reading of *The Tempest* discloses a lot of themes related to the subaltern ideology. The play revolves around an enchanted island where all the characters meet with the help of a sprite. Though there are a lot of interpretations and reading to the play, one cannot ignore the theme of colonialism and its effects. “While the play was written in seventeenth-century England, post-colonial criticism takes the play outwards towards its complicated transactions between European and African and Caribbean cultures in the succeeding centuries” (Singh 506). The play begins with a group of people in a ship who are sailing in a tempestuous sea which is caused by Ariel, a spirit who works under Prospero (a wizard of the enchanted island).

A play most directly involved in dramatizing European ‘discovery’ and colonization in the early modern period was *The Tempest*. While *The Tempest* is considered the primary text on which post-colonial criticism first took root, this critical method has spawned a growing body of work that has enlarged our understanding of the politics of race, nationalism, and colonialism in early modern England. And this mode of criticism complements – and often overlaps with – the critical work of feminist and materialist criticism (449).

The treatment of the crew of the ship is an apt example of the subordination of the lower section by the upper class in society. Sebastian calls the Boatswain names because he cannot calm and control the ship, “A pox o’ your throat, you bawling, blasphemous, in-charitable dog” (Shakespeare 32). Even though it is not his fault, the Boatswain is being abused and threatened by the elites on board. In fact, if he ever leaves the ship the rest of the crew would meet disastrous incidence.

On the enchanted island, Prospero meets Miranda “wearing a cloak and bearing a staff” (33). Miranda in her innocence pleads with Prospero to stop the tempest, but Prospero assures Miranda that nothing would happen and says:

MIRANDA: If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to th’ welkin’s cheek,
Dashes the fire out. O! I have suffered

With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel
(Who had no doubt some noble creature in her)
Dashed all to pieces: O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perished.
Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere
It should the good ship so have swallowed and
The fraughting souls within her...

PROSPERO: No harm:

I have done nothing but in care of thee
(Of thee, my dear one; thee, my daughter), who
Art ignorant of what thou art, naught knowing
Of whence I am, nor that I am more better
Than Prospero, master of a full poor cell,
And thy no greater father (33).

Miranda's innocence and pure character is revealed when she pleads with Prospero. It also shows that she is under the stern authority of her father. When Prospero calms her down and explains why he is doing so, he unknowingly exposes his colonialist instinct when he says "master of a full poor cell". Prospero thinks that the time has come for Miranda to know about how they happen to come and stay on the enchanted island. He relates how his brother Antonio cheated him and abdicated his throne. He also tells Miranda about the King of Naples, Alonso who aided Antonio in overthrowing him. Prospero and Miranda would have been killed if it wasn't for Gonzalo "a noble Neapolitan" who helped them to flee Milan with things they might need and most importantly, Prospero's books on magic. The revelation by Prospero dawns on Miranda.

Letting Miranda sleep Prospero calls upon his airy servant Ariel:

PROSPERO: ...Come away, servant, come! I am ready now.

Approach, my Ariel. Come!

ARIEL: All hail, great master; grave sir, hail! I come

To answer thy best pleasure: be 't to fly,

To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride

On the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task
Ariel and all his quality (39).

The conversation between them reflects on the postcolonial theme of colonizer and the colonized. Later on in their conversation, Ariel reminds Prospero about his promise:

ARIEL: Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
Which is not yet performed me.

PROSPERO: How now? Moody?
What is't thou canst demand?

ARIEL: My liberty.

PROSPERO: Before the time be out? No more!

ARIEL: I prithee,
Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made no mistaking, served
Without or grudge or grumblings; thou didst promise
To bate me a full year.

PROSPERO: Dost thou forget from what a torment I did free thee?...
Thou, my slave,
As thou report'st thyself, was then her servant (40-41).

Prospero relates how Ariel was saved by him from Sycorax and reminds that Ariel has obligations toward him which further makes Ariel a subaltern. He even threatens Ariel to send him back to his previous position. The sprite has no other option but to be obedient under Prospero.

Caliban is introduced as another slave of Prospero who is half human and half monster who do their domestic chores: "Dull thing, I say so: he, that Caliban whom now I keep in service" (43). Prospero abuses Caliban because of his looks (who ironically speaks in verse and not in prose). Caliban is the incarnation of the lowest class of society whom the elites trample over. He protests against Prospero but he is too powerful to defeat and so Caliban can do nothing but grumble and obey Prospero:

I must eat my dinner.

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st frist,
Tou strok'st me, and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee,
And showed thee all the qualities o'th'isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile.
Curst be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you:
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o'th'island (43-44).

Even Miranda abuses Caliban and says:

MIRANDA: Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness will not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn. Had that in't which good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison
CALIBAN: You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,
For learning me your language (44).

This particular conversation is the most ideal example of the colonization and exploitation by the Europeans of native people throughout the world. "Miranda and

Prospero's justifications of their enslavement of the 'savage' Caliban, whose 'vile race' lacks natural goodness, are strongly challenged by post-colonial criticism. Unlike generations of earlier readers, post-colonial critics view Prospero's and Miranda's relations with Caliban as an allegory of European colonialism – one that reveals Shakespeare's own ambivalence toward Prospero's power" (Singh 505). Although the eyes of the natives were opened by Western means of education, hygiene and social manners; they took away the true identity of the natives by providing them with an alternative which they 'adopted' but never could 'adapt'. The hibernation process is painful and only leaves a scar and a hybrid identity which the natives cannot blend. Caliban's accusation of Miranda's teaching him how to speak and behave augments the above explanation.

If, traditionally, Prospero's art represented the world of civility and learning in contrast to the 'natural' black magic of Sycorax, Caliban's mother, anti-colonial revisions of the play challenged this rather abstract Eurocentric division between art and nature. Instead, as Africans and Caribbeans that widespread national liberation was imminent – that is from 1959 onwards – they began to revise and mobilize the play in defence of Caliban's right to the island on which he is born prior to Prospero's arrival. Caliban's assertion in the play, 'This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me', became the rallying cry for African and Caribbean intellectuals from the 19960s to the 1970s (501).

Ferdinand and Miranda meet for the first time and he is awestruck with the beauty of Miranda and she, who has never seen another mortal than her old father is mesmerized by Ferdinand's looks. To break the spell with each other, Prospero accuses Ferdinand to be a spy who has come to usurp the island. Prospero forcefully takes Miranda from Ferdinand's sight and captures him to be his slave. The theme of liberty and freedom can be seen in the following lines when Ferdinand says "All corners else o'th'earth let liberty make use of; space enough have I in such a prison" and Prospero replies, "Thou shalt be as free as mountain winds; but then exactly do all points of my command" (Shakespeare 49).

On another part of the island; Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrain and Francisco converse about the past. Gonzalo says:

GONZALO (*to Alonso*): Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,-

ANTONIO: He'd sow't with nettle-seed.

SEBASTIAN: Or docks, or mallows.

GONZALO: And were the king on't, what would I do?

SEBASTIAN: Scape being drunk, for want of wine.

GONZALO: I'th' commonwealth I would by contraries

Execute all things: for no kind of traffic

Would I admit; no name of magistrate;

Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,

Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;

No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;

No occupation, all men idle, all,

And women too, but innocent and pure;

No sovereignty- (53-54).

The above conversation leads to the theme of colonisation. Ariel comes amidst them but is invisible playing sweet music and lulls them to sweet slumber. While they're sleeping Sebastian and Antonio gets into a fight in their sleep walk. The accusations they heap upon each other reveal their own evil deeds and aspirations and further add to the theme of subalternity and subordination:

SEBASTIAN: I remember you did supplant your brother Prospero.

ANTONIO: True; and look how well my garments sit upon me,

Much feater than before. My brother's servants

Were then my fellows; now they are my men.

SEBASTIAN: But for your conscience?

ANTONIO: Ay, sir: where lies that? If 'twere a kibe,

'Twould put me to my bosom. (58).

Ariel wakes them up and everyone is surprised and realizes that the island is enchanted. These men are under the spell of Prospero who wants to avenge them of their misdeeds. In another part of the island Caliban is out to gather firewood for

Prospero. He is depressed as he never gets any rest from work. He meets Trinculo and Stephano, Alonso's jester and butler whom he believes to be some kind of spirits sent by Prospero. Later he takes them to be gods and bows down low and worships them. It can be noted that these two men are more debased than the monster Caliban as they are not only drunk but also has no sense of sanity. They let Caliban kiss their feet and make him believe that they are nobles. Caliban's reaction to the appearance of Trinculo and Stephano symbolises the response of the native people towards the advent of the Europeans who were considered as gods:

These be fine things, and if they be not sprites!
That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor:
I will kneel to him...
I'll swear upon that bottle to be thy true subject, for the liquor is not
earthy...I'll show thee every fertile inch of the island;
And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee be my god...
I'll kiss thy foot. I'll swear myself thy subject...
I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmoset: I'll bring thee
Young scamels from the rock... (63-64).

The awe and respect with which the natives invite the Europeans into their rich and pristine land is reciprocated in cruelty which leads to the postcolonial themes of subalternisation, isolation, hybridity and so on. Robert Fernandez Retamar in his essay *Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America* explains in detail about the status of Caliban in the following words:

Caliban is Shakespeare's anagram for 'cannibal', an expression which he had already used to mean anthropophagus, in the third part of *Henry IV* and *Othello*, and which comes in turn from the 'carib'. Before the arrival of the Europeans, whom they resisted heroically, the Carib Indians were the most valiant and war-like inhabitants of the very lands which we occupy today. Their name lives on in the term Caribbean Sea (referred to genially by some as the American

Mediterranean; just as if we were to call the Mediterranean the Caribbean of Europe). But the name *carib* in itself – as well as in its deformation, *cannibal* – has been perpetuated in the eyes of Europeans above all as a defamation (Retamar 65).

It is not only Retamar who has identified Caliban to the natives but most of the postcolonial writers and critics alike relate him to the subalterns whose freedom and rights are being stolen from them.

Even though Ferdinand works under Prospero he cannot forget Miranda's beauty and daydreams about her. When Miranda comes and tried to assist him, he would not let her and confesses his love for her:

O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with kind event
If I speak true; if hollowly, invert
What best is boded me to mischief! I,
Beyond all limit of what else i'th' world,
Do love, prize, honour you (Shakespeare 67).

Prospero bears witness to their conversation and is happy to see their innocent and pure love for each other and says, "Fair encounter of two most rare affections: heavens rain grace on that which breeds between 'em!" (67). In a world full of hatred, vengeance, bloodshed and pathos, the love of Ferdinand and Miranda is a ray of sunshine to brighten up the gloom that surrounds. It is also a message that good always conquers over evil desires. These young innocent lovers give hope to new fresh beginnings.

Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo are enjoying the wine and in the process they plan to overthrow Prospero. Caliban discloses about all the magic tricks that Prospero possesses. Ariel then appears and plays a tune which they all follow. In another part of the island Alonso with the others are in search of Ferdinand but old Gonzalo is tired and while they all rest Ariel appears with its sweet music and lures them into its tunes putting them all again into its spell and displaying a banquet for their famished selves. Suddenly the banquet vanishes and Ariel exposes their past misdeeds:

You are three men of sin, whom destiny-
 That had to instrument this lower world
 And what is in't – the never-surfeited sea
 Had caused to belch up you, and on this island
 Where man doth not inhabit, you 'mongst men
 Being most unfit to live. I have made you mad;
 And even with suchlike valour, men hang and drown
 Their proper selves. [*Several men draw their swords.*]
 You fools! I and my fellows
 Are ministers of fate. The elements
 Of whom your swords are tempered may as well
 Wound the loud winds, or with bemocked-at stabs
 Kill the still-closing waters, as diminish
 One dowl that's in my plume; my fellow ministers
 Are like invulnerable (74).

Gonzalo recognizes their fears and anxiety about their past and says:

All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
 Like poison given to work a great time after,
 Now 'gins to bite the spirits. I do beseech you,
 That are of suppler joints, follow them swiftly,
 May now provoke them to (76).

Prospero and Ferdinand speak and their conversation can be interpreted into postcolonial subalternist view:

PROSPERO (*to Ferdinand*): If I have too austere punished you,
 Your compensation makes amends, for I
 Have given you here a third of mine own life,
 Or that for which I live: who once again
 I tender to thy hand.
 FERDINAND: I do believe it against an oracle.
 PROSPERO: Then as my gift, and thine own acquisition
 Worthily purchased, take my daughter. But
 If thou dost break her virgin-knot before

All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rite be ministered,
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow; but barren hate
Sour-eyed distain, and discord shall bestrew
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed,
As Hymen's lamp shall light you (77).

Prospero accepts Ferdinand as his son-in-law and permits their marriage. The words that are used actually hints strongly to some kind of business transaction or deal of an object and not Miranda. She is considered as a possession and not as an individual. Prospero marries Ferdinand and Miranda and through the help of Miranda and Ariel invokes Iris, Ceres and Juno to bless the young couple. Prospero then goes to avenge his enemies and is met with the three drunken fellows outside his cell:

PROSPERO: A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quiet lost;
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to roaring (83).

It shows the real nature of Caliban who can never become sane. They enter the cell and Trinculo and Stephano tries the garments which are hung and act as if they are royals. They are chased away by Ariel and Prospero prepares himself to meet his brother Antonio and the rest. He wears his magic robes and asks Ariel to bring all of them to him. The command Prospero has over the island and of the people in it portrays him as a dictator. But he is willing to give up his magic if he is reconciled with everyone who has wronged him:

By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and when I have required
Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,

Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book (87).

Everyone is brought into the circle by Ariel which Prospero has made and as they stand charmed Prospero speaks of each one of them:

(To Alonso:) A solemn air, and the best comforter

To an unsettled fancy, cure thy brains

(Now useless), boiled within thy skull.

(To Sebastian and Antonio:)

For you are spell-stopped.

Holy Gonzalo, honourable man,

Mine eyes, ev'n sociable to the show of thine,

Fall fellowly drops...

(To Antonio:) Flesh and blood,

You, brother mine, that entertained ambition,

Expelled remorse and nature; who, with Sebastian

(Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong),

Would here have killed your king: I do forgive thee,

Unnatural though thou art (87-88).

Prospero also tells Ariel to bring the rest of the crew on the ship. As it dawns on the island all the people in the circle come to their senses again and meet with Prospero. Alonso is not only reunited with his son but also meets his daughter-in-law Miranda. Prospero also exposes Sebastian's evil plans to usurp Alonso's kingdom. When the three drunken fellows are brought in front of the rest Prospero proudly shows off Caliban as his position:

This mis-shapen knave:

His mother was a witch, and one so strong

That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs,

And deal in her command without her power.

These three have robbed me, and this demi devil

(For he's a bastard one) had plotted with them

To take my life. Two of these fellows you

Must know and own; this thing of darkness I
Acknowledge mine (94).

This further gives insight into the subalternity of Caliban. He is dismissed as a thing which Prospero possesses. The play ends with an epilogue spoken by Prospero. *The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's last plays and the epilogue can be read as Shakespeare's own retiring speech from his long career as a dramatist:

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint. Now, 'tis true,
I must be here confined by you,
Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
Since I have my dukedom got,
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island, by your spell;
But release me from my bands,
With the help of your good hands.
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be reliev'd by prayer
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free (96).

Everything is set in place at the end of the play and everybody learns their lesson. The features of Colonialism and Postcolonialism cannot be readily ignored in the play as the characters are bound by an authority, be it magic or human beings themselves. "In trying to view the conditions of Caliban's servitude from his perspective, post-colonial criticism gives legitimacy to his claims to the island, based on a reading of history antithetical to that narrated by Prospero to his daughter. In Caliban's account,

Prospero is the intruder who betrayed the initial welcome given to him by Caliban” (Singh 506).

William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is considered one of his most celebrated tragedies as it deals and relates to the psychological state of many contemporary readers. Although it is a revenge tragedy, the characters in the play intimately relates to many readers with its various themes. The postcolonial themes of subaltern ideology and patriarchy run along the play. The very place Denmark where the play is set can be read and understood in postcolonial perspective. Historical revelations show that Denmark oppressed Norway and its surrounding countries like Poland, Germany and Russia and others in order to have control over the Baltic Sea where Poland and Finland suffered much and were caught between these wars. The struggle for autonomy by Norway against Denmark is depicted in the play.

The play begins with two sentries at the castle of Elsinore who are on guard and Horatio waiting for the ghost to appear, which finally appears before them:

MARCELLUS: Peace, break thee off: look where it comes again!

BARNARDO: In the same figure like the King that’s dead.

MARCELLUS: Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio.

BARNARDO: Looks a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO: Most like; it harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO: It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS: Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO: What art thou that usurp’st this time of night,

Together with that fair and warlike form

In which the majesty of buried Denmark

Did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee speak! (Shakespeare 40).

Horatio did not believe at first about the ghost but when he sees it with his own eyes he could not contain his fears. The appearance of the ghost which is Hamlets father from the very beginning brings in the subaltern theme in the play. Even though he is dead the ghost haunts Hamlet and orders him to take revenge for his death.

In the Council Chamber of the castle Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet and some others enter. It is learnt that the king of Denmark is dead and his brother Claudius is the new monarch. Claudius sends messengers to Norway for he had defeated the previous king who was Fordingbrass' father. He also lets Laertes return to France and asks Hamlet about his melancholic condition requesting him to stay with them. Later Hamlet discloses about his melancholic state:

But two months dead – nay not so much, not two –
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, and yet within a month –
Let me not think on't: frailty, thy name is woman –
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe all tears, why she, even she –
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer – married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not (nor it cannot come to) good.
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue (48).

Hamlet cannot believe that his beloved mother and uncle would do such an unacceptable thing. But he is interrupted by his friend Horatio who informs him that he had seen his father's ghost the previous night. Hamlet had a very close relationship with his father and when he hears about the ghost he suspects that something is not right and says, "My father's spirit in arms? All is not well; I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come. Till then, sit still my soul; foul deeds will rise, though all

the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes" (51). The domination of the ghost even after death can be seen as an ideal theme of the postcolonial subalternisation of Hamlet. He is caught between his duty and love for his father to avenge his murderer, and his desire to be a normal individual pursuing his dreams. His father's dominance hampers Hamlet's psychological state of mind which leads to his insanity.

At Polonius' house Laertes warns Ophelia about Hamlet's character and not to fall in love with him. Laertes is ready to leave for France and Polonius advises his son thus:

Yet here, Laertes? Abroad, abroad for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stayed for. There – my blessing with thee,
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act...
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in Fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are most select and generous, chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell; my blessing season this in thee (53-54).

This is wise advice that every good and responsible father gives to their son. And in doing so the sons are bound by their fathers' advice which automatically links to patriarchal domination in the family. Fathers have full authority over ones family members and thus, all of them become subordinates to the sole patriarch. Ophelia also

receives similar advice from Polonius. She promises to obey her father by restricting her freedom of expression and individuality in the process. She says, “I shall obey, my Lord” (55) which puts all of her authority under her father. “...The masculine domination of the family (is) a corrupting influence, making boys selfish and girls abject” (Sharma 17).

Hamlet and Horatio wait for the ghost to reappear and when it does, it beckons Hamlet to speak in private. The ghost reveals the true nature of its death:

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burned and purged away...
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder...
Haste me to know't, that I with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love
May sweep to my revenge...
But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown...
Ay! That incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts –
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce! – won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous Queen (Shakespeare 59-61).

The responsibility the ghost puts on Hamlet grows heavy on him as he ponders on what should be done. Hamlet is now angry and frustrated of how his own mother and uncle would conspire in such an inhuman act. He promises the ghost to take revenge making him the sole trusted subordinate in disposing the ghost's commands but is burdened by the enormity of his responsibility: “How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself – as I perchance hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on -... O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right!” (64).

Polonius sends Reynaldo to take care as well as spy on his son Laertes. Later Ophelia enters and narrates about the strange encounter she had with Hamlet. As promised Ophelia reports everything related to Hamlet to her father as an obedient and dutiful daughter. Polonius concludes that Hamlet's thwarted love has made him mad. Meanwhile Claudius has sent for Hamlet's two friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to stay and accompany him for some time in the castle he is still mourning his father's death. They readily accept it as the king and queen have asked them, binding them to their position as commoners:

ROSENCRANTZ: Both your Majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

GUILDENSTERN: But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves in the full bent,
To lay our service freely at your feet
To be commanded (69).

Polonius enters and informs that he has discovered about Hamlet's 'lunacy' and tells the king to first hear the news of the envoy from Norway. Voltemand the envoy reports about Fortinbras who asks for safe passage through Denmark to go to Poland. Polonius then reveals about Hamlet's love for his daughter: "I have a daughter – have while she is mine – who in her duty and obedience, mark, hath given me this" (71). The very description of Polonius about Ophelia is a proclamation of the female subordination to man. Women are meant to be obedient, dutiful and passive towards the patriarchal domination. When Hamlet enters, Polonius tries to find out what is bothering him but there is no answer. Hamlet knows why his friends are present and that they are sent by the king and queen to watch over him. They converse about a travelling troupe who is very famous and have come to entertain at the royal palace. Hamlet plans to add twist in the play as he secretly asks an actor whether he would be able to memorize a few lines. Hamlet is filled with sorrow as he cannot bear the burden of revenge upon his head. He is forever doomed and bound by his father's ghost who makes him sink deeper and deeper into an abyss:

Ay, so, God buy you! Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!...
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made...
Ha? Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall...
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion! Fie upon't; foh! (83-84).

Thus, Hamlet first wants to make sure about Claudius as a murderer before he kills him because Hamlet is overcome by his deep-rooted moral values towards humanity. The king and queen ask Hamlet's friends to watch him closely. Claudius also asks Gertrude to retire and she goes away saying "I shall obey you" (86). The act of Gertrude's submission to Claudius shows her powerlessness towards male domination. "Claudius murdered his own brother so he can never be the right heir to the throne. He married Gertrude not for the reason that he loved her but for the selfish motive of acquiring the throne. The woman was only a source and not the means. She was used as a tool and thus a distrust of males is shown who achieve power through marriage to the female monarchy" (Mandal 65).

Unaware of their presence Hamlet enters and soliloquises thus:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them. To die – to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished (Shakespeare 86-87).

These famous lines expose the innermost thoughts of Hamlet who is in a dilemma whether to act according to the ghost's bidding or to listen to his moral obligations. When he meets Ophelia, Hamlet is felt with suspicion and when she tries to confess her love Hamlet dismisses her to a nunnery. Hamlet cannot trust anyone now and not even Ophelia as she is too loyal to her father: "If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery; go, farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monster's you make of them, to a nunnery go, and quickly too. Farewell" (88-89). This lines first reveals about the purity and innocence of Ophelia and secondly warns about the real world which is full of evil people who are ready to devour an individual. Everyone thinks that Hamlet is becoming psychologically unstable but Claudius recognizes Hamlet's troubled mind and therefore decides to send him to England:

... There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger; which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute (89).

The troupe is ready to take the stage and Hamlet makes sure that the actor would incorporate the speech which Hamlet had written. Meanwhile Hamlet asks Horatio to look Claudius closely for any kind of reaction. There is a pantomime and the play follows both showing of a king being murdered according to the ghost declaration. Claudius rises and rushes out which confirms the truth about Hamlet father's death:

HORATIO: You might have rhymed.

HAMLET: O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand

pound. Didst perceive?

HORATIO: Very well, my lord.

HAMLET: Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HORATIO: I did very well note him (99).

His friends and even Polonius come to inform Hamlet about his mother's desire to see him but he dismisses everyone and broods upon his task of avenging his father's murderer:

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyard yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quack to look on. Soft, now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature: let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom;
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites:
How in my words somever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent! (101-102).

He is devastated that his own mother would easily forget her husband and be married to none other than his brother, a murderer. He loves his mother but cannot forgive her for her incestuous act. Later, Claudius has arranged for Hamlet's voyage to England with his two friends. Polonius volunteers to spy on Hamlet and his mother. Overcome by emotions Claudius prays for forgiveness without real repentance and says, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go" (105). Hamlet spares Claudius because he thinks that Claudius would get to heaven if he kills him while praying:

Now might I do it pat, now he is a-praying;
And now I'll do't; (*he draws his sword*) and so he goes to heaven, and
so am I revenged. That would be scanned:
A villain kills my father, and for that

I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven. (104).

Gertrude and Polonius enter her chamber and Polonius hides behind the curtains. Hamlet then enters and Gertrude scolds him for offending Claudius. But he would not agree with her instead abuses her and she cries for help Polonius tries to come to her aid but Hamlet stabs him thinking that it is Claudius, thus killing him. Hamlet then accuses Gertrude of her wrong doings:

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
As false as dices' oaths – O such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face does glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act (106-107).

As they speak the ghost appears and tells Hamlet about his mother and commands him to avenge his murderers. The ghost does not leave Hamlet alone but appears at crucial times and interrupts to remind him of the promise he made, making Hamlet more miserable as he cannot act spontaneously. "...The Ghost is a 'father who knows' and whose knowledge threatens the status of the symbolic mandate he imposes upon his son. The content of this knowledge consists not only of the 'harrow(ing)' secret of his purgatorial prison-house but, more disturbingly, of his 'enjoyment' of the 'blossoms' of his sin" (Charnes 29).

HAMLET: Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
Th'important acting of your dread command?
O, say!

GHOST: Do not forget! This visitation
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose,
 But look, amazement on thy mother sits.
 O step between her and her fighting soul;
 Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works,
 Speak to her, hamlet...
 HAMLET: On him, on *him*! Look you how pale he glares.
 His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,
 Would make them capable. – Do not look upon me,
 Lest with this piteous action you convert
 My stern effects. Then what I have to do
 Will want true colour – tears perchance for blood (109).

When Gertrude is alone in her chamber, Claudius and Hamlet's two friends enter and she relates what had happened earlier. The two friends go and ask Hamlet about the whereabouts of the death body but he speaks in riddles

That I can keep your counsel and not mine own.
 Besides, to be demanded of a sponge – what replication
 should be made by the son of a king?...
 Ay, sir, that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his
 authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end: he
 keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be
 last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but
 squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again (113-114).

The above passage gives way to the theme of subordination and exploitation by Claudius. The last lines are suggestive of exploiting individuals for selfish gains. No one is spared by Claudius in achieving his evil desire of becoming king and to destroy anyone who tries to contest his authority. Hamlet is brought before Claudius and is immediately sent to England with his two friends in the meantime Fortinbras and his army passes through Denmark to win over a small patch of land that belongs to Poland. This incident sparks Hamlet's conscience to further his vengeful heart to act. Fortinbras' fight for such an insignificant patch of land is crucial as it represents his

subaltern identity which he can only overcome by defeating his enemy. Hamlet is pushed to the edge to act against his will:

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more:
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused...
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The eminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! (117).

Ophelia has gone mad after his father's death and everyone sympathises with her:

...Poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgement,
Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts;
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France,
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death,
Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,

Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear (120-121).

Ophelia is caught in a world which she cannot control or understand. Her innocent heart is robbed of its happiness in order to fulfil the evil designs of the world. Her mistake is obedience to her father and loving a man who does not need her. "Ophelia in *Hamlet* has been made a sacrificial goat not only by her father and king Claudius, but by the most noble Hamlet and her dear brother Laertes" (Mandal 66). Her world is shattered when her father dies as he is the epitome of authority and without him she is free from her duty but ironically her freedom rather kills her because she does not know how to survive without an authority. Laertes also comes back to avenge his father's murderer:

How came he dead? I' not be juggled with.
To hell allegiance! Vows to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
That both the worlds I gave to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father (Shakespeare 122).

The above passage is an apt image of the amalgamation of postcolonial ideology. Meanwhile, Horatio receives a letter that Hamlet has escaped the ship bound to England with the help of pirates who attacked their ship. Claudius instigates Laertes to avenge his father's death and says:

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize:
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chambers;
Hamlet returned shall know you are come home;
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence
And st a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together,
And wager on your heads. He, being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,

Will not peruse the foils, so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father (130).

Claudius is the incarnation of colonial authority that manipulates and exploits his subjects for his selfish desires.

In the final act Hamlet and Horatio meet near a graveyard and comes to know of Ophelia's sudden death and her death body is brought for burial to the graveyard where Hamlet mourns her death:

... Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where
be your gibes now? Your gambols, your songs, your flashes of
merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to
mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my
lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour
she must come. Make her laugh at that (138).

Ophelia had to die because she is too innocent for the wicked world. She is allowed 'virgin rites' by scattering flowers on her coffin by her mourners because she died chaste. "When we come to Ophelia we find her protected and perished under three different layers of male protectivism. She has to carry out the duties of a daughter, a sister, and lover to Polonius, Laertes, and Hamlet respectively" (Pandey 64). The hopelessness under the pressures of patriarchy completely destroys Ophelia to the extent of her death. Polonius and Laertes binds her under their selfish authority and Hamlet cannot give her the identity (love) which would have saved her.

Osric come and informs Hamlet that Claudius has arranged a friendly fencing match between himself and Laertes which would take place before the king and queen and their attendance to which Hamlet agrees. Hamlet's explanation about his actions to Laertes indirectly reveals about his bondage under the ghost which commands his every move:

But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,

How I am punished with a sore distraction.
What I have done
That might your nature, honour and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not; hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged:
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience,
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother (Shakespeare 146).

The motive of Laertes revenge also comes from his ardent devotion towards his father Polonius as he says:

I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motif in this case should stir me most
To my revenge, but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation,
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungored; but till that time,
I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it (146-147).

Claudius brings a poisoned drink in case Laertes dagger does not work and waits impatiently. Hamlet and Laertes wound each other in the duel and the poisoned drink is taken by Gertrude and dies. "Both of the women in *Hamlet*, Gertrude and Ophelia, die because of the selfish nature of Claudius and Hamlet respectively. Although both

women are sacrificial victims, the importance of their death in developing the plot is varied. Ophelia is the ultimate sacrificial victim in *Hamlet*” (Pandey 67).

Laertes confesses that it was all Claudius plan:

It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain.
No med’cine in the world can do thee good:
In thee there is not half an hour of life.
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice
Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again. Thy mother’s poisoned.
I can no more; the King, the King’s to blame (Shakespeare 149).

Hamlet wounds Claudius and forces him to drink the rest of the drink which is poisoned and he dies. Both Laertes and Hamlet are driven by vengeance for their death fathers and both are successful because even though they die, they have fulfilled their duty. The unquestioned obedience and duty that they both fell is a significant representation of their subordination or subaltern identity. Gertrude also represents the subaltern women who are forced by circumstances to be who she is. Only after her husband’s death she gets married to Claudius because she had no other option. Every time she looks at Hamlet, Gertrude reflects on her deeds and even with weeps and asks forgiveness from Hamlet. There is no other way but to obey Claudius and his commands because if she protests, her very life is at stake. Just for the selfish desire of staying alive Gertrude becomes passive and obedient. As there is no heir to the throne of Denmark, Fortinbras becomes its new monarch making him free from the authority of Claudius and reinstating his individuality.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream is perhaps the most technically challenging play of Shakespeare during his time. But through all its incorporations and creativity the ingenuity of William Shakespeare is revealed. The blend of the two worlds of fairies and mortals gives way to changes in both. “After examining the structure and artifice of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, we can now ask how much reality it masters by its mirth. This comedy is the first that is completely, and triumphantly successful; but it has the limitations, as well as the strengths, of a youthful play” (Barber 157).

Act I opens at the hall in the palace of Theseus where himself and Hippolyta are planning to get married. Philostrate is asked to invite all Athens to come and celebrate their marriage. Theseus recalls how he had fought for Hippolyta; “Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, and won thy love, doing thee injuries; but I will wed thee in another key, with pomp, with triumph, and with revelling” (Shakespeare 33). The conquest of Amazon by Theseus has made Hippolyta surrender and accept to be his wife. Their marriage is a union between the conqueror and the conquest, coloniser and the colonised. Since Theseus has conquered Hippolyta, she has no other choice but to obey and become his wife. “Hippolyta and the other women attempt to break this mold when they speak their mind and demand their rights. This puts the female characters in conflict with the male characters” as well as bring tension between the power relationship between male dominance and female submissiveness (Chohlis np). From the very opening part of the play there is the unmistakable theme of postcolonial theme of subalternisation.

Egeus come to meet Theseus with complain which concerns his daughter Hermia and her two suitors Lysander and Demetrius:

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander. And, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child (Shakespeare 33-34).

Egeus accuses Lysander of seducing Hermia with his romantic gestures which has let her to go against her father’s will. But Egeus is determined to get her married to Demetrius; “As she is mine, I may dispose of her: which shall be either to this gentleman, or to her death; according to our law immediately provided in that case” (34). His declaration of Hermia’s position can be translated into the subaltern ideology where Egeus represents patriarchal domination which curbs the identity and individuality of Hermia. Theseus’ advice to Hermia about her life is also a testament of the deep rootedness in the traditional patriarchal rule:

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.

To you, your father should be as a god:
One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman (34).

“Theseus, perhaps representative of all men in a patriarchal society, projects his own socially constructed culture onto his experiences, and in turn, represses and oppresses that which does not conform to his understanding. He is quick to uphold patriarchal attitudes and tradition” (Colborn np). Hermia argues that Lysander is as worthy as Demetrius and that her father would also see in Lysander what she sees. The verdict that Theseus gives Hermia is harsh in comparison to the sin that she has committed:

Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether (if you yield not to your father’s choice)
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mewed
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon...
Prepare to die
For disobedience to your father’s will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
Or on Diana’s altar to protest,
For aye, austerity and single life (Shakespeare 35).

Her acceptance of the final verdict is an exposition of her strong will to protest against the traditional rule of patriarchy. Hermia thus says: “So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord. Ere I will yield my virgin patent up unto his lordship, whose unwisdom yoke my soul consents not to give sovereignty” (35). Demetrius also asks both Hermia and Lysander to give up their love for each other but Lysander scorns at the request which leads Egeus to remind him that Hermia is his daughter and that he wants her to marry

Demetrius and says: “she is mine, and all my right of her I do estate onto Demetrius” (35). Egeus’ stress on reminding not only Lysander but everyone about Hermia being his daughter depicts not just his protective instinct as a parent but also notes on his over possessiveness and domination which can be explained with the words like ‘mine’ and ‘right’.

Theseus is the duke of Athens and so has the full authority upon his subjects. His treatments of both his betrothal and Hermia is similar in the sense that though their situations are different, like Hippolyta becoming Theseus’ wife just because she had lost the fight and Hermia squeezed in between duty and love. They both suffer in the hands of Theseus because of the authority that he has on both the women. Even the rest of the men like Egeus, Lysander and Demetrius have no other choice but to follow and listen to Theseus:

For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father’s will;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up
(Which by no means we may extenuate)
To death, or to a vow of single life.
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial, and confer with you
Of something that nearly concerns yourselves (36).

Hermia and Lysander are left alone to lament their bitter situation. The lovers cannot live without each other and so Lysander persuades Hermia to elope with him and to break free from her father’s yoke

If thou lov’st me, then,
Steal forth thy father’s house tomorrow night:
And in the wood a league without the town
(Where I did meet thee once with Helena
To do observance to a morn of May),
There will I stay for thee (37).

Hermia promises to meet him and as they are talking Helena enters and laments about her one-sided, undying love for Demetrius and wishes to be like Hermia in every way so that Demetrius would fall in love with her. "...Although she disobeys her father's will and escapes subordination and dependence on her father, she is still not able to be fully independent as an individual. This is due to the fact that she is now completely dependent on Lysander, again a man, whose proposal she is following without a second thought" (Steppat np). The two lovers disclose about their elopement to Helena who thinks that if she goes and tell Demetrius about their plan then he would look at her with thankfulness, which is enough for her to survive:

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind:
...I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the woods will he tomorrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence,
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again (Shakespeare 39).

In another rugged part of Athens Quince, Bottom, Snug, Flute, Snout and Starveling gather to rehearse a play to be acted at Theseus and Hippolyta's nuptial. These characters represent the life of the lower class people of the Elizabethan era. Their names are also representation of the jobs that the lower class people did during Shakespeare's time:

The name 'Quince' suggests 'acidic fruit of the pear family' but is probably, here, a version of 'quines' or 'quoins', which could aptly mean 'wooden wedges used by carpenters'. A 'bottom' was the core or spool on which a weaver's skein of thread or yarn was wound. The adjective 'snug' can mean close-fitting, and Snug, being a joiner, should make close-fitting joints. Flute, being a bellows-mender, might repair fluted church-organs (and his voice may be a fluty treble). The noun 'snout' can mean 'spout', and thus is appropriate for Snout, a tinker who could mend kettles. Tailors were proverbially deemed thin: hence the name 'Starveling', implying a thin, weak person (Watts 97).

Act II opens at night in the palace wood where Robin Goodfellow and a fairy are in conversation. Both Robin and the fairy are under the authority- Robin is the servant of Oberon and the fairy is under Titania. The changeling boy is the reason why the king and queen of fairies have fallen off in their relationship. The changeling is an Indian boy who is wanted by both Oberon and Titania for their own personal desires. Oberon wants the changeling to be “knight of his train, to trace the forest wild” but Titania on the other hand wants the boy to “crown him with flowers, and make him all her joy” (Shakespeare 43). Their purpose for the boy is rather different and the clash between paternal domination and maternal love as drawn apart Oberon and Titania.

The introduction of Robin and the fairy is a revelation of how mortals are under the mercy of the fairies. The tricks that they play upon humans bring mirth to them but many a times the humans suffer because he cannot control his situations. Rather the fairies play mischief on humans and make him the victim when Robin says:

I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me:
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And 'Tailor!' cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole choir hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there (44).

Oberon and Titania enter and immediately get into an argument as Titania is unwilling to part with the changeling boy:

OBERON: I'll met by moonlight, proud Titania.
 TITANIA: What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence –
 I have forsworn his bed and company.
 OBERON: Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?
 TITANIA: Then I must be thy lady; but I know
 When thou ha stol'n away from fairy land,
 And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
 Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
 To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
 Come from the farthest steep of India?
 But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
 Your buskined mistress and your warrior love...
 OBERON: How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,
 Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
 Knowing I know thy love to Theseus? (44-45).

Their squabble hints at Oberon's jealousy of Titania in possessing the changeling boy and most importantly his anger at Titania's high handedness because as he is the king of the fairies, he should be the one to make the final decision about the changeling boy's future whether he was brought by Titania or any other fairies. Thus, Titania rightly questions Oberon's actions as she thinks that she should also have the same power as Oberon as she is the 'lady' of the 'lord' and they should have the same power to execute. Titania's fight with Oberon can be seen in the light of the oppressed subaltern women who are considered inferior and incapable by men.

Titania's comment on Hippolyta as 'buskined mistress' draw attention to another dimension of the subaltern ideology where women are subalternised by their own kind. Titania's perspective towards Hippolyta as a physically strong woman without any feminine qualities indirectly criticises themselves about their position in society. According to Titania women should be amicable, well mannered with proper clothes but Hippolyta is an Amazonian queen who is not only opposed to the Elizabethan women in general but also is different in her race. This can be easily rectified with the description of the personality of the mythic Amazonian women by Geraldo De Sousa in the following words; "...As it came down to Shakespeare (the

myth) consists of a cluster of contradicting elements. Amazons conjure up images of spectacular female defiance, subversion, or ‘aggressive, self-determining desire’” (Sousa 12). This explanation does not only hint at the exotic nature of the Amazon in general but also projects the different lifestyle which is totally opposed to the European women who are trained only to please.

Oberon and Titania blame each other for the rift that has been made between them:

OBERON: Do you amend it then: it lies in you.

Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

I do but beg a little changeling boy,

To be my henchman.

TITANIA: Set your heart at rest.

The fairy land buys not the child of me.

His mother was a vot’ress of my order;

And in the spiced Indian air, by night,

Full often hath she gossiped by my side;

And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,

Marking th’embarked traders on the flood;

When we have laughed to see the sails conceive

And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait

Following (her womb then rich with my young squire),

Would imitate, and sail upon the land,

To fetch me trifles, and return again,

As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;

And for her sake do I rear up her boy;

And for her sake I will not part with him (Shakespeare 46).

By getting hold of the changeling boy and making him his ‘henchman’, Oberon is showing desperation in having the upper hand over Titania while Titania’s materialistic instinct kick-starts and makes her want to protect the boy and also to stand against patriarchal domination which is symbolised by Oberon. The above

description of India by Titania gives vivid illustrations of India as exotic and rich in natural resources. These descriptions also bring rich images of colonisation and exploitation of India by the European nations.

The Indian boy seems first to have been brought on stage to provide an exotic touch to some productions. A post-colonial perspective on the role of the Indian changeling boy foregrounds images of India in the play, bringing Shakespeare's Europe fairyland close to European trading and colonizing interests. While at the time India was frequently imagined by people as a place of fabulous wealth and exoticism, by the early seventeenth century – in the wake of explorations and trade – it was also being defined as a real geographical and cultural space, open to acquisitive drives. Shakespeare's comedy participated in the popular imaginings of 'India' both as an exotic place and also as a land to be conquered and occupied, as Oberon and Titania struggle to stake their claims on the 'Indian boy' (Singh 497-498).

Oberon and Titania come to a solution about their claims on the changeling boy and they depart. But as Titania exits Oberon promises himself "well go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove till I torment thee for this injury" (Shakespeare 47).

Oberon instructs his servant Robin to play mischief on Titania. In the mean time Demetrius and Helena happen to come near Oberon and Robin in search of Lysander and Hermia. Demetrius is so blinded by his love for Hermia that he cannot see Helena's love for him and tells her to stop following him but she begs to let her follow him and says:

I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel; spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave
(Unworthy as I am) to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love
(And yet a place of high respect with me)
Than to be used as you use your dog? (48).

Though he lets her follow him Demetrius confesses that he does not even want to look at her but she does not mind:

DEMETRIUS: But I shall do mischief in the wood.

HELENA: Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,

You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!

Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.

We cannot fight for love, as men may do;

We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,

To die upon the hand I love so well (49).

Helena is the victim of her own desires because even though she is not loved, she cannot help loving. Helena also comments on the capabilities and opportunities given to men who are forbidden to women because of their status of inferiority and marginalization as 'the other'. When Oberon sees the situation of Demetrius and Helena he quickly instructs Robin to put everything into place in favour of Helena. Robin solemnly promises Oberon "Fear not, my lord: you servant shall do so" (50). Titania and her retinue are in the woods and she reclines to take rest for the night when Oberon comes and drips the love potion on her eyelids saying:

What thou see'st when thou dost wake,

Do it for thy true-love take:

Love and languish for his sake.

Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,

Pard, or boar with bristled hair,

In thy eye it shall appear

When thou wak'st, it is thy dear:

Wake when some vile thing is near (51).

Oberon makes Titania a puppet in his hands so as to punish for her disobedience. Later Lysander and Hermia also come and lie down to sleep when Robin mistaken Lysander for Demetrius and drips the love potion on him:

Pretty soul, she durst not lie

Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.

Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
(He drips the juice upon Lysander's eyelids)
When thou wak'st, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.
So wake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon (52).

Helena is offended by Lysander's sudden change of devotion towards her:

LYSANDER (*leaping up*):
And run through fire I will. For thy sweet sake!
Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!
HELENA: Do not say so, Lysander, say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content...
Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When, at your hands, did I deserve this scorn?
Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
That I did never – no, nor never can –
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eyes,
But you must flout my insufficiency?...
O, that a lady, of one man refused,
Should of another therefore be abused! (53-54).

Act III opens in another part of the woods where the rustic players have gathered to rehearse their play. Unknown to the presence of fairies around them, they start practising their parts. Robin discovers them and decides to play mischief on the players and turns Bottom's head into an ass' head. This makes all the other run away in fear and Bottom is left all alone with the invisible Robin and overcome with fear starts to sing loudly which wakes Titania up and she immediately falls in love with him saying, "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. Mine ear is much enamoured of

thy note; so is mine eye enthralled to thy shape, and thy fair virtue's force (perforce) doth move me, on the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee" (58). Oberon's jealousy and desire for authority has made the unsuspected victims suffer and Robin enjoys his mischief in their expense.

Demetrius and Hermia enter with him wooing her and asking to forget about Lysander. Hermia accuses Demetrius of hurting Lysander and departs while he reclines for the night. When Oberon sees the mistaken identities, he orders Robin to make everything return to normal. Lysander and Helena enter where Demetrius is sleeping and with their arguments wakes him up and he immediately falls in love with Helena. Poor Helena is unable to understand what is happening and thus argues with the men

O spite! O hell! I see, you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
If you were civil, and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so:
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals to mock Helena (64).

She becomes the worst victim whose emotions are traumatized. Hermia also finds her way to where the others are and questions Lysander for his sudden disappearance. Lysander abuses Hermia and says:

HERMIA: Lysander, whereto tends all this?
LYSANDER: Away, you Ethiop!...
Hang off, thou cat, thou bur! Vile thing, let loose;
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA: What are you grown so rude? What change is this, sweet love?

LYSANDER: Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!

Out, loath'd med'cine! O hated potion, hence!

HERMIA: Do you not jest?...

LYSANDER: What? Should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?

Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

HERMIA: What? Can you do me greater harm than hate?...

LYSANDER: That I do hate thee and love Helena...

HERMIA: 'Little' again? Nothing but 'low' and 'little'?

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

LYSANDER: Get you gone, you dwarf;

You minimus, of hind'ring knot-grass made;

You bead, you acorn (67-69).

Although he is under a spell, Lysander's cruelty towards Hermia cannot be ignored. The masochist tendency towards women is seen in Lysander's abusive words as words are more hurtful than any other kind of physical abuse. Helena cannot bear all the drama around her and when Demetrius and Lysander draw their sword to fight for her she runs off.

Oberon intervenes and orders Robin: "This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st, or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully" (70). Robin goes in search of the lovers and leads them towards each other where weary with all the weird activities of the night they all fall asleep:

Up and down, up and down,

I will lead them up and down.

I am feared in field and town.

Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one...

On the ground,

Sleep sound.

I'll apply

To your eye:
Gentle lover, remedy.
(He drips the juice upon Lysander's eyelids)
When thou wak'st,
Thou tak'st
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown.
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again,
And all shall be well (71 and 73).

The lovers fall into the mischievous hands of the fairies who dominates over their every movement and even their emotions.

In Act IV a fairy and a mortal fall victim to Oberon's authority. Titania and Bottom enter with Titania's fairies serving them. Oberon sees that Titania has madly fallen in love with an ass' head and feels pity for her:

See'st thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
For meeting her of late, behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell, like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flow'rets' eyes,
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,

And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child:
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes (75).

Oberon's feeling of pity can be questioned because he already has what he wanted i.e. the changeling boy. Nevertheless he realises his mistakes and tried to undo it by reconciling with Titania. In another part of the woods Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and guards are searching for the runaway lovers and found them in deep slumber. They wake up and Lysander tries to explain their state but Egeus vehemently denies it:

Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough.
I beg the law, the law, upon his head. –
They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me:
You of your wife, and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife (78).

But when Demetrius relates everything and realises that it is Helena that he truly loves, Theseus declares that the young lovers would also wait along with him and Hippolyta and they all follow the duke and duchess to the temple. On another part of the woods Bottom wakes up and finds that he was sleeping the whole night with dreams.

Act V opens at the hall in the palace of Theseus where Hippolyta and Theseus are discussing about the strange stories and dreams that the lovers had told them. Theseus' comment on the lovers' dreams shed light on the theme of colonisation:

And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turn them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,

It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear! (82).

Everyone is gathered in a merry and the play of Pyramus and Thisby is chosen to be played. Philostrate's explanation of the life of the actors displays their status:

THESEUS: What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE: Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never laboured in their unbreathed memories
With this same play, against your nuptial

THESEUS: And we will hear it (84).

The play is enjoyed by all not because of its good performance but of its flaws and all depart with happiness. In the end Oberon and Titania with all their retinue come and bless the mortal couples:

Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be:
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the blots of nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand.
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace;

And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest (93).

The contemporariness of Shakespeare's plays cannot be questioned as every individual relates to his characters in their own way. Whether it is Othello, Hamlet, Prospero, Caliban or any other character, their psychological, social, political and economic struggles are intimately associated with that of a modern audience.

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Chapter III

HISTORY, SUBALTERN AND THE CONTEMPORARY IN GIRISH KARNAD

The root of the theatre in India goes back to ancient times. In the beginning, for many decades drama formed a part of the life of the common people as music, dance, storytelling and tableaux during festivals or on special occasions. Subsequently its different forms were adopted by the upper strata of society and continued as such for more than a thousand years. But as time pass by, the modern theatre started to diminish its aura as many people were lured to new improved and sophisticated genres in the form of television. Drama caters to a heterogeneous audience and it depends largely on popular taste and current fashion for its success and sustenance. But this argument does not hold good in the case of drama in English by Indian writers for it is always meant for a select elite audience. There is always a special audience, a category for plays in English in India. Tandon rightly remarks that:

Indians are known for their cultural heritage and religious fervour. Their devotion towards their religion and Vedas are exemplary. They considered Drama as 'the fifth Veda'. Being godlike in spirit it could not die even after the Muslim invasion; rather it was absorbed into folk forms in several Indian languages and effortlessly came closer to the common man and his life (Tandon vii).

Our familiarity about the early, primitive stage of theatrical activity is very meagre. But we can safely assert that in India, as in other culture, the theatrical activity began with primitive magical, religious or social rites, ritualistic dances, festivals etc. Today, many tribes in different parts of the country perform rituals related to birth, death, puberty, marriage, food gathering and so on. Prayers are offered to goddesses and primordial forces, in which the dramatic or theatrical elements are prominent. There are frequent references in Vedic literature to songs, dances, musical instruments and also to people connected with these activities. Later a

musical rendering of the lives of the heroes and other eminent persons of the community originated. Most of the requirements of the early dramatic forms thus appeared in the form of ballads or mere oral narrations passed on through generations.

The Indian view of life does not accept that a human being is a puppet in his hands of inscrutable, mysterious, blind, supernatural force, condemned to struggle, but destined to face a pre-determined tragedy. That is why in Sanskrit plays, instead of the usual exposition of any gradually intensifying real or imaginary personal predicament or sense of sin, we have a portrayal of the joys and sufferings, success and failure. It is for this reason that Sanskrit plays, unlike Greek drama, defy categorization into tragedy and comedy. Instead, they are categorized according to social and mental status of the protagonists and their consequent actions.

The postcolonial period in India witnessed the flourishing of poetry and novel but drama suffered a great deal of hibernation perhaps, due to the failure to capture the attention of the audience or the indifferent attitude of the audience. It had got its own problems, not shared by the other literary forms. Many writers have not taken much interest in writing plays, so it lacked in both quality and quantity. The reasons attributed for the insufficient amount of Indian Dramas are, the unsuitability for stage production, the lack of creativity among the dramatists to use the Indian myth and historical heritage.

Some notable playwrights of the present period are Asif Currimbhoy, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Gurcharan Das, Ratan Thiyam, Mahesh Dattani and so on. Their plays are successfully staged in Europe and America. The first Five Year Plan after Independence encouraged the performing of arts as a means of public enlightenment and The National School of Drama was established in Delhi. Institutions were founded in big cities for imparting training in dramatics. The National Drama festival was started in Delhi by the Sangeet Natak Academy in 1954.

The purpose of Drama and theatre for the Indians was to create a feeling of pleasure or bliss, *Rasa*, by delineating different situations, mental status and feelings of human beings. Chandrasekhar Kambar rightly observes that “*Rasa* is the meaning of drama. This is a statement which makes *Rasa* a comprehensive experience, not merely aesthetic. Aesthetique is the language of drama through which many things can be conveyed” (Chandrasekhar xii). The purpose of western drama on the other

hand, was to reveal the struggles of life in their various forms. The western Drama and theatre entered India as elements of the culture of the conquerors, which, in a well-planned manner deliberately tried to prove that when compared to the western the Indian culture was inferior, trivial and undeveloped. The Indian English drama is not considered to be popular like the Indian English novel. Translations paved the way for the growth of Indian Drama in English. This enabled the readers to be aware of the different culture and tradition followed in different regions in India. In spite of a work written in his own language, a dramatist is celebrated for his dramatizing skill and style. Prominence was given to the works produced with Indian dramatic tradition, history, legend, myth and folklore. Dramatists like Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad became popular not only in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Kannada, but also in all the Indian languages of modern Indian theatre by their innovative works and presentations of plays on the stage.

British drama influenced the Indian English drama in the early twentieth century, giving rise to many theatrical groups. The department of drama was established in major universities giving a bigger scope to dramatic art. Many tried but failed to represent the rich and purity of Indian tradition and culture in their works. This was done mostly to preserve the rich cultural heritage and history of the Indians which is considered as an individual's identity. Though poor in performing arts, these plays gave the rural community a sense of belongingness as these plays related to them. In recent years dramas produced in Indian language are complex according to its relationship to modernity as well as tradition. The works of Habib Tanvir, K.V. Panikkar, B. V. Karnath, Ratan Thiyam, Badal Sircar, and Girish Karnad celebrate the heterogeneous culture of modern Indian nation. Their plays demonstrated a discernible and anxious development, both in terms of performance aesthetics and politics of representation. Their choice of subject matter and dramatic practice were totally different from their predecessors. The dramatists returned to the past as an immediate response to westernization in India. Contemporary Indian dramatists have crossed cultural boundaries by going back in time for its source and creating plays which is appreciated all over the world for its vivid representation of not only the past but also for its relevance to the contemporary audience and its translations from regional languages to English which has increased its quality.

The epics and classics when translated in English becomes an important part in Indian English literature. Translated texts when taught to the students, increases their creativity and English translations popularized the Indian tradition among the scholars. Translations of regional drama served as a pillar for the emergence of national theatre into which the streams of theatrical art seem to converge. The translations have forged a link between the east and west, north and south and they contributed to the growing richness of contemporary creative consciousness. Independent Indian theatre paved the path for a group of young directors and actors who created better theatre to prove their talent, avoiding the native and basic professional theatre and the amiable atmosphere encouraged many playwrights to create plays to present a new type of drama for the fulfilment of practical demands of the stage. The freedom struggle gave a new opening to the dramatist and he handled historical characters to project the breakdown of communication.

Karnataka is known for its rich and ancient heritage in performing arts with their various genres dating back to as early as the twelfth century. Kannada is flourishing in almost all branches of literature and modernity. The most important writers of contemporary period are P. Lankesh, Nisar Ahamed, Girish Karnad, Chandrasekar Kambar and U.R. Ananthamurthy. The Kannada theatre and drama came into existence almost simultaneously. Most of the early playwrights wrote for very popular professional troupes. Great actors dominated the professional theatre and both the rural and the urban spectators went to see their favourite stars.

The history of modern Kannada theatre begins around the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The British administration had by then penetrated fairly deeply into present-day Karnataka, the material infrastructure for Kannada printing and publishing had been established and modern educational institutions had begun functioning across the region. All these in turn, influenced the development of Kannada literature, the period 1880-1920 often being termed the 'Kannada Renaissance'. (Vibuthi 48).

The other factors that had influenced Kannada literature, especially theatre was that the Kannada-speaking people were scattered around different states like Bombay, Hyderabad, Mysore and Madras. The encounter with the rich cultural, traditional and

dialectic forms lead to the growth and amalgamation for the Kannada-speaking population in forming a fine balance between rootedness and openness.

Girish Karnad is one of the most influential and pre-eminent playwrights of contemporary India who has enthralled international theatre through his work. He is a playwright, actor, screenwriter, movie director and writer in Kannada and translating them in English. He was born on 19th May 1938 in Matheran, Maharashtra into a Konkani speaking family. His early schooling was in Marathi. He grew up in the small town of Svisi where he came across travelling theatre groups called the Natak Mandalis in the 1950s which had an impression on his latter interest and eventual venture into the world of drama. He earned his Bachelor Degree (in Mathematics and Statistics) from Karnatak University, Dharwad in 1958 and then moved to Bombay for further studies where he got the Rhodes Scholarship (1960-63) and went to England for his Master's degree and (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) at Lincoln and Magdalen Colleges in Oxford. Somehow Karnad was drawn towards art and culture which he couldn't just ignore. Thus, Karnad worked as the President of the Oxford union (Oxford University Press, Madras) after his return to India in 1963 exposing him to numerous kinds of writings from around the world and also meeting the amateur theatre group, The Madras Players. In 1970, he resigned and took up writing full time. From 1974-75, Karnad was appointed as the director of the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune which again brought him closer to art and theatre. In 1987, he went to the University of Chicago, U.S.A as a visiting professor and also as Fulbright playwright-in-residence at the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations. During this time, *Nagamandala* was translated by Karnad himself from the original Kannada text and was premiered at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. After returning from the U.S.A he served as the chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy for the performing Arts), New Delhi, 1988-1993. In 1994, Karnad was awarded Doctor of Letters degree by the Karnatak University, Dharwad. He also served as the Director of the Nehru Centre and as Minister of Culture in the Indian High Commission, London (2000-03).

His plays have enthralled keen audience for four decades with his diverse display of themes. "Girish Karnad, undoubtedly, the most important dramatist of the contemporary Indian stage has enriched this genre with his talent...he has represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture" (Tandon 33). The form and

content of his plays are distinct as he makes use of the rich Indian myths, pre-modern and modern history and folktales. He has won accolades for his works and has been conferred with several awards. The awards conferred to Karnad for his contribution to Literature are Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1972, Padma Shri in 1974, Padma Bhushan in 1992, Kannada Sahitya Academy Award in the same year (1992), Sahitya Academy award in 1994, D. Litt., Karnatak University in the same year (1994), Jnanpith Award 1998, Kalidas Samman the same year (1998), Rajyotsava Award and Honorary Doctorate, University of Southern California, Los Angeles in 2011. Karnad has also won several National film awards for his contribution to Indian cinema which are: Best Director *Vamsha Vriksha* (with B. V. Karanth) in 1972, Second Best Feature Film *Kaadu* and Filmfare Award for Best Director *Kaadu* in 1974, Best Feature Film in Kannada *Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane* in 1977, Best Screenplay *Bhumika* (with Shyam Benegal and Satyadev Dubey) in 1978, Best Feature Film in Kannada *Ondanondu Kalalalli* in the same year (1978), Filmfare Best Screenplay Award *Godhuli* (with B. V. Karanth) in 1980, Best non feature Film *Kanaka Purandara* in 1989, Best Non-Feature Film on Social Issues *The Lamp in the Niche* in 1990, Best Film on Environment Conservtion *Cheluvi* in 1993, Best Feature Film in Kannada *Kaanuru Heggadathi* in 2000. Karnad is not only known for his work in art and culture but he is also a critic on religious fundamentalism and supports freedom of expression, secularism and multi-culturalism.

The plays of Girish Karnad were mostly written in Kannada and later on translated himself into English. Following are the plays of Karnad: *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlag* (1964), *Hayavadana* (1972), *Anjulimallige* (1977), *Hittina Hunja (Bali The Sacrifice* 1980), *Nagamandala (Play with Cobra* 1988), *Taledanda (Death by Beheading* 1990), *Agni mattu Male (The Fire and the Rain* 1995), *Tippuvina Kanasugalu (The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* 2004), *Odakalu Bimba (A heap of Broken Images* 2006), *Maduve Album (Wedding Album* 2006), *Flowers* (2012), *Benda Kaalu On Toast (Boiled Beans on Toast* 2012).

Yayati (1961), the first play of Karnad is an interpretation from of ancient myth from *Mahabharatha* where Yayati is in search of youth and immortality. He cannot accept the fact that he is getting old and that's when he pleads everyone to exchange his old age to youth and vigour. At last, his son Puru agrees to exchange and Yayati is endowed with the strength of his son. Puru, on the other hand becomes old

and shrivelled like his old father but he could not see his father dissatisfied and thus sacrifices his life for him. “The conflict itself seems to dramatise the thesis that knowledge is located at the intersection of power and desire” (Rajeswaran 129). This play is based on the existentialist view of a parent’s responsibility towards their children.

Girish Karnad’s second play *Tughlaq* (1964) is one of his best works and also earned him an assured position among the Indian English dramatists. The play is based on the 14th Century Sultan Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq of India. The play deviates from the true historical character and depicts Tughlaq as a visionary man who saw beyond his time and age and tried ardently to transform India. Aziz and Azam are reflections of the two close associates of Tughlaq (Barni the historian and Najib the politician) and who represents the two aspects of Tughlaq’s personality. It also reflects the political mood of disillusionment following the Nerhu era of idealism. The play is also credited for its ideal and immaculate technique, irony and paradox, accuracy and compactness, symbolism and its contemporarity.

Hayavadana (1972) is a blend of Kannada folktale (Somadeva’s *Kathasaristgara*) and Thomas Mann’s long short story *The Transposed Head*. The sub-plot (the horse-head man) serves as both the prologue and epilogue of the main plot. Devadatta (a scholarly young man) and Kapila (a robust man) are very close friends. Devadatta marries Padmini but after the marriage, Pabmini is drawn towards Kapila which becomes obvious during their Ujjain fair. Since Devadatta could not bear this, he kills himself by cutting off his head. In shock Kapila also dies the same manner. Padmini is devastated as both the men are dead but when she pray, Goddess Kali answers her prayers and tells her to keep their heads accordingly. But in her excitement, Padmini transposes the two heads. She is torn between the two men and at first chooses to live with Devadatta’s head but soon she leaves him and goes to the man with Kapila’s head. Thus, the two men fight and kill each other and then Padmini also commits Sati at the end. The dramatic techniques of both the western and the Indian has been beautifully blended and used in this play by Karnad.

Nagamandala (*The Play with Cobra*) was published in 1990 and then translated into English by Karnad himself. The play depicts the struggles a woman faces within the four walls of a house. In *Nagamandala*, Rani is married to Appanna

who treats her with condemn and goes off to his mistress after locking Rani up inside her own house. Kurudavva, an old blind woman tries to help Rani and give her a potion to be fed to Appanna when he comes for his meal. Rani cannot do so and throws the curry with the love potion into an ant-mould where a cobra lives. The cobra transforms himself as Appanna and visits Rani whenever Appanna leaves home which makes her pregnant with child. When Appana comes to know of this, he curses and beats Rani, calling her a whore. Thus, to prove her innocence, Rani goes through the snake ordeal and comes out triumphant making Appanna serve Rani instead at the end.

The play *Tale-Danda* (1990) is about the radical protest and reform movement called Veers Shivism in the twelfth century in Karnataka. It is also a challenge to the Hindus and their Varna system at large. Karnad does so by depicting Bijala, who is a Shudra and a barber by caste as the king of Kalyan.

The Fire in the Rain (1998) is based on an episode called *Vanaparva* from the *Mahabharatha*. This episode is narrated by the ascetic Lomasha to the Pandavas as they wander across the land during their exile. Two sages, Bharadwaj (who concentrated on his ascetic practices) and Raibhya (a learned man) were good friends. Yavakri, son of Bharadwaj was not satisfied with the world as he felt that his father did not get the respect he deserves. Unlike his father, Yavakri goes to the forest and performs 'Tapasya' in order to gain knowledge of the Vedas from the Gods. Indra appears before him and tries to change his mind but to no avail. He even goes and molests Raibhya's daughter-in-law. This makes Raibhya infuriated and he invokes the 'Kritya' and forms two person (one in the form of his daughter-in-law and the other a demon) and sends them to kill Yavakri. When Yavakri is killed, his father Bharadwaj curses his friend that he would be killed by his eldest son. Raibhya's eldest son Parvasu mistakes him as a deer and kills him and he hides the truth and blames it on his younger brother Arvasu. Arvasu obediently follows his brother's cruel intentions but goes to the forest and prays to the Gods to restore everybody's life just as before. The play is about the uselessness of knowledge, revenge and jealousy which is a representation of modernity. But true love can conquer any hurdles and gives life second chances to be better human beings.

The Dream of Tipu Sultan was written in 2004 to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Indian Independence. The play draws upon a range of historical sources to present convincing portraits of the principal characters. It deals with a controversial protagonist who can be characterized in radically opposite ways – as a heroic figure of anti-colonial resistance and a treacherous but fallible and even foolish adversary. The image of the play of polity is crisis, both because of internal dissensions and the presence of a powerful alien adversary, carries the same potential for application to contemporary problems and also politically relevant.

Bali: The Sacrifice (2004) is a stand against irrational rites and rituals which the Hindus practice, especially, the sacrificing of animals. It is also a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and his teachings on non-violence. The play mocks at the animal sacrifice that is being practiced which is represented by the character of the Queen Mother. The Queen is a representation of the sane, rational voice of humanity towards preservation of animals. Most importantly, the Queen Mother is a symbol of the orthodox and traditional Hindu beliefs whereas the Queen is the embodiment of the Jain principal of love, mercy and non-violence.

Wedding Album is a turn from Karnad's usual historical and political plays. It is a modern play depicting the advancement of science and technology and also the age old traditions and conventions that still plagues the Indian modern family. The main theme of the play is the celebration of marriage in an urban middle class family. This is a play which depicts the ever present tug-of-war between traditional values and the lure of the contemporary mind-set.

Boiled Beans on Toast explores the modern Bengaluru and the effects of globalization and the modern scientific developments that have been ushered in at present. Legends say that the name Bengaluru was acquired through a king who was so grateful to had eaten a dish of boiled beans. Karnad meticulously portrays stark realities of the contemporary society. The play holds a mirror to the fractured lives of its floating popularity which occupies a broad social spectrum from the struggler to the street-smart survivor, from the small town aspirant to the elite. This is a city of wild hopes and dashes dreams, of disappointment and despair, of environmental destruction and rapid development. Anjana Padabidri, the central character of the play weeps over the axing down of the magnificent rain tree across the street – a tree

because of which she built her house there. Her friend Dolly, a high-society battered wife with little to occupy her, rues the cement concrete that is replacing trees everywhere. However, what she rues, Prabhakar Telang finds exciting. He has never seen tall, glass-fronted buildings except on television, in the small town in the Western Ghats from where he comes. For him, they spell promise. For Vimala, the family servant, the anonymity that the city offers provides a convenient cover. The play is vibrant with moments of lyricism, cruelty and laughter, as it deals with a host of characters, jostling together, clashing, and getting entangled or preying upon each other, in the city of Bangalore. The play is neither loaded with memories of a Golden past nor does it take a moralistic stand against the government. It looks at the reality of the present with an unblinking eye.

The two *Monologues* – *Broken Images* and *Flowers* deal with new subjects and form. Karnad deftly compresses all features of a play into the monologue form. *Broken Images* takes up a debate that has grown steadily edgier since Independence – the politics of languages in Indian literary culture. It also deals with the popularity of novel in English. Mangula Nayak, the protagonist of the play raises the question of Kannada writers suddenly changing the linguistic medium from Kannada to English. This monologue presents the dichotomy between legitimacy and fraudulence. In *Flowers*, Karnad returns to the world of folklore which presents the clash between love and duty.

Karnad has often used history and the Indian mythology to deal with the contemporary issues, fabricating a link between the past and the present. History and mythological characters come alive (in the hands of Karnad) and are faced with contemporary issues of displacement, colonisation, political, psychological and social trauma.

He deftly makes use of myths, legends, and history in his plays to present the contemporary issues. He firmly believes that the roots of contemporary issues are deeply embedded in them. He attempts to interpret myth and history in the modern context. He is a great craftsman in whose writing we find a fine blending of genius and intuitive vision, a fertile imagination and subtle sense of wit and humour (Wadikar 24-25).

Thus, Karnad has been rightly called the Renaissance Man.

Tughlaq is an historical play which deals in depth about the last five years of the inconsistent reign of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq. This play was originally written in Kannada (1964). Karnad was persuaded to translate it into English by Alyque Padamsee. It was first staged at Bhalabai auditorium at Bombay in 1917. The rich and complex symbolism and the subtle weaving of its different motifs in the play cannot be ignored by the reader. The play has an interesting story, an intricate plot, scope for spectacle, and uses dramatic conventions like the comic pair, Aziz and Aazam. Many critics comment that the play was written as a reflection of the political mood of disillusionment during the British colonial rule followed by Jawaharlal Nehru's era of idealism. "Yet the play was not meant either as an 'obvious comment on Nehru' or an 'exact parallel' of the present: rather, it addressed the emerging ambivalence of power relations in the political and public spheres which were based, for the first time in Indian history, on the principles of mass representation of enfranchisement" (Dharwadker xviii).

The play, which is more than a political allegory has puzzling qualities, which reflects the character of Tughlaq. All the other characters in the drama have complex personalities. The author's treatment of the play is not historical although the plot and the theme are inspired by history. Karnad has artistically blended contradictory themes of real and the ideal, religious beliefs and intellectual decisions. Tughlaq was born at a wrong time and at a wrong place. The existential angst that permeates the text is a representation of the misunderstood modern man. C. R. Simha commends on Karnad's *Tughlaq*:

The proof of the play's depth, strength and dimensions is in its inherent capacity to admit various adaptations to suit the different artistic predilections and its ability to withstand experimentation. The more one explores the play, the more it endures. It grows in stature with the passage of time. Very few works exhibit such a quality to withstand the test of time. *Tughlaq* is one such play and we would have remained ever grateful to Karnad for writing this one play, even if he had written no other (Simha 124).

The action of the play centres around 1327 in Delhi and then on the highway from Delhi to Daulatabad and finally in and around the fort in Daulatabad five years later. Karnad meticulously sticks on to authentic historical sources while delineating Tughlaq's visionary zeal of innovative methods and religious tolerance.

Even a superficial familiarity with Karnad's written sources confirms that our seemingly 'objective' views of Tughlaq come either from medieval Muslim historians like Zia-ud-din Barani, who regarded him as a dangerous heretic, or from orientalist British historians like James Mill and Vincent Smith, who regarded him as a type of the brilliant but unprincipled 'Oriental despot' that British rule had eliminated in India. Karnad revives the paradoxical Tughlaq of history and occasionally constructs his dialogue verbatim out of various historical documents especially Barani's contemporaneous account of Tughlaq's reign, the *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi* (1357). He also follows the chronology of Tughlaq's reign closely, mixes historical characters (such as Barani, Najib, Sheikh Imam-ud-din, and the stepmother) with fictional inventions (such as Azam and Aziz), and thus creates a complex ideological and inter-textual connection between history, historiography and his own fiction (Dharwadker xx).

The play basically deals with the tragedy of the limits of human power. Tughlaq's regime is considered to be one of the most spectacular regimes of history and he is credited for his innovative policies. But he becomes a victim as he failed to convince the people of his visions. "Consequently, his plays evolve in a symbolic form out of tension between the archetypal and mythic experience, and further make it contemporarily relevant" (Jha 170).

The play opens in AD 1327 at the yard in front of the Chief Court of Justice in Delhi where a crowd has gathered with most of them Muslims and a few Hindus. The conversation between an old man and a young man in the crowd introduces the tense situation of the nation.

OLD MAN: God, what's this country coming to!

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

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

YOUNG MAN: Your days are over, old man. What's the use of Sultans who didn't allow a subject within a mile's distance? The king now, he isn't afraid to be human- (Karnad 5).

This conversation between them explains the clash between the older Orthodox Muslims who believes in the old order of tradition and culture, and the younger liberal who is ready to receive new and contemporary ideas. "It is clear that at the very beginning of the play the conflict is set in between the old and the new, orthodox religion and modernity" (Wadikar 90). There are certain rules that Tughlaq has made, like doing Namaz five times a day, giving authority to the common people to challenge the king, the exemption of jiziya tax from the Hindus and so on. The Hindus are also worried that there's something wrong with the king:

HINDU: Now, now, don't look at me when you say that. We didn't want an exemption! Look, when a sultan kicks me in the teeth and say, 'Pay up, you Hindu dog', I'm happy. I know I'm safe. But the moment a man comes along and says, 'I know you are a Hindu, but you are also a human being' - well that makes me nervous (Karnad 6).

Both the Hindus and the Muslims are threatened by such decisions as the Muslims feel that it's an insult to their community and the Hindus are suspicious that they are being deceived because the Sultan's rules are too good to be true. The very word of the Hindu critiques the present situation. Just then an announcer comes and announces thus:

Attention! Attention! In the name of the Allah it is hereby announced that Vishnu Prasad, a Brahmin of Shiknar, had filed a suit against His Merciful Majesty, that his land had been seized illegally by the officers of the State and that he should be given just compensation for the loss of the land and the privation resulting therefrom. The Kazi-i-Mumalik having considered this matter carefully and in full detail has declared

that the Brahmin's claim is just and that His Merciful Majesty is guilty of illegal appropriation of land. The Kazi-i-Mumalik has further declared that in return for the land and in compensation of the privation resulting from its loss the said Vishnu Prasad should receive a grant of five hundred silver dinars from the State treasury. His Merciful Majesty has accepted the decision of the Kazi-i-Mumalik as just and in addition to the grant of five hundred silver dinars has offered the said Vishnu Prasad a post in the Civil Service to ensure him a regular and adequate income (6-7).

This is ironic because Vishnu Prasad is not a real Hindu, in fact, he is Aziz a Muslim dhobi who is also a conman, had forged the identity of a Hindu and filed the suit against the Sultan. The Sultan becomes a puppet in the hands of a common thief who scams him of his idealistic views of life:

AAZAM: ...Anyway why did you have to dress up in these ungodly clothes? Couldn't you have come like a proper Muslim?

AZIZ: (*Scandalized*) But then what would happen to the king's impartial justice? A Muslim plaintiff against a Muslim king? I mean, where's the question there? Where's the equality between Hindus and Muslims? If, on the other hand, the plaintiff's a Hindu... well, you saw the crowd.

AAZAM: Complicated!

AZIZ: It's a bit too subtle for you. Anyway, here's my offer. From tomorrow I join the Civil Service. Why don't you come along too? I'll get you a job under me. You know, a Brahmin with a Muslim friend- the Sultan will like that (12).

Tughlaq himself comes and addresses the crowd:

My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of the Kazi and seen for yourselves how justice works in my kingdom- without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. May this

moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace- not just peace but a more purposeful life. And to achieve this end I am taking a new step in which I hope I shall have your support and cooperation. Later this year the capital of my empire will be moved from Delhi to Daulatabad... My empire is large now and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and, as you well know, its peace is never free from the fear of invaders. But for me the most important factor is that Daulatabad is a city of the Hindus and as the capital, it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom. I invite you all to accompany me to Daulatabad. This is only an invitation and not an order. Only those who have faith in me may come with me. With their help I shall built an empire which will be the envy of the world (7-8).

Tughlaq is a visionary and the decisions that he had made proves his practicability. But he is misunderstood by many as a mad man with crazy ideas. The vision he saw for the future India has made him a dictator. Tughlaq wants to eradicate the historical battle between the Hindus and the Muslims and bring peace between them by taking all kinds of decisions to make all his subjects equal in the eyes of law.

Karnad projects Tughlaq in various roles. Tughlaq stands for administrative reforms, for Hindu-Muslim amity, recognition of merit, despite caste and creed, reconstruction of administrative machinery and reformation of taxation, establishment of a well balanced society in which all shall enjoy freedom, justice, equality and basic human rights. As a man of letters, he tries to implement a new system in his administration. Being a rationalist and a philosopher, he completely deviates from the religious doctrines in respect of politics and administration (Wadikar 89).

Tughlaq, the most intriguing ruler of India is caught up in his own wisdom leading him to his failure, isolated from everything and everyone who is against him, thus, making him a subaltern. Perhaps, his angst of murdering his father during prayer has made him decide to bring peace and equality in repentance for his sins. Sheikh Imam-

ud-din is introduced as having resemblance to the Sultan in look and some mannerism like oratory gifts. But he is against Tughlaq because of the illegal means that he used in taking over his father's throne.

Scene two opens at the palace where Tughlaq is brooding over a game of chess when his step mother appears. Their conversation centres on a game of chess which symbolises the mental state of Tughlaq as well as the political scenario. His childhood friend and companion Ain-ul-Mulk has also deserted him and is planning to overthrow him. Tughlaq is so engrossed with the problems of the state that sleep evades him:

I pray to the Almighty to save me from sleep. All day long I have to worry about tomorrow but it's only when the night falls that I can step beyond all that. I look at the Pleiades and I think of Ibn-ul-Mottazz who thought it was an ostrich egg and Dur-rumma who thought it was a swallow. And then I want to go back to their poetry and sink myself in their words. Then again I want to climb up, up to the top of the tallest tree in the world, and call out to my people: 'Come, my people, I am waiting for you. Confide in me your worries. Let me share your joys, let's laugh and cry together and then, let's pray. Let's pray till our bodies melt and flow and our blood turns into air. History is ours to play with- ours now! Let's be the light and cover the earth with greenery. Let's be darkness and cover up the boundaries of nations. Come! I am waiting to embrace you all!'

But then how can I spread my branches in the stars while the roots have yet to find their hold in the earth? I wish I could believe in recurring births like the Hindu; but I have only one life, one body, and my hopes, my people, my God are all fighting for it. Tell me, how dare I waste my time sleeping? And don't tell me to go and get married and breed a family because I won't sleep (Karnad 16).

The presentation of Tughlaq as a lover of poetry hints at his vast intellectual knowledge. He is also concerned about his subjects and their well-being but his decisions for them are misunderstood. His step mother is concerned about Tughlaq's

preoccupation with his ideologies. She is a postcolonial subaltern living under the shadow and of Tughlaq who had murdered her husband. With her motherly instinctive nature, she cannot ignore her son's abilities and is both troubled and devastated. Yet, she is a woman who has greater hopes and expectations for herself as well as her stepson. There is the announcement of the coming of Vizier Muhammad Najib and Zia-ud-din Barani. They are introduced by Tughlaq: "...Barani is a historian- he's only interested in playing chess with the shadows of the dead. And Najib's a politician- he wants pawns of flesh and blood. He doesn't have the patience to breathe life into these bones" (17). Barani is the Court historian and he has a lot of knowledge about different rulers that have come and gone. He fears that the Sultan is making hasty and impractical decisions about his kingdom which might lead to his downfall. On the other hand, Najib is a Hindu convert and an ally of the Sultan who usually takes the shorter route in disposing his work and a man without patience. This can be seen with his character description by Tughlaq and also when he says that Sheik Imam-ud-din should be "get rid of" (18). His impatience can be seen when Barani tries to reason with the Sultan about his promises and rules:

BARANI: But His Majesty is right. The people have been told that they have a right to criticize the Sultan, to voice their grievances openly. Surely this is the time to show that the Sultan means it- that they were not empty words. The people will surely respond to His Majesty's courage, honesty and justice...

NAJIB (*groans*): Courage, honesty and justice! My dear Barani, we are dealing with a political problem!

BARANI: I know and that's where they count most. Because that's where the kingdom of Islam which the prophet- may peace be upon him- has gifted us much blossom. Oh! You won't understand it. Your Hindu childhood has twisted your attitudes beyond repair.

NAJIB: Do you know why I gave up Hinduism? Because it didn't speak of the salvation of society. It only talked of the soul- my individual soul- while a poor frenzied world screamed in agony around. So I became a Muslim. Islam is worried about this world, I said, it'll bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. But I know now- it

won't work. There's only the present moment and we must grasp it firmly (19-20).

Barani doubts Najib's advice to Tughlaq about Sheikh Imam-ud-din and Ain-ul-Mulk's rebellion towards the Sultan. He pleads with Tughlaq that there must be some misunderstanding about the news of Ain-ul-Mulk. Najib's quick dismissal of Barani's advice will turn fatal towards the end of the play when Tughlaq would be unable to undo his mistakes. Tughlaq instead listens to his sagacious minister to plan for the destruction of his enemies. Even Tughlaq comments and recognises Najib as the devil incarnate for his devilish plans, "You are a devil, Najib" (21). Tughlaq is so engrossed in the development of his kingdom that he fails to recognise the devastating impact Najib's advice would have on him. Barani identifies the authority that Najib has on Tughlaq and says, "It's not for me to advice... but I have to mention it. I am not jealous of Najib and I admire his integrity. But sometimes I am bothered by his influence on the Sultan" (23). After Tughlaq and Najib leaves, the step mother begs Barani to be with her son no matter what happens in the future:

... I am worried about him. You know what he is like. He is such an intelligent boy and he works so hard for the people. He doesn't even go to bed these days. (*Pause.*) But he is so impulsive- and when he gets into one of his moods I don't know what he'll do next. (*Pause.*) You are a sober man, Barani, level-headed and honest, and he needs friends like you (22).

There is an announcement that there would be a meeting after the evening prayer in front of the Great Mosque where together with the Sultan, Sheikh Imam-ud-din would come and address the meeting and would scrutinize the Sultan's administration in the State and give corrections and advice to the Sultan.

Tughlaq emerges as a shrewd politician who has learnt the art of transforming every adverse situation to his advantage. He invites the charismatic religious leader Imam-ud-din to address a public meeting and gives him the freedom of denouncing the policies of Tughlaq in public. The act may appear to exemplify Tughlaq's courage and integrity in allowing freedom of expression to prevail in his kingdom.

This facade of impartiality and supreme objectivity comes to the fore when we learn that his soldiers have been sent from door to door to prevent them from attending the said meeting. His plan, to eliminate Imam-ud-din, projects him as a brilliant intriguer (Ghosh 112)

The third scene opens at the yard in front of the Great Mosque where there is only the Sultan and the Sheik present with some servants but nobody turns up for the meeting. The Sheik try to reason with Tughlaq to try and resolve things before it's too late but he would not listen:

MUHAMMAD: I have never denied the word of God, Sheik sahib, because it's my bread and drink. I need it most when the surrounding void pushes itself into my soul and starts putting out every light burning there. But I am alone in my life. My kingdom has millions- Muslims, Hindus, Jains. Yes, there is dirt and sickness in my kingdom. But why should I call on God to clean up the dirt deposited by men?

IMAM-UD-DIN: Because only the Voice of God, the Holy Word, can do it. Please listen to me, Your Majesty. The Arabs spread Islam round the world and they struggled and fought for it for seven hundred years. They are tired now, limp and exhausted. But their work must continue and we need someone to take the lead. You could do it. You are one of the most powerful kings on earth today and you could spread the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. God has given you everything- power, learning, intelligence, talent. Now you must repay His debt.

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

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

MUHAMMAD (*refusing the bait*): Only an atheist can try to be God. I am God's most humble slave.

IMAM-UD-DIN: Yes. And slaves have often tried to replace their master... Religion! Politics! Take heed, Sultan, one day these verbal distinctions will rip you into two (Karnad 26-27).

Sheik Imam-ud-din cannot persuade Tughlaq to alter his past mistakes and take responsibilities as well as listen to advice. Tughlaq is too driven by his innovative schemes that he forgets to be sane and human. "I shall have to kill the part of me which sang to them. And my kingdom too is what I am- torn into pieces by vision who's validity I can't deny. You are asking me to make myself complete by killing the Greek in me and you propose to unify my people by denying the visions which led Zarathustra or the Buddha" (27). Tughlaq is elated when the Sheik bites on the bait when he asks him to go and meet Ain-ul-Mulk and try and dissuade him of his revolt. Sheik Imam-ud-din cannot refuse the Sultan but to do as he bids him. The ingenuity of the Sultan in making arrangements for the meeting with Ain-ul-Mulk makes the Sheik say, "You know Sultan, I'm just beginning to understand why they say you are the cleverest man in the world". To this Tughlaq replies, "I am an incompetent fool" (31). His words will become true in the end as he becomes a real foolish king as he failed to win over the hearts of his subjects.

Scene four opens at the palace where Shihab-ud-din, who is left in-charge for looking after the affairs of the kingdom, is reading a letter when the step mother of Tughlaq comes and thanks him for helping her son. Just then Ratan Singh comes back from the war and informs about the death of Sheik Imam-ud-din. Then Tughlaq, Barani and Najib comes and confirms about the death of the Sheik, Ain-ul-Mulk on the other hand was let go by the Sultan. Later when only Shihab-ud-din and Ratan Singh are left alone, Ratan Singh relates what really happened at the battle ground. Ratan Singh is the adopted brother of Shihab-ud-din and not really liked by the Sultan and thus, he with other soldiers were sent to the forefront with the Sheik who was dressed with royalty just like the Sultan. Even the war was started not by the enemy but by them, murdering the Sheik in "cold blood". Ratan Singh utters the following lines about the Sheik: "The Sheik is delighted about being the Sultan's peace emissary. He looks gorgeous- all dressed up in royal robes, a royal turban, even royal slippers, and sitting on the royal elephant. In fact, he looks exactly like the Sultan" (36). Sheik Imam-ud-din is a spoil sport to Tughlaq's practical idealism and thus, had to be sacrificed. He becomes a subaltern puppet who has to be mercilessly destroyed for no fault of his. A secret meeting is held against the Sultan, and Ratan Singh and Shihab-ud-din are also invited.

The secret meeting is held at a house in Delhi in Scene Five, where Amirs, Sayyids and others with Ratan Singh and Shihab-ud-din are gathered. In trying to give equal treatment to both Hindus and Muslims, the Sultan has imposed taxes on the Muslims and exempted the *jiziya*, the only tax from the Hindus which is considered atrocious to the local Muslims. Not only that, their capital would be shifted from Delhi, a Muslim community to Daulatabad, a Hindu community. One of the Amirs says thus: “Just consider this. Why is he taking us to Daulatabad? Have you wondered about that? I’ll tell you. He wants to weaken the Amirs. You see, we are strong in Delhi. This is where we belong. But Daulatabad is a Hindu city and we’ll be helpless there. We’ll have to lick his feet” (39). The Muslims are threatened by their Sultan’s partial treatment towards them and thus, plans to kill him. Their subalternist ideology drives the Muslims to rebel against their authority and this has been explained by Sheik Shams-ud-din Tajuddarfim:

Yes you are right. I should shut myself in a holy mosque and devote myself to Allah. I shouldn’t get mixed up in the treacherous games of politicians. I know and I had hoped my life would be like that. But Allah isn’t only for me, Shihab-ud-din; He’s for everyone who believes in him. While tyranny crushes the faithful into dust, how can I continue to hide in my hole? ... Is it so reprehensible to be concerned about people? Is it a crime to speak out for oneself and one’s family? (40-41).

When Shihab-ud-din argued about their absence at the meeting in front of the Great Mosque, the true incident is related:

SHEIKH: Yes, behind the scenes. It’s true the Sultan invited the whole of Delhi to hear the Sheikh. Yet, on that very afternoon, soldiers went from door to door threatening dire consequences if anyone dared to attend the meeting... they were his orders! And do you know, while the Sultan stood in front of the Great Mosque with the Sheikh and got more and more agitated at the empty auditorium, his soldiers were hiding in the streets around, stopping those who tried to come? You don’t believe it? Look here... (*Unbuttons his shirt and shows a wound*

on his shoulder) I tried to force my way to the Great Mosque and this is what I got for it. Who else would do this to an old man? (42).

Shihab-ud-din is stunned by these revelations. The Sheikh appeals him to help them because he is an outsider and the Sultan would suspect him the least and says:

Will you only think about yourself, Shihab-ud-din? You are the strong, the powerful in this country. You have the capacity to set things right. Won't you worry a little about the people? The citizens of Delhi don't wish to go to Daulatabad, but they are weak. Will you do nothing for them? How many people like Sheikh Imam-ud-din have to die before you'll be ready to act? (42).

Shihab-ud-din is caught between his loyalty to the Sultan and to his fellow citizens who have proved against the Sultan. He is already burdened by his past which Ratan Singh reveals and can be seen in the light of his subaltern identity:

RATAN SINGH: Come on, everyone knows about it! His father is supposed to have killed my father by treachery and usurped the kingdom. Shihab can't forget that. He wants to make up for it. That's why I'm here, as his adopted brother. And that's why he just can't stand the mention of treachery. (*To Shihab-ud-din.*) Don't overdo it. You'll have to face it some day. After all, what did the Sultan do to Sheikh Imam-ud-din? (43).

He is not only subalternized by an authority but also by his own consciousness which always pricks his emotions to do justice. The meeting ends with the decision that they would murder the Sultan the next week when he is having his prayer.

Scene Six opens at the palace where Tughlaq, Barani and Najib are waiting for the Amirs for the Durbar-i-khas but Tughlaq and Najib are a little too anxious. When the Amirs come to the meeting, Tughlaq informs them that Abbasid Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad, a member of the hallowed family of the Abbasid Khalifs will be visiting the capital which will be Daulatabad and not Delhi. Shihab-ud-din and the Amirs plead with the Sultan not to move the capital because all the people in Delhi are opposed to it. But Tughlaq replies that it can't be done:

MUHAMMAD: What am I to do, Shihab-ud-din? I have explained every reason to them, shown how my empire cannot flourish with Delhi as its capital. But how can I explain tomorrow to those who haven't even opened their eyes to the light of today? Let's not waste more time over that. They'll see the point soon. It's getting late and I must come to the more important news. From next year, we shall have copper currency in our empire along with the silver dinars.

AMIR 1: Whatever for? I mean what does one do with a copper coin?

MUHAMMAD: Exchange it for a silver coin! A copper coin will have the same value as a silver dinar.

SHIHAB-UD-DIN: But I don't understand, Your Majesty. How can one expect a copper coin to have the same value as a silver one?

MUHAMMAD: It's a question of confidence. A question of trust! The other day I heard that in China they have paper currency- paper, mind you- and yet it works because the people accept it. They have faith in the Emperor's seal on the pieces of paper... I have hopes of building a new future for India and I need your support for that. If you don't understand me, ask me to explain myself and I'll do it. If you don't understand my explanations, bear with me in patience until I can show you the results. But please don't let me down, I beg you. I'll kneel before you if you wish, but please don't let go of my hand (48-49).

Tughlaq's revolutionary ideas of moving the capital to Daulatabad and the introduction of copper currency are unacceptable for the rest of the people as they cannot understand or envision the future. The Sultan is a modern man who is born in the wrong time because he becomes a fool and a misunderstood king who only thought about bringing chaos and hatred among each citizen. But Tughlaq can be seen as a very intellectual person who wanted to build an indestructible nation. But as he was flawed in his character (impulsive and temperamental), it brought disaster at the end. "Events go beyond his control and consequently, he finds himself unable to prevent his ruin. His dispassionate idealism is, thus, defeated by the stark reality of his deeds and misdeeds" (Wadikar 93).

The time of prayer comes and the Sultan decides that they all will pray together at the palace itself. Ratan Singh had betrayed the Amirs by informing of their plan to the Sultan and they are being caught by the Sultan's army. Shihab-ud-din is crushed by Ratan Singh's betrayal and is killed by the Sultan. He becomes another sacrificial lamb to be offered by Tughlaq in order to achieve his vision. He laments, "Why must this happen, Barani? Are all those I trust condemned to go down the history as traitors? What is happening? Tell me, Barani, will my reign be nothing more than a tortured scream which will stab the night and melt away in the silence?" (Karnad 52). In his anger and frustration Tughlaq orders that:

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. Not a light should be seen in the windows of Delhi. Not a wisp of smoke should rise from its chimneys. Nothing but an empty graveyard of Delhi will satisfy me now... what hopes I had built up when I came to the throne! I had wanted every act in my kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer to become a further step in knowledge, every step to lead us nearer to God. But our prayers too are ridden with disease and must be exiled. There will be no more praying in the kingdom, Najib. Anyone caught praying will be severely punished. Henceforth, let the moment of prayer walk my streets in silence and leave without a trace (53).

The scene ends with the announcement to the people that all the citizens are to leave for Daulatabad within two weeks.

Scene Seven opens at a camp on the Delhi-Daulatabad route where a Hindu woman is kneeling before Aziz and is begging him to let her take her son who is very sick, to a doctor. Aziz, still acting as Vishnu Prasad (who now holds a government job), cannot permit the woman to go in search of a doctor because everyone is being forcefully taken to Daulatabad, their new capital. He even tries to get bribe from the poor woman but when she doesn't have anything to offer he drives her away, "I can't waste any more time on you. There's a lot of work here. Stop screaming and get back to your tent- I said, get back to your tent! (57). Aazam feels pity for the Hindu woman but he is can't do anything about it. Just then a man and a woman with six kids come

to report to Aziz but he literally ignores them, but again Aazam feels embarrassed by his friend's ways. Men like Aziz who are fake, cunning, deceitful and heartless can only act as low as to think about benefiting from others during crisis. The cruelty of human beings toward one another is seen and one can only wonder about what the world has come to. Aziz scolds the family for being late and directs them to a tent. He also informs Aazam about how they would live their life in the future:

AZIZ: You are a hopeless case, you know. Pathetic! You've been in Delhi for so many years and you're as stupid as ever. Look at me. Only a few months in Delhi and I have discovered a whole new world- politics! My dear fellow, that's where our future is- politics! It's a beautiful world- wealth, success, position, power- and yet it's full of brainless people, people with not an idea in their head. When I think of all the tricks I used in our village to pinch a few torn clothes from people- if one uses half that intelligence here, one can get ropes of power. And not have to pinch them either- demand them! It's a fantastic world! (59).

They then plan to make counterfeit copper coins.

Scene Eight opens in 1332 AD, roughly five years after coming to Daulatabad. A young man and an older man are guarding the fort of the new capital. They talk about the magnificent fort that is built as protection from enemies. The old man also relates how his wife and six year old son die on the way to the new capital. Tughlaq appears before them and he seems disturbed and when the old man goes to call Barani, the young man talks to Tughlaq. The young man is nineteen years old and Tughlaq comments, "Nineteen. Nice age! An age when you think you can clasp the whole world in your palm like a rare diamond. I was twenty-one when I came to Daulatabad first, and built this fort. I supervised the placing of every brick in it and I said to myself, one day I shall build my own history like this, brick by brick" (63). Tughlaq's dream of becoming the most proficient ruler is thwarted by his inability to administer the laws in the right manner. His young temperamental mind failed to cater to the immediate needs of his subjects thus, making him the most foolish Sultan in history. Barani comes and Tughlaq relates about his kingdom which is in a state of chaos:

MUHAMMAD: Fakr-ud-din has risen against me in Bengal... Yes. And there's been another uprising in the Deccan. In Ma'bar, Ehsansha has declared himself independent. Bahal-ud-din Gashtasp is collecting an army against me. The drought in Doab is spreading from town to town- burning up the country. Only one industry flourishes in my kingdom, only one- and that's of making counterfeit copper coins. Every Hindu home has become a domestic mint; the traders are just waiting for me to close my eyes; and in my whole kingdom there are only two people whom I can trust- Ain-ul-Mulk and Shihab-ud-din's father. What should I do, Barani? What would you prescribe for this honeycomb of diseases? I have tried everything. But what curses on disease just worsens another (65).

These incidents are actually real events that had occurred in Tughlaq's reign. Tughlaq himself can see the pathetic situation which was his own doing but is helpless now to make amends. "In spite of Tughlaq's best intentions his scheme of introducing copper currency met with failure. Tughlaq failed to realise that the intrinsic value of the copper coins amounted to very little like the modern bank notes. Besides, the copper coins, in the absence of the State control of the mints, could be easily minted in private houses" (Ghosh 113). Barani advises Tughlaq to retire but he rejects it vehemently:

BARANI: Your Majesty, there was a time when you believed in love, in peace, in God. What has happened to those ideas? You won't let your subjects pray. You torture them for the smallest offence. Hang them on suspicion. Why this bloodshed? Please stop it, and I promise Your Majesty something better will emerge out of it.

MUHAMMAD: But for that I'll have to admit I've been wrong all along. And I know I haven't. I have something to give, something to teach, which may open the eyes of history but I have to do it within this life. I've got to make them listen to me before I lose even that! (Karnad 67).

He still believes in his ideas and cannot comprehend why his subjects fail to understand his simple ideas which are just for the betterment of the subjects themselves. He is a revolutionary modern man who cannot fit into an age which still

holds firmly on old traditions and culture and so, he becomes “Mad Muhammad” (66). When Tughlaq hears the news about Najib’s murder, he is devastated.

Scene Nine opens with Aziz and Aazam in the hills at a hide-out and is waiting for a good to be delivered. They are actually waiting for a Turkish merchant as their good to loot him but it turns out to be Ghiyas-ud-din who is the guest of honour at the Sultan’s palace. Human being’s greed and selfishness can be manifested by the inhuman act done by Aziz and Aazam in killing an innocent man. Aziz decides to go and meet the Sultan as the grandson of the Khalif.

In Scene Ten, the step mother come and challenges Tughlaq about the counterfeited copper coins that are being brought to the palace to exchange with silver coins. He has no other options but to exchange them giving away all the treasuries in the palace:

MUHAMMAD: Don’t worry, Mother. The coins aren’t going into the treasury. They’ll all be heaped in the new rose garden.

STEP-MOTHER: What’s the matter with you? You spent years planning that rose garden and now-

MUHAMMAD: Now I don’t need a rose garden. I built it because I wanted to make for myself an image of Sadi’s poems. I wanted every rose in it to be a poem. I wanted every thorn in it to prick and quicken the senses. But I don’t need these airy trappings now; a funeral needs no separate symbol. (76).

Tughlaq dreamed of peace and prosperity in his kingdom which is represented by his desire to plant roses but all his dreams fails and so has to give it up. His ideas and the reality of his kingdom cannot merge together. The Sultan also finds that five of the Amirs and Khans have fled; in fact, Amir Jalal-ud-din had committed suicide in order to hide the culprit who ordered the murder of Najib. His step mother confesses that it was her who ordered the murder of his friend which is the last blow to his ego. He cannot imagine that of all the people, she would be the one whom he loved dearly, to have betrayed his love and trust:

STEP-MOTHER: It’s only seven years ago that you came to the throne. How glorious you were then, how idealistic, how full of hopes.

Look at your kingdom now. It's become a kitchen of death- all because of him. I couldn't bear it any longer.

MUHAMMAD: But you don't know that for the past few months he had been advising me against violence, do you? He wanted me to hold back my sword for the stability of the throne.

STEP-MOTHER: Then why didn't you?

MUHAMMAD: Because I couldn't. Not now. Remember Shihab-ud-din of Sampanshahr? He was the first man I killed with my own hands. And I had a glimmer then of what now I know only too well. Not words but the sword- that's all I have to keep my faith in my mission. Why should Najib be sacrificed for that?

STEP-MOTHER: You had your share of futile deaths. I have mine now.

MUHAMMAD (*shouting*): No, they were not futile . They gave me what I wanted- power, strength to shape my thoughts, strength to act. Strength to recognize myself. What did your little murder give you? (*Suddenly freezes. Stares at her. Then quietly*) Woman, woman, so you are also one of them! So that's what you too wanted! Mother is annoyed she can't control me. And now you too are trying the same game, aren't you? Get rid of Najib, so you could control me? (78).

It is too big a crime to be ignored for Tughlaq and so he orders that she be stoned to death. A mother's instinctive love for her child to be saved and protected has driven the step-mother to act. The influence of Najib on Tughlaq is a huge one and it had to be destroyed to save some of Tughlaq's sanity. Tughlaq falls on his knees and starts praying to God:

God, God in Heave, please help me. Please, don't let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in Your path, Lord, why am I wandering naked in this street now? I started in search of you. Why am I become a pig rolling in this gory mud? Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with Your Infinite Mercy. I can only clutch at the hem of Your cloak with my bloody fingers and plead. I can only beg- have pity on me. I have

no one but You now. Only You. Only You... You... You... You... (79-80).

Pity is the only feeling that can be felt for Tughlaq's case as he helplessly prostrates in defeat and guilt. In trying to give a better future and hope to his kingdom, Tughlaq fall victim to his idealistic visions which reduce him to insanity.

Scene Eleven opens with a crowd at a plain outside the fort of Daulatabad. They are waiting for the Khalif to come and bless their land but the crowd is agitated because they are dying of hunger:

FIRST MAN: Prayers! Prayers! Who wants prayers now?

SECOND MAN: Ask them to give us some food.

FIRST MAN: There's no food. Food's only in the palace. It's prayers for us.

SECOND MAN: The Amirs have food.

FIRST MAN: We starve and they want us to pray. They want to save our souls.

THIRD MAN: Is it true the Sultan has opened up his granary?

SECOND MAN: There was not a grain in it! Not a skin of paddy.

FIRST MAN: And they want us to pray.

THIRD MAN: The other day my younger brother came here from our village. He says it's much worse there. We are better off here, he says. They have to pay twenty grains of silver for a fistful of wheat. And the scenes he saw on his way here! Ugh!

SECOND MAN (*getting annoyed*): Hm...

THIRD MAN: He says the roads are lined with skeletons. A man starved to death right in front of his eyes. In Doab, people are eating barks off the trees, he says. Yes, and women have to make do with shins of dead horses (82).

They start attacking each other like animals. Angry with the Sultan for their pathetic condition, they start fighting among themselves. These people are all under the Sultan's mad innovative ideas which have made them subalterns. The announcer appears and introduces the arrival of the Khalif. Tughlaq comes and welcomes him

but the poor Hindu woman recognizes Aziz but the crowd misunderstands the murderer as Tughlaq and not Aziz.

In Scene Twelve, Aziz is seen in the palace enjoying the comfort of food and shelter when Aazam comes and begs him to go away which he has arranged because he cannot live in deception any longer. But Aziz is adamant in his decision to stay so Aazam leaves in spite of Aziz's warnings and he is killed. Aazam also becomes a unfortunate subaltern in the hands of his only friend that he trusts.

Scene Thirteen (last scene) opens at another part of the palace where Tughlaq and Barani are in conversation where Barani is asking leave from the Sultan to go to his village to pay his last respect to his mother who had died. When Tughlaq asks him whether he'll come back or not, he answers, "I don't know, I don't know. Please don't ask me. I beg of you" (90). Barani had seen enough of bloodshed and drama to last a lifetime and he cannot bear to see the madness of Tughlaq any longer. He had promised the Step-mother in beginning that he would help and be with Tughlaq till the end, but when his old mother is killed in a massacre by Tughlaq's soldiers, he cannot stay. His dedication towards the Sultan and his mother is divided which makes him guiltier and the audience feel pity as he is torn. Tughlaq is becoming suspicious of the Khalif. Then a soldier comes and informs them that Aazam was found murdered. Destiny plays foul with Tughlaq as he thought that this day would bring some kind of peace to Daulatabad with the starting of prayers by the Khalif himself. But he turns out to be a dhobi. It is ironic because a great and learned man like Tughlaq is fooled by a dhobi. He even forgives Aziz for his unacceptable actions and is totally subalternized unconsciously. Tughlaq has to forgive Aziz because he was the only one in the kingdom who understood his vision. Tughlaq sums up his whole despotic rule and the way of life as human beings in the following words:

If justice were as simple as you think or logic as beautiful as I had hoped, life would have been so much clearer. I have been chasing these words now for five years and now I don't know if I am pursuing a mirage or fleeing a shadow. Anyway, what do all the subtle distinctions matter in the blinding madness of the day? Sweep your logic away into a corner, Barani, all I need now is myself and my madness- madness to prance in a field eaten bare by the scarecrow of

violence. But I am not alone. I have a companion to share my insanity now- the Omnipotent God! (*Tired.*) When you pass your final judgment on me, don't forget Him (97).

Tughlaq finally accepts his defeat when he utters "I am suddenly feeling tired. And sleepy. For five years sleep had avoided me and now suddenly it's flooding back. Go Barani. But before you go- pray for us" (98). The play ends with the call of prayer by the Muezzin but Tughlaq is already fast asleep. A servant thinks of waking him up for the prayer for which he had been waiting for but seeing him sleeping, leaves without doing so. When the prayer ends Tughlaq wakes up with a daze.

The contemporaneity of Tughlaq's revolutionary ideas cannot be understood by his people because they considered his visions as impractical. He would have become the most innovative and powerful ruler had his plans worked out.

The central theme of the play *Hayavadana* is contemporary as it deals with the modern man's quest for completeness and perfection. *Hayavadana* has two plots; the main plot revolves around the story of two friends, Devadatta and Kapila, and a woman, Padmini, who falls in love with both of them. The sub plot deals with the story of Hayavadana who is in search of a remedy for his incompleteness with a horse's head and a human's body. The play has two acts where both the plots are interwoven simultaneously.

Act One opens with the Bhagavata praising the Ganesha who is the god with an elephant's head and a human body which is "the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness" (105).

The Bhagavata's role is crucial in the play, since he performs a great variety of functions. He is the narrator who introduces the major characters in the story and later supplies the connection links in the action, informing the audience about major developments...Some of his songs reveal him as a choric commentator on the action. Occasionally, he is the vehicle for the revelation of deepest thoughts of a major character...at times he become a minor character in the action...we even find him assisting the stage-hands...The Bhagavata indeed out-Bottoms Bottom, but in a far more constructive way than Shakespeare's comic

weaver. In discharging his choric function, the Bhagavata is joined by a chorus of female singers also; their role, however, is restricted to this alone (Niak 141).

The introduction of the god is symbolic because it represents the incompleteness of the characters in the play. The Bhagavata also introduces the main characters in the play, “two friends there were- one mind, one heart” (Karnad 106):

This is the city of Dharmapura, ruled by King Dharmasheela whose fame and empire have already reached the ends of the eight directions. Two youths who dwell in this city are our heroes. One is Devadatta. Comely in appearance, fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence, Devadatta is the only son of the Revered Brahmin, Vidyasagara. Having felled the mightiest pundits of the kingdom in debates on logic and love, having blinded the greatest poets of the world with his poetry and wit, Devadatta is as it were the apple of every eye in Dharmapura. The other youth is Kapila. He is the only son of the ironsmith, Lohita, who is to the king’s armoury as an axle to the chariotwheel. He is dark and plain to look at, yet in deeds which require drive and daring, in dancing, in strength and in physical skills, he has no equal (106).

The theme of imperfection resurfaces again with the introduction of the two main characters Devadatta and Kapila who has opposite qualities and extreme qualities. This introduction is also a manifestation of the stratified Indian Hindu society where the Brahmins enjoy the upper-most position and privileges. “Girish Karnad’s *Hayavadana*, explores the complex psycho-social dimension of the problem of human identity crisis, as different from the moral aspect of the Indian story and the philosophical purport of Mann’s story, in both tangled and untangled relationships” (Dhanavel 47).

As the Bhagavata is introducing the characters to the audience, an actor comes running to the stage screaming and shouting in fear. He explains that he had seen a thing with a horse’s head and a human’s body, but the Bhagavata cannot believe him and sends him again to make sure he was right. The scream is heard again and the actor comes running to the Bhagavata in fear followed by Hayavadana

sobbing. The Bhagavata is amazed to see a man with a horse's head and tries to pull the head away from the body thinking that it's a mask but realizes that the head was a real one. Hayavadana relates his story of how he came to possess a horse's head:

My mother was the Princess of Karnataka. She was a very beautiful girl. When she came of age, her father decided that she should choose her own husband. So princes of every kingdom in the world were invited- and they all came. From China, from Persia, from Africa. But she didn't like any of them. The last one to come was the Prince of Araby. My mother took one look at that handsome prince sitting on his great white stallion- and she fainted... her father at once decided that this was the man. All arrangements for the wedding were made. My mother recovered- and do you know what she said?... She said she would only marry the horse... No one could dissuade her. So ultimately she was married off to the white stallion. She lived with him for fifteen years. One morning she wakes up- and no horse! In its place stood a beautiful Celestial Being, a *gandharva*. Apparently this Celestial Being had been cursed by the god Kubera to be born a horse for some act of misbehaviour. After fifteen years of human love he had become his original self again... Released from his curse, he asked my mother to accompany him to his Heavenly Abode. But she wouldn't. She said she would come only if he became a horse again. So she cursed her... He cursed her to become a horse herself. So my mother became a horse and ran away prancing happily. My father went back to his Heavenly Abode. Only I – the child of their marriage – was left behind (Karnad 113-114).

Hayavadana is bearing the burden of his parents without any fault of his. He is identified with the subaltern ideology of isolation and hybridity. He explains that he had been to so many places and done things to cure him of his incompleteness but to no avail. The Bhagavata suggests going to the goddess Kali of Mount Chitrakoot. Hayavadana agrees and sets on his journey accompanied by the actor. Then the Bhagavata continues to relate the main plot. Kapila tries to tell Devadatta about his

wrestling match the other day but Devadatta is preoccupied with something else. It's the fifteenth time that Devadatta is falling in love with a woman which Kapila notices:

DEVADATTA: How can you even talk of them in the same breath as her? Before her, they're as...

KAPILA: ...as stars before the moon, as the glow-worms before a torch. Yes, yes, that's been so fifteen times too.

DEVADATTA (*exploding*): why don't you go home? You are becoming a bore.

KAPILA: Don't get annoyed. Please...

DEVADATTA: Why don't you go home? All I want was to be by myself for a day. Alone. And you had to come and start your chatter. What do you know of poetry and literature? Go back to your smithy—that's where you belong. (118-119).

This conversation explores the affiliation that the two friends share. Even though they are close friends there is the ever present issue of their status and position in relation to society and intellectual knowledge. There is no doubt that despite their differences in their status, Devadatta and Kapila share an intimate bond, but the true nature of their complex relationship comes to light when Devadatta puts Kapila in his proper position when he abuses him and tells him to go back to where he belongs. And even when Kapila comes to meet Devadatta, he does not sit in the chair but sits on the floor and insists Devadatta to sit in the chair. This action questions the true relationship between them because they are friends, they cannot alter their status and merge together to become equals. The Indian caste system is strongly represented by their friendship which directly puts them in the position of the colonizer and the colonized and also of subalternization of Kapila by Devadatta.

Kapila realizes that Devadatta has really fallen in love this time because he seemed serious. But Kapila assures that Devadatta, with all his "qualities – achievements – looks – family – grace..." is the perfect man. But Devadatta is anguished and even goes to the extreme of sacrificing his body parts if he ever gets the woman:

Don't! Please. I know this girl is beyond my wildest dreams. But still- I can't help wanting her- I can't help it. I swear, Kapila, with you as my witness I swear, if I ever get her as my wife, I'll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra... I mean it! What's the use of this hands and this head if I'm not to have her? My poetry won't live without her. The *Shakuntalam* will never be excelled. But how can I explain this to her? I have no cloud for a messenger. No bee to show the way. Now the only future I have is to stand and do penance in Pavana Veethi... (120-121).

Devadatta does not know anything about the girl only that she lives in Pavana Veethi and "an engraving of a two-headed bird at the top" of her door-frame (121). Kapila promptly decides to go in search of the girl and disappears before Devadatta could say or do anything:

Kapila- Kapila... He's gone. How fortunate I am to have a friend like him. Pure gold. (*Pause.*) But should I have trusted this to him? He means well- and he is a wizard in his smithy, in his farm, in his fields. But here? No. He is too rough, too indelicate. He was the wrong man to send. He's bound to ruin the whole thing. (*Anguished.*) Lord Rudra, I mean what I said. If I get her, my head will be a gift to you. Mother Kali, I'll sacrifice my arms to you. I swear... (122).

The above lines also suggests the difference between Devadatta and Kapila as Devadatta is an intellectual, high class, rich Brahmin while Kapila is an un-intellectual low class, poor Shudra. Kapila goes to Pavana Veethi and finds the house of the girl but as he meets the girl and talk to her, Kapila at once realizes that Padmini would be quiet a handful for Devadatta:

Devadatta, my friend, I confess to you I'm feeling uneasy. You are a gentle soul. You can't bear a bitter word or an evil thought. But this one is fast as lightning- and as sharp. She is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can one do? You'll never listen to me. And I can't withdraw now. I'll have to talk to her family... (126).

Even though Kapila is just a smithy, he is accurate in his judgement about Padmini's disposition. Padmini happens to be the daughter of the richest merchant in Dharmapura and thus, Devadatta and Padmini happily got married and Kapila became even closer to both of them, bringing in the rich imagery of the Hindu gods Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. They also represent the different strata in society of the Hindus like, the Brahman, Vaishya and Shudra where Devadatta is a Brahmin, Padmini is a Vaishya and Kapila is a Shudra. They plan to go on a trip to Ujjain but there is already tension building up as Devadatta realises Padmini's fancy on Kapila. As Kapila said earlier, Padmini is not satisfied with her husband and is attracted to Kapila's strength. Like Hayavadana, Padmini is in search of perfection in a man.

(The image of the 'two-headed bird') can be linked with the inner nature of Padmini. Kapila, as a wizard in his smithy, finds Padmini with the extraordinary beauty; he sees the combination of Rambha and Ragini- rather it is the beauty that puts together the beauty of Shanhuntala, Urvashi, Indumati and so on. As a matter of fact, the suggestive meanings of the two-headed bird indicate the fractured conscious or the associational attitude for sharing the best of the two in an alternative mode (Budholia 73).

Padmini wants a man who is both intellectual like Devadatta as well as physically strong like Kapila. She represents the contemporary Indian woman who knows what she wants and needs in a man. "Padmini is a representation of a modern woman. She is bold, free, quick and enthralling" (Gill 103). Devadatta notices Padmini's attraction towards Kapila, thus, making him jealous but as she is pregnant, he tries to bear with her. He even notices Kapila's demeanour towards Padmini and warns her of it:

Does she really not see? Or is she deliberately playing this game with him? Kapila was never the sort to blush. But now, he only has to see her and he begins to wag his tail. Sits up on his hind legs as though he were afraid to let her words fall to the ground. And that pleading in his eyes- can't she really see that? (*Aloud.*) Padmini, Kapila isn't used to women. The only woman he has known in his life is his mother (Karnad 129).

Padmini only teases him further but decides to cancel the trip which leads to the excitement of Devadatta as he does not want to go. But when Kapila come in and explains why he is late, Padmini abruptly changes her mind. Both the friends could not say anything but to follow Padmini's orders. They are both charmed by Padmini's beauty thus, making them slaves under her spell. They stop on the way to Ujjain to take some rest when Padmini notices a tree with flowers and Kapila offers to go and get some for her. As he climbs the tree to pluck the flowers both Padmini and Devadatta watches him:

PADMINI (*watching him, aside*): how he climbs- like an ape. Before I could even say 'yes', he had taken off his shirt, pulled his *dhoti* up and swung up the branch. And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back: like an ocean with muscles rippling across it- and then that small, feminine waist which looks so helpless.

Devadatta (*aside*): She had so much to talk about all day, she couldn't wait for breath. Now, not a word.

PADMINI (*aside*): He is like a Celestial Being reborn as a hunter. How his body sways, his limbs curve- It's a dance almost.

DEVADATTA (*aside*): And why should I blame here? 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've been. All these days I only saw that pleading in his eyes stretching out its arms, begging for a favour. But never looked in her eyes. And when I did took the whites of her eyes for their real depth. Only now I see the depths. Now I see these flames leaping up from those depths. Now! So late! Don't turn away now, Devadatta, look at her. Look at those yellow, purple flames. Look how she's pouring her soul into his mould. Look! Let your guts burn out. Let your lungs turn to ash, but don't turn away. Look and don't scream. Strangle your agony. But look deep into these eyes- look until those peacock flames burn out the blindness in you. Don't be a coward now.

PADMINI (*aside*): How long can one go on like this? How long? How long? If Devadatta notices... (*Looks at Devadatta. He is looking at her already and their eyes meet. Both look away*) (134).

They both are aware about each other's feelings but suppress it when Kapila comes back with the flowers. Ironically, the flower is called the "the Fortunate Lady's Flower". Kapila also explains that there are Rudra and Kali temples on the hills and Padmini decides to go to the Rudra temple as it is nearer but Devadatta declines to go with them and decides to stay back. As they leave, Devadatta is devastated:

Good-bye, Kapila. Good-bye, Padmini. May the Lord Rudra bless you. You are two pieces of my heart- Live happily together. I shall find my eternal happiness in that thought. (*Agonized.*) Give me strength, Lord Rudra. My father, give me courage. I'm already trembling, I'd never thought I would be so afraid. Give me courage, Father, strengthen me (136-137).

He goes to the Kali temple and sacrifices himself by cutting off his head because he cannot bear to live with the knowledge of Padmini loving both himself and Kapila at the same time. When Padmini and Kapila come back, Devadatta is nowhere to be found and so Kapila goes in search of him. Finding Devadatta's corpse Kapila also kills himself:

You've cut off your head! You've cut off your head! Oh my dear friend, my brother, what have you done? Were you so angry with me? Did you feel such contempt for me, such abhorrence? And in your anger you forgot that I was ready to die for you? If you had asked me to jump into fire, I would have done it. If you had asked me to leave the country, I would have done it. If you had asked me to go and drown in a river, I would have accepted. Did you despise me so much that you couldn't ask me that? I did wrong. But you know I don't have the intelligence to know what else I would have done. I couldn't think- and so you've pushed me away? No, Devadatta, I can't live without you. I can't breathe without you. Devadatta, my brother, my guru, my friend... (*Picks up the sword.*) You spurned me in this world. Accept

me as your brother at least in the next. Here friend, here I come. As always, I follow in your footsteps (138-139).

Padmini couldn't wait any longer for the two friends to come so she goes off in search for them. As darkness falls she stumbles on the dead bodies and is shocked and helpless:

...Oh God! What's this? Both! Both gone! And didn't even think of me before they went? What shall I do? What shall I do? Oh, Devadatta, what did I do that you left me alone in this state? Was that how much you loved me? And you, Kapila, who looked at me with dog's eyes, you too? How selfish you are, you men, and how thoughtless! What shall I do now? Where shall I go? How can I go home? (*Pause.*) Home? And what shall I say when I get there? What shall I say happened? And who'll believe me? They'll all say the two fought and died for this whore. They're bound to say it. Then what'll happen to me? No, Mother Kali, no, it's too horrible to think of. No! Kapila's gone, Devadatta's gone. Let me go with them (139-140).

Padmini is about to hack herself to death when the Goddess Kali is roused from her slumber by Padmini's laments and gives back the lives of the two friends, but Padmini has to place their heads to their bodies and place the sword on it. The conversation between the Goddess Kali and Padmini is interesting:

PADMINI (*hesitating.*): May I ask you a question?

KALI: If it's not too long.

PADMINI: Can there ever be anything you don't already know, Mother? The past and the future are mere specks in your palm. Then why didn't you stop Devadatta when he came here? Why didn't you stop Kapila? If you'd saved either of them, I would have been spared all this terror, this agony. Why did you wait so long?

KALI (*surprised.*): Is that all you can think of now?

PADMINI: Mother...

KALI: I've never seen anyone like you.

PADMINI: How could anyone possibly hide anything from you, Mother?...

KALI: Don't drag me into it. I had nothing to do with it. You spoke the truth because you're selfish, that's... (141-142).

Instead of lamenting about the death of the two men, she laments about her death and complains that she would have been happy if either of them were alive. Padmini is the embodiment of every woman who is in search of a man who is perfect. "Through the character of Padmini, Karnad portrays a 'new woman' who is free and has no hitch or hesitation in sharing the emotional, if not conjugal, lives of two men. Throughout the play, it is she who controls the situation and moulds the men to behave according to her wishes. She is rational and determined. However, she gets defeated by the forces of nature" (Wadikar 122). It is not just perfection that women seek but also of security which they can easily identify with their men who can protect them. But it is this selfishness that would lead to Padmini's doom as she cannot tame herself. Devadatta and Kapila come alive but in her excitement Padmini exchanges their heads. At first, all three of them are enlivened by the incident:

DEVADATTA: Mixed-up heads!

KAPILA: Heads mixed-up!

DEVADATTA: Exchanged heads!

KAPILA: Heads exchanged!

DEVADATTA: How fantastic! All these years we were only friends!

KAPILA: Now we are blood-relations! Body-relations! (*Laughing.*)
What a gift! ...

ALL THREE (*Together.*): What a good mix! No more tricks! Is this one that or that one this! Ho! Ho! (Karnad 144).

Their excitement dies down and is plagued by the question and decision as to who should be who, and who would be Padmini's husband. Kapila angrily says, "...But the question now is simply this: Whose wife is she? (*Raising his right hand.*) This is the hand that accepted her at the wedding. This is the body she's lived with all these months. And the child she's carrying is the seed of this body" (148). In the middle of their argument, Devadatta and Padmini verbally abuses Kapila calling him a "rascal", "pig", "brute" (145-146). Their treatment of Kapila validates their true feelings

towards him. However he changes, Kapila will always be the poor ironsmith. He is subalternized by the only friends he has making him isolated and a hybrid. The following conversation among the three is a manifestation of Padmini's true desires:

KAPILA: Ha! You think the people in Dharmapura don't know my body, do you? They've seen me a thousand times in the wrestling pit. I've got I don't know how many awards for body-building. Let's see whom they believe.

PADMINI (*pleading*): Why are you tormenting us like this? For so many years you've been our friend, accepted our hospitality...

KAPILA: I know what you want, Padmini. Devadatta's clever head and Kapila's strong body...

PADMINI: Shut up, you brute.

DEVADATTA: Suppose she did. There's nothing wrong in it. It's natural for a woman to feel attracted to a fine figure of a man (148).

Even when she pleads with Kapila to stop arguing, she reminds him of their generosity towards him and shows him where he stands. In truth, Padmini's reminder of their treatment towards Kapila only acumens his subalternity.

Act Two begins with the Bhagavata in search of a solution for the "three unfortunate beings" and eventually concludes that, "As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs. Therefore the man with Devadatta's head is indeed Devadatta and he is the rightful husband of Padmini" (150-151).

BHAGAVATA: Kapila- Kapila... (*No reply.*) Don't grieve. It's fate, Kapila, and...

KAPILA: Kapila? What? Me? Why am I Kapila? (*Exits.*)

BHAGAVATA: So the roads diverged. Kapila went into the forest and disappeared. He never saw Dharmapura again. In fact, he never felt the wind of any city again. As for Devadatta and Padmini, they returned to Dharmapura and plunged into the joys of married life (152).

Kapila isolates himself from other human being as he realises that he cannot be regarded as equal in their eyes even if he tries to. Devadatta and Padmini are happily

living together and waiting for their child to be born. With a new body, Devadatta is feeling great and Padmini is also satisfied as she had admired Kapila's strength:

DEVADATTA: You know, I'd always thought one had to use one's brains while wrestling or fencing or swimming. But this body just doesn't wait for thoughts- it acts!

PADMINI: Fabulous body- fabulous brain- fabulous Devadatta.

DEVADATTA: I have been running around all these days without even proper sleep and yet I don't feel a bit tired. (*Jumps up.*) Come on, we'll have a picnic by the lake. I feel like a good, long swim (153-154).

Padmini loves Devadatta more now that he is the perfect incarnation of what she had desired in a man and she wants him to be as he is now. But time goes by and Devadatta gives up all the physical activities and concentrated only on reading and writing as before. A son is born to them and they are very happy about it and Padmini wants to take the child out to play but Devadatta has no time as he has "a family tradition to maintain – the daily reading, writing and studies" (158). Padmini is disappointed as she sees that Devadatta has changed to his old self again and she can't help falling out of love with him. Padmini's song is a sign of her free spirited nature and the desire to break the mundane chains of monotonous traditional married life. Of course, she breaks the rule of traditional marriages which are considered holy, when she desires for another man rather than her husband:

Here comes a rider! From what land does he come from? Oh his head a turban with a long pearly tail. Round his neck a garland of virgin-white jasmines. In his fist a sword with a diamond-studded hilt. The white-clad rider rides a white charger which spreads its tossing mane against the western sky, spreads its mane like breakers against the western sky. Sleep now, my baby and see smiling dreams. There he comes- here he is! From which land does he come? But why are the jasmines on his chest red O so red? What shine in his open eyes? Pebbles O pebbles. Why is his young body cold O so cold? The white horse gallops across hills, streams and fields. To what land does he gallop? Nowhere O nowhere (159).

Padmini is bound by her role as a wife and a mother whose job is to take care of her husband and child and also the household. She is of a different type who is independent, free, and most of all individualistic. But the marriage to Devadatta has restrained all her activities as a child when she was carefree and could do anything she wanted. Thus, she is subalternized by Devadatta's domination over her. As a Brahman, Devadatta is too busy to give any attention to Padmini who desires it. Her unfulfilled desires and expectations from Devadatta make her to protest silently and long for Kapila again. When Devadatta goes to the Ujjain fair to buy dolls for their son, Padmini takes the child to the forest in search of Kapila. When she finds him, Kapila couldn't understand why she had come in search of him. It is not fair to him as he had been tortured and haunted enough to forget about the past:

KAPILA: When this body came to me, it was like a corpse hanging by my head. It was a Brahmin's body after all: not made for the woods. I couldn't lift an axe without my elbows moaning. Couldn't run a length without my knees howling. I had no use for it. The moment it came to me, a war started between us.

PADMINI: And who won?

KAPILA: I did.

PADMINI: The head always wins, doesn't it?

KAPILA: Fortunately, yes. Now I can run ten miles and not stop for breath. I can swim through the monsoon floods and fell a banyan. The stomach used to rebel once. Now it digests what I give. If I don't, it doesn't complain.

PADMINI: Must the head always win?

KAPILA: That's why I'm Kapila now. Kapila! Kapila with a body which fits his face (168-169).

Kapila's subalternization goes beyond mere acts but even Devadatta's body holds him captive as he explains:

Yes, mine. One beats the body into shape, but one can't beat away the memories trapped in it. Isn't that surprising? That the body should have its own ghosts, its own secrets? Memories of touch- memories of *a* touch- memories of a body swaying in these arms, of a warm skin

against these palm- memories which one cannot recognize, cannot understand, cannot even name because this head wasn't there when they happened (170-171).

Kapila's incompleteness is made complete by Padmini but in doing so she does not think about the consequences that she has to bear. When Devadatta comes back from the fair, he discovers that Padmini and his son are missing and goes in search of them. With a sword he goes straight to Kapila because he realizes that he has lost Padmini again to Kapila. The two men become conscious that they can't live happily together and thus gets into a fight and dies. Padmini blames herself for their tragedy:

They burned, lived, fought, embraced and died. I stood silent. If I'd said, 'Yes, I'll live with you both', perhaps they would have been alive yet. But I couldn't say it. I couldn't say, 'Yes'. No, Kapila, no, Devadatta. I know it in my blood you couldn't have lived together. You would've had to share not only me but your bodies as well. Because you knew death you died in each other's arms. You could only have lived ripping each other, but again, left me out (176).

She laments her dead husband and lover, and asks the Bhagavata to take care of her child and commits sati, "Kali, Mother of all Nature, you must have your joke even now. Other women can die praying that they should get the same husband in all the lives to come. You haven't left me even that little consolation" (177). Sati system in India is still prevalent in many parts but it is not done willingly by the bride, rather, they are forced to perform it in part fulfilment of their marriage vows. These acts are done in secrecy as the law does not allow it. Karnad exposes the evils of sati system in Indian Hindu societies and mocks at its practice through the representation of Padmini's action.

An actor comes running in shock to the Bhagavata and tells him that he had seen a horse singing all the patriotic songs. Just then Actor I and Padmini's son comes followed by Hayavadana turned into a complete horse but still with a human voice. Hayavadana relates how his wishes were fulfilled by the goddess Kali:

Ah! That's a long story. I went there, picked up a sword which was lying around- very unsafe, I tell you- put it on my neck and said: 'Mother of all Nature, if you don't help me, I'll chop off my head!'... The goddess appeared. Very prompt. But rather put out. She said- rather peevishly, I thought- 'Why don't you people go somewhere else if you want to chop off your stupid heads? Why do you have to come to me?' I fell at her feet and said, 'Mother, make me complete'. She said 'So be it' and disappeared- even before I could say 'Make me a complete man!' I became a horse (183).

As the boy who does not speak or show any emotions to anybody hears Hayavadana laugh, he starts laughing. As Hayavadana carries the boy on his back and prances around, he neighs and becomes a complete horse.

Hayavadana's mother refused to go to heavenly abode with her Gandharva husband. It seems that she was blessed in her bestial self only. Since she failed to recognize the divine aspect of relationship so her life turns into a tragedy. And the tragedy is to be carried not only by herself but by the next generation also, that is Hayavadana carries the curse of incompleteness. And Padmini's son also seems to carry this curse, but recognition of the imperfection and the fact that the perfection could be attained only with the realization of the other seems to be the ultimate finding... Perfection could be attained in the acceptance of reality as truth (Pandey 63).

The quest for completeness by all the major characters in the play forces them to be confronted by the stark realities of isolation, hybridity, confrontation and subalternization which brings loss as well as hope for them at the end.

Bali: The Sacrifice critiques the Hindu practice of sacrificing live offerings to their gods and religion. The play also represents the communal hatred among the different religions like the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains which has been going on in India for centuries. "The two women characters in the play, the queen and mother queen best exemplify Karnad's new women. The action of the play revolves round these two women characters: the former represents Jainism, that stands for non-

violence and the latter Kshatriya *dharma* that stands for violence” (Wadikar 63). The play begins at a ruined temple where the King is seated at the outer seats of the temple and the Queen and the Mahout are inside the inner sanctum of the temple:

So we begin our tale – and in any tale the King and the Queen sitting on the throne should merge into one- she on his lap become half his royal frame or entwined in bed, tangled together they must turn into a four-armed deity thrashing and moaning for the good of the land. But woe betide the times where the King sits alone outside on the steps racked by sighs while the Queen is wrapped in her lover’s thighs (Karnad 190).

There is tension building up from the very beginning of the play as the King sits and listens helplessly to the voices of the two lovers. Unaware of the King’s presence the Queen prepares to leave and the Mahout asks her name but the Queen refuses to reveal her identity. The Mahout gets agitated with her and refuses to let her go unless she tells her name. The Mahout gets more intrigued by the Queen as he realises that she is no ordinary woman. As he holds the Queen captive, he relates to her about his life:

You know why I am so ugly? I was born on a full moon. There was an eclipse. As you know, the worst thing you can do to yourself is to be born during an eclipse. The sun or the moon- the god whose eclipse it is- is already in the grips of the demons. The beneficial powers of that god are weak at that moment, often ineffective. So it’s free for all as far as the forces of evil are concerned. A baby about to be born is fair game. It’ll be maimed. Or blind. Or even if it looks normal, You won’t know till the baby grows up. My mother knew all this and was scared. She was lying there on a torn piece of mat and she heard sparrows chirping. In the middle of the night? She looks up and what does she see? Up in the eaves, a snake had crept into a sparrow’s nest and was gobbling up the eggs. She screamed in terror. And I was born like this... people mock at mahouts. Call us ‘low-born’. But where would all your princes and kings be without us, I want to know. What would happen to their elephants? No elephants. No army. No pomp and splendour. No processions. No kings! Ha! (196).

Even though he is ugly women are attracted to him because of his voice and beautiful songs. He cannot complain to god anymore because he's gifted with a good voice instead of a handsome face.

As the Queen stands up to go, the Mahout sees the Queen Mother outside but cannot make her out because of the dark. She comes inside the temple which alarms both the Queen and the Mahout. The Queen now pleads with the Mahout to let her go but there is only one door out of the inner temple. The Mahout sees the Queen and is sure that he had seen her before somewhere but the Queen hides again and supplicates the Mahout by trying to bribe him which offends him:

QUEEN: Please, please, help me. Here- (*Reaches for her necklace, an almost automatic gesture.*)

MAHOUT (*irritated*): Keep it. If I'd wanted that bauble, I wouldn't have waited so long. That's the estimate of every low-caste man, isn't it? He's a good lay and all he wants is a piece of gold. I am an elephant keeper, madam, not a fence, selling stolen jewellery. And if someone decides to investigate, I'll get my hands chopped off (199-200).

The treatment of the Mahout can be seen in the light of his status in society. He is from the lowest class of the Hindu society, the Shudras. He is caught in a messy web among the three elites. He knows and understands his place in the society as a subaltern who can never have another job or be respected by anybody. When the King comes and knocks at the door the Queen and the Mahout acts like they're making love to let him leave but to no avail. The Mahout opens the door in anger and realizes that it is the King himself. He enters and calls for the Queen to come out. Amritamati comes out. The Mahout realizes that he had just made love to the Queen. He pleads to them that he would keep everything a secret. The King is angry but cannot kill the Mahout because he has converted his religion to Jainism which professes non-violence.

The play goes back in time and the King and Queen meet as children. They get into an argument about their own religion and beliefs:

KING: I know. You are Jains, aren't you? Your kings can't hunt. Your Saviours are all stark naked.

QUEEN (*miffed*): And...and...and my maid says your goddess eats meat.

KING: She does too. But she is dressed in such gorgeous saris. Bright, shiny silk saris. Clothed from neck to toe.

QUEEN (*losing the argument*): Your goddess eats...chicken...and goats...and...

KING: But she is decked in gold. What kind of a king is your father? Can't he even afford a jockstrap for your Saviour? Not even a piece of rag to cover his shame? (206).

Their argument throws light and mocks the constant issue of religious intolerance among people in Indian society. The King kills a bird with a stone and it upsets the Queen. This act of violence makes the King repent and he embraces Jainism instead.

The scene shifts to another part of the past where the King and Queen are happily married. The Queen tells the King that she's four months pregnant and the King quickly goes to the Queen Mother to share the news:

MOTHER: God bless you! You have made our family tree bloom. May you beget a son whose glory blinds the eight directions. (*Gently seats her down.*) Now, the next couple of months are most precious. You need to take special care.

KING: Yes, Mother. She'll be your obedient daughter-in-law...

QUEEN: Yes! Yes! Now I'll show them. I'll show those swine. All these years I have waited for this moment. Prayed for it. Cringing at their glances-

KING: They meant well. They were only anxious.

QUEEN: they were vicious.

KING: As subjects of this land, they were interested in an heir. Fair enough.

QUEEN: Your subjects. For me, they were my judges, my interrogators, torturers- all clubbed together against me.

KING: 'Against' you?

QUEEN: Can you men even imagine what it feels like? To pretend you are unaware of their gaze as they scrutinize the roundness of your

belly, the stain on your thigh! Line after line of carrion crows, watching, waiting, ready to caw at the palmful of blood that spurted. And spurt it did- every month- every bloody month. How I hated myself when that happened (210-211).

The above conversation leads to a lot of interpretations. It talks about the preference of boy child as they would be heirs of the family wealth or title. From time immemorial Indian society is deeply rooted in a traditionally driven desire for male child rather than female child. The Queen Mother is representative of the traditional orthodox Hindus who is anxiously waiting for a grandson to replace his father to the throne. “She is a traditional, Hindu woman and all the cultural and religious rituals are firmly planted in her conscious mind. She is an orthodox and conservative in her attitude, a custodian of the Hindu faith and superstitions and is a devout and obstinate follower of her faith and religious rites and rituals” (Nimsarkar 171-172). The Queen represents those subaltern women who are bound by marriages to produce heirs for the family and nothing else. Simone de Beauvoir rightly comments:

...from infancy woman is repeatedly told that she is made for childbearing, and the splendours of maturity are for ever being sung to her. The drawbacks of her situation – menstruation, illness, and the like – and the boredom of household drudgery are justified by this marvelous privilege she has to bring children into the world (Beauvoir 508-509).

They are being treated as procreative machines and if they don't fulfil this task, they are treated as outcasts in the family as well as society. She is also a representative of the contemporary women where:

The bonds of conventional morality and the codes of fidelity are swept away by the pull of the flesh. Through the character of the Queen Amritamati, Karnad has portrayed a bold, new woman who unhesitatingly confesses to her extramarital relationship and plainly admits that whatever happened was very ‘beautiful’ and charming. Karnad here seems to give a message that purity that is guiltless of

mind matters more than that of physical relationship even in the case of adultery (Wadikar 64).

A woman understands another woman and so the Queen Mother should understand the pathos of the Queen instead, she acts as the colonizer to dominate her own kind. The influence and ascendancy of patriarchy as well as matriarchy cannot be ignored in the play and it can be seen when the King says “Unhappy! Are you mad? She’s wanted a grandson as badly as we’ve wanted a son” (Karnad 211).

The Queen insists not to make any sacrifices for their child’s birth, “I don’t want to hurt her. She can live by her beliefs. But we are Jains. Our son will be a Jain. He will have to uphold the principle of compassion for all living beings, of non-violence. Should we allow a blood rite to mark his arrival? It would be wrong. Terribly wrong!” (213). The King goes and requests his mother the same but she is hurt. She leaves the palace and settles outside of it so that she can make her sacrifices to her gods. The Queen Mother accuses the Queen of manipulation the King to turn to Jainism and also have bewitched him by her charms. The King only defends the Queen saying that she had “been a good wife. A good Queen” (216). Time shift to the present where the King stands transfixed as he cannot say nor do anything. The only person he truly loves and sacrificed everything for has deceived him. The Queen is anguished and promises the King, “I swear to you. It won’t happen again. Ever. Please.” (217). She also learns that the King had followed and heard everything that she’d done with the Mahout. This makes her even guiltier. In order to hide from his mother the King lies to her about the Queen’s clandestine meeting with the Mahout. He tells his mother that he had a bad dream thus, making her go back to the temple for sacrificing to her gods to appease them:

MAHOUT: I knew it! I knew it would finally skewer me. No, no, that’s not right, Your Majesty. A hundred fowl- I know what that slaughter means. It’s witchcraft. Whip me, Sir, brand me. But don’t don’t take away my voice.

KING: Be quiet!

MAHOUT: What’ll happen to me, if I lose my voice? I have nothing else...only my songs. Please, please, don’t destroy me by taking them away.

QUEEN: Don't be alarmed. I'll see that nothing happens to you.

MAHOUT: Thank you, madam. You are like a mother to me. I'll never forget your kindness- (*He literally touches her feet.*)

QUEEN (*no irony*): Trust me. I shall not deprive the world of your voice. I shall not desecrate it. (*Caresses his hair.*)

KING (*turning his face away in disgust*): Bravo!

QUEEN: Spare me your disgust. You take your blood and gore. I'll choose his voice- (221).

The King is caught between forgiveness and vengeance. "The King, in the play, is a typical modern man inflicted by the weakness of indecisive temperament, like that of a Modern man, like that of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, caught between the forsaken faith and inherited beliefs, the inborn temperament and the embraced instincts which remains as something imposed and unassimilated" (Jha 63). Realizing his mother's actions would upset the Queen, he persuades his mother that there was no dream. But the Queen Mother recognizes her son's pathos and it dawns on her about the Queen's clandestine affair and she erupts:

MOTHER: Oh horrible! Horrible! Where? Where is she? Tell me- In some hole? A god-forsaken garret? Where? Where did you see them?

KING: Control yourself-

MOTHER: Has she fallen so low? The whore- And you. How can you stand here like this? I should cut her to pieces...feed her to wolves and vultures. Do it, son, now!

KING: Don't be hysterical, Mother-

MOTHER: Throw her bones to the dogs. She has betrayed you. You are not bound by your vows now. All these nonsense about non-violence. It had to go. Let it go. Kill the harlot and her lover. If you won't do it, I'll do it. Let me fetch my sacrificial knife from the temple... (Karnad 223).

The Queen Mother only thinks of revenge and insists her son to kill his wife or to do something else, a substitute sacrifice for the Queen's sin. The King's persistence on non-violence makes them to perform a mock sacrifice. The King is also a representative of the postcolonial subaltern who is isolated and a hybrid, as he is torn

between two women whom he equally loves. “Crushed under the two strong-willed, rather obstinate women and headed verbal exchanges on their respective creeds, his life gets ruffled. Consequently, he becomes miserable a sad picture of himself” (Wadikar 68).

The King takes the tray filled with sacrificial things and goes to his wife:

KING: This is the offering. A sacrifice of dough. A sacrifice for a live fowl...All you have to do is place your right hand on the back of my fist. Like this. (*Demonstrates by placing his left hand on the back of his right.*) And I'll push the knife into this lump of dough. We will, together. That's all. That'll be the end of it.

QUEEN: This is a temple. You want to violate it?

KING: But it's only dough. There's no violence in it.

QUEEN: But...but...this sword. This plunging in of the blade. The act...it's violent.

KING: There's no bloodshed.

QUEEN: Then why are you doing it? Why? Blood at least makes sense if you believe in bloodthirsty gods. But this...you can't knowingly fool yourself.

KING: It's a small thing. A symbolic gesture... (Karnad 226-227).

Though it is just dough the very act is “a symbolic gesture” of the Queen's sacrifice. The King cannot forget about the Queen's sins and tries to persuade her to accept her mistakes and do the act of sacrifice. In other words, she herself becomes the sacrificial lamb which has sinned and can never be forgiven. And when the Queen tries to tell the King that they would solve the problem by themselves at home, he misinterprets her and is eager to sacrifice the dough. He says, “No harm. Sacrifice. That's the whole point of its being there. That's its whole purpose”. The Queen cannot believe what the King had just said and replies, “Do you realize that those words would sum up my life as well?” It does sum up her whole life. The King says that he cannot live without her but to do so she has to do the sacrificial rites and accepting to her transgressions saying “You want me to play your wife so I can damn myself as an adulteress?” (228). The Queen has committed an unforgiveable sin for which there is the solutions of either kill her or sacrifice an animal in place of her. But the Queen insists that what

had happened between herself and the Mahout wasn't planned but it just happened and was beautiful without any kind of demands. There was both angst and expectation every time the King made love to her as he needed an heir to ascend the throne after him. She is subalternized by her husband with the very act of love. For once in her life she felt truly loved and needed and truthfully confesses to the King, "I want to come back to you. I feel fuller. Richer. Warmer. But not ashamed. Because I didn't plan it. It happened. And it was beautiful" (235). The King asks to prove her love for him in that same place and tries to forcefully rape her. All this time the Mahout was silently drinking and sitting in a corner but now he gets up and stops them. He tries to destroy the dough cock but fails in his attempts and goes to his corner, picks up his belongings and leaves. But before he leaves the Mahout says:

Listen, the two of you. Stop playing with these things, these forces. Look at those bats- hanging on the roof. Silent. Still. Watching us. Waiting for some signal. Go now. Fetch a witch-doctor. Let him deal with it. Take my advice. This things can eat into you. Go back to the palace. As for me, I am leaving town (238).

The Mahout is more intellectual and understanding than the King or his mother. His words also mock at the complex lives of wealthy or elite society which is surrounded by superficial love and loyalty.

The play ends with the death of the Queen which is inevitable. She sacrifices herself because she realized that her husband and Queen Mother would never see her the way she understands herself nor would they forgive her for her impulsive act. All the characters are burdened by one problem or the other which makes them suffer and die or be defeated at the end. Human beings are made to take care and love each other, but they fail to understand or embrace each other because they are never satisfied with what they get. Thus, the Queen's sacrifice of herself is symbolic as she believes that her blood would wipe out all misunderstandings and misdeeds.

Nagamandala revolves around two stories; the outer story revolves around a man and a group of flames who gather at a ruined temple and discusses about the life in the village, and the second story revolves around a woman Rani who is married to a young man whom she believed would take care of her and love her as her parents

loved her. She is the representation of every woman who is innocent and pure at heart, and who fall victim to domestic violence everyday without the knowledge of the society. “Rani is the victim of the patriarchal structure and child marriage much vogue in the native culture” (Nimsarkar 118).

In the Prologue of *Nagamandala*, a man is sitting in the inner sanctum of a ruined temple who is trying not to sleep. He directly talks to the audience and says that he has to stay up one whole night in the present month to stay alive, if not he is going to die on the last night:

...Tonight may be my last night. So I have fled from home and come to this temple, nameless and empty. For years I’ve been lording it over my family as a writer. I couldn’t bring myself to die a writer’s death in front of them...I swear by this absent God, if I survive this night, I shall have nothing more to do with themes, plots or stories. I abjure all story-telling, all play-acting (Karnad 248).

Suddenly he hears voices and sees that flames are gathering at the ruined temple to tell their stories. They all have gathered after doing their usual chores of giving light to people, when a new flame comes and tells the rest of the flames about “the story with a song” (251). The Story comes and is sad because she cannot tell her story to the flames that can’t pass it on. Suddenly the man volunteers himself that he would pass on her story even if he has vowed never to do anything with writing.

Act One opens with the Story telling the story:

A young girl. Her name...it doesn’t matter. But she was an only daughter, so her parents called her Rani. Queen. Queen of the whole wide world. Queen of the long tresses...Her fond father found her a suitable husband. The young man was rich and his parents were both dead. Rani continued to live with her parents until she reached womanhood. Soon, her husband came and took her with him to his village. His name was...Appanna (253).

After reaching their house Appanna immediately leaves, telling Rani that he’ll be back the next day for lunch. He locks the door behind him and disappears. Rani does

not understand what has just happened and is perplexed and worried. Her innocence can be seen in the imaginary world she creates where she can be as free and happy as she wants:

...So Rani asks him: 'Where are you taking me?' And the Eagle answers: 'Beyond the seven seas and the seven isles. On the seventh island is a magic garden. And in that garden stands the tree of emeralds. Under that tree, your parents wait for you.' So Rani says: 'Do they? Then please, please take me to them- immediately. Here I come.' So the Eagle carries her clear across the seven seas... (254).

The next day, Appanna comes home for lunch and when he sits down to eat Rani cannot comprehend her situation and tries to talk to Appanna:

RANI: Listen- (*fumbling for words*) Listen- I feel- frightened- alone at night-

APPANNA: What is there to be scared of? Just keep to yourself. No one will bother you. Rice! (*Pause.*)

RANI: Please, you could-

APPANNA: Look I don't like idle chatter, do as you are told, understand? (*Finishes his meal, gets up.*) I'll be back tomorrow, for lunch (254-255).

Right from the beginning Rani becomes a captive in her own house and her husband who is suppose to take care and love her abandons her making her a slave, a subaltern. She is helplessly left to her own devices inside the caged house. In reality, a house is supposed to give not only shelter but also a sense of security and comfort. But, the house becomes a prison for Rani. One day Kurudavva, the blind woman and her son Kappanna visits Appanna's house:

KAPPANNA: Mother, you can't do this! You can't start meddling in other people's affairs the first thing in the morning. That Appanna should have been born a wild beast or a reptile. By some mistake, he got human birth. He can't stand other people. Why do you want to tangle with him?

KURUDAVVA: Whatever he is, he is the son of my best friend. His mother and I were like sisters. Poor thing, she died bringing him into this world. Now a new daughter-in-law comes to her house. how can I go on as though nothing has happened? Besides, I haven't slept a wink since you told me you saw Appanna in his concubine's courtyard. He has got himself a bride- and he still goes after that harlot? (255).

When they approach near the house Kappanna sees that the door is locked and informs his mother. Kurudavva insists on looking through the window when Rani appears and asks who's outside but Kappanna starts running carrying his mother but Kurudavva stops him and goes to meet the new bride, "I am coming, child! Right now! Don't go away! (*To Kappanna*) He keeps his wife locked up like a caged bird? I must talk to her. Let me down- instantly!" (257). She goes to the window and meets Rani and inquires about Appanna:

KURUDAVVA: ...Does he lock you up every day like this?

RANI: Yes, since the day I came here.

KURUDAVVA: Does he beat you or ill-treat you?

RANI: No.

KURUDAVVA (*pause*): Does he... 'talk' to you?

RANI: Oh, he does. But not a syllable more than required. 'Do this', 'Do that', 'Serve the food'.

KURUDAVVA: You mean-? That means- you are- still- hmm! Has he...?

RANI: Apart from him, you are the first person I have seen since coming here. I'm bored to death. There is no one to talk to!

KURUDAVVA: That's not what I meant by 'talk'. Has your husband touched you? How can I put it? (*Exasperated.*) Didn't anyone explain to you before your wedding? Your mother? Or an aunt? (258-259).

The above conversation throws light on Rani's character and her innocence. She does not understand why her husband treats her like a slave by locking her everyday and making her work and cook for him just like a servant. Simone de Beauvoir rightly asserts that "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society" (Beauvoir 445). Her innocence can be further seen in her explanation:

I am so frightened at night, I can't sleep a wink. At home, I sleep between Father and Mother. But here, alone- Kurudavva, can you help me, please? Will you please send word to my parents that I am, like this here? Will you ask them to free me and take me home? I would jump into a well- if only I could- (Karnad 259).

Kurudavva promises to help her and calls his son to go home and "In the right hand side of the wooden box is a coconut shell wrapped in a piece of paper. Inside are two pieces of a root. Bring them" (260).

When Kappanna has gone to fetch the roots Kurudavva relates her story:

I'll tell you. I was born blind. No one would marry me. My father wore himself out trudging from village to village, looking for a husband. But to no avail. One day a medicant came to our house. no one was at home. I was alone. I looked after him in every way. Cooked hot food specially for him and served him to his heart's content. He was pleased with me and gave me three pieces of a root. 'Any man who eat one of these will marry you', he said... One day a boy distantly related to me came to our village and stayed with us. That day I ground one of the pieces into paste, mixed it in with the food, and served him...I was in a hurry I barely noticed the small one. The biggest scared me. So I used the middle-sized root... He finished his meal, gave me one look and fell in love. Married me within the next two days. Never went back to his village. It took the plague to detach him from me (261).

Kurudavva's life has been hard from the beginning and it doesn't become easier but with her son's love and care, she is able to survive. "Karnad has created an ideal and visionary woman in Kurudavva. She is a blind and old woman. Symbolically her old stands for worldly wisdom and her blindness represent Rani's 'unconsciousness'. She leads the subplot of the play. She is a wonderful character in the play in that she plays a catalytic role which navigates the action of the play" (Nimsarkar 136-137). Kappanna brings the roots and Kurudavva gives the smaller piece to Rani to feed it to her husband. Appanna come home and meets Kurudavva on the way and suspiciously calls her. She confesses that she has come to meet his new bride and Appanna

answers, “She won’t talk to anyone. And no one need to talk to her” (Karnad 262). Appanna’s attitude towards Kurudavva shows his true nature. He is cruel and does not care about anybody be it young or old. Kurudavva is his mother’s friend so he should at least respect her for that but instead he insults her: “(so she can hear): I put a lock on the door so those with sight could see. Now what does one do about blind meddlers? I think I’ll keep a watch dog” (263).

Appanna asks for milk as he would be lunching out and Rani takes this opportunity to make a paste of the smaller root, mixes it with the milk and gives Appanna to drink. The root doesn’t affect Appanna as it only makes him pass out for some few minutes. He gets up and pushes Rani inside the house and goes off. That night, Kurudavva and Kappanna comes to visit Rani eager to know of the result of the root but when Kurudavva finds out that it did not work she gives the largest piece to Rani. She is afraid to feed the larger piece of root to her husband because even though he does not care or love her, she has nowhere else to go, “...Suppose something happens to my husband? What will my fate be? That little piece made him ill. Who knows...?” (266). She is concerned about the well-being of Appanna despite his ill treatment as she has vowed to be faithful to her husband. Women tend to be submissive and faithful towards their husbands regardless of their abusive nature. Appanna is the Colonizer incarnate who married Rani just to take care of himself. Rani is the colonized who is a slave in her own house. The postcolonial theme of subalternity is represented by the treatment of Rani by Appanna.

Appanna comes home with a vicious looking dog to guard the house and goes to take a bath. When the dog starts barking, Appanna calls out to Rani to have a look but she is busy trying to throw away the blood-red curry in which she had put the root paste. She hurriedly throws the curry on an ant-hill and runs back inside the house where Appanna is irritated. As soon as she moves from the ant-hill, a king cobra comes out of it and follows Rani from a distance. Appanna asks:

Rani, where have you been? (*No answer.*) I said, where have you been? Rani, answer me? (*Moves aside so she can go in. But the moment she steps in, Appanna slaps her hard. Rani collapses to the floor. He does not look at her again. Just pulls the door shut, locks it*

from the outside and goes away. There is not a trace of anger in anything he does. Just cold contempt...) (267).

The above action against Rani makes one cringe in contempt as she is trying the best she could to please Appanna. Instead, she gets beaten for taking care of him. The masochistic action towards Rani is a representation of women by men in general. Men are created stronger than women and this strength is being endowed to protect and give security to women and children but most of the times, men tend to forget his responsibilities and acts otherwise.

The king cobra, Naga falls in love with Rani. That night, Naga takes the form of Appanna and goes to Rani. She cannot believe that Appanna has come but the dog does not stop barking outside. Naga assures her that he would come every night to her. The next morning Rani wakes up to find that Appanna is gone, she is a little puzzled and when he comes home at his usual time Rani goes to him with a smile but is meet with “the expression of distaste on his face” (270). That night Naga kills the dog outside and comes in to meet Rani, but she is confused about Naga’s behaviour:

RANI (*rubbing her finger*): I must be going mad.

NAGA: Why?

RANI (*to herself*): His visit last night – I assumed I must have dreamt that. I am certainly not dreaming now. Which means I am going mad. Spending the whole day by myself is rotting my brain.

NAGA: It is not a dream. I am not a figment of your imagination either. I am here. I am sitting in front of you. Touch me. Come on! You won’t? Well then. Talk to me. No? All right. Then I’d better go (271).

Rani begs Naga to stay and she goes and opens her mirrored box to tend to his wounds when she sees his real image in the mirror and screams. Naga swiftly goes to her and takes away the mirror. Ironically, Rani says:

RANI (*looking up*): Since I looked into the mirror, I seem to be incapable of thinking of anything else. Father says: ‘If a bird so much as looks at a cobra-‘

NAGA: There! Now you said 'cobra'. Now he is bound to come- (*He mimes a cobra's hood with his hand.*)

RANI: Let it. I don't feel afraid any more, with you beside me. Father says: 'The cobra simply hooks the bird's eyes with its own sight. The bird stares- and stares- unable to move its eyes. It doesn't feel any fear either. It stands fascinated, watching the changing colours in the eyes of the cobra. It just stares, its wings half-opened as though it was sculpted in the sunlight.'

NAGA: Then the snake strikes and swallows the bird (*He kisses her. The flames surround them and dance, and sing. Naga and Rani join them*) (273-274).

Rani is not only Appanna's slave but also becomes Naga's lover where both subalternize her in one way or the other. "...The psychological self-division of Hero, Appanna has been exposed. The play seems to be a beautiful generalization of man-woman relationship and it seems that every woman in the play is one woman and every one man. Appanna, Naga and Kappanna are likely various facets of same person" (Pandey 76).

In Act Two Rani is getting agitated because of her husband's weird behaviour – a stranger in the morning and a lover at night. Naga gives her no choice but to accept the situation as it is:

NAGA: I'll be back again at night.

RANI: Only at night? Not for lunch?

NAGA: Of course. There's always that. (*Pause.*) Listen, Rani. I shall come home every day twice. At night and of course again at mid-day. At night, wait for me here in this room. When I come and go at night, don't go out of this room, don't look out of this window- whatever the reason. And don't ask me why.

RANI: No, I won't. The pig, the whale, the eagle- none of them asks why. So I won't either. But they ask for it again. So I can too, can I? (Karnad 277).

Rani then goes and embraces Naga. Her submissive words and actions is a revelation of Rani's subalternization and domination by patriarchy represented by Naga. Her fear of Naga not visiting her makes Rani to give in to his rules. Just as Naga changes into a cobra and goes through the drain, Kurudavva and Kappanna comes near the house and finds the dog dead but the door still locked. They hear footsteps and suspects that Kurudavva's root has taken its effect. Rani comes to the window and talks to Kurudavva about her married life and Kurudavva leaves in triumph. On their way Kappanna is charmed by a beautiful lady who appears before him beckoning him but his mother brings him back from his reverie and they leave arguing.

The next day Appanna comes home as usual but Rani noticed that he has no scars on his cheek. She cannot fathom what is happening but keeps quiet. Appanna is furious that the dog is dead. Later he brings a mongoose but it also dies and for fifteen days Naga does not visit Rani who spends the night crying and yearning for her night lover. He visits again but has a lot of wounds but Rani does not question him, only takes care of him.

One night Rani tells Naga:

All these days I was never sure I didn't just dream up these nightly visits of yours. You don't how I have suffered. When I saw your scowling face in the morning, I would be certain everything was a fantasy and almost want to cry. But my real anxiety began as the evening approached. I would merely lie here, my eyes shut tight. What is there to see after all? The same walls. The same roof. As the afternoon passed, my whole being got focused in my ears. The bells of cattle returning home- that means it is late afternoon. The cacophony of birds in a far-away tree- it is sunset. The chorus of crickets spreading from one grove to another- it is night. Now he will come. Suppose he doesn't tonight? Suppose the nightqueen does not bloom? Suppose it's all a dream? Every night the same anxiety. The same cold feeling deep within me! Thank God. That's all past now... I am pregnant... We are going to have a baby (282).

Naga is speechless. Rani's fears come true, "What I feared has come true. What kept me silent has happened. You are not happy about the baby. You are not proud that I am going to be a mother. Sometimes you are so cold-blooded – you cannot be human" (283). Rani literally reveals the true nature of Naga as an animal without feelings or common sense. Naga insists that she keep the news to herself and never to talk about it. Then Rani replies:

Yes, I shall. Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you. Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you. No. I won't ask questions. I shall do what you tell me. Scowls in the day. Embraces at night. The snarl in the morning unrelated to the caress at night. But day or night, one motto does not change: Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you...I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot. Not a cat or a sparrow. Why don't you take it on trust that I have a mind and explain this charade to me? Why do you play these games? Why do you change like a chameleon from day to night? Even if I understood a little, a tiny bit- I could bear it. But now- sometimes I feel my head is going to burst! (283-284).

Her only hope is shattered when she realizes that she would never be accepted whether she is barren or pregnant. A man marries so he could have heirs but Naga gets rather angry and frustrated making Rani feeling useless. Appanna appears and tortures Rani:

APPANNA: Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in, and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is. Who did you go to with your sari off?

RANI: I swear to you I haven't done anything wrong!

APPANNA: You haven't? And yet you have a bloated tummy. Just pumped air into it, did you? And you think I'll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, you slut-! (*He beats her. The cobra watches this through a window and moves about, frantic. Neither notices it.*) I swear to you I am not my father's son, if I don't abort that bastard! Smash it into dust! Right

now- (*Drags her into the street. Picks up a huge stone to throw on her. The cobra moves forward, hissing loudly, drawing attention to itself. Rani screams.*) (284-285).

The strength of a husband is supposed to be used in doing something good for his wife or child. There is no doubt that God made man strong but it does not make them superior to women nor does it give the freedom to abuse another human being. The names that is being given to Rani by Appanna as ‘harlot’, ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ is representative of the general perspective of men towards women. Appanna says; “Why are you humiliating me like this? Why are you stripping me naked in front of the whole village? Why don’t you kill me instead? I would have killed myself. But there’s not even a rope in this house for me to use” (285). This is ironic because he is the one who goes to meet his concubine every day and locking Rani up in her own house, but is ashamed and feels humiliated. In fact, he is the one who is guilty of everything.

Night draws and Naga comes to meet Rani and pleads her to trust her and to do as he tells her. She has to take the “snake ordeal” by putting her hand inside the ant-hill and take out the king cobra, and swear of her innocence but she must tell the truth if not it would bite. And before she could do anything, Naga disappears. Three elders come followed by a large crowd to witness Rani’s ordeal as everyone is curious of what would be the consequence because she has chosen the most dangerous ordeal and it could even cost her life. There are other ordeals like taking oath by holding red-hot iron in the hand, or plunging one’s hand in boiling oil. The elders represent the patriarchal society where they force people to accept accusations which they have not committed. One elder even suggests Rani to accept her mistake, “If you are afraid, there is no need to go through with the ordeal. Accept your guilt. We shall then go on to consider the punishment” (289). She has no other option but to go through the ordeal to prove her innocence to everyone that has gathered. In fear, Rani changes her mind and decides to take the red-hot iron oath. While the crowd roars in disappointment Kurudavva comes searching for Kappanna who is missing. The conversation between Rani and Kurudavva throws light on the postcolonial theme of subalternization of women in society:

RANI (*runs to Kurudavva*): Help me, Kurudavva. Help me, please!

KURUDAVVA: Do you know where he is? He-

RANI: It's me Rani. What shall I do? I don't know...

KURUDAVVA: My Kappanna is gone. Melted away.

RANI: I am innocent, Kurudavva. I haven't done anything, what shall I do?

KURUDAVVA: I woke up. It was midnight. I heard him panting. He was not in his bed. He was standing up...stiff...like a wooden pillar. Suddenly I knew. There was someone else in the house. a third person (290-291).

The only family that Kurudavva had is being robbed from her and as she is blind, nobody is concerned about her. She was also the only ray of sunshine for Rani but it's been taken away from her too. They both are subalterns who are crushed by society branding them as 'mad' and 'whore'. At the end Rani annihilates any doubt against her by taking the snake ordeal whereby proving her innocence and raising her to the status of a goddess:

Appanna, your wife is not an ordinary woman. She is a goddess incarnate. Don't grieve that you judged her wrongly and treated her badly. That is how goddesses reveal themselves to the world. You were the chosen instrument for the revelation of her divinity...Spend the rest of your life in her service. You need merit in ten past lives to be chosen for such holy duty...Bless us, Mother. Bless our children (293).

Kurudavva on the other hand is destroyed as she cannot recover from her grief of losing her son. The relationship among human beings is complex and one has to be ready to sacrifice one's desires and wants to bring peace and harmony in the society.

Karnad has beautifully blended history, myth and folklores in representing the issues faced in the contemporary society which is plagued by desire of power, bloodshed and hatred. It becomes difficult for an individual who is; innovative like Tughlaq, insatiable like Padmini, practical like the Queen Amaritamati and innocent like Rani to survive in a world that is ready to judge one's every action and only find fault in it. Rani is the only one who comes out triumphant at the end but the rest of the

characters are sacrificed for their act of defiance against the set rules of the society. They become mere puppets in the hand of fate as well as society which not only subordinate them but also destroy them in the end.

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Chapter IV

HUMAN DESTINY AND THE ART OF LIVING IN RATAN THIYAM

Manipur is known for its rich history in dramatic art which is being influenced by various colonial rules over the years. The Aryan Brahmins came during the early fifteenth century from all the different parts of India and made settlements in Manipur. The place also borders Assam, Tibet, Bhutan and Bengal. Eighteenth century brought about a new movement called the neo-vaishnavism that greatly influenced the culture of Manipur. The Meiteis are the majority in the community and they belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race that was known as the *Kirata* in the Mahabharata period. They speak Meitei which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages also known as *Kuki-Chin*.

The origin of Manipuri performance are traced to native primitive fertility-cults and ancestor-worship festivals, the ritual forms perhaps established in the twelfth century. The celebratory rite of Lai Haraoba received its formal shape with the monarch's participation, therefore assuming a politico-cultural significance later in the process of nation making. Wari Liba, or the art of solo storytelling before the king or community, became institutionalized in the seventeenth century. Folk dances and music, collective enhancement of relations with ancestral spirits, and ritual control over clan principalities through cyclic festivals, with associated secular lessons for education and initiation of young, developed into a national culture in the eighteenth century symbolizing the cosmos under the monarch as visible active principle (Arambam 76).

Ch. Manihar Singh writes about Manipuri drama in the following:

The novel, the new literary genre appeared, so to say, without much fanfare, but drama was not so as it first made its rumble heard on the stage. The Manipuris, already past masters in dance, music and later *jatra*, took to the new form of performance like a duck to water. Thanks to the combined zeal of the domiciled Bengali officers and Manipuri teachers from Assam, theatre was introduced as another course of dish to the art-loving Manipuris (Singh 234-235).

A North East Indian playwright and theatre director, Ratan Thiyam is a graduate of Dramatic Arts from National School of Drama, New Delhi who is a multifaceted artiste. Ratan Thiyam was born into a family of artistes in January 20, 1948 at Nabadwip West Bengal, Nadia District and brought up at Haobam Dewan Lane, Imphal. His father, Guru Thiyam Tarunkumar was one of the most respected gurus of Classical Manipuri Dance and his mother, Bilasini Devi was a renowned dancer. Considered as a prominent contemporary theatre guru, Thiyam is a painter, poet and an expert in direction, design, script, music, choreographer and a lighting expert. He uses the ancient Indian theatre traditions and forms in a contemporary context. He represents:

The ‘theatre of roots’, a new unconventional theatre, which has been evolving as a result of its encounter with tradition for some two decades. It has finally made its presence felt. It has compelling power, it thrills audiences, and is receiving institutional recognition. It is deeply rooted in regional theatrical culture, but cuts across linguistic barriers, and has a pan-India character in idiom and communicability. Never before during the last one century and more was theatre practised in such diversified form, and at the same time with such unity in essential theatrical values (Awasthi 295).

Ratan Thiyam’s plays are so dramatic that it captures the audience’s and the reader’s attention alike and makes them feel that sense of awe what mere expressions and moves can do. “ ...Creative individuals like Ratan Thiyam initially transcended local and regional frontiers to seek greener pastures in New Delhi and attained meteoric success with colourful productions” (Arambam 79). Following are the list of plays that Thiyam has written: *Karanabharam* (1979) (*Karna-bhara*: Karna’s burden

by Sanskrit playwright Bhasa); *Imphal Imphal* (1982); *Chakravyuha*; *Army Formation* (1984); *Lengshonnei* (1986) (An adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*); *Uttar Priyadarshi: The Final Beatitude*, by Hindi playwright Agyeya (1996); *Chinglon Mapan Tampak Ama: Nine Hills One Valley*; *Ritusamharam: Ritusamharam* by Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa; *Andha Yug: The Blind Age*, by Hindi playwright Dharamvir Bharati); *Wahoudok: Prologue*; *Ashibagee Eshei* based on *When We Dead Awaken*, by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (2008); *The King of Dark Chamber: Raja* (2012), based on a play *Raja* (1910) by Rabindranath Tagore.

Thiyam incorporates different theatre styles like the ancient Greek drama, the Natya Sastra, the Noh theatre of Japan. He is also influenced by the Manipuri traditional martial arts called Thang-Ta, which he beautifully blends with the different theatre styles, thereby creating a distinct form of art. "A close study of the art of Manipuri *Thang-Ta* in various levels reveals clearly the spiritual foundation of this art as a Tantric way of dedication and prayer, medium of communication of forces both good and evil, in the context of a life style of austerity and nobility" (Singh 64). In 1976, Thiyam set up a theatre group called Chorus Repertory Theatre at Imphal, Manipur, which is now being considered as one of the finest theatre performing groups in the world. Appreciation for Thiyam's works can only be done if one truly understands between the working and relationship of Thiyam himself and the repertory performers.

His works profess a deep concern for social welfare and spiritual yearnings in the midst of the political chaos in the modern world. "Like many other sensitive theatre lovers Thiyam is also troubled by the socio-political problems but not restricted to Manipur alone rather by those that have affected the world over" (Konwar 219). His plays infuse rationalised and multifaceted analysis of myriad perspectives. "Thiyam considers theatre as a political and moral critique and uses myths and histories of war and violence as vehicles to express his protest" (Das 108). Using ingenious theatrical stagecraft, his plays are tinged with literary beauty and meaning. Most of Ratan Thiyam's plays are thematically Indianised and are profound plays with universal appeal. His approach to theatre has been shaped by years of study under the tutelage of several major exponents of the traditional Manipuri performing arts. Thiyam is also known for his use of traditional martial arts, of Thang-Ta in his

plays, such as in *Urubhangam (Broken Thigh)*, of Sanskrit playwright Bhāsa itself based on an episode from epic, the *Mahabharata*, which along with *Chakravyuh (Amry Formation)* is considered one of his finest works. In 1986, he adapted Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* as *Lengshonnei*, a comment on the personal behaviour of politicians, failing to handle political situation in the state. *Uttar Priyadarshi (The Final Beatitude)*, an adaptation of Hindi verse play by playwright and poet Agyeya in 1996, based on a story of redemption of King Ashoka, a man's struggle against his own inner dark side and a plea for peace, knowing its impact on future generation. The play has since travelled to many parts of the South Asia, Australia and the US. His play *Andha Yug (The Blind Age)*, known for creating an intense and intimate experience, around the epochal theme, was famously staged in an open-air performance, at Tonga, Japan, on 5 August 1994, a day before the forty-ninth anniversary of Atomic Holocaust in Hiroshima.

Thiyam's art is criticised by many as they believe that he does not adhere to the traditional rules of drama. His works are disapproved for his misuse and misrepresentation of the characters in the *Mahabharata* and he is also criticised for his adaptations of the Manipuri traditional dances and art as the *Thang Ta*, incorporating it with other forms of dramatic art to create a new form of performing arts.

There are various forms of *Ta* in Manipur. Like *Thang* (sword), *Ta* is a universal weapon used by the people of Manipur since antiquity. Ancient Manipuri people called it *Timen*, which *Chung*, an elongated shield associated with this *Ta* is called *Marung*. The *Ta* may roughly be featured a a weapon having a long shaft of hard wood or bamboo, tipped with different shapes of iron points on both the ends of the handle. In short it is a weapon, which can advantageously be used in thrusting man and animal alike with either end of the *Ta*. The front tip is called *Tamang* and the other tip is called *Taning*. There are different forms of *Ta*, such as, *Lambu-Ta*, *Lang-soi-Ta*, *Sagol-Ta*, *Thongal-Ta*, *Khang-ning-Ta*, etc (Dutta 257).

He neither sticks to the tradition nor moves away from it, rather feeds on tradition to evolve into a hybrid form which makes him unique. This uniqueness has enthralled

many countries around the world and has made Ratan thiyam and his *Chorus Repertory*. For Ratan Thiyam, every individual whether he is a king or a common man, is in constant contact with the environment and people around him which gives him the privilege to make or break his own life. “His keen observations of human nature have enabled him to shape and project the finer details of the characters in his plays” (Singh 11).

Destiny is created by his own choice of relationships. It is in one’s hands to be good or bad, but there are also times when an individual is built or destroyed by someone else’s choices of good or evil. Thiyam makes use of a rich variety or dramatic art to give life to characters, emotions and situations. *Chakravyuha* enacts an episode from the *Mahabharata* where a boy is sacrificed cruelly for selfish and irreconcilable reasons between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. In a desperate move to win over the Pandavas who are literally winning the battle, the Kauravas forces Guru Dornacharya to form the dreaded Chakravyuha which cannot be denied by him as he is being sheltered and provided food by the Kauravas. Thus, the Kauravas deliberately make him a subaltern in the process.

With the help of the Sutradhara and his two followers (Pariparshvika 1 and 2) the prologue introduces the situation of the play and also introduces the characters in the play. They also give hints about what is going to befall on the different characters. The Sutradhara is offering flowers and prayers as the prologue opens:

I remember Hari my preceptor,
Whose feet remain in the form of mercy
In the form of a delicate lotus.
I remember him decorated in sparkling white garments
And white smelling garlands,
Abode of all qualities and attributes
In the form of genuine development...
I remember Him who searches for all means of giving
His mercy undiminished by my faults,
Whose face is ever wreathed in smiles
The one who shows the path of service
And worship of Shree Krishna,

Who is the protector of the helpless and downtrodden
In Him repose all manner of wellbeing,
Who is himself the embodiment of pleasure and happiness
In flesh and blood (Thiyam 3).

He gives praise to Brahma who is the creator of the earth. He also prays for protection and blessings. The Sutradhara and his Pariparshvikas discuss how the Natyasastra came into existence into the world of dramatic art in India, thus, indicating about their various incorporation with different dramatic forms:

PARIPARSHVIKA 1: O Guru, O my preceptor, Lord Brahma, the Creator of this universe, who was himself born in the lotus (*He makes the lotus gesture*) stemming from the navel (*points to the navel*) of lord Vishnu had taken the recitative from the Rig Veda, music from the Sama Veda, acting from the Yajur Veda and the *Rasas* or emotions from the Atharva Veda to create the fifth Veda called the Natya Veda. (*He describes each Veda with broadly drawn gestures indicating the attributes and draws a pot to suggest the hoard.*) It is not true, Gurudeva, my teacher? (*He addresses the Sutradhara who has been following his gestures appreciatively.*

SUTRADHARA (*still kneeling*): Oh ho ho! You still remember the lesson? You are a real theatre buff, a theatre student in the real sense of the word. (*Pats Pariparshvika 1. He then lifts the jarjara flag three times as he recites the verse describing the Natya Veda.*)...All the recitative was taken from the Rig Veda, the song from the Sama Veda, acting from the Yajurveda, all the *rasas* from the Atharvaveda. Dramas and other fine arts were invented from the Vedas and sub-Vedas like the Upanishads. In this way the Creator created all these sciences and arts (5).

They converse about the creator and how everything revolves around him at first but due to human beings selfishness, all things that are good perishes and there is only violent and bloodshed. Pariparshvika 2 rightly says:

No. Because once he has witnessed the corrupt and debased age of Kaliyuga in which we exist, the Creator will automatically understand

why I doubt Him. I am that product of our times which has jumped straight out of the scriptures, from the book of the Kalki Purana. If He does not know this simple fact, how can He be considered a creator of the universe? This is the age when instead of saying ‘truth is the victor’, one should declare, ‘untruth is the victor’ (6).

Suddenly they hear the blowing of conch shells. The Sutradhara explains that:

...In the holy plain of Kurukshetra the five sons of Pandu and a hundred sons of Dhritarashtra are arranging their charioteers and soldiers in formations of battle. Both sides are marching forward as if victory is theirs...Among these conches are Janardana Krishna’s Panchajanya, Arjuna’s Devadatta, Vrikodara Bheema’s Poundra...Dharmaraja Yudhishtira’s Anantavijayam, Nakula and Sahadeva’s Sughosha and Manipushpaka. We are hearing the sound of all these conches...From the side of the Kauravas, Dronacharya son of Bharadwaja Rishi, Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Ashwathama, Karna, Kripacharya, Kritavarma and other well known charioteers have taken position...They are blowing their conches with such vigour as to make the sound cause cracks in the earth and its waves cause ripples of blood to rise in the river of bloody war – a newly formed Ganga...Just look at the spectrum of flags floating in the skies aided by the good of the winds (7-8).

Everything they see and hear around them is about war and bloodshed. The fight for domination of one another has blinded both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Sutradhara introduces all the charioteers bearing their different flags for the epic battle “Among the millions of flags of both Kauravas and Pandavas, as you look at the Pandava side, you can see the flag with the motif of a dancing peacock. That is the flag of Abhimanyu, adolescent son of Subhadra. He has just turned fifteen” (9). Abhimanyu, even though young, is ready to fight for the Pandavas. His cry is a cry of innocence when he says, “O my father Dhananjaya, Oh my maternal uncle Krishna, O Bheema, my elder uncle, protect me, protect me” (9). The Sutradhara also talks about a country’s political situation and how one manipulates another to gain power over each other:

Each and every nation of this world has its own flag by which it is indentified. Two flags in proximity mean friendship and flags apart mean... Right, it means enmity – ... National flags conceptualize politics. In this modern battlefield on the holy plains of Kurukshetra the power game has already started. This is a war of flags... this is a war of power grabbers... (10).

The flag bearers' song is symbolic of the bloodshed and sacrifices that humanity has made to gain power and domination among each other. The prologue is a reflection of real situation of the world today of power politics and postcolonial theme of displacement and isolation:

In this verse, where nectar flows, called
Dharamkshetra Kurukshetra
By chanting the *mantra* (the divine word) of Hari with swords,
By chanting the *mantra* of Vishnu with arrows.
We are scattering red *abeer* (the holy red powder of Holi, the
Spring festival)
And celebrating the festival of Holi with red blood from the
Pichkari (colour sprinklers).
In this Mahayagna (a great sacrificial ceremony),
With the great sacrificial rites of grappling for power,
We all become the offering.
The great power-hunters have already let loose
Their Ashwamedha horse for sacrifice (11).

Scene I open in the evening at Dronacharya's camp where he performs his puja and prays for help from his God. He is the Guru of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas and so is torn between the two and is praying to the almighty for help:

...O the supreme one, that is why today, on the twelfth night, when this devastating battle being fought on the field of justice called Kurukshetra is taking the shape of Kaliyuga, I pray to you... I pray to you in the twilight of my life, I, the stupid scum of a Brahman, who choose the life of a Kshatriya by taking up arms and standing between truth and untruth, I, Dronacharya, the

son of Bharadwaja Muni, holding the sacred *tulasi* leaves in my sinful hands, offer this prayer: When you serve the lord, kindly convey my humble request and communicate my innermost feelings and thoughts to him...(*The entire sequence is charged with energy, bursting with the lust for power*) (13).

The Kauravas come and ask him to be their help in destroying the Pandavas once and for all:

DUHSHASANA: It appears, Gurudeva, that the strain of being on one side while being a teacher of both parties is coming too much for you. You are unable to adjust to this reality and are tired. That is why perhaps you are invoking the divine name of that cowherd Krishna... But please do not forget that time is running out. The Kaurava armies are being massacred. It is a distressing situation. Kindly forget your association with the other party, stop sympathizing with them and step out boldly to fulfil the promise you made to us. We want your total support (14-15).

They are mad at Drona for being inactive in doing his duty towards them. But Shakuni interrupts and tells Duhshasana about true politics:

You are wrong, my dear... Don't hurl allegations against the respected *acharya*. No veteran politician uses that tone or speaks that language. Politics is to be able to deliver the harshest words in the sweetest tones, words so embellished with frills as to melt the hardest heart. By presenting five-year plans, never to be implemented, as colourful dreams heralding a bright future, one can become a leader, a king. This is also politics (15).

This explanation exposes how dirty politics are played in manipulating and conquering over others. The thirst for power has made human beings blind to do right and search for truth. Even Drona (a learned Guru) is not spared when he tries to prove his worth to the Kauravas. He declares: "Claiming outwardly to be an ardent supporter of one and all the while thinking of ways to destroy him is also politics. You also had a hundred brothers. Politics, Politics, Politics" (16), but later on changes

his stance when he is forced to form the Chakravyuha. He becomes a mere puppet in the hands of the Kauravas who is trying to prove that they are doing the right thing.

Duryodhana questions the authority of the Pandavas in their stand for truth and quest for peace:

Dharma (truth), Dharma, Dharma... I know the one who says that he is the embodiment of truth and the personification of justice. In reality he uses untruth as a weapon. Where were the so-called torchbearers of truth when the grandsire Bheeshma (*gesture bow and arrow*), who is more capable than any god guarding the directions and who had been annihilating the Pandava armies, like a wild elephant in a banana garden, and in whose presence the Pandava generals, charioteers and warriors were running helter skelter, was killed in a game so foul? Where is *Dharma*?... Why did Krishna advise Arjuna to use the eunuch Shikhandi as a shield?... and this at the behest of one who calls himself the embodiment of truth?... Is this how he refers to himself? (16).

Drona is pressed to make his decision and the Kauravas even advise him to create the Chakravyuha. In fact he is threatened to choose between the Pandavas and the Kauravas to prove his loyalty to them, thus, he has no choice but to form the dreaded “cosmic formation of military warfare”, Chakravyuha. He becomes a postcolonial subaltern who has to prove his position and support to the Kauravas:

DUHSHASANA: (*with broad gestures, moves threateningly towards Drona*). Make a decision, O Brahman, whether you are going to be on our side, on whose bread you feed, or that of the Pandavas who have vowed to suck our blood.

DRONA: (*rising on his knees on the stool*). Duhshasana! Perhaps you do not know who I am. Perhaps I will have to teach you a lesson before I defeat the Pandavas. Dronacharya is not afraid of insects like you that hover over a flower, not afraid even of Yama, the god of death, you must remember this (17).

They even intimidate Drona to act fast by relating various incidents:

SHAKUNI: One engages in battle to fight and kill the enemy, not to torture oneself. Once you become the wall of defence, Gurudeva, we know that even Vasudeva Krishna will have to bow before your skilful warfare. And his Sudarshana Chakra... Ah! Yes, yes, the *chakra*. Kindly create the Chakravyuha – the cosmic formation of military warfare.

ALL KAURAVAS: Yes Master... the Chakravyuha.

DURYODHANA: Please, sire, promise that you will array your army as the Chakravyuha and kill one chief warrior of the Pandavas by tomorrow (18).

The way the Kauravas persuade Drona is suggestive of their fears and insecurities towards the Pandavas as they know that they are weaker and have little or zero chances of winning the war. They have no other choice but to convince Drona that he is doing the right thing while they all know that they are forcing him to do against his will. Drona is the embodiment of the subaltern man caught in between his desire to do right and the outside forces that drag him further into doing wrong. At last, he cannot escape them but surrenders to their demands and declares:

DRONA: Yes...I will kill one chief charioteer of the Pandavas... Without any delay, send a messenger to Kritavarma's camp and tell him that he must engage Arjuna in battle as leader of the Sangsaptaka army. Arjuna is the only warrior who can penetrate the Chakravyuha and emerge safely. So he must be diverted and engaged in a different part of the battlefield (19-20).

Drona submits to the evil desires of the Kauravas. He divides among the charioteers and asks each of them to stay guard on different positions of the Chakravyuha. Drona is the only person who is given the knowledge how to create Chakravyuha and as he plans to create it, he literally washes his hands off by confessing his innocence:

Oh Ganganandan Bheeshma, grandfather of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, you handed over this duty to me in the battlefield of Kurukshetra where there is no discrimination between right and wrong.

Oh, Friend, in this hour I remember you, after giving my word to the Kauravas that I will build the Chakravyuha (22).

Though Drona can be considered as a victim of the Kauravas, his willingness to help them and his partiality towards the Pandavas made him an ally and a subalternist. He is the representation of both the colonizer and the colonized.

Scene II opens at Abhimanyu's camp and its dawn. Sumitra looks at his grandson sleep:

SUMITRA: I do not know how many hours of this passing night I have spent in sleep sitting here. Day is about to break. (*Looks at Abhimanyu, caresses his head.*) How calmly he lies here in my lap. Just like the moon having completed the night's journey and task of sprinkling light over the world rests at daybreak. Brought up under my care, romping on my back, this tender, delicate boy has never been away from me. Even here, on this battlefield, he is my ward, entrusted to my care by his mother Subhadra (23).

He also informs that it's been thirteen days since the war started at Kurukshetra. In the meantime Abhimanyu dreams a dream and wake up with a start and tell his dream to Sumitra.

ABHIMANYU: (*lifts his arms and puts them around Sumitra's waist.*) Oh! Grandpa... (*His voice is trembling.*) They were asking me to come with them.

SUMUTRA: Who were they?

ABHIMANYU: (*rises on both knees. Holds out the garland of flowers around his neck first to Sumitra and then to the audience. He raises it high above his head and to his eyes.*) I was asleep in my mother's lap and they came to me, the heavenly dancers from the bank of an ocean of clouds. They beckoned me to follow. They asked me to throw away this garland and promised to replace it with a wreath of divine flowers, the heavenly Parijata. And all the while I was telling my mother I won't go. It was a weird dream.

SUMITRA: (*mimes as he describes the event*). When you caught and held Suprateek, King Bhagadatta's four-tusked, iron-booted elephant, the proud and happy Lord Krishna gave you this garland of fragrant blossoms. You fell asleep smelling its fragrance. Which is why perhaps it entered your dreams. There's nothing weird about it at all (24-25).

With Sumitra's explanation it is also seen that Abhimanyu, though very young is a warrior. Suddenly there is the sound of gongs and drums and also of voices "What is the matter, grandfather? Why this loud beating of war drums? Anybody there? (*Two soldiers enter.*) Go and find out if any charioteer wounded in yesterday's combat lies on his deathbed" (25). Yudhisthira and Pheema enter and are aggrieved about the devastation that the Kauravas are causing in the war. Not only that, they have also heard about the creation of the Chakravyuha by Drona in favour of the Kauravas which is causing such havoc in the Pandavas camp:

YUDHISHTHIRA: A message was delivered in the early hours of the morning that on the Kauravas' demand Guru Drona has taken a vow to destroy the entire Pandava army by forming the cosmic arrangement of military warfare designed like a *chakra* (the cutting wheel) – the Chakravyuha. Immediately I rushed to the camps of Krishna and Arjuna, but unfortunately they had already set out on their chariots with a mission to kill all the Sangsaptakas today. So I could not speak to them. Lord Krishna from far away shouted, 'O king, my brother, let us meet when we return victorious'. Nakula, Sahadeva, Satyaki, Chakitan, Dhrishtadyumna, Kunti Bhoj, Ghatotkacha (Pandava warriors all) have all been advised to discuss the matter in all seriousness in their camps. In the meantime we are here to confer with you, my son. We do not know what we will tell your valiant father when he returns after defeating the Narayani soldiers. None of us is capable of destroying the Chakravyuha. And that is why we have come to you.

ABHIMANYU: (*eagerly stepping forward*). What? Destroying the Chakravyuha...

SUMITRA: (*gets up, tries to restrain Abhimanyu*). Oh no... not Abhi... no, my grandson...

YUDHISHTHIRA: (*in a reprimanding tone*). Sumitra!

BHEEMA: We do not merely want to defeat the Kauravas but tear them to bits. You can tell us how to do it.

ABHIMANYU: Yes, there is a way out.

YUDHISHTHIRA: What did you say, my son? (26-27).

Abhimanyu even confesses that he knows the technique to penetrate the Chakravyuha and says:

ABHIMANYU: I know the technique, O Maharaja. (*He touches the ground with his forehead.*)

Cross and general centre area lights fade out.

YUDHISHTHIRA: (*exultant*). What did you say? You know the technique? How?

BHEEMA: (*again prances around with his mace in a whirling motion, laughing triumphantly*). When did you learn it?

The moves, gestures, expressions of Bheema and Yudhishtira indicate a preplanned intention.

ABHIMANYU: Listen to me, please, O king. I was then but five months in my mother's womb (28).

The uncles already know that Abhimanyu knows the technique of penetrating the Chakravyuha but did not want to take the blame later that they had persuaded Abhimanyu to do it. Their plan is successful as Abhimanyu relates how he came to gain knowledge to penetrate the Chakravyuha.

Abhimanyu is in Subhadra's womb and can hear her conversation with Arjuna:

SUBHADRA: If tomorrow is a full moon night, the one growing inside me will be five months old.

ARJUNA: The noble soul will arrive in this cruel world to participate in a fierce struggle for survival. That day is not far away.

SUBHADRA: That is what is worrying me.

ARJUNA: Where there is no affection amongst brothers, relatives and kinsmen; where corruption and selfishness are consecrated; in this world of disfigured human nature, he will be another addition... Listen, my sweetheart. The Mahabharata war is imminent in the near future. Ages change. Human behaviour alters with changing times, till it becomes difficult to distinguish between good and bad. One sins knowingly and gradually equips oneself to cover these sins with deeds that mask the colour of truth. Gradually the mask begins to assume the features of truth. Going so far as to recast truth in its own mould, its own colours making it difficult to distinguish between good and evil. There is no dearth of selfish people. Is it possible to make them aware of their inhumanity? And even if it is, how many persons can one change? Look at the hundred Kaurava brothers. They are conspiring to snatch the tiny piece of land given to us as our share. By awarding high positions to Grandsire Bheeshma and Guru Dronacharya, the Kauravas are cunningly trying to win them over to their side. Aware of the short span of life left, the old Grandsire Bheeshma and Dronacharya, who though rich with the fruits of knowledge are weakened by old age and insecurity, have succumbed to the grandeur and comforts of palatial living (30-31).

Arjuna's explanation of the cruelties of human beings and of derogating each other is a testament of the present situation where humans kill each other for selfish gains. Even Drona with all his knowledge becomes a subaltern under the lure of the Kauravas. Arjuna and Subhadra are in fear of the present state as well as the future when their son would be born. The postcolonial theme of isolation can be related to the fears and emotions of Arjuna and Subhadra for their unborn child:

In this age, when truth has started changing into falsehood like a chameleon changing colour, those of us who have reached middle age will meet the same fate. I do not know how the future generations are going to survive this age where feinds operate in human disguise. Are we destined to embark on our last journey after offering our unborn child to the sacrificial fires of the coming age? (31).

But Abhimanyu promises that he would survive by saying, “Don’t worry, mother. It is human nature to be swept along the tide of time. But in the boat of truth, holding the oars of honesty, I shall cross the turbulent ocean of fearful corruption, sinful deeds, following in the light of your footsteps, O my dear parents” (31-32). Abhimanyu is optimistic about the future as his parents have taught him well, but he does not know how treacherous the world can be. His believe that truth and honesty would bring victory but it is short-lived as he would become the sacrificial victim to be sacrificed for the elders who are thirst for power and domination. Arjuna promises to teach Abhimanyu well in his footsteps and to even teach the technique well to penetrate a Chakravyuha and to come out of it. Subhatra persuades Arjuna to tell her immediately:

Then listen, O Subhadra! The formation of the armies are the shape of a Chakra is known as the Chakravyuha. A number of major and minor charioteers as powerful as the lord of heaven, Indra himself, will be inside this formation... O my dear Subhadra, that secret which is no known even to the gods of this universe, but passed on to me as a special sign of blessing by the kind-hearted Guru Dronacharya, I shall now whisper into your ear. Listen to this *mantra*. One may know how to penetrate the Chakravyuha, but failure to come out of it could be fatal. (*Subhadra yawns.*) Which is why after a fierce battle, the only wish would be to come out of the Chakravyuha with this secret *mantra*. (*Arjuna bends down to whisper the mantra and discovers that Subhadra is asleep.*) Oh God... she has fallen asleep. (*Abhimanyu shifts restlessly from the right to the left side*) (33-34).

Abhimanyu was unable to learn about how to get out of the Chakravyuha as his mother had fallen asleep while Arjuna was explaining about it. Abhimanyu says, “But my mother was deaf to my entreaties. She was under the spell of ‘Nidra’, goddess of slumber. O Maharaja, I was told by my father Arjuna the method of entering the Chakravyuha, but not how to come out of it! (*Yudhishtira and Bheema ignore this*)” (35). Their thirst for power and domination has blinded Yudhishtira and Bheema to give false hope to Abhimanyu. He becomes a subaltern who cannot ignore the requests and encouragements from people who are older as well as revered by him.

He becomes a tool for the Pandavas for destroying their enemy and shows support to Abhimanyu so that he would be willing to do as they wanted and encourages thus:

O Abhimanyu, valiant warrior...try and penetrate the *vyuha* by whatever means you know. You enter by one gate and we shall follow you. (*He turns away from Abhimanyu. Dhaemaraja is somewhat ashamed at what he is doing to his young nephew. But he turns back for the Pandava cause.*) We will follow and protect you wherever you go. Remember you are as valiant and expert at arms as your father.

BHEEMA: (*moves down right and places his mace before Abhimanyu*). I too shall follow you, Abhi. Drishtadyumna, Satyaki, the Panchalas, the Kaykeis, the armies of the Matsya province, the armies of Prabhadraka, will all accompany you. If you succeed in breaking through even a slight opening in the Chakravyuha, we will rush in full strength and destroy the Kaurava armies (35).

With the encouragement from his uncles, Abhimanyu becomes vigorous and says, “Like the insect that jumps into the wild fire, I will leap on the army deployed by Drinacharya. Though I may be young and alone, I swear to kill all the major and minor charioteers of the enemy force to save the honour of the dynasty of my parents” (35-36). The image of the insect jumping into the fire is representative of Abhimanyu’s discernment about his actual situation. He knows that after penetrating the Charakravyuha, it would be impossible for him to come out of it and thus, forfeits himself to the responsibility of doing his duty.

In scene III Drona and the Saptarathi (the seven charioteers) are preparing to form the Chakravyuha. He entrusts each charioteer in different positions:

O Sindhu King Jayadratha, let Lord Sadashiva Mahadeva give you the blessed power to protect the main gate of the Chakravyuha...O great Brahman Kripacharya, expert in the techniques of warfare, protect the Chakravyuha with all your might...O Ashwathama, you will guard the gate beside your uncle Kripacharya...O best among warriors, bright as the rays of the sun – Vaikartana Karna – I know you can quite effortlessly guard the fourth wall entrance held by a posse of

soldiers...And now, Duhshasana, younger brother to the King, may the gods be with you...O great Shakuni, master of political intrigues and manoeuvres! You will be in the front row of the soldiers guiding King Duryodhana...O King Suyodhana, you must be observant and alert while waiting on your chariot. All Maharathis (*major charioteers*), heed my advice... This is an order from General Dronacharya. Now let us start on our mission (36-37).

Abhimanyu on the other side also prepares himself and says, “Do not worry, grandfather. If I enter the Chakravyuha with you as my chariot-driver, I will shatter single-handedly the power of the Kauravas. I shall surely defeat the enemy, or lay down my life as a valiant Kshatriya in the field of battle. When I die my spirit will wing to heaven” (38). He is a Kshatriya by birth and so must obey every order he receives from the king. The class struggle of the elites and the commoners is eminent from Abhimanyu’s declaration about his caste. A Kshatriya can never become a Brahman whatsoever as such Abhimanyu becomes the subaltern victim on whom the Pandavas fed on.

Scene IV opens with Jayadratha offering prayers to Shiva. He confesses that,

At the centre of this flood
of battle, called Kurukshetra, I, Jayadratha,
Serve the orders of Guru Dronacharya,
And stand as the bolt to the gate of the Chakravyuha.
I pray to you, O master of the trident,
Who once gave me the boon:
On any given day you can defeat all the Pandavas
Except Arjuna.
O Mahadeva, master of the *bhootas*,
Bless me so
That this day, when I stand sole guard at the gate of the Chakravyuha,
Be the day for the boon to come true (41).

His confession and prayer discloses his position as a subaltern who acts according to his master Drona. Then Abhimanyu enters in front of the gates of the Charavyuha and they fight but Abhimanyu is successful in his battle with Jayadratha.

Scene V opens with four soldiers challenging Abhimanyu but they also gets defeated. Shakuni relates about the battle between the Kauravas and Abhimanyu:

I have just seen the blood-smeared body of Duryodhana. Helpless Dronacharya's weapons are being cut to pieces. Duhshasana's nose bleeds, striking Karna with shocked wonder. Ashwaththama and Kripacharya lie wounded. Abhimanyu, though young in years, is as versatile as his father in the art of warfare. Like a lion cub tearing the flesh of a deer, he has mauled the major charioteers. The Kaurava soldiers are running helter skelter creating chaos in the Chakravyuha. I, Shakuni, have never seen a more happy sight in my life. I am witness to the fire of revenge quenched by Abhimanyu's valiant deeds (43).

Thus, Abhimanyu is seen destroying and conquering over all the charioteers. Duryodhana on the other hand is wondering why their plan was not working and makes him to think back:

As Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, fearlessly battles the major and minor charioteers inside the Chakravyuha, my thoughts turn inwards: what are the true colours of my friend? Are they as they appear? In speech guru Dronacharya orders death for Abhimanyu, but his eyes glow with affection and appreciation for him. His hands quiver when he aims an arrow at Arjuna's son. The question of appearance and reality occurred to me on the very first day when Vaikartana Karna, who had taken a vow to demolish the Pandavas, gave his sacred armour away to Kunti, thus weakening his own defence. Why are Kripacharya and Ashwaththama holding back and bringing up the issue of Brahman and non-Brahman?... Is this the method of cogitation in this new age? The meaning of truth, which has more shades and nuances than grains of sand they interpret in two words – the Kauravas and the Pandavas...I have gathered around me people who are strong in body, but their

loyalty is not with me. I feel like I am fighting a losing battle. Historians have predicted events. They are doing now and will continue to do so in the future (44).

There is mistrust and power struggle even among the Kauravas which make Duryodhana to feel insecure towards his subordinates. Duryodhana realises that he is all alone in the battle with the Pandavas. He is isolated from the rest of his followers making him doubt his own abilities as a ruler and as an individual.

Scene VI opens with all the charioteers and Abhimanyu fighting. In a battle field one must fight only one enemy at a time. But Abhimanyu is fighting with seven charioteers who are warriors and the fight is not a fair one:

DRONA: Aye charioteers! You cannot defeat this child Abhimanyu unless you break his bow and shatter his chest-guards. This task is difficult for even the gods and demons. Cut him to pieces. Victory to the Kauravas.

ASHWATHTHAMA: Listen, O charioteers... this is my father's order... encircle and kill him inside this Chakravyuha.

KRIPACHARYA: Acharya... we are here.

KARNA: O brave warriors... why are you afraid to attack? What can a lad like Abhimanyu do when Karna is here? I will kill him this instant.

SHAKUNI: O Kuru King Duryodhana... Let us kill this boy in a united attack or he shall kill us one by one.

DUHSHASANA: Are you boy... How can you ever get out of this Chakravyuha alive?

DURYODHANA: Gurudeva! Get ready to kill Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna. Otherwise this boy will become Yama (the god of death) for us and wipe out the entire Kuru dynasty. Send him to Yamalaya (land of death) immediately (46-47).

Sumitra is also killed. The Kauravas circle around Abhimanyu and is killed but even to his last breath he fights with the Kauravas, "O my father Dhananjaya... O my uncle Krishna... O Brikodara, save me... Your son Abhimanyu stands encircled by seven charioteers in this Chakravyuha. Oh, they are killing me... Please help me..." (49).

The epilogue is spoken by Abhimanyu where he talks about the foul play that the Kauravas played on him to kill him:

Adieu, O mother earth. And you humans full of carnal desires, jealousy and corruption. I am on my last journey after completing my duties on earth. Jayadratha did not allow me to escape and the son of Duhshasana killed me by foul means. Yet I have never sinned and always firmly followed the path of truth. I set out on this last journey with an unanswered question in my heart – am I a scapegoat or am I a martyr? This question accompanies me as I walk towards God, to the promised land. As I leave for the last time I look at you, my mother earth... O great Kings and emperors of this world, ensconced under canopies of power, those canopies were given to you as shields to protect truth from the blistering acid of sinful lies. But you have polluted this fair and pure earth with your blind egos and criminal use of power. The germs proliferated by sins float around in the unclean atmosphere. They will gradually eat into the hearts and minds of future generations. All shall be engulfed in a thick smoke of selfishness. No Duryodhana shall ever receive the pious words of any Yudhishtira. The search for truth will remain unfulfilled. No one shall receive the *sankhya* and *karma yoga* of any Krishna. Goodbye, O mother earth... (51).

His speech is a universal admonishment towards human beings lust for power and authority over each other. Humans have the power to make or break the universe. Abhimanyu becomes the sacrificial lamp for the power-thirsty Pandavas and Kauravas. “In his Play *Chakravyuha* he has exemplified the crisis of spiritual ecology that is rampaging today’s world by employing the myth of Chakrauyuha from the *Mahabharat*”. Abhimanyu is the embodiment of the “evergreen ecology of cosmic and earthly power” but is being destroyed mercilessly by the Kauravas (Das 184).

By making use of a mixture of myth and reality of history as well as the contemporary conditions of the universe, *Manipur Trilogy* has been presented by Thiyan to expose remind each individual that it time to look back at the past mistakes

and to rectify it so as to bring peace and harmony in the world again as it was a long time ago.

In all the three plays, myth is linked with reality. It encompasses a wide spectrum of human evolution right from the birth of the Universe, based on the myths of the Mieties, the natives of Manipur, to the modern time, broken up into four distinct episodes – the birth of the Universe, the creation of living beings and the modern times (Singh 15).

In *Wahoudok*, the whole play circles around the creation and destruction of the universe. The Almighty has given omnipotent power to humans for taking care of the universe, but humans have misused this power for his own selfish gain thus, bringing destruction and pathos to the whole universe. The play opens with the master singer—Ojha Sheishakpa who is seated with two attendants who are playing the Pena (Traditional bow and string musical instrument) and Pe (Traditional temble umbrella) and he starts singing:

Your name
Lending your quality of exemplary beauty
to your next of kin.
Uncoiling Yourself at the break of dawn
Recoiling again when it gets late
O powerful God
Slicing like a boat
For creating the Universe
You created leaders of seven houses
To carry on the lineage
with sons and daughters.
O mighty God
Ha! Lord, *Ha!* Lord of Lords
O Lord, we, humans with short hands,
Like thinking of plucking lotus blooming in
the vast surface of water
and trying to reach the moon

Will try to relate Your story
lost in oblivion.
Unto us, Your humble innocent
ballad singers,
shower Your blessings.
Allow us to receive Your wealth,
biting on a blade of grass
With a length of cloth
wrapped around our necks,
Lying on the ground like a walking stick,
We are prostrating at Your feet (Thiyam 13).

He start reading Puya (book of knowledge written in ciphers) where he tells about the evolution of the universe and of human beings. Everything was made beautiful by the Creator and was left for human beings to enjoy these abundant blessings. He also says that every deed one does is accountable to oneself. Then the Lairembi Goddess appears and he starts praying to her:

Mystical Divine Goddess
Supernatural Divine Goddess
Divine gentle Mother Goddess!
Endowed with immortality,
free from sufferings
Allow us to call You *Hoong*,
allow us to awake You
with the word *Haya*
You, who can see all the four directions,
eight barriers and nine boundaries
Without removing the screen,
my beloved Mother
Hunting in the Iril,
Catching prey in the *Nambul*
Getting soaked without rain,
getting dry without sunshine

Allow us to refer to You as *Hoong*
Hoong Hei, Hoong Hei, Hoong Hei (15-16).

She starts to dance slowly and Oja Sheishakpa starts singing again. The dance is about the birth of the universe and the Lairembi's dance is joined by six other Lairembi's. Oja Sheishakpa sings about how the creator asked his two sons to create human beings:

My dear sons,
You two create the living world
First of all, they created
Something out of soil
And offered it to their Father
My dear sons, but it is not a human;
Since you have created, I'll give life to it
Release it in water
To be a substitute of the human beings,
Let's call it *Ngamu* (17).

Instead of humans, the two sons create toads but the creator gives life to it and they plead to let them go. Then the creator allows them and entrusts them with responsibilities:

Well, well you may go
Since you refuse
To turn into human beings
In the future, if drought visits farm land
And crops fail,
When fishes unable to endure
Start flipping and jumping around
Because of thirst,
If cattle starts mooing loudly
And running around,
Trees and bamboos
Stop sprouting new shoots

At that time you call for the seasonal rain
And save the living beings
From the sufferings.
Ha! It's heartening to see,
In the days to come
And toads will be tied
With an inseparable bond (18-19).

The toads are under an oath under the creator. The two sons create one after the other
but it does not resemble a human being:

Ah, what a pity, you, *Yong!*
Go, go, stay in forests.
As a leader of imperfect creations, you will
Continue to live long in the days to come.
Your greatest break would come when you
Help the old couple in planting arums.
Whenever a human being does any mischief,
Everyone would say – *Ha*, it's monkey
Business (19).

With the help of the Divine Mother the sons create the human beings limb by limb
and the Almighty gives life to it:

1st WOMAN: Let's dance making forehead, brows,
Corners of the eyes and eye sockets.
ALL WOMEN (in unison): Let's dance.
1st WOMAN: Let's dance making cheeks and two ears... *Ho*, let's
make the back of the head...
2nd WOMAN: Let's dance making upper arm, elbow, forearm and
wrist...
3rd WOMAN: Let's make front and back sides of the palm, divided
fingers complete with nails (23-24).

The humans are made and they become Ningthou (King) Leimarembi (Queen):

NINGTHOU: Powerful god,
All-prevading god!
Born as human beings,
A rare and precious birth,
You have given to us.
Hou Hey Hou Hou Hey Hou
Meitei Leipak, an enchanting land,
Encircled by ranges of hills,
Guarded by natives,
Our beloved motherland has been
Taking care of us;
Installing a throne, choosing a queen,
Let the Lord of destiny,
Leader of seven houses,
Administer justice,
It's Your promise
The tradition cannot be broken (25).

He is given the responsibility to take care of the vast universe and he asks the seven *Maichous* (wise men) to come and advice him how to take care of the earth. The seven *Maichous* appears and advice the king. They first explain how important he is and also blesses him and then they give advice:

6th MAICHOU: Fortunate king of *Kanglei*
You're an incarnation
Sent by god
Who looks after the birth of living beings,
Don't you forget the rationale
Behind your birth.
7th MAICHOU: May you be judicious
Don't you show partiality
To your subordinates
If the wrong one is favoured ignoring the truth
Generations in future would suffer (27).

Then the seven Lairembi's come and bless the king and queen and feeds him ambrosia so that he would gain strength and rule the earth with wisdom. The Angambas (dignitaries) with their Manais (attendants) enter and talks about the prosperity of the land. They also talk about the abundance of exotic fruits and flowers and the peacefulness and contentment in the land. Chanu (unmarried woman) comes and asks Ningonlakpa (An official incharge of unmarried women) the right manners for becoming a decent woman. He replies:

NINGONLAKPA: *Eberra*, you are an unmarried woman; *Meitei Leipak* is big, there is no dearth of suitors. I am sure you would be attracted to a young high official. If your eyes meet, your heart will surely be won over. Don't hesitate, tell me frankly if it happens; I will hand you over to him after proper verification of his antecedent – saying you may take this beautiful necklace home and wear it on your neck (33).

The population on earth slowly increases and then difficulties come in different forms. Then suitors come for the hand of Chanu. The seven *Maichous* appear and they foretell about the future and what would befall humans:

1st MAICHOU: *Hey* Almighty, I'm a human being created by You, why have you given me, an ancient man, such a vast treasure of knowledge? When I look, ah! I can see the posterity.

2nd MAICHOU: A *chak* after another, the life of a human, two-third would be suffering, only one-third would have happiness.

3rd MAICHOU: O Almighty, our Father, You have made seven separate houses and nine clans, according to the traditions – we have started following Your faint footprints.

4th MAICHOU: During the course of history, groups of aliens with the thought of devastating our society have inflicted serious diseases on the future generations and poisoned their minds, but You have not disclosed the remedy, O' Father!

5th MAICHOU: Ancestors and the new generations; a fissure has started developing in the bond between them.

6th *MAICHOU*: Ancient traditions, its values is on the wane in the minds of the younger generations.

7th *MAICHOU*: Truth will have no place; the 'flower of love' will scatter on the ground...

1st *MAICHOU*: Wrong pen have started scribing on departmental scrolls forcibly; the purses of the dignitaries looking after the departments have started bulging.

2nd *MAICHOU*: Ah, what a pity! Common man has started fleeing hither and thither... In the race of civilization, in the passage of time, grudge amongst nations have become very frequent. Killing and wanton murder, arresting and kidnapping would happen more frequently, news of wars and devastations would reverberate in all the four directions and eight corners (36-39).

Human beings are overcome with greed and a thirst for power fills their minds, which has driven them into madness by not feeling pity for each other and starts to kill each other. Wars break out and it has made many people displaced, some are left without a husband, wife, son or daughter and there is mourning and bloodshed everywhere. Though the Almighty has created a world which was perfect humans have destroyed everything around him. Human beings have become victims, isolated, pathetic and helpless in each other's hand causing pain, suffering and ultimately dies. The narrator comes and looks at the relics of the past glory and prosperity but there is nothing he can do about it because one cannot go back and undo everything as it was before:

This monument is declared as protected under the Manipur ancient and historical monument and Archaeological sites and remains act 1976. We remained little more than glorified chimpanzees in how we made our living. Because of the ability to walk erect for millions of years human became *Homo erectus* and then only forty million years ago became *Homo sapiens* or intelligent man, meaning 'the wise man' in English. It is said to be the first step to civilization. It was at that time, human beings slowly changed their habits and sowed the seeds that would sprout as arts and technology. Even most of it turned into reality

during the last ten-thousand years; art, musical instruments, lamps, trade and progress are the examples. It was the sudden whirlwind of civilization after having been found in the search of changes in man's thinking and psyche are a few fossils and skeleton remains, except it, nothing has been found. Impressions of man's generosity, mind and thinking are not found in the skeletons. Many civilizations collapsed in spite of artificial energy, new technologies and medicines. Why are we suffering in this age? Peace, it must have been very peaceful when people were honest (39-40).

The seven *Maichous* appear and says that there is always a connection among the past, present and the future and that humans should understand that even though one cannot undo the past, there is always a way to rebuild the present and the future of the universe. The narrator closes the play by saying that man has been given full authority by the Almighty to take care of the universe and that knowledge and wisdom is what humans need to survive, not bloodshed and domination. He also says that one can still see the beauty of mother earth if he sees carefully and can be saved and protected if one chooses to do so:

The stream flowing down from the high mountain of history crashes with the socio-eco-religio-political rocks of the contemporary world and then flows to the future after changing its course. The flow of knowledge is perennial but the group who cannot drink the 'water' in the flow cannot become civilized and it would be difficult to show their identity... Paradise is this. There is no paradise better than the earth, eyes never tiring to behold making the mind restless only at smelling, filling the heart with joy only at touching, immensely satisfy the tongue only at tasting, once captivating melody to hear, words fail to describe it. Look, isn't the earth beautiful? (41-42).

The play *Nungshibi Prithivi (My Earth, My Love or Hey)* is a vivid depiction of the devastations of war which spring out from the greed for colonial rule over one another. The devilish and horrendous acts humans do to each other just to prove that one is superior has been meticulously blended and displayed by Ratan Thiyam.

The play opens with the prologue where Shikaplon Ishei (prayer song in distress) is sung and a cloth is being weaved to offer as a peace offering for the universe where there is much distress and bloodshed:

O Lord
Lord of the Lords
O Mother Goddess
In Your divine courtyard
We, Your humble servants,
Are offering a length of cloth
Please accept it wholeheartedly,
O Father
Forgive our sins
Save us from making mistakes,
With these words at Your divine feet
We are paying obeisance
O Lord (50).

At the same time seven dignitaries enter with spears and shields and perform the war dance:

Hayum Hey, Haya Hey
Death will visit today, it's not known
Death will come tomorrow, it's not foretold
One who is born once
Will not die twice...
Moving like the wind, sitting like a stone
Free to do as You wish,
O Lord
Today, on this day,
Our forbears, in Your lap
We, seven males
Are bidding to relate
About the never-ending incidents called 'war'
A part of the history

When cruel blood
Has started flowing like a river (50-51).

They relate about what was befallen the humans from past till date never ending war and war cry. They slowly disappear and then the seven Celestial Nymphs dance and a ballad is sung:

Hayi Haya Hey
Aa Haya Hayum
Hayahey, it's about the creation of the Earth
From the bamboo leaves, long ago
The song of flowers, the sublime message,
Hides among the bulls
The whining of the spinning top
Has not reverberated yet
A fine cloth being brought from afar
The ultimate Immortal Voice
Has created the minds of human beings, it's about it.
Dawn has broken, it has become day.
The brilliant Sun has risen in the east
Lighting the hills thrown by nine senior Gods
And caught by seven Celestial Nymphs.
The name of the seven Celestial Nymphs
Are *Hi-pokpi*, *Yaipokpi*, *Hi-leima*, *Yaileima*,
Hi-kubi, *Yaikubi* and *Yaishra*.
Today. On this day
O Lord, let me relate the story of
The adventures of the seven Celestial Nymphs
Who can assume any form they want.
Assuming the form of birds,
They flew all over the world
And carried out their duties,
Incarnated as human beings (51-52).

The first scene opens with the eldest Nymph Hi-pokpi singing and weaving a cloth calling for her younger sisters as the sun is going down. They all come back and weave the cloth together when Hi-pokpi asks each one where they went and what they did the whole day. They reply thus:

ONE NYMPH: Seven-year devastation is over. Genocide by suffocating with the smoke of burning chillies is also over. I had thought, the time of slitting ears with cane-splits was over but there is no stop to war. The Earth, eaten bare to bones by its children would one day be annihilated, definitely.

SECOND NYMPH: In this gruesome age of savages, we, the weaker section, women and children, would become their beast of prey.

THIRD NYMPH: Amidst the frightening and unfathomable tortures and extermination.

FOURTH NYMPH: Vanished are the humans of yesterday, their hard-earned wealth love, righteousness, beauty, benevolence, humility and respect.

FIFTH NYMPH: The smell of blood is in the air; dead bodies sans clothes are piled up in whichever direction one looks at.

SIXTH NYMPH: Dying while standing upright, sitting, lying prostrate, face up, sideways and upside down, before one could shout, after shouting, after moaning unable to bear the excruciating pain... (53-54).

This is a historical reference to the Burmese colonization of Manipur for seven years where lots of innocent children were put to death by suffocation with the smoke of burning chillies. There were also thousands of people who were dragged away to slaves tied with cane-splits bearing wounds of slits on their ears and palms. When Hi-pokpi asks to the youngest Nymph Yaishra she replies:

It's only this, *Echemhan!*
A petite flower was blooming,
A small frightened one.
The lovely tiny flower
Was quiet enchantingly beautiful.

Unable to control myself,
I had extended my hands
To pluck and adorn it on my ears.
But at that moment, all of a sudden,
I heard a soft and melodious voice.
Taking me to be a human being
The flower lamented...
Don't touch me, a flower,
Please don't pluck me
I hate the stench of humans.
I don't want to be touched by humans.
Full of greed in your world,
Brimming with enmity.
You, who had taken part
In torturing and killing,
Please don't touch me with your hands
Smeared with blood.
I hate you,
O human beings (55-56).

They decide to ask the help of the unseen force to help them in bringing peace and goodwill into the universe. They complete their communication and disburse. Puwari enters where Hi-leima has transformed herself into a bird, perched on the loom for making the cloth. Puwari says:

...Infiltrators will dilute and subdue
Sons of the soil.
Precious and sacred traditions,
Kept open, will sink silently.
Articles brought from outside
Will flood the market.
Come, my dear ones.
Let's run away riding on horses.
Gold nails, useless splinters (58).

They meet and Puwari introduces himself:

I'm painting pictures of human beings through the ages, right from the pre-historic period to the present age; the horrible stories written on my chest are taught in schools to be learnt by children like you; I'm 'History' who has been traversing through aeons picking up dead bodies, over and over again, of those killed after torturing in the struggle for power, those killed in battlefields – fathers, uncles and brothers. War is not over yet the Earth will have to suffer more killing, torturing and extermination of human by human themselves. During the renaissance, Nostradamus had prophesied – (59-61).

Then he relates about the World Wars that had destroyed many innocent people, the birth of Hitler who had brought terror into the world, the devastating war between Germany and Russia and the bombing of atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The disclosure of the past incidents by Puwari makes one wonder about the whole human race in a frenzied mood of domination and power play. Puwari again relates an incident

In the evening on the 5th of August 1945, to be able to fly wherever we want, we fitted 'Little Boy', the atom bomb on Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber named after our Lead Pilot Major Cloth Etherly's mother. Among us, twelve crew members, Naval Captain William D. Parsons is the one responsible for dropping the bomb.

At 0245 hours, on the 6th of August, we took off from the Italian Air Base.

At 0300 hours, we checked the trigger for dropping the bomb for the last time.

At 0605 hours, we flew over Iwo Jima, towards Japan.

At 0741 hours, we received weather clear report of our third target.

At 0904 hours, we changed our course to the west.

At 0915 hours 30 seconds we dropped the bomb (61-62).

This is a re-enactment of the scene of the B-29 bombers flight to drop the nuclear bomb at Hiroshima. Hi-leima flies away to Japan to collect first hand information about the suffering and feelings of the native people.

The second scene opens at Hiroshima where Hi-leima in the form of a woman is trapped under a fallen tree and relates what the nuclear bomb has affected everything around her:

Where am I? This excruciating pain is making me immobile. I saw many children like me going to school after the siren sounded ‘All Clear’ signal.

Mama! Mama! Mama!

I heard someone shouting ‘*Banzai! Banzai!*’ on the road. Then a loud deafening boom of the explosion of a bomb was heard. Along with it, in front of me, Pikadon – many bright circular objects flared up before my eyes and the sky darkened. The whole of the city was covered with a mushroom shaped huge cloud, coloured like that of an elephant. In the centre of the cloud, an enormous white column climbed up high in the sky and spread far and wide. Throughout the day, massive spiral clouds hung above the city. Then all of a sudden, rain came down in torrents without stopping. Amidst the shower, the temperature came down drastically. Though, it was mid-summer, those who had escaped from the inferno, some scantily clad and some wearing thin clothes, were shivering with cold.

Amidst the stampede of naked and blood-smeared people, innumerable men, women and children died. The injured persons were wailing and crying for help but no one came to their rescue. Green pine trees were reduced to charcoal. All the orchids that were blooming on the branches of trees had also been reduced to cinder.

Amidst the heartfelt cries of agony, cherry blossoms, chrysanthemums, fragrance of lotuses and lilies, charming image of the Moon reflected on the calm surface of water, melodious calls of cuckoos and the enchanting globular scarlet *Tayal* hanging on creepers in bamboo-

groves are about to fade away from the lines of Haikus of Basho, Shiki, Issa and Buson.

O my Earth, my love, how a World War has harmed you so much! (62-64).

The devastation of war and the cruelties of human beings are seen vividly with these illustrations. Thus, humans trap each other mercilessly which profits neither the colonizer nor the colonized. The cruelties of human beings are lashed out towards the weaker sections of human race, i.e. women and children.

The third scene opens at a cemetery where Puwari is fixing crosses and offering flowers at the graves and also reads out the words on the epitaphs then he pays homage to the fallen soldiers who had died in war:

23rd JAN 1944 AGE-26
855528, K.A. ROSSER, ROYAL ARTILLERY
25TH JAN. 1944 AGE-25
LIEUTENANT W. POPPLETON OF KENYA
1ST DEC 1945 AGE-23
1337530 FLIGHT SERGEANT RJ COOK
PILOT, ROYAL AIR FORCE 8TH NOV 1945
MAJOR E. HOCKINS
1ST ROYAL BAT, 9TH JAT REGIMENT AND INDIAN
PARACHUTE
BN. 26TH MARCH 1944 AGE-20
CAPTAIN A.T. JOHNSON, 14TH PUNJAB REGIMENT AND
INDIAN PARACHUTE BN. 26TH MARCH 1944 AGE-29
MAJOR R.J.P. LOCK, ROYAL ARTILLERY
26TH MARCH, 1944 AGE-29
1256573 LEADING AIR CRAFTSMAN
J.A. HAYLETT, ROYAL AIR FORCE (65).

The cemetery is full of fresh graves where soldiers are buried. All the soldiers had died young which is heart breaking to see. They have not even lived half of their years but had to be sacrificed due to the selfishness of world leaders who are engaged in

power-politics. The soldiers fall victim to the greed of their leaders and thus, becomes victims. All the soldiers had died young which is heart breaking to see. They have not even lived half of their years but had to be sacrificed due to the selfishness of world leaders who are engaged in power-politics. The soldiers fall victim to the greed of their leaders and thus, becomes victims.

The fourth scene opens at the Celestial Nymphs abode which is being visited by Puwar. Hi-pokpi is burdened with all the war and devastation that are taking place around the world and shares it with Puwari:

HI-POKPI: The Earth is suffering like anything, *Epu*. The story of killing never ends. War after war, war-mongering cowards – I’m at a loss, *Epu*, how will the future generation survive amidst the smoke of revenge, punishment and genocide.

PUWARI: Ah! How right you are! O Hi-pokpi, where on th Earth will cool breeze blow when there is no love, kindness and respect and while superficial glittering, enjoyment and greed have subdued the pure unembellished faith? I, your grandpa Puwari, am also dead tired on pulling the cart of time loaded with dead bodies (67).

Suddenly Yai-liema flies away saying, “I’m leaving for Angkor Wat, the place of innumerable temples. I’ll fly over the main road metalled with dead bodies by Khmer Rouge, enter the body of a half-dead woman, reduced to skeletons because of starvation and bear the pain of tortures as nature dictated a woman” (67). Her sisters try to stop her but Puwari allows her to go saying

Don’t stop her. Don’t worry, my child. Let her fly, flapping her wings for a while; let her perform the duty of a human being. I too will leave and follow her. The Kulen Mountains in the north, the Tonle Sap, a large lake, in the south, the lovely Siem Reap river meandering through the three hillocks, Phnom Bok, Phnom Bakheng and Phnom Brok – Emperor Yacovarman’s (Yasovarman) temple complex, Angkor Wat – I will cross it, taking big strides to pick up dead bodies, killed by their own kinsfolk, from the battlefields made to flood with blood by Khmer Rouge; to record Pol Pot’s gruesome murders with

blood as ink, amidst the smoke over thousands of graves. Come, let's go together Yailiema, my child (68).

Hi-pokpi is weaving all by herself while soldiers are seen moving slowly in a field flooded with blood. She talks about the turn of events in the world which was once beautiful and inviting has become dreadful and unwelcoming:

The Earth rotates around the Sun. Humans are revolving on the axis of time. Satellites called History, Geography, Science, Literature, Vision, Politics, Economics, Religion and Society are floating in the vast space called life. In every morning, day and evening, the cloud of life turns red, white and blue. In the red, white and blue sky, time plays riddle... Vyasa did not write the Mahabharata without war. Then, (without war) Helen, the gorgeous would not have emerged from the blood-smeared expanse of Illiad and Odyssey. Then, Draupadi would have remained with her tresses let loose, unable to wash it with blood. Do you hear, the Emperor called 'War' has vowed to devastate the Earth? Wake up, open your eyes. How much would the Humans have to suffer only for the sake of a small section's gain? ... Where shall the fatherless children of war, born of women, deceptively called prostitutes, go? ... The child, barely ten-year old, the future generation, has been sold off in the market by the followers of war who made him carry heavy loads – his legs have been crushed, his hands are paralyzed, worms have made nests in his heart, every night he vomits blood. His doll, his intimate, has left him. Oh! Mother, let me listen to your soothing lullaby... (68-70).

Scene five opens at Kampuchea where war had ended and the aftermath of war can be seen with dead bodies and destruction everywhere. Amidst these, there is a woman running in tattered clothes with a bundle on her back and carrying a child in her arms.

... In the air of Kampuchea, laden with the stink of rotten human flesh, nothing is there except the cry of agony, burdened with ceaseless sufferings, the surviving few have started speaking unintelligibly; their

voices have started echoing on the walls of the palace in Phnom Penh city... Oh! Khmer Rouge holding the reigns of the country!... *Hey War!* I hate you! Empty is the stomach but on the shoulder rests a gun. Carried around are broken guns. Ceaseless is the sound of bullets escaping from the tips of barrels. Throughout day and night, fireballs play amidst the cries of agony... come on, open your eyes why is your body cold like ice? Even though, I have not taken a single morsel of food for days together and my stomach has stuck to my backbone, let's try to squeeze out at least a drop of milk, my child. (*The child does not move*) What happened? What happened to you? Cry, cry out – at least once, cry out, my child, cry out once, my precious ... my child has refused to cry, do you hear me? (70-72).

The child, her only hope and happiness dies and with it the future generation loses hope of rebuilding the universe.

The last scene opens with Hi-pokpi weaving a cloth and four of the younger Nymphs fly off to West Asia and Europe to witness the devastation war has brought saying, “We are going towards the west, to every corner of Europe. We will follow the course of the Neretva River and see the demolished Ottoman bridge built by Suleyman. The Sultan of Mostar” (72). Hi-pokpi is worried that something bad might happen to her younger sister: “War, there is no end to the news of war. Not a single day passes without the news of killing. What a pity, human beings! Today, I saw a bad dream – a bad omen. Four of my sisters had flown towards the west. In what sort of trouble they could have landed” (72-73). Soldiers chase four women and are captured and tortured and physically abused, as such they become gravid:

FIRST WOMAN: War, you have made us prostitutes.

War, you have made us prisoners.

War, you have made us bonded slaves.

Never-ending story of revenge and invasion

In the fight for supremacy,

Women and children

Are fed to War, the Demon...

Look, this is war's gift!

The lump of blood growing day by day,
The result of the meeting of enemies,
What name shall I give it?
‘Mother’s Precious Lump’
Or ‘Enemy’s Child’...
I feel as if it is calling, “Mother ... Mother.”
No, no, it can’t be.
It’s a leftover of some inhuman
Characterless one.
Leftover, *khak thui* ...
Tell me, tell me!
The Jordan, Euphrates or Ganges,
Taking a dip in the river of which faith,
How can I purify my defiled body?
With what face can I stand
Before my husband and relatives?
I hate myself for being alive.
Each follicle all over my body has become a
Spring and impure blood
Has started to gush out.
O Goddess of death!
Embrace me; take me in your lap!
(*She looks at the baby and puts it down.*)
With your smiling face,
Kicking your legs and moving your hands,
Don’t look at me,
I can’t bear it.
You, enemy’s child,
Look. I am leaving.
Let me go – enemy’s child
My precious lump, I’m leaving (73-75).

Wars have brought anguish and psychological tension among the most sensitive section of the society, women and children. They become the worse victims of war

and subordination in the every society. The above lines in the play relates about the horrendous acts against women as well as children, making them subalterns of the worse kind and makes them isolated, hybrid and so on.

Postcolonial studies, then, comes in several guises. Rereading of the Euro-American canon, investigations of the production of colonial stereotypes and the ‘inventions’ of the other, materialist analyses of social conditions, critical analyses of postcolonial literatures and cultures, theorization of categories such as subalternity, ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity – all these are part of the vast territory of the ‘postcolonial’ (Desai 5).

In the epilogue, the seven sisters complete weaving the cloth and cut it from the loom and pray to the almighty:

O Lord
Lord of the Lords
O Mother Goddess
In your divine courtyard
We, Your humble servants,
Are offering a length of cloth
Please accept it wholeheartedly,
O Father forgive our sins
Save us from making mistakes,
With these words
At Your divine feet
We are paying obeisance
O Lord.
I, an Immortal Spirit,
Will not leave behind
Any prophecy (Thiyam 77).

Then they all incarnates into birds and fly away. Puwari with all the history of war on him cannot stand any longer but crawls and speaks the concluding speech:

Fly away, O birds!

After collecting dust from the spot in
 Bamiya, where the demolished colossal
 Image of Buddha once stood,
 Sprinkle it all over the corners of the Earth,
 Where war has not seen the end,
 With a message of peace...
 Oh, my dear flags!
 Why is United Nations,
 Formed by all of you coming together,
 To make the world a better place to live in,
 Hiding behind the shadow
 Of only the rich countries? ...
 Hey flags!
 You flags are suited
 For fluttering in the wind of Peace;
 Tell me what should I write?
 I, Puwari, have been made a weakling
 By the selfish nature of human beings.
 But, I will continue to write
 History on my chest
 With blood as ink.
 Hey birds, let's meet again
*(When light comes on, an open History Book is seen lying on a
 wheelchair. On the platform, flags of the UN are there. Birds, frozen in
 flight, are also there. Light goes out slowly.) (77-79).*

Humans as well as Celestial beings suffer for the selfishness of human beings.
 All the characters in the play are subordinated by a greater authority which they
 cannot break free from. The postcolonial themes of otherness, hybridity, isolation and
 subalternation can be seen in all the characters.

Chinglon Mapan Tampak Ama or *Nine Hills, One Valley* relates about the
 ideal haven that is being provided by the Almighty for the humans to live in love,
 peace and prosperity. But as time passes, this secluded haven is met with devastations

turning it into a dry, barren land. In the prologue of the play, there are seven old women who are the guardians of cultural traditions invoke the evil spirits because they fear that the evil spirits are angry and causing such devastation and havoc. Thus, they are desperate to appease the evil spirits and leave their land so that the people can live in peace:

... You all supernatural beings,
This year there are five Saturdays in *Lamta*
So, we seven have come to offer You
Your delicacies
Come on
Seven lumps of puffed rice, seven tobacco
Leaves, seven cotton balls, medlar-leaf salad,
Seven varieties of fruits, seven varieties of
Flowers, seven *dakshinas*, small tubers of
Arum and ginger, we will prepare rice-beer,
Come and eat to your fill.
After eating it,
You cool down
And return to your abodes (83-84).

In a mystical land, there is a valley which is encircled by nine concentric hills which existed in peace and tranquillity for a long time. But through the passage of time, its glory slowly faded because of man's greed and selfishness. The play revolves around these hills and explains how humans and gods alike try to save it from deterioration and extinction. Then mothers with their children appease and they are advising their children about the evil world:

3rd MOTHER: With all the means cut-off, our society is starving and becoming thinner and thinner with the passing of each day. My children! We have to manage to stay alive somehow.

4th MOTHER: My children! A trap in front of you an arrow ready to shoot behind you – you have to escape from the trapped life and run away (85-86).

The children have to break free from the domination of the evil world and try to save themselves. There is no other way but to save oneself. The mother also cries out to the seven *Maichous* for help who are in deep slumber:

MOTHER: *Hey Ebudhou!* O Supreme God of humans, O Omnipotent One, on the coming of *Langbachuk* after *Heiyichak*, and *Konnachuk*, in this world, when there is chaos, ‘when the wrongs have subdued the rights,’ when the close ones have turned betrayers, and when might has become right, please carry us, Your progeny, on the deck of Your boat and lead us to the land where there is truth, beauty, love and no suffering, *Lainingthou*. *Hey! Maichous*, who are the pillars of knowledge, where are you hiding? (86-87).

The seven *Maichous* wake up to the cries of the mothers and talks among themselves:

1st MAICHOU: *Hee!* What’s this? Today I saw a bad dream. It’s not good. Peepul tree was on fire; dead bodies were floating in a row in the river; for how long we, *Maichous*, have been sleeping, how many years have passed, how many eons have gone? O *Maichous*, are we listening?

2nd MAICHOU: *Hee!* What’s this omen? I feel a muscular spasm in my left arm; my left eyebrow is also quivering. *Hee!* I hear the call of my sons and daughters echoing through the nine ranges of hills.

1st MAICHOU: Our ways and traditions do not agree with that of the new generation. Even the dream we saw was bad, let’s go to sleep again (87-88).

But they go back to sleep again. “The story of the fall of the country is presented with the form of a sequence of Raasleela, exquisitely performed by a group of dancers, revealing its rich repertoire rhythm, postures and gestures; rudely and brutally disrupted by Time appearing as a demon that slashes the dancing wrists, symbolic of the destruction of art and culture”. (Singh 80). The sleeping *Maichous* can be symbolic of the deterioration of wisdom and knowledge of the olden times among men who are more dependent on the present technology. The *Maichous* wake up again and finds the land is infested by untold misery, “Wise men! There is chaos in

the land. Before the land is completely devastated, we have to save it by following the prophesy of the Almighty” (Thiyam 94). The *Maichous* decide to write about the culture and traditions so that the young generation can understand easily, “Lets proceed to the beloved land to write an easily understandable *Puya* ‘on the back of time’ as the scroll, with the knowledge of the olden *Puya* as the ink, a new *Puya* that carries a lot of meaning, one that can be carefully followed by the new generation” (94).

There are four Readers who are reading the newspaper where the atrocities of human beings are being read:

1st READER: August seven, nineteen ninety-eight, Dar-es-salam, two hundred twenty-five dead, injured over four-hundred. Matrix of terror, United States of America, nine eleven, suicide hijackers crash four aircraft into the World Trade Centre and Pentagon killing nearly three thousand people, Ground Zero.

2nd READER: Afghanistan, Kabul, Kandahar, Tora Bora, Bamiyan Buddha.

3rd READER: Iraq, no nuclear weapon, US attack Hill Brasa, Baghdad, Shiya-Sunni fight, Iraq prisoner Gwanstanamo Bay, Cuba...

2nd READER: Seven, seven, tow thousand five, London bomb blast, rush-hour attack kills over fifty people, bus and train blast...

3rd READER: Manipur. Bribery, corruption, no factory.

4th READER: No industry, no employment, no job.

1st READER: Protests, strikes.

2nd READER: Economic blockage.

3rd READER: Armed Forces Special Powers Act (94-97).

The above lines give confirmation about the power-play and selfishness of human beings. People are more interested in destroying each other rather than trying to negotiate and compromise for bringing peace and harmony into the world. “The geo-political and cultural space which Thiyam belongs to moulds him to question the structures of authority” (Das 109). The *Maichous* are determined to save the mother earth from its devastation and to bring back happiness and prosperity once again:

4th MAICHOU: ... Human beings keep themselves in the 'prison of discontentment and suffering' they have built on their own and try to live as a 'smelly' human. An independent way of life has to be devised to escape from it. Like a brave soldier, they have to fight and try to win the inner conflict...

7th MAICHOU: Don't burden the weaker ones with loads more than their capacity, they will not be able to bear it. Even if they can't do outwardly, they would approach inwardly... In this world, no rich and powerful country would allow to live in peace the countries or human beings who wish and try to control chaos and live in harmony (Thiyam 97-99).

The weaker ones always suffer and are destroyed at the end. The subalternization of each other has existed from time immemorial as it takes away one's freedom and individuality. The *Maichous*' indication of the human race has exposed human beings as the culprit as well as the victim:

In the battle of life, to overcome the woes of the half dead souls standing on the sticky floor splashed with blood,, to make the younger generation understand their culture, customs and traditions, to be able to give a strong blow to the changing trends of the world, drive away the spirits of evil knowledge, put the daggers in the sheaths (99).

The *Maichous* also call upon the seven Celestial Nymphs and Mother Goddess to come and help them. They start writing the book which contains wisdom of peace, religion, humanity rights, economic which can be understood by the young generation and would accordingly:

5th MAICHOU: Arrogance, vanity, deception, indolence, laziness, imprudence, fright, fatigue, loss of self confidence, reluctance to work thinking it will be of no use – only that person who tries to escape from all these will be an independent man.

3rd MAICHOU: But if a society wants to be an independent society it has to do away with murder, loot, torture, violence, illiteracy, not taking others seriously, keeping bad company, imposition of orders,

subduing others, working with a political motive, the habit of taking undue advantage, having a number of self-proclaimed leaders...

6th MAICHOU: In English when a country is calm and quiet, and mind is completely at rest, it is called 'Peace'. Even though people speak about it quite often, not many are working to bring it into reality. A man who is not endowed with compassion and forgiveness will never get peace of mind.

3rd MAICHOU: Only when we can rout out completely from our minds the feelings of revenge, anger, envy, arrogance and over-ambition, we will get peace.

4th MAICHOU: One who is truthful is beautiful both physically and mentally. If one is compassionate, then his character is good. If his character is good then his family is peaceful. If each of the families is peaceful then a society or a nation can have peace (100-103).

The above lines can be related to the situation of any other state or nation in the world, but it particularly reflects Thiyam's homeland, Manipur, where everything is not right. In this regard Thiyam says:

Manipur is not a place like Calcutta or Delhi or Bombay. Inside, it is bleeding. Outside you may see that everything is okay, everybody is going to office, but inside its bleeding. And theatre is a kind of document where all these things, all the inner ideas, all the inner layers of life, should be and are normally expressed. I think that is why we do theatre, at least the kind of theatre we do (Thiyam 64).

The mothers relate stories to their children about the past glory and how the world has changed from bad to worse:

3rd MOTHER: An ideal community, its people once very
Friendly, jovial, impartial and compassionate,
Where have they gone?

2nd MOTHER: On which God's curse
For their inability to answer
And explain which riddle

They are heading towards devastation
 Moving faster and faster
 Like mayflies attracted
 By the face of a lamp...
 2nd MOTHER: No one is allowed to use his or her head,
 Even if it is there.
 1st MOTHER: No one is allowed to speak,
 Even if they can speak.
 3rd MOTHER: No one is allowed to walk,
 Even if they have feet.
 4th MOTHER: No one is allowed to see
 Even if they have eyes.
 2nd MOTHER: No one is allowed to hear,
 Even if they have ears.
 1st MOTHER: The humans, living without souls, have turned into
 Black oak trees standing on the hillside after the
 Wildfire, unable to express their pent-up sorrows
 With heartrending wails (Thiyam 104-105).

But there is still hope as they advise their children to be wise and to love peace so that
 everything would be made whole again:

2nd MOTHER: But, we, enlightened with a new knowledge, will
 Be able to build a land full of happiness, with a
 Bright future...
 Mothers: (in unison) My dear son, my dear daughter,
 My precious daughter
 Hoom ... Hoom ... Hoom ... Hoom
 Moon ... Moon ... tender moon
 Let me carry your dolly-child on my back
 Strap it with a cloth
 Drop a bunch of figs, tender moon
 It has fallen in the stinking gorge
 If it has fallen amidst urine
 Who will eat it?

Herilo Herilo

Hayute Khutlaite

Float downstream like the wooden pestle

My dear son...

In the spherical world

To bring peace

To make human beings live in harmony

To put an end to war

To let the dwellers of hills and valley co-exist

In this land

Encircled by nine concentric ranges of hills

Let us place lamps as offerings for peace (105-106).

Thiyam say, “My roots help me evolve creatively. I am just taking ancient knowledge and presenting it to our future generation, in the form of my art and my art is the constant evolving process of my identity” (Pune Newsletter 111). Through his plays, Thiyam tries to convey to the present generation that human beings are the destroyer as well as the preserver of the universe. To have peace or war is ours to choose. The preservation of biodiversity in the universe is also emphasised because, there are a lot of species which are in the brink of extinction.

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Chapter V

COMPARATIVE POETICS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, GIRISH KARNAD AND RATAN THIYAM

The dynamicity of comparative literature makes it hard to give it a particular definition. In simple words, comparative literature as the term rightly suggests takes into consideration a multi-dimensional approach to comparing two or more literary works in any discipline. The scope of comparative literature is very vast as it includes the entire human experience and thus, is interdisciplinary. Different fields like history, cultural studies, religious studies, sociology, anthropology and translation studies are taken into consideration. This eclectic move towards comparative studies creates difficulties for the comparatists as his study becomes broader. Nevertheless, it provides the opportunity to work and study:

Literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as art (e.g., painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g., politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, etc., on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or other, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression (Remak 1).

Comparative Literature studies the similarities and dissimilarities of literatures and also analyses its themes, allegories, histories and the like. “Comparative Literature comes out of the premise that a literature is to be studied with reference to other literatures within and outside the country. It transcends the narrowness, provinciality and parochialism of national and general literatures” (Das 4).

The time gap among William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam does not obstruct their relatedness to a contemporary general reader. A comparative study among them would present similarities in their gathering of sources, themes and social, political and religious movements. A writer is always inspired by some stories, incident or news to develop an idea and create masterpieces. Likewise all the three dramatists have been inspired by some work or the other for their plays. Shakespeare is known for borrowing story plots from other dramatists and turning them into masterpieces, Karnad is known for choosing unusual characters from history, myth and folklore to present a different dimension against traditional beliefs and notions, Thiyam is also known to draw motivation from myth and from the rich Manipuri history and culture to tackle and enlighten the younger generation to embrace peace and unity.

Shakespeare's *Othello* is mainly taken from a story by an Italian author Giovanni Battista Giraldi, (who is known as Cinthio to his readers) in his collection of novellas called *Hecatommithi* which was published in 1565 in Venice. Shakespeare took most of the characters from Cinthio and gave them names except 'Disdemona' which was already given. The play *Hamlet* is based on Saxo Grammaticus' collection of Norse legends called *History of the Danes* which narrates about the great rulers of Denmark where he relates the story about Amleth. King Rorik gives full responsibility to two brothers, Orvendil and Fengi to rule over Jutland. Orvendil weds Rorik's beautiful daughter Geruth and Amleth is born to them. Fengi gets jealous of his brother's happiness which makes him murder Orvendil and marries Geruth which makes Amleth angry. He feigns madness to keep himself safe from his uncle and plans to avenge his father's death. In the end, Amleth is successful in killing his uncle and become the ruler of Jutland. There is no particular source for the main plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* though Shakespeare took quite a few characters and incidents from several materials. The King and Queen of the Fairies date back to a lot of sources which are both ancient and modern. The Queen of England, Elizabeth was given the pet name as the Fairy Queen, Oberon appears in *The Scottish History of James the Fourth* which was written by Robert Greene, Titania first appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where it means Titan's daughter. Bottom's famous ass's head is inspired by John Lyly's *Midas* where Midas's head changes into an ass's. Ovid has also described about Midas's change in *Metamorphoses*. This change occurs in

Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* which was written in Latin in the second century and translated into English by William Adlington in 1566 where a girl falls in love with a man who has completely turned into an ass. Robin Goodfellow is described by Reginald Scot in his book *The Discovery of Witchcraft* written in 1584. The most significant source for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where the story of Pyramus and Thisbe appears. A letter written in 1610 by William Strachey describing a shipwreck inspired Shakespeare to write his last play *The Tempest* but the plot of the play is originally Shakespeare's alone.

Aparna Dharwadker states that "the 'marvellous' discovery of the fourteenth-century sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq in an elementary-level textbook motivated Karnad to take on the historiographic materials available at Oxford, which in turn led to a series of revelations about the uncanny persistence of the past in India" (Dharwadker xviii). Historians consider Tughlaq as the greatest failures among rulers because he was an idealist but Karnad's depiction of Tughlaq is representative of a modern king who is misunderstood. *Hayavadana* has been inspired by two different sources; Karnad confesses that he had relied a lot on *The Transposed Head* written by Thomas Mann and Devadatta and Kapila's story is based on a tale from the *Kathasaritsagara*, a collection of Sanskrit tales. The role of the *Bhagavata* is derived from the art of *Natyasastra*. Karnad's *Naga-Mandala* was motivated by two oral tales related to him by his friend and mentor A. K. Ramanujan. Karnad relates that he had heard about the cock of dough as a young teen. *Bali: The Sacrifice* has its source which refers back to the thirteenth century Kannada epic *Yashodhara charite*, which again is inspired by two Sanskrit epics which dates back to as early as eleventh and ninth century.

Ratan Thiyam's *Chakravayaha* is being taken out from the Indian epic *Mahabharata* where Abhimanyu is murdered due to the evil desires of the older generation. It is also a reflection of the military domination of Manipur and the loss of freedom and identity. The play was written in protest against violence. *Manipur Trilogy* is deeply rooted in the rich Mietie myths and folklores which are intimately associated with realities of the modern time. The seven celestial nymphs and seven *Maichous* is representative of mythological characters. Thiyam also incorporates several dramatic styles in his plays to give emphasis on characters and incidents.

Both Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam are playwrights from the “theatre of roots” who are known for their incorporation of the tradition and culture with contemporary issues in search for an identity. Subhash Chandra Das also comments that, “The search for roots also prompts them to revisit and reinterpret the nation’s ancient and pre-colonial past through myth and history for thematic concerns which give them a sense of rootedness, a kind of political and cultural identity in the postcolonial Indian ethos” (Das 111).

All the three dramatists draw their inspiration from one thing or the other and make these plays their own by their different artistic styles. Whether the source is historical, mythical or folklore there is always a distinction between the original text and the borrowed text as the material is totally transformed in the hands of the playwright.

Various themes can be identified in all three playwrights that are similar in nature. These themes have brought their different characters and incidents into contact making them merge together to become one.

THEME OF ISOLATION

All the major characters in the plays are isolated or alienated in one way or the other. Priya Srivastava explains the concept of isolation or alienation in the following words:

The concept of alienation (isolation) is not quiet new and it has been in vogue in philosophical, theological, sociological and psychological writings for a long time... It seems that there is always a struggle between what the individual aspires for and the harsh reality of what he achieves, what he professes and what he practices, what he really is and what he would like to be taken for, has crumbled his life leaving an insidious effect on his inner being. The injuries infected and the scars left on his psyche make him realise only of his helplessness. Painfully aware of his precarious position, man experiences severe limitations arising out of randomness and alienation (Srivastava 75).

In *Othello*, Othello is isolated from the other characters by his race as a Moor. Desdemona is isolated by the fact that she is a woman and thus inferior to the

patriarchal domination. Even Emilia and Bianca are not spared from isolation as they are mere puppets in the hands of the men who use them for their own benefit and later would dump them. The physical abuse and humiliation that these women feel cannot be compared to the psychological trauma that they face. Cassio is no longer favoured by Othello and his public humiliation makes him feel like an outsider and is isolated. Even Iago feels isolated when he realizes that Othello favours another person instead of him although he had worked really hard and was expecting a promotion. He internalizes all his feelings of disappointment and hatred towards Othello and plans his vendetta. Hamlet is the most isolated character as he cannot decide on what to do and what not to. His intellectual mind cannot accept the death of his father and his mother's early marriage to his uncle, thus making him suffer. Ophelia is isolated by her knowledge of her father's death that was killed by Hamlet himself. She cannot comprehend that Hamlet, who had confessed his love for her very often has killed her father whom she adored. This reels her and becomes mad and drowns herself at the end. In *The Tempest*, almost all the characters are isolated physically as well as mentally and emotionally. Prospero and Miranda are literally isolated in an island from the rest of the world where they are the only humans surviving. This puts Prospero in a difficult position as he alone is responsible for everything. Miranda is isolated as she has never been in contact with the real world. She had never been with another human company, except her old father and whatever manners and proper care that was taught by Prospero in the island can never compare to the ones that are learned at a proper home. Her reaction after seeing Ferdinand for the first time cannot be questioned when she says, "I might call him a thing divine, for nothing natural I ever saw so noble" (Shakespeare 46). Both Ferdinand and Miranda are bound by certain patriarchal rules which make them isolated. Both of them are isolated and suffer because of the sins of their fathers. Ferdinand has to endure a lot of physical and psychological trauma and has to live under captivity in the enchanted island. Caliban is actually the owner of the island but Prospero has come and arrogated from him which is rightfully his, making him a slave. He inherits the monstrous looks from his mother Sycorax which further ostracises him from the rest of the characters and feels isolated. Though Ariel is an able spirit, he was first enslaved by Sycorax and then Prospero. Though Prospero reminds Ariel that it was he who had saved him from the evil witch, he becomes no different from Sycorax when Ariel is bid to do all his dirty works, thus making him long for freedom and isolated.

THEME OF SUBALTERNITY

From time immemorial human beings have all been subalterns in one way or the other. Even the strongest and richest man in the world is considered as a subaltern because he is under the mercy of an Omnipotent and Omniscient God. All the characters in the selected plays are subalterns and are faced with dire circumstances which are overcome by some, some are destroyed, and some become passive and submissive while others are comfortable with it.

Othello is read and interpreted by many from the postcolonial perspectives as the play is representative of the downfall of a Moor who is mistreated in the hands of the white. Othello is exploited by Iago who considers himself superior. G. K Hunter rightly asserts:

The relationship between these two is developed in terms of appearance and reality. Othello controls the reality of action; Iago the 'appearance' of talk about action; Iago the Italian is isolated (even from his wife), envious, enigmatic (even to himself), self-centred; Othello the 'extravagant and wheeling stranger' is surrounded and protected by a network of duties, obligations, esteems, pious to his father-in-law, deferential to his superiors, kind to his subordinates, loving to his wife. To sum up, assuming that *soul* is reality and *body* is appearance, we may say that Iago is the white man with the black soul while Othello is the black man with the white soul (Hunter 193-194).

Othello is someone who had been under ominous situations and had suffered a lot. He does not forget about his early struggles in life which makes him a compassionate person towards everyone he meets. Unfortunately he meets a rascal like Iago whose sole desire in life is to see others suffer and benefit himself by his crooked ways. The simplicity in Othello's personality makes him a victim of Iago's evil plans and is totally destroyed in the end. Desdemona is a female subaltern who dies an innocent death. As a daughter she was bound to her father as a young girl and after her marriage she becomes a subordinate of Othello. Her love for Othello is pure which transcends colour, breed or race. She is a victim of patriarchal domination from which she cannot liberate herself. As Othello starts suspecting her, he mistreats her every

time she comes and tries to talk to him. The names that she is given by Othello are suggestive of her bondage. She doesn't know for what she is being accused of by Othello. Her innocence is proven at the end of the play where she tries to save Othello even when she's dying. When Emilia asks who had strangled her, Desdemona replies, "Nobody: I myself, farewell" (Shakespeare 99). All the three women in the play are subalterns under the domination of men. Emilia is also under the merciless devil Iago who only uses her for his benefits and treats her like a slave although she is his wife. Whenever Iago encounters Emilia, he never treats her well. But Emilia loves Iago and wishes to please him and steals the handkerchief for him with the sole purpose of receiving a little compassion from him. Iago is too full of himself that he is incapable of love or compassion towards anybody whether it is Emilia, Desdemona or Othello who calls him 'honest Iago'. Bianca is a prostitute who is subalternized by her profession itself. Cassio confesses that he cares for her but is not ardent which shows that she is being used only for his pleasures. She is treated with contempt by the other male characters making her a puppet in their hands. Roderigo and Cassio are totally manipulated by Iago which makes them subalterns. Iago takes advantage of every situation he gets to profit himself; he asks money from Roderigo to get Desdemona for him and manipulates Cassio to go to Desdemona to plead his case so that he can go and inform Othello that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair. Both Roderigo and Cassio are in the mercy of Iago.

All the characters in the play *Hamlet* are tortured or manipulated by an authority. Hamlet is subalternized by a ghost who wants him to avenge his death but he is also burdened by his own consciousness to adhere to moral values. Thus, he faces a dilemma whether to take revenge and be doomed forever or to forgive and forget and live a peaceful life as he had always wanted to. Ophelia and Gertrude are female subalterns under the patriarchal rule but the process of their subalternization is different as Ophelia is innocent whereas Gertrude knowingly becomes a subaltern. It can be seen that Polonius and Laertes are over-protective of Ophelia as they love and care for her but their concern results in her subalternization. Ophelia is under the strict rule of both her father and brother who restrain her activity making her psychologically incapable to make decisions of her own and when Laertes leaves and Polonius dies, Ophelia becomes mad and dies in the end. When her husband is murdered, Gertrude marries Claudius even though she had the choice not to. There

can only be two reasons for her actions; either she was forced to marry her husband's murderer or she had assisted Claudius in murdering her husband. Whatever the reason, her actions have made her a subaltern under Claudius' selfish motives. Laertes is driven by vengeance for his father's murderer and is further subalternized and used by Claudius to fulfil his evil desires. Polonius is bound by Claudius to do as he is instructed. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern represent the lower section of the society in Shakespeare's time who abides by the rules and commands of the king they serve. Hamlet recognizes from the beginning about Claudius' motive behind bringing his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to him and rightly says: "...But such officers do the king best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again" (Shakespeare 114). The subalternization of the two friends can be seen in the light of the colonizer and the colonized because for them, their king is the master and their survival is solely under his mercy. Fordinbras is another subaltern who is trying to claim his personal as well as political independence from Denmark. At the end of the play, Fordinbras is the only person left to ascend the throne of Denmark.

The Tempest has been interpreted as a play of power struggle between the coloniser and the colonised branding it as an apt study of the postcolonial ideology of subalternisation, where most of the characters are under the authority of Prospero who controls their fate. Caliban is subalternised by Prospero by making him a slave in his own island. Ariel, is also a subaltern under Prospero's control because he has obligations towards his master of his help in releasing him from the evil witch Sycorax. Ariel is first subalternised by Sycorax and then later by Prospero. The shipwreck that happens is caused by Prospero's magic and everyone inside the ship is subalternised by Prospero with the help of Ariel. Nevertheless, Prospero's actions are justified as he wanted to make them realise their wrong deeds. But whatever the reason, Prospero becomes the coloniser and the rest of the characters are considered as the colonised. Miranda is also a subaltern under the strict rule of her patriarchal domination by her father.

In *The Midsummer Night's Dream* the world of fairies and the real world merge into one with the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta bringing them all together

in the mercy of the king of fairies, Oberon. This play is a rich representation of the Elizabethan society where the people were divided as the elites, middle class and the commoners. Theseus represents the monarchy; the middle class are symbolised by Egeus, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius and Helena, and the working class or commoners are represented by Bottom and his fellow workers. These characters are under the authority of the fairies that use the mortals for their own sport and gain. The fight between the king and queen of fairies over a changeling boy from India is significant because a rich image of the exotic and mysterious land of the orient is being given. As such, Edward Said comments, “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said 71). These images disclose the western point of view about the Orientals as totally different and inferior to them in colour, race and breed, with a sense of magic. Egeus is adamant about Hermia’s marriage to Demetrius which leads to the elopement of Hermia and Lysander. A woman is always under the authority of patriarchy that binds her for life, thus Hermia is bound not only by her father’s rule but also by the king’s orders.

Tughlaq is a subaltern as he becomes a puppet in the hands of Aziz and Azzam. Although Tughlaq is driven by his own idealistic vision it is Najib who is the driving force for these visions to be actually fulfilled thus, further making Tughlaq a subaltern. His downfall is not just his fault but it is rather the fault of the other characters that subalternizes him. Shiekh Imam-ud-din fall victim to Tughlaq’s greedy and idealistic dreams. He has to be sacrificed because he is a spoil sport for the Sultan.

Hayavadana is born with a horse’s head which makes him a subaltern as he is ostracised by the society as a monster. But it is his mother’s fault that Hayavadana has been born as he is. Kapila is from the lowest caste of the Hindu society and although he is strong physically, he is considered as a subaltern under Devadatta and Padmini. Even though they are friends, both Devadatta and Padmini regard and treat Kapila as a slave. Even after the transposed heads, Padmini chooses Devadatta over Kapila which further subalternizes Kapila.

The Mahout in *Bali: The Sacrifice* is an elephant keeper and is seen as a helpless victim under the embarrassing situation among the other three characters.

The King also is caught between his desire to do away with the sin of his wife by sacrificing to the Hindu gods and to forgive, forget and accept his wife as his new religion teaches. He is further subalternized by the Queen Mother and the Queen who are playing a tug-of-war with the King in between. The Queen Mother subalternizes both the King and the Queen by forcing them to make the sacrifice to do away with the Queen's sins.

In *Naga-Mandala*, both Rani and Kurudavva are subalternised by patriarchy. Rani is subalternised by both Appanna and Naga where Appanna literally makes her a slave and a prisoner in her own house and Naga uses her for his pleasures. On the other hand, Kurudavva is subalternized by society itself which mocks and neglects her instead of helping her find her son.

Abhimanyu in *Chakravyuha* becomes a subaltern under his uncles, Bheema and Yudhishtira who knowingly sacrifices him. They knew that Abhimanyu only knows how to enter the Chakravyuha but doesn't know how to get out of it, still then, they persuade him to enter it and he is killed. Dronacharya, is also torn between the Pandavas and the Kauravas because he is the guru of both, but the Kauravas gives him no other choice and he is forced to form the dreaded Chakravyuha to show his loyalty to them making him a subaltern in the process.

Wahoudok or *Prologue* presents the destruction of the beautiful world that god has created for human beings. The destruction is done by none other than humans themselves making one another suffer and die which makes every human a subaltern in the mercy of each other. *Hey Nungshibi Prithivi* or *My Earth My Love* depicts the grim realities of life. Puwari is a subaltern as he is carrying all the history of the world with him and is given the burden to write further. The seven Celestial Nymphs: Hipokpi, Yai-pokpi, Hi-leima, Yai-leima, Hikubi, Yaikubi and Yaishra are all subalterns as they embody all the women characters in the play. In *Chinglon Mapan Tampak Ama* or *Nine Hills, One Valley*, the seven Maichous are burdened by the present happenings of war and destructions which forces them to write a new history so as to make the new generation aware of the bleak future.

THEME OF HYBRIDITY AND OTHERNESS

Othello finds it hard to identify himself as he is a hybrid. He is a Moor by birth but due to his position as a general, he is respected by all which gives him a hybrid identity of a coloniser as well as colonised. Due to his colour, Othello is considered as an outsider by the other characters which can be seen in the way they regard him as 'the Moor' and that makes him the other or the outsider. There are other characters in most of the plays who are literally hybrid making them feel as the other or the outsider like.

Caliban is half-human and half-monster which makes him impossible to mingle with the humans. He also can't be a monster as he understands and is familiar with the humans and their manners, in fact, Miranda tries to civilize him but he gives a rather ironic and apt reply, "You taught me language, and my profit on't is, I know how to curse" (Shakespeare 44).

Hayavadana has a horse's head with a human body and he is in search of completeness thus, literally making him a hybrid. Everybody who sees him is afraid of him. He is carrying his mother's sins and has to suffer shame and brand him as the other. Devadatta and Kapila's heads are exchanged which makes them feel uneasy as they are carrying each other's body which makes them hybrid. Kapila is the one who suffers the most as he had to reshape his body again and says, "When this body came to me, it was like a corpse hanging by my head. It was a Brahmin's body after all: not made for the woods. I couldn't lift an axe without my elbows moaning. Couldn't run at length without my knees howling. I had no use for it. The moment it came to me, a war started between us" (Karnad 168). He moves away from the village and lives in isolation as he now feels like an outsider because of his hybrid and unusual body.

Naga transforms into Appanna and a king Cobra which gives him a hybrid identity as well as privilege to meet Rani, but at the same time, his identity is hidden from everyone as he is a cobra. Bottom has an ass' head and his fellow workers ran away when they saw him leaving him all alone in the woods. Except for Bottom, who gets the privilege of being with a fairy, all the other characters suffer due to their hybrid identity making them different from others and making them feel as the other or an alien. The women characters also face similar identity crisis, but most importantly they suffer due to their physical otherness. The characters like Desdemona, Emilia, Bianca, Gertrude, Hermia, Helena, Hippolyta, Ophelia,

Tughlaq's Step-mother, the Queen, Rani, Kurudavva and the seven Celestial Nymphs represent women as the other because of their difference from men.

THEME OF VIOLENCE AND WAR

The plays represent violence or war at one point or the other leaving the characters traumatised, victimised or death. Othello is fed with lies by Iago which leads him to kill Desdemona and becomes a victim himself. In Act II Scene Two, a drunken Cassio challenges and wounds Montano and is terminated from his position. In Act IV Scene Three, Othello abuses Desdemona and even slaps her in front of the Senate ambassador. Throughout Act Five, the action is full of violence where Cassio is wounded and Iago kills Roderigo, and in another scene, Othello strangles Desdemona and kills himself at the end of the play. The play *Hamlet* revolves around violence and war where Hamlet's father is murdered by their own brother and uncle, Claudius which leads Hamlet to avenge his father's death and in the process kills Polonius and Laertes too. The death of Ophelia is a violent one as she drowns herself and because of her as well as Polonius' death, Laertes announces war on Hamlet and they both die in the end. The tempest in the sea is representative of the real tempest between Prospero and the others which is resolved at the end with the reconciliation of the characters.

There are acts of violence and war throughout *Tughlaq*. In Scene Three, there is an incident where Tughlaq manipulates Sheikh Imam-ud-din to go and meet Ain-ul-Mulk and make peace but he is killed in cold blood. In Scene Six, Shihab-ud-din and his allies are killed mercilessly by Tughlaq's men and shams their plan of murdering the Sultan. Again, in Scene Nine, Aziz and Aazam murders Ghiyas-ud-din and Aziz takes his place to go as the Guest of Honour to the Sultan. Their act against the innocent Khalif is heinous and they become more debase. Scene Eleven opens with a crowd gathering and they end up rioting against the Sultan as they are dying with hunger and in Scene Twelve, Aazam is killed. In Act One of *Naga-Mandala*, on their way to the fair, Devadatta could not bear that Padmini has fallen in love with Kapila, his best friend and thus, goes to the Kali temple and sacrifices himself by cutting off his head but when Kapila discovers it he too is overcome by guilt and does the same saying, "...You spurned me in this world. Accept me as your brother at least in the next. Here, friend, here I come. As always, I follow in your footsteps" (Karnad 139).

At the end of the play they get into a duel and kills each other and Padmini is left with no other choice but to kill herself and asks the Bhagavata, “Make me a large funeral pyre. We are three” (176). The Queen Mother in *Bali: The Sacrifice*, is the incarnation of violence with all her animal sacrifices to her gods. The Queen has to be sacrificed at the end because it is the only way for her to be free of the authority that she is under. In *Naga-Mandala*, domestic violence is evident in the way Appanna treats Rani where he does not only abuse her verbally but beats her for getting pregnant.

Similar images could be seen in *Manipur Trilogy* where there are vivid images of violence and war as in *Wahoudok* where human beings become violent in search of power destroying everything that is left for them to enjoy. *Hey Nungshibi Prithivi* also presents different incidents of historical wars all over the world like the Burmese colonisation of Manipur, bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and so on. *Chakravyuha* deals with war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas and the whole play revolves around the forming of the Chakravyuha and Abhimanyu’s brave battle with his enemy.

THEME OF CONFRONTATION

Many of the characters confront to their situations but only a few come out victorious. Bianca confronts patriarchal domination and abuse of her husband and is triumphant at the end. But innocent Desdemona falls prey to patriarchy and dies in the end. Othello is also confronted by Iago’s defamation and his own emotions, but he lets Iago fill his mind with lies and he ends up killing himself as he cannot accept his own foolies. Hamlet is confronted with the most difficult decision where he has to choose between revenge and forgiveness, “To be, or not to be: that is the question” (Shakespeare 86).

Like Hamlet, Tughlaq is also confronted between his ideological vision for a stronger and better kingdom and the bitter reality to act. Both Hamlet and Tughlaq fail in their endeavour as they cannot handle the pressures of their own inner self and also the forces without, thus, killing them both. Padmini confronts the traditional culture and set rules of society in search for perfection which destroys her by committing sati. Likewise, the Queen is also confronted by traditions and religious believes which forces her to sacrifice her life to bring about peace. Human beings are confronted by

the dilemma to choose war and violence over peace and unity and by confirming to the atrocious killing and lust for power, have brought more hatred among each other. Dornacharya is confronted and forced to choose between the Pandavas and the Kauravas putting him in a difficult position. He is confronted to choose between good and evil. But since he is at the mercy of the Kauravas who has provided shelter and food for him, and also wants to show his support to them, he forms the dreaded Chakruvyuha and kills an innocent boy in the process which further leads to a greater war of vengeance.

QUEST FOR IDENTITY

The characters in the plays go through different situations in search of their true identity which makes them stronger or in many cases, destroy them as they can never identify themselves with that particular position, ideology or thing. Othello is destroyed in the end as he is an outsider and can never be accepted by the others as equals. He is a Moor as the Venetians brand him making him inferior to their race. Hamlet is driven to act which destroys him completely as he cannot identify himself with violence. He is an intellectual who wants to be in peace with everything around him, but the Ghost forces upon him to avenge his murderer and over-shadows his own feelings and emotions. Hippolyta is an Amazonian woman who is individualistic and strong but through her marriage to Theseus, she loses her independent identity and had to relate everything she does to Theseus. Likewise, the other women like Hermia and Helena are related to their men and not as individuals. Hermia tries to find her identity by going against her father but this ends up only in relationship to Lysander where she loses her identity again. Titania also tries to search her identity by not listening to Oberon only to give up at the end to the wishes and whims of Oberon.

Tughlaq cannot identify himself with his era because his ideas are too modern and unacceptable to his subjects which lead to his downfall. He is a representation of a contemporary individual in quest for a greater and prosperous nation. Thus, his identity is lost in oblivion as he could not prove his worth to his people or to his contemporaries. Padmini is in search for perfection in her husband which leads her to fall in love with both Devadatta and Kapila and leads to their death because all humans are flawed and is never perfect. She is a contemporary woman who knows exactly what she wants and needs in a husband or man: intellect and status to feed her

and strength to protect her. But due to her lust for wanting the perfect man, she loses herself in the process. On the other hand, Rani is in search of a husband who would love and take care of her, and due to her patience is rewarded.

In *Manipur Trilogy*, human beings are given abundance of blessings by God to enjoy and share with each other but due to his greed and selfishness he destroys everything and in turn his true identity is shrouded in bloodshed and violence and which can be atoned only through love and peace.

MIMICRY, AMBIVALENCE

In trying to mimic an authority, a person loses his/her true identity and it leads to the feeling of ambivalence towards that particularly authority or the colonizer. Edmund Burke in his essay *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* describes what mimicry is really about. He says:

He is himself a domestic servant, and generally chosen out of that class of native who, by being habituated to misery and subjection, can submit to any orders, and are fit for any of the basest services. Trained under oppression (it is the true education,) they are fit to oppress others. They serve an apprenticeship of servitude to qualify them for the trade of tyranny. They know all the devices, all the little frauds, all the artifices and contrivances, the whole panoply of the defensive armour by which ingenious slavery secures itself against the violence of power... they have the best intelligence of what is done in England. The moment a company's servant arrives in India, and his English connections are known to be powerful, some of that class of people immediately take possession of him, as if he were their inheritance. They have knowledge of the country and its affairs; they have money; they have the arts of making money (Burke 33).

As such, the Europeans exploited the natives all over the world and made them do their dirty jobs while they were enjoying their lives elsewhere. The ways of the Europeans are to imposed upon the natives and make them the mimic men who try to do everything as his colonizers. Homi Bhabha asserts that "The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing" (Bhabha 266).

Othello believes and mimics everything that Iago tells him to feel or do which makes him sometimes hate himself. The faith he has in Iago makes him believe that Iago would never deceive him. But he is just a tool for Iago to take revenge for his injustices. Othello cannot love or hate Desdemona whenever he meets her as he fails to know what she really feels for him which makes him more irritated. Iago is the colonizer who dictates all the movements of Othello, and Othello is the colonized who mimics all that Iago orders him to think. The Ghost asks Hamlet to avenge his death and thus, Hamlet becomes a mimic man who has to do as he is ordered. The contemplation and delay with the revenge is due to Hamlet's feeling of ambivalence towards the very act. He wants to punish his father's murderer but also is reluctant as he is wise enough to understand the consequences. Bhabha rightly states that, "The menace of mimicry is its *double* vision which is disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double-vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object" (268). Caliban is bound by Prospero in his power and keeps him as a slave. He is even taught by Miranda to speak and also the manners of a civilized individual. At first, he tries to mimic their ways and manners but cannot learn it, thus, making him hate himself. There is a sense of awe as well as hatred towards Prospero and Miranda because he is more human than before after their coming into the island but they have usurped his island from him and also, he could no longer be himself or be civilized as them.

Tughlaq is totally absorbed in his idealistic dream of making the most successful nation in history that he forgets about his subjects, the most important object in making a great nation. His ideals reign over his mind and all he can do is to try and act accordingly making him hate and love himself at the same time.

DOMINANCE OF PATRIARCHY AND THE ISSUES OF FEMINISM

From time immemorial, patriarchy has dominated over individuals, family and society. In fact, men are the authority because they consider themselves physically stronger and superior to women and children. Taisha Abraham observes that, "Patriarchy, more than capitalism (is) responsible for women's oppression. It oppressed them across class Monogamy, marriage, child-rearing, the nuclear family, were all patriarchal traps to contain and oppress women" (Abraham 14). The women

characters in all the plays suffer in the hands of patriarchy. “To feminism, ‘patriarchy’ is the key word: patriarchy as that social organization which produces and guarantees superior status for the male and inferior for the female, a political concept that governs power-structured relationships in which one group is controlled by the other” (Singh 3). The struggle to let their voices heard and be recognized and accept for who they are, is a far cry from the realities of what women face. They are subalternized by patriarchy without the hope of ending it. Feminists around the world have been trying to fight and stand against the traditional hold of patriarchy but in one way or the other, they are always subordinated till today.

There are a lot of incidents in the plays where women characters, including children are either verbally abused, beaten, physically exploited, mentally tortured or subordinated just because they are inferior.

Man has subjugated women to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasure, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort, but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could do to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and say, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior... (Grimke 14).

Desdemona, Emilia and Bianca are abused verbally by the men they are associated with. Othello even strikes Desdemona and Iago have never shown any love or feelings towards Emilia, in fact, she is just a woman to be used and disposed of at his whims. Ophelia is bound by patriarchy under the three male characters, Polonius her father, Laertes her brother, and Hamlet her lover. Miranda is also under the dominance of Prospero who devices her every move and even plans her marriage to Ferdinand. Hippolyta is a conquest of Theseus who displays it with arrogance and pride. Titania is also under the mercy of Oberon who puts her in shame by making her fall in love with Bottom, just because she would not give him the changeling boy. Hermia is bound by her father first and then later by Lysander. “Perhaps men are victims of an unnecessary anxiety at the loss of space, at being deprived of their ability to deprive or suppress. They suffer from the fear of impotence that they feel at the impending loss of their power of suppressing or even oppressing other” (Singh 120).

Padmini and the Queen represent the contemporary women who are independent, individualistic and do not adhere to the set norms of the society as well as patriarchy. Thus, most of “the women characters in Karnad’s plays are very bold and dominating. Symbolically, they are the representatives of ‘new women’ in society. Instead of being dictated by their men, they dictate them to follow their decisions” (Wadikar 63). On the other hand, Rani and Kurudavva are the worse victims of patriarchy where Rani is held as a captive inside her own home and Kurudavva is ostracised and abused by the society.

The Celestial Nymphs who represents the different women are also tortured. The women and children of different wars around the world become victims of the power-play among different patriarchal nations.

The universal appeal of Shakespeare’s plays through centuries is astounding as they always relate to the contemporary issues. Both Karnad and Thiyam are considered as the products of the ‘theatre of roots’ as they present their plays in quiet unconventional ways by incorporating different types of styles and techniques to give the plays their unique identity. “The search for roots also prompts them to revisit and interpret the nation’s ancient and pre-colonial past through myth and history for thematic concerns which give them a sense of rootedness, a kind of political and cultural identity in the postcolonial Indian ethos” (Das 115). Karnad and Thiyam are inspired by the rich Indian myths, folklores and history which become the basis for their plays. Likewise, Shakespeare is also enthused by the rich history of England and Europe to write his plays and he has heavily borrowed from myths, folklores and contemporary writers of his time to give a touch of his ingenuity and gave new life and dimensions to the plays. All the three playwrights represent related themes in their plays making them more intimately associated with each other.

Comparative studies of the three playwrights and their plays give an insight into the different themes that is present. Their similarities in dealing with the different themes and characters bring the playwrights closer to each other. All the characters in the plays face similar incidents and go through the same or similar emotions as the others that bring disaster or healing to the community. Also, these incidents and interactions mould the characters into complete beings or totally destroy them, as they can/cannot overcome their nemeses.

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Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

In literature, theatre or drama has occupied an important position as it is totally different from novels or poetry. The playwright writes as to reveal all the feelings, emotions and situations of the different characters which make the audience or reader alike strike a chord in rhythm with the various emotions that the characters go through. This distinct characteristic of drama has brought audiences and readers closer to their own feelings which have helped in identifying their uniqueness, individuality and also helped in understanding the human psyche. As such, different plays through the passage of time have enthralled ardent audiences and readers with its relevant themes. No human being in this universe can say that he/she is not under anyone or any authority. Even the most powerful person on earth is a subaltern as he is under the mercy of the creator. A common person is under the authority of the elders, rank, class, gender, creed and so on, which makes him a subaltern. Thus every human being is a subaltern in one way or the other.

With reference to the plays of William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam's relatedness to the postcolonial subalterns, the study was carried out under such perspectives.

In the first part of chapter one, an introduction has been given to postcolonialism where it is described as a theoretical perspective which tries to reclaim the true identity, rights and freedom of the native people from its colonizers and to be independent economically, socially and most importantly, politically. Then a brief description is given on how postcolonialism gained its momentum and the use of its term and debated definition is discussed. This is followed by the explanation on different postcolonial theorists who have hugely contributed in its development, namely, Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Hami K. Bhabha.

There is also an overview of the views of Peter Barry on postcolonialism where he divides it into three phases just like feminism such as, adopt, adapt and adept.

The second part of the chapter deals with the definition of subaltern and discussion on subaltern studies with special reference to Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and also discussed its contribution to postcolonialism. The third part of the chapter focuses on the definition and elaborated discussions on the term phenomenology.

Chapter two opens with a brief introduction to the universal appeal of drama through the passage of time. Drama has evolved through the course of time and has contributed in reflecting human emotions and feelings. Then an introduction to the most celebrated playwright William Shakespeare is given in reference to his relatedness to the contemporary audience and readers alike. The second part of the chapter discusses four selected plays of Shakespeare, namely, *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. All the four plays are studied in detail in relation to the postcolonial subaltern ideology. Most of the characters in the plays become victims under the traditional patriarchal system, race, rank, social stratification and so on. Othello becomes a subaltern as he can never be considered equals (though he is a high ranking officer) with the others because he is a Moor. All the characters in *The Tempest* are under the mercy of Prospero who becomes the colonizer. A young intellectual is oppressed by a ghost whose sole desire is revenge, thus, making him a subaltern. Fairies as well as humans alike are subalternized by Oberon just because of his jealousy towards Titania.

The first part of chapter three deals with the Indian theatre and its struggles to flourish through the decades. The plays or theatre in India started out from different religious practices and cultures and have evolved to the contemporary plays which blend tradition and contemporary issues. Drama, unlike poetry and novel, struggled to survive the onslaught of various insufficiencies during the postcolonial period. However, even the handful of playwrights like, Asif Currimbhoy, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Gurcharan Das, Ratan Thiyam, Mahesh Dattani, have kept drama alive till today.

The second part of chapter three talks about Kannada theatre and its influence and importance to Indian theatre, with special reference to Girish Karnad. He is rightly called the Renaissance man as he has revolutionised the concept of blending history, religion, myth and folklore, and contemporary issues into his plays to tackle and display the follies and flaws of human beings. The later part of the chapter discusses four plays in detail, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Bali: The Sacrifice* and *Nagamandala* keeping track of the use of historical characters and incidents, subaltern ideology and contemporary issues, and its relation to the different characters in the plays.

Chapter four analyses the four plays of Ratan Thiyam namely, *Chakravyuha* and the three plays from *Manipur Trilogy*; *Wahoudok*, *Hey Nungshibi Prithivi* and *Chinglon Mapan Tampak Ama*, which talks about the ultimate destiny of every human being. The first part of the chapter introduces the theatre of Manipur and the various influences it has. The second part of the chapter introduces Ratan Thiyam who is known for his unique productions all around the world. The different styles he incorporates into his plays like the *Natya Sastra* and *Thang – Ta* adds to his uniqueness. The later part of the chapter deals with a detailed study of the four plays, where the different facets of human being's destiny and how one works for it is discussed.

The fifth chapter is a comparative study of all the three playwrights taking into consideration the various themes and their relatedness. Through the process of analysing different plays of William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam there is one general conclusion that could be made i.e. all the three dramatists are seen as subalternists. They consciously or unconsciously expose the subalternity of the different characters under patriarchy, matriarchy, traditional and cultural norms, social stratification and the like.

The diverse themes that are presented in the selected plays of Shakespeare, Karnad and Thiyam embody similar themes and techniques. These similarities have brought the three playwrights closer beyond their diversity in time, place and productions. Themes like, theme of isolation, theme of subalternity, theme of hybridity and otherness, theme of violence and war, theme of confrontation, quest for

identity, mimicry and ambivalence, dominance of patriarchy and the views of feminism are being discussed.

So much is given away when one writes about one's own country which becomes a representation of the society. All the three playwrights have vividly represented their society in the plays and in the process consciously or unconsciously exposed the ills and wells of their country. They are, thus, deliberate activists who fight for promoting the causes of subalterns in society and plead for allowing justice and liberty for these people.

Through this study of *Phenomenology of Subalternity in William Shakespeare, Girish Karnad and Ratan Thiyam: A Study in Postcolonial Perspectives*, it can be concluded that every human being whether rich or poor, great or small is a subaltern. This subalternity is brought about by the workings of human minds through their actions and interactions.

The study carried out is not intended to be final in its research; rather it is just the modest personal interpretation of the scholar through reading the text of the various playwrights and, suggestions and corrections are much needed. It is hoped that interested scholars would give thought to the field of Indian drama as well as regional drama to shed more light on the rich field of dramatic art.

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