Conclusion

Ramchandra Guha observes that there are roughly four axes the conflicts in the Indian society run along – caste, language, religion and class (xix). To these four, gender could also be added as another axis "that cuts right across them" (Guha xx). Against Guha's wider formulation, the four axes of the present study – power politics, gender, caste and middle class – seem to imply the significance of Tendulkar's and Karnad's access to the social core. Undoubtedly, they are the two most keen readers of the Indian society after Independence through the medium of drama. They substantially contribute to the questioning of the state-sponsored version of national progress at various levels. Their work, however, never betrays any dogmatic approach or rigid ideological commitment in this regard. Tendulkar has sided with the political left in numerous social activisms, but his writing never shows any sign of constraint due to such affiliation in real life. Even he claims that he is "a pain in the neck as a writer" (*A Testament* 58) to his leftist mates. Karnad, on the other hand, remains a secular liberal all through his career, without clinging to any particular political brand either in real or in literary life. Their freedom from dogmatic constraints has surely added an extra edge to their critical observation underlying the plays. They unhesitatingly expose different notional realities of our socio-political life and boldly present our society as oppressive, corrupt, and unaccommodating from certain angles.

Post-Independence Indian society witnesses a postcolonial condition that espouses nationalistic consolidation on the one hand and, on the other, looks into the alternative discourses, marginalised by such consolidation. The build-up of an independent nation-state with a powerful centre is the chief goal of postcolonial nationalism or, what Partha Chatterjee has called, "mature nationalism" (*Nationalist Thought* 144). With the exit of the colonial power and the arrival of Independence, nationalism reconfigures itself to the needs of the new situation. Leaving behind the anti-colonial struggle, it now forms the nation-state. For this, the socio-cultural history of the nation demands an immediate rediscovery. Along with the politico-administrative reconstitutions, culture also needs to be reunderstood from the "post-independence theoretical and polemical positions"

(Dharwadker, *Theatres* 37). Neo-nationalism therefore revives an 'authentic' cultural past to build the nation-state with a rich and indigenous cultural heritage. It finds theatre as the most vital medium to legislate a national culture. Obviously, the 1956 drama seminar, organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi is the first theoretical exercise to this end. The revivalistic theatre, which wants to restore the classical glory of Indian theatre to the present, is an outcome of this postcolonial nationalism.

Postcoloniality vis-à-vis the post-Independence Indian society is also marked by the counter discourses to nationalistic consolidation. If nation-state is the most powerful goal, there is also the critique of it. Postcolonial nationalism vigorously pursues a decolonised nation-state but gradually questions the process of its build-up. It makes possible a self-assessment to review the functioning of the new state. As a result, multiple discourses come forth alongside the dominant discourse of nationalism. Several marginal voices become audible. The backwards in terms of gender, caste, class, ethnicity and so on are recognised. The recovery of their lost voices is an important feature of the post-Independence postcoloniality. The nationalist narrative of the nation-state is no longer the sole guiding spirit that undermines all other oppressed interests for the sake of the nation. Women, Dalits, tribals, all seem to get their recognition, rendering the post-Independence development story a 'plural' one. Indian theatre significantly contributes to this plural narrative of national progress. As a part of the post-Independence postcolonial interrogation, they question the "nationalistic postcolonial imagination" (Bhatia xxi) that calls for a powerful nation-state and its singular story of development. They question its authenticity from different parameters and foreground many an issue, which is kept away from general recognition.

Tendulkar and Karnad stand supreme among those playwrights who refuse to accept the post-Independence society uncritically. As a socio-political critique, their plays foreground several important issues. Chief among them is the development of the political culture of a newly independent state. They look at the dream project of nation-building and investigate the consequent political and administrative mobilisations. The investigation brings forth many disjunctive aspects of the hallowed project. The reign of the twelfth-century sultan, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, acts as a theatrical vehicle to analyse the hidden fissures and irrationalities of the present. One important thing to note is that the critical reading of contemporary political history here does not bear a pre-decidedly

dystopic and negative attitude. Evidently, there are attempts to re-understand the defamed sultan of history and rescue him from the stereotypes. But simultaneously, his failures and their causes are ruthlessly examined, leading to a fresh insight into the dubious reign. This attempt to understand the criticalities of the situation, the daunting task ahead before the ruler, and also the unmistakable acts of irrationality, often rationalised, problematise the discourse of "Creating a just state by just means" (Nehru qtd. in Guha 226). Sultan Tughlaq's manipulative politics to set up his ideal state raises multiple questions on the formative enterprises after India's independence. Centralisation of power, politicised development and pseudo-secularism are unmasked to interrogate the claims about national progress. The critique goes deep into the core of political corruption where we find the regimes of Ghashiram and Queen Vijaya. The danger of a democratic structure getting submerged in a totalitarian and autocratic regime always looms large. The loss of individual rights due to the rise of a draconian state, aided by the politicised state machinery and criminalised political forces, comes out as a major concern in these plays. Another aspect of the post-Independence and postcolonial state, which comes to further disturb its progressive image, is the ominous signs of replication of some of the colonial antics. The autocracy and statist rule of Ghashiram and Vijaya, with their allegorical correspondence with the post-Independence crises in democracy, challenges the claimed decolonisation. Their repressive mechanism and divide-and-rule strategy attempts to stifle the democratic rights in favour of their regime, very much in the same style of colonial masters. An almost similar reproduction seems to have occurred time and again in Indian society and politics, be it the spell of Emergency or the presence of several draconian laws/acts. On an ideological level, this concern is voiced by *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, where colonial (or neo-colonial) exigencies transcend geo-political boundaries, seriously undermining the notion of post-Independence 'difference' from the "alien rulers" (Nehru qtd. in Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought* 132).

Neither playwright wants to offer any ready-made, easy solution to the problems they have addressed, most reasonably because there exists none to offer. Nor is it a playwright's obligation as well! But it is true that their protagonists arrive at the sites of power relations with a seemingly disruptive or challenging posture. They seem to represent a 'difference' from the status quo, a "counter-power" (Foucault qtd. in Pickett 459) to the dominant power. But mostly, their 'resistance' seems to have become problematic. Their encounter with what they oppose greatly dilutes their claimed

'difference', and they only replace the 'old order' with another one. Neither Tughlaq, nor Queen Vijaya, nor Ghashiram was able to provide a qualitatively different condition. They all end up as clever replications of their predecessors. The unceremonious endings of Tughlaq and Ghashiram and the fabricated eulogy of Queen Vijaya by a sold-out media at the end point to this aspect. Among them, the only exception is Tipu whose claim to 'difference' from his British antagonists remains genuine to a great extent. Although he mimed the British in their military and business strategies in order to resist them, his resistance was always against the colonial system of thought in favour of an indigenous one. He never intended to bring a colonial style of governance upon his people. However, despite the above problems in some of the challenges, they still hold importance due to their opposing voices. That they come to challenge a status quo, whatever be the result, is crucial enough to expose several loopholes in the existing systems. In the plays discussed, the past, pre-colonial or colonial, is thus used to comment on the postcolonial present.

The woman question remains a major axis in the plays. The presence of gender prejudice cutting across the social strata is an undeniable reality. The patriarchal discourse is exposed as it creates 'regime(s) of silence' within or outside the home. More important is perhaps the playwrights' attention to women's counteraction. They acknowledge the endless possibilities of insubordination even in the most repressive domain. The women display a sign of dissent, however little that may be in the practical sense. Truly, Karnad's women prove more resourceful than Tendulkar's in voicing their protest. A more compromising attitude can be seen in Tendulkar's women, provoking allegation that his plays end "not with a bang, but with a whimper" (Nabar 19). But if we look at the women both in Tendulkar and Karnad as a whole, we find that none of them in fact try, so to say, to destroy or annihilate the existing structures. Their foremost intent remains to redesign the power-imbalances inside the traditional institutions and co-exist peacefully. In their final stand, they are obviously pro-marriage, pro-family and pro-husband, but unmistakably aware of the gender irrationalities in each of these social relationships. Most of them try to safeguard their interest against the formidable 'code of silence' in ways suitable to their respective situations. In the Indian context with its multiple local specificities, such as caste, class, religion, ritual, this urgency to ensure their immediate well-being in a situation-specific way seems feasible. Any ideological prescription for an outright rejection of norms would have landed these women nowhere.

Caste(ism) is another thematic axis in the plays. The age-old piety and purity of the Brahmins has, socially and historically, lost much of its sway over the people. But it still wields significant power not only over the Brahmins but also over the other non-Brahmin upper castes to form a caste prejudice against the Dalits. In this context, the ruthless de-glamorisation of the Brahmin caste upholds the absurdity of caste prejudices against the downtrodden. A character like Sakharam subverts many a Brahminic notion of our society. In the field of caste after Independence, the most important event is the rise of the Dalit movement in art, literature, social activism and politics. Both Tendulkar and Karnad have attempted a bold and critical assessment of caste activisms and the rise of caste, in particular the Dalits, in politics. The upper caste approach to the whole problem remains as messianic and supercilious as ever. But importantly, the counteractive Dalit assertions come to reveal some unnerving realities. In *Kanyadaan,* it becomes equally, or even more, oppressive and biased discourse of opportunism. The character of Arun Athavale puts behind staunch idealistic Dalits such as Kaka Godghate or the radical youth like Arjun Jadhav in Datta Bhagat's *Routes and Escape Routes* and undermines the very concept of 'Dalit victim'. Tendulkar had to receive severe flak from the Dalits for being "unscientific" (Samant qtd. in Chari & Renuka 27) in his treatment of Dalit psyche. He has allegedly mistreated the Dalit character by showing him as much an oppressor as the upper castes and undermined Dalit aspirations. But it is equally 'unscientific' on the part of his critics to take Tendulkar's portrayal of Arun as his attempt to draw a monolithic image of the oppressive Dalit community. On the contrary, his portrayal tends to focus on one of the nuances of a social reality, which is relatively unacknowledged for the sake of 'political correctness'. Karnad's reading of caste politics, too, uncovers serious shortcomings in the caste ex-centric, who try to regain their lost voices. He welcomes challenges against caste hierarchy in *Tale'-danda.* But he tries to go beneath the surface realities and exposes how the predominance of communal hysteria, fanaticism and internal rivalry can rout an anti-caste movement.

The Indian middle class, which has assumed a growing significance since Independence, occupies a central position in Tendulkar. Most of his realistic social plays have an urban middle class setting. The educated, affluent, refined middle class families with their supposedly high morals and ethics dominate the stage. But their encounter with each other and the society at large renders their moral image problematic. There appears a

huge gap between their 'ideality' and reality. In Karnad's world of myth and history, a direct encounter with the middle class is rare. But his *Wedding Album* skilfully penetrates into this social segment and foregrounds realities enough to destabilise its long-held image. However, neither playwright seems to address duly one important development in the middle class. The arrival of 'new economy' since the 1980s, and more since the 1990s, signals the rapid expansion of this segment. Modern education and government jobs were made available right after Independence, thanks largely to the affirmative actions of the state (Seth 2506). This facilitated the entry of several backward castes, other than the upper caste, into the middle class segment (Seth 2506). But this expansion accelerates notably in the new liberalised economy (Varma xviii). The opening up of multiple corridors of income and license to consume brings upward social mobility to a number of socio-economically deprived people. This identity of 'consumers' has its inevitable repercussion on the general character of the middle class. This is duly exposed by both Tendulkar and Karnad. But this changing formation of the middle class, due to the new entries from the non-upper caste segments, and its possible impact on the character of the class itself lie outside their focus. This, however, does not undermine their assessment of the class as a volatile segment against a fast changing time.

The overall mood, emerging from the entire critique, surely borders on a hopeless condition. Is there any possibility of change? First, there is no ready-made, comfortable answer. Secondly, the plays consciously avoid such answer, perhaps, because that could undermine their critical thrust, which is to problematise the social 'normalities' and not to handle them therapeutically. The urgency for an easy answer to all the social issues could divert the critical focus and turn the critique into a dogmatic or propagandist understanding of reality. Therefore, the importance lies more in exposing the problematic than in prescribing any remedy for it. And such uncovering shatters popular notions about the present and hope for the future. The chaotic end in Karnad's *Tughlaq* or Tendulkar's *The Vultures* for example shocks our sensibilities and blurs our hope for an immediate way out. But such bold assessment of the situations, where some characters struggle disregarding the outcome, is perhaps necessary because this can make the society think and produce some change. Amidst despair, this ability to make the society think about itself by unveiling it seems to be the most positive sign in the plays. The crooked world of politics inside and outside the home unsettles our hypocrisies, and the efforts of some people to dissent disturb our inertia.

The mood of despair, with its intended shock-therapy for and jibe at the society, is perhaps best summed up in Tendulkar's *The Cyclist* through its absurd quest for meaning in life. The play seems to be an epilogue to Tendulkar's whole corpus, questioning the 'naturalness' of social reality, and could be a symbolic addition to the concluding chapter for the same purpose. It upholds the meaninglessness and absurdity of any effort of finding meaning and thus ridicules the human apathy towards this end. It targets no particular domain, class, section or society, but never lets any of these go unquestioned. The mood of confusion is simultaneously contextual and eternal. This balance is achieved through the co-ordination between content and form. It is the journey of a nameless cyclist, in a may-be-known/unknown setting, through a series of allegorical episodes in life. The metaphor of travel brings forth several situations. They all represent deceit, corruption, confusion which the man fails to understand. The best way to move on is, therefore, to do nothing! The best solution is "eyes closed, mountain gone" (36). As if a banter on the general misreading of the proverbial monkeys – 'see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil' – a maxim so favourite to Gandhi, Tendulkar ridicules the mass inertia of the society and sarcastically prescribes, 'Do nothing'. The absurdity of the travel is underscored when it is found that the cycle has no wheel at all. So, the man ends where he began. Interestingly, he looks younger after the illusive journey, but at the same time a bald patch is also visible on the back of his head. Balwant Bhaneja asserts that the play is ultimately positive in spirit because the man has unwavering faith in the journey, despite the obstacles (xi). The positive note can also be discerned in the young look of the man at the end. But it is also juxtaposed with the bald patch on his head that betrays age. He may be young because he has the self-confidence or because he has not really travelled any geographical space. But he has travelled in time. This travel has cost him his energy, without giving any result, except for a meaningless stasis. Comparing this to the general situation in India, Tendulkar has this to say, "Life here is as in *The Cyclist*. It will never change. Each day we ride our old, dilapidated wheelless cycle and go places. Breathtaking static activity" (qtd. in Bhaneja xii). After such a long theatrical journey through heavily contemporaneous characters and situations, Tendulkar seemingly makes a caustic remark on human stupidity and callousness. He avoids taking up any specific social segment to critique. On the contrary, he builds up a surrealist narrative which is contextually evocative of the human situation in general and the post-Independence Indian condition in particular. The 'absurd journey' and the 'do nothing' approach to life

can refer to the material and psychological spheres of the static situation, where our society seems to have become fully inert to find solutions. The portrayal of the painful stasis aims to whip the society up from its stupor and make it think about the problems at hand.

Although equally sceptical, Karnad never goes to such an extent of locating absurdity in life as Tendulkar does in *The Cyclist*. His *Hayavadana* could be taken for his 'epilogical' view on the critical observations underlying his plays. The play seems to capture the key to Karnad's take on the socio-political problematics – that is, the impossibility of an 'ideality'. In many of his plays, the situation is, to an extent, absurd and all challenges and counteractions can never fully yield the ideal or desired result. They, at best, can be partially successful. His women characters are very resourceful indeed in their counteractions, but even they have to content themselves with what they get under certain circumstances. Padmini (*Hayavadana*) alone can be found to blatantly claim an 'ideality' of existence, but her fate shows the impossibility of such a claim. Absurdity of life is also underscored by the horse-man in the outer-frame of the narrative. The cursed life of the horse-man with a horse's head and a human body seems to be a metaphor of the post-Independence nation. He is condemned with the horse's head, which he cannot shake off to become a "complete man" (81). Contrary to his wish, he finally becomes a complete horse – a completion that he must be content with. Karnad does not leave the horse-man in his absurd state as the 'hayavadana'. He lets him develop into a complete being, i.e. a complete horse, though it is exactly what the horse-man opposed. Unlike Tendulkar's *The Cyclist*, Karnad seems to refuse to end on a stasis. He, rather, stresses a continuity, though it might lead to somewhere least desired and expected. So a mood of disillusionment is always there in the continuity or development. And Karnad seems to emphasise this disillusionment in the 'development story' of the nation and make the inert society aware of its own disillusionment. This refusal to end on a stasis is otherwise an important feature in Karnad, though he is fully aware that this continuity can never realise the ideal. A common point can be drawn here between the two playwrights. Tendulkar's cyclist always desires to travel, despite the sheer absurdity of the situation, and so does Karnad's horse-man who self-develops, though the opposite way. Their desire to move ahead even in the most hostile situations bears a positive note. The critique seems to serve its goal. On the one hand, the hostile situation stands exposed; on the other, the individual struggles of some people counterbalance it.

A reading of Tendulkar and Karnad draws attention not only to their role as a social critic but also to the difference in their dramaturgies. They two are the most pre-eminent dramatic voices in the culture of social critiquing, and equally important is the fact that they adopt two dissimilar styles for the purpose. Karnad exploits the folk performance conventions to communicate with a modern, urban audience. History and mythology offer materials for his dramatic narratives. Karnad is, of course, not alone in doing this. But what sets him apart is his deft handling of these materials in order to suit the requirements of a contemporary reception. *Hayavadana* quite justly becomes an iconic play where modernity meets tradition in the finest way possible. In the political-cultural context after Independence, such dramaturgical formulation involves some risk. The state is desperate to create an 'indigenous', 'national' theatre by invoking the Sanskrit and folk performance conventions. Chiefly, the revival of Sanskrit theatre, projected as the mother of all folk traditions such as Kutiyattam, Yaksagāna, Chau, Nautanki, Tamasha (Dalmia 72-73), is heavily endorsed by the state. Under such circumstances, any playwright using the "roots" to critique the prevailing order has the danger of being co-opted by what he opposes (Zook 174). He/she can be branded as a conformist, toeing the state-narrative of culture. Karnad's credit lies in the fact that he has extensively borrowed materials from myth and folk and participated in the "theatre of roots", but visibly avoided any effort to revive a 'pristine', past tradition. His borrowing can better be called calculative adaptation of some conventions and devices of the past to critique the present. Moreover, the adapted mythological materials, which seemingly invoke the pristine past, are often twisted and subverted through the folklorist frame to suit the playwright's modern purposes. The whimsical Goddess Kali (*Hayavadana*), the manipulation of the snake-ordeal (*Naga-Mandala*) and Vishakha's counteraction (*The Fire and the Rain*) exemplify it.

Karnad, along with many of his contemporaries, draws inspiration from Bertolt Brecht. The concept of 'epic theatre' and 'alienation effect' (Bentley 85-96) opens up the immense possibilities of communication that a play can achieve by utilising the traditional techniques of dramaturgy. The narrator-cum-actor, chorus, costumes, fable and history in the regularly interrupted plot, all aimed at 'complex seeing' of the social reality, unveil the potentialities of folk, mythology and history for modern urban theatre. The appeal of 'alienation effect' is there to a certain extent, but Brecht seems to have provided

to Karnad, along with many others, a theoretical license to exploit the traditional, "nonnaturalistic" (Karnad, *Three Plays* 15) techniques of their own theatre of the past. The vast theatrical scope of folk conventions and the unlimited source of referrable situations in mythologies as well as in history offer a fresh mode of critiquing society and also create a national theatre canon. Brecht's influence is vital here, along with IPTA that calls for taking theatre to the common people by looking back to "our rich cultural heritage" (qtd. in Dalmia 161). Karnad is certainly motivated by all these factors and able to create his own distinguishable style within the premise of an Indian theatre. He displays an enormous command over his traditional materials. He utilises the figures of Tughlaq, Tipu, Basavanna to address crucial issues of the present. Similarly, the flexibility of folk performance is readjusted to his thematic needs. Nowhere he seems to have lost direction in the labyrinth of folk, myth or history. Nor does he end up as a political propagandist exploiting "nonnaturalistic" techniques. As his *Tughlaq* tells of the endless "incoherence and discontinuity" (Sengupta, *Being* 166) of the human subject, it also talks visibly about post-Independence political condition. This becomes possible because he most skilfully arranges for the arrival of tradition on the modern stage.

Tendulkar's dramaturgy, on the other hand, is realistic, though his most commercially and technically successful play remains *Ghashiram Kotwal*. It gains its iconic status as an urban folk drama, along with *Hayavadana*. Tendulkar claims to have "a feeling of liberation" (qtd. in Dalmia 176), using this form. The reason seems to be the same that Karnad felt about folk conventions. The form allows the "de-glamorization" (Tendulkar, *Ghashiram Kotwal* viii) of familiar historical figures, such as Nana and Ghashiram, and offers a scope of critique that his realistic and naturalistic mode could never provide. However, Tendulkar believes, surely not solitarily, that his play's content determines its form (qtd. in Bhaneja ix), and hence his realistic style. There may be another reason for this preference for realism over folk. After the production of his *Sari Ga Sari* (1964), a play which utilised the Tamasha form, Tendulkar discovers the problem of staging the folk form with urban actors (Hansen 79). He finds the "informality and improvisational skills of traditional actors" (qtd. in Hansen 79) missing in the urban performance. This problem points to the much debated gap between the folk (rural) style and content and the urban experiences (Dharwadker, *Theatres* 323). Habib Tanvir tries to overcome the problem through his Naya Theatre that enacts folk plays, using rural and tribal players from the Chhattisgarh region. But not to forget, Tendulkar has written

Ghashiram Kotwal (1972) even after knowing this shortcoming, and a reappearance of the urban folk style afterwards would have enriched his canon and generally the tradition as well.

Of Tendulkar's stage devices, light and sound are very important. He has used fade-ins/fade-outs of the light and its focus regularly to build the ambience. And sound works conjunctively to heighten the mood. A very notable use of light is in the ending of *Silence! The Court is in Session.* The symbolic violence of the mock-trial ends with Benare, self-assertive yet exhausted, sitting alone on the centre-stage. The light focuses on her, while the rest of the stage is dark. The spectacle seems to imply the endless persecution of Benare's brave-heart. *Kamala* also ends on a nearly dark stage where Sarita turns off all the lights leaving only one. Tendulkar is keen to make the ending positive, and Sarita's act indicates her determination to overcome her lower status. A more deft use of light can be found in *Sakharam Binder.* A major part of the play takes place in dim light or semi-darkness. Light perfectly co-ordinates with sound to create a world of sensuality and thrill. The night's calm is often disturbed by the sound of the 'mridanga', whose varying beats indicate Sakharam's changing moods. The more sensually aroused he is, the more furious its tempo becomes. The howling of dogs and the crickets chirping are also common at nights that are often disturbed by the knockings at the door by visitors. The ending attains a macabre dimension. In the darkness of night, Laxmi is digging the soil, while Champa's corpse is on the ground and Sakharam stands petrified and frozen. The rapid blows of the shovel makes uncanny sound combined with Laxmi's "muffled grunts" (198). The secrecy of the crime is shattered by Champa's husband, who is knocking at the outer door and howling for her. The sound is eerie and gradually becomes a "monotonous whimper" (198). A similar effect is achieved in *The Vultures* as well. Whenever the Pitale offspring are at their crooked game, the screeching sound of the vultures can be heard off-stage. In contrast, Rama's presence is accompanied by birds' twittering. In the gruesome, off-stage abortion of Manik, the sound of ravings, kicks on the door and violent scream in pain, accompanied by the spectacle of blood, create horror on the stage. This time the crime happens under broad light, perhaps, to suggest the blatant degeneration of the household.

One important thing to note in Tendulkar's modern urban setting is the predominance of the drawing-room and the relative absence of the bedroom. Even when

he deals with man-woman relationships in the domestic domain, the bedroom does not occupy much of the stage. In *The Vultures* alone, an entire scene (Scene Four) is enacted inside the bedroom. This absence of the bedroom does not matter much in plays such as *Sakharam Binder* where we do not have a middle class, sophisticated, drawing-room-bedroom house. There sex can take place even in the kitchen. But its relative absence in plays such as *Kamala*, *The Vultures* is an important feature to note, particularly considering the traditional place of a bedroom in a common middle class home in India. In comparison, Karnad also shows no difference when he works in an urban middle class setting in *Wedding Album*. Even an intimate conversation between an aged couple takes place in the living-room (72-77), which is visibly not much different from Tendulkar's drawing room. There is of course not much scope of the drawing-room-bedroom setting in Karnad. His stage is predominantly premodern.

In Karnad, the stage abounds in folk devices and techniques. What Tendulkar performs in his realistic style, Karnad does that through folklorist and mythological framework. *Hayavadana*, for example, explores the conventions of Yaksagāna. The use of Bhagavata, invocation to the elephant-headed god Ganesha, comic episodes, half-curtain and improvised dialogues perfectly suits the play's complex theme. The use of mask within the premise of Yaksagāna tradition is innovative in itself. Karnad decides to use mask to explore the theme of ideal identity in "greater depth" (Karnad, *Three Plays* 13). Another device is the "androgynous dolls" (Crow and Banfield 149) in the second act of the play. Along with the chorus, music and Bhagavata, the dolls continually interrupt the story and thus help "bring out the disintegrated state of the three people's lives" (Karnad qtd. in Crow and Banfield 149). The anti-realist devices also distance the action from mundane reality and place it "in the realm of the mythical and the elemental" (Karand, *Three Plays* 13), keeping with the play's universal theme. No less rich is *Naga-Mandala* in stage devices. The story in both of the plays has a dual framework, which is skilfully executed through the folk devices. *Naga-Mandala* presents the main story through the outer frame of oral tradition. The Story narrates herself to the Man (a damned playwright) and a group of Flames (female gossipmongers of village) and thus creates the situation for an orally transmitted tale. Importantly, the paradoxical nature of the oral tale, which is independent of its teller and simultaneously exists only at the time of oral transmission, refers metonymically to the story of gender. Woman's apparently free status in the society coincides with the fact that she exists only in terms of her relation to men.

The folk/oral style works at its best in the multiple endings of the play. The audience witness multiple versions of the conclusion and symbolically participate, along with the Flames and the Man, in the act of producing meaning. The style of deciding one out of multiple options also suggests the empowered status of Rani at the end of the play. The entire play is enacted through the contrast between light and darkness (day and night). Daylight shows Rani's life of misery which temporarily ends at every night with the arrival of Naga. Her triumph at the end also occurs at night. Thus, the whole stereotype of light and darkness is subverted as Rani's 'oppressive days' are compensated by her 'freedom at nights'.

If we look at Tendulkar and Karnad for dramaturgical experiments, there seems to be a mismatch. Tendulkar's plays do not display the type of experiment with form that we find in Karnad. *Hyavadana*'s outer and inner frames of narrative, *Naga-Mandala*'s multiple endings and the time-shift in *Wedding Album* do not have their match in Tendulkar. The folk style undoubtedly offers Karnad much scope for experimentation, but even in his 'non-folk' ventures such as *Wedding Album*, *Broken Images*, and *Flowers* he continues to experiment with form. Tendulkar's play-within-a-play in *Silence! The Court is in Session* is noteworthy. His forte unmistakably lies in the naturalistic depiction of situation, and there he always excels. There is no doubt that it suits his sometimes ruthless and some other times deceptively naïve and tongue-in-cheek jibe at society. The caricature of the media in *Encounter in Umbugland* finds him at his dramatic best. The nursery rhyme of the reporters, their dress and gesture make them look like opportunist buffoons. An almost similar serio-comic tone, though much improved, reappears in *His Fifth Woman*. However, lengthy speech, wordy dialogues sometimes seem to be an odd feature in Tendulkar's close-to-reality language. One prominent example is Leela Benare's long and 'never-to-end' self-defence in *Silence! The Court is in Session*. Tendulkar, perhaps, would have defended it as necessary for a free spirit like Benare, caged for such a long time. But from the theatrical point of view, its necessity is debatable. His use of poetry, particularly in *The Vultures*, may be another issue for debate. Its effectiveness in the narrative is doubtful. According to Vrinda Nabar, the climax of Act Two Scene Seven is "rather ruined by the last scene" (19), which downplays the fiery reaction of Ramakant to his wife's illegitimate pregnancy with serene poetry.

Both Tendulkar and Karnad show a considerable change in dramaturgy in their later plays. *His Fifth Woman* (2004) highlights the playwright's long journey from *Sakharam Binder* (1972) to the present. A fresh style is evident in the language and form of the play. Crisp dialogue filled with sharp wit and humour, slim and swift narrative and the marvellous addition of a paranormal situation add an extra edge to the usual satire on the state of affairs. He has already written a "dark comedy" (Bhaneja x) like *The Cyclist* (2004), whose Marathi original, *Safar*, was written in 1991. This interest in dark comedy and black humour persists with a new found concern for the magical world. He has indeed come a long way from *Silence! The Court is in Session* et al. A similar change is there in Karnad as well. His easy dip into the intricate world of a South Indian Brahmin middle class family in *Wedding Album* differs from his urban folk style. There is, however, no reason to take this departure from folk as an acknowledgement of any deficiency of the form. It is perhaps Karnad's will to experiment as he had done before within the premise of urban folk drama.

In the perspective of the present study, the position of the plays vis-à-vis the society they address is always an important consideration. Notwithstanding their insight into the universal recurring situations of life, the plays are evidently embedded in specific socio-political contexts. Their relation to the social realities can be called their historicity. They are the product of a specific historical condition, where the strong sentiment of nationalism/nation-building coincides with the growing scepticism over it and the downturn of the post-Independence jubilation that used to hide many a fissure. Growing uncertainty and failures at the national level multiply discontent at large, and the plays seem to arise from this contemporary mood to critique the dominant social order. By way of scrutiny, they expose the growing irrationalities in politics, gender, class, caste and so on. Tendulkar is unambiguously disgusted over the system both in his plays and essays (*The Confession*). Karnad is no less aware than him of the situation and always remains a playwright conscious of the socio-political injustice around. As a product of the growing feelings of doubt and disbelief over what is given, the plays diagnose the ills, without prescribing easy remedies. They arise from a sentiment, which serves as an alternative to the statist and nationalist perception of the society, and, on their part, represent and interrogate the social realities to initiate a rethink. Their purpose is to hold a critical mirror to the society to make it self-aware and help construct "a society's sense of itself"

(Brannigan 426). Although easy solution is not provided, the unmistakable awareness of the situation is often 'liberatory' in itself.

One important aspect of Tendulkar and Karnad is that while representing the mood of scepticism they never surrender to any particular ideological or dogmatic position. They never let themselves be co-opted by the dominant order, in whatever field it may be, which they critique. For Karnad, the danger of co-option was greater because his use of folk and mythological resources was in tune with the state-endorsed dramaturgy for theatre. But he consciously avoids the use of folk and myth for the politics of revivalism. He is surely eager to create a distinctive identity of theatre in India, but his plays utilise their indigenous characteristics more to critique than to glorify both the past and the present. Even while representing an alternative point of view, they both refuse to be narrowly confined by any dogma. To be precise, they are never the "loyal watchdog" (Brannigan 420) of any conservative, ideological order. Their interrogation seems to display loyalty only to their individual understanding of the social realities. This is an important aspect of the historicity of their plays. For this reason, Tendulkar can churn up the society with the stunning perspectives, either on Dalit identity (*Kanyadaan*) or on common Brahmin male character (*Sakharam Binder*). Though less shocking, Karnad's intellectual freedom offers equally (or even more) distinctive insight into the issues of power politics or sexuality. Tughlaq's soul-searching against a contemporary political background does not betray any propagandist agenda of the playwright, except for a close reading of the 'presentness' of the past. Similarly, Karnad's probe into the issues of gender and sexuality displays his free, individual assessment of the women's condition. Rani's (*Naga-Mandala*) or Padmini's (*Hayavadana*) stand vis-à-vis the society does not follow any rigid parameter of gender study. This is, on the contrary, the women's independent stand, technically aided by the flexibility of the folklorist framework. Both in contesting the existing order and representing the marginalised voices, Tendulkar and Karnad remain free from the influence of what is contested and any narrow theoretical parameter of the contester either. They try to be politically unbiased and remain loyal, as much as possible, only to their art and independent insight.

To sum up, both Tendulkar's and Karnad's plays are rich with political overtones. From power politics to sexual or caste politics, the plays' political awareness is undeniable. But most importantly, they never become political propaganda. They do not

spread pessimism; nor do they glorify any utopian prospect with an easy way-out from problems. In their critique, they capture situations of crisis where most of the individuals stand in a transition from one condition to another. The individuals have problems with the prevailing order of things. Their relation with it creates crisis in their life, and they stand in a condition where the established order becomes contested and a move to a new condition seems probable. Existence under the given system is rendered totally problematic, which reveals its hitherto unrecognised aspects. The established norms and regulations become untenable. By their acts, the individuals show the need for a change, a different condition that could end the present problems. But this new condition is not clear either to them or to us. Sometimes they only have the hope that something better will come, though they do not know how (*Kamala*). They sometimes take steps towards a future, though the future is kept unknown by the playwright (*The Threshold*). The uncertainty of the future is stressed also by offering its multiple versions, any of which can be possible (*Naga-Mandala*). Or, the attainment of an ideal future may be impossible altogether. At best, one can have partly what one wishes. The hope of the horse-headed being to turn into a complete human is not fulfilled as he becomes a complete horse instead, but there lies the joy of fulfilment and motion towards a future (*Hayavadana*). So what we find in most of the plays is a liminal condition, where the present is contested and a future looked forward to. But the future is not clear and definite either. The individuals stand between the given, yet contested, order and the possibility of a new situation. They have a strong desire for a better condition and do their best to achieve it. But the condition is largely kept under speculation and not made clear and definitive. This is why the liminal condition of struggle sometimes might appear, to use Tendulkar's words, a "Breathtaking static activity" (qtd. in Bhaneja xii) of *The Cyclist*. However, what is ultimately important both in Tendulkar and Karnad is not the indefiniteness of future but the 'unusual' acts of certain characters that show their desire to live better and also make possible the overall critique of the situation. This is why the plays cannot be tagged as either dystopian or utopian. They seem to emphasise the period of crisis and transition in the life of the individuals where they destabilise norms and look beyond.

One pertinent question may arise about the viability of English as the language of the plays. Since all the plays under discussion talk, directly or indirectly, about the society at large which hardly interacts in English, the status of the language surely raises a concern. It is true that almost all the plays are originally written in either Marathi or

Kannada, but the present study is based on their English translations for convenience of accessibility. This foregrounds mainly two issues – one, the viability of the language of the primary works which is English, and the other, the 'problems of translation'. A total indifference to these aspects might undermine a proper understanding of the plays, since the Marathi and Kannada originals are inaccessible to the present researcher. So, on the one hand, how much successfully can the plays interact with the society (or audience) in English, when the majority of it might feel alienated because of the plays' language? Their critique of society may become futile in its impact, if they remain inaccessible to the larger society due to the English-language barrier. On the other, the 'problems of translation' can mar the connotative significances of the plays' source language.

Regarding the first issue, we must begin with the fact that drama in English still remains "isolated events" (Dharwadker, *Diaspora* 78) in India. Common audience finds it hard to accept a rustic farmer in a remote Indian village delivering dialogues in correct English. But in spite of their marginal existence, a large number of regional language plays are being translated into English. Almost all the plays of Tendulkar and Karnad are available in English translation. Tendulkar's plays are translated into English by others, whereas Karnad himself has done the job. Moreover, both Tendulkar and Karnad have written original English plays, though few in number. What could be the reasons behind such move towards English? There must have been a readership, reception and stage-prospect of these plays. Otherwise, the playwrights would not have bothered for the English translations. The success or failure of the plays in English translation should be seen together with their original or regional language productions. A major work in a regional language (say in Marathi or Bengali) or a major Indian language (such as Hindi) creates its readership and reception. Its success often leads to its English translation for further prospects. When it is translated into English, its fame is already established by then due to its popularity among the regional theatre audience. Thus the English translation becomes possible for the success in regional language theatre. Moreover, the pre-English fame of the composition helps draw an extra attention of the English-educated audience. The English readership remains informed about the major position of the work in regional language theatre and contributes to its further fame and circulation. As a link language, English is inarguably the language of "power and prestige" (Dharwadker, *Theatres* 441) in India, and when a major work is translated into English and forms a readership, it boosts its fame and circulation further. Although the work may

be circulated chiefly in regional languages, its success in English plays a major role behind its further circulation. The recognition from the English audience, however small in number, draws media attention. The play becomes accessible to the elite upper/middle classes and other influential linguistic communities such as the national academia which converse in English. Further, it gets the chance to travel abroad and receive more attention internationally. By virtue of being in English, the play thus receives a wide visibility, thanks to the endorsement of the academia, media, publisher etc. It may continue to be performed mostly in regional languages, but the English translation contributes greatly to its canonicity. This is true of many major Indian plays such as *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Tughlaq*.

The above role of the plays in English translation shows the importance of English in a multilingual dramatic tradition like India. The fear of alienation is largely overcome when we see the plays in English translation in a relation of mutual benefit vis-à-vis the regional language plays. The fame of a regional language work leads to its English translation for further readership and market, and thus the English translation is 'contributed' by it. After the translation, the work's pre-English fame is clearly multiplied, and the translation now plays a 'contributory' role to the further circulation of the work in English as well as in its original and other Indian languages. Though lesser in number than the regional productions, the English translations attain more visibility due to the 'high status' of the English language in India (Dharwadker, *Theatres* 441). This wide circulation and fame, through the original and the translation, enables the work to exert influence on society. As a work either in the original or in English, it stands firm within the canon.

The original English compositions, however, occupy a lesser space than the translations. Karnad himself acknowledges, "writing in English about characters who are presumably speaking in an Indian language for audiences for whom English is a second language is not a situation conducive to great drama" (qtd. in Dharwadker, *Diaspora* 80). They get the attention of the academia and media and establish a critical readership across the nation. But this seems insufficient as they do not have the advantageous situation enjoyed by the English translation plays. They seem to miss the mutual relation of benefit, existing between the English translation plays and their originals. Original English plays have to work without the mass circulation and fame of the regional

language theatre. They, however, draw the western attention, perhaps, more easily than the translations. This is because most of them are written, keeping in mind the demands and expectations of the western audience, along with the English-educated audience in India. This is true of plays such as *His Fifth Woman*, or *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan.*

Apart from the appropriateness of English as a language in Indian theatre, there is another problem concerning the English translation plays – that of translation itself. Most of the plays under discussion in the present study are in English translation. Only one play of Tendulkar (*His Fifth Woman*) and three of Karnad (*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Flowers, Wedding Album*) are original compositions in English. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* is special in the sense that it is first written in English and later translated into Kannada, which is a rare act in the field of translation in Indian drama because mostly the regional language or 'Bhasha' texts are translated into English and not the other way round. The quality of English translation always causes much debate. Mahesh Dattani puts it straight that the language is often stilted, either too academic or too literally translated, totally cut off from real speech (170), and hence his originally written English plays. Translation, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes, "is the most intimate act of reading" (96). The translator's unfamiliarity with the context of the source language (for example, Kannada or Marathi) can destroy this intimacy, and "the rhetoricity of the original" (Spivak 97) can never be reproduced in the translation. Apart from this weakness of the translator, there may also be insufficiency in the target language required to correctly reproduce the cultural connotations of the source language (Karnad, *Gesture* 218). This is explained by Karnad in the appendix of his play, *The Fire and the Rain* (63). He despairingly shows the insufficiency of English in bringing forth the profound implication of the original title of the play *Agni Mattu Malé* and concludes that the translation that he himself has done is "only an approximation to the original" (63). This is perhaps true of all Indian plays in English translation. Given this problem, one must admit that any study solely based on them has some limitations in truly appreciating the cultural connotations and "rhetoricity" which are implicit in the original language and often lost in the English translation. A full investigation into the 'gaps' between Tendulkar's and Karnad's 'bhasha' plays and their English approximations is still awaited.

Problems about Indian drama in English are many, but on the other hand their vast potential in the country's entire theatre-landscape is undeniable (Ahuja 313). Their appearance in English provides them a national (as well as international) readership and further circulation through many other languages. With national recognition, they become a significant part of the multilingual Indian dramatic canon. They lag behind the regional language productions in terms of stage-visibility but attain a pan-Indian status, owing largely to English. This is true of Tendulkar's and Karnad's plays. Most of their plays are translated into English and have a large readership cutting across different linguistic groups in India. The cross-linguistic familiarity through English results in their reproductions in many other Indian languages and their national recognition. Therefore, the English language plays of Tendulkar and Karnad (translations and originals) are important occasions to canonise the plays in the multilingual dramatic tradition of the country.

English is, of course, never the sole/most important factor for the national fame of the plays under discussion. In fact, language cannot be, to quote Chaman Ahuja, "the quintessential core – more so in theatre which, as a composite art, involves numerous other arts, too" (299). The plays stand on the merit of what and how they talk to their audience – their thematic content and technique. In this respect, they are the creative aspirations of the post-Independence and postcolonial condition. They respond to the call for an Indian tradition of theatre by formulating distinctive dramaturgy and critiquing society in a way that reflects the contemporary mood of growing uncertainty and questioning. Their assessment is boldly insightful to problematise the perceived notion of social realities. Such a critique is matched by inimitable theatrical styles. Tendulkar's deceptive plain-speak and Karnad's technical exquisiteness seem to be perfectly in place to deal with the contents of their work. Karnad's use of folk, myth and history for urban audience is well suited to the new desire for indigenous theatre. Tendulkar also addresses a newly-emergent situation in a distinctive way. New subjects like nation-building, its crises and many other marginalised issues such as caste, gender feature in their plays. As a whole, the plays represent the mood of the new nation, which wants to self-examine in every respect, and help redefine the Indian theatre canon after Independence. For this, they had to excel in dealing with the newly emerging society at hand. Their re/appearance in English merely acts as a contributory factor for their further success in the multilingual Indian dramatic tradition.