

# The Socio-Psychological Study of Women in India with Reference to Karnad's Nagamandal

**Dr.Santosh Narayan Salunke**

Asst Prof-Dept of English, Anantrao Thopte College, Bhor, Pune.

## Abstract

The paper endeavors to analysis Karma's Nagamandal from different perspectives- plot rooted in two folk tales of Karnataka 'dramatic transmutation of these tales, fusion of classical and modern theatre techniques exploring the socio-psychological study of women in Indian orthodox society which is patrichal and repressive which restricts the creative potentiality of women folk. Through the character of Rani, the female protagonist Karnad first highlights the subjugation of women via various means to let all know the real guise of women. Subsequently Rani's acceptance of Naga clearly suggests Karnad's response to patrichal structure of the society. The play continues the tradition of Henri Gibson, G.B.Shaw and John Galsworthy. Making drama a medium to discuss social cultural, familial or political issues. Nagamandal though is based on oral tales, it has validity in the modern context. It fuses past and present together.

## Keywords: -

Girish Karnad is a multi-faceted genius: he is noted stage actor, playwright, film actor, television artiste and creative figure. He is a bilingual writer: he writes in English as well as in his native language, Kannada. He had a leading role in the film Samskara, which won the presidents Gold medal. Kaadu (Forest), for which he himself wrote the script and which he himself directed also won him the Golden Lotus. He was honored with the awards like Padma Vibhushan and the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 1999.

As a writer, he is known for his plays, which are just four in number-Yayati, Tughlaq, Hayavadana and Naga-Mandal. He concerns himself with the problems of existence, the quest for equality, search for identity and the problems of isolation and frustration. Existentialism asserts humanism or the dignity of man. This philosophy is exemplified in all the plays of Karnad. The major theme of these plays is that of responsibility and the quest for identity. For instance, in Yayati it is the theme of responsibility; in Tughlaq it is the quest for identity: in Hayavandana it is the search for identity and human relationship. In Naga-Mandala the theme is the right of a woman to live in dignity and self- respect, not as a shadow of her husband.

Karnad's 'Naga-Mandal' is inspired by the snake's myths prevalent in South India. It is actually a dramatization of two folk tales of Karnataka. This folk tales throw ample light on the age old culture and civilization of the region. They reflect the basic norms or values, ethical, spiritual and social, which form place in our way of life now. While we absorb and assimilate the new ways and ideas in our culture and adopt ourselves to the changing time, our simple folk tales help to keep alive the basic values of life and they are handed down from one generation to another generation in the form of written or oral

stories. In fact, naga cult is a widely practiced in many parts of India. In Naga-Mandal Karnad weaves two Kannada folk tales together. The first one comments on the paradoxical nature of oral tales in general: they have an existence of their own, independent of the teller, and yet live only when they are passed on from one story –teller to another. Concealed within this is story of Rani, who makes up tales to fill the void in her life. Rani's predicament pointedly reflects the human need to live by fictions and half-truth. The play touches one of the most sensitive issues of marital life. In folk style and form, the play throws open a question as to who is the husband- the person who marries an innocent girl and indulges in self-pleasures or the 'person who gives her the real and complete experience of life. It is centered on three people, Appanna, his wife Rani and Naga, a king Cobra, who can assume the form of human being. In Naga-Mandal, Karnad brings about a synthesis between the ancient and the modern to serve his purpose of using the past illuminate the present. He uses a traditional folk-tale to throw light on a present, thus fusing the past and present. Through a folk-tale, he reveals the complexity of human life. The play thus reveals the social and individual relations and deeds with the social stigmas prevailing in the society such as the intimate relationships between a man and a woman, an Indian woman's desperation to win the affections of her husband in spite of the husband's open infidelity, the need to prove fidelity being imposed on married women while their husbands are no eve questioned the extramarital affairs, and the village judicial system.

Naga-Mandal is based on two oral Kannada tales that Karnad had heard from his Guru A.K.Ramanujan. It is clear the plot of the play is reworking into dramatic medium like the plot of Greek drama. Two plots make up Naga-Mandala-the framing plot of male dramatist and his curse is a re-telling of the story with the story that Rumanian calls 'A story and a song'. The plot that deals with story of Rani is based on 'The Serpent Lover'. Now in case of Naga-Mandala, the originality is not important. The story is known and the plot also. What's important is what the dramatist does with the story. The first plot of Naga-Mandala is told by 'The story of the folk tradition'. It reveals the writer's predicament both as man and as playwright. Karnad make use of myths and folk forms in his play in order to reveal socio-cultural evils. On one hand he upholds tradition values while questioning the same values at the same time. He tries to make them literally stand on their head.

In Naga-Mandala, Karnad exposes male-dominance, the oppression of women, the great injustice done to them by patriarchal culture and men. He also questions the concept of chastity that surrounds the patriarchal mythic imagination. The framing plot of the play reminds the audience that it is watching a dramatic presentation. It is really crucial not to leave everything to the common sense of the audience. In this man-oriented folk tale, there is particular female context and content as we come across with young, jolly, vocal women in the form of the flames and the female gender of 'The Story'. Thus, the stories represent woman's understanding of the reality around her. The man in the play directly addresses the audience and thus engages them in his crisis. When the female-voiced flames enter into action, a new kind of dramatic situation occurs on the stage. The male writer is transformed into internal audience. His stories exist to be told. The old women tries to choke her creativity but the Story and Song escapes her clutches, and earn a life of their own. Thus, the plot of Naga-Mandala is a reworking into the dramatic medium of the folk-mythologies.

In many ways, Naga-Mandala is an explicitly feminist play. It develops the repeatedly used themes of fate, chastity and social role and combines it with the unexpected ending one has come to expect of folk-stories. Folktales often perform the reversal or double-crossing or upturning of old manners. In Karnad's hands, the success of Rani, her social and divine rise, fulfills the reversal function.

We notice that positive female agency within Naga-Mandala rises in many forms- for instance, the Flames with their stories present a new form, and they tell this tale of Rani. Rani's story questions the patriarchal moral code that demands the fruitfulness of a woman to her husband but not the faithfulness of a man to his wife. It reveals social double standards with regard to sexual desire. Appanna can sleep with prostitute in complete public knowledge, but Rani's single so-called act of adultery makes the entire village rise in indignation and fury. The tale presents remarkable psychological access to Rani's own consciousness. It presents the woman's misery in her married life. We feel sympathy for Rani and her fantasy world where she rules and is, indeed, Rani of all. Kurudavva's help to Rani shows how the women can take course of their lives in their own hands.

The rise of Rani as a Goddess shows a special kind of transformation. There are ironies in Rani's success in the snake-ordeal. As test of her chastity, the trial defeats the purpose and mocks the Hindu mythic test of truth. In Karnad's play, the woman comes through the ordeal of handling a venomous snake only because the snake is her lover. It is her very infidelity that comes to her help in proving that she is a faithful wife. The split in the male figures between 'the sullen husband by day and the passionate over by night' is a comment on how women perceive their partners in a system of unequal marriage. All this sets out the feminist concerns of the play.

Karnad is sometimes made to compromise different aspects of Rani's story. For instance, Rani fails to discover the truth and her continued belief in Naga. It is a suppression of Rani's reason and intuition. She seems to accept the instructions of Naga and Appanna not to ask questions. The revelation of Rani's pregnancy occurs twice in the play. First to naga when it is a personal moment. Then to Appanna, when it is a public acknowledgement of the private desire and act. It is interesting to note that Rani's success is engineered throughout by Naga and Naga paves the way for the restoration of her rightful place in the marital home

It is true that Naga-Mandala is unconventional in that it offers three endings. They are given by Karnad to give scope for the readers to select and interpret for themselves. The first of the three endings goes along with what one would expect in a fairy tale or folktale. Rani, after having succeeded spectacularly in demonstrating her innocence, is considered her as his wife and forgets about his concubine, who voluntarily becomes Rani's servant. However, as the Author narrator points out, this ending is fond to be loose. Obviously, Appanna knows that the child his wife is expecting is not his, since he has never had any sexual relationship with Rani. Though Appanna has his doubts, he can do nothing and, in fact, he begins to suspect his own sanity, when the elders convince him that Rani is the 'Mother Goddess'. The spectator or reader has access to his thoughts expressed in these lines: "What am I to do? Is the whole world against me? -Let any miracle declare her a Goddess. But I know!" And further, we cannot ignore the cobra. On the part of the story-narrator, she wonders about Rani's thoughts. Now, after being intimate with her husband, Rani has to know that the man with whom she used to have intercourse was not her husband.

The second ending takes into account both Appanna's suspicion and the state of mind of the Cobra who, after recognizing his love for Rani, in another soliloquy, is ready to sacrifice himself. He hides in Rani's abundant hair and dies. The Flames, this time, do not seem to be pleased with an ending, which involves the death of the Cobra. Therefore, Rani and Appanna reappear on the stage to perform a third ending, which at first seems to be a repetition of the second one. However, this time when the Cobra falls from Rani's hair he is alive. Appanna immediately thinks about killing the snake, but Rani devises a way to save the Cobra. She lets him hide in her hair again, though she tells Appanna that he

has escaped. It ends with these words spoken by Rani: “This hair is symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in there happily, for ever!” The third ending may not be acceptable within the orthodox Indian tradition as it considers chastity of a woman superior than and preferable to life. According to Karnad, Indian society is terrible puritanical. Some critics consider the second ending as the most satisfactory. In fact in the third ending Karnad has challenged the orthodoxy of Indian epic stories. The third ending shows that Rani explicitly accepts not only the existence but also the significance of her relationship with the Cobra.

### **Conclusion:**

Karnad, through folk story comments on the patriarchal social order in Indian society which look down upon the status of women. Karnad comments on the role of Appanna and Naga in the play. They represent the twin roles of husband, “as a stranger during the day and as a lover in the night”. Karnad subordinates the individual to social interests. In Nagamandala Rani and Appanna confirm to their social roles and obligation as husband and wife though both aware of the truth of their relation. Karnad makes use of myths, mythologies and folk-lore as his source for his play. He does not glorify the chosen myths but relates the myths to the present and to the past beliefs found in these myths. Karnad provides us with a glimpse of the past as well as its relevance to an understanding of the contemporary world. In Nagamandala he forges a synthesis between the ancient and the modern to serve his purpose of using the past to illuminate the present. He uses a traditional folk-tale to throw light on the present, thereby fusing past and present. Thus, Karnad’s play reflects upon contemporary Indian cultural, religious, psychological and social life through the use of myths, folk-tales and mythology.

### **References:**

1. Three Plays: Naga-Mandala; Hayavadana; Tughlaq; Girish: Oxford University Press, 1994.
2. Karnad Girish, Naga-Mandala: Play With A Cobra, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.  
Karnad Girish, Naga-Mandala: Play with a Cobra, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 11 impression, 2011 (student edition).
3. Myths in Girish Karnad’s plays: studies in Indian drama in English, ed, A.N Prasad Bareilly: Prakash Book depot(2003)
4. Contemporary Indian dramatist: ed, Shubha Tiwari, Atlantic publishers and publication(2011)
5. <http://en.wikipedia.org>.