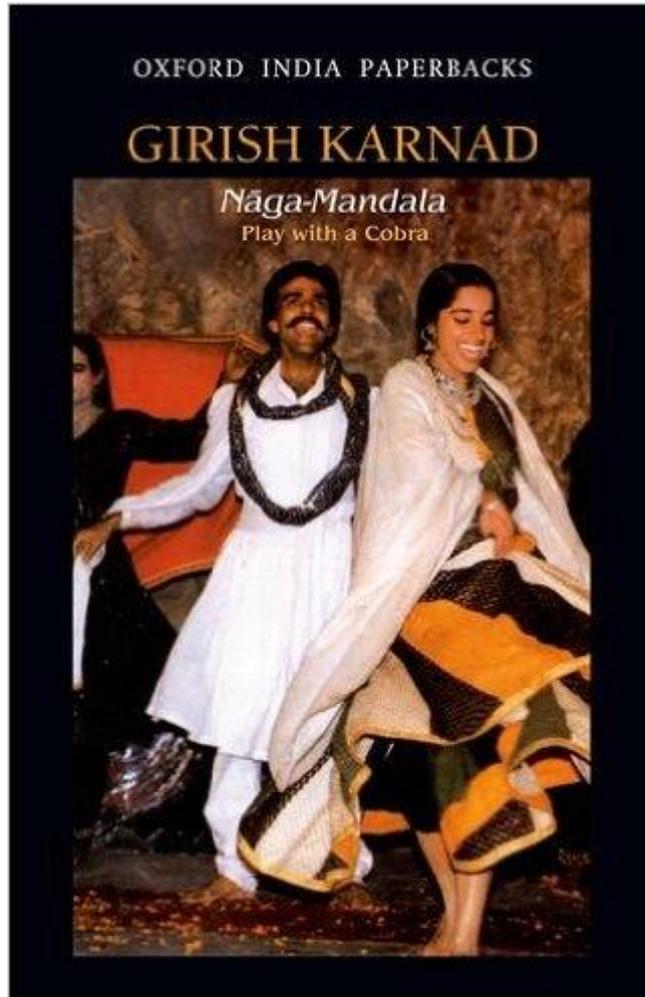


## The Theme of Patriarchal Ideology in Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala*

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### Abstract

Through the centuries, Indian women have tried to create their own space within a patriarchal society which regards them as primarily an adjunct to a male. Women have ruled vast households, have found voices in music, art and literature – and yet, by and large, they have unquestioningly accepted their subaltern position in society. The vast majority has regarded that position as inevitable, almost destined: they have interiorized the dominating patriarchal ideology so thoroughly that there was no scope for a critical re-evaluation filament. A Meera Bai, a Janabai, an Akkamahadevi has come rarely; the rest have sunk into a morass of impassivity, content or resigned to play out their socially pre-determined roles. Presetting Karnad's female characters as

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incapable of feminine assertion and identity indeed reduce them to mere silent victim in the face of an aggressive and hostile patriarchy. The purpose of this article is to analyze the theme of Patriarchal ideology and the psychological realities of Rani the female character of Girish Karnad, one of the foremost playwrights in Contemporary Indian drama. Further, the article will examine the marginal position, and female sensibility of women in the Indian Society.

**Keywords:** Patriarchal ideology, Conflicts, Female sensibility, Victim, assertion, identity, fulfillment.

### **Girish Karnad and Indian Writing in English**

The Indian woman of the mid- and late twentieth century is placed in a rather different, more complex situation. The Indian socio-cultural environment has felt the impact of the forces of compulsions have led to a significant widening of the horizons of a woman's life without a corresponding re-definition of social values, placing her in the proverbial horns of a dilemma.

The term, *Indo-Anglian* is used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indian authors. Today, there are a large number of educated Indians who use the English language as a medium of creative exportation and expression of their experience of life. Their writing has now developed in to a substantial body of literature which is now referred to Indian English Literature.

The arrival of Girish Karnad into the realm of Indian writing in English Drama brought out the long neglected themes into limelight. The shifting of focus from the external world to the inner world of individual marked an important stage in the growth of drama in India. Girish Karnad turns his eye inward and writes about the flickering psychic reactions. His themes are original and different from those of other Indo-Anglican writers as he is engaged in exposing the essential dilemmas faced by the Indian woman. He portrays and analyses human relationships in the context of emotionally related which is a fertile area for exploration.

Girish Karnad is an Indian dramatist who writes in Kanada and then translates his plays in to English: he has earned international recognition as a playwright and translator. He has also carved a niche for himself as a script writer, actor, and director in the world of Indian cinema. His knowledge of human nature made him a great playwright. His plays recall the ancient theory and tradition of Indian theatre. Modern Indian dramatic writing in English is neither rich in quantity nor on the

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whole, is of high quality. Enterprising Indians have for nearly a century occasionally attempted drama in English - but seldom for actual stage production.

In Karnad's plays, the play is not a sociological phenomenon, rather it is psychic. He sets himself seriously to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women. These women are tormented by existentialist problems and predicaments. Karnad always unravels the subconscious of his highly sensitive protagonists.

### ***Nagamandala***

*Nagamandala* is a socio-psychological study of Indian woman richly textured dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka. It mainly deals with gender – bias search for self, and the subjection of woman in patriarchal Indian Society. The protagonist Rani of *Nagamandala* married to a man who was “rich and his parents were died” (27). Rani's parents are least bothered about the character and wrong of doings of Appanna. They are equally responsible for her miseries and after marriage they never visit Rani.

### **Protagonist Rani**

Rani is a symbol of any woman who is not ready to face life on her own once she leaves the defensive threshold of her parent's home. The Patriarchal society uses marriage as a tool to exploit and tyrannize women on so many planes- physical, emotional, intellectual, sexual and social. The play deals with the married life of Rani and Appanna. There is not a normal conjugal relationship between them. “Marriage is not only an honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact and at the sametime to find sexual fulfilment as lived one and mother.”<sup>2</sup> He brings his young wife to his house and keeps her under lock and key. He comes only once in the afternoon and to find his lunch ready. He passes his days and nights with his concubine and Rani passes her life like a deserted wife. Her dreams of a happy married life are shattered.

Rani has none to support her in her solitary cell, except her parents who come in her day dreams to console her. She misses her parents so much that she sees them in hallucination. This solitary imprisonment of Rani by Appanna in the house symbolizes the chastity belt of the middle ages, the decline of women's talents to housework and the keeping out of women from enlightenment and enjoyment. Krishnamayi quotes “In the dramatic world of Karnad, women, within and without wedlock, are subjected to various forms of deprivation, humiliation, violence

and torture in almost every walk of life in one way or the other. The playwright not only exposes the arbitrariness of the system where women are considered as “second sex,” “other,” “non-persona” but also questions the way women are socialized to internalize the reigning hegemonic ideology and degrade their own position to perpetuate the on-going subordination and subjugation. Man who is ruled by the mastery-motive has imposed her limits on her. She accepts it because of biosocial reasons”.<sup>1</sup>

Appanna treats Rani only as his housekeeper and cook in his life. He does not allow her to have any social contacts and connections, and to make certain her complete isolation he first brings home a watch dog and then a mongoose. His attitude to women reminds one of an observation in Sircar’s play “Evam Indrajit” : “ Girls must follow the rules, men can do what they like but women must be obedient” (1994:21)<sup>3</sup>

### **Masculinity and Feminity in Patriarchal Social Order**

In a patriarchal social order, “masculinity is associated with superiority: whereas ‘feminity’ is linked with inferiority,” and while “masculinity implies strength, action, self-assertion and domination, feminity implies weakness, passivity, docility, obedience and self-negation.” Folk tales in a patriarchal society always focus the fears and wishes of male. They do not give much importance to the inner feelings and experiences of women. Girish Karnad adopts this male oriented folk tale in such a way that it represents the psychological realities of man and woman.

### **Solitary Caging**

The solitary caging of Rani by Appanna in the house symbolizes the chastity belt of the middle ages, the decline of women’s talents to housework and the keeping out of women from enlightenment and enjoyment. Rani’s youth is thus wasted by an unhappy marriage because “ Appanna gallivant around leaving such loveliness wasting away at home?” (II). Rani, the wife is so unhappy that she even thinks of suicide. She tells Kurudava “I would jump into a well – if only I could” (II). Wife hood for Rani is thus an imprisonment in a strange male dominated home.

### **Magic Roots**

Rani has grown so panicky that she seems to be eager to find some solution for this misery and unhappiness. She acts according to Kurudava’s advice. She decides to feed her husband with the magic roots hoping that Appanna will be attracted to her.

A marriage in the Indian context is not something that takes between two individuals but something that brings two families together. Women in India are taken for granted as men have failed to realize that she too has feelings and emotions. She is exploited simply because she is a woman and no one cares to ask for her consent. In *Nagamandala*, the position of Rani is the same. Rani is the very image of an ideal Indian woman – demure, unquestioning and uncomplaining. The imprisonment of Rani symbolizes the chain of restrictions placed round women, which denies even her basic rights and hinders her natural growth even today. She is one among the passive victims of a male dominating and cruel husband who exercises absolute supremacy over his innocent and naïve spouse.

### **Naga's Love**

Being suffered in the storm of isolation, she gets in to the squall of Naga's love and affection that comes to her in the form of her husband. The Naga assuages the shape of Appanna to make love with Rani. He comes every night when Appanna is away. He assuages the hurt feelings of Rani and provides her idyllic joy. In course of time, Rani becomes pregnant. When Appanna comes to know Rani's pregnancy his ego is hurt. He pushes her to the floor, kicks her and accuses her, "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? (p. 33) He calls her names and decides to go the village elders to get her punished for adultery.

### **Authority and Love**

The woman in her might have experienced the difference between the love of Naga and authority of Appanna. A. Jaganmohana Chari expresses views in this context: "The dichotomy of lover and husband is in the tradition she has inherited. When she discovers in her experience in the end the difference between Naga's love and that of her husband the feeling of experience hardly crosses the threshold of her consciousness because her experience of her head or her conscience hardly matters in the world of patriarchal hegemony".<sup>4</sup>

A man does not need to explain his reasons for enjoyment of his sensual pleasures but a woman's instinctual need is unseen, and their desire is considered an infringement of moral codes requiring paranormal justification. This inequality and imbalance is clearly visible in the relationship of Rani-Appanna. People never ask Appanna's fidelity towards his wife. They never object to his licentious behavior.

## To Conclude

To conclude, Rani is a typical Indian woman who is ready to suffer at the hands of her husband without complaining, in the hope that her husband will return to her in the end. She expects nothing, yet she is ready to make any sacrifice. If she comes to commit a mistake, she holds herself guilty and ever remains repentant for the lapse. It will not be amiss to say that an Indian or rather a Hindu wife is masochistic, taking pleasure in being tormented by the husband. She never revolts even in thought. A husband, according to Indian mythology, is a replica of God howsoever depraved the husband be. Karnad deals indirectly with the problems of woman in a patriarchal society. Marriage forces a woman to face a new atmosphere and adjust to a new life style. In the process, the bride becomes a totally new woman. In the case of the heroine of Naga Mandala, she suffers a crisis initially and instead of being shattered, she emerges from a meek bride in to a strong woman struggling for survival.

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