



## Key Themes in the Nagamandala of Girish Karnad as a Crisis in Identity and Personality

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### ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates Karnad's theatrical works through thematic and conceptual frameworks. The major analysis throughout this discussion will examine male-female relationships and wedding institutions with respect to postcolonial cultures. Through his works starting from Yayati until Boiled Beans on Toast India's most renowned playwright Karnad demonstrates how authentic Indian theater can honor cultural traditions while addressing current social issues.

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### INTRODUCTION

Naga-Mandala was published in 1990. The dramatist first wrote the text in Kannada before its translation into English. This feminist play Naga-Mandala exposes tacitly how patriarchal culture deprives women of freedom and men practice severe discrimination against them while battling gender inequality and sexism. As the tale works to improve Rani's unfortunate married existence it appears to endorse traditional marriage institutions. Yet the novel subverts this belief through its subversive nature that fights against love and desires being fulfilled within marriage. Is the success of fulfillment accessible within or beyond the boundaries of marriage? Naga-Mandala together with Hayavadana provide a major theme about the location of satisfaction between marriage and outside conventional marriage.



**Interpreting Meaning:** The tales in Nagamandala define the metaphors that appear in the story of the married woman. The drama achieves universal appeal by incorporating two traditional stories that link myth with superstition to actual events and instinctual knowledge with rational thinking across specific details and universal appreciation. The situation faced by "Rani" proves to be more tragically challenging than employment as a maid. The usage of "Rani" shames the traditional Indian definition of a woman as both queen and home goddess. According to Virginia Woolf in *A Room of ne's Own* "she is of importance yet practically insignificant from an imaginative perspective" She remains the main presence in each poem yet she completely goes missing from historical documents.

**The Nagamandala depicts the following stages of womanhood:** Throughout her three life cycle stages the female character's dependence on others is evident: Rani depends on Appanna as wife, Rani depends on her parents as daughter, Kurudavva lacks capacity without Kappana as mother. Traditional Indian culture considers a woman to have reached fulfillment only after she gets married. The situation is ironic since she does not belong in the homes of her birth parents or her new husband. In Indian society a wife reflects independence through creating her own home domain. The regular practice of her husband locking the door from outside causes Rani to remain confined within her home making others wonder about this behavior. Unlike Nora in *A Doll's House* who walked away from the door God sent to her in the appearance of a King Cobra Rani remains inside the doorway and does not close it. Kurudavva uses a love potion to make Rani attractively lure her uninterested husband so he ends up mating with the King cobra. Daily life brings the Snake a transformation into a dedicated Appana who disregards the abusive qualities of the husband's daytime personality. The story reaches its peak while Rani is pregnant because Appana begins to question her purity. The community leaders subjected Rani to a test using snakes in order to confirm her purification from false accusations and revealed her divine nature as a goddess.

**Critical comments on Appana by Nagamandala:** The word "Appana" serves as a term for "any man" to describe male dominance alongside chauvinistic attitude in general society that restricts women from developing their individuality. Rani uses her dreams and fantasies about fairy tales together with her personal inventions to create a sanctuary from the unpleasant harshness of her current affairs. At her age one could expect her to dream about a horse-riding sultan or prince yet her mind takes her to a seventh heaven where she will find both of her parents waiting for her. The critics agree that her body functions as a territory where victimized gender-self experiences "violence, confinement, regulation, and



communication of the victimized gender-self." She later employs this very body as her means to challenge authority and disrupt social norms in her environment. In Appana's narrative he depicts the concubine with whom he has had an adulterous relationship as untrustworthy. Both Appana's morality and Rani's virginity status remain unquestioned by Appana together with the hypocritical social group. The solitary need for proving virginity receives minor attention yet male testimonies about virginity or loss become undeniable truth for society regardless whose words they are.

**Respect for the Author In the play:** The author discusses universal storytelling phenomena and analyzes their existence and survival mechanism which depends on transmission. The narrative takes human form to represent its uniqueness through the author's creation of the story as a female persona in "A story has life; it is born and grows." Every story exists with a unique personality along with a separate existence. Stories pass through ancient marines who conceive a duty to spread their tales. The story demonstrates that narratives need recurring explanation to remain alive throughout time. Without perceiver involvement the story becomes meaningless according to the text and creates doubts about whether the author emphasizes phenomenology or reader contribution in meaning generation. Through reader-response theory writers gain understanding because their viewpoint requires the reading perspective to make sense. The words "interpretation" correspond to "told" and "re-interpretation" matches "re-told" in their simplest definitions. Reading adds intention to literary material since interpretation transforms an object into meaningful text. A narrative requires transmission in order to survive. Since background flames highlight the passing on aspect of the motif they seem important.

Otherwise the story's fuel burned upward but if not then its fiery elements came from "not having" which represents "passing on." Since the start they actively passed on the story form. The concept of passing on goes beyond physical transmission between individuals during this instance.

The story takes a female form although the author is male. So, does man create women? According to the author the love for stories originates from interpretation and reinterpretation processes while tales exist separately from such interpretations. Meaningful childbearing shapes both the identity and life quality of a woman. The narrative structure of the principal plot follows a course equivalent to its main message. Appanna serves as a physical object which enables Rani to demonstrate her divine nature in



the conclusion of the story. The dramatist works as a male theatrical performer who hears from the Story which he identifies as a female character.

**Appanna as a Split Personality:** The writer declares that during accurate "The idol is broken so that the presiding deity of the temple cannot be identified." This is exactly accurate. The incident demonstrates Appanna's two distinct personality traits. As the leader of his palace Appanna displays large egoistic traits. Indian masculinity manifests through attempts that prevent spouses from expressing their true self in domestic spaces. Appanna sets his wife inside their home under siege as she suffers undeserved mistreatment and he stops all her plans. Appanna's naga symbol represents his male sexual nature which includes phallic aspects. Among all the aspects Appanna finds difficult to accept we find his obliging behavior toward his wife which includes his sexual wants. An absence of connection should prevent these essential parts from being recognized as mirror images but they are actually fully linked elements. Both the snake's natural drives are expressed through its tails and ego findings exist in its heads. From the beginning Appanna was identified as Naga after her first appearance.

Naga: No, you didn't. That's what I'm saying. Was it painful? This morning's thrashing. Naga experienced house arrest all throughout the day. Your parents must be missed. (Act 2, page 39). Through which methods does Naga repeat these statements? The evidence shows clearly that Naga is Appanna since Rani cannot talk to anyone neither does she possess any way to communicate. Naga reveals himself as Appanna when he feels unbound. The night brings substantial efforts from Naga to make Rani succumb to his natural desires. During nighttime hours he presents soothing behavior to Rani. During nighttime his vigilant nature becomes turned against himself. He ignites a metaphor for his defense against his own desire which ends up unsuccessful. The character experiences defeat because he fails to recognize his loss thus the battle continues and "the scars remain." While acting as an aggressor during daytime the husband takes on Pharamkon status during nighttime. At night the man must obey his wife despite being the dominant figure throughout daylight hours. B.T. Seetha suggests that instinct stands as the strongest creative force behind the stories Karnad produces. Reason does not overpower instinct even though it seems to triumph. (98 "Hayavadana and Nagamandala Quest").

No, suppose the husband chooses the day of the visits. Additionally, the wife pays a nocturnal visit. If you don't want me to, I won't come at night.



Nonetheless, the knowledge of dissociation disorder and duality still exists in the sub-consciousness mind.

**Naga (Seriously).** The situation will remain this way (Markandaya 1955: 123). Normal conditions persist throughout daytime hours yet shift to these circumstances during nights. Don't ask me why. His refusal to handle queries about his quality stems from his desire to avoid acknowledging his sexual deeds. The duality of his nature proves excessive for him to endure seeing in a mirror. This fact is embodied by his act of hiding from seeing himself. At this moment Rani comprehends through the mirror that Appanna sees her only as a sexual object thus marking the most important revelation for her. Rani stops sexual relations with Appanna while also distancing herself from his mirror image. Rani understands that Appanna shows no particular behaviors in his relationship with her which would require obedience from her. At night when I arrive and depart Naga please stay inactive by not leaving the room space while omitting window observation and disregard all questions you may have. And don't ask me why. Rani performs an unexpected alignment of herself with the whale in some way. She believes her nature consists of instincts since she sees herself without reason. The animal enclosure holds her at present while she possesses mental capabilities. Her unique personality together with her personal identity are completely absent. The expression of her personality exists only through her husband's changing needs and desires. Animal analogies abound to demonstrate the dominance of instincts or impulses. The way the dog ended its life becomes a cause of outrage for Appanna since the death suggests a loss of his willpower. The protective dog which Appanna initially bought for human interlopers became useless when it passed away. He purchases a mongoose for guarding purposes. The entrance of an outsider triggers a reaction from the mongoose creature. Obviously not! Without delay he procures a watchdog for protecting either the snake or his own sexual desires. The mongoose is enough evidence. The mongoose survived longer against the snake so he briefly disappeared from sight. The injuries on his body remained fresh as he came out after his disappearance. The misunderstanding between Appanna and Naga consists of his intentional ignorance toward her and her refusal to accept his existence. The culmination of the story reveals self-realization yet this moment will pass before we become conscious of it. At the climax Naga turns his body away before moving forward. They both freeze. A drastic change from dark to bright daytime conditions.

**Identity crisis in Nagamandala:** The identity crisis in Nagamandala uses expressive language to expose the patriarchal social structures. The cultural constraints of his conscious mind allow Appanna to



perceive his wife's affair more readily than admitting to his Naga identity. The sand snake encounter serves as a test which external viewers use to evaluate Rani's purity. Appanna maintains complete control over the matter of identifying whether he belongs to the Naga species. The positive test results from the examination expose the concealed truth about Naga. Appanna = Naga. His acceptance of her led to Rani taking his position as his wife. His defeat by her now puts her in a divine position where she is treated as a goddess. Another Naga emerges due to this domestication and peace that has settled upon him. My affection has stitched my lips together while removing my teeth. Therefore, this King Cobra now resembles an ordinary grass snake \*...+ (The pride decreases, 61). The King Cobra transformed itself into a mere grass snake by extracting my poison sack \*...+ (The pride decreases, 61). Affection has sewn shut my lips while extracting my teeth's existence. Yes, this King Cobra now resembles a grass snake once removing my poison sac \*...+ (The pride decreases, 61). In a last act of poison removal the mighty king cobra became reduced to plain grass snake \*...+ (The pride decreases, 61). The key indicators which reveal entire self-understanding are the references titled "fangs" "the Sac of Poison" and "Cobra."

The writer presents three hypothetical conclusions through the narrative progression. 1. The first outcome of self-acceptance between Naga and Appanna creates their eternal unification into a content and everlasting existence. 2. Naga commits suicide. Survival of one rational self requires the other self activity to cease emotionally. 3. Naga and Appanna live together. History is reenacted. The fabricated myth functions as a symbol which points to a second symbol that signifies a specific meaning but folklore operates as a symbol which represents that very meaning. Some commentators question the genuineness of the play because they label Nagamandala as a "folk-play." Jose George establishes that the authentic folklore tradition differs from what people show as traditional lore during his research. Written.fake.legend is the term he applies to address such instances. He explains that tradition through speech conveys personal observations about peaceful community relations with their environment. The classification of folklore derived from outsider acquisition for particular needs becomes a false legend. Plato's theory about the distinction between thoughts and reality appears in his teachings. The playwright states that drama serves no purpose as self-expression in his work. Through the art form of drama performers generate significant meanings. A single story serves without connections to other tales.



### Conclusion:

Girish Karnad through his dramatic work "Nagamandala as a split personality and Identity Crisis" uses the ancient idea to explain its relevance in modern times. The physical and material inclinations allow Yayati to act like an ordinary person. His reality exists in an atmosphere free of spiritual morals because humanity has lost its sacred principles and not developed any new principles to replace them. The story about generational time transitions from father to son became a source of puzzlement and anger for traditional critics while knowing readers and reviewers recognized Karnad's contemporary approach. Since then the original Kannada text has received an English translation which has transformed it from Kannada to English. Mrs. P. Krishnaveni analyzed in her research "A Comparative Study of Myth and Folk Elements in Girish Karnad's Nagamandla and Hayavadana" that Karnad generated the two plays from his unique imagination. The two plays present love narrative stories. The object in Naga Mandala transforms from snake to man while the Hayavadana story transforms a horse into a man. The romantic connection between male and female characters appears in both theatrical works. The Upanishad concept describes the human body as symbolic representation. The theme illustrates how the various parts naturally match with the entirety. Religious rituals in these plays necessitate physical self-sacrifice which appears through the destruction of ego in Hayavadana and through snake suffering endured by Rani in Naga Mandala. The subjects of plays incorporate both religious spiritual insight as well as reflection's essence.

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