

# Nativism in girish karnad's naga mandal

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Nativism in Girish Karnad's Naga-Mandala Abstract Bhalchandra Nemade observed that modern Indian literature has been basking in the glory of western modernism. It always locates the centre of creativity outside the desi (native) tradition. In his book Nativism Nemade poses a question, ' Do we need native standards to interpret and evaluate native tradition or the so-called " universal" standards for this purpose?' Nemade's question becomes very important in Indian context, because throughout the world cultural similarities do exist, but differences which are more fecund and important, also exist. There can be universal standards in science because in science there is nothing Occidental or Oriental, Western or Indian, but each culture has distinct native styles of living. Nemade takes into consideration the Whorfian thesis of how language decides the speakers' world-view. As the so-called ' universal standards' take into its ken only European knowledge and ignores conveniently others, the basis of these standards is ' hollow'. Nemade is right when he says, the British, having ruled over most peoples of the world for generations, have imposed upon the subject-cultures the rules based on their understanding of universe. Now accepting such irrational standards as ' universal' would mean we ourselves lack the power of investigating truth. Literature is a kind of knowledge about human existence with reference to the cosmos, nature, society and the inner mental process of human beings. Then how can this knowledge be assessed with reference to the cosmos, nature, society which is alien and has no reference and relation to the land and culture which the work of art represents. Therefore, in this paper an attempt has been made to discuss how the concept of Nativism is reflected in Girish Karnad's Naga-Mandala. Naga-

Mandala, based on two Kannada folk-tales which Girish Karnad heard from A. K. Ramanujan, is full of mythical wonder and is enshrouded in a realm of magic and supernaturalism. The mythical culture and tradition is clearly seen in this play. This paper is an attempt to find how the Nativistic literary values are present in this play and show how this play reflects indigenous Indian tradition and culture. While introducing what modern India has offered to the world by way of literary achievement, John Oliver Perry, in his article in the *World Literature Today* has pointed out that: 1 Deshivad (nativism) is the positive term advanced by Bhalchandra Nemade to start a nationwide literary movement emphasizing India's many regional languages and cultures, a movement just now being widely recognized and challenged (1998: 687). However, M. H. Abram's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1993) fails to exhibit any reference to nativism. Even the fourth edition of J. A. Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, published in 1999, does not include it. This volume has included all the —isms: from the period of Aristotle to the present one, but it fails to pay any attention to nativism. Originally the concept of deshivad (not properly translated into English as Nativism) was used in world literature, in Indian literary criticism in particular, by Bhalchandra Nemade, after realization of the perils of submitting the products of one literary culture to another culture's theories. Nemade observed that modern Indian Literature had been basking in the glory of western modernism, always locating the center of creativity outside the desi (native) tradition. The existing literary theory has indeed been excessively in-group and obscurantist; therefore, Nemade started the nativistic literary movement to undo that damage and made it more widely

accessible to the bahujan samaj — the majority of ordinary people. The important reason for the growth of Nativistic literary theory since the 1960 was the gradual breakdown of the assumption that works of literature can only be appreciated by those with a particular sort of cultural breeding, brahmnical in particular, under the impact of new kinds of students entering higher education from bahujan samaj background. Nemade's concept of Indian Nativism has its affinities with the ideology expounded by Jotirao Phule and M. K. Gandhi, both posed danger to the greatest Anglo-Sanskritic tradition by introducing a different system of moral concern, which emphasizes truth and threatened to alter basic characteristics of Indian society by making its cultural periphery its center. Nativism is completely unknown and untaught in our institutes of learning which most students and teachers of literature in India have not even heard of is now being given a voice and shape, however feeble and blurred. Nativism is a reaction to the imposed non-native models and standards, which are accepted in an ambivalent spirit of slavish submission. It is a serious search for and moulding of one's identity in terms of the society and culture to which one belongs. It is neither a blind adherence to one's traditional heritage, nor is it a total rejection of foreign influences, but an assimilation of both, only after a thorough examination of them, in terms of what is relevant in the context of the development of one's own culture. It is, in short, a plea for vitality relating to oneself to one's cultural and political present in a meaningful manner. It is agreed that there is a desi-margi oppositional central framework in desivad. Margi was degenerating completely due to increasing utility of desi and terseness of Sanskrit. But with the advent of Britishers,

Margi again started enjoying the hey-day and desi became uninfluential. If we observe the margi-desi relation up to the present, we would realize that though Margi has been accepted as a standard and desi a regional dialect, Margi cannot become national, then how can it become international? Considering Sanskrit-Margi standard and superior Makarand Paranjape assumes desi-margi as National and International respectively, he says, ' Not only do we have the useful traditional distinction between desi and margi, but also the idea that desi is somehow regional, as opposed to national, or country as opposed to the city, or national as opposed to the international. We could also extend desi to suggest the colonial as opposed to the metropolitan. In fact, we could argue that in today's context, the metropolitan, the western, is the margi' (1997: 175). No language in the world can be considered the most excellent or superior. Due to this misconception Sanskrit led to its decadence. Sanskrit which was open once upon a time was diminished due to selfish-rigidity. Devy stated how the foreign influence affected the growth of desi, he says, ' during the Indo-Islamic period, the marga traditions were dominated by the Islamic cultural influence, and subverted by the religious sectarianism of the desi traditions. But during the initial phases of the British Colonial rule in India, the marga traditions received some very vigorous but artificial respiration from the European Indologists (1992: 81)'. It means with the arrival of Britishers Margi became animate. Margi and Britishers came together due to their common aim. Britishers came here to plunder Indians in guise of civilizing or culturing them, whereas traditionalists wanted to loot bahujan samaj, by locking the snare of caste and Varna system, in guise of relation. Colonialists and Margi

tradition belonged to the same caste or group. One more focal 3 point was added to this conflict between desi and Margi and it was videsi. Consequently it became a tripartite relation: desi- margi- videsi. G. N. Devy has clearly shown this tripartite cultural transaction in his After Amnesia. Margi joined her hands with videsi and efforts were made to make desi powerless. Economic plunder was at the core of Margi-videsi conspiracy. Obviously desi consciousness emerged spontaneously in the nineteenth century. Numerous nativistic movements were started one after another during this period. The most powerful and influential among these movements was Jotirao Phule's Nativistic movement. Later on up to the present plenty of nativistic movements became influential in different forms. The origin of nativism in literature is also in these movements. Today, a new awareness is emerging in all Indian bhasa (languages), i. e. the root of our bhasa literature is in our native tradition. The distinguished literary icon like Hemachandra, Jnandeva and Basaveshwara too found the roots of our bhasas in desi parampara (native tradition). This tradition is continuous. And Indigenous Indian writers have close relation with bhasa tradition only. So we can say that bhasa tradition is basically desi tradition. It created a new kind of awareness and insight among the native writers. In this connection, Bhalchandra Nemade and G. N. Devy played a pivotal role. According to Makarand Paranjape, ' Bhalchandra Nemade and G. N. Devy are the cultural heroes. They represent a very important and useful intervention in the evolving dynamics of Indian culture. Nemade, of course, is a leading Marathi Novelist besides being a critic, poet and professor of Comparative Literature. Devy, also a professor of English, is a translator, literary historian, and

bibliographer, besides being a lively and engaging critic. Both are provocative and opinionated, sometimes even given to extremes, but what is more important is that they are deeply rooted in our bhasha traditions and utterly dedicated to the cause of freeing Indian literary criticism from the shackles of Euro-American dominance. Both wish to make Indian criticism a more responsible, self-respecting, and Indo-centric activity. In that sense Nemade and Devy have brought the agenda of decolonization to Indian literary criticism' (1997: X-XI). The Anglo-conjunction affected the Marathi language. In English amalgamation period, the standardization of Marathi became Puneri-Brahminic and resulted in condemning the Marathi dialect. A hybrid Anglo-Brahmin Marathi was created out of it. Due to this Marathi's native tendency was destroyed. It lost its manifestation power and mode of beauty and became unable to observe the reference of people's life. So Nemade showed this lacuna and observed that the creation of good work in Marathi became difficult. While observing the effects of colonialism, Nemade says; [kjs rj ys[kdkP; k lkekftd vkoj. kkuqlkj uSlfxZdi. ks lkfgR; d`rhaP; k lajpukah vkdkj ? ks. ks] gs Lok; ã™ k laLd`rhr vkiksvki ? kMwu ; srs( ijarq olkgroknh ifjLFkrhr ijdH; nMi. kkeqGs ; kP; k myV izdkj ? kMrks- ys[kdkapk vkf. k brj lokZapkp ifjljkcãypk vkRefo'okl ukghlk gksrks vkf. k ijD; k tsR; k laLd`rhdMwu ? ksrysY; k lajpukuq: lk vkiY; k okrkoj. kkdMs ikG.; kph lo; ykxrs- olkgrhdj. k > kysys yksd ts R; k laLd`rhph ewY; s xqykehi. ks Lohdkjrkr] rhp ewY; s f'kjtksj gksrkr vkf. k ns'kh ewY; kauk deh egã™ o izklr gksrs- ; keqGs ijdH; lkfgR; ewY; kaph , d laiw. kZ miO; oLFkk mlU; k ? ksrysY; k lajpukcjksj vk; kr gksã...u ns'kh lkfgR; ewY; kaoj dqj? kksMh djrkuk fnlrsHkk"ksP; k okijkiklwu rj ekuoh laca/kkai; Zar loZ miO; oLFkkaoj gk ijsn'kh ewY; O;

oLFkspk ckstk iMr jkgrks- ik'pkÃ™; lkfgR; ehekalspk] ik'pkÃ™; ' kSyhpk vkf. k ik'pkÃ™; lkfgR; izek. kdkapk ns'kh lkfgR; O; ogjkryk vuqdj. k'khy okij ; k lanHkkZr mnkgj. k Eg. kwu nsrk ; sbZy- ; kpk vFkZ tqukV laLd`r lkfgR; ehekalk vkf. k izek. kds iqUgk ftoar d: u fucqZ/ni. ks okij. ks vlk gksr ukgh] rj Lora= i. ks R; k R; k Hkkf"kd lektkph lkfgR; ehekalk mRÃ~kar > kyh ikfgts] vlk gksrks (1990: 233-234). Nemade says that in an autonomous culture the structure of literary work comes into existence naturally according to the social surrounding of the writer; but in colonial circumstances due to foreign influences the opposite thing happens. The authors and others also lose the confidence about their surrounding and become habituated to look at their own surrounding according to the borrowed foreign structures. The colonized people accept the cultural canons with slavish attitude. These canons become dominant and the Desi canons become less important. Due to this a complete subsystem of foreign literary canons is being imported along with the borrowed 5 structures and it derides the native literary canons. The burden of foreign canons overpowers from the use of language to human relationship. The imitative use of foreign literary criticism, foreign style and literary standards in native literature can be considered a fine example of this. It does not mean reviving the age old Sanskrit literary criticism and standards and using them without consideration. On the other hand it means that the literary philosophy of these linguistic societies should be evolutionized independently. This clearly explains the nativistic approach of Nemade. On one side he describes the bad effects of colonialism and on the other opposes the revivalism of Sanskrit literary criticism. The native standards, that Nemade is persistent about, are associated with non-Vedic,



non-Brahmin and bahujan tradition. The tradition of Gautama Buddha-ChakradharaMahanubhava-Varkari opposes Brahmin domination. Nemade considers it native tradition. Nemade's nativism opposes our native-colonialism like western colonialism. He strongly protests against the imposing values of minority on majority (bahujan samaj). Nemade argues that Ram Manohar Lohiya is an important thinker. There was no different condition in literature when Lohiya was persisting with the role of Nativism against existing Royal order. The Anglo-Brahmin tendency of literature was creating literature with trifling relish. The formalist theory had got reputation and bahujan samaj had been thrown away from the process of literary creation. No language of bahujan samaj, particularly cast-tribe or region was reflecting in literature. There was disorder of minority relish in literary exercise. This exercise was wallowing in acquiring the cultural reputation like that of Nehru's bogus but hollow internationalism. With the help of flight of fancy, the literature was dancing like puppets in the hands of those, whose writing was devoid of merit, elegance, and representation of bahujan samaj's aspiration and ignorance of native values. Nemade advocated nativism by introducing indomitable nativistic literary values: tradition, desi modernity, new morality, language of the people, verbal action, truth and nativisation.

Naga-Mandala: a Nativistic Play Girish Karnad has emerged as the most significant playwright of post-independence Indian literature. He looks for subjects in traditional Indian folklore. His play NagaMandala is consciously anchored in the ancient theory and tradition of Indian theatre. The play reflects Karnad's respect for the Indian tradition of storytelling. In the 6 introduction to Three Plays: Naga-Mandala, Hayavadana, Tughlaq, Karnad

tells us how the cultural tensions which remained dissembled up to the moment of India's independence visibly surfaced afterwards and required authors to deal with those tensions openly' (1999: 3). He further adds The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their head. The various conventions- the chorus, the masks, the seemingly unrelated comic episodes, the mixing of human and nonhuman worlds- permit the simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view, of alternative attitudes to the central problem (1999: 14). Focusing on the four different stories which make up the play Naga-Mandala, it is seen that these four different stories are on four narrative levels. The frame story contains three other stories, each one of them inside the previous story. On the first narrative level, the frame story tells of an Author whose plays were so boring that the audience often went to sleep. For this "crime" the Author is condemned to death unless he manages to remain awake for one entire night before the end of that month. The bight of this theatrical performance is precisely his last chance. His repeated laments are heard in: "I may be dead within the next few hours" (1999: 22). The second and third narrative levels contain magical elements. The second is formed by the gossip-type tales that a group of personified flames tell each other when they gather at night, after their work has ended. The flames choose to go the same ruined temple where the Author is bewailing his plight. When he sees them arrive, he hides behind a column from where he closely follows their stories. On the third narrative level, there is the tale told by one of the Flames who wants to be forgiven for arriving

late. Her singularized tale is about a woman who knew a beautiful story but refused to tell it and share it with other people. One day, that story, taking advantage of the fact that the woman was sleeping with her mouth open, escapes and is transformed into a young lady. And the song that accompanies it turns into her beautiful sari. The Story thus personified on the fourth narrative level relates the life of Rani, the main character of Naga-Mandala. The need for the story to escape illustrates the paradoxical nature of oral tradition, according to Karnad. Stories are autonomous and independent of the person who tells them, although they live by being told and shared (1999: 17). The plot of this central story, can be summarized as follows: young Rani, recently married to Appana, is locked inside the house by her husband. He treats her as if she were a mere servant, and meanwhile he keeps and uses a concubine. An old blind woman, who is always carried around by her son Kappana, tries to help Rani by giving her a potion which, she says, will cause Appana to fall in love with her. Rani gives up that plan at the last moment, however, and pours the potion on the ant hill which happens to be the dwelling place of a King Cobra. The Cobra (Naga) then falls in love with Rani. He enters the house through the drain in the bathroom at night and once inside takes on the appearance of Appana, the husband. Despite the disorientation and wonder that this new situation causes in Rani, her relationship is fruitful and results in Rani getting pregnant. As soon as Appana discovers her pregnancy, he informs the elders of the village in order that they may determine her guilt or innocence, since he and she had never had sexual intercourse. Rani proves her "innocence" by undertaking Snake ordeal, that is, by holding the King Cobra in her hand. Surprisingly, the

Cobra, instead of biting her, " Slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head" (1999: 58). The onlookers are awestruck, Rani is considered a goddess, and Appana can do nothing but accept her as his wife. Naga-Mandala is unconventional in that it offers three endings and that too are open to the readers. This play is labelled as " story theatre", that is, theatre whose action is based on folk stories. Karnad found his source of inspiration for this play in stories that he heard from the poet and academic A. K. Ramanujan. A. K. Ramanujan narrated this story once in a conversation to Girish Karnad and Chandrashekhar Kambar. Based on this story Karnad wrote Naga-Mandala and Kambar wrote Siri Smapige. Both the plays deal with same story. storytelling. Naga-Mandala represents Indian culture. The story in the play is not only the story of Rani and Appana. It is a story of the relationship of husband and wife. Appana's behavior towards Rani to show the world is different and it different for themselves. It 8 The play Naga-Mandala follows the Indian tradition of may be a kind of relationship which usually found in many Indian joint families. The husband behaves rudely with the wife in the company of others but the same husband cares for the wife in private moments. Similarly, Kuddava, a blind woman, who helps Rani, also reflect the attitude of others. Truth is a Nativistic literary value which we find in Naga-Mandala. In fact, the base of literature is truth. The story of Rani-Appana-Naga is based on the philosophy of truth. Appana when realizes that his wife is pregnant, calls the villagers to give a judgment. Rani proves herself true and chaste, by conducting snake ordeal. She is true in her ordeal. She says taking an oath that she had not the touch of any other man than her husband and this snake. Here, Rani is unaware of the fact, still she

tells the truth. In this play we find ample use of language of people. The play itself is written in Kannada and then translated into English by the author himself. The names of the characters specifically give a local touch to the theme. Appana, Kuddava (Kuddablind; ava- woman, mother) are the names from Kannada language. The dialogues between the characters are conducted in the language of the common villagers. We do not find the language of elites in this play. Nativism believes in verbal action. Naga-Mandala is a verbal action by Girish Karnad. Through this play Karnad has tried to show the truth in society. The husbandwife relationship, wife's love for husband and his negligence towards her. A new bride's unawareness about the sexual relationship. Kuddava's enquiry about this to Rani and helping her by all means to get husband's love, the husband's daytime behavior and the love at night, Naga's passions for Rani and finally by providing multiple endings Karnad has made the scope for the action to take place. Literature is the product of society in which the writer lives. Karnad, by creating this verbal icon, has tried to focus the social problems. The problem placed in NagaMandala is very common in present society. The Rani-Appana relationship is just a symbolic representation. Rani's awareness of her 'self' and Appana's failure and acceptance of Rani's superiority is nothing but the reflection of this morality. Transformation is the base of Naga-Mandala. Naga's transformation into Appana and again in Naga is a kind of metamorphosis. This kind metamorphosis is very common in Indian mythological stories. This metamorphosis is not western one, it is the native transformation. The technique of Parakaya Pravesha (entering into others body) or taking shape of others' body is very common. Naga's

transformation into others body is a kind of western metamorphosis in a native style. Thus, we find Nativistic theory reflected in Girish Karnad's Naga-Mandala. It is a play through which we find the indigenous Indian mythological traits. These traits are the reflection of Indian sensibility which not only presents the culture and cultural problems but also provides solutions to it. Karnad has presented native tradition, culture, morality, language of the people and truth to the readers through this play.

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