

Nagamandala essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Reluctant Master Girish Karnad says that, though the English writers and the thought of writing in English influenced him, it was unknowingly that he became a playwright and started writing in Kannada. 'Yakshagana', the traditional folk theatre of Karnataka, influenced him. Karnad's plays, Yayathi, Hayavadana, Tughlag, and Nagamandala certainly reveal this influence. Two Folktales and a Play The play Naga Mandala is based on two folk-tales of Kannada. It was first staged at the University of Chicago.

Karnad says: The energy for the folk-theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values. The various conventions- the chorus, the music, the seemingly unrelated comic interludes, the mixing of human and non human worlds permit a simultaneous presentation of alternative points of view. Bed Time Stories For Living in Day Time! Old women in the family usually narrate the folktales, either when the children are being fed in the evenings or when they are put to bed in the night. Though they are narrated to children, stories serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family. A Two Acts Play with a Prologue The play Nagamandala is divided into prologue and two acts.

The Problem Starts With the Audience! In the prologue, we find a ruined temple with a broken idol. A man comes to the temple and says that he was a playwright earlier, who with his plays had made many audiences to sleep. They cursed him to death! A mendicant had advised him that if he could keep awake at least one whole night he would not die. That day was the last day of the month, and he kept himself awake in order to overcome the curse of death. He then swore to himself that if he could survive that night without

sleep, he would have nothing more to do with story writing. After sometime, he heard some voices and then saw some flames.

Flames With Speaking Tongues Karnad says that the writer had heard that in some remote villages, the flames had the ability to speak. These flames talk to each other with female voices. Flame 1 says that her master was a miser and hence had put the lights off early and due to this she could come to the temple early. Flame 2 says that she came from a family, whose master was a 'lustful man'. He needed the light to feast on his wife's body.

Flame 3 says that, hereafter she could come early because her master and wife were free now to enjoy worldly pleasures. The master's mother had died and now both of them were free to enjoy. All these flames are not mere flames, but they represent the society. The play deals with the loose morals that are being practiced in society.

Further, humans in the present day do not give any importance to religious values. A Different Story to Tell Flame 4 has a different story to tell. The lady in her house was doubtful about her husband and she had a story and a song inside her mouth, which she kept for herself. She did not reveal it to anybody. One day, while she was snoring, the story and the song jumped out of her mouth.

This story became a lady and the song took the form of a saree. When the woman woke up, she saw a young lady, coming outside her husband's room. It is reported that these were some hallucinations in the mind of the woman. This story and song tell a new story. Breaking Vows The writer-character, in spite of his vow not to indulge in any more story telling, promises that he

would pass the story to others. The Story of Rani and Appanna The story deals with the life of Rani and Appanna.

They are not given any name in the beginning and hence they represent the whole humankind. Rani is so called because she is the queen of the long tresses, which, when tied into a knot, resembled a ' cobra. ' Appanna and Rani are married, apparently Rani being a child bride. After gaining puberty, she is bought to her husband's house. Appanna is not a faithful husband.

He spends his time with his concubine and comes to his house only to have his lunch. He speaks to Rani only in " syllables. " He says: APPANNA: Look, I don't like idle chatter. Do as you are told, you understand? (Nagamandala 39).

Rani leads a secluded life and then Kurudavva saves her. It is only she who understands Rani's real problem. Kurudavva gives two small roots to Rani and asks her to mix it in Appanna's food. It is believed that, by taking the root, Appanna will not go and visit with the concubine again. She says: KURUDAVVA: Once he gets even the smell of yours he won't go after that concubine. (Nagamandala 261) The first root has no effect on Appanna.

Rani takes a bigger root, and when she mixes it in the curry it becomes bloody red. She actually curses herself for trying to give this to Appanna. She says: RANI: Suppose it harms my husband, what will happen to me? (Nagamandala 387). She spills it on a nearby anthill.

A snake living in the anthill instantly falls in love with Rani. The snake in the myth is believed to be a symbol of fertility. The snake takes the shape of

Appanna and has sexual communion with Rani. It is through the snake that Rani understands the meaning and passion of love in marital life. When the real Appanna finds that she is pregnant, he calls her a “ whore. ” Appanna asks: APPANNA: Don't you feel ashamed to admit that you are pregnant, you whore? (Nagamandala 753) Rani is asked by the village leaders to perform the ordeal of holding the hot iron rod to demonstrate that she is a chaste woman and faithful to her husband.

The snake advises her to perform the ordeal of holding the snake instead. Rani follows this advice, and holds the snake, which spreads its hood on her head and sways it gently and hangs like a garland around her neck. The elders on the village judicial committee proclaim her to be a ‘ goddess. ’ Elder 2 says that she is not a woman but she is a goddess. In the end, Rani gets her husband back and enjoys a happy life.

Naga, the snake, who has brought about such a happy consummation of married love, wants to have a final look at Rani. He makes the final visit when they are fast asleep. Naga then presses Rani's hair to his body, ties a noose and strangles himself to death. When Rani combs her hair later, a dead cobra falls to the ground.

It is cremated and her son lit the funeral pyre. Once again, the snake appears and Rani allows it to live in her tresses forever. Supernatural Elements Like in most folktales, supernatural elements play the vital role in Nagamandala. Traditional beliefs help generate supernatural elements. There is always some magical power in specific roots, according to traditional belief.

Kurudavva gives Rani the magical roots but the root is consumed by a king cobra which results in very interesting twists and turns in the play. Another belief is that the cobra has divine power and it can assume any form it desires. In the play, Naga takes the form of Appanna. It is by the form of Appanna that Rani becomes pregnant. So, in some sense, Rani has nothing to do with this “unlawful” sexual communion. It is with his supernatural powers, Naga saves Rani from her pitiable and dangerous plight prove her chastity.

The story of Appanna also has certain interesting touches. It is believed that some witch or fairy enchanted him away from his lawful wife. Once again, the act of the unfaithful husband is explained away through the use of some mysterious fairy. The identity of the woman who entices Appanna away is unknown and it remains a mystery. Are these anecdotal explanations intended to justify that we as human beings are simply pawns in the hands of the divine, or that these events are inevitably caused by Karma?

Complexity of Human Life Girish Karnad uses a magical folktale to reveal the complexity of human life.

In particular, he uses the folktale in the Indian context to reveal the social and individual relations. Man-Woman intimate relationships, the question of chastity being imposed on married women while their husbands have a merry-go-round with other women outside their wedlock, married women’s earnest desire for the love of their husbands in spite of the shortcomings of their husbands, the throbbing of secret love that Naga demonstrates by his killing himself on the passionate and warm body of Rani, and, above all, the result of the sexual communion being a male child, the “son” lighting

funeral pyre and so many other potent and hidden meanings, make this play a very complex play. The village judicial system also comes to be portrayed with ease, and with this the process of deification in Indian society also gets revealed. Demonstration of unusual power and tolerance is sure ground and an essential step toward deification. We Wonder - The Audience Is Alive, and Not Dead! In the backdrop of a folktale, which includes flames, snake, avatars, performance of impressive ordeals, cremation of the dead snake, and the background chorus, Nagamandala comes alive with numerous symbols, hidden meanings, and explicit and implicit lessons, even as the play bewitches the captive audience, scene by scene.

The play started with a curse of dead or non-responsive audience, but we complete reading the play certainly as active and live audience! At the end of it all, we still wonder whether it is the magic, characters, events, conversations, or simply the ambience that takes us far from our mundane life even for a few hours. A master piece, indeed, from a reluctant Master. In an Indian folktale tradition of a story within a story, the critically acclaimed playwright Girish Karnad sows into the fertile mind of a sleepless writer a fascinating tale. A story narrated by a Story, a story carried late in to the dark night by giggling flames gathered in a derelict temple and a story of a queen and her snake lover.

This Indian folk 'tail' has many twists! The touches touches one of the most sensitive issues of marital life. In folk style and form, the film 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 the real and complete experience of life. Plot Summary Rani is a young bride who is neglected by

her indifferent and unfaithful husband, Appanna. Appanna spends most of his time with his concubine and comes home only for lunch.

Rani is one of those typical wives who want to win her husband's affection at any cost. In an attempt to do so, she decides to drug her husband with a love root, which she mixes in the curry. That curry is spilled on the nearby anthill and Naga, the King Cobra drinks it. Naga, who can take the form of a human being, is enchanted with her and begins to visit her every night in the form of her husband.

This changes Rani's life completely as she starts to experience the good things in life though she never knows that the person with her is not her husband but the Naga. One of these days, she gets pregnant and breaks the news to Appanna. He immediately accuses her for adultery and says that he has not fathered the child. The issue is referred to the village Panchayat.

She is then asked to prove her fidelity by putting her hand in the snake burrow and taking a vow that she has not committed adultery. It is a popular belief that if any person lies holding the snake in their hand, they will be instantly killed by the snake God. She does place her hand in the snake burrow and vows that she has never touched any male other than her husband and the Naga in the burrow. She is declared chaste by the village Panchayat. However, her husband is not ready to accept that she is pregnant with his child and decides to find out the truth by spying on the house at night.

Appanna is shocked to see the Naga visiting Rani in his form, spending time with her and then leaving the house. Appanna gets furious with the Naga

and indulges in a fight with him. Both of them fight vigorously and at one point of time, the Naga takes the form of the snake and escapes into the burrow. The villagers see the snake escaping into the burrow and kill it.

Before dying the snake comes to Rani and reveals the truth to her. However, after this incident Appanna realizes his mistake and he accepts Rani along with the child she is carrying. Nagamandala is a critically acclaimed Kannada movie released in 1997. The story of the film was adapted from a play of the same name written by well-known writer Girish Karnad. The movie was directed by award winning director T. S.

Nagabharana, who is deemed to be one of the ace directors in Kannada film industry. Music was scored by C. Aswath and Srihari L. Khoday produced the movie. The film stars Prakash Rai, Vijayalakshmi, Mandya Ramesh, and B. Jayashri in prominent roles.

The film is centered on three people, Appanna (Prakash Rai), his wife Rani (Vijayalakshmi) and Naga, a King Cobra, who can assume the form of a human being (Prakash Rai). The strong points of the movie remain the amazing acting by the leading cast and an authentic portrayal and command on story by the director. The director has made some change to the original play in the climax.