

Coalescing Myth And Reality: A Reading of Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala*

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The word 'myth' is derived from the Greek word 'mythos' meaning fable, story-telling, or fiction. Hayden White defines myth as "a mode of discourse" (149). *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines myth as "a story from ancient times, especially one that was told to explain natural events or to describe the early history of the people". It has a fabricated or a primitive story, commonly relating supernatural individuals emphasizing some popular impression or historical phenomena.

Myth means a story with an inherent meaning. According to Kovalam Narayan Panikkar, "a very private event in the life of a person can sometimes transcend its limit and create social repercussions and when it gets transferred into collective memory, it assumes mythical dimensions" (24-25). The evolution of a human experience to a myth results in interpreting it to the posterity and unfolding the veiled meaning to mankind. Myth manifests itself through a religious act and it has its basic roots in an individual's mind. From time immemorial, religious beliefs and practices remain a prime concern of a community and not of the individual.

Myths have the power to express the real concerns of the ordinary people about the complex or the mystery of human life. At the surface level, it may look like a superficial tale, but at the deeper level, it gives insights into the nature of the world. Classical myths serve the purpose of explaining the creation of the world, to present the natural phenomena, to recapitulate the religious practices, to teach moral lessons, to explain history, to express the deepest fears and hopes of the human race. Myths present ancient Gods and Goddesses as both good and evil. Cruelty, jealousy, lying and even murder are presented as attributes of Gods and Goddesses.

Ashis Nandy states, "All myths are morality tales. Mythologization is also moralization; it involves a refusal to separate the remembered past from its ethical meaning in the present" (47). Myths are seeds, laid in the innermost recesses of human psyche. They get expressions in the

world literature to hold the religious beliefs of the people. Ancient dramatists used myths to create awareness on their human understanding. Graves states:

Myth has two main functions: The first is to answer the awkward questions that children ask, such as, “Who made the world?” “How will it end?”... The answers, necessarily graphic and positive, confer enormous power on the various deities credited with the creation and care of souls – and incidentally on their priesthoods. The second function of myth is to justify an existing social system and account for traditional rites and customs. (v)

Commonly, Indian myths centre around the epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* and the characters project the good and the evil forces. Myth unfolds the ethno - complexity of a particular race, paradoxes of life, religious rituals. It is didactic. It aims at enriching human life. Many writers, including Karnad, have understood this and tried their hands in carving the social behaviour in a better way. Karnad exploits myth and brings out issues like identity crisis, split personality, ideological break ups, man and woman relationship, man’s failure to treat woman as a person, dual personality, double standards, incest, jealousy and struggle for power. Karnad’s plays uphold traditional values and cultural ethos. The playwright uses myths and folklores for his source projecting contemporary issues and concerns.

A myth is very much related to culture and as it is deep rooted in one’s culture, it reverberates. It makes the reader wonder. Myth has the power to transcend time and space and is part of cultural consciousness, which provides insights into life. Shobha Diwakar in her article, “Why Myths? A Critique on the Use of Myth in Drama” speaks out:

Mythology wears a mysterious coat of anonymity. Its origin is said to be prehistoric since the nomadic unclad man with no knowledge of science held nature in awe and feared its wrath. Therefore every culture, every civilization has a set of its own values and beliefs framed into their ‘collective conscience’ projecting their experiences and beliefs that carved their social behaviour and created their vision of the world in which they lived. (1)

Karnad is influenced by the Jungian collective racial consciousness. He uses traditional myths to explore modern man’s anguish, dilemmas, isolation, longing for identity and so on. He recreates myths and legends to present the story effectively with an inherent meaning.

Moutushi Chakravartee in his article, “Myth and Reality in *Hayavadana* and *Naga-Mandala*” specifies:

Our sensibility is accustomed to distinguish between myth and reality as binary opposites. Yet in literary appreciation, discursive thinking and imaginative apprehension are not as far removed as the two terms may initially suggest. By suggestion, myth and reality are antonyms; by implication, they cohere and co-exist. Within the structural framework of the plays, they are usually yoked together not by violence but by subtlety. (181)

Myths can never become irrelevant to contemporary sensibilities. Myths present not only physical reality but also psychic reality.

Karnad digs at many issues and records his concerns for them in his *Naga-Mandala*. Patriarchal hegemony, power display, the dichotomy of lover and husband, post-colonial dialectics, struggle for completeness, metaphysical mystique, alienation are a few serious distressing issues. As a balanced writer, he takes a careful stand in voicing out his concern for an individual, family and society.

A. K Ramanujan narrated a folk tale to Karnad, which stimulated the latter to write this play *Naga-Mandala* and unstintingly these types of folktales were recounted to women folk. In Karnad’s words:

These tales are narrated by women, normally the older women in the family - while children are being fed in the evenings in the kitchen or being put to bed. The other adults present on these occasions are also women. Therefore, these tales, though directed at children, often serve as a parallel system of communication among the women in the family. (314)

Generally, all folk performances are part of ritualistic festivals conducted invoking a local deity.

Rani lives with her parents until she reaches womanhood. Then Appanna comes and takes her with him. He never calls her by name. Rani’s parents called her ‘Rani’, because she is the only daughter of her parents and they shower their unconditional love on her. She is the queen of long tresses. When her hair is tied up in a knot, it looks as though a black king cobra hung loose; it is entangled in her silver anklets. She is such a beautiful lady but to the eyes of Appanna she is just an object. Rani is good-looking and charming. She is an embodiment of feminine

qualities. She is a typical byproduct of Indian culture. She never rebels against her husband even when she experiences excruciating pain in her isolated state. Appanna exercises an incorrigible supremacy over her. She pines for his true love, which is like asking for the moon. The institution of marriage supposed to bring in happiness, unfortunately makes woman an alienated being.

Rootlessness is the basic form of alienation. It forms the subject of many psychological, sociological, literary, philosophical studies of various characters. In the modern world, alienation leaves an indelible impact upon contemporary literature. It emerges as a natural consequence of existential procurement both in intrinsic and extrinsic terms. It is because of the real-life struggle with feeling disconnected from, shunned by and unrelated to other human beings and the societal constitution that shape and guide a person. Alienation is a powerful negative force.

It derives human beings towards the negative compulsions of self-pity, vulnerability and vehemence. This makes a man feel detached or estranged. This kind of a situation that prevails in the hi-tech society tends to move man away from the traditional life style. Man has become the individual minority.

This has a vital influence upon the minds of the twentieth century Indian English writers and has steered them to write about the tradition of enmity to the established order - more significantly against the celebration of democracy and individualism. Those writers have objectified the theme of alienation, emotional conflicts in their characters, and their detestation of social establishments. This has resulted in showing their characters not only oppressive in nature but also ethically ambiguous.

Writers have variously dealt with persistence and unflinching spirit in their works especially in the literary pieces produced by the Indian writers who have their protagonists alienated. It is because of the loss of identity that they have found in their creation and man's failure to understand today, the very purpose behind the world in this hostile world. Man suffers not only from the external forces like war, persecution, famine and ruin but also from inner trauma that leads to isolation, randomness, and meaninglessness of existence.

Rani's bottled up feelings, and her shattered expectations make her frantic and she yearns for her parental love. Karnad here focusses on the mental turmoil of Rani who becomes an isolated individual after marrying Appanna. Rani becomes a caged bird under chained manacles. The patriarchal society, which hails the tradition bound culture, considers the conjugal relationship a sacred one but in the very same society, men are free to break traditional values. Appanna's visit to a concubine is not questioned by anybody anywhere in the play. It reflects the

camouflaged evils in the Indian society. In other words, the play is an exorcism of social and cultural evils.

Karnad's use of the myth of Naga brings forth the intricacies of inner woman and her longings. Naga myth fills the void in a woman's life. His authority and arrogance makes her desperate and it takes her beyond the materialistic world and lands her in the world of trance, which gives her genuine joy.

Appanna pays no attention to her and he locks the door of the house from outside and goes away. Rani talks to herself indistinctly. Her isolation and total depravity takes her into the world of fantasy.

RANI. 'Where are you taking me?'

EAGLE (answers). Beyond the seven seas and the Seven Isles. On the seventh island is a magic garden. And in that garden stands the tree of emeralds. Under that tree your parents wait for you. Do they? Then please, take me to them – immediately. Here I come. So the Eagle carries her clear across seven seas... (1. 254)

This is an instance of magical realism. For the sake of literary genre, fantasy is treated not just as possible, but also as realistic.

Rani moans 'Oh!, mother! Father!' in her sleep. She wakes up in a frightened state. Appanna comes and she serves him food. She fumbles for words and says to Appanna 'Listen-Listen – I feel – frightened – alone at night'. He has no mind to listen to his wife. And he says, "I don't like idle chatter" (1.254). He is not ready to understand his wife. He never addresses her as 'Rani'.

Rani talks to herself and cooks food for Appanna. She talks unto herself because of her shattered inner self. This shows that she is hard pressed by her inner disturbances. The very name Appanna, suggests 'any man'. It stands for the patriarchal construct where man is superior and always gives orders to women to be executed, whether right or wrong.

In yet another incident in the play, Kurudavva, a blind old woman, carried by her son, comes near Appanna's house, and she introduces herself to Rani and enquires about her.

KURUDAVVA. What is your name?

RANI. They call me Rani.

KURUDAVVA. And where is Appanna?

RANI. I don't know.

KURUDAVVA. When did he go out?

RANI. After lunch yesterday.

KURUDAVVA. When will he come back?

RANI. He will be back for lunch later in the day. (1.258)

This conversation shows the real picture found in many houses – the wife, unaware of her husband's whereabouts. This also reflects the breach in communication and relationships. People call her Rani, but in reality, she is reduced to a chattel. Her husband comes home only for lunch. He only commands her: 'Do this', 'Do that', 'Serve the food' (1.258). This is indicative of the authoritarian set up found in a family. This is one of the major issues in the society.

KAPPANNA. Mother, what does it mean when a man locks his wife in?

KURUDAVVA. You tell me.

KAPPANNA. It means he does not want anyone to talk to his wife. (1.257)

Appanna's sadistic nature is revealed through his actions. "He keeps his wife locked up like caged bird" (1.258). Again, it is an evidence of a male dominated family.

Appanna, who is very cruel to his wife, is friendly with a dog. Modern man is friendly with animals and birds but proves an alien to his own kith and kin. Kurudavva pities Rani, gives her a root, and asks her to grind and give it to her husband.

APPANNA. She won't talk to anyone and no one need talk to her.

KURUDAVA. If you say so.

APPANNA. I put a lock on the door so those with sight could see. Now what does one do about blind meddlers? I think I will keep a watchdog. (1.262-63)

Appanna does not want anyone to converse with his wife. He goes to the extent of keeping a watch dog. When Rani makes a paste out of the root, the curry becomes red. She starts worrying and says, "No, no. Forgive me god, this is evil. I was about to commit a crime. Father, Mother, how could, your daughter, agree to such a heinous act? No, I must get rid of this before he notices anything" (1.266). In her first attempt to give Rani becomes distraught, as he falls down, she starts crying. Again she goes into a state of trance. It rains seven days and nights. Rani considers the act of getting the root and mixing it with curry as a heinous act. Unaware of

the consequences, she pours it into the anthill. In the meantime, Appanna waits for her to serve food. Without a tinge of human consideration, he slaps her and she collapses to the floor. He has no conscience or fear of God, or love. He locks the door from outside and goes away. The reason for his cold contempt – is the patriarchal blood, which is running in him.

The First Act of the play presents woman as a victim of patriarchal construct. Rani is presented as an innocent girl, longing for love and affection. At the end of Act I, there is a twist in the story line - a cobra comes out of an anthill and assumes the shape of Appanna. Naga episode presents the inner longings of a woman, and her expectation from her husband. Appanna never listens to Rani but Naga listens to Rani. Appanna never asks or talks about her parents whereas Naga caresses her and appreciates her beauty and empathises with her. Rani's entry into the world of Naga is a desperate attempt of Rani to escape from the inhuman treatment of her husband and find some solace in her life.

NAGA. That a tender bud like you should get such a rotten husband.

RANI. I didn't say anything!

NAGA. you didn't. I am saying it. Did it hurt the beating this morning?

RANI. No. (1.268)

In the patriarchal society, a woman accepts all the beatings and thrashings from her husband. When her husband shows his love or even pretends to show, she is ready to forget all his ill-treatment.

If Naga episode is a fantasy, even there, Rani is a subjugated being. She does not complain about the ill treatment of her husband. Naga lovingly converses with her and asks whether her parents doted on her and whether she likes to see them. Naga asks Rani to relax herself, asks whether her parents pamper her, and admires her long hair. Naga's soothing words comfort her and his admiration gives her fulfilled joy. This is yet another issue where the writer highlights his belief that men and women have sought a way to find consolation and comfort from non-human things.

In a patriarchal society, men play dual roles. In this play, the two facets of man are exemplified through Appanna and Naga. Appanna is a ruthless and rugged philanderer. But the caring Naga is quite contrary to the unscrupulous Appanna. A woman never complains about the inhuman treatment of man in the patriarchal construct, and here Rani is such a girl. If a woman never raises her voice to speak of or to tell her anguish or her stored up thoughts, or her pent up

feelings and even if she had to accept whatever inhuman treatment is meted out to her, any man will slowly show his other side, i.e, his kindness, which is always transient.

A patriarchal society accepts double standards. Appanna consorts with a concubine but he expects his wife to be pure and he wants her to perform an ordeal to prove her innocence. The traditional test followed in the village court is, to take the oath while holding a red-hot iron in the hand. The villagers have fear of sin. They feel that by allowing her to swear by the king cobra, they risk the sin of killing her unborn child.

When the cobra slides up her shoulder and spreads its hood like an umbrella over her head, the crowd gasps in wonder. The cobra sways its wings for a while and moves over her shoulder like a garland. They hail Rani as a divine being! A Goddess! The crowd lifts her into the palanquin. When they reach their home, Appanna falls at her feet and his concubine becomes Rani's servant. The same Rani who is considered a whore is now considered a divine being. Even the elders exclaim like this:

Elder I. A miracle! A Miracle!

Elder II. She is not a woman. She is a Divine Being!

Elder III. Indeed, a goddess! (2.292)

After the snake ordeal the villagers as well as the elders accept her as 'a divine being'. In the patriarchal society, woman is considered a weak, vulnerable, seductress and a procreating device. When Appanna doubts Rani's chastity, he calls the village elders and tries to put her into shame, but when he visits a concubine, there is no one to question him. According to Karnad, "The position of Rani in the story of *Naga-Mandala*, for instance, can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of a young girl in the bosom of a joint family where she sees her husband only in two unconnected roles- as a stranger during the day and a lover at night" (17). The dual role of a man is explicit from the conversation of Naga and Rani.

Appanna's expression of distaste on his face makes her shudder and she pines for parental care and affection. Rani is able to find the dual role of her husband. She wonders how Appanna speaks so nicely at night and on issues like a stupid snake during the day.

NAGA. I am afraid that is how it is going to be. Like that during the day. Like this at night. Don't ask me why.

RANI. I won't.

NAGA. Come. You slept like a child in my arms last night (1.272).

Naga considers Rani as a child and gives her protection.

RANI. When I looked in the mirror, I saw there- where you were sitting – instead of you, I saw a – (mimes a cobra hood with her fingers). (1.273)

While wooing Rani, Naga overflows with *sringara rasa* and *vibhasta rasa*. The ending of the play explicates *shanta rasa*. Naga candidly accepts the dual role - “Like that during the day. Like this at night. Don’t ask me why” (1.272).

A.Jaganmohana Chari, in his article “*Hayavadana* and *Naga Mandala*: A Study in Post-Colonial Dialectics” states: “This vulgar display of power, instead of love and treating woman as a disposable object accrues to him owing to the neo-colonialist ethos and the mystique of tradition” (124). Shoba Diwakar too comments, “Since Karnad detests debauchery, by punishing Appana, he reveals the importance of human relationships and uses the myth of the Naga to convey his message. The play *Naga-Mandala* abounds in the realization of *purusha* and *prakrit*, the yin and the yang; that man is incomplete without his ‘other half’ (5)”. Motherhood is considered a sacred one in the Indian Society. Rani wants the fantasy to be real:

RANI. I have definite evidence to prove. I was not fantasizing.

NAGA. What evidence?

RANI. I am pregnant. (2.282)

Rani is so happy that she is pregnant but Naga is worried. Here it is yet another place where there is a possibility for magical realism, encompassing a range of subtly different concepts that are shared in common. It is contradictory to the conventions of fables, myths, and allegory. In the patriarchal society, women are not allowed to ask questions. Rani sadly speaks out what is going on in her mind:

I realize it cannot remain a secret for long. That is why I said, as long as possible. Please, do as I tell you. (blankly) Yes, I shall. Don’t ask questions. Do as I tell you. Don’t ask questions. Do as I tell you. No. I won’t ask questions. I shall do what you tell me. Scowls in the day. Embraces at night. The face in the morning unrelated to the caress at night. But day or night, one motto does not change. Do not ask questions. Do as I tell you. (2.283)

Motherhood gives confidence to Rani. She is bold enough to question the dual nature of man.

RANI. I was a stupid, ignorant girl when you brought me here. But now I am a woman, a wife, and I am going to be a mother. I am not a parrot. Not a cat or a sparrow. Why don't you take it on trust that I have a mind and explain this charade to me? Why do you play these games? Why do you change like a chameleon from day to night? Even if I understood a little, a tiny bit-I could bear it. But now – sometimes I feel my head is going to burst!

APPANNA. Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? 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? (2.283-284)

It shows the suspicious nature of a man. When she swears that she has not done anything wrong, he is ready to accept her. When she denies the charge against her, he says, "And yet you have a bloated tummy just pumped air into it, did you? And you think I'll let you get away with that? You shame me in front of the whole village, you darken my face, you slut" (2.285).

Elaine Showalter's "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", cites Ardener's Diagram of the relationship of the dominant and the muted group. Ardener's groups are represented by intersecting circles. Much of muted circle Y falls within the boundaries of dominant circle X; there is also a crescent of Y which is outside the dominant boundary and therefore for 'wild' we can think of the "wild zone" of women's culture spatially, experientially or metaphysically. Spatially it stands for an area, which is literally no-man's land, a place forbidden to men, which corresponds to the zone in X which is off limits to women.

Experientially it stands for the aspects of female-life-style which are outside of and unlike those of men; again there is a corresponding zone of male experience alien to women. But if we think of the wild zone metaphysically or in terms of consciousness, it has not corresponding male space since all of male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus accessible to or structured by language. In this sense the 'wild is always imaginary; from the male point of view, it may simply the protection of the unconscious. In terms of cultural anthropology women know what the male crescent is like, even If they have never seen it ... But men do not know what is in the wild. (200)

Rani, in Karnad's *Naga-Mandala*, belongs to the muted group and her wild zone is unexplored by her husband Appanna. Appanna is 'any man' in the patriarchal construct, whose male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus accessible to or structured by language. Appanna's language is authoritative and it bruises Rani's heart. According to Ardener, "All language is the language of the dominant order, and women, if they speak at all, must speak through it" (191).

This 'wild zone' of female sphere, which men can never tread, makes a difference in a man understanding a woman and a woman understanding a woman. Kurudavva's empathetic feelings towards Rani and also love towards her son Kappanna's make a difference. Whether it is Appanna or Naga, the inherent trait of dictatorship finds its expression through their character. 'Don't ask questions. Do as I tell you' are the dictums often repeated by Appanna and Naga. Rani's attainment of motherhood gives sheer confidence and she starts questioning her husband.

Identity crisis is one of the major problems of the modern society. The framework of the play hints at identity crisis: "In the inner sanctum of a ruined temple, the idol is broken, so the presiding deity of the temple cannot be identified" (1.192). Rani has no identity. Motherhood gives her identity. She sleeps like a child in Naga's arms one night because Naga considers Rani a child and gives her protection. The following words of Rani, "When I looked in the mirror, I saw there – where you were sitting – instead of you, I saw a – (mimes a cobra hood with the fingers) (1.272)" reveal a man's dual nature. Rani, though naïve, is able to see the dual nature of her husband. Naga is mere fantasy and it is the other side - Appanna himself.

In reality, Rani cannot get away from the clutches of her husband Appanna. Naga's words, "Then the snake strikes and swallows the bird" (1.274) imply that she is totally under his control and she gives space for conjugal love. And at the same time, innocently she speaks to her husband about his nature by saying, "I didn't know you were such a bad man. I should have known the moment you started using honeyed words. Had I known, I would never have agreed to marry you. What will father and mother say if they come to know?" (2.275).

She is guilty of the conjugal relationship with her husband. She is brought up by her loving parents in such a way that she expects only platonic love. Their overpowering love makes her remain truthful to her parents. She is as pure as the dewdrop. Though she is not given education, she wants to lead an impeccable life. This trait is inherent in her nature. She is the unspoilt child of the mother earth. However, she is a victim of male- chauvinism.

When Naga comes, she applies ointment on the wounds and tends him. Nevertheless, she never questions him about them. Under patriarchal construct, woman's questioning spirit remains dormant. He is very particular that his wife should be modest but his visits to concubines do not prick his conscience at all. She does not commit adultery, but she endures the abusive words thrown upon her by her husband. Naga cannot be a man other than Appanna, when Naga assumes the shape of Appanna, physical appearance of Naga is exactly like that of Appanna. Her relationship with Naga cannot be put to shame or be blamed because she does not know that Naga is a not her husband.

Rani says, "I swear to you I haven't done anything wrong! Appanna calls her 'whore' and humiliates her. He goes to the village elders. Rani pathetically asks Appanna, "Why are you stripping me naked in front of the whole village? Why don't you kill me instead?" (2.285). When the night comes, Rani asks Naga to withdraw his complaint which he has lodged against the elders. She asks him to proclaim that his wife is not a whore. Naga orders her to choose snake ordeal.

Rani's snake ordeal can be compared with that of Sita's fire ordeal. The plight of both of them are one and the same. Naga compels Rani to come out with the truth. She sarcastically asks him, "Shall I say my husband forgets his nights by next morning?" (2.286). Rani has no other go, except to accept the snake ordeal.

RANI. Since coming to this village, I have by this hand only two...

APPANNA. (triumphant) There she admits it. Two, she says. Two! Who are they?

RANI. My husband and...

APPANNA. And say it, Who else?

RANI. And this cobra. (Suddenly words pour out) Yes, my husband and this king cobra. Except for these two, I have not touched any one of the male sex. Nor have I allowed any other male to touch me. If I lie, let the cobra bite me. (2.292)

Simone de Beauvoir states that cultures all over the world projected certain qualities into women according to the masculine need of the moment. Here, in *Naga-mandala*, Rani is projected as an unchaste woman, and the same Rani is considered a divine being as well.

In the Indian society, woman, who is submissive and chaste faces trials in her life and if she becomes victorious, she is given special regard. On the other hand, the globalized world is also ready to look at a woman as a person who breaks all her tradition for the sake of her pleasure

or for the sake of her survival or the emotional satisfaction, as one could see in the play towards the end.

The Story in the play hails patriarchy through its word:

So Rani got everything she wished for - a devoted husband, a happy life. She even got a life – life servant to draw water for her house. For Appanna's concubine was present at the trial. When she saw Rani's glory, she felt ashamed of her sinful life and volunteered to do menial work in Rani's house. In due course Rani gave birth to a beautiful child. Rani lived happily ever after with her husband, child and servant. (2.293)

The play *Naga-Mandala* presents the pathetic impact of patriarchy. In a patriarchal construct a woman is alienated and expected to be subservient to men, doing all the household chores, expecting protection from her father, husband and son. Here Rani is presented a victim, not repulsive but her truthful obedience and ready to face the ordeal transforms her. Such a kind of social system is not accepted by the modern generation. Though there is a subtle need for a transformation in the so-called patriarchy, this system should not be uprooted. When the existing system is disturbed, society becomes chaotic.

The man, in the story does not approve of the ending of *Naga-Mandala*. It shows the sorry plight of the modern generation where they give space for entangled relationships. Appanna's words, "Let any miracle declare her a goddess. But I Know! What sense am I to make of my life if that is worth nothing" (2.294). It's clear that Appanna knows Rani's extra marital affair and the story confirms that she cannot be innocent. Again, Naga visits Rani and he is not able to accept Rani in another man's bed. And he cannot bear the sight. It (Naga) says, "Rani! My queen! The fragrance of my nights! The blossom of my dreams! In another man's arms? In another man's bed? " Someone must die. Someone has to die. Why shouldn't I kill her?" (2.295-96)

This indicates that if the relationships are not ethically and morally designed, there is always a tendency to kill somebody or commit suicide. Naga intends to kill her but then decides not to kill her. It (Naga) yearns to retain human form. At last, it tries to become the size of her tresses by using magical powers and make love to her. As the tresses have no sensation, it is evident that Naga wants to have a Platonic relationship with Rani. Finally, it ties a tress into a noose and dies. Moreover, Rani's head weighs a ton. It shows Rani's struggle, out of her complexities.

They cremate Naga. It proves that the old are rung out and newer ones are rung in. Her wish to keep the older things as reminiscence is accepted by Appanna. It shows Appanna's generous nature. On the other hand, the other end in the play to see Rani keeping Naga in her tresses, though it weighs heavy, is a sign of women breaking the patriarchy and falling into the pit. Rani, casting a spell on her husband and accepting Naga in the guise of Appana and living happily knowing that Appana is not the father of his child shows Rani's guts to break her shackles and distorting the ethical values laid down for women and fulfilling her libido shows the prevalent condition of the modern society which goes astray from patriarchy.

Furthermore, Naga can be taken as the other half of Appanna, who is so kind and loving. Appanna who is ruthless to the core has undergone a great transformation. Like the French playwrights, Cocteau and Anouilh, Karnad reconsiders the use of myth as depiction of modern life and focuses on patriarchal hegemony, dichotomy of lover and husband, display of power struggle for completeness and so on.

Naga-Mandala explores man-woman relationship in the patriarchal construct. Man's failure to understand woman totally distorts the institution of marriage. Though patriarchy exerts power on women, suppresses them, humiliates them through silence, words and deeds, to establish men's superiority, they themselves become failures in the modern context as well as in traditional social system. *Naga-Mandala* exploits mythical elements keeping to present contemporary socio-cultural problems. In *Naga-Mandala*, Karnad mocks at the patriarchal social construct. *Naga-Mandala* portrays patriarchal hegemony, the dichotomy of lover and husband, display of power, struggle for completeness, identity crisis and alienation.

The man-woman relationship is the most blessed one that God bestows on mankind. The strain in the relationship affects every member of a family, society and in turn the nation. The love that sprouts in the heart of man and woman binds relationship, builds the family and paves the way for the growth of the nation. It is a universal truth. When man and woman give space for the other forces, that distorts their relationship; they become ego centric, neurotic, hysteric, and vindictive. Man and woman should be aware of the external forces that spoil their relationship. When they realize the true essence of relationship, the meaning of their life becomes complete.

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