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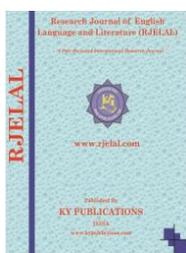
RANI IN NAGAMANDALA: NAME ITSELF IT MEANS THE MEAN

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ABSTRACT

Naga Mandala tells a story of male-dominated world to give the message that it degrades both sexes. In modern world, men and women have to work to maintain progress. In many cases, exploitation of women is revealed these days. The play reveals gender discrimination and suppression of woman in Indian orthodox society. The female protagonist Rani and Kurudavva are main characters who stand for Indian woman. Though the play is a result of dramatic transmutation of the folk tale of Karnataka, Karnad deeply examines contemporary socio-cultural and philosophical concerns.

Girish Karnad is a director, critic, translator, poet and a dramatist. Karnad is the most popular dramatist. Karnad's dramas have been translated into English in all major Indian languages. When Karnad started writing, Kannada literature had been highly influenced by the renaissance in English literature. Conflicting beliefs, Political Freedom of India, modern versus old tradition gave the special background to write his dramas. Karnad was greatly influenced by *Natak Company*. Dramas which he used to watch appealed to him by their buffoonery and horse play. But the greater impact came from Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw. Karnad was greatly influenced by Shakespeare also. Kannada drama influenced him deeply. Karnad is the living legend in Indian English drama. His works mark the evolution of Indian theatre. Karnad has said this fact:

My generation is to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It therefore has to face a situation in which tensions implicit until then had come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self-justification:

tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gives rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries. (Three plays 1)

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As a dramatist, Myth has been his most favourite muse. Karnad has given the most genuine platform for Indian mythology. He wanted Indian myths to achieve the popularity that Greek myths got in the world stage. According to him, writing a play is like writing a love letter. He remains a theatre loyalist though he works in cinema and television.

The play tells a story of male-dominated world to give the message that it degrades both sexes. In modern world, men and women have to work to maintain progress. In many cases, exploitation of women is revealed these days. The play reveals gender discrimination and suppression of woman in Indian orthodox society. The female protagonist Rani and Kurudavva are main characters who stand for Indian woman. Though the play is a result of dramatic transmutation of two folk tales of Karnataka, Karnad deeply examines contemporary socio-cultural and philosophical concerns.

Rani lives in a place where orthodox conventions and cultural taboos exist. Patriarchy is a big blow to existence of Rani. Apart from patriarchy she accepts male superiority. Even in thought she does not oppose her husband. To her, husband is a replica of god. It is an invisible conspiracy to degrade her position in society. She practices new ways to change suppression of woman. Rani is helpless because she is surrounded by evil forces. She is tortured by alienation and frustration. She continues

her struggle to prove as a woman, as a wife and as a mother. Message of the play is obvious.

Though she feels that she is alienated by the society, frustration and antithetical conditions a woman should continue her struggle for her existence. Patriarchy, social practices of Appanna, Naga, and Elders of the village, Parents of Rani, Naga, Dog and Mongoose etc... are the characters that are used as a tool to perpetuate exploitation of Rani. M.K. Naik has explored the symbolism embedded in the play:

The two folk-tales were deftly blended in presenting the two allied themes of the nature of art and the relationship between art and imagination on the one hand and mundane reality on the other. The tale of the failed playwright seemed to suggest that art demands everything from the artist and that he will die if he cannot fulfil his mission. The Rani-Appanna-Cobra tale was evidently an allegory of the nexus between the world of art and the world of reality. Rani, who is away her time making up fairy tales is the artist, and the Cobra, the power of imagination, while Appanna represents the work-a day world. The fact that the Cobra assumes the form of Appanna suggests that Art is, and also in not, the same as reality. That the Cobra finally finds permanent refuge in the hair of Rani is perhaps indicative of the permanent alliance between Art and Imagination. (NM 46)

Tale-Danda is a story derived from the life of Kannada saint Basavanna who was against the evils of caste hierarchy. It is a historical play. History and its relevance to the present situation have always attracted Karnad. *Tale-Danda* explores this fact. Burning situations after the submission of Mandal Commission report inspired Karnad to work on subaltern issue. Karnad does not tell any solution but he creates awareness and raises the subaltern issue for discussion. Under the leadership of Basavanna, a social reformer of the 12th century assembled a congregation of poets, social revolutionaries, philosophers and mystics to create

Lingayat faith instill courage to question society. Subaltern revolution includes avoiding idol worship, abolition of caste system, equality of sexes, denial of Brahminism and Sanskrit in support of the mother tongue Kannada. The revolution reaches its climax when Madhuvarsa, a higher caste Brahmin gives his daughter Kalavati to untouchable Sheelvanta to get married. The last act of the play brought anger in the minds of orthodox people. The movement comes to an end with bloodshed, fear and terror.

Whenever Girish Karnad wants to tell important problems that are not taken seriously, disastrous results would follow again. Ramaswami finds Karnad a dramatist with a different whose motive behind playwriting is too held:

Pulse of the socio-cultural-historical-political facets of India and Indian life... his plays have always aimed at providing message in the contemporary context. In *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda* Karnad employs history to comment on the pathetic and corroded state of Indian modern day politics, and through which he engages in an intellectual debate of our time. (105)

Basavanna's dream of egalitarian society and emotional politics is the dream of Karnad himself. In the play he raises many questions and some suggestions are given but many are left to the audience to think and find solution.

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