



ANALYSIS OF SUBALTERNITY AND DUAL PERSONALITY IN KARNAD'S NAGAMANDALA

*Ms. DEENA JANA¹ Dr. NEELIMA CHOUDARAJU²

Research Scholar, Department of Engineering English, College of Engineering, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation, Vaddeswaram, A. P., India-522502

Associate Professor, Department of Engineering English, College of Engineering, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation, Vaddeswaram, Andhra Pradesh Email:

drneelima@kluniversity.in

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4636-9228>

Corresponding Author*

doi: 10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si4.1304

Abstract:

Gender, socio-political, and cultural themes are highlighted in Indian writing in English as it relates to human life. The seasoned actor, dramatist, and film director Girish Karnad created artistic works along these lines. The present paper investigates the significance of disguises in Karnad's Nagamandala. It relied on the stylistic and film recordings of his plays, periodicals, and erudite evaluations of theatre to establish the background of his dramaturgy and thematic considerations. It describes Karnad's theatrical history, the influences that sparked his immediate attention in playhouse and recital, and his plays' historical and social backdrop. Analysis of gender, society, and masking techniques are also presented in Karnad's Nagamandala.

Keywords: Subalternity, two personalities, masked behaviour, theatre, etc.

Karnad's *Nagamandala* depicts Indian patriarchy and the domination of women. In order to achieve this, the researcher has examined Rani's personality, her exploitation by her husband, Appanna, and finally, her transformation from a woman in need of emancipation. Since discussing oppression without looking at the oppressor's perspective can be challenging, I looked at Appanna's character to study hers. Like Hayavadana, *Nagamandala* focuses on gender narratives and how they are presented from various social perceptions.

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological standpoint that is exceptionally significant in societal consciousness. George Herbert Mead's work serves as the primary source of

inspiration. A Mead student and translator named Herbert Blumer presented an influential exposition of the viewpoint and coined the word “symbolic interactionism” as follows:

1. Humans react to things based on the meanings those objects have for them.
2. Social engagement with one's fellows serves as the source or catalyst for the meaning of such things.
3. The person handles and modifies these meanings through an interpretative process while interacting with the things he meets.

Therefore, this paper examined significant symbols in the *Nagamandala* using the symbolic interactionist technique. It has been used to uncover hidden meanings that the audience might find difficult to comprehend. In this article, I examine how the dual identity of the man— Between institution and modernity, the characters Appanna and Naga—a human and a snake—serve as a bridge. The play's title further proves that a snake, not a human character, served as its inspiration.

Patriarchy-Position of women

In a predominantly male culture, women are expected to perform menial jobs to become aware of their uniqueness through the male gaze of others around them. In such a society, women are raised in a way that prevents them from seeing themselves as independent, decent people. Mary Wollstonecraft believed that women's rights should not be suppressed since they are intellectually equal to men, as she had asserted in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* as early as 1792. However, it is noted that men use a double standard in the patriarchal society of modern India. They enjoy benefits that they do not give to women.

Chris Weedon claims that society becomes patriarchal when women's interests are put second to men's. Similar to this, women are seen by Michael Barret as the chaste mothers of men's offspring in a patriarchal society.

Subaltern Women: The Views of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

A subaltern is a noun from the British language that combines the Latin words sub, which means "under," and alter, which means "other." Subordination is more of a psychological than a physical state. Because they lack a voice to protest exploitation, subalterns endure without help and are forced to take a tiny place. Antonio Gramsci coined

the term "subaltern" to describe someone subordinate in status, gender, social order, race, and ethnicity.

The essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak helped make it more well-known (1985). According to Spivak, subalterns are given no voice and endure their suffering silently. The voices of working-class people, coloured people, and women whose voices have been stifled are all examples of oppressed or colonized subjects she has referred to as "subalterns" in her writing. Spivak has "placed attention on "gendered subaltern" - that is, women, who are doubly oppressed by colonialism and patriarchy in the Third World countries," according to B.K. Das in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Response to Girish Karnad

In his plays, Karnad provides a voice to the voiceless challenging Spivak's notion of subalternity. In his plays, he presents individuals who are "subalterns as emancipated," refuting Spivak's assertion that "subalterns are mute." He reflects his civilization on itself in this way. Karnad's subaltern characters suffer because of their social position, caste, gender, and age. The dramatist explores how women internalize this hegemonic structure in addition to exposing a society in which women are labelled the "second sex," "other," and "non-personas." According to Krishnamayi's explanation of the female mentality in a patriarchal culture:

Gender equality is still untrue. Man, not woman, has prescribed how to discuss the relationship between men and women.

She has been constrained by man, who is controlled by the mastery-motive. Due to biosocial considerations, she consents. In addition to discussing these repressed people, Karnad portrays them as impacting their position. This section focuses on Rani's transformation from a minor character to a deity. Karnad used the word "disguise" as a metaphorical guise for Appanna to highlight Rani's growth into a powerful lady. Appanna plays two roles in the play: he poses as Rani's spouse in the morning, and then at night, the Naga/Cobra resumes Appanna's persona. Because cobras are revered in various regions of India, especially by women, Karnad has successfully exploited the snake as its emblem. According to A.K. Ramanujan, the purpose of the Cobra Festival ritual is to appease the serpent to secure protection and fertility in unions. From the sociocultural perspective of subaltern Indian women, this disguise might be understood. Women want to have a loving husband to fulfil their psychosexual wants and goals. This claim is supported by the play's

alternate ending, where a cobra chooses to live in Rani's hair. It demonstrates how the lover who provided a lady with her first erotic and emotional experiences always exists in a woman's recollections. Additionally, it demonstrates how Rani transforms into a rebellious force when her existence is complete. The play is given an allegoric undertone by using the snake image.

Rani as a Naga Subaltern Woman- Nagamandala

The psychological issues, conundrums, and tensions that contemporary society is engulfed in are portrayed in *Nagamandala*. It places much emphasis on the problems in Indian marriages. Rani is a single child to her parents, and her name, in Sanskrit, means "Queen." planet-wide monarchy's queen. She is the queen of her maternal house. Rani marries Appanna, also known as "any man," and is imprisoned. He only visits his house for lunch and stays there for a while without speaking to his new wife. He does not engage her in conversation or let her ask him any questions. "I do not like an idle conversation, he declares. Do as you are instructed, you get it?" However, he has the liberty to visit his concubine every day.

Rani is similar to any lady who visits her husband's home with romantic fantasies and aspirations of leading a happy married life. She must, however, accept a different truth. There are no social, ethical, or conventional restrictions for Appanna. He continues to be unhindered and unfettered. Karnad draws attention to the problem that traditional patriarchal culture and its social regulations need a wife's dedication and allegiance, though her husband is shrewd and cruel.

Rani lives in a patriarchal environment in *Nagamandala* and is a subservient woman. The drama demonstrates that socialized women internalize a male-controlled society and display its terrible aspect. They aid in maintaining male domination, vilifying their gender, and participating in self-enslavement. In *Nagamandala*, Rani's father plans her wedding to a rich, unparented man. Nevertheless, Rani's preference is disregarded, presuming that she is unable to make any decisions about her marriage. She is powerless. Soon after getting married, Rani discovers that Appanna is not truly a human being. Rani is subjected to abuse, and he disregards the fact that she is a human.

When Appanna leaves the house to visit his mistress on the first day of their marriage, he locks Rani inside and says, "I'll be back tomorrow at noon." This incident highlights

Appanna's harsh nature. Please prepare my lunch. I'll eat and leave. He does not explain why he travels or where he goes, and Rani lacks the guts to challenge his night-time excursions.

Absence and Neglect

In the drama, Rani's imprisonment by Appanna represents the complete male-dominant discourse of purity employed to restrict and regulate women's appeals. "The reduction of women's skills to housework and the exclusion of women from enlightenment and happiness" are what this isolation stands for, according to the author. Rani's circumstance might be considered an example of what happens to a young woman who marries a family and moves in with her husband's relatives rather than living alone with him. An Indian girl living with her husband's in-laws views him in two contradictory roles: as a visitor by daytime and a devotee by dusk. If the menfolk are kind to their spouses in public, it is criticized and seen as unmanly in a traditional Indian patriarchal society.

As a result, following marriage, the men simultaneously play two roles. The wives occasionally find it challenging to comprehend their husbands' odd behaviour, but they eventually pick up on it. Similarly, Rani finds it difficult to connect the relationships she must forge due to these fragmented interactions with her spouse. Rani might be married into the family whose empty home she is confined in. This vacant house also serves as a metaphor for Rani's lack of emotional support. The walls cause her a sense of confinement and helplessness. Karnad creates a narrative on the community, moral distinctions between individuals, and how these characters abuse and oppress the feminine world.

The husband's responsibility in a patriarchal society is to care for and protect his wife, yet in Naga-Mandala, the husband makes Rani feel unsafe and afraid. She senses a "frightened" presence "alone at night" and is obsessed with feelings of uncertainty, but Appanna questions her angrily instead of consoling or encouraging her: "What are you afraid of? Maintain yours. You won't be bothered by anyone. 69 When Rani expresses her frustration, Appanna stifles her with unkind expressions: "Look, I don't appreciate idle chatter." Do as you are instructed; you get it?

In a traditional Indian marriage, the husband has total control over the proceedings and will not tolerate his wife's dissension. Rani feeling helpless, hides her psychological, social, and carnal desires. By engaging in sensuous pleasure with his concubine, Appanna betrays Rani. Rani is well aware but acts passively.

Dreams, fantasies, and Symbolism

Rani seeks safety in dreams and hallucinations since she has been subjected to cruelty and confinement. She imagines that an eagle has taken her away from Appanna's world. Where are you taking me? She asks the eagle. Beyond the seven seas and the seven isles, the eagle replies. A magical garden is located on island number seven.

Moreover, there is an emerald tree in that garden. Your folks are waiting for you below the tree. Then Rani queries him once more, "Do they? Afterwards, kindly drive me to them. She nods off while dreaming and cries, "Oh, Mother!" However, her fantasy world is short-lived because she eventually faces the harsh truths of life.

She discovers herself in a locked home when she awakens. The inner workings of Rani's mind and her suppressed personal ambitions are revealed via her nightmares. The Eagle represents freedom and flight, which reflects Rani's yearning to escape Appanna's control.

Rani is with her parents when she is dreaming: "Then Rani's parents cry and cuddle her." Hugs and kisses are given to her. Don't worry; we won't ever let you leave again, they assured her. However, they are not there to protect her from her violent husband. She envisions a stag with golden antlers knocking on the door and announcing, "I am a royal." She wanted to be taken away from her parents' home by a prince so that she might be transformed into a faithful Rani, just like any young girl would. She was kidnapped and turned into an enslaved person, nevertheless, by Appanna, who is a human monster. She reflects on her suppressed urges and longing for affection in her thoughts and dreams. She then thinks, "The devil locks her up in his stronghold." None other than Appanna, the demon, has her confined inside the house. Dinner preparation is the only thing Rani does for him. He locks her, brings a dog and a mongoose to guard the house, and isolates her entirely from the outside world. In Rani's visions, Karnad purposefully used the imagery of an eagle and a stag because the eagle is popularly known as the "king of the sky," the symbol of strength and the stag for machismo. Karnad has incorporated a gorgeous animal that serves as a lust symbol for the play's female character in *Nagamandala*.

A blind and elderly woman named Kurudavva steps in to save Rani at this point, yet her assistance to Rani seems limited in both time and space. "You are the first person I have seen since arriving here", Rani says to Kurudavva. I'm utterly bored. Nobody is available to talk to! In order to free her husband from the control of his lover, Kurudavva proposes her

mystical ancestry as a remedy. The magical concoction, however, appears disastrous since Appanna drinks it; he collapses to the ground and loses consciousness.

At Kuruddava's urging to win her husband over, Rani uses a larger root, but this time the curry she adds it to turns blood crimson. Rani is startled and goes covertly outside to pour it into the anthill, but Appanna is enraged by this. Rani "collapses to the floor" after being "slapped severely" by him. It's crucial to remember that Rani believes she is nothing without Appanna. The blood-coloured curry is consequently not given to Appanna by Rani, despite the fact that it is thought to have the ability to capture his attention and win his love. She worries about her husband's safety like many other Indian spouses do: "Suppose something happens to my husband? What will happen to me? ... I'm sorry, God. This is wrong. I was going to do something wrong. How could I, your daughter, have consented to such a horrific deed, Father, Mother?"

No Indian woman who adheres to tradition wants to lose her spouse or become a widow. She was born and raised in a society that was created by humans. Therefore, she finds it unsettling even to consider the possibility of her spouse passing away while she is still living since she is aware of how vulnerable widowhood will be.

She once more depends on her father—if he's still alive. Otherwise, her brother has to take care of her. A brother would typically view his bereaved sister as a burden in such a situation. Therefore, a girl is told from an early age that a husband is a god for a woman, even when he can actually be a devil. But in a patriarchal society, a girl would rather live with a devil of a husband than with her brother. Rani pours the curry that is coloured like blood on an anthill where a cobra dwells as a result of her upbringing. She becomes her lover after the cobra consumes it. She begins to stop dreaming once Naga begins spending the night with her.

Appanna's Mask and Dual Personality

When Naga first appears in the Naga-Mandala, it serves as a reminder of Lord Shiva to the audience, who is revered by Hindus as both the creator and the destroyer. A snake that Lord Shiva carries around his collar is viewed as a symbol of fertility. Karnad makes Naga appear as Appanna to talk about the deep reality of marital life. The Hindu religion supports women's desire for their husbands to satisfy their sexual urges, according to references to Lord Shiva. Karnad has so employed Naga as Appanna's cover to investigate Rani's sexual desires.

Naga assumes the persona or mask of Appanna and comes to Rani in night's darkness through the open drain in her restroom. Since the character portraying Appanna now plays a dual role in the play—a husband by day and a lover by night—Karnad used to masquerade as a metaphorical guise for Appanna. Both the play's theatre presentations and its film versions have used this technique of disguising. Disguise is used to comprehend how Rani changes from a subordinate character to an empowered lady.

Characters like Appanna, according to Ralph Yarrow, reside in a region of shifting elements and state borders. According to Yarrow, a liminal place is where one merges with something outside of themselves. Naga is both a man and a serpent in *Nagamandala*. Such interim is what Yarrow refers to as "multiple transformative acting." The characters portraying Appanna and Naga were employed by Karnad in two separate ways: first, to follow the conventional plot, and second, to investigate the sexual demands of women. The playwright juxtaposes two universes, one inside the play and the other outside it, through the use of masks and disguises. In the play's scenario, Naga begins spending the night with Rani and uses his "honeyed words" to gradually break through her ice and take away her feelings of sorrow and insecurity. Karnad stresses that while Rani's desire for sexuality continues to go unmet, her and Appanna's family life continues to be strained outside the boundaries of the play.

Rani and Naga have a talk. As it comes to a close, Rani expresses worry that a snake might come if its name is mentioned late at night. Naga reassures her that he will protect her and that she need not be concerned. This conversation demonstrates the superstitious views of less educated people. With you by my side, Rani says to Naga, "I don't feel terrified anymore." He compliments her long hair and talks about her maternities while listening to what she has to say. Rani gradually develops feelings for Naga and waits excitedly for him as night falls. She spends her evenings "tear sobbing, longing for him" after waiting fifteen days for him to arrive. Naga lures her into a carnal association, and she gets conceived. However, because her husband has not had intercourse with her, this turn of incidents attracts further hostility, abuse, and whippings from him.

While Appanna is intolerant and cruel during the day, Naga is kind, and caring at night. He will hiss at Rani as soon as she opens her mouth. Here, the roles of the human and the animal are reversed. In *Nagamandala*, the serpent exhibits compassion and love, unlike Rani's husband, the savage demon. This demonstrates how Karnad enjoys manipulating the line between animals and humans. According to M. Sarat Babu, "Women are sexually oppressed." It is mirrored in the patriarchal value of chastity. It is an extremely potent social

chain that has held women captive for centuries. However, it is unseen. Appanna informs the village elders of the pregnancy, and they determine that Rani has to prove her purity by holding a red-hot iron or placing her hands into the cobra's anthill. Village heads want Rani to demonstrate her morality, but not Appanna, despite the fact that it is clear that he frequently leaves his wife at home to visit his lover. Only Rani is required to endure suffering and the "snake ordeal". Naga arrives in the evening and tells Rani what the heads have decided. She cries out to him for protection because she feels humiliated. Why are you embarrassing me in this way? She asks. Why are you exposing my nakedness to the entire village? You may now proceed to file a complaint withdrawal. assert that my wife is not a whore.

Rani undergoes a significant transformation thanks to Naga. She now displays boldness and confidence. Rani responds as follows after Naga admits he can't protect her from the chastity test:

When you brought me here, I was a child who didn't know anything. However, I am now a woman, a wife, and I will soon become a mother. I'm not a bird. Neither a sparrow nor a cat. Why don't you assume that I am thinking and tell me what this charade is all about? Why do you enjoy playing these games? Why do you vary from day to night like a chameleon? Even if I only understood a little, I could handle it. But now - sometimes I feel like my head is going to explode!

Rani's claims are now audible in the drama as well. Here, the playwright elevates Rani from a supporting role to the centre. Rani is currently displaying ideological opposition, one of two types of resistance: physical and verbal. Naga-Mandala emphasizes the exploitation, position, ascent, and revolution of the underclass. In Karnad, a strong awareness of the Indian patriarchal past has bred a desire for social justice and a genuine concern for the underdog and the oppressed. Karnad hopes to highlight a social reality through his play: which questions Appanna to attest his purity? Are there no ethical standards for men? Why should women go through these issues?

Throughout her trial, Rani seems bewildered and begs for assistance from everyone, but her efforts are ineffective. The charges of adultery, taunts, and ultimately the public trial brought on by her husband torture Rani. Rani, who is terrified and uneasy, plunges her hands into the cobra anthill and swears, "Since arriving in this village, I have held by this hand, just two... my spouse Also, this Naga. Rather than biting her, the cobra "sways its hood gently for a while, then becomes gentle and moves over her shoulder like a garland." Her bravery in enduring the test supports the newly empowered female's quest for liberation. Through Rani's vows, Karnad offers corrective advice. He also demonstrates his compassion toward women

through Rani's anxiety and humiliation throughout the community test. Through Rani, Karnad poses a number of issues, such as why women are always required to demonstrate their allegiance to their husbands and not the other way around. The audience is then given the opportunity to think about and make a decision. The villagers, who were just about to call her a whore, cry, "A miracle! The miracle! She's not a woman at all! A Divine Being, she is! At her feet, the locals swoon.

The mob approaches her and bows down to her. They make her feel like a deity, telling Appanna, "Your wife is not a typical woman. She is a divinity come to life. Don't be sorry that you misjudged her and mistreated her. This open trial brings to light misogyny and the norms that stifle women's liberty. Rani demonstrates that a lady's journey toward liberation has begun. We must remember that Naga's passion, comfort, and support for Rani are critical factors in her development as an independent woman and evolving identity. An everyday rural Indian woman might look to Rani as her iconic representation to resist the life-depriving patriarchal system and achieve equality.

Conclusion

Appanna modifies his behaviour and perspective toward Rani due to pressure from the village populace or the pricks from his conscience. He apologizes and shatters to the ground at her feet. I'm a bad person. I had no sight. He welcomes her and her child. He now appreciates her beauty and human decency. Appanna cries, "Your long hair rescued us," as the dead Naga falls from her hair. When Rani states that the snake "needs to be ritually incinerated... our kid should kindle the fire," this is what she means. Furthermore, on this day every year, our son shall carry out the ceremonies to mark its demise," Appanna concurs, adding, "Any request of yours would be carried out." Although she has been granted Goddess status, the spectator wonders if she realized whom her clandestine devotee was, given her yearning to remember the death of the cobra.

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