



THEME OF MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN GIRISH KARNARD'S *NAGAMANDALA*

Dr. Umesh Patil

Associate Professor of English, Arts Commerce and Science College, Nardana, Dist. Dhule. (M. S)

Abstract:

Indian Literature is seriously concerned with the theme of Man-woman relationship. Indian culture gives great importance to the family unit. The present study critically examines the theme of Man-woman relationship. Indian society is largely a male dominating since ancient times. Man is supposed to be intelligent and strong. Woman is seen as weaker. Her responsibility is to take care of family. Girish Karnard's plays have folk themes like man-woman relationship, exile and alienation. It appears literal, psychological and metaphorical. Rani's confinement in her husband's house is an example of patriarchal imprisonment. She is trapped and imprisoned in her own husband's house. She lives an isolated life even after her marriage. Rani and Appanna has no healthy marital relationship. Karnard presents Indian history, man-woman relationship, myths and legends as the themes of his plays. Karnard's plays presents the place of woman in Indian society. Woman is the victim of male dominance in India from ancient times. The present paper analyses the subordinate status of woman and man-woman relationship in India. The play has triangle of love among Rani, Appanna and Naga. Rani and Appanna are not a perfect match. They have no attachment and love.

Keywords: Identity Victim, Culture, Myths, Gender Issues, Purity, Gender Justice

Girish Raghunath Karnard is a stalwart in Modern Indian English drama. *Nagamandala* is initially written in Kannada. It was translated into English by Karnard himself. The play presents the subordinate place of woman in Indian society. The marriage and man-woman relationship are also the themes of the play. Indian dramatists have also presented man-woman and family relationship in their plays. In India, the age-old institution marriage is under tremendous stress. Woman has to go through many ordeals to prove her chastity. There are many examples of women in ancient India who has gone through ordeals. Sita, in our great epic *Ramayana* has gone through the ordeal after her exile was completed. Rani faces the problem of chastity in society. Man's weaknesses are neglected in Indian society. We have an example of the King Pandu. Kunti and Madri were his queens. It is also an example of patriarchal family. There are good examples of woman's freedom in *Mahabharata*. The woman had a right of *Swayamwara*. Draupadi and Sita are the examples of it. They had freedom of choosing their husband. Though they were victims of male dominance. Sita and Draupadi had exile life with their husbands. Wife has to accept what her husband is imposed. *Nagamandala* is a feminist play. It attacks on male racism and patriarchal society in India. The writer employs traditional folktale elements. He also shows supernatural impositions on human and non-human entities.

Davis McReynolds observes while commenting on the breaking up of family: "Nor can a person find his identity in the family-for that that institution is breaking up" (203). The identity crisis in *Nagamandala* uses expressive language to social structures. Appanna is a symbol of male dominant family. He is a person who dominates Rani. Such characters are typically found in India. India has male dominating societies where male is super and his decisions are final. Women have always given a subordinate place in Indian society. Appanna's regular practice of dominating Rani reflects in the play. The behaviour of Appanna affects the husband and wife relationship. Rani feels insecure and alienated in her house. The place becomes jail for her.

He is a split personality, he sends snake serves as a test which external viewers use to evaluate Rani's purity. He interlaces *Kannada* folk tales. The prologue presents that man is a bundle of weaknesses, but he is neither aware of them, or he cannot get rid of them. It was very impossible for him to awake because he was a sleepy person. Karnard has also presented the man's weaknesses in *Hayavadana*. It was Herculean task for a man who dozes of every night. It was a last night of his life, he has to do something to avert his death. He is not sure that he would succeed in his efforts. The weaknesses of Appanna makes him uneasy and that is the reason of his lack of confidence and insecurity. He is suspicious eccentric while living



with Rani. The weaknesses of man are the causes of man in establishing man-woman relationship. Rani is the victim of circumstances. It is generally found in India. In Indian culture, we have witnessed supernatural elements are imposed on women to avoid man's weaknesses. All the evil practices are done on women. Even it is believed that she is bewitched. These are common practices in India. Woman is sent to mantrics/enchanters. Sometimes, women are brought to temples for her bewitched stage. She experiences profound loss of self. Naga is emotional and physical anchor. She is banished from the society and asked to prove her chastity.

He visits a dilapidated temple with unidentifiable statue to pass his last night. The temple is haunt of flames that come from different houses. It presents the conditions of society. Flame one comes from the miserly fellow who retires to bed early to save spending on lamp oil. Flame four comes from a house in which the old mother has died. The master and mistress have freedom to pass their nights. Flame three is forced to witness lasciviousness master who needs light to feast his eyes on the limbs his wife to make the rest of him to react. The flames find that the people are asleep to the spiritual needs of the man. The symbolism of Man in the story is very powerful in the drama *Nagamandala*. Men dominate Indian society. Karnard's *Nagamandala* raises the problem of patriarchy that demands woman's faithfulness. It does not demand husband's faithfulness in contemporary Indian society. The play also raises a question of Appanna's masculinity. Appanna is a heartless husband and Rani wins readers sympathy.

Girish Karnard has woven his *Nagamandala* in following stories. The story of New Flame is one of it. In it, the old mistress has seen a young woman dressed in a sari coming out of the room in which her husband is sleeping. The woman wraps herself in sari. In fact, it is nothing but hallucination. However, this story also comes to the temple and desires that it should be heard by somebody who can pass to others. Flames cannot do it because these are non-living objects. The man offers to hear the story on the condition that he will be kept awake all the night. Rani wishes for Appanna's affection but she could not get it. *Naga* gives it to Rani. Chastity is a very powerful weapon to subjugate women in the society. The play *Nagamandala* reflects upon the contemporary Indian cultural and social life with the use of myths and folktales. *Naga* is the symbol of her wedded bliss and asks him to live in her hair for ever. Girish Karnard shows how women experience a survival of subjugation and compliance in a patriarchal society. The men use domestic violence as an ornament to control and disseminate against their wives and their female counterparts docilely endure all the pains and anguishes.

The story presents the story of a young girl, Rani. She is the only child of her parents. She is called Rani because she is the queen of long tresses. Her father gets her married to a young man who is rich and his parents are dead. The writer calls him Appanna. He brings his wife and locks her that he will get his lunch ready. Rani lives a deserted life. Her dreams of happy married life are shattered. Rani lives a depressed and dejected life. She is not supported by anyone. Her parents come in her dreams to console her. She misses her parents so much that she sees them in hallucination. They assure her that they will not send her.

Sometimes help also comes from an unexpected quarter. It is in the form of Kurudavva, friend of Appanna's mother. She is blind. She wants to meet Rani. She tells her son Kappamma that Appanna's mother was her friend and they were like sisters. She knows that Rani is locked up by Appanna. She feels pity for Rani as Rani is beautiful and she supports Rani. She sends Kappamma to bring the roots which have magical of lighting love in the heart of the man that eats them. She has tested them on her husband. She gives the roots to Rani with instructions. Rani prepares the roots and gives to her husband. The love roots have failed to work on stonehearted Appanna. He is impervious to love. Chastity has always weakened women for ages in India's history. Rani feels secluded and alone. He dominates her feelings and says: "Look, I don't like idle chatter. Don't question me. Do as you are told and you won't be punished" (7) The house was almost solitary confinement for her husband. Appanna orders her: "She won't talk to anyone. And no one need to talk to her" (14) Kurudavva notices that the lock is still there. He is surprised to see that the root has not made an effect on Appanna. Rani is advised to exceed dose of the root. But she is stunned by an explosion. She pours the paste into curry. The curry turned blood red. She pours the curry into the ant-hill. As she turns her back, a king Kobra lifts its hood, hissing out of the ant-hill. After that, King Cobra comes in the life of Rani.



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The Act II presents the love story of Naga and Rani. Appanna ties a dog to his door to keep Kurudavva away from Rani. The Naga incarnates in the shape of Appanna and makes love with Rani. Rani is confused about Appanna's two different roles. Nightly visits of Naga turn into sexual intercourse which is a new experience of Rani. Naga kills the dog. Appanna tells Rani it was not an ordinary dog. It must be sensed by Cobra. He brings a mongoose and Naga kills the mongoose. In this fight the Naga is bruised. The Naga is absent for fifteen days. Rani waits for him as she is in love the Naga. In course of time Rani becomes pregnant. Rani tells it to Naga. Naga advises her to hide her pregnancy. Her pregnancy is a big trouble for her. Appanna becomes furious when he knows of her pregnancy He mistreats her kicks her and blames her: "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" (33) He further says: "I swear to you I am not my father's son if I don't about that bastard! Smash it into dust" (33) Rani thinking that she has not committed any crime, swears to him about her guiltlessness. "I swear to you I haven't done anything wrong" (33)

Appanna is shocked when he notices her inflated tummy. He decides to punish for her adultery. Rani is asked to hold a cobra instead of hot bar. Rani plunges her hand into the ant-hill and pulls out the cobra. The cobra spreads like an Umbrella on her head and then as a garland. The crowd is enchanting and Appanna is advised to serve Rani as she is supposed to be a goddess. Rani has got her husband but Appanna knows that he is cuckolded. Her real husband is different from her real husband. The story ends with Rani's Shelter to Naga in her tresses.

Nagamandala is a study of a split of personality and identity crises. Karnard's *Nagamandala* transforms snake into a man and presents a love story. Appanna does not care for Rani for any customs and culture or tradition to one question. Rani did not know the originality of Naga.

Man-woman relationship is a much-discussed subject in India. The positive relationship makes human life happy whereas negative relationship brings unhappiness in life. But sensitisation about gender justice is neglected at the grassroot level. It is evident from largely held belief that men are anti-women and women are the main propagators of women rights. It is seen in Appanna's case. The study of Indian drama shows that man-woman relationship in Indian English plays is passing through a conflict in roles and values. It is one of the main Indian themes i.e. Man-woman relationship. The paper critically examines and compares the man-woman relationship.

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