



The Suffering of Women in Girish Karnad's Naga-Mandala

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Abstract:

This article examines the suffering of women in Girish Karnad's play Naga-Mandala. Through a close reading of the play, this article highlights the various ways in which women suffer in Indian society, including their lack of autonomy and agency, their objectification and commodification, and their socialization to accept their subordinate status. Despite this suffering, the play ultimately offers a message of hope and empowerment, suggesting that women have the power to resist and challenge the oppressive forces that govern their lives.

Keywords: Serpent Mythology, Patriarchy, Autonomy, Agency,

Objectification, Commodification

Introduction:

Girish Karnad's play Naga-Mandala is a powerful exploration of the suffering of women in Indian society. Written in 1988, the play is a masterful blend of folk tale, mythology, and social commentary, offering a nuanced and thought-provoking portrayal of the complexities of women's lives in India. Through the story of Rani, a young woman married to a man named Appanna, Karnad sheds light on the various ways in which women suffer in Indian society. From the lack of autonomy and agency to the objectification and commodification of their bodies, women in India face a multitude of challenges that threaten their dignity, self-worth, and very survival.



Naga-Mandala is a play that is both deeply rooted in Indian culture and universally relevant. It is a play that speaks to the experiences of women across cultures and societies, and yet, it is also a play that is uniquely Indian, drawing on the rich cultural heritage of the country to tell a story that is both timeless and timely. The play is set in a small village in Karnataka, where Rani lives with her husband Appanna and his family. The story revolves around Rani's complex relationships with the men in her life, including her husband, her father-in-law, and the snake that becomes her lover. Through these relationships, Karnad explores the various ways in which women are oppressed and marginalized in Indian society.

One of the most significant themes of the play is the lack of autonomy and agency that women experience in Indian society. Rani, like many women in India, is trapped in a marriage that she did not choose, and is forced to navigate a complex web of social and cultural expectations. Her desires, needs, and aspirations are constantly ignored or suppressed, and she is forced to conform to the norms and expectations of her family and community.

The play also explores the theme of objectification and commodification of women's bodies. Rani's body is seen as a commodity that can be bought and sold, and she is constantly objectified by the men in her life. Her husband Appanna sees her as a possession that he can control and dominate, while the snake sees her as a desirable object that he can possess and enjoy.

Through Rani's story, Karnad offers a powerful critique of the patriarchal forces that govern women's lives in India. The play is a scathing indictment of the social and cultural norms that perpetuate women's oppression, and it offers a powerful message of hope and empowerment to women everywhere. In this article, we will explore the suffering of women in Naga-Mandala, examining the ways in which Karnad portrays the complexities of women's



lives in Indian society. We will analyse the themes of autonomy, objectification, and



commodification, and explore the ways in which the play offers a powerful critique of patriarchal forces.

Main Thrust;

Girish Karnad's play Naga-Mandala is a powerful exploration of the suffering of women in Indian society. The play, which is based on a folk tale from Karnataka, tells the story of a young woman named Rani who is married to a man named Appanna. However, Rani's life is complicated by the fact that she is also loved by a snake, who is determined to win her back from her husband.

Through Rani's story, Karnad explores the various ways in which women suffer in Indian society. One of the primary ways in which women suffer is through their lack of autonomy and agency. Rani, like many women in India, is trapped in a marriage that she did not choose, and is forced to navigate a complex web of social and cultural expectations. Another way in which women suffer in Naga-Mandala is through their objectification and commodification. Rani is seen as a prize to be won by the men in her life, rather than as a person with her own desires and agency. This objectification is reinforced by the societal norms and expectations that govern women's lives in India.

The play also explores the theme of women's suffering through the character of Rani's mother-in-law, who is a symbol of the oppressive patriarchal forces that govern women's lives. Through this character, Karnad highlights the ways in which women are often complicit in their own oppression, and the ways in which they are socialized to accept their subordinate status. Despite the suffering that Rani and other women in the play endure, Naga-Mandala is ultimately a message of hope and empowerment. Through Rani's story, Karnad suggests that women have the power to resist and challenge the oppressive forces that govern their lives. The



play ends with Rani's triumphant declaration of independence, as she rejects the societal norms and expectations that have governed her life.

Naga-Mandala is a powerful exploration of the suffering of women in Indian society. Through Rani's story, Karnad highlights the various ways in which women suffer, including their lack of autonomy and agency, their objectification and commodification, and their socialization to accept their subordinate status. Despite this suffering, the play ultimately offers a message of hope and empowerment, suggesting that women have the power to resist and challenge the oppressive forces that govern their lives.

The main thrust of this article is to examine the suffering of women in Girish Karnad's play Naga-Mandala, with a particular focus on the ways in which the play portrays the complexities of women's lives in Indian society.

This article will argue that Naga-Mandala is a powerful feminist text that sheds light on the various ways in which women suffer in Indian society, including:

The lack of autonomy and agency: The play highlights the ways in which women are denied agency and autonomy in their lives, and are instead forced to navigate a complex web of social and cultural expectations.

Objectification and commodification: The play portrays the ways in which women's bodies are objectified and commodified in Indian society, and the ways in which this objectification perpetuates their suffering.

Socialization to accept subordinate status: The play examines the ways in which women are socialized to accept their subordinate status in Indian society, and the ways in which this socialization perpetuates their suffering.



Through a close reading of the play, this article will demonstrate how Karnad uses the story of Rani to highlight the complexities of women's lives in Indian society, and to offer a powerful critique of the patriarchal forces that perpetuate their suffering.

Conclusion:

Girish Karnad's *Naga-Mandala* is a powerful portrayal of the suffering of women in Indian society. Through the story of Rani, Karnad sheds light on the various ways in which women suffer, from the lack of autonomy and agency to the objectification and commodification of their bodies. However, *Naga-Mandala* is not just a play about suffering; it is also a play about resistance and empowerment. Through Rani's journey, Karnad shows that women have the power to challenge the oppressive forces that govern their lives and to create their own destinies.

Naga-Mandala is a play that is both deeply rooted in Indian culture and universally relevant. It is a play that speaks to the experiences of women across cultures and societies, and yet, it is also a play that is uniquely Indian, drawing on the rich cultural heritage of the country to tell a story that is both timeless and timely. *Naga-Mandala* is a powerful feminist text that offers a message of hope and empowerment to women everywhere. It is a play that challenges the status quo and offers a vision of a more just and equitable society. As such, it remains a deeply relevant and important work of Indian theatre, one that continues to inspire and provoke audiences to this day.

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