

Study of Patriarchal Code in Karnad's Nagamandala

Dr. Ranjit Kumar

Girish Karnad is one of the foremost playwrights in India who writes in Kannada and yet has moved away from the regionalist tradition to make fresh raids on the inarticulate. In his play 'Naga Mandala', Karnad weaves two Kannada folk tales together, the first one comments on the paradoxical nature of oral tales, and the other is the story of Rani whose predicament reflects the human need to live by fictions and half-truths. He borrows the theme from two Kannada folk tales that he has heard from A.K. Ramanujan, his friend and guru. The play 'Naga-Mandala' deals with gender inequalities. It mocks at and questions the unjust values of our patriarchal society. The postcolonial matrix embedded in the play opens up yet another space for the working out of the theme of patriarchal oppression. Myths, legends and folk forms function as a kind of cultural anaesthesia and they have been used for introducing and eliminating cultural pathogens such as caste and gender distinctions and religious fanaticism. Girish Karnad makes use of myths and folk forms in his plays to exorcise socio-cultural evils. He says, "The energy of folk-theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it also has the means of questioning these values, of making them literally stand on their head." In his play, "Naga Mandala', he exposes male chauvinism, the oppression of women, the great injustice done to them by men and patriarchal moral code. He even goes further and deflates the concept of chastity. He seems to suggest that matriarchy, the lost paradise of mankind, will come again.