



# Liberation of Women in Girish Karnad's Nagamandala: Breaking Free from Shackles

**Balaji A**

Department of English

PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore

**Dr. M. John Suganya**

Associate Professor of English

PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore

## Abstract

This paper explores Girish Karnad's impactful play, *Nagamandala*, highlighting the suffering of women. It addresses patriarchal systems historical influence and the ongoing fight for freedom. The play spotlights typical Indian women's challenges, shedding light on their struggles within society. Women's challenges within the Indian patriarchal system are universal and demand collective attention. The paper delves into women's experiences across history, emphasizing their journeys and progress. In *Nagamandala*, Karnad skillfully portrays strong, independent female characters challenging societal norms. The play empowers these women to break free from expectations and embrace their true selves.

**Keywords:** Emancipation, Liberation, Society, Women.

## Introduction

The genre of drama has always been a captivating form of literature, skillfully showcasing the vast range and profound complexity of human emotions through skilled performances. It is an art that excels in evoking genuine reactions from its audience, leaving them mesmerized by the power it holds. It is a form of art that genuinely mesmerizes viewers, moving them and keeping them engrossed in the characters and their story. It offers a unique platform to express and explore different feelings, making it a powerful storytelling tool.

Indian drama in English is a remarkable literary genre that deserves special recognition. It offers riveting dialogues that can really come to life when brought to the stage by talented actors. The fusion of Indian culture and English creates a unique and powerful story experience. The term "drama" is rooted in the Greek word "dran" which means "to do" or "to perform" This fascinating etymology emphasizes the active nature of theatrical presentations. The concept of meaning suggests a unique connection to actions. In keeping with the Indian outlook on life, every action is believed to have a specific purpose or intention behind it. The purpose of drama and theater

is to engage the audience and create a sense of pleasure and happiness through the portrayal of various situations, emotions and thoughts.

According to him, a play's full potential can only be realized through its stage presentation.

He says, 'When a story gets my attention, I want to share that excitement with others. As I examine the parts of its enchantment, the plays are well-received for their compelling storylines, intricacy, and compelling structure.'

Girish Raghunath Karnad is a true renaissance man, revered as one of India's leading playwrights. His diverse talents as a writer, playwright, actor, film producer, screenwriter and critic have earned him international recognition. His works transcend boundaries and connect deeply with the universal human experience. A multi-talented individual, Girish Karnad has excelled in various fields including writing, translating and directing films. His exceptional abilities have earned him numerous accolades and accolades. Notably, he has been honored with prestigious national civilian awards such as the Padmashree Award in 1974 and the Padmabhushan Award in 1992.

In addition, Karnad's outstanding contribution to literature has been recognized with the esteemed Bharatiya Jnanpith Award, the highest honor in the literary world. In 1999, India conferred a great honor on Karnad. Not only is he celebrated for his contribution to literature, but in 2008, this distinguished playwright was also honored as a world theater ambassador by the prestigious UNESCO International Theater Institute. Karnad's deep involvement in theater led him to craft plays that are remarkable not only on paper but also meant to be performed on stage.

Girish Karnad's plays are highly regarded for their captivating narrative, intricate details and impressive structure. His work in the theater reflects two remarkable qualities: a relentless pursuit of innovation in dramatic forms and a deep understanding of the complexity of the human experience. These qualities make his games truly exceptional and deserving of recognition. The talented playwright delves into contemporary and timeless aspects of Indian culture through his plays. Drawing inspiration from folk tales, myths and historical legends, he brings to light the intricacies and nuances of contemporary Indian society. His works serve as a powerful reflection of our rich cultural heritage. These cultural constructs play a vital role in shaping individuals by imparting moral values and upholding traditional codes. Food and gender play a major role in this. In the article, "Gender Performance on the Reinvigoration via Food" Suganya et al says that food builds the cultural gap (Suganya et al. 890). Also, the article "Communal Expectancy and the Authentic Self of Men and Transgenders - Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw and Birthday by Meredith

Russo" by Suganya et al clearly outspeaks "the fear of losing his masculine dignity and being shunned by his culture" (Suganya et al. 880). They serve as key building blocks that guide individuals to live a fulfilling life.

## The Web of Tradition

In the first act of *Nagamandala* Karnad sets the stage by introducing us to Rani, the protagonist, who is trapped in a stifling marriage and the shackles of tradition. Through vivid storytelling and compelling characters, Karnad exposes the limitations imposed on women in a patriarchal society. Rani's plight serves as a metaphor for the countless women bound by societal expectations.

## The Enigmatic Serpent

The play takes a dramatic turn when Rani encounters a caged cobra, a symbol of transformation and liberation. As she begins feeding and conversing with the snake, an unusual bond develops, and Rani finds herself drawn

to its mysterious allure. This relationship with the serpent symbolizes Rani's awakening to her own desires and her yearning for freedom.

### Rebellion and Liberation

In the final act, Rani's newfound strength and courage lead her to challenge societal norms and confront her oppressive husband. She refuses to accept the fate imposed upon her and, in a powerful climax, takes control of her own destiny. Karnad brilliantly portrays Rani's journey from subjugation to self-assertion, emphasizing the importance of breaking free from the chains of tradition.

### Symbolism and Metaphor

Throughout *Nagamandala* Karnad skillfully employs symbolism and metaphor to convey his message. The cobra represents not only the malevolent forces at play in Rani's life but also the potential for transformation and liberation. The physical and metaphorical entanglement of Rani and the snake underscores the complexity of her struggle. *Nagamandala* remains a poignant and timeless exploration of women's liberation. It invites audiences to reflect on the enduring challenges faced by women in societies where tradition often clashes with individual aspirations.

### Conclusion

*Nagamandala* is a timeless exploration of women's liberation within the confines of tradition. Through Rani's transformative journey, we witness the struggle to break free from societal constraints. In our analysis of "Breaking the Chains: Women's Liberation in Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala*," we've delved into the power of storytelling to challenge norms. Rani's evolution, from entrapment in a stifling marriage to her act of rebellion, is a testament to the human spirit's resilience. Karnad's use of symbolism, especially the caged cobra, underscores the possibility of transformation even in adversity. Rani's story serves as an inspiration, prompting reflection on the courage needed to challenge the status quo. As we conclude, we celebrate the enduring relevance of this masterpiece. *Nagamandala* invites dialogue on women's rights and empowerment, emphasizing the importance of breaking free from the chains of tradition. Art, as exemplified by this play, continues to inspire change and the pursuit of freedom in society.

### References

- Karnad, G. (1990) *Naga-Mandala: Play with a Cobra*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- ..., *Three Plays*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- ..., (1995) "Performance, Meaning and the Materials of Modern Indian Theatre", in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 11 (44), 355-370.
- ..., (2010). *Collected Plays, Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Bali: The Sacrifice, Naga-Mandala*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.\\_Karnad](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/G._Karnad)

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nagamandala>

Suganya, M. John & Boopalan, Priyanga & .V, Harish Sachin. (2023). Gender Performance on the

Reinvigoration via Food Section A-Research paper Eur. European Chemical Bulletin. 12. 883-891.

10.31838/ecb/2023.12.s1.095.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372140450\\_Gender\\_Performance\\_on\\_the\\_Reinvigoration\\_via\\_Food\\_Section\\_A-Research\\_paper\\_Eur](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372140450_Gender_Performance_on_the_Reinvigoration_via_Food_Section_A-Research_paper_Eur).

<https://www.eurchembull.com/uploads/paper/b9181a968de998b7727c25b6af5d20f2.pdf>.

Suganya, M.John & S., Jeevitha & Grashya, L.. (2023). Communal Expectancy and the Authentic

Self of Men and Transgenders - Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw and Birthday by Meredith Russo. European Chemical Bulletin. 12. 878-882. 10.31838/ecb/2023.12.s1.094.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372140477\\_Communal\\_Expectancy\\_and\\_the\\_Authentic\\_Self\\_of\\_Men\\_and\\_Transgenders\\_-Arms\\_and\\_the\\_Man\\_by\\_George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw\\_and\\_Birthday\\_by\\_Meredith\\_Russo](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372140477_Communal_Expectancy_and_the_Authentic_Self_of_Men_and_Transgenders_-Arms_and_the_Man_by_George_Bernard_Shaw_and_Birthday_by_Meredith_Russo).

<https://www.eurchembull.com/uploads/paper/72c7b104b7b5ddc1f8fe0b8cbb0f69a8.pdf>

